

**7th Circuit Court of Genesee County 1115 Parents and
Children Together Project Report**

Submitted by: Michigan Office of Child Support



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I. Executive Summary

In 2009, Michigan's Office of Child Support received a federal Section 1115 grant to expand the 7th Circuit Court of Genesee County's child support problem-solving court program called "Parents and Children Together" (PACT) "Project" to provide services to 600 at risk families. Three hundred of these families (the "job-loss cases") recently experienced a financial setback such as a parent's job loss or a loss of other income. The other 300 families had new child support paternity establishment cases. The intent of the Project was to test two main hypotheses: (1) Providing holistic services to noncustodial parents when they first enter the child support program or when their financial circumstances change will increase the amount of child support collected from those parents, and 2) A noncustodial parent is more willing to pay child support when that parent receives parenting time.

Some of the pilot's outcomes were unexpected. Those involved with the Project expected parents would participate in holistic services and as a result of their participation pay more child support. However, it was discovered that holistic services did not have the most significant impact on the families who participated in the Project. Instead, early court staff intervention, parental involvement in establishing the terms of the court order, establishing a relationship with the Friend of the Court (FOC) office, and establishing parenting time in the original child support court order had the most significant impact. Based on analysis of the Project's data, the following outcomes of the Project were identified.

Job-Loss Outcomes

- Payers who had their orders right-sized sooner and had fewer arrears.
- Payers maintained efforts to pay support longer than those who did not have the early intervention.
- Payers were able to secure employment.

New-Establishment Outcomes

- Payers contributed more child support when early intervention was provided.
- Payers paid more child support when they were involved in formulating the support order.
- Payers contributed more child support when they developed a rapport with the friend of the court office instead of receiving a notice to appear for a hearing.
- Payers were more compliant with child support orders when those orders included a parenting time provision.

II. Introduction

Michigan's 7th Circuit Court serves Genesee County from courtrooms and offices in the City of Flint. In 2007, the court's family division established a problem-solving court docket.

The called Parents and Children Together (PACT) that helps noncustodial parents (NCPs) break through the barriers that impair their ability to financially support their children. PACT was administered by Circuit Judge Michael J. Theile. To qualify for PACT court participation a NCP support payer had to meet the following criteria:

- Have failed to pay some court-ordered child support.
- Have total arrears under \$10,000.
- Have no more than one case, and have at least one child under age 10.
- Have not paid child support for three to six months.
- Be a Genesee County resident with no bench warrants or other pending child support cases.
- Not be incarcerated.

PACT coordinated services: The court identified as necessary to remove the payer's arrears. It also monitored through hearings the payer's progress and adjusted the services based on the payer's success or failure.

In 2009, Michigan's Office of Child Support (OCS) and the Michigan State Court Administrative Office (SCAO) applied for and received a federal Section 1115 grant to expand PACT (The Project) to serve two target populations:

- Persons who recently lost employment due to the economic downturn.
- New paternity establishment cases.

At the time Michigan had the highest unemployment rate in the country at 15.2 percent¹ and Genesee County's unemployment was 16.5 percent.²

The stress from the severe economic downturn negatively impacted many Genesee County families. Some who struggled with economic, social, emotional, and psychological issues also had domestic relations cases pending in the 7th Circuit Court involving custody, parenting time, and child support issues.

¹ <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/laus.nr0.htm> As of April 2012, Michigan's unemployment rate has fallen to 8.8 percent and Genesee County's to 9.6 percent.

² http://www.google.com/publicdata?ds=usunemployment&met=unemployment_rate&idim=county:CN260490#met=unemployment_rate&idim=county:CN260490

III. Description of the Project

The “Project” was designed to provide holistic services at the earliest possible date to at-risk families with child support court cases. A family was considered at risk if preliminary screening identified factors that could impede the parents’ ability to support their child. Examples include a parent’s unemployment, substance abuse, or inadequate housing. A family was also considered at risk if the family’s financial circumstances significantly changed for the worse (for example, a parent lost a job).

One goal of the Project’s early intervention was to avoid postjudgment court proceedings to enforce child support orders. The Project also addressed child custody and parenting time issues. One hypothesis the Project tested was “the more time a parent spends with his or her child, the more likely it becomes that the parent will provide financial support.”

The Project targeted 600 at-risk families (300 job-loss cases and 300 new paternity establishment cases³ involving any of the at-risk factors). A case was designated for the job-loss category if the NCP recently lost a job or exhausted unemployment benefits. The establishment cases were those in which the parents were not married, and court orders establishing paternity had not yet been entered (or had very recently been entered).

In order to evaluate the Project, court staff qualified a comparison group of 300 job-loss cases and 300 new-establishment cases. Comparison cases were selected based on the same criteria as the 600 participant cases except that the parents did not participate in the Project.

Job-Loss Case Criteria (300 participant and 300 comparison)

The selection criteria for the participant and comparison cases:

- The support payer had an active child support order.
- The payer had recently received unemployment benefits or recently exhausted all unemployment benefits.
- No indications or history of domestic violence.
- No indications or history of child abuse.
- Support arrearage less than \$10,000. (The arrearage limit was expanded if the child support payer was slightly over the \$10,000 limit.)
- No active bench warrant.

³ In Michigan an establishment case is considered a child support case that is adjudicated either under Michigan’s Family Support Act [http://www.legislature.mi.gov/\(S\(awycjsvcht3h5155tvnw2m55\)\)/mileg.aspx?page=getObject&objectName=mcl-Act-138-of-1966](http://www.legislature.mi.gov/(S(awycjsvcht3h5155tvnw2m55))/mileg.aspx?page=getObject&objectName=mcl-Act-138-of-1966) or under Michigan’s Paternity Act [http://www.legislature.mi.gov/\(S\(awycjsvcht3h5155tvnw2m55\)\)/mileg.aspx?page=getObject&objectName=mcl-Act-205-of-1956](http://www.legislature.mi.gov/(S(awycjsvcht3h5155tvnw2m55))/mileg.aspx?page=getObject&objectName=mcl-Act-205-of-1956)

- A Genesee County resident.
- The child support payer was not scheduled for a contempt hearing within the six months from the time the project started.
- The support payer was not incarcerated.
- The child support payer had only one child support case. (This requirement was later expanded in the project to two child support cases.)

New-Establishment Case Criteria (300 participant and 300 comparison)

The selection criteria for participation in the Project:

- The (anticipated) support payer did not yet have a child support order, or such orders had only recently been entered.
- The parents were not married.
- No indications or history of domestic violence.
- No indications or history of child abuse.
- Arrearage less than \$10,000. (The arrearage limit was expanded if the child support payer was slightly over the \$10,000 limit.)
- No active bench warrant. .
- A Genesee County resident.
- The child support payer was not scheduled for a contempt hearing within the six months from the time the project started.
- The support payer was not incarcerated.
- The child support payer had only one child support case. (This requirement was later expanded in the project to two child support cases.)

Because providing services to the participating families was an integral part of the Project, court staff identified local providers who could provide services that would be most useful to Project participants. Court staff screened the participant cases to identify the services that Project participants needed. Once those services were identified, staff referred participants to the appropriate service provider. Services included psychological counseling, anger management training, mental health services, transportation, housing, job training and placement, and mediation. ([Appendix A](#) lists the local agencies that provided services to Project participants.)

A Project advisory board provided recommendations regarding the Project to the SCAO, the OCS, and the court. ([Appendix B](#) is a list of the advisory board members.). The board was kept informed of project issues, project status, number of families referred for services, number of families receiving services, and the types of services provided. The board also worked with local service providers to help increase their capacity and identify Project needs such as additional funding, which is discussed within this report.

IV. Literature Review

The following is a summary of literature related to challenges faced by child support payers.

Families with child support court cases often struggle, especially during difficult economic times, to meet their children's emotional and financial needs. Traditionally, courts intervene only after families reach a breaking point beyond which the financial and emotional damage can no longer be repaired (Comanor, S., 2004). When courts intervene late in the process, they often focus on punitive actions that do not address the underlying causes of the family's struggles to provide for their children (Crowley, J. E., 2003). Many struggling families face multiple challenges, often arising directly from the economic stress in their communities. The successful resolution of these issues requires providing many and diverse services such as substance abuse treatment, parenting education, job training, and mediation services (Henry, R. K., 2004).

Additionally, dysfunctional family dynamics often exacerbate individual problems. For example, when a support payer fails to pay child support due to unemployment, the support recipient understandably experiences frustration and anger that may cause the support recipient to retaliate by withholding parenting time. Such a response does nothing to treat the underlying problem (unemployment) and rarely encourages the support payer to do better. Rather, many support payers simply "give up," choosing to abandon their children both financially and emotionally (Ellman, 2004). They devote their energies in avoiding child support enforcement mechanisms rather than in seeking employment. Most distressingly, research indicates that the failure to collect child support increases the incidence of child delinquency and inhibits the general psychological and social development of children (Antecol & Bedard, 2004; Argys, Peters, Brooks-Gunn & Smith, 1998; Comanor & Philips, 2004; Wallerstein & Huntington, 1983). Families in such destructive cycles require services that address the underlying problems, but traditional family courts lack the ability to provide such services.

V. The Initial Job-Loss Case Process and Problems Encountered and Adjustments Made with Job-loss Cases

In order to identify job-loss Project participants and a suitable nonparticipating comparison group, a query was submitted to the Michigan Child Support Enforcement System (MiCSES). The query's specifications were designed to identify cases that met the Project

criteria (discussed in detail in the Project Description section). Working from the query results, court staff did additional screening to verify that each case met all the criteria. While checking case-specific information on MiCSES, the staff determined that approximately 90 percent of the cases from the query results **did not** meet all the Project criteria. Identifying more potentially qualified cases required submitting additional MiCSES queries and screening those results. Much staff time was spent eliminating cases from the query results and “manually” identifying cases that qualified for the Project and the comparison group. Staff initially set a goal to begin meeting with parents in qualified job-loss cases in January of 2010, but were unable to begin those meetings until March of 2010.

The staff mailed letters signed by Judge Theile to the parents in qualified cases informing them of the Project. The letters requested that the parents appear in court to consider participating in the Project (the letters were not court orders). Cases were scheduled every 15 minutes in Judge Theile’s courtroom, during which time staff determined whether the parents who appeared might benefit from participation in the Project. The staff was specifically seeking to determine if the case included any custody, parenting time, or child support issues and what specific services the parent needed. Parents were not required to participate in the Project. However, if either parent requested participation, and the case met the project criteria, that case was admitted into the Project.

During this preliminary enrollment process, the parents (almost all participants were NCPs) completed the Project assessment forms, consent forms, and release forms that would allow the court staff to collect information from other agencies if necessary. This process was very time consuming because of the amount of paperwork. Once job-loss cases were identified and the parents had signed the proper documents, they had a hearing before Judge Theile. These hearings were occasionally chaotic due to the volume of cases and the presence of only two caseworkers to cover all of the day’s scheduled cases.

After parents in the job-loss cases were enrolled, court staff members met weekly with the parents to monitor the Project’s progress. It soon became apparent that it would be impossible, to adequately process the 300 job-loss participant cases while also monitoring 300 comparison cases. The first response by the court staff was to schedule job-loss assessment meetings with parents every 30 minutes during two full days per week. These assessment meetings were held in the FOC office. Although this new procedure accelerated the processing

rate for job-loss cases, the gain was not enough to reach the project goal of registering 300 job-loss cases.

Realizing the need for a more efficient process, court staff developed the “Blitz” days. For Blitz days, staff screened cases and parents who qualified for the Project received a notice to appear at the FOC office. These notices explained the Project, summarized its benefits, and listed information that the parents should bring with them if they decided to participate. During the Blitz days, virtually all FOC caseworkers devoted their day to assessing parents’ eligibility and assisting parents with custody, parenting time, and child support issues. The first job-loss Blitz day was held in August 2010, and almost 100 cases were added to the Project in a single day. Without adopting this new process, it is unlikely that the 7th Circuit Court could have identified the nearly 300 job-loss cases.

