

***Building Opportunities,
Enforcing Obligations:***
**Implementation and Interim Impacts
of Parents' Fair Share**

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December 1998

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This report is based on research conducted for the Parents' Fair Share Demonstration, a national demonstration project that combines job training and placement, peer support groups, and other services with the goal of increasing the earnings and child support payments of unemployed noncustodial parents (usually fathers) of children on welfare, improving their parenting and communication skills, and providing an opportunity for them to participate more fully and effectively in the lives of their children.

Funders of the Parents' Fair Share Demonstration

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services	U.S. Department of Labor
The Pew Charitable Trusts	Smith Richardson Foundation
W. K. Kellogg Foundation	Ford Foundation
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation	The McKnight Foundation
U.S. Department of Agriculture	Northwest Area Foundation
The Annie E. Casey Foundation	

Dissemination of MDRC's work is also supported by MDRC's Public Policy Outreach Funders: the Ford Foundation, the Ambrose Monell Foundation, the Alcoa Foundation, and the James Irvine Foundation.

The findings and conclusions presented in this report do not necessarily represent the official positions or policies of the funders or the participating states. Interested readers may wish to contact the states for more information on the program. The sites and states in the Parents' Fair Share Demonstration are Los Angeles Parents' Fair Share Project, Los Angeles County (Los Angeles), California; Duval County Parents' Fair Share Project, Duval County (Jacksonville), Florida; MassJOBS Parents' Fair Share Project, Hampden County (Springfield), Massachusetts; Kent County Parents' Fair Share Project, Kent County (Grand Rapids), Michigan; Operation Fatherhood, Mercer County (Trenton), New Jersey; Options for Parental Training and Support (OPTS), Montgomery County (Dayton), Ohio; and Tennessee Parents' Fair Share Project, Shelby County (Memphis), Tennessee.

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Preface

With new time limits restricting the availability of public assistance to single-parent families, welfare reformers have placed a high priority on increasing the financial support provided by noncustodial parents (usually fathers). Partly prompted by new federal welfare-to-work funding, state and local officials across the country are developing new initiatives. In this context, the findings and lessons presented in this interim report on the Parents' Fair Share Demonstration (PFS) provide important insights and cautions.

Combining services, participation requirements, and enhanced child support enforcement, PFS is the largest national demonstration program for noncustodial parents of children receiving welfare, encompassing more than 5,000 such parents in seven sites around the country. Usually they were referred to PFS by the courts because they were behind in their child support payments and were unemployed. The demonstration was designed with three interrelated goals — to help low-income noncustodial parents gain more stable and better-paying jobs, to increase their payment of child support, and to encourage them to be active parents in other ways.

As detailed in the report, PFS has demonstrated that developing new forms of outreach and services for noncustodial parents did lead to increases in child support payments from a group of parents sometimes viewed as unlikely to respond to child support enforcement efforts. Innovative partnerships between child support agencies and community service providers can accomplish a great deal, building the system's capacity to distinguish between those who are unwilling to pay support from those who are unable to pay, and to provide appropriate services to each group.

At the same time, the most promise for collecting significant payments resides in noncustodial parents who are stably employed. About half the PFS fathers worked during each quarter of the 18-month follow-up period, but so far PFS has not succeeded in increasing the fathers' employment rates or earnings above and beyond those of a control group of similar fathers. It proved hard to provide the menu of skill-building activities that might have helped the more employable men gain better jobs than they would have on their own and, for those who faced substantial barriers to employment, the program's offerings often could not compete with the realities of the men's difficult life circumstances, vividly portrayed in a forthcoming qualitative study from the demonstration. The project's final report, scheduled for 1999, will present longer-term data and findings on a broader set of outcomes.

It is to be hoped that these results will provoke creative thinking about, and a renewed commitment to, improving access to economic opportunity for low-skilled men. Since even the PFS sites that used skill-building services (classroom and on-the-job training) did not increase the earnings of the men they served, the report suggests that to succeed in the future, new models may be required that can provide disadvantaged men with the income they need while allowing them to build new skills. To improve the

economic status of the group of men served by PFS would clearly bring benefits resonating far beyond the goal of increased child support collections.

The PFS demonstration has been supported by a forward-looking group of private foundations, federal agencies, and the participating states, with a shared vision that comprehensive welfare reform and antipoverty efforts must encompass both the obligations and the opportunities of low-income noncustodial fathers. The foundation and federal partners are listed at the front of this report. To them, the participating states and localities, and the staff and participants in each site who worked daily to reach the goals of the program and to support our research efforts, we are greatly indebted.

Judith M. Gueron
President

Acknowledgments

The evaluation of the Parents' Fair Share Demonstration and the writing of this report have depended upon the commitment of many people, including program staff, PFS funders, and MDRC staff.

In addition to launching the PFS program and dedicating themselves to continually improving its services, the PFS staff in the seven demonstration sites have been key contributors to the evaluation research. They conducted random assignment and collected baseline information on each sample member, provided information to field interviewers and other researchers, reviewed a draft of this report, and offered their insights throughout the demonstration. While staff at many levels made extraordinary contributions to the evaluation, we would especially like to thank the state PFS liaisons, the local PFS program directors, and the PFS child support managers in each site for their dedication and hard work. These were Charleszetta Anderson, Danetta Graves, Jackie Martin, and Nancy Randolph (Dayton); William Camden, Gary Howitt, and Raymond Jackson (Grand Rapids); Annette Day, Alice Lindquist, and Herbert Moore (Jacksonville); Linda Jenkins, Melanie Lemons, and Geraldo Rodriguez (Los Angeles); Frank Dawson, Felicia Hogan, Viola O'Neil, and Fagan Thompson (Memphis); Elaine Frawley, Donna Hobart, Carolyn Muzzi, and Norman Wagner (Springfield); Barbara Kelley-Sease, Rowena Madden, Mark Rogers, and Joseph Thomas (Trenton).

We are greatly indebted to the project's funders, who have supported both the program operations and the evaluation. These include the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services, Agriculture, and Labor and the Pew Charitable Trusts, W. K. Kellogg Foundation, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Annie E. Casey Foundation, Smith Richardson Foundation, Ford Foundation, McKnight Foundation, and Northwest Area Foundation. Insightful critiques of early results and drafts of this report were provided by Gerard Fiala, Mark Fucello, Bob Harris, Kristen Hyatt, Gaile Maller, Linda Mellgren, and Ronald Mincy.

At MDRC, Gordon Berlin, director of the PFS project, has provided vision and guidance fundamental to the demonstration since its inception. He, Dudley Benoit, Jacqueline Peters, Marilyn Price, and Evan Weissman conducted the field research underlying the implementation story told in these pages. Maxine Bailey and George Cave influenced our thinking about the program through their earlier roles on the PFS team. Earl Johnson's ethnographic work and field research have been invaluable to our interpreting the quantitative results. Judith Gueron, Suzanne Lynn, Philip Robins, and Judith Greissman offered many helpful comments on drafts of the report.

Joel Gordon oversaw the random assignment process, monitored the results of the enrollment process, and managed the processing of data. Frank Yang assisted with random assignment and demographic data. Gaston Murray developed the PFS management information system, continuously refining it throughout the demonstration. Programming of the MIS was done by Maryno Demesier and Juanita Vega-Chetcuti.

Margarita Agudelo collected and coordinated the processing of the administrative records data. Martin Gaynor developed the system for processing child support enforcement data. Charles Daniel, Joyce Dees, Donna George, Marguerite Payne, and Carmen Troche handled random assignment calls and entered data, with supervision from Shirley James.

John Martinez managed the data for the report and did the programming for the participation chapter. Cindy Redcross programmed the demographic and impact data. Both of them helped the authors interpret the results as they emerged. Iris Reyes and Paula LeePoy served as research assistants in early stages of the research. Joan Johnson ably coordinated the production of the report through its many versions and produced the tables and figures. She and Kim Torres fact-checked the document. Ute Appenzeller commented on an early draft.

Sylvia Newman edited the report, and Stephanie Cowell and Patt Pontevolpe did the word processing.

The Authors

Chapter 1

Introduction

In 1996, approximately 20 million children under age 18 lived with only one of their parents. Almost half of these 20 million children lived in families with an annual income of less than \$15,000. In light of these figures, which have been rising steadily over time, government child support agencies are focusing their efforts on increasing the number of children for whom paternity is established, a child support order is in place, and payments are being made. Despite these efforts, in the early 1990s only about half of all custodial parents, largely mothers, had a child support agreement or order in place, and only about half of these (or one-fourth of all such parents) received the full amount called for under the order. Only about one-eighth of custodial parents living in poverty had an order in place and were receiving full payments. Partly for this reason, many custodial parents rely on public assistance for a substantial part of their income: in the early 1990s, more than one-fifth of single parents with children under age 18 received cash assistance. For these families, child support collections amounted to only about 10 to 15 percent of AFDC benefits. With the recent changes in federally funded public assistance, these families are facing new financial pressures. Thus, poor families will have to rely even more on nongovernment sources of income, and their stake in successful child support enforcement (CSE) has dramatically increased.

The noncustodial parents, usually the fathers of children receiving federally funded public assistance, have largely been left out of the reform debate and programmatic initiatives except as the targets of increasing CSE efforts. But the experience of those involved in child support on a daily basis and the findings of research suggest that many of these parents have unstable employment and low current earnings. Further, there is growing evidence that many of these parents do not fit the stereotypes of absent and uninvolved fathers.¹ Many do have a relationship with the mother and child, but it is a fragile one without public supports designed to strengthen the connections between father and child.²

The Parents' Fair Share (PFS) Demonstration tests a new approach — one that is simple in theory, though complex to implement.³ In exchange for fathers' current and future cooperation with the child support system, a partnership of local organizations (including child support agencies) offered services designed to help noncustodial fathers find more stable and better-paying work, assume a fuller and more responsible parental role, and pay support on a consistent basis.⁴ Parents were referred to PFS by the courts or child support agencies and were required to partici-

¹A companion volume to this report, by Johnson, Levine, and Doolittle (forthcoming), provides some background on the issue.

²The concept of a "fragile family" in need of support emerges from the work of Ronald Mincy and others. See, for example, *Strengthening Fragile Families Initiative*.

³In this report, the abbreviation PFS is used to refer to both the demonstration as a whole and the program being tested in the demonstration.

⁴Since this report covers the implementation of PFS between 1995 and the end of 1996, with the follow-up period extending through the fall of 1997, the description of PFS is written in the past tense. Many of the programs described in this report continue to operate.

pate or face further CSE. During the period in which the parents participated in PFS services, the child support system gave them some “breathing room” and an incentive to invest in themselves by temporarily lowering or eliminating their current obligation to pay child support. The demonstration is a test of the feasibility of implementing this new “bargain” and its effects on parents, children, and the child support system.

This report presents interim findings on program implementation and initial impacts on several key outcomes. The following section of this chapter discusses the factors that led to the development of PFS. Subsequent sections present an overview of the goals, program model, and demonstration sites, and a summary of the PFS research strategy.

I. The Origins of Parents’ Fair Share

A. Welfare Reform

PFS had its origins, first, in welfare reform efforts that gradually shifted the balance of responsibility for supporting poor children away from the public sector and toward parents. The goal of a series of reform efforts, which gained momentum in the late 1980s, was to help custodial parents increase their employment and earnings and to create and enforce legal obligations for support from more noncustodial parents, so that poor children would be supported by *both* parents.

The Family Support Act of 1988 made explicit in federal policy the obligations of both parents and of the public assistance agencies providing income support. Custodial parents who received cash assistance were expected to participate in publicly funded employment-related services designed to help them find jobs and leave welfare. Noncustodial parents faced new CSE efforts, though no special services were provided to help them meet their obligation. As a move in this direction, the Family Support Act authorized a test of services for unemployed noncustodial parents, which gradually evolved into the Parents’ Fair Share Demonstration.⁵

The movement to shift support of poor children away from government and toward parents accelerated in the early 1990s, leading to passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) in 1996. This law eliminated the federal guarantee of cash assistance previously in place for families eligible for AFDC by ending that “entitlement” program and converting federal support to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), a fixed amount of federal funding provided in the form of a block grants to states. This shift ended federal funding for cash assistance after a five-year lifetime limit for most welfare recipients and imposed strict participation requirements in work-related activities for adults receiving assistance. Because of this series of changes, families receiving welfare face great pressure to replace benefits with new income streams, especially custodial parents’ earnings and noncustodial parents’ child support payments.

⁵Under the provisions of this legislation, federal funds for services intended to raise employment and earnings — normally targeted to custodial parents — could be used to serve unemployed noncustodial parents of children receiving welfare. Other waivers of federal funding rules concerning CSE funds were also granted for the demonstration.

B. Child Support Enforcement Efforts

Efforts to improve CSE were the second factor contributing to the development of PFS. Since the mid 1970s and continuing through the 1996 welfare law, federal lawmakers have imposed requirements on states to strengthen CSE with the goals of helping low-income families stay off welfare and of recouping welfare expenditures for those who did receive aid. These reforms required states to (1) develop data systems to track the status of cases and the location and income of noncustodial parents, (2) standardize child support orders by relying on guidelines that linked an order amount to income, (3) institute automatic withholding of child support payments from wages, (4) review the status of cases on a more frequent basis, and (5) increase the number of paternities established and dollars collected. Further, employers were required to report new hires and employee earnings for all their employees to state agencies, providing a means for CSE agencies to track earnings for those with outstanding child support obligations.

These efforts to improve CSE have largely focused on noncustodial parents with income and assets and have been most effective for these cases. Location and enforcement techniques, such as matches of administrative records (for example, child support cases against earnings records), work best with noncustodial parents whose residence, employment, and financial resources are stable. Research from PFS and other studies suggests that a significant portion of the noncustodial parents of children receiving welfare do not fit this profile. These parents continue to pose enforcement challenges precisely because their residence and employment are often difficult to determine, and the information available to CSE staff suggests that they have few financial resources and are unlikely to pay much in support. Hence, in many jurisdictions these cases remain a frustration to CSE agencies, causing them to turn their attention to other cases. With the changes in welfare, however, low-income families and children have a much greater stake in the success of CSE efforts to increase their income.

C. Labor Market Trends

The dramatic decline over the past 25 years in the labor market fortunes of less-educated men also contributed to the emergence of PFS. Numerous studies have documented the decline in the inflation-adjusted earnings of men with a high school diploma and no other educational or occupational credentials; the situation for those without a high school credential or General Educational Development certificate (GED) is even more dismal.⁶ Because much of the public policy focus has been on parents receiving welfare (largely women) and dislocated workers (who had previously held “family-supporting” jobs), men on the fringes of the labor market (and especially men of color) were rarely the special targets of employment program outreach, and there were few successful strategies for increasing their employment and earnings.⁷

⁶See Murnane and Levy (1992); and Wilson (1996).

⁷There is now a potential source of funding for poor noncustodial parents in the welfare-to-work grants to states and local employment and training programs. Under this program, administered by the U.S. Department of Labor, \$3 billion will be distributed, and the noncustodial parents of children receiving public assistance are one possible target group for services.

D. The Problem Facing the Courts and CSE Administrators

For child support administrators and the courts charged with enforcing a support obligation, the combination of the growing importance of child support for poor families, the low or sporadic employment and earnings of less-educated men, and the lack of programmatic alternatives for unemployed noncustodial parents created a serious ongoing problem. When a noncustodial parent with little work experience claimed that he was unable to pay his support because he was unemployed, it was frequently difficult for child support agencies and the courts to determine the truth of his claim (they often encountered parents who tried to hide income and assets from the system). The situation was further complicated because custodial parents who are receiving welfare do not have strong financial incentives to cooperate with CSE. Much or (under rules enacted in 1996) possibly all of child support payments made by the noncustodial parent are retained by the state and federal government to reimburse them for public assistance costs. A custodial parent might, therefore, see formal CSE as either irrelevant or cutting into informal support that she and her children might be receiving.

In practice, the courts and child support agencies were left with two options: they could hold the parent in contempt of court for failure to meet his obligation and order him to jail until he made a specified payment of support or they could order the parent to seek work on his own and begin to make his support payments. While the first, and less frequently used, option could be appropriate for parents who had the means to make their support payments (those “unwilling” to pay), neither option was likely to address the problems of those who were truly without employment or other means to support their children (those “unable” to pay). Further, child support officials and the courts were often unsure whether a specific noncustodial parent was among the unwilling, the unable, or both.

PFS provided a third option: referring noncustodial parents to a program of employment and other services where participation was mandatory and would be carefully monitored and where efforts would be made to increase their job-related skills to enable them to get better and longer-lasting jobs.

For parents who were working and hiding their income, the program’s participation mandate would “smoke out” jobs previously unknown to child support officials because parents could not simultaneously work and participate in PFS. Such parents faced a choice of revealing their employment or failing to meet program requirements and being referred back to the child support agency with compelling evidence that they in fact presented an enforcement problem. For those truly without employment and earnings, PFS has the potential to make the new bargain between noncustodial parents and the welfare and child support system a reality by combining a participation mandate and close monitoring of case status with opportunities to increase earning capacity and parenting skills.

II. An Overview of the Parents’ Fair Share Demonstration

A. The Goals of PFS

The demonstration has three main goals, reflecting the concerns described above:

- **To increase the employment and earnings of unemployed noncustodial parents (largely fathers) of children receiving welfare.** Most welfare-to-work programs funded under the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training (JOBS) program and its successors have largely served women, who as a group had low levels of formal employment and earnings. Programs found to make a difference in these parents' labor market success did so largely by getting more mothers to work than would otherwise have been the case or speeding up employment.⁸ The situation was quite different for PFS because (unlike women in the welfare caseload) the great majority of low-income men are very likely to have had some recent employment, though often spotty and usually in low-wage jobs. Thus, to make a real difference in the income of the fathers, the program would have to do more than increase the percentage of men who worked at all. Rather, program services had to be designed to affect the speed with which jobs were found, job retention, and wage levels, as well as the percentage of fathers working.
- **To increase child support payments.** Past research and experience suggest that the frequency and level of child support payments are linked to parental income; hence the goal of increased earnings was linked to the goal of greater support. However, fathers' attitudes toward parental roles and responsibilities, relations with the custodial parent, and knowledge about the child support system also affect behavior, as do local CSE practices. Thus, the PFS program model sought to increase support by affecting all of these factors.
- **To support and improve parenting behavior.** Program experience and research suggest that in addition to financial support noncustodial parents can help their children through responsible and constructive involvement in their lives. Further, many of the fathers in programs like PFS express a strong desire to be involved parents, "being there" for their children as they develop. Finally, research suggests that greater involvement in children's lives may be a motivating factor behind greater financial support. Thus, PFS services were designed to help fathers become more effective and responsible parents.

The demonstration was launched in early 1992 with a two-year pilot phase designed to test the feasibility and promise of the PFS approach. It is coordinated by the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC), a nonprofit organization that develops and evaluates programs to help low-income people become more successful in the labor market. Despite a variety of start-up and implementation issues, the pilot experience was promising enough to suggest that it would be

⁸See Friedlander, Greenberg, and Robins (1997).

Table 1.1
Parents' Fair Share
Selected Characteristics of Sites in the PFS Demonstration

State	County Location of PFS Program	Largest City in County	County Population 1995	Population of Largest City 1996	County Unemployment Rate 1995	County AFDC Caseload 1996	Percent Nonwhite in County 1990
California	Los Angeles	Los Angeles	9,138,789	3,553,638	7.9	305,271	43.2
Florida	Duval	Jacksonville	701,673	679,792	3.8	13,196 ^a	27.2
Massachusetts	Hampden	Springfield	443,463 ^b	149,799	6.5	11,481 ^c	15.0
Michigan	Kent	Grand Rapids	525,355	188,242	3.8	6,029	11.3
New Jersey	Mercer	Trenton	330,305	85,437	5.4	4,630 ^d	24.9
Ohio	Montgomery	Dayton	570,490	172,947	4.0	10,469	19.2
Tennessee	Shelby	Memphis	865,058	596,725	4.9	23,424	44.9
National average					5.4		17.2

SOURCES: Population Estimates Program, Population Division, U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1996 Washington, DC; County and City Extra: Annual Me and County Data Book, 1997; Employment and Earnings April 1997; U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1996.

NOTES:^aNumber is the average for July 1996 to April 1997 fiscal year.

^bNew England states' geographic data list towns and cities. The U.S. Department of Labor and Labor Statistics derive the county data by adding for Massachusetts towns and cities.

^cNumber is the average for January 1997 to April 1997.

^dNumber is the average for January 1997 to April 1997.

worthwhile to mount a rigorous test of the program's effects on noncustodial parents' employment rates, earnings, and child support payments, and on aspects of their parenting skills and their children's well-being. Thus, beginning in early 1994, PFS entered a second phase, which included a full-scale test of the program's effectiveness. Table 1.1 lists the local sites participating in this second phase of the demonstration and briefly describes their characteristics. In the remainder of the report, for simplicity in presentation, the sites are listed by city rather than county or state. The remainder of the section describes the PFS program model and then — because of the crucial need for interagency coordination to implement PFS — discusses in detail the various PFS partnerships.

B. The PFS Program Model

In most cases, noncustodial parents were referred to PFS during court hearings or appointments scheduled by CSE agencies in response to the parents' failure to make court-ordered child support payments for children receiving welfare. Noncustodial parents who cited unemployment as the reason for their nonpayment were ordered to attend PFS activities. In some sites, at paternity hearings, parents who appeared to be without the means to meet their child support obligation were referred to the program.

Participation was mandatory, and PFS staff in effect served as agents of the court or CSE agency in monitoring the status of PFS participants, documenting their participation in the program, reporting employment when it was found, and referring parents who did not meet program participation requirements back to the child support agency or court for further enforcement efforts. Parents referred to the program were required to participate in program activities until they found a job and started paying child support.

Program service plans were built around four core components that were identified by MDRC's background research and the pilot phase experience as critical to serving the PFS population; they are described in Table 1.2. (Chapters 2 and 5 discuss the implementation of these services during the demonstration in some detail.) These services were seen as a package of activities that could reinforce each other to produce the changes needed to achieve the demonstration's goals. Strong local partnerships and careful coordination were needed to achieve this integration of services, monitor parental activity and enforce the mandate to participate, and send a consistent message about program goals. This was especially true because of the diverse nature of the services called for in the PFS program model and the need to involve organizations with little experience working together.

In general, parents began their participation in the program with the peer support group. The Responsible Fatherhood curriculum provided local group facilitators (who were trained by a consultant to MDRC) with material covering a wide range of topics (see Table 1.3), and sites generally spent at least a session on each of them. In most sites, sessions met a minimum of two to three times per week for a set number of weeks to cover all the topics. Parents were usually required to attend a minimum number of sessions to be deemed to have completed the component.

Most sites offered other services concurrently with peer support. Over the course of the demonstration, as discussed later in this report, employment readiness, job search assistance, and job clubs emerged as the most common employment activities. Since most of the PFS parents

Table 1.2
Parents' Fair Share
Core Components of the PFS
Program Model

- **Peer support.** MDRC's background research and the pilot phase experience suggested that employment and training services alone would not lead to changed attitudes and regular child support payment patterns for all participants. Education, support, and recognition could be needed as well. Thus, demonstration programs were expected to provide regular support groups for participants. The purpose of this component is to inform participants about their rights and obligations as noncustodial parents, to encourage positive parental behavior and sexual responsibility, to strengthen participants' commitment to work, and to enhance participants' life skills. The component is built around a curriculum, known as Responsible Fatherhood, that was supplied by MDRC. The groups also could have included recreational activities, "mentoring" arrangements using successful PFS graduates, or planned parent-child activities.
 - **Employment and training.** The goal of these activities is to help participants secure long-term, stable employment at a wage level that would allow them to support themselves and their children. Sites were strongly encouraged to offer a variety of services, including job search assistance and opportunities for education and skills training. In addition, since it is important to engage participants in income-producing activities quickly to establish the practice of paying child support, sites were encouraged to offer opportunities for on-the-job training, paid work experience, and other activities that mix skills training or education with part-time employment.
 - **Enhanced child support enforcement.** One objective of PFS is to increase support payments made on behalf of children living in single-parent welfare households. Although a legal and administrative structure already exists to establish and enforce child support obligations, demonstration sites were asked to develop new procedures, services, and incentives in this area. These included steps to expedite the modification of child support awards and/or flexible rules that allowed child support orders to be reduced while noncustodial parents participated in PFS and special monitoring of the status of PFS cases.
 - **Mediation.** Often disagreements between custodial and noncustodial parents about visitation, household expenditures, lifestyles, child care, and school arrangements — and the roles and actions of other adults in their children's lives — influence child support payment patterns. Thus, demonstration sites had to provide opportunities for parents to mediate their differences using services modeled on those now provided through many family courts in divorce cases.
-

Table 1.3
Parents' Fair Share
Topics in the PFS Responsible Fatherhood Curriculum

1. Introduction to Responsible Fatherhood
 2. What Are My Values?
 3. Manhood
 4. The Art of Communication
 5. Fathers as Providers
 6. Noncustodial Parents: Rights and Responsibilities
 7. Developing Values in Children
 8. Coping as a Single Father (or Sometimes Weekend Dad)
 9. Dealing with Children's Behaviors
 10. Relationships: Being a Friend, Partner, Parent, and Employee
 11. Understanding Male/Female Relationships
 12. Managing Conflict and Handling Anger
 13. Handling Anger and Conflict on the Job
 14. Surviving on the Job
 15. The Issue of Race/Racism
 16. Taking Care of Business
 17. Managing Your Time and Money
 18. Building a Support Network: Who's on Your Side?
- Optional Sessions:
- Alcohol and Drug Use and Abuse
 - Food as Common Ground
 - Eating for Health
 - Cooking for Health
-

SOURCE: Hayes, Johnson, and Wilson (1994).

were not eligible for cash assistance,⁹ they felt a pressing need for employment and earnings; and sites responded by offering job-finding activities early in the PFS experience. Other longer-term skill-building activities (such as basic education, occupational training, and on-the-job training) typically were offered after the completion of peer support.

Mediation services were offered by staff or outside agencies with experience in conducting family mediation. This was a voluntary activity in which both parents had to agree to participate. Staff within the CSE (in some sites) or the PFS program also offered informal mediation services or counseled parents on better ways to communicate and resolve differences.

In the first year of the demonstration, case management services also emerged as an important part of PFS. Staff serving in this role were typically assigned a group of parents for whom they sought to identify and address barriers to program participation or employment, tracked participation in the program and followed up if the participation requirements were not being met, reported employment to the CSE, and made referrals back to that agency when the parents were noncompliant with program rules or completed PFS. As discussed in Chapters 2 and 5, some staff emphasized the “compliance monitoring” aspects of the job, whereas others served more as advocates for the parents to help them secure needed services or explain their situation to the CSE agency or the courts.

C. The PFS Partners

PFS is the product of two unique partnerships: a *funding partnership* of federal, state, and local agencies and private foundations and a *site operations partnership* linking child support, welfare, and Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) employment and training agencies with community-based organizations.

PFS began with statutory authorization for the U.S. Health and Human Services to broaden the permitted uses of JOBS welfare-to-work funds, normally reserved to serve custodial parents of children receiving income assistance. In addition, federal child support officials permitted demonstration sites to use federal child support funds for many of the PFS services. Because both of these funding sources were open-ended entitlements, the waivers of the usual funding rules allowed demonstration sites to draw down federal funds by providing a state match.¹⁰ States provided this match from their own revenues and from grants provided to them by other PFS partners in the foundation community.¹¹ Local agencies in each site contributed resources to the operation of the program (either through funding or in-kind contributions), and other government and foundation partners also supported the demonstration. PFS’s nonsite funding partners are listed in Table 1.4.

⁹Noncustodial parents of children receiving AFDC or TANF payments are not themselves eligible for public assistance on these grounds. Some parents were eligible because they were living in another household with poor dependent children or in a jurisdiction that offered general assistance for adults without dependent children.

¹⁰Because the funding rules used in PFS pertained only to the demonstration and because the statutory framework for welfare and child support has changed with the reform of federal law, the funding structure is not discussed in detail in this report.

¹¹These site grants were channeled through MDRC.

Table 1.4
Parents' Fair Share
PFS Demonstration Nonsite Funding Partners

States	Federal Agencies	Foundations
California	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services	The Pew Charitable Trusts
Florida	U.S. Department of Agriculture	W. K. Kellogg Foundation
Massachusetts	U.S. Department of Labor	Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
Michigan		The Annie E. Casey Foundation
New Jersey		Smith Richardson Foundation
Ohio		Ford Foundation
Tennessee		McKnight Foundation
		Northwest Area Foundation

Aside from a few common requirements, the PFS sites were free to structure their programs by drawing on the organizational expertise of state and local agencies as well as local community-based organizations. The constraints imposed by the demonstration funding structure and the programmatic approach included the following: (1) because state and federal JOBS funds (the federal welfare-to-work program) were a significant part of PFS funding, the state agency that received and controlled these funds had to be an active partner; (2) local child support agencies had to be actively involved because of their central role in identifying appropriate parents for the program and implementing changes in standard enforcement approaches; and (3) the program model called for a diverse collection of service providers with experience serving low-income men, especially men of color.

At the state level, three state agencies could potentially play a role in the implementation of PFS. The state social services department had to be involved in the program because of its control of state and federal JOBS funding, needed for PFS operations. Similarly, the state child support agency had to facilitate the provision of special CSE procedures and request a federal waiver to allow use of federal child support funds for activities that would not normally be permitted. Some state departments of labor or employment services also became active in the program.

In each state, a lead state agency was chosen to coordinate the demonstration at the state level. These agencies, listed in Table 1.5, helped to pull together the needed local PFS partnerships, signed necessary contracts and interagency funding agreements, and disbursed funds to the local program operators. In five sites the social services department served as the lead state agency, while in the remaining two sites the department of labor/employment services played this role.

The lead agency in each state in turn chose local lead agencies, also listed in Table 1.5, which were responsible for the overall coordination of PFS service delivery at the site level. Three of these agencies were local nonprofit community-based service organizations; child support, human services, and labor departments played this role in the remaining sites. A single local agency often offered initial PFS services such as peer support and case management and came to be identified by many of the participants as the physical “home” for PFS. In four sites, the lead local agency also housed the key initial PFS services: in the three sites where a nonprofit community-based organization was the lead local agency and in one site where a labor department regional office was the lead agency. When human services or child support agencies served as the local lead, they contracted out initial services to a nonprofit organization, in part to distinguish PFS from traditional programs they offered.

Because the required PFS services involved such diverse kinds of expertise (ranging from enhanced CSE to peer support), sites developed local operational partnerships to provide the required services. Table 1.6 shows the types of organizations involved in providing services in each site. In every site, the CSE agency provided enhanced CSE, but for all the other PFS services the choice of service provider(s) varied, reflecting local conditions. Community-based organizations became more important over the course of the demonstration as sites increasingly turned to them because of their flexibility and willingness to serve men with serious barriers to employment. They were especially prominent in peer support, assessment and referral to employment services, and job search/job club.

Table 1.5

Parents' Fair Share Agencies Playing Key Roles in Implementing PFS,by Site

County	Lead State Agency	Lead Local Agency	Program Home
Dayton	Department of Human Services	Montgomery County Department of Human Services	Goodwill Industries of Miami Valley
Grand Rapids	Department of Social Services	Kent County Friend of the Court	Hope Network
Jacksonville	Department of Labor and Employment Security	Florida Department of Labor and Employment Security, Region III	DLES, Region III
Los Angeles	Employment Development Department	Los Angeles District Attorney's Office, Bureau of Family Support Operations	Los Angeles Department of Community and Senior Services
Memphis	Department of Human Services	Bridges, Inc. ^a	Bridges, Inc.
Springfield	Department of Transitional Assistance ^b	Spectra Management Services Corporation ^c	Spectra Management Services Corporation
Trenton	Department of Human Services	Union Industrial Home for Children	Union Industrial Home for Children

NOTES: ^aFormerly known as Youth Services USA.

^bFormerly known as Massachusetts Department of Public Welfare.

^cFormerly known as Springfield Employment Resource Center, Inc.

Table 1.6

Types of Agencies Providing PFS Services

Site	Case Management	Peer Support	Employment and Training			
			Referral and Job Development/ Job Club/ Job Search	Education and Training	Enhanced Child Support Enforcement	Mediation
Dayton	County JOBS program	Community-based organization	Community-based organization	JTPA service provider	CSE agency	City agency
Grand Rapids	CSE agency	Community-based organization and CSE agency	Community-based organization and CSE agency	Community-based organization	CSE agency	CSE agency
Jacksonville	State employment services agency and community-based organization	Community-based organization	State employment services agency and community-based organization	Community college	State department of revenue	Community-based organization
Los Angeles	County community service agency and JTPA service provider	County community service agency	State employment services agency and JTPA service provider	JTPA service provider	County district attorney's office	County community service agency

(continued)

Table 1.6 (continued)

Site	Case Management	Peer Support	Employment and Training			
			Referral and Job Development/ Job Club/ Job Search	Education and Training	Enhanced Child Support Enforcement	Mediation
Memphis	Community-based organization	Community college	Community-based organization	Community college and state technical training school	Juvenile court	Juvenile court
Springfield	Community-based organization	Community-based organization	Community-based organization	JTPA service provider	State department of revenue	Community-based organization
Trenton	Community-based organization	Community-based organization	Community-based organization and state department of labor	Community-based organization; community college and private sector not-for-profit employers	County family court	County family court

NOTE: Formal mediation was rarely, if ever, used at most sites regardless of the type of organization providing the service.

D. An Illustration of How PFS Was Intended to Work¹²

Ken is a 30-year-old father of two children residing with their mother, Amanda, who is receiving AFDC. Although Ken and Amanda were never married, they were in a steady relationship when the children were born. Ken sees the children about once a week and gets along reasonably well with Amanda and her new boyfriend. Ken has had child support payments deducted from his paycheck whenever he has had a steady job, but he has made no payments since his last job ended eight months ago.

On the Monday after the child support review hearing at which he was referred to PFS, he arrives at orientation, which is held in a program office downtown. Several other noncustodial parents are there. The session is run by a staff person from the county's employment and training program for welfare recipients. Under PFS, the county's program has been expanded to serve noncustodial parents, and several additional staff have been assigned to it.

The staff person starts by describing the goal of PFS: to help the fathers find good jobs and stay out of trouble with child support and the court. He says that the program offers a variety of services, including job search help, opportunities for training, a peer support group that will give the participants a chance to meet other fathers, and help in resolving disputes with custodial parents. He explains that several agencies have come together to run PFS. Each father will be assigned to a case manager who will be his primary contact. Activities will be led by staff from other agencies but will usually meet in the PFS office. He concludes by reminding the fathers that they are expected to show up every day to their assigned activities or call to explain why they cannot attend; if they do not, the agency will have to notify the court. A staff person from the CSE tells the fathers that he is assigned to work with PFS participants and that they should call him directly if they have any questions about child support issues.

After orientation, Ken takes a brief reading and math test and completes some forms that describe his education and work history. He then meets with a case manager to talk about his employment goals. They jointly decide that he will begin by participating in a "job club" designed to help him quickly find employment; it is also possible that the job club staff will help Ken locate an on-the-job training (OJT) position, a job in which he will be trained in new occupational skills with the program subsidizing a portion of the employer's wages during training. If Ken does not find a job or an OJT, he and his case manager plan to meet again to think about a training program. The job club will start in two weeks. In the meantime, Ken's peer support group will begin meeting two days later in the PFS office.

Ken is skeptical about the peer group but attends the first session anyway to avoid problems with the court. It is more interesting than he expected. The other participants are facing problems similar to his own, and the group leader (facilitator) seems to understand what the fathers are going through. They talk about what it means to be a father and how it feels to be unable to support your children regularly. The group meets three days a week for about two hours a day. By the third session, Ken is attending because he wants to, not because he has to. He shows up at nearly all the sessions.

¹²This description is abbreviated from Bloom and Sherwood (1994).

The job club starts the following week; it meets every morning from 9 to noon (peer support continues in the afternoons). The job club is run by an instructor from a local nonprofit organization but meets in the PFS office. Many of the men Ken has gotten to know in peer support are also there. The first week is in the classroom. The instructor helps Ken produce a résumé, and they videotape a mock interview. The instructor offers Ken some useful tips about how to “sell” himself to an employer.

Late in the second week, Ken begins to search for employment, using a telephone and job listings provided by the program; the instructor is present to provide additional tips. This is difficult because few companies are hiring; Ken gets frustrated and misses several days. The job club instructor lets Ken’s case manager and the peer support facilitator know about Ken’s absences. His case manager and the facilitator call him at home and encourage him to keep trying. They also remind him that he will be sent back to the court if he misses any more days. Ken decides to give the program another chance. If he had not returned, he probably would have been served with legal papers and charged with contempt of court. Two weeks later, a job developer working with the job club tells Ken about a job opening that sounds right for Ken. He interviews for the job, gets it, and goes to work.

Ken continues to attend peer support in the evenings after he gets off work. The other fathers and the facilitator help him think about how to deal with a problem with his supervisor at work. Ken is proud of the way he handles the problem; in earlier days he might have confronted his boss and gotten fired. Ken graduates from the peer support program a few weeks later. His mother, Amanda, and the children attend the ceremony, which is held in a local church.

Meanwhile, the child support agency raises Ken’s child support order back to its original level. Child support begins to be deducted from his third paycheck. Ken’s case manager checks up several times to see how Ken is doing at work. After six months of steady payment, Ken’s case manager calls to congratulate him for finishing the program successfully. The case manager tells Ken to get back in touch immediately if he loses his job and cannot pay support.

PFS did not work this well for all participants. Many issues arose in the implementation of the program that could prevent a success story like that presented above. Some men presented serious barriers to employment (for example, because of weak skills and work history, criminal records, substance abuse problems, or animosity to employers) that the relatively short-term PFS services were unable to overcome. Others did not consistently take advantage of the opportunities PFS offered because of hostility to the custodial parent or the child support system. Finally, in some cases the local PFS partnership failed to deliver the services promised by the program: agencies might work poorly together, resist serving disadvantaged men who were participating under court order rather than as willing volunteers, or be unable to provide better leads for jobs than the fathers could find on their own. Telling this varied and complex story is the goal of the PFS research.

III. The Research Strategy

A. Hypotheses About PFS Effects and Behavior

This section identifies specific PFS services and explores their hypothesized link to the attainment of demonstration goals. The framework of hypothesized relationships provides a structure for the research on PFS implementation and impacts.

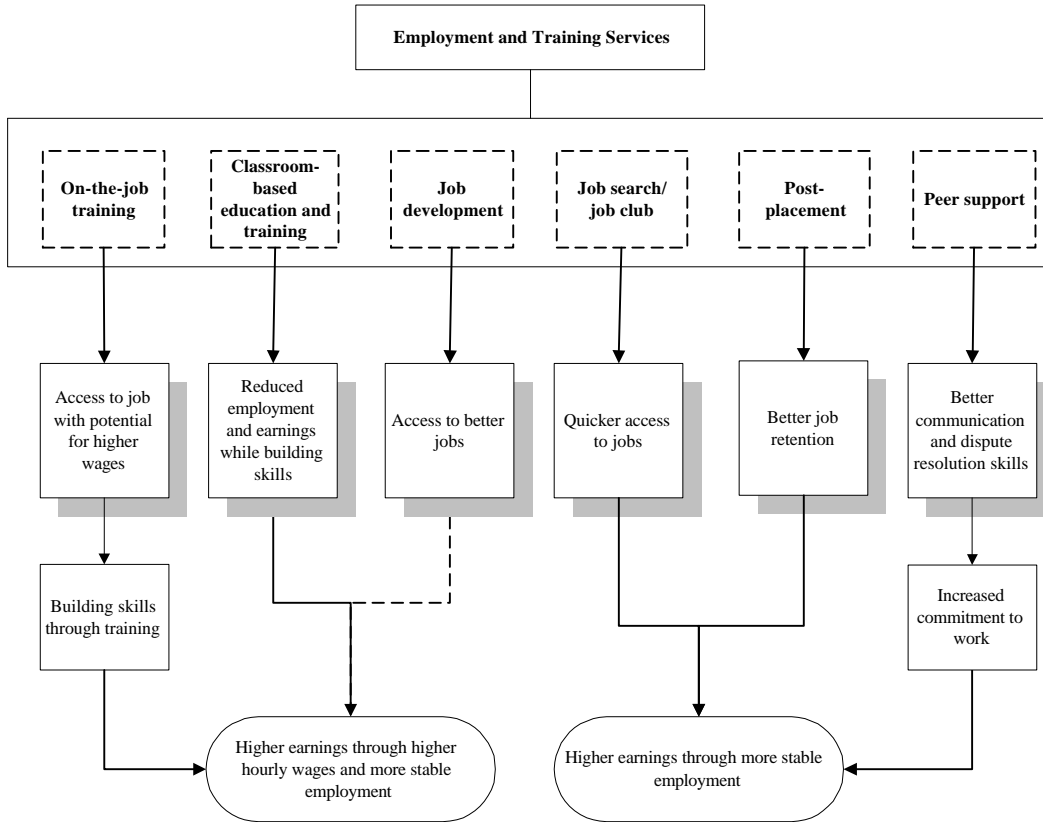
Effects of the PFS program on employment and earnings. Figure 1.1 presents hypothesized effects of various PFS service offerings on noncustodial parents' employment and earnings. Employment and training services are hypothesized to be most directly linked to this demonstration goal. Within this category of service, some activities are hypothesized to have more potential for earnings effects than others. On-the-job training (OJT) and classroom-based education and training are expected to produce earnings increases in two ways: by improving parents' job-related skills, helping them gain jobs that pay higher wages; and by expanding their access to jobs for which they are qualified, reducing the time they spend out of work and increasing work hours. Job search and job club services, in contrast, have only one hypothesized effect: producing quicker access to jobs during spells of unemployment, thereby raising earnings through shorter employment gaps and longer work hours. Job development services are hypothesized to fall somewhere between these two categories because they have the potential to increase parents' access to jobs they could not find on their own. In addition, postplacement services (help in dealing with the demands of the job) are hypothesized to improve job retention, thereby increasing earnings by improving employment stability.

