



Orange County
Child Support Services

2023

ORANGE COUNTY CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES

ANNUAL REPORT

*Trusted partners of parents in securing financial
stability for Orange County's children*





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ORANGE COUNTY CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES

EXECUTIVE TEAM



MARIA ARZOLA

Director
Orange County Child Support Services



RACHAEL GALLARDO

Chief Deputy Director
Orange County Child Support Services



VERONICA MCNAMARA

Deputy Director
Program Support Services



MONIQUE JOHNSON

Deputy Director
Case Management Operations



TIFFANY ROCHA

Deputy Director
Customer Support Operations

FROM THE

EXECUTIVE TEAM

For a long time, the child support program was rooted in transactions — collecting and distributing child support payments as efficiently as possible. Over time, the program has evolved to center itself around people — parents, families, and communities. As the program has evolved, and the makeup and needs of families have become more diverse, Orange County Child Support Services (OC CSS) has grown and changed too. Over the years, we have pursued several strategies to simplify child support, connect customers to local resources, and tailor services for specific audiences like veterans or those affected by domestic violence. As the program has changed, and we have changed with it, we found the best way to support our customers is by being flexible, proactive, and intentional in our approach to adapt to the diverse needs and expectations of our customers.

This past year, OC CSS has taken big steps in this direction. Our continued implementation of a holistic case management model has resulted in organizational changes to reduce hand offs, training and collaboration to increase departmentwide knowledge, and a new onboarding process for case managers infused with holistic principles. Through our Customer Experience initiative, we took time to understand our customers' experiences with the child support program and began implementing changes to improve customer communication and simplify processes. We embraced new programs from California Child Support Services and worked hard to implement them so they can fully benefit our customers. Finally, we increased our efforts to engage our community and county partners to coordinate service for our shared customers.

These accomplishments are significant alone, but together they add up to a reimagining of child support for OC CSS. These new approaches and systems recognize the power of the tools we have to transform the lives of parents we serve. It helps us find balance in our approach in order to shift our focus from collecting payments to serving families and playing an active role in the social safety net that supports Orange County.

VISION

To be a trusted partner of parents in securing financial stability for Orange County's children.

MISSION

To facilitate the financial support of children by engaging parents and providing professional child support services.

