

Administrations for Children, Families, and Aging

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Child Support

Direct Interstate Income Withholding

We will evaluate the extent to which States use direct income withholding to increase interstate child support collections. Required since 1998, direct interstate income withholding is intended to increase interstate collections by allowing State child support enforcement agencies to order employers to withhold wages of noncustodial parents in other States. An estimated 25 percent of custodial and noncustodial parents live in different States.

(OEI; 00-00-00000; expected issue date: FY 2004)

States' Use of New Hire Data for Direct Interstate Income Withholding

We will evaluate the extent and effectiveness of States' use of new hire information for direct interstate income withholding and determine the impact of this tool on child support collections.

Since 1996, the Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE), Administration for Children and Families (ACF), has matched information in the Federal Case Registry to employer-provided information in the National Directory of New Hires. A new hire match should trigger direct income withholding and should allow for the timely initiation of, or a change in, income withholding by the new employer in interstate cases.

(OEI; 00-00-00000; expected issue date: FY 2004)

States' Use of Work Requirements for Noncustodial Parents

This study will evaluate how effectively child support agencies and courts use work requirements when dealing with noncustodial parents and the impact of these requirements on child support collections. Child support agencies often refer low-income, underemployed, or unemployed noncustodial parents to job service programs to help them meet their child support responsibilities. The agencies are eligible for Federal funds for referral, followup, and tracking services offered to noncustodial parents who have been ordered by the courts or required administratively by the child support agency to participate in an employment service program.

(OEI; 00-00-00000; expected issue date: FY 2004)

Financial Institution Data Match

We will determine the effect of States' use of the Financial Institution Data Match on child support collections. ACF estimated that approximately \$88 billion was owed for past-due child support in 2001. Through the Financial Institution Data Match, State child support enforcement agencies are required to collaborate with financial institutions to identify accounts belonging to noncustodial parents who are delinquent in their child support obligations. We will determine whether States have successfully conducted matches and to what extent the matches have resulted in payment of arrearages. Additionally, we will determine whether the data match

process has improved compliance with ongoing child support obligations.
(*OEI; 00-00-00000; expected issue date: FY 2004*)

Review and Adjustment of Child Support Orders

At ACF's request, we will assess the timeliness of State reviews and modifications of child support orders in response to changes in custodial or noncustodial parents' situations. For example, based on periodic reports on wage data, States should assess whether wage increases or decreases might warrant a court order modification. We will determine what data are available to States and whether they take appropriate action. States must have in place and use a process to review and adjust child support orders, including challenges to any changes.
(*OAS; W-00-04-23001; A-00-04-00000; expected issue date: FY 2004*)

Revocation of Federal Licenses

This review will determine whether delinquent noncustodial parents hold pilot, truckers, disc jockey, or other licenses issued by Federal agencies, such as the Department of Transportation and the Federal Communications Commission. Federal law permits States to suspend or revoke State-issued licenses to enforce collection of child support payments. The possibility of revocation has resulted in increased collections. Applying this tool to holders of federally issued licenses could enhance the Federal/State partnership and provide an additional means of increasing child support collections and minimizing the need for public assistance to some families. We will determine the amount of child support payments that could potentially be collected, based on the noncustodial parents' ability to pay.
(*OAS; W-00-04-23002; A-00-04-00000; expected issue date: FY 2004*)

Child Support Administrative Costs

We will determine whether the administrative costs claimed by a State are reasonable, allowable, and allocable. Child support programs may be administered by various State agencies, such as the Department of Human Resources, Department of Revenue, State Attorney's Office, and Clerk of Court. The primary agency responsible for the program often contracts some functions to other State/local agencies or private contractors. With increasing fiscal problems in State and local governments, some may shift unrelated costs to the 66 percent federally funded child support program or devote less attention to ensuring the validity of costs claimed.
(*OAS; W-00-04-23003; A-00-04-00000; expected issue date: FY 2004*)

Undistributed Child Support Collections

This review will examine undistributed child support collections and determine whether the Federal Government received its share of program income earned in interest-bearing accounts or for undistributed balances written off by States. Historically, States have had difficulty in

distributing sizeable amounts of support payments because certain identifiers, such as custodial parents' addresses, were not current or the case numbers were omitted. OMB has expressed interest in having this area reviewed.