VI. Initial Establishment Case Processing, Problems Encountered, Adjustments Made

Because most new-establishment cases are processed and adjudicated differently than job-loss cases, identifying new-establishment cases for the Project’s participant and comparison groups required using different processes.

The typical establishment case starts with the Department of Human Services (DHS) OCS gathering information from the custodial parent and then requesting that the county prosecuting attorney’s (PA) office start a child support case. Once the case is referred to the PA’s office, it is considered to be in Court Action Referral (CAR) status. The PA’s office is responsible for filing a complaint on a case, serving the defendant with the complaint and a summons, and securing a court order.

At the beginning of the Project, the staff worked with the Genesee County PA’s office to identify cases. In December 2009 and January 2010, the staff worked with the PA’s office for several days, met with families who had child support cases in CAR status, and encouraged them to participate in the Project. Unfortunately, few parents appeared for these meetings.

In addition to meeting with parents, the staff relied on the PA’s office to identify cases in CAR status and make direct referrals to the FOC office for assessments. It was discovered that many of those referred child support payers did not qualify for the Project because they had more than one child support case. This requirement was amended to allow child support payers with more than one case to participate in the Project.

Even with those changes, the processes described above still did not generate a sufficient number of cases for the Project; therefore, the PA's office began conducting an initial screening of cases that were being heard in court. The PA would then include in the resulting court order a referral to FOC staff for a Project assessment. Upon receipt of this court order, the staff would conduct a more thorough assessment of the case and determine whether or not the parties could participate in the Project.

The Project staff found that this new process generated more eligible parents, but not enough to meet the Project goals. Staff also discovered that often too much time had passed between when the order was entered and the time the parent was referred to the project. The following are some other problems that were encountered while identifying establishment cases with court orders for the participant and comparison groups:

- Court orders did not include a parenting time provision that was in the family's best interest.
- Parents' addresses and phone numbers were no longer current; thus Project information could not be obtained.
- Child support arrearages had accumulated and parenting time issues had already developed.

Given these concerns, the staff decided to hold a Blitz day for establishment cases, hoping to replicate the success of the job-loss Blitz day. One Blitz day was held in November 2010, two in December 2010, and two in February 2011. During the Blitz days, all parents assembled in one room so representatives from the FOC office and the PA's office could speak to them simultaneously and answer their questions. Then, virtually every FOC caseworker devoted the rest of that day to assessing parents' eligibility and assisting parents with custody, parenting time, and child support issues. Please see [Appendix C](#) for detailed description of the Blitz days provided by the Genesee County 7th Circuit Court.

All the parents who appeared on these Blitz days were also given the opportunity to establish an initial custody, parenting time, and child support agreement. Further, putative fathers who denied paternity were immediately offered a DNA test and a court hearing within four weeks to consider the test results. During these processes, staff also assessed whether the parents might benefit from other Project services. One employment service provider, actually had staff in attendance to assist parents for the first Blitz day.

During the Blitz days, parents were given a court date on which to appear before Judge Theile to have their proposed court orders signed. Court staff were available during those later

hearings to make any necessary changes to the proposed orders. Approximately 122 cases were identified for the new-establishment group as a result of these Blitz day efforts.

The cases identified initially during Blitz days had not yet been processed by the PA, meaning that complaints, summonses and answers had not yet been served on the parents. To resolve that problem SCAO created a form that allowed parents to waive formal proceedings, including the filing of a complaint, the service of a summons, the filing of a formal answer, and a pretrial appearance in court. See [Appendix D](#) for a copy of the Complaint/Answer, Waiver of Summons, and Stipulation form.

As with the job-loss group, without the use of the Blitz days, the staff could not have identified a sufficient number of eligible participants for the Project.

VII. Evaluation Methodology

Purpose of the Evaluation

There were two broad purposes of the evaluation:

- If providing holistic services to families in Michigan's child support program early in the judicial process or immediately when their financial circumstances change (due to a job-loss, for instance) would improve their ability to provide for the financial, medical and emotional needs of their children.
- Would a noncustodial parent (NCP) pay more child support if that parent received parenting time?

The evaluation used a mixed-methods research design and analyzed both quantitative and qualitative data. The mixed-methods design revealed details about strengths, opportunities, and barriers encountered by the Project directors, collaborators, and participating agencies. The evaluation tools included written surveys and telephone interviews of parents; intake forms completed by clients when they first entered into the Project; telephone interviews and data collection from local service providers; and secondary data collection from MiCSES regarding information about parents' support-payment consistency and amounts.

The evaluation also addressed a number of questions regarding the Project's implementation process. Answers to the following questions were sought from participants, court staff, and agency partners.

- What were some of the issues and problems with starting the Project?
- What were some of the issues related to the local environment (e.g., economic and social)?
- Who were the Project clients and what were their characteristics?
- What clients did well in the Project?

- Who were the stakeholders involved in the Project?
- Were the Project goals and objectives achieved?
- Were the Project strategies successful?
- What obstacles were encountered after the Project started?
- What factors contributed to the Project's success?
- What factors were barriers to the Project's success?
- What collaborations were successful?
- Was there any correlation between the increased time a nonresident parent spent with his or her child and improved consistency in child support payments?
- Did the Project foster new professional collaborations?
- What collaborations were notably successful or unsuccessful?
- Would it be possible to implement this Project statewide?
- What elements of the Project were most beneficial?
- What elements of the Project were least beneficial?

Selection of Cases

Sample

These data collection efforts targeted 600 participant cases and 600 comparison group cases. Each group included 300 job-loss cases and 300 new-establishment cases. Please see the Project description for a detailed description of the participant and comparison cases.

Selection of the Job-Loss Participant Cases

Potential participant cases in the job-loss category were identified through a MiCSES query in which either: (1) support payments were coming from an unemployment office or (2) no support payments had been received. Court staff then screened the cases and payers identified by the MiCSES query. After adjustments, 254 job-loss cases were included in the project. Of those 254 participant job-loss cases, 100 child support payers participated in the Blitz days, a process described in the Project Description section of this report.

Selection of Comparison Job-Loss Cases

Potential comparison job-loss cases were also identified through a MiCSES query. The MiCSES query results were screened by court staff to ensure that the cases met Project criteria. After the screening adjustments, 249 comparison job-loss cases were selected. The parties to those cases did not receive the special services provided to parties in the participant job-loss cases.

Selection of the New-Establishment Participant Cases

Potentially qualifying establishment cases were referred to the Project by: 7th Circuit Court Family Division judges, the Genesee County PA's Office, and the Genesee County FOC office. Because that initial referral process did not identify a sufficient number of establishment cases, MiCSES was queried to identify more cases. The MiCSES query also selected establishment cases that did not yet have a court order for establishment or support. Court staff screened the new-establishment cases to ensure that they met the Project criteria. There were 265 establishment participant cases in the project. Of the 265 new-establishment participant cases 127 participated in the Blitz days.

Selection of the New-Establishment Comparison Cases

A MiCSES query identified potential qualifying establishment comparison cases. This MiCSES query selected establishment cases that had a recent court order and met the Project criteria. There were 265 new-establishment comparison cases in the project.

Data Sources

All survey instruments and research protocols used for evaluating this project were developed with input from and review by SCAO, OCS, and 7th Circuit Court staff. Data for this study were collected from multiple sources. Prior to collecting any data, Michigan State University (MSU), the retained evaluator for the Project, obtained approval for the methodology and all survey instruments from the university's institutional review board (IRB). The following data sources contributed to the evaluation of the project.

Michigan Child Support Enforcement System (MiCSES)

The evaluation sought several types of information from MiCSES, the electronic case management system used by Michigan FOC offices to manage child support cases. That MiCSES data was used to compare support charged, support collected, number of payments made, types of payments and arrears.

Pre and Post Assessment Surveys

MSU created written surveys to track the number of parents who received services (or at least referrals) by participating in the Project; the number of parents who completed services; the type of services provided; the number of jobs parents applied for; the number of parents who had job interviews; and the number of parents who became employed. MSU and SCAO also

conducted semi-structured telephone interviews in which the written surveys were used as a guide for interviewing parents. In addition, court staff sent out surveys. Those interviews and surveys measured data that included the number of visits a parent had with his or her child; parental satisfaction concerning involvement in their child's life; the number of parents who received and completed Project services; the type of services actually received; the number of jobs parents applied for; the number of parents who had job interviews; and the number of parents who became employed. Similarly, MSU conducted semi-structured telephone interviews with service providers. They were asked process-assessment questions that measured the type and efficacy of services provided; the degree of parental compliance and cooperation; and the perceived benefit of services to families.

Interviews with Judges and Court Staff

Interviews were conducted with 7th Circuit Court Family Division judges and court staff. MSU conducted interviews to collect information from court staff on how the Project was implemented, identified problems that impeded the Project, and explored if the Project could be implemented statewide.

Blitz Day Exit Interviews

Court and OCS staff conducted separate interviews with parents who participated in the Blitz days.

VIII. Findings

Qualitative Data Findings for Job-loss Cases

In order to collect base-line data, parents who participated in the Project were required to complete a pre-participation intake form when first enrolling in the Project. Because the Project was originally scheduled to last for only 17 months, it was decided to use existing intake forms from a previous child support specialty court project. Unfortunately, it was discovered after the Project was underway that this intake form was very lengthy and time intensive to complete. A more streamlined version of the intake form was developed.

The collection of post-participation data posed additional challenges. Because parents were involved in the project for different time periods (some parents were involved for longer periods and some shorter depending on their needs and services provided) there was no predetermined time set aside in which to conduct an exit interview. Mailed surveys were sent to

those parents who participated in the project. As a way to increase response rates, a second method was used in which survey data was collected through individual telephone calls placed to all parents of the participant and comparison groups. Although there were a substantial number of cases for which valid phone numbers could not be obtained, the use of telephone surveys increased the amount of data collected from parents who participated in the project.

The collection of qualitative data from the comparison group parents also posed challenges. The original goal was to collect base-line responses through a mail survey and then follow-up with later surveys to measure change over time. However, only four initial surveys were returned from parents of the comparison group. As a result, the telephone surveys were conducted a single time to capture a “snapshot” of the comparison parent group data. Because parents of the comparison group had not participated in the Project and were unaware of its potential benefits, many parents reached by telephone were suspicious or openly hostile to the caller. Such reactions made it particularly difficult to gather data from this group.

In addition to the Project-specific challenges referred to above, it is important to note that surveys are always challenging. Mailed surveys typically produce a lower response rate than face-to-face data collection efforts, and in a project involving child support agency, it was expected that obtaining responses to surveys could be especially challenging. Many FOC clients often have a negative or even hostile view of the agency. This reality very likely affected survey response rates given that many clients (and especially those in the comparison group) had no motivation to take the time to assist an agency which they viewed unfavorably.

With the forgoing caveats, the following information represents responses to open-ended telephone survey questions from parents in the job-loss group who participated in the project.

Employment Effects: Parents were asked to describe how being involved in the Project has impacted your career or life at work.

Parents who responded positively provided the following comments:

- Helped quite a bit.
- Helped with job applications.
- Made it easier to get along with ex wife.
- Provided help with education and employment.
- It has been a big help with modification of child support.

Parents who responded negatively provided the following comments:

- Hasn't impacted me at all.

- It hasn't helped.
- Not much.
- No benefit to him.

Parenting Time Effects: Parents were asked whether they were satisfied or dissatisfied with the number of visits they had with their children.

Parents who were satisfied with the number of visits they had with their children had the following comments:

- Sees the children every day.
- Has her every weekend.
- Can see the child whenever he wants to.
- Satisfied because he sees them every day.

Parents who were dissatisfied with the number of visits they had with their children provided the following comments:

- Don't have enough visits.
- Not getting visits that were agreed to.
- Wishes he could spend more time with his children.
- Wants more time with son.

Willingness to Pay Child Support: Parents were asked to explain how having time with their child made them feel about making child support payments. The following are some of the comments made by those parents:

- Actually being able to provide for his daughter.
- Believe in child support, it's his responsibility to support his child.
- Does not miss any payments.
- Would make payments regardless.
- Doesn't make a difference.

