



JIM PETRO
AUDITOR OF STATE

STATE OF OHIO

**MAHONING COUNTY
CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT AGENCY
PERFORMANCE AUDIT**

JUNE 11, 2002



STATE OF OHIO
OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR

JIM PETRO, AUDITOR OF STATE

To the Citizens of the Mahoning County:

In response to a request from the County Commissioners and County Administrator of Mahoning County (the County), the Auditor of State's Office is pleased to provide the completed performance audit report for the Mahoning County Child Support Enforcement Agency (MCSEA). The County requested that the performance audit be conducted to provide a resource in ongoing efforts to improve the efficiency of operations, establish internal accountability over the use of tax dollars, help address the financial difficulties the County is experiencing, and ensure that families are provided with appropriate and timely financial support.

This report assesses several key areas within MCSEA, including case management operations; staffing, personnel issues and collective bargaining agreements; customer service and community awareness; and planning efforts and child support payment central. These areas were selected because they significantly impact the services provided by MCSEA. The Auditor of State's Office conducted an independent assessment of these areas with the objective of providing recommendations to the County and MCSEA in areas where it can recognize financial benefits, achieve efficiency improvements in operations and service delivery and improve program results.

An executive summary has been prepared which includes the project history, MCSEA overview, purpose and objective of the performance audit and a summary of findings, commendations, recommendations and financial implications. This report has been provided to Mahoning County and its contents discussed with appropriate County officials and management. The County and MCSEA have been encouraged to utilize the results of the performance audit as a resource in improving its overall operations, service delivery and financial stability. Additional copies of this report can be requested by calling the Clerk of the Bureau's office at (614) 466-2310 or the toll free number in Columbus, (800) 282-0370. In addition, this performance audit can be accessed on-line through the Auditor of State's website 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".

JIM PETRO
Auditor of State

June 11, 2002

Executive Summary

Project History

In an attempt to improve service delivery to its citizens and optimize operational efficiencies, the County Commissioners and County Administrator of Mahoning County (the County) engaged the State Auditor's Office in December 2000 to conduct a performance audit. Since the County has experienced financial difficulties in the past caused by repeals of its largest source of General Fund revenues, the sales tax, the County officials were concerned with the overall effectiveness and efficiency of operations. The County officials felt that a performance audit would be one appropriate mechanism of ensuring and improving county operations.

Due to the significant number of departments and operations within the County, a prioritization approach was selected whereby certain departments and functions having a significant impact on the General Fund revenues, expenditures and operational efficiency would be the first departments to be assessed. Based on discussions with the County Administrator and Commissioners, and input from the general public, the following areas of county operations were selected for assessment and a final report on these areas was released in January 2002:

- Compensation and Salary Analysis
- Personnel and Benefits
- Board of Elections
- County Courts
- Juvenile Court
- Sheriff's Office

In July 2001, the County Commissioners, County Administrator and Director of Mahoning County Department of Job and Family Services (MDJFS) requested a performance audit on the Mahoning County Child Support Enforcement Agency (MCSEA) to improve operations and enhance services provided to its customers. Additional meetings between the Auditor of State's office, County management, various MCSEA officials, and union representatives were held to discuss the scope and objectives of the MCSEA performance audit. As a result of these meetings and discussions, this report focused on the following areas:

- Case Management Operations
- Staffing, Personnel Issues and Collective Bargaining Agreements
- Customer Service and Community Awareness
- Planning Efforts and Child Support Payment Central (CSPC)

The overall objectives of this project are to review the selected areas of MCSEA and develop recommendations based on comparisons with peer counties and other benchmarks to improve case management operations, increase the amount of child support payments collected and subsequently disbursed to families, provide timely and quality services to clients, enhance customer service and interaction with the public, and enhance the overall planning process at MCSEA. The primary focus of the recommendations will be on opportunities for the County to improve the overall effectiveness and efficiency of MCSEA, as well as enhance overall management of the Agency.

The leadership at the County and MDJFS including MCSEA has acknowledged the need to address operational issues to improve overall performance and has been proactive in approaching the Auditor of State for assistance through the performance audit process. The recommendations resulting from the performance audit will provide a framework for change which can result in cost savings, revenue enhancements, operational improvements and increased quality of service. The high level of support for the audit process exhibited by the County and MDJFS including MCSEA is an indication of the positive environment for change which currently exists with respect to MCSEA operations.

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, recommendations and conclusions. 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 amount of resources and with the fewest negative consequences. Program audits, on the other hand, are normally 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. These audits attempt to determine if the actual outputs match, exceed or fall short of the intended outputs. The performance audit conducted on MCSEA contains elements of both an economy and efficiency audit, and a program audit.

Methodology

To complete this report, the auditors gathered and assessed a significant amount of data pertaining to the various areas, conducted interviews with various individuals associated with MCSEA, and assessed available information from selected peer counties. In addition to reviewing this information, the auditors spent a significant amount of time gathering and reviewing other pertinent documents and information, such as state and national best practices in Child Support and various Support Enforcement Tracking System (SETS) reports. Numerous interviews and discussions were

held at many levels at MCSEA and with groups of individuals involved internally and externally with MCSEA. In addition, three peer CSEAs, Lorain, Montgomery and Tuscarawas, were selected to provide benchmark comparisons with MCSEA.

The performance audit process involved significant sharing of information with the County and management from MCSEA including preliminary drafts of findings and recommendations as they were being developed. Further, periodic status meetings were held throughout the engagement to inform the County Administrator, Director of MDJFS, designated MCSEA staff and union officials of key issues impacting the selected areas, and proposed recommendations to improve and enhance these areas. Sharing information and conducting periodic status meetings gave the County and MCSEA numerous opportunities to provide their comments about key issues and proposed recommendations. This feedback provided by the County and MCSEA was very important because it helped to finalize the findings and recommendations in each of the sections.

Overview of MCSEA

MCSEA is administered within MDJFS. MCSEA provides a variety of services to the families and children of Mahoning County including: locating absent parents, establishing paternitys, establishing and enforcing financial and medical support orders, and reviewing and modifying support orders. In addition, MCSEA operations are largely regulated by federal and state legislation. As of June 2001, MCSEA had a caseload of 22,449 cases and was budgeted for 145.3 FTEs.

