

2024

ORANGE COUNTY CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT

A trusted partner of parents in securing financial stability for Orange County's children



TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 3 Our Vision, Mission, and Values
- Letter From the Executive Team 5
- Our Business 6
- Our Customers 8
- Our Approach 12
- Collaborating for Success 14
- Commitment to Progress 16
- Legislation Shaping the Child Support 20 Program
- Looking Forward
 - Appendices
 - 25 Performance Scorecard
 - 26 Organizational Charts
 - 28 Federal Performance Measures
 - 30 What Customers Are Saying
 - 31 Recognition Awards

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

ORANGE COUNTY CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES EXECUTIVE TEAM



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FROM THE **EXECUTIVE TEAM**

In 2023, the Orange County Department of Child Support Services (OC CSS) experienced a year of foundational changes and new chapters. The California legislation passed several impactful bills that will reshape the child support program around family and community — fundamentally changing how we think about and approach our work. At the same time, we experienced an evolution of our own. We introduced increased flexibility and intentionality into our customer engagement strategies, invested in our workforce through hiring, training and retention strategies, and strengthened our connection to our community.

At the center of our evolution is the belief and understanding that each customer has a unique story that influences their child support journey. In partnering with our customers, it is our responsibility to understand each story and have the knowledge and capability to meet every parent where they are in their journey. Ensuring customers are supported in every interaction comes from a culture of service ingrained in the department and also commitment to providing ongoing learning opportunities to our valued team members to build in-depth knowledge and skill. Ensuring customers feel heard comes with increasing customer engagement, diversifying our communication, and increasing opportunities to connect with us online. Through community events and targeted outreach, we increase access to our services for underserved parents who may not know about or understand the child support program. Finally, developing relationships with trusted community partners allows us to connect the parents we serve to other systems of care — supporting long-term success and stability for them and their children.

Together, we have established a foundation for the next chapter of child support in Orange County. As we look forward to 2024, our customers' stories will remain at the center of our decisions and our work.

OUR BUSINESS

Child support requires our customers to navigate legal systems and relationships. OC CSS' role as a local child support agency (LCSA) is to provide access to this system by empowering our customers with knowledge and guiding them through the child support process.

How Child Support Works

OC CSS Numbers Through the Child Support Process

Apply

Parent or Caregiver Completes an Application for Child Support

> OC CSS opened 6,288 new cases in FFY23



Establish Parentage

To facilitate child support payments, legal parentage needs to be established. OC CSS can help establish parentage through genetic testing, court, or voluntarily through the Parentage Opportunity Program.



Finalize A and filed with both parents can schedule a complaint, they have 30 days to respond. After the parent receives the complaint, they have 30 days to respond. In F There are three options to establish support: new orders with through and through and the schedule and through and the schedule and through and the schedule and the sc

» If no response, the complaint becomes a child support order

If both parents agree on a child support amount, an order is signed and filed with the court. If both parents cannot agree, we will schedule a court hearing.

In FFY23,

488 new orders were established through an agreement

A court date is scheduled for both parents to appear and present information to the Court Commissioner to determine the child support amount.

In FFY23,

new orders were established through court

Case Maintenance

Once a child support order is finalized, OC CSS begins facilitating child support payments.

Significant changes in circumstances, such as changes in income or parenting time, can qualify for a review and adjustment of the current order.



OC CSS modified 2,5555 orders in FFY23

Establish A Child Support Order

After an application is received, we review information for both parents and file a legal notice known as a Summons and Complaint. The complaint is received by the parent who will pay child support.







OUR CUSTOMERS

Understanding who our 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.

