



**ERICSA 62ND ANNUAL
TRAINING CONFERENCE & EXPOSITION**

MAY 18-22, 2025

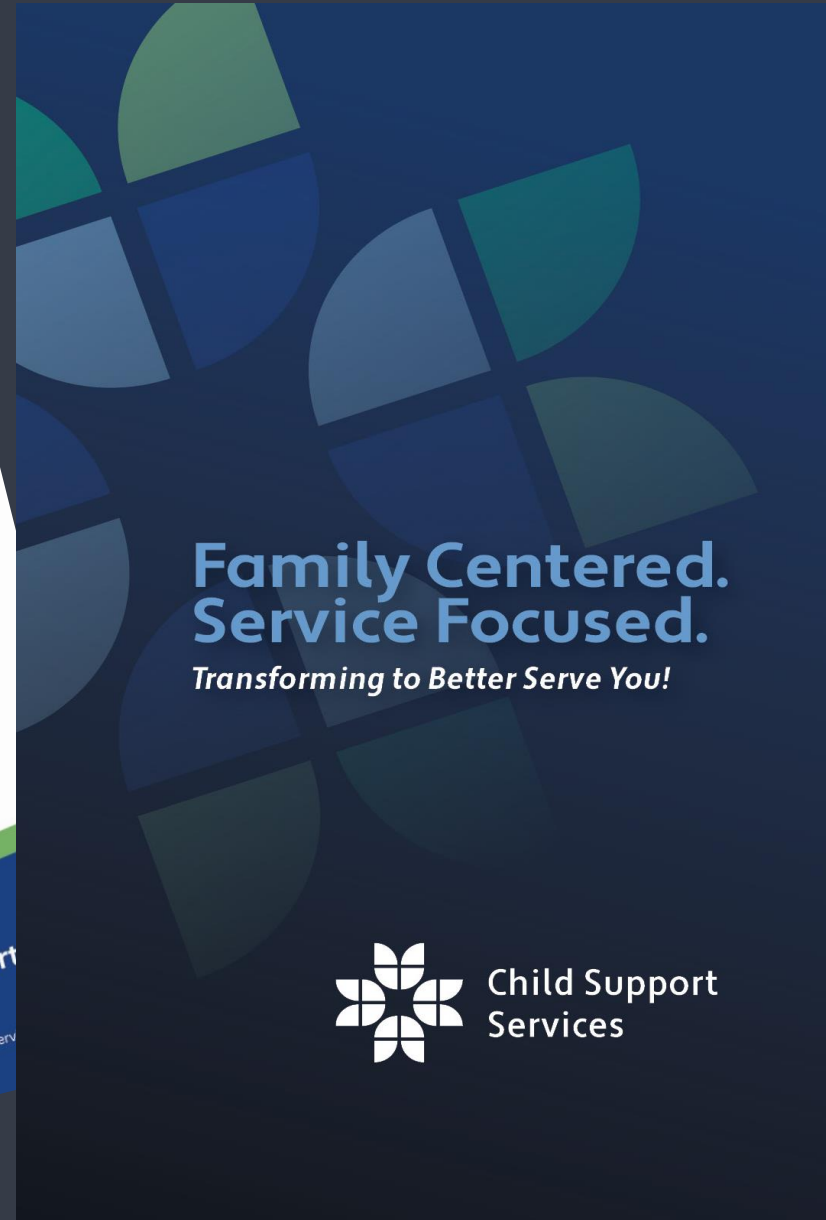
NORFOLK

VIRGINIA

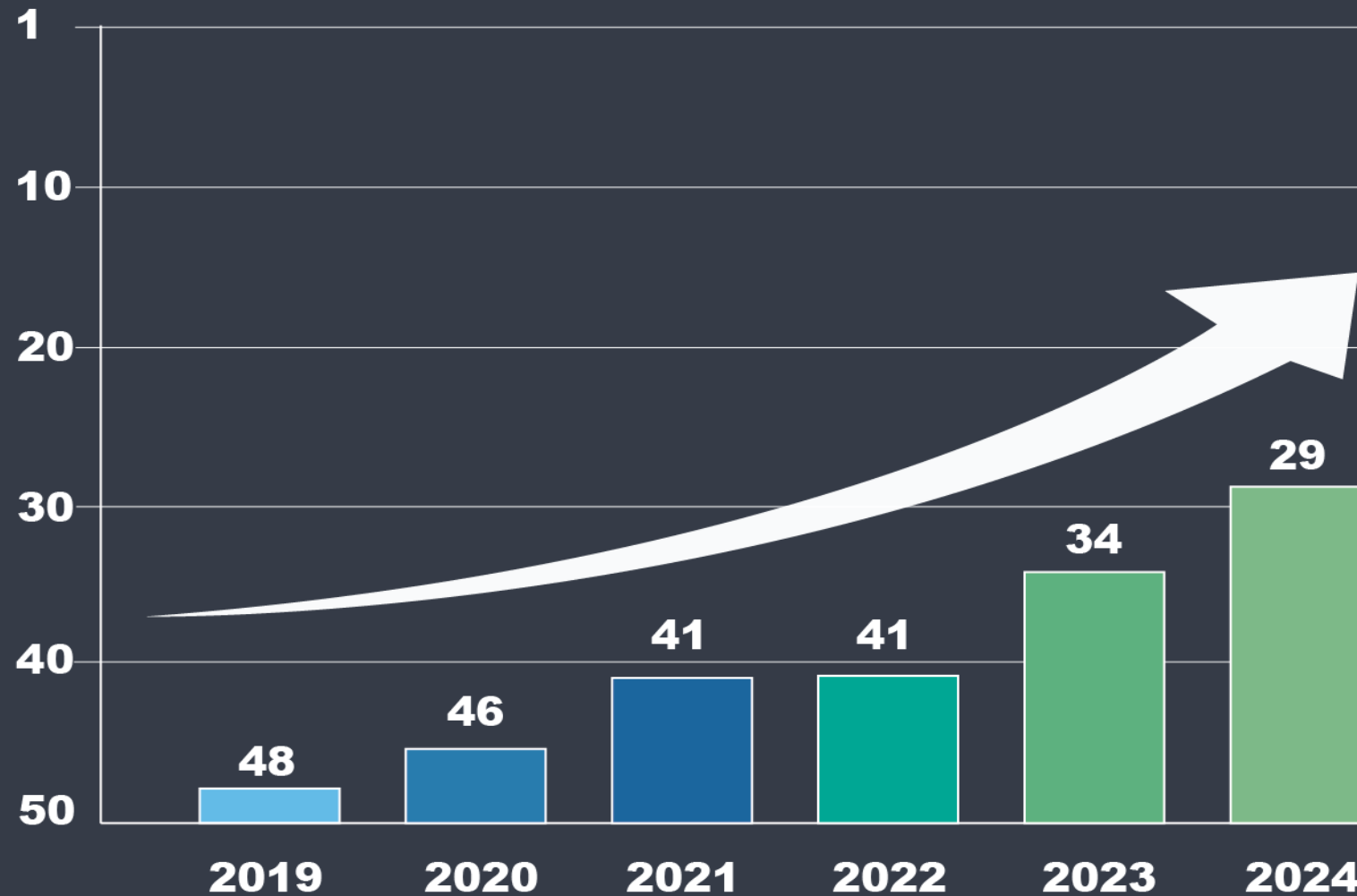
Engaging

Eric Watson – State of Illinois
With a purpose!





State Rankings through the years



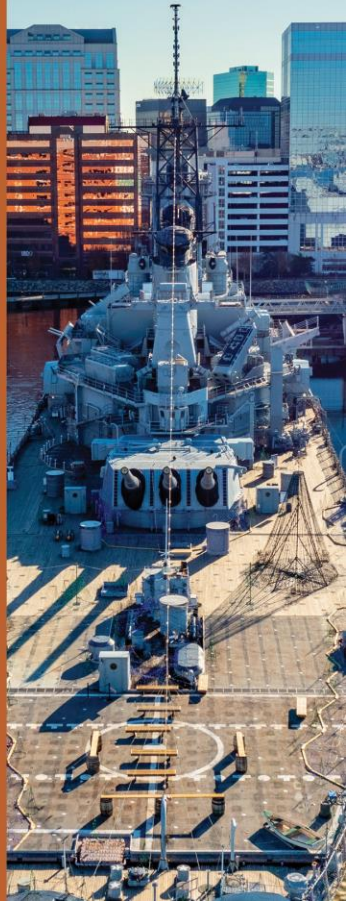
We are motivated to reimagine services by applying innovative approaches, personalized solutions, and an unwavering commitment to better outcomes. Below, please find some of our more recent achievements to better serve you!

Fair and Equitable Child Support Payments: We made it more fair in determining child support by moving to an income shares model. Income shares considers income, parenting time, and other factors in the calculation of child support amounts.