Effectively managing caseloads to collect and subsequently provide timely child support payments to custodial parents is a primary objective of CSEAs. Overall, MCSEA had the lowest percentage of cases in the enforcement mode as compared to the peers indicating that MCSEA could improve its case management operations. As a result, MCSEA is collecting a much lower amount of child support payments per case as compared to the peers. The lower percentage of cases in enforcement could be attributed to the method in which MCSEA assigns and manages caseloads, establishes cases in SETS, performs administrative processes and conducts interviews of public assistance applicants. In addition, MCSEA's lack of performing administrative processes, using available enforcement tools, tracking and monitoring progress of individuals referred to jobs program, monitoring cases through SETS reports, ensuring that staff are appropriately and adequately trained, and developing and tracking additional performance measures further contribute to the lower number of cases in the enforcement mode at MCSEA. If MCSEA could improve its case management operations and achieve performance comparable to the peers, it could potentially collect an additional \$458,000 per month in child support payments.

MCSEA does not have a significant need to fill vacant positions in numerous areas (e.g., pre-enforcement and enforcement, review and adjustment, and legal unit). Currently, MCSEA is processing the second lowest number of cases per case worker as compared to the peers. Implementing an alternative method of managing caseloads and establishing cases in SETS could result in enhancing the operational efficiency in the pre-enforcement and enforcement units. In

addition, improving the case management system to increase the number of cases in enforcement could result in a more balanced workload for the case workers. Based upon the relatively lower number of administrative hearings currently being processed by MCSEA, it is adequately staffed with attorneys and hearing officers, but is overstaffed in support staff positions. However, expanding and increasing the use of administrative processes and enforcement tools to more effectively service its clients in a timely manner could increase the workload in the legal unit.

MCSEA has three separate collective bargaining agreements: AFSCME #3577 for line staff, Teamsters #377 for attorneys and hearing officers, and Teamsters #377 for supervisors. In contrast to MCSEA, Lorain and Montgomery CSEAs have one collective bargaining agreement representing direct child support services staff. In addition, Tuscarawas CSEA does not have any collective bargaining agreements. Negotiating, managing, interpreting, and maintaining three separate collective bargaining agreements for one county agency requires numerous management and union resources. In addition, the overall benefits outlined in the three collective bargaining agreements at MCSEA appear to be reasonable to the County and employees.

Overall, customer service activities at MCSEA could be significantly enhanced by conducting phone studies and continually monitoring activities, providing appropriate training, implementing a formal customer complaint procedure and developing a customer survey to obtain valuable feedback and determine areas that need to be further enhanced. In the long-term, implementing technological enhancements to customer service operations could result in further streamlining and improving customer service activities. In addition, community outreach has not been consistently performed by MCSEA. Enhancing customer service operations and actively promoting community awareness could result in a positive public perception of MCSEA and create an environment in which clients are fully willing to work with MCSEA in the process of supporting their children. Furthermore, MCSEA has not effectively conducted planning activities to develop strategies and subsequently improve services provided to its clients. Developing a strategic plan with clearly defined goals and performance measures tied to enhancing operational efficiency and effectiveness could assist MCSEA in improving services provided to clients and promoting a continually improving culture and environment.

Long-Term Objective

Although MCSEA is administered by MDJFS, some staff at MDJFS perform solely MCSEA job functions while other staff perform only MDJFS job functions. County administration and MDJFS management have developed a long-term goal for the structure of human services functions in Mahoning County by eventually implementing a consolidated human services system in the County. In this system, employees would perform all types of human services related tasks. For example, instead of having to visit MDJFS for public assistance benefits and make an additional visit to MCSEA for child support services, a client would only have to make one visit and would only have to interface with one employee to obtain appropriate and necessary human services. As a result, clients could be able to receive all necessary services in a shorter time frame. Furthermore,

implementing a consolidated human services system could result in cost savings to the County, specifically in the areas of overhead and administrative expenses.

While implementing a consolidated human services system appears to be a logical long-term goal in improving the quality of services provided to clients and citizens of Mahoning County, constraints exist that could make this goal difficult to achieve. Implementing such a system requires the agreement and buy-in of all of the collective bargaining units. Job responsibilities and functions would have to be significantly adjusted and updated for all positions within the human services agencies. The County and collective bargaining units should collaborate and develop a partnership to begin the planning for a consolidated human services system.

Further, the Auditor of State's Office was engaged to solely assess MCSEA operations. Therefore, the feasibility of implementing a consolidated human services system was beyond the scope and focus of this performance audit.

Key Findings/Recommendations

The performance audit report and executive summary contain a number of findings and recommendations pertaining to MCSEA. The following are the key findings and related recommendations:

- Overall, MCSEA has the lowest percentage of cases in the enforcement mode as compared to the peers indicating that MCSEA is not effectively processing and managing cases. Consequently, MCSEA has the lowest amount of collections per case as compared to the peers.

MCSEA should develop strategies to improve case management with the purpose of increasing the number of cases in enforcement to subsequently increase child support payments provided to custodial parents. Key recommendations to improve MCSEA's case management system include implementing a generalized case management system, performing additional administrative processes and using available enforcement tools. If MCSEA could improve its case management operations and achieve performance comparable to the peers, it could potentially collect an additional \$458,000 per month in child support payments.

- Administrative processes are used by CSEAs in order to conduct various activities quickly and minimize the amount of cases which must appear in court. MCSEA is using a limited number of administrative processes. In contrast, additional administrative processes used by peer CSEAs include financial institution data match (FIDM), emancipations, requests for default tax intercepts, adjustments and reviews upon objections, recoupment of monies resulting from emancipations, held income tax, license suspension, administrative liens, seizure of non-custodial parents' bank accounts, and professional license revocation. In

addition, Maine's use of the license revocation process has increased overall child support performance including a doubling of collections since 1993 and a payment rate on current support for intrastate cases of 60 percent.

MCSEA should research, develop and implement the use of more administrative processes into its operations including the processes discussed above. By using available administrative processes, MCSEA could increase arrearage collection, encourage clients to remain current in their support, and more effectively manage its caseload to increase the number of cases being enforced.

