



Improving Child Support Outcomes and Family Self-Sufficiency in Louisiana

White Paper



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Background

The child support program has significantly evolved since its creation in 1975. It first served primarily in a public assistance cost-recovery role and moved to a more family-centered program focused on improving longer-term outcomes for families. This shift turned the program into an efficient, highly effective means to provide economic support to 13 million children and their families.

The evolution of the child support program made further progress with the launch of the five-year child support-led employment program for noncustodial parents funded by the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE). Through federal grants to eight states, the program involves partnerships between workforce and child support, leading other states to examine how they may implement similar services.





Introduction

Public Knowledge® (PK) guided the work in Louisiana's child support-led employment program. In 2021, PK began working with the Louisiana Department of Children & Family Services (LA DCFS) to evaluate a small-scale child support employment program in Caddo Parish. In 2022, PK assisted the agency in expanding its child support employment program to include additional geographic locations.

LA DCFS was granted \$20 million over a five-year period to launch and quickly expand the program. PK provides significant subject matter expertise to the project to assist with:

Creating and reviewing policies.

Developing program procedures, forms, and participant materials.

Designing program performance measures and participant tracking templates.

Researching sustainable funding options to continue operating the program into the future.



Problem Statement

Child support–led employment programs improve outcomes but lack stable funding. Low–income noncustodial parents often face significant barriers to employment, including limited education, unstable housing, lack of job experience, and former incarceration. Additionally, they are more likely to fall behind on payments than their higher–income counterparts due to unemployment. These factors cause challenges in collecting child support from noncustodial parents.

Solution

PK management consultants bring deep expertise in a wide range of public, nonprofit, and private sector work. Led by a consultant with family–centered child support expertise, specifically with a child support–led employment program oversight background, PK was able to provide comprehensive support to LA DCFS.

Our familiarity with the child support workforce implementation roadmap provided a baseline. The roadmap was a product of our evaluation of the Caddo Parish Good Support program. Additionally, it identified sequential and concurrent steps the agency would likely want to consider ahead of program implementation and expansion.



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They don't just sit you in front of a computer and tell you to apply for a job. They ask about your skills, abilities, and what you're looking for. They find jobs that you are interested in.

– Caddo Parish Good Support parent.

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Using that background knowledge, PK created an implementation science training specific to DCFS's objective of standing up a child support-led employment program. Implementation Science provides the methods and strategies to facilitate the uptake of evidence-based practices and research into regular use by policymakers and practitioners. Through the training, LA DCFS was introduced to four main phases of implementation: Development, Planning and Preparation, Initial Implementation, and Full Implementation. After establishing a shared understanding of implementation best practices and implementation science methods, PK's support included:

Developing the project implementation plan.

Co-creating policy procedures and materials.

Reviewing policy documents.

Researching sustainable funding options and providing recommendations

LA DCFS is on track to expand statewide over the next few years.



Conclusion

PK continues to work with LA DCFS in expanding the program with fidelity to the evidence-based service model. In the future, we will assist in gathering lessons learned and documenting practices from the initial pilot sites to expand to new areas. Our firm is supporting DCFS with the ongoing implementation of its child support-led employment program. Once statewide, the program will impact approximately 140,000 children in the child support caseload.

“I’m a big proponent of making sure I call people out for the good ... those who are doing a great job as it relates to establishing the foundation for [federal funding for child support-led employment programs]”

At the 2023 NCSEA Policy Forum, Commissioner Gray specifically called out Louisiana when she said, “I’m a big proponent of making sure I call people out for the good ... those who are doing a great job as it relates to establishing the foundation for [federal funding for child support-led employment programs]”

Our work with LA DCFS is leading to improved outcomes for families, stable employment for parents, and increased reliability of child support for parents struggling to meet their obligations.

