



201 East Washington Avenue, Room G200
P.O. Box 8916
Madison, WI 53708-8916
Telephone: 608-267-3905
Fax: 608-261-6972

Governor Scott Walker
Secretary Eloise Anderson

Secretary's Office

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Contact: Joe Scialfa or Kathleen Scholl - 608-266-9000

DCF is Changing Perception of Child Support System

August is National Child Support Awareness Month

(MADISON) –In a perfect world, a child is raised in a stable and loving two-parent home, with both parents contributing equally to their growth. However, many Wisconsin children experience a vastly different reality. When a relationship dissolves, the Wisconsin Child Support system plays a vital role in ensuring that children receive the financial and emotional support needed to grow and thrive.

Governor Scott Walker has recognized the important function that child support plays in children's well-being and economic security by proclaiming August [Child Support Awareness Month](#).

"Children desperately need both parents, their mother and their father, in order to flourish," said DCF Secretary Eloise Anderson. "When a non-custodial parent makes regular child support payments, they don't feel the shame of failing to provide for their family and are more likely to be active in their child's life."

Wisconsin's Child Support Agencies understand the importance of parental involvement to the over 374, 000 children in the state whose parents are receiving child support services. To help foster increased parental participation in their children's lives, county agencies are not only working to ensure timely payments, but also offering assistance to parents in gaining the means to make those payments. In addition to the more than \$639 million in maintenance payments collected to ensure that children are fed, clothed and kept safe, county child support agencies work with non-custodial parents to connect them to job opportunities, develop work skills, and connect with their children in meaningful ways.

"We're trying to change the negative perception many non-custodial parents have about child support," remarked Anderson. "By changing the focus from being a debt collections agency to finding ways to help parents get jobs, make timely payments, and develop a positive partnership with the other parent, we improve outcomes for children, reduce dependence on government assistance, and promote a path to independence and prosperity for families."

One example of this new approach is the Supporting Parents Supporting Kids (SPSK) pilot program in Brown and Kenosha counties. SPSK provides non-custodial parents with specialized services to help them support their families. The program first aims to help non-custodial parents take responsibility for their past behaviors and accept the need to change, then offers comprehensive case management, job skills, and fatherhood/parenting activities so they can turn their lives around and start to rebuild their relationships with their families. Based upon its early success, DCF is looking at ways to continue and expand the program beyond the pilot's expiration in 2017.

“Kids whose parents make timely child support payments are typically healthier, have fewer behavioral problems, and do better in school,” added Anderson. “Investing in children through providing support and building relationships can lead to their lifelong success.”

See more about the [Wisconsin Child Support Program](http://dcf.wi.gov) on the Department of Children and Families website <http://dcf.wi.gov>.

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