



INSTITUTE *for*
RESEARCH *on*
POVERTY

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON

The National Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration (CSPED): Selected Implementation Findings

Lisa Klein Vogel
CSPED Project Director

WICSEC 2018 Conference
October 17, 2018

Acknowledgements

- Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE), Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- Wisconsin Department of Children and Families
- Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. and the University of Wisconsin Survey Center
- CSPED grantee and partner staff
- Noncustodial parents participating in the study

Any views expressed here are mine alone and not necessarily those of the sponsoring institutions.

Outline

1. Background and Evaluation Overview
2. CSPED Model: Key Elements
3. Eligibility, Recruitment and Enrollment
4. Participant Characteristics
5. Service Delivery
 - A Closer Look: Employment Services
6. Key Challenges and Lessons Learned

Background and Evaluation Overview

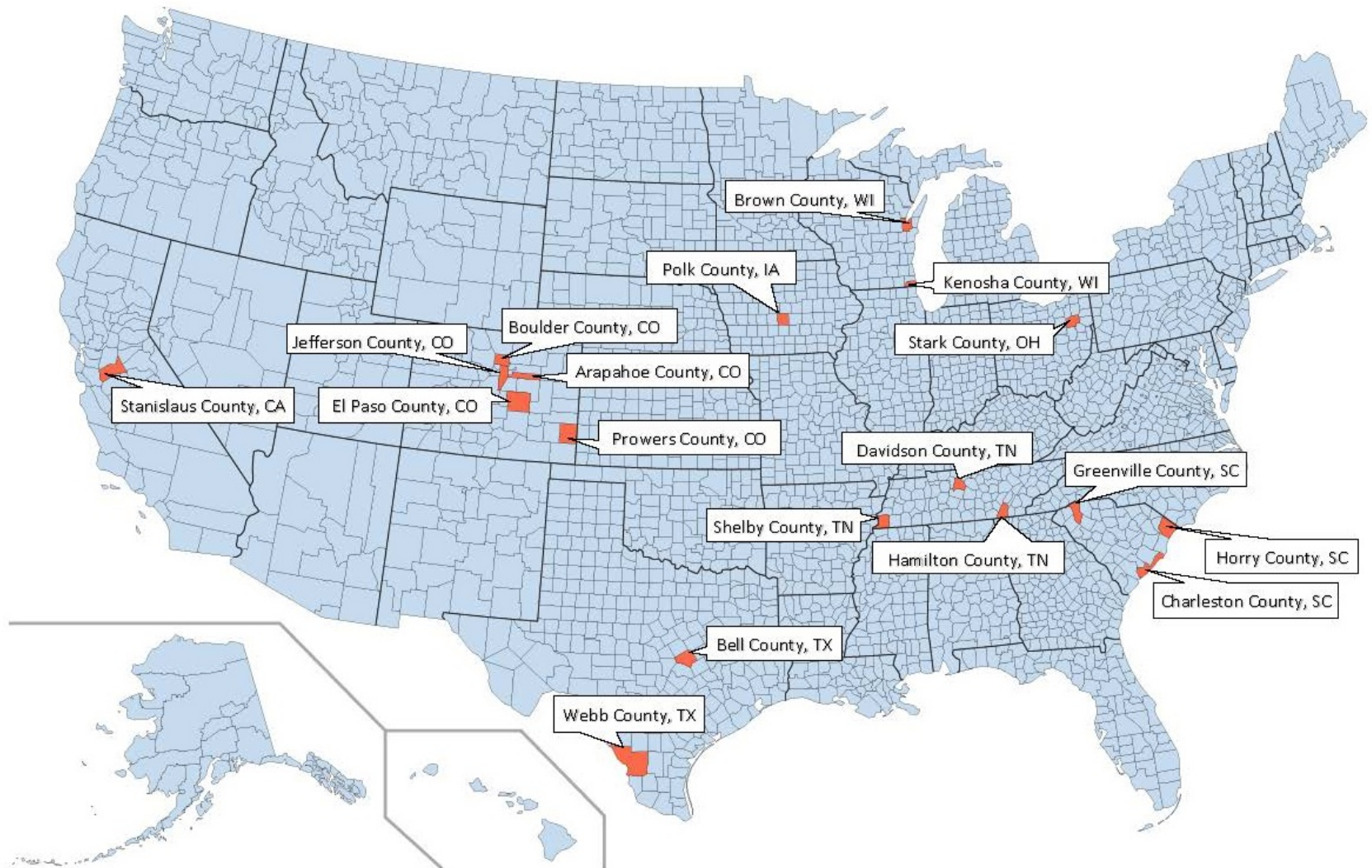
Background

- Changes in family structure have led to a substantial increase in single parent households
- The child support system is designed to ensure noncustodial parents (NCPs) contribute financially to the upbringing of their children
- Many NCPs have limited earnings and ability to pay
- Children in single-parent households could benefit from a child support system that enables, as well as enforces, NCPs' contributions to their support

Background

- In Fall 2012, OCSE competitively awarded:
 - Grants to child support agencies in 8 states to provide NCPs struggling to meet child support obligations with enhanced services
 - A Cooperative Agreement to the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families to procure and manage an evaluation through an independent third party
- The Institute for Research on Poverty, along with its partner Mathematica Policy Research, was selected to conduct the evaluation
- Demonstration ran from October 2013 – September 2017

Implementation Sites



Evaluation Components and Study Goals

- All grantees and all sites are part of a rigorous, randomized controlled trial (RCT)
- Three main study components: Impact Analysis; Benefit-Cost Analysis; Implementation Analysis
