

In the Best Interests of Children:
A critical policy analysis of child support cooperation requirements

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Dedication

To the mothers, fathers and children that navigate these systems-- I see you.

To my daughter, Cady, who inspires me every day and continues to thrive in the face of too many obstacles--I love you and thank you for the encouragement you have shown throughout this journey. We did it!

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Every person completing a PhD is on a journey filled with curves, detours, unmarked roads and the open highway. Throughout that journey, graduate students also find friendship, love and support. My journey, replete with most everything on the lists of “The 10 Most Stressful Experiences in Life,” includes an extensive list of people to thank for walking with me. You have helped me process ideas, fed me, edited drafts, made me keep virtual appointments with you, offered necessary distractions, given endless encouragement, offered shoulders to cry on and even gifted me a gigantic white board sticky note! While a few people are thanked explicitly below, my thank yous can fill as many pages as the dissertation itself. Even if you do not see your name below, please know the sincere gratitude I have for all those that have supported, encouraged, offered tissues, listened, distracted, and fed me along the way. WE did it!

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Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

CCDF	Child Care Development Fund (child care subsidies)
CHIP	Children's Health Insurance Program
Cooperation	Refers to child support cooperation requirements within welfare or public assistance programs
CP	Custodial Parent
CPA	Critical Policy Analysis
CSE	Child support enforcement system
CSEA	Child Support Enforcement Agency
FoodShare	Wisconsin's version of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
MECA	Milwaukee Early Care Assistance, the City's version of CCDF/Wisconsin Shares
NCP	Noncustodial Parent
OCSE	Office of Child Support Enforcement
Public Assistance/Public Benefits	Terms used interchangeably to refer to the collection of programs that require cooperation with CSEA as an eligibility requirement
SNAP	Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program
TANF/Welfare	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program
W-2	Wisconsin Works, the state's version of TANF
Wisconsin Shares	That state's version of CCDF

Abstract

The study interrogates the ways in which child support cooperation requirements contribute to the education debt by structuring poverty and facilitating the criminalization and incarceration of low-income, unmarried Black mothers, fathers. Federal law created the IV-D child support enforcement system which generally requires that low-income families applying for certain public assistance programs cooperate with the local child support enforcement agency (CSEA); this cooperation is intended to establish paternity (when the parents are not married) and child support orders and to collect on those orders. Cooperation requirements are masked requirements that bind families to complex and punitive systems with elaborate and life-altering enforcement mechanisms. Cooperation requirements are also essential tools to minimize welfare expenditures which is the legislated mandate of the IV-D child support enforcement system.

The limited, existing literature criminalizes mothers'/custodial parents' behavior and bypasses the significance of cooperation for fathers/custodial parents and families. This critical policy analysis speaks into that paucity of research by mapping and contextualizing cooperation and related policies and practices. It also explores the unique experiences of custodial and noncustodial parents as they work to provide for their children. .

This critical policy analysis centers child support cooperation requirements and utilizes stakeholder interviews (mothers, fathers, service providers, former child support and public assistance program staff), state and federal data, related policies and political discourse to

create a deep and contextualized understanding of the operationalization and impacts of cooperation.

In mapping the circuitous policy systems bound through cooperation, many themes emerged and four are discussed: Discretion, Learning and Access to Knowledge, Economic (In)stability and The Carceral State. These themes detail: 1) the ways in which discretion at all levels creates opportunities for injustice, 2) how current modes of teaching and learning about child support cooperation further mask its significance, empower the state's enforcement efforts, fuel discretionary powers and confuse parents, and 3) the ways that cooperation structures economic instability for families in both the short-term and long-term. Findings suggest that the nation invests in cooperation and related systems that criminalize and incarcerate Black families rather than operating in the best interests of children. This misguided investment furthers the nation's education debt. Implications for children, families, policy and practice and future research are considered.

Chapter 1 Introduction

The “education debt” (Ladson-Billings, 2006) is a concept used to challenge educational researchers to push against the deficit language and thinking of “academic achievement gaps.” Ladson-Billings posited that the individual measures of achievement typically used to identify those disparities serve to shift our gaze away from the primary cause which is the lack of investment in the nation’s Black and Brown children. This study responds to that challenge by examining a powerful federal requirement which ensnares unmarried, low-income mothers and fathers into powerful state systems that ultimately put the family under the gaze of the carceral state, incarcerate parents, further economic instability and create barriers to academic achievement of children.

As a graduate student, I was exposed to Critical Race Theory (CRT), methods of policy analysis and the importance of historical, political, and cultural contexts for understanding. Learning about CRT through the lens of education transformed my understanding of my own K-12 schooling experiences and started me on a journey of examining many aspects of society through that lens. As a student, teacher and parent, I sometimes unknowingly learned how individuals, policies, and systems perpetuated gaps throughout PK-16 schooling. As a policy analyst for an organization focused on the economic security of the nation’s lowest income families, I began to understand how CRT operated within public benefits and welfare, child support and economic systems in society. In that role, I studied IV-D (public) child support policy and interrogated the ways in which child support policy and practice caused harm by further structuring white supremacy and entangling families in systems that often caused harm.

I worked with a team that conducted listening sessions with parents and other stakeholders involved in the child support enforcement system. In those spaces, I started to learn about child support cooperation requirements. This confluence of experiences and thinking led me to connect disciplines and fields that are not typically in conversation with one another and to consider the ways in which child support cooperation requirements link to the education debt.

Broadly speaking, federal child support cooperation requires custodial parents (CPs)/mothers applying for certain public assistance/welfare programs to cooperate with the child support enforcement agency (CSEA) to establish paternity, establish a child support order and collect on that order.¹ This study explores the ways in which child support cooperation furthers the education debt by facilitating the criminalization and incarceration of low-income Black parents and further undermining their economic instability. These impacts create barriers to the academic success of children in impacted families.

In part, this study contributes to cooperation literature by utilizing the tool of intersectionality to make visible families' experiences as child support cooperation requirements are activated. This study highlights both mothers/CPs and fathers/NCPs experiences and considers what those mean for their children. The story of Sylvia and Derek introduces the concept of child support cooperation.

¹ "Custodial parent" and "noncustodial parent" are the legal terms assigned to each parent within the IV-D child support enforcement system. Within a heterosexual marriage, the law presumes that the husband is the father. When a child is born outside of a heterosexual marriage, and the family has resources, custody and parenting time agreements can be established through the courts. When the parents do not have resources and apply for public assistance, the mother is structured as the custodial parent and paternity must be established before the law can assign the father the status of "noncustodial parent." The language and thinking of these systems is gendered and heteronormative. This is problematic and throughout the paper I intentionally tie custodial parent to mother and noncustodial parent to father to highlight the ways in which the law and serves to perpetuate white supremacist notions of families and parenting.

*

On a blustery winter day in the Midwest in the midst of the Coronavirus pandemic, Sylvia, a mother of three moved herself into the garage to find sanctuary and privacy to protect her family during our phone call. She explained her geographic choice as necessary because our conversation “was not to be heard by my children,” and did not need to be re-lived by her husband, Derek. It was a traumatic story.

During her first pregnancy about ten years earlier, Sylvia learned a lot about insurance and health care systems. She had insurance through her job, but it did not cover much. After conception, her doctor’s resident helped connect her with the federal Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children, more commonly known as “WIC.” It quickly became clear that the insurance she had would not cover much of the standard care practices throughout pregnancy and, with her high deductibles, high co-pays and minimal coverage, she would incur significant medical debt throughout pregnancy and the beginning of her baby’s life.

With that information and knowing that pregnant women were expected to see doctors often, she switched to a program offered through the City. It was free, but she felt regularly looked down upon by doctors, treated as less-than, and did not feel she received quality care. During her first pregnancy, Sylvia had a male doctor who often dismissed her pain as “in her head.” As a Black woman, this was not a new experience for Sylvia, but it was more concerning during a pregnancy. At the time, that doctor had a resident, a “white woman who took up for me.” She supported Sylvia in ways that other physicians had not. The resident shared information about resources to support a healthy pregnancy, including the state’s health

insurance program. Ultimately, Sylvia switched to the state's version of Medicaid which, from her understanding, would minimize debt. The resident listened to Sylvia's experiences and concerns, and advocated for services. Sylvia developed trust in her. Ultimately, Sylvia was able to name her as the family's primary care physician and that doctor went on to deliver the family's other two children.

In concert with Derek and her doctor, Sylvia developed a birthing plan and shared that with the hospital. This was especially important for Sylvia as she knew the frequency of problematic health outcomes for Black women and babies. The well-developed birthing plan and sharing it with the doctors and the hospital did not prevent circumstances beyond her wildest dreams from becoming reality in the first day of her son's life. She recalled waking up in a hospital room after giving birth and the baby's father (they were not yet married) wasn't there because he wasn't able to get off work. Derek had been there for the birth and then had to report for his shift. Sylvia woke up and wanted to hold her newborn and continue working on breastfeeding. She looked around and the baby was not in the room. She pushed the call button. The nurse checked in and clearly had no idea where the baby was. A staff person went to the nursery and could not locate him.² It took 40 minutes for someone to find her baby, during which time, Sylvia was sure that someone had kidnapped him. "I told every nurse...I stayed up at the beginning of every shift and told the new nurse that I wanted the baby in the room with me. They took the one opportunity, when I was asleep, to take my baby out the room." What Sylvia came to learn is that after Derek left for work and while she was asleep, a nurse came and

² This birth happened before some of the current stringent protocols around access to hospital nurseries and birthing areas.

“snuck my baby out the room” to give him a bottle which went against Sylvia’s clearly stated and documented plan to breast feed.

For those 40 minutes, the new mom thought someone had kidnapped her baby. “That was a lifetime.” She panicked and was terrified. When her baby was finally returned, she was so relieved to hold him and at the same time so angry that, not only had a nurse taken him and not documented that fact anywhere, but she entirely disregarded Sylvia’s intention to breastfeed. Sharing this story almost 10 years later, the hurt, frustration, anger, and terror still emanated in Sylvia’s voice. Belittling her concerns and overruling her mothering decisions, the nurse then told her, “Black people don’t breastfeed.” The nurse then tried to justify her decision by saying, “There weren’t any bottles, so clearly you weren’t feeding the baby.” Sylvia’s physician (the resident) had none of that. She advocated for Sylvia, noting that the mother clearly communicated her intention to breastfeed and expected that nurses were there to help her learn how to do so and to honor her desire to keep her baby in her room, not in the nursery. From the nursing staff, the closest Sylvia got to breastfeeding support and education was a Black nurse who told her that she “needed to eat to be able to breastfeed” and ordered food for her. The hospital had become a place this new mom couldn’t trust and found minimal support. Because of these experiences, this new mom committed to never sleeping in the hospital, especially after giving birth. “I stayed woke until the day I was discharged. I never closed my eyes....I slept in the car on the way home.” Because of these experiences, Derek committed to taking off work, even if he had to take vacation without pay to protect his family while they were hospitalized.

Sylvia went on to describe her intense feelings as she finally got to hold her baby and explain to Derek what happened. Then another hospital worker came in and started asking questions while filling out a form. One of the questions directed at Sylvia was, "Who's the baby's father?" Thinking that was horribly disrespectful, she looked at Derek, turned her gaze back to the staff person, and said, "Umm, the man who is standing here holding our child, who was here throughout the labor and delivery, and then cut the umbilical cord. He's the father." The hospital worker then looked at Derek and asked him if he wanted a DNA test to make sure. Logically, Derek looked at Sylvia, with worry and a little fire in his eyes, and asked, "Do I need to?"

That was the birth of their first child, but these questions were posed at the birth of the second child and the third. Sylvia described that as "very disrespectful, because he was right there, holding my hand. He cut the umbilical cord. Right in front of me, all three pregnancies, all three births, they asked if he wanted a DNA test to make sure these children was his." He was upset for the first one, but because they weren't married, he could sort of understand. "But for the third one, he didn't understand why. He was like, 'This is my wife!' They was like, 'Well, do you or do you not want to make sure this is your child?' And he told them to get out."

Sylvia gave birth to her two other children with the same doctor, in the same hospital and did not sleep during the time she was there. Derek, who by the second birth, was her husband, took off work without pay for the subsequent births. Even as a married couple, Sylvia and Derek were questioned in the same hospital about paternity testing at the birth of their second child. After explaining that they were husband and wife, the hospital worker said, "Well, are you really married?" Her experiences as a Black woman in the United States prepared Sylvia

to instinctively jump in to defend her husband, the babies' father, and their marriage. In response to the question, Sylvia immediately pointed out to the hospital staffer that if she looked at the names in her chart, they would have seen that she and Derek shared a last name, and she would not have legally changed her name without getting "state married."

As Sylvia continued, the clarity and intensity around the next part of her story was evident. It wasn't until she had two children that the state pursued child support. Sylvia did not pursue child support. "I didn't want him (Derek) in the system. I didn't want them making it seem like he wasn't around." Neither Sylvia nor Derek knew why the State decided to pay attention at that moment, but on the phone, the child support staff person tried to convince Sylvia that Derek was "a deadbeat" as she had two kids with him and he wasn't paying child support. "I asked the lady, how was he a deadbeat when he was at every birth, and we both work? When I'm at work, he had the kids. The kids do not go to daycare. She was like, well, by state law, he has to pay."

"They did start garnishing his checks and all that kind of stuff. But it was crazy because when they did that, they would take like \$400 from every paycheck (every two weeks), and we would only receive \$112 each month." Of the \$800 garnished from Derek's checks every month, his wife received \$112 in child support. The State took \$688. During each of those months, the state took 86% of Derek's income. The couple never understood why so much was taken out. When Sylvia questioned the child support enforcement agency, they'd just say, "That's the way it goes." This siphoning of money stopped and started for months, and Sylvia and Derek had no idea when it would happen, when it would stop or why.

Beyond the questions in the hospital, Sylvia didn't recall the involvement of the child support enforcement agency until much later. It appears that when Sylvia had a second child with Derek, the agency's interest was triggered.

Trying to detach Derek from the hands of the child support system was no easy feat for the couple and required significant support from their networks. "I was blessed to have a doctor that actually knew us and got to see us, because she even wrote a letter stating that during her medical school, as well as now, throughout the whole pregnancy, he (Derek) brought me to my doctor's appointments, he was there through labor. If something happened during tests, they would call him. They wouldn't call my phone, they would call him, because I wouldn't answer my phone too much. At that time, my phone was janky, so they would contact him. He was under emergency contacts with the doctor. When they (the children) started school, he was on emergency contacts at school. We had teachers... Luckily, we had teachers that would be like, 'We see Dad more than Mom, because Mom works first shift and Dad works second. They do that so somebody can pick up and drop off the kids. We see Mom dropping off one child, but Dad picks up that child, and drops off and picks up the other child.' My youngest was going half days. They (the school officials) had to write, well, we had the principal of the school, at the time, write letters stating that they see him more. They talk to him more. Mom is at work. Dad works third shift. They even wrote that one time, that Dad came on a field trip, and he started working third shift, and he went to both of his kids' field trips in the same week. They said that Dad had worked third shift and got off at 7:00 and came on the field trip at 8:00, and stayed woke through the whole field trip. He chaperoned both field trips, two different field trips during the week and stayed woke the whole time, chaperoning and helping other parents and teachers

with their kids, while he had his.” This (battle with the child support enforcement agency) went on for three years. “They took our medical insurance and then they’d snatch our food stamps and our child care. We had to work extra hours. The school gave us a discount because we were fighting the child support system, because I never wanted him to be seen or looked at as a deadbeat.” Ultimately, “they (the child support enforcement agency) put Derek’s name on the children’s case and said, ‘As of right now, he would be on the case as these two children’s father-- biological father, no child support.’ That’s it. We called and asked, none of the case workers had anything to say afterwards, so we let it be. He wasn’t on child support because I wanted him on it. He was on child support because they (the child support enforcement agency) wanted to make him seem like a father that wasn’t around.”

While there was a tremendous sense of relief in her voice as Sylvia shared that outcome, there was also a good dose of apprehension. She described not really trusting that it was all over and not understanding why it was ending. “I don’t know if it’s because I told them he buys diapers, clothes, shoes, but he didn’t have to go through the system anymore. But it took us a while. It took us a while.” It took Sylvia and Derek three years and a lot of support, resources, and angst to get disentangled from the child support enforcement agency.

During those three years of what she described as “tug-of-war,” Sylvia and Derek grew very tired. They paid \$900 in rent, \$550 per month for the kids’ health insurance, and then co-pays. Their doctor tried to give them free care or care at reduced costs until she started getting in trouble. Reflecting back, seemingly with a sense of exasperation and pride, Sylvia explained, “We were paying for food. We had the rent, light bill, car insurance. We stopped paying car insurance. There were times when we wouldn’t eat, but the kids would. We were trying to make

sure we had enough money to get to our next pay checks. We were working minimum wage. Not full-time either. We never got kicked out. Our lights stayed on. It's just Mom and Dad wouldn't eat. And then Derek started working at a restaurant. They gave him extra food, and we would eat that, but the kids would have a home cooked meal. The kids have allergies and we don't eat pork. They always have home cooked meals."

The tug-of-war Sylvia and Derek experienced during this time reinforced for her that "the system does not want families to succeed, especially low-income, two-parent families." During the months they received Food Stamps, they were granted \$250 per month, which wasn't enough to feed a family of five the nutritious foods that she wanted and that "the system" expected. Her commitment to her kids' health and nutrition also led her to start a garden. She grows fresh fruits and vegetables, and cans them for use throughout the year. She avoids processed foods and makes her own chicken strips and pizza. Many decisions Sylvia makes as a parent are informed by her first pregnancy and birthing experience, and her own childhood experiences as her family navigated public benefits systems. One very strong childhood memory involved the state "threatening to take us from my mom because she fed us canned fruits and vegetables." She lives with the fear of the state looking for reasons to take the kids away from them. "I struggle to give my kids a life where the system won't look down on us. They can't say my kid is underweight and use that as a reason to take them away"—another fear growing from childhood experiences.

Sylvia's decision to sit in her car in the garage on this cold afternoon was a decision to protect her children from the generational trauma that grew from state intervention throughout the life of this loving, hard-working, strong Black woman. Sylvia and Derek work to protect the

lives, childhoods, and dreams of their children from systems that hinder their abilities to care for themselves and their children. Their children's dreams include becoming a doctor, a lawyer and the youngest wants to be Superman.

*

Federal law makes child support funding to states contingent upon a state requiring parent applicants to its Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and/or Medicaid programs to cooperate with local child support enforcement agencies (42USC § 654(29)(B)&(C), (42USC § 433.147(b)) (represented in

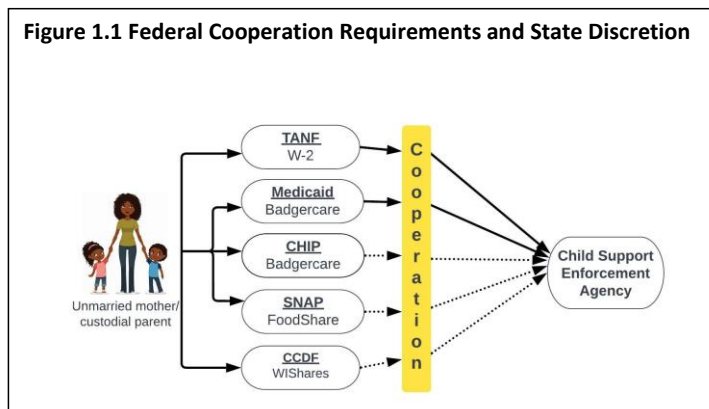


Figure 1.1 Federal Cooperation Requirements and State Discretion by a dotted line). The federal government granted discretionary power to states to also require the cooperation of parent applicants to its state Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), SNAP food stamps (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), and/or child care subsidies through the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF).

This dissertation study more closely examines implementation in one state, Wisconsin. It is one of only a few states that has passed laws requiring cooperation for all the optional programs: the state Children's Health Insurance Program (BadgerCare), CCDF child care

subsidies (Wisconsin Shares and Milwaukee Early Care Assistance), and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (FoodShare).³

Although individual states can each develop more detailed cooperation requirements, each state must incorporate the following components. In TANF, cooperation must be “in good faith” and include:

- 1) Appearing at interviews, hearings, and legal proceedings and
- 2) Submitting to genetic testing (for paternity establishment) (42 USC §654(29)(B)&(C)).

The minimum requirements for Medicaid cooperation include:

- 1) Providing relevant information or evidence
- 2) Appearing as a witness at hearings
- 3) Attesting to lack of information under penalty of perjury (if deemed necessary)
- 4) Paying the Medicaid agency any monies collected by the individual that are covered by the assignment and
- 5) Taking any other reasonable steps to establish paternity and secure medical support (42 CFR §433.147(b)).

Federal requirements put an emphasis on paternity establishment. In the United States, a husband is presumed to be the father of a child born during marriage. If two parents are not married, then paternity⁴ must be established before the father has any legal rights or

³ In 2017, the federal government encouraged states to require cooperation for SNAP benefits. Wisconsin passed a law requiring cooperation. Enactment required a federal waiver that was not granted, so in practice, Wisconsin requires cooperation for 4 of the 5 possible programs.

⁴ Cooperation requirements were established before the US legalized gay marriage. Therefore, the law uses the term “paternity” and not “parentage.”

responsibilities for the child. Therefore, in practice, the parents required to cooperate have low incomes⁵, are not married (at the time of application) and are typically mothers.

Continuing, child support enforcement agencies (CSEAs) are not required to report and disseminate racial demographic information about their caseloads. In the absence of that data, welfare program data and existing cooperation research offer some additional insights into who is required to cooperate. In 2019, the Administration for Children and Families reported that nationwide, 64.7% of TANF recipients were classified as Black and Brown, with 29% listed as Black, 35.7% as Hispanic and 26.7% as White. Although nationwide sanction data disaggregated by race is not available, one study from the state of Maryland indicates that the “typical” payee sanctioned by child support is a never-married African American woman (Hall et al., 2015). In the absence of CSEA data, other available information suggests that the cooperation requirement disproportionately impacts low-income Black and Brown mothers.

Unmarried parent applicants for TANF benefits must also assign their rights to receive support to the state (42 USC §608 (a)(3), (42 USC §1396k(a)(1)(A)). This assigning of rights gives the state authority to pursue paternity establishment and child support orders, and the option to pass some of the money through to families.⁶ If states do not require cooperation, then they do not receive federal funding. If the mother does not cooperate with the state, then she will

⁵ TANF is the nation’s welfare program which uses the Federal Poverty Index to cap eligibility requirements. Medicare is an entitlement program which also uses income caps for eligibility determination.

⁶ The amount or percentage of each payment varies by state. For more information about “the assignment” and pass-through policies see (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2019).

be sanctioned and, depending on the state in which she lives, she may be denied the full benefit(s). These processes help the CSEAs meet their legislated goal of minimizing welfare expenditures (1974 Child Support Enforcement Amendments).

For some readers of Sylvia and Derek's story, it may seem clear and simple—when applying, Sylvia agreed to cooperate, so, while the implementation may seem disjointed, it is logical and what she agreed to. This study maps the policy contexts, interrogates implementation issues and the impacts on families. Clearly, Sylvia sees it as complex and traumatic. Child support cooperation requirements generally operate behind the scenes. They are masked, intersect with multiple systems, and are implemented by various stakeholders. It took years of studying child support policy and practice, learning from experts, and observing family court around the country for me to understand the ways that this complex policy operated in Sylvia and Derek's story. This study offers a critical analysis of child support cooperation, and the ways in which race and racism operate in its evolution, implementation, and subsequent impacts. It also illuminates this generally masked policy by bridging the systems to which it binds some of the nation's lowest income families, who are disproportionately Black and Brown, and by illuminating the impacts on stakeholders, including mothers, fathers, and therefore, children.

Ultimately, this study speaks into Professor Ladson-Billings' challenge to researchers to examine the nation's "education debt" or lack of investment in the children, families, and communities that are underachieving in traditional individual measures of academic success. By engaging with that challenge, this information is used to explain how child support cooperation undergirds Ladson-Billings' "education debt" by furthering economic instability, limiting access

to knowledge about the policy, and allowing unchecked discretion. Consequently, this study will demonstrate that child support cooperation and its implementation threaten parental freedom and create barriers to resources necessary for the health and well-being of low-income Black and Brown children. Therefore, child support cooperation helps structure the nation's education debt.

Framing the Study

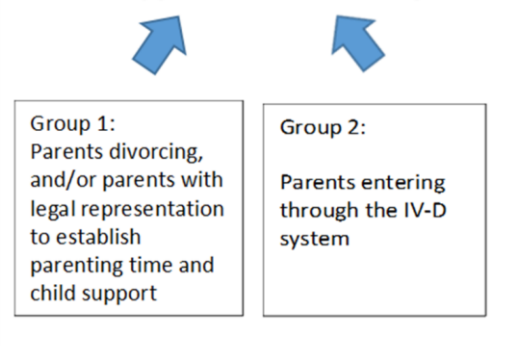
Sylvia's decision-making as she began the journey of motherhood was impacted by immediate needs and circumstances, as well as long-term ones. Her decisions were informed by the recommendations of trusted professionals (i.e., her doctor) and the personal experiences of herself, and her friends and family. Her journey was also influenced by state and federal laws related to both child support policy and welfare/public benefits policy. This section begins to describe ways that families enter the child support enforcement system and how policies establish who is required to cooperate.

Understanding systems of child support

In 2019, the Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) reported a caseload of 13,604,791 of which 6,846,444 (approximately 49.7%) had never received public assistance. These numbers speak to the two systems of child support with which families in the United States interact. The way that parents enter the system impacts the experiences they have and requirements that apply (see Figure 1.2 Paths to Enter the Child Support Enforcement System). Those numbers explain that the court cases of 49.7% of those families were initiated by one

parent and the cases are identified by the names of the parents, *Parent 1 v Parent 2*. These parents are typically divorcing and have “never received public assistance.” These Group 1 parents establish child support orders and parenting time agreements through the courts. For

Figure 1.2 Paths to Enter the Child Support Enforcement System



these families, the collection of child support is an administrative process and is implemented through local CSEA. The CSEA coordinates the garnishing of paychecks through the payor’s employer. If issues arise with this process, they are often addressed by attorneys before the parents ever enter a courtroom. These families typically have the means to get “state married” and have the means to divorce, oftentimes with legal representation or mediators. This is one system of child support enforcement.

The other 6,846,444 parents that are part of OCSE’s caseload (approximately 50.3%), are part of cases brought forth by the government against the (alleged) father. In those cases the state is the petitioner and the (alleged) father is the respondent (i.e., *In Re the Paternity of Child’s Initials, Child Support Enforcement v Father’s Name, State of Wisconsin v. Father’s Name*) In this branch of the CSE system known as “IV-D” or the public side (Group 2 above), the state initiates the case. This system was established through Section IV-D, an amendment to the Social Security Act of 1935 and is the system that Sylvia and Derek navigated. Families enter their local CSEA’s IV-D system in the following ways:

- 1) When an unmarried custodial parent (typically a mother) applies for a welfare or public benefits program that requires cooperation with the child support enforcement agency, and/or,
- 2) When the child welfare system removes a child from a parents' home, oftentimes that parent will have to pay child support to the state in order to reimburse the state for foster care payments⁷ and/or,
- 3) When a parent who is supposed to receive child support through the first system is not receiving consistent or full payments, then that parent can hire an attorney for assistance or she can seek the assistance of the local CSEA to pursue collection of the child support order (Social Security Act, Section IV-D).

This study centers on child support cooperation policies, practices, and impacts resulting when a family enters the IV-D system through welfare/public benefits programs (the first of the three categories). It is not clear what percentage of families enter the IV-D system through each of those methods.

To achieve the mandate of minimizing welfare expenditures, child support enforcement agencies need a laser focus on establishing paternity. Without paternity establishment, the (alleged) father has no legal rights or responsibilities to the child, and child support cannot be established. Paternity establishment is one essential step in the state's efforts to recoup welfare expenditures from him. Also, the policy logic is that if the father continues to pay child support, then the mother's household income will rise above eligibility for welfare and public benefits. Consequently, the state intends to use child support payments to seek reimbursement for welfare/public assistance and ultimately limit welfare expenditures because child support

⁷ For in-depth analysis of this child welfare component of the child support enforcement system, see Hatcher, 2016; D. E. Roberts, 2002.

payments will help raise her household income above eligibility levels for welfare/public assistance.

Reconnecting to education

In part, this study interrogates the varied impacts that child support cooperation has on low-income, unmarried, Black families. When they turn to the state for assistance, child support cooperation binds these families to complex, interconnected and powerful systems of surveillance and enforcement. These systems structure some of students' and parents' lives outside the classroom but also impact their experiences in the classroom and school building. This study illuminates the ways that intersectionality and racism operating in systems outside of schools structure circumstances that are widely known to build barriers to student success - parental incarceration and poverty. Maybe more importantly in today's context, this study further arms education professionals who believe in the humanity and potential of every person as we navigate a political terrain that is working to deny race and racism.

Mapping cooperation policy onto Sylvia and Derek's story

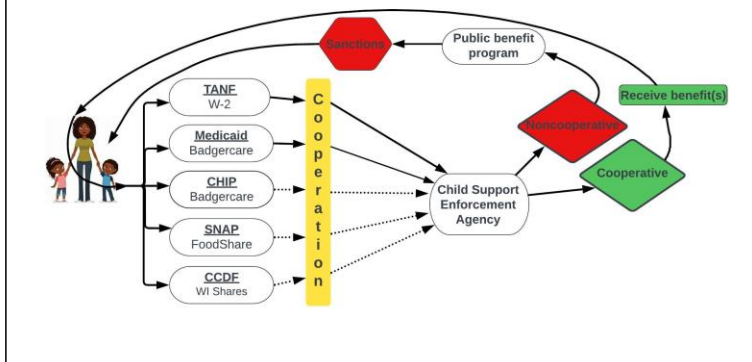
Sylvia followed the logical advice of her physician to utilize the more cost-effective insurance option that was expected to lead to better care during pregnancy. That insurance was Wisconsin's Medicaid insurance program, commonly referred to as "BadgerCare." The physician recommending BadgerCare was likely not aware of the other consequences of that seemingly logical decision. Sylvia did not recall being asked to cooperate with the child support

agency when she applied. It is unclear whether there was discussion of cooperation. If asked, the question likely seemed irrelevant because Derek was involved, and they did not yet have a baby in their arms.⁸ Applying for BadgerCare was a logical decision for her because the insurance through her job was costly and would have created debt by attending the recommended medical appointments during pregnancy. Sylvia did not remember agreeing to cooperate with the CSEA at the time of application. The questions about paternity came in the hospital just after birth.

Once an unmarried parent completes an application for a program requiring cooperation, one of two things happens. If she agreed to cooperate, then the CSEA initiates a process with the family court and turns to the mother as an informant for information used to establish paternity and the child support order. Cooperation is required throughout the period that she is

receiving the benefit. If she is deemed noncooperative, then the child support

Figure 1.3 Cooperation Policy Map: Mothers'/Custodial Parents' Path



⁸ Cooperation was eventually considered a barrier to a woman seeking medical care during pregnancy and now is only required after she gives birth (P. Roberts, 2005). With the summer 2022 overturning of *Roe v Wade* and the debates about when life begins, states are beginning to pursue legal changes allowing them to also pursue paternity establishment, medical support costs and child support during the pregnancy whereas currently this does not happen until after the birth is completed.

enforcement agency notifies the welfare/ assistance program, and she will be sanctioned and lose all or a portion of the benefit(s).⁹ See Figure 1.3 Cooperation Policy Map: Mothers'/ Custodial Parents' Path. Federal law requires that states sanction a minimum of 25% reduction in benefits, up to 100% reduction of the benefit(s) (42 US Code § 608(2)(b)). Wisconsin takes the most extreme position and terminates the benefit(s). The mother can attempt to reactivate the benefits by returning to the CSEA and cooperating with the agency's requests.

When a pregnant woman is married, the law presumes the husband is the father. State interest in them is generated only if they divorce, child support payments become delinquent, and the mother/CP turns to the state for welfare/public assistance. Otherwise, because the goal is to minimize welfare expenditures, cooperation really only applies to unmarried parents.¹⁰ Any current paternal involvement (financial or otherwise) in raising the child is irrelevant. Nothing about Sylvia's story suggests that her physician had any knowledge of these consequences of applying for BadgerCare. The conversations between Sylvia and her physician were about cost-effective insurance coverage for the pregnancy and birth of the child. There was no way for Sylvia to know that the state would begin efforts to establish paternity, charge

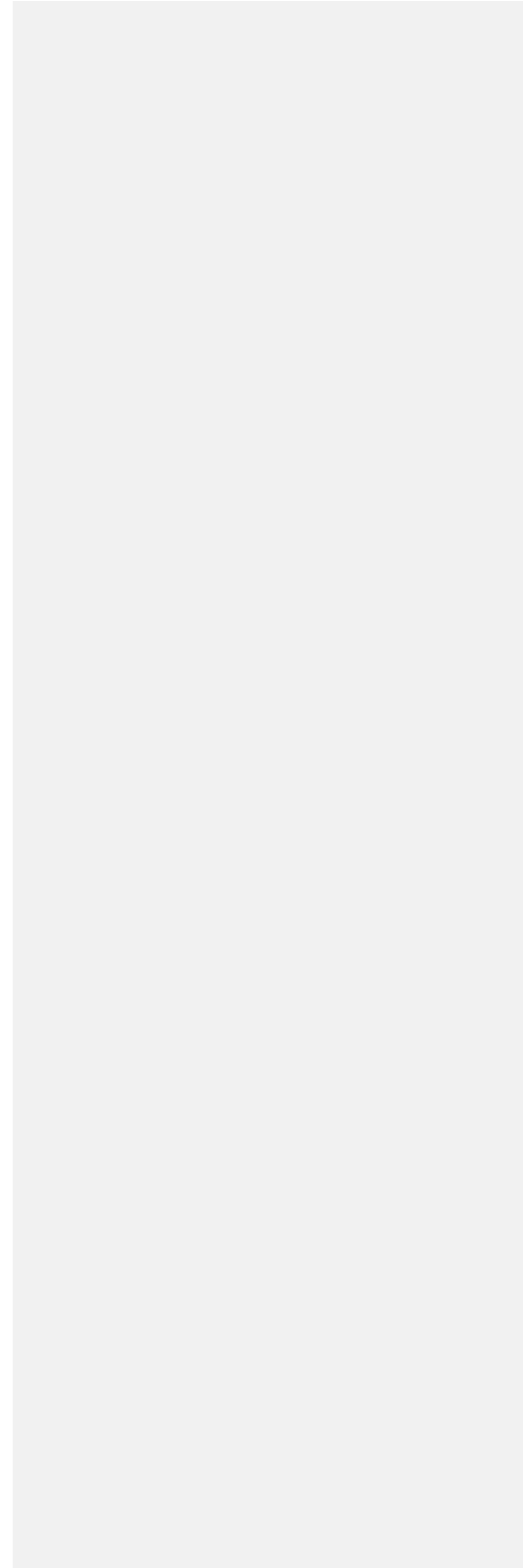
⁹ There is one exception. Applicants who fear abuse from the other parent can apply for a "good cause exemption" from child support cooperation requirements. While an essential component of child support policy, these exemptions are rarely granted (Hall et al, 2015). Nationwide, only 2% of applicants were granted an exemption in 2015. Between 2014 and 2018, the number of good cause determinations for five consecutive years ranged from 8,301 to 9,940. In Wisconsin, the range was 51 to 69 during the same period (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2019). Research is needed to understand the reasons behind these exemption numbers.

¹⁰ Eligibility requirements for welfare/public assistance make it rare for a married couple to be eligible.

Derek birth costs, and establish a child support order. In all likelihood, the physician did not either.¹¹

In this study, I map the varied impacts of child support cooperation with special attention to both parents and the lives that they are creating for their children. Centering both mothers and fathers is unique and illuminates the ways in which child support cooperation policies and practices undermine and build barriers to the academic success of children growing up in unmarried families with low incomes who are disproportionately Black. In other words, this study interrogates the ways in which child support cooperation helps structure the nation's education debt.

¹¹ While it may appear that I am holding the individual physician responsible for the situation that Sylvia and Derek faced, that is not my intention. Although I did not interview the physician, it was clear that Sylvia saw this person as an ally and an advocate. I have no reason to doubt that and the roles of these well-intentioned and unaware stakeholders are a problematic part of the systems which also needs further consideration.



Chapter 2 Literature Review

Creating a better future means we must contextualize the struggles of communities of color within the structural realities in which they live.

(Stovall, 2013)

In part, this project examines the on-the-ground realities of child support cooperation requirements in the lives of the nation's low income, unmarried families. Child support cooperation binds many systems together including: welfare and public assistance, child support, family court, and law enforcement. This study seeks to understand the ways that child support cooperation links to the education debt by interrogating cooperation through the eyes of various stakeholders and its links to systems that cooperation binds together. This requires bridging literatures that are not typically in conversation with one another. Consequently, this literature review uses the education debt to begin building a bridge between aspects of student achievement and impacts of child support cooperation and the carceral state. The small body of existing child support cooperation literature is considered and some of the current gaps are identified. Subsequent chapters further construct the bridge between child support cooperation and the education debt by analyzing data collected.

The education debt and student achievement

Some of the data used to measure and articulate achievement gaps include: high school graduation rates, Advanced Placement courses offered and taken, and standardized test scores. These items measure the individual success of students, and that data is then reviewed to identify high and low-achieving groups. Ladson-Billings challenged educational researchers to look beyond those isolated measures of individual achievement to understand why groups of K-

12 students persistently underachieve and consider what is happening at all levels of society that might inform those outcomes. In part, this study unmask the ways in which child support cooperation requirements activate systems that put low-income, unmarried, Black parents and children into the gaze of the state which ultimately furthers economic instability and parental incarceration.

Various school-related responses to the challenges of poverty have been generated over many decades (i.e., school lunch programs, programs to address “summer slide,” incorporating ACT testing into a school day). Parental incarceration is a newer area of research. It is commonly defined as removal and imprisonment of a parent for more than one night, either in jail or prison (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). It can negatively impact students’ emotional well-being, as well as their connections to, participation in, and achievement in school (Eddy & Poehlmann, 2010; Travis & Waul, 2003; Nichols, Loper, & Meyer, 2016). The disproportionate and disparate impacts of incarceration policies and practices on African American, Latinx, and Native American people are well-documented (Alexander, 2010; Boggess, 2017), which indicates that Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) students, families and communities are incarcerated at disproportionate rates and therefore their children are more likely to suffer the adverse consequences. This study identifies specific policies that criminalize and incarcerate parents and create a debt anchor for the family, two factors that act as barriers to student success.

Some of the data used to measure and articulate achievement gaps include: high school graduation rates, Advanced Placement courses offered and taken, and standardized test scores. These items measure the individual success of students and that data is then reviewed in ways

that identify high and low-achieving groups. Ladson-Billings challenged educational researchers to look beyond those measures of individual achievement to understand why groups of K-12 students persistently underachieve and consider what is happening at all levels of society that might inform those outcomes. This study starts with families who have low-incomes and examines how the experiences of child support cooperation both further poverty and create paths to incarceration. These are two factors that education literature shows as barriers to student achievement.

Since the United States started disaggregating student academic achievement measures, the nation has documented achievement gaps between Black, Brown, and white students and between children from low-income families and those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. These are typically highlighted through differences in graduation rates, standardized test scores, registration for Advanced Placement (AP) courses, and even school readiness. These measures of individual student performance are also compiled to evaluate the success of state, districts, schools, and individual teachers.

Various large- and small-scale attempts have been made to close or at least “interrupt” those gaps. Those efforts, like Head Start and year-round schooling initiatives attempt to improve the school readiness of young children or prevent summer learning loss. Efforts like these are often directed at families with low incomes, many of whom are Black or Brown families. While these efforts (and others) help many individual students, overall, achievement disparities across the nation persist.

In her call to educational researchers, Ladson-Billings suggested that assessing measures of individual achievement will continue to produce the same results because of the nation’s

lack of investment in the lives and communities of the student groups found to be underachieving. She purported that identifying and examining the lack of investments would lead to different questions, answers, and solutions.

Parental incarceration and poverty are two experiences that are widely accepted as creating significant barriers to the academic achievement of students. Responses to the challenges of poverty have been generated over many decades (i.e., school lunch programs, programs to address “summer slide,” incorporating ACT testing into a school day). Parental incarceration is a newer area of research. It is commonly defined as removal and imprisonment of a parent for more than one night, either in jail or prison (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). It can negatively impact students’ emotional well-being, as well as their connections to, participation in, and achievement in school (Eddy & Poehlmann, 2010; Travis & Waul, 2003; Nichols, Loper, & Meyer, 2016). The disproportionate and disparate impacts of incarceration policies and practices on African American, Latinx, and Native American people are well-documented (Alexander, 2010; Boggess, 2017), which indicates that Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) students, families and communities are more likely to experience the negative impacts of parental incarceration than white students. Connections between child support cooperation, poverty, and parental incarceration are examined throughout this study.