Interest on Past Due Payments: We removed past due interest when enforcing case balances and now allow the parent to decide whether to pursue calculated interest.

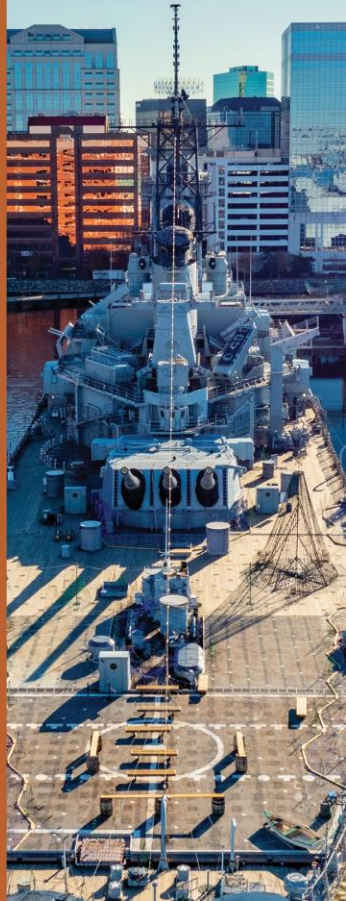
No Credit Reporting: We no longer report child support debt to credit bureaus. This eliminates additional difficulties for parents seeking better employment or securing more stable housing.

Full Family Disbursement of Child Support (Pass-Through): Previously, when a family was receiving cash assistance, the state would keep any child support payment received as reimbursement of the assistance provided. Now, the state will no longer keep any payment collected, it will be paid (pass-through) to the family and the child.



