

Department of Health and Human Services

**OFFICE OF
INSPECTOR GENERAL**

**CHILD SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN IN
STATE FOSTER CARE**



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE

To determine potential for collecting child support from biological parents of children in State foster care programs.

BACKGROUND

Foster care agencies are required to refer the biological parents of children in foster care to child support enforcement agencies, *only if* a child's care is funded by Title IV-E of the Social Security Act. To be eligible for Title IV-E foster care, a child must have been removed from a low income family that is eligible for Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). However, more than 260,000 children in foster care nationwide are not in the Title IV-E foster care program. These children, "non-IV-E" foster care children, have been removed from homes where the family's income may be substantially higher than the AFDC limit. Non-IV-E foster care is funded partially through Title IV-B in addition to State monies. We had previously issued a report regarding IV-E children. It is the "non-IV-E" children who are the subject of this report.

METHODOLOGY

We asked nine States to sample children in non-IV-E foster care and send us basic identifying information. We traced this information to State child support enforcement agencies to determine the extent of child support collections. We also searched Social Security Administration's (SSA) Earning Reference Files (ERF) to calculate the potential for biological parents of non-IV-E foster care children to pay child support.

FINDINGS

Child Support Was Collected On Behalf Of 9 Percent Of Non-IV-E Foster Care Children

During 1991, Child Support Enforcement agencies collected child support payments from parents of 7 percent (42) of the 593 non-IV-E foster care children in our sample. This represents 9 percent of non-IV-E foster care children nationally.

State Emphasis On Collecting Child Support Is Low

State foster care agency records are inadequate for pursuing child support because foster care agency caseworkers do not routinely and systematically collect basic information needed for pursuing child support. Only 35 percent of parents are referred to child support enforcement agencies for possible collections. Since few

referrals are made, and information on the parents is often inadequate, child support orders are established for only about 12 percent of non-IV-E foster care children.

States Have Potential To Increase Child Support Collections For Non-IV-E Foster Care Children

Many parents of children in non-IV-E foster care have financial resources to pay child support on behalf of their child. Since, unlike traditional child support cases, children in foster care have two absent parents, States can increase collections by pursuing child support from both parents. States also can increase child support collections through better management of the child support collection process. Management of the process should include collecting information on all parents of children in non-IV-E foster care, referring the parents to child support agencies, establishing support orders and actually collecting child support payments. If child support collections were made on behalf of just half of the children in non-IV-E foster care, \$193.8 million would have been collected in 1991. Administrative costs of collecting child support would reduce the amount of collections available for improving child welfare services. However, the administrative costs to child support enforcement agencies can be lessened if foster care agencies (1) obtain adequate information on parents when a child enters the system, and (2) refer all appropriate cases for services.

CONCLUSION

Failure to collect child support on behalf of non-IV-E foster care children decreases opportunities to obtain needed resources for providing child welfare services. Since no Federal policies mandate that child support services be pursued for children in non-IV-E foster care, many may believe that child support cannot, or should not, be pursued on behalf of these children. Because of this, children are being denied important services, such as locating absent parents and paternity establishment which allows a child to have inheritance and insurance rights. Additionally, biological parents may be able to provide medical insurance which covers a child's medical expenses.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We believe foster care agencies need to review each foster care case to determine if pursuing child support collections is in the best interest of a foster care child. Then, for those foster care children for whom child support is appropriate, foster care agencies should work cooperatively with child support agencies to pursue child support as a routine part of the process of building parental responsibility. To this end, we have two recommendations.

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) should encourage States to extend child support services to all children in foster care, regardless of the funding source for a child's foster care. They can do this by instructing States to improve data gathering and referral systems. ACF can provide States with guidance and plans to improve coordination between foster care and child support programs. ACF can also

seek legislation to require child support on behalf of all foster care children, "where appropriate." Such legislation should be the same as that presently in place for children in IV-E foster care.

Other organizations interested in foster care and child support should also encourage States to seek child support for non-IV-E foster care children whenever appropriate. Such organizations include, but are not limited to, the National Governors Association, the National Association of State Budget Officers, the National Conference of State Legislatures, the National Council of State Human Services Administrators of the American Public Welfare Association (APWA), and the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA).

AGENCY COMMENTS

We thank ACF, ASPE, CWLA, and the States of Washington and New York through the APWA for their comments on our report. They agreed with our findings and recommendations, although ACF and ASPE noted that whether or not to pursue child support collections should be determined on a case-by-case basis. We made appropriate revisions in the report based on their comments. We present the full text of comments in appendix D.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	
INTRODUCTION	1
FINDINGS	
Few Child Support Collections Are Made	5
State Emphasis On Collecting Is Low	5
Collections Potentially Can Be Increased	8
CONCLUSION	12
RECOMMENDATIONS	13
AGENCY COMMENTS	14
APPENDICES	
Methodology	A-1
The Foster Care Process	B-1
Estimation Of Potential Collections	C-1
Agency Comments	D-1

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

To determine potential for collecting child support from biological parents of children in State foster care programs.

BACKGROUND

This report describes the potential for collecting child support for foster children who are not eligible for the Title IV-E foster care program. To be eligible for Title IV-E foster care, a child must have been removed from a low income family that is eligible for Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). While no requirement exists to report the number of children in foster care, estimates show that more than 260,000 foster children nationwide are not in the Title IV-E foster care program. These children, "non-IV-E" foster care children, have been removed from homes where the family's income may be substantially higher than the AFDC limit.

The Child Support Amendments of 1984 require foster care agencies to refer Title IV-E foster children for child support, where appropriate. No such requirement exists for foster children who were removed from homes where income may exceed AFDC eligibility limits, and who are, therefore, ineligible for the Title IV-E foster care program.

In May of 1992 the Office of Inspector General released a report on Child Support Collections for IV-E Foster Care Children (OEI-04-91-00530). That report described the extent to which States collect child support on behalf of Title IV-E foster care children.

At the Federal level, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) administers both foster care and child support enforcement programs. Foster Care is operated under the Administration for Children, Youth and Families (ACYF). Child support enforcement is operated under the Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE).

What Is Foster Care

Foster care is temporary removal of a child to live with someone other than a parent or usual caretaker during a time of crisis in a family.

Each State is responsible for establishing and operating foster care programs under provisions of Federal statutes and HHS guidelines. Foster care agencies provide the following services.

FOSTER CARE SERVICES

- **Make Reasonable Efforts to Prevent Removal of Child From Parents**
- **Remove Child from an Unsafe Environment When Necessary**
- **Place Child in Appropriate Foster Care**
- **Plan for Child's Long Term Welfare**
- **Where Appropriate, Refer Parent(s) and Child for Child Support Services**

How Is Foster Care Funded

Foster care is funded through Federal, State and local programs. Federal funding is available primarily under two programs -- Title IV-E and Title IV-B of the Social Security Act.

