

# Child Support Program

SFY

# 2023

---

The Division of Child Support delivers child support services, including the establishment of parentage and the establishment, modification and enforcement of child support orders (financial and medical) so families have the resources they need for children to thrive.

**ESA Briefing  
Book**

## Table of Contents

Child Support Program Overview .....	3
Child Support Program Highlights, SFY 2023 .....	4
Child Support Incentive Scorecard, FFY 2022 and FFY 2023.....	5
Child Support Caseload, SFY 2014 – SFY 2023 .....	6
Child Support Collections, SFY 2014 – SFY 2023 .....	7
Clients with DCS Cases by County of Residence, June 2023 Snapshot.....	8
Percentage of Total Population with a DCS Case by County, June 2023 Snapshot .....	9
Percentage of Custodial Parents (CP) by County, June 2023 Snapshot.....	10
Percentage of Noncustodial Parents (NCP) by County, June 2023 Snapshot.....	11
Child Support Cost Avoidance by Source, SFY 2023 .....	12
Child Support Cost Avoidance by Source, SFY 2014 – SFY 2023 .....	13
Child Support Tribal Caseload, SFY 2023 .....	14
Child Support Tribal Collections, SFY 2023 .....	15
Child Support Demographics, June 2023 Snapshot .....	16
Special Grants/Projects.....	17
Voluntary Acknowledgments and Genetic Testing.....	18

## Child Support Program Overview

The Child Support program (established under Title IV-D of the Social Security Act) provides services for the establishment of paternity and the establishment, modification and enforcement of child support orders to help families become or remain economically secure.

Three types of cases make up the Title IV-D child support program:

- **Current Assistance** – People receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or Title IV-E Foster Care.
- **Former Assistance** – People who previously received TANF or Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) or Title IV-E Foster Care.
- **Never Assistance** – People who have never received TANF/AFDC or Title IV-E Foster Care. Never Assistance cases include Medicaid only, child care only, and state-only foster care cases.

The Child Support Performance and Incentive Act of 1998 awards incentives to state child support programs based on their performance on five measures:

1. Paternity establishment
2. Order establishment
3. Current support collected
4. Cases paying toward arrears
5. Cost effectiveness

The Child Support Incentive Scorecard included in this chapter shows Division of Child Support (DCS) outcomes on the five measures over the past two federal fiscal years. Information is presented by federal fiscal year (FFY) because that is the timeframe used for awarding incentives earned by the state's child support program.

Cost avoidance, one of the indirect benefits of the child support enforcement program, is measured by reductions in public expenditures in cash assistance, food assistance and Medicaid for families. Washington state studies have shown that a dependable stream of child support income for custodial parents and medical insurance coverage for children helps families increase their level of financial stability and independence, leading to less reliance on public assistance programs and greater economic security.

Additional information, including the eligibility criteria, funding sources, and services/benefits provided, is available [here](#).

### TECHNICAL NOTES

**DATA SOURCES:** Data for this chapter was based on ESA Division of Child Support's Support Enforcement Management System (SEMS) - September 2023 caseload. Data for incentive payments are provided by DCS.

**DATA NOTE:**

- Percentages may not add up to expected totals due to rounding.

## Child Support Program Highlights, SFY 2023

- The average monthly child support caseload was 256,014 in SFY 2023, representing a 7.3% decrease from 276,267 in SFY 2022. Within this caseload, average monthly Current Assistance cases increased by 6.6% from 28,365 in SFY 2022 to 30,230 in SFY 2023; Former Assistance cases decreased by 3.6% from 141,348 to 136,332; and Never Assistance cases decreased by 16.1% from 106,555 to 89,452.
  - The child support program collected a total of \$633.8 million in SFY 2023.
  - The total cost avoidance in SFY 2023 was \$198.4 million. Of the total, \$113.6 million (57.2%) was for the Medicaid program, \$59.0 million (29.7%) was for the Basic Food program, and \$25.9 million (13.0%) was for the TANF program.
  - An Acknowledgment of Parentage (AOP) is a legal form that establishes a parent-child relationship or “parentage.” By filing this form, a second parent is added to a child’s birth certificate. The vast majority are signed by unmarried birth mothers/parents and a second parent. On rare occasion, some parents already on a birth certificate through marriage or registered domestic partnership may choose to file an AOP for use outside of Washington to prove parentage. The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) reported 24,991 births to unmarried birth mothers/parents and, of those births, 22,308 (89.3%) of mothers/birth parents and a second parent jointly signed and filed Washington state AOP forms. The vast majority of these acknowledgments were signed at the hospital because of the efforts of the Parentage and Paternity Program.

## Child Support Incentive<sup>1</sup> Scorecard, FFY 2022<sup>2</sup> and FFY 2023<sup>3</sup>

Measure	Goal Needed to Obtain Maximum Incentive Funding	Actual Performance		Estimated Percentage of Maximum Incentive Reached	
		2022	2023	2022	2023
<b>Paternity Establishment Percentage</b>	80%	95.9%	95.6%	100%	100%
<b>Support Order Establishment</b>	80%	91.3%	91.0%	100%	100%
<b>Current Collections</b>	80%	65.3%	66.1%	75%	76%
<b>Arrearage Collections</b>	80%	62.8%	61.6%	72%	71%
<b>Cost Effectiveness</b>	\$5.00	\$3.29	\$3.86	60%	70%

### Incentive Measure Formulas Used by the Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement

**Paternity establishment percentage:** Number of children in the caseload in the FFY or as of the end of the FFY who were born out-of-wedlock (BOW) with paternity established or acknowledged divided by number of children BOW in the caseload as of the end of the preceding FFY.

