

Do MFIP Participants Receiving Child Support Differ from Those Not Receiving Child Support? Findings from 1998 to 2003

What is child support and how is it established?

A court may order basic, medical, and child care support for the care of a child. For divorced or legally separated couples, a court may order one or both parents to pay child support. If a child's parents are not married, paternity may need to be established before a court will order child support. In state fiscal year 2003, there were 194,027 cases with court orders for child support in Minnesota, according to the Child Support Division of the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS).

How does child support relate to the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP)?

MFIP provides cash and food assistance to low-income families with children. It is the state's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) welfare program, and in 2003 the average monthly caseload was 45,017 (DHS).

- Under MFIP, child support counts as unearned income, which can reduce the family's MFIP grant.
- A court order for child support continues after a parent leaves MFIP. Beginning in January 2007, guidelines base the amount of child support on the incomes of both parents (Minn. Stat. § 518A.34). Prior to 2007, child support guidelines were based on the income of the noncustodial parent.
- An individual receiving MFIP must cooperate with the child support enforcement agency, unless there is evidence of "good cause" for not doing so. Minnesota statutes requires DHS to sanction noncompliant individuals until they are in compliance (Minn. Stat. § 256.741, subd. 7). If individuals are sanctioned for six consecutive months, their case is closed and food stamp eligibility is redetermined.

Does child support receipt impact MFIP participants' likelihood of exiting MFIP?

A statistical analysis controlling for more than 30 factors indicates that MFIP participants who received child support or child care support are more likely to exit MFIP than participants not receiving either support.

Do MFIP participants with and without child support differ demographically?

Among people who enrolled in MFIP for the first time between 1998 and 2003, median age was 26 or 27, and median years of education was 12. Those who received child support had more children, but were less likely to have ever been married while on MFIP than those who did not receive child support. (A more in-depth analysis might further investigate demographic characteristics and groups, such as differences between married and single parents.)

Comparisons Between Families That Did and Did Not Receive Child Support while on MFIP: 1998-2003

	Families that received child support at least once while on MFIP (N=11,396)	Families that never received child support while on MFIP (N=48,960)
Age at first enrollment (mean [0])***	26	27
Education at first enrollment (median[0])***	12 years	12 years
Number of children (largest) (median [0])***	2	1
Ever married while on MFIP (percentage) *	9%	12%

*** p<0.001 * p<0.05

Note: “p” represents the probability the estimated statistic equals zero given a normal distribution of random values; it is deemed significantly different from zero if it is less than 0.05.

For more information: Contact legislative analyst Donald Hirasuna at 651-296-8038. Also see the House Research publication *Do MFIP Participants Receive Child Support?* June 2007.

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