



Leveraging Federal Opportunities: Examining the Impact of Family Resources and Child Support on Economic Mobility

August 20th, 2024

Who We Are



JustUScc.org

The JCC is a national federal policy table led by and created for individuals who are directly impacted. The JCC forms the connective tissue needed to catalyze full participation in policy practices and changes for formerly incarcerated people and directly impacted individuals and their communities.

Our Why



The voices of those most impacted by the criminal legal system have been missing and/or excluded from decision-making tables.

Priorities



Health and Wellbeing: One of Several Federal Priorities



Within health and wellbeing — just one aspect of the reentry experience — federal resources and opportunities, often provided to states to manage, are ineffective in helping a diverse group of individuals navigating supporting themselves and their families:

Funding comes from many different, disconnected programs

Distribution of funding often does not match the depth of need

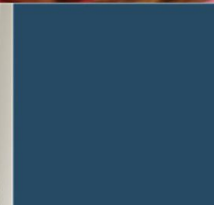
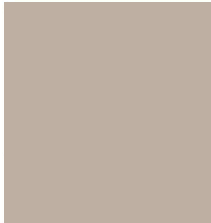
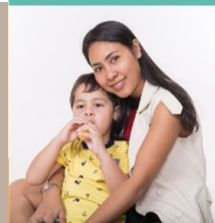
Various policies place carve outs and restrictions on key social supports

Centered back to people



Administration for Children and Families (ACF)

Overview & Priorities
August 2024



Presentation Overview (IOAS Staff Focused)

About ACF

ACF & HHS

ACF Organizational Structure

ACF Strategic Plan

ACF Programs At A Glance

ACF Regional Structure



About ACF



History

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) was created on April 15, 1991, following the merger of the Office of Human Development Services, the Family Support Administration, and the Maternal and Child Health Block Grant Program.



What We Do

We promote the economic and social well-being of families, children, individuals and communities with funding, strategic partnerships, guidance, training and technical assistance.



Vision, Mission & Values

ACF promotes the economic and social well-being of families, children, individuals and communities who are resilient, safe, healthy, and economically secure.



ACF's Place within HHS

HHS Operating Divisions



ACF is the **second largest** Operating Division within HHS with a budget of over **\$70 billion** in FY2023 – making it the **largest federal entity** working on human service programs.



ACF's Organizational Structure

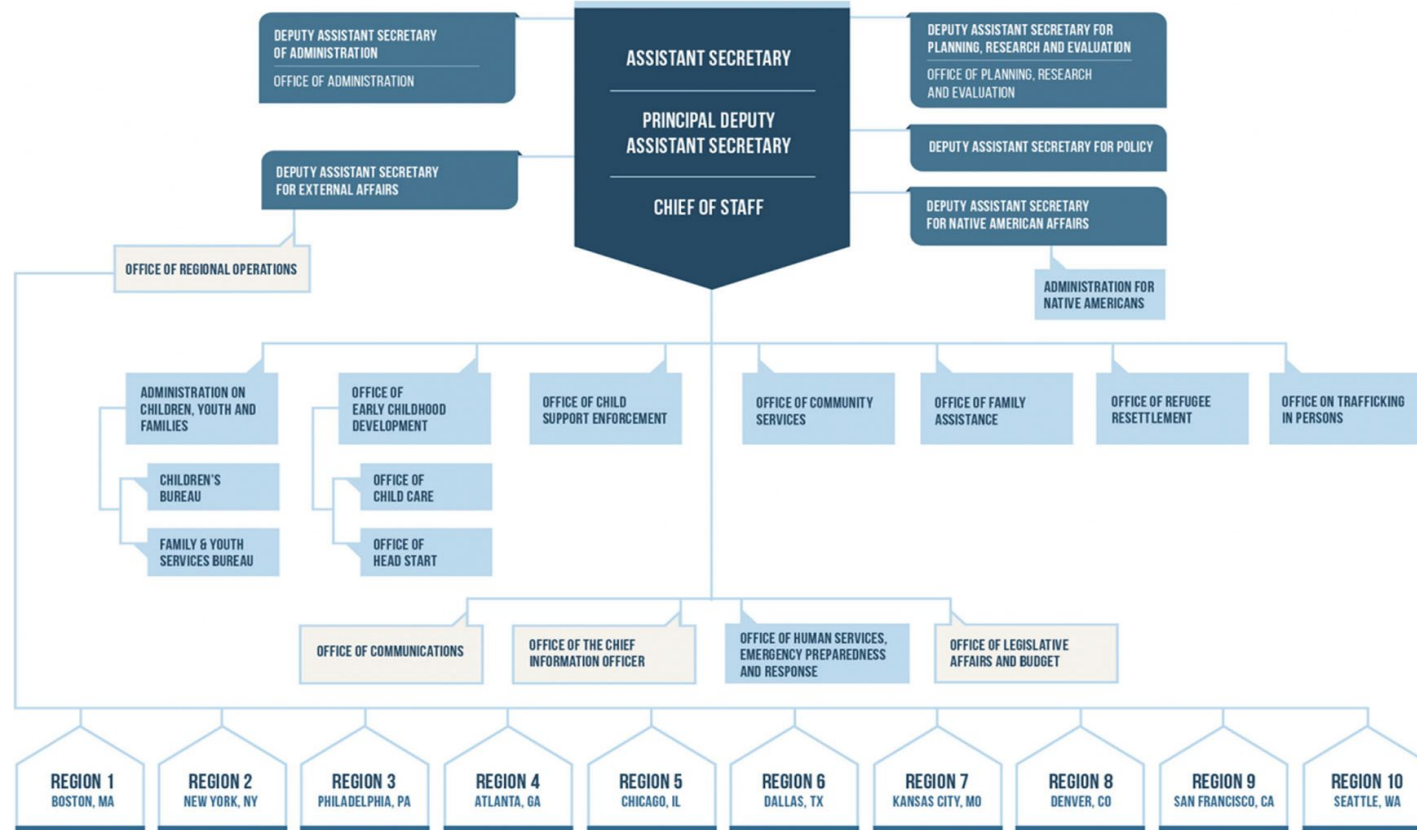
ACF is comprised of 21 program and support offices and employs approximately 2,000 staff.

