



Becoming an Ally Instead of an Adversary

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Quotes submitted for Child Support Guideline Reviews

- “I do not understand how...”
- “DCSE is supposed to be neutral but it is clear and evident in court that they are not...”
- “This creates a bias against the paying parent...”
- “In no way is this fair...”
- “To us this doesn’t make any sense...”
- “How is it fair to the working citizen...”
- “There’s no help for [non-custodial parents] like me.”
- “The system is outdated.”



Quotes Continued

- “I have spoken with 7 Child Support Enforcement personnel...They have been unhelpful...”
- “It is disturbing to know that the Child Support Enforcement agency would be ‘the obstacle’ in obtaining employment...”
- “It would certainly benefit everyone if the agency was taking the time to help all parties involved...”
- “It is completely unjust...”
- “Aren’t we all supposed to be treated as equals?”
- “This current system has made me feel like it is easier for me to give up.”
- “It gets a little malicious feeling.”



What Is Procedural Justice?

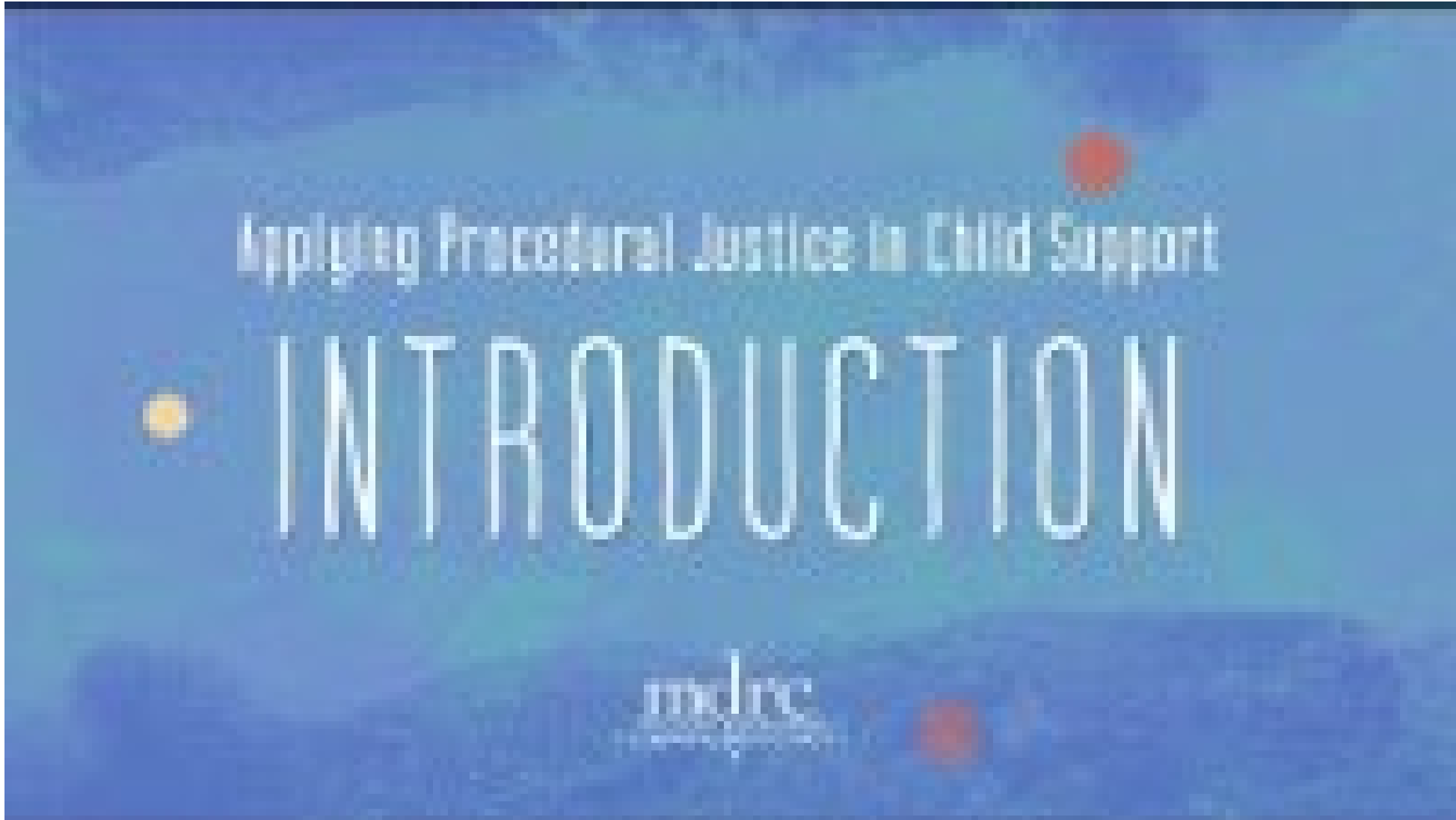
The idea that the perceived fairness of the process and outcome are more important to an individual than the favorability of the outcome.

