



ERICSA 63RD ANNUAL TRAINING CONFERENCE & EXPOSITION

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Milwaukee

WISCONSIN

Tools That Work: How to Plan Employment Services Programs



Louisa Treskon, Senior Research Associate, MDRC

Eric Watson, Assistant Deputy Administrator, State of Illinois

Tina Gonzalez, RISE Grant Manager, Cherokee Nation Office of Child Support Services RISE Program

Bridget Ferrigan, Departmental Specialist, Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity

Child support programs have traditionally focused on enforcement, but the field is evolving toward a more holistic approach - one that combines enforcement with supportive services to help parents overcome barriers and sustain reliable payments. This interactive session will explore lessons learned from the federal Next Generation Child Support Employment Services Demonstration (NextGen) and other studies of child support-led employment services initiatives, highlight innovative strategies from states and tribes, and discuss how child support agencies can serve as connectors to employment, training, and community resources. Participants will gain insights into practical tools, cross-program collaboration, and leadership strategies to move beyond one-time collections toward long-term family stability.



Child Support-Led Employment Programs

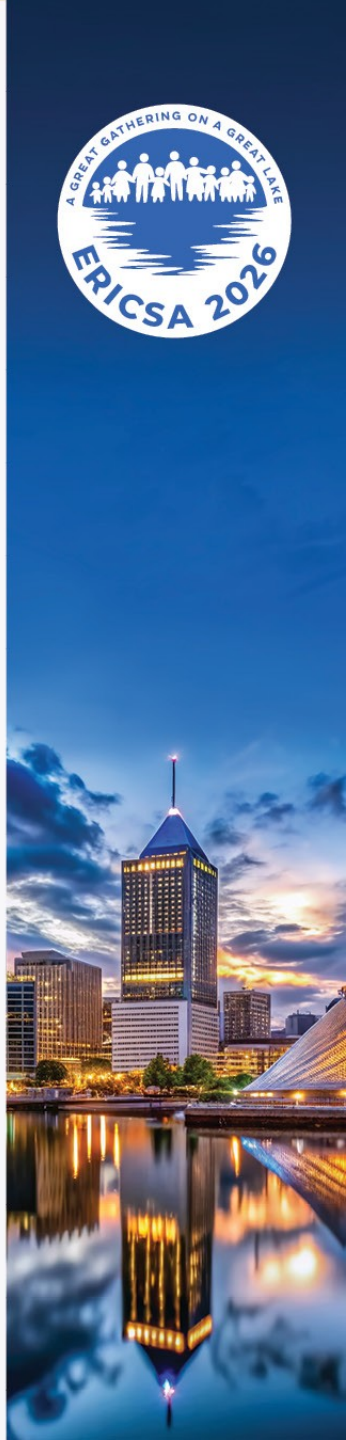
Many noncustodial parents behind on child support lack stable employment