Central Office (DC): 55%
Regional Offices: 31%
Remote locations: 14%

ACF staff serve various unique roles. At a high level, most employees perform one or several of these functions:

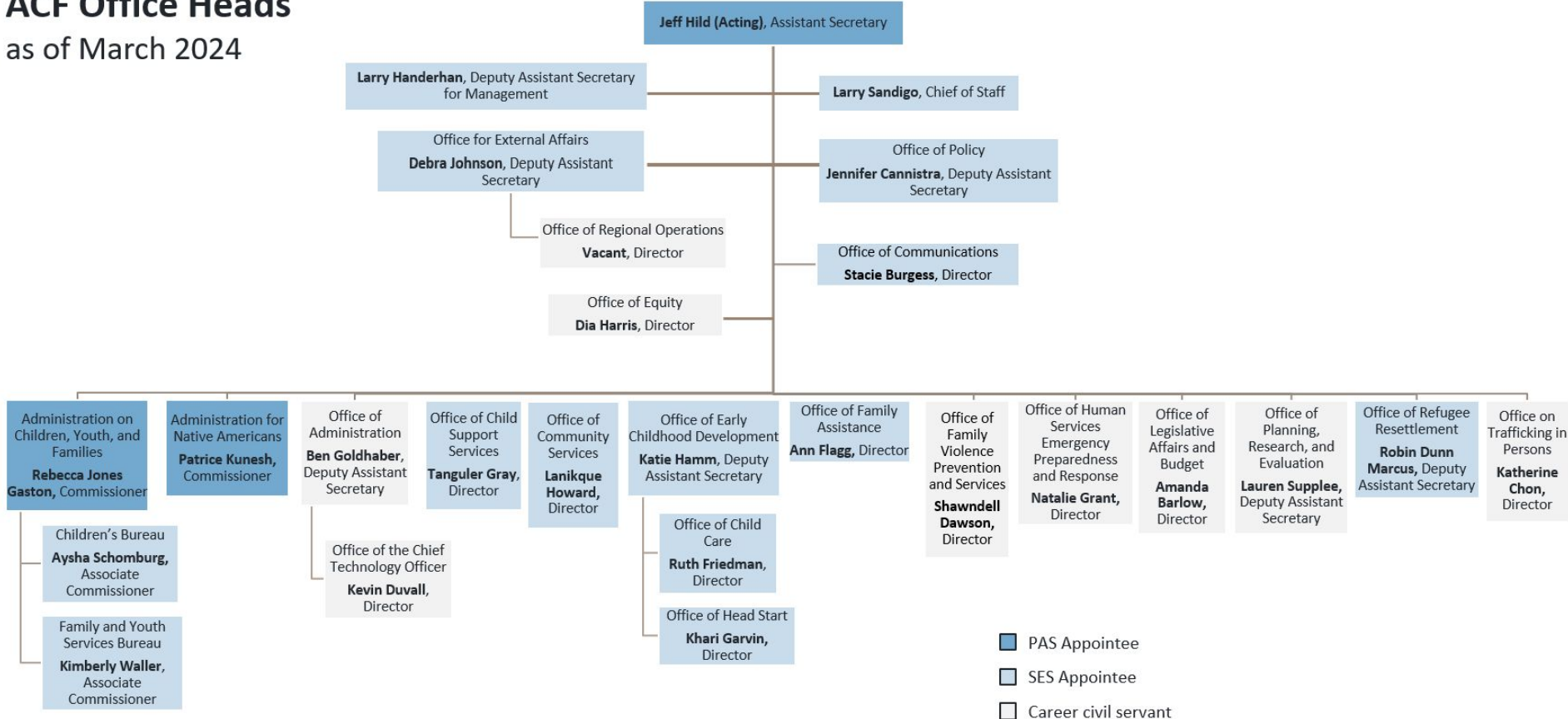
1. **Serve grantees and/or beneficiaries** (e.g., through grants management)
2. **Serve other ACF employees** (e.g., through human capital management)
3. **Provide policy leadership** (e.g., through evidence-based research)