Program activities beyond narrowly defined employment services are also hypothesized to affect earnings. Peer support was designed to increase parents' commitment to work and improve their communication and dispute resolution skills, thereby leading to more stable employment. It is also possible that enhanced CSE, with its closer monitoring of the circumstances of the parents, might lead to greater work effort to avoid problems with the CSE agency and the courts; this would be akin to a deterrent effect.¹³ More remotely, mediation services might improve relations among the parents and children to the extent that noncustodial parents might have a greater desire to work so they can better support their children. (These last two possible indirect service effects are not shown in Figure 1.1.)

These hypothesized efforts focus the PFS research on a series of questions: To what extent were the intended services provided, and how much did noncustodial parents participate in them? What was the importance of skill-building activities like OJT, education, and occupational training compared with job club and other less intensive services? How successful was peer support in affecting parents' desire to work and support their children? With these implementation findings as background, the research estimates the impact of referral to PFS on parents' earnings and uses the implementation findings (and site variation in the implementation experience) to help interpret the impacts.

¹³Conversely, increased enforcement could also lead to reduced employment if noncustodial parents seek to avoid enforcement by changing jobs frequently or working in informal, unstable jobs.

Figure 1.1
Parents' Fair Share
Hypothesized Effects of PFS on Employment and Earnings



Effects of the PFS program on child support payments and family relationships. All four of the core PFS service components are hypothesized to have effects on child support payments and family relationships, as shown in Figure 1.2. Mediation and peer support are hypothesized to help parents resolve family conflicts that might inhibit both support payments and more constructive parental involvement. Further, peer support, with its message of parental responsibilities and explanations of obligations under the child support laws, is expected to lead to greater willingness to pay support, even if family conflicts remain. The figure also suggests that there is a two-way interaction between increased support and improved family relationships: a better payment record might help ease family tensions.¹⁴

Employment and training activities are hypothesized to affect child support by providing non-custodial parents with greater income. Much research suggests a clear positive relationship between the level of a parent's income and the frequency and amount of support payments. Enhanced CSE is hypothesized to temporarily reduce payments because of the temporary reduction of orders during program participation. However, in the longer run, closer monitoring of child support case status, quicker institution of wage-withholding orders, and more consistent follow-up when payments are late should lead to more frequent and higher levels of support. Once again, increased support in itself may lead to improved family relationships. It is also important to recognize, however, that increased CSE may worsen family tensions by increasing pressures on noncustodial parents to pay support.

This framework suggests that it is important to understand the extent of implementation of the peer support activity, the messages it sent about support responsibilities, the level of parental participation, and use of mediation services. It also suggests that there will be a causal link between greater earnings and more support, and the possibility of a separate effect of enhanced CSE even if higher earnings do not materialize. Finally, it highlights the possibility of improved family relationships even if earnings or support payments do not increase.

B. PFS Research Activities

MDRC is conducting a multifaceted evaluation of the PFS Demonstration to determine if the program was implemented as planned and has had the intended effects. The research began during the pilot phase with a study of the program's implementation and early operations. That analysis focused on the administrative feasibility of operating these programs, the characteristics of the noncustodial parents they served, the kinds of services that participants received, and their early labor market experiences and child support payment records.¹⁵

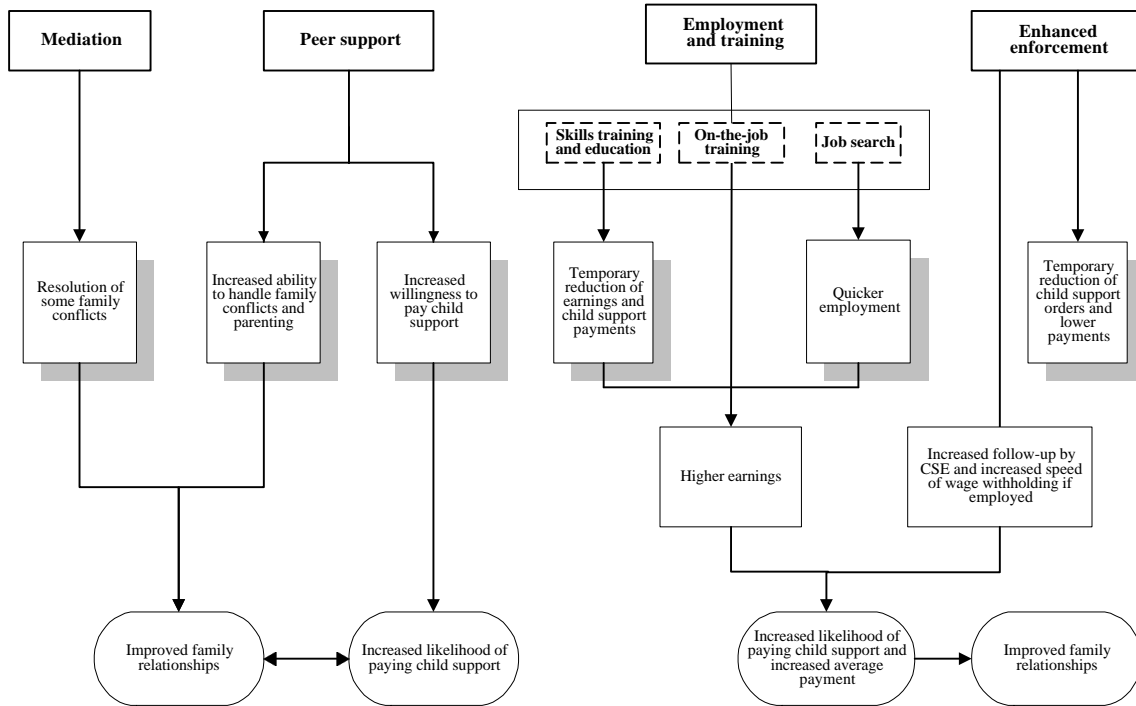
The full-scale evaluation that began in early 1994 includes:

- continued research on the implementation of PFS services and parental participation in them;

¹⁴For custodial parents receiving AFDC or the successor programs, this two-way effect may be attenuated by the rule that all but the first \$50 in support paid each month or (under current rules in some states) all the support paid goes to the state to reimburse taxpayers for public assistance expenditures.

¹⁵See Furstenberg, Sherwood, and Sullivan (1992); and Bloom and Sherwood (1994).

Figure 1.2
Parents' Fair Share
Hypothesized Effects of PFS on
Child Support Payments and Family Relationships



- a qualitative study of the lives and PFS experience of a sample of PFS participants;
- a special study of CSE in the PFS sites, including the intake of parents into the program, normal child support practices, and the nature of enhanced CSE in PFS;
- an analysis of the impact (the difference the program made) on key outcomes such as noncustodial parents' employment and earnings, child support payments, relations with their children, and relations with custodial parents; and
- a cost analysis, with a special focus on CSE.

The analysis of program implementation and impacts focuses on parents whose support cases were being reviewed through a program intake process involving the CSE agency and the courts. This report focuses on the PFS process at two different stages: at the point noncustodial parents were being identified as potential PFS referrals through the extra outreach and case review in PFS intake and at the point they were being judged eligible and appropriate for PFS.

The analysis of program impacts at both stages of the PFS process utilizes a random assignment research design, with two different points of random assignment:

- **extra outreach and case review:** A representative sample of noncustodial parents from a site's child support caseload who appeared — based on information in administrative records — to meet the PFS eligibility rules were assigned at random to one of two groups: an *extra outreach group* subject to extra outreach and case review or a *standard group* subject to the site's usual CSE practices.
- **referral to PFS services and coverage of PFS mandates:** Noncustodial parents who appeared at a hearing or case review and were judged eligible and appropriate for PFS by site staff were assigned at random to one of two groups: a *program group* that was given access to PFS services and was subject to its mandates to participate or a *control group* that did not receive those services and was subject to normal CSE practices. Members of the control group were free to participate in other services in their community on their own initiative.

At each stage of the PFS process, the analysis of program impacts compares the labor market, child support payment, and parenting experiences of these two groups of noncustodial parents — and the associated custodial parents and children — during a follow-up period. Any differences that are measured between the two groups will be attributable to the aspect of the PFS program under review.

The analysis of PFS intake shows the extent to which more vigorously “working” child support cases in which there is no evidence of employment (without any referral to PFS) stimulates increased employment or “smokes out” previously unreported jobs and earnings and increases child support payments. The analysis of referral to PFS (for a sample that is actually judged eligible and appropriate for the program) documents how the combination of the offer of PFS services and the accompanying mandate to participate or pay support affected noncustodial parents' employment, earnings, and support payments. Because those referred to PFS services are exposed to both the opportunities provided by services and the obligation imposed by the mandate, it is not appropriate to focus our analysis just on the subgroup of parents (about two-thirds) who actually

participated in the program. Those not participating might have been affected by the mandate and changed their behavior even without participating in any service.¹⁶

The evaluation uses a wide variety of data sources, including demographic information on non-custodial parents; observation of program activities and interviews with staff; data on noncustodial parents' participation in program activities; administrative records of their child support payments and earnings; a survey of noncustodial and custodial parents; case file reviews of CSE and ethnographic research to shed light on the life circumstances and outlook of this little-studied group.

This is one of three companion reports. *Working with Low-Income Cases: Lessons for the Child Support Enforcement System from Parents' Fair Share*, by Fred Doolittle and Suzanne Lynn, discusses the experience of the PFS sites when they sought to identify potential referrals to PFS, bring them into a review of their case, determine their status and eligibility for PFS, and refer eligible and appropriate parents to the program. A qualitative study¹⁷ provides an in-depth look at the lives of a sample of 32 fathers who participated in PFS and assesses their reaction to child support and the PFS program. It focuses on why they chose to come forward and participate and how they used, or were not able to use, the program to improve their lives.

The present report describes the implementation and early effects of PFS services, with a special focus on identifying key implementation challenges and offering insights into how the challenges were addressed. Because of the recent developments in welfare and child support reform, which increase the need to address the problems of low-income noncustodial parents, these lessons are relevant to a broad audience of service providers and policymakers. The report also presents information on the background characteristics of the parents in the full PFS research sample and the extent to which they participated in program services.

This report is the first in the demonstration that presents findings on the program's effects: specifically, how the PFS intake process and referral to the program affected the noncustodial parents' employment, earnings, and child support payments. These are early findings, based on approximately seven quarters of child support and employer wage-reporting administrative records for parents entering the PFS demonstration sample in the first year of intake.¹⁸ Thus, these impact findings address the program's initial success in meeting two of the three demonstration goals: increasing the employment and earnings and raising the child support payments of the non-custodial parents.¹⁹

The report is organized as follows. Chapter 2 outlines the service challenges that program operators encountered as they put PFS in place and lessons from this experience about how to overcome them. Chapter 3 discusses the impact of the extra outreach and case review, involved in

¹⁶In the context of random assignment research, an underlying problem in isolating the effect of participation is the difficulty of identifying the control group counterparts of those program group members who ended up participating in program services.

¹⁷Johnson, Levine, and Doolittle (forthcoming).

¹⁸The sample used in the analysis of the implementation of PFS and the impacts of referral to PFS is approximately half of the entire PFS demonstration sample.

¹⁹Future research, discussed below, will examine the demonstration's success in achieving its third goal: helping fathers become more involved in constructive ways as parents.

PFS intake, on noncustodial parents' employment and earnings and child support payments. Chapter 4 describes the characteristics of the noncustodial parents referred to PFS (covered in more detail in the qualitative study). Chapter 5 summarizes the service offerings in each site and analyzes noncustodial parents' participation in these activities. Chapter 6 presents early findings on the impacts of PFS services and mandates on noncustodial parents' employment and earnings and child support payments.

Future PFS research will cover several new topics and extend the length of follow-up for the early impact analysis presented in this report. A later report will present findings based on a survey of 550 noncustodial and 2,200 "associated" custodial parents, administered approximately 12 months after random assignment to the program group referred to PFS or to the control group subject to normal CSE practices. These data will make it possible to analyze PFS's success in achieving its third major goal: helping noncustodial parents become more responsible, involved, and effective parents. The surveys will also be used to investigate whether increases in payments to the child support agency are made at the expense of other informal support paid directly to the custodial parents or children or, alternatively, stimulate increased informal support as well. The survey data will also allow an analysis of employment in the informal or underground economy. These data will also be used to present a much more detailed picture of the lives of noncustodial parents, including findings on their work histories after random assignment, relations with the custodial parents and children, attitudes toward child support and welfare, and goals as parents. Future work will also include an analysis of program costs, including detailed information on child support services. Finally, a review of child support case files will provide a more detailed analysis of what enhanced CSE looked like in practice after noncustodial parents were referred to PFS services. Key issues in this final work include the extent to which child support orders were adjusted downward in a timely manner during PFS participation and upward upon employment or noncompliance with program requirements and how child support agencies and the courts followed up when noncustodial parents were referred back to them for noncompliance.

Chapter 2

The Challenges of PFS Implementation: Building Partnerships Across Diverse Organizations

Chapter 1 described the variety of agencies in each site that collaborated to operate PFS. Later chapters of the report will describe the substantial levels of parental participation in services that these agencies achieved, particularly in the peer support and job search components of the model. However, implementing this complex program model presented management challenges that went far beyond making sure that each agency had the capacity to run its own PFS activities effectively. To implement PFS successfully required many of the agencies involved to institute changes in their standard operating procedures — changes that often conflicted with pre-existing agency structures or priorities and therefore proved difficult to achieve. Thus, operating the program required a high level of sustained attention from program managers as well as interagency cooperation within each site.

In particular, to implement the PFS model as the planners envisioned, agency managers would have to develop effective methods to:

- assign enough noncustodial parents to the program to support the program’s activities;
- run a seamless program in which staff communicated well across agencies and presented noncustodial parents with a coherent message about their opportunities and obligations;
- implement an employment and training component that would result in better jobs for noncustodial parents than they would have acquired on their own;
- implement peer support and mediation — additional program components aimed at increasing noncustodial parents’ commitment to involved parenting, improving their family relationships, and increasing their ability to retain jobs.

This chapter discusses each issue in turn, drawing on MDRC’s experience in providing technical assistance to each site, as well as on field research that was conducted throughout the demonstration.

I. Assigning a Sufficient Number of Noncustodial Parents to the Program

Over the course of the PFS Demonstration, staff in the seven participating sites determined that over 5,500 noncustodial parents who appeared for child support enforcement (CSE) hearings or other reviews were eligible and appropriate for referral to PFS program services and coverage by its mandates. This section describes the process by which PFS sites identified potential referrals to the program to place the PFS sample in the context of broader CSE efforts. The PFS intake process

proved to be a difficult undertaking since it required targeting a segment of the child support population, low-income noncustodial parents with no apparent employment, that traditionally has not been the focus of CSE efforts. In order to identify sufficient numbers of noncustodial parents who might be eligible for PFS, most sites instituted extra outreach and case review practices as part of the PFS Demonstration.¹ The issues that arose in the process of intake and the way in which sites responded will provide insights for other jurisdictions that are now moving to a more active enforcement policy for this type of case.

As will be discussed further below and in subsequent chapters, differences in eligibility definitions and outreach methods among the sites are important from the perspective of the evaluation. Obviously, the enrollment process influenced the *number* of noncustodial parents who were available to participate in PFS. Moreover, the depth of outreach in each site affected the *types* of noncustodial parents being served by PFS, in turn influencing each site's likelihood of changing the employment and child support behavior of the program group.

A. PFS Eligibility

The basic eligibility framework for the PFS Demonstration was set by the 1988 Family Support Act, which authorized a test of employment services for the noncustodial parents of children receiving AFDC who were unable to pay child support because of unemployment. But as MDRC and sites grappled with the details of program design, questions arose. A few were decided based on the logistics of program operation: for example, sites uniformly imposed a rule that enrollees had to live close enough to program services to participate. For most sites, this translated into a requirement that the participants live within the county, though in a few cases noncustodial parents with nearby addresses just over county borders were allowed into the demonstration.

But four eligibility criteria posed larger issues:

- **Nonpayment of support.** Site practices reflected the belief that a major effort such as PFS was best targeted to noncustodial parents with serious and long-lasting nonpayment problems. As such, sites either developed specific nonpayment criteria for the demonstration (for example, no payments for a set period, usually a month or more) or relied on the standard procedures that CSE staff use as they review their caseloads and consider whether to schedule a contempt hearing.
- **Newly established paternity cases.** A complex issue was how to handle newly established paternities where a support order was about to be set. Even if the noncustodial parents had serious employment problems, there was not yet a nonpayment problem. Some sites (Grand Rapids and Springfield) chose to make this group a priority. Other sites found it difficult to introduce the PFS Demonstration research procedures into the paternity and order establishment process and thus ex-

¹For a more detailed account of the process of outreach and referral to PFS and the broader lessons for CSE, see Doolittle and Lynn (1998).

cluded these cases. But even in these sites, staff recognized the advantage of helping people before large arrearages mounted.²

- **Recognizing underemployment.** Low-income noncustodial parents often moved back and forth between unemployment and low-wage/short-hour jobs that — though technically not unemployment — clearly reflected underemployment. Sites also recognized that PFS could be an appropriate option for noncustodial parents who were working in a short-term, temporary job at the time of the child support review. Some sites imposed maximum wage and/or hour cutoffs below which noncustodial parents could be referred to the program as underemployed. Other sites decided that noncustodial parents could be referred to the program if their earnings were not sufficient to allow them to support themselves and pay the required child support or did not allow them to meet “their obligations.”³
- **Custodial parent’s receipt of AFDC.** The frequency with which custodial parents (CPs) moved on to and off public assistance also complicated the definition of PFS eligibility. The PFS eligibility rules were expanded to include noncustodial parents in child support cases when the custodial parents were not receiving AFDC at the time of the PFS referral, but (1) there were minor children for whom current support was owed and (2) arrearages owed the state had built up because of past nonpayment of support while the custodial parents received welfare and/or medical assistance.⁴

Each site established an enrollment goal for PFS based on the number of cases in their CSE caseloads that were likely to meet these eligibility criteria and the system’s likelihood of being able to locate eligible cases and have them show up for referral to PFS. (See Table 2.1.) These enrollment targets were important to meet so that the program’s components, particularly those that de-

²In the early design of PFS, MDRC worked with sites to find ways to offer PFS even before formal paternity establishment (an approach labeled “early intervention”), but no site was successful in operating this program on a large scale.

³This approach might seem circular since noncustodial parents’ child support obligations are — in theory — to be set as a percentage of income using state guidelines, but in practice the approach can make sense for several reasons. Over time, child support orders become out of date, yet child support obligations are not adjusted downward in most jurisdictions unless noncustodial parents petition for such a change in a proceeding separate from a review for nonpayment, and the process is often complicated and time-consuming, leading few noncustodial parents to go this route. There are often rules allowing or requiring courts to impute earnings when noncustodial parents with a work history are unemployed. Further, most jurisdictions require that a change in noncustodial parents’ circumstances be substantial and in some sense permanent before a downward modification in an order will be approved.

⁴Including noncustodial parents when the associated custodial parents were not receiving AFDC meant that in these cases the child support order could not be lowered while the noncustodial parents participated in the program. When custodial parents receive AFDC, they must assign to the state their child support rights; under program rules in effect through most of the demonstration they receive only the first \$50 paid each month in child support. But for custodial parents not receiving AFDC any reduction could be made only with their approval, which was logistically difficult and not attempted by any site.

Table 2.1
Parents' Fair Share
Child Support Enforcement Caseloads and PFS Enrollment,
by Site

	Dayton ^a Montgomery County	Grand Rapids ^a Kent County	Jacksonville ^b Duval County	Los Angeles ^c Los Angeles County	Memphis Shelby County	Springfield Hampden County	Trenton ^b Mercer County
Total CSE caseload	45,344	42,060	70,863	707,244	NA	NA	29,961
Total public assistance CSE cases	14,505	11,568	21,674	560,715	NA	NA	7,904
Total public assistance CSE cases with a child support order	5,058	2,840	6,455 ^d	188,306	NA	NA	4,368
Enrollment for PFS ^e							
Projected	2,160	1,080	1,300	1,140	1,350	1,500	1,500
Actual	664	1,083	775	1,088	813	592	625

SOURCES: Los Angeles District Attorney's Office, Division of Family Support Operations; Department of Revenue Child Support Enforcement, Tallahassee, Florida; Michigan Office of Child Support; New Jersey Division of Family Development; Ohio Department of Human Services, Office of Family Assistance and Child Support; Parents' Fair Share Memorandum of Agreement.

NOTES: NA = not available.

^aCaseload data are for the January-March 1997 quarter.

^bCaseload data are for the period January-May 1997.

^cCaseload data are for the period January-May 1997. Soon after this period the county closed approximately 270,000 cases, which were classified as inactive under state regulations. The majority of these cases were welfare cases without a court order.

^dDoes not include foster care cases.

^eThese numbers cover the entire period of random assignment, between March 1994 and June 1996, in all sites except California. Random assignment in California started in February 1995 and ended in June 1996.

pended upon group interaction, could operate properly. In addition, for evaluation purposes, a large research sample is required to provide the statistical power needed in order to detect differences in program and control group outcomes with precision. Nevertheless, despite sites' efforts to identify and bring in eligible noncustodial parents, only Los Angeles and Grand Rapids were able to meet their projected enrollments. These sites were well-positioned to meet their enrollment goals — Los Angeles because it had an enormous caseload from which to draw and Grand Rapids because the CSE agency was able to efficiently produce computerized lists of noncustodial parents who appeared to be eligible for PFS.⁵

As it turned out, meeting enrollment goals was more difficult than it had been in the earlier PFS pilot phase, when enrollment had proceeded more smoothly, for at least three reasons. First, randomly assigning half the recruited sample to a control group meant that sites had to double their efforts to get as many enrollees as were in the pilot (where there was no random assignment, so that everyone identified as eligible for PFS could enroll in the program).⁶ Second, the economy improved considerably over time, so that during the demonstration phase a higher proportion of those who showed up for a hearing were already employed. Third, it may be that during the pilot phase some sites had “cleaned out” from their caseload the most easily located PFS-eligible group, and were left with a less cooperative group during the demonstration. The demographic characteristics of the enrollees did not change much as sites moved from the pilot to the demonstration phase, so it is difficult to judge whether this was indeed the case.

B. Identifying Noncustodial Parents Eligible and Appropriate for PFS

In their effort to bring in a sufficient number of PFS enrollees, sites used a wide variety of methods to identify potential referrals. (See Appendix Table A.1 for detailed information on identification procedures for each site.) In two of the sites (Jacksonville and Springfield), local staff simply identified potential referrals to PFS by reviewing the regular court dockets after they were set through normal procedures. However, because noncustodial parents who might be potentially eligible for PFS are not typically a priority for CSE staff, few of them usually appear on court dockets. Thus, in the remaining five PFS sites, extra outreach efforts were made to increase the flow of potential PFS referrals. These efforts included:

- **Conducting special reviews of cases on the existing caseload** to identify non-custodial parents with orders who appear to meet the PFS eligibility rules and scheduling them for individual hearings at which eligibility can be determined. This was done in Dayton and Trenton, for example, where designated staff coordinated

⁵The enrollment targets in Grand Rapids were also lower than its enrollment during the pilot phase, relative to the enrollment targets of other sites.

⁶Random assignment also restricted certain referral routes that had been used during the pilot, because it required a specific point of program enrollment where random assignment occurred. It also made “marketing” the program to noncustodial parents more difficult because potential enrollees who appeared eligible could not be told for certain that they would be allowed into the program until after random assignment. Finally, random assignment reduced the enthusiasm of some court personnel for the program, either because they perceived it as taking away some of their judicial authority or because they found it frustrating to spend time on cases that were then assigned to the control group.

the efforts of other front-line staff with caseloads of noncustodial parents and conducted reviews themselves of the entire caseload.

- **Reviewing other lists** in search of potential referrals. Examples included new referrals from the welfare agency to the CSE agency of families receiving public assistance, listings of individuals about to exhaust unemployment insurance (UI) benefits, and Medicaid-supported births in local hospitals. One site also retrieved several thousand cases from a special parent locator service (PLS) caseload, cases that had an address but no information on employment and had been sent to the PLS to determine if any current job could be found. These tactics were used most extensively in Dayton, Grand Rapids, and Memphis.
- **Developing hearing procedures to review the status of large numbers of non-custodial parents on the caseload.** Mass hearings of cases for noncustodial parents who appeared to be potential referrals proved to be the most effective and efficient way to identify large numbers of parents in need of program services. In Dayton, Grand Rapids, and Memphis, MDRC worked with the sites to produce randomly drawn lists of noncustodial parents with orders who appeared to fit PFS eligibility rules.⁷ Local CSE and PFS staff worked to determine if they were really potential referrals to PFS and to get appropriate noncustodial parents to a hearing where their eligibility for the program could be determined. In Dayton and Grand Rapids, this approach produced a substantial portion of the sample, while in Memphis the payoff was considerably less. In Los Angeles, local CSE staff on their own developed similar lists of noncustodial parents who were sent letters telling them to appear at a specially scheduled mass hearing for possible referral to the program; such hearings produced a large majority of the PFS referrals.

Data currently available and interviews with CSE staff reveal that these efforts made the clearest difference in Los Angeles, Dayton, and Grand Rapids; that is, the outreach efforts in these sites resulted in their working with cases who normally would not have been brought in as promptly for hearings.⁸ To some extent, Memphis and Trenton also worked cases that normally would have been low priority; however, efforts in Memphis were hampered by large caseloads and difficulty locating those who were identified as potentially eligible, and in Trenton about half of the cases would have been worked even in the absence of PFS, because they were new paternity establishment cases. (As stated previously, Jacksonville and Springfield identified cases from their regular court dockets.)⁹

⁷This process is described in more detail in Chapter 3 of this report.

⁸In Dayton, outreach efforts became increasingly successful as their procedures evolved over time. Analyses of CSE case file data to be presented in a future report will include estimates of how much extra outreach increased the likelihood of taking part in a hearing in Grand Rapids, Dayton, and Memphis.

⁹The hearings and review settings through which noncustodial parents were referred to PFS represent in microcosm the diversity of child support systems nationally. (See Appendix Table A.2.) Alone among the PFS sites, Springfield has a court-based system in which only judges, in this case in probate court, can preside over child support cases. (The courts, however, generally handle only cases involving paternity establishment and the setting of initial orders, since enforcement — with a few high-profile exceptions — is handled through the state Department of Revenue.) Five of the sites operate a quasi-judicial system in which referees or hearing officers

(continued)

Dayton’s CSE office was particularly innovative in providing outreach to potential PFS cases once it became clear that many fewer noncustodial parents were being referred to PFS than had been originally projected. Their methods included:

- expanding the pool of potential PFS referrals by including a large number of cases who had been referred to the parent locator service because they had a residential address but no employment address or evidence of income;
- moving from a protracted contempt hearing process to a more streamlined review hearing held for the purpose of determining eligibility for PFS;
- breaking with the national CSE tradition of office-bound enforcement by instituting home visit the week prior to scheduled hearings. (This practice, which began after the period of intake for the sample included in this report, substantially increased the proportion of noncustodial parents who showed up for hearings.)¹⁰

C. Appearance Rates at Hearings and Eligibility for PFS

To assess the overall picture of noncustodial parent identification, review, and referral, staff in six sites tracked what happened to noncustodial parents they initially identified as potential PFS referrals as the hearing process unfolded.¹¹ Table 2.2 shows some of the results of this tracking. Across the sites the rate of appearance at hearings varied, from an estimated 5 to 10 percent to nearly 70 percent, reflecting differences in the nature of the enforcement hearings, the accuracy of the addresses in the CSE database, the notice sent to noncustodial parents, and local enforcement practices. That the likelihood of being sanctioned for not attending the hearing was relatively high in Memphis, for example, seems to be one factor related to the appearance rate.

Of those who appeared at hearings or reviews, 35 percent (the average across the sites) were judged by CSE and court staff to be eligible and appropriate for PFS. Table 2.2 shows that the proportion eligible ranged from 12 to 72 percent, with higher rates in sites that instituted special court dockets for PFS and thus began tracking with a carefully screened initial list of potential referrals. As mentioned earlier, Grand Rapids, whose eligibility rate was highest among those who appeared for a review, was able to specifically target for hearings parents for whom the computer system indicated no child support payments in the last four weeks and no evidence of employment.

Table 2.2
Parents’ Fair Share

preside in courtroom settings, but under close supervision of the courts. In four of these sites, PFS referrals occurred during the normal hearings held for paternity and initial order establishment or contempt of court for nonpayment (or the local equivalent). In Los Angeles, which also has a quasi-judicial child support system, special “mass” review hearings (with less formality and authority than judicial proceedings) were put into place to determine eligibility for PFS and make referrals. Finally, in one site, Grand Rapids, referrals were made through what is primarily an administrative child support system. The local CSE agency, which is actually a part of the court system, handles all aspects of child support cases, with referees (employed by the agency) presiding and hearings held in the agency. The only exception is for contempt actions, which are referred to the circuit court.

¹⁰The outreach process in Dayton and other sites is described in greater detail in Doolittle and Lynn (1998).

¹¹Because of the nature of the referral process in Springfield, tracking was not undertaken.

Appearance Rates of Potential PFS Referrals and Factors Affecting Them

Site	Point at Which Tracking Begins	Appearance Rate at Reviews (%)	Factors Affecting Appearance Rates	Of Those Who Appeared at Hearing	
				Employed (%)	Eligible for PFS (%)
Dayton					
Prior to prehearing home visit	When notices sent to NCPs ordering them to appear for a review hearing	42	Less formal hearing and notice; short notice; lack of sanction; cases dismissed if no appearance	33	41
After prehearing home visits ^a	When notices sent to NCPs ordering them to appear for a review hearing	69	Similar hearing and notice, but prehearing home visits left supplementary notice; when home visits provided proof NCPs were given notice, then CSE staff recommended contempt proceedings for those not appearing	35	44
Grand Rapids	When NCPs from public-assistance-related cases scheduled for a review meeting	30 ^b	Many NCPs called to less formal reviews	6	72
Jacksonville	When court dockets reviewed and public-assistance-related cases identified	27	Some problems with serving notice reported and large geographic area for county	37	12

(continued)

Table 2.2 (continued)

Site	Point at Which Tracking Begins	Appearance Rate at Reviews (%)	Factors Affecting Appearance Rates	Of Those Who Appeared at Hearing	
				Employed (%)	Eligible for PFS (%)
Los Angeles	When letters sent to NCP in public-assistance-related cases within service area of two PFS service centers	Estimated 5 to 10	Less formal hearing and notice, NCPs drawn from across large urban county with all reviews held in downtown Los Angeles location; mobility of NCPs meant many addresses were outdated; short notice; notice emphasized opportunity not sanctions; sanctions for nonappearance difficult to impose; fear among some NCPs that this was a sting operation	32	42
Memphis	When court dockets reviewed and public-assistance-related cases identified	67	Formal court hearing and notice; many NCPs lived in downtown area; strong threat of jail for nonappearance	49	17
Trenton	When NCPs from public-assistance-related cases scheduled for a review hearing	56	Significant proportion of NCPs involved at stage of paternity establishment when more involvement of fathers; follow-up letter by PFS program; most NCPs lived near the location of hearing; formal hearing forum and notice	32	14

SOURCE: Doolittle, Fred, and Suzanne Lynn. 1998. *Working with Low-Income Cases. Lessons for the Child Support Enforcement System from Parents' Fair Share*. New York: MDRC.

NOTES: Data for Springfield are not available because about 70 percent of referrals were from paternity hearings, which made it difficult to track potential referrals prior to the hearing.

^aPrehearing visits started at the end of the sampling period covered in this report. Therefore, the report sample was generally recruited prior to the institution of home visits.

^bThis includes people called in for informal meetings.

Noncustodial parents who appeared at a hearing could be found ineligible for PFS for a variety of reasons. Some were unable to work because of disability or incarceration; some were living with the custodial parent; and others did not meet local program rules, such as residence within the county. However, one of the primary reasons for ineligibility was employment. In fact, a central finding of this tracking effort concerned the “smokeout” of previously unreported employment. Across all sites studied, about one-third of all those noncustodial parents tracked *who appeared for a hearing* reported previously unknown employment to CSE staff. This number ranged from 6 percent in Grand Rapids to 49 percent in Memphis (see Table 2.2).¹² In Memphis, a large number of potentially eligible noncustodial parents were identified through contempt of court dockets, made up primarily of cases in which the custodial parent had requested action. Assuming that custodial parents often request follow-up when they know about noncustodial parents’ employment income, this method of identification may explain the relatively high percentage of noncustodial parents who were employed in Memphis. For noncustodial parents found to be employed, CSE staff were then in a position to institute a wage-withholding order. This smokeout represents an effect of the extra outreach efforts connected with PFS intake.

As this summary of the PFS intake process illustrates, the sites were able to improve their knowledge of the status of cases that are not typically the focus of CSE efforts. However, doing so required stepping out of the usual enforcement paradigm and focusing more outreach effort on noncustodial parents linked to welfare cases who appeared to be unemployed. As it turned out, even in sites that developed effective processes to regularly identify potentially eligible noncustodial parents, it was difficult to actually bring them in for hearings for a number of reasons: in some cases staff did not know where the noncustodial parents were living or had some address information but not enough to legally serve them;¹³ in other cases, the noncustodial parents were served, but did not show up, and there were usually no serious sanctions for nonappearance. For those who did appear at hearings, the sites were able to more effectively “sort” CSE cases based on their circumstances. The results of this sorting illustrate why many fewer noncustodial parents turned out to be eligible and appropriate for PFS than originally expected based on sites’ initial review of their caseloads.¹⁴ In some cases, the noncustodial parents reported previously unknown employment, and action was taken to put a wage-withholding order in place. In other instances, the noncustodial parents were found to be disabled or incarcerated, and the status of their case was updated. The remaining cases, about one-third of the initial list of noncustodial parents, were found eligible for PFS and referred to the program.

D. Implications of the Referral and Eligibility Process for Program Implementation

As mentioned earlier, the identification, referral, and eligibility processes ultimately produced fewer sample members than expected. In response, sites worked to develop operational structures that maximized the effectiveness of PFS services despite low enrollment. Nevertheless, the problem did affect PFS implementation negatively, by altering the services that were provided, by making it difficult for sites to maintain steady funding streams, and by drawing management attention away from other important implementation issues.

¹²In Springfield, where formal tracking was not done, local staff report a smokeout rate at the low end of this range.

¹³Some sites were required to serve the noncustodial parents in person, and would not use the resources to do so unless they were certain that the address information was correct.

¹⁴For a fuller discussion of the lessons from this experience, see Doolittle and Lynn (1998).

Because of the low enrollment numbers, the services did not always operate as planned. Peer support and job club were probably most affected, because both were designed around group processes. If only one to three people met, as was sometimes the case in the sites that had trouble meeting participation targets, participants could not experience the supportive group dynamics that were intended. Of course, it is possible that the intensive staff attention that participants received when groups were small or nonexistent may also have been useful. Nevertheless, it is clear that the small number of participants in some sites affected the way that participants experienced these group components. For example, by running peer support as an open-entry component, sites engaged participants quickly rather than making them wait until enrollment was sufficient to start a new group. Even though the open-entry policy was a logical strategy given the low numbers, ideally a peer support group would contain the same participants week after week, to promote trust and solidarity. Finally, the employment and training components were also affected, even though they were often run by outside providers who also served participants from other sources. Arguably, some providers may have been more willing to develop programs around the particular needs of PFS participants if the program had been able to guarantee a more substantial flow of enrollees.

Moreover, because payment of MDRC funds used to operate the program was tied to the number of people enrolled in the research sample, when enrollment was lower than expected, the availability of operating funds dropped.¹⁵ Similarly, since some lead agencies used performance-based contracts related to the number of people who were served, service agencies ran into difficulties because these contracts did not fully cover the salaries of the staff that the agencies had allocated to PFS. This resulted in a variety of management problems, with some agencies eventually withdrawing from providing PFS services, cutting staff, or revamping the way that services were provided.

Perhaps most important, the continual struggle to identify and bring in for hearings the required number of new participants took a significant amount of management attention by MDRC, the child support agencies, and the lead PFS agencies. For example, near the conclusion of the demonstration, when a field researcher asked managers and staff in Dayton what the biggest challenge had been in implementing PFS, both PFS and CSE staff members said “enrolling enough people.” Managers in other sites often gave a similar response. This focus on the problem of enrollment in many sites prevented the kind of forward-thinking management style that could have helped sites meet their other substantial challenges: creating a seamless, coherent set of services; implementing effective services to improve family relationships; and developing a strong employment and training component from which the participants could benefit. As described in more detail later in this chapter, the two sites that had the least problem enrolling adequate numbers of noncustodial parents — Los Angeles and Grand Rapids — were able to focus much of their program management effort on building effective partnerships across the agencies that operated PFS.

The outreach process also had implications for the probability that PFS would produce impacts on employment and child support. Since sites drew on different referral sources and made different decisions about program eligibility, it is possible that differences in characteristics of the PFS sample from site to site made it more or less likely that enrollees would be influenced by the mix of services that PFS offered.

¹⁵When MDRC funds to a site were reduced, federal matching funds were also affected.

II. Running a Seamless Program

Managers often find it difficult to run programs in which services are provided by more than one agency. Thus, programs like PFS that rely on multiple agencies can expect tensions over program goals that conflict with the individual missions of the partner organizations, as well as over funding and “turf.” Thus, it is not surprising that even though most sites were generally successful at developing the “program home” where peer support and job search assistance were typically provided, it was much more difficult to present a coherent, well-integrated program to participants, in which staff across all of the agencies involved had a common vision of the program and worked effectively together.

In the case of PFS, running a seamless program required attention to two aspects of the problem at the same time: the overarching challenge of ensuring that the staff in different agencies were working toward, and communicating to participants, a set of common program goals and the logistical problem posed by the need to track, monitor, and report clients’ activities across agencies. The former problem is a prerequisite for solving the latter: even the best interagency reporting system will go unused if staff do not have a common mission that makes them want to communicate with one another.

Reaching a common understanding was made particularly difficult by the fact that the PFS model was trying to accomplish two goals which are inherently hard to reconcile: providing non-custodial parents with a set of positive opportunities, while making clear that the program expects them to pay more of whatever money they have for child support. Unfortunately, at the same time that the staff needed to come together as a team, these two goals of the program helped to reinforce pre-existing differences in perspective between two key sets of staff: the PFS program staff (who in many sites saw themselves as advocates for the noncustodial parents) and the CSE staff (whose job was to enforce the child support laws).

The discussion below relates the individual perspectives that the noncustodial parents, the PFS staff, and the child support staff brought to PFS and gives some examples of how sites worked toward achieving a seamless program with a clear mission.

A. The Perspective of the Noncustodial Parents

The initial reaction of many noncustodial parents who were told that they were being enrolled in PFS was that the mandate to participate was unfair. When single parents receiving welfare are asked to work or participate in activities, it can make sense to them as a form of “reciprocal obligation”; the government has certain responsibilities, and so does the recipient. In the case of PFS, however, the noncustodial parents did not typically receive any help from the government. In fact, one problem that program group members faced when deciding whether to comply with the participation mandate was that PFS did not offer its participants a stipend, other than reimbursement for transportation expenses. The main incentives offered to noncustodial parents were the opportunity to stay out of trouble with the child support system and a temporary reduction in their child support order.

In addition, noncustodial parents had often previously experienced the child support system as unfair. Enforcement was typically applied erratically, and when the system did follow up, to withhold child support from wages, for example, it appeared bent on leaving noncustodial par-

ents even deeper in poverty. In addition, if the custodial parent was on public assistance, any payments a noncustodial parent made did not go to his children but reimbursed the state and federal government for welfare and/or Medicaid payments. As one peer support participant observed, “Why do we have to pay back the system if we find a job? If the mother finds work and leaves welfare, she doesn’t have to pay anything back.”

At the same time, most of the program’s participants could clearly use the help of an effective employment and training program. This group has experienced the shrinking demand in the labor market for low-skilled workers, which has deeply affected black and Hispanic men in the central cities from which the PFS sample was drawn. MDRC’s qualitative interviews with participants uncovered many stories of sporadic employment, the struggle to give up lucrative illegal or underground activity, and the constant shadow of racism over the attempts of these men to enter the above-ground economy. The high proportion of men with histories of arrest or, anecdotally, current problems with alcohol or drug abuse made gaining stable employment an even more daunting task.

While many noncustodial parents were cautiously interested in taking advantage of the services that PFS offered to them, they were also conflicted. Would this program be different? Would it be better to get a job through PFS, even though the CSE agency could immediately begin withholding child support? Would it be better to wait and see if this program really could produce a “better job” than to find any kind of work on their own?

