



Updated April 2020

Quick Facts: Medical Support

This Quick Facts guide provides information about improving the availability of health care coverage for children through the state’s Child Support program.

The Child Support Program¹ is a successful federal-state-tribal partnership that seeks to promote economic stability for children whose parents live apart. It serves one in five children nationwide² and collects \$5.12 for every \$1 in public funds invested. In FY 2018, \$34 billion was collected in 13.9 million cases for 14.7 million children.³

How are Medical Support and the Child Support Program related?

The phrase "Medical Support" is used to describe the process by which a state’s child support agency (also known as the IV-D agency) establishes and enforces provisions for health care coverage in child support orders. Many of the children in the IV-D caseload receive or are eligible to receive government paid or subsidized health care through the state’s Medicaid or Children’s Health Insurance Program. There are also children in the IV-D caseload who are eligible to be covered under a parent’s private health insurance plan.

Federal law⁴ requires state child support agencies to obtain provisions for health care coverage in child support orders consistent with that state’s child support guidelines and to enforce such provisions when a parent paying child support is required to provide health care coverage. This is generally done through the issuance of the National Medical Support Notice requiring the parent’s employer to enroll the child in available, cost-reasonable coverage. States may opt to enforce healthcare provisions against parents receiving support as appropriate. If health insurance is not available through the parent paying child support, “medical support” may also include establishment and enforcement of an amount the parent is required to pay to offset the cost of health insurance or other medical costs for the child.

Why Have a Medical Support Program?

In addition to meeting the federal mandate to establish and enforce provisions for health care coverage in child support orders, an effective medical support program can improve child well-being and can help states avoid expending funds for child health care by ensuring that parents pay their fair share of these costs.

¹ Title IV, Part D of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 651, *et seq.*).

² https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/programs/css/2018_infographic_national.pdf

³ <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/css/resource/fy-2018-preliminary-data-report>

⁴ 42 U.S.C. 666 (a)(19).





What is the current situation regarding Medical Support through the Child Support Program?

Federal law requires states to have in place procedures to ensure that the medical needs of children in the state's child support caseload are addressed. These laws were not modified in response to the Affordable Care Act, but a review is ongoing at the state and national level to analyze the impact of the Act on the Child Support Program and determine the extent to which Medical Support should continue to be established and enforced.