VALUES

COMMITMENT TO CHILDREN

DEDICATED CUSTOMER SERVICE

COMPASSION AND ENCOURAGEMENT

INTEGRITY AND RESPECT

GROWTH AND LEARNING

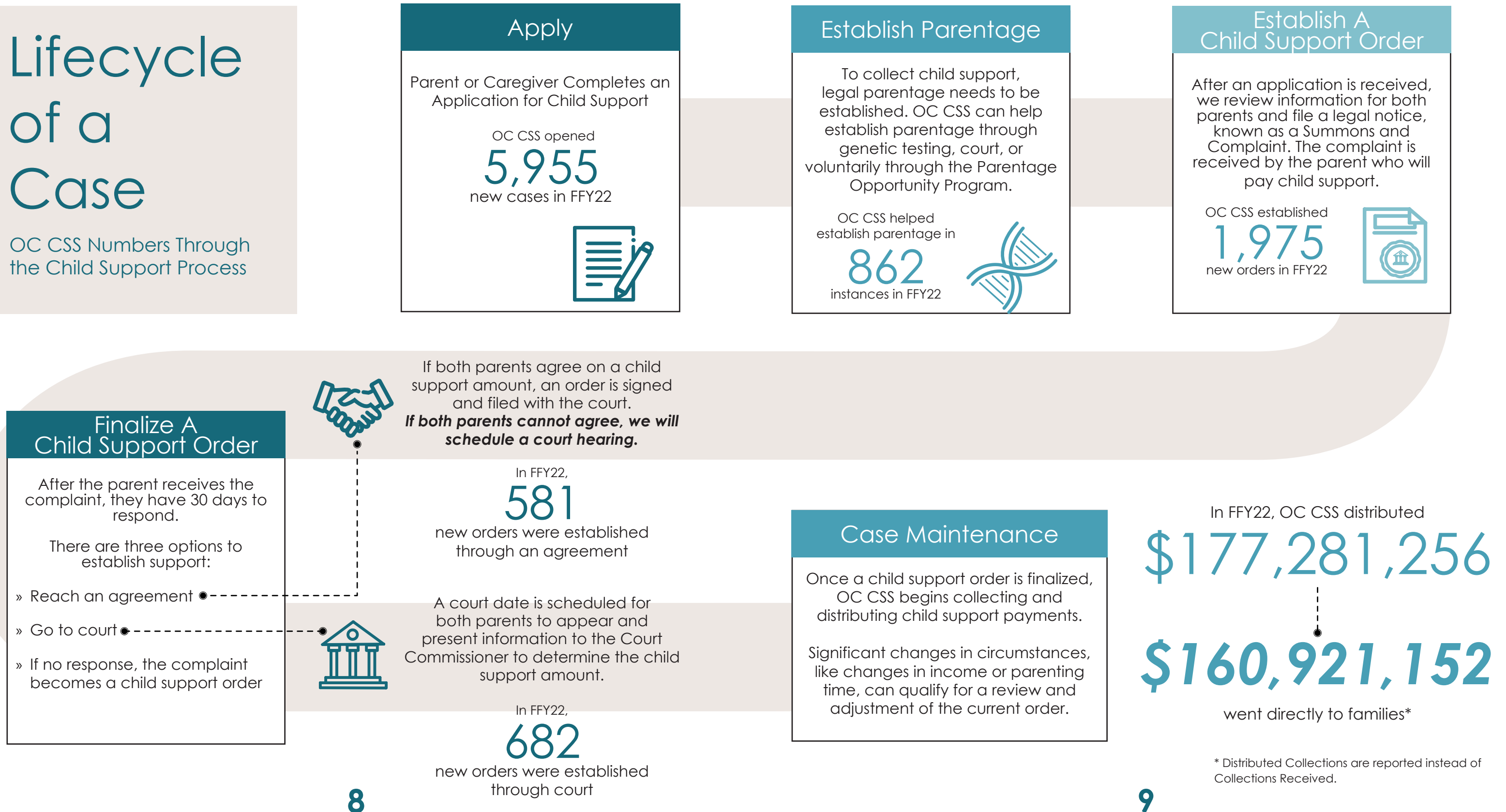
TEAMWORK AND COLLABORATION

OUR BUSINESS

Child support requires our customers to navigate legal processes and relationships. Our role as a local child support agency (LCSA) is to empower our customers with knowledge and guide them through the child support process.

Lifecycle of a Case

OC CSS Numbers Through the Child Support Process



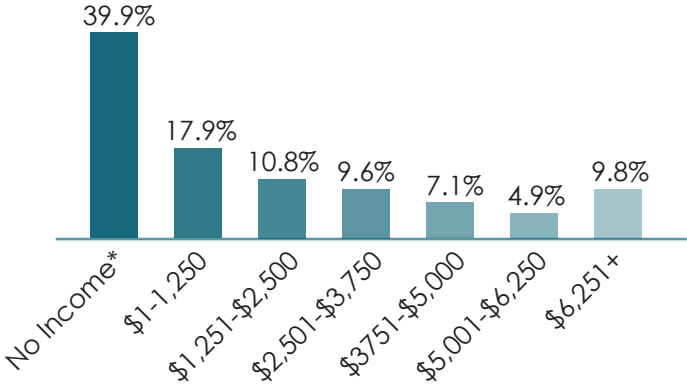
OUR CUSTOMERS

Our first priority is providing excellent customer service. Understanding who are customers are, the external barriers they face, and the challenges they have in the child support program allows us to deliver excellent service by tailoring our approach.

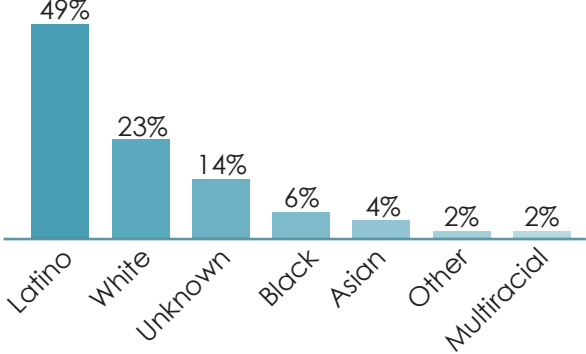
This year, our Call Center answered **112,899** calls and our Customer Service Teams served **20,318** customers and assisted with **3,950** messages through our customer portal, Customer Connect.

CUSTOMER DEMOGRAPHICS

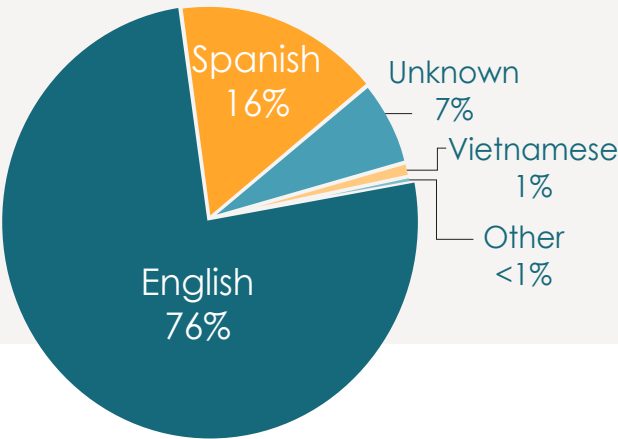
MONTHLY INCOME OF PARENTS PAYING SUPPORT
N=52,151



