

Spring 4-28-2015

## **Parenting Time Plans: Will Early Intervention Improve Parent Participation?**

Karen Roye

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Parenting Time Plans: Will Early Intervention Improve Parent Participation?

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EMPA 396

Graduate Research Project in Public Management

Golden Gate University

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April 28, 2015

### Abstract

The Office of Child Support Enforcement has directed all states to develop and implement policies and procedures that require the establishment of “parenting time plans” beginning 2019. Research has shown that noncustodial parents who have a parenting time plan in place are more consistent with their child support payments and that unmarried custodial parents who are unfamiliar with parenting time plans are generally reluctant to comply with parenting time plans for fear that they will adversely impact the amount of child support ordered. This paper will review federally funded demonstration grants conducted in states that have successfully merged parenting time plans with new child support orders. This research study will interview relevant researcher’s and policy makers and survey never married custodial and non-custodial parents whose case resides in San Francisco to determine if early outreach and education concerning parenting time plans would improve compliance with such orders. Study findings will be shared with both the California Department of Child Support Services and the Office of Child Support Enforcement as a preliminary step toward implementation.

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## Chapter 1 - Introduction

There is a crisis in America. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 24 million children in America—one out of three—live without their biological dad in the home (Stuart, 2011).

President Barack Obama has been personally committed to social service delivery that brings fathers back into the lives of their children. In a tribute to Father's Day, Mr. Obama spoke not as the 44th president of the United States of America, but as a child who grew up without his dad in his life. He wrote,

I came to understand that the hole a man leaves when he abandons his responsibility to his children is one that no government can fill. We can do everything possible to provide good jobs and good schools and safe streets for our kids, but it will never be enough to fully make up the difference. (Obama, 2009)

This is a call to action. The Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) has adopted a family-centered service model. This model recognizes the important role non-resident, non-custodial parents (largely fathers) play in the lives of their child(ren). Seeking to improve the well-being of children, OCSE is encouraging state child support program to develop and implement policies and procedures that require the establishment of “parenting time plans (PTP),” sometimes referred to as visitation orders along with new child support orders, beginning 2019 (Office of Child Support Enforcement, 2013). The success of this initiative will rely on the willingness of both parents receiving child support services to participate in the development of and adherence to PTPs. Research has shown that custodial parents (largely mothers) and non-custodial parents (largely fathers) who have never been married, with low family incomes have little knowledge of PTP's and the subsequent benefits of mediation that can promote positive, productive communication necessary for successful co-parenting. Children

benefit greatly from the commitment both parents make to stay in their lives and that non-custodial parents who have an emotional connection to their children are more willing to pay child support (Zill, 1996). The process of establishing a parenting time plan includes mediation services which help parents learn the skills necessary to resolve conflict and improve overall communication skills. These services are offered by the court and are available to parents for a fee. These services are primarily utilized by divorcing couples that have the resources to engage mediation and the court to help them build a co-parenting road map as they dissolve their marriage (Dudgeon, 1999).

Low income, never married couples do not have the resources to access these services nor is there programmatic access through the human services agency or child support services. When couples are able to communicate effectively and resolve conflict, the incidence of family violence is dramatically reduced (Cahn, 1996). Non-custodial parents who do not see their children regularly and do not share in decision-making for their children, as can be prescribed through a PTO lose a meaningful route to building a strong emotional bond with their children and with it is the loss of a powerful incentive to pay child support reliably (Seltzer, 1991, p. 82).

Low-income parents who are unfamiliar with PTPs are the most at risk for noncompliance with the construction of and adherence to a PTP (Pearson & Thoennes, 2005, pg.). The successful implementation of PTPs within the child support program rests with the interest and commitment of custodial parents whose cooperation is critical. A critical component to the success of parenting time plans within the child support program will be the implementation of early outreach to both parents.

Through research and analyses of literature reviews, telephone interviews of four key child support professionals who informed and built child support policy; an online survey and in-person survey, the study shall investigate the following questions:

1. Do researchers concur that those child support cases where noncustodial parents have been delinquent in their child support payments and have a parenting time plan show improved payment performance?
2. Typically unwed parents don't seek these services - why? Are never married parents aware of mediation services offered by the court? Do they know about parenting time plans?
3. Do resident unwed custodial parents who have a current support order managed by the San Francisco Department of Child Support Services believe it is in the best interest of their child(ren) that they work with the non-custodial parent to share decision-making and parental responsibility through a parenting time plan?
4. Would the custodial parent be willing to forego the higher monetary order that may not be paid consistently by the non-custodial parent for a lesser amount that is reliable?
5. Would the non-custodial parent be willing to pay child support reliably if they had greater access to their child(ren)?

Through a data collection strategy that assesses a frequency distribution of agreement level of respondents to determine whether low income, never married custodial parents believe that the implementation of parenting time plans will be a benefit to their children and improve their well-being, independent of the amount of financial child support received. This analysis will uncover whether custodial and non-custodial parents who have limited exposure to parenting time plans will be interested in learning more about them when they are given information that highlights the benefits of these orders to their children which may improve a custodial parent's willingness to comply with the development and adhere to a parenting time plan.



## **Chapter 2 – Literature Review**

### **Overview**

The literature review is divided into four distinct discussions that start with an examination of federal policy guidance as prescribed by OCSE and state response to the proposed changes under “Office of Child Support Enforcement - Expanding Services to Families.” The second section, “Child Support and Parenting Time Plans,” provides a review of parenting time plans as they are administered through the San Francisco Family Court follows along with the current treatment of parenting time plans by the child support program in California. The third section, “Benefits of Parenting Time Plans” reviews visitation of noncustodial parents through a review of relevant research results from Colorado, Texas and Illinois. The final section, “Concerns with Parenting Time Plans,” will close this chapter section with an important discussion on family violence that includes an alternative to parenting time plans designed to support parent and child safety.

### **Office of Child Support Enforcement – Expanding Services to Families**

The Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) has taken a bold step that would expand the scope of allowable services to include parenting time as part of family-centered services (Pontisso, 2015). OCSE has also directed considerable effort to modify existing enforcement policies so that they are less severe and encourage responsible parenting particularly as it affects low-income or “dead broke” noncustodial parents.

The expansion of allowable services would be contingent upon a state’s desire or willingness to offer them to parents. Those states that are or have wanted to provide parenting time plans will move forward. However, for those states that have *not* demonstrated interest in family-centered services to date, it is questionable as to whether they will be encouraged to do so

even if these services are an allowable expenditure of IV funds (Pontisso, 2015). Many of these same states believe their sole function is to fulfill the core responsibilities of the child support program (e.g., paternity establishment, child support order, locate, and enforcement) in a parochial way (Pontisso, 2015). A further reason these states may choose not to “buy into” the family-centered approach is that:

- a) Incentive funds are based on performance measures directly related to the child support core services; and/or
- b) States choose not to appropriate additional state funds (34%) to match the Federal share (66%) of providing family-centered services (Pontisso, 2015).

OCSE’s proposed rule – and the changes contained therein – is historic and lays the groundwork for a more family and father-friendly child support program. It establishes a social policy precedent that can be strengthened and expanded upon – administratively or legislatively - in years to come.

### **Child Support and Parenting Time Plans**

#### **San Francisco Unified Family Court provided mediation services.**

Mediation service is a component of the family court system designed to assist divorcing parents resolve custody and visitation disputes resulting in successful parenting time plans (Dudgeon, 1999). This service is incredibly important in creating stability in co-parenting that children need as they transition from residing with both parents to living with only one parent (Dudgeon, 1999).

In San Francisco, parenting plans are obtained through the family law departments of the San Francisco Unified Family Courts (SFUFC) (California Courts Family Law, 2015). Parents can receive assistance obtaining parenting time plans through the Family Law Facilitator Office

(FLF) and the ACCESS Center (California Courts Family Law, 2015). They can get help in completing the necessary forms and make a formal “Request for Order” for custody and visitation. Once the case is called, the parents are ordered to attend orientation and to participate in mediation. The mediators are licensed professionals (LCSW, PhD, or MFT) and are certified in domestic violence training (California Courts Family Law, 2015). Mediation is mandatory, confidential and non-recommending (no recommendations to the judge). There may be several other hearings if custody, visitation and/or parenting time plans are not resolved (California Courts Family Law, 2015). The Court may even appoint a second mediator to investigate, on behalf of the court, certain facts the court wishes to know. Once the parents agree on the plan the judge signs off and the plan become a parenting time plan (California Courts Family Law, 2015).

### **California child support and parenting time plans.**

California Department of Child Support Services (CA DCSS) has not incorporated parenting time plans as part of the establishment of new child support orders. The current practice of the San Francisco Local Child Support Agency (SF LCSA) is to set child support orders based upon the visitation the non-custodial parent currently has with their child(ren). This is because the California guideline requires the percentage of visitation to be a factor is the child support guideline (Family Code section 4055(b)(1)(D)) (Blumberg, 2015).

### **Benefits of Parenting Time Plans**

#### **Increase visitation for non-custodial parents.**

Full engagement by non-custodial fathers is essential to stability of the family and contributing to the welfare of their children. Fathers who see their children are more likely to pay support, and these fathers pay more support than do fathers who have no contact with their

children (Meyer, 1995). Evidence shows that children whose non-resident fathers are involved perform better academically, have higher self-esteem, and experience fewer behavioral and social problems (Maldonado, 2006). The consideration of in-kind support and emotional support is not a new concept to families but will be directly recognized by the child support program as nonfinancial contributions.