CUSTOMER DEMOGRAPHICS

*70% of the county's

in CA SB1055.

median income aligns

with guidance provided

IN FFY 23, OC CSS SERVED

62,262 CHILDREN

1 IN 9 CHILDREN IN ORANGE COUNTY



INCOME AT OR BELOW 70% OF COUNTY'S ANNUAL MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME*





TOP 10 CITIES CUSTOMERS LIVE IN







BARRIERS OUR CUSTOMERS FACE

The customers we see and speak to regularly often face some combination of barriers in their life and with the child support process. As their partner, we have the opportunity to identify and address these barriers. Some of the most significant barriers for our customers include:

Cost of Living and Housing in Orange County

The majority of our customers make \$70,000 or less per year in a county with a median household income of \$109,361. The median rent in Orange County is \$2,248 which makes housing a significant expense for families. This leaves less for everyday necessities like childcare, groceries, and gas which, generally, cost more in California.

Child support payments, and connecting families to resources, help parents have everyday needs met for themselves and their children. Actively promoting waitlist openings for the Housing Choice Voucher program and increasing partnership with housing services, also allows us to connect families and coordinate our services.

Employment

Many parents we serve have a hard time finding consistent and sufficient employment. OC CSS only has verified traditional employment for 59% of paying parents. For the remaining population of parents, their income and employment is often inconsistent. We work with these parents to avoid long-term impacts and child support debt.



Part of our efforts to support our customers in need of employment services includes prioritizing partnerships with local and statewide workforce development boards.

Involvement in the Justice System

History in the justice system add an additional barrier to regular employment for some customers.

Those currently in the justice system have their court orders suspended during, and for up to 10 months after incarceration. These 10 months give us the opportunity to connect these parents to resources and help them stay on track with child support.

Navigating the Child Support Process

The child support process includes legal paperwork, navigating negotiations, court appearances, and decisions that affect the parents and children involved for a long time. Without an understanding of the child support process, it can be difficult for customers to confidently make decisions that affect their families.

Our holistic approach is designed to support parents through decision-making and court appearances. We also make our services accessible through virtual, phone, and in-person appointments, Saturday availability, and one-on-one assistance with forms.

SERVING OUR CUSTOMERS

Whether in court, our lobby, on a video call, or over the phone, our goal is for every customer to leave our interactions with a better understanding of their case.



1 US Census Bureau, 2023: https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/sandiegocountycalifornia, losangelescountycalifornia, sanbernardinocountycalifornia, riversidecountycalifornia, CA, orangecountycalifornia/PST045222f



OUR APPROACH

Being flexible, intentional, and proactive in our approach is how we serve our customers, meet their needs, and reduce their barriers. We put these ideas to work over the last year by identifying business process changes to create a more positive customer experience, implementing new programs, and promoting a new culture.

HOLISTIC CASE MANAGEMENT

OC CSS has reimagined how we serve our customers by creating a culture and system of services designed to meet the unique needs of each of our customers. Our case managers walk each customer through the case, explain every option available, and make sure they understand the next steps. This approach allows our case managers to be supportive and collaborative in moving their case forward.

In the last year, we have started to build the partnerships, tools, and practices that will allow our case managers to provide solutions beyond child support. This includes connecting customers with resources for employment, basic needs, and health care.

Through shaping our services and culture while strengthening our partnerships, our goal is to center our services around families — ensuring everyone involved in the case finds the help and support they need for success.

THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY

Using research, customer surveys, and staff input, we gained a better understanding of our customers' journey with child support and our office. In deepening our understanding, we identified opportunities to improve customer communication and case management practices.

Every month, supervisors and leaders review cases and customer surveys in depth to foster conversation. These conversations and cases are extended to team meetings where staff and their supervisors collaborate on best practices in case management.



SETTING CUSTOMERS UP FOR SUCCESS

Through customer engagement, our goal is to gather the most accurate information from both parents. Accurate information on important factors, such as income and time with children, ensures that child support orders find a balance between supporting children and affordability. This balance makes it more likely parents can afford their child support payments, and help make payments a reliable source of income.

