



# WikiLeaks Document Release

<http://wikileaks.org/wiki/CRS-RL32875>

February 2, 2009

Congressional Research Service

Report RL32875

*The Child Support Enforcement Program: A Review of the  
Data*

Carmen Solomon-Fears, Domestic Social Policy Division

April 21, 2005

**Abstract.** For the past 20 years (since the 1984 Amendments), the CSE program and major changes or modifications to it have consistently had bipartisan congressional support. Child support proposals that were introduced in the 106th, 107th, and 108th Congresses, and that have been reintroduced in the 109th Congress, seek to fully implement a "family first" policy by ensuring that more of the child support collected on behalf of TANF families go to the family, and that all of the child support collected on behalf of former-TANF families go to the family. In addition, the proposed legislation has included additional child support collection methods/enforcement techniques to ensure that noncustodial parents of all children are made to be financially responsible for their children. These CSE proposals are broadly supported but generally have been incorporated into the controversial welfare reauthorization legislation, and therefore have not yet passed both houses of Congress.

WikiLeaks

# CRS Report for Congress

Received through the CRS Web

## **The Child Support Enforcement Program: A Review of the Data**

**April 21, 2005**

Carmen Solomon-Fears  
Specialist in Social Legislation  
Domestic Social Policy Division

<http://wikileaks.org/wiki/CRS-RL32875>

# The Child Support Enforcement Program: A Review of the Data

## Summary

The Child Support Enforcement (CSE) program is a federal/state program that promotes self-sufficiency of families in which one of the biological parents is living outside of the home by ensuring that noncustodial parents meet their financial responsibility to their children. The CSE program provides several services on behalf of children including parent location, paternity establishment, establishment of child support orders, and collection and distribution of child support payments.

In FY1978, families who received cash welfare comprised 85% of the CSE caseload. By FY2003, they comprised only 17% of the CSE caseload and 9% of CSE collections. In FY2003, former cash welfare recipients comprised 47% of the CSE caseload and 40% of CSE collections. Families that had never received cash welfare comprised 36% of the CSE caseload and almost 52% of CSE collections. This is consistent with the underlying premise of the CSE program: as child support becomes a more consistent and stable income source/support, former cash welfare families will never have to return to the cash welfare rolls and families that never resorted to cash welfare will never have to do so. In FY2003, the CSE caseload was comprised of 15.9 million families. The CSE program is estimated to handle about 60% of all child support cases; the remaining cases are handled by private attorneys, collection agencies, or through mutual agreements between the parents. All of the data in this report are exclusively CSE program data.

Before a state can enforce/collect a child support obligation, paternity must be determined and a child support order must be established. During the period FY1999-FY2003, the number of paternities established or acknowledged fell 5% nationwide, from 1.6 million to 1.5 million. During the period FY1998-FY2002, the number of cases with a support order established dropped 2% nationwide, from 11.5 million to 11.3 million.

The CSE program is a program of paradoxes. The CSE program only collected 18% of the child support obligations for which it had responsibility in FY2003 (i.e., 58% of all current collections and 7% of obligations that were past-due). But, during the period FY1999-FY2003, child support payments collected by CSE agencies increased 33% for the nation as a whole, from \$15.9 billion to \$21.2 billion. Child support collections have continued to increase even though the CSE caseload has declined. Although the number and percent of CSE cases with collections have been increasing over time, the average monthly child support payment for families that actually receive a payment has been decreasing and is relatively small, amounting to only \$221 per month in FY2003. Although states incurred a cost of \$355 million for the CSE program in FY2003 and the federal government incurred a cost of almost \$2.3 billion, \$4.33 in child support was collected for every \$1 spent on CSE activities. The CSE program began as a welfare cost-recovery program; however, in FY2003, 90% of CSE collections went to CSE families (rather than the federal government or the states); the comparable figure in FY1979 was no more than 56%. This report will not be updated.

## Contents

Introduction .....	1
CSE Caseload .....	5
Paternity Establishment .....	12
Establishment of Child Support Orders .....	15
CSE Collections .....	17
Child Support Collected on Behalf of TANF Families .....	21
Collections on Current Support Obligations and Arrearage Payments .....	24
CSE Administrative Expenditures .....	31
Cost-Effectiveness of the CSE Program .....	37
Conclusion .....	40

## List of Figures

Figure 1. Child Support Enforcement Program: Collections and Expenditures: FY1978-FY2003, Selected Years .....	5
Figure 2. Child Support Enforcement Caseload, FY1978-FY2003 .....	7
Figure 3. Child Support Enforcement Caseload, FY1999-FY2003 .....	11

## List of Tables

Table 1. Summary of National Child Support Enforcement Program Statistics, Selected Fiscal Years 1978-2003 .....	4
Table 2. Child Support Enforcement Caseload, FY1978-FY2003 .....	8
Table 3. CSE Caseload, FY1999-FY2003 .....	9
Table 4. Paternities Established or Acknowledged, FY1999-FY2003 .....	13
Table 5. Paternity Establishment, FY2003 .....	14
Table 6. Number of Cases with Child Support Orders Established, FY1998-FY2002 .....	16
Table 7. CSE Total Collections, FY1999-FY2003 .....	18
Table 8. Average Monthly CSE Collections per Case, by Category of Family, FY1999-FY2003 .....	19
Table 9. Average Monthly Child Support Payments for Families with Collections, Selected Years, FY1978-FY2003 .....	19
Table 10. Average Monthly Child Support Payments in Cases with Collections, by State, FY1999-FY2003 .....	20
Table 11. Financial Overview of CSE Program, FY2003 .....	22
Table 12. Child Support Collected on Behalf of TANF Families, FY1999-FY2003 .....	23

Table 13. Collections on Current Child Support Obligations, FY1999-FY2003 .....	25
Table 14. Current Child Support Payments, FY2003 .....	27
Table 15. Child Support Arrearage Payments, FY2003 .....	28
Table 16. Cases with Past-Due Child Support Payments (Arrearages), FY2003 .....	30
Table 17. Total CSE Administrative Expenditures, FY1999-FY2003 .....	32
Table 18. Federal Share of CSE Administrative Expenditures, FY1998-FY2002 .....	34
Table 19. State Share of CSE Administrative Expenditures, FY1998-FY2002 .....	35
Table 20. CSE Expenditures per CSE Case, Selected Years, FY1978-FY2003 .....	37
Table 21. Cost-Effectiveness Performance Level, FY1999-FY2003 .....	38
Table 22. State and Federal “Savings” and “Costs” from Income and Expenditures Generated by the Child Support Enforcement Program .....	40

# The Child Support Enforcement Program: A Review of the Data

## Introduction

The Child Support Enforcement (CSE) program (Title IV-D of the Social Security Act) was enacted in January 1975 (P.L. 93-647). The CSE program is a federal/state program that promotes self-sufficiency of families in which one of the biological parents is living outside of the home by ensuring that noncustodial parents meet their financial responsibility to their children. While the federal government plays an important role in setting program standards and policy, evaluating state performance, and providing technical assistance and training, states are responsible for administering the CSE program (directly or through local CSE agencies and family or domestic courts).

All 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands operate CSE programs and are entitled to federal matching funds. To qualify for federal matching funds, each state's CSE plan must be approved by the Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). States also are eligible to receive incentive payments, based on certain performance indicators. The CSE program provides seven major services on behalf of children: parent location, paternity establishment, establishment of child support orders, review and modification of support orders, collection of support payments, distribution of support payments, and establishment and enforcement of medical support. CSE services are provided to both welfare and non-welfare families.

Since 1975, the federal administration of the CSE program has been in the OCSE, which was originally located in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW), renamed the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in 1979. From the beginning, OCSE has been required by law to review and approve state CSE plans, establish standards for effective state CSE programs, provide technical assistance to the states, assist them with reporting procedures, maintain records of program operations and child support expenditures and collections, audit state CSE programs, and prepare and submit an annual report to Congress. The annual report to Congress has always included collection, expenditure, and caseload data. In fact, Section 452(a)(10) of the Social Security Act stipulates that certain data must be included in the annual report.

In March 2004, the CSE program was cited by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) as being the most cost-effective program among all social services

and block grant/formula programs reviewed government-wide.<sup>1</sup> In FY2003, \$21.2 billion was collected at a combined federal/state cost of \$5.2 billion. Thus, in effect, four dollars in child support was collected for every dollar spent. While the extensive reforms made to the CSE program in 1996, 1997, and 1998 have helped to significantly improve child support collections and the number of paternities established, the CSE program has since its beginning in 1975 been a highly respected and valuable program which has made much progress in achieving its original goals of reducing public expenditures for actual and potential welfare recipients by obtaining ongoing support from noncustodial parents, and establishing paternity for children born outside marriage so child support could be obtained for them.

Many commentators agree that the mission of the CSE program has changed over the years. It began as a welfare cost-recovery program, but the Child Support Enforcement Amendments of 1984 (P.L. 98-378) broadened the mission to reflect service delivery. The criteria for making incentive payments to the states was broadened in 1984 to include collections for non-welfare families. Some commentators assert the service-delivery goal was reemphasized in 1996 legislation, which established the “family first” policy. To help assure that former welfare recipients stay off the TANF rolls,<sup>2</sup> the “family first” policy requires that such families are to receive any child support arrearage payments collected by the state before the state and federal governments retain their share of collections.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, the sharp decline in the cash welfare rolls and reduced expenditures on cash welfare since the mid-1990s helped shift the program from recovering declining costs for a smaller population to collecting and paying child support to nonwelfare families.

For the past 20 years (since the 1984 Amendments), the CSE program and major changes or modifications to it have consistently had bipartisan congressional support. Child support proposals that were introduced in the 106<sup>th</sup>, 107<sup>th</sup>, and 108<sup>th</sup> Congresses, and that have been reintroduced in the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress, seek to fully implement a “family first” policy by ensuring that more of the child support collected on behalf of TANF families go to the family, and that *all* of the child support collected on behalf of former-TANF families go to the family. In addition, the proposed legislation has included additional child support collection methods/enforcement techniques to ensure that noncustodial parents of all children are made to be financially responsible for their children. These CSE proposals are broadly supported but generally have been incorporated into the controversial welfare

---

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, HHS News, *Child Support Effectiveness Cited By OMB*, Mar. 31, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant replaced the Aid to Families With Dependent Children (AFDC) program in 1996 as the federal government’s primary cash assistance program for poor families with children.

<sup>3</sup> An exception to this rule occurs when child support is collected via the federal income tax refund offset program. In federal income tax refund offset cases, the child support arrearage payment (up to the cumulative amount of TANF benefits which has been paid to the family) is retained by the state and federal governments. In other words, if child support arrearages are collected via the federal income tax refund offset program, the family does not have first claim on the arrearage payments.

reauthorization legislation, and therefore have not yet passed both houses of Congress. (See CRS Issue Brief IB10140, *Welfare Reauthorization: Overview of the Issues*.)

**Table 1** presents a summary of child support program statistics for the nation as a whole over a 25-year time span. Between FY1978 and FY2003, child support payments collected by CSE agencies increased from \$1 billion in FY1978 (\$2.7 billion in 2003 dollars) to \$21.2 billion in FY2003 (an almost seven-fold increase, adjusting for inflation). During that same period, the number of children whose paternity was established (or acknowledged) through the CSE program increased by 1,274%, from 111,000 to 1.525 million; and the number of child support obligations established increased by 269%, from 315,000 to 1.161 million. During that period, the CSE caseload expanded from 4.146 million in FY1978 to 15.923 million in FY2003, an increase of 284%. (The definition of “caseload” is explained in the next section of this report.) CSE expenditures also increased tremendously, from \$312 million in FY1978 (\$801 million in 2003 dollars) to \$5.213 billion in FY2003 (a more than five-fold increase, adjusting for inflation). Expenditures per case increased from \$75 in FY1978 (\$193 in 2003 dollars) to \$327 in FY2003 (a 69% increase, adjusting for inflation).

**Figure 1** graphically shows CSE collections and expenditures over the 25-year period from FY1978-FY2003. The CSE program is estimated to handle about 60% of all child support cases; the remaining cases are handled by private attorneys, collection agencies, or through mutual agreements between the parents. All of the data in this report are exclusively CSE program data.

Although this report does not address some significant areas of the CSE program (e.g., medical child support and child support collections that have not been distributed), it examines CSE caseload, collection, and expenditure data over the period FY1978-FY2003. (FY1978 is the first year of complete data and the data for FY2003 are the most recent data available.) It also presents more detailed data on collections, expenditures, paternity establishment, child support order establishment, cost-effectiveness, and program financing impacts on the federal government and the states for the five-year period FY1999-FY2003. All of the tables in this report are based on data from OCSE, obtained from the OCSE Internet website. The information is taken from state-submitted reports on program status sent to OCSE quarterly for financial data and annually for statistical data. The reader should note that the 25-year trend data for CSE collections and caseload have been disaggregated into two categories: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cases and non-TANF cases. Before 1997, TANF cases were Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) cases and non-TANF cases were non-AFDC cases. Also, note that the tables that display TANF cases, collections, or expenditures include foster care cases as well, even though they are not labeled as such.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> In 1984, Congress reinstated authority for state CSE agencies to secure (when appropriate) an assignment to the state for any rights to support on behalf of Title IV-E foster care children and to collect child support on behalf of those children. In FY2003 CSE collections made on behalf of foster care cases amounted to less than 0.4% of total CSE collections.



