

# Evaluation of the Tennessee Parent Support Program

**Tennessee**



*Parent Support Program*

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## Executive Summary

### The Project

In October 2009, the Tennessee Department of Human Services (DHS) was awarded a grant from the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) to develop, implement, and evaluate a program providing employment, parenting time, and case management services to low-income, unwed parents in the child support program in three Tennessee judicial districts: the 11th (Chattanooga), 20th (Nashville), and 26th (Chester, Henderson, and Madison counties which includes the city of Jackson). The program, called the Parent Support Program (PSP), was conducted in collaboration with the Tennessee Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC). The new project built on the Tennessee Parenting Project, which was funded by OCSE, conducted by DHS and AOC in the same three judicial districts, and provided parenting time services to low-income parents in the child support program. PSP enabled child support agencies in these three jurisdictions to hire staff to provide case management and job-focused services in addition to helping with parenting time.

From January 2010 through March 2013, 1,016 noncustodial parents enrolled in PSP across the three project sites: 342 in the 11th, 435 in the 20th and 239 in the 26th. Most enrollees were African-American males (83%). Nearly half (47%), and completed high school or attained a GED. Nearly all of the participants in the 11th and 20th Judicial Districts (JD) were unemployed when they enrolled in PSP (92% and 82%, respectively) and a majority of the participants in the 26th JD were unemployed (54%). On average, PSP participants had been unemployed for 17 months and only 6 to 11 percent were receiving unemployment benefits. They had earned an average of \$9.45 per hour and a median of \$8.50 in their most recent job. Three-quarters of all PSP participants characterized their financial situation as “poor” and reported annual earnings of \$10,000 or less.

In the last year of the Parent Support Project, DHS and AOC developed a pilot project to test the effectiveness of providing short-term, paid, job training in generating longer-term employment and regular child support payments for noncustodial parents (NCP). Except for those enrolled in the pilot, NCPs in the PSP were offered only soft skills and job search services such as résumé preparation, job leads, and interview practice. They rarely had access to job training and none had the opportunity to participate in paid training programs. Pilot job training services were provided by Goodwill agencies in two of the project sites: the 11th Judicial District (Chattanooga) and the 20th Judicial District (Nashville). From January 2013 through April 30, 2013, 54 NCPs were referred to the Goodwill Pilot Demonstration project, and their progress was monitored through August 2013.

The Center for Policy Research (CPR) of Denver, Colorado, conducted a comprehensive evaluation. It included data from a Management Information System that project staff used to record information on

PSP participants, including demographics, employment, barriers to child support payment, parent-child contact and service delivery; telephone interviews with participants conducted three and six months following PSP enrollment to determine employment status and the use of various services and referrals available through PSP; and a data extract from the Tennessee Child Support Enforcement System (TCSES) that included information on child support orders, arrears balances, and payment patterns in the 24 months prior to and following enrollment in PSP. The only data on service delivery in PSP and employment outcomes came from client interviews, which were ultimately done with fewer than half of all PSP participants

CPR also generated a non-treatment comparison group consisting of 466 child support cases in jurisdictions selected to match the project sites. Very limited information was available on noncustodial parents in these cases and subsequent analysis revealed that they were not equivalent to the treatment group and had higher levels of employment and better child support payment behaviors at program enrollment.

### **The Participants' Service Needs**

- The top problems noted by PSP participants across the three project sites were limited work history (80%), lack of job skills (78%), prior incarceration (77%), lack of reliable transportation (60%), and the lack of a driver's license (60%).
- On average, PSP participants had child support cases that were seven years old, with only 11 percent having cases that were under one year. Nearly all owed past-due child support and had average arrears balances that ranged from \$6,000 in the 26th JD to \$22,000 in the 11th. Average obligations for current monthly support were \$273 in the 26th JD, \$370 in the 11th JD, and \$406 in the 20th JD. Total average monthly obligations for current monthly support and arrears were \$323 in the 26th JD, \$447 in the 11th JD, and \$526 in the 20th JD.
- Over 80 percent of NCPs who enrolled in PSP wanted job-focused services. Half in the 11th JD and 65 percent in the 26th JD wanted help with driver's license reinstatement (45% across the three project sites), and approximately one third (38%) wanted a one-on-one explanation of their child support situation and options. Only 18 percent of PSP participants had a written parenting plan, and nearly a third (31%) of those without a visitation plan wanted help developing one. Many parents in the 26th JD (72%), who reported the highest levels of conflict with the other parent, wanted help with co-parenting.

### **PSP Services Provided and Outcomes**

- PSP participants interviewed at three and six months following enrollment reported receiving a variety of employment-focused job services. For example, 88 percent reported getting help

with job listings and postings; 60 percent reported getting job leads and counseling from PSP staff members; and 49 percent reported participating in job fairs and hiring events.

- PSP participants also reported strong increases in employment. In the 11th JD, rates of employment rose from 8 percent at program enrollment to 67 percent at the three-month check to 45 percent at the six-month follow-up interview. In the 20th JD, rates of employment rose from 8 percent at program enrollment to 46 percent at the three-month check to 50 percent at the six-month follow-up interview. In the 26th JD, rates of employment rose from 46 percent at program enrollment to 65 percent at the three-month check to 69 percent at the six-month follow-up interview.
- According to the automated child support system (TCSES), payments among PSP participants improved significantly following their enrollment. The percentage of months during which PSP participants made a child support payment prior to and following program enrollment rose from 43 to 48 percent in the 11th JD, 37 to 38 percent in the 20th, and 52 to 62 percent in the 26th JD. The differences between pre- and post-program payment were only statistically significant in the 26th JD. The percentage of child support due that was paid prior to and following enrollment in PSP rose significantly for PSP participants, from 33 percent to 36 percent. Those who received help with access and visitation registered significant improvements in child support payment, paying 45 percent of their child support obligation, as compared with 32 percent for those who did not receive help with parenting time.

### **Goodwill Job Training Pilot**

- Of the 54 noncustodial parents who enrolled in the job training pilot project, 10 percent did not qualify because they had an open criminal case, 45 percent dropped out, and the remaining 23 percent either completed job training and secured full time employment or were still actively participating in job training and job search (22%).
- The incidence of verified employment for participants in the Goodwill Pilot Project rose from 2 percent at enrollment to 38 percent when project data were collected, while the incidence of an active income assignment rose from 28 to 40 percent.
- The percentage of participants in the Goodwill Pilot Project who paid nothing toward their current child support obligation dropped from 33 to 20 percent in the six months following enrollment, while the median number of months in which participants made a child support payment rose from one to two.

### **Key Findings**

- **Many noncustodial parents seen at the child support agency need and want help with employment.** PSP participants had dramatically higher unemployment rates than those for the general population in the 11th, 20th, and 26th Judicial Districts, and nearly all wanted help finding a job.

- **Programs like PSP attract participants at all stages of child support case processing.** Although the OCSE initiative was designed to focus on new child support cases recruited at order establishment, NCPs who enrolled in PSP had child support cases ranging in age from one to 24 years. Recruitment efforts for future programs should be broad and not restricted to a certain age range or stage of case processing.
- **Low income noncustodial parents face many barriers to obtaining and retaining employment.** At program intake, between 59 and 80 percent of NCPs reported that a limited work history, a lack of job skills, prior incarceration, the lack of a car or reliable transportation, not having a driver's license, and lacking a high school diploma or GED presented barriers to finding employment. This is similar to what other jurisdictions implementing employment programs for low income NCPs have found.
- **Many low-income noncustodial parents who enroll in programs for employment assistance drop out or participate at only minimal levels.** Nearly half (45%) of the 54 noncustodial parents who enrolled in the Goodwill Job Training Pilot Project dropped out, and another 10 percent did not qualify because they had an open criminal case. Other employment programs for noncustodial parents also report high rates of attrition, ranging from 30 to 40 percent.
- **PSP increased employment among participants.** Employment increased following enrollment in PSP with the percentage of employed noncustodial parents rising from 8 percent at program enrollment in the 11th and 20th Judicial Districts to 45 and 50 percent at the six-month follow-up interview, respectively. This compares favorably with Arapahoe County's Parent's To Work program, where 54 percent of noncustodial parents obtained employment following enrollment in the program.
- **PSP increased child support payments among participants.** The percentage of child support due that participants' paid prior to and following their enrollment in PSP rose significantly, from 33 to 36 percent.
- **Noncustodial parents who participate in paid training programs appear to experience improvements in employment and child support payment.** Early results from the Goodwill training pilot are promising. In the six months following enrollment, the incidence of verified employment among participants rose from 2 percent to 38 percent, active income assignments increased from 28 to 40 percent, and the median number of months in which participants made a child support payment rose from one to two.
- **Although child support payment patterns improved following PSP participation, they remained far from complete.** That payment performance only rose from 33 to 36 percent, with the most substantial increases occurring in the 26th JD may be due to the fact that average order levels were the lowest at that site (\$273 versus \$400 in the 11th and 20th). Noncustodial parents at this site were substantially more likely than their counterparts in the 11th and 20th Judicial Districts to agree that they could afford to pay their child support obligation (39% versus fewer than 10%). Child support order levels should reflect actual earnings and an ability to pay.
- **Few parents have formal parenting time arrangements, and many want help developing a formal parenting plan to submit to the court.** Only 18 percent of PSP participants said that they had a written visitation plan, and 30 percent of those without one wanted help developing one

(58% in the 26th Judicial District). These patterns are consistent with those observed in the Massachusetts Parent Support Program, where only 18 percent had a written parenting plan and 22 percent were interested in working with program staff to develop one.

- **Helping parents with their parenting time problems improves the payment of child support.** PSP participants who received help with visitation paid 45 percent of their child support obligation, as compared with 32 percent for those with no help. This is consistent with the Tennessee Parenting Project, where average child support payments for noncustodial parents who received parenting time services rose significantly, from 54.2 to 57.6 percent in the 12 months following program enrollment, and was unchanged for cases in the comparison group, which only received printed information about community resources.
- **Only a fraction of PSP participants have court orders dealing with family safety.** According to interviewed PSP participants, the incidence of restraining orders (2%), supervised visitation orders (2%), and open child protection cases (3%) was very low. Although self-reports of socially undesirable behaviors are inherently unreliable, higher proportions of PSP participants disclosed other socially undesirable behaviors such as drug and alcohol problems (13%), mental health issues (13%), and housing instability (22%).
- **Programs like Parent Support Program generate high levels of user satisfaction but many participants want more intense job training opportunities and higher paying jobs.** Most (82%) participants rated PSP as “very” or “somewhat” helpful, and at least 80 percent classified résumé preparation, computer training, workshops or classes on interviewing or preparing for work, and ESL or GED classes as “excellent” or “good” features of the program. To improve the program, at least 80 percent of the respondents suggested offering more job training programs, having more job openings, having jobs that pay higher wages, and giving more help with rent.
- **Although they are appreciated, programs like PSP do not change the grim financial situation that low-income NCPs face.** After enrollment, 69 percent of PSP participants reported running out of money for food, having to stay with family or friends because they lacked housing, or having their utilities turned off. Low-income noncustodial parents face considerable barriers to employment, earnings, child support payment, and self-sufficiency that are not readily addressed in programs that aim to help.
- **Child support offices should develop more responsive policies for low-income NCPs.** When they enrolled in PSP, three quarters of participants reported annual earnings of \$10,000 or less and characterized their financial situation as “poor.” Recommended child support policies for noncustodial parents in employment programs included expedited modifications, minimum order levels, suspended enforcement actions, driver’s license reinstatement, and forgiveness of state-owed arrears.
- **Child support offices should partner with workforce programs that are equipped to offer a wider array of effective job services and to monitor service delivery.** Interviewed PSP participants were most apt to report receiving job postings and counseling to guide their job search efforts; nearly all recommended offering more job training programs, job opportunities for individuals with weak job history and prior incarceration, and more transportation assistance. Future job-focused services for noncustodial parents should be offered by



experienced and resourced workforce programs that are equipped to provide a wider range of services—including job training. These providers should also be in a better position to monitor the actual delivery of workforce services and to track employment outcomes.

## 1. Introduction

In 2009, the Tennessee Department of Human Services (DHS) was awarded a grant from the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) to develop, implement, and evaluate a program providing employment, parenting time, and case management services to low-income, unwed parents in the child support program in three judicial districts across Tennessee. DHS collaborated with the Tennessee Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) to design and implement the project. The project was conducted in three sites:

- The 11th Judicial District encompassing Hamilton County and the city of Chattanooga;
- The 20th Judicial District encompassing Davidson County and the city of Nashville; and
- The 26th Judicial District comprised of Chester, Henderson, and Madison counties and the city of Jackson.

The program, called the Parent Support Program (PSP), built upon a previously funded OCSE demonstration project conducted by DHS and AOC that had operated in these three judicial districts. Known as the Tennessee Parenting Project, it had focused on providing parenting time services to low-income unwed parents in the child support system, encouraging cooperation between parents, and strengthening the parents' emotional connection with their children. As part of the Tennessee Parenting Project, staff had offered facilitation services to 1,591 parents in the child support program to help them develop parenting plans. A comprehensive evaluation by the Center for Policy Research (CPR) had compared the impact of providing parenting time services to families in the child support program on parental relationships, parent-child contact and child support payments (Davis et al., 2010).

The Parent Support Program (PSP) placed staff known as Grant Program Coordinators (Coordinators) in each of the three local child support offices to provide employment-focused services to families. Maximus operates the child support program for the 11th and 20th Judicial Districts, and the District Attorney's Office operates the child support program for the 26th Judicial District. The Social Services Coordinators conducted outreach with child support workers, the court, and local community agencies serving low-income parents to generate referrals for the PSP and to deliver services aimed at helping families in a holistic way.

Project staff conducted brief screenings with referred noncustodial parents (NCPs) to identify problems that they had that might reduce their ability to support their children both emotionally and financially. Since a critical service need that most recruited, low-income noncustodial parents faced was unemployment or underemployment, PSP staff developed partnerships with the local workforce services providers and other community agencies that provide employment services. In addition to providing referrals to the local workforce center, the Coordinators located at the local child support

office were the primary provider of employment-related services to NCPs enrolled in PSP. In addition to employment services, the Coordinators were available to work with interested parents to develop a parenting plan and provide referrals to other public and private agencies for needed supportive services.

During the last year of the grant, a pilot project was developed within the Parent Support Program to test the effectiveness of a short-term, paid, job-training initiative in generating longer-term employment for NCPs. Except for those enrolled in the pilot, job training was unavailable through PSP and most employment-focused services involved job search activities and “soft skills” development such as résumé preparation and interview practice provided by the Coordinators. The job training services for the pilot were provided by the Goodwill agencies in the two pilot sites, which were the 11th Judicial District (Chattanooga) and the 20th Judicial District (Nashville). The Goodwill Pilot Demonstration project received PSP referrals beginning in January 2013 through April 30, 2013. Outcomes for these cases were tracked through the final month of PSP, August 2013.

This report describes the design and operation of the Parent Support Program and the results of a comprehensive process and impact evaluation conducted by the Center for Policy Research (CPR) of Denver, Colorado, to assess its strengths and limitations.

## 2. Background: Child Support, Employment, and Parenting

Child support is a powerful economic tool for low-income families. Researchers estimate that child support removes approximately one million people from poverty (Sorensen, 2010; Wheaton & Tashi, 2008), and that next to mothers' earnings, it is the second largest income source for poor families. It comprises 30 percent of total family income among families below poverty and 15 percent for families between 100 and 200 percent of poverty (Turetsky, 2005). Child support payment is also associated with positive child well-being outcomes (Knox & Bane, 1994) including gains in children's academic achievement and declines in behavioral problems (Koball & Principe, 2002).

Despite its potential, child support frequently goes unpaid. In 2007, census accounts showed that only 39.6 percent of never-married parents received all the support they were due (Grall, 2009). The Administration for Children and Families projects that its caseload will be increasingly comprised of never-married parents and that by 2009, 42 percent of the child support enforcement caseload will fall in this category (Johnson & O'Brien-Strain, 2000). Many noncustodial parents face barriers to employment that include limited education, limited work histories, mental health and behavioral issues, substance abuse, lack of transportation, and criminal backgrounds (Schroeder & Doughty, 2009). Ex-offenders face severe challenges finding a steady job, with two-thirds of 3,000 interviewed employers indicating that they would not knowingly hire a former prisoner (Holzer et al., 2004). Past incarceration reduces subsequent wages by 11 percent, cuts annual employment by nine weeks, and reduces yearly earnings by 40 percent (Pew, 2010).

In addition to the employment barriers they face, noncustodial parents often have child support obligations that are unrealistically high. Sorensen and Oliver (2002) note that in 1999, more than one-quarter of poor fathers who paid child support spent 50 percent or more of their personal income on child support, while only 2 percent of non-poor fathers spent that much. Without coordination, child support can undermine employment programs and discourage NCPs from participating in the formal labor market. While two-thirds of child support collections come from wage withholding, this is not available for the 25 to 30 percent of noncustodial parents who have limited or no earnings (Sorensen & Oliver, 2002).

For these reasons there is growing sentiment that child support agencies need to go beyond traditional enforcement activities and collaborate with employment programs to address the array of problems that many low-income noncustodial parents face in a more comprehensive manner. The earliest program to promote employment and father-engagement among low-income noncustodial parents was Parents' Fair Share, a large-scale, national demonstration project that used random assignment techniques. Conducted in seven states from 1994 to 1996, Parent's Fair Share provided court-ordered employment services to unemployed noncustodial parents who owed arrears to the government. In

addition, noncustodial parents were offered case management, peer support services, help with parenting, help with the relationship with the other parent, and referrals for other community services. The evaluation found that child support payments for parents in the experimental group increased by nearly 20 percent. This was largely attributed to the fact that many noncustodial parents who claimed to be unemployed and unable to pay support chose to begin paying when subjected to extra outreach and court hearings through the project. Truly unemployed noncustodial parents who received employment services were less apt to experience increases in employment activity or earnings relative to the comparison group, with the exception of the most disadvantaged—those without a high school diploma and with limited work experience. There was little parent interest in mediation services to improve parental relationships or parent-child contact, but considerable enthusiasm for peer support.