ACF's Organizational Structure



ACF Office Heads

as of March 2024



- PAS Appointee
- SES Appointee
- Career civil servant

ACF Strategic Plan & Priorities

STRATEGIC GOAL 1

Advance equity by reducing structural barriers including racism and other forms of discrimination that prevent economic and social well-being

STRATEGIC GOAL 2

Take a preventative and proactive approach to ensuring child, youth, family, and individual well-being

STRATEGIC GOAL 3

Use whole-family, community-based strategies to increase financial stability and economic mobility

STRATEGIC GOAL 4

Support communities and families to respond to acute needs and facilitate recovery from a range of crises and emergency situations

STRATEGIC GOAL 5

Enable and promote innovation within ACF to improve the lives of children, youth, families, and individuals

Pre-decisional draft – for internal discussion purposes only



ACF runs 60+ programs, including...

Supporting Child and Youth Wellbeing

- Foster care system and adoption support
- Youth experiencing homelessness
- Survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking

Economic Mobility

- Income supports (TANF)
- Energy assistance (LIHEAP, LIHWAP)
- Anti-poverty (SSBG, CSBG)
- Child support enforcement

Investing in Early Childhood Development

- Child care subsidies & workforce support
- Head Start
- Preschool development support
- Tribal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (TMIECHV)

Resettlement Assistance

- Services for refugees
- Care for unaccompanied children

Cross-cutting support for Tribal nations



Staff Offices



Office of Administration (OA)

Responsible for human resource management, staff development and training, information management, grants administration and policy, organizational development, administrative services, and facilities



Office of Communications (OC)

Develops and coordinates public affairs and communication services



Office of Legislative Affairs and Budget (OLAB)

Provides leadership on ACF's budget, legislation, and policy, and liaises with HHS, the executive branch, and congress on these topics



Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE)

Studies ACF programs and the populations they serve through research and evaluation projects

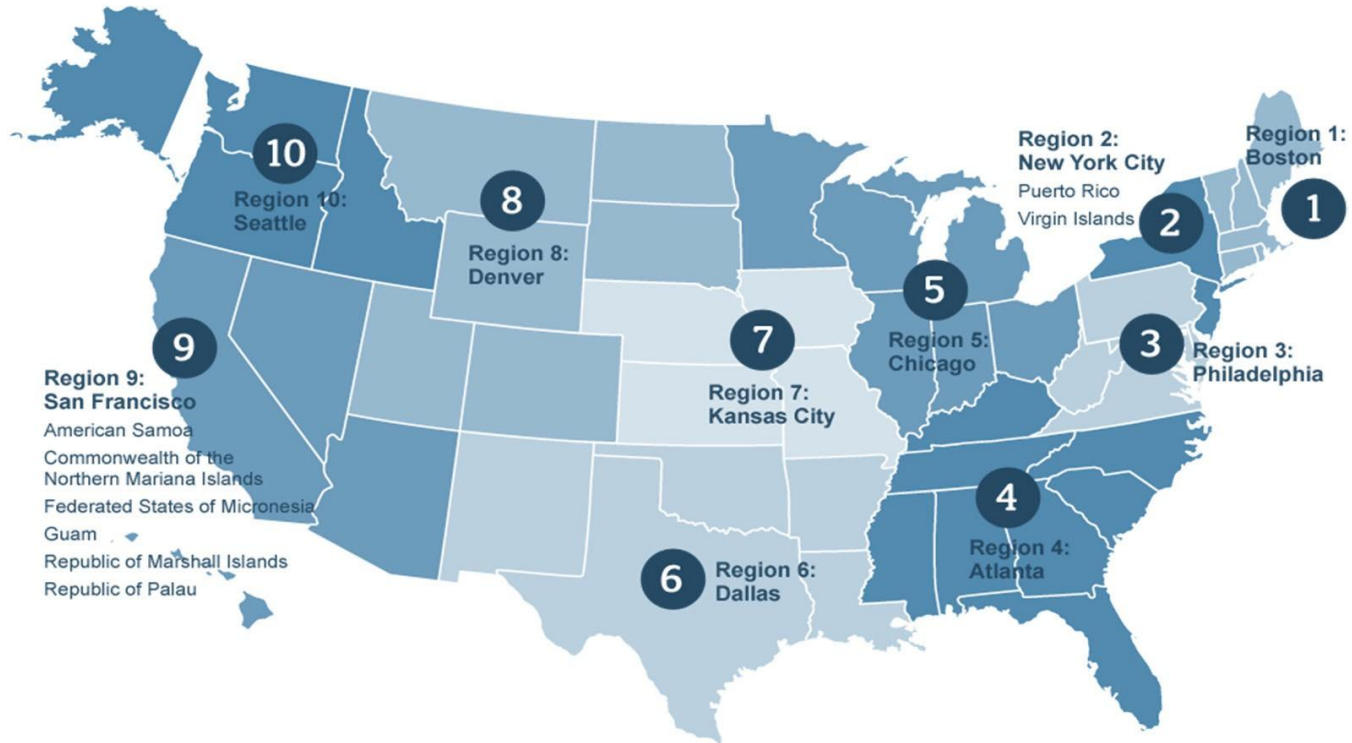


Office of Regional Operations (ORO)