Some program group members resolved their conflict by participating actively to gain what they could from this new program; others participated briefly but dropped out for a variety of reasons; and still others remained elusive, never enrolling even though they had been assigned to the program.¹⁶

B. The Perspective of the PFS Staff

Staff who worked directly for the PFS program (as opposed to partner agencies such as CSE or an employment and training contractor) fell into two categories: specialists such as peer support facilitators or job developers, who ran particular services in the PFS sequence, and case managers, who were hired to work with a caseload of participants throughout their stay in the program.¹⁷ Case managers oriented noncustodial parents to the program; drew up service plans with them; assessed the need for support services, such as transportation; made referrals to program components or to outside services; monitored program compliance and participation; and intervened with noncustodial parents when there were program compliance issues. In addition, case managers were expected to keep in touch with participants until they were employed for six months.

¹⁶For a more detailed discussion about individual participation decisions, see Johnson, Levine, and Doolittle (forthcoming).

¹⁷Particularly in the smaller PFS sites, though, this description is an oversimplification. Staff often played more than one role, for example, both peer support facilitator and part-time case manager, or moved between roles over time.

It should be clear from the previous description of the noncustodial parents that the PFS staff faced a number of challenges each time they began working with a new group of participants. They needed to defuse the men's anger toward the child support system, to build bonds with them that helped remove their initial skepticism toward the PFS program, and to help them make some sense of their previous experiences with the child support system and the labor market so that they could move ahead with their lives. In short, if the PFS staff did not gain the trust of the noncustodial parents, they were unlikely to affect their lives in a meaningful way. Thus, PFS staff often presented themselves to the men as their advocates, sharply distinguishing themselves from the CSE system in order to gain their trust.

As the program's main liaisons with the CSE system, the PFS case managers were probably affected more directly than other PFS staff by the potential conflicts in the goals that PFS was trying to achieve. At the same time that they (and other PFS staff) were supposed to counsel and advocate for the participants, they were also supposed to keep track of the progress being made by the noncustodial parents on their caseloads, reporting employment or noncompliance to the CSE agency so that the CSE agency could institute wage withholding, raise participants' child support orders, or call them for a hearing. Field researchers reported that in some sites case managers tried to perform both roles — that of counselor and that of monitor — while in other sites staff resolved their role conflict by focusing on one aspect of their job over the other.

According to MDRC field researchers, in addition to differing in their approach to interactions with participants, PFS staff also differed in the emphasis that they placed on program messages. The four main messages that were communicated to the noncustodial parents were “This is your opportunity to get training or a job,” “You have an obligation to pay child support,” “This is an opportunity to get your life together,” and “It is important that you get involved in your children's lives.” In most sites, field researchers observed staff communicating more than one of these messages to participants. Interestingly, as the different agencies gained more experience working together and developing a common mission, the messages that they conveyed often became more reflective of all of the program's goals. For example, Grand Rapids, which focused on enforcing child support at the beginning, gradually increased its emphasis on the employment goal, while Trenton, the site that had focused most exclusively on the importance of gaining better jobs, began over time to impress on participants the child support goal as well.

The fact that PFS staff in several sites took on the role of advocate made it difficult for them to develop a strong working relationship with the CSE staff. They were concerned that the CSE agency might react to noncompliance by either putting the noncustodial parent in jail or, at the other extreme, not following up on the case. As a result, some PFS staff were reluctant to participate in the day-to-day collaboration with the CSE agency that was needed to run the program well. In fact, staff in more than one site described themselves as “slow to send cases back” to CSE. Similarly, in at least one site, for a time case managers delayed informing the CSE agency when participants found employment so that the agency would not immediately increase the support orders and begin withholding wages.

C. The Perspective of the Child Support Enforcement Staff

Once noncustodial parents were in the PFS program, there were three ways in which PFS needed CSE staff to “enhance enforcement” in support of the program's goals. When parents

were assigned to PFS, the child support agency was supposed to lower their orders, to give them time to participate in peer support and to move toward employment. Once noncustodial parents became employed, PFS staff were supposed to transmit that information to CSE staff, who would begin the process of raising the child support order and withholding wages from their paycheck. On the other hand, if the PFS staff determined that program group members were not participating as required, they sent the cases back to CSE for enforcement action. CSE staff were then supposed to try to work with the noncustodial parents to resolve their participation problems and, if they remained noncompliant, raise their support order back to its original level and revert to regular enforcement. Following up on program group members by either raising the support order or responding to noncompliance required the CSE agency to receive information from the PFS agency — a source outside its regular channels — and, ideally, to act on it more promptly or in a different way than would be the case for non-PFS cases.

Unlike the PFS staff, who were hired specifically to fulfill the goals of PFS, the actions of the CSE staff were expected to follow the procedures of an agency whose goal was to collect child support payments for a wide population. Most CSE staff had enormous caseloads, and the courts or administrative review processes often had limited docket space, requiring staff to have a system for prioritizing cases. In general, low priority was placed on trying to collect payments from noncustodial parents who were unemployed or otherwise unlikely to make payments. Staff generally saw these cases as being difficult to locate, and thus requiring a high level of effort for little payoff. Thus, if CSE agencies proceeded with “business as usual,” the system would not be as responsive to PFS cases as the program design envisioned.

Moreover, because CSE staff are part of an organizational culture geared toward rooting out those who are able to pay (rather than developing new opportunities for people), when cases were sent back to the CSE agency its staff typically did not see their role as actively trying to engage the noncustodial parents or to convince them to participate. Instead, in most sites noncompliant enrollees were called in for a review or hearing and followed up if they did not appear.

In some sites, the CSE staff and the judges or hearing officers placed a high priority on PFS cases because they believed the program gave them some important new options for working with noncustodial parents. Yet even CSE agencies that were eager to make PFS work had few avenues to pursue those who were determined not to comply with their child support orders or PFS requirements. The last step in the enforcement process for noncustodial parents who simply did not show up for review or contempt hearings was to issue a bench warrant through which the system would catch up with them if they were ever arrested on a charge not related to child support. Thus, in dealing with noncustodial parents who were completely unresponsive to contacts by the CSE agency or the PFS program, no matter what form they took, programs were stymied. Since the noncustodial parents were not receiving any benefits (unlike parents in welfare-to-work programs), ultimately there was no credible “sanction” to be applied to convince them to participate, short of raising their order back to its pre-PFS level, issuing a bench warrant, and waiting.

However, some noncustodial parents did respond to letters from the CSE agency and show up for review meetings or hearings when requested. Therefore, if the CSE staff could develop creative methods to cajole noncompliant program group members into participating (in addition to modifying child support orders and instituting wage withholding for employed participants), their actions could help to shape the effectiveness of the program as a whole.

D. Bringing Together Agencies with Divergent Perspectives

It is clear that the participants, the PFS staff, and the CSE staff approached the program differently. Unfortunately, often it was easier for the PFS and CSE staff members either to see themselves as adversaries or to simply retreat to their own jobs rather than working together. Alternatively, the PFS and CSE staffs could complement each other's strengths, bringing their different perspectives to the challenge of implementing a seamless program. Ideally, both PFS and CSE staff would communicate a message to participants that they were working as a team and were following through with strategies for regular communication between the two organizations.

Initial message to participants. The message that the program requirement would be jointly enforced could be communicated at the initial hearing and the subsequent orientation to PFS. For example, in all the sites PFS staff appeared at the intake hearings to carry out the random assignment process and conduct the baseline interviews needed for the research. In Dayton, Los Angeles, and Grand Rapids, the PFS staff acted more like CSE staff than in the other sites because they also helped to manage the review or hearing process and, in some cases, provided information during the reviews or hearings themselves. Program group members in the sites presumably left the initial hearing with the understanding that the PFS and CSE staffs regularly shared information and worked together. As the enrollees interacted with PFS staff over time, the image that the staff were working closely with, and were perhaps even part of, the child support agency probably increased the staff's effectiveness in getting participants to pay child support. Similarly, in some sites a CSE staff member attended the initial orientation at the PFS site, primarily to provide information about child support, but a by-product was to let participants see that the CSE staff were interested in the program and were part of the PFS team.

Prioritizing enhanced enforcement. Beyond the orientation, the managers and staff needed to actively work on developing a common mission and a strategy for interagency communication. As it turned out, the sites in which the child support agency was the lead local agency — Los Angeles and Grand Rapids — were particularly well positioned to bring PFS and CSE staff together to act as a problem-solving team. As described above, CSE staff, with large caseloads and therefore pre-existing assumptions about which cases to prioritize, often had a hard time changing their priorities and procedures to support PFS. In some cases, PFS staff expressed an interest in working more closely with CSE, but found it difficult to convince the CSE agency to give PFS issues priority. In other cases, overburdened administrators on the PFS side did not treat the CSE agency as a full partner by maintaining close communication between the two agencies. Thus, it was especially helpful to have a local lead agency that had some control over CSE priorities.

Ultimately, the program's effectiveness at delivering seamless services across agencies will be measured largely by how well the staff responded to changes in status of program group members. In a later report, CSE case file reviews will be used to estimate how effectively the CSE agencies responded to changes in the circumstances of program group members. Specifically, enhanced enforcement should mean that CSE lowers the orders of noncustodial parents when they are assigned to PFS, learns more quickly than usual of any employment among program group members, increases the child support order appropriately, and puts wage withholding into place. It should also mean that when a program group member does not comply with PFS requirements, eventually his case returns to the CSE system and receives further enforcement action.

While quantitative measures of CSE actions are yet to come, field interviewers' reports of the mechanisms that sites developed to enhance enforcement are available. Four sites — Los Angeles, Grand Rapids, Trenton, and Memphis — designated specific CSE staff members to handle enforcement for all PFS program group cases; they had smaller caseloads than regular CSE staff and understood the program's objectives (see Table 2.3).

As shown in Table 2.3, for the full period of implementation covered by this report, Los Angeles, Dayton, Grand Rapids, and Memphis reported that the agencies had developed a consistently effective mechanism by which CSE staff learned about, and acted on, noncustodial parents' employment. Trenton staff reported some problems in communication between PFS and CSE staff that improved after the first year of the program, and Springfield PFS staff reported that while communicating with the CSE agency was not a problem, the CSE agency did not reliably respond to employment information when it was provided.

Noncompliance follow-up. Two specific strategies proved helpful in following up with noncompliant cases. First, as shown in Table 2.3, the CSE agency in Los Angeles stipulated that an automatic review hearing was to be held 120 days after random assignment to ascertain whether each program group member was complying with PFS. The follow-up procedure in Grand Rapids was also a modification of the usual enforcement system: noncustodial parents who were noncompliant with PFS mandates were given a warning designed to try to convince them to participate, instead of simply calling them in for a hearing as was the case in most other sites.¹⁸

¹⁸CSE staff in Memphis and Springfield adopted this same practice partway through the demonstration, after most members of the early cohort had already entered the program.

**Table 2.3
Parents' Fair Share**

**Features of Enhanced Child Support Enforcement, Employment Services, and Peer Support,
by Site**

	Dayton	Grand Rapids	Jacksonville	Los Angeles	Memphis	Springfield	Trenton
Enhanced CSE structure							
Special CSE staff handle PFS caseload		✓		✓	✓		✓
Normal CSE caseload per worker	2,500	3,500	1,500	1,500	9,000	NA ^a	600
Caseload per CSE worker handling PFS cases	2,500	250 ^b	1,500	350 ^b	150 ^b	NA ^a	200 ^b
Future review hearing set automatically upon entry into PFS				✓			
Regular meetings between CSE and PFS staff to review noncompliant cases		✓ ^c		✓ ^c			
Mechanism in place to ensure that CSE staff learn about employment of program group members	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓ ^d	✓ ^e
Employment services							
Job club							
Initial group job search workshop	✓ ^f	✓	✓ ^g	✓ ^h	✓	✓ ^f	✓ ⁱ
Structured intensive job search/ phone room	✓	✓		✓ ^j	✓	✓	✓
Job developer available	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Emphasis on job development		✓				✓	
Availability of employment services after job loss ^k	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

(continued)

Table 2.3 (continued)

	Dayton	Grand Rapids	Jacksonville	Los Angeles	Memphis	Springfield	Trenton
Peer support							
In addition to peer support discussions of paternal involvement, site regularly held special events for children	✓ ¹						
Peer support emphasized meeting special needs of NCPs and maintaining contact with NCPs over time	✓		✓				

SOURCES: MDRC field research observations and interviews with PFS staff and participants.

NOTES: A component given a "✓" was implemented.

A component given a "✓" was either not a strong part of the site's operation or was implemented for only part of the follow-up period.

^aNot applicable. CSE staff do not have caseloads.

^bEstimate based on all program group members randomly assigned through July 1995 for Grand Rapids, Memphis, and Trenton and through December 1995 for Los Angeles.

^cIn Los Angeles, these case conferences were held monthly; in Grand Rapids, they were held weekly.

^dA mechanism was in place, but the CSE agency was unlikely to follow up, given the priority the agency placed on establishing new orders.

^eThis mechanism was improved in the second half of the follow-up.

^fIn Springfield, the group workshop portion of the job club functioned well, but there was no phone room and/or little structured follow-up after the workshop; initially Dayton operated similarly, but added a more formal job search near the end of the follow-up period.

^gJob club was provided through one-on-one meetings for the first year of the program; then group workshops were instituted, but the subsequent job search component remained relatively unstructured.

^hAll noncustodial parents were referred to a two-to-three day "work-readiness workshop" during the second half of peer support.

ⁱHigh rates of staff turnover and attendance problems hampered effective implementation of job club.

^jParticipants considered "job ready" were referred to the local job service for one-on-one assistance after the initial workshop.

^kWhile this service was theoretically available in all sites, it was used by only a small proportion of participants.

^lWhile all peer support facilitators emphasized involvement with children, the facilitators in Dayton gave NCPs particular assignments designed to improve their relationship and held special events for children regularly.

Second, Los Angeles and Grand Rapids held regular “case conference” meetings between PFS and CSE staff members to discuss the participation problems of particular noncustodial parents and how to respond to them. (Staff in other sites typically relied on paper status reports shared across agencies.)¹⁹ These meetings not only made it more likely that staff from each agency would follow through with the actions that were needed on each case, but also gave both groups a chance to discuss their jobs and to develop a common understanding of the program’s mission. As mentioned, in Grand Rapids field researchers reported that over time the PFS focus shifted from largely enforcement to the broader goal of expanding employment opportunities. In contrast, managers in Los Angeles reported that the case conferences helped the PFS staff to understand the enforcement goals of the program.

The CSE systems in Jacksonville and Springfield appeared to be the least likely to follow up with program group members who did not participate: in Jacksonville because there was little communication between PFS and CSE staff and in Springfield because the CSE agency had little room to override the priority that was given to new establishment cases over enforcement cases in the courts. All of the other sites, according to interviews with CSE staff, had at least some mechanism in place for noncompliance follow-up. A future report will include information on whether, and how promptly, the CSE agency in each site actually held hearings or reviews with program group members who did not comply with PFS requirements.

CSE agency leadership. In summary, the managers in Los Angeles and Grand Rapids took seriously their leadership roles, coordinating the program across agencies and working to ensure that services on both the PFS and CSE sides were delivered as planned. Arguably, the focus that these managers placed on effective implementation across agencies was related to their role as CSE managers, since the CSE agency was the only agency involved that had a direct (financial) interest in learning how to achieve results with this segment of its population. In addition, as mentioned earlier, these agencies may have been able to focus more on overall program management because they struggled less than other sites with the problem of meeting their enrollment targets.

Sites that did not have CSE as the local lead agency experienced varying degrees of success at developing a common mission. In some sites, such as Jacksonville and Springfield, the individual staffs focused primarily on running their own aspect of the program, without fully integrating the message presented to the noncustodial parents. In the remaining sites — Memphis, Dayton, and Trenton — the PFS and CSE staff did, over time, improve their communications and work together more effectively.

III. Providing Comprehensive Employment and Training Services

As discussed in Chapter 1, the designers of PFS felt strongly that to have a significant effect on the earnings of noncustodial parents, sites would have to do more than provide them with job search services. They would have to give noncustodial parents access to activities that would

¹⁹Staff in other sites did have regular interagency PFS meetings, but these were typically to iron out policy or operational issues, not to discuss individual cases.

increase their hourly wages; increase their likelihood of getting a stable, long-term job; or improve their job-keeping skills. In fact, data shown in Chapter 4 suggest that slightly more than one-fourth of the fathers did not need help in finding a job; they had been employed fairly steadily prior to entering the program. Thus, for many participants, simply putting them through a job search program would not improve their employment prospects. At the same time, however, the program designers recognized that the participants were under intense pressure to not stay out of the labor market for very long. Unlike single parents who might participate in a training program as part of an effort to leave welfare for work, these participants received little or no public assistance and had to work for any income.

A. Job Search and Job Development

Although a significant proportion of the noncustodial parents were either currently working or had worked recently, others needed help identifying the type of job they wanted, writing résumés, practicing interviewing techniques, or gaining access to job networks. In helping participants to enter employment, sites experienced a tension between two models of job placement: providing basic job search help that would get participants to work as quickly as possible and providing the assistance of a job developer who might find participants better jobs than they would find on their own, but not as quickly.

Job search. The job search activities offered in different sites were known by a variety of names — usually pre-employment workshops or job clubs — but usually consisted of an initial group workshop followed by, for those who did not find jobs immediately, ongoing assistance such as use of a phone room, continuing group sessions, or one-on-one meetings with staff. Like peer support, the job search workshops were generally implemented as planned, although in many sites the follow-up job search activities were not as well structured as the initial workshops.

As seen in Table 2.3, field researchers reported that two of the sites fully implemented both aspects of job search, running group workshops to teach methods of improving job search skills, and providing phone rooms or systematically following up with clients once they were looking for jobs independently. In most sites, job clubs were either two or three weeks long or provided ongoing support for those who were looking for jobs. In contrast, Los Angeles referred all program group members to a two-to-three-day work-readiness workshop, with subsequent job search assistance provided one-on-one by the local job service for those who were deemed “job ready” or by individual training providers after the completion of skills training. Similarly, Jacksonville’s job club was not fully developed, although it improved somewhat in the second half of the program (as was often true in other sites). Dayton and Springfield, which ran strong group workshops emphasizing job search skills, did not support participants as consistently as other sites once they were looking for jobs on their own after the workshop.²⁰ Overall, field researchers found that job search services improved over time, as technical assistance was provided.

²⁰In Dayton, active job search was employed initially as part of the on-site job club, and then was de-emphasized. Instead, participants were referred to a job developer at the completion of a three-to-four-week job search workshop. This job development component, which was to link participants to employment as well as on-the-job training (OJT), was operated by welfare department staff. Attendance was very low throughout the program.

Job development. Sites varied in the extent to which job developers were effective at linking participants to specific job openings rather than primarily expecting participants to identify jobs themselves (Table 2.3). Job development services were expected to help people to gain access to better jobs than they would be able to find on their own. As shown in Table 2.3, all the sites had job developers available, as intended, but Springfield and Grand Rapids emphasized job development most heavily. Often, the same job developers who identified private sector job openings for PFS participants also worked on placing people in OJTs (to be discussed subsequently with other skill-building services).

In sites that reportedly placed fewer participants in jobs through job development, field researchers found that job developers often were conflicted because they placed a high value on maintaining good relationships with their employer networks. Thus, even when they managed to place few participants, they sometimes expressed reluctance to refer very disadvantaged PFS clients for jobs, because they saw such referrals as risky. From their perspective, participants sometimes expressed disappointment that the job developers were not able to link them to a better job than they would have found on their own. They often told field researchers that the time they spent in Parents' Fair Share without working was a worthwhile investment, if it would yield a good job at the end:

. . . But all in all, if I don't get the proper job that I'm looking for, it was a waste of time. I should have carried my butt over to a temporary service and got a quick job. Really it was a waste of time for me to be without work for the whole three weeks in Peer Support, three weeks in Job Club, and now a week of Job Search. That's a month and three weeks! A month and three weeks! I'm sure JOBS Temporary Service would have found a job by now. So my time is my money because time is money and the time that was wasted in Peer Support and Job Club, therefore — that was a waste of time. If I end up having to go to a temporary service anyway, then that was really a waste of time.²¹

B. Post-Employment Services

Post-employment services were seen as an important way to improve job retention by helping clients to resolve employment-related problems, both working with clients to resolve issues while they were employed and providing additional job search assistance if they lost their job. Sites were encouraged to allow employed enrollees to continue in peer support or other activities if they found it helpful, and they were expected to maintain contact with participants for six months after employment. However, post-employment services proved difficult to implement. For example, evidence from the participation data, supported by qualitative interviews with noncustodial parents, suggests that participants rarely returned after losing a job.²²

Field researchers reported that a number of factors seem to have contributed to less-than-optimal provision of post-employment services. Some sites did not communicate well to partici-

²¹Johnson, Levine, and Doolittle (forthcoming).

²²See Johnson, Levine, and Doolittle (forthcoming).

pants that ongoing help was available. Instead of being a continuing job-finding resource, the program was often described by participants as something they had “completed” or “graduated” from once they completed peer support or gained their first job after entering PFS. On the other hand, site staff who did try to engage noncustodial parents after they had left the program for employment often reported that former participants ignored their attempts to contact them. From another perspective, some former participants who were interviewed by MDRC ethnographers felt that while they had benefited from PFS activities, they would not gain a great deal from returning for further job search help.

C. Skill-Building Services

The skill-building services — particularly classroom training and OJT — proved to be the PFS activities that were the most difficult to implement. The report that described implementation of the PFS pilot phase, *Matching Opportunities to Obligations*,²³ made clear that from the beginning of the program institutional barriers made it difficult to provide all the services intended in each site. As the report pointed out, most commonly classroom training and OJT were provided by local JTPA agencies. PFS developed agreements with these agencies to provide services to a certain number of participants, with the slots funded by PFS, JTPA, or a combination of the two.

When specific slots were funded by PFS, the agencies had some flexibility in developing new service models that would effectively serve these disadvantaged men. For example, PFS staff in Springfield, which relied on a mix of PFS-funded slots and JTPA-funded slots, reported that the JTPA provider was much more flexible in admitting noncustodial parents when they were being funded by PFS than by JTPA.

When slots were funded by JTPA, the providers faced conflicting incentives. On the one hand, they were interested in serving PFS participants because at the time the PFS pilot was being implemented, JTPA providers were under pressure to target their services toward harder-to-serve participants rather than motivated clients who had traditionally helped them to meet performance standards. However, at the same time, those performance standards still placed constraints on the kinds of clients the agencies were willing to serve and how much they were willing to spend on services. In addition, many JTPA agencies felt restricted in their ability to develop OJT slots, the activity seen by PFS planners as a promising way to help participants gain access to high-quality jobs while maintaining a source of income. In the 1980s, the U.S. Department of Labor’s inspector general conducted audits and concluded that OJT was often used to subsidize employers even when little documented training occurred. New regulations were put into place that required JTPA agencies to carefully document training associated with JTPA slots and to justify the length of time that the subsidy was required. JTPA agencies reported that this made OJTs less attractive to employers, by increasing their paperwork burden while reducing the size of the subsidies that were available.

Regardless of whether slots were funded by JTPA or by PFS, agencies that were providing employment and training services often had to try new approaches with PFS participants. For example, one JTPA agency had trouble placing enough noncustodial parents in OJT slots, because

²³Bloom and Sherwood (1994).

its staff were used to developing OJT agreements with employers and then looking for clients enrolled in their agency who were likely to succeed in those slots. However, when working with a group of highly disadvantaged men, OJT developers in other sites found it more effective to identify the type of job needed for a specific client and then approach employers who might be able to work with that client successfully.

Unfortunately, as the PFS lead agencies and the provider agencies negotiated over time about the changes in process needed to serve this unfamiliar, “high-risk” population, the participants were sometimes caught in the middle. After being referred by PFS staff for classroom training, noncustodial parents sometimes encountered complicated eligibility and screening processes, long delays before a class would begin, or even denial of the services that they had expected to receive.

D. Promising Strategies for Developing Skill-Building Services

As field researchers visited the PFS sites in Los Angeles, Grand Rapids, and Springfield — the three sites that were most successful at putting OJT and classroom training components into place — they noted characteristics among providers and staff that appeared to influence implementation of employment and training services, including active leadership, a staff ethic of serving disadvantaged populations, and an expectation that the different service providers would work as a team on behalf of a common pool of clients.

It is clear from the employment and training experiences in different sites that “leadership matters,” as it did in attempting to bring PFS and CSE staff together in a common mission. In Los Angeles, the state Employment Development Department (EDD) helped shape the role that the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) providers played in PFS by devoting a full-time staff person to coordinate PFS from the state level. In addition, the EDD staff member spent a significant amount of time specifically monitoring the services being provided by the three JTPA agencies in the Los Angeles PFS program.

While having EDD as the lead agency probably helped facilitate this process, what mattered most was the high level of monitoring and assistance that EDD provided. In Jacksonville, the Florida Department of Labor and Employment Security was the lead state agency, but it was not as aggressive in its role, and the configuration of employment and training services in the Jacksonville PFS site is similar to that of other sites.

In addition to strong leadership, field researchers reported that the attitudes of program staff toward the noncustodial parents affected their access to skill-building and job development services. In particular, staff varied considerably in their pre-existing assumptions about the “employability” of the men who became PFS participants, which appeared to affect the opportunities offered to them in two fundamental ways: staff involved in intake and assessment determined whether a PFS participant would be allowed to enroll in employment and training activities, and, once enrolled, job developers had a great deal of discretion in determining whether clients were actively “marketed” to employers, for OJT positions or for unsubsidized jobs.

Thus, field researchers observed that in a number of sites where the OJT component was not fully utilized, staff voiced concerns to them that PFS participants “did not want to work” or described PFS participants as clients whose performance could potentially jeopardize their rela-

tionship with employers. Of course, these attitudes were shaped by the incentives and expectations that these staff members had faced in other programs. Interestingly, two of the sites that achieved high participation rates in OJT or classroom training (Grand Rapids and Springfield) contracted for some of their services with providers who had previously worked with very disadvantaged populations, including those with physical or mental disabilities, and ex-offenders, who obviously faced significant problems in the labor market. By contrast, the staff of these organizations did not perceive PFS participants as having insurmountable barriers to employment.

In another successful approach, Los Angeles contracted out intake and referral for the bulk of PFS employment and training activities to a community-based provider that hired new staff specifically to screen PFS participants. Field researchers reported that these staff members were open-minded about streamlining the intake and assessment process to make it more inviting to clients and may have been more willing to enroll PFS participants than the agency staff who were previously doing this job.

Finally, the two sites that were able to implement the OJT component for significant numbers of participants, Springfield and Grand Rapids, diversified their access to employers by contracting with two providers to develop their OJTs. They also structured the relationship between the providers so that they acted as a team rather than in competition for clients. For example, in Springfield the two providers met regularly to review their success in placing the clients who were ready for OJTs and shared job leads to help place all the clients who had been assigned to each provider.

IV. Implementing Peer Support and Mediation Services

As described in Chapter 1, two PFS services — peer support and mediation — were included in the program model largely in recognition of the need to help noncustodial parents to build a stronger commitment to paying child support, to develop better relationships with their former partners and their children, and to gain skills that might help them to retain jobs. For example, since previous qualitative research had indicated that noncustodial parents often cited conflict and resentment over visitation, child care, lifestyles, and other issues as reasons that they were not paying child support, it was logical to include in the PFS model services aimed at improving family relationships. However, whether sites would be able to operate these components effectively enough to influence the attitudes and conflicts at which they were targeted was uncertain.

A. Peer Support

Peer support was more straightforward to operate than enhanced CSE or employment and training services, which both required substantial cooperation across agencies to be successful. Even though special skills were required to facilitate the peer support sessions effectively, the agency providing peer support was not dependent on other partner agencies to operate the component. Perhaps not coincidentally, the overall impression among field researchers was that peer support was the most consistently well run PFS activity.

The initial component for most PFS participants after orientation, peer support, was provided by a trained facilitator using a curriculum provided by MDRC that included 18 topics. Groups generally met a minimum of two or three times a week for a set number of weeks to cover all the topics. The curriculum was designed to help noncustodial parents to set personal goals and to resolve some of their family conflicts, and to motivate them to want to provide both emotional and financial support to their children. In addition, it was expected that peer support would provide the noncustodial parents with conflict resolution skills that might help them to retain jobs.

According to ethnographic and field research in each site, peer support was well implemented in most sites and generally well received by the noncustodial parents. Most peer support facilitators followed the PFS curriculum relatively closely, so that participants in each site discussed a common set of topics. Nevertheless, peer support still varied across sites in the skill and experience of facilitators and in the aspects of the curriculum that were emphasized.

When peer support was implemented well, it could provide participants with opportunities to relate to a peer group; to discuss troubling personal and societal problems; to develop new problem-solving skills related to employment and family issues; and to have, sometimes for the first time, access to an advocate who believed in their potential. In sites with strong peer support components, a charismatic peer support leader supported and motivated participants (sometimes staff as well) and turned participants' initial skepticism about the program's requirements into enthusiasm for its possibilities.

As reported in MDRC's ethnographic study, for many noncustodial parents peer support was special because they were listened to and heard.²⁴ Two PFS enrollees who participated in MDRC's ethnographic interviews reported:

I have a lot to thank for this [facilitator] in here . . . because he's instilled in me one thing: I have no fear of sharing anything that has hurt me. There was years and years of me walking around not trusting anybody to talk to about it. Now . . . I don't walk around feeling as though I'm going to have an angina attack or I feel as if the top of my head's going to explode from blood pressure because I keep holding all this crap in me. It's got to come out.

It helped me to be a better father, to get better perspective on what I'm suppose to do as a father, and I appreciated that.

Two sites stand out for their approach to the peer support curriculum. Dayton's facilitators seem to have gone furthest in developing methods for encouraging noncustodial parents to become regularly involved with their children. In particular, they gave participants assignments such as "make dinner for your child" or "take your children to the park" and asked them to report back to the group about the assignment. They also held special events and outings, such as Easter egg hunts, for the fathers and their children about once per quarter. Other sites focused on peer support discussions to encourage noncustodial parents' involvement with their children. Also, in Dayton as well as in Jacksonville, the peer support facilitators made a particular effort to provide individualized attention and to develop specialized groups that would be as supportive as possible

²⁴Johnson, Levine, and Doolittle (forthcoming).

to participants with various disadvantages. For example, Dayton organized sessions for noncustodial parents who were HIV-positive or had AIDS, and Jacksonville instituted a mental health-oriented group that was facilitated by a psychologist rather than the regular staff, for program group members who could benefit from more therapeutic sessions.

In some sites, field researchers noted specific problems that may have limited the effectiveness of the peer support component for at least part of the follow-up: facilitators who were less skilled at encouraging group discussion or staff turnover that led to uneven training of facilitators (Memphis, Springfield, and Trenton). As mentioned earlier, some sites periodically struggled with peer support groups that were too small to support the intended group dynamics. (This was particularly true in Dayton for roughly the first half of program operations and in Memphis during the first half of the demonstration period.) Nevertheless, peer support was overwhelmingly viewed as the central activity of the program, providing a positive focal point for participants.

B. Mediation

Mediation was meant to provide additional support to the goal of resolving existing family conflicts, as part of the long-run goal of increasing the likelihood that the noncustodial parents would want to pay child support. Unlike the other three components, mediation was not mandatory because the program had no influence over custodial parents and thus no way to enforce a mandate. In addition, not every set of parents had conflicts that would require mediation.

All of the sites had formal agreements with mediation organizations, and orientation at every site included information about the availability of mediation services. Formal mediation remained underutilized throughout the demonstration, however. Interviews and observations indicated a number of possible reasons. Staff generally reported that few participants were interested when the opportunity was offered. When a noncustodial parent did express interest, it was not always possible to persuade the custodial parent to participate. When both parties agreed to participate, there was a high no-show rate for one or both parties. At the same time, staff did not place as high a priority on encouraging participation in mediation as they did on the mandatory program components.

In Dayton and Jacksonville, when staff experimented with marketing the component more aggressively, demand for mediation increased, but no site was willing (or able) to sustain the effort necessary to maintain the increased demand for long periods. Moreover, in Grand Rapids, the site in which mediation was used the most, it was provided by the CSE agency, which had already been charged with providing mediation to any family in the child support system that needed it. Thus, the evidence suggests that the use of mediation can be increased if it is well integrated into the program.

PFS staff in several sites, however, performed an informal mediation role when approached for assistance; many of them had mediation training. In Los Angeles, for instance, all of the peer support facilitators had other responsibilities outside PFS, and for some these included community dispute resolution. (In Los Angeles and Michigan, the same agency that provided peer support and case management also operated the mediation component.) In Springfield, the agency selected to provide mediation services trained PFS staff in dispute resolution and also provided dispute resolution training to noncustodial parents during job club after it was clear that formal

mediation was seldom used. Memphis case managers and Dayton peer support facilitators routinely helped participants resolve problems with custodial parents or other family members.

It may be that noncustodial parents were more willing to take problems to someone they knew and trusted than to an impartial third party who was usually a stranger. PFS staff were sometimes able to negotiate agreements that allowed participants to visit their children, work out personal problems, or remain housed. In that sense, mediation was an important function in PFS, but it was difficult to document how often this informal mediation took place.

V. Conclusion

Finding solutions for the most difficult challenges — building enrollment, managing cross-agency partnerships, and developing the employment and training component — absorbed a great deal of the time and focus of managers in most sites. Thus, sites that suffered from additional ongoing management problems, such as a lack of attention to PFS by overburdened administrators at one agency or another, high rates of turnover among program staff, or longstanding rifts between agencies that needed to work closely together in the PFS context, faced an even more difficult task.

In many sites, one or more of these problems remained unresolved for much of the demonstration, ultimately requiring program managers to build the program on a less-than-ideal underlying structure. Thus, problems of management and coordination left many sites with weaknesses in the program treatment, particularly for the cohort whose services are described in this report. However, these shortcomings were not universal. The agencies that were able to resolve the operational problems described in this chapter had laid the foundation on which to build an effective program. In addition, as the demonstration progressed beyond the period covered in this report, field researchers did observe improvement in many sites, particularly in the quality of the job search component, post-employment follow-up, and coordination between PFS staff and the CSE agencies. These improvements were achieved through a combination of focused management attention, technical assistance from MDRC site representatives,²⁵ and training on specific issues by outside consultants.

²⁵For additional information on MDRC's role in the demonstration, see Appendix Table B.

Chapter 3

Impacts of Extra Outreach and Case Review Prior to Referral to PFS Services

Identifying parents appropriate for PFS required the child support enforcement (CSE) agencies to bypass their usual enforcement models and focus on cases that they had typically assigned low priority: noncustodial parents who would appear to be eligible for PFS. As described in Chapter 2, this process proved difficult and involved more extensive outreach and child support case review than normally done by CSE staff. This chapter presents findings on the effects of the initial process of extra outreach and case review¹ involved in the PFS intake process.

The segment of the caseload that might be eligible for PFS had typically not been the target of enforcement efforts because the payoff was thought to be low. However, the majority of fathers identified as potentially eligible for PFS were found to be ineligible for the program, and some of the reasons illustrate the diversity of this segment of the CSE caseload and the potential of extra outreach: they could refuse to cooperate with CSE (by not appearing or contacting the agency), posing a pure enforcement problem; they could appear and inform CSE staff of a previously unreported job; or they could turn out to be disabled or incarcerated (or even deceased) and therefore not expected to work.

The extra outreach, which was a part of PFS intake, helped local CSE staff target “unwilling” parents, reduce or eliminate the current child support obligation of those who were unable to work, and refer the appropriate parents to PFS services. This extra outreach (which also affected those eventually referred to PFS) could by itself increase child support payments through a pure enforcement effect, as staff discovered noncustodial parents with previously unknown income or as parents decided to commit a larger part of their income to child support payments. In addition, the extra outreach might lead noncustodial parents to work or earn more because their child support obligation was more pressing.

The results presented in this chapter show that increased enforcement for the segment of the caseload potentially eligible for PFS did increase the payment of child support. This effect was due most likely to the “smokeout” of earnings previously unknown to the CSE agency. Extra outreach caused more fathers in the potentially eligible caseload to pay support, and many continued to pay fairly regularly throughout the follow-up period covered in this report. However, the dollar increase in payments was fairly small, which is not surprising given the fathers’ relatively low incomes. The extra outreach did not increase their employment or earnings.

The chapter describes the random assignment design put in place in three of the sites to estimate the impacts of extra outreach. It then outlines how the extra outreach was conducted and the results. The chapter concludes with findings from the three sites on the effects of extra outreach on noncustodial parents’ child support payments, employment, and earnings.

¹For brevity’s sake, the phrase “extra outreach and case review” is shortened to “extra outreach” in the remainder of this chapter.

I. The Research Design for This Analysis

Figure 3.1 summarizes the random assignment design. The three sites analyzed in this chapter (Dayton, Grand Rapids, and Memphis) went through two stages of random assignment. In the first stage, MDRC and site staff developed lists of noncustodial parents who appeared (based on information in each site's automated data system) to meet the PFS eligibility rules (see top box). Between April 1994 and December 1995, noncustodial parents on these lists were randomly assigned to one of two research groups (see two shaded diamonds): two-thirds were assigned to a group subject to extra outreach by site CSE staff, and one-third were assigned to a group subject to the standard CSE procedures and not eligible for PFS. As a result of the random assignment design process, the overall characteristics of the two groups were similar, and the standard group could represent the experience of those noncustodial parents on the caseload who appeared to meet the PFS profile but were not brought in for case review.

Site staff then made special efforts to get the parents assigned to the extra outreach group to a case review or hearing, to determine their current employment and child support status and to identify those who were eligible and appropriate for PFS. In Dayton these efforts were substantially different from standard CSE practice. In Memphis the extra outreach efforts represented a clear break from local standard practice, in which the system was largely reacting to custodial parent complaints in scheduling review hearings for welfare-related child support cases. But these efforts did not involve the kind of innovations that Dayton undertook. In Grand Rapids the extra outreach represented a more intensive and frequent version of "business as usual" because normal enforcement was already quite vigilant. Here, impacts on child support payments probably resulted from quicker identification of employment than would have otherwise occurred.²

In the next step of the process, local staff interviewed those noncustodial parents who appeared for a review hearing and determined their PFS eligibility. In the second stage of random assignment, those assessed as eligible and appropriate for PFS were randomly assigned to one of two groups (see two shaded squares): half were assigned to the *PFS program group* and referred to PFS services and subject to its mandates, and half were assigned to the *control group*, subject to standard CSE procedures and not eligible for PFS. Once again, because the assignment to the program and control groups was made through a random process, the two groups had similar overall characteristics.

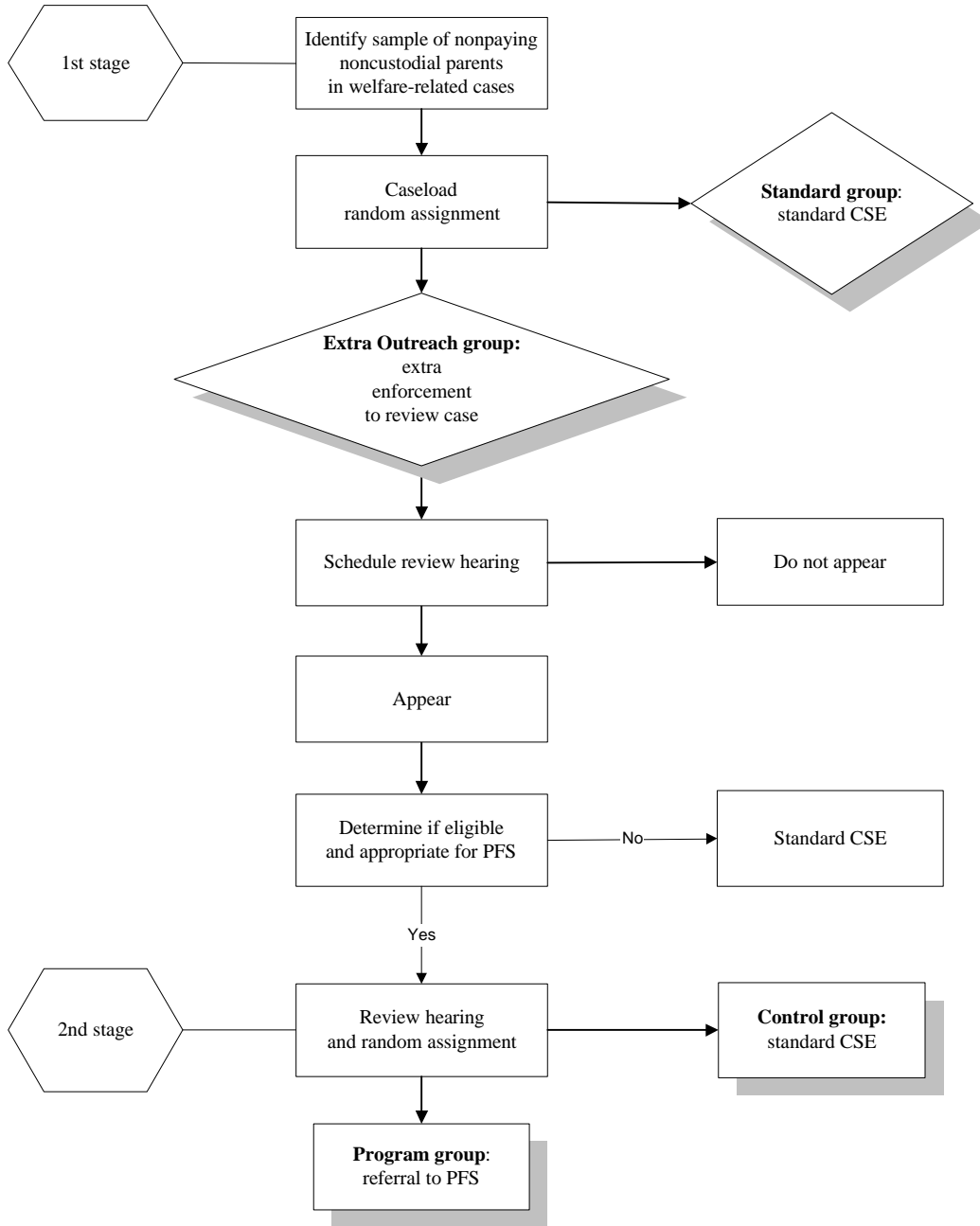
II. Results of the Extra Outreach and Case Review

Local CSE staff started with a list of noncustodial parents from their CSE caseload who had been randomly assigned to *extra outreach*. They were asked to make special efforts to:

²To the extent that this is true, recent federal requirements for employers to report new hires to the unemployment insurance system might produce similar effects in local programs like Grand Rapids, where enforcement is already strong. However, this reporting would not uncover jobs outside the unemployment insurance system.