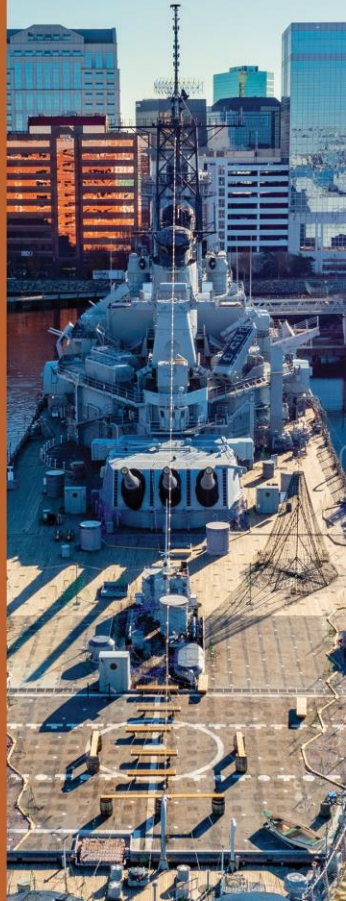
You're not alone! At Child Support Services, we recognize that every parent faces unique challenges, and we want to help. Call us at 800.447.4278 or email hfs.dcssconnect@illinois.gov and ask about Family Resource Connections (FRC) or visit us at childsupport.illinois.gov/FRC to learn how we can help you!

Family Centered, Service Focused - Transforming to better serve you!



Internal Struggles

Shifting from an enforcement mentality towards a more family centered approach came with many challenges.

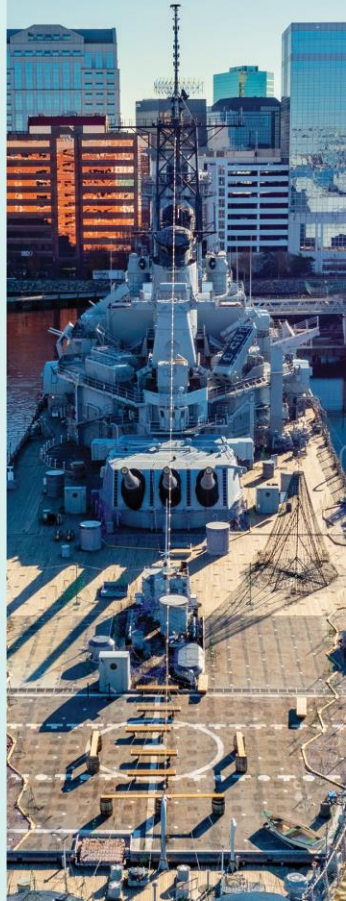


It Starts With Us



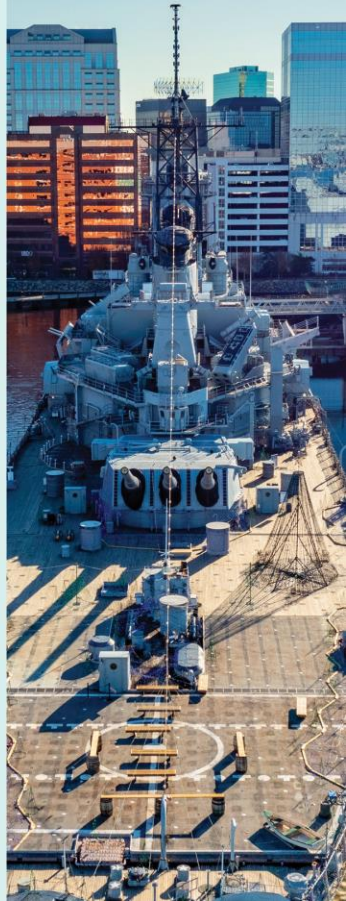
Building a Strong Internal Culture

- A strong internal culture fosters collaboration, trust, and shared values among team members.
- Create a foundation for consistent and effective external engagement.
- Clear communication, mutual respect, and shared goals



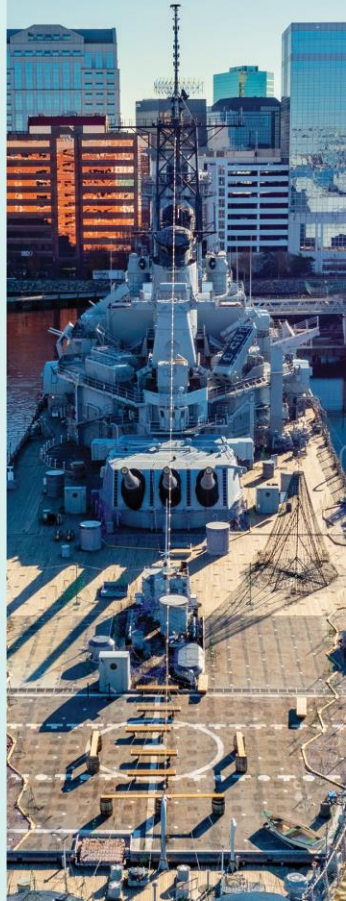
Voices not heard... Maybe heard

The reality, we were just numb to it.



Building Internal Engagement

- Regular team-building activities to strengthen relationships
- Transparent communication channels to ensure alignment
- Training to equip staff with skills and confidence
- Build on the positive – recognize challenge

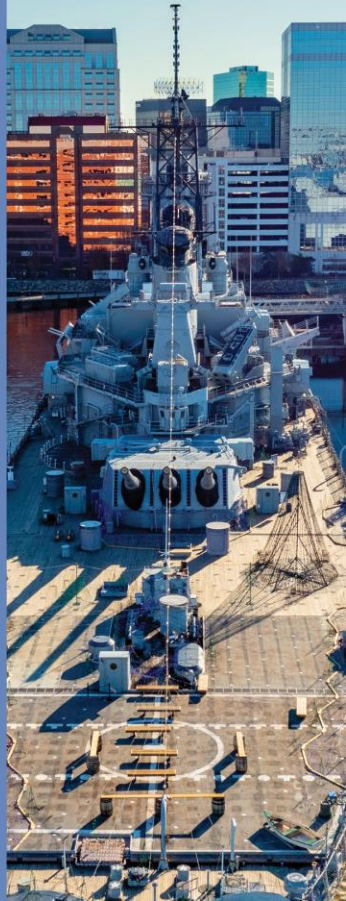


Connecting Internal to External



How?