Although they involved fewer participants than Parents' Fair Share and lacked the use of random assignment techniques, Welfare-to-Work, the OCSE Responsible Fatherhood Programs, and Partners for Fragile Families were other early, multi-site projects that targeted unemployed noncustodial parents and offered employment-oriented services. Like Parents' Fair Share, they yielded mixed findings on effectiveness. For example, while the OCSE Responsible Fatherhood Programs succeeded in promoting employment and increasing client earnings relative to their pre-program work and earning patterns, most noncustodial parents continued to show low earnings following program participation, with the most substantial increases occurring for those entering the programs with the lowest rates of employment and income (Pearson et al., 2003). While child support payments increased following program participation, most enrollees still paid less than the full amount due and their arrearages did not drop. And although most fathers in the program (64%) lacked a visitation order and half wanted help getting to see their children more often, relatively few participated in mediation (6%), parent education (17%), or other interventions dealing with parenting or relationships (Miller & Knox, 2001).

More recently, numerous states and local jurisdictions have developed employment programs for nonresident fathers in the child support system. The most carefully evaluated of these programs are Texas' NCP Choices (Schroeder & Daughy, 2009), Colorado's Parents to Work (Pearson, Davis & Venohr, 2011), and New York's Strengthening Families through Stronger Fathers Initiative (Lippold & Sorensen, 2011). The Department of Labor is currently conducting the Enhanced Transitional Jobs Demonstration, a national demonstration of the effectiveness of transitional jobs for unemployed non-custodial parents. The federal Office of Child Support Enforcement supported strategic planning efforts in Oklahoma, Tennessee, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Georgia to develop statewide capabilities to conduct child support-workforce programs. In addition to the Tennessee Parent Support Program, OCSE funded a similar demonstration project in Massachusetts that dealt with employment-focused services known as the Massachusetts Parent Support Program (PSP) (Pearson, Kaunelis, & Thoennes, 2012). And in 2012, OCSE funded the Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration Project (CSPED), a five-year national demonstration of employment programs for unemployed noncustodial parents in eight states that uses random assignment techniques.

One clear finding across demonstration programs is that poorly educated men with limited work experience face challenges gaining employment, meeting their child support obligations, and maintaining relationships with their partners and children. Nevertheless, evaluations of these newer generation employment programs find that they result in greater participation in workforce development activities, increased job activity, and higher rates of child support payment. Newer noncustodial parent-employment programs are also associated with improvements in the regularity and amount of child support that is paid.

One such program is Texas NCP Choices, which court-orders unemployed noncustodial parents with cases handled by the Texas Office of the Attorney General, Division of Child Support whose children are current or former recipients of public assistance to participate in employment programs operated by the Texas Workforce Commission. An evaluation that compared participants and non-participants with similar characteristics in different jurisdictions found that noncustodial parents in the treatment group were employed at a 21 percent higher rate, paid their child support 47 percent more often, and paid \$57 per month more than those in the comparison group. This resulted in a 51 percent increase in total collections. In addition, custodial parents associated with NCP Choices were 21 percent less likely to receive TANF benefits in the first year after program enrollment, and 29 percent less likely two to four years after enrollment (Schroeder and Doughty, 2009).

Colorado's Parents to Work program involved the voluntary referral of unemployed and underemployed noncustodial parents with open child support cases at the Arapahoe Division of Child Support Enforcement to Arapahoe/Douglas Workforce Center for assessment and the development of a service plan that typically included job search assistance, job readiness training, and job placement. Participants also received child support-related services such as driver's license reinstatement. A comparison of pre- and post-program payment patterns for 600 cases in the treatment group with 350 randomly generated cases in a comparison group found that the percentage of child support due that was paid increased significantly (from 36.6% to 41.3%) in the treatment group, but was unchanged in the comparison group (28.2% versus 27.5%). Although members of both groups had lower earnings following project enrollment compared with their pre-program, pre-recession earning levels, treatment group members had significantly higher rates of earnings and less economic decline due to the 2008/2009 economic recession. Those with the highest levels of participation realized the greatest economic benefit (Pearson et al., 2011).

The New York Strengthening Families Through Stronger Fathers Initiative enrolled 3,700 unemployed noncustodial parents who were behind in their child support payments in four cities. Participants in New York's employment programs were referred on a voluntary basis to workforce programs where they were assessed to identify their service needs and offered an array of work readiness, job search, job training, and work support services. The sites also offered workshops on relationship skills and child support interventions. By comparing project participants with matched non-participants, evaluators concluded that participants in the employment programs earned 22 percent more and paid 38 percent

more in child support than a comparable group of fathers who did not receive the intervention (Sorensen et al., 2009).

The Massachusetts Parent Support Program recruited noncustodial parents of all ages and stages of case processing; screened them for eligibility at court hearings; strongly urged eligible noncustodial parents to participate; and retained a dedicated work force case manager who offered project participants employment services that included job search, placement, and retention activities. PSP enrollment activities occurred over a 19-month period (June 2010 to January 2012), and ultimately 296 noncustodial parents participated in the project. All participants engaged in a one-on-one assessment by the employment case manager, and 50 to 60 percent pursued opportunities for help with résumé development, cold calling to employers, job and aptitude testing, job readiness classes, immediate job search assistance, and help with online and/or paper applications. One quarter (27%) of the 296 parents who enrolled in PSP actively engaged in project services and found a job, with 20 percent obtaining two or more jobs. PSP participants who became employed paid 67 percent of the child support they owed in the 12 months following project enrollment, while those who did not find jobs paid significantly less—35 percent (Pearson, Kaunelis, and Thoennes, 2012).

These results are prompting many jurisdictions to initiate and operate work-oriented programs for unemployed noncustodial parents, although OCSE estimates that only 1 to 3 percent of the caseload participates in such programs at any given time (OCSE, 2012). While the precise elements of a “clearly successful program design” have not yet been established, the literature on these programs (including “newer generation” models) offers some clues about how to best serve never-married, low-income parents.

- Recruitment is challenging so programs should use a variety of referral techniques and sources (including courts) and work with noncustodial parents of all ages and all stages of case processing to achieve strong enrollment goals.
- In addition to job search and job readiness training, programs should pursue workforce services that are effective with poorly educated noncustodial parents with limited computer skills and criminal backgrounds, including short-term job training, job development, and job placement and retention services.
- Programs should pursue “enhanced” child support policies such as suspending child support enforcement during program participation, establishing minimum orders rather than imputing minimum wage, reviewing and adjusting orders to match actual earnings more quickly than is the norm, forgiving some arrears in exchange for project participation and employment and child support payment, and/or assisting with driver’s license reinstatement.
- Programs should develop communication systems so that child support staff, workforce personnel, and the court can exchange information about noncustodial parents and monitor their participation.

- Programs should provide assistance with transportation and other practical barriers that impede the ability to work and explore the use of other financial incentives and work supports.
- Programs should strengthen noncustodial parent commitment to workforce programs, legitimate employment, child support payment, and other pro-social and pro-family behaviors through opportunities to develop parenting plans and effective peer-support interventions.



### 3. Program Setting

The Parent Support Program operated in three judicial districts. The 20th Judicial District is Davidson County, which includes the city of Nashville. The 11th Judicial District is Hamilton County, which includes Chattanooga. The 26th Judicial District is composed of three counties: Madison, Chester and Henderson.

The three judicial districts vary in population size. The 20th JD has a population of over 648,000, with 1,243 individuals per square mile. The 11th JD has approximately half the population of the 20th, at just over 345,000, and 620 individuals per square mile. The 26th JD is made up of three rural counties that range in population size from approximately 17,000 to 98,000, and average less than 100 individuals per square mile.

The counties participating in the Parent Support Program are predominantly white, non-Hispanic. The African-American population ranges from a low of 8 and 9 percent in Madison and Henderson counties in the 26th JD, to a high of 36 percent in Chester County in the 20th JD. Over 80 percent of the population in each of the three judicial districts has a population with high school degrees or greater.

**Table 3.1. Selected Demographic Characteristics of Counties**

	Davidson County (Nashville) 20th JD	Hamilton County (Chattanooga) 11th JD	Madison County 26th JD	Chester County 26th JD	Henderson County 26th JD	Combined 26th JD (averaged)
Total population	648,295	345,545	28,023	98,656	17,171	143,850 combined
Population per square mile	1,243	620	53	176	60	96
Percentage African American	28%	20%	8%	36%	9%	18%
Percentage White, non-Hispanic	58%	72%	88%	58%	86%	77%
Percentage with high school degree or higher	85%	86%	81%	85%	78%	81%

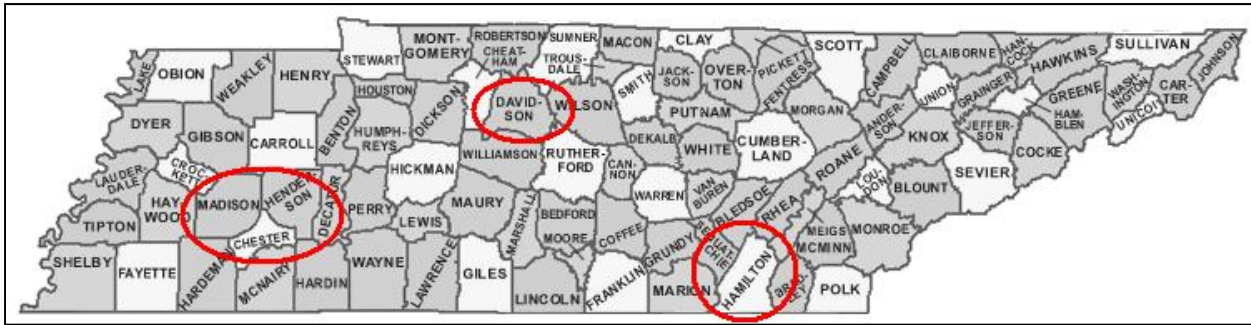
Table 3.2 shows selected economic characteristics of the counties. The counties that comprise the 26th JD had the highest unemployment rates during the time the project was running. For example, in one county in the 26th, Henderson, the 2011 unemployment rate was 12.3 percent, compared to 9.5 percent for Tennessee as a whole and 9.0 percent for the United States.

Median 2011 incomes ranged from a low of \$37,627 in Madison County to a high of \$46,737 in Davidson County. The comparable figure for the United States as a whole was \$52,762, and for Tennessee, it was \$43,989. Poverty rates were lowest in Chattanooga (15.9%) and highest in Madison County (19.2%). For Tennessee as a whole, the poverty rate was 16.9 percent, and for the United States, it was 14.3 percent.

**Table 3.2. Selected Economic Characteristics of Counties**

	Davidson County (Nashville)	Hamilton County (Chattanooga)	Chester County	Henderson County	Madison County	Tennessee Total	United States Total
	20th JD	11th JD	26th JD				
2011 Unemployment Rate	8.2%	8.7%	10.3%	12.3%	9.8%	9.5%	9.0%
Median Household Income (2007-2011)	\$46,737	\$45,826	\$39,776	\$37,627	\$40,667	\$43,989	\$52,762
Persons below poverty (2007-2011)	17.7%	15.9%	17.9%	16.5%	19.2%	16.9%	14.3%

Geographically, the judicial districts include counties in southeastern Tennessee (Hamilton), north central Tennessee (Davidson), and western Tennessee (Madison, Chester, and Henderson Counties).



**Figure 3.1**

The Parent Support Program placed Coordinators in each of the three local child support offices. These local child support offices have different administrative arrangements that are representative of the state as a whole: Hamilton County and Davidson County is managed by Maximus; and Madison, Chester, and Henderson counties are managed by the Tennessee District Attorneys General Conference. The selected sites differ in caseload size, ranging from a high of 35,714 cases in the child support office in the 20th JD to a low of 10,128 in the office located in the 26th JD. Although there are also differences in performance measures across the sites, such as the percentage of cases under order, paternity acknowledgement rates, collections on current support, and payments towards arrears, no one office stands out as performing significantly better or worse than the others.

**Table 3.3. Selected Child Support Characteristics of Counties**

	Davidson County (Nashville) 20th JD	Hamilton County (Chattanooga) 11th JD	Madison, Chester, and Henderson counties 26th JD
Child support program administrator	Maximus	Maximus	Tennessee District Attorneys General Conference
Number of open child support cases	35,714	21,233	10,128
Percentage TANF cases	13,490 (37.7%)	6,781 (31.94%)	3,364 (33.21%)
Percentage of cases under order	62.92%	72.69%	59.16%
Percentage collected on current support	52.38%	52.35%	58.32%
Percentage of cases paying arrears	23.81%	23.30%	30.62%
Paternity establishment percentage	79.29%	89.39%	72.45%
IV-D out-of-wedlock children	29,466	16,161	7,924

## 4. Evaluation Methodology

This chapter describes how the data were generated for the evaluation of the Parent Support Program, including data sources and methods of data collection. It also describes efforts made to generate a non-treatment comparison group and changes made to the original evaluation plan.

### Generation of the Experimental Group

Experimental group cases in the project counties were referred for enrollment in the Parent Support Program from multiple sources. Noncustodial parents seen at the child support office for establishment or enforcement activities were screened by child support workers to determine if there were barriers to child support payment, such as unemployment or underemployment, lack of a parenting time plan, disagreements between parents regarding parenting time, lack of transportation, and/or substance abuse or mental health problems. In addition to child support workers, court magistrates, referees, and other judicial personnel who had contact with NCPs with barriers to child support payment were asked to make referrals to the Coordinators in their jurisdiction for enrollment into PSP.

Once the NCP was referred to the Coordinator for enrollment in PSP, the NCP appeared at the child support office to attend a one-on-one or group orientation session to learn about the services offered by PSP. The Coordinator completed an intake and assessment survey with the NCP to gather demographic, education, employment history, and relationship information. A service plan was developed and the Coordinator provided referrals and employment help to the NCP based on his or her needs. All information collected from the NCP at the initial meeting was entered into an online Management Information System (MIS) developed for the project.

Enrollment in PSP began in January 2010, peaked in the third quarter of 2010 with a high of 172 enrollments per quarter, and then leveled off and remained relatively steady at about 60 NCPs per quarter. Figure 4.1 provides an overview of enrollments by quarter for each site and total. A total of 1,016 NCPs were enrolled in PSP over the 27-month enrollment period.

## Enrollment of PSP Participants by Quarter and Site

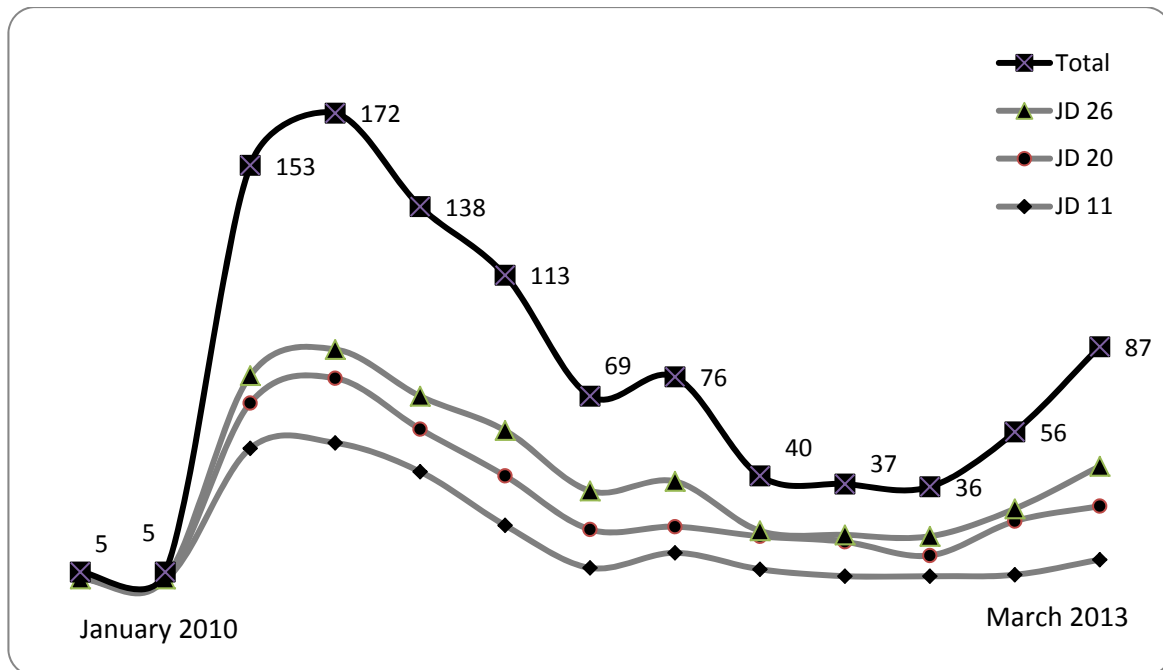


Figure 4.1

### Generation of Comparison Group

The original proposal for the Parent Support Program called for the random assignment of enrollees into a low- or high-level treatment group. According to the original plan, the low-level treatment group would be given written information about community resources that might be helpful to address their barriers to child support payment, but would not be provided with any individualized or intensive assistance. They would be asked to complete a telephone interview six months following enrollment to track their progress in addressing barriers to child support payment and to determine whether they had used any community services. High-level treatment group cases would be offered enhanced services provided by project staff. They would also be asked to participate in follow-up interviews six months following their enrollment. At the conclusion of the project, child support records for members of both groups would be checked for evidence of payment.

Early in the project planning phase, Parent Support Program staff raised concerns about the practicality of generating a low-level treatment group, especially in a small, rural setting like the 26th Judicial District. They anticipated problems when members of the comparison group discovered that their neighbors in the experimental group were receiving services not offered to them. Staff also worried whether the low-level treatment group's receipt of a packet of information rather than more robust services would undermine the goal of enhancing parent perceptions of the child support agency and lead them to become more disengaged.

Finally, it proved impossible to utilize a true random assignment scheme with cases referred by the court because judges required that all court-referred cases be enrolled in the high-level treatment group. Because of these concerns, CPR, project staff, and key stakeholders considered various alternatives to the proposed random assignment methodology and determined that the only alternative was to generate a comparison group from other jurisdictions with similar sizes and demographics.