Customers were engaged in the process of establishing 70% of orders in FFY23

With this balance in mind, we designed a new settlement conference process that allows customers to meet with a child support attorney to reach an agreement on a payment amount instead of going to court. This helps us engage both parents, facilitate discussion, and educate customers on how order amounts are set. When parents agree to an order amount, it is more likely that the child support case will be successful for both parents in the long run.

HELPING CUSTOMERS MANAGE CHILD SUPPORT DEBT

Balanced orders are the first step in preventing child support debt. However, child support orders last for years and life changes. 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 reduce the remaining balance^{*}. Since being introduced, we have proactively encouraged case managers to identify eligible customers and help them take full advantage of the program.



*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.





of settlement conferences successfully reached an agreement on a child support amount in FFY 23

COLLABORATING FOR SUCCESS

Child support is an important aspect of our customers' lives, but it is just one piece of the puzzle. To make a areater impact and ensure the success of our customers, we are focused on building strong partnerships with nonprofit organizations, community organizations, and county and government agencies. Through partnership referrals and fostering closer collaborations, we can collectively work towards enhancing the well-being of the families and children of Orange County.

COMMUNITY AMBASSADORS

Our new Community Ambassador program allows case managers and staff to engage with customers at community events, increasing awareness and understanding of our child support services. By meeting customers where they are, we can provide convenient and accessible assistance in their own neighborhoods.

FATHERHOOD

Our active participation in the Orange County Fatherhood Coalition and statewide Fatherhood Council enables us to develop and provide tailored support services for the diverse needs of our valued customers. By collaborating with fatherhood programs and leveraging our expertise, we are dedicated to establishing an inclusive environment that addresses the specific needs of both parents involved in the lives of children in Orange County.

SOCIAL SAFETY NET

Throughout the year, OC CSS has actively organized quarterly Social Safety Net presentations. These are presentations from partners to staff aimed to enhance the knowledge and understanding of case managers regarding resources available to mutual customers. In 2023, we partnered with OC Head Start, Think Together, Be Well OC, Orange County Asian and Pacific Islander Community Alliance (OCAPICA), and First 5 Orange County.

> Partners, such as The Orange County Superior Court, Self-help Office, Family Law Facilitator, Social Services Agency, and employers are critical partners in providing child support services. Maintaining relationships with them ensures a positive overall experience for our customers.



In the next year, OC CSS will strengthen partnerships and build outward referral systems to address the following needs for our customers.

Health	Housing	Food Security	Employment	Safety
Mental Health	Utility	CalFresh	Employment	Parenting
Services	Assistance	Food	Readiness	Resources
Physical Health	Rental	Distributions	Employment	Domestic
Services	Assistance	Food Banks	Support	Violence Services
	Housing Programs		Childcare Resources Work Attire	Support for Justice-Involved Customers

JUSTICE-INVOLVED

Legislative changes in the last year have allowed us to increase support for justice-involved customers. During incarceration, and for up to 10 months after, court orders are suspended to avoid accumulating child support debt. These 10 months allow us to support these customer's re-entry efforts by connecting them with resources and helping them stay on track with child support.

SAFF ACCESS

Working with community partners in Orange County, we designed a system of services that help us ensure the safety of customers and provide them safe access to child support. In partnership with Orange County Superior Court, we also developed on-site protocols so customers can safely attend their court hearings.





MUTUAL REFERRALS

Over the last year, OC CSS has started to build internal systems for handling partner referrals. Having systems in place allows us to increase communication with organizations trying to access our services on behalf of our shared

COMMITMENT TO PROGRESS

We work to be a leader in the child support program by taking opportunities to innovate, improve our customers' experience, and develop an experienced workforce. We are committed to moving our services forward because Orange County families deserve reliable services that are responsive to their changing needs and preferences.