**Table 1. Summary of National Child Support Enforcement Program Statistics, Selected Fiscal Years 1978-2003**  
(numbers in thousands, dollars in millions except as noted)

Measure	1978	1982	1986	1990	1994	1996	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Total child support collections	\$ 1,047	\$ 1,770	\$3,246	\$6,010	\$9,850	\$2,019	\$5,901	\$7,854	\$8,958	\$20,137	\$21,176
In 2003 dollars <sup>a</sup>	\$ 2,689	\$ 3,230	\$5,198	\$8,202	\$2,094	\$4,030	\$7,552	\$9,071	\$9,701	\$20,598	\$21,176
— Total TANF collections <sup>b</sup>	\$ 472	\$ 786	\$1,225	\$1,750	\$2,550	\$ 2,855	\$ 2,482	\$2,593	\$2,592	\$ 2,893	\$ 2,972
— Total Non-TANF collections	\$ 575	\$ 984	\$2,019	\$4,260	\$7,300	\$ 9,164	\$3,419	\$5,261	\$6,366	\$7,244	\$8,204
Total administrative expenditures	\$ 312	\$ 612	\$ 941	\$1,606	\$2,556	\$ 3,049	\$ 4,039	\$4,526	\$4,835	\$ 5,183	\$ 5,213
In 2003 dollars <sup>a</sup>	\$ 801	\$ 1,117	\$1,507	\$2,192	\$3,138	\$ 3,559	\$ 4,458	\$4,835	\$5,024	\$ 5,302	\$ 5,213
Total CSE caseload	4,146	7,024	9,724	12,796	18,610	19,319	17,330	17,374	17,061	16,066	15,923
— TANF cases	3,542	5,545	7,220	5,872	7,986	7,380	3,724	3,299	3,093	2,807	2,759
— Non-TANF cases	604	1,479	2,503	6,925	10,624	11,939	13,606	14,075	13,967	13,259	13,164
Percent of TANF cases with collections	12.9%	10.8%	8.1%	11.9%	11.6%	12.7%	24.5%	24.9%	25.0%	28.7%	29.2%
Percent of Non-TANF cases with collections	41.2%	30.3%	31.4%	19.7%	29.8%	21.9%	41.8%	45.5%	47.9%	52.9%	54.5%
Number of paternities established or acknowledged	111	173	245	393	676	1,058	1,600	1,554	1,568	1,527	1,525
Number of support obligations established	315	462	731	1,022	1,025	1,093	1,220	1,175	1,181	1,220	1,161
Total child support collections (dollars) per dollar of total administrative expenses	\$ 3.4	\$ 2.9	\$ 3.5	\$ 3.7	\$ 3.9	\$ 3.9	\$ 3.9	\$ 3.9	\$ 3.9	\$ 3.9	\$ 4.1

**Source:** Office of Child Support Enforcement, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Data converted into 2003 dollars by the Congressional Research Service.

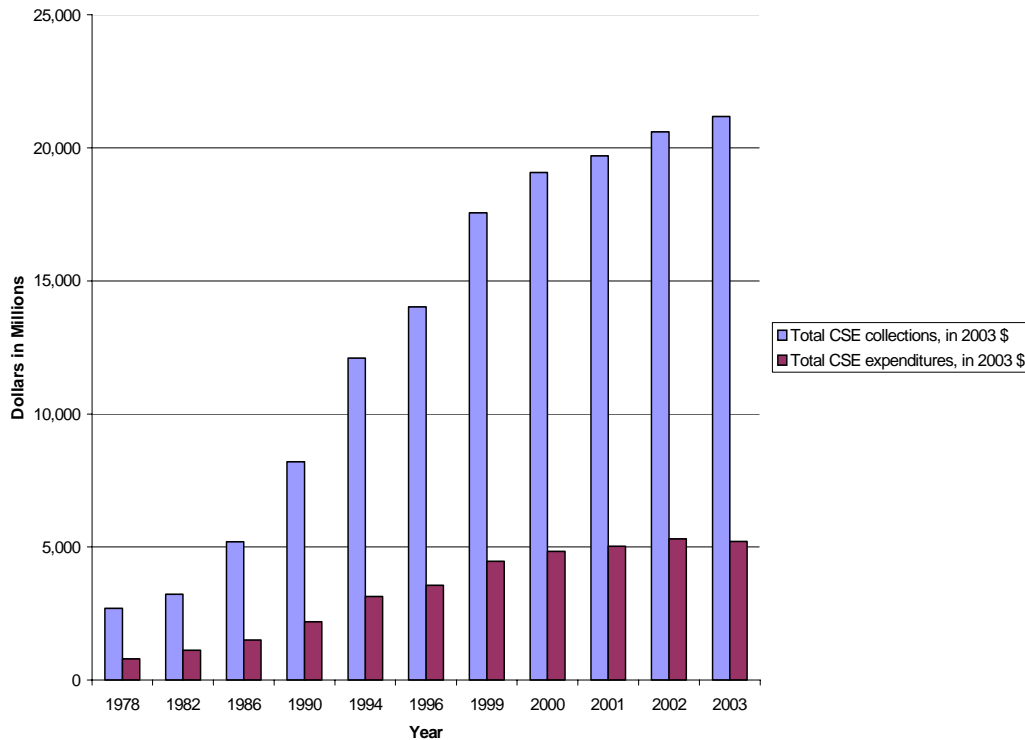
**Note:** The CSE collections and caseload data have been disaggregated into two categories: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cases and non-TANF cases. Before 1997, TANF cases were Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) cases and non-TANF cases were non-AFDC cases. Also, note that the tables that display TANF cases, collections, or expenditures include foster care cases as well, even though they are not labeled as such.

a. Adjusted for inflation using the Consumer Price Index, research series for urban consumers (CPI-U-RS).

b. Before FY2002, TANF collections are divided into state/federal shares and incentives are taken from the federal share thereby reducing the federal amounts. Beginning in FY2002, child support incentive payments are paid with appropriated funds.

NA—Not available.

**Figure 1. Child Support Enforcement Program: Collections and Expenditures: FY1978-FY2003, Selected Years**



**Source:** Office of Child Support Enforcement, HHS, Annual Reports — selected years. Figure prepared by the Congressional Research Service.

## CSE Caseload

OCSE defines a CSE “case” as a noncustodial parent (mother, father, or putative/alleged father) who is now or eventually may be obligated under law for the support of a child or children receiving services under the CSE program. If the noncustodial parent owes support for two children by different women, that would be considered two cases; if both children have the same mother, that would be considered one case.

Families who receive TANF cash benefits are required to assign their child support rights to the state in order to receive TANF. In addition, such families must cooperate with the state if necessary to establish paternity and secure child support. Families receiving TANF cash benefits, Medicaid benefits, or whose children receive Title IV-E foster care payments automatically are enrolled (free of charge) into the CSE program.<sup>5</sup> Collections on behalf of families receiving TANF cash benefits are used to reimburse state and federal governments for TANF payments made to the

<sup>5</sup> In addition, several states have opted to require food stamp households to cooperate with the CSE agency in establishing paternity and establishing and enforcing child support obligations. These food stamp households also receive CSE services automatically, free of charge.

family (i.e., child support payments go to the state instead of the family, except for amounts that states choose to “pass through” to the family as additional income that does not affect TANF eligibility or benefit amount).<sup>6</sup> Other families must apply for CSE services, and states must charge an application fee that cannot exceed \$25. Child support collected on behalf of nonwelfare families goes to the family (usually via a state child support disbursement unit).

The CSE program defines a *current assistance case* as one in which the children are: (1) recipients of cash aid under TANF (Title IV-A of the Social Security Act) or (2) entitled to Foster Care maintenance payments (Title IV-E of the Social Security Act). In addition, the children’s support rights have been assigned by a caretaker to the state, and a referral to the state CSE agency has been made. A *former assistance case* is defined as a case in which the children were formerly receiving TANF or foster care services. A *never assistance case* is defined as a case in which the children are receiving services under the CSE program, but are not currently eligible for and have not previously received assistance under TANF or foster care.

**Figure 2** shows the trend in the CSE caseload, separated by TANF cases and non-TANF cases. **Table 2** shows that TANF cases comprised 85% of the CSE caseload in FY1978, but dropped to 17% of the caseload in FY2003. By the same token, non-TANF cases represented only about 15% of the CSE caseload in FY1978, and increased to 83% of the caseload in FY2003. Available data show that non-TANF cases increasingly are families that formerly received TANF.

In FY1999, OCSE started reporting data for the following categories: current assistance, former assistance, and never received assistance rather than by TANF and non-TANF. The data indicate that the number and percentage of CSE families who currently receive TANF has decreased over time while the number and percentage of CSE families who formerly received TANF has increased. The data also show that the proportion of the CSE caseload comprised of families who had never received TANF has remained relatively stable for the period FY1999-FY2003 (see **Figure 3**). The decline in TANF families since 1994 (see **Table 2**), and the relative stability of the segment of the caseload that had never been on the TANF rolls, resulted in a smaller CSE caseload. Former TANF families represent the largest portion of the total CSE caseload.

In FY2003, the largest group of families who were participating in the CSE program were families who had left the TANF rolls (i.e., former TANF families —

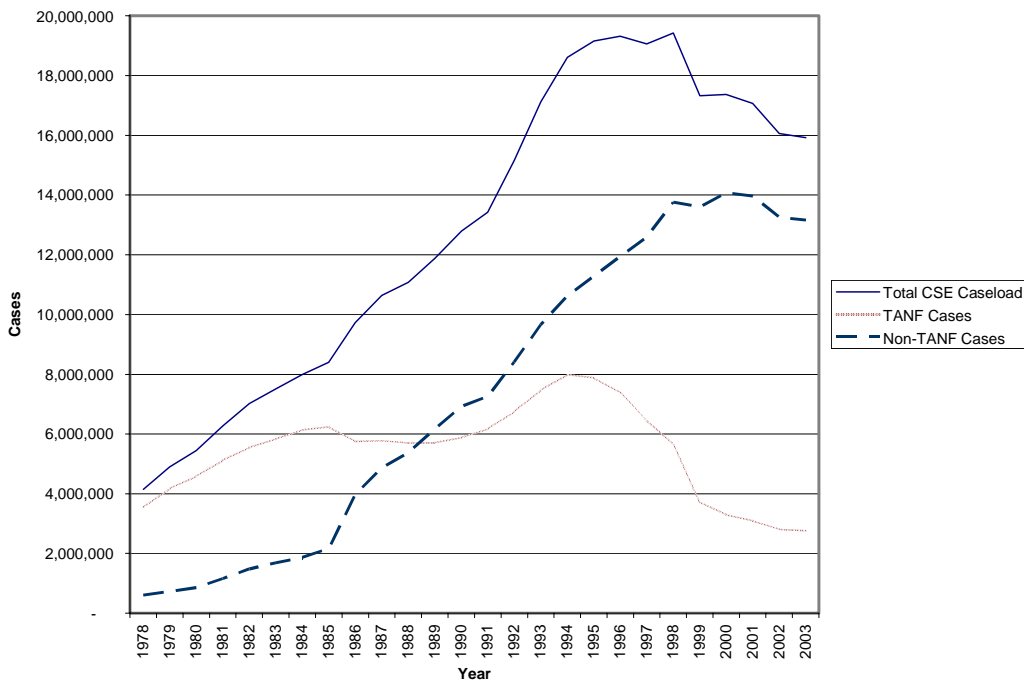
---

<sup>6</sup> While the family receives TANF cash benefits, the state is permitted to retain any current support and any assigned arrearages it collects *up to the cumulative amount of TANF benefits which has been paid to the family*. The 1996 welfare reform law (P.L. 104-193) repealed the then \$50 required pass through and gave states the choice to decide how much, if any, of the state share (some, all, none) of child support payments collected on behalf of TANF families to send the family. States also decide whether to treat child support payments as income to the family. P.L. 104-193 required states to pay the federal government the federal government’s share of TANF collections. (As of Aug. 2004, 21 states were, on a monthly basis, providing a pass through and disregard up to \$50 (higher in a couple of states) of child support collected on behalf of TANF families.)

47%, see **Figure 3**).<sup>7</sup> Families who had never been on TANF represented 36% of the CSE caseload and families who were currently receiving TANF benefits comprised 17% of the CSE caseload.<sup>8</sup> Thus, although the majority of the CSE caseload is comprised of non-TANF families, most of them at some point in their lives received TANF/AFDC. This is consistent with the expanded mission of the CSE program. The expectation is that as child support becomes a more consistent and stable income source/support, these former TANF families will never have to return to the TANF rolls, and families that never resorted to the TANF program will never have to do so. In its strategic plan for the period FY2000-FY2004, the CSE agency stated:

It is our commitment to lead the child support program into the new century as a key component to assist families to become self-sufficient or to remain self-sufficient. It is our vision that child support is an important line of defense against children living in poverty.<sup>9</sup>

**Figure 2. Child Support Enforcement Caseload, FY1978-FY2003**



**Source:** Office of Child Support Enforcement, HHS, Annual Reports — selected years. Figure prepared by the Congressional Research Service.

<sup>7</sup> Under the old jargon former TANF families would have been included among non-TANF families.

<sup>8</sup> In FY2003, families currently receiving TANF comprised 17% of the CSE caseload and received about 9% of CSE collections. In contrast, former TANF families comprised 47% of the CSE caseload and received 40% of CSE collections. Families that have never been on TANF comprised 36% of the CSE caseload and received almost 52% of CSE collections.

