

State Performance in Child Support Collections

by Mary Brandenberger

Child support noncompliance can have serious implications for families, children, and taxpayers (Beron, 1988). The success of state agencies in establishing child support cases and collecting monies owed varies across the United States. Previous studies suggest that noncustodial parents' willingness to pay child support and state child support guidelines and enforcement efforts relate to child support awards and compliance. Additional research theorizes that legislative policies can affect the type of outcome, as well as the amount of child support awards. This study addresses the following research question: how do out-of-wedlock births, paternity establishment, and volume of interstate cases affect child support collections? Data sources include reports released by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the National Center for Health Statistics, and the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, U.S. Census Bureau. The total amount of child support collections in dollars is compared to the number of out-of-wedlock births, percentage of paternity establishments, and number of interstate cases by state. The multivariate analysis indicates the volume of interstate cases and out-of-wedlock births may have little effect on child support collections. However, all statistical analyses show a positive relationship between collections and paternity establishment. Further research is needed to determine the influence of other variables such as administrative authority regulations, tribal caseloads, enforcement tactics, and demographics.

Child support noncompliance can have serious implications for families, children, and taxpayers (Beron, 1988). In addition, child support collections can be vital to the well-being and self-sufficiency of children and families. In an effort to minimize negative outcomes of such, states collect child support payments through various methods including income withholding, unemployment compensation interception, and state or federal income tax refund offsets. Also, state agencies assist in establishing paternity and support obligations and enforcement. The Child Support Enforcement Program mandates that all states and territories run a child support enforcement program, with the assistance of prosecuting attorneys, district attorneys, law enforcement agencies, and family or domestic relations courts. Most importantly, the act requires families seeking government child support services to apply directly through their state, local, or tribal agency.

Public Law 105-200, the Child Support Performance and Incentive Act of 1998, established a new incentive system intended to be cost and budget neutral. The structure is based on five performance measures, which include paternity establishment percentage, support order establishment percentage, current collections performance level, arrears collection performance level, and cost effectiveness. The measures were put in place to create strong incentives for states to operate efficient and effective programs ("Child Support Enforcement," 2004).

The success of state agencies in establishing child support cases and collecting monies owed varies across the United States. As such, the following research questions surfaces: how do out-of-wedlock births, paternity establishment, and volume of interstate cases affect child support collections? Other variables that may influence child support collections include state administrative authority regulations, tribal caseloads, enforcement tactics, and demographics.

Laura M. Argys and H. Elizabeth Peters (2003) studied

the effect of legislation and parental responsibility as it relates to child-support collections. The authors theorize that noncustodial parents' willingness to pay child support and state child support guidelines and enforcement efforts relate to child support awards and compliance. Argys and Peters established a theoretical model that identifies three types of outcomes as related to parental involvement and state enforcement: cooperative and self-enforcing, noncooperative and self-enforcing, and noncooperative and state-enforced. They conclude that legislative policies can affect the type of outcome, as well as the amount of child support awards. Further, the findings indicate that guidelines and increased enforcement can increase payments when awards are court-ordered. Conversely, the same guidelines and increased enforcement may not increase and could even reduce child expenditures when the payment would have otherwise been received voluntarily. Hence, child support awards must take into consideration both willingness to pay and state guidelines and enforcement efforts already in place (Argys & Peters, 2003).

Causal Model

The dependent measure, or construct of interest, is the dollar amount of child support collections. The question identifies explanatory variables of out-of-wedlock births, paternity establishment, and interstate cases. Other variables that may surface include state administrative authority regulations, tribal caseloads, enforcement tactics, and demographics. Outcomes of child support collections will be compared by state. The below causal model outlines this scenario:

Causal Model: Child support collections

Out-of-wedlock births →

Paternity establishment → Child support collections

Interstate cases →

This causal model uses states as the unit of analysis. It is expected that out-of-wedlock births, paternity establishment,

and interstate cases would determine the outcome of child support collections. Thus, the amount of child support collections represents the dependent measure, and out-of-wedlock births, administrative authority regulations, and interstate cases are key independent measures. That is, states with higher out-of-wedlock births, on average, are more likely to have lower child support collections than states with lower out-of-wedlock births. States with more cases in which paternity of the child is established take in more money in child support collections. States with a higher number of interstate cases are more likely to have a lesser amount of child support collections in dollars than states with fewer interstate cases.

In addition to the direct effects of most constructs of child support collections, other relationships among the variables exist. Anne C. Case, I-fen Lin, and Sara S. McLanahan (2003) suggest that political, demographic, and economic forces influence child support payments. Specifically, the authors contend that inflation, the shift to unilateral divorce, changes in marital-status composition, changes in men's and women's earnings, and ineffective child-support laws factor into the stagnation of child support payments over a thirty-year period. Such conclusions were drawn from data taken from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) between 1968 and 1997. The longitudinal study isolated 5,000 U.S. households in 1968 and followed the households and their children over 30 years (Case, Lin & McLanahan, 2003).

The research methods utilized through use of PSID data had both advantages and disadvantages for studying child-support trends. The PSID, unlike any other national survey, was able to provide annual information on child-support payments over an extended period of time, dating back to the 1960's. This information was crucial in determining the effects of inflation, divorce laws, and shifts in fertility. However, the study also presented limitations. One disadvantage was the absence of information indicating whether a mother ever actually obtained a child-support award or the amount of the award. The dependent variables in the analysis were whether the mother received any child support and the amount of child support received. Explanatory variables include mothers' marital status, age, education, race, and the number of minor children in the household (Case et. al., 2003).

