

A Comparison of Approaches Informed by Procedural Justice and Traditional Enforcement in the Procedural Justice-Informed Alternatives to Contempt Demonstration

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OVERVIEW

When a child does not live with both parents, the parent with whom the child does not live is known as the “noncustodial parent.” The noncustodial parent may be responsible for a share of the costs associated with raising the child. Parents who do not make their child support payments can be subject to enforcement measures such as license suspensions or interceptions of tax refunds. If these measures do not yield sufficient payment, child support programs can refer parents to the legal system for civil contempt of court. Civil contempt proceedings require noncustodial parents to attend hearings and may lead to arrest or jailing.

In recent years, some child support policymakers and researchers have questioned the fairness and effectiveness of pursuing civil contempt to secure child support payments, particularly for parents with low incomes. Civil contempt proceedings are costly, burdensome, and often counterproductive to the goals of the child support program. They can impede employment, increase child support debt, alienate noncustodial parents from their children, and decrease parents’ cooperation with the program.

The Procedural Justice-Informed Alternatives to Contempt (PJAC) demonstration project tested a different approach to improving child support payments. Developed by the Office of Child Support Enforcement, it integrated principles of procedural justice (the idea of fairness in processes) into enforcement practices in six child support agencies across the United States as an alternative to standard contempt proceedings. PJAC services aimed to address noncustodial parents’ reasons for nonpayment, improve the consistency of their payments, and promote their positive engagement with the child support program and the other parent.

The PJAC demonstration used a random assignment research design. Parents who had reached the point of a contempt referral were assigned either to a PJAC services group, which had access to child support services informed by procedural justice, delivered by a specially trained PJAC case manager, or to the business-as-usual group, which proceeded to the standard contempt process. This report compares the service and enforcement experiences of parents in these two groups. Findings include:

- PJAC case managers conducted in-depth case reviews, outreach and engagement with both parents, and case-planning activities to address underlying reasons for nonpayment and connect parents to support and services. The principles of procedural justice underpinned this intensive casework. Though some elements of the PJAC model were present in business-as-usual services, they were ad hoc and not applied systematically by regular enforcement workers.
- Compared with business as usual, PJAC services generated modest increases in parents’ receipt of child support services such as order reviews, license reinstatements, and child support debt forgiveness, and a modest reduction in license suspensions, an enforcement action.
- PJAC services led to a nearly 60 percentage point reduction in civil contempt filings, which in turn decreased the proportion of parents in the PJAC services group who experienced ensuing aspects of contempt proceedings.

Taken together, these results suggest a meaningful contrast between the experiences of parents in the PJAC services and business-as-usual groups. This contrast will allow the research team to determine whether PJAC services achieved the intervention's goal of improving payment outcomes. Those findings will be the subject of a future report.



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The Authors

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

When a child does not live with both parents, the parent with whom the child does not live is known as the “noncustodial parent.” The noncustodial parent may be responsible for a share of the costs associated with raising the child. The primary goal of child support programs is to improve children’s well-being by emphasizing the roles of both parents in providing for them.

Some families receive child support from noncustodial parents regularly. For other families, however, payments may be sporadic, partial, or nonexistent. Parents who do not make their child support payments can be subject to enforcement measures such as license suspensions, interception of tax refunds, or seizure of bank accounts.¹ If these measures do not yield sufficient payment, child support programs can refer nonpaying parents to the legal system for civil contempt of court. Civil contempt proceedings require noncustodial parents to attend hearings and may lead to arrest or jailing if they fail to appear in court or continue not to meet their child support obligations.

In recent years, some child support policymakers and researchers have questioned the fairness and effectiveness of pursuing civil contempt to secure child support payments, particularly for parents with low incomes. Civil contempt proceedings are costly, burdensome, and often counterproductive to the goals of the child support program. They can impede employment, increase child support debt, alienate noncustodial parents from their children, and decrease parents’ future cooperation with the program.²

¹ Enforcement measures are actions taken by child support agencies with the intention of collecting past-due child support and securing current and future payments.

² Elizabeth Patterson, “Civil Contempt and the Indigent Child Support Obligor: The Silent Return of Debtor’s Prison,” *Cornell Journal of Law and Public Policy* 18 (2008): 95-142; Rebecca May and Marguerite Roulet, *A Look at Arrests of Low-Income Fathers for Child Support Non-payment: Enforcement, Court and Program Practices* (Madison, WI: Center for Family Policy and Practice, 2005).

The Procedural Justice-Informed Alternatives to Contempt (PJAC) demonstration project tested a different approach to improving child support payments. Developed by the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE), it integrated principles of procedural justice (as described in Box ES.1) into enforcement practices in six child support agencies across the United States as an alternative to standard contempt proceedings. Procedural justice, sometimes referred to as “procedural fairness,” is the idea that “how individuals regard the justice system is tied more to the perceived fairness of the *process* and how they were treated rather than to the perceived fairness of the *outcome*.”³ Research suggests that if people perceive a process to be fair, they will be more likely to comply with the outcome of that process, whether or not the outcome was favorable to them.⁴ With oversight from the Georgia Division of Child Support Services, MDRC leads a random assignment evaluation of the model’s effectiveness in collaboration with MEF Associates and the Center for Court Innovation.

PJAC services aimed to address noncustodial parents’ reasons for nonpayment, improve the consistency of their payments, and promote their positive engagement with the child support program and the other parent. Between 2018 and 2020, eligible parents were randomly assigned either to a group offered PJAC services or to a business-as-usual group sent through standard contempt proceedings. The research team is comparing the outcomes of these two groups over time.

This is the second major report in the PJAC evaluation. An earlier report provides a detailed description of the PJAC service model and assesses its implementation.⁵ Building on those findings, the present report compares the overall service and enforcement experiences of parents in the PJAC services group with those of parents in the business-as-usual group in the year following their enrollment into the study. This comparison draws on child support administrative records, PJAC management

BOX ES.1 THE FIVE KEY ELEMENTS OF PROCEDURAL JUSTICE AS APPLIED TO THE CHILD SUPPORT CONTEXT

- **Respect:** Parents should believe they were treated with dignity and respect and their concerns were taken seriously.
- **Understanding:** Parents should understand the child support process and have their questions answered.
- **Voice:** Parents should have a chance to be heard by sharing their perspectives and expressing their concerns.
- **Neutrality:** Parents should perceive the decision-making process to be impartial.
- **Helpfulness:** Parents should feel that the child support agency was helpful and interested in addressing their situations.

³ Emily Gold, “The Case for Procedural Justice: Fairness as a Crime Prevention Tool,” *Community Policing Dispatch* (https://cops.usdoj.gov/html/dispatch/09-2013/fairness_as_a_crime_prevention_tool.asp, 2013).

⁴ Rachel Swaner, Cassandra Ramdath, Andrew Martinez, Josephine Hahn, and Sienna Walker, *What Do Defendants Really Think? Procedural Justice and Legitimacy in the Criminal Justice System* (New York: Center for Court Innovation, 2018); Tom R. Tyler, “Procedural Justice and the Courts,” *Court Review* 44, 1 (2007): 26–31.

⁵ Louisa Treskon, Douglas Phillips, Jacqueline Groskaufmanis, and Melanie Skemer, *Procedural Justice in Child Support Enforcement: Lessons from an Implementation Study of PJAC* (New York: MDRC, 2022).

information system data, interviews with staff members at child support agencies and partner organizations, court observations, staff survey data, and parent interviews.⁶ It sets the stage for a future publication focused on PJAC's effects on outcomes such as overall compliance with child support obligations and regularity of payments. If there is not a meaningful contrast between the two research groups' service and enforcement experiences, it is unlikely that the evaluation will be able to determine whether PJAC services have effects on payment outcomes.

Characteristics of Parents in the PJAC Demonstration

The target population for the PJAC demonstration project was noncustodial parents who were at the point of being referred for contempt because they had not met their child support obligations, yet had been determined by child support agency staff members to have the ability to pay. They owed an average of \$26,000 in child support debt when they enrolled in PJAC and had been in the child support program for an average of 10 years.

Most child support debt is owed by fathers with low incomes and fathers of color.⁷ While the evaluation does not have complete income information for parents in the PJAC study sample, their gender and racial/ethnic backgrounds align with this reality: 90 percent were identified as male, and 62 percent were identified as Black or Hispanic. The demographics of noncustodial parents in PJAC have important implications for thinking about their prior experiences with the child support program, employment, and law enforcement. Men of color, who make up the majority of noncustodial parents in PJAC, face higher rates of discrimination in the labor market and criminal legal system (issues that reinforce one another).⁸

An Overview of Service and Enforcement Differences Between PJAC and Business-as-Usual Services

Figure ES.1 provides an overview of the differing services received and enforcement experienced by parents who reached the point of a civil contempt referral and were then randomly assigned either to the PJAC services group or the business-as-usual group.

⁶ Administrative records are data collected in the normal course of administering a program. A management information system is a database used to capture information about program participants and the activities they engage in with the program's staff.

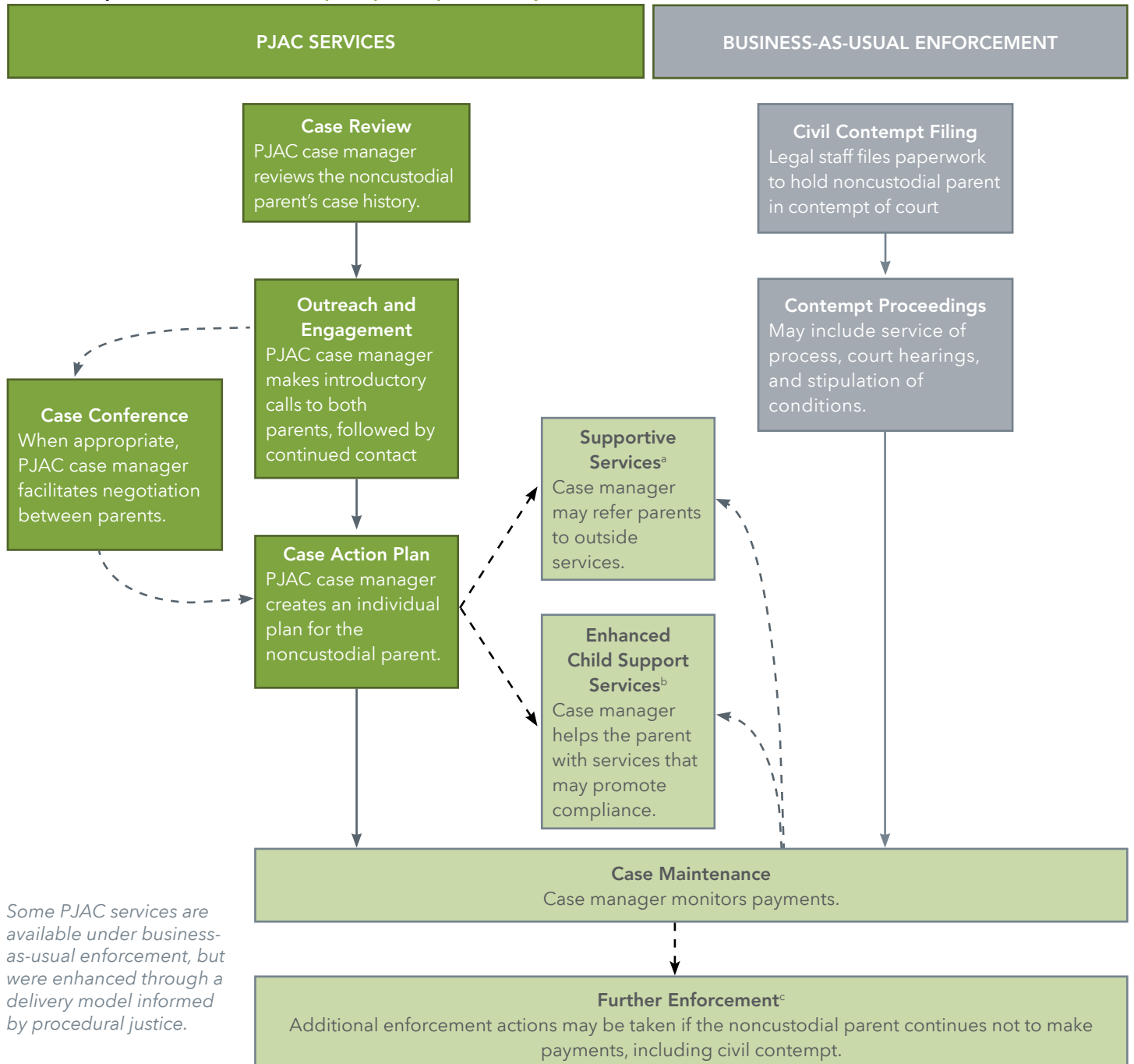
⁷ Elaine Sorenson, Heather Koball, Kate Pomper, and Chava Zibman, *Examining Child Support Arrears in California: The Collectibility Study* (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, 2003); Tonya Brito, David Pate, Jr., and Jia-Hui Wong, "Negotiating Race and Racial Inequality in Family Court" *The Institute for Research on Poverty Focus* 36, 4 (2020): 3-11.

⁸ The Sentencing Project, *Report to the United Nations on Racial Disparities in the U.S. Criminal Justice System* (Washington, DC: The Sentencing Project, 2018); Christian Weller, "African Americans Face Systemic Obstacles to Getting Good Jobs" (Washington, DC: Center for American Progress, 2019); Tonya Brito, David Pate, Jr., and Jia-Hui Wong, "Negotiating Race and Racial Inequality in Family Court," *The Institute for Research on Poverty Focus* 36, 4 (2020): 3-11.

FIGURE ES.1. PJAC Services and Business-As-Usual Enforcement in the PJAC Demonstration

Noncustodial parents who have reached the point of a civil contempt filing are randomly assigned either to the **PJAC services** group, which is offered an array of services **infused with principles of procedural justice**...

...or to a **business-as-usual** group, which instead proceeds with the **standard contempt process**, followed by a return to typical child support enforcement.



Some PJAC services are available under business-as-usual enforcement, but were enhanced through a delivery model informed by procedural justice.

NOTES: Dashed lines indicate services or steps that do not necessarily occur for all parents, but instead are determined based on specific circumstances.

^aExamples of supportive services include employment services, legal support, substance use services, and mental health services.

^bExamples of child support services include order modifications, debt forgiveness, and license reinstatements.

^cEnforcement actions are those taken by child support agencies with the intention of collecting past-due child support and securing current and future payments, for example license suspensions or asset seizures.

A parent assigned to the PJAC services group was diverted from contempt and assigned to a PJAC case manager trained in the principles of procedural justice; this case manager was the parent's main point of contact at the child support agency. The PJAC case manager—incorporating the elements of procedural justice throughout—first completed a case review, conducted outreach and engagement to both parents, facilitated a case conference to negotiate between parents if appropriate, and completed a case action plan with the noncustodial parent. Depending on the parent's needs and interests, the PJAC case manager included supportive service referrals or specific enhanced child support services as part of the case action plan. After those steps were completed and if the parent started making payments, the case maintenance phase began, in which the PJAC case manager monitored payments and checked in on the parent regularly. If PJAC services group members refused to engage in PJAC services or comply with their case action plans and continued not to make child support payments, they could be subject to enforcement actions, including contempt.

The business-as-usual group proceeded to the contempt process following random assignment. This process involved filing contempt motions, serving parents with notices to attend court hearings, and holding hearings. Parents who failed to appear in court could have bench warrants issued.⁹ If the parent was found in contempt, the court issued a stipulation of conditions that the parent must meet to avoid jail time—often including a purge payment. The length of the contempt process varied but could take several months to conclude; in some circumstances, contempt proceedings remained open for years. Once the contempt process was resolved, parents returned to regular child support enforcement. While the contempt process was largely handled by legal staff members from child support and the court, the resumption of regular enforcement meant a business-as-usual enforcement worker monitored payments on the case. The enforcement worker might have referred the parent to supportive services or completed a child support service (for example, an order modification because the contempt process revealed that the parent's support obligation was set too high given a recent change in employment). **Though some elements of the PJAC model were present in business-as-usual services, they were ad hoc and not applied systematically by enforcement workers serving business-as-usual parents.** As illustrated in Figure ES.1, if business-as-usual parents failed to comply with their child support obligations, they could be subject to additional enforcement, including additional contempt filings.

While data limitations prevent direct quantitative comparison, evidence suggests that a far greater proportion of parents in the PJAC services group than in the business-as-usual group received core PJAC services such as case reviews, outreach and engagement, case conferences, and case action plans. **PJAC parents' greater receipt of core PJAC services constitutes a significant portion of the overall contrast in experiences between the two research groups.**

⁹ A bench warrant is a legal document issued by a judge that authorizes an individual's arrest.

Contrasts in Civil Contempt Proceedings

A goal of the PJAC demonstration was to reduce the *ineffective* use of contempt, characterized by costly court hearings that, at best, result in one-time payments rather than regular, reliable payments custodial families can count on, and at worst, can lead to the jailing of noncustodial parents without yielding any financial support for their children. Instead, PJAC services offer an alternate approach informed by procedural justice, designed to improve child support compliance in a fairer way that addresses parents' underlying reasons for nonpayment and that is less burdensome to noncustodial and custodial parents, the child support program, and the courts.

Administrative child support data show that PJAC services led to a statistically significant, 59 percentage point reduction in civil contempt filings. This large reduction in filings—the first step in the contempt process—resulted in large reductions in later aspects of the process: being served with notice to appear in court, having a bench warrant issued, and attending court hearings. This difference in contempt filings was expected given the study design. However, PJAC's designers could not know ahead of time how large the difference would be since PJAC case managers could, at their discretion, refer PJAC services group members for contempt. Case managers might do so if they never successfully engaged parents, or if parents did not comply with PJAC services and continued not to meet their child support obligations.

Overall, by decreasing civil contempt filings, PJAC services lessened PJAC parents' exposure to legal actions and court proceedings that many experience as punitive and disruptive. While there was variation among the sites in the size of their reductions in civil contempt filings and ensuing aspects of the process, large decreases were observed at all six of the PJAC study sites.

Contrasts in Receipt of Child Support Services

Child support agencies can offer services—such as order modifications, debt forgiveness, license reinstatements, suppression of enforcement actions, assistance with parenting-time agreements, and case closures—to encourage parents to comply and to better align their obligations with their financial and family circumstances. These services were available to all parents, as depicted in Figure ES.1, though parents often had to fulfill various requirements to receive them. However, parents in the PJAC services group received “enhanced” services—including the removal or easing of some of these requirements—relative to what was provided to business-as-usual parents, and PJAC case managers made a point of offering those services.

To assess whether parents in the PJAC services group were more likely to receive child support services than parents in the business-as-usual group, the research team analyzed administrative records provided by the six participating agencies. Overall, relatively few parents in either group received child support services: Fewer than 10 percent of parents received most types of services. This pattern can be explained by the criteria required to qualify for certain services (order modifications and case closures, in particular), which most parents were unlikely to meet. Additionally, services such as li-

cense reinstatement could only be offered to parents who met certain obvious preconditions (such as having their licenses suspended at the time), restricting their frequency. **Nevertheless, parents in the PJAC services group were modestly more likely to receive multiple child support services, including order reviews, license reinstatements, and debt compromises.** All of these effects ranged from 2 percentage points to 5 percentage points in size. Among the six sites, PJAC appeared to have the strongest effects on child support service receipt in Franklin and Stark Counties.

Contrasts in the Use of Enforcement Actions

Typically, parents eligible for the PJAC study had already experienced multiple enforcement actions before their enrollment into the evaluation, actions such as license suspensions, interceptions of tax refunds, and seizures of bank accounts, among others. At all sites, parents in the PJAC services group who were not engaging in PJAC services and remained noncompliant with their child support orders after case managers' repeated efforts were subject to further enforcement actions. Parents in the business-as-usual group were subject to continued enforcement actions if they remained noncompliant following the conclusion of civil contempt proceedings.

Most enforcement actions are automated in child support systems based on levels of debt or months of nonpayment and therefore were not within case managers' control. However, at several PJAC study sites, case managers had authority over the use of some enforcement actions, which they could exercise at their discretion. The research team analyzed contrasts in the use of these enforcement actions and found that PJAC services led to a statistically significant reduction in license suspensions of 2 percentage points. The research team did not find a significant difference between research groups in the use of financial institution data matches (the first step in pursuing asset seizures, liens, etc.). Enforcement actions that are triggered automatically and could not be altered were experienced by the vast majority of parents in both research groups.

Implications of Contrast Findings for the Final Impact Results and Next Steps

Taken together, the implementation of core PJAC service components, substantial reductions in contempt filings, and effects on the receipt of child support services and enforcement actions (though these effects are generally modest) constitute a meaningful service contrast between parents in the PJAC services and business-as-usual groups. This contrast will allow the research team to determine whether PJAC services achieved the intervention's goal of improving payment outcomes in the final impact analysis.

Future reports will address two of the PJAC demonstration's overarching research questions: (1) Did PJAC improve payment outcomes? and (2) how do the costs and benefits of PJAC services compare with those of business-as-usual services?



1 Introduction

When a child does not live with both parents, the parent with whom the child does not live is known as the “noncustodial parent.” The noncustodial parent may be responsible for a share of the costs associated with raising the child. The primary goal of child support programs is to improve children’s well-being by emphasizing the roles of both parents in providing for them. Programs do so by locating parents, setting financial obligations, and enforcing those obligations.

Some families receive child support from noncustodial parents regularly. For other families, however, payments may be sporadic, partial, or nonexistent. In 2017, 24 percent of parents who were owed child support payments received only part of the amount they were owed during that year, and 30 percent received no payments.¹ Parents who do not make their child support payments can be subject to enforcement measures such as license suspensions, interception of tax refunds, or seizure of bank accounts.² If these measures do not yield sufficient child support payment, child support programs can refer nonpaying parents to the legal system for civil contempt of court. Civil contempt proceedings require noncustodial parents to attend court hearings and may lead to arrest or jailing if they fail to appear in court or fail to meet the obligations of their child support orders.

¹ Grall (2020). This 2017 statistic is based on all families owed child support, not just those receiving services from the child support system.

² Enforcement measures are actions taken by child support agencies with the intention of collecting past-due child support and securing current and future payments.

In recent years, some child support policymakers and researchers have questioned the fairness and effectiveness of pursuing civil contempt to secure child support payments, particularly for parents with low incomes. Civil contempt proceedings are costly, burdensome, and often counterproductive to the goals of the child support program. They can impede employment, increase child support debt, alienate noncustodial parents from their children, and decrease parents' future cooperation with the program due to their negative experiences.³ Even for noncustodial parents with the means to meet their child support obligations, there is no evidence that contempt leads to future child support compliance through ongoing, regular payments on which families can rely. Often, contempt proceedings result in one-time “purge” payments, in which the noncustodial parent pays a lump sum to avoid continued court action or jail.⁴

The Procedural Justice-Informed Alternatives to Contempt (PJAC) demonstration project tested a different approach to improving child support payment compliance. Developed by the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE), it integrated principles of procedural justice into enforcement practices in six child support agencies across the United States as an alternative to standard contempt proceedings (see Figure 1.1).⁵ Procedural justice, sometimes referred to as “procedural fairness,” is the idea that “how individuals regard the justice system is tied more to the perceived fairness of the *process* and how they were treated rather than to the perceived fairness of the *outcome*.”⁶ Research has shown that if people perceive a process to be fair, they will be more likely to comply with the outcome of that process, whether or not the outcome was favorable to them.⁷ The PJAC demonstration applies this premise to the child support context (see Box 1.1) with the goal of improving compliance with child support orders. With oversight from the Georgia Division of Child Support Services, MDRC leads a random assignment evaluation of the model's effectiveness in collaboration with MEF Associates and the Center for Court Innovation.