Traditional enforcement alone is often ineffective for low-income parents

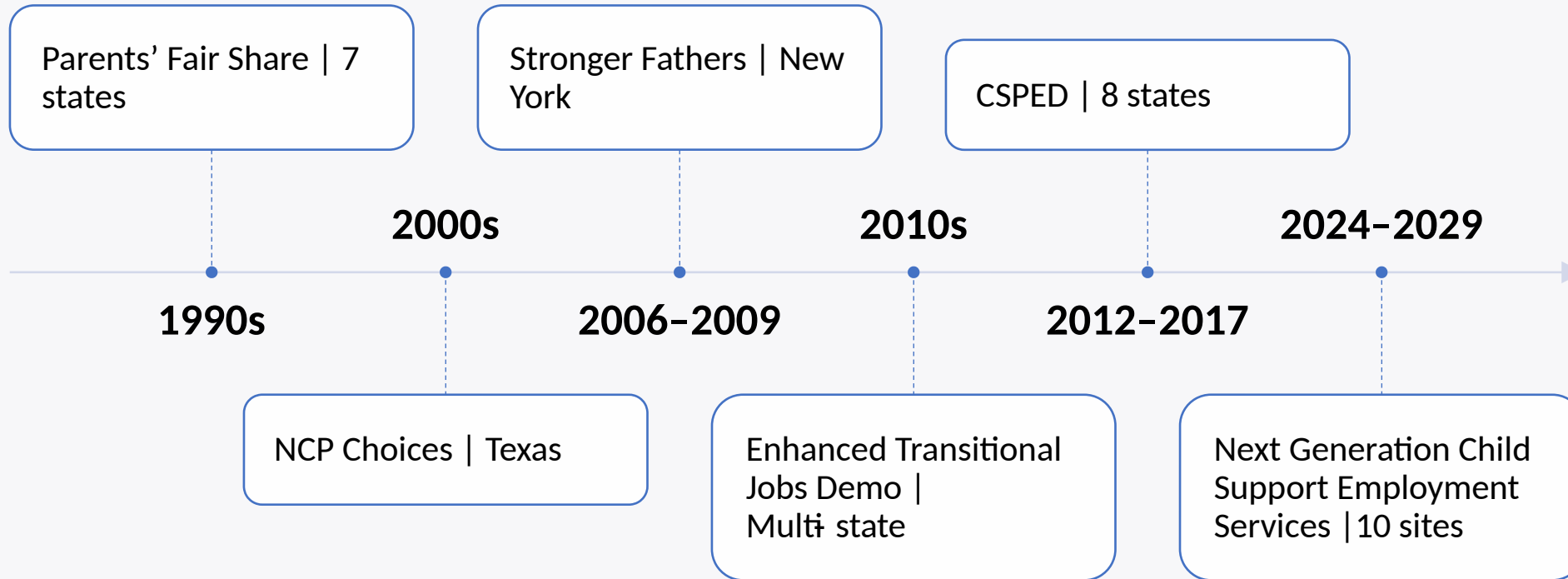
Programs reflect a shift from enforcement toward solutions that improve parents' ability to pay

An estimated 30 states operate programs at some scale

Scale, funding sources and implementation varies across states

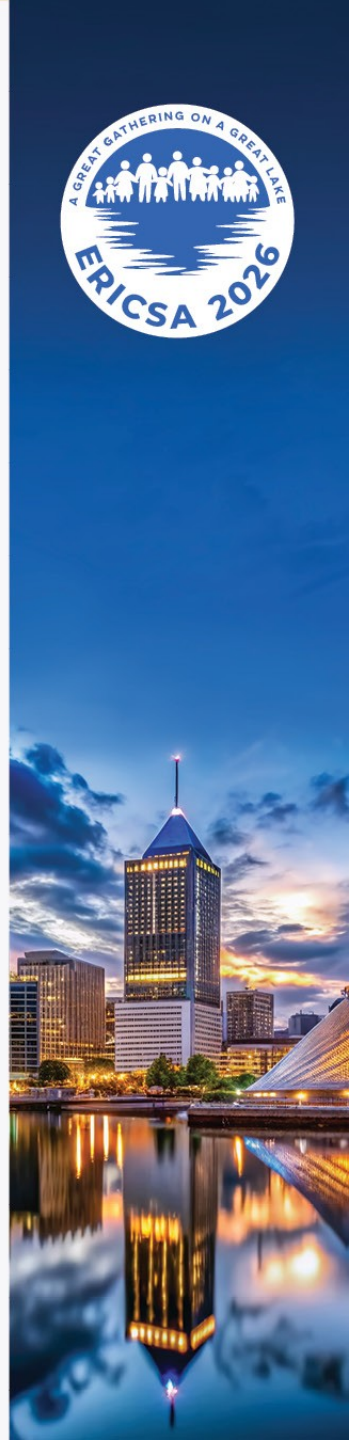


Prior Studies



Summary of Effects on Key Outcomes

- Short-term employment gains
- Mixed, generally modest effects on child support outcomes
- Improvements in engagement and collaboration



Implementation Lessons



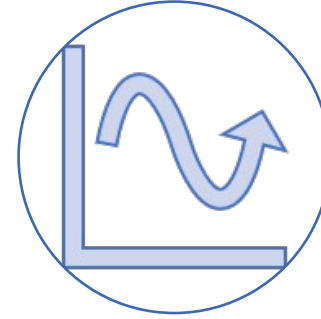
Clear roles and coordination across systems are essential



Workforce services must match participant needs



Tension between enforcement and support



Need for extended service periods or follow-up to support job retention and advancement





