

CONTRA COSTA 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 absent 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. MISSION STATEMENT

The Contra Costa County Department of Child Support Services promotes the well-being of children and the self-sufficiency of families by delivering effective child support services to help meet the financial, medical and emotional needs of children.

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 18/19 is \$18,769,093 and we currently have 143 FTEs.

The five department functional areas are responsible for a wide range of duties:

A. ADMINISTRATION/SUPPORT

Management

Business Administration

Systems Support

- Administration is responsible for the overall management of the department. The Management team provides leadership and direction to ensure program compliance.
- Business administration is responsible for fiscal management, including budgets, purchasing, contracts administration and payroll, human resources, including recruitment, personnel and labor relations.
- Systems Support provides information technology (I.T.) support for a complex networking environment with more than 25 different software applications. Systems Support also provides I.T. leadership to streamline work and increase work efficiencies through the use of technology.

B. PRE-ORDER/PUBLIC SERVICE

Intake

Establishment

Public Service Unit

- Intake is responsible for the initial processing of child support applications and service requests received from Employment and Human Services Department, including verifying the information that has been provided and conducting additional research to locate incomplete information.

- Establishment works to establish court orders, including locating income and asset information, calculating the amount of support to be collected and distributed and locating absent parents.
- Public Service Unit handles the in person contact with customers that visit our office. This unit handles requests for information; receives and processes child support payments; receives and tracks initial case referrals; receives and processes requests for child support order modifications; collects, secures and confirms case information and provides direction to customers for the next appropriate action for their case.

C. LEGAL SERVICES /ATTORNEYS

Legal Resolution I & II

Legal Support

Attorneys

The Legal Services division works to establish or modify court orders through the legal process.

- Legal support is responsible for coordinating genetic testing to establish paternity and processing and serving summons and complaints, including processing responses and maintaining the proofs of service, and facilitating filing summons and complaints and other legal documents with the Court.
- During the court preparation process, the Legal Resolution I team works to establish court orders through the stipulation process, where the parties of the cases work to negotiate a mutually acceptable agreement for support, thereby avoiding the time and process of a court appearance. Legal Resolution I staff also attends court to work with customers and support the attorneys.
- Legal Resolution II is responsible for the department's Smith/Ostler program, which enables the enforcement of orders in 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; processing of special collections from employer pensions and 401k plans; processing and serving court documents to our customers, managing cases where a participant has filed for bankruptcy protection and providing legal clerical support in the court room.
- Attorneys handle all court appearances, provide legal opinions and/or legal interpretations for staff, provide attorney support and advice for certain enforcement functions and prepare court documents. The Attorneys Team legal assistant manages workers' compensation lien cases.

D. CLIENT SERVICES POST ORDER

Operational Teams

- The Client Services Post Order division handles all enforcement actions on child support cases with established orders with the goal of collecting consistent support payments. Three Operational teams are collectively responsible for these duties. These duties include working with the parties of the case to ensure that payments are made in accordance with the court order, utilizing the case management tool to work cases to optimize current collections, collecting payments on arrears balances, reviewing and adjusting accounts and if appropriate, facilitating stipulations, and taking appropriate steps to collect current and outstanding child support obligations. These teams provide ombudsperson services and manage compromise of arrears applications.

E. INTERNAL SUPPORT

Document Processing

Fiscal

Training and Special Projects

The Internal Support division is responsible for activities that support the other divisions.

- Document Processing is responsible for processing all incoming mail by scanning, indexing, and working certain items and electronically routing others to the appropriate person or team to be worked.
- Fiscal is responsible for handling all of the child support accounts. These duties include activating new court orders and establishing the appropriate accounts, performing account adjustments and audits, and closing accounts when necessary. Fiscal operates the department's drive-up payment window and manages cash deposits sent to the State Disbursement Unit. Fiscal also serves as a liaison with the State Disbursement Unit, processing payments at the local level, handling stop payments, researching and resolving funds held in suspense and resolving customer service concerns regarding payments.
- Training and Special Projects is responsible for providing training support for all staff members, including an intensive multi-week classroom training for all newly hired child support specialists and assistants and the creation and delivery of new training programs as needed. This team is also responsible for making sure that staff use the case management system correctly by working state created reports, conducting data reliability audits, manages inter-county transfers of cases and represents the department in the complaint resolution and State Hearing processes.

III. ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Caseload 26,246

Total Collections \$69,442,962

Although the department's caseload size decreased 2.1% from the prior year, the department's total distributed collections of \$69,442,962 represented an increase of 0.2% over the prior year, delivering more money to families.

- The department was recognized by the California Department of Child Support Services for:
 - Director's Excellence Award for providing excellent customer service as measured by collecting and distributing current support to families each month for the federal fiscal year 2017.
 - Director's acknowledgment for exceeding annual performance over FFY 2016 by decreasing the average number of days from opening a new case, obtaining an order for support, and receiving the first payment by 15 days.
- The department also received the Child Support Directors Association Positive Collaboration Award for collaborating with the other San Francisco Bay Area counties on holding a Bay Area Employer Forum event.

In 2017, 7,538 customers came into the department. 13.74% were Spanish speaking. The average wait time for a customer to be seen without an appointment was 5 minutes. In addition to serving those customers who came into our Department, our Public Service Unit staff successfully handled 2,062 inquiries that came in through the statewide customer connect self-service website. A full time Family Law Facilitator continued to be available in the lobby to assist child support customers with responding to or preparing court documents involving child and/or spousal support. The facilitator saw an average of 121 customers per month with an average wait time of under 8 minutes. The shared services agreement with Butte County Department of Child Support Services to handle the incoming phone calls for Contra Costa continued to be a successful customer service partnership. During this Federal Fiscal Year, 66,748 calls were successfully handled, an average of 5,562 calls per month.

The department's shared services project with Sonoma DCSS for management of out-of-state cases continued for 1,807 cases that resulted in total distributed collections of \$3,997,701.

Focusing 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 reached an all-time high of 95.5%.

The department handled an estimated 3,759 cases in court. The department's continued efforts to contact parties to discuss reaching an agreement, prior to going to court, resulted department-wide in 901 stipulated agreements.

The Document Processing Team (DPT) received, routed, and delivered (within 24 hours of receipt) 74,679 pieces of mail during the year. The DPT staff also recorded 1,610 real property liens and generated 2,001 Release of Liens.

The Fiscal team processed real property liens that resulted in collections of \$1,400,998, a 23% increase over last year. The team also handles all the payments at the drive-up payment window.

The department's Smith/Ostler program, which enables the enforcement of orders in 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, had tremendous success this year with collections of \$4,909,829 (a 5.42% increase over last year).

The department expanded the use of the Qualified Domestic Relations Orders (QDRO) to collect past due child support from obligor employer pensions and 401k plans. This collection method had an 83% increase over last year with collections of \$887,915.

The department met with all the Contra Costa birthing hospitals to provide them with customized Paternity Opportunity Program (POP) forms to help reduce the error rate and increase the number of valid POP declarations.

The department's Operational Team One's themed collection competitions, such as the "Fall into Cash Challenge," continued, resulting in additional collections of \$437,756.

The Systems Support Team (SST) managed the installation of a TouchPay kiosk in our lobby, planned, tested and replaced all of the department's desktop computing hardware, continued development of the Smith/Ostler application, installed and configured upgraded network server equipment, fully implemented a new case management system-integrated scanning solution, upgraded network infrastructure and added voice-over-IP-supporting network switches, edited and produced the department's newsletter, expanded network support for the court liaison project, planned and developed configuration for a new phone system and purchased and installed new desktop telephones throughout the department.

Contra Costa continues to be seen as a leader in the child support business. The management and attorney staff spoke at numerous conference sessions at training conferences and legal college and wrote articles for professional publications throughout the year.

