

# HENNEPIN COUNTY MINNESOTA



Here. To assist kids and their families.

Child Support

Hennepin County **Human Services**

Annual Report • October 2019



# Child Support

We work with families to ensure that children can count on their parents for the resources they need to be healthy and successful.

Child support – the contribution noncustodial parents pay to ensure children have appropriate financial, medical, and child care support – is among the largest income support programs serving children in the United States. Data shows that payments help families maintain self-sufficiency, and the program pays for itself by reducing the need for other public assistance programs.

Child support is especially important for custodial parents living in poverty; payments can represent more than 40% of family income\*. Our goals include:



## Engaging noncustodial parents

Assuring a recognized legal relationship between parents and children, and engaging parents throughout the process



## Finding solutions that work

Working each case holistically, setting appropriate orders that match each noncustodial parent's ability to pay, and modifying orders when circumstances change



## Helping families to thrive

Connecting families to community resources to get the additional resources they need

\*Office of Child Support Enforcement (2016). The Child Support Program is a Good Investment. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

# Our accomplishments

We want to ensure that households with children receive a reliable income. Families that can count on regular child support payments are more likely to achieve self-sufficiency.

## Hennepin County Child Support provides four primary services:

**Establishing parentage:** We initiated 2,574 genetic tests, achieved 100 percent success rate for establishing paternity.

**Setting support obligations:** 82 percent of cases have a court order that sets the amount of support.

**Collecting support obligations:** Helped distribute \$97.6 million in child support.

**Modifying support obligations:** Child Support helped modify 454 court orders.

## A sustainable model

As a result, we were able to help families move forward. Our work is more than self-sustaining for families' benefit. In 2018, the service area collected \$9 for each property tax dollar expended to run the service area.

### Child Support highlights

- 48,000 families received child support services
- Across the board, payments average \$333 per month
- Among families who receive public assistance, payments average \$234 per month

## Families receiving child support services

42,836

single-parent families with children

40,752

children born to unmarried parents

55

percent of child support families are former public assistance clients

## Knowing our numbers

Every month, managers and supervisors review key state and federal performance indicators in order to develop and implement further improvements. Hennepin County is well above the national average, and is continuously improving, in current support and arrears collections. We also perform better than other urban jurisdictions with similar caseload sizes and demographics.

The county met or exceeded the following state and federal standards:

<b>Objective</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>Performance standard</b>
Cases with paternity established	97.18%	99.59%	101.01%	90%
Cases with a court order for support	84.31%	83.66%	82.02%	80%

The county continues to work on the following standards:

<b>Objective</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>Performance standard</b>
Current child support collected	71.47%	71.58%	71.88%	80%/ Positive year-over-year change*
Cases with collections on arrears	68.60%	69.81%	69.64%	80%
Cost effectiveness	\$2.97	\$2.89	\$2.87	\$5.00

\*Child support performance is measured at the federal and state level. The state measures, known as the Human Service Performance Management System (HSPM), mirror three of the five federal performance measures: percent of cases with paternity established, percent of cases with orders established, and percent of current child support collected. There is one key difference: The federal threshold for percent of current child support collected is 80%; the HSPM threshold requires a positive year-over-year change over an average of five years. A positive year-over-year average is above the threshold. The state is developing a regression analysis model which will account for the unique demographics of each county, to help set achievable goals in the Human Service Performance Management system. See Legislative Report: Human Services Performance Management System (December 2018).

# Disproportionality

## Racial disparities in child support

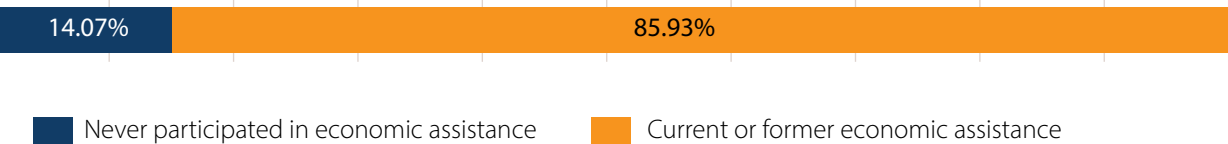
We are considering how a disparities lens might change how we see our work. The first step to understanding disparities is reviewing our demographic data. Like other county departments, we are using data to guide us to a system that is aware of the impact of disparities, and that eventually is more fair to all of our communities. Hennepin County is Minnesota’s largest county. Our child support caseload reflects the state’s largest percentage of nonwhite residents, and the largest percentage of residents who currently receive or formerly received public assistance.