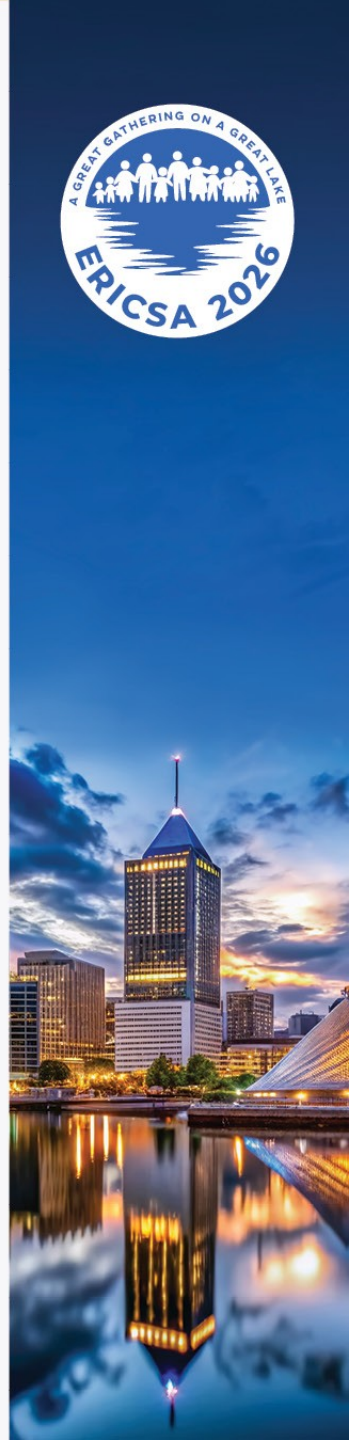
NextGen Child Support Employment Services Demonstration



Technical Assistance and Evaluation Team



Participating Child Support Programs



REAL CHANGE, *REAL IMPACT.*

How Illinois Child Support Services is reimagining its role to better serve families.

Making a Measurable Difference

\$1.1B+

COLLECTED ANNUALLY
For 330,000 Illinois
Families

Top 30

A HISTORIC FIRST
Overall National
Ranking

1 in 5

CHILDREN SERVED
Across the State
of Illinois

It Starts With Us



Putting families first demands more than just establishing new programs and policy reforms - it takes a culture shift. We have re-committed ourselves to listening, understanding, and supporting one another, so we can listen, understand, and support the families we are fortunate to serve.

2019

CUMULATIVE
NATIONAL RANKING

43



Interest Reform:
Eliminated reflexive
assessment of interest,
empowering the
parents to decide
whether to pursue.

2020

CUMULATIVE
NATIONAL RANKING

46



**Numerous
BPR/CPI
Successes**

2021

CUMULATIVE
NATIONAL RANKING

41

2022

CUMULATIVE
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39



Removing Barriers

First state in the nation
to discontinue the
reporting of child
support debt to credit
bureaus, eliminating
barriers for parents
seeking employment and
stable housing.

System Modernization

Investing in EPIC modernization
to power the program forward,
ensuring that current and future
family's needs will be met.

2023

CUMULATIVE
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34

2024

CUMULATIVE
NATIONAL RANKING

29

**?
2025
CUMULATIVE
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A National Leader

With a full pass-through law enacted in 2024, ensuring that families on TANF will now receive 100% of their child support, not the state.



**FAMILY 1ST
PARENTAL WORKGROUP**

A collaborative effort designed to elevate the voices, interests, and concerns of parents and caregivers.



**Family Resource
CONNECTIONS**

An innovative new program launched in 2024, Family Resource Connections is paving the way for the future of child support in Illinois. We're connecting families to vital services like employment, training, counseling and mediation.

Engagement:

True partnerships, not just transactions. A strong focus on meeting parents where they are, created simplified messaging and delivery tools, reimagined culture through connections versus compliance. Centered through lived experiences in program design and outreach.



Real Change, Real Results.
Historic highs across
nearly all KPI metrics

FAMILY SUPPORT

Every child deserves financial, emotional, and family support to grow and thrive. We are committed to helping parents by focusing on more than just money. We offer our services to all parents, whether they receive or pay support.