**Figure 3.1
Parents' Fair Share**

PFS Random Assignment Design



- update the status of the cases;
- locate noncustodial parents and serve them with legal notice of a review hearing;
- conduct a review of the cases to determine current employment status and employability of noncustodial parents;
- determine current support order and payment status; and
- identify appropriate cases for possible referral to PFS.

In the three sites, varying proportions of the extra outreach group eventually appeared at a hearing and were judged eligible and appropriate for PFS. In Memphis, where local staff's large caseloads inhibited intensive outreach, many noncustodial parents in the extra outreach group were never brought in for a hearing, and only 8 percent of them were judged eligible and appropriate for PFS (or made it to the second stage of random assignment).³ Thus, in this site CSE operational constraints prevented a test of the effect of aggressively working a random sample of CSE cases who were potential PFS referrals.

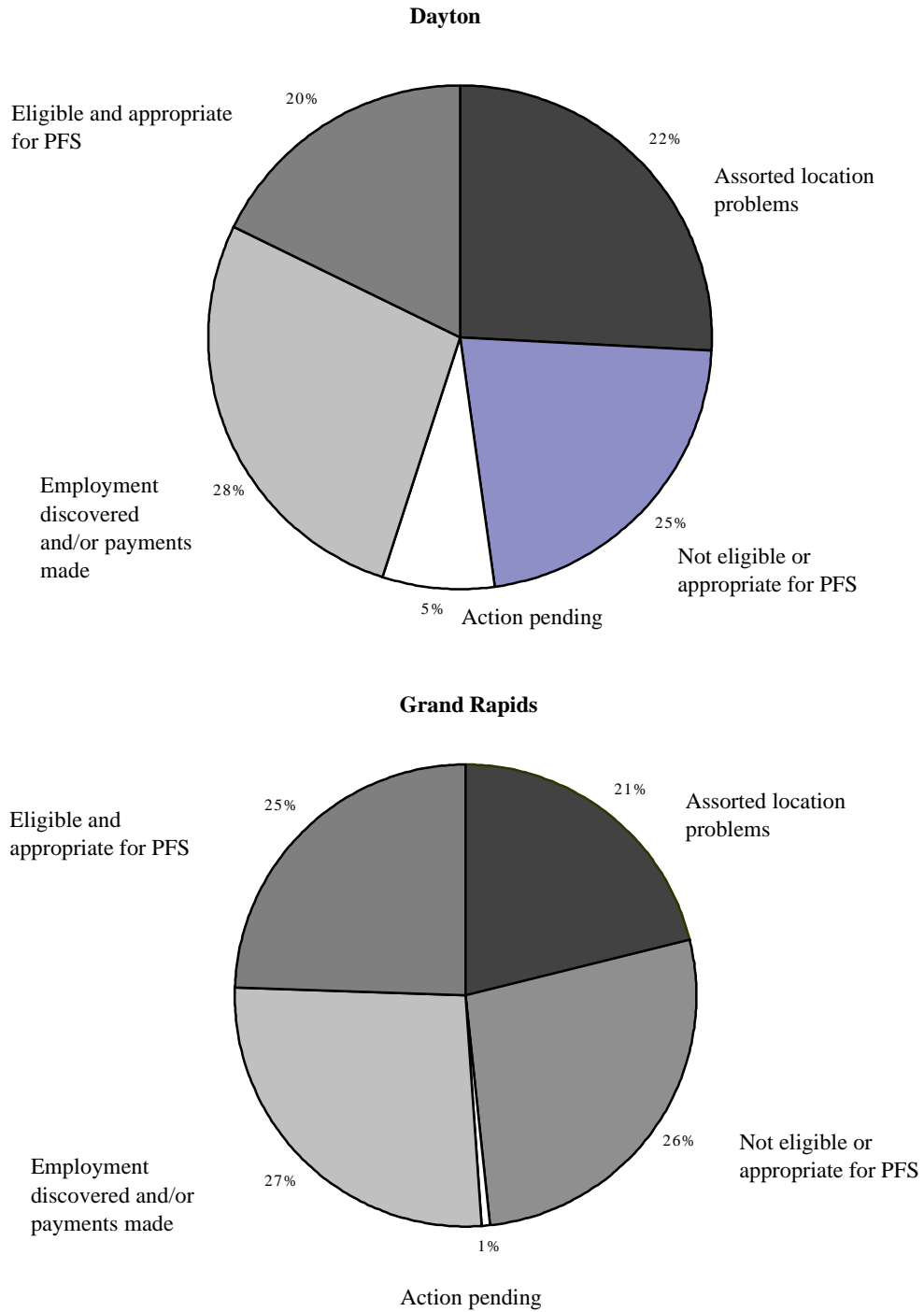
In contrast, local staff in Dayton and Grand Rapids were able to aggressively work the cases in the extra outreach group. In Dayton local staff assessed 20 percent of this group as eligible and appropriate for PFS within a two-year follow-up period, and in Grand Rapids staff judged 25 percent to be eligible and appropriate. These two sites were also able to determine the status of many other members of the extra outreach group, as shown in Figure 3.2.

- **Discovery of previously unreported employment or resources.** Approximately 25 percent of the noncustodial parents in the extra outreach group either reported a job previously unknown to the CSE agency (for which an income deduction order was possible) or otherwise made child support payments without any referral to PFS. This “smokeout” of previously unreported resources does not automatically produce increased support payments, but the impact findings presented later in this chapter show that there was a positive impact on child support payments from the process.
- **“Inappropriateness” of enforcing a current support obligation through PFS.** Approximately 25 percent of noncustodial parents in the extra outreach group turned out to be ineligible or inappropriate for PFS for reasons previously unknown to the CSE agency. One in three of these cases was disabled and receiving SSI, Veterans, or Social Security disability payments and thus did not have a current child support obligation. Others were living with the custodial

³The discussion of tracking of potential PFS references in Chapter 2 involves a different sample drawn in six sites at a later stage in the outreach effort. Therefore, the eligibility rates were higher than those presented here.

**Figure 3.2
Parents' Fair Share**

**Resolution of the Extra Outreach Group Cases in
Two PFS Sites**



SOURCE: MDRC calculations from enhanced group logs completed by local child support enforcement (CSE) staff.

parent and/or the child was legally emancipated.⁴ Some noncustodial parents were ineligible because they were incarcerated and thus unable to work,⁵ were deceased, or had a support order in which there were legal procedural problems in enforcement. In all of these various cases, the current support obligation should be revised to reflect current circumstances. The extra outreach allowed the local staff to “clean up” the status of parents and remove a number of cases from the regular CSE caseload. The remaining noncustodial parents in this category lived outside the county or state (and thus could not be served in the PFS program).

- **Location problems.** In slightly over 20 percent of the cases, local CSE staff were unable to make contact with the noncustodial parents and/or get them to attend a hearing. In Grand Rapids it was primarily because of difficulties in locating and serving noncustodial parents with legally sufficient notice of the hearing. In Dayton it was a mix of inability to serve notice and nonappearance at the hearing.

III. Impacts on Child Support Payments

The *impacts* of the PFS intake process are estimated by comparing child support payments for fathers randomly assigned to the extra outreach group with those for fathers assigned to the standard group. In Figure 3.1, the two groups are represented by the two shaded diamonds in the first stage of random assignment. Under the two-stage design, however, the comparison is more complex than in most random assignment studies. As the discussion in the previous section illustrated, the noncustodial parents in the extra outreach group fell into one of four categories:

- those who appeared for a review or hearing, were deemed eligible and appropriate for PFS, and were randomly assigned to the *program group* and referred to PFS;
- those who appeared for a review or hearing, were deemed eligible and appropriate for PFS, and were randomly assigned to the *control group* and not referred to PFS;
- those who appeared for a review or hearing but were deemed *ineligible or inappropriate for PFS* (because they were employed, disabled, incarcerated, and so on); and
- those who *never appeared* for a review or hearing, whose status could not be ascertained.

The initial stage of random assignment assures that a comparison of the extra outreach group (that is, all four groups just listed) and the standard group is valid. However, since the goal of this

⁴In designing the PFS program, much emphasis was placed on helping noncustodial parents come to terms with their parental obligations. Thus, eligibility for the program was limited to noncustodial parents with at least one unemancipated child. When a child reaches the age of emancipation, there is no longer a current support obligation unless some other arrangement has been set by the parents. Noncustodial parents could still owe child support if they had not made payments in the past and thus had an “arrearage” for past support due the CSE agency.

⁵In Grand Rapids, about one-fourth of those found ineligible for PFS for reasons other than employment were incarcerated.

analysis is to isolate the impacts of the PFS intake process itself, *prior to the referral to PFS*, those noncustodial parents in the extra outreach group who were referred to PFS in the second stage of random assignment (represented by the shaded square at the bottom of Figure 3.1) are not included in the analysis. Under the two-stage random assignment design, this procedure is valid with the appropriate statistical adjustments.

In sum, the analysis presented here compares the behavior of noncustodial parents in the standard group subject to normal CSE with all noncustodial parents in the extra outreach group except those assigned to the PFS program group. The impact estimates, therefore, show the effect of the extra outreach for a sample of parents that includes those who were eligible and appropriate for PFS and those who were not. However, as discussed earlier, only about one-fourth of the parents in Grand Rapids and Dayton were found appropriate and eligible for PFS, so the bulk of the sample is made up of other parents who were not eligible for PFS.

The data on child support and earnings have two sources. Information on child support payments are provided by each state's CSE agency, which reports monthly payments made to the state child support system. Earnings data are provided by each state's unemployment insurance (UI) records database, which contains earnings in jobs covered by the UI system.⁶

The data available for noncustodial parents cover the two calendar quarters (six months) prior to the quarter of random assignment to either the standard or extra outreach group and the six calendar quarters following random assignment. Child support payments and earnings in the quarters prior to random assignment are the only background, pre-random assignment information available for this analysis.⁷ The initial sample was created by drawing noncustodial parents from CSE administrative records, which do not systematically contain background information on them. In addition, there was no personal contact with the noncustodial parents prior to the first-stage of random assignment, so such information could not be collected.

Table 3.1 presents impacts of extra outreach *prior to referral to PFS* on child support payments to the CSE agency for the three sites combined. The upper panel of the table shows impacts on the percentage of each group who paid any support to the agency. In quarter 0, the quarter of random assignment, column 2 shows that 18.0 percent of noncustodial parents subject to normal CSE practices paid some support, and the proportion gradually increased to 26.6 percent by quarter 6. Because of the way the sample was drawn, this pattern reflects the typical payment rates of nonpaying noncustodial parents in welfare-related cases, or noncustodial parents who would appear to

⁶The UI records provide earnings by calendar quarter, and the child support records provide information on monthly payments. For consistency in the impact analysis, the child support payments have been converted to quarterly totals.

⁷Pre-random assignment characteristics are typically used for two purposes: to describe the characteristics of the sample and to serve as control variables in the regression adjustments used to improve the precision of the impact estimates.

Table 3.1
Parents' Fair Share
Impacts of Extra Outreach on Child Support Payments
for Three Sites Combined

Outcome	Extra Outreach Group	Standard Group	Impact
Paid child support (%)			
Prior quarter 1 ^a	19.1	19.1	0.0 ^b
Quarter 0 ^c	21.8	18.0	3.8 ***
Quarter 1	27.7	20.1	7.6 ***
Quarter 2	30.7	23.6	7.1 ***
Quarter 3	32.7	26.0	6.7 ***
Quarter 4	31.9	26.4	5.6 ***
Quarter 5	30.7	25.4	5.3 ***
Quarter 6	31.8	26.6	5.2 ***
Quarters 1-6	54.9	47.2	7.7 ***
Average child support Paid (\$)			
Prior quarter 1 ^a	87	87	0 ^b
Quarter 0 ^c	98	83	15 **
Quarter 1	130	100	30 ***
Quarter 2	165	133	32 ***
Quarter 3	202	175	27 **
Quarter 4	204	180	24 *
Quarter 5	187	154	33 ***
Quarter 6	202	175	27 **
Quarters 1-6	1,090	917	173 ***
Sample size (total = 6,844)	4,416	2,428	

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from child support enforcement (CSE) payment records.

NOTES: These impacts are separate from the impacts of PFS services.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

^aPrior quarter 1 refers to the quarter before random assignment.

^bAverage outcomes in the quarter prior to random assignment are equal for both groups because the impacts are regression adjusted for these values.

^cQuarter of random assignment.

fit the PFS profile based on information in administrative records.⁸ At some point during quarters 1 through 6 following random assignment, 47.2 percent of the fathers in the standard group made some child support payment.⁹

Column 1 in Table 3.1 shows the payment behavior of the fathers subject to extra outreach. For example, in the first quarter of follow-up, 27.7 percent of these fathers paid some child support. The proportion who made a payment increased from 21.8 to 32.7 percent from quarters 0 through 3 and was constant thereafter at about 31 percent. Column 3 shows the differences in payment behavior for the two research groups for each follow-up quarter. Asterisks denote a statistically significant impact, or one that is unlikely to appear by chance.

Fathers subject to extra outreach were more likely than fathers subject to standard enforcement to pay child support in all follow-up quarters, with the biggest impacts occurring in quarters 1 through 3 after random assignment. For example, in quarter 0, the difference in the proportion paying is 3.8 percentage points. The table also shows that at some point during quarters 1 through 6, 54.9 percent of fathers in the extra outreach group made a child support payment, producing a positive impact of 7.7 percentage points. The lower panel of Table 3.1 presents impacts on the average amount of child support paid. The averages shown in the table include zeros for fathers who did not pay any support during the period in question. On average, fathers in the standard group paid \$83 in support during quarter 0, which increased to \$175 by quarter 6. Extra outreach generally increased the average amount of child support paid, as shown in column 3, and all of the quarterly impacts are statistically significant.¹⁰ For example, in the first quarter of follow-up, fathers in the extra outreach group averaged \$130 in child support payments to the CSE agency (including zeros for those not paying), and fathers in the standard group averaged \$100, for a statistically significant difference (or impact) of \$30. The impact of \$173 on average total payments for quarters 1 through 6 is also statistically significant.

It is also possible to calculate average support payments *for those fathers who paid support* by dividing the average payment amounts shown in the lower panel of Table 3.1 by the percentage in the group who made a payment (shown in the upper panel). Although not reported in the table, in quarter 1 fathers in the standard group who paid any support averaged \$498 in payments ($\$100/.201$), which increased to \$658 in quarter 6 ($\$175/.266$).¹¹ Average payments for those paying are somewhat lower for the extra outreach group than for the standard group.¹² In quarter 1, for example, fathers in the extra outreach group who paid support averaged \$469 (compared with \$498 for the standard group),

⁸As discussed earlier, however, only a small proportion of these fathers were found to be eligible and appropriate for PFS.

⁹Quarter 0, the quarter of random assignment, will include preprogram payments for fathers who entered the program in the later months of a calendar quarter. As such, quarter 0 impacts are not included in the summary measures covering quarters 1 through 6.

¹⁰It is not uncommon for impacts on the “ever occurred” measure to be statistically significant and those on the dollar amount measure not to be. Numerical measures tend to have greater variance, making impact estimates less precise.

¹¹As a comparison, full-time work at \$5.00 per hour produces quarterly earnings of approximately \$2,250. If a child support order were set with the commonly used guideline of 17 percent of income for one child (assuming no other income and no exemptions or deductions), the child support obligation would be about \$385 per quarter.

¹²This comparison of average payments among those paying in standard and extra outreach groups is not strictly a program impact because the program treatment affected the percentage of those in the extra outreach group who paid. However, it is a useful comparison to illustrate the absolute levels of payment, and, as indicated in the text, the findings are suggestive of patterns.

which rose to \$635 in quarter 6 (compared with \$658 for the standard group). This result suggests that the additional fathers who paid support as a result of extra outreach paid somewhat less than the average fathers who paid in the standard group.

Table 3.2 presents the impacts for each site separately. Two patterns emerge. First, there is substantial variation across sites in payment rates among fathers in the standard enforcement group. Quarterly payment rates were about 31 percent in Grand Rapids and Dayton, and only 9 to 10 percent in Memphis. In addition, average payment amounts were lower in Memphis, not only because fewer fathers paid support, but because they paid less (calculated by dividing average payments by the percentage who paid). In quarter 6, for example, fathers who paid support averaged \$451 in Memphis, \$643 in Grand Rapids, and \$747 in Dayton (not shown in Table 3.2). These findings are consistent with discussions earlier in the report about levels of child support enforcement (Grand Rapids and Dayton are relatively strong) and levels of disadvantage among the noncustodial parents (those in Memphis appear to be relatively disadvantaged).

Second, despite the variation in payment rates for the standard groups, in all three sites the extra enforcement increased the percentage of fathers who paid support. In Grand Rapids, for example, 31.3 percent of fathers in the extra outreach group made a payment in quarter 1 compared with 24.0 percent of fathers in the standard group, for an impact of 7.2 percentage points. The impacts are largest in Memphis, possibly because the standard group's payment rate was lower in this site, so that gains were easier to achieve. The low payment rates may reflect the normal level of monitoring of these cases. Alternatively, since case monitoring was relatively unsystematic in Memphis, the caseload may have consisted of a larger percentage of fathers with employment un-known to the child support system.¹³ Finally, impacts on average payment amounts appear to be positive across all sites, but only in Memphis are they consistently statistically significant.

Thus, extra outreach increased the percentage of fathers who paid support and the average amount paid, although the latter impacts were not always statistically significant. The pattern of impacts, which persisted throughout the follow-up period, suggests that extra enforcement caused some fathers to begin paying support, and they continued paying throughout the follow-up period. However, since there was a lag between the time that noncustodial parents were randomly assigned and when they appeared for a hearing, it is possible that the quarterly payment increases reflect this fact. In other words, some fathers had hearings in the first quarter after random assignment, some in the second, and so on.¹⁴ If these men responded to the extra enforcement by paying only once or

¹³Since Memphis tracking data are not available, the percentage of fathers in the extra outreach group who reported previously unknown employment is not known. As noted earlier, in Grand Rapids and Dayton, about 25 percent of the extra outreach group in these sites reported previously unknown employment. Data reported later in this chapter show that overall rates of employment in the extra outreach group were highest in Dayton (slightly more than 50 percent per quarter), followed by Grand Rapids (slightly more than 40 percent per quarter) and Memphis (slightly less than 35 percent per quarter).

¹⁴Information on the time difference is available for those fathers who appeared at a hearing and were deemed eligible for PFS. Among these men, on average there was an eight-month lag between the random assignment date and the hearing date.

Table 3.2
Parents' Fair Share
Impacts of Extra Outreach on Child Support Payments,
by Site

Outcome	Dayton			Grand Rapids			Memphis		
	Extra Outreach Group	Standard Group	Impact	Extra Outreach Group	Standard Group	Impact	Extra Outreach Group	Standard Group	Impact
Paid child support (%)									
Prior quarter 1 ^a	31.2	31.2	0.0 ^b	21.3	21.3	0.0 ^b	4.1	4.1	0.0 ^b
Quarter 0 ^c	29.1	29.5	-0.3	22.8	17.5	5.4 ***	13.3	7.1	6.2 ***
Quarter 1	31.5	27.7	3.9 **	31.3	24.0	7.2 ***	20.1	7.8	12.3 ***
Quarter 2	39.6	31.1	8.5 ***	34.3	29.9	4.4 **	17.9	8.8	9.1 ***
Quarter 3	40.4	33.3	7.1 ***	38.4	33.6	4.8 **	18.9	10.0	9.0 ***
Quarter 4	39.1	33.6	5.5 ***	37.2	33.3	3.9 **	19.2	11.5	7.7 ***
Quarter 5	38.1	32.2	5.9 ***	36.4	31.9	4.5 **	17.1	11.3	5.8 ***
Quarter 6	39.7	32.4	7.3 ***	39.9	35.3	4.6 **	15.3	11.3	4.0 ***
Quarters 1-6	63.1	57.1	6.0 ***	65.9	62.7	3.1	34.9	20.0	14.8 ***
Average child support paid (\$)									
Prior quarter 1 ^a	151	151	0 ^b	91	91	0 ^b	18	18	0 ^b
Quarter 0 ^c	158	147	11	95	78	18	41	25	16 ***
Quarter 1	165	164	1	153	106	47 ***	71	29	42 ***
Quarter 2	229	191	38 *	191	166	25	76	36	40 ***
Quarter 3	274	252	22	251	221	30	78	46	32 ***
Quarter 4	290	248	42	246	233	13	74	53	21 **
Quarter 5	268	209	59 **	223	196	27	67	52	15
Quarter 6	279	242	37	262	227	35	61	51	10
Quarters 1-6	1,506	1,307	200 **	1,325	1,148	177 **	427	266	160 ***
Sample size (total = 6,884)	1,432	792		1,519	874		1,465	762	

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from child support enforcement (CSE) payment records.

NOTES: These estimates are separate from the impacts of PFS services.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

^aPrior quarter 1 refers to the quarter before random assignment.

^bAverage outcomes in the quarter prior to random assignment are equal for both groups because the impacts are regression adjusted for these values.

^cQuarter of random assignment.

twice, with the hope that it would divert attention away from their case, the result would be impacts in each quarter, even though most of the noncustodial parents made only a one-time payment. However, further analysis suggests that this is not the source of the impacts on payment rates.

Table 3.3 presents impacts on the stability of child support payments over the follow-up period. It gives the percentage of the standard and extra outreach groups falling into each of three payment categories: paid no child support during the six quarters, paid support in one to three of the six quarters, and paid support in four to six of the six quarters. The table shows that for all three sites combined the extra outreach reduced the proportion of noncustodial parents who paid no support during the follow-up period by 7.7 percentage points (45.1 percent of the extra outreach group compared with 52.8 percent of the standard group) and that the increase in payments during the entire period came almost entirely from an increase in the number of persistent payers, or noncustodial parents who made payments in at least four of the six quarters (6.6 percentage points). Thus, extra enforcement did not simply increase the incidence of one-time payments but had a more lasting effect. Table 3.3 also presents findings for each of the three sites. Once again, the stark differences in payment rates are apparent; in Memphis, 80.0 percent of the standard group paid no support compared with 42.9 percent in Dayton and 37.3 percent in Grand Rapids. Further, in Dayton and Grand Rapids all of the increase in the payment rate during the follow-up period was from fathers who made payments in at least four of the six quarters; in Memphis, in contrast, more than half of the increase in the payment rate (7.7 of the 14.8 percentage point impact) was from fathers who made payments in one to three of the six quarters.¹⁵

Table 3.4 presents impacts on child support payments for subgroups of fathers who were or were not employed during the three quarters preceding random assignment. The upper panel of the table shows the percentages who paid child support. For example, in the quarter of random assignment for sample members with recent earnings 30.8 percent of the extra outreach group paid some support compared with 25.7 percent of the standard group. The difference of 5.1 percentage points is statistically significant. The last column presents the difference in the impacts for the two subgroups; although the impacts for those with recent employment tend to be somewhat larger, few of the differences in subgroup impacts are statistically significant.¹⁶

The lower panel of Table 3.4 presents payment amounts for those with and without recent earnings. In general, impacts for those with recent earnings appear to be larger, though once again the differences in subgroup impacts are not statistically significant.

Finally, an interesting pattern in the table relates to outcomes, rather than impacts. Recent employment experience has a dramatic effect on post-random assignment payment rates. For example, standard group fathers with recent earnings were much more likely than those without earnings to pay any child support during the follow-up period (61.9 percent versus 30.8 percent). This pattern illustrates the strong association between fathers' incomes and their likelihood of paying child support.

¹⁵The average number of months between random assignment and the hearing was similar across the three sites.

¹⁶The most interesting difference in impacts between the two groups concerns the measure of payment stability (not shown). Nearly all of the increase in the payment rate for fathers with recent earnings was from fathers who paid in four of the six quarters, whereas for fathers without recent earnings only about half of the increase in the payment rate came from those who paid consistently.

Table 3.3
Parents' Fair Share
Impacts of Extra Outreach on Stability of Child Support Payments,
by Site

Outcome	Extra Outreach Group	Standard Group	Impact
All Sites			
Paid child support (%)			
Paid no child support	45.1	52.8	-7.7 ***
Paid child support in 1 to 3 quarters of 6	29.6	28.6	1.1
Paid child support in 4 to 6 quarters of 6	25.2	18.6	6.6 ***
Total sample (6,844)	4,416	2,428	
Dayton			
Paid child support (%)			
Paid no child support	36.9	42.9	-6.0 ***
Paid child support in 1 to 3 quarters of 6	30.6	32.1	-1.6
Paid child support in 4 to 6 quarters of 6	32.5	25.0	7.6 ***
Sample size (2,224)	1,432	792	
Grand Rapids			
Paid child support (%)			
Paid no child support	34.1	37.3	-3.1
Paid child support in 1 to 3 quarters of 6	37.0	39.4	-2.4
Paid child support in 4 to 6 quarters of 6	28.9	23.3	5.6 ***
Sample size (2,393)	1,519	874	
Memphis			
Paid child support (%)			
Paid no child support	65.1	80.0	-14.8 ***
Paid child support in 1 to 3 quarters of 6	20.7	13.1	7.7 ***
Paid child support in 4 to 6 quarters of 6	14.1	7.0	7.2 ***
Sample size (2,227)	1,465	762	

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from child support enforcement (CSE) payment records.

NOTES: These impacts are separate from the impacts of PFS services.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; and * = 10 percent.

Table 3.4
Parents' Fair Share
Impacts of Extra Outreach on Child Support Payments,
by Recent Employment Status

Outcome	Employed Recently ^a			Not Employed Recently			Difference in Subgroup Impacts
	Extra Outreach Group	Standard Group	Impact	Extra Outreach Group	Standard Group	Impact	
Paid child support (%)							
Quarter 0 ^b	30.8	25.7	5.1 ***	11.6	9.5	2.1	3.0 *
Quarter 1	36.9	28.0	8.9 ***	17.2	11.2	6.0 ***	2.9
Quarter 2	42.2	32.6	9.6 ***	17.6	13.6	4.0 ***	5.6 ***
Quarter 3	44.7	34.8	9.9 ***	19.0	16.2	2.8 *	7.1 ***
Quarter 4	43.6	36.4	7.2 ***	18.7	15.3	3.4 **	3.8 *
Quarter 5	40.2	33.8	6.3 ***	19.8	16.0	3.8 **	2.5
Quarter 6	41.2	34.8	6.4 ***	21.1	17.6	3.6 **	2.8
Quarters 1-6	70.3	61.9	8.4 ***	37.6	30.8	6.8 ***	1.5
Average child support paid (\$)							
Quarter 0 ^b	141	123	18 *	48	40	7	11.2
Quarter 1	175	145	30 ***	77	51	25 **	4.9
Quarter 2	226	190	35 **	95	71	24	11.7
Quarter 3	277	236	40 **	116	109	7	33.2
Quarter 4	280	269	11	117	81	35 *	24.7
Quarter 5	254	217	37 **	109	86	24	13.7
Quarter 6	272	240	32 **	121	104	17	15.3
Quarters 1-6	1,484	1,298	186 ***	634	502	132 *	54.1
Sample size (total = 6,844)	2,325	1,289		2,091	1,139		

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from child support enforcement (CSE) payment records and unemployment insurance (UI) earnings records.

NOTES: These impacts are separate from the impacts of PFS services.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

^aEmployed during the three quarters preceding random assignment.

^bQuarter of random assignment.

IV. Impacts on Employment and Earnings

Although extra outreach does not include employment-oriented services, it may indirectly have an impact on employment if noncustodial parents are led to get jobs in order to make child support payments. Employment impacts may also be expected because, as shown in Table 3.4, extra outreach increased support payment rates among men who had not been recently employed at random assignment. Estimates of impacts on employment rates and earnings are presented in Tables 3.5 (for the three sites combined) and 3.6 (for individual sites).

As Table 3.5 shows, for all sites combined extra outreach produced virtually no statistically significant impacts on the employment rate of fathers or on average earnings within the follow-up period. For example, in the first quarter following random assignment 42.8 percent of the extra outreach group were employed versus 42.7 percent of the standard group. Throughout the six quarters of follow-up, differences in employment rates were very small, and only the impact in the final quarter of follow-up (2.0 percentage points) is statistically significant. Interestingly, there is no upward trend for either group in the percentage employed over the follow-up period. For the extra outreach group, 42.1 percent were employed in the quarter of random assignment compared with 43.1 percent in the final quarter; for the standard group, 42.0 percent were employed in the quarter of random assignment, compared with 41.1 percent in the final quarter. The lower panel of Table 3.5 shows impacts on earnings, most of which are statistically insignificant. For example, in the quarter following random assignment, the extra outreach group averaged \$1,192 in earnings (this average includes zeros for those with no reported wages) while the standard group averaged \$1,175, for an impact of \$17.

Two other points deserve mention. First, because fewer than half of either research group worked, average earnings for those who were employed were substantially higher than the averages for the entire group. For example, the 42.8 percent of fathers in the extra outreach group who worked in the quarter following random assignment earned on average \$2,785 in that quarter (calculated by dividing the average earnings in the quarter by the percentage working in the quarter), or approximately \$928 per month. For comparison, the poverty level for a single individual under age 65 with no children in the household was \$8,163 per year, or \$680 per month.

Second, despite the stability over time in the employment rates there was a gradual increase in earnings for both research groups over the course of the follow-up period. The extra outreach group averaged \$1,103 in the quarter of random assignment and \$1,363 in the final quarter of follow-up. The standard group showed a somewhat smaller increase, from \$1,122 to \$1,282. Since employment rates did not increase over the period, the increase in total earnings for the standard group implies a growth in average earnings for those who were working. For example, in the final quarter of follow-up, those in the extra outreach group who were working averaged \$3,162 in earnings per quarter, or \$377 more than in the quarter following random assignment. The increase in average earnings was especially pronounced among those who worked during all six quarters of follow-up.

Table 3.5
Parents' Fair Share
Impacts of Extra Outreach on Employment and Earnings
for Three Sites Combined

Outcome	Extra Outreach Group	Standard Group	Impact
Employed (%)			
Prior quarter 1 ^a	40.6	40.6	0.0 ^b
Quarter 0 ^c	42.1	42.0	0.1
Quarter 1	42.8	42.7	0.1
Quarter 2	43.0	43.2	-0.2
Quarter 3	43.3	43.0	0.3
Quarter 4	44.3	42.9	1.4
Quarter 5	43.1	42.7	0.4
Quarter 6	43.1	41.1	2.0 *
Quarters 1-6	61.4	62.1	-0.7
Average earnings (\$)			
Prior quarter 1 ^a	950	950	0 ^b
Quarter 0 ^c	1,103	1,122	-19
Quarter 1	1,192	1,175	17
Quarter 2	1,209	1,226	-17
Quarter 3	1,278	1,253	25
Quarter 4	1,360	1,332	29
Quarter 5	1,381	1,334	47
Quarter 6	1,363	1,282	81 *
Quarters 1-6	7,784	7,602	182
Sample size (total = 6,844)	4,416	2,428	

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from unemployment insurance (UI) earnings records.

NOTES: These impacts are separate from the impacts of PFS services.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between program and control groups.

Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

^aPrior quarter 1 refers to the quarter before random assignment.

^bAverage outcomes in the quarter prior to random assignment are equal for both groups because the impacts are regression adjusted for these values.

^cQuarter of random assignment.

Table 3.6 shows findings for the three sites. Once again, there are virtually no statistically significant impacts on either employment rates or earnings. Two other points stand out. First, as for the full sample, in each site the employment rates are relatively stable over time while average earnings increase somewhat. Second, there are dramatic differences among the sites in both the percentage working and average earnings. In general, employment rates and average earnings were lowest in Memphis and highest in Dayton, with Grand Rapids falling in the middle. Average earnings for those working also showed a similar pattern. For example, in the final quarter of follow-up working members of the extra outreach group averaged \$910 per month in Memphis ($(\$977/.358)/3$), \$1,059 in Grand Rapids ($(\$1,389/.437)/3$), and \$1,151 in Dayton ($(\$1,719/.498)/3$).

These differences in employment and earnings reflect several underlying differences among the sites. Table 3.7 shows that though the unemployment rates were similar in the three sites (in 1996, they ranged from 4.3 percent in Grand Rapids to 5.6 percent in Dayton), the employment base and wage levels varied in ways that could affect the employment prospects of fathers on the public-assistance-related child support caseload. Assuming that the manufacturing sector is the best source of higher-paying jobs for noncustodial parents in this sample, differences in the relative importance of this sector in the local economy and in the average wage rates may be important. As Table 3.7 shows, manufacturing was a source of a much larger percentage of jobs in the Dayton and Grand Rapids metropolitan areas than in Memphis, and average earnings were also higher in these two areas. In addition, it is likely that welfare-related noncustodial parents in Memphis faced more barriers to employment than those in the other two sites. As noted earlier in the chapter, background information beyond prior earnings and child support is not available for the sample analyzed in this chapter, but information is available for those found eligible for Parents' Fair Share. (These data are presented in Chapter 4.) Findings on the narrower sample found eligible for PFS suggest that the parents in the Memphis sample analyzed in this chapter were disadvantaged relative to their counterparts in Dayton and Grand Rapids.

Table 3.8 presents impacts on employment and earnings for subgroups based on recent employment experience. Not surprisingly, fathers who had been employed during the three quarters preceding random assignment had much higher employment rates and earnings than those without recent earnings. As much research has shown, past employment is a strong predictor of future employment. Unexpectedly, fathers in the extra outreach group with recent prior earnings *earned less* than their counterparts in the standard group during the first few quarters of follow-up. One possible explanation for these negative impacts is that members of the extra outreach group who were working were "driven underground" by the extra outreach and shifted to jobs not included in the unemployment insurance wage reports. Another possible explanation is that the men in this group changed jobs more frequently in order to elude wage-withholding orders that may have been in place. In this case, employment rates in a given quarter would be similar across the groups, but earnings might be somewhat lower for men in the extra outreach group.

In sum, the process of extra outreach and case review prior to referral to PFS produced an increase in the payment of child support that, at least in Dayton and Grand Rapids, was from fathers who paid fairly regularly throughout the follow-up period. Once the fathers became the focus on extra outreach efforts in these sites, they may have been less likely to "get lost" in the caseload again. This was not the case in Memphis, where enforcement may have been less systematic. Extra outreach also increased payments among fathers who had and had not been employed in the nine months prior to entering the program. Coupled with the lack of employment impacts, this result shows that the extra outreach did not cause any fathers to get jobs, but for those fathers who did get jobs during the follow-up period, it increased the likelihood that they paid child support.

Table 3.6
Parents' Fair Share
Impacts of Extra Outreach on Employment and Earnings,
by Site

Outcome	Dayton			Grand Rapids			Memphis		
	Extra Outreach Group	Standard Group	Impact	Extra Outreach Group	Standard Group	Impact	Extra Outreach Group	Standard Group	Impact
Employed (%)									
Prior quarter 1 ^a	49.4	49.4	0.0 ^b	39.8	39.8	0.0 ^b	32.3	32.3	0.0 ^b
Quarter 0 ^c	52.0	50.2	1.8	39.9	41.3	-1.4	34.4	34.4	0.0
Quarter 1	51.8	52.0	-0.2	41.5	41.7	-0.2	35.1	34.5	0.6
Quarter 2	52.2	51.7	0.4	42.7	42.7	0.0	34.3	35.3	-1.1
Quarter 3	51.2	50.7	0.5	44.3	44.2	0.1	34.4	34.3	0.2
Quarter 4	52.2	50.9	1.3	44.8	44.1	0.8	35.9	33.8	2.0
Quarter 5	51.7	50.7	0.9	43.5	43.3	0.2	34.1	34.1	0.0
Quarter 6	49.8	47.5	2.4	43.7	43.1	0.6	35.8	32.5	3.2 *
Quarters 1-6	69.1	69.8	-0.7	63.1	64.5	-1.4	52.0	51.7	0.3
Average earnings (\$)									
Prior quarter 1 ^a	1,198	1,198	0 ^b	876	876	0 ^b	777	777	0 ^b
Quarter 0 ^c	1,429	1,349	80	1,039	1,140	-101	843	882	-39
Quarter 1	1,572	1,430	141 *	1,114	1,176	-62	897	919	-22
Quarter 2	1,582	1,556	25	1,173	1,216	-43	874	909	-35
Quarter 3	1,604	1,539	65	1,338	1,262	77	888	957	-68
Quarter 4	1,695	1,638	57	1,444	1,390	54	934	962	-28
Quarter 5	1,766	1,644	123	1,426	1,421	5	946	931	14
Quarter 6	1,719	1,583	136	1,389	1,323	67	977	938	40
Quarters 1-6	9,938	9,391	547	7,885	7,788	97	5,517	5,616	-100
Sample size (total = 6,844)	1,432	792		1,519	874		1,465	762	

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from unemployment insurance (UI) earnings records.

NOTES: These impacts are separate from the impacts of PFS services.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent;

** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

^aPrior quarter 1 refers to the quarter before random assignment.

^bAverage outcomes in the quarter prior to random assignment are equal for both groups because the impacts are regression adjusted for these values.

^cQuarter of random assignment.

Table 3.7
Parents' Fair Share
Employment Conditions in 1996,
by Site

Measure	Dayton	Grand Rapids	Memphis
Unemployment rate (%)	5.6	4.3	4.4
Employees in nonfarm jobs working in manufacturing (%)	21.2	28.0	11.8
Average weekly hours worked by manufacturing employees	44.5	41.8	41.7
Average hourly earnings of workers on manufacturing payrolls (\$)	15.7	14.3	11.7
Average weekly earnings of workers on manufacturing payrolls (\$)	700	597	488

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employment and Earnings*, May 1997.

Table 3.8
Parents' Fair Share
Impacts of Extra Outreach on Employment and Earnings,
by Recent Employment Status

Outcome	Employed Recently ^a			Not Employed Recently			
	Extra Outreach Group	Standard Group	Impact	Extra Outreach Group	Standard Group	Impact	Difference in Subgroup
Employed (%)							
Quarter 0 ^b	70.6	71.9	-1.3	9.7	8.6	1.2	-2.5
Quarter 1	68.2	68.9	-0.7	14.0	13.5	0.5	-1.2
Quarter 2	66.9	68.2	-1.3	16.0	15.4	0.6	-1.9
Quarter 3	67.1	67.0	0.0	16.4	16.4	0.1	0.0
Quarter 4	67.9	65.7	2.2	17.6	17.6	0.1	2.1
Quarter 5	64.7	65.0	-0.3	18.6	18.0	0.6	-0.9
Quarter 6	64.5	62.2	2.3	18.9	17.7	1.2	1.1
Quarters 1-6	86.7	88.8	-2.1	33.0	32.3	0.8	-2.9
Average earnings (\$)							
Quarter 0 ^b	1,920	2,077	-156 **	142	85	57	-213.5 *
Quarter 1	1,984	2,036	-52	261	242	19	-71.0
Quarter 2	1,997	2,092	-95	283	286	-2	-92.8
Quarter 3	2,098	2,092	6	319	341	-22	28.2
Quarter 4	2,207	2,187	20	372	402	-30	49.4
Quarter 5	2,181	2,169	11	444	428	16	-4.2
Quarter 6	2,125	2,077	49	470	420	51	-2.3
Quarters 1-6	12,593	12,654	-62	2,150	2,119	31	-92.7
Sample size (total = 6,844)	2,325	1,289		2,091	1,139		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from unemployment insurance (UI) earnings records.

NOTES: These impacts are separate from the impacts of PFS services.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

^aFathers who had been employed during the three quarters preceding random assignment had much higher employment rates and earnings than those without recent earnings.

^bQuarter of random assignment.

Chapter 4

Characteristics of the PFS Sample

Although the PFS intake process proved challenging because it required targeting noncustodial parents who are not usually the focus of child support enforcement, targeting enforcement efforts to this segment of the caseload did increase child support payments. This chapter describes the characteristics of the noncustodial parents who, as a result of outreach and intake, were ultimately referred to PFS, using information reported by the noncustodial parents at the point of referral to the program, administrative records on child support payments and employment and earnings, and findings from a qualitative study of a small group of fathers.¹ While there has been considerable research on the population of mothers eligible to receive child support, relatively little is known about noncustodial parents, particularly those whose children receive welfare. The PFS sample is by far the largest for which data have been collected of an important subset of this population: those without apparent employment. Learning about the circumstances of these men is important, for both employment and training policy and child support policy.