Advises the Assistant Secretary on all strategic operational activities related to implementation of agency programs at the regional level



ACF Regional Offices



Additional Resources

- ACF website: www.acf.hhs.gov
- ACF Connect (for employees only, requires being signed into network): <https://connect.acf.hhs.gov/>
- ACF Acronym List: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/digital-toolbox/content/acronyms>
- ACF Strategic Plan portal: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/about/acf-strategic-plan-2022>
- HHS Strategic Plan portal: <https://www.hhs.gov/about/strategic-plan/2022-2026/index.html>



Child Support Services Program Update

James Murray, Senior Advisor

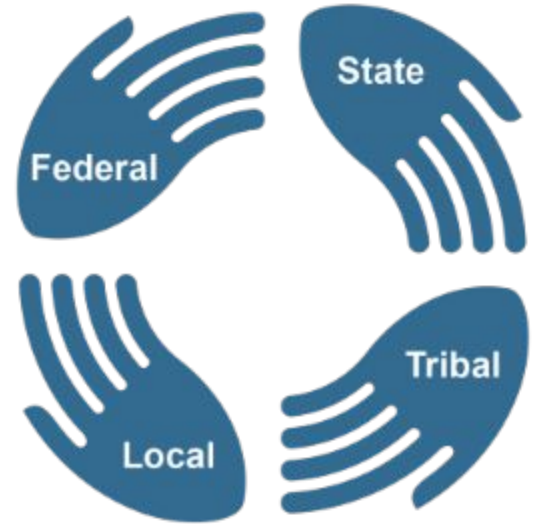
August 20, 2024

Agenda

- Program Overview
- Commissioner's Priorities & Vision
- Name Change
- Shaping the Future of the Program

Program Overview

- Federal and state child support program established in 1975 due to high divorce rates and increased use of welfare (Title IV-D of Social Security Act)
- Initially designed to recoup welfare costs; later also used to recoup Medicaid and Foster Care costs
- Has evolved into a federal/state/tribal/local partnership to help families by promoting family self-sufficiency and child well-being
- IV-D programs operating in 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, the Virgin Islands, and 61 federally recognized tribes



Commissioner's Priorities & Vision

Vision: Engagement

3Ps: People, Process, Performance

Priorities:

- Improve our collaboration with tribal programs
- Extend flexibilities to programs during public emergencies
- Reinvest in programs that support fathers and further employment

Child Support Policies and Practices Vary

- Federal statutes and regulations form the backbone of the Title IV-D child support program.
- Family law is a state responsibility.
- State law, policies, and practices vary even though each state must have certain child support laws in to receive funding for its child support program.
- As sovereign nations, tribes with IV-D child support programs are subject to some, but not all, of the federal child support regulations governing states.

Modification

- Child support does not automatically change with changes in employment income.
- A child support order does not automatically stop when employment ends.
- A parent may request a modification if financial circumstances change.
- Child support may be increased or decreased.

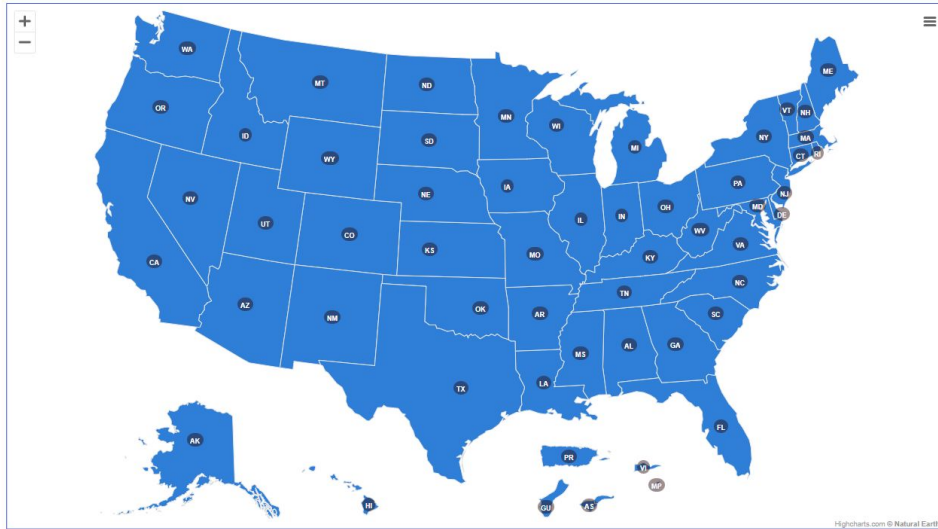


Modification Related Resources

State by State - How to Change a Child Support Order

Listen

Select a State/Region/Territory



Changing a Child Support Order

Office of Child Support Enforcement
330 C Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20201

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/css>

Updated June 2021



Flexibility, Efficiency, and Modernization

- The Flexibility, Efficiency, and Modernization in Child Support Enforcement Programs final rule was published on December 20, 2016.
- The final rule provides that state guidelines under 45 CFR 302.56(c)(3) may not treat incarceration as “voluntary unemployment” in establishing or modifying child support orders.

