

# Child Support

## Definition

Child support is financial assistance for children from a noncustodial parent. *Total collections* is the amount of child support collected on behalf of families by the state's child support enforcement program. *Percent collected* is the ratio of the amount collected to the total current year obligation.

## Data in context

All children need basic necessities, such as food and clothing, and child support payments provide a critical means for custodial parents to meet these needs. Child support reduces poverty rates by about 5 percent for children with a nonresident parent.<sup>1</sup> Second only to earnings, child support constitutes 31 percent of income for low-income families headed by single mothers.<sup>2</sup>

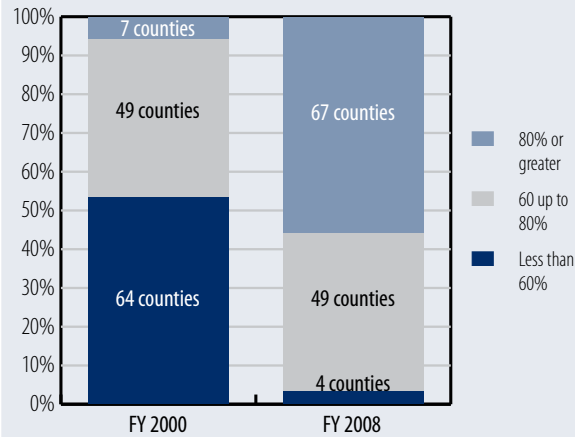
In addition to the monetary benefits, child support contributes to family self-sufficiency and economic stability. Even when controlling for other factors impacting employment, low-income parents who receive regular child support payments are more likely to find jobs quickly and keep jobs longer.<sup>3</sup> Regular child support payments help working families that have left welfare overcome financial crises without relying on government assistance again.<sup>4</sup>

Federal, state, and local governments work together to help families promote self-sufficiency and child well-being. Nationally, 20 million children received almost \$25 billion in child support in 2007.<sup>5</sup> The Child Support Enforcement Program, a federal-state partnership, facilitates collections and has been increasingly effective at both collecting child support and keeping enforcement costs reasonable.<sup>6</sup>

However, late last year, a federal funding cut reduced state enforcement efforts by \$6.7 billion over 10 years. An estimated \$11 billion will be lost in child support payments due to the cut over that 10-year period.<sup>7</sup>

In Kentucky, the Cabinet for Health and Family Services, Division of Child Support works to collect child support through services such as locating noncustodial

Counties by Rate of Open Cases with a Court Order Established, FY 2000 and FY 2008



Source: Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services.

parents, establishing paternity, establishing support orders, and collecting support payments. Recipients of Medicaid or benefits through the Kentucky Transitional Assistance Program are automatically enrolled for child support services.

During FY 2008, Kentucky's child support program collected nearly \$410 million in child support owed, a 70 percent increase over FY 2000 collections. The percent of child support successfully collected statewide increased as well, from 53 percent to 59 percent.

Collection rates exceeded 70 percent in Adair, Boone, LaRue, Livingston, McLean, and Oldham Counties in FY 2008. While collection rates for most counties range from 50 to 70 percent, eleven counties had rates below 50 percent: Clay, Fulton, Jackson, Jefferson, Knox, Lee, Lewis, Magoffin, McCreary, Owsley, and Whitley Counties.

States can increase child support collections by working to establish paternity and establishing a court order for payment of child support.<sup>8</sup> States can also encourage noncustodial parents to pay child support by allowing families that receive welfare to keep a portion of the payment and setting reasonable obligations for noncustodial parents.<sup>9,10</sup>

States can also increase the likelihood that parents can pay child support by working to ensure greater economic opportunity for those with obligations. Low wages and unstable employment seriously impact noncustodial parents' ability to fulfill their commitments. Because parents of color are disproportionately impacted by low wages and unstable employment, they are less able than their White counterparts to provide this important form of family support.

Data Source: Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services, Division of Child Support.