- A cohesive and motivated team is equipped to better serve and connect with parents
- Aligning internally ensures consistency in messaging and the delivery of service
- Engaged staff leads to collaborative and investment – “be present” in every opportunity



Tools of Engagement

Internal: Team meetings – simple reminders and messages, challenge the status quo, share testimony, internal newsletter

External: Simplify message – show you care, prove it when given opportunity – every time



We've moved from comments like this:

F@@k you...you stupid as**oles.

I haven't recieved shit, I have an order in for child support. You assholes took taxes and everything else so get your f***ing story right before coming at me with lies.



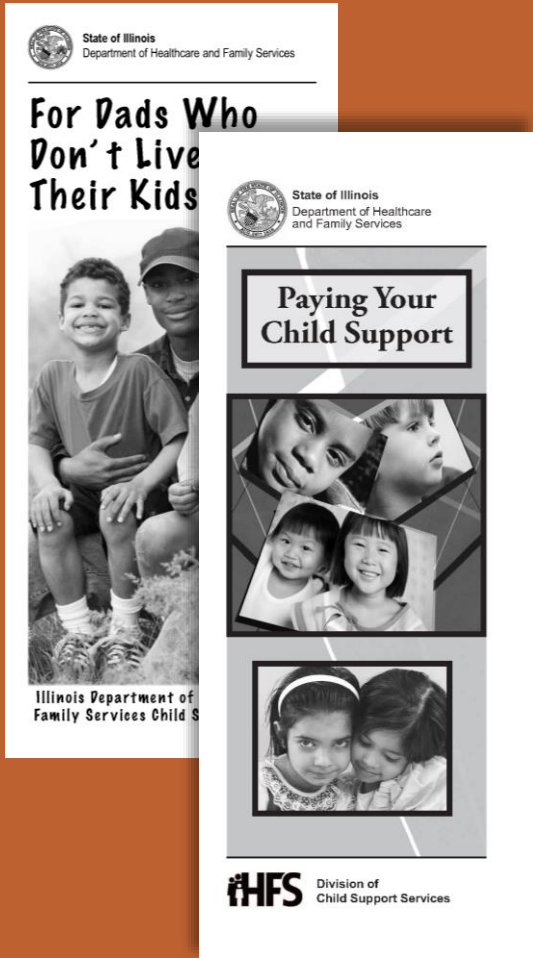
To comments like this:

Wow, thank you so much for asking, you and Doug have just been so very helpful. A total 180 from my previous experience.

I want to give compliment to the improvement of ILHFS customer service communication via online and phone. Both are answered timely and thoroughly researched to give an adequate response. A vast improvement from long hold time on the phone and/or generic online email responses. So, implementation of policy changes and/or quality customer service is working.

I would like to know more about the child support services

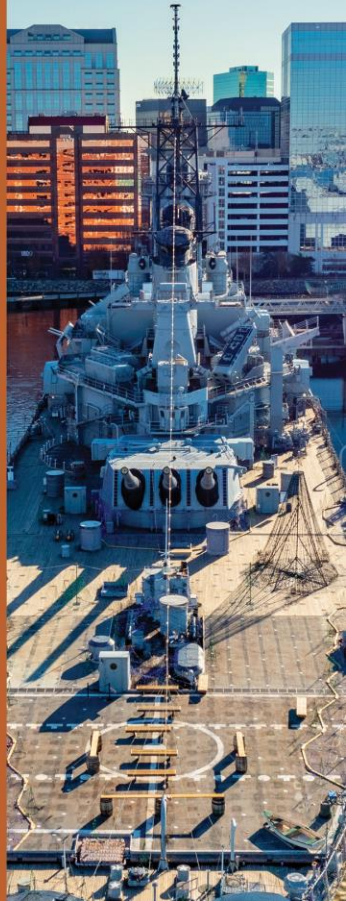




Old Materials

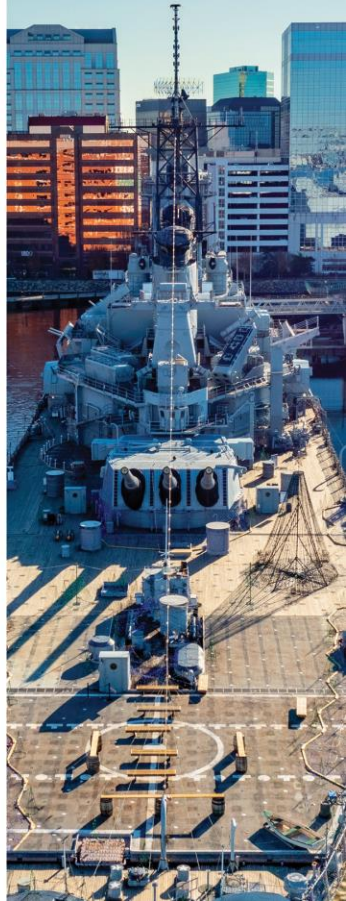


New Materials



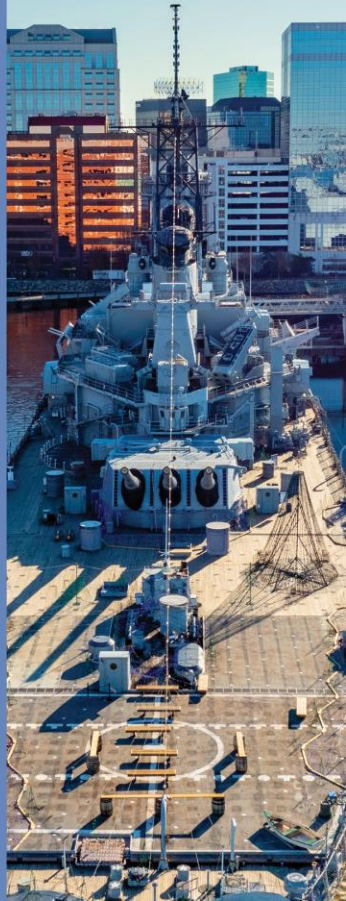
Challenges and Solutions

- Building as you are flying
- Fighting history – internal and external
- Strategic
- Innovative
- Determination



