

December 31, 2017

The Honorable Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr.
President of Senate
State House, H-107
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Michael E. Busch
Speaker of the House
State House, H101
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Noncustodial Parent Employment Pilot Program Report – MSAR #10834

Dear President Miller and Speaker Busch:

The Department of Human Services (DHS) is required to submit an annual report to the Maryland General Assembly on the Noncustodial Parent Employment Pilot Program in accordance with Family Law Article §10-112.2(h)(2). DHS is pleased to provide you with the enclosed report.

As always, if there are any questions or if additional information is needed, please contact Kevin Guistwite, Executive Director for the Child Support Administration at 410-767-7606.

Sincerely,



Lourdes R. Padilla
Secretary

**ANNUAL REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF CHILD SUPPORT ADMINISTRATION
NONCUSTODIAL PARENT EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE PILOT PROGRAM**

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Completed pursuant to Chapter 312 (House Bill 1502), Acts of 2016

December 31, 2017

REPORT REQUIREMENT

This report is hereby submitted in response to the following reporting requirement found under Chapter 312 (House Bill 1502), Acts of 2016:

“(h) (1) The Secretary [of Human Services] shall conduct evaluations of the program using the following measures:

- (i) The number of noncustodial parents who are eligible to participate in the program;*
- (ii) The number of noncustodial parents who sign consent agreements and enroll in employment services under the program;*
- (iii) The number of participants who attend the meetings, classes, or workshops specified in their employment plans;*
- (iv) The percentage of participants who complete all program requirements;*
- (v) The number of participants who receive an occupational license or certificate;*
- (vi) The number of participants who obtain employment;*
- (vii) For each employed participant, the job type and location, whether the job is full-time, wage or salary amount, and length of time the job is retained;*
- (viii) The number of participants who consistently make the required child support payments and the amounts of the payments; and*
- (ix) The amount of child support arrearages paid by participants who entered the program with arrearages.*

(2) On or before December 31 each year, the Secretary [of Human Services] shall report to the General Assembly, in accordance with § 2-1246 of the State Government Article, on the effectiveness of the Program based on the evaluations.”

BACKGROUND

House Bill 1502, Child Support Administration – Noncustodial Parent Employment Assistance Pilot Program, took effect on October 1, 2016 as a three-year pilot program that will abrogate September 30, 2019. The purpose of the program is to provide eligible unemployed or underemployed noncustodial parents (NCP) with assistance in obtaining employment that will enable them to achieve economic self-sufficiency and meet their child support obligations. Delegate Samuel I. Rosenberg, the sponsor of HB 1502, worked with the Department of Human Services (DHS)/Child Support Administration (CSA) to craft legislation that would assist an NCP who may have barriers to employment. DHS worked in cooperation with the partners identified below to fully develop the Baltimore City Noncustodial Parent Employment Assistance Program Pilot, which has been named the Supporting, Training and Employing Parents (*STEP Up!*) program.

HB 1502 partners include the Family Investment Administration (FIA) within DHS; the Baltimore City Department of Social Services; the Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning within the Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation (DLLR); Local Workforce Investment Boards in Baltimore City; and the Circuit Court for Baltimore City. HB