The target population for the PJAC demonstration project was noncustodial parents who were at the point of being referred for contempt because they had not met their child support obligations for several months or more, yet had been determined by child support agency staff members to have the ability to pay child support. PJAC services aimed to address parents' reasons for nonpayment, improve the consistency of their payments, and promote their positive engagement with the child support program and the other parent. As part of the evaluation of PJAC's effectiveness, between 2018 and 2020 over 11,000 parents were randomly assigned either to a group offered PJAC services or to a business-as-usual group sent through standard contempt proceedings. The research team is comparing the outcomes of these two groups over time.

³ Patterson (2008); May and Roulet (2005).

⁴ Office of the Attorney General for the District of Columbia, Child Support Services Division (2020).

⁵ While two of the participating agencies are in Ohio—Franklin County and Stark County—they were operated independently and are therefore considered two separate study sites. California and Virginia, on the other hand, did have PJAC services available at multiple locations, but those locations were operated centrally, so each is considered a single study site.

⁶ Gold (2013).

⁷ Swaner et al. (2018); Tyler (2007).



FIGURE 1.1. Child Support Agencies in the PJAC Demonstrator



The purpose of this report is to describe the contrasts between the child support services and enforcement approaches experienced by parents in the PJAC services group and those experienced by parents in the business-as-usual group in the year following their enrollment into the study. This comparison includes what services and enforcement measures were available, how they were delivered (for example, with procedural justice principles applied), and the frequency with which they were used. This report will extend the story of PJAC's implementation described in [Procedural Justice in Child Support Enforcement: Lessons from an Implementation Study of the Procedural Justice-Informed Alternatives to Contempt Demonstration](#), placing it in context alongside the experience of parents in the business-as-usual group.⁸ The report offers both quantitative and qualitative analyses of service contrasts based on child support administrative records, PJAC management information system data, staff interviews, and a variety of other data sources (described in detail below).⁹ In the PJAC demonstration, the hypothesized contrast in experiences between the two research groups encompasses both differences in service receipt (services available to PJAC services group members over and above those

BOX 1.1
THE FIVE KEY ELEMENTS OF
PROCEDURAL JUSTICE AS
APPLIED TO THE CHILD
SUPPORT CONTEXT

- ▶ **Respect:** Parents should believe they were treated with dignity and respect and their concerns were taken seriously.
- ▶ **Understanding:** Parents should understand the child support process and have their questions answered.
- ▶ **Voice:** Parents should have a chance to be heard by sharing their perspectives and expressing their concerns.
- ▶ **Neutrality:** Parents should perceive the decision-making process to be impartial.
- ▶ **Helpfulness:** Parents should feel that the child support agency was helpful and interested in addressing their situations.

⁸ Treskon, Phillips, Groskaufmanis, and Skemer (2022).

⁹ Administrative records are data collected in the normal course of administering a program. A management information system is a database used to capture information about program participants and the activities they engage in with the program's staff.

available to business-as-usual group members) and differences in enforcement actions and contempt (reductions in the use of coercive measures that are often perceived as punitive by parents in the PJAC services group relative to the business-as-usual group, particularly contempt filings).

Additionally, this report will set the stage for a future publication focused on PJAC's effects on outcomes such as overall compliance with child support obligations and regularity of payments. If there is not a meaningful contrast between the two research groups' service and enforcement experiences, it is unlikely that the evaluation will be able to determine whether PJAC services had effects on payment- and compliance-related outcomes.

Overview of the PJAC Service Model

PJAC services were primarily delivered by case managers [specially trained](#) in procedural justice, dispute resolution, responses to domestic violence, and trauma-informed care.¹⁰ PJAC case managers carried far smaller caseloads than is typical in child support enforcement, designed to allow them to provide more intensive, procedural justice-infused case management to parents with complicated case histories, high amounts of child support debt, and multiple challenges to making payments. The main components of the PJAC service model are described below. When these efforts were unsuccessful in achieving compliance, PJAC case managers could take further enforcement action, including referrals to contempt.

- **Case review.** Case managers reviewed noncustodial parents' case histories to inform their approach to the rest of the components.
- **Outreach and engagement.** Case managers made initial contact with custodial and noncustodial parents to introduce the program and learn about their perspectives on their case, followed by continued contact.
- **Case conference.** Case managers facilitated a back-and-forth exchange between parents to identify reasons for nonpayment, come to a preliminary agreement about how to address these reasons for nonpayment, and develop a plan to achieve payment compliance.
- **Case action plan.** Together, case managers and noncustodial parents created individually tailored plans for noncustodial parents to become compliant with their child support orders. Case managers could connect parents to enhanced child support services or other supportive services outside the child support agency.
- **Case maintenance.** Case managers monitored payments, met with parents, and modified case action plans as necessary to help noncustodial parents reach or sustain compliance.

¹⁰ For additional information regarding PJAC staff training, see Rodney (2019). According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2014), trauma-informed care "realizes the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery; recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system; and responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices, and seeks to actively resist re-traumatization."



Noncustodial Parents in the PJAC Demonstration

The eligibility criteria for the PJAC demonstration largely aligned with agencies' overall contempt-eligibility guidelines. Each participating PJAC agency applied its own specific rules to verify that noncustodial parents were eligible for contempt before enrolling them in the study. Universal categories of eligibility included:

- Address verification
- A determination that the parent had some ability to pay
- Confirmation of nonpayment or severe underpayment for several months
- Multiple attempts to reach the parent
- Exhaustion of most administrative enforcement actions¹¹

Given these criteria, parents eligible for the PJAC study represented a group that was especially difficult to reach and obtain payment from. Once eligibility was confirmed, 65 percent of noncustodial parents were randomly assigned to the PJAC services group, while 35 percent were randomly assigned to the business-as-usual group.¹²

[Characteristics of noncustodial parents](#) enrolled in the PJAC study are presented in Figure 1.2, with additional detail available in Appendix Table A.1. Noncustodial parents enrolled in the PJAC study owed large amounts of child support debt after long periods of nonpayment, averaged more than one child support case, and often had long histories with the child support program but frequently had had minimal recent contact with it.¹³ Comprehensive data across all participating agencies are not available to the study team, but an early analysis of case review data from three of them revealed that parents had not been in touch with the agencies for about two years when they were enrolled in the study.¹⁴ Additionally, substantial numbers had previously been referred to civil contempt, had cases with disclosures of family violence, or had other child support cases in which they were custodial parents and thus were owed child support payments. The complex circumstances of parents in the PJAC study sample speak to a population with numerous intersecting payment challenges, the effects of which may compound to interfere with their ability to meet their child support obligations.

¹¹ Treskon and Skemer (2021).

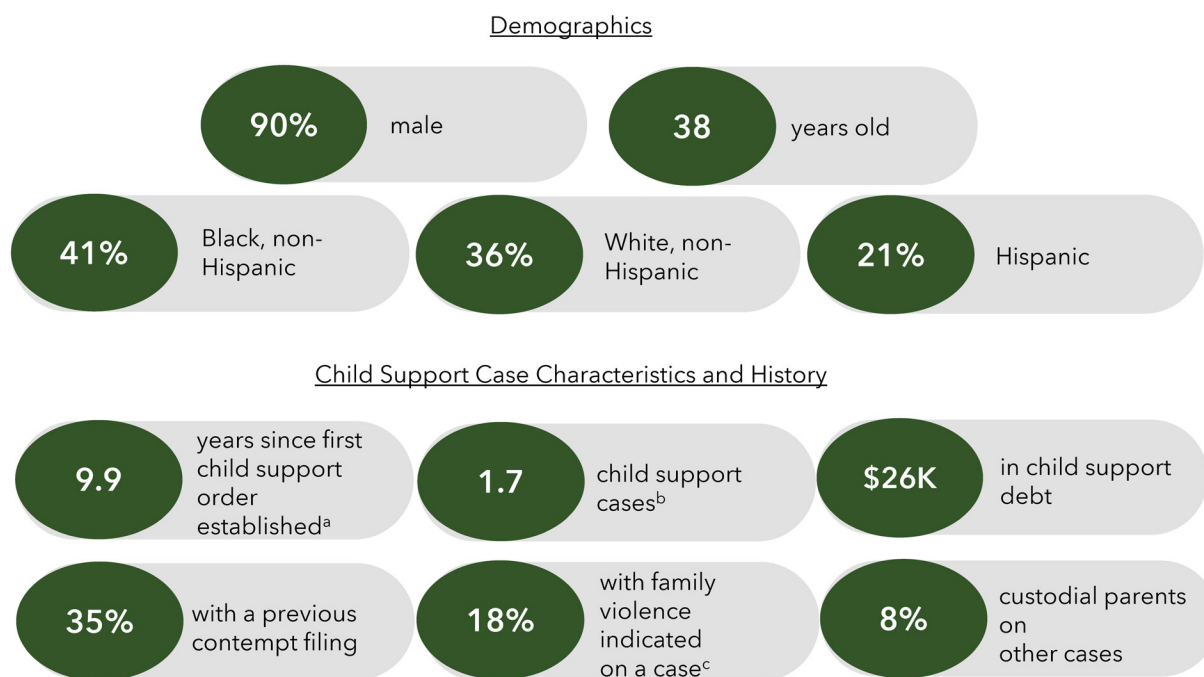
¹² A 65/35 random assignment ratio was used so that a sufficient number of parents would be assigned to the PJAC services group, allowing PJAC agencies to meet their grant requirements for the number of parents they were to serve while still maintaining adequate statistical power for the impact study.

¹³ In 35 states—including the 5 states in the PJAC demonstration—child support debts are subject to interest, increasing debt amounts further. See National Conference of State Legislatures (2019b) for additional information.

¹⁴ Local child support agencies typically record information on contacts with parents in running case notes rather than in fixed data fields, which makes the information difficult to use for research/analytic purposes. For additional information regarding this case study, as well as the characteristics of noncustodial parents in the PJAC demonstration more broadly, see Cummings (2020).



FIGURE 1.2. Characteristics of Noncustodial Parents at PJAC Enrollment



SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on child support administrative records.

NOTES: This figure includes the full study sample: parents enrolled from February 1, 2018 through September 30, 2020.

^aThis measure is calculated among cases open at the time of study enrollment only.

^bThis measure includes cases in which the sample member was the noncustodial parent only (as opposed to cases in which the sample member was the custodial parent or child).

^cThis measure indicates family violence for either the noncustodial parent or the custodial parent on a noncustodial parent's cases, with the exception of one location (Arizona), where the data only include instances where the noncustodial parent was indicated as the victim of family violence.

Most child support debt is owed by fathers with low incomes and fathers of color.¹⁵ While the evaluation does not have income information for parents in the PJAC study sample, their gender and racial/ethnic backgrounds align with this reality: 90 percent were identified as male, and 62 percent were identified as Black or Hispanic.¹⁶ The demographics of noncustodial parents in PJAC have important implications for thinking about their prior experiences with the child support program, employment, and law enforcement. Men of color, who make up the majority of noncustodial parents in PJAC, face higher rates of discrimination in the labor market and incarceration (issues that reinforce one another), leading many to experience long periods of unemployment and underemployment.¹⁷ This reality aligns with PJAC case managers' descriptions of inconsistent, low-wage work and challenges to obtaining employment as major reasons why PJAC noncustodial parents had not made child support

¹⁵ Sorenson, Koball, Pomper, and Zibman (2003); Brito, Pate, and Wong (2020).

¹⁶ According to data from the 2018 Survey of Income and Program Participation, 20 percent of nonresident parents in the United States are Hispanic or Latino and 19 percent are Black, non-Hispanic, summing to 39 percent overall. These figures illustrate the overrepresentation of Black parents in the PJAC study sample relative to nonresident fathers overall. See Congressional Research Service (2021).

¹⁷ The Sentencing Project (2018); Weller (2019).

payments.¹⁸ Past research has also identified that parents who are behind on child support often lack jobs in the formal economy; otherwise, they would be subject to income withholding and child support would be automatically deducted from their paychecks.¹⁹ Given their employment histories, noncustodial parents in PJAC may have had order amounts that were unrealistic for them to pay in full on a consistent basis. These difficulties may have particularly affected men of color; for example, their minimum orders may not have adequately reflected the systemic disadvantages they faced in the labor market.

This description may seem incongruous with the fact that parents in the PJAC demonstration project had been determined to have an ability to pay. However, each state sets its own policy for making ability-to-pay determinations, and assessments can often be subjective. Common approaches include checking state and national employment databases for evidence of employment in recent quarters, reviewing social media accounts for evidence of having recently spent money (to detect informal employment not captured by employment databases), and confirming the absence of an inability to pay (that is, being incarcerated, disabled, or otherwise unable to work).

PJAC services could have helped disrupt some of the race-related inequity Black and Hispanic parents may have experienced in the child support program by diverting them from civil contempt and offering them case managers trained in procedural justice. This more personal, hands-on approach focused on trying to make parents feel respected and helped, on helping them understand processes, and on making sure they had a voice and were treated in an unbiased manner could have led to fairer treatment and more appropriate services to address the realities faced by Black and Hispanic men in the labor market. For example, PJAC services could lower their monthly child support order amounts in lieu of the more coercive, punitive-feeling enforcement they had probably experienced before. At the same time, PJAC case managers might still have only had a limited ability to help parents facing structural barriers. Procedural justice and individually tailored child support services alone cannot address the broader challenges parents of color face obtaining long-term employment that pays well enough to meet both their own living expenses and their child support obligations. Additionally, communities of color may have lower trust in government systems due to historic discrimination, which may make a goal of PJAC services—to promote positive engagement with the child support program by building legitimacy—tougher to achieve.

The PJAC Service Contrast Analysis: Research Questions and Data Sources

The primary research questions for this report are:

1. How did the delivery and receipt of child support services differ between parents in the PJAC services group and parents in the business-as-usual group?

¹⁸ Cummings (2020).

¹⁹ Berger et al. (2019).



2. How did the delivery and use of enforcement actions, including civil contempt, differ between parents in the PJAC services group and parents in the business-as-usual group?

These research questions are addressed using a variety of data sources, both quantitative and qualitative, collected from each of the six participating PJAC study agencies—hereafter called “sites.”

Quantitative Data Sources

- **Child support administrative records.** These data were extracted from child support agency systems for all parents in the study sample and include information on parents’ background and case characteristics, receipt of child support services, child support orders, and receipt of enforcement actions and civil contempt proceedings. While data are available from each of the six PJAC study sites, state systems vary, and information was not available from every site for every data element. A detailed accounting of the availability of each data element by site can be found in Appendix Table A.2.
- **PJAC management information system data.** These PJAC case management data document the rates and details of parent contacts, case conferences, case action plans, enhanced child support services, and referrals to supportive services for all PJAC services group members throughout PJAC implementation.

Qualitative Data Sources

- **Child support staff and partner interviews.** In-person interviews were conducted during implementation site visits in Spring 2019 and remote interviews were conducted in Summer 2020 (due to the COVID-19 pandemic). In total, the research team conducted 196 interviews with PJAC and business-as-usual staff members and referral service partners. Some staff members were interviewed twice, once in each round.
- **Court observations.** Research team members observed PJAC services and business-as-usual contempt hearings in person during Spring 2019 site visits.²⁰
- **Staff survey data.** Data were collected from 59 PJAC and business-as-usual case managers using a web-based survey during Spring/Summer 2020.
- **Parent interviews.** Phone interviews with 120 PJAC services and business-as-usual custodial and noncustodial parents were conducted in Fall 2020. Parent interviews were conducted for descriptive purposes and may not be representative of the larger sample of parents in the PJAC study.

These data sources will be used to describe both differences in *how* child support services and enforcement measures were delivered to parents in each research group (for example, in terms of applying procedural justice principles) and differences in their availability and frequency. (See Box 1.2 for

²⁰ A second round of court observations was planned for Summer 2020, but was preempted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in PJAC sites either pausing contempt hearings or holding them remotely.



BOX 1.2 METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

The COVID-19 pandemic led to an unanticipated change in the research team's original data-analysis plans. Specifically, the quantitative analysis of child support administrative records is now focusing primarily on the "pre-COVID" sample: noncustodial parents enrolled between February 2018 and April 2019, whose one-year follow-up period elapsed before the effects of the pandemic were widespread. As a result of COVID-19's disruptions, child support agencies—along with most other organizations—were forced to alter their operations in ways likely to affect service contrast (for example, court closures, paused and remote services due to closed offices, staff furloughs, etc.).* While some shifts in services may be retained after the pandemic, on the whole it is likely that future child support operations will look more like pre-COVID services than like pandemic services, making the pre-COVID sample most relevant for assessing PJAC's effects. The analysis of effects on payment and compliance outcomes, to be covered in a future report, will also focus on the pre-COVID sample. This decision was made both because of these service considerations and because the early part of the pandemic made it more difficult to assess payment outcomes: Those months saw a deep economic recession, and federal stimulus and unemployment insurance payments made in response were often intercepted by the child support program for payment of child support debts (for both research groups).†

The pooled, cross-site effects will take precedence in the discussion, though site-specific differences will also be assessed in an exploratory analysis, with the role of local context taken into account in interpreting site-level results. An additional exploratory analysis will assess whether certain subgroups experienced different effects. The PJAC analysis plan prespecified both the decision to emphasize pooled effects and the subgroups to be examined for differential effects.‡ Readers should give less weight to results of exploratory analyses, as these are designed to offer additional insight and generate hypotheses for future research rather than to provide definitive information regarding the overall service contrast that resulted from PJAC services.

All outcomes discussed in this report were measured using a 12-month period beginning at study enrollment, in which the calendar month of random assignment is considered the first month of the follow-up period.

* Baird, Hayes, Henderson, and Johnson (2020).

† Chapter 6 describes an analysis assessing whether PJAC's effects were different for parents in the pre-COVID-19 group (those enrolled before May 2019) than they were for parents in the COVID-19 group (those enrolled in May 2019 or after). Many parents had their Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act Economic Impact Payments, known as stimulus checks, intercepted to pay their child support debts. The same is true for CARES Act unemployment insurance payments. Notably, second and third rounds of stimulus payments from the federal government were not subject to child support intercepts.

‡ The PJAC impact analysis plan was finalized in March 2021 and is publicly available on Open Science Framework at <https://osf.io/zps8w/>.

methodological notes concerning the quantitative analyses included in this report.) Parents' perspectives as reflected in parent interviews will be incorporated where possible (while acknowledging that interview respondents may not be representative of all PJAC or business-as-usual parents).

There are some important limitations to the research team's ability to assess the service contrast between the two research groups. First, the research team was not able to measure the frequency and consistency with which PJAC case managers incorporated procedural justice principles into

their work with parents. Second, the study was unable to measure parents' perceptions of fairness rigorously. Finally, while quantitative data document the frequency with which parents in the PJAC services group received services such as case reviews, outreach and engagement, case conferences, and case action plans, there are no quantitative data on the extent to which parents in the business-as-usual group received comparable services. Interviews with child support staff and parents suggest that business-as-usual parents did not often receive services akin to those offered in PJAC, but direct quantitative comparisons are not possible. The inability to measure these differences represents a meaningful limitation on the study.

Roadmap to This Report

The remainder of this report is organized into six chapters. Chapter 2 provides an overall comparison of the services and enforcement experienced by parents in the PJAC services group and parents in the business-as-usual group. Chapter 3 focuses on differences between the two research groups in parents' receipt of child support services. Chapter 4 identifies differences between research groups in receipt of enforcement actions apart from the multistep civil contempt process, which is then discussed in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 assesses whether differences in contrast outcomes vary for different subgroups of parents. Chapter 7 offers a summary of the report's findings and their implications for the final impact analysis.



2

An Overview of Service and Enforcement Differences Between PJAC and Business-as-Usual Services

This chapter provides an overall comparison of the services and enforcement actions used by PJAC case managers compared with those used by regular enforcement workers. First it provides a general overview of the intended services for each group. Next it draws on data from interviews, a staff survey, and the PJAC management information system to present differences in staffing, services, and enforcement actions. Subsequent chapters provide a more detailed analysis of contrasts in services, enforcement actions, and the use of contempt, and include findings from child support administrative data.

Findings include:

- PJAC case managers had dramatically smaller caseloads than did business-as-usual enforcement workers. They had those smaller caseloads to make it easier for them to undertake the intensive casework intended by the PJAC model. PJAC case managers and enforcement workers reported receiving similar amounts of training related to case management and child support policy and procedures. PJAC case managers received specialized training in skills specific to PJAC—such as dispute resolution and trauma-informed care—that were not as common among business-as-usual enforcement workers.

- Parents in the PJAC services and business-as-usual groups received different services from their child support agencies after enrollment into the study, as was expected from the study design. Interviews with PJAC case managers indicate they implemented a different approach to working with parents than business-as-usual enforcement workers. They conducted in-depth case reviews, reached out to and attempted to engage both parents, and planned activities to address parents' barriers to payment and connect them to services and other forms of support—all using principles of procedural justice. Though some elements of the PJAC model were present in business-as-usual services, they were ad hoc and not applied systematically by enforcement workers serving business-as-usual parents.

Overview of PJAC and Business-as-Usual Services

A parent randomly assigned to the PJAC services group was diverted from contempt and assigned to a PJAC case manager trained in the principles of procedural justice. The green boxes in Figure 2.1 show the typical progression of PJAC services. The PJAC case manager first completed a case review, conducted outreach and engagement to both parents, facilitated a case conference to negotiate between parents if appropriate, and completed a case action plan with the noncustodial parent. Depending on both parents' needs and interests, the PJAC case manager included supportive service referrals or specific enhanced child support services as part of the case action plan. After those steps were completed and if the noncustodial parent started making payments, the case maintenance phase began, in which the PJAC case manager monitored payments and checked in on the parent regularly. If PJAC services group members refused to engage in PJAC services or comply with their case action plans and continued not to make child support payments, they could be subject to enforcement actions, including contempt.¹ See Box 2.1 for a description of one parent's experience receiving PJAC services.

The business-as-usual group proceeded to the contempt process following random assignment. This process involved child support and court staff members filing contempt motions, serving parents with notices to attend court hearings, and holding hearings. Parents who failed to appear in court could have bench warrants issued.² If the parent was found in contempt, the court issued a stipulation of conditions that the parent must meet to avoid jail time—often including a purge payment. The gray boxes in Figure 2.1 outline the typical process for parents in the business-as-usual group. The length of the contempt process varied but could take several months to conclude; in some circumstances, [contempt proceedings](#) remained open for years.³ Typically, a business-as-usual enforcement worker did not interact with a noncustodial parent while the case was in the contempt process since inter-

¹ For a detailed discussion of how the agencies in the PJAC demonstration implemented PJAC services and put principles of procedural justice into operation with parents, and for more on rates of service receipt, see Treskon, Phillips, Groskaufmanis, and Skemer (2022).

