

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. 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 lifts a half million children from poverty in the U.S. each year.¹ When poor families receive child support, the child support averages 26% of the family's budget - making it the second largest source of income next to earnings.²

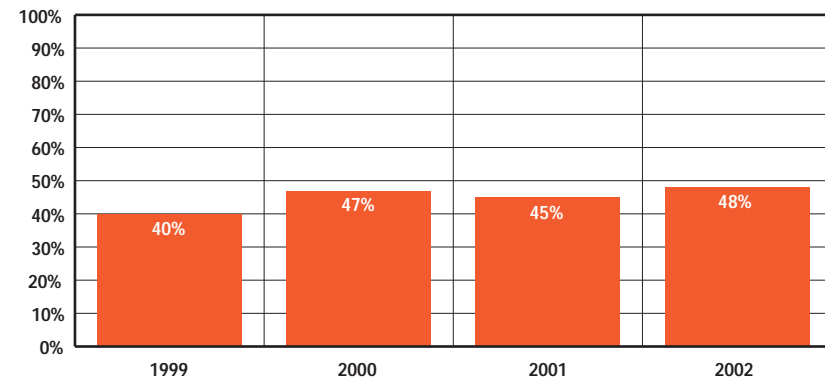
The goal of the child support system is to collect money from non-custodial parents so that their children can have adequate financial security as they grow up. For child support to be collected on behalf of a child, the non-custodial parent must be identified, paternity must be established, a support order must be entered, and the money must be collected.³ 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 a custodial parent who do not receive child support payments are more than twice as likely to live in poverty as children whose families receive child support payments in full.⁴

Even when there is a child support order in place, child support payments tend to be low and unreliable. As of December 2002, there were 96,088 Rhode Island children in the State's Child Support Enforcement System.⁵ Of these, 24,392 (25%) had not yet had paternity established and therefore were not yet eligible for a child support award.⁶ In 2002 in Rhode Island, 48% of Rhode Island non-custodial parents under court order paid child support on time and in full.⁷ As of December 31, 2002, the amount of past due court-ordered child support in Rhode Island totaled \$175 million.⁸

Although poor fathers are much less likely to pay child support, for every poor father who does not pay child support, there are nearly two non-poor fathers who do not pay.⁹ Parents who have regular contact with their children are more likely to pay child support.¹⁰ In 1999 in the United States, 79% of parents who had either joint custody or visitation privileges paid child support compared to 46% who did not have regular contact.¹¹

Non-custodial Parents with Court Orders who Pay Child Support On-Time and In Full, Rhode Island 1999 – 2002

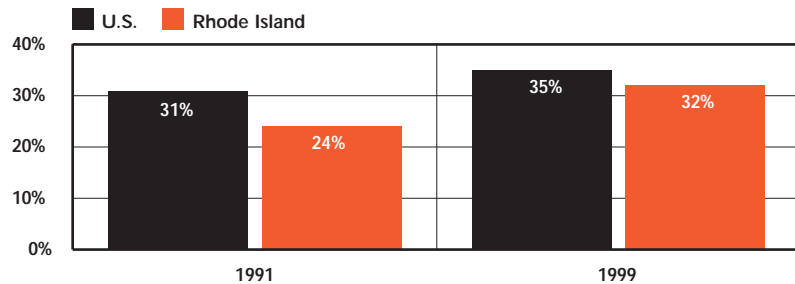


Source: Rhode Island Department of Administration, Division of Taxation – Child Support Enforcement, 1999 - 2002.

- ◆ In 2002 in Rhode Island, 48% of custodial parents under court order paid child support on time and in full. This is an increase from 40% in 1999.¹²
- ◆ Nationally, among the parents with child support agreements, only 45% received all of their child support payments. One in four parents (29%) with agreements received some, but not, all of what was due.¹³
- ◆ 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.¹⁴

Children Receiving Child Support

Female-Headed Families Receiving Child Support or Alimony
1991 and 1999, U.S. and Rhode Island, 1991 and 1999



Source: *KIDS COUNT Databook: State Trends in the Well-Being of Children (1994 and 2002)*. Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.

