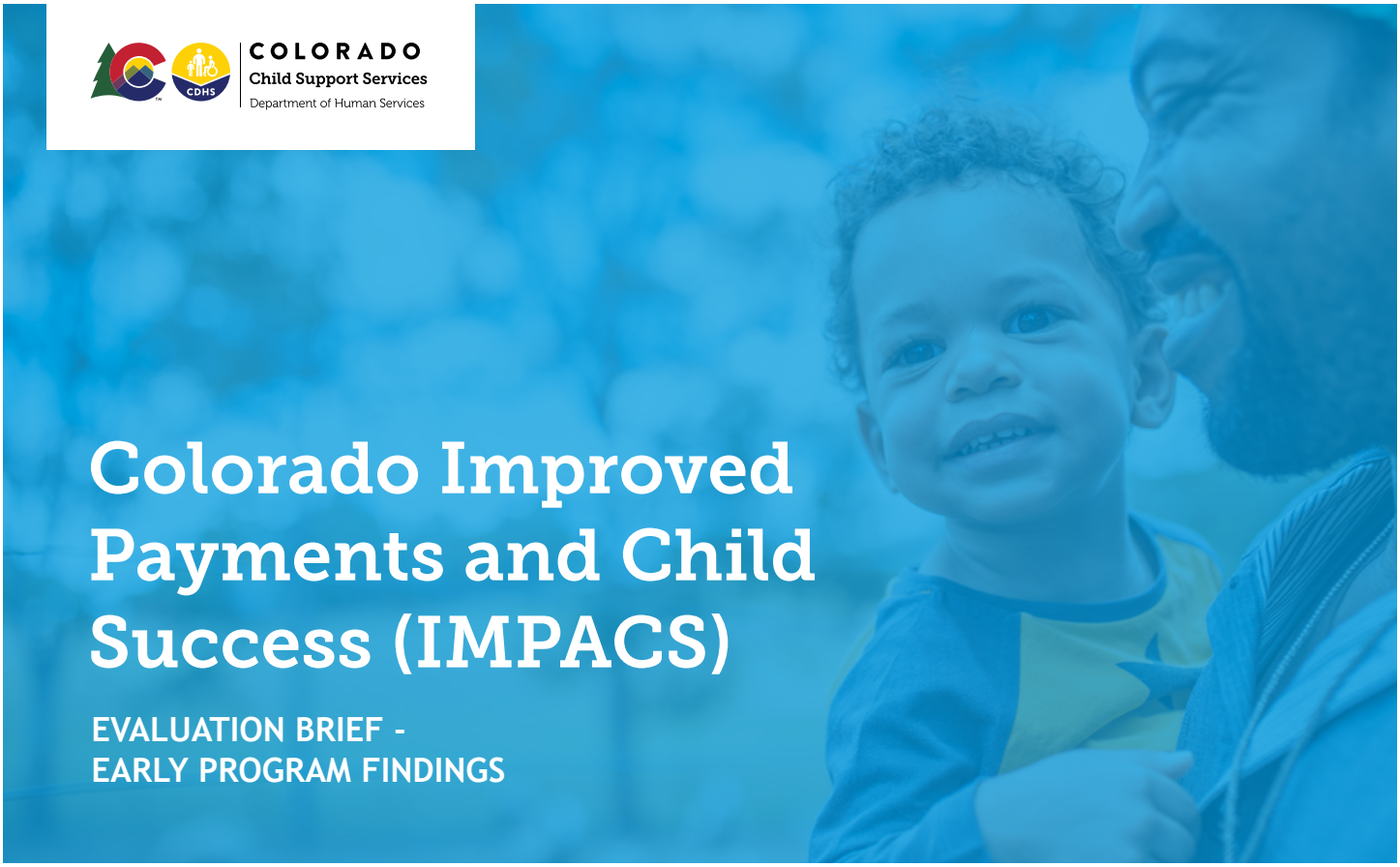
COLORADO
Child Support Services
Department of Human Services



Colorado Improved Payments and Child Success (IMPACS)

EVALUATION BRIEF - EARLY PROGRAM FINDINGS

Overview

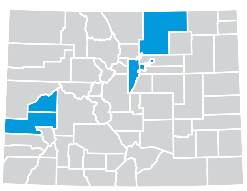
Colorado's Improved Payments and Child Success (IMPACS) program is an employment and case management program for non-custodial parents unable to meet their child support obligations. The IMPACS program continues the Division of Child Support Services' (DCSS) ongoing efforts to infuse a multigenerational framework (2Gen) into services that address barriers to self-sufficiency for an entire family. IMPACS is funded through Temporary Assistance for Needy Family (TANF) resources, as allocated by the state legislature. This brief describes the initial implementation and outcomes of IMPACS services during the period of March 2021 through April 2023.