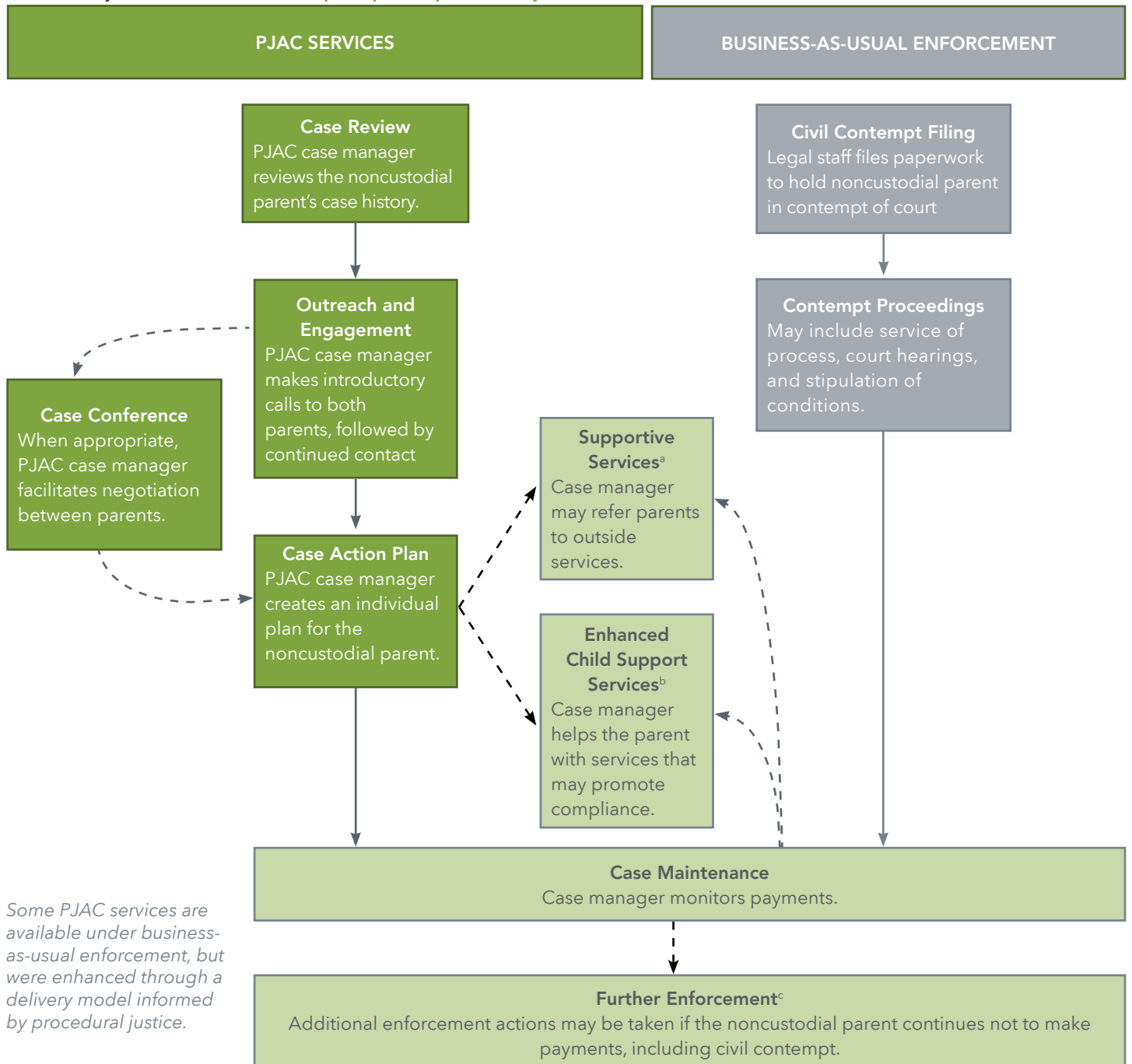
² A bench warrant is a legal document issued by a judge that authorizes an individual's arrest.

³ For more detailed information regarding the civil contempt process at the PJAC demonstration sites, see Treskon and Skemer (2021).

FIGURE 2.1. PJAC Services and Business-As-Usual Enforcement in the PJAC Demonstration

Noncustodial parents who have reached the point of a civil contempt filing are randomly assigned either to the **PJAC services** group, which is offered an array of services **infused with principles of procedural justice**...

...or to a **business-as-usual** group, which instead proceeds with the **standard contempt process**, followed by a return to typical child support enforcement.



NOTES: Dashed lines indicate services or steps that do not necessarily occur for all parents, but instead are determined based on specific circumstances.

^aExamples of supportive services include employment services, legal support, substance use services, and mental health services.

^bExamples of child support services include order modifications, debt forgiveness, and license reinstatements.

^cEnforcement actions are those taken by child support agencies with the intention of collecting past-due child support and securing current and future payments, for example license suspensions or asset seizures.

BOX 2.1
PARENT CASE STUDY 1: ADAM
(PJAC SERVICES)*

In the past, Adam said that he did not feel like child support case managers treated him with dignity. When he started working with his PJAC case manager Charles—who Adam said was honest and kind in their interactions—this feeling changed.

When Adam got sick during the COVID-19 pandemic, he had to leave his job. He sought out other work opportunities when he was feeling better but encountered another issue: He did not have a way to get to and from work, having sold his car to put more money toward child support payments. Seeing that his income had been halted but his child support obligations had not, Adam reached out to Charles, and the two began working together toward solutions.

First, they focused on employment. Adam found a new job and worked with Charles to coordinate with his boss to set up automatic child support payments. At each step along the way, Charles checked in and reminded Adam that he could be a resource in other areas, too—whether Adam wanted to be brought to a job fair, needed help with transportation, or wanted help getting access to a food bank.

“Whenever I was close to getting in the fire, he was on it for me,” Adam said, reflecting on the help Charles offered during the pandemic. “He looked out for me.”

NOTE: *Names changed to protect anonymity.

actions with the parent should occur through the parent’s counsel. Parents could represent themselves, hire their own counsel, or use public defenders or legal aid if they qualified. Once the contempt process was resolved, parents returned to regular child support enforcement. While the contempt process was largely handled by legal staff members from child support and the court, the resumption of regular enforcement meant a business-as-usual enforcement worker monitored payments on the case. The enforcement worker might have referred the parent to supportive services or completed a child support service (for example, an order modification because the contempt process revealed that the parent’s support obligation was set too high given a recent change in employment). If business-as-usual parents failed to comply, they could be subject to additional enforcement, including additional contempt filings.

PJAC and Business-as-Usual Child Support Staffing and Training

Implementation research, drawn from child support staff interviews and a staff survey, found some sharp contrasts between the staffing approaches of PJAC and business-as-usual enforcement, as well as some similarities. One important difference was caseload size. [PJAC](#)

[case managers were intended to have smaller caseloads](#) than business-as-usual enforcement workers to provide the level of service envisioned by the model.⁴ On the staff survey, PJAC case managers reported a median caseload of 255, while business-as-usual enforcement workers reported a median caseload of 1,155. With smaller caseloads, PJAC case managers had more time to allocate to each of their cases, though they also had additional responsibilities. Another difference was in the experience levels of staff members. PJAC case managers had a median of 5 years of experience, while business-

⁴ Groskaufmanis (2021).

as-usual enforcement workers had 11. PJAC case managers were generally recruited from within their child support agencies and applied to internal job postings.

PJAC case managers received training not generally provided to business-as-usual enforcement workers (see Appendix Table A.3). PJAC case managers were more likely than business-as-usual case managers to report receiving training in domestic violence response, trauma-informed care, dispute resolution, and implicit bias (subconscious attitudes toward groups of people). PJAC case managers were also more likely to report training in customer service, but the rates were high for both groups. The groups also had high rates of training in case management strategies and child support policy and procedures. These numbers suggest that training in customer service, case management, and child support policy and procedures was standard across PJAC demonstration sites. However, specialized training in skills specific to PJAC—such as dispute resolution and trauma-informed care—were not.

PJAC case managers reported having more job experience than business-as-usual enforcement workers in the practices needed to implement PJAC services (for example, case management, working with people affected by domestic violence, or making referrals to support services), but most business-as-usual enforcement workers did report having similar types of experience (see Appendix Table A.3). This finding suggests that some aspects of PJAC case managers' and enforcement workers' work with parents were similar, though PJAC case managers may have used these practices more often.

PJAC Services Compared with Business-as-Usual Services

As shown in Figure 2.1, the PJAC model begins with a case review, followed by personalized outreach to both parents. Once noncustodial parents were engaged, PJAC case managers worked with them to develop an action plan and connect them to services to help address their reasons for noncompliance. These activities are also offered to some extent by business-as-usual enforcement workers, but the study design does not allow for direct quantitative comparisons between PJAC services and business as usual for most of these services. This section summarizes what qualitative data can reveal about how services differed between the groups. Participation measures from the PJAC management information system for parents in the PJAC services group in the 12 months after study enrollment are also included. Table 2.1 summarizes this information.

- **Case review:** Case reviews were part of both PJAC case managers' and regular enforcement workers' jobs, but PJAC case managers completed them routinely and as a first step with a newly enrolled parent, whereas they were only typically done as needed in business-as-usual enforcement. At the outset of their work with newly enrolled parents, PJAC case managers completed a thorough case review of all a noncustodial parent's cases to identify possible next steps for the case and check for errors. Among parents in the PJAC services group, 99 percent had a completed case review within a year of enrollment. In contrast, business-as-usual enforcement workers said that they generally reviewed cases in response to needed actions, such

TABLE 2.1. Staffing and Use of PJAC Model Components Among the PJAC Services and Business-as-Usual Groups

	PJAC Services	Business-as-Usual
Staffing		
Training	In addition to training in general child support policy and procedures, specialized training for case managers in procedural justice, dispute resolution, etc.	Training in general child support policy and procedures, customer service
Median caseload size	255	1,155
Services		
Case review	Automatic for all cases	Not standard practice; cases reviewed in response to specific needs or inquiries from parents
Outreach and engagement	Contact attempts to all parents	Contacts generally in response to cases identified on reports or in response to parent-initiated contacts; no contact with parents in contempt
Case conference	Attempted for all cases that were appropriate and in which parents were engaged	Not offered, though parents might come in together to document agreements that they came to on their own
Case action plan	Attempted for all noncustodial parents	Not offered, though parents might come in together to document agreements that they came to on their own
Child support services and referrals	Child support services and referrals actively offered; hands-on support to help parents navigate paperwork and processes	Connections or referrals to services; generally no assistance to parents to help them make use of services
Case maintenance	Active engagement with all parents to check on payments	Reports and contacts initiated by parents used to decide which cases to engage regarding payments

SOURCE: MDRC analyses of staff interview and PJAC staff survey data.

as a request from a parent or a system-generated report. Like PJAC case managers, business-as-usual case workers described using these reviews to inform next steps with a case or to prepare for a conversation with a parent.

- **Outreach and engagement:** After study enrollment, parents in the PJAC services group received targeted engagement in lieu of the contempt filing experienced by parents in the business-as-usual group.⁵ Among parents in the PJAC services group, PJAC case managers were able to make contact with 67 percent of noncustodial parents, and the noncustodial parent and at least one associated custodial parent for 56 percent of noncustodial parents, within a year of study enrollment. Business-as-usual enforcement workers generally do not interact with parents while they are facing

⁵ Kusayeva (2020); Treskon, Phillips, Groskaufmanis, and Skemer (2022).

contempt since those parents are in a formal legal process. When business-as-usual parents return to regular enforcement caseloads, enforcement workers resume communications. Business-as-usual enforcement workers described their communication with parents as typically occurring in response to parent-initiated contact or reports flagging certain cases for outreach (for example, nonpaying cases). PJAC case managers reported using text messages and social media more often to reach parents than did business-as-usual caseworkers.

- **Case conferences:** PJAC case managers actively tried to schedule joint meetings (in-person, virtual, or back-and-forth/shuttle negotiations) between parents to resolve disputes or establish agreements. As described in a prior brief, case conferences proved challenging to achieve since the PJAC case manager had to reach both parents and get them to engage in a case conference, which many parents did not want to do due to complicated histories with the other parent.⁶ Twenty-seven percent of noncustodial parents in the PJAC services group had a case conference. Business-as-usual enforcement workers do not actively try to schedule meetings with parents or facilitate negotiations. They described helping parents (those not currently in the contempt process) finalize agreements that they came to on their own, for example agreements to modify parenting-time arrangements or child support order amounts, or to terminate an order.
- **Case action plans:** Fifty-two percent of noncustodial parents in the PJAC services group had a case action plan. Business-as-usual enforcement workers did not describe developing case action plans for parents on their caseloads routinely. Still, aspects of case action plans were present in a few enforcement workers' descriptions. A small number of business-as-usual enforcement workers described making verbal payment-plan agreements with parents. For parents in contempt, the outcome of the contempt process was often a suspended sentence tied to conditions for payments or other requirements imposed by the court. These conditions resemble case action plans in that they document the steps to which a parent agrees to avoid further enforcement. However, case action plans were more holistic and included action items to address a parent's reasons for nonpayment, such as participation in an employment program. While suspended sentences from the court hold the threat of jail time or bench warrants for noncompliance, the response to noncompliance with a case action plan could be further enforcement actions, including civil contempt, but could also be revising a plan to better meet a parent's circumstances.
- **Enhanced child support services and referrals:** PJAC case managers connected parents to services offered by the child support agency and partners to help address the reasons for nonpayment. Within the child support agency, enhanced child support services included order modifications, debt-forgiveness programs, and driver's

⁶ Webster (2020).

license reinstatement. (These services are detailed in Chapter 3.) In general, these services were similar to those available to business-as-usual parents, but PJAC case managers made a point of offering them and supported parents in navigating the paperwork and legal processes required to gain access to them. About 28 percent of noncustodial parents in the PJAC services group received an enhanced child support service within 12 months after study enrollment.⁷ The availability of services varied by site, in part due to local or state policies. PJAC case managers also connected noncustodial parents to services offered by community partners to help address the underlying issues that prevented them from making consistent payments. These services included help finding employment or housing, assistance negotiating parenting time, substance use treatment, domestic violence services, transportation, and legal services. The PJAC agencies generally relied on the same service providers they already partnered with, but sometimes adapted these existing relationships to include more direct hand-offs from PJAC case managers to partner staff members. Overall, referrals were entered in the PJAC management information system for about 10 percent of noncustodial parents in the PJAC services group. See Box 2.2 for a summary of another PJAC parent's service experiences, including a referral to an outside provider for employment support that unfortunately did not yield a long-term position.

- **The use of procedural justice concepts:** Staff interviews suggest that business-as-usual enforcement workers try to be helpful, respectful, and neutral. Enforcement workers agree that parents do not understand child support policies or processes, and they try to help. However, they are limited in the extent to which they can be helpful by large caseloads and their own lack of understanding of some processes. Responses from the staff survey provide evidence that PJAC case managers internalized procedural justice principles and incorporated them into their work with parents: Compared with business-as-usual enforcement workers, PJAC case managers averaged higher scores on a scale designed to measure their application of procedural justice principles in their work.⁸ While both groups scored on the high end of the scale, PJAC case managers' scores were higher.

⁷ When a parent received an enhanced child support service within 12 months of study enrollment, that fact was recorded in the PJAC management information system. Services included in this measure are: child support debt compromises, debt-payment-amount modifications, credits for direct payments to the custodial parent, debt-interest modifications, order modifications, assistance with parenting-time agreements, license reinstatements, license-suspension suppressions, and lien suppressions. (A lien is a claim upon property to prevent that property from being transferred or sold until a debt is satisfied, one of several enforcement tools sometimes used to obtain payment from parents.)

⁸ The scale includes eight items and measures case manager agreement with statements such as "at the end of each meeting with customers, I verify that they understand what is expected of them going forward" and "when speaking to customers, I acknowledge unfair or difficult prior experiences they may have had with regard to their child support case." Responses to the eight items were averaged, with all scores falling between one and four, where one indicates the low end of procedural justice orientation and four indicates the high end. See Treskon, Phillips, Groskaufmanis, and Skemer (2022) for more information.

BOX 2.2
PARENT CASE STUDY 2: ANDREW
(PJAC SERVICES)*

Before he was incarcerated, Andrew said that he was always on time with his child support payments—often receiving reimbursements in instances where he overpaid. However, after serving jail time and being charged with a felony, Andrew faced new barriers that put him behind on his payments. When his felony charge prevented him from acquiring the licenses he needed to work in his chosen trade, Andrew was forced to rely on temporary gigs. Without consistent, reliable employment, Andrew started to fall behind on paying bills—and his child support payments were no exception.

Although he was enrolled in PJAC, when he was interviewed Andrew said that he had never heard of the program and was not aware of being assigned to a case manager as his main point of contact. When Andrew had a question about his case, he called child support and spoke to a different person every time. He did receive a referral to employment services and followed up on it, but was unable to acquire long-term employment; other than that assistance, Andrew said that he has been unable to get help despite wanting badly to get caught up.

Andrew said that he does not understand certain aspects of child support, such as the contempt process or the way order amounts are determined. He also said that he does not feel that he is treated with dignity, or that he has any kind of decision-making power. “I wish somebody could help me get on track. It’s not like I don’t want to abide by the law. All I need is some help,” he said.

NOTE: *Name changed to protect anonymity.

Enforcement Actions and Contempt Proceedings in PJAC and Business-as-Usual Services

PJAC case managers described taking some limited additional enforcement actions (license suspensions, for example) in instances where PJAC services were not successful, before they made contempt referrals. When they did take these actions, they said they would use procedural justice to inform the process. The availability and use of enforcement actions varied by site, in part due to local and state policies. Parents in the business-as-usual group could also be subject to additional enforcement actions while in contempt or if they went out of compliance after completing the contempt process. Enforcement actions are discussed in Chapter 4.

When all other options for bringing cases into compliance were exhausted, PJAC case managers referred noncustodial parents for civil contempt. At about half of the sites, once a noncustodial parent in the PJAC services group was sent to contempt, the proceedings were very similar to the standard ones experienced by the business-as-usual group, and the PJAC case manager had minimal contact with the parent after that point. At the other half of sites, agencies modified their regular contempt procedures for parents in PJAC to incorporate elements of procedural justice. Differences in contempt are discussed in Chapter 5.

3 Contrasts in Receipt of Child Support Services

Child support case managers can offer services to parents to encourage compliance and better align parents' obligations with their financial and family circumstances. The child support services provided at the PJAC study sites included order modification, child support debt compromise, license reinstatement, suppression of enforcement actions, assistance with parenting-time agreements, and case closure. At all six PJAC sites, child support services were available to both parents in the PJAC services group and the business-as-usual group. However, parents in the PJAC services group received “enhanced” services relative to what was provided to business-as-usual parents, and PJAC case managers made a point of offering those services.

To assess whether parents in the PJAC services group were more likely to receive child support services than parents in the business-as-usual group—as expected based on the PJAC model—the research team analyzed administrative child support records provided by the six participating agencies. The discussion below describes each of the available child support services and any relevant enhancements, presents the results (where available) from the analysis of administrative records, puts the findings in context using information from the PJAC implementation study, and adds inferences where administrative data are unavailable or incomplete.

Findings include:

- Across the six study sites, child support services were available to parents in both the PJAC services group and the business-as-usual group. However, agencies often offered enhancements to these services to parents in the PJAC services group. Quantitative analyses of administrative child support records indicate that parents in the PJAC services group were more likely to receive multiple child support services, including order reviews, debt compromises, and license reinstatements.
- Service delivery and the availability of child support service enhancements varied across PJAC sites, leading to variation in the contrast between research groups by site. Of the six sites, PJAC appeared to have the strongest effects on child support service receipt in Franklin and Stark Counties.

Contrasts in Receipt of Child Support Services

Order Reviews and Modifications

Table 3.1 presents the child support services received by parents in each research group for the pooled, cross-site sample. (For an explanation of how to interpret Table 3.1 and subsequent outcome tables, see Box 3.1.) According to OCSE guidelines, child support orders must be based on the noncustodial parent’s “earnings, income, and other evidence of ability to pay.”¹ Order modifications allow parents to update their obligations to better match their financial and family circumstances in the event of a change, such as having another child, sharing child custody, or experiencing the emancipation of a child for whom a parent previously owed child support.²

At all PJAC sites, parents may seek order modifications through order reviews.³ If one or both parents experience a significant change in financial or family circumstances, as defined by local and state statutes, either parent may request an order review.⁴ After an order review is prompted, if the child support agency or court finds sufficient evidence of a change in income or ability to pay, it will proceed with an order modification. Outside of order reviews, order modifications may also result from court proceedings in which a judge orders a change in the amount to be paid by a noncustodial parent.

While order reviews and modifications were available to all parents in the PJAC study, PJAC case managers took more intensive approaches to case management than were possible for business-as-usual enforcement officers. This approach probably made it easier for them to identify past errors in order

¹ Office of Child Support Enforcement: Division of Policy and Training (2017b).

² Arizona Department of Economic Security (2021); California Courts (2021); Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (2019); Michigan Supreme Court: State Court Administrative Office, Friend of the Court Bureau (2019); Virginia Department of Social Services (n.d.).

³ Order reviews are a process distinct from the case reviews described earlier. An order review focuses on assessing whether a parent qualifies for an order modification. In contrast, a case review is a holistic review of a parent’s full case history with the child support program.

⁴ If no changes in circumstances occur, a parent may request an order review every three years. An order review may also be triggered by contempt activities, administrative procedures, and changes to laws.

TABLE 3.1. Contrasts in Receipt of Child Support Services

Outcome	PJAC Services Group	Business-as-Usual Group	Difference	90 Percent Confidence Interval
Had a child support order reviewed ^a (%)	7.8	5.9	1.9*	(0.2, 3.6)
Received an order modification (%)	8.9	8.0	0.9	(-0.4, 2.1)
Received a downward order modification (%)	6.1	5.1	1.0	(-0.1, 2.0)
Monthly child support order amount ^b (\$)	359	368	-9	(-20.2, 2.0)
Had a license reinstated ^c (%)	16.4	12.0	4.5***	(2.6, 6.4)
Received debt forgiveness ^a (%)	7.4	2.9	4.5***	(3.0, 6.1)
Amount of debt forgiven ^a (\$)	-572	-348	-224	(-476, 29)
Received a debt adjustment ^a (%)	9.6	15.3	-5.7***	(-7.8, -3.6)
Amount of debt adjusted ^a (\$)	-280	-84	-196*	(-365, -26)
Had a case closed (%)	6.3	5.8	0.5	(-0.6, 1.6)
Sample size (total = 5,628)	3,650	1,978		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on child support administrative data.

NOTES: Results in this table are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in sums and differences.

Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

The sample includes noncustodial parents enrolled from February 1, 2018 through April 30, 2019. Sample sizes by site are: Arizona = 963; California = 1,278; Franklin County = 908; Michigan = 825; Stark County = 904; Virginia = 750.

^aLimited to Franklin County, Michigan, and Stark County.

^bDue to data limitations, for Arizona and Virginia the monthly child support order amount does not include required monthly payments on debts. This component of monthly child support order amounts is included for all other sites.

^cExcludes Arizona and California.

calculations and changes in circumstances that would merit a modification. Further, unlike their business-as-usual peers, PJAC case managers were able to offer direct support to parents by assisting with order-review requests and following through with the modification process.⁵ See Box 3.2 for a description of one business-as-usual parent's experiences with the child support program, including his struggle to obtain a modification to his order amount.

Administrative data on order reviews were available in Franklin County, Michigan, and Stark County. PJAC generated a statistically significant difference in the receipt of order reviews among this pooled three-site sample: 8 percent of the PJAC services group and 6 percent of the business-as-usual group had an order review in the 12 months following study enrollment. This modest effect is mostly the result of Franklin County, where research group differences were largest (see Appendix Table B.7).

⁵ Treskon, Phillips, Groskaufmanis, and Skemer (2022).

BOX 3.1

HOW TO READ THE SERVICE-CONTRAST TABLES IN THIS REPORT

The service-contrast tables in this report use the format shown in the table excerpt below (taken from Table 3.1). This excerpt shows the child support order review outcomes for the PJAC services group and the business-as-usual group. The excerpt shows that 7.8 percent of parents in the PJAC services group and 5.9 percent of parents in the business-as-usual group had an order reviewed in the 12 months following enrollment.

The “difference” column in the table excerpt shows the difference between the two service groups’ receipt of order reviews—that is, PJAC’s estimated effect on the receipt of order reviews. The estimated effect of PJAC on the receipt of order reviews in the year following enrollment was calculated by subtracting 5.9 from 7.8, yielding a 1.9 percentage point difference.

