

CHILD SUPPORT COOPERATION:
**Ending the cycle of
dependency**

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KEY FINDINGS

1

PROBLEM:
TOO FEW FAMILIES ARE
RECEIVING THE CHILD
SUPPORT THEY DESERVE



2

COST:
LOWER INCOMES, MORE
POVERTY, AND MORE
DEPENDENCY



3

SOLUTION:
REQUIRE CHILD SUPPORT
COOPERATION



4

IMPACT:
CHILD SUPPORT
COLLECTIONS
INCREASED BY NEARLY

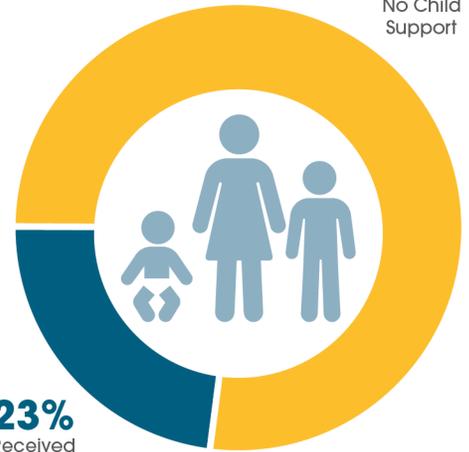
40%
AFTER REFORM

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OPPORTUNITY:
FAMILIES COULD SEE UP TO **\$300 MILLION** IN INCREASED
CHILD SUPPORT COLLECTIONS

JUST ONE IN FOUR SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES ON FOOD STAMPS RECEIVES CHILD SUPPORT

77%
Received
No Child
Support



23%
Received
At Least Some
Child Support

Source: US Department of Agriculture

Problem: Too few families are getting the child support they deserve

Nationwide, child support payment collection is a big problem. The most recently available data shows that few single-parent families receive child support at all and still fewer receive the entire amount owed them. In fact, in 2015, fewer than one in four single-parent families on food stamps received any amount of child support.¹⁻² Even among those families who receive support, most only receive a portion of what is owed.³

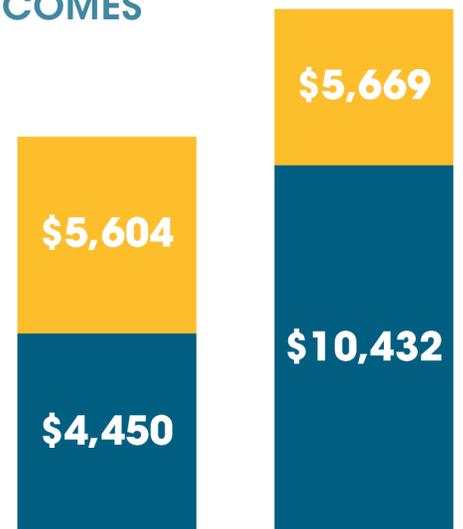
Cost: Lower incomes, more poverty, and more dependency

The lack of child support payments should be of concern because child support has the power to make an enormous difference in children's lives. Specifically, the payment of child support has been proven to help increase incomes, decrease poverty, and reduce dependency. When child support payments are not paid, however, incomes are lower, poverty is higher, and families are more likely to be trapped in welfare.

LOWER INCOMES

When child support is paid in full, single-parent families on food stamps receive an average of nearly \$5,700 per year.⁴ These payments boost incomes by more than 54 percent for these families and more than double incomes for families in poverty.⁵ When families do not receive what they are owed, they are robbed of thousands of dollars in extra income—a life-changing amount of money for someone trapped in dependency and poverty.

WITHOUT CHILD SUPPORT, SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES HAVE MUCH LOWER INCOMES

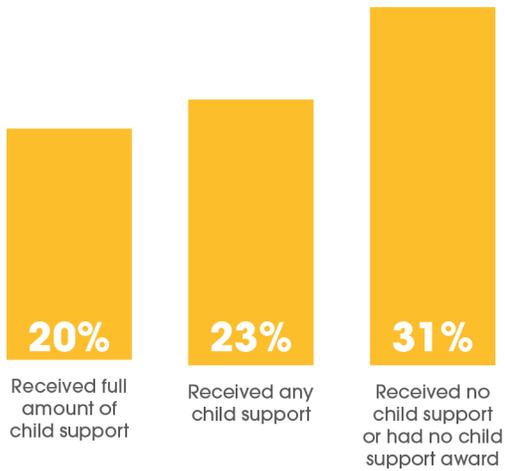


Single-parent families on food stamps and in poverty Single-parent families on food stamps

