

# Child Support Enforcement

## Update to 2006 Evaluation Report

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### Problems Identified

- **Weak Accountability.** The Department of Human Services (DHS) had not developed statewide service delivery standards to which county agencies could be held accountable.
- **Inadequately Targeted Incentive Payments.** DHS distributed incentive payments to counties without considering the differences in the populations that county agencies serve.
- **Unclear Authority.** DHS was reluctant to create a compliance program because the statute that gives DHS authority to establish one (*Minnesota Statutes 2006, 256.017*) did not include the child support enforcement among the several human services programs specifically named.
- **Inconsistent Services.** The child support enforcement program is administered by 84 county agencies and service delivery was inconsistent throughout the state. The absence of statewide standards and easily accessible and timely information for county child support agencies likely contributed to inconsistencies.

### Changes Implemented

- **Improved Consistency and Accountability.** DHS started a two-year project to improve its online child support policy and procedures manual. This resource should provide timely and accurate information to county child support agencies. DHS has also developed a pilot policy that could lead to greater consistency in how counties manage child support arrears. Finally, the department is working with some counties to develop county-specific performance targets for increased accountability.

### Action Needed

- **Give DHS Clear Compliance Authority.** The Legislature should amend *Minnesota Statutes 256.017* to give DHS authority to establish compliance policies and procedures for the child support enforcement program.
- **Facilitate Consistency and Accountability.** DHS should continue working with counties to develop county-specific performance targets and statewide service delivery standards. These performance targets and statewide standards, along with the strategic use of incentives and grants, could facilitate statewide consistency in child support enforcement services and strengthen accountability.