

PROCEDURAL JUSTICE-INFORMED
ALTERNATIVES TO CONTEMPT

PROJECT BRIEF
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Integrating Procedural Justice Principles into Child Support Case Management

HOW STAFF MEMBERS EXPERIENCED THE PROCEDURAL JUSTICE-INFORMED ALTERNATIVES TO CONTEMPT (PJAC) DEMONSTRATION

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The Procedural Justice-Informed Alternatives to Contempt (PJAC) demonstration project integrates principles of procedural justice into enforcement practices in six child support agencies across the United States. Procedural justice is fairness in processes that resolve disputes and result in decisions. Research has shown that if people perceive a process to be fair, they will be more likely to comply with the outcome of that process, whether or not the outcome is favorable to them.¹

Child support agencies aim to secure payments from noncustodial parents to support the well-being of their children.² The PJAC demonstration project targets noncustodial parents who are at the point of being referred to the legal system for civil contempt of court because they have not met their child support obligations, though child support agency staff members have determined that they have the ability to pay. The goal of PJAC services is to address noncustodial parents' reasons for nonpayment, improve the consistency of their payments, and promote their positive engagement with the child support agency and the custodial parent.

The PJAC demonstration was developed by the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE), which is within the Administration for Children and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. MDRC, in collaboration with research partners at MEF Associates and the Center for Court Innovation, is leading a random assignment study of the model's effectiveness. Between 2018 and 2020, over 11,000 noncustodial parents

were randomly assigned, either to a group who was offered PJAC services or to a "business-as-usual" group who instead proceeded with the standard contempt process. The Georgia Division of Child Support Services provides oversight of the evaluation. For an overview of the PJAC demonstration, see "[A New Response to Child Support Noncompliance: Introducing the Procedural Justice-Informed Alternatives to Contempt Project](#)."³

This brief is the eighth in a series developed primarily for child support practitioners and administrators that shares lessons learned as the six child support agencies (the project sites) implement the PJAC model. It describes the delivery of PJAC services from PJAC case managers' perspectives, drawing on interviews with PJAC staff members held in the spring of 2019 and the summer of 2020, data from the PJAC management information system, and PJAC case manager responses to a staff survey fielded in the spring of 2020.⁴

¹ Swaner et al. (2018).

² The noncustodial parent is the parent who has been ordered to pay child support, and is generally the parent who does not live with the child. The other parent is referred to as the custodial parent.

³ Mage, Baird, and Miller (2019).

⁴ A management information system is a computer-based system used to capture information about program participants and the activities they engage in with the program's staff.

CHILD SUPPORT AGENCIES PARTICIPATING IN THE PJAC DEMONSTRATION

- ▶ Arizona Division of Child Support Services (Maricopa County)
- ▶ California Department of Child Support Services (Riverside and San Bernardino Counties)
- ▶ Michigan Office of Child Support (Muskegon County)
- ▶ Stark County Job and Family Services, Division of Child Support Enforcement (Ohio)
- ▶ Franklin County Child Support Enforcement Agency (Ohio)
- ▶ Virginia Division of Child Support Enforcement (Richmond and Newport News District Offices)

INTRODUCTION

The role of a child support case manager is generally to establish, modify, and enforce child support orders. Under the PJAC model, case managers are trained to perform these duties while applying principles of procedural justice, with the expectation that they will engage both parents through comprehensive case review, frequent contacts, and dispute resolution, all to address barriers to regular payment.

This brief begins with an overview of the PJAC service model and intervention design from the PJAC case managers' viewpoint, followed by information on the skills and training that case managers found most useful during implementation. It also provides details on PJAC implementation in practice and PJAC case managers' perspective on the intervention itself.

THE PJAC SERVICE MODEL

Because all parents eligible for PJAC services have a history of nonpayment, their cases can be especially challenging for staff members to manage. For example, some parents have had negative interactions with the child support program in the past, are not able to see their children regularly, or

have conflicts with custodial parents, and therefore may be reluctant to engage and unwilling to make payments even if they are financially able to do so. Others may struggle to pay their child support consistently due to difficulties maintaining stable employment.⁵ Identifying and addressing underlying reasons for nonpayment can be a time- and labor-intensive process, as parents in the PJAC study often have complicated cases with high amounts of child support debt, may actively avoid contact with child support workers, and frequently face obstacles to making regular payments. For this reason, PJAC case managers work with smaller caseloads than their business-as-usual counterparts. According to a staff survey, the average PJAC case-

PROCEDURAL JUSTICE

The five key elements of procedural justice as applied to the child support context

- ▶ **Respect:** Parents should believe they were treated with dignity and respect and their concerns were taken seriously.
- ▶ **Understanding:** Parents should understand the child support process and have their questions answered.
- ▶ **Voice:** Parents should have a chance to be heard by sharing their perspectives and expressing their concerns.
- ▶ **Neutrality:** Parents should perceive the decision-making process to be impartial.
- ▶ **Helpfulness:** Parents should feel that the child support agency was helpful and interested in addressing their situations.

