

**COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE**  
Inter-Office Communication

Date: April 22, 2022

To: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

From: Child Support Services, Jim Sullivan, Director

Subject: Child Support Services Overview of Services

File Type: Informational Report

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The purpose of this report is to provide background information on the function and services provided by the Department of Child Support Services (CSS).

**BACKGROUND**

The child support program is federally mandated and state administered under the Child Support Enforcement Act, pursuant to Title IV-D of the Federal Social Security Act and Sections 49.22 and 59.53 of the Wisconsin Statutes.

CSS provides child support services to Milwaukee County through a contract with the Wisconsin's Department of Children and Families. Child support cases are referred by state-managed public assistance programs when a custodial parent or child is eligible to receive benefits. Parents or custodians who do not receive public benefits may also apply for federally funded child support services, free of cost to their families.

Individuals choosing not to apply for services or those ineligible for full services may receive limited child support services funded by County tax levy and fees for services. CSS works cooperatively with State agencies and other County departments to comply with Federal and State IV-D program mandates, including providing parent location services, establishing paternity, and establishing and enforcing child and medical support orders in local and interstate cases.

The role of CSS is legally limited to support issues and CSS is not part of any decisions regarding the custody or placement of children.

**BODY**

**MISSION:** The Department of Child Support Services through the utilization of community resources, promotes family stability, creating a better quality of life for the children of Milwaukee County.

**STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:** By ensuring the involvement of both parents in their child's life, the Department of Child Support Services makes it possible for every child to grow with loving support from their parents.

Milwaukee County CSS provides services to families in over 116,000 child support cases each year. The Wisconsin Department of Children and Families estimates that 2/3 or more of these families are African American or Hispanic. Milwaukee County CSS's 116,000 cases is the largest case load of any county in Wisconsin, approximately 1/3 of all child support cases in the state, and equates to approximately 800 cases per CSS employee.

CSS has four divisions: Case Management, Financial, Legal Counsel and Operations. Each division is split into units to assist with paternity establishment, case initiation, order establishment, enforcement of obligations, payments and disbursements, interstate cases, customer service, court appearances, and daily operations. We have 139 full time employees (FTE).

CSS is a performance funded department in which higher performance on child support metrics translates into a greater share of federal funds. These metrics include Paternity Establishment, Order Establishment, Collections of Current Support (CSUP), and Collections on Arrears. Child support leverages federal dollars and generates returns on investment for the Milwaukee community. Every dollar spent on child support programming brings in an additional \$2 in Federal funding. Likewise, \$1 cut to child support funding loses \$2 from the Federal government and multiplies service impacts to families that are low income, with potentially generational negative effect.

We advance Milwaukee County's strategic goals of creating intentional inclusion, bridging the gap in health disparities, and investing in equity, because we ensure that families and children have the support that they need. By strengthening families and supporting children, we increase the quality of life and health of Milwaukee County residents. CSS also works to reduce barriers for the families we serve, including by adopting and implementing the new Administrative Paternity law, which increases access for low-income families to be able to legally recognize their family relationship without the need to originate in a formal and adversarial court proceeding.

CSS has many outreach programs:

- CSS Prison project aids prisoners as they reenter the community following incarceration by seeking to stop debt from accumulating by suspending child support orders during periods of incarceration limiting amount of outstanding debt. This aligns to strategic plan 2A and 3A.
- Child Support Attorneys volunteer at legal clinics throughout the city to assist participants with legal questions related to child support. This aligns to strategic plan 2A and 2B.
- Child Support in Your Neighborhood provides child support services after hours

- at various off-site locations. This aligns to strategic plan 2A.
- Fatherhood Family-Focused, Interconnected, Resilient and Essential (FIRE) program assists participants with parenting, relationship and employment assistance. This aligns to strategic plan 2A.

### **ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN**

- 1A: Reflect the full diversity of the County at every level of County government  
1B: Create and nurture an inclusive culture across County government  
1C: Increase the number of County contracts awarded to minority and women-owned businesses  
2A: Determine what, where, and how we deliver services to advance health equity  
2B: Break down silos across County government to maximize access to and quality of services offered  
2C: Apply a racial equity lens to all decisions  
3A: Invest "upstream" to address root causes of health disparities  
3B: Enhance the County's fiscal health and sustainability  
3C: Dismantle barriers to diverse and inclusive communities

### **FISCAL EFFECT**

The report is informational only and there is no fiscal impact.

### **VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES**

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### **PREPARED BY:**

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### **APPROVED BY:**

Jim Sullivan, Director, Child Support Services



**ATTACHMENTS:** Child Support Basics, PowerPoint

cc: Kelly Bablitch, Chief of Staff, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors  
Janelle M. Jensen, Legislative Services Division Manager, Office of the County Clerk  
Allyson Smith, Committee Coordinator, Office of the County Clerk  
Daniel Benson, Information Coordinator, Office of the County Clerk