Differences marked with asterisks in the service-contrast tables are “statistically significant,” meaning they are larger than would generally be expected if the intervention had no true effect. Such differences can probably be attributed to PJAC services. The number of asterisks indicates whether the estimated effect is statistically significant at the 10 percent (one asterisk), 5 percent (two asterisks), or 1 percent (three asterisks) level. The lower the level (or the more asterisks), the less likely it is that an ineffective intervention could have generated the effect. For example, as shown in the excerpt, PJAC services had a statistically significant effect of 1.9 percentage points on the receipt of child support order reviews. This effect is statistically significant at the 10 percent level, which means that there is less than a 10 percent probability that an ineffective intervention would have resulted in an estimated effect this large.

CONTRASTS IN RECEIPT OF CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES

Outcome	PJAC Services Group	Business-as-Usual Group	Difference	90 Percent Confidence Interval
Had a child support order reviewed ^a	7.8	5.9	1.9*	(0.2, 3.6)

^aIncludes Franklin County, Michigan, and Stark County.

A confidence interval shows the range of values in which the true effect on an outcome probably falls given the specified confidence level. Using confidence intervals helps illustrate the degree of uncertainty in statistical estimates. In 90 percent of tests comparable to the PJAC evaluation, the true value of the effect on child support order reviews would fall within the range shown in the “confidence interval” column. As shown in the excerpt, the 90 percent confidence interval for PJAC’s effect on the receipt of order reviews is from 0.2 percentage points to 3.6 percentage points.

Order modifications can be upward (increase in order amount) or downward (decrease in order amount). The research team first measured the occurrence of *any* modification and found that PJAC did not have a statistically significant effect on order modifications. In total, 9 percent of parents in the PJAC services group and 8 percent of parents in the business-as-usual group had a modification in the 12 months following random assignment.⁶

⁶ The proportion of parents who received order modifications reflects all six PJAC sites and thus should not be directly compared

The research team also measured the receipt of downward modifications and the average monthly child support order amount at the end of the follow-up period. Given the individual and case characteristics of parents in the study sample and child support practices described in Chapter 1, it is probably more common for orders to be set at an amount that overestimates, rather than underestimates, a parent's ability to pay. The differences between the PJAC services group and the business-as-usual group in their receipt of downward modifications and average monthly order amounts are not statistically significant. Six percent of parents in the PJAC services group and 5 percent of parents in the business-as-usual group had a downward modification. The average monthly order amount at the end of the follow-up period was \$359 for parents in the PJAC services group and \$368 for parents in the business-as-usual group.

Order modifications typically require evidence of a change in the financial, employment, or custody circumstances that dictate order amounts. PJAC could only increase rates of order modification by a limited amount, since only a subset of parents in the PJAC services group were likely to meet these criteria. Nonetheless, the provision of services informed by procedural justice probably helped parents gain a better understanding of the modification process and allowed PJAC case managers to more readily identify cases that might benefit from order review/modification.

License Reinstatement

Child support agencies have the authority to reinstate noncustodial parents' licenses if they have been suspended for child support nonpayment. Child support agencies use license suspensions to penalize

with the proportion of parents who had order reviews, which only reflects Michigan and Franklin and Stark Counties. See Appendix B for site-specific order review and modification outcomes.

BOX 3.2

PARENT CASE STUDY 3: NATHAN (BUSINESS-AS-USUAL GROUP)*

For Nathan, interactions with child support have always been a challenge. He does not think that the order amount he pays is fair, he feels like child support workers are biased against noncustodial parents, and he does not think he is generally treated with dignity when he goes into the office for help. On top of these issues, Nathan has not been able to see his son in years, a fact that upsets him.

Usually, Nathan will interact with someone from child support about once a year, typically speaking with a different person every time. "When I've gone in to try to get help a couple of different times, [child support workers] ... were non-caring and never wanted to hear everything that's going on or what's happened." As a result, Nathan does not feel that he has been able to get help with important aspects of his case.

For example, Nathan has tried to modify his order amount four times. The most recent time, he was told that the amount would be lowered, but when he received the paperwork, he found that it was unchanged, and that the amount he owed in debt had actually increased. After this attempt, he stopped trying to get a modification on his case. Although he now makes regular automatic payments, he maintains that his order amount is too high for him.

NOTE: *Name changed to protect anonymity.

nonpayment. The use of license suspensions varies greatly across the PJAC study sites. For example, in Franklin County, 34 percent of parents in the PJAC study had a license suspended in the year before enrollment; in Virginia, only 2 percent of parents had a suspension in the year before enrollment.

In business-as-usual enforcement, after a noncustodial parent's license is suspended, the parent must satisfy certain criteria to get it back. For example, in Virginia, business-as-usual parents must fulfill requirements such as making lump-sum payments toward their outstanding child support debts and entering into payment agreements to qualify for license reinstatement. For parents in the PJAC services group, some states added flexibility to their reinstatement processes, allowing PJAC case managers additional discretion. (See Appendix Table A.4 for a detailed, site-by-site description of differences between the PJAC services and business-as-usual groups in the specific child support services they had available to them and used.)

Given the variation in the use of license suspensions across the six PJAC sites (see Chapter 4 for further information), the use of license reinstatements also varied greatly. Administrative data on license reinstatements were available in Franklin County, Michigan, Stark County, and Virginia.⁷ PJAC services had a statistically significant effect on license reinstatement among this pooled four-site sample: 16 percent of parents in the PJAC services group had their licenses reinstated during the year following random assignment, compared with 12 percent of parents in the business-as-usual group. The overall increase of 4.5 percentage points in license reinstatements probably made a meaningful difference to parents, improving their access to employment opportunities and ability to work and manage other responsibilities.

Debt Compromises and Adjustments

When noncustodial parents do not meet their monthly obligation amounts, they accrue child support debt or “arrears.” These unpaid obligations often translate to custodial parents lacking the financial support needed to care for their children. Over time, noncustodial parents who continue to fall short of their monthly obligations can accumulate tens of thousands of dollars in child support debt. The burden of this debt, which is often subject to interest, can be overwhelming for noncustodial parents and thus lead to further nonpayment.⁸ Additionally, large sums of child support debt may trigger enforcement actions; enforcement actions parents experience as punitive may further discourage interaction and compliance with child support.⁹

[Reductions in debts owed to custodial parents and to the state](#) were available to parents in both the PJAC services group and the business-as-usual group at all PJAC sites, as detailed in Appendix Table

⁷ Arizona very rarely used license suspensions, so an effect of PJAC services on license reinstatements would be unlikely even if data were available from that site. California offered license reinstatements, but administrative data on their use were not available.

⁸ Debt balances in the five states participating in the PJAC demonstration are subject to interest. See National Conference of State Legislatures (2019b) for additional information.

⁹ Cancian, Heinrich, and Chung (2013); Miller and Mincy (2012).

A.4.¹⁰ Noncustodial parents could only receive reductions in the debts they owed to custodial parents if they could come to agreement with the custodial parents. To reduce state-owed debt, parents were typically required to complete a compromise-of-arrears program.

PJAC case managers frequently made a point of bringing up debt-forgiveness options and explored them with parents more fully than was possible for business-as-usual enforcement workers.¹¹ PJAC case managers did so in alignment with PJAC's emphasis on the procedural justice principles of *helpfulness* and *understanding*; they were also able to do so because their smaller caseloads allowed them more time and their dispute-resolution training helped them to negotiate compromises between parents for debts owed to custodial parents. Additionally, some agencies offered enhancements to state debt-forgiveness programs for parents in the PJAC services group.

Administrative data from Franklin County, Michigan, and Stark County (the only sites where reliable data were available) showed that PJAC services had a statistically significant effect on the receipt of debt forgiveness: 7 percent of the PJAC services group and 3 percent of the business-as-usual group had a compromise on debts owed to the state or to the custodial parent in the year following enrollment. However, while the average amount of debt compromised was larger among the PJAC services group than the business-as-usual group (\$572 compared with \$348), this difference is not statistically significant. An explanation for this pattern is that while debt forgiveness was more common among parents in the PJAC services group, compromise amounts *among parents who received forgiveness* were larger for the business-as-usual group than the PJAC services group.¹²

In addition to debt forgiveness, child support agencies sometimes perform debt adjustments to correct errors in debt levels. For example, an agency may make an adjustment if a case manager manually identifies a mistake in a debt balance, such as erroneous charges during a time when a parent was not required to pay. PJAC case managers' smaller caseloads and in-depth case reviews probably made them better able to identify errors that would lead to adjustments. Debt balances may go up or down after an adjustment.

Like compromises, debt adjustments were used at all six study sites, but administrative data were only available in Franklin County, Michigan, and Stark County. The pooled three-site sample shows that PJAC services had a statistically significant effect on the receipt of debt adjustments, though not in the expected direction: As shown in Table 3.1, parents in the PJAC services group were 6 percentage

¹⁰ Debt owed to the state accrues in two ways: (1) If a custodial parent and children receive public assistance (for example, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), the state may claim portions of child support payments as reimbursement for the state's financial support paid through public assistance, and if payment is not received, the costs will accrue as debt owed by the non-custodial parent. (2) Most noncustodial parents incur fees associated with child support actions, such as processing fees for child support payments, and those fees can go unpaid. For an in-depth description of approaches to state- and custodial parent-owed debt forgiveness under the PJAC demonstration, see Phillips (2021).

¹¹ Phillips (2021).

¹² Among those parents who received debt compromises, the average reduction in debt was \$8,007 for parents in the PJAC services group and \$11,783 for parents in the business-as-usual group.

points *less* likely to receive a debt adjustment than parents in the business-as-usual group (10 percent compared with 15 percent).¹³

PJAC site managers reported a probable reason for this result: the higher rate of contempt filings among business-as-usual parents (see Chapter 5 for a discussion of contempt outcomes). To prepare for contempt, a child support agency often reviews a parent's debts and makes corrections where necessary. While parents in the business-as-usual group do not necessarily have more errors in the calculations of their debts, those debts are reviewed more comprehensively and corrected through their exposure to the contempt process. Even though PJAC led to this unexpected decrease in the percentage of parents who received debt adjustments, parents in the PJAC services group had a significantly larger reduction in debt as a result of adjustments (an average of \$280 in debt reduction compared with \$84 for the business-as-usual group). An explanation for this pattern is similar to that described above for debt forgiveness: While debt adjustments were more common among parents in the business-as-usual group, adjustment amounts *among parents who received adjustments* were larger for the PJAC services group than the business-as-usual group.¹⁴

Suppression of Enforcement Actions

Automatic enforcement actions are typically used to compel payment and are often triggered by a parent's payment status or debt levels. Enforcement actions can lead to further disengagement from the child support agency. Some automatic enforcement actions can also interfere with parents' ability to meet their obligations (for further detail, see Chapter 4). To avoid such adverse outcomes and promote compliance and cooperation, PJAC case managers in California and Virginia could suppress some automatic enforcement actions, preventing them from occurring in the first place regardless of a parent's payment status or debts.

In California, case managers could suppress a variety of automatic enforcement actions. According to administrative data, the most frequently suppressed automatic actions were new license suspensions, followed by bank levies and interceptions of unemployment or disability insurance. The same suppressions were available to both research groups. PJAC case managers were in a better position to develop cooperative relationships with parents, however, and identify circumstances that would merit suppression. Administrative records from California show evidence of this effect: The difference between the PJAC services group and the business-as-usual group in the proportion of parents who had automatic enforcement actions suppressed was a statistically significant 21 percentage points (39 percent of parents in the PJAC services group and 18 percent of parents in the business-as-usual group in California received a suppression). PJAC case managers showed *helpfulness* through these suppressions, illustrating the agency's interest in supporting parents and promoting their positive engagement with and perception of child support.

¹³ Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating sums and differences.

¹⁴ Among those parents who received debt adjustments, the average reduction in debt was \$2,814 for parents in the PJAC services group and \$678 for parents in the business-as-usual group.

In Virginia, license suspensions were automatic after 90 days of nonpayment if the parent had a previous contempt filing. PJAC case managers in Virginia were able to use their discretion to suppress new license suspensions for PJAC parents who were engaging in services. Administrative data on the suppression of automatic license suspensions in Virginia were not available; however, differences resulting from suppressions may present themselves through differing rates of license suspension (see Chapter 4).

Parenting-Time Assistance

In some states, parents can enter into a parenting-time agreement, a formally documented agreement on the amount of time each parent is ordered to spend with the child or children. These agreements can affect the monetary child support ordered and received by the parents.¹⁵ Parenting time can lead to better compliance, as noncustodial parents who spend more time with their children are more likely to pay child support.¹⁶

All PJAC agencies offered some form of assistance to parents in negotiating these sorts of parenting-time agreements, though the level of support varied by site and research group (see Appendix Table A.4 for further details). Administrative data on parenting-time assistance were not available; however, implementation research revealed some differences in this area between the PJAC services group and the business-as-usual group. In Arizona and Michigan, parents in the PJAC services group received direct, enhanced support with establishing, navigating, and adjusting parenting-time agreements, while parents in the business-as-usual group received limited assistance or referrals. Further, PJAC case managers' increased engagement with parents and use of procedural justice probably allowed them to better assist parents with the process.¹⁷ At the other sites, parents in both study groups were offered referrals to outside mediation groups or family law firms.

Case Closures

A case closure signifies the end of a child support agency's enforcement of a child support order. Various criteria must be satisfied before a case can be closed, and it is relatively rare that all criteria can be met. Potential justifications for a case closure include:¹⁸

- The custodial parent requests that the case be closed and the case has no debt owed to the state.
- The noncustodial parent faces a change in life circumstances or a total barrier to the regular payment of child support, such as permanent disability or incarceration without parole.

¹⁵ National Conference of State Legislatures (2019a).

¹⁶ Turner and Waller (2016); Office of Child Support Enforcement (2019).

¹⁷ Treskon, Phillips, Groskaufmanis, and Skemer (2022).

¹⁸ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2016); Office of Child Support Enforcement: Division of Policy and Training (2017a); Virginia Department of Social Services (2019).

- The noncustodial parent lives with and acts as the primary caregiver of the child for whom the parent owes support.
- There is no current support order and no debt owed to the custodial parent.¹⁹

Thanks to case reviews and other elements of the PJAC model that helped them gather information on parents, PJAC case managers should have been better able than business-as-usual enforcement workers to identify cases eligible for closure and to follow through with the steps necessary to close those cases.

As shown in Table 3.1, PJAC services did not have a statistically significant effect on case closures. Approximately 6 percent of parents in both research groups had their cases closed in the 12 months following study enrollment. As noted, it is relatively rare for a parent to qualify for a case closure, and many parents came into the PJAC study with high levels of debt and other case characteristics that made them unlikely candidates for closures during the year following study enrollment. Since few parents in the PJAC study were likely to become eligible for case closures, a statistically significant effect was also unlikely.

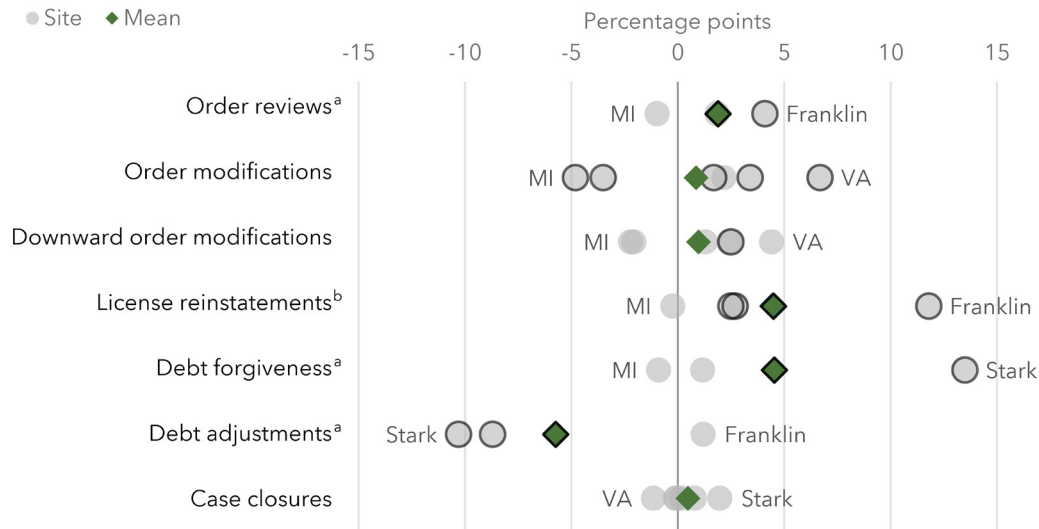
Contrasts in Receipt of Child Support Services, by Site

In addition to analyzing the effects of PJAC services on the pooled, cross-site sample, the research team also assessed effects on child support service receipt at each PJAC site independently. Differences in the structures of the existing child support programs and local child support laws, regulations, and protocols often dictated how the agencies implemented and altered child support services for parents in the PJAC services group relative to the business-as-usual group. Findings on site-level differences between research groups in the receipt of child support services are described below and presented in Figure 3.1. (Detailed site-specific tables, with means for each research group, are available in Appendix B.)

Only some administrative data on the receipt of child support services were available in Arizona and California. The research team analyzed effects on order modifications, order amounts, and case closures in both states, and on the suppression of enforcement actions in California only. Among those services, PJAC had effects on order modifications (a 4 percentage point decrease in Arizona and a 2 percentage point increase in California) and the suppression of enforcement actions (in California). PJAC management information system data showed a relatively high incidence of debt forgiveness among parents in the PJAC services group in Arizona (10 percent). Comparable data are not available for the business-as-usual group, making direct quantitative comparison impossible, but implementation data indicate that PJAC case managers were more likely to present debt-forgiveness options to parents and help parents navigate the process for obtaining forgiveness, offering some evidence that PJAC services may have had an upward effect on this service, though the research team cannot measure it directly.

¹⁹ The average parent in the PJAC study owed nearly \$20,000 to the corresponding custodial parent(s) at study enrollment, so this reason for closure is probably rare among the study sample. See Phillips (2021).

FIGURE 3.1. Contrasts in Receipt of Child Support Services, by Site



SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on child support administrative records.

NOTES: Results in this figure are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics. The sample includes noncustodial parents enrolled from February 1, 2018 through April 30, 2019. Sample sizes by site are: Arizona = 963, California = 1,278, Franklin County = 908, Michigan = 825, Stark County = 904, Virginia = 750.

A positive value indicates that a higher percentage of the PJAC services group than the business-as-usual group received a child support service, while a negative value indicates the opposite. Statistically significant differences between the PJAC services and business-as-usual groups are denoted by outlines around the circles (for sites) and diamonds (for cross-site means). Sites with the largest positive and negative differences for each outcome are labeled.

^aLimited to Franklin County, Michigan, and Stark County.

^bExcludes Arizona and California.

The effects of PJAC services on child support service receipt were more apparent in Virginia. The effect on order modifications was positive and statistically significant (26 percent of the PJAC services group compared with 20 percent of the business-as-usual group). PJAC also had a statistically significant effect on license reinstatements (received by 4 percent of parents in the PJAC services group compared with 2 percent of parents in the business-as-usual group). Additionally, as in Arizona, PJAC management information system data reveal that a relatively high proportion of parents in the Virginia PJAC services group received debt forgiveness (10 percent). Again, comparable data are not available for the business-as-usual group, making direct quantitative comparison impossible; however, the research team hypothesizes that PJAC services probably led to an increase in debt forgiveness in Virginia, since the agency there relaxed some requirements for the forgiveness of state-owed debts for parents in the PJAC services group (see Appendix Table A.4).

There was only a small contrast in Michigan in the child support services offered to parents in the PJAC services and business-as-usual groups. Where statistically significant differences were observed, the results ran contrary to the research team’s expectations: The business-as-usual group had higher rates of order modifications and debt adjustments than the PJAC services group (though there was no effect on debt-adjustment amounts).

The most substantial contrasts in child support service receipt between research groups were observed in Stark and Franklin counties. At both Ohio sites, PJAC services had strong, statistically significant, positive effects on the receipt of multiple child support services. In Stark County, parents in the PJAC services group averaged lower monthly child support order amounts and were more likely to have their licenses reinstated. They were also more likely to receive debt compromises and had significantly larger reductions in debt on average than their business-as-usual counterparts. PJAC had a statistically significant, negative effect on the receipt of debt adjustments in Stark County, with business-as-usual parents being more likely to receive adjustments. These adjustments—which can increase or decrease debt levels, depending on the reason for the adjustment—increased debt for both groups, but resulted in a significantly larger average increase among parents in the business-as-usual group (\$111 compared with \$9 for parents in the PJAC services group).

In Franklin County, parents in the PJAC services group were significantly more likely to have order reviews, to receive order modifications, and (more specifically) to receive downward order modifications.²⁰ Parents in the PJAC services group in Franklin County were also 12 percentage points more likely than their business-as-usual counterparts to have their licenses reinstated, reflecting an important detail in the county’s service context: In Franklin County, license suspensions are used more frequently than they are at many of the other PJAC sites, allowing the county more opportunity to provide a different level of service to parents in the PJAC services group by granting license reinstatements. Franklin County facilitated this service contrast by allowing PJAC case managers more discretion in applying state criteria for license reinstatement for parents in the PJAC services group, making it easier for them to get their licenses back. In Franklin County, PJAC services also produced an effect on debt-adjustment amounts, reducing debts for parents in the PJAC services group by \$156, on average, compared with an increase of \$277 for parents in the business-as-usual group (a difference of \$433).

Overall, these site-specific results reveal that the agencies involved in PJAC offered different child support services to parents in the PJAC services group and had different business-as-usual contexts, leading to substantial site-by-site variation in the contrast in child support service receipt.

²⁰ Ohio administrative data on order modifications, used for both Franklin and Stark counties, do not include orders modified through stipulated agreements (also referred to as mutual agreements). Stipulated agreements occur between parents and are submitted to a judge for approval, eliminating the need to go to court and have a judge decide the issue. Since stipulated agreements may have been more common among PJAC services parents than business-as-usual parents (given the PJAC model’s use of case conferences and focus on dispute resolution and negotiation between parents), the effects on order modifications at the Ohio sites may be understated.

4 Contrasts in the Use of Enforcement Actions

Typically, parents eligible for the PJAC study had already experienced multiple enforcement actions before their enrollment into the evaluation, enforcement actions such as license suspensions, interceptions of tax refunds, and seizures of bank accounts, among others. Most of these enforcement actions are automated in child support systems based on levels of debt or months of nonpayment and therefore were not within case managers' control. However, at several PJAC study sites, case managers had control over the use of some enforcement actions, which they could exercise at their discretion. At all sites, parents in the PJAC services group who were not engaging in PJAC services and remained noncompliant with their child support orders were subject to further enforcement actions. Business-as-usual group members were subject to continued enforcement actions if they remained noncompliant following the conclusion of civil contempt proceedings.

This chapter describes the contrast in enforcement actions between the PJAC services group and the business-as-usual group across all six PJAC sites, emphasizing those that are discre-

tionary and therefore more likely to be directly affected by PJAC services. (It does not touch on civil contempt, a multistep process analyzed separately in Chapter 5.) To make these comparisons between the two groups, the research team conducted a pooled, cross-site analysis using administrative child support records provided by the PJAC agencies. Where there are gaps in the administrative data, the chapter provides some information on the differences that could have existed between the groups using qualitative data gathered as part of the PJAC implementation study. It closes with a discussion of contrasts in the use of enforcement actions at individual PJAC sites.

Findings include:

- PJAC services led to a statistically significant, 2 percentage point reduction in license suspensions.
- The research team did not find a significant difference between research groups in the use of financial institution data matches (the first step in pursuing asset seizures, liens, etc.).
- Enforcement actions that are triggered automatically and could not be altered by case managers were experienced by the vast majority of parents in both groups.