- ◆ In Rhode Island in 2000, 54,648 children lived in a household headed by a single mother.¹⁵ Of the Rhode Island families headed by a single female, 32% received child support or alimony payments in 1999, compared to 35% nationally.¹⁶
- ◆ The rate of receipt of child support or alimony in families headed by a single female has increased significantly in Rhode Island since 1991 when only 24% of families received this income.¹⁷
- ◆ Reasons that parents do not have legal court orders in place include not feeling the need to make agreements legal, knowing that the other parent could not afford to pay and not wanting to have contact with the other parent.¹⁸ Nationally, 59% of custodial parents had child support agreements in 2000.¹⁹

References for Indicator

¹ Sorenson, E. and Zibman, C. (March 2000). *Child Support Offers Some Protection Against Poverty*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

² Turtesky, V. (May 2001). *Families Participating in the State Child Support Program*. Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy, Inc.

^{3,20} *Giving Hope and Support to America's Children: Handbook on Child Support Enforcement* (1997). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Human Services, Administration for Children and Families Office of Child Support Enforcement.

^{4,11,13,14,18,19} *Custodial Mothers and Fathers and Their Child Support: 1999* (October 2002). Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.

^{5,6,7,8,22,25} Rhode Island Department of Administration, Division of Taxation – Child Support Enforcement, December 1, 2002.

⁹ Sorenson, E. and Zibman, C. (April 2001). *Poor Dads Who Don't Pay Child Support: Deadbeats or Disadvantaged?* Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

¹⁰ Koball, H. and Principe, D. (March 2002). *Do Non-resident Fathers Who Pay Child Support Visit Their Children More?* Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

Child Support and the Family Independence Program

- ◆ In order to receive cash benefits through the Family Independence Program (FIP), custodial parents are required to cooperate with the Rhode Island Department of Administration's Child Support Enforcement Division in establishing paternity and seeking child support.²⁰
- ◆ In certain instances, such as domestic violence, the requirement to establish paternity and seek child support may be waived in order to protect the custodial parent. Caseworkers are required to notify FIP applicants and recipients of this waiver option.²¹
- ◆ In Rhode Island as of December 2002, 55% (15,127) of the 27,522 children enrolled in the Family Independence Program were in the Child Support Enforcement System and had paternity established.²²
- ◆ In 2002, the average child support obligation to children enrolled in FIP was \$270 per month, as compared to an average child support obligation of \$377 per month for non-FIP families.²³ This is a significant increase since 1999 when average obligations were \$207 and \$237 per month respectively.²⁴
- ◆ An average of 2,958 Rhode Island families enrolled in FIP each month received the \$50 child support pass-through in 2002.²⁵ The first \$50 of child support paid on time on behalf of a child receiving cash assistance goes to the custodial parent caring for the child and the remainder goes to the state. Although budget cuts threatened the continued existence of this program, the child support pass-through was maintained in the 2002 legislative session as an important part of the Family Independence Program.²⁶

¹⁵ U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census 2000.

¹⁶ *KIDS Count Data Book: State Profiles of Child Well-Being 2002* (2002). Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.

¹⁷ *KIDS Count Data Book: State Profiles of Child Well-Being 1994* (1994). Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.

²¹ *Paternity: Questions Moms Usually Ask and Their Answers*. Providence, RI: State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations.

²² Rhode Island Department of Administration, Division of Taxation – Child Support Enforcement, December 2002, and the Rhode Island Department of Human Services InRhodes Database, December 2002.

²⁴ Rhode Island Department of Administration, Division of Taxation – Child Support Enforcement, December 1, 1999.

²⁶ *Legislative Wrap-Up: 2002 Session of the Rhode Island General Assembly* (August 2002). Providence, RI: Rhode Island KIDS COUNT.