⁵ While noncustodial parents enrolled in the PJAC demonstration have been determined able to pay by their child support agencies based on state guidelines, ability-to-pay assessments are subjective and often focus on the absence of an inability to pay. Some parents in the study sample do struggle with employability and maintaining consistent employment. For more information, see Cummings (2020).



load has about 275 cases while business-as-usual caseloads average well over 2,000 (2,328). Smaller caseloads give PJAC case managers more time to devote to each individual case.

Figure 1 offers an overview of the PJAC service model. On any given day, a PJAC case manager may conduct initial outreach, mediate communication between parents, review case histories, or accompany parents to court hearings, among other activities. Because some of these tasks differ from business-as-usual child support services, PJAC case managers are required to use different skills—leaning more heavily on dispute resolution, problem-solving, and interpersonal communication.

When a PJAC case manager is assigned a new non-custodial parent, the first step is to complete a **case review**—a thorough review of the parent’s background and history with child support, looking at all of that parent’s cases to understand the case history and identify potential reasons for noncompliance or past mistakes on the case or cases. This review is also an opportunity to identify instances where a parent may not have been treated in a procedurally just manner, including times in the past when that parent attempted to engage with the child support program but the program did not address the parent’s concerns. Next, case managers begin **outreach and engagement**, using various communication methods to provide ongoing, personalized support to parents. Following outreach to parents, PJAC case managers must determine whether to pursue a **case conference**, in which case managers meet with both parents to identify reasons for nonpayment and develop a mutually agreed-upon plan to move toward compliance.⁶ Agreements made during case conferences are documented in **case action plans**; these plans may also include services or other forms of support that PJAC case managers provide.

The next and final phase outlined by the PJAC model is **case maintenance**. In this phase, a case manager follows through with the steps outlined in a case action plan. These steps may include tasks such as modifying the order outlining how much a parent must pay, assisting with issues related to parenting time (how much time each parent gets with the child), reinstating professional or driver’s licenses

suspended as a consequence of nonpayment, [negotiating compromises on child support debt](#),⁷ and referring parents to supportive services, among other activities that may help parents get back on track with their child support obligations. During the case-maintenance phase, case managers continually check in with parents to monitor payments and respond to requests.

Enforcement measures such as license suspensions, civil contempt filings, and other coercive methods of obtaining payment are used for PJAC parents who remain disengaged and continue not to comply with their child support orders. While many enforcement actions are automatic and policies vary by site, some PJAC case managers have discretion regarding if and when to apply certain measures; in particular, civil contempt filings are discretionary for the group offered PJAC services. The PJAC model requires case managers to work toward solutions with parents before considering these enforcement measures, which often feel punitive to parents.

Caseload Size and Manageability

For PJAC case managers, identifying, acknowledging, and ultimately addressing noncustodial parents’ reasons for nonpayment can be time- and labor- intensive. As previously noted, PJAC case managers have smaller caseloads than business-as-usual enforcement workers—in part because the composition of their caseloads tend to differ. Business-as-usual caseloads typically consist of a mix of paying and nonpaying cases. Paying cases generally take little effort to manage, while nonpaying cases can require significant time and resources. The PJAC demonstration specifically targeted *only* nonpaying cases, meaning PJAC case managers have a far greater proportion of nonpaying, time- and resource-intensive cases on their caseloads.