Child support cooperation literature

Child support cooperation policy is complex. It sits at the intersection of multiple government agencies and academic disciplines including child support, welfare and public assistance, family court, and law enforcement. It only applies to the lowest income, unmarried

families, the majority of whom are Black or Brown. These complexities help inform why it is an understudied area. Boggess (2017) explained that the journey of parents in the IV-D child support system is through “a space where two systems – family court and child support – intersect. This territory is co-managed by judicial actors and a government agency, and is not widely known or understood by people who are outside it” (*ibid*, p. 112). Key actors at that point of intersection are family court officials, child support staff, and very low-income parents. Because the judicial actors are less likely to know the experiences of poverty, they are less able, or aware of the need, to think creatively to address related challenges. Parents connected to the IV-D system rarely have legal representation to navigate this complex terrain where many of the policies were designed for divorcing families where the father is working full-time (Sorensen & Lerman, 1998). Many factors combine to limit the likelihood of critical research. Those include the general lack of understanding, absence of legal representation of IV-D parents, and the dominant culture’s general acceptance of the child support enforcement system’s narrative of universally acting in the best interests of children.

Perspectives of mothers/CPs about the child support enforcement system

The experiences of new mothers vary and there is much evidence to show that engaging with the CSE system is not something they typically desire. After giving birth, many unmarried mothers are immediately pulled between feeling positive and/or hopeful about the father’s current support and involvement in the child’s life and her need for stable resources that the dad is not able to provide (Kelly, 1994). Many unmarried low-income parents prefer to negotiate private agreements for child support and not pursue formal child support orders

(Edin, 1997; Huang & Han, 2012; Pate, 2003). Mothers' reasons vary and include: still being in a romantic relationship with the father who is providing informal support (Nepomnyaschy & Garfinkel, 2010) and believing that informal support provides greater economic benefits (Edin, 1997). Sometimes a mother knows that the father's financial situation is as bad as (or worse than) hers and that a child support order will not put more money in her pocket (Harris, 2015). There is a common perception that engaging with the child support enforcement system will detract from their child's well-being and may harm poor fathers (Hopkins & Poulson, 2014). Finally, some evidence demonstrates that child support and welfare/public benefits policies disrupt relationships between mothers and fathers, position them as adversaries, and push those families further into poverty (Hatcher, 2007; Kelly, 1994).

That significant body of research explains the reasons that many families try to avoid the CSE system. A study specifically about child support cooperation did not ask parents' perspectives, but instead turned to child support caseworkers and welfare office caseworkers to understand why custodial parents did not cooperate (Hall et al., 2015). Those reasons included: 1) protection of the noncustodial parent, 2) fear of losing the informal support received from the custodial parent and 3) fear of domestic violence.

This evidence suggests that the cooperation requirement positions mothers so that there are no reasonable choices. Mothers apply for benefits because additional resources are needed. Sometimes fathers are contributing and there are still not enough resources. Existing research indicates that many families view engaging with the CSEA, and therefore the cooperation requirement, as problematic for their families. Furthermore, these are families that

need additional resources provided through public benefits programs to care for themselves and their children.

While there is a significant amount of evidence to indicate that many mothers are apprehensive to engage in the CSE system, there is a gap in the literature about if, how, what, and when mothers learn about this complex cooperation requirement. The applications themselves and interactions with public assistance caseworkers are likely sources of learning about cooperation. Wisconsin's most extensive application is for Medicaid/BadgerCare. In that 61-page application packet (see Appendix A BadgerCare Plus Application Packet), this is the information provided about cooperation:

In some situations, you must cooperate with the Child Support Agency to establish paternity. This means you must help the agency locate an absent parent, legally name the absent parent and/or enforce medical support liability orders. If you do not cooperate with the Child Support Agency and do not have a good reason to not cooperate, your benefits may end if you are an adult and are not pregnant (p. 2).

TANF workers interviewed in a six-state study noted challenges in quickly gaining trust during initial interviews to collect information about alleged fathers (to forward to the child support enforcement agency) (Brown, 2000). Analyzing the experiences of women applying for TANF, Bridges (2020) finds that the interviews can be dehumanizing and violent and an invasion of privacy. It does not seem likely that these are opportunities for meaningful learning about the implications of cooperation requirements.

Cooperation: legal meanings and practical applications

Definitions of cooperation outlined in federal and state laws can differ by state and program. In reality, “the multitude and complexity of child support and welfare rules interfere in ways that make it difficult for parents to comply, even when they want to” (Waller & Plotnick, 2001, p. 90).

Looking solely at the cooperation description in the BadgerCare application listed above, the implications are not clear. Aid for Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) is the entitlement welfare program that predates the current Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant program. Under AFDC, there were a few legal challenges to cooperation which is more than have been initiated under TANF. One case in particular sheds light on cooperation’s implementation by emphasizing the unstated behavioral expectations related to cooperation, as well as the discretion of the state in deeming someone noncooperative. Testimony of child support administrators in *Tomas v. Rubin (1991)* offered a practice-based description of both cooperation and non-cooperation. Cooperation was described as including, but not limited to:

a willingness to talk and provide information, giving complete answers, maintaining a pleasant, conversational tone of voice and demeanor during the interview, acting friendly, interested/sincere in wanting paternity established, maintaining eye contact, furnishing names of possible witnesses, friends and acquaintances who might know the possible father.

Conversely, noncooperation was described in the following ways:

evasive/inconsistent answers, nervous/distrustful/hostile attitude, defensive demeanor, antagonistic behavior from start of interview, no eye contact, no attempt to describe possible father in any way, cannot recall any information regarding possible father, the way they met, where they went, how many times did they meet what friends or acquaintances were involved, furnishing conflicting information furnished (*Tomas v. Rubin*, 926 F. 2d 906 - Court of Appeals, 9th Circuit, 1991).

Rubin highlights the tremendous discretion granted to case workers in determining noncooperation. Those definitions also suggest that personality, attitude, life experiences, human interaction, race, ethnicity, and culture are some of the variables that can be used to deem someone noncooperative.

Sanctions

Once a parent is deemed noncooperative, sanctions take effect. Federal law requires that sanctions be a minimum 25% reduction in benefits, but depending on the state, the sanction can be termination of the benefits. Although sanctions vary by state and can also vary by program, the “shifting and increasing regulations which carry severe sanctions that affect the well-being of the children of women who do not comply are extremely threatening to welfare recipients” (Shaw, 2003, p. 73). Depending on where they live and the programs utilized, a family could lose health insurance, child care subsidies, cash assistance and food stamps.

The limited child support cooperation research was primarily done through university partnerships with CSEAs and addressed concerns of interest to the state. Typically, the focus of these studies was the effectiveness of the cooperation requirement in generating compliance (Gleason & Passarella, 2017; Hall et al., 2015). In other words, the literature focuses on the effectiveness of sanctions resulting in a mother cooperating.

A child support agency-university partnership in Maryland studied cooperation by looking at characteristics of “cases” that were sanctioned in that state, specifically whether the noncooperative caregiver complied after the sanction and the “recidivism” rate where a case is

reopened within one year of a sanction for noncooperation (Hall et al., 2015). The use of the term recidivism speaks to the construction of people who access public assistance programs as also being criminals. “Recidivism” generally refers to a criminal who reoffends and not a parent who is seeking assistance in caring for a child.

The Maryland study identified a 53.5% recidivism rate. This was described in a positive light by suggesting that mothers were *choosing* to cooperate. Maryland is one of 31 states (like Wisconsin) that terminates cash assistance when the mother does not comply with the cooperation requirement (*ibid*). This seems to suggest that when a mother is sanctioned for noncooperation that she has real options, a real choice. The context in which these moms come to request cash assistance (e.g., little formal education in a highly credentialed society, Black in a society with documented and persistent discrimination in hiring processes, and one or more children that need food or clothing and shelter) suggests that these moms are forced into compliance not that they have a reasonable “choice.” Secondly, the closed cases that reopened in one year included “churners,” cases that closed and reopened within one month. The authors suggest that those probably result from missing an agency appointment or failure to submit required paperwork on time. Therefore, from an agency perspective, the child support cooperation requirement is effective because it is generating compliance. The Maryland study did not address the circumstances that led to a noncooperation sanction, the experiences of families when benefits were terminated or the decision to comply. There is a general lack of understanding about how cooperation requirements impact children and families (Selekman & Holcomb, 2018; Hopkins & Poulson, 2014).

Who is sanctioned

Very little has been written about which mothers/custodial parents are sanctioned. The Maryland study did identify that the typical “payee” receiving a child support sanction in the state’s TANF program was a never married, African American woman in her early 30s who finished high school. And “Payees who received child support sanctions (*as opposed to sanctions related to work requirements*) were more likely to be African American” (Hall et al., 2015, p. 4). Most of the women sanctioned through the child support cooperation requirement had children under the age of three and were work-exempt cases. Clearly, there is a significant gap about who is sanctioned for noncooperation.

Presumably, the mothers’ tenuous circumstances (e.g., income instability, housing instability, child care instability), which are amplified by the cooperation requirement, help ensure that mothers will not challenge these systems. Child support cooperation sits at the intersection of systems and as noted, the court experiences of mothers and fathers effected by it are masked and unfamiliar to many outside those systems (Boggess, 2017). Involved families lack legal representation. Although there is a significant body of evidence indicating that families believe that engaging with the CSE system will cause financial harm to the family and hinder the emotional well-being of the children, cooperation is required when families attempt to utilize the nation’s safety net.

Evidence suggests that the enforcement of the cooperation requirement and interactions with the CSEA heightens the stress and increases the responsibilities these mothers face. Faced with unreasonable choices: don’t cooperate and don’t get the resources needed to care for themselves and their children or comply with caseworker expectations and, according

to *Tomas*, comply in a pleasant manner. The state justifies management of her behavior because she is not married and is asking to use the government's welfare/public assistance programs. The requirement limits the parents' abilities to make decisions about roles they will play in raising the child. There are significant gaps in the literature about how families learn about the requirement and navigate its consequences.

Chapter 3 Theoretical Framework

In a perfectly just society, we would not discuss race because it would not exist and there would be no need for it. That is not the world in which we live. In “We Were 8 Years in Power,” Ta-Nehisi Coates (2017) described two theories related to justice. He explained that non-ideal theory asks, “When injustice has been so central to the development of the nation, how do we move toward justice?” Conversely, ideal theory operates without acknowledging the historical and current environment by instead considering what justice demands in a perfectly just society. Critical Race Theory (CRT) is premised on the reality that (racial) injustice has been central to the development of the nation and is grounded in the understanding that when scholarship and action ignore the history and current situation, they will perpetuate injustice. CRT is a movement, a collection of activists and scholars that examine and work to alter the relationships between race, racism, and power in society and attempt to provide redress for historically and intentionally marginalized communities. The movement challenges the theoretical foundations and thinking that undergird the organization of society.

My introduction to Critical Race Theory was through a graduate course taught by Professor Gloria Ladson-Billings, who is one of the scholars credited with extending CRT into the field of education. I remember the energy that I felt as I applied the theory to my own educational experiences as a K-12 student in the Milwaukee Public Schools as that system navigated court-ordered desegregation. It simultaneously made so much sense and challenged so much of the societal understandings that I breathed into my psyche every day. At that time,

CRT was still very young and its founders and followers were (and continue to) uniquely challenging systems of power during unsettling times.

The writings of legal scholars Derek Bell and Alan Freeman in the 1970s formed the basis for Critical Race Theory. Within a decade of the tremendous civil rights gains of the 1960s, Bell, Freeman, and other lawyers, activists, and legal scholars understood those gains as being stalled at best and rolled back at worst (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Initially, Critical Legal Studies seemed to be a reasonable academic home for these scholars as it was populated with neo-Marxists challenging some of the foundations of legal education and thinking. Ultimately, the voices of white neo-Marxists did not see and allow for analysis related to racial inequity (Brown & Jackson, 2013). It is in this context that Critical Race Theory was founded.

Recognizing that responses to legal changes around race and racism and responses to social movements around equity and justice were creating a new context, these leaders saw a need for new theories and strategies moving forward. These founders framed the legal system as unable to consider the circumstances of individuals who were historically viewed as property and not as people. Building on critical legal studies and radical feminism, CRT borrowed the idea of legal indeterminacy (not every legal case has one correct outcome) and built on insights into the relationships between power and the construction of social roles and invisible patterns of dominance (Delgado, 2017). These theorists understood that the law was structured to respond to some issues facing communities of color, but there was no precedent or even language allowing for a race-based critique of the legal institutions or reasoning within them. This is where CRT began its work. CRT has expanded beyond the law into other disciplines and fields, and into many regions of the world. For example, Ladson-Billings and Tate applied CRT

to the field of education where it is now used extensively by researchers in K-12 education, higher education, policy, and finance.

While the use of CRT has blossomed across many fields, it has been underutilized in relation to child support and social welfare policies. In *The Racial Contract*, Charles Mills (1997) offered insights about the underutilization of CRT in his area of philosophy, which also seems relevant for the fields of social work and social welfare, and the child support system.

The fact that this racial structure, clearly political in character, and the struggle against it equally so, have not for the most part been deemed appropriate subject matter for mainstream Anglo-American political philosophy and the fact that the very concepts hegemonic in the discipline are refractory to an understanding of these realities (Mills, 1997, p. 31).

The political acceptability of studying race, the obstacles created through the ways of thinking within disciplines, and the dominant make-up of the researchers have likely limited the use of CRT in various fields. Therefore, researchers in disciplines that continue to be dominated by positivist research and mainstream Anglo-American thinking are not likely to find support (i.e., intellectual, financial) to diversify their fields and disciplines by utilizing CRT or other theories that challenge existing power structures. As a review of the literature suggests (see Chapter 2), examination of child support cooperation has typically been positivist in nature, funded by the state, and seemed to focus primarily on the policies' successes in compelling mothers to cooperate.

The research and thinking of critical race theorists asks different questions, examines through lenses of power, and forces consideration of the past, present and future. Sometimes those efforts highlight the need to examine a policy from lenses that have not yet been

considered or developed. Those new perspectives can generate different kinds of questions that require access to information that has not been collected or disseminated. Therefore, questions posited by critical race theorists sometimes necessitate new approaches or call for new information. The creation of these new approaches is sometimes met with resistance as they may challenge the master narratives that govern society's thinking.

Critical race theorists must be intentional when calling into question master narratives as they are engrained in the culture's policies and practices that inform daily living. Identifying those narratives is an ongoing process at the individual, group, and societal levels and can be particularly challenging for beneficiaries of the narratives, but also sometimes for those enslaved by them. Awareness and understanding of those narratives can inform all aspects of research. One relevant master narrative that pervades U.S. social welfare and child support policy constructs the definition of family as having a husband, a wife, and one or more children.¹² In Wisconsin, many social welfare programs are only available to custodial parents. For unmarried parents, paternity must be established as an initial step in the child support and custody processes. By focusing on the experiences of students as children in a family, this study recognizes that each child has two parents and that both matter in the life of the child.

Tenets

Although there are not a strict set of beliefs or doctrines that all CRT scholars must follow, there are ideologically identifiable positions that many maintain and tools of actions

¹² Although recent legalization of gay marriage challenges the construct of two-parent families consisting of husband and wife, prior to 2015, social welfare policy promoted marriage as a union between two-people, a man, and a woman.

that many utilize. The following tenets and tools of action that ground Critical Race Theory are discussed: permanence of racism, race and racism are social constructions, intersectionality, interest convergence, majoritarian narratives and counters to them, and critiques of liberalism.

Permanence of racism

While Mills' "The Racial Contract" (1997) spoke to white supremacy in worldwide context, CRT Scholar Derrick Bell (Bell, 1991) spoke to its prominence and permanence in the United States. For some, the idea that racism is permanent and built into the structure of society may be the hardest aspect of CRT to digest. When acknowledged, racism is often constructed as something enacted by individuals (who are outliers) and something that is uncommon. CRT examines all the manifestations of racism and suggests that it is foundational to the systems and policies that shape society.

Consequently, Bell (1992) described large scale systemic reform as an essential aspect of real change and recognized that the likelihood of that is minimal. In the absence of real change, activists' efforts may be usurped within the larger system that ensures racism's permanence. Although there are moments in history that mark seemingly significant progress toward ending racism, CRT identifies those simply as disruptions that are then followed by regression or retrenchment (Delgado, 2017). Rothstein (2017) documented governmental policies and practices (i.e., GI Bills, Federal Housing Authority loans) that have structured generational wealth-building for white families while structuring Black families out of those opportunities. In the midst of those efforts to structure wealth out of Black communities, activists have resisted and fought against those initiatives. Carson Gulley, a former chef at my graduate institution,

sought to creatively challenge laws that prevented him from purchasing a home near the university. Today, although they do not appear to be actively used, some of those neighborhoods still have race restrictions on record for real estate ownership. Race remains built into that system.

Truth-telling about the experiences and impacts of racism or “racial realism” is a tool of CRT and yet, it can create further risk for minoritized and oppressed peoples. This harm may come to the individual speaking up¹³ and/or groups of people. Doing no harm is a very real concern when engaging with racial realism around child support cooperation and the child support system in general. Detailing the context and experiences of individuals, families, and groups who are navigating oppressive and, in many ways, discretionary systems (i.e., the court system, social welfare systems, child support system), can lead to worsening conditions or further entrenching injustices. This is significant for low-income Black parents navigating these systems without legal representation. If individuals with discretionary power are able to make decisions about access to resources, access to their children, and ultimately parental freedom or incarceration. These are some of the challenges of trying to dismantle self-perpetuating systems.

Race and racism are social constructions

While the history of the United States shows that by law, Black people were structured as property, exploring race in relation to economic status deepens the understanding of how race was and continues to be used as a tool to divide and establish hierarchies of value to

¹³ For more context, see (Crenshaw, 2001)

human life. During slavery, even though poor whites remained economically subordinate to wealthy whites, “Slavery also provided mainly property-less whites with a property in their whiteness” (Bell in Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 75). In other words, whiteness gave the potential for someone to own property and never be property. Owning property has always been a central concept for citizenship and rights in the United States. For example, originally only landowners were allowed to vote. Policies and practices that ensure that people are seen as “other,” “less than” or “not human” are baked into the culture of the United States. While some policies and practices that categorize individuals and groups as deserving or worthy shift over time (e.g., immigration laws target different groups for exclusion from the United States at different points in history), The Racial Contract endures and ensures that only white people will remain at the top of the hierarchy.

For whiteness to remain synonymous with property, policy and perception must continually adapt. Lipsitz (2006) described this as “possessive investment in whiteness,” where “possessive” is meant to

Stress the relationship between whiteness and asset accumulation in our society, to connect attitudes and interests, to demonstrate that White supremacy is usually less a matter of direct, referential, and snarling contempt than a system of protecting the privileges of whites by denying communities of color opportunities for asset accumulation and upward mobility. Whiteness is invested in, like property, but it is also a means of accumulating property and keeping it from others (p. vii).

This reasoning also highlights the ways in which whiteness is systemic and compounds over time. The approach is a two-pronged strategy: increase the wealth of whites while actively suppressing the income and wealth accumulation of Blacks. The nation’s use of marriage laws portrays this strategy. As enslaved people, Black Americans were outlawed from marrying.

Demonstrating commitment to family, love, and resistance, Black people still married, but were not “state married.” In post-World War I and II, the state excluded Black war veterans and their families (married or unmarried) from receiving the resources and supports offered to white U.S. war veterans, including the GI Bill and Federal Housing Authority loans, tools used to gain economic security and build families (Rothstein, 2017). Additionally, Professor Dorothy Brown (2021) also documented ways that the US Tax Code furthers this possessive investment in whiteness through laws that have the impact of financially punishing Black people who are “state married.” By adopting laws to allow or deny access to these properties of whiteness, white elites construct and reconstruct whiteness.

CRT helps illuminate the ways in which whiteness and possessing whiteness invoke the figure of human and, conversely, how possessing whiteness requires the dispossession of anyone who is not white. Efforts to maintain property values of whiteness have generated the “one drop rule” and an emphasis on “passing” to gain the privileges of whites or simply to be safe.¹⁴ Consequently, as the definition of white shifts throughout U.S. history, various oppressed groups experience the dispossession of whiteness at different moments in the nation’s story. This investment in the possession of whiteness is about property and the figure of “human” envisioned as white. Both rely on the dispossession of people of color. Mills (1997) speaks to white people’s efforts to perpetuate these privileges through adaptation of The Racial Contract.

One could say then, as a general rule that *white misunderstanding, misrepresentation, evasion, and self-deception on matters related to race* are among the most pervasive mental phenomena of the

¹⁴ For further discussion of significance of skin hue toward and within African American communities, see (Hughes & Hertel, 1990)

past few hundred years, a cognitive and moral economy psychically required for conquest, colonization, and enslavement. And these phenomena are in no way *accidental*, but *prescribed* by the terms of the Racial Contract, which requires a certain schedule of structured blindnesses and opacities in order to establish and maintain the white polity (p. 19).

The commitment to whiteness as property requires significant mental gymnastics.

Intersectionality

Critical race theorists challenge the theoretical foundations and thinking that underlie the organization of society, in part making visible what has typically been invisible (e.g., permanence of racism). An aspect of that includes an intersectional analysis or consideration of “How the structures of a society make certain identities vehicles for vulnerability” (Crenshaw, 2017). While Crenshaw is credited with coining the term “intersectionality” and applying it to law, conversations about the problems of not being seen as embodying all of one’s identities was not new. In the 1960s and 70s, the Combahee River Collective engaged and wrote about the ways in which the world seemed to operate as if they could only embody one of their identities and live into all of them. For example, they were not heard or seen fully as Black women or queer Black women, but instead seen solely as women (Taylor, 2017). A century earlier, the women’s suffrage movement(s) could not reconcile the shared concern for suffrage amongst Black women and white women. White leaders ultimately prioritized their whiteness above suffrage for all women (Watkins, 2016). Although the concept was not new, CRT incorporated the need for intersectional analysis into its framework.

Yet, Harris compels us to not essentialize people by “Reduce(ing) the lives of people who experience multiple forms of oppression into addition problems: racism + sexism= straight black women’s experiences” (Harris in Roberts, 1991, p. 1424-5). Contexts are essential to understanding power, identity, and domination. Without contextual (and continuous) examination, it is easily assumed that everyone is similarly situated with regard to the laws, policies, and practices. Yet, within and across each of those groups, there is variation. CRT works in the complex space of not overgeneralizing, while utilizing intersectionality to explore strategic approaches.

Consequently, CRT contextualizes issues of identity, domination, and story. CRT scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw continues educating us about how “structures make certain identities the consequence of and the vehicle for vulnerability.” For example, “far more for black women than white experience of the self is precisely that of being unable to disentangle the web of race and gender—of being enmeshed always in multiple, often contradictory discourses of sexuality and color.” (Harris in Roberts, 1991, p. 1426) . A commitment of CRT scholars is to understand that these sites of oppression require examination of policies and institutional structures, and the roles they play in contributing to the oppression of some and not others.

Interest convergence

Interest convergence is the idea that movements to advance the concerns of intentionally marginalized people will happen when those interests converge with the interests of white elites. Yet, often these changes are material in nature (e.g., profits, status of a nation) and actually serve to perpetuate white dominance (Crenshaw, 1995). Another challenge in

finding remedies to racial injustice is that dramatic moves toward justice will not be tolerated by the structure, and any costs will be felt by people of color and working-class whites.

Brown v Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas of 1954 is a commonly utilized to exemplify the concept of interest convergence. The violence of discrimination and segregation in the United States was being shared around the world and became a weapon for communist nations to use to further mar the United States' reputation amongst developing nations. Only white war veterans and their families were given access to life-changing resources and opportunities, and Black heroes were being excluded from those opportunities. At the same time, the southern economy was being destabilized and segregation was understood to be a limiting factor. This powerful combination of factors pushed the nation into *Brown I and II* decisions gave the illusion of movement toward justice, equality, and opportunity. This image was needed to promote a better image of the nation across the world. Yet, almost immediately after the decision, Black teachers were fired as school districts desegregated and prioritized white staffing. Resources followed wealthy white families into suburban school districts, furthering the disparities between their children and students of color and low-income whites. *Brown's* timeline of "all deliberate speed" to desegregate took decades to come to fruition in some school districts (i.e., Milwaukee, Wisconsin).

CRT illuminates and understands that the illusion of significant movement toward justice comes when the interests of white elites converge with the needs of minoritized and oppressed people. That illusion will also be followed by new realities of white supremacy that will be felt by people of color and low-income white people.

Majoritarian narratives and counters to them

United States' history is dominated by stories that hold a "comforting majoritarian interpretation of events" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 25) and therefore often disregard and/or whitewash the experiences of oppressed and minoritized people. These interpretations contribute to the master narratives and promote the psychic aspects of whiteness as property needed to perpetuate white supremacy through The Racial Contract. Revisionist interpretations seek to "reexamine America's historical record, replacing comforting majoritarian narratives with ones that square more accurately with minorities' experiences" (*ibid*, p. 25). These efforts help detail a more complete and robust understanding of history.

Oftentimes, revisionist efforts highlight the importance of storytelling to Critical Race Theory. "Powerfully written stories and narratives may begin a process of correction in our system of beliefs and categories by calling attention to neglected evidence and reminding readers of our common humanity" (*ibid*, p. 51). Because race is a social construction and racism is permanent, people of color endure the impacts of race and racism every day and must be key voices in telling the nation's stories.

Oftentimes, critical race theorists utilize counter-narratives and counter-storytelling to highlight embedded preconceptions that marginalize people or conceal their humanity. The U.S. form of democracy suggests that each person is entitled to her/his "day in court," an opportunity to tell "my story." Many parents engaged in family court through welfare and public assistance programs seem to anticipate the courtroom as a space where their counter narratives will be heard and impact outcomes. The testimonies of these Black fathers in courtrooms often fall on deaf ears or are silenced by the judges as their attempts to counter

the courts' majoritarian narratives about who they are (Brito et al., 2014; Price et al., 2014; Rodriguez, 2016). Although counter narratives are not likely to change outcomes, the mental release for oppressed individuals and communities that comes with sharing them may help shift responsibility to the systems (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Critical race theorists sometimes create counter-stories to help readers grasp complexities and experiences, and also to create new realities (Smith, Yosso, & Solorzano, 2007). This technique can make racialized power and systems more easily visible for some while also challenging that which is often presumed to be neutral. Critical race theorists believe that the impacts of counter-narratives and counter-storytelling are at least twofold. Firstly, once those stories are told, they can educate people. They might begin "a process of correction in our system of beliefs and categories by calling attention to neglected evidence and reminding readers of our common humanity" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 51). Secondly, they can serve to support and empower others that have similar stories. Counter-storytelling can be a useful tool to build awareness and question current and past injustices.

Critiques of liberalism

Two mainstays of liberal thinking include colorblindness and the concept of rights. Grounded in the truth of racism as a continuous and permanent aspect of U.S. society, CRT identifies colorblindness as an obstruction to change. Colorblindness describes an avoidance of discussing race. Justifications include: "Race doesn't matter," and "We live in a post-racial society" (commonly used after Barack Obama was elected President). Yet, because racism is "embedded in our thought processes and social structures.....the routines, practices and

institutions we rely on to do the world's work will keep minorities in subordinate positions" (*ibid*, 2017, p. 27)

Rich (2016) explains that by the early 2000s, the idea of the welfare queen as a poor, Black or brown, single, promiscuous woman was so entrenched in the thinking around welfare reform that the descriptors were no longer needed.¹⁵ The image of her was powerfully created simply by invoking the term "welfare queen" and racial descriptors were no longer needed.

This imagery has also served to mask the reality that while TANF participants remain disproportionately Black and Brown, the largest group of recipients nationwide has historically been white women. Consequently, white women could continue to benefit from assistance programs and minimize social stigma. In the racial hierarchy, they retained footing above Black women who were constructed as welfare queens. This portrays the "evasion and self-deception" that Mills noted as necessary to uphold The Racial Contract.

Additionally, some critical race theorists believe that liberals' commitment to the concept of "rights" has focused on individuals rather than groups. They suggest that that emphasis has ignored substantive rights (a group's experience) and prioritized procedural ones (an individual's experience). This thinking prevents an understanding of the differential impacts on people who embody oppressed identities and allows society to bypass consideration of the perpetuation of white supremacy. This also positions us to think of assessment through an equality of "opportunity" lens (rather than equality of "outcome"), and then we bypass the context of the history of injustice and uphold The Racial Contract.

¹⁵ Rich argues that "welfare queen" has achieved "advanced hegemonic status" meaning that she has become so engrained in the American cultural landscape that she is no longer a clear referent for people born after the 1980s.

Since CRT's inception, the challenges posed by liberalism have persisted. Yet, more recent iterations of conservatism pose a more imminent threat to families and communities of color. This project is evolving as the United States is tearing babies, children, and teenagers from their parents at the U.S.-Mexican border (and not keeping records to allow for reunification), and experiencing horrific murders of Jews, Muslims, Sikhs, and Black Christians exercising their religious freedoms. It remains common practice for systems to uphold police killings of Black and Brown men, women, youth, and children. At the same time, welfare programs are continually reworked in ways that structure people out of them (e.g, an increasing number of states are requiring drug testing for SNAP recipients at the same time that marijuana for health and recreational purposes is legalized). The messages of wealthy white lives being valued over the lives of people of color with limited resources (and other groups) are constant. Access to food, shelter, medical care, employment, housing, and freedom are systematically limited for families and communities of color through this flavor of conservatism. The threat to life, liberty, and family comes from many directions. Even though the challenges of colorblindness persist, these direct attacks on life and liberty also command the attention of the CRT movement.

A current challenge within the movement

The expansion and evolution of CRT beyond law has helped highlight the interplay of power and authority within and across nondominant and minoritized communities. For example, two concepts have evolved through that: politics of respectability, and politics of identification. Politics of respectability thinking purports that there is value in supporting individuals (some of

whom may have some aspect of black criminality) as long as they are young, redeemable and a potential asset to the community” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 62). This way of thinking implies that dads/NCPs who are pulled into the IV-D child support enforcement system are individuals who are not currently, but have the potential, to become contributing members of society. Others perceive the politics of respectability as working within the rules of a racist society that maintains white supremacy.

The politics of identification provides another way of thinking. This perspective promotes cultural and ethnic understanding, and pride as essential to justice and equity. Approaches to justice and rectifying the history of injustice may conflict between and within these realms of thinking.

Critical Race Theory uses historical context to interrogate what is. It engages with the realities of systems that perpetuate white supremacy, while also challenging the mind to imagine and work toward a just world. It offers tools of thought and understanding to hold race and racism as central to the evolution of the nation, the welfare system, and the child support system. Impacts of policies are impacted by implementation of them. To develop that understanding, I examine policy, numeric data and engage various stakeholders, including mothers and fathers. This allows for intersectional analyses that makes the differing experiences and consequences of both mothers and fathers visible and valued.

Although the nation as a whole continues to suffer the generational impacts of its education debt, the harsh consequences are endured by Black and Brown children and families that are unmarried and have low incomes. As a theory of action, CRT requires interrogation of

child support cooperation requirements through both the policy systems they connect and through the lenses of stakeholders impacted by it.

Chapter 4 Methodological Issues and Research Design

Policy is understood to “embody intentions, to express the prevailing political groups’ ideas of what should be, to make explicit and implicit statements of value through allocation of resources, including and excluding segments of society, ordering priorities and setting goals. Continuing, policy encapsulates a notion of what ought to be according to the values of the body generating the policy” (Grimley, 1986).

In part, this project uses child support cooperation requirements to explore the nation’s values of what should be. It also illuminates the complex terrain in which child support cooperation policies are situated. This chapter provides background about critical policy analysis (CPA) and describes the research plan which centered child support cooperation as a case study. Cooperation is fully activated when an unmarried mother applies for TANF or Medicaid, and, depending on the state in which she lives, cooperation may also apply to CHIP, SNAP, and CCDF child care subsidies. Consequently, cooperation’s real power is derived through its role in connecting parents to multiple systems. A study which discerns the impacts of cooperation must also consider the complex systems it connects and the experiences of parents navigating those systems.

Moving cooperation from traditional policy analysis to CPA

The decision to engage with critical policy analysis was, in part, informed by the existing literature about child support cooperation. Harold Lasswell, the founder of policy analysis, envisioned policy analysis “as a means for exploring policy problems in all their complexity” (Diem et al., 2014, p. 1069). Yet, existing child support cooperation literature embodies three common critiques of traditional policy analysis. Firstly, it “focuses on outcomes that are

important to the state” (Shaw, 2003, p. 1069) . Secondly, because the premises for the policy are never questioned, the research “analyses and plans are neutral and objective when they are actually tied to prevailing relations of power” (Marshall, 1997, p. 3).¹⁶ Finally, that emphasis on compliance means that cooperation’s weaknesses cannot be discerned because a supportive mode of analysis is applied. “Such analysis would be confined to cosmetic fine tuning, with no questioning of the basic premises on which the policy was based” (*ibid*, p. 23). Cooperation’s position as the link between continuously evolving welfare/public assistance programs and IV-D child support policy suggests that its research must be contextualized. Otherwise, policy analysis will remain a “symbolic and rhetorical activity in which politicians engage in a self-sufficient and self-perpetuating activity” (Grimley, 1986, p. 19).

Critical policy analysis (CPA) is typically categorized within deconstructivist or critical realms and embodies an activist orientation intending “to enfranchise and to disrupt and dismantle oppressive policy directions” (Marshall, 1997). To that end, critical policy analyses must pay attention to both decisions and non-decisions. It must consider the ways that premises are built into decisions, and the ways in which individuals do and do not act politically. CPA is most commonly used in educational policy studies and tends to focus on:

- 1-The difference between policy rhetoric and practiced reality (and is concerned with the spaces between policy development and implementation),
- 2- How the policy emerged, what problems it was intended to solve and how it changed and developed over time, and its role in reinforcing the dominant culture,
- 3-The distribution of power, resources and knowledge and the creation of winners and losers,

¹⁶ Although Kelly (1994) pointed to mothers’ more narrative experiences, other research focused narrowly on maternal compliance.

- 4- Social stratification which focuses on the broader effect a given policy has on the relationships of inequality and privilege,
- 5-Members of non-dominant groups who resist processes of domination and oppression and who engage in activism and use of participatory methods to employ agency,
- 6-Paying significant attention to the complex systems and environments in which policy is made and implemented,
- 7-Utilizing qualitative rather than quantitative research approaches in their work---often discourse analysis, critical policy ethnography, historical approaches and policy archaeology (Diem et al., 2014).

CPA is also used as a means to discover the complexity, subjectivity and equity of policy and to illuminate intended and unintended consequences of the implementation process (*ibid*, 2014).

Methods of CPA

CPA emphasizes the connection between theory and method. Because CPA is rooted in the understanding that policies are complex and honors the potential for analysis to tell multiple truths, one single method is not prescribed by or even associated with CPA. Various methods can be used, but they typically encompass more qualitative approaches and case studies are one of them (Diem et al., 2014; Young & Diem, 2017).

As CPA reflects an interest in varied ways of knowing, the analysis and connection between method and theory are central. Oftentimes, the method used flows from the framework utilized by the researcher. Extending CRT Scholar Ladson-Billings' (2006) charge to examine achievement gaps as an outgrowth of the nation's lack of investment in minoritized and oppressed communities, Pillow (2017) considers the ways that theoretical absences and blind spots have created a policy debt despite a wealth of data detailing school inequity. Similarly, the existing cooperation literature also has blind spots and theoretical absences. The

implementation processes and impacts of child support cooperation are largely unknown.

While there is a growing body of literature about the experiences of mothers and fathers with very low incomes in the child support enforcement system and some use critical approaches (Boggess & Roulet, 1998; Brito, 2012; Edin, 1997; Jr, 2016; Rodriguez, 2016), blind spots exist related to cooperation. CPA does not promote one theory and does not invite researchers to ask, “Which theory is best to use with CPA?” but rather, “What happens to CPA when it is rethought with ____ theory?” “What becomes possible?” “What becomes visible?” (Pillow, 2017, p. 267).

Emphasizing the relationship between theory and method, CPA creates space to examine child support cooperation as a link to evolving systems through the lens of Critical Race Theory. The question of impacts of the cooperation requirement necessitates an openness to varied data and a willingness to follow the data. A case study affords those opportunities.

Research Design

Case study approach and evidence

“Case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances” (Stake, 1995, p. xi). This study is bounded by time and place (Creswell, 2013). Centering child support cooperation as the case to be studied requires evidence that considers the policy from the perspectives of various stakeholders, including the state and parents. It allows for consideration of child support cooperation’s intricate connections to political, social, and historical contexts. At the same time,

centering child support cooperation as the case also centers what can be competing goals of minimizing welfare costs and the best interests of the child.

Case studies are not typically utilized to address “what” questions. Yin (2009) indicated that “what” questions are a form of “how many” or “how much,” and therefore survey or archival methods would be more appropriate than a case study. A question addressing the links between child support cooperation and the education debt is different. Initially, one might see this question as encompassing a goal of “describing the incidence or prevalence of a phenomenon and therefore not an appropriate question for a case study” (*ibid*, p. 10, 2009). CPA expects that cooperation would be considered from multiple lenses and utilize multiple forms of data. Case study allows for the “multiple realities” of stakeholders to be present in the policy analysis and the researcher is then tasked with preserving them (Stake, 1995).

Those multiple realities are uncovered by accessing a variety of evidence. This is a unique strength of case study research that often includes combinations of documents, artifacts, interviews, and observations (Gillham, 2000; Yin, 2009). Because child support cooperation is under-examined, this study considers its development and implementation in addition to the impacts on families and the state. Evidence includes document analysis of cooperation’s evolution within the systems it connects, quantitative state and federal level data, and semi-structured interviews of various stakeholders.

Designing case study research also requires the identification of the major concerns or issues to be addressed (Stake, 1995). Issues were identified, in part, through the Critical Race Theory framework (i.e., intersectionality, racism as continuous), and also informed by knowledge I generated while working for a national organization focused on the economic

security of low-income parents. That knowledge also informed the development of topical information questions (*ibid*, 1995) (see Appendix B Topical Information Questions).

Why Wisconsin

Child support cooperation originates through federal law, and both states and locales are responsible for implementation. Before detailing the data used in this study, this section explains some of the reasons Wisconsin made an interesting focus state for closer examination of child support cooperation in relation to the education debt.

According to the American Community Survey, Wisconsin's overall population in 2019 included the following racial breakouts:

- White: 85.59%;
- Black or African American: 6.38%;
- Asian: 2.76%;
- Two or more races: 2.35%;
- Other race: 2.01%;
- Native American: 0.87%;
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander: 0.03%

While 6.38% of Wisconsin's total population identified as Black, more than 31% of the people living below the poverty level were categorized as Black (*ibid*). Also highlighting the disproportionality of poverty amongst Black Wisconsinites, 2019 TANF data indicate that in Wisconsin, 42% of recipients were identified as Black (Goehring et al., 2019).

Echoing disparities in racial wealth gaps, Wisconsin consistently earns high rankings on lists describing "the worst achievement gaps in the nation" (Becker, 2015), "the worst place to raise a Black child" [4](#), or "the worst unemployment rates amongst Black men in the nation"

(Cornelius, 2018) and “worst incarceration rates of Black people” (Joseph, 2016). Wisconsin also has some of the highest rates of incarceration of Black men in the nation that incarcerates more people than any nation in the world. Wisconsin leads the nation with the highest black male incarceration rate, being nearly double that of the nation at large. In Milwaukee County, over half of African American men in their 30s had served time in state prison (Pawasarat & Quinn, 2013).

Another factor making Wisconsin a particularly interesting focus is the state’s use of discretion around cooperation requirements. The federal government granted states discretionary power in the following four areas:

- 1) Extending cooperation to a state’s Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Child Care Development Fund (CCDF),
- 2) Extending who is required to cooperate,
- 3) Adding to the definition of cooperation, and
- 4) Increasing the sanctions for noncooperation.

Wisconsin has acted on three of them. Wisconsin is one of only a few states that has extended cooperation laws to include all allowable programs:¹⁷ BadgerCarePlus (CHIP and Medicaid combined)¹⁸, Wisconsin Shares (CCDF), and FoodShare (SNAP) (Roberts, 2005).

¹⁷ Although Wisconsin law requires cooperation for FoodShare, the law cannot be implemented. In 2017, the federal government encouraged states to require cooperation for SNAP benefits. Wisconsin passed a law requiring cooperation. Enactment required a federal waiver that was not granted, so in practice, Wisconsin requires cooperation for four of the five possible programs.

¹⁸ Interestingly, Wisconsin has folded SCHIP into its Medicaid program known as BadgerCare or BadgerCare Plus. That decision allows Wisconsin to require cooperation for SCHIP. So, in practice, if a parent applies for insurance for her child and refuses to cooperate with child support, then she can be deemed noncooperative. Yet, because Medicaid only drops the adult and not the child for noncooperation, there really is no significant sanction for noncooperation in the state’s Children’s Health Insurance Program.

Wisconsin has also further defined what it means to cooperate. The state's Department of Children and Families indicates that to receive benefits from the applicable programs, a parent must:

- Give the child support agency the information they ask for about your child's other parent,
- Keep your appointments with your child support worker,
- Attend any required court hearings about your child support case,
- Report any child support paid directly to you by the other parent to your benefit case worker, and
- Appear with your child for scheduled genetic tests (Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, 2022).

Finally, states have some flexibility in defining the sanction for noncooperation¹⁹ and Wisconsin adopted the most extreme sanctions. While the federal government requires a minimum 25% cut, Wisconsin terminates the benefit. When a Wisconsin mother/CP in the IV-D system is deemed noncooperative, then benefits are terminated. Consequently, she may lose medical insurance for herself, cash assistance, child care subsidies, and food stamps.