Implementing Service Providers:

Discover Goodwill, Hilltop Family Resource Centers, Employment Services of Weld County

Counties Served:

- Delta
- Denver
- Jefferson
- Montrose
- Weld



IMPACS Goals:

- Increasing the percentage of child support cases that receive payments
- Improving employment outcomes
- Enhancing parent child relationships

Evaluation and Technical Assistance Partner:

CPR
center *for* policy research

Service Providers

Discover Goodwill (Denver and Jefferson), commonly known for its thrift stores, offers a full suite of employment opportunities, services, and training for various populations, including those with economic challenges. **Hilltop Family Resource Center** (Montrose and Delta) provides parenting support and education, along with a wide array of other human services. **Employment Services of Weld County** provides comprehensive employment and education services. The three IMPACS programs are located in different geographic areas, with one provider serving the most populated metro area in Colorado, another serving a rural area, and another serving a county with both urban and rural populations.

Lived Experiences of IMPACS Clients and Service Providers

IMPACS client and service provider experiences provide vivid illustrations of the challenges and successes of the early implementation of the IMPACS program. Direct, anonymous quotes, solicited through multiple focus groups, are shared throughout this brief to center lived experiences as key evaluation metrics.

Child Support Agency Referrals to IMPACS

IMPACS Services

Number of Clients Served:

210

Service Duration:

19 hours over six months

Financial Assistance Provided:

$360 per client

Potential IMPACS clients were identified and referred through the participating child support agencies. Engagement with IMPACS was offered to clients as a strategy to address nonpayment of child support obligations. Participation in IMPACS was largely voluntary, but in a few cases, clients were court-ordered to enroll in IMPACS due to nonpayment of child support obligations. Child support agencies had the option of offering child support incentives for participation, such as a stay on driver's license suspension or a reduction in state-owed arrears.

Services Description

Early service sessions focused on understanding the client's needs, obstacles, and interests. As service progressed, efforts were made by the IMPACS service providers and clients to create plans to overcome barriers and secure employment. All IMPACS service providers engaged in extensive collaboration and communication with their partner child support agencies, including regular meetings (weekly or biweekly). The meetings included a client-by-client review of service uptake, engagement, and resources needed. If a client had not engaged in services, the child support staff would often

follow up to encourage engagement. Client-specific information was shared, and options for resources and child support incentives were considered.

IMPACS programs provided services to clients across four categories: case management, employment, supportive services, and parenting time.

Case Management included needs assessments, goal setting, engagement support, and collaboration with the referring child support agency.

> *"They made me feel like I had somebody that I can depend on. And they haven't let me down yet. Like if I have a problem, I call them, and they're there."* — IMPACS Client

Employment included developing employment plans, creating and updating resumes, and providing information about job leads, job search support, and training.

> *"Kim is a beast at finding jobs. She's a monster, man. She will get it done . . . [She] sits in that little bitty cubicle and makes miracles happen."* — GOODWILL CLIENT

Supportive services focused on responding to crises and addressing the immediate barriers that clients faced, such as a lack of secure housing, food, or transportation. IMPACS programs provided indirect financial support, such as rent assistance or transportation vouchers.

> *They gave me a computer. That was huge because it made it a lot easier for me to tap into what is going on, compared to just hearing it from the streets . . . . They made sure I had tokens or Uber so if I was going to be late, I got help, full help.* — GOODWILL CLIENT

Parenting time included coaching to increase and enhance parents' time with children and referrals to parenting classes or other services.

Milestones

As IMPACS clients progressed through services, case managers assigned milestones to track progress. Across all three IMPACS programs:

40%
were awarded employment related milestones

11%
were awarded parenting time milestones

22%
received child s upport milestones, including improved payment patterns

IMPACS Clients

Average Age
38

Gender
25% FEMALE | 75% MALE

Self-Reported Annual Earnings
- **62%** Less than $20,000
- **29%** $20,000 - $40,000
- **9%** Over $40,000

Number of Children
4

Ethnicity
- WHITE 40%
- AFRICAN AMERICAN 16%
- LATINX 27%
- OTHER or DECLINED TO SAY 15%

In Relationship with Youngest Child?
- YES 75%
- NO 25%

Education
- **24%** No Degree
- **37%** GED or High School
- **30%** Some College
- **6%** Associate Degree
- **3%** Bachelors Degree or higher