- Goals:
 - Determine how CSPED programs operate, whether they improve outcomes, and whether benefits outweigh costs
 - Inform future public policy

Key question of interest: Did CSPED increase the reliability of child support payments?

Data Sources

Data Source	Implementation Analysis	Impact Analysis	Benefit-Cost Analysis	Participant Demographic Characteristics Analysis
Baseline survey	✓	✓		✓
12 month follow-up survey		✓		
Administrative records		✓	✓	
Service use data (GMIS)	✓		✓	
Semi-structured staff interviews	✓			
Participant focus groups	✓			
Web-based staff surveys	✓		✓	
Program documentation	✓		✓	

CSPED Model: Key Elements

Parenting services partner *16 hours of group sessions on:*

- Personal development
- Responsible fatherhood
- Parenting skills
- Relationship skills
- Domestic violence

Child Support Agency

- Leadership, oversight,
and coordination
- Enhanced child support services
- Domestic violence screening,
referrals, and safeguards

Employment services partner

- Job readiness training
- Job search assistance
- Job placement services
- Employment retention services

Grantee or partner agency: Case management including needs assessment, personalized service planning, individualized assistance, progress monitoring

Eligibility, Recruitment, and Enrollment

Eligibility

- All participants, as required by OCSE:
 - Had established paternity for at least one child
 - Had one or more IV-D cases
 - Had difficulty paying, or expected difficulty paying, child support due to lack of regular employment
- OCSE recommended criteria on:
 - Ability to work
 - Living distance from services
 - Child support order
- Grantees customized/operationalized criteria to local context

Recruitment

- October 2013 – September 2016 enrollment period
- Recruiting enough participants to meet the demonstration's target was a key challenge
 - Especially for single-site grantees
- Grantees addressed challenges with a wide range of strategies, such as:
 - Referrals from *child support staff*, courts, probation/parole offices, other agencies and CSPED *participants*
 - Outreach by dedicated recruitment staff at community events, agency offices, job fairs
 - Mailings, phone calls/texts, posters, billboards, fliers