- CSEAs have the two options of structuring either a generalized or specialized case management system. Montgomery CSEA and Tuscarawas CSEA use a generalized case management system. Under this system, the support specialist (case worker) is responsible for the establishment of paternity, medical and support orders, as well as the enforcement of all orders on that case. In contrast, case workers in the pre-enforcement unit at MCSEA work on establishing paternity, medical and support orders. After these activities have been completed, the cases are assigned to the enforcement unit which ensures that the support and medical orders are enforced. Benefits of a generalized case management system include enhancing client interactions, completing activities in a more timely manner, allowing case workers to be fully knowledgeable and capable of processing all case activities, allocating managers/supervisors and case workers in a more efficient manner, and better accounting for case workers' leaves and absences. As indicated throughout this report, Montgomery and Tuscarawas CSEAs are more effectively processing cases and have more cases in the enforcement mode as compared to MCSEA.

MCSEA should consider reorganizing its case management structure from a specialized system to a generalized system. Based upon peer information and comparisons, a generalized case management system could result in processing cases more efficiently and effectively and improving customer relations within the community. However, if MCSEA were to maintain the current case management system, it should ensure each case worker is cross-trained in processing all of the various case activities.

- MCSEA has the second lowest ratio of cases per actual intake and support specialist, and cases per actual data entry support staff when compared to the peers. In addition, MCSEA has the lowest ratio of administrative (managers and supervisors) staff to all other staff. The lower number of cases processed per data entry support staff, and intake and support specialist at MCSEA; and the higher number of supervisors and managers at MCSEA as compared to the peers could be attributed to the process of assigning and managing cases, ineffective use of SETS, process of establishing cases in SETS, lack of using administrative processes, lack of using all available enforcement tools, larger percentage of its caseload comprising current assistance cases, and lower percentage of its caseload in the enforcement mode.

Based upon the staffing analysis conducted in this report and the improvements MCSEA could make to increase the number of cases in the enforcement mode, MCSEA should consider not filling its vacant intake and support specialist positions (13.0 FTEs), data entry support staff (1.0 FTE) and other support staff positions (2.5 FTEs). If MCSEA alters its case management system, it should consider reducing 2.0 FTE intake/support specialist supervisor positions. By not filling 13.0 intake/support specialist FTEs, 1.0 data entry support staff FTE and 2.5 other support staff FTE vacant positions, MCSEA could realize an annual cost avoidance of approximately \$548,000 in salaries and benefits. By reducing 2.0 FTE intake/support specialist supervisor positions, MCSEA could realize an additional annual cost savings of approximately \$93,000 in salaries and benefits.

- Historically, MDJFS including MCSEA has performed limited strategic planning activities. MCSEA is currently participating in some strategic planning activities. However, MCSEA’s strategic plan does not fully assess the current state of operations and the methods that will allow MCSEA to improve performance. Although the current plan describes where employees want MCSEA to be, the goals are not written in measurable terms, making assessment of progress problematic.

MDJFS including MCSEA 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. A successful strategic plan should also encompass several years of planning and be updated at least annually to reflect accomplishments and changes in priorities. Further, MCSEA should link the strategic plan to developing, monitoring and improving outcomes in key performance measures

Additional Findings & Recommendations

The remainder of this executive summary highlights additional findings and recommendations, as well as commendations from those areas of the audit report. A summary of additional findings and recommendations includes the following:

Case Management Operations

- MCSEA establishes cases in SETS based upon the number of children involved in a case. However, two of the three peer counties (Montgomery and Tuscarawas) establish cases based upon the custodial parent, not the number of children. Establishing cases based on the number of children could prevent MCSEA from moving cases to enforcement in a timely fashion. Other disadvantages of establishing cases based on children includes decreased uniformity in work performed on cases due to assignment of multiple workers; increased number of contacts a non-custodial parent must make to inquire about their case; and increased time spent establishing and processing cases which further impacts staffing levels. In the future, MCSEA should consider transferring and converting the existing cases into

SETS based upon the custodial parent (same mother/same father combination) and not based upon the number of children. In addition, MCSEA should work with ODJFS to determine the feasibility of converting the existing cases to be established based upon the custodial parent.

- While CSEAs are not required to make annual presentations to local hospitals, Montgomery CSEA is being proactive in assisting hospitals with paternity establishment by making annual presentations to provide information on changes related to paternity establishment and discuss problem areas. MCSEA does not make any formal presentations to its local hospitals on a periodic basis.

MCSEA should begin developing and making periodic presentations to local hospital personnel in an effort to ensure all changes are communicated effectively and timely. Furthermore, MCSEA should actively solicit feedback from the hospitals as to the frequency and quality of the training being provided by the Central Paternity Registry (CPR) vendor to ensure that adequate training is being provided to the hospitals.

- Prior to genetic testing at MCSEA, the mother or father can come in for an initial interview with the case worker. MCSEA does not administer genetic testing at this time. However, some CSEAs have streamlined the paternity establishment process by conducting an administrative hearing and collecting the genetic samples at the same time and location. Conducting genetic testing and the administrative hearing on the same day saves time and money for CSEAs by eliminating the need for multiple hearings and appointments.

MCSEA should streamline its paternity establishment process and conduct genetic testing at the same time and location of the initial interview with the case worker. By using this process, MCSEA could increase the rate and number of paternity establishments and decrease the need for multiple meetings, hearings and appointments.

- Voluntary paternity affidavits in Ohio are all completed and submitted for entry into the CPR in hard copy format. In contrast, New Jersey's POP (Paternity Opportunity Program) uses electronic imaging of voluntary paternity acknowledgment forms. Electronic submissions or imaging of voluntary paternity affidavits would eliminate the need for data entry on the majority of paternity documents and expedite the process of transferring changes that result from the paternity process over to the permanent birth certificate.

MCSEA should work with ODJFS to determine the potential of implementing electronic submission of voluntary paternity affidavits. Electronic submission of voluntary paternity affidavits could decrease errors, decrease the time involved in data entry and increase the speed in which paternity information is made available to case workers.

- Financial Institution Data Match (FIDM) is another enforcement tool available to county CSEAs to secure past-due child support from non-custodial parents. MCSEA has not used FIDM as an enforcement tool and has yet to establish freeze and seize procedures for case workers to follow. However, Lorain and Montgomery CSEAs do use FIDM as an enforcement tool. In addition, other CSEAs of similar size and in the same district as MCSEA including Columbiana, Jefferson and Wayne CSEAs, have collected past-due child support payments through FIDM

MCSEA should use FIDM to freeze and seize funds from financial accounts, enforce payment agreements, locate delinquent obligors, and modify support orders. In addition, MCSEA should establish standard and uniform procedures for its case workers to follow when freezing and seizing accounts.