Based on a review of demographic and child support characteristics, it was decided to match the 11th JD with the 6th Judicial District; the 20th JD with the 16th, 18th, and 19th; and the 26th with the 28th. CPR sought to generate a comparison group by identifying parents with similar problems in these matched jurisdictions. A screening tool was developed that child support workers distributed to parents who came to the child support office for services in these matched jurisdictions. Parents who disclosed problems were provided with a packet of information on employment and parenting time resources in their community, and were asked to participate in a follow-up telephone interview.

The screening form used to generate the comparison group was administered in each comparison district beginning in June 2010 and ending in November 2011. In each of the comparison districts, the main child support office was asked to hand out the one-page screening forms to parents as they came into the office for services. During that time period, a total of 466 parents completed the screening form and were identified as a comparison group case.

Although the comparison group was sufficiently large, there were a number of ways in which it proved a poor match to the experimental group. Most notably, since the custodial parent is typically the parent that comes to the child support office for services, it was impossible to obtain background information on noncustodial parents in the comparison group and only custodial parent information was available. In addition, a subsequent assessment of the child support characteristics and payment patterns for cases in the two groups revealed that the comparison group was comprised of noncustodial parents who had better child support payment patterns and lower arrears balances than did members of the experimental group at program enrollment. For these reasons, only limited reference is made the comparison group in the evaluation of PSP.

## **Data Sources for the Evaluation**

CPR used a variety of methods to collect data for the evaluation of the Parent Support Program and Goodwill Pilot Training Demonstration.

- As previously discussed, to generate comparable cases for the comparison group, CPR developed a one-page screening form to be handed out by child support workers in the comparison jurisdictions. These screening forms asked parents about possible problems they may be having that might impede their ability to support their children financially or be an effective parent. They included such factors as unemployment, conflict with the other parent, the lack of a parenting time plan, or mental health and substance abuse issues. These screenings began in June 2010 and continued through November 2011. All parents who

indicated that they had problems in these areas were placed in the comparison group. Ultimately, the comparison group consisted of 466 cases generated in matched judicial districts.

- A Management Information System (MIS) consisting of an Access database was developed by CPR to collect referral, enrollment, demographic, employment, and relationship information on experimental group cases. The database was uploaded and made secure and accessible via cloud server to allow for the Coordinators across the three project sites to access, enroll, and track participants in this secure online system. This also allowed for CPR staff to have real-time access to data in order to provide ongoing technical assistance and reporting.
- A brief, three-month follow-up telephone check was developed and conducted by a CPR interviewer with NCPs enrolled in the PSP experimental group. The purpose of the interview was to determine the employment status of project participants three months following enrollment. Interviewers also asked about the services participants had received and the action they had taken on referrals provided by PSP staff. A total of 488 participants were interviewed three months following enrollment.
- A six-month follow-up telephone interview was developed by CPR and administered by Northern Illinois University's Public Opinion Laboratory (POL). The six-month follow-up interviews were targeted to all members of the experimental and comparison groups. These interviews were used to assess whether members of the high-level treatment group found project services to be accessible and helpful and whether members of the low-level treatment group had pursued any of the resources contained in the written information they received. Both groups were asked about their employment status and other problems they had disclosed at the start of the project. Members of both groups were asked to provide information about their involvement with their nonresident children. Phone contact was attempted with 1,257 project participants: 877 from the high-level treatment group and 380 from the low-level treatment groups. Calls were made beginning in February 2011 and completed in March 2013. A total of 410 interviews were completed during this time period representing a response rate of 32.6 percent. The response rate for members of the experimental group was 38 percent and 19 percent for the comparison group.
- A data extract from the Tennessee Child Support System was generated based on parameters provided to DHS by CPR. The child support data extract contained information on the child support case characteristics for NCPs in the experimental and comparison groups including: monthly support order, arrears balance and payment behavior in the 24 months prior to and following enrollment in the Parent Support Program. At the close of the evaluation, CPR analyzed the child support extract paying particular attention to information on child support payments for up to 24 months following program enrollment for each member of the experimental and comparison groups.

The table below provides a summary of the data collected from each source by project site and treatment group.

<b>Table 4.1 Summary of Data Collected, by Group and Site</b>						
	Hamilton County (Chattanooga) 11th JD	Davidson County (Nashville) 20th JD	Madison, Chester and Henderson Counties 26th JD	Total Treatment Group	Total Comparison group	
Intake data collected on NCPs at enrollment	342	435	239	1,016		
Screening forms to generate a comparison group in matched counties					466★	
Brief interviews conducted 3 months post-enrollment	208	164	116	488		
Interviews conducted 6 months post-enrollment	112	147	78	337	73	
Child support extract with data for 24 months pre- and post-enrollment	254	283	178	715	178	
★ Typically, this was information on the custodial parent only.						

In addition to the data collected for the PSP experimental and comparison group enrollees, CPR collected data on members of the Goodwill Pilot demonstration, which offered paid job training services to a sub-group of noncustodial parents. A total of 54 PSP enrollees were referred to Goodwill for the job training pilot demonstration. Goodwill and PSP coordinators collected data on enrollment, demographic characteristics, and service receipt using the same online MIS employed for the PSP. Evaluators conducted open-ended, follow-up telephone interviews with enrollees. Finally, their child support records were checked for payment activity prior to and following their enrollment in the Goodwill Pilot.

With the above data, CPR sought to answer the following primary research questions:

- What percentage of low-income and never-married families who are establishing child support need various types of services, such as access and visitation, employment, substance abuse treatment, housing, or transportation?
- When offered the opportunity to participate in needed services, what percentage of parents participate and fail to participate?
- Are parents who receive case management more likely to access services than are parents who receive a packet of information about community resources
- Do noncustodial parents who receive services obtain jobs?
- Do noncustodial parents who receive services do a better job of seeing their children regularly?
- Do noncustodial parents who receive services do a better job of paying child support?
- Do paid job training opportunities enhance outcomes dealing with employment, earnings, and child support payment?



## **Limitations of the Evaluation**

The evaluation of PSP had several shortcomings. As previously noted, it was impossible to generate a treatment and comparison group using random assignment techniques, and the comparison group that was ultimately produced from matched counties differed from the experimental group in basic ways. As a result, the outcome analysis focuses on behaviors of members of the experimental group before and after enrollment in PSP, with only limited reference to the comparison group.

The study also has limited information on the various types of services received by noncustodial parents enrolled in PSP. Project staff maintained careful records of the service needs of PSP participants. Project resources did not allow for the collection of service delivery information directly from the service providers. Nor was employment activity available from a reliable third-party source. Instead it was necessary to rely on participant reports. Attempts were made to contact all participants three and six months after enrollment; however, interviews ultimately could be conducted with fewer than half of all PSP enrollees.

## 5. Profile of the Parent Support Program Participants

### Demographics

At each of the sites, the majority of the noncustodial parents enrolled in the Parent Support Program were male. Most were also African American who were approximately 30 to 35 years of age. However, all three sites served a wide range of ages. For example, at all three sites, the youngest noncustodial parents were approximately 18 years old, while the oldest were approximately 60 years of age.

**Table 5.1. Demographic Profile of PSP Participants, by Site**

	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total
Gender ★				
Male	83%	82%	98%	86%
Female	17%	19%	3%	14%
Number	(434)	(340)	(239)	(1,013)
Race of NCP ★				
African American	79%	86%	76%	81%
White, non-Hispanic	19%	12%	21%	17%
Hispanic	1%	< 0.5%	2%	1%
Other	< 0.5%	1%	1%	1%
Number	(426)	(336)	(239)	(1,001)
Age			✦	
Mean	35	36	29	34
Median	34.5	36.0	29.0	33.0
Range	18-61	20-59	18-54	18-61
Number	(302)	(325)	(235)	(862)

★ Chi square is significant at .02.

✦The difference between the mean age of NCPs in the 26th Judicial District and the mean ages of the NCPs in the 11th and 20th Judicial Districts are statistically significant at <.000.

Table 5.2 shows the educational levels attained by the noncustodial parents in the PSP. Most commonly, participating NCPs had either completed high school or had attained a GED. In the 20th JD and the 11th JD, about a third had less than a high school degree or GED. Less than 10 percent at any site had completed a bachelor's degree, although 20 percent had either attended some college or completed an associate's degree.

**Table 5.2. PSP Participants' Highest Educational Attainment, by Site\***

	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total
Bachelor's degree	4%	9%	5%	6%
Some college, no degree	14%	14%	21%	15%
AA degree	3%	2%	2%	2%
GED or high school diploma	45%	44%	54%	47%
No high school or GED	34%	32%	19%	30%

★ Chi square is significant at .000.

As is shown in Table 5.3, only about 10 percent of the noncustodial parents were enrolled in school at the time of intake to the PSP. Those who were enrolled tended to be in GED programs or were attending trade schools.

**Table 5.3. School Enrollment of PSP Participants, by Site**

	11th <sup>h</sup> JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total
Currently enrolled in school				
Yes	10%	13%	9%	11%
No	90%	87%	91%	89%
Number	(427)	(338)	(236)	(1,001)
★ If enrolled in school, type of program:				
Trade school	15%	28%	17%	21%
GED program	45%	14%	22%	27%
High school	8%	12%	4%	9%
Associate's degree program	23%	26%	13%	22%
Bachelor's degree program	10%	21%	39%	21%
Graduate school	0%	0%	4%	1%
Number	(40)	(43)	(23)	(106)

★ Chi square is significant at .02.

Table 5.4 shows that most noncustodial parents in the 11th JD had never participated in a job training program. In the 20th JD and the 26th JD, 39 percent to 55 percent had been in a job training program. Only the 20th JD had a significant percentage of noncustodial parents who reported participating in job training that lasted a year or more. However, even in this jurisdiction the percentage was still low (21%).

**Table 5.4. Information about Past Job Training Received by PSP Participants, by Site**

★ Has the NCP received the following training:	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total
Attended trade school	4%	16%	20%	13%
Short-term training (up to 1 month)	2%	10%	3%	5%
Moderate-term, on-the-job training	1%	9%	6%	5%
Long-term, on-the-job training (more than 1 year)	0%	21%	10%	11%
None of the above	93%	45%	61%	66%
Number	(309)	(334)	(236)	(879)
Participant has a vocational certificate	2%	24%	24%	15%
Number	(335)	(336)	(186)	(857)

★ Chi square is significant at <.000.

## Employment

Table 5.5 shows that relatively few of the participants in the 11th and 20th judicial districts had received services at a Workforce Center. In the more rural 26th JD, participation in the Workforce Center was more common (53%). Ratings of the helpfulness of the Workforce Centers varied by site. Most of those in the 20th JD who used a Workforce Center reported it was helpful. Most of those in the 11th JD reported the Workforce Center was not helpful. The 26th JD fell in between the other two sites, with approximately half rating the Workforce Center as helpful and half saying it was not helpful.

**Table 5.5. Past Assistance From a Workforce Center Reported by PSP Participants, by Site**

★ Has NCP received assistance from a Workforce Center	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total
Yes	17%	26%	53%	29%
No	81%	70%	48%	69%
Don't Know	2%	4%	0%	2%
Number	(403)	(338)	(238)	(979)
★ If yes, how helpful was the Workforce Center?				
Not at all or not very helpful	62%	25%	45%	46%
Somewhat or very helpful	38%	75%	55%	54%
Number	(104)	(80)	(124)	(308)

★ Chi square is significant at <.000.

There were significant differences across the three sites with respect to the employment status of participants at entry to the Parent Support Program. Participants in the 26th JD, composed of rural counties, reported the highest levels of full-time employment, with about a third employed full time. The more urban centers of Nashville and Chattanooga reported participant unemployment rates of 92 and 82 percent, respectively.

**Table 5.6. Employment Status of PSP Participants at Program Enrollment, by Site ★**

	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total
Employment status at intake:				
Employed full time	2%	7%	34%	11%
Employed part time	2%	9%	11%	6%
Seasonal/temporary employment	4%	2%	2%	3%
Unemployed	92%	82%	54%	80%
Number	(424)	(339)	(238)	(1,001)

★ Chi square is significant between sites at .000.

Among those who were unemployed at intake to the Parent Support Program, most had been unemployed for one year (26th JD) to two years (20th JD). Relatively few participants were still receiving unemployment benefits at intake.

**Table 5.7. Information on Unemployed PSP Participants, by Site**

	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total
Length of unemployment:		★		
Mean	16 months	22 months	12 months	17 months
Median	8.5 months	12 months	7 months	11 months
Number	(334)	(229)	(126)	(689)
Currently receiving unemployment benefits	6%	7%	11%	7%
Number	(295)	(257)	(124)	(676)
Length of weeks receiving unemployment benefits				
Mean	21 weeks	19 weeks	13 weeks	18 weeks
Median	5 weeks	13 weeks	8 weeks	9.5 weeks
Range	1 to 124 weeks	6 to 52 weeks	1 to 52 weeks	1 to 124 weeks
Number	(12)	(9)	(13)	(34)

★ The difference between the mean number of months the NCPs in the 20th Judicial District had been unemployed and the mean number of months the NCPs in the 11th and 26th Judicial Districts had been unemployed are statistically significant at <.003.

When asked about their current or most recent job, most respondents reported earning approximately \$9.50 per hour and the average number of hours worked per week tended to be 35 to 40. Most participants were employed in jobs that offered no benefits. For example, health benefits were provided in 10 percent of the jobs or less and retirement benefits were provided in less than 2 percent of the cases.

**Table 5.8. Information about Current or Most Recent Job Held by PSP Participants, by Site ★**

	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total
Hourly wage				
Mean	\$9.37	\$9.40	\$9.54	\$9.45
Median	\$8.00	\$9.00	\$8.50	\$8.50
Range	\$2.13-\$40.00	\$2.13-\$33.00	\$2.15-\$28.00	\$2.13-\$40.00
Number	(178)	(272)	(235)	(685)
Number of hours worked per week				
Mean	35	34	35	35
Median	40	40	40	40
Range	8-40	6-70	7-60	6-70
Number	(169)	(257)	(234)	(660)
★ Types of benefits offered:				
Health insurance only	3%	8%	10%	6%
Retirement benefits only	<0.5%	2%	<0.5%	1%
Both health and retirement benefits	7%	16%	27%	15%
None	89%	74%	62%	78%
Number	(375)	(289)	(234)	(898)

★ Chi square is significant at .000.

Given the patterns described above, it is not surprising that 56 to 85 percent of the respondents described their current financial situation as “poor.” Table 5.9 shows annual earnings by site. This data was not available in the 20th JD. In the 11th JD, 60 percent of participants reported no earnings in the previous year, and in the 26th JD, most participants reported earning between \$10,000 and \$20,000 annually. Relatively few of the NCPs in any JD reported receiving any public benefits. The exception to this pattern was food stamps, which about half of the NCPs in each JD reported receiving at enrollment.

**Table 5.9. Financial Situation at Intake for PSP Participants, by Site ★**

	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total
★ Financial situation is				
Good	1%	4%	7%	3%
Fair	23%	12%	37%	23%
Poor	76%	85%	56%	74%
Number	(406)	(339)	(237)	(982)

**Table 5.9. Financial Situation at Intake for PSP Participants, by Site ★**

	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total
★Annual earnings				
\$0	60%	<i>Not available</i>	5%	45%
\$10,000 or less	26%		35%	29%
\$10,001 - \$20,000	8%		34%	15%
\$20,001 - \$30,000	5%		17%	8%
\$30,001 - \$40,000	2%		5%	3%
\$40,001 - \$50,000	1%		1%	1%
\$50,000 or more	0%		1%	1%
Number	(198)		(76)	(274)
★Percentage who own a car	42%	33%	56%	42%
	(399)	(336)	(235)	(970)
Percentage receiving				
Food stamps	49%	54%	52%	52%
★Unemployment benefits	3%	6%	9%	5%
★TennCare	3%	9%	19%	7%
Families First	1%	4%	4%	3%
★Disability benefits (SSI, SSDI)	1%	7%	5%	4%
★Veteran’s benefits	1%	4%	0%	2%

★ Chi square is significant at .05.

The intake interview asked noncustodial parents if they had received any financial planning or money management services prior to enrolling in PSP. The vast majority in each site reported they had never received such services.

**Table 5.10. PSP Participants Who Reported Receiving Financial Planning Assistance at Intake, by Site ★**

	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total
★Had received financial planning or money management at intake	1%	4%	0%	2%
Number	(398)	(317)	(83)	(798)

★ Chi square is significant at .05.

Responses to questions about the current economic well-being of PSP participants at enrollment revealed a number of differences across the sites. Over half of the respondents in the 20th JD (Nashville) reported having more debt than they would ever be able to pay off, and over 70 percent said they sometimes ran out of money for food prior to the end of the month. The 11th JD (Chattanooga) also had substantial proportions of noncustodial parents reporting more debt than they could handle

and running out of food. Participants in the rural counties in the 26th JD were most likely to report being able to keep up with all their financial obligations (45%). As previously noted, NCPs in the 26th JD were most apt to report being employed either on a full-time (34%) or part-time (11%) basis.

**Table 5.11. Financial Hardship at Intake for PSP Participants, by Site ★**

	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total
Percentage reporting				
★ I have more debt than I will ever be able to pay off	26%	57%	8%	33%
★ I have medical coverage for myself	5%	16%	36%	17%
★ Sometimes I run out of money for food before the end of the month	20%	71%	32%	41%
★ I can afford to make my child support obligations	2%	9%	39%	14%
★ I am keeping up on all my financial obligations	2%	13%	46%	16%
★ I have a bank account	6%	15%	40%	17%
★ Most months I am able to save a little money	1%	12%	17%	9%

★ Chi square is significant at .000.

When asked about their prior employment, most NCPs at all of the sites reported having held one or two jobs in the last five years. The longest time with one employer ranged from an average of 45 months in the 26th JD to 55 months in the 20th JD. In other words, PSP participants were overwhelmingly likely to have prior work experience and to report substantial tenure at a single job.