**Support order establishment:** Number of IV-D cases with support orders divided by number of IV-D cases.

**Current collections:** Amount collected for current support in IV-D cases divided by amount owed for current support in IV-D cases.

**Arrearage collections:** Number of IV-D cases paying toward arrears divided by number of IV-D cases with arrears due.

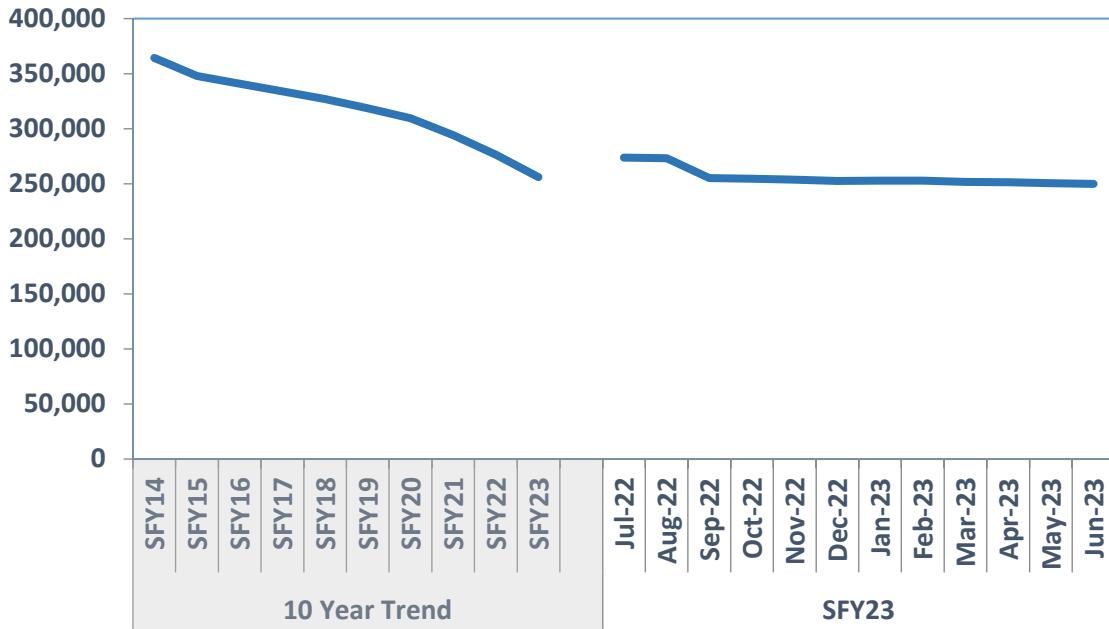
**Cost-effectiveness:** Total IV-D dollars collected divided by total IV-D dollars expended.

<sup>1</sup> DCS incentive payments for FFY 2022 are based on DCS actual FFY 2022 performance and Office of Child Support Services FFY 2022 preliminary performance results for all other states. DCS incentive payments for FFY 2023 are based on DCS actual FFY 2023 performance and OCSS FFY 2023 preliminary performance results for all other states. Data source: DCS Fiscal Office.

<sup>2</sup> FFY 2022 data is from U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children & Families, Office of Child Support Services 2021 Preliminary Report.

<sup>3</sup> FFY 2023 data is preliminary based on unaudited federal reports.

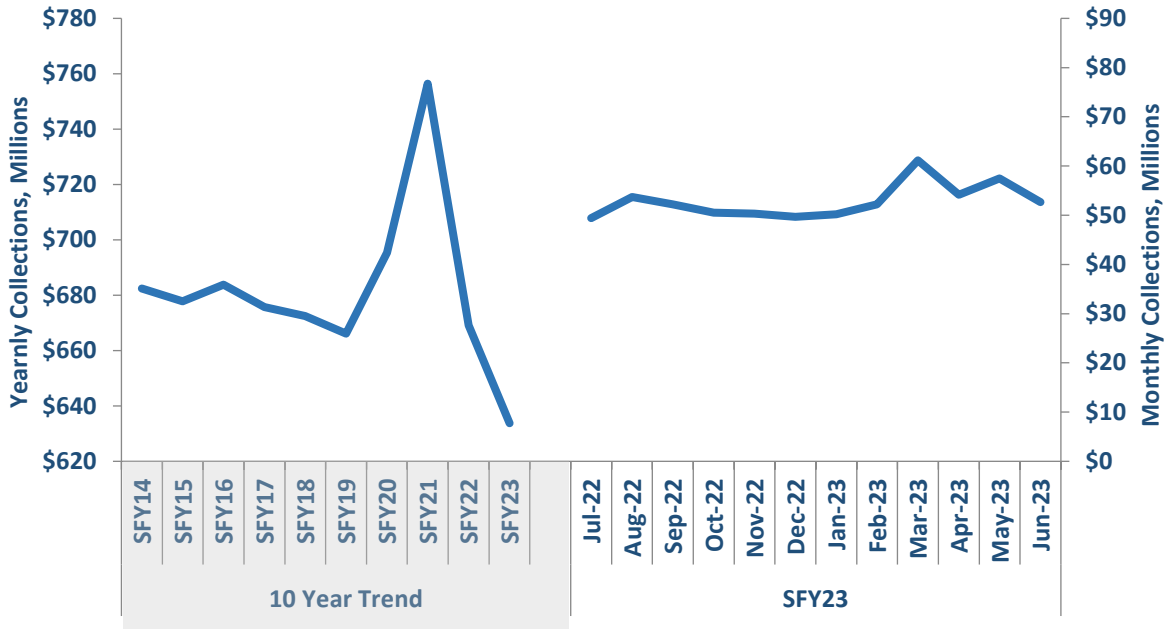
### Child Support Caseload, SFY 2014 – SFY 2023