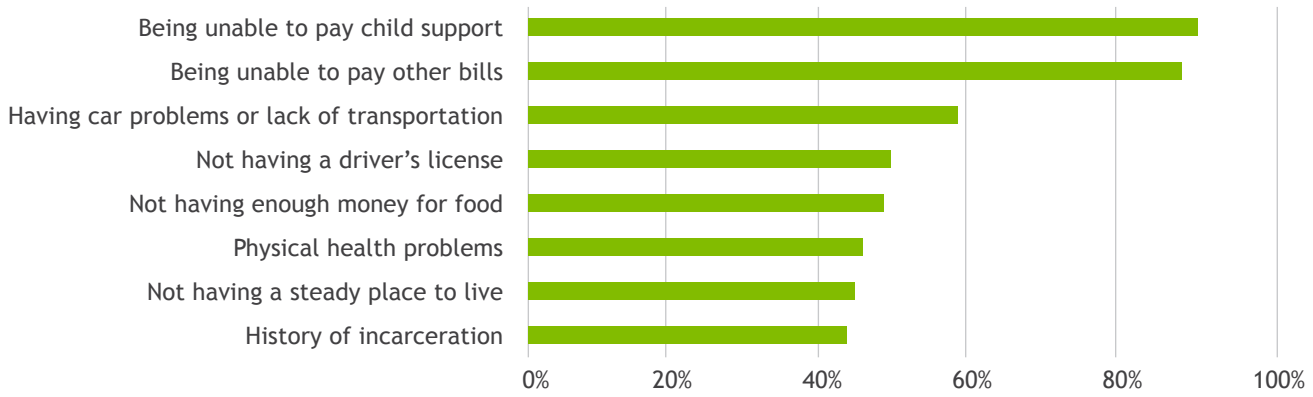
Monthly Child Support Obligation and Debt
$455/month:
$13,257 child support debt

Barriers to Self Sufficiency

IMPACS clients experience a variety of circumstances that create barriers to self-sufficiency and meeting their child support obligations. IMPACS programs supported clients in addressing barriers as a first step to improving child support payments.

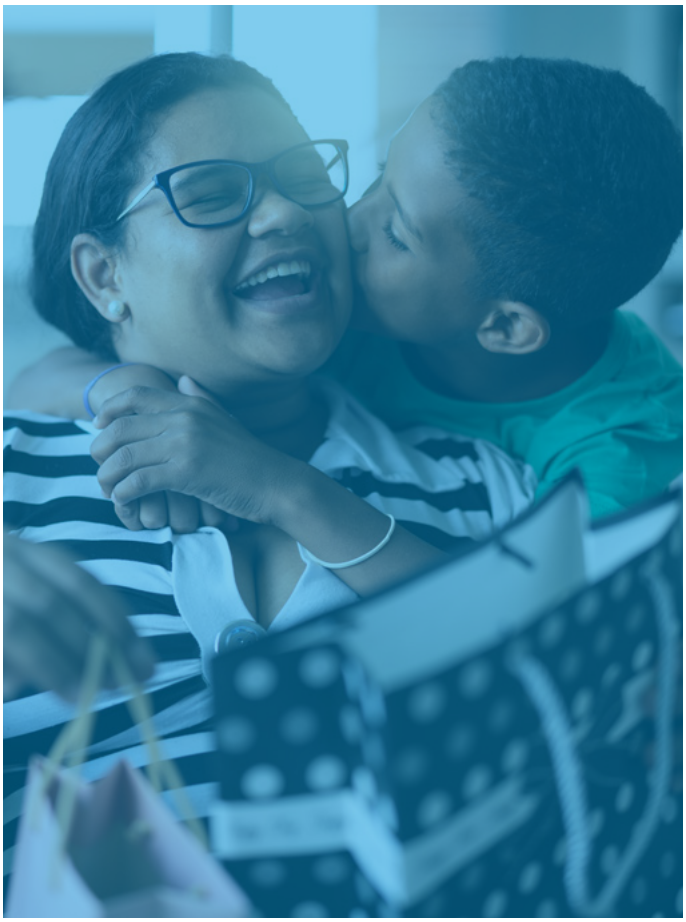
> *They're so understanding, and it's on my time. Because through all of what I was going through, like being sick, being pregnant, being put in the hospital, through all of that. . . we were able to work around it or work with it. And I didn't get just cut off or thrown out of the program. It was like, "what can we do to help you succeed?"* — EMPLOYMENT SERVICES CLIENT

Top Barriers Reported by Clients
Total (n=196)



Key Results:

1. IMPACS "graduates" increased child support payments by 54% compared to pre-service levels and reported a 53% decrease in barriers experienced.
2. Forty-four percent of clients secured better or new employment.
3. Strong partnerships between IMPACS service providers and their partner child support agencies were key to effective program implementation and staff ability to meet the needs of clients.
4. Sixty-seven percent of clients referred by child support agencies to IMPACS programs engaged in service.
5. The average length of engagement for IMPACS clients was six months, with positive milestones typically observed beginning in month four, after basic needs were addressed.
6. The individualized support and case management provided by IMPACS staff from all three programs were greatly appreciated by clients.
7. IMPACS services were most effective when coupled with 2Gen services provided by child support agencies.



