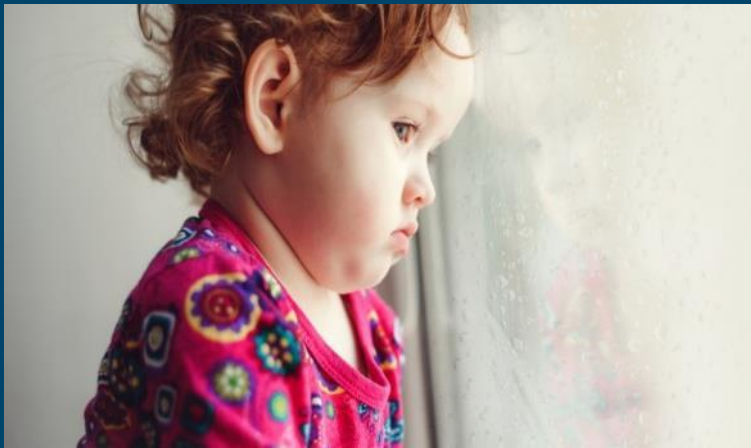


Child Support and Foster Care in California



62,500 Foster Care cases
in the California
Child Support Program
during FFY 2018

INTRODUCTION

- Federal law requires the child support program to establish and enforce orders **when appropriate** for parents who have a child in foster care. The purpose of ordering parents to pay child support is to offset the government incurred costs of Title IV-E foster care maintenance payments.
- Most children enter foster care due to neglect (75%)¹. A smaller percentage enter due to abuse (11%). Root causes of these issues include parental substance abuse, inability to cope, child behavior problems, inadequate housing, parental incarceration, and abandonment.

¹ Data source: https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/California-Foster-Care-Factsheet_2015.pdf

Foster Care Cases in California Child Support 62,500 (FFY 2018)

\$250
median monthly
child support
order

63%
of parents have
more than one
child support
case

86%
of parents reported
income less than
\$30,000 per year

50%
of cases paid
less than 7% of
support due

pay support
at a rate of **37%**

41%
of obligors
are females

57% of parents are
non-white

60%
of parents
owe

\$490_M
in arrears

which is **3%**
of total arrears
balance in the state

Foster Care cases make up 5% of California's Child Support Caseload

STUDY QUESTIONS

Orange County examined Foster Care cases in the California Child Support caseload in order to answer the following questions:

1

Are foster care cases similar to the rest of the child support caseload?

2

Are child support orders against parents in the foster care system cost effective for the California child support program?

3

Do child support collections from these orders substantially reimburse the federal government for foster care maintenance payments?

4

Are child support enforcement actions consistent with state and federal child welfare policy goals?

1 Are foster care cases similar to the rest of the child support caseload?

NO

Foster Care cases are fundamentally different from non-foster care cases.

- They are in deeper poverty.
- Payment rates are lower.
- No money goes directly to support the child.
- The parent required to pay child support is more often the mother.
- At least one of the obligated parties is often working simultaneously towards reunification with their child.



	Foster Care	Non-Foster Care
Number of Cases	62,500	1.2 million
Female NCPs	41%	10%
% Billing Current Support	13%	34%
FPM3 Compliance	37%	67%
NCP Income	\$700	\$1700
Collections to family	None	Some or All

2 Are child support orders against parents in the foster care system cost effective for the California child support program?

NO

- ✓ These orders are costly for the child support program in California with little return. For every dollar it expends, only **27 cents** is collected.
- ✓ Foster care cases require about **50% more** effort to manage.

UNPRODUCTIVE & COMPLEX WORK

Leading to little or no collections

- **48%** of cases with \$0 orders
- **14%** of cases with no support order
- **46%** of cases pay nothing
- **Multiple** court hearings in Dependency and Child Support courts
- Many parents have more than one child support case.
- Require extensive **research**
- Additional **communication burden** between Child Support and Social Services

3 Do child support collections from these orders substantially reimburse the federal government for foster care maintenance payments?

NO

For every dollar paid in foster care maintenance payments, the federal government recoups only **4 cents** through child support collections.

