

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES  
DIVISION OF FAMILY AND ECONOMIC SECURITY  
ADMINISTRATOR'S MEMO SERIES

ACTION  
 NOTICE

**DFES 18-06**

ISSUE DATE: 11/09/2018

DISPOSAL DATE: 12/31/2019

\*PROGRAM CATEGORIES:

TJ  W-2  CS  
 RA  CF

**TO:** Child Support Agency Directors  
W-2 Agency Directors  
Tribal Child Support Agency Directors  
Tribal Economic Support Directors  
DCF Regional Coordinators

**FROM:** John Chapin  
Division Administrator

**RE:** 2019 Children First Program Plan Request

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this memo is to outline plans for the 2019 Children First Program.

**BACKGROUND:**

The Children First Program provides case management services to connect noncustodial parents (NCP) to employment services with the goals of obtaining employment and providing child support to their families. The Program provides an opportunity for noncustodial parents to succeed in paying court-ordered child support.

Over the past 28 years, many NCPs have benefited from the additional case management services offered through participation in the Children First Program. The Program provides opportunities for self-improvement through case management and referrals for community services. CSAs may elect to offer Children First services, as an initial enforcement resource in lieu of taking more punitive enforcement steps. Offering additional case management services to the NCP will allow the CSA to determine whether the NCP is willing to cooperate in finding employment.

Funding for the 2019 program will be \$1.14 million.

**POLICY:**

County and tribal agencies interested in providing Children First services in 2019, including agencies that currently have Children First Programs, must submit a new Children First Program Plan (Attachment 1) by November 30, 2019. The plan must include a letter of support from the child support agency in each county/tribe that will be served by the program. A sample letter of support is attached (Attachment 2).

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For plan year 2019, as in previous years, each plan will be reviewed to determine whether it meets the core mission of the Program. Agencies will be required to submit a Plan which includes justification for the number of slots requested and, if there is an increase or decrease from previous years, the reason for the change. For those plans selected, funding will be allocated to those agencies. Additionally, child support agencies are requested to provide a methodology on how cases are prioritized to obtain Children First orders. The Bureau of Child Support (BCS) will notify the agencies selected and provide information regarding funding allocations for the 2019 Children First plan year.

#### **FUNDING:**

Children First funds, up to \$400.00 per participant, are for employment services and activities, and are not eligible for federal financial participation (FFP). Services authorized under Title IV-D of the Social Security Act for the administration of the child support program or to meet the federal match requirements of the child support program do not qualify as Children First funding. Agencies will use SPARC Line 0700 to report Children First Program activities with the participant.

Case management activities are eligible for 66% FFP reimbursement. Agencies will use SPARC Line 0701 to report Children First case management activities costs. The Department of Children and Families (DCF) will report these expenditures through the OCSE-396 Child Support quarterly expenditure report.

Per OCSE PIQ 12-02, <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/css/resource/partnering-with-other-programs-and-activities>, there are several ways child support funding may be used to achieve the program's core mission - collecting and disbursing payments to families. The following case management activities may contribute to improving child support outcomes:

- identifying noncustodial parents that are unemployed, underemployed or experiencing other social and family circumstances that impede the parent's ability to pay child support
- making referrals to other service agencies
- tracking and monitoring child support payments
- follow-up and tracking noncustodial parents where the court issued an order directing a noncustodial parent to attend a work program
- collecting and analyzing data, as well as entering documentation in the state child support system and the CARES system
- conducting timely reviews and modifications, and
- providing specialized enforcement.

Case managers may be employed by private, public, or non-profit community organizations pursuant to a cooperative agreement or contract. If a case manager also performs functions unrelated to child support, the agency must allocate costs as appropriate.

DCF reserves the right to decline contracts with programs that are not meeting program requirements as referred to in this Administrator's Memo and the 2019 Children First Program Guide (Attachment 4). Additionally, the state reserves the right to make appropriate shifts in funding.

## **PROGRAM GUIDE AND CARES DATA ENTRY REQUIREMENT:**

The 2019 Children First Program Guide describes current state policies and procedures for program operation. The Guide outlines required CARES entry for all Children First participants and activities, and provides technical details regarding the requirements for tracking Children First participant data in CARES. The child support agency must enter the court order in KIDS, and review the 2019 Children First Program Guide for a detailed list of agency responsibilities.

Agencies are expected to review this guide (attached to this memo) prior to submitting their Children First Program Plan.

## **PROGRAM MONITORING:**

DCF will routinely monitor various aspects of program implementation and operation, including compliance with state statutes and policies, as well as financial monitoring of Children First Programs. Children First agencies are required to adhere to CARES data entry guidelines, including entering participant data and court orders, to be eligible for reimbursement. In February of 2019, Children First case managers will enter some data in the new Wisconsin Works Programs system. Training for using the new system will begin in early 2019.

Agencies are expected to have collaborations and partnerships with local, state, and community partners to provide services to Children First participants.

Children First agencies are required to complete a quarterly report. The reports are due April 30, July 31, October 31, and January 31. Please see Attachment 3 for details. In addition, Children First agencies are required to complete and submit a weekly survey of drug screening, testing, and treatment results.

## **PROGRAM AUTHORITY AND STATUTES:**

For additional information regarding the Children First program, refer to Wis. Stats. §§ 49.36 and 767.55.

If you are a child support agency with questions regarding the Children First program, please contact BCS via the KIDPOL Request Form at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cs/kidpol>. Other agencies may contact BCS at [BCSINFO@wisconsin.gov](mailto:BCSINFO@wisconsin.gov).

## **ACTION SUMMARY STATEMENT:**

Counties/ W-2 agencies /Tribes and consortia who plan to offer Children First in 2019 must do the following:

- Complete a Children First Program Plan using the attached “2019 Children First Program Plan” (Attachment 1).
- Obtain a signed Letter of Support from each county/tribal child support office served by the Children First Program (Attachment 2).
- ***Submit the 2019 Children First Program Plan and Letter(s) of Support to the Bureau of Child Support no later than November 30, 2018, using one of the options listed below:***

Mail to: WI Bureau of Child Support  
ATTN: Phyllis Fuller  
PO Box 7935  
Madison WI 53707-7935

Email to: [BCSINFO@Wisconsin.gov](mailto:BCSINFO@Wisconsin.gov)

Fax to: Phyllis Fuller (608) 422-7165

**Attachments**     [2019 Children First Program Plan \(Attachment 1\)](#)  
[Child Support Agency Letter of Support \(Attachment 2\)](#)  
[Children First Program Quarterly Report \(Attachment 3\)](#)  
[2019 Children First Program Guide \(Attachment 4\)](#)

cc: 2018 Children First Agencies  
DCF Regional Coordinators  
Andre Small  
Phyllis Fuller