

# COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT

*Q&A on...*

**Child Support Referral**



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# CAPLAW

Community Action Program Legal Services, Inc.

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# Introduction

The federal Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funds local Community Action Agencies and other eligible entities to carry out a variety of activities designed to reduce poverty, revitalize low-income communities, and empower low-income families and individuals to become self-sufficient. The following Q&A is intended to assist state CSBG lead agencies and CSBG eligible entities in better understanding child support referral requirements. It is intended to provide practical guidance based on relevant laws, but is not authorized or approved by the federal Office of Community Services, the office within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) that administers the block grant, and does not constitute legal advice. Relevant sections of laws referenced in this guidance are located at the end of this document.

## 1. Does the federal CSBG Act require CAAs to provide child support referrals?

Yes. The federal CSBG Act requires all Community Action Agencies (CAAs) during each fiscal year to:

1. Inform custodial parents in single-parent families that participate in CSBG-funded programs, activities, or services about the availability of child support services; and
2. Refer eligible parents to the child support offices of state and local governments.

42 U.S.C. § 9919(b).

## 2. To which agency should child support cases be referred?

Each state has an agency or office designated under state law to enforce child support obligations. Contact information for the different state child support agencies is available on the federal Department of Health and Human Services [website](#).

## 3. What are actions a CAA may take to promote compliance with the child support referral requirement?

We recommend that each CAA adopt a child support referral policy, as well as procedures for making child support referrals. A child support referral policy and related procedures educate CAA staff on their responsibilities to provide the child support referrals and helps establish a CAA's compliance with the referral requirement.

We also suggest that CAAs distribute a standard notice to clients during intake. The notice would notify single parents about their potential eligibility for child support services from the state child support agency.

“A child support referral policy and related procedures educate CAA staff on their responsibilities relating to the child support referral services requirement...”

## 4. What might a child support referral policy typically cover or include?

Generally, such a policy would explain that clients of any CSBG-funded program are eligible for child support referral services, subject to confirmation that the client is the custodial parent in a single-parent family and not currently receiving child support as a source of income. The policy also often explains that once eligibility for the referral service is confirmed, the staff conducting client intake, such as a caseworker, will:

- Inform the custodial parent about the availability of child support services.

- Refer clients who are the custodial parent to the state agency charged with child support enforcement.
- Make available for single-parent clients application forms for child support enrollment.

*See Appendix A for a sample child support referral policy.*

## 5. What might a CAA include in its referral procedure?

Child support referral procedures set forth the process that staff conducting client intake, such as a case worker, will follow to ensure compliance with the referral requirement. Such procedures typically require a caseworker to:

“Child support referral procedures set forth the process that staff conducting client intake... will follow to ensure compliance...”

1. Assess a client’s eligibility for referral services by determining whether they are (a) the custodial parent and (b) not receiving child support as a source of income.
2. Notify the client of the type of services available from the state’s child support enforcement agency, which often include:
  - Locating a parent
  - Arranging for paternity testing
  - Establishing a support order
  - Enforcing a support order
3. Offer to provide the client information from the state’s child support enforcement agency regarding available child support services, if such information exists, including the contact number for the agency and a copy of the application for such services.
4. Indicate on the CAA’s client intake form whether a referral was made and if information was provided to the client regarding child support services.
5. Track any referrals in the CAA’s tracking system.

*See Appendix B for a sample child support referral procedure.*

## 6. What might be included in a CAA’s notice to client about referral services?

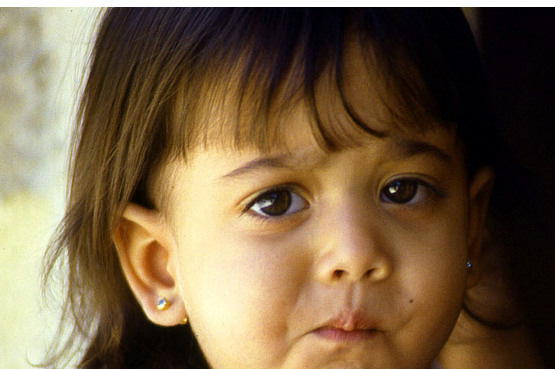
The notice might include eligibility requirements, the types of services the state enforcement agency can provide, and a way to contact the enforcement agency for more information.