FLEXIBILITY AND ACCESS

Improving flexibility and access for our customers comes through trying new approaches and finding innovative strategies. This year, we focused on introducing, implementing, and refining the following strategies:

Reaching Underserved Communities

Through marketing, community outreach, and partnership development OC CSS has developed integrated strategies to identify and reach underserved communities. Increasing awareness and understanding of child support in the community, and among partners, provides access to parents who would benefit from child support.

Simplified Application

California Child Support Services developed an application that requires less information. Over the last year, we have focused on promoting the easier, simpler application through tailored campaigns, community events, and incorporating QR codes into our marketing materials.



Appointment Scheduling, Video Appointments, and Saturday Hours

Online appointment scheduling gives customers the opportunity to choose how and when they connect with us. Pairing this tool with video appointments and Saturday office hours provides customers flexibility to handle child support matters around their schedule and connect with us from wherever they are.



In FEY 23, customers scheduled

appointments online



16

OC CSS served customers on Saturday in FFY23

Forms Workshop Expansion

Completing required legal forms can be difficult for customers. So, we introduced Forms Workshop where we provide assistance completing child support forms. In the last year, we have expanded the availability of this service from a few days every week to Monday – Friday, and one Saturday each month.

> In FFY 23, OC CSS helped 949 customers complete forms

Electronic Signatures

Integrating electronic signatures into our processes has made sending and receiving required paperwork much easier. They also allow customers to review and sign documents while on the phone or video call with their case manager — enabling them to ask questions and receive clarification.

Increased Communication

Keeping in mind evolving communication preferences, case managers text customers to provide case updates and follow up phone calls. We also send email reminders for upcoming appointments and court dates.



• 58% Case opening & new orders 31% Case management

10% Call Center follow up







STAFF DEVELOPMENT

RETENTION AND SUCCESSION PLANNING

The quality of our service is rooted in our knowledge and success. We invest in our staff by emphasizing growth and providing training at all levels. Our training focuses on program knowledge, leadership, and professional and personal development.



CSS Academy Cohorts Onboarded 8 Graduated

PROGRAM KNOWLEDGE

Foundational child support knowledge starts with onboarding. New case managers receive in-depth program knowledge and hands-on training through the CSS Academy. Our training team also provided refresher trainings on integral case management procedures.

LEADERSHIP

OC CSS prioritizes leadership development through regular, tailored trainings and workshops. With several new leaders promoted this year, each completed programs focused on leadership skills. Leaders and staff also attended conferences that connected them to our program's statewide perspective and innovative ideas to enhance our local program.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Administrative staff were trained on project management skills covering topics like presentations, data analysis, strategic thinking, and writing. These foundational skills increase effectiveness and move our program and department forward.

Participation in our Coaching Corner program increased over the last year. Participants work with their coach to set goals and create a plan to achieve them.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Every OC CSS employee takes a CliftonStrengths® assessment when hired. This allows us to understand and best work with each other. In FFY23, our training focused on understanding and communicating with different work styles.



OC CSS strives to be an agency where people find careers and growth. Our staff hold knowledge and expertise on all processes necessary to run our program.

As with other agencies, OC CSS has experienced changes in our workforce. In response, we have prepared strategies to retain knowledge and staff by:

- to their role.
- their best foot forward.
- transparency and build trust.
- Increasing self-care and wellness opportunities.
- program and in OC CSS' workforce.

Retaining knowledgeable staff and offering opportunities for growth and development are important to maintaining high-quality service.



Transferring child support knowledge through cross training and peer learning.

• Introducing Career Lane panels where leaders and experienced staff share their journey

• Providing staff an overview of the recruitment process so that they are prepared to put

• Increasing and refining communication from leaders and Executives to increase

• Expanding knowledge through regular rotation opportunities throughout the year.

• Developing the next generation of leaders for a new chapter in the child support

19 years 26 years 17 vears



LEGISLATION SHAPING THE CHILD SUPPORT PROGRAM

Over the next year, the following legislative changes being implemented in California expand our capacity to focus on the whole family. They enable us to further mitigate child support debt as a barrier, restrategize how we engage customers, increase payments to families, and set orders that more closely match our customers' financial circumstances.