**Table 5.12. Information about PSP Participants' Employment History at Intake, by Site ★**

	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total
★ Number of jobs held in the past five years				
None	2%	4%	2%	3%
One or two	58%	59%	51%	56%
Three or four	30%	31%	36%	32%
Five or six	9%	3%	8%	7%
More than six	2%	3%	3%	2%
Number	(405)	(321)	(236)	(962)
Most months employed at same job/same employer				
Mean	47	55	45	49
Median	48	48	36	36
Range	<1-252	<1-300	<1-240	<1-300
Number	(371)	(264)	(225)	(860)

★ Chi square is significant at <.04.



Table 5.13 shows the percentage of NCPs who were interested in receiving various types of services when they enrolled in the Parent Support Program. The top five services of interest all dealt with jobs:

- Help finding a job with benefits;
- Help finding any type of job;
- Help finding a job with better pay;
- Help finding a job with more hours; and
- Help with job search and applying online.

Participants in the rural jurisdictions in the 26th JD were least apt to mention needing help with any of these services. For example, when asked if they wanted help accessing job skills training, only 17 percent of those in the 26th JD responded affirmatively, compared to 96 percent in the 11th JD and 69 percent in the 20th JD.

<b>Table 5.13. Types of Employment Help PSP Participants Want, by Site</b>				
<b>Percentage of respondents wanting help with the following:</b>	<b>11th JD (n=415)</b>	<b>20th JD (n=333)</b>	<b>26th JD (n=203)</b>	<b>Total (n=951)</b>
★Help finding a job with benefits	98%	98%	67%	90%
★Help finding any job	99%	92%	62%	88%
★Help finding a job that pays more	98%	97%	61%	88%
★Help finding a job with more hours	98%	90%	44%	83%
★Help with job search and applying online	98%	79%	63%	82%
★On the job training	95%	85%	19%	73%
★Job readiness classes (résumés, interviewing, etc.)	97%	69%	34%	72%
★Job skills classes	96%	69%	17%	68%
★Getting a vocational certificate or attending trade school	95%	65%	13%	65%
★Going back to school for a degree	95%	57%	20%	63%

★ Chi square is significant at .000.

## Children and Custodial Parents

Table 5.14 shows that most project participants had never been married to the custodial parent, although significant percentages of participants in the 20th and 26th JDs had lived together. The majority of noncustodial parents in each site reported having only a single child with the custodial parent; between 12 and 46 percent had more than a single child together.

The sites varied considerably with respect to the degree to which the noncustodial parent reported getting along well with the custodial parent. For example, in the 11th JD, 65 percent of project

participants described the relationship with the other parent as “cooperative” or “fairly cooperative.” This was true for 44 percent of those in the 20th JD. In the 26th JD, participants rated cooperation between the parents at the lowest level. Over 40 percent described the relationship as angry and hostile. This was true for only 11 percent and 19 percent of those in the 11th and 20th JDs, respectively. As a result, as Table 5.14 shows, parents in this setting were significantly more interested in getting help with parenting.

**Table 5.14. Marital Situation at Intake for PSP Participants, by Site ★**

	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total
★ Were you ever married to the custodial parent?				
Never married and never lived together	57%	40%	40%	47%
Never married, lived together	16%	48%	55%	37%
Yes, we were married	27%	12%	6%	17%
★ Number of children with the custodial parent				
One	50%	66%	88%	65%
Two	25%	22%	11%	21%
Three to five	21%	11%	1%	13%
More than five	4%	1%	0%	1%
★ Nature of your relationship with the other parent				
Angry and hostile	11%	19%	43%	22%
Fairly cooperative	21%	34%	37%	29%
Cooperative	51%	23%	12%	32%
No relationship, no contact	14%	21%	7%	15%
	(387)	(331)	(235)	(953)

★ Chi square is significant at .05.

Table 5.15 summarizes levels of contact with children reported by participants at entry to the Parent Support Program. The percentage reporting contact with the child at least once a week ranged from 54 percent in the 11th JD, to 44 percent in the 20th JD, to 32 percent in the 26th JD. The percentage reporting they never see their children was low at each of the sites: 20 percent at the 11th JD and 13 and 14 percent, respectively, in the 20th and 26th judicial districts. Very few participants reported that there was a restraining order or court order restricting contact with children.

Noncustodial parents were presented with a number of reasons why parent-child contact sometimes occurs less frequently than the parent would like and asked if any of these were barriers to more contact in his or her case. The percentage of NCPs citing barriers to contact with children varied significantly by site, from a low of 11 percent in the 11th JD to a high of 80 percent in the 26th JD. Among those who cited barriers to greater contact with their children, the single most common reason was resistance to contact by the custodial parent. This was followed by noncustodial parents reporting problems in their own lives that they wanted to address before beginning to see their children.

**Table 5.15. Contact with Children at Intake for PSP Participants, by Site ★**

	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total
Percentage reporting a restraining order against the NCP	1%	2%	2%	2%
Percentage reporting court has ordered no visits or supervised visits	2%	4%	1%	3%
Percentage with an ongoing child protection case	2%	3%	2%	2%
★ About how often do you see the children at intake				
More than once a week	41%	22%	12%	16%
About once a week	13%	22%	20%	18%
About once or twice a month	6%	22%	26%	17%
About every other month	3%	5%	12%	6%
About once or twice a year	3%	9%	10%	7%
Never	20%	14%	13%	16%
Other	14%	5%	7%	9%
Percentage mentioning any barriers to visitation	11%	56%	80%	46%
	(319)	(329)	(233)	(881)
Of those mentioning some barriers, percentage citing these as reasons for not seeing their children as often as they would like				
★ Custodial parent did not want visits	92%	65%	88%	78%
Problems in life (like drugs, jail) prevented involvement	50%	33%	28%	31%
Live too far away	31%	17%	12%	15%
★ Have another family and children and this takes up NCP's time	22%	17%	3%	11%
	(35)	(185)	(190)	(410)
★ Does NCP have a visitation plan?				
No	76%	54%	64%	65%
Not sure	3%	6%	2%	4%
Yes, verbal plan	7%	13%	22%	13%
Yes, written plan	14%	27%	12%	18%
	(369)	(328)	(230)	(927)

★ Chi square is significant at .000.

As shown in Table 5.15, most noncustodial parents did not have a written visitation plan when they enrolled in the Parent Support Program. In fact, averaging across the three sites, 65 percent said there was no plan, 4 percent were uncertain whether there was a plan, 13 percent said there was a verbal agreement, and 18 percent had a written plan.

Noncustodial parents without written visitation plans were asked if they were interested in getting help developing one. As shown in Table 5.16, overall, about a third of those without plans said they would like to develop one. This ranged from a low of 4 percent expressing such an interest in the 11th JD to a high of 58 percent in the 26th JD.

**Table 5.16. Interest in Visitation Help for PSP Participants at Intake, by Site**

	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total
Percentage interested in				
★Help working out a visitation plan	4%	31%	58%	31%
	(86)	(150)	(87)	(323)

★ Chi square is significant at .000.

Noncustodial parents were asked about their interest in a variety of other services related to parent-child contact, such as help modifying an order, getting the other parent to follow the plan, co-parenting, and ensuring their children’s safety in the custodial parent’s care. The results, summarized in Table 5.17, show that few noncustodial parents in the 11th JD had interest in any of these services. Interest was somewhat greater in the 20th and 26th. In the 20th JD, about a third of the parents were interested in each of the services mentioned. In the 26th JD, the most commonly selected item was help with co-parenting, which was of interest to 72 percent of NCPs.

**Table 5.17. Interest in Help with Access for PSP Participants at Intake, by Site**

	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total
Percent interested in				
★Help modifying an existing plan	3%	36%	19%	19%
★Help getting the other parent to follow the plan	2%	33%	32%	20%
★Help to do a better job of co-parenting	2%	33%	72%	30%
★Ensuring that the children are safe with the other parent	3%	33%	23%	19%
	(86)	(150)	(87)	(323)

★ Chi square is significant at .000.

## Other Problems for Noncustodial Parents

At program intake, NCPs were also asked about a number of other issues that might be causing them problems. The top five items, when averaged across the three sites, were: a limited work history, a lack of job skills, prior incarceration, and the lack of a car, or reliable transportation. The least commonly mentioned items had to do with limited English, domestic violence, lack of child or elder care, or issues with the children. There were some differences by site. Specifically, program participants in the 20th JD

generally cited more problems compared to NCPs in the 11th and 26th JDs. However, across the sites, the issues most commonly reported by NCPs as barriers to child support payment involved employment.

**Table 5.18. Problems Reported at Intake by PSP Participants, by Site**

Percentage reporting the following are problems	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total
★ Limited work history	94%	89%	41%	80%
★ Lack of job skills	95%	81%	36%	78%
★ Past incarceration	72%	94%	69%	77%
★ No reliable car or public transportation	57%	89%	18%	60%
★ No driver's license	32%	95%	52%	60%
★ No GED/high school diploma	52%	90%	37%	59%
★ Currently on probation or parole	20%	78%	44%	37%
★ Lack of stable housing/homeless	4%	80%	3%	22%
★ Disability or serious health issue	8%	61%	15%	17%
★ Ongoing legal problems	8%	66%	7%	17%
★ Drug or alcohol problems	8%	51%	8%	13%
★ Mental health issues	7%	60%	3%	13%
★ Issues with your children	1%	54%	1%	8%
★ Lack of child care or elder care	1%	50%	0%	7%
★ Domestic Violence	1%	36%	1%	5%
★ Limited English	2%	22%	1%	3%
	(177)	(47)	(72)	(296)

★ Chi square is significant at .000.

Across all sites, less than 15 percent of PSP participants mention having been treated currently or in the past for any physical, emotional, or medical condition. Only in the 20th JD did significant numbers agree with the statement that their drug or alcohol use created problems with visitation or employment. Finally, at all sites, significant numbers of PSP participants reported prior criminal histories. Indeed, only 24 and 20 percent of participants in the 11th and 20th JDs, respectfully, and 44 percent of NCPs in the 26th JD, reported that they had never been convicted of a misdemeanor or a felony.

**Table 5.19. Medical, Substance Abuse, and Criminal Histories Reported by PSP Participants, by Site**

	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total
★ Have been treated in past or currently being treated for a physical, emotional, or medical conditions				
No	89%	76%	91%	85%
Yes, currently being treated	8%	9%	4%	7%
Yes, treated in the past	3%	14%	5%	7%
Percentage reporting use of drugs/alcohol interfere with				
★Ability to maintain relationships with your children	0%	40%	5%	5%
★Ability of maintain relationship with your child's guardian	0%	25%	4%	3%

**Table 5.19. Medical, Substance Abuse, and Criminal Histories Reported by PSP Participants, by Site**

	<b>11th JD</b>	<b>20th JD</b>	<b>26th JD</b>	<b>Total</b>
★Your ability to look for a job	18%	55%	5%	19%
★Your ability to maintain employment	2%	42%	9%	7%
★ Have you ever been convicted of a crime?				
No	24%	20%	44%	28%
Yes, both misdemeanor and felony	28%	33%	7%	25%
Yes, felony	9%	16%	21%	14%
Yes, misdemeanor	39%	31%	28%	34%
	(177)	(47)	(72)	(296)

★ Chi square is significant at .000.

## 6. Employment Services Needed and Provided

This chapter reports on client employment needs based on an assessment done by Grant Program Coordinators during program enrollment. It also describes what PSP participants had to say about their own employment needs, what services they said they received, and their ratings of the usefulness of the services they received.

### Employment Needs

Table 6.1 shows that in approximately three-quarters of the cases, the Coordinator felt clients needed help with employment. And in nearly half (41%), they needed work support services. Needs were perceived to be greatest in the 20th JD where nearly 90 percent of the participants were assessed to be in need of employment services and nearly three-quarters were seen as needing work support services, including help with transportation, housing, money management, and work supplies.

**Table 6.1. Employment and Work Support Service Needs for PSP Participants, by Site**

	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total
Percentage of cases with service needs noted in these areas:				
★Employment	67%	86%	61%	75%
★Work support services	39%	71%	3%	41%
	(435)	(342)	(239)	(1,016)

★ Chi square is significant at .000.

Table 6.2 shows that the most commonly identified employment need reported by Coordinators was job search assistance. Averaging across the sites, three-quarters of the clients needing employment services were felt to need help with job search. Other frequently mentioned forms of employment assistance were résumé preparation, obtaining vocational certificates, employment workshops, and help with basic skills and GED preparation.

Table 6.3 shows the specific types of work supports that participants were perceived to need. In the 11th JD and the 20th JD this always involved transportation help. In the 26th JD, participants were most likely to need help with money management and work supplies.

**Table 6.2. Specific Employment Needs of PSP Participants, by Site**

	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total
★Job referrals	62%	86%	90%	77%
★Help with job search on the computer	59%	90%	76%	75%
★Help with résumé preparation	66%	86%	33%	67%
★Vocational certificate	57%	64%	12%	51%
★Employment workshop	62%	53%	15%	49%
★Help with basic skill/GED preparation	44%	52%	23%	43%
★Other employment assistant (e.g., job training)	48%	15%	7%	26%
	(20)	(20)	(37)	(77)

★ Chi square is significant at .000.

**Table 6.3. Specific Work Supports Needed by PSP Participants, by Site**

	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total
Transportation assistance(bus tokens, car repair)	100%	99%	29%	98%
★Assistance finding housing	1%	3%	14%	2%
★Money management	0%	13%	29%	8%
★Work supplies	0%	1%	14%	1%
	(171)	(242)	(7)	(420)

★ Chi square is significant at .000.

Table 6.4 shows that the clients who participated in a follow-up interview were even more likely than Coordinators to note that employment problems had motivated them to get involved with the Parent Support Program. Over 90 percent of those interviewed in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> JDs, and 60 percent in the 26<sup>th</sup> JD, said they had problems finding a job or a job that paid sufficiently.

**Table 6.4. Self-Report of Employment Needs at Intake for PSP Participants, by Site**

	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total
Percentage of cases with service needs noted in these areas:				
★Problems finding a job or a better paying job	94%	95%	60%	87%
★Not being regularly employed	80%	83%	44%	73%
★Being injured or disabled or not able to work	27%	18%	5%	18%
	(112)	(145)	(78)	(335)

★ Chi square is significant at .000.

## Employment Services Received

Table 6.5 shows the employment related services that participants reported receiving while in the Parent Support Program. This self-report information is based on a follow-up interview conducted with PSP participants approximately six months after enrollment. The analysis is restricted to those participants who reported having employment problems when they enrolled. Overall, the service that participants most commonly reported receiving was a list of job opportunities to use in their



employment search. Counseling and one-on-one help with job leads were also mentioned frequently. Participants in the 20th JD made more frequent use of: workshops or classes on job interviewing, assistance with résumé preparation, job fairs and hiring events, and training on computer use. Usage patterns in the 11th and 26th JD were more similar to one another.

**Table 6.5. Self-Report of Employment Services Received Among PSP Participants with Employment Problems, by Site**

	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total
Job listings and postings	★ 89%	91%	75%	88%
Job leads, employment counseling, individual help from staff	52%	67%	53%	60%
Job fairs and other hiring events	★ 38%	67%	49%	49%
Assistance with résumé preparation	★ 38%	63%	28%	48%
Cold calling to employers	46%	52%	36%	47%
Workshops or classes on interviewing and preparing for work	★ 30%	67%	23%	47%
Bus passes or gas money	29%	24%	25%	26%
Training on using computers	★ 13%	33%	13%	23%
English as a Second Language or GED	12%	5%	8%	8%
Financial help to get clothing and work tools	3%	5%	4%	4%
	(105)	(138)	(47)	(290)

★ Chi square is significant at .01.

As is shown in Table 6.6, most PSP participants rated the services they received as “excellent” or “good.” The lowest satisfaction ratings were given to cold calling employers to ask about job openings and job fairs and other hiring events. However, even these activities received satisfaction ratings that exceeded 60 percent.

**Table 6.6. Rating of Employment Services by PSP Participants, by Site**

Percentage Rating this Service as “Excellent” or “Good”	11th JD	20th JD	26 JD	Total
Assistance with résumé preparation	82%	93%	92%	90%
Training on using computers	93%	89%	66%	88%
Workshops or classes on interviewing and preparing for work	75%	86%	91%	84%
English as a Second Language or GED	85%	72%	100%	83%
Bus passes or gas money	65%	85%	75%	75%
Job leads, employment counseling, individual help from staff	61%	76%	84%	72%
Financial help to get clothing and work tools	33%	72%	100%	67%
Job listings and postings	58%	73%	60%	66%
Cold calling to employers	52%	63%	71%	60%
Job fairs and other hiring events	56%	56%	65%	58%
	(105)	(138)	(47)	(290)

Table 6.7 shows how PSP participants and those in the comparison group responded to questions about services received. As previously noted, Coordinators provided services to PSP participants while members of the comparison group probably received services at the local Career Center, which was the entity listed on their packet of community referrals for help with employment. There were few

statistically significant differences between the two groups. To the extent that there were differences, PSP participants were more likely to report receiving bus passes or gas money and to be trained on using computers. The comparison group was more likely to report participating in job fairs, used job postings, and attended ESL or GED classes. It should be noted that interview responses were obtained from only 31 members of the comparison group.

**Table 6.7. Self-Report of Services and Training Received by PSP Participants and Comparison Group**

Training Received at PSP or Career Center for Comparison	PSP Participants	Comparison
Training on using computers	20%	10%
Workshops or classes on interviewing/preparing for work	42%	32%
Participate in job fairs or other employment events	49%	64%
Receive assistance with résumé preparation	45%	42%
Get job listings or postings	79%	93%
Cold calling of employers	42%	55%
Employment counseling	54%	54%
★ Bus passes or gas money	24%	6%
Attend English as a Second Language or GED	8%	16%
Financial help to get work clothes or tools	4%	10%
	(337)	(31)

★ Chi square is significant at .01.