<sup>9</sup> See [<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/pol/DCL/dcl-00-76.htm>].

**Table 2. Child Support Enforcement Caseload, FY1978-FY2003**  
(numbers in thousands)

FY	Total CSE caseload	TANF cases	Non-TANF cases	TANF as % of caseload	Non-TANF as % of caseload
1978	4,146	3,542	604	85.4%	14.6%
1979	4,899	4,175	724	85.2%	14.8%
1980	5,442	4,584	858	84.2%	15.8%
1981	6,266	5,113	1,153	81.6%	18.4%
1982	7,024	5,545	1,479	78.9%	21.1%
1983	7,516	5,828	1,688	77.5%	22.5%
1984	7,999	6,136	1,863	76.7%	23.3%
1985	8,401	6,242	2,159	74.3%	25.7%
1986	9,724	5,749	3,975	59.1%	40.9%
1987	10,635	5,776	4,859	54.3%	45.7%
1988	11,078	5,703	5,375	51.5%	48.5%
1989	11,876	5,709	6,168	48.1%	51.9%
1990	12,796	5,872	6,925	45.9%	54.1%
1991	13,423	6,166	7,256	45.9%	54.1%
1992	15,158	6,752	8,406	44.5%	55.5%
1993	17,125	7,472	9,653	43.6%	56.4%
1994	18,610	7,986	10,624	42.9%	57.1%
1995	19,162	7,880	11,282	41.1%	58.9%
1996	19,319	7,380	11,939	38.2%	61.8%
1997	19,057	6,462	12,595	33.9%	66.1%
1998	19,419	5,658	13,761	29.1%	70.9%
1999	17,330	3,724	13,606	21.5%	78.5%
2000	17,374	3,299	14,075	19.0%	81.0%
2001	17,061	3,093	13,967	18.1%	81.9%
2002	16,066	2,807	13,259	17.5%	82.5%
2003	15,923	2,759	13,164	17.3%	82.7%

**Source:** Office of Child Support Enforcement, HHS, Annual Reports, selected years. Table prepared by the Congressional Research Service.

**Table 3. CSE Caseload, FY1999-FY2003**  
(numbers in thousands)

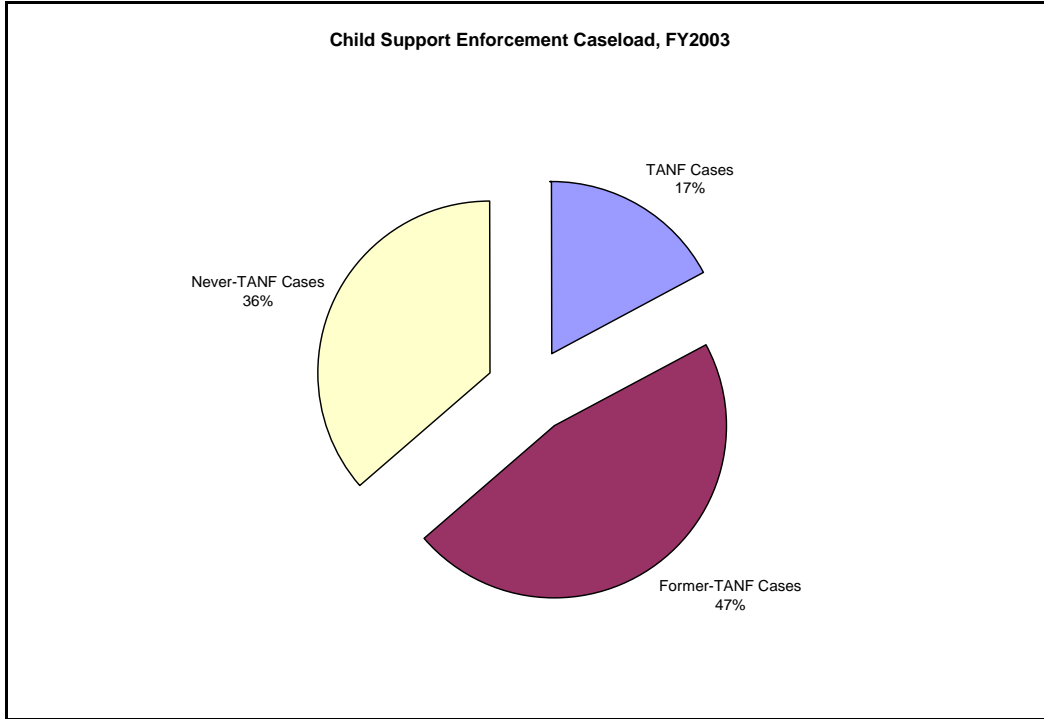
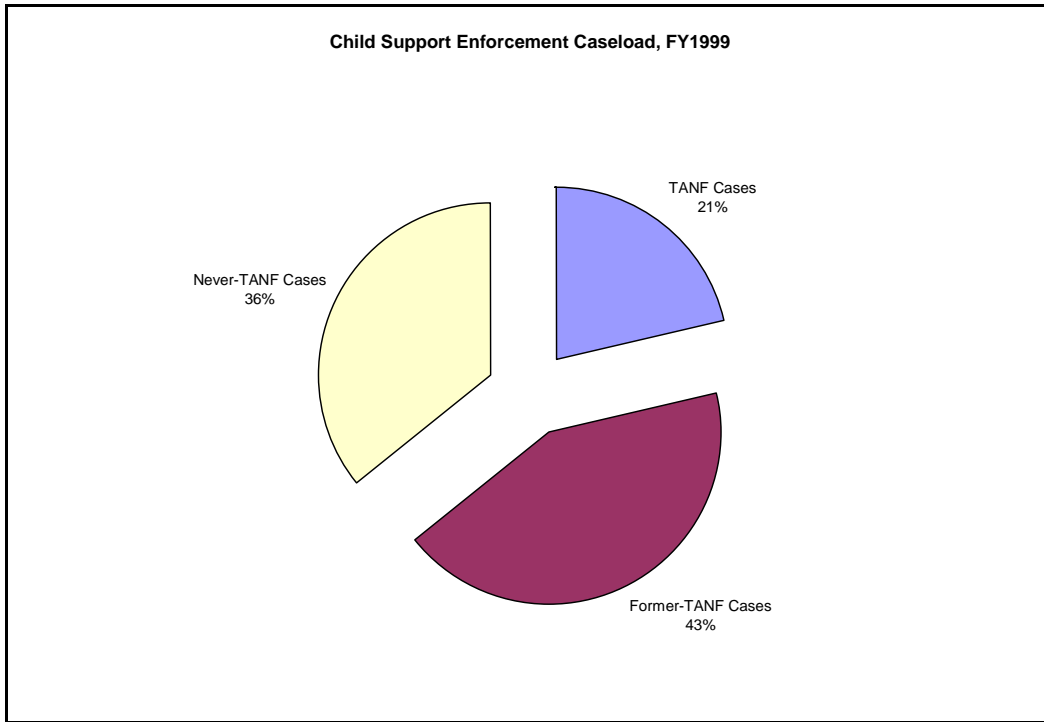
State	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Alabama	313	305	290	259	249
Alaska	47	47	46	46	46
Arizona	266	246	238	238	259
Arkansas	129	150	142	131	128
California	2,030	2,029	1,963	1,906	1,838
Colorado	169	146	138	134	138
Connecticut	199	186	196	207	213
Delaware	56	56	53	54	55
District of Columbia	117	128	114	108	105
Florida	729	784	729	669	664
Georgia	649	696	706	476	481
Guam	11	11	12	12	12
Hawaii	82	92	96	95	99
Idaho	70	72	74	80	88
Illinois	980	1,069	951	866	724
Indiana	468	475	488	311	301
Iowa	162	165	166	171	175
Kansas	145	152	151	141	134
Kentucky	286	304	299	312	314
Louisiana	297	292	287	266	272
Maine	61	62	63	65	64
Maryland	343	346	321	310	313
Massachusetts	209	236	255	246	247
Michigan	887	1,013	1,005	978	1,041
Minnesota	224	229	235	240	245
Mississippi	256	266	283	290	302
Missouri	362	372	386	391	384
Montana	39	38	39	40	41
Nebraska	100	97	95	98	98
Nevada	103	105	89	94	118
New Hampshire	41	40	37	37	38
New Jersey	372	364	344	341	345
New Mexico	101	107	84	70	70
New York	997	987	979	899	887
North Carolina	489	504	462	426	418
North Dakota	36	37	35	31	39
Ohio	799	767	857	901	915
Oklahoma	140	143	148	141	137
Oregon	229	240	241	247	247
Pennsylvania	681	624	636	590	591
Puerto Rico	225	235	235	237	237
Rhode Island	64	63	64	70	68
South Carolina	239	225	227	225	219
South Dakota	30	31	31	43	43
Tennessee	487	436	443	350	359
Texas	1,215	1,058	1,012	952	897
Utah	85	81	76	75	75
Vermont	23	25	25	24	24

CRS-10

State	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Virgin Islands	13	NA	NA	11	11
Virginia	416	392	380	362	350
Washington	321	322	310	303	315
West Virginia	127	128	131	116	110
Wisconsin	362	353	349	340	341
Wyoming	47	44	42	39	38
Totals	17,330	17,374	17,061	16,066	15,923

**Source:** Table prepared by CRS based on data from the Office of Child Support Enforcement, Department of Health and Human Services.

**Figure 3. Child Support Enforcement Caseload, FY1999-FY2003**



**Source:** Figures prepared by the Congressional Research Service.



## Paternity Establishment

A child born outside of marriage has a biological father but not a legal father. Legally identifying the father of a child is a prerequisite for obtaining a child support order. States generally follow a standard sequence of events in determining paternity. In order to be part of the CSE program, states are required to have procedures which permit the establishment of the paternity of a child at any time before the child reaches age 18. Federal CSE law also requires states to have laws and procedures for a simple civil process for voluntarily acknowledging paternity. Under such a process, the state must ensure that the rights and responsibilities of acknowledging paternity are explained to both parents and that due process safeguards are afforded to both parents. The statute requires that voluntary acknowledgment procedures include hospital-based programs that focus on the period immediately before or after the birth of a child. FY2003 was the first year for which data are available in which more fathers were legally identified through a voluntary paternity acknowledgment process (862,000) than through the courts or administratively via the CSE agency (663,000).

In FY2003, paternity was established or acknowledged for 1.5 million children in the CSE program. **Table 4** shows that during the period FY1999-FY2003, the number of paternities established or acknowledged fell 5% nationwide, from 1.6 million in FY1999 to 1.5 million in FY2003. Over that period, the number of paternities established or acknowledged in Kansas increased by 218%, from 7,347 in FY1999 to 23,356 in FY2003. In contrast, in New Mexico the number of paternities established or acknowledged decreased by 85%, from 52,380 in FY1999 to 7,639 in FY2003.

State performance on paternity establishment is calculated as a percentage of either (1) all births in a given year for which paternity is established, or (2) all cases in the state CSE program for which paternity is established. **Table 5** uses all cases in the state CSE program for which paternity is established as the base. **Table 5** shows the paternity establishment performance measure for FY2003. For the nation as a whole, the paternity establishment percentage (PEP) was 77%. In other words, in FY2003, there were a little over 10 million children on the CSE rolls who had been born outside of marriage, and the CSE agencies had determined paternity for 7.7 million of them. In FY2003, the PEP ranged from a low of 20% in the District of Columbia to a high of 101% in Maine and Utah. The reader should note that **Table 5** indicates that for some states the PEP was greater than 100%. This occurred because paternity is established for more than just the children who were born outside of marriage in the specified year. Most states acknowledge that while they have made significant improvement in establishing paternity for newborns they are performing poorly with respect to establishing paternity for older children.