Title IV-E funds foster care services for children who would be eligible to receive AFDC if they were living in the home of birth parents or specified relatives at the time of removal from that home. Such funds are provided to States as an entitlement. States match Federal funds for the care of each Title IV-E-eligible child. In FY 1991, the Federal share reached \$1.8 billion.

Title IV-B funds a variety of State child welfare programs, including foster care for any child, regardless of parent's income. In FY 1991, the Federal government appropriated \$274 million under Title IV-B for State child welfare service grants. Each State grant is based on the population of children. States often spend Title IV-B funds on foster care for children not covered by Title IV-E. However, State and local funds are the primary funding mechanisms for foster care for non-IV-E eligible children.

What Is Child Support

Child support is a monetary payment made by an absent parent to provide for his or her child. An absent parent is one who is not residing in the same home as a child.

Each State establishes and operates child support programs under provisions of Federal statutes and HHS guidelines. Child support enforcement agencies open a case on an absent parent when they receive a request, or referral, for services on behalf of a child. Once a case is opened a child support agency provides the following services.

CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES

- Locate Parents
- Establish Paternity
- Obtain a Child Support Order
- Collect and Distribute Child Support

What Are Federal Requirements For Pursuing Child Support

Title IV-D of the Social Security Act created the child support enforcement program in 1975. This legislation authorized child support agencies to obtain support orders and collect child support on behalf of all children included in an AFDC grant. The program goals are to (1) increase family (parental) responsibility, and (2) reduce costs of public assistance for taxpayers, especially AFDC costs.

The 1984 Child Support Amendments Act required child support for one class of foster care children -- those that meet AFDC eligibility criteria and are, therefore, covered under Title IV-E. The 1984 amendments to the Act required foster care agencies to refer the biological parents of children in Title IV-E foster care for child support "where appropriate." Any child support that is collected must be distributed to appropriate State and Federal foster care agencies to offset costs of foster care.

The 1984 Amendments also allowed child support services to be extended to anyone requesting the services. This theoretically allowed services to be provided to children in non-IV-E foster care, provided that someone requests such services. However, the 1984 amendments do not require foster care agencies to refer biological parents of non-IV-E foster care children for child support.

Like Title IV-E foster care children, both parents of non-IV-E foster care children no longer have custody of their child. Unlike Title IV-E children, the parents of non-IV-E foster care children may have incomes or assets that are sufficiently high so as to disqualify them for AFDC.

METHODOLOGY

To determine potential for collecting child support for non-IV-E foster care children, we randomly selected 10 States with probability proportional to size. Title IV-B allocations to States for FY 1991 determined size. Nine States responded to our requests for information within our study time frame. We conducted our review between March and November 1992.

From each of the nine State foster care agencies, we requested a random sample of 70 non-IV-E foster care children, as of December 31, 1991. The 9 States furnished the names of 630 foster care children. Thirty-seven of the sampled children did not meet our criteria, leaving us with a sample size of 593 children.

Next, we determined if child support was pursued for the sampled children. We used a standardized data collection instrument to request names, Social Security numbers and dates of birth for sampled foster care children and their biological parents. After receiving the information, we contacted each State child support enforcement agency to determine if any parents of the children had been referred to a child support enforcement agency and the status of any cases that had been referred. If collections were made, we requested information on how the money was distributed.

To determine 1991 earnings by parents of sampled foster care children, we matched each parent's Social Security number, when available, with Social Security Administration's (SSA) Earning Reference Files (ERF). We then calculated the amount of funds available to foster care agencies if they pursued child support from biological parents. We used a child support formula of 17 percent¹ of earnings to estimate potential funds available for child support. To estimate potential child support collections nationwide, we weighted our sample results to represent non-IV-E foster care children nationally.

Appendix A fully describes our data collection and analysis methods.

We conducted our review in accordance with the *Quality Standards for Inspections* issued by the President's Council on Integrity and Efficiency.

¹ *Federal guidelines allow States wide latitude in what formula to use in collecting child support. As a result, States have selected a wide variety of formulas, and we could not find a child support formula that was applicable in all States. Therefore, to estimate potential for collecting child support for non-IV-E foster care children, we chose one of the simplest child support formulas - 17 percent of earnings. This formula is currently being used in Wisconsin. Actual child support collections will vary by State depending on their respective child support formulas and specific factors of each foster care case.*

FINDINGS

CHILD SUPPORT WAS COLLECTED ON BEHALF OF 9 PERCENT OF NON-IV-E FOSTER CARE CHILDREN

During 1991, Child Support Enforcement agencies collected support payments from parents of 7 percent (42) of the 593 non-IV-E foster care children in our sample. This represents 9 percent of non-IV-E foster care children nationally.² About 4 percent (52) of the 1186 biological parents of the 593 foster children paid child support. Both parents paid child support for only 10 of the 42 children. For the remaining 32 children, only one of their parents paid support on their behalf.

Some States were more successful than others in collecting child support from parents of non-IV-E foster care children. Two of the nine States in our sample accounted for about 71 percent of the child support collected. Three States accounted for 29 percent and 4 States collected no child support for sampled non-IV-E foster care children.

STATE EMPHASIS ON COLLECTING CHILD SUPPORT IS LOW

State Foster Care Agency Records Are Inadequate For Pursuing Child Support

Foster care agency caseworkers do not routinely and systematically collect basic information needed for pursuing child support. To illustrate, State foster care agencies could provide us with the names of about 70 percent (830) of the 1186 parents of foster care children in our sample. Likewise, they had dates of birth for only 57 percent of the parents and Social Security numbers for only 48 percent of the parents.

Child support enforcement staff often had more information than foster care agency staff on parents of foster care children. In some instances, child support enforcement agency staff had established a child support case before a child was placed in foster care. To illustrate, child support enforcement agencies were able to supply us with 52 names of parents who were listed as "unknown" by appropriate foster care agencies. Further, child support enforcement agencies furnished us with 26 dates of birth that appropriate foster care agency staffs could not provide.

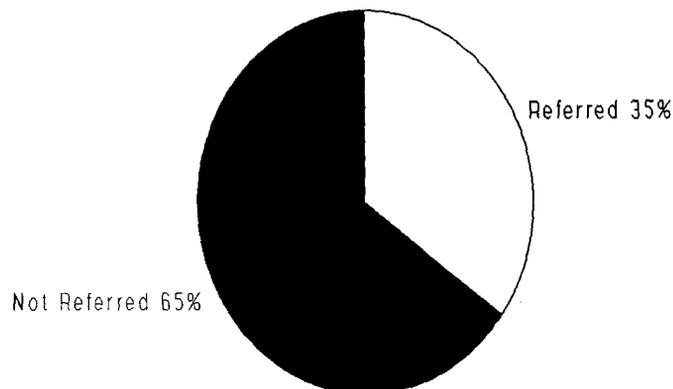
² *In our sample, we did not select the number of cases in each State proportionate to the number of children in non-IV-E foster care. To obtain a more accurate national estimate, our data was weighted during analysis to reflect the variance in non-IV-E foster care populations.*

Such basic information is essential for collecting child support, and for providing other services to the families of children in foster care such as counseling and parental training. Failure to share such needed information can limit child support that helps defray public assistance, and it adversely affects the provision of child support services to foster care children. Further, independently collecting the same information results in inefficient use of staff time and resources in both foster care and child support agencies.

