

CHILD SUPPORT: PRIVATIZING LOCAL OFFICES

While all IV-D programs share a common framework and mission, each program operates in a different environment and has unique attributes and constraints. The challenge is to deliver child support services in a manner that best serves the local constituency and fulfills program objectives. State and local governments and judicial districts have chosen to team with private sector vendors for local service delivery for a diverse number of reasons:

- **Establish New Offices in Under-Served Areas:** As caseloads increase and population centers shift, it makes sense to open new offices in under-served geographic areas. These can be operated by a private vendor.
- **Address Performance Issues:** If a local office is not meeting state expectations for performance in one or more areas, the state or local governing body can make a decision to outsource. Requests for proposals and contracts can be structured to stimulate higher performance by incentivizing a contractor based on progress toward federal or state goals.
- **Curtail Perceived Expansion of Government:** A IV-D agency might need extra hands to manage its workload, meet federal time frames, or accomplish all its objectives. However, despite the need for additional staffing, adding public employees may not be an option – even if sufficient funding is available. Contracting with a private company is often more palatable to the general public.
- **Relieve County Governments from Staffing and Operating Child Support Offices:** Elected county officials are charged with providing myriad services for local residents, ranging from law enforcement to solid waste management, all diverse but very important responsibilities. Operating a program as complex and challenging as child support can strain local resources and compete with other public demands and expectations.

Contracting with an experienced private child support service provider can allow local officials to focus on other areas of responsibility. Public agencies can benefit from competition among vendors in terms of both costs and service delivery. Vendors are continually challenged to provide high levels of service at the most reasonable cost. A vendor's ability to win and sustain business depends upon its reputation and pricing.

Additionally, with operations across state lines, vendors can bring best practices and lessons learned from other jurisdictions. Whether it is infusing innovative ideas into struggling offices, or just allowing government more flexibility, private vendors can provide a cost-effective alternative to publicly operated child support programs.

For more information on privatization, contact info@ywcss.com