Earnings and other income Child support

Source: Census Bureau

FAMILIES WHO RECEIVE NO CHILD SUPPORT ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE IN POVERTY



Source: Census Bureau

MORE POVERTY

A lack of child support payments also means more poverty among single-parent families. Nearly a third of all single-parent families who receive no child support are in poverty—including 62 percent of such families on food stamps.⁶

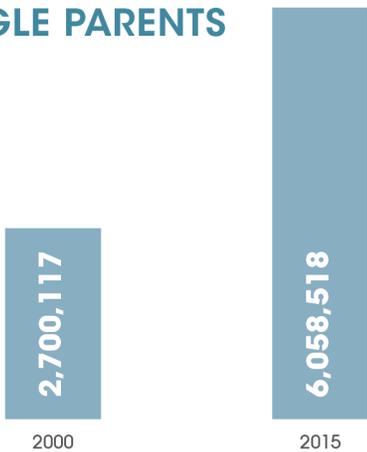
On the other hand, just one in five single-parent families are in poverty when the absent parent makes court-ordered child support payments in full.⁷ Child support lifts more than a million children out of poverty each year and brings millions more one step closer to escaping poverty.⁸

MORE DEPENDENCY

The number of single-parent families on food stamps has skyrocketed in recent years. Today, more than 6 million single-parent families are on the program—more than twice as many as in 2000.⁹⁻¹⁰ Worse yet, most of these single-parents will remain trapped in dependency for years to come: fewer than one in ten will leave the program within a year, while more than 60 percent will languish in dependency for more than eight years.¹¹

However, child support can greatly reduce dependency by increasing incomes through increased child support payments.

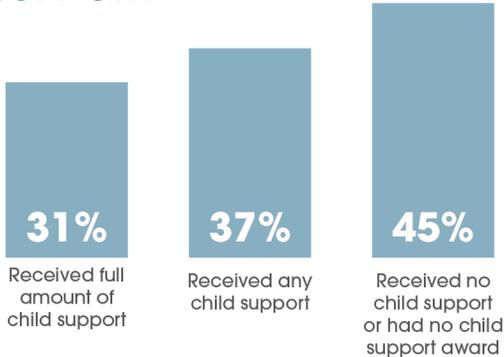
FOOD STAMP ENROLLMENT IS SKYROCKETING AMONG SINGLE PARENTS



Source: US Department of Agriculture

SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE ON WELFARE WHEN THEY DO NOT RECEIVE CHILD SUPPORT

Families who receive child support are far less likely to receive Medicaid, food stamps, cash welfare, public housing, rent subsidies, or other welfare benefits. In fact, fewer than one in three single-parent families who receive child support in full receive benefits from any of these programs.¹² On the other hand, nearly half of families who do not receive any support are dependent on one or more of these welfare programs.¹³



Source: Census Bureau

Families who receive no child support are nearly 50 percent more likely to receive Medicaid, nearly 60 percent more likely to be on food stamps, and nearly 70 percent more likely to receive public housing or rent subsidies as families who receive the full amount of owed child support.¹⁴ They are more than three times as likely to receive cash welfare and twice as likely to receive general assistance or other welfare benefits.¹⁵

Even if they enroll in food stamps and other welfare programs, single-parent families who receive child support need far less government assistance. In food stamps, for example, families who receive no child support cost taxpayers nearly 30 percent more per-person than families receiving at least \$500 in child support per month.¹⁶

TAXPAYER COSTS INCREASE WHEN SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES DO NOT RECEIVE CHILD SUPPORT



Source: Census Bureau

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Solution: Require child support cooperation

Given the power of child support to increase incomes, reduce poverty, and reduce dependency, the only question for policymakers is how they can help poor children receive more of the support they need and deserve. One simple step lawmakers can take is to require parents to cooperate with states’ child support enforcement efforts.

States have long used child support cooperation requirements in cash assistance programs to help families get the support they need and reduce government dependency. States should build on the success of these reforms and expand the requirements to food stamps, which is currently an option for states within federal law.

Under this reform, custodial parents would be prohibited from obstructing the state’s attempts to establish paternity, track down absent parents, or collect child support. Likewise, noncustodial parents would be required to make court-ordered payments and otherwise cooperate with collection efforts.

If parents refuse to cooperate without good cause—such as when the child is the product of rape or incest, when there is a risk of domestic violence, or when it would otherwise not be in the best interest of the child—they would be removed from food stamps. Their children would remain enrolled, but parents would need to cooperate to return to the program.