Thirty-five Percent of Parents Are Referred To Child Support Enforcement Agencies For Possible Collections

Foster care agencies,³ a biological parent, AFDC eligibility offices, or courts referred 29 percent (349) of the 1186 parents of sampled non-IV-E foster care children for child support. This projects to 35 percent of parents nationally. This means that no attempt was made to collect child support from 65 percent of the parents of non-IV-E foster care children. Without a referral, child support enforcement agencies cannot provide services, including establishing paternity, locating parents, and evaluating a parent's potential for contributing to the support of his or her child.

**35 Percent of Parents Are Referred
To Child Support Agencies**



Child Support Orders Are Established For 12 Percent Of Non-IV-E Foster Care Children

A child support order must be established to collect child support from biological parents. Child support agencies had established support orders for 11 percent (67) of the 593 non-IV-E foster care children in our sample. This projects to 12 percent of

³ *Records at foster care agencies were inadequate for determining the precise number of referrals. In practice, child support agencies often initiate child support services without a referral from foster care agencies.*

non-IV-E foster care children nationally. A total of 89 parents were ordered to pay support on behalf of sampled children. This represents about 25 percent of the 349 parents who were referred to child support. Both parents were ordered to pay child support on behalf of 22 of the 67 children for which support orders were established.

Twenty-eight Percent Of The Referred Foster Care Cases Are Open But Incorrectly Classified

Of the 349 parents referred to child support enforcement agencies, 28 percent of the cases were open but not correctly classified. The foster care agency was not named as the custodian of the child, and, therefore, could not be the ultimate recipient of collections made on a child's behalf. Some of the 9 States in our sample classified zero cases correctly while other States classified as high as 92 percent correctly.

Thirty percent of the cases were closed and, therefore, inactive. Although we did not assess reasons for closure as part of this review, some cases may have been closed because pursuing child support was not considered to be in best interests of a child.

The remaining 42 percent were open and classified as foster care cases. For these cases, child support enforcement agencies indicated that services were appropriately provided. The chart below summarizes the classification of sampled non-IV-E foster care cases referred to child support enforcement agencies.

Status Of Non-IV-E Foster Care Cases Referred To Child Support Agencies	
Cases Open But Incorrectly Classified	28%
Closed Cases	30%
Cases Open as Non-IV-E Foster Care Cases	<u>42%</u>
	100%

Correct classification helps ensure that monies collected on behalf of foster care children are correctly distributed to the foster care program. Ultimately, incorrect classification resulted in child support paid by 17 percent of parents being incorrectly distributed. We describe the distribution of child support collections in a companion management advisory report titled "Incorrect Distribution Of Child Support Collected On Behalf Of Non-IV-E Foster Care Children" (OEI-04-91-00981).

STATES HAVE POTENTIAL TO INCREASE CHILD SUPPORT COLLECTIONS FOR NON-IV-E FOSTER CARE CHILDREN

Many Parents Of Children In Non-IV-E Foster Care Have Financial Resources To Pay Child Support On Behalf Of Their Child

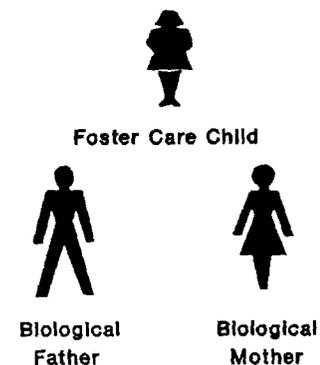
The children in our sample were not eligible for foster care under Title IV-E. This may be because their family income and assets exceeded AFDC eligibility limits.

The biological parents of about 44 percent (263 of 593) of our sampled non-IV-E foster care children reported earning a total of 2.4 million dollars⁴ in 1991. To estimate potential child support we used 17 percent of gross income. Based on 17 percent of their income, the parents of the 263 children should have paid a total of \$403,000 per year in child support for their children. However, they actually paid a total of \$19,521. This represented about 45 percent of the total child support collected during 1991 for our sampled children.

We were unable to determine the extent that parents had income such as disability compensation, interest income, or dividend income. However, 55 percent of the total child support actually paid for 7 percent (42 of 593) of our sampled children was paid by parents who either reported no earnings, or whose records were inadequate to determine earnings. Child support from these parents totaled \$23,386.

States Can Increase Collections By Pursuing Child Support From Both Parents

Most States historically pursued child support from only one parent, usually the father. Non-IV-E foster care children potentially have two biological parents who may contribute to their support. Child support may be collected from either the biological mother, the biological father, or, in some situations, both parents. Nationally, our sample shows that some States do not consider or pursue child support payments from mothers. However, the States in our sample that are most effective in collecting child support were those that collected from both parents.



⁴ Because of inadequate records, we could not determine incomes for the parents of the remaining 56 percent of our sampled non-IV-E foster care children.

States Can Increase Child Support Collections Through Better Management of the Process

Regardless of the type of foster care, the process for collecting child support includes four major steps. They are

- o collecting basic information on biological parents, such as name and Social Security numbers,
- o referring parents of foster care children to child support enforcement agencies,
- o establishing child support orders, and
- o collecting child support.