- ODJFS has a contract with a vendor to provide private collection services (PCS) to assist local CSEAs in collecting and enforcing child support payments. MCSEA does not refer any cases to PCS. In contrast, Summit CSEA has referred cases, which have resulted in \$300,000 in additional collections from 360 cases. Montgomery and Lorain CSEAs both use PCS. In addition, the director of MDJFS interprets the language in the collective bargaining agreement as allowing the use of PCS.

MDJFS should consider using PCS. Referring cases in which MCSEA has exhausted all of its available enforcement tools and which have a long history of non-payment to PCS would provide an additional method of attempting to enforce cases. In addition, MSCEA should develop specific criteria in determining which cases should be referred to PCS, such as length of time of non-payment and arrearage amounts.

- Massachusetts has developed a creative and effective process of enforcing child support orders. Insurance companies licensed to do business in the state must check with the Department of Revenue (DOR) to determine whether a claimant or beneficiary owes unpaid child support. Almost \$11.0 million has been collected since DOR implemented its insurance intercept program in May 1998.

ODJFS should work with MCSEA to consider developing and implementing the process used by Massachusetts. Involving insurance companies in the process could increase the potential of collecting and enforcing child support payments.

- An ODJFS contracted vendor is responsible for receiving all the reports of new hires from employers around the State and inputting them into a database, the State Directory of New Hires. MCSEA has indicated that less than 10 percent of its employees have received training on how to effectively use the new hire reporting database.

MCSEA should send all case workers to SETS Training Centers for training on the New Hire Database. This tool is meant to be used for location purposes which could also increase the number of income withholding orders. Further, MCSEA should seek to improve on its efforts to obtain income withholdings by having employers send a post card informing MCSEA that an employee has left the company, which is a process used in Wenatchee, Washington.

- While MCSEA has a great deal invested in job programs intended to increase the probability of collecting and disbursing child support payments, MCSEA's ability to monitor the effectiveness of these programs (i.e., to determine whether such programs are successful in employing non-custodial parents) is limited because MCSEA does not track or request statistics on program performance.

Although MCSEA does not directly operate the job programs, it should implement the following as a means of ensuring that the jobs programs are effective in increasing child support collections: work with the programs to set effective goals, establish a series of actions to take if goals are not met, require each program to submit reports detailing the programs' effectiveness in employing non-custodial parents, and monitor effectiveness and take action as needed.

- MCSEA does not use a coordinated interview process with MDJFS for parents on public assistance, which could contribute to the lower collection at MCSEA. However, Connecticut coordinates interviews between the Title IV-A agency and the Title IV-D agency. In addition, the Colorado Model Office Project concluded that cases participating in the joint interview approach were more likely to have paternity and child support orders established within six months of the interview. Furthermore, 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.

MCSEA and MDJFS should coordinate Title IV-A and Title IV-D interviews to obtain similar information in one interview as opposed to multiple interviews. By streamlining the interview process or implementing cross training between the Title IV-A and Title-D agencies, MCSEA may be able to provide greater levels of customer service to families by reducing the number of visits a parent must make to various County departments.

- Title IV-E cases are currently not being served by MCSEA. As a result of MCSEA's lack of involvement with Title IV-E cases, the foster care maintenance system in Mahoning County assumes the sole responsibility of caring for children in foster care. If MCSEA processed Title IV-E cases, collections obtained from these cases could be used to offset the costs of providing foster care services.

MCSEA should build on the existing procedures in place for servicing Title IV-D cases to include a process that will encompass referrals from Mahoning County Children Services (MCCS). Based upon projecting MCCS's estimate of referring ten Title IV-E cases per month and the average collections per current assistance case of \$114.84, MCSEA could collect about \$13,700 in additional annual payments to offset the County's foster care costs by effectively processing Title IV-E cases.

- Additional data was requested from MCSEA and peers for the purposes of more fully assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of their operations. However, MCSEA and peer CSEAs indicated that additional performance measures such as average time to establish paternity or support can not be obtained from SETS.

MDJFS should contact ODJFS and stress the importance of ODJFS surveying the counties to determine relevant management reporting elements currently not available through the SETS reporting package. The director of MDJFS indicated that staff have attended meetings with ODJFS to discuss these issues. 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.

- MCSEA ordered a significantly lower number of medical support orders as compared to the peers. The largest contributing factor to the low rate of medical support enforcement at MCSEA appears to be inconsistencies which occurred during the conversion to SETS. Other factors that have contributed to MCSEA's low rate of medical support enforcement includes the process used to establish reasonable cost. An order is made to the custodial and non-custodial parents indicating that they are obligated to obtain medical insurance if it becomes available at a reasonable cost. However, Ohio Revised Code (ORC) §3119.30 requires CSEAs to include medical support orders in all newly issued or modified support orders regardless of reasonable cost. Furthermore, MCSEA does not pursue medical support inclusion in cases of divorce or dissolution where no order has been established. However, case workers at Tuscarawas CSEA review every divorce or dissolution to ensure that all orders contain language that address the issue of medical support.

Since medical support is required to be included in all newly issued or modified support orders, MCSEA should establish medical support orders in all cases. MCSEA should review all divorces or dissolutions to ensure that support orders contain language that includes the assignment of medical support. MCSEA should work with the local courts to establish standard criteria for determining reasonable cost. In addition, MCSEA should ensure that all case workers receive adequate training on the proper procedures to follow when filling out the medical support order (MSO) screen.

Staffing & Other Operations

- Although the director and assistant director of MDJFS and MCSEA allocate time to manage child support, the lack of employing one full-time professional to be solely responsible and accountable for MCSEA operations could contribute to the agency’s overall success in providing services and achieving high-levels of performance. Lorain CSEA and Montgomery CSEA each have a full-time assistant director who monitors the day-to-day operations of CSEA, and a director who splits times between the county CSEA and the county DJFS. Because Tuscarawas CSEA is a stand-alone entity (it is not combined with DJFS), it has its own full-time director.

The director of MDJFS and the County should fully evaluate the options of either employing one full-time professional or using existing management staff to be ultimately accountable for child support operations and implement improvements at MCSEA. This report indicates that significant improvements should be made at MCSEA to ultimately enhance the quality of services provided to MCSEA’s clients.