An analysis of the data indicates that although the fathers are diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, age, and living arrangements, overall they are a disadvantaged group. The majority of them live on the edge of poverty, and many rely on family and friends to make ends meet or for a place to stay. Most of the men are also under- or unemployed. Some had been employed fairly regularly prior to entering the program, but with relatively low earnings. For this group, the goal of the program is not to help them find jobs, but rather to help them find better jobs. In contrast, others have tenuous connections to the mainstream labor market, and their recent employment histories consist of lengthy unemployment spells or moving from one low-wage job to another. For these men, the goal of the program is to help them find stable employment. However, the data also suggest that the program and the fathers face several challenges in meeting these goals. Most of the men have had encounters with the legal system unrelated to child support, and nearly half of them do not have a high school diploma, factors that affect their ability to find and keep jobs. The economic context in which the men live poses another challenge. As noted earlier, the economic status of less-educated men has deteriorated substantially over the past two decades. This trend, coupled with the flight of jobs from inner cities, has significantly reduced their employment prospects.

As would be expected, because of low earnings or unemployment, many of the fathers seem to meet the criterion of being currently unable to fulfill their child support obligations. In many instances, their inability to pay support has affected their interactions with their children. Either the custodial parent restricted access when they failed to pay support or the men voluntarily withdrew from the family because they felt they had nothing to offer. Thus, they faced multiple problems coming into the program, which might be expected to affect their ability to fully participate in PFS services and to benefit from these services.

¹Johnson, Levine, and Doolittle (forthcoming).

I. Characteristics of the Full Sample

A. Demographic Information

Table 4.1 presents basic demographic information for all sites combined, and by individual site. Data are presented for approximately half of the full PFS sample: those who were referred to the program between March 1994 and June 1995. The same subsample, selected to provide data for a minimum of 18 months after program entry, is also used in Chapters 5 (on program participation) and 6 (on the impacts of referral to PFS services and mandates).² Not surprisingly, 98 percent of noncustodial parents in the sample are men. On average, they were 30 years old at program entry, and this is true for all sites except Los Angeles, where the average age was 35. There is considerable variation within the sample, however, with fathers ranging in age from 18 to 64.

Most of the fathers (64 percent) are black, with the rest evenly divided between white and Hispanic men. This figure varies across the sites, reflecting, to some extent, the racial and ethnic composition of the general population or, more specifically, the population receiving welfare, in these cities. For example, the majority of fathers in the Los Angeles sample are Hispanic, and 98 percent of fathers in the Memphis sample are black. However, black fathers appear to be overrepresented in the PFS sample. Data from the state of Michigan, for example, indicate that black families make up 48 percent of families receiving welfare in Grand Rapids.³ If the noncustodial parents linked to the parents receiving welfare are of the same race, this suggests that black fathers would make up approximately one-half of welfare-related noncustodial parents in Grand Rapids.⁴

There are several possible explanations for why black fathers appear to be overrepresented in PFS. First, black men face higher unemployment rates than white men, suggesting that more of them meet the PFS eligibility criterion. However, black men may also have been judged by site staff as eligible and appropriate for PFS more often than their Hispanic and white counterparts, or they were less able to make purge payments to avoid the program.

An average of 63 percent of noncustodial parents had never been formally married (ranging from 48 percent in Los Angeles to 78 percent in Trenton). A fairly high proportion of the fathers reported living with one or both parents (45 percent), possibly reflecting their lack of access to resources to establish their own households. About 7 percent of the men lived with a spouse/partner and no children, while 15 percent lived with a spouse/partner and either the

²Sample intake continued for a year after the sample for this report was drawn, ending in June 1996. The conclusions in this chapter generally apply to the full PFS sample, though the site and ethnic distribution of the noncustodial parents changed somewhat in the last year of program intake as Los Angeles, with a high percentage of Hispanic fathers, became a larger part of the sample.

³State of Michigan, Family Independence Agency, Caseload Characteristics by Zipcode, Report No. EY-011.

⁴This estimate is based on the assumption that all individuals choose partners of the same race, which is not true in practice. In fact, several of the men in the PFS qualitative research had fathered children with a woman of a different race. This pattern might partly account for the discrepancy in Grand Rapids between the percent of families on welfare that are black and the percent of PFS fathers that are black.

Table 4.1
Parents' Fair Share
Characteristics of Noncustodial Parents Referred to PFS,
by Site

Characteristics at Random Assignment	All Sites	Dayton	Grand Rapids	Jacksonville	Los Angeles	Memphis	Springfield	Trenton
Demographic information								
Sex (%)								
Men	97.7	92.7	98.6	95.7	98.7	99.7	98.9	99.7
Women	2.3	7.3	1.4	4.3	1.3	0.3	1.1	0.3
Age	30.4	31.4	30.2	30.7	35.3	28.5	28.5	29.1
Race/Ethnicity (%)								
White, non-Hispanic	17.2	32.1	28.3	12.6	5.8	1.4	28.1	5.7
Black, non-Hispanic	63.8	65.7	61.2	84.0	24.3	98.3	22.7	87.0
Hispanic	17.2	1.5	6.9	2.5	65.0	0.3	47.3	6.8
Other	1.8	0.6	3.5	0.9	4.9	0.0	1.9	0.5
Marital status (%)								
Never married	62.5	58.4	62.7	51.0	48.2	68.9	69.7	78.4
Other ^a	37.5	41.6	37.3	49.0	51.8	31.1	30.3	21.6
Household information (%) ^b								
Lives alone	9.3	8.3	7.9	8.4	13.3	5.4	12.5	9.9
Lives with								
Both parents	11.2	9.8	8.6	13.2	17.8	11.5	11.2	7.8
One parent	33.4	26.6	31.8	31.5	21.7	47.0	33.5	42.6
Siblings	8.6	8.6	9.0	6.2	11.0	8.8	10.9	6.8
Spouse/partner and no children	7.3	8.6	5.9	7.1	6.8	6.4	6.6	9.9
Spouse/partner and children	15.5	24.5	20.8	20.5	14.6	14.2	8.0	3.9
Own children, no spouse	4.2	6.7	3.9	4.6	6.1	3.4	1.6	3.9
Other relatives	8.3	4.6	7.5	9.4	6.8	7.4	7.4	14.0
Friends	7.7	8.0	8.6	5.5	11.3	2.4	11.7	5.7
Number of partners with whom NCP has children (%)								
1	54.1	43.7	51.5	50.6	61.5	45.6	68.2	57.4
2	31.6	37.6	32.2	32.7	31.1	33.8	23.5	30.9
3 or more	14.3	18.7	16.3	16.7	7.4	20.6	8.4	11.7

(continued)

Table 4.1 (continued)

Characteristics at Random Assignment	All Sites	Dayton	Grand Rapids	Jacksonville	Los Angeles	Memphis	Springfield	Trenton
Number of own children outside household (%)								
0	3.2	4.6	5.7	3.7	1.0	3.1	3.2	0.3
1	37.2	35.1	32.8	36.8	35.9	32.4	42.6	44.9
2	28.8	25.5	30.1	27.7	25.6	30.4	29.3	31.9
3 or more	30.8	34.8	31.4	31.8	37.5	34.1	25.0	22.9
Lived with father at age 14 (%)	46.2	48.5	43.0	48.0	62.5	37.8	49.5	36.9
At 14, lived with an adult who worked (%)	80.2	76.9	78.4	86.9	87.4	80.7	68.4	83.4
Food Stamps in household in last month (%)	28.8	36.4	26.9	27.5	20.1	46.8	28.2	20.2
Arrest record (%)								
Non-CSE arrest since age 16	68.5	72.5	80.2	73.1	57.9	74.3	59.6	57.4
Education and training								
Program participation in prior year (%)								
High school	2.4	0.0	3.5	2.3	0.3	1.7	5.6	2.3
GED ^a or Adult Basic Education	7.5	9.2	9.4	6.8	1.9	9.5	7.7	7.3
Post high school	3.3	6.7	2.8	2.1	3.9	0.7	3.7	3.9
ESL ^c in prior 12 months	0.5	0.0	0.4	0.0	2.6	0.0	0.5	0.3
Occupational skills training	6.8	6.1	5.5	6.2	10.0	4.7	9.0	6.8
No program	80.5	78.6	80.2	84.0	81.9	83.4	75.5	80.0
Highest grade completed (%)								
No degree	47.7	46.8	39.7	44.5	57.3	52.4	48.7	50.4
GED ^a	12.5	13.2	21.2	8.7	5.8	9.8	15.2	9.6
High school diploma	37.3	37.3	34.8	43.6	34.6	36.5	34.8	39.0
Associate degree	1.4	1.8	2.6	1.6	1.3	0.7	0.8	0.8
4-year-college degree	1.0	0.9	1.8	1.6	1.0	0.7	0.5	0.3

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from Parents' Fair Share Background Information Forms.

NOTES: Includes noncustodial parents randomly assigned between March 1994 and June 1995.

Distributions may not sum to 100 percent because of rounding.

^aThis category includes those who are legally married and living with their spouse, separated, divorced, or widowed.

^bThese numbers may sum to more than 100 percent because noncustodial parents living with their own children may also be living with parents, siblings, relatives, or friends.

^cThe General Educational Development (GED) certificate is given to those who pass the GED test and is intended to signify knowledge of basic high school subjects. ESL is the abbreviation for English as a Second Language.

spouse/partner's children or their own children. Although these data provide a "snapshot" of non-custodial parents' living arrangements, data from the PFS qualitative research that followed men for two and a half years show that many of their living situations were fairly volatile; over the study period, most of them moved at least once, and about a third did so fairly frequently.

B. Education and Training

Table 4.1 also indicates that very few of the fathers had education beyond high school, and 48 percent lacked a high school diploma or GED. Thus, nearly half of the sample faced at least one significant barrier to employment. Despite the low levels of educational attainment in this sample, 80 percent of noncustodial parents had not participated in an education or training program in the year prior to entering the study. According to many of the men, particularly the younger men, PFS was "the only game in town," suggesting either a lack of services for this population or a lack of knowledge of or interest in available programs among the noncustodial parents. Of the 19.5 percent who participated in education and training activities, one-third were in occupational skills training, and one-third were in GED or Adult Basic Education classes.⁵

C. Employment and Earnings

Table 4.2 presents information on noncustodial parents' employment and earnings history from self-reports and UI records. Across all sites (column 1), 17 percent of the men reported being employed at random assignment. Among those unemployed at random assignment, 36 percent had been unemployed for fewer than four months, while 19 percent had been unemployed for over two years.

Eligibility requirements for the program were loosened over time to include men who were underemployed, which was determined in some sites by maximum wage and hours thresholds and in others by maximum earnings thresholds. It is not surprising, therefore, that a significant proportion of the men worked in the months preceding the program or reported being employed at program entry.

⁵The proportion who participated in a program within the past 12 months may be a somewhat misleading indicator of service provision, since a higher proportion had probably participated in a program at some point in their lives.

Table 4.2
Parents' Fair Share
Past Employment, Earnings, and Child Support of Noncustodial Parents Referred to PFS,
by Site

Characteristics at Random Assignment	All Sites	Dayton	Grand Rapids	Jacksonville	Los Angeles	Memphis	Springfield	Trenton
Employment and Earnings								
From baseline survey								
Employment status (%)								
Employed at random assignment	17.0	10.4	15.9	39.5	12.3	5.1	10.9	17.1
Number of months unemployed prior to random assignment								
0 to 3	35.9	25.9	48.4	45.4	15.8	31.7	41.3	35.3
4 to 6	16.5	20.5	16.6	15.1	11.7	14.5	22.0	13.7
7 to 11	14.0	12.2	11.3	15.9	12.0	14.9	15.3	17.3
12 to 24	14.5	15.5	12.7	12.4	20.3	14.9	11.3	16.0
25 or more	19.1	25.9	11.0	11.2	40.2	24.1	10.1	17.7
Ever worked	97.3	96.9	99.0	98.9	98.4	90.2	98.1	97.1
Ever employed full time	90.7	89.9	94.7	93.6	93.5	78.4	91.8	89.1
Number of months worked full time in past 12 months								
0 to 3	60.7	71.2	52.2	51.3	78.6	69.3	52.5	62.5
4 to 6	18.3	15.4	24.0	21.0	11.4	16.0	18.4	16.7
7 to 12	21.0	13.4	23.8	27.6	10.0	14.7	29.2	20.8
Hourly wage at most recent or current job (\$)	6.70	6.23	6.23	5.72	8.72	5.72	7.44	7.17
From UI administrative records								
Employment status (%)								
Employed in pre-RA quarter 1	46.0	44.0	47.5	66.0	30.4	35.8	51.2	38.4
Employed in pre-RA quarter 2	49.2	51.4	51.3	62.1	33.0	41.9	56.2	41.8
Employed in pre-RA quarter 3	48.5	48.0	51.3	63.5	36.9	44.3	51.2	38.4
Employed in all 3 pre-RA quarters	27.9	28.8	25.0	45.7	16.8	20.3	32.6	21.3
Average earnings during the 3 quarters prior to random assignment (\$)	2,799	2,212	2,646	3,699	2,633	1,744	3,775	2,468

(continued)

Table 4.2 (continued)

Characteristics at Random Assignment	All Sites	Dayton	Grand Rapids	Jacksonville	Los Angeles	Memphis	Springfield	Trenton
Distribution of earnings during the 3 quarters prior to random assignment (%)								
Less than \$501	43.4	46.2	41.3	28.1	56.3	52.0	36.3	51.2
\$501 to \$2,000	16.7	17.4	19.8	16.4	10.4	18.6	17.5	14.8
\$2,001 to \$3,500	11.9	13.2	13.6	14.6	8.7	11.2	10.6	10.1
\$3,501 or more	28.0	23.2	25.3	40.9	24.6	18.2	35.5	23.9
Child support								
Paid child support in quarter prior to random assignment (%)								
	22.9	14.7	24.8	27.9	19.4	14.9	31.6	22.3
NCP contact with child (%)								
Once per week	45.5	46.5	42.4	34.5	43.7	56.1	73.2	27.5
Every two weeks	11.7	16.2	14.5	15.1	12.0	9.8	5.8	7.0
Once per month	5.5	5.8	5.5	8.0	5.8	6.1	2.4	4.4
Once/six weeks	1.0	0.6	1.8	1.6	0.7	0.7	1.1	0.3
Every 2 months	2.8	5.2	2.8	4.1	2.6	3.4	0.8	0.8
Once per year	6.5	4.9	9.2	8.0	6.8	8.5	2.7	4.4
Not seen child in last 12 months	8.5	11.3	9.0	7.5	13.6	7.4	4.5	7.3
Other amount	18.6	9.5	14.7	21.2	14.9	8.1	9.6	48.3
Distance from child's residence (%)								
Less than 1 mile	22.8	23.2	26.9	13.0	9.7	19.3	18.8	45.2
1 to 10 miles	52.7	59.9	48.7	50.9	47.6	49.3	66.3	47.0
11 to 50 miles	17.3	11.0	13.2	27.4	28.5	27.4	12.5	4.7
51 or more miles	3.1	3.4	5.5	3.9	3.2	1.4	1.9	1.3
Does not know distance to child	4.2	2.5	5.7	4.8	11.0	3.1	0.5	1.8
Method of referral to program (%)								
Contempt	41.9	0.0	51.4	74.9	0.0	100.0	6.6	50.7
Paternity establishment	22.2	0.0	7.3	21.5	0.0	0.0	70.6	49.4
Other	35.9	100.0	41.3	3.7	100.0	0.0	22.8	0.0

(continued)

Table 4.2 (continued)

Characteristics at Random Assignment	All Sites	Dayton	Grand Rapids	Jacksonville	Los Angeles	Memphis	Springfield	Trenton
Arrears (%)								
Those with arrears information available	60.3	88.1	57.2	68.5	0.0	0.0	97.1	90.4
Arrears of less than \$2,000	51.4	51.7	48.8	18.7	—	—	79.5	52.0
Arrears of \$2,000 to \$7,999	31.5	30.2	35.1	48.0	—	—	15.3	32.2
Arrears of \$8,000 or more	17.1	18.1	16.2	33.3	—	—	5.2	15.8

SOURCES: MDRC Parents' Fair Share Background Information Forms; child support enforcement (CSE) payment records; and unemployment insurance (UI) earnings records.

NOTES: Includes noncustodial parents randomly assigned between March 1994 and June 1995.
Distributions may not sum to 100 percent because of rounding.

However, data from the qualitative research suggest that the employment rate statistic calculated from self-reports may overstate the relative position of even the employed men. The typical noncustodial parent in the qualitative research sample exhibited substantial job mobility, moving from often-temporary low-wage job to low-wage job, with intermittent periods of unemployment. Field research also indicated that temporary help agencies were an important source of employment for these men. From a PFS participant:⁶

I was working, the times I was working, I never had a job over six months . . .
I never got fired or nothing. It was always temporary like that, you know, two months on the job here and you know — the first real job I ever had . . . it paid good, but it was just temporary.

In addition, many of the men had difficulty retaining jobs, sometimes because of drug or alcohol abuse or prior arrest. For others, difficulties at work stemmed from a distrust of the work world, which they perceived to be racist and hostile.

Although employment information is primarily from fathers' self-reports at the time of their referral to PFS, it is also available from employer reports to the unemployment insurance (UI) system. For example, according to UI records, 46 percent of the fathers earned income in the quarter prior to random assignment. A comparison of fathers' self-reported employment status with data from the UI records indicates a fairly close correspondence. From the baseline survey, 17 percent of the fathers reported being employed at random assignment, and 36 percent of those not employed reported that they had been unemployed for fewer than four months. These numbers imply that 47 percent would have been employed at some point during the prior quarter (or 17 percent plus .36 times 83 percent). Such a close match between the two data sources is somewhat surprising, since the setting in which they provided background information, at the child support hearing, might have encouraged noncustodial parents to underreport their employment and earnings.⁷

The baseline data indicate that the recent employment experiences of many noncustodial parents in this sample were fairly erratic, and over half of them had not held a job during the three months prior to entering the program. The UI data also illustrate the instability of the men's employment. Although 46 to 49 percent were employed in the three quarters prior to entering the program, only 28 percent had been employed in all three quarters. These numbers illustrate, however, that a significant proportion (nearly a third) of the fathers do not need help finding jobs. For these men, the challenge for the program is to help them find better jobs.

Comparing the fathers' employment rates with those of other men helps to put their situation in context. For example, data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics indicate that in March 1995, near the end of the intake period for this sample of noncustodial parents, 87 percent of all

⁶Johnson, Levine, and Doolittle (forthcoming).

⁷It is also possible, however, that a noncustodial parent might falsely report employment. Some parents believed that they could avoid the PFS mandate to participate by reporting a false job and then evade further child support enforcement. See Doolittle and Lynn (1998). After recognizing the problem of false-reporting in at least one site, staff changed their usual practice and would put a case on hold briefly while they telephoned the reported employer to verify the job.

men aged 25 to 54 were employed.⁸ Employment rates differ by race, however, and since a slight majority of the noncustodial parents are black, a better comparison might be with the employment rate for black men. In March 1995, 78 percent of all black men aged 25 to 54 were employed. Although employment rates for men without college degrees are somewhat lower than these rates, they illustrate that there is substantial room for improvement in noncustodial parents' employment rates.

Table 4.2 also reveals that employment histories vary widely across the sites, owing primarily to the experiences of the fathers in the Jacksonville and Memphis sites. In Jacksonville, 40 percent of the fathers reported being employed at random assignment. In addition, among those unemployed, 45 percent had been unemployed for fewer than four months. Table 4.1 shows that a relatively high proportion of the sample in Jacksonville had a high school diploma, and fewer than the average for all sites had never been married at program entry (men who have been or are currently married typically earn more than never-married men). The fact that the majority of noncustodial parents potentially eligible for the program were referred through contempt of court proceedings rather than through a review of other lists may explain why this sample is somewhat different from those in the other sites. As noted earlier, noncustodial parents with recent employment experience may be more likely than unemployed men to be on contempt of court dockets, since child support enforcement (CSE) is more likely to pursue their cases.

In contrast, in Memphis noncustodial parents appear to be more disadvantaged than those in other sites. Only 5 percent of these fathers reported being employed at random assignment, 90 percent reported having worked at some point in the past, and only 78 percent reported having worked full time. These employment data are consistent with data in Table 4.1 and show that compared with the other fathers, fewer noncustodial parents in Memphis lived alone, fewer lived with a spouse, and more lived in households that received Food Stamps in the month prior to the survey.

Finally, although the percentage of fathers employed in the Los Angeles site is comparable to that in several other sites, only 16 percent of the men in Los Angeles had been unemployed for fewer than four months, while 40 percent had been unemployed for more than two years. The men in this site appear to have been in the midst of fairly long unemployment spells when they entered the program. The administrative records data also show this difference in prior employment for fathers in Los Angeles, where only 17 percent had been employed in all three quarters prior to entering the program.

Although most fathers were not employed at random assignment, 97 percent of them reported that they had worked in the past, and most of them had worked full time at some point. In addition, the qualitative research revealed that the jobs the men had held ranged from a clerical job in the service industry to owning a lucrative business. While the data suggest that some, primarily older, men in the qualitative sample may have had relatively good jobs in the past, for various reasons they have not been able to regain a foothold in the labor market.

⁸U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment and Earnings, April 1995.

Of those who reported working full time at some point, the majority worked full time for fewer than four months in the year prior to the survey. This pattern holds across all sites, although the fathers in Jacksonville, Springfield, and Grand Rapids worked more consistently during the year than fathers in the other sites. For example, 29 percent of men in Springfield worked full time for seven months or more of the prior year compared with only 10 percent of men in Los Angeles.

Finally, on average, the fathers earned somewhat above the minimum wage in their current or most recent job. The average hourly wage was \$6.70 for the full sample, ranging from \$5.72 for fathers in Memphis and Jacksonville to \$8.72 for fathers in Los Angeles. The average wage was higher in Los Angeles partly because the fathers in this site were five years older on average than the other men.

Table 4.2 shows that Jacksonville and Memphis also stand out at the high and low ends for average earnings. In the nine months before random assignment, fathers in Jacksonville earned on average \$3,699 and fathers in Memphis earned \$1,744. Average earnings includes zero amounts for those not working, and the higher earnings for the Jacksonville sample are entirely due to the fact that more of these fathers were employed.

Data on the distribution of earnings show that 43 percent of the noncustodial parents in the sample earned no more than \$500 during the nine months prior to program entry, and more than half earned no more than \$2000. Considered in terms of annual income, these numbers are consistent with a finding from the qualitative research that most of these men inhabit the economic margins of society.

D. Child Support

Only 23 percent of the noncustodial parents made a child support payment through the CSE system in the three months prior to random assignment. Data from the pilot phase of the project, however, suggested that, while most of the fathers were unemployed, lack of employment is not the only reason fathers do not pay support. For example, in interviews some fathers said they would not pay because they had a strained relationship with the custodial parent or did not trust how she would spend the money, leading them to make in-kind contributions, such as toys, diapers, or clothes, rather than cash payments.⁹ In addition, hostility toward the CSE system led some fathers to resist making payments through the formal system, and instead to pay the mother directly. Information from the PFS qualitative research also suggests that many noncustodial parents made informal contributions to their children.¹⁰

Despite the fact that most noncustodial parents did not pay formal child support, 46 percent reported that they had contact with their children once a week (the proportion ranged from

⁹Bloom and Sherwood (1994). In fact, some economists argue that the primary reason most fathers do not pay support is that they cannot ensure that all of the money will be spent on their children; Weiss and Willis (1985).

¹⁰Information on informal payments will be available from the 12-month survey of custodial and noncustodial parents.

28 percent in Trenton to 73 percent in Springfield).¹¹ Three-quarters of the fathers lived within 10 miles of their child's residence.

The qualitative research found that most fathers in the sample expressed love and concern for their children. At the same time, however, many of the men's perceptions of themselves as good fathers were tied to their ability to provide for their children. As a result, some men voluntarily fell out of contact with their children when they lacked money to provide support. From a PFS participant:¹²

. . . It's hard when you're trying to be a father, right, and then you turn around saying you're the best father in the world to your kids, which you're trying to be, and then all of a sudden you can't even buy a pack of Pampers, you know?

For all sites combined, the sample is fairly evenly divided across methods of referral, although at each site, the sample was typically referred through one primary method. The entire sample in Memphis, for example, was referred through contempt of court hearings, the entire Los Angeles sample through other methods, and most of the sample in Springfield through paternity establishment hearings.

Finally, administrative data on arrears indicate that many fathers are heavily in debt to CSE (Table 4.2, bottom panel). These data are subject to the caveat that arrears information is available for only a subset of the sample, and this subset differs from the full sample in terms of several demographic characteristics. Nonetheless, they show that a significant share of fathers (17 percent) owed at least \$8,000 in child support. The median amount of arrears for the full sample is \$2,755. Although some part of the arrears amounts may consist of childbirth costs billed to the parent, the large amounts suggest that the system is unresponsive to the circumstances of non-custodial parents. Although awards are typically set as a percentage of the father's income, where income is sometimes imputed if he is currently unemployed, they are rarely modified if his economic circumstances change.

II. Subgroup Characteristics

This section presents demographic characteristics for several subgroups, in order to examine the sample in more detail. Many of the subgroups are also analyzed in the chapters on participation and on the program's effects on employment and child support.

A. Age

Table 4.3 (columns 1 and 2) presents characteristics of noncustodial parents by age for men under 30 and 30 or over. Older men were more likely to have been previously married, whereas 81 percent of the younger men had never been married. Although prior arrest rates are

¹¹A relatively high proportion of the men in Trenton report some "other amount" of contact. This amount may likely be more than once a week because a relatively high proportion of the noncustodial parents in Trenton were referred to the program through paternity establishment proceedings.

¹²Johnson, Levine, and Doolittle (forthcoming).

Table 4.3
Parents' Fair Share
Characteristics of Noncustodial Parents Referred to PFS,
by Subgroup

Characteristics	Age ^a		Race/Ethnicity ^b			Earnings ^c		Education		Arrest Record	
	<30	≥30	Black	Hispanic	White	<\$2,000	≥\$2,000	Degree ^d	No Degree	No Prior Arrest	Prior Non-CSE Arrest ^e
Age	24.4	37.2	30.0	31.3	31.0	30.3	30.6	31.0	29.8	30.3	30.5
Marital status (%)											
Never married	81.5	41.3	68.9	58.2	43.6	65.8	57.6	60.3	65.0	62.7	62.4
Other	18.5	58.7	31.2	41.9	56.4	34.2	42.4	39.7	35.0	37.3	37.6
Has no diploma or GED (%) ^f	51.0	44.0	43.3	63.4	48.2	53.8	38.6	0.0	100.0	46.6	48.2
Ever non-CSE arrest age since age 16 (%)	68.0	69.0	71.4	52.4	75.0	72.8	62.0	67.9	69.2	0.0	100.0
Ever worked (%)	95.5	99.3	96.5	98.0	99.1	95.7	99.6	99.0	95.4	97.7	97.1
Ever employed full time (%)	85.9	96.2	88.6	92.1	96.9	86.8	96.6	94.7	86.4	91.2	90.5
Employment (%)											
Employed in pre-RA quarter 1	49.5	42.1	48.1	38.6	46.2	24.0	79.2	51.6	39.9	51.0	43.8
Employed in pre-RA quarter 2	53.1	44.9	49.6	40.8	56.2	22.7	89.1	54.4	43.6	54.9	46.6
Employed in pre-RA quarter 3	51.1	45.7	49.5	42.7	50.2	23.0	86.9	53.6	43.0	55.3	45.4
Employed in all 3 pre-RA quarters	30.3	25.4	29.9	20.7	27.7	5.1	62.3	33.4	22.0	34.0	25.2
Average earnings during the 3 quarters prior to random assignment (\$)	2,553	3,072	2,714	2,763	3,080	373	6,443	3,441	2,093	3,747	2,361
Currently working (%)	17.1	16.8	17.9	15.0	15.7	12.1	24.3	18.8	15.0	19.0	16.0
Method of referral to PFS (%)											
Contempt	41.9	41.8	54.1	10.6	29.7	42.7	40.6	43.3	40.3	35.0	45.0
Paternity establishment	29.8	13.7	20.3	31.1	21.0	22.7	21.5	20.9	23.7	27.0	20.1
Informal means	28.2	44.5	25.6	58.4	49.3	34.6	37.9	35.9	36.0	38.0	34.9
Paid child support in quarter prior to random assignment (%)	20.8	25.3	21.0	26.7	26.6	13.8	36.6	25.8	19.8	29.8	19.7
Sample size	1,395	1,246	1,680	454	452	1,586	1,055	1,381	1,260	832	1,809

(continued)

Table 4.3 (continued)

SOURCES: MDRC Parents' Fair Share Background Information Forms; child support enforcement (CSE) payment records; and unemployment insurance (UI) earnings records.

NOTES: Includes noncustodial parents randomly assigned between March 1994 and June 1995.
Distributions may not sum to 100 percent because of rounding.

^aRefers to age at random assignment.

^bThe subgroup does not include 55 men who were in the category "other."

^cEarnings in the 3 quarters prior to random assignment.

^dThis subgroup includes those who have at least a high school diploma or GED.

^eIncludes those with any arrests unrelated to CSE since age 16.

^fThe General Educational Development (GED) certificate is given to those who pass the GED test and is intended to signify knowledge of basic high school subjects.

similar across the two groups, the older men were more likely to have a high school diploma or GED. Extensive employment histories are not available from the baseline file, but data from the qualitative research point to a difference between the older and younger men. In general, the older noncustodial parents were men who had good jobs at one time and were supporting their families. For some reason, they lost these jobs and never managed to get securely back into the workforce or to get well-paying jobs. In contrast, the younger men started out with erratic employment, working part time or in a succession of temporary jobs, and have never established any stability in the labor market.

B. Race/Ethnicity

Columns 3–5 present characteristics by race/ethnicity. Black fathers were somewhat younger than Hispanic and white fathers, and they were less likely to have been married. Hispanic fathers were much less likely than fathers in the other two groups to have a high school diploma, but they were also much less likely to have been arrested prior to entering the program. All groups are equally likely to have worked in the past, although fewer black noncustodial parents had worked full time. In addition, Hispanics were somewhat less likely (21 percent) to have worked in all of the three quarters prior to random assignment than black and white fathers (30 percent and 28 percent, respectively).

C. Prior Earnings

Characteristics by prior earnings are presented in columns 6 and 7. The sample is divided into those who, according to administrative records data, earned \$2,000 or more in the nine months prior to entering the program and those who earned less than \$2,000, including those who did not work.

Although there are no notable age differences between the two groups, men with higher earnings were more likely than men with lower earnings to have been married (42 percent versus 34 percent), and a higher percentage of them had a high school diploma (61 percent versus 46 percent). Also, fathers with higher earnings were less likely to report having been arrested prior to the program, although the percentages are still fairly high for both groups.

Not surprisingly, men with higher earnings were much more likely than the other group to report that they were employed at program entry. The biggest difference between groups, however, is for earnings in the three quarters prior to random assignment. Although prior earnings should be different for these subgroups by construction, the data show that fathers with lower earnings, who make up over half of the sample, earned on average only \$373 in the nine months prior to random assignment, or about \$41 per month. However, the average earnings of fathers with higher earnings were also relatively low — \$6,443 over the nine-month period. The quarterly employment rates illustrate the difference in employment stability for these two groups. Of the men with higher earnings, 62 percent had been employed in all of the three quarters prior to program entry compared with only 5 percent of the men with lower earnings. These differences by prior earnings illustrate that a substantial minority of the men do not appear to need help finding a job, but need help finding a better, or higher-paying, job.

Finally, fathers with higher earnings were substantially more likely to have paid child support in the quarter before random assignment; 37 percent of the higher-earning group made a

payment compared with 14 percent of the lower-earning group. This pattern illustrates that child support payments are strongly related to fathers' incomes.

D. Educational Attainment and Arrest History

Columns 8–11 of Table 4.3 present information for four subgroups, defined by educational attainment and arrest history. Columns 8 and 9 present demographic characteristics for fathers who had at least a high school diploma or GED and those who did not. The primary differences between the two groups are in employment status. Fathers with a high school diploma were somewhat more likely than those without a diploma to report that they were employed at random assignment, and they were more likely to have worked full time at some point prior to entering the program (95 percent versus 86 percent). They were also substantially more likely to have worked in the quarter before random assignment and to have earned significantly more than men without diplomas. Finally, they were somewhat more likely to have paid child support in the quarter prior to entering the program.

Columns 10 and 11 present data for fathers who reported that they had been arrested prior to entering the program and for those who had not. There are no significant differences between the two groups in terms of age, marital status, and educational attainment. However, the similar numbers for educational attainment mask the fact that fewer of the previously arrested fathers received high school diplomas and that more received GEDs (not shown).

Men who had been previously arrested were somewhat less likely than their subgroup counterparts to report that they were employed at random assignment, and earnings in the three quarters prior to random assignment were also lower for this group. The previously arrested were also more likely to have been referred to the program through a contempt of court hearing and less likely through paternity establishment. In addition, they were less likely than their nonarrested counterparts to have paid some child support in the quarter prior to random assignment. The difference in payment rates across the two groups is probably due to the difference in earnings, although a previous arrest may have caused a distrust of the legal system, reducing noncustodial parent's incentive to make formal payments.

III. Community Characteristics

The previous sections have attempted to describe the fathers themselves. For understanding the effects of PFS, it is also important to describe the communities in which they live. Although the community context is described in greater detail in the qualitative research, this section focuses on one factor relevant to PFS: employment opportunities by area and by race.

As a starting point, it is well documented that employment prospects for less-educated men have deteriorated over the past 20 years. Between 1979 and 1994, real weekly earnings of male high school graduates fell by 20 percent.¹³ Employment rates for male high school dropouts fell from 78.5 percent in 1975 to 67.4 percent in 1994. These changes are due partly to a fall in

¹³Gottschalk (1997).

the number of manufacturing jobs and to advances in technology that have reduced employer demand for less-skilled workers.¹⁴

The decline in job prospects has been especially severe for young black men, owing in part to the flight of jobs from the inner cities, where the majority of the black population live.¹⁵ Table 4.4 presents one measure of employment prospects for the seven PFS metropolitan areas. Columns 1–3 present information on area of residence and show the high degree of segregation in these areas. In Dayton, for example, 68 percent of blacks live in the central city compared with 20 percent of whites. In fact, in five of the seven areas, over 70 percent of blacks live in the central city.

Columns 4–6 show the implications of this residential segregation. First, in the metropolitan areas as a whole, the unemployment rates for black residents are double, and sometimes triple, those for white residents (17 percent versus 4 percent in Grand Rapids, for example). Second, a comparison of central city and suburban rates suggests that some part of the racial differences can be explained by differences in area of residence. In all sites except Jacksonville, unemployment rates are lower in the suburbs than in the central cities. Grand Rapids, Springfield, and Trenton are the most extreme cases. In Grand Rapids, for example, 86 percent of blacks live in the central city, where the unemployment rate (19 percent) is double that in the suburbs (10 percent).

These numbers suggest that location matters, especially for black men. Employment prospects are much better in the suburban areas, and this is likely to be a reality for PFS participants as well. However, employment prospects in the suburbs may be better only on paper for many men. For example, access to these jobs may be limited by high travel costs, in terms of time and money, to get to the suburbs. In addition, research suggests that discrimination remains an important barrier. Recently conducted surveys reveal that employers, especially suburban employers, are hesitant to hire black male applicants or applicants with criminal records, or those they suspect have criminal records.¹⁶ These issues are important to keep in mind when interpreting program impacts.

¹⁴Katz and Murphy (1992).

¹⁵Bound and Freeman (1992).

¹⁶Holzer (1996); Wilson (1996).

Table 4.4
Parents' Fair Share
Area of Residence and Unemployment Rates
for PFS Sites in 1990

	Population Distribution (%)			Unemployment Rate (%)		
	Black	White	Hispanic	Black	White	Hispanic
Dayton				13.6	5	6.9
In central city	68.1	20.2	23.0	15.9	7.4	8.2
Outside central city	31.9	79.8	77.0	9.5	4.5	6.5
Grand Rapids				17.2	4.1	10.5
In central city	86.4	26.7	59.0	18.8	4.7	13.3
Outside central city	13.6	73.3	41.0	9.5	3.9	7.3
Jacksonville				10.6	4.3	8.2
In central city	88.6	65.0	70.0	10.5	4.3	8.5
Outside central city	11.4	35.0	30.0	11.4	4.3	7.6
Los Angeles				11.7	5.6	9.8
In central city	53.7	33.7	44.1	13	6.3	10.6
Outside central city	46.3	66.3	55.9	10.3	5.2	9
Memphis				13.6	3.7	7.6
In central city	86.9	49.9	56.0	13.8	3.8	8.4
Outside central city	13.1	50.1	44.0	11.8	3.6	6.5
Springfield				13.3	5.7	18.6
In central city	92.7	44.6	90.3	13.9	6.6	20
Outside central city	7.3	55.4	9.7	6.5	5.1	9.9
Trenton				11.7	3.6	10.3
In central city	71.6	15.2	62.0	14.6	6.4	14.8
Outside central city	28.4	84.8	38.0	5.5	3.1	3.9

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990 census.

NOTE: The unemployment rate is calculated for persons aged 16 and over who are in the labor force.

Chapter 5

Patterns of Participation in PFS Activities

This chapter describes the services that were provided in the Parents' Fair Share sites and the extent to which they were used by the noncustodial parents. It discusses overall participation patterns and possible explanations for differences in participation rates across sites, noncustodial parents' participation in individual components, and the extent to which sites put enhanced child support enforcement (CSE) policies in place to support PFS objectives. The chapter focuses on 18 months of participation follow-up for parents who reached the point of possible referral to PFS and were randomly assigned between early 1994 and June 1995.¹

The main finding of the chapter is that over two-thirds of noncustodial parents in the program group participated in at least one PFS activity. The average participant was active in PFS for five months, with about half (47 percent) participating for one to three months, another quarter participating for four to six months (26 percent), and the remaining quarter (27 percent) active for at least seven months. In most sites, the peer support component — the central activity for most participants — was rated highly by field researchers, and also, anecdotally, by participants. In several sites, the group job search workshops were a strong component as well. However, as discussed in Chapter 2, only some sites managed to provide a significant number of their participants with employment and training activities aimed at helping them get better jobs than they would have found on their own, and most sites found it difficult to provide significant levels of post-employment assistance.

Field research and the PFS automated management information system (MIS) provided the data for this chapter. Field researchers visited PFS sites several times a year from 1994 to 1996. They observed program activities and conducted semistructured interviews with managers and staff involved in each program component. The data they provided form the basis for the observations concerning how components were implemented in each site.

The MIS provided data on noncustodial parents' participation patterns. Each month, site staff provided data on how many days noncustodial parents participated in specific activities in the prior month, reasons for nonparticipation, and whether noncompliant noncustodial parents were referred back to the child support office for follow-up. Staff stopped supplying information on noncustodial parents after they had been employed for at least three months, were expected to be inactive for a long period, or were referred back to the child support office for noncompliance, so that the length of time for which each individual has follow-up data varies depending on when he left the program or became categorized as inactive for the long term.

The MIS does not track the participation of PFS participants in any services outside PFS, unless they were specifically referred to an outside service provider as a PFS activity. Similarly,

¹The month in 1994 that random assignment began varies across the sites. In Los Angeles, the last site to enter the demonstration, the random assignment process began later, in February 1995. However, in all cases sample members in this report were tracked for 18 months.

any activities in which noncustodial parents may have enrolled after leaving PFS are not included in this source of follow-up data. In addition, the MIS does not supply information on the participation of control group members in any activities for which they may have volunteered in the community. A later report will provide additional information on participation in activities outside PFS after random assignment to the PFS program group or to a control group, using data from a one-year follow-up survey of noncustodial parents in both the program and control groups. Determining the net increase in participation caused by PFS, that is, participation in activities above and beyond what noncustodial parents would have achieved on their own, will have to await this future report.

I. Overall Participation Patterns

A. Proportions Participating in Any PFS Activity

Table 5.1 summarizes the proportions of noncustodial parents in the program group who either participated in any activity; were ever excused from participating in the long term; or, if they never participated or were excused, were referred back to the child support agency for enforcement because of noncooperation with PFS requirements. As shown in the table, 70 percent of noncustodial parents who were assigned to PFS participated in an activity for at least one day within 18 months after random assignment. While comparable data are not available on control group activities during the 18 months after random assignment, only about 20 percent of research sample members surveyed on the day of random assignment reported participating in any employment and education and training activities in the prior year. Thus, the 70 percent participation rate most likely represents a substantial increase over the participation rates that members of the program group would have achieved in the absence of PFS. (However, the bulk of the prior participation reported by research sample members was in education and occupational skills training, activities that, as will be discussed in more detail later, make up a smaller proportion of the 70 percent PFS participation rate than peer support and job search activities.)