SFY	Monthly Average Caseload	SFY	Monthly Average Caseload
SFY14	364,295	SFY19	318,444
SFY15	347,740	SFY20	309,616
SFY16	340,919	SFY21	294,069
SFY17	334,027	SFY22	276,267
SFY18	326,923	SFY23	256,014

SFY 2023	TANF/Foster Care	Former Assistance	Never Assistance	Total IV-D Caseload
July	30,982	137,623	105,082	273,687
August	30,886	137,988	104,353	273,227
September	30,636	137,301	87,197	255,134
October	30,859	136,933	86,706	254,498
November	30,263	136,855	86,547	253,665
December	30,199	136,120	86,308	252,627
January	30,530	135,883	86,313	252,726
February	30,193	136,119	86,433	252,745
March	30,059	135,531	86,221	251,811
April	29,991	135,376	86,161	251,528
May	29,609	134,929	86,092	250,630
June	28,557	135,323	86,015	249,895
Mo. Avg.	30,230	136,332	89,452	256,014

### Child Support Collections, SFY 2014 – SFY 2023



SFY	Collections	SFY	Collections
SFY14	\$682,411,249	SFY19	\$666,175,348
SFY15	\$677,763,250	SFY20	\$695,311,638
SFY16	\$683,807,632	SFY21	\$756,412,192
SFY17	\$675,702,583	SFY22	\$669,143,007
SFY18	\$672,521,073	SFY23	\$633,754,215

SFY 2023	TANF/Foster Care	Former Assistance	Never Assistance	Total IV-D Collections
July	\$1,890,824	\$16,469,039	\$31,055,622	\$49,415,485
August	\$2,139,465	\$18,054,913	\$33,543,383	\$53,737,761
September	\$2,130,603	\$17,517,863	\$32,545,514	\$52,193,980
October	\$1,868,579	\$16,805,967	\$31,855,202	\$50,529,747
November	\$1,922,796	\$16,648,273	\$31,784,981	\$50,356,050
December	\$1,828,457	\$16,322,999	\$31,509,535	\$49,660,991
January	\$1,919,996	\$16,355,702	\$31,929,372	\$50,205,070
February	\$2,102,771	\$17,946,710	\$32,162,264	\$52,211,744
March	\$2,747,628	\$22,143,486	\$36,262,489	\$61,153,604
April	\$2,307,067	\$18,510,358	\$33,339,664	\$54,157,088
May	\$2,273,222	\$19,899,450	\$35,304,942	\$57,477,614
June	\$1,961,840	\$17,729,403	\$32,963,837	\$52,655,079
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$25,093,250</b>	<b>\$214,404,161</b>	<b>\$394,256,804</b>	<b>\$633,754,215</b>

**Clients with DCS Cases by County of Residence, June 2023 Snapshot<sup>4</sup>**

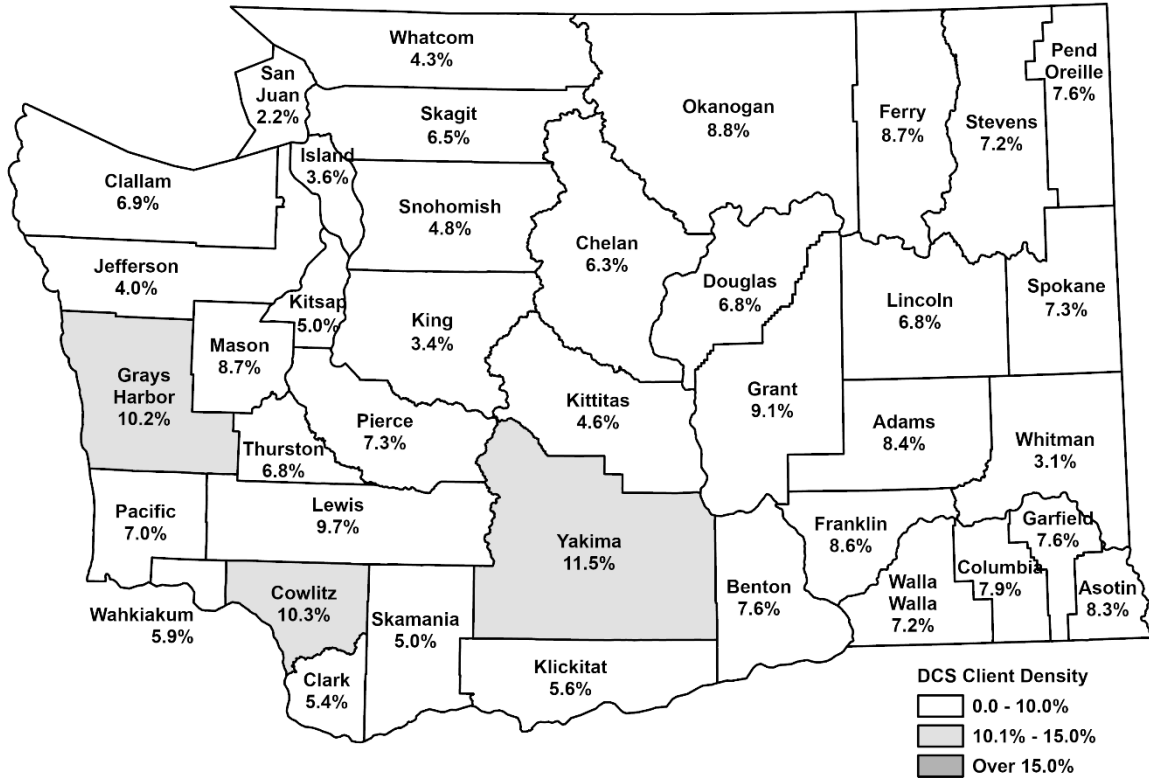
County	Clients	Population Estimate	% of Residents Served	County	Clients	Population Estimate	% of Residents Served
Adams	1,775	21,200	8.4%	Lewis	8,187	84,075	9.7%
Asotin	1,888	22,650	8.3%	Lincoln	757	11,125	6.8%
Benton	16,402	215,500	7.6%	Mason	5,843	67,000	8.7%
Chelan	5,140	81,500	6.3%	Okanogan	3,791	43,000	8.8%
Clallam	5,398	78,075	6.9%	Pacific	1,654	23,775	7.0%
Clark	28,363	527,400	5.4%	Pend Oreille	1,047	13,725	7.6%
Columbia	311	3,950	7.9%	Pierce	69,494	946,300	7.3%
Cowlitz	11,599	113,000	10.3%	San Juan	402	18,350	2.2%
Douglas	3,014	44,500	6.8%	Skagit	8,585	132,000	6.5%
Ferry	633	7,300	8.7%	Skamania	603	12,000	5.0%
Franklin	8,668	101,100	8.6%	Snohomish	41,653	859,800	4.8%
Garfield	174	2,300	7.6%	Spokane	40,762	554,600	7.3%
Grant	9,445	103,300	9.1%	Stevens	3,420	47,350	7.2%
Grays Harbor	7,841	77,000	10.2%	Thurston	20,749	303,400	6.8%
Island	3,182	88,150	3.6%	Wahkiakum	268	4,550	5.9%
Jefferson	1,321	33,425	4.0%	Walla Walla	4,553	63,100	7.2%
King	78,704	2,347,800	3.4%	Whatcom	10,203	235,800	4.3%
Kitsap	14,032	283,200	5.0%	Whitman	1,475	48,100	3.1%
Kittitas	2,172	47,300	4.6%	Yakima	29,948	261,200	11.5%
Klickitat	1,306	23,250	5.6%				
<b>State Total</b>	<b>454,762</b>	<b>7,951,150</b>	<b>5.7%</b>				