Contrasts in the Use of Enforcement Actions

License Suspensions

License suspensions are an enforcement tool available at all six PJAC study sites; suspensions extend to driver's, professional, and recreational licenses.¹ License suspensions may be automated or discretionary, depending on the site. (Appendix Table A.5 describes contrasts between the research groups in the use of enforcement actions for each PJAC site.) Their use varies widely across PJAC sites, ranging from rare to relatively common (at those sites where suspensions happen automatically once a parent reaches certain number of months of nonpayment). While license suspensions are meant to compel noncustodial parents to pay past-due child support, in interviews, both parents and child support staff members noted that they often make it harder for parents to obtain and maintain employment, as they prevent parents from commuting to and from work. Thus, suspending parents' licenses may further hinder them from meeting their child support obligations and many parents and staff members consider the practice to be counterproductive.

Parents enrolled in the PJAC study could have licenses suspended after several months of nonpayment or severe underpayment and unanswered outreach attempts from case managers. At sites where license suspensions were automated, case managers could apply a "suppression" to prevent the automated action from occurring. Implementation data suggest that PJAC case managers were more likely to suppress license suspensions than business-as-usual enforcement workers. At sites where license suspensions were discretionary, they occurred less frequently overall. However, license sus-

¹ An example of a professional license that could be subject to suspension is a security guard license, while a hunting license would be an example of a recreational license.

pensions were intended to occur even more rarely for parents in the PJAC services group because PJAC case managers attempted to address parents' underlying reasons for nonpayment through case-work informed by procedural justice first, before resorting to coercive enforcement tools.

As shown in Table 4.1, across the five PJAC sites from which data were available, 22 percent of parents in the business-as-usual group had a license suspension compared with 20 percent of parents in the PJAC services group.² This 2 percentage point difference is statistically significant.

TABLE 4.1. Contrasts in the Use of Enforcement Actions

Outcome (%)	PJAC Services Group	Business-as-Usual Group	Difference	90 Percent Confidence Interval
License suspended ^a	20.2	22.4	-2.1**	(-3.7, -0.6)
Financial institution data match returned ^b	6.5	6.7	-0.2	(-1.6, 1.2)
State tax intercept requested ^c	97.0	97.1		
Federal tax intercept requested ^c	77.6	77.4		
Passport sanctioned ^d	64.4	62.7		
Reported to credit bureau ^e	62.5	61.9		
Sample size (total = 5,628)	3,650	1,978		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on child support administrative data.

NOTES: Results in this table are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in sums and differences.

Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

The sample includes noncustodial parents enrolled from February 1, 2018 through April 30, 2019.

Sample sizes by site are: Arizona = 963; California = 1,278; Franklin County = 908; Michigan = 825; Stark County = 904; Virginia = 750.

The federal tax intercept, state tax intercept, passport sanction, and credit bureau reporting measures are included in this table for descriptive purposes. Significance tests were not conducted for these outcomes since, due to broader child support policies, it was not expected that PJAC services would affect their use.

^aExcludes Arizona.

^bExcludes California and Michigan.

^cExcludes Franklin and Stark Counties.

^dLimited to California and Michigan.

^eLimited to Arizona, California, and Virginia.

Financial Institution Data Matches

Financial institution data matches (FIDMs) are a process whereby parents who owe child support debt are matched to the records of banks and other financial institutions to determine whether they have assets that can be seized to help pay down their debt balances. Most PJAC sites allow both PJAC and business-as-usual child support staff members discretion over FIDMs and any potential asset

² While Arizona could not provide license-suspension data, qualitative data indicate that suspensions occur very rarely there overall due to state policy, leaving little room for PJAC services to have an effect.

seizures they may generate. Still, in interviews, staff members reported applying more restraint in FIDM use for PJAC services parents than business-as-usual parents.³

Administrative data on FIDM requests where banks returned data were available in Arizona, Virginia, Franklin County, and Stark County. (California and Michigan provided information on submitted FIDM requests only, so those sites' results are not included in the pooled measure and are instead presented separately in Appendix Tables B.5 and B.11, respectively). As shown in Table 4.1, the incidence of returned FIDMs was comparable across research groups, with about 7 percent of parents in each group having a returned FIDM in the 12 months following their enrollment into the study.

Seek Work Orders and Motions to Compel Seek Work (Stark County, Franklin County, and California)

Seek work orders are an enforcement action that requires nonpaying parents to seek employment and provide monthly proof of their efforts to the child support agency. Among the PJAC sites, they are used in Stark and Franklin Counties and in California. Case managers in Stark County used seek work orders as a step before resorting to contempt, meaning all parents in the Stark PJAC study sample received them before their enrollment into the study. In Franklin County and California, staff members might use seek work orders before or after a contempt filing, and they tended to be used less consistently. While administrative data on the use of seek work orders are not available, implementation data do not suggest a strong reason to expect large differences in their use between PJAC services and business-as-usual parents.

After parents in Stark County were enrolled in the study, PJAC case managers could file motions to compel seek work if they could not reach or engage parents or parents did not comply with PJAC services. Motions to compel seek work, unique to Stark County, were legal proceedings that required court appearances from the noncustodial parent but fell short of civil contempt filings in that there was no threat of being found in contempt or receiving jail time. Like seek work orders, they required parents to show proof that they were making efforts to seek employment. If a parent in the PJAC services group did not comply with the motion to compel seek work, then the PJAC case manager could file for civil contempt. Parents in the business-as-usual group proceeded directly to civil contempt following study enrollment, without the benefit of the additional chance afforded by motions to compel seek work. Twenty-three percent of parents in the Stark County PJAC services group received a motion to compel seek work compared with only 2 percent of their peers in the business-as-usual group (see Appendix Table B.14).⁴

³ At some sites, the match process is triggered automatically at a certain amount of debt, but case managers maintain discretion over what actions to take with any assets identified. For additional details, see Appendix Table A.5.

⁴ The 2 percent of parents in the business-as-usual group who received motions to compel seek work in Stark County may reflect a minor data issue or rare exceptions in which legal staff members there filed motions to compel seek work for business-as-usual parents rather than sending them directly to civil contempt as intended.

Other Enforcement Actions

Some other commonly used enforcement actions are typically automated based on either debt level or months of nonpayment.⁵

- **Federal and state tax refund intercepts** are a method to collect child support debt from noncustodial parents' income tax refunds.
- **Passport sanctions** usually occur when cases are submitted for tax refund intercepts. A passport sanction prevents a parent with past-due child support of more than \$2,500 from receiving a new passport.
- **Credit bureau reporting** involves reporting child support debt levels to credit bureaus.

Interviews with child support staff members across PJAC sites confirmed that state and federal tax refund intercepts, passport sanctions, and credit bureau reporting occurred automatically for both research groups.

Table 4.1 shows the percentages of parents in the PJAC services and business-as-usual groups who experienced these automated enforcement actions. While the PJAC model predicts reduced debt levels for parents in the PJAC services group, thresholds for automated enforcement actions are typically set quite low relative to the debt levels of parents in the study. Parents in the PJAC study averaged over \$26,000 in debt levels at study enrollment, so the research team did not expect PJAC services to bring their debts under the threshold necessary to avoid automated actions within one year (which could be as little as \$500, depending on the jurisdiction and the enforcement action in question). Therefore, the research team also did not expect substantial differences between the PJAC services and business-as-usual groups in tax intercepts, passport sanctions, or credit bureau reporting. This section describes the incidence of these enforcement actions to paint a full picture of what parents in the PJAC demonstration experienced, but significance testing was not conducted for these outcomes since differences between research groups were not expected.

For requests to intercept state and federal tax refunds, administrative data were available in Arizona, California, Michigan, and Virginia. For that four-site sample, nearly all parents in both groups had been subject to state tax refund intercept requests (97 percent), and 78 percent had federal tax refund intercepts submitted. Administrative data on the use of passport sanctions were available in California and Michigan only; at these two sites, almost two-thirds of parents in both groups received passport sanctions. Finally, information on credit bureau reporting was available in Arizona, California, and Virginia; again, nearly two-thirds of parents in both groups were subject to credit bureau reporting at these sites.

The high incidence of automated enforcement actions may feel unfair to parents who rely on these resources—tax refunds, passports for travel, and access to credit through a decent credit score—that are withheld from them, usually without their consent or approval. As part of the PJAC model, case

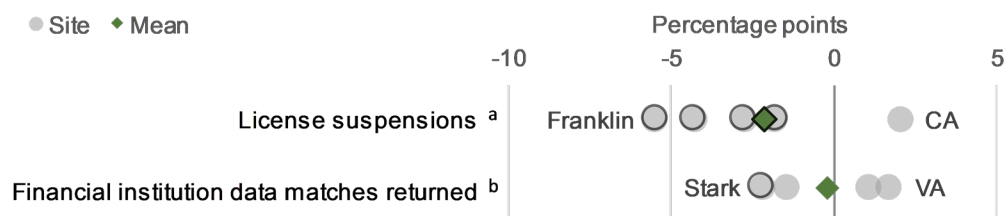
⁵ Office of Child Support Enforcement (2013).

managers incorporate procedural justice into their work with parents to increase their *understanding* of the child support process. While automated enforcement actions may interfere with PJAC case managers' efforts to engage parents, parents in the PJAC services group are likely to receive a clearer explanation of why and how these actions occur, which may help to keep them engaged in the child support process.

Contrasts in the Use of Enforcement Actions, by Site

Figure 4.1 and Appendix B present differences in the use of license suspensions by site. PJAC services led to statistically significant reductions in license suspensions at four sites. The effect in Franklin County was the largest, at 6 percentage points. In California, where license suspensions are used more frequently than they are at other sites, over 60 percent of parents in both research groups had a license suspension during the year following enrollment into the study, with a negligible difference between the groups that is not statistically significant.

FIGURE 4.1. Contrasts in the Use of Enforcement Actions, by Site



SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on child support administrative records.

NOTES: Results in this figure are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics. The sample includes noncustodial parents enrolled from February 1, 2018 through April 30, 2019. Sample sizes by site are as follows: Arizona = 963, California = 1,278, Franklin County = 908, Michigan = 825, Stark County = 904, Virginia = 750.

A negative value indicates that a lower percentage of the PJAC services group than the business-as-usual group received an enforcement action, while a positive value indicates the opposite. Statistically significant differences between the PJAC services and business-as-usual groups are denoted by outlines around the circles (for sites) and diamonds (for cross-site means). Sites with the largest positive and negative differences for each outcome are labeled.

^aExcludes Arizona.

^bExcludes California and Michigan, where available data on financial institution data matches pertain to requests only rather than returned matches.

Stark County is the only site at which there was a statistically significant difference between the research groups in FIDMs (PJAC services reduced the incidence of returned FIDMs there by 2 percentage points). Additionally, Virginia showed a statistically significant reduction of 3 percentage points in asset seizures, a step that can be taken if financial assets such as bank accounts are identified through FIDMs. Appendix Table A.5 offers qualitative information on differences in each PJAC agency's approach to enforcement actions for PJAC services parents compared with business-as-usual parents.



5

Contrasts in Civil

Contempt Proceedings

Civil contempt of court is a legal enforcement tool used by the child support program to compel non-paying noncustodial parents to meet their child support obligations. If parents do not make child support payments, they may face legal repercussions, including continued court action and jail time. A goal of the PJAC demonstration is to reduce the *ineffective* use of contempt, characterized by costly court hearings that, at best, result in one-time payments rather than regular, reliable payments families can count on, and at worst, can lead to the jailing of noncustodial parents without yielding any financial support for their children. Instead, PJAC services offer an alternate approach informed by procedural justice, designed to improve child support compliance in a fairer way that addresses parents' underlying reasons for nonpayment and that is less burdensome to noncustodial and custodial parents, the child support program, and the courts.

This chapter assesses the extent to which PJAC services reduced civil contempt filings—the first step in the contempt process—and, as a result, lessened parents’ involvement with ensuing aspects of the contempt process, including negative outcomes that may stem from it.

Findings include:

- PJAC services led to a large, statistically significant reduction in civil contempt filings. This large reduction in filings resulted in reductions in subsequent outcomes: being served with notice to appear in court, having a bench warrant issued, and attending court hearings. Overall, by decreasing civil contempt filings, PJAC services lessened PJAC parents’ exposure to legal actions and court proceedings many experience as punitive and disruptive.
- While there was variation among the sites in the size of their reductions in civil contempt filings and later steps in the process, large decreases were observed at all six of the PJAC study sites.
- Some sites made modifications to the contempt process informed by procedural justice for parents in the PJAC services group who were referred to contempt. These modifications largely related to improving parents’ understanding of the process.

Contrasts in Civil Contempt Proceedings

Civil Contempt Filings

Figure 5.1 offers a generalized overview of the steps in the civil contempt process, which formally begins once the child support agency files a motion asking the court to declare a parent in contempt.¹

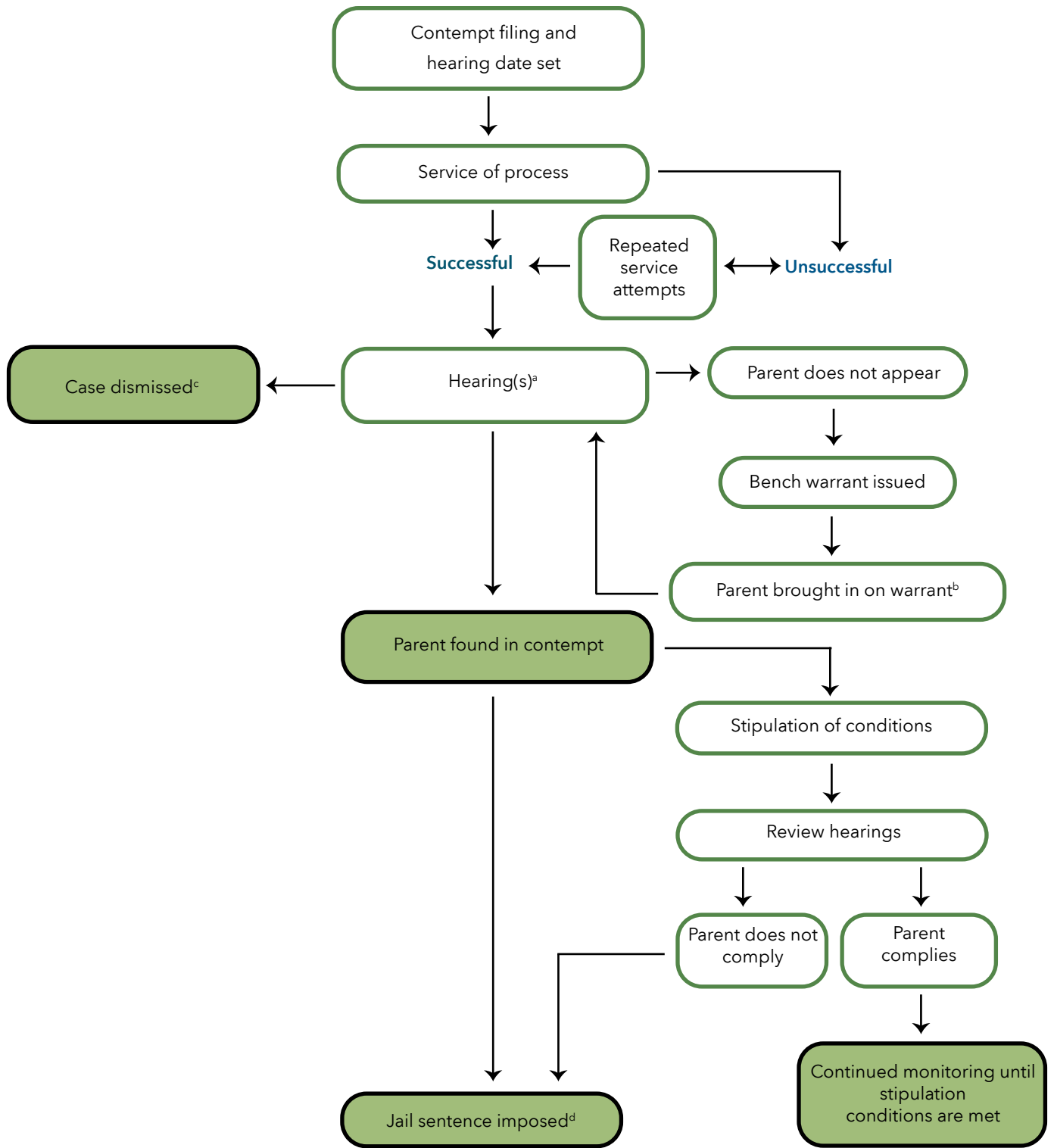
As shown in Table 5.1, across all six PJAC sites, civil contempt of court was filed for 80 percent of parents in the business-as-usual group in the year following study enrollment, compared with just 21 percent of parents in the PJAC services group, meaning PJAC resulted in a statistically significant reduction in civil contempt filings of 59 percentage points.²

This difference is expected given the study design. However, PJAC’s designers could not know ahead of time how large the difference would be since PJAC case managers could, at their discretion, refer PJAC services group members for contempt. Case managers might do so if they never successfully engaged parents, or if parents did not comply with PJAC services and continued not to meet their child

¹ This diagram is simplified and illustrates the most common contempt procedures across the six PJAC study sites; it does not capture all variations that can occur within and across PJAC study sites, nor does it necessarily reflect the contempt procedures followed by non-PJAC child support agencies across the country.

² The contempt filing outcome measure serves as both a measure of contrast and an impact outcome. It is a measure of contrast in that it reflects a difference in the service experiences of the two research groups that occurred as a direct result of the study design. It is also an impact outcome in that, for the PJAC services group, it measures how effective PJAC services were at engaging parents in activities aimed at increasing their payment compliance so that PJAC case managers did not resort to contempt filings. Thus, the contempt filing outcome is measuring the performance of the PJAC intervention at reducing the use of contempt, a central goal of the project. For this reason it is discussed in the present report with an emphasis on its role in service contrast, and will also be discussed in an upcoming impact report focused on the overall effectiveness of PJAC services.

FIGURE 5.1. A Common Business-as-Usual Contempt Process at the PJAC Study Sites



(continued)

FIGURE 5.1. (continued)

NOTES: This diagram depicts a generalized, simplified overview of the standard contempt process at the six PJAC study sites and does not fully capture variation within and across jurisdictions and cases. Additionally, this diagram does not reflect the contempt process in non-PJAC jurisdictions.

^aThe number of hearings will vary based on whether noncustodial parents request counsel, on their compliance with stipulations, and on the magistrate or judge's willingness to work with them.

^bWarrants are generally not actively enforced but may be executed if a noncustodial parent is arrested for another matter.

^cA case might be dismissed if, for example, the noncustodial parent were found to be unable to pay or the child(ren) were living with the parent.

^dIt is rare for a jail sentence to be immediately imposed after a contempt hearing. Most commonly, a jail sentence is suspended and imposed at a later date if the noncustodial parent does not comply with the conditions of the stipulation. Some PJAC agencies may sentence parents to community service rather than jail.

support obligations. (As described in Chapter 1, the group of parents eligible for PJAC services faces many challenges that make them difficult to reach and engage in services. For about one-third of noncustodial parents in the PJAC services group, management information system data show that PJAC case managers never made contact with them within one year of their enrollment into the study.)

Additionally, though the design of the PJAC evaluation expected that the six participating child support agencies would proceed with contempt filings for nearly all parents assigned to business-as-usual child support services (allowing for the odd exception), in fact they did not. The business-as-usual group filing rate of 80 percent shows that more parents than anticipated (20 percent of the business-as-usual group) avoided contempt filings within one year of study enrollment for various administrative and logistical reasons. These reasons include: a lack of verified addresses for noncustodial parents (a legal requirement for filing contempt), missing affidavits from custodial parents attesting that noncustodial parents had not made payments, noncustodial parents making child support payments in the small window between when they were enrolled into the study and when legal paperwork could be filed with the court, and child support attorneys opting not to proceed with contempt filings upon final review.

Since the parents in the two research groups who were referred to contempt took differing paths to get there—with parents in the business-as-usual group proceeding directly to a contempt filing while PJAC services group members were only referred to contempt after a considerable period of nonengagement—study designers expected a difference in the timing of those contempt filings. In fact, among parents who were referred, contempt was filed for parents in the business-as-usual group about seven weeks (48 days) after they were enrolled into the study, on average, compared with over 6 months (194 days) for parents in the PJAC services group.

Process Service

At the time of a contempt filing, the court sets an initial hearing date, after which the child support agency must serve the noncustodial parent with a notice to appear in court, otherwise known as

TABLE 5.1. Contrasts in Civil Contempt Proceedings

Outcome	PJAC Services Group	Business-as-Usual Group	Difference	90 Percent Confidence Interval
Civil contempt of court filed (%)	20.9	80.0	-59.0***	(-60.9, -57.2)
Days to first contempt referral ^a	194	48		
Successfully served with notice to appear in court (%)	12.1	52.2	-40.1***	(-41.8, -38.3)
Attended civil contempt hearing ^b (%)	6.5	34.8	-28.3***	(-30.4, -26.2)
Bench warrant issued (%)	4.9	20.9	-16.0***	(-17.3, -14.7)
Sample size (total = 5,628)	3,650	1,978		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on child support administrative data.

NOTES: Results in this table are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in sums and differences.

Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

The sample includes noncustodial parents enrolled from February 1, 2018 through April 30, 2019.

Sample sizes by site are: Arizona = 963; California = 1,278; Franklin County = 908; Michigan = 825; Stark County = 904; Virginia = 750.

^aSignificance tests were not conducted for this measure, as it is only calculated among parents for whom contempt was filed in the 12-month period following random assignment, rather than all parents, and is therefore nonexperimental.

^bLimited to California, Franklin County, and Stark County.

“process service.”³ The PJAC agencies generally hired third-party vendors or engaged their county sheriff’s offices to serve noncustodial parents. Child support staff members reported that serving noncustodial parents was challenging and often required several attempts. Cases are continued (that is, postponed) by the courts until successful service occurs. Many noncustodial parents may never be served successfully, thus stalling their contempt processes.

Stemming from its large reduction in contempt filings—a necessary step before process service can occur—PJAC services decreased process service by about 40 percentage points (52 percent among business-as-usual parents compared with 12 percent among PJAC services parents). This reduction in process service arises directly from PJAC’s large, negative effect on contempt filings, as the PJAC service model is not designed to directly affect process service rates (or any other, later step in the contempt process).

Among parents with a contempt filing across both research groups, only about 63 percent were successfully served. This percentage reflects what child support staff members reported about how dif-

³ In California, on occasion parents may attend court hearings based on notifications from their case managers, with formal process service then occurring at the hearing. In Virginia, if parents appear for court dates without having been served, court proceedings can continue without documentation of formal process service; they may appear if they have learned they are required to appear in court through an automated system or directly from child support workers, or if sheriffs notify them as per standard practice but the corresponding paperwork never makes its way into court data systems.

difficult it is to serve parents who may change addresses frequently and, in some instances, may be actively avoiding contact with the child support program.

Hearing Attendance

For parents who are successfully served, the next step in the contempt process is a hearing. Typically, an attorney from the child support agency represents the agency in the proceedings. The noncustodial parent may be assigned or request counsel if the parent has not already secured a lawyer. During the contempt hearing, the child support attorney presents evidence to the judge or magistrate overseeing the hearing. The noncustodial parent and the custodial parent (if in attendance) also have the opportunity to provide testimony.

The number of hearings parents must attend can vary considerably. For example, a contempt case may be dismissed following an initial hearing if it is determined that the parent is unable to pay due to a disability or that the children actually reside with the noncustodial parent (meaning that that parent should not be ordered to pay child support). More often, the contempt hearing results in a finding of contempt. Following some negotiation of the exact terms, the judge or magistrate will issue a ruling that often includes a suspended jail sentence and a stipulation for the noncustodial parent to follow a payment plan, make a purge payment, or agree to engage in an employment program. A review hearing will be set for a later date (often 60 or 90 days in the future) for the noncustodial parent to return to court. At that time, the court will assess whether the noncustodial parent has met the terms of the stipulation. Review hearings may be ongoing for months or even years.