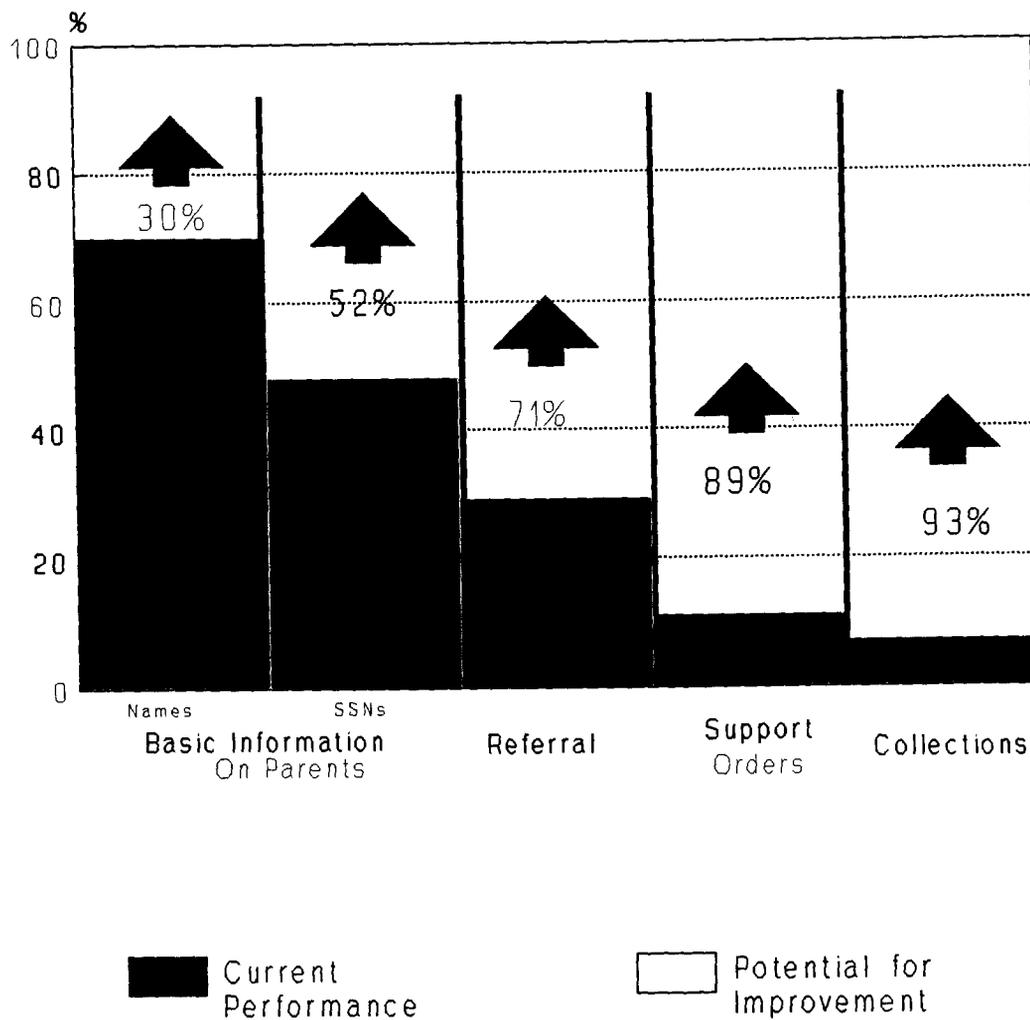
Appendix B provides detailed information on the process of placing a child in foster care and collecting child support.

Failure to carry out any one of the first three steps has a direct relationship to the amount of child support collected. Despite the ability of many parents to pay child support, foster care agencies frequently do not (1) collect adequate information for pursuing child support, or (2) refer foster care cases for child support collection. In instances where foster care agencies did refer biological parents to child support agencies for possible collections, child support agencies obtained support orders for only about 25 percent of the parents. As a result, States collected child support for only about 9 percent of non-IV-E foster care children.

Two of the nine States in our sample, Washington and North Carolina, showed that better management of each step in the process does increase overall collection of child support. For example, each of the 2 State foster care agencies recorded basic information such as parents name for over 90 percent of the parents as compared to 70 percent for the States overall. They also referred almost 60 percent of the parents to child support agencies for possible collections as compared to 29 percent overall for the 9 selected States. As a result, child support agencies in the 2 States collected child support from over 15 percent of the parents of non-IV-E foster care children. Overall, the 9 States in our sample collected child support from about 4 percent of the parents of non-IV-E foster care children.

The following chart illustrates the potential for improvement in each of the four key steps for collecting child support on behalf of non-IV-E foster care children. Based on our sample, the blackened area shows States' current performance in each step toward collecting child support on behalf of foster care children. The white area shows the extent of opportunity to improve performance.

Opportunity to Improve Child Support Collections



Estimate Of Potential Child Support Collections

Our sample of 593 children represented over 260,000 children in non-IV-E foster care nationwide. Because our random sample was stratified, each of our sampled children represented a different percentage of the universe. To estimate potential child support collections, we weighted our sample results to represent non-IV-E foster care children nationwide. The following chart shows our sample and weighted results.

	Sampled Results	Weighted Results
Number of Children in Non-IV-E Foster Care	593	260,000
Percent of Children on Whose Behalf Child Support Is Collected	7%	9%
Percent of Children Included in a Support Order	11%	12%
Percent of Parents Referred to Child Support	29%	35%

The table on the next page shows possible child support collections nationwide that could have been collected in 1991 if child support were pursued on behalf of non-IV-E foster care children. We assumed all parents of foster care children have incomes and ability similar to the parents of the children in our random sample.

We know, however, that both biological parents of every child in non-IV-E foster care will not be identified and located. Further, some parents that are located will be unable to pay child support because of inadequate income. Finally, in some situations it is not in the best interests of a child to pursue child support collections. For these reasons and because the child support collections formula varies by State, we conservatively limit our estimate of potential child support collection, as shown in the table on the next page. If child support collections were made on behalf of half of the children in non-IV-E foster care, \$193.8 million would have been collected in 1991.

Administrative costs of collecting child support would reduce the amount of collections available for improving child welfare services. However, the administrative costs to child support enforcement agencies can be lessened if foster care agencies (1) obtain adequate information on parents when a child enters the system,⁵ and (2) refer all appropriate cases for services.

⁵ *The administrative cost of collecting this information would be minimal because foster care caseworkers generally obtain information on biological parents as part of their services to the family. However, the caseworkers do not enter this information into a system which can be accessed by child support enforcement staff.*

ESTIMATE OF POTENTIAL CHILD SUPPORT COLLECTIONS

Percent of Children On Whose Behalf Child Support Is Collected	50%	40%	30%	20%	15%	10%
Possible Collections (in millions)	\$193.8	\$154.4	\$115.8	\$77.2	\$57.9	\$38.6

The shaded column shows possible collections if all States achieved the 15 percent collection rate for non-IV-E foster care children that 2 States in our sample are already achieving. However, we believe an even higher percentage of parents can pay child support, and the amount of possible collections would be higher as well. Appendix C shows in detail how we calculated estimated child support collections.

CONCLUSION

Federal law requires pursuit of child support, where appropriate, from parents of children in foster care who are removed from low income families. However, no such law exists to require child support from parents with higher incomes.

Failure to collect child support on behalf of non-IV-E foster care children, where appropriate, decreases opportunities to obtain needed resources for providing child welfare services. Since no Federal policies mandate that child support services be pursued for children in non-IV-E foster care, many may believe that child support cannot, or should not, be pursued on behalf of such children. Because of this, children are being denied important services, such as paternity establishment which allows a child to have inheritance and insurance rights. Additionally, biological parents may be able to provide medical insurance which covers a child's medical expenses. Even in situations where child support is pursued, lack of established procedures often results in misclassification of cases.

Foster care agencies should review each foster care case and determine if pursuing child support is in the best interest of a foster care child. In instances where it is considered appropriate, each case should be referred to child support for collection. Child support agencies should work cooperatively with foster care agencies to pursue child support, where appropriate, as a routine part of the process of building parental responsibility. To do this, States may choose to better manage or change their systems so that child support will be pursued on behalf of all children in foster care.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: ACF should encourage States to extend child support services to all children in foster care, regardless of the funding source. Some options for ACF to accomplish this are discussed below.

