

# Best Practices for Increasing Performance



**MFSRC**

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## Performance

In child support, program performance is measured by the five federal performance indicators.

1. **Paternity Establishment**-Number of children in open IV-D cases not born in marriage with paternity established during the current Federal Fiscal Year (FFY), divided by the number of children in open IV-D cases not born of the marriages of the end of the previous FFY.
2. **Order Establishment**- Number of open cases with orders established as of the end of the FFY divided by the tot number of open cases.
3. **Collections on Current Child Support**-The total dollars collected and disbursed toward current support during the FFY.
4. **Arrears Collection Measure**-The number of cases with a collection on arrears during the FFY.
5. **Cost Effectiveness**-The total dollars collected during the FFY divided by the total dollars spent providing child support services in the FFY.

Federal Performance Measures	Federal Performance Standard	Minnesota FFY 2008 Performance	Minnesota FFY 2009 Performance	Minnesota FFY 2010 Performance
Paternity Establishment	90% (Max. @ 80%)	97%	99%	100%
Order Establishment	80%	84%	84%	85%
Current Support Collections	80%	70%	70%	69%
Arrears Collections	80%	68%	67%	70%
Cost-Effectiveness Ratio	5.00	3.91	3.71	3.70

The federal performance indicators measures outcomes or results. As a state, Minnesota is not meeting federal performance expectations in Collections on Current Support, Arrears Collection and Cost Effectiveness.

In a time of shrinking budgets, staff reductions and hiring freezes what can we do to increase performance?

# Bubble Chart' Mirrors Child Support Work Nationwide

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Many of you have seen OCSE's "bubble chart," a simple picture of the innovative partnerships and initiatives that state, county, and tribal child support programs have developed to help parents improve their ability and willingness to support their children. Through collaborations with courts, workforce agencies, prisons, fatherhood programs, domestic violence coalitions, and faith-based and community organizations, we have begun to put the bubble chart in action.

Our automated enforcement strategies work well for most parents in our caseload—the 75 percent or so of parents who are regularly employed or have assets. Most child support is collected from noncustodial parents through automatic employer payroll withholding (70 percent). Other collection methods include withholding federal and state income tax refunds and unemployment benefits, bank account seizures, denying passports, and denying or revoking driver's and professional licenses. OCSE maintains the Federal Parent Locator Service (FPLS), including web-based portals that operate applications, such as Query Interstate Cases for Kids (QUICK), to simplify interstate data exchanges and exchanges between states and employers.

However, traditional enforcement tools have been less effective for the approximately 25 percent of parents who owe child support but have a limited ability to pay. We know from research that 70 percent of unpaid child support debt is owed by parents earning no or low-reported income. A growing body of research suggests that reduced orders and debt balances can improve employment and child support outcomes.

The idea behind the bubble chart has slowly taken root within the child support community over the past decade: turning nonpayers into paying parents. Sometimes the most effective strategy to increase support for a child is to connect a father to a job. The bubble chart encourages child support programs to intervene early to address the underlying reasons for nonsupport—whether it is unemployment, parental conflict, or disengagement. By broadening our strategies and partnering with other programs, we can do more to assure that parents provide their children with financial and emotional support throughout childhood.

## **Case Management Strategies: Enforcement/Contempt Faribault/Martin Counties**

Over a two-year period, child support management and staff applied strategic and focused case management strategies to improve collections through enforcement and contempt actions.

### **Overall Results**

- *Eliminated the backlog for contempt actions.*  
Went from having a contempt waiting list with several cases that hadn't had payments in well over a year to virtually no waiting list and contempt actions initiated within 4 months of no payments.
- *Significant and measurable changes in child support payments*
  - Collections on current support went from 76% in 2009 to 74% in 2010, not sure why a decrease.
  - Collections on arrears went from 76% in 2009 to 80% in 2010. The increase is significant because we maximized our performance in this performance measure.
  - The percentage of cases with arrears payments for 2011 have been: Jan 65.25%, Feb. 68.67%, March 73.45% July 80.55%
  - Contempt statistics for contempts done from 1/1/10-4/30/11: 37% are receiving current payments, 19% are partial payors, 29% have made some payments and 15% have had no payments. This has resulted in 85% of cases referred for contempt receiving some type of payment
- *Improved relationships and stronger families*  
Results for NCP's and their families:
  - Some NCPs who have never worked now have steady employment,
  - Self-esteem and self-worth is dramatically increased
  - Some who have never had a connection with their children have had an opportunity to start building relationships
  - Some CP's have agreed to waive NPA arrears as a result of receiving current and steady support

### **Steps Taken to Achieve Results**

#### **Caseload changes made in early 2010**

- Moved 1 CSO from doing contempt actions to handling the majority of interstate "initiating" cases.
- 3 CSOs now focus on contempt actions and process cases on a continuous basis. Before the change, contempt actions were worked on one day a month.
- SEAs now have one additional day of intake per month which has freed up one additional day for CSO's to focus on enforcement. SEAs are now involved with case management process for delinquent payors.