As shown in Table 5.1, PJAC services had a statistically significant, downward effect of 28 percentage points on hearing attendance: 35 percent of parents in the business-as-usual group attended a hearing in the year following study enrollment compared with 7 percent of parents in the PJAC services group.⁴ Much of this difference, again, results from PJAC's overall effect on contempt filings. Far fewer PJAC services parents than business-as-usual parents received a contempt filing, leading fewer to receive notice to appear in court, ultimately meaning fewer were required to attend hearings at all.

Bench Warrants for Failure to Appear in Court

If a noncustodial parent is served and fails to appear for an initial court hearing or a subsequent hearing, the civil court generally issues a bench warrant. A noncustodial parent with an open bench warrant can be arrested by law enforcement at any time. How actively the police seek out and arrest parents on these warrants depends on the local jurisdiction. In most localities, child support staff members indicated that bench warrants for failure to appear are typically executed only if a parent is stopped by law enforcement for another reason; they are not otherwise actively enforced.

Twenty-one percent of the business-as-usual group received a bench warrant for failure to appear to a court hearing in the year following their enrollment into the study, compared with 5 percent among

⁴ Due to limitations on the administrative data available, the measure of contempt-hearing attendance in Table 5.1 (the percentage of parents who attended at least one court hearing in the year following enrollment into the PJAC study) is limited to California, Franklin County, and Stark County.

the PJAC services group, a statistically significant decrease of 16 percentage points. This difference originates with the large difference between research groups in contempt filings that resulted in a large difference in process service: Far fewer PJAC services parents than business-as-usual parents were required to appear in court, therefore they were at less risk of incurring bench warrants.

Civil Contempt Dispositions

Contempt proceedings can take varying paths (see Figure 5.1) and do not always have a clear end point. Below are some of the potential contempt dispositions parents may experience:

- **Dismissal.** A case might be dismissed if, for example, the noncustodial parent was found to be unable to pay or the child(ren) were living with that parent. A dismissal may also occur if a parent makes sufficient payment or promises to pay (though these payments or promises could occur after the parent was found in contempt and threatened with jail time).
- **Suspended jail sentence with stipulated conditions.** A noncustodial parent found in contempt may receive a suspended jail sentence with a stipulation to follow a payment plan, make a purge (or lump-sum) payment, or agree to engage in an employment program. If the parent fails to meet the stipulated conditions, the judge can impose the jail sentence, though parents are often afforded multiple chances through continued review hearings.
- **Imposed jail sentence with purge conditions.**⁵ It is very rare for a jail sentence to be imposed immediately after a contempt hearing.⁶ Most commonly, a jail sentence is suspended and imposed at a later date if the noncustodial parent does not comply with the conditions of the stipulation. Jail sentences can range from three days to 12 months. Some PJAC agencies may require parents to do community service rather than complete jail sentences.

It is difficult to measure the ultimate conclusions of the contempt proceedings initiated against parents in the two research groups for a number of reasons: The contempt process can stall because no one is able to serve parents with notice to appear in court. Served parents may fail to appear for scheduled court dates. And there is subjective judgment involved in the review hearing process to determine whether a parent has met the terms of a judge's stipulation satisfactorily. While the research team collected child support administrative data on contempt dispositions in hopes of assessing differences in outcomes between the two research groups quantitatively, ultimately these realities of the civil contempt process itself made such assessment impossible (though data-quality issues also contributed to the difficulty). As described in this chapter, civil contempt tends to be a long process that can take many twists and turns and does not always have a clear end point. As of the end of the

⁵ Purge conditions are conditions set by a judicial officer that a parent must meet to resolve the civil contempt filing and avoid continued court action and jail time.

⁶ Unfortunately, data are not available to quantify the frequency with which immediate jail sentences are imposed at the PJAC study sites.

one-year follow-up period that this report's contrast analysis covers, the majority of parents with a contempt filing and successful process service in both research groups appeared still to be mired in review hearings, with their last disposition flagged as a continuance. For many other such parents, the data did not clearly indicate their contempt status as of their last hearing on record. Still others appeared to have had their contempt cases dismissed, though it was not always clear whether a case was dismissed because it did not meet the criteria for a contempt finding or because the parent made a payment, leading the child support agency to stop pursuing the case.

Taken together, these circumstances prevent the research team from drawing any broader conclusions regarding PJAC services parents' contempt outcomes compared with those of business-as-usual parents.⁷ However, as described in Box 5.1, interviews with child support and court staff members indicate that, at some sites, courts implemented additional options for parents in the PJAC services group, allowing them more time to meet conditions and more ways to do so before imposing penalties.⁸

Implications of the Contempt Process for Parents

The prolonged and uncertain nature of contempt proceedings often makes the process both confusing and quite onerous for parents, given the number of court appearances that may be required of them. In addition to the potential disruptions these proceedings may cause for parents—interfering with work, childcare, and other obligations—noncustodial parents are likely to experience the civil contempt process as punitive, not responsive to their circumstances, and challenging to navigate. Indeed, in interviews, some noncustodial parents described contempt hearings as especially upsetting, saying that they felt misunderstood and that their voices were not being heard in court. (In contrast, a smaller group of noncustodial parents described contempt hearings as more procedural/administrative and seemed to experience them more as “check-ins” with judges and the court.) As discussed in Chapter 1, many of the parents in the PJAC study are men of color who face higher rates of discrimination in the labor market, incarceration, and elsewhere, and may have difficulty obtaining consistent employment as a result (even though the child support agency has determined they have some ability to pay).⁹ Parents of color may feel especially targeted by the child support system due to the many challenges they face supporting themselves and their children financially and due to the history of discrimination by government and legal systems against people of color.

Among custodial parents in both research groups who participated in interviews, most reported that their cases were not in contempt or that they were not aware of their cases' contempt status because

⁷ Notably, child support administrative data from each of the six PJAC sites are inconclusive regarding the proportion of parents who spent any time in jail stemming from contempt. A future PJAC demonstration report focused on impact findings will assess PJAC's effects on jail stays in Arizona. Arizona was selected for this one-site case study because it is believed to use jailing more frequently than other study agencies. Additionally, all parents sentenced to jail at the Arizona PJAC site were sent to the Maricopa County jail, meaning the necessary data could be accessed in one request. Other PJAC agencies may send parents to several different county jails, which would mean separate data-sharing agreements with each jail; given study resource constraints, it was not feasible to execute those agreements.

⁸ Treskon and Skemer (2021).

⁹ The Sentencing Project (2018); Weller (2019).

BOX 5.1
MODIFICATIONS TO CIVIL CONTEMPT
INFORMED BY PROCEDURAL JUSTICE FOR PARENTS IN THE PJAC SERVICES GROUP

Business-as-usual enforcement workers, who identify cases eligible for contempt, are generally removed from the proceedings once contempt is filed. For PJAC services group members who were sent to contempt, half of the study sites followed the business-as-usual approach, while the other half modified their regular contempt procedures somewhat to make them more procedurally just. For example, one adaptation was for the PJAC case manager to join prehearing meetings (usually only attended by the child support attorney) to try to engage noncustodial parents in PJAC services. PJAC case managers also said they were more involved with cases during contempt proceedings, either through testifying at hearings or explaining the process to parents. Depending on the court, PJAC contempt cases could also be resolved in different ways than they would be otherwise. For example, rather than issue a contempt finding right away, a judge or magistrate might continue the contempt hearing and not impose penalties on the condition that the noncustodial parent comply with PJAC services or engage in supportive services offered by an outside provider (for example, employment support).*

* See Treskon and Skemer (2021) for more information about contempt proceedings under PJAC.

they had not received that information from the child support agency. Those whose cases were in contempt described relief that some action was being taken to address their situations, but also skepticism that the process would make a difference in obtaining payments. As often-lengthy contempt proceedings are running their course, custodial parents are probably not receiving much financial support and may continue to struggle to care for their children without adequate resources.

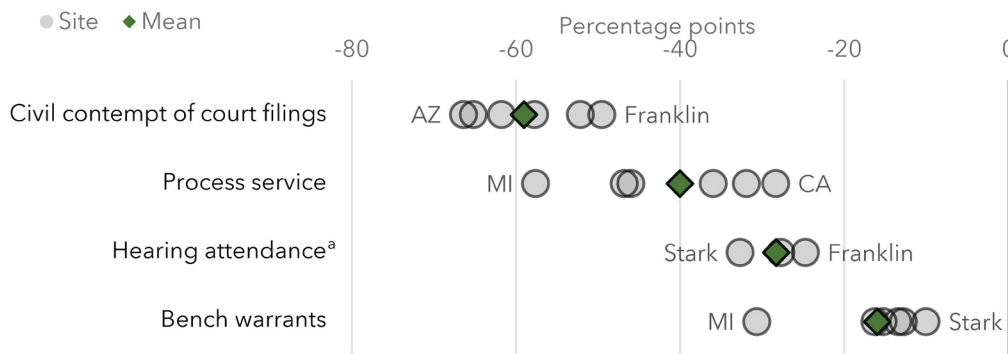
Contrasts in Civil Contempt Proceedings, by Site

Contrasts in civil contempt proceedings are presented by PJAC site in Figure 5.2 and Appendix B. PJAC services led to a large, statistically significant reduction in contempt filings at each of the six sites individually, with the exact size of the effect ranging from 50 percentage points in Franklin County to 66 percentage points in Arizona. The size of the effect varies for a number of reasons: Different participating agencies had different practices for referring parents in the PJAC services group to contempt when they were unwilling to engage in PJAC services, with the result that the proportion of the PJAC services group referred to contempt ranged from 8 percent in Stark County to 30 percent in Franklin County. They also had different procedures that led to variation in the proportion of busi-

ness-as-usual parents for whom contempt was successfully filed (ranging from 60 percent in Stark County to 94 percent in Virginia). Stark County's especially long time frame between study enrollment and contempt filing for business-as-usual parents (112 days) probably contributes to its lower business-as-usual filing rate, as the passage of time increases the likelihood that circumstances or information will change.

Contrasts between the research groups in rates of process service varied across sites. However, these differences do not all directly follow from contempt filing differences. They range from a 28 percent-

FIGURE 5.2. Contrasts in Civil Contempt Proceedings, by Site



SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on child support administrative records.

NOTES: Results in this figure are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics. The sample includes noncustodial parents enrolled from February 1, 2018 through April 30, 2019. Sample sizes by site are as follows: Arizona = 963, California = 1,278, Franklin County = 908, Michigan = 825, Stark County = 904, Virginia = 750.

A negative value indicates that a lower percentage of the PJAC services group than the business-as-usual group experienced the contempt-related outcome, while a positive value indicates the opposite. Statistically significant differences between the PJAC services and business-as-usual groups are denoted by outlines around circles (for sites) and diamonds (for cross-site means). Sites with the largest and smallest differences for each outcome are labeled.

^aLimited to California, Franklin County and Stark County.

age point reduction in California to a 58 percentage point reduction in Michigan. Michigan's large effect is probably the product of its less stringent process-service approach; parents are considered to be served if they are simply sent a letter by registered mail, with no signature requirement. Most other agencies generally require in-person service, except for Stark County which uses registered mail with a signature required for its first service attempt. If that delivery is unsuccessful, then the sheriff will attempt in-person service. In Michigan, virtually every parent for whom contempt was filed was considered to have been served successfully, preserving the large difference between research groups stemming from contempt filings. This effect gets reduced in other sites through lower process-service rates that, under the circumstances, have a greater influence on the business-as-usual group.

Five of the six PJAC sites saw fairly comparable reductions in bench warrants, ranging from 10 percentage points to 16 percentage points. However, Michigan was an outlier, with a 31 percentage point reduction. This larger service contrast is probably again explained by Michigan's looser requirements for process service. If a larger proportion of parents are considered to have been served and thus suitably notified of their obligation to appear in court, this larger group is also subject to bench warrants for failing to appear at their court hearings. The result is a proportionally higher bench-warrant rate, leaving room for a larger PJAC-induced reduction. The use of registered mail without signature confirmation of receipt means that many Michigan parents may be unaware of contempt filings and the requirement to appear in court. This practice could subject more parents to arrest.

6 Variations in Service Contrasts Among Subgroups of Parents

While this report primarily focuses on service contrasts among the full, pre-COVID-19 sample, this chapter explores six subgroups of interest to determine whether PJAC services may have had different effects on contrast outcomes for parents with certain characteristics at the time of study enrollment. The six subgroups are defined by:

- Noncustodial parents' racial/ethnic group (Black, Hispanic, or White)¹
- Time since the establishment of noncustodial parents' oldest case (less than six years versus six years or more)
- Noncustodial parents' payment status in the year before study enrollment (any payment versus no payments)
- Noncustodial parents' previous contempt referrals (any contempt referral before study enrollment versus no contempt referrals before study enrollment)
- Noncustodial parents' number of open cases (one versus multiple)
- Study follow-up period predating or overlapping the COVID-19 pandemic (enrollment before May 2019 versus enrollment in May 2019 or after)

To focus on the most important, complete measures and limit the number of statistical significance tests conducted (to lessen the likelihood of a statistically significant result arising

¹ In this chapter "Black" and "White" are used as shorthand for "Black, non-Hispanic" and "White, non-Hispanic."

purely by chance), the research team assessed differences in effects on the following contrast outcomes for most subgroups: order modifications, case closures, contempt filings, and bench warrants.² The COVID-19 enrollment subgroup is an exception: Given the far-reaching repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic, the research team opted to assess effects on all contrast outcomes for this subgroup. This chapter explains why these particular subgroups were chosen and, in an exploratory analysis, describes any statistically significant differences in effects between or among subgroups for the contrast outcomes chosen. Despite the research team's efforts to limit the number of statistical significance tests conducted for this subgroup analysis, the overall number remains quite large. For this reason, the research team conducted additional analysis to adjust for multiple comparisons.³ Where this adjustment meant that specific subgroup effects or differences in effects were no longer statistically significant, that fact is noted in the text.

Findings include:

- Service contrast was generally consistent across the subgroups and outcomes examined, meaning that, overall, PJAC services did not have different effects on service contrast for different subgroups of parents.
- There are a few exceptions to this general finding. The only robust pattern among those exceptions is that PJAC services had different effects on multiple aspects of the contempt process for parents whose study follow-up periods predated and overlapped the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Contrasts Among Noncustodial Parents of Different Racial/Ethnic Groups

As described in Chapter 1, parents of color face racial discrimination across multiple systems that can impede their ability to obtain long-term employment that pays well enough to meet both their own living expenses and their child support obligations. This reality and negative past experiences with government systems may affect both how PJAC services are delivered to parents of color, and how parents of color respond to and interact with those services.⁴

As shown in Appendix Table C.1, PJAC did not have different effects on order modifications, case closures, or civil contempt filings among parents of different racial/ethnic groups (as evidenced by the lack of dagger symbols in the “differential significance” column for these outcomes, showing that the differences in effects among the subgroups are not statistically significant). However, there was

² Increasing the number of impact estimates examined increases the likelihood that at least one estimate will be statistically significant by chance, even if there was no true difference in the program's effect for different subgroups. If 10 independent effect estimates are examined, there is a 65 percent chance that one of them will show a difference in effects that is statistically significant at the 10 percent level even if the program did not truly have different effects for different subgroups. Likewise, if 30 independent effect estimates are examined, there is a 96 percent chance that one will show a difference in effects that is statistically significant at the 10 percent level even if the program did not have different effects for different subgroups.

³ The method used was the Benjamini-Hochberg adjustment. See Benjamini and Hochberg (1995).

⁴ Previous research suggests that Black parents may have had particularly poor experiences with the child support system; see Meyer and Kim (2021).

a statistically significant difference among racial/ethnic groups in PJAC's effects on bench warrants issued for failure to appear for a contempt hearing. While PJAC services reduced bench warrants for all parents, regardless of their racial/ethnic backgrounds, the reduction for White parents was largest (18 percentage points) compared with Black parents (15 percentage points) and Hispanic parents (13 percentage points). However, this difference in effects was no longer statistically significant after the research team applied the adjustment for multiple comparisons; this fact, combined with the lack of a difference in effects on contempt filings (the mechanism through which PJAC services could affect bench warrants), lessens the research team's confidence that PJAC services truly had different effects on this outcome for parents of different racial/ethnic groups.

Contrasts Among Parents with Older and Newer Cases

Parents who have had prolonged contact with the child support program may respond differently to PJAC services than parents who have had less exposure to it. For example, parents who have spent less time interacting with the child support program may be less disgruntled and therefore more responsive to caseworkers' outreach. Parents with older cases are likely to have accrued more child support debt, are likely to have been subject to more previous enforcement actions, and, as a result, may be less responsive to caseworkers and less motivated to engage in PJAC services. On the other hand, parents who have had prolonged contact with the child support program and potentially more negative experiences may have more room to benefit from PJAC services and its use of procedural justice.

A subgroup analysis showed no statistically significant differences between parents with older and newer cases in the effects of PJAC services on order modifications, case closures, or contempt filings (see Appendix Table C.2). This lack of differences indicates that service contrast was consistent for these outcomes regardless of how long parents had been in contact with the child support program. There was a statistically significant difference in the effect on bench warrants: PJAC services appear to have reduced bench warrants more for parents with fewer years of involvement with the child support program. As was the case in the previous section, however, this difference in effects on bench warrants was no longer statistically significant after the research team adjusted for the large number of hypothesis tests conducted. This fact, along with the fact that there is not a difference in the effect on contempt filings, leads the research team to believe that this difference in effects may be the result of random variation.

Contrasts Among Noncustodial Parents Who Did and Did Not Make Payments in the Year Before Study Enrollment

Parents who have not made child support payments in over a year are likely to be more disconnected from the child support program. These parents are likely to have experienced more enforcement actions and to have less accurate contact information on file with the child support agency. These parents may also have less ability to pay than their counterparts who have made more recent payments. These factors may make it more difficult for PJAC case managers to engage them, so parents with a more recent history of payments may experience more services. Conversely, there may be more room for PJAC services to make a difference in engagement relative to the business-as-usual group among the subgroup of parents who had not made recent payments.

As shown in Appendix Table C.3, PJAC services did not have significantly different effects on order modifications, case closures, contempt filings, or bench warrants by payment status in the year before study enrollment.

Contrasts Among Noncustodial Parents With and Without Previous Contempt Referrals

Previous contempt referrals are a sign that parents have had persistent challenges making their child support payments. Those parents may also have poorer relationships with the child support program than parents with no previous contempt referrals. These conditions may cause parents to respond differently to PJAC services. The research team conducted a subgroup analysis to see where PJAC services had different effects for parents with and without previous contempt referrals, and found no statistically significant differences in effects (see Appendix Table C.4).

Contrasts Among Noncustodial Parents with One Child Support Case and Those with More than One

Noncustodial parents with more than one child support case typically have multiple children and owe support to more than one custodial parent. They also tend to have more involvement with the child support program and may struggle to balance the financial, familial, and emotional demands of having children in more than one household. Therefore, they may respond differently to PJAC services than parents with only one case, who can focus on that case and may have lower amounts of total child support debt to pay. However, a subgroup analysis revealed no statistically significant differences in the effects of PJAC services based on this characteristic (see Appendix Table C.5).

Contrasts Among Parents Whose Study Follow-Up Periods Predated and Overlapped the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic dramatically influenced the economic conditions, employment opportunities, childcare options, health, well-being, and stability of most Americans. Further, child support agencies and courts [changed their operations in response to COVID-19](#).⁵ The subgroup analysis presented in Appendix Table C.6 tests whether PJAC services had different effects for parents who enrolled a year before the COVID-19 pandemic than it did for those who had part or all of their follow-up period overlap with the COVID-19 pandemic. For this subgroup, the economic environment, service contrast, and many other contextual factors were markedly altered; therefore, the subgroup analyses assessed differences in effects on all contrast outcomes. (As noted in Box 1.1, the cross-site, full sample service-contrast effects described in Chapters 3, 4, and 5 are for pre-COVID enrollees only, as are all other subgroup analyses presented in this chapter. To assess COVID-19's influence, this COVID-19 subgroup analysis extends the sample used in the rest of the report to include parents enrolled through March 2020.) Overall, PJAC services had different effects on the receipt of some child support services and enforcement actions and multiple steps in the contempt process for parents whose follow-up periods predated the COVID-19 pandemic than they did for parents whose follow-up periods overlapped the pandemic.

Child Support Services and Enforcement Actions

The research team found few differences between parents who enrolled before and during COVID-19 in effects on receipt of child support services or enforcement actions, even though the pandemic caused child support agency and court closures and led child support staff members to work remotely. These few significant differences were for debt forgiveness (PJAC had larger positive effects for the COVID-19 sample, though this difference in effects was no longer statistically significant following the multiple comparison adjustment), debt adjustments (PJAC caused larger reductions for the COVID-19 sample), and returned financial institution data matches (business-as-usual levels were higher for the COVID-19 sample than for the pre-COVID-19 sample, and PJAC significantly decreased matches for the COVID-19 sample where it did not for the pre-COVID-19 sample, though again, this difference in effects was no longer statistically significant following the multiple comparison adjustment). There are no obvious reasons for these differences in effects; the multiple comparison adjustment suggests that they may largely be due to random variation rather than true subgroup differences.

⁵ Baird, Hayes, Henderson, and Johnson (2020).

Civil Contempt Proceedings

There were significant differences in the effects of PJAC services for pre-COVID-19 and COVID-19 parents across most civil contempt outcomes (see Appendix Table C.6). Parents enrolled in the PJAC study during the COVID-19 period had lower contempt filing rates across the board than parents enrolled in the pre-COVID-19 period. Several COVID-19-related factors seem to have had a dampening effect on contempt filings: Courts closed, and when they reopened they did so with fewer cases seen every day to accommodate social distancing. Child support staff members also reviewed cases for contempt eligibility more closely given the crisis, and applied more stringent standards for making contempt referrals. For these reasons, contempt filing rates dropped overall. However, they decreased more for parents in the PJAC services group, and thus PJAC services caused a larger reduction in contempt filings during the COVID-19 period relative to the pre-COVID-19 period (65 percentage points compared with 59 percentage points). Case managers and enforcement workers have a certain amount of discretion over contempt referrals, so a possible explanation for the difference in effects is that PJAC case managers, more familiar with parents' circumstances, made fewer discretionary referrals to contempt for noncompliant parents during the pandemic than their business-as-usual counterparts.

After a contempt filing, the next steps in the contempt process are process service, hearing attendance, and, potentially, bench warrants for failure to appear in court. Hearing attendance and bench warrants are both contingent on successful process service. Because they had a larger effect on contempt filings for parents in the COVID-19 period, PJAC services also had a larger effect on process service among those parents (a 46 percentage point reduction for parents in the COVID-19 period compared with a 40 percentage point reduction for parents in the pre-COVID-19 period). However, PJAC services had a smaller effect on bench warrants for parents enrolled in the COVID-19 period than they did for parents enrolled in the pre-COVID-19 period (12 percentage points compared with 16 percentage points). One possible explanation for this pattern is that parents in both groups were less likely to be required to attend hearings during the COVID-19 period due to court shutdowns. They were therefore less likely to be subject to bench warrants, leaving less room for PJAC services to have an effect.

7 Discussion

The previous chapters of this report describe the differences between the child support services and enforcement approaches those parents in the PJAC services group experienced in the year following their enrollment into the PJAC study and those experienced by parents in the business-as-usual group during this same time frame. This concluding chapter offers an overall summary of the service contrast between the two research groups; describes variation in service contrasts among the PJAC sites; considers the implications of the service contrast for effects on payment-related outcomes (the topic of a future report); and offers a few thoughts on what service contrast might look like in other contexts, if the PJAC model were to be implemented in a broader spectrum of child support agencies. Finally, the chapter outlines next steps for the PJAC demonstration.