Pragmatic reasons for focusing on Wisconsin

Wisconsin's stark policy contexts made it a logical choice, but there were also practical considerations. My personal, professional, and academic history in the state generated a network of people able to bridge access to key stakeholders. I also resided in the state at the time of the study. In the preceding seven years, I interacted with stakeholders while working on

¹⁹ Federal law requires the following: a minimum 25% cut to the TANF benefit, the mother to lose Medicaid coverage when the baby turns two months old (Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, 2022), and termination of SNAP benefits for the parent deemed noncooperative (if a state requires cooperation). The child retains the benefit.

research and evaluation in the areas of violence prevention, education, child support and public benefits policy, and family economic security in Wisconsin and other states. These experiences deepened my understanding of federal policy, state implementation, and family and community experiences, especially at the intersections of race, ethnicity, class, marital status, language, gender, and sexual orientation. Given that this study was primarily researcher-funded, these networks and understandings were not only fiscally necessary to support access to information, but also to deepen qualitative understandings.

Data sources, IRB, and the pandemic

Data used in this study is derived from three categories: document review to map the policy terrain, semi-structured interviews of various stakeholders, and quantitative data provided through the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) and Wisconsin's Department of Children and Families. Navigating the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval process was complex as the proposal seemed to challenge prescribed narratives and assumptions about parent participants. Approval was ultimately granted and then the pandemic shut down in-person research. The lives, experiences, and identities of stakeholders informed an adjusted research plan. Because these experiences speak to the nation's understandings of the lives and experiences of low-income Black families, the following section shares more details of the IRB process and reworking of the research plan than is typical.

Quantitative data

Both nationwide and state data were used to inform this study. Data was pulled from federal reports from the Office of Child Support Enforcement (OSCE) and the Administration for

Children and Families. Additional requests for state-specific data were made to the State of Wisconsin's Department of Children and Families. Requests and clarifications for Wisconsin's state-specific IV-D data were made between October of 2020 and January of 2021. The initial request in October of 2020 included:

- 1-The number of parents currently in the IV-D child support system,
- 2-Demographics of those parents (specifically, gender, race, and ethnicity, and, if available, income level and age),
- 3-The law requires applicants/recipients for BadgerCare/BadgerCare Plus, W-2, and Wisconsin Shares to cooperate with the child support agency to establish paternity and establish and collect on the child support order(s). During the most recent year available, how many of those parents were sanctioned for non-cooperation around child support? How many times were each sanctioned?, and
- 4-Demographics of those who were sanctioned-specifically, race and ethnicity, gender, and age.

There were subsequent email communications to clarify the data that was shared and to pose an additional question. The second request was:

As I understand it, there are two ways that people enter the IV-D child support system. One is a parent seeking assistance with establishing paternity or establishing/collecting/modifying a child support order. The second is when a parent applies for a public benefits program (i.e., BadgerCare, Wisconsin Shares) that requires cooperation with child support as an eligibility requirement. Can you delineate how many custodial and noncustodial parents enter the IV-D system through each mechanism? (personal email communication, February 2021).

Qualitative data sources

The qualitative component of this study included semi-structured interviews of key stakeholders related to cooperation. Through the policy research component, I determined those stakeholders to include:

- fathers or mothers connected to benefits programs requiring cooperation,
- fathers or mothers connected to the IV-D CSE system (court-ordered to pay or receive),
- local CSEA staff,
- family court judges and/or court commissioners, and/or
- staff at community agencies working with the parents noted above.

Both the pandemic and the IRB approval process had dramatic impacts on the design and implementation of the qualitative component of this research. I found both factors to be significant enough for this study and for future research about low-income Black families to describe here.

I utilized my policy knowledge and professional network to recruit key stakeholders, including: fathers, mothers, family support program staff, and personnel from CSEAs and related public benefits programs to participate in semi-structured interviews. Implementation of cooperation varies across states, but also within states. In Wisconsin, it varies across the state's 72 counties. Interviews for this study focused exclusively on residents of Milwaukee County where approximately 57% of the state's W-2 recipients reside (Hannah, 2017) and approximately 70% of the state's African American residents (*African Americans in Wisconsin*, 2014). Snowball sampling was utilized in an effort to incorporate all the stakeholder groups identified above (Huberman & Miles, 2002).

Throughout the 18 months preceding study implementation, I developed connections through my job with lead staff of a community organization working with parents. I attended many Family Community Organization 1 (FCO1)²⁰ activities and developed strong relationships with staff and some parents. I also gained preliminary permission to conduct research and furthered contextual understandings of families. The parent inclusion criteria were:

- had at least one child under the age of 18,
- had a connection to the child support system—court-ordered to pay or receive child support, and/or
- considered applying or applied for W-2 (TANF), a Quest card (SNAP), BadgerCare Plus (Medicare) and/or WI Shares (CCDF child care subsidies),
- spoke English, and
- not incarcerated at the time of the interview.

Exclusion criteria for the study were:

- Adults who are not parents,
- Parents with only adult children, and
- Non-English speakers.

The initial research design also included focus groups with eligible parents with the potential for one to two follow-up individual interviews. By coordinating the focus groups and interviews with the community organizations, child care needs could be addressed through the organization's child programming.

In the IRB approval process, the expertise of parents with very low incomes was perceived to be too greatly influenced by gift cards valued at more than \$25. Even with travel time, a one-hour focus group and/or interview, bus fares, and the knowledge that only these

²⁰ Staff at FCO1 eventually introduced me to staff at what became a second community partner that worked with parents, Family Community Organization 2 (FCO2).

parents would have, IRB approval was not granted as \$25 was perceived as coercive.²¹

Ultimately, the stipend remained at \$25 and I planned to schedule interviews at overlapping times with parents' planned activities with the FCO1 to mitigate transportation and child care costs to participants. This process raised many questions about the monetary value placed on information from some groups and the origins of IRB as providing protection for research participants.

Continuing, IRB approval was earned in March 2019, which holds great significance. Within 10 days, my university (and many others) responded to the pandemic by halting in-person research. The approved plans for recruitment, consent, focus groups, and interviews were no longer viable.

Additionally, the community organizations with whom I worked were regrouping and assessing how they could maintain connections with families. Logically, neither the organizations nor the families with whom they worked were prepared to instantly pivot from high-touch, in-person work to a new world of "virtual-only." The focus and implementation of their work had to shift as families whose limited economic means and technological access resulted in extreme isolation. Families were navigating school in a virtual world with limited internet and technology access, and often limited technological skills.

It took time to access resources to establish internet connections, obtain the technology to use it, and, in some cases, teach the parents to use the technology. Some parents were homeschooling, and others remained mostly in-person. Some parents were working and many

²¹ I brought forth information about higher compensation offered by other researchers currently working with similar populations. Additionally, I offered an example of a \$25 stipend offered to the same population 20 years earlier and argued for a cost-of-living increase.

lost their jobs. All were enduring the uncertainties of Covid exposures. As these realities took hold, FCO1 and 2 remained supportive of my proposed research and collaborated with me to envision new data collection plans. It became clear that the way forward for this dissertation project was likely going to be through telephone or video conferencing.

I submitted many revisions to again seek IRB approval. Videoconferencing posed a challenge as it required having protocols in place in case I observed child abuse during the interviews. Parents would have to be notified of the concern in the consent process. As a qualitative researcher, I faced a dilemma. Even though, from a qualitative research lens, videoconferencing would have provided even richer data collection, I am aware of the fear of the state/child protective services that many low-income Black and Brown people endure, and of the consequences of a child being removed from the home. Ultimately, I decided to conduct only audio interviews for two reasons: 1) I believed that a middleclass, white female PhD student having to read child abuse protocols in the oral consent process would have adverse impacts on the trust-building process (especially during the pandemic), and 2) Participating in the FCO1's weekly virtual parent groups, I learned that the likelihood of both myself and the parents having strong enough internet connections to allow for uninterrupted interviews was very low. Consequently, all interviews were conducted by telephone or through an IRB-approved software program that allowed parents to speak on their phones and me to record the interviews (after consent was given).

Additionally, by participating in the organization's virtual parent group meetings, I decided that the technology issues would greatly limit the effectiveness of focus groups for data collection. As a result, I dropped the parent focus group component.

The recruitment plan for other stakeholders also shifted during the pandemic.

Originally, I intended to observe IV-D child support cases (identified through Consolidated Court Automation Program-CCAP) in the Milwaukee County Courthouse. Between proceedings, I intended to approach child support attorneys and family court personnel about participating in interviews; an approach that was effective in other projects. Whether or not interviews grew from the observations, the process itself would have afforded a deeper understanding of the court experiences of families. Early in the pandemic, court proceedings moved to virtual. I attempted to log on to the YouTube channels of some family court judges and explored other mechanisms to gain access to child support staff. I was very uncomfortable as the process felt like an invasion of parents' privacy but also important as court observers are an essential element of accountability. Regardless, it was not a reasonable way to access child support staff.

Instead, I attempted to call the local CSEA on three different occasions. I started with the main number and spent about thirty minutes each time working my way through the entire phone tree. I was never able to talk with a human being or leave a message. (A later interview with a former child support staff person affirmed that that would likely happen.) Ultimately, I decided to utilize snowball sampling (Merriam, 2002) in the other interviews with the hope of finding child support or family court staff to interview.

Parent recruitment also shifted because of the pandemic. Previously, I planned to make announcements and share recruiting fliers at FCO1 events inviting parents to sign-up for a focus group, earn a \$25 gift card, and the opportunity to participate in a separate interview to earn another \$25 gift card. Approved consent fliers were to be shared at the time of scheduling and signed before the focus group.

With permission of the staff and IRB approval, I created a flier (see Appendix C Recruitment Flier) that was posted on the FCO1's private social media group and placed on the screen during virtual gatherings over a two-week period. I also attended FCO1's virtual sessions in the weeks leading up to scheduling interviews to introduce the project, share my contact information to schedule interviews, and answer any questions. If I was not present, staff read the flier and invited interested people to reach out using contact information listed on the flier. Parents scheduled interviews via email or telephone calls. At the beginning of each interview, I read the approved consent form, obtained oral consent, and sent a copy of the oral consent form electronically or through U.S. mail, whichever the parent preferred.

Utilizing snowball sampling (*ibid*), at the end of each interview, I also asked if there was anyone else the person might recommend. FCO1 staff also understood the importance of both mothers' and fathers' voices being included in the study. Participants in the groups with which I worked were primarily mothers and grandmothers. Fathers, as expected, did not respond immediately to the call for interviews. Before the pandemic, when meeting with FCO1 staff about this project, a staff contact who worked mostly with females raising children immediately connected me with colleagues within and beyond FCO1 that more commonly worked with fathers. She also reached out electronically and shared the previously- mentioned flier and a message from me which acknowledged that allowing a white woman access to their fathers, especially Black fathers, was a significant ask and one that I did not take lightly. These efforts led to partnering with FCO2 and interviewing more fathers. Because of FCO2's regulations, one service provider participant was not allowed to share the study with the fathers with whom he

worked, but he agreed to be interviewed and reflect on the experiences of his program's fathers.

The consent process also shifted dramatically from written to oral. Written consent during the pandemic would have required the complexities of using the U.S. mail or the technological issues of virtual signing. Oral consent was the most reasonable consent option during the pandemic. When an interview was scheduled, I shared that our conversation would include an oral consent process. Oral consent forms were read to participants in the research study (see Appendix D Oral Consent). Each participant was asked if they fully understood the contents of the consent form and the activity in which they were about to engage. I addressed any questions before proceeding. Parents were offered a \$25 Walmart gift card for their time and expertise and choose to have it sent via email or the U.S. mail. People who were interviewed in their professional capacity were not offered additional financial compensation. Each interviewee chose to have a copy of the oral consent sent via email or the U.S. mail.

It is also noteworthy that child support policy structures oral consent as a best practice to protect parent participants. Oral consent helps minimize records of stipends received by parents which is significant for parents utilizing public benefits programs and for those connected to the child support enforcement system. Participation in the study could adversely impact their child support circumstances or public assistance/welfare eligibility.²²

²² Child support payors are expected to report all income to the state, and welfare and public assistance eligibility are impacted by income level. Additionally, if a custodial parent chose not to report this income, then the law allows the state to charge her with fraud. For a parent court-ordered to pay child support, compensation must be reported to the child support agency or the noncustodial parent can be held in contempt of court. Oral consent adds a layer of protection for parents utilizing welfare/public assistance or connected to IV-D child support system so that parents' access to services or liberty was not put at risk for agreeing to participate in the study and receiving a \$25 gift card.

With all the necessary protocols in place, interviews could begin. From October-December 2020, 15 interviews were conducted. The broad purpose of semi-structured interviews was to explore implementation and impacts of child support cooperation. A set of initial questions was generated for each category of interviewees: mothers and fathers, staff of family community programs, and state actors. Subsequent questions depended on answers given. The semi-structured protocols included in Appendix E Interview Protocols reflect an effort to highlight the topics the researcher expected to delve into.

Centering child support cooperation as the case requires examination of the policy from the perspectives of varied stakeholders. Stakeholder voices also served to triangulate and strengthen the reliability of findings across stakeholders and across data sets. Interviews were transcribed by the researcher or using an IRB approved software transcription program (e.g., freeconferencecall.com, rev.com). Both transcriptions and audio files were uploaded into Dedoose and Box, both password-protected programs. Every effort was made to maintain the anonymity and confidentiality of all participants. Again, the goal was to develop a deep understanding of child support cooperation from multiple lenses, not of any individual stakeholder.

Researcher identity, trust-building and member checks

I entered into these interviews keenly aware that as a white woman, I may be seen as representing the state, the systems that I was examining. Additionally, I entered the space knowing that although my focus was on understanding how a policy was enacted and its

impacts, which also necessitated asking about some personal details of people's lives. These realities and understandings amplified the need for trust-building and me owning the significance of race and racism (and their permanence), and of being a white woman asking those questions. Developing relationships within community organizations over the preceding two years helped create avenues of trust as the staff introduced me to the colleagues and parents who were ultimately interviewed. Additionally, as I earned the trust of interviewees, some of them offered to reach out to other prospective interviewees.

Gendered differences in scheduling interviews and trust-building were expected and immediately evident.²³ Women responded quickly to the FCO1's group request for interviews. I had already met many of them through my work with FCO1. Because these interviews were voice-only, many of the verbal cues that inform relationship building in person were not available. Even so, in the interviews with Black and Brown women, I could often feel a tinge of apprehension (i.e., answers given, but brief). This contrasted with women identifying as white that quickly shared in-depth details related to topics and/or asked clarifying questions. I read this as logical uncertainty related to my identities and my goals, and also just generally how much they wanted to share. I recognized that I was a white woman academic who was asking some of the same questions as state workers. For some, this may have triggered thoughts of negative interactions in welfare offices (Bridges, 2017) and even more significantly, fear of the ultimate risk of losing their children to child protective services or additional reporting to child

²³ In the years preceding data collection, my work with FCO1 was primarily with women, so I was familiar to more women. Also, as Chapter 5 details, the impacts of noncustodial parents/fathers in the related policy systems creates significant incentives for them to pursue some level of invisibility in society.

support and/or law enforcement (an experience one mother had and shared with me during her interview).

At some point in each interview, I could hear a shift in tone or the ease of laughter and/or recognized that questions yielded longer responses or more depth, or it would start to feel more like a conversation than a question-and-answer session. A layer of trust was established that allowed for more sharing of information. In a couple of sessions, I heard the interviewee shift into Black colloquialisms that I interpreted as a level of comfort and/or trust. Many of the women commented about how much they enjoyed the conversation, which I, in part attributed to the isolation of the coronavirus pandemic.

A commonality between the men and women interviewed was a willingness to continue talking beyond the scheduled time. At the 45-minute mark of each interview, I noted the time and acknowledged that we used the time that they had committed to. Twelve of the 15 interviewees expressed an interest in continuing beyond the allotted time. Many offered gratitude for asking about their experiences, noting that the systems have problems and no one had asked them before.

As a white woman studying policies and systems through the lens of Critical Race Theory, I constantly work to become aware of what I don't know and what I need to see. Bonilla-Silva & Zuberi (2008) amplify the ways in which capitalism, white supremacy and heteropatriarchy are worldviews. I work daily to dissect the ways in which those worldviews that I inhale every day in US society create normative biases about the systems and lives described in this study. Continuing, I constantly remind myself that my personal, professional, and research experiences continually contradict the nation's narratives about Black mothers,

fathers, families, and communities. I often see the passion and commitment of Black men to their children and the juggle of Black women working and raising children. Some of the obstacles that white supremacy creates to their joy and happiness are visible to me.

I turned to Black and Brown academic colleagues and friends to check my understandings and provide “member checks” (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Although race is central to construction and experience of child support cooperation, additional identities and variables also matter. The individuals I turned to also reflected variations in gender, income and wealth levels, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, language, and national origin. I also relied on former colleagues who have expertise in the IV-D CSE system to confirm and clarify.

Analysis of the data was aided by Dedoose, a qualitative and mixed-methods software program and also Microsoft Excel. The interviews were transcribed and coded, and then listened to multiple times. More than 50 inductive and deductive codes were generated.

The combination of evidence (documents, interviews, quantitative data) helped protect against threats to validity and created an opportunity to investigate and test rival explanations (Yin, 2009). Additionally, as critical policy analysis “straddles the line between theory-based analysis and interpretation,” the varied evidence helps ensure that the researcher is “getting it mostly right” as opposed to traditional policy analysis whose positivistic underpinnings suggest that there is one right answer (Young & Diem, 2017, p. 15) . It also helps minimize the concern of “subjectivity” that is sometimes associated with case study research. In this study, the evidence was collected and incorporated “with how people understand themselves and their

settings, what is behind the more objective evidence, the underlying reasons that often come through people's feelings or perceptions" (Gillham, 2000, p.7).

Continuing, the utility of merging case study with critical policy analysis (CPA) serves to minimize limitations specific to case study research which include: rigor, generalizability, and establishing causal relationships. Rigor was promoted by utilizing varied sources to understand the overall impacts of cooperation and their specific impacts on families and communities. The evidence was followed, and conflicting pieces were explored. The goal of this study is not generalization in the statistical sense, but in the analytic sense related to future policy development (Yin, 2009, p. 15).

Addressing limitations of this study

There are three significant limitations of this study. First, child support cooperation originates as federal law, but states and, to some extent, localities are granted much discretion both in terms of which public benefits programs require cooperation and also around implementation issues. So, while examination of an individual state is useful, a holistic look at the practices of more states and locales is also important. That said, studies that speak into policy discretion issues are important regardless of the number of states or communities considered.

Secondly, although this study attempts to incorporate families' voices into discussions of the impact of the cooperation requirement, the perspectives and experiences of children and extended family are missing. This initial study begins to name the impacts that the cooperation requirement has on many aspects of the stability of family life. After those impacts are

understood, it may be logical to incorporate the voices of children and youth to clarify the ways that cooperation impacts the academic lives of affected students. This study takes the first step in mapping the policy evolution and identifying the ways the policy helps position impacted children within the system of schooling. Additionally, this study does not include the voices of mothers and fathers in the same family. While that was not part of the research design, some interviewees initiated asking the other parents to participate. Those efforts did not produce additional interviews but would be a valuable way to interrogate the ways cooperation impacts each parent in a family and the family unit.

Finally, family court officials are central to families' experiences within the child support system. Interviews and/or observations of these stakeholders afford more depth of understanding to child support cooperation. Before the pandemic, the intention was to include court officials, beginning with court room observations. Even during the pandemic, efforts were made to incorporate them starting with YouTube court observations, but their absence from the study is notable.

Background of stakeholder interviewees

The planning detailed above resulted in the completion of 15 semi-structured telephone interviews completed between October and December of 2020. Table 1 highlights the stakeholder identities represented by each interviewee. The table below reflects the stakeholder categories that each interviewee represented or some of the lenses from which they spoke.

Table 4.1 Interviewees by Stakeholder Category

	Mother (or father) who was eligible for one of the targeted benefits programs	Father (or mother) who was part of IV-D child support system	Family service provider	State worker in public benefits office	Child support enforcement agency staff person
Alanda	x				
Alesha					x
Andrea	x			x	
Anthony		x	x		
Donita			x		
Erika	x				
James			x		
Lena	x				
Maritza					x
Monica			x	x	
Rachelle	x				
Rebecca			x	x	
Reggie		x	x		
Sherry	x				
Sylvia	x				

A short biography of each interviewee is included below. They are not intended as comprehensive descriptions, but instead to highlight the varied backgrounds, identities, experiences, and knowledge bases of stakeholders in this study.

Alanda was a self-proclaimed “wild child” and she happily admitted, “I love being a mom.”

Explaining that becoming a mom was transformative, she explained, “Not only do they need me, but I need them. Now I have something to lose.” She has four children and describes them using phrases like, “loves reading books,” “has quite the imagination,” “is a sweetheart, and “he loves his teachers and they love him.” She is not currently with either of the men who are

fathers to her children. One is incarcerated and the other is “around” and sometimes provides time and resources. Although the father who is incarcerated would like the child to visit him in prison, Alanda chooses not to introduce her son to that reality. As an African American woman, her mother taught her to work hard, to “be a hustler,” so in addition to working as a certified nursing assistant (CNA), she also does hair, make-up, and nails out of her home to help make ends meet. She utilizes FoodShare and for a short time, utilized the W-2 program.

Alesha is the mother of a 13-year-old and a two-year old. Her dreams for her children include financial stability, “living out their dreams and desires and not having to worry about food and housing.” She has some exposure to the private side of child support as she is divorced and a child support order was established during that process. She was also employed as an income maintenance worker for the state to determine eligibility for FoodShare, BadgerCare, and Wisconsin Shares. Reflecting on the child support cooperation application question, Alesha explained, “I would have said, ‘No’ if I was applying. Child support is a whole ‘nother can of worms when it comes to men and women placed in the child support system....it puts a whole ‘nother layer of bondage on them.” Alesha identifies as African American.

Andrea is a single mother of one son, age six. She explained that the father has essentially chosen to “not be involved in his son’s life.” She explained that he “missed the birth,” and although he works full-time in his field, he is paid under-the-table. Consequently, his child support order was set very low, \$25 per month. Currently, he owes \$2000 in child support and

more in birth costs. She identifies as white and describes her son as biracial. During her son's life, Andrea has utilized the W-2 program as well as BadgerCare Plus and FoodShare.

Anthony teaches parenting classes through FCO1 and is a father who has navigated the CSE system. His girlfriend, who eventually became his wife was central to his child support story (detailed in Chapter 5). He was incarcerated when he became a father and believes that without her support, persistence, and advocacy, he would be in a much worse financial position. He identifies as African American.

Donita works at FCO1 has multiple degrees, and a decade of hands-on experience working with children and parents from very low-income communities. Also, identifying as a mother, a wife, and as African American, she has strong relationships with mothers and fathers in her community organization who are navigating the CSEA and public benefits policies, and has an "insider" understanding of the racism that these parents endure every day. Another African American woman interviewed initiated that Donita provides "a safe space for Black mommies."

Erika has four adult children that she raised in a southern state. Her experiences using public assistance in two states afforded her unique insights. Erika spent time incarcerated in Wisconsin and after release found it a great state to start a new life. She has utilized the FoodShare program and child care subsidies. When raising children in the South, she never wanted to pursue child support. Although money was tight, she had various kinds of support both from the father's family and the father himself. She believed that putting that support in

jeopardy to pursue child support would not be beneficial for anyone. She noted that to this day, if their (now adult) children need help, she can call the father and he will step up if he can. After fostering many children over almost a decade, she recently adopted one of her foster children who is 14. Erika, who identifies as African American, accessed FCO1 to find support for herself and her daughter who is “slow in school,” and loves basketball and reading.

James works at FCO2. He focuses primarily on fathers as they develop further parenting skills, support one another, and learn about the child support system and public benefits that are available to them. He speaks very passionately about the essential and unique value of both mothers and fathers in the raising of children and envisions a future where policy and practice value fathers as parents and not narrowly as financial providers. He strongly encourages fathers with whom he works to establish paternity as soon as possible because, without it, they have no legal rights or responsibilities to their children. Currently, he says that “fear of Child Support and incarceration are preventing access to care and services” for fathers. James identifies as Black.

Lena, through the support and encouragement of mothers in FCO1, returned to school to earn an associate’s degree as a stepping stone to a career in her chosen profession. She is also parenting her five-year old and started homeschooling him before the pandemic. When Lena became pregnant, she was still on her father’s health insurance and was in the process of switching to state insurance as her employer did not provide that benefit. Lena and her baby’s father live together and have throughout the child’s life. They would like to be married and

have come close on multiple occasions, but the money they budgeted for the license and related costs had to be redirected to some other priority. Lena was not using state insurance at the time of her son's birth and when she was asked in the hospital if she wanted to put the father on child support, her definitive "no" was heard. To this day, they are concerned about child support "coming after" him because of the stories they hear and are especially concerned as they consider having a second child while she is utilizing BadgerCare for herself and their son. Lena identifies as white.

Maritza was referred to the study by her mother, Rebecca. Maritza used to work at a local CSEA and described her role as "tracking income for noncustodial parents and trying to obtain payments." She and her ten colleagues in that role shared "Thousands upon thousands upon thousands of cases." Her background in customer service made her qualified for her position. Overall, she described the role of local CSEAs as trying to "help you do what is best for your child." Sometimes that means imputing income or warrants for contempt of court, because: "If you aren't communicating (*with CSEA*) then we have to follow the laws. You're (*parents are*) are not expected to know (*the system/laws*) but we can't help you if we don't know you need help." She left her job a few years ago and is a mother.

Monica works at a community agency where her focus is on helping people apply for public benefits programs. She identifies as Latina and seems to be a very valuable resource, both because of her Spanish-English language skills and cultural background, but also because of her employment history in welfare benefits offices. Her depth of understanding about the steps in

processing benefits applications, as well as the policy requirements, affords her a clearer understanding of how to best advocate for people and when applicants are not getting the necessary information. This also makes her a resource for colleagues learning how to advocate in the public benefits systems. As we talked about her current work, she teared up as she shared the gratitude she received from an elderly man who was “able to provide Thanksgiving dinner to my family” because of her work with him. She explained, “So stories like that, every day, I like what I'm doing. So it makes me do my job more and more and more.”

Rachelle is a 39-year-old mother of four whose children range in age from six to 22. The history she shared included rape, domestic violence, and police presence. It also included resilience as she earned her GED and accessed community resources in efforts to become a more consistent parent. Both she and two of the three fathers of her children have spent time in jail and/or prison. Rachelle identifies as white. She has interacted with the CSEA and family courts and utilized BadgerCare and FoodShare.

Rebecca has work experience in both a community organization supporting families applying for benefits and for the state public benefits programs. She explained that, “knowing all of the questions that were asked by the state workers and knowing a little bit more about the way they would process applications and do things like that, it really helped me in informing clients about their rights and about the way the application process works.” Working as a translator, she had special insights into the experiences of some families navigating public benefits and child support systems. She described the angst of mothers who had an agreement with the

father and did not want to jeopardize that when questions about cooperating with the CSEA were asked. It was scary for many parents to interact with the state worker, who was “perceived as the person who is going to deny the benefits they need.” When I asked Rebecca if she knew anyone in the CSEA that I might reach out to, she offered to contact her daughter, Maritza, who used to work there. A few hours later, she called and shared that her daughter would like to schedule an interview.

Reggie is a father of four children with two mothers and is also a grandfather. One of his many hats is that of community educator in a program for fathers. He is very passionate about reforming the child support and public benefits systems, as they have created many challenges in his life. Reggie became a father while still in high school, but the mother told him the baby was not his. When the child was seven years old, Reggie’s mom saw him and based on appearance, told Reggie, “That is your child.” He could not bear the idea of a child of having a child in the world and not being a part of his life, so Reggie did a blood test to establish paternity. The state “made me pay for it and automatically put me on child support.” Retroactive child support was immediately initiated (as the law allows) and overnight, Reggie was \$55,000 in arrears. Today, his oldest child is 28 and Reggie still owes more than \$100,000 arrears. Despite the payments that he makes, interest accrues much faster than he can pay off the principle. His own experience, in addition to years of working with fathers, gives him deep knowledge about how fathers experience and navigate child support and public benefits systems.

Sherry is a 30-year-old mother of three and currently lives with one of her children. She utilized BadgerCare and FoodShare. In their interviews, multiple Black mothers alluded to the fear of state involvement in their lives because “Child Welfare can label me a bad parent and take my babies.” Sherry lived/lives that nightmare. Her oldest two children were “taken” by the state and one of the benefits was transferred to her other child. Sherry explained that she reported the error to the state, and it was not changed. A few years later, the state acted on its mistake and charged Sherry with thousands of dollars of debt to repay. Every month, a significant portion of her allotted benefits are withdrawn from her benefits card to rectify the state’s overpayment that she reported initially. She does not know if child support was or is being charged to the father.

Sylvia, whose story is detailed further in Chapter 1 has three children. She and her husband, Derek, both identify as African American. They consciously work every day to fight both the stereotypes of Black families in the United States and intentionally build lives that minimize opportunity for state systems and workers to “take my babies away” and label us as “bad parents.” For Sylvia, this included always making homemade food for her kids. Sometimes it meant she and her husband ate the leftover, “less nutritious food” he brings home from work or the two of them going without food so the kids have enough to eat. It also includes being very active parents at school and prioritizing Derek’s involvement to fight back against the narrative of Black men as deadbeat dads and growing fresh vegetables in a community garden they started. Through volunteer work, Sylvia also supports other Black parents in these endeavors.

This eclectic group of stakeholders provided a wealth of insights into the implementation and impacts of child support cooperation requirements.

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This critical policy analysis centers child support cooperation as the case to be studied. Centering power in the analysis, this approach allows use of multiple types of data, including policies and political discourse, semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, and quantitative data from the federal and Wisconsin state governments. It also allows consideration of the data from multiple lenses, including both the mothers and fathers. This web of data and perspectives triangulates the data and helps validate the study itself. It also helps to illuminate the ways in which the evolution of child support cooperation and related policy systems embody policy makers' values and visions of what society should be.

Chapter 5 Findings

The power of child support cooperation is generated through binding families to multiple governmental systems - CSE, family court, law enforcement and social welfare programs that surveil, coerce, and manage behavior. This study is grounded in the understanding that social welfare policy historically constructs low-income families as inclusive of single (Black) mothers/CPs with children (i.e., welfare queens). Therefore, policy analysis often focuses strictly on mothers and constructs fathers as “absent.” Bringing both parents into the analyses highlights the ways in which cooperation and related policy systems push low-income Black mothers/CPs and Black fathers/NCPs into the narratives of welfare queens and deadbeat dads. Cooperation and related policies and practices create a web that ensnares families and generates both short- and long-term barriers to families’ health and well-being and, therefore, to children’s academic success. In a nation grounded in the enslavement and destruction of Black families (including making marriage of Black people illegal) and the construction of cooperation requirements only applying to under-resourced, unmarried parents furthers the possessive investment in whiteness.

In this study, I mapped the evolution of policy systems, listened to voices of stakeholders, and analyzed quantitative data that generated more than 50 themes. The three themes explored here individually and collectively illuminate the power of child support cooperation, challenges to making meaningful change, and the significant impacts of cooperation on families, both mothers and fathers, and therefore on children. The themes of discretion, learning and access to knowledge, and economic (in)stability inform how child support cooperation helps structure and perpetuate the criminalization of Black children and

families by undermining low-income, unmarried Black families' efforts and abilities to effectively provide for and parent their children. Consequently, these policies serve to further the majoritarian narratives around deadbeat dads and welfare queens.

Discretion, which is discussed in the first finding, is sometimes granted through laws and policies, and is sometimes garnered by individual stakeholders. Federal law grants states discretion around many aspects of cooperation. Consequently, the experiences of families vary by address. Individual stakeholders operating in cooperation-related systems also have some discretion, the significance of which is considered. The varied levels and types of discretion have long-term impacts. The impacts of discretion are experienced disproportionately by various identity groups and can have life-altering consequences across generations. Explanation of the theme of learning and access to knowledge relies primarily on CSEA documents and stakeholder interviews to describe who has access to knowledge about cooperation policies and practices, how they learn, and how they use that knowledge to inform decision making. Those themes are tied to the economic (in)stability of children and their parents.

Although the policy systems mapped through cooperation have significant impacts on the whole family, the consequences for the mother/custodial parent (CP) are fairly straightforward: cooperate or lose all or a portion of the benefit (depending on the state in which she resides). The impacts on the father/noncustodial parent (NCP) are quite convoluted and the system persists, whether or not he is an active and engaged parent or is willing to engage with the CSEA. In the last finding, the experiences of fathers are detailed where the data shows that child support cooperation activates related systems and enforcement measures that further economic instability amongst these already under-resourced families and

threaten the freedom of alleged fathers and fathers/NCPs. In the context of the education debt, this becomes more significant as both poverty and parental incarceration are widely understood to create barriers to children's academic success and furthers state interest in prioritizing investments in the carceral state over investments in schooling and family supports. Examination of cooperation requirements as powerful tools that tie racialized and punitive policy systems together to put what a former public assistance program staff person described as "A whole 'nother level of bondage on them (*IV-D families*)" points to the child support cooperation requirements' work to put low-income Black children and families into cradle to prison nexus.

Finding 1: Discretion

The general problems of discretion give rise to additional concerns when responsibility for implementing a federal policy is parceled out to the fifty states or when responsibility for a state policy is given to county or city governments. In these cases, local bureaucratic discretion may work to undermine the goals of legislators at a higher level of government. In addition, if the factors that shape administrative choice vary across locales, then citizens in some places may have access to benefits that are denied to their neighbors in other political jurisdictions (Keiser & Soss, 1998, p. 1134)

The Oxford Dictionary defines discretion as the freedom to decide what should be done in a particular situation. The presence and power of discretion related to cooperation were immediately evident at all levels of implementation of child support cooperation - state, local, and individual. This section considers the significance of discretion in the implementation of child support cooperation as it positions unmarried mothers as informants to bind mother,

father, and child to the welfare/public assistance, child support enforcement (CSE), and related systems.

The discretion granted by the federal government to states informs state policies and practices and significantly impacts unmarried families utilizing public benefits requiring cooperation. This study also considers some aspects of discretion utilized by state workers and the impacts of that discretion. Also, this study examines the implementation of cooperation requirement and impacts of parents' agency and why that agency does not equate to discretion. Overall, this section uses state policies, data, and stakeholder voices to demonstrate how discretion not only creates disparate experiences based on residence, but also further fuels unique state control over the lives of unmarried families with low incomes and helps ensure the perpetuation of generational poverty and parental incarceration within Black communities.

Discretion between states

The federal government requires that states require cooperation as an eligibility requirement for parents utilizing Medicaid and TANF, but states are granted discretion to require cooperation for state Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)²⁴, child care subsidies through the Child Care Development Fund, and/or SNAP. This means that whether or not a mother/CP is required to cooperate depends both on the benefit that she is receiving and the

²⁴ Practically speaking, the discretion granted to states to require cooperation for state CHIP was rescinded. Federal law says that a child utilizing CHIP will not be denied coverage because a parent is deemed noncooperative. That sanction only applies to the parent and therefore, in practice, cooperation is not required for state CHIP.

state in which she resides. As of 2017, only five states passed laws requiring cooperation for all programs. Those states were: Mississippi, Nebraska, North Carolina, South Dakota, and Wisconsin (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2017).

The power of a state's discretion is highlighted through Wisconsin's decision to require cooperation for its Medicaid program known as BadgerCare. Wisconsin is one of only a few states that actively pursues "Birth Cost Recovery" (ABC for Health, 2022) sometimes referred to as "lying-in fees" or "birth costs." When an unmarried mother who utilizes BadgerCare gives birth, the state of Wisconsin charges the unmarried father for the medical costs of the birth. Paternity must be established by court order for birth costs to be charged and therefore, paternity establishment requires the cooperation of the mother.

Wisconsin pursues Birth Cost Recovery (BCR) even though in 1990 Congress exempted pregnant women from medical support (Medicaid/BadgerCare) cooperation requirements, because cooperation was understood to discourage women from seeking access to prenatal care, which ran counter to the public health goal of reducing infant mortality (P. Roberts, 2005). A loophole was identified, and birth cost collections could legally continue:

Nevertheless, a number of state and county child support enforcement agencies continue to require women to cooperate in obtaining medical support for prenatal and birth costs. They can do this legally if they do not require the woman to cooperate until *after* the baby is born (Paradise et al., 2015, p. 20).

This loophole created the space for states to individually decide how to navigate the majoritarian narrative of being a nation that cares for pregnant women and children. Most states decided that BCR did not serve that narrative and abandoned the practice of pursuing Birth Cost Recovery. Wisconsin was not one of them.

Nearly 90% of all states abandoned Birth Cost Recovery (BCR), some states determining that it is not in the best interests of infants, children or families. Infamously, Wisconsin leads a small numbers of states that continues to pursue this policy and takes the most aggressive enforcement posture in the nation, collecting over \$16 million from some parents in 2016..... none of the recovered dollars go directly to support the children and families. It is all directed to reimburse/incentivize child support offices or the government at the federal and state level (ABC for Health, 2022b).

The cooperation requirement is an essential tool for charging birth costs. In Wisconsin, when an unmarried mother utilizing Medicaid gives birth, the cooperation requirement is activated and the paternity establishment process begins so that the state can charge birth costs to the father and, ultimately, so that child support can be collected.

Paternity establishes a legal link between the child and father that means he will have a legal right to participate in making decisions that require this legal connection (i.e., medical and educational decisions). Whether or not a father is involved in the life of the child is irrelevant to this legal process. If he and the mother were not married when the child was born and she utilized BadgerCare, then he will be charged for birth costs and child support.²⁵

As Sylvia described in Chapter 1, families often experience the IV-D CSE system as smoke and mirrors that punishes some families and works to construct low-income Black fathers into deadbeat dads. Wisconsin follows federal law by not requiring cooperation during pregnancy for women utilizing Medicaid. Yet, as soon as she gives birth, the state activates the cooperation requirement that leads to not only establishing child support orders, but also the

²⁵ Federal policy recently changed so that at the time that a child support order is established, the judge/court commissioner must also establish “parenting time” expectations for the family.

recovery of birth costs. In Sylvia and Derek's situation, she was still in the hospital with Derek by her side when a hospital staff person trying to complete a form, asked who the father was. The new mother was angry at the person asking. And the new father was shocked and angry and looked to the mother to explain why someone would ask that question. Although that person was likely completing a hospital voluntary acknowledgement form to begin the paternity establishment process,²⁶ for Sylvia and Derek, this was a key moment in the state's efforts to make him into a deadbeat dad and construct this new Black family as underserving. The long-term implications for low-income, unmarried parents entering this system are described in subsequent sections, and some were highlighted in Sylvia and Derek's story in Chapter 1. For the State of Wisconsin, this is a cost-effective and efficient mechanism to ensure that paternity is established very quickly after a baby is born to an unmarried mother who utilizes Medicaid. Establishing paternity is the first step for Wisconsin to establish a child support order and to recover Birth Costs. The discretion utilized by states has significant impacts on families in the IV-D system.

²⁶ The 1993 federal Omnibus Reconciliation Act requires "States to have laws and procedures for simple civil process for voluntary acknowledgment of paternity, which explains the rights and responsibilities of acknowledging paternity and includes due process safeguards." One of those procedures is a "Hospital-based program for voluntary acknowledgment of paternity around the time of the child's birth." Initiating paternity establishment during this "golden hour" is a cost-effective and efficiency mechanism in helping CSEAs to meet their required paternity establishment rates (initiated through the Family Support Act of 1988 and increased in 1996 through the Personal Responsibility and Workforce Opportunity and Reconciliation Act). The significance of voluntary acknowledgement laws and procedures is discussed in Finding 3.

Discretion within a state

Parents' cooperation-related experiences vary. Because each state legislates whether child support enforcement activities are handled at the state or county/parish level, there are variations between states and sometimes within states. In Wisconsin, child support enforcement activities are handled at the county level, of which there are 72. Although stakeholder interviews in this study focused only on the state of Wisconsin and one county (Milwaukee), quantitative data collected from the state spanned all 72 counties. The statewide data highlighted significant discrepancies between counties that pointed to discretionary powers at the county/local level.

Although Wisconsin state law establishes its sanction for noncooperation as the termination of benefits, data from the State of Wisconsin also shows significant variation in the rate of sanctioning within the state. Comparison of the 2019 sanction data from across Wisconsin's 72 counties reveals some significant discrepancies by county of residence, gender, age, and race/ethnicity.

