

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES

I. DEPARTMENT MANDATE MISSION

A. MANDATE

In 2000, Governor Gray Davis created the Department of Child Support Services (DCSS). 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. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

DCSS supports children's' futures, assisting parents and guardians by establishing, collecting and distributing financial support. Our work is an important part of California's efforts to nurture and protect children and to help them and their families achieve self-sufficiency.

Each functional area of the department is composed of several teams of child support professionals dedicated to delivering exceptional customer service. Our annual budget for SFY 2022-2023 is \$20,141,769 which supports 137 full time positions.

III. ACCOMPLISHMENTS

A. DEPARTMENT EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS

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

- Implementation of the Simplified Enrollment Platform (SEP) to streamline the case opening process for customers. This mobile app allows parents to apply for child support services in under fifteen minutes and has become the preferred method of opening a case with DCSS.
- Utilizing Contra Costa's award-winning automated Lien Demand Portal, developed in collaboration with Intresys. The portal has revolutionized the process by which child support agencies respond to demands from Title companies. The portal 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, but it is also scalable and is being adopted by other local child support agencies throughout the state including Sacramento County DCSS. Collections from liens processed through the Fiscal team's demand portal are an important source for families receiving child support. \$1,163,618 in child support was collected through the Lien Demand Portal, an increase of 25% over the prior year.
- Incorporating DocuSign, which has become the preferred method for conveniently signing legal documents from a remote location for DCSS customers. A total of 1,369 documents were handled through DocuSign in FFY 2021-2022, an 18% increase over the prior year.
- Handling an estimated 2,567 cases in court. The department's emphasis on working with parents has resulted in pre-court agreements in 20% of our court caseload.
- Transitioning from manual to fast and efficient electronic filing of court documents with Contra Costa Superior Court.
- Receiving annually over 44,000 pieces of mail with the standard to route and deliver it within 24 hours of receipt.
- Enforcing orders made per the Smith-Ostler legal precedent. This program manages orders where child and/or spousal support includes a base support amount plus additional support from bonuses, commissions and income earned over a set

amount. DCSS collected \$6,301,972 for Smith-Ostler cases, representing a 14% increase over 2021.

- Using 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 \$453,238, a 51% increase over 2021.

B. TECHNOLOGY

For FFY 2021-2022, the Systems Support Team made the following technological advancements to increase productivity and cost effectiveness, while ensuring the security of our data with the end goal of serving our customers more efficiently:

- Updated backup systems to enhance the security of the department's data.
- Upgraded switches to allow for better network performance and provide additional levels of data security.
- Implemented softphone technology for a cost-effective and highly secure, cloud-based option to enable employees to work from home while connecting seamlessly with customers without the use of a traditional telephone.
- Deployed printer resources to reduce wasteful printing as well as increase worker productivity and data security by enabling print jobs to be released from printer in bulk when ready for mailing.
- Update to the network/firewall to accommodate modifications to the Child Support Enforcement training environment.
- Initiated efficient DCSS State issued laptop/Docking station deployment in the workplace to convert from desktop setups.
- Supported migration to Odyssey Court System to enable electronic filing of legal documents.
- Created Legal Early Customer Contact Expansion Macro to automate the workload associated with the project.

C. RECOGNITION

In FFY 2021-2022, Contra Costa DCSS received three prestigious awards--two from the California Directors Association (CSDA), and one from the National Child Support

Enforcement Association (NCSEA)--in recognition the program's excellence. The department was honored to accept the following awards on behalf of Contra Costa County:

- **Outstanding Program (CSDA)**

The Outstanding Program award recognizes a local child support agency that has consistently exemplified quality child support services to its constituency and community. The department was recognized among forty-seven local child support agencies in California for its commitment to improving the lives of children and families in Contra Costa as well as its contributions to the success of the program statewide.

- **Outstanding Group Achievement (CSDA)**

The Outstanding Group Achievement Award recognizes a group of child support professionals who have made a significant contribution to improve program performance for the families we serve locally and throughout the state. Contra Costa DCSS was recognized for developing a model Smith-Ostler program, which allows for collection of child and spousal support from additional overtime and bonus earnings. The unique program is scalable for statewide implementation, and to prepare for this, Contra Costa DCSS trained and supported other local child support agencies to develop their own Smith Ostler programs so that families receive all the support they are entitled to.