Summary of Findings

The main points to take away from this report regarding the contrast in service and enforcement experiences between parents in the PJAC services and business-as-usual groups are as follows:

PJAC and Child Support Services

Thanks to their smaller caseload sizes and specialized training, PJAC case managers took a different approach to working with parents than did business-as-usual enforcement workers. They conducted in-depth case reviews, reached out to and attempted to engage both parents, and worked with parents to determine their underlying reasons for nonpayment and connect them to support services. The principles of procedural justice underpinned this intensive casework. Though some elements of the PJAC model were present in business-as-usual services, they were ad hoc and not applied systematically by enforcement workers, resulting in differing experiences for parents.

In terms of receipt of various child support services, there were a few positive, statistically significant differences between the PJAC services and business-as-usual groups. Specifically, PJAC services led to increases in order reviews, license reinstatements, debt forgiveness, debt reductions arising from adjustments, and, at one site, suppressions of enforcement actions. However, these effects were fairly modest in size. PJAC services probably did not increase the frequency of certain services, such as order modifications and case closures, because only a small subset of parents who meet specific criteria qualify for these services, leaving little room for PJAC to affect the percentages of parents who received them. Notably, for those child support services that the research team was able to measure quantitatively, levels of receipt were quite low across research groups.

Enforcement Actions and Civil Contempt Filings

Many enforcement actions—such as tax refund intercepts and passport denials—are automatic based on debt levels (typically set at fairly low thresholds) rather than discretionary, thus both research groups experienced them at similarly high rates. However, PJAC services did lead to a 2 percentage point reduction in license suspensions, largely reflecting reductions at two sites where license suspensions are used with some regularity (Franklin County and Michigan).

By far the strongest contrast between the PJAC services group and the business-as-usual group was a nearly 60 percentage point reduction in civil contempt filings, which in turn led to reductions in the proportion of parents in the PJAC services group who experienced ensuing aspects of contempt proceedings (process service, court hearings, and bench warrants). Though the difference in contempt filings was part of the study design (in that parents in the business-as-usual group proceeded to contempt following study enrollment, while parents in the PJAC services group were diverted from contempt), parents in the PJAC services group could have been referred to contempt in large numbers if they refused to comply with PJAC services and remained noncompliant with their child support orders. Instead, only about one-fifth of PJAC parents were referred to contempt.

Subgroup Findings

In an exploratory analysis, the research team found few statistically significant differences in effects on some important contrast outcomes (order modifications, case closures, civil contempt filings, and bench warrants) for subgroups defined using the following characteristics: noncustodial parents'

racial/ethnic group, time since the establishment of parents' oldest case, parents' payment status in the year before enrollment, parents' previous contempt referrals, and parents' number of open child support cases. This lack of differences in effects suggests that PJAC generated a consistent service contrast across a variety of subgroups of parents who had differing circumstances and histories with the child support program.

Looking at the full set of contrast outcomes for the COVID-19 and pre-COVID-19 subgroups, the team found a few significant differences in effects on parents' receipt of child support services and enforcement actions, though explanations for these effects were unclear and the results may be due to random variation rather than true differences in the effects of PJAC services. The pattern of differences in effects was clearer when it came to civil contempt proceedings. While PJAC services decreased civil contempt filings for parents in both subgroups, the reduction was larger for parents in the COVID-19 subgroup than those in the pre-COVID-19 subgroup. This pattern may be explained by PJAC case managers curtailing discretionary contempt referrals for the PJAC services group more sharply than business-as-usual enforcement workers did for parents in that group as the COVID-19 pandemic set in.

The Site Story

The six PJAC study sites saw different proportions of parents receive core PJAC services such as contact with a case manager, case action plans, and case conferences.¹ There was also variation among them in the availability of other child support services such as license reinstatement and debt compromises. Administrative data show that Franklin and Stark Counties and Virginia generated the largest increases in parents' receipt of child support services.

Site differences in the “counterfactual,” or business-as-usual approach, had some important implications for service contrast. For example, at sites where licenses were suspended relatively frequently—such as Franklin County—PJAC services had the potential to generate larger decreases in license suspensions, increases in license reinstatements, or both. Stark County, Michigan, and Virginia also saw statistically significant effects on at least one of these license-related outcomes, though the effects were smaller there.

All sites saw marked reductions in contempt filings, ranging in size from 50 percentage points in Franklin County to 66 percentage points in Arizona.

Implications of the Contrast Findings for the Final Impact Results

Taken together, the implementation of core PJAC service components, effects on the receipt of child support services and enforcement actions (though those effects are generally modest), and substan-

¹ Treskon, Phillips, Groskaufmanis, and Skemer (2022).

tial reductions in contempt filings constitute a meaningful service contrast between the PJAC services and business-as-usual groups. This contrast will allow the evaluation to determine whether PJAC services had effects on outcomes such as payment compliance and regularity of payments.

The final impact analysis will reveal whether PJAC's casework infused with principles of procedural justice did enough (through increased services and other efforts to address parents' underlying reasons for nonpayment) to bolster payments relative to what the contempt process yielded on the business-as-usual side (by compelling payment through the courts).

Representativeness

When considering how the PJAC model could affect services in child support agencies nationally, or contemplating whether to expand the model, one must take into account the local contexts of the six jurisdictions in the PJAC demonstration. The child support agencies at these six sites applied for PJAC grants as part of a competitive process. Therefore, it is likely that all of them were interested in applying procedural justice principles to their work with parents. They may already have been incorporating procedural justice into their casework to some extent, and the PJAC grant opportunity may then have been appealing because it aligned with their organizational cultures. In that case, some level of procedural justice would have been present across the six PJAC agencies and would have been maintained for parents in the business-as-usual group, putting a limit on how different the experiences of parents in the PJAC services group could have been. The evaluation found some evidence along these lines: While PJAC case managers averaged slightly higher scores on a scale designed to measure their application of procedural justice principles, regular enforcement workers also scored on the high end of the scale, suggesting that there could only be a limited degree of service contrast in workers' case management approaches.²

Other child support agencies across the country that are not already aligned with principles of procedural justice might be able to generate larger service contrasts, assuming their administrators and managers could get caseworkers on board. On the other hand, they might not be able to generate service contrasts as large if their administrators and managers could not get caseworkers interested enough in approaches informed by procedural justice or if the greater cultural shift and service realignment involved meant that they struggled to implement the PJAC service model.

Looking Forward

Future reports will address two of the PJAC demonstration's overarching research questions: (1) Did PJAC improve payment-related outcomes? and (2) how do the costs and benefits of PJAC services compare with those of business-as-usual services?

² Treskon, Phillips, Groskaufmanis, and Skemer (2022).



APPENDIX A

Miscellaneous

Supplemental Exhibits

APPENDIX TABLE A.1. Baseline Characteristics of Noncustodial Parents in the PJAC Demonstration

Characteristic	Arizona	California	Michigan	Franklin County	Stark County	Virginia	All PJAC Sites
Parent characteristics							
Male (%)	93.5	92.9	88.7	92.6	86.6	87.7	90.2
Age (years)	39.7	37.2	35.7	37.3	39.0	39.0	38.1
Race/ethnicity (%)							
Black, non-Hispanic	16.6	16.4	44.8	61.1	33.8	84.8	41.2
White, non-Hispanic	32.6	19.7	50.2	36.3	64.6	13.6	35.5
Hispanic	46.3	60.0	1.8	1.4	0.9	1.3	20.9
Other	4.5	3.9	3.2	1.2	0.7	0.3	2.4
Noncustodial parent is a custodial parent on another case (%)	1.4	12.1	17.6	5.7	7.6	5.3	8.4
Case characteristics							
Number of cases per noncustodial parent ^a	1.3	1.3	2.1	1.8	2.1	1.8	1.7
Years since order on oldest case established ^b	9.7	8.8	10.2	8.4	10.7	11.4	9.9
Monthly amount due (\$)	427	522	259	528	340	455	420
Total debt due (\$)	44,742	33,943	15,362	21,431	16,747	21,311	26,146
Months since last payment, among those who made a payment in the year before study enrollment	4.8	5.2	5.0	4.7	6.0	5.4	5.2
Ever referred to contempt before study enrollment (%)	24.2	8.0	63.9	38.5	31.9	50.2	34.9
Family violence indicated ^c (%)	5.7	10.2	43.2	6.3	5.6	29.9	17.8
Has a debt-only case (%)	29.1	17.3	32.7	19.8	34.6	43.9	30.7
Custodial parent and child(ren) receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families on primary case ^d (%)	1.3	21.5	4.5	4.4	11.3	14.9	10.0
Sample size	2,085	2,070	1,730	1,416	2,166	1,905	11,372

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on child support administrative records.

NOTES: Sample sizes may vary because of missing values and gaps and delays in data.

^aThis measure includes cases in which the sample member was the noncustodial parent only (as opposed to cases in which the sample member is the custodial parent or child).

^bThis measure is calculated among cases open at the time of study enrollment only.

^cThis measure indicates family violence for either the noncustodial or the custodial parent on a noncustodial parent's cases except for in Arizona, where the measure only includes instances where the noncustodial parent is indicated as the victim of family violence.

^dA noncustodial parent's primary case is the case that made the parent eligible for contempt and the PJAC study.

APPENDIX TABLE A.2. Availability of Administrative Child Support Data Elements, by Site

Data Element	Arizona	California	Franklin County	Michigan	Stark County	Virginia
Child support services						
Order reviews			✓	✓	✓	
Order modifications	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Child support order amounts	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
License reinstatements			✓	✓	✓	✓
Debt adjustments			✓	✓	✓	
Debt forgiveness			✓	✓	✓	
Suppression of enforcement actions		✓				
Parenting-time orders						
Case closures	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Enforcement actions						
License suspensions		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Financial institution data matches	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Asset seizure or withholding	✓					✓
Seek work orders						
Motions to compel seek work					✓	
State and federal tax intercepts	✓	✓		✓		✓
Passport sanctions		✓		✓		✓ ^a
Credit bureau reporting	✓	✓				✓
Civil contempt proceedings						
Contempt filings	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Process service	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hearing attendance		✓	✓		✓	
Bench warrants	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

NOTE: ^aVirginia's data report the initiation of new passport sanctions, of which there were none in the follow-up period. This action is therefore not reported in the outcome tables.

APPENDIX TABLE A.3. The Experience and Training of PJAC Case Managers and Business-as-Usual Enforcement Workers

	PJAC Case Managers	Business-as-Usual Enforcement Workers
Type of experience (%)		
Providing case management	94.6	88.5
Working with people involved in or affected by domestic violence	97.3	69.2
Coordinating supportive services with partner agencies in workforce training, public assistance, housing, and other services	81.1	73.1
Helping people obtain employment or placing them in jobs	75.7	69.2
Using communication strategies to encourage and support behavior change (motivational interviewing)	86.5	73.1
Facilitating negotiations between people (mediation)	83.8	61.5
Training (%)		
Domestic violence	94.6	57.7
Trauma-informed care	75.8	30.8
Dispute resolution	91.9	46.2
Mediation	89.2	30.8
Motivational interviewing	78.4	53.9
Case management strategies	81.1	76.9
General child support policy and procedures	86.5	84.6
Federal policy changes, including contempt procedures and other changes in policy and in practice	83.8	73.1
Screening for ability to pay	75.7	65.4
Procedural justice (not related to PJAC)	43.3	38.5
Procedural justice related to PJAC	94.6	46.2
Policy and procedures for PJAC	89.2	38.5
Implicit bias ^a	75.7	38.5
Cultural sensitivity	83.8	61.5
Customer service	91.9	80.8
Behavioral economics	67.6	23.1

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on the PJAC staff survey.

NOTE: ^aImplicit bias refers to subconscious attitudes toward groups of people.

APPENDIX TABLE A.4. Availability and Use of Child Support Services, PJAC Services Versus Business-as-Usual Services

Service	Arizona		California		Franklin County	
	PJAC	Business-as-Usual	PJAC	Business-as-Usual	PJAC	Business-as-Usual
Order modifications	Available judicially or through stipulated agreements; flexibility on eligibility time limit since last modification	Available judicially or through stipulated agreements; no flexibility on time limit since last modification	Available at parents' request based on changed circumstances; potentially initiated by case managers for TANF cases	Available at parents' request based on changed circumstances; potentially initiated by case managers for TANF cases	Modification paperwork sent to parents every 3 years; "agreed entries" where parents agreed to amounts other than stipulated amounts	Modification paperwork sent to parents every 3 years
License reinstatement	Available, but license suspensions were rare	Available, but license suspensions were rare	Available if a noncustodial parent completed a case action plan	Available if a parent made a payment and agreed to a payment plan	Available, with additional discretion for case managers in applying state criteria	Available, subject to state criteria for noncustodial parents
Debt forgiveness from the custodial parent	Available with the agreement of the custodial parent	Available with the agreement of the custodial parent	Available with the agreement of the custodial parent	Available with the agreement of the custodial parent	Available with the agreement of the custodial parent	Available with the agreement of the custodial parent
Debt forgiveness from the state	Available at case managers' discretion	Available if the noncustodial parent submitted a hardship application	State program available with more flexible criteria for parents' eligibility ^a	State compromise program available	State compromise program available	State compromise program available
Suppression of automatic enforcement actions	Not offered	Not offered	Possible, mainly for license suspensions and bank levies	Possible, mainly for license suspensions and bank levies	Not offered	Not offered
Parenting-time orders	Help from the staff creating plans and paying court fees	Referrals to partners that could help with the court process	Referrals to family law	Referrals to family law	Referrals to mediator, help navigating the process	Referrals to mediator
Order modifications	At parents' request; paperwork sent automatically every 3 years	At parents' request; paperwork sent automatically every 3 years	Help from case managers with paperwork; stipulated agreements filed with the court on behalf of parents	At parents' request, with automatic eligibility every 3 years; stipulated agreements through the court	Eligibility for review every 3 years or upon request for change of circumstances	Eligibility for review every 3 years or upon request for change of circumstances




(continued)



APPENDIX TABLE A.4. (continued)

Service	Michigan		Stark County		Virginia	
	PJAC	Business-as-Usual	PJAC	Business-as-Usual	PJAC	Business-as-Usual
License reinstatement	Available at case managers' discretion	Available at family court officers' discretion	Available, with additional discretion for PJAC case managers in applying state criteria	Available, subject to state criteria for noncustodial parents	Available at case managers' discretion	Available; lump-sum payment or signed payment agreement required
Debt forgiveness from custodial parent	Available with the agreement of the custodial parent, who could waive debt more than once per year	Available with the agreement of the custodial parent, who could only waive debt once per year	Available with the custodial parent's agreement, with the case manager submitting court paperwork and parents not required to appear	Available with the agreement of the custodial parent, conducted in court with both parents present	Available with the agreement of the custodial parent	Available with the agreement of the custodial parent, only through the courts
Debt forgiveness from the state	State compromise program available	State compromise program available	State compromise program available; up to \$5,000 of debt reduction for noncustodial parents who made 6 months of payment or completed an employment program	State compromise program available in limited circumstances	TANF Debt Compromise program; more opportunities for greater forgiveness amounts	TANF Debt Compromise program
Suppression of automatic enforcement actions	Not offered	Not offered	Not offered	Not offered	Suppression of license suspensions at case managers' discretion	Not offered
Parenting-time orders	Potentially set by the case manager, who could assist with paperwork	Set by a designated business-as-usual staff member	Referrals to legal aid	Referrals to legal aid	Referrals to mediation groups/family law	Referrals to mediation groups/family law

Key to exhibit colors:

-  Minimal potential for service contrast: no services available, or same services available to both groups
-  Moderate potential for service contrast: similar services available to each group, but PJAC case managers were to make a point of offering the service
-  Strong potential for service contrast: in addition to PJAC case managers making a point of offering the service, different service or eligibility criteria for the two groups; differences summarized in the table

SOURCE: MDRC analysis of interview and staff survey data.

NOTES: TANF = Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.

^aIn May 2021, California's debt-compromise program shifted. The state introduced an enhanced program for all parents, eliminating any differences in program offerings between PJAC services and business-as-usual parents.

APPENDIX TABLE A.5. Use of Enforcement Actions, PJAC Services Versus Business-as-Usual Services

Enforcement action	Arizona		California		Franklin County	
	PJAC	Business-as-Usual	PJAC	Business-as-Usual	PJAC	Business-as-Usual
License suspension	Not used	Discretionary after 60 days of nonpayment; rarely used	Automatic	Automatic	At case managers' discretion; used with noncompliant cases before they were sent to contempt	At case managers' discretion
Seek work orders	Not used	Not used	Potentially used before or after contempt; limited use	Potentially used before or after contempt; limited use	Potentially used before or after contempt; typically issued with a contempt filing	Potentially used before or after contempt; typically issued with a contempt filing
Financial institution data matches	Not used if a parent was actively engaged in PJAC services, but otherwise possibly used at case managers' discretion	Used at caseworkers' discretion at \$2,500 of debt	Triggered at \$500 of debt, subject to suppression by caseworkers at their discretion.	Triggered at \$500 of debt, subject to suppression by caseworkers at their discretion	At case managers' discretion	At case managers' discretion
State/federal tax intercepts	Automatic	Automatic	Automatic	Automatic	Automatic	Automatic
Passport sanctions	Automatic at \$2,500 of debt	Automatic at \$2,500 of debt	Automatic at \$2,500 of debt	Automatic at \$2,500 of debt	Automatic at \$2,500 of debt	Automatic at \$2,500 of debt
Credit bureau reporting	Automatic if any debt	Automatic if any debt	Automatic	Automatic	Automatic	Automatic




(continued)



APPENDIX TABLE A.5. (continued)

Enforcement action	Michigan		Stark County		Virginia	
	Michigan	Business-as-Usual	PJAC	Business-as-Usual	PJAC	Business-as-Usual
License suspension	Rarely used	Regularly used	At case managers' discretion, used rarely	At caseworkers' discretion	At case managers' discretion	Automatic if no payment had been made in 90 days and a parent had a previous show-cause motion filed
Seek work orders	Not used	Not used	Received by all noncustodial parents before a contempt referral; motion to compel seek work also available	Received by all noncustodial parents before a contempt referral	Not used	Not used
Financial institution data matches	Processed by the state	Processed by the state	At case managers' discretion	At case managers' discretion	Automatic match submission, but case manager discretion in withholding and seizing funds	Automatic match submission, with funds withheld unless a parent was in cooperation with the case manager
State/federal tax intercepts	Automatic	Automatic	Automatic	Automatic	Automatic	Automatic
Passport sanctions	Automatic at \$2,500 of debt	Automatic at \$2,500 of debt	Automatic at \$2,500 of debt	Automatic at \$2,500 of debt	Automatic at \$2,500 of debt	Automatic at \$2,500 of debt
Credit bureau reporting	Automatic at 2 months of debt	Automatic at 2 months of debt	Automatic at \$2,500 of debt	Automatic at \$2,500 of debt	Automatic	Automatic

Key to exhibit colors:

-  Minimal potential for service contrast: no services available, or same services available to both groups
-  Moderate potential for service contrast: similar services available to each group, but PJAC case managers were to make a point of offering the service
-  Strong potential for service contrast: in addition to PJAC case managers making a point of offering the service, different service or eligibility criteria for the two groups; differences summarized in the table

SOURCE: MDRC analysis of interview and staff survey data.

APPENDIX B

Site-Level Contrasts in
Child Support Services,
Enforcement Actions, and
Civil Contempt Proceedings

APPENDIX TABLE B.1. Contrasts in Receipt of Child Support Services, Arizona

Outcome	PJAC Services Group	Business-as-Usual Group	Difference	90 Percent Confidence Interval
Received an order modification (%)	6.3	9.7	-3.5**	(-6.4, -0.6)
Received a downward order modification (%)	4.2	6.2	-2.1	(-4.4, 0.3)
Monthly child support current order amount (\$)	416	413	3	(-22, 28)
Had a case closed (%)	3.1	2.3	0.8	(-1.0, 2.6)
Sample size (total = 963)	624	339		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on child support administrative data.

NOTES: Results in this table are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in sums and differences.

Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

The sample includes noncustodial parents enrolled from February 1, 2018 through April 30, 2019.

APPENDIX TABLE B.2. Contrasts in the Use of Enforcement Actions, Arizona

Outcome (%)	PJAC Services Group	Business-as-Usual Group	Difference	90 Percent Confidence Interval
Financial institution data match returned	3.3	2.2	1.1	(-0.8, 3.0)
Had an asset seized	1.6	1.8	-0.2	(-1.6, 1.2)
State tax refund intercept requested	97.0	97.6		
Federal tax refund intercept requested	97.1	97.6		
Reported to credit bureau	64.0	66.3		
Sample size (total = 963)	624	339		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on child support administrative data.

NOTES: Results in this table are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in sums and differences.

Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

The sample includes noncustodial parents enrolled from February 1, 2018 through April 30, 2019.

The state tax intercept, federal tax intercept, and credit bureau reporting measures are included in this table for descriptive purposes. Significance tests were not conducted for these outcomes since, due to broader child support policies, it was not expected that PJAC services would affect their use.

APPENDIX TABLE B.3. Contrasts in Civil Contempt Proceedings, Arizona

Outcome	PJAC Services Group	Business-as-Usual Group	Difference	90 Percent Confidence Interval
Civil contempt of court filed (%)	12.9	79.3	-66.4***	(-70.4, -62.4)
Days to first contempt referral ^a	204	35		
Successfully served with notice to appear in court (%)	5.9	51.9	-46.0***	(-50.0, -42.1)
Bench warrant issued (%)	1.7	18.0	-16.3***	(-19.1, -13.5)
Sample size (total = 963)	624	339		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on child support administrative data.

NOTES: Results in this table are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in sums and differences.

Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

The sample includes noncustodial parents enrolled from February 1, 2018 through April 30, 2019.

^aSignificance tests were not conducted for this measure, as it is only calculated among parents for whom contempt was filed in the 12-month period following random assignment, rather than all parents, and is therefore nonexperimental.

APPENDIX TABLE B.4. Contrasts in Receipt of Child Support Services, California

Outcome	PJAC Services Group	Business-as-Usual Group	Difference	90 Percent Confidence Interval
Received an order modification (%)	3.8	2.1	1.7*	(0.0, 3.4)
Received a downward order modification (%)	3.2	1.9	1.3	(-0.3, 2.9)
Monthly child support order amount (\$)	449	438	11	(-21, 44)
Had an enforcement action suppressed ^a (%)	39.4	18.1	21.4***	(17.0, 25.8)
Had a case closed (%)	4.1	4.2	-0.1	(-2.0, 1.8)
Sample size (total = 1,278)	824	454		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on child support administrative data.

NOTES: Results in this table are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in sums and differences.

Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

The sample includes noncustodial parents enrolled from February 1, 2018 through April 30, 2019.

^aEnforcement actions suppressed included new license suspensions, bank levies, and unemployment/disability insurance intercepts.

APPENDIX TABLE B.5. Contrasts in the Use of Enforcement Actions, California

Outcome (%)	PJAC Services Group	Business-as-Usual Group	Difference	90 Percent Confidence Interval
License suspended	62.2	60.2	2.1	(-2.2, 6.4)
Financial institution data match requested	34.4	32.6	1.8	(-2.6, 6.2)
State tax refund intercept requested	96.8	96.6		
Federal tax refund intercept requested	96.6	96.4		
Passport sanctioned	96.6	96.4		
Reported to credit bureau	95.3	93.8		
Sample size (total = 1,278)	824	454		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on child support administrative data.

