

# *DCCSA*

## *Dane County Child Support Agency*

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### **Overview of the Child Support Program: An Intergovernmental Partnership Ensuring Financial Support and Parental Involvement**

Created by Congress in 1975, the child support program ensures that children in single-parent households receive a reliable source of private financial and medical support. ***Today, it supports one-fourth of the nation's children (over 16 million) and 27,367 in Dane County (25.3%) - children from all socioeconomic backgrounds.*** The program increases family self-sufficiency, reduces child poverty, and encourages both mothers and fathers to be involved and committed to their children.

The program's **core functions** are:

- Locating absent parents
- Establishing paternity (Fathers have no legal rights until paternity is established) – 270,000 in WI - 20,336 in Dane County in FFY 2014
- Establishing child support and health insurance orders – 27,000 cases in Dane County
- Collecting and distributing child support – FFY 2014 \$636 million in WI - \$51 million in Dane County

### **The Need Remains High!**

Data compiled by the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement reveals that for poor families that receive support it makes up 40% of household income, and 63% for deeply poor families.

70% of poor children in Wisconsin live with a single parent. (NCCP)

20% of all earnings in the US are unreported/underground. (Cebula, Feige)

### **Child Support Helps Families More than Just Financially**

Fathers who begin paying for their child(ren) then see them more frequently and have more positive interactions. (Hofferth, Forry & Peters)

Children who receive child support have higher GPAs and scholastic achievement. (Argys, et. al.)

Even a modest increase in child support collections for poor families creates a significant reduction on substantiated maltreatment in the Child Protective Services (CPS) system. (Cancian, Meyer)

A similar small increase in child support reduces cohabitation with men who are not the child's father and increases the mother's financial independence. (Cancian, Meyer)

Child support brought more children from below, to above, the poverty line than all social insurance programs (SS, UC, WC, and vets benefits) and welfare programs (AFDC/TANF, SSI & other) combined. (Meyer & Hu)

DCCSA staff use a variety of methods and tools to carry out the above core functions to support children and their families. Using administrative and judicial processes, we locate employers and work with them to withhold from wages. In federal fiscal year (FFY) 2014, 72% of statewide WI collections came from withheld wages.

## Private Health Insurance

In Wisconsin, child support agencies request that the court order the parents to provide health insurance for their child if it is/becomes available through their employment at a reasonable cost.

- Due to this, 34,848 Badgercare eligible IV-D children in WI have private insurance – 1,957 in Dane County.
- Even where families have both private insurance and Badgercare, subrogated payments from the private health insurance carriers result in substantial reimbursements to the Medicaid program, allowing Badgercare to cover more families.

## Child Support Does More Than Collect Dollars

During the economic recession, DCCSA worked hard with non-custodial parents to find and maintain work, and to modify support orders when necessary so that parents do not fall hopelessly behind in payments. Agencies try to build a culture of voluntary compliance, so that parents support their children voluntarily.

Child support programs have developed targeted, specific initiatives to work with special populations, including incarcerated parents (see initiatives below).

## Statutory Guidance

Under Wisconsin law, failure to pay child support for a period of 120 days or more is a Class I felony, punishable by 3 ½ years in prison, for each occurrence. However, use of this provision can have detrimental repercussions; therefore DCCSA very rarely utilizes this approach - 1 in CY 2014.

For cases that fall into arrears, Wisconsin law mandates that the child support agency enforce the payment order including the use of contempt proceedings. DCCSA utilizes the contempt process rather than criminal enforcement for numerous reasons, including the ability to avoid any penalties by coming into compliance with court orders on a “this point forward” basis, contempt provisions can be tailored to the individual circumstances, there is no criminal record created, and there is no future compliance required with Probation and Parole and its accompanying restrictions.

## Children First

Dane's County's Children First program is funded by the Child Support program and is part of Employment and Training here in Dane County. This program is only available to people with a child support obligation and promotes self sufficiency and responsible parenting. The program helps participants obtain jobs, get signed up for health insurance, works with drivers license reinstatement projects such as the YWCA, provides bus tickets/transportation assistance, arranges unpaid work experience, makes referrals to get vocational rehab services if qualified, offers parenting/life skills including fatherhood and/or peer support services, remedial education, and makes referrals related to AODA and/or mental health services when appropriate.

## DCCSA Initiatives

Bridges Out of Poverty  
Prison/Jail Outreach  
Contempt Process  
Guidelines Review  
GED Program

SPD Poverty Simulation Training  
Community Access Day  
Jobs Programs  
FACE Program

Prison Hearings/Process  
Due Diligence Process  
Negotiated Purges  
What's the Rush