<sup>4</sup> Population estimate source: Office of Financial Management (OFM) population estimates



# Percentage of Total Population with a DCS Case by County, June 2023 Snapshot

Percentage of Residents Served by DCS During June 2023

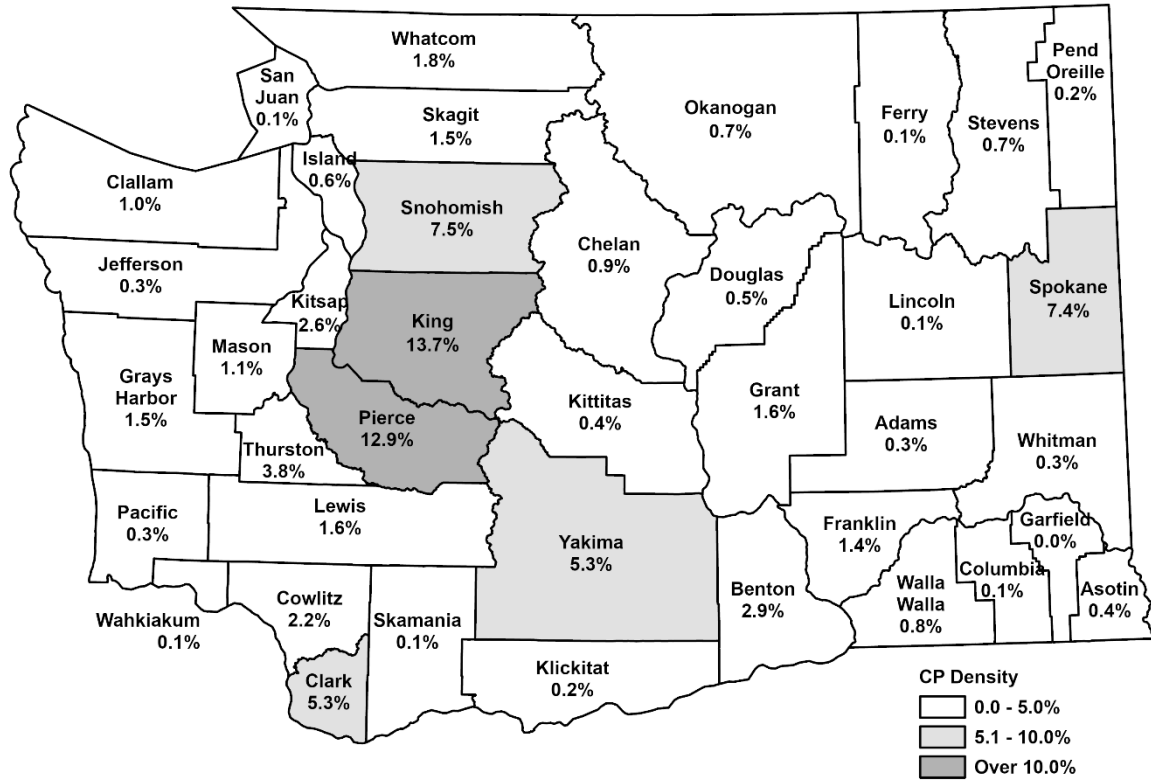


Note: The percentage of residents served is obtained by dividing the number of DCS clients in a county during June 2023 by the OFM 2023 County Population estimate.