Most Helpful Services: Parents were asked what services were most helpful to them. Many of the parents in the job-loss participant group decided not to take part in any services. Those parents who did participate in services provided the following comments:

- Got a parenting time order was unable to see daughter before.
- Helped with joint custody.
- Parenting time agreement.

Benefits from Services: Parents were asked to explain why the services they received were helpful or were not helpful.

Parents who believed the services they received were helpful provided the following comments:

- Counseling regarding children.
- Educational services GED.
- Helped with interview techniques.
- Visits organized, caught up with payments.
- Was able to get help with employment and paying arrearage.

Parents who believe the services were not helpful provided the following comments:

- None offered.
- Was referred but didn't believe he needed them.
- Was told he needed an attorney.
- Referred, but has not participated yet.

As stated previously there were many challenges with gathering information from the intake surveys and post participation surveys. Because of these challenges this section of the report focused on information to open ended questions provided from parents in the job-loss group after they participated in the Project. In summary: Some parents were helped by the Project. That help came in the form of assistance with job applications and receiving education and employment training. A number of job-loss parents were satisfied with the number of visits they had with their children. The parents who were not satisfied indicated they wanted to spend more time with their children. Some of the parents surveyed indicated they would pay their support no matter how much time they spent with their children. Of those parents who were referred and received services, they appreciated the counseling for themselves and their children and services that help them become more employable. However, some of the parents surveyed felt they did not benefit from the services offered.

Qualitative Data Findings for New-Establishment Cases

Like the parents in the job-loss group, parents in the new-establishment group who participated in the Project were also required to complete both a preparticipation intake form and a postassessment survey. It was soon discovered that this group presented the same data collection challenges. In summary, those challenges were:

- A short grant period.
- The use of existing intake forms designed for other purposes.
- Low response rate to mailed surveys.
- Hostile view of the FOC office.

Because of these challenges, phone surveys were also used to collect qualitative data from the new-establishment participant group. A sampling of their responses to open-ended telephone survey questions begins one paragraph below.

Following the summary of the open-ended telephone survey answers will be a summary of the exit interviews conducted with new-establishment parents who participated in the Blitz days.⁴

Employment Effects: Parents were asked to describe how being involved in the Project has impacted your career or life at work.

Parents who responded positively provided the following comments:

- Drives him to find work.
- It helped me become a man.
- Pushed him to find a job.

Parents who responded negatively provided the following comments:

- It hasn't.
- It hasn't done anything for him.
- It hasn't thus far, but maybe later.

Parenting Time Effects: Parents were asked why they felt satisfied or dissatisfied with the number of visits they had with their children.

Parents who were satisfied with the number of visits they had with their children had the following comments:

- Because both parents allow each to have time with the child and everything is working out.
- Satisfied because all he has to do is call and gets to see his child whenever.
- Satisfied because I am the father and see him a lot.

Parents who responded negatively provided the following comments:

- Okay with it because son needs his mother, but wishes had more time with him.
- Dissatisfied because he wants more time with his child.
- Not enough visits with daughter. She needs more time to get used to me.

Willingness to Pay Child Support: Parents were asked to explain how having time with their child made them feel about making child support payments. The following are some of the comments made by those parents:

- A whole lot better and a whole lot more supportive; watch them grow.

⁴ For a description of the Blitz days please see [Appendix C](#) of this report.

- Has an impact because relationship with child grows and makes him want to provide for his child.
- Feel like a better father and feel good about taking care of his child.
- Makes him feel better about paying child support when he sees his daughter.
- It doesn't matter as long as he sees his child.

Most Helpful Project Services: The participants found the following services the most helpful:

- Clinic for parenting time services.
- Parenting skills.
- The entire 1115 PACT project.
- STRIVE employment training.

Benefits from Services: Parents were asked to explain why the services they received were helpful or were not helpful. Many of the parents in the new-establishment participant group decided not to take part in any services. The following is a sample of some of the comments by parents who did participate in services.

Parents who believed the services they received were helpful provided the following comments:

- Didn't use any special services, but thought PACT was helpful.
- Helped because he was unable to see child until services.
- Helpful because they let him know what services were available.
- Caseworker was helpful.
- Quick process to finalize everything instead of traditional process.
- Helpful to go through the program.
- Initial hearing and adjustment.

Parents who believed the services they received did not help them provided the following comments:

- Not helpful because he did not go.
- Never needed services.
- Gave him an option, but did not go.
- Declined services.

Blitz Days Q&A: The following is a summary of responses to questions that an OCS employee asked the participating parents during two Blitz days that were held on December 15 and 16, 2010.

Q1. Do you have any other child support cases? (This question was asked to see if parents could compare their experiences in the Project to the length of time and number of appointments necessary for their prior case.) Only two couples had prior cases.

Responses

- Lot less time for this child (10 months) than for first child (18 months).
- No court date yet for 3-year-old child; this child is 10-months-old and already taken care of.

Q2. Are you leaving here knowing what is happening?

Summary of Responses

- With one exception, all the other parties knew they were establishing paternity/child support cases, when their upcoming court date was, and what amount he/she would be ordered to pay.

Q3. Did you have any problems understanding/completing forms?

Responses

- No one indicated they had any difficulty completing their paperwork. One participant said it was a lot of paperwork, but it was worth it.

Q4. How would you rate your service today?

Responses

- Friendly service, felt comfortable.
- Fast service.
- Service was fair, didn't like being questioned about address when came in willingly.
- Service was perfect.
- Quite satisfied.
- Good service; got questions answered.
- Service was good; they walked us through the process.
- Caseworker was wonderful.
- A very good service.

Q5. Do you have any suggestions for improving this process?

Responses

- Check IDs before starting so right parties are sitting at the tables.
- Send paperwork with notice so don't have to fill it out here.
- Could have done this via the Internet with video explanation; no travel, not miss work.
- Need better directions for parking and within the building.
- Provide refreshments.
- Coffee and donuts would have been nice.

Q6. Do you have any other comments?

Positive Comments

- Nice to get everything done in 1 ½ hours instead of an all-day process

when the state is involved.

- Neutral environment, less stressful.
- Like knowing what is going to happen before facing judge.
- Felt like a workshop instead of a battlefield.
- Like the process, can get everything done at once.
- Everything was broken down in layman's terms.
- Fifteen times smoother than I thought it would be.
- Happy to get parenting time decided now.
- Straight forward.

Negative Comments

- No leniency on appointments, only one available.
- No confidentiality in conference room setting.
- Didn't like the fact that his girlfriend could sit with him to fill out paperwork.
- Equipment not ready so caseworker not ready.
- Wish the FOC was going after deadbeat dads instead of willing ones.

Exit Interviews

Comments about the “Blitz Day” process by an OCS employee who conducted the exit interviews to Mr. Jack Battles, Genesee County Friend of the Court Director.

“Thank you for allowing me to participate in this process. It was a great opportunity to see both parties involved at the same time. The comments above don't relay the smiles, handshakes and positive attitudes that I witnessed. I think the parties left the office with a feeling of relief that their case was settled. I hope that you continue to look into this accelerated process in the future. It was an impressive two days for me!”

Summary of Data Qualitative from New-Establishment Group: As with the job-loss participants there were many challenges collecting qualitative data from the new-establishment parents. Because of these challenges, only the responses to open-ended survey questions were evaluated. Certain parents who participated believed that the Project helped them find work and become more responsible, but not all parents were impacted to the same extent. Many parents who participated in the Project were very satisfied with the number of visits they had with their children. Those not satisfied wanted to spend more time with their children. A number of parents indicated they felt better about making child support payments when they were able to spend time with their children. Parents who participated in services appear to benefit the most from job training services, parenting skills services, and the Project (1115 PACT) as a whole. Based on exit interviews and observations of an OCS employee, the Blitz days were positively perceived

by those project participants. These parents reported that the processes involved in having their cases established were far easier and less time consuming than their past experience with the court system. Additionally, many participants in the Blitz days reported that at the end of their experience they understood the court process, when their upcoming court date was, and what amount of child support they were ordered to pay or to receive.

Quantitative Data Findings for Job-Loss Cases

To collect quantitative data for the job-loss and new-establishment cases, several MiCSES⁵ queries were completed. The query parameters were based on the original Section 1115 grant application and recommendations made by Genesee County Friend of the Court and 7th Circuit Court staff, OCS staff, the retained evaluator, and SCAO staff. The data obtained from the MiCSES queries were placed in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, which was used to analyze the data.

The following quantitative analysis is based on MiCSES data collected for job-loss participants and job-loss comparison cases.

Sample Size

The original Section 1115 grant application stated that the Project would attempt to secure 300 job-loss participant cases, and 300 job-loss comparison cases. During the Project, some of the participant and comparison cases that were originally selected were not considered for the quantitative data analysis due to changes in circumstances (e.g., parties reconciled, no child support ordered). In addition, not all the cases that met the original Project criteria yielded suitable MiCSES data. Table1 summarizes the job-loss samples of participant and comparison cases used for the quantitative data analysis.

Table 1: Participant and comparison cases for the quantitative data analysis

Group	Desired Number of Participant and Comparison Cases	Cases that Met Project Criteria	Qualifying Cases with MICSES Data Available	Percentage of Qualifying Cases with MiCSES Data Available
Job-Loss Comparison	300	255	253	99.22%
Job-Loss Participant	300	255	255	100%

⁵ The MiCSES system is Michigan’s statewide computer system that tracks all IV-D child support activity for all IV-D child support cases.

Current Support Paid

One of the variables that the Project measured was the amount of current child support⁶ paid by the participant group and by the comparison group. Table 2 compares the amounts paid by the two groups, including the current amount of child support charged, current support paid six and twelve months after entry into the Project,⁷ and the percentage of the current support paid compared to the amount of current support charged.⁸

Table 2: Current child support due, paid, and percentages, and total child support paid

Group	Time period (Project Entry)	Current Child Due	Current Child Support Paid	Percent Paid Compared to the Amount Charged	Total Child Support Paid
Job-Loss Comparison	6 months prior	\$385,222	\$284,005	73.73%	\$392,941
Job-Loss Comparison	6 months after	\$370,958	\$258,012	69.55%	\$301,755
Job-Loss Participant	6 months prior	\$460,712	\$325,597	70.67%	\$421,865
Job-Loss Participant	6 months after	\$416,112	\$308,164	74.06%	\$391,986
Job-Loss Comparison	12 months prior	\$765,655	\$561,858	73.38%	\$718,962
Job-Loss Comparison	12 months after	\$721,066	\$499,446	69.26%	\$635,183
Job-Loss Participant	12 months prior	\$921,041	\$626,085	67.98%	\$786,430
Job-Loss Participant	12 months after	\$798,818	\$586,135	73.38%	\$754,250

The job-loss *participants* were charged more current child support six and twelve months prior to and after the project. After the six month period, the *comparison* group had their support reduced by \$14,264 (4 percent) and after twelve months, the comparison group had their support reduced by \$44,589 (6 percent). Conversely, the participant group had their child support reduced by \$44,600 (11 percent) after six months and \$122,223 (15 percent) after twelve months. Job-loss *participants* had paid a lower percentage of current support both six and twelve months

⁶ Current child support is the amount of child support charged the first day of the month that is owing for that particular month.

⁷ Throughout this section of the report, the terms “six-month period,” and “twelve-month period” are used. The six-month period reflects six months prior to the project and six months after, for twelve months total. The 12-month period reflects 12 months before the Project and 12 months after, for 24 months total.

prior to the project than the *comparison* group, but paid a higher percentage six and twelve months after the project. Explanations for this: (1) The amount due was reduced more for the participant group than for the comparison group, and (2) the amount of current support paid was greater for the participant group. Table 3 points out the differences in percentages of current support paid for the participant group and comparison groups (trend-lines).