#### **Broader "case management" approach adopted**

- Met with workforce center staff to educate child support staff on resources available from workforce center and on the reality of employment in our area.
- Met with social security staff to educate child support staff on qualifications for SSI and RSDI and reality that social security encourages recipients of benefits to seek employment.
- Walk-ins are encouraged and welcome. We want NCPs to meet with us to discuss the barriers to paying their support.

- We extended our office hours to 7 p.m. on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings to accommodate working parents.
- Use medical opinion forms and self-appraisal forms to gather information on NCP's limitations to work.

### **Zero Tolerance monitoring contempt process initiated**

- On cases with new court orders, if a payment is not received in the first month, a 30 day delinquency notice is sent from child support. If no payment the following month, the county attorney sends a letter. If still no payment, the case is referred for contempt the third month after the order was established.
- 30, 60, 90 day delinquency notices sent on cases with existing orders in place. These cases are referred for contempt in the 4<sup>th</sup> month if no payment is made.
- Cases are handled through expedited process and district court. If worker determines there is little chance of getting an agreement prior to the contempt hearing, the case is initiated in district court (expedited process is bypassed).
- Cases with new orders established are given the highest priority for contempt.
- Arrears only cases are given an equal priority and are processed with other cases needing contempt.
- As processes improved, started initiating contempt actions on partial payors.
- Once the contempt is complete, the case is closely monitored to ensure the NCP is complying with contempt conditions
- Revocations are done as soon as CSO determines the NCP is not following through with their requirements; usually 60-90 days from the initial contempt hearing date.

### **New focus placed on Interstate "initiating" cases**

- Completed a cleanup of NCID to determine if the Minnesota case lists an employer the other state does not have.
- Make phone calls on new QW information to see if currently employed so information can be passed on to other state quickly
- Coordinated with states to do direct income withholding if we have employer and there is delay with other state implementing.
- Increased phone and email contact to get case status and prompt action on cases. We have had a huge success in communicating with other states via Microsoft Outlook email.

### **Reports used to prioritize work and form strategies**

- Info Pac
  - Delinquency report no payments and partial payments QW250401 & QW250402.
  - These reports are used monthly to identify cases that need delinquency notices, contempt of court or need an initiating interstate action to another state for enforcement.
- Data Warehouse Report Request
  - 6/10/10 "091 Cases with Arrears and Arrears only"
    - Closed cases with arrears < \$500 and no payments, looked at cases for possibly SHLIF if worker determined that it was not cost effective to pursue collections. Removed PA arrears balances, shifted monthly non-accruals where there were multiple cases for a child (i.e. relative caretaker, foster care) to insure majority of cases were getting payments. Results of this project:
      - Closed 35 cases
      - Waived \$16,550 in NIVE NPA arrears
      - Waived \$184,188 in PA arrears

### **Telephone Project: Enforcement Wright County**

In an attempt to increase collections, Wright County utilized an enforcement tool that is often overlooked; the telephone. Seven child support officers made phone calls to clients on cases where a payment had not been received in the prior month. In some instances a payment had not been received in years. One hundred eighty-five cases fit the criteria for the project.

- In the two months prior to attempting contact with the client, collections on the 185 cases were \$11,785.00
- Two months after the phone calls were attempted collections were \$54,502.00. This is 4 times the amount collected prior to the phone calls!
- Of the 185 cases targeted:
  - Contacts was made with 151 obligors, resulting in collections of \$53, 394.00
  - No contact was made with 34 obligors. Collections on those cases totaled \$1,108.42

### **Unproductive Arrears Project: Case Management Wisconsin**

For FFY 2011 the state office of child support in Wisconsin has chosen to focus on their cases with arrears. Of the five federal performance measures, Cases with a Payment towards Arrears is the area needing the most improvement. The goal of the project is to reduce the number of “unproductive cases” by obtaining a payment on arrears or closing the case by 9/30/11. The definition of an unproductive case is: A case with arrears that did not receive a payment toward arrears in FFY 2010.

Typically any settlement on a debt must be approved by the Wisconsin State Office of Child Support, but for this project, staff was given blanket authority to forgive AFDC arrears. Staff was also encouraged to seek settlements on the debts, but not required to do so.

### **Case Banking: Case Management Morrison County**

Case Banking is reviewing flows and processes in your office to eliminate duplication of effort, minimize staff interruptions and divide work into segments. In addition you can look at staff strengths and weaknesses and “put your aces in their places.”

Jackie Wise, supervisor from Morrison County Child Support has implemented Case Banking and created a Case Management Team. Morrison County has 4 CSOs and 3 SEAs. Jackie created one enforcement caseload (950 cases) and developed 3 mini job descriptions for the SEAs. The 3 positions are Intake, Worklist, and Contempt. There is one telephone line, mailbox, and worker number for the entire caseload. In addition, the 3 SEAs rotate phone duty on a weekly basis, handling all incoming calls for the agency.