**Parents and Kids in Partnership (PAK): DuPont County, Illinois.**

Recognizing the value of parenting time plans and the mediation services associated with it, DuPont County's Domestic Relation Division was a participant of a four state grant through an access and visitation grant that created a separate program. "Courtroom 2003" was designed to provide never married couples with access to mediation and the development of parenting time plans (Dudgeon, 1999, pg. 21). The program had three components: an educational seminar, an immediate, no-cost, in court mediation program (PAK), and a free supervised visitation service when the parties agree to that option or it is ordered by the court (Dudgeon, 1999). The goal of the program was "to treat the non-custodial parents as more than just a financial resource" (Dudgeon, 1999, pg.22). Referrals to PAK were through the child support court after each parent completed a questionnaire to screen for domestic violence. The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) analyzed information from 190 cases across four states (Nevada, Connecticut, Oklahoma, and Illinois) (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2002). Seventy-six percent of cases examined in the case file review resulted in a mediated agreement (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2002). In 86 percent of these cases, access rights were increased for the noncustodial parent through mutually agreed upon visitation plans (parenting time plans). Forty-two percent who reported reaching an agreement also reported an overall increase in noncustodial parent visits after mediation and 33 percent (Epstein, 1999)

reported visits stayed the same, and an additional 11 percent reported a decrease in visitations. According to DHHS case file review of child support files, 61 percent of noncustodial parents increased the percent they paid of their current child support obligation after entering mediation (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2002, pg. 13). Twenty-seven percent decreased the percent of the current child support obligation they paid, and 12% did not change the percent they paid.

**Texas Ensuring Access/Encouraging Support: Grant Number 90FD0092.**

A key element in Texas' success was S.B 188, passed by the 1989 Legislature, which served as a vehicle for standard parenting time plans to be coupled with support orders. Thus, since 1989, the Texas Child Support Division to establish conservatorship (custody) and periods of possession (visitation) when first establishing a child support order.

The Office of the Attorney General (OAG) of Texas, Child Support Division contracted with the Harris County Domestic Relations Office to offer unwed parents mediation and enforcement services traditionally provided to divorced parents (Pearson, 2006). The population of parents who participated in the study was 875 (Pearson, 2007). The treatment group received mediation and assistance in establishing a possession (visitation) order (Pearson, 2007). The control group received traditional child support without custody orders. The treatment group was divided into two groups: the first group of parents received in-person/telephone education about and assistance with possession orders from a specialized caseworker and the second group of parents received mailed information only (Pearson, 2007). All treatment participants had the use of an access and visitation hotline.

A key finding showed that child support paid on cases associated with non-custodial parents who received "high-level" treatment, increased by 13% the amount of child support they

paid from 73 to 86 percent (Pearson, 2007). Child support payments received from noncustodial parents in the low-level treatment went from 75 to 78 percent. Those who participated in attorney consultations and parent conferences made the greatest gains and payments rose from 73 to 88 percent. None of the increases were due to enforcement actions.

**Colorado Parenting Time Visitation Project: Grant Number 90FD0096.**

Jefferson and El Paso Counties was the site for a research grant designed to test the outcomes of targeted services provided to 1,432 parents of 716 cases with identified visitation problems, open child support cases over a 20-month period beginning May 2005 (Pearson, 2007). Identification of test cases either self-disclosed they had visitation problems or were identified by caseworkers as having visitation problems. The treatment group was ranked based on visitation problems identified as either as high-level for those cases requiring a child support specialist to assist in problem solving or low-level for those parents who were handed or mailed educational materials that explained parenting time plans in plain language (Pearson, 2007). Two-third of parents who disclosed visitation problems had never been married to the other parent (Pearson, Davis, & Thoennes, 2007). Child support payments increased significantly after enrollment in the program for all groups (those with parenting plans and those without parenting plans) (Pearson, 2007). Of the parents who were never married 25% had annual incomes between \$10,000 and \$20,000; 20 percent had annual incomes below \$10,000 and only 16% had annual incomes over \$30,000. The self-sufficiency wage in Jefferson County for an adult and a child under 5 years of age is \$34,679 (Pearson, 2007).

**Concerns with Parenting Time Plans**

**Family violence.**

In healthy, nonviolent relationships where parents are successfully co-parenting through a parenting plan, the lack of a legal framework that both defines and limits periods of parenting time and decision-making roles may be perfectly functional (Jaffe, 2008). For survivors of family violence, though, the absence of this legal structure may expose them to ongoing conflicts that arise when negotiating parenting time on an ad hoc basis, provide opportunities for an abuser to continue to manipulate and intimidate the other parent, and in the worst case scenarios, can create the potential for the abusive partner to take and keep the child(ren) (Jaffe, 2008). There is debate about whether or not co-parenting should be imposed on an unwilling parent. The establishment and enforcement of child support orders and the establishment of parenting time plans pose multiple potential risks for survivors of family violence and as such, the program at the federal, state and local levels have looked to collaborate with family violence partners to build an appropriate response.

A consideration has been to allow fragile families in the child support program to “opt out” of parenting time plans for “good cause” as is currently done when custodial parents apply for public assistance. Further, these cases require highly specialized skills on the part of mediators, judges and attorneys to understand the underlying reasons for parent resistance. Concern that some local courts lack sufficient resources to provide the highly qualified family violence response necessary to change behavior is quite apart from a family’s willingness to participate in a parenting time plan (i.e. batterers intervention programs) (Gondolf, 2004).

Family violence experts believe a parenting time arrangement that is based on the cooperation of both parents to be inadequate in protecting and limiting parent-to-parent interaction. Advocates suggest parallel parenting plans as a better option for fragile families (Jaffe, 2008). Parallel parenting plans involve parents sharing time with their children in a very

structured and scheduled way. Parents would not interact with each other but rather bring their concerns to the judge for resolution. The parallel parenting expects the child(ren) to spend more time with one parent, typically the custodial parent, more than the other. This model is considered a more appropriate cooperative agreement.

**Michigan - enforcement of parenting time plans.**

The generation of a parenting time plan as part of the child support program will require enforcement of those orders if either parent violates the order. In Cass County, Michigan either parent would have the right to ask the child support program to address complaints about alleged violation (Michigan Supreme Court, 2015). When a complaint is filed, parents are referred to the mediator to assist in the resolution of the concern. If the parent is reluctant to comply the child support program they would be subject to enforcement that may affect the amount of child support received or paid. There are legitimate reasons for the custodial parent's non-compliance as described in the Michigan Child Custody Act of 1970. The Custody Act gives the Judge authority to consider the following factors when determining the frequency, duration and type of parenting time to be granted:

- a) The existence of any special circumstances or needs of the child.
- b) Whether the child is a nursing child less than 6 months of age, or less than 1 year of age if the child receives substantial nutrition through nursing.
- c) The reasonable likelihood of abuse or neglect of the child during parenting time.
- d) The reasonable likelihood of abuse of a parent resulting from the exercise of parenting time.
- e) The inconvenience to, and burdensome impact or effect on, the child of traveling to and from the parenting time.



- f) Whether the visiting parent can reasonably be expected to exercise parenting time in accordance with the court order.
- g) Whether the visiting parent has frequently failed to exercise reasonable parenting time.
- h) The threatened or actual detention of the child with the intent to retain or conceal the child from the other parent or from a third person whom has legal custody. A custodial parent's temporary residence with the child in a domestic violence shelter shall not be construed as evidence of the custodial parent's intent to retain or conceal the child from

The Michigan Child Custody Act of 1970 states:

It is in the best interest of the child to have frequent and constant contact with the non-custodial parent. If the parents agree on parenting time terms, the Court shall order those parenting time terms, unless the Court determines on the record that the parenting time terms are not in the best interests of the child. A child shall have a right to parenting time with a parent unless it is shown on the record by clear and convincing evidence that the parenting time would jeopardize the child's physical, mental or emotional health (Michigan Supreme Court, 2015).

### **Chapter 3 - Research Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

This study will use a correlational approach to determine if given targeted information on PTPs to custodial and non-custodial parents would they will be interested in learning more about them. An analysis of the correlational coefficient variables defined as the number of custodial and non-custodial parents that complete a survey as compared to the number of custodial and non-custodial parents who answered “yes” to the question, “would you like to learn more about parenting time plans?” The resulting statistical measure was a percentage of the tested group. The strength of the relationship between the two independent variables was analyzed based on a percentage of the total sample group.

This study did not attempt to determine the success of parenting time plans and will be limited to families who are not affected by family violence. It will not determine nor evaluate programmatic systems designed to implement and enforce PTPs. The focus of this work has been limited to families who have been or are currently receiving public assistance and are therefore part of the Title IVD child support program.

This study assumes that all states will be required to implement parenting orders by 2019, and that the State of California will seek to modify State laws pertaining to the establishment of a child support order. This study also assumes that the State of California will consider the inclusion of parenting time plans as part of the existing family court, mediator and family law facilitator systems that are utilized by most counties. Uniformity in practice will be key to programmatic consistency throughout the State.

As a precursor to the study, relevant research was reviewed beginning with a focus on San Francisco County’s local rules for the establishment of parenting orders and its treatment by

the child support program in California. Following a local review was a discussion of research that considers both the benefits and challenges to implementing parenting time plans as part of the child support program. The research specifically identified unwed, low income, custodial parents as reluctant to agree to a parenting time plan for fear it would negatively impact the child support they received. The research also found that neither the court nor the child support program had a systematic organizational structure that specifically reached out to these parents.

Based on the findings of the literature review, this study incorporated quantitative and qualitative research models that included an on-line survey of never married parents with open child support cases locally managed by San Francisco County Local Child Support Agency (SF LCSA) and telephone interviews of four key actors within the child support program responsible for the research, policy directive and the consideration of parenting orders within the program.

