

Children Receiving Child Support

DEFINITION

Children receiving child support is the percentage of non-custodial parents in the Rhode Island Child Support Enforcement System who pay child support on time and in full. The percentage does not include cases in which paternity has not been established or cases in which the non-custodial parent is not under a court order because he/she cannot be located. Court orders for child support require establishment of paternity.

SIGNIFICANCE

The receipt of child support payments can significantly improve the economic status of a child growing up in a family with a non-resident parent. Child support is an essential source of financial support for low-income families, often making up a significant portion of their incomes.¹ Nationally, approximately 59% of custodial parents had child support awarded in 2002.²

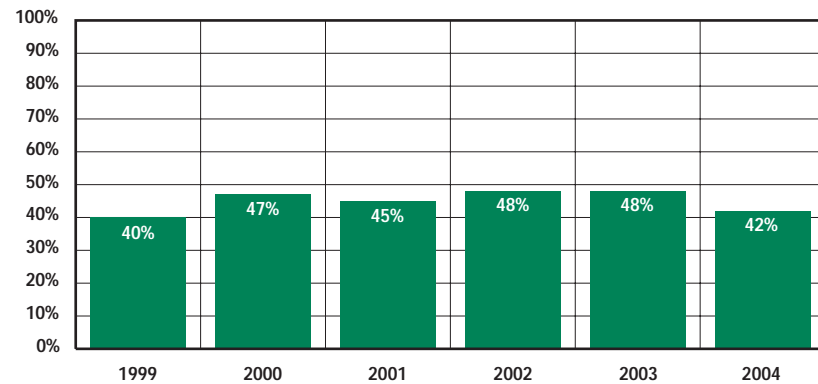
The goal of the child support system is not only to collect money from non-custodial parents so that their children can have adequate financial security as they grow up, but also provide support and services to custodial parents in locating the non-custodial parent or establishing paternity and to help non-custodial parents connect to education and training.³ To collect child support on behalf of a child, the non-custodial

parent must be identified, located, provided with due process, paternity must be established and a support order must be filed with the court.⁴

The failure of a non-custodial parent to pay child support has significant economic consequences for the custodial parent and for the child. Nationally, children who live with custodial parents who do not receive child support payments are more than one and a half times as likely to live in poverty as children whose families receive child support payments in full.⁵ In the U.S., low-income mothers, Black or Hispanic mothers, never-married mothers and mothers with less than a college education are least likely to receive the child support due under court order.⁶

Even when a child support order is in place, payments can be unreliable.⁷ Non-custodial parents often encounter the same barriers to employment that many low-income parents face, including lack of education and limited work experience making it difficult to fulfill their child support obligations.⁸ Research shows that providing education and job training that increase non-custodial parents' ability to pay child support also increases their contact with their children.⁹

Non-custodial Parents with Court Orders Who Pay Child Support On Time and In Full, Rhode Island 1999 – 2004



Source: Rhode Island Department of Administration, Division of Taxation – Child Support Enforcement, 1999 - 2004.

- ◆ In 2004 in Rhode Island, 42% of non-custodial parents under court order paid child support on time and in full, a decrease of 13% since 2003.¹⁰
- ◆ As of December 2004, there were 94,514 Rhode Island children in the state's Child Support Enforcement System.¹¹ Of these, 15,454 (16%) had not yet had paternity established and therefore were not yet eligible for a child support order.¹²
- ◆ In Rhode Island in 2004, 56% of the children in the state's Child Support Enforcement System resided in one of the six core cities, those cities with 15% or more of children in poverty.¹³ Nationally, the poverty rate for custodial-parent families was about four times higher in 2001 than the rate for married-couple families with children.¹⁴
- ◆ As of December 1, 2004, the cumulative principle amount of past due court-ordered child support in Rhode Island totaled over \$178 million.¹⁵
- ◆ In Rhode Island in 2001, an estimated 67,653 children lived in a household headed by a single parent.¹⁶ Of the Rhode Island families headed by a single female, 41% received child support or alimony payments in 2001, compared to 35% nationally.¹⁷

