



Child Support

Media contacts: William Brumfield, Human Services and Public Health Dept: 612-348-5203
Barry Bloomgren, Child Support: 612-348-3939
LuAnn Schmaus, Public Affairs: 612-348-7865

Fast facts

- ▲ In 2008, Hennepin County had more than 56,000 open child support cases and collected more than \$112 million to support approximately 72,000 children.
- ▲ Minnesota's 87 counties collected about \$625 million in child support in 2008.
- ▲ On Hennepin's caseload about 34 percent of non-custodial parents fail to support their children, which is a contributing factor to child poverty.
- ▲ Child support is important to maintain self-sufficiency for many families – about 54 percent of families receiving child support were welfare clients.
- ▲ About 19 percent of the county's child support families are on public assistance; Hennepin collects an average of \$222 a month in child support for each case that pays.

What is child support?

Child support is the contribution that non-custodial parents make to ensure that their children have appropriate care, living expenses and medical support. All of Minnesota's 87 counties are federally mandated to provide child support services for families regardless of the family's socioeconomic status.

How many does it affect in Hennepin? What is collected?

In 2008, Hennepin County had more than 56,000 child support cases involving approximately 162,000 clients, including 72,000 children, and collected more than \$112 million in child support. About 80 percent of Hennepin's cases have a court order for support, and the county has a 66-percent collection rate, which exceeds the national average. Still, 34 percent of non-custodial parents do not support their children. This gap averages more than \$3.5 million a month in unpaid child support, which is a contributing factor to child poverty.

Who are the families?

Forty-two thousand children in Hennepin's child support system were born to unmarried parents; about 8,000 of those cases need paternity established. In 2008, the county initiated genetic testing for 1,065 cases.

Most of the families – more than 81 percent – do not receive public assistance. About 54 percent of current child support recipients are former welfare clients. In many cases, the child support payment (averaging \$328 a month per family) helps these families maintain self-sufficiency. Of the 19 percent of families who are on public assistance, the average child support collected per case is \$222 a month. In 2008, Hennepin had 590 modification requests (mostly to reduce payment amounts); 413 requests were granted.

What are primary child support services?

Hennepin's Human Services and Public Health Department (HSPHD) provides four primary child support services:

- Establishing paternity, including coordinating genetic testing.
- Establishing court orders to pay child support: Cases may be heard in Family Court before a child support magistrate or a district court referee.
- Collecting child support and enforcing court orders.
- Helping families modify court orders.

How do Minnesota counties collect child support payments?

Child support offices have several legal tools to collect child support payments:

- Requiring employers to report new hires to a state office to match employees with child support obligations and withholding income.
- Intercepting federal and state tax refunds.
- Directly billing a non-custodial parent for child support.
- Reporting unpaid child support to credit bureaus.
- Suspending driver's licenses and occupational licenses.
- Denying passports.
- Obtaining a contempt of court order.