Enrollment

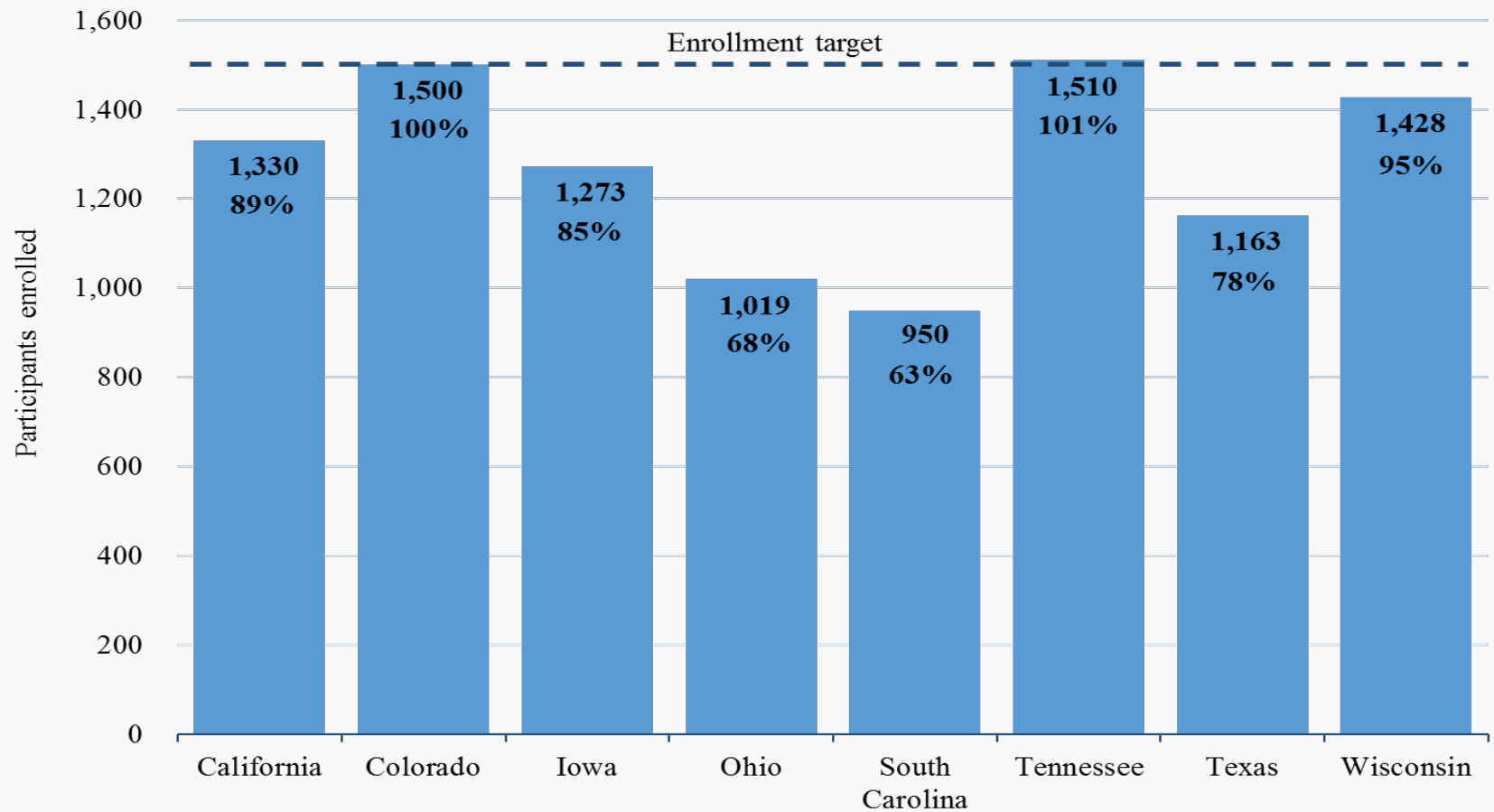
Target enrollment =
12,000 participants

Final CSPED enrollment =
10,161
(85% of target)

Extra Services
(5,086 study participants)

Regular Services (5,075
study participants)