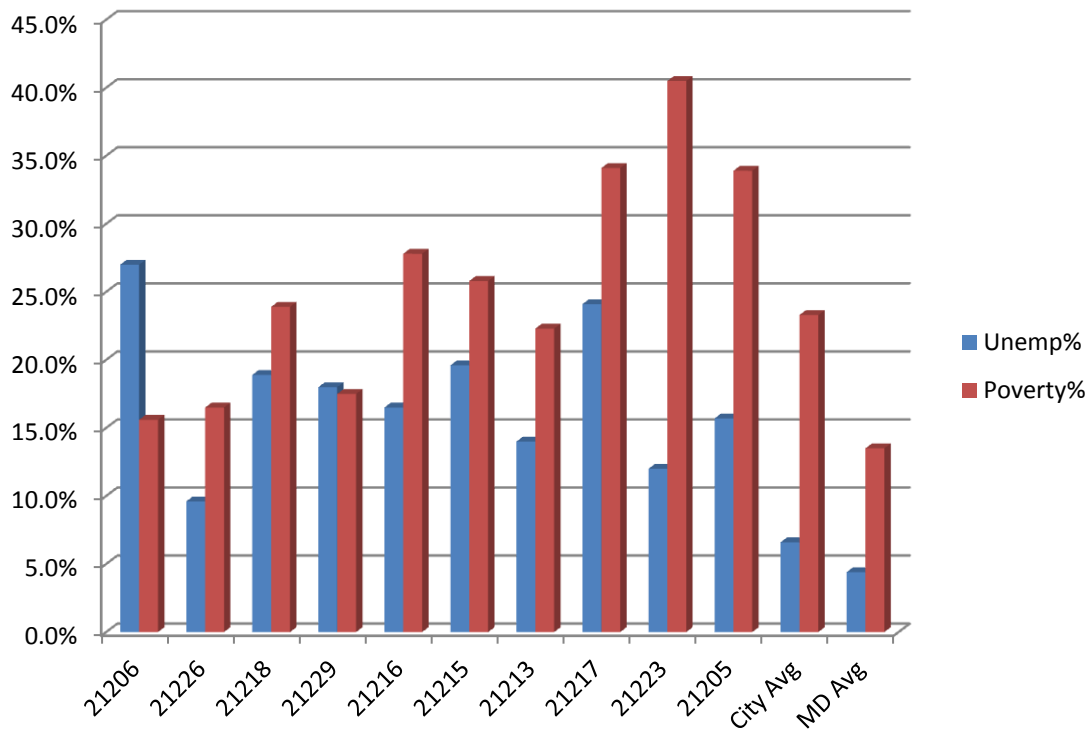
1502 requires the Department to report “on the effectiveness of the program based on evaluations.” This is the second annual report required by HB 1502.

TARGET POPULATION

In year one, based on a data report compiled in August 2016, Baltimore City had 12,233 NCPs with active child support cases who were also currently receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) services. A total of approximately \$147,507,390 is owed in arrears by those same NCPs. As of October 2017, there are 8,894 NCPs receiving SNAP services. Clearly, there was an abundant need for *Step Up!* services in the City. Therefore, CSA concentrated its initial outreach efforts on 10 zip codes determined to be most at need based on unemployment, poverty, and child support arrearage data within those zip codes (See Chart 1). Those zip codes are: 21205, 21206, 21213, 21215, 21216, 21217, 21218, 21223, 21226 and 21229.

There was no change in the target population between year one and year two.

Chart 1: Unemployment and Poverty Rates of Target Zip Codes



PROGRAM EVALUATION BASED ON THE REQUIRED MEASURES

Evaluation Outcomes

As of September 30, 2017, there are 292 NCPs enrolled in the *STEP Up!* program representing 504 cases. Of the 391 cases that have received child support payments since the NCP enrolled in the *STEP Up!* program, 60 percent received payments after the NCP was enrolled in the program.

HB 1502 requires the Department to report on the outcome measures below.

	Outcome	#
1	THE NUMBER OF NONCUSTODIAL PARENTS WHO ARE ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROGRAM	292
2	THE NUMBER OF NONCUSTODIAL PARENTS WHO SIGN CONSENT AGREEMENTS AND ENROLL IN EMPLOYMENT SERVICES UNDER THE PROGRAM	292
3	THE NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS WHO ATTEND THE MEETINGS, CLASSES, OR WORKSHOPS SPECIFIED IN THEIR EMPLOYMENT PLANS	148
4	THE PERCENTAGE OF PARTICIPANTS WHO COMPLETE ALL PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS	0
5	THE NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS WHO RECEIVE AN OCCUPATIONAL LICENSE OR CERTIFICATE	0

6	THE NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS WHO OBTAIN EMPLOYMENT	64
7	FOR EACH EMPLOYED PARTICIPANT, THE JOB TYPE AND LOCATION, WHETHER THE JOB IS FULL-TIME, WAGE OR SALARY AMOUNT, AND LENGTH OF TIME THE JOB IS RETAINED	N/A
8	THE NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS WHO CONSISTENTLY MAKE THE REQUIRED CHILD SUPPORT PAYMENTS AND THE AMOUNTS OF THE PAYMENTS	235; average monthly payment: \$287
9	THE AMOUNT OF CHILD SUPPORT ARREARAGES PAID BY PARTICIPANTS WHO ENTERED THE PROGRAM WITH ARREARAGES	\$93,356

Evaluation Outcome Limitations/Challenges

The accuracy of the information for three of the prescribed outcomes (Numbers 3, 5 and 7 above) is dependent on participant self-reporting. Regarding outcome 5 (the number of participants who receive an occupational license or certificate), while the Department has the ability to obtain information for occupational licenses, the data does not include certifications. Therefore, the program must rely largely on self-reporting by the participant for this measure.