This analysis will uncover whether parents who have limited exposure to parenting time plans are interested in learning more about them when they are given information that highlights the benefits of these orders to their children which may improve a parent's willingness to comply with the development and adhere to a parenting time plan.

### **Research Hypothesis**

Through a data collection strategy that assessed a frequency distribution of agreement level of respondents to determine whether low income, custodial and non-custodial parents believe that the implementation of parenting time plans will be a benefit to their children and improve their well-being, independent of the amount of financial child support received. This study developed and administered a survey, then validated and assessed whether resident unwed non-custodial and custodial parents are willing to learn more about the benefits of parenting time plans. Do low income, unwed parents know about parenting time plans? Would

the custodial parent be willing to forego a higher monetary order that may not be paid consistently by the non-custodial parent for a lesser amount that is reliable? Would non-custodial parents be willing to pay their child support obligations reliably as they share in the decision-making and spend time with their child(ren)?

### **Data Collection Plan**

Two hundred twenty three participants who have open child support cases can access the survey either as a visitor to the main office or by visiting the department's website. Participants were asked to voluntarily complete a questionnaire (Appendix A). Each respondent received a cover sheet that explained the reason for the survey and the participant's rights (Appendix B). The survey was available in Spanish and Cantonese. Participants were advised that their answers would be kept confidential and anonymous and will not impact their child support case and that their responses will help us improve our services by better understanding their needs.

Initially, custodial and non-custodial parents were to be identified via a downloaded report from the Child Support Enforcement (CSE) case management tool (CMT) that accepts a unique data query. The query would have extracted participant names and phone numbers, which are then programmed against a telephonic outbound auto-dialer. An outgoing message will be prerecorded that would have been delivered to all telephone numbers identified by the query. A subsequent report (activity log) would be generated that documents outgoing call status. The activity log will also report dropped calls or failed calls do to invalid phone numbers. All outgoing messages would have been translated into Spanish and Cantonese to reflect the demographics of a large portion of possible participants.

The outgoing message would identify the caller as the child support program, and invite the parent to participate in a five-minute survey that will help us understand and respond to their

needs. The telephonic system available does not have the programmatic ability to ask more than three questions and can only make 100 calls per day! With a statistical expectation of one to two percent of participant responses, the idea of utilizing the telephonic system as the primary data collection method was abandoned.

A second approach to administering the survey looked to create a hyperlink to a written survey on the county child support agency's website inviting participants to complete the survey. Data collected via the website would be downloaded into a statistical database (Survey Monkey) for analysis (see Appendix B). Concerns regarding attrition of participants as a result of redirecting respondents from the telephone call to the website would challenge the studies ability to receive enough completed surveys to draw meaningful conclusions.

The decision was made to personally administer a printed version of the survey as well as provide access to an on-line version of the survey via the department's website to custodial and non-custodial parents as they visited the intake unit of the child support office. Completed surveys were collected. All written surveys were made available in English, Spanish and Cantonese. The researcher controlled all data collection methods.

Additional data will be identified through telephone interviews with key researchers and policy makers who have expertise in child support and are familiar the consideration of integrating parenting time plans in the child support program.

### **Controlling for Internal and External Validity and Bias**

Statistical significance in the data analysis will depend on its validity, the weight of the instrumentation, selection and researcher bias that pose threats to internal validity (Leedy, 2013). Instrumentation and selection contamination of the cases identified for the study could pose a threat to a successful correlational relationship between early intervention and outreach efforts

and a custodial parent's willingness to learn more about parenting time plans (O'Sullivan, 2008). Typically the child support program does not contact the parent represented on an open child support case (positively or negative) unless there is a court ordered change to the case. A clear pre-survey explanation that stresses anonymity and no impact to the open case prior to the request to complete the survey reduces anticipatory anxiety that may influence parent response. Court services regularly assist divorcing parents resolve the conflicts surrounding access and visitation. Because they have worked with the court to establish custody and visitation orders as part of a marital dissolution, they are more likely to understand and have already strong opinions regarding parenting time plans. Only those cases where the child support order was established through the child support program will be considered as study participants. The final challenge to validity rests with concerns regarding researcher bias. The researcher has an extensive relationship with the child support program and has considered the inclusion of parenting time plans into the child support program.

A careful consideration of bias during the planning, design, implementation and subsequent review of findings were necessary to control for researcher bias. Rigorous criteria in the selection of participants, a survey designed to be completed electronically by participants directly into a database and a separate survey designed for interviewees to accurately capture comments will reduce the possibility of researcher bias. Recommendations and conclusions will be solely based on data analysis and not include the researchers professional opinion.

### **Dependent and Independent Variables**

If unwed custodial and non-custodial parents receive early intervention strategies that include targeted outreach, educational materials, and enhanced case management services it is believed that their willingness to learn about parenting time plans would improve. The study

provided both parents with general information regarding the benefits of parenting time plans along with the caveat that with access and visitation there will be an adjustment in the child support amount ordered and received. Parent willingness to learn more about parenting time plans is identified as the independent variable and will be influenced by the dependent variables which in this case are: the benefits children receive when they have a relationship with the non-custodial parent; the possibility that increased visitation may improve the non-custodial parent's willingness to pay child support; conflict resolution through mediation services; a possible decrease in the amount of child support ordered; and possible consequences for non-compliance with a parenting time plan. The researcher expects the custodial parent to be willing to learn more about parenting time plans.

### **Development of Interview and Survey Questions**

#### **Interviews questions.**

Telephone interviews were conducted with significant researchers who have conducted major demonstration research projects with a focus on non-custodial parents and parenting time participation in New York and Colorado, staff at the Office of Child Support Services and a county director. Four prominent thinkers within the child support community consented to be interviewed. The interviewees included two prominent researchers, a deputy director from OCSE and a State Child Support Director of a jurisdiction that has parenting time plans as part of their program for over ten years (see Appendix C for a list of the interviewees' name, title, department and child support program responsibility). All interviewees were asked four parallel questions for the two groups (See Appendix D for a list of questions). Each interview lasted between twenty and thirty minutes.

**Survey questions.**

The survey is comprised of seven questions was created using Survey Monkey and printed from a WORD document. The survey was distributed three ways: on-line with a link to the survey on the San Francisco Department of Child Support Services website (<http://sfgov.org/dcsc/>), distributed to parents visiting the main office at 617 Mission Street, San Francisco. These questions were vetted and approved by the County City Administrator. A printed version of the survey was made available to parents at the intake unit and the main office to complete on a voluntary basis. On the morning of April 6, 2015 the online survey was available to the public (see Appendix A and Appendix B) with the following:

We are conducting a short survey of parents and their interest in Parenting Time Plans. If you are a custodial parent who would like to participate, [click here](#). Your responses will be kept anonymous and confidential.

**Participant characteristics.**

Participants are predominately African American (53%) and Latino (33%) with the number of Asian (11%) and Caucasian (3%) families increasing. Over 86% of the caseload have been or are currently receiving public assistance. Over 72% of the noncustodial parents on my caseload have had a relationship with the criminal justice system an impact of an overrepresentation of parents incarcerated for low level, nonviolent, non-sexual offenses. The majority of custodial parents reside in the southeast sector of San Francisco County – Bay View Hunter’s Point (District 10) within the 94124, 94134, 94107 zip codes followed by Western Addition (District 5) within the 94117, 94115 and finally the Mission (District 9) 94110.



**Sampling procedures.**

The study will extract relevant data from the child support enforcement system (CSE). The query will identify a subsection of unique parents associated with the current caseload managed by the San Francisco Local Child Support Agency (12,847) that controls for cases that have been flagged for family violence (1770) and cases that have never received public assistance (3,379) for a total test population of cases (8,968) (CS1257, 2015).

Parents associated with the test population of cases reside in San Francisco county with their child(ren) and have either previously received public assistance (6,928) or are currently receiving public assistance (2,540) would be considered for the study. Income levels have been determined to be below the poverty level (CS1257, February, 2015).

**Operational terms and definitions.**

For the purposes of this study, *parenting time plan* (PTP) also known as *parenting time order* is defined as a written document that outlines how and when each parent will care for their child. It sets out the schedule and protocols for access and visitation of child(ren) between separated parents. Typically utilized by divorcing couples. The *custodial parent* is defined as a single parent raising child(ren) and is the parent who has either sole physical/legal custody of the child or the parent with whom the child resides for a majority of the time. The *non-custodial parent* does not have physical and/or legal custody of his/her child by court order and is defined as the parent not residing with the child(ren).

A *stipulation* is defined as agreement that is filed with the court and becomes a court order. For the purpose of this study, *willingness* is defined as interest to learn more about parenting time plans. The three arms of the child support program referred to in this paper are the

federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE), the California Department of Child Support Services (CA DCSS) and the San Francisco Local Child Support Agency (SF LCSA).

## **Chapter 4 – Results and Findings**

### **Research Hypothesis**

The study will determine if early intervention and outreach to custodial and non-custodial parents would improve their willingness to learn about and participate in parenting time plans. Research has shown that children benefit greatly from the commitment both parents make to stay in their lives and that non-custodial parents who have an emotional connection to their children are more willing to pay child support. The process of establishing a parenting time plan includes mediation services which help parents learn the skills necessary to resolve conflict and improve overall communication skills. These services are offered by the court and are available to parents for a fee. They are primarily utilized by divorcing couples that have the resources to engage mediation and the court to help them build a co-parenting road map as they dissolve their marriage.

