

Solano County

Local Plan PY17-21 Modification – Child Support Services Attachment

Department of Child Support Services

Partnerships to Serve Parents Ordered to Pay Child Support

The Workforce Development Board (WDB) of Solano County will continue its growing partnership with the Solano County Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) to provide services for non-custodial parents (hitherto referred to as “parents ordered to pay child support”). As part of these services, WDB and DCSS will continue its referral system, augment America’s Job Centers of California (AJCC) services, and build enrolled Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) services into the partnership. The partners will create additional tools and incentives to better serve Solano’s parents ordered to pay child support.

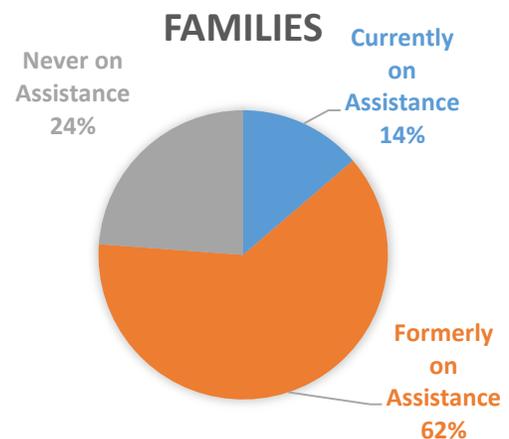
In addition, the WDB will support new partnerships between DCSS and justice-involved stakeholders in the county (such as the Sherriff’s Office, community-based organization Leaders in Community Alternatives, and the Solano County Probation Department) to coordinate workforce service delivery and mitigate barriers to employment associated with child support payments. The WDB will explore a closer partnership with disability partners, such as community-based organization Dreamcatchers, to coordinate workforce service delivery for parents ordered to pay child support who also have a disability. No community-based organizations exist in Solano County that focus on serving parents ordered to pay child support. However, the WDB will leverage its partnerships with general community-based organizations, Solano County Department of Health and Social Services (HSS), Solano Community College, training providers, and other stakeholders in the area to identify any parents ordered to pay child support within their clientele base and will explore opportunities to connect services for participants. The WDB will also leverage its internet-based referral system, Community Pro, to create linkages in service delivery around the individual.

Population Overview

In Federal Fiscal Year 2018, Solano County’s DCSS caseload was 15,954, which represented 14,467 children. 3,801 families have never been on public assistance, 2,187 families are currently on assistance, and 9,966 families were formerly on assistance. Of Solano DCSS’s caseload, 71% of parents live in California. Only 36%, or 5,709 of Solano’s caseload reside in Solano County. Within Solano County, the highest concentrations of parents ordered to pay child support are in the following three cities:

- Vallejo (2,035 families)
- Fairfield (1,660 families)
- Vacaville (1,166 families)

The majority of parents are male (90%). Solano’s parents ordered to pay child support are a diverse group of individuals by race and ethnicity. Of Solano parents on DCSS’s caseload, 33% are Black/African-



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American, 24% are White, 21% are Hispanic, 5% are Asian, and 17% other. The majority of parents' primary language is English, but over 500 (8%) speak a primary language other than English.

In FY2018, DCSS collected \$38,239,437 in child support. Out of the 15,954 on the caseload, 12,810 of the cases had past-due child support (80%), yet collections were received on 71% of cases with past-due child support. In addition, 43% of parents paying child support pay less than 25% of their monthly child support obligation, while an additional 7% pay between 25-75% of the monthly child support obligation. Families who were formerly on assistance accounted for 70.2% of arrears owed. This shows that a number of our parents ordered to pay child support struggle to keep up with their child support payments, yet the majority are making payments.

For parents ordered to pay child support in Solano County, 2,426 of parents do not have an active employer listed; another 437 are considered underemployed. Together, the number of unemployed and underemployed equal 45% of Solano's local DCSS population. Among Solano's parents ordered to pay child support, 259 receive Social Security Benefits, and 818 were formerly incarcerated (13% of local population). Of those formerly incarcerated, 221 (or 27%) have no employer and currently owe child support. This creates difficulties not only for the parent, but also the children supported, as the average arrears for formerly incarcerated parents ordered to pay child support is \$21,014. Family-sustaining employment opportunities for our parents ordered to pay child support is crucial to ensuring our families are being taken care of effectively.

Assessment of Need and Barriers

Low wage employment and underemployment was a significant barrier identified by DCSS and child support stakeholders during the planning process. Often parents will obtain employment where a wage garnishment order takes about half of their gross income. This can be a discouragement to parents ordered to pay child support, who may quit their jobs or work under the table due to an inability to support themselves and make child support payments. There is also a general fear among parents ordered to pay child support that they will not be able to afford their payments or fear of the consequences to custody or wage enforcements for not paying.

Other parents are unable to work, which creates difficulties in meeting child support obligations. They may be unable to work due to incarceration, disability, or engagement in mental health or substance abuse treatment. Oftentimes, these individuals are unaware that they can receive a modification to their child support payments due to their situation. Better awareness and promotion of child support modifications is needed.

Parents ordered to pay child support who have a disability face unique barriers. Many are low income and struggle to balance social security benefits, ability to support themselves, and work capabilities. Many are fearful not only of their child support obligation, but of how it will affect their social security benefits. Disability partners during the planning process identified parents particularly with intellectual disabilities may not understand the dynamic of the child support process and requirements. Benefits counseling and advocacy for individuals with disabilities who owe child support payments is needed.

Better communication between organizations and agencies serving parents ordered to pay child support is needed. Child support obligations can be a complicated process with many case-by-case scenarios. Organizations need a better understanding of the process and requirements in order to better support their participants in navigating support around child support payments.

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Solano has a number of resources that can be utilized to assist with overcoming these barriers. Better communication between organizations and DCSS is a foundational step in this process, so that those serving parents ordered to pay child support can connect with the resources provided by DSCC and vice versa. The WDB and partners are currently exploring ways to improve education and awareness of child support within Solano's workforce system.

Baseline Services Currently Provided and Services Planned

The WDB and DCSS currently have a partnership to provide AJCC services and referrals for parents ordered to pay child support. The partnership includes a work order from Superior Court for any parent without employment to visit the AJCC for employment services. Other community-based organizations and agencies currently serve parents ordered to pay child support but have not targeted this population nor provided specific services to this population.

The WDB and DCSS will enhance their direct partnership by expanding partnering service delivery throughout Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs. In addition, DCSS will work with the WDB to provide child support information sessions for those who may need information on the child support process. The WDB will provide specific information via handout, website, and orientations around child support, the resources available, and how to balance child support payments with employment. In addition, the WDB and DCSS will explore creation of a milestone-based compromise of arrears program for WIOA clients.

The WDB and DCSS will also work together to enhance the knowledge and connection within the network of partners in the county around serving parents ordered to pay child support. DCSS and justice-involved partners will explore strategies and services available for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals. The WDB will work with disability partners to explore strategies and services to support individuals with disabilities who may be struggling with their child support obligation.

Partner Information Sharing

Linking DCSS with Solano's workforce service partners and different community organizations will help participants seeking various services to understand the child support process. The WDB and DCSS will strengthen the collaboration between organizations to build a trustworthy communication system. The WDB will leverage its CommunityPro referral system to make linkages between the partners and increase partner information sharing. The system will help with the timeliness of referrals between partners, support client document sharing, and track outcomes of success.