In every site, the majority of those assigned to the program did participate, although the overall participation rate varied widely, with Los Angeles achieving the highest rate (82 percent), and Dayton and Memphis the lowest rates (57 and 59 percent, respectively). These rates are comparable to those that have been achieved by effective welfare-to-work programs that have targeted primary wage earners (generally men) in the two-parent (AFDC-U) welfare population.²

On average, about one-third of noncustodial parents were excused from participating for at least part of the 18 months for what were deemed long-term reasons, including incarceration, moving out of the area, being referred for drug or alcohol treatment, or having their child support

²In San Diego's mandatory saturation work initiative model (SWIM) in the late 1980s, about 65 percent of AFDC-U registrants participated in some kind of program activity in the 12 months after random assignment; Hamilton (1988). In California's Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) program, the participation rate of AFDC-U parents ranged from 36 percent in Los Angeles to 66 percent in Riverside County within 11 months of random assignment; Riccio and Friedlander (1992).

Table 5.1
Parents' Fair Share
Participation in PFS Activities and Referral to CSE
Within 18 Months of Random Assignment, by Site

Measure (%)	All Sites	Dayton	Grand Rapids	Jacksonville	Los Angeles	Memphis	Springfield	Trenton
Participated in any activity^a	70.4	56.5	74.5	70.6	81.8	59.3	73.7	72.4
Ever long-term excused^b	32.9	26.7	47.1	15.4	33.8	33.3	38.7	33.2
Never participated and never long-term excused	21.4	31.7	12.0	28.5	7.1	33.3	18.8	21.4
Of those who never participated and were never long-term excused, proportion ever referred back to CSE	91.6	74.5 ^c	83.9	95.4	100.0	100.0	94.3	97.6
Ever referred to CSE for noncooperation	60.6	62.1	49.0	76.8	48.1	69.3	57.5	61.7
Of those referred to CSE, percent who subsequently participated in a PFS activity ^d	16.8	16.0	33.3	11.8	36.1	4.9	11.4	10.9
Sample size	1,334	161	259	228	154	150	186	196

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from Parents' Fair Share management information system.

NOTES: This table includes the program group members in the early cohort, randomly assigned between March 1994 and June 1995.

^aParticipation is defined as attending an activity for at least one day.

^bReasons for long-term unavailability include being incarcerated, moving out of the area, being referred for drug or alcohol treatment, or having the child support case closed.

^cIn Dayton, 10 to 15 cases were referred to PFS through a voluntary process that was not enforceable by the courts. These voluntary cases probably reduced the proportion of nonparticipants who were referred to CSE for noncooperation.

^dRefers to referral to CSE through month 17 and participation through month 18.

case closed. The likelihood of being excused ranged from 15 percent in Jacksonville to 47 percent in Grand Rapids.

PFS staff used a number of methods to ensure that noncustodial parents understood the program to be mandatory, including describing the program requirements at the initial orientation and following up by telephone and mail with those who did not show up at their scheduled activities. One measure of whether PFS was implemented as a mandatory program is the extent to which cases were referred back to the child support agency for enforcement if the noncustodial parents did not attend required activities. In fact, 92 percent of cases in which the noncustodial parents neither participated nor were ever considered long-term excused were eventually sent back to the CSE agency. This result is striking, in part because during field interviews many PFS program staff described themselves as advocates for the noncustodial parents and expressed reservations about sending their cases back for enforcement. It appears that while staff usually tried to resolve noncustodial parents' nonparticipation issues themselves, ultimately they did send the cases back for enforcement.³

Table 5.1 also shows that only 17 percent of noncustodial parents ever participated in a PFS activity *after* being referred to CSE for noncompliance. Several aspects of the program contributed to this low proportion provided with a "second chance," in spite of the policy in most sites that nonparticipants could return to PFS after agreeing to participate. There were often significant delays between the time that the PFS staff sent a case back to the CSE system and any action being taken. In one site, PFS staff said that they had not seen evidence that the CSE agency acted on these cases at all. Even when the CSE agency did schedule hearings quickly, there was a high no-show rate because noncustodial parents were often not penalized for nonappearance. Both as a result of these problems and because they saw themselves as advocates for program group members, the PFS staff in most sites sent cases back for enforcement as a last resort, once they were convinced that the noncustodial parents were unlikely ever to cooperate.

B. Explaining Differences in Participation Rates

To explain differences in overall participation rates requires uncovering the reasons for sites' different levels of success in getting noncustodial parents to participate for at least one day in at least one activity. Several differences among the sites may help to explain variations in this participation rate.

First, as discussed in Chapter 2, sites used different methods to identify noncustodial parents and bring them into hearings, with the result that they ended up working with different segments of the noncustodial parent population. In particular, Los Angeles, which achieved a high participation rate among those who enrolled, recruited through large "mass stipulation" meetings that noncustodial parents attended after receiving a notice describing the PFS program and requesting them to appear. Since only an estimated 5 to 10 percent of noncustodial parents appeared for this meeting compared with the 27 to 69 percent who appeared for the hearings held in other sites, noncustodial parents in Los Angeles may have interpreted the request to appear, which emphasized the opportunities of PFS more heavily than its mandatory nature, as something

³While Dayton had the lowest rate of returning cases to CSE, it was affected by 10 to 15 cases who entered PFS through a voluntary process that was not enforceable by the court.

they could ignore with few consequences. This may have meant that noncustodial parents who *did* show up for random assignment were more likely to *want* to participate than those assigned in the other sites, where review meetings or hearings more closely resembled the regular mandatory CSE process in each county.⁴

Even if the intake process had been the same in all sites, local demographics, low-income labor markets, and child support systems would result in variations in population in each site. For example, in the quarters preceding random assignment, sample members in Los Angeles had substantially lower employment rates than those in other sites. (See Table 4.2.) Since most PFS activities were not structured to accommodate those with jobs, employment would conflict with enrollees' ability to participate.⁵ Lacking work as an alternative activity, more program group members in Los Angeles than in other sites may have been available to participate in PFS activities. Similarly, Los Angeles, Trenton, and Springfield had the lowest proportion of noncustodial parents with prior arrest records, perhaps indicating that they were somewhat less disadvantaged, less apprehensive of entering formal service systems, and therefore more likely to participate than noncustodial parents in other sites. Although not measured in the baseline data, it is also likely that transportation problems, substance abuse problems, and other barriers to participation that enrollees and staff frequently mentioned during the field research varied in intensity from site to site.

In addition to differences in the characteristics of sample members across sites, specific operational decisions made by sites appear to have affected their ability to engage large numbers of noncustodial parents. For example, as mentioned in Chapter 2, most sites used an "open-entry" system for peer support to make sure that program group members began peer support soon after they were assigned to PFS, under the assumption that the longer that noncustodial parents were made to wait the less likely they were to show up (see Table 5.2). When Los Angeles started its pilot PFS program, each new peer support class began on the Monday after a new group of noncustodial parents was assigned to PFS on the prior Thursday. During that period, the site achieved a 92 percent participation rate in peer support. The next year, after the demonstration officially started, Los Angeles switched to a policy of beginning peer support within two weeks, and participation rates in peer support dropped to the 79 percent reported later in this chapter in Table 5.3. It seems likely that this change in policy affected participation rates, particularly since few other major changes were made at the same time.

⁴In four of the seven sites, noncustodial parents generally were not informed about PFS until they arrived for the child support hearing at which random assignment took place. Like Los Angeles, Trenton and Dayton also described PFS in the notices that were sent to noncustodial parents who were required to come to hearings and had been identified as "potentially eligible" prior to the hearing. However, attendance rates at their initial hearings were substantially higher than in Los Angeles.

If the intake process for random assignment differed across sites, it would affect the motivation and other characteristics of both the experimental and control groups. For example, in Los Angeles control group members should also be particularly motivated, perhaps leading them to have a higher rate of participation in services outside PFS than control group members in other sites and reducing the likelihood that the high participation rates in Los Angeles would lead to large impacts on employment or earnings. Data to compare participation rates for experimental and control group members will be available for a later report.

⁵The exception is peer support, which several sites began offering at night to accommodate employed enrollees.

Table 5.2
Parents' Fair Share
Implementation of Services That Support the PFS Participation Mandate,
by Site

Service	Dayton	Grand Rapids	Jacksonville	Los Angeles	Memphis	Springfield	Trenton
Sequence and structure of PFS activities							
Start of new peer support group							
Open-entry	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Periodic							
Enrollment in peer support and employment services							
Concurrent	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Sequential			✓				✓
Role of PFS and CSE staff							
PFS case managers colocated with other PFS staff		✓	✓	☒ ^a		✓	✓
PFS case managers active in monitoring participation and problem solving for nonparticipants	☒	✓		✓	☒ ^b	✓	✓ ^c
CSE used as a tool to increase participation ^d		✓		✓			

SOURCES: MDRC field research observations and interviews with PFS staff and participants.

NOTES: A component given a "✓" was implemented.

A component given a "☒" either was not a strong part of the site's operation or was implemented for only part of the follow-up period.

^aCase managers were not colocated with peer support in two of the six locations.

^bCase managers were actively involved with participants who enrolled; mechanisms for tracking those who did not initially show up were not as effective.

^cThis process was stronger in the second half of the program.

^dBased on descriptions of CSE for each site in Table 2.3.

Table 5.3
Parents' Fair Share
Patterns of Participation in PFS Activities Within
18 Months of Random Assignment, by Site

Activity	Percent Who Ever Participated ^a	Of Those Who Participated in an Activity		
		Average Number of Months	Average Number of Sessions per Month	Percent Who Participated for ≥12 Months
All Sites				
Any activity	70.4	4.9	9.0 ^b	7.3
Peer support	64.3	2.9	5.3	2.0
Job club or workshop	56.7	3.5	5.5	1.5
Skills training	8.2	4.0	12.8	3.7
Basic education	11.5	3.0	9.4	1.9
On-the-job training	11.8	3.0	13.5	0.0
Mediation	2.8	1.2	1.0	0.0
Sample size	1,334			
Dayton				
Any activity	56.5	4.8	9.8 ^b	6.6
Peer support	56.5	4.4	5.5	4.4
Job club or workshop	44.7	2.5	4.9	0.0
Skills training	5.6	6.0	14.8	11.1
Basic education	4.3	5.3	5.8	14.3
On-the-job training	5.0	4.0	15.6	0.0
Mediation	0.0	–	–	–
Sample size	161			
Grand Rapids				
Any activity	74.5	4.5	10.5 ^b	6.2
Peer support	61.0	2.5	3.8	0.0
Job club or workshop	69.9	3.8	7.9	2.8
Skills training	1.9	3.0	12.8	0.0
Basic education	4.2	1.5	6.8	0.0
On-the-job training	26.6	3.3	10.4	0.0
Mediation	10.8	1.3	1.0	0.0
Sample size	259			

(continued)

Table 5.3 (continued)

Activity	Percent Who Ever Participated ^a	Of Those Who Participated in an Activity		
		Average Number of Months	Average Number of Sessions per Month	Percent Who Participated for ≥12 Months
Jacksonville				
Any activity	70.6	5.7	7.3 ^b	12.4
Peer support	67.5	5.1	4.0	8.4
Job club or workshop	48.7	3.2	5.6	0.0
Skills training	5.7	4.5	15.1	0.0
Basic education	12.7	4.1	9.0	0.0
On-the-job training	6.1	1.9	13.2	0.0
Mediation	2.6	1.2	1.0	0.0
Sample size	228			
Los Angeles				
Any activity	81.8	7.2	7.9 ^b	16.7
Peer support	79.2	2.3	5.5	0.0
Job club or workshop	77.3	5.3	3.6	3.4
Skills training	28.6	4.8	12.4	6.8
Basic education	14.9	3.8	10.8	4.3
On-the-job training	1.3	4.0	15.4	0.0
Mediation	0.0	–	–	–
Sample size	154			
Memphis				
Any activity	59.3	3.9	12.6 ^b	3.4
Peer support	54.0	1.9	9.1	0.0
Job club or workshop	44.0	3.0	3.8	0.0
Skills training	5.3	3.1	17.8	0.0
Basic education	47.3	2.3	9.4	0.0
On-the-job training	0.7	1.0	6.0	0.0
Mediation	2.7	1.0	1.0	0.0
Sample size	150			

(continued)

Table 5.3 (continued)

Activity	Percent Who Ever Participated ^a	Of Those Who Participated in an Activity		
		Average Number of Months	Average Number of Sessions per Month	Percent Who Participated for ≥12 Months
Springfield				
Any activity	73.7	3.9	10.0 ^b	1.5
Peer support	60.8	1.6	7.0	0.0
Job club or workshop	69.4	2.8	4.9	0.8
Skills training	11.3	2.0	7.4	0.0
Basic education	1.6	1.7	7.8	0.0
On-the-job training	25.8	2.8	16.6	0.0
Mediation	0.0	–	–	–
Sample size	186			
Trenton				
Any activity	72.4	4.3	6.5 ^b	3.5
Peer support	70.9	2.2	4.7	0.0
Job club or workshop	39.8	3.3	6.1	1.3
Skills training	4.6	3.9	17.1	0.0
Basic education	5.1	3.3	12.7	10.0
On-the-job training	7.7	3.3	17.0	0.0
Mediation	0.0	–	–	–
Sample size	196			

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from Parents' Fair Share management information system.

NOTES: This table includes the program group members in the early cohort, randomly assigned between March 1994 and June 1995.

^aParticipation is defined as attending a component for at least one day.

^bAverage number of sessions of all activities, for months in which noncustodial parents participated in any activity.

It is clear, however, that enrolling noncustodial parents in their first activity promptly is not by itself sufficient to lead to high participation rates. In the first year of follow-up, Memphis waited until at least 25 parents were ready to start in peer support before beginning a new group, which sometimes led to considerable delays. In the meantime, most enrollees were expected to participate in basic education. Dissatisfied with its high no-show rates, the site switched to an open-entry peer support system after March 1995. However, participation rates did not show an appreciable increase as a result of its policy change.

Other operational decisions that may have influenced participation rates include the colocation of case managers with peer support facilitators and job club staff (see Table 5.2). In Memphis and Dayton — the sites with the lowest participation rates — case managers and peer support were not colocated. This lack may have hindered case management staff in Dayton from learning about individuals' participation problems early enough to engage in problem-solving strategies that might have persuaded them to participate.⁶ Similarly, although the case managers in Memphis did work on noncompliance issues, field researchers generally observed weak coordination between the PFS program staff and the child support agency.⁷

Finally, participation rates appear related to the conscious use of CSE *as a tool for increasing participation* rather than as a final disposition of “hopeless” cases. It is logical that participation rates are likely to increase if noncompliant cases are returned to the child support agency for the purpose of convincing them to participate in the program rather than returned to regular non-PFS enforcement. While most sites theoretically gave noncompliant program group members the option to return to PFS (*if* the CSE agency followed up with the nonparticipants and *if* they showed up for the scheduled hearing or meeting with child support staff), the actual rates at which people ever returned to PFS following a referral to CSE varied widely. As discussed earlier, on average, 17 percent of individuals who were referred back to the child support agency for noncompliance ever participated in a PFS activity subsequently; however, in Los Angeles and Grand Rapids 36 and 33 percent participated subsequently — often enough to make an appreciable difference in overall participation rates — while in Memphis only 5 percent participated subsequently.

The relatively high rate of “second chances” for noncompliant cases in Los Angeles and Grand Rapids reflects a conscious strategy by PFS and CSE staff in those sites — returning a case to the CSE agency was not viewed as “giving up” on the program group member's potential for involvement in PFS, but instead was an additional step toward convincing the noncustodial parent to participate.⁸ As was discussed in more detail in Chapter 2, this approach was operationalized

⁶Dayton's participation rate may also have been affected by 10 to 15 voluntary PFS program group members who did not participate and whose participation was not enforceable by the court.

⁷Note, however, that in two of the six Los Angeles locations, case managers were not colocated with peer support.

⁸Aside from the possibility of returning to PFS, the remedies that noncustodial parents ultimately faced for noncompliance depended primarily on the nature of the pre-existing child support system in each site. In every site, there was at least a possibility that noncustodial parents could be jailed for noncompliance, although this appears to have rarely occurred. (In a future report, the results from a follow-up survey of noncustodial parents will provide data on how frequently they spent time in jail after entering the program.) In the PFS design, the noncompliant

(continued)

by having specialized CSE staff to work with PFS cases; by scheduling regular review meetings among PFS and CSE staff members to discuss how to handle nonparticipation cases, and, in Los Angeles, by scheduling automatic review hearings 120 days after random assignment for PFS program group members.

C. Participation Patterns over Time

Figure 5.1 shows the cumulative proportion of noncustodial parents who ever participated in the program, for each month after random assignment. As mentioned above, sites tried to enroll noncustodial parents in program activities quickly after their assignment to PFS. Accordingly, most noncustodial parents who did participate began their first activity within two months after random assignment; those who did not begin to participate in the first three months after random assignment were not likely to ever participate. Nevertheless, the efforts of program staff to enforce the participation mandate did result in some additional noncustodial parents beginning to participate in the months after random assignment, with 62 percent participating within 3 months, 66 percent participating within 6 months, and 70 percent participating by the end of the 18 months.

Figure 5.2 shows the proportion of noncustodial parents who were still participating in any PFS activities in each month after random assignment. Clearly, the bulk of activity for participants occurred within the first few months of enrollment in the program, with fewer and fewer noncustodial parents remaining active over time. Although not shown in the figure, over half of those who were still in PFS at 12 months were participating in job search activities, with smaller numbers participating in other activities. (As one might expect, however, compared with other components, a higher proportion of noncustodial parents who began skills training were still enrolled in it 12 months after random assignment. However, since more noncustodial parents participated in job search, a larger absolute number was still in job search at the 12-month point than in skills training.)⁹

Figure 5.3 provides insight into how the status of typical noncustodial parents shifted over time, by presenting the proportion of noncustodial parents in five program statuses at 3, 6, 12, and 18 months after random assignment. For example, in the third month after random assignment 41 percent participated in at least one program activity, and 26 percent were categorized as short-term inactive, indicating that they were not participating because of a short-term issue preventing participation.¹⁰ The remainder of noncustodial parents were categorized into one of three statuses according to the most recent tracking information available: they were employed, their case had been sent back to the child support office for noncompliance follow-up, or they were not available for participation with good reason.¹¹ Because the program did not con-

noncustodial parent's child support order should be raised if it was originally lowered in return for participating in the program.

⁹One-quarter of noncustodial parents who ever began participating in skills training were still in that activity 12 months after assignment to PFS. This was true for 11 to 12 percent of those who had started basic education or job search activities, and only 5 percent of those who had participated in peer support.

¹⁰Reasons for short-term inactivity include transportation problems or waiting for an assigned activity to begin.

¹¹Reasons for long-term nonparticipation include being incarcerated, moving out of the area, being referred for drug or alcohol treatment, or having the child support case closed.

Figure 5.1
Parents' Fair Share

Cumulative Percent of Program Group Members Who Ever Participated in PFS

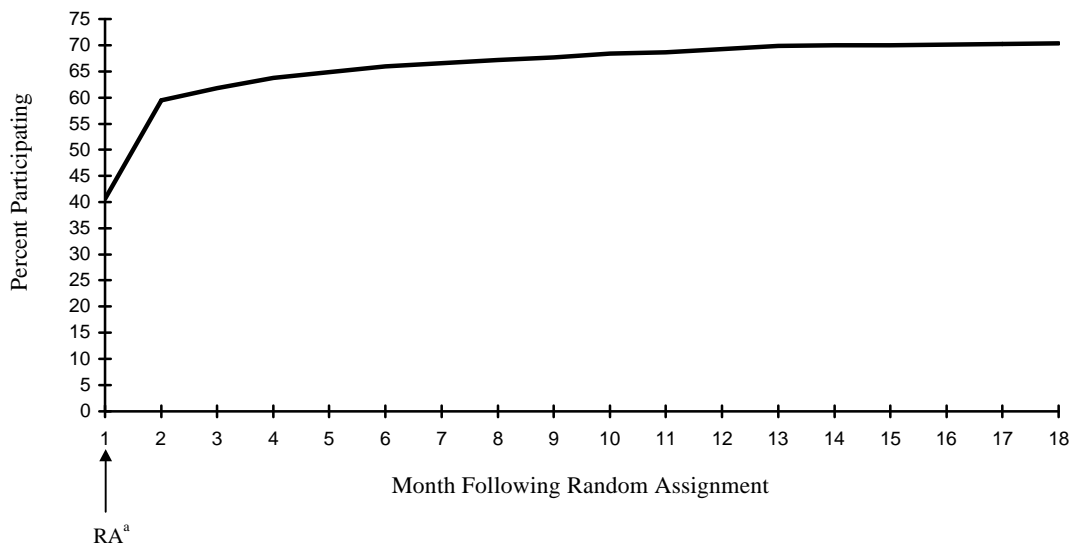
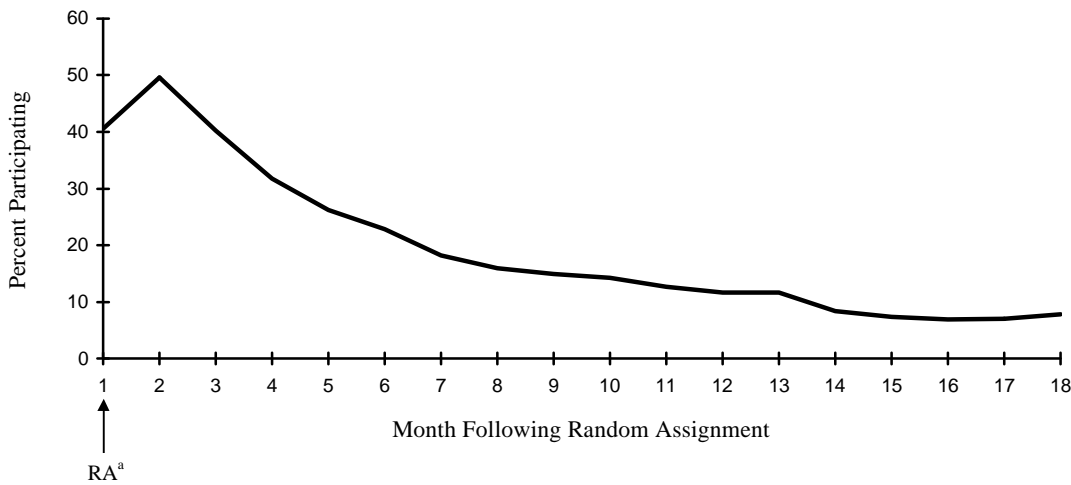


Figure 5.2
Parents' Fair Share

Monthly Percent of Program Group Members Participating in Any PFS Component



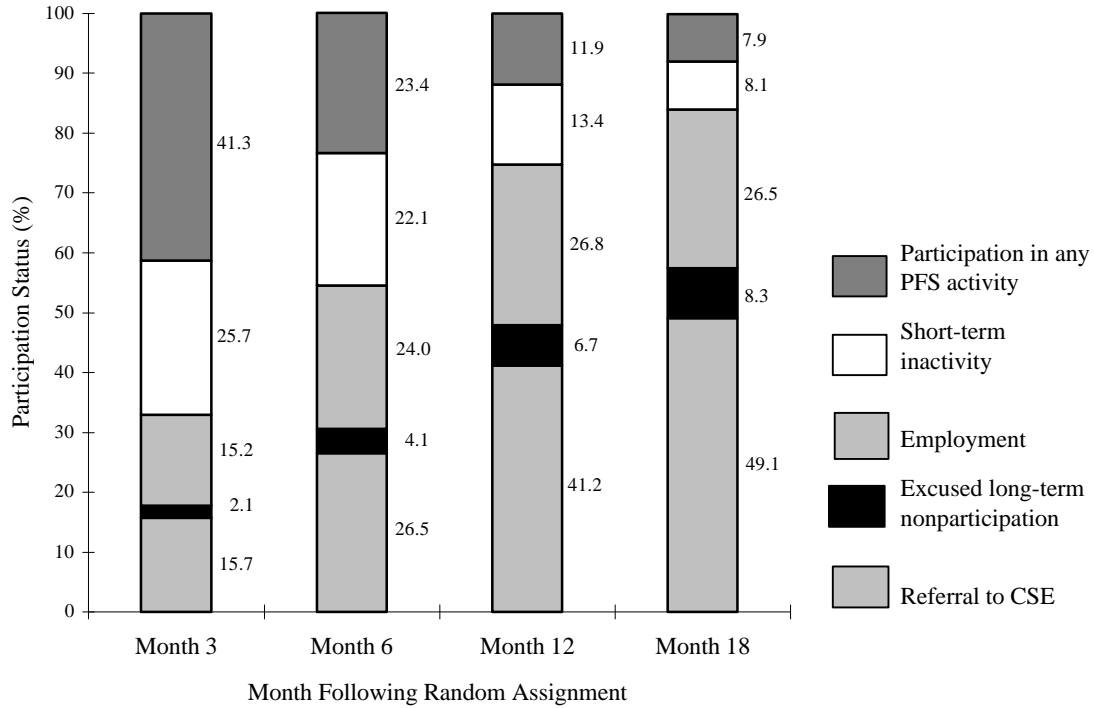
SOURCE: MDRC calculations from Parents' Fair Share management information system.

NOTES: These figures include the program group members in the early cohort, randomly assigned between March 1994 and June 1995; sample size = 1,334.

^aMonth of random assignment.

Figure 5.3
Parents' Fair Share

Participation Status in PFS at 3, 6, 12, and 18 Months After Random Assignment



SOURCE: MDRC calculations from Parents' Fair Share management information system.

NOTES: This figure includes the program group members in the early cohort, randomly assigned between March 1994 and June 1995.

Participation in any PFS activity and short-term inactivity are determined in months 3, 6, 12, and 18. Employment, excused long-term nonparticipation, and referral to CSE are based on most recent information available. Participants who did not meet criteria for one of the five categories are not included in the calculation. This proportion ranged from 1.7 to 2.7 percent, with total sample sizes ranging from 1,298 to 1,311.

tinue to track the status of noncustodial parents once they were deemed long-term nonparticipants, they were categorized concerning employment, referral to CSE, or unavailability for participation according to their *last available program status*, not necessarily information that had been updated for the current month. Thus, while the percentage whose last status was employed as of month 3 is based on relatively recent information, the percentage whose last status was employed as of month 12 is based on information that could be up to 12 months old (depending on when the noncustodial parent last had contact with the PFS staff).¹²

Figure 5.3 shows that in month 3 the largest group of noncustodial parents was participating in PFS, while by month 18 the typical noncustodial parent had been referred back to the CSE agency for follow-up. This figure has several important implications.

On the one hand, the figure shows that the programs made sure that deferrals were not permitted to continue indefinitely, because they reduced the proportion of people who were short-term inactive or in what might be considered a “holding” status over time. By one year after random assignment, most of the 26 percent who had started out as short-term inactive had either participated, found employment, or been sent back to CSE for further enforcement.

On the other hand, it is discouraging that the final action on about half of all program group members was to be sent back to the child support agency. This finding implies that in addition to the 30 percent who never participated, over the 18 months another 20 percent of noncustodial parents *had* participated (at least for a brief period) but subsequently became disengaged from the program without ever returning to it. For example, staff did report that when participants found jobs and subsequently lost them, they did not always respond to staff efforts to reconnect with them. Eventually, these cases would have been returned to the CSE agency.¹³

Finally, it appears that, like participation in PFS, little new employment was reported to PFS staff after the first six months. Between months 6 and 18, the proportion who had reported employment rose only 2.5 percentage points, from 24.0 to 26.5 percent. Interestingly, this represents only about half of the employment reported to the unemployment insurance (UI) system in any given quarter, suggesting some combination of three possibilities: that employment for this population is so unstable that employment within a quarter is considerably higher than in any one month, that many of the program’s nonparticipants were working while avoiding interaction with PFS or the CSE system, or that program staff simply had difficulty keeping track of much of the employment among participants. Chapter 6 will present more complete information on employment patterns for program and control group members, using UI data that do not depend on whether employment was reported to the PFS program.

¹²The status of program group members was treated hierarchically, so that if more than one status was reported in the relevant month, the categories took precedence in the following order: employment, participation in any PFS activity, excused long-term nonparticipation, and referral to CSE.

¹³Further, in addition to those referred back to the CSE agency, some unknown proportion of noncustodial parents whose last contact was to report employment may have lost their jobs during the remainder of the 18-month period without recontacting the program.

D. Length of Activity for Participants

Table 5.3 indicates that those enrollees who participated averaged approximately five months of activity within the 18-month follow-up period. (Participants were counted as attending in a month if they participated for *at least one day* in that month.) Among those who participated, 47 percent were active in the program for one to three months, 26 percent for four to six months, 20 percent for seven to 11 months, and 7 percent for at least a year.

In a typical month of participation, noncustodial parents attended nine sessions of program activities. Thus, if these sessions took place on separate days, noncustodial parents would be participating in activities about twice a week in months during which they were active. However, because peer support and job club activities often took place on the same day, participation in nine sessions per month means that the average noncustodial parent participated somewhat less often than twice a week, even though many activities were scheduled to meet more frequently. Site staff complained about sporadic attendance, which combined with already low levels of enrollment often made it difficult to maintain the group dynamics intended in peer support and job club workshops.¹⁴

At the 18-month follow-up point, those who had participated in skills training were active longer (for four months) than those enrolled in peer support, job club, basic education, or on-the-job training (OJT) (approximately three months each). In addition, participants active in skills training, education, or OJT attended more sessions per month than those active in peer support or job club.¹⁵

II. Participation Patterns in Individual Components

This section examines the proportion of noncustodial parents who took advantage of each of the available PFS services, the length of participation, and the rate of referral back to the CSE agency for enforcement action.

Of those noncustodial parents who participated in PFS, the majority participated in peer support; most also participated in some form of job club or pre-employment workshop. Thus, as described below, these two components formed the bulk of the PFS treatment, with additional activities offered in particular sites.

A. Participation in Peer Support

The peer support group met with a facilitator two to three times a week for a set number of weeks to cover all topics. Both because it was the common experience of most noncustodial

¹⁴In Dayton in particular, during much of the follow-up period for this early cohort, peer support and job club were provided one-on-one rather than in groups as intended. This was attributed to low intake, low attendance among those enrolled, and a strong local economy that often quickly siphoned participants into employment.

¹⁵Since training activities generally take place off site, the numbers of sessions recorded for these activities are probably less likely to accurately reflect absences than the sessions recorded for peer support and job club, which are usually provided on site.

parents in PFS and because they tended to respond enthusiastically to the opportunity to discuss issues of importance to them, peer support constituted the center of the program in most sites.

More noncustodial parents participated in peer support than in any other component because it was the first component to which most of them were assigned. As indicated in Table 5.4, among noncustodial parents who were assigned to PFS, 64 percent participated in peer support; across the sites, the proportion ranged from 54 to 79 percent. Overall, the average peer support participant attended a total of 15 sessions, indicating that those who did participate were exposed to most of the peer support curriculum. (See Table 5.3.) This “average” participant, however, actually reflected three different participation patterns identified by field researchers and staff. While the majority of participants who participated in peer support (56 percent) attended between 6 and 20 peer support sessions, about one-quarter attended fewer than 6 sessions. In addition, a small proportion attended for extended periods, in fact raising questions about whether some noncustodial parents became “too comfortable” in peer support.¹⁶

Table 5.3 shows considerable differences in length of peer support participation among the seven sites. For example, in Springfield and Memphis, peer support lasted less than two months for the average participant, who attended 7 and 9 sessions per month, respectively. In contrast, the average peer support participant attended for over four months in Dayton and for five months in Jacksonville (but less often per month than in Springfield and Memphis).¹⁷

These differences arose in part because some sites placed an emphasis on a formal “graduation” from peer support and moving on to the next phase of PFS, while others (particularly Jacksonville and Dayton) encouraged noncustodial parents to continue in peer support after they had formally completed it, and many participants in those sites apparently did find continued participation useful. (Staff in at least one other site told field researchers that they did make the offer of continued participation, but few participants took up the offer and continued to attend.) In fact, several sites held evening peer support groups to enable noncustodial parents who were employed when they entered PFS to participate or to enable those who gained jobs while in the program to continue to participate. As shown in Table 5.3, a handful of participants in both Jacksonville and Dayton attended peer support for more than 12 months, a reflection of the emphasis in those sites on peer support as ongoing for those who needed it.

B. Participation in Employment and Training Services

Knowing that sequential programs typically experience some drop-off in participation with each activity, most sites allowed noncustodial parents to attend peer support at the same time as services that could help them to gain employment, such as job club, pre-employment training, or other components (see Table 5.2). This policy seems to have had a substantial effect

¹⁶While generally field researchers felt that sites were providing a positive form of support by allowing noncustodial parents to stay in peer support for several months if they continued to benefit from it, they occasionally observed noncustodial parents who appeared to adopt peer support as their long-term focal activity rather than finding a job.

¹⁷In Memphis, for many of the participants in this early cohort the full peer support component consisted of 25 sessions (five days a week for five weeks). Memphis staff used the PFS curriculum but also added peer support sessions based on other workshops that they had developed previously.

Table 5.4
Parents' Fair Share
Participation in PFS Activities Within
18 Months of Random Assignment, by Site

	All Sites	Dayton	Grand Rapids	Jacksonville	Los Angeles	Memphis	Springfield	Trenton
Participated in any activity (%)^a	70.4	56.5	74.5	70.6	81.8	59.3	73.7	72.4
Peer support	64.3	56.5	61.0	67.5	79.2	54.0	60.8	70.9
Job club or workshop	56.7	44.7	69.9	48.7	77.3	44.0	69.4	39.8
Skills training	8.2	5.6	1.9	5.7	28.6	5.3	11.3	4.6
Basic education	11.5	4.3	4.2	12.7	14.9	47.3	1.6	5.1
On-the-job training	11.8	5.0	26.6	6.1	1.3	0.7	25.8	7.7
Mediation	2.8	0.0	10.8	2.6	0.0	2.7	0.0	0.0
Sample size	1,334	161	259	228	154	150	186	196

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from Parents' Fair Share management information system.

NOTES: This table includes the program group members in the early cohort, randomly assigned between March 1994 and June 1995.

^aParticipation is defined as attending an activity for at least one day.

on participation rates in subsequent activities. Across the five sites that allowed concurrent enrollment, over nine-tenths of those who attended peer support also participated in additional activities. In Jacksonville and Trenton, however, peer support took place prior to any other components, and in those two sites only two-thirds of those who attended peer support ever attended another component. In fact, when Trenton later in the demonstration began providing job club concurrently with peer support, participation rates in job club increased.

PFS designers had hoped that the employment and training component would achieve two primary goals: to help noncustodial parents get better jobs than they would have been able to obtain on their own and to help them get jobs relatively quickly so that they could afford to pay child support. There was a conflict between the program's interest in encouraging noncustodial parents to take the time to raise their skills, or at a minimum wait for the best job possible, and the realization that they could not afford to be out of the labor market for long. It was assumed that to have a substantial impact on the men's earnings each site would need to offer an array of short-term skills training and OJT options that would enable noncustodial parents to get higher wages or longer-lasting jobs than they would have on their own, as well as job clubs that would help people to obtain employment.

As it turned out, few of the sites offered the range of employment and training services throughout the life of the program originally envisioned (discussed in Chapter 2). However, Los Angeles, Memphis, Springfield, and Grand Rapids did regularly provide at least one employment and training activity oriented toward human capital development — either OJT, educational components, or classroom training in the skills needed for a particular occupation.

Job search activities. Most sites relied heavily on job club as a route to employment, with job clubs typically running simultaneously with peer support rather than following it. This practice was consistent with the PFS goal of helping noncustodial parents to gain employment relatively quickly, so that they could meet their child support obligations. In addition, for those fathers who were eager to find employment, moving to the job club phase early helped to keep them engaged in the program. As one participant put it, “Everybody can't wait to get the Job Club, Job Search. . . . Everybody can't wait. Some of 'em is impatient and don't even go through the rest of the part and just go to Job — just go, go look for 'em a job themselves . . . and get out the program.”¹⁸

Overall, some version of job search was attended by 57 percent of those assigned to PFS. Three of the seven sites (Springfield, Grand Rapids, and Los Angeles) achieved substantially higher average participation rates (69 to 77 percent) than the other four sites (40 to 49 percent). As mentioned earlier, the lower participation rates in Jacksonville and Trenton may have been influenced by their policy of waiting until peer support was complete before allowing noncustodial parents to enter employment and training activities.¹⁹ In Dayton, the relatively low participation rate in job search was in part a continuation of low initial intake into peer support. In Memphis, for this early cohort the emphasis was on basic education rather than on job search.

¹⁸Johnson, Levine, and Doolittle (forthcoming).

¹⁹In late 1995, Trenton changed its program sequence so that noncustodial parents attended job search concurrently with peer support. This resulted in an increase in participation in job search, although the increase would not have affected program group members in the early cohort, since by this date they had already attended the bulk of their activities.

Skill-building activities. As noted earlier, only some sites were able to gain access to services beyond peer support and job club/pre-employment activities for a substantial proportion of their participants. Los Angeles and Springfield stand out for their emphasis throughout the follow-up period on short-term skills training, with 29 percent of noncustodial parents receiving skills training in Los Angeles and 11 percent in Springfield (see Table 5.4). In contrast, staff in Memphis commonly offered basic education to noncustodial parents who lacked high school diplomas or GEDs,²⁰ and nearly half of them participated, as did over 10 percent of noncustodial parents in Los Angeles and Jacksonville.

As described in Chapter 2, sites encountered significant difficulties in implementing OJT for the population served by PFS. As a result, OJT, originally intended to be a focus of PFS employment and training activities, was provided to about one-quarter of noncustodial parents in Springfield and Grand Rapids. Unlike other sites, Grand Rapids provided not only OJT but also paid work experience slots in which government funds subsidized the full wage of the workers for a specified period, and the employers were not committed to hire them at the end of their tenure.

Even in sites that managed to find OJTs for a significant proportion of their enrollees, a critical question is whether those OJTs actually provided the participants with access to higher-quality jobs than they would have found on their own. Two types of available evidence suggest that the OJTs provided in PFS might be expected to raise earnings for those who participated in them. First, the noncustodial parents who participated in OJTs had the same education levels, on average, as those who did not participate, indicating that the sites did not reserve OJTs for only their higher-skilled enrollees. Second, analyses conducted using placement data provided by the sites suggest that the average starting wage reported by those in unsubsidized jobs (\$6.69 per hour) was about 51 cents lower than the average wage reported by those starting OJTs.²¹ These data are imperfect, because they represent only wages that participants reported to the PFS staff, and they do not control for any differences between all workers and OJT participants, other than site and education level. In addition, it may be that staff were more likely to report wages for OJTs in the MIS than those for unsubsidized jobs. Nevertheless, these averages suggest that the OJTs were for somewhat higher-quality jobs than noncustodial parents attained on their own.

C. Participation in Mediation

Mediation was offered as a service in every site, with a variety of contracting arrangements discussed in Chapter 2. The formal mediation component was used very little, however, with field researchers observing that staff were rarely able to get both parties together to resolve their differences. As shown in Table 5.4, only three sites reported any formal mediation referrals, and Grand Rapids was the only site in which a significant proportion of enrollees used the service (11 percent). As discussed in Chapter 2, however, case managers and other staff in many sites did perform a fair amount of informal mediation.

D. Participation Patterns for Subgroups of Noncustodial Parents

²⁰Basic education was used more in Memphis in the first half of the program than the second half.

²¹The difference in wages for unsubsidized jobs and OJTs was regression-adjusted, controlling for site and for whether the sample member had a high school diploma or GED. The average starting wage was not regression-adjusted.

Table 5.5 indicates that rates of participation in any PFS activity are relatively stable when sample members are categorized by a variety of demographic characteristics, including their level of earnings in the nine months prior to random assignment, their race/ethnicity, their history of arrests since age 16, and their age at random assignment. Subgroups based on earnings, arrest record, and age are associated with only small differences in most individual participation measures. For example, sample members who were under age 30 were somewhat more likely to participate in a basic education course than those who were 30 or over. The largest subgroup differences in participation patterns are evident when the sample is divided by race/ethnicity. Black sample members were less likely to attend job club or pre-employment workshops, skills training, or OJT and more likely to attend basic education than nonblack sample members. However, in a multiple regression model that controls for each site, these differences in participation by race/ethnicity disappear. Thus, the differences appear to be driven by sites' differences in race/ethnicity and in participation patterns rather than by race/ethnicity alone.

Even though the likelihood of participating in any activity did not vary by subgroup, those who had low prior earnings, were black, or had a prior history of arrest were somewhat more likely to be referred back to CSE for noncompliance follow-up. Further analyses suggest that these differences were caused by different rates of being excused from activities rather than different rates of enforcement following nonparticipation.

E. Implementation of PFS Activities, by Site

Table 5.6 summarizes the implementation of each PFS activity, by site. A component was given a check mark (✓) if the site had a structure in place to provide the component and at least 10 percent of the PFS program group participated in it.

Overall, the sites did implement a core set of components consistent with the PFS model, but the services were significantly more limited than program planners had envisioned. Peer support and, to a lesser extent, job search assistance generally operated as planned. Job search was given a check if, at a minimum, a strong group job search workshop was implemented; a partial check (✓) indicates that neither the group job search workshop nor the subsequent individual job search was fully implemented. Most sites had difficulty providing a full range of skill-building activities aimed at helping program group members to gain higher-wage jobs. Most sites either did not provide OJT and classroom skills training to significant numbers of noncustodial parents, or provided only one type of training. In addition, only Grand Rapids provided formal mediation in a substantial way, even though most sites had access to contractors who had agreed to provide the service when needed.