Figure 6.1 shows employment activity reported by PSP participants at three points in time: when they enrolled in PSP, when the Coordinator did a three-month check on the client, and at the six-month follow-up telephone interview. At every site, employment rose following PSP enrollment with the increase being most dramatic in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> JD.

- In the 11th JD, the percentage employed was 8 percent at enrollment, rose to 67 percent at the three-month check, and stood at 45 percent at the time of the six-month follow-up interview.
- In the 20th JD, the percentage employed was 8 percent at enrollment, rose to 46 percent at the three-month check, and stood at 50 percent at the six-month follow-up interview.
- In the 26th JD, the percentage employed at intake was 46 percent, rose to 65 percent at the three-month check, and was 69 percent at the six-month follow-up interview.

It is important to note that employment information was available only for the subset of PSP participants who were interviewed. Thus the three and six month levels that are shown may overstate the level of employment for the full group of PSP participants.

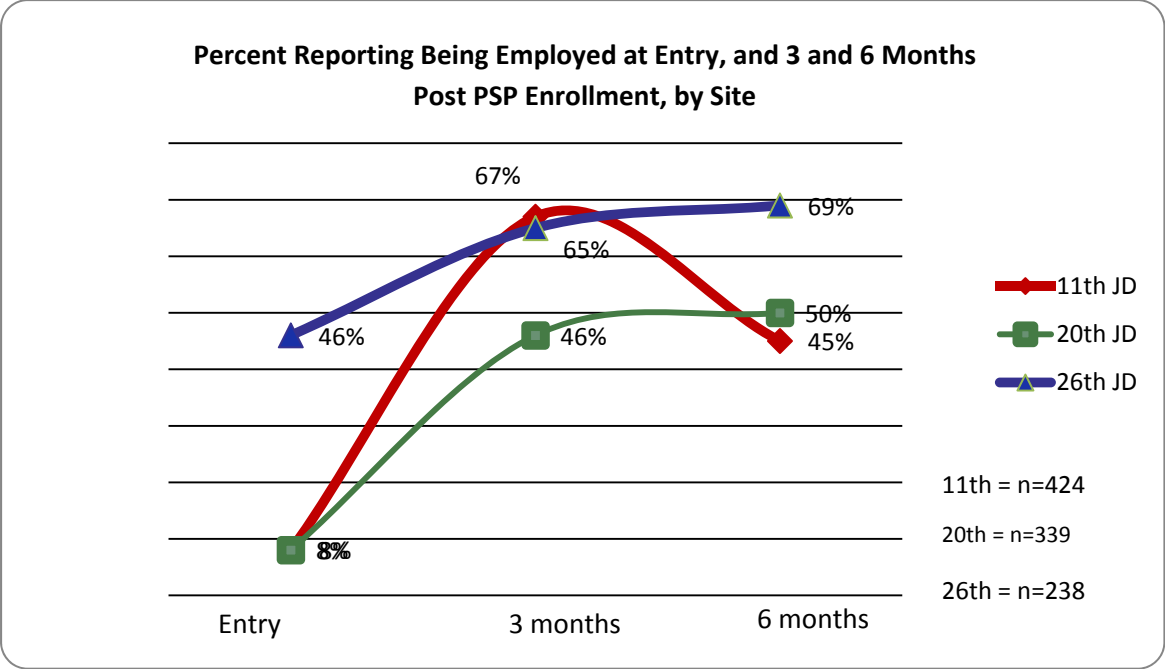


Figure 6.1

Finally, with respect to employment assistance, Table 6.8 shows how PSP participants rated the program and how the 31 members of the comparison group who were interviewed rated the Career Center. PSP participants were clearly more pleased with the help they received relative to the comparison group. In the comparison group, nearly half of those interviewed (42%) said the Career Center was “not very” or “not at all” helpful. Less than 20 percent of the PSP participants gave “not helpful” ratings to the Parent Support Program and nearly half (48%) rated PSP as “very helpful.”

★ How helpful was PSP or the Career Center (for Comparison)	PSP Participants	Comparison
Very helpful	48%	19%
Somewhat helpful	34%	39%
Not very helpful	8%	19%
Not at all helpful	10%	23%
	(337)	(31)

★ Chi square is significant at .01.

## 7. Parenting Plans and Contact with Children

### Parenting Plans

As noted earlier (Table 5.15), half to three-quarters of the PSP participants reported that they lacked a parenting plan when they enrolled in the program, and only 12 percent (26th JD) to 27 percent (20th JDs) had a written plan. When the Coordinators at the sites checked on project participants three months following enrollment, many had developed one. This was true for 50 percent of those in the 26th JD, 24 percent in the 20th JD, and 11 percent in the 11th JD.

**Table 7.1. PSP Participants Lacking a Parenting Plan at Intake Who Developed One at Three-Month Check, by Site**

	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total
Percentage reporting they developed a parenting plan and filed it with the court	11%	24%	50%	24%
	(122)	(68)	(58)	(248)

★ Chi square is significant at .000.

In the telephone interview conducted approximately six months after intake, more than half of PSP participants reported that they had received an explanation of their visitation or parenting time situation. Depending upon the JD, approximately half to two-thirds reported receiving help developing a plan, and 16 to 31 percent reported receiving help revising their plan. Those who received these services rated them highly.

**Table 7.2. PSP Participants Reporting Receiving Various Parenting Time Services at Six Month Telephone Interview, by Site**

	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total
★An explanation of your visitation or parenting time situation	54%	51%	78%	65%
★Help developing a parenting plan for you and the other parent	62%	42%	61%	54%
Help changing an existing plan	31%	24%	16%	21%
	(111)	(144)	(78)	(333)

★ Chi square is significant at .01.

**Table 7.3. PSP Participants Rating of Various Parenting Time Services at Six Month Telephone Interview, by Site**

Percentage Rating this Service as “Excellent” or “Good”	11 <sup>th</sup> JD	20 <sup>th</sup> JD	26 <sup>th</sup> JD	Total
Explanation of your visitation or parenting time situation	100%	72%	79%	79%
Developing a parenting plan for you and the other parent	87%	59%	82%	76%
Help changing an existing plan	75%	70%	66%	70%

### Contact with Children

At the three-month check, the Coordinator asked PSP participants who had reported needing help with parenting time whether their parenting situation was better, worse, or about the same. As shown in Table 7.4, relatively few parents described things as “worse” than at intake. However, only in the 26th JD did a majority say their parenting situation had improved. In the 11th JD, parents were fairly evenly divided between those saying there had been improvements and those saying things were unchanged. In the 20th JD, most participants said things had remained the same.

**Table 7.4. PSP Participant Ratings of Parenting Situation at Three Month Check Compared with Intake, by Site**

	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total
★At the three-month follow-up, client reports the parenting situation has:				
Improved	44%	27%	51%	42%
Stayed the same	44%	56%	35%	44%
Become worse	11%	16%	13%	14%
	(9)	(62)	(90)	(158)

★ Chi square is significant at .000.

At the six-month telephone interview, 36 percent of those in the 11th JD, 33 percent in the 20th JD, and 43 percent in the 26th JD reported that contact with their children had increased. On the other hand, at each site, about a quarter said that contact had decreased.

**Table 7.5. Reported Changes in Contact with Children for PSP Participants at Six Months Telephone Interview, by Site ★**

	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total
Compared to six months ago has the amount of time you spend with the children:				
Decreased a lot	16%	22%	18%	19%
Decreased a little	7%	3%	9%	6%
Stayed the same	41%	41%	30%	38%
Increased a little	16%	13%	13%	14%
Increased a lot	20%	21%	30%	23%
	(112)	(143)	(77)	(332)

Table 7.6 shows that there was no difference between the PSP participants and the comparison group in reports of changes in contact levels during the preceding six months. In both group, about a third reported contact had increased, just over a third reported it had stayed the same, and the remaining respondents reported decreased contact.

**Table 7.6. Contact with Children at Six Month Telephone Interview Reported by PSP Participants and the Comparison Group**

	PSP Participants	Comparison
Compared to six months ago, would you say the amount of time you spend with the children has:		
Decreased a lot	19%	16%
Decreased a little	6%	11%
Stayed the same	38%	39%
Increased a little	14%	10%
Increased a lot	22%	24%
	(334)	(70)

Although PSP participants were somewhat more likely than comparison group parents to report seeing their children more regularly, the differences were not statistically significant. Nor were there statistically significant differences across the sites. About a third of the PSP participants said contact was more regular, while nearly half said it was the same as it had been at intake.

**Table 7.7. Reported Regularity of Visits with Children by PSP Participants and Comparison Group**

	PSP Participants	Comparison
Compared to six months ago, would you say you see the children:		
More regularly	32%	25%
Less regularly	22%	20%
About the same	46%	55%
	(331)	(71)

**Table 7.8. Reported Regularity of Contact with Children Six Month Telephone Interview for PSP Participants, by Site ★**

	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total
See children more regularly	29%	31%	39%	32%
See children less regularly	24%	21%	22%	22%
See children about the same	47%	48%	39%	46%
	(111)	(141)	(77)	(329)

## 8. Financial Status of Participants

Table 8.1 shows the public benefits that PSP participants reported receiving when they entered PSP and the percentage needing help applying for services. Approximately half reported receiving food stamps when they entered PSP, and about another third said they needed help applying for food stamps. Unemployment benefits, Medicaid, TANF, and disability were reportedly received by less than 10 percent of participants.

In the 20th JD but not in the other sites, a significant number of participants wanted help applying for benefits. At this site, 45 percent wanted help applying for unemployment benefits, 33 percent wanted help applying for disability benefits, 22 percent wanted help applying for food stamps, and 19 percent wanted help with making an application to Medicaid.

**Table 8.1. Percentage Reporting Receiving Benefits and Needing Help Applying for Benefits at Intake, by Site**

	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total
Percentage receiving food stamps	49%	54%	52%	52%
★Percentage needing help applying for food stamps	9%	22%	20%	17%
★Unemployment benefits	3%	6%	9%	5%
★Percentage needing help applying for unemployment benefits	2%	45%	12%	19%
★Medicaid	3%	9%	19%	7%
★ Percentage needing help applying for Medicaid	1%	19%	11%	10%
TANF	1%	4%	4%	3%
★Percentage needing help applying for TANF	1%	10%	4%	4%
★Disability benefits (SSI, SSDI)	1%	7%	5%	4%
Percentage needing help applying for disability benefits	1%	33%	5%	11%

★ Chi square is significant at .01.

Table 8.2 shows the status of benefit receipt at the three-month follow-up check for those PSP participants who wanted help with applying for benefits at intake. In the 11th JD, relatively few participants had made a benefit application. In the 20th JD, where interest in help was the greatest, over 60 percent had applied and 50 percent had been approved. In the 26th JD, approximately 40 percent had applied and 23 percent had been approved.



**Table 8.2. Benefit Status at Three Month Check for PSP Participants Wanting Help at Intake, by Site**

★Application Status	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total
Did not apply for any benefits	64%	36%	63%	54%
Applied, denied	8%	8%	11%	8%
Pending	3%	4%	3%	3%
Approved	26%	52%	23%	35%
	(186)	(157)	(88)	(431)

★ Chi square is significant at .00.

At the three month check, participants were asked to compare their current financial situation to their situation at intake. At all three sites, about half said their situation had not changed, while about a quarter said things were better and a quarter said things were worse.

**Table 8.3. Rating of Financial Situation by PSP Participants at Three-Month Check, by Site**

	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total
Financial situation is better than at intake	25%	20%	24%	23%
Financial situation is the same as at intake	56%	51%	50%	53%
Financial situation is worse than at intake	20%	30%	26%	25%
	(183)	(154)	(112)	(449)

At the time of the six month follow-up telephone interview, half to three-quarters of PSP respondents said they often had financial problems such as running out of money for food before the end of the month, having utilities turned off for nonpayment, or having to stay with family and friends. Table 8.5 shows no difference in ratings of financial situation based on participation in employment services. In both instances, about half of the respondents rated their financial situation as unchanged, 20 percent characterized it as improved, and the rest rated it as worse.

**Table 8.4. Financial Difficulties Reported by PSP Participants at Six Month Telephone Interview, by Site**

Percentage reporting they “often”	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total
Run out of money for food before the end of the month	56%	54%	47%	53%
★ In the last 6 months have had utilities turned off	27%	13%	8%	16%
In the last 6 months have had to stay with family or friends	54%	41%	32%	43%
★ Any of the above	74%	71%	56%	69%
	(109)	(144)	(78)	(331)

★ Chi square is significant at .05.

**Table 8.5. Rating of Financial Situation Reported by PSP Participants at Six Month Follow-up Telephone Interview, by Employment Services Received**

	<b>Received No Financial Services from PSP</b>	<b>Received Financial Services from PSP</b>
Financial situation is better than at intake	21%	22%
Financial situation is the same as at intake	56%	49%
Financial situation is worse than at intake	23%	40%
	(34)	(183)

## 9. Child Support Status and Outcomes

### Profile of PSP Participants' Total Child Support Obligations

This chapter focuses on the payment behavior of PSP participants with respect to the specific child support case that brought them into the program. However, the first tables provide an overview of all of the participant's child support cases. As shown in Table 9.1, most of the PSP participants had either one or two active child support cases when they entered PSP. Virtually all had at least one child support case with a parent to whom they were never married. To contrast, members of the comparison group were much more likely to have only one active case (95% versus 64%), and somewhat less apt to have an out-of-wedlock birth (80% versus 98%).

**Table 9.1. Number of Active Child Support Cases at Intake for PSP Participants, by Site and Comparison Group ★**

	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total PSP	Comparison
One	64%	59%	71%	64%	95%
Two	23%	26%	22%	24%	5%
Three	8%	11%	4%	8%	0%
Four or more	5%	5%	4%	4%	0%
	(252)	(283)	(178)	(713)	(171)

★ Chi square is significant at .02.

**Table 9.2. Percentage with at Least One Active Child Support Cases Involving Never Married Parents at Intake for PSP Participants, by Site and Comparison Group ★**

	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total PSP	Comparison
At least one child support case with Never-married parents	94%	98%	98%	98%	80%
	(252)	(283)	(178)	(713)	(171)

Only a few PSP participants had an arrears only child support case that only required payment for back due child support. Most participants had arrears due for at least one case in addition to monthly obligations for current support. Participants in the 26th Judicial District and those in the comparison group were less likely to have arrears on one or more cases relative to those in the 11th and 20th Judicial Districts.

Combining arrears balances for PSP participants across all their cases yields an average arrears balance of approximately \$20,000 in the 11th and 20th Judicial Districts. For the 26th Judicial District and the comparison group, average arrears balances were \$5,000 and \$10,000, respectively. A comparison of the total PSP population with the comparison group yields average arrears of \$18,439 and \$10,153,

respectively. This further underscores the fundamental differences between the treatment and comparison groups.

**Table 9.3 Percentage of Arrears-Only Cases at Intake for PSP Participants, by Site and Comparison Group ★**

	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total PSP	Comparison
Arrears-only Cases	7% (252)	4% (283)	4% (178)	4% (713)	5% (171)

★ Chi square is significant at .02.

**Table 9.4. Arrears Status of Active Child Support Cases at Intake for PSP Participants<sup>★</sup>, by Site and Comparison Group ★**

	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total PSP	Comparison
★ Percentage of cases with no arrears	1%	5%	20%	7.1%	23%
Arrears of \$1,000 or less	5%	5%	27%	10.6%	16%
\$1,001-\$5,000	20%	15%	22%	18.6%	22%
\$5,001-\$10,000	18%	14%	12%	14.7%	15%
More than \$10,001	56%	61%	19%	49.0%	25%
★★ Average arrears	\$18,575 (252)	\$22,996 (283)	\$5,850 (178)	\$18,439 (715)	\$10,153 (171)

★ Combines all active cases. ★ Chi square is significant at .02. ★★ ANOVA significant at .00.

Table 9.5 shows average current monthly support obligations for PSP participants when all their child support case is taken into consideration. They averaged approximately \$400 for participants in the 11th and 20th Judicial Districts and in the comparison group. In the 26th Judicial District, monthly support obligations were significantly lower, and averaged only \$273.

**Table 9.5. Current Support Due Across All Child Support Cases at Intake for PSP Participants<sup>★</sup>, by Site, and Comparison Group ★**

	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total PSP	Comparison
\$1 - \$200	13%	9%	39%	18%	17%
\$201 - \$400	53%	52%	41%	50%	39%
\$401 - \$600	23%	24%	18%	23%	23%
\$601 - \$800	9%	9%	2%	7%	9%
\$801 - \$1,000	2%	4%	0%	2%	7%
\$1,001 or more	1%	2%	0%	1%	5%
★★ Average	\$370 (209)	\$406 (227)	\$273 (140)	\$361 (576)	\$472 (121)

★ Combines all cases with current support orders. ★ Chi square is significant at .02. ★★ Anova significant at .00.

Table 9.6 shows the average amount due across all orders if monthly arrears payments are added to current monthly support obligation (the table includes only those cases with current support due). The PSP participants in the 26th Judicial District and the comparison group owed approximately \$500 per month. In the 11th Judicial District, the average owed per month is approximately \$450, and in the 20<sup>th</sup>, the average is significantly lower at \$323.

**Table 9.6. Total Monthly Amount Due (Current and Arrears Payments) at Intake for PSP Participants, by Site, and Comparison Group\***

	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total PSP	Comparison
★★ Average	\$447 (209)	\$526 (227)	\$323 (140)	\$449 (576)	\$535 (121)

\* Includes only cases with current support due. ★★ Anova significant at .00.

## Profile of the Target Child Support Case

Every PSP participant entered the project because of a payment issues associated with a particular child support case that is termed the “target case.” Typically, this case was scheduled for enforcement activity during the enrollment timeframe. Table 9.7 shows that these cases were hardly new. On average orders had been established 7.3 years earlier; the average was eight years in the 11th and 20th Judicial Districts and approximately five years in the 26th Judicial District and the comparison group. Thus, although PSP was originally conceived by OCSE to be a project that would intervene with noncustodial parents who were establishing new child support orders, this clearly did not happen and most participants had been in the system for many years and had older child support cases.

