

DESCRIPTION

In Ramsey County, the County Attorney's Office is responsible for child support collection and services. The goal of the Ramsey County Attorney's Office of Child Support Services Division is to create safe communities where children can live with dignity and respect.¹ As a criminal justice agency, the Ramsey County Attorney's Office regards child support enforcement as a premier crime prevention program. Dedication to the fair collection of child support contributes to child well-being by contributing support for basic needs-food, clothing, health, education and shelter. This in turn can help ensure that Ramsey County's children will become productive, law abiding adults in our community.

The Ramsey County Attorney's Office Child Support Services Division offers four primary services:

- 1) Establishing paternity, including genetic testing
- 2) Establishing court orders
- 3) Enforcing and collecting child support (usually until the child is age 18 or graduates from high school)
- 4) Modifying child support if circumstances change

In 2016, the Ramsey County Child Support Services Division provided services to 26,719 families: 4,264 families receiving public assistance; 14,990 families that previously received public assistance; and 7,465 additional families.

HOW WE ARE DOING

Each year, state child support programs report on several performance measures to the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement.² Minnesota and Ramsey County continue striving to be among the top performing states/counties on the five federal performance measures, and in other key program areas.³ One performance measure, the "current collections ratio" is the percentage of child support collected compared to the amount of child support ordered. In Ramsey County, the current collections ratio increased from 64 percent to over 67 percent in the past two years. This increase is due in part to efforts to obtain realistic orders for families and to use early intervention and effective enforcement remedies for collection. Child support performance is also measured by the "establishment rate," which is the number of cases where paternity is established there is a court order for child support. Sometimes these orders are in place because of a divorce or custody order, but a large majority of child support orders are obtained for Ramsey County parents through the efforts of the Child Support Services Division.

BENCHMARK INDICATOR

The federal Office for Child Support Enforcement:

- 1) Improvement in the current collections ratio
- 2) Improvement in the number of cases with a child support court order

DISPARITIES

Nationwide, 25 percent of all children and 50 percent of poor children receive child support services. Child support makes up approximately 40 percent of a poor family's income.⁴ Over 71 percent of Ramsey County's caseload includes current or former public assistance recipients.

Information to note

- Ramsey County's child support collections ratio increased from 64% to over 67% in the past two years.
- Due to efforts of the Office of Child Support Services staff, close to 100% of paternities are established in child support cases.

¹ Ramsey County Attorney's Office Child Support Services Division. <https://www.ramseycounty.us/your-government/leadership/county-attorneys-office/divisions-units/human-services-division/child-support-section>. Accessed August 2018.

² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children & Families. Office of Child Support Enforcement 2016 Preliminary Report. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/css/resource/2016-preliminary-report>. Accessed December 07, 2017.

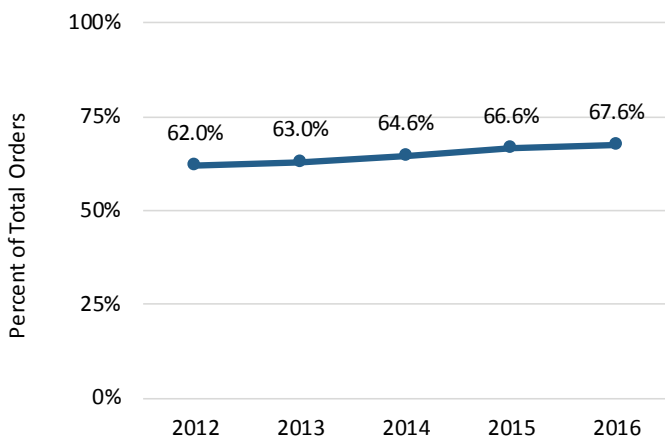
³ 2016 Minnesota Child Support Performance Report. Minnesota Department of Human Services. <https://www.leg.state.mn.us/docs/2017/other/170238.pdf>. Accessed August 2018.

⁴ The Child Support Program is a Good Investment: Story Behind the Numbers. Office of Child Support Enforcement. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/css/resource/sbntn-child-support-program-is-a-good-investment>. Published December 30, 2016. Accessed December 07, 2017.

WHAT RAMSEY COUNTY GOVERNMENT IS DOING

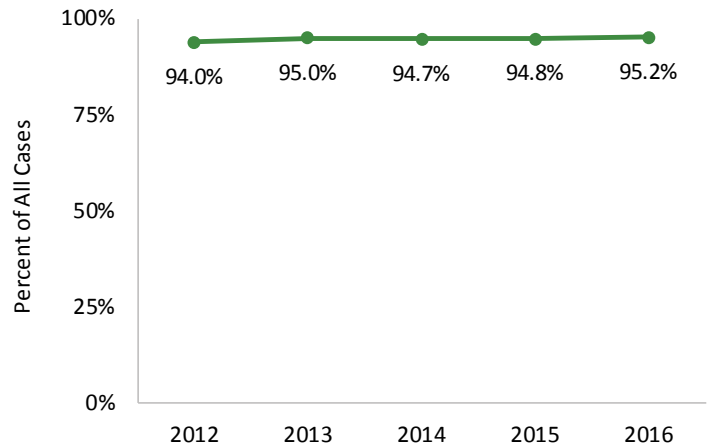
In August 2016, Ramsey County Child Support Services initiated a project as a part of Child Support Awareness month. County staff contacted more than 1,600 noncustodial parents inviting them to connect with the child support office and take the necessary steps to reinstate driver's licenses that had been suspended for nonpayment of child support. Through this effort, over \$61,000 was collected and 112 noncustodial parents established payment agreements who were able to have their driver's licenses reinstated. This small effort made a big difference and helped Ramsey County achieve its highest-ever collection rate in 2016.

Child Support Collections, Ramsey County



Source: Ramsey County Attorney's Office Child Support Services Division.

Child Support Paternities Established, Ramsey County



Source: Ramsey County Attorney's Office Child Support Services Division.