Provided by DSHS/ESA/OAS/EMAPS - Aug. 2023

## Percentage of Custodial Parents (CP) by County, June 2023 Snapshot

Percentage of Custodial Parents by County in Washington State: June 2023

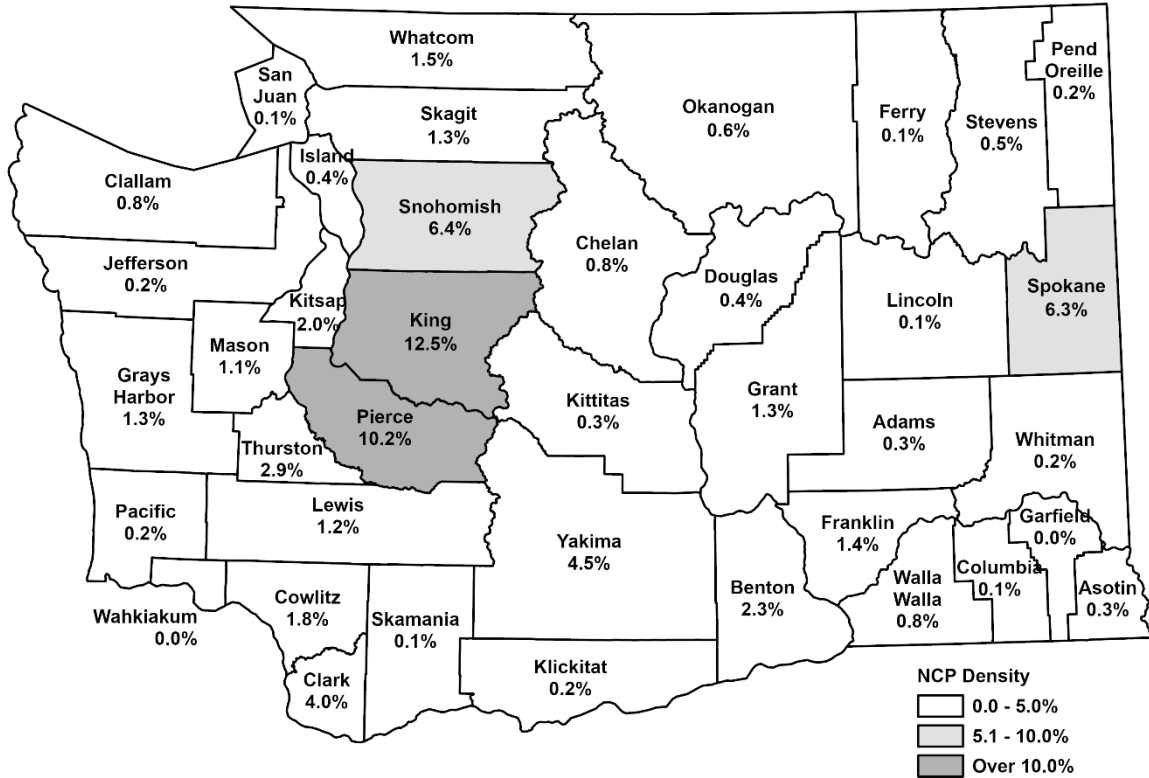


Note: 17.8% of CPs are out of state or do not have valid county address code.

Provided by DSHS/ESA/OAS/EMAPS - Aug. 2023

# Percentage of Noncustodial Parents (NCP) by County, June 2023 Snapshot

Percentage of Noncustodial Parents by County in Washington State: June 2023



Note: 31.4% of NCPs are out of state or do not have valid county address code.

Provided by DSHS/ESA/OAS/EMAPS - Aug. 2023

### Child Support Cost Avoidance by Source, SFY 2023

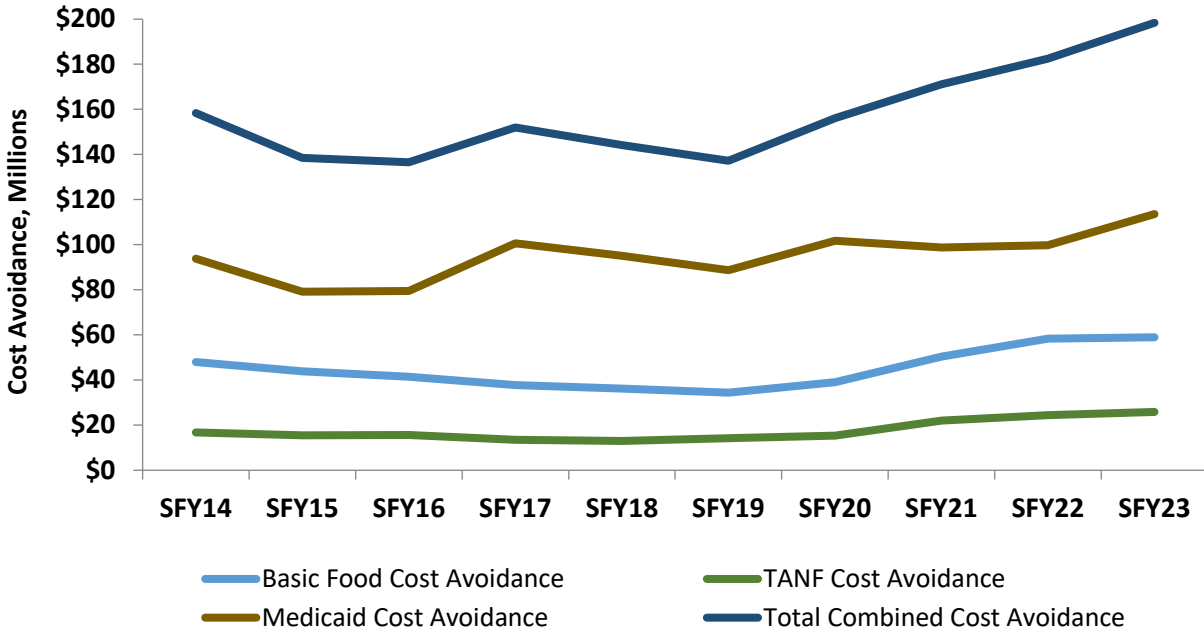
SFY 2023	Basic Food			TANF		
	Average CR <sup>5</sup> Basic Food Expenditure	Average CI <sup>6</sup> Basic Food Expenditure	Total Basic Food Cost Avoidance	Average CR <sup>5</sup> TANF Expenditure	Average CI <sup>6</sup> TANF Expenditure	Total TANF Cost Avoidance
July	\$161.87	\$246.64	\$4,732,478	\$11.57	\$50.30	\$2,109,109
August	\$162.32	\$247.03	\$4,718,972	\$12.22	\$51.64	\$2,115,953
September	\$158.04	\$244.31	\$4,786,425	\$11.54	\$51.74	\$2,163,574
October	\$179.08	\$278.31	\$5,546,449	\$11.43	\$52.28	\$2,211,524
November	\$177.68	\$276.54	\$5,505,369	\$11.39	\$52.28	\$2,174,348
December	\$175.38	\$275.97	\$5,596,612	\$11.73	\$52.64	\$2,150,851
January	\$175.19	\$278.05	\$5,775,927	\$11.47	\$52.36	\$2,189,037
February	\$174.49	\$275.65	\$5,665,969	\$11.56	\$52.64	\$2,174,484
March	\$106.66	\$184.58	\$4,173,307	\$11.97	\$51.79	\$2,142,147
April	\$107.58	\$185.71	\$4,180,551	\$11.90	\$52.07	\$2,171,441
May	\$106.42	\$185.39	\$4,185,600	\$11.55	\$52.05	\$2,161,284
June	\$106.13	\$184.32	\$4,089,754	\$11.69	\$51.42	\$2,089,065
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$58,957,413</b>			<b>\$25,852,817</b>