Impact: Child support collections increased by nearly 40 percent after reform

States have successfully used child support cooperation requirements in cash assistance programs for decades, but expanding these requirements to food stamps also has an impressive track record.

In 2015, Kansas adopted child support cooperation requirements for parents on food stamps, estimating that the new policy would apply to nearly 20,000 single-parent families.¹⁷ At the same time, the Kansas Department for Children and Families set in place a system to track child support collections for families affected by the reform.¹⁸ Within just six months, child support collections increased by nearly 40 percent among those impacted by the reform.¹⁹

This increase only reflects the first round of individuals removed from the program for refusing to cooperate as the reforms were initially implemented. Based on this experience, child support collections among those impacted are expected to be approximately \$1.8 million higher per year now that the reforms have phased in fully.²⁰

CHILD SUPPORT COLLECTIONS ROSE BY NEARLY 40 PERCENT AFTER REFORM



Source: Kansas Department for Children and Families


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Child support cooperation requirements are an important first step to improving lives, reducing dependency, and helping needy and impoverished children.

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Opportunity: Families could see up to \$300 million in increased child support collections

States have a long track record of success in using cooperation requirements in cash welfare. Kansas' experience shows the value in expanding those requirements to other welfare programs, including food stamps. Based on that experience, families could see up to \$300 million per year in additional child support collections if all states adopted these reforms.²¹

Of course, more work will be needed to ensure that poor families get the support they need. But child support cooperation requirements are an important first step to improving lives, reducing dependency, and helping needy and impoverished children.

Appendix 1. Just one in four single-parent families on food stamps receive any child support

STATE	SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES ON FOOD STAMPS	RECEIVING CHILD SUPPORT
Alabama	135,028	18%
Alaska	8,753	25%
Arizona	131,014	19%
Arkansas	68,953	24%
California	545,062	14%
Colorado	67,683	25%
Connecticut	48,512	27%
Delaware	22,851	25%
District of Columbia	19,883	13%
Florida	342,311	25%
Georgia	273,339	31%
Hawaii	17,170	19%
Idaho	26,623	33%
Illinois	272,265	19%
Indiana	132,475	30%
Iowa	55,999	31%
Kansas	38,478	32%
Kentucky	101,703	21%
Louisiana	152,305	23%
Maine	27,100	30%
Maryland	100,569	20%
Massachusetts	121,279	24%
Michigan	198,053	21%
Minnesota	62,036	28%
Mississippi	91,961	35%
Missouri	138,608	26%
Montana	14,634	26%
Nebraska	26,528	38%
Nevada	38,270	21%
New Hampshire	16,573	33%
New Jersey	116,405	8%

Appendix 1. Just one in four single-parent families on food stamps receive any child support (Continued)

STATE	SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES ON FOOD STAMPS	RECEIVING CHILD SUPPORT
New Mexico	51,776	21%
New York	357,525	19%
North Carolina	216,571	25%
North Dakota	8,011	34%
Ohio	247,495	28%
Oklahoma	75,786	20%
Oregon	80,374	23%
Pennsylvania	202,127	29%
Rhode Island	21,177	28%
South Carolina	125,738	26%
South Dakota	14,059	25%
Tennessee	158,402	20%
Texas	620,139	26%
Utah	29,534	28%
Vermont	10,415	21%
Virginia	139,576	25%
Washington	127,924	26%
West Virginia	38,613	33%
Wisconsin	115,316	39%
Wyoming	5,537	34%
TOTAL	6,058,518	24%

Appendix 2. Child support collections could increase by nearly \$300 million per year

STATE	ADDITIONAL COLLECTIONS	STATE	ADDITIONAL COLLECTIONS
Alabama	\$7,830,000	New Mexico	\$2,883,000
Alaska	\$464,000	New York	\$20,263,000
Arizona	\$7,436,000	North Carolina	\$11,491,000
Arkansas	\$3,711,000	North Dakota	\$374,000
California	\$33,134,000	Ohio	\$12,471,000
Colorado	\$3,559,000	Oklahoma	\$4,278,000
Connecticut	\$2,503,000	Oregon	\$4,361,000
Delaware	\$1,202,000	Pennsylvania	\$10,153,000
District of Columbia	\$1,219,000	Rhode Island	\$1,080,000
Florida	N/A	South Carolina	\$6,508,000
Georgia	\$13,312,000	South Dakota	\$739,000
Hawaii	\$973,000	Tennessee	\$8,958,000
Idaho	N/A	Texas	\$32,382,000
Illinois	\$15,556,000	Utah	\$1,494,000
Indiana	\$6,553,000	Vermont	\$579,000
Iowa	\$2,702,000	Virginia	\$7,386,000
Kansas	N/A	Washington	\$6,655,000
Kentucky	\$5,645,000	West Virginia	\$1,812,000
Louisiana	\$8,245,000	Wisconsin	\$4,913,000
Maine	\$1,338,000	Wyoming	\$257,000
Maryland	\$5,654,000	TOTAL	\$289,220,000
Massachusetts	\$6,454,000		
Michigan	N/A		
Minnesota	\$3,134,000		
Mississippi	N/A		
Missouri	\$7,172,000		
Montana	\$761,000		
Nebraska	\$1,156,000		
Nevada	\$2,120,000		
New Hampshire	\$783,000		
New Jersey	\$7,567,000		

