



STATE OF MICHIGAN

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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING

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IV-D MEMORANDUM 2024-009

TO: All IV-D Staff*
FROM: Erin P. Frisch, Director
Office of Child Support
DATE: May 21, 2024

UPDATE(S):

- Manual
- Form(s)

SUBJECT: Title IV-D Child Support Navigation Services Pilot Program

ACTION DUE: None

POLICY EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon receipt

PURPOSE:

This IV-D Memorandum provides an overview of the Title IV-D Child Support Navigation Services Pilot Program. It defines the goals of the pilot, describes the navigator role and activities, identifies the Friend of the Court (FOC) and Prosecuting Attorney (PA) offices participating in the pilot, and introduces the external evaluation plan. It also explains the funding mechanisms and timeline for the pilot. This memorandum is informational only and does not introduce any new statewide policy or procedure.

DISCUSSION:

A. Background

The Michigan Office of Child Support (OCS) is conducting a three-year pilot program to test the effect of navigation services on parent/non-parent caregiver understanding of, access to, and satisfaction with the IV-D program. Upon the case participants' request, the Child Support Navigation Services Pilot Program will serve as a bridge between participants and their assigned IV-D office (OCS Case Management, FOC, or the PA) and community human service organizations.

OCS developed this pilot program in response to the [OCS Community Advisory Council's recommendation in 2021](#) to provide advocacy and/or navigation services to enhance families' understanding of the IV-D program and their rights and responsibilities. The Council cited concerns about websites being difficult to use,

forms being confusing, and difficulties finding the “right” person to ask for help or clarification.

Research shows that navigation services in many types of social service programs increase participation, build trust between participants and program staff, and improve outcomes for families. Specifically, parents who receive navigation services are more likely to say they know where to seek support and feel more confident that they will get the resources they need.

The goals of the Child Support Navigation Services Pilot Program are to:

- Increase participant understanding of the IV-D program;
- Increase access to child support resources; and
- Improve perceptions of the child support program’s fairness and usefulness.

These goals build on previous and current efforts to work toward a more equitable and inclusive child support program, both within the state and nationwide. The pilot seeks to advance the Michigan Child Support Program’s vision and purpose as established in its Strategic Plan:¹ It will engage and empower case participants, promote healthy relationships between parents, and recognize and respect diverse communities.

B. Overview

The Navigation Services Pilot Program will be implemented in four Michigan counties: Calhoun, Genesee, Kent, and Wayne. The pilot program will offer the same types of services and resources in each of the counties; however, county-level service delivery models will vary by funding mechanism and structure. Both state staff and contracted partners will provide navigation services.

The pilot program is currently in its planning year, which is dedicated to program development, evaluation design, and start-up activities including hiring and training. The second and third years of the pilot will focus on implementation and service delivery. Navigation services are anticipated to begin in summer 2024.² Throughout the course of the pilot, third-party evaluators, Mathematica and the Michigan Public Health Institute (MPHI), will conduct rigorous implementation and impact evaluations to analyze the effectiveness of the navigation services. The evaluators will investigate barriers and facilitators to the implementation process. The final impact evaluation will take place during the third year.

¹ Ref: [Michigan Child Support Program 2021-2024 Strategic Plan](#).

² OCS will send an email notification when the pilot program starts providing services to parents and caregivers.

C. Implementation Plan

1. Navigator Role and Activities

The primary role of the navigator will be to facilitate communication between case participants, the IV-D program, and community human service organizations. Navigators will be IV-D workers and will engage in a range of unique activities, including:

- Working closely with case participants to identify their child support goals;
- Facilitating participants' IV-D experience by providing information about their rights and responsibilities;
- Helping participants understand their options by providing timely and personalized IV-D program information relevant to their current case status;
- Facilitating access to IV-D-related information, including forms and online portals;
- Explaining how child support is calculated;
- Providing information about good cause and resources related to family violence concerns;
- Helping participants understand the support order review and modification process;
- Conducting outreach to community human service organizations; and
- Collaborating with child support program partners to develop informational workshops.

To help child support staff differentiate between the duties of navigators and traditional IV-D caseworkers, OCS, in coordination with the pilot counties, will provide guidance. IV-D caseworkers will take the next most appropriate IV-D action to progress the case; navigators will not.

Additionally, the navigators will not be “legal” or “court” navigators.³ Instead, they will help engage and connect with IV-D case participants in navigating the complex IV-D program and its associated case activities. Assistance that navigators provide in the areas of custody, parenting time, and other non-IV-D family court activities will be minimal; navigators will refer parents and non-parent caregivers with challenges in those areas to legal aid resources and/or FOC representatives who are better positioned to assist them.

Throughout the pilot, navigators will collect data needed for program evaluation and give feedback to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and service providers based on aggregate data. To streamline documentation, OCS has created a new role for navigators⁴ in the Michigan Child

³ Several agencies and service organizations in other states have provided legal or court navigation services; however, Michigan's IV-D navigation program will be distinct and separate from those types of services.