### **Research Assumptions**

Low income, never married couples unfamiliar with and do not have the resources to access parenting time plans or mediation services nor is there programmatic access to them either through the human services agency or child support services. Research has shown that when couples are able to communicate effectively and resolve conflict, the incidence of family violence is dramatically reduced. Research has also shown that children benefit greatly from the commitment both parents make to stay in their lives and that non-custodial parents who have an emotional connection to their children are more willing to pay child support. The survey identified 223 respondents - low income, never married custodial and non-custodial parents (from a population of 12,487) to provide them with high level information regarding the benefits (and concerns with parenting time plans and then ask them whether they are interested in

learning more about them. The results from this study will be provided to the Office of Child Support Services as well as the California Department of Child Support Services.

### **Objectives**

The introduction of parenting time plans to the child support program will primarily impact low-income, unwed custodial and non-custodial parents who may not be aware of them. Parenting time plans and the opportunity for mediation services have largely been utilized by divorcing couples that are directed by the court as part of the dissolution and have assets available to pay court required fees. As the child support program seeks to integrate parenting time plans into its program, attention must be given to the development of a strategic outreach campaign that educates low-income, unwed parents that specifically address the unique perspective of each parent and promotes both the benefits and responsibilities of parenting time plans. Without such information impacted parents and their families are unprepared to decide whether or not to comply with such orders. This study will support the recommendation that the child support program should consider the implementation of a strategic parent outreach, program education and enhanced case management model that is easily accessible by culturally diverse, complex families.

### **Outline - Interview Findings**

**Question 1:** What do you consider to be the major benefits of implementing an early intervention strategy with parenting time plans for: 1. the low income, never married, custodial and noncustodial parents receiving service from the child support program; 2. the child support program?

**Responder 1:** J. Pearson. Since parents who were not married at the time of their child(ren)'s birth are not covered by marital family law, they do not have the clearly established

rights and responsibilities that divorcing parents have following their break-up. With a clear pathway to the legal proceedings these parents would have a way to formalize parenting issues such as custody and parenting time and structured access to the mediation, parent education, facilitation, and other services that are essentially standard for divorcing parents to help them plan for the future of their families. Parents understand parenting plans better with a third-party explanation and ambiguities that might be the source of future problems can be identified and corrected before the plan goes into effect. As with divorcing parents, most never-married parents who attempt mediation/facilitations are successful in producing a parenting plan, with many reaching agreement in a single, brief session and reporting strong satisfaction with the process and outcome. And depending on the jurisdiction, the parenting plan often can be combined with the child support order and filed without a separate filing fee. In other jurisdictions, there must be a separate motion for visitation and a filing fee.

**Responder 2:** E. Sorenson. There is a considerable unmet need among this population for parenting time plans with 41% of children are born outside of marriage. In general, all children want to have a relationship with both parents. Research shows that father contact improves a child's wellbeing - social, economic, emotional. In 2012, approximately two-thirds of noncustodial parents in the Title IV-D program had no legal arrangement to see their children as reported by the custodial parent. The court system is designed to establish co-parenting structures for a couple's post-divorce family life. But unmarried couples do not need the state to end their relationships, and most cannot afford to go to court. This means that in most states unmarried parents are left without an effective institution to help them transition from a family based on a romantic relationship to a family based on co-parenting. If they go to court, they can't afford it. The overwhelming majority of unmarried parents (and many married or divorcing

couples) does not have the financial means to secure legal representation. The result - many parents are left without access to legal remedies. With regard to the child support program multiple studies attribute increased child support payments with increased parenting time. Parenting time and child support are not separate issues in parents' minds. Most child support clients had their children outside of marriage.

**Responder 3:** P. Lowry. The benefits for families are clear. If you reduce conflict between parents you have better outcomes for parents. It's about long-term outcomes for children. Creating a system whereby both parents continue to engage co-parenting can lead to building new parental decisions around future children regardless of the family circumstances – married, divorced, never married. If the family is intact with co-parenting of existing children it can lead to parents deciding not to have more children.

The benefit to the child support program would be the reduction of court time based on less conflict. There would be fewer court proceedings to resolve conflict, change custody orders resulting from conflict, or enforce custody orders. Another important benefit would be the balance of services to both the custodial and noncustodial parent. The field would be level for low income, never married primarily minority families. These families would receive the same resources as married couples. It is also vital that the courts deliver and parents receive gender-neutral services. The continuum of gender specific services has gone on for decades and it has been to the detriment of non-custodial parents (over-represented by African American males). During the 1970's systems were inherently biased towards father. In the 1980's policies around welfare caused the fragmentation of families by removing fathers from the families. Minority fathers, particularly African American dads have been adversely impacted by social service

policies contributed to family disruption. Parenting time plans will balance the commitment that social programs have to serve all people and all families.

**Respondent 4:** M. Hayes: One of the benefits for the parents and one of the most important aspects is parenting time plans provides (unwed) parent access to justice. Dissolution triggers court-facilitated services that help parents come to an agreement about the parenting of their children. Unwed parents are not afforded an opportunity to access mediation and facilitation of parenting time plans because there isn't a systematic institutional structure designed to introduce these services to parents. Nationally, there are roughly ten million non-custodial parents who have reported that they don't have access services or a legal order in place to see their child(ren). Because the legal system has clung to the dissolution as the only way to access parenting plans and mediation there is a definite disparity in treatment. The same is true for the child support program. The program is a party to separate and unequal tracks for unwed low income parents because the due process that is necessary to access those rights is not imbedded in the program. Both custodial and non-custodial parents agree that not having access to parenting time plans is not fair. For the child support program the inclusion of services that promote parenting time plans would demonstrate that we are not biased. At the core, child support is focused on the children and their wellbeing and that includes the pursuit of both their emotional and financial stability.

**Question 2:** What do you consider as the major challenges of implementing an early intervention strategy with the development of parenting time plans for: 1. the low income, never married, custodial and noncustodial parents receiving service from the child support program; 2. the child support program?

**Responder 1:** J. Pearson. The legal and fiscal bifurcation of child support and parenting time flies in the face of their many practical interconnections. Thirty-four states have child support guidelines (mathematical formulae that are to be used to determine the amount of support that the obligor pays) that provide an adjustment for the obligor's parenting time. In most states, the adjustment requires a court-ordered custody or agreed-upon parenting time plan. A growing number of families in the child support caseload have orders addressing financial responsibilities with no attention to access and visitation because of the bifurcated system that never-married parents face. The connection between child support and parenting time that parents report and workers have long suspected have been noted by researchers too. For example, in 1979, David Chambers found that fathers with little or no contact with their children after divorce paid only about 34 percent of their child support, while fathers in regular contact paid 85 percent. Since then, many researchers have confirmed the relationship, although there is less agreement on the causal direction. Some researchers contend that paying more support leads to more visitations because those who pay feel more invested in their children or mothers who receive some child support may be more supportive of a father who wishes to visit.

**Responder 2:** E. Sorenson. The greatest challenges are: lack of funding; lack of buy in; lack of policy and procedures; and lack of outreach materials to share with parents.

**Responder 3:** P. Lowry. How do you balance the welfare of the child with the needs of the child(ren)? In many cases either parent might not be suitable to raise the child(ren). Policies that insure the safety of the child while moving toward the parenting time plan are necessary. In some cases the mediator may recommend no parenting time plans for the family. Domestic violence is a real concern particularly around the development and implementation of a parenting time plan where custodial parents (mothers) are being pressured to agree parenting time plans



during mediation. There must be domestic violence protocols to insure that mom is not pressured. The decision to participate in a parenting time plan should be voluntary. Another real challenge is the bureaucracy that exists between the national child support program and the local court system run on a parallel tracks, specifically there are a lot of players within the court and the child support program have a lot of players and parenting time plans would add new players to the process - the mediators, attorney's, psychologists that bring new processes and expectations. New processes bring new questions around representation. At what point do you need a lawyer? Who does the attorney represent? Should a parenting time plan be prepared by a mediator or should it be prepared by a lawyer? Custody is another issue that the court will address as part of the parenting time plan. Finally, in order to insure equal access to parenting time plan establishment and justice in treatment across the nation it is essential and requires standard models. Some would argue that equal quality of services to the family is a constitutional issue and there is a tipping point with systems in their current configuration.

Resources and information – national educational program collaboration IVD attorney, leadership mediation, court officials to develop standards and models that work at a global level and at the local level what is needed is money. Federal dollars – state local are broke. Court official stake and appreciate guidance. It is one thing to get them to only listen deeply when it is their leaders are speaking but we also need to encourage their assistance with operational solutions that don't challenge the role of the court but instead looks to enhance it. First, tackle the issue – how to get chief judges all around the country to agree that early mediation and parenting orders and should be a priority just as for divorcing couples when courts get on board. Judges need to be aware and fund programs in their courtrooms, speaking it and understood what questions to ask. It happens from within not from without. So if there is a real desire to move

parenting time, then the impetus for parenting time plans and its champion must be from the courts. Standardizing public policy - who can make lasting change? Who has the sphere to make parenting time plans happen? The people who have the authority have to be the ones to drive the discussion. We in child support have a different viewpoint – we see millions of cases and draw conclusions based on trends at a high level. We see the big picture! Courts on the other hand have a “one-case at a time” orientation. It’s difficult to get it in the courts to see the big picture. They also tend to be reluctant to get formally involved in policymaking but they do informally. When a judge experiences a difficult case that is the one they remember. They can hear hundreds of cases but the one they remember are those that are extremely challenging. Challenging cases tend to color their opinions going forward. Judges, mediators, advocates. Because safety is at stake parenting time plans should be a judicial decision not an administrative (child support) decision. They are trained to make those very tough decisions and those decisions are heavily weighted.

