



The State of Rhode Island  
Department of Human Services  
Office of Child Support Services  
Strategic Plan 2011-2016

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**INTRODUCTION**

This National Child Support Enforcement Strategic Plan is the product of an enormously effective national collaboration. The Plan reflects many years of child support professionals brainstorming and consensus-building among many branches and levels of government. The result is not merely a good process but a good product: a deliberate, thoughtful, specific, data-driven map that shows how we will proceed to meet our commitments to children and families. The Rhode Island five (5) year strategic plan is based upon the National Plan incorporating Rhode Island procedures and laws.

The FY 2011-2016 Plan creates a roadmap from a set of updated objectives and related strategies. These objectives and strategies demonstrate how the Child Support Program has evolved and matured. Child support is no longer a welfare cost recovery revenue-producing agency for the Federal and State government; it is a family-first program, intended to

ensure families' self-sufficiency by making child support a more reliable source of income

## **MISSION**

The mission of the Child Support Agency is derived from the title IV-D of the Social Security Act:



***To enhance the well being of children by assuring that assistance in obtaining support, including financial and medical, is available to children through locating parents, establishing paternity, establishing support obligations and monitoring and enforcing those obligations.***

## **VISION FOR THE FUTURE**

***Children can count on their parents for the financial, medical, and emotional support they need to be healthy and successful.***

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

These principles underline our mission and serve as the basis for how we operate.

### **1. Customer and Partner Focused – We value and respect our customers and our partners.**

- Children first.
- A legal, financial, and emotional relationship between parents and their children is vital to child well-being.

- Parental employment is key to reliable support payments.
- All parents and custodians are treated fairly and kept informed, and their concerns are recognized.
- Services are most effective when cultural and economic differences are respected.
- We have a responsibility to reach out to educate partners, stakeholders, customers, and the public about the program and available services.
- We promote stable, safe and healthy relationships between parents and children by participating in the larger community's efforts to strengthen families and encourage responsible parenthood.
- We honor and respect sovereignty and collaborate widely with flexibility to address and overcome jurisdictional and other barriers among countries, states, tribes, programs, cultures, and traditions.
- We promote collaboration and innovation as part of our program culture.

**2. Performance Results and Outcomes – We value achievement of the best possible results.**



- Parents have a responsibility to provide financial, medical, and emotional support to their children, and we help those who are struggling to do so.
- Our prompt, proactive steps ensure that child support obligations are set at appropriate levels and are paid timely and consistently to prevent the accrual of unpaid child support.
- Reliable child support and medical coverage are crucial for families striving to achieve and maintain self-sufficiency.

- Policy and technology decisions are interdependent and coordinated to achieve high performance.
- Performance results depend upon adequate program resources.

### **3. Data and Information – We value the use of data to support and guide our actions.**

- We ensure the privacy and security of the personal information so critical to our mission.
- We maintain a high standard of data reliability and completeness to measure our results.
- We use research and data to improve our processes and results.
- We use data to understand, analyze, and sort our caseload to respond to different case needs.
- We exchange data with other programs to improve coordinated service delivery to families and reduce improper payments consistent with our statutory authority.

### **4. Human Resources – We value and support staff at all levels of the program.**

- Training, tools, information technology, and skills are essential for our staff to be prepared and successful in serving our customers.
- We build trust and exhibit respect for our staff by being responsive, accountable, and ethical in all our actions.
- We achieve excellence through collaboration, transparency, and honoring the diversity of the workforce.
- We value the commitment our staff brings to the program, especially during difficult economic times.



## **5. Leadership – We value responsible, innovative leadership.**

- The Child Support Program advances through coordinated efforts of technology, research, demonstration projects, and innovation.
- We provide leadership, along with our stakeholders, in advocating for improvements and efficiencies in our program.
- We are accountable to the public, our stakeholders, and our customers.
- We facilitate learning and promote the use of best practices.