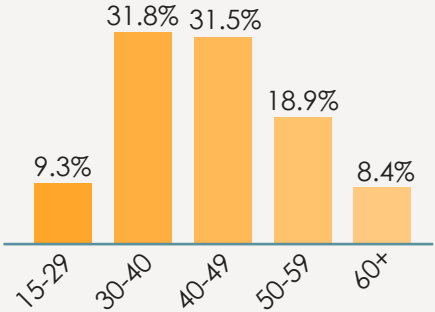
CUSTOMERS BY RACE
N=103,550



PRIMARY LANGUAGE
N=103,550



AGE OF PARENTS
N=103,208



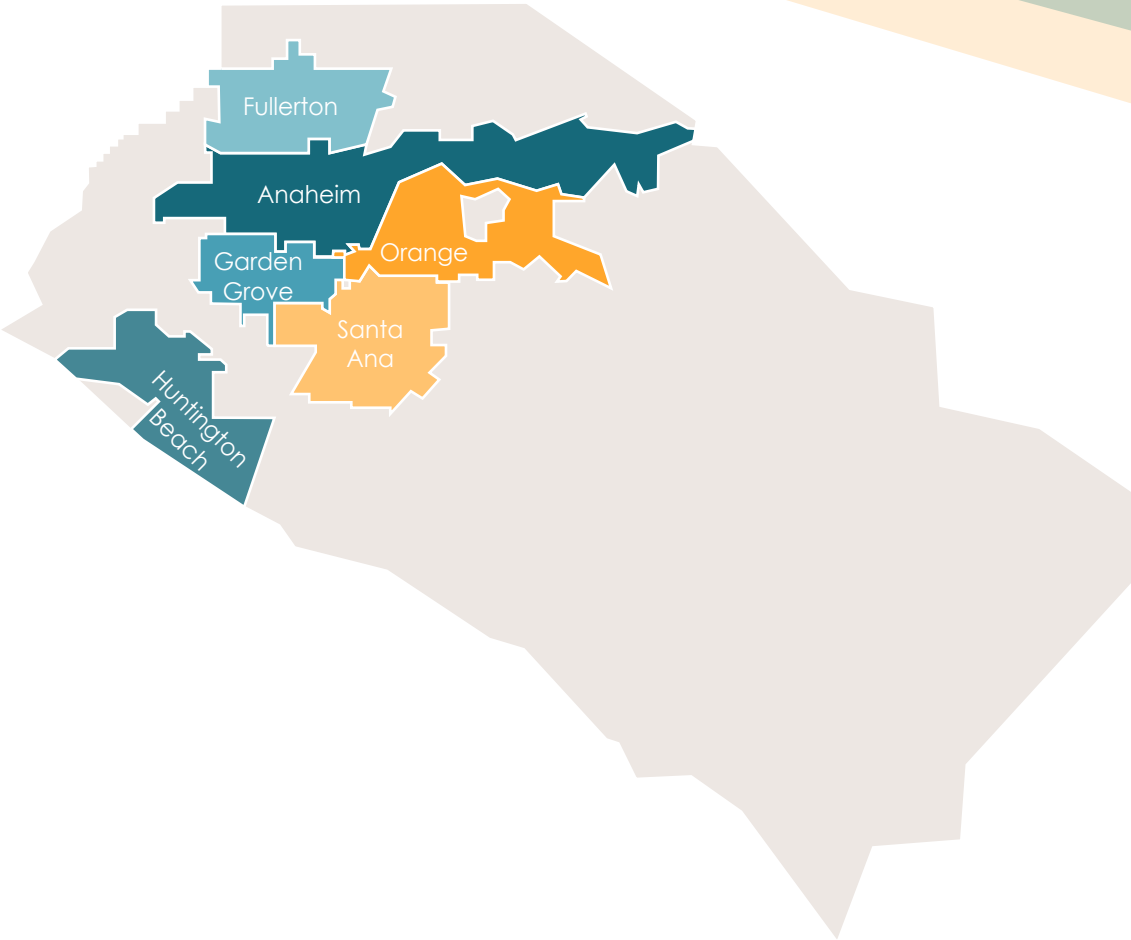
TOP 5 CITIES CUSTOMERS LIVE IN

Parents Paying Support
N=28,509

- Santa Ana, 21%
- Anaheim, 18%
- Garden Grove, 7%
- Orange, 6%
- Huntington Beach, 5%

Parents Receiving Support
N=42,324

- Santa Ana, 17%
- Garden Grove, 7%
- Huntington Beach, 5%
- Fullerton, 5%
- Orange, 5%



*No income includes customers where income information is not available.

CUSTOMER CHALLENGES

Cost of Living and Housing

With the median rent in Orange County at \$2,057 a month and home prices over \$490,000 higher than the national median, rent and mortgage payments are a large expense for Orange County families¹. For parents receiving child support payments, their monthly payments offset these costs. For parents making child support payments, it can be difficult to find a balance between paying child support and their need to pay rent. Generally, the cost of groceries, gas, and other goods are also higher in Orange County, and California, compared to other areas of the U.S.

Barriers to Making and Receiving Payments

Many of our customers experience challenges with unemployment and under-employment, limited education, and healthcare coverage that does not meet their needs and/or the needs of their children. Some of our customers have a criminal history which can make it hard to find a job. Often, customers face some combination of these challenges and each alone makes paying child support more difficult.



Difficulty Navigating the Child Support Process

The child support process includes legal paperwork, navigating negotiations and relationships, court appearances, and decisions that affect the parents and children involved for a long time. The forms required can be hard to fill out, especially if there is a language barrier. Without an understanding of the child support process, it can be hard for customers to know what decisions make the most sense for them and their children.

Each of our customers brings a unique set of challenges, needs, and expectations. It is important for our services to have flexibility to adapt to these broad range of needs, challenges, and expectations. For example, we introduced a virtual appointment option to continue services during the pandemic which greatly increased accessibility. However, many of our customers still prefer coming to our office in person to make payments and ask questions. Having both options available to meet both preferences is an example of how we think about flexibility in service delivery.



¹ US Census Bureau, 2023: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/orangecountycalifornia,US/PST045222,PST045221>

OUR APPROACH

Being flexible, intentional, and proactive in our approach is how we meet our customers' needs and reduce their challenges. We put these ideas to work over the last year through a holistic transformation, business process changes, implementing new programs, and promoting a new culture.

HOLISTIC CUSTOMER SERVICE

For the last two years, OC CSS has been reimagining how we serve our customers by creating a culture and system of services designed to meet the unique needs of each of our customers.

A holistic customer service approach means walking customers through their case, explaining every option available to them, and helping them understand next steps. This approach is designed to empower our customers to feel confident in their decisions and for our case managers to have a collaborative and supportive role in moving cases forward.