The Office of Child Support Enforcement's Annual Preliminary Report indicates that in 2019, Wisconsin's overall sanction rate was 3.7%, which was more than 4.5 times the nationwide average of 0.8%. Data reported from all 72 counties and seven Tribal nations indicate significant variations across key areas. As we consider sanction rates, it is important to remember that this data is not disaggregated by the parents' path into the IV-D system (i.e., public benefits requiring cooperation, child welfare system, divorced parent seeking state assistance in collecting child support as described in Chapter 1) or even by who is eligible for sanctions (parents cannot be sanctioned for noncooperation is their only connection to the

state is asking for help collecting support). Consequently, the sanction rates of parents applying for welfare/public assistance is likely much higher as this data includes parents in all categories of the IV-D system and not just that subset of custodial parents. Additionally, without more nuanced data sets that also consider the intersections of peoples' identities (i.e., Latino men compared to white women), analyses are limited. These gaps in data may mask varied impacts of child support cooperation requirements on subgroups. Also, in wanting to understand the impacts the policy is having on families, the current State data system does not allow tracking to see:

- the ways in which noncooperation sanctions impact paternity establishment rates,
- whether sanctions for noncooperation have contributed to a specific noncustodial parent making regular child support payments,
- whether any IV-D child support payors impacted by cooperation can achieve a sense of economic stability
- whether fathers paying child support continue engaging in the life of his child, or
- the ways that noncooperation contributes to contempt of court charges and the arrest of fathers/NCPs.

Despite those limitations, the State data does provide some helpful information. Of the Wisconsin parents sanctioned in 2019, more than 96% were listed as female. Yet, statewide, mothers were sanctioned at more than three times the rate of fathers, 3.8% compared to 1.2% respectively. The statewide rate of 3.8% is anchored by Milwaukee County at 3.7%. Amongst the most populous counties in the state, Racine and Dane stand out, sanctioning women custodial parents at nearly double the

Key Wisconsin findings related to noncooperation and gender (2019):

- 96% of sanctioned parents were mothers
- Custodial mothers sanctioned for noncooperation at three times the rate of custodial fathers
- Dane and Racine Counties sanction mothers at nearly double the statewide rate

statewide rate, 6.4% and 6% respectively. A few less populous counties sanctioned mother/CP at even higher rates, but, because they were more-populous counties, Racine and Dane stand out as affecting more families. See Appendix F Wisconsin Non-Cooperation Sanctions-Gender.

The county level sanction patterns described above also held true for sanctions by age. Racine and Dane counties stood out among more-populous counties. Racine sanctioned custodial parents aged 21-40 at an especially high rate of 9.5%, while Dane County's rate was 7.8%. Statewide, the sanction rate of custodial parents aged 21-40 years old was significantly lower at 4.7%, anchored by Milwaukee County at 5.1%. In general, it appears that sanctions against custodial parents aged 21-40 years old drove overall rates of sanctions by age group. This age group has the most custodial parents and the most sanctions. See Appendix G

Wisconsin Non-Cooperation Sanctions-Age. The relatively high rates of sanctions in the 21–40-year-old category (common age range for conceiving and giving birth) suggests that Wisconsin's local CSEAs use the power to sanction in an effort to establish paternity

Key Wisconsin findings related to noncooperation and age (2019):

- 21–40-year-olds sanctioned most often
- Racine and Dane Counties sanction 21-40-year-olds at highest rates in state

and child support and BCR orders early on. These practices were incentivized in 1996 through PRWORA and remain efficient and effective measures for minimizing welfare expenditures. The pernicious effects of the 1996 Performance Incentive Funding Structure on families are detailed in Finding 3.

Statewide, Hispanic custodial parents and American Indian custodial parents were sanctioned at the highest rates, 6.5% and 6.2% respectively. Discrepancies were also evident

between counties in the race/ethnicity data. Amongst more populous counties, Dane stands

Figure 5.1 Wisconsin Sanction Rate Percentages by Race/Ethnicity*, 2019**

	American Indian	Black	Hispanic	Pacific Islander	White	Race unknown
Wisconsin	6.2	5.2	6.5	4.9	3.1	0.7
Milwaukee	4.8	4.1	5.3	4.2	2.2%	0.6
Dane	6.8	9.9	11.2	5.3	5.1	1%
Racine	6.4	8.7	9.1	6.5	3.5	1.1

*No reportable data was available for Asian parents (i.e., Hmong, Chinese, Laotian)

**Wisconsin's most populous counties

out for sanctioning both Black and Hispanic custodial parents at nearly double the statewide rate, 9.9% and 11.2% respectively. Racine also sanctioned Black custodial parents at rate of 9%, nearly double the statewide rate. It is noteworthy that Dane, Milwaukee and Racine counties include the largest number of Black residents in Wisconsin and some of the highest numbers of Hispanic/Latino residents. For an overview of related data, see Appendix H Wisconsin Non-Cooperation Sanctions-Race and Ethnicity.

The State of Wisconsin did not satisfy the request for “reasons for sanctions,” but other data sources illuminated possible reasons. Federal law empowers child support enforcement agencies to deem someone “noncooperative” and then notify the welfare/public assistance agency who is responsible for administering the sanction. Maritza was a former child support enforcement agency staff person. Although her role in the local CSEA was to “track down income from the noncustodial parent,” she offered this context around sanctioning someone for noncooperation. In part, she spent time “in the lobby area” of the CSEA offices where parents would come to address many issues, including why their benefits were terminated. In her role, Maritza, did not make determinations of “noncooperation,” but she had to clarify for

parents why they were sanctioned. Maritza explained reasons why people in Milwaukee County were typically sanctioned for noncooperation.

A lot of the time it's because that person wasn't cooperating, so we had to explain that they've been called by a paralegal, they've been sent letters. They knew they had to come in and they're choosing to ignore coming in.

So, it wasn't generally paperwork. Most of the time it's they have to sit down for an interview with a paralegal. So, the way it works is you (mother or father) go apply for benefits for the child, whether it be medical or child care. Generally, Foodshare (*Wisconsin's version of SNAP*) doesn't get you a referred kicked over. But medical will or child care or W-2... We'd send a letter saying, "You need to come talk to a paralegal so that we can go over your case or we can establish paternity for the child." We also try to call you. If you ignore the first letter, you ignore the second letter, you ignore that third letter, you're not returning the calls from the paralegal or the lawyer then they'll sanction you in order to get your attention. That generally immediately gets someone's attention, when their benefits are sanctioned. They either call or come down and they do what they can to correct it.

Maritza indicated that CSEAs have a series of steps that are followed (i.e., letters sent, phone calls) and if parents do not respond to those automated systems, then they are sanctioned. Even so, law and precedent indicate that reasons for sanctioning is a very gray area. In *Tomas v Rubin (1991)* the courts empowered the CSEA to deem parents as noncooperative for a very broad range of behaviors and communication styles, including:

- evasive/inconsistent answers,
- nervous/distrustful/hostile attitude,
- defensive demeanor,
- antagonistic behavior from start of an interview, and
- no eye contact.

It is unclear if the automated approach that Maritza described was typical within Wisconsin and/or across the country, or if reasons for sanctions were broader and more subjective as

allowed through *Tomas v Rubin*. Further research is needed to understand reasons for determinations of noncooperation. Yet, *Tomas v Rubin* institutionalizes racism by legitimizing sanction for cultural differences and racist notions of “appropriate and inappropriate behavior.”

Individual discretion

Discretion in the implementation of cooperation is evident between and within states. Interviews with service providers, child support staff, and parents suggest that there is significant discretion at the individual level as well.

When a mother or a pregnant woman applies for a welfare/public assistance program requiring cooperation, it is likely her first opportunity for formal learning about cooperation requirements. Wisconsin applicants can begin the application process with a paper copy, through an online portal, on the telephone, or in person. The method of application impacts the speed with which an application is processed²⁷ and likely impacts the information shared about cooperation requirements. For example, Wisconsin’s 61-page application for Medicaid/BadgerCare and SNAP/FoodShare (See Appendix A) includes the following information about cooperating with the CSEA.

In some situations, you must cooperate with the Child Support Agency to establish paternity. This means you must help the agency locate an absent parent, legally name the absent parent and/or enforce medical support liability orders. If you do not cooperate with the Child Support Agency and do not have a good reason to not cooperate, your benefits may end if you are an adult and are not pregnant (p. 2).

²⁷ Multiple phone calls to state and county benefits offices in Wisconsin helped clarify that when applicants apply in-person or on the telephone, the application is processed immediately. If someone applies online or through the mail, the processing and approval processes take longer.

Given the complex web of related issues and policies and the length of the application, it may be reasonable that the explanation provided is vague. Yet, it is unclear if the State makes any other efforts to inform mothers/CPs or pregnant women. And one can reasonably say that the paragraph above does not fully inform an applicant of the significance or breadth of impacts of cooperation requirements.

Continuing, interviews with stakeholders indicated that if a person applies for a benefit program in-person or on the telephone, she may receive even less information about cooperation requirements than if completing a hard copy or an online version of the application. Monica, a former state public assistance staff person who processed applications explained:

Let me tell you something, everything is worker decision, worker discretion. Working for the state in the past, you don't have to ask that question (about the applicant's willingness to cooperate with the child support enforcement agency). I mean, you brush that question. You only say, "Does the father of your children live with you? Does the father of your children help you with any payments?" And they say, "No." If they say no, they right away submit a referral to Child Support and that's it. They don't explain too much, they don'tNot even ask the right question about cooperating, they submit the referral to Child Support and that's it. They don't explain. They submit the referral and that's it. If you apply only for medical and you're not married, and the father of the unborn child is not listed in the case because they're not married, they're referred right away, that person to Child Support. Because they're not living together and they don't have any children yet, so the father of the unborn baby will be referred right away to Child Support.

Consequently, in practice, if an applicant applies in-person or on the telephone for a program requiring cooperation, whether she is told about the requirement depends on the individual worker. Caseworkers have much discretion and are central to the implementation of

the child support cooperation requirement. They are considered street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky, 2010). In the context of cooperation, welfare and public assistance caseworkers are positioned as gatekeepers to protect the state's resources, more so than resources to support and assist Black and Brown mothers/CPs who are navigating these complex systems (Kelly, 1994; Shaw, 2003). Stories of violence toward applicants in welfare offices is not uncommon (Farzan, 2018; Gay & Goldberg, 2019). Yet, within that complex terrain, Monica also suggested that the massive caseloads of state benefits workers present a real time constraint that may inform decisions to share information about cooperation requirements. Bureaucratic constraints impacting worker discretion is a well-documented issue (Keiser & Soss, 1998; Lipsky, 2010).

State/county workers' discretion to share information about cooperation holds great significance in the lives of low-income unmarried mothers/CPs and fathers/NCPs. These parents rarely have legal representation in child support-related matters (Boggess, 2017), so much of their access to formal information is tied to the workers with whom they interact. (A discussion of learning and access to knowledge about cooperation follows.)

Clearly, applicants should be informed of the federal requirement to cooperate and the significance of the requirement. Yet, even if parent applicants are told about child support cooperation requirements, the decision to cooperate or not is not real. Lipsky (2010) explains, "Potential welfare recipients in a sense 'volunteer' to apply for welfare, for example, but their participation in the welfare system is hardly voluntary if they have no income alternatives" (p. 54). As evidenced in Sylvia and Derek's story, pregnant women and parents apply for benefits because there are not enough resources to care for themselves and/or their families. At that

point, the (alleged) father's role typically falls into one of two categories. First, if he is already participating in the financial, socio-emotional and/or physical care of the mother and child, then paternity will be established, and he will be charged with child support and maybe birth costs. So, if he is already involved in the raising of the child and the family still needs resources, then because the family used benefits requiring cooperation, the state reimbursement efforts actually extract his financial contributions out of the family.²⁸ As described by many parents, cooperation also creates or increases tension between the mother/CP and father/NCP as he becomes ensnared in the CSE and related systems. If the mother/CP chooses to mask the father's/NCP's involvement from the state to obtain the needed resources, then the household is at risk of losing benefits and she could be charged with fraud. Again, these are processes that parents typically navigate without legal representation. Secondly, if the father/NCP has not been involved in the care of the child, then her cooperation awards her the financial resources of the public benefits program and a portion of any child support collected.²⁹ In this case, cooperation can also create or exacerbate any tension between the mother and father.

Author and journalist Ta-Nehisi Coates' questioned, "When injustice has been so central to the development of a nation, how do we move toward justice?" Cooperation is bound to the welfare/public assistance system. Research has documented the centrality of race to the construction of TANF and in states where whites express more negative racial views toward

²⁸ In Chapter 1, Sylvia described the realities of the state siphoning Derek's income from their tightly managed budget. The 1984 Child Support Enforcement Amendments created automatic withholding mechanisms to increase child support collections.

²⁹ The amount she receives depends on the amount paid, the state and locale in which she resides, and the benefit program(s) utilized.

Black people in particular, the distribution of TANF cash assistance is adversely impacted (Fusaro, 2021). In response to Coates' question, when systems are grounded in injustice, these significant layers of discretion (i.e., between states, within states, and by individual street-level bureaucrats) limit the potential of a system and a nation to move toward justice. In practice, the requirement of cooperation really only applies to unmarried families who turn to the state for assistance. Wisconsin's enactment of cooperation further limits the potential for justice by actively entrenching injustice. In practice, discretion perpetuates injustices tied to parents' identities, including: gender, age, race, ethnicity, legal parenting status and even residential address. These outcomes are informed by bureaucratic processes, systems, and individuals. The discretion allotted through cooperation then serves to structure low-income, unmarried Black mothers/CPs and fathers/NCPs into racialized notions of welfare queens and deadbeat dads. Cooperation requirements demonstrate how anti-Blackness and white supremacy are permanently ingrained into US society through law and policy.

Finding 2: Learning and Access to Knowledge

The IV-D CSE system is largely unfamiliar to many who are outside of it and therefore operates separately from the consciousness of the public and many other stakeholders (Boggess, 2017). Interviews with parents, service providers, and street-level bureaucrats support that claim. More specifically, the data suggest that across stakeholder groups (i.e., street-level bureaucrats, mothers/CPs, fathers/NCPs, community workers), the impacts of the

masked systems impact stakeholder groups differently, but overall, learning and access to knowledge are limited across groups. Combined with the discretion described earlier, this creates significant opportunity for injustice.

Interviews suggest that these mothers/CPs and fathers/NCPs have some parallel experiences and some unique ones as they navigate the CSE system. Mothers/CPs described a system that happened to them, not something in which they had any sense of agency. Like Sylvia, many other mothers/CPs described CSE as something that just seemed to start happening. They did not ask for child support to be initiated. Andrea, mother of one who utilized W-2 and BadgerCare, explained,

I just feel like I didn't get much information about what I could do. I was ushered places. You know, 'Here do this, here do that,' instead of them giving me information so I could figure out what I wanted to do.

Fathers/NCPs described being controlled by the system. Reggie, who works with many fathers through Family Community Organization 1 (FCO1), explained:

We don't have a choice in what we do when it comes to child support. They (*the CSEA agency*) just do it. They just take it. We don't have a choice. We don't have a say-so.

Although both mothers/CPs and fathers/NCPs described not understanding cooperation and the IV-D CSE system, and not having any agency, at times their limited access to knowledge almost made it seem as though they were describing entirely different systems. From the fathers' vantage point, the mothers were "putting me on child support and messing with our situation." That incomplete understanding can create friction between the parents. Anthony, another FCO1 staff person who worked with fathers, explained:

One of the situations that I find myself probably explaining to the dads the most when it comes to child support is that because the mom and the child are on Medicaid or W-2 or BadgerCare or need child care, et cetera, that's what forces the dad to have to pay child support. What dads are angry or upset about is, they're under the impression that the girl placed them on child support and, 'Here it is, she got me on child support and I'm at the house and I take care of the bills. I do everything anyway, why she taking child support?' And so I have to explain to them, it's not that she's taking child support from you, but when the state and the county is giving her any assistance, they want to be reimbursed or paid back for that. In order to get reimbursed or paid back they place you on child support.

Both mothers/CPs and fathers/NCPs described a system that prevents them from operating in the best interests of their children.

Yet the narrative expressed by former child support workers in this study reflected the outcomes touted in reports, webinars, and videos by the National Child Support Enforcement Agency (NCSEA) about "lifting children out of poverty" and operating in the "best interests of children." Former CSEA staff who were interviewed echoed those narratives. This narrative positions children as needing the protection of the state and implies that parents are not operating in the best interests of their children. Yet the experiences described by both custodial and noncustodial parents consistently suggested that the child support cooperation requirement and subsequent interactions with the Agency actually further economic instability for the family rather than "lifting children out of poverty."

While issues of furthering economic instability are discussed later in the chapter, this section examines how stakeholders learn about cooperation and its impacts, and who has access to that knowledge. As the Chapter 1 story of Sylvia and Derek highlights, cooperation requirements can have serious consequences for families. This section considers four

stakeholder groups: 1) street-level bureaucrats (i.e., child support staff, welfare, and public assistance staff), 2) mothers/CPs, 3) fathers/NCPs, and 4) community members that refer mothers/CPs to public assistance programs. In this policy realm, public assistance and welfare staff hold some responsibility around notifying mothers of cooperation requirements³⁰ (and sanctioning for noncooperation). Child support staff determine noncooperation and notify the public assistance/welfare program when the sanction is actually implemented.

Street-level bureaucrats: Silos and automation limit learning

As discussed in Finding 1: Discretion, when an unmarried mother/CP applies for a program requiring cooperation, the information she obtains about cooperation requirements depends on the method of application used and the worker who provides assistance. Examination of the policy systems and interviews with former child support and public assistance staff indicate that street-level bureaucrats' knowledge of cooperation policy, implementation, and impacts are constrained by their positions. In Wisconsin, learning and access to knowledge is also impacted by the state's automated system.

Alesha worked as a case manager for BadgerCare, Milwaukee Early Care Assistance (MECA, Milwaukee's version of Wisconsin Shares), and FoodShare. She primarily did telephone interviews for those programs. Alesha described an automated system where "as soon as a parent said they weren't married, you'd push that button, and they were automatically referred to Child Support." The State of Wisconsin W-2 (TANF) Policy Manual (2022) also indicated that

³⁰ Access to information about cooperation may happen through the language in the application for benefits or through the interactions with the state benefits/welfare staff. For additional information, see Finding 1: Discretion.

“An automated referral is sent via CARES screen APCI when W-2 eligibility is confirmed.” That policy suggests that once that unmarried applicant is deemed eligible for benefits requiring cooperation, the IV-D Child Support case is automatically activated.

Interviews with street-level bureaucrats highlighted that these workers were trained and operated in silos. On the public assistance side, many workers spoke openly about application and eligibility processes related to Medicaid, FoodShare, and/or child care subsidies, but TANF/W-2 was its own special entity. Monica, for example, explained, “I worked with FoodShare and healthcare (*Medicaid/BadgerCare*) and child care (*Wisconsin Shares/Milwaukee Early Care Assistance*), not W-2 at all. W-2 is a different program from the state, and it was managed by another organization.” Operating in that silo informed how Monica worked with parents applying for assistance:

When I submit the application or enter the person for FoodShare and healthcare, and I see that the mom is working and they have children, I ask them, “Are the children in school?” If she says, “Yes,” I don’t ask anything about child care. We don’t work with W-2 neither, so I don’t ask anything about W-2, but, I refer the client if they need more information about W-2. They can go home and use ACCESS (*online portal*) or look for W-2 program because now you can submit an application for W-2 and Energy Assistance online.

Yet Monica was clear that cooperation was required for W-2. She explained:

I know if you receive W-2 and you don’t comply with Child Support, I think they also sanction you. But, like I said, I don’t have too much information about W-2, because I don’t work with W-2, I do not, but I know that they are sanctioning people with W-2 cases.³¹

³¹ W-2 has two broad categories for sanction: noncooperation with CSE and work-related.

W-2 staff were not interviewed in this study. Because W-2 operates as a separate entity, public assistance staff working with other programs were uncertain what information was shared with those parent applicants.

Silos also exist between those programs and the CSEA. These county and state workers also described having limited knowledge about what cooperation meant or what an unmarried parent would experience at the CSEA. When responding to clients' questions about cooperation, Alesha, a former public assistance case manager, explained:

I would just tell them...They'll get this information that you know, will initiate a process where they'll try to figure out what the salary is or things of that nature, but I would always tell them, I don't know the extent of that because honestly, I just know that it would initiate a process on the Child Support end.

For public benefits staff, the workings of the CSEA were a mystery. For example, Monica, a former state public assistance staff person who processed applications, talked about CSE as something that happened in another section of the building and literally "behind closed doors." These barriers help ensure that the system and its impacts are not fully understood by anyone, even child support staff.

Even within the local CSEA, the staff seemed to operate in silos. Maritza, a former CSEA staff person whose role was to "track income for noncustodial parents and try to obtain payments," spoke in tremendous detail about the work that she did, but she also had very clear lines when questions would move beyond her silo of Child Support knowledge. Here are some of the references Maritza made during the interview:

- "Then I would send a parent upstairs (*to other CSEA staff*) to get in line to address that,"

- “That is something that would be discussed with the paralegal or the attorney,”
- “They would have to talk with the legal clinic about that,” and
- “That is something they would have to go in front of the commissioner for.”

With those siloes of understanding, it was hard to filter who in these systems would fully understand how cooperation was enacted and the full significance for individual parents or families.

Even though Maritza spoke clearly about some of the steps that parents would have to follow and the need for “parents to communicate with us or we can’t help them,” she was also very clear about impacts and the harsh realities of unmarried and under-resourced families engaging with the child support enforcement system. She noted, “People who don’t have the wealth, it’s hard to collect. They just don’t have it but the state has to collect it.” Alesha, as a former public assistance case manager, elaborated on these realities. She described parents calling her in tears because of the financial strain and increased tension caused by engaging with the CSEA. Alesha reflected,

Given what I know, I would have said, ‘No’ (*to cooperating with the CSEA*) if I was applying for myself...Child Support (*system*) is a whole ‘nother can of worms. Men and women placed in child support system puts a whole ‘nother level of bondage on them.

The state workers (CSEA and public assistance program staff) were well versed in their roles and interactions with parents but lacked a clear sense of other parts of the systems. Even so, they each described an overall sense that when low-income, unmarried parents (are required to) engage with the CSEA, the family will suffer.

Mothers'/CPs' learning about child support cooperation

Mothers' access to knowledge about cooperation appears to come from two realms: the state (formal) and personal networks (informal). As described in Finding 1: Discretion, the states determines what information about cooperation requirements to include in its applications. In Wisconsin, the information shared with mothers is dependent on the method of application for benefits used and the discretion of the individual workers. Wisconsin's short, vague description is one paragraph which is buried in its 61-page BadgerCare Plus Application, For a mother /CP who is looking for help to feed her children or to access medical care, that paragraph likely blends in to the rest of the text. The description's substance and position mean the policy's significance likely goes undetected.³² Yet, for a researcher reviewing the application, that language begs for follow-up questions such as, "What's a 'good reason' and who gets to decide?", "What's an 'absent parent'?" "What happens when the state finds the parent?" Also, depending on the method of application she uses, that limited information may not be shared at all (see Finding 1: Discretion). And, for a woman who has not yet given birth, cooperation does not yet apply and this information likely feels irrelevant.³³

After applying for the public benefit program, the mother/CP will meet with a CSEA representative as part of the cooperation process. In that meeting, she may learn more about cooperation. Because CSEA staff who conducted those initial meetings were not part of the

³² See Appendix A for full BadgerCare Plus Application Packet, F-10182application.

³³ With the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* (June 2022) overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, questions about when life begins are getting renewed attention and questions are being raised about when fatherhood and the related fiscal responsibilities should begin. If paternity establishment is done during the pregnancy, then cooperation requirements for pregnant women applying for Medicaid/BadgerCare will begin earlier.

stakeholder interviews, the State lens on this aspect of learning and access to cooperation information is absent from this study.

Learning about the concept of cooperation during the application and eligibility process is one important layer, but the experiential learning of being sanctioned for noncooperation is another separate layer. Monica, who worked for the state for almost 15 years helping parents apply for benefits, shared what she was able to understand about the CSEA sanction process:

Child Support sends a letter saying, “We need more information about the absent father. “So, I guess they send them a paper that you have to fill out and provide information about the absent parent. So they send you that form. If you don’t send it back with the information that means you did not comply or if you did not return a call from Child Support.

If you don’t comply with that, that’s when the sanctions come. Child Support is somehow connected with DHS (*Wisconsin’s Department of Human Services*), and DHS needs to sanction that person. Child Support notifies DHS, and DHS goes and sanctions the person. A letter goes out saying, “You need to comply with this. You’re not eligible for healthcare because you did not comply with the Child Support.” So many people do not pay attention to those letters either, so they don’t know they don’t have healthcare because they didn’t comply with Child Support. They figure it out when they need to go to the doctor or they need to go pick up a prescription. When they (*the medical receptionist*) tells the (*public assistance/welfare staff*) person, “You don’t have medical,” That’s how they become aware they don’t have medical, and they go back to the state and say, “I want to know why I don’t have medical.” When the worker checks they tell the clients, “You did not comply with Child Support, and that’s the reason you don’t have medical.” So then they are referred back to Child Support.

The experiences of mothers learning they have been sanctioned can be shocking and fraught with intensity, frustration, and fear. At one point, Alanda, mother of four children, applied for TANF/W-2 and SNAP/FoodShare was sanctioned for noncooperation:

I stopped receiving benefits. It would be like I'd miss an appointment. They would send me things on email and then, for a while, I didn't have a phone so I didn't know they were sending me stuff. Then they'd send a *letter (in the US mail)* but it was too late.

The benefits were cut. Alanda's economic circumstances led to a period when she did not have a phone. Her phone gave her access to the internet, email communications, and her public assistance portal account. By the time she received a hard copy of the letter notifying her of the sanctions, her benefits were cut. The tenuous economic circumstances that bring parents to the public assistance programs are further undermined when a mother/noncustodial parent is sanctioned and are amplified when she tries to buy groceries, take her son to child care, or take her sick daughter to the doctor, and finds that she cannot. When parents utilize the public assistance programs requiring cooperation, they are also put under the gaze of the carceral state as they struggle to care for themselves and their children and come into contact with mandatory reporters (i.e., teachers, medical professionals). This serves to re-entrench the notion of Black bodies (parents) as unworthy and undeserving. Each of the Findings points to disincentives for mother/CPs and fathers/NCPs to engage with the CSEA.

There also appears to be a significant disconnect in the way the State communicates its expectations and sanctions, and the way that these mothers are learning about them. Maritza, a former Child Support worker, often talked with parents whose benefits were terminated for noncooperation when she "worked the hallway," where parents gathered outside the child support offices seeking information. Maritza explained, "Moms would come in with their kids yelling because their benefits were cut. Most of the time they said they didn't do anything, so I would explain that they didn't cooperate, and I would send them to the paralegal."

When sanctioned, the mother/CP typically has to meet with someone at the CSEA before the sanction can be removed. That is a complex project for any parent and is impacted by many factors including employment status, employer flexibility and hours, child care and/or child responsibilities, and transportation options. For a mother/CP who learned about the sanction when she was trying to use the benefit, setting this meeting is even more time-sensitive and stress-inducing. Martiza shared more information about why parents struggle to access information and schedule appointments:

The problem is that the top of the Child Support letters have our Child Support Customer Service line right away and you have to read all the way towards the bottom to get the direct number (*to your assigned caseworker*). So, people didn't read that far; they just saw the number on top and that's the one they called.

When looking for child support staff to interview, I called the Customer Service line three times. In those calls, I intentionally attempted to navigate each "branch" of the Milwaukee CSEA's phone tree. After three attempts that lasted 20-30 minutes each, I was not able to talk with a human being or leave a message for someone to return my call. It seems that even if people who are sanctioned call the Customer Service number, they will also likely have to physically go to the agency and wait in the hallway to find out the next step.

The current processes of learning and access to knowledge through the CSEA have some significant gaps that seem to create more tension, stress, uncertainty, and economic instability for mothers/CPs, children, and families. There appears to be a mismatch in the ways that the CSEA communicates with parents and the realities of life in under-resourced families. Many mothers/CPs found support and insights about Child Support from their friends and families.

Mothers'/CPs' informal learning and access to knowledge

In addition to the access to formal knowledge described earlier, some mothers in the study described their friends and female relatives as sources of knowledge and information about the CSEA. They described more general conversations about staying away from the CSE system and not specifically about cooperation. Erika, mother of five, recalled strong messages from her female relatives about avoiding the CSEA. They were pragmatic in their advice. She explained:

You have your momma in one ear and your auntie or your grandmother in the other ear saying, "Girl, leave him (*the father*) alone. He's sticking by you. He's not doing nothing. He picks up them kids whenever you call. He is doing what he can. So why you gonna go and cause all this calamity and do this (*tie him to the CSEA*)?"

I didn't want to mess with that because I could go over to his mom's house and eat; they would keep my kids anytime. There was never a stressful conversation over there. All the stresses came from my mom.

The insights shared by her female relatives helped make Erika more conscious of all the parenting support she received through the good relationships with the father and his family. Even though the father struggled financially and they were not married, she believed that any benefits of engaging the CSEA were outweighed by the significant and ongoing support offered by the father's family.³⁴ Although mothers' relationships with fathers and their families varied, mothers' friends and relatives taught them that engaging with the CSEA meant harming the

³⁴ The father was not interviewed for this study, so his views about establishing paternity and child support are not represented here.

father and/or her relationship with him and his family.³⁵ Yet, if the mother pursues an assistance program, then she will be required to cooperate. Overall, the experiences of friends and relatives teaches unmarried, low-income Black parents that the problems created for the families by engaging with the CSEA outweigh the benefits of public assistance/welfare. This is especially significant when the resources address basic needs through cash, food, health insurance and child care.

Fathers'/NCPs' learning about child support cooperation

Fathers'/NCPs' learning seems to also reflect informal and formal ways of knowing. There was consensus amongst service providers working with dads that fathers come to their programs mad at the moms because, "She put me on child support." The service providers working with them knew that "the state starts to press him for child support when she applies for benefits," and they described spending a lot of time explaining fathers/NCPs that "the state is making her do this."

The fathers/NCPs clearly had some awareness of the CSE system before coming to the community programs. Given the relatively small percentage of fathers/NCPs served by programs, further research about the informal ways that fathers learn about the CSE system would be helpful. Like mothers/CPs, the fathers'/NCPs' friends and family members within and

³⁵ It is noteworthy that this guidance was consistent within Black mothers interviewed but varied across white mothers. While some White mothers received similar guidance from friends and family, others found significant financial support from their own parents because, as Andrea explained, "He's absent and his parents, I've never met them. Never met anyone else in his family. Without help from my parents, Medicare, and FoodShare, I wouldn't be able to parent." Further research might explore the advice that racially and ethnically diverse mothers receive from friends and family about child support and also incorporate class analyses.

beyond the community groups are likely sources of information. Additionally, child support is a common topic in Black social media, music, and television.³⁶ These sources construct powerful messages that inform fathers'/NCPs' understandings of the CSE system, how it impacts their ways of parenting, their relationships with the mothers/CPs and their understandings of the state and its systems. Examination of these sources of knowledge would contribute to a better understanding of fathers'/NCPs' learning about the CSE system.

Maritza, a former child support staff person, explained that in Milwaukee, the first formal communication initiated by the CSEA is a letter sent through the US mail requiring fathers to come in for paternity testing. I was not able to obtain a copy of one of those letters for this study,³⁷ but the fathers'/NCPs' lack of awareness of cooperation suggests that if those letters are received and read, then they likely do not explain that paternity establishment is initiated by the CSEA when an unmarried mother seeks benefits. [The CSEA's communications with (alleged) fathers are further discussed in Finding 3].

The learning of other stakeholders

Interviews with parents made it very apparent that people outside the CSEA and public assistance/welfare systems play key roles in referring parents to the programs that require

³⁶ Some examples include: "Child Support" by Ice Cube, "Child Support" by Greg Gitty, "Child Support Lyrics" by BMT Hustlers, "Beat the Child Support Court Game" by Billion Dollar Worth of Game, and "Golddigger" by Kanye West, as well as television shows like "Child Support Court with Judge Vonda," and "Love and Hip Hop."

³⁷ As explained in Chapter 4, efforts were made to contact the CSEA to interview legal staff and request sample documents. These efforts were unsuccessful in part because of the Covid-19 pandemic and in part because the Milwaukee County CSEA telephone tree did not lead to an opportunity to leave a message or talk with a human being.

cooperation. Some of the people referring parents include: staff at community organizations working with parents, medical professionals, social workers in various settings, and interested community members.

In the introductory story of Sylvia and Derek, one of those trusted individuals was Sylvia's medical resident during pregnancy who became her family physician. When she learned of Sylvia's limited and costly health insurance, the physician encouraged Sylvia to apply for the state Medicaid/BadgerCare program. Nothing about Sylvia's experience with that medical professional suggested that the person had any understanding of the cooperation requirement and the financial impacts the family would endure by applying for BadgerCare. Understandably, the primary concerns of that physician were the health of her patient and that the coverage provided through BadgerCare was better and more cost-effective than the coverage provided through Sylvia's insurance. Other mothers shared that they were offered a brochure about BadgerCare when visiting Planned Parenthood and another when talking with a librarian at her local public library. The broad lack of awareness and understanding of the IV-D child support system as a whole (caused in part by lack of legal representation) (Boggess, 2017) and specifically child support cooperation requirements help ensure that policies and practices that perpetuate the majoritarian narratives of public assistance/welfare programs benefitting families and CSEAs operating "in the best interests of children" will not be questioned.

The masking of the CSE system also means that mothers/CPs and fathers/NCPs will not be able to effectively advocate for their children and family as they navigate the CSEA. This is not to imply that health providers, librarians, teachers, or social workers should be expected to know the nuances of CSE policy. Yet, the broad lack of awareness, the siloed knowledge within

systems, and the minimal and inconsistent sharing of information with parents furthers the opportunities for injustice within these racialized policy systems. The lack of awareness also means that discretion can more easily go unchecked and create greater potential for power to be abused.

Yet, increased awareness and access to knowledge alone will not dismantle racism. The next finding interrogates the ways that policies and practices grounded in racialized notions of low-income mothers and fathers serve to perpetuate economic instability amongst unmarried families.

Finding 3: Economic (in)stability

When families are divorcing, the adversaries in the court case are the parents. The subsequent role of the CSEA is administrative, simply moving money from one parent to the other. The child support orders are established through court-approved parenting arrangements. Beyond that, the state is not involved or invested in parenting roles, decision-making or families' finances. If payors in these families fail to make the expected payments, then for a relatively small fee, payees can seek the assistance of the CSEA in procuring those payments. On this "private side" of child support, the CSEA can utilize a wide range of enforcement tools described below.

The experiences of low-income, unmarried families is significantly different. These families typically engage with the CSEA as a result of cooperation requirements in public assistance/welfare programs. In this realm, the adversaries in the legal proceedings are the state and the (alleged) father. The court case to establish paternity and child support is initiated by the state and against the (alleged) father. This points to a system that presumes that every low-income, unwed father and mother match the racialized stereotypes of deadbeat dads and welfare queens.³⁸ The mother's/CP's interests are not represented unless she hires a separate attorney.³⁹ As the plaintiff in the case, the state's interests are in establishing paternity and in establishing and collecting on child support orders to meet the Agency's legislative mandate to limit welfare expenditures (i.e., either by limiting the mothers'/CPs' need for public assistance because child support is paid or by reimburse the state for assistance already disbursed to the mother). The federal Performance Incentive Structure created through the Child Support Performance and Incentive Act of 1998 established five measures used to assess funding support: Paternity Establishment Percentage (PEP), Child Support Collections Score, Child Support Collections Score, Child Support Arrearage Cases Score and Cost-Effectiveness Score. The addition of paternity establishment or the PEP measure directed the attention of CSEAs to a group that previously was not considered valuable, the lowest income alleged fathers. Previously, they were not useful to the CSEA in meeting its performance goals because they only mattered if they paid child support and/or arrears and in a way that was cost-effective for

³⁸ Although not the primary focus of this study clearly the system also presumes that there are two parents and that one is male, and one is female. The problematic nature of those assumptions calls for critical examination.

³⁹ According to Wisconsin law, unmarried mothers are CPs and have sole legal custody of her child until a court orders otherwise (2005 Wisconsin Act 443).

the Agency. As Maritza, a former child support enforcement agency staff person, explained, “People who don’t have the wealth....It’s hard to collect because they just don’t have it.”

Yet, that reality was addressed through a carceral lens of surveillance and punishment of the alleged fathers/NCPs with the addition of the PEP measure, every unmarried and (alleged) father instantly represented a source of funding for the state/CSEA. The fathers’/NCPs’ ability to pay child support was irrelevant. Consequently, each state CSEA had a fiscal incentive to prioritize paternity establishment and enforcement efforts.

The focus of this study is the segment of IV-D unmarried families where the state brings suit against the (alleged) father through cooperation requirements. The IV-D side of CSE structures the mother/CP primarily as caregiver (and sometimes financial provider) and the father/NCP as financial provider. When the state pursues actions against the father/NCP, both parents lose their right to make decisions about their roles and responsibilities, and about how they can best operate as a parenting unit to support the health and well-being of their child. His involvement in the life of the child is not relevant to the court proceedings and in many ways is discouraged as the state constructs the definition of a responsible father as one who pays child support. The primary concerns for the state are establishing paternity and a child support order and making sure the father/NCP pays.

Engaging in separate discussions with mothers, fathers, and child support workers about their experiences in the IV-D child support system made it seem as though they were describing entirely different systems. Mothers/CPs described a system happening around them, but they were not informed or part of decision-making processes. Many described having no idea how the child support system operated and noted that they did not “ask for child support.”

Fathers'/NCPs' positionality and limited understandings of the policy systems suggest that mothers/CPs, not the state, are responsible for "putting me on child support and messing with our situation."⁴⁰ CSEA staff described "just wanting to help." None of the stakeholder groups noted a sense of economic security or stability derived from engaging with the CSEA and practically speaking, they described more instability. This economic (in)stability finding contextualizes the experiences of key stakeholders in the child support cooperation system by situating their voices within the current policy systems.

Even though these assistance programs are available to parents whose economic circumstances leave them unable to make ends meet, this section will describe how seeking support from the state actually helps perpetuate further economic instability and structure enduring poverty for involved families. This finding begins by mapping the policy evolution of the child support enforcement system. Laying a foundation about the evolution of the policy systems as elements of the carceral state helps contextualize parents' experiences. The experiences and impacts on mothers'/CPs' financial circumstances follows. Lastly, consideration is given to fathers/NCPs, who are affected very differently by the policy systems that have been created.

Evolution of policy systems connected through cooperation

⁴⁰ Many fathers logically presume that mothers initiate child support orders as it appears that they would be the only ones with a vested interest. That understanding is reinforced for many when they enter a courtroom as the mother is positioned next to the CSEA attorney on the plaintiff's side. Yet, the cooperation requirements activate the process, and the Performance Incentive Funding Structure ensures that the process continues.

This section does not offer a full history of child support policy. It is intended to weave together and introduce: 1) the significance of cooperation requirements binding together welfare/public assistance and CSE systems, 2) the beginnings of CSE in the US, 3) the initial and continued links between welfare/public assistance and Child Support policy and practice, and 4) the impacts of child support policy at the intersections of race, class, gender, and place. Additional policies and practices are contextualized in subsequent sections detailing the experiences and impacts of policy and practice on families, including both mothers/CPs and fathers/NCPs.

Although it was not yet a federal matter, the federal government started to invest in child support enforcement as early as 1935 through the establishment of Aid to Dependent Children (Title IV-A of the Social Security Act), which was public child support granted to mothers and widows (typically when the father died).⁴¹ In 1950, the federal government established procedures to notify law enforcement officials that a child was receiving aid because the child was deserted or abandoned (Uniform Reciprocal Enforcement of Support Act of 1950). This allowed for interstate enforcement of states' efforts to collect child support.

The 1950s is also when the nation started to see an increase in the number of unmarried mothers utilizing public assistance programs and specifically in the number of single, Black mothers accessing those benefits. The rising costs of welfare benefits were untenable. At the same time, the divorce rates were rising and the (white) women's movement was seeking much-needed reforms of the family court system to help ensure that divorcing fathers

⁴¹ ADC was later replaced with Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) that was commonly referred to as "welfare." In 1996, President Clinton ended this entitlement and replaced AFDC with a work program known as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families or TANF.

maintained a financial commitment to their children. Within this confluence of issues, the nation's Child Support System was born. The Social Service Amendments of 1974 (enacted in 1975), formalized child support as a federal matter with enforcement responsibilities primarily at the state level. The evolution of the system over the next few decades emphasized efficiencies and enforcement.

The legislative mandate of the Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) was to minimize welfare expenditures (Social Service Amendments of 1974). To address that mandate, an efficient and effective system had to be developed. *Chart 5.1 Some Key Policy Ideas in the Evolution of an Efficient Child Support Enforcement System, 1950-2004* highlights some of the key steps in building an efficient system that uses the power of the government to build federal, state, and interstate approaches to efficiently identify fathers, to quickly track their employment status, and efficiently collect and disburse child support payments. The policy logic seems to be that the father/NCP paying child support will also minimize the mother's/CP's need for public assistance and/or she will be ineligible. In the case of TANF, the state can also keep a portion of child support payments as reimbursement for its welfare expenditures.

In 1974 and 1975, when OCSE was created and child support became a federal matter, states were also required to have a unit charged with establishing paternity and collecting on child support orders for families receiving AFDC (the welfare program preceding TANF) (Cahn & Murphy, 2000). Establishing paternity early on is efficient, is likely clearer for families, and is seen as having the best potential for limiting new mothers' need for public assistance. Some of the policy nuances and the significance of paternity establishment will be discussed later in the chapter.