Option 1: Extend written instructions to States to include all foster care children regardless of the funding source. Such instructions should encourage State

- foster care agencies to record names, dates of birth and Social Security numbers for both biological parents of children in foster care,
- foster care agencies to review each foster care case to determine if pursuing child support collections is in the best interest of a child,
- foster care agencies to refer all appropriate biological parents of foster care children to IV-D child support enforcement agencies for establishing child support orders and collecting child support, and
- foster care agencies and child support enforcement agencies to develop a Memorandum of Understanding determining appropriate cases for referral, and gathering and exchanging data.

Option 2: Provide specific guidance and plans to States for coordinating foster care and child support programs, such as including a data exchange link between foster care and child support enforcement records when developing or modifying automated systems, and providing child support enforcement agencies with a model system for classifying and processing child support cases.

Option 3: Seek legislation requiring the pursuit of child support on behalf of non-IV-E foster care children, "where appropriate." The legislative requirement should conform to that presently in place for the children in IV-E foster care.

Recommendation 2: Organizations interested in foster care and child support should encourage States to seek child support for non-IV-E foster care children whenever appropriate. Such organizations include, but are not limited to, the National Governors Association, the National Association of State Budget Officers, the National Conference of State Legislatures and the National Council of State Human Services Administrators of the American Public Welfare Association.

AGENCY COMMENTS

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) generally agreed with the focus of our recommendations. ACF noted however, that our recommendation on child support services should be qualified to recognize that in some instances it would not be good practice to collect child support from parents of children in foster care. The ACF welcomes assistance and participation from national organizations interested in encouraging States to seek child support on behalf of foster care children whenever appropriate.

The Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) agreed with our recommendations. The ASPE noted that child support collections should only be initiated when it would support a foster care agency's case plan for a foster care child. We highlighted this objective in our report. Whether to pursue child support collections or not should be determined on a case-by-case basis by a foster care agency. The foster care agency should then contact the child support agency to pursue collections.

The Child Welfare League of America, Inc. (CWLA) noted that our report makes a case for stronger collaboration between foster care agencies and child support enforcement agencies. Further, such collaboration will enhance the financial base for providing services to children in foster care and promote greater parental responsibility. The CWLA agreed with our recommendations and are willing to work with the National Governors Association and the American Public Welfare Association in encouraging States to seek child support for non IV-E eligible children in foster care.

The American Public Welfare Association (APWA) received comments on our report from the (1) State of Washington agency that administers the child support program, and (2) State of New York agency that administers both the foster care and child support program. The State of Washington is identified in our report as one that has had success in collecting child support on behalf of foster care children. They commented that foster care agencies need to work cooperatively with child support agencies as a routine part of the process of building parental responsibility. They concurred with our point that improvements in data gathering will ameliorate many of the information gaps that presently inhibit effective case management. The State of New York also supports our recommendations. They believe our recommendations are consistent with current Federal and State government efforts to implement welfare reform and its emphasis on parental responsibility. New York noted its experience that child support collections on behalf of State foster care children provide significant reimbursement to the State for expenses it incurs in providing child welfare services.

APPENDIX A

METHODOLOGY

Sample Selection

Since no accurate count of children in foster care exists, we used a listing of Title IV-B appropriations to establish our universe. We selected 10 States with probability proportional to the appropriation amounts for Title IV-B as our national sample. One State, Massachusetts, chose not to participate. This reduced our sample to the following nine States: California, Ohio, Florida, South Carolina, Illinois, Washington, North Carolina, Nevada, and Texas.

We asked foster care officials in each sampled State to select a random sample of 70 cases from a universe of children who had been in foster care for at least 6 months as of December 31, 1991. States were instructed to use the same sampling procedures used to sample for reviews conducted by ACF. We requested States not to include foster care children funded under Title IV-E in the sample. We verified the randomization method used by the States prior to actual sample selection. We conducted our review between March and November 1992.

Information Collection

Using standardized forms, we requested names, Social Security numbers and dates of birth for both the foster care children appearing in our sample, and their biological parents. We received information on 630 children; however, we excluded 37 from our sample because they had been classified as eligible for Title IV-E financial support. State foster care officials provided us with the names, addresses, Social Security numbers, and birth dates for each of the remaining 593 sampled children and their biological parents.

We contacted State child support enforcement agencies in each of the 9 States to determine which parents of the 593 foster care children had been referred to a IV-D child support enforcement agency. We asked child support enforcement agencies for detailed information on any established cases. Using standardized forms we asked whether a case was currently open, how it was classified, what services had been performed in the cases, whether a child support order was established, and whether collections were being made. If collections were made, we requested information on how the money was distributed.

Using the Social Security Administration's (SSA) Earning Reference Files (ERF), to determine earned income, we calculated potential child support that could be paid by biological parents of sampled children. We used a child support formula of 17 percent of earnings to estimate potential funds available for child support.

APPENDIX B

THE FOSTER CARE PROCESS

After a child is removed from a home - occasionally by the police or linked child protection authorities - the child is placed in some type of emergency care. A **removal order** is signed by a court official and a more permanent place for the child is found. Some States and localities also allow parents to **voluntarily place** their children in foster care.

The preferred **placement** is usually in the least restrictive and most "homelike" setting where a child will be cared for by **foster parents**. Usually foster parents are certified volunteers who take children into their homes. **Maintenance payments** are for expenses directly related to care and lodging for eligible children. An **eligibility determination** is made to determine which funding sources will cover the cost of foster care.

Local foster care agencies work with the **former custodial parent(s)** - usually the biological parent(s) who last had legal custody of a child - to develop a **permanency plan**. The permanency plan is a step-by-step action plan to determine what will happen with a child. In accordance with the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980, the majority of permanency plans are designed to return a child to the former custodial parent(s) as soon as possible.

Occasionally, a foster care worker (or a parent) will determine that a child can never return home. This determination is usually reached because problems causing removal are extreme and insurmountable. For many such cases the permanency plan will be adoption. For **adoption** to take place, proper legal proceedings must terminate **parental rights** of both parents. This termination can be voluntary or involuntary. If a parent is absent and his or her whereabouts are unknown, a "**diligent search**" must be made to satisfy legal requirements before a child can be eligible for adoption.

A child's case must be reviewed every six months and the permanency plan updated. The family's progress towards improving the home situation is tracked by an assigned foster care case worker. In cases of voluntary placements, a child must be returned to the parent(s) upon his/her request, or the agency must seek court-ordered custody.

Coordination between foster care and child support programs begins with a **referral** from a foster care agency. The child support enforcement agency attempts to **locate** an **absent parent(s)**. An "absent parent" is a biological parent not residing in the home the child is in. **Paternity will be established** if necessary. The child support enforcement agency will go through the court proceedings to establish a **support order**. A support order is an order issued by a court requiring an absent parent(s) to provide child support. The agency will then **collect** monies from the absent parent(s) and **distribute** them in accordance with the court's ruling and Federal regulations.