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

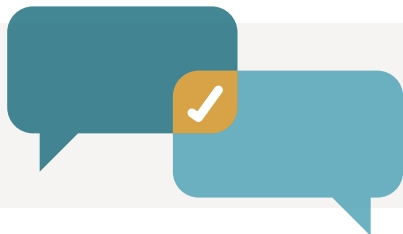
Using research, customer surveys, and staff input, we gained a better understanding of our customers' experience and identified changes that could increase accessibility and convenience. As a result, we implemented new processes and technology to enhance customer communication, simplified processes for customers, and trained case managers on more productive and effective approaches to customer conversations.

SETTING UP OUR CUSTOMERS FOR SUCCESS

Child support orders should work for both parents. Our goal is to find a balance between supporting children and affordability. This balance makes it more likely parents can afford their child support payments and those payments are reliable sources of income. Child support orders that strike this balance are called right-sized orders.

To obtain a right-sized order, we strive to fully engage both parents in the process of setting a child support order. Their engagement allows us to base amounts on accurate income, monthly costs, and parenting time. It also gives us the opportunity to build trust and share the child support process. This trust and understanding opens communication when assistance is needed in the future.

With right-sized orders in mind, we designed a new settlement conference process. This process allows customers to meet with a child support attorney to reach an agreement on a child support amount rather than going to court. This helps us engage both parents, facilitate discussion, and share how order amounts are established. When parents agree to an order amount it is more likely the child support case will be successful for both parents in the long run.



52% of settlement conferences successfully reached an agreement on a child support amount in FFY 22

Helping Customers Manage Child Support Debt

Establishing right-sized orders is the first step towards preventing child support debt. However, child support orders last for years and life changes a lot in that time. If a customer misses payments, we work with them to create a payment plan or check if they qualify to change their monthly amount.

California's Debt Reduction Program also allows OC CSS to negotiate a payment on child support debt and forgive the remaining balance*. Through internal education and promotion of how the Debt Reduction Program can transform our customers' lives, OC CSS has proactively encouraged case managers to identify eligible customers and help them take full advantage of the program.

256 Debt Reduction Program applications approved in FFY 22



*Only past due child support owed to the government qualifies. Past due child support is owed to the government if missed payments occurred while the child(ren) received public assistance.



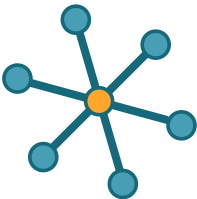
WORKING TOGETHER

Child support is a big part of our customers' lives, but it is still only one piece of it. We know that we can only support our customers in so many ways. To play a larger role in helping our customers be successful, we rely on non-profit, county, and government partners to help our customers in ways we cannot. We want to connect our customers to these resources and help other agencies where we can because the well-being and success of our community and parents we serve is tied to the well-being and success of Orange County's children.



Building relationships with community service providers that specialize in father engagement gives us the opportunity to understand the unique needs and situations of fathers which informs our services and approach. It also allows us to share the child support process with these providers so they can support their clients with cases.

Our relationships with local family resource centers, job centers, and Orange County Social Services Agency allow us to connect customers who need help with job services, health and mental health services, or just meeting basic needs.



Every quarter, we host Social Safety Net presentations where local community service providers share information about their services. These presentations inform our case managers who connect our customers to these providers.

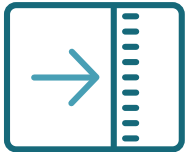


This year, presenters included CalOptima, family resource centers, Community Legal Aid SoCal, the Superior Court of Orange County, MOMs Orange County, and Veterans Legal Institute.



OC CSS has started to work with the OC CARES system which coordinates care and services for individuals involved in the justice system re-entering society. For individuals in the OC CARES system with a case, we can help them navigate barriers to re-entry caused by child support where it is appropriate and we are able to.

For customers affected by domestic violence, accessing child support services can be difficult. We worked with domestic violence service providers in Orange County to design a system of services that help us identify these customers and provide them safe access to child support. In partnership with the Orange County Superior Court, we have implemented on-site protocols and virtual options so that customers can safely attend their court hearings.



While some partnerships help us fully support our customers, the Orange County Superior Court, Family Law Facilitator, and employers are critical partners in providing child support services. Maintaining relationships with them helps us ensure a positive overall experience for our customers.



COMMITMENT TO GROWTH AND PROGRESS

We work to be a leader in the child support program by taking opportunities to innovate, improve our customers' experience with the child support program, and develop an experienced workforce. We are committed to growing and moving our services forward because Orange County families deserve excellent, reliable service.

FLEXIBILITY AND ACCESS

Improving flexibility and access for our customers comes through trying new approaches and finding innovative strategies. Over the years, we have focused on a variety of practical ways to give our customers flexibility in our services. This year, we focused on introducing, implementing, and refining the following strategies.

Simplified Application

California Child Support Services launched a simplified child support application pilot which requires less information to start the child support process. OC CSS, and a number of other LCSAs, are using this application and providing feedback on its effectiveness. The application is also mobile-friendly so that customers can easily complete it with the device they prefer or is available to them.

In FFY22, customers scheduled
1,250
appointments online



Self-scheduling and Video Appointments

We identified a need for customers to have a better way to reach us and worked on solutions for several years. During the pandemic, we created a system where customers could schedule appointments online that worked with their schedule and allowed them to choose an online meeting. This allowed more customers to connect with us from further away and gave them more flexibility and control with scheduling.