- MCSEA has more FTEs classified as cashiers compared to the peers and the peer average. Cashiers are responsible for receiving all over the counter and mail payments, processing cash payments, forwarding check payments to Child Support Processing Central (CSPC), answering client payment-related questions, and assisting with the mis-application of CSPC errors. In contrast, Tuscarawas CSEA no longer accepts payments at its location nor does it forward checks received from employers to CSPC. In addition, CSPC was implemented so that all child support receipts and disbursement would take place in a central location.

MCSEA should develop and implement a process similar to Tuscarawas CSEA by eliminating the collection of cash and checks for child support payments. To ensure that customer service is not negatively impacted by this policy, MCSEA should gradually implement this recommendation. A notice should be provided to all custodial and non-custodial parents informing them of this change. In addition, individuals who continue to make child support payments at MCSEA should be provided with another notice and personnel should fully explain the new policy that all child support payments be sent to CSPC. Furthermore, MCSEA should consider granting some exceptions to this policy to ensure that non-custodial parents provide the required child support payments. The overall objective of this policy should be to ensure that MCSEA is complying with CSPC requirements while providing quality service to custodial and non-custodial parents. As a result of implementing this process, MCSEA should eliminate the one vacant cashier position (1.0 FTE) and reduce the three filled cashier positions (3.0 FTEs). MCSEA would realize an annual cost avoidance of \$36,000 as a result of not filling the one vacant cashier position; and an annual cost savings of approximately \$109,000 if it were to reduce its cashier personnel.

- The MCSEA hearing officer is the only individual at MCSEA who can conduct administrative hearings. In contrast, Tuscarawas CSEA attorneys also function as hearing officers.

MCSEA should require that all attorneys receive the necessary training in order to function as hearing officers. The more personnel which are able to hold administrative hearings will assist MCSEA in performing certain job functions more efficiently.

- MCSEA conducted a significantly lower number of administrative hearings as compared to the peers, which is a result of performing a limited number of administrative processes. MCSEA is conducting an adequate number of administrative hearings per hearing officer and attorney. However, MCSEA is conducting a lower number of administrative hearings per support staff as compared to Lorain and Tuscarawas CSEAs.

MCSEA should conduct more administrative processes to provide clients with services in a more timely manner, which would result in more administrative hearings being conducted. After MCSEA has conducted administrative processes for a certain length of time, staffing levels in the legal unit should be fully re-assessed. Based upon the legal unit staffing analysis, MCSEA should not fill 2.0 FTEs vacant support staff positions and 1.0 FTE vacant legal services coordinator position. In addition, based on the records room staffing analysis, MCSEA should not fill 2.0 FTEs vacant records room positions. By not filling these vacant positions, MCEA would realize an annual cost avoidance of approximately \$158,000 in salaries and benefits.

- While training personnel indicated that the current level of training being offered is adequate to the needs of MCSEA, other personnel have indicated there is not enough training given to employees.

MCSEA should conduct an employee survey to determine all of the staff's training needs. In addition, merely sending staff to training classes does not ensure that employees will be adequately trained in essential job functions. Therefore, supervisors should ensure that employees fully understand and apply information obtained through training classes.

- MCSEA has three separate collective bargaining agreements. Lorain and Montgomery CSEAs have one collective bargaining agreement and Tuscarawas CSEA does not have any collective bargaining agreements. In addition, MCSEA's department average compensation is 3.8 percent higher than the peer average.

The County and MCSEA management should consider the following when negotiating future contracts: exclude the paid union leave benefit or require the union to reimburse personnel expenses associated with union leave; and continue to maintain a multi-unit bargaining arrangement whereby one set of negotiations would take place for both Teamsters

contracts. In addition, as a result of organizational changes and language contained in several supervisory job descriptions, MCSEA and the County should re-examine the positions originally deemed eligible for union representation to ensure that they are in fact still fully eligible.

- An important component of any County Department of Job and Family Services (DJFS) that includes child support enforcement activities is customer service. Analysis throughout this report indicates that MCSEA could improve its customer service operations.

Since customer service is a critical component of its operations, MCSEA should make it a priority to improve customer service and develop strategies to enhance its customer service unit. Key recommendations to improve customer service include conducting phone studies and monitoring customer service activities; restructuring the customer service unit; providing training for customer service personnel; ensuring that staff use the SETS system to effectively communicate customer service issues; implementing a formal customer complaint procedure; and fostering community awareness about its services.

- The staff at Montgomery CSEA has been recognized by their peers and the State of Ohio as possessing a world class customer service program. In contrast to MCSEA, Montgomery CSEA has its case workers function as customer service personnel. The number of complaints to the Commissioner's Office at Montgomery County decreased by 75 per month to one or two per month.

In the long term, MDJFS should consider restructuring MCSEA's customer service function according to Montgomery CSEA model. This restructure should include streamlining customer service activities resulting in personnel cost savings; training all case workers in effectively handling customer service activities; purchasing wall boards, a recorder to document all calls, and workforce management software program to assist in the scheduling of case worker phone time; setting goals and continuously monitoring the results; and surveying clients on a periodic basis. The total costs of implementing these technological enhancements and restructuring the customer service function would be about \$136,000 in implementation costs and \$5,000 in additional annual maintenance costs. However, implementing these technological enhancements to rely on case workers to perform customer service functions would allow MCSEA to reduce its 4.0 FTE customer service unit, resulting in \$146,400 in annual cost savings related to salaries and benefits. Therefore, MCSEA would realize a one-year payback on this investment by implementing this recommendation.

Commendations

A summary of commendations includes the following:

- Conducting more detailed audits provide benefits to MCSEA. All relevant parties (auditors, case workers and court personnel) have all of the needed information immediately.
- By having an internal auditor perform staffing analyses and other types of activities is indicating that MCSEA is committed to enhancing its operational efficiency. Determining the adequacy of staffing levels is an important function of any organization.
- Employing attorneys on-site allows MCSEA to avoid sending cases to the prosecutor's office. As a result, MCSEA can work on and resolve legal issues in a more timely manner; and subsequently provide more efficient services to its clients. However, MCSEA could better utilize attorneys on-site by increasing the use of administrative processes and enforcement tools.
- The frequency of evaluations allows MCSEA to evaluate employees efficiently. Including attendance in the evaluation process permits a higher degree of accountability.
- MCSEA has implemented a more effective telephone system as compared to the previous system. Phone calls can be made more efficiently to other County agencies and the new system is easy to use.