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Medical Child Support

- ◆ Rhode Island General Laws, Title 15, Chapter 29, requires that any child support order issued by the family court must require any parent owing a duty of support to a child to obtain health insurance coverage for the child when insurance is available at either parents' place of employment at reasonable cost.¹⁸
- ◆ Rhode Island defines reasonable cost for health coverage as 5% of the gross monthly income of the individual providing the coverage. If the cost of health coverage is 5% or lower, the non-custodial parent is ordered to obtain and maintain the coverage.¹⁹
- ◆ If the cost of providing coverage exceeds 5% of the non-custodial parent's gross income, the court will order the non-custodial parent to pay 5% of his/her gross income as a cash medical order in addition to the weekly child support order. If the child receives RIte Care or RIte Share, the state will retain the medical order to defray the cost of coverage. If the child receives private insurance through the custodial parent, the weekly cash medical order is sent to the custodial parent.²⁰
- ◆ As of September 2004, there were 21,795 court orders for non-custodial parents to maintain or obtain medical insurance. Of these, only 4,700 (22%) non-custodial parents provided coverage through private insurance and 1,555 (7%) non-custodial parents provided a cash medical order toward the cost of RIte Care. The remaining 15,540 (71%) of orders either have children covered through the custodial parent's insurance or through RIte Care.²¹
- ◆ For Federal Fiscal Year 2004, a total of \$513,029 was retained by the state to offset the cost of RIte Care, while \$134,544 was disbursed directly to families to offset the cost of private coverage or other medical expenses.²²

References for Indicator

^{1,8,9,23} Legler, P. (2003). *Low-income fathers and child support: Starting off on the right track*. Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.

^{2,5,6,14,16} Grall, T. (2003). *Custodial mothers and fathers and their child support: 2001*. (2001). Washington DC: U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, U.S. Census Bureau.

³⁴ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2002). *Fact sheets: Child support enforcement program*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.

⁷ Frank, A. (2004). *Where the funds are: Potential uses of child support funds for transitional jobs programs* (Brief). Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy.



Child Support and the Family Independence Program

- ◆ Research suggests that welfare recipients receiving child support are more likely to leave welfare for work, remain off welfare and have income above the federal poverty line.²³
- ◆ In Rhode Island as of December 2004, all 23,917 children enrolled in the Family Independence Program were in the Child Support Enforcement System. Of these 14,857 (62%) of these children had paternity established.^{24,25}
- ◆ In 2004, the average child support obligation to children enrolled in FIP was \$245 per month, compared to an average child support obligation of \$317 per month for children in non-FIP families.²⁶ It is expected that the child support obligation for children enrolled in FIP would be lower as calculations for the payments are based upon the income of both parents.
- ◆ Recent research finds that more generous child support "pass through" programs and disregard policies increase the number of fathers making payments, increase the average payments received by mothers and have positive effects on paternity establishment.²⁷ In Rhode Island, the first \$50 of child support paid on time each month on behalf of a child receiving FIP cash assistance goes to the custodial parent caring for the child. An average of 2,700 Rhode Island families on FIP over a nine month period received the \$50 child support pass-through in 2004.²⁸

^{10,11,12,13,15,20,22,25,26} Rhode Island Department of Administration, Division of Taxation – Child Support Enforcement, December 1999-2004.

¹⁶ U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, 2001-2003.

¹⁷ *KIDS COUNT Data Book: State profiles of child well-being, 2004*. (2004). Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.

^{18,21} Rhode Island Law, Title 15, Chapter 29, Section 1, 15-5-16.2 (2).

¹⁹ Rhode Island Family Court, Administrative Order.

²⁴ Rhode Island Department of Human Services, InRhodes Database, December 2004.

²⁷ Miller, C. Farrell, M., Cancian, M. & Meyer, D. (2005). *The interaction of child support and TANF: Evidence from samples of current and former welfare recipients*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

²⁸ Rhode Island Department of Administration, Division of Taxation – Child Support Enforcement, December 2004. Note: Due to a change in policy the \$50 pass through was terminated as of April 1, 2004 until June 30, 2004 when the General Assembly restored the payment to families.