Strong Partnerships

Consistent and engaged partnerships between IMPACS service providers and child support agencies required substantial time and attention but produced good results. Both partners were able to leverage their strengths and resources to enhance client communication and accountability.

> *It's really good sometimes to staff these things together and to meet with the parent, so that the parent hears from both of us. I just did one the other day with IMPACS staff, where I explained to mom, "Hey, you've been with the program a while. You've not made any progress. We really need to see you start to step up and here are the things that we're going to need from you in order for us to keep your license in compliance." Then of course, IMPACS staff steps in and says, "Okay, well, here's where we are on the job stuff."*
>
> **CHILD SUPPORT STAFF**

> *Between Jon (Child Support) and Paul (IMPACS), they're a really great team. Because whatever Paul doesn't know, the expert on child support is . . . Jon. Paul knows a lot, but Jon is the main guy to go to. If Paul can't answer questions, Jon sure can. But then Jon will tell you sometimes, I don't know. Ask Paul."* — **HILLTOP CLIENT**

Parent Engagement

The experiences of IMPACS clients well-illustrates the intersectionality of the time spent with children, the presence of a parenting plan, the co-parent relationship, and the amount of child support paid.

63% of those with a parenting plan reported seeing their child daily or weekly, while 49% of those without a parenting agreement reported never seeing their child.

The amount of child support payments made by those with a legal parenting time agreement during a six month period were more than double ($1343) the amount of payments made by those without an agreement ($668).

42% of those without a parenting plan agreement report they do not interact with the child's other parent, while this is the case for only 13% of those with a parenting plan.

54% of those who reported not interacting with the other parent reported they never see their child.

While IMPACS service providers engaged with clients about parent-child relationships, more focused resources are needed to support parents in securing a parenting plan agreement, improving their relationships with the other parent, and enhancing their overall relationship with their child. Routinely providing financial assistance through child support payments is an important first step to improvement.

> *"What motivates me is seeing my girls because I feel like every girl needs their father. My son, too, is helping me be a man, but every girl needs their dad."* — GOODWILL CLIENT

Child Support's Two Generation (2Gen) Approach and Services Improves Outcomes

Two of the five counties engaged with IMPACS made referrals through an internal child support 2Gen program. Denver's Parenthood program and Montrose's Parent Coach worked closely with IMPACS programs to refer clients likely to engage in services and then jointly coordinated services and communication with clients. The result was more active engagement and better outcomes for clients:

- The rate of service uptake from clients from the 2Gen counties was 78%, compared to 53% at other counties.
- IMPACS clients from 2Gen counties demonstrated a significantly larger decrease in overall barriers at graduation than clients from other counties.
- The average number of hours served and supportive service funds distributed was slightly less for clients from 2Gen counties than those from other counties.
- IMPACS clients from 2Gen counties made an average of $529 more in child support payments during the six months after referral than did clients from other counties.

> *We actually have a really strong collaboration here in Denver . . . . We don't just refer them and walk away from it. It's an ongoing collaboration where we work really closely with the IMPACS team to service our parents. So, if IMPACS needs something done or has a question, they can reach out to me. … if somebody needs some RTD tickets, which we usually provide from our end, . . . if I need to work on doing any kind of IV-D debt forgiveness, anything like that, we go ahead and collaborate. We've also collaborated on doing food boxes. I do a lot of running in the community and meeting face-to-face with our parents. If IMPACS is having a gap and I need to do a resume with a parent, I'll do it. Most of the time they do that. Sometimes I step in. We've done joint phone calls to parents to work things out.*
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> — **CHILD SUPPORT STAFF**

Conclusions and Recommendations

The IMPACS program was launched during the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic, but in spite of this, services were initiated by the three service providers and clients engaged in services and experienced positive outcomes. Much can be learned from this first implementation of the IMPACS program to enhance outcomes in the future:

1. Diversify enrollment strategies to enroll more clients, including conducting direct outreach to eligible clients through parenting services, flyers, and written communication.
2. Encourage child support agencies to implement internal 2Gen services as a complement to IMPACS services. The outcomes for both 2Gen services and IMPACS will improve if services are provided in tandem.
3. Continue the strong collaboration between child support agencies and IMPACS programs. Work with child support agencies to consistently leverage child support incentives, such as reinstatement of driver's licenses or state-owed debt reduction.
4. Enhance the consistent use of motivational interviewed and other case management strategies to address the challenges of effectively engaging clients.
5. Continue to provide in-direct financial support to assist clients with the basic needs stabilization necessary prior to gaining meaningful employment and improving child support payments.
6. Expand service providers capacity to address parent-child engagement, including collaboration with parenting plan services.
7. Recognize and plan for clients' needs for several months of service to achieve meaningful outcomes.