Just Beginning

- FRC
- Family 1st
- Partnerships
- EPIC



Realization

Everything is more difficult

Everything is better

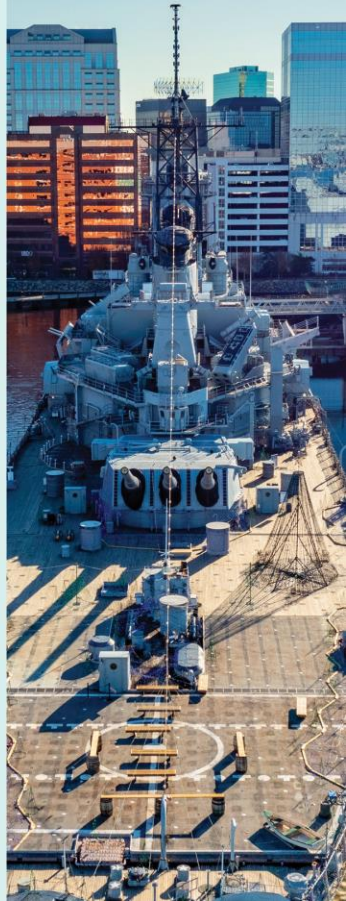
Sleep is overrated

Illinois CSS is succeeding!



Experiences:

- Posing questions
- Increase in parent involvement and conversations
- Positive feedback
- Greater collaboration and participation



Key Resources

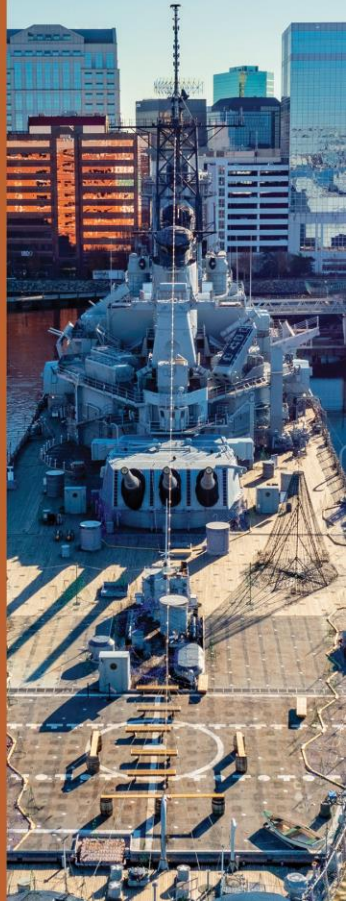
Branding

Brochure Focus

Court Palm Cards

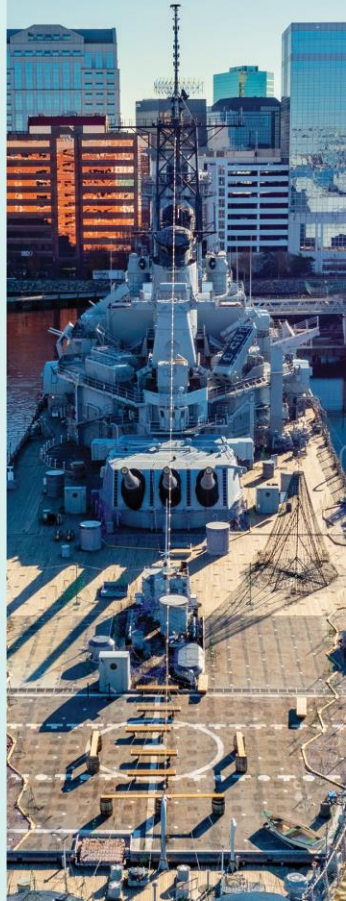
Business Cards

Campaigns



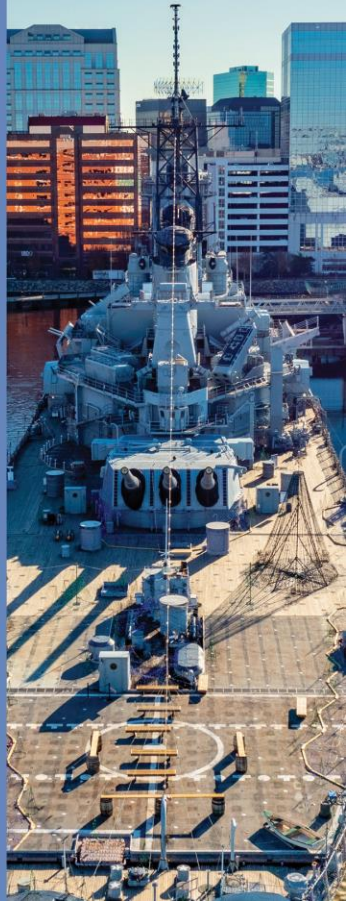
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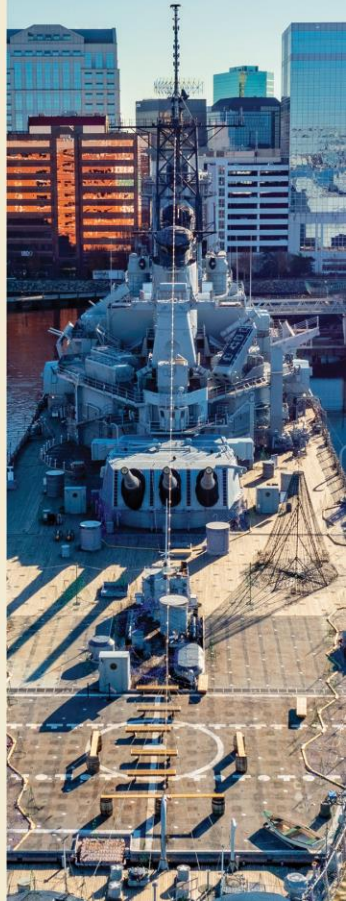
Sleep is overrated