New Name

- Promote equity
- Reflect whole family strategies
- Increase understanding of program's services
- Shape the program's future



Office of Child Support Services

ACF Strategic Goals

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Enable and promote innovation within ACF to improve the lives of children, youth, families, and individuals

Lived Experience Starter Kit



A Starter Kit on Engaging People With Lived Experience in Child Support Programs

Shaping the Future of the Child Support Program

- Promote equity by reducing structural barriers, especially for fathers
- Make the program work better for families with low incomes
- Improve program perception/image through evidence-informed policies and listening to feedback from grantees and customers
- Serve the whole family and provide employment programs for noncustodial parents

Resources

- **State Map**

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/css/map/state-state-how-change-child-support-order>

- **Changing a Child Support Order:**

https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ocse/changing_a_child_support_order.pdf

- **Modification for Incarcerated Parents:**

https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ocse/fem_final_rule_incarceration.pdf

Resources (continued)

- **OCSS Whole Family Approach:**
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/css/ocsevoiceblog/2023/06/new-name-reflect-our-family-centered-approach>
- **Administration for Children and Families Strategic Plan**
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/about/acf-strategic-plan-2022>
- **Lived Experience Starter Kit**
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/css/training-technical-assistance/lived-experience-starter-kit>

The Intersection of Child Support Debt and Incarceration

Dr. Maretta McDonald

JCC Speaker Series: Leveraging Federal Opportunities – Examining the Impact of Family Resources and Child Support on Economic Mobility Webinar

August 20, 2024

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services



Objectives

Lay out the contextual factors of child support debt and criminal legal system involvement by

Summarizing current research on child support debt and its scope and impact

Making visible the connection between child support and reentry

Discussing jurisdictional implementation of the Flexibility, Efficiency, and Modernization in Child Support Enforcement Programs final rule and other ways to address this intersection

Imagining ways to move forward



Disclaimer

The findings and conclusions in this presentation are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

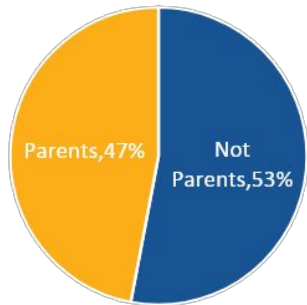


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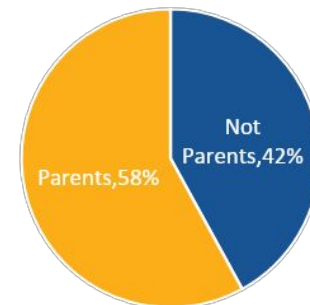
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Noncustodial Parents with Child Support Orders Who Experience Incarceration