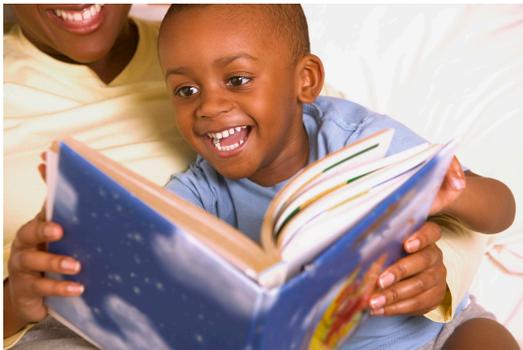
## **Strategies**

We implement a range of strategies to carry out our mission and improve our program impact and effectiveness.

### **1. Collaborate to improve services to our customers and strengthen families.**

- Build and strengthen partnerships through collaborations to promote healthy family relationships, such as through programs and services that support:
  - ❖ Responsible fatherhood
  - ❖ Pregnancy prevention
  - ❖ Domestic violence prevention
  - ❖ Parenting and co-parenting education
  - ❖ Military and veteran parents
  - ❖ Incarcerated and formerly incarcerated parents
  - ❖ Employment
  - ❖ Health care

- ❖ Access and visitation
- ❖ Financial literacy
- Establish and standardized data sharing to achieve program purposes and improve outcomes among:
  - ❖ Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE)
  - ❖ States
  - ❖ Means-tested programs and other agencies that serve our customers, promote our mission, and carry out our program responsibilities.
  - ❖ Workforce-related agencies
  - ❖ Courts
  - ❖ Employers
  - ❖ Insurance providers and financial institutions
  - ❖ Utilities and communications providers
  - ❖ Other agencies authorized by law to access the data.
  - ❖



•Establish policies that authorize IV-D program access to needed data and information exchanges, for example:

- ❖Federal and state tax information
- ❖ Utilities and communications providers
- ❖ Multistate financial institutions
- ❖ Public and private entities that provide health care coverage
- Use research to inform our policies and practices.

**2. Deliver timely, clear, and accessible services adapted to customer needs and circumstances.**

- Deliver accessible and culturally-appropriate services to customers.
- Address obstacles to payment, including access to children, matters of procedural justice, and affordability of orders.
- Develop targeted, specific initiatives to serve special populations, including incarcerated or formerly incarcerated parents.
- Address the needs of veterans and military families experiencing extended deployments or returning to the workforce.
- Focus on families that have lost employment, receive unemployment insurance benefits, and/or are no longer eligible for unemployment insurance.
- Use time-sensitive, specific customer service protocols for holistic customer services.
- Ensure prompt payment of collections to families and promote electronic payment options for parents, employers, and among jurisdictions.
- Provide child support services for families receiving assistance throughout their involvement with the support program.
- Provide access to about other programs and available to parents caretakers.
- Involve both parents aspects of child and related access and visitation services to increase financial and emotional support of children.
- Adapt child support services to the special needs of domestic violence victims.
- Provide understandable program information to our customers.



child  
materials  
available  
services  
and  
in all  
support

### **3. Emphasize early intervention and proactive case management to ensure reliable payments of support.**

- Continue to provide easy access to genetic testing in house for parents of children born out of wedlock.
- Update child support guidelines regularly, establish appropriate orders, and respond to job loss. The next 4 year review is in 2011.
- Communicate with customers about child support services early and consistently to ensure that they are kept informed and involved.
- Develop case management tools for early intervention to work with parents to ensure regular, consistent payments. Enhance the voice response system to initiate a call to the parent when a certain number of payments are missed.
- Use automation when possible to detect changes in circumstances and intervene early to review and modify orders.
- Strive for reliable payments and voluntary compliance in preference to debt-triggered enforcement action. Consider ways to facilitate regular and reliable payment of current support through debt leveraging strategies and other approaches to reducing uncollectible debt owed to a state. Enter into agreements with non-custodial parents who meet certain criteria to waive interest and compromise arrears under certain circumstances to promote, reliable payment of current support.
- Use automation and proactive case review to manage case closure effectively.