**Table 4. Paternities Established or Acknowledged,  
FY1999-FY2003**

State	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Percent change, 1999-2003
Alabama	13,236	6,689	6,806	7,016	8,142	-38.5
Alaska	2,811	3,055	2,995	3,086	3,298	17.3
Arizona	39,105	43,515	48,287	43,648	48,135	23.1
Arkansas	3,799	3,062	10,411	10,692	10,727	182.4
California	326,051	306,508	277,307	188,011	185,197	-43.2
Colorado	15,559	13,745	15,480	16,750	17,764	14.2
Connecticut	18,816	16,687	17,189	25,814	23,980	27.4
Delaware	5,821	4,611	3,881	7,931	4,689	-19.4
District of Columbia	9,710	7,863	3,630	8,644	6,088	-37.3
Florida	65,836	98,004	91,299	95,508	93,042	41.3
Georgia	47,163	22,467	62,450	59,378	54,498	15.6
Guam	2,162	1,905	2,619	2,269	164	-92.4
Hawaii	3,710	3,937	5,198	5,671	9,800	164.2
Idaho	6,747	6,071	7,399	11,229	8,308	23.1
Illinois	49,336	71,696	82,706	81,302	78,899	59.9
Indiana	15,595	25,921	20,527	9,330	9,202	-41.0
Iowa	10,364	10,561	10,117	10,856	11,674	12.6
Kansas	7,347	8,571	17,454	19,456	23,356	217.9
Kentucky	14,600	16,000	16,318	19,929	19,735	35.2
Louisiana	26,851	20,496	15,206	18,591	19,703	-26.6
Maine	3,504	3,372	2,688	2,887	2,291	-34.6
Maryland	28,458	32,959	29,016	27,405	27,476	-3.5
Massachusetts	24,518	25,197	23,887	18,878	19,895	-18.9
Michigan	49,026	49,878	52,659	45,140	62,783	28.1
Minnesota	19,594	26,875	20,399	20,524	23,742	21.2
Mississippi	40,349	19,420	19,111	17,836	14,548	-63.9
Missouri	23,652	31,880	32,843	33,076	33,630	42.2
Montana	2,669	3,288	2,894	1,274	1,217	-54.4
Nebraska	6,446	5,886	6,028	6,147	6,879	6.7
Nevada	2,817	18,765	2,081	2,851	4,370	55.1
New Hampshire	936	1,411	1,398	1,280	1,214	29.7
New Jersey	41,811	36,987	37,538	36,183	36,872	-11.8
New Mexico	52,380	10,992	11,814	5,186	7,639	-85.4
New York	90,711	102,368	102,104	103,877	104,488	15.2
North Carolina	23,431	29,875	36,309	48,383	45,684	95.0
North Dakota	8,194	7,478	6,839	6,932	8,221	0.3
Ohio	96,813	67,223	53,602	53,739	52,965	-45.3
Oklahoma	17,961	13,694	13,995	13,415	13,865	-22.8
Oregon	14,567	16,239	13,496	14,824	13,482	-7.4
Pennsylvania	56,051	61,300	72,091	74,140	65,671	17.2
Puerto Rico	59	90	186	26,132	25,398	42,947.5
Rhode Island	3,187	3,747	3,314	3,175	5,496	72.5
South Carolina	17,867	16,853	18,906	19,553	17,343	-2.9
South Dakota	2,701	2,964	3,100	3,341	3,220	19.2
Tennessee	50,908	37,343	34,718	38,734	52,891	3.9
Texas	126,187	126,940	144,468	150,537	141,321	12.0

State	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Percent change, 1999-2003
Utah	7,892	7,869	9,234	8,714	8,267	4.8
Vermont	731	737	754	1,871	1,442	97.3
Virgin Islands	NA	NA	NA	14	21	NA
Virginia	36,417	35,086	34,822	33,615	29,227	-19.7
Washington	27,901	27,700	30,083	29,411	27,930	0.1
West Virginia	6,653	7,286	6,593	7,265	6,889	3.5
Wisconsin	29,265	29,429	21,449	23,639	19,911	-32.0
Wyoming	1,704	1,945	1,811	2,014	1,880	10.3
Total	1,599,979	1,554,440	1,567,509	1,527,103	1,524,569	-4.7

**Source:** Table prepared by CRS based on data from the Office of Child Support Enforcement, Department of Health and Human Services.

**Table 5. Paternity Establishment, FY2003**

State	Children in CSE cases who were born outside of marriage	Children in CSE cases for whom paternity was established or acknowledged	Paternity establishment percentage, 2003
Alabama	160,742	117,441	73.1
Alaska	18,125	11,535	63.6
Arizona	180,934	116,054	64.1
Arkansas	83,042	73,151	88.1
California	1,403,875	1,220,901	87.0
Colorado	77,118	68,873	89.3
Connecticut	139,353	113,177	81.2
Delaware	49,186	35,725	72.6
District of Columbia	77,841	15,331	19.7
Florida	444,037	407,746	91.8
Georgia	313,701	160,572	51.2
Guam	13,566	10,792	79.6
Hawaii	45,858	32,591	71.1
Idaho	48,670	42,497	87.3
Illinois	633,443	335,415	53.0
Indiana	176,497	130,723	74.1
Iowa	86,400	79,344	91.8
Kansas	72,935	64,733	88.8
Kentucky	170,559	137,933	80.9
Louisiana	221,929	170,269	76.7
Maine	36,702	37,011	100.8
Maryland	222,428	168,233	75.6
Massachusetts	134,654	104,229	77.4
Michigan	390,005	302,640	77.6
Minnesota	150,931	124,750	82.7
Mississippi	239,227	155,214	64.9
Missouri	251,126	214,931	85.6
Montana	22,071	22,033	99.8
Nebraska	47,670	38,327	80.4

State	Children in CSE cases who were born outside of marriage	Children in CSE cases for whom paternity was established or acknowledged	Paternity establishment percentage, 2003
Nevada	72,263	42,915	59.4
New Hampshire	25,513	24,794	97.2
New Jersey	192,377	152,907	79.5
New Mexico	58,780	40,531	69.0
New York	513,056	380,018	74.1
North Carolina	304,858	285,190	93.5
North Dakota	17,213	14,919	86.7
Ohio	570,957	409,952	71.8
Oklahoma	112,228	57,045	50.8
Oregon	86,816	65,864	75.9
Pennsylvania	287,835	235,623	81.9
Puerto Rico	27,120	25,733	94.9
Rhode Island	55,853	37,427	67.0
South Carolina	182,326	147,936	81.1
South Dakota	16,927	16,821	99.4
Tennessee	253,637	189,128	74.6
Texas	606,771	413,476	68.1
Utah	34,768	35,167	101.1
Vermont	15,765	14,955	94.9
Virgin Islands	5,407	2,516	46.5
Virginia	229,065	186,168	81.3
Washington	167,357	155,980	93.2
West Virginia	60,574	53,526	88.4
Wisconsin	213,300	202,990	95.2
Wyoming	12,000	9,970	83.1
Totals	10,035,391	7,713,722	76.9

**Source:** Table prepared by CRS based on data from the Office of Child Support Enforcement, Department of Health and Human Services.

## Establishment of Child Support Orders

A child support order legally obligates noncustodial parents to provide financial support for their children and stipulates the amount of the obligation (current monthly obligation plus arrearages, if any) and how it is to be paid.

Although the FY2003 national total is available for child support order establishment, the data for the individual states and territories have not yet been published. Therefore, data for the five-year period FY1998-FY2002 were used in the following table. **Table 6** shows that during the period FY1998-FY2002, the number of cases with a child support order established dropped by 2% nationwide, from 11.5 million in FY1998 to 11.3 million in FY2002. During that period, the District of Columbia established 40% fewer cases in FY2002 than it did in FY1998. In contrast, Hawaii established 72% more cases in FY2002 than it did in FY1998.

**Table 6. Number of Cases with Child Support Orders  
Established, FY1998-FY2002**

State	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	Percent change, 1998- 2002
Alabama	227,642	188,636	172,224	172,951	171,787	-24.5
Alaska	48,588	36,318	36,892	36,532	38,452	-20.9
Arizona	187,430	124,563	134,097	140,993	149,328	-20.3
Arkansas	114,700	91,420	100,993	103,633	102,961	-10.2
California	1,319,177	1,329,100	1,400,875	1,409,690	1,434,766	8.8
Colorado	158,801	120,989	113,747	112,463	112,136	-29.4
Connecticut	166,060	122,186	119,327	125,622	132,409	-20.3
Delaware	45,422	31,385	33,763	37,141	38,078	-16.2
District of Columbia	53,246	34,036	33,509	31,795	32,014	-39.9
Florida	432,562	356,549	372,210	391,027	435,620	0.7
Georgia	318,701	282,831	300,576	313,807	324,380	1.8
Guam	5,520	5,594	5,707	5,909	6,054	9.7
Hawaii	32,689	41,938	43,495	55,424	56,088	71.6
Idaho	62,508	52,105	56,057	57,991	62,280	-0.4
Illinois	226,967	304,117	320,704	336,386	353,188	55.6
Indiana	164,696	243,134	244,849	244,552	219,561	33.3
Iowa	178,757	139,137	142,144	145,054	150,027	-16.1
Kansas	87,643	69,896	74,802	85,602	90,210	2.9
Kentucky	206,323	183,398	196,734	204,658	218,822	6.1
Louisiana	147,627	140,883	145,990	166,596	178,942	21.2
Maine	60,346	53,558	54,526	55,868	56,732	-6.0
Maryland	207,674	218,139	211,721	211,504	212,566	2.4
Massachusetts	197,262	145,714	158,352	166,329	174,559	-11.5
Michigan	794,709	638,704	714,138	762,254	745,135	-6.2
Minnesota	201,766	163,264	170,980	180,678	187,587	-7.0
Mississippi	144,490	122,165	130,682	139,287	144,546	0.0
Missouri	306,242	257,504	274,548	294,127	308,247	0.7
Montana	30,827	30,807	29,959	30,217	30,896	0.2
Nebraska	90,480	71,176	72,446	72,875	74,628	-17.5
Nevada	53,396	51,375	58,282	56,635	56,983	6.7
New Hampshire	40,617	31,328	31,401	30,497	30,669	-24.5
New Jersey	372,069	276,676	268,638	267,107	268,389	-27.9
New Mexico	18,714	26,871	28,183	29,837	31,140	66.4
New York	866,226	614,854	647,050	661,395	656,700	-24.2
North Carolina	308,052	263,543	285,605	303,751	311,702	1.2
North Dakota	29,398	23,672	24,192	24,140	23,386	-20.5
Ohio	700,456	573,827	596,813	625,300	643,410	-8.1
Oklahoma	72,640	84,490	88,627	94,469	98,122	35.1
Oregon	152,720	152,972	159,389	161,157	165,046	8.1
Pennsylvania	568,975	489,564	487,389	489,726	489,368	-14.0
Puerto Rico	145,814	137,532	146,810	146,368	151,074	3.6
Rhode Island	42,954	34,607	32,084	32,829	35,876	-16.5
South Carolina	119,945	144,198	147,969	149,464	150,078	25.1
South Dakota	31,496	24,341	25,039	25,888	26,734	-15.1
Tennessee	197,440	183,253	187,363	195,714	198,178	0.4
Texas	475,657	547,806	590,232	633,327	656,579	38.0
Utah	82,885	64,132	64,016	63,862	63,617	-23.2
Vermont	24,010	20,198	21,067	21,557	20,853	-13.1
Virgin Islands	5,262	5,761	NA	NA	4,250	-19.2
Virginia	269,272	266,841	265,869	283,587	289,918	7.7

State	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	Percent change, 1998-2002
Washington	361,391	283,666	287,283	278,674	275,559	-23.8
West Virginia	62,485	76,477	78,545	85,450	86,703	38.8
Wisconsin	278,228	264,487	269,970	266,665	268,455	-3.5
Wyoming	41,111	30,378	30,152	31,246	30,813	-25.0
Total	11,540,068	10,272,095	10,688,015	11,049,610	11,275,601	-2.3

**Source:** Table prepared by CRS based on data from the Office of Child Support Enforcement, Department of Health and Human Services.

## CSE Collections

Child support collection methods used by CSE agencies include income withholding, interception of federal and state income tax refunds, interception of unemployment compensation, liens against property, security bonds, reporting child support obligations to credit bureaus, regular billings, delinquency notices, garnishment of wages, revocation of various types of licenses (drivers', business, occupational, recreational), attachment of lottery winnings and insurance settlements, and seizure of assets held by public or private retirement funds and financial institutions. Income withholding accounted for 66% of total collections received (almost \$16.7 billion) in FY2003. All jurisdictions also have civil or criminal contempt-of-court procedures and criminal nonsupport laws.

**Table 7** shows that during the period FY1999-FY2003, child support payments collected by CSE agencies increased 33% for the nation as a whole, from \$15.9 billion in FY1999 to \$21.2 billion in FY2003. Child support collections increased in all states during the FY1999-FY2003 period, ranging from a 1% increase in Kansas to an 88% increase in Texas. Interestingly, child support collections continued to increase even though the CSE caseload declined. During the period FY1999-FY2003, the CSE caseload declined 8%, from 17.3 million in FY1999 to 15.9 million in FY2003 (See **Table 1**).

It appears that the broad array of child support collection/enforcement techniques has enabled states to provide some help to the entire spectrum of CSE families (i.e., current TANF families, former TANF families, and families that had never been on TANF/AFDC). During the FY1999-FY2003 period, CSE collections increased for each of the three segments of the CSE caseload. **Table 8** shows average monthly child support collections per CSE case,<sup>10</sup> by category of family, for FY1999 and FY2003. The greatest increase in collections occurred on behalf of former TANF families.

Although the number and percent of CSE cases with collections have been increasing over time, the average monthly child support payment for families that

---

<sup>10</sup> The reader should note that not all of these families actually receive child support payments; these numbers simply represent an average for each component of the entire CSE caseload.

actually receive a payment has been decreasing over time. **Table 9** shows that these payments decreased by 46% over the period FY1978-FY2003, from \$408 in FY1978 to \$221 in FY2003 (if adjusted for inflation). **Table 9** also shows that the average monthly child support payment for families who actually received a payment was relatively small, amounting to \$221 in FY2003. **Table 10** shows the variation by state in average monthly child support payments for families that actually receive a payment. In FY2003, average monthly child support payments for families who received them ranged from a high of \$300 in New Jersey to a low of \$136 in Mississippi. During the five-year period FY1999-FY2003, average monthly child support payments increased 10%.