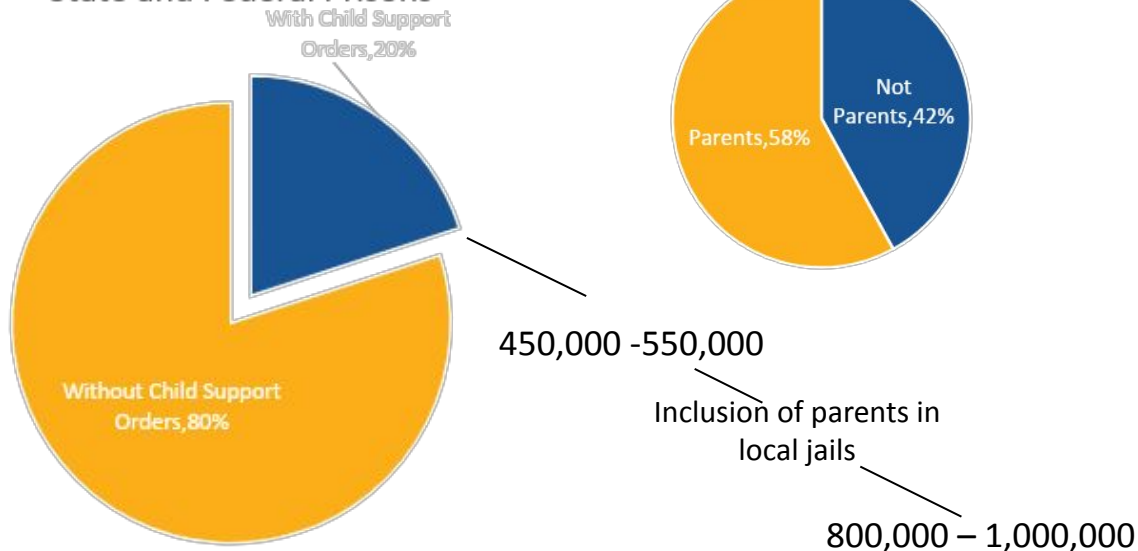
State Prisons



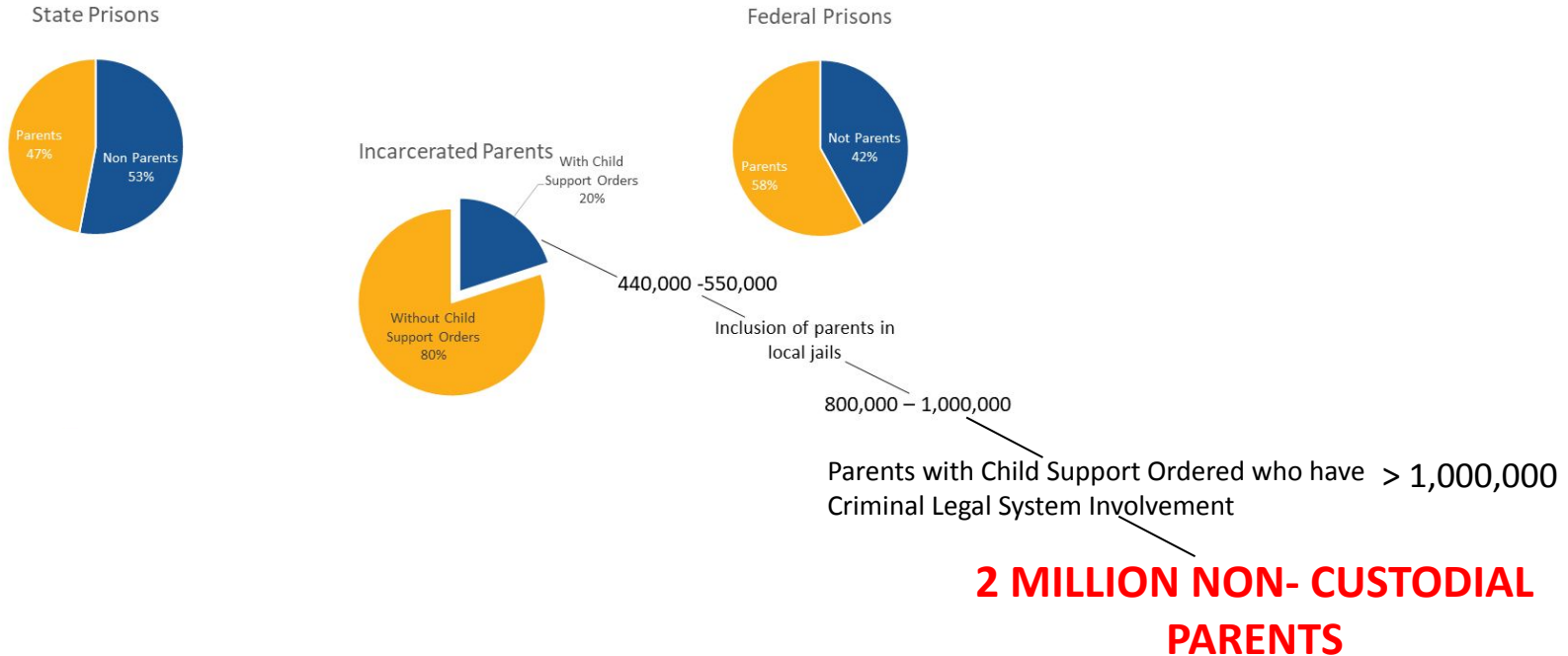
Federal Prisons



Incarcerated Parents in State and Federal Prisons



Noncustodial Parents with Child Support Orders with Criminal Legal System Involvement



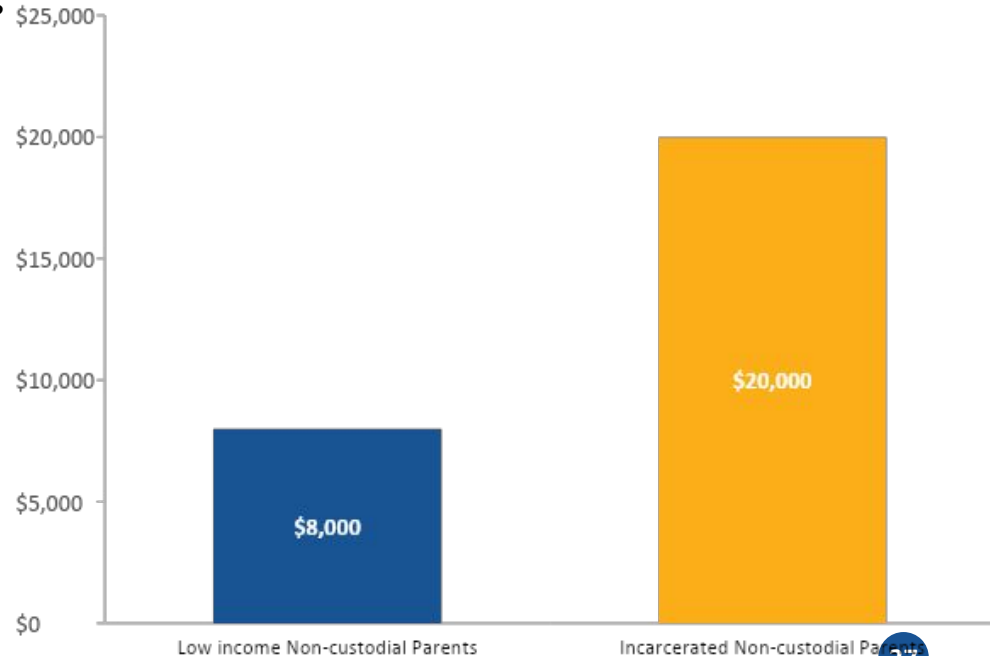
Child Support Debt Among Those Exposed to Incarceration