⁴ The new role is “Child Support Navigator” on the *Resource Master* (RESM) screen.

Support Enforcement System (MiCSES). This role will allow navigators to access and update the MiCSES *Grant and Pilot Management (GAPM)* and *Notes Processor (NOTE)* screens.

2. Service Population

In the pilot counties, navigation services will be available to all current and potential IV-D case participants. Parents and non-parent caregivers may request navigation services regardless of the functional area in which their cases reside. Participants may include but not be limited to:

- Payers and recipients of support;
- Those with or without support orders;
- Those in the process of establishing a child support case (including parents with or without custody of their children); and
- Potential parents who have been named in a child support case.

Parents and non-parent caregivers who are interested in seeking child support services may also request child support-related information from navigators.

A service population of interest includes parents and non-parent caregivers who report socioeconomic barriers⁵ to participating in the IV-D child support program. This population includes parents and non-parent caregivers at or below poverty guidelines and those who are Asset-Limited Income Constrained Employed (ALICE). ALICE refers to families who earn above the poverty level but do not earn enough to sustain their basic needs when taking their county's cost of living into account.⁶

3. Funding

All navigation services will be IV-D activities according to federal laws and regulations. In all four pilot counties, funding will be provided by traditional IV-D federal and state sources. In Calhoun, Genesee, and Kent counties, OCS will leverage funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. OCS requested and has received a federal Office of Child Support Services (OCSS) Section 1115 waiver for accessing federal IV-D matching funds while using private funds (from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation).

Funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation will be limited to participants who are at or below ALICE and/or poverty levels. OCS acknowledges and thanks the foundation for its generous contribution to this innovative program. Parents or non-parent caregivers who are not at or below ALICE and/or poverty levels will also be eligible for navigation services. Funding for these participants will come from traditional IV-D sources.

⁵ These barriers may include but not be limited to transportation, stable housing, and employment.

⁶ For more information, reference [United for ALICE](#).

4. Referral Process

Participants will be self-referred, and participation will be optional. Participants will be able to enter (and exit) the navigator pilot at any stage of the child support process. Navigators will record case members' pilot participation on the GAPM screen.

To the greatest extent possible, navigators will collaborate with PAs, FOCs, and OCS Case Management staff to engage participants and ease the transition between IV-D caseworker and navigator. Navigators and designated FOCs, PAs, and OCS Case Management staff will discuss important information with the participant present. Whether this communication is conducted in person, virtually, or by telephone, it will allow participants to hear how and what information is being shared and to ask questions and clarify information. This approach can instill confidence in participants that a team is working on their behalf.

5. County-Level Navigation Services Delivery

Participants in each pilot county will have access to similar services and resources. However, navigation service delivery will vary by county structure and funding mechanisms. Both state staff and contracted partners will provide navigation services; these individuals will all be known as navigators.

a. Calhoun County

OCS will partner with Michigan Works! Southwest to provide navigation services. Michigan Works! Southwest was selected due to its demonstrated success as a partner in the Gain Employment, Maintain Support (GEMS) program.⁷

b. Genesee and Kent Counties

OCS will partner with community organizations that have experience serving parents and non-parent caregivers in areas with high percentages of current and potential child support participants. OCS is currently in the process of identifying those organizations and entering into contracts with them.

c. Wayne County

⁷ The former name of this program was LEAP (Learn, Earn and Provide). For more information, reference [IV-D Memorandum 2024-004, *Statewide Rollout of the Gain Employment, Maintain Support \(GEMS\) Program and Introduction of Section 6.10, "Employment Programs," of the Michigan IV-D Child Support Manual.*](#)

Five navigators will provide services in Wayne County. These navigators will be MDHHS/OCS limited-term state employees.⁸ Part of the time, these navigators will be located in community agencies that work with families served by the IV-D child support program. These agencies have volunteered to host navigators through a Memorandum of Understanding.

6. Staffing

a. OCS Departmental Manager

A new, limited-term OCS departmental manager will supervise the five OCS navigators in Wayne County. This manager will also be responsible for contract management and for coordinating training and other activities for navigators in Calhoun, Genesee, and Kent counties. However, these agencies will be largely responsible for making managerial and day-to-day operational decisions.

The OCS departmental manager will report directly to the OCS Operations Division director and provide status to the OCS executive team and other program leadership.

b. Navigators

In OCS's search for navigators who will be under contract and hired directly, a key element will be identifying individuals who have lived experience with the IV-D program. People with "lived experience" are those directly affected by social, health, public health, or other issues and by the strategies that aim to address those issues. This gives them insights that can inform and improve systems, research, policies, practices, and programs. Lived experience also means knowledge based on someone's perspective, personal identities, and history beyond their professional or educational experience.⁹

Navigators who are or have been parents or non-parent caregivers with a IV-D case will be ideal. Research shows that navigators with this type of experience can increase participant comfort and engagement.¹⁰

⁸ These open positions were announced through the January 30, 2024 email notification [Informational conference call Jan. 31 for Wayne County Pilot Navigator job postings](#).