\$181.2 m

Foster Care
Maintenance
Payments

\$6.6 m

Federal
Recoupment

4 Are child support enforcement actions consistent with state and federal child welfare policy goals?

IN QUESTION

Based on the income profile and the first hand experience of child support professionals:

- Paying child support places a financial burden that can thwart reunification requirements
- Not paying child support subjects parents to enforcement actions that can also jeopardize reunification

CSS ENFORCEMENT TOOLS

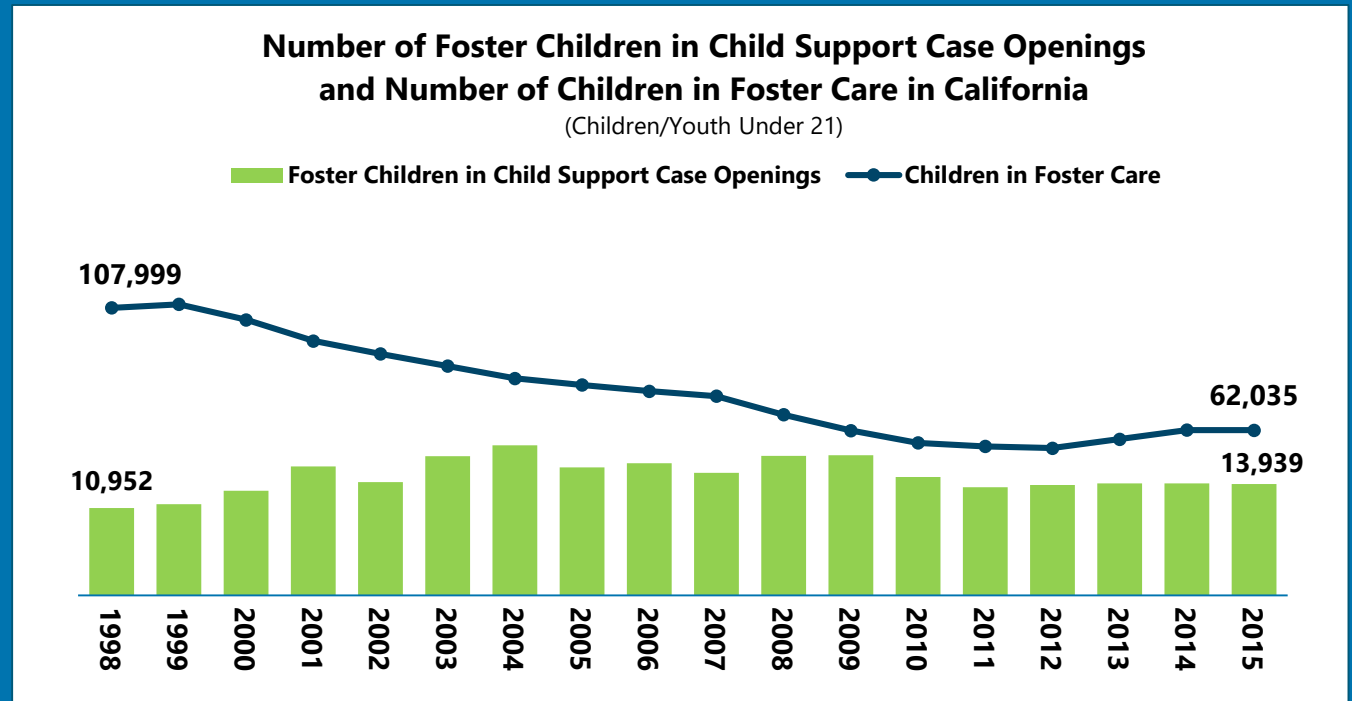
Can hinder a family's ability to reunify by weakening their financial stability

- Wage, Unemployment Insurance, and or Disability Benefit garnishment
- Suspension or revocation of driver's and professional license
- Intercepts of tax refunds, worker's compensation payouts, and insurance payouts
- Bank levies
- Property liens
- Negative Credit Reporting