\$10,000 → Average child support debt of Parents Entering Prison

\$20,000 → Average child support debt of Currently Incarcerated Parents

\$100,000 → For 60% of debtors, partially due to incarceration

Child Support Debt Variations Based on Incarceration STATUS



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Child Support Debt Impact on Families

Negative impact on noncustodial fathers' wellbeing

- Depression
- Material Hardship
- Poorer Physical Health

Strains Interpersonal relationships

- Co-parenting
- Parent-child
- Kinship network

Negative impact on child wellbeing

- Anxiety and depression
- Aggressiveness
- Rule Breaking



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[Robbins et al – Child support debt and the well-being of disadvantaged fathers of color 2022](#)
[National Institute of Justice – Child Support and Reentry 2021](#)
[Nepomnyaschy et al – Parental Debt and Child Wellbeing 2021](#)

Factors That Contribute to High Child Support Debt

Inability to pay

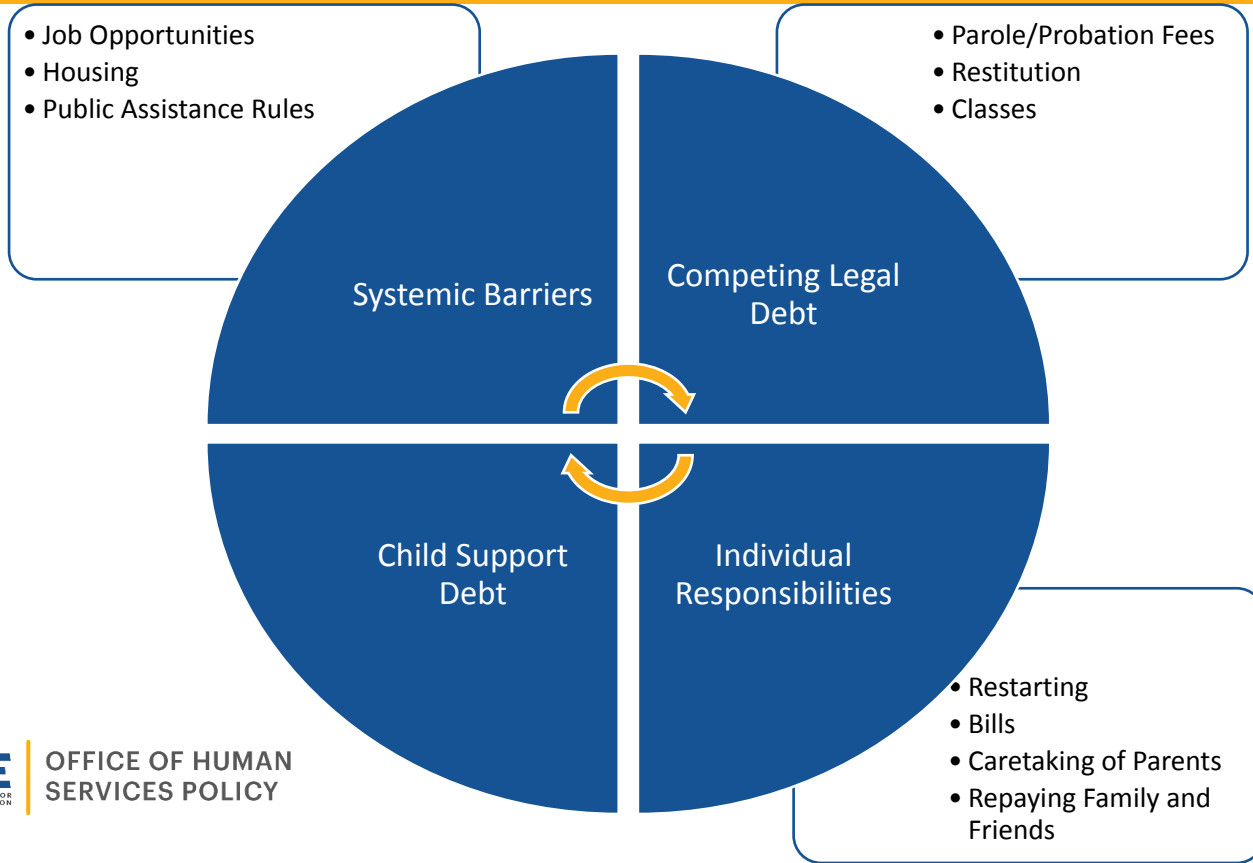
Setting child support while incarcerated based on pre-incarcerated earnings