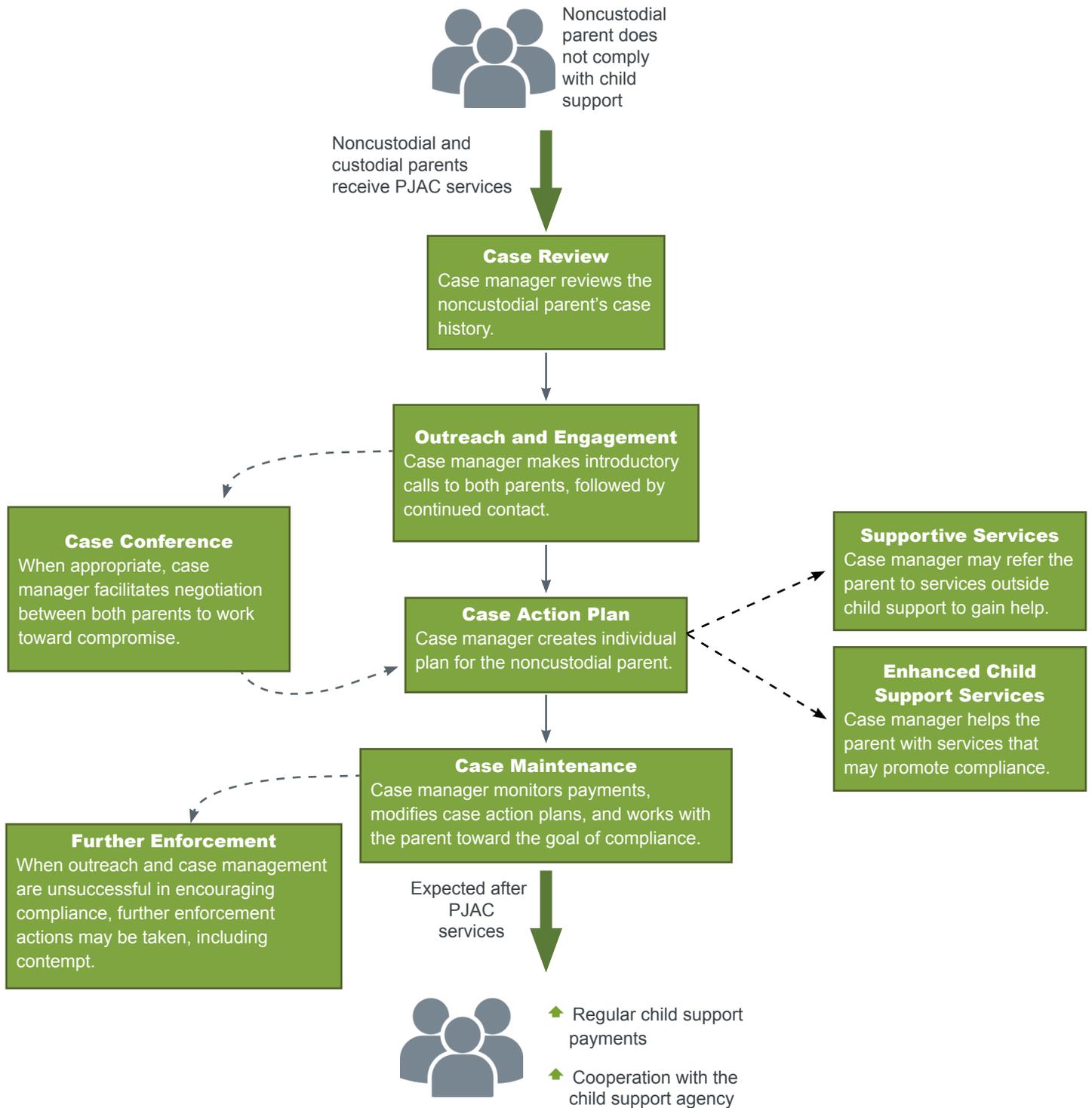
Even with smaller caseloads, however, PJAC case managers identified several factors that affect how well they can manage their work:

- ▶ The challenging nature of PJAC cases. For a parent to be enrolled in PJAC, the child support agency must have confirmed nonpayment or severe underpayment for several months, attempted all possible means of out-

⁶Webster (2020).

⁷Phillips (2021).

FIGURE 1
The PJAC Model



reach, and exhausted most other enforcement actions.⁸ PJAC case managers said that unwillingness to pay and lack of understanding of the process were common reasons for nonpayment. Unwillingness to pay could result from several factors, including mistrust of the child sup-

port program or conflict with the custodial parent. PJAC case managers also identified [lack of employability or consistent employment](#) as an underlying challenge (particularly for parents with criminal records).⁹

⁸ Treskon and Skemer (2021).

⁹ Cummings (2020).