AB 207: FULL PASS-THROUGH FOR FORMERLY AIDED

Currently, the policy states child support payments are distributed based on the following hierarchy: current obligation to the parent receiving support, never aided arrears to the parent receiving support, and permanently assigned arrears to the state. Effective May 1, 2024, all child support payments will be distributed to the Parent Receiving Support who used to receive cash public assistance through CalWORKs.

SB 1055: LICENSE SUSPENSION WHEN MEDIAN **INCOME IS ABOVE 70%**

The existing law requires local child support agencies to submit the parent paying support for license suspension if they have not made a payment within 30 days. Effective January 1, 2025, parents paying support whose gross annual income is at or below 70% of the county median income will not be submitted for license suspension.





AB 135: UNCOLLECTABLE DEBT

Effective January 1, 2023, local child support agencies were authorized to adjust child support debt owed to the state that are deemed "uncollectable." Debt would be deemed "uncollectable" if the sole income of the parent paying support is from Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Veterans Disability, or Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants (CAPI).

AB 207: EARNING CAPACITY

The legal guidelines for determining child support payment amounts is based on a parents income and expense report and time spent with the child. Effective September 27, 2022, the bill required the courts to not only consider a parent's income but also their ability to earn. This means that additional factors such as education, health, job experience, and employment barriers would be taken into account when determining the appropriate child support amount.

LOOKING FORWARD

2023 was a foundational year. We were able to onboard and develop new staff and leaders, create a dedicated partnership team, and started planning for the implementation of legislative changes to name a few.

2024 will be a year of building from this foundation. To do this, we set the following priorities:



Tailoring services to reflect the diversity of all our customers requires foundational knowledge of the child support program, where it is headed, and a deep understanding of the community we serve. A stronger connection with our community and awareness of community needs influences our long-term strategies and everyday service delivery. Our movement toward a family-centered, community-driven approach aligns us with legislative and program changes being implemented.

With a large portion of our staff new to the agency, we will also focus on refreshing foundational program knowledge and cross training so our case managers are equipped to handle any child support case or question.

Community and County Engagement

With a new partnership team and Community Ambassador program, our goal over the next year is to substantially increase our community presence. Increasing community presence means increasing the number of events we attend and provide service at, increasing the number of referrals from our case managers to community agencies, and building meaningful collaborative relationships with community partners. These integrated strategies help us reach underserved parents and communities that would benefit from the child support program.

In addition to increasing community presence, OC CSS is also focused on creating processes to evaluate these efforts through data and referral tracking.



Performance Strategies

Over the past year, OC CSS has worked on increasing departmentwide knowledge and understanding of performance and the strategies we use to affect our performance. This knowledge allows for increased collaboration which is necessary to meet the evolving needs of families.

OC CSS will also go through a strategic planning process that will create and communicate a vision and path forward for the next several years.



We are committed to building a culture of trust, innovation, and lifelong learners. Through leader development, formal mentorship, and collaboration, trust is built as we construct the future of OC CSS together. Innovation stems from reimagining how we work and adopting and implementing new ideas and strategies from across the department. Finally, providing training and opportunities that focus on career planning, team building, personal and professional development, and wellness gives staff the tools to balance their responsibilities and develop a career.



It is clear that the child support program is evolving. In embracing this evolution, OC CSS aims to be a leader in developing the new business processes and best practices that meet the current needs of families. This next year we are committed to deepening our understanding of our community and customers and increasing intentional customer engagement.