Table 3: Graph of percentage of current child support paid

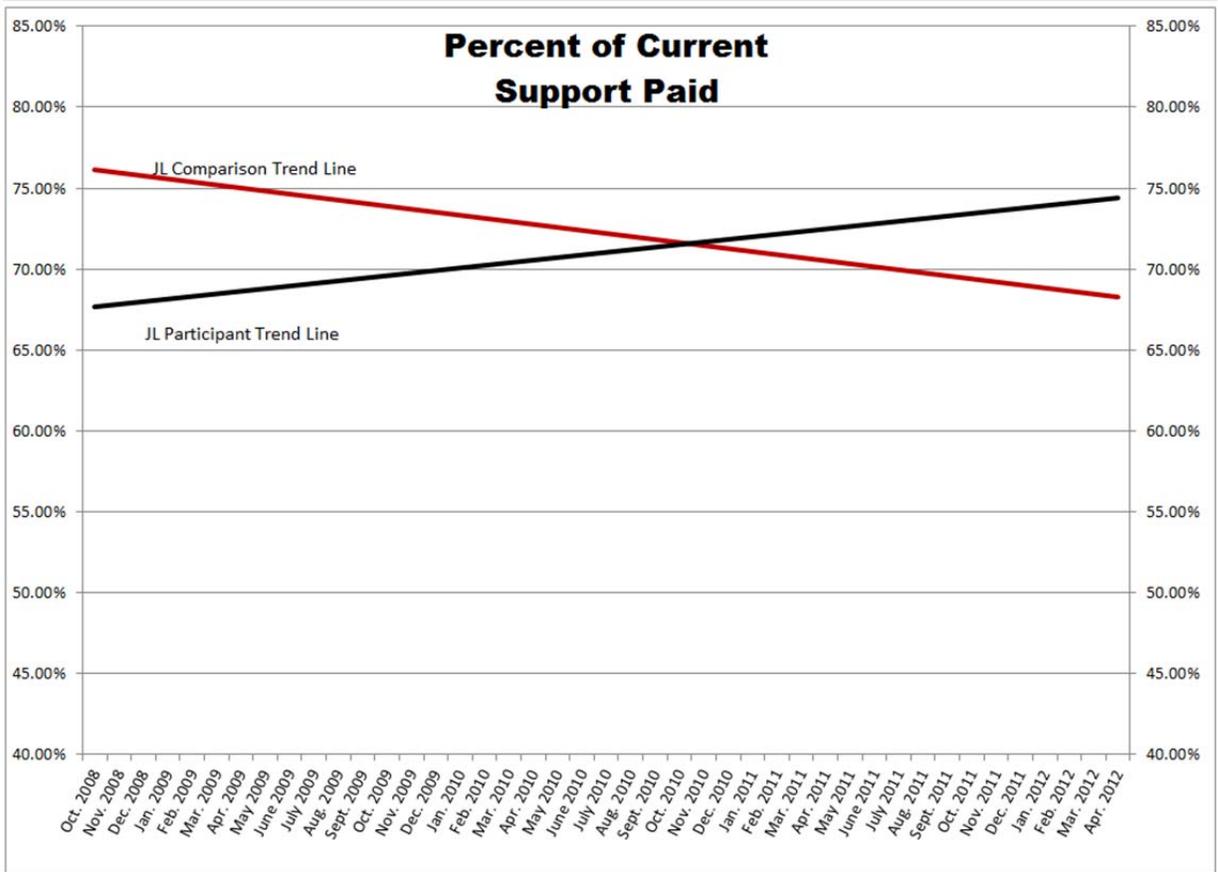


Table 3 shows the percentage-paid directional decrease for the comparison group and a directional increase for the participant group. The differences shown in Table 3 indicate that the participant group improved the percentage of current support paid while the comparison group did not.

In addition to *percentages* of current support paid, participants paid more *total* support than the comparison group prior to (six and twelve months) and after (six and twelve months) the Project’s twelve-month evaluation period. The comparison group paid \$91,186 less after six

months and \$83,779 less after twelve months. For the same time periods participant group paid \$29,879 less after six months and \$32,180 after twelve months.

Table 4 shows the average amounts due and paid for the comparison and participant groups.

Table 4: Average amount of current child support due and paid

The comparison group had its child support reduced by an average of \$10 per case from six months before to six months after the Project start date and \$18 per case from twelve months before to twelve months after the Project start date. The participant group had different results: It had its child support reduced an average of \$33 per case for the six-month period and an average of \$45 on average per case for the twelve-month period. Besides the aggregate supported differences between the two groups, the averages paid per case were also different. The

Group	Time period (PACT Entry)	Due	Current Paid
Job-loss Comparison	6 months prior	\$257	\$189
Job-loss Comparison	6 months after	\$247	\$172
Job-loss Participant	6 months prior	\$304	\$215
Job-loss Participant	6 months after	\$271	\$201
Job-loss Comparison	12 months prior	\$258	\$189
Job-loss Comparison	12 months after	\$240	\$166
Job-loss Participant	12 months prior	\$307	\$209
Job-loss Participant	12 months after	\$262	\$192

comparison group paid on average \$17 less per case after the six-month period and on average \$23 less per case less after the twelve-month period. The participant group paid on average \$14 less per case after the six-month period and \$17 less per case after the twelve-month period.

Table 5 shows the number of months in which child support was paid in full for the six and twelve-month periods for the comparison and participant groups.

Table 5: Number of months in which child support was paid in full

Group	Six Months Prior to the Project Number of Months Child	Six Months After the Project Number of Months Child	Twelve months Prior to the Project Number of Months Child	Twelve Months After the Project Number of Months Child
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	Support Paid in Full			
Job-Loss Comparison	758	691	1,486	1,409
Job-Loss Participant	643	776	1,266	1,551

The job-loss comparison group had a 10 percent reduction in number of months paying current support after the six-month period and a 5 percent reduction after the twelve-month period. By this metric, the job-loss participant group showed more improvement for the six- and twelve-month periods than the comparison group. Job-loss participants had 21 a percent increase in the number of months that child support was paid in full after the six month period and a 23 percent increase after the twelve-month period.

Table 6 shows the average number of months of current child support paid in full per case for the comparison and participant groups.

Table 6: Average number of months of current child support paid in full per case

Group	Average Number of Months Child Support Paid in Full Prior to Six Months Before the Project	Average Number of Months Child Support Paid in Full After Six Months of the Project	Average Number of Months Child Support Paid in Full Prior to Twelve Months Before the Project	Average Number of Months Child Support Paid in Full Twelve Months After the Project
Job-Loss Comparison	3.02	2.74	5.92	5.59
Job-Loss Participant	2.53	3.05	4.98	6.11

During the evaluation period, the comparison group had a reduction in the average number of months when child support was paid in full. In contrast, the participant group demonstrated an improvement in the average number of months child support was paid in full for the same time periods.

Table 7 compares child support paid by income withholding from unemployment benefits and child support paid by income withholding from employer payments twelve months after the Project.

Table 7: Average and number of cases of child support paid by unemployment benefits and from employer payments

Group	Unemployment Benefits (Average)	Unemployment Benefits (Case Count)	Income Withholding (Average)	Income Withholding (Case Count)
Job-loss Comparison	12	107	19	122
Job-loss Participant	12	97	22	156

The comparison and participant groups on average had the same number of child support payments made from unemployment benefits (12) for the twelve-month period. The data indicate that more parents in the comparison group were unemployed than in the participant group. There were more comparison cases (107) with child support paid from unemployment benefits than the participant group (97). The participant group had on average more child support payments made from employer withholdings (22) than the comparison group (19). There were more participant cases (156) with active employer income withholding deductions than the comparison group (122).

Table 8 shows payment sources for all support payments made by the comparison and participant groups.

Table 8: Payment sources for all child support payments

Group	QDRO / EDRO	Direct Payments Made by the Payer	State Tax Refund Offset	Interstate Payments	Unemployment Income Withholding for Child Support	Employer Income Withholding for Child Support	Total Child Support Paid
Job-Loss Comparison	\$30,513.45	\$121,008.1	\$5,581.82	\$2,371.40	\$160,539.86	\$262,081.93	\$582,096.57
Job-Loss Participant	-0-	\$49,004.26	\$11,741.42	-0-	\$158,172.48	\$422,660.15	\$641,578.31

The comparison group contributed more for child support from direct payments, interstate payments, and unemployment benefits than the participant group. A considerable difference exists between the two groups for the amount of employer income withholding for support. The participant group contributed much more child support from employer income withholding (\$160,578.22 more) than the comparison group. Again, it would appear that more parents in the participant group were employed.

Table 9 provides information about total number of payments and type of payments twelve months after the Project.

Table 9: Total number of child support payments and type child support payments

	FIDM Receipt	Special Instruction	State Refund - 820 Manual	State Refund - 820 Automatic	Negative Tax Offset	Levy	Federal Tax Refund Offset	QDRO / EDRO	Obligor	State Tax Refund Offset	Interstate	Unemployment	IWN	Grand Total
Job-Loss Comparison	1	3		1	1		53	84	528	26	12	1,270	2,339	4,318
Job-Loss Participant	1	4	1	2	0	2	45	0	275	27	0	1,152	3,480	4,989

The comparison group had a greater number of Federal Tax Refund Offset payments, more qualified domestic relations order (QDRO) and eligible domestic relations order (EDRO) payments, direct payments, interstate payments, and unemployment benefit payments. The participant group had many more payments from employer income withholding than the comparison group (70 percent compared to 54 percent of total payments made).

Summary of Quantitative Findings

The Project was designed to have 300 participant cases and 300 comparison cases. However, not all the originally selected cases met the Project criteria. Of the 255 qualified cases in each group, MiCSES data was available for 253 comparison cases and all 255 of the participant cases. The participant group paid \$50,152 more in current support, and had a higher percentage of current support paid (74.06 percent) compared to (69.55 percent) than the comparison group. After twelve months, the participant group had paid \$119,067 more in child support and had a higher percent of child support paid (73.38 percent) than the comparison group (69.26 percent).

The participant group was charged more in child support after both six and twelve months. The participant group also paid more per month on average than the comparison group after both six months (\$172 for the comparison group, \$201 for the participant group) and twelve months (\$166 for the comparison group and \$192 for the participant group).

After six months, the participant group, as a whole, had 85 more months in which child support was paid in full than the comparison group. After twelve months, the participant group continued to have more months (142 more) of child support paid in full than the comparison group.

The participant group improved its average months of child support paid in full from six months prior to the project to six months after (2.53 months to 3.05 months). For this same time period, the comparison group showed a reduction in average of months child support was paid in full from 3.02 months to 2.74 months. This same pattern occurred after the 12 month period; the average number of paid in full months for the participant group rose from 4.98 to 6.11 months, while the comparison group declined from 5.92 to 5.59 months.

After twelve months, the participant group had 156 cases with employer withholding child support payments compared to 122 for the comparison group. Also, the participant group paid more child support payments via employer withholding than the comparison group (\$160,578.22 more) and had 1,141 more employer child support payments made than the comparison group.

The participant group showed steady improvement for the amount of child support paid, the percentage of child support paid, the average amount of child support paid per case, the number of months child support was paid in full, average months child support was paid in full, and the number of employer child support payments made. In contrast the comparison group declined or regressed for all of these same measures.

Quantitative Data Findings for New-Establishment Cases

As with the job-loss cases, several MiCSES queries were completed for the new-establishment comparison and participant cases. The query parameters were based on the original Section 1115 grant application and recommendations by the Genesee County FOC, the 7th Circuit Court staff, the OCS staff, the retained evaluator, and SCAO.

Sample Size

Table 10 shows the new-establishment sample sizes.

Table 10: New-establishment sample sizes

Group	Desired Number of Participant and Comparison Cases	Cases that Meet Project Criteria	Qualifying Cases with MiCSES Data Available	Percentage of Qualifying Cases with MiCSES Data Available
New-Establishment Comparison	300	265	264	99.60%
New-Establishment Participant	300	265	251	94.72%
Traditional (subset)	Subset of the Participant Group	138	137	99.28%
Blitz (subset)	Subset of the Participant Group	127	114	90%

The original Section 1115 grant application stated that 300 new-establishment cases would be included in the Project and evaluated, along with a comparison group of 300 new-establishment cases that did not otherwise participate in the Project. Of the 300 new-establishment *comparison* cases, 265 meet the project criteria. Of those 265 cases, we obtained useable MiCSES data for 264 cases. Of the 300 *participant* new-establishment cases selected, 265 meet the project criteria, and 251 of those had useable MiCSES data. Of the 265 participant cases, 127 were processed during the Blitz days⁹ and 138 were not. For this quantitative data analysis, new-establishment cases were analyzed as follows:

- Comparison cases measured against participant cases.
- Comparison cases measured against Blitz day participant cases.

