



CSPED: Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration

What is CSPED?

The Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration (CSPED) is a national demonstration designed to give child support programs the ability to help noncustodial parents overcome employment barriers and strengthen relationships with their children so that they can pay their child support consistently.

Under CSPED, the Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) within the Administration for Children and Families, Department of Health and Human Services, has issued grants to eight state child support agencies to provide employment, parenting, and child support services to noncustodial parents who are having difficulty meeting their child support obligations.

CSPED Will Be Rigorously Evaluated

The overall objective of the CSPED evaluation is to document and evaluate the effectiveness of the approaches taken by these eight CSPED grantees.

The CSPED evaluation will:

- Yield valuable information about effective strategies for improving child support payments by providing noncustodial parents employment and other services through child support programs
- Generate extensive information on how these programs operated, what they cost, what effects they had, and whether the benefits of the programs exceeded the costs
- Inform decisions related to future investments in child-support-led, employment-focused programs for noncustodial parents who have difficulty meeting their child support obligations

The information gathered will be critical to informing decisions related to future investments in child-support-led, employment-focused programs for noncustodial parents who have difficulty meeting their child support obligations.

The study will use a research design in which noncustodial parents who agree to participate are assigned randomly to a group that receives extra services under the CSPED program or a group that receives regular services that would be available to them even if CSPED was not taking place.

The CSPED evaluation is sponsored by OCSE through a grant to the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families. The University of Wisconsin and its partner, Mathematica Policy Research are conducting the evaluation.

CSPED GRANTEES

OCSE has issued grants to eight states to provide employment, parenting, and child support services to noncustodial parents who are having difficulty meeting their child support obligations. These grantee states are: California, Colorado, Iowa, Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Wisconsin.

CSPED PARTICIPANTS

Over the course of three years, each grantee state will enroll about 1,500 noncustodial parents who are having trouble meeting their child support obligations. Up to 12,000 noncustodial parents will participate in CSPED.

THE CSPED MODEL

Participants will be assigned randomly to either a group that receives CSPED program services or a group that receives regular services available. CSPED services include integrated case management, employment services, enhanced child support services, and parenting classes.

Who is eligible to enroll in CSPED?

A noncustodial parent must have a child support case with an order to pay child support to his or her family. The noncustodial parent must reside in the area in which services are being offered. The parent must be either unemployed or underemployed and able to work. Other requirements may apply.

If a noncustodial parent is interested in participating in CSPED, what happens next?

If a noncustodial parent is eligible for CSPED and interested in enrolling, he or she must agree to participate in the evaluation of this program. If the noncustodial parent agrees to participate in the evaluation, they will be asked to complete a 30-minute interview over the telephone with an interviewer at the University of Wisconsin Survey Center. After completing the interview, he or she will be randomly assigned into one of two groups – either the group that receives CSPED services or the group that receives regular services.

What kinds of questions are asked during the interview?

The interview asks questions about the noncustodial parent's background; relationships with their children, the mothers or fathers of their children, and other romantic partners; the noncustodial parent's employment situation and well-being; and information to help the research team contact the noncustodial parent for the follow-up interview in 12 months.

What is random assignment and why is it used for CSPED?

Random assignment is like picking numbers out of a hat or flipping a coin so everyone is treated fairly. One-half of the eligible and interested noncustodial parents will be randomly assigned to the group that receives CSPED program services. The other one-half will be assigned to the group that receives regular services. CSPED uses random assignment because space is limited and extra services cannot be provided to all of the eligible parents who would like to receive them. Additionally, random assignment provides the strongest evidence that CSPED, not other factors, caused differences in outcomes between those who received CSPED services and those who received regular services.

Does everyone in CSPED receive services?

Everyone in CSPED can receive services. A computer will randomly place all eligible noncustodial parents into either the group that can receive CSPED services or the group that can receive regular services.

What kinds of services can noncustodial parents assigned to the CSPED services group receive?

Noncustodial parents assigned to the CSPED services group will receive services available to only a limited number of parents. These services include integrated case management, employment services, enhanced child support services, and parenting courses.

What kinds of services can noncustodial parents assigned to the regular services group receive?

If a noncustodial parent is assigned to the group that can receive regular services, they will be eligible to receive those services that would have been available to them even if CSPED was not taking place.

Are noncustodial parents asked to do anything else as a part of the CSPED evaluation?

Noncustodial parents in both groups will be contacted in 12 months and asked to take part in another interview. They may also be asked to take part in paid focus group activities. Taking part in these activities is voluntary. Researchers will also collect information about the noncustodial parent's employment, earnings, and credit; use of public programs; and experiences with the criminal justice, child welfare, and child support systems.

Does the noncustodial parent receive anything for participating in the evaluation?

Yes. Noncustodial parents will receive a \$10 gift card for completing the 30-minute survey prior to random assignment. If the noncustodial parent completes the follow-up survey 12 months later, he or she will receive an additional \$25.

Who can I contact for more information about CSPED or the evaluation?

For more information about CSPED, please contact Lauren Antelo, the Project Officer for CSPED at the Office of Child Support Enforcement. Her phone number is 202-401-5602. For more information about the CSPED evaluation, please contact Dan Meyer, Principal Investigator, at the University of Wisconsin. Dan can be reached at 608-262-6358.