- **Innovative Partnership/Collaboration (NCSEA)**

Contra Costa DCSS was recognized nationally for its innovative partnership with Rubicon, a nonprofit with a mission to transform East Bay communities by equipping people to break the cycle of poverty. Contra Costa DCSS and Rubicon have collaborated for nearly a decade now to help struggling parents in the child support program achieve financial stability and provide better lives for their children. The Urban Institute has leveraged data to analyze the success of the partnership. The data shows that participants in Rubicon's programs are more likely to be employed than non-participants and are better positioned to support their children.

IV. CHALLENGES

Maintaining an appropriate staffing level for the department continues to be a challenge as its sole source of funding is allocated by the California Department of Child Support Services and its competitors, for human resources, includes Bay Area public and private sector employers.

FFY 2021-2022 RESULTS

- The department achieved its locally established goals under the state strategic plan:
 - Contra Costa continues to exceed statewide performance in its service delivery to families in the following areas: Collections on Current Support, Arrears and Orders Established—6.2%, 4.1%, and 3.9% above the statewide average in each respective category. Contra Costa DCSS collected \$3.79 for families for every \$1 it spent in delivery of its virtually free service, exceeding statewide Cost Effectiveness by 41%.
 - Total distributed collections reached \$74,276,459. This is the 3rd highest annual collection figure in the department’s history and represents a 2.7% or \$1.9 million increase since pre-pandemic collections in FFY 2018-2019.
 - At \$4,460 average collected per child support case for the year, Contra Costa DCSS ranked in the top six in the state for this performance indicator and made a significant impact in reducing childhood poverty. \$584,854 in support payments was collected per each full time Contra Costa DCSS employee in FFY 2021-2022, making the program highly cost-effective.
 - With a focus on expanding public awareness of child support services, Contra Costa DCSS increased new child support cases opened by 13%. The department also increased its Paternity Establishment Percentage by 1.7%, providing no-cost genetic testing to individuals and families.

- The department achieved state strategic plan goals through:
 - Establishment of a new Outreach and Marketing Team, expanding the department’s presence with the goal to reach a wider base of families from underserved communities while continuing to serve all families throughout the County.
 - Implementation of a new mobile application to simplify opening child support cases.
 - Developed a consistent, efficient and sustainable process to modify child support orders that involves educating and empowering customers and to increase efficiency of the Review and Adjustment Process.

- Refinement and expansion of new customer services tools to enhance our customers' experience when interacting with the department. These tools include text messaging, Zoom court appearances and interviews, as well as an interactive Virtual Information Center and DocuSign.

FFY 2022-2023 PRIORITIES

In FFY 2022-2023, the department will continue 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 four years, staff has had the opportunity to participate in project workgroups to see their own ideas come to fruition, resulting in an unprecedented level of investment in collective goals. Project priorities for FFY 2022-2023 include:

- **Outreach and Marketing Team Continued Development**

The department strives to promote a positive public image of child support, thereby ensuring that families in need have awareness of and access to child support services. In 2023, the department's new Outreach and Marketing team will focus on the following:

- Development of an internal SharePoint outreach page, as a hub for all outreach related information, including events, sign ups and a resource center, providing easy access to customer brochures and publications to facilitate customer referrals to other providers.
- Increased Community Partnerships as well as presentations and trainings on child support services.
- Collaboration with the state to build and enhance Contra Costa DCSS's social media presence.
- Streaming commercial campaigns.

- **Implement Tableau Score Card and Caseload Management Tool**

Leveraging the department's Enforcement and Performance Management Model as guides, a Tableau Caseworker Performance and Caseload Management tool is being piloted and will be implemented in FFY 2022-2023. The Caseworker Performance module of the tool will provide workers with real-time and individualized performance and productivity data as well as the ability to set and track progress on department and individual goals. The Case

Management module of the tool assists caseworkers with proactive strategies focused on establishing consistent current support and arrears payments.

- **Assessment to Identify and Respond to Parent/Child/Family needs**

The department recognizes that for families to thrive, they must have access to resources and services. The department will solicit targeted feedback from parents and caretakers to identify the individualized needs of families in our caseload and provide referrals for wrap-around services tailored to those needs.

- **Departmentwide Business Process Reviews**

The department will conduct business process reviews on each team with a focus on improving performance outcomes, standardization of customer service expectations and practices as well as building relationships with our customers through increased accessibility, communication, and education.

V. RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE FOCUS

In FFY 2021-2022, our newly established Outreach & Marketing team worked tirelessly to strengthen and expand connections with social service partners as well as increase the department's presence at community events. In addition to regular participation at Bay Area Rescue Mission, Homeless Court, Parole and Community Team (PACT) meetings and Rubicon presentations (among others), sixteen staff members volunteered to participate at fifteen community events throughout the year, reaching families in need with information about child support services and working with partners to help existing clients overcome financial barriers to supporting their children. The department recognizes that economic barriers impede a family's ability to thrive. Therefore, we have increased our roster of partnerships with agencies assisting families by more than 100% compared to the prior year and similarly expanded staff participation in outreach events. DCSS partners with the following programs:

AB109 community Partners, Aspiranet Fatherhood Program, Bay Area Rescue Mission, BARCS Employer Workshop, CCC Homeless Court, CCC Community Partners, COC Providers, East County Workforce Integration, East Bay Work's America's Job Center/Workforce Development Board, Family Justice Center, Federal VA Homeless Division, Game Plan for Success, Historically Marginalized Communities Engagement (HMCE), Homeless Workforce Integration Network, PACT and our local parole agency, Re-entry Success Center, Rubicon (Antioch and Richmond), and Shelter Inc.

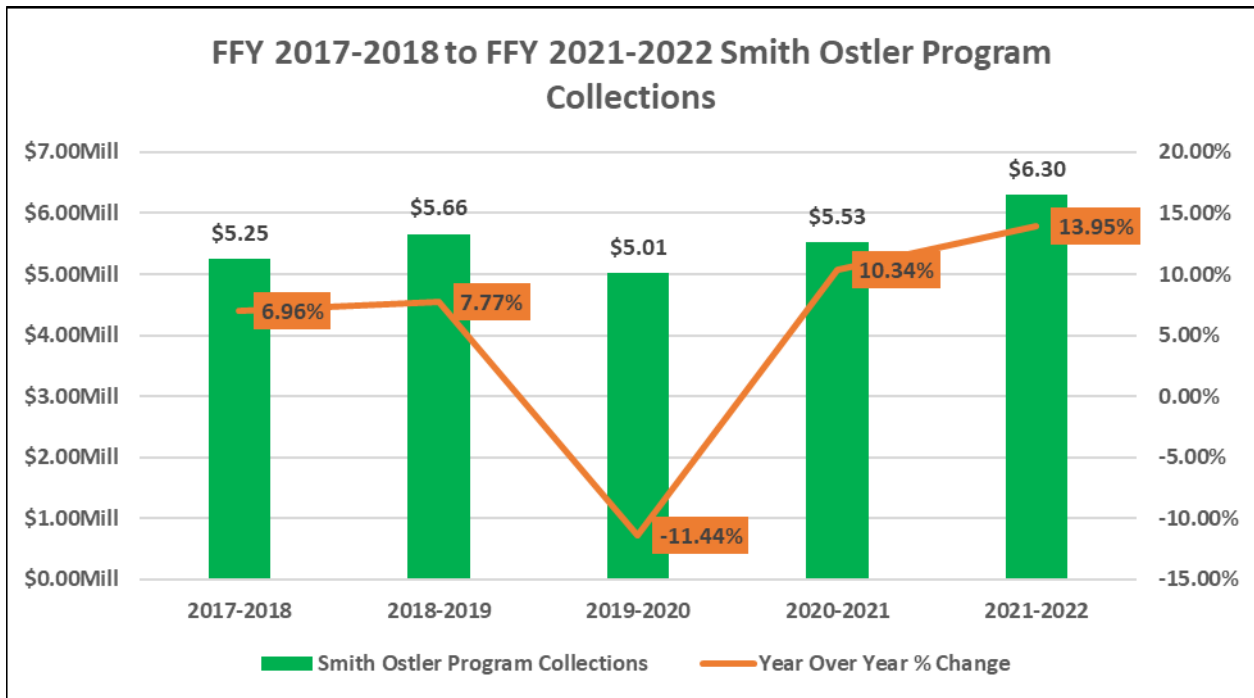
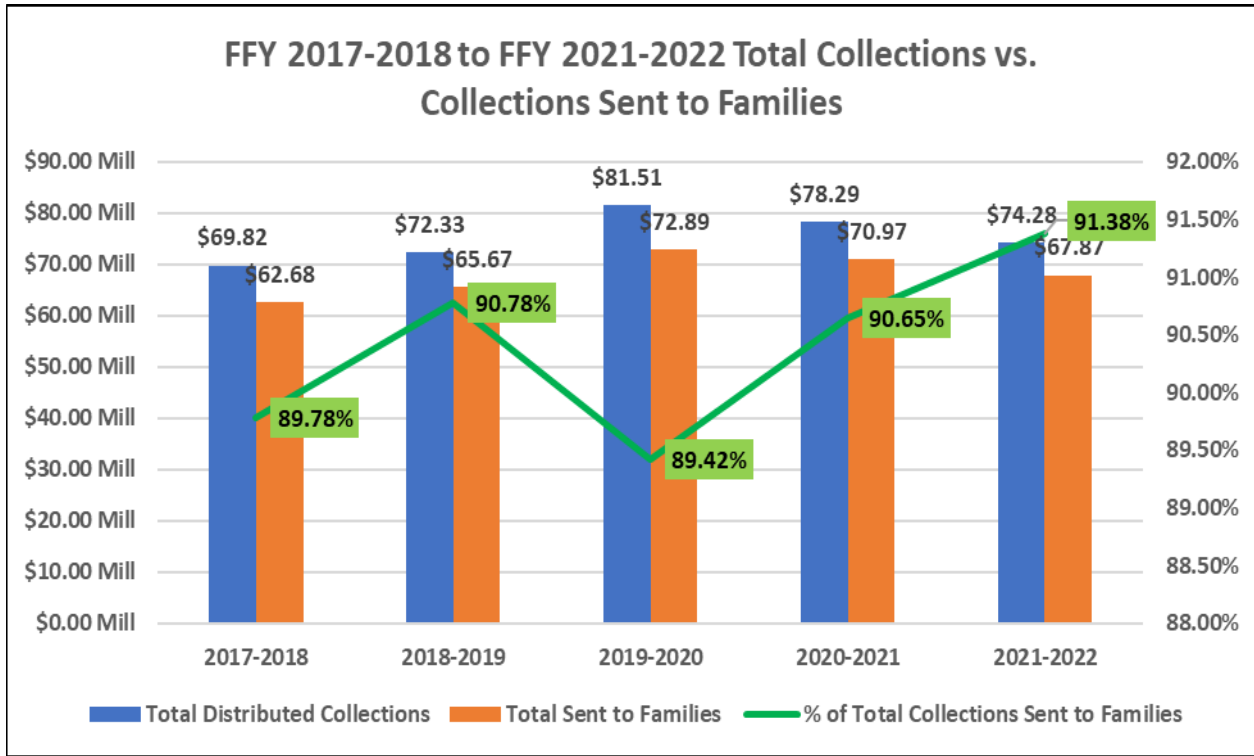
The department has emphasized developing *new* partnerships with the following programs, some of which serve the most vulnerable members of the community:

- **AB109 Group** seeks to deliver appropriate and effective rehabilitative reentry services to Contra Costa residents exiting the prison system. DCSS is committed to establishing early relationships and working with parents in our caseload preparing for release from incarceration so that child support is not a barrier to rehabilitation.
- **Contra Costa Community Partners** is a coalition of service providers and agencies throughout the county. As an active participant in this coalition, the department ensures that other program case managers are educated about child support services as a resource as well as where to turn if their clients are experiencing issues with child support.
- **HMCE (Historically Marginalized Communities Engagement)** program focuses on reaching underserved communities with information on healthcare and other services to improve outcomes for these groups. According to the Department of Health and Human Services, child support nearly doubles the average income of families below the poverty line. The department takes a seat at the HMCE table to ensure that underserved families have access to a service proven to boost families out of poverty.
- **Federal Veterans Homeless Division** is a community partner that the department has sought to strengthen its ties with this year. The department is a long-standing participant at the multi-day Stand Down at the Delta event, where veterans receive services in Medical, Dental, Veterans Treatment Court, Housing, Job Placement, Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Counseling. Inspired by our participation in Stand Down, the department has established relationships with the VA social workers assisting our veterans, so those who served our country have access to the services and assistance they need surrounding child support issues.

VI. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The department measures our effectiveness by whether we achieve the goals set forth in our strategic plan. Our first goal, make every case a paying case, is measured by the amount of collections distributed to families and collections made by the departments Smith Ostler Program. Our second goal, deliver excellent customer service, is measured by the percent of total customers surveyed who responded strongly positive customer service experience. Our third goal, have a knowledgeable and supported workforce, is measured by the number of optional trainings offered to staff. Our final goal, improve outcomes for families, is measured by

the number of community outreach partnerships. The charts below reflect the department's performance over five years.



FFY 2016-2017 to FFY 2021-2022--% of Total Customers with Strongly Positive Customer Service Experience*

*Survey
Monk