### **4. Eliminate barriers associated with intergovernmental cases.**

- Develop effective and streamlined protocols for intergovernmental case processing.
- Improve and increase data sharing of case information across state and tribal jurisdictions.
- Maximize use of caseload reconciliation tools and automation, such as Interstate Case Reconciliation, Query Interstate for Kids (QUICK), and Child Support Enforcement Network (CSENet), to share data across jurisdictions effectively.
- Promote single-jurisdiction case management whenever appropriate.
- Emphasize and facilitate state and tribal collaboration.
- Respond to the growing international caseload through foreign reciprocal agreements and protocols to facilitate currency exchange and electronic payment.

## **5. Seek innovative ways to improve establishment and enforcement methods and performance.**

- Develop more effective locate, service of process, and establishment tools.
  - ❖ Increase use of expedited and administrative processes, including recourse to courts, ensuring that parents have access to procedural justice.
  - ❖ Streamline intake processes for quicker identification and location of non-custodial parents and their resources.
  - ❖ Evaluate and maximize the use of the most effective locate, service of process and establishment methods.
  - ❖ Improve access to cell phone data.
  - ❖ Increase the use of location resources to ensure timely distribution of collections to families.
  - ❖ Continue to reach out to and educate employers about the importance of compliance with new hire reporting and income withholding requirements.

- Expand and improve enforcement and collection tools.
  - ❖ Develop tools to identify and collect unreported and self-employment income.
  - ❖ Customize and apply enforcement approaches that distinguish between those who cannot pay and those who refuse to pay.
  - ❖ Assess enforcement strategies and tools to ensure effective use in all cases.
  - ❖ Improve the effectiveness of bank account, asset, and insurance settlement seizure, passport sanctions, direct income withholding, and liens.
  - ❖ Improve communication, education, and collaboration with employers and employer organizations regarding new hire reporting, electronic income withholding, and electronic payment options.



- ❖ Evaluate and improve the process for criminal prosecution of nonpayment of child support.
- ❖ Explore and evaluate opportunities for centralization and standardization of automated enforcement and collection tools.

- Evaluate and develop technologies to improve interfaces, data mining, data matching, imaging, systems modernization, and data safeguarding.

## **6. Anticipate and implement changes in distribution of collections.**

- Research and consider implementation of optional family distribution options in the Deficit Reduction Act.

- Analyze the impact of family distribution policies on families, means-tested program interactions, and governmental budgets.
- Analyze the impact of alternative uses of IV-E collections for the benefit of children in the foster care system. Example may include a trust for children in placement.
- Educate legislators and policymakers regarding the impact of different distribution strategies on families.

## **7. Secure access to health care coverage or medical support for children.**

- Continue to obtain health insurance match data through HMS and establish medical insurance coverage orders and cash medical orders
- If at some point, the medical coverage provision is redefined by the federal government, reconsider the agency role in obtaining health care coverage for children and their parents consistent with federal health reform legislation, develop an implementation plan, and ensure that RI has the resources and incentives to meet their responsibilities and provide services.
- Ensure Rhode Island agencies have efficient access to necessary and appropriate health coverage data.
- Eliminate barriers and collaborate among IV-D, Medicaid, and RITE Share/ RITE Care.
- Educate legislators and policymakers regarding the evolving role of child support in securing health coverage for children.

## **8. Identify sustainable and responsible fiscal practices and policies that benefit our customers.**

- Ensure we have the necessary resources to meet evolving responsibilities, strategies, and tools.

- Ensure the program has the capacity to meet the needs of the IV-D service population.
- Continuously seek to improve program productivity through efficiency measures and cost effectiveness, including assessing and tracking cost avoidance and cost savings to other means-tested programs.
- Proactively assess and manage program data to identify trends in service delivery.
- Establish human resource policies and practices, including succession planning to ensure continuation of effective service to customers.
- Analyze current audit processes to improve program accountability, management, and performance.

## **GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND INDICATORS**



The Office of Child Support Services earns approximately 1.2 million dollars annually in incentive dollars for meeting or exceeding performance measures in 5 categories: Establishing paternity, Establishing Child Support and Collecting on current support, Collection on arrears, and Cost effectiveness. The Federal regulations require the Child Support Program to reinvest the incentive dollars in the program. Section 458A(f) of the Social Security Act requires a State to use incentive payments to supplement and not supplant other funds used by the State in its IV-D program. Up until the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005, the agencies were permitted to claim 66% on all appropriate child support expenditures from the incentive dollars. In 2005 Congress removed the match capability. The American Reinvestment and Recovery Act reinstated the 66% federal match on those funds retroactive to 10/1/08 until September of 2010.