Enrollment



Participant Characteristics

Participant Characteristics

Characteristic	Mean/Percent
Sex	90% fathers
Age	35 (average)
Marital History*	58% never married
Number of Parenting Partners	1.8 average; 3+ = 21%
Number of Biological Children (<age 18)	2.5 average; 4+ = 21%
Any Resident Biological Children (<age 18)*	31%
Race/Ethnicity	33% White NH; 40% Black NH; 22% Hispanic
Education	26% <HS; 43% HS or GED; 31% >HS

* No Texas

Challenging Caseload

- Complex families
- Limited work histories
- Low levels of education
- Barriers to employment
 - Transportation (30% reported this to be very or extremely limiting)
 - Having a criminal record (68% reported being convicted of a crime)
 - Not having a steady place to live (30% did not expect to live in same place)
- Mental health*:
 - Major Depression: 23%
 - "Never" or "rarely" in control over things that happen to self: 25%

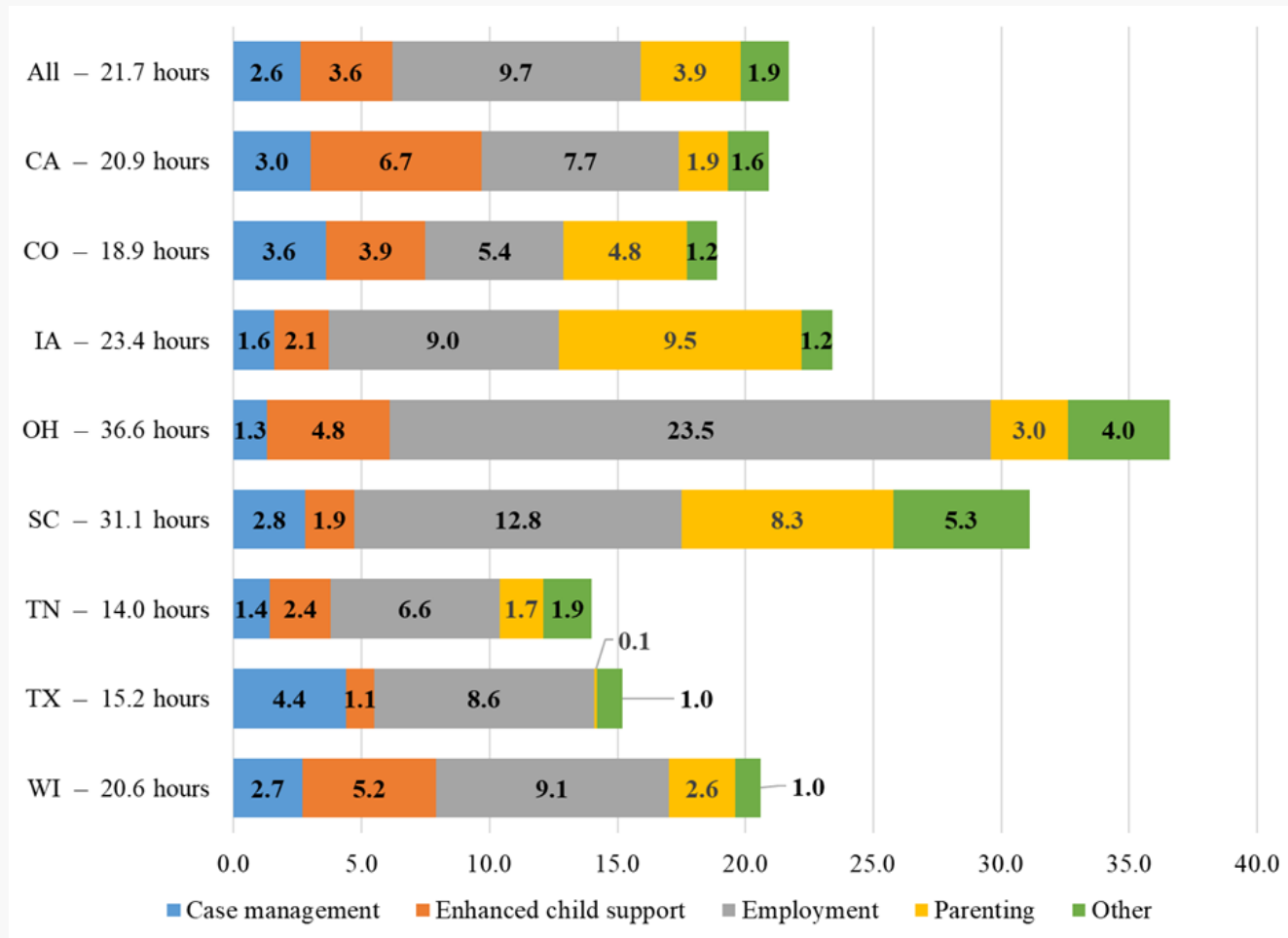
* no data for Texas

Service Delivery

CSPED Services

- CSPED services
 - All programs: Enhanced child support; employment; parenting; case management
 - Some programs added: Financial literacy, parenting time, mediation
- All programs partnered with...
 - DV experts to develop and implement DV plans
- Programs also provided...
 - Work supports, incentives, referrals
- CSPED programs adapted to meet local contexts
- In total, participants averaged 21.7 hours of CSPED services
 - 53 % group-based; 47% individually-administered
 - (19.1 hours in first year post-enrollment)