Saturday Hours

After resuming normal business hours after the pandemic, we reintroduced Saturday office hours once a month in 2022. This weekend availability allows busy parents to better coordinate an appointment with their schedules.

Over **200** customers served on Saturday between January and September 2022



Forms Workshops

Completing required legal forms can be difficult for customers. So, we introduced Forms Workshops where we provide assistance completing any required forms.



Between August and October 2022

OC CSS helped **65** customers complete **89** forms

We also continued refining and expanding other strategies such as diverse payment options, electronic document signatures and filing, maintaining an on-site computer lab, and text message reminders. Many of these strategies are made possible through partnership with California Child Support Services and the court system. In addition, we maintain options customers prefer such as in-person cashiering.



STAFF DEVELOPMENT

The skills and knowledge of our case managers and staff is the foundation of our customers' success and our success. We invest in our staff by emphasizing growth and training at all levels.

OC CSS staff received
19,600
hours of training
last year



Our training program focuses on the core pillars of program knowledge, leadership, and professional and personal development. Training supports our holistic approach by enhancing departmentwide program knowledge which helps improve the quality and effectiveness of our services.

We develop our leaders by encouraging them to reflect on and practice their approach to leadership, offering essential HR and leadership trainings, and encouraging leaders to lean on and learn from each other. Last year, we introduced the Coaching Corner Program which allows leaders to schedule an appointment with a coach here at OC CSS. Coaches are experienced leaders that provide guidance on any topic from team development to project planning.

Taking a holistic approach has also meant changing how our teams operate and interact to focus less on specialization. To support case managers taking on new duties and learning new functions, we rolled out a series of formal trainings and cross training sessions over the past year.

As part of the onboarding process for new case managers, we introduced the CSS Academy. In the CSS Academy, new case managers learn from experts at OC CSS and perform a variety of case work functions. It also encourages peer connections and collaboration intended to build relationships across teams and throughout the department.



RETENTION AND SUCCESSION PLANNING

OC CSS strives to be an agency where people find careers and grow both professionally and personally. Our staff hold knowledge and expertise on all processes necessary to run our program. Most importantly, the care they show for their own families extends to the care they show each other and our customers.

As with other agencies, OC CSS has experienced a lot of change in our workforce over the last year. In response to the changing workforce, we have been preparing strategies to retain knowledge and staff by:

- Transferring child support program knowledge by encouraging cross training, peer learning, and collaboration.
- Increasing self-care trainings.
- Infusing our holistic approach to customer service into our culture and leadership.
- Strengthening leader support through the Coaching Corner program and HR trainings.
- Increasing communication and transparency by developing new channels of communication from leaders and Executives.
- Encouraging staff to take advantage of County of Orange benefits such as tuition reimbursement, employee assistance program, and wellness program to increase career opportunities and overall wellness.

Retaining knowledgeable staff and offering opportunities for growth and development are not only important to maintaining high-quality services, but also ensures we develop the next generation of leaders.

AVERAGE WORKFORCE EXPERIENCE



LOOKING FORWARD

In 2023, we want to continue on the path we set for ourselves over the last two years. To do this, we set the following priorities for this year:

Continue Making Our Program and Services Flexible, Proactive, and Intentional

We will continue efforts to tailor services that reflect the diversity of all our customers. We also recognize the importance of engaging both parents in the child support process as much as possible. Part of doing that is increasing our understanding of the unique needs and situations of fathers and how we can use this understanding to inform our approach and increase father engagement.

Community and County Engagement

We have made a lot of progress in engaging partners in our community and in the County of Orange. To continue this, we plan to expand our efforts and explore how we can use partnerships to increase awareness and understanding of the child support program and the visibility of OC CSS. We also plan to use this expansion to broaden the support network we can offer our customers and create robust cross-referral systems.

Performance Strategies

We are committed to robust data collection and analysis. This data knowledge has primarily been used by our Research team. Our goal over the next year is to extend more of that data knowledge and application throughout the rest of our department. We are also being intentional in analyzing the lessons learned over the course of the pandemic and how to apply them moving forward.



OC CSS Culture

We are working on applying our holistic principles internally to create a culture of trust, innovation, and lifelong learners. Through support, mentorship, and growth and learning opportunities for our staff, we ensure quality care for them and our customers and prepare the next generation of OC CSS leaders.

Innovation

Innovation is critical as child support and the needs of our community evolve. Our goal is to focus on being a leader in the child support program by trying new strategies and embracing new programs from California Child Support Services. Often, new innovative ideas come from our staff so it is important to continue building channels for them to share their thoughts and ideas.