**Table 7. CSE Total Collections, FY1999-FY2003**  
(dollars in millions)

State	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Percent change, 1999-2003
Alabama	\$186	\$192	\$200	\$211	\$223	20.1
Alaska	67	71	78	81	79	18.2
Arizona	169	197	212	230	234	38.0
Arkansas	108	120	122	129	135	24.8
California	1,604	2,059	1,988	1,761	2,132	32.9
Colorado	164	176	190	203	203	24.2
Connecticut	175	191	203	217	222	26.7
Delaware	45	49	53	60	62	36.8
District of Columbia	35	35	38	41	44	26.1
Florida	580	648	700	803	891	53.7
Georgia	331	362	383	415	454	37.2
Guam	8	8	7	8	8	8.6
Hawaii	61	67	69	73	76	25.1
Idaho	64	75	87	96	103	60.4
Illinois	326	361	424	460	471	44.7
Indiana	271	366	367	430	417	53.8
Iowa	201	219	237	255	270	34.2
Kansas	138	139	127	134	139	0.9
Kentucky	206	226	249	281	281	36.3
Louisiana	188	214	233	260	273	45.1
Maine	81	89	95	96	98	21.0
Maryland	350	368	379	396	409	16.9
Massachusetts	291	319	363	403	425	45.8
Michigan	1,275	1,347	1,385	1,444	1,404	10.1
Minnesota	443	477	512	537	559	26.2
Mississippi	129	144	158	169	175	35.8
Missouri	286	339	373	411	433	51.5
Montana	38	41	41	43	44	15.9
Nebraska	111	142	160	143	147	32.7
Nevada	92	79	84	91	100	8.2
New Hampshire	66	71	73	76	80	20.2
New Jersey	635	679	725	775	815	28.3
New Mexico	35	40	44	52	60	71.4
New York	910	1,102	1,149	1,289	1,341	47.4
North Carolina	348	396	430	469	496	42.6
North Dakota	41	42	48	51	55	33.4
Ohio	1,301	1,411	1,461	1,618	1,566	20.3
Oklahoma	96	107	116	132	142	48.1

State	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Percent change, 1999-2003
Oregon	232	248	271	276	289	24.6
Pennsylvania	1,108	1,167	1,252	1,332	1,357	22.5
Puerto Rico	166	183	196	212	232	39.9
Rhode Island	44	48	49	53	53	18.6
South Carolina	174	188	208	224	233	33.8
South Dakota	38	44	47	51	53	37.0
Tennessee	224	248	276	318	354	57.7
Texas	803	965	1,174	1,347	1,507	87.7
Utah	107	118	127	133	137	27.7
Vermont	35	39	41	42	42	21.0
Virgin Islands	6	8	7	7	8	23.8
Virginia	313	348	403	437	467	49.5
Washington	516	549	573	591	597	15.8
West Virginia	109	120	137	151	157	43.6
Wisconsin	533	569	584	574	578	8.5
Wyoming	38	42	45	47	47	23.1
Total	15,901	17,854	18,958	20,137	21,176	33.2

**Source:** Table prepared by CRS based on data from the Office of Child Support Enforcement, Department of Health and Human Services.

**Note:** Percentages are imprecise due to rounding of data.

**Table 8. Average Monthly CSE Collections per Case, by Category of Family, FY1999-FY2003**

Family category	FY1999	FY2003
TANF Families	\$33	\$55
Former TANF Families	\$54	\$96
Never TANF Families	\$129	\$157

**Source:** Table prepared by CRS based on data from the Office of Child Support Enforcement, Department of Health and Human Services.

**Table 9. Average Monthly Child Support Payments for Families with Collections, Selected Years, FY1978-FY2003**

FY	Current dollars	Constant 2003 dollars <sup>a</sup>
FY1978	\$159	\$408
FY1982	\$155	\$283
FY1986	\$177	\$283
FY1990	\$219	\$299
FY1996	\$253	\$295
FY1999	\$201	\$222
FY2000	\$206	\$220
FY2001	\$212	\$220
FY2002	\$215	\$220
FY2003	\$221	\$221



**Source:** Table prepared by CRS based on data from the Office of Child Support Enforcement, Department of Health and Human Services.

a. Adjusted for inflation using the Consumer Price Index, research series for urban consumers (CPI-U-RS).

**Table 10. Average Monthly Child Support Payments in Cases with Collections, by State, FY1999-FY2003**

State	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Percent change, 1999-2003
Alabama	\$147	\$149	\$151	\$154	\$158	7.8
Alaska	\$204	\$209	\$224	\$228	\$219	7.5
Arizona	\$183	\$193	\$197	\$208	\$207	13.4
Arkansas	\$135	\$145	\$139	\$151	\$156	15.5
California	\$174	\$215	\$212	\$185	\$220	26.2
Colorado	\$163	\$191	\$223	\$269	\$284	74.5
Connecticut	\$194	\$199	\$209	\$214	\$220	13.3
Delaware	\$145	\$150	\$163	\$180	\$188	29.2
District of Columbia	\$181	\$187	\$200	\$200	\$217	19.5
Florida	\$170	\$177	\$179	\$189	\$195	14.7
Georgia	\$138	\$165	\$171	\$177	\$187	34.8
Guam	\$199	\$191	\$109	\$107	\$103	-48.1
Hawaii	\$198	\$198	\$197	\$200	\$222	12.2
Idaho	\$188	\$158	\$171	\$176	\$179	-4.8
Illinois	\$167	\$172	\$183	\$187	\$193	15.7
Indiana	\$173	\$216	\$214	\$250	\$233	34.5
Iowa	\$172	\$155	\$160	\$166	\$166	-3.2
Kansas	\$254	\$181	\$165	\$171	\$174	-31.4
Kentucky	\$165	\$168	\$165	\$177	\$172	4.0
Louisiana	\$144	\$156	\$164	\$175	\$180	24.9
Maine	\$169	\$180	\$188	\$194	\$199	17.5
Maryland	\$203	\$212	\$214	\$217	\$224	10.1
Massachusetts	\$246	\$256	\$279	\$304	\$273	10.7
Michigan	\$197	\$236	\$265	\$265	\$268	35.7
Minnesota	\$267	\$273	\$281	\$292	\$297	11.3
Mississippi	\$120	\$125	\$129	\$135	\$136	13.2
Missouri	\$164	\$181	\$190	\$199	\$206	25.0
Montana	\$138	\$141	\$144	\$150	\$149	7.9
Nebraska	\$216	\$215	\$234	\$207	\$207	-4.1
Nevada	\$271	\$185	\$185	\$195	\$200	-26.0
New Hampshire	\$212	\$225	\$229	\$235	\$249	17.5
New Jersey	\$249	\$259	\$272	\$284	\$300	20.4
New Mexico	\$144	\$170	\$168	\$181	\$193	33.6
New York	\$189	\$208	\$217	\$241	\$252	33.2
North Carolina	\$187	\$149	\$153	\$159	\$163	-12.8
North Dakota	\$215	\$184	\$197	\$200	\$206	-4.1
Ohio	\$497	\$270	\$253	\$275	\$266	-46.4
Oklahoma	\$245	\$143	\$150	\$155	\$170	-30.7
Oregon	\$180	\$186	\$201	\$200	\$205	14.1
Pennsylvania	\$234	\$245	\$252	\$263	\$263	12.4
Puerto Rico	\$161	\$165	\$172	\$179	\$191	18.8
Rhode Island	\$188	\$199	\$200	\$209	\$213	13.5
South Carolina	\$162	\$168	\$174	\$184	\$189	16.7
South Dakota	\$863	\$170	\$179	\$182	\$186	-78.4
Tennessee	\$158	\$169	\$179	\$186	\$196	23.7

State	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Percent change, 1999-2003
Texas	\$266	\$265	\$282	\$226	\$234	-11.8
Utah	\$173	\$177	\$186	\$192	\$195	12.9
Vermont	\$192	\$202	\$208	\$220	\$222	15.6
Virgin Islands	NA	NA	NA	\$159	\$165	NA
Virginia	\$153	\$159	\$172	\$182	\$189	24.2
Washington	\$200	\$201	\$205	\$208	\$210	5.0
West Virginia	\$177	\$192	\$199	\$213	\$215	21.3
Wisconsin	\$217	\$212	\$220	\$217	\$220	1.3
Wyoming	\$179	\$176	\$175	\$174	\$173	-3.3
Total	\$201	\$206	\$212	\$215	\$221	10.1

**Source:** Table prepared by CRS based on data from the Office of Child Support Enforcement, Department of Health and Human Services.

**Note:** Percentages are imprecise due to rounding of data.

## Child Support Collected on Behalf of TANF Families

The reader should note that the child support payments made on behalf of TANF children are paid to the state for distribution rather than directly to the family. If the child support collected is insufficient to lift the family's income above the state's TANF eligibility limit, the family receives its full TANF grant and the child support is collected by the state and distributed to the state treasury and the federal government in proportion to their assistance to the family. If the family's income, including the child support payments, exceeds the state's TANF limitations, the family's TANF cash benefits are ended and all child support payments are then sent directly to the family (via the state's child support disbursement unit).

When the CSE program was first enacted in 1975, welfare cost recovery was one of the primary goals of the program. There has been movement away from this goal, in part because of the changing nature of the CSE program. As discussed earlier (in the Caseload Section), the size of the component of the caseload that is comprised of TANF families is shrinking. Even though overall child support collections increased by 33% over the five-year period FY1999-FY2003, child support collections made on behalf of TANF families decreased by 27%. In FY2003, only 17% of the CSE caseload was comprised of TANF families. Thus, the policy shift from using the CSE program to recover welfare costs to using it as a mechanism to consistently and reliably get child support income to families is not surprising. In FY2003, only about 9% of CSE collections (\$1.8 billion) were made on behalf of TANF families; a little less than half of that amount (46%) actually went to the families (pursuant to state child support "pass through" provisions), the rest was divided between the state and federal governments to reimburse them for TANF benefits to the families. This meant that in FY2003, 90% of CSE collections (\$19.0 billion) went to the families on the CSE rolls. (See **Table 11.**)

According to the CSE Preliminary FY2003 Data Report, payments to families increased 6% from FY2002 to FY2003, and 41% from FY1999 to FY2003. In FY2003, the percent of child support payments that went to families was 86% or

more in 47 states; in seven states, the percentage that went to families exceeded 95%.<sup>11</sup>

The CSE strategic plan for the period FY2005-FY2009 states:

Child support is no longer primarily a welfare reimbursement, revenue-producing device for the Federal and State governments; it is a family-first program, intended to ensure families' self-sufficiency by making child support a more reliable source of income.<sup>12</sup>

**Table 11. Financial Overview of CSE Program, FY2003**

<b>Total CSE collections on behalf of families</b>		<b>\$21,176,389,882<sup>a</sup></b>
Collections for current TANF families		\$1,815,261,394
— State and federal reimbursement	\$957,868,488	
— Medical child support	\$20,148,859	
— Payments to families	\$837,244,047	
Collections for former TANF families		\$8,452,305,462
— State and federal reimbursement	\$1,156,987,876	
— Medical child support	\$56,716,916	
— Payments to families	\$7,238,600,670	
Collections for families who never received TANF		\$10,908,823,026
— Medical child support	\$21,476,462	
— Payments to families	\$10,887,346,564	
Child support paid to families		\$18,963,191,281
Reimbursement to states & federal government		\$2,114,856,364
— State share	\$948,255,175	
— Federal share	\$1,166,601,189	
Total medical child support		\$98,342,237
Total administrative expenditures		\$5,212,570,124
— Federal share	3,448,165,402	
— State share	1,764,404,722	
Actual incentive payments to states		\$461,000,000
<b>Total program savings/costs<sup>b</sup></b>		<b>-\$3,097,713,760</b>
— Federal share <sup>c</sup>	-\$2,281,564,213	
— State share <sup>d</sup>	-\$355,149,547	

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Support Enforcement, *Child Support Enforcement FY2003 Preliminary Data Report*, June 2004, at [[http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cse/pubs/2004/reports/preliminary\\_data/](http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cse/pubs/2004/reports/preliminary_data/)].

<sup>12</sup> See [[http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/pubs/2004/Strategic\\_Plan\\_FY2005-2009.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/pubs/2004/Strategic_Plan_FY2005-2009.pdf)].

**Source:** Table prepared by CRS based on data from the Office of Child Support Enforcement, Department of Health and Human Services.

- a. Total CSE collections are equal to collections made on behalf of TANF families plus collections made on behalf of former TANF families plus collections made on behalf of families who had never received TANF [\$1.815 billion + \$8.452 billion + \$10.909 billion = \$21.176 billion]. Total CSE collections also are equal to total child support paid to families plus total reimbursement to state and federal governments for TANF cash benefits paid to families plus medical child support [\$18.963 billion + \$2.115 billion + \$98 million = \$21.176 billion].
- b. Total CSE program costs are equal to total reimbursement to the states and federal governments for TANF cash benefits paid to families minus total administrative expenditures [\$2.115 billion - \$5.213 billion = -\$3.098 billion].
- c. The federal share of CSE program costs are equal to the federal share of reimbursement for TANF cash benefits paid to families minus the federal share of administrative expenditures [\$1.167 billion - \$3.448 billion = -\$2.281 billion].
- d. The state share of CSE program costs are equal to the state share of reimbursement for TANF cash benefits paid to families plus actual incentive payments to states minus the state share of administrative expenditures [(\$948 million + \$461 million) - \$1.764 billion = - \$355 million].

**Table 12** shows child support collected on behalf of TANF families for the period FY1999-FY2003, by state. As noted earlier, for the nation as a whole, child support collections made on behalf of TANF families decreased by 27% over that five-year period.