SFY 2023	Medicaid		
	Total Custodial Parent Medicaid Cost Avoidance	Total Child Medicaid Cost Avoidance	Total Medicaid Cost Avoidance
July	\$4,020,201	\$4,397,611	\$8,417,812
August	\$4,713,887	\$4,764,125	\$9,478,012
September	\$4,644,000	\$5,079,585	\$9,723,585
October	\$4,530,768	\$4,792,306	\$9,323,074
November	\$4,355,836	\$4,833,866	\$9,189,702
December	\$4,253,729	\$4,661,442	\$8,915,171
January	\$4,429,544	\$5,732,871	\$10,162,414
February	\$4,568,892	\$5,288,770	\$9,857,662
March	\$4,629,586	\$5,172,139	\$9,801,725
April	\$4,525,812	\$4,819,934	\$9,345,747
May	\$5,370,544	\$4,800,500	\$10,171,044
June	\$4,621,219	\$4,565,083	\$9,186,302
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$54,664,019</b>	<b>\$58,908,231</b>	<b>\$113,572,250</b>

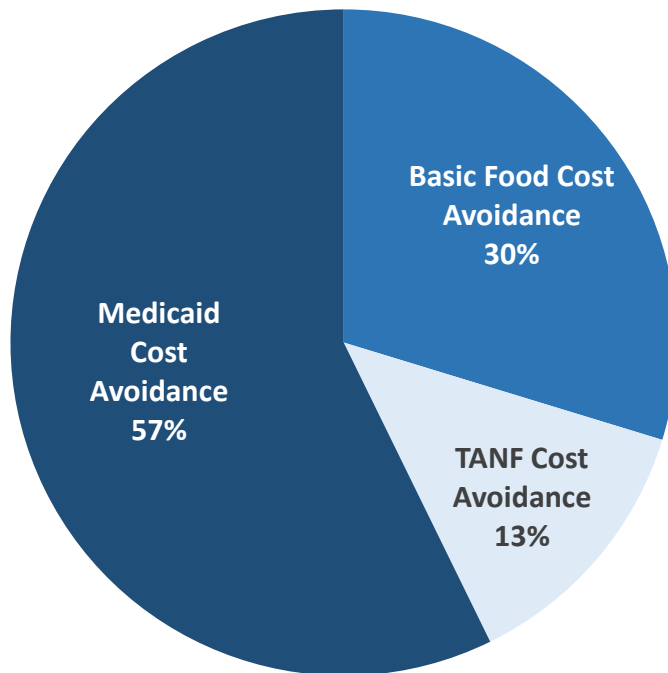
<sup>5</sup> CR: Custodial parents with regular child support payments. Regular child support payments are defined as summed monthly order amount more than \$0 and summed total arrearage debt less than twice the summed monthly order amount.

<sup>6</sup> CI: Custodial parents without regular child support payments.

### Child Support Cost Avoidance by Source, SFY 2014 – SFY 2023



Sources of \$198.4 Million in Child Support Cost Avoidance, SFY 2023



Child Support Tribal Caseload<sup>7</sup>, SFY 2023

SFY 2023	Total Child Support TANF/Foster Care	Child Support Tribal TANF/Foster Care	% of Child Support Tribal TANF/Foster Care	Total Child Support Former Assistance	Tribal Child Support Former Assistance	% of Tribal Former Assistance
July	30,982	2,007	6.5%	137,623	5,452	4.0%
August	30,886	1,993	6.5%	137,988	5,460	4.0%
September	30,636	1,990	6.5%	137,301	5,431	4.0%
October	30,859	1,994	6.5%	136,933	5,370	3.9%
November	30,263	1,986	6.6%	136,855	5,375	3.9%
December	30,199	1,956	6.5%	136,120	5,359	3.9%
January	30,530	1,967	6.4%	135,883	5,377	4.0%
February	30,193	1,915	6.3%	136,119	5,121	3.8%
March	30,059	1,974	6.6%	135,531	5,341	3.9%
April	29,991	1,989	6.6%	135,376	5,303	3.9%
May	29,609	1,979	6.7%	134,929	5,259	3.9%
June	28,557	1,913	6.7%	135,323	5,280	3.9%
Mo. Avg.	30,230	1,972	6.5%	136,332	5,344	3.9%