- 1 Sorensen, E., and Zibman, C. (2000). *To What Extent Do Children Benefit from Child Support?* Urban Institute. Available at <http://www.urban.org>. Accessed August 2008.
- 2 Center for Law and Social Policy (2007). *Basic Facts About Child Support*. Available at <http://www.clasp.org>. Accessed August 2008.
- 3 Turetsky, V. (2005). *The Child Support Enforcement Program: A Sound Investment in Improving Children's Chances in Life*. Center for Law and Social Policy. Available at <http://www.clasp.org>. Accessed August 2008.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Support Enforcement (2007). *Child Support Enforcement, FY 2007 Preliminary Report*. Available at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov>. Accessed August 2008.
- 6 Center for Law and Social Policy (2007). *Basic Facts About Child Support*. Available at <http://www.clasp.org>. Accessed August 2008.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 National Center for Children in Poverty (2004). *State Policy Choices: Child Support*. Available at <http://www.nccp.org>. Accessed August 2008.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Turetsky, V. (2007). *Staying in Jobs and Out of the Underground: Child Support Policies that Encourage Legitimate Work*. Child Support Series, No. 2. Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy.

## Child support (amount & percent collected)

	FY 2000		FY 2008	
	Total collections	Percent collected	Total collections	Percent collected
<b>Kentucky</b>	<b>\$240,645,454</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>\$408,871,101</b>	<b>59</b>
Adair	\$404,159	47	\$1,591,931	71
Allen	\$898,777	62	\$2,384,565	69
Anderson	\$977,866	61	\$2,208,657	69
Ballard	\$619,137	56	\$955,677	60
Barren	\$2,478,530	63	\$3,782,711	60
Bath	\$531,838	49	\$1,209,403	51
Bell	\$1,388,299	46	\$2,710,573	61
Boone	\$9,230,333	72	\$14,435,320	71
Bourbon	\$967,532	49	\$1,921,658	55
Boyd	\$2,356,974	44	\$3,750,250	53
Boyle	\$1,587,692	54	\$2,369,090	57
Bracken	\$400,918	53	\$811,369	57
Breathitt	\$796,938	47	\$1,763,603	52
Breckinridge	\$1,123,232	63	\$2,271,167	67
Bullitt	\$1,566,393	45	\$5,440,719	63
Butler	\$593,314	59	\$1,212,478	69
Caldwell	\$603,250	47	\$1,495,755	62
Calloway	\$1,209,651	50	\$2,349,575	60
Campbell	\$8,342,622	62	\$10,729,679	56
Carlisle	\$296,532	53	\$496,477	62
Carroll	\$783,775	57	\$1,804,274	63
Carter	\$1,530,628	52	\$2,416,116	53
Casey	\$703,196	50	\$1,515,408	62
Christian	\$6,262,616	68	\$9,631,402	64
Clark	\$1,478,357	45	\$3,586,662	55
Clay	\$900,107	38	\$1,376,322	38
Clinton	\$321,806	43	\$628,903	53
Crittenden	\$530,124	59	\$973,363	67
Cumberland	\$187,696	38	\$585,307	60
Daviess	\$5,045,552	48	\$8,931,680	60
Edmonson	\$434,625	56	\$703,666	63
Elliott	\$223,454	44	\$434,115	52
Estill	\$640,725	49	\$1,238,448	57
Fayette	\$15,298,156	51	\$20,922,214	53
Fleming	\$678,980	56	\$1,285,514	54
Floyd	\$1,746,460	42	\$4,021,329	57
Franklin	\$2,807,516	53	\$4,659,838	58
Fulton	\$477,059	34	\$1,366,340	50
Gallatin	\$643,854	63	\$943,992	61
Garrard	\$608,785	54	\$1,076,924	62