CSPED Service Hours, by Content Area



A Closer Look: Employment Services

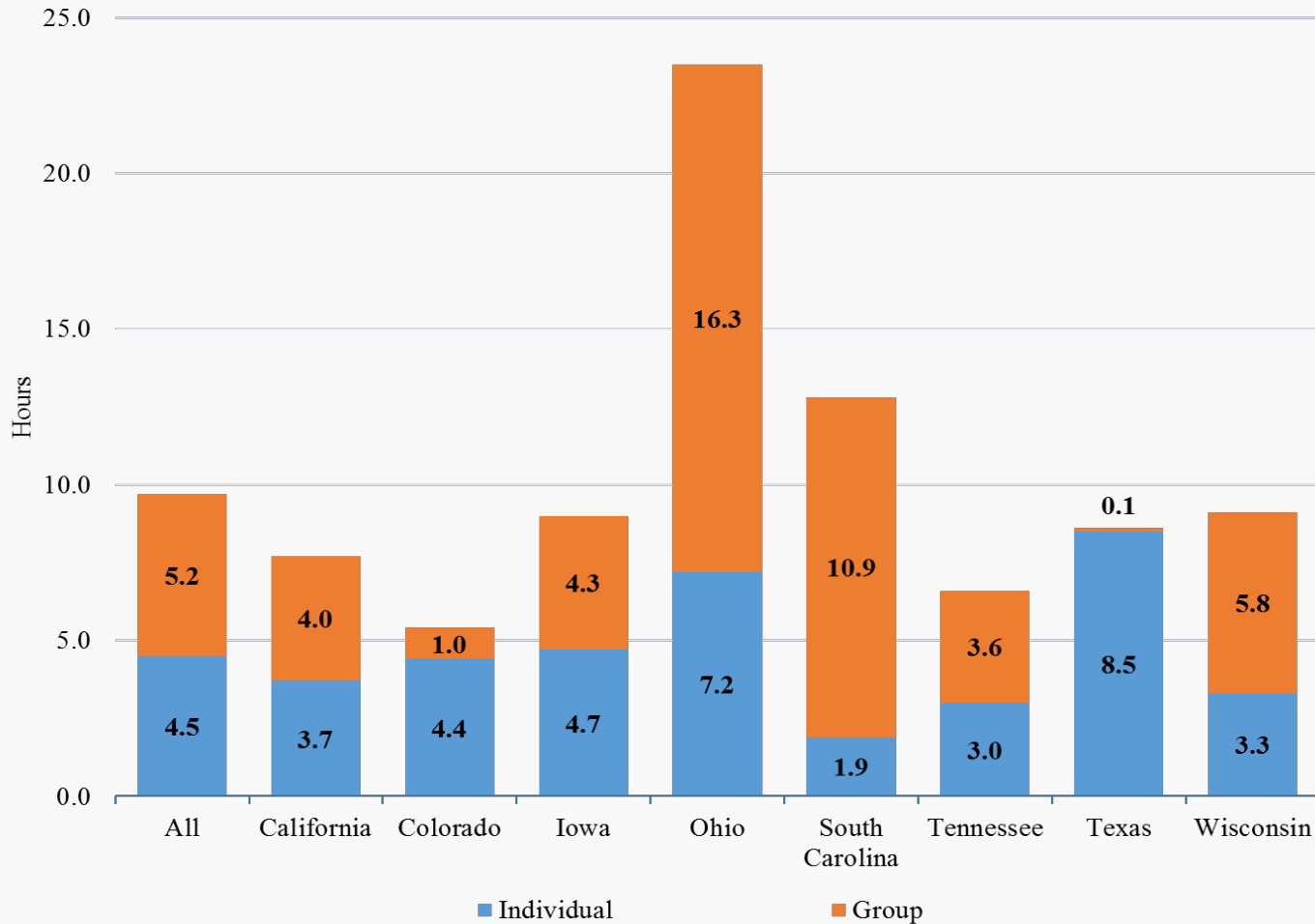
CSPED Employment Services

- Provided by partner(s), each with an employment case manager (CM; dedicated or shared), and a job developer (same as CM or different)
- Most commonly:
 - Employment assessments and plans
 - Facilitated and self-directed job search
 - Job readiness training; resume and cover letter training
 - Job referrals; job development
 - Job retention services
 - Work supports
- Less often:
 - Vocational training, on-the-job training, subsidized employment, internships, and short-term job skills training
 - ESL classes, GED classes
 - Voluntary drug testing, expungement services

CSPED Employment Service Dosage

- 94% received one or more service contacts (93% individual; 52% group)
- In total, participants received on average 9.7 hours of employment services (8.8 hours in first 12 months)
 - Most time: 38% of employment service hours were spent on group-based job readiness training
 - Highest uptake: job readiness; employment assessments; facilitated and self-directed job search; job development; resume and cover letter training.
- Average employment service dosage varied across grantees, during the first 12 months and in total
 - 4.3 to 20.4 hours of employment services total
 - 1.8 to 8.5 hours of individual employment services
 - .1 to 15.6 hours of group employment services

CSPED Employment Service Dosage



CSPED Employment Service Dosage