*See Appendix C for a model notice.*

## 7. Is formal training required for CAA staff responsible for providing child support referrals?

No formal training is required under the federal CSBG Act; however a CAA should check its state CSBG statutes and regulations, if any exist, to ensure that there are no special training or other requirements relating to providing child support referral services. Even though no formal training is generally required, we suggest that CAAs train staff responsible for providing child support referrals on their policy and procedures.

# Appendices



# Appendix A

## [CAA] Child Support Referral Policy

To ensure that the CSBG statute regarding child support referral procedures is being implemented within all CSBG supported programs, [CAA] has included this procedure in its intake process. During the client's initial intake, the client is asked if he or she is the custodial parent in a single-parent family. If this status is confirmed, then the caseworker/intake worker will:

- Inform the custodial parent about the availability of child support services.
- Refer the custodial parent to the [state child support enforcement agency].
- Have available for all clients the [state child support enforcement agency]'s [child support intake form & application for full child support services].

Staff should not act in a manner to be interpreted as giving legal advice but should assure that custodial parents in single-parent families are referred to the [state child support enforcement agency].

# Appendix B

## [CAA] Child Support Referral Procedure

If a client is a single parent, who has custody of a child under the age of 18 the client may be eligible for help from the [state child support enforcement agency] with obtaining child support from the father or mother of their child

### ASSESSING ELIGIBILITY

1. Your client indicated that they have custody of their child/children on the Intake Form:

Are you the custodial parent/guardian of a child/children?

Yes  No

### AND

2. Your client did **NOT** indicate that they are receiving child support as a source of income on the Income Verification Form:

Step 8: Financial Assessment		
What is your monthly income? (please check all that apply)		
	Income Source	Monthly Amount (\$)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Wages/Earned Income	\$750
<input type="checkbox"/>	Self-Employment	
<input type="checkbox"/>	TAFDC (Welfare)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Unemployment Insurance	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Social Security	\$250
<input type="checkbox"/>	Supplemental Security Income	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Social Security Disability Income	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Veteran's Benefits	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Worker's Compensation	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Emergency Aid to Elders, Disabled, and Children	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pension/Retirement Income	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Rental Income	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Alimony	\$300
<input type="checkbox"/>	Child Support	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Educational Assistance	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Family Support	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Odd Jobs	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	
<input type="checkbox"/>	No Income	

3. Provide the client with the following information about services provided by the [state child support enforcement agency]:
  - Locating a parent
  - Arranging for paternity testing
  - Establishing a support order
  - Enforcing a support order

4. Give the client a copy of the application for such services to be submitted to the [state child support enforcement agency].
5. Fill out the **For Staff Use Only** portion of the [CAA name] Intake Form indicating whether a referral to the [state child support enforcement agency] was made and information regarding available services including a contact number for the agency and a copy of the application was provided to the client.
6. Enter any applicable tracking codes for the services rendered into [CAA]'s tracking software.

# Appendix C

## [CAA] Child Support Referral Notice

### Are you a single parent who has custody of a child under the age of 18?

If you are, you may be eligible for help from the [state child support enforcement agency] with obtaining child support from the father or mother of your child.

### What types of services would the [state child support enforcement agency] provide?

Some of the services the [state child support enforcement agency] provides to eligible parents include:

- Locating a parent
- Arranging for paternity testing
- Establishing a support order
- Enforcing a support order

### How do I find out more?

We can provide you with information from the [state child support enforcement agency] which explains the services and eligibility requirements and includes a copy of the application to be submitted to the [state child support enforcement agency]. **Ask a member of the [CAA] staff for more information or contact the [state child support enforcement agency] directly at:**

[State child support enforcement agency contact information]

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