⁹ Ref: Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) Office of Human Services Policy, [What Is Lived Experience?](#)

¹⁰ Ref: U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, [Navigators in Social Service Delivery Settings: A Review of the Literature with Relevance to Workforce Development Programs](#), January 12, 2022.

7. Stakeholder Engagement

Key stakeholders have been involved throughout the development of the pilot. Multiple workgroups have considered and addressed anticipated operational issues, policy and procedure needs, system access, host agencies' navigator proposals, and training expectations. These workgroups include but are not limited to the Navigator Steering Committee and the Navigator Working Group.

The purpose of the Navigator Steering Committee is to ensure operational plans stay true to the initiative's goals and strategic direction and to guide the navigation pilot implementation planning process. The committee has been meeting once per month since it was established in November 2023. Both the PA and FOC offices from Genesee and Kent counties and the combined offices from Calhoun and Wayne counties participate in the steering committee. The committee also includes representatives from Mathematica and MPHI.¹¹ Two members of the OCS Community Advisory Council joined the committee in March 2024.

8. Training

Navigator training will be provided by OCS's Training and Application Support Services Section, the participating local county FOC and PA offices, and the selected local community organizations in Calhoun, Genesee, and Kent counties. Training will focus on the following areas:

- IV-D confidentiality and security;
- IV-D overview and processes;
- MiCSES access and navigation;¹²
- IV-D resources including but not limited to MiChildSupport, MiSDU¹³ payment sites, and public materials;
- Navigation Services Program logistics;
- Providing information vs. providing advice;
- Policies, procedures, and standards of the IV-D offices in the pilot counties; and
- Trauma-informed care, motivational interviewing, and cultural competency.

D. Evaluation

1. Evaluation Plan

The third-party evaluators will analyze IV-D data and participant and program outcomes using survey and interview data from participants and navigators. The

¹¹ For more information on the evaluation of the program, reference Section D of this memorandum.

¹² Access will be limited to specific screens.

¹³ The MiSDU is the Michigan State Disbursement Unit.

evaluation will be designed and implemented using an equitable engagement and evaluation framework. County-specific factors will be considered throughout the evaluation process. Evaluators will look for specific participant, process, and program outcomes.

a. Participant Outcomes

1) Increase participants' understanding of the IV-D program, including:

- The role of child support professionals; and
- Participants' rights and responsibilities according to the current case status and activities.

2) Increase the use of child support resources by improving:

- Awareness of child support resources; and
- Access to child support-related community resources.

3) Improve perceptions of the child support program's fairness and usefulness.

The evaluation will also assess participants' satisfaction with the navigation services and whether their participation goals were met. The evaluators may track additional participant outcome measures throughout the evaluation period as necessary.

b. Process Outcomes

Process outcomes of interest include the number of:

- Participants served;
- Contacts that navigators had with each participant and whether contacts were initiated by navigators or participants;
- Referrals that navigators made to community agencies;
- Times that navigators linked participants to child support staff and resources; and
- Referrals and the types of referrals made by local child support offices to navigation services.

c. Program Outcomes

Program outcomes of interest include:

- Parentage establishment;
- Arrears prevention and management;
- Frequency of child support payments;

- Engagement with the child support program;
- Order modification; and
- Referrals to community resources.

Certain aspects of the pilot program may change in response to participant and program needs and feedback. OCS and partners will make these decisions in collaboration with the pilot's two external evaluators, Mathematica and MPHI.

2. Information Dissemination

The evaluation's findings will contribute to the child support community's knowledge about the feasibility and effectiveness of child support navigation services. OCS will work closely with county partners and community stakeholders to share information about the evaluation. Information will be shared broadly and through various communication methods.

E. Opportunity to Learn More

1. Communications Within the Child Support Program

OCS held a program-wide conference call introducing the navigation services pilot on March 6, 2024. A recording of this call is available in the OCS [Learning Management System](#). Additionally, an article appeared in the [January 2024 OCSS Child Support Report](#).

2. Communications with Case Participants

The workgroups mentioned in Section C(7) of this memorandum continue to discuss the best methods for marketing the navigation services to eligible pilot participants. The groups have discussed possible pamphlets, posters, targeted messaging on MiChildSupport, and inserts to include in routine mailings within the pilot counties.

NECESSARY ACTION:

Retain this IV-D Memorandum until further notice.

REVIEW PARTICIPANTS:

Navigator Steering Committee
Navigator Working Group
Program Leadership Group

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OCS Community Advisory Council
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Michigan Public Health Institute
Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity

SUPPORTING REFERENCES:

Federal
Social Security Act 454(23)

OCSS Policy Interpretation Question (PIQ)-12-02, *Partnering with Other Programs, Including Outreach, Referral, and Case Management Activities*

OCSS PIQ-00-03, *State IV-D Program Flexibility with Respect to Low Income Obligors*

State
None

ATTACHMENTS:

None

EPF/LM

* Ref: the [Michigan IV-D Child Support Manual Introduction and Table of Contents](#) for a definition of IV-D staff.