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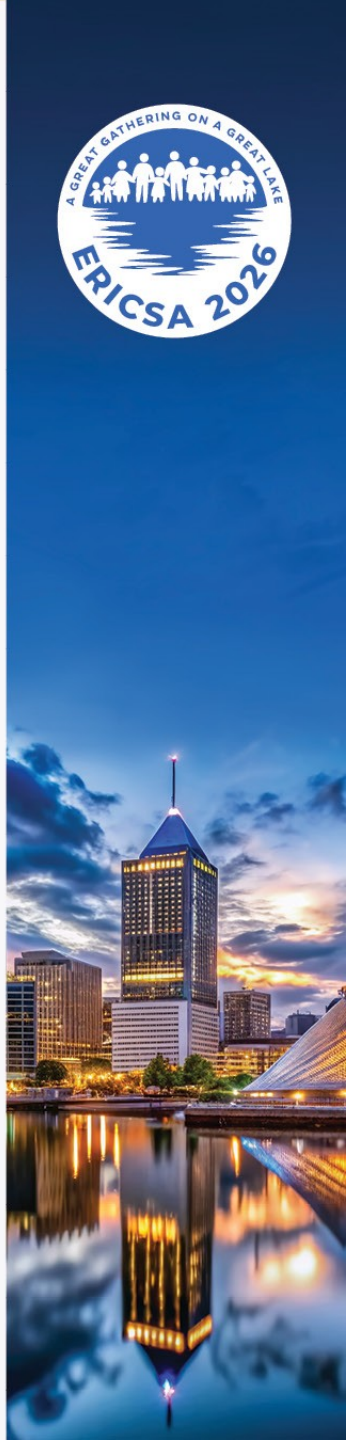
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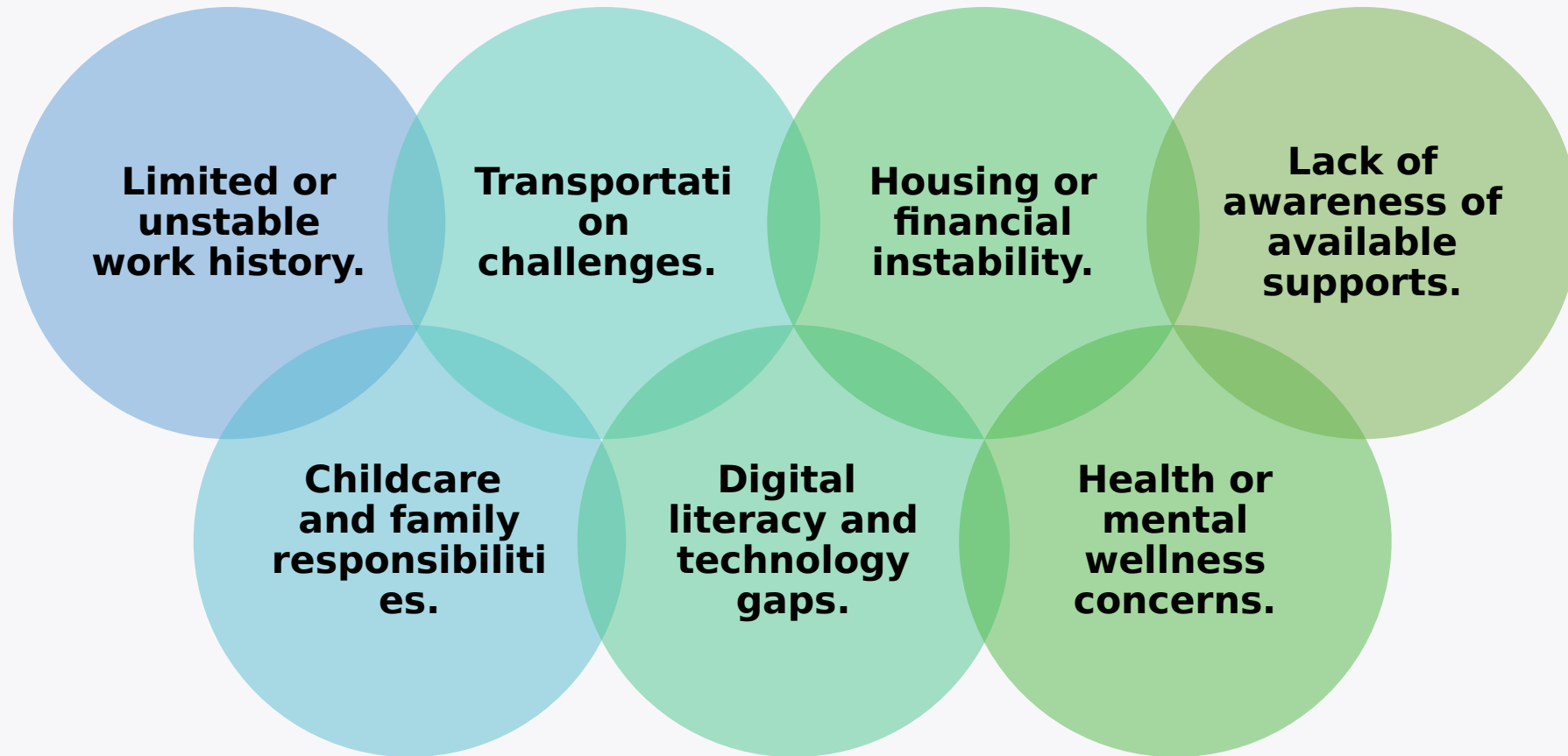
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Typical Barriers to Employment