The department ran BART, bus, and a digital billboard advertising campaigns in numerous Contra Costa locations to educate the general public about Child Support services. In addition, the department increased public exposure by advertising in the Concord and San Pablo DMV offices, and two East Bay family magazines.

The range of organizations and outreach events the department partners with and participates in has been broadened to help parents meet the financial and emotional needs of their children. Partners and outreach events include:

Bay Area Rescue Mission, Clean Slate, Contra Costa Homeless Court, COPE Family Support Center, County Services Block Party, East Bay Goodwill, East Bay Works, East County Resource Fair, East

County WIN meetings, Monument Crisis Center, Office of Education, PACT, Project Homeless Connect, Rubicon, Sisters of Solidarity, Stand Down on the Delta, and Urban Institute.

The department has given particular emphasis to strengthening relationships with the below partners:

- East Bay Works America's Job Center to provide presentations to center staff and customers, and provide child support materials at the centers throughout the County. The information about the center's programs are also shared with child support customers who need jobs.
- Monument Crisis Center to provide the center customers with information about child support services.
- Rubicon, a community based organization, whose mission is to work with low-income individuals to help them overcome barriers to financial independence. Monthly presentations are given at two county locations to the Rubicon participants to educate them about the department's services. DCSS staff works with participants to reduce child support barriers that may prevent them from succeeding in the Rubicon program.
- Monthly attendance at Contra Costa County Homeless Court to assist customers with child support.

To promote Child Support Awareness Month, the department launched its first Backpacks for Kids drive. While generous DCSS staff contributed the bulk of backpacks and supplies, community members, local vendors and the county library also partnered. Backpacks for Kids was a great success which exemplified the DCSS purpose: To improve the lives of children and families. The department plans to continue and expand partnerships for the event in coming years.

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:

- Increase support for California's children
- Deliver excellent and consistent customer services statewide
- Enhance program performance and sustainability
- Develop and strengthen collaborative partnerships
- Be innovative in meeting the needs of families

Continued participant in a statewide texting project to explore the use of texting as a method to contact customers (phase II scheduled to commence in early 2018).

Implement a pilot to reduce orders established by default.

Develop and implement a new customer service model to deliver an enhanced customer service experience.

Finalize and share TiNA2 with other local child support agencies, our automated additional support order tool.

Conduct an operational assessment to identify efficiencies that can address decreased staffing levels, and implement new efficiencies as recommended. The department has not received an increase in its funding allocation from the State and Federal governments in over 16 years. With the cost of salary and benefits now at 91% of the total annual budget, the department must, and is, making the development of efficiencies a priority.

B. INTERNAL TO THE COUNTY

Although salary increases for staff are a welcome tool in retaining existing staff, but presents challenges to the department as funding from the state remains flat. Vacant, unfunded positions have been cancelled and the department will be focusing on filling all funded, vacant positions and identifying methods to increase operational efficiency within its current staffing levels without reducing performance and customer service.

C. EXTERNAL TO COUNTY OPERATIONS

Advocate at the state level for increased department funding to cover increased costs of doing business.

Increase child support services to families by promoting services through partnerships, outreach, marketing, and social media. Explore new methods of advertising to make the public aware of child support services.

V. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The federal department of child support 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 DCSS has consistently outperformed the State of California average.

Contra Costa County	FFY 2013	FFY 2014	FFY 2015	FFY 2016	FFY 2017
Cases with Support Orders Established	90.5%	93.7%	94.8%	95.1%	95.5%
Collections of Current Support Due	65.8%	66.9%	69.3%	71.6%	71.8%
Collections on Cases with Arrears	67.6%	68.5%	69.9%	70.9%	70.7%
Cost Effectiveness	\$3.41	\$3.56	\$3.75	\$3.85	\$3.82
Declared Paternity	104.7%	102.7%	104.7%	98.5%	102.1%