(OAS; W-00-03-23080; A-00-03-00000; expected issue date: FY 2004)

Investigations

Child Support Enforcement Task Force Model

In 1998, OI and OCSE developed a task force model to create a coordinated effort to identify, investigate, and prosecute criminal nonsupport cases. This model began as a pilot program in three States. By 2002, the program now known as Project Save Our Children had grown to 10 task forces covering 50 States and the District of Columbia. These task forces join OI, U.S. Marshals, U.S. Attorneys' Offices, State and local law enforcement, local prosecutors, State child support agencies, and other interested parties in working together to enforce Federal and State criminal child support statutes. For FY 2004, we plan to increase the number of child support prosecutions, particularly in the States that have not pursued prosecutions of those individuals who have failed to meet their child support obligations.

Child Welfare

Background Checks on Foster Families and Adoptive Parents

This review will examine State background checks on foster families and potential adoptive parents. We will determine compliance with Federal and State laws and the reliability of methods used to determine an individual's qualifications. In one State, background checks did not routinely include records on Federal crimes, crimes in other States, or child abuse found in other States. Also, according to two foster care providers, State record checks on some potential employees and foster families returned clear, but further checking found Federal or out-of-State crimes and child abuse which would disqualify these individuals.

(OAS; W-00-04-24001; A-00-04-00000; expected issue date: FY 2004)

Foster Care Requirements

At ACF's request, we will determine whether two States have met eligibility requirements for Federal funding of the foster care program. Over the last several years, these States have collectively claimed foster care maintenance expenditures totaling more than \$1 billion. ACF has expressed concern about foster care children who may be residing in unlicensed facilities or in juvenile justice centers that do not meet criteria for Federal reimbursement.

(OAS; W-00-04-24002; A-03-04-00000, -09-04-00000; expected issue date: FY 2004)

Tracking Children While in Foster Care

We will determine whether States have met tracking and placement requirements to ensure the safety of children in foster care. In 2003, an estimated 549,400 children will be in foster care each month and ACF will spend an estimated \$4.9 billion on the program. The Social Security Act provides that States develop and implement standards to ensure that foster care children receive quality services that protect their safety and health. We will evaluate the ability of States to track children and provide insight into any underlying problems that States have encountered with Federal and State tracking requirements.

(OEI; 04-03-00350; expected issue date: FY 2004)

Children's Use of Medicaid Services While in Foster Care

We will conduct a number of State-specific studies to describe foster care children's access to and use of Medicaid services. These studies were requested by the ACF Children's Bureau, which expressed concern about the foster care population's access to Medicaid services and the overall health of children in foster care. We will attempt to identify factors that lead to better access to care in individual States and common factors across States.

(OEI; various reviews; expected issue date: FY 2004)

Oversight of Foster Care Contractors

We will assess the extent to which ACF, States, and direct granting agencies have monitored foster care contractors. ACF is responsible for monitoring States' administration of the title IV-E foster care program, as well as for passing down monitoring requirements to States that choose to subaward foster care monies to local governments or private agencies. Some States have chosen to contract the administration of services to counties or lead agencies or to create a mixed model of service provision. This study will review the fiscal and programmatic monitoring of contractors, compliance with fiscal monitoring regulations, and performance monitoring.

(OEI; 05-03-00060; expected issue date: FY 2004)

Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information Systems

This study will assess the usefulness of Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information Systems. The Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993 provided Federal funds at an enhanced 75-percent matching rate for States to design, develop, and install the systems. Once the systems are implemented, the Federal matching rate drops to 50 percent to cover operating costs. We will evaluate the outcome of Federal funding for the development and implementation of state-wide systems.

(OEI; 00-00-00000; expected issue date: FY 2004)

Costs for Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System

At ACF's request, we will examine one State's escalating costs for operating its Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System. The review will determine whether (1) prior Federal approval was obtained for acquisition of products and services and (2) costs claimed were allowable and allocable to the system. The Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993 provided Federal funds at a 50-percent matching rate to operate state-wide systems. The systems are intended to improve information exchange among child welfare staff and other social services programs, such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Child Support Enforcement, and Medicaid.

(OAS; W-00-04-24050; A-09-04-00000; expected issue date: FY 2004)

Foster Care Administrative Costs

We will determine whether claims for training and other administrative costs relating to the foster care program are allowable, reasonable, and supported in accordance with laws and regulations. Title IV-E is one of the few remaining open-ended programs for Federal participation. Training and other administrative costs have risen dramatically in relation to maintenance payments in recent years. Reviews in some States found that unallowable costs were claimed, costs were improperly allocated, and/or costs were otherwise unsupported.