The Performance Measures or Goals are as follows:

**Goal 1: ALL CHILDREN HAVE ESTABLISHED PARENTAGE.**

Paternity is measured as follows:

Numerator: Out-of-wedlock IV-D children for whom paternity was established in current FY

Denominator: Children in IV-D caseload who were born out of wedlock during preceding FY.

**Goal 2: ALL CHILDREN IN IV-D CASES HAVE SUPPORT ORDERS**

Support establishment is measured as follows:

Numerator: Number of IV-D cases with support orders established during the fiscal year

Denominator: Total number of IV-D cases during the fiscal year



**Goal 3: ALL CHILDREN IN IV-D CASES HAVE MEDICAL COVERAGE.**

Medical Coverage is measured by how many cases have a medical insurance coverage order

**Goal 4: ALL CHILDREN IN IV-D CASES RECEIVE FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM PARENTS AS ORDERED**

Collections on Current Support are measured as follows:

Numerator: Total dollars collected for current support in IV-D cases during current FY

Denominator Total dollars owed for current support in IV-D cases during current FY

And Collections on arrears is measured as follows:

Total number of eligible IV-D cases paying towards arrears during the fiscal year \_\_\_\_\_

Total number of IV-D cases with arrears due during the prior fiscal year

**Goal 5: THE IV-D PROGRAM WILL BE EFFICIENT AND RESPONSIVE IN ITS OPERATIONS**

Cost Effectiveness is measures as follows:

Numerator: Total IV-D dollars collected

Denominator: Total IV-D dollars expended

RI does quite well on the cost effectiveness ratio usually above the national average. In Fy10 because of the economic

stimulus funds available, the Office of Child Support Services was able to spend incentive dollars and obtain the 66% match, on a number of projects including the new Voice Response System, a new State Disbursement Unit, enhanced Imaging, Data Mining and other technology upgrades. In addition, there were substantial claims submitted on behalf of the RI Family Court for prior period adjustments. This brought the expenditures to a substantially high rate causing the cost effectiveness ration to be artificially and extremely low for FY10.



## History of Performance measures over the last 10 years:

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
<b>PATERNITY MEASURE</b>											
<b>RI</b>	59.1	69.37	68.9	64.3	74.8	77.0	86.2	88.8	90.14	90.63	92.90
<b>Nat.</b>	64.8	78.5	84.0	77.2	80.5	87.4	87.1	87.8	99.06	90.36	-----
<b>ORDERS ESTABLISHED</b>											
<b>RI</b>	51.0	51.0	51.2	52.3	52.5	57.2	58.6	60.4	62.44	64.90	64.96
<b>Nat.</b>	62.2	66.4	70.5	72.5	74.4	75.9	77.4	78.7	79.07	79.41	-----
<b>PERCENTAGE OF CURRENT SUPPPORT PAID</b>											
<b>RI</b>	53.7	61.3	61.1	61.8	61.9	60.6	59.2	58.3	58.97	60.06	60.35
<b>Nat.</b>	56.1	55.9	57.5	57.5	59.0	59.9	60.4	61.3	61.87	61.78	-----
<b>PERCENTAGE OF CASES PAYING ON ARREARS</b>											
<b>RI</b>	61.0	56.9	58.2	57.2	58.9	58.03	58.4	58.5	58.96	58.78	56.05
<b>Nat.</b>	59.9	60.1	59.7	59.8	59.9	60.05	60.80	61.5	63.32	63.34	-----
<b>COST EFFECTIVENESS</b>											
<b>RI</b>	4.44	4.23	4.52	4.63	5.01	6.45	4.70	6.53	6.76	7.87	3.31
<b>Nat.</b>	4.23	4.21	4.13	4.32	4.38	4.58	4.60	4.73	4.79	4.78	-----

**Incentive Dollars – approximately \$1.2 million annually**

**Penalty Risk – If Data is determined to be unreliable or if Paternity does not increase 2% per year until you achieve 90% and remain.**