Through regression analyses, Case, Lin, and McLanahan discovered that marital status, number of children, and education affect the amount of child support receipts. Mothers who have never been married received 183 fewer dollars of child support than did mothers who had been married. An increase in mothers' education positively affected child-support receipts for both mothers who had been married and mothers who had not. The study also demonstrated that states' adoption of unilateral divorce legislation has a negative, statistically significant effect on child-support receipt, and changes in demographics variables, such as marital status and fertility, had a negative effect. Further limitations were

present in these analyses. The data did not take remarried women who are eligible for child support into account. Also, the analysis did not include Hispanics who immigrated to the United States after 1968. The authors conclude that genetic testing, legislative guidelines, and universal wage withholding are the most important determinants of child-support payments (Case et. al., 2003).

Jessica Pearson and Esther Ann Griswold (2000) argue that policymakers need to address this issue through incentive regulations. Research indicated that states are testing or employing an array of policies and practices aimed at the growth and impact of arrears payments. Pearson and Griswold advocate that child support workers should approach the treatment of various types of obligors in different ways. To do so, more research must be done to determine what strategies of recouping monies owed works best (Pearson & Griswold, 2000). Roger Muns (2004) adds to this theory, stressing the need for states to work together when dealing with intrastate cases. Collaborating on cases that transcend state and county lines could have great impact on child support collections. Muns suggests that the interaction between child support workers across state lines has great impact on the success of collections (Muns, 2004).

Operationalization and Measurement

The outcome of child support collections is measured in dollars. It is also necessary to measure and evaluate the number of out-of-wedlock births, paternity establishments, and interstate cases by state. The number of unmarried women, ages 15 to 44, with a birth determines out-of-wedlock births. The paternity establishment percentage is calculated by dividing the number of minor children in the state born out-of-wedlock with paternity established or acknowledged during the fiscal years by the number of children born out-of-wedlock during the preceding fiscal year. Interstate child support cases are composed of cases in which a child support order has been established, but the parent or child in the case lives in a state outside the state in which the order originated. The Office of Child Support Enforcement defines a child support case as a case in which a parent who is currently or eventually obligated under law to support a child or children.

Data Collection

Data sources for this research project include a variety of federal reports. These reports include the Office of Child Support Enforcement Preliminary Data Report released by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2004), the Births: Final Data for 2003 report released as part of the National Vital Statistics Reports by the National Center for Health Statistics (2005), and the Indicators of Marriage and Fertility in the United States from the American Commu-

nity Survey: 2000 to 2003 released by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, U.S. Census Bureau (2005).

The Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) Preliminary Data Report details financial and statistical data as provided through reports submitted by states on a quarterly basis. The Child Support Performance and Incentive Act of 1998 requires states to maintain reliable data and federal auditors review the data annually. The act mandates families seeking government child support services to apply directly through their state, local, or tribal agency. States are required to report on and monitor the collection of data as it relates to total number of child support cases, child support collections, established child support orders, interstate caseloads, and paternity establishment cases (“Child Support Enforcement,” 2006).

Data from the U.S. National Center for Health Statistics, Vital Statistics of the United States, and National Vital Statistics Reports (NVSR) indicate the number and percentage of births to unmarried women in the United States. The report is released annually by the Center for Disease Control National Center for Health Statistics. The U.S. National Center for Health Statistics compiles data as provided through contracts between vital registration systems operated throughout various jurisdictions of the United States, which are comprised of 50 states, two cities, and five territories. The Births: Final Data for 2003 report presents 2003 data on births in the United States according to a wide variety of characteristics. In 2003, descriptive tabulations were based on data reported on the birth certificates of 4.09 million births that occurred that year. The report details demographic and health characteristics of births, as well as state-based data (Martin, Hamilton, Sutton, Ventura, Menacker, & Munson, 2005).

Data from the National Vital Statistics Report (2005) is based on 100 percent of the birth certificates registered in all states and the District of Columbia. More than 99 percent of births occurring in the United States are registered. Births to unmarried women are based on several methods that determine marital status. Birth certificates in 45 states and the District of Columbia include information about the mother’s marital status. In 1997, California and Nevada began determining the marital status of women giving birth as determined in the birth registration process. In 1998, Connecticut added a question to the State’s birth certificate that indicates the mother’s marital status. Michigan and New York use inferential procedures to compile birth statistics by marital status. In doing so, a birth is assumed to be that of an unmarried woman if a paternity acknowledgement was received or the father’s name is missing. In the last several years, many states have extended efforts to identify fathers when the parents are unmarried, in an effort to enforce child support obligations. In 2003, the mother’s marital status went unreported in 0.04 percent of birth records from 48 states and the District of Columbia (Martin et al., 2005).

Out-of-wedlock births are often connected to paternity establishment. Before a child support order can be created, paternity of the child must be determined. According to the Office of Child Support Enforcement, paternity establishment involves the legal establishment of fatherhood for a child (2006). The number and percentage of paternity establishment cases by state can be determined as reported in the Child Support Enforcement, FY 2003 Preliminary Report (2004).

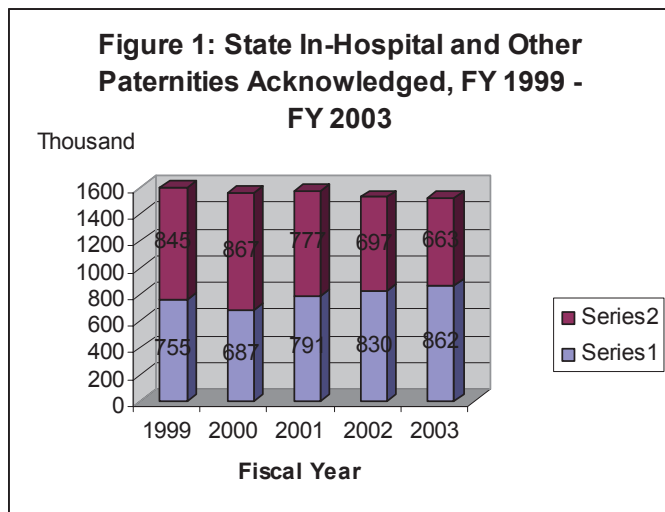
The third independent measure is that of interstate cases. The Office of Child Support Enforcement, under the Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families initiated the National Interstate Case Reconciliation Project Business Case in 2003. The project requires research into interstate child support cases. Interstate child support cases present many problems for enforcement authorities. Incorrect or missing cases, cases which are open in one state and closed in another state, and cases that are presumed to be interstate by one state but of which the other state has no record are a few of the common problems encountered by child support enforcement agencies. Such conditions adversely affect the ability of states to efficiently manage interstate caseloads. As such, there may be a direct correlation to the amount of child support collections and the number of interstate cases by state. The volume of interstate cases by state can be defined by either the number of interstate caseloads or as the number of those cases forwarded to or received from other states, as relative to the state’s overall caseload.