**Table 12. Child Support Collected on Behalf of TANF Families, FY1999-FY2003**  
(in millions of dollars)

State	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Percent change, 1999-2003
Alabama	\$18	\$12	\$13	\$13	\$12	-32.1
Alaska	18	17	17	16	5	-68.9
Arizona	23	26	25	29	13	-43.3
Arkansas	11	10	10	16	37	239.2
California	620	751	695	583	297	-52.1
Colorado	32	30	26	25	16	-51.2
Connecticut	54	50	59	63	36	-34.2
Delaware	7	7	10	7	4	-49.0
District of Columbia	5	4	4	5	3	-39.5
Florida	73	75	70	296	296	305.4
Georgia	48	44	41	43	32	-32.0
Guam	2	1	1	2	1	-24.9
Hawaii	10	12	13	12	5	-50.3
Idaho	4	4	5	4	1	-69.1
Illinois	73	81	56	50	15	-79.9
Indiana	25	24	24	28	15	-41.2
Iowa	44	44	51	87	75	70.4
Kansas	29	28	17	20	10	-67.1
Kentucky	36	34	34	36	17	-52.8
Louisiana	18	16	18	18	8	-54.1
Maine	33	34	33	30	17	-48.4
Maryland	25	25	22	22	10	-59.8
Massachusetts	54	47	44	47	27	-50.0
Michigan	129	130	97	140	56	-56.9

State	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Percent change, 1999-2003
Minnesota	61	57	56	57	32	-47.6
Mississippi	11	8	8	8	5	-55.0
Missouri	37	47	46	51	20	-44.9
Montana	6	6	5	6	3	-47.0
Nebraska	13	12	16	15	10	-25.3
Nevada	7	8	6	6	3	-64.0
New Hampshire	9	9	8	8	6	-32.3
New Jersey	73	66	63	63	30	-58.4
New Mexico	11	8	8	9	3	-68.1
New York	182	193	179	168	69	-62.2
North Carolina	44	45	43	41	19	-56.5
North Dakota	5	4	6	5	2	-52.0
Ohio	94	100	82	80	29	-69.4
Oklahoma	21	20	20	20	6	-72.5
Oregon	24	23	22	25	13	-46.6
Pennsylvania	97	95	99	99	54	-44.2
Puerto Rico	2	3	2	2	2	-24.3
Rhode Island	18	17	16	15	11	-39.8
South Carolina	15	13	13	14	10	-33.1
South Dakota	14	16	19	21	21	53.9
Tennessee	30	31	38	46	43	41.6
Texas	108	82	103	174	149	37.3
Utah	20	19	21	21	11	-46.1
Vermont	8	9	8	6	3	-59.1
Virgin Islands	0	1	1	1	0	-76.8
Virginia	38	36	139	148	144	282.5
Washington	95	93	88	85	32	-66.3
West Virginia	6	16	45	66	63	991.6
Wisconsin	38	43	44	35	13	-64.4
Wyoming	4	3	3	3	0	-92.3
Totals	2,482	2,593	2,592	2,893	1,815	-26.9

**Source:** Table prepared by CRS based on data from the Office of Child Support Enforcement, Department of Health and Human Services.

**Notes:** Percentages are imprecise due to rounding of data. The data in this table do not include child support collected by the state to reimburse itself and the federal government for TANF benefits made to families who are *no longer on TANF*. Such assistance payments amounted to \$1,156,987,876 in FY2003. The addition of those assistance payments to the data in this table is reflected in the summary table (Table 1) as Total TANF collections.

## Collections on Current Support Obligations and Arrearage Payments

**Table 13** shows that during the period FY1999-FY2003, CSE agencies increased the amount they collected on current child support obligations for the nation as a whole by 32%, from \$11.9 billion in FY1999 to \$15.7 billion in FY2003. All but one jurisdiction (the District of Columbia) increased their collections on current support during the period from FY1999 through FY2003. New Mexico

increased its collections by 93%. Collections on current child support obligations fell in the District of Columbia by 9%.

In FY2003, \$122.9 billion in child support obligations (\$27.1 billion in current support and \$95.8 billion in past-due support) was owed to families receiving CSE services, but only \$22.2 billion was paid (\$15.7 billion current, \$6.5 billion past-due). This meant that the CSE program only collected 18% of the child support obligations for which it had responsibility. If current collections are examined separately, **Table 14** indicates that the CSE program collected 58% of all current collections in FY2003. If collections on past-due support (i.e., arrearages) are examined separately, **Table 15** shows that the CSE program collected only 7% of arrearage payments in FY2003. **Table 15** shows that the total amount of arrearages reported in FY2003 for all previous fiscal years was \$95.8 billion; however, \$6.5 billion was collected in FY2003.

The CSE FY2003 Preliminary Data report states:

In 1999, 53% of the child support cases had arrearages owed. In 2003, the proportion was up to 68%. We obtained collections in 60% of these cases, so we know that child support professionals are working hard on them and that obligors are trying to work on their debts. But we collected an average of \$600 per arrearage case, while the average amount of arrears per arrearage case is \$9,000. So, even though we're collecting significant amounts of arrears, we don't seem to be making a dent in the problem, and the overall debt continues to grow.<sup>13</sup>

**Table 16** shows that there were 10.8 million cases with arrearages due in FY2003 and collections were made in 6.4 million of those cases. This meant that 60% of noncustodial parents who owed past-due support made some payment toward their arrearages in FY2003. **Tables 13 and 14** indicate that although a majority of noncustodial parents who owe arrearages make some payment toward those arrearages, the percentages of all arrearages paid remains small.

**Table 13. Collections on Current Child Support Obligations, FY1999-FY2003**  
(in millions of dollars)

State	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Percent change, 1999-2003
Alabama	\$105	\$111	\$148	\$155	\$169	60.6
Alaska	45	45	46	49	52	15.3
Arizona	128	146	154	156	161	26.2
Arkansas	79	87	93	96	102	28.9
California	930	1,026	1,107	1,171	1,243	33.6
Colorado	114	125	135	146	155	36.3

<sup>13</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Support Enforcement, *Child Support Enforcement FY2003 Preliminary Data Report*, June 2004, at [[http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cse/pubs/2004/reports/preliminary\\_data/](http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cse/pubs/2004/reports/preliminary_data/)].

State	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Percent change, 1999-2003
Connecticut	122	138	150	157	164	34.4
Delaware	39	43	44	48	50	26.0
District of Columbia	40	33	27	35	37	-9.1
Florida	442	479	517	624	691	56.5
Georgia	263	281	305	331	359	36.6
Guam	6	5	6	6	6	6.4
Hawaii	48	51	55	58	59	24.8
Idaho	48	58	67	74	79	65.2
Illinois	289	222	255	300	318	10.1
Indiana	203	267	285	303	311	52.7
Iowa	133	176	173	188	201	50.9
Kansas	84	87	89	91	94	11.8
Kentucky	149	174	218	212	224	50.3
Louisiana	144	154	170	191	205	41.9
Maine	53	58	62	64	65	22.9
Maryland	273	296	311	325	339	23.9
Massachusetts	231	260	298	311	329	42.5
Michigan	909	905	1,033	1,053	978	7.6
Minnesota	318	353	379	442	446	40.5
Mississippi	95	107	119	124	133	39.8
Missouri	230	255	278	302	326	41.8
Montana	29	31	31	33	34	19.0
Nebraska	95	101	108	115	117	23.2
Nevada	62	64	73	77	76	21.6
New Hampshire	53	57	59	61	61	14.9
New Jersey	528	562	595	639	679	28.6
New Mexico	21	25	30	35	41	93.2
New York	797	867	926	953	1,016	27.6
North Carolina	295	320	352	385	411	39.1
North Dakota	26	34	37	40	44	71.4
Ohio	1,046	1,038	1,201	1,223	1,264	20.8
Oklahoma	63	70	76	86	93	47.2
Oregon	185	199	206	218	227	22.3
Pennsylvania	837	905	1,013	1,051	1,079	28.8
Puerto Rico	133	148	158	173	190	43.5
Rhode Island	26	35	39	41	42	60.5
South Carolina	130	128	162	165	172	32.7
South Dakota	34	34	37	40	41	21.8
Tennessee	175	187	218	242	270	54.3
Texas	556	785	826	943	985	77.1
Utah	74	82	90	96	102	38.0
Vermont	28	31	33	34	35	23.2
Virgin Islands	6			6	7	18.3
Virginia	257	289	322	346	367	42.6
Washington	380	407	427	447	458	20.5
West Virginia	83	85	106	114	119	42.5
Wisconsin	429	458	471	454	447	4.2
Wyoming	27	30	32	33	34	27.0
Totals	11,895	12,914	14,151	15,063	15,704	32.0

**Source:** Table prepared by CRS based on data from the Office of Child Support Enforcement, Department of Health and Human Services.

**Note:** Percentages are imprecise due to rounding of data.

**Table 14. Current Child Support Payments, FY2003**  
(in millions of dollars)

State	Current child support payments due, FY2003	Current child support payments collected, FY2003	Current child support percentage
Alabama	\$338	\$169	49.9
Alaska	92	52	55.7
Arizona	374	161	43.2
Arkansas	174	102	58.3
California	2,749	1,243	45.2
Colorado	281	155	55.2
Connecticut	300	164	54.8
Delaware	82	50	60.7
District of Columbia	74	37	49.7
Florida	1,226	691	56.4
Georgia	705	359	51.0
Guam	13	6	44.6
Hawaii	116	59	51.3
Idaho	146	79	53.9
Illinois	675	318	47.0
Indiana	615	311	50.5
Iowa	334	201	60.0
Kansas	169	94	55.3
Kentucky	418	224	53.6
Louisiana	360	205	56.9
Maine	117	65	55.7
Maryland	536	339	63.2
Massachusetts	540	329	60.9
Michigan	1,755	978	55.7
Minnesota	639	446	69.9
Mississippi	255	133	52.0
Missouri	619	326	52.7
Montana	58	34	59.1
Nebraska	177	117	66.3
Nevada	185	76	40.9
New Hampshire	95	61	64.3
New Jersey	1,044	679	65.0
New Mexico	83	41	49.0
New York	1,570	1,016	64.7
North Carolina	665	411	61.8
North Dakota	62	44	71.3
Ohio	1,880	1,264	67.3
Oklahoma	193	93	48.4
Oregon	379	227	59.9
Pennsylvania	1,442	1,079	74.8
Puerto Rico	362	190	52.6
Rhode Island	68	42	61.8



State	Current child support payments due, FY2003	Current child support payments collected, FY2003	Current child support percentage
South Carolina	349	172	49.2
South Dakota	62	41	67.1
Tennessee	503	270	53.7
Texas	1,709	985	57.7
Utah	174	102	58.6
Vermont	53	35	65.8
Virgin Islands	12	7	53.1
Virginia	614	367	59.7
Washington	711	458	64.3
West Virginia	189	119	62.8
Wisconsin	660	447	67.7
Wyoming	56	34	60.9
Totals	27,058	15,704	58.0

Source: Table prepared by CRS based on data from the Office of Child Support Enforcement, Department of Health and Human Services.

**Table 15. Child Support Arrearage Payments, FY2003**  
(in millions of dollars)

State	Arrearages due, FY2003	Arrearages collected, FY2003	Percent collected
Alabama	\$2,340	\$83	3.5
Alaska	597	40	6.7
Arizona	1,805	97	5.4
Arkansas	702	45	6.4
California	18,386	1,007	5.5
Colorado	1,143	83	7.3
Connecticut	1,496	74	5.0
Delaware	228	18	8.0
District of Columbia	342	14	4.0
Florida	3,833	302	7.9
Georgia	2,724	141	5.2
Guam	96	2	2.5
Hawaii	533	21	4.0
Idaho	376	34	9.2
Illinois	2,782	188	6.8
Indiana	513	119	23.3
Iowa	1,015	83	8.1
Kansas	543	48	8.8
Kentucky	1,364	91	6.6
Louisiana	844	88	10.4
Maine	545	35	6.4
Maryland	1,429	101	7.1
Massachusetts	1,872	112	6.0
Michigan	8,012	429	5.3
Minnesota	1,368	123	9.0
Mississippi	714	53	7.4

State	Arrearages due, FY2003	Arrearages collected, FY2003	Percent collected
Missouri	1,926	155	8.0
Montana	186	17	9.2
Nebraska	566	37	6.5
Nevada	816	37	4.5
New Hampshire	184	21	11.2
New Jersey	2,121	170	8.0
New Mexico	581	25	4.2
New York	3,568	342	9.6
North Carolina	1,618	131	8.1
North Dakota	153	15	10.1
Ohio	4,060	325	8.0
Oklahoma	798	59	7.4
Oregon	1,129	86	7.6
Pennsylvania	2,243	256	11.4
Puerto Rico	827	48	5.8
Rhode Island	170	14	8.1
South Carolina	953	70	7.4
South Dakota	130	15	11.8
Tennessee	1,729	114	6.6
Texas	9,150	528	5.8
Utah	331	45	13.6
Vermont	100	12	12.3
Virgin Islands	52	3	4.9
Virginia	2,005	146	7.3
Washington	1,783	178	10.0
West Virginia	778	43	5.6
Wisconsin	2,010	121	6.0
Wyoming	227	19	8.3
Totals	95,799	6,462	6.7

**Source:** Table prepared by CRS based on data from the Office of Child Support Enforcement, Department of Health and Human Services.