**Respondent 4:** M. Hayes. A major challenge is insuring that unwed parents have enough information about the long term impacts of them having a parenting time plan so that they are making fully informed decisions. That is a concern of the legal community because absent a clear, educated decision, conflict between parents could arise requiring lengthy court hearings, trials, required documentation and may lead to estrangement between parents. That is not good for child(ren). When parents understand that the order they are making can stand the test of time and will promote a safe, workable co-parenting relationship in the long run, they are agreeable to work together. The child support program has the same challenge. We have to educate parents on what to expect with a child support order, what their due process rights are so that when parents come in it doesn’t take a lot of time to write the child support order because the parents

are educated on the subject, they know what they want and have 90% of the plan worked out.

For the program that saves caseworker time and that saves money. Fully informed parents make thoughtful decision for their family.

**Question 3:** What are the current barriers that prevent effective implementation of an early intervention strategy with the development of parenting time plans in: 1. the low income, never married, custodial and noncustodial parents receiving service from the child support program; 2. the child support program?

**Responder 1:** J. Pearson. It is important to implement actions and operational practices that build relationships and communicate with NCPs and CPs to maximize voluntary parenting time plans and minimize the need for enforcement. Any intervention strategy should include telephone calls, in-person meetings, and written communications in simple language. Do not underestimate outreach to workers. Worker commitment and commitment to support workers as they take on new duties that are time-consuming require the organizational culture to shift.

**Responder 2:** E. Sorenson. I am unaware of a comprehensive plan to implement parenting time plans at the federal, state or local level.

**Responder 3:** P. Lowry. Current barriers include the inequality of quality of services delivered to both non-custodial and custodial parents include: issues around representation, determining when an attorney is needed, lack of agreement on standard models, funding issues for states and local government and, bureaucracy logistics and territory restrictions. Standard models and creating the standards around mediation and the development of parenting time plans are significant. Who does the screening? How does the screening process work – trained mediation? When do they pass it off – to court? What about court appointed psychologists and their role? What professional affiliations and licenses. A lot has been agreed upon in divorce

issues. Maybe those standards are strong but maybe not. They have been co-parenting a cohabitated and their standards have never cohabitate. Maybe the standards are the same but maybe not. The court has the power to implement solutions and open up services to address the needs of the public.

**Respondent 4:** M. Hayes. For parents they are the same barriers that parents have for receiving services from child support. Chaotic lives, transportation, competing needs get in the way and are considered before child support. We in child support, tend to think that interacting with the child support program is the most important thing in the lives of the parents we serve. That's not true. Parents have a lot going on in their lives that capture their attention. Without the support of the courts that adopt a joint filing that includes parenting time and child support the barrier is that the parent has to go someplace else, they aren't going to get it. The barrier is the lack of a "one stop shop" delivery of services similar to what happening in Texas. And it's the exact same barrier for the child support program. We don't negotiate with parents, they have to go to the Family Law Facilitator and then the mediator and then back to child support. It is incredibly cumbersome for parents, inefficient for the child support program and practically guarantees non-compliance by parents who would otherwise have gladly complied. There is a huge cost in the amount of time parents must dedicate to the process of establishing a parenting time plan that is vexing. There needs to be an integrated process - a one stop shop - that would ease the need for parents to visit multiple agencies.

**Question 4:** What information and resources are needed for effective implementation of an early intervention strategy with the development of parenting time plans for: 1. the low income, never married, custodial and noncustodial parents receiving service from the child support program? 2. The child support program?

**Responder 1:** J. Pearson (2015). In addition to a possible causal relationship between parenting time and child support payment, research reveals that child support receipts improve child outcomes. The Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) contracted with Colorado Policy and Research (CPR) from 2011 to 2013 to conduct the Child Support Program and Parenting Time Plan Project, the purpose of which was to identify and describe promising ways states and local jurisdictions are establishing parenting time plans for the child support population and addressing family violence safeguards. Based on conversations with State Access and Visitation coordinators and with input from OCSE, CPR selected five jurisdictions and conducted site visits to each from May 2012 through December 2012: the State of Texas; the State of Oregon; Cuyahoga County, Ohio; Oakland County, Michigan; and Du Page County, Illinois. Each two-day site visit involved semi-structured interviews and focus groups with approximately 12 to 15 participants from child support, court, and domestic violence professionals. The case studies revealed that states or local jurisdictions use one of four main approaches to establishing parenting time:

1. Standard parenting time schedules;
2. Self-help resources for parents;
3. Mediation or facilitation with a neutral third party; and
4. Comprehensive programs that address multiple barriers.

Each approach has certain strengths and limitations and lends itself to a different method of identifying and addressing IPV and safety (Pearson, 2013).

**Responder 2:** E. Sorenson. Incremental steps that can be taken to promote parenting time:

- 1) Include information in child support materials about the value of cooperative parenting and noncustodial parent time with child

- 2) Offer “model” parenting time schedules that parents can use based on their own agreement (quasi-formalizes informal arrangements) and provide tools to make parenting time work (calendar)
- 3) Provide easy access to information about parenting time (e.g. hotline)
- 4) Provide sample/model parenting time agreements to parents going through child support and when parents agree to an order, offer to adopt those agreements into the court order:
  - Start with the premise that it is in the child’s best interest to have a parenting time plan that provides consistent and frequent contact with both parents - absent circumstances that would put the child at risk of emotional or physical harm (e.g. domestic violence, abuse/neglect factors).
  - Review guidelines and figure out how to incorporate parenting time into orders easily and quickly. You don’t want to negotiate every parenting time plan from zero.
  - Develop standard menu of parenting time plans so that horizontal equity is achieved.
  - Determine reasons for deviating from this standard menu of options.
  - Develop procedures to implement this as part of the stipulation process.
  - Provide clear information for parents on the purpose of the process, the process itself.
  - Educate parents before they come into the office so they know what’s coming.
  - Work cooperatively with parents. Train staff to handle the new workflow.
  - Provide clear options if parenting time is not agreed upon.
  - Develop hotline to answer questions.
  - Provide parenting time calendars.
  - Provide a list of resources in the community that can help if parenting time plan goes awry.
  - Implement domestic violence protections.

For appropriate domestic violence protections to effectively occur, the following elements need to be built into the process:

1. Identifying cases - screening and universal information - need for staff training - multiple opportunities to disclose
2. Process transparency - provides the “why disclose” rationale and promotes victim control.
3. Access to confidential legal information to help make informed decisions (hotline) - legal clinics, in court self-help centers.
4. Self-determination - providing the information and structure to allow victims to make the decisions they need to make - no wrong door out -
5. State’s legal positions clearly stated - is the state truly a disinterested bystander? Or can the state (and its attorneys) take a position? Need for public policy goal that the state’s interest is in safe, workable orders and so will pursue that goal
6. Collaboration with DV advocate/service groups - training for advocates, advocates in courtrooms, advocates as navigators, reviews of policy and procedures, jointly developed public education materials
7. Three tiered approach: 1) do not increase risk, 2) Increase safety, 3) develop interventions/treatment

**Responder 3:** P. Lowry. Resources and information – national educational program collaboration IVD attorney, leadership mediation, court officials to develop standards and models that work. Nationally, answers can be viewed at a global level. At the local level what is needed is money. Federal dollars – state local are broke. Court officials have a stake in and appreciate guidance. They (courts) only listen deeply when it is their leaders (presiding judges)

are speaking. The issue must be tackled – how to get chief judges all around the country to agree that early mediation and parenting orders should be a priority just as it is for divorcing couples when courts get on board. Judges need to be aware and fund programs in their courtrooms, speaking it and understood what questions to ask. It happens from within not from without. So if there is a real desire to move parenting time, then the impetus for parenting time plans and its champion must be from the courts. Standardizing public policy - who can make lasting change? Who has the sphere to make parenting time plans happen? The people who have the authority have to be the ones to drive the discussion. We in child support have a different viewpoint – we see millions of cases and draw conclusions based on trends at a high level. We see the big picture! Courts on the other hand have a “one-case at a time” orientation. It’s difficult to get it in the courts to see the big picture. They also tend to be reluctant to get formally involved in policymaking but they do informally. When a judge experiences a difficult case that is the one they remember. They can hear hundreds of cases but the one they remember are those that are extremely challenging. Challenging cases tend to color their opinions going forward. Judges, mediators, advocates. Because safety is at stake parenting time plans should be a judicial decision not an administrative (child support) decision. They are trained to make those very tough decisions. Judges give credence and are heavily motivated by decisions.

**Respondent 4:** M. Hayes. What I would love to see is an interactive on-line resource for parents to fill in the blanks to get to a parenting time plan. In access to “Access2Justice” software complicated concepts are broken down into, understandable, manageable step-by-step process similar to TurboTax. They don’t have to read through a complex document but behind the scenes the court receives systems generated document to file. Most parents know what they want in a parenting time plan and many have had previous relationships with their child.



Previous skill, experience and knowledge in an electronic format so that when they go in for the court process the caseworker would just print out. Millennials like to do things on-line. This would fit into the self-directed format that is simple. We need serious development to give people more control of the process and also for child support time is not spent filling out the form. “Access 2 Justice” software was originally put together by Kent Law School. Some places use it for tenant lawsuit removes a lot of the technical glitches that keep litigants from pursuing their legal rights.

### **Survey Findings**

Two hundred twenty three parents completed the survey as of April 16, 2015. One hundred thirty-eight custodial parents (61.88%), eighty-four non-custodial parents (37.66%), and one parent (1%) who declined to state their role on the case. Surveys were collected from parents who volunteered to participate.

Question 1 provided respondents with a definition of parenting time plans then asks respondents to determine their level of awareness of parenting time plans with three possible answers: 33.94% of all parents who responded were “previously aware of parenting time plans,” 12.22% of parents reported they “heard about parenting time plans but did not know what they were,” and 53.85% “had not heard of parenting time plans before the survey.” (see Figures A through C)

- Custodial Parents: 27.74% of all parents who responded were “previously aware of parenting time plans,” 14.60% of parents reported they “heard about parenting time plans but did not know what they were,” and 57.66% “had not heard of parenting time plans before the survey.”