⁹ For a description of the Blitz day process, please see [Appendix C](#).

- Traditional participant cases¹⁰ measured against Blitz day participant cases.

Current Child Support Paid

Current child support paid was one of the key evaluation measures. Table 11 provides information about the amount of current child support charged, current child support paid, and total amount of child support paid for the comparison cases, all participant cases, Blitz participant cases, and traditional participant cases.

¹⁰ Traditional participant cases are cases that were part of the Project but the parents did not participate in the Blitz days. Many of these cases were referred to the Project after a court order was signed.

Table 11: Amount of current child support charged, paid, and total amount of child support paid

Group	Time Period Project Entry	Child Support Due	Current Child Support Paid	Percentage of Current Child Support Paid	Total Child Support Paid
New-Establishment Comparison	6 months after	\$298,634	\$153,822	51.51%	\$221,186
New-Establishment Participant	6 months after	\$215,075	\$116,144	54.00%	\$156,363
Traditional (subset)	6 months after	\$98,750	\$44,951	45.52%	\$68,601
Blitz (subset)	6 months after	\$116,325	\$71,193	61.20%	\$87,762
New-Establishment Comparison	12 months after	\$535,704	\$281,466	52.54%	\$373,816
New-Establishment Participant	12 months after	\$432,843	\$255,971	59.14%	\$342,834
Traditional (subset)	12 months after	\$192,118	\$93,839	48.84%	\$144,490
Blitz (subset)	12 months after	\$240,725	\$162,132	67.35%	\$198,345

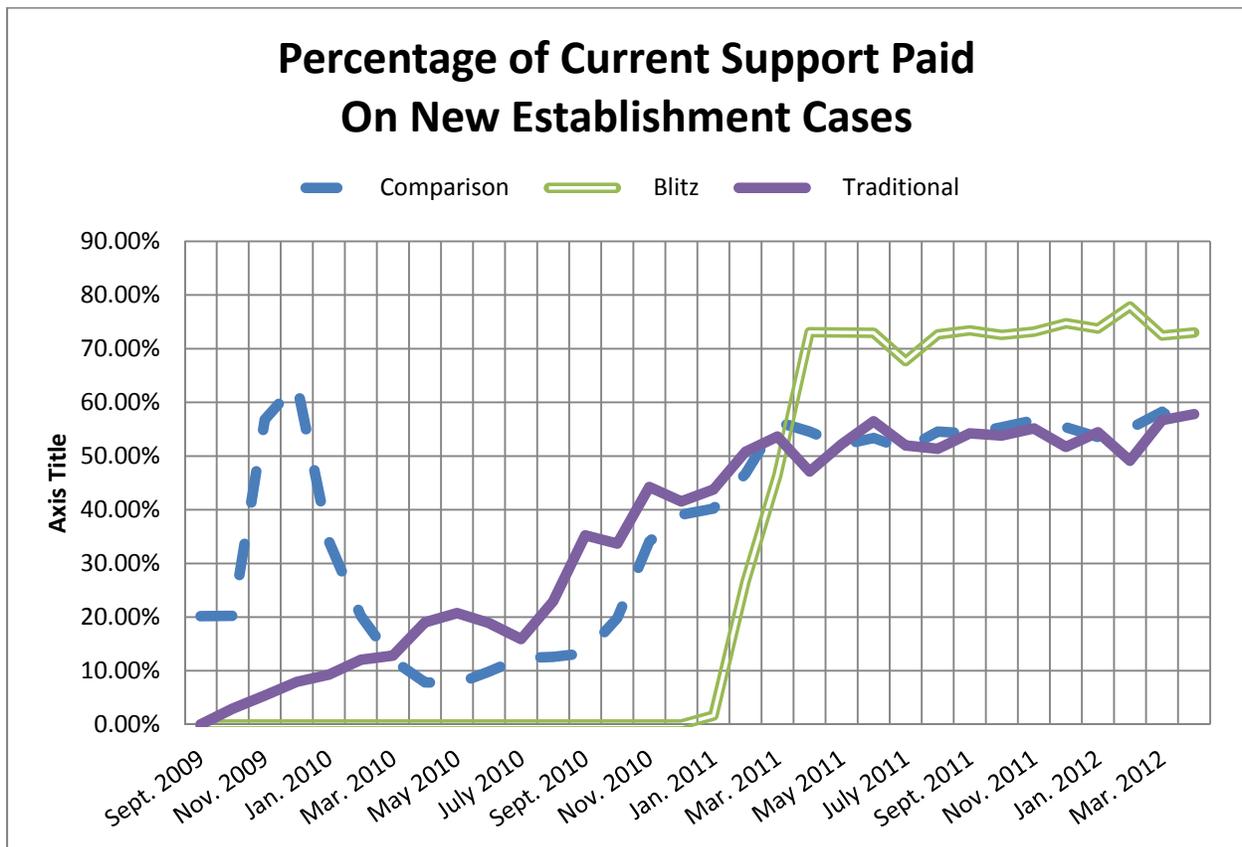
Six months after the project, the comparison group was charged more child support and paid more in both current and total child support than the participant group.¹¹ However, the participant group (including both the Blitz and traditional subgroups) had a higher percentage of current support paid. The Blitz cases had a much higher percentage of current child support paid when measured against the comparison group and the traditional cases.

Twelve months after the Project, the comparison group still was charged and contributed more child support (both current and total). But, the participant group had a higher percentage of current child support paid. The Blitz group had a much higher rate of current child support paid than the comparison group and the traditional group. The Blitz cases were charged more and paid more total child support than the traditional participant cases.

¹¹ There was little or no activity for the new-establishment cases prior to entry into the Project.

Table 12 will illustrate the points in time when the percentage of current child support was paid.

Table 12: Percentage of current child support paid



The comparison cases obtained their highest percentage of current support paid in November 2009.¹² Their percentages then declined for a time before showing an improvement in July and September 2010. In contrast, the traditional cases demonstrated a steady improvement in percentages of current child support paid from September of 2009 to March of 2012. The Blitz cases had a higher percentage of current child support paid than the comparison cases and the traditional cases. The Blitz cases started paying consistently sooner (best described as a “jump start” of child support payments made). Within four months of the Blitz cases being established (November 2010), they had a current child support payment percentage of 72 percent (March 2011). It took the comparison and traditional cases approximately 20 months to reach a consistent percentage of over 50 percent. The highest current child support percentage for the Blitz cases was approximately 78 percent in February of 2012. The highest percentage of current

¹² The spike in current support paid for comparison cases in November 2009 was due to one child support payer making one large payment for one case that month.

child support paid for the comparison cases was 62 percent in November of 2009. The traditional cases' highest percentage was approximately 56 percent in June of 2011.

Table 13 lists the amounts of child support collected for the new-establishment comparison and participant cases.

Table 13: Amounts of child payments made

Group	Payments Made Directly by the Support Payer	State Tax Refund Offset Payments	Unemployment Withholding Child Support Payments	Employer Income Withholding Child Support Payments	Grand Total
New-Establishment Comparison Group	\$28,598.52	\$1,914.75	\$22,810.13	\$200,974.49	\$254,297.89
New-Establishment Participant Group	\$41,716.20	\$5,759.60	\$25,522.07	\$195,381.38	\$268,379.25
Traditional (subset)	\$18,409.21	\$5,759.60	\$16,175.84	\$79,788.49	\$120,133.74
Blitz (subset)	\$23,306.99	\$0	\$9,346.23	\$115,592.89	\$148,246.11

The participant group paid more in direct payments, tax offsets, and total payments. In contrast, the comparison group paid slightly more in employer-withheld child support payments. The Blitz cases paid more in direct payments, employer payments, and total payments than the traditional cases. The traditional group paid more in unemployment child support payments than the Blitz cases.

Table 14 displays information about average amounts of current child support due and paid for the comparison and participant groups.

Table 14: Average amounts of current child support due and paid

Group	Time Period From Project Entry	Average Amount of Child Support Due	Average Amount of Current Child Support Paid
New-Establishment Comparison	6 months after	\$172	\$89
New-Establishment Participant	6 months after	\$146	\$80
Traditional (subset)	6 months after	\$120	\$54
Blitz (subset)	6 months after	\$172	\$105
New-Establishment Comparison	12 months after	\$170	\$89
New-Establishment Participant	12 months after	\$148	\$89
Traditional (subset)	12 months after	\$117	\$54
Blitz (subset)	12 months after	\$179	\$120

On average, the comparison group was charged more after six and twelve months than the participant group. However, both groups paid about the same amounts on average after six and twelve months. The Blitz group was charged more on average than the traditional group and also paid more on average than comparison and traditional groups after six and twelve months. The Blitz group paid \$66 more per case than the traditional group and \$31 more than the comparison group after 12 months.

Table 15 provides information about the number of months child support was paid in full by the comparison and participant groups.

Table 15: Number of months child support was paid in full.

Group	Number of Child Support Payments Paid In Full After Six Months	Number of Child Support Payments Paid In Full After Twelve Months	Number of Child Support Payments Paid In Full Total
New-Establishment Comparison	493	959	1,452
New-Establishment Participant	600	1,279	1,879
Traditional (subset)	300	646	946
Blitz (subset)	300	633	933

The participant group had more months of child support paid in full than the comparison group after six months and twelve months. The traditional cases had slightly more payments after twelve months and total number of payments than the Blitz group.

Table 16 provides information about the average number of months per case that current support was paid in full for comparison, participant, traditional, and Blitz cases.

Table 16: Average number of months per case that current support was paid in full

Group	Average Number of Months Per Case Current Support Paid in Full for Six Months	Average Number of Months Per Case Current Support Paid in Full for Twelve Months
New-Establishment Comparison	1.87	3.63
New-Establishment Participant	2.40	5.10
Traditional (subset)	2.19	4.72
Blitz (subset)	2.65	5.55

The comparison group had the lowest average for months child support paid in full, followed by the traditional group. These metrics show that the participant cases (traditional and Blitz combined) had a better average than the comparison cases. The Blitz cases demonstrated the best average for current support paid for both the six- and twelve-month periods.

Table 17 presents information about the total number of payments by payment type for 12 months after the Project.

Table 17: Total number of child support payments by payment type for 12 months

Group	FIDM Receipt	Special Instruction	State Refund - 820 Manual	State Refund - 820 Automatic	Federal Tax Refund Offset	Obligor	State Tax Refund Offset	Unemployment	IWN	Grand Total
New-Establishment Comparison	0	5	0	1	48	164	9	295	2,070	2,592
New-Establishment Participant	1	4	2	0	30	379	17	343	2,691	3,467
Traditional (subset)	1	0	2	0	29	207	17	210	1,397	1,863
Blitz (subset)	0	4	0	0	1	172	0	133	1,294	1,604

The participant group had more payments from unemployment benefits than the comparison group. Similarly, the participant group had many more payments from employer withholding than the comparison group (621 more payments). The traditional group had more unemployment (77) and employer payments (103) than the Blitz group.

Table 18 presents data about the number of payments from unemployment and employer withholding twelve months after the Project for the comparison and participant cases.

Table 18: Number of child support payments from unemployment and employer withholding

Group	Unemployment Child Support Payments (Average)	Unemployment Child Support Payments (Case Count)	Employer Income Withholding Child Support Payments (Average)	Employer Income Withholding Child Support Payments (Case Count)
New-Establishment Comparison	10	31	19	107
New -Establishment Participant	10	34	21	128
Traditional (subset)	11	19	23	61
Blitz (subset)	9	15	19	67

The participant group had slightly more cases with child support paid from unemployment benefits, a higher average of child support payments from employers, and more cases with child support paid from employers than the comparison group. The Blitz cases had fewer child support payments from unemployment benefits than the traditional cases. The Blitz cases had a higher number of cases with child support paid from employer-withheld wages than the traditional cases.

Table 19 provides contempt hearing information for the comparison and project participant cases.

