

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES

I. DEPARTMENT MANDATE MISSION

A. MANDATE

Established by legislative authority, the Child Support Enforcement Program is authorized under Title IV-D of the Social Security Act to provide services assisting parents to meet their mutual obligation to support their children. Established in 1975, the program is a joint Federal, State and local partnership involving separate state systems, each with its own unique laws and procedures.

In California, child support reform legislation signed in 1999 by Governor Davis created the Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) in 2000. The new department was directed to provide leadership and oversight to develop a statewide automation system, while ensuring uniformity of service for families throughout the State. Every county has a local child support agency providing child support services on behalf of the State of California. The Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) is the Contra Costa County agency responsible for providing child support services and enforcement.

Services to Contra Costa County residents include:

- Establishing paternity
- Locating parents
- Establishing court orders for paternity, child, and medical support
- Enforcing court orders for child, family, and medical support
- Collecting and distributing support payments
- Maintaining accounts of payments paid and payments due
- Modifying court orders when appropriate

B. OUR PURPOSE

We listen to, respect and support our customers so that children can receive the emotional and financial support they need to thrive.

II. MAJOR PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

Contra Costa County's Department of Child Support Services is committed to delivering outstanding service using state of the art technology, modern communications methods, and streamlined business processes. Each functional area of the department is composed of several teams of child support professionals that interface to deliver seamless customer service. Our annual budget for SFY 2021-2022 is \$19,163,643 and we currently have 135 FTEs.

III. ACCOMPLISHMENTS

A. DEPARTMENT EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS

Caseload 24,768
Total Collections \$78,292,423

While the department's total distributed collections of \$78,292,423 represents a 3.9% decrease from the prior year, we continue to be above the statewide average in collections on current support by 6%.

The department continues to focus on establishing child support orders that are fair, accurate, and consistent with a parent's ability to pay, the overall percentage of cases with support orders was 95.6%, a 0.9% increase over last year. Contra Costa County is 2.8% greater than the statewide average for cases with a child support order.

The Department continued to look for ways to streamline business processes and improve efficiency and effectiveness by:

- Developing an automated Lien Demand Portal to streamline what had been a highly manual and physical document-driven process to receive and respond to Title Company pay off requests. The new portal, designed in partnership with Intresys, allows Title Companies to register online, and submit secure, digital requests to resolve real property liens. This efficiency has not only saved the department time and improved communication with our Title Company partners, it is scalable and being adopted by other local child support agencies throughout the state. Liens processed through the Fiscal team's demand desk resulted in collections of \$930,097, an increase of 7.7% over the prior year.
- Designing and building a Virtual Information Center, also known as VIC, to provide answers to our customers' frequently asked questions in an accessible, interactive and sustainable way, thereby enabling our staff more time to focus on complex and demanding tasks.
- Handling an estimated 2,836 cases in court. The department's continued efforts to contact parties to discuss reaching an agreement prior to going to court resulted in 480 stipulated agreements departmentwide. 6.17% of all cases scheduled for court reached a stipulation, despite court being held on Zoom. Departmentwide, 20% of all new orders were stipulated agreements.
- Receiving, routing, and delivering 67,197 pieces of mail within 24 hours of receipt. The Document Processing Team (DPT) staff also recorded 415 real property liens and generated 2,529 Releases of Liens.

- Enabling the enforcement of orders through the Smith-Ostler program on cases where child and/or spousal support orders include a base support amount plus additional support from bonuses, commissions and income earned over a set amount. This program had tremendous success with collections of \$5,530,486, representing a 10.3% increase over last year.
- Continuing the Qualified Domestic Relations Order (QDRO) program to collect past due child support from pensions and 401k plans. This collection method had an overall collection total of \$299,449.

B. SYSTEMS SUPPORT TEAM

- Implemented Video Chat
- Deployed PCs for virtual lobby customer access
- Added Virtual Information Center (VIC) Chatbot to Contra Costa County DCSS website
- Updated Lobby Central to allow calendar events to be created when appointments are made
- Moved from Internet Explorer to Edge as default browser
- Deployed new Storage Area Network (SAN) - Dell EMC SCv3020 to replace legacy Dell EqualLogic SAN
- Transitioned Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) traffic isolation from Virtual Private Network (AVPN) to dedicated Virtual Local Area Network (VLAN) for more bandwidth and cost savings
- Retired Skype
- Deployed New Konica Minolta Multi-functional Devices (MFD)
- Implemented Paper-Cut print software
- Upgraded Virtual Machine (VM) host servers from Windows Server 2012 to Windows Server 2019
- Installed new Windows 2016 print server
- Split the Work Assignment and Tracking Tool (WATT) database to enhance the speed of the application
- Defined information system policy for remote work
- Provided remote work peripheral equipment to all staff
- Modified the network to accommodate CSE migration to Azure
- Migrated California DMV electronic Employer Pull Notice (EPN) integration system from File Generation System (FGS) software to web based EPN portal
- Upgraded court PCs to 7780 OptiPlex All-in-One PCs and 7050 SSD PCs
- Upgraded Lobby PCs to 7780 OptiPlex All-in-One PCs