- Non-Custodial Parents: 43.37% of all parents who responded were “previously aware of parenting time plans,” 8.43% of parents reported they “heard about parenting time plans but did not know what they were,” and 48.19% “had not heard of parenting time plans before the survey.”

Question 2 provided respondents with the statement, “...having both parents in the lives of their children greatly benefits them and improves their odds for future success,” then asked, “Do you and the other parent of your child(ren) have a parenting time plan or similar agreement in place?” with three possible answers: 31.05% of all parents who responded “yes”; 23.29% “do not have a parenting time plan but have a casual agreement in place,” and 45.66% answered “no.”

- Custodial Parents: 26.47% of all parents who responded “yes,” 19.85% “do not have a parenting time plan but have a casual agreement in place,” and 53.68% answered “no.”
- Non-Custodial Parents: 39.02% of all parents who responded “yes,” 29.27% “do not have a parenting time plan but have a casual agreement in place,” and 31.71% answered “no.”

Question 3 provided respondents with the statement, “Sometimes parents disagree and have trouble communicating about how to care for their children. Parenting time plans also include mediation services to help with conflict resolution.” Then asked, “Would you be interested in mediation services?” With two possible answers 35.94% of all parents who responded answered “yes” while 64.06% “answered “no.”

- Custodial Parents: 33.58% of all parents who responded answered, “yes” while 66.42% “answered “no.”
- Non-Custodial Parents: 40.24% of all parents who responded answered, “yes” while 59.76% “answered “no.”

Question 4 provided respondents with the statement, “Parents who spend more time with their children are more likely to make child support payments.” Then asked, “Have you made or received payments regularly,” 43.64% of all parents who responded to the survey answered, “yes,” “I have made or received payments regularly,” 10.45% answered, “I have made or received irregular payments,” and 45.91% answered, “no,” “I have not made or received a payment.”

- Custodial Parents: 41.30% of all parents who responded to the survey answered, “yes, I have made or received payments regularly,” 10.87% answered, “I have made or received irregular payments,” and 47.83% answered “no, I have not made or received a payment.”
- Non-Custodial Parents: 46.91% of all parents who responded to the survey answered, “yes, I have made or received payments regularly,” 9.88% answered, “I have made or received irregular payments,” and 43.21% answered “no, I have not made or received a payment.”

Question 5 provided respondents with the question, “If the other parent of your children wanted to establish a Parenting Time Plan, would you be willing to participate in the process?” With three possible answers 49.32% of all parents who responded to the survey answered, “yes,” 28.1% answered, “I am not sure,” and 22.37% answered, “no.”

- Custodial Parents: With three possible answers 44.20% of all parents who responded to the survey answered, “yes,” 34.06% answered, “I am not sure,” and 21.74% answered, “no.”
- Non-Custodial Parents: With three possible answers 58.75% of all parents who responded to the survey answered, “yes,” 18.75% answered, “I am not sure,” and 22.50% answered, “no.”

Question 6 provided respondents with the affect that parenting time plan may have on the amount of time that each parent spends with the child(ren) and that visitation may change the amount of child support you are ordered to paid or received then asks the respondent if “they would be willing to establish a parenting time plan” with three possible answers: 44.65% of all parents “would be willing to establish a parenting time plan,” 36.28% were “not sure and wanted to think about it,” and 19.07% said ‘they were unwilling to establish a parenting time plan.’”

Custodial Parents: 39.55% of all parents “would be willing to establish a parenting time plan,” 41.04% were “not sure and wanted to think about it,” and 19.40% said ‘they were unwilling to establish a parenting time plan.’”

- Non-Custodial Parents: 53.75% of all parents “would be willing to establish a parenting time plan,” 28.75% were “not sure and wanted to think about it,” and 17.50% said ‘they were unwilling to establish a parenting time plan.’”

Question 7 provided respondents with the question, “Would you like to learn more about Parenting Time Plans? With two possible answers 48.15% of all parents who responded to the survey answered, “yes,” and 51.85% answered, “no.”

- Custodial Parents: With two possible answers 46.72% of all parents who responded to the survey answered, “yes,” and 53.28% answered, “no.”
- Non-Custodial Parents: With two possible answers 51.28% of all parents who responded to the survey answered, “yes,” and 48.72% answered, “no.”

## **Chapter 5 - Conclusions, Recommendations and Areas of Further Research**

The Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement has adopted a family centered service delivery model that considers the whole family in its attainment of self-sufficiency. Specifically, the program seeks to codify a balanced consideration of the role both parents play in the life of their child(ren). To that end the federal government seeks to combine parenting time plans with child support orders in 2019. Parenting time plans coupled with mediation services to resolve conflict have historically been utilized by the court as part of the marital dissolution.

While these services are readily available to divorcing couples, never married, low income parents have had little access to or understand parenting time plans and are unaware of the benefits these orders may have for the child(ren).

### **Conclusions**

This chapter provides the conclusions and recommendations for this study. These conclusions and recommendations are entirely based on this researcher's reflection of the relevant literature review of scholarly work and studies along with the actual data collected from interviews and surveys. The empirical data was collected in the City and County of San Francisco and reflects a limited scope of study. The researcher strived for balance, fairness, completeness and sensitivity (Leedy, 2013), the researcher formulated conclusions based upon cross tab of the results and findings of each question. In an effort to reduce subjectivity the researcher formulated conclusions based upon a cross tab of the results and findings of each question.

- The original hypothesis assumed that absent preliminary information, outreach and educational materials that explain both benefits and responsibility parents are in danger of non-compliance. The assumption for this research is that low income never married

parents are unaware of parenting time plans and mediation and if given information that highlights the benefits of those plans, they would want to learn about PTPs.

- The research data strongly suggests there is a high level of understanding of PTPs by participants prior to the survey and that many parents have developed formal and informal parenting plans. Additionally and equally important is the lack of interest in mediation services by participants and concern that steps be taken to provide an efficient process of enrollment (on-line).
- While the literature and data do not exact match in the area of mediation, there are strong commonalities that suggest parents are willing to work together to develop and comply with parenting time plans, which is beneficial to their children.

This brings us back to the original research questions:

Do researchers concur that those child support cases where noncustodial parents have been delinquent in their child support payments and have a parenting time plan show improved payment performance? Yes, the researchers interviewed for this study feel strongly that the child support program should consider the development of early intervention strategies that encourage easy parent access to parenting time plans documents. Interviewees suggest the need for an automated solution that permit parents to step through the development of their parenting plans on their own before filing similar to the “Turbo Tax” model of self-help systems.

Are never married parents interested mediation services offered by the court? No, roughly 64% of parents who responded to the survey are not interested in accessing mediation services. Do surveyed parents know about parenting time plans? Yes, although the respondents to the survey were split on their awareness of parenting time plans. Contrary to initial assumptions, 28

% of custodial parents knew about parenting time plans while 43% of non-custodial parents were aware of parenting time plans.

Do resident unwed custodial parents who have a current support order managed by the San Francisco Department of Child Support Services believe it is in the best interest of their child(ren) that they work with the non-custodial parent to share decision-making and parental responsibility through a parenting time plan? Yes, over 81% of parents who responded are in favor of parenting time plans and are willing to move forward with their development.

Would the custodial parent be willing to forego the higher monetary order that may not be paid consistently by the non-custodial parent for a lesser amount that is reliable? The answers were split. While 39.55% were willing to move forward with a parenting time plan even though it would change the amount of child support they received, 41% need to consider the change in child support amount and roughly 19% are not willing to proceed with parenting time plans if it means a change in the amount of their child support order. When asked the same question roughly 54% of non-custodial parents who responded were willing to participate in the development of parenting time plans. It is important to note that while Contrary to researcher assumptions, 52% of parents surveyed are not interested in learning more about parenting time plans. This could be attributed to the high number of parents who are already aware of parenting time plans, approximately 54%. Thirty-one percent of those surveyed report that they have a parenting time plan in place and 23% report they have an informal co-parenting relationship in place and 49% (see Figure B.). While 48% of custodial parents reported that they have not received consistent child support payments within the last three months, 81% are interested in participating in a parenting time plan (see Figure C).

**Recommendation**

Some respondents show interest in exploring parenting time plans and all interviewees confirmed that families would benefit immensely from parenting time plans. This study supports the recommendation to the Office of Child Support Enforcement and the California Department of Child Support Services that the first steps necessary for effective implementation of parenting time plans is a strategic early intervention strategy. The child support program, specifically, local county agencies and court partners should consider strategic parent outreach, program education and an enhanced case management model that is easily accessible by culturally diverse, complex families as an opportunity to engage parents early and often. Key to successful implementation will be the demonstration of early intervention during the development of parenting time plans.

The next step in the research of parenting time plans in San Francisco will a pilot project that will look to build upon the findings of this study and continue to understand the needs of families in relation to parenting time orders. The local child support agency seeks to formalize a partnership between City College of San Francisco – Mission Campus (“Mission Campus”) and Southeast and Evans Campuses (“Southeast and Evans Campuses”) and the San Francisco Department of Child Support Services’ (“DCSS”) in order to develop and expand a framework of cooperation that will be the framework that will assist both the agency and the institution with their goals of providing services that improve and enhance the ability of students who are custodial parents with respect to their child support expectations. In compliance with CA DCSS, funding for the study will be considered from local sources.

