

Using Performance Measures to Assess Quality in Child Support Enforcement

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The technique of using performance measures as a way to assess the quality in various child support programs and assist in levels of funding was another major topic examined in the 2010 National Child Support Enforcement Association (**NCSEA**) Policy Forum and Training Conference. It was argued that much of the child support enforcement (CSE) expenditure was not going towards cost-effective measures. The idea was that more support would be seen on the state and local level if more incentives were available. Performance measures would essentially be a way to provide evidence of the quality of work being done within these programs. David Stillman, IV-D Director of the Washington Division of Child Support, supported the idea stating that CSE should be a cost-effectiveness ratio exercised by child support workers. He emphasized the importance of CSE in families and how there should be a reflection of the impact. The idea of performance measures seemed to be a widely accepted theme in the conference even amongst tribal communities. Carleen Anderson, Council Member of the Colville Tribes stated that tribes are more than willing and happy to agree to performance measures. Her only concern was that decision makers would be mindful and cognizant, in their evaluation, of their unique environment in which they do business, since it significantly differs from that of a state.

Performance could be evaluated in a variety of ways such as the outcomes of child support prevention programs, as seen in ones such as the Parenting and Paternity Awareness Program (**PAPA**) executed in Texas. Other performance measures could be evaluated with the help of technology. Many states are reconsidering the ways in which data from CSE is being incorporated into their systems, and making upgrades and modernizations accordingly. For example, Pam McKee, Planning and Evaluation Manager of the Michigan Department of Human Services, Office of Child Support (DHS/OCS), revealed a few technology challenges her state had overcome. She stated that recent system changes enabled streamlining of medical support, payment process screens and data exchanges. McKee also revealed that her state's shared agency data view system, developed for cleanup reports, is currently experiencing technical problems and is being considered for revisions.

A representative from New York, Lee Sapienza, Chief of Policy, Planning and Data Analysis shared information about their state's IV-D system that interfaced with Medicaid and the (**IV-D**) program. The state had experienced problems with the system, including cases where there were no distinguishing codes for Medicaid services, which led to an influx of broad-ranged referrals. A system was then developed, that aligned more with the characteristic codes, in which numbers are run on a nightly basis. The system also assists in notifying the Medicaid program when they get private health insurance in Medicaid-related cases, in which Medicaid does additional matching. Sapienza stated that the state may make more upgrades to the system that will incorporate an interface that includes federal notifications as well.

Kim Newsom Bridges, Executive Director for the **Ohio CSEA** Director's Association, shared how Ohio had recommendations in July 2008, for improving their CSE system that would get their software up to speed. Bridges stated that the state was doing a fairly good job of getting their child support program into the implementation stage and that the main motivation for making the revisions, and as quickly as possible, was to reach cost-effective solutions and alleviate financial challenges.

Other initiatives to increase efficiencies, discussed in the Policy Forum included the idea that there must be a more uniform process for processing clients and managing cases, and essentially the development of a simplified system across the state. States seemed to uphold these ideas including **San Diego California**, who just received a lot of stimulus funds, and plans to move to an electronic interface between TANF and CSE. Further, **Louisiana** plans on building out an interface that will utilize data-driven decisions and facilitate capacity in their CSE caseloads.