- Incentives for achieving milestones
 - 75% received at least one
 - Of those who received any, participants received an average of 4.9 valued at \$149*
 - Examples: gift cards, planners, parent-child activities
- Work supports for overcoming barriers to work and services
 - 36% received at least one
 - Of those who received any, participants received an average of 5.4 valued at \$336
 - Examples: gas cards, bus passes, work tools, uniforms

*Excludes arrears forgiveness

Key Challenges and Lessons Learned

Trust and Relationship-Building

- **Challenge:** Child support system's "reputation" led to a lack of trust that CSPED represented a true offer of service.
- **Strategies:**
 - Leveraging partner reputations within the community
 - Intensive support and contact early in the relationship
 - Frontloading employment services

"[The perception is], nothing good comes from child support." – Fatherhood Partner

"Child support has had such a negative rep for decades upon decades upon decades, as a collection agency... So for the first year, child support just had to sort of re-brand itself, to say, 'Hey, we're OK. There's no tricks.'" - Fatherhood Partner

Attaining Buy-In

- **Challenge:** Some participants did not think they needed help finding work through CSPED, or could not afford time away from work for training.
- **Strategies:**
 - Consistency of messaging; reinforcement of programmatic goals
 - Job development services
 - Highlighting successes among peers
 - Offering services at a wide range of times