**Table 9.7. Age of Child Support Order at Intake by PSP Participants, by Site and Comparison Group★**

	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total PSP	Comparison
Average	7.5 years	8.0 years	5.5 years	7.3	4.5 years
Median	7.0 years (183)	7.0 years (196)	4.0 years (109)	6.0 (488)	3.5 years (130)

★ Chi square is significant at .02.

Table 9.8 shows that it had been nearly two years since most project participants had made their last current support payment on the case bringing them into PSP. The range was from only a month or two, to over 40 months.

**Table 9.8. Months from Last Child Support Payment to Enrollment in Program by PSP Participants\*, by Site and Comparison Group★**

	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total PSP	Comparison
Average months	22.4	17.9	20.6	20.2	29.0
Median months	24.0	19.0	22.0	22.0	33.0
Range	1-40 (65)	1-34 (177)	1-35 (139)	1-40 (381)	2-41 (154)

## Post-Program Child Support Performance

A key outcome of interest deals with the payment of child support by PSP participants on their target case. One summary of pre- and post-program payment activity is shown in Table 9.9. This table shows the number of months in which a payment was due, and the number of months in which a participant made a payment both prior to and following his enrollment in PSP. In the PSP sites, NCPs made a payment in a third to half of the months with a payment due prior to enrollment★, with an average of 48

percent for the group as a whole. In the comparison group, rates of pre-enrollment payment were higher, with payments occurring in 71 percent of the months when they were due. Only in the 26th Judicial District was there a post-program increase in the percentage of months with a payment. It rose from 52 percent pre-program to 62 percent post-enrollment. In the 11th and 20th Judicial Districts and in the comparison group, the percentage of months with a payment was unchanged following program enrollment. It may be relevant that child support order levels were significantly lower in the 26th Judicial District as compared with order levels in the 11th and 20th as well as the comparison group.

**Table 9.9. Average Number of Months with Payments Due and Average Number of Months with Payment Made On Target Case at Intake and Extract for PSP Participants, by Site and Comparison Group ★**

	Pre-Program			Post-Program		
	Months with Support Due	Months with Support Paid	Percentage of Months with a Payment	Months with Support Due	Months with Support Paid	Percentage of Months with a Payment
11th JD (n=252)	15.5	6.9	43%	14.2	7.0	48%
20th JD (n=282)	14.8	5.4	37%	12.3	4.9	38%
★26th JD (n=178)	13.3	6.9	52%	16.5	10.4	62%
Total PSP	14.7	6.3	48%	15.1	8.1	51%
Comparison (n=178)	13.3	7.7	71%	19.6	12.5	62%

★Paired T-test of months paid pre and post is significant at .02.

Table 9.10 presents another measure of payment performance. It shows the percentage of the amount due that was paid by participants in each judicial district and across all project sites. Prior to enrollment in the program, PSP participants in the 11th and 20th Judicial Districts paid approximately a quarter to a third of the amount due, while those in the 26th Judicial District paid 45 percent of the amount due. Once again, this may reflect higher rates of employment and lower child support obligation levels for participants in the 26th Judicial District. Looking across sites, PSP clients paid an average of one-third of the current support that they owed prior to their enrollment in PSP. Following enrollment, the percentage of owed child support that they paid rose to 36 percent. The change was statistically significant.

**Table 9.10. Percentage of Current Support Due that was Paid Pre and Post Program, by Site and Total**

	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	★Total PSP
Percentage of Amount Due that was Paid Pre-Program	31%	26%	45%	33%
Percentage of Amount Due that was Paid Post-Program	34%	27%	53%	36%

★Paired T-test of months paid pre and post is significant at .05.

Table 9.11 contrasts pre- and post-program payment patterns for the experimental and comparison groups. While the percentage of current support paid prior to and following enrollment in PSP increased significantly from 33 to 36 percent for members of the experimental group, they declined for members of the comparison group from 60 to 52 percent. As previously noted, members of the comparison group had higher child support order levels and lower arrears balances at program enrollment suggesting that they were better off financially and had a stronger history of child support payment.

**Table 9.11. Percent of Current Support Due that was Paid Pre- and Post-Program, by Total PSP Enrollees and Comparison Group**

	★Total PSP	Comparison
Percentage of Amount Due that was Paid Pre-Program	33%	60%
Percentage of Amount Due that was Paid Post-Program	36%	52%

★Paired T-test of months paid pre and post is significant at .05.

Another indicator of employment and child support payment is the percentage of cases with a verified employer. The child support agency keeps track of verified employment in its database (TCSES) and this was extracted for PSP participants and members of the comparison group. PSP enrollees show improved employment patterns based on this measure with the percent with a verified employer increasing from a low of 15 percent in the 11th Judicial District at enrollment to a high of 48 percent in the 26th Judicial District at follow-up. Table 9.12 also provides further evidence that the experimental and comparison groups were not comparable with the comparison group having higher levels of employment at enrollment and thus better child support payment patterns.

**Table 9.12. Verified Employment Activity According to Child Support Records for PSP Enrollees Pre- and Post-Program Enrollment**

	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total PSP	Comparison
TCSES shows verified employer at enrollment	15%	20%	42%	24%	47%
TCSES shows verified employer at follow-up	45%	47%	48%	46%	53%
	(254)	(283)	(178)	(715)	(178)

When they entered the PSP, clients in need of child support assistance were most likely to report needing help with having a driver’s license reinstated after it was suspended for failure to pay child support. This was a common problem in both the 11th and 26th JDs, although not in the 20<sup>th</sup>, where car ownership was the lowest. In the 20th Judicial District, the most commonly expressed need was to have a one-on-one explanation of a client’s child support situation. Clients did not report having classic child support problems related to order establishment, modification, or enforcement at any of the project sites, although in part this may be because they did not qualify for modification of their child support orders or lower order levels.

**Table 9.13. Specific Child Support Needs Reported at Intake by PSP Participants, by Site**

	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total
★ Driver’s license reinstatement	50%	5%	65%	45%
★ Explanation of client’s case	35%	85%	13%	38%
Help correcting child support errors	15%	15%	11%	13%
Order establishment	5%	0%	5%	4%
Order modification	5%	0%	3%	3%
Delaying enforcement actions	0%	0%	5%	3%
Genetic testing	0%	0%	3%	1%
Paternity establishment	0%	0%	0%	0%
Wage withholding	0%	0%	0%	0%
	(20)	(20)	(37)	(77)

★ Chi square is significant at .000.

The final analysis of child support performance considers the percentage of months with a payment and the percentage of the obligation that was paid when controlling for various types of services that clients might have received through PSP. Assistance that was provided was not always recorded on the MIS. As a result, the table may not be an accurate portrayal of the services provided and their impact on payment outcomes.

Based on the information available, receiving help with child support does not appear to produce a significant increase in the number of months with payment or the percentage of the obligation that is paid. There are significant differences in these two outcome variables based on whether the client received help with employment or benefits. However, in both instances those receiving help had lower performance on the child support measures. This may reflect the fact that those who needed help with employment or benefits were in the worst financial situation and less able to meet their child support obligations.

Client reports at three months post-enrollment suggest that providing assistance with access and visitation problems does result in improved child support performance. Those receiving help made a payment in 53 percent of the months with a payment due, and paid a total of 45 percent of their obligation, while the figures for those who did not receive help with access and visitation were 45 and 32 percent, respectively.



**Table 9.14. Child Support Payments Made by PSP Participants by Type of Assistance Received**

	Percentage of Months with a Payment	Percentage of Amount Due that was Paid Post-Program	Number
Client reports help with child support	47.9	36.3	482
Received help	50.6	39.6	51
Client reports help with employment	55.7★	44.9★	393
Received help	45.5	33.6	140
Client reports help with applying for benefits	49.5★	37.8★	457
Received help	40.3	29.1	76
Client reports help with access and visitation	45.4★	31.9★	349
Received help	53.4	45.3	184
Client reports help with any of the above	47.4	35.6	370
Received help	49.9	38.8	163

★T-test is significant at .05.

### Participant Ratings of Their Child Support Situation Following Enrollment

At the three month check, most of the PSP participants described their child support situation as unchanged relative to their situation at program entry. However, nearly a quarter said things were better and a similar percentage said that things were worse.

**Table 9.15. Client Assessment of Their Child Support Situation at Three Month Check, by Site**

At the three-month follow-up, client reports the child support is	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total
Improved	21%	20%	26%	22%
The same	58%	52%	58%	56%
Worse	22%	29%	16%	23%
	(180)	(151)	(112)	(443)

Chi square is significant at .000.

## 10. Participant Reactions

This chapter provides participant reactions to the Parent Support Program at two points in time following enrollment. As described in chapter four, participants were contacted three and six months following enrollment to gauge reactions to the PSP, determine employment status, and child and family relationship status.

CPR contracted with an experienced independent telephone interviewer to conduct the three month follow-up check with PSP participants. The interviewer attempted to contact all enrollees in the experimental group three months following enrollment. Ultimately, a total of 448 PSP participants in the experimental group (out of the 1,016 with intake forms – 48%) were reached for the three month check. The brief telephone check sought to determine the participants employment status, reaction to the services received at the PSP, and family relationship status.

The six month follow up telephone interviews were conducted with members of the experimental and comparison group by interviewers at Northern Illinois University’s Public Opinion Laboratory. The in-depth telephone interviews lasted an average of 30 minutes, and were completed with 410 PSP participants in the experimental and comparison group. Interviews began in February 2011 and were completed in March 2013 with up to 8 callback attempts placed before a final disposition was made. The response rate for the follow up telephone interviews was 32.6%. Interviews were conducted in English.

In both the three month check and six month follow-up telephone interview, participants were asked about aspects of their life compared to before enrollment in PSP. They were also asked to rate the program and the services provided to them by the PSP. They were asked about how the program could be improved and what actions the child support agency could take to provide greater assistance to participants.

At both the three and six months interviews, over half of the PSP participants described their lives as better than at program entry and approximately half of those interviewed in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> jurisdictions reported the program to be very helpful, in the 11<sup>th</sup> JD 73 percent said the program was either “very helpful” or “somewhat helpful.”

**Table 10.1. Client Assessment of the Overall Quality of Life at Three-Month Check, by Site**

	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total
★At the three-month follow-up, client reports quality of life has				
Improved	54%	51%	62%	55%
Stayed the same	42%	38%	32%	39%
Become worse	4%	11%	9%	7%
	(182)	(151)	(109)	(442)

★ Chi square is significant at .05.

**Table 10.2. Client Assessment of the Overall Helpfulness of the Program at the Six Month Follow-up Interview, by Site**

	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total
Very helpful	36%	55%	50%	47%
Somewhat helpful	37%	31%	37%	34%
Not very helpful	13%	5%	5%	8%
Not at all helpful	14%	9%	8%	11%
	(111)	(145)	(78)	(334)

When asked how the program might be improved, most respondents favored more job training opportunities, jobs with higher wages, more job openings for someone with the skills of a PSP participant, and more assistance with transportation and rent.

**Table 10.3. Client Recommendations on How to Improve PSP at the Six Month Follow-up Interview, by Site**

Percentage reporting that it is very important for PSP to	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total
Offer more job training programs	88%	85%	85%	86%
Have more job openings for someone like me	95%	90%	91%	92%
Keep in touch after I get a job	63%	60%	67%	62%
Give more bus passes or money for transportation help	78%	83%	74%	79%
Give more help with rent	80%	81%	86%	82%
Have jobs that pay higher wages	86%	86%	84%	86%
	(113)	(146)	(77)	(336)

Respondents suggested a number of ways the child support agency could be of greater assistance to program participants. This included offering lower child support orders, debt forgiveness, and delayed enforcement during job training or job search activities.

**Table 10.4. Client Assessment of PSP Services at the Follow-up Interview, by Site**

Percentage reporting that it is very important for PSP to	11th JD	20th JD	26th JD	Total
Lower child support orders	78%	68%	48%	67%
Forgive some child support debt	66%	69%	46%	63%
Hold off on enforcement while I am looking for work	75%	74%	64%	72%
Stop child support orders so we can go to school for training	75%	69%	49%	66%
	(113)	(146)	(77)	(336)

In summary, the participants generally viewed the program very favorably, while recognizing its limitations without the ability to create more job openings with higher wages or larger budgets to provide assistance with transportation and housing. The PSP participants also were clear that greater action on the part of the child support agency would be valued.

## **11. Short-Term Job Training Pilot Project**

### **Overview of Pilot Project**

In December 2012, a small-scale pilot demonstration project was developed to test the effectiveness of a short-term, paid, job-training intervention. The pilot project involved a partnership with Goodwill Industries in the 11th Judicial District (Chattanooga) and Goodwill of Middle Tennessee, Inc. in the 20th Judicial District (Nashville). During January 2013 through April 30, 2013, NCPs were co-enrolled in both PSP and the Goodwill pilot project. The goal of the pilot project was to gauge the efficacy of providing short-term, paid, job training to unemployed and underemployed NCPs, and assess the utility of the training effort in securing full-time employment, and generating regular child support payments.

There is growing interest in the use of transitional and subsidized employment strategies with both recipients of public assistance (e.g., National Supported Work Demonstration, AFDC Home Health Aid demonstration), and ex-offenders (e.g., Center for Economic Opportunities (CEO) program, the Transitional Work Corporation (TWC), and the Transitional Jobs Reentry Demonstration (TJRD)). Transitional jobs are also being used with NCPs in the Transitional Jobs Demonstration Project, a multi-site, random assignment project funded by the Department of Labor. To date, the research on transitional jobs has yielded mixed results. For ex-offenders, it appears that while transitional jobs do not increase the likelihood of obtaining unsubsidized employment, they are associated with lower rates of recidivism among high-risk, former prisoners. Clearly, more research and demonstration activity on paid training and work interventions with NCPs is needed.

### **Pilot Project Enrollment and Operations**

From January through April 2013, 54 NCPs from the Parent Support Program were referred to the Goodwill agencies in Nashville and Chattanooga for short-term, paid and/or unpaid job training. Pilot project operations differed in the 11th and 20th Judicial Districts.

In the 11th Judicial District, the Coordinator for PSP referred unemployed and underemployed NCPs to a pilot project coordinator at Goodwill and NCPs were told where and when to appear for enrollment and assessment. At Goodwill, case managers collected information on the NCP's job history, education, and job training needs. Next, NCPs were required to participate in a job readiness orientation session that covered résumé writing, interviewing skills, and proper business attire and conduct. Afterward, the NCP began 10 weeks of paid job training. During the 10-week program, the NCP earned \$7.50 per hour and worked a 40-hour work week in the Goodwill retail store. The program was supervised by a Goodwill staff member who provided coaching on proper work conduct, including timeliness, dress, work language, and job-related tasks and duties.

The Goodwill Career Counselor assisted NCPs who completed the 10-week training program with securing full-time stable employment. Some trainees were hired for full-time work at a Goodwill retail store. If no position was suitable or available at Goodwill, the career counselor provided the NCP with direct links to area employers and jobs. Throughout the 10-week program, Goodwill offered the NCP supportive services, such as bus passes. The PSP Coordinator was available to address other issues that arose, such as access and visitation problems, child support issues, and/or community referrals. The Goodwill Career Counselor tracked and monitored the NCP's participation and status in the job training program and reported back to the PSP Coordinator on these activities as well as employment and earnings outcomes, when available.

In the 20th Judicial District, Goodwill Industries of Middle Tennessee provided assessment and job training services to PSP participants. Following a thorough assessment, The Goodwill Career Counselor recommended that the NCP pursue a career path and the corresponding Goodwill training program. The NCP was invited to attend a full-day job readiness class and a weekly "Job Jam," which is a job club where job seekers meet as a group and have their job-related questions answered by career counselors at Goodwill. The Job Jam is also an opportunity for enrollees to network, provide peer support, and watch videos on work-related topics, practice interview skills, and complete job applications. Goodwill of Middle Tennessee also offered a variety of training programs to pilot project participants, including forklifting, computers, construction, call centers, health care careers exploration classes, and retail training. The construction training program offered a paid stipend of \$100 per week. The other types of training programs offered up to four weeks of paid training, followed by a possible offer to hire by Goodwill. Goodwill also provided a series of classes for ex-offenders on how to talk about their criminal past in job interviews. In addition, through community partners, they offered interview training, and assistance in expunging criminal records.

The Goodwill Career Counselor assisted pilot project participants who completed the training program in obtaining stable full-time employment, including providing job leads. Those who enrolled in the program were eligible to receive bus passes and other supportive services. As in Chattanooga, the Coordinator was available to help with other barriers, including helping with child support problems, parenting time issues, and/or referrals to community services.

## **Profile of Enrollees**

From January through May 2013, 54 noncustodial parents enrolled in the Goodwill Pilot Job Training Program: 32 in Nashville and 22 in Chattanooga. Not surprisingly, the demographic characteristics of pilot project participants matched those of PSP enrollees. The majority were male (83%) and African American (78%). On average, they were three years older than PSP participants (37 versus 34). Those with a high school degree or GED totaled 39 percent, while 35 percent had less than a high school diploma. Compared to PSP participants, the 54 NCPs in the Goodwill Pilot were less likely to be employed at enrollment (2% versus 11%) and more likely to be unemployed (87% versus 80%).

**Table 11.1. Employment Status of Goodwill Pilot and PSP Participants at Enrollment**

	<b>Goodwill Pilot</b>	<b>All PSP</b>
Employment status at intake		
Employed full time	2%	11%
Employed part time	7%	6%
Seasonal/temporary employment	3%	3%
Unemployed	87%	80%
Number	(54)	(1,001)

A comparison between the Goodwill Pilot enrollees and all PSP enrollees on the duration of their most recent or current length of unemployment reveals that both groups had been unemployed for an average of 17 months (16.6 vs. 17). Similarly, 4 percent of

those in the Pilot group and 7 percent of all PSP enrollees reported that they were receiving unemployment benefits.