Key Elements

Respect ◦ Understanding ◦ Neutrality ◦ Voice ◦ Helpfulness



What Is Procedural Justice?





The PJAC Grant

- October 2016 – September 2022
 - Planning
 - Pilot
 - Enrollment
 - Continued services
 - No cost extension
- Demonstration Grants
 - Arizona – Maricopa County
 - California – San Bernardino & Riverside Counties
 - Michigan – Muskegon County
 - Franklin County, OH
 - Stark County, OH
 - Virginia – Newport News & Richmond District Offices
- Evaluation Grant
 - Georgia



Changing the Narrative

- “They listen. They’re sympathetic.”
- “I feel like they give me information when I’m there. Like when I needed help or with forms or something like that.”
- “I’ve never really been in a position where we were making a decision together and they needed my input.”
- “My case manager been a really, really cool person through this bad time. It’s good to know that there’s somebody out there that is being straight up.”



Changing the Narrative

■ PJAC services group

■ Business-as-usual group

Child support has been helpful in relation to my case



People at child support help to make sure that I understand my case







PJAC Parent Characteristics

Characteristic	Arizona	California	Michigan	Franklin County	Stark County	Virginia	All PJAC Sites
<u>Parent characteristics</u>							
Male (%)	93.5	92.9	88.7	92.6	86.6	87.7	90.2
Age (years)	39.7	37.2	35.7	37.3	39.0	39.0	38.1
Race/ethnicity (%)							
Black, non-Hispanic	16.6	16.4	44.8	61.1	33.8	84.8	41.2
White, non-Hispanic	32.6	19.7	50.2	36.3	64.6	13.6	35.5
Hispanic	46.3	60.0	1.8	1.4	0.9	1.3	20.9
Other	4.5	3.9	3.2	1.2	0.7	0.3	2.4
Noncustodial parent is a custodial parent on another case (%)	1.4	12.1	17.6	5.7	7.6	5.3	8.4
<u>Case characteristics</u>							
Number of cases per noncustodial parent ^a	1.3	1.3	2.1	1.8	2.1	1.8	1.7
Years since order on oldest case established ^b	9.7	8.8	10.2	8.4	10.7	11.4	9.9
Monthly amount due (\$)	427	522	259	528	340	455	420
Total debt due (\$)	44,742	33,943	15,362	21,431	16,747	21,311	26,146
Months since last payment, among those who made a payment in the year before study enrollment	4.8	5.2	5.0	4.7	6.0	5.4	5.2
Ever referred to contempt before study enrollment (%)	24.2	8.0	63.9	38.5	31.9	50.2	34.9
Family violence indicated ^c (%)	5.7	10.2	43.2	6.3	5.6	29.9	17.8
Has a debt-only case (%)	29.1	17.3	32.7	19.8	34.6	43.9	30.7
Custodial parent and child(ren) receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families on primary case ^d (%)	1.3	21.5	4.5	4.4	11.3	14.9	10.0
Sample size	2,085	2,070	1,730	1,416	2,166	1,905	11,372



How Do You Shift from Enforcement to Engagement?

- Common Goals between Program Staff and Parents
- Foster a Customer-Centric Culture
- Improve Communication Channels
- Develop Partnerships



Be a Mr. Jensen





The Power of Words



Lessons Learned

- The longer you apply these principles, the more compounded the positive impact. And the longer you wait to apply these principles, the more compounded the negative impact.

Current Support in Virginia

	September 2021	August 2022
PJAC	32.5	34.2
Control	33.7	32.1
Percentage Point Difference	-1.2	+2.1

Arrears in Virginia

	September 2021	August 2022
PJAC	60.5	58.3
Control	68.6	57.3
Percentage Point Difference	-7.9	+1.0



More Lessons Learned

- This positively impacts interpersonal relationships
- Willingness and ability to pay are often tied together
- Not everyone has “barriers”
- Agency culture and training impact case management
- Include both parents
- Timeliness matters