APPENDIX C

ESTIMATION OF POTENTIAL CHILD SUPPORT COLLECTIONS

We completed an earnings search on 317 parents, or 26.7 percent of the 1186 possible parents of children in our sample. The reason for a low percentage of parents with reported earnings is that foster care records lack the basic information on parents, such as names and Social Security numbers (SSNs). For example, foster care agencies were able to provide us with 836 names of parents and 570 SSNs for 1186 parents in our sample. Further, some of the information we did receive was invalid, e.g. the SSN did not match the name.

Data obtained from the Social Security Administration showed the 317 parents earned **\$2,372,800** during 1991. Because of State variations in formulas used for calculating child support, we could not find a formula that was applicable to all States. Therefore, we based our estimate on 17 percent of income -- a formula used by Wisconsin. This calculation showed that, theoretically, **\$403,376** could have been collected by child support enforcement agencies from 317 biological parents of sampled children in foster care during 1991.

We chose the 17 percent for several reasons. First, we could not obtain consensus among ACF officials on what percentage to use. Several ACF officials referred us to Wisconsin which uses 17 percent of income for child support. Second, regardless of what percent we used, potential collections would not be precise for each State. Actual collections vary by State depending on their individual child support formulas. Third, collections vary depending on numerous factors unique to each individual case. Therefore, we could not account for all the possible factors affecting collections.

National projection of possible child support collections

To estimate how much could be collected nationally, if child support were pursued on behalf of children in non-IV-E foster care, we made several assumptions.

First, we do not have an exact number of children in non-IV-E foster care. Several estimates place the total number of children in non-IV-E foster care in 1991 nationally to be over 260,000. Assuming this number, each child has 2 parents for a total of **520,000** parents who could possibly support their child.

We assumed all biological parents of foster care children have earned incomes similar to the 317 parents of children in our random sample. Further, we assumed a child support formula used would approximate 17 percent of earned income.

We know, however, that both parents of every child in non-IV-E foster care will not be identified and located. Further, some parents that are located will be unable to pay child support because of inadequate income. Finally, in some situations it is not

in the best interests of a child to pursue child support collections. In the Title IV-E foster care program, for example, parents are referred to child support enforcement agencies for possible collections "where appropriate." We believe a similar standard should be applied for children in non-IV-E foster care. In situations where a child's safety or well-being would be jeopardized, child support should not be pursued. In foster care cases where parental rights are to be quickly terminated, pursuing child support collections could also be inappropriate.

The table below shows possible child support collections which could have been collected in 1991 if child support were pursued from specific percentages of the 520,000 parents of non-IV-E foster care children.

Estimate of Potential Child Support Collections For Non-IV-E Foster Care Children in 1991						
Percent of Children On Whose Behalf Child Support Is Collected	50%	40%	30%	20%	15%	10%
Possible Collections (in millions)	\$193.8	\$154.4	\$115.8	\$77.2	\$57.9	\$38.6

The dollar figures shown above are based only on biological parents' earned income. Other income sources, such as disability payments, dividends or investment income can also be used to pay child support. In our sample over half (55 percent) of the child support actually paid in 1991 came from parents who had no reported earned income. Additionally, biological parents may be able to provide medical insurance which covers a child's medical expenses.

APPENDIX D

AGENCY COMMENTS

- ▶ ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
- ▶ ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR PLANNING AND EVALUATION
- ▶ CHILD WELFARE LEAGUE OF AMERICA, INC.
- ▶ AMERICAN PUBLIC WELFARE ASSOCIATION



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
Office of the Assistant Secretary, Suite 600
370 L'Enfant Promenade, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20447

March 29, 1994

To: June Gibbs Brown
Inspector General

From: Mary Jo Bane
Assistant Secretary for Children and Families

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Subject: Comments on Office of Inspector General Draft Report:
"Child Support for Children in State Foster Care,"
OEI-04-91-00980

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on your draft report of a study conducted on the potential for collecting child support payments from biological parents of children in State foster care programs.

General Comments

There are several areas in the report regarding the use of title IV-B child welfare funds, and title IV-E eligibility requirements which should be clarified.

Title IV-B funds should be expended by the States on child welfare services, not foster care maintenance as could be assumed from information in the report.

States may expend a limited amount of title IV-B funds for foster care maintenance, however, according to section 423(c)(1) of the Social Security Act, there are restrictions which apply when such funds are used for maintenance. The overall goal of the title IV-B child welfare program is to keep families together through the provision of social services so that, if possible, children will not have to be removed from their homes.

Regarding title IV-E foster care eligibility, the draft report indicates that title IV-E foster care eligibility is based solely upon a child's removal from the home of an Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) family. The AFDC linkage is only one of several title IV-E eligibility criteria.

OIG Recommendation 1:

ACF should encourage States to extend child support services to all children in foster care, regardless of the funding source. Some options for ACF to accomplish this are discussed below.

Option 1: Extend written instructions to States to include all foster care children regardless of the funding source. Such instructions should encourage State

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- foster care agencies to record names, dates of birth, and Social Security numbers for both biological parents of children in foster care,
- foster care agencies to refer all appropriate biological parents of foster care children to IV-D child support enforcement agencies for establishing child support orders and collecting child support, and
- foster care agencies and child support enforcement agencies to develop a Memorandum of Understanding determining appropriate cases for referral, and gathering and exchanging data.

Option 2: Provide specific guidance and plans to States for coordinating foster care and child support programs, such as including a data exchange link between foster care and child support enforcement records when developing or modifying automated systems, and providing child support enforcement agencies with a model system for classifying and processing child support cases.

Option 3: Seek legislation requiring the pursuit of child support on behalf of non-IV-E foster care children, "where appropriate." The legislative requirement should conform to that presently in place for the children in IV-E foster care.

ACF Comments

The ACF does not disagree with the direction of this recommendation. However, recommendations concerning child support for children in foster care should be qualified to recognize that in some instances it would not be good practice to seek (or to seek immediately) to collect support from parent(s) of children in care. The major goal of the title IV-E foster care program is the reunification of children with their families. Premature or ill-timed efforts to collect child support payments from a parent could jeopardize and complicate reunification. The pursuit of child support from the ex-custodial biological parent may be inappropriate if the conditions are temporary, such as hospitalization or incarceration of the parent. In too many of these cases, the absence of child support payments from the non-custodial biological parent, for any number of reasons, also contributed to the poor financial conditions of the family.

State foster care agencies are now, and have been since the inception of the child support program in 1975, able to apply for and receive the full range of non-AFDC child support services from the State IV-D agency. Currently, the foster care agency makes a referral and pays a very nominal application fee (in many States \$1) for IV-D services. This fee need be paid only one time by the IV-E agency, and the application may be for one child or several children.

The ACF's Automated Systems for Child Support Enforcement: A Guide for States, revised June 1993, addresses the requirements for certification of State child support automated systems:

"The system must automatically accept and process automated referrals from the IV-E agency if the State IV-E system is automated.

"Alternative: If the Title IV-E agency is not automated, procedures must be established to ensure timely transmittal of information from the IV-E agency."