- **Intensive individual contact.** To give parents a *voice* and come to understand challenges that may interfere with regular payments, case managers must make frequent, personalized contact with both parents. Some PJAC case managers found doing so to be emotionally laborious and taxing, given the complicated, high-conflict nature of some parents' relationships.
- **A broad range of duties.** At some child support agencies, staff members may manage specific parts of the child support process—for example, one staff member may be responsible for processing order modifications for cases across the agency. In contrast, PJAC case managers handle most aspects of their cases—including connecting parents with supportive services, attending court hearings, and resolving disputes between parties. Many PJAC case managers found this approach challenging, especially those who had to learn new skills or processes.
- **Additional PJAC responsibilities.** In addition to providing PJAC services to parents, PJAC case managers had the additional duties of documenting service delivery for evaluation purposes; completing extensive, specialized training; and participating in regular project-related calls with OCSE and other child support agencies involved in the demonstration.

Smaller caseloads allow PJAC case managers to spend more time on each case. However, some PJAC staff members who entered the program after working in business-as-usual child support services reported that service delivery in PJAC was more challenging than standard casework despite the smaller caseloads due to the demanding nature of PJAC cases, the attendant interpersonal labor,¹⁰ and the mix of child support skills PJAC service delivery requires. (At the same time, PJAC case managers also reported they found the PJAC approach to be more rewarding, a point discussed further below.)

Training

As mentioned above, the PJAC model requires case managers to use different skills than they may

have in business-as-usual child support enforcement. All PJAC staff members received [training](#) in procedural justice, responses to domestic violence, dispute resolution, and trauma-informed care.¹¹ After the intervention launched, some received additional training in topics such as implicit bias,¹² cultural sensitivity, and self-care/personal well-being, along with advanced training in procedural justice and dispute resolution for high-conflict parents and families. Staff members also engaged in collaborative training, including:

- **Learning-community webinars.** PJAC staff members at all demonstration sites joined OCSE to collaborate during monthly learning-community webinars. The subjects of these calls have included responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, advanced procedural justice training, and case-study presentations.
- **Case-analysis calls.** Case-analysis calls are monthly meetings between PJAC sites and OCSE where sites and case managers receive individual support. In these calls, case managers discuss their cases and receive advice on how to approach challenges with methods and responses using principles of procedural justice.
- **PJAC conferences.** There have been four in-person, all-site conferences since the PJAC project began. At these conferences, PJAC staff members from the different sites have had the chance to interact with one another and share their experiences and expertise. They have also received additional, interactive training and heard from experts on topics such as trauma-informed care and domestic violence.

¹¹ Rodney (2019). According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2014), trauma-informed care “realizes the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery; recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system; and responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices, and seeks to actively resist re-traumatization.”

¹² Implicit bias is defined as “a bias or prejudice that is present but not consciously held or recognized.” See Merriam-Webster (2021). Implicit bias training works to help staff members recognize, acknowledge, and work against any harm that may be created by implicit bias.

¹⁰ Interpersonal labor refers to work that requires case managers to interact closely with parents, including assisting them with issues that may concern their personal welfare, trauma, or other difficult topics.



In a survey, over 60 percent of PJAC staff members said that they found learning-community webinars to be helpful, while about 86 percent found case-analysis calls to be helpful. Even more—over 90 percent—said the PJAC conferences were helpful.

Staffing and Structure

When sites began delivering PJAC services in the fall of 2017, most of the newly hired PJAC case managers had experience working in business-as-usual child support enforcement in their agencies.¹³ As PJAC implementation continued and sites were given additional funding to hire new staff members, site managers reported seeking out candidates who were adaptable, interested in social work, and eager to help people, having determined that these characteristics were important for effective PJAC case management.

PJAC teams are designed to be highly collaborative—both across and within sites. Sites hold regular team meetings in which PJAC case managers discuss their cases and brainstorm solutions to challenges. When the COVID-19 pandemic started, many of these meetings moved to virtual platforms. Some case managers found it challenging to collaborate as effectively while working from home.

Supervisors serve as important resources for PJAC case managers as they deliver services to parents. Case managers at all sites reported frequent contact with their supervisors in both scheduled and impromptu meetings. On the staff survey, nearly all PJAC case managers said they were able to get helpful, prompt answers when they had questions about their work: Over 95 percent of respondents said they knew whom to ask when they had a question about PJAC services, and all agreed that they felt comfortable doing so. Respondents were also in agreement that they received helpful answers to their questions about the PJAC project. These results suggest that PJAC teams operated under strong management and that guidance was readily available to case managers.