Table 5.5
Parents' Fair Share
Participation in PFS Services Within
18 Months of Random Assignment, by Subgroup

	Age ^a		Race/Ethnicity		Earnings ^b		Arrest Record	
	< 30	≥ 30	Black	Nonblack	< \$2,000	≥ \$2,000	No Prior Arrest	Prior Non-CSE Arrest ^c
Participated in any activity (%)^d	69.8	71.0	69.2	72.3	69.7	70.1	70.3	70.4
Peer support	63.4	65.3	63.9	64.8	65.7	63.6	64.2	64.4
Job club or workshop	55.6	57.9	52.2	64.2	55.6	52.9	55.9	57.0
Skills training	8.7	7.6	6.0	12.2	7.8	7.4	9.3	7.7
Basic education	14.0	8.9	13.5	8.2	13.1	13.2	10.3	12.1
On-the-job training	11.5	12.0	9.5	15.3	8.9	10.4	11.8	11.8
Mediation	3.6	2.1	2.1	4.2	2.2	5.1	2.7	2.9
Referred to CSE for noncooperation	62.5	58.4	64.7	53.2	62.6	58.5	55.4	62.9
Sample size	702	632	850	477	717	431	408	926

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Parents' Fair Share management information system, Background Information Forms, and unemployment insurance (UI) earnings records.

NOTES: This table includes the program group members in the early cohort, randomly assigned between March 1994 and June 1995. The sample size may be less than 1,334 due to missing subgroup information.

^aRefers to age at random assignment.

^bRefers to earnings in the nine months prior to random assignment.

^cIncludes those with any arrests unrelated to CSE since age 16.

^dParticipation is defined as attending a component for at least one day.

Table 5.6
Parents' Fair Share
Summary of PFS Program Services Implemented,
by Site

Service	Dayton	Grand Rapids	Jacksonville	Los Angeles	Memphis	Springfield	Trenton
Peer support	✓ ^a	✓ ^b	✓	✓	✓ ^c	✓ ^b	✓
Job club or workshop ^d	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Skills training				✓		✓	
Basic education			✓	✓	✓		
On-the-job training (OJT)		✓ ^e				✓	
Mediation ^f		✓					

SOURCES: MDRC field research observations, interviews with PFS staff and participants, and PFS management information system.

NOTES: A component given a "✓" was implemented as intended, and at least 10 percent of the program group participated.

A component given a "✓" either was not implemented as intended or was implemented for only part of the follow-up period, although at least 10 percent of the program group participated.

^aFor parts of the follow-up, peer support did not have a large enough number of participants to operate as a group activity.

^bPeer support was stronger in the second half of implementation than in the first half.

^cPeer support was stronger in the first half of implementation than in the second half.

^dSites were given a "✓" if they consistently provided, at a minimum, a strong group job search workshop. Sites were given a "✓" if neither the initial group job search nor the following individual job search was effectively structured.

^ePaid work experience was used, in addition to on-the-job training.

^fWhile this service was theoretically available in all sites, the formal mediation process was rarely used.

III. Child Support Enforcement: A Critical Link Between Program Participation and Child Support Payments

In the PFS design, sites were expected to “enhance” their usual CSE activities by implementing three changes that would enable PFS to effectively respond to changes in noncustodial parents’ circumstances. Specifically, sites were supposed to implement policies that would allow them to reduce child support orders on entry into PFS, to increase child support orders and put wage withholding into place when noncustodial parents gained employment, and to provide non-compliance follow-up when they did not participate in PFS as expected.

Whether a site is likely to produce changes in child support payments depends on the extent to which the level of CSE increased for the program group *compared with the control group*. For example, in Grand Rapids, which prior to PFS already had relatively streamlined administrative processes for CSE, it may be that staff could increase child support awards relatively quickly in response to employment for both the program group and the rest of the caseload (including control group members), reducing the extent to which enforcement for the program group was “enhanced” through communication between PFS and CSE.

To assess the extent to which CSE was enhanced in each site would require a review of specific enforcement actions taken on a sample of cases in the program and control groups. A future report will provide such an assessment, using data from child support case file reviews in each site. Currently, it is possible only to indicate the differences in the enforcement *policies* that each site intended to implement with respect to program and control group members.

As shown in Table 5.7, several important measures indicate differences in CSE agencies’ treatment of program and control group members. The first is the extent to which PFS worked with cases it would otherwise have considered low priority. Chapter 2 described the intake process and concluded that all but two sites — Jacksonville and Springfield — changed their usual enforcement practices to call in groups of noncustodial parents who might be eligible for PFS. In addition, there is evidence that as part of the initial intake process, Los Angeles, Grand Rapids, and Dayton were particularly likely to work cases that would not have been worked as quickly in the absence of PFS.

With the exception of Los Angeles, at the time of random assignment both program and control group members had either an administrative review or a hearing, at which program group members were ordered into PFS and had their child support orders lowered, and control group members were subject to the usual enforcement practices for unemployed noncustodial parents. (Generally they were ordered to seek work, but in some sites they might also be subject to short-term incarceration until they made a “purge payment.”)

Los Angeles was the only site in which members of the control group were allowed to leave the random assignment meeting with no further action taken on their case, since the meeting to which they had been called was held solely for the purpose of determining eligibility for PFS. Thus, in Los Angeles it is clear that from the beginning program group members received more enforcement than control group members, who received no enforcement beyond what their cases would normally receive.

Table 5.7
Parents' Fair Share
Characteristics of Child Support Enforcement for Control Group Members,
by Site

Measure	Dayton	Grand Rapids	Jacksonville	Los Angeles	Memphis	Springfield	Trenton
Program brought in cases typically of low priority	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓
Most likely control group treatment at random assignment							
No hearing			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Seek work	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Purge payment/jail possible for control group members at random assignment ^a		✓			✓		✓
Systematic follow-up for control group members		✓				✓	

SOURCES: MDRC field research observations and interviews with PFS and CSE staff members; Background Information Forms.

NOTES: A component given a "✓" was implemented.

A component given a "✓" either was not a strong part of the site's operation or was implemented for only part of the follow-up period.

^aChecked off if over 5 percent of control group members experienced this outcome for the hearing at which random assignment occurred.

In the other sites, since both program and control group members were subject to a hearing or review, any substantial increases in enforcement between program and control group members generally began *after* that first hearing. In fact, control group members were probably *more* likely than program group members to make child support payments as a direct result of the random assignment hearing, since they were sometimes required to make a purge payment to avoid incarceration.

While measures of experimental-control differences in specific enforcement actions after random assignment are not yet available, presumably enforcement was enhanced most significantly in sites that both brought cases in for PFS that were not likely to be worked otherwise (with the control group likely to revert to low priority status after random assignment) and instituted effective follow-up processes for the program group.

Once noncustodial parents were assigned to the control group and had one hearing, interviews with CSE staff suggest that they usually reverted to low priority status. While the amount of follow-up that controls received from the CSE agencies is not yet known, the agencies did not typically follow up systematically with noncustodial parents who were unemployed (see Table 5.7).²² (However, it is possible that since the CSE system had at least located these noncustodial parents, it might learn of employment somewhat more quickly than if PFS had not existed.)

IV. Conclusion

Taken together, the evidence from field research and the participation data suggest that the sites did provide a core set of PFS services, with participants in most sites receiving well-implemented peer support and job search assistance. Over two-thirds of program group members attended PFS activities, remaining in the program for an average of five months.

However, the program's designers assumed that intensive employment and training services would be required to improve many noncustodial parents' future employment and earnings and that child support agencies would need to be particularly responsive to changes in noncustodial parents' circumstances for the program to affect child support payments. Many sites fell short in fully delivering these additional program components to substantial numbers of program group members.

While each site had strengths and weaknesses, Los Angeles, Springfield, and Grand Rapids came closest to providing the array of skill-building services originally envisioned, increasing the likelihood that those sites would produce employment and earnings impacts. However, even in these sites it remains to be seen whether program group members actually participated in substantially more skill-building services than control group members were able to find on their own. (This will be analyzed using survey data, in a future report.) It is possible that in the sites that

²²Possible exceptions are Springfield, which routinely required unemployed noncustodial parents to report back to a court official whose job was to monitor their seek-work effort (program group members were excused from this activity), and Grand Rapids, which required some control group members to report monthly to CSE staff. However, staff in Springfield reported that this expectation was difficult to enforce, and the Grand Rapids requirement applied to only a fraction of the control group.

were able to provide skills training and OJTs, community agencies made these services available to control group members as well.

The CSE agencies in five sites (all except Jacksonville and Springfield) showed some evidence of increasing enforcement for the program group relative to the control group. These five sites worked with noncustodial parents who would have been deemed low priority in the absence of PFS and developed mechanisms by which PFS staff communicated with CSE staff about the status of particular cases. Los Angeles and Grand Rapids did the most, according to staff interviews, to institute systems that made the child support system particularly responsive to PFS cases.

Chapter 6

The Effects of PFS on Child Support Payments and Employment

The noncustodial parents ultimately referred to PFS were men who, through the intake and case file review process, were not paying child support and were determined by staff to be unable to pay. Chapter 3 indicated that the intake process itself increased payments among the caseload of fathers potentially eligible for PFS. The primary question addressed in this chapter is whether referral to PFS services and coverage by its mandates had impacts on the fathers' employment, earnings, and child support payments in addition to the effects of the PFS intake process.

I. Summary of Findings

Over the 18 months of follow-up available for this report, a larger number of fathers referred to PFS paid child support than would have paid in the absence of the program. However, significant increases in payments were observed in only three sites: Grand Rapids, Dayton, and Los Angeles; the remaining sites produced no impacts. In addition, although these three sites produced fairly substantial increases in the number of fathers paying support, they did not consistently increase average payment amounts. Thus, the men in the program group who paid support paid relatively small amounts, possibly because they had little money to pay and because their orders were temporarily lowered while they participated in the program.

The increase in the payment of child support came without a corresponding increase in fathers' employment and earnings. During the first 18 months, no sites were able to produce consistent and statistically significant increases in noncustodial parents' employment and earnings, relative to what they would have earned in the absence of the program, not even those sites that got more fathers to pay child support. The fathers who paid support as a result of PFS, therefore, already had the means to pay some, albeit small, amount but would not have made formal payments in the absence of the program.

An important caveat to these results is that they were obtained using data from jobs covered by the unemployment insurance (UI) system. Some fathers may have worked outside the formal economy or earned unreported income, and if PFS has had any effects on informal employment or earnings, they would not be captured with the data used for this report. The same caution applies to the child support impacts, which are based on payments made through the child support system. Many fathers, in fact, provide support for their children through informal or in-kind payments, and it is possible that fathers who are forced to pay through the formal system will reduce their informal contributions, resulting in no added benefits to custodial parents. It is also possible, however, that PFS encouraged payments of all types, both formal and informal. The effect of PFS on informal employment and child support payments will be addressed in a later report, using data from the 12-month survey of noncustodial and custodial parents.

The final caveats are that the results are relatively short term, since they follow fathers for only their first 18 months in the program, and they are for the group of fathers who enrolled in the program before July 1995, approximately half of the full sample. If the program became more effective over time, as some of the implementation research suggests, it will not be captured with the early sample. Thus, a longer follow-up period for the full sample is important to describing the program's overall impacts.

Finally, the data allow for an examination of the effect of PFS intake on men found eligible and appropriate for PFS. Child support payment rates of the control group had been consistently low prior to the point of random assignment but noticeably increased in the quarter of random assignment. Members of the control group were subject to the PFS intake process (with its extra outreach and case review) but were not referred to the program. Thus, the observed increase in payments in the quarter of random assignment is consistent with the findings presented in Chapter 3 that the PFS intake process increased child support payments.

II. Data and Methods

Once found eligible for PFS, fathers were assigned at random to either the PFS (program) group or the control group. The impacts of referral to PFS are estimated by comparing earnings and child support payments for these two groups. As noted earlier, assigning men at random to either group ensures that there are no systematic differences between the two group's members at the point the two groups are formed. Any differences between the groups in child support payments and employment after random assignment, therefore, can be attributed to referral to PFS.

Data on child support payments are provided by each state's child support enforcement (CSE) agency, which reports monthly payments made through the state child support system. Earnings data are provided by each state's unemployment insurance records database, which contains earnings from jobs covered by the UI system.¹

The effects of the program are estimated using the sample of fathers who were found eligible for PFS and randomly assigned to the program or control group between March 1994 and June 1995. These fathers were followed for 18 months, after they were assigned to either the program or control group.² Impacts are estimated for all sites together and for each site separately.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the impacts presented here are for the combined effect of the opportunities offered by the PFS services and the obligation imposed by the PFS mandates to participate and/or pay support. The program group, as discussed in Chapter 5, includes fathers who participated in PFS services (and thus were exposed to both aspects of PFS) and fathers who were never active in any PFS service (who were exposed only to the PFS mandate). However, it is not possible to identify the effects of participation in PFS services per se. Comparing partici-

¹The UI records provide earnings by calendar quarter, and the child support records provide information on monthly payments. For consistency in the impact analysis, the child support payments have been converted to quarterly totals.

²The effects of the program for the full sample will be presented in a later report.

pants with the entire control group would be inappropriate, because it is clear that participants are *not* a random sample of the entire program group; this comparison would undermine the basic initial similarity of research groups used in impact calculations.

III. Child Support Payments

A. Impacts for All Sites

Table 6.1 presents the effects of referral to PFS on child support payments for all sites combined. The data are presented graphically in Figure 6.1. The upper panel shows the percentage of noncustodial parents who made a child support payment during a given follow-up quarter. The outcome levels for the control group provide an estimate of the payments that would have been made by noncustodial parents in the absence of PFS, that is, for fathers who were called in for a hearing, found eligible for PFS, but faced no program requirements and did not have access to PFS services. Column 2 shows that the proportion of control group noncustodial parents who made payments was fairly constant over the period, about 39 percent in each quarter. Average payment levels increased somewhat, from \$164 to \$250. However, a constant payment rate does not imply that the same fathers made payments in each quarter, which can be seen by the fact that the percentage of control group fathers who made a payment during the entire follow-up period is much higher than the percentage who made a payment in any given quarter. In addition, analyses reported later show that most fathers did not pay consistently over the quarters.

The most notable change in payments for the control group is the substantial increase in payment rates from the quarter prior to random assignment to the quarter of random assignment. The proportion of fathers who made a payment increased during this time by 16 percentage points, from 23 to 39 percent, which followed several quarters of low payment rates. It does not appear that parents experienced a temporary drop in their payments, but that the increase is the effect of the preprogram hearing. As discussed in Chapter 5, although noncustodial parents assigned to the control group generally reverted to low enforcement priority after the hearing, most were at least subject to a hearing in which they were told to seek work and begin making payments. The additional attention to their case brought on by the hearing may have caused some of them to start making payments. A similar effect might have occurred for noncustodial parents assigned to PFS, who may have started making payments to avoid participating in the program or to satisfy program staff.

The effects, or impacts, of referral to PFS can be estimated by comparing the outcomes for the PFS and control groups. In quarter 2, for example, 43.5 percent of noncustodial parents in the PFS group made a child support payment during the second quarter after they entered the study (or during months 4 through 6) compared with 35.9 percent of noncustodial parents in the control group. The difference, or the program impact, is 7.6 percentage points, which is statistically significant; that is, it can be thought of, with a reasonable degree of certainty, as representing a true program-control difference rather than a difference in outcomes due to sampling variability.

Table 6.1
Parents' Fair Share
Impacts of PFS on Child Support Payments
for All Sites Combined

Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Impact
Paid child support (%)			
Prior quarter 1 ^a	22.9	22.9	0.0 ^b
Quarter 0 ^c	32.4	39.0	-6.6 ***
Quarter 1	40.0	40.7	-0.7
Quarter 2	43.5	35.9	7.6 ***
Quarter 3	43.9	37.3	6.6 ***
Quarter 4	45.0	40.1	4.9 ***
Quarter 5	44.6	39.7	4.9 ***
Quarter 6	43.2	38.7	4.4 **
Quarters 1-6	72.7	69.1	3.5 **
Average child support paid (\$)			
Prior quarter 1 ^a	99	99	0 ^b
Quarter 0 ^c	121	164	-43 ***
Quarter 1	168	176	-8
Quarter 2	190	172	18
Quarter 3	206	185	21
Quarter 4	258	260	-2
Quarter 5	269	241	27
Quarter 6	269	250	19
Quarters 1-6	1,359	1,284	76
Sample size (total = 2,641)	1,334	1,307	

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from child support enforcement (CSE) payment records, and PFS Background Information Forms.

NOTES: The impacts are for the early cohort, randomly assigned between March 1994 and June 1995.

These impacts are separate from the impacts of Extra Outreach.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between program and control groups.

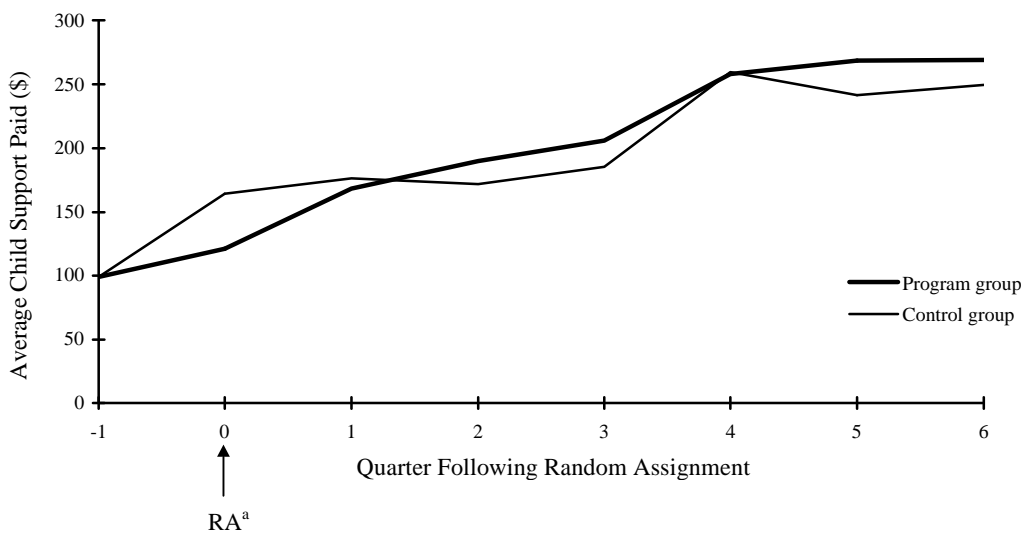
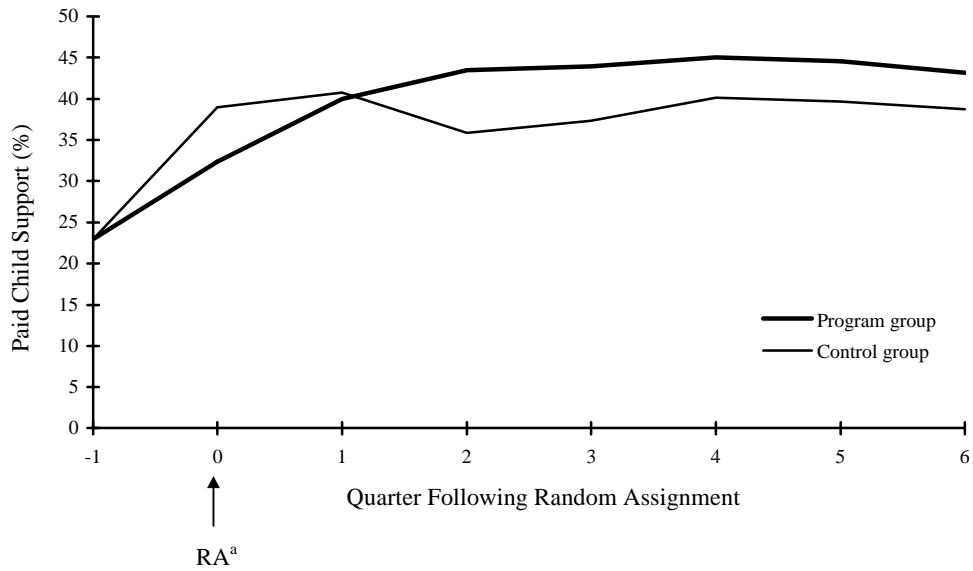
Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

^aPrior quarter 1 refers to the quarter before random assignment.

^bAverage outcomes in the quarter prior to random assignment are equal for both groups because the impacts are regression adjusted for these values.

^cQuarter of random assignment.

Figure 6.1
Parents' Fair Share
Percent Paying Child Support and Average Payment Amounts
for All Sites Combined



SOURCES: MDRC calculations from child support enforcement (CSE) payment records, and PFS Background Information Form.

NOTES: The sample consists of the early cohort, randomly assigned between March 1994 and June 1995. Average outcomes in the quarter prior to random assignment are equal for both groups because the impacts are regression adjusted for these values.

^aQuarter of random assignment.

Table 6.1 shows that a higher percentage of PFS fathers than control fathers paid support in all subsequent quarters. In quarter 6, for example, 43.2 percent of PFS members paid some child support compared with 38.7 percent of control group members, for a statistically significant impact of 4.4 percentage points.

The exception to the pattern of positive impacts on the payment rate occurred in the quarter of random assignment, when PFS fathers were less likely than control fathers to have paid support. It was expected that payments by the PFS program group might be lower in the early months of the program, since child support orders were frequently suspended or lowered while the noncustodial parents participated in PFS activities. In contrast, as noted earlier, most control group fathers were told to seek work and begin making payments. In addition, they were sometimes required to make a purge payment to avoid incarceration. These treatment differences for the two groups suggest that control group fathers would be more likely to pay support than PFS fathers in the quarter of random assignment. This result is also consistent with impacts for individual sites (shown later). For example, in Los Angeles control group fathers were not more likely to pay support than PFS fathers in the quarter of random assignment. As mentioned, control group fathers in this site left the hearing with no further action taken on their case.³

The lower panel of the table presents data on the amount of child support paid during a quarter.⁴ In the second quarter after random assignment, noncustodial parents in the program group paid on average \$190 in child support, and those in the control group paid \$172. The difference, or the program impact, of \$18 is not statistically significant. These averages are calculated for all fathers and include zeros for fathers who did not pay any support during the quarter. Dividing average payments by the percentage who made a payment gives an estimate of average payments among fathers who paid. In quarter 1, for example, payers in the control group paid on average \$440 (\$176 divided by .40), or about \$146 per month.

Despite the positive impacts on the percentage who paid any support, Table 6.1 shows that on average PFS fathers did not pay higher dollar amounts. In quarter 5, for example, or during months 13 through 15 after program entry, noncustodial parents in the PFS group paid on average \$269 in child support compared with \$241 for the control group. The difference, or program impact, of \$27 is not statistically significant. In fact, although most of the quarterly impacts on the amount of support paid are positive, none is statistically significant. In addition, they are somewhat smaller in percentage terms than the impacts on the percentage who made a payment. There are several possible reasons for this pattern of impacts. First, it is not unusual to obtain statistically significant impacts on the percentage paying but not on the dollar amount paid, since there is more variability in the dollar amounts. Second, the men who paid support as a result of

³Payment rates were somewhat higher for control group fathers in the quarter prior to random assignment. However, all impacts are regression-adjusted to control for random differences between the program and control groups when they entered the study, including differences in demographic characteristics and child support payments prior to random assignment. Regression adjusting changed the estimated impact in quarter 0 (shown in Table 6.1) from -7.7 to -6.6 and did not change the level of significance.

⁴Payments in quarter of random assignment will include payments made before entering the study for those noncustodial parents who were randomly assigned in the second or third month of a calendar quarter. As such, outcomes and impacts in this quarter are not included in the post-program summary measures covering quarters 1 through 6.

PFS may have had lower average incomes and paid less child support than men in the control group who paid. In this case, the percentage paying support could increase, since more PFS men had nonzero payment amounts, but the average amount paid would increase only slightly, since the additional payments were fairly small.⁵ Finally, a feature of the PFS program might also have lowered average payments. As mentioned, PFS lowered or suspended child support award levels while fathers participated in program activities. Thus, PFS fathers who paid while attending program activities paid lower amounts than control group fathers who paid. This aspect of the program might also account for the impact in quarter 4, in which more PFS fathers paid support but the average amount paid was \$2.00 less, although this difference is not statistically significant.

To assess whether the effects of PFS might be different for fathers who entered the program after it had been operating for some time, impacts for two quarters of follow-up were estimated for the cohort of noncustodial parents who entered the study from July 1995 to June 1996. Although the follow-up period is fairly short for this later cohort, the estimates (shown in Appendix Table C) show a pattern similar to that for the early sample, with two exceptions. There are no impacts in the quarter of random assignment for the later cohort, and the positive impacts on the percentage making payments appear by quarter 1 rather than quarter 2. This cohort difference may reflect a change in the program over time; the implementation research suggests that over time program staff encouraged fathers to start making payments more quickly after they entered the program.

B. Impacts for Individual Sites

The overall results show that PFS produced a small but positive increase in the number of fathers paying support. However, the implementation research suggests that some sites produced better results than others. Table 6.2 presents impacts on child support payments for each site separately. It shows average outcomes for the program and control groups and the program impact, or the difference between these two outcomes. Sample sizes are fairly small at the site level, which should be kept in mind when interpreting the results. In particular, a given impact estimate is less likely to be statistically significant if it is based on a small sample.

The preprogram hearing affected noncustodial parents to some degree in all sites, as the percentage of fathers who made payments increased from the quarter before random assignment through the first quarter. In Memphis, for example, 14.9 percent of control group fathers paid support in the quarter before random assignment, and this number increased to 34.8 percent by quarter 1. Control group fathers in this site who did not pay support faced a threat of jail, whereas their counterparts assigned to PFS faced no such penalty.

The payment rates for the control groups, showing payments that would occur in the absence of PFS, also vary greatly across sites. For example, 14.7 percent of fathers in Dayton made a payment in the quarter prior to random assignment compared with 31.6 percent of fathers in Springfield. This variation may be due to differences across sites in the types of fathers who ap-

⁵In fact, staff in some sites, such as Jacksonville, encouraged noncustodial parents to pay something, even if the amount was very small.

Table 6.2
Parents' Fair Share
Impacts of PFS on Child Support Payments,
by Site

Outcome	Dayton			Grand Rapids			Jacksonville			Los Angeles		
	Program Group	Control Group	Impact	Program Group	Control Group	Impact	Program Group	Control Group	Impact	Program Group	Control Group	Impact
Paid child support (%)												
Prior quarter 1 ^a	14.7	14.7	0.0 ^b	24.8	24.8	0.0 ^b	27.9	27.9	0.0 ^b	19.4	19.4	0.0 ^b
Quarter 0 ^c	14.5	19.7	-5.2	29.7	39.2	-9.5 **	45.4	46.9	-1.5	30.9	28.1	2.8
Quarter 1	21.0	29.6	-8.6 *	49.3	38.1	11.3 ***	45.7	48.4	-2.7	32.5	20.0	12.5 ***
Quarter 2	36.3	19.6	16.6 ***	54.3	32.2	22.1 ***	50.3	46.8	3.4	32.8	20.3	12.5 **
Quarter 3	33.9	20.8	13.1 **	56.6	38.5	18.1 ***	51.8	48.9	2.9	36.8	25.4	11.4 **
Quarter 4	34.3	23.9	10.4 **	57.0	40.5	16.6 ***	49.9	50.1	-0.2	42.2	33.6	8.6
Quarter 5	39.2	25.8	13.3 **	52.7	45.8	6.9	46.4	48.2	-1.8	40.9	32.9	8.0
Quarter 6	37.8	26.6	11.2 **	52.2	45.5	6.7	47.1	49.8	-2.7	42.8	31.7	11.1 **
Quarters 1-6	59.8	56.4	3.4	85.4	74.7	10.7 ***	79.4	77.1	2.2	62.6	54.6	8.1
Average child support paid (\$)												
Prior quarter 1 ^a	60	60	0 ^b	88	88	0 ^b	121	121	0 ^b	83	83	0 ^b
Quarter 0 ^c	22	53	-31 *	106	125	-19	170	226	-57 *	266	305	-39
Quarter 1	88	111	-23	194	168	27	225	184	41	296	115	180 **
Quarter 2	97	80	17	258	144	114 ***	259	255	4	220	135	85
Quarter 3	132	106	25	252	171	81 ***	275	275	0	198	238	-39
Quarter 4	156	173	-17	298	235	63 *	318	315	3	373	373	0
Quarter 5	378	96	282 *	346	272	74	269	331	-62	241	271	-29
Quarter 6	231	132	99 *	287	378	-91	404	288	117 *	217	234	-17
Quarters 1-6	1,082	698	384 *	1,637	1,367	270 *	1,749	1,648	102	1,545	1,365	180
Sample size	161	166		259	250		228	210		154	155	

(continued)

Table 6.2 (continued)

Outcome	Memphis			Springfield			Trenton		
	Program Group	Control Group	Impact	Program Group	Control Group	Impact	Program Group	Control Group	Impact
Paid child support (%)									
Prior quarter 1 ^a	14.9	14.9	0.0 ^b	31.6	31.6	0.0 ^b	22.3	22.3	0.0 ^b
Quarter 0 ^c	15.9	32.9	-17.0 ***	47.5	53.7	-6.2	37.1	43.0	-5.9
Quarter 1	24.8	34.8	-10.0 *	52.8	60.1	-7.4	42.8	46.6	-3.7
Quarter 2	28.3	23.7	4.6	49.7	56.8	-7.1	43.4	41.8	1.6
Quarter 3	27.3	24.7	2.6	44.9	54.2	-9.3 *	44.7	38.9	5.8
Quarter 4	28.4	23.6	4.8	48.4	53.9	-5.6	45.8	45.1	0.7
Quarter 5	28.4	25.6	2.8	49.8	47.8	2.0	47.5	41.2	6.3
Quarter 6	23.5	19.7	3.8	48.4	49.8	-1.4	41.0	37.9	3.1
Quarters 1-6	59.2	53.6	5.6	76.2	82.3	-6.1	72.6	75.5	-3.0
Average child support paid (\$)									
Prior quarter 1 ^a	36	36	0 ^b	158	158	0 ^b	125	125	0 ^b
Quarter 0 ^c	32	64	-32 **	125	168	-43	146	171	-25
Quarter 1	46	72	-27 *	157	243	-86 *	164	271	-107 **
Quarter 2	64	61	3	206	245	-39	159	230	-71
Quarter 3	74	75	-1	236	223	13	194	188	7
Quarter 4	77	64	13	272	342	-70	242	294	-53
Quarter 5	79	119	-41	316	289	27	217	232	-15
Quarter 6	73	60	13	343	275	68	251	263	-12
Quarters 1-6	413	452	-39	1,529	1,617	-87	1,227	1,477	-250
Sample size	150	146		186	191		196	189	

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from child support enforcement (CSE) payment record and PFS Background Information Form.

NOTES: The impacts are for the early cohort, randomly assigned between March 1994 and June 1995.

These impacts are separate from the impacts of Extra Outreach.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent;

** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

^aPrior quarter 1 refers to the quarter before random assignment.

^bAverage outcomes in the quarter prior to random assignment are equal for both groups because the impacts are regression adjusted for these values.

^cQuarter of random assignment.

peared at the child support hearing to be randomly assigned, but it is probably also related to differences in the strength of the states' CSE systems. Data from the Office of Child Support Enforcement as well as from other sources indicate that Massachusetts has one of the most effective child support systems in the nation. The PFS program in Springfield, however, was not able to increase payments beyond the levels produced by its general CSE system. In fact, the results show that the modest impacts estimated for the combined sample are driven by significant impacts in only three sites: Los Angeles, Grand Rapids, and Dayton. Additional tests indicate that average impacts in these three sites are significantly different from average impacts in the remaining four sites.

In Los Angeles, the proportion of control group fathers who paid support increased during the follow-up period, from 20.0 percent in quarter 1 to 31.7 percent in quarter 6. Among the PFS fathers, in contrast, the proportion who paid gradually increased to 42.8 percent by quarter 6, for a positive and significant impact of 11.1 percentage points. The impacts for Los Angeles are also significant in quarters 1 through 3. As with the combined sample, however, there are no consistent and significant impacts on average payments (see lower panel of Table 6.2).

In Grand Rapids and Dayton, the impacts are fairly substantial. The PFS program in Grand Rapids produced positive impacts on the percentage who paid support in quarters 1 through 6, with the largest impacts in the earlier quarters. In quarter 2, for example, 54.3 percent of PFS fathers made a child support payment compared with 32.2 percent of control group fathers, for a 22.1 percentage point difference. Average payments were also significantly higher in quarters 2 through 4. In quarter 3, for example, fathers in the PFS group paid on average \$252 compared with \$171 for the control group, for a significant impact of \$81. In Dayton, 37.8 percent of PFS fathers paid support in the last quarter of follow-up compared with 26.6 percent of control group fathers, for an impact of 11.2 percentage points. Average payments were significantly higher for the PFS group in quarters 5 and 6.

In the remaining sites — Jacksonville, Springfield, Trenton, and Memphis — the PFS fathers were not more likely to pay support. In Trenton and Memphis, the impacts were generally positive but small in magnitude. With such small sample sizes in these two sites, smaller impacts are less likely to be statistically significant. In Jacksonville and Springfield, in contrast, PFS fathers had generally lower payment rates than control group fathers, although most of these differences are not statistically significant.

In several instances across the sites more PFS fathers paid support in a given quarter, but the average payment amount among PFS fathers was lower than among controls. Although these payment differences are not statistically significant, this pattern of impacts may be due to the fact that award amounts were lowered or suspended while the fathers participated in the program. However, most fathers stopped participating within six months of entering the program, at which point the orders should have been adjusted to reflect current income or the usual minimum order, whichever was higher. The fact that average payments were sometimes lower for the PFS group in the later quarters suggests that some sites may have been slow to bring the orders back to their

original levels. Alternatively, when orders were put back in place, they may have been lowered to reflect the noncustodial parents' economic circumstances.⁶

An alternative explanation is that PFS fathers, knowing that they may be required to pay more regularly as a result of PFS, decided to pay less each period. Table 6.3 shows that PFS fathers did, in fact, pay more regularly. The first row shows, consistent with the impacts shown earlier, that PFS fathers were more likely to have made a payment at some point during the entire follow-up period; 27.3 percent of PFS fathers and 30.9 percent of control group fathers made no payments. In addition, 38.1 percent of PFS fathers made payments in at least four of the six quarters compared with 31.9 percent of control group fathers. Although not shown in the table, this pattern also holds for each of the three sites with statistically significant child support impacts (Los Angeles, Grand Rapids, and Dayton).

Thus, the effects of PFS were fairly modest for the combined sample, suggesting one of two things: either the PFS program in general was minimally effective, with all sites producing small impacts, or some sites did well and others did not. The impacts by site indicated the latter, with three sites producing fairly large impacts and four producing no statistically significant impacts. The variation could be due to a number of factors, such as differences in the characteristics of fathers served by the program. Alternatively, the implementation research suggests that one factor common to two of the sites with impacts, Los Angeles and Grand Rapids, was the strong involvement of the CSE agency. These issues will be discussed in the final section of the chapter.

IV. Employment and Earnings

A. Impacts for All Sites

A goal of the PFS program is to increase fathers' employment opportunities by providing a variety of employment and training services, such as basic education, job search assistance, skills training, and on-the-job training (OJT). This section examines the program's impact on fathers' employment and earnings.

Table 6.4 and Figure 6.2 present impacts on employment and earnings for all sites combined. The upper panel shows the percentage of fathers employed during each quarter after random assignment, and the lower panel shows average earnings. Average earnings and employment rates for the control group illustrate the employment patterns that would have occurred for noncustodial parents in the absence of PFS; quarterly employment rates stayed at about 50 percent throughout the period, and earnings, although fairly low, gradually increased. In addition, the fact that the proportion employed over the 18-month period (77.7 percent) is higher than that employed in any given quarter (about 50 percent) indicates, as discussed in Chapter 4, that there is a fair amount of job instability in this population.

⁶A future report will provide information on the modification of orders for program and control group members.

Table 6.3
Parents' Fair Share
Impacts of PFS on Stability of Child Support Payments
for All Sites Combined

Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Impact
Paid child support (%)			
Paid no child support	27.3	30.9	-3.5 **
Paid child support in 1 to 3 quarters of 6	34.6	37.3	-2.7
Paid child support in 4 to 6 quarters of 6	38.1	31.9	6.2 ***
Sample size (total = 2,641)	1,334	1,307	

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from child support enforcement (CSE) payment records, and PFS Background Information Form.

NOTES: Impacts are for the early cohort, randomly assigned between March 1994 and June 1995. These impacts are separate from the impacts of Extra Outreach. A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

Table 6.4
Parents' Fair Share
Impacts of PFS on Employment and Earnings
for All Sites Combined

Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Impact
Employed (%)			
Prior quarter 1 ^a	46.0	46.0	0.0 ^b
Quarter 0 ^c	45.3	48.0	-2.7
Quarter 1	50.3	51.9	-1.6
Quarter 2	51.9	52.6	-0.7
Quarter 3	50.8	52.6	-1.8
Quarter 4	50.1	51.7	-1.6
Quarter 5	50.4	53.0	-2.7
Quarter 6	50.3	51.4	-1.2
Quarters 1-6	77.7	77.7	0.1
Average earnings (\$)			
Prior quarter 1 ^a	793	793	0 ^b
Quarter 0 ^c	627	672	-45
Quarter 1	954	994	-40
Quarter 2	1,155	1,243	-89
Quarter 3	1,224	1,270	-46
Quarter 4	1,310	1,360	-50
Quarter 5	1,316	1,389	-73
Quarter 6	1,394	1,414	-21
Quarters 1-6	7,352	7,670	-318
Sample size (total = 2,641)	1,334	1,307	

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from unemployment insurance (UI) earnings records and PFS Background Information Form.

NOTES: Impacts are for the early cohort, randomly assigned between March 1994 and June 1995.

These impacts are separate from the impacts of Extra Outreach.

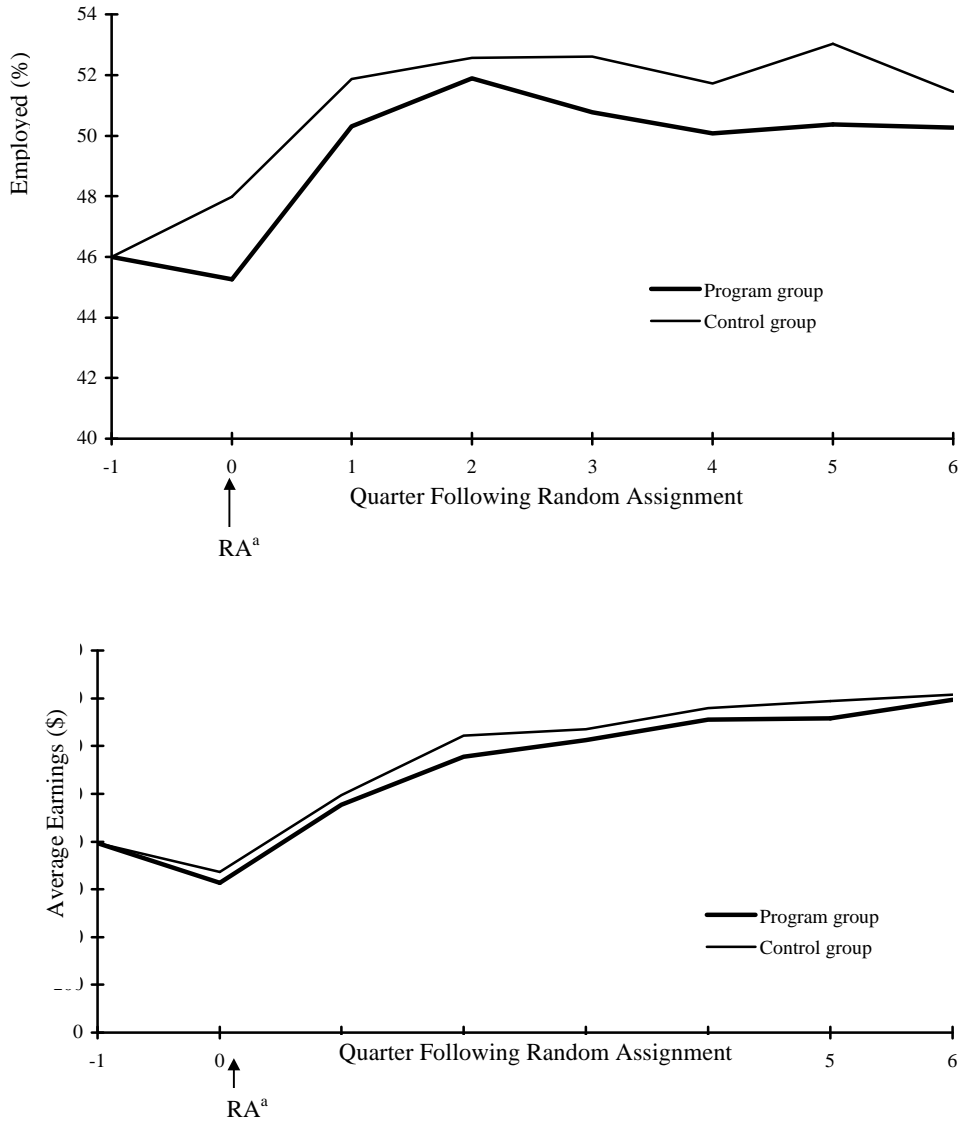
A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

^aPrior quarter 1 refers to the quarter before random assignment.