For outcome 7, the Department does not have a way other than self-reporting to obtain this level of detail. The program has also submitted a request to have the measure revised to be more aligned with data available to the program.

For outcome 4, initial enrollment into the Program was slow. Therefore, there were only a limited number (13) of enrollments that would have been in the program long enough to complete all program requirements. With this particular group of enrollees, one NCP passed away and three others had their cases closed prior to completion. However, as the Program ramped up, enrollments steadily increased; currently, 29 NCPs from the first quarter enrollments are on track to successfully complete by the end of the December 2017.

PARTNERSHIPS

Based on the needs of the target population, the Department has leveraged partnerships, such as the one with Baltimore City’s Mayor’s Office of Employment Development (MOED). MOED via One Baltimore For Jobs (1B4J) provides access to employment and employment placement programs, as well as access to legal counseling and expungement services for ex-offenders. 1B4J provides employment training opportunities in:

- **Manufacturing & Welding:** Civic Works, Humanim, and Jane Addams Resource Corporation (JARC);
- **Construction Training:** Job Opportunities Task Force (JOTF) and City Life Community Builders;
- **Automotive Training:** Associated Catholic Charities, Vehicles for Change;

- **Business administration and Customer service training:** Maryland New Directions; and
- **Healthcare Training:** BioTechnical Institute of Maryland, Bon Secours Baltimore Health Systems, Caroline Fries Center, and New Pathways.

The Department’s Family Investment Administration (FIA) via the Food Stamp Employment & Training (FSET) program is providing NCPs enrolled in the Program with access to a variety of education, employment, training and support services options. Program participants via the FSET partnership can enroll in the following programs:

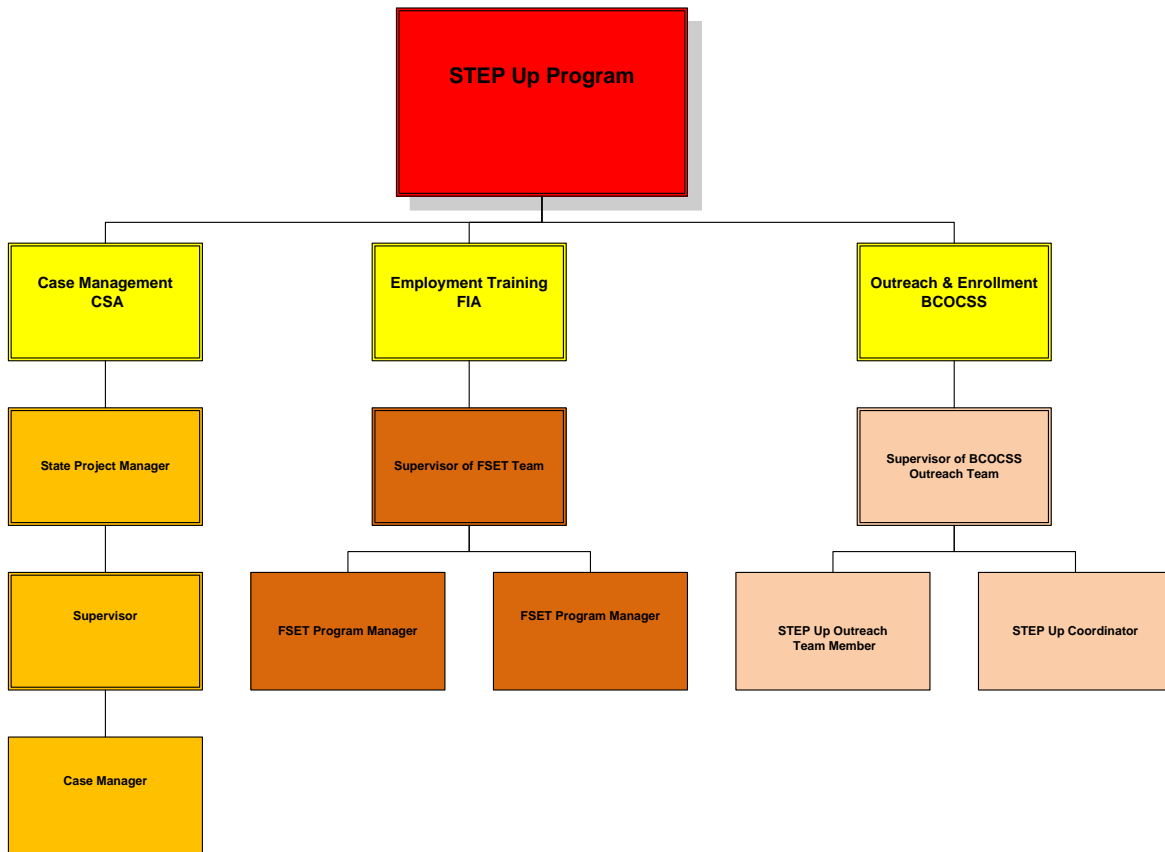
- **Multi-medical technician and Warehouse logistics:** Baltimore City Community College;
- **Case management, support services, job placement and retention:** Center for Urban Families and Humanim;
- **Green construction, solar, weatherization:** Civic Works; and
- **Deconstruction training:** JARC and JOTF.