PJAC IN PRACTICE

Case managers juggle numerous cases at different stages in the PJAC process. Drawing on PJAC case managers' survey responses and qualitative interviews, Figure 2 illustrates a hypothetical workday for

a case manager—showing the work a case manager might plan to complete, as well as tasks that pop up unscheduled. This section elaborates on the components of the PJAC model touched on above, focusing on how case managers implement them in practice.

Foundational Casework

To engage parents using procedural justice, PJAC case managers first need to develop an understanding of parents' cases and their child support histories through comprehensive **case reviews**.

Drawing information from numerous databases, these case reviews inform how case managers work with parents—for example, by flagging safety concerns that may exist between parents or highlighting potential reasons for nonpayment. With greater understanding of the circumstances surrounding each case, PJAC case managers can provide more individually tailored services to parents and address their specific needs (illustrating the procedural justice principle of *respect*). During these close reviews of cases, many case managers also reported that they take the time to find and correct errors—for example, adjusting cases in which payment has been incorrectly documented, orders have not been properly modified, or case information is outdated (illustrating *helpfulness*).

PJAC case managers estimated that case reviews typically take from 15 minutes to an hour to complete. Case reviews for older cases can be especially time-consuming, both because there is often more information to review and because dated records can be hard to find.

Interactions with Parents

Part of what makes the PJAC model different is the degree to which case managers are expected to engage one-on-one with parents to gain a thorough understanding of their cases and their needs. Whether a case manager is answering questions from a custodial parent on the phone, explaining processes to a noncustodial parent by text message, or hosting a case conference with both parents, communication is a core aspect of PJAC case management—and one that can be time-intensive.

Business-as-usual child support enforcement communicates with parents about their cases mostly using letters generated automatically and sent by mail. PJAC case managers use phone calls, text messages, emails,

¹³Rodney (2019).

FIGURE 2
Hypothetical Workday for a PJAC Case Manager

	Planned Activities Planned meetings and time blocks	Unplanned Activities Unexpected work events
9 AM	Case action plan Meet with a noncustodial parent at a location convenient for the parent to go over paperwork and answer questions.	
10		Outreach and engagement Respond to text messages from a custodial parent about the status of a case.
11	Case conferences Attempt to schedule a case conference with two custodial parents associated with a noncustodial parent. Reach out to the first and leave a message. Reach out to the second, who answers and engages in an in-depth discussion of the case, but does not want to meet with the noncustodial parent in person. Gather information that could be used for a shuttle negotiation.	
12 PM		Outreach and engagement Assist a noncustodial parent who has dropped into the child support office to discuss an issue related to parenting time.
1	Outreach and engagement Make initial phone calls to newly enrolled custodial and noncustodial parents, introducing PJAC services.	
2	Enhanced child support services Review child support debt on several cases and assess order modification requests. Submit modification paperwork for qualifying parents.	
3		Case conference The first custodial parent from earlier in the day returns the phone call and is willing to meet in person. Reach out to the noncustodial parent and leave a message about scheduling.
4	PJAC team meeting Meet with internal PJAC team to discuss challenging cases and identify solutions.	

letters, and social media to [reach parents](#) and may adjust the methods they use depending on what parents are most receptive to.¹⁴ While business-as-usual staff members at some project sites also make use of this broader range of communication options, PJAC case managers reported doing so far more regularly—particularly with social media and texting.

Case managers give parents their direct phone numbers and encourage them to reach out whenever they have questions or need assistance with their child support orders (*helpfulness* and *understanding*).¹⁵ They have reported that parents also call them to talk through other issues (*voice*), such as concerns about their health care coverage or their experienc-

es with the [COVID-19 pandemic](#).¹⁶ Some PJAC case managers said that this type of communication has been helpful on cases, making it easier to understand parents' individual circumstances and stay in touch. However, a substantial minority of PJAC case managers also noted that this more personal level of communication can be emotionally intense at times, given the difficult nature of the challenges—and sometimes the traumas—that parents discuss with them. Because the PJAC model emphasizes the importance of helpfulness, often interpreted as case managers making themselves available to parents and responding promptly to their messages, communication could be especially time-consuming.

¹⁴ Kusayeva (2020).

¹⁵ Kusayeva (2020).