CHART 5.1
SOME KEY POLICY IDEAS IN THE EVOLUTION OF AN EFFICIENT CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT SYSTEM, 1950-2004

- Inter- and intra- state systems created to find NCPs
- Employers required to submit information about new employees (within 60 days) for a New Hire Directory
- Created a centralized disbursement and collection of child support (*and birth costs in Wisconsin*)
- Created system of automated income withholding
- Federal government encouraged state/local CSEAs to partner with law enforcement and family court systems to improve efficiencies and enforcement
- Child support obligation became a judgment by operation of law so:
 - father NCP does not have to be present in court for order or subsequent sanctions to be established and
 - prevents child support obligors' debts from being retroactively reduced or forgiven after debt (arrears) have been incurred
- Federal law encouraged states to create a voluntary acknowledgement process (including hospital-based version during "golden hour") allowing father's name to appear on birth certificate
- When state deducts child support from wages, it pays "family first" but only a portion of the child support order, the rest goes to the state as reimbursement for benefits
- When unmarried parents live together, it adversely impacts the family's eligibility for (most) public assistance programs because their household income rises

(Adapted from Josephson, 1997; Pate, 2003)

Once paternity is established and child support orders are generated, then the orders have to be enforced. To that end, the federal government generated a variety of enforcement tools available to state government agencies at all levels - federal, state and local. The following enforcement measures are available to make sure the father/NCP pays:

- ✓ Revoking/denying licenses (i.e., drivers', fishing, medical, boating)
- ✓ Taking liens against property (i.e., houses, boats, cars)

- ✓ Intercepting tax returns
- ✓ Reporting arrears to consumer protection agencies
- ✓ Pursuing contempt of court charges (and jail accordingly)
- ✓ Pursuing incarceration (arrears will continue to accrue while incarcerated unless CP requests suspension and the request is granted)
- ✓ Intercepting pandemic stimulus checks

While some of those tools are reasonable responses to a family court system that was not sensitive to the realities of women divorcing (i.e., wage gaps and disparities, no employment supports for working mothers). Yet, for unmarried, low-income parents who are required to cooperate, the enforcement measures further engrained the nation's construction of Black parents as deadbeat dads and welfare queens, images created and normalized through the leadership of President Reagan in the 1980s.

Additionally, the system of enforcement also structured mothers/CPs as agents of the state in that process. Any money or resources from the father/NCP to the mother/CP must be reported to the CSEA or the mother/CP can lose benefits and be charged with fraud. This includes cash or items of monetary value (i.e., diapers, shoes, groceries).

The enforcement measures above help ensure that if the father/NCP has income, wealth, or savings, the government will find it and use it as payment for child support. For example, within 60 days of hiring someone, employers must notify the federal government, and if applicable, child support deductions will begin. The child support payor's property can be confiscated. Any financial stream from the government to the payor will be intercepted. The tools of enforcement seem to close every possible loophole to a father having money and not paying child support. Loss of freedom is one of those and is detailed later in the chapter.

The enforcement policy systems described above undergird the experiences of families in the IV-D CSE system. The enforcement mechanisms (i.e., revocation and denial of licenses, incarceration) are activated even if the father/NCP has absolutely no money. Again, the system is designed in response to the notion that every unmarried father/NCP has money, is hiding it from the family and is not an engaged parent. The experiences of these families are described below by incorporating the voices of child support staff, public assistance program staff, service providers, and mothers and fathers themselves.

Mapping the ways that cooperation-related laws, policies, and practices impact mothers/CPs

When an unmarried, pregnant woman or an unmarried mother needs additional resources to provide for herself and her child, she can go to the state to access programs that offer assistance. While there are many public benefits afforded to residents and citizens, the focus here is on the ones that require cooperation with the CSEA. In the case of Sylvia and Derek, the limitations of her insurance during the pregnancy were going to create significant financial debt. So, at her physician's recommendation, she applied for BadgerCare/Medicaid. In addition to health insurance, other programs offer cash assistance to supplement incomes or to support educational endeavors, and to provide child care assistance so the parent can work. Because of racial and gender wealth gaps, employment discrimination, and other systems of racial inequity, minoritized families are more likely to need public assistance even if both parents are working. Yet, incomes requirements for public assistance/welfare programs are set low enough that households with two incomes are likely ineligible.

Continuing, before cooperation requirements are fully implemented, the state is invested in structuring and fathers/NCPs as “financial providers.” When the parents are not married, the father’s/NCPs residential address is of interest to the state for the purpose of determining eligibility and/or amounts of public assistance to be awarded. Residing in the same household will have adverse impacts on the mother’s/CP’s access to some programs as it impacts household income calculations. If the father/NCP is living with them, then for eligibility purposes, the state includes his income or imputes income as part of the household total.⁴² If he is providing financially for the child, his contributions can also be used to calculate the mothers’/CPs’ income/eligibility. So, the father’s/NCP’s address holds great significance.

As Findings 1 and 2 highlight, discretion also plays an important role in parent learning and access to information about cooperation. Even if she is aware of the range of cooperation’s consequences, the mother/CP/applicant still needs resources to care for herself and her family. The state is not invested in whether the unmarried father/NCP is present during the pregnancy or is involved in the life of the child; he is structured as the financial provider. Although the address and involvement of the alleged father/father/NCP can impact the mother’s/CP’s public assistance eligibility, they are irrelevant to the child support process. Because they are not married and she applied for a program requiring cooperation, the state processes of establishing paternity, and establishing and collecting on the child support orders will continue. Consequently, three scenarios are created: 1) the mother/CP, may have to accept that it makes

⁴² Because Medicaid/Badgercare is an entitlement program, the mother/CP and the child will have access to that health insurance as long as she cooperates with the CSEA. Even if the mother does not cooperate with the CSEA, Medicaid law only denies her access to health insurance. The child will remain eligible. (Roberts, 2005)

them ineligible for some programs, or 2) have to misrepresent the living arrangement to the state (and risk sanctions, including fraud), or 3) the father/NCP will have to seek out a different living arrangement.

Each option will have adverse and significant financial implications for the family (and likely serious relationship implications for the mother/father and the father/child). If the family does not pursue the public assistance program, then the financial needs will remain. Some mothers expressed fear that going to the State's for assistance will draw the attention of Child Welfare. Sherry, mother of two, articulated mothers' fears in saying that Child Welfare is "Lookin' for reasons to take my babies away." This fear was very real for Sherry who still carries the trauma of having her child removed from her home by the local child welfare agency.⁴³

Continuing, if the unmarried mother misrepresents the living arrangement to the state, then she risks not only losing the assistance, but also risks being charged with fraud and subsequent penalties (Headworth, 2021). And finally, if the parents separate to gain access to the benefits, then they are increasing the family's financial burden as he would need separate living arrangements that may limit his parenting contributions (i.e., financial, socio-emotional, and day-to-day responsibilities that parents share). If the father is present and involved in the life of the child, each choice will have consequences that also go well beyond the adverse financial ones. There is not an ideal choice, or even a reasonable one, for an unmarried family with limited means.

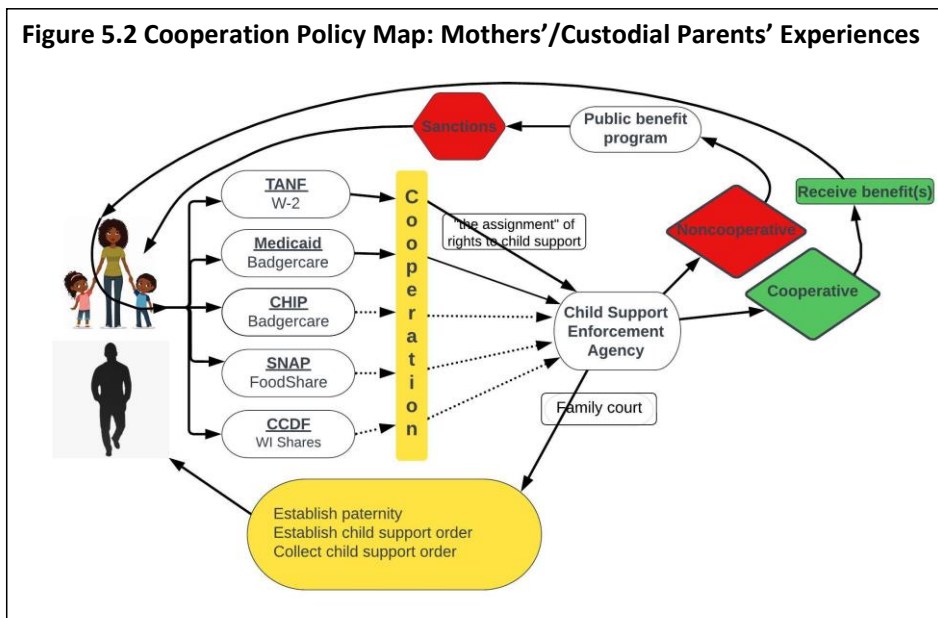
Yet, financial considerations are the impetus for parents to come to public assistance programs. If the mother/CP continues applying for TANF, Medicaid, or another program

⁴³ For a discussion about race in the child welfare system, see Alan J. Dettlaff, 2021.

requiring cooperation, then she will be required to cooperate with the state's efforts to establish paternity and collect child support throughout the time that she is receiving the benefit.

In spite of the nuances related to program eligibility and cooperation that impact the family's economic circumstances, the policy map for mothers/CPs appears fairly clear. It is outlined in *Figure 5.2 Cooperation Policy Map: Mothers'/Custodial Parents' Experiences*. If she applies for benefits, is eligible (which can include signing her rights to child support and medical orders to the state), and cooperates, then she will receive benefits. She must cooperate throughout the time she is receiving the benefits, or she will be sanctioned 25%-100% cut of benefit depending on the state in which she resides. Even though that policy map is fairly clear, mothers did not describe their experiences with any clarity of understanding.

Figure 5.2 Cooperation Policy Map: Mothers'/Custodial Parents' Experiences



Presumably, utilizing public assistance programs can create some financial stability, but mothers/CPs described being entrenched in a system that they did not understand, was not explained, and resulted in sanctions that were swift, severe, and ultimately created further economic instability. Andrea, a mother of one who utilized child care subsidies (Wisconsin Shares), described the frustration of needing information, and the time and energy that it took to find it:

Child care (*subsidies*) are the worst experience ever. I have been on the phone with them for six hours! You can't understand the system because you ask questions and they say, "The screen says ___ and that's the law." No one explains things.

At the same time, the consequences for not taking the right steps in a timely fashion are enacted swiftly and oftentimes mothers/CPs learn their benefits are terminated in ways that create more instability. Alanda, a mother of four children, said:

I would find out (*benefits were cut*) because I stopped receiving benefits. It would be like I'd miss an appointment...They would send me things on email and then, for a while, I didn't have a phone so I didn't know they were sending me stuff until I'd try to pay for something and couldn't.

Alanda recalled grocery shopping with a friend, waiting in line, and when it was her turn, she tried to pay for groceries with her EBT card and it was declined. She said her friend, "Kicked it into gear and started putting food back and took me to the clearance aisle to see what I could do with the little money on my card."

When Alanda returned home, she started to call the FoodShare program to find out what happened. That process involved multiple phone calls and hours on hold as the FoodShare people told her she had to talk with the CSEA. Paralleling my experiences calling the CSEA,

Alanda said, “I couldn’t talk to anyone, so I had to go down there (*to the CSEA*) and found out they cut me off ‘cause I missed some appointment.”

Another mother, Erika, recalled two friends (also unmarried, Black women) who brought their kids to daycare on their way to work and got turned away.

They walked in with their babies and the staff said, “We couldn’t run your card. Go talk to Child Support.” They had no place to take their kids that day. And they were supposed to work!

Erika was close to one of those moms and recalled, “She was too scared about something happening and Child Welfare getting involved, so she didn’t go to work. She lost her job.” The real fears about drawing attention from the state meant this low-income, unmarried Black mother had two unreasonable options: leave her child in an unsafe situation and keep her job or stay with her child and lose her job.

The termination of benefits had dramatic impacts on these families that turned to the state for assistance. The ways they learned about the sanctions amplified their fragile economic circumstances. Whether spending hours on the phone trying to learn and navigate systems, or having to choose between going to work and leaving their children in unsafe child care situations with fear of Child Protective Services looming, when mothers seek assistance from the state, they are also opening the door to additional layers of stress, uncertainty and economic instability, incarceration and tearing their families apart.

Mapping the ways that cooperation-related laws, policies, and practices impact fathers/NCPs

As described earlier, IV-D CSE policies construct fathers/NCPs as financial providers, regardless of their income levels and parenting behavior. This patriarchal notion of fathering

helps frame the CSEA's approach to working with fathers. Stakeholder interviews highlighted that while this approach establishes the father's/NCP's legal connection to the child, it also further destabilizes the family's economic circumstances and undermines the parents' decision-making authority. Stakeholder voices also suggest that the policies and practices converge to threaten fathers'/NCPs' freedom, their masculinity, and their relationships with their children and their children's mothers. All of these impacts disproportionately impact low-income, unmarried Black fathers/NCPs and make the realities of their lives invisible while perpetuating the debunked myths of Black fathers as deadbeat dads. These impacts are amplified in under-resourced families and minoritized families that are over-represented in the CSE system.⁴⁴ This section incorporates policies, practices, and the voices of stakeholders to describe the impacts on fathers/NCPs when cooperation is activated.

Paternity establishment

When the federal government noticed the increase in unmarried mothers applying for programs requiring cooperation, it incentivized paternity establishment for state CSEAs (1984 Child Support Amendments). Consequently, it became essential for states to prioritize establishing paternity and a child support order as quickly and efficiently as possible to achieve its goal of minimizing welfare expenditures. Paternity also establishes a legal connection between the unmarried father and child. In this system, establishing this connection

⁴⁴ The OSCE does not report demographic information about mothers and fathers that enter the IV-D system through cooperation requirements. Similarly, the state of Wisconsin did not satisfy the request for that data.

simultaneously empowers the father by giving him legal rights and also undermines his ability to be an active and engaged father. Three key policy steps are discussed here: charging alleged fathers for paternity testing, incentivizing state's efforts to establish paternity, and hospital voluntary acknowledgement.

Charging alleged fathers for paternity testing - One step taken by the federal government to save money in the paternity establishment process came in 1988. The Family Support Act of 1988 required unmarried parents in a contested paternity case (where an unmarried parent is utilizing programs that require cooperation) to take a genetic test to establish paternity and charge the (alleged) father for the test. For an alleged father with resources, who is denying any responsibility for his children, this may be reasonable. For an alleged father who has limited resources (and may be engaged in the lives of his children), the impacts of the state's actions are felt more severely. When the mother/CP is uncertain who the father is, the state can initiate paternity testing with any possible fathers until the biological parent is established.

Incentivizing state's efforts to establish paternity - A second effort of the federal government to prioritize paternity establishment was to create financial incentives for states to establish paternity (1984 Child Support Amendments). Initially, that included a 75% paternity establishment rate that was ultimately increased to 90% by 1996 (Personal Responsibility and Workforce Opportunity Act, PRWORA). Meeting such high goals would require a highly efficient system in which "voluntary acknowledgement" was a key tool.

Hospital voluntary acknowledgement - A third effort of the federal government to prioritize paternity establishment came in 1993 through the Omnibus Reconciliation Act which

required states to develop a system for “hospital-based voluntary acknowledgement,” which would put the father’s name on the birth certificate and establish parentage with very little effort. This allows paternity to be established through the completion of a form during the mother’s/CP’s hospital stay after giving birth. If the mother/CP is not married and is utilizing Medicaid/BadgerCare at the time of birth, then she will be asked to name a father while in the hospital. As described by Sylvia, she and Derek did not understand that child support could be established as a result of answering those questions and signing the form. According to the Wisconsin Volunteer Paternity Acknowledgement Handbook (2014), when the form is signed by both parents and notarized, then both parents will be listed on the birth certificate and paternity will be established. A child support order will follow. If paternity is not established through this hospital-based process, then the CSEA can continue to pursue paternity establishment, which may lead to sanctions against the mother/CP for noncooperation. Hospital-based voluntary acknowledgement is clearly faster and more efficient for the state.

Sylvia and Derek experienced significant financial harm as a result of the hospital-based voluntary acknowledgement process. Although they were not aware of the consequences of answering the questions the hospital worker posed years before, the document they completed established legal paternity for Derek and activated the child support processes. The staff person did not give context for her questions, explain the significance of Sylvia’s answers, or explain the legal nature of the document that they were signing. The immediate consequences of this were to create tension and frustration for the new parents. The longer-term consequences were to further destabilize their already tenuous financial situation and create further stress and tension by needing to cut parent meals and having to defend Derek’s integrity as a father

whenever the state challenged their lives. To this day, their questions about why the CSEA started to collect more than two years after the birth of their first son remain unanswered. They stopped seeking answers because of the harms that resulted from the state's attention on Derek and their lives. The emotional turmoil was still felt seven years later as Sylvia completed our interview in her car in the garage, out of earshot of Derek, a move to protect his well-being.) Their experience highlights legal concerns around due process and legal representation for the nation to consider in pursuit of just policy and practice. Additionally, without continued examination of policies and practices at the sites of these intersecting and oppressed identities, cooperation requirements will continue to contribute to the oppression of unmarried Black families that utilize a public assistance program requiring cooperation.

In addition to pulling the father/NCP into the CSE system, establishing paternity also creates a legal connection between the father/NCP and child. Without that, he has no legal authority for decision making around the child's education, medical issues, or living circumstances. Anthony teaches classes at FCO1 specifically for men who are fathering. He explained why he encourages (alleged) fathers to establish paternity:

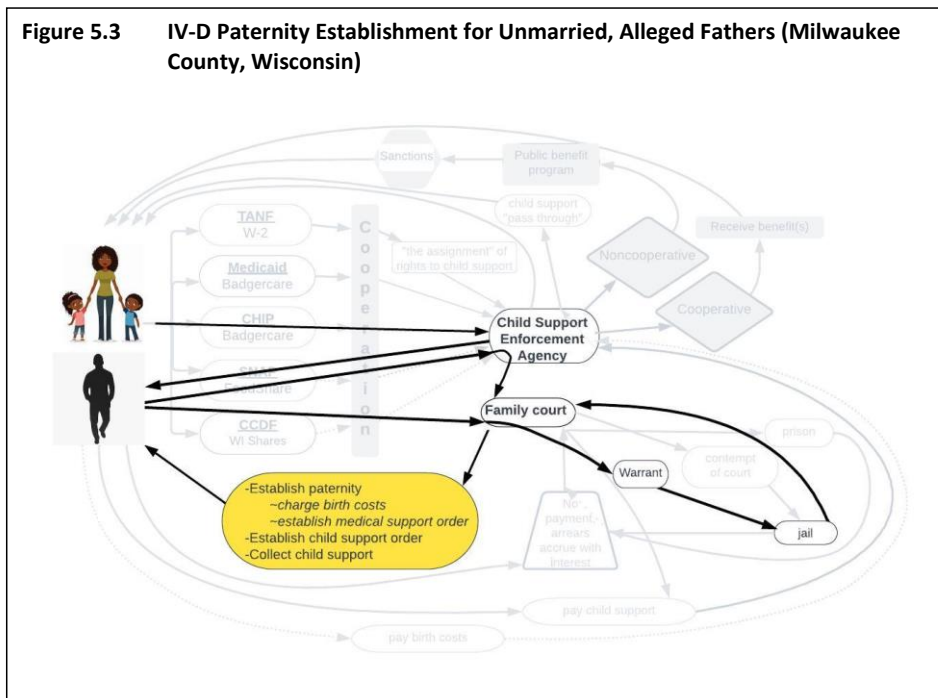
What I try to tell the dads, especially if they get into the class before the child is born, I tell the dads right away, "You establish paternity right away." I tell them that because the way that the Wisconsin law is, if you aren't married and you don't establish paternity, you have no rights concerning that child.

Although paternity establishment formalizes a man's position as father/NCP to the child, it does not expand the state's interest in him beyond that of financial provider.

Figure 5.3 IV-D Paternity Establishment for Unmarried, Alleged Fathers/NCPs in Milwaukee, Wisconsin subsequent maps were constructed by triangulating the CSE and welfare

policies detailed earlier with the voices of former child support and public assistance program staff, service providers, fathers, and mothers. Their voices are utilized to describe and give context to Figure 5.3 below.

Figure 5.3 IV-D Paternity Establishment for Unmarried, Alleged Fathers (Milwaukee County, Wisconsin)



Many fathers/NCPs logically presume that the mother/CP initiates paternity and child support processes. As shown through the diagram, her requirement to cooperate with the CSEA is masked. Anthony, FCO1 staff person who works with fathers explained:

That's one of the situations that I find myself probably explaining to the dads the most when it comes to child support, is that because the mom and the child are on Medicaid or W-2 or Badgercare or need child care, et cetera, that's what forces the dad to have to pay child support. What dads are angry or upset about is, they're under the impression that the girl placed them

on child support and, “Here is it, she got me on child support and I’m at that house and I take care of all of the bills. I do everything anyway, why she taking child support?” And so I have to explain to them, it’s not that she’s taking child support from you, but when the state and the county is giving her any assistance, they want to be reimbursed or paid back for that. In order to get reimbursed or paid back, they place you on child support to have you pay part of the bill.

Fathers/NCPs described frustration with the insertion of the CSE system into their lives and the criminalization it includes. Sometimes both parents are doing what they can to raise the child and he feels attacked by the initiation of a child support order, especially when it appears to be initiated by the mother. Other fathers say they would have helped if the mother had asked. Other times, fathers have no money to give, but care for the child while the mother works or goes to school. There are many configurations of these families and of parenting responsibilities, but, when the CSEA is involved, the focus has to be paying child support.

The information gathered from the mother/CP during her application for assistance and interviews with the CSEA are used to identify alleged father(s). According to Maria, a former CSEA worker, the Agency typically notifies the (alleged) father(s) about paternity testing in a letter sent through the US Postal Service. When an alleged father receives the letter, reads it, and comes in to the CSEA for paternity testing at his own volition, if he is found to be the father, then he may be charged for the cost of the paternity test (Family Support Act of 1988) and the family court processes to establish a child support order and a medical support order will ensue. If BadgerCare is being utilized, then BCR will follow. (See Figure 5.3 IV-D Paternity Establishment for Unmarried, Alleged Fathers in Milwaukee, Wisconsin).

In Milwaukee County, if an alleged father does not submit to paternity testing in a timely fashion, then a body warrant can be issued. Maritza, a former CSEA worker, explained:

For the DNA testing, they are told (*in a letter mailed to the last known address*) that if you don't show up, they can get a warrant for you and bring you in. You're not going to jail. They're going to pick you up, process you, put you in, most of the time it was Milwaukee County, the courthouse (*Milwaukee Secure Detention Facility*). And then they bring you over once we open and DNA swab you. And then you get processed out. It just sucks if you get caught on Friday. The DNA test will happen after you're processed as long as Child Support's open. If you get arrested on a Friday afternoon and Child Support's not open on the weekends, you're going to spend the weekend there until Monday, because it's a body warrant. So, it means you have to bring your body...Once the DNA is done, they'll process them out, as long as that's the only warrant they have. Now if you have a search warrant for something completely different....well.

In practice, alleged fathers can be incarcerated for not coming in for paternity testing. If detained, the alleged father will not be released until he submits to a DNA test, which will also activate the family court-CSEA processes to establish a child support order.

Maritza's description highlights the importance of and the power in the relationships between CSEA, family courts and law enforcement in promoting the efficiencies and enforcements (i.e., partnerships with law enforcement) detailed earlier. These processes insert some men into the child support and law enforcement systems through the paternity establishment process. These practices criminalize unmarried fatherhood for poor men through police surveillance and loss of freedom. These practices also contribute to the unique burden that Black men in this study described as "setting us up to not be good fathers" (Reggie, father of four). The nation's history of disproportionate criminalization of people of color makes this a significant burden for Black and Brown men, especially those with low-incomes and wealth. The

subsequent sections detail the unique ways that cooperation related systems impact the lives of low-income, unmarried fathers. The impacts of child support policy and practice at the intersection of these oppressed identities is both a consequence of racism and further structures it.

Paternity establishment also activates enforcement efforts

The power of state and local discretion was highlighted earlier. It helps limit mothers' and fathers' learning and access to knowledge about cooperation and the CSE system. Once paternity is established, the state courts have tremendous power to create and enforce orders. Some research speaks to the processes and issues related to establishing orders. (Brito et al., 2014; Pate, 2016; Pate, 2003). Stakeholder interviews in this study highlighted that enforcement measures are a key source of the CSEA's power. The immediate and long-term impacts of these policies on the lives of children and their parents are considered through the stories of two families.

Sylvia and Derek's cooperation experiences were introduced in Chapter 1. Unmarried at the time of their first child's birth and utilizing BadgerCare at the recommendation of her physician, they completed the hospital-based voluntary acknowledgement process without a clear understanding of its significance. It became evident a few years later when the CSEA started withholding child support payments and what seemed to be payments for BCR and arrears (although it was never clear to them). Sylvia then received child support payments through the state which constituted a small portion of what was deducted from Derek's pay checks. Consequently, the CSEA took money out of the family budget and gave it to the state

which sent the family into turmoil. Years later, they still do not understand why the CSEA enforcement measures started or stopped. Although the financial burden around paying child support has eased, Sylvia says that she is always prepared to defend the incredible father that Derek is against these systems that are trying to “make Derek a deadbeat dad.” As a Black woman partnered with a Black man, it is a burden that Sylvia knows she carries every day.

Reggie is 47 years old, a father of four, a grandfather, and also a staff person at FCO1. His story of CSE and navigating these masked systems highlighted some of the consequences of requiring cooperation as part of public assistance programs. His paternity and child support establishment story is shocking. The financial implications have been devastating and never-ending. Reggie explained:

To be honest with you, by the time I was 22 years old, I already had three children. I think I got hooked up on child support before I even had my first job. So, I was...I had my first son at 18 years old. Then I had another child by the time I was 20. By the time I was 20 years old, I was already on child support for the two-year-old, and I didn't know!

Reggie and the mother were not together, and he did not know he was a father. Years later, at the encouragement of his own mother, Reggie pursued paternity testing:

I had a son who my child's mom told me that he wasn't mine. So, I didn't find out until he was seven years old that he was mine. I did that because I had to literally go down to court myself and demand a blood test, and things like that. The state made me pay for the blood test, out of my own pocket, they made me pay. But, when I paid and the results came back, and they found out he was mine, they automatically put me on child support for the past seven years back to the day he was born.

First you made me pay for the whole test and things like that. But it's not right that I'm seven years in arrears when I didn't even know that he was my child. Like, nobody....She told me he wasn't mine, and things like that. And she had another guy's name on the

birth certificate. What made me go down there was my mom had seen my child and said, "This is your child. You might want to get tested." I always said that I don't want any kids out there that I don't know about, so it's worth the test. So, I was willing to go and do all of that. But I didn't know that doing all that was going to make me seven years in arrears on child support already. It makes me think, if I had known that, would I have did that (gotten the DNA test)?

Seven years of child support being behind, I was already...When I found out the kid was mine, I was already \$55,000 behind on child support.

Federal and state child support enforcement policies and practices structured the system that led to Reggie incurring significant and immediate arrears totaling \$55,000. The state sought retroactive establishment of child support. (In Wisconsin, the law was changed to end this horribly punitive practice, but the retroactive orders of fathers/NCPs charged before the law changed remain). Reggie looks back on the recommendation of his mother with disbelief:

So that's my personal experience. It seemed like I never was able to catch up from there. Here I am, like I said, I'm 47. My kids are grown and I'm still playing catch up. That 55,000 is over 100,000 now (*because of interest*).

Once paternity is established, a child support order must also be established. As demonstrated through Reggie's story, this can happen as soon as the state is able to establish legal fatherhood.

The court experiences of fathers in the IV-D system has been described as frustrating and even devastating. Many fathers experience the courts as uninterested in their parenting efforts and solely focused on establishing and paying child support. Research suggests that fathers experience these courtrooms as places where "race was highly visible, but rarely acknowledged in child support enforcement actions" (Brito et al., 2014, p. 3036)The question of

“‘right-sized’ orders” based on the fathers’/NCPs’ “ability to pay” remains unresolved.⁴⁵ In 2019, millions of noncustodial parents across the United States owed over \$115 billion in child support debt. A more nuanced analysis of child support debt was generated in 2007 through a study of nine states. It found that “Nearly three quarters of the high debtors (*who owed over \$30,000 in arrears*) had either no reported income (44 percent) or reported income of \$10,000 a year or less (30 percent)” (Sorensen et al., 2007, p. 19). The financial consequences for nonpayment are severe and enduring. And the data suggests that it is an insurmountable issue for a significant majority of fathers/NCPs.

Yet, once the order is set, payments must begin. When the mother/CP assigns her rights to child support to the state (a requirement to access some public assistance benefits), states have the option to pass-through a portion of each child support payment to her and the rest goes to the state.⁴⁶ The amount varies by state.

Continuing, it is rare to see a mother or father navigate the IV-D system with legal representation. Not only are unmarried, low-income mothers and fathers left to navigate the systems on their own, the systems of siloed learning and access to knowledge described in Finding 2 create more opportunity for parental stress, frustration and overall confusion. For example, when a father/NCP claims that he paid child support in full and she receives a smaller

⁴⁵ Many hoped that *Turner v Rogers* would require judges to fully consider a father’s/NCP’s “ability to pay” when establishing/modifying a child support order, but there is no evidence that the court holding is being followed by courts and child support agencies. Research is needed about the implementation of *Turner*.

⁴⁶ “Pass-through” is a contentious issue and has changed over time. The Deficit Reduction Act of 1984 gave states the option to pass a portion of child support payments through to the family. This changed through PRWORA in 1995 which ended the first \$50 pass-through to the family, and then again through the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 where, the federal government gave states the option to pass through some of the money.

amount, distrust is fueled between them, especially if they are not together. She may not believe that he paid and he may think that she is lying about the amount she received. It is not apparent to them that the system is designed to only support her request for assistance to care for herself and the child if she agrees to give the state information to pursue child support. Continuing, it was not clear to parents that if the father/NCP pays, then the mother/CP likely will not receive the full amount. Because they lived together and shared financial information, Sylvia and Derek could see that the state took more out of his checks than she received in child support.

Continuing, when fathers/NCPs do not pay child support or do not make full payments, arrears accrue and interest is charged. Once a father/NCP has child support debt, the arrears will continue to accrue until either they are paid in full or the father/NCP dies. (While declaring bankruptcy allows a fresh start for people with other kinds of debt, the 1986 Bradley Amendment prevents NCPs from declaring bankruptcy for arrears.) Particularly frustrating to some parents is that when he has paid all the child support that is owed to the mother, then all the money is retained by the state and the interest continues to accrue. Reggie is one of those frustrated fathers/NCPs:

The mom's not getting anything. It's all in arrears. Everything I pay is going to the state. I got a bonus from my check of \$1,800. When I got the check, it was \$700, because child support took \$1,100 of my bonus.

Reggie continued:

Even when my child is 18 years old, an adult, the child is no longer a kid and I still owe back child support. So, my child could be 36 years old and I'm still paying child support out of all my checks because I couldn't catch up from when they was five and six. I just don't think that it's....like, at what point do....I mean, you've got

some people out here in the world right now on \$250,000 worth of back child support. That's just ridiculous. How do you expect a person to pay \$250,000 worth of back child support? Some of the amounts that I had bringing in, it's just ridiculous what they on. I just feel, when do it stop? It never stops for the dad to pay that money. It never stops. You have 76-year-old men whose kids are 40 years old and grandkids is 20 years old who's still paying child support, as long as they working. I just don't see the justification in that.

As Reggie alluded to, "Seventy percent of the arrears were owed by obligors who had either no reported income or reported income of \$10,000 a year or less" (Sorensen et al., 2007) .

These scenarios reflect the idea that child support becomes a "debt anchor."⁴⁷ As described above, it continues to increase and does not go away. The father remains indebted to the state. The interest continues to accrue. The efficiencies and enforcements make it virtually impossible for him to survive or be a good father whether using the state definition of financial provider or more common societal expectations or his own definition of a good father.

The debt anchor combined with enforcement tools make it virtually impossible to break free from the cycle. Even when a father finds what is considered a "living wage job," the laws and policies seem relentless. Reggie explained:

Like a lot of people, most of the people who are really on child support, especially on back child support (arrears), are low-income people. And if I finally get a job that's substantial. And let's just say if I'm finally getting a job that's making \$22 an hour and my child support order is \$500 a month, and I be paying every two weeks, that's still almost 250, 300 dollars a paycheck that's coming out of my paycheck along with other things, along with my state taxes, along with my insurance. Because, now, especially when you pay child support like that, you definitely have to pay for your insurance. So, you've got three kids. You've got to carry all three of your kids on your medical insurance....So, now you're

⁴⁷ Personal communications with Professor David Pate and Anne Price, former President of the Insight Center (October, 2018).

taking child support out of my check as well as the insurance. I have to cover medical, dental, vision. I have to cover all of that. And if it's a copay or if there's anything like that, it could be a bad situation for just that male. Most of the time, he is actually somewhere else trying to pay bills to maintain another household, and still dealing with all these deductions out of his check from a previous household. So, it's definitely hard for him to maintain it, and the children fall back on that, because there's certain things that he can't do for his kids because there's so much deductions and so much money is coming out of his checks that he don't have that extra money. Even if he wanted to, he just don't have it.

That debt anchor impacts fathers' abilities to care for themselves and parent their children. Reggie shares what fathers he works with experience in this way:

Some of the ways I've seen it impacts the kids is you have some parents who feel like because the state is getting so much in child support, that they're taking care of them that way, and personally won't do anything else for them, because they're taking so much of the money from child support. Like I've seen it where, like I said, in my job, they was taking \$500 a month from me. It I was getting paid every week, my checks wasn't bigger than 300, 400 dollars. They taking \$125 for each one of those checks. So, then when my kids call and say, "Dad, I need some extra money this week because I want to go to this dance," or "Dad, can you give me some extra money because I need these shoes," things like that- and if you budgeting, you have barely enough money to get from this Friday to this Friday, to the next paycheck, you don't have that extra money. That's one of the ways the kids suffers, because they take so much of one person's paycheck that they don't have the extra of the anything like that do even do with their kid if they wanted to. Then you have another example, where people just feel like because I'm paying so much in child support that should be enough.

In many ways, Reggie has learned throughout his life that a man's job is to provide for his family financially. He strives to be much more than that, but his sense of self is also connected to providing for his family. One painful memory was when his daughter asked him

for \$10 for the ticket to her school dance. He pulled out his wallet and she could see \$20. Yet, he could not give it to her, because that was all he had until his next paycheck. He needed that money for gas to get to his job and food until he was paid again. The realities of his arrears weighed heavily, but that was not a reality he could explain to his daughter. He felt the impact of how this made his daughter view him. That financial reality impacted how his daughter and threatened his masculinity.

Incarceration (i.e., jail, prison)

This section about fathers'/NCP's experiences begins and ends with a discussion of incarceration, because it is a powerful tool of enforcement with conflicting messages. As described earlier, in some counties, alleged fathers who do not complete paternity testing within a specified amount of time can be charged with contempt and arrest, which can potentially lead to being locked up for an evening or a weekend.

Ultimately, if a father/NCP incurs arrears, the federal government allows states to prosecute parents. For example, when a father/NCP incurs arrears, Wisconsin law allows the state discretion to pursue criminal misdemeanor or felony charges. Wisconsin Statute 948.22(2) indicates that:

Any person who intentionally fails for 120 or more consecutive days to provide spousal, grandchild or child support which the person knows or reasonably should know the person is legally obligated to provide is guilty of a Class E felony. A prosecutor may charge a person with multiple counts for a violation under this subsection if each count covers a period of at least 120 consecutive days and there is no overlap between periods.

And, Wisconsin Statute 948.22(3) explains that:

Any person who intentionally fails for less than 120 consecutive days to provide spousal, grandchild or child support which the person knows or reasonably should know the person is legally obligated to provide is guilty of a Class A misdemeanor.

Wisconsin's state and local CSEAs indicate that they pursue incarceration for criminal non-payment for only a small number of fathers/NCPs who are in arrears. Yet, laws and policies are in place so that fathers/NCPs who are in arrears can automatically be charged with civil (rather than criminal) contempt of court that can also lead to incarceration. And, before paternity is even established, an alleged father can be picked up by the police based on a court-ordered warrant for his arrest. Practically speaking, the policy systems that families encounter as a result of cooperation structure surveillance by law enforcement and increase the likelihood of fathers'/NCPs' incarceration for contempt of court, an outgrowth of child support debt and other infractions. Families in this system know that being on the radar of the CSEA can and does lead to incarceration. Music videos portray the CSEA and the police as one in the same. Social media and newspapers still print headlines and pictures of fathers who owe large sums of child support or are being incarcerated for arrears. So, although the CSEA may pursue criminal prosecution for only a small number of its cases, these realities of the carceral state are what unmarried, low-income alleged fathers and fathers/NCPs and their families navigate every day.

Also, the realities of mass incarceration in the US and the disproportionate incarceration of Black and Brown people indicate that minoritized, unmarried fathers, especially those with low incomes, carry a reasonable fear of engaging with the CSEA. As James, who works with fathers through FCO 2 explained, "The sheer fact that it can be a felony is a deterrent to engaging with Child Support." The ultimate example of these impacts comes through the story

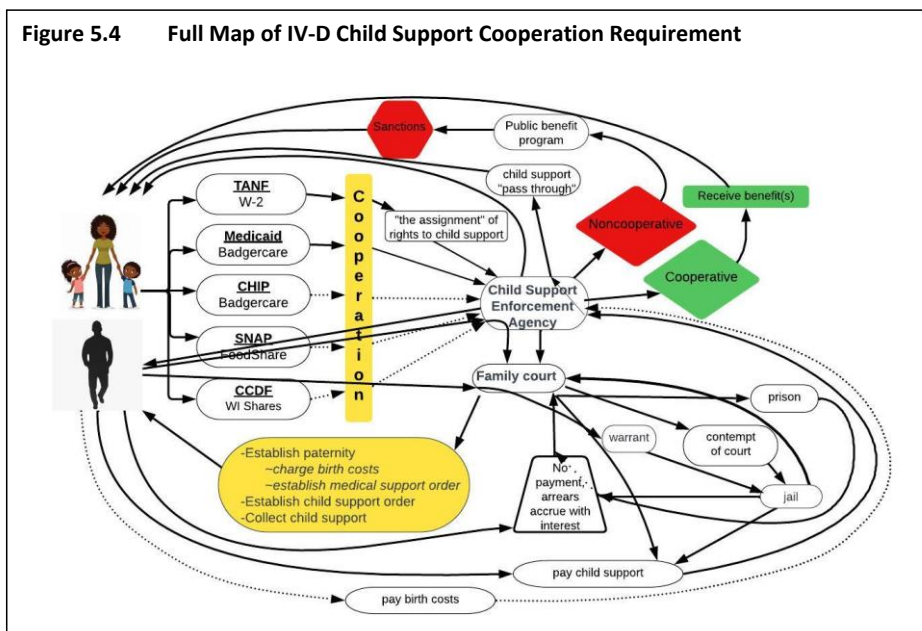
of Walter Scott who was shot in the back by Officer Michael Slager and killed in South Carolina in April 2017. He was pulled over for a non-functioning brake light and ran away from the police. His family later explained that they believe he ran away because he did not want to go back to jail for arrears. Mr. Scott was engaged to be married and was a 50-year-old father of four children, two of whom were in their twenties at the time he was killed. He had accrued about \$18,000 in child support debt and interest. He had been incarcerated multiple times for failure to pay child support or for failure to appear in court for child support proceedings. The last time he was incarcerated, he lost his job. When the police stopped Mr. Scott in April of 2017, his family believes he ran because he was afraid of being incarcerated again for nonpayment of child support. When he ran, Officer Slager shot him in the back and killed him (Mincy, 2015). This reality highlights the impacts of living, and dying, under the threat of incarceration for nonpayment of child support.

Although criminal convictions may be a small percentage, no published reports share data about the frequency of civil contempt charges issued or the number of warrants for alleged fathers and fathers/NCPs that are picked up by police and “held” for one night or more. That is likely a much higher percentage and will provide deeper insight into the number of children that are impacted by child support cooperation and the related systems.

Figure 5.4 Full Map of IV-D Child Support Cooperation Requirement shows the circular path the system of policies and practices creates. It is a compilation of the previous maps to which more fully outlines the cooperation-initiated experiences of unmarried, low-income mothers and fathers. These systems are not activated if unmarried mothers and fathers have enough income and wealth that they do not seek state assistance. Policy history combined with

the voices of mothers, fathers, service providers, and child support staff highlight two primary paths that are created through the cooperation requirement. One path includes the mother/CP not cooperating to establish paternity and a child support order. On that path, she is denied the public assistance that she needs, and the unmarried (alleged) father has no legal rights to the child, because paternity is not established through the state.

Figure 5.4 Full Map of IV-D Child Support Cooperation Requirement



The second path is when the mother/CP cooperates and receives the assistance. This path generates two primary journeys. The only way for fathers/NCPs to avoid the entanglements (i.e., child support arrears, family court, contempt of court, jail, prison) in the middle of the diagram is to make regular and full child support payments and, in Wisconsin, that may also include birth costs. His ability to make full and regular payments is influenced

by living in a society rooted in structural racism (i.e., barriers to academic achievement, discrimination in hiring and retention, access to generational wealth). The Racial Contract and white supremacy prevail and touch all aspects of life as unmarried Black mothers and fathers seek support to care for themselves and their children. These racialized structures create clear, persistent barriers to employment, housing, and education for these fathers and their families. They also extend to influence the wages offered, jobs available, accessible transportation, language skills, criminal record or lack thereof, having a phone number and address to even apply for jobs, his own housing payments and utilities, and cost of food.