How We're Addressing The Barriers



Individualized assessment through FRC staff

Coordinated resource navigation (childcare, transportation, financial supports)

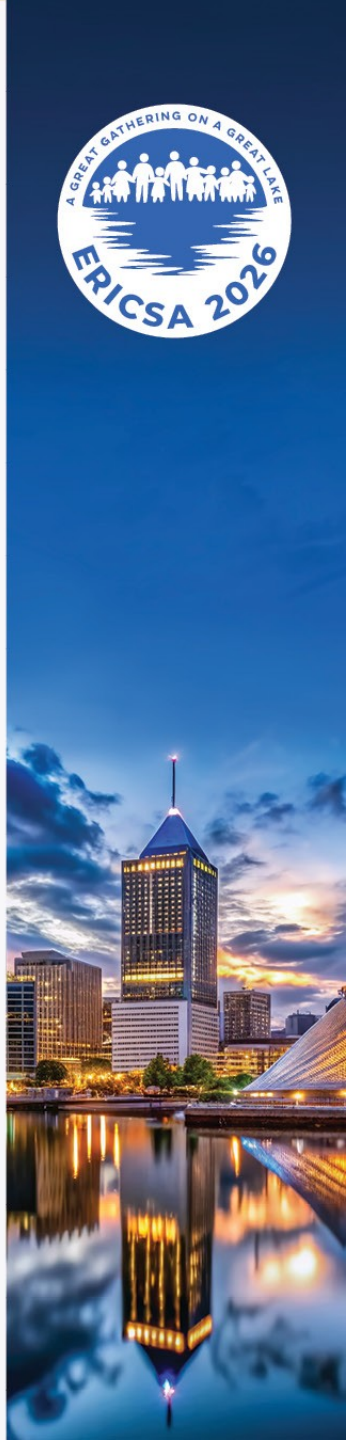
Job readiness and digital literacy training

Warm handoffs to CMS (state hiring pathways)

Warm handoffs to IDES (training and job placement)

Family-centered, flexible service delivery

Ongoing coaching and follow-up support



Key Partnerships & Program Strengths



CMS - hiring guidance, career counseling

Legal Partners - Parent engagement, case coordination, legal obligations

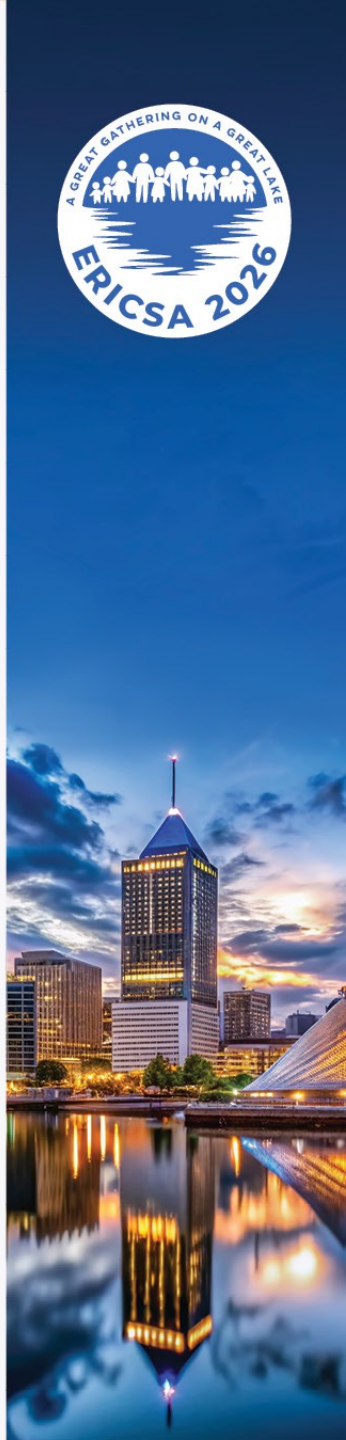
IDES - America's Job Center, job matching, career pathway programs