	FY 2000		FY 2008	
	Total collections	Percent collected	Total collections	Percent collected
Grant	\$1,842,235	64	\$3,242,578	63
Graves	\$2,118,484	59	\$2,889,352	57
Grayson	\$1,583,086	61	\$2,920,732	62
Green	\$392,422	56	\$1,058,882	69
Greenup	\$1,476,691	48	\$2,341,848	52
Hancock	\$375,613	53	\$780,413	63
Hardin	\$6,135,313	56	\$10,155,139	65
Harlan	\$2,026,406	61	\$2,929,156	64
Harrison	\$1,568,336	74	\$2,130,981	63
Hart	\$869,722	59	\$1,736,297	62
Henderson	\$3,513,095	59	\$6,555,243	62
Henry	\$1,280,607	65	\$1,751,848	62
Hickman	\$296,954	51	\$392,863	58
Hopkins	\$2,804,065	54	\$5,309,291	62
Jackson	\$500,526	42	\$993,006	45
Jefferson	\$52,399,932	47	\$76,982,246	48
Jessamine	\$1,795,157	55	\$4,378,426	55
Johnson	\$1,082,648	44	\$1,922,828	55
Kenton	\$12,503,155	58	\$20,288,339	60
Knott	\$748,190	43	\$1,601,303	56
Knox	\$1,264,836	40	\$2,380,364	47
LaRue	\$1,147,134	68	\$1,694,725	71
Laurel	\$1,649,943	39	\$4,342,795	54
Lawrence	\$502,983	39	\$1,127,599	53
Lee	\$423,412	47	\$496,964	41
Leslie	\$532,952	37	\$987,115	59
Letcher	\$1,006,719	47	\$2,400,621	56
Lewis	\$588,106	49	\$953,793	44
Lincoln	\$1,275,963	61	\$2,250,047	58
Livingston	\$731,910	67	\$1,068,863	75
Logan	\$1,836,870	61	\$2,437,323	63
Lyon	\$332,091	60	\$426,166	54
McCracken	\$2,876,182	40	\$6,171,508	54
McCreary	\$981,602	42	\$1,279,382	42
McLean	\$754,448	69	\$1,314,979	71
Madison	\$2,922,617	50	\$5,587,314	58
Magoffin	\$207,899	27	\$1,210,833	49
Marion	\$868,577	56	\$1,543,512	55
Marshall	\$1,199,711	51	\$2,865,053	60
Martin	\$592,051	41	\$1,072,087	53
Mason	\$1,060,607	54	\$1,917,775	56

	FY 2000		FY 2008	
	Total collections	Percent collected	Total collections	Percent collected
Meade	\$1,759,025	58	\$2,401,158	64
Menifee	\$268,384	53	\$514,664	57
Mercer	\$1,046,874	56	\$1,982,355	58
Metcalfe	\$320,846	45	\$830,691	63
Monroe	\$311,557	44	\$944,561	57
Montgomery	\$1,462,111	63	\$2,591,726	53
Morgan	\$538,002	56	\$1,128,741	69
Muhlenberg	\$1,037,225	45	\$2,197,148	55
Nelson	\$1,977,781	62	\$4,060,152	60
Nicholas	\$591,430	68	\$741,777	58
Ohio	\$965,111	57	\$1,740,042	59
Oldham	\$1,621,701	65	\$3,198,173	70
Owen	\$652,144	62	\$929,681	63
Owsley	\$175,417	21	\$274,831	36
Pendleton	\$1,055,650	62	\$1,952,380	68
Perry	\$1,280,457	37	\$2,570,578	57
Pike	\$3,912,833	44	\$5,223,231	52
Powell	\$1,531,154	61	\$1,597,056	57
Pulaski	\$3,842,732	60	\$6,533,175	59
Robertson	\$95,071	62	\$168,568	64
Rockcastle	\$795,783	53	\$1,574,735	54
Rowan	\$794,404	50	\$1,933,291	58
Russell	\$831,709	55	\$1,652,866	56
Scott	\$1,894,228	57	\$3,797,573	59
Shelby	\$1,623,899	57	\$3,126,080	60
Simpson	\$1,521,671	57	\$2,693,795	59
Spencer	\$143,844	49	\$866,864	62
Taylor	\$1,067,377	51	\$1,808,404	60
Todd	\$359,125	49	\$862,248	54
Trigg	\$728,832	63	\$1,224,092	66
Trimble	\$521,596	58	\$773,020	58
Union	\$1,155,277	59	\$2,443,617	65
Warren	\$3,728,643	45	\$8,591,381	62
Washington	\$366,781	64	\$643,103	66
Wayne	\$740,259	51	\$1,417,955	60
Webster	\$944,735	59	\$1,689,432	64
Whitley	\$1,465,332	39	\$3,191,753	44
Wolfe	\$554,322	58	\$1,017,002	58
Woodford	\$1,215,418	61	\$2,101,136	63