The system must record the date the referral is received and must be able to link two non-custodial parents to a child(ren) in the custody of the IV-E agency. The system must also accept and process a number of data elements, such as the IV-E case identification number, the IV-E case status, the IV-E approval date, the IV-E payment amount, and many others.

OIG Recommendation 2:

Organizations interested in foster care and child support should encourage States to seek child support for non-IV-E foster care children whenever appropriate.

ACF Comment

The ACF would welcome the assistance and participation of other organizations, such as those named in Recommendation No. 2, in this work.

Technical Comments

Appendix C of the report notes that the formulas used for computing child support obligations vary from State to State. For a "simple way of estimating child support collections nationwide" the report used 17 percent of income--a formula used by Wisconsin for one child. This presumes the cases involve only one child. We recommend that the OIG consider how many children a "typical" foster care case involves in making their computations of a theoretical amount of child support available.



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TO: June Gibbs Brown
Inspector General

FROM: Assistant Secretary for
Planning and Evaluation

SUBJECT: Draft OIG Report: "Child Support for Children in State Foster Care," OEI-04-91-00980--CONDITIONAL CONCURRENCE

I appreciate your office's inquiry into this subject and I found this draft report, and the one which accompanied it, "Incorrect Distribution of Child Support Collected on Behalf of Non-IV-E Foster Children," helpful and informative. Both have the potential to make important contributions to the child welfare and child support fields. I am in general agreement with the recommendations of the draft report which is the subject of this memorandum and I concur with it provided the following points are developed more fully.

First, I believe it is critical for the draft report to highlight that collection of child support from parents with children in foster care should only be pursued in instances in which this action would support the child welfare agency's case plan for the child. Care should be taken to make clear that this determination should be made on a case-by-case basis. It is clearly not appropriate for all foster care cases.

Second, the draft report should emphasize that in instances when this is considered appropriate, the child welfare agency, rather than the child support agency, should make this determination and then incorporate compliance as part of the child's case plan. The child welfare agency should then contact the child support agency to pursue collection.

I understand that our staff have talked informally and your office is comfortable making these modifications to the final report.

David T. Ellwood

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 Sandra G. Scarth
 Director

February 3, 1994

June Gibbs Brown
 Inspector General
 Department of Health and Human Services
 330 Independence Avenue, SW
 Washington, DC 20201

Dear Ms. Brown,

Thank you for forwarding to us the draft inspection report, *Child Support for Children in State Foster Care*. We appreciate your efforts to analyze child support payment activities on behalf of non-IV-E eligible children in foster care. Your findings clearly make the case for stronger collaboration between foster care agencies and child support agencies to enhance the financial base for providing services to children in foster care and to promote greater parental responsibility.

With regard to our specific comments, we would like to share the following:

- ◆ **Page 2:** While Title IV-B may serve as a source of federal funding for foster care maintenance, the requirements in P.L. 96-272 limit the use of Title IV-B funds for child day care, foster care maintenance payments and adoption assistance payments to the 1979 Title IV-B appropriation of \$56.6 million. Because of this limitation and states' needs to finance child welfare services with Title IV-B funds, Title IV-B has not been a viable source of funding for foster care maintenance payments. State and local funds are the primary funding mechanisms for foster care for non-IV-E eligible children, a fact that you may wish to emphasize in the description.
- ◆ **Pages 2 and 5:** The list of Foster Care Services includes "refer parent(s) and child for child support services" as a foster care function and lists this function before planning for the child's long term welfare. Likewise, the discussion of "State Foster Care Agency Records Are Inadequate for Pursuing Child Support" appears to suggest that routine and systematic collection of information for pursuing child support is a primary responsibility of foster care agencies. It should be recognized that foster care agencies are legally charged with protecting children and ensuring safe and nurturing care for children outside of their parents' homes when necessary. Collecting information to pursue child support is, at best, a secondary function. By contrast, child support enforcement staff are primarily charged with collecting information on parents and establishing a child support case. As a consequence, it is hardly surprising—and, in fact, would be expected—that child support agencies have more complete information on this issue than foster care agencies.

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Page 2.

- ◆ **Pages 9-12:** We certainly agree that "States Can Increase Child Support Collections through Better Management of the Process" but we urge you to recommend that child support agencies become actively involved in the process. Placing yet another non-protection function on foster care agencies to collect information and refer parents is unrealistic without an active collaboration with the child support agency. Simply stating as you do on page 11 that "the administrative cost of collecting the information would be minimal because foster care caseworkers generally obtain information on biological parents...but do not enter this information..." fails to acknowledge (1) the role of foster care and (2) the nature of the relationship between foster care workers and the parents with whom they are working. Child support agencies need to give priority to developing collaborative relationships and interagency procedures with foster care agencies. This emphasis should be included in the last paragraph on page 12.

Your recommendations are excellent, particularly Recommendation 1, Option 1 as it recognizes the collaboration required between foster care and child support agencies. We also strongly support Recommendation 2 and would be happy to work with organizations such as the NGA and APWA in encouraging states to seek child support for non-IV-E eligible children in foster care.

Thank you for your excellent work. Please let us know if we can be of any assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David S. Liederman", is written over a horizontal line.

David S. Liederman
Executive Director



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES

PO Box 9162 • Olympia WA 98507-9162

February 11, 1994

Cathleen Tucker
American Public Welfare Association
810 First Street, NE
Suite 500
Washington, DC 20002-4267

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Re: Draft Inspector General Report on Child Support for Children in State Foster Care

Dear Ms. Tucker:

DEI-04-91-00980

Thank-you for the opportunity to review and comment upon the draft report of the Inspector General on child support for children in state foster care. As our state was one of the nine states sampled for information collection, we were particularly interested in both the findings and recommendations set out in the report. We agree that foster care agencies need to work cooperatively with child support agencies to pursue child support as a routine part of the process of building parental responsibility.

The specific recommendation that the Administration for Children and Families encourage states to extend child support services to all children in foster care, regardless of funding source, is a concept already endorsed by Washington. We concur that improvements in data gathering and referral systems will ameliorate many of the information gaps that presently inhibit effective case management.

Based on an internal review conducted last year, our own conclusion was that an increase in the communication and coordination of responsibilities between foster care and child support enforcement agencies would profit all service recipients and stakeholders. The major benefits anticipated to flow from implementation of these recommendations would be an increase in child support collections, increased paternity establishment and location of absent parents.

To these ends, the following recommendations were made:

1. Development of an automated collection distribution program to comply with federal distribution regulations.
2. Proposed development of an electronic foster care case referral process with enhanced data provisions.
3. Proposed development of an electronic data exchange system between the child support agency (IV-D) and the foster care agency (IV-E and State Only).

4. Proposed on-line access to the foster care case management data base.
5. Development of coordinated training tracks for child support and foster care staff which provide an overview of each agency's reciprocal interests and specific program requirements.
6. Ongoing issuance of appropriate policy clarifications and directives that articulate program requirements and best practices.
7. Development of a joint work group, staffed by both child support and foster care employees, to develop strategies and solutions for specific issues, to broaden interagency communication on all levels and to form the nucleus of a network for continuing communication.