DCEO - core workforce job-skill training and apprentice support

Community Colleges - regional consortiums

Community-based workforce partners

FRC as the service hub for assessment and coaching





Cherokee Nation Office of Child Support Services

R.I.S.E.

Reaching for
Innovative and
Stable
Existence

*“Welcoming with compassion.
Rising together.”*

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R.I.S.E. Project Goals & Barriers

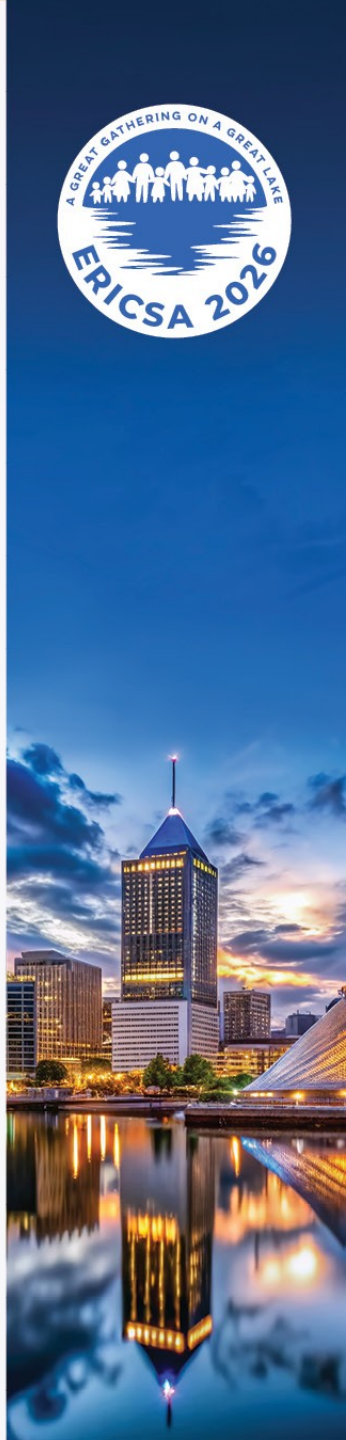
The R.I.S.E. Project is designed to empower noncustodial parents by providing supportive services that promote stability, self-sufficiency, and long-term success.

Project Goals

- Reducing barriers
- Promoting economic stability
- Strengthening family relationships
- Empowering NCPs to meet their child support obligations

Barriers

- Technology
- Transportation
- Education & training
- Behavioral health
- Soft skills (interviewing, communication, workplace expectations)
- Childcare
- Legal



R.I.S.E. Partnerships & Referrals

Internal Tribal Programs

- Career services
- Childcare services
- Behavioral health services
- Human services

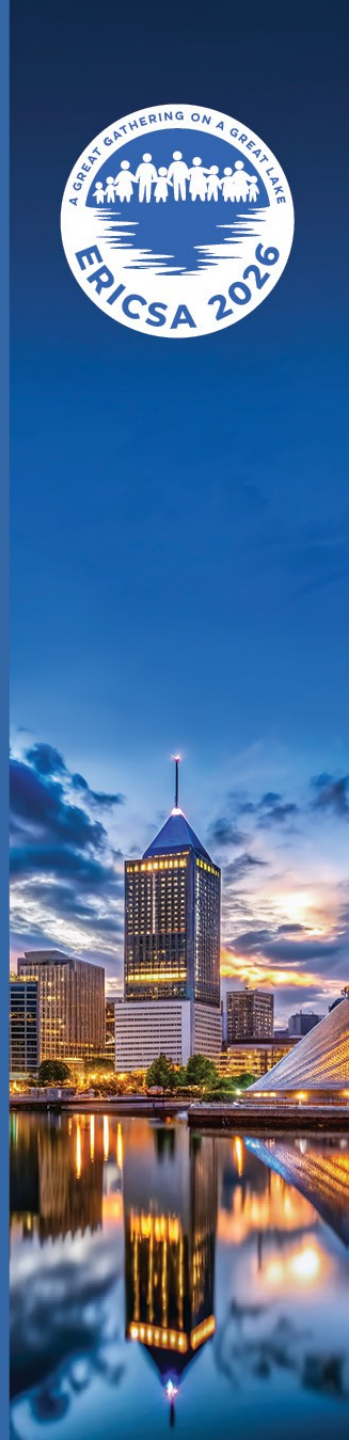
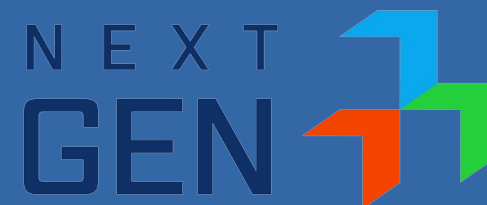
External Community Resources