Data Analysis

The total amount of child support collections in dollars is compared to the number of out-of-wedlock births, percentage of paternity establishments, and number of interstate cases by state. This cross-sectional study will be based on data reported for federal fiscal year 2003. In addition, the multivariate analysis will simultaneously examine the relationships among variables of out-of-wedlock births, paternity establishments, and intrastate cases by state as they relate to child support collections. Cross-tabulation and subgroup analyses make it possible to decipher the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

The Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) Preliminary Data Report (2004) shows that more than \$21.2 billion dollars in child support payments were collected nationwide in federal fiscal year 2003. This marks a 5.2 percent increase in collections from the previous fiscal year. Of the money collected, almost \$19 billion dollars went to families, an increase of 6 percent from the previous year. In addition, more than 1.5 million paternities were established and acknowledged (see Figure 1) and 1.2 million new child support orders were established. Series 1 in Figure 1 represents hospital paternity establishments, and Series 2 represents state

paternity establishments. Of those paternities established in 2003, 663,000 were determined by the state child support enforcement agencies and 862,000 were determined in hospitals and otherwise. Thus, paternities acknowledged in hospitals and otherwise decreased. The total amount of paternities established shows a nearly 5 percent decrease from fiscal year 1999 to fiscal year 2003 (“Child Support Enforcement,” 2004).



The Center for Disease Control National Center for Health Statistics summarized 2003 births and birth rates for the United States. Key findings indicate that childbearing by unmarried women rose significantly in 2003. The birth rate per unmarried women aged 15 to 44 years increased 3 percent from the previous year to 44.9 births. Further, the number of births to unmarried women rose 4 percent to 1,415,995, marking the highest number in more than six decades for which national data exists. When compared to all births, the proportion of births to unmarried women increased to 34.6 percent. Despite these increases, birth rates for unmarried teenagers continued to decline (“Child Support Enforcement,” 2004).

Table 1. Number, rate, and percentage of births to unmarried women and birth rate for married women

Births to Unmarried Women				
Year	Number	Rate ¹	Percent ²	Birth Rate for Married Women ³
2003	1,415,995	44.9	34.6	88.1
2002	1,365,966	43.7	34.0	86.3
2001	1,349,249	43.8	33.5	86.7

1 Births to unmarried women per 1,000 unmarried women aged 15–44 years.

2 Percent of all births to unmarried women.

3 Births to married women per 1,000 married women aged 15–44 years.

Births to Unmarried Women				
Year	Number	Rate ¹	Percent ²	Birth Rate for Married Women ³
2000	1,347,043	44.0	33.2	87.4
1999	1,308,560	43.3	33.0	84.8
1998	1,293,567	43.3	32.8	84.2
1997	1,257,444	42.9	32.4	82.7
1996	1,260,306	43.8	32.4	82.3
1995	1,253,976	44.3	32.2	82.6
1994	1,289,592	46.2	32.6	82.9
1993	1,240,172	44.8	31.0	86.1
1992	1,224,876	44.9	30.1	88.5
1991	1,213,769	45.0	29.5	89.6
1990	1,165,384	43.8	28.0	93.2
1989	1,094,169	41.6	27.1	91.9
1988	1,005,299	38.5	25.7	90.8
1987	933,013	36.0	24.5	90.0
1986	878,477	34.2	23.4	90.7
1985	828,174	32.8	22.0	93.3
1980	665,747	29.4	18.4	97.0

In fiscal year 2003, interstate collections reached record levels. Collections made on behalf of families in other states totaled close to \$1.3 billion dollars. As illustrated in Figure 2, this marked a nearly 18 percent increase from the \$1.1 billion dollars collected in fiscal year 1999. In addition, the overall interstate caseload continues to rise. In fiscal year 2003, 1,083,336 cases were sent to another state, an 8 percent increase from fiscal year 1999. Also, cases received from other states totaled 948,581, a more than 3 percent increase over the previous five years (“Child Support Enforcement,” 2004).

The number of out-of-wedlock births, percentage of paternity establishments, and number of interstate cases must be broken down by state to determine their effect on the total amount of child support collections in dollars. Collections are further broken down by method of collection. For the purpose of this analysis, total collections by state will be measured.

The same analysis can be made for out-of-wedlock births, percentage of paternity establishments, and number of interstate cases by state. State data for out-of-wedlock births by percentage, the percentage of paternity of establishments, and number of interstate cases is compared to the total collections by state in the table in Appendix B. For purposes of comparison and analysis, the Virgin Islands, Guam, and Puerto Rico have been removed from this comprehensive table.

Several analyses were employed in the interpretation of the aforementioned data. Correlation tests were applied to each of the independent variables and the dependent variable. There is a 0.8794 correlation between total collections and paternity establishment. As such, the higher the paternity establishment, the greater the amount of collections. In ad-

dition, a correlation of 0.7761 exists between total collections and interstate cases, meaning that the more interstate cases there are, the higher the state’s amount of collections. There was no correlation between out-of-wedlock births and total child support collections. Also, states with higher numbers of single-parent families demonstrated a higher amount of child support collections, indicated by a correlation of 0.8995. In addition, a correlation of 0.9751 is measured between the number of single-parent families and paternity establishment rates.