** As of October 2016, child support cooperation requirements had already been adopted in Florida, Idaho, Kansas, Michigan, and Mississippi.

REFERENCES

1. Author's calculations based upon data provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture on food stamp enrollment among single adult households with dependent children in fiscal year 2015, disaggregated by receipt of child support income.
2. Data from the Census Bureau indicated a similar rate of single-parent families on food stamps receiving no child support in 2013. See, e.g., <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/demo/tables/families/2013/chldsu13.pdf>.
3. Ibid.
4. Author's calculations based upon data provided by the Census Bureau on average child support income among single-parent families receiving food stamps.
5. Author's calculations based upon data provided by the Census Bureau on average child support income and other income among single-parent families receiving food stamps, disaggregated by poverty status.
6. Author's calculations based upon data provided by the Census Bureau on poverty rates among single-parent families who do not receive court-ordered child support or do not have child support awards, disaggregated by enrollment in food stamps.
7. Author's calculations based upon data provided by the Census Bureau on poverty rates among single-parent families who receive the full amount of court-ordered child support.
8. Administration for Children and Families, "The child support program is a good investment," U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2016), https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/programs/css/sbtn_csp_is_a_good_investment.pdf.
9. Author's calculations based upon data provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture on food stamp enrollment among single adult households with dependent children in fiscal year 2015. See, e.g., Food and Nutrition Service, "Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program quality control database," U.S. Department of Agriculture (2016), https://host76.mathematica-mpr.com/fns/PUBLIC_USE/2015/qcfy2015_st.zip.
10. Author's calculations based upon data provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture on food stamp enrollment among single adult households with dependent children in fiscal year 2000. See, e.g., Food and Nutrition Service, "Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program quality control database," U.S. Department of Agriculture (2001), https://host76.mathematica-mpr.com/fns/PUBLIC_USE/2000/qcfy2000_st.zip.
11. Author's calculations based upon the completed spell lengths and cumulative exit rates among a cross-sectional sample of adults in families with children and one adult. Joshua Leftin et al., "Dynamics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program participation from 2008 to 2012," U.S. Department of Agriculture (2014), <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/ops/Dynamics2008-2012.pdf>.
12. Author's calculations based upon data provided by the Census Bureau on welfare receipt among single-parent families who receive the full amount of court-ordered child support.
13. Author's calculations based upon data provided by the Census Bureau on welfare receipt among single-parent families who do not receive court-ordered child support or do not have child support awards.
14. Author's calculations based upon data provided by the Census Bureau on receipt of Medicaid, food stamps, and public housing among single-parent families, disaggregated by payment and award status.
15. Author's calculations based upon data provided by the Census Bureau on receipt of TANF, general assistance, or other cash welfare among single-parent families, disaggregated by payment and award status.
16. Author's calculations based upon data provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture on average benefit costs per person, disaggregated by level of child support payments received.
17. Shawn Sullivan, "Fiscal note for HB 2381 by House Committee on Federal and State Affairs," Kansas Division of the Budget (2015), http://www.kslegislature.org/li_2016/b2015_16/asures/documents/fisc_note_hb2381_00_0000.pdf.
18. In order to track the impact of the reform for an extended period, data in this report is limited to parents receiving disqualification notices between July 2015 and January 2016.
19. Author's calculations based upon data provided by the Kansas Department for Children and Families.
20. Author's calculations based upon the average annualized increase in child support collections per disqualification among the first 1,253 disqualifications and the total expected disqualifications per year once fully implemented, based on annualized disqualifications in the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2016.
21. Author's calculations based upon the average annualized increase in child support collections per disqualification in Kansas, the average annualized number of disqualifications for noncooperation in Kansas during the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2016, annualized disqualifications as a share of total single-parent households receiving no child support in Kansas, and total single-parent households receiving no child support in other states.



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