(OAS; W-00-03-20008; various reviews; expected issue date: FY 2004)

Adoption Assistance Cost Allocations

This review will determine the appropriateness of the adoption assistance allocation rates that States use to calculate training and maintenance payments claimed for Federal reimbursement. ACF reviews in FY 2003 showed that some States' foster care allocations were overstated. Because adoption assistance criteria are more complex than foster care criteria, we believe the adoption assistance allocations could also be overstated. Our preliminary information indicates that certain States did not adjust their adoption assistance allocations when ACF reduced their foster care rates.

(OAS; W-00-03-24003; A-01-03-00000; expected issue date: FY 2004)

State Investigations of Abuse and Neglect

We will determine how States investigate allegations of abuse and neglect of title IV-E foster care children and whether they take appropriate action to prevent further harm. Our primary focus will be on the timeliness and thoroughness of the investigation, including such factors as the previous history of the alleged abuser, whether a background check was performed, and how well caseworkers monitored the child/family. We will be looking for root causes that have contributed to any identified weaknesses.

(OAS; W-00-04-24004; A-00-04-00000; expected issue date: FY 2005)

Head Start

Head Start Enrollment

We will examine the extent to which persistent underenrollment in Head Start programs has been identified and determine whether timely corrective action has been taken to adjust for such underenrollment. Our previous reviews and discussions with program officials indicated that some grantees did not maintain their funded enrollment levels for extended periods. More timely action may be needed to reduce funding to the actual number of children being served or to better recruit eligible children to fill empty slots. We will assess early implementation of ACF's recent actions to address this matter.

(OAS; W-00-04-25002; A-00-04-00000; expected issue date: FY 2004)

Head Start Programs' Use of Quality Improvement Funds

We will evaluate the use of quality improvement funds for Head Start programs. The amended Head Start Act required that at least 50 percent of Head Start teachers in center-based programs nationwide have an associate, a baccalaureate, or an advanced degree in early childhood education or a related field, with experience teaching preschool children. A key priority, linked to improving staff qualifications and retaining experienced staff, is to enhance staff salaries. To assist Head Start programs, the Congress increased the authorization for quality improvement funds. We will determine whether Head Start grantees have complied with the Head Start Act in their use of quality improvement funds.

(OEI; 00-00-00000; expected issue date: FY 2005)

Head Start Matching Costs

We will validate the matching costs that grantees are required to pay in order to receive Federal Head Start funding. The matching share of 20 percent must be from non-Federal sources and may be in the form of cash or in-kind contributions. The change brought about by welfare reform may have affected grantees' ability to meet matching requirements. We will determine what effect, if any, welfare reform has had and determine whether the matching costs can be supported.

(OAS; W-00-04-25003; A-00-04-00000; expected issue date: FY 2004)

Other Issues

Collection of Welfare Overpayments

We will assist a State in calculating the total amount that should be remitted to the Federal Government for the Federal share of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) overpayment collections. A series of OIG reviews in the past few years found that virtually all States had not remitted to the Federal Government collections of welfare overpayments under

the former AFDC program. By statute, the Federal Government is entitled to its proportionate share of those collections.

(OAS; W-00-03-21001; A-09-03-00000; expected issue date: FY 2004)

State Contracted Services

This review will examine States' increasing use and oversight of contractors that perform administrative and program functions in such areas as foster care, child support, and state-wide systems. Our prior work in the individual ACF program areas, as well as single audit reports, identified abuses in contract performance, service delivery, and costs claimed. We plan to expand that work to determine whether these are isolated incidents or indicators of systemic problems that should be addressed through improved control systems.

(OAS; W-00-03-27001; A-05-03-00048; expected issue date: FY 2004)

Administration on Aging

Cost Sharing Under the Older Americans Act

At the request of the Administration on Aging, we will determine the impact of cost sharing on the participation of the elderly in services authorized by title III of the Older Americans Act. This review will follow up on our 1996 study, which we conducted in anticipation of legislation allowing States to charge older citizens for some title III services. Such legislation was enacted in 2000. Our earlier study found that some States would be better prepared than others to implement the cost-sharing provisions of title III.

(OEI; 00-00-00000; expected issue date: FY 2004)

Locally Contracted Services

We will determine whether States and local agencies properly monitor contracted human service programs for the elderly. States provide funding on a formula basis to 655 area agencies on aging to deliver community-based services to the elderly. In turn, these local agencies contract with more than 27,000 public or private service providers. Our limited-scope reviews will determine what controls are in place at the State and local levels to ensure that contracted service providers are adequately monitored. Deficiencies in contract monitoring have been identified in State single audits and in reviews conducted by State auditors in three States.

(OAS; W-00-04-26001; A-06-04-00000; expected issue date: FY 2004)