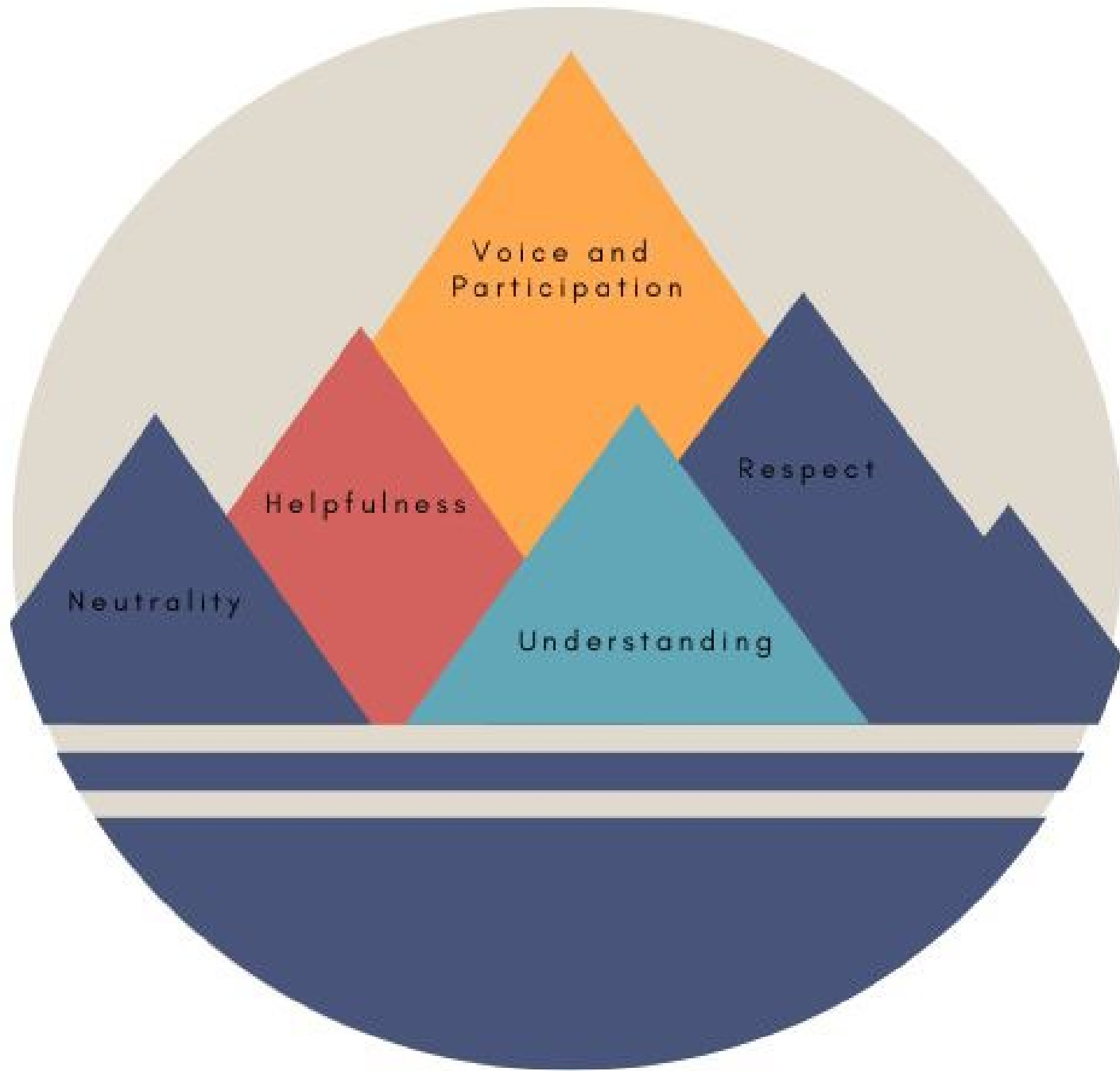


Ongoing Efforts without \$\$



Practical Strategies

- Visuals and Terminology Matter
- Opportunities for Voice and Participation
- Timely and Transparent Information
- Accessible and User-Friendly Systems
- Proactive Case Management
- Training and Education





Resources

- [Procedural Justice-Informed Alternatives to Contempt \(PJAC\) | The Administration for Children and Families \(https://www.acf.hhs.gov/css/grants/current-grants/pjac\)](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/css/grants/current-grants/pjac)
- [PJAC TA Guide FINAL.pdf \(https://www.mdrc.org/sites/default/files/PJAC TA Guide FINAL.pdf\)](https://www.mdrc.org/sites/default/files/PJAC%20TA%20Guide%20FINAL.pdf)
- [Gathering and Using Family Input to Improve Child Support and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Services: Approaches from the Human Services Field \(https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/opre/family_input_brief_oct2022.pdf\)](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/opre/family_input_brief_oct2022.pdf)
- [Elevating Family Input in TANF and Child Support Programs: Resources for Program Staff, Leaders and Families \(https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/opre/toolkit_feb2023.pdf\)](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/opre/toolkit_feb2023.pdf)
- [The Power of Perception \(https://trabianshorters.com/the-power-of-perception/\)](https://trabianshorters.com/the-power-of-perception/)
- [Voices from the Field: Asset-Framing in Practice \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddH2x6RIVJE\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddH2x6RIVJE)