^bAverage outcomes in the quarter prior to random assignment are equal for both groups because the impacts are regression adjusted for these values.

^cQuarter of random assignment.

Figure 6.2
Parents' Fair Share
Employment Rates and Average Earnings
for All Sites Combined



SOURCES: MDRC calculations from unemployment insurance (UI) earnings records, and PFS Background Information Form.

NOTES: The sample consists of the early cohort, randomly assigned between March 1994 and June 1995. Average outcomes in the quarter prior to random assignment are equal for both groups because the impacts are regression adjusted for these values.

^aQuarter of random assignment.

The impact of the PFS program is measured as the difference between the program and control group outcomes. In the first quarter after random assignment, for example, 50.3 percent of PFS fathers worked compared with 51.9 percent of control group fathers, for a small and statistically insignificant difference of 1.6 percentage points.⁷ In fact, PFS produced no significant impacts on employment. Average earnings were also no different between the two groups from a statistical point of view, although they were slightly lower for fathers in the program group.⁸

B. Impacts for Individual Sites

Impacts for each site are presented in Table 6.5. In contrast to the child support findings, no sites produced notable impacts on employment or earnings; across most sites the impacts are generally small and statistically insignificant. Again, a given impact estimate is less likely to be statistically significant at the site level because sample sizes are fairly small.

Employment rates tended to be higher among PFS fathers in Los Angeles, Dayton, and Memphis. Earnings were also higher among PFS fathers in these sites, at least in the later quarters. In Los Angeles, for example, 48.9 percent of PFS fathers were employed in the last quarter of follow-up compared with 41.8 percent of control group fathers, for a difference of 7.1 percentage points. In fact, although most of the differences are not statistically significant, Los Angeles and Memphis show consistently positive employment impacts toward the end of the follow-up period. A unique feature of the program in Los Angeles is that a relatively large proportion of its participants were enrolled in skills training. Memphis also placed a strong emphasis on basic skills; nearly half of PFS participants in this site were enrolled in basic education programs (see Table 5.3).⁹

The data for Los Angeles show that PFS fathers who worked earned less on average than control group fathers who worked. This can be seen by calculating earnings per worker, or average quarterly earnings divided by the percentage who worked during that quarter. Differences in earnings per worker are not meant to be a test of the program's effects, since they are calculated only for sample members who worked. Thus, there could be differences in the characteristics of workers in the program and control groups that affect earnings.¹⁰ Nonetheless, in quarter 6, for example, earnings per worker were \$3,806 (\$1,861/.489) for PFS fathers and \$4,012 (\$1,677/.418) for control group fathers. This pattern also holds in a few other sites, although not as consistently as in Los Angeles. The PFS fathers who worked may have earned less because they obtained lower-wage jobs or because they worked fewer hours per week. The requirement to participate in PFS services, in particular, was likely to lead to more part-time work among PFS

⁷All impacts are regression-adjusted to control for random differences between the program and control groups when they entered the study. For example, variables used to adjust the regression include noncustodial parents' age, race, marital status, number of children, method of referral to PFS, and employment, earnings, and child support payments during the nine months prior to random assignment.

⁸Impact estimates for two quarters of follow-up are no different for the later cohort than for the early cohort.

⁹Over time, the Memphis program shifted its emphasis away from basic skills. Data for the later cohort will provide evidence on whether the impacts reported here are due to the high placement in this component.

¹⁰Since these differences in earnings per worker are not calculated in the same way as other impacts presented in this chapter and do not include possible statistical adjustments used in sophisticated "nonexperimental" calculations of impacts, they are not tested for statistical significance.

Table 6.5
Parents' Fair Share
Impacts of PFS on Employment and Earnings,
by Site

Outcome	Dayton			Grand Rapids			Jacksonville			Los Angeles		
	Program Mean	Control Mean	Impact	Program Mean	Control Mean	Impact	Program Mean	Control Mean	Impact	Program Mean	Control Mean	Impact
Employed (%)												
Prior quarter 1 ^a	44.0	44.0	0.0 ^b	47.5	47.5	0.0 ^b	66.0	66.0	0.0 ^b	30.4	30.4	0.0 ^b
Quarter 0 ^c	42.9	46.9	-4.0	50.4	53.0	-2.6	62.2	66.8	-4.6	32.6	30.2	2.4
Quarter 1	53.5	49.9	3.7	54.5	51.6	2.9	67.3	66.9	0.4	38.6	34.5	4.1
Quarter 2	54.6	48.3	6.3	53.4	56.3	-2.8	61.4	63.3	-1.9	41.6	37.3	4.3
Quarter 3	50.9	50.0	0.9	53.9	56.5	-2.6	61.2	68.4	-7.2	44.8	40.7	4.1
Quarter 4	54.6	50.7	3.9	54.3	53.7	0.6	59.5	65.9	-6.4	46.1	42.0	4.1
Quarter 5	50.2	46.5	3.7	52.7	60.6	-7.8 *	60.2	63.2	-3.1	49.7	44.1	5.6
Quarter 6	45.7	46.0	-0.3	52.9	56.0	-3.0	62.9	62.7	0.2	48.9	41.8	7.1
Quarters 1-6	81.1	69.6	11.5 **	81.6	83.5	-1.9	86.8	86.2	0.6	69.7	58.4	11.3 **
Average earnings (\$)												
Prior quarter 1 ^a	561	561	0.0 ^b	762	762	0 ^b	1,153	1,153	0 ^b	712	712	0 ^b
Quarter 0 ^c	541	551	-11	709	794	-84	951	989	-37	556	576	-20
Quarter 1	1,031	674	357 **	1,077	1,025	53	1,176	1,322	-146	912	928	-16
Quarter 2	1,159	915	244	1,271	1,265	5	1,232	1,458	-226	1,085	1,487	-402
Quarter 3	1,111	1,001	110	1,390	1,463	-73	1,319	1,511	-191	1,340	1,489	-149
Quarter 4	1,326	1,142	184	1,508	1,559	-52	1,358	1,530	-172	1,497	1,707	-210
Quarter 5	1,062	1,080	-19	1,504	1,517	-13	1,338	1,566	-228	1,723	1,613	111
Quarter 6	1,062	1,019	43	1,540	1,534	6	1,419	1,603	-184	1,861	1,677	184
Quarters 1-6	6,753	5,833	920	8,289	8,363	-74	7,843	8,990	-1,147 *	8,419	8,901	-482
Sample size	161	166		259	250		228	210		154	155	155

(continued)

Table 6.5 (continued)

Outcome	Memphis			Springfield			Trenton		
	Program Mean	Control Mean	Impact	Program Mean	Control Mean	Impact	Program Mean	Control Mean	Impact
Employed (%)									
Prior quarter 1 ^a	35.8	35.8	0.0 ^b	51.2	51.2	0.0 ^b	38.4	38.4	0.0 ^b
Quarter 0 ^c	38.4	42.7	-4.3	44.5	49.3	-4.7	37.2	38.1	-0.9
Quarter 1	43.7	51.7	-8.0	51.3	56.9	-5.6	38.1	44.1	-6.0
Quarter 2	52.1	55.4	-3.3	56.6	57.4	-0.8	41.8	42.9	-1.2
Quarter 3	55.3	43.9	11.4 **	46.2	57.6	-11.3 **	41.7	41.9	-0.1
Quarter 4	51.0	42.1	8.9	51.1	53.9	-2.8	35.0	43.6	-8.6 *
Quarter 5	50.1	46.5	3.6	53.4	56.9	-3.5	35.7	44.0	-8.3 *
Quarter 6	50.9	45.7	5.2	51.2	60.1	-8.9 *	36.0	41.0	-5.0
Quarters 1-6	77.9	78.9	-0.9	78.1	85.7	-7.6 *	67.8	71.5	-3.8
Average earnings (\$)									
Prior quarter 1 ^a	462	462	0 ^b	989	989	0 ^b	750	750	0 ^b
Quarter 0 ^c	302	375	-73	548	553	-6	619	664	-45
Quarter 1	621	797	-175	1,005	1,127	-122	740	907	-167
Quarter 2	848	882	-35	1,417	1,590	-173	925	1,015	-90
Quarter 3	852	786	65	1,388	1,463	-75	1,019	989	31
Quarter 4	921	745	176	1,627	1,554	73	904	1,012	-108
Quarter 5	1,008	870	138	1,711	1,719	-8	859	1,104	-245
Quarter 6	1,104	858	247	1,709	1,900	-191	1,018	1,096	-77
Quarters 1-6	5,355	4,938	416	8,857	9,353	-496	5,466	6,122	-656
Sample size	150	146		186	191		196	189	

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from unemployment insurance (UI) earnings records, and PFS Background Information Forms.

NOTES: Impacts are for the early cohort, randomly assigned between March 1994 and June 1995.

These impacts are separate from the impacts of Extra Outreach.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent;

** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

^aPrior quarter 1 refers to the quarter before random assignment.

^bAverage outcomes in the quarter prior to random assignment are equal for both groups because the impacts are regression adjusted for these values.

^cQuarter of random assignment.

fathers. Also, data on the length of participation in services show that fathers in the Los Angeles site participated in PFS activities longer than fathers in other sites (see Table 5.3).¹¹ Alternatively, a relatively high proportion of fathers in this site participated in skills training, during which they may have had to reduce their work hours.

Finally, in some cases employment rates were lower for PFS fathers than for control group fathers. In Jacksonville, Grand Rapids, Springfield, and Trenton the PFS fathers were somewhat less likely to work in each quarter, and they earned less on average. In Jacksonville, for example, 61.4 percent of PFS fathers were employed in quarter 2 compared with 63.3 percent of control group fathers. The fact that a relatively high proportion of the control group in Jacksonville were employed may have created a difficult hurdle for the program to overcome.

Although these differences in employment rates are not statistically significant, they are consistent across several sites. The PFS qualitative research suggests that many fathers came into PFS with high expectations about what the program would provide for them. As such, they may have been less likely than men in the control group to accept relatively low-wage employment, opting instead to wait for a better job. In fact, getting these men better jobs than they could have obtained on their own was a goal of the program. But, as the impacts indicate, for most of these fathers either the better job never materialized or they had difficulty keeping it.

V. Employment and Child Support

Referral to PFS did not increase employment and earnings among noncustodial parents during the first 18 months, but it did increase the extent to which they paid child support. Table 6.6 gives some indication of which fathers in PFS paid more child support. The table presents impacts on the percentage of fathers who (1) were not employed and did not pay child support, (2) were not employed and did pay support, (3) were employed and did not pay support, and (4) were employed and did pay support. The impacts are estimated for a sample consisting of the sites with significant child support impacts: Los Angeles, Grand Rapids, and Dayton.

In quarter 3, for example, PFS fathers, compared with control group fathers, were 5.2 percentage points less likely to have been unemployed and not paying support and 4.9 percentage points more likely to have been unemployed and paying support. Since the four categories cover all possible outcomes, the impacts across a given row sum to zero. In addition, since the program did not produce any significant changes in employment rates, all of the changes across a row are due to increases in the child support payment rate.

The table shows that although some of the increase in child support payments was from unemployed fathers, most of it was from employed fathers. In quarter 3, for example, PFS produced a 15 percentage point increase in the proportion paying child support, with 4.9 percentage

¹¹The lower average earnings might also be due to the fact that the program increased employment rates somewhat, although the impacts were not statistically significant. The PFS men who got jobs during the follow-up period may have been “less employable” than the average employed control group fathers, making their average earnings somewhat lower.

Table 6.6
Parents' Fair Share
Impacts of PFS on Employment and Child Support
for Dayton, Grand Rapids, and Los Angeles Combined

Quarter of Follow-Up	Not Employed and Did Not Pay	Not Employed and Paid	Employed and Did Not Pay	Employed and Paid
Quarter 0 ^a	4.0	-3.1	1.5	-2.5
Quarter 1	-0.5	-3.2 *	-4.8 *	8.6 ***
Quarter 2	-8.5 ***	7.0 ***	-9.0 ***	10.6 ***
Quarter 3	-5.2 *	4.9 **	-9.8 ***	10.1 ***
Quarter 4	-5.9 **	3.7 **	-5.9 **	8.1 ***
Quarter 5	-2.4	3.0	-6.3 **	5.7 **
Quarter 6	-3.1	2.0	-6.0 **	7.1 ***

Sample size (total = 1,145)

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from child support enforcement (CSE) payment records, unemployment insurance (UI) earnings records, and PFS Background Information Form.

NOTES: Impacts are for the early cohort, randomly assigned between March 1994 and June 1995.

These impacts are separate from the impacts of Extra Outreach.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as

*** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

^aQuarter of random assignment.

points coming from unemployed fathers (column 2) and 10.1 percentage points coming from employed fathers (column 4). In addition, child support impacts among unemployed men did not persist beyond quarter 4. In these later quarters, the impacts on the percentage who were unemployed and paid child support (column 2) are not statistically significant. The fact that the program increased child support payments among unemployed fathers suggests that some fathers had unreported income or access to other resources to pay child support. The pattern of impacts, however, suggests that obtaining payments from these fathers is not viable in the long run. Any persistent payment increases came from men who were employed in the formal economy.

VI. Subgroup Impacts

The impacts presented so far have described the average effects of PFS for all eligible fathers. This section examines whether PFS has varying effects on different types of men by dividing fathers into subgroups based on the following categories: age, race/ethnicity, earnings prior to random assignment, and arrest record.

The impacts are presented for all sites combined, since the sample sizes at the site level are fairly small. In addition, a statistical significance test is used to assess whether PFS affects groups differently, for example, older men versus younger men. In other words, even though PFS may produce statistically significant impacts for one subgroup and not another, the two impact estimates may not be significantly different from each other. Whether the two subgroup impacts are significantly different from each other is noted in the table.

Table 6.7 presents impacts on child support for each of the subgroups. Although there are few statistically significant differences in impacts, the pattern of outcomes across groups is interesting. For example, *outcomes* for the control groups show that fathers who earned at least \$2,000 during the nine months before entering the study were more likely than fathers who earned less than \$2,000 to have paid support during the follow-up period (82.0 percent versus 60.7 percent), and they paid on average higher amounts (\$1,821 versus \$918). Fathers who had not been arrested and nonblack fathers were also more likely to have paid support than their subgroup counterparts, and they paid more on average.

The *impact*, or the program-control difference, on the proportion who paid support is larger for black fathers than for nonblack fathers (4.9 percentage points versus 1.2 percentage points), but the difference in impacts is not statistically significant (column 4). A similar pattern holds for the age and arrest record subgroups. For the amount of support paid, there are two noteworthy differences in impacts. The first is by prior earnings, where the impact is \$291 for high earners compared with -\$47 for low earners; and the second is by race, where the impact is \$285 for nonblack fathers and -\$39 for black fathers. Both of these differences in impacts are statistically significant. Thus, although the program had little overall effect on the amount of support paid (see Table 6.1), it did produce an increase in payments among fathers who were more able to pay (i.e., high earners and nonblack fathers).

Data on employment and earnings are shown in Table 6.8. Outcomes for the control group show how employment and earnings vary across the subgroups. Not surprisingly, men

Table 6.7
Parents' Fair Share
Impacts of PFS on Child Support Payments,
by Subgroup

Characteristics and Subgroup	Ever Paid Child Support in Quarters 1-6 (%)				Average Total Child Support Paid, Quarters 1-6 (\$)			
	Program Group	Control Group	Impact	Difference in Subgroup Impact Significant? ^a	Program Group	Control Group	Impact	Difference in Subgroup Impact Significant? ^a
Age^b								
< 30	72.2	70.7	1.6		1,187	1,108	79	
≥ 30	73.1	67.5	5.6 **	No	1,550	1,482	69	No
Race/Ethnicity								
Black	70.9	66.0	4.9 **		1,129	1,169	-39	
Nonblack	75.7	74.5	1.2	No	1,765	1,481	285 **	Yes
Earnings^c								
≥ \$2,000	86.2	82.0	4.2		2,112	1,821	291 **	
< \$2,000	63.5	60.7	2.8	No	871	918	-47	Yes
Arrest record								
Prior arrest	69.2	64.4	4.8 **		1,153	1,103	49	
No prior arrest	80.1	79.3	0.7	No	1,810	1,677	133	No

Sample size (total = 2,641)

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from child support enforcement (CSE) payment records, unemployment insurance (UI) records, and PFS Background Information Form.

NOTES: Impacts are for the early cohort, randomly assigned between March 1994 and June 1995.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

^aSubgroup differences are tested for significance at the 10 percent level.

^bRefers to age at random assignment.

^cRefers to earnings in the nine months prior to random assignment.

Table 6.8
Parents' Fair Share
Impacts of PFS on Employment and Earnings,
by Subgroup

Characteristics and Subgroup	Ever Employed in Quarters 1-6 (%)			Difference in Subgroup Impact Significant? ^a	Average Total Earnings Quarters 1-6 (\$)			Difference in Subgroup Impact Significant? ^a
	Program Group	Control Group	Impact		Program Group	Control Group	Impact	
Age^b								
< 30	81.2	81.8	-0.7		6,573	7,121	-548	
≥ 30	74.0	72.9	1.1	No	8,213	8,294	-82	No
Race/Ethnicity								
Black	79.1	78.3	0.8		6,820	7,013	-193	
Non-black	75.4	76.5	-1.2	No	8,291	8,806	-515	No
Earnings^c								
≥ \$2,000	91.9	93.1	-1.3		11,383	12,098	-714	
< \$2,000	67.9	67.8	0.1	No	4,669	4,715	-45	No
Arrest record								
Prior arrest	75.5	76.4	-0.8		6,461	7,191	-730 *	
No prior arrest	82.5	80.5	2.1	No	9,310	8,727	583	Yes

Sample size (total = 2,641)

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from unemployment insurance (UI) earnings records, and PFS Background Information Form.

NOTES: Impacts are for the early cohort, randomly assigned between March 1994 and June 1995.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

^aSubgroup differences are tested for significance at the 10 percent level.

^bRefers to age at random assignment.

^cRefers to earnings in the nine months prior to random assignment.

with prior earnings of at least \$2,000 were much more likely than those who earned less to have worked during the follow-up period (93.1 percent versus 67.8 percent), and they earned substantially more over the 18 months (\$12,098 versus \$4,715). For these fathers, the goal of the program was to help them get higher-paying jobs. As the table shows, however, there is no earnings difference between program and control fathers. For fathers who earned less than \$2,000 there is more room for improvement in employment rates with 67.8 percent of the control group working at some point during the period. Again, however, there is no impact on the employment rate for this group. In general, there are no significant impacts for particular subgroups and no differences in impacts. The one exception is for prior arrest record, in which the program produced an earnings impact of negative \$730, and this impact difference is statistically significant.

VII. Factors Influencing Program Effectiveness

During the program's first 18 months, referral to PFS increased the number of fathers who paid child support, primarily among those who were employed, and these fathers tended to pay more regularly than their control group counterparts. However, the program had no significant effects on employment or earnings. This section discusses possible reasons for this pattern of impacts. Using the model outlined in Chapter 1 as a starting point, Tables 6.9 and 6.10 present factors thought to influence the program's effectiveness. The factors can be broadly classified into characteristics of the program and of the men being served.

Table 6.9 lists several factors thought to determine the effectiveness of the program in increasing child support payments. The first factors listed, peer support and mediation, are both thought to be important elements for increasing child support payments. Very few fathers participated in mediation, but the rate of participation in peer support was fairly high across the sites, with Los Angeles and Trenton achieving the highest rates. In addition, although Dayton had one of the lowest participation rates, field research indicated that this site provided the most active and sustained encouragement of noncustodial parents to become more involved with their children, which may have increased their likelihood of paying child support. On the basis of these factors, one might expect larger impacts on child support payments in Los Angeles and smaller impacts in Memphis.

The second set of factors measures how well CSE adapted its system to meet the needs of PFS, which translates into whether the fathers were treated differently than they would have been in the absence of the program. One determinant of the treatment difference is the extent to which the sites brought in cases that typically would not have been the focus of enforcement efforts. To the extent that they did this, there is a bigger treatment difference between the program and control groups, making program impacts more likely. Field research suggests that three of the seven sites met this criterion. In Los Angeles, in particular, no further enforcement action was taken on control group cases after the random assignment meeting. This stands in contrast to the other sites, in which both program and control members were subject to a hearing, and the control group members were sometimes required to make purge payments or told to seek work in order to start making payments.

Table 6.9
Parents' Fair Share
Factors Hypothesized to Influence Child Support Impacts,
by Site

	Dayton	Grand Rapids	Jacksonville	Los Angeles	Memphis	Springfield	Trenton
Participation in services^a							
Peer Support							
Participated (%)	56.5	61.0	67.5	79.2	54	60.8	70.9
Of those who participated, average number of months active	4.4	2.5	5.1	2.3	1.9	1.6	2.2
Mediation							
Participated (%)	0.0	10.8	2.6	0.0	2.7	0.0	0.0
CSE system treatment of program versus control members							
Program brought in cases typically of low priority	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓
Special CSE staff handled PFS caseload		✓		✓	✓		✓
Future review hearing scheduled automatically upon entry into PFS				✓			
Regular meetings between CSE and PFS staff to review noncompliant cases		✓ ^b		✓ ^b			

(continued)

Table 6.9 (continued)

	Dayton	Grand Rapids	Jacksonville	Los Angeles	Memphis	Springfield	Trenton
Payments by control group during follow-up period							
Average quarterly payment rate (%)	24.4	40.1	48.7	27.3	25.3	53.8	41.9
Average quarterly payment amount (\$)	116	227	275	228	75	269	246
Employment and earnings							
Did PFS increase employment or earnings for the program group?	No	No	No	No	No	No	No

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Parents' Fair Share management information system; unemployment insurance (UI); child support enforcement (CSE); field research observations and interviews with PFS and CSE staff and participants.

NOTES: A component given a "✓" was implemented.

A component given a "✗" either was not implemented as intended, or was implemented for only part of the follow-up period, although at least 10 percent of the program group participated.

^aParticipation measured over 18 months following random assignment (see Table 5.3).

^bIn Los Angeles, these case conferences were held monthly; in Grand Rapids, they were held weekly.

Other determinants of the treatment difference are measured by how PFS handled non-custodial fathers once they were in the program. Were CSE staff assigned specifically to handle PFS cases, and did CSE staff meet with PFS staff to review noncompliant cases? As discussed in Chapters 2 and 5, Los Angeles and Grand Rapids met these criteria more often than the other sites. These two sites, for example, were noticeably more likely than the other sites to have fathers return to PFS and participate in activities after being referred to CSE for noncompliance. Los Angeles was also the only site in which a follow-up hearing was scheduled automatically when fathers entered PFS, allowing staff to more easily identify noncompliant cases.

Thus, Los Angeles and Grand Rapids stand out as potentially providing the biggest difference in CSE between program and control group members, with Jacksonville and Springfield at the other end of the spectrum. One factor common to the Los Angeles and Grand Rapids sites was the strong involvement of the CSE agency. In Los Angeles and Grand Rapids, CSE was the local lead agency. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the managers in sites with CSE as the local lead worked to adjust their CSE procedures to support PFS and placed a high priority on implementing PFS effectively across all the agencies involved. For example, PFS and CSE staff in these sites met regularly to devise strategies to deal with noncustodial parents who had stopped participating. The fact that these two sites did produce impacts suggests that this set of factors is important.

The reasons for the positive impacts in Dayton are less clear, since this site did not appear to provide big treatment differences across many of the factors listed in the table. One explanation may be related to the rate at which fathers would have paid child support in the absence of the program. This can be measured by the payment rates of the control group. If very few fathers would have paid in the absence of the program, gains may be easier to achieve, with even a small treatment difference. Table 6.9 shows that the control groups in Los Angeles, Dayton, and Memphis had the lowest payment rates, suggesting that it would be easier in these sites to produce impacts. The data also suggest one reason why Springfield did not produce impacts, since over 50 percent of the control group members paid support in each quarter.

Finally, an important intermediate step in increasing child support payments is to increase fathers' ability to pay, that is, increase their employment and earnings. As Table 6.9 shows, however, no sites produced consistent and statistically significant increases in employment or earnings. This factor does not help to explain why some sites increased payments and others did not, but it may explain why the impacts that were observed, particularly on the amount paid, were fairly small.

In sum, the pattern of impacts on child support payments is most likely due to a variety of factors. The available evidence suggest that impacts are related to the involvement of the CSE agency, possibly to the strength and content of the peer support component, and to how much the fathers would have paid in the absence of the program.

Table 6.10 lists several factors thought to determine the program's effectiveness in increasing employment and earnings. The first is the extent of fathers' participation in employment and training services. As noted throughout the report, most sites were not able to provide the full range of employment and training services to participants. In particular, sites had the most diffi-

Table 6.10
Parents' Fair Share
Factors Hypothesized to Influence Employment and Earnings Impacts,
by Site

	Dayton	Grand Rapids	Jacksonville	Los Angeles	Memphis	Springfield	Trenton
Participation rates of program group during the follow-up (%)^a							
Peer support	56.5	61.0	67.5	79.2	54.0	60.8	70.9
Job club	44.7	69.9	48.7	77.3	44.0	69.4	39.8
Skills training	5.6	1.9	5.7	28.6	5.3	11.3	4.6
Basic education	4.3	4.2	12.7	14.9	47.3	1.6	5.1
On-the-job training	5.0	26.6	6.1	1.3	0.7	25.8	7.7
Employment rates of control group during follow-up (%)							
Average quarterly employment rate	48.6	55.8	65.1	40.1	47.5	57.1	42.9
Employed at some point during follow-up	69.6	83.5	86.2	58.4	77.9	85.7	71.5
Employed in at least 4 of the 6 follow-up quarters	47.5	51.2	65.7	41.3	36.9	56.0	38.1

(continued)

Table 6.10 (continued)

	Dayton	Grand Rapids	Jacksonville	Los Angeles	Memphis	Springfield	Trenton
Barriers to employment (%)							
No high school diploma	46.7	39.6	44.5	57.3	52.4	48.8	50.3
Prior arrest	72.0	80.0	73.0	58.0	74.0	60.0	57.0
Community characteristics (%)							
Black unemployment rate (1990)							
Central city	15.9	18.8	10.5	13.0	13.8	13.9	14.6
Surrounding area	9.5	9.5	11.4	10.3	11.8	6.5	5.5

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from unemployment insurance (UI) earnings records; Parents' Fair Share management information system; PFS Background Information Form, and 1990 census.

NOTE: ^aParticipation measured over 18 months following random assignment (see Table 5.4).

culty developing the OJT component of PFS, which was viewed by program designers as the component with the most potential. However, three sites did provide a relatively full array of services but still did not increase noncustodial parents' employment or earnings. As mentioned in Chapter 5, it is possible that service providers in the sites that offered the full range of options were also more likely to provide services to low-income men in general. In this case, the control group may have received a fair amount of services, reducing the likelihood of program impacts.

These findings suggest that in most sites the program components may not have been adequately tailored to the men's characteristics. First, job club is helpful for men who would have had difficulty finding jobs, but the data indicate that many of the men did not need help getting a job, but rather help in keeping a job or in getting a higher-paying job, as employment rates for the control group during follow-up show. The proportion who were employed at some point during follow-up ranges from 58.4 percent in Los Angeles to 86.2 percent in Jacksonville. For job retention, postplacement services are key, but according to field research, few men received these services with any intensity. The amount of job instability in this population suggests that such services may be very important. The group of men who needed help finding better-paying jobs can be roughly identified by the proportion who were regularly employed during the follow-up period, or in at least four of the six quarters, which ranges from 36.9 percent in Memphis to 65.7 percent in Jacksonville. As noted earlier, previous research has shown that increasing participants' earnings has proven more difficult than increasing their employment rates.

Many of the men who did need help in getting jobs lacked a high school diploma and had been previously arrested, which may have limited what job club could do for them, relative to basic education services, for example. In fact, Los Angeles and Memphis, two of the three sites in which employment and earnings were higher for the program group in the later quarters, although not significantly so, had relatively high participation in basic education or skills training. A future report, with longer follow-up, will test whether these services are effective in the longer run.

The broader economic context, as shown by unemployment rates in inner cities versus suburban areas, also may have contributed to the program's minimal effects. Even a well-implemented employment and training program will have a limited impact on the lives of these men if there are no jobs in their communities or if they have little access to employment in the surrounding areas. In this case, a different program, such as public sector job creation, may prove more successful.

Appendices

**Appendix Table A.1
Parents' Fair Share**

Process for Identifying Potential Referrals to PFS

Site	Process
Dayton	CSE staff reviewed special lists of potential referrals randomly drawn from caseload, identified those employed by checking wage reports and took action to institute wagewithholding, identified others who appeared inappropriate for other reasons, (for example, incarcerated or living outside jurisdiction), and notified remaining noncustodial parents that they should appear for a review hearing to determine their eligibility for PFS. CSE staff also reviewed monthly lists of noncustodial parents not meeting their obligations to identify potential referrals, and these noncustodial parents were also notified that they should attend a review hearing. Prosecuting attorneys also reviewed noncustodial parents appearing in contested paternity, support, or contempt hearings for possible PFS referrals.
Grand Rapids	PFS and CSE staff reviewed special lists of potential referrals randomly drawn from caseload, identified those employed by checking wage reports and took action to institute wagewithholding, identified others who appeared inappropriate for other reasons, (for example, incarcerated or living outside jurisdiction), and notified remaining noncustodial parents that they should appear at Friend of the Court for an appointment about their case status. In addition, staff reviewed status of noncustodial parents attending conciliation meetings and administrative, contempt, and arraignment hearings to identify potential referrals. Also, they attempted to locate potential referrals by tracking births in hospitals where the medical expenses were covered by Medicaid.
Jacksonville	PFS staff reviewed court contempt hearing dockets developed by CSE staff to identify welfare-related cases in which noncustodial parents had orders, had not paid their obligation, and there was no evidence of employment. When noncustodial parents appeared, they completed forms asking if they were working. If not, PFS staff recommended them for possible referral. No special outreach or court dockets for likely referrals was instituted.
Los Angeles	CSE staff prepared specially run lists of welfare-related cases in which noncustodial parents were not meeting their support obligations and mailed a notice to these noncustodial parents urging attendance at a group hearing to determine eligibility for PFS. Hearings were set to come shortly before start of a PFS service cycle in one of six different offices around the county offering PFS services. Noncustodial parents who were called to attend a hearing lived near a service center about to begin a cycle. Follow-up letters were sent if noncustodial parents did not appear. CSE staff also screened cases on paternity and order modification hearing dockets for potential PFS eligibility.

(continued)

Appendix Table A.1 (continued)

Site	Process
Memphis	<p>CSE staff reviewed special lists of potential referrals randomly drawn from caseload, identified those employed by checking wage reports and took action to institute wagewithholding, identified others who appeared inappropriate for other reasons, and notified remaining noncustodial parents that they should appear for a court hearing. Efforts to work this list produced fewer PFS referrals than in Michigan or Ohio, in part because many of addresses of noncustodial parents on list were not current and location was difficult. In addition, CSE staff reviewed special lists of welfare-related cases with no recent payments, lists of noncustodial parents about to exhaust unemployment insurance benefits, and lists of new welfare-related CSE cases to identify potential referrals and to schedule them for court hearings. Finally, CSE staff reviewed the contempt hearing dockets (largely made up of cases in which CP filed a complaint) and paternity establishment dockets to identify potential PFS referrals. CSE and PFS staff interviewed those noncustodial parents who appeared at hearings to determine eligibility.</p>
Springfield	<p>State emphasis on establishing new paternities and orders meant that approximately 85 percent of cases heard in court were new paternities, so these were the major source of potential PFS referrals. CSE staff reviewed court dockets prior to hearings and identified welfare-related cases where noncustodial parents were a likely referrals. When noncustodial parents appeared they were asked if they had means to pay child support. If not, they were identified as potential referrals to PFS. Efforts to generate a list of welfare-related cases with existing orders where noncustodial parents were not paying and allocate a portion of court docket to these cases did not produce many referrals.</p>
Trenton	<p>Local county board of social services staff reviewed paternity and order establishment hearing dockets for welfare-related cases in which noncustodial parents were potential referrals to PFS. In addition, probation department enforcement staff reviewed their caseloads for potential referrals and a specially dedicated PFS enforcement worker supplemented review efforts of normal enforcement staff. When potential referrals were identified, they were scheduled for a court hearing, called a motion to enforce litigant rights. When they appeared, noncustodial parents were screened for PFS eligibility.</p>

**Appendix Table A.2
Parents' Fair Share**

Forum for the Review of PFS Cases

Site	Type of Review Used
Dayton	Most referrals came from special group review hearings before a referee conducted solely to determine if noncustodial parents should be referred to program. County prosecuting attorney prepared dockets and handled cases for two courts involved in CSE: domestic relations court for cases in which there had been a divorce and juvenile court for cases in which paternity had to be established. Seven-day notices were sent by regular mail, which was supplemented starting in mid 1995 by home visits made a few days before a hearing. Prior to the beginning of home visits, cases of nonappearing noncustodial parents were dismissed. After home visits began, referees accepted recommendation to institute a contempt action against noncustodial parents for whom there was evidence of actual notice of hearing.
Grand Rapids	Referrals most commonly came from meetings with CSE staff in their offices, which had no docket schedule, judicial involvement, or notice requirement, and additionally from noncustodial parents brought into court on bench warrants for their arrest for nonpayment of child support. Other cases also came from hearings on an order to show cause why noncustodial parents should not be held in contempt occurred before referees, who typically scheduled 10 to 15 cases an hour (on assumption that not all noncustodial parents would appear) and CSE staff presented the case. Notices were sent by regular mail and hearing could be no more than 28 days after the date of mailing. Cases heard in court before a judge on an order to show cause were presented by a CSE staff attorney. Notices were similar to referee hearing notices. Bench warrant cases were presented by a CSE staff arraignment officer.
Jacksonville	Most referrals came from hearings before a commissioner of family court for Duval County, who was not a judge. Cases were brought on a motion for contempt of court for failure to comply with orders to pay support. Cases were presented by a private attorney under contract with the state, with assistance from CSE staff. Child support mass hearings (for cases not expected to have complications) were scheduled for half-day sessions, approximately 15 days a month. Notices of hearings were typically served in person, by substitute service (to another adult at address), or by mail, and the notice process was usually begun about 30 days before a hearing. Some cases were referred out of paternity hearings, also in family court, and a few from order modification hearings.
Los Angeles	Referrals came out of a group screening and stipulation process. Noncustodial parents on a CSE caseload who appeared to be eligible for PFS were sent a letter telling them to report on a date approximately one week later to the civil court house in downtown Los Angeles for screening to determine eligibility for PFS. Screening was done by PFS and CSE staff, and those found eligible for program were asked to sign stipulations agreeing to participate in PFS. Those who signed then appeared as a group before a referee, who confirmed their understanding of the meaning of the stipulation, signed the stipulation, and ordered them into a program. Since group screening was not a formal hearing and was done without usual legal notice, staff had to institute a separate process to enforce the obligation of those who did not appear and/or did not agree to the stipulation.

(continued)

Appendix Table A.2 (continued)

Site	Type of Review Used
Memphis	<p>Most noncustodial parents were referred to PFS at hearings before a referee of juvenile court for contempt of court for nonpayment of support. CSE staff prepared material for the hearing and “presenters” (who are specialists in the hearing process but not attorneys) presented the agency’s case. Usually notices of a contempt hearing were served by mail, though sometimes in person. The usual lag between identification of a case and the scheduled hearing was 2 to 4 weeks. If noncustodial parents failed to appear at a contempt hearing, the court usually issued a warrant for their arrest. Some referrals were made out of paternity establishment process at the point at which the court was setting an initial child support order. If noncustodial parents were unable to pay support and meet PFS eligibility requirements, they could be referred to program.</p>
Springfield	<p>Most referrals came from hearings before a judge in probate court to establish paternity and an order. The case was presented by a CSE agency attorney or other staff. A block of time was set aside on one day of the week for hearings of new paternities and potential PFS referrals were mixed in with other cases. Notices of hearings could be served in person or — more usual — by mail. A hearing had to be set at least 20 days after the CSE agency received a return receipt that service had been made, except for contempt hearings, which could be scheduled sooner. Other cases came from order modification hearings, or — to a small extent — from contempt hearings.</p>
Trenton	<p>Referrals came from hearings before hearing officers of family court. Special PFS hearing dockets were set for both paternity and order establishment and enforcement of existing orders (called motions to enforce litigant rights). Notices of hearings were normally served by mail (both regular and certified), though sometimes in person. The usual lag between service and hearing was 30 to 60 days. PFS staff also sent letters to noncustodial parents telling them of the program. PFS staff also attended other family court dockets to identify potential referrals to program. If service was adequate and noncustodial parents did not appear, hearing officers could issue a default order in paternity and first order cases or a bench warrant in enforcement cases</p>

Appendix Table B Parents' Fair Share

MDRC's Role as PFS Partner Agency

MDRC's role in the implementation of PFS included, developing the program model, providing technical assistance to sites to help implement the model, and contract monitoring. By the demonstration's end, MDRC staff had also provided program development and other technical assistance in each site, had interacted with court and child support enforcement managers at all levels to increase the number of noncustodial parents referred to PFS, and had intervened with state and county officials to ensure adequate program budgets and staffing.

Program design and development. The PFS program model was designed by MDRC and pilot tested for over 18 months in nine sites, including six of the seven demonstration sites. Written guidelines were provided for each component, and more detailed information provided for OJT development. Specific curricula were provided for the job club and the peer support components. The peer support curriculum, *Responsible Fatherhood*, was revised during the demonstration as several new sessions recommended and tested by site peer support facilitators were added.

With the assistance of MDRC, various changes in the PFS program were made during the demonstration. For instance, several sites that suffered a significant decrease in enrollment at some point had to adjust their services to reflect this drop. (See Chapters 2 and 5 for more about program services.)

Technical assistance. Technical assistance took several forms. Training on specific topics was provided both onsite and offsite throughout the demonstration. Curriculum training was provided for the peer support facilitators on several occasions, and facilitators were debriefed on a regular basis through telephone conference calls. Experts in job development, OJT development, and job club/job search assistance provided intensive instruction to employment staff. Team-building efforts took the form of all-site conferences for managers in the early days of the demonstration to build communication across sites and, when the need was later identified, on-site sessions for all staff members across agencies within sites. MDRC site liaison staff made regular visits to the sites and provided advice and assistance to site managers and staff as needed.

MDRC staff also encouraged site managers to visit other PFS sites to observe and to get assistance in areas where they were experiencing difficulties. Perhaps the most remarkable turnaround resulting from site-to-site assistance occurred after managers from Grand Rapids visited the Springfield site to observe the employment component, specifically the OJT portion. During the pilot phase of PFS, the OJT developers in Grand Rapids were able to develop and fill only a few OJT positions and offered few alternatives for training. The local lead agency changed employment and training contractors, and then visited Springfield with the project director of the new agency. The result was a complete revamping of the OJT philosophy. During the demonstration, Grand Rapids developed more OJT slots than any other site.

Program monitoring. Program sites were visited and contacted by telephone regularly throughout the demonstration as a way of identifying and addressing issues. In part, the purpose was to ensure contract compliance and fidelity to the model. On many occasions, the purpose included intervening between partner organizations to resolve problems.

(continued)

Appendix Table B (continued)

Increasing intake. At some point during the demonstration almost every site experienced problems meeting its enrollment goals (see Chapter 2), and MDRC staff in some cases spent months working with sites, reviewing and assessing every step of the intake process, and meeting with child support and court personnel to try to maximize enrollment.

Funding assistance. MDRC signed a Memorandum of Agreement with each site at the start of the demonstration that included a payment to the site ranging from \$150,000 to \$265,000. The amount depended a number of factors including whether the site had a single or dual point of random assignment. The funds from MDRC were not a large portion of the funds needed to operate PFS but, because the money came from private sources, the state welfare and child support agencies were able to use it as a match for federal funds, yielding each site an additional 100 to 200 percent above the contracted amount with MDRC. MDRC funds also gave the sites increased flexibility since they were not subject to many of the restrictions limiting the uses of government funds. For instance several sites used these funds for OJTs, allowing them to contract with employers without a lot of the paperwork usually required by the federal government and to offer OJTs to a population that might not typically be considered a good risk.

**Appendix Table C
Parents' Fair Share**

**Impacts of PFS on Child Support Payments,
by Cohort**

Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Impact
Early cohort^a			
Paid child support (%)			
Quarter 0 ^b	32.4	39.0	-6.6 ***
Quarter 1	40.0	40.7	-0.7
Quarter 2	43.5	35.9	7.6 ***
Amount of child support paid (\$)			
Quarter 0 ^b	121	164	-43 ***
Quarter 1	168	176	-8
Quarter 2	190	172	18
Sample size (total =2,641)	1,334	1,307	
Late cohort^c			
Paid child support (%)			
Quarter 0 ^b	36.9	38.1	-1.2
Quarter 1	43.0	37.1	5.9 ***
Quarter 2	44.0	36.8	7.2 ***
Amount of child support paid (\$)			
Quarter 0 ^b	177	189	-13
Quarter 1	195	188	8
Quarter 2	212	192	20
Sample size (total =2,641)	1,334	1,307	

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from child support enforcement (CSE) payment records, and PFS Background Information Form.

NOTES: A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

^aEarly cohort random assignment occurred between March 1994 and June 1995.

^bLate cohort random assignment occurred between June 1995 and June 1996.

^cQuarter of random assignment.

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