Table 19: Child support contempt hearing information

Group	Contempt Hearings Scheduled Prior to Project Entry*	Contempt Hearings Scheduled After Project Entry	Total Contempt Hearings Scheduled
New-Establishment Comparison	35	208	243
New-Establishment Participant	19	43	62
Traditional (subset)	19	43	62
Blitz (subset)	0	0	0

Prior to the Project, the comparison group had 16 more contempt hearings than the participant group. After the Project, that gap widened considerably, with the comparison group

having 165 more contempt hearings than the participant group. The traditional subgroup had 43 contempt hearings after the Project; the Blitz subgroup had none.

In addition to the new-establishment quantitative data analysis conducted on the 251 participant cases, the FOC conducted its own analysis on 102 Blitz cases. This analysis was conducted on December 12, 2011, and can be found in [Appendix E](#).

Summary of Quantitative Data for New-Establishment Cases

The data analysis conducted for the entire Project looked at cases with obtainable MiCSES data. That turned out to be 264 comparison cases and 251 participant cases. The participant cases included 137 traditional cases and 114 Blitz cases.

The Blitz cases had the highest percentage of child support paid after both six months (61.20 percent) and 12 months (67.35 percent). These percentages represent child support paid for the entire evaluation period. The Blitz cases achieved the 70 percent threshold within four months (November 2010 to March 2011) and maintained it to the end of the evaluation period. The comparison and traditional cases took 20 months to reach a consistent 50 percent child support collections percentage and maintain that percentage.

The comparison group paid \$5,593.11 more in employer-withheld child support than the participant group. Within the participant group, the Blitz case subgroup paid more in employer child support payments (\$35,804.40 more) than the traditional subgroup.

Twelve months after the Project, the Blitz subgroup cases on average paid more per case (\$120) than the traditional subgroup cases (\$54) and the comparison group cases (\$89). The participant group had more child support payments paid in full (427 more) than the comparison group. The Blitz cases had the highest average (5.55) for months in which child support was paid full compared to the traditional cases (4.72) and the comparison cases (3.63).

The participant group had a greater number of total payments (875 more payments) and more employer-withholding child support payments (621 more payments) than the comparison group. The participant group also had a greater number of cases (128) with employer withholding for child support than the comparison group (107). The Blitz subgroup had more cases (67) with employer withholding than the traditional subgroup (61).

The comparison group had 208 contempt hearings scheduled after the Project. In contrast, the traditional subgroup had 43 contempt hearings and the Blitz subgroup had no contempt hearings scheduled after the project.

It appears based on the analysis of the MiCSES quantitative data that the participant group fared better than the comparison group on most all child support collection measures. And the Blitz subgroup of participant cases outperformed both the comparison group and the traditional subgroup of participant cases on almost all of the same measures.¹³

Court Staff Findings

Michigan State University (MSU) posed to participants, court staff, and agency partners a number of questions regarding the processes of the Project's implementation and outcomes. Twenty-one of the 23 agency partners who assisted with the Project participated in a telephone interview. All nine of the identified key court staff participated in a telephone interview

Staff was asked to describe the primary issues addressed through the Project. Answers focused on the inability of many parents to provide for the children's financial support by paying the court-ordered child support. While this is the traditional goal of the FOC, this Project sought to do so through the provision of services rather than solely through the use of coercive measures. Also, staff stressed the connection between this issue and a noncustodial parent's (NCP's) exercise of parenting time. Staff felt strongly that parenting-time services needed to be provided to improve the NCP's willingness to pay child support. As one staff member stated, it, "the primary idea was to try and create a 'functioning two-parent family unit' where no such family unit had ever existed."

Staff identified a number of primary concerns related to the local social and economic environment. Foremost was the poor economy in the region served by the Project. The Flint area was described as perhaps the "worst local economy" in one of the "worst state economies" in the nation. Thus, even when parents were motivated to work it was often very difficult for them to find employment. During the last decade and a half General Motor's deterioration has trickled down through all other businesses. Related to the poor economy is the inability of many parents to maintain suitable housing for their families. Substance abuse was also raised as a substantial concern in the local environment and specifically among parents with FOC cases.

Staff also described local education deficiencies as a key concern. Many parents on the FOC caseload are described as undereducated, often without even a GED, and frequently presenting as functionally illiterate. Such individuals are difficult to employ even in strong

¹³ Many of the measures used for this report were aggregate data for the Blitz and traditional cases. The Blitz cases had greater totals than the traditional cases even though there were fewer Blitz cases.

economies. Finally, staff felt that many parents were raised in a culture that does not value men being actively involved in the support and care of their children. Fathers often believed that it was “someone else’s” responsibility to provide for their children’s needs. This attitude posed a substantial hurdle to encouraging meaningful participation in the Project.

Staff felt that those parents who did well in the Project had a number of common characteristics. Not surprisingly, the most commonly noted characteristic among staff was the parent’s motivation. Parent’s who “really wanted to do well and see their kids and pay their support were” likely to succeed in the Project. The opposite was true as well, that is a parent’s lack of motivation inevitably led to failure in the Project. Also, parents with newer cases, younger parents, and parents with only one case were more likely to succeed than those with older cases or multiple cases. New, younger parents had not accumulated arrears and had not had any negative experience with the court system. They viewed the Project with an “open mind and willingness to work.” They were not “overwhelmed by the situation” as are many parents with high arrears and multiple cases.

Those parents with higher educations and who were employed were also deemed likely to be successful. Lower conflict cases were also described as far more likely to succeed than cases with high conflict between the parents. When both parents recognized the need for the child(ren) to have a relationship with both mother and father, the odds of success were greatly increased. Project participants with criminal records were not likely to be successful given the difficulty in finding these parents employment. Persistence and motivation were the key character traits. Genuine desire of both parties to have child contact with two parents is crucial.

Staff unanimously agreed that based on their observations many of the Project goals had been achieved. Staff noted the increased level of the Project participant’s NCP’s involvement with their children. As one staff member noted: “though the number of NCPs involved in the Project represented a small percentage of the total FOC caseload, on the small number of cases we dealt with, services helped get people much more involved with their children.” The Project required parents to “take baby steps to get started, encouraging parents to agree to put kids first and put aside their own issues.

A staff member pointed out, “Our ability to do this was a big success because once dads put kids first they became more willing to pay. This mindset change was a big gain.” Another staff member noted that success in the “family court business” is difficult to measure but noted

that he observed in the court room a number of custodial parents who were happy for the first time because support was finally being paid and the NCP was involved with his child for the first time.

Staff was also asked to identify those Project partners that were deemed to be the most crucial to the Project's success. *Support and Training Results in Valuable Employees* (STRIVE) was by far the most frequently mentioned partner in this regard, described by one staff member as the "go to" program. "STRIVE was great they cut through all the excuses by telling people this is YOUR problem so YOU deal with this. People who made it through STRIVE did great, finding jobs something like 80 percent of the time." Staff noted that it had been helpful to have STRIVE staff come to the FOC office to describe their services so that STRIVE could be effectively used.

Many staff members also noted the importance and success of mediation services provided by Dr. Max Taylor. Dr. Taylor met with parties who could not reach agreement on custody and/or parenting time issues. After meeting with parties for a number of sessions he was often able to help them reach mediated agreements that were then used as the basis for new court orders. Unfortunately, funding for this service ran out during the course of the Project. Staff also noted that a number of attorney volunteers often mediated such disputes after they arose in the courtroom. These volunteer services were very useful toward enabling parties to reach agreements.

Staff believed that teaching parties to communicate effectively with each other, and providing the parties an opportunity to be heard was a key piece of the Project's success. A number of staff members stressed that helping the parties to communicate as co-parents for the first time ever was one of the most useful strategies for increasing the likelihood of positive outcomes. The Project benefitted from "parenting time therapists focusing on communication trying to get young/immature parents to put aside their own issues and anger to focus on kids and communicate with each other productively probably for the first time ever."

Staff also identified collaborations that would have been helpful. By far the most frequently cited need was for the partners to help with employment related issues.

Staff wondered whether some form of partnership with the state unemployment office would have been helpful. Staff specially noted the need for temporary employment agencies to assist people in finding jobs, including programs that were specifically tailored toward persons

with criminal records. Staff also would have appreciated some degree of partnership with the local church community to reach black fathers and raise awareness of the Project and to encourage participation. Similarly, other staff would recommend more use of various father's/men's groups as disseminators of information focusing on how the Project was designed to help, rather than punish NCPs. Staff also questioned if there could have been some way to reach into the grandparent population to help spread information and motivate parents.

Staff also identified a number of strategies that were thought to have been particularly helpful for the Project's success. The "Blitz day" strategy was considered by virtually all staff to have been the most effective strategy. The Blitz days enabled staff to meet with participants while they were "still fresh and did not have any arrears yet. Support was set accurately at the beginning of the case rather than through a default judgment that is almost always too high." At Blitz days, men "felt more empowered" more in charge of how life would be governed when involved up front. This was their first meeting with the FOC and it was a positive meeting as the Blitz days were structured in a nonadversarial fashion. Usually the first contact is really negative and the positive nature of the first contact made a big difference in how the case went forward. Motivating and empowering fathers was considered a key to success. "If mom is calling all the shots, it is not likely to have an involved dad and that means failure."

Staff noted that during the Blitz days staff were able to answer all the participant's questions at one time, usually in one hour or less. Typically, this process would "drag over weeks in most cases, often up to six to twelve months." Many parents who fail to get the correct information "just give up and disappear most of the time." Blitz days were a great way to get people "in the system" and "started on a positive note." One staff member noted that she had "dealt with one couple who got a new case set up in one hour for a new baby. Then they commented that they still did not have a case for their three year old" that had been handled in the traditional manner.

Another key strategy frequently mentioned by staff was frequent follow-up with participants." Sending out official letters that were not actually court orders was an effective way to get people into the FOC. Afterwards, regular personal calls and even home visits were deemed crucial to keep people on task as staff worked as case managers. The goal was to encourage people into "developing a habit of paying support" so that it would become "natural" to do so. Throughout the process of case management FOC staff continually "redefined how to go about

this work to cut out unneeded steps. We were always streamlining how best to contact them, how to get them in, how keep on them.”

Dedicated and motivated staff who “really bought into what we were doing was key” to making this aggressive case management style work. Further, ongoing and clear contact and communication between the court and FOC staff was important to accommodate clients’ individual case needs and to get them into court when needed. This Project required staff comfortable with taking a “hands on approach” willing to really take the time with people. One specific strategy staff described involved holding the court’s “payment hearings with guys in cuffs and shackles in front of the Project waiting for their hearings.” This was seen as a motivating tool to impress upon participants the benefits the Project offered as opposed to the traditional coercive approach toward child support collection.

Staff was also asked to identify obstacles that were encountered throughout the course of the Project’s implementation. One obstacle that was often cited was that there was not an effective partnership between the FOC and the PA’s office. Many staff noted that the PA’s office and the FOC have different institutional missions which led to differing perspectives in the Project’s implementation. The PA’s office is set up to establish an order for support. They do not want to get into parenting time issues or to think about how to change the system to something less adversarial. They did not buy into the concept of doing things differently. The absence of specific parenting time orders in new cases was seen as a barrier because “having orders with parenting time as agreed upon gave the mother all the control and often frustrated fathers.” As a result, these cases started out with higher levels of antagonism than if the parenting time issue were addressed at the outset of the case.

Staff further elaborated, noting that “different agencies having individual goals which do not always line up with each other or the Project goals. Support specialists wanted an address, prosecuting attorney wants an order, but no one sees the big picture. Getting support is important but so is parenting time and so is helping the family with services. Everyone should have been on board with the Project’s goals and approaches ‘up front’ but this was not the case.” Finally, staff noted that that the time it took to have new cases established through the prosecutor’s office was also a major obstacle. The time delay meant that many families waited “sometimes years” to get an order in place, during which time the noncustodial parent had no legal right to begin a relationship with his child and no legal obligation to support that child financially.