Multiple Complex Barriers to Employment

- **Challenge:** Many participants had substantial, interlocking barriers to employment.
- **Strategies:**
 - Intensive case management (across agencies)
 - Leveraging community resources
 - Occasional use of grant funds for exceptional circumstances

Criminal Backgrounds

- **Challenge:** Most CSPED participants had criminal backgrounds.
- **Strategies:**
 - Seeking out felony-friendly employers; employer education
 - Training on background-related questions and federal bonding program for participants
 - Expungement assistance (of varying intensity)

Adopting a Child Support Agency Leadership Structure Is Consequential

- Not without challenges
- But crucially for CSPED, child support agencies:
 - Identified and had access to the target population
 - Had information about the full family context
 - Could take direct action to address barriers to financial stability the child support system may create
- The child support-led structure:
 - Helped child support outcomes remain the focus
 - Facilitated more direction and prescription
 - Enabled the development of relationships and buy-in across agencies and levels of government
 - Allowed partners to focus on own areas of expertise

Additional Benefits Beyond CSPED

- Changing how child support staff think about themselves

"I think it brought us to the table. Us doing this, us leading this effort, let everyone in the community know what we are about..." – Site Manager

"I think that it motivated us to be more aware and look more and educate ourselves more... if it wasn't our goal to know all of the resources, we'd still just be focused on child support collections." – Site Manager

- Changing child support's reputation

"I think [participants] see child support as a more neutral party now." – Site Manager

"You wouldn't believe how many times I have heard, 'I'd never think that this was being offered by the child support office.'" – Site Manager

*"It's something different. [Participants] aren't looking at child support in that way. As child support starts to evolve into a more helping field, [CSPED] is a good start."
– Project Manager*

Leadership Matters

- Strong child support leaders were crucial for:
 - Managing partners, encouraging communication, providing information on expectations, delineating roles and responsibilities
 - Building buy-in, facilitating culture change, and promoting sustainability

"You got to have a team of leaders that first of all believe in the concept in what you are trying to do." – Parenting and Employment Partner

"I feel that they have really let us do our job. They haven't stepped on our toes; they haven't limited us; they don't try to get into our day-to-day function. There really seemed to be a lot of trust; 'We're hearing what you are saying and we trust that you will bring it to the table.'" – Employment Partner

Cross-Agency Programs (like CSPED) Require Strong Partnerships

- Partnerships were not without challenges
- But, they offered many benefits for implementation
- Allowed for the provision of multiple services

"One person can't do it all... they need a partner. And that was kind of the intent [of the grant], right?" - Child Support Agency Director
- Leveraged each partner's unique strengths and expertise

"Each partner is doing what they do best and that is why it works in our state." – Project Director
- Created a "unified front" for interactions with participants

"I think it's seamless...you can't have the one without the other." - Site Manager
- Broadened access to non-CSPED community resources and providers

The Crucial Role of Staffing and Collaboration

- Dedicated, consistent, communicative staff were crucial to participant engagement
 - Cultivating trust and motivation
 - Warm handoffs; frequent communication with partners
 - Communicating with partners about engagement barriers, successes
 - Providing consistent messaging across partners
 - Maintaining commitment to program goals

"It's the passionate case managers. Every single person that said they got something out of [the program], it was because of the person they worked with, not because of the services they received. They talk about the services; the services are great. But, it always comes back to that one individual who helped them; that is the number one thing." - CSPED Project Manager

In Conclusion

- CSPED's impacts are yet to be determined
- But even without knowing CSPED's effects, the grantees' experiences offer many valuable insights in many domains:
 - Recruitment, enrollment, and engagement
 - Providing services that address the needs of the target population
 - The role of partnerships and leadership
 - And many more!
- Coming soon: public release of final CSPED reports
 - **Fall 2018:** Implementation Report; Baseline Characteristics Report
 - **Spring 2019:** Impact Report; Benefit-Cost Analysis

Thank You!

Questions?

Lisa Klein Vogel
CSPED Project Director
lmklein@wisc.edu