

**NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services
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Child support payment rates for ND children rise above 75 percent

BISMARCK, N.D. – Over the last year, more than \$109.3 million in monthly child support accrued for children in North Dakota, and of that amount, nearly \$82.4 million was paid on time.

“Receiving child support on a reliable basis is a key to setting up kids for success as they grow and develop,” said Chris Jones, executive director of the North Dakota Department of Human Services.

Jim Fleming, director of the department’s Child Support Program added, “Parents in our state do a good job of supporting their children; a payment rate of current support of 75.3 percent is far above the national average and is likely the second highest rate among all states. On top of that, the amount of unpaid support, including interest, has not increased over the last two years.”

Fleming said many factors contribute to collecting such a high rate of court-ordered support payments for children. In 2017, North Dakota lawmakers sponsored and passed a bill terminating monthly child support obligations of parents who were sentenced to 180 days or more in jail.

“This law not only helps prevent the accrual of uncollectible support, which gives parents a better chance at a fresh start when they come out of prison, it also allows Child Support team members to refocus their efforts on cases where there is a better chance of collecting support on behalf of children,” Fleming said.

The good payment rate was also driven by the department’s ongoing effort to provide family-centered customer service.

“We start with the assumption that most parents are willing to support their children, and try to improve that by providing good customer service and being flexible with parents to adjust to real-life family situations like job changes or an illness, while remaining firm with those who are more reluctant to pay what they owe,” Fleming said.

As an example of family-centered customer service, Fleming points to statistics showing that from September 2015 through spring of 2018, an estimated 22.8 percent of new child support orders provided for equal residential responsibility. “Our program has adapted to the growing number of equal residential responsibility arrangements without any negative impact on payment rates,” he said.

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Child support payment rates for ND children rise above 75 percent
Page 2

Another service enhancement is the ability of parents to request a review of their child support amounts every 18 months instead of every three years, which is more responsive to income fluctuations.

The Child Support Program also launched a new customer-focused website in 2018. New features include a responsive design layout, which is compatible with smartphones and other devices and automatically reformats content to the device the customer is using. Parents can find resources and information and can access online services 24/7 at www.childsupportnd.com.

In Federal Fiscal Year 2018, the Child Support Program managed about 34,000 cases involving about 66,000 North Dakota children.

Parents with questions about their case are encouraged to call Child Support customer service at 701-328-5440 or toll-free at 800-231-4255.

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