Summary of Financial Implications

The following tables summarize the performance audit recommendations which contain financial implications. These recommendations provide a series of ideas or suggestions which MCSEA should consider when making the important decisions necessary to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of its operations while continuing to meet the needs of its clients. Certain recommendations are dependent on labor negotiations or community approval. In addition, according to MCSEA and the County, about 34 percent of MCSEA's funding comes from the County's General Fund and 66 percent comes from Federal and State sources; and therefore, these financial implications would impact the General Fund accordingly. Detailed information concerning the financial implications, including assumptions, is contained within the individual sections of the performance audit.

Furthermore, if MCSEA could improve its case management operations and achieve performance comparable to the peers, it could potentially collect an additional \$458,000 per month in child support payments. Since collecting and providing child support payments to appropriate families does not financially impact MCSEA or the County, the additional \$458,000 per month is not included in the following table.

Summary of Financial Implications

Recommendation	Estimated Revenue Enhancements (Annual)	Estimated Cost Savings (Annual)	Estimated Implementation Cost (One-time)	Estimated Implementation Cost (Annual)
R3.21 Service Title IV-E cases which will help offset foster care costs.	\$13,700			
R3.28 Do not fill these vacant positions: 13.0 intake/support specialist FTEs, 1.0 data entry support staff FTE and 2.5 other support staff FTE.		\$548,000 (Cost Avoidance)		
R3.28 Reduce 2.0 FTE supervisor positions.		\$93,000		
R3.29 Fill the vacant customer service position (short-term solution).				\$36,600
R3.30 Do not fill 6.0 FTE vacant review and adjustment specialist positions.		\$210,000 (Cost Avoidance)		
R3.31 Do not fill the one vacant cashier position.		\$36,000 (Cost Avoidance)		
R3.31 Implement alternative processes to reduce 3.0 FTE cashier personnel.		\$109,000		
R3.36 Do not fill 2.0 FTEs vacant support staff positions, 2.0 FTEs vacant records room positions and 1.0 FTE vacant legal services coordinator position in the legal unit.		\$158,000 (Cost Avoidance)		
R3.43 Either exclude the paid leave benefit for union business or require the union to reimburse the County for the expenses in all three agreements. ¹		\$10,400 ¹		
R3.47 Purchase workforce management system software, wall board system, and recording device to improve customer service operations and eventually phase out the customer service unit.		\$146,400	\$136,000	\$5,000
R3.48 Develop and implement a customer survey.				\$4,800
Totals ²	\$13,700	\$1,310,800	\$136,000	\$46,400

¹ Subject to Union Negotiations

² MCSEA obtains the majority of its funding through Federal and State sources, with a smaller portion coming from the County's General Fund. As a result, these financial implications would primarily impact the County's Special Revenue Fund.

Comparative CSEAs

One important component of a performance audit is the selection of peer CSEAs. The peer groups provide an ability to compare information and statistics while providing benchmarking data. The peer group selected for this audit included the CSEAs of Lorain, Montgomery and Tuscarawas. In addition, state and national best practice information were included throughout this report to provide additional benchmarking and comparison data.

Table 1-1 illustrates the social and economic characteristics of Mahoning County and the peers as they relate to child support. These social and economic characteristics affect MCSEA 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 and per capita income correlate with the absent parents’ ability to make child support payments.

Table 1-1: Child Support Enforcement County Population Demographics

	Mahoning	Lorain	Montgomery	Tuscarawas	Peer Average
County Population (2000)	257,555	284,664	559,062	90,914	311,547
One parent families as a percentage of two parent families (2000)	45.3%	41.6%	55.2%	30.5%	42.4%
Divorce Rate per 1,000 Population (1998)	3.5	3.9	3.1	6.0	4.3
Per Capita Income (1999)	\$24,095	\$25,712	\$28,113	\$21,078	\$24,968
% Transfer Payments of Total Personal Income (1999) ¹	20.6%	13.9%	13.7%	16.8%	14.8%
Unemployment Rate (2000)	5.6%	5.1%	3.8%	4.6%	4.5%
FY 2001 Caseload	22,449	24,901	50,459	6,748	27,369
Cases per 1,000 population	87	87	90	74	84
Number of FTEs in 2001	109.8 ²	71.9	109.6	48.0	76.5
Cases per FTE	204	346	460	141	358

Source: County interviews, Ohio Department of Development, ODJFS

¹ Transfer payments are payments to a person, usually in monetary form, for which that person has not rendered a service. Examples include unemployment benefits, retirement benefits, and value of food stamps.

² Only includes currently filled positions. As of June 31, 2001, 35.5 positions were vacant.

Table 1-1 indicates that Mahoning County is below the peer average population and has the second lowest divorce rate of all the peers. Mahoning County has the second lowest per capita income and the highest unemployment rate when compared to the peers. In addition, the percentage of transfer payments of total personal income in Mahoning County is the highest of the peers. Since Mahoning County has the second lowest per capita income, highest unemployment rate and highest percentage

of transfer payments as compared to the peers, enforcing and collecting child support payments could be more challenging for MCSEA.

A Child Support Enforcement Agency’s (CSEA) primary objective is to effectively manage cases to maximize the number of cases being enforced. By having more cases being enforced, CSEAs are able to provide more child support payments to custodial parents. **Table 1-2** depicts the caseload managed by MCSEA and peers by case mode: intake, locate, paternity, support, and enforcement. Cases that are labeled “locate” can also be captured in the paternity, support and enforcement modes depending on the needs of the case.

Table 1-2: Caseload by Case Mode

	Mahoning		Lorain		Montgomery		Tuscarawas		Peer Average	
	Cases	%	Cases	%	Cases	%	Cases	%	Cases	%
Intake	277	0.9%	98	0.3%	327	0.5%	12	0.2%	146	0.4%
Locate	5,101	17.2%	3,623	12.1%	11,766	18.7%	688	8.9%	5,359	16.0%
Paternity	4,086	13.8%	1,426	4.8%	7,414	11.8%	266	3.4%	3,035	9.1%
Support	4,199	14.2%	2,736	9.2%	6,447	10.2%	566	7.4%	3,250	9.7%
Enforcement	15,970	53.9%	21,970	73.6%	37,006	58.8%	6,157	80.1%	21,711	64.8%
Total ¹	29,633	100%	29,853	100%	62,960	100%	7,689	100%	33,501	100%

Source: Management Overview report, June 2001

Note: Above information includes arrears only cases and undefined cases.

