



Dane County Corporation Counsel – Child Support Agency

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 14.7 million) and 30,363 in Dane County (20.7%) - 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) – 280,889 in WI - 20,619 in Dane County in FFY 2018
- Establishing child support and health insurance orders – 27,894 cases in Dane County
- Collecting and distributing child support –\$937 million in WI - \$80 million in Dane County FFY 2018

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.

56% of poor children in Wisconsin live with a single parent. (NCCP, 11/2018)

Approximately 20% of all earnings in the US are unreported/underground. (Cebula, Feige, 4/2012)

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) 2018, 73% 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 (10% of their gross income).

- Out of our 27,894 cases, Dane County has 17,664 court orders requiring parents carry private health insurance, with 6,409 that actually do provide that private health insurance.
- 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.
 - o In Dane County child support cases, 11,610 children are eligible for Badgercare, and 2,069 are listed as having access to private health insurance.

Child Support Does More than Collect Dollars

Recently, employment and training has become a major federal and state initiative. In 2019, the State created four W2 Child Support Liaison positions stationed around Wisconsin to help Child Support Agencies provide people access to all state and local employment and training resources. DCCSA has also partnered with multiple local groups to give participants better access to the agency and its resources, and work to determine if participants should be going back to court when orders need to be reviewed and modified. It is DCCSA's belief that the agency should try to build a culture of voluntary compliance, so that parents support their children voluntarily.

Child support programs have also developed targeted, specific initiatives to work with special populations. DCCSA has in particular created a specialized incarcerated court calendar in accordance with the Federal Final Rule, as well as a court calendar specific to families in the foster care system.

Statutory Guidance

For cases that fall into arrears, Wisconsin law and federal regulations mandates that the Child Support Agency enforce the payment order. 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 – 0 in the last 5 years. 16 total in the last 20 years.

Instead, DCCSA utilizes the contempt process 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 County's Children First program is funded by the Child Support program and is part of Employment and Training Association located at the Dane County Job Center. 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 and 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 receive 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 Partners and Initiatives

Partners: Dane County Job Center, W2 Child Support Liaisons, Lift Dane, Urban League, DAIS, Thompson Correctional, Oak Hill Correctional, UW Law School Economic Justice Institute

Initiatives: Prison Hearings/Process, Prison/Jail Outreach, Jobs Programs with Partners, Driver's License suspension policy, Birth Cost recovery policy, State Guideline Review, Specialized foster care court calendar, Administrative Paternity, Civil Rights/Implicit Bias Training

2018 CHILD SUPPORT: MORE MONEY FOR FAMILIES

COLLECTIONS

75%



of child support is collected by income withholding from an employee's paycheck

25% other sources

\$32.3 billion



in child support collected by state and tribal child support programs in FY2018

96%



went to families

4% reimbursed public assistance dollars

CASELOAD

14.7 million children served by the child support program in 2018

Child support in comparison to other programs*

Children served (millions)

Medicaid	36.3
SNAP/FS	19.2
Child Support	14.7
WIC	3.5
Social Security	2.9
TANF	1.8
Child Care Development Fund	1.3
Supplemental Security Income	1.2

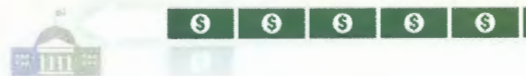
1 in 5 children
in the U.S.

Child support accounts for about half the average income of low-income parents who receive it, lifting nearly 3/4 million people out of poverty in 2017†

COST-EFFECTIVENESS

One of the most cost-effective government programs

\$5.14 collected by the child support program for every \$1.00 spent



Source: [Office of Child Support Enforcement](#)

* Combined CHIP Enrollment Total Report and Form CMS-64.EC, 2019; Characteristics of SNAP Households, FY 2017; WIC Program Monthly Data-State Level Participation, FY 2018; Annual Statistical Supplement, 2018; TANF: Total Number of Child Recipients, FY 2018; CCDF Preliminary Data Table 1, 2017; SSI Annual Statistical Report, 2017.

† Bureau of Census: Current Population Reports P60-261 (Appendix Table 5) and P60-265 (Appendix Table A-7).



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES
Office of Child Support Enforcement

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