APPENDICES

Performance Scorecard

Organizational Charts

Federal Performance Measures

An Award Winning Agency

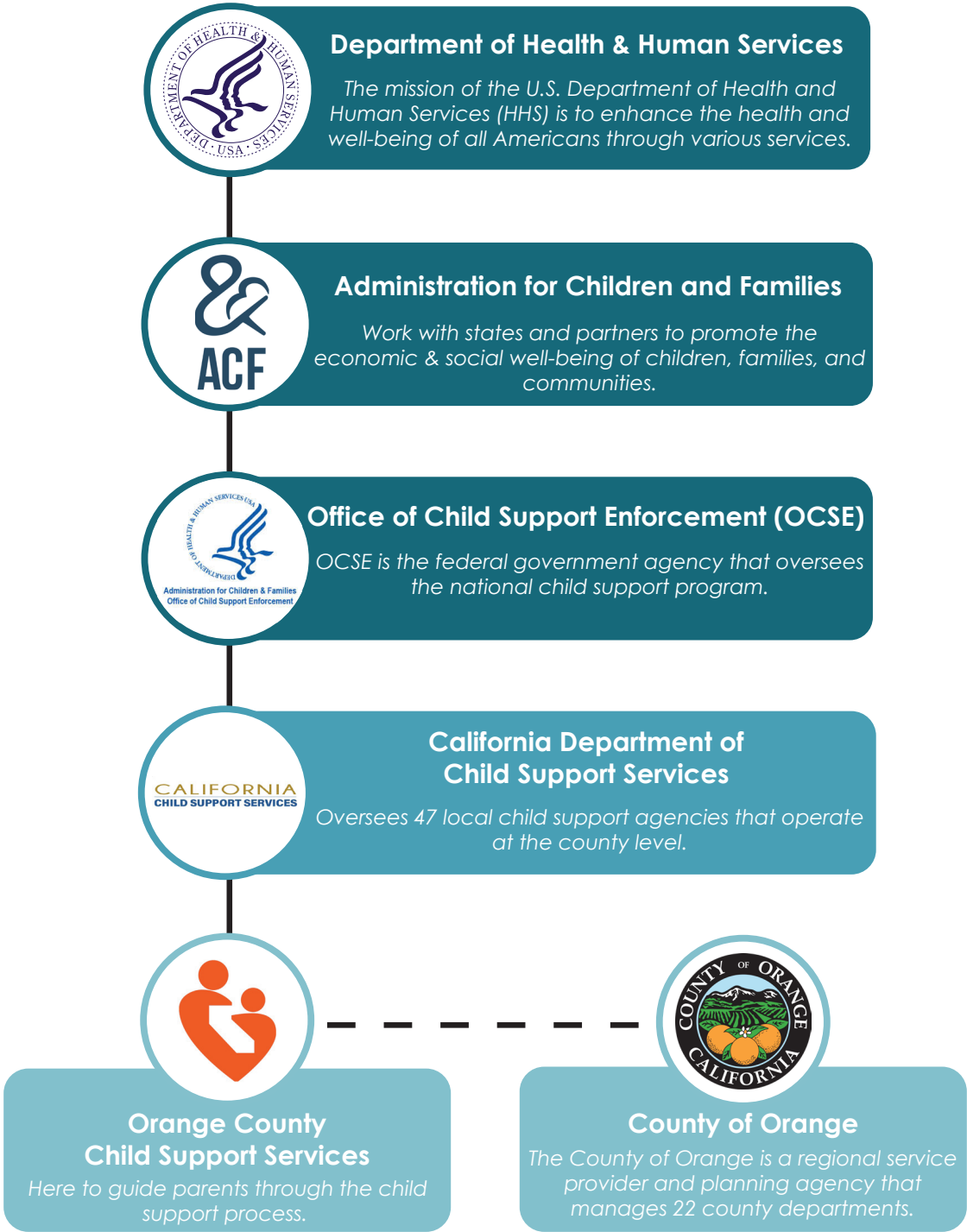
What Customers Are Saying

PERFORMANCE SCORECARD FFY22

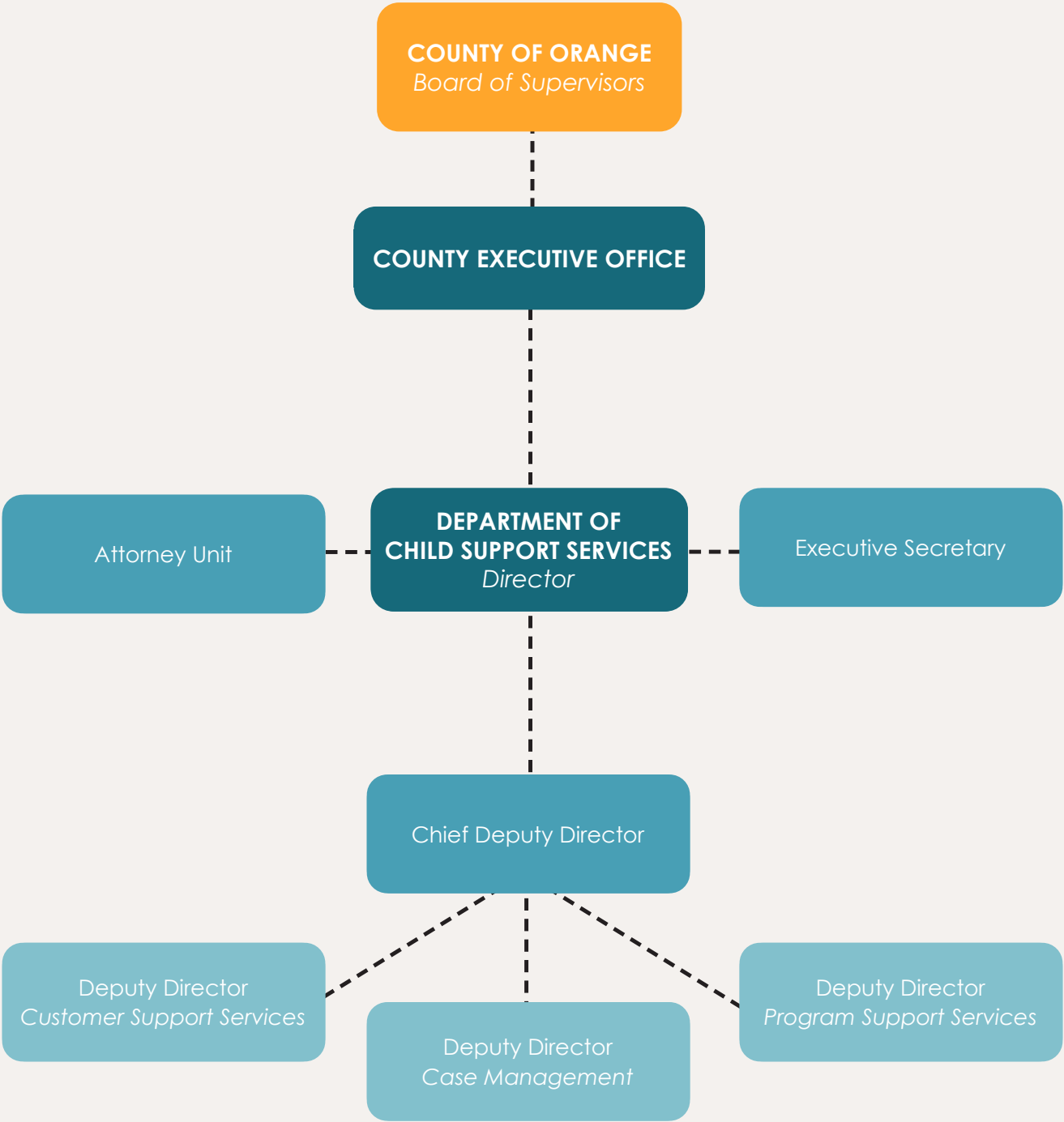
Objective		Metric	FFY20	FFY21	FFY22
Collections & Performance	To ensure the financial and medical support of children	Annual Dollars Collected Per Case	\$3,304	\$3,296	\$3,134
		Annual Dollars Distributed to Families	\$175,525,070	\$169,266,185	\$160,921,152
		Annual % of Current Support Collected	68.2%	67.8%	65.6%
		Annual % of Cases with Arrears Collected	77.3%	73.2%	67.2%
		Annual % of Cases with Orders Established	93.8%	94.3%	93.3%
		Annual % of Cases with Paternity Established*	99.9%	100.1%	102.3%
Customers	To build positive, lasting and valued relationships with customers	Annual Department Overall Customer Satisfaction	3.5	3.4	3.4
		Annual Lobby Wait Time (Customer Contact)	9 min	10 min	16 min