¹ Cases may be maintained in more than one mode.

As shown in **Table 1-2**, MCEA has the lowest percent of its cases in enforcement as compared to the peers. Both Lorain and Tuscarawas CSEAs have a significantly higher percent of cases in enforcement as compared to MCSEA. The number of cases in the enforcement mode directly impacts the amount of child support collections received by MCSEA and subsequently disbursed to custodial parents. **Table 1-3** presents collections per case in current assistance, former assistance and never assistance caseloads for MCSEA and the peers.

Table 1-3 Collections per Case by Case Type ¹

	Mahoning	Lorain	Montgomery	Tuscarawas	Peer Average
Collections per current assistance case	\$114.83	\$169.07	\$122.43	\$247.72	\$140.59
Collection per former assistance case	\$614.19	\$638.00	\$668.86	\$806.86	\$672.26
Collections per never assistance case	\$981.46	\$1,344.54	\$1,284.21	\$1,315.86	\$1,306.21

Source: SETS 4289 Report from January 2001 through June 2001

¹ SETS does not track collections on non-type IV-D cases.

At the end of June 2001 quarter, MCSEA had collected a lower amount per each case type in comparison to the peers. A factor that could impact collections per case are various demographic variables in each county. Mahoning County has the second lowest per capita income and the highest unemployment rate in comparison to the peers. However, the more significant factor impacting collections per case is the significantly lower number of cases in enforcement at MCSEA as compared to the peers (see **Table 1-2**). Increasing the number of cases in the enforcement mode would result in increasing the amount of child support payments collected and subsequently disbursed to custodial parents.

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Background

As a result of an agreement reached between the Mahoning County Board of County Commissioners (MBOCC) and Mahoning County Child Support Enforcement Agency (MCSEA), the Auditor of State’s Office has undertaken this performance audit to assess the performance of MCSEA. MCSEA is administered within the Mahoning County Department of Job and Family Services (MDJFS). MCSEA also operates under state regulations developed by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) and is monitored on the federal level by the Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE).

Organization Chart

Chart 2-1 provides an overview of MCSEA’s organizational structure and staffing levels. All staffing levels are illustrated in full-time equivalents (FTEs) and state the number of filled and vacant positions.

Chart 2-1: Child Support Enforcement Agency Organization

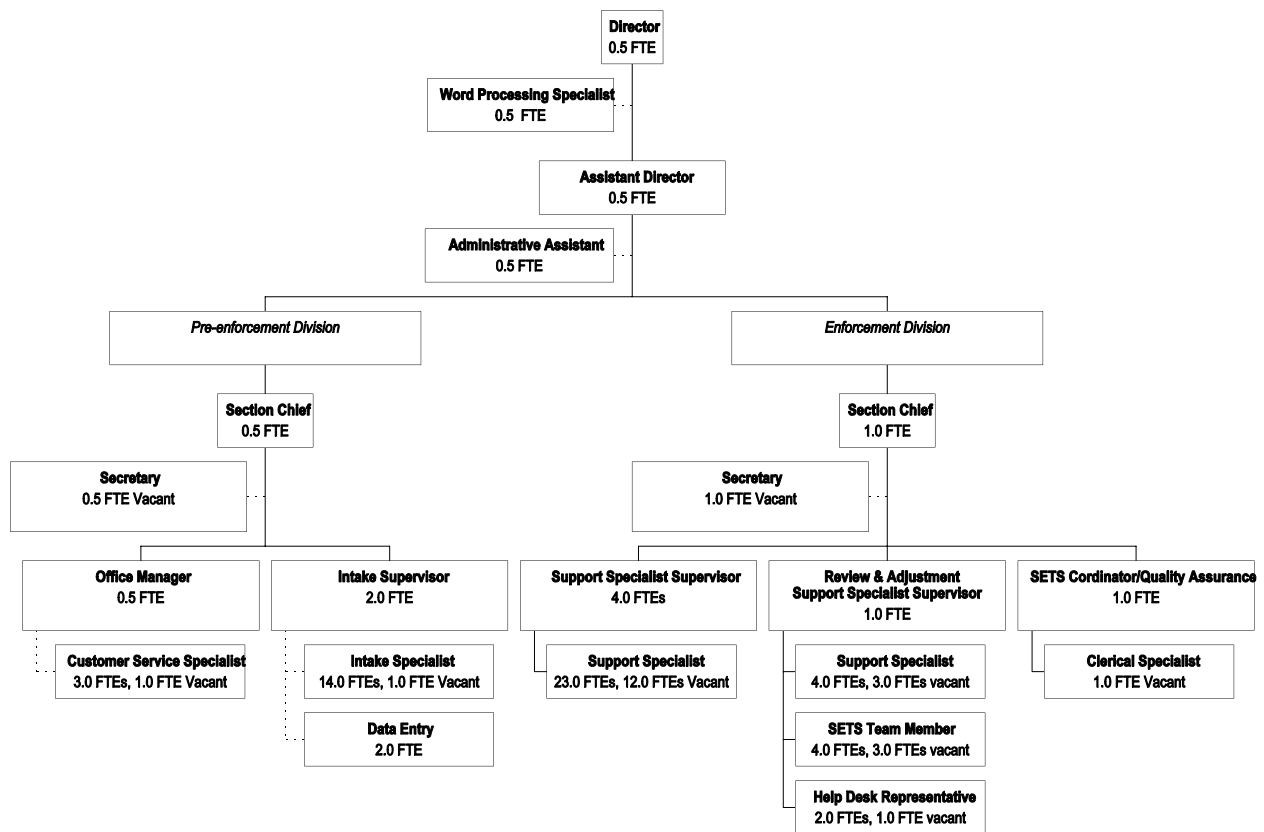
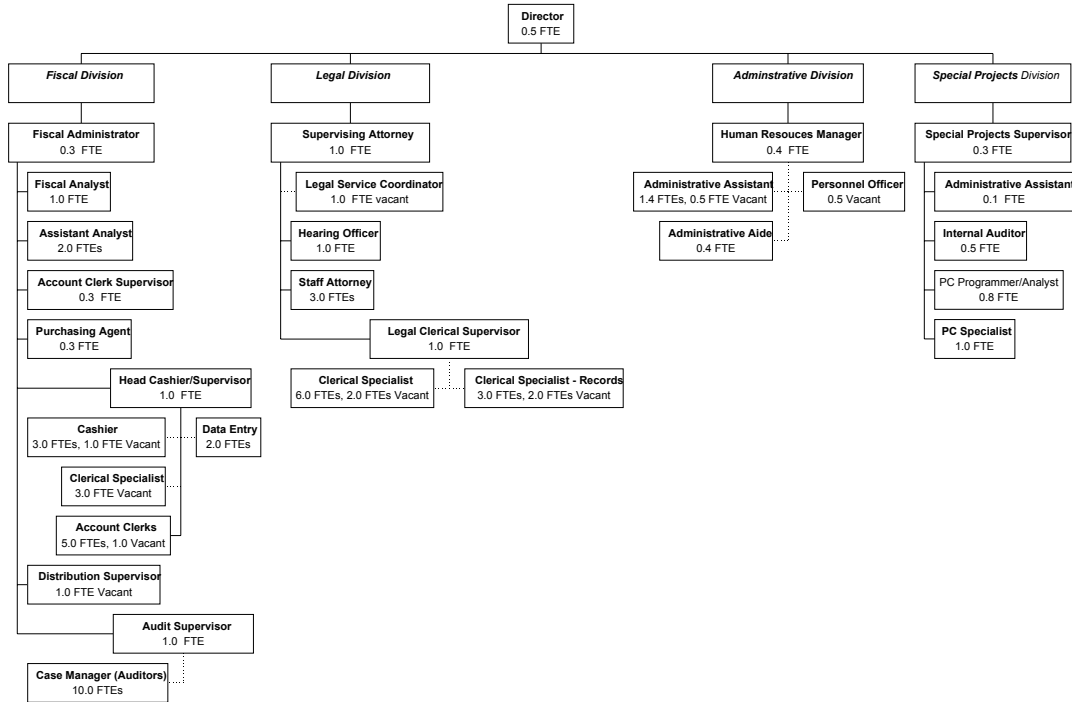