Whether or not a father/NCP can pay child support, he will be pulled into the middle section of the map. If he can pay, he will likely experience the system as less punitive and harsh. If he cannot pay, the enforcement systems (i.e., CSE, family court, law enforcement) ensnare the family as the state seeks to establish paternity and child support. The consequences further undermine the family's economic stability by creating a debt anchor and threatening the father's/NCP's freedom. The vulnerability of unmarried Black mothers, fathers and children with limited financial means in these pernicious and racialized systems is extreme and enduring. The web ensnares minoritized fathers/NCPs further structures poverty, police surveillance and incarceration. Consequently, the systems activated through cooperation create insurmountable obstacles to fathers fulfilling their roles as adults who support the social, psychological, educational, and financial well-being of their children.

Furthermore, these policies combine to suggest that the nation is supporting debtors' prisons for unmarried, low-income fathers. As described in Finding 2, learning about cooperation and IV-D systems happens in silos and the system as a whole is masked from the

public and many actors within it (Boggess, 2017). Whatever information is shared, mothers and fathers do not have a clear understanding of the significance or consequences of cooperation requirements and related systems.

Continuing, by the state imposing its narrow definition of father as financial provider, it usurps the responsibility of parents to decide the parenting roles that best fit their circumstances. The policy systems persist in ways that perpetuate injustice and further the nation's education debt by structuring barriers to success, including furthering poverty and parental incarceration.

The systems generated through these laws and policies reflected a commitment to efficiently identifying fathers (i.e., asking mothers and alleged fathers to "voluntarily acknowledge" paternity in the "golden hour" after giving birth), engaging the support of other government agencies (i.e., establishing local partnerships with family courts and law enforcement to make processes efficient), and utilizing the full force of the federal government (i.e., requiring employers to report new hires within the first 60 days of employment) to ensure that fathers/NCPs connected to the IV-D system are pursued relentlessly to pay child support and any related costs.

The challenges of being enmeshed in a system that not only takes money out of the family finances and punishes the father/NCP for not providing, threatens his masculinity, relationships, and freedom make it very reasonable that "A lot of men feel that child support is dedicated to stop us from being that family man instead of trying to help us" (Reggie, a service provider and father). Moreover, the term "unmarried" is used frequently throughout this study to highlight the ways in which cooperation requirements adversely impact unmarried, low-

income parents. The intersection of those identities within this race-based system may lead some to conclude that the clear solution is for the couple to get married. None of the parents interviewed were opposed to marriage as a construct. In fact, some were planning their weddings and others hoped to one day have enough savings designated for a marriage license. Others were not in relationships with the other parent and marriage was not a reasonable choice. Even so, parents' thoughts about marriage bypass cannot be a distraction from the reality that the US created and uses policy systems that incarcerate parents because they have low-incomes and are not married.

Finding 4: Cooperation as a tool of the carceral state

This section does not introduce new data. Instead, it takes information introduced in previous findings and further explores the ways in which child support cooperation acts as part of “a commitment across institutions to maintain order through surveillance, coercion and punishment” (Annamma, 2016, p. 121). In other words, it further explores how child support cooperation structures the criminalization and incarceration of Black parents. The carceral state reflects “the totality of this spatially concentrated, more punitive, surveillance and punishment-oriented system of governance” (Weaver & Lerman, 2010, p. 818). The cooperation system mapped in *Figure 5.4 Full Map of IV-D Child Support Cooperation Requirement* as well as the enforcement tools undergirding it embody the carceral state. The human beings that are ensnared in the carceral state become its “custodial citizens” (*ibid*). In this context, that includes mothers/CPs, fathers/NCPs, and their children. Although the custodial citizens

experience the systems activated by cooperation differently, the consequences of the surveillance and punishments (i.e., economic sanctions, child support enforcement mechanisms, incarceration) are shared by all members of the family.

The systems activated through cooperation reflect the carceral state by incorporating various government agencies in the surveillance and tracking of low-income, unmarried, Black parents (i.e., law enforcement, CSEA, family court). These mechanisms seem to target parents when their actions allow the state to construct them as deadbeat dads and welfare queens. Through the legislated mandate of minimizing welfare expenditures, the state positions and empowers the CSEA to see these parents as deadbeat dads and welfare queens and put them in the gaze of the carceral state. Punishments include sanctioning benefits, separating the family by removing children from their homes and/or incarcerating the parents.

When multiple systems are involved in surveillance and punishment, there are many paths to the incarceration of low-income, unmarried, Black parents. At the point of application for benefits requiring cooperation, if the unmarried mother misrepresents the living arrangement to the state, then she risks not only losing the assistance, but also risks being charged with fraud and subsequent penalties (Headworth, 2021). And, if the parents co-habitate and then separate to gain access to the benefits, they are increasing the family's financial burden as he would need separate living arrangements that may limit his parenting contributions (i.e., financial, socio-emotional, and day-to-day responsibilities that parents share). If the father is present and involved in the life of the child, each choice will have consequences that also go well beyond the adverse financial ones. There is not an ideal choice, or even a reasonable one, for an unmarried family with limited means.

Continuing, if a mother/CP is sanctioned for noncooperation, she is at greater risk for a teacher, social worker, medical professional, or other mandatory reporter to deem her as an unfit parent. As noted in Finding 3, some mothers, like Sherry expressed fear that cooperating brings the family under the gaze of the carceral state, specifically the attention of Child Welfare who are mandatory reporters. If the mother/CP is punished and incarcerated, then she may become the NCP to her children and enter the CSE system as a child support payor (for the foster parents caring for her children while incarcerated). These concerns are amplified in a nation where “Over half (58%) of all women in U.S. prisons are mothers, as are 80% of women in jails, including many who are incarcerated awaiting trial simply because they can’t afford bail,” (Sawyer and Bertram, 2022).

Similarly, when a father/NCP does not respond to the CSEA’s request for paternity establishment in a timely fashion and a body warrant is issued, he is at greater risk for being picked up by law enforcement (or in the case of Walter Scott, being shot and killed). As Maritza, a former CSEA worker explained, depending on the day of the week and the time of the day the father/NCP is picked up he can become part of the system of over-incarceration of Black men and fathers and will suffer the short- and long- term consequences associated with incarceration and reentry.

The elaborate and powerful system of surveillance of low-income, unmarried Black mothers/CPs and fathers/NCPs connected to child support cooperation requirements explain why Alesha, a former income maintenance worker described the CSE system “puts a ‘whole nother layer of bondage on them.” Research is needed to understand the ways in which this

monitoring and surveillance as a result of cooperation is understood and experienced by children in impacted families.

Chapter 6 Implications and Conclusions

During the time of this study, Professor Gloria Ladson-Billings described the convergence of four pandemics: COVID-19, racism, the threat of economic collapse and impending environmental catastrophe (Ladson-Billings, 2021). Citing the US Constitution's commitment to the welfare of the nation's people, she argued that centering our work on "justice" is the way out of these pandemics. The Oxford Dictionary of Languages defines justice as "the quality of being fair and reasonable." In the context of schooling, Ladson-Billings noted, "As long as we avoid demanding justice, we will continue to divorce student achievement from justice. In other words, when we look at which kids are not doing well, we almost never have a conversation about the lack of justice that makes that possible," (Bowen, 2021). This injustice is reflected in the examination of the ways that child support cooperation requirements structure anti-blackness and white supremacy for the family as a whole and for each individual. Cooperation requirements put the lives and decisions of unmarried, low-income Black families in the gaze of the carceral state which has short- and long-term consequences for their lives, well-being, freedom, economic security, and academic success.

This study utilized CPA to interrogate the ways in which cooperation requirements help structure the education debt. This process helped unmask the impacts of cooperation and the systems it binds. In part, simply mapping federal and state laws and policies highlighted that these systems structure poverty and criminalize and incarcerate parents. These are significant barriers to student achievement. Incorporating the voices of mothers, fathers, child support staff, public assistance staff, and service providers ultimately triangulated the policy data and offered a more textured understanding about state and local implementation issues and the

impacts of policies and practices on the lives of children, their mothers/CPs and their fathers/NCPs. The families impacted by these systems have low incomes, have parents that are not married and a disproportionate number are minoritized. Evidence highlighted that these elaborate enforcement systems were designed in response to Black citizens use of welfare programs and impending racist stereotypes.

Continuing, CPA interrogates policies and policy systems through lenses of power. In this case, that analysis is grounded in an historical examination of the evolution of policy systems. These systems begin by structuring unmarried mothers and fathers as welfare queens and deadbeat dads and not seeing them as two parents looking for support in caring for their children. Simply mapping cooperation requirements into the systems they connect (i.e., welfare/public assistance and child support enforcement, family court and law enforcement/incarceration), made it apparent that the systems are structured to punish, criminalize and incarcerate families for not being state-married and having low-incomes.

Continuing, state level policy discretion highlighted disparities in access to benefits, in cooperation requirements themselves, in sanctions for noncooperation and other economic consequences determined by the state/locale in which mothers and fathers reside (i.e., BCR). Across states, policy systems and incentives position low-income unmarried mothers and fathers as adversaries, require mothers/CPs to act as agents of the state against their children's fathers/NCPs, and pursue, identify, charge and surveil every unmarried father whose child is connected to public assistance programs requiring cooperation. At first glance, the focus of these systems appear to be simply getting resources to mothers/CPs. A closer look details the

dire and long-term consequences of accessing those benefits, ones that impact mothers, fathers, and children.

Triangulating the policy maps with numeric data from the state of Wisconsin highlighted disparities in termination of benefits based on age, gender, race/ethnicity and county of residence. Continuing, triangulating the policies and state data with the voices of mothers, fathers, service providers, public assistance program staff and CSE staff further emphasized the dire consequences for families (mothers, fathers and children) when a mother/NCP is required to cooperate. Those begin with the state imposition of traditionally white, middle class, gendered parenting roles onto low-income, unmarried disproportionately minoritized families. Other factors include: taking limited resources out of the family (i.e., charging child support and the state keeping a portion, charging birth costs, sanctioning for noncooperation, arresting for contempt of court), inserting the state into their lives and decision-making, implementing swift and severe sanctions, promoting police surveillance and incarceration of low-income, unmarried Black mothers and fathers.

Justice demands that we stop creating policy systems that help ensure that unmarried, low-income Black and Brown families will experience additional and ongoing surveillance and incarceration. Justice demands that we stop creating policy systems that structure poverty for low-income, unmarried families. Justice demands that we end these laws and practices that criminalize low-income, unmarried fathers. “Rather than build more prisons in response to overcrowded prisons, abolitionists would reevaluate and change laws and policies that have created the world’s largest prison population” (Bullock and Meiners, 2019, p. 342). And finally, justice demands that we take action to rectify the injustices created through these systems.

Understanding our collective responsibility for creating and perpetuating systems that consistently generate these disparities helps illuminate the multitude of transactions that create the education debt, may empower those children and families, and helps generate an approach to dismantling oppressive systems that prevent fruitful investments in historically minoritized and oppressed children, families and communities.

Although the mapping of policies in historical context highlights systems of injustice, CRT demonstrates a variety of reasons that systemic change will not happen. If interests converge, change may come to create an illusion of progress, but beneath the surface, policy and perception will continually adapt to increase the wealth of whites while suppressing the income and wealth accumulation of Blacks. The intersectional lens of CRT also highlights that the unique experiences of unmarried, low-income Black mothers/CPs and unmarried, low-income Black fathers/NCPs make the political will to end the system and allow redress is highly unlikely.

Yet, there is value in pursuing progress and research can be a part of that. The value to mothers and fathers in doing this research was evident in almost every interview as parents thanked me for doing the study and for asking about their experiences. Research ideas may focus on developing further understanding of the current system and others may explore alternative systems. For example, research that clarifies who is in the IV-D CSE system and how they enter, including racial/ethnic and socio-economic details would be informative. We continue to operate as if fathers/NCPs whose children are connected to public assistance programs requiring cooperation have money and are hiding it. Yet, we have developed

enforcement systems designed to give the government access to every penny these parents earn and make them targets of law enforcement.

Continuing, although we know that poverty and parental incarceration adversely impact children's development and schooling experiences, there may be value in connecting data points to understand how many children are navigating these consequences of the IV-D system and learning through their experiences to identify needed supports and services. While additional research may provide helpful information, simply mapping the policies tell us that the system must change. Linking discussions of cooperation requirements to the education debt may also support those change efforts.

This study alludes to various opportunities for further research, many of which can make the systems that families navigate a little less unjust (i.e., What are effective ways to communicate with applicants to welfare/public assistance programs about the impacts of cooperating with the CSEA?, Why are Black people in Dane, Racine and Milwaukee County more likely to be sanctioned than Black people living in other counties in Wisconsin?, What changes can be made to communications with alleged fathers that promote paternity establishment while not criminalizing a lack of response to letters from the local CSEA?). Yet, if we return to the question posed by Coates earlier, "When injustice has been so central to the development of the nation, how do we move toward justice?" we must look at the policies of the nation as a reflection of the values of the prevailing political group that generated them (Grimley, 1986). As the maps that triangulate the policies themselves with the voices of varied stakeholders suggest, the nation has created systems that (de)value and incarcerate people based on their income, wealth, race, ethnicity, skin color, marital status, sexual orientation and

their intersections. We criminalize unmarried Black mothers and fathers with low incomes. We position the parents of families who attempt to access the nation's safety net against one another so the state can minimize welfare costs.

Additionally, although historically the focus on incarceration has primarily been on men, specifically Black men, there is increase in criminalization of Black women overall. Currently, 58% of women who are currently incarcerated are mothers. Not only do they and their children face the related socio-emotional challenges and the barriers to academic success, but the mothers' legal parenting status may shift to "noncustodial parent" and she may have to pay child support to the father or to foster parents. Research is needed to dissect how these changes are impacting low-income, unmarried Black families, the related policies and practices of the carceral state and ways to effectively invest in these families rather than systems that harm them.

Utilizing research to envision alternative child support systems that support both parents and their children and minimize barriers will likely create something that looks very different. Calls have been made for entirely separate child support services that center the lives and needs of low-income families (Boggess, 2017). Those could continue to define and position fathers solely as financial providers or they could truly center the child and allow for broader definitions of mothering/fathering/parenting as is afforded to families with greater income and wealth. Similar to wealthier parents, some lower-income parents would continue to choose to not be present in their lives of their children and a strong system would have to be in place to protect those who fear interpersonal violence, but a system could be created that would perpetuate injustice.

A more immediate step could include ending cooperation as a requirement for public assistance. It could remain as an option for public assistance applicants who would like the state's assistance in establishing and collecting child support orders. James, staff person at FCO2 centers why cooperation requirements need to end. He posited,

Instead of asking people that we consider at-risk, that we consider poor, that we consider the most vulnerable to be able to provide that for themselves....I feel like if they could provide it for themselves, we wouldn't be having this conversation. Why are we asking poor people to pay for things we're saying that they can't afford to pay for? Let's just provide it. It would save us more money. It would save us less harm. Fathers would feel encouraged to engage with their children because they knew they wouldn't get a bill from the state the second they are legally considered a father.

By shifting our focus from punishing those who are lacking in resources to offering some support, we create potential to challenge The Racial Contract (white supremacy) and stop perpetuating injustice by creating barriers to the academic success of children in those families.

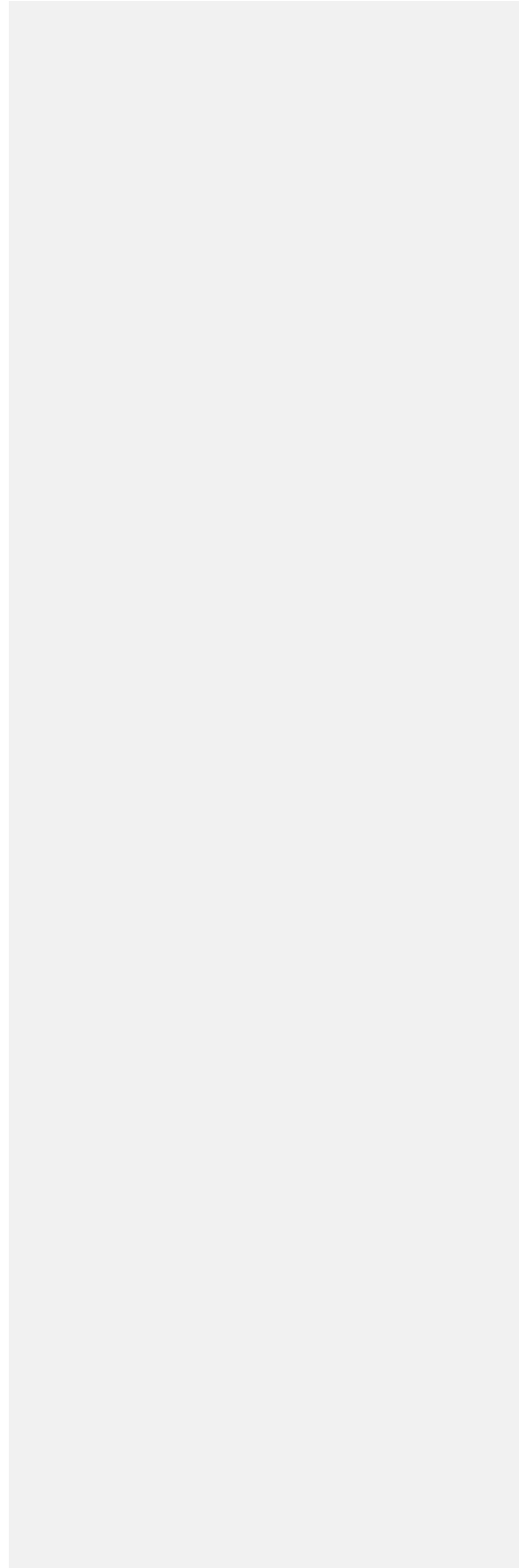
Just as child support debt weighed heavily on Walter Scott and is a daily and insurmountable burden for Reggie and millions of other fathers and mothers, we also know that the related poverty and parental incarceration creates obstacles to their children's academic success. Sylvia clearly articulated the burdens that she carries as a Black woman fighting to ensure that systems to construct Derek as a deadbeat dad. As a family unit, they put much energy and effort into protecting one another from the daily burdens of race and racism while still meeting all their needs. Although the burdens of race and racism can affect the mothers, fathers and children in unique ways, all are punished when low-income, unmarried Black mothers/CPs utilize welfare/public assistance programs and are required to cooperate

with the CSEA. As a society, if we value a safety net for children and our most vulnerable families, then we should not tie its use to systems that further injustice, by criminalizing and incarcerating unmarried parents who have limited resources.

Cooperation and schools

The American Federation of Teachers estimates that in K-12 schools, between 1 in 14 and 1 in 28 students have an incarcerated parent. A disproportionate number of those children live in urban areas and/or are Black (Turney, 2020). Parental incarceration further exacerbates the financial instability of these children and families. Education research shows that the incarceration of a parent for even one night has adverse effects on the well-being and academic achievement of children. Many teachers and school staff, likely unknowingly, experience the impacts of cooperation on the lives of their students every day.

Additional research is needed to fully understand cooperation's impacts on the cradle-to-prison-nexus, yet it is clear that cooperation is another lever in that mechanism. As mandated reporters, teachers are an important aspect of that mechanism. The realities of poverty and parental incarceration touch students, classrooms and teachers every day. Cooperation requirements play a role in structuring the education debt by creating systems that promote criminality and carcerality amongst low-income, Black parents and further economic instability in those families. Knowledge of these systems can inform teacher decision-making and advocacy.



Appendices

Appendix A BadgerCare Plus Application

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES
Division of Medicaid Services
F-10182 (12/2021)

STATE OF WISCONSIN

BADGERCARE PLUS APPLICATION PACKET

This is an application for BadgerCare Plus and Family Planning Only Services. You can apply:

- Online at access.wi.gov. Click Apply now.
- By mail or fax: Complete this application, mail or fax it to:

If you live in Milwaukee County:

MDPU
PO Box 05676
Milwaukee WI 53205
Fax: 1-888-409-1979

If you do not live in Milwaukee County

CDPU
PO Box 5234
Janesville, WI 53547-5234
Fax: 1-855-293-1822

- By phone or in-person: You will need to call your agency to set up an appointment to apply by phone or in-person.

If you need help filling out this application or want to answer the questions in person or by phone, contact your agency. To get the address or phone number of your agency, call 800-362-3002 or go to www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/forwardhealth/imagency/index.htm.

If you have a disability or need this information interpreted/translated or in a different format, contact your agency. These services are free.

ACCESS - APPLY ONLINE

ACCESS is an online tool that lets you apply for benefits, check the status of your benefits, or report changes to your worker. To visit ACCESS, go to access.wi.gov.

On ACCESS, you can also apply for FoodShare Wisconsin, which is a program that helps people buy nutritious food. For more information about FoodShare, go to www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/forwardhealth/resources.htm.

HOW TO USE THIS FORM — CHECK LIST

- ☐ Read the Important Information, the Rights and Responsibilities sections before you apply.
- ☐ Keep pages 1 through 6 and the Information Change Report, F-10183, in this application packet, for future changes.

☐ Print clearly, using blue or black ink.

☐ Read any instructions, before you answer the question.

☐ Complete all sections of the application that apply to you and your family. You may have a delay in getting BadgerCare Plus benefits if the application is not complete.

If more room is needed, use an additional sheet of paper or the blank sheets at the end of the application.

☐ Enter information about all the people living in your home. List all children who live in the home with you at least 40% of the time.

☐ You may need to provide proof of some of your answers. See the Verification/Proof Section on page 4, to see what documents you will need to provide. Enclose with your application any proof documents, additional documentation or sheets of paper used to complete the application. Please send copies. Do not send originals.

☐ You may have an authorized representative apply for you. To appoint an authorized representative, fill out either the Appoint, Change, or Remove an Authorized Representative: Person form, F-10126A, or the Appoint, Change, or Remove an Authorized Representative: Organization form, F-10126B. This will allow your authorized representative to complete and sign the application for you. To get this form, call 800-362-3002, or go to www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/forwardhealth/representative-types.htm.

☐ Sign the application and any attachments that require a signature. Applications and/or attachments without a signature will be returned.

☐ If you want to apply for FoodShare, complete the FoodShare Wisconsin Registration form, F-16019A, in this application packet.

BADGERCARE PLUS APPLICATION PACKET

F-10182

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RECOVERY OF BADGERCARE PLUS

Wisconsin state law provides for the recovery of certain BadgerCare Plus benefits you get in error. The law also requires the recovery of certain Medicaid benefits from your estate or the estate of your surviving spouse. The Wisconsin Estate Recovery Program Handbook (P-13032) provides you with information on estate recovery. You may get a copy of the publication from your agency, by contacting Member Services at 800-362-3002 or at www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p1/p13032.pdf. Certain benefits you get in the community after age 55 and all benefits you get after age 55 while you are participating in a long-term care program, living in a nursing home or while you are an inpatient in a hospital for 30 days or more, are recoverable.

RIGHTS

State and federal laws guarantee rights for anyone applying for or enrolled in BadgerCare Plus. These rights include the right to:

- Be treated with respect by state and county employees.
- Confidentiality of all information given to local agencies to determine enrollment. (This does not prohibit the use of such information for program administration.)
- Have access to agency records and files relating to your case, except information obtained by the local agency under a promise of confidentiality.
- The right to remain enrolled in BadgerCare Plus even if temporarily absent from the state, if you remain a Wisconsin resident.
- Be notified if you can be enrolled in BadgerCare Plus within 30 days from the day the agency gets your application for BadgerCare Plus.
- Be notified in advance of changes in your benefits or enrollment status.
- Ask for reasonable accommodation to participate in the program for a disability-related reason, or the right to request interpreters or translators to participate in the program.
- Appeal any action taken concerning your BadgerCare Plus application or on-going benefits that you do not agree with by asking for a Fair Hearing.

FAIR HEARING

You may appeal to the Division of Hearings and Appeals or your agency if:

- Your application for BadgerCare Plus was denied in error.
- Your application was not processed within 30 days from the date the agency received it.

- You disagree with the agency's decision to discontinue, terminate, suspend, or reduce your benefit.
- Your request for prior authorization was denied.

You may request a fair hearing by writing to:

Wisconsin Department of Administration
Division of Hearings and Appeals
PO Box 7875
Madison, WI 53707-7875

The Request for Fair Hearing form can be found at www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/forwardhealth/resources.htm.

If you choose to write a letter instead of using the form, you must include:

- Your name.
- Your mailing address.
- A brief description of the problem.
- The name of the agency.
- Your CARES case number.
- Your signature.

An appeal must be made no later than 45 days after the date of the action.

You may also contact the agency where you applied and ask for help filing a Fair Hearing request. Refer to the ForwardHealth Enrollment and Benefits Handbook (P-00079) to learn more about the fair hearing process. You will get a handbook when the agency gets your application or you can find the handbook at www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/forwardhealth/resources.htm.

If you have questions about the fair hearing process, you can call the Division of Hearings and Appeals at 608-266-7709.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Report Public Assistance Fraud — Go to www.reportfraud.wisconsin.gov or call 877-865-3432 (toll-free).

You have the responsibility to provide truthful and complete information on this application, attachments, or any other form(s) needed for BadgerCare Plus and Family Planning Only Services enrollment.

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IMMIGRANTS

If you are an immigrant applying for BadgerCare Plus, you may be asked to send a copy of your USCIS documentation showing your immigration status.

Note: Undocumented immigrants can only get coverage for emergency health care services. Pregnant immigrants may be able to enroll in BadgerCare Plus Prenatal Services.

PROOF OF INCOME

Job Income and Wages

Some applicants who have a job must give proof of their income. This information can be provided on the Employer Verification of Earnings form (EVF-E), or you can use check stubs you have gotten in the last 30 days. If you want to get a form, call your agency. If enrolled, you may be asked to provide proof of this information at your annual renewal and when you change jobs.

Self-Employment

You must provide proof of any self-employment income for any family member who is self-employed. You may use copies of your tax forms to provide this proof.

Other Income

You may need to provide proof of any other income your family gets (example, pensions, disability pay, unemployment from another state, etc.).

OTHER PROOF

Your worker may ask for other proof. Below are some examples of other items for which you may need to provide proof.

- Medical expenses to meet a deductible.
- Documentation for Power of Attorney and Guardianship.
- Assets. (Only for those applying for the Medicare Savings Program.)

If you need help getting any required proof, contact your agency and ask for help.

OTHER PROGRAMS

Medicare Savings Program

If you or someone in your home is receiving Medicare Parts A and/or B, they may be able to get help paying their Medicare premiums, copays and deductibles.

This is called the Medicare Savings Program. To see if you can enroll in the program, you will need to complete Attachment 8: Assets and provide proof of these assets.

FoodShare Wisconsin

FoodShare helps people with limited money buy the food they need for good health.

To apply for FoodShare, complete the FoodShare Wisconsin Registration form, F-16019A, in this application packet or go to access.wi.gov and click Apply now.

To learn more about FoodShare Wisconsin, visit www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/forwardhealth/resources.htm.

MINIMUM VALUE STANDARD PLANS

Minimum Value Standard means that the plan pays at least 60 percent of the total benefit costs allowed by that plan.

Your employer should be able to tell you if they offer a minimum value standard plan (MVSP).

Some employers are required to give their employees a letter that says whether their plan meets the minimum value standard. Or, you can go to <https://marketplace.cms.gov/applications-and-forms/employer-coverage-tool.pdf> to get a form you can give to the employer to help you get more information.

If your employer does offer a plan that meets the minimum value standard, the questions in the Minimum Value Standard Plans section on Attachment 5b, have to do with the lowest-cost, employee-only plan that meets the minimum value standard. Employee-only means a plan that only covers the person who is employed. This is not a plan that covers other members of the employee's family.

Even if you are enrolled in a plan that costs more than the lowest-cost employee only plan, you should still tell us about the lowest-cost plan in Attachment 5b.

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BADGERCARE PLUS APPLICATION

Instructions

- Use blue or black ink
- Write all dates in the MM/DD/YY format (example 04/02/58)
- Use an additional sheet of paper or the blank pages at the end of this application if more room is needed.
- Try to give us as much information as you can. If you don't give us some information now, we may have to ask for it before we can make a decision about your application.
- Keep pages 1–6 and the Information Change Report, F-10183, for future use.

For Agency Use Only

Case Number	Date Received
-------------	---------------

SECTION 1 – APPLICANT INFORMATION

In this section we will ask about you, the applicant.

Name – Applicant (last, first, MI)		Date of Birth (mm/dd/yy)	
Name at Birth and/or Previous Names		Social Security Number	
Address			
City		State	Zip Code
Mailing address, if different from above			
City		State	Zip Code
Are you applying for BadgerCare Plus? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		Are you applying for Family Planning Only Services? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Do you need help paying for health care in any of the previous three months, for anyone in your home? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
If you check yes, complete the Help Paying for Medical Expenses Request (Attachment 7) in this packet.			
Sex <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female	What language do you want your letters printed in? <input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish	What language is spoken in your home?	
Ethnicity* (optional) <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic or Latino <input type="checkbox"/> Not Hispanic or Latino			
Race* (optional, choose one or more) <input type="checkbox"/> American Indian/Alaska Native <input type="checkbox"/> Asian <input type="checkbox"/> Black/African American <input type="checkbox"/> Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander <input type="checkbox"/> White			
<i>*You don't have to answer the ethnicity and race questions if you don't want to. We're asking these questions to help improve our programs and make sure they do not discriminate based on ethnicity or race. Your answers will not be used to make a decision about your benefits.</i>			
Is anyone in your home blind, disabled, or unable to work due to illness or injury? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			

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SECTION 3 – OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS

Tell us about all other people in the home, even if they are not applying. You don't have to answer the ethnicity and race questions if you don't want to. We're asking these questions to help improve our programs and make sure they do not discriminate based on ethnicity or race. Your answers will not be used to make a decision about your benefits. List all children who live in the home with you at least 40% of the time. Include any child you are responsible for the care of, who is out of the home for six months or less. Also include any child that has been removed from your home and placed in foster care or with a relative. Use an additional sheet of paper if more room is needed.

Name – Spouse or Other Adult (last, first, MI)		Date of Birth (mm/dd/yy)
Name at Birth		Social Security Number
Applying for BadgerCare Plus? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Applying for Family Planning Only Services? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Sex <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female	Relationship to Applicant	
Ethnicity (optional): <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic or Latino <input type="checkbox"/> Not Hispanic or Latino		
Race (optional, choose one or more)		
<input type="checkbox"/> American Indian/Alaska Native <input type="checkbox"/> Asian <input type="checkbox"/> Black/African American <input type="checkbox"/> Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander <input type="checkbox"/> White		
Are you homeless now or have you been homeless in the last 12 months? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
What is your marital status?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Annulled <input type="checkbox"/> Divorced <input type="checkbox"/> Legally Separated <input type="checkbox"/> Married <input type="checkbox"/> Never Married <input type="checkbox"/> Single <input type="checkbox"/> Widowed		
Are you a member, child or grandchild of a member of an American Indian Tribe or an Alaska Native?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
If yes, complete Attachment 9.		
Are you eligible to get services from Indian Health Services, a tribal clinic, or an urban Indian health program?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
Have you received services from Indian Health Services, a tribal clinic, or an urban Indian health program?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
<i>Answer the following questions only if you are applying for BadgerCare Plus or Family Planning Only Services.</i>		
Are you a U.S. citizen?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
If no, complete the following questions:		
What is your Alien Registration or USCIS number?		
When did you come to the U.S. to live?		
Do you have a sponsor? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
Are you on active duty in the U.S. military or an honorably discharged veteran, married to someone on active duty or an honorably discharged veteran, the surviving spouse of a veteran, or the child of someone on active duty or an honorably discharged veteran?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		

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Name – Child 2 (last, first, MI)		Date of Birth (mm/dd/yy)
Name at Birth		Social Security Number
Applying for BadgerCare Plus? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		Applying for Family Planning Only Services? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Sex <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female	Relationship to Applicant	
Ethnicity (optional) <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic or Latino <input type="checkbox"/> Not Hispanic or Latino		
Race (optional, choose one or more) <input type="checkbox"/> American Indian/Alaska Native <input type="checkbox"/> Asian <input type="checkbox"/> Black/African American <input type="checkbox"/> Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander <input type="checkbox"/> White		
What is your marital status? <input type="checkbox"/> Annulled <input type="checkbox"/> Divorced <input type="checkbox"/> Legally Separated <input type="checkbox"/> Married <input type="checkbox"/> Never Married <input type="checkbox"/> Single <input type="checkbox"/> Widowed		
Are you a member, child or grandchild of a member of an American Indian Tribe or an Alaska Native? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes, complete Attachment 9.		
Are you eligible to get services from Indian Health Services, a tribal clinic, or an urban Indian health program? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
Have you received services from Indian Health Services, a tribal clinic, or an urban Indian health program? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
Is this child in foster care or living with a relative? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
Answer the following questions only if you are applying for BadgerCare Plus or Family Planning Only Services.		
Are you a U.S. citizen? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If no, complete the following questions:		
What is your Alien Registration or USCIS number?		
When did you come to the U.S. to live?		
Do you have a sponsor? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
Are you on active duty in the U.S. military or an honorably discharged veteran, married to someone on active duty or an honorably discharged veteran, the surviving spouse of a veteran, or the child of someone on active duty or an honorably discharged veteran? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		

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Name – Child 4 (last, first, MI)		Date of Birth (mm/dd/yy)
Name at Birth		Social Security Number
Applying for BadgerCare Plus? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		Applying for Family Planning Only Services? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Sex <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female	Relationship to Applicant	
Ethnicity (optional) <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic or Latino <input type="checkbox"/> Not Hispanic or Latino		
Race (optional, choose one or more) <input type="checkbox"/> American Indian/Alaska Native <input type="checkbox"/> Asian <input type="checkbox"/> Black/African American <input type="checkbox"/> Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander <input type="checkbox"/> White		
What is your marital status? <input type="checkbox"/> Annulled <input type="checkbox"/> Divorced <input type="checkbox"/> Legally Separated <input type="checkbox"/> Married <input type="checkbox"/> Never Married <input type="checkbox"/> Single <input type="checkbox"/> Widowed		
Are you a member, child or grandchild of a member of an American Indian Tribe or an Alaska Native? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
If yes, complete Attachment 9.		
Are you eligible to get services from Indian Health Services, a tribal clinic, or an urban Indian health program? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
Have you received services from Indian Health Services, a tribal clinic, or an urban Indian health program? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
Is this child in foster care or living with a relative? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
Answer the following questions only if you are applying for BadgerCare Plus or Family Planning Only Services.		
Are you a U.S. citizen? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
If no, complete the following questions:		
What is your Alien Registration or USCIS number?		
When did you come to the U.S. to live?		
Do you have a sponsor? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
Are you on active duty in the U.S. military or an honorably discharged veteran, married to someone on active duty or an honorably discharged veteran, the surviving spouse of a veteran, or the child of someone on active duty or an honorably discharged veteran? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		

L. Can anyone in your home get health insurance through an employer but has NOT signed up for it?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes complete attachment 5b.

M. Does anyone in your home get Medicare Part A and/or Part B?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes and this person would like to apply for the Medicare Savings Program, complete Attachment 8, Assets.

N. Does anyone expect their income to change from month to month?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, complete Attachment 10, Yearly Income.

SECTION 5 – SIGNATURE

Please read the following statements before signing. If you don't understand any part of this application, contact your agency.

Under penalties of law and/or perjury, I declare I have read and understand this application and any attachments and to the best of my knowledge, the information I have given is true, correct and complete. I understand the penalties for giving false information or breaking the rules. I understand I will have to provide proof that what I have said is true. I understand I will have to repay any benefits paid on my behalf that are issued incorrectly due to my failure to report changes or provide complete and correct information.

I understand my rights as well as my responsibilities and agree to abide by them.

I know that federal rules state any information I have given must be reviewed and verified by state staff. Also, I understand that I must cooperate fully with state and federal workers if my case is reviewed. No additional permission by me is needed to get any proof or other information.

I know that BadgerCare Plus does not pay medical costs that a third party, such as a private health insurance company or someone who injures me, is supposed to pay. I therefore assign and give my rights to any payments from a liable third party to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services up to the payment amount that BadgerCare Plus has made for my medical care. This assignment applies to any of my minor children. These payments may include payments from hospital and health insurance policies or payments received as a settlement from an accident.

I understand that my signature authorizes the local agency and the Wisconsin Department of Health Services to request any information that is appropriate and necessary for the proper administration of BadgerCare Plus as authorized under Wisconsin law.

I understand that if I do not meet the rules to enroll in BadgerCare Plus and/or Medicaid, the agency may send my information to the federal Health Insurance Marketplace. The Marketplace will use this information to see if I can get help with paying for private health insurance.

SIGNATURE – Applicant or Authorized Representative	Date Signed
--	-------------

DESCRIPTIONS OF LESS COMMON TAX DEDUCTIONS

Type of Tax Deduction	Description
Domestic Production Activities Deduction	<p>A deduction for self-employed people who produced or invented items in the U.S. Examples of production are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Property • Natural gas • Potable water <p>Examples of inventions are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating software • Recording • Film
Fee-based Officials' Tax-Deductible Expenses	<p>A deduction for fee-based officials that have out-of-pocket business expenses. This does not include expenses paid for by their employer. Examples of fee-based officials include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chaplains • County commissioners • Judges • Justices of the peace • Sheriffs • Constables. • Registrars of deeds • Building inspectors <p>If you are not sure if you qualify, check IRS Form 2106.</p>
Loss from Sale of Business Property	A deduction for self-employed people with a loss from the sale or exchange of property that they owned for their business.
Net Operating Loss (NOL)	<p>If the person has more deductions than income for the year, they may have a net operating loss (NOL). An NOL can be deducted from income from another year or years. If the person has an NOL carryover from a previous year, check this box.</p> <p>The IRS has a number of rules for having an NOL. Generally, an NOL is caused by a loss from operating a sole proprietorship business or rental property. The IRS also has rules that limit what can be deducted when calculating an NOL. For example, you cannot deduct capital losses in excess of capital gains. In addition, the NOL deduction cannot exceed 80% of taxable income for losses in tax years after 2017.</p> <p>For more information about NOL, please see the instructions for completing IRS Form 1040 and IRS Publication 536.</p>
Out-of-Pocket Costs for a Job-Related Move	<p>A deduction for people who paid out-of-pocket to move for a job. The move must be for a job-related reason, such as starting a new job. In addition, the new job must be at least 50 miles farther than their old home was from their old job. It also counts, if they didn't have a job before, and their new job is at least 50 miles from their old home.</p> <p>This deduction is not used if their employer paid their moving expenses.</p>
Penalties for Early Withdrawal of Savings	<p>A deduction for penalties paid to a bank for withdrawing funds early from an account where money must stay for a fixed period of time. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A time savings account • A certificate of deposit • An annuity

ATTACHMENT 2 – PREGNANT WOMEN

If more room is needed for any section, use an extra sheet of paper.

PREGNANT WOMAN		
Name of pregnant woman	Due date (mm/dd/yy)	If multiple births, number of babies expected.
Name of pregnant woman	Due date (mm/dd/yy)	If multiple births, number of babies expected.
Name of pregnant woman	Due date (mm/dd/yy)	If multiple births, number of babies expected.

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Retirement Contributions		\$	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
Job 2 – Name of employed person (last, first, MI)		Date employment started (mm/dd/yy)	
Employer name			
Employer Address			
City		State	Zip Code
Is this person on strike?		How many hours does this person work each week?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
Is this person paid hourly or salary?	If hourly, how much each hour?	If salary, how much each pay period?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Hourly <input type="checkbox"/> Salary	\$	\$	
Does this person get cash and/or tips?	If yes, how much per pay period?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	\$		
Does this person get bonuses and/or commissions?	If yes, how much per pay period?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	\$		
How often is this person paid?			
<input type="checkbox"/> Weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Every 2 weeks <input type="checkbox"/> Twice each month <input type="checkbox"/> Once a month			
<input type="checkbox"/> Other, explain: _____			
Job Type		Job Title	
<input type="checkbox"/> Permanent <input type="checkbox"/> Temporary		<input type="checkbox"/> Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Staff	
If employment ended, date ended (mm/dd/yy)	Date of last paycheck	Amount of last paycheck	
		\$	
Is this person a migrant worker?			
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
List all pre-tax deductions this employed person has taken out of his or her paychecks for this job.			
Type of Pre-tax Deduction	How much?	How often?	
Child Care Savings Account	\$		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
Group Life Insurance	\$		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
Health Insurance Premiums	\$		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
Health Savings Account	\$		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
Parking and Transit Costs	\$		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
Retirement Contributions	\$		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			

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ATTACHMENT 4A – SELF-EMPLOYMENT

SELF-EMPLOYMENT

Please tell us about any self-employment income you and/or anyone in your home gets. If more room is needed or you have more than two self-employment businesses, use a separate sheet of paper.