Bivariate analyses of total collections by state, as grouped in quintiles, present additional findings. When comparing the bottom, middle, and top quintiles, it appears there is no relation to total child support collections and the percentage of births that are to unmarried women. The bottom quintile averaged a percentage of 36.1 of births to unmarried women. The middle quintile, as determined by amount of collections, averages 34 percent for births to unmarried women. The top quintile averages 34.2 percent for births to unmarried mothers. Hence, as the percentage of out-of-wedlock births increases or decreases, the amount of collections is not affected. The opposite is true of the relationship between total collections and paternity establishment. The bottom quintile of total collections by state averages 4,037 paternity establishments, the middle quintile averages 17,901 paternity establishments, and the top quintile averages 76,965 paternity establishments. Thus, as the number of paternity establishment increases, so does the amount of collections. The number of interstate cases appears to have a direct relationship to amount of collections, as well. The bottom quintile of collections has an average of \$6,122,561 dollars in interstate collections, which is an average of 8.9 percent of the total amount of collections. The middle quintile averages \$17,497,891 dollars in interstate collections, which is an average of 6.4 percent of total collections. Finally, the top quintile averages \$56,782,189 in interstate collections with an average of 5 percent of the total amount of collections.

This subgroup analysis is illustrated in Table 2. Highlighted areas show direct relationships, when measured in quintiles. This table demonstrates that 90 percent of states with total collections in the top fifth have paternity establishments, number of interstate cases, or both measuring in the top fifth, as well. Only ten percent of states in the top fifth also have a percentage of out-of-wedlock births that rank in the top fifth. The middle quintile shows similar findings, with 9 out of 10 states in the middle quintile show paternity establishment, interstate cases, or both that also measure into the middle quintile. However, no states in the middle quintile show a measurement of out-of-wedlock births in the middle quintile. Lastly, all of the states in the bottom quintile of total collections show bottom fifth measurements of paternity establishment, interstate cases, or both. This mirrors correlation findings, and indicates a direct relationship between the total amount of collections and paternity establishment, as well as

a direct relationship between total collections and both the number and percentage of interstate cases. There is no observable relationship between the percentage of births that are out-of-wedlock and amount of child support collections.

Table 2. Total collections, out-of-wedlock birth rates, paternity establishments, and interstate cases by state—in Quintiles

Total Collections	Out-of-Wedlock Births	Paternity Establishment	Interstate Cases
(Greatest to Least)			
Top Quintile			
California	District of Columbia	California	California
Texas	New Mexico	Texas	Florida
Ohio	Louisiana	New York	New York
Michigan	Mississippi	Florida	Texas
New York	Delaware	Illinois	Georgia
Pennsylvania	Arizona	Pennsylvania	Virginia
Florida	South Carolina	Michigan	New Jersey
Wisconsin	Florida	Georgia	Pennsylvania
New Jersey	Nevada	Ohio	North Carolina
Illinois	Georgia	Tennessee	Washington
Washington	Arkansas	Arizona	Illinois
Indiana	Tennessee	North Carolina	Ohio
North Carolina	Indiana	New Jersey	Maryland
Minnesota	Oklahoma	Missouri	Colorado
Virginia	New York	Virginia	Tennessee
Georgia	Ohio	Washington	Arizona
Missouri	Rhode Island	Maryland	Oregon
Arizona	Missouri	Connecticut	Nevada
Massachusetts	Illinois	Minnesota	Massachusetts
Maryland	North Carolina	Kansas	Missouri
Middle Quintile			
Tennessee	Alabama	Wisconsin	Alabama
Alabama	Maryland	Massachusetts	Michigan
Iowa	Alaska	Kentucky	Louisiana
Kentucky	Michigan	Louisiana	Minnesota
Oregon	West Virginia	Colorado	Connecticut
Colorado	Texas	South Carolina	Indiana
Louisiana	South Dakota	Mississippi	Wisconsin
Connecticut	Pennsylvania	Oklahoma	Oklahoma
South Carolina	Kentucky	Oregon	Kentucky
Arkansas	California	Iowa	Arkansas
Mississippi	Hawaii	Arkansas	Iowa
West Virginia	Maine	Hawaii	Alaska
Nebraska	Wyoming	Indiana	South Carolina
Oklahoma	Montana	Idaho	Kansas
Kansas	Oregon	Utah	Idaho
Utah	Kansas	North Dakota	Mississippi
Nevada	Virginia	Alabama	Utah

Total Collections	Out-of-Wedlock Births	Paternity Establishment	Interstate Cases
(Greatest to Least)			
Idaho	Wisconsin	New Mexico	West Virginia
Maine	Connecticut	West Virginia	Montana
Hawaii	Vermont	Nebraska	Delaware
Bottom Quintile			
Alaska	Iowa	Dist. Of Col.	Dist. Of Col.
New Hampshire	Nebraska	Rhode Island	New Hampshire
Delaware	New Jersey	Delaware	South Dakota
North Dakota	Washington	Nevada	Nebraska
New Mexico	North Dakota	Alaska	New Mexico
Rhode Island	Massachusetts	South Dakota	Maine
South Dakota	Minnesota	Maine	Hawaii
Wyoming	Colorado	Wyoming	Wyoming

The same variables can be measured by comparing the percentage of cases with orders in which some child support was paid, percentages of births to unmarried women, paternity establishment percentages, and percentages of interstate collections by state. Paternity establishment percentages are calculated by dividing the number of children in fiscal year 2003 who were born out-of-wedlock with paternity established or acknowledged by the number of children in the preceding fiscal year who were born out-of-wedlock (“Child Support Enforcement,” 2004). By using percentages, rather than total amounts, allowance is given to differences in state populations. These values are reflected in the table in Appendix C. These calculations present a different set of correlations. A moderate correlation exists between the percentage of cases in which some child support was paid and the percentage of paternity establishment cases. There is a moderate inverse correlation between the percentages of cases in which some child support was paid and the percentages of out-of-wedlock births. There is no relationship between the percentages of cases in which some child support was paid and the percentages of interstate cases. Numeric calculations for these correlations are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Selected Correlations, 2003

Correlation between...	Percentage of cases with orders where some child support was paid
Percentages of births to unmarried women	-0.353
Paternity Establishment Percentage	0.500
Percent of collections that are interstate	-0.035

Interpretation & Conclusion

This research analysis posed the following research question: how do out-of-wedlock births, paternity establishment, and volume of interstate cases affect child support collections? Analysis indicates that the volume of interstate cases and out-of-wedlock births may have little effect on child support collections. However, all statistical analyses show a relationship between collections and paternity establishment. As such, the greater the percentage of paternity establishments, the greater the amount of collections, whether measured by dollar amount, percentage of cases with orders in which some child support was paid, or by collections per capita.