The parties recognize that this partnership results in a number of mutual benefits to enhance the ability of current student custodial parents to maintain enrollment through increased



compliance and support by non-custodial parents. The SF LCSA achieves these benefits by assisting individuals who are currently enrolled at Mission, Southeast, and Evans Campuses and have an interest in working with child support to build parenting time plans. The project will look to begin in September, 2015 signal with a test population of approximately 100 families where the custodial parent is a matriculating student at one of the identified campuses of the City College system and has an open child support case with unemancipated children where the non-custodial parent has been delinquent in payments will be considered for this study. Both custodial and non-custodial parents will be randomly selected and participate for a 24-month period. Supplemental services that include parenting classes and fatherhood workshops would be provided by the City College System for participating non-custodial parents. Performance measures for consideration will include the number of CP participants who maintain matriculation and graduate from City College and the compliance with parenting time plans as well as the continued matriculation of the custodial parent was considered jeopardized by lack of child care. During the study participants will be surveyed regularly to determine participant satisfaction and any concerns resolved with a focus on family satisfaction. There will be an assessment of the project after six months to determine program adjustments where needed. Finally, consistent tracking, analysis, documentation of findings and the development of recommendations to OCSE and CA DCSS that make recommendations for program replication in other jurisdictions.

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**Survey Question: Custodial and Non-Custodial Parents**

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**Please indicate whether you are the custodial parent or noncustodial parent:**

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<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percentage</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
I am the custodial parent.	62.20%	138

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I am the noncustodial parent.	<u>37.80%</u>	<u>84</u>
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>222</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>1</b>

Figure A.

Survey Questions - Parents Combined Results	%
Parents were <u>familiar with parenting time plans</u> prior to completing the survey.	54%
Parents <u>have a parenting time plan</u> in place.	31%
Parents <u>have an informal co-parenting</u> relationship.	23%
Parents who do not have a parenting time plan would be <u>willing to participate</u> to establish one if the other parent wanted too <u>even</u> if it meant their child support amount could change.	49%
Parents are <u>not interested</u> in learning more about parenting time plans	52%

Figure B.

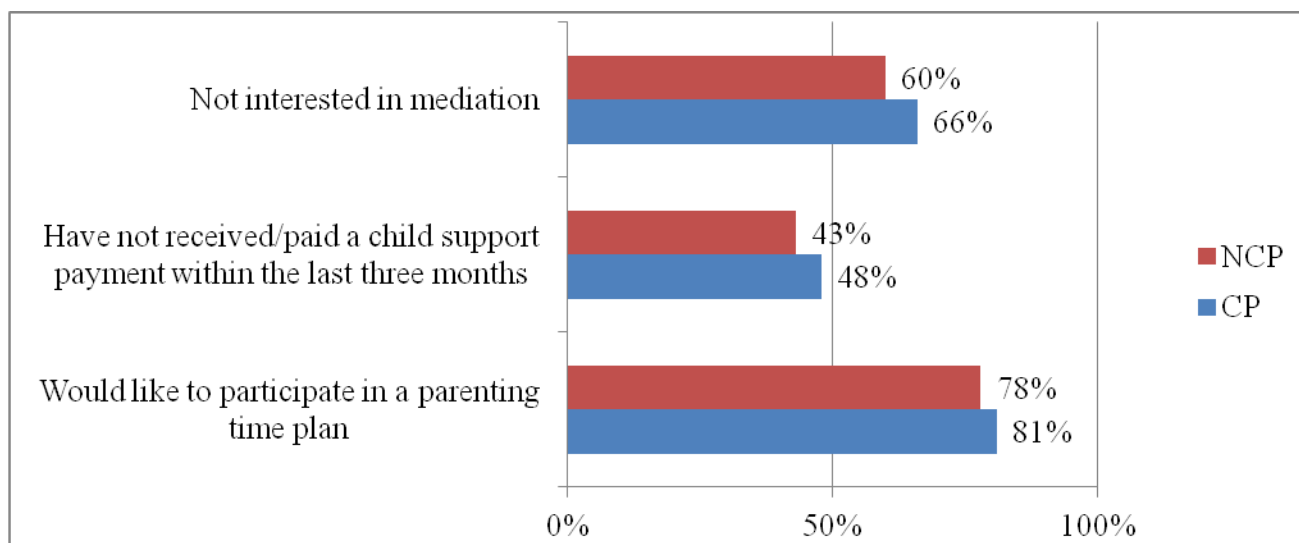


Figure C.

## Appendix A

**Parenting Time Plans**

**1. Parenting Time Plans are voluntary agreements that parents make to share time with and care for their children. Prior to completing this survey, did you know what a Parenting Time Plan was?**

☐ Parenting Time Plans are voluntary agreements that parents make to share time with and care for their children. Prior to completing this survey, did you know what a Parenting Time Plan was?

☐ Yes, I knew about Parenting Time Plans.

☐ I had heard of Parenting Time Plans but did not know what they were.

☐ I had not heard of Parenting Time Plans before taking this survey.

**2. Having both parents involved in the lives of children greatly benefits them and improves their odds for future success. Do you and the other parent of your children have a Parenting Time Plan or similar agreement in place?**

☐ Having both parents involved in the lives of children greatly benefits them and improves their Odds for future success. Do you and the other parent of your children have a Parenting Time Plan or similar agreement in place? Yes, we have a Parenting Time Plan in place.

☐ We have a casual agreement in place but it is not a formal Parenting Time Plan.

☐ No, we do not have a Parenting Time Plan or other type of agreement in place.

**3. Sometimes parents disagree and have trouble communicating about how to care for their children. Parenting Time Plans also include mediation services to help with conflict resolution. Would you be interested in mediation services?**

☐ Sometimes parents disagree and have trouble communicating about how to care for their children. Parenting Time Plans also include mediation services to help with conflict resolution. Would you be interested in mediation services?

☐ Yes, I am interested in mediation services.

☐ No, I am not interested in mediation services.

**4. Parents who spend more time with their children are more likely to make child support payments. Have you made or received received child support payments within the last three months?**

Parents who spend more time with their children are more likely to make child support payments. Have you made or received received child support payments within the last three months?

☐ Yes, I have made or received child support payments regularly within the last three months. I have made or received some child support but it has not been on a regular basis within the last three months.

☐ No, I have not made or received any child support payments within the last three months.

**5. If the other parent of your children wanted to establish a Parenting Time Plan, would you be willing to participate in the process?**

☐ If the other parent of your children wanted to establish a Parenting Time Plan, would you be willing to participate in the process?

☐ Yes, I would participate to establish a Parenting Time Plan.

- ☐ I'm not sure I would participate; I would need to think about it.
- ☐ No, I would not be willing to participate in establishing a Parenting Time Plan with the other parent.

**6. A parenting time plan may affect the amount of time each parent spends with their children which could change the amount of child support you are ordered to pay or receive. With this in mind, would you be willing to establish a Parenting Time Plan?**

- ☐ A parenting time plan may affect the amount of time each parent spends with their children which could change the amount of child support you are ordered to pay or receive.

With this in mind, would you be willing to establish a Parenting Time Plan?

- ☐ Yes, I am willing to establish a Parenting Time Plan.
- ☐ I'm not sure; I would need to think more about it.
- ☐ No, I am not willing to establish a Parenting Time Plan if it means my child support will be affected.

**7. Would you like to learn more about Parenting Time Plans?**

- ☐ Would you like to learn more about Parenting Time Plans?
  - ☐ Yes, I am interested in learning more.
  - ☐ No, I am not interested.

**8. Please indicate whether you are the custodial parent or noncustodial parent:**

- ☐ Please indicate whether you are the custodial parent or noncustodial parent:
  - ☐ I am the custodial parent.
  - ☐ I am the noncustodial parent.

Done

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**Appendix B**

**What is a “Parenting Time Plan?”** A Parenting Time Plan, sometimes called a custody-visitation agreement, is a written document that outlines how and when each parent will care for their child. These plans ensure consistency and help avoid conflict.

**The Superior Court of San Francisco** offers **FREE** services to families who are interested in establishing a Parenting Time Plan.

**The San Francisco Department of Child Support Services** is teaming up with the Superior Court to bring these services to you in the near future.

**Would you be interested in getting help creating a Parenting Time Plan?** Please take our **SHORT SURVEY** and provide your feedback. Participation is voluntary. Your opinion matters. Your responses will be kept confidential and will help us improve our services for you.

**The San Francisco Department of Child Support Services**  
617 Mission Street, San Francisco CA 94105 Tel. 1-866-901-3212  
On the web at [sfgov.org/dcss](http://sfgov.org/dcss) and [facebook.com/sfcdcss](https://facebook.com/sfcdcss)

**Appendix C***Interviewee Names, Titles, Department and Child Support Responsibilities*

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Department</b>	<b>Child Support Responsibility</b>
Respondent 1	<b>J. Pearson</b>	Director	Denver Center For Policy Research, Colorado	Researcher
Respondent 2	<b>E. Sorenson</b>	Technical Advisor	Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE)	Researcher
Respondent 3	<b>P. Lowry</b>	Director	Director of the Division of Child Support Services, Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services	State
Respondent 4	<b>M. Hayes</b>	Senior Program Manager	Division of Program Innovation Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) U.S. Department of Health and Human Services	Federal



### Appendix D

Question 1: What do you consider to be the major benefits of implementing an early intervention strategy with parenting time plans for: (i) the low income, never married, custodial and noncustodial parents receiving service from the child support program? (ii) the child support program?

Question 2: What do you consider as the major challenges of implementing an early intervention strategy with the development of parenting time plans for: (i) the low income, never married, custodial and noncustodial parents receiving service from the child support program? (ii) the child support program?

Question 3: What are the current barriers that prevent effective implementation of an early intervention strategy with the development of parenting time plans in: (i) the low income, never married, custodial and noncustodial parents receiving service from the child support program? (ii) the child support program?