Self-Employment 1

Name of Self-Employed Person	Business Name
------------------------------	---------------

Business Address

Business Ownership Type: ☐ Partnership ☐ S corporation ☐ Sole proprietorship ☐ I don't know

Business Type (for example, a farm, home day care)	Date Business Started
--	-----------------------

Has this business filed taxes? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, for what tax year did the business last file taxes?

Has the business had a significant change in income or expenses? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I don't know

On average, how much does this business make each month? Please give us the income received before expenses are taken out. \$

On average, what are the total expenses this business has each month? \$

On average, how many hours per month does this person work for this business?

Self-Employment 2

Name of Self-Employed Person	Business Name
------------------------------	---------------

Business Address

Business Ownership Type: ☐ Partnership ☐ S corporation ☐ Sole proprietorship ☐ I don't know

Business Type (for example, farm, home day care)	Date Business Started
--	-----------------------

Has this business filed taxes? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, for what tax year did the business last file taxes?

Has the business had a significant change in income or expenses? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I don't know

On average, how much does this business make each month? Please give us the income received before expenses are taken out. \$

On average, what are the total expenses this business has each month? \$

On average, how many hours per month does this person work for this business?

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ATTACHMENT 5A – HEALTH INSURANCE

HEALTH INSURANCE

Complete the following if anyone has medical or health insurance now, or in the previous three months.

Name – Policy holder	Policy number	Begin Date
----------------------	---------------	------------

Name of Plan (for example "Silver Plan")

Name of Insurance Company

Insurance Company Address

City	State	Zip Code
------	-------	----------

Who is or was covered under this policy (family member's names)?

Has this coverage ended in the last three months?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, what is the date the coverage ended?

Why did the coverage end?

Does this insurance cover services from a doctor?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Is/was this insurance provided by a current employer?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If no, tell us the source of the insurance:

☐ COBRA Continuation Coverage

☐ Retiree Health Plan

☐ Private Insurance Plan

☐ TRICARE

☐ Past Employment

☐ Veterans Health Administration Programs

☐ Peace Corps

If yes, answer all of the remaining questions on this page.

If the insurance is through a current or past employer, what is the employer's name?

What is the employer's address?

What is the employer's Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN), if known?

Is this insurance through a state employee benefit plan?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Does this insurance cover services from a doctor?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Minimum Value Standard Plans (For more information about Minimum Value Standard Plans, see page 5.)

Does this employer offer a plan that meets the minimum value standard?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Do not know

What is the employer's Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN), if known?

Is this insurance through a state employee benefit plan?	Does this insurance cover services from a doctor?
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

Minimum Value Standard Plans (For more information about Minimum Value Standard Plans, see page 5.)

Does this employer offer a plan that meets the minimum value standard?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Do not know

What is the name of the lowest-cost employee-only plan offered by this employer?

How much are the monthly premiums?	How often do these premiums need to be paid?
\$	<input type="checkbox"/> Weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Every Two Weeks <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly

Plan Changes (Tell us more about changes that this employer may make to the health insurance it offers next year.)

Will this employer continue to offer health insurance next year?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Do not know

Will there be any change in premiums for the lowest-cost employee-only plan that meets the minimum value standard?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Do not know

How much will this plan's new premiums be?	How often do these premiums need to be paid?
\$ <input type="checkbox"/> Do not know	<input type="checkbox"/> Weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Every Two Weeks <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly

ATTACHMENT 6 – TAX INFORMATION

TAX FILER

List information for each person in your household who expects to file taxes for income they will get this year. If you are married and file jointly, you only need to complete one section for both filers.

Name Tax Filer 1		Name of Spouse (if married and filing jointly)	
Tax Filing Status <input type="checkbox"/> Single or Head of Household <input type="checkbox"/> Married Filing Jointly <input type="checkbox"/> Married Filing Separately			
Will this tax filer be claimed as a dependent by someone outside of the home? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
Tax Dependents: List the dependents this tax filer will be claiming on his or her taxes. Use an additional sheet of paper if more room is needed.			
Name of Tax Dependent		Date of Birth	
Social Security Number		Sex <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female	
Is this dependent expected to have more than \$12,400 in earned income this year? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
Is this dependent expected to have more than \$1,100 in unearned income this year? (Do not include Child Support, Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, Worker's Compensation, Veterans Benefits or gifts/money from another person.) <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
Is this tax dependent living outside of the home? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		Is this tax dependent deceased? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Name of Tax Dependent		Date of Birth	
Social Security Number		Sex <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female	
Is this dependent expected to have more than \$12,400 in earned income this year? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
Is this dependent expected to have more than \$1,100 in unearned income this year? (Do not include Child Support, Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, Worker's Compensation, Veterans Benefits or gifts/money from another person.) <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
Is this tax dependent living outside of the home? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		Is this tax dependent deceased? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Name of Tax Dependent		Date of Birth	
Social Security Number		Sex <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female	
Is this dependent expected to have more than \$12,400 in earned income this year? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			

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Is this dependent expected to have more than \$1,100 in unearned income this year? (Do not include Child Support, Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, Worker's Compensation, Veterans Benefits or gifts / money from another person.)

☐ Yes ☐ No

Is this tax dependent living outside of the home? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Is this tax dependent deceased? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
---	---

Name of Tax Dependent	Date of Birth
Social Security Number	Sex <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female

Is this dependent expected to have more than \$12,400 in earned income this year?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Is this dependent expected to have more than \$1,100 in unearned income this year? (Do not include Child Support, Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, Worker's Compensation, Veterans Benefits or gifts/money from another person.)

☐ Yes ☐ No

Is this tax dependent living outside of the home? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Is this tax dependent deceased? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
---	---

Name of Tax Dependent	Date of Birth
Social Security Number	Sex <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female

Is this dependent expected to have more than \$12,400 in earned income this year?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Is this dependent expected to have more than \$1,100 in unearned income this year? (Do not include Child Support, Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, Worker's Compensation, Veterans Benefits or gifts/money from another person.)

☐ Yes ☐ No

Is this tax dependent living outside of the home? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Is this tax dependent deceased? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
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APP

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ATTACHMENT 8 – ASSETS (FOR MEDICARE SAVINGS PROGRAMS ONLY)

This form should be completed only if someone in your home gets Medicare Part A and/or Part B and you want to apply for the Medicare Savings Program (also called Medicare Premium Assistance or Buy-In program). You must list all your family's assets. Include assets owned jointly with any other person. Do not include the value of personal household belongings (televisions, furniture, appliances). Do not list motor vehicle information in this section. Assets include items such as cash, checking or savings accounts, certificates of deposit, prepaid debit cards, trust funds, stocks, bonds, retirement accounts, interest in annuities, U.S. savings bonds, property agreements, contracts for deeds, timeshares, rental property, life estates, livestock, tools, farm machinery, Keogh plans or other tax shelters, personal property being held for investment purposes, etc.

NOTE: You will be required to provide proof of all your assets. Examples of proof include a copy of your bank statement showing the value of your bank account on the date the application is completed, or something that shows the face value and cash value of your life insurance policy. Use an additional sheet of paper if more room is needed.

Type of Asset (See Above)	Name of Owner(s)	Current Dollar Amount	Bank / Financial Institution Name	Account Number
		\$		
		\$		
		\$		

BURIAL ASSETS

List all burial assets.

Type of Burial Asset	Name of Owner(s)	Value
Burial Insurance: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		\$
Irrevocable Burial Trust (which means it can't be returned or changed): <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		\$
Other: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No *Other examples could be a headstone, casket, marker, or opening and closing costs.		\$

VEHICLE INFORMATION

List all motor vehicles. Include vehicles owned jointly with another person.

Vehicle 1				Vehicle 2			
Type of Vehicle	Year	Make	Model	Type of Vehicle	Year	Make	Model
Amount Owed on Vehicle	Fair Market Value*			Amount Owed on Vehicle	Fair Market Value*		
\$	\$			\$	\$		

*By fair market value, we mean the price you could sell the vehicle for right now. Looking up the vehicle's Blue Book value online (www.kbb.com/whats-my-car-worth) is a good way to find this out.

LIFE INSURANCE

Tell us about any life insurance you and/or your family has.

Do you or any family member have any life insurance policies? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, complete the section below.

ATTACHMENT 9 – AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKA NATIVE FAMILY MEMBER

FEDERALLY RECOGNIZED TRIBE

Is anyone a member of a federal recognized tribe?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, list them below.

Person's Name	Name of Tribe

NON-GAMING TRIBAL INCOME

Some tribal income types may not be counted for BadgerCare Plus. List any income (amount and how often) reported on your application that includes money from these sources:

- Per capita payments from a tribe that come from natural resources, usage rights, leases, or royalties
- Payments from natural resources, farming, ranching, fishing, leases, or royalties from land designated as Indian trust land by the Department of Interior (including reservations and former reservations)
- Money from selling things that have cultural significance

Tribal per capita payments from gaming activities are counted for BadgerCare Plus, so you should not list them here.

Name of Person Who Gets Income	Amount	Type of Income	How Often Paid
	\$		
	\$		
	\$		
	\$		
	\$		

STATE OF WISCONSIN
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES
Division of Health Care Access and Accountability
F-10154 (07/08)

ID

STATEMENT OF IDENTITY FOR CHILDREN UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE

This Statement may be used only to meet the new Medicaid/BadgerCare Plus/Family Planning Only Services proof of identity rule for children under 18 years of age. This statement may not be used to meet the Medicaid, BadgerCare Plus/ Family Planning Only Services proof of citizenship rule.

Instructions: In the space provided below, list all the children under age 18 in your household for whom you are a parent, guardian or caretaker relative. For each child you list, include the child's date of birth and place of birth (city, state and country). **Complete, sign and return this statement to your agency.**

Child's Full Name (First, MI, Last)	Date of Birth	Place of Birth (City, State, Country)
1. _____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____
5. _____	_____	_____
6. _____	_____	_____
7. _____	_____	_____
8. _____	_____	_____
9. _____	_____	_____
10. _____	_____	_____
11. _____	_____	_____
12. _____	_____	_____
13. _____	_____	_____
14. _____	_____	_____

Personally identifiable information will be used only for the direct administration of Family Planning Only Services, Medicaid and BadgerCare Plus programs.

By signing this statement, I certify, under penalty of perjury and false swearing, that the information I have given is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand that the local agency may contact other persons or organizations, to confirm the accuracy of my statement.

SIGNATURE _____	Date Signed _____
(Parent, Guardian or Caretaker Relative)	
Print Name _____	Case Number _____
(Parent, Guardian or Caretaker Relative)	

CHG

INFORMATION CHANGE REPORT
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Name – Member (Last, First MI)	Case Number or Social Security Number
--------------------------------	---------------------------------------

CHANGE IN ADDRESS

Use this section to report a new address if you moved.

New Street Address		
City	State	Zip Code
New Phone Number	Date of Change (mm/dd/yy)	

CHANGE IN HOUSEHOLD

Use this section to report if someone moved in or out of your home, got married, became pregnant, or gave birth. If someone became pregnant, tell us who it is, the due date, and the number of expected babies.

Name (Last, First MI)		Social Security Number
Date of Birth (mm/dd/yy)	Relationship to You	Date of Change (mm/dd/yy)

Describe the Change

CHANGE IN INCOME

Use section A to report changes in income from a job or self-employment or from sources other than a job, such as Social Security or unemployment insurance. Fill out section B if someone in your home lost a job or section C if someone in your home got a new job.

A. Changes in Income From Any Source

Name (Last First MI)	Source of Income
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What changed?

Date of Change (mm/dd/yy)	New Income Amount \$	How often is it paid?
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B. Loss of Job

Name (Last, First MI)

Name – Employer

Date Job Ended (mm/dd/yy)	Date of Final Paycheck (mm/dd/yy)	Amount of Final Paycheck \$
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CHG

INFORMATION CHANGE REPORT
F-10183
Page 3 of 4

If yes, what is his or her tax filing status?

☐ Single ☐ Married filing jointly ☐ Married filing separately

Will this tax filer be claimed as a dependent by someone outside of the home?

☐ Yes ☐ No

List the dependents this person will be claiming on his or her taxes.

Name – Tax Dependent (Last, First MI)

Date of Birth (mm/dd/yy)	Social Security Number	Sex <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female
--------------------------	------------------------	--

Is this tax dependent expected to have more than \$6,300 in earned income this year?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Is this tax dependent expected to have more than \$1,050 in unearned income this year? (Do not include child support, Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, workers compensation, or veterans benefits.)

☐ Yes ☐ No

Is this tax dependent living outside of the home?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Is this tax dependent deceased?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Name – Tax Dependent (Last, First MI)

Date of Birth (mm/dd/yy)	Social Security Number	Sex <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female
--------------------------	------------------------	--

Is this tax dependent expected to have more than \$6,300 in earned income this year?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Is this tax dependent expected to have more than \$1,050 in unearned income this year? (Do not include child support, Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, workers compensation, or veterans benefits.)

☐ Yes ☐ No

Is this tax dependent living outside of the home?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Is this tax dependent deceased?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Name – Tax Dependent (Last, First MI)

Date of Birth (mm/dd/yy)	Social Security Number	Sex <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female
--------------------------	------------------------	--

Is this tax dependent expected to have more than \$6,300 in earned income this year?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Is this tax dependent expected to have more than \$1,050 in unearned income this year? (Do not include child support, Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, workers compensation, or veterans benefits.)

☐ Yes ☐ No

Is this tax dependent living outside of the home?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Is this tax dependent deceased?

☐ Yes ☐ No

APP

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES
Division of Medicaid Services
F-16019A (12/2021)

FOODSHARE WISCONSIN REGISTRATION

INSTRUCTIONS: If you have a disability and need this application in an alternate format or need it translated to another language, please contact your agency. To get the phone number of your agency, go to www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/forwardhealth/resources.htm or call Member Services at 800-362-3002. Translation services are free of charge.

You have the right to submit your application at any time. To set your filing date (the date your benefits can start) you must provide at least your name, address, and signature. You can then complete a full application online at access.wi.gov, by mail, by fax, by phone, or in person.

You will need to have an interview with your agency over the phone or in person in order to finish the rest of your application. Your application will be processed as soon as possible but no later than 30 days from the date your application is received by your agency.

You may have an authorized representative complete this form for you. To appoint an authorized representative, either fill out the Appoint, Change, or Remove an Authorized Representative: Person form, F10126A, or the Appoint, Change, or Remove an Authorized Representative: Organization form, F10126B. This will allow your authorized representative to complete and sign the application for you. To get this form, call 800-362-3002, or go to www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/forwardhealth/representative-types.htm.

If you had FoodShare benefits that stopped within the last 30 days, you may be able to reopen your FoodShare benefits without completing this registration form. Contact your agency to find out if you can reopen your FoodShare benefits without completing this form or an application.

Name – Applicant (Last, First, Middle Initial)		Social Security Number	
Date of Birth (mm/dd/yy)	Phone Number	Are You Currently Homeless? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Street Address			
City		State	Zip Code
SIGNATURE – Applicant or Authorized Representative		Date Signed (mm/dd/yy)	

Priority FoodShare Services

If you need help right away, you may be able to get FoodShare benefits within seven days of providing your application and/or registration form if any of the following are true:

- Your household has \$100 or less available in cash or in the bank and will have less than \$150 of income this month.
- Your household has rent, mortgage, or utility costs that are more than your total gross monthly income (available cash or in bank accounts) for this month.
- Your household includes a migrant or seasonal farm worker whose income has stopped.

Answer the following questions to be considered for faster service.

What is the total gross income (before taxes or other deductions) expected by your household this month?	\$ _____
What are your household's total available assets (for example, cash, money in checking or savings accounts, or a lump sum of money)?	\$ _____
What is the amount your household pays in total for housing (for example rent or mortgage) this month?	\$ _____
Did your household get Wisconsin FoodShare benefits this month?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Did your household get Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, food stamps, electronic benefits transfer) benefits in another state this month?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are you currently living in a shelter for victims of domestic violence?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

FOODSHARE WISCONSIN IMPORTANT INFORMATION

This application is for FoodShare benefits only. It is not an application for BadgerCare Plus, Family Planning Only Services, Medicaid, Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy, or Wisconsin Works (W-2). You can apply for BadgerCare Plus, Family Planning Only Services, Medicaid, and Wisconsin Shares online at access.wi.gov at the same time you are applying for FoodShare. You must contact your agency to apply for W-2.

FoodShare is an entitlement. You do not have to apply for W-2 or other programs to be able to get FoodShare benefits. FoodShare benefits are available to help meet nutritional needs of low-income households. A household is usually made up of people who live together and share food. The amount of FoodShare benefits a household gets is based on the household's size, expenses, and income. FoodShare benefits are issued on a Wisconsin QUEST card, which is used like a debit card at grocery stores or farmers markets that accept FoodShare.

As a FoodShare member, you have rights and responsibilities. Your rights include:

- The right to be notified of your enrollment status within 30 days of applying.
- The right to get benefits within seven days if you qualify for immediate help.
- The right to be treated with respect and not be discriminated against because of age, sex, race, color, disability, religious creed, national origin, or political beliefs.

You are responsible for:

- Answering all questions on the application completely and honestly and signing your name to certify, under penalty of perjury, that all your answers are true and correct.
- Providing proof of all information needed to determine eligibility.
- Reporting required changes within the time frame provided to you in your letters.
- Not selling, trading, or giving away benefits.
- Using FoodShare benefits only to buy allowed items.

People who break FoodShare rules may be disqualified from the program, fined, imprisoned, or all three.

For more information about your rights and responsibilities, go to www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/library/F-10150B.htm.

USDA Nondiscrimination Statement

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the [USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form](#), (AD-3027) found online at: [How to File a Complaint](#), and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

FOODSHARE WISCONSIN APPLICATION
F-16019A
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individual failing to provide a Social Security number. Any Social Security numbers provided will be used and disclosed in the same manner as Social Security numbers of eligible household members.

Your Social Security number will not be shared with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

IMMIGRATION STATUS

To be able to get FoodShare, you must be a U.S. citizen or have qualifying immigration status with USCIS. Immigration status of all individuals applying for FoodShare will be verified with USCIS and may affect FoodShare enrollment and benefits. Immigration status will **not** be verified with USCIS for any individual who is not applying for FoodShare or who indicates he or she does not have qualifying immigration status with USCIS. However, income from those individuals may affect FoodShare enrollment or benefits.

QUALITY CONTROL REVIEW

Your FoodShare case may be randomly selected by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services for a quality control review. A FoodShare quality control review is a review of your FoodShare case to make sure the agency that enrolled you in FoodShare issued your benefits correctly and is following the rules set by the federal government. Federal law states that you must cooperate with the quality control review. If you do not give the information requested and do not cooperate with the review, your FoodShare case may be closed. If this happens, you will be told how long your case may be closed.

WORK REGISTRATION REQUIREMENT FOR INDIVIDUALS AGES 16 THROUGH 59

All FoodShare applicants and members ages 16 through 59 must be registered for work unless they are considered exempt. You will be registered for work at the time you are determined eligible for FoodShare unless you meet an exemption.

You meet an exemption from the work registration requirements if **any** of the following is true:

- You are 16 or 17 years old and are not the primary person in the FoodShare group.
- You are 16 or 17 years old and are the primary person in the FoodShare group but are enrolled in school or in an employment and training program at least half time.
- You are found to be unfit for work. This applies if:
 - You get temporary or permanent disability benefits from the government or a private source.
 - You are found to be mentally or physically unable to work by your agency.
 - You are verified as unable to work by a statement from a health care professional or social worker.
- You are enrolled in W-2 and complying with the W-2 work requirements.
- You are the primary caregiver for a dependent child younger than age 6 (whether the child lives in your home or out of your home). However, if you and another person both have parental control of the child, only one of you can be exempt from the work registration requirements as the primary caregiver of that child.
- You are the primary caregiver for another person who cannot care for himself or herself (whether the person lives in your home or out of your home).
- You have applied for or are receiving unemployment compensation.
- You are regularly taking part in an alcohol or other drug abuse treatment or rehabilitation program.
- You are working 30 or more hours per week or earning wages equal to 30 or more hours per week at the federal minimum wage.
- You are enrolled at least half time in a recognized school, training program, or institution of higher education.

You may need to provide proof to your agency if you meet one of these exemptions. Although registration for work is required, taking part in a work program is voluntary.

WORK REGISTRATION REQUIREMENT SANCTION

If you do not comply with the work registration requirements and you do not meet an exemption, you will not be able to get FoodShare benefits for a specified sanction period. This includes if you voluntarily and without good cause do any of the following:

- Turn down a suitable job offer
- Quit a job of 30 or more hours per week (or a job with earnings equal to 30 hours per week at the federal minimum wage)
- Reduce your work hours to less than 30 hours per week (or your earnings to less than 30 times the federal minimum wage)
- Take part in W-2 but do not meet the W-2 program work requirements
- Apply for or get unemployment benefits but do not meet the unemployment compensation program work requirements

all Social Security numbers, may be referred to federal and state agencies, as well as private collection agencies, for claims collection action.

FOODSHARE PENALTY WARNING

Any member of your household who intentionally breaks any of the following rules can be barred from FoodShare for 12 months after the first violation, 24 months after the second violation or for the first violation involving a controlled substance, and permanently for the third violation.

- Giving false information or hiding information to get or continue to get FoodShare benefits
- Trading or selling FoodShare benefits
- Altering cards to get benefits you are not entitled to get
- Using FoodShare benefits to buy nonfood items like alcohol or tobacco
- Using another person's FoodShare benefits, identification cards, or other documentation

Depending on the value of the misused benefits, you can also be fined up to \$250,000, imprisoned up to 20 years, or both. A court can also bar you from FoodShare Wisconsin for an additional 18 months. You will be permanently disqualified if you are convicted of trafficking FoodShare benefits of \$500 or more. You will not be able to take part in FoodShare Wisconsin for 10 years if you are found to have made a fraudulent statement or representation with respect to identity and residence to receive multiple benefits at the same time. Fleeing felons and probation and parole violators are not able to take part in FoodShare Wisconsin. You may also be subject to further prosecution under other applicable federal laws.

If you trade (buy or sell) FoodShare benefits for a controlled substance or illegal drugs, you will be barred from the FoodShare program for a period of two years for the first finding and permanently for the second finding. If you trade (buy or sell) firearms, ammunition, or explosives, you will be barred from FoodShare Wisconsin permanently.

PROOF NEEDED

Enrollment in FoodShare cannot be determined until you provide proof of certain answers. The list below shows what proof is needed and some of the items you can use.

- If your interview is at the agency, please bring as many items of proof as you can from the list below.
- If your interview is by phone, you will be sent a list of what you will need to provide proof of after your phone interview.

If you are not able to get the items you need, tell your agency what items you are not able to get, and your agency can help you. You may be asked to give proof of items not listed below. If so, your agency will send you a list of other proof that is needed.

Identity	Earned Income	Other Income
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Driver's license• Birth certificate• Passport or U.S. citizen card• Paycheck• Employee ID• Hospital record	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All check stubs received in the last 30 days• A signed statement from employer that includes gross earnings and pay dates expected in the next 30 days• Employer Verification of Earnings form	<p>(for example, unemployment insurance, disability insurance, Social Security, retirement, veterans benefits, military allotments)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Award letter• Copy of last check

The following items may be required to get a credit.

Housing Costs and Utility Bills

- Current rent receipt with landlord's name and phone number on it
- Lease or mortgage papers
- Real estate property tax statement
- Utility bills

Child Support

- (received or paid in a state other than Wisconsin)
- Court order papers or other record of payment
 - Payment record from other state

APP

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES
Division of Medicaid Services
F-16019B (12/2021)

FOODSHARE WISCONSIN APPLICATION

This application is for FoodShare only. This is not an application for Medicaid, BadgerCare Plus, Wisconsin Shares, or Wisconsin Works (W-2). You can apply for Medicaid, BadgerCare Plus, and Wisconsin Shares online at access.wi.gov at the same time you are applying for FoodShare. To apply for W-2, you must contact your agency. These programs can provide you help with the cost of health care or child care or finding a job as part of W-2.

How to Use This Form

1. Print clearly. Use blue or black ink.
2. Fill out the application completely. If you need more room to provide your answer, use a blank sheet of paper. Return your application to **your agency**. To get the address of your agency, go to www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/forwardhealth/resources.htm or call Member Services at 800-362-3002.
3. If you need help filling out this application, contact your agency.
4. You may have an authorized representative apply for you. To appoint an authorized representative, fill out either the Appoint, Change, or Remove an Authorized Representative: Person form, F10126A, or the Appoint, Change, or Remove an Authorized Representative: Organization form, F10126B. This will allow your authorized representative to complete and sign the application for you. To get this form, call 800-362-3002, or go to www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/forwardhealth/representative-types.htm.

SECTION 1 – CONTACT INFORMATION

Please tell us how we can contact you. Include the area code for all phone numbers.

Phone Number	Type of Phone <input type="checkbox"/> Home <input type="checkbox"/> Cell <input type="checkbox"/> Work	
Other Phone Number	Who does this number belong to? <input type="checkbox"/> Self <input type="checkbox"/> Friend <input type="checkbox"/> Neighbor <input type="checkbox"/> Relative	What is this person's name?

Email Address

What is the best way and time to contact you during the weekdays?

SECTION 2 – APPLICANT INFORMATION

If you are completing this application for someone else, answer the rest of the questions as if you were that person.

Note: You don't have to answer race and ethnicity questions if you don't want to. We are asking these questions to help improve our programs and make sure they do not discriminate based on ethnicity or race. Your answers will not be used to make a decision about your programs and benefits.

Name – Applicant (Last, First Middle Initial)	Date of Birth (mm/dd/yy)	Social Security Number
---	--------------------------	------------------------

Are you currently homeless*?

☐ Yes ☐ No

*By homeless, we mean that you do not have a long-term place to stay at night. You could be staying at a shelter, with a friend or relative, or may not have a place to stay.

If no, where are you currently living?

Street Address

City	State	Zip Code
------	-------	----------

Mailing Address* – if different from your residence (include street or PO box)

*If you are currently homeless and do not have a mailing address, your mail will go to the local agency.

APP

FOODSHARE WISCONSIN APPLICATION
F-16019B
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Relationship to Applicant	Do you buy food or eat meals with this person? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Do you provide care for this person? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Name – Child 2 (Last, First Middle Initial)		Is this person applying for FoodShare? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Date of Birth (mm/dd/yy)	Social Security Number (if applying)	
Sex <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female	Marital Status <input type="checkbox"/> Married <input type="checkbox"/> Single <input type="checkbox"/> Divorced	
U.S. Citizen (only for those applying) <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Ethnicity (optional) <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic or Latino <input type="checkbox"/> Not Hispanic or Latino	
Race (optional, choose one or more) <input type="checkbox"/> American Indian/Alaska Native <input type="checkbox"/> Asian <input type="checkbox"/> Black/African American <input type="checkbox"/> Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander <input type="checkbox"/> White		
Relationship to Applicant	Do you buy food or eat meals with this person? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Do you provide care for this person? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Name – Child 3 (Last, First Middle Initial)		Is this person applying for FoodShare? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Date of Birth (mm/dd/yy)	Social Security Number (if applying)	
Sex <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female	Marital Status <input type="checkbox"/> Married <input type="checkbox"/> Single <input type="checkbox"/> Divorced	
U.S. Citizen (only for those applying) <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Ethnicity (optional) <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic or Latino <input type="checkbox"/> Not Hispanic or Latino	
Race (optional, choose one or more) <input type="checkbox"/> American Indian/Alaska Native <input type="checkbox"/> Asian <input type="checkbox"/> Black/African American <input type="checkbox"/> Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander <input type="checkbox"/> White		
Relationship to Applicant	Do you buy food or eat meals with this person? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Do you provide care for this person? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

SECTION 4 – STUDENT INFORMATION

If more room is needed, use a separate sheet of paper.

Is there anyone in your household 18–49 years of age going to school? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If no, go to Section 5.	Name – Student (Last, First Middle Initial)
Name of School	The student is enrolled: <input type="checkbox"/> Part time <input type="checkbox"/> Full time
Is the student employed at least 20 hours per week? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Is the student caring for a child younger than 6 years old? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

APP

FOODSHARE WISCONSIN APPLICATION
F-16019B
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Reason for Parent's Absence

Name of Absent Parent (Last, First Middle Initial)	Social Security Number (if known)	Date of Birth (mm/dd/yy)
Name(s) of Child(ren)		Relationship to Child(ren) <input type="checkbox"/> Mother <input type="checkbox"/> Father
Date Parent Left Household (mm/dd/yy)	Date Last Contact With Parent (mm/dd/yy)	
Court Order of Divorce/Paternity		
Case Number	County	State

Reason for Parent's Absence

SECTION 7 – ASSETS

Asset information is only needed if you are applying for emergency benefits or a household of individuals who are elderly, are blind, or have a disability. List all assets owned by the applicant(s). Include assets owned jointly with anyone else. Do not include the value of personal household belongings. Available assets mean any asset that can be cashed at any time. Assets include items such as cash, checking or savings accounts, prepaid debit cards, certificates of deposit, trust funds, stocks, bonds (not set aside for education, or funeral expenses), interest in annuities, U.S. savings bonds, property agreements, contracts for deeds, timeshares, rental property, life estates, or personal property being held for investment purposes.

Type of Asset	Name of the Owner(s)	Current Value	Description (such as name of bank or financial institution, account number)
Cash		\$	
Checking Account		\$	
Savings Account		\$	
Other Type of Asset		\$	
Other Type of Asset		\$	
Other Type of Asset		\$	

SECTION 8 – EMPLOYMENT/JOB INCOME AND WAGES

Enrollment in FoodShare is based on total household income. Do not list self-employment in this section. Self-employment will be entered in Section 10. If more room is needed, use a separate sheet of paper.

Is anyone listed below a migrant worker? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Is any household member working? If yes, answer questions below for each household member who is working. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Name of Person Working	Date Employment Began (mm/dd/yy)
Employer Name and Address	

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Name of Self-Employed Person	Business Name
Business Address	
Business Ownership Type <input type="checkbox"/> Partnership <input type="checkbox"/> S Corporation <input type="checkbox"/> Sole Proprietorship <input type="checkbox"/> Corporation <input type="checkbox"/> I don't know	
Business Type (for example, a farm, home day care)	Date Business Started
Has this business filed taxes? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
If yes, for what tax year did the business last file taxes?	
Has the business had a significant change in income or expenses? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> I don't know	
On average, how much does this business make each month? Please give us the income received before expenses are taken out. \$	
On average, what are the total expenses this business has each month? \$	
On average, how many hours per month does this person work for this business?	

SECTION 11 – IN-KIND OR VOLUNTEER INCOME, OTHER INCOME

Please tell us about any in-kind (getting goods, food, or services in exchange for work) or volunteer work you and/or anyone in your home does. If more room is needed, use a separate sheet of paper.

Name – Person or organization who gives goods, services, or food in exchange for work or services

Street Address		Phone Number
City	State	Zip
What is the service or work done in exchange for goods, services, or food?		
How many hours each month are provided?		Date Service Started
Name – Person or organization you volunteer with		
Street Address		Phone Number
City	State	Zip
How many hours each month do you volunteer?		Date Service Started

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Who pays the expense?	Amount Household Pays Monthly \$
What is the expense for?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Rent/lot rent	<input type="checkbox"/> Mortgage
<input type="checkbox"/> Homeowner's insurance	<input type="checkbox"/> Mobile home loan payment
	<input type="checkbox"/> Property tax
	<input type="checkbox"/> Special assessment or taxes for things like sidewalk or street repair
Utility Costs:	
Does anyone in the household pay for utilities?	If you pay rent, is heat included in the rent?
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Check the box(es) for the utilities your household is required to pay and if the utility is used to heat your home.	
Used for heat?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Gas (natural)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<input type="checkbox"/> Electric	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<input type="checkbox"/> Liquid propane gas	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
	<input type="checkbox"/> Fuel oil/kerosene
	<input type="checkbox"/> Coal
	<input type="checkbox"/> Wood
	Used for heat?
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Check the box(es) for the utilities your household is required to pay.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Phone <input type="checkbox"/> Water <input type="checkbox"/> Sewer <input type="checkbox"/> Trash removal <input type="checkbox"/> Installation <input type="checkbox"/> Air conditioning surcharge <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	
Do you get housing assistance (Section 8 or other subsidized public housing)?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Do you get energy assistance?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	

SECTION 14 – RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Fair Hearings: I understand I have the right to file a fair hearing request to appeal any action taken concerning my application or ongoing benefits if I do not agree with that action. I understand I can ask for a fair hearing by calling 608-266-7709 or by sending a letter or Request for Fair Hearing form by fax to 608-264-9885 or by mail to:

Department of Administration
Division of Hearings and Appeals
PO Box 7875
Madison, WI 53708-7875

I can download a Request for Fair Hearing form at www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/forwardhealth/resources.htm. I may also contact the agency office where I applied and ask for a fair hearing verbally or in writing. I understand I can refer to the ForwardHealth Enrollment and Benefits handbook (P-00079) for more information.

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO A WRITTEN NOTICE from this agency before any action is taken to end or reduce your FoodShare benefits. For most actions, you will get a letter at least 10 days before the action is taken.

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO:

- Get an application and have your application accepted right away.
- Have an adult who knows your situation help you apply for and manage your FoodShare benefits.
- Get your FoodShare benefits within 30 days after you apply if you meet the requirements.
- Get FoodShare benefits within 7 days if you meet the requirements for faster service.
- Not be discriminated against because you are elderly or because of sex, race, color, disability, religious creed, national origin, or political beliefs.
- Have your civil rights upheld.
- Be treated with respect by agency staff.
- Have your private information kept private.
- Ask your agency to explain anything you do not understand.
- Be told in advance if your FoodShare benefits are going to be reduced or will end and the reason for the change.

APP

I understand the questions and statements on this application form. I understand the penalties for giving false information or breaking the rules. I certify, under penalty of perjury and false swearing, that all my answers, including information provided about the citizenship status of each household member applying for benefits, are correct and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand and agree to provide documents to prove what I have said. I understand that the local agency may contact other persons or organizations to obtain the necessary proof documents of my eligibility and level of benefits.

By signing this application, I am acknowledging that I have read and understand the rights and responsibilities as stated above.

SIGNATURE – Applicant or Authorized Representative	Date Signed (mm/dd/yy)
--	------------------------

RESET FORM

Appendix B Topical Information Questions

1- What problems was the child support cooperation requirement intended to address and why has it evolved in the way it has?

a-The cooperation requirement sits at the intersection of child support policy and public benefits policies. Under what conditions (i.e., political, economic, social) has the child support cooperation requirement developed/evolved at the federal level and in Wisconsin?

b-How did the evolution of the child support enforcement system intersect with the child support cooperation requirement?

2- Which families are affected by the cooperation requirement and how are they impacted?

a-Who has to cooperate? Data: subset of IV-d caseload (only parents who applied for public benefits) numbers and demographics of parents (race, gender, age, marital status) who are applicants/recipients of public benefits that require cooperation?

Sources: Child support agencies-federal, state (WI), county? And/or public benefits programs: TANF/W-2, Medicaid, State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), Food Stamp program, Child Care Development Fund (CCDF)? Federal? WI? County?)

b-What does it mean to be cooperative? Noncooperative? What leads to a parent being sanctioned?

c-How many parents are deemed "noncooperative" and sanctioned? What are the demographics of those parents?

d-How many parents satisfy the requirement and continue receiving public benefits and how many do not?

e-How many and which parents receive multiple sanctions?

f-What do parents say about the cooperation process, sanctions and returning to or leaving the program?

g-What costs are incurred by the state to enforce the cooperation requirement? By families?

3-What impacts does the cooperation requirement have on families?

a-How are custodial parents impacted by the cooperation requirement?

b-How are noncustodial parents impacted by the cooperation requirement?

c-How does the enactment of the cooperation requirement impact children's lives?

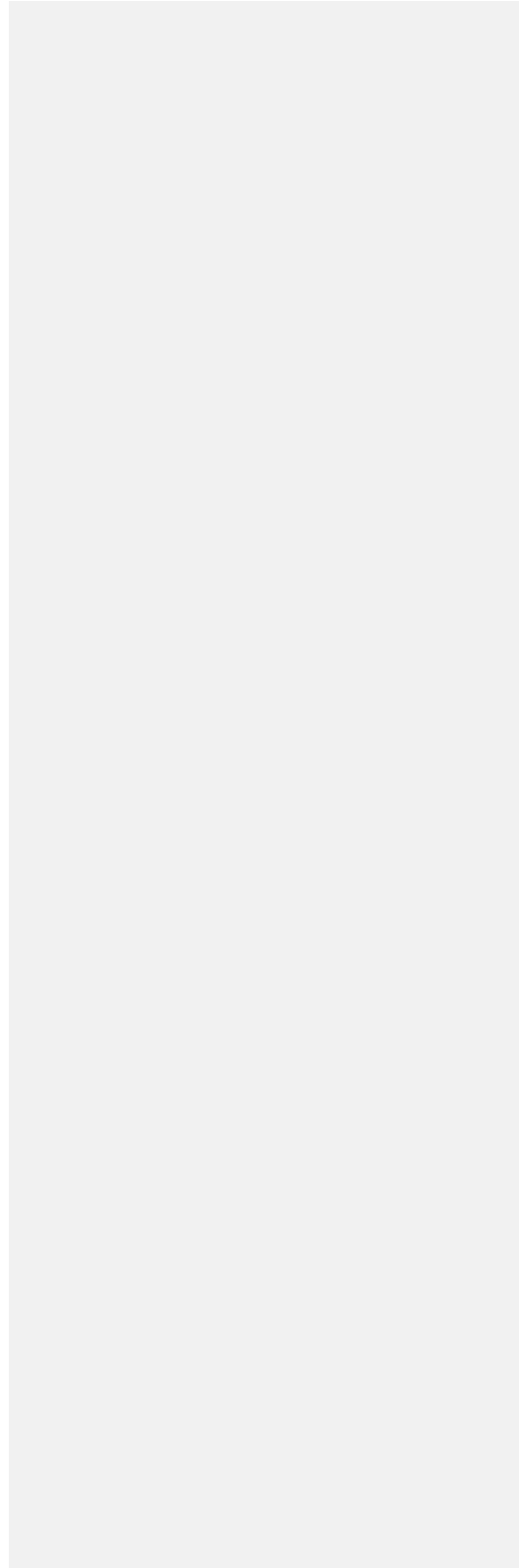
4-How does the cooperation requirement impact the state?

a-How much money does the state save as a result of imposing sanctions?

b-How much money is not distributed/saved in public benefits as a result of sanctions?

c-How much child support money is collected from families that are connected to the child support system and the public benefits programs requiring cooperation? How much of that money goes to the state?

d-What are the financial benefits to the state when IV-d child support cases are opened, collected upon, and not collected on?



Appendix C Recruitment Flier

Are you a mom or dad who...

- ☐ has at least one child under the age of 18,
- ☐ has a connection to the child support system—court-ordered to pay or receive child support, and/or has considered applying or applied for W-2, a Quest card, BadgerCare and/or MECA childcare subsidy,
- ☐ speaks English (only because the researcher is monolingual)
- ☐ is not currently incarcerated and
- ☐ wants to earn a \$25 gift card?



If so.....

If you are willing to participate in a research project, I would like to spend 45 minutes on the telephone listening and asking questions about:

1-your experiences with public benefits and/or child support agencies and

2-whether or how these programs are helping you parent, become economically secure and helping the dreams you have for your kids to become reality.



Call, text or email as soon as possible with questions or to set up a time to talk:

SUE STANTON, STUDENT, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

608. [REDACTED]
SMSTANTON@WISC.EDU



Appendix D Consent Protocol

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
Research Participant (Parent) Information and Consent Script for
“Structuring the Education Debt: The Story of the Child Support Cooperation Requirement”

My name is Sue Stanton and I am a student at UW-Madison. I am studying the child support cooperation requirement which is a federal mandating states to require parent applicants for certain public benefits programs to cooperate with the child support agency to establish paternity and to establish, modify and/or collect on a child support order. I am trying to understand it by learning what it means, how it is implemented and the impacts that it has on the government and on families. You are here for that last part, to help me understand what it means in your lives.

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH

You have been invited to participate because you:

- are a parent or legal guardian of a child under the age of 18, and
- you have a connection to the child support system--court-ordered to pay or receive child support, and
- you have considered applying or applied for W-2, FoodShare, BadgerCare and/or Wisconsin Shares and
- you speak English and
- you are not incarcerated.

Do each of those describe you?

I am also talking with workers in the child support system, public benefits programs and staff that work with parents in community settings. Specifically, I will ask questions about your experiences applying and staying eligible for these public benefits programs and your experiences working with the child support agency to establish paternity and to establish, modify or collect on a child support order. I will ask if and how these programs are helping you be a good parent, move toward economic security and make the dreams you have for your child(ren) become reality.

I will conduct focus groups like this one and also some interviews of parents at community meeting spaces or public libraries.

I would like to audio record our conversation. Only approved members of the research team will hear this recording and the audio files will be stored securely on UW Box for 7 years before they are deleted.

WHAT WILL MY PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?

If you decide to participate we will have this 60 minute small group conversation with 4-10 other parents. You can skip any questions at any point and if you need to leave the focus group at any time, you will not be penalized. I may also ask some of you to do a one-on-one interview with me. If you agree to an interview that will mean one more 30-60 minute conversation.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS OR BENEFITS TO ME?

Steps have been taken to minimize the risks of participating in this project. Yet, confidentiality and anonymity also depend on the other participants in the group, so there is always a little risk.