State of Illinois CSS is Winning





Thank You for the opportunity to share!



DOING BETTER

Re-evaluating how we can
collaborate with community

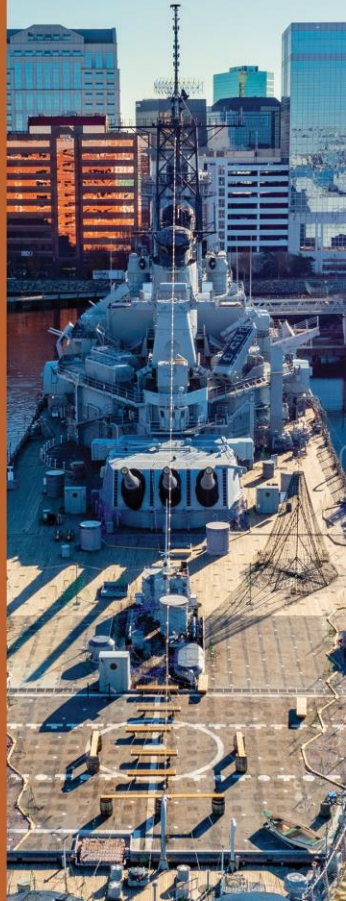
Trever Harwell

Planning Specialist • Ramsey County, Saint Paul, MN

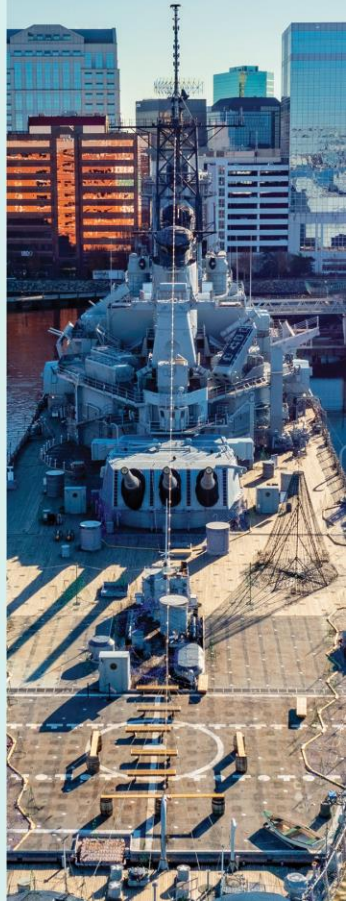


WHO IS THIS GUY?

- Genetic Testing Specialist
- Child Support Assistant
- Support Enforcement Agent
- Service Team Specialist
- Technology Planning Specialist
- The Acronym-That-Shall Not-Be-Named Planning Specialist

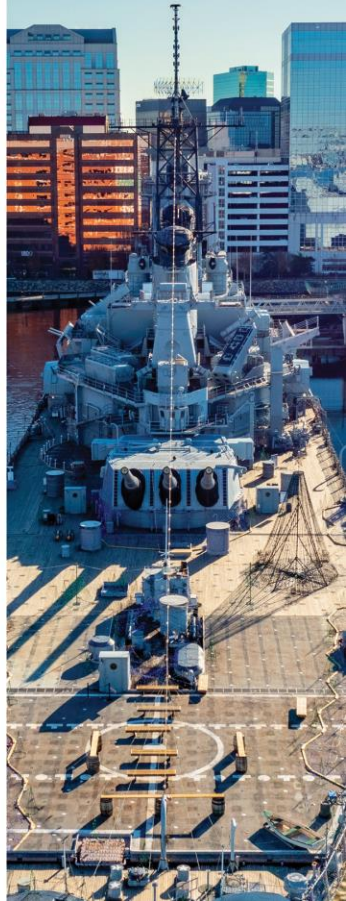


Child Support Does Not Have an Employee Discount.



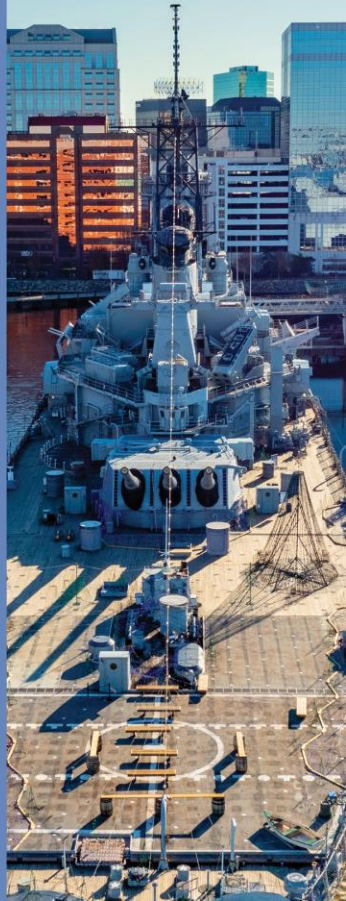
A QUICK OVERVIEW

- Child Support system are designed to ensure financial responsibility for children.
- Disparities exist in how these systems impact families of different racial backgrounds.
- This presentation explores racial disparities using data from Ramsey County.