One limitation of the aforementioned research design and analysis was the inability to accurately compare the amount of child support collections. A total dollar amount of collections per state was available. However, comparing this variable to the other factors was not completely precise, due to the difference in state populations. Measuring collections per capita provided a closer comparison, but was not an exact match because the quantity of child support cases varies in every state. Further, weighing collections per single-family households was also incomplete because not all child support collections are made to unmarried parents. Measuring the percentage of open child support cases in which

some child support was paid against the other variables proved to be the most accurate comparison. Regardless, all measures demonstrated a positive relationship between child support collections and paternity establishment. There are a variety of other factors that may lead to an increase or decrease in the amount of

child support collections, including state administrative authority regulations, tribal caseloads, enforcement tactics, and demographics. Further research and analysis is necessary to determine which factors pose the greatest influence on the outcome of child support collections.

As previously mentioned, the Child Support Performance and Incentive Act of 1998 dictates an incentive system based on paternity establishment percentage, support order establishment percentage, current collections performance level, arrears collection performance level, and cost effectiveness (“Child Support Enforcement,” 2004). This data is presented in the Child Support Enforcement Data Report and can be seen as an annual report card. Yet the bigger picture is found in the story behind the numbers. Interpretation of that information allows child enforcement professionals to prioritize enforcement strategies, structure policies, and determine why performance has improved or failed to improve. In 2003, 90 percent of distributed child support collections went directly to families. Sherri Z. Heller, Commissioner of the U.S. Office of Child Support Enforcement, claims, “It’s partly an indicator of an amazing change in the very nature of the work we do and the families we serve. It represents a

cultural turning point in our understanding of the purpose of the Federal/state partnership that is the national child support enforcement program” (“Child Support Enforcement,” 2004). Collections in 2003 continued to increase and reached an unprecedented high of \$21.2 billion dollars, representing a 5 percent increase from the previous year, and a 33 percent increase over five years. Heller urges child enforcement professionals to use the data in the Child Support Enforcement Data Report in talks with legislators, cabinet officials, judges, and other stakeholders to demonstrate how changes in administrative, court, funding, and other practices affect performance (“Child Support Enforcement,” 2004).

State child support professionals pay close attention to the numbers reported to the federal government, and seek the means to better serve their populations. Many states have the ability to enforce child support through automated credit bureau reporting notification, income taxes, administrative liens, driver’s license suspensions, professional license suspensions, recreational license suspensions, asset seizures, unemployment insurance interception, worker’s compensation interception, seizure of lottery winnings, income withholding, and other tactics (Sorenson & Harper, 1999). Child support orders can be established through respective state agencies, regardless of income. Once an order is established, paternity must be determined to collect child support. In the event paternity is unknown, collectors face the obstacle of establishing such. Studies suggest that changes in laws and practices have increased paternity establishment, including mandating fathers’ names on birth certificates, the use of genetic testing, and paternity establishment in hospitals (Miller & Garfinkel, 1999). Further, the success of paternity establishment has a direct impact on four out of the five performance measures dictated in the Child Support Performance and Incentive Act of 1998.

Child support enforcement professionals have lobbied state and federal policymakers over the years to change child support enforcement laws. Case, Lin, and McLanahan (2003) cite several reasons for low child support collections. The authors blame ineffective child support policies and government failure, amongst other reasons, for a lack of improvement in the overall collection of child support payments. They argue that states have been slow to pass or implement child support enforcement policies, resulting in minimal effects of new legislation. Further studies indicate that policies such as wage withholding, legislative guidelines, paternity establishment statutes, and tax intercepts also impact the outcome of child support collections.

Also, it is possible that any positive effect of legislature may have been masked by inflation, shifts in marital status, changes in divorce laws, and the closing gap in men’s and women’s earnings (Case, Lin, & McLanahan, 2003).

The effect of the nation’s child support system reaches far beyond children and families. Estimates from a 1999 study indicate that more than half of children today will

live apart from their biological parents at some point during childhood (Miller & Garfinkel, 1999). The proportion of these children born out-of-wedlock continues to increase. Almost all of these children will be poor, due partly to lack of financial assistance by an absent parent. Poverty during childhood often leads to low educational attainment and productivity during adulthood. “The future of these children depends in large part on the quality of the nation’s child support system” (Miller & Garfinkel, 1999, p. 237). It is up to policymakers, child support enforcement professionals, and families to devise and enforce a framework that produces results. “Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the child support enforcement program will result in greater numbers of single-mother families being able to count on child support, thereby moving more of America’s poor families toward self sufficiency” (Sorenson & Halpern, 1999, p. 5). This can be achieved by looking at all factors that influence child support collections. However, legislative change with regard to paternity establishment regulations may prove to be the most effective tactic in child support enforcement.

