



CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT

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PA CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT

Pennsylvania's child support enforcement efforts include the use of (1) a combination of management principles and (2) several technological innovations that include:

- data-driven case management tools,
- mobile and online tools,
- a paternity tracking system,
- automated interfaces with government and private entities, and
- an automated case-closure and order-modification system.

QUESTION

Summarize the efforts made by Pennsylvania to collect child support.

SUMMARY

The Pennsylvania Child Support Enforcement Program is governed by both federal and state law. The state receives federal incentive payments based on the program's performance in five areas, including the establishment of paternity and the collection of child support. According to the state's Bureau of Child Support Enforcement (BCSE), which administers the program, the state has met or exceeded the federal standards for the past five years.

The agency credits its success to its use of (1) certain management principles that include the timely implementation of federal requirements and (2) technological innovation. The technological innovations include the use of data-driven case management tools

that focus on case performance and targeted intervention. They also include (1) the use of mobile and online tools such as text message notifications on cell phones, tablets, and other portable computers; (2) a paternity tracking system and various automated interfaces with government and private entities to locate parents, attach wages, and intercept other forms of income; and (3) an automated case-closure and order-modification system to reduce the time staff spend on cases.

PENNSYLVANIA CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM FEDERAL AND STATE LAW

Both federal and state laws govern the establishment and enforcement of child support orders.

Title IV-D of the federal Social Security Act established the Child Support Enforcement (CSE) program (42 USCA § 301 et seq.). The CSE program, funded by both state and federal dollars, provides services related to the establishment, modification, and enforcement of child support orders.

Additionally, the 1998 federal Child Support Performance and Incentive Act (P.L. 105-200), provides federal incentive payments to states based on performance in several areas related to their efforts to enforce child support orders (42 USC § 658a). The five performance measures are:

1. establishment of paternity,
2. establishment of child support orders,
3. collection of current child support,
4. collection of past-due child support, and
5. cost-effectiveness of the CSE program.

Pennsylvania law requires the Department of Public Welfare (DPW) to develop and implement a federally approved state plan for child support enforcement in compliance with Title IV-D of the Social Security Act (23 PA.CON.S. STAT. ANN. § 4372).

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

The Pennsylvania Child Support Enforcement Program (also called the IV-D program) is administered by the BCSE, which is within the DPW. BCSE works with the County Courts of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations Sections (DRS) to implement the program.

According to BCSE, Pennsylvania's program has met or exceeded all five federal performance measures over the past five years ([Child Support Report Vol. 35 No. 4 April 2013](#)).

TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS IN CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT

According to BCSE, the Pennsylvania Child Support Enforcement Program has developed highly automated systems that give DRS staff tools that (1) expedite case processing, (2) encourage a focus on difficult-to-collect cases, and (3) target cases based on the federal performance measures. These innovations include:

1. data-driven case management tools,
2. mobile and online tools,
3. a paternity tracking system,
4. automated interfaces, and
5. an automated case closure and order modification computer system.

Data-Driven Case Management Tools

Performance Improvement Module (PIM). DRS staff get case-specific data from a case management tool, the Performance Improvement Module (PIM). PIM helps the staff to prioritize cases for immediate action based on payment profile, performance metrics, or other criteria.

The DRS Directors' Dashboard. DRS Directors' Dashboard, a component of PIM, is another case management tool. It allows supervisors and managers to track employee case-management activities.

Predictive Analytics. DRS staff develop early intervention strategies by using data to predict the probability that obligors (i.e. those responsible for paying child support) will meet their monthly support obligation. For example, the data can be used to identify obligors who are not making payments. These cases are then targeted for intervention.

Self-Assessment Reports. DRS managers use self-assessment reports, developed from data warehouse statistics, as a case management tool. These reports measure case performance and are available in real-time. DRS staff give priority to cases identified as not meeting one of the federal standards.

Mobile and Online Tools

The PA Child Support Website. The program uses a dedicated [website](#) that allows for interactive information sharing. The website is used to (1) issue daily e-mail reminders and (2) provide updated case information to clients and obligors. It also allows clients to view payment history and research child support information.

Online Questionnaire. An [online questionnaire](#), available on the website, allows those who receive or pay child support to submit information to DRS as the first step in opening a new case.

Cell Phones, Tablets, and Other Portable Computers. The Pennsylvania Child Support Enforcement Program incorporates tools that customers use most frequently, such as cell phones, tablets, and portable computers. According to BCSE, Pennsylvania is launching a mass texting program to replace a more expensive voice response system ([Child Support Report Vol. 35 No. 4 April 2013](#)). Text messages will be used to provide case information to clients and remind them of appointments. Obligor will be notified of things such as early intervention actions.

Paternity Tracking System

The Pennsylvania Child Support Enforcement Program uses a paternity tracking system that stores in-state and out-of-state paternity acknowledgements. This helps DRS, other government agencies, and hospitals in filing and tracking paternity. According to BCSE, regular outreach to hospitals helps the state to achieve the paternity establishment standards set by federal law ([Child Support Report Vol. 35 No. 4 April 2013](#)).

Automated Interfaces

Pennsylvania uses automated interfaces with government and private-sector entities to locate parents, attach wages, and intercept other income. The main interfaces used are:

1. Federal Parent Locator Service,
2. Federal Case Registry,
3. Pennsylvania's Department of Labor and Industry (for unemployment claims and state new hire information),
4. Child Support Lien Network (CSLN),
5. National Directory of New Hires, and
6. The Work Number (TALX) – an employment verification database.

According to BCSE, the Office of Child Support Enforcement Electronic Income Withholding Orders program (OCSE e-IWO program) has 1,379 active employers accepting electronic income withholding orders from Pennsylvania as of April 2013 ([Child Support Report Vol. 35 No. 4 April 2013](#)).

Pennsylvania Child Support Enforcement System (PACSES)

PACSES is a statewide computer system that DRS uses to monitor child support payments and enforce support orders. The system maintains case, personal, and payment information.

Automated Case Closure and Order Modification. PACSES has an automated case closure and order modification component (ACC/OM). ACC/OM improves case management by automatically identifying cases that meet federal case-closure standards or state order-modification requirements. Cases identified through this process are flagged for either automated closure or manual review. This allows cases eligible for closure or modification to get immediate attention.

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