- Oklahoma Work Ready
- OKDHS (Oklahoma Department of Human Services)
- Area behavioral health providers & grants
- Area transit services
- LASO (Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma)
- Subsidized wireless services

RISE Provides

- Individualized goal setting, career coaching and employment planning
- Connections to GED, training programs, and certification opportunities
- Transportation vouchers and assistance
- Weekly check-ins to reduce setbacks and maintain momentum
- Culturally based perspective
- Trauma-Informed approach to client needs

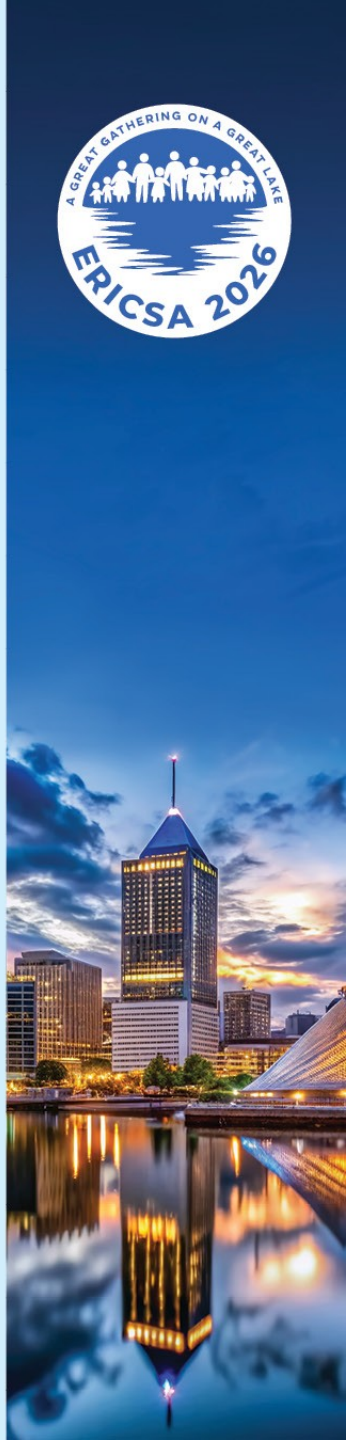
Funding for this project was provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Support Enforcement, Grant Number 90FD0274, awarded to Cherokee Nation Child Support Services.



GEMS Program - Michigan

The Gain Employment Maintain Support (GEMS Program) works with non-custodial parents under Title IV-D child support enforcement to provide case management to assist dual program goals: gaining/retaining employment and meeting child support obligations.

Program participants must be already in arrears, or in danger of becoming so, in their child support obligation. They can be required to attend by the local family court or child support enforcement, or they can voluntarily attend.



GEMS Program Administration



Michigan Department of Health & Human Services (MDHHS):

- Office of Child Support (OCS)
- Local Child Support Enforcement Offices (Friend of the Court/FOCs)

Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Opportunity (LEO)

- Workforce Development & Re-Employment Services (LEO-WD)
- Local Michigan Works Agencies (MWAs)



The GEMS Participant Experience

1. Participants are referred to attend GEMS (voluntarily or compulsory). Participants must be work-ready.
2. They attend an orientation and intake meeting with their local American Job Center to go over program expectations, employment and education history, and barriers.
3. Participants receive 1:1 case management to address barriers, achieve employment goals, and provide support to retain employment.
4. Successful completion of the program is considered 6 consecutive months of employment AND 6 months of continuous, on-time and in-full child support payments.