In January 2017, FIA revised the eligibility criteria of its Travel Assistance Program (TAP) to include NCPs with current or former connections to Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA). Program participants benefit from this resource given the fact that transportation is often the main barrier to employment for our noncustodial parents. Finally, FIA also plans to add FSET employment partners in Baltimore City as they expand their FSET program.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Staffing Responsibilities

The *STEP Up!* program has been divided into three main work processes: Outreach & Enrollment, Employment Training, and Case Management. The program’s organizational chart illustrates the core *STEP Up!* program implementation teams and the division of duties within each team.



Outreach & Enrollment

The Baltimore City Office of Child Support Services (BCOCSS) is responsible for outreach efforts and enrollment for eligible participants. This includes but is not limited to, participating in outreach events in the community; educating employment and supportive service partners on the *STEP Up!* program to encourage referrals to the program; completing the assessment for all potential participants; and connecting enrolled participants to appropriate employment training programs, as well as needed support services.

Employment Training

The BCOCSS’s *STEP Up!* program coordinator is responsible for documenting the employment training work referral in the employment tracking database and scheduling the NCP for the first check-in with the CSA Case Manager. FIA, via its FSET Program, has existing contracts with six employment training partners in Baltimore City and has expanded the services to *Step Up!* program participants. The majority of *STEP Up!* program participants are referred to these six training partners. FIA has been instrumental in facilitating connections with other employment training resources through DLLR, MOED, as well as community organizations.

Case Management

CSA is responsible for the ongoing intensive case management for all program participants. After BCOCSS completes the enrollment, the participant is given a thirty-day follow-up appointment to meet with the CSA Case Manager. BCOCSS completes the review of the NCP's case(s) to determine if any may be eligible for a modification based on the support ordered amount based on the NCP's present ability to pay. Those cases determined to be eligible are processed by the Office of Special Counsel (OSC).

The Case Manager meets with the participant every thirty days throughout the duration of enrollment. The CSA Case Manager is responsible for reviewing the participants' progress with employment activities.

CHALLENGES

Staffing & Program Capacity

With the exception of the full-time *STEP Up!* program coordinator hired by MAXIMUS, no new employees were hired for this project. The staff assigned to this program have other assigned duties and therefore work part-time on this project which limits the program's capacity. Presently, the program is limited to a capacity of two hundred NCPs. Additionally, our employment training partners have capacity limits as to the number of participants they can serve at any given time.

