CHILD SUPPORT PROGRAM

The child support program was established in 1975 to provide a means for children to receive the financial, medical and emotional support they need to help ensure a bright future. Child support payments help provide food, shelter, clothing and other basic living expenses for children**.** By providing the means for many families to meet their most basic financial needs, the program is a critical part of efforts to fight poverty in California. In addition, recipients of public assistance are required to open a child support case, with collections being used to recoup the government's cost of providing that assistance. California's program is administered by 49 local child support agencies (called LCSAs) and operates under the oversight of the California Department of Child Support Services.

LCSAs locate absent parents, establish parentage and court orders for child support, and enforce those orders. A variety of tools are used to collect support which is owed, including: wage withholding; tax intercepts; intercepts of lottery winnings and insurance claim payouts; and real property liens. LCSAs also partner with other county agencies, as well as community-based organizations, to serve a variety of groups such as veterans, active duty military and the unemployed who are experiencing other, non-child support issues. The child support program is not involved in custody, visitation, foster care issues, establishment or modification of spousal support, or other family law matters.

Reliable support payments help support family economic stability and lead to improved child outcomes. The child support program is based on the principal that the engagement and participation of both parents contributes to the success of every child. To support this principal, LCSAs work collaboratively with both parents to obtain orders that are fair and to ensure that both parents fully participate in the management of their child support case.

Providing excellent customer service is a program priority. A number of innovative services are available to make it convenient for customers to utilize program services. Child support customers can submit applications to open their case electronically, receive updates on the status of their case 24/7 via access to the statewide Customer Connect program, and make payments online or at hundreds of locations throughout California. Many LCSAs also provide targeted services to customers such as educational workshops or by providing program information to citizens at community public events to ensure that all customers have the opportunity to effectively participate in the program.

During fiscal year 2016/17, California's LCSAs collected over $2.4 billion, while managing over 1.2 million cases, and serving 1.26 million children. Of the state's total collections, $414 million was collected and returned to the government as reimbursement for the cost of providing public assistance. The impact of the program as a powerful tool for preventing poverty is illustrated by the fact that, nationally, over the last 20 years, income from child support averaged more than a quarter of poor custodial parent's total money incomes.

The effectiveness of LCSAs' case management activities is measured through five federal performance measures. Over the past several years, California has made significant improvement in each of these measurements, as LCSAs implement innovative strategies and continuously improve the effectiveness and efficiency of their program services. Funding for the program is a combination of federal and state funds.

For more information, please contact the Child Support Directors Association at (916) 446-4700, or visit the CSDA website at www.csdaca.org.

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