Pre-existing orders set remaining at pre-incarceration rates

Interest accrual



Intersection Between Returning Noncustodial Parents with Incarceration Histories and Child Support Debt

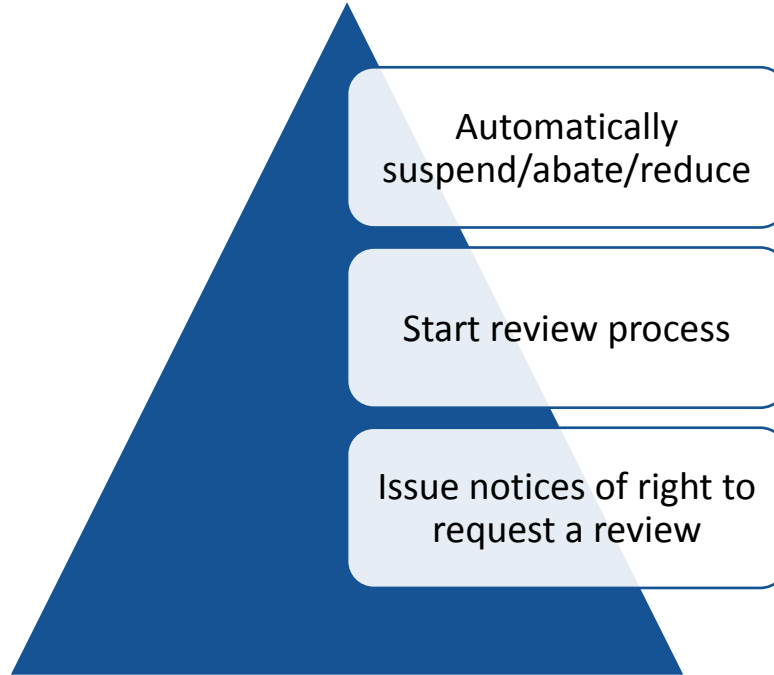


[Horowitz et al. Dual Debtors: Child Support and Criminal Legal Debt 2022](#)



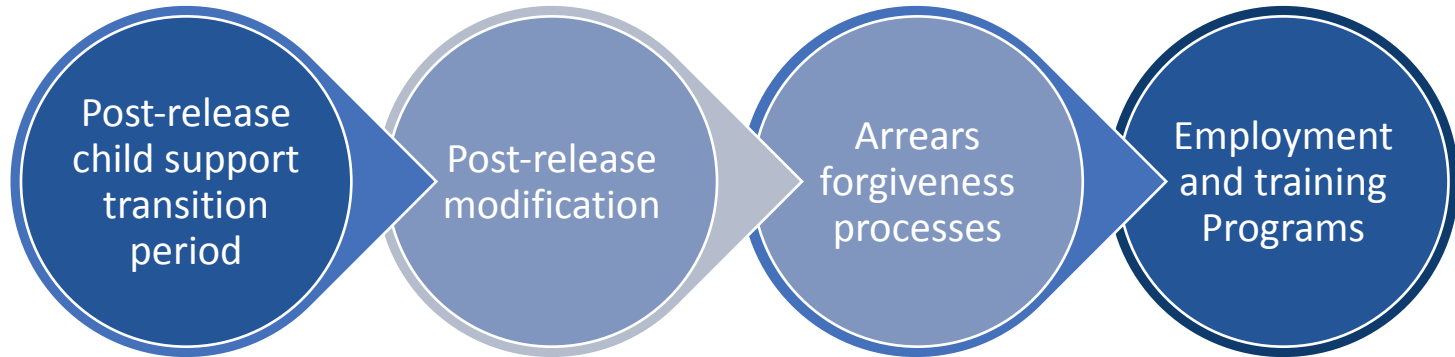
Child Support Policies Vary By Jurisdiction

- Even though there are federal guidelines, state policies vary within those guidelines.
- Example: Order modifications while incarcerated vary by process type and length of incarceration.



Child Support Debt Relief Policies Vary Too

- Programs that can help address post-incarceration child support debt



Potential Actions Steps

Knowledge accumulation and sharing

Gather	Gather jurisdiction-specific information on child support relief programs
Equip	Equip groups and individuals who have access to incarcerated parents with this information to share with those who have child support obligations
Learn	Learn about what other jurisdictions are doing to address child support debt
Share	Share promising practices that could be beneficial to your community



Thank you for inviting me to be in community with you.

Maretta McDonald, Ph.D.

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TAKE OUR SURVEY!!