¹⁶ Baird, Hayes, Henderson, and Johnson (2020).



In addition to interacting with parents one-on-one, the PJAC model also includes **case conferences** where PJAC case managers facilitate dialogue between both parents, either by bringing them together or by shuttling information back and forth. In the first 12 months following study enrollment, across all PJAC sites, about 27 percent of all noncustodial parents participated in a case conference; when a case manager succeeded in reaching a custodial parent, the figure rose to about 46 percent of noncustodial parents.¹⁷ PJAC case managers reported spending about three hours per week conducting case conferences.¹⁸

To prepare them to lead these case conferences, PJAC case managers received training in dispute resolution, domestic violence response, cultural sensitivity, and procedural justice. This training informed their efforts to make case conferences a safe space for both parents, for example, by hosting in-person conferences in neutral locations easily accessible to both parents (*helpfulness*) and ensuring that both parents were able to provide their perspectives and discuss their concerns and wishes (*voice*). Case managers reported using approaches informed by procedural justice to make parents feel comfortable, such as explaining the process beforehand to help set expectations (*understanding*), or pointing out spaces where parents could go if they needed to take a break at any point (*helpfulness* and *respect*). Case managers remarked that joint, in-person conferences offered a unique opportunity to demonstrate *neutrality* by giving parents the same information and attention simultaneously. They hoped parents could see that case managers were a resource to them both and information did not get lost in translation because all parties were present.

Many case managers reported that various factors—including tension or discomfort between parents, scheduling challenges, and parents' unwillingness to meet—can make joint case conferences difficult to pursue. The most common type of case conference in PJAC is a shuttle case conference, in which case managers “shuttle” information back and

forth between parents, often by phone.¹⁹ Some case managers believed that this format, which may take four to five phone calls, avoids the tension that can come with bringing parents together.

Drawing on the relationships that they build with parents—through one-on-one communication, case conferences, or both—case managers develop **case action plans** to achieve mutually agreed-upon goals. These plans map out any compromises and agreements achieved during case conferences, as well as commitments made by parents to work toward compliance.²⁰ PJAC case managers reported spending about three hours per week on case action plans.

Case action plans aim to reflect parents' particular situations, goals, and barriers to achieving those goals. Some case action plans document general goals such as “payment” and “employment,” and others map out specifics about parenting time, payment amounts, and participation in supportive services that can help noncustodial parents address barriers to payment (employment services, for example). One case manager reported working with parents to identify challenges and write corresponding goals in the case action plan; for example, when one parent said that a barrier was difficulty finding a ride to work, the case manager marked “stable transportation” as a goal and got that parent a bus pass.

Once case action plans are established, PJAC case managers track parents' progress toward their goals. Some case managers reported sending prompts to parents—for example, a reminder text to a parent about a weekly parenting-time obligation (*helpfulness*). Other case managers said they check on parents to gauge their progress, but are otherwise not actively engaged in the process once a case has entered this phase. If changes occur in the case, plans are amended as needed.

Services and Support

PJAC case managers use **enhanced child support services** to engage parents who are difficult to reach

¹⁷ These figures are calculated among parents enrolled in the PJAC services group between February 1, 2018 and May 31, 2020.

¹⁸ These time estimates were calculated for a standard 40-hour work week using responses from the staff survey.

¹⁹ Webster (2020).

²⁰ Case action plans generally document commitments made by noncustodial parents, but when custodial parents make commitments during case conferences or other meetings, those are recorded as well.



or who are not participating in PJAC services.²¹ For example, some reported using driver's license reinstatements as an incentive to encourage parents to make incremental progress toward compliance. Such offers opened a dialogue between case managers and parents while encouraging parents to participate.

Many services that PJAC case managers provide are not unique to PJAC—for example, order modifications and license reinstatements are also available in business-as-usual enforcement. What differentiates PJAC is *how* case managers deliver these services. PJAC case managers look for opportunities to take actions that may be appropriate for a particular case (*helpfulness*)—for example, by noticing that parents are now earning less than they were when their orders were set and can therefore receive order modifications, or that they are eligible for debt-forgiveness programs for debts owed to the state.²² Once a necessary service is identified, case managers work with parents to explain the process (*understanding*) and to help them navigate things like paperwork or court processes (*helpfulness*).

Across the six project sites, PJAC staff members work with local partners that offer services related to employment, mediation, counseling, substance abuse, housing, and more, and refer parents to these services when they need additional support.