**Table 16. Cases with Past-Due Child Support Payments  
(Arrearages), FY2003**

State	Arrearages due, FY2003 cases	Paying on arrearages, FY2003 cases	Child support arrearage percentage
Alabama	181,346	88,380	48.7
Alaska	38,027	25,721	67.6
Arizona	148,366	75,433	50.8
Arkansas	107,541	60,318	56.1
California	1,225,178	679,167	55.4
Colorado	119,683	72,462	60.5
Connecticut	130,273	71,019	54.5
Delaware	35,386	22,917	64.8
District of Columbia	30,924	11,437	37.0
Florida	471,012	304,128	64.6
Georgia	306,676	195,038	63.6
Guam	5,641	2,584	45.8
Hawaii	53,681	21,614	40.3
Idaho	64,173	37,976	59.2
Illinois	311,531	160,238	51.4
Indiana	234,344	128,399	54.8
Iowa	152,213	96,445	63.4
Kansas	92,038	57,024	62.0
Kentucky	206,681	104,722	50.7
Louisiana	163,429	97,671	59.8
Maine	53,470	31,850	59.6
Maryland	194,177	121,088	62.4
Massachusetts	154,686	93,490	60.4
Michigan	630,563	371,962	59.0
Minnesota	190,023	129,273	68.0
Mississippi	139,625	82,187	58.9
Missouri	267,864	136,140	50.8
Montana	31,730	20,409	64.3
Nebraska	66,860	39,553	59.2
Nevada	61,741	37,793	61.2
New Hampshire	30,205	21,810	72.2
New Jersey	269,710	177,048	65.6
New Mexico	34,625	21,890	63.2
New York	584,733	349,920	59.8
North Carolina	318,836	186,277	58.4
North Dakota	26,069	17,932	68.8
Ohio	602,872	399,687	66.3
Oklahoma	101,983	58,527	57.4
Oregon	158,471	97,610	61.6
Pennsylvania	487,166	348,256	71.5
Puerto Rico	139,217	72,920	52.4
Rhode Island	28,954	16,550	57.2
South Carolina	150,824	77,424	51.3
South Dakota	28,915	20,011	69.2
Tennessee	208,682	119,550	57.3
Texas	692,905	431,701	62.3

State	Arrearages due, FY2003 cases	Paying on arrearages, FY2003 cases	Child support arrearage percentage
Utah	74,105	48,747	65.8
Vermont	20,154	14,077	69.8
Virgin Islands	6,058	2,799	46.2
Virginia	286,999	165,009	57.5
Washington	285,355	196,503	68.9
West Virginia	84,836	50,351	59.4
Wisconsin	255,785	158,649	62.0
Wyoming	28,689	18,126	63.2
Totals	10,775,030	6,447,812	59.8

**Source:** Table prepared by CRS based on data from the Office of Child Support Enforcement, Department of Health and Human Services.

## CSE Administrative Expenditures

The CSE program is a federal-state matching grant program under which states must spend money in order to receive federal funding. For every dollar a state spends on CSE expenditures, it generally receives 66 cents from the federal government. Although the actual dollars contributed by the federal government are greater, the level of funding allocated by the state or local government determines the total amount of resources available to the CSE agency. The federal government reimburses each state 66% (more for paternity determination) of all allowable expenditures on CSE activities. The federal government's funding is "open-ended" in that it pays its percentage of expenditures by matching the amounts spent by state and local governments with no upper limit or ceiling. It also refunds to states 90% of the laboratory costs of establishing paternity.

**Table 17** shows that during the period FY1999-FY2003, total CSE administrative expenditures increased 29%, from \$4.0 billion in FY1999 to \$5.2 billion in FY2003.

Although total administrative expenditure data are available for FY2003, the disaggregation of the data by state for the federal and state share of administrative costs is currently available only through FY2002. In FY1998, CSE administrative costs amounted to \$3.585 billion. The federal government paid 66% of those CSE costs (\$2.384 billion) and the states paid 34% of the costs (\$1.201 billion). In FY2002, total CSE administrative costs amounted to \$5.183 billion (see **Table 17**). The federal government paid 66% of those CSE costs (\$3.432 billion) and the states paid 34% of the costs (\$1.752 billion). (See **Tables 18 and 19**.)

**Table 18** shows that during the period FY1998-FY2002, the cost to the federal government of CSE administrative expenditures for the nation as a whole increased by 44% while the cost to states for CSE administrative expenditures increased by 46% (see **Table 19**). During that period, the cost to the federal government of the CSE program in Nebraska increased by 104% (from \$16.7 million in FY1998 to \$34.0 million in FY2002) and by 98% in Michigan (from \$106 million in FY1998 to \$210 million in FY2002). In contrast, the cost to the federal government of

Hawaii's CSE program dropped by 49% (from \$15.9 million in FY1998 to \$8.1 million in FY2002). During the period from FY1998 through FY2002, the state share of CSE administrative expenditures dropped in only two states (Hawaii, by 49%; and Mississippi, by 18%).

**Table 20** shows CSE administrative expenditures per CSE case for selected years during the period FY1978-FY2003. CSE expenditures per case increased from \$75 in FY1978 (\$193 in 2003 dollars) to \$327 in FY2003 (a 69% increase, adjusting for inflation).

**Table 17. Total CSE Administrative Expenditures,  
FY1999-FY2003**  
(in millions of dollars)

State	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Percent change, 1999-2003
Alabama	\$54	\$57	\$54	\$63	\$64	16.7
Alaska	18	22	22	21	22	20.7
Arizona	59	61	59	61	59	0.6
Arkansas	37	41	48	53	48	29.5
California	613	676	809	968	972	58.7
Colorado	52	63	61	63	72	38.7
Connecticut	39	55	57	62	59	53.7
Delaware	18	19	22	18	23	25.8
District of Columbia	13	16	20	18	24	84.9
Florida	191	216	222	229	231	21.1
Georgia	90	110	109	110	114	26.9
Guam	4	3	6	5	4	15.8
Hawaii	20	16	12	12	16	-20.1
Idaho	10	20	22	20	20	89.5
Illinois	139	159	180	176	192	38.1
Indiana	39	51	61	57	55	42.3
Iowa	43	55	47	48	51	20.8
Kansas	50	51	55	57	50	0.9
Kentucky	56	60	64	63	61	8.6
Louisiana	47	47	57	57	57	20.6
Maine	19	20	17	24	21	10.8
Maryland	83	110	96	101	97	17.5
Massachusetts	75	96	74	73	82	8.9
Michigan	164	247	291	318	297	80.6
Minnesota	113	120	128	137	143	26.0
Mississippi	31	31	28	25	25	-19.5
Missouri	94	107	103	94	92	-2.4
Montana	12	13	12	12	14	23.4
Nebraska	32	38	49	51	47	48.1
Nevada	38	41	33	40	40	4.7
New Hampshire	17	16	15	19	18	7.1
New Jersey	139	157	146	170	170	22.4
New Mexico	32	34	45	40	43	32.5
New York	213	240	241	307	287	34.9

State	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Percent change, 1999-2003
North Carolina	130	112	116	115	108	-17.2
North Dakota	10	10	12	12	12	17.0
Ohio	274	302	359	345	335	22.2
Oklahoma	32	43	45	52	50	56.5
Oregon	42	50	45	52	53	24.9
Pennsylvania	184	199	185	200	206	12.1
Puerto Rico	30	30	37	35	43	43.3
Rhode Island	11	12	12	13	12	12.9
South Carolina	37	39	48	40	39	5.6
South Dakota	7	7	7	7	7	14.4
Tennessee	52	56	60	77	70	34.1
Texas	203	207	239	265	289	42.2
Utah	36	37	37	37	36	-1.8
Vermont	9	10	11	11	12	31.0
Virgin Islands	3	5	7	5	5	87.6
Virginia	76	79	73	76	79	4.4
Washington	118	129	134	127	140	18.7
West Virginia	29	31	32	33	37	27.9
Wisconsin	97	90	99	97	101	4.0
Wyoming	9	11	12	10	9	7.2
Totals	4,039	4,526	4,835	5,183	5,213	29.1

**Source:** Table prepared by CRS based on data from the Office of Child Support Enforcement, Department of Health and Human Services.

**Note:** Percentages are imprecise due to rounding of data.

**Table 18. Federal Share of CSE Administrative Expenditures,  
FY1998-FY2002**  
(in millions of dollars)

State	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	Percent change, 1998-2002
Alabama	\$34	\$36	\$38	\$37	\$42	23.3
Alaska	12	12	14	15	14	14.9
Arizona	36	39	40	39	41	12.9
Arkansas	23	24	28	31	35	54.4
California	341	405	447	536	640	87.6
Colorado	30	34	42	40	42	41.3
Connecticut	32	26	37	38	41	28.4
Delaware	11	12	12	15	12	11.8
District of Columbia	11	9	11	13	12	9.0
Florida	110	126	143	150	152	37.2
Georgia	56	60	74	73	73	29.2
Guam	3	3	2	4	3	22.7
Hawaii	16	14	11	8	8	-49.0
Idaho	10	7	13	15	13	36.9
Illinois	79	92	105	119	117	47.1
Indiana	27	26	34	42	38	41.5
Iowa	26	29	36	31	32	22.2
Kansas	27	33	35	36	38	41.8
Kentucky	32	37	40	44	42	31.8
Louisiana	28	32	31	39	38	34.5
Maine	11	12	13	12	16	35.8
Maryland	55	55	73	64	67	22.2
Massachusetts	40	50	64	49	48	21.2
Michigan	106	109	165	194	210	98.2
Minnesota	70	75	80	85	90	29.3
Mississippi	20	20	21	19	17	-17.7
Missouri	56	62	71	70	62	10.7
Montana	8	8	9	8	8	6.7
Nebraska	17	21	25	33	34	104.0
Nevada	16	25	27	22	27	67.9
New Hampshire	9	11	11	10	13	40.4
New Jersey	83	92	104	97	112	34.8
New Mexico	15	21	22	31	26	69.4
New York	133	141	159	160	203	52.6
North Carolina	73	86	74	77	76	4.0
North Dakota	5	7	6	8	8	50.7
Ohio	140	182	201	240	228	63.0
Oklahoma	19	21	29	30	35	86.6
Oregon	26	28	33	30	34	30.4
Pennsylvania	98	123	132	122	132	34.7
Puerto Rico	18	20	20	24	23	29.9
Rhode Island	7	7	8	8	8	26.4
South Carolina	22	24	26	33	27	23.7
South Dakota	4	4	5	5	5	29.4
Tennessee	34	35	38	40	51	50.7

State	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	Percent change, 1998-2002
Texas	121	136	138	159	176	46.1
Utah	21	24	24	25	24	13.9
Vermont	5	6	7	8	7	46.0
Virgin Islands	2	2	4	5	3	129.9
Virginia	41	50	53	49	50	24.3
Washington	84	78	85	89	84	-0.0
West Virginia	16	19	21	21	22	33.9
Wisconsin	60	65	60	66	64	7.1
Wyoming	6	6	7	8	7	9.0
Totals	2,384	2,680	3,006	3,222	3,432	43.9

**Source:** Table prepared by CRS based on data from the Office of Child Support Enforcement, Department of Health and Human Services.

**Note:** Percentages are imprecise due to rounding of data.

**Table 19. State Share of CSE Administrative Expenditures, FY1998-FY2002**  
(in millions of dollars)

State	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	Percent change, 1998-2002
Alabama	\$17	\$18	\$19	\$18	\$21	24.6
Alaska	6	6	7	7	7	15.0
Arizona	18	20	20	20	21	14.5
Arkansas	12	12	13	16	18	54.4
California	174	208	229	273	327	88.1
Colorado	15	18	21	21	21	39.0
Connecticut	16	13	19	19	21	33.4
Delaware	6	6	6	7	6	12.8
District of Columbia	5	4	5	7	6	15.0
Florida	56	64	73	72	77	37.2
Georgia	29	30	37	36	37	29.3
Guam	1	1	1	2	2	23.4
Hawaii	8	6	6	4	4	-49.2
Idaho	5	4	7	7	7	37.2
Illinois	41	47	54	61	59	45.3
Indiana	15	13	17	18	19	30.8
Iowa	13	14	19	16	16	26.3
Kansas	13	17	17	19	19	43.7
Kentucky	16	19	20	21	21	32.3
Louisiana	14	16	15	18	19	35.5
Maine	6	6	7	5	8	36.2
Maryland	28	28	37	32	34	22.5
Massachusetts	20	25	32	25	25	23.7
Michigan	54	56	82	97	108	98.4
Minnesota	32	38	41	43	46	42.7
Mississippi	10	10	10	9	8	-16.9
Missouri	29	32	36	33	31	7.7



State	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	Percent change, 1998-2002
Montana	4	4	4	4	4	6.6
Nebraska	8	11	13	16	17	106.7
Nevada	8	13	14	11	14	68.5
New Hampshire	5	5	5	5	6	33.9
New Jersey	42	47	53	49	58	37.3
New Mexico	8	11	11	15	13	69.6
New York	68	72	81	81	104	53.1
North Carolina	36	44	38	39	39	8.3
North Dakota	2	3	3	4	4	65.1
Ohio	63	93	101	119	116	85.2
Oklahoma	9	11	14	15	17	88.3
Oregon	13	14	17	15	17	30.5
Pennsylvania	49	61	68	63	68	37.6
Puerto Rico	9	10	10	12	12	28.6
Rhode Island	3	3	4	4	4	27.2
South Carolina	11	12	13	15	14	22.8
South Dakota	2	2	2	2	3	37.7
Tennessee	19	17	18	20	26	37.0
Texas	61	67	69	80	89	44.9
Utah	11	12	13	13	12	16.7
Vermont	3	3	3	4	4	46.2
Virgin Islands	1	1	2	2	2	131.9
Virginia	20	25	26	24	26	26.1
Washington	43	40	44	46	43	0.9
West Virginia	8	10	10	10	11	35.0
Wisconsin	31	32	30	34	33	6.7
Wyoming	3	3	3	4	3	28.7
Totals	1,201	1,359	1,519	1,613	1,752	45.8

**Source:** Table prepared by CRS based on data from the Office of Child Support Enforcement, Department of Health and Human Services.

