

Quick Facts: Workforce Development

This Quick Facts guide provides information about program initiatives to help noncustodial parents connect with job training and placement services.

The Child Support Program¹ is a successful federal-state-tribal partnership that seeks to promote economic stability for children whose parents live apart. The program collects \$4.37 for every \$1 in public funds invested. In FY 2023, \$31 billion was collected in 12 million cases for 12.7 million children.²

To make the program more effective and to increase regular child support payments among cases with parents who owe support and who have limited earnings, state and local child support programs have partnered with a wide variety of workforce development programs to provide job training and employment services to these parents. The programs are designed to complement traditional enforcement tools and to help parents find suitable employment opportunities so they can support their children. They include the following:

- Job search assistance.
- Job readiness training.
- Job development and job placement services.
- Skills assessments to facilitate job placement.
- Job retention services, certificate programs, and other skills training directly related to employment.

Traditional enforcement tools often prove ineffective in getting unemployed parents to pay child support.³ Parents who owe support often face similar barriers to work as custodial parents, such as low levels of education, lack of recent work experience, or health conditions that limit their ability to work.⁴ In many cases, offering job services is a more effective approach for increasing the ability of unemployed parents to get and keep a job and to pay child support on a regular basis.

The evidence from research studies, including rigorous analyses of Texas' *Non-Custodial Parent Choices (NCP Choices)* and New York's *Strengthening Families Through Stronger*

¹ Created by Title IV-D of the Social Security Act.

² Office of Child Support Services (OCSS) FY 2023 Preliminary Report

³ For further information, see Maria Cancian, Daniel R. Meyer, and Eunhee Han's article, *Child Support: Responsible Fatherhood and the Quid Pro Quo* (2011), *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 635:140.

⁴ See publication by Elaine Sorensen and Helen Oliver, *Policy Reforms are Needed to Increase Child Support from Poor Fathers* (2002).

Fathers Initiative, indicates that child support-coordinated work programs can be an effective method of increasing child support payments to families.⁵

In Texas' *NCP Choices* service model, noncompliant parents were given the choice of paying child support, participating in workforce services, or going to jail. The program included job readiness and job search assistance as well as training opportunities. The program resulted in a 49 percent gain in collections rate relative to the comparison group. *NCP Choices* participation was also associated with a substantial 15 percentage point increase in the frequency of any child support collections in the first year after being ordered into the program. Overall, in the first year after the program, *NCP Choices* participants paid approximately \$54 per month more in child support than their comparison group counterparts, a substantial 44% increase in total collections.

Additionally, those ordered into *NCP Choices* were subsequently employed at much higher rates than their comparison group counterparts.

New York's *Strengthening Families Through Stronger Fathers Initiative* involved work-oriented programs that offered job search assistance and job readiness training; workshops to help participants understand and navigate the child support system; and classes on parenting, communication, and relationship skills. After taking part in these programs, participants increased their earnings by 22 percent and their child support payments by 38%, compared with a comparable group of parents who did not receive these services.

While some other early pilots produced mixed results, recent analysis suggests that those outcomes were likely the result of design choices more than the employment services themselves. Current models show employment services positively correlate to improved support payments.⁶

States have implemented many different workforce development strategies:

- North Dakota developed *Parental Responsibility Initiative for the Development of Employment* (PRIDE), which assists parents who owe support with job search assistance, matching participants with employers, GED referrals and assistance with testing fees.
- Florida implemented *Motion to Enforce*, which includes judicial orders for parents to participate in job training programs and conduct work searches.
- Michigan recently created Learn, Earn, and Provide (LEAP), providing career planning, on the job training, and support services such as help with transportation, licensing fees, and GED and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes.

⁵ For further information, see Daniel Schroeder and Nicholas Doughty's report, *Texas Non-Custodial Parent Choices: Program Impact Analysis* (2009).

⁶ McCann, Meghan: Promoting Parental Employment to Boost Child Support, National Conference of State Legislators, 2019.



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As of July 22, 2022, thirty-two states and the District of Columbia operated work-oriented programs for noncustodial parents with active child support agency involvement.⁷

While workforce development activities are not allowed as IV–D reimbursable costs, child support agencies may request a Section 1115 waiver from the Office of Child Support Services (OCSS).⁸ Other funding methods may be available, such as requesting an OCSS exemption to reinvest child support incentive payments or partnering with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Workforce Development Boards or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) state agencies. All three possible funding streams, however, are limited and come with additional administrative burdens. Expanding the availability of federal funding to support Workforce Development programs would encourage more evidence-based and cost-effective approaches to obtaining regular child support payments.

⁷ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Services, *Child Support-Led Employment Programs by State* (2021).

⁸ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Support Services, *Availability of Section 1115 Waivers to Fund NCP Work Activities* (2019).