For example, when parents and their case managers identify inconsistent employment as a reason for nonpayment, case managers can refer parents to services that help them develop job-readiness skills and connect them with employers (*helpfulness*). Many case managers reported giving careful consideration to which services would be most beneficial—weighing factors such as parents' needs and what level of participation might be feasible for them.

Some PJAC case managers said their involvement in the supportive services process ends after they make a referral. Others remain involved, checking in with parents and partners to gauge progress—especially with parents who agree to work with referral partners as a condition of their case action plans. These differences may be based on norms at

different sites, personal inclinations, or case managers' relationships with local service providers. On average, PJAC case managers estimated that they spend about two hours per week on service referrals.

PJAC Enforcement Approaches

While the PJAC model aims to engage parents using nonpunitive strategies, **enforcement actions** are still taken in cases where parents continue not to comply with their orders and do not respond to repeated contact attempts from their PJAC case managers. PJAC case managers used less of their time (10 percent) on enforcement than their business-as-usual counterparts (17 percent)—a notable difference considering the far higher proportion of non-paying cases on PJAC caseloads.

In some cases, enforcement actions that are triggered automatically under business-as-usual enforcement are discretionary for PJAC case managers. However, what may make a greater difference in enforcement between PJAC services and business-as-usual enforcement is the way that PJAC case managers are trained to approach enforcement and communicate with parents. Under PJAC, case managers will attempt to reach parents numerous times before enforcement actions are triggered—aiming to hear parents' side of the story regarding nonpayment and to explain potential enforcement consequences to parents in an effort to encourage compliance.

Moreover, taking the initiative to communicate with parents can sometimes make enforcement unnecessary. For example, if a PJAC case manager is in contact with a parent who has lost a job and was unable to pay for several months, that case manager could potentially suppress a pending license suspension—an enforcement measure that often actually reduces a parent's ability to earn income—and instead work to address the parent's employment needs (*helpfulness*).

PJAC STAFF PERSPECTIVES

This section highlights comments that PJAC case managers have made about the PJAC intervention as a whole, including their perspectives on core procedural justice principles, their workload, and the model's design.

- **Experience using procedural justice principles.** A small number of PJAC case managers

²¹ Enhanced child support service offerings varied slightly across PJAC sites.

²² Phillips (2021).



felt that procedural justice principles (such as *respect* and *helpfulness*) were not new to them, and that formally incorporating them into their work did not cause a significant shift in how they interacted with parents (for those who were previously employed as business-as-usual enforcement workers). However, most staff members who commented on procedural justice reported that the training did have a notable impact, and overwhelmingly felt that the difference was positive. Several case managers reported feeling that they were treating parents more fairly, building greater trust with parents, and offering better overall services under PJAC.

- **Program expectations and workload.** Case managers had different opinions about how manageable they found their workloads. Among those who talked about the manageability of their caseloads in interviews, about one-third found the intervention to be unmanageable, one-third found it to be manageable, and one-third described it as occasionally or conditionally manageable—for example, manageable some weeks but not others, or manageable at the beginning of the study when caseloads were smaller. Staff members who felt that the intervention was manageable reported that, with training, staff support, and smaller caseloads, services were actually easier to provide in PJAC than they were in business-as-usual conditions. Staff members who felt the intervention was unmanageable noted that the thorough, individ-

ually tailored approach to case management was time-consuming, even with smaller caseloads, and a handful suggested that reducing caseloads further might make the intervention's goals feel more realistic.

- **Overall perceptions of the PJAC model.** A majority of case managers expressed positive opinions of the PJAC model, noting that integrating procedural justice principles and tailoring their approach to case management to parents' needs allowed them to engage parents better than they had before. However, a sizeable minority of PJAC case managers also found that the level of engagement mapped out by the model was difficult to achieve in practice and, at times, unrealistic—particularly with respect to parental outreach. PJAC case managers are supposed to provide a broad range of services to each parent on their caseloads—and some of those services require additional skills and training.

CONCLUSION

To integrate principles of procedural justice into child support case management, PJAC case managers undergo extensive training and reshape the ways in which they provide services to parents. While this model can be time- and labor-intensive and emotionally demanding, many PJAC case managers also reported that it was professionally rewarding. Future publications will offer broader lessons on PJAC implementation and insights on parents' perspectives on and experiences with PJAC services.

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