Question 4: What information and resources are needed for effective implementation of an early intervention strategy with the development of parenting time plans for: (i) the low income, never married, custodial and noncustodial parents receiving service from the child support program? (ii) the child support program?

## Appendix E

**Figure 1: Survey Question 1: Custodial and Non-Custodial Parents**

**Parenting Time Plans are voluntary agreements that parents make to share time with and care for their children. Prior to completing this survey, did you know what a Parenting Time Plan was?**

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Yes, I knew about Parenting Time Plans.	33.90%	75
I had heard of Parenting Time Plans but did not know what they were.	12.20%	27
I had not heard of Parenting Time Plans before taking this survey.	<u>53.80%</u>	<u>119</u>
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>221</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>2</b>

**Figure 2: Survey Question 2: Custodial and Non-Custodial Parents**

**Having both parents involved in the lives of children greatly benefits them and improves their odds for future success. Do you and the other parent of your children have a Parenting Time Plan or similar agreement in place?**

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Yes, we have a Parenting Time Plan in place.	31.10%	68
We have a casual agreement in place but it is not a formal Parenting Time Plan.	23.30%	51
No, we do not have a Parenting Time Plan or other type of agreement in place.	<u>45.70%</u>	<u>100</u>
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>219</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>4</b>

**Figure 3: Survey Question 3: Custodial and Non-Custodial Parents**

**Sometimes parents disagree and have trouble communicating about how to care for their children. Parenting Time Plans also include mediation services to help with conflict resolution. Would you be interested in mediation services?**

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Yes, I am interested in mediation services.	35.90%	78

No, I am not interested in mediation services.	64.10%	139
	<i>answered question</i>	<u>217</u>
	<i>skipped question</i>	6

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**Figure 4: Survey Question 4: Custodial and Non-Custodial Parents**

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**Parents who spend more time with their children are more likely to make child support payments. Have you made or received received child support payments within the last three months?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes, I have made or received child support payments regularly within the last three months.	43.60%	96
I have made or received some child support but it has not been on a regular basis within the last three months.	10.50%	23
No, I have not made or received any child support payments within the last three months.	<u>45.90%</u>	<u>101</u>
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>220</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	3

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**Figure 5: Survey Question 5: Custodial and Non-Custodial Parents**

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**If the other parent of your children wanted to establish a Parenting Time Plan, would you be willing to participate in the process?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes, I would participate to establish a Parenting Time Plan.	49.30%	108
I'm not sure I would participate; I would need to think about it.	28.30%	62
No, I would not be willing to participate in establishing a Parenting Time Plan with the other parent.	<u>22.40%</u>	<u>49</u>
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>219</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	4

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**Figure 6: Survey Question 6: Custodial and Non-Custodial Parents**

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**A parenting time plan may affect the amount of time each parent spends with their children which could change the amount of child support you are ordered to pay or receive. With this in mind, would you be willing to establish a Parenting Time Plan?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes, I am willing to establish a Parenting Time Plan.	44.70%	96
I'm not sure; I would need to think more about it.	36.30%	78
No, I am not willing to establish a Parenting Time Plan if it means my child support will be affected.	<u>19.10%</u>	<u>41</u>
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>215</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>8</b>

Figure 7: Survey Question 7: Custodial and Non-Custodial Parents

Would you like to learn more about Parenting Time Plans?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes, I am interested in learning more.	48.10%	104
No, I am not interested.	51.90%	112
	<i>answered question</i>	<b><u>216</u></b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>7</b>

### Custodial Parent Responses

Figure 1.1: Survey Question 1: Custodial

Parenting Time Plans are voluntary agreements that parents make to share time with and care for their children. Prior to completing this survey, did you know what a Parenting Time Plan was?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes, I knew about Parenting Time Plans.	27.74%	38
I had heard of Parenting Time Plans but did not know what they were.	14.60%	20
I had not heard of Parenting Time Plans before taking this survey.	<u>57.66%</u>	<u>79</u>
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>137</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>1</b>

Figure 2.1: Survey Question 2: Custodial

**Having both parents involved in the lives of children greatly benefits them and improves their odds for future success. Do you and the other parent of your children have a Parenting Time Plan or similar agreement in place?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes, we have a Parenting Time Plan in place.	26.47%	36
We have a casual agreement in place but it is not a formal Parenting Time Plan.	19.85%	27
No, we do not have a Parenting Time Plan or other type of agreement in place.	<u>53.68%</u>	<u>73</u>
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>136</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>2</b>

**Figure 3.1: Survey Question 3: Custodial**

**Sometimes parents disagree and have trouble communicating about how to care for their children. Parenting Time Plans also include mediation services to help with conflict resolution. Would you be interested in mediation services?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes, I am interested in mediation services.	33.58%	45
No, I am not interested in mediation services.	66.42%	89
	<i>answered question</i>	<b><u>134</u></b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>4</b>

**Figure 4.1: Survey Question 4: Custodial**

**Parents who spend more time with their children are more likely to make child support payments. Have you made or received received child support payments within the last three months?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes, I have made or received child support payments regularly within the last three months.	41.30%	57
I have made or received some child support but it has not been on a regular basis within the last three months.	10.87%	15
No, I have not made or received any child support payments within the last three months.	<u>47.83%</u>	<u>66</u>
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>138</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>0</b>

**Figure 5.1: Survey Question 5: Custodial**

**If the other parent of your children wanted to establish a Parenting Time Plan, would you be willing to participate in the process?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes, I would participate to establish a Parenting Time Plan.	44.20%	61
I'm not sure I would participate; I would need to think about it.	34.06%	47
No, I would not be willing to participate in establishing a Parenting Time Plan with the other parent.	<u>21.74%</u>	<u>30</u>
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>138</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>0</b>

**Figure 6.1: Survey Question 6: Custodial**

**A parenting time plan may affect the amount of time each parent spends with their children which could change the amount of child support you are ordered to pay or receive. With this in mind, would you be willing to establish a Parenting Time Plan?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes, I am willing to establish a Parenting Time Plan.	39.55%	53
I'm not sure; I would need to think more about it.	41.04%	55
No, I am not willing to establish a Parenting Time Plan if it means my child support will be affected.	<u>19.40%</u>	<u>26</u>
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>134</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>4</b>

**Figure 7.1: Survey Question 7: Custodial**

**Would you like to learn more about Parenting Time Plans?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes, I am interested in learning more.	46.72%	64
No, I am not interested.	55.28%	73
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>137</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>1</b>

## Non-Custodial Parent Responses

**Figure 1.2: Survey Question 1: Non-Custodial Parents**

**Parenting Time Plans are voluntary agreements that parents make to share time with and care for their children. Prior to completing this survey, did you know what a Parenting Time Plan was?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes, I knew about Parenting Time Plans.	43.37%	36
I had heard of Parenting Time Plans but did not know what they were.	8.43%	7
I had not heard of Parenting Time Plans before taking this survey.	<u>48.19%</u>	<u>40</u>
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>83</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>1</b>

**Figure 2.2: Survey Question 2: Non-Custodial Parents**

**Having both parents involved in the lives of children greatly benefits them and improves their odds for future success. Do you and the other parent of your children have a Parenting Time Plan or similar agreement in place?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes, we have a Parenting Time Plan in place.	39.02%	32
We have a casual agreement in place but it is not a formal Parenting Time Plan.	29.27%	24
No, we do not have a Parenting Time Plan or other type of agreement in place.	<u>31.71%</u>	<u>26</u>
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>82</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>2</b>

**Figure 3.2: Survey Question 3: Non-Custodial Parents**

**Sometimes parents disagree and have trouble communicating about how to care for their children. Parenting Time Plans also include mediation services to help with conflict resolution. Would you be interested in mediation services?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes, I am interested in mediation services	40.24%	33
No, I am not interested in mediation services	<u>59.76</u>	<u>49</u>
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>82</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>2</b>

**Figure 4.2: Survey Question 4: Non-Custodial Parents**

**Parents who spend more time with their children are more likely to make child support payments. Have you made or received received child support payments within the last three months?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes, I have made or received child support payments regularly within the last three months.	46.91%	38
I have made or received some child support but it has not been on a regular basis within the last three months.	9.88%	8
No, I have not made or received any child support payments within the last three months.	<u>43.21%</u>	<u>35</u>
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>81</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>3</b>

**Figure 5.2: Survey Question 5: Non-Custodial Parents**

**If the other parent of your children wanted to establish a Parenting Time Plan, would you be willing to participate in the process?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes, I would participate to establish a Parenting Time Plan.	58.75%	47
I'm not sure I would participate; I would need to think about it.	18.75%	15
No, I would not be willing to participate in establishing a Parenting Time Plan with the other parent.	<u>22.50%</u>	<u>18</u>
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>219</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>4</b>

**Figure 6.2: Survey Question 6: Non-Custodial Parents**

**A parenting time plan may affect the amount of time each parent spends with their children which could change the amount of child support you are ordered to pay or receive. With this in mind, would you be willing to establish a Parenting Time Plan?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes, I am willing to establish a Parenting Time Plan.	53.75%	43
I'm not sure; I would need to think more about it.	28.75%	23
No, I am not willing to establish a Parenting Time Plan if it means my child support will be affected.	<u>17.50%</u>	<u>14</u>
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>80</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>4</b>

**Figure 7.2: Survey Question 7: Custodial and Non-Custodial Parents**



**Would you like to learn more about Parenting Time Plans?**

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Yes, I am interested in learning more.	51.28%	40
No, I am not interested.	48.72%	38
	<i>answered question</i>	<b><u>78</u></b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>6</b>

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