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Appendix A

Total Collections Made by Method of Collection, FY 2003

States	Offset of Federal Tax Refund	Offset of State Tax Refund	Unemployment Compensation	Other Sources	Income Withholding	Other States	Total
Alabama	\$21,224,222.00	\$1,738,667.00	\$380,451.00	\$64,115,056.00	\$261,938,263.00	\$16,489,046.00	\$365,885,705.00
Alaska	\$4,623,018.00	\$0.00	\$3,527,820.00	\$26,621,564.00	\$48,141,985.00	\$9,875,885.00	\$92,790,272.00
Arizona	\$24,529,048.00	\$2,470,777.00	\$5,786,791.00	\$100,134,513.00	\$343,159,377.00	\$19,960,842.00	\$496,041,348.00
Arkansas	\$14,154,609.00	\$2,260,083.00	\$3,445,388.00	\$29,858,293.00	\$146,105,012.00	\$12,468,861.00	\$208,292,246.00
California	\$206,097,119.00	\$38,726,440.00	\$76,540,347.00	\$488,292,376.00	\$1,357,533,427.00	\$82,612,240.00	\$2,249,801,949.00
Colorado	\$18,217,870.00	\$2,760,149.00	\$5,833,437.00	\$63,674,166.00	\$200,168,865.00	\$22,672,170.00	\$313,326,657.00
Connecticut	\$20,038,239.00	\$3,051,750.00	\$9,822,806.00	\$46,344,081.00	\$160,780,717.00	\$24,188,690.00	\$264,226,283.00
Delaware	\$3,039,801.00	\$172,561.00	\$2,673,450.00	\$8,370,776.00	\$52,458,040.00	\$12,065,434.00	\$78,780,062.00
Dist. Of Col.	\$4,519,779.00	\$598,096.00	\$562,592.00	\$8,565,747.00	\$40,153,689.00	\$2,186,650.00	\$56,586,553.00
Florida	\$80,507,426.00	\$0.00	\$13,490,795.00	\$312,282,127.00	\$507,888,389.00	\$79,080,192.00	\$993,248,929.00
Georgia	\$30,620,451.00	\$747,120.00	\$7,124,968.00	\$92,756,164.00	\$335,336,125.00	\$55,782,056.00	\$529,090,964.00
Guam	\$642,231.00	\$490,311.00	\$0.00	\$956,737.00	\$5,580,878.00	\$1,379,067.00	\$9,049,224.00
Hawaii	\$8,437,597.00	\$1,698,532.00	\$1,361,067.00	\$14,571,617.00	\$68,077,103.00	\$3,918,955.00	\$98,064,871.00
Idaho	\$7,530,599.00	\$1,945,116.00	\$2,331,245.00	\$26,517,830.00	\$60,094,016.00	\$17,679,040.00	\$116,097,846.00
Illinois	\$46,071,226.00	\$3,419,932.00	\$14,691,578.00	\$102,184,499.00	\$722,702,029.00	\$190,045.00	\$889,259,309.00
Indiana	\$42,128,472.00	\$4,184,348.00	\$15,795,121.00	\$106,426,345.00	\$473,929,765.00	\$14,398,427.00	\$656,862,478.00
Iowa	\$18,549,068.00	\$3,022,143.00	\$10,638,709.00	\$33,340,556.00	\$259,632,481.00	\$34,610,419.00	\$359,793,376.00
Kansas	\$16,086,326.00	\$3,218,496.00	\$6,675,928.00	\$32,993,401.00	\$92,299,467.00	\$0.00	\$151,273,618.00
Kentucky	\$24,265,795.00	\$2,160,337.00	\$2,831,264.00	\$80,025,062.00	\$186,704,023.00	\$35,485,256.00	\$331,471,737.00
Louisiana	\$23,219,385.00	\$972,554.00	\$6,642,445.00	\$54,059,865.00	\$186,230,910.00	\$23,807,926.00	\$294,933,085.00
Maine	\$9,186,763.00	\$1,403,492.00	\$2,990,390.00	\$19,265,313.00	\$66,196,656.00	\$7,110,978.00	\$106,153,592.00
Maryland	\$22,322,211.00	\$6,788,037.00	\$10,759,181.00	\$78,431,564.00	\$303,160,893.00	\$36,158,572.00	\$457,620,458.00
Massachusetts	\$18,329,043.00	\$4,414,353.00	\$24,251,902.00	\$86,318,611.00	\$318,030,113.00	\$12,173,502.00	\$463,517,524.00
Michigan	\$84,696,464.00	\$10,468,827.00	\$29,037,229.00	\$291,177,828.00	\$1,072,381,513.00	\$35,494,629.00	\$1,523,256,490.00
Minnesota	\$20,714,860.00	\$9,108,006.00	\$22,320,129.00	\$81,827,048.00	\$415,689,573.00	\$29,351,743.00	\$579,011,359.00
Mississippi	\$18,486,517.00	\$1,106,325.00	\$5,603,973.00	\$30,194,542.00	\$127,706,643.00	\$23,015,067.00	\$206,113,067.00
Missouri	\$39,509,203.00	\$5,456,021.00	\$14,109,174.00	\$120,096,743.00	\$317,894,696.00	\$26,338,240.00	\$523,404,077.00
Montana	\$3,664,652.00	\$598,652.00	\$1,141,059.00	\$8,952,924.00	\$30,628,924.00	\$8,662,984.00	\$53,649,195.00
Nebraska	\$6,588,199.00	\$1,489,367.00	\$3,811,951.00	\$36,789,340.00	\$104,061,021.00	\$13,738,410.00	\$166,478,288.00
Nevada	\$8,732,795.00	\$0.00	\$4,221,611.00	\$16,670,806.00	\$80,007,632.00	\$15,737,152.00	\$125,369,996.00