Business Efficiencies	To provide child support services efficiently and effectively	Annual Dollars Collected Per Full-Time Employee(FTE)	\$503,148	\$511,317	\$512,374
		PI #22 - Days: Case Opening to Order + Order to First Payment = Total Days	124	141	141
		PI #25 - Days: Case Opening with Order to First Payment	44	43	42
		Data Reliability Index Per QTR	100%	99%	94%
		Compliance Index Per QTR	100%	99%	97.5%
		Emergency Operation Action Plans	100%	100%	100%
Staff	To deliver child support services in a professional manner	Annual Hrs of Professional Development Per FTE	35.4	21.1	57.7
		% of Leaders w/ 27 hrs of Annual Leadership Training	87%	48%	98%

FEDERAL TO LOCAL ORGANIZATION

The child support program was established in 1975. In California, child support services are provided through a network of 47 Local Child Support Agencies that operate at the county level.



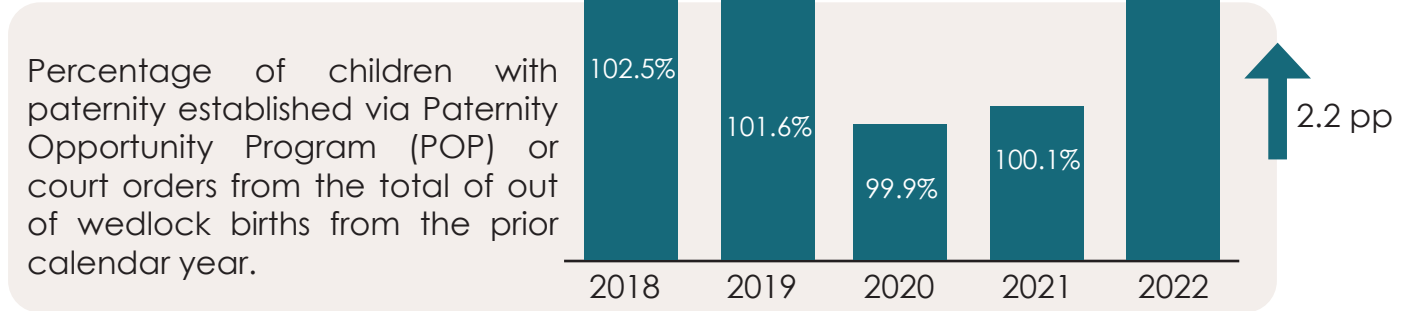
OC CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES



Federal Performance Measures

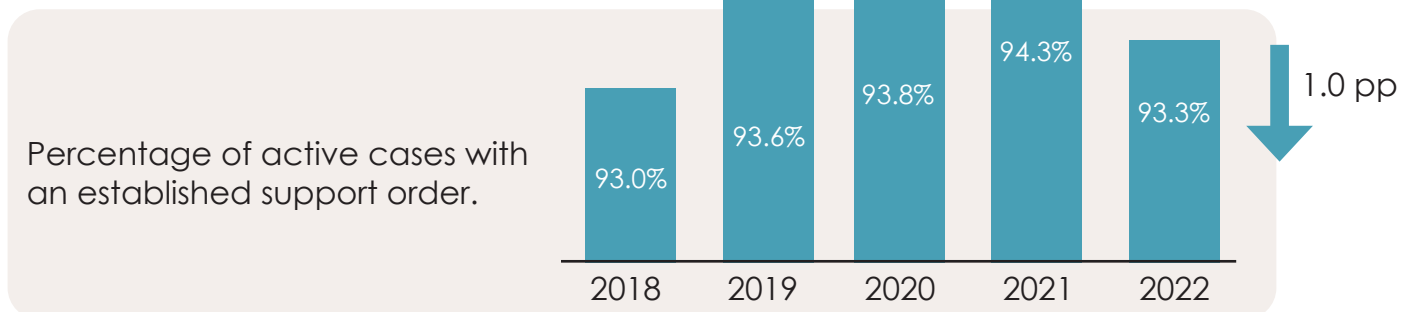
Federal Performance Measures (FPMs) establish performance metrics for establishing orders and collecting and distributing child support.

FPM 1. Paternity



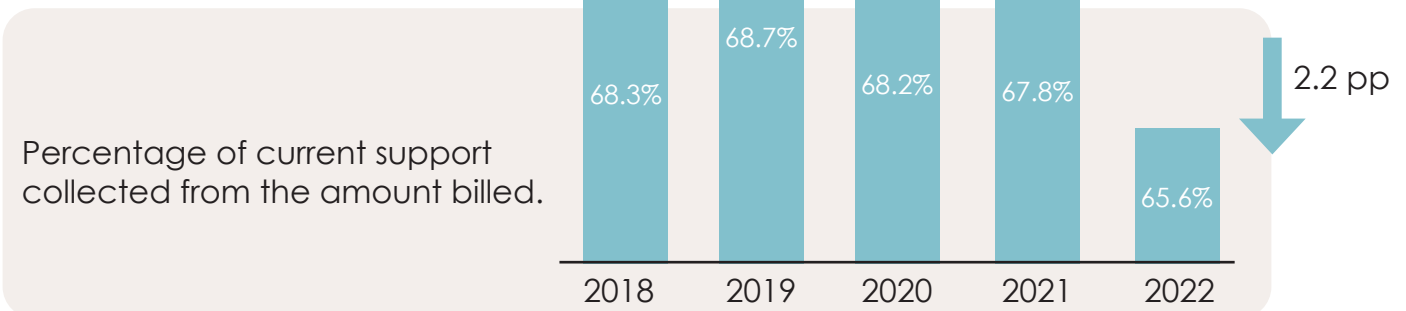
Data Source: 1257 report/Office of Vital Records

FPM 2. Court Orders



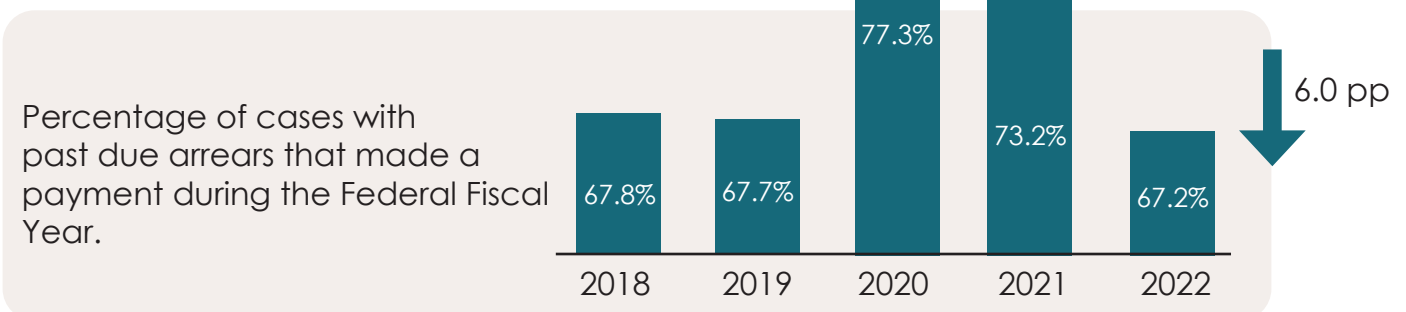
Data Source: 1257—line2/line1

FPM 3. Current Support



Data Source: 1257—line25/line24

FPM 4. Arrears



Data Source: 1257—line29/line28

FPM 5. Cost Effectiveness



Data Source: 1257 report and Fiscal Budget

ORANGE COUNTY CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES AN AWARD WINNING AGENCY



Program Engagement Award
Settlement Conferences
2022



Program Awareness
Marketing Campaign
2019

Program Engagement Award
Marketing Campaign
2019



Achievement Award
Predictive Analytics
2019



Incorporating Innovative
Technology Award
Predictive Analytics
2019

WHAT CUSTOMERS ARE SAYING

"Every representative I've ever spoken with on the phone was pleasant and knowledgeable. Turning my support order over to OC CSS was one of the best decisions I made regarding child support."

"Your service has been very helpful to me and my daughters... thank you for caring."

"I was given direct information, explanations, and insight as to what I needed to do next."

"OC CSS went above and beyond in helping me. They are respectful, followed up as they said they would, and made sure all my questions and requests had been answered. They are the best."



MARIA ARZOLA

DIRECTOR

**ORANGE COUNTY
CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES**

1055 N. MAIN ST.

SANTA ANA, CA 92701

(866) 901-3212



**Orange County
Child Support Services**