**Morrison County SEA “MINI JOB DESCRIPTIONS”:**

<b>Phone Duties</b> <b>(Rotates Weekly)</b>	<b>Duty 1 – Contempt</b> <b>(Rotates Qtly)</b>	<b>Duty 2 – Intake</b> <b>(Rotates Qtly)</b>	<b>Duty 3 - Worklist</b> <b>(Rotates Qtly)</b>
Handle All Incoming Calls. During phone duty weeks, workers should make efforts to respond to calls upon receipt except during the workers’ lunch break. Phones cannot be pounded out to “cover” during your scheduled weeks. Calls from Court must be answered as received so court dates can be given as needed..... This should not seem different to outside customers. Because of this, workers should make every effort to be at their desks during their phone week duty rotations.	Process All worklist messages for “review for enforcement” & complete 21 enforcement actions per month or 65/quarter. This includes a minimum of 47 actual contempt actions & up to 18 F3001 letters.  Schedule court hearings for contempts as needed.	Completes all monthly & quarterly reports. Note: Annual larger reports will be split amongst 3 workers (ex. COLA).	Process all worklist messages received during a month unless noted specifically in the other duties listed here. These must be completed within 30 of receipt. (There are a couple exceptions below) Only messages received during the last week of a qtr. may be left for next worker at rotation time.
Workers will complete work needed that comes as a result of the phone contacts such as info updates in prism, enforcement payment plans, payment breakdowns, etc. unless they are directly related to a legal action or enforcement action a CSO has been brought in to. If so, then refer the call to the CSO assigned for questions related to the particular legal action whenever possible.	Handle all Locate as needed on contempt cases	Process all new intake cases within 5 days of receipt. This includes CRDL automated referrals, NPA applications and foster-care referrals.	Bulk worklist messages the state may send out & we get notification about will be handled across SEA’s jointly. Ex: Newly created locate message or cola repts.
Check phone messages every 1 hour and respond to all calls daily except for those left after 2:00 p.m. which must be returned by Noon of the next day or client given a specific response date, etc.	Send out modification brochures as needed.	Meet with PA clients brought over by financial assistance workers. Must see those who have no prior case and those with cases on an as needed basis.	Case program changes will be processed within 5 days of receipt.
Give out court dates as necessary aside from those needed by the contempt worker.	Review & Respond to Incoming Faxes, E-mail, & Snail-mail or distribute to appropriate worker.	Meet with any new walk-in client who comes to the agency or has a case in another county as must be seen right away and given packet or advised have to talk to worker in appropriate county. No Exceptions!!!	New hire worklist messages will be processed within 48 hours of receipt except on the last 2 days of a quarter. Those must be completed that day.
Generate REAM requests immediately upon receipt & include mod. Brochure.	Send out Doc Gen Documents	Handle all un-insured medical expenses submitted by clients. Only those received during the last week of the quarter may be left for the next worker who will come into intake duties. All uninsured medical expenses must be reviewed within 30 days of receipt and loaded on system if all info included or returned if they are not.	Review daily jail listings and add worklist messages on cases when ncp incarcerated for more than 3 days. Even cases in other counties.
Send out modification brochures as needed.		Handle genetic testing for CSO’s as needed.	FIDM/Levy Hits. Must be processed within the month they are received.
		Handle genetic testing requests from Child Protection as needed. When test results received, distribute them to appropriate CSO’s or Social Workers.	Send out modification brochures as needed.
		Review all new orders assigned to case management duties, including any paternity, establishment, contempt & modifications orders & load any needed worklist messages as a result of the orders. Get insurance info if needed, etc.	Process all SULI/SUCA referrals off of the suspense list.
		Send Out New Case Brochures & Yellow Info Sheets.	
		Send out Modification Brochures as needed.	

# Performance Checklist

***All statements on this checklist are considered to best practices that can positively impact performance. Answer each question either Yes or No to determine the number of strategies your county is already using to improve performance.***

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1. \_\_\_\_\_ Do we have early intervention strategies in place to prevent the accumulation of arrears?
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Are we using driver's license suspension effectively? This includes:
  - enforcing payment plans
  - requiring delinquent payment amounts be paid in full before reinstating
  - reviewing suppressions on a regular basis
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Do we compromise arrears owed to the State to encourage regular support payments?
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Do we review non-paying arrears only cases for possible closure?
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Do we close cases when they meet closure criteria?
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Do we have an efficient case closure process?
7. \_\_\_\_\_ Do we contact NCPs to inform, when appropriate, that they qualify for interest suspension and provide them with information on how to make a request?
8. \_\_\_\_\_ Have we considered different approaches to our child support caseload assignments such as:
  - stratifying cases assignments based on NCP financial or employment circumstances
  - in- state vs. interstate cases
  - paying vs. nonpaying cases
  - cases appropriate for early intervention techniques
9. \_\_\_\_\_ Are we suppressing enforcement remedies appropriately?
10. \_\_\_\_\_ Do we review cases that have enforcement remedies suppressed to ensure the suppressions are still valid?
11. \_\_\_\_\_ Do we use Info Pac reports for targeting ongoing work?
12. \_\_\_\_\_ Do we request Ad Hoc Data Warehouse reports or special clean-up projects?
13. \_\_\_\_\_ Are modifications a priority in our agency?
14. \_\_\_\_\_ Do we utilize the telephone as an enforcement tool?