

Child support is a critical source of economic stability for families; those who do not receive it are at risk for living in poverty. In a study of U.S. families who received child support, child support payments made up:

- 40% of the family income for families in poverty,
- 30% of the family income for families leaving welfare,
- 26-29% of the family income for all divorced families.

In a similar study, 5-7 out of every 10 children living in single-parent households with no child support were living at or below the poverty level.

If child support orders were established and followed for families needing support, the state could experience substantial savings. Researchers have estimated that if all families who needed child support had orders in place, and those orders were fully enforced:

- Cash assistance costs for families would drop 26%,
- Food Stamp costs would drop 19%,
- Medicaid costs would drop 5%.

Despite court orders for child support, many families get sporadic or no support.

- Kansas collected \$151.8 million in child support for 2004, yielding about \$1,122 per child and reflecting a collection of 55.3% of child support due.
- Of the approximately 90,000 of current Kansas Child Support Enforcement Program (CSE) cases with orders for child support, almost 90% have unpaid child support.
- At a current \$543 million in total unpaid support, an average child support case in Kansas carries an approximate average of \$6,700 in unpaid child support.
- Kansas ranks 34th in the U.S. on establishing paternity, 41st on establishing child support orders, 32nd on collecting child support, and 22nd on collecting arrears.

Recommendations to Improve Child Support in Kansas

- Authorize the Kansas CSE to develop administrative procedures (as opposed to legal proceedings currently used) to establish and revise child support orders, increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the process and making it more family-friendly.
- Expand existing administrative remedies available to the Kansas CSE to collect unpaid child support (e.g., statewide Financial Institution Data Match, liens on insurance proceeds, drivers' license sanctions).
- Reduce late and sporadic payments by shortening the length of time noncustodial parents have before being considered "in contempt" of child support orders.