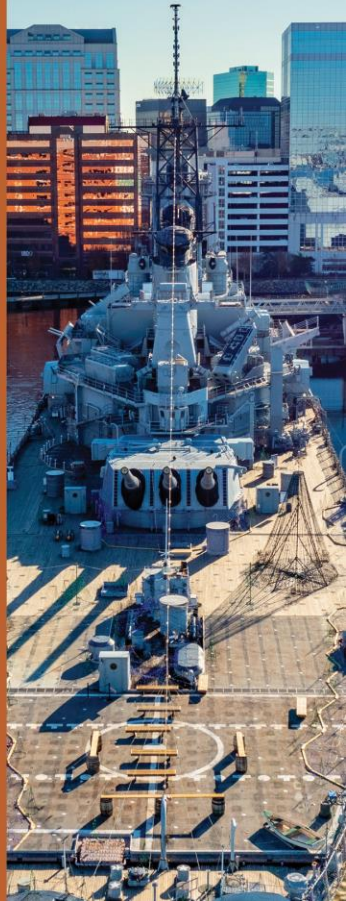
COUNTY RESIDENTS

- Ramsey County provides child support services to thousands of families.
- Communities of color, especially Black and Hispanic families, are disproportionately represented among recipients.
- White families are underrepresented in the child support caseload by comparison.



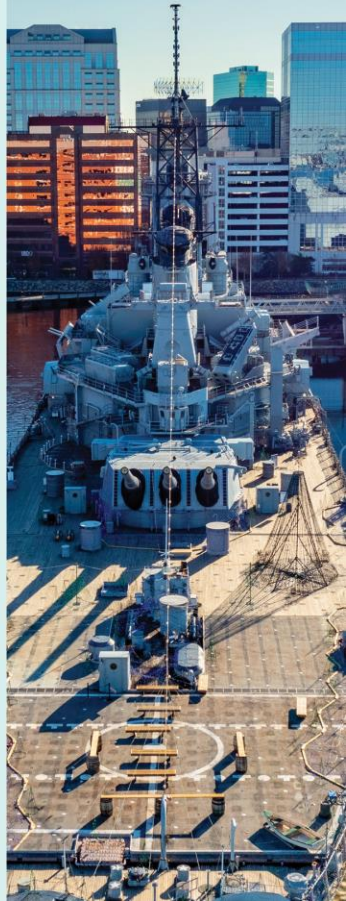
CASE OUTCOMES

- Less than 60% of families receive full support.
- Payment consistency is lower for BIPOC families.
- Average monthly support is \$300, often less for families of color.



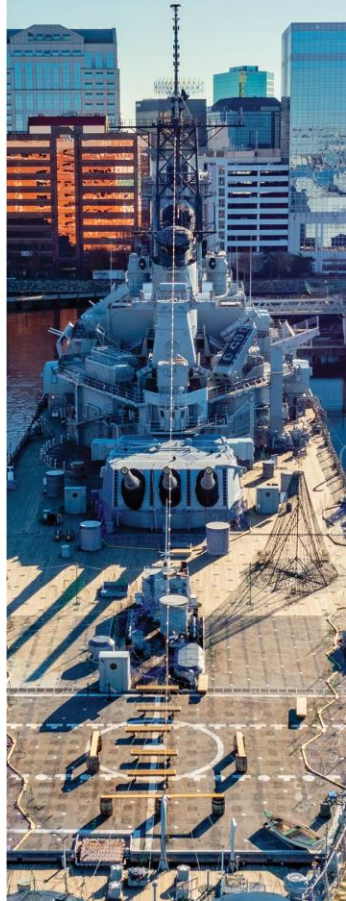
BARRIERS TO ACCESS

- Legal jargon and complex forms deter engagement.
- Distrust of the system rooted in past inequities.
- A one-size-fits-all enforcement model often fails diverse family structures.



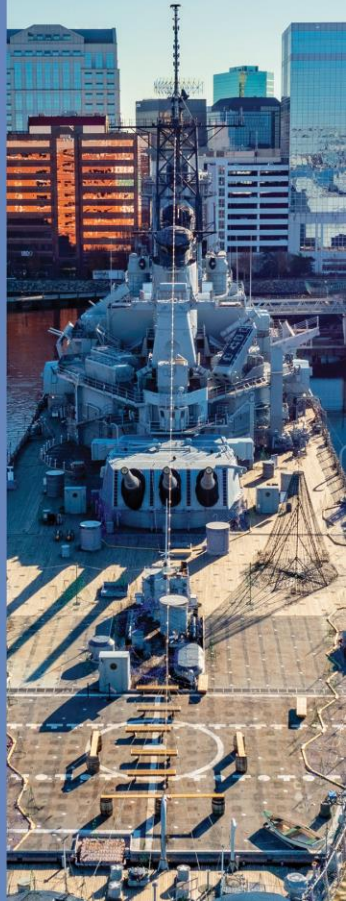
ENGAGING RESIDENTS

- Listening sessions with parents and other community members.
- Feedback: system lacks respect and cultural awareness.
- Parents want flexible, empathetic support – not punishment.