You may benefit from hearing and sharing stories of people's experiences navigating the public benefits and child support systems. Researchers in this study are mandatory reporters, so you should refrain from sharing personal or highly sensitive information (i.e., child abuse) in order to minimize the potential that we would have to report any information.

WILL I BE COMPENSATED FOR MY PARTICIPATION?

You will be offered a \$25 gift card for today's focus group and if we do an interview, then you will be offered another \$25 gift card. If you do not complete the session today, you will still be offered the gift card. You choose whether or not to accept the gift card (e.g., if the accepting the gift card will make you ineligible for a public benefit program, you may not want to accept it).

HOW WILL MY CONFIDENTIALITY BE PROTECTED?

The study team will not share your data with the program, community organization, or staff members. Program staff will not be present during the focus groups or interviews. Given the nature of focus groups, the study team cannot guarantee your confidentiality. Although I hope that no one does, it is possible that people could share things they learn in the focus group with others outside the group. While there will probably be publications as a result of this study, only group characteristics will be published.

If you participate in this study, we would like to be able to quote you directly without using your name. In a minute, I will ask if you consent to participate in the study. I will ask a separate question to see if you agree to being quoted in publications without using your name.

Identifiers will be removed from the private information you share. After such removal, the information could be used for future research studies or distributed to another investigator for future research studies without additional informed consent from you or a legally authorized representative.

Do you have any other questions you would like to ask?
 Do you agree to participate in this study?
 Do you give permission to be quoted directly in publications without using your name?

This information will be written on board/large post it note and highlighted for participants:

WHOM SHOULD I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

If you have questions about the research after you leave today you should contact the Principal Investigator: Carl Grant OR me, the Student Researcher: Susan Stanton (phone: 608.xxx.xxxx) (email: smstanton@wisc.edu)

If you are not satisfied with response of the research team, have more questions, or want to talk with someone about your rights as a research participant, you should contact the Education and Social/Behavioral Science IRB Office at 608-263-2320.

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON Research Participant Information and Consent Form-Staff

Title of the Study: Structuring the Education Debt: The Story of the Child Support Cooperation Requirement

Principal Investigator: Carl Grant

Student Researcher: Susan Stanton (phone: 608.xxx.xxxx) (email: smstanton@wisc.edu)

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH

You are invited to participate in a research study with a purpose of understanding the impacts of the child support cooperation requirement on families, communities and the government.

You have been asked to participate because you interact with families impacted by the child support cooperation requirement through the court system, child support, a public benefits program or a community organization.

This study will include: people working in the court system, child support system, public benefits offices and in programs that work with parents and parents themselves.

Questions vary based on roles. For example, I may ask you to reflect on parents who were deemed noncooperative and the circumstances in which that happened, how often it happens and how you see parents navigate sanctions for noncooperation. If you work to establish, set or modify placement orders, I may ask about the roles you ask custodial parents to play in those processes and how they respond to those expectations. If you work directly with parents, I may ask how you see fathers and mothers navigate the child support system and/or the public benefits systems and the impacts you see these programs having on families.

Audio interviews will be conducted utilizing Freeconferencecall.com or Microsoft Teams and because those are third party apps, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

Audio tapes will be made of your participation. Only approved members of the research team will hear this recording and the audio files will be stored securely on UW Box for 7 years before they are deleted.

WHAT WILL MY PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in a one-on-one semi-structured interview with Sue. Your participation will last 30-60 minutes per session and will include 1 session. You can skip any questions and at any point, you can choose to end the interview without penalty.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS TO ME?

There are minimal risks to your participation in this study. Every precaution will be taken to reduce the possibility of physical, psychological, social, economic or legal risks for participation. You may be upset by some aspects of the research, and participants may reveal personal information when responding to open-ended questions. Because Freeconferencecall.com and Microsoft Teams are third party apps, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS TO ME?

There are no direct benefits to participation in this study.

WILL I BE COMPENSATED FOR MY PARTICIPATION?

No.

HOW WILL MY CONFIDENTIALITY BE PROTECTED?

Only approved members of the team will have access to the data.

While there will probably be publications as a result of this study, pseudonyms will be used and any information that would identify you will be removed. If you participate in this study, we would like to be able to quote you directly without using your name. If you agree to allow us to quote you in publications, please initial the statement at the bottom of this form.

Identifiers might be removed from the private information. After such removal, the information could be used for future research studies or distributed to another investigator for future research studies without additional informed consent from you or a legally authorized representative.

Your participation is completely voluntary. If you decide not to participate or to withdraw from the study, it will have no effect on you.

I am going to ask a few questions to assess your interest in this research study and ask your voluntary consent to participate. Would you prefer that I email or text you a copy of this information right now?

Do you have any other questions you would like to ask?

Do you agree to participate in this study?

Do you give permission to be quoted directly in publications without using your name?

WHOM SHOULD I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

You may ask any questions about the research at any time. If you have questions about the research after our conversation today you should contact the Principal Investigator Carl Grant or the student researcher, Susan Stanton at 608.xxx.xxxx.

If you are not satisfied with the response of the research team, have more questions, or want to talk with someone about your rights as a research participant, you should contact the Education and Social/Behavioral Science Institutional Review Board Office at 608-263-2320.

Appendix E Interview Protocols

Semi-structured interview protocol: parents

Thank you for talking with me today. As you may recall, my name is Sue Stanton. I am a graduate student at UW-Madison in the School of Education. Today I want to spend our time together learning more about your specific story related to the child support and public benefits. I will continue to do everything I can to maintain your anonymity and confidentiality. I will use a pseudonym, not use your kids' names or ages or name how many kids you have or anything that I think would identify you. Ultimately, I hope that this study could be used to ease some of the pressure that parents face, but at the very least, I want to make sure to not create more challenges for any parent.

Do you have any questions?

With all that in mind, are you still interested in participating today? If you have changed your mind, that is fine and there are no penalties. I will not be upset and the program will not penalize you.

Is it alright if I record our conversation to help me remember and interpret later? Also, I will take some notes, just because it helps my brain think things through.

1-How many children do you have? What do you imagine them being when they grow up?

Will you tell me about them and things they like to do at their age?

If school age or near, ask about child's thoughts about school, experiences, academic interests.

2-Is your children's other parent involved in the life of the kids? Why did that happen that way?

--listen for any issues related to good cause, possible follow-up: Did you want to put the other parent on child support

3-I'm interested in your experiences applying for and/or receiving W-2, BadgerCare and/or Wisconsin Shares, child care subsidies. What was happening in your life that led you to apply and what was the process like?

4- Would you say that applying for public benefits is....easy

....complex

....difficult

....reasonable

....a nightmare

"What makes you say that?"

5-Do you recall your benefits ever being cut-partially or fully? If so, what happened and how did you find out?

6- How does it impact you to have these public benefits?

-What would make it better?

-If there is uncertainty about what is coming, then ask... how does that impact your life?

7-Do you have contact with the child support system? Do you remember how that started? Tell me about that experience.

- (-it was the only way to force my child's other parent to step up
- the public benefits office told me to
- neither of us has enough and it seemed like the best way to make sure we would get what we needed to take care of the baby)

Has getting involved with the child support agency increased the economic security of you and your child?

8-Have you heard of the child support cooperation requirement? If so, what do you think the purpose of the cooperation requirement is? If not, then explain that it is a federal law that requires unmarried parents in Wisconsin who are applying for W-2/TANF, Badgercare/Medicaid or child care vouchers to cooperate with the child support agency to establish paternity and establish/modify/collect on a child support order. What would you guess is the purpose of requiring parents to cooperate?

9-How do you think cooperation is impacting mothers? Fathers? Kids?

10- How much schooling have you completed?

- High school
- Some college
- A bachelor's degree
- Beyond a bachelor's degree

11-How do you describe your racial and ethnic background?

General discussion questions

12-What is one word you would use to describe the experience of going to the public benefits office and why?

13-How did you get connected to the child support agency?

14-What did you have to do to get the child support process started?

15-What are the interactions with the child support enforcement agency like?

16-Is there anything else you would like to share with me today?

Final question: Is there anything else you think I should ask or you would like to say about the cooperation requirement?

Semi-structured interview **protocol: service providers**

Thank you for signing the consent form. Just to highlights a few aspects.....My name is Sue Stanton. I am a graduate student at UW-Madison in the School of Education. I am studying the child support cooperation requirement and how it impacts children and families. Thanks for talking with me today. I am trying to understand cooperation from multiple perspectives like parents, child support workers, and people like you that work with parents of children that might be impacted by the child support cooperation requirement. I am not really interested in what any individual says, but instead I am interested compiling the thoughts of all the people I speak with to develop a deep understanding of the law and the impacts it has on people. That said, I will do everything I can to maintain your anonymity and confidentiality. In my writing and presentations, I will use a pseudonym. I will not identify the name or role or geographical scope of your work, etc. With all that in mind, is it alright if I record our conversation to help me remember and interpret later? Also, I will take some notes, just because it helps my brain think things through.

1-Tell me about your work with this program and how you interact with parents.

2-Tell me about your family. (Some service providers will talk about their own experiences and the parents with whom they work)

3-Overall, does W-2, BadgerCare, etc. help families?

4-What is your understanding of parents' experiences accessing public benefits and/or the child support system-what it means, how it works, etc.

5-Are you aware of parents getting dropped from these programs and/or their benefits getting cut? If so, why and what do they do then?

6-What have you learned about noncustodial parents experiences with the child support system?

7-Have you heard of the child support cooperation requirement? If so, what do you think the purpose of the cooperation requirement is? If not, then explain that it is a federal law that requires unmarried parents who are applying for W-2/TANF, BadgerCare/Medicaid and in Wisconsin, also child care subsidies to cooperate with the child support agency to establish paternity and establish/modify/collect on a child support order. What would you guess is the purpose of requiring parents to cooperate?

8-How do you think cooperation is impacting mothers? Fathers? Kids?

9-Is there anything else you think I should ask or you would like to say about how you see public benefits, the child support system and/or the cooperation requirement impacting parents?
Thank you for your time!

Semi-structured interview protocol: State actors

Thank you for signing the consent form. Just to highlight a few aspects.....My name is Sue Stanton. *I am a graduate student at UW-Madison in the School of Education. I am studying the child support cooperation requirement and its impacts.* Thanks for talking with me today. I am trying to understand cooperation from multiple perspectives like parents, child support workers, etc. I am not really interested in name of person said _____, but instead compiling the thoughts of all the people I speak with to develop a deep understanding of the law and the impacts it has. That said, I will do everything I can to maintain your anonymity and confidentiality. I will use a pseudonym, not identify the name and geographical scope of your office, etc. With all that in mind, is it alright if I record our conversation to help me remember and interpret later? Also, I will take some notes, just because it helps my brain think things through.

1-What is your role here and how long have you worked here?

2-What is your understanding of the cooperation requirement-what it means, how it works, etc. (If interviewee doesn't know what it is, say, "It is a federal law implemented by the state that says if a parent wants to receive TANF/W-2 then she/he needs to cooperate with the child support enforcement agency to establish paternity and a child support order and to modify and enforce that order." Does that sound familiar?)

3-What is your role at the child support/W-2/Medicaid office or the courts?

a-How does your role connect to the cooperation requirement?

If "I determine noncoop..." then ask how it works and how they decide if someone is not cooperating? How often does this happen? How are parents notified?

4-What do you think the purpose of the cooperation requirement is?

5-Are you familiar with parents who were deemed noncooperative? Can you recall the reasons why?

6-How do you think cooperation is impacting parents and kids? What makes you say so?

7-Is there anything else you think I should ask or you would like to say about the cooperation requirement?

Appendix F Wisconsin Non-Cooperation Sanctions-Gender

Gender Distribution of Custodial Parents Sanctioned for Non-Cooperation (Currently): 13,666									
	Female	Male	Total Count	FEMALE CP Counts	% Female	MALE CP Counts	% Male	% Total	% Female : % Male
Stockbridge-Munsee (Tribe)	12	2	14	101	11.9%	22	9.1%	11.4%	1.3
Waushara County	115	6	121	1032	11.1%	188	3.2%	9.9%	3.5
Ho-Chunk (Tribe)	26	1	27	274	9.5%	44	2.3%	8.5%	4.2
Marquette County	67	1	68	732	9.2%	135	0.7%	7.8%	12.4
Menominee (Tribe)	80	5	85	922	8.7%	94	5.3%	8.4%	1.6
Shawano County	140	9	149	1747	8.0%	196	4.6%	7.7%	1.7
Racine County	1169	23	1192	18354	6.4%	1746	1.3%	5.9%	4.8
Dane County	1658	96	1754	27460	6.0%	3504	2.7%	5.7%	2.2
Sheboygan County	319	14	333	5394	5.9%	518	2.7%	5.6%	2.2
Winnebago County	429	10	439	8475	5.1%	1135	0.9%	4.6%	5.7
Oconto County	69	1	70	1469	4.7%	193	0.5%	4.2%	9.1
Mole Lake-Sokaogon (Tribe)	3		3	66	4.5%	15	0.0%	3.7%	
Price County	24	2	26	536	4.5%	119	1.7%	4.0%	2.7
Oneida County	76	11	87	1710	4.4%	288	3.8%	4.4%	1.2
Douglas County	119	6	125	2680	4.4%	376	1.6%	4.1%	2.8
St. Croix County	144	14	158	3289	4.4%	454	3.1%	4.2%	1.4
Brown County	599	29	628	14108	4.2%	2160	1.3%	3.9%	3.2
Green Lake County	34	3	37	807	4.2%	117	2.6%	4.0%	1.6
Polk County	75	3	78	1800	4.2%	211	1.4%	3.9%	2.9
Red Cliff (Tribe)	6		6	147	4.1%	18	0.0%	3.6%	
Rock County	511	17	528	12556	4.1%	1951	0.9%	3.6%	4.7
Oneida (Tribe)	68		68	1695	4.0%	259	0.0%	3.5%	
Sauk County	113	11	124	3004	3.8%	579	1.9%	3.5%	2.0
Iron County	8	1	9	213	3.8%	21	4.8%	3.8%	0.8
Door County	33		33	901	3.7%	146	0.0%	3.2%	
Milwaukee County	4181	52	4233	114179	3.7%	9207	0.6%	3.4%	6.5
Pierce County	45	1	46	1235	3.6%	148	0.7%	3.3%	5.4
Walworth County	192	14	206	5307	3.6%	651	2.2%	3.5%	1.7
Marathon County	194	16	210	5377	3.6%	738	2.2%	3.4%	1.7
Vernon County	31	3	34	880	3.5%	136	2.2%	3.3%	1.6
Jackson County	36	2	38	1037	3.5%	171	1.2%	3.1%	3.0
Juneau County	54	1	55	1564	3.5%	275	0.4%	3.0%	9.5
Marinette County	87	5	92	2533	3.4%	384	1.3%	3.2%	2.6
Vilas County	22	4	26	641	3.4%	119	3.4%	3.4%	1.0
Adams County	30	2	32	890	3.4%	187	1.1%	3.0%	3.2
Fond du Lac County	155	8	163	4693	3.3%	757	1.1%	3.0%	3.1
Lincoln County	49	5	54	1485	3.3%	296	1.7%	3.0%	2.0
Manitowoc County	117	4	121	3625	3.2%	522	0.8%	2.9%	4.2
Kenosha County	405	17	422	12671	3.2%	1187	1.4%	3.0%	2.2
Rusk County	23	3	26	767	3.0%	148	2.0%	2.8%	1.5
Ashland County	31	3	34	1035	3.0%	157	1.9%	2.9%	1.6
Sawyer County	26	1	27	874	3.0%	126	0.8%	2.7%	3.7
Clark County	33	2	35	1111	3.0%	153	1.3%	2.8%	2.3
Lafayette County	16		16	550	2.9%	106	0.0%	2.4%	
Pepin Buffalo County	7		7	243	2.9%	27	0.0%	2.6%	
Buffalo Pepin County	13	1	14	476	2.7%	59	1.7%	2.6%	1.6
Portage County	70	2	72	2633	2.7%	389	0.5%	2.4%	5.2
Washburn County	21		21	805	2.6%	124	0.0%	2.3%	
Barron County	64	6	70	2534	2.5%	363	1.7%	2.4%	1.5
Monroe County	62	5	67	2469	2.5%	409	1.2%	2.3%	2.1
Outagamie County	220	12	232	8792	2.5%	1007	1.2%	2.4%	2.1
Forest County	13	3	16	521	2.5%	119	2.5%	2.5%	1.0
Columbia County	65	1	66	2642	2.5%	467	0.2%	2.1%	11.5
Trempealeau County	32		32	1310	2.4%	201	0.0%	2.1%	
La Crosse County	110	4	114	4569	2.4%	690	0.6%	2.2%	4.2
Lac du Flambeau (Tribe)	12	1	13	513	2.3%	116	0.9%	2.1%	2.7
Waupaca County	51	6	57	2260	2.3%	262	2.3%	2.3%	1.0
Dunn County	44	2	46	1984	2.2%	318	0.6%	2.0%	3.5
Washington County	106	6	112	4865	2.2%	626	1.0%	2.0%	2.3
Burnett County	15	4	19	761	2.0%	120	3.3%	2.2%	0.6
Wood County	66		66	3474	1.9%	430	0.0%	1.7%	
Waukesha County	250	2	252	13626	1.8%	1717	0.1%	1.6%	15.8
Ozaukee County	47	1	48	2606	1.8%	294	0.3%	1.7%	5.3
Langlade County	21		21	1167	1.8%	251	0.0%	1.5%	

Dodge County	60	1	61	3441	1.7%	461	0.2%	1.6%	8.0
Calumet County	28	1	29	1628	1.7%	128	0.8%	1.7%	2.2
Florence County	3		3	177	1.7%	20	0.0%	1.5%	
Richland County	11		11	671	1.6%	116	0.0%	1.4%	
Eau Claire County	76	5	81	4833	1.6%	729	0.7%	1.5%	2.3
Grant County	24	2	26	1605	1.5%	290	0.7%	1.4%	2.2
Bayfield County	6	1	7	403	1.5%	52	1.9%	1.5%	0.8
Green County	20	2	22	1368	1.5%	244	0.8%	1.4%	1.8
Taylor County	7		7	652	1.1%	101	0.0%	0.9%	
Iowa County	7	2	9	774	0.9%	157	1.3%	1.0%	0.7
Kewaunee County	3		3	569	0.5%	70	0.0%	0.5%	
Chippewa County	12		12	2768	0.4%	487	0.0%	0.4%	
Jefferson County	15	1	16	3738	0.4%	519	0.2%	0.4%	2.1
Crawford County	2		2	750	0.3%	105	0.0%	0.2%	
Sum:	13187	479	13666	351553	3.8%	41425	1.2%	3.5%	3.2

See Appendix G Wisconsin Non-Cooperation Sanctions-Age

Age Distribution of Custodial Parents Sanctioned for Non-Cooperation																
	Number of Custodial Parents Sanctioned					Sum:	CP Count					% of CPs sanctioned by age				
	<20 y/o	21-40	41-60	61-80	80+		<20 y/o	21-40	41-60	61-80	80+	<20 y/o	21-40	41-60	61-80	80+
Stockbridge-Munsee (Tribe)		9	5			14	5	70	43	6		0.0%	12.9%	11.6%	0.0%	
Ho-Chunk (Tribe)	1	22	3	1		27	8	179	111	22		12.5%	12.3%	2.7%	4.5%	
Marquette County	1	55	11		1	68	17	529	280	38	4	5.9%	10.4%	3.9%	0.0%	25.0%
Racine County	54	875	252	11		1192	355	9164	8200	2270	153	15.2%	9.5%	3.1%	0.5%	0.0%
Waushara County	4	68	45	4		121	28	714	412	69	1	14.3%	9.5%	10.9%	5.8%	0.0%
Menominee (Tribe)	4	50	22	9		85	27	529	363	96	6	14.8%	9.5%	6.1%	9.4%	0.0%
Shawano County	4	103	40	2		149	41	1133	654	115	6	9.8%	9.1%	6.1%	1.7%	0.0%
Dane County	35	1136	551	32		1754	374	14476	13290	2730	147	9.4%	7.8%	4.1%	1.2%	0.0%
Sheboygan County	12	251	66	3	1	333	110	3206	2223	368	17	10.9%	7.8%	3.0%	0.8%	5.9%
Oconto County	1	64	5			70	32	964	586	82	2	3.1%	6.6%	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%
Winnebago County	17	355	64	3		439	140	5515	3322	621	33	12.1%	6.4%	1.9%	0.5%	0.0%
Douglas County	3	99	21	2		125	39	1619	1177	217	9	7.7%	6.1%	1.8%	0.9%	0.0%
Oneida County	2	60	22	2	1	87	23	1078	738	154	9	8.7%	5.6%	3.0%	1.3%	11.1%
Rock County	20	379	119	9	1	528	518	7061	5221	1613	115	3.9%	5.4%	2.3%	0.6%	0.9%
Vernon County		29	5			34	15	541	411	51	1	0.0%	5.4%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%
Polk County	1	55	21	1		78	28	1062	805	112	7	3.6%	5.2%	2.6%	0.9%	0.0%
Iron County		7	2			9	4	137	83	9	2	0.0%	5.1%	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%
Milwaukee County	176	2825	1170	59	3	4233	2311	55612	49847	14784	968	7.6%	5.1%	2.3%	0.4%	0.3%
St. Croix County		90	60	8		158	26	1788	1674	253	9	0.0%	5.0%	3.6%	3.2%	0.0%
Marathon County	4	149	53	4		210	75	3067	2433	524	34	5.3%	4.9%	2.2%	0.8%	0.0%
Pierce County		36	9	1		46	7	777	536	59	6	0.0%	4.6%	1.7%	1.7%	0.0%
Green Lake County	1	26	10			37	15	592	296	23	2	6.7%	4.4%	3.4%	0.0%	0.0%
Price County		15	11			26	7	343	246	61		0.0%	4.4%	4.5%	0.0%	
Jackson County		30	8			38	14	697	433	66	2	0.0%	4.3%	1.8%	0.0%	0.0%
Sauk County	1	93	30			124	54	2184	1209	145	4	1.9%	4.3%	2.5%	0.0%	0.0%
Vilas County		18	7	1		26	12	427	279	43	1	0.0%	4.2%	2.5%	2.3%	0.0%
Red Cliff (Tribe)		5	1			6	5	120	37	4		0.0%	4.2%	2.7%	0.0%	
Marinette County	1	70	20	1		92	66	1697	942	202	18	1.5%	4.1%	2.1%	0.5%	0.0%
Oneida (Tribe)		50	16	2		68	30	1268	587	73	3	0.0%	3.9%	2.7%	2.7%	0.0%
Manitowoc County	5	92	23	1		121	90	2384	1400	272	15	5.6%	3.9%	1.6%	0.4%	0.0%
Lincoln County	2	37	15			54	26	959	635	160	5	7.7%	3.9%	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%
Walworth County	5	109	89	3		206	61	2846	2530	508	24	8.2%	3.8%	3.5%	0.6%	0.0%
Clark County		30	5			35	24	790	402	49	3	0.0%	3.8%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%
Brown County	12	343	257	16		628	331	9098	5887	930	49	3.6%	3.8%	4.4%	1.7%	0.0%
Juneau County	1	40	13	1		55	31	1079	650	87	3	3.2%	3.7%	2.0%	1.1%	0.0%
Portage County	2	61	9			72	48	1648	1083	235	16	4.2%	3.7%	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%
Fond du Lac County	4	115	40	4		163	79	3113	1942	313	12	5.1%	3.7%	2.1%	1.3%	0.0%
Door County	1	21	9	2		33	16	587	379	63	4	6.3%	3.6%	2.4%	3.2%	0.0%
Forest County		12	3	1		16	14	340	230	52	7	0.0%	3.5%	1.3%	1.9%	0.0%
Adams County		21	11			32	20	609	375	74	4	0.0%	3.4%	2.9%	0.0%	0.0%
Kenosha County	5	245	169	3		422	227	7240	5165	1183	74	2.2%	3.4%	3.3%	0.3%	0.0%
Monroe County		57	10			67	55	1760	924	140	4	0.0%	3.2%	1.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Lafayette County		13	3			16	6	423	198	31		0.0%	3.1%	1.5%	0.0%	
Washington County		79	28	5		112	47	2571	2385	499	32	0.0%	3.1%	1.2%	1.0%	0.0%
Ashland County	1	20	12	1		34	17	663	439	75	5	5.9%	3.0%	2.7%	1.3%	0.0%
Trempealeau County	1	26	5			32	28	883	540	63	5	3.6%	2.9%	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%
Sawyer County		15	12			27	13	510	409	69	3	0.0%	2.9%	2.9%	0.0%	0.0%
Buffalo Pepin County		9	5			14	8	311	197	21		0.0%	2.9%	2.5%	0.0%	
Rusk County	1	14	11			26	12	486	325	87	8	8.3%	2.9%	3.4%	0.0%	0.0%
Ozaukee County	2	31	15			48	83	1103	1332	375	38	2.4%	2.8%	1.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Outagamie County	5	139	75	12	1	232	113	5077	3950	666	28	4.4%	2.7%	1.9%	1.8%	3.6%
La Crosse County	1	79	33	1		114	56	2896	2031	277	12	1.8%	2.7%	1.6%	0.4%	0.0%
Washburn County	2	14	5			21	15	521	336	58	1	13.3%	2.7%	1.5%	0.0%	0.0%
Waupaca County		37	20			57	31	1381	917	191	7	0.0%	2.7%	2.2%	0.0%	0.0%
Waukesha County	1	163	84	4		252	131	6518	6866	1751	119	0.8%	2.5%	1.2%	0.2%	0.0%
Bayfield County		6	1			7	6	241	187	23		0.0%	2.5%	0.5%	0.0%	
Pepin Buffalo County	1	4	2			7	3	163	95	10	1	33.3%	2.5%	2.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Calumet County	1	24	4			29	24	982	677	69	8	4.2%	2.4%	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%
Columbia County	1	39	25	1		66	25	1664	1167	250	13	4.0%	2.3%	2.1%	0.4%	0.0%
Richland County		11				11	12	475	277	24	1	0.0%	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Lac du Flambeau (Tribe)		8	4		1	13	13	357	215	42	4	0.0%	2.2%	1.9%	0.0%	25.0%
Wood County	1	51	14			66	56	2298	1320	222	12	1.8%	2.2%	1.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Mole Lake-Sokaogon (Tribe)		1	2			3	3	46	32	2		0.0%	2.2%	6.3%	0.0%	
Dunn County		26	20			46	19	1243	875	168	7	0.0%	2.1%	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Burnett County		10	9			19	15	493	331	44	1	0.0%	2.0%	2.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Dodge County	1	46	14			61	62	2364	1300	173	12	1.6%	1.9%	1.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Barron County		29	36	5		70	39	1498	1060	284	22	0.0%	1.9%	3.4%	1.8%	0.0%
Eau Claire County	1	61	17	2		81	66	3173	1897	420	22	1.5%	1.9%	0.9%	0.5%	0.0%

Florence County		2	1			3	1	117	69	11		0.0%	1.7%	1.4%	0.0%	
Langlade County	1	14	5	1		21	26	856	462	77	2	3.8%	1.6%	1.1%	1.3%	0.0%
Grant County		19	7			26	20	1237	589	48	4	0.0%	1.5%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%
Green County	1	13	8			22	19	980	558	55	2	5.3%	1.3%	1.4%	0.0%	0.0%
Taylor County	1	5	1			7	16	469	245	27		6.3%	1.1%	0.4%	0.0%	
Iowa County		5	4			9	12	504	373	42	2	0.0%	1.0%	1.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Kewaunee County		3				3	9	381	222	31	1	0.0%	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Chippewa County	1	11				12	37	2029	1052	140	1	2.7%	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Jefferson County	1	11	4			16	68	2326	1662	201	13	1.5%	0.5%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%
Crawford County		2				2	12	520	282	44	1	0.0%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Sum:	404	9247	3788	218	9	13666	6533	196761	152912	35446	2166	6.2%	4.7%	2.5%	0.6%	0.4%

Appendix H Wisconsin Non-Cooperation Sanctions-Race and Ethnicity

Race Distribution of Custodial Parents Sanctioned for Non-Cooperation by Agency

Race: AA- African American*, BL- Black, HP- Hispanic, NH- Non-Hispanic, PI- Pacific Islander, RU- Race Unknown, WH- White

	AA	BL	HP	NH	PI	RU	WH
Owning Agency County	# of NonCoop Sanctions						
Iron County		3		5		1	
Red Cliff (Tribe)	3	1		1			1
Lafayette County		1	1	10			4
Clark County		3	8	12		1	11
Green Lake County		4	8	20		3	2
Pierce County		4	3	16			23
Forest County	8	1		4			3
Portage County	2	11	8	30		2	19
Sheboygan County	2	48	54	62	2	33	132
Shawano County	54	2	6	30			57
Winnebago County	15	77	36	148		15	148
Marinette County	4	3	7	35		1	42
Douglas County	5	8	1	35		4	72
Trempealeau County	1	1	11	7			12
Jackson County	14	1		13			10
Dane County	16	683	274	295		82	404
Marathon County	3	13	17	66		26	85
Grant County		5	1	8		1	11
Racine County	5	584	194	148	2	19	240
Brown County	81	123	93	71	2	47	243
Fond du Lac County	2	30	22	54		2	53
Waushara County		1	17	69	1	1	32
Walworth County		15	66	53		7	65
Outagamie County	6	28	37	53	1	13	94
Eau Claire County	1	11	6	18		6	36
St. Croix County	2	4	8	66		6	72
Calumet County		3	8	6			12
Manitowoc County	2	10	19	30	2	9	49
Door County	1	1		7		2	22
Kenosha County	1	167	55	61	2	1	135
Waukesha County	5	44	41	66	1	6	89
Rock County	3	131	76	153	2	14	149
Lincoln County		1	3	19		1	29
Ozaukee County		6	5	13		2	22
Chippewa County		3		1		1	7
Langlade County		1		10		1	9
Columbia County	4	2	4	15		5	36
Milwaukee County	58	2716	710	346	15	122	266
Monroe County	5	2	5	23		1	31
La Crosse County	3	11	6	38		12	44
Barron County	4	1		14		10	41
Dodge County	1	2	10	17		3	28
Wood County	5	2	6	29		5	19
Oneida (Tribe)	57	1	3	2			5
Washington County		4	19	32		3	54
Jefferson County		1	5	5			5
Mole Lake-Sokaogon (Tribe)	2						1
Florence County							3
Price County			4	5	1		16
Washburn County	2		2	5			12
Buffalo Pepin County			2	4			8
Bayfield County	2		1	2			2
Richland County			1	7			3
Marquette County	2		4	33			27

AA	BL	HP	NH	PI	RU	WH
CP Counts						
3	1		125		8	98
124	1	1	10		2	28
1	3	33	279		56	286
16	11	87	461		133	560
11	18	84	671	1	46	97
10	22	19	540		253	541
129	6	4	166	2	62	274
26	68	135	1323	3	393	1082
26	303	501	1592	6	1260	2236
399	13	43	514	1	109	870
120	542	355	2895	15	1660	4044
25	28	42	1067	1	346	1416
110	79	20	884	3	334	1631
13	10	169	451	1	137	738
156	10	24	354	3	118	547
237	6903	2456	5588	24	7895	7914
80	137	157	2071	4	1405	2279
10	53	32	779	1	214	809
78	6695	2389	2379	31	1755	6815
849	1430	1572	3833	21	3085	5505
41	358	268	2042	7	601	2142
14	12	102	669	2	78	347
26	182	685	1516	4	821	2735
213	413	471	3077	16	2229	3415
97	177	119	1706	13	823	2643
33	66	68	1487		913	1183
18	50	105	590	3	389	605
36	170	246	1282	3	732	1692
22	17	35	289		79	607
89	2924	1623	3091	36	2240	3835
82	777	1069	4301	37	4977	4142
89	2321	967	4050	12	2711	4378
19	18	17	576	1	230	924
12	116	67	854	3	1122	757
33	61	30	1290	5	323	1517
38	23	27	434		74	827
30	47	93	987		453	1509
1204	66031	13305	10912	356	19448	12266
60	53	128	863	4	249	1526
70	309	57	1810	11	986	2029
80	30	47	840	2	426	1478
34	71	232	1400	1	615	1558
86	73	103	2151	1	254	1240
1258	41	82	180	1	69	330
52	171	159	1619	2	1189	2342
23	94	390	1421	5	666	1671
61	1		3		3	15
3	1		73		35	86
7	2	9	250	3	83	303
34	9	7	310	1	77	493
9	4	9	180		80	255
64	2	5	158	1	40	187
	7	7	292		65	418
8	13	30	359		83	375

Ashland County	17		1	5		1	10	359	16	9	260	1	99	455
Sawyer County	13		1	2		1	10	358	5	9	222		68	342
Sauk County	8		19	37		2	58	106	37	202	1036	4	369	1842
Polk County	4		1	24		2	47	54	12	12	711	1	263	961
Waupaca County			6	13		1	35	31	18	75	896		300	1209
Oneida County	10		2	26		2	47	62	17	25	629	4	241	1024
Juneau County	2		1	24	2	1	25	50	14	20	972	2	75	717
Dunn County	1		1	14		4	26	27	45	22	739	3	356	1120
Green County			1	12			9	7	22	40	858	1	166	520
Menominee (Tribe)	80			2		1	2	939	1	3	15		31	32
Oconto County	5			31		1	33	47	11	21	616	2	208	761
Vernon County	2			17			15	3	8	14	402	1	80	511
Lac du Flambeau (Tribe)	10			1			2	530	3	5	29		17	47
Vilas County	10			12		1	3	53	9	23	411		48	218
Adams County				9			23	11	14	25	321		34	617
Rusk County				8		1	17	12	6	6	288		66	540
Iowa County				6			3	5	10	6	472	1	73	366
Burnett County	7			3			9	101	6	6	244	1	74	452
Kewaunee County				1			2	7	5	24	242		111	255
Taylor County	1			1		1	4	6	7	18	258		89	379
Ho-Chunk (Tribe)	25						2	201	6	4	19		59	31
Crawford County							2	7	10	7	304		63	468
Pepin Buffalo County				2		1	4			2	116		23	131
Stockbridge-Munsee (Tribe)	13						1	96		1	3		3	21
Total	589	4774	1900	2522	33	488	3384	9440	91259	29264	87107	668	65352	110619

*Data received from Wisconsin included an AA and a BL category which were identified as African American and Black. In all likelihood, AA is mislabeled and should be NA, Native American.

Ethnicity Distribution of Custodial Parents Sanctioned for Non-Cooperation

Owning Agency County	Eth Unknown	Hisp	Non-Hisp	Eth Unknown	Hisp	Non-Hisp	Eth Unknown	Hisp	Non-Hisp
# of NonCoop Sanctions	CP Counts			Percent of CPs sanctioned					
Mole Lake-Sokaogon (Tribe)	3			65		18	4.6%		0.0%
Florence County	3			123		74	2.4%		0.0%
Iron County	1		8	108		126	0.9%		6.3%
Crawford County	2			536	7	312	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%
Price County	16	4	6	387	9	259	4.1%	44.4%	2.3%
Washburn County	13	2	6	599	7	323	2.2%	28.6%	1.9%
Bayfield County	3	1	3	275	5	175	1.1%	20.0%	1.7%
Buffalo Pepin County	8	2	4	337	9	189	2.4%	22.2%	2.1%
Richland County	3	1	7	485	7	295	0.6%	14.3%	2.4%
Washington County	59	19	34	3565	165	1761	1.7%	11.5%	1.9%
Marquette County	47	8	37	1777	44	1096	2.6%	18.2%	3.4%
Calumet County	12	8	9	1011	106	639	1.2%	7.5%	1.4%
Sawyer County	21	1	5	711	11	278	3.0%	9.1%	1.8%
Lincoln County	31	3	20	1168	18	595	2.7%	16.7%	3.4%
Waupaca County	36	6	15	1528	75	919	2.4%	8.0%	1.6%
Pierce County	23	3	20	796	19	568	2.9%	15.8%	3.5%
Ozaukee County	26	5	17	1898	68	934	1.4%	7.4%	1.8%
Ashland County	24	1	9	828	10	354	2.9%	10.0%	2.5%
La Crosse County	56	6	52	3050	63	2146	1.8%	9.5%	2.4%
Outagamie County	122	38	72	5798	487	3514	2.1%	7.8%	2.0%
Trempealeau County	13	11	8	874	169	468	1.5%	6.5%	1.7%
Wood County	25	6	35	1540	108	2258	1.6%	5.7%	1.6%
Juneau County	28	2	25	818	22	999	3.4%	9.1%	2.5%
Dodge County	31	11	19	2206	236	1460	1.4%	4.7%	1.3%
Clark County	12	9	14	700	89	475	1.7%	10.1%	2.9%
Eau Claire County	48	6	27	3538	124	1900	1.4%	4.8%	1.4%
Marathon County	108	19	85	3563	162	2390	3.0%	11.7%	3.6%
Jefferson County	5	5	6	2374	393	1480	0.2%	1.3%	0.4%
Green Lake County	5	8	24	141	85	688	3.5%	9.4%	3.4%
Sauk County	66	19	39	2286	204	1093	2.9%	9.3%	3.6%
Walworth County	81	66	59	3668	688	1602	2.2%	9.6%	3.7%
Manitowoc County	60	19	42	2454	251	1442	2.4%	7.6%	2.9%
St. Croix County	79	8	71	2087	70	1588	3.8%	11.4%	4.5%
Fond du Lac County	63	22	78	2833	271	2346	2.2%	8.1%	3.3%
Columbia County	43	4	19	1989	94	1026	2.2%	4.3%	1.9%
Brown County	402	97	129	9821	1607	4840	4.1%	6.0%	2.7%
Shawano County	99	7	43	1243	49	651	8.0%	14.3%	6.6%
Grant County	13	1	12	1039	32	824	1.3%	3.1%	1.5%
Waukesha County	120	43	89	9466	1086	4791	1.3%	4.0%	1.9%
Portage County	24	8	40	1462	138	1422	1.6%	5.8%	2.8%
Dunn County	28	1	17	1484	23	785	1.9%	4.3%	2.1%
Polk County	51	1	26	1257	14	740	4.1%	7.1%	3.5%
Rock County	235	82	211	8411	1003	5093	2.8%	8.2%	4.1%
Winnebago County	201	42	196	5866	367	3377	3.4%	11.4%	5.8%
Sheboygan County	165	55	113	3489	507	1916	4.7%	10.8%	5.9%
Green County	9	1	12	692	40	880	1.3%	2.5%	1.4%
Dane County	972	280	502	20479	2495	7990	4.7%	11.2%	6.3%
Oconto County	37	2	33	999	23	640	3.7%	8.7%	5.2%
Waushara County	32	17	72	427	103	690	7.5%	16.5%	10.4%
Marquette County	29	4	35	464	32	371	6.3%	12.5%	9.4%
Kenosha County	248	56	118	7834	1681	4343	3.2%	3.3%	2.7%
Milwaukee County	1555	746	1932	66989	13709	42688	2.3%	5.4%	4.5%
Monroe County	33	5	29	1824	136	918	1.8%	3.7%	3.2%
Douglas County	83	1	41	2071	24	961	4.0%	4.2%	4.3%
Oneida (Tribe)	47	3	18	1289	97	568	3.6%	3.1%	3.2%
Racine County	684	200	308	14218	2420	3462	4.8%	8.3%	8.9%
Lafayette County	4	1	11	341	33	282	1.2%	3.0%	3.9%
Menominee (Tribe)	61		24	722	16	278	8.4%	0.0%	8.6%
Ho-Chunk (Tribe)	18		9	228	7	83	7.9%	0.0%	10.8%
Stockbridge-Munsee (Tribe)	7		7	93	1	29	7.5%	0.0%	24.1%
Oneida County	57		28	1310	26	662	4.4%	0.0%	4.2%

Red Cliff (Tribe)	5		1	123	2	40	4.1%	0.0%	2.5%
Door County	25		8	700	36	311	3.6%	0.0%	2.6%
Papin Buffalo County	5		2	151	2	117	3.3%	0.0%	1.7%
Adams County	23		9	719	26	332	3.2%	0.0%	2.7%
Rusk County	18		8	616	6	283	2.9%	0.0%	2.7%
Vernon County	17		17	594	15	407	2.8%	0.0%	4.2%
Barron County	54		16	1956	49	892	2.8%	0.0%	1.8%
Jackson County	19		19	773	27	408	2.5%	0.0%	4.7%
Vilas County	7		19	295	24	441	2.4%	0.0%	4.3%
Burnett County	13		6	597	7	277	2.2%	0.0%	2.2%
Forest County	9		7	439	4	197	2.1%	0.0%	3.6%
Lac du Flambeau (Tribe)	8		5	462	8	159	1.7%	0.0%	3.1%
Langlade County	10		11	924	28	466	1.1%	0.0%	2.4%
Taylor County	5		2	468	18	267	1.1%	0.0%	0.7%
Iowa County	3		6	440	6	485	0.7%	0.0%	1.2%
Kewaunee County	2		1	368	24	247	0.5%	0.0%	0.4%
Chippewa County	9		3	1870	33	1352	0.5%	0.0%	0.2%
Total	6620	1976	5070	231129	30058	131791	2.9%	6.6%	3.8%

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