**Table 11.2. Unemployment History for Goodwill Pilot and PSP Participants**

	<b>Goodwill Pilot</b>	<b>All PSP</b>
Length of unemployment		
Mean	16.6 months	17 months
Median	12 months	11 months
Number	(40)	(689)
Currently receiving unemployment benefits	4%	7%
Number	(47)	(676)

Table 11.3 provides a comparison of the most recent job held and benefits information for those enrolled in the Goodwill Pilot Demonstration compared to all PSP enrollees. The comparison shows few differences in employment history between the two groups.

**Table 11.3. Most Recent Employment Information for Goodwill Pilot and PSP Participants**

	Goodwill Pilot	All PSP
Hourly wage		
Mean	\$9.57	\$9.45
Median	\$9.50	\$8.50
Range	\$7-\$16	\$2.13-\$40
Number	(45)	(685)
Number of hours worked per week		
Mean	32.7	35
Median	38.5	40
Range	8-50	6-70
Number	(45)	(685)
★ Types of benefits offered:		
Health insurance only	4%	6%
Retirement benefits only	4%	1%
Both health and retirement benefits	14%	15%
None	78%	78%
Number	(50)	(898)

★ Chi square is significant at .000.

As shown in Table 11.3, both Pilot and PSP enrollees earned an average wage of approximately \$9.50 per hour. Median wages of Pilot enrollees were \$9.50 per hour compared to \$8.50 for PSP enrollees. Both groups worked an average of 33 to 35 hours per week at their most recent job, and 78 percent of both groups reported that their current or most recent employer had offered no benefits.

Marriage was equally rare for NCPs in the two groups (20% versus 17%), but cohabitation patterns differed slightly for Goodwill Pilot and PSP participants. Just under one third of Pilot enrollees (32%) reported they were never married and had never lived with the other parent,

as compared with 47 percent of PSP participants. And while nearly half (48%) of Goodwill Pilot participants reported cohabiting with the other parent, this was the case for only 37 percent of PSP participants. The majority of both groups reported having only one child (64% and 65%, respectively). Goodwill Pilot enrollees were slightly more apt than PSP participants to report having a more hostile relationship with the other parent (27% versus 22%).

**Table 11.4. Relationship Situation at Intake Reported by Goodwill Pilot and PSP Participants**

	Goodwill Pilot	All PSP
Were you ever married to the custodial parent?		
Never married and never lived together	32%	47%
Never married, lived together	48%	37%
Yes, we were married	20%	17%
Number of children with the custodial parent		
One	64%	65%
Two	27%	21%
Three to five	6%	13%
More than five	4%	1%
Nature of your relationship with the other parent		
Angry and hostile	27%	22%

**Table 11.4. Relationship Situation at Intake Reported by Goodwill Pilot and PSP Participants**

	Goodwill Pilot	All PSP
Fairly cooperative	29%	29%
Cooperative	19%	32%
No relationship, no contact	17%	15%
Other	8%	N/A
	(52)	(953)

At intake, nearly a quarter of the participants in both groups reported seeing their children only once or twice a year or less. On the other hand, nearly 40 percent reported seeing their children at least weekly. Although many NCPs saw their children frequently, over 40 said there was no visitation plan, 14 percent said it was a verbal agreement, and 9 percent were not sure if they had a visitation plan. Approximately one-third of the enrollees in the Goodwill Pilot believed that they had a court-ordered visitation plan.

**Table 11.5. Comparison of Visitation Status for Pilot and PSP Participants**

	Goodwill Pilot	All PSP
About how often do you see the children at intake		
More than once a week	16%	16%
About once a week	22%	18%
About once or twice a month	22%	17%
About every other month	8%	6%
About once or twice a year	8%	7%
Never	16%	16%
Other	10%	9%
Does NCP have a visitation plan?		
No	44%	65%
Not sure	9%	4%
Yes, verbal plan	15%	13%
Yes, written plan	32%	18%
	(54)	(927)



## Pilot Demonstration Outcomes

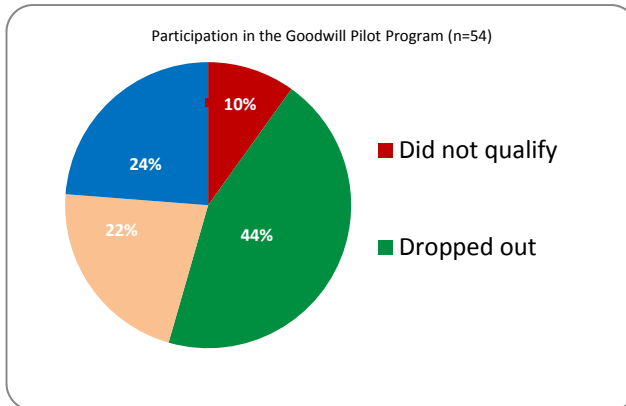


Figure 11.1

As of report writing, only limited data on outcomes was available for the 54 PSP enrollees who participated in the Goodwill Pilot. As previously noted, enrollment occurred from January to April 30, 2013, and the job training programs lasted approximately 4 to 10 weeks. Because of the short time frame available for enrollment, training activities, and the conduct of a follow-up assessment, employment and child support outcomes are limited and should be viewed as preliminary and ongoing.

Ten percent of the 54 NCPs enrolled in the Pilot Project did not qualify for the training program, primarily because they had an open criminal case. Just under half (45%) of participants who were referred to the Goodwill Pilot subsequently dropped out. The remaining 24 percent either completed the job training program at Goodwill and secured full-time employment or were still actively participating in training and job search with Goodwill (22%) as of report writing.

## Employment and Child Support Outcomes

Table 11.6 shows that most noncustodial parents in the Goodwill Pilot had an average of 1.7 child support cases. Their monthly obligation for current support averaged \$388. In addition, they owed an average of \$193 per month for their child support arrears. Their total arrears balances averaged \$25,000 and ranged from \$100 to over \$130,000.

**Table 11.6. Child Support Profile for Goodwill Pilot Demonstration Enrollees**

		(n=54)
Number of Child Support Cases	Average	1.7
	Median	1.0
	Range	1-7
	<hr/>	
Total Monthly Current Support Due Across all Cases	Average	\$388
	Median	\$351
	Range	\$100-\$935
	<hr/>	
Total Monthly Arrears Payment Due Across all Cases	Average	\$193

**Table 11.6. Child Support Profile for Goodwill Pilot Demonstration Enrollees**

	Median	\$130
	Range	\$7-\$2,308
Total Arrears Balance Across All Cases	Average	\$25,015
	Median	\$16,840
	Range	\$100-\$130,830

**Table 11.7. Verified Employment and Wage Assignment Activity According to Child Support Records for Goodwill Pilot Demonstration Enrollees Pre- and Post-Program Enrollment**

	At Enrollment	At Follow-up Post Enrollment
TCSSES shows verified employer	2%	38%
TCSSES shows income assignment in effect	28%	40%

One way to gauge employment outcome is to assess the incidence of verified employment on the automated child support system and the

implementation of automatic income assignments. Table 11.7 shows that between enrollment into the Goodwill Pilot and the conduct of a post-enrollment data check in August 2013, the percentage of cases with a verified employer recorded in the TCSSES system rose from 2 to 38 percent. The percentage of cases with an income assignment rose from 28 percent at enrollment to 40 percent at follow up. This suggests that NCPs who participated in the Goodwill Pilot obtained new employment following their enrollment and were poised to be able to earn regular income and make child support payments.

Table 11.8 shows the percent of current support paid that was due in the months prior to and following enrollment in the Goodwill Pilot, compared with PSP enrollees. There was little change in payment performance following enrollment in the Goodwill Pilot and the total PSP population.

**Table 11.8. Percentage of Current Support Due that was Paid Pre- and Post-Program for Participants in Goodwill Pilot, PSP, and Comparison Group**

	Goodwill Pilot	★Total PSP	Comparison
Percentage of amount due that was paid pre-program	31%	33%	60%
Percentage of amount due that was paid post-program	27%	36%	52%

★Paired T-test of months paid pre and post is significant at .05.

While there was little change in overall payment performance among NCPs following their enrollment in the Goodwill Pilot, the percentage of NCPs who paid nothing declined, dropping from 33 percent in the months before their enrollment to 20 percent in the months following. This suggests that payment of child support began to improve following participation in the pilot project and total non-payment declined.

**Table 11.9. Percentage of Current Support Due that was Paid Prior to and Following Enrollment in Goodwill Pilot Demonstration**

Percentage of Current Support Paid	Goodwill Pilot	
	Pre	Post
Percentage paying nothing	33%	20%
Percentage paying 1-25%	20%	40%
Percentage paying 26-50%	23%	23%
Percentage paying 51-75%	9%	10%
Percentage paying 76-100%	15%	7%

As in the child support payment analysis conducted with all PSP enrollees, CPR examined the number of months in which NCPs in the Goodwill Pilot made any payment to determine if there is an increase in general payment behavior following enrollment in the program. The results are very preliminary — again, due to the short time frame available for follow up. Nevertheless, there does appear to be a slight increase in the frequency of payment. In the six months prior to enrollment in the Goodwill Pilot Demonstration, a median of six payments were due and a median of one payment was paid. In the six months following enrollment, a median of six payments were due and a median of two payments were paid.

**Table 11.10. Average Number of Months with Payments Due and Average Number of Months with Payment Made For Goodwill Pilot Demonstration Cases**

	Months with Support Due	Months with Support Paid	Percentage of Months with a Payment
Goodwill Pilot Enrollees			
Pre-Program			
Average	4.9	1.9	33%
Median	6.0	1.0	17%
Post-Program			
Average	4.4	2.0	38%
Median	6.0	2.0	50%

## Pilot Demonstration Reactions

In July and August 2013, open-ended telephone interviews were conducted with Goodwill Pilot Demonstration enrollees. The purpose of the telephone interviews was to gauge reactions to the

One NCP heard about the Goodwill Pilot at the PSP orientation and felt the opportunity was “good news” and “gave him hope.” He appeared at Goodwill, enrolled, and was assigned a career counselor.

The NCP received employment services including classes on general employment skills, interviewing, résumé writing, and computer skills, and chose to participate in an unpaid opportunity that dealt with specialized warehouse training.

Goodwill supported his job search and provided job leads every week, and he got a job within weeks. He is now working full time in a temporary, warehouse position earning \$13 per hour, and hopes to be hired permanently soon.

Goodwill Pilot, identify problems with enrollment and service delivery, and determine if participation in Goodwill services had led to employment. In addition, the interviewer sought to determine why referred NCPs had chosen not to participate in a Goodwill job training program.

The telephone interviewer made up to eight attempts to reach each enrollee before a final interview disposition was entered and a total of 11 interviews were completed. Completed interviews lasted approximately 20 minutes. The interviews are not a representative sample of all Goodwill Pilot Demonstration enrollees and reflect the opinions of those who could be reached.

All but two of the 11 interviewees had followed up with their referral to the Pilot Project and participated in job training at Goodwill. At the time of the interview, five of the 11 noncustodial parents were employed either at Goodwill or at a job that Goodwill had helped them to find. Two NCPs did not follow up with referral, and one respondent was still actively participating in the paid job training program and earning \$7.25 per hour. Each of the NCPs interviewed reported that the program was very helpful and useful and would recommend it to others.

The two participants who did not follow up on the referral to the Goodwill Pilot gave only vague reasons for their decision not to participate. One female NCP stated that she just didn’t get around to going to Goodwill to sign up, and the other NCP stated that he did not have transportation to get there. They both appreciated the offer to help and thought that they might go to Goodwill at some point in the future.

Finally, most of the Goodwill Pilot enrollees who participated in the telephone interview had positive comments and reactions.

They tended to describe it with terms such as “useful” and

“helpful.” One NCP said the enrollment process was “easy” and the staff was “cool and taught me a lot of stuff.” Another NCP said that he recommended the program to a friend.

## 12. Summary and Conclusions

### Summary

In October 2009, the Tennessee Department of Human Services (DHS) was awarded a grant from the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) to develop, implement, and evaluate a program providing employment, parenting time, and case management services to low-income, unwed parents in the child support program in three judicial districts across Tennessee: the 11th (Chattanooga), 20th (Nashville), and 26th Judicial Districts (Chester, Henderson and Madison counties, including the city of Jackson). The program, called the Parent Support Program (PSP), was conducted in collaboration with the Tennessee Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC). The new project built upon a previously funded OCSE demonstration project conducted by DHS and AOC (Tennessee Parenting Project) in the same three judicial districts that focused on providing parenting time services to low-income parents in the child support program. PSP enabled child support agencies in these three jurisdictions to add personnel who could offer job-focused services to the parenting services that were being offered to child support families. The 2011 unemployment rate in the 11th Judicial District was 8.7 percent; in the 20<sup>th</sup>, it was 8.2 percent; and in the 26<sup>th</sup>, it was 12.3 percent (Henderson County). The 2011 unemployment rate in Tennessee as a whole was 9.5 percent and 9.0 percent for the United States.

Coordinators retained through the Parent Support Program in each of the three local child support offices in the 11th, 20<sup>th</sup>, and 26th Judicial Districts, began to outreach to child support workers, the court, and local community agencies to generate referrals for the Parent Support Program in January 2010. During the next 27 months (until March 2013), 1,016 noncustodial parents were referred to PSP and enrolled in the project. As part of the enrollment process, Coordinators conducted screenings with referred noncustodial parents to identify problems that reduced their ability to support their children both emotionally and financially. Since a critical service need that most low-income noncustodial parents faced was unemployment or underemployment, PSP staff developed partnerships with local workforce services providers and other community agencies that provide employment services. However, because of high unemployment during the program enrollment period and the absence of additional workforce funding, local workforce agencies were not able to provide additional staff or services to the PSP population beyond what was available to the general public. As a result, employment and job-readiness services were primarily provided by the Coordinators at the child support agency. In addition to employment services, the Coordinators were available to work with interested parents to develop a parenting plan and provide referrals to other public and private agencies for needed supportive services.

Plans to randomly generate a non-treatment comparison group that only received a list of community resources were dropped in favor of recruiting parents with similar problems who appeared at child

support agencies in jurisdictions selected to match the characteristics of the project sites. The 6th was selected to match the 11th, the 16th and 18th were selected to match the 20th, and the 28th was selected to match the 26th. Although a comparison group consisting of 466 cases was generated in matched judicial districts and parents were given a list of community resources, the comparison group proved to be less helpful than originally anticipated since the information obtained about these cases was limited to background information on the custodial parent (who was typically the parent most likely to appear at the child support agency) and child support payment information obtained from the automated child support enforcement system. More to the point, the limited information that was available showed that the two groups were dissimilar in many respects. For example, the comparison group had higher levels of employment and better child support payment behaviors than the treatment group at program enrollment.

In the last year of the Parent Support Project, DHS and AOC developed a pilot project to test the effectiveness of providing short-term, paid, job-training in generating longer-term employment and regular child support payments for noncustodial parents (NCP). Except for those enrolled in the pilot, NCPs in the Parent Support Project were offered employment-focused services that dealt with soft skills and job search activities such as résumé preparation and interview skills. They rarely had access to job training, and none had the opportunity to participate in paid training programs. The employment services for the job training pilot were provided by the Goodwill agencies in two of the project sites: the 11th Judicial District (Chattanooga) and the 20th Judicial District (Nashville). From January 2013 through April 30, 2013, 54 NCPs were referred to the Goodwill Pilot Demonstration project and their progress was monitored through August 2013.

The information collected for the evaluation conducted by the Center for Policy Research of Denver, Colorado, was obtained from multiple sources:

- A screening form distributed by child support workers in matched sites to identify parents with problems that might affect their ability to support their children financially and/or emotionally and generate a non-treatment comparison group;
- A Management Information System consisting of an access database that was uploaded to a cloud server through which Coordinators recorded information on parents that enrolled in the Parent Support Project, including demographics, employment, barriers to employment and child support payment, parent-child contact, and service delivery.
- A three-month follow-up telephone interview with participants to determine their employment status and the usage of various services and referrals available through PSP.
- A six-month follow-up telephone check with PSP participants and parents in the comparison group to assess the status of their employment and parenting problems, involvement with their children, and reactions to the utility of printed information about community resources versus job-focused and parenting services delivered through the PSP. Professional telephone interviewers with the Northern Illinois University Public Opinion Laboratory attempted to

conduct interviews with 1,257 individuals in the treatment and comparison groups and completed 410 for a response rate of 32.6 percent (38% for the treatment group and 19% for the comparison group).

- A data extract from the Tennessee Child Support Enforcement System (TCSES) for all cases in the treatment and comparison group that included information on case characteristics, monthly order levels, arrears balances, and payment patterns in the 24 months prior to and following enrollment in the Parent Support Program.
- For the Goodwill Pilot Project, Coordinators and Goodwill Case Managers recorded background and service delivery information for participants; project evaluators conducted open-ended, post-enrollment telephone interviews with 11 participants on reactions to the program; and child support staff recorded payment behaviors before and after enrollment in the Pilot Project.

### **Demographic, Educational, Employment, and Financial Characteristics of PSP Participants**

During January 2010 to March 30, 2013, 1,016 noncustodial parents enrolled in PSP across the three project sites: 342 in the 11th, 435 in the 20<sup>th</sup>, and 239 in the 26th. The following are selected characteristics of the noncustodial parents who enrolled in PSP.

- African-American males (83%), ranging in age from 18 to 60, with an average age of 30 to 35.
- Nearly half (47%) completed high school or attained a GED, but 30 percent had lower levels of educational attainment.
- Nearly all (92% and 82%) of the participants in the 11th and 20th Judicial Districts were unemployed when they enrolled in PSP, and a majority (54%) of the participants in the 26th JD were unemployed.
- On average, PSP participants had been unemployed for 17 months, and only 6 to 11 percent were receiving unemployment benefits.
- Relatively few (17% in 11th, 26% in the 20<sup>th</sup>, and 53% in the 26th) had received assistance at a local Workforce Center.
- On average, PSP participants had earned \$9.45 per hour at their most recent job, with the median being \$8.50.
- Although PSP participants had worked an average of 35 hours in their prior job, few reported receiving health insurance and/or retirement benefits (22%).
- Most participants (56%) had held only one or two different jobs in the past five years, with the average amount of tenure at a single job being 49 months.
- Three-quarters of all PSP participants characterized their financial situation as “poor” and reported annual earnings of \$10,000 or less.
- Fewer than half (42%) of PSP participants reported owning a car.

