



# Child Support Cooperation

**M** MYTH: Unpaid child support isn't really a problem.

**R** **REALITY: Most single-parent families on food stamps don't receive any child support and those that do get support only obtain a portion of what is owed.**

Three out of four single-parent families on food stamps don't receive any child support at all.<sup>1</sup> The result: more than 6 million single-parent families are on food stamps.<sup>2</sup>

**M** MYTH: This policy punishes kids and moms for the sins of a deadbeat dad.

**R** **REALITY: Only uncooperative parents are removed from food stamps.**

Children are never removed from food stamps as a result of these cooperation requirements.<sup>3</sup> The policy only affects parents who refuse to cooperate without good cause. If a parent later chooses to cooperate, they may return to the program. Additionally, this policy actually helps families by increasing the likelihood they get the child support they are owed.<sup>4</sup>

**M** MYTH: Unpaid child support isn't financially significant to families.

**R** **REALITY: If absent parents paid their part, families could receive nearly \$500 per month.**

When child support is paid in full, single-parent families on food stamps receive \$5,700 per year on average.<sup>5</sup> These payments boost incomes by more than 54 percent for these families and those in poverty see their incomes more than double.<sup>6</sup>

**M** MYTH: Using unpaid child support to cut off food stamp benefits is unfair.

**R** **REALITY: States currently require child support cooperation for individuals receiving other welfare benefits, including cash assistance.**

Sanctions in other welfare programs are often even stricter than food stamp sanctions. Some states sanction entire households for the parents' non-cooperation and can extend sanctions for up to 12 months, even if a parent begins cooperating.

**M** MYTH: Enforcing child support will increase administrative costs.

**R** **REALITY: Additional enforcement costs are typically offset by lower caseloads.**

State experiences show that the reform can be adopted within existing resources, with no need for additional administrative funds at all. When Kansas implemented the policy in 2015, for example, the Department for Children and Families reported that it absorbed the administrative costs of the policy in its existing budget.<sup>7</sup>

1. Jonathan Ingram, "Child support cooperation: Ending the cycle of dependency," Foundation for Government Accountability (2018), <https://thefga.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Child-Support-Cooperation-Ending-the-Cycle-of-Dependency-3-20-18.pdf>.
2. Ibid.
3. 7 C.F.R. § 273.11 (2018), <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2018-title7-vol4/pdf/CFR-2018-title7-vol4-sec273-11.pdf>.
4. Jonathan Ingram, "Child support cooperation: Ending the cycle of dependency," Foundation for Government Accountability (2018), <https://thefga.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Child-Support-Cooperation-Ending-the-Cycle-of-Dependency-3-20-18.pdf>.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Nicholas Stehle and Jonathan Ingram, "Child support cooperation reduces dependency without breaking the bank," Foundation for Government Accountability (2018), <https://thefga.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Child-Support-CoOp-Costs-FINAL.pdf>.