Chart 2-1: Child Support Enforcement Agency Organization (Continued)



Organization Function

MDJFS administers Mahoning 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 or Title IV-D agency. The responsibilities of a child support enforcement agency include the following:

- Location of non-custodial parents,
- Establishment of paternity,
- Establishment and enforcement of financial and medical support orders, and
- Review and modification of support orders.

In addition, MCSEA 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 child enforcement agencies are also required to enforce collections for all child support cases, including individuals who are not on public assistance and who have not formally requested services. MCSEA 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 service 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 child support enforcement agency services.
- **Non-Title 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 MCSEA process payments.

Organization History & Legislation

MCSEA was established in 1975 and was managed by the Domestic Relations Court until 1998. Currently, the child support enforcement program is administered by the Mahoning County Department of Job and Family Services (MDJFS), which reports directly to the Mahoning County Board of County Commissioners (MBOCC). As of June 2001, MCSEA had a caseload of 22,449 cases and was budgeted for 145.3 FTEs.

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 individuals from 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 (PRWORA) (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 its child support systems by reducing its 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 in past due child support or owes one year of past due child support.

Summary of Operations

Mahoning County administers the child support enforcement program within MDJFS, with some staff functioning solely on MCSEA activities and some staff devoted to both MDJFS and MCSEA activities. The initiation of MCSEA services can occur in the form of a referral from MDJFS or Children’s Protective Services (CPS), by application to MCSEA 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 MCSEA are administered through the following functions: establishing paternity, support and medical orders (pre-enforcement unit); ensuring child support payments are remitted to appropriate parties (enforcement unit); collections; fiscal management; case maintenance and legal assistance.

To begin the process of obtaining child support, custodial parents are referred to the pre-enforcement unit which consists of a pre-enforcement section chief (0.5 FTE), two intake specialist supervisors, 14 intake specialists (14.0 FTEs), two data entry clerks (2.0 FTEs), an office manager (0.5 FTE), and three customer service specialists (3.0 FTEs). When the case is referred to the pre-enforcement

unit, the intake specialists are responsible for locating absent parents and establishing paternity. Once paternity is established, child and medical support orders can be established. The pre-enforcement 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-enforcement 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-enforcement unit attempts to get an admission of paternity from the non-custodial parent or arrange for genetic testing in order to establish paternity. The pre-enforcement unit enters and establishes cases in SETS and is responsible for the following specific case types: paternity cases; married and separated cases; Uniform Interstate Family Support Act (also known as UIFSA cases); genetic testing cases referred from Juvenile or Domestic Relations Court; third party and children services client support cases; and medical support cases.

After a support order is established, the case is assigned to the enforcement unit which consists of an enforcement section chief, four support specialist supervisors, 23.0 FTEs support specialists (including Help Desk personnel), one review and adjustment support specialist supervisor (1.0 FTE), four review and adjustment support specialists (4.0 FTEs), one SETS coordinator supervisor (quality and assurance supervisor), one SETS team member (1.0 FTEs) and two help desk representatives (2.0 FTE). Once the case is received, the unit is responsible for enforcing and modifying existing orders. The enforcement unit addresses client inquiries, out-of-state cases, arrearage and tax-offset disputes. The enforcement unit also modifies existing orders, prepares emancipations, initiates legal actions and testifies in court. Furthermore, the enforcement 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.

MCSEA 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, MCSEA used the County AS400 computer system. Other counties relied on their own computer systems or did not have computerized case management capabilities prior to SETS. 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. MCSEA converted to SETS in September of 1999 and uses the system to maintain all case information, case arrearages, payment histories, financial data relating to the collection and disbursement of support payments and other related data. 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.

MDJFS fiscal personnel are responsible for all financial processes including those used by MCSEA. Fiscal personnel specifically responsible for MCSEA operations include one fiscal administrator (0.3 FTE), one fiscal analyst (1.0 FTE), two assistant analysts (2.0 FTEs), one account clerk supervisor (0.3 FTE), one purchasing agent (0.3 FTE), one audit supervisor (1.0 FTE), 10 audit case managers (10.0 FTEs), one cashier/fiscal supervisor (1.0 FTE), three cashiers clerks (3.0 FTEs) and two data entry clerks (2.0 FTEs). The fiscal personnel are responsible for reconciling MCSEA accounