



JIM PETRO
AUDITOR OF STATE

STATE OF OHIO

CLERMONT COUNTY
CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT AGENCY
PERFORMANCE AUDIT

MARCH 22, 2001



STATE OF OHIO
OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR

JIM PETRO, AUDITOR OF STATE

To the Clermont County Commissioners, Mr. Steve Wharton, County Administrator, and the citizens of Clermont County,

The State Auditor's Office is pleased to provide the completed performance audit of Clermont County Child Support Enforcement Agency (CSEA). As a component of Clermont County's long-range performance improvement plan, the County requested a performance audit of four departments which have already implemented Managing for Results and activity based costing. The State Auditor's Office conducted this independent review of CSEA with the objective of evaluating service delivery levels and Agency efficiency in relation to State and Federal benchmarks and best practice agencies and programs. Recommendations provided to County management focused on areas where CSEA can heighten client service levels and improve coordination and planning. This performance audit is the third of five performance audits focusing on the four County departments.

The performance audit focused on six core aspects of CSEA's operations including staffing levels and mix, performance measurement and accountability, long-term planning, customer service and Agency interaction with the community, as well as the impact of the Support Enforcement Tracking System (SETS) and Child Support Payment Central (CSPC). These service and operating areas comprise all aspects of CSEA's operations. The performance audit contains recommendations based on best practices and industry standards for improved service delivery and efficiency, as well as numerous commendations highlighting best practices within CSEA.

An executive summary has been prepared which includes the project history, purpose and objective of the performance audit, overview of CSEA, and summary of each of the six areas. The executive summary also includes a summary of background information, findings, commendations and recommendations.

Additional copies of this performance audit can be requested by calling the clerk of the bureau at (614) 466-2310 or the toll free number in Columbus, 800-282-0370. In addition, this performance audit can be accessed online through the State Auditor Office's Web site at <http://www.auditor.state.oh.us> by choosing the *on-line audit search* option.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Petro", written over a large, stylized flourish.

JIM PETRO
Auditor of State

March 22, 2001

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project History

In January of 2000, the Clermont County Office of Management and Budget contacted the Auditor of State's Office requesting a performance audit of various County departments. Clermont County has undertaken a performance improvement process to improve accountability to County residents and increase the efficiency of the County's services. As a component of the performance improvement process, the County requested a performance audit of four County departments to determine the efficiency and effectiveness of operations in each department. Meetings between the Auditor of State's Office and County management were held to discuss the scope and objectives of the performance audit.

As a result of these discussions, it was determined that the performance audit would focus on the following areas and departments:

- Facilities Management
- Child Protective Services, Policies and Procedures Establishment and Implementation
- Child Support Enforcement
- Permits Central
- Child Protective Services, Agency Program Operational Assessment

The Child Support Enforcement Agency (CSEA) performance audit is the third of five performance audit sections to be released. Each performance audit compares the County to best practice agencies and recommended practices in the specified area. CSEA's operations are compared to child support enforcement operations maintained by best practice agencies. The objective of a best practice/recommended practice comparison is to assist well-running organizations in performance improvement. This report focuses on the following areas:

- Staffing level and mix
- Performance measurement and accountability
- Long-term planning
- Customer service and Agency interaction with the community
- Support Enforcement Tracking System (SETS)
- Child Support Payment Central (CSPC)

Agency Overview

Clermont County's Child Support Enforcement Agency is a division with the County Department of Job and Family Services (DJFS). Ohio law requires each county to have a Child Support Enforcement Agency (CSEA) or Title IV-D agency and CSEA serves as the Agency for Clermont County. CSEA provides a variety of services to the families and children of Clermont County including: locating absent parents, establishing paternity, establishing and enforcing financial and medical support orders, collecting and distributing child support payments, and reviewing and modifying support orders. CSEA operations are largely regulated by federal and state legislation. In 1999, CSEA managed approximately 11,000 cases and collected approximately \$31,750,696 in child support payments. As of June 2000, there were 69 employees at CSEA.

Clermont County has undertaken a performance improvement initiative through a Managing for Results program. CSEA has instituted some aspects of Managing for Results, but has had difficulty implementing the Managing for Results philosophy agency-wide due to substantial changes in CSEA operations during the past two years. Federally mandated changes in reporting and collections, which were the catalyst for the development and implementation of the statewide Support Enforcement Tracking System (SETS), have reduced CSEA's ability to monitor performance and provide flexible collections and disbursement services to its clients. Staff turnover and unfilled vacancies have impacted continuity within CSEA. CSEA has not explored team based case management which has been recognized as a best practice in child support enforcement case management. Large caseloads, coupled with substantial administrative duties, limit caseworkers' effectiveness in establishing paternity and support orders in more difficult child support case types.

CSEA has regularly performed above state averages in the federal performance measures. However, CSEA performs below the averages for paternity and support establishment when compared to agencies within like sized counties in Ohio. Current assistance cases show a prevalence of unresolved paternity but are well above the collections per case levels of the peers. Former assistance cases show lower than average levels of collections. In the area of never assistance cases, CSEA's collections are the second highest of the peer agencies and the Agency uses the locate mode to identify opportunities for direct withdrawal orders. Most non-IV-D cases are in the locate mode for similar reasons. Service levels have been impacted by turnover in CSEA's chief executive position, as well as the state's haphazard implementation of the SETS system and centralized processing.

CSEA primarily uses Unit Plans of Work (UPW) for its short-term planning function, but has not developed formalized means to plan for the long-term. The conversion to SETS and centralized processing has created dramatic changes in the manner in which county child support enforcement agencies perform their primary functions and long-range goal setting has largely been tabled by CSEA because of rapid changes in the Agency's business practices. Federal performance measures and some SETS reports are used by CSEA to monitor performance and adjust Agency operations, but variability in reporting filters within SETS and related Ohio Department of Job and Family Services

(ODJFS) Innerweb reports have complicated CSEA's use of management reports to guide Agency operations and employee effectiveness. CSEA specific performance measures have not been developed to supplement the SETS and Innerweb reports and use of management reports for decision making has been greatly limited.

Prior to the implementation of SETS, CSEA used an in-house child support enforcement tracking and case management system. Although CSEA assisted ODJFS in the development of several employee performance tracking modules, programming errors and few definable reporting variables have reduced the utility of the new statewide system management reports to CSEA. Additionally, customer service failures resulting from frequent SETS shutdowns at critical periods have raised CSEA concerns over long-term Agency performance and client/Agency relationships.

At the time of reporting, the outcome of the federal certification of the SETS system and child support payment central (CSPC) has not been determined. CSEA has not been directly impacted by the federal sanctions levied on Ohio by the federal Department of Health and Human Services for non-compliance with the requirements for statewide automation. However, if the automated system is not approved in FY 2000, Clermont and other counties may be required to make up a portion of funds lost to sanctions through tardy implementation.

Summary Results

The summary results of the performance audit are contained within pages 1-4 through 1-15. The summary results are followed by overall performance audit information, including a definition of performance audits, the objective and methodology of performance audits and comparisons of key information.

The performance audit addresses Clermont County's Child Support Enforcement Agency operations and focuses on performance measurement and accountability, planning, customer service and grievance processes, community relations and centralized reporting, collections and distribution. Major findings, commendations, and recommendations are provided for each area. A thorough analysis of CSEA's operation, including detailed findings and recommendations, is contained within the corresponding section of the report. All interested parties are encouraged to read the entire report.

The results of this performance audit should not be construed as criticisms of Clermont County's Child Support Enforcement Agency. The performance audit should be used as a management tool by Clermont County and CSEA to improve operations within the Agency, as the performance audit provides a series of ideas which the County and CSEA should consider in its decision-making process.

Staffing

Findings: CSEA employs 69 full-time employees (FTEs) within the Agency who are responsible for providing CSEA services to clients. CSEA services include locating non-custodial parents, establishing paternity and support orders, and collecting and disbursing child support payments. When compared to like sized counties, CSEA has the highest percentage of investigators and the lowest percentage of FTEs categorized as administration and support staff indicating a concentration on direct service delivery. CSEA's span of control is higher than the peer average and administrator to staff ratios are slightly above national benchmarks. CSEA does not currently use teams, but relies on investigators to be responsible for all case modes and types.

CSEA has the second highest caseload per employee, but investigators maintain the lowest average caseload of the peers. Although increases in CSEA staffing levels during the past three years have helped to reduce an excessively high caseload per employee ratio, there remains a wide variation in caseloads and collections when examined on an investigator by investigator basis. CSEA does not use a case weighting system to allocate cases and, therefore, some investigators may have a larger portion of more difficult cases which could negatively affect individual employee performance.

CSEA's turnover has remained below national averages for child support enforcement agencies, although recent resignations have resulted in several unfilled vacancies within the Agency. CSEA does not regularly use exit interviews to track reasons for leaving but appeared to be familiar with each employees reason for leaving for FYs 1998 and 1999. Clermont County is also in the process of implementing a pay for performance system in which employee salary increases will be based on the ability of the employee to complete the activities described in the position description. Employees that exceed minimum acceptable levels of achievement will be recommended for merit raises based on the number of points earned during the rating period.

Commendations: CSEA appears to direct a large component of its resources toward direct client service through the high percentage of investigators as a component of Agency staff. Using investigators to respond to client inquiries enables quick and accurate problem resolution and provides more personal assistance to CSEA clients while low turnover within the Agency helps ensure continuity and a high degree of experience in case management.

The addition of pay for performance to employee recognition systems will improve employee work skills, job performance and future career development, as well as foster team building and provide a motivating link for the execution of organizational goals. Additionally, the pay for performance program may help retain qualified employees by providing merit based incentives.

Recommendations: CSEA should determine the amount of time spent by investigators on administrative duties to identify which service areas may need additional support staff. The amount of time spent on administrative functions may negatively impact CSEA's ability to establish paternity

and support orders and makes the investigator caseload appear artificially low. Also, CSEA should implement a case weighting system to allocate cases to investigators and reduce the possibility of unfairly difficult case distributions. Case weighing and assigning equitable total case weights to each investigator would help CSEA ensure that individual employees are not negatively impacted by cases requiring greater levels of service.

Other recommendations include:

- Conduct an internal job audit and fully implement time tracking in order to determine areas which may continue to suffer from inequitable staffing levels
- Cross train employees between units and fill current vacancies
- Emphasize CSEA mission and goals in pay-for-performance

Current Assistance Cases

Findings: Current assistance cases comprise families who receive some form of public assistance. CSEA has the second highest number of current assistance cases overall and the second lowest as a percentage of the County's total population when compared to the peers. CSEA collected the highest dollar amount per caseload in comparison to the peers which was 38.8 percent above the peer average. A number of cases remain in the locate mode as CSEA uses state and federal databases which continually search employer and bank records to establish direct withdrawal orders. The approximately 900 current assistance cases currently managed by CSEA have a low probability of moving to the former assistance category because of the multiple barriers these clients face in moving to self-sufficiency.

CSEA posted the second highest current assistance total collections for the quarter ending June 2000. Although SETS records do not include federal income tax refund withholdings, CSEA received and placed these monies in escrow until the federal government could identify the correct recipients of the funds. Most tax refund withholdings from the period prior to June 2000 were released in August and September. CSEA uses multiple tools to enforce the payment of current assistance obligations which increases the Agency's collections per case.

CSEA does not currently use a coordinated client interview process with DJFS for parents on public assistance. Although CSEA stated that the information between case types is too diverse and the clients too infrequent to warrant coordinated interviews, the separated application process may reduce the number of custodial parents who apply for child support enforcement services. Connecticut, Colorado and Nevada have recorded increases in paternities established through the use of coordinated interviews.

CSEA refers non-custodial parents to DJFS's work skill and job assistance program. The program is designed to assist non-custodial parents in obtaining employment and thereby increases their ability

to pay child support. Although CSEA refers fathers to the DJFS programs, DJFS does not track program attendees and therefore can not determine which non-custodial parents have taken part in the training.

In addition, CSEA and other County human services agencies meet on a six week rotation to determine services needed by families who are 36 months from losing their TANF benefits. CSEA's role in the team is to explore any child support options for custodial parents to assist in funding the family's return to self-sufficiency.

Commendations: On a per case basis, CSEA is able to collect substantially more than the peers through the use of multiple collection tools. The application of tax refund withholdings provides CSEA clients with funds that, under usual circumstances, would be returned to the non-custodial parent. Also, CSEA's use of DJFS's work skills program increases the likelihood of non-custodial parents obtaining employment and being better able to meet their obligations. By using DJFS's program, CSEA avoids additional costs which might be incurred in implementing a separate program.

Recommendations: CSEA should approach ODJFS and request the addition of a second mode identification field within the SETS system. Although using the locate mode to establish direct withdrawal orders increases CSEA collections, the Agency is unable to distinguish between cases needing locate services and cases awaiting a direct withdrawal order.

CSEA should implement a coordinated interview or face-to-face meeting process for Title IV-A applicants. The face-to-face meeting or information on IV-D services conveyed through a cross trained IV-A employee could be used on an as needed basis to increase customer service. Also, DJFS should track non-custodial parents who participate in the work skills program so that CSEA can measure attendance and, when necessary, apply subtle pressure to non-custodial parents to attend.

Former Assistance Cases

Findings: Former assistance cases comprise families that have received Title IV-A or IV-D services in the past. They account for approximately 21.9 percent of CSEA's total caseload which is the second lowest percentage of former assistance when compared to the peers. A majority of former assistance cases are in arrears and CSEA pursues non-custodial parents to recoup funds owed for government services formerly rendered by the state. Of the peers, CSEA has the second lowest collections on former assistance cases, even though the Agency places many former assistance cases in locate in an attempt to establish a direct withdrawal order and increase collections.

Recommendations: CSEA should create a team of investigators solely responsible for former assistance cases who could focus on locating assets and obtaining wage withholding orders. Using a team approach to asset location and withdrawal order establishment would potentially increase former assistance case collections to levels comparable with other case types.

Never Assistance Cases

Findings: Never assistance cases comprise approximately 66.2 percent of the total caseload in Clermont County and include families that are eligible for CSEA services but have never used public assistance. CSEA's never assistance caseload is the second highest of the peers, both as a percentage of the total population and total caseload. As with current and former assistance cases, CSEA has the highest number of cases (1,478 or 13.4 percent) in locate mode in comparison to the peers which could increase collections through the establishment of direct withdrawal orders.

Collection rates on never assistance cases are generally the highest of all case types because of the higher socioeconomic status of never assistance clients. Although many never assistance cases are the result of divorce decrees, approximately 65 percent of paternities established are associated with never assistance cases. CSEA has the highest total collections on never assistance cases, collecting approximately 25.0 percent more than the peer average and 15.0 percent more than the next highest collector, which results from the use of the locate mode to locate employers of any active bank accounts held by obligor. CSEA also has the second highest collections per case on never assistance cases (\$773 per case) which is approximately 10.5 percent higher than the peer average. Within the counties examined, income withholding orders produced approximately 75.0 percent of the collections for the quarter ending June 2000.

Commendations: CSEA's comparatively high collections on never assistance cases is the result of the Agency's use of the locate mode for many cases in enforcement. CSEA's use of the locate mode to track non-custodial parents who have not set up direct withdrawal accounts is a positive practice. The practice helps CSEA establish a greater number of direct withdrawal orders and avoid issues of non-compliance that may negatively affect a family's support payment history.

Non IV-D Cases

Findings: Non IV-D cases encompass child support and alimony-only orders and recommends the same services as IV-D cases except locator services, income tax offset collections and withholding of unemployment compensation. CSEA has the lowest percentage of non IV-D cases as a percentage of total population and the second lowest percentage of non IV-D cases as a percentage of total caseload when compared to the peers. Although a majority of the cases are in enforce mode, CSEA has the second highest percentage (8.6 percent) of cases in locate mode which indicates continued diligence in establishing direct withdrawals payments. CSEA collected approximately \$1,283 per case on non IV-D cases for the quarter ending June 2000, which is the highest of the peers. The high collections on non IV-D cases are due to the majority of the cases being spousal support only cases, which typically involve larger sums of money. Total collections by type of collection tool are not tracked by SETS for non IV-D cases.

Agency Operations

Findings: CSEA measures its performance against the federal 1998 Child Support Incentive Act performance measures. The measures include paternity and support establishment, collections on current support and arrears and cost effectiveness. While CSEA shows the second highest caseload and the highest collections over the three-year reporting period, CSEA has not performed above or comparable to the peer average in three of the five performance measures, which include paternity establishment, support establishment and collections on arrears.

Also, based on June 2000 SETS reports of cases requiring services, CSEA had the second highest number of cases requiring services, including cases requiring support orders (13.5 percent above the peer average) and cases requiring paternities (19.2 percent above the peer average). These services are required before custodial parents are able to collect funds to support their children. The high number of cases requiring these services is potentially the result of recent turnover in CSEA's chief executive position. In prior years, CSEA demonstrated higher performance, reaching 96 percent paternity establishment in FY 1999 and best in state for FY 1998.

CSEA maintained the second highest number of cases where health insurance is ordered and the highest number of cases where health insurance is provided. Although the SETS report for medical insurance is inaccurate, CSEA can accurately identify cases not receiving medical insurance as ordered because the Agency uses a private contractor to monitor medical insurance orders.

The amount collected by CSEA as a percent of obligations was the highest of the peers for the month of June 2000. CSEA was able to collect 93.0 percent of obligations, compared to the peer average of 84.2 percent. The high number of never assistance cases and the use of the locate mode to secure direct withdrawal orders helps CSEA maintain high collections as a percentage of obligations. CSEA's director plans to monitor collections as a percent of obligations on each case as a component of Agency performance measures.

Additional data was requested from CSEA and ODJFS for the purposes of this comparison to determine outstanding obligations, cases in arrears, the average length of time to establish paternity or support orders and total outstanding arrears. Neither CSEA or ODJFS were able to provide data encompassing the above information. Through this performance audit, it was determined that a limited range of management information is produced by the SETS system and, in some reports, the reliability of data produced by the SETS system is questionable.

Commendations: CSEA has the highest percent of its caseload receiving collections for the quarter ending June 2000 despite greater percentages of cases needing paternities or support orders established. This high collection rate enables CSEA, in part, to accomplish its mission by providing the families with financial support from both parents. In addition, high collections as a percent of obligations are reflective of CSEA's programmatic efforts to ensure obligations are fulfilled.

Recommendations: CSEA should refocus resources on paternity and support establishment. CSEA should establish goals for paternity and support establishment and include front line employees in determining methods to achieve higher performance. CSEA should refrain from hiring additional employees to fulfill these functions until the job audit and time tracking studies have been completed. CSEA should also consider using the pay-for-performance system to encourage increased performance in these areas or by offering bonuses to the pre-order Unit for achievement of milestones in paternity and support establishment.

ODJFS should survey counties to determine relevant management reporting elements currently not available through the SETS reporting package. Additional reporting capabilities should be developed for the SETS system and implemented within the next two years so that counties can track their performance from a variety of angles. The SETS system should be augmented to allow counties to search by independent data elements as soon as the certification is complete or the FY 2000 deadline has passed, whichever occurs first. Finally, ODJFS should also ensure that filters between data sets are consistent so that management reports are more comparable and more useful to county agencies.

Long Range Planning

Findings: CSEA has developed Unit Plans of Work (UPW's), a five-year plan and an annual budget to guide Agency planning. However, the five year plan lacks the necessary detail for strong action plans. The annual budget, which is attached to CSEA's UPWs, is not strongly linked with the UPWs or CSEA's five year plan. CSEA staff, through the Managing for Results program, was able to implement some aspects of Managing for Results, but key aspects, such as identifying and including stakeholders, have not been implemented. Arizona's Auditor General noted significant improvements in its state CSEAs' operations as the result of strategic planning.

CSEA uses formal Agency-wide performance measures on a limited basis and most measures are based on federal performance measures. Performance measures are designed to measure both work performed and results achieved. The federal measures used by CSEA are insufficiently detailed to provide strong data for management decision making within CSEA. Additional performance measures have not been widely implemented and links between performance measurement and CSEA objectives or goals are unclear. Furthermore, CSEA does not have a formalized quality improvement system designed to measure Agency performance with regards to outcomes. Although CSEA management has identified outcomes, the Agency has not developed a process for measuring these outcomes and incorporating the results into the Agency's decision making process.

CSEA has been monitoring employee performance for several years through indicators such as contempts, credit bureau notices and referrals, default distributions, interstate transmittals, investigative reports, medical and support orders, and IRS intercepts and wage assignments. SETS Innerweb reports, which are now used by CSEA, measure similar features including the number of non-custodial parents whose payments are in arrears, support orders established, paternities

established, absent parents deleted from the default list, enforcement techniques initiated and adjustment reviews conducted per employee. Prior to the implementation of the SETS reports, ODJFS requested CSEA's input on the design of the measures because of the Agency's past experience in employee performance measurement.

Although CSEA uses SETS and federal reports to monitor overall performance, the Agency has not developed a comprehensive reporting methodology. The newness of the SETS reports and the inherent errors in some reporting modules has resulted in CSEA using a variety of reports at any point in time. Several key data elements that CSEA should use to monitor its performance are either currently unavailable through SETS or are filtered in a manner that makes comparison to other measures impossible.

Commendations: The SETS employee performance tracking reports help CSEA track caseloads and services performed by each case worker. Past experience with measuring employee performance gives CSEA an advantage in using and interpreting the SETS reports. CSEA is able to track caseloads and services performed by each case worker and uses the results of employee performance reports to reward high performers.

Recommendations: CSEA should formulate a written strategic plan that includes objectives, definitions of desired outcomes, and realistic time lines for implementation. Agency goals should be an integral part of an action plan, and the plan should be designed to implement identified strategic initiatives. UPWs could be used as the basis for the strategic plan. To increase accountability, CSEA should be sure to include action steps whereby specific individuals would be responsible for an action step's completion. Also, CSEA should frequently update the plan to reflect changes in the field of child support enforcement.

CSEA should also develop Agency-wide performance measures and design a quality improvement system to develop, assess and report outcome measures. CSEA should develop a set of measurable indicators for each target outcome by which progress may be assessed. It is important that the performance measures and quality improvement initiatives be aligned with CSEA's objectives to effectively evaluate performance.

Finally, CSEA should identify and define the data elements necessary to monitor Agency operations and support effective management decision making. ODJFS should correct the flaws in SETS and make access to comparable data a high priority. Outcome measures and management reports will help CSEA redirect scarce resources to lower performing areas.

Client Service and Community Outreach

Findings: The implementation of SETS and centralized collections has affected CSEA's ability to meet client service expectations during FYs 1999 and 2000. CSEA employees have a reduced ability

to provide timely and accurate responses to inquiries under the new SETS system. In addition, CSEA provided clients with flexibility in paying and collecting support in prior years that is no longer possible under the centralized collection system. Mitigating client frustration caused by changing service levels is CSEA's primary customer service challenge during FYs 1999 and 2000.

The federal Benchmark Consortium recommends tracking areas that may not fulfill client expectations through the use of surveys and client complaint information. The National Partnership for Reinventing Government further recommends empowering front line employees to provide accessible, accurate, timely and responsive service. CSEA uses its investigators to provide high levels of services to its clients by providing direct access to investigators for client inquiries and complaints. CSEA also uses phone studies to track the causes of increases or decreases in calls to the Agency. In some instances, the state's voice response unit for child support information is incorrect which increases calls to CSEA. Client confusion over new state requirements is also a large component of calls.

CSEA has not formalized the Agency's grievance process. Although conflict resolution is a primary component of CSEA case workers' daily activities, CSEA does not have a formalized complaint resolution procedure and does not track client grievances in a centralized system. The majority of complaints are reportedly resolved without a record of the complaint or action being developed. Licking County CSEA formally tracks all grievances and complaints which are used in employee performance evaluations. PCSAO has also published recommendations on the development of a grievance process and Clermont County Children's Protective Services has developed an effective process for their Agency.

CSEA uses a variety of means to communicate with the community. Each year, CSEA participates in the statewide child support month during which CSEA explores new ideas and creates new ways of informing the community of its services and accomplishments and related child support enforcement information. Also, CSEA participates in a state sponsored outreach program in which CSEA employees visit local vocational schools and speak to unwed mothers about the services provided by the Agency and the importance of financial support for their children from non-custodial parents. CSEA has also developed a web site which is used for outreach and as an informational resource. CSEA discontinued the use of the media to search for the Agency's most wanted obligor even though neighboring Hamilton County has used this method to increase arrests and collections for a minimal cost.

Commendations: CSEA's in-house phone studies help the Agency determine causes of increased or decreased phone activity. By monitoring client service phone issues in-house, CSEA is able to pro-actively address potential customer service lags and more quickly address client needs. Also, CSEA actively participates in several community outreach activities to inform the community about the benefits of child support services thereby raising the community's awareness of child support enforcement issues and encouraging community support of the Agency's mission.

Recommendations: CSEA should develop and implement a client grievance policy outlining client rights, grievance steps and individuals responsible for handling complaints. This policy should be tailored after PCSAO guidelines and potentially should be derived from the Children’s Protective Services grievance process. CSEA should also create and maintain a centralized grievance database to capture and track complaint information. The database could be created with CSEA’s Corel Paradox software at no additional cost to the Agency.

Other recommendations include:

- Develop a surveying process to identify client service lags
- Use phone studies on an ongoing basis to assist CSEA in assessing client service issues
- Lobby ODJFS to ensure that the voice response unit is regularly updated
- Expand CSEA’s web site
- Increase community outreach activities and involve the media in locating absent non-custodial parents

Financial Implications: The average cost for designing a survey evaluation instrument is approximately \$3,200 while the data analysis component of the process is approximately \$1,600.

Support Enforcement Tracking System (SETS)

Findings: The creation of Ohio’s statewide automated child support enforcement tracking system (SETS) began in 1984. Although the federal government set a deadline for completion and then extended the deadline by four years, Ohio and six other jurisdictions had not achieved certification of their systems by the time of reporting. As a result of non-compliance with the implementation deadlines for the automated system, Ohio has paid \$43 million in federal sanctions and faces an addition \$56 million in fines if the system is not certified in FY 2000. SETS was developed to provide case management and financial management and reporting functions to CSEAs throughout the state, but AOS research on the implementation of the system identified several critical problems. Overall, AOS determined that the SETS implementation was designed to meet federal guidelines with little concern for the needs of the end users. Because of flaws in the financial reporting module, many counties were unable to reconcile their accounts prior to the implementation of centralized payment collection and distribution. CSEA increased personnel resources and used a private contractor to bring its accounts into balance. However, ODJFS indicated that, with the implementation of child support payment central, reconciliations will move from the county level to the state level.

CSEA collaborated with Hamilton County in cleaning up Hamilton County’s records before their conversion to SETS to prevent overwritten Clermont case files. CSEA was able to identify almost 800 records that were duplicated but outdated in Hamilton County’s system. CSEA uses the ODJFS SETS Help Desk as a mechanism to the SETS system. However, CSEA has experienced slow response times– the average resolution time for a CSEA Help Desk request is 30 days for both

procedural inquiries and potential programming issues. On average, CSEA makes approximately 70 Help Desk requests each month.

Commendations: By preparing for Hamilton County's conversion, CSEA able to save a significant amount of time and personnel resources that would have been needed to investigate changes in case management data. In the course of the month, one CSEA employee researched 796 cases and closed 116 cases in Hamilton County that were inaccurate.

CSEA's contact for the Help Desk is able to organize Help Desk requests and has reduced repetitious requests. The Help Desk log provides the CSEA with a record of problems experienced with SETS so that recurring problems can be quickly resolved.

Recommendations: CSEA should use the time tracking software to determine the optimal staffing levels within the Agency's fiscal and collection functions. Also, ODJFS should ensure that in moving from county to state administered payment and accounting functions, coordinated and consistent information is provided to the counties.

ODJFS should improve technical support and Help Desk response times. Additional assistance is needed by several counties to resolve crucial issues and the average 30-day resolution time appears excessive. A more appropriate response time would be one business day for procedural issues and three to six weeks for programming problems.

Child Support Payment Central (CSPC)

Findings: The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PROWA) required all states to develop a centralized state disbursement unit for the purpose of collecting both Title IV-D and non-IV-D child support payments. Ohio's Child Support Payment Central (CSPC) will enable the State to receive income withholding payments for all cases at a central site, generate all statewide disbursements from a single location, integrate payment and case data with SETS and ensure a two-day turnaround for collections. Likewise, counties will be relieved of the responsibilities for financial functions such as reconciliation. ODJFS has had difficulties implementing CSPC and did not locate a vendor to provide services until mid 1999. Bank One, the chosen vendor, and ODJFS will implement CSPC in two phases: phase one will allow employers to electronically file all payments while phase two will enable non-custodial parents to make direct debit payments from their bank accounts. CSPC was tested by the federal government on November 6, 2000 but a decision on the acceptability of the system was not available at the time of reporting.

CSEA has spent extensive time and effort in planning for the conversion to CSPC. CSEA developed an in-house, client service training program and implemented a CSPC spearhead team to serve as experts for the Agency. The spearhead team also acts as a liaison between the Agency and ODJFS,

Bank One and Anexysis. An additional client service team has been established which consists of four high-level investigators who manage complaint resolution and other client service issues.

Commendations: CSEA has taken a proactive stance in developing and conducting in-house training seminars to ensure that employees are prepared for the change in payment processing. CSEA has prepared for change management through the development of spearhead teams to lead the Agency, its clients and vendors through the transition to centralized reporting and collection.

Objectives and Scope

A performance audit is defined as a systematic and objective assessment of the performance of an organization, program, function or activity to develop findings, commendations and recommendations. Performance audits are usually classified as either economy and efficiency audits or program audits.

Economy and efficiency audits consider whether an entity is using its resources efficiently and effectively. They attempt to determine if management is maximizing output for a given amount of input. If the entity is efficient, it is assumed that it will accomplish its goals with a minimum of resources and with the fewest negative consequences.

Program audits normally are designed to determine if the entity's activities or programs are effective, if they are reaching their goals and if the goals are proper, suitable or relevant. Program audits often focus on the relationship of the program goals with the actual program outputs or outcomes. Program audits attempt to determine if the actual outputs match, exceed or fall short of the intended outputs. The performance audit conducted on CSEA's operations contains elements of both an economy and efficiency audit and program performance audit.

The objectives of performance audits may vary. The Auditor of State's Office has designed this performance audit with the objective of reviewing systems, organizational structures and operating procedures to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of CSEA. Specific objectives of this performance audit include the following:

- Analyze CSEA performance based on state and federal performance indicators
- Evaluate CSEA client service
- Assess the effectiveness of CSEA interaction with the community
- Evaluate level and mix of staff

- Analyze CSEA long term planning and planning for Child Support Processing Center (CSPC) programmatic changes
- Assess Support Enforcement Tracking System (SETS) usage and reliability

The performance audit of CSEA covers the following areas of operations:

- Staffing
- Current Assistance Cases
- Former Assistance Cases
- Never Assistance Cases
- Non IV-D Cases
- Agency Operations
- Long Range Planning
- Client Service and Community Outreach
- Support Enforcement Tracking System (SETS)
- Child Support Payment Central (CSPC)

Planning for the performance audit began in February 2000. The actual performance audit was conducted primarily during the months of March 2000 through mid-August 2000. Regular progress meetings were conducted throughout the entire period. Draft reports were discussed with the staff and management of Clermont County and CSEA.

Many of the recommendations in this report are designed to improve a process or a programmatic aspect of CSEA's operations. The collection of all dollars owed to Clermont County residents could increase through the implementation of the recommendations contained within this report. An exact figure of a potential annual increase in collections could not be accurately determined. However, significant financial gains for the both the residents of Clermont County and CSEA could be realized.

Methodology

To complete the performance audit, the auditors gathered and assessed a significant amount of data pertaining to CSEA, conducted interviews with various individuals associated with CSEA and ODJFS and assessed information from industry benchmark and best practices reports. The methodology is further explained below.

Use of previous studies, reports and other data sources

In evaluating the various performance audit areas, CSEA was asked to provide any previous studies or analyses already prepared on the subject areas. In addition to reviewing this information, the

auditors spent a significant amount of time gathering and reviewing other pertinent documents or information. Examples of the studies, reports and other data sources which were reviewed include the following:

- Clermont County CSEA SETS reports and planning documents
- ODJFS and US Health and Human Services studies and documents
- Licking County CSEA SETS reports
- Clark County CSEA SETS reports
- Warren County CSEA SETS reports
- Public Children’s Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO) *Standards for Effective Practice* and *Fact Book*

Interviews and Discussions

Numerous interviews and discussions were held at many levels and with groups of individuals involved internally with CSEA. These interviews were invaluable in developing the overall understanding of operations and in some cases, were useful sources in identifying concerns with CSEA policies and procedures and in providing recommendations to address these concerns. Examples of the organizations and individuals which were interviewed and surveyed include the following:

- Clermont County CSEA management and staff
- Clermont County DJFS Fiscal Division employees
- Licking County CSEA management
- Clark County CSEA management
- Warren County CSEA management
- Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, Office of Child Support Enforcement employees

Benchmark Comparisons with Other Agencies

Benchmark comparisons were developed through best practice agencies, SETS data, and federal performance measures. Performance indicators were established for the various performance audit areas to develop a mechanism to compare how CSEA is managing its operations. The information was gathered through interviews, data reports and industry publications.

Comparative Statistics

Comparative statistics and information regarding CSEA and the peers are presented in **Table 1-1 (A) through Table 1-1 (C)**. County indicators show Clermont County’s population in relation to the peers, as well as one parent families, divorce rates and income levels. County population and median

and per capita income affects collections while the divorce rate and prevalence of one parent families impacts CSEA caseloads.

Table 1-1 (A): County Indicators

| | Clermont County | Clark County | Licking County | Warren County |
|--|-----------------|--------------|----------------|---------------|
| FY 1998 Population | 175,960 | 145,341 | 136,896 | 146,033 |
| Families | 41,347 | 40,419 | 35,574 | 31,663 |
| One Parent Families | 4,549 | 5,357 | 3,846 | 2,786 |
| One Parent Families as a Percentage of Families | 11.00% | 13.25% | 10.81% | 8.80% |
| FY 1995 Median Income | \$40,689 | \$33,731 | \$37,803 | \$48,049 |
| FY 1997 Per Capita Income | \$22,050 | \$22,042 | \$23,335 | \$24,947 |
| Divorces per 1,000 population | 6.6 | 5.4 | 5.2 | 5.9 |

Source: County profiles, Agency documents and SETS reports

Table 1-1 (B) shows FY 1999 CSEA and peer caseloads. CSEA had the second highest caseload as a total number of cases but the second lowest as a percentage of total County population. In 1999, CSEA had the highest collections in dollars, surpassing the next highest comparison county by \$6.4 million. Clermont also had the highest total collections per case.

Table 1-1(B): Child Support Enforcement Agency Indicators

| | Clermont County | Clark County | Licking County | Warren County |
|---|-----------------|--------------|----------------|---------------|
| FY 1999 Caseload | 10,571 | 13,513 | 8,518 | 7,039 |
| Cases as a Percentage of County Population | 6.01% | 9.30% | 6.22% | 4.82% |
| FY 1999 Collections | \$28,635,182 | \$21,196,641 | \$16,596,970 | \$17,324,031 |
| FY 1999 Collections per Case | \$2,709 | \$1,569 | \$1,948 | \$2,461 |

Source: County profiles, Agency and DJFS documents and SETS reports

Table 1-1 (C) shows the investigator caseload ratio and amount collected per investigator. In FY 1999, CSEA had the second highest total number of cases but the investigator caseload ratio was the lowest of the peers and approximately 70 cases below the peer average. Also CSEA collected the lowest amount per investigator-- the amount per investigator was \$10,704 below the peer average.

When classified by case type, CSEA collected the highest dollar amount of the peers for current assistance cases on a per case basis. Former assistance cases were the second lowest of the peers. Never assistance cases, though, were the second highest of the peers and, since the majority of CSEA cases are never assistance, this contributes to CSEA's high total collections. Finally, CSEA had the second highest percentage of cases requiring some type of service, either paternity or support establishment. Establishing paternity and support is essential to the enforcement function of CSEA and is required before a custodial parent can begin collecting financial support for his or her children.

Table 1-1 (C): Average Caseloads and Collections

| | Clermont | Clark | Licking | Warren | Peer Average |
|--|-----------------|--------------|----------------|---------------|---------------------|
| Investigator/ Caseload Ratio | 1: 335 | 1: 387 | 1: 454 | 1: 413 | 1: 405 |
| Amount Collected per Investigator | \$81,588 | \$82,741 | \$114,149 | \$86,117 | \$92,292 |
| Collections per Current Assistance Case | \$307.31 | \$161.90 | \$160.20 | \$122.00 | \$187.85 |
| Collection per Former Assistance Case | \$427.80 | \$402.70 | \$468.80 | \$433.21 | \$433.13 |
| Collections per Never Assistance Case | \$773.00 | \$609.50 | \$595.60 | \$819.00 | \$699.28 |
| Percentage of Cases Requiring Paternity or Support Services | 18.25% | 19.50% | 17.02% | 9.20% | 15.99% |

Source: ODJFS records, Agency Documents

Background

At the request of the Clermont County administration, the Auditor of State’s Office has undertaken this performance audit to assess the performance of Clermont County’s Child Support Enforcement Agency (CSEA). CSEA is managed on the county level within the Clermont County Department of Job and Family Services (DJFS). CSEA also operates under state regulations developed by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS). CSEA operations are monitored on the federal level by the Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE).

Organization Chart

Chart 2-1 provides an overview of CSEA’s organizational structure and staffing levels.

Chart 2-1: Child Support Enforcement Agency Organizational Chart

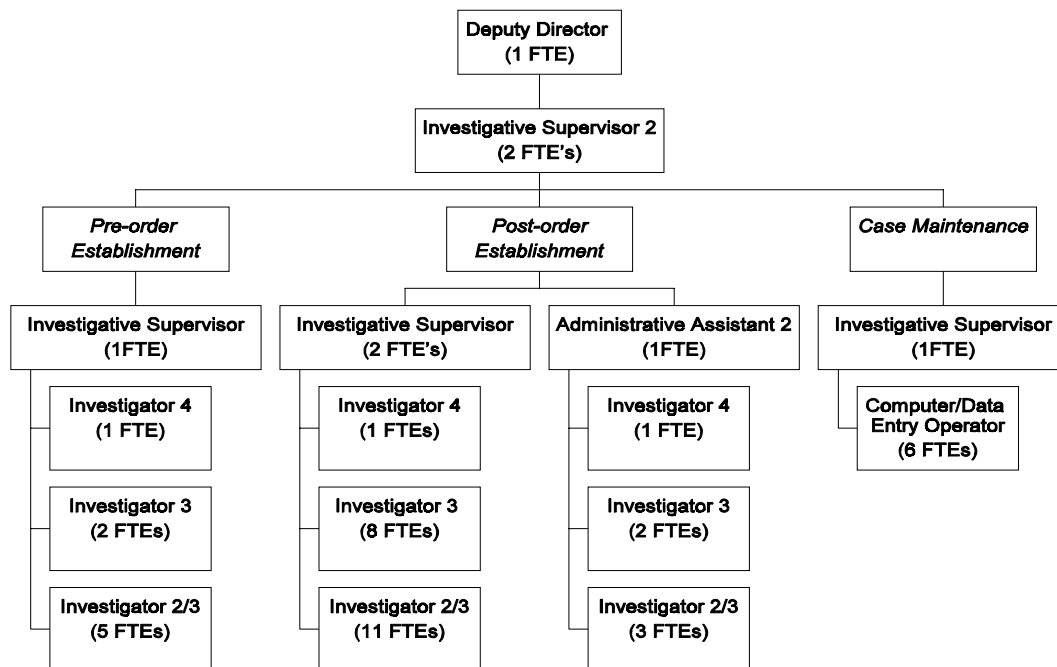
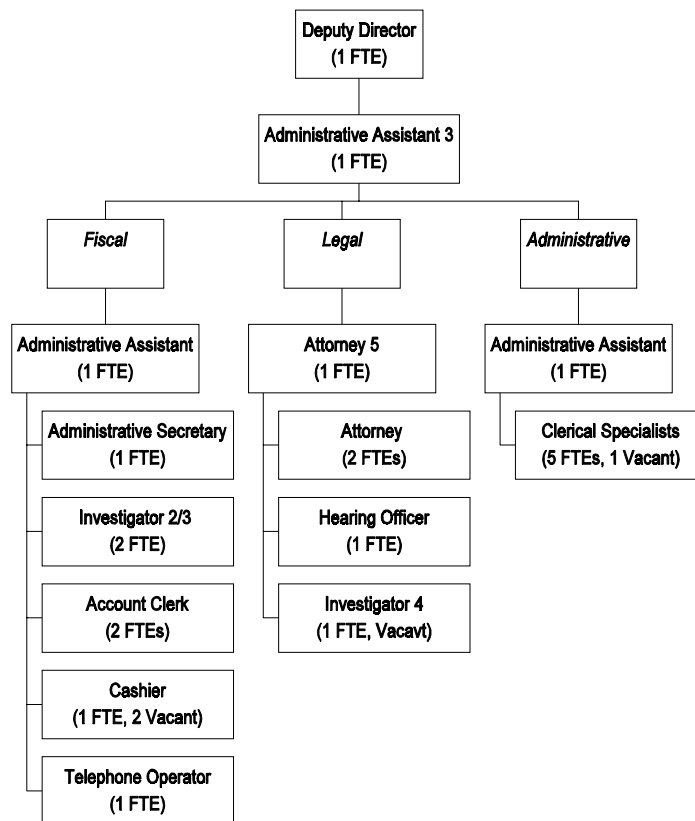


Chart 2-1: Organizational Chart (Continued)



Organization Function

Clermont County's Child Support Enforcement Agency administers the County's Child Support Enforcement Program. The Child Support Enforcement Program was established in 1975 under Title IV-D of the Social Security Act to assist custodial parents in securing financial support for their children. The goal of the program is to ensure that children receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), as well as non-TANF families, are financially supported by both parents, thereby reducing the number of children receiving public assistance. At the national level, the Child Support Enforcement Program is administered by the Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Ohio has a state-supervised, county-administered Child Support Enforcement Program. The Office of Child Support within ODJFS directs Ohio's Child Support Enforcement Program and each county operates its own child support enforcement agency (CSEA) or Title IV-D agency. CSEA's responsibilities include the following:

- Location of non-custodial parents
- Paternity establishment
- Establishment and enforcement of financial and medical support orders
- Collection and distribution of child support payments
- Review and modification of support orders

In addition, CSEA is responsible for providing services to Ohio Works First (OWF), Medicaid and Title IV-E foster care recipients or any other person who requests or is referred for services. In Ohio, county CSEA's are also required to handle collections for all child support cases, including individuals who are not on public assistance and who have not formally requested services. CSEA caseloads are broken down into the following types of cases:

- **Current Assistance Cases** (Title IV-A and Title IV-E) include custodial parents receiving public assistance benefits or children under the custody of a public children's services agency or the Department of Youth Services
- **Former Assistance Cases** (Title IV-A) encompass custodial parents who formerly received public assistance benefits
- **Never Assistance Cases** (Title IV-D) include custodial parents who are not receiving public assistance but who have applied for CSEA services
- **Non IV-D Cases** comprise either spousal support only cases or custodial parents who did not apply for child support services, but were ordered by the court to have CSEA process payments

Organization History

CSEA was created in 1975 and, by 1987, had approximately four employees and a caseload of approximately 15,000. CSEA was managed by Clermont County Department of Job and Family Services (DJFS) until 1988 when it became a free-standing agency that reported directly to the Board of County Commissioners. In January of 1988, collections staff were transferred from the County Domestic Relations Court to CSEA and, in April of the same year, prosecutors were added to the Agency's staff. In November of 1992, CSEA again moved under the control of DJFS. At this time, CSEA initiated several case closure projects with the intent to clean up their records and reduce their caseload by removing uncollectible cases. Currently, CSEA is under the control of DJFS. As of June 30, 2000, CSEA has a caseload of approximately 11,000 cases and is budgeted for 73 full-time equivalents (FTEs), although the Agency has not been fully staffed throughout the past decade.

The Child Support Enforcement Program was designed as a joint federal, state and local partnership. The program involves 54 separate state and territory systems, each with its own unique technologies and laws. The program is typically run by state and local human services agencies, often with the help of prosecuting attorneys, law enforcement officials, and family or domestic relations courts. At the federal level, OCSE is responsible for establishing standards for state programs. OCSE also provides technical assistance and funding to states. The federal government initiates and enacts all legislation relating to Child Support Enforcement. Major legislation governing child support enforcement is shown below.

- **Title IV-D of the Social Security Act (1975):** Designed to reduce spending for actual and potential recipients of public welfare by obtaining support from the non-custodial parent
- **Family Support Act (1988):** Required all states to have a statewide automated child support system operational by October 1995. The date was later changed to October 1997
- **Child Support Recovery Act:** Prohibited leaving a state to avoid paying child support by making it a federal crime.
- **Budget Reconciliation Act (1993):** Required voluntary in-hospital paternity establishment
- **Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PROWA) (1996):** Required the development of the National Directory of New Hires (NDNH) and the Federal Case Registry (FCR) which is a database of all child support orders

- **The Child Support Performance and Incentive Act (1998):** Created additional penalties for states failing to automate their child support systems by reducing their federal child support funding. The act also rewards states for achieving a variety of child support-related goals, including the number of paternity establishments, support orders and collections on current and back support.
- **Deadbeat Parents Punishment Act (1998):** Made crossing state lines to avoid paying child support a felony if the non-custodial parent owes more than \$5,000 or one year of past due child support

The Ohio Office of Child Support was created in 1975 with the passage of the Title IV-D Social Security Act. An amendment to Title IV-D of the Social Security Act required each state to develop a plan for an automated statewide child support computer system. The Family Support Act of 1988 officially required that each state implement its child support enforcement system by October 1995. ODJFS, the state agency responsible for overseeing Ohio's Child Support Enforcement Tracking System (SETS), began implementing SETS in 1993 and now projects SETS will cost at least \$252 million. According to federal mandates, SETS was to be fully implemented by October 2000. ODJFS requested a review for the certification of SETS that was conducted on the sixth of November. Ohio is one of seven states and territories that have not had their automated systems certified by the federal government.

Summary of Operations

The initiation of CSEA services can occur in the form of a referral from DJFS or Children's Protective Services (CPS), by application to CSEA or through a court order. In addition, parents of children who receive Title IV-E funding, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) or Medicaid funds are required to participate in the Child Support Enforcement Program.

The core services provided by CSEA are administered through the following functions:

- Pre-order establishment which includes paternity, support and medical order establishment
- Post-order establishment which encompasses enforcement
- Collections
- Fiscal management
- Case maintenance
- Legal assistance

To begin the process of obtaining child support, custodial parents are referred to the Pre-order Unit which is responsible for establishing paternity. Once paternity is established, child and medical support orders can be established. The Pre-order Unit locates an absent parent through a variety of resources, including the records of the Department of Motor Vehicles, Department of Corrections

and the federal Parent Locator Service. The Pre-order Unit also receives a listing of all children born out of wedlock from the state each month. Once the parties to a case have been located, the Pre-order Unit attempts to get an admission of paternity from the absent parent or arrange for genetic testing in order to establish paternity. The Pre-order Unit is responsible for the following specific case types:

- Paternity cases
- Married and separated cases
- Uniform Interstate Family Support Act; otherwise known as Interstate cases (UIFSA cases)
- Genetic testing cases referred from Juvenile or Domestic Relations Court
- Third party and children services client support cases
- Medical support order cases

After a support order is established, the case is passed to the Post-order Unit which is responsible for enforcing and modifying existing orders. The Post-order Unit addresses client inquiries, out-of-state cases, arrearage and tax-offset disputes. The Post-order Unit also modifies existing orders, prepares emancipations, initiates legal actions and testifies in court. The Post-order Unit is responsible for paternity and divorce cases where the child/medical support has already been established, interstate cases and third party and children services cases. In June 2000, CSEA had 26 investigators who managed 10,571 cases.

CSEA uses the state-wide Child Support Enforcement Tracking System (SETS), a computerized system that tracks activities in child support cases. Prior to the implementation of the SETS system, CSEA used Atek case management software. Other counties relied on their own computer systems or did not have computerized case management capabilities. The Family Support Act of 1988 required that each state centralize, standardize and automate its child support enforcement program. The SETS system was designed by ODJFS to help all Ohio counties to achieve better case management, improve the quality and consistency of child support enforcement services, enhance office automation and achieve compliance with federal mandates. CSEA converted to SETS in June of 1999 and uses the system to maintain all case notes, case arrearage, payment histories, financial data relating to the collection and disbursement of support payments and other reporting mechanisms. Each case is maintained on SETS in one of five different modes depending upon the actions required to obtain support payments. The five modes are described below.

- **Intake Mode:** Case is held in this temporary status until further action is determined. Cases may be held in Intake for no more than 20 days.
- **Locate Mode:** Case requires action to locate a person, income or assets. Cases in locate mode can simultaneously be in paternity, support or enforcement mode depending on the current mode.

- **Paternity Establishment Mode:** Case requires actions to establish paternity.
- **Support Establishment Mode:** Case requires actions to establish a support order.
- **Enforcement Mode:** Case has an established support order which requires the collection of payment and/or the provision of medical insurance.

The fiscal responsibilities for CSEA are split between the Collections Unit and the Fiscal Division of Clermont County DJFS. The Collections Unit is responsible for collecting and distributing child support payments. Other functions of the Collections Unit include posting payments to SETS, recouping overpayments and resolving general payment problems. SETS monitors and reports collection statistics on a quarterly basis and details the types of collection tools used within the following six separate enforcement categories:

- Federal income tax refund intercepts
- State income tax refund intercepts
- Offset unemployment compensation
- Income withholding orders
- Collections from other states
- Other sources

The CSEA Fiscal Department is responsible for reconciliation of CSEA accounts and generation of reports for the state and federal governments which are used to measure performance. This task requires significant knowledge of the financial management function of the SETS system. This Unit also performs audits on cases that are going to court for payment. The Case Maintenance Unit is responsible for initiating cases on the SETS system, entering modifications into SETS, receiving public assistance information, making address changes and adjudicating defaults.

CSEA's Administrative staff performs clerical duties such as maintaining case dockets, filing court documents, and answering and screening calls. CSEA also has a Legal Unit which, as of July 2000, was comprised of four attorneys and two hearing officers, an increase of two employees over the prior year. The Legal Unit is responsible for all legal actions pertaining to cases. The attorneys review and sign legal documents and attend hearings and sentencings. The hearing officer makes independent decisions on the administrative process of paternity and support establishment, which can be completed without court involvement if the parties agree.

Cases may be closed after every reasonable effort has been attempted to establish or enforce a court order and specific time frames have been exhausted. Prior to closing the case, CSEA must notify the custodial parent 60 days in advance that their case is being closed. However, the law permits the custodial parent to request reopening a case if new information has surfaced that would result in a paternity establishment or support order.

Staffing

Table 2-1 presents the FY 2000 CSEA staffing levels. CSEA is budgeted for 73 full-time equivalent positions and, as of June 31, 2000, 69 positions were filled.

Table 2-1: CSEA Staffing Levels ¹

| Area | Classification | Budgeted | Actual | Net vacancies |
|--|--|-------------|-------------|---------------|
| Administration | Deputy Director | 1.0 | 1.0 | 0.0 |
| | Administrative Assistant | 1.0 | 1.0 | 0.0 |
| Supervision | Investigative Supervisor 2 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 0.0 |
| | Investigative Supervisor 1 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 0.0 |
| | Administrative Assistants | 3.0 | 3.0 | 0.0 |
| | Attorney 5 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 0.0 |
| Subtotal | Administration and Supervision | 12.0 | 12.0 | 0.0 |
| Investigation | Investigator 4 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 0.0 |
| | Investigator 3 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 0.0 |
| | Investigator 2/3 | 5.0 | 5.0 | 0.0 |
| Subtotal | Investigation | 8.0 | 8.0 | 0.0 |
| Post-order Establishment and Case Maintenance | Investigator 4 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 0.0 |
| | Investigator 3 | 10.0 | 10.0 | 0.0 |
| | Investigator 2 | 14.0 | 14.0 | 0.0 |
| | Account Clerk | 2.0 | 2.0 | 0.0 |
| | Computer and Data Entry Operators | 6.0 | 6.0 | 0.0 |
| Subtotal | Post-order and Case Maintenance | 34.0 | 34.0 | 0.0 |
| Legal | Attorney | 2.0 | 2.0 | 0.0 |
| | Hearing Officer | 1.0 | 1.0 | 0.0 |
| | Investigator 4 | 1.0 | 0.0 | 1.0 |
| Subtotal | Legal | 4.0 | 3.0 | 1.0 |
| Fiscal and Support Staff | Administrative Secretary | 1.0 | 1.0 | 0.0 |
| | Clerical Specialist | 6.0 | 5.0 | 1.0 |
| | Account Clerks | 2.0 | 2.0 | 0.0 |
| | Cashiers | 3.0 | 1.0 | 2.0 |
| | Investigator 2 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 0.0 |
| | Telephone Operators | 1.0 | 1.0 | 0.0 |
| Subtotal | Support Staff | 15.0 | 12.0 | 3.0 |
| Total | CSEA Staff | 73.0 | 69.0 | 4.0 |

Source: CSEA records

¹ Employees are FTE equivalents.

Financial Data

Table 2-2 presents FY 1998, FY 1999 actual expenditures and the FY 2000 budget for CSEA.

Table 2-2: Child Support Enforcement Agency Expenditures

| Appropriation Account | FY 1998 Actual Expenditures | FY 1999 Actual Expenditures ¹ | Dollar Change | Percent Change | Budget 2000 | Dollar Change | Percent Change |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|--------------------|----------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Salaries | \$2,052,969 | \$1,828,739 | (\$224,230) | (10.9%) | \$2,112,000 | \$283,261 | 15.5% |
| Fringe Benefits | \$614,209 | \$550,630 | (\$63,579) | (10.4%) | \$615,250 | \$64,620 | 11.7% |
| Purchased Services | \$361,899 | \$375,544 | \$13,645 | 3.7% | \$620,150 | \$244,606 | 65.1% |
| Supplies | \$78,710 | \$5,892 | (\$72,818) | (92.5%) | \$65,000 | \$59,108 | 1003.0% |
| Maintenance & Repair | \$21,245 | \$10,283 | (\$10,962) | (51.6%) | \$22,000 | \$11,717 | 113.9% |
| Capital Outlay | \$136 | \$0 | (\$136) | (100%) | \$10,000 | \$10,000 | 100.0% |
| Renovation | \$150 | \$0 | (\$150) | (100%) | \$0 | \$0 | 0.0% |
| Advances/Transfers/Reimbursements | \$944,086 | \$932,533 | (\$11,553) | (1.2%) | \$1,422,800 | \$490,267 | 52.6% |
| Total | \$4,073,404 | \$3,703,621 | (\$369,783) | (10.0%) | \$4,867,200 | \$1,163,579 | 31.4% |

Source: CSEA financial records

¹ FY 1999 had an additional payroll period totaling approximately \$70,336 which was backed out of the calculation to better reflect the 26 pay periods in FY 1998 and FY 2000 budget.

The significant differences in **Table 2-2** are discussed below.

- *A decrease in salaries for FY 1999:* During FY 1999, CSEA lost several employees that were not immediately replaced due to the conversion to SETS in June of 1999. In addition, budgetary issues caused the county commissioners to freeze CSEA's staffing levels.
- *An increase in salaries for FY 2000:* The county continues to encounter problems with the SETS system and as a result the county commissioners approved five new positions resulting in an 15.5 percent budgeted increase in salaries for 2000. Also, the increase can be attributed to salary increases for CSEA staff that were budgeted for FY 2000 but were not implemented by the County.
- *A decrease in fringe benefits for FY 1999 and an increase for FY 2000:* The 10.4 percent decrease in fringe benefits is a direct result of the decrease in employees. Fringe benefits were projected to increase 11.7 percent for FY 2000 due to the hiring of new employees. The budget for the following fiscal year is provided to the commissioners for approval in May while the health insurance coverage rates are not provided to the County until November.

- *An increase in Advances/ Transfers/ Reimbursements for FY 2000:* Advances/ Transfers/ Reimbursements represent shared costs within DJFS. Specific shared costs include salaries of shared employees, telephone bills and rent. According to the fiscal director, many of the large percent increases for FY 2000 are built in contingencies for unforeseeable changes.
- *An increase in purchased services for FY 2000:* The 65.1 percent increase in purchased services for FY 2000 is to cover expenditures such as outside consulting services. In addition, Clermont County experienced cash flow problems at the end of FY 1999 and as a result, November and December CSEA contracts were not paid until the beginning of FY 2000. Federal and state mandates also effect CSEA operations and create a need for a surplus of purchased service funds to cover potential expenditures.
- *A decrease in supplies and maintenance and repair costs for FY 1999 and an increase in supplies and maintenance and repair costs for FY 2000:* Supplies and maintenance costs decreased dramatically in FY 1999 because the fiscal officer reclassified those expenditures as shared costs. The fiscal officer is unsure if this practice will continue and, therefore, has budgeted an increase in expenditures for FY 2000.
- *An increase in capital outlay for FY 2000:* The fiscal officer has budgeted \$10,000 for new office equipment.

CSEA Key Statistics

Table 2-3 illustrates the social and economic characteristics of Clermont County and the peers as they relate to child support. These social and economic characteristics affect CSEA operations in regards to total caseload and types of cases. In most instances, the size of the population positively corresponds to the size of the caseload. The number of one parent families and the divorce rate also positively correlate with a county's caseload. Furthermore, a county's unemployment rate strongly correlates with the absent parents' ability to make child support payments.

Table 2-3: Child Support Enforcement County Population Demographics

| | Clermont | Clark | Licking | Warren | Peer Average |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|--------------|
| County Population | 172,922 | 146,121 | 135,488 | 140,144 | 148,669 |
| One parent families as a percentage of two parent families ¹ | 23.9% | 39.8% | 26.6% | 19.7% | 27.5% |
| Divorce Rate per 1,000 Population | 6.6 | 5.4 | 5.2 | 5.9 | 5.8 |
| Median Income ² | \$40,689 | \$33,731 | \$37,803 | \$48,049 | \$40,068 |
| Public Assistance Usage (Individuals as a Percent of Total County Population) | 0.70% | 2.02% | 1.24% | 0.23% | 1.05% |
| Unemployment Rate | 4.1% | 4.6% | 3.8% | 3.1% | 3.9% |
| FY 1999 Caseload | 10,571 | 13,513 | 8,518 | 7,329 | 9,983 |
| Cases per 1,000 population | 61 | 93 | 63 | 52 | 67 |
| Number of Employees - 1999 | 69 | 84 | 87 | 56 | 74 |
| Cases per employee | 153 | 161 | 98 | 130 | 135 |

Source: County interviews, Ohio Department of Development 1997 County Profiles, ODJFS

¹ One parent families were last measured 1990.

² Median income was last measured in 1995.

Table 2-3 indicates that Clermont County has the highest population and the highest divorce rate of the peers and the second highest caseload, surpassed only by Clark County. The high population and divorce rate contribute to CSEA's higher caseload. While Clermont has the second highest unemployment rate, the County also has the second highest median income which indicates an increased economic ability for absent parents to make child support payments. The percentage of population within Clermont County that receives public assistance is the second lowest of the peers which should reduce the effect of low income maintenance payment collections on CSEA's total collections. Finally, CSEA's staffing level is slightly below the peer average, most likely as a result of continued unfilled vacancies within the Agency.

Table 2-4 shows case modes for CSEA and the peers during June 2000.

Table 2-4: Case Modes, June 2000

| Case Mode | Clermont County | | Clark County | | Licking County | | Warren County | |
|--------------|-----------------|-------------|---------------|------------------|----------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|
| | Cases | Percent | Cases | Percent | Cases | Percent | Cases | Percent |
| Intake | 20 | 0.1% | 2 | n/a ² | 6 | n/a ² | 4 | n/a ² |
| Locate | 2,004 | 14.4% | 1,971 | 11.6% | 1,191 | 9.6% | 643 | 7.0% |
| Paternity | 474 | 3.4% | 739 | 4.4% | 457 | 3.7% | 190 | 2.1% |
| Support | 717 | 5.2% | 1,315 | 7.8% | 488 | 3.9% | 261 | 2.9% |
| Enforce | 10,630 | 76.9% | 12,935 | 76.2% | 10,267 | 82.8% | 8,046 | 88.0% |
| Total | 13,845 | 100% | 16,962 | 100% | 12,409 | 100% | 9,144 | 100% |

Source: Management Overview Report (ODJFS Innerweb report), Quarter ending June 2000

¹ Cases may be maintained in more than one mode. Therefore totals will not equal the number of cases.

² n/a - less than 0.1 percent of the total caseload

As shown in **Table 2-4**, CSEA has the highest percentage of cases in the intake and locate modes which indicates a significant number of cases require a form of action to establish support orders and/or locate non-custodial parents or their assets. CSEA has the second lowest percentage of cases in the enforcement mode, 76.9 percent, which is attributed to cases receiving collections but remaining in the Locate Mode until direct withdrawal orders can be established. CSEA's director explained that, by placing cases in the Locate Mode, state and federal databases automatically search for changes in employment or the location of other assets which helps CSEA increase overall collections. However, some cases in locate require action before paternity or a support order can be established. CSEA could distinguish between the percentage of cases in Locate requiring the location of the non-custodial parent or their assets versus cases requiring the establishment of direct withdrawal orders.

Table 2-5 presents the open cases by type for CSEA and the peers.

Table 2-5: Open Cases by Case Type, June 2000

| | Clermont County | | Clark County | | Licking County | | Warren County | |
|--------------------|-----------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|
| | Cases | Percent | Cases | Percent | Cases | Percent | Cases | Percent |
| Current Assistance | 900 | 7.7% | 1,877 | 12.8% | 864 | 7.6% | 237 | 2.8% |
| Former Assistance | 2,568 | 21.9% | 3,825 | 26.2% | 2,942 | 26.1% | 1,566 | 18.6% |
| Never Assistance | 7,758 | 66.2% | 8,359 | 57.2% | 5,436 | 48.1% | 5,937 | 70.7% |
| Non IV-D | 496 | 4.2% | 548 | 3.8% | 2,056 | 18.2% | 660 | 7.9% |
| Total | 11,722 | 100% | 14,609 | 100% | 11,298 | 100% | 8,400 | 100% |

Source: SETS Report 4223, Quarter ending June 2000

As shown in **Table 2-5**, the majority of CSEA’s open cases are never assistance cases, 66.2 percent. Current assistance, former assistance and non IV-D cases comprise a smaller percentage of CSEA’s open cases, or 7.7 percent, 21.9 percent and 4.2 percent respectively. CSEA is below the peer average in the percentage of never assistance cases handled by CSEA, but is above the peer average in current and former assistance cases, which may require more due diligence to achieve collections.

Table 2-6 illustrates dollar collections disbursed to families according to case type for CSEA and the peers.

Table 2-6: Collections Disbursed to Family by Case Type, June 2000

| Case Type | Clermont County | | Clark County | | Licking County | | Warren County | |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|---------------|--------------------|-------------|--------------------|-------------|--------------------|-------------|
| | Collections | Percent | Collections | Percent | Collections | Percent | Collections | Percent |
| Current Assistance | \$276,578 | 3.7% | \$303,799 | 4.4% | \$138,383 | 2.9% | \$28,909 | 0.5% |
| Former Assistance | \$1,098,709 | 14.7% | \$1,540,186 | 22.2% | \$1,379,337 | 29.0% | \$678,404 | 12.3% |
| Never Assistance | \$5,996,653 | 80.2% | \$5,094,769 | 73.4% | \$3,237,867 | 68.1% | \$4,826,473 | 87.2% |
| Total | \$7,477,837¹ | 100.0% | \$6,938,754 | 100% | \$4,755,587 | 100% | \$5,533,786 | 100% |

Source: SETS 4289 Report, Quarter ending June 2000

¹CSEA’s total collections include \$105,897 in federal income tax refund withholdings that could only be identified as non-public assistance and could not be allocated to former and never assistance and non-VI-D cases.

Table 2-6 indicates that CSEA has the second highest percentage of collections disbursed on never assistance cases when compared to the peers and, in contrast, the second lowest percentage of collections in both the current and former assistance cases when compared to the peers. Total CSEA collections disbursed during the quarter are 21.1 percent higher than the average for the peer agencies.

Table 2-7 presents the collections disbursed per case by case type for CSEA and the peers.

Table 2-7: Collections Disbursed to Family per Case by Case Type

| | Clermont | Clark | Licking | Warren | Peer Average |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------------|
| Collections per current assistance case | \$307.31 | \$161.90 | \$160.20 | \$122.00 | \$187.85 |
| Collection per former assistance case | \$427.80 | \$402.70 | \$468.80 | \$433.21 | \$433.10 |
| Collections per never assistance case | \$773.00 | \$609.50 | \$595.60 | \$819.00 | \$699.30 |

Source: SETS 4289 report

CSEA collected approximately \$307.31 per case on current assistance cases for the quarter ending June 2000. This is approximately 38.8 percent higher than the peer average. CSEA collected 1.2 percent less than the peer average on former assistance cases. CSEA has typically been most successful with never assistance cases, collecting 10.5 percent above the peer average per case.

Performance Measures

The following is a list of performance measures that were used to conduct the review of Clermont County's Child Support Enforcement Agency (CSEA):

- Analyze CSEA performance based on state and federal performance indicators
- Evaluate CSEA client service
- Assess the effectiveness of CSEA interaction with the community
- Evaluate level and mix of staff
- Analyze CSEA long term planning and planning for Child Support Processing Center (CSPC) programmatic changes
- Assess Support Enforcement Tracking System (SETS) usage and reliability

Findings/Commendations/Recommendations

Staffing

F3.1 Clermont County Child Support Enforcement Agency's purpose is to ensure that children have the financial support of both parents in order to foster responsible behavior and reduce welfare costs. CSEA provides a variety of services which include locating non-custodial parents, establishing paternity and support orders, enforcing support orders, collecting and disbursing child support payments and reviewing and modifying support orders.

CSEA reports directly to the director of the Department of Human Services and, as of June 30, 2000, consisted of 69 full-time equivalents (FTEs), including the deputy director, 10 supervisors, 35 investigators, 19 support staff members and 4 legal staff members. The following is a brief description of the responsibilities for CSEA employees.

- *Administrator:* The child support enforcement administrator serves as the overall leader of CSEA and plans and controls operations, develops and implements policy and procedures for state Title IV-D programs. In addition, the administrator directs and coordinates operations and office functions among all divisions.
- *Supervisors:* Supervisors are responsible for planning, controlling and directing operations within their unit. Supervisors ensure compliance of operations with federal, state and local laws and supervise lower level employees. In addition, supervisors are responsible for interviewing, hiring and training new employees. Supervisors also draft management or programmatic proposals and reports. The attorney supervisor manages legal staff, provides legal advice to administrative staff, reviews policies and procedures for legal implications, prepares cases for trial and tries cases on behalf of the County.
- *Investigators:* Investigators are responsible for maintaining an active caseload, conducting interviews, collecting information and determining necessary actions regarding the establishment or enforcement of court orders. Investigators establish paternity, and modify and enforce support orders. Additionally, investigators are responsible for responding to phone and mail inquiries and attending court hearings.
- *Support Staff:* The support staff consists of computer operators, fiscal specialists, clerical specialists, account clerks, as well as the clerk and the administrative secretary. Collectively, support staff responsibilities include entering data and setting up new cases and maintaining statistical or tracking data, performing specialized clerical tasks, managing child support dockets, preparing case audits, entering

payments and adjustments into SETS, balancing case payment information, obtaining grant information, researching case information, sorting and filing court documents and answering a multi-line phone.

- *Legal Staff:* The legal staff consists of four attorneys and two hearing officers as of July 2000. The attorneys are responsible for reviewing, preparing and presenting cases for court hearings, preparing legal briefs, pleadings, and correspondence. Additional responsibilities include performing legal research and answering inquiries from staff, other agencies and the general public. The hearing officers are responsible for conducting administrative hearings, and reviewing and assessing testimony and evidence. The hearing officers are also responsible for drafting findings of fact and recommendations.

F3.2 **Table 3-1** presents the total number of FTEs and the percentage of total employees in each classification for CSEA and the other like-sized counties.

Table 3-1: Number and Percentage of FTE's by Classification

| Classification | Clermont County | | Clark County | | Licking County | | Warren County | | Average | |
|----------------|-----------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|-----------|---------------|
| | FTEs | % | FTEs | % | FTEs | % | FTEs | % | FTEs | % |
| Administrator | 1 | 1.4% | 1 | 1.2% | 2 ¹ | 2.3% | 3 ² | 5.4% | 2 | 2.6% |
| Supervisors | 10 | 14.5% | 7 | 8.3% | 14 | 16.1% | 7 | 12.4% | 10 | 12.8% |
| Investigators | 35 | 50.7% | 33 | 39.3% | 27 | 31.0% | 19 | 33.9% | 29 | 38.7% |
| Support Staff | 19 | 27.5% | 40 | 47.6% | 41 | 47.1% | 24 | 42.9% | 33 | 41.3% |
| Legal Staff | 4 | 5.8% | 3 | 3.6% | 3 | 3.5% | 3 | 5.4% | 3 | 4.6% |
| Total | 69 | 100.0% | 84 | 100% | 87 | 100% | 56 | 100% | 77 | 100.0% |

Source: CSEA documents

¹ Licking County employs an assistant director.

² Warren County CSEA classifies their controller as an administrator and has an assistant director who will be retiring this year.

In comparison to other like-sized agencies, CSEA had the highest percentage of investigators and the second highest percentage of supervisors. The high concentration of investigators indicates a large number of employees responsible for direct service delivery. County officials indicated that the high percentage of investigators relative to the percentage of support staff could be attributed to the investigators performing more administrative duties than the investigators in comparative counties.

Additional discrepancies in support staff are due to the use of client service teams and internal fiscal departments in the comparative counties. CSEA has not designated employees who are solely responsible for client inquiries. Rather, investigators are contacted directly by clients. CSEA also does not have as many employees working the collections and reconciliation process when compared to other like-sized counties (see **F3.63** and **F3.64**).

C3.1 The relatively high percentage of investigators in CSEA indicates that the Agency is directing more of its resources toward direct client service. Using investigators to respond to client inquiries enables quick and accurate problem resolution and provides more personal assistance to CSEA clients.

R3.1 Although CSEA appears to be directing a significant portion of its resources to direct service delivery, the Agency should determine the amount of time spent by investigators on administrative duties to identify which service areas may need additional support staff. CSEA should take full advantage of the time tracking software used in other County departments for activity based costing analysis. Time tracking software would assist CSEA in determining where staff time is currently spent and would enable the Agency to plan for future staffing needs and appropriate staffing distributions. The amount of time spent on administrative functions may negatively impact CSEA's ability to establish paternity and support orders as discussed in the *current assistance cases*, *former assistance cases* and *never assistance cases* sections. Full use of the time tracking software could be accomplished at a negligible cost to the Agency.

F3.3 **Table 3-2** compares the number of administrators to the number of employees supervised. In this comparison, administrators and supervisors are classified as administrators and all other employees are classified as staff.

Table 3-2: Administrators to Staff Ratio

| | Clermont | Clark | Licking | Warren | Peer Average |
|----------------------------------|----------|-------|---------|--------|--------------|
| Administrators | 11 | 8 | 16 | 10 | 11 |
| Staff | 58 | 76 | 71 | 46 | 65 |
| Ratio of Administrators to Staff | 1:5.4 | 1:9.5 | 1:4.4 | 1:4.6 | 1:5.9 |

Source: CSEA documents

As indicated in **Table 3-2**, CSEA has a 1 to 5.4 ratio of administrators to staff. CSEA is slightly below the peer average ratio of 1 to 5.9 and has the second highest ratio of the peers. Clark County has the highest administrator to staff ratio. According to a study performed by the American Public Welfare Association, the national average for administrators to staff among human service agencies is 1:6.5. The administrator to staff ratio appears to be slightly below the benchmark for CSEA span of control when based on the peer average.

F3.4 **Table 3-3** presents caseloads per employee ratios for FY 1999 for CSEA and the peers.

Table 3-3: FY 1999 Caseload per Employees Ratio

| | Clermont County | Clark County | Licking County | Warren County | Peer Average |
|---------------------------|-----------------|--------------|----------------|---------------|--------------|
| Caseload | 10,571 | 13,513 | 8,518 | 7,329 | 9,885 |
| Employees | 69 ¹ | 84 | 87 | 56 | 74.3 |
| Cases per Employee | 153.2 | 160.9 | 97.9 | 130.9 | 135.2 |

Source: ODJFS documents, CSEA records

¹ Caseload is based on FY 1999 staffing levels to maintain consistency between the peers.

As indicated in **Table 3-3** CSEA has the second highest caseload per employee ratio of 153.2 which is approximately 8.7 percent higher than the peer average caseload ratio per employee of 135.2. Although CSEA has the highest number of investigators (see **Table 3-1**), the Agency appears to manage a high number of cases on the basis of cases per employee. No state or federal benchmarks have been developed to indicate the optimal caseload for child support enforcement caseworkers.

F3.5 **Table 3-4** depicts the history of department staffing levels during the past three years compared to the caseload and collections during the same period.

Table 3-4: CSEA Caseload, Staffing and Collections, Three Year History

| | FY 1998 | FY 1999 | FY 2000 |
|---------------------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------------|
| Employees ¹ | 64 | 69 | 72 |
| Caseload | 12,611 | 10,571 | 11,367 ² |
| Caseload per Employee | 197 | 153 | 158 |
| Collections ³ | \$27,999,500 | \$28,635,182 | \$29,265,156 |
| Collections per Employee | \$437,492 | \$415,003 | \$406,461 |

Source: SETS reports and CSEA records

¹ FTE budgeted positions

² Caseload count as of May 2000

³ Projected amount of collections for FY 2000 based on annual increases in collections of 2.2 percent.

As shown above, employees have increased by 8.8 percent during the three-year period while the caseload has decreased by 9.9 percent over the past three years. Also, over the three-year period, total collections have increased by 4.5 percent. With the increase in employees during FY 1999, employee caseloads decreased from an excessive 197 cases to a moderate 158 cases per employee. While lower caseload ratios may help CSEA collect additional support dollars per case (see **F3.6**), the Agency should closely monitor the client base for any trends in growth to avoid the high caseloads per employee that were experienced by the Agency in FY

1998. Furthermore, the implementation of any future mandated tasks should be carefully studied for potential impact on CSEA resource needs.

- F3.6 CSEA has devised a method to track average collections per case and average caseload by size using information from the SETS system. Since February 2000, CSEA has been performing this analysis on a monthly basis. **Table 3-5** illustrates the average caseload and collection for the top 10 collectors, as well as the average caseload and collections for the top 10 employees with the highest caseloads.

Table 3-5: CSEA Collections Caseload Comparison, FY 2000

| | February | March | April | May | Average |
|--------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| <i>Top 10 Collectors</i> | | | | | |
| Average collections | \$282.83 | \$293.15 | \$259.62 | \$304.24 | \$284.96 |
| Average Caseload | 383 | 416 | 437 | 427 | 416 |
| <i>Top 10 Caseloads</i> | | | | | |
| Average collections | \$238.56 | \$248.25 | \$232.43 | \$236.78 | \$239.01 |
| Average Caseload | 427 | 458 | 450 | 453 | 447 |

Source: CSEA Documents

As shown in the **Table 3-5**, the employees with the highest collections collect approximately \$45.95 or 19.0 percent more per case and have 7.0 percent fewer cases. Assuming collections could be increased by \$45.95 per case by reducing the caseloads to the overall Agency average, a potential annual increase in collections of \$234,204 could be realized.

Although a correlation exists between a smaller caseload per employee and increased collections, this analysis is affected by the types of cases assigned to each caseworker. For certain types of cases, current assistance cases for example, collection rates are significantly lower than never assistance cases (see **Table 3-11** and **Table 3-19**). As a result, there is also a strong correlation between collections and cases assigned. Currently, CSEA distributes cases alphabetically. A comparison of collections and caseloads indicates that there may be an inequitable distribution of cases which may lead to less than optimal collections in some instances.

- R3.2** CSEA should consider using a rating system to allocate cases to caseworkers. As shown above, cases may be inequitably distributed within CSEA. By using a rating system to determine which cases may require the most effort, caseworkers could be assigned equal caseload levels but would also be ensured a relatively equitable caseload based on the level

of difficulty associated with the cases assigned. A case rating system could be implemented at no additional cost to the Agency.

F3.7 **Table 3-6** presents a caseload per investigator ratio which indicates that CSEA maintains the lowest ratio of average cases per investigator of 334. This is approximately 19.5 percent less than the peer average.

Table 3-6: Investigator Caseload and Collections, June 2000

| | Clermont County | Clark County | Licking County | Warren County | Peer Average |
|--|-----------------|--------------|----------------|---------------|--------------------|
| Investigators | 35 | 33 | 27 | 18 | 28 |
| Caseload | 11,722 | 14,609 | 11,298 | 8,400 | 11,507 |
| Investigators to Caseload Ratio | 335 | 442 | 418 | 466 | 415 |
| June 2000 Collections | \$2,855,593 | \$2,995,321 | \$2,400,477 | \$2,102,067 | \$2,588,365 |
| Collections per Investigator | \$81,588 | \$90,767 | \$88,906 | \$116,781 | \$95,746 |

Source: ODJFS monthly web report

¹ Due to timing issues with converting to SETS, the data used in this table is June 2000 information.

CSEA has the lowest caseload per investigator ratio and collections per investigator. When compared to the peers, CSEA appears to be functioning at a lower level of efficiency in the areas of caseload and collections per investigator. The peer agencies employ more support services staff which lowers the number of investigators and inflates the caseload. The low ratios are a direct result of the large scope of administrative tasks delegated to investigators, the diffusion of support tasks throughout the Agency and the performance of tasks within CSEA that may be delegated to other agencies in the peer counties. A team approach is used on a limited basis and, while caseworkers share case data between functions, the varying functions of CSEA are housed in different areas of the building and do not have substantial direct or personal contact with one another.

Warren County CSEA is organized into three teams which contain at least one employee responsible for each of the five case modes: intake, locate, paternity, support establishment and enforcement. Each team also has an interstate case worker and a client service representative. Warren County officials indicated that this arrangement has worked well for their Agency because each employee can focus on their particular function. In addition, the team aspect has enhanced case processing in Warren County. Each team, manages a caseload between 2,500 and 3,000 cases.

According to ODJFS, a study to determine an optimal staffing ratio of cases per investigator has not been conducted on a statewide or national level. The question of optimal staffing

ratios has been discussed at the state level. However, there are no plans for a study of this nature at this time.

R3.3 Before CSEA considers hiring additional investigators or support staff, CSEA should conduct an internal job audit to determine the level of resources needed for different kinds of cases. In conjunction with time tracking, CSEA should examine varying case distribution systems and organizational arrangements, such as the one used in Warren County, to determine the most effective manner in which to allocate staff resources and cases. A limited team environment, in which caseworkers, attorneys and clerks from varying functions could be housed in close proximity and encouraged to support one another in their case work, may help the Agency bridge gaps in administrative services and customer service.

F3.8 **Table 3-7** presents CSEA's employee turnover for the last three years.

Table 3-7: CSEA Employee Turnover FY 1998 to FY 2000

| Calendar Year | Number of Employee Separations | Average Number of Agency Staff | Percentage of Employee Separations |
|---------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| FY 1998 | 6 ¹ | 74 | 8.1% |
| FY 1999 | 13 | 75 | 17.3% |
| FY 2000 | 3 ² | 80 | 3.8% |

Source: CSEA documents

¹ Five employees were transferred out of CSEA to the Employment Services Division of DJFS.

² Three employees have separated as of July 2000.

CSEA has experienced low employee turnover in the last two years. Out of the 13 employees who left CSEA in FY 1999, there were two retirements, one disability separation, one transfer within DJFS, and nine resignations.

According to the National Resource Center for Child Welfare, a benchmark of 20 percent is the average turnover rate of the states that participated in a national study of child welfare job requirements. The turnover rate is highest among child welfare workers who have been on the job for less than a year.

The cause of employee resignations within CSEA were predominantly the result of disciplinary actions. Although the resignations were not attributed to CSEA's work environment, the resulting drop in staffing levels and unfilled vacancies have created a higher workload for remaining employees.

In addition, the current rapid changes in child support enforcement have created a higher stress level for employees within the Agency. CSEA administrators and supervisors encourage

team building activities and frequent celebrations of milestones to alleviate some of the job related stress. Employees within CSEA expressed a favorable opinion of the activities used by CSEA to create higher employee morale.

C3.2 CSEA maintains a lower turnover rate than the national benchmark for child welfare turnover. Low turnover provides CSEA with continuity in case management and increased productivity. Low turnover enables CSEA to maintaining a well-trained and experienced staff that has become accustomed to the children’s welfare environment.

R3.4 CSEA should implement a process to ensure backups within the Agency to cover any positions that may remain vacant due to resignations. Increased cross training would assist CSEA in using current employees to fill critical vacancies.

Also, CSEA may need to increase staffing levels in some areas to implement some of the best practices highlighted in this report. CSEA currently has low support staff levels, as shown in **Table 3-1**, which requires investigators to perform support functions (see **F3.7**). The implementation of a team environment (**R3.3**) may require the reallocation of support functions to personnel in support staff positions. The reallocation of duties may be facilitated through the job audit cited in **R3.3**. Time tracking should also be used to determine the impact of any functions performed in-house that may be delegated to other agencies in the peer counties.

F3.9 Exit interviews are not regularly conducted at CSEA. Although CSEA and/or County human resources can request an exit interview, CSEA does not have a formal policy of offering exit interviews to all employees who sever ties with the Agency. Generally, exit interviews provide an employer with the opportunity to determine an employee’s reason for leaving the organization. Reasons may include training issues, stress, economic factors or other various reasons. Exit interviews also provide an employee with the opportunity to offer suggestions to improve agency operations and working conditions.

R3.5 CSEA should consider offering exit interviews to all employees who leave the Department. Providing employees with an opportunity to discuss their reasons for leaving will allow CSEA to identify and track reasons for employee turnover, as well as to develop programs designed to minimize future turnover (see **F3.8** and **R3.4**). The performance of exit interviews and the compilation of interview data should be coordinated through the Department of Staff Development.

CSEA has the option of developing either a one-on-one or written exit interview process for employees prior to their last day of employment. A written exit interview provides the employee the option of completing the interview after their departure from the Department and should contain questions that provide feedback on specific areas of operation. A one-on-

one exit interview should be conducted by human resources personnel. The benefits of this method of exit interview include the interpersonal element, as well as the open-ended discussion which cannot be duplicated in a written exit interview. More frequent exit interviews could be implemented through the Department of Staff Development without additional costs to CSEA.

F3.10 Clermont County Department of Job and Family Services is in the process of developing a pay for performance system. Although the system is in the early stages of development, a basic framework for the system has been implemented. As part of pay for performance, employee salary increases for non-bargaining unit employees are based on the ability of the employee to complete the activities described in the position description. Employee evaluations that exceed minimum acceptable levels of achievement are recommended for merit raises based on the number of points earned during the rating period. CSEA will be required to negotiate the terms of pay for performance for bargaining unit employees beginning in FY 2002.

C3.3 The use of DJFS's pay for performance system within CSEA will improve employee work skills, job performance and future career development, as well as foster team building and provide a motivating link for the execution of organizational goals. Additionally, the pay for performance program may help retain qualified employees by providing merit based incentives.

R3.6 CSEA and County administrators should begin to explore the manner in which pay for performance is implemented in other jurisdictions. When CSEA has the opportunity to begin negotiations for the implementation of pay for performance for bargaining unit employees, the Agency should ensure that the merits of pay for performance can be demonstrated to bargaining unit employees. Tracking employee performance and correlating monetary regards to above average performance should be emphasized.

CSEA should develop a structure for pay for performance using the performance measures discussed in **R3.15** and available through the SETS system. In addition, customer service should be strongly linked to pay for performance rewards and the centralized grievance tracking database (see **R3.20**) should be used in the evaluation process. Pay for performance rewards should correlate with the mission and goals of the Agency and should link with achievement or promotion of those goals.

Current Assistance Cases

F3.11 The current assistance caseload is comprised of families who are receiving some form of public assistance from the government. Public assistance can be in the form of TANF under Title IV-A of the Social Security Act or foster care maintenance payments under Title IV-E of the Social Security Act. County CSEA's obtain child support payments for current

assistance cases to provide additional support for those on public assistance in an effort to shift financial responsibility from the county to the non-custodial parent and begin to move families from public assistance to self sufficiency. **Table 3-8** below presents the current assistance cases for CSEA and the peers for the quarter ending June 2000.

Table 3-8: Current Assistance Caseload, Quarter Ending June 2000

| | Clermont | Clark | Licking | Warren | Peer Average |
|--|----------|-------|---------|--------|--------------|
| Total Current Assistance Cases | 900 | 1,877 | 864 | 237 | 970 |
| Current Assistance Cases as a Percent of the Population | 0.5% | 1.3% | 0.6% | 0.3% | 0.7% |
| Current Assistance Cases as a Percent of Total Caseload | 7.7% | 12.8% | 7.6% | 5.9% | 8.5% |

Source: SETS 4223 report, quarter ending June 2000

As shown in **Table 3-8**, CSEA is slightly below the peer average in the number of current assistance cases overall, both as a percentage of the County's total population and as a percent of total caseload. In general, current assistance cases experience a greater level of difficulty in collecting support payments. Since the inception of welfare to work programs, most Counties have reduced the number of public assistance cases, thereby reducing the number of current assistance cases collecting child support. CSEA's remaining current assistance cases have a low probability of moving into the former assistance category because of the high number of barriers to self sufficiency, such as mental illness or drug dependency, associated with the remaining cases. Therefore, CSEA may experience greater challenges in achieving full enforcement of support orders for current assistance cases currently under CSEA case management.

F3.12 Current assistance cases are comprised of both Title IV-A and Title IV-E cases. **Table 3-9** presents current assistance caseload by case mode for CSEA and the peers. Cases in the locate mode can also be in paternity, support and enforce modes depending on the needs of the case.

Table 3-9: Current Assistance Caseload by Case Mode

| | Clermont | | Clark | | Licking | | Warren | | Peer Average | |
|--------------------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| | Cases | % | Cases | % | Cases | % | Cases | % | Cases | % |
| Intake | 6 | 0.1% | 0 | 0% | 3 | 0.3% | 3 | 1.1% | 3 | 0.2% |
| Locate | 308 | 28.3% | 339 | 14.9% | 168 | 17.2% | 52 | 17.8% | 217 | 18.6% |
| Paternity | 136 | 12.5% | 287 | 13.3% | 153 | 15.7% | 18 | 7.0% | 149 | 12.8% |
| Support | 210 | 19.7% | 492 | 18.0% | 206 | 21.1% | 45 | 17.0% | 238 | 20.5% |
| Enforce | 427 | 39.4% | 1,179 | 53.8% | 446 | 45.7% | 176 | 57.1% | 557 | 47.9% |
| Total¹ | 1,087 | 100% | 2,297 | 100% | 976 | 100% | 294 | 100% | 1,164 | 100% |

Source: Management Overview report, June 2000

¹ Cases may be maintained in more than one mode. Therefore the totals are higher than shown in Table 3-1.

CSEA has the highest percentage of the current assistance caseload, 28.3 percent, in locate mode when compared to the peers. CSEA uses the locate mode to identify income sources on cases in enforcement that do not receive payment via an employer based direct withdrawal, do not receive full payments or are not in compliance with medical support orders. CSEA has also dedicated two full-time employees and an attorney to manage cases attributed to foster care to increase the likelihood of collecting child support for children in the custody of Clermont County CPS. While a low percentage of cases in locate and a high number of cases in enforce is most desirable, CSEA's use of the locate mode to identify income may increase collections on current assistance cases. However, placing a case in the locate mode precludes CSEA from easily distinguishing between the percentage of cases in Locate requiring the location of the non-custodial parent or their assets versus cases requiring the establishment of direct withdrawal orders.

R3.7 CSEA should request that ODJFS add secondary mode identification fields within SETS so that cases receiving collections may remain in the locate mode without appearing to negatively impact the County's mode statistics. Although case workers can identify paying cases from non-paying cases in the locate mode, the inability to isolate these cases in management reports reduces CSEA's ability to demonstrate the effectiveness of its locate function.

F3.13 CSEA is responsible for the collection of payments on all cases managed by the Agency. SETS monitors collections on a quarterly basis and details the sources of funds within six separate enforcement categories. **Table 3-10** presents the collection sources for current assistance cases for CSEA and the peers.

Table 3-10: Collections Disbursed on Current Assistance Cases, June 2000

| | Clermont | Clark | Licking | Warren | Peer Average |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Federal Income Tax Refund | \$190,428 ¹ | \$168,334 | \$37,267 | \$4,983 | \$100,253 |
| State Income Tax Refund | \$1,326 | \$0 | \$0 | \$778 | \$526 |
| Offset Unemployment Income | \$434 | \$1,770 | \$660 | \$0 | \$955 |
| Income Withholding | \$49,287 | \$110,612 | \$67,704 | \$17,799 | \$61,351 |
| Other States | \$1,215 | \$5,169 | \$1,368 | \$140 | \$1,973 |
| Other Sources | \$33,888 | \$17,913 | \$31,384 | \$5,211 | \$22,099 |
| Total | \$276,578 | \$303,798 | \$138,383 | \$28,911 | \$186,917 |

Source: SETS 4289 report, quarter ending June 2000.

¹ CSEA was able to identify the federal income tax refund withholdings placed in escrow by the County which were later applied to current assistance cases. A total of \$153,518 has been included to reflect these withholdings.

For the quarter ending June 2000, CSEA posted collections which were approximately 32.4 percent above the peer average for current assistance cases. The majority of collections on current assistance cases in Clermont County are derived from income withholdings and federal income tax refunds. CSEA was the only county that used each of the enforcement tools for the quarter.

CSEA held federal income tax payments beyond the end of the quarter ending June 2000 because federal income tax refund checks were not reaching custodial parents and were being returned to the obligor. The comparison counties did not withhold these payments and applied the refunds upon receipt. These payments were applied in August and September, but CSEA was only able to indicate payments applied to public assistance or non-public assistance cases. The federal income tax return withholdings from the quarter ending June 2000 are reflected in the above table but are not included in **Tables 3-14** and **3-18**.

F3.14 **Table 3-11** presents collections per case for the current assistance caseload.

Table 3-11: Current Assistance Collections Disbursed per Case

| | Clermont | Clark | Licking | Warren | Peer Average |
|------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|------------------|
| Total Collections | \$276,578 | \$303,799 | \$138,383 | \$28,910 | \$186,917 |
| Current Assistance Caseload | 900 | 1,877 | 864 | 237 | 969 |
| Collections Per Case | \$307.31 | \$161.90 | \$160.20 | \$122.00 | \$187.85 |

Sources: SETS 4223 and 4289 reports, quarter ending June 2000.

At the end of the June 2000 quarter, CSEA had the highest collections disbursed per case on current assistance cases which was 38.8 percent above the peer average. The County's use of multiple collection tools greatly enhanced the collections per case for current assistance clients. When compared to the peers, CSEA's collections per case far exceed the next highest collector, Clerk County. By assisting current assistance clients in collecting larger support payments, CSEA helps families move from welfare to self-sufficiency.

C3.4 CSEA is able to collect greater support payments per case than the peers through the use of multiple enforcement tools. As shown by the County's large federal income tax refund withholding, the application of tax refunds to CSEA current assistance cases provides current assistance clients with substantially higher resource levels than would otherwise be available.

F3.15 CSEA does not use a coordinated client interview process with DJFS for parents on public assistance. Although coordinated interviews have been tried in the past, CSEA determined that the required information was too diverse and the clients too infrequent to warrant a formalized coordinated interview program. Currently, there are two separate interviews associated with the process of applying for Title IV-A benefits (public assistance) and Title IV-D services (child support). Through an application, clients apply for public assistance benefits at DJFS. The client also must undergo an interview with a DJFS caseworker. Upon the completion of this interview, CSEA is notified of a potential child support case. A second interview is then scheduled with CSEA to determine what actions must be taken to commence enforcement efforts.

CSEA and other County human services departments use a team approach to providing services to current assistance clients who will lose welfare benefits within 36 months. Every six weeks, CSEA and other County departments (DJFS, the County Mental Health Board and Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services) meet to discuss options available to public assistance clients moving from welfare to self-sufficiency in areas of treatment and financial support. The coordinated team approach to serving public assistance clients is reported to improve the probability of a current assistance family moving to self-sufficiency and remaining off welfare.

CSEA's role in the team is to ensure that support orders have been established for eligible families and that all available resources have been factored in to the payment amount.

- F3.16 Connecticut has implemented a program on the county level designed to increase paternity establishments and support establishments. Interviews with mothers of children born out of wedlock are coordinated between the Title IV-A agency and the Title IV-D agency. Child support workers are present at public assistance interviews to initiate the process of establishing paternity or support orders, thereby eliminating the need for a second interview.

The Colorado Model Office Project tested coordinated interviews in two forms: joint interviews and same day interviews. Joint interviews were conducted by a single interviewer who collects both Title IV-A and Title IV-D information while same day interviews were conducted separately but in sequential fashion. The Colorado Project tracked case information for six months following the interview. Data indicated that while the type of information generated in each interview was identical, cases participating in the joint interview approach were more likely to have paternity and child support orders established within six months of the interview.

Nevada's Office of Child Support Enforcement also stated that efforts to include a CSEA worker in Title IV-A interviews decreased welfare applicants' likelihood of reporting fathers as unknown by about 65 percent.

- C3.5** Through participating in a team approach to moving public assistance clients from welfare to self-sufficiency, CSEA helps other County human services departments increase the probability that public assistance families will be able to remain off welfare. CSEA uses information provided by DJFS to identify families needing support orders and tracks potential resources available to these clients in an effort to increase child support payments from the obligor.

- R3.8** CSEA and DJFS should reintroduce coordinated Title IV-A and Title IV-D interviews. By streamlining the interview process or implementing cross training between the Title IV-A and Title IV-D agencies, CSEA may be able to provide greater levels of customer service to families needing paternities and support orders established by reducing the number of visits a parent must make to various County departments. Coordinating interviews could be performed on an as needed basis. If the information required by CSEA is sufficiently diverse to warrant separate interviews, CSEA should consider providing a CSEA representative to meet with the prospective client at the conclusion of the DJFS interview. Through activity based costing CSEA should be able to identify and plan for any increased costs associated with coordinated initial contacts.

- F3.17 Work skill and job assistance programs are designed to assist non-custodial parents in obtaining employment which enables the non-custodial parent to pay child support. Work

skills take on an even greater importance in current assistance cases when the collections per case are examined (see **Table 3-11**). CSEA does not have a work skills or a job assistance program for non-custodial parents but uses the program developed by DJFS. However, DJFS does not provide tracking information to CSEA and the Agency is unable to easily identify non-custodial participants related to cases under CSEA's management.

Job assistance programs have been recognized as best practices in the field of child support enforcement as work skills programs help non-custodial parents in obtaining employment and thereby better meet their support obligations. The following states and counties have developed work skills and job assistance programs as part of their child support enforcement programs.

- Georgia: Fatherhood Initiative
- Marion County, Indiana: Job or Jail Program and On Track Program
- Missouri: Parents Fair Share Program
- Oregon: JOBS program
- Pennsylvania: Training/Employment Project

Other work skills programs have been recognized by Ohio Office of Child Support (OCSE) in the *Compendium of State Best Practices and Good Ideas in Child Support Enforcement - 2000*.

C3.6 CSEA's practice of referring non-custodial parents to the work skills program currently in use by DJFS potentially increases support payments for current assistance clients. As shown in **Table 3-10, Table 3-14 and Table 3-18**, a majority of collections come from income withholding orders. By assisting non-custodial parents in finding employment, CSEA increases the establishment and payment of support orders, the establishment of medical orders and collections on arrears. Through collaborating with DJFS, CSEA avoids substantial costs for the development and implementation of a work skills program.

R3.9 DJFS should provide CSEA with tracking documentation so that the Agency can better identify non-custodial parents who have participated in the program. If the Agency is able to identify non-participants, CSEA could exert additional pressure on non-custodial parents to attend the work skills program. Although CSEA can not require non-custodial parents to attend the work skills program, the Agency should consider incentives to encourage maximum participation.

Former Assistance Cases

F3.18 Former assistance cases are comprised of families who previously received either Title IV-A or Title IV-E services. For former assistance cases, CSEA attempts to recoup money that is owed to the government for services formerly rendered by the state. Approximately half of all former assistance cases are arrears only cases indicating irregular payment histories.

Table 3-12: Former Assistance Caseload

| | Clermont | Clark | Licking | Warren | Peer Average |
|---|----------|-------|---------|--------|--------------|
| Total Former Assistance Cases | 2,568 | 3,825 | 2,942 | 1,566 | 2,725 |
| Former Assistance Cases as a Percent of the Population | 1.4% | 2.6% | 2.2% | 1.0% | 1.8% |
| Former Assistance Cases as a Percent of Total Caseload | 21.9% | 26.1% | 26.0% | 18.6% | 23.2% |

Source: SETS 4223 report, quarter ending June 2000

Former assistance cases account for approximately 21.9 percent or one fifth of CSEA's total caseload. CSEA has the second lowest percentage of former assistance cases as a percentage of the population, but the amount of former assistance cases as a percentage of total cases has increased through FYs 1997, 1998 and 1999 as current assistance cases have been moved to self-sufficiency.

F3.19 **Table 3-13** presents the former assistance caseload by case mode. Former assistance cases are largely comprised of arrears cases and cases in which the family formerly received public assistance services. Because a majority of the cases are arrears cases, there are fewer cases requiring paternity and support establishment. In order to have an arrears on a case, a support order must have been established.

Table 3-13: Former Assistance Caseload by Case Mode

| | Clermont | | Clark | | Licking | | Warren | | Peer Average | |
|--------------------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|------------------|------------|-------------|--------------|------------------|
| | Cases | % | Cases | % | Cases | % | Cases | % | Cases | % |
| Intake | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| Locate | 170 | 14.6% | 152 | 11.1% | 188 | 13.9% | 48 | 7.1% | 140 | 12.3% |
| Paternity | 1 | n/a ¹ | 1 | n/a ¹ | 3 | 0.2% | 0 | 0% | 1 | n/a ¹ |
| Support | 1 | n/a ¹ | 2 | 0.2% | 1 | n/a ¹ | 0 | 0% | 1 | n/a ¹ |
| Enforce | 1,000 | 85.4% | 1,210 | 88.7% | 1,167 | 85.9% | 630 | 92.9% | 1,002 | 87.7% |
| Total² | 1,172 | 100% | 1,365 | 100% | 1,359 | 100% | 678 | 100% | 1,144 | 100% |

Source: Management Overview report, June 2000

¹ n/a - less than 0.1 percent.

² Cases may be maintained in more than one mode. Therefore the totals are higher than shown in **Table 3-5**.

As illustrated in **Table 3-13**, CSEA has a high percentage of cases in the enforce mode when compared to other case types. A high percentage of cases in enforcement mode can be attributed to the arrears only cases included in the former assistance case type. CSEA has the highest percentage of former assistance cases, 14.6 percent or 2.3 percent higher than the peer average in locate mode, indicating that the Agency is attempting to locate the non-custodial parent or their assets or apply a direct withdrawal payment method to the non-custodial parent's assets.

F3.20 For the quarter ending June 2000, CSEA collected over \$1.0 million on former assistance cases. **Table 3-14** presents the sources of collections on former assistance cases.

Table 3-14: Collections Disbursed on Former Assistance Cases, June 2000

| | Clermont | Clark | Licking | Warren | Peer Average |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Federal Income Tax Refund | \$217,542 ¹ | \$526,472 | \$328,225 | \$124,791 | \$299,257 |
| State Income Tax Refund | \$28,606 | \$0 | \$0 | \$15,406 | \$11,003 |
| Offset Unemployment Income | \$16,723 | \$16,230 | \$13,638 | \$5,611 | \$13,051 |
| Income Withholding | \$559,538 | \$840,093 | \$796,556 | \$361,448 | \$639,409 |
| Other States | \$28,215 | \$26,626 | \$36,641 | \$28,344 | \$29,957 |
| Other Sources | \$248,085 | \$130,765 | \$204,277 | \$142,805 | \$181,483 |
| Total | \$1,098,710 | \$1,540,186 | \$1,379,337 | \$678,404 | \$1,174,159 |

Source: SETS 4289 report, quarter ending June 2000

¹ CSEA's collections include \$105,897 in federal income tax refund withholdings that could only be identified as non-public assistance and could not be allocated to former and never assistance and non-VI-D cases.

CSEA collected second lowest dollar amount on former assistance cases which is approximately 6.4 percent less than the peer average. The majority of collections on former assistance cases were derived from federal income tax refunds and income withholding orders. However, CSEA collected less than the peer average on both federal income tax refunds and income withholding orders. Although the inclusion of the non-public assistance federal income tax withholdings would increase the federal income tax collections, the amount would not be sufficient to increase collections above Clark or Licking counties. CSEA collected higher than the peer averages with the state income tax refund, offset unemployment income, and other sources, but these sources make up only 26.7 percent of all collections.

F3.21 Collections per former assistance case are presented in **Table 3-15**.

Table 3-15: Former Assistance Collections Disbursed per Case

| | Clermont | Clark | Licking | Warren | Peer Average |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|--------------------|
| Total Collections | \$1,098,710 ¹ | \$1,540,186 | \$1,379,337 | \$678,404 | \$1,174,159 |
| Former Assistance Caseload | 2,568 | 3,825 | 2,942 | 1,566 | 2,725 |
| Collections Per Case | \$428 | \$403 | \$469 | \$433 | \$433 |

Sources: SETS 4223 and 4289 reports, quarter ending June 2000

¹CSEA's collections include \$105,897 in federal income tax refund withholdings that could only be identified as non-public assistance and could not be allocated to former and never assistance and non-VI-D cases.

CSEA has the second lowest collections disbursed per case on former assistance cases, approximately \$428 which is only 1.2 percent less than the peer average. However, the former assistance caseload comprises approximately 20 percent of the total caseload in Clermont County. The lower total collections per case are directly related to the low total collections for the quarter ending June 2000. CSEA was unable to identify the cause of the low collections per case in comparison to the peers.

R3.10 CSEA should consider focusing its efforts on improving collections for former assistance cases. Increased collections for former assistance cases would benefit both the County and the state by recouping funds for services previously rendered. One potential option available to CSEA would be to create a team of investigators solely responsible for former assistance cases (see **R3.3**). By creating a specialized team with improved knowledge on former assistance cases and offering incentives for increased collections, CSEA could provide the County with improved performance in both former assistance collections and arrears collections. The team based approach should focus on locating assets and obtaining wage withholding orders.

Never Assistance Cases

F3.22 **Table 3-16** presents the never assistance caseloads for CSEA and the peers. The never assistance caseload consists of cases where the family receives child support services but are not eligible and have never previously received public assistance benefits. In these cases, the family receives services as a result of a written application for IV-D services.

Table 3-16: Never Assistance Caseload

| | Clermont | Clark | Licking | Warren | Peer Average |
|--|----------|-------|---------|--------|--------------|
| Total Never Assistance Cases | 7,758 | 8,359 | 5,436 | 5,937 | 6,873 |
| Never Assistance Cases as a Percent of the Population | 4.3% | 5.7% | 4.0% | 3.8% | 4.5% |
| Never Assistance Cases as a Percent of Total Caseload | 66.2% | 57.2% | 48.1% | 70.7% | 60.6% |

Source: SETS 4223 report, quarter ending June 2000

Never assistance cases comprise approximately 66.2 percent or two-thirds of the total caseload in Clermont County. CSEA's never assistance caseload is the second highest as a percentage of the total population and total caseload. CSEA exceeds the peer average in both total number of never assistance cases and cases as a percentage of total caseload.

F3.23 **Table 3-17** shows the never assistance caseload by case mode for CSEA and the peers. The never assistance caseload includes some cases that are arrears only cases.

Table 3-17: Never Assistance Caseload by Case Mode

| | Clermont | | Clark | | Licking | | Warren | | Peer Average | |
|--------------------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|------------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|
| | Cases | % | Cases | % | Cases | % | Cases | % | Cases | % |
| Intake | 14 | 0.1% | 2 | n/a ¹ | 3 | n/a ¹ | 1 | n/a ¹ | 5 | n/a ¹ |
| Locate | 1,478 | 13.4% | 1,451 | 11.4% | 664 | 8.4% | 480 | 6.5% | 1,018 | 10.2% |
| Paternity | 330 | 3.0% | 446 | 3.5% | 259 | 3.3% | 163 | 2.2% | 300 | 3.0% |
| Support | 488 | 4.4% | 812 | 6.4% | 249 | 3.2% | 194 | 2.6% | 436 | 4.3% |
| Enforce | 8,717 | 79.1% | 10,027 | 78.7% | 6,713 | 85.1% | 6,607 | 88.7% | 8,266 | 82.5% |
| Total² | 11,027 | 100% | 12,738 | 100% | 7,888 | 100% | 7,445 | 100% | 10,025 | 100% |

Source: Management Overview report, June 2000

¹n/a - less than 0.1 percent.

² Cases may be maintained in more than one mode. Therefore the totals are higher than shown in Table 3-9.

As shown with the current and former assistance cases, CSEA has the highest number of cases in locate mode in comparison to the peers. Many of the cases in locate mode receive collections but are maintained in the locate mode until CSEA can establish a direct withdrawal order for the obligor's employer or bank account. Also, the lower percentage of cases in the enforce mode are reflective of the number of cases maintained in the locate mode, though CSEA could not break down the types of cases in the locate mode to determine those

awaiting the establishment of direct withdrawal orders. The peer counties do not place cases in the locate mode to establish direct withdrawal orders.

F3.24 Collections rates on never assistance cases are most often the highest because of the greater economic resources of never assistance clients. Ideally, the judge orders an income withholding and CSEA is responsible for collecting and disbursing child support payments, although over 65 percent of CSEA's paternity establishment cases can be attributed to never assistance cases.

Table 3-18: Collections Disbursed on Never Assistance Cases, June 2000

| | Clermont | Clark | Licking | Warren | Peer Average |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Federal Income Tax Refund | \$258,805 ¹ | \$723,471 | \$254,734 | \$241,358 | \$369,592 |
| State Income Tax Refund | \$39,057 | \$0 | \$0 | \$33,015 | \$18,018 |
| Offset Unemployment Income | \$40,097 | \$32,459 | \$32,349 | \$21,111 | \$31,504 |
| Income Withholding | \$4,621,679 | \$3,677,415 | \$2,433,326 | \$3,605,091 | \$3,584,378 |
| Other States | \$77,886 | \$90,858 | \$46,153 | \$68,277 | \$70,794 |
| Other Sources | \$959,030 | \$570,565 | \$471,306 | \$857,621 | \$714,631 |
| Total | \$5,996,653 | \$5,094,769 | \$3,237,867 | \$4,862,473 | \$4,797,940 |

Source: SETS 4289 report, quarter ending June 2000

¹CSEA's collections include \$105,897 in federal income tax refund withholdings that could only be identified as non-public assistance and could not be allocated to former and never assistance and non-VI-D cases.

CSEA has the highest total collections disbursed on never assistance cases while having the second highest number of never assistance cases in its caseload when compared to the peers. CSEA collected approximately 25.0 percent more than the peer average and 15.0 percent more than the next highest collector, Clark County. Clermont County and Warren County experienced collections from all of the enforcement types illustrated in the chart. Within the counties examined, income withholding orders produced approximately 75.0 percent of the collections for the quarter ending June 2000. The large dollar amount derived from income withholding orders is attributed to the use of the locate mode to search for employers of and active bank accounts held by obligors.

F3.25 **Table 3-19** presents the never assistance collections per case.

Table 3-19: Never Assistance Collections Disbursed per Case, June 2000

| | Clermont | Clark | Licking | Warren | Peer Average |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------------|
| Total Collections | \$5,996,653 ¹ | \$5,094,769 | \$3,237,867 | \$4,862,473 | \$4,797,940 |
| Never Assistance Caseload | 7,758 | 8,359 | 5,436 | 5,937 | 6,873 |
| Collections per Case | \$773.00 | \$609.50 | \$595.60 | \$819.00 | \$699.30 |

Sources: SETS 4289 and 4223 reports, quarter ending June 2000

¹ CSEA's collections include \$105,897 in federal income tax refund withholdings that could only be identified as non-public assistance and could not be allocated to former and never assistance and non-VI-D cases.

CSEA has the second highest collections disbursed per case on never assistance cases with approximately \$773 per case, which is approximately 10.5 percent higher than the peer average. The affect of high income withholding collections is apparent in the collections per case comparison between CSEA and the peers.

C3.7 CSEA's high collections for never assistance cases is facilitated through the use of the locate mode to identify income sources for direct withholdings and payments. By using the direct payment method, CSEA avoids instances of non-compliance with support orders and minimizes late payments.

Non IV-D Cases

F3.26 Non IV-D cases encompass child support and alimony-only orders and receive the same services as IV-D cases except locator services, income tax offset collections and withholding of unemployment compensation. CSEA is responsible for collections and disbursements, as well as modification and emancipations for non IV-D cases. **Table 3-20** presents the non IV-D caseload for CSEA and the peers.

Table 3-20: Non IV-D Caseload

| | Clermont | Clark | Licking | Warren | Peer Average |
|--|----------|-------|---------|--------|--------------|
| Total Non IV-D Cases | 496 | 548 | 2,056 | 660 | 940 |
| Non IV-D Cases as a Percent of the Population | 0.3% | 0.4% | 1.5% | 0.5% | 0.7% |
| Non IV-D Cases as a Percent of Total Caseload | 4.2% | 3.8% | 18.2% | 7.9% | 8.5% |

Source: SETS 4223 report, quarter ending June 2000

CSEA has the lowest percentage of non IV-D cases as a percentage of total population and the second lowest percentage of non IV-D cases as a percentage of total caseload. Clermont County directs its clients to apply for non IV-D benefits and the Clermont County Domestic Relations Court provides non-IV-D applications to custodial parents. However, applications for non-IV-D services are limited and without an application for non IV-D services by a custodial parent, the case becomes classified as a IV-D case.

F3.27 **Table 3-21** presents the non IV-D caseload by case mode for CSEA and the peers.

Table 3-21: Non IV-D Caseload by Case Mode

| | Clermont | | Clark | | Licking | | Warren | | Peer Average | |
|------------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| Intake | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| Locate | 48 | 8.6% | 29 | 5.3% | 171 | 7.8% | 63 | 8.7% | 78 | 7.6% |
| Paternity | 7 | 1.3% | 5 | 0.8% | 42 | 1.9% | 9 | 1.2% | 32 | 3.1% |
| Support | 18 | 3.1% | 9 | 1.6% | 32 | 1.5% | 22 | 3.0% | 21 | 2.1% |
| Enforce | 486 | 87.0% | 519 | 92.3% | 1,941 | 88.8% | 633 | 87.1% | 895 | 87.2% |
| Total | 559 | 100% | 562 | 100% | 2,186 | 100% | 727 | 100% | 1,026 | 100% |

Source: Management Overview report, June 2000

¹ Cases may be maintained in more than one mode. Therefore the totals are higher than shown in Table 3-13.

As shown in **Table 3-21**, CSEA and the peers have a majority of non IV-D cases in enforce mode reflecting the high percentage of spousal support cases. However, CSEA has the second highest percentage of cases in locate mode which is consistent with the second highest percentages in locate mode for current, former and never assistance cases and reflect the Agency's use of the locate mode to establish direct withdrawal and payment orders (see also **F3.12**, **F3.19** and **R3.7**).

F3.28 Non IV-D collections are not available by type of enforcement. Although ODJFS monitors activity and collections on non IV-D cases, case activity is not presented in the same manner as current, former, and never assistance cases.

F3.29 **Table 3-22** illustrates case collections disbursed per case on non IV-D cases.

Table 3-22: Non IV-D Collections Disbursed per Case, June 2000

| | Clermont | Clark | Licking | Warren | Peer Average |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|------------------|
| Total Collections | \$636,116 ¹ | \$568,935 | \$1,959,182 | \$680,347 | \$961,145 |
| Non IV-D Caseload | 496 | 548 | 2,056 | 660 | 940 |
| Collections Per Case | \$1,283 | \$1,038 | \$953 | \$1,031 | \$1,023 |

Sources: SETS 4289 and 4223 reports, quarter ending June 2000

¹CSEA's collections include \$105,897 in federal income tax refund withholdings that could only be identified as non-public assistance and could not be allocated to former and never assistance and non-VI-D cases.

CSEA collected and disbursed approximately \$1,283 per case on non IV-D cases for the quarter ending June 2000, which is 25 percent higher than the peer average. According to CSEA officials, the high collections on non IV-D cases are due to the majority of the cases being spousal support only cases, which typically involve larger sums of money. Because child support payments are determined using a standard calculation chart but spousal support payments are not standardized, there is a significant difference in terms of collections per case.

Agency Operations

F3.30 CSEA measures its performance through performance measures established by the 1998 Child Support Incentive Act. The Act established five performance measures which are tied to financial performance incentives for each state and monitored at both the state and federal levels. The measures are shown below.

- **Paternity Establishment:** The number of children with paternity established during the calendar year divided by the number of children born out-of-wedlock during the preceding calendar year
- **Support Establishment:** The number of cases with support orders divided by the number of Title IV-D cases
- **Collections on Current Support:** The amount collected for current support in Title IV-D cases divided by the amount owed for current support in Title IV-D cases

- **Collections on Arrears:** The number of Title IV-D cases paying toward arrears divided by the number of Title IV-D cases with arrears due
- **Cost Effectiveness:** Total Title IV-D dollars collected divided by the total Title IV-D dollars expended

These measures monitor only IV-D cases which consist of public assistance, former assistance cases, IV-E cases and never assistance cases. Non IV-D cases are not included in the calculation of the performance measures.

In FY 2000, these performance measures will be used to determine the amount of funding the state receives from the federal government and the amount of funding each county receives from the state. Under the current incentive system, federal payments to the states are based on support and paternity establishment, which determine 50 percent of the funding, and the other three measures listed above, which determine the remaining funding amounts. A new incentive system that incorporates different weights for the measures will be gradually phased in over the next three years.

F3.31 **Table 3-23** presents a three-year performance history for CSEA and the comparative counties based on the five federal performance measures.

Table 3-23: Federal Performance Measures, Three Year Aggregate

| Performance Measure | Clermont | Clark | Licking | Warren | Peer Average | State Average |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|
| IV-D Caseload | 11,793 | 17,218 | 9,608 | 8,059 | 11,670 | 9,944 |
| IV-D Collections | \$27,723,561 | \$19,180,387 | \$15,398,238 | \$17,562,909 | \$19,996,274 | \$14,502,007 |
| Average Collections per Case | \$2,351 | \$1,120 | \$1,603 | \$2,719 | \$1713 | \$1,458 |
| Paternity Establishment | 82.16% | 93.53% | 145.03% | 89.41% | 102.53% | 77.59% |
| Support Establishment | 79.98% | 84.97% | 85.74% | 88.16% | 84.71% | 72.67% |
| Collections on Current Support | 112.20% | 63.55% | 62.55% | 67.98% | 76.57% | 68.03% |
| Collections on Arrears | 69.23% | 54.50% | 86.21% | 67.02% | 69.24% | 55.21% |
| Cost Effectiveness | \$5.87 | \$4.58 | \$5.23 | \$9.87 | \$6.39 | \$6.98 |

Source: ODJFS performance measure reports

As shown in **Table 3-23**, CSEA has the second highest caseload and the highest collections over a three-year time period or 19.2 percent more than the peer average. In addition, CSEA has the second highest collections per case which is also higher than the peer and state averages. However, CSEA has not performed above or comparable to the peer average in three of the five performance measures, which include paternity establishment, support establishment and collections on arrears. Although CSEA is reimbursed fully for these measures, customer service aspects of paternity and support establishment and collections on arrears may have been impacted by recent turnover in the Agency's chief executive position and a trend toward caseworker skill generalization. In prior years, CSEA demonstrated higher performance in the five measures, reaching 96 percent paternity establishment in FY 1999 and best in state for FY 1998.

R3.11 CSEA should refocus its customer service resources on paternity and support establishment, both of which are necessary for CSEA to collect support for children residing in the County. CSEA should establish Agency goals for paternity and support establishment and include front-line employees in determining methods to achieve higher performance. Performance plans may incorporate programs used in prior years or in other counties, or, if necessary, additional staffing in the Pre-order or Legal Units. CSEA should reserve the option of hiring additional employees until a full time tracking analysis has been performed as discussed in **R3.1** and **R3.3**.

F3.32 SETS quarterly reports can be used to monitor the types of services required by CSEA clients. **Table 3-24** illustrates Title IV-D cases from the quarter ending June 2000 in which a support order has not been established or paternity has not been determined. These cases are compared to the number of services provided for the quarter ending June 2000. Measured services include cases with paternity established, support orders established and payments processed for the year.

Table 3-24: Title IV-D Services Required and Provided

| | Clermont | Clark | Licking | Warren | Peer Average |
|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------|--------------|
| Cases Open Requiring Paternity Establishment ¹ | 622 | 718 | 510 | 237 | 522 |
| Paternities Established During the Quarter ² | 199 | 341 | 166 | 114 | 205 |
| Percent of Paternities Established | 32.0% | 47.5% | 32.5% | 48.1% | 39.3% |
| Cases Open Requiring a Support Order ¹ | 1,307 | 1,916 | 940 | 437 | 1,150 |
| Support Orders Established During the Quarter ² | 198 | 423 | 195 | 218 | 259 |
| Percent of Support Orders Established | 15.1% | 22.1% | 20.7% | 49.9% | 22.5% |
| Total | 1,929 | 2,634 | 1,450 | 674 | 1,672 |

Source: SETS 4223 Report, quarter ending June 2000

¹ The total number of cases requiring paternity or support establishment for January 1 through June 30, 2000.

² The total number of cases with paternity or support established for the quarter ending June 2000.

CSEA had the second highest number of cases requiring services to be performed at the end of the June 2000 quarter which was 15.4 percent greater than the peer average. Cases requiring support orders were 13.5 percent above the peer average and cases requiring paternitys were 19.2 percent above the peer average. CSEA's open cases requiring services were exceeded only by Clark County. Effective completion of paternity and support establishment are necessary to begin collection of child support funds. A smaller number of cases requiring services indicates that more paternitys and support orders have been established, which improves overall CSEA performance.

CSEA completed the second highest number of paternity establishments at 199 during the nine-month period, but was below the peer average by 2.9 percent. If the high number of paternitys and support orders established in Clark County is removed from the peer average, Clermont County is 42.1 percent above the peer average in paternitys established but 9.2 percent below the peer average for established support orders.

R3.12 CSEA should continually monitor the services required on the quarterly reports to ensure that paternity and support order establishment are performed in an efficient and effective manner. CSEA should consider implementing an incentive system for each of the units responsible for establishing paternitys and support orders which rewards reductions in the numbers of open cases in these categories through pay-for-performance (see **F3.10**). Further recommendations to reduce the number of services required are found throughout the *current assistance*,

former assistance, never assistance and non-IV-D and agency programs sections of this report.

F3.33 **Table 3-25** illustrates the number of cases within CSEA and the peers that received some form of collection for the quarter ending June 2000.

Table 3-25: Title IV-D Cases with Collections ¹

| | Clermont | Clark | Licking | Warren | Peer Average |
|---|----------|--------|---------|--------|---------------|
| Open Cases | 11,722 | 14,609 | 11,298 | 8,544 | 11,543 |
| Cases With Collections | 8,566 | 9,072 | 7,829 | 6,035 | 7,876 |
| Percent of Open Cases with Collections | 73.1% | 62.1% | 69.3% | 70.6% | 69.4% |

Source: ODJFS 4223 report, quarter ending June 2000

¹ The federal fiscal year ends in September 2000 and the figures presented in Table 3-12 correspond to nine months of data.

As indicated in the table, CSEA received some form of collection on 73.1 percent of its cases, which is the highest among the peers. CSEA provides 16.9 percent fewer services than the peer average (see **Table 3-24**) but reported cases with collections 3.7 percent higher than the peer average. If the Agency increases the level of services provided on a quarterly basis, CSEA should also experience a corresponding increase in child support dollars collected and disbursed.

C3.8 CSEA has the highest percent of its caseload receiving collections for the quarter ending June 2000. This high collection rate enables CSEA, in part, to accomplish its mission by providing the families with financial support from both parents.

F3.34 As a component of child support, medical insurance is often ordered to be provided by the non-custodial parent. **Table 3-26** below shows medical insurance provisions on cases for CSEA and the peers.

Table 3-26: Medical Support Orders

| | Clermont | Clark | Licking | Warren | Peer Average |
|---|---------------------|-------|---------|--------|--------------|
| Health Insurance Ordered, Title IV-D Cases | 1,385 | 1,549 | 1,048 | 633 | 1,154 |
| Health Insurance Provided, Title IV-D Cases | 1,529 | 1,088 | 825 | 830 | 1,068 |
| Percent of Medical Insurance Provided as Ordered | 110.4% ¹ | 70.2% | 78.7% | 131.1% | 92.5% |

Source: ODJFS 4223 report, quarter ending June 2000

¹ Note: The percentage of medical insurance provided as ordered appears to be incorrect for Clermont and Warren counties. The inclusion of both parent's medical insurance in the report may contribute to this error.

Table 3-26 shows CSEA as carrying the second highest number of cases where health insurance is ordered and the highest amount of cases where health insurance is provided. Although CSEA has a high number of cases with health insurance provided, the percentage data provided by SETS may be incorrect as it shows provided health insurance at 110.4 percent of cases where health insurance is ordered. The County stated that the over inflated percentage may be a result of the SETS system recording the medical insurance of both parents, although the Agency has not developed a method to isolate cases containing medical insurance information for both parents. A private contractor, who is responsible for tracking medical support orders, has provided the County with accurate data which is not reflected by the SETS report. ODJFS is in the process of updating the SETS reports to provide more reliable data.

F3.35 The monthly collections report details the monthly obligations for child support as compared to the actual collections for the month. This report is broken down according to caseload. However, counties are free to classify the caseload in any manner and CSEA and the peers do not classify cases in the same manner. Therefore, an assessment could not be made on a collections per caseworker basis.

Table 3-27: Monthly Collections Comparison

| | Clermont | Clark | Licking | Warren | Peer Average |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------------|
| Monthly Obligations | \$3,267,571 | \$3,272,572 | \$3,036,584 | \$2,862,701 | \$3,109,857 |
| Monthly Collections | \$3,037,962 | \$2,995,321 | \$2,400,477 | \$2,102,067 | \$2,633,957 |
| Collections as a Percentage of Obligations | 93.0% | 91.5% | 79.1% | 73.4% | 84.2% |

Source: ODJFS monthly web report, June 2000

CSEA's collections for June 2000 were approximately 93.0 percent of obligations which the highest of the peers and 8.8 percent above the peer average. This indicates that CSEA collects obligations on a high percentage of cases. The high number of never assistance cases managed by CSEA and the use of the locate mode to identify assets for direct withdrawal orders may contribute to the high percentage of obligations collected. Federal income tax return withholdings also increased the June 2000 collections. CSEA's director monitors collections as a percentage of total obligations and plans to incorporate collections as a percentage of obligations for *each case* as a component of Agency performance measurement.

C3.9 The high collections as a percentage of obligations are reflective of CSEA's programmatic efforts used to ensure that support order obligations are fulfilled. The high collections can be attributed to the use of the locate mode and the employment of all available collection tools. Plans to incorporate collections as a percentage of obligations for each case as a component of CSEA benchmarks will help the Agency focus resources to cases with arrears or other non-compliance issues.

F3.36 Additional data was requested from CSEA and ODJFS for the purposes of this comparison to determine outstanding obligations, cases in arrears, the average length of time to establish paternity or support orders and total outstanding arrears. Neither CSEA or ODJFS was able to provide data encompassing the above information. The deputy director of CSEA was unsure as to whether the data could be produced by SETS or was tracked through the system. ODJFS representatives stated that a programmer would be needed to isolate such data elements which are not currently a component of the SETS reporting package. Through this performance audit it was determined that a limited range of management information is produced by the SETS system. In addition, CSEA managers throughout the state expressed concern over the reliability and veracity of data produced by the SETS system and CSEA has repeatedly contacted ODJFS to convey problems with the SETS system.

R3.13 ODJFS should survey counties to determine relevant management reporting elements currently not available through the SETS reporting package. As the SETS system moves toward federal certification, all computation errors should be corrected and ODJFS should identify these errors through internal studies and feedback from county CSEAs. Additional reporting capabilities should be developed for the SETS system and implemented within the next two years so that counties can track their performance from a variety of angles. The SETS system should be updated to allow counties to choose data elements for report generation as soon as federal certification is complete or the FY 2000 deadline has passed, whichever occurs first.

Detailed, relevant, timely and accurate management reports are crucial to the continued success of county CSEAs in fulfilling their missions to ensure that children have the financial support of both parents, foster responsible behavior and reduce welfare costs. All SETS

reports, generated by either the SETS system or the ODJFS Innerweb, should use the same filters and data elements to ensure consistency in reporting and increase the utility of reports to county child support enforcement agency managers.

Long Range Planning

F3.37 CSEA has developed Unit Plans of Work (UPW's), a five-year plan and an annual budget to guide Agency planning. However, the five-year plan lacks the necessary detail for a strong strategic plan: action plans, costs, responsible personnel and due dates. The one-page, five-year plan for CSEA consists of goals, objectives, costs and the responsible unit. UPW's consist of program activities and outcomes. A typical UPW establishes a time frame, necessary resources, supporting values, activities involved, stakeholder benefits, and participating agencies. However, there are no action steps assigned to the participating agencies and staff members. The annual budget is attached to the UPW documents. The budget consists of four line items and does not include a description of the potential expenditures for each of the line items. The linkage between the budget and the UPW's or the five-year plan is unclear.

F3.38 In 1998, the Commissioners asked departmental supervisors throughout the County to participate in a leadership program designed to improve government. The program, "Managing for Results," encourages management staff to shift an organization's focus from inputs to outcomes. The philosophy behind this program logically follows other important studies on improving government, including *Reinventing Government*, (1992) and *Banishing Bureaucracy*, (1997). CSEA management staff participated in the program at first on a monthly basis and, most recently, on a quarterly basis. The program includes a series of workshops, lectures, and videos that address a variety of results-oriented approaches to management. Some of the major initiatives suggested by the "Managing for Results" program include:

- Focus on moving from inputs to outcomes
- Identify and involve key stakeholders
- Use strategic planning and visioning to adopt goals as a community
- Use performance measures and benchmarks to monitor progress
- Utilize surveys to obtain input from the community and clients
- Communicate performance results to all stakeholders to improve accountability

- Shift organizational control away from the top and center to help flatten the organizational chart
- Establish collaborative partnerships for shared outcomes

Although CSEA has implemented some lessons from the program's curriculum, several other lessons have not been initiated by CSEA. Collaborative partnerships with various groups from the public and private sectors have been established only on a limited basis. However, key stakeholders have not been identified for the purposes of developing a strategic plan designed for CSEA and the Agency does not have a current, long term strategic plan.

F3.39 Licking County CSEA has developed a strategic plan which it updates annually. The strategic plan consists of goals and several steps and objectives to achieve these goals. The document also contains dates for actions to be completed and specific staff members responsible for the implementation of the objectives. The level of specifics, date to be completed and persons responsible for implementation give added weight and utility to the strategic plan.

F3.40 The Auditor General of Arizona noted significant accomplishments in the area of strategic planning within the Arizona Division of Child Support Enforcement. The Division of Child Support uses strategic planning to increase performance for the program's primary functions of paternity and support establishment and collections. The Division sets numeric goals for each office, unit and employee. On a monthly basis, projected versus actual productivity are measured and individual employee evaluations are based upon the accomplishment of these performance goals. The Division reports increased performance in key programmatic areas as a result of planning efforts. Between FY 1995 and FY 1997, Arizona ranked in the top five states nationally for increased collections, even though the caseload remained stable

R3.14 CSEA should place a high priority on formulating a long-term strategic plan that includes objectives, definitions of desired outcomes, and realistic time lines for implementation. Participation in the "Managing for Results" program creates an opportunity for CSEA management and staff to develop its own strategic plan. Lessons from this program can help guide CSEA in its strategic planning process with support from the Commissioners. The purposes of the strategic planning process are to:

- Establish the overall mission, vision, goals, objectives and strategies of the organization
- Provide an ongoing framework for action upon which decisions can be made about what is being performed

- Create an understanding regarding the intent of the program and how its actions are moving the program toward the desired outcomes
- Provide a basis for the allocation of tasks, which includes the roles and responsibilities of each party
- Assess the programs' current and past successes in order to inform the necessary parties
- Identify resources required to achieve the desired outcomes
- Improve performance through monitoring and eliminating activities that are not contributing to the desired outcomes
- Increase accountability for stakeholders and management

The strategic plan should:

- Establish the overall mission, vision, goals, objectives and strategies of CSEA, and develop means to meet the goals and objectives (action plan)
- Establish mechanisms for coordinating and monitoring projects among different departments
- Address issues that are common to all projects
- Prioritize projects
- Require realistic time frames with an implementation plan
- Describe interagency coordination and project leadership as well as project accountability

It is important to note that the key to a successful strategic planning process lies not only in the final document, but with the strategically aligned interaction and communication among the parties involved. A successful strategic plan should also encompass several years of planning and be updated at least annually to reflect accomplishments and changes in priorities. CSEA should also ensure that the plan is updated to accommodate the rapid changes taking place in the field of child support enforcement.

F3.41 Performance measures are defined as a system of client-focused quantified indicators that let an organization know if it is meeting its goals and objectives. Performance measures are a management tool that measures work performed and the results achieved. These same measures form a basis for management to plan, budget, structure programs, and control results. Measurement for performance helps to ensure a continuous provision of efficient and effective services.

F3.42 CSEA uses formal Agency-wide performance measures on a limited basis. Most measures used by CSEA are derived from the federal performance measures. While the federal government's performance measures provide a satisfactory starting point for monitoring agency performance, the measures are insufficiently detailed to provide strong data for management decision making within CSEA. Additional performance measures have not been widely implemented and links between performance measurement and CSEA objectives or goals are unclear.

R3.15 CSEA should consider developing formal agency-wide performance measures to augment the performance measures established by the federal government. Performance measures should be aligned with CSEA's objectives to effectively evaluate and continuously improve the performance of CSEA.

The implementation of a performance measurement system is an ongoing process. Measurement quality will likely improve with experience. The process of developing performance measures should initially focus on common indicators. The types of performance measures most commonly used in government include:

- **Inputs:** Resources used (what is needed)
- **Outputs:** Activities completed (what is produced)
- **Outcomes:** Results achieved
- **Efficiency:** How well resources are used
- **Quality:** Effectiveness (how much has agency improved)

Each measure is designed to answer a different question. It is not always necessary to use all of the types of measures to determine if an objective is being achieved. Good performance measures need to be specifically defined and identified. Clear explanations are necessary to indicate what is being measured, the source of the information, and how the value is calculated. The use and reporting of performance measures may increase CSEA's efficiency and should better inform County employees and constituents of CSEA performance.

Potential performance measures to be used by CSEA include the following:

- Length of time to resolve appeal disputes (Efficiency)
- Length of time to process a case from paternity establishment to collection on support order (Efficiency)
- Number of complaints and subsequent response time (Efficiency)
- Percent of time that collections are accurately posted to SETS (Output)
- Percent of cases that received timely support payments (Outcome)
- Percentage increase in response times to complaints (Quality)

CSEA should also consider using random representative samples of cases to perform various tests. By following a sample of cases through the system and noting all actions taken on each case, CSEA would be able to identify trends in cases such as actions that result in successful collections or more effective methods of location. In addition, CSEA would be able to determine the average length of time from initial application to paternity establishment and from paternity establishment to support order. CSEA could also follow public assistance cases through the process to identify any actions that may cause the client to be removed from public assistance.

F3.43 CSEA does not have a formalized quality improvement system designed to measure Agency performance with regards to outcomes. Although CSEA management has identified outcomes which include self-sufficiency, family stability, increased standard of living, legitimation, shared responsibility and equitable child support, CSEA has not developed a process for measuring these outcomes and incorporating the results into the Agency's decision making process. In measuring progress toward identifiable outcomes, child support enforcement agencies become more accountable to families receiving child support payments by ensuring that children have the financial support of both parents.

R3.16 CSEA should design a quality improvement system to develop and assess outcome measures. In designing such a system, CSEA should consider following the recommended steps.

- With the input of key stakeholders, identify three to five target outcomes which are consistent with the Agency's mission.
- Develop a set of measurable indicators for each target outcome by which progress may be assessed

- Structure the Agency's information system to be able to collect data on outcome indicators.
- Incorporate the focus on outcomes into all levels of the Agency by modifying daily operations to include a process of reporting progress toward identified outcomes.

Once the target outcomes are established with key stakeholders, a quality assurance committee should be established to report the progress made toward the identified outcomes to management, staff and key stakeholders. Through periodic progress reports on outcome achievement, CSEA management will be better able to make decisions regarding performance and resource allocation. By involving key stakeholders in the process, CSEA will become more accountable for obtaining financial support from non-custodial parents.

F3.44 CSEA devised employee performance reports and has been monitoring employee performance for several years. The reports were developed in-house and were generated manually on a monthly basis using data from CSEA's Atek system. The reports tracked employee activities for the month and included the following:

- Contempts
- Credit Bureau notices and referrals
- Defaults Distributions
- Interstate transmittals
- Investigative reports
- Medical and support orders
- IRS intercepts and wage assignments

The reports were compiled monthly basis and the layout of the report allowed for a year of activity to be viewed for each employee. The reports also contained a column for monthly average of activity per employee and an overall average for all investigators.

CSEA used the Atek system performance reports to assist ODJFS in developing a SETS system employee performance measurement report. The SETS event tracking report includes many of the measures that were developed and used in CSEA but has the potential to be more sophisticated as a result of the automation. The new SETS Innerweb reports measure the number of absent parents payments in default, support orders established, paternities established, absent parents deleted from the default list, enforcement techniques initiated and adjustment reviews conducted per employee.

C3.10 Past experience in measuring employee performance provides CSEA with an advantage in using the new SETS event tracking reports. CSEA was also able to assist the State in the development of a statewide event tracking reporting system. By including this reporting mechanism in CSEA's operational assessment, CSEA is able to track caseloads and services

performed for each case worker within the Agency and use the results to reward good performance.

F3.45 Although CSEA has an advantage in using the SETS reports as a result of the Agency's previous experience with management reports, CSEA currently lacks a comprehensive management reporting methodology. The deputy director stated that some SETS reports contain computation flaws and the information contained therein is not usable (see also **F3.36** and **R3.13**). In addition, CSEA management does not consistently monitor performance through the same sets of reports and performance data is not tracked on a long term basis. Finally, several key data elements, which were determined by this audit to be critical to monitoring CSEA performance, are not available through the SETS system and are not tracked independently by the Agency.

R3.17 CSEA should identify and define the key data elements necessary to monitor Agency performance as described in **F3.36**, **R3.13**, **R3.15** and **R3.16**. Once identified, these elements should be tracked through the SETS system or an in-house database. As some data elements are not available through SETS or are reported incorrectly due to computation programming errors, ODJFS should immediately begin correcting the system flaws so that county CSEAs will have access to management data. Through monitoring employee and CSEA performance on a regular basis, the Agency will be able to implement and monitor the success of programs designed to raise performance in lagging areas.

Client Service and Community Outreach

F3.46 The implementation of SETS during FY 1999 affected CSEA's ability to meet client service expectations. Under CSEA's old Atek computer system, clients could be provided with case information in a timely manner. As the SETS system has disrupted the integrity of the data within CSEA's system, employees have a reduced ability to provide timely and accurate responses to inquiries. Also, CSEA provided clients with flexibility that is no longer possible under the centralized collection system. Non-custodial parents were able to deliver payments directly to CSEA. If the custodial parent needed the money immediately, the custodial parent could pick up a check at CSEA or the Agency would make arrangements to have it delivered. The SETS system does not allow for those types of transactions. Mitigating client frustration caused by changing service levels is CSEA's primary customer service challenge.

F3.47 The 1997 Federal Benchmarking Consortium's report *Best Practices in One-Stop Client Service* indicates that clients expect accessible, accurate, timely and responsive service, and top organizations continually measure their progress in these areas. Potential options for identifying service lags are to implement a surveying process, track client complaints, or monitor areas which require the most intensive client contact. CSEA has not implemented a surveying or complaint tracking process.

R3.18 CSEA should develop a surveying process to identify client service lags. Prior to initiating the survey, a clear statement of the problems to be studied or the type of information desired should be put into writing. Also, the population to be surveyed should be identified. As child support clients, custodial and non-custodial parents, are often in opposite positions and it may be necessary to develop different surveys for each party.

Survey results can be used to measure client service performance. CSEA could also use the results of the survey to identify areas of emphasis to be included in the strategic plan. Follow up surveys would allow CSEA to measure annual performance improvement in the area of customer service and other areas identified in prior surveys.

Depending upon the objective of the survey and the desired information, CSEA has many options for disseminating the survey. CSEA could use:

- Mail or telephone surveys
- Point of service surveys
- Focus groups

The cost of surveys varies on the length and complexity of the survey and data to be analyzed. The average cost for designing the evaluation instrument is approximately \$3,200 while data analysis is approximately \$1,600 for a total cost of \$4,800.

Financial Implication: According to the PCSAO's *Standards for Effective Practice*, the estimated cost for a survey evaluation design is \$3,200 and the study of the results is approximately \$1,600 for a total cost of \$4,800. The actual cost of the survey will depend on many factors including sample size, number and type of varying surveys, and length of the questionnaire.

F3.48 CSEA has not formalized the Agency's grievance process. Complaints by clients are forwarded to the investigator's supervisor who has the authority to assign the case a new investigator. If the supervisor does not rectify the complaint, the client will be referred to the investigative supervisor II and then to the deputy director of CSEA. CSEA tracks some complaints via a Quattro Pro spreadsheet, but the majority of complaints are resolved without a record of the complaint or action being developed.

Licking County CSEA has established a formalized grievance tracking process. Complaints are directed to the agency's supervisory level. Supervisors complete a form citing the problem and describing the resolution. This information is used during employee performance evaluations.

F3.49 PCSAO's *Standards for Effective Practice* recommends including the following items in a formal written grievance policy with associated procedures:

- The identification of parties who may seek formal redress of grievances
- An established process describing how grievances are received by the agency
- Designated staff members responsible for conducting the grievance process or hearing
- An established time frame for grievance process to be initiated and completed
- An established process for providing written decisions to those involved in the grievance process
- A method for documenting, reporting, and maintaining documents associated with the grievance process

Clermont County Child Protective Services has both formal and informal grievance procedures. CPS's formally established grievance process gives clients an avenue to express criticism about the agency's delivery of services.

R3.19 CSEA should formalize the grievance process by developing a formal and informal grievance resolution procedure. CSEA should base the Agency's grievance policy on the policy used by Clermont County CPS. As at least one DJFS department already has a grievance procedure being used, CSEA should base its grievance process on methods already developed and implemented by the Department. Information on complaints should be utilized as part of the employee evaluation process.

F3.50 Complaint resolution is a primary component of CSEA case workers' jobs. The National Partnership for Reinventing Government researched best practices in private business complaint resolution to determine how those practices could be recreated in government. The best practice companies used similar approaches to handling complaints which include the following:

- Train and empower front-line employees to resolve complaints during first contact
- Make it easy for clients through centralized client help lines, 1-800 numbers and point of service client cards
- Enter complaint data into a computerized, integrated system

- Consider complaints as opportunities for improvement
- Use various other organizational arrangements

CSEA investigators provide clients with their direct phone line at the Agency. This enables the client to reach the caseworker on the first contact. The phone system at CSEA also supplies callers with a 1-800 number to call for payment and arrearage information before the operator answers, which reduces the volume of calls to the Agency. CSEA also provides customer service training to its employees and CSEA management recognizes complaint resolution as a critical job function for caseworkers. However, CSEA does not have a formalized complaint resolution procedure and does not track client grievances in a centralized system.

Licking County CSEA monitors complaint resolution at the supervisor level. If a client speaks with the supervisor, the complaint is logged and the corresponding resolution is recorded. Neither Warren nor Clark County monitor or track complaints.

R3.20 CSEA should develop and implement a centralized, searchable database to track client grievances. While it appears that many of CSEA's client service initiatives are consistent with best practices in business, the creation of a centralized database for client complaints would provide the Agency with the following:

- A method to regularly analyze customer complaint data
- A source of information for management decision making
- A formalized method to respond to external concerns

As part of a performance measurement system (see **R3.15** and **R3.16**), tracking client complaints could assist CSEA with identifying lags in services and opportunities for improvement on a per employee basis. Additional training in client service could be directed toward employees who accrue the greatest number of grievances. Also recurring issues could be addressed in future training.

CSEA employees have access to Corel Suite software, which includes word processing, spreadsheet, database, graphics and calendar applications. CSEA could use the Corel Paradox program to create a database to store complaint information. The grievance database could be developed at no additional cost to CSEA, although additional training may be necessary to fully implement a grievance tracking database. Training costs would depend on the level of training needed and whether the training is developed and conducted in-house or by an outside vendor.

F3.51 CSEA uses in-house phone studies to track causes of increases or decreases in phone calls. Internal studies found that a large portion of calls resulted from the inaccuracy of the state voice response unit (VRU) which was not being frequently updated. The VRU was designed to reduce calls to county CSEA's and provide clients with accurate, timely case information. Incorrect information posted to the VRU caused an influx of client calls to the local child support agencies regarding the discrepancies. The peer counties also indicated that the VRU has increased the volume of phone activity rather than decreased the number calls to their agencies.

C3.11 CSEA's in-house phone studies help the Agency determine causes of increased or decreased phone activity. By monitoring client service phone issues in-house, CSEA is able to proactively address potential customer service lags and more quickly address client needs.

R3.21 CSEA should use phone studies on an ongoing basis to assist the Agency in assessment of client service issues. Ongoing monitoring of the level of phone calls would enable CSEA to ascertain potential service problems in a timely manner. Quarterly analysis of phone call levels would also assist CSEA in conducting trend analysis, determining staffing needs and identifying areas which may need continued intervention.

Also, ODJFS should update the VRU on a regular basis. CSEA should check the VRU monthly to ensure the information being provided by the VRU is accurate. By regularly monitoring the accuracy of the VRU, CSEA will be able to better prepare for increases in client inquiries and forward information about inaccuracies to ODJFS for correction.

F3.52 CSEA has recently developed a Web site with the assistance of the County Information System Department (ISD). CSEA's Web site is currently available on the World Wide Web at www.clermontsupportskids.com. The County ISD is providing Web site support services to CSEA free of charge. Updates and changes to the site are performed by the ISD Department; CSEA is responsible for providing new data and concepts for any additions to the Web site. The cost of the Web site was approximately \$100, which covered costs for the domain name for two years. CSEA's new Web site remains linked with the County Web site and contains the following:

- Agency mission, history and services
- Applications for services and direct deposit
- Criminal warrant sheets
- Enforcement techniques
- Most Wanted Poster
- Links to other web sites including State of Ohio and federal child support programs
- Apprehended absent parents
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Awards

The Web site benefits CSEA by increasing exposure to special programs and initiatives and providing the community with an additional way to contact the Agency.

F3.53 Licking County CSEA's Web site provides general information about the agency, the basic services offered, SETS information, current and past most wanted listings, download capabilities for certain forms to print out at home and mail to the agency, frequently asked questions, E-mail capabilities, links to other sites and other valuable information. The Web site, created in November 1998, receives between 230 and 790 hits per month.

Marion County, Indiana CSEA also developed a Web site that provides information associated with the agency. The information includes agency departments and their responsibilities, services provided by the agency, support forms in Word and PDF format, a feedback page, a tip form and a news flash page with regular updates on child support enforcement in the county and state.

C3.12 CSEA's Web site provides clients and community members with an additional avenue to reach the CSEA offices and provide input or ask questions of Agency staff. In addition, the Web site serves as a public relations tool by publicizing CSEA functions.

R3.22 In addition to the information found on the Web site, CSEA should consider expanding the information to be included on the site with the following items.

- Client survey
- Calendar of upcoming events and changes and additions to the web site
- Annual reports
- Change of address forms
- Counter to measure the number of hits on the Web site

CSEA is in the process of placing the most frequently used client forms on-line.

F3.54 CSEA uses a variety of means to communicate with the community. Each year, CSEA participates in the statewide child support month during which CSEA explores new ideas and creates new ways of sharing services, accomplishments and information with the community. This year CSEA will display a banner, publish a listing of absent parents who owe large sums of money and begin using unique methods of enforcement in order to collect support payments on some difficult cases. In past years, CSEA published articles in the newspaper and gave an award to the absent parent of the year.

CSEA participates in the state sponsored outreach program called GRADS. Employees from CSEA visit local vocational schools and speak to unwed mothers about the services provided by the Agency and the importance child support enforcement services to their children. CSEA also sets up booths at the County fair to distribute information about its services.

C3.13 CSEA actively participates in several community outreach activities to inform the community about the benefits of child support services. By actively participating in community outreach efforts, CSEA raises the community's awareness of child support enforcement issues and encourages community support of the Agency's mission.

R3.23 CSEA should continue to make community outreach a priority and consider expanding current efforts to include some of the following best practices:

- Massachusetts uses high-school seniors as lecturers in school-based programs aimed at ninth and tenth graders. The programs stress the responsibilities and pressures of fatherhood and the importance of a father in a child's life.
- Illinois Child Support Enforcement Division has been nationally recognized for their outreach efforts. The Division participated in Child Support Awareness Month by creating public service announcements, hosting open houses and commissioning art work from children to be displayed around the state. In addition, the Division staff make regular presentations on paternity establishment and child support services at Head Start, Woman, Infants and Children (WIC) and child care sites. A two-page newsletter is published and faxed to county hospitals, clerks and registrars to keep them up to date on developments and progress in the child support program. The staff produces holiday flyers explaining the voluntary paternity acknowledgment process.

CSEA may, in the future, wish to consider allocating resources for a public relations position. As public relations can assist CSEA in increasing collections, public relations activities should become an integral component of the Agency's strategic plan.

F3.55 CSEA no longer involves the media in Agency searches for absent non-custodial parents as the publication of the most-wanted list in local newspapers was discontinued several years ago. However, the County recently hired a media relations representative who has assisted CSEA in preparing and disseminating public service announcements advising clients about centralized collections.

Hamilton County CSEA enlists the local media to help circulate the names of non-custodial parents who are wanted for nonpayment of child support. Hamilton County CSEA negotiated an agreement with the local television station to advertise non-paying parents on the news once each week. Twice per month the TV station profiles the custodial parent and children and announces the name of the absent parent. Hamilton County CSEA has the ability to pull the profile at any time if the non-paying parent is apprehended. The Hamilton County Sheriff's Department phone number is provided to receive tips from the public.

Through collaboration with the media and the Sheriff's Department, Hamilton County CSEA has made 26 arrests and collected \$19,000 in child support. News segments also appear to invoke social intolerance of non-support of children. The cost to Hamilton County for this project is approximately \$80 of personnel time each week to prepare information for the TV station.

R3.24 CSEA should consider developing an agreement with the local media in both Clermont and Hamilton counties similar to the agreement used by Hamilton County. The agreements could be developed either through the Agency or the County media relations representative. CSEA and the Sheriff's Department should develop a working relationship to facilitate the reporting and arrest of non-paying parents. CSEA should also develop appropriate agreements with local television and print media. As part of the new Web site, CSEA publishes a listing of non-paying parents with arrest warrants which could be used to develop press releases or news segments. Increased advertisements of non-paying parents could improve the County's collection rates on arrears.

Support Enforcement Tracking System (SETS)

F3.56 The creation of the Ohio support enforcement tracking system began in 1984 as a result of an amendment to Title IV-D of the Social Security Act which required each state to submit a plan for a statewide automated child support system. The Family Support Act of 1988 required states to have their systems operational by October 1995. Most states failed to meet the October 1995 deadline and, therefore, the deadline was extended to October 1997 and then extended again to October 1999. As of June 6, 2000, the following seven jurisdictions have not yet met federal certification requirements: Ohio, California, Michigan, Nebraska, Nevada, South Carolina and the Virgin Islands.

F3.57 In 1998, ODJFS missed the congressionally established deadline and was fined approximately \$14 million. Ohio missed the deadline again in 1999 and the federal government withheld funding in the amount of approximately \$29 million for a total cost of \$43 million. ODJFS appropriated funds from a separate account which enabled them to provide full funding to the counties. If the October 2000 deadline is not met, ODJFS is facing an additional \$56 million in federal sanctions. ODJFS plans to either distribute costs among counties or penalize those that are not yet converted. According to ODJFS officials, ODJFS suggested that county commissioners examine potential options for raising money in the event of a sanction. However, this idea did not receive widespread acceptance.

R3.25 CSEA, in conjunction with DJFS and the County Commissioners, should devise a plan to inject funding into CSEA in the event of a federal sanction against Ohio for non-certification of the statewide computer system. If the fine is assessed at the county level and the sanction spread evenly across the 88 counties, the result would be a \$637,000 loss of state funding to

Clermont County. A potential estimate of withheld funding could not be determined by ODJFS because many of the plans to address future penalties are undecided.

- F3.58 SETS was developed to provide two basic functions of child support enforcement: case management and financial management. The case management functions include creating and updating case files, locating absent parents, tracking paternity determinations, and establishing and modifying support orders. The system is designed to allow counties to share information, use federal and statewide databases to locate persons owing child support, to identify asset sources, to assist in establishing paternity, to track collections and to standardize other processes. Financial management functions within SETS include collecting payments, allocating payments to the appropriate entity, disbursing payments, aging and tracking arrearage, creating financial reports and assisting in reconciliation of the CSEA bank account.
- F3.59 A report issued in May 1999 by the Auditor of State's Office (AOS) concluded that the SETS system has several critical problems. The problems with SETS were a result of changes in federal requirements and incomplete implementation efforts which led to repeated but differing implementation efforts. Additional problems with SETS include the following:
- Miscalculation of hardware needs
 - Lack of involvement by end-users in software development
 - Less than optimal system design and development procedures

The AOS report determined that the design and development of SETS primarily revolved around meeting federal guidelines and requirements with seemingly less concern for whether the system met all functional requirements for conducting child support activities at the county level.

- F3.60 The AOS report identified serious flaws in the financial management function of the SETS system. Federal regulations require each state to have a fully operational statewide system which carries the entire state's caseload. Individual counties do not have the option of running a system simultaneously with SETS to aid in financial management issues. According to CSEA and other County officials, several deficiencies still exist within the financial management function of the system. Examples of deficiencies include the following:
- Due to the differing fields in the payment journal and check log, matching payments with checks issued must be performed manually and is difficult and time-consuming.
 - The misapplied payment function in SETS is not accurate. When a payment is misapplied, the CSEA worker access SETS and reverse the payment of the incorrect account and apply the money to the correct account, although amounts that have been reversed out of an account will not necessarily show up in the correct account.

- The same check can be released more than once. For internal control purposes, employees must print the screen each time a check is released. In order to release the check, the employee must put an R in front of the case and the date, although the record remains on the same screen and does record the release function. The check record is not removed from the screen until the batch has been processed overnight.

F3.61 According to the AOS report, as many as 53 counties have not been able to reconcile their most recent bank statements and some counties are as much as nine months behind in the reconciliation process. CSEA was not able to reconcile accounts from June 1999 through July 2000. ODJFS initially recommended that each county agency spend approximately 72 hours per month to reconcile 2,000 cases. CSEA dedicated 4.25 FTEs to the reconciliation process. Also, CSEA contracted with an outside vendor in order to reconcile the accounts for the in-house function. The reconciliation was completed by the private vendor in June of FY 2000.

F3.62 The major differences between CSEA and the other counties are in the organization of the collections and reconciliation functions and the number of employees assisting in the process. The following list describes the current methods being utilized by Warren, Stark and Licking Counties.

- Licking County has nine staff members working the collections and reconciliation process. Licking converted to SETS in January 1998 and completed reconciliation of accounts in July 1999.
- Stark County has 13 staff members working on the reconciliation process. Although not fully converted, Stark County has remained reconciled.
- Warren County has 8.5 FTEs working on the reconciliation process. Warren County converted to SETS in October 1998 and is not currently reconciled.

F3.63 ODJFS officials have indicated that upon the full implementation of Child Support Payment Central (CSPC), the state will take over the collection and reconciliation duties involved with SETS and CSPC. If the collection and reconciliation duties are managed at the State level, the individual counties would not need payment processors, account clerks and fiscal employees. ODJFS indicated that the county will receive payments and, thus, need payment posters for two to three months. A learning curve of approximately six months to a year will be needed for the conversion to CSPC which will also raise significant client service issues.

R3.26 CSEA should perform a comprehensive staffing analysis in conjunction with the use of the time tracking software. Repeated changes in plans at the state level make it difficult for CSEA management to effectively allocate staffing resources and maintain adequate staffing levels.

In addition, ODJFS should better coordinate plans for future advancements in child support enforcement and payment collections. Communications to the counties should be consistent within ODJFS operations. CSEA has received conflicting advice from the ODJFS department responsible for SETS and CSPC. In FY 2000, ODJFS indicated that CSEA would need to hire employees to maintain reconciled records then reversed its recommendation based on projected labor savings as a result of centralized collection. Since the implementation of CSPC, county CSEAs have not been relieved of reconciliation responsibilities and the need for fiscal staff has not been reduced.

F3.64 As counties convert to SETS, the case data input into the SETS system overrides any previously entered information. Hamilton County converted to SETS in April 2000; CSEA converted in June 1999. Due to the proximity of the two counties, many cases overlap. CSEA had several months to perform clean up processes on their records since conversion. In preparation for Hamilton County CSEA's conversion and to prevent corrected information from being overridden with inaccurate data, the Agency sent one employee to Hamilton County DJFS to rectify any discrepancies in case information.

C3.14 CSEA has taken a proactive stance toward case management by planning and acting on a potentially significant problem with case records during the conversion process. By preparing for Hamilton County's conversion, the Agency was able to save a significant amount of time and personnel resources that would have been needed to investigate changes in case management data. Although the potential still exists for errors to occur, the risk has been minimized. In the course of the month, one CSEA employee researched 796 cases and closed 116 cases in Hamilton County that were inaccurate.

F3.65 CSEA uses the ODJFS SETS Help Desk as a mechanism to the SETS system. The Help Desk corresponds with counties by E-mail which allows the Help Desk to send messages to all counties and enables quick responses to inquiries. However, CSEA has experienced slow response times, unworkable solutions and solutions that create significantly more work for employees through Help Desk contact.

The average resolution time for a CSEA Help Desk request is 30 days for both procedural inquiries and potential programming issues. According to ODJFS, 87 percent of calls with regards to procedural or functional problems are resolved within one week. ODJFS does not track resolution times for programming problems and, therefore, was unable to provide data to support the stated time frames. The table below shows the use of the ODJFS Help Desk in CSEA and the peer counties.

Table 3-28: Help Desk Requests

| | Clermont | Clark | Licking | Warren |
|-----------------------------|----------|-------|------------------|--------|
| Maintain a Request Log? | Yes | No | No ¹ | Yes |
| Average Requests Per Month | 70 | N/A | 10 | 20 |
| Number of Employee Contacts | 1 | 4 | N/A ² | 3 |

Source: CSEA interviews

¹ No longer keep a log due to length of time to respond.

² Management e-mails the request to other employees to avoid duplicated Help Desk requests.

As indicated in **Table 3-28**, two of the peer counties are not currently tracking help desk requests. However, CSEA indicated that the Agency will continue to monitor help desk requests in order to track ongoing help desk requests and to ensure proper communication and elimination of help desk requests.

C3.15 By establishing a contact person within CSEA for the Help Desk, CSEA is able to organize Help Desk requests and has reduced repetitious requests. Through maintaining a log of requests, CSEA is able to monitor ongoing Help Desk requests. The Help Desk log provides the CSEA with a record of problems experienced with SETS so that recurring problems can be quickly resolved.

R3.27 ODJFS should improve technical support and Help Desk response times. Additional assistance is needed by several counties to resolve crucial issues and the average 30-day resolution time appears excessive. A more appropriate response time would be one business day for procedural issues and three to six weeks for programming problems. Lengthy resolution time seriously hinders county CSEAs' ability to carry out operations.

Child Support Payment Central (CSPC)

F3.66 Currently in Ohio, individual counties are responsible for payment collections and disbursement to custodial parents. However, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PROWA) requires all states to develop a centralized state disbursement unit for the purpose of collecting both Title IV-D and non-IV-D child support payments. Child Support Payment Central (CSPC) will enable the state to receive income withholding payments for all cases at a central site, generate all statewide disbursements from a single location, integrate payment and case data with SETS and ensure a two-day turnaround for collections.

Similar to the beginning stages of SETS, ODJFS had a difficult time developing the statewide collection and disbursement unit. After a year of research into best practices in centralized

collection development in other states, the initial request for proposal was issued by ODJFS in February 1998 with an estimated cost of approximately \$110 million. Only one bid was received for the RFP with a proposed cost of \$214 million. ODJFS retracted the initial request for proposal in February 1999 and began researching alternatives. Subsequently, ODJFS has contracted with Bank One and Anexysis to process child support payments for \$125 million.

F3.67 Bank One and ODJFS will be implementing CSPC in two phases. The first phase was set to begin on March 27, 2000 but was delayed until mid-April and again until early June because Bank One and Anexysis were late in sending implementation materials to the counties. The implementation of CSPC will include the following phases:

- Phase one enables employers to pay child support payments electronically. Counties will make their normal daily deposit to Bank One rather than local banks and recipients will be able have child support payments deposited directly into their bank account. ODJFS mailed deposit enrollment forms with all child support checks in August. The state also conducted a mass mailing targeted at the 1,000 largest employers in Ohio to encourage direct deposit.
- Phase two will enable non-custodial parents to make automatic direct debit payments from their bank account on a regular basis or make payments over the Internet. Phase two also incorporates the lockbox check implementation. All parties making child support payments with a check will mail checks to a new lockbox location with an attached payment coupon and counties will no longer receive payments. ODJFS is currently piloting this phase in seven counties. This last phase was implemented by the September 30, 2000 federal deadline. CSPC was tested by the federal government on November sixth to ensure the system is in accordance with federal guidelines. A decision on the acceptability of the system had not been issued as of December 1, 2000.

F3.68 CSEA has spent extensive time and effort in planning for the conversion to CSPC. Local efforts for phase one include in-house training sessions developed by the administrative and supervisory staff at CSEA, as well as an in-house client service training program through an outside consultant. CSEA employees have attended state-sponsored training as well. Employees of CSEA are also conducting presentations for the Domestic Relations Court and Juvenile Court, the Family Law Committee and the County Bar Association.

CSEA has created a CSPC spearhead team consisting of three Agency supervisors. The team serves as experts for CSEA and acts as a liaison to ODJFS, Bank One and Anexysis. In addition, a client service team has been established which consists of four high-level investigators who will manage complaint resolution and other client service issues. The client service team is in the process of drafting complaint resolution logs which will assist in

tracking issues during and after conversion to CSPC. Another two CSEA employees visited Delaware County, a CSPC pilot county, to view operations and reconciliation processes associated with CSPC.

C3.16 CSEA has taken a proactive stance in developing and conducting in-house training seminars to ensure the employees are prepared for the change in payment processing. The creation of the spearhead and client service teams allow CSEA to provide more effective change management to vendors and clients.