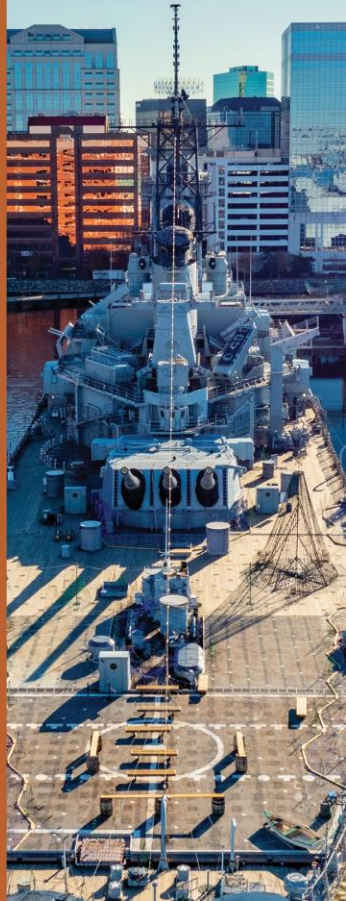
FRESH PERSPECTIVES

- Virtual/community-based appointments reduce access barriers.
- Early intervention prevents debt cycles.
- Bilingual staff enhance trust and understanding.



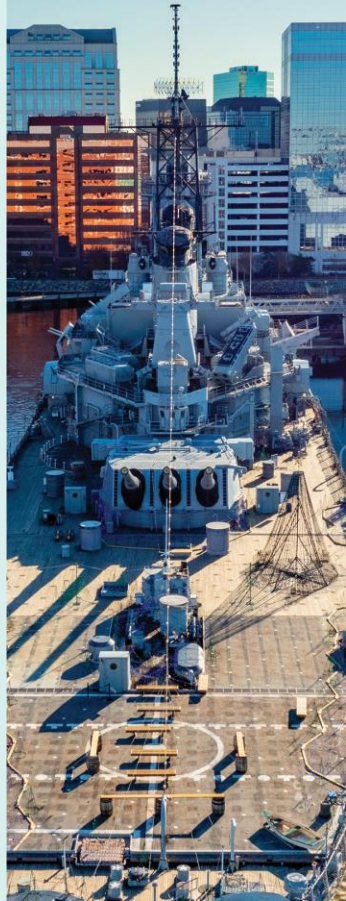
EQUITY-DRIVEN ENGAGEMENT

- Partnering with cultural community groups and organizations.
- Pilots designed for (and, more importantly, by) families of color and community.
- Relationship-based models build trust over transactions.



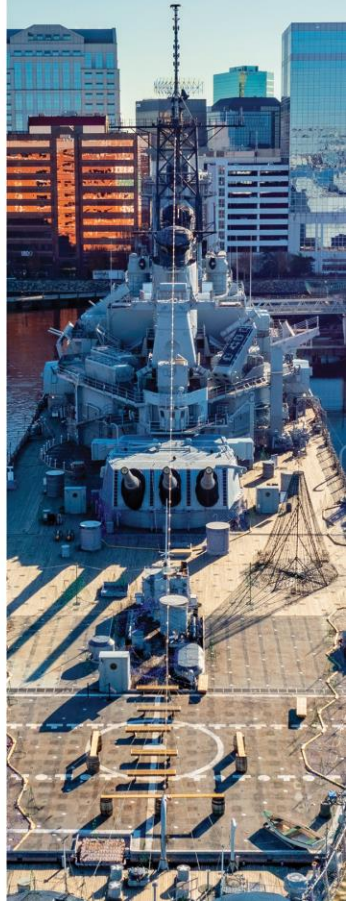
POLICY REFORM

- Align payments with ability to pay.
- Decriminalize inability to pay.
- Invest in jobs, housing, and wraparound services.



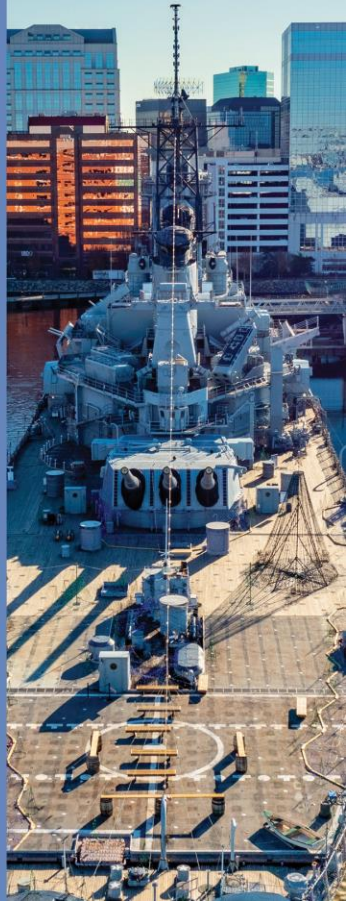
DATA AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- Use of disaggregated data helps identify and track disparities.
- Transparency ensures community and policymaker awareness.
- Sustainable/continued improvement requires regular feedback and evaluation.



CONCLUSION

- Racial disparities in child support reflect broader systemic inequities.
- Equity-focused reforms can lead to better outcomes for children and families.
- A commitment to fairness benefits entire communities.



WANT TO LEARN MORE?

TRANSFORMING
SYSTEMS TOGETHER



STRUCTURAL WELL-
BEING FRAMEWORK



RACIAL EQUITY
AND COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT
RESPONSE TEAM



THANK YOU!