C. RECOGNITION

Contra Costa County DCSS was honored to receive the prestigious Western Intergovernmental Child Support Engagement Council (WICSEC) Standing Ovation Award in September 2021. As the global COVID-19 pandemic forced California into a shutdown in March 2020, Contra Costa County quickly developed and implemented a Pandemic

Response Plan to ensure that customers continued to receive services without interruption. The plan included updated processes for communication, an emergency remote work policy, home office set-up for employees, safety protocols and measures, new workflows, and maintaining an educated and connected workforce. All these components allowed Contra Costa County DCSS to remain fully operational during unprecedented times and allowed the department to continue to provide essential services to the families we serve.

Jennifer Olson, a Contra Costa County Child Support Specialist Supervisor, received this year's esteemed Innovation in Child Support Award from the California Child Support Directors Association (CSDA). This award recognizes outstanding examples of creative problem solving which improve the delivery of child support services. Previously our department's process to receive demand requests from title companies had inefficiencies and was highly manual. Jennifer recognized an opportunity to streamline our processes and improve delivery of services. With Jennifer's innovative thinking, the dedication of her project team, and partnership with Intresys, her vision for a secure, easy to use, and efficient "Title Company Demand Portal" was brought to fruition.

IV. CHALLENGES

A. INTERNAL TO DEPARTMENT

The department will be focusing efforts to achieve locally established goals under the California Department of Child Support Services strategic plan goals:

- Facilitate consistent support for children
- Strengthen customer engagement
- Enhance program performance
- Build collaborative partnerships to benefit families
- Foster innovation and improve service delivery

FFY 2020-2021 PRIORITY RESULTS

The Department achieved its locally established goals under the state strategic plan goals:

- Contra Costa continues to be above the statewide average in Collections on Current Support and Arrears, Orders Established and Cost Effectiveness—6%, 3.1%, 2.8% and 55.4% above the statewide average in each respective category.
- Total distributed collections reached \$78,292,423. This is the 2nd highest annual collection figure in the department's history and represents an 8.2% increase in collections over FFY 2018-2019. While FFY 2019-2020 collections exceed FFY 2020-2021, cost effectiveness is 5.7% or \$.23 higher for FFY 2020-2021.
- With a focus on establishing child support orders that are fair, accurate, and consistent with a parent's ability to pay, the overall percentage of cases with

support orders was 95.6%. This represents a .9% increase over the prior year. The department increased its total paternities and orders established by 58% and 60% respectively, overcoming deficits caused by court closures during the height of the pandemic in 2020.

- The department exceeded its performance over last year in collections on current support, order establishment and cost effectiveness.

The Department achieved state strategic plan goals through:

- Development, implementation and refinement of new customer service resources and tools to enhance our customers' experience when interacting with the department, including:
 - The Response to Change of Circumstance model, which simplifies the process of modifying court orders
 - The Virtual Court Zoom process, which enables customers to attend court safely and conveniently from remote locations
 - The Lobby Central Review, a revamp of the department's lobby check-in tool to support the post-pandemic, lobby re-opening project
 - Virtual Interviews, which allow customers to meet with their caseworkers remotely
 - And the launch of VIC, our Live Chat tool, to support customer education about child support services.
- Our marketing committee which has worked to secure new advertising contracts and increase the department's presence in the community to reach a wider base of potential customers who will benefit from child support services.

These efforts resulted in families receiving support in a timelier manner and had a meaningful impact on our local community.

FFY 2021-2022 PRIORITIES

Over FFY 2020-2021, the department continued its innovative approach to goal-achievement through staff led projects. In the past, the Management Team was solely responsible for planning strategies and tactics for success. Over the last three years, staff has had the opportunity to participate in project work groups to see their own ideas come to fruition, resulting in an unprecedented level of investment in collective goals and nearly forty projects completed to date.

- Project priorities for FFY 2021-2022 include:
 - Departmental Performance Management Model and Plan
Development of a Departmental Performance Management model to lay the foundation for defining expected outcomes, setting goals, planning

strategies and tactics, measuring results, communicating feedback, and implementing process improvement. Teams will leverage the Departmental Performance Management Model to make and implement their own success plans and strategies in alignment with the overarching departmental goals.