## Economic disparities

Hennepin County recognizes the adverse consequences of disparities and is committed to reducing disparities among our residents.

We define disparities as difference in areas of life that result in one group having a disproportionate burden of negative life outcomes. Our approach to improving these outcomes focuses on seven interconnected domains. Reducing any individual disparity can leverage positive change and help reduce disparities in other areas. Economic disparities are directly linked to disparities in employment, education and housing, and also are tied to health, transportation and justice.

Percent of cases that have or have not participated in economic assistance programs



# Disproportionality

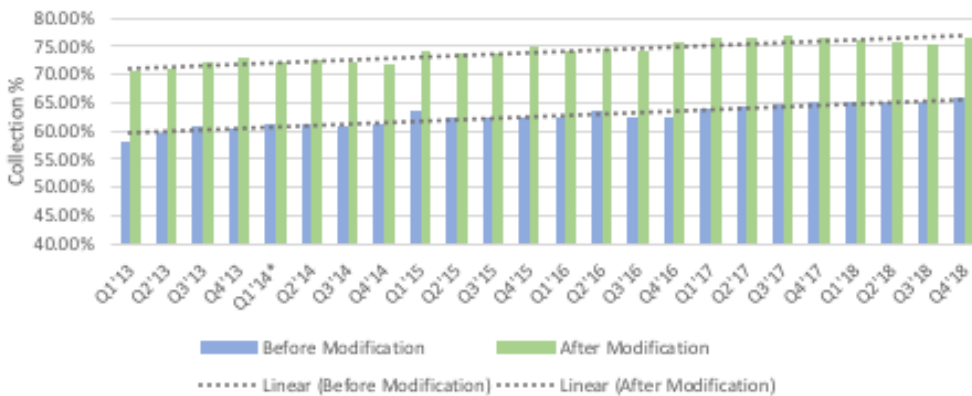
## Ability to pay

Data shows that modifying orders based on ability to pay increases collection percentage. In other words, when orders are appropriate, children can count on regular support payments. In 2018, Hennepin County staff helped to modify 454 orders.

## Adjusting how parenting expense are calculated

On August 1, 2018, a new law changed how courts adjust child support for parenting time expenses based on the number of overnights parents spend with their children. The law better reflects the expenses parents incur when taking care of their children during court-ordered parenting time.

## Right-sized orders: review and modification



# In focus

## Innovations and strategies to improve outcomes

### Bringing technology up to date

The Minnesota Department of Human Services is actively working on securing funding and proposals from vendors to explore options to modernize our computer systems.

### Creating point-of-sale and alternative payments

Minnesota expanded options for noncustodial parents to pay their child support more easily. Parents now can make payments through Minnesota Child Support Online, PayNearMe and MoneyGram. Hennepin County also hopes to pilot cash payment kiosks.

### Partnerships connect child support parents with job training

Employment is essential for noncustodial parents to support their children. Working in partnership with Hennepin's Eligibility and Work Services area, which enrolls people in assistance programs, we identified noncustodial parents with open child support cases who receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and are not currently employed or are underemployed. Our new initiative will enroll them in a SNAP employment and training program that is focused on helping them gain skills, training or work that will increase their ability to obtain regular employment.

### Pathways helps Hennepin diversify our workforce

We are working with the Hennepin Pathways program, which connects regional employers – including Hennepin County – to a diverse pool of well-trained candidates to meet our needs, or to reach potential new hires when we have vacancies to fill. It is important that our employees reflect the customers we serve and the Pathways program is one avenue to help us develop a more diverse workforce.

### Onboarding team helps staff develop skills to succeed

We implemented a new training process for new hires. New staff spend 10 to 12 weeks in a special onboarding team, receiving an introduction to the service area and building skills that can be used in all functions. They are placed in functions based on the need, their strengths, work review and interest. The goal is to have better trained staff with a holistic view of child support.

## **Hennepin County Board of Commissioners**

Mike Opat, District 1

Irene Fernando, District 2

Marion Greene, District 3

Angela Conley, District 4

Debbie Goettel, District 5

Jan Callison, District 6

Jeff Johnson, District 7

## **Hennepin County**

David Hough, administrator

Jennifer DeCubellis, Health and Human Services, deputy county administrator

## **Human Services**

Jodi Wentland, assistant county administrator

Deborah Huskins, director

Casey White, senior department administrator,  
Child Support

Health and Human Services  
[hennepin.us/healthandhumanservices](http://hennepin.us/healthandhumanservices)