**Note:** Percentages are imprecise due to rounding of data.

**Table 20. CSE Expenditures per CSE Case, Selected Years, FY1978-FY2003**

FY	Current dollars	Constant 2003 dollars <sup>a</sup>
FY1978	\$75	\$193
FY1982	\$87	\$159
FY1986	\$97	\$155
FY1990	\$126	\$172
FY1994	\$137	\$168
FY1996	\$158	\$184
FY1999	\$233	\$257
FY2000	\$261	\$279
FY2001	\$283	\$294
FY2002	\$323	\$330
FY2003	\$327	\$327

**Source:** Table prepared by CRS based on data from the Office of Child Support Enforcement, Department of Health and Human Services.

a. Adjusted for inflation using the Consumer Price Index, research series for urban consumers (CPI-U-RS).

## Cost-Effectiveness of the CSE Program

The CSE cost-effectiveness rate is the amount of child support collected for each dollar expended (as defined in P.L. 105-200, the Child Support Performance and Incentive Act of 1998). **Table 21** shows that in FY2003, \$4.33 in child support was collected for every \$1 spent on CSE activities, for an increase of 5% over the FY1999 cost-effectiveness rate of \$4.11. During the period FY1999-FY2003, the cost-effectiveness rate fell by 39% in Michigan, from \$7.81 in FY1999 to \$4.79 in FY2003. In contrast, the cost-effectiveness rate rose by 56% in Hawaii, from \$3.25 in FY1999 to \$5.08 in FY2003.

The collection-to-cost ratio is not the sole measure of an effective program. In the late 1990s, the CSE incentive payment system was revamped and Congress designated four additional indicators as reliable performance measures. The five performance measures in the CSE program currently are related to establishment of paternity (see **Table 5**), establishment of child support orders (this performance measure is not shown in this report), collections of current child support payments (see **Table 14**), collections of past-due child support payments (see **Table 14**), and cost-effectiveness (see **Table 16**).

**Table 22** shows the difference between income and expenditures generated by the CSE program for both state and federal governments for FY1987-FY2003 (the dollars have been adjusted for inflation — i.e., converted to constant 2003 dollars). The reader should note that *state* “savings” or “costs” were computed by subtracting from total administrative expenses, the federal share of CSE administrative expenses,

actual incentive payments to states, hold harmless payments to states, and the state share of CSE collections. Similarly, *federal* “costs” were computed by adding together the federal share of CSE administrative expenses, actual incentive payments, and hold harmless payments and then subtracting the federal share of CSE collections.<sup>14</sup> **Table 22** shows that the CSE program is no longer a “money-maker” for states. Since FY2000, the states, in the aggregate, have not incurred a “savings” on the CSE program; instead in aggregate states incurred a cost of \$40 million on the program in FY2000, \$193 million in FY2001, \$359 million in FY2002, and \$355 million in FY2003. In contrast, the federal government has always “lost” money on the CSE program. In FY1987, the federal government incurred a cost of \$823 million on the CSE program and in FY2003 the CSE program cost the federal government almost \$2.3 billion.

Part of the reason that the CSE program has been consistently “losing” money is because non-welfare collections are growing at a faster rate than welfare collections. While the state and federal governments share in a portion of welfare collections, non-welfare collections go to the custodial parent via the state’s disbursement unit.

**Table 21. Cost-Effectiveness Performance Level, FY1999-  
FY2003**

State	FY1999	FY2000	FY2001	FY2002	FY2003
Alabama	3.78	3.66	4.01	3.64	3.78
Alaska	4.41	3.89	4.14	4.49	4.24
Arizona	3.29	3.72	4.12	4.25	4.47
Arkansas	3.28	3.28	2.83	2.66	3.12
California	2.78	3.23	2.61	1.91	2.31
Colorado	3.65	3.23	3.58	3.66	3.22
Connecticut	4.96	3.75	3.86	3.76	4.04
Delaware	2.97	3.19	2.93	3.66	3.03
District of Columbia	3.27	2.64	2.26	2.69	2.09
Florida	3.53	3.45	3.60	4.03	4.39
Georgia	4.16	3.72	3.96	4.24	4.47
Guam	2.25	2.67	1.33	1.64	2.10
Hawaii	3.25	4.54	6.16	6.53	5.08
Idaho	7.09	4.32	4.62	5.29	5.70
Illinois	2.52	2.42	2.50	2.80	2.64
Indiana	7.45	7.69	6.34	7.80	7.91
Iowa	5.01	4.24	5.27	5.63	5.52
Kansas	2.98	2.91	2.51	2.61	3.12

<sup>14</sup> Beginning in FY2002, child support incentive payments are no longer paid out of the federal share of child support collections made on behalf of TANF families. Instead, federal funds have been specifically appropriated out of the U.S. Treasury for CSE incentive payments.

State	FY1999	FY2000	FY2001	FY2002	FY2003
Kentucky	3.90	4.02	4.08	4.71	4.88
Louisiana	4.41	4.92	4.38	4.87	5.11
Maine	4.87	4.90	6.01	4.28	4.99
Maryland	4.42	3.60	4.22	4.19	4.53
Massachusetts	4.07	3.50	5.14	5.77	5.46
Michigan	7.81	5.52	4.82	4.59	4.79
Minnesota	4.06	4.11	4.13	4.05	4.05
Mississippi	4.53	4.92	5.96	7.12	7.50
Missouri	3.26	3.37	3.81	4.63	4.95
Montana	3.87	3.58	3.91	4.10	3.63
Nebraska	3.61	3.78	3.35	2.87	3.22
Nevada	3.08	2.52	3.24	2.87	3.12
New Hampshire	4.24	4.82	5.40	4.37	4.72
New Jersey	4.86	4.60	5.27	4.83	5.06
New Mexico	1.18	1.31	1.07	1.46	1.57
New York	4.58	4.90	5.07	4.49	5.00
North Carolina	2.93	3.86	4.04	4.43	4.99
North Dakota	4.42	4.61	4.19	4.71	5.10
Ohio	4.91	4.82	4.23	4.81	4.92
Oklahoma	3.37	2.83	2.90	2.80	3.12
Oregon	6.08	5.54	6.63	5.85	5.93
Pennsylvania	6.21	6.05	6.98	6.85	6.80
Puerto Rico	5.77	6.31	5.51	6.27	5.67
Rhode Island	4.36	4.44	4.23	4.52	4.63
South Carolina	5.06	5.08	4.60	5.87	6.32
South Dakota	6.75	6.95	7.72	7.59	7.80
Tennessee	4.69	4.85	4.99	4.50	5.47
Texas	4.23	4.96	5.23	5.41	5.63
Utah	3.24	3.47	3.69	3.89	4.13
Vermont	4.15	4.02	3.90	3.93	3.78
Virgin Islands	2.86	1.63	1.12	1.58	1.84
Virginia	4.74	5.00	6.12	6.34	6.52
Washington	4.68	4.53	4.55	4.95	4.54
West Virginia	4.09	4.15	4.64	4.87	4.54
Wisconsin	5.64	6.51	6.06	6.11	5.95
Wyoming	4.84	4.33	4.09	5.00	5.57
Totals	4.11	4.23	4.21	4.13	4.33

Source: Table prepared by the Congressional Research Service.

**Table 22. State and Federal “Savings” and “Costs” from Income and Expenditures Generated by the Child Support Enforcement Program**

(in millions of constant 2003 dollars)

Year	Federal costs	State savings/costs
1987	-823	544
1988	-863	569
1989	-1,024	534
1990	-1,074	455
1991	-1,160	529
1992	-1,213	610
1993	-1,384	610
1994	-1,661	552
1995	-1,990	490
1996	-1,817	478
1997	-1,962	564
1998	-2,055	325
1999	-2,380	96
2000	-2,606	-40
2001	-2,858	-193
2002	-2,304	-359
2003	-2,282	-355

**Source:** Table prepared by the Congressional Research Service, based on data from the Office of Child Support Enforcement, Department of Health and Human Services.

## Conclusion

The CSE program is a very complex, multi-faceted program. Its purpose/mission has been evolving over the years, from welfare cost recovery and income producer for the states, to delivery of services to custodial parents and promotion of personal responsibility among noncustodial parents. This is not surprising given the changing composition of the CSE caseload, which is reflected in the decline in cash welfare families and the rise in former cash welfare families. So far, it seems that the multiple purposes or broadened mission has not had a negative effect on the effectiveness of the CSE program.

The data highlighted in this report bring the CSE program into focus. The data indicate that the program has grown tremendously. During the 25-year period FY1978-FY2003, CSE collections increased almost seven-fold to \$21.2 billion (adjusting for inflation), program expenditures increased more than five-fold to \$5.2 billion (adjusting for inflation), the number of children whose paternity was established or acknowledged (through the CSE program) increased almost 13-fold to 1.5 million, the number of child support obligations established increased three-fold to about 1.2 million, and the CSE caseload increased nearly three-fold to 15.9 million. From this viewpoint the CSE program is seen as very successful.

The data presented also show that even though the CSE agency is second only to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) in terms of its collection/enforcement

apparatus, it has consistently collected only a small fraction of the child support obligations for which it has responsibility — 18% in FY2003. Although this percentage is higher if past-due child support payments (i.e., arrearages, which generally are hard to collect) are not considered in the equation, it is still relatively low at 58% — that is, in FY2003, the CSE program collected only 58% of *current* child support payments/obligations. CSE data indicate that the program is collecting child support for a greater number and higher percentage of families, but the average monthly child support payment for families that actually receive a payment is still relatively small, \$221 per month in FY2003.

For the 10 million children in the CSE program in FY2003 who were born outside of marriage, the establishment of paternity is the first step in obtaining a child support obligation. FY2003 was the first year in which more fathers were legally identified through a voluntary paternity acknowledgment process (862,000) than through the courts or administratively via the CSE agency (663,000). Most states acknowledge that while they have made significant improvement in establishing paternity for newborns (primarily through voluntary paternity acknowledgment at hospitals when the child is born) they are performing poorly with respect to establishing paternity for older children. In FY2003, the CSE program had established paternity for only 77% of its caseload.

So, although the CSE program exhibits improved performance, there is much more to be achieved. Congress has consistently had high expectations for the CSE program. There was widespread congressional support for the CSE provisions that were incorporated into the controversial 1996 welfare reform legislation and there is agreement that more progress in the program is possible when all states are in full compliance with the automated systems requirements enacted in 1996 and 1998.

This report points out that in FY2003, only about 9% of CSE collections (\$1.8 billion) were made on behalf of TANF families; about half of that amount actually went to the families and the rest was divided between the state and federal governments to reimburse them for TANF benefits to the families. This meant that in FY2003, 90% of CSE collections (\$19.0 billion) went to the families on the CSE rolls. Thus, the data confirm that the “family first” policy that was begun with the 1996 welfare law (P.L. 104-193) is being effectively implemented. P.L. 104-193 required states to pay a higher fraction of child support collections on arrearages to families that have left welfare (i.e., former TANF families) by making these payments to the *family first*. The order of payment of the child support collection is of tremendous importance because in many cases past-due child support, i.e., arrearages, are never fully paid. The 1996 welfare reform law also gave states the option to pass through and disregard some, all, or none of the child support collected on behalf of TANF families (about half of the states currently pass-through and disregard some child support for TANF families).

If the currently pending TANF reauthorization legislation (H.R. 240, S. 667) becomes law, states will have new choices to make about how far to proceed with the service-delivery, stable income source/support perspective of the program. There will be more federal money available for states that decide to pass through and disregard more child support collected on behalf of families who are still receiving TANF cash benefits and there will be new options for states to distribute more child

support collections to families who are former TANF cash benefit recipients. Thus, it is possible that in the near future even more child support collected by states on behalf of TANF families and former TANF families actually would go to families (rather than be kept by the states and the federal government to reimburse them for TANF cash benefits that were paid to the family).

A slightly different examination of the preceding discussion shows how pending CSE legislation could severely restrict the ability of the CSE program to recover cash welfare costs. The data in this report indicated that in FY2003, 17% of the CSE caseload was comprised of TANF families, 47% of the caseload was comprised of former TANF families, and 36% of the caseload had no TANF connection. This meant that in effect 64% of the CSE caseload had some TANF connection. Another viewpoint shows TANF families representing 17% of the caseload and non-TANF families representing 83% of the CSE caseload. Under current law, the state and federal governments can potentially receive reimbursements from 64% of the caseload. If pending welfare reauthorization legislation is passed, the state and federal governments would be able to receive reimbursements from only 17% of the CSE caseload.

Although sometimes overlooked, the CSE program is an integral component of welfare reform. It is not surprising that child support payments are now widely recognized as a very significant income source for single-parent families. The data presented in this report indicate that the CSE program is making great strides in ensuring that children get the support they are owed from their noncustodial parents.