- Enforcement Toolbox
Leveraging the department's Enforcement Model as a guide, a toolbox for child support enforcement is being developed. Its purpose is to promote a clear understanding of each enforcement tool available to child support professionals, their suitability relative to varied situations and the desired outcomes from their application so that caseworkers will have the resources to achieve the best-case outcome.
- Service Delivery Option Campaigns
Promotion of customer service options, including Virtual Chat, Chatbot and text. Marketing tactics will include mass text, email and social media campaigns to promote public awareness of these new customer service avenues and reduce the complexity of the customer experience.
- Next-Gen Child Support Services
Development of a model to implement the next generation of service delivery focused upon whole family well being. The department will leverage the model to improve the outcomes for families by offering wrap-around services utilizing government and community partners. The model will include expanded program awareness and accessibility, as well as wrap-around services utilizing government and community partners.
- Poverty Reduction Projects
Focusing efforts on several poverty reduction projects:

Response to Change in Circumstance: This model simplifies the process of modifying an order when a parent's circumstances have changed. Staff have been trained on the model and the new process has been implemented. Over the next year, as unemployment benefits expire and many in our community face difficult economic times, the department will measure outcomes and adjust to improve the process.

FACT II: DCSS will improve the communication and referral process to the Fathers Advancing Community Together for unemployed and under-employed participants in the child support caseload.

Debt Reduction: California DCSS has simplified the process by which parents with past-due child support payments can apply to reduce their debt owed to the government for time periods their children received public

assistance. The revamped program is known as the Debt Reduction Program. The department will promote awareness of the program to customers and caseworkers to increase total applications and approval rates.

B. INTERNAL TO THE COUNTY

The Department will focus on filling vacancies to achieve the staffing levels reached before FFY 2019/2020 budget cuts made it necessary to reduce staffing. The Department is also prioritizing outreach to ensure that all potential customers are aware of the services we offer.

V. RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

The Department strives to achieve racial equity and social justice among the workforce to better serve children and families of Contra Costa County. Goals for 2022-2023 will be:

A. Creation of a Committee, Policy and Toolkit

The Department created a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee that has been charged with creating a policy while identifying gaps and barriers that need to be addressed and overcome.

B. Training

In addition to the training of the policy, the Department will ensure all staff continue to educate themselves on social injustice.

C. Partnerships

The Department recognizes that economic barriers impede a parent's ability to consistently pay child support. Therefore, we emphasize partnerships with agencies assisting families to achieve financial independence. While the COVID-19 Pandemic has impacted the ability to meet in person and derailed some meeting and outreach opportunities, the Department has continued to build relationships through remote participation in and collaboration with the following outreach events and partners:

Bay Area Rescue Mission, BARCS Employer Workshop, CCC Homeless Court, East County WIN Meetings, East Bay Work's America's Job Center/Workforce Development Board, PACT, the local parole agency and Rubicon.

- The Department has given emphasis to strengthening relationships with the below partners:
 - PACT or Parole and Community Team: DCSS maintained an active presence at PACT meetings as they were held and continued to work on

strengthening its partnership within the law enforcement community. The department renewed its commitment to Fathers Advancing Communities Together (FACT) and will refer participants from our caseload to the next cycle of the program. Additionally, DCSS will further support FACT by providing child support case data to assist Urban Institute in gauging the efficacy of the program in improving economic and life outcomes for participants.

- Rubicon: Staff work with participants to reduce child support barriers that may prevent them from succeeding in the program.
- Contra Costa Homeless Court: Staff attend court monthly to assist homeless customers with child support issues. During the pandemic, these sessions have continued online.

VI. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The federal department of child support, the Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) has established performance measures for each state in the country. Each state then establishes goals for each individual county. The table below reflects Contra Costa’s actual performance over five years and below that, are charts showing a side-by-side comparison of Contra Costa’s performance with that of the State of California.

Contra Costa County	FFY 2017	FFY 2018	FFY 2019	FFY 2020	FFY 2021
Cases with Support Orders Established	95.5%	95.4%	96.3%	94.7%	95.6%
Collections of Current Support Due	71.8%	72.5%	73.4%	72.2%	72.5%
Collections on Cases with Arrears	70.7%	70.6%	70.7%	81.8%	77.6%
Cost Effectiveness	\$3.82	\$3.79	\$3.88	\$4.04	\$4.26
Paternity Establishment	102.1%	102.0%	107.0%	101.0%	100%