OPERATIONAL APPLICATION

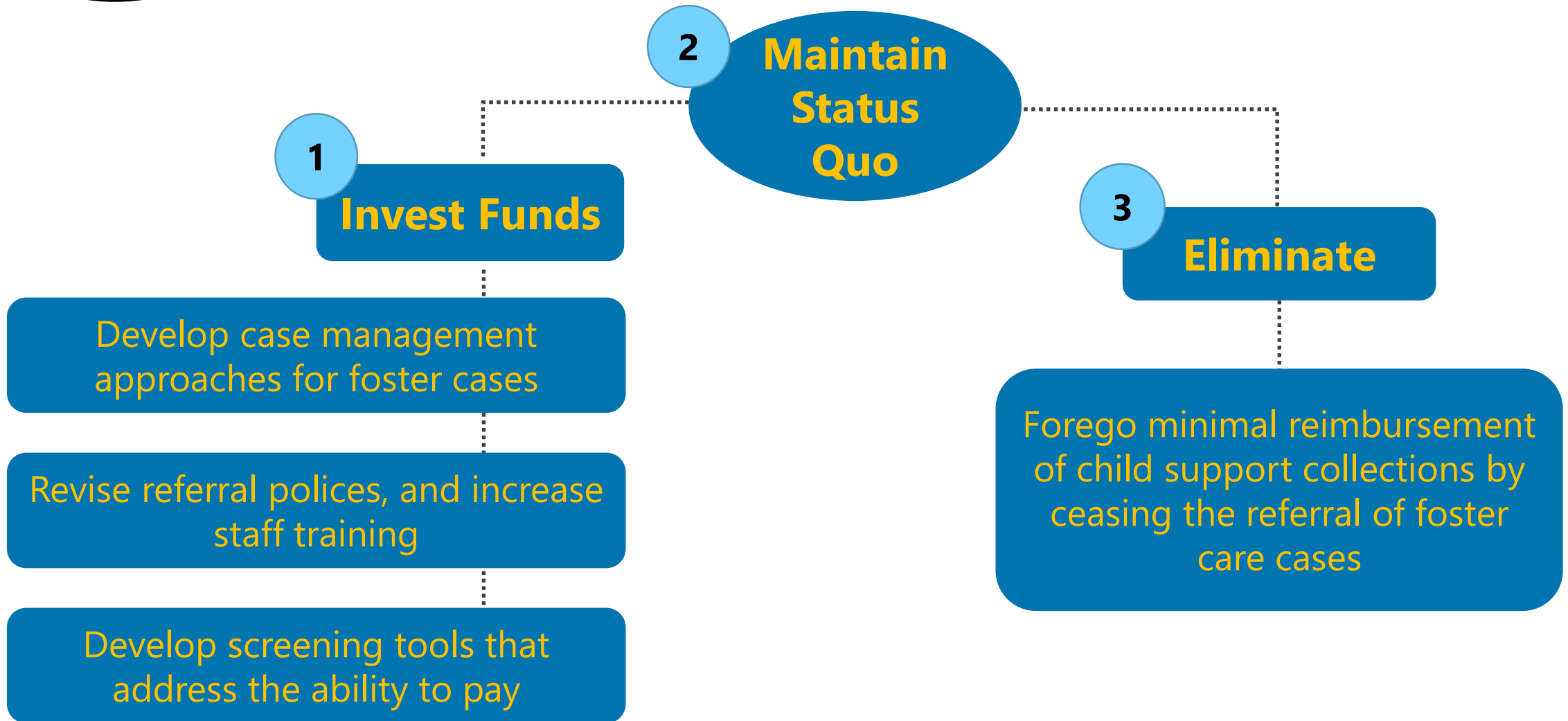
Data examined by Orange County Child Support Services suggests that referral policies are not being applied consistently throughout California. Families in the foster care system are being referred at different rates depending on the county handling their child welfare case.

In addition, the percentage of children in foster care who are being referred to the child support program has doubled over the years, despite foster care rolls declining substantially.



OPTIONS

Based on focus groups with child welfare professionals and an internal operational analysis, child support enforcement actions against parents in the foster care system can have a negative impact on families and are not cost effective.





“She was a domestic violence victim; her child was removed from the home and a child support case was opened against her. A \$150 order turned into \$8,000 in arrears that took her 30 years to pay off. She is now an advocate for victims”.

- An Orange County case managers story

Orange County Child Support Services

THANK YOU