States	Offset of Federal Tax Refund	Offset of State Tax Refund	Unemployment Compensation	Other Sources	Income Withholding	Other States	Total
New Hampshire	\$4,886,108.00	\$0.00	\$270,065.00	\$18,417,709.00	\$53,618,156.00	\$6,937,250.00	\$84,129,288.00
New Jersey	\$32,535,705.00	\$6,399,630.00	\$41,843,637.00	\$187,521,004.00	\$590,519,277.00	\$43,476,120.00	\$902,295,373.00
New Mexico	\$6,645,659.00	\$1,228,605.00	\$0.00	\$14,096,158.00	\$46,912,467.00	\$3,421,443.00	\$72,304,332.00
New York	\$43,233,116.00	\$18,943,073.00	\$52,922,963.00	\$268,148,695.00	\$1,006,697,138.00	\$53,839,404.00	\$1,443,784,389.00
North Carolina	\$27,146,179.00	\$5,484,107.00	\$12,810,713.00	\$103,222,545.00	\$392,094,055.00	\$45,422,092.00	\$586,179,691.00
North Dakota	\$4,012,827.00	\$203,691.00	\$1,175,547.00	\$10,411,490.00	\$54,488,452.00	\$7,801,585.00	\$78,093,592.00
Ohio	\$98,080,867.00	\$12,080,999.00	\$38,318,330.00	\$262,477,268.00	\$1,429,681,555.00	\$35,756,403.00	\$1,876,395,422.00
Oklahoma	\$16,918,397.00	\$2,559,567.00	\$1,941,227.00	\$30,839,004.00	\$98,949,563.00	\$13,396,360.00	\$164,604,118.00
Oregon	\$17,541,642.00	\$2,395,182.00	\$16,357,928.00	\$57,191,206.00	\$182,744,181.00	\$39,996,216.00	\$316,226,355.00
Pennsylvania	\$52,987,052.00	\$5,750,195.00	\$66,840,072.00	\$268,800,335.00	\$947,150,441.00	\$72,510,875.00	\$1,414,038,970.00
Puerto Rico	\$7,931,706.00	\$4,206,797.00	\$0.00	\$140,541,875.00	\$82,948,472.00	\$10,519,810.00	\$246,148,660.00
Rhode Island	\$3,345,960.00	\$391,475.00	\$2,407,634.00	\$13,832,976.00	\$43,702,474.00	\$6,277,421.00	\$69,957,940.00
South Carolina	\$12,230,261.00	\$3,290,752.00	\$3,386,892.00	\$92,260,203.00	\$132,616,978.00	\$1,442,699.00	\$245,227,785.00
South Dakota	\$4,232,727.00	\$0.00	\$574,363.00	\$10,878,978.00	\$40,253,020.00	\$5,399,405.00	\$61,338,493.00
Tennessee	\$29,531,257.00	\$0.00	\$7,521,990.00	\$67,468,776.00	\$285,941,429.00	\$33,726,530.00	\$424,189,982.00
Texas	\$123,791,243.00	\$0.00	\$40,403,871.00	\$429,183,649.00	\$1,258,694,640.00	\$49,099,041.00	\$1,901,172,444.00
Utah	\$7,929,232.00	\$1,512,522.00	\$4,847,342.00	\$22,522,997.00	\$100,999,598.00	\$10,139,888.00	\$147,951,579.00
Vermont	\$2,780,919.00	\$637,068.00	\$1,525,915.00	\$7,018,842.00	\$35,786,964.00	\$4,729,971.00	\$52,479,679.00
Virgin Islands	\$552,183.00	\$49,729.00	\$212,307.00	\$1,949,582.00	\$5,387,171.00	\$875,856.00	\$9,026,828.00
Virginia	\$31,999,836.00	\$2,935,839.00	\$10,366,255.00	\$56,886,110.00	\$398,566,341.00	\$34,140,286.00	\$534,894,667.00
Washington	\$34,977,925.00	\$0.00	\$35,685,471.00	\$160,309,015.00	\$366,014,228.00	\$60,064,482.00	\$657,051,121.00
West Virginia	\$11,964,478.00	\$1,105,510.00	\$2,918,240.00	\$25,963,165.00	\$117,768,212.00	\$11,736,888.00	\$171,456,493.00
Wisconsin	\$34,088,933.00	\$13,680,321.00	\$30,862,234.00	\$161,523,370.00	\$654,087,965.00	\$20,812,622.00	\$915,055,445.00
Wyoming	\$4,914,249.00	\$0.00	\$1,137,451.00	\$16,069,253.00	\$31,496,576.00	\$6,837,917.00	\$60,455,446.00
Totals	\$1,460,991,449.00	\$204,049,634.00	\$682,733,248.00	\$4,889,349,699.00	\$16,701,791,578.00	\$1,254,993,042.00	\$25,193,908,650.00

Appendix B

Total Collection, Out-of-Wedlock Births, Paternity Establishment, Interstate Cases, FY 2003, by Rank