Another major obstacle to success reported by staff was that the Project forms and procedures were frequently changed. “It seemed like every time we thought we knew what we were doing we were told we had to do it differently. Need to figure it all out up front and let folks know from the beginning.” Similarly, the Project criteria for qualifying cases was changed thorough the course of the Project to get cases. Initially, there were very strict criteria that very much limited the number of qualifying cases. As criteria was relaxed, staff identified many more cases to work with. But as a result of the initial criteria, “the first five months or so we did not get enough cases and that was time we did not use well. Blitz days were a big help in cases in the door once we started doing that.” Along these lines, many forms were initially “far too long and intrusive clients did not like having to do that.” The forms and questionnaires were later shortened, but staff stressed that it would have been more helpful to have all the forms prepared in their final versions before the Project began. “Otherwise, with all the changes, we looked like we did not know what we were doing.”

The high number of cases and few staff to work those cases was also cited as an obstacle. Similarly, with only one judge assigned to the Project it was difficult to always have sufficient access to the court. “The numbers were overwhelming at times” so even with a highly dedicated judge and staff “sometimes cases were rushed through which hindered the possibility of intense attention needed.” Similarly, turnover in staff working on the Project posed an obstacle since new staff would take time to “get up to speed and develop the enthusiasm and expertise” needed to handle the Project’s challenging caseload. “When staff was well prepared for hearings we had very productive hearings.”

Court staff were asked to consider whether this Project could be expanded on a statewide basis. While staff unanimously answered in the positive, a number of caveats were attached. Staff strongly felt that any future Project would have to adopt some sort of strategy comparable to the Blitz days. “To get enough cases in the door and start them off right you need to have a round up like we did. You cannot just ask people to come in.”

Staff also stressed that to expand the Project successfully; “firm direction from the top at the beginning” is needed. “Someone or one agency needs to be in charge and everyone needs to be OK with that. You cannot always reach consensus so a higher level organization or individual needs to be in charge and give direction when consensus is not reached.” Other staff expressed concerns that “politics” and “union issues” could be a hindrance in the expansion of this Project.

One staff member wondered whether “a court rule or statute could be passed” to allow or even require “counties and courts authority to do this sort of work.”

Staff also stressed that all procedures, forms, and Project parameters need to be determined prior to actually beginning the Project if the Project were to be expanded. It would also be important to become closely involved with the partnering agencies at the beginning of the Project so that staff understood the services available to clients and the agencies understood the Project’s specific goals and parameters. To make this work elsewhere planners need to “get all ducks in a row before starting everything. Too much time can be wasted backtracking because of form changes and things like that.” One staff member specifically suggested that for any future Projects “everyone needs to understand the evaluator’s process how long it takes all up front.” In summary, one staff member stated that “I am convinced this process could be streamlined to get cases established faster and get right into cases to legally establish a family unit set up with payment and a noncustodial parent being involved in the child’s life.” Staff also emphasized the intensive time demands of this Project and noted that any future Project expansion would have to take that into account. Projects would need to have sufficient FOC and court resources to provide effective case management services. One staff member noted that in addition to having dedicated FOC staff, future project must have “jurists with motivation.” Cases need to meet weekly if not more often. If each court could devote part of its docket to these problem cases it would be a good start. This is very “labor intensive” work.

Finally, the following agency partners were also singled out as being particularly helpful to the Project’s participants: *Insight, Odyssey, Department of Human Services (DHS), substance abuse assessment and treatment centers, Community Mental Health (CMH), Michigan Fatherhood, Catholic Charities (for clothes, job searches and a pantry for toiletries), Mott Adult Education (for obtaining GEDs), and the SCAO.*

Agency Partners

Though no agency partner felt in a position to comment on the overall success of the Project, a number of partners described a variety of participant successes. “Many of the participants we worked with seemed to be successful; the self-motivation is important to their overall success and continuation of paying support and also staying involved with their children.” Another partner noted that while working with NCP’s to find employment she saw that the NCP’s ability to see their kids contributed to their success. ‘Many parents want to have a

relationship with their kids and parents are more invested when they get to see their children.” Another partner reported that one NCP explained that he was “ashamed” to see his children when he had not paid his support regardless of whether they knew he had not paid. This NCP demonstrated the necessary “motivation to do right by your children.”

Some agency partners noted that at the beginning of the Project they were unclear on how processes would actually work. They noted that for future Projects it would be advisable to bring in the partners at the beginning planning stages to establish early, ongoing commitment as well as to develop procedures and protocols that were most efficient. Partners also recommended enabling them to provide “assistance and consultation to the court staff and to serve as liaisons to other agencies.” Partners also noted that clients would often discuss how practices and services varied from county to county. As a result, agency partners recommend that any statewide program provide “consistency” regarding how cases are handled. Finally, partners recommend that any future Project include incentives to participants. While “the incentive of getting a job or improving relationships should be enough, parents still need a ‘pat on the back’ for continued encouragement. It would be nice to have some sort of celebration to acknowledge parents’ commitment to their children.

Agency partners were also very enthusiastic regarding their collaboration with the court pursuant to this Project. “I felt my opinions and experience were valued and accepted when beginning this Project. There was great enthusiasm from the court staff and that made me more optimistic about the potential success of this Project.” Another partner noted that “I thought this was a far-fetched, but doable project. The court staff maintained a healthy, excited nervousness (this is a good thing) as we worked with them.” One partner made a specific suggestion for improvement, noting that “I would like to have seen a bit more understanding about our agency’s role and expected level of involvement/commitment. This may have been confusing just because the Project was new.”

Agency partners added that the court’s unfairly negative reputation in the community was a major obstacle. “The court doesn’t have the best reputation (unfairly so) in the community. Fathers who are primarily the NCP don’t usually find the court to be in their favor while a Project like this may change that perception; will they then have to worry about the custodial parents being upset at the process?” This partner apparently felt that such concerns could hinder

an NCP's willingness to participate in the Project and commitment to the program if actually participating

Almost all agency partners cited concerns about the economy and the job outlook for the county as a whole as the major barrier to the Project's success. As one partner stated "What do you do when you give someone job training and education and they still cannot find a job?" Along those same line, one partner noted that "it was definitely a concern of mine about the damage that receiving services and not improving one's situation would have on an individual."

Agency partners overwhelmingly agreed that the Project can and should be implemented statewide. Virtually unanimous suggestions for doing so included providing "faster attention" to noncustodial parents to facilitate "faster movement through the court process," especially to "hold mothers more accountable when she doesn't let the father see the children." Agency partners also advised providing more counseling assessments to noncustodial parents "as the issues they face go beyond the child support issue." Partners also recommended increasing the involvement of CPs in the Project. "CPs might be more supportive if there was universal access to counseling and parenting/co-parenting skills classes."

IX. Conclusions

Conclusions

The quantitative and qualitative findings reported earlier in this report demonstrate that the Project helped many Genesee County parents provide emotional and financial support for their children. The following paragraphs summarize the conclusions drawn from the Project first for the job-loss cases and then for the new-establishment cases.

Conclusions for Job-Loss Cases

The Project demonstrated that early intervention with child support payers who lost their employment or some other income had the following benefits:

Early intervention meant payers had their orders right-sized sooner and as result accrued fewer arrears. Payers who participated in the Project had their child support obligations reduced by more than three times the amount than those who did not participate. They were able to pay more towards current child support thus reducing the probability of accumulating any child support arrearages. When courts pay attention to early trouble signs in a child support case, a collaboration can be formed between the payer and the court. Also, early attention underscores the importance of the payer's role in supporting his or her child and as a result the payer many times secures employment earlier.

Payers maintained efforts to pay support longer than those who did not have early intervention. Payers in the Project had a higher percentage of current support paid than the comparison group. They also paid more in current support and total child support than the comparison group. Third, the findings show that the participant group showed steady improvement for paying current child support while the comparison group showed a reduction in the amount of child support paid for the same time period.

Payers were able to secure employment. Payers in the Project paid substantially more and more often for employer child support payments than the comparison group. These findings indicate that more job-loss participants were employed than those in the comparison group. They were also more likely to have medical insurance for their children as a benefit of their employment.

Conclusions for New-Establishment Cases

The Project demonstrated that, early intervention, collaboration in developing the order, developing a rapport between court staff and parents, and the inclusion of parenting time, in child support orders had the following benefits:

Payers contributed more child support for their establishment case when early intervention was provided. Payers who were provided early intervention had a much higher percentage of current child support paid than those who did not. They also began paying much sooner and reached a higher payment plateau more quickly than those payers who did not receive the early intervention.

Payers paid more child support when they were involved in formulating the support order. Payers had a higher average of child support paid when they were allowed input in formulating the child support court order than those who did not participate in formulating the order or those whose participation was not voluntary.

Payers contributed more child support when they developed a rapport with child support staff. Payers who appeared voluntarily at the Friend of the Court Office and were able to have their questions answered and the process explained contributed over 37 percent more child support than those payers whose opportunity to participate were by way of a court hearing.

Payers were more compliant with child support orders when those orders included a parenting time provision. Payers who had a parenting time provision in their original child support court order had a higher average of months of child support paid in full than those payers who did not.

X. Recommendations

The 7th Circuit Court “Project” was a very successful child support/parenting time pilot project. It demonstrated that putting certain new practices in place will allow local, state, and national child support programs to achieve greater success. The following are recommendations for those practices based on the 7th Circuit results.

- Courts need to reach out and offer help to parents as soon as their financial circumstances change for reasons such as a job loss or other loss of income.
- The delay in establishing child support and parenting time court orders must be significantly reduced from months to days.
- Whenever possible, both parties to a case must be included in the discussions that lead to the establishment of child support orders.
- Courts and child support agencies cannot use a "cookie cutter" process when establishing child support orders.
- Each child support order should include a parenting time provision so both parents can continue active involvement in the child's life.
- Child support and court agencies must engage both parties as early as possible in paternity establishment cases. This will lead to a better working relationship between the parents the court, and child support agencies.
- Child support agencies need manageable caseloads. A manageable caseload will allow for quick follow up action when a payer quits paying or when the agency staff must intervene to solve other issues.
- Other projects similar to the 7th Circuit Project should be implemented. However, these projects must be given adequate time for planning, implementation, and evaluation. The results of these projects should be monitored so that expedited processes can be further evaluated to identify better child support processes

Appendix A-List of Project Services

List of Service Providers

Services Provided for Participants in the Genesee County PACT 1115 Grant Funded Project.

- Substance Abuse Treatment Services.
- Mental Health Treatment Services (anger management).
- Employment Services.
- Medical Treatment Services.
- Transportation and Housing Services.
- Mediation services (parenting time issue).
- Education Services.
- Parenting Skills.
- Batterer Intervention.
- Child Support Reviews.
- Custody and Parenting Time Evaluations.
- Psychological Evaluations.
- Housing.