SFY 2023	Total Child Support Never Assistance	Child Support Tribal Never Assistance	% of Child Support Tribal Never Assistance	Total Child Support	Total Child Support Tribal	% of Child Support Tribal
July	105,082	2,606	2.5%	273,687	10,065	3.7%
August	104,353	2,574	2.5%	273,227	10,027	3.7%
September	87,197	1,703	2.0%	255,134	9,124	3.6%
October	86,706	1,604	1.8%	254,498	8,968	3.5%
November	86,547	1,618	1.9%	253,665	8,979	3.5%
December	86,308	1,608	1.9%	252,627	8,923	3.5%
January	86,313	1,602	1.9%	252,726	8,946	3.5%
February	86,433	1,566	1.8%	252,745	8,602	3.4%
March	86,221	1,601	1.9%	251,811	8,916	3.5%
April	86,161	1,607	1.9%	251,528	8,899	3.5%
May	86,092	1,618	1.9%	250,630	8,856	3.5%
June	86,015	1,608	1.9%	249,895	8,801	3.5%
Mo. Avg.	89,452	1,776	2.0%	256,014	9,092	3.6%

<sup>7</sup> Starting in SFY 2023, the methodology used to identify tribal caseloads was adjusted in order to more accurately reflect the entire tribal caseload throughout the year.

## Child Support Tribal Collections, SFY 2023

SFY 2023	TANF/Foster Care	Former Assistance	Never Assistance	Total Child Support Collections
July	\$59,514	\$256,973	\$270,357	\$586,844
August	\$74,439	\$325,039	\$310,401	\$709,880
September	\$75,013	\$296,674	\$312,937	\$684,624
October	\$58,748	\$261,955	\$281,293	\$601,995
November	\$59,046	\$261,274	\$290,468	\$610,788
December	\$57,490	\$280,801	\$288,352	\$626,643
January	\$62,385	\$286,104	\$298,681	\$647,170
February	\$78,981	\$320,890	\$328,528	\$728,399
March	\$99,671	\$403,563	\$338,957	\$842,191
April	\$89,436	\$331,497	\$332,807	\$753,740
May	\$76,803	\$367,827	\$319,238	\$763,868
June	\$79,399	\$308,648	\$312,355	\$700,402
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$870,925</b>	<b>\$3,701,244</b>	<b>\$3,684,375</b>	<b>\$8,256,544</b>

## Child Support Demographics, June 2023 Snapshot

Characteristic	Noncustodial Parents <sup>8</sup>		Custodial Parents <sup>9</sup>		Children	
	# of NCPs	Percent	# of CPs	Percent	# of Children	Percent
<b>Total</b>	<b>190,738</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>212,411</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>213,819</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Gender	Noncustodial Parents		Custodial Parents		Children	
<b>Female</b>	27,977	14.7%	188,149	88.6%	105,174	49.2%
<b>Male</b>	162,494	85.2%	23,509	11.1%	108,583	50.8%
<b>Unknown<sup>10</sup></b>	267	0.1%	753	0.4%	62	<0.1%

Age of Parent	Noncustodial Parents		Custodial Parents		Children	
<b>&lt;26 Years Old</b>	5,365	2.8%	7,646	3.6%	N/A	
<b>26 – 35 Years Old</b>	48,583	25.5%	55,778	26.3%		
<b>36 – 45 Years Old</b>	78,059	40.9%	82,051	38.6%		
<b>46 – 55 Years Old</b>	41,518	21.8%	42,395	20.0%		
<b>56+ Years Old</b>	14,673	7.7%	23,995	11.3%		
<b>Not Reported/ Unidentifiable</b>	2,540	1.3%	546	0.3%		

Age of Children	Children			
<b>&lt;6 Year Old</b>	N/A		33,185	15.5%
<b>6 – 10 Years Old</b>			58,970	27.6%
<b>11 – 15 Years Old</b>			81,546	38.1%
<b>16 – 18 Years Old</b>			37,428	17.5%
<b>19+ Years Old</b>			2,658	1.2%
<b>Not Reported/ Unidentifiable</b>			32	<0.1%

Years	Noncustodial Parents	Custodial Parents	Children
<b>Mean Age</b>	42.0	42.5	11.4
<b>Median Age</b>	41.2	40.9	12.0

<sup>8</sup> A noncustodial parent (NCP) may also be a custodial parent (CP) on another case.

<sup>9</sup> A CP may also be an NCP on another case.

<sup>10</sup> Currently, the SEMS system has a limited gender field capacity, which means that non-binary customers will be included in 'Unknown' as well as customers that do not have clearly identified gender designation.



## Special Grants/Projects

**Charting a Course for Economic Mobility and Responsible Parenting (EMRP)** – The Office of Child Support Services (OCSS) awarded DCS \$1 million dollars to participate in the second cohort of the Charting a Course for Economic Mobility and Responsible Parenting demonstration. The goal of the EMRP project is to provide youth and young adults with opportunities to gain the knowledge, skills, and access to resources that are likely to lead to success in their pursuit of life goals, economic mobility, and responsible parenting. DCS is collaborating with high schools and fatherhood organizations to deliver child support and responsible parenting curriculum to teens and young adults and connect them with resources in their area.