Total Collections (Greatest to Least)	Total Collections (Least to Greatest)	Out-of-Wedlock Births (Greatest to Least)	Paternity Establish- ment (Greatest to Least)	Interstate Cases (Greatest to Least)
California	Vermont	District Of Columbia	California	California
Texas	Montana	New Mexico	Texas	Florida
Ohio	Dist. Of Col.	Louisiana	New York	New York
Michigan	Wyoming	Mississippi	Florida	Texas
New York	South Dakota	Delaware	Illinois	Georgia
Pennsylvania	Rhode Island	Arizona	Pennsylvania	Virginia
Florida	New Mexico	South Carolina	Michigan	New Jersey
Wisconsin	North Dakota	Florida	Georgia	Pennsylvania
New Jersey	Delaware	Nevada	Ohio	North Carolina
Illinois	New Hampshire	Georgia	Tennessee	Washington
Washington	Alaska	Arkansas	Arizona	Illinois
Indiana	Hawaii	Tennessee	North Carolina	Ohio
North Carolina	Maine	Indiana	New Jersey	Maryland
Minnesota	Idaho	Oklahoma	Missouri	Colorado
Virginia	Nevada	New York	Virginia	Tennessee
Georgia	Utah	Ohio	Washington	Arizona
Missouri	Kansas	Rhode Island	Maryland	Oregon
Arizona	Oklahoma	Missouri	Connecticut	Nevada
Massachusetts	Nebraska	Illinois	Minnesota	Massachusetts
Maryland	West Virginia	North Carolina	Kansas	Missouri
Tennessee	Mississippi	Alabama	Wisconsin	Alabama
Alabama	Arkansas	Maryland	Massachusetts	Michigan
Iowa	South Carolina	Alaska	Kentucky	Louisiana
Kentucky	Connecticut	Michigan	Louisiana	Minnesota
Oregon	Louisiana	West Virginia	Colorado	Connecticut
Colorado	Colorado	Texas	South Carolina	Indiana
Louisiana	Oregon	South Dakota	Mississippi	Wisconsin
Connecticut	Kentucky	Pennsylvania	Oklahoma	Oklahoma
South Carolina	Iowa	Kentucky	Oregon	Kentucky
Arkansas	Alabama	California	Iowa	Arkansas
Mississippi	Tennessee	Hawaii	Arkansas	Iowa
West Virginia	Maryland	Maine	Hawaii	Alaska
Nebraska	Massachusetts	Wyoming	Indiana	South Carolina
Oklahoma	Arizona	Montana	Idaho	Kansas
Kansas	Missouri	Oregon	Utah	Idaho
Utah	Georgia	Kansas	North Dakota	Mississippi
Nevada	Virginia	Virginia	Alabama	Utah
Idaho	Minnesota	Wisconsin	New Mexico	West Virginia
Maine	North Carolina	Connecticut	West Virginia	Montana
Hawaii	Indiana	Vermont	Nebraska	Delaware
Alaska	Washington	Iowa	Dist. Of Col.	Dist. Of Col.
New Hampshire	Illinois	Nebraska	Rhode Island	New Hampshire
Delaware	New Jersey	New Jersey	Delaware	South Dakota

Total Collections (Greatest to Least)	Total Collections (Least to Greatest)	Out-of-Wedlock Births (Greatest to Least)	Paternity Establish- ment (Greatest to Least)	Interstate Cases (Greatest to Least)
North Dakota	Wisconsin	Washington	Nevada	Nebraska
New Mexico	Florida	North Dakota	Alaska	New Mexico
Rhode Island	Pennsylvania	Massachusetts	South Dakota	Maine
South Dakota	New York	Minnesota	Maine	Hawaii
Wyoming	Michigan	Colorado	Wyoming	Wyoming
Dist. Of Col.	Ohio	New Hampshire	Vermont	Rhode Island
Montana	Texas	Idaho	Montana	North Dakota
Vermont	California	Utah	New Hampshire	Vermont

Appendix C

Percentages of cases with orders where some child support was paid, Percentages of births to unmarried women, Paternity establishment percentage, and Percentage of interstate collections, FY 2003

State	Percentage of cases with orders where some child support was paid	Percentages of births to unmarried women	Paternity Establish- ment Percentage (PEP) 2003	Percent of collections that are interstate
Alabama	67.83	35.0	74.79%	5.3%
Alaska	78.69	34.6	113.76%	13.5%
Arizona	60.19	41.5	71.60%	5.1%
Arkansas	71.21	38.0	86.03%	6.5%
California	57.58	33.5	84.30%	5.0%
Colorado	51.66	26.7	93.27%	9.3%
Connecticut	60.88	30.0	84.20%	6.5%
Delaware	70.25	41.9	73.58%	9.0%
Dist. Of Col.	50.73	53.6	20.36%	12.0%
Florida	83.48	39.9	95.21%	10.7%
Georgia	60.29	38.1	50.70%	10.1%
Hawaii	47.86	33.5	85.00%	5.3%
Idaho	70.63	22.3	100.82%	8.7%
Illinois	60.17	35.3	46.11%	4.0%
Indiana	65.79	37.1	72.26%	2.6%
Iowa	87.05	29.9	98.56%	3.7%
Kansas	72.73	31.6	98.59%	6.7%
Kentucky	60.12	33.8	82.18%	4.4%
Louisiana	67.8	47.5	85.18%	6.3%
Maine	70.79	33.5	99.20%	5.0%
Maryland	70.69	34.8	75.55%	6.7%
Massachusetts	71.42	27.8	78.04%	4.5%
Michigan	57.59	34.6	63.48%	1.3%
Minnesota	80.45	27.7	84.94%	3.1%
Mississippi	71.62	47.0	66.79%	4.8%
Missouri	57.56	35.6	88.88%	3.9%
Montana	77.72	32.2	103.29%	14.3%
Nebraska	77.67	29.7	82.04%	3.5%
Nevada	65.49	39.1	66.20%	19.6%
New Hampshire	86.03	24.8	105.52%	7.3%

State	Percentage of cases with orders where some child support was paid	Percentages of births to unmarried women	Paternity Establishment Percentage (PEP) 2003	Percent of collections that are interstate
New Jersey	82.81	29.3	83.39%	5.1%
New Mexico	77.99	48.4	168.24%	7.7%
New York	65.95	36.5	70.69%	6.5%
North Carolina	79.54	35.3	90.97%	6.8%
North Dakota	75.42	28.5	95.07%	4.9%
Ohio	75.02	36.2	74.78%	1.7%
Oklahoma	72.01	37.1	49.39%	9.1%
Oregon	69.19	31.7	76.35%	7.8%
Pennsylvania	89.43	33.9	88.33%	3.0%
Rhode Island	57.9	35.8	64.87%	5.9%
South Carolina	66.33	41.1	78.77%	5.0%
South Dakota	86.21	34.2	99.16%	9.7%
Tennessee	69.43	37.2	86.80%	6.8%
Texas	78.9	34.3	66.73%	4.4%
Utah	91.59	17.2	103.70%	6.6%
Vermont	74.77	30.0	96.11%	4.9%
Virginia	70.96	30.4	78.47%	8.8%
Washington	82.5	28.8	98.53%	5.9%
West Virginia	68.44	34.6	86.26%	5.5%
Wisconsin	80.11	30.4	97.92%	1.7%
Wyoming	73.76	32.6	79.93%	8.3%