PERFORMANCE SCORECARD FFY23

	Objective	Metric	FFY21	FFY22	FFY23
	To ensure the financial and medical support of children	Annual Dollars Collected Per Case	\$3,296	\$3,134	\$3,127
		Annual Dollars Distributed to Families	\$169,266,185	\$160,921,152	\$158,320,272
		Annual % of Current Support Collected	67.8%	65.6%	65.8%
		Annual % of Cases with Arrears Collected	73.2%	67.2%	64.9%
		Annual % of Cases with Orders Established	94.3%	93.3%	91.8%
		Annual % of Cases with Paternity Established	100.1%	102.3%	100.9%
Customers spl spl spl spl spl spl spl spl spl sp	To build positive, lasting and valued	Annual Department Overall Customer Satisfaction	3.4	3.4	3.4
	relationships with	Annual Lobby Wait Time (Customer Contact)	10 min	16 min	12 min
ss Efficiencies child ser ser co	customers	Annual Dollars Collected Per Full-Time Employee(FTE)	\$511,317	\$512,374	\$478,134
	To provide child support services efficiently and effectively	PI #22 - Days: Case Opening to Order + Order to First Payment = Total Days	141	141	144
		PI #25 - Days: Case Opening with Order to First Payment	43	42	37
		Data Reliability Index Per QTR	99%	94%	96%
		Compliance Index Per QTR	99%	97.5%	97%
		Emergency Operation Action Plans	100%	100%	100%
Staff	To deliver child support services in a professional manner	Annual Hrs of Professional Development Per FTE	21.1	57.7	44.2

APPENDICES

Performance Scorecard

Organizational Charts

Federal Performance Measures

What Customers Are Saying

Recognition Awards





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.





27

Federal Performance Measures

Federal Performance Measures (FPMs) are metrics for establishing orders and facilitating child support payments.

Each year, OC CSS implements strategies that affect and improve performance. For 2024, these strategies include targeted customer engagement, outreach to employers, marketing and partnership development, and analyzing order amounts.

FPM 3. Current Support

Percentage of current support paid from the amount billed.

FPM 1. Parentage

Percentage of children with parentage established via Parentage Opportunity Program (POP) or court orders from the total of out of wedlock births from the prior calendar year.

100%

FPM 4. Arrears

Percentage of cases with child support debt that made a payment during the Federal Fiscal Year.

FPM 2. Court Orders

Percentage of active cases with an established support order.



FPM 5. Cost Effectiveness

Total dollars received compared to program expenditures.







Received in child support payments

for every \$1.00 spent

ORANGE COUNTY CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES AN AWARD WINNING AGENCY

WHAT CUSTOMERS ARE SAYING

"These [folks] are always wonderful! I'm so very very pleased with them. It was a breath of fresh air dealing with OC!"

"I really appreciated the time and effort the representatives demonstrated when they helped me out with my child support case, as it was a very stressful situation for me."

"The professionals I came into contact with through OC CSS were very approachable and helpful. Though the situations and nature of their work is difficult, they have all conveyed professional compassion and made me feel acknowledged in a fair manner."

"Orange [County] Child Support Services have treated me with patience, attentiveness and professionalism. I have had pleasant experiences over the phone with the department of child support in answering my questions and in getting the answers. Thank you!"

Communications and Innovation



AWARD OF EXCELLENCE In the Loop, Director's Newsletter 2023





ACHIEVEMENT **Orange Slice, Internal** Podcast 2023

ACHIEVEMENT Safe Access to Child

NACo.

Support 2020



PROGRAM ENGAGEMENT Settlement Conference 2022



Innovation in the Child Support Program



INNOVATION IN THE CHILD SUPPORT PROGRAM Forms Workshop 2023



PROGRAM AWARENESS Marketing Campaign 2019



INCORPORATING INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY **Predictive Analytics** 2019

Achievement



ACHIEVEMENT **Predictive Analytics** 2019



ACHIEVEMENT Leadership Development Training 2018

Program Engagement



PROGRAM ENGAGEMENT Safe Access to Child Support 2020



PROGRAM ENGAGEMENT Marketing Campaign 2019



INNOVATION IN THE CHILD SUPPORT PROGRAM Safe Access to Child Support 2020



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