**Safe Access for Victims' Economic Security (SAVES)** – The SAVES demonstration aims to increase safe access to child support and parenting-time services for domestic violence victims/survivors. Over the course of the five-year project, DCS will work with OCSS, experts, and individuals with lived experience to review policy and procedure, develop outreach materials explaining the safety measures available within the child support program, and pilot the use of specialized case management strategies for victims/survivors.

**The Alternative Solutions Program** – DCS implemented this statewide program in July 2014 to assist parents struggling to meet their child support obligations. The program connects these parents to community resources that can help them remove barriers to paying child support, such as work-related training, education, and supportive services. Between July 2014 and June 2023, the voluntary program received 7,296 referrals. During SFY 2022, Alternative Solutions served 566 parents. The program maintains a database of more than 4,700 resources with a version available to the public, allowing any Washingtonian to connect with local community resources. Parents, field staff, prosecuting attorney staff, and community partners embrace the program. This cooperative effort generates real-life success stories as parents work through barriers and meet their child support obligations.

**Tribal Partnerships** – Through mutual respect and trust, DCS and tribes have worked collaboratively for over 30 years to improve and provide child support services to Washington families. Currently, there are eight federally funded tribal child support programs and 11 Tribal TANF programs in the state. Additionally, Urban Indian Organizations (UIOs) provides support to Native people in urban and rural areas. Partnerships are especially vital when the state or a tribe lacks jurisdiction to enforce child support. Intergovernmental and cooperative agreements allow DCS to offer federal enforcement remedies to tribal programs, and for tribal programs to provide remedies that would not otherwise be available to the state. Government-to-government efforts with tribes and tribal organizations promote tribal and state sovereignty and ensure that comprehensive, culturally appropriate services are being delivered to all American Indians and Alaska Natives in Washington state.

## Voluntary Acknowledgments and Genetic Testing

### Parentage Program Background

The Parentage Program (originally known as the Paternity Affidavit Program) began in July 1989 as a partnership between the DCS and the Washington State Department of Health (DOH). The program provides unmarried parents the opportunity to sign an Acknowledgment of Parentage form at the child's birth or a later date. Most Acknowledgments of Parentage forms are signed at a birthing hospital or midwifery practice. Based on its success of increasing paternity establishment using the voluntary acknowledgment and its cost effectiveness, Washington's program was soon recognized as a national best practice. In the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993, Congress required that every state implement a voluntary paternity establishment program based on Washington's model.

**Legal Requirements** – The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act (PRWORA) created numerous state requirements, including the requirement that states afford all unmarried parents the opportunity to voluntarily acknowledge paternity. Section 45 CFR 303.5 (g) provides the applicable federal regulations; RCW 70.58A.100 and Chapter 26.26A RCW are the applicable state laws.

A hospital, midwifery clinic, or other authorized entity must provide an opportunity for unmarried parents to sign an Acknowledgment of Parentage at the time of the child's birth. The parents are entitled to both a written statement of their rights and responsibilities (this is on the second page of the Acknowledgment form) and oral notice (a short video or 1-800 line). Upon receipt of a properly completed and notarized or witnessed Acknowledgment of Parentage form, the Department of Health must name the father/second parent on the child's birth certificate.

**Effects of the Acknowledgment of Parentage** – A properly signed and filed Acknowledgment of Parentage creates a legal determination of parentage immediately without the need for a court order. Parentage for a child of unmarried parents must be legally established before the child support order determining the noncustodial parent's financial and medical obligations. The determination of parentage afforded by this simple administrative process also provides other benefits, such as making a child eligible to participate in any available social security, veterans', life insurance, or health insurance benefits.

**Results** – The signed and filed Acknowledgment of Parentage allows DCS to establish a child support obligation quickly and at low cost. DCS is usually able to obtain a child support order in 90 days or less from the date the Department of Health files the Acknowledgment of Parentage, which is a much quicker and less costly process than establishing parentage through the courts. DCS saves taxpayers millions of dollars each year because of the administrative Parentage Program. In SFY 2023, parentage was established for 11,476 children, 83.8% of them by Acknowledgment of Parentage.

### **DCS Parentage and Paternity Partner Outreach**

DCS published and electronically distributed three editions of the Parentage and Paternity Newsletter in SFY 2023. The purpose of the newsletter is to share information about parentage and paternity with hospitals and other providers. Other DCS partners also subscribe to the newsletter.

In partnership with the Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics staff, DCS co-hosted two virtual “Provider Insider” meetings on the Microsoft Teams platform for staff from the state’s hospitals, midwifery clinics, and birth centers. Offered in September 2022, the presentations covered information about birth filing, the Acknowledgment of Parentage, and the Voluntary Paternity Testing Program. The Provider Insider presentations will be offered annually to the state’s birthing providers.

### **Voluntary Paternity Testing Program**

DCS continues to operate the Voluntary Paternity Testing Program (VPTP). VPTP incorporates two strategies: reimbursement for notaries and no-cost genetic testing. The Acknowledgment of Parentage (AOP), Denial of Parentage (DOP), and Rescission of Parentage (ROP) forms, which have been in effect since January 1, 2019, give parents the option of signing in front of a witness or a notary. Some hospitals have opted to offer only the notary option to parents. DCS reimburses hospitals for the cost to add Notaries Public, which historically increased the opportunity for parents to sign an Acknowledgment. DCS also offers no-cost genetic testing to unmarried parents in a non-judicial setting. Through the VPTP, hospital staff can offer an application for genetic testing to unmarried parents. Completing genetic testing gives parents the ability to confirm they are the child’s biological parents before signing an Acknowledgment of Parentage.