

Child support court opens in Porter County, Indiana

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On Jan. 7, 2013, Porter County in northwest Indiana opened a specialized Title IV-D Court. Its purpose: to increase efficiency, lessen strain on resources, and decrease costs—with the ultimate goal of better serving children in the program.

The court's opening followed 18 months of planning and hard work. The Porter County Prosecutor's Office and other planners faced many decisions, including the facility's location, funding, procedures, and key partners.

The planning group first chose space in the Juvenile Services building, and the county commissioners helped with building funds to ensure timely remodeling. Next, the Porter County Council agreed to fund the project (including equipment and salaries) through reimbursements from the program. They also used County Incentive Funds from the child support program for start-up equipment. Finally, the group developed relationships with Porter County Clerk of Courts, the departments in the Juvenile Services building, and the other courts, and they determined procedures.

Going up – collections, efficiency, service

The objective and goal of this project is to increase collections through a specialized court structure. While it is a little early to provide complete metrics to measure the court's success, collections have increased from last year based on performance measures.



In the third quarter of 2012, arrears collections were at 68 percent; in the same quarter of 2013, these collections stand at 71 percent. Current support collections increased from 62 percent in 2012, to 65 percent in 2013. The biggest improvement so far has been in order establishment: up from 82 percent in 2012, to 92 percent in 2013.

Additionally, the Title IV-D Court is efficient with staff doing all work electronically. The commissioner views the files from the bench on her computer and the court generates orders immediately. This important change saves time and money and cuts down on cumbersome paper files needing numerous people to handle.

While the project was a significant undertaking, it was well worth it. The new court employs part-time Commissioner Lisa Moser to hear cases, a full-time court reporter, and a part-time secretary. The court operates Monday through Thursday weekly. The Porter County child support office has about 4,500 cases and employs 3 attorneys, 11 full-time staff, and 1 part-time staff member. The new court allowed the child support office to grow by adding one attorney and one full-time staff member to better serve the program.

Porter County is on track to achieve the ultimate goals of improving efficiency to increase the number of child support orders and to provide better service to the community. Most of all, the court is providing better service to the most important individuals—the children for whom the program is meant to serve.

For more information, see the [Porter County Child Support](#) website.