To address the employment training capacity concern, the BCOCSS Outreach Team has made connections in the community with other employment training partners and resources to expand employment training capacity. However, many of the additional partners are smaller community organizations who also have limited capacity. Therefore this often has resulted in only adding a handful of additional training slots to the *STEP Up!* program. Additionally, the program is finding it difficult to identify organizations, whether for training or supportive services, who will serve participants with sex offenses. The implementation team has reached out to DLLR, MOED and community partners for suggestions but the results were all the same. The only available local resource is through the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services' Division of Parole and Probation. Fortunately, the number of participants with sex offenses is low, so it does not impact many. However, there are still enough participants with this issue that the Department identifies this as a program challenge.

HB 1502 requires that one of the evaluation components include the "number of participants who attend the meetings, classes, or workshops specified in their employment plans." Attendance is not currently tracked this way by our employment partners and under current circumstances would be difficult to request them to change their methods. Also, attendance requirements vary among the employment programs and from participant to participant, even if they are participating in the same program. The *STEP Up!* program currently receives a "Yes" or "No" compliance update from the employment training partners. If a participant fails to comply with the attendance requirement of the training program, they are terminated from the training program. The Department recommends amending the statute to reflect the current practice.

Another requirement of the Statute is intensive case management that includes “documentation of the noncustodial parent’s compliance status at 14, 30, 60, 90, and 180 days after the effective date of the consent agreement.” On average it takes approximately one to two weeks after enrollment for a participant to connect with an employment service partner. Therefore, the 14-day compliance status check is unnecessary because it does not afford the participant enough time to be compliant with any referrals. The Department recommends amending the statute to remove the “14-day” compliance check requirement.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

A Success Story

Mr. Charles¹, has five Baltimore City cases for seven minor children. At this time there is an established support order for only two of the children. His current child support obligation was based on imputed income for the NCP, thus the monthly support obligation is \$402. The obligation was made effective October 1, 2015 and the court ordered retroactive arrears in the amount of \$2814. No payments had ever been collected from Mr. Charles. For a period of time, the case was with BCOCSS’s early intervention program, the Debt Prevention Project. However, despite numerous collection calls and letters no one successfully contacted the NCP to speak with him about the child support obligation. Eventually, the case was scheduled for court for payment noncompliance.

In January 2017, Mr. Charles contacted the *STEP Up!* program coordinator because he heard via word of mouth about the *STEP Up!* program. He was scheduled for and completed a program assessment in February 2017.

During the needs assessment the following barriers were identified:

1. Lack of education: Mr. Charles had dropped out of school after completing the 10th grade. He has not obtained a GED but would like to get it.
2. Unemployment: He last worked in September 2016 cleaning air ducts.
3. Lack of child care: One of the mothers left two of the children with him and has not been seen since then.
4. Legal assistance: He has no legal custody documentation for the children currently in his custody.
5. Lack of a valid driver’s license due to past suspensions for child support payment noncompliance.
6. An Outstanding warrant for a traffic matter from the Wabash District Court. The NCP was driving with a license that had been suspended in March 2016 due to child support noncompliance.
7. Criminal background: CP was incarcerated from 2009 to 2010.

¹ The name of the participant was changed to provide anonymity.

The *STEP Up!* program coordinator was able to identify several community partners to assist Mr. Charles. More importantly, Mr. Charles reached out the BCOCSS to share that he had been offered employment at a local distributor of food products making \$17.97 an hour. While all of Mr. Charles's issues have not been resolved as that will take some time, this is considered a success for the program because this was an NCP who had been evading child support prior to enrolling in the *STEP Up!* program. Now he is working and voluntarily staying in contact with BCOCSS. Additionally, because of his participation in the *STEP Up!* program, he is able to receive the needed supportive services to address his legal and educational barriers.

SUMMARY

In conclusion, implementation of the *STEP Up!* program has been valuable not only to NCPs but also to the Custodial Parents and children receiving child support payments earned as a result of obtaining employment through the program. Most importantly the Department believes the program has demonstrated promising results and hopes to see those increase as additional employment training partners are added and word of mouth spreads about the benefits of the program.

Lastly, the implementation team will continue to find creative methods to leverage existing funds, staffing, and resources to build upon the program's success to better assist the many noncustodial parents, like Mr. Charles, towards becoming economically self-sufficient and thus better able to meet their child support obligations.