



Child support in Minnesota: facts and figures

County and state child support offices provide services for more than 407,000 custodial and noncustodial parents. All families who receive public assistance are required to cooperate with the child support office to establish and enforce their child support orders. An important goal of the program is to help families work toward becoming and remaining self-sufficient.

Child support services

The mission of the child support program is to benefit children through:

- Establishing paternity
- Establishing and modifying support orders
- Collecting support.

Paternity establishment

- About 161,000 children who have a Minnesota child support case were born outside of marriage.
- As of September 2005, 96 percent of these children had paternity established.

Caseload information

- At the end of state fiscal year 2005, the child support program had 249,300 cases.
- Public assistance cases totaled 45,000.
- Nonpublic assistance cases totaled 204,000; of those, 75 percent received public assistance at some time.
- About 82 percent of Minnesota child support cases have a child support order in place.

Collections

- \$595 million in child support, a 1 percent increase from 2004, was collected and disbursed in FY 2005.
- Collections for ongoing child support totaled \$460 million, which was 69 percent of the total ongoing support that was due; 75 percent of cases with ongoing support obligations had some payment toward the obligation during the year.
- The average collection per open case with a court order was \$2,913.
- In 2005, through pass through, \$11.7 million in child support was collected and distributed to families in the Minnesota Family Investment Program.

Child support debt

- Cumulative past due support, or arrears, owed as of Sept. 30, 2005, was about \$1.5 billion.
- About \$129 million was paid on child support debt in federal fiscal year 2005. About 66 percent of cases with arrears received some arrears payment during the year.
- Average debt owed in cases with child support debt was \$7,817. About 78 percent of cases have debt.

Collection and enforcement methods

- **Income withholding.** A total of \$422 million was collected by employers withholding child support from parents' paychecks.
- **New hire reporting.** Each month employers report an average of 206,000 newly hired staff, which provides information for child support location and enforcement efforts.
- **License suspension.** As of June 30, 2005, approximately 32,000 parents had their driver's licenses suspended for failing to pay child support.
- **Tax refund intercepts.** Through federal and state tax refunds and rebate intercepts, \$30.1 million, 5 percent of all collections, was collected. About 69 percent of intercepts are federal; 31 percent are state.
- **Financial Institution Data Match.** As of June 30, 2005, \$7.9 million was collected by freezing or seizing financial assets.
- **Other enforcement methods.** Parents who do not comply with child support orders may also: have their lottery winnings intercepted, be denied approval or renewal of their passport, be reported to a credit bureau, be subject to civil contempt proceedings or be charged with Nonsupport of a Spouse or Child.

Service delivery

- PRISM, Minnesota's automated child support computer system, supports the work of more than 1,580 county and state workers in providing child support services.
- The Child Support Payment Center receives and processes approximately \$50 million each month.
- Automated phone lines receive an average of more than 132,500 calls a month, providing parents with information about their child support cases 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- Parents can get information about their child support case activities and payments through a secure state Web site at www.childsupport.dhs.state.mn.us. As of June 30, 2005, parents accessed their cases an average of 133,000 times per month.
- Minnesota is phasing out its warrant writing system to one in which payments will be automatically deposited into custodial parents' accounts. Parents can receive their child support payments by direct deposit into their savings, checking or stored value account. Approximately 65 percent of the collections disbursed for state FY 2005 were directly deposited into custodial parents' accounts.

Program funding

- Child support expenditures for 2005 totaled \$140.8 million. The federal government funded 75 percent; the state 11 percent and Minnesota counties 14 percent.
- The federal government matches 66 percent of state and county spending. It also provides funding based on performance outcomes, which is passed on to the counties; Minnesota's share of that was approximately \$12.2 million.
- For every \$1 spent on Minnesota's child support program, \$4.23 was collected in support for Minnesota children.

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