- More than half (52%) reported receiving food stamps, with 41 percent agreeing with the statement, “I sometimes run out of money for food before the end of the month,” and 33 percent affirming that they “had more debt than I will ever be able to pay off.”

### **Barriers to Employment**

PSP participants reported many barriers to employment and payment of child support. The top five problems noted by participants across the three project sites were:

- Limited work history (80%).
- Lack of job skills (78%).
- Prior incarceration (77%).
- Lack of a car or a reliable transportation (60%).
- Lack of a driver’s license (60%).

Smaller percentages (but substantial proportions in the 20<sup>th</sup> JD) reported problems with housing and homelessness (22%), health issues (17%), drug or alcohol problems (13%), mental health issues (13%), and/or domestic violence (5%)

### **Family Characteristics, Parenting Plans, and Parent-Child Contact**

- Very few (16%) PSP participants had been married to the other parent, with 37 percent reporting cohabitation and 47 percent reporting neither marriage nor cohabitation.
- Two-third (65%) reported having one child with the other parent and 21 percent reported two.
- More than half (61%) reported cooperative or fairly cooperative relationships with the other parent, and only 22 percent characterized them as “angry and hostile,” although this response was selected by 43 percent of PSP participants in the 26th JD.
- Only small fractions of PSP participants reported having a restraining order (2%), a supervised visitation order (3%), or an open child protection case (2%).
- A third (34%) reported parent-child contact of once a week or more, a quarter (23%) reported little to no contact, and 23 percent reported monthly, bi-monthly, or semi-monthly contact.
- The main reason PSP participants gave for not seeing their children more often was the “custodial parent did not want visits” (78%). Another reason reported by nearly a third (31%) was problems in the PSP participant’s life such as drugs or jail.
- Only 18 percent of PSP participants had a written visitation plan, with 65 percent reporting no plan at all.



### **Child Support Obligations**

PSP participants had substantial child support obligations and wanted help with their child support situation.

- Approximately two-thirds of PSP participants had one child support case, and another quarter had two.
- On average PSP participants had child support cases that were seven years old, with only 11 percent having cases that were under one year.
- Nearly all owed past-due child support with arrears balances that averaged \$18,000 in the 11th JD, \$22,000 in the 20th JD, and \$6,000 in the 26th JD.
- Average obligations for current monthly support for project participants were \$273 in the 26th JD, \$370 in the 11th JD, and \$406 in the 20th JD.
- Total average monthly obligations for current monthly support and arrears were \$323 in the 26th JD, \$447 in the 11th JD, and \$526 in the 20th JD.

### **Services Desired by Participants**

NCPs who enrolled in the Parent Support Program were interested in receiving various types of services. The top five services of interest selected by at least 82 percent of participants involved job-focused services:

- Help finding a job with benefits (90%);
- Help finding any type of job (88%);
- Help finding a job with better pay (88%);
- Help finding a job with more hours (83%); and
- Help with job search and applying online (82%).

In addition, most participants wanted on-the-job training (73% overall, but 95% in the 11th JD, and 85% in the 20th JD). A similar proportion wanted to participate in job readiness classes where they could get help with résumé preparation and interviewing skills (72% overall, but 97% in the 11th JD, and 69% in the 20th JD). Nearly all participants (98%) in the 11th and 20th Judicial District wanted help with transportation.

Many PSP participants wanted help with their child support cases.

- Half of PSP participants in the 11th JD and 65 percent in the 26th JD wanted help with driver's license reinstatement (45% across the three project sites).
- Approximately one third (38%) wanted a one-on-one explanation of their child support situation and options, and 13 percent were interested in getting errors in their case corrected.

Some PSP participants wanted help with applying for various types of benefits.

- Approximately 20 percent of participants wanted help applying for food stamps and/or unemployment benefits.
- Approximately 10 percent wanted help applying for Medicaid and/or disability benefits.

Finally, a substantial proportion of PSP participants who lacked a formal parenting time plan wanted help with developing one and with co-parenting.

- A third (31%) of those without a visitation plan wanted help developing one, with 58 percent of participants in the 26th JD reporting interest in this type of assistance.
- Many parents in the 26th JD (72%), who reported the highest levels of conflict with the other parent, wanted help with co-parenting.

### **Service Delivery and Helpfulness Ratings**

Interviewed PSP participants reported receiving a variety of employment-focused job services.

- 88 percent reported getting help with job listing and posting.
- 60% reported getting job leads and counseling from PSP staff members.
- 49% reported participating in job fairs and hiring events.
- 49% reported getting help with résumé preparation.
- 47% reported making cold calls to employers and going to workshops on interviewing and job behavior, respectively.

In addition, approximately one-quarter reported receiving bus passes or gas money and training on using computers, respectively. With few exceptions, PSP participants rated the assistance they received very highly, with upwards of 75 percent characterizing it as “excellent” or “good.”

With respect to parenting time, interviewed PSP participants reported receiving a variety of services:

- 65 percent reported receiving an explanation of their parenting time situation.
- 54 percent reported getting help with developing a parenting time plan.
- 21 percent reported help with changing an existing parenting time plan.

As with ratings of job-focused services, nearly all (70% to 79%) of interviewed PSP participants characterized the access and visitation services that they received as “excellent” or “good.” Overall, nearly half (48%) of interviewed PSP participants rated the program as “very helpful” and another 34 percent termed it “somewhat helpful.”

### **Outcomes Dealing with Employment, Child Support, Parent-Child Contact, and Financial Well-Being**

PSP participants interviewed at three and six months following enrollment reported strong increases in employment.

- In the 11th JD, rates of employment rose from 8 percent at program enrollment to 67 percent at the three-month check, to 45 percent at the six-month follow-up interview.
- In the 20th JD, rates of employment rose from 8 percent at program enrollment to 46 percent at the three-month check, to 50 percent at the six-month follow-up interview.
- In the 26th JD, rates of employment rose from 46 percent at program enrollment to 65 percent at the three-month check, to 69 percent at the six-month follow-up interview.

Child support payments improved significantly among PSP participants following their enrollment.

- The percentage of months during which PSP participants made a child support payment prior to and following program enrollment rose from 43 to 48 percent in the 11th JD, 37 to 38 percent in the 20th, and 52 to 62 percent in the 26th JD. The differences between pre- and post-program payment were only statistically significant in the 26th JD.
- The percentage of child support due that was paid prior to and following enrollment in PSP rose significantly for PSP participants, from 33 percent to 36 percent.
- Those who received help with access and visitation paid 45 percent of their child support obligation, as compared with 32 percent for those who did not receive help with parenting time — a difference that was statistically significant.

Interviewed PSP participants were most apt to report that their parenting situation hadn't changed or had improved.

- 44 percent reported their overall parenting situation had stayed the same, and 42 percent said it had improved.
- 38 percent said their level of parent-child contact had stayed the same, and 37 percent said it had increased.
- 46 percent said that the regularity of visitation with their children had stayed the same, and 32 percent said it had improved.
- Approximately 20 percent of interviewed PSP participants reported that their parenting situation had deteriorated.

Asked to compare their overall financial situation since enrolling in PSP, interviewed participants reported few changes. Their financial situation remained grim regardless of whether they had received employment services in PSP.

- More than half (53%) reported that their situation was unchanged, and 25 percent reported it was worse.

- Nearly three quarter (69%) reported running out of money for food, having their utilities turned off, and/or having to stay with friends or family.
- Identical proportions of PSP participants reported improvements, deteriorations, and no change in their financial situation regardless of whether they received job-focused services in PSP.

### **Goodwill Job Training Pilot**

- Of the 54 noncustodial parents who enrolled in the job training pilot project, 10 percent did not qualify because they had an open criminal case, 45 percent dropped out, and the remaining 24 percent either completed job training and secured full time employment or were still actively participating in job training and job search (22%).
- The incidence of verified employment for participants in the Goodwill Pilot Project rose from 2 percent at enrollment to 38 percent when project data were collected, while the incidence of an active income assignment rose from 28 to 40 percent.
- The percentage of participants in the Goodwill Pilot Project who paid nothing toward their current child support obligation dropped from 33 to 20 percent following enrollment.
- The median number of months in which participants made a child support payment in the six months prior to and following their enrollment in the Goodwill Pilot Project rose from one to two.

### **Conclusions**

The evaluation of the Parent Support Program yields the following conclusions about the delivery of employment services to noncustodial parents in the child support caseload.

#### **Many noncustodial parents seen at the child support agency need and want help with employment.**

Nearly all (82 to 92%) the NCPs who enrolled in PSP in the 11th and 20th Judicial Districts were unemployed, as were 54 percent of NCPs in the 26th. These rates of unemployment were dramatically higher than rates for the 11th, 20th, and 26th Judicial Districts as a whole, which ranged from 8.2 to 12.3 percent. They faced difficult financial situations. More than half reported running out of money for food, only 17 percent reported having a bank account, and 50 to 71 percent characterized their financial problems as serious. Approximately 90 percent of PSP participants wanted help finding any job, a job with benefits, or a job with more hours. More than three-quarters wanted help with applying for jobs online and/or job training

**Programs like PSP attract participants at all stages of child support case processing.** Although the OCSE initiative was designed to focus on new child support cases recruited at order establishment, NCPs who enrolled in PSP had child support cases ranging in age from one to 24 years, with the average being seven years old. Only 11 percent of cases were one year or less. These patterns suggest that

recruitment efforts should be broad and not restricted to a certain age range or stage of case processing.

**Low-income noncustodial parents face many barriers to obtaining and retaining employment.** At program intake, between 59 and 80 percent of NCPs reported that a limited work history, a lack of job skills, prior incarceration, the lack of a car or reliable transportation, not having a driver's license, and lacking a high school diploma or GED presented barriers to finding employment. This is similar to what other jurisdictions implementing employment programs for low income NCPs have found. In the Massachusetts Parent Support Program, 42 to 48 percent of participants lacked a reliable car or access to public transportation, a driver's license, and/or a high school diploma or GED. More than a third (37%) had been previously incarcerated, and one-fifth stated that their lack of job history (23%) or job skills (20%) prevented them from getting a job. In Arapahoe County, Colorado, half of the Parents to Work participants were ex-offenders, a third lacked transportation, and 26 percent said that being on parole or probation presented barriers to employment.

**Many low-income noncustodial parents who enroll in programs for employment assistance drop out or participate at only minimal levels.** Nearly half (45%) of the 54 noncustodial parents who enrolled in the Goodwill Job Training Pilot Project dropped out, and another 10 percent did not qualify because they had an open criminal case. Attrition is high in other, similar employment programs for noncustodial parents. In the Parents to Work Program conducted in Arapahoe County, Colorado, 31 percent only enrolled and did not receive any program services while another 23 percent participated at minimal levels. The percentage that participated more fully was 46 percent. In the Massachusetts Parent Support Program, 34 percent of participants only completed the enrollment process and another 6 percent only attended an orientation session. The remaining 60 percent participated more fully.

**PSP increased employment among participants.** Employment increased following enrollment in PSP, with the percentage of employed noncustodial parents rising from 8 percent at program enrollment in the 11th and 20th Judicial Districts to 45 and 50 percent at the six-month follow-up interview, respectively. In the 26th Judicial District, the rate of employment rose from 46 percent at program enrollment to 69 percent when PSP participants were interviewed six months after enrollment. These rates of employment compare favorably with rates observed in other programs for unemployed NCPs. For example, in Arapahoe County's Parent's To Work program, 54 percent of noncustodial parents obtained employment following enrollment in the program, and in the Massachusetts Parents to Work Program, only 27 percent of enrolled NCPs became employed (31% of those who received employment services).

**PSP increased child support payments among participants.** Child support payments improved for participants following their enrollment in PSP. The percentage of child support due that was paid prior to and following enrollment rose significantly from 33 to 36 percent. The percentage of months during which participants made a child support payment also rose following enrollment, although the increase was statistically significant only in the 26th Judicial District, where it increased from 52 to 62 percent.

Child support obligations were substantially lower among participants in the 26th JD, with average order levels of \$273 per month versus \$400 in the 11th and 20th JDs.

**Preliminary evidence suggests that noncustodial parents who participate in paid training programs experience improvements in employment and child support payment.** Although it was only possible to examine employment and child support payment outcomes for noncustodial parents who participated in the Goodwill Training Pilot Project, the early results are promising. A quarter of the 54 noncustodial parents who enrolled completed job training and another 22 percent were still participating in training and looking for work. The incidence of verified employment among participants rose from 2 percent to 38 percent, and the incidence of active income assignments increased from 28 to 40 percent. During the six months prior to and following enrollment, the median number of months in which participants made a child support rose from one to two.

**Although child support payment patterns improved following PSP participation, they remained far from complete.** Payment performance increased significantly following program enrollment, but it only rose from 33 to 36 percent, and only 22 percent of interviewed PSP participants thought their child support situation had improved following program participation. The most substantial increases occurred in the 26th Judicial District, where average order levels were the lowest (\$273 versus \$400 in the 11th and 20th.) Noncustodial parents at this site were substantially more likely than their counterparts in the 11th and 20th Judicial Districts to agree that they could afford to pay their child support obligation (39% versus fewer than 10%.) Not surprisingly, average arrears balances ranged from \$6,000 in the 26th JD to \$18,000 and \$22,000 in the 11th and 20th JDs, respectively. Child support order levels should reflect actual earnings and an ability to pay.

**Few parents have formal parenting time arrangements, and many want help developing a formal parenting plan to submit to the court.** Although most PSP participants were seeing their children frequently prior to program enrollment, only 18 percent had a written visitation plan and 78 percent of parents who were not seeing their children as often as they would like blamed it on the custodial parent not wanting visits. Thirty percent of noncustodial parents without a parenting plan wanted help developing one (58% in the 26th Judicial District), and 30 percent wanted help with co-parenting (72% in the 26th Judicial District). These patterns are consistent with those observed in the Massachusetts Parent Support Program, where only 18 percent had a written parenting plan and 22 percent were interested in working with program staff to develop one.

**Helping parents with their parenting time problems improves the payment of child support.** NCPs who received help with parenting time were significantly more likely to show improvement in child support performance. PSP participants receiving help with visitation made a payment in 53 percent of the months with a payment due, and paid a total of 45 percent of the obligation, while the figures for those who did not receive help with access and visitation were 45 and 32 percent, respectively. This is consistent with payment patterns observed in the Tennessee Parenting Project, where average child support payments for noncustodial parents who received parenting time services rose from 54.2 to 57.6 percent in the 12 months following program enrollment—a statistically significant increase that was not

observed among noncustodial parents in the low-level treatment group who only received printed information about community resources.

**Only a fraction of PSP participants have court orders dealing with family safety.** According to interviewed PSP participants, the incidence of restraining orders (2%), supervised visitation orders (2%), and open child protection cases (3%) was very low. To contrast, 19 percent expressed concern about the children’s safety with the custodial parent. Self-reports of socially undesirable behaviors are inherently unreliable, although it is relevant that higher proportions of PSP participants disclosed other socially undesirable problems such as drug and alcohol (13%), mental health issues (13%), and housing instability (22%).

**Programs like Parent Support Program generate high levels of user satisfaction and better ratings of the court and the child support agency.** Most (82%) participants rated PSP as “very” or “somewhat” helpful, and at least 80 percent classified résumé preparation, computer training, workshops or classes on interviewing or preparing for work, and ESL or GED classes as “excellent” or “good” features of the program. During the three-month follow-up interviews, more than half of the participants (55%) said that their lives had improved since enrolling in PSP. To improve the program, at least 80 percent of the respondents suggested offering more job training programs, having more job openings, having jobs that pay higher wages, and helping with rent.

**Although they are appreciated, programs like PSP do not change the grim financial situation that low-income NCPs face.** The percentage reporting that their financial situation had not changed or had worsened was unchanged for those with and without job-focused services. Both before and after enrollment more than half reported running out of money for food before the end of the month, nearly half reported having to stay with family or friends because they lacked housing, and 16 percent had had their utilities turned off. Taken together, 69 percent reported one or more of these consequences even after enrolling in PSP and participating in program services. Low-income noncustodial parents in the child support system face considerable barriers to employment, earnings, child support payment, and self-sufficiency that are not readily addressed in programs that aim to help.

**Child support offices should develop more responsive policies for low-income NCPs.** When they enrolled in PSP, three quarters of participants reported annual earnings of \$10,000 or less and characterized their financial situation as “poor.” Even after participating in PSP and receiving services, more than half reported that their financial situation was unchanged and 25 percent said it was worse. Unemployment remained a problem for many, and 70 percent reported having problems meeting basic needs for shelter and food. Recommended child support policies for noncustodial parents in employment programs include establishing orders that track with actual earnings, expedited modifications, minimum order levels during unemployment, suspended enforcement actions, driver’s license reinstatement, and forgiveness of state-owed arrears.

**Child support offices should partner with workforce programs that are equipped to offer a wider array of effective job services and to monitor service delivery.** Interviewed PSP participants were most apt

to report receiving job postings and counseling to guide their job search efforts. While they appreciated these forms of assistance, nearly all recommended that future programs offer more job training programs, access to more job opportunities for individuals with weak job history and prior incarceration, and more work supports such as transportation assistance. Future job-focused services for noncustodial parents should be offered by experienced and resourced workforce programs that are equipped to provide a wider range of services—including job training. These providers also should be in a better position to monitor the actual delivery of workforce services and to track employment outcomes than child support personnel are able to do.

Fortunately, there may be an opportunity to address some of the questions and issues that were not fully resolved in the Parent Support Program. In 2012, the Tennessee Department of Human Services, Child Support Division was awarded a five-year demonstration grant from OCSE that is building upon the PSP program. It provides funding to retain a dedicated employment case manager based in Tennessee Career Centers to work with low-income noncustodial parents in the child support system. The five-year Child Support Parent Employment Demonstration (CSPED) is being tested in two of the three judicial districts in Tennessee where the PSP was implemented as well as in Shelby County (Memphis). It employs a rigorous random assignment evaluation.



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