Appendix B-List of Advisory Board Members

Dr. Maxwell Taylor Taylor Psychological Clinic	Ellen Durnan Policy Analyst Michigan of Child Support
Jim Hudgens Executive Director, New Paths, Inc.	Tim Cole Management Analyst Michigan Supreme Court
Honorable Richard B. Yuille Chief Circuit Court Judge, 7 th Judicial Circuit Court	Candy Mattson Director of Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Services YMCA of Great Flint
Dan Jaworski Division Chief, Family Support Genesee County Prosecutor's Office	Linda Thompson Superintendent, Flint Community Schools
John G. Battles Director, Genesee County Friend of the Court	Richard L. Gladney Director of Employment & Training, The Urban League of Flint
Larry Leslie Administrative Assistant, Genesee County Friend of the Court	Duane Zuckschwerdt UAW Region 1-C
Natalie Mott PACT/Project Coordinator, Genesee County Friend of the Court	LaDon McNeil Manager of Customer Services & Access, Genesee County Community
Stephanie Witucki Caseworker, PACT Genesee County Friend of the Court	Diana Kelly Community Investment Manager, United Way of Genesee County
Sheryl Thompson Director, Genesee County Department Of Human Services	Marilyn Stephen Michigan IV-D Director, Michigan Office of Child Support
Mike Kildee President, Michigan Fatherhood Coalition	Julie Griffiths Attorney at Law
Craig Coney President, Career alliance	Vicky Shultz CEO, Catholic Charities
Jamar Baker STRIVE	Steve Walker Director, GCCRD

Appendix C-Description of the Blitz Days

Seventh Judicial Circuit of Michigan

Genesee County Friend of the Court

John G. Battles

Friend of the Court

Larry E. Leslie
Administrative Assistant

Genesee County Adm. Bldg.
1101 Beach St, Suite 111
Flint, Michigan 48502-1474
Telephone:18101257-3300

MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 3, 2012
TO: John G. Battles
Friend of the Court
FROM: Mark Allen
Casework Supervisor

RE: Summary of Genesee County Friend of the Court's PACT Court Cases

**SUMMARY OF GENESSEE COUNTY FRIEND OF THE COURT'S PACT COURT CASES:
Expedited process for Establishing Child Support orders**

Introduction:

The Genesee County Friend of the Court initiated an expedited process for establishing paternity orders as part of the 1115 PACT Court grant. Originally, cases were to be referred to the program by the Family Division of the County Prosecutor's Office. Due to time constraints, the FOC office proposed and implemented a Blitz format for establishing court orders. The Genesee County FOC worked CAR referrals received from the DHS support specialists and invited clients to participate in an expedited establishment process. The simplified and condensed PACT Court Blitz process reduced the time involved to one hour in the office discussing child support and parenting time for the parties' children. Timely court dates were also scheduled to have the cases heard before Judge Theile. Traditionally, the CAR referrals would remain in establishment status awaiting an order for a period of 9-12 months and sometimes longer. (see table 1)

The Process:

The FOC mailed official requests to the parties to appear at the Friend of the Court office to begin the establishment process and potentially enter the PACT program to receive available services. On the Blitz dates, the establishment process was broken down into 3 phases. The initial phase included an introduction and general information. The FOC Director and an Assistant Prosecutor presented information on the program and explained the expedited establishment process. During phase 2 of the Blitz, the clients worked with staff to fill out the necessary paperwork and to provide needed information to begin the process of establishing paternity.

Once all of the necessary paperwork was completely filled out, the clients then moved on to

phase 3 of the Blitz process which entailed meeting with a caseworker to discuss the issues facing the family, DNA testing, running child support guidelines and creating an order. The clients were required to provide proof of income and other pertinent information to the caseworkers. Parenting time and custody arrangements were also addressed during this phase, which were incorporated into the orders. The clients were then given a date to appear before the court to have the orders signed. Non-custodial parents who wished to participate were asked to waive notice under the Court Rules and stipulate to the orders that were being prepared

Once orders were established on all of the Blitz cases, the FOC immediately started the enforcement process, which included telephone contact, home visits, written correspondence, computer searches for income and assets, show cause hearings, bench warrants, and possible arrests. Some form of enforcement action had taken place on all non-compliant cases 30 days after establishment. There was also enforcement action taken on parenting time violations on these cases.

Traditional Establishment Approach:

The FOC reviewed all of the Blitz cases after 6 months and found that 61.8% of total charged support had been collected and distributed on these cases. After 12 months, MiCSES data showed that 72.7% of the total charged support had been collected on the Blitz cases. As a comparison, our office reviewed cases which were established in the conventional manner through the Prosecutor's Office for the same time period. Based on the MiCSES data, 63.7% of the cases had made some type of payment and that only 38.5% of the total charged support had been collected on the cases established by the Family Division of the Prosecutor's Office. (see table 3)

Conclusion:

In considering the data, there are three major factors which contributed to the increased collections for the FOC Blitz cases as opposed to the cases established by conventional methods: First, the input and involvement of the NCP in the establishment of the order, Second, the expedited process from CAR referral to enforcement phase which reduced the time necessary to establish paternity by 9 months and lastly, the inclusion of appropriate parenting time in the orders for the NCP on Blitz cases. The NCP was involved from the beginning and was able to provide input and information which resulted in a more accurate court order. We are also able to obtain better contact information from the NCP and answer questions by the NCP before they become hopelessly behind in arrearages. The expedited format helps in enforcement as we have more accurate contact information for both parties. It also sends the message to clients that the FOC is closely monitoring these cases. The inclusion of appropriate parenting time in the orders also sends the message to both parties that children need both parent's emotional support. The data shows what most of us already know and that is that a father is more likely to comply with an order he provided input in and which addresses his parenting time and custody rights. Based on the success of the Blitz days and the Genesee County PACT Court, one must question whether there is a more efficient way of processing DP and DS cases. Further studies/projects should be undertaken and results monitored where one IV-D agency receives information from the IV-A worker and works with and assists the parties to create an order that includes not just child support but appropriate parenting time provisions which will strengthen the families involved. Truly expedited then

Appendix D –Copy of Complaint/Answer/Waiver/Stipulation Form

STATE OF MICHIGAN 7TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT GENESEE COUNTY	COMPLAINT/ANSWER, WAIVER OF SUMMONS AND STIPULATION <input type="checkbox"/> PATERNITY <input type="checkbox"/> SUPPORT (PAGE 1)	CASE NO.
Court address		Court telephone no.

Mother's name, address, and telephone no.

Father's name, address, and telephone no.

Mother's county of residence: _____

Father's county of residence: _____

1. I understand that I may be a party to a paternity or family support action.
2. To avoid formal proceedings, including the filing of a complaint, the service of summons,* the filing of a formal answer, and an appearance in court for pretrial proceedings, I agree:
 - a. the IV-D agency may file this form with the circuit court to start a family support action. paternity action.
 - b. to waive service of a separate complaint and summons in this case.
 - c. the court may recognize this form as my complaint and/or my answer and initial appearance for purposes of this case.
 - d. a judgment may be submitted to the court for entry dated within 21 days of the date that I sign this form, unless this is a paternity case.
 - e. all future court notices will be sent to the above address and I will immediately notify the Friend of the Court of any changes in my address.

3. I state that:

I am or may be (subject to genetic testing if this is a paternity action) the parent of

Child's name	Date of birth	Address	City	State	Zip
Child's name	Date of birth	Address	City	State	Zip
Child's name	Date of birth	Address	City	State	Zip

- (paternity cases only)
- a. the mother became pregnant by the father on or about _____ Date _____ in _____ City/county _____, Michigan.
 - b. the mother delivered the child(ren) named above.
 - c. the mother was unmarried at the time of conception and remained unmarried until the date the child(ren) was/were born.
 - d. I agree that the friend of the court or prosecuting attorney may submit a judgment to the court 1) establishing paternity and containing the terms agreed to on page 2 of this form for entry within 21 days of the date that genetic testing with a 99 percent or greater probability of paternity is complete, or 2) ending this case if paternity testing finds he is not the father.
- (family support cases only)
- a valid Affidavit of Parentage for the child(ren) is on file with the Michigan Department of Community Health.
 - the child(ren) was/were conceived during the marriage of the mother and the father whose names appear on this form.
 - a judgment of paternity for the child(ren) has previously been entered.

(SEE SECOND PAGE)

* I understand that, as a defendant in a paternity action, if a formal summons is issued in this case, I am entitled to the assistance of an attorney and that, if I am financially unable to obtain an attorney of my choice, the court will, at my request, appoint an attorney for me at public expense.

STATE OF MICHIGAN 7TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT GENESEE COUNTY	COMPLAINT/ANSWER, WAIVER OF SUMMONS AND STIPULATION <input type="checkbox"/> PATERNITY <input type="checkbox"/> SUPPORT (PAGE 2)	CASE NO.
Court address _____		Court telephone no. _____
Mother's name _____		Father's name _____

We agree the friend of the court or prosecuting attorney may prepare an order and submit it to the court containing the following:

- Custody:
 - Legal custody shall be with mother. father.
 - Physical custody shall be with mother. father.
- Parenting time:
 - Reasonable parenting time as the parents agree for mother. father.
 - Per the Genesee County Guidelines for mother. father.
 - Other: _____

- Support:
 - Effective date: _____
 - Payer: mother father
 - Monthly amount: _____ Base: _____ Medical: _____
 Premium: _____ Child care: _____ Other: _____
 Confinement: _____
 - Health care to be divided _____ % to the mother and _____ % to the father.
 - The mother father shall carry health insurance for the child(ren).
- The issues of custody, parenting time, and support terms not agreed to shall be heard before Hon. Michael J. Theile on _____ at _____, located at 900 S. Saginaw, Flint, Michigan 48502.
Date Time
- All issues shall be addressed by the PACT court.

This agreement is temporary. subject to PACT court revision. final.

I declare that the statements on pages 1 and 2 of this form are true to the best of my information, knowledge, and belief.

 Mother's signature Date

 Father's signature Date

Appendix E – Genesee County 7th Circuit Courts Data Analysis

Seventh Judicial Circuit of Michigan

Genesee Count Friend of the Court



John G. Battles
Friend of the Court

Larry E. Leslie
Administrative Assistant

Genesee County Adm. Bldg.
1101 Beach St., Suite 111
Telephone: (810) 257-3300

MEMORANDUM

DATE: December 12, 2011

TO: John G. Battles
Director, Friend of the Court

FROM: Larry E. Leslie 
Administrative Assistant

PACT Blitz Day Cases Review

I have finished reviewing the one hundred twenty-four (124) cases that were placed in the PACT court as a result of the "Blitz Days" we held at the Friend of the Court.

There are twenty-two (22) cases out of the one hundred twenty-four (124) cases that do not have a current monthly support charge. One (1) of the cases has a deceased NCP, two (2) cases were closed, sixteen (16) of the cases are a combination of the parties living together/married or an Agreement of Non Enforcement is in place and support is reserved. The other three (3) cases involve an NCP who either is on SSI or has applied for SSI and court is reserving support on the case at this time.

One hundred two (102) of the cases have a current monthly support charge to be paid. Sixteen (16) of the one hundred two (102) cases are charging Medical Support (MS) only at this time. Ninety-four (94) of the one hundred two (102) cases that currently have a monthly charge amount have made at least one partial payment on the account since the case was opened.

There has been as little as \$13.00 paid on one case and greater than \$6900.00 on another case since the first Friend of the Court "Blitz Cases" were established in November 2010.

There has been at least a partial payment made on 92.2% of the charging cases established during the "Blitz Days."

According to MiCSES, a total of \$137,541.63 has been collected on these cases. There is an arrearage total of \$51,741.27 collectively on the cases. During the period from November 2010 to December 2011 72.7% of the total charging support has been collected for all the cases combined.

There are several conclusions to be submitted based upon the review of these cases that are listed below:

- The NCP is more involved in the establishment of the ease when the case is expedited under the model utilized during the Friend of the Court blitz days.
- The NCP is involved from the beginning of the process allowing the NCP an opportunity to have input into the establishment of the order that will govern the ease; including a parenting time clause for the NCP to be involved in the child(ren)'s life.
- The NCP has an opportunity to ask questions and develop a working relationship with the Friend of the Court that allows for contact that is more frequent when issues may be presented in the case later.
- When the case is expedited under this model, the order is established much sooner than the conventional time period, which can be as much as nine (9) or more months. This eliminates the creation of a substantial arrearage on the case that is created under the conventional method at the beginning of the case.
- The involvement of both parties in the establishment of the support order allowed for the support to be set at a level that is more in line with the economic conditions of both parties.
- The Friend of the Court enforcement team became involved in the collection of the support much quicker when the NCP did not pay under this model than it does under the conventional model. These cases were reviewed by a member of the Friend of the Court enforcement team on a regular basis and enforcement action was taken when deemed appropriate.

Summary

If greater success is to be achieved in collecting additional child support there are a minimum of five (5) criteria where change must take place. The delay in issuing an order to manage a case must be significantly reduced from months to days. Both parties to a case must be included in the creation of the order whenever possible. The order cannot be a "cookie cutter" type order; each order must include the needs of both parties including a parenting time clause to continue the inclusion of the payer of support in the child's life. Interaction with both parties and the Friend of the Court from the establishment of the case will lead to a better working relationship. A manageable caseload for the Friend of the Court enforcement staff to allow for quick follow up when a payer quits paying or when staff must intervene to solve other issues presented.

Total Cases	Total Charging Cases	Total Payments of Cases	Total Arrears Owing	Total Cases with Payment	Percentage Charging Cases Paid	Percentage Total Arrears Paid
124	102	137,541.63	51,741.27	94	92.2%	72.7%