NOTES: Results in this table are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in sums and differences. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent. The sample includes noncustodial parents enrolled from February 1, 2018 through April 30, 2019. The state tax intercept, federal tax intercept, passport sanction, and credit bureau reporting measures are included in this table for descriptive purposes. Significance tests were not conducted for these outcomes since, due to broader child support policies, it was not expected that PJAC services would affect their use.

APPENDIX TABLE B.6. Contrasts in Civil Contempt Proceedings, California

Outcome	PJAC Services Group	Business-as-Usual Group	Difference	90 Percent Confidence Interval
Civil contempt of court filed (%)	21.2	83.0	-61.8***	(-65.6, -58.0)
Days to first contempt referral ^a	233	52		
Successfully served with notice to appear in court (%)	7.8	36.1	-28.4***	(-31.8, -24.9)
Attended civil contempt hearing (%)	4.0	31.8	-27.7***	(-30.8, -24.6)
Bench warrant issued (%)	2.0	14.8	-12.8***	(-15.1, -10.5)
Sample size (total = 1,278)	824	454		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on child support administrative data.

NOTES: Results in this table are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in sums and differences. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent. The sample includes noncustodial parents enrolled from February 1, 2018 through April 30, 2019. ^aSignificance tests were not conducted for this measure, as it is only calculated among parents for whom contempt was filed in the 12-month period following random assignment, rather than all parents, and is therefore nonexperimental.

APPENDIX TABLE B.7. Contrasts in Receipt of Child Support Services, Franklin County

Outcome	PJAC Services Group	Business-as-Usual Group	Difference	90 Percent Confidence Interval
Had a child support order reviewed (%)	7.4	3.3	4.1**	(1.4, 6.8)
Received an order modification (%)	5.8	2.4	3.4**	(1.0, 5.8)
Received a downward order modification (%)	4.6	2.1	2.5*	(0.4, 4.7)
Monthly child support order amount (\$)	493	512	-19	(-38, 1)
Had a license reinstated (%)	43.4	31.7	11.8***	(6.3, 17.3)
Received debt forgiveness (%)	5.5	4.3	1.2	(-1.4, 3.7)
Amount of debt forgiven (\$)	-527	-465	-63	(-424, 298)
Received a debt adjustment (%)	12.9	11.7	1.2	(-2.6, 5.0)
Amount of debt adjustment (\$)	-156	277	-433***	(-641, -225)
Had a case closed (%)	4.7	4.8	0.0	(-2.4, 2.4)
Sample size (total = 908)	590	318		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on child support administrative data.

NOTES: Results in this table are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in sums and differences. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent. The sample includes noncustodial parents enrolled from February 1, 2018 through April 30, 2019.

APPENDIX TABLE B.8. Contrasts in the Use of Enforcement Actions, Franklin County

Outcome (%)	PJAC Services Group	Business-as-Usual Group	Difference	90 Percent Confidence Interval
License suspended	10.1	15.5	-5.5**	(-9.1, -1.8)
Financial institution data match returned	5.8	7.2	-1.4	(-4.2, 1.3)
Sample size (total = 908)	590	318		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on child support administrative data.

NOTES: Results in this table are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in sums and differences. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent. The sample includes noncustodial parents enrolled from February 1, 2018 through April 30, 2019.

APPENDIX TABLE B.9. Contrasts in Civil Contempt Proceedings, Franklin County

Outcome	PJAC Services Group	Business-as-Usual Group	Difference	90 Percent Confidence Interval
Civil contempt of court filed (%)	29.7	79.2	-49.6***	(-54.6, -44.5)
Days to first contempt referral ^a	175	78		
Successfully served with notice to appear in court (%)	15.7	51.7	-36.0***	(-40.8, -31.2)
Attended civil contempt hearing (%)	11.9	36.7	-24.7***	(-29.2, -20.3)
Bench warrant issued (%)	6.3	21.6	-15.3***	(-18.9, -11.7)
Sample size (total = 908)	590	318		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on child support administrative data.

NOTES: Results in this table are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in sums and differences.

Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

The sample includes noncustodial parents enrolled from February 1, 2018 through April 30, 2019.

^aSignificance tests were not conducted for this measure, as it is only calculated among parents for whom contempt was filed in the 12-month period following random assignment, rather than all parents, and is therefore nonexperimental.

APPENDIX TABLE B.10. Contrasts in Receipt of Child Support Services, Michigan

Outcome	PJAC Services Group	Business-as-Usual Group	Difference	90 Percent Confidence Interval
Had a child support order reviewed (%)	8.4	9.4	-1.0	(-4.4, 2.4)
Received an order modification (%)	9.5	14.3	-4.8**	(-8.6, -1.1)
Received a downward order modification (%)	5.0	7.3	-2.2	(-5.0, 0.6)
Monthly child support order amount (\$)	239	249	-10	(-26, 7)
Had a license reinstated (%)	9.1	9.4	-0.2	(-3.7, 3.2)
Received debt forgiveness (%)	1.0	1.9	-0.9	(-2.3, 0.5)
Amount of debt forgiven (\$)	-169	-166	-3	(-416, 410)
Received a debt adjustment (%)	15.2	23.9	-8.7***	(-13.3, -4.1)
Amount of debt adjustment (\$)	-701	-745	44	(-438, 525)
Had a case closed (%)	8.7	8.5	0.2	(-3.2, 3.5)
Sample size (total = 825)	534	291		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on child support administrative data.

NOTES: Results in this table are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in sums and differences.

Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

The sample includes noncustodial parents enrolled from February 1, 2018 through April 30, 2019.

APPENDIX TABLE B.11. Contrasts in the Use of Enforcement Actions, Michigan

Outcome (%)	PJAC Services Group	Business-as-Usual Group	Difference	90 Percent Confidence Interval
License suspended	5.8	10.0	-4.3**	(-7.3, -1.2)
Financial institution data match requested	6.9	4.5	2.4	(-0.5, 5.2)
State tax refund intercept requested	96.9	96.1		
Federal tax refund intercept requested	14.5	10.6		
Passport sanctioned	14.5	10.6		
Sample size (total = 825)	534	291		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on child support administrative data.

NOTES: Results in this table are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in sums and differences.

Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

The sample includes noncustodial parents enrolled from February 1, 2018 through April 30, 2019.

The state tax intercept, federal tax intercept, and passport sanction measures are included in this table for descriptive purposes. Significance tests were not conducted for these outcomes since, due to broader child support policies, it was not expected that PJAC services would affect their incidence.

APPENDIX TABLE B.12. Contrasts in Civil Contempt Proceedings, Michigan

Outcome	PJAC Services Group	Business-as-Usual Group	Difference	90 Percent Confidence Interval
Civil contempt of court filed (%)	28.2	86.0	-57.7***	(-62.7, -52.8)
Days to first contempt referral ^a	166	20		
Successfully served with notice to appear in court (%)	25.0	82.6	-57.6***	(-62.5, -52.7)
Bench warrant issued (%)	11.0	41.7	-30.7***	(-35.3, -26.0)
Sample size (total = 825)	534	291		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on child support administrative data.

NOTES: Results in this table are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in sums and differences.

Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

The sample includes noncustodial parents enrolled from February 1, 2018 through April 30, 2019.

^aSignificance tests were not conducted for this measure, as it is only calculated among parents for whom contempt was filed in the 12-month period following random assignment, rather than all parents, and is therefore nonexperimental.

APPENDIX TABLE B.13. Contrasts in Receipt of Child Support Services, Stark County

Outcome	PJAC Services Group	Business-as-Usual Group	Difference	90 Percent Confidence Interval
Had a child support order reviewed (%)	7.5	5.7	1.9	(-1.0, 4.7)
Received an order modification (%)	7.2	5.0	2.2	(-0.6, 5.0)
Received a downward order modification (%)	6.0	3.6	2.4	(-0.1, 4.9)
Monthly child support order amount (\$)	309	340	-31***	(-48, -15)
Had a license reinstated (%)	5.8	3.1	2.7*	(0.3, 5.2)
Received debt forgiveness (%)	15.4	1.9	13.5***	(10.0, 16.9)
Amount of debt forgiven (\$)	-964	-445	-519*	(-1,037, -2)
Received a debt adjustment (%)	1.0	11.3	-10.3***	(-12.6, -8.0)
Amount of debt adjustment (\$)	9	111	-103**	(-175, -31)
Had a case closed (%)	10.2	8.2	2.0	(-1.3, 5.3)
Sample size (total = 904)	587	317		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on child support administrative data.

NOTES: Results in this table are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in sums and differences. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent. The sample includes noncustodial parents enrolled from February 1, 2018 through April 30, 2019.

APPENDIX TABLE B.14. Contrasts in the Use of Enforcement Actions, Stark County

Outcome (%)	PJAC Services Group	Business-as-Usual Group	Difference	90 Percent Confidence Interval
License suspended	0.1	2.9	-2.7***	(-3.9, -1.5)
Financial institution data match returned	0.9	3.1	-2.2**	(-3.7, -0.7)
Motion to compel seek work filed	22.7	2.0	20.7***	(16.7, 24.7)
Sample size (total = 904)	587	317		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on child support administrative data.

NOTES: Results in this table are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in sums and differences. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent. The sample includes noncustodial parents enrolled from February 1, 2018 through April 30, 2019.

APPENDIX TABLE B.15. Contrasts in Civil Contempt Proceedings, Stark County

Outcome	PJAC Services Group	Business-as-Usual Group	Difference	90 Percent Confidence Interval
Civil contempt of court filed (%)	7.5	59.6	-52.2***	(-56.2, -48.1)
Days to first contempt referral ^a	198	112		
Successfully served with notice to appear in court (%)	5.7	37.6	-31.9***	(-35.8, -28.0)
Attended civil contempt hearing (%)	4.6	37.3	-32.7***	(-36.5, -28.9)
Bench warrant issued (%)	1.6	11.6	-10.0***	(-12.5, -7.6)
Sample size (total = 904)	587	317		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on child support administrative data.

NOTES: Results in this table are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in sums and differences.

Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

The sample includes noncustodial parents enrolled from February 1, 2018 through April 30, 2019.

^aSignificance tests were not conducted for this measure, as it is only calculated among parents for whom contempt was filed in the 12-month period following random assignment, rather than all parents, and is therefore nonexperimental.

APPENDIX TABLE B.16. Contrasts in Receipt of Child Support Services, Virginia

Outcome	PJAC Services Group	Business-as-Usual Group	Difference	90 Percent Confidence Interval
Received an order modification (%)	26.2	19.5	6.7**	(1.4, 12.0)
Received a downward order modification (%)	16.7	12.3	4.4	(-0.1, 8.9)
Monthly child support order amount (\$)	171	170	2	(-23, 26)
Had a license reinstated (%)	4.3	1.8	2.5*	(0.2, 4.8)
Had a case closed (%)	8.1	9.3	-1.1	(-4.6, 2.4)
Sample size (total = 750)	491	259		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on child support administrative data.

NOTES: Results in this table are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in sums and differences.

Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

The sample includes noncustodial parents enrolled from February 1, 2018 through April 30, 2019.

APPENDIX TABLE B.17. Contrasts in the Use of Enforcement Actions, Virginia

Outcome (%)	PJAC Services Group	Business-as-Usual Group	Difference	90 Percent Confidence Interval
License suspended	1.3	3.0	-1.8*	(-3.5, 0.0)
Financial institution data match returned	18.1	16.3	1.7	(-3.0, 6.5)
Had an order to seize assets	4.2	7.5	-3.3*	(-6.1, -0.4)
State tax refund intercept requested	97.3	98.5		
Federal tax refund intercept requested	89.8	91.9		
Reported to credit bureau	3.6	3.9		
Sample size (total = 750)	491	259		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on child support administrative data.

NOTES: Results in this table are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in sums and differences. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent. The sample includes noncustodial parents enrolled from February 1, 2018 through April 30, 2019. The state tax intercept, federal tax intercept, and credit bureau reporting measures are included in this table for descriptive purposes. Significance tests were not conducted for these outcomes since, due to broader child support policies, it was not expected that PJAC services would affect their incidence.

APPENDIX TABLE B.18. Contrasts in Civil Contempt Proceedings, Virginia

Outcome	PJAC Services Group	Business-as-Usual Group	Difference	90 Percent Confidence Interval
Civil contempt of court filed (%)	28.7	93.9	-65.2***	(-70.2, -60.2)
Days to first contempt referral ^a	177	14		
Successfully served with notice to appear in court (%)	17.2	64.0	-46.8***	(-52.1, -41.6)
Bench warrant issued (%)	8.9	22.4	-13.5***	(-17.8, -9.2)
Sample size (total = 750)	491	259		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on child support administrative data.

NOTES: Results in this table are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in sums and differences. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent. The sample includes noncustodial parents enrolled from February 1, 2018 through April 30, 2019. ^aSignificance tests were not conducted for this measure, as it is only calculated among parents for whom contempt was filed in the 12-month period following random assignment, rather than all parents, and is therefore nonexperimental.

APPENDIX C

Contrasts for Subgroups of Parents

APPENDIX TABLE C.1. Contrasts Among Noncustodial Parents of Different Racial/Ethnic Groups

Outcome (%)	White, non-Hispanic			Black, non-Hispanic			Hispanic			Differential Significance ^a
	PJAC Services Group	Business-as-Usual Group	Difference	PJAC Services Group	Business-as-Usual Group	Difference	PJAC Services Group	Business-as-Usual Group	Difference	
Received an order modification	7.7	6.3	1.4	12.6	11.5	1.1	5.0	5.3	-0.2	
Had a case closed	5.5	5.5	0.0	8.5	7.1	1.3	4.4	4.2	0.2	
Civil contempt of court filed	20.2	79.7	-59.5***	23.1	82.3	-59.2***	18.5	78.0	-59.5***	
Bench warrant issued	4.1	21.9	-17.8***	7.3	22.7	-15.4***	2.9	16.2	-13.3***	†
Sample size (total = 5,221)	1,250	670		1,377	749		759	416		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on child support administrative data.

NOTES: Differences were calculated separately for each subgroup, using an ordinary least squares model and adjusting for pre-random assignment characteristics. Estimates were then examined for statistically significant differences across subgroups.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in sums and differences.

Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

The sample includes noncustodial parents enrolled from February 1, 2018 through April 30, 2019. Sample sizes by site are: Arizona = 894, California = 1,181, Franklin County = 850, Michigan = 789, Stark County = 767, Virginia = 740.

^aWhen comparing effects among the three subgroups, an H-statistic is generated. The H-statistic is used to assess whether the difference in effects among the subgroups is statistically significant. Statistically significant differences among subgroups are indicated as: ††† = 1 percent; †† = 5 percent; † = 10 percent.

APPENDIX TABLE C.2 Contrasts Among Noncustodial Parents with Older and Newer Cases

Outcome (%)	Oldest Case Six Years Old or More			Oldest Case Five Years Old or Less			Differential Significance ^a
	PJAC Services Group	Business-as-Usual Group	Difference	PJAC Services Group	Business-as-Usual Group	Difference	
Received an order modification	8.5	7.7	0.8	9.7	8.8	0.9	
Had a case closed	7.3	6.8	0.5	4.1	3.8	0.3	
Civil contempt of court filed	20.9	80.6	-59.7***	20.8	79.0	-58.2***	
Bench warrant issued	5.2	20.0	-14.7***	4.2	22.6	-18.4***	††
Sample size (total = 5,620)	2,476	1,308		1,169	667		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on child support administrative data.

NOTES: Differences were calculated separately for each subgroup, using an ordinary least squares model and adjusting for pre-random assignment characteristics. Estimates were then examined for statistically significant differences across subgroups.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in sums and differences.

Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

The sample includes noncustodial parents enrolled from February 1, 2018 through April 30, 2019. Sample sizes by site are: Arizona = 963, California = 1,271, Franklin County = 908, Michigan = 825, Stark County = 903, Virginia=750.

^aWhen comparing effects between two subgroups, an H-statistic is generated. The H-statistic is used to assess whether the difference in effects between the subgroups is statistically significant. Statistically significant differences between subgroups are indicated as: ††† = 1 percent; †† = 5 percent; † = 10 percent.

APPENDIX TABLE C.3. Contrasts Among Noncustodial Parents Who Did and Did Not Make Payments in the Year Before Study Enrollment

Outcome (%)	Made a Payment in the Last Year			Did Not Make a Payment in the Last Year			Differential Significance ^a
	PJAC Services Group	Business-as-Usual Group	Difference	PJAC Services Group	Business-as-Usual Group	Difference	
Received an order modification	10.1	8.9	1.2	7.8	7.2	0.6	
Had a case closed	5.7	5.6	0.1	6.8	6.0	0.7	
Civil contempt of court filed	20.6	79.3	-58.7***	21.2	80.7	-59.5***	
Bench warrant issued	5.0	21.0	-16.0***	4.7	20.9	-16.1***	
Sample size (total = 5,621)	1,767	953		1,879	1,022		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on child support administrative data.

NOTES: Differences were calculated separately for each subgroup, using an ordinary least squares model and adjusting for pre-random assignment characteristics. Estimates were then examined for statistically significant differences across subgroups.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in sums and differences.

Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

The sample includes noncustodial parents enrolled from February 1, 2018 through April 30, 2019. Sample sizes by site are: Arizona = 963, California = 1,271, Franklin County = 908, Michigan = 825, Stark County = 904, Virginia=750.

^aWhen comparing effects between two subgroups, an H-statistic is generated. The H-statistic is used to assess whether the difference in effects between the subgroups is statistically significant. Statistically significant differences between subgroups are indicated as: ††† = 1 percent; †† = 5 percent; † = 10 percent.

APPENDIX TABLE C.4. Contrasts Among Noncustodial Parents With and Without Previous Contempt Referrals

Outcome (%)	Previous Contempt Referral			No Previous Contempt Referral			Differential Significance ^a
	PJAC Services Group	Business-as-Usual Group	Difference	PJAC Services Group	Business-as-Usual Group	Difference	
Received an order modification	11.3	10.5	0.8	7.7	6.8	0.9	
Had a case closed	7.7	6.5	1.2	5.6	5.5	0.1	
Civil contempt of court filed	24.6	84.8	-60.2***	19.1	77.5	-58.4***	
Bench warrant issued	7.7	25.5	-17.8***	3.5	18.5	-15.0***	
Sample size (total = 5,628)	1,196	675		2,454	1,303		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on child support administrative data.

NOTES: Differences were calculated separately for each subgroup, using an ordinary least squares model and adjusting for pre-random assignment characteristics. Estimates were then examined for statistically significant differences across subgroups.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in sums and differences.

Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

The sample includes noncustodial parents enrolled from February 1, 2018 through April 30, 2019. Sample sizes by site are: Arizona = 963, California = 1,278, Franklin County = 908, Michigan = 825, Stark County = 904, Virginia=750.

^aWhen comparing effects between two subgroups, an H-statistic is generated. The H-statistic is used to assess whether the difference in effects between the subgroups is statistically significant. Statistically significant differences between subgroups are indicated as: ††† = 1 percent; †† = 5 percent; † = 10 percent.

APPENDIX TABLE C.5. Contrasts Among Noncustodial Parents with One Child Support Case and Those with More Than One

Outcome (%)	More than One Case			One Case			Differential Significance ^a
	PJAC Services Group	Business-as-Usual Group	Difference	PJAC Services Group	Business-as-Usual Group	Difference	
Received an order modification	11.6	10.6	1.0	7.0	6.4	0.6	
Had a case closed	11.7	11.5	0.2	2.6	2.0	0.6	
Civil contempt of court filed	21.9	83.1	-61.1***	20.2	77.9	-57.7***	
Bench warrant issued	6.7	23.1	-16.4***	3.7	19.3	-15.7***	
Sample size (total = 5,628)	1,495	773		2,155	1,205		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on child support administrative data.

NOTES: Differences were calculated separately for each subgroup, using an ordinary least squares model and adjusting for pre-random assignment characteristics. Estimates were then examined for statistically significant differences across subgroups.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in sums and differences.

Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

The sample includes noncustodial parents enrolled from February 1, 2018 through April 30, 2019. Sample sizes by site are: Arizona = 963, California = 1,278, Franklin County = 908, Michigan = 825, Stark County = 904, Virginia=750.

^aWhen comparing effects between two subgroups, an H-statistic is generated. The H-statistic is used to assess whether the difference in effects between the subgroups is statistically significant. Statistically significant differences between subgroups are indicated as: ††† = 1 percent; †† = 5 percent; † = 10 percent.

APPENDIX TABLE C.6. Contrasts Among Noncustodial Parents Whose Follow-Up Periods Predated and Overlapped the COVID-19 Pandemic

Outcome	Predated the COVID-19 Pandemic			Overlapped the COVID-19 Pandemic			Differential Significance ^a
	PJAC Services Group	Business-as-Usual Group	Difference	PJAC Services Group	Business-as-Usual Group	Difference	
<u>Child support services</u>							
Had a child support order reviewed ^b (%)	7.8	5.9	1.9*	7.2	5.9	1.3	
Received an order modification (%)	8.9	8.0	0.9	9.8	9.3	0.5	
Received a downward order modification (%)	6.1	5.1	1.0	6.5	5.6	0.9	
Monthly child support order amount ^c (\$)	359.1	368.1	-9.0	336.2	351.3	-15.1*	
Had license reinstated ^d (%)	16.4	12.0	4.5***	10.7	7.3	3.4***	
Received debt forgiveness ^b (%)	7.4	2.9	4.5***	9.2	1.3	7.9***	††
Amount of debt forgiven ^b (\$)	-573.0	-347.5	-225.4	-568.5	-104.0	-464.5***	
Received a debt adjustment ^b (%)	9.6	15.3	-5.7***	10.0	21.1	-11.2***	†††
Amount of debt adjusted ^b (\$)	-279.9	-83.0	-196.9*	-67.6	-103.7	36.1	††
Had a case closed (%)	6.3	5.8	0.5	5.9	6.0	-0.1	
<u>Enforcement actions (%)</u>							
License suspended ^e	20.2	22.4	-2.1**	12.9	14.5	-1.7*	
Financial institution data match completed ^f	6.5	6.7	-0.2	6.7	9.6	-2.9***	††
<u>Civil contempt proceedings (%)</u>							
Civil contempt of court filed	20.9	79.9	-59.0***	11.1	75.6	-64.5***	†††
Successfully served with notice to appear in court	12.1	52.2	-40.0***	7.4	53.8	-46.4***	†††
Attended civil contempt hearing ^g	6.5	34.8	-28.3***	2.3	29.9	-27.6***	
Bench warrant issued	4.9	20.9	-16.0***	1.9	14.2	-12.4***	†††
Sample size (total = 9,727)	3,650	1,978		2,664	1,435		

(continued)

APPENDIX TABLE C.6. (continued)

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on child support administrative data.

NOTES: Differences were calculated separately for each subgroup, using an ordinary least squares model and adjusting for pre-random assignment characteristics. Estimates were then examined for statistically significant differences across subgroups.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in sums and differences.

Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

The pre-COVID-19 sample includes noncustodial parents enrolled from February 1, 2018 through April 30, 2019, and the COVID-19 sample includes noncustodial parents enrolled from May 1, 2019 through March 31, 2020.

Sample sizes by site are: Arizona=1,650; California=1,877; Franklin County=1,385; Michigan=1,558; Stark County=1,700; Virginia=1,557.

^aWhen comparing effects between two subgroups, an H-statistic is generated. The H-statistic is used to assess whether the difference in effects between the subgroups is statistically significant. Statistically significant differences between subgroups are indicated as: ††† = 1 percent; †† = 5 percent; † = 10 percent.

^bLimited to Franklin County, Michigan, and Stark County.

^cDue to data limitations, in Arizona and Virginia the monthly child support order amount does not include required monthly payments on debts. This component of monthly child support order amounts is included for all other sites.

^dExcludes Arizona and California.

^eExcludes Arizona.

^fExcludes California and Michigan.

^gLimited to California, Franklin County and Stark County.

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