Comments on the Draft Report

The stated purpose of the draft report is "to determine potential for collecting child support from biological parents of children in State foster care programs." In examining the question, the report began to set out the impediments to effective referral of state funded foster care cases and posited a methodology for estimating potential collections. This was a good beginning. Bluntly, our concern is that the analysis in the report did not go far enough in identifying impediments to referral, support order establishment and collection and that the estimate of collection potential did not reflect a more realistic assessment of the demographics of the responsible parents.

Impediments to Effective Case Referral and Child Support Order Establishment and Collection

As Appendix B in the draft report describes, children entering the foster care environment are not always voluntarily placed. Children are sometimes removed from the household under circumstances that can best be described as requiring emergent intervention. Parents of these children are generally not cooperative, in the sense of voluntarily providing information that will lead to filling in all the blanks on a child support referral. This, in turn, means that referrals tend to be incomplete without fault to the foster care agency.

The lack of cooperativeness further extends to the arena of paternity establishment. For example, in an AFDC case, an uncooperative mother may be sanctioned for not participating in the process of establishing paternity. No similar remedy exists for an uncooperative mother in the state only foster care case. Adding requirements to Individual Service Plans and placement orders which require parents to participate in paternity establishment efforts is only marginally effective, in that it presumes the parties are truly interested in family reconciliation.

Our study also noted a lingering perception among foster care professionals that referral to the child support agency was detrimental to family reconciliation efforts. The additional financial strain imposed by a child support obligation on a family already in crisis is the focal point for that perception. Overcoming this impression is a matter of education and training and of identifying solutions which take into consideration the financial issues raised.

Factors Limiting the Collection Potential From Parents of Children In State Only Foster Care

The draft report estimates a population of 520,000 parents from which support would be collected. In arriving at this estimate, the number of children (260,000 nationwide) was multiplied by two. Income data, obtained from the Social Security Administration, was then used to calculate a potential earnings base. Finally, a child support formula of 17 percent of earned income was used to net out a potential collection figure.

It must first be noted that Washington agrees that there remains an untapped collection potential from parents in State Only foster care. However, each of the applications in the draft report make significant assumptions or ignore significant factors which tend to reduce collection potential. Neither postulating or creating an account receivable is equivalent to actually collecting the amounts due. Efforts to accurately measure collection potential must both evaluate the amount of the receivable and the likelihood of successfully collecting the scheduled obligation. A review of the magnitude of existing receivables and the rate of collection on IV-E Foster Care, AFDC, and Non-Assistance cases could provide instructive data.

Additional factors to consider are:

1. Not every child has two parents from whom support may be collected. Aside from issues such as abandonment and the death of a parent, which may lead to foster care placement, a child's parent may simply not be able to be located.
2. Many placements involve siblings. Either siblings remain in the household from which the child in care was removed or the siblings are all removed from the household. Our review of Washington data indicates that this often occurs. Where other siblings are involved, a different (lower) per child support formula is appropriate which considers the multiple child scenario. Where other siblings are involved, and remain in the household, one or both parent's earning ability may be dramatically affected.
3. Many placements involve family reconciliation efforts. Counseling, treatment and other expenses of trying to bring the family unit back together are often reasons for dramatic reductions in child support awards. In Washington, for example, a deviation from the scheduled child support obligation is available for reconciliation costs.
4. State law may limit collections of child support in some circumstances. For example, child support collections may be limited to the amount of the expenditures actually incurred by the state.
5. State law may provide other deviations from scheduled support obligations particularly pertinent to children in foster care. These may be extensive medical bills, specialized care and education, or simply the continuing cost of maintaining a household for the child to return to after placement. Parents may also face unique transportation costs for children in foster care.

These factors should be addressed by the report and the collection potential revised in light of the limitations identified. Just as the draft report alludes to dividends and investment income, and

thus wealthier parents, the report should also take note of parents with developmental or other disabilities which may have prompted the need for state intervention.

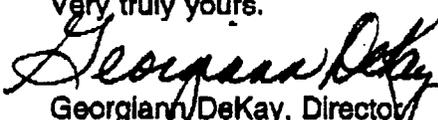
All children deserve the support of their parents. This support can be emotional, financial, or by in-kind contribution. Foster care agencies and child support agencies must work cooperatively to ensure that the support deserved for children in foster care is made available in a fashion that best meets the interests of each child.

Extending the benefits of paternity establishment, child support establishment and child support collection to the population of non-IV-E foster care children is a sound concept. Improving the communication and coordination between foster care agencies and child support agencies is a sound recommendation. However, our feeling is that this is only the beginning.

A unified approach must be developed that teams the efforts of both foster care and child support staff. Simply increasing the amount of data collected will no doubt lead to higher child support collections, but it will do little to support broader program goals such as preservation of the family unit and family self sufficiency. We recommend that the scope of this report be broadened or that an additional study be commissioned to more fully address the issues we have raised in our response.

Thank-you again for the opportunity to review and comment upon the draft report.

Very truly yours.


Georgiana DeKay, Director
DSHS, Support Enforcement

cc: Jerry Friedman

NEW YORK STATE
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
40 NORTH PEARL STREET, ALBANY, NEW YORK 12243-0001

MICHAEL J. DOWLING
Commissioner

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March 2, 1994

Cathleen Tucker, Esq.
Project Manager
National Council of State Human Services Administrators
American Public Welfare Association
810 First Street, N.E., Suite 500
Washington, D.C. 20002

Re: Child Support for Children in
State Foster Care Programs
DET-04-91-00980

Dear Ms. Tucker:

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the New York State Department of Social Services' comments on the draft report issued by the Department of Health and Human Services' ("DHHS") Office of the Inspector General entitled "Child Support for Children in State Foster Care". The draft report recommends that the DHHS Administration for Children and Families instruct the states to extend the administration of their Title IV-D Child Support Enforcement programs to the collection of support for children in state-funded foster care programs. The Department supports the recommendations stated in the draft report as they are consistent with the federal and state governments' current efforts to implement welfare reform and its emphasis on parental responsibility.

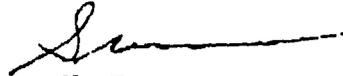
New York State's Child Support Enforcement Program already pursues the establishment and enforcement of child support orders on behalf of children in the State's foster care program. As noted in the draft report, the implementation of more effective processes for the transfer of information between a state's foster care agency and its child support enforcement agency enables a state to benefit from the collection of support for those children. It is this State's experience that such collections provide significant levels of reimbursement to the State for the expenses it incurs in the provision of child welfare services.

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Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this draft report. If you require any additional information in this regard, please contact Assistant Counsel Anne Binseel of my staff at 518-473-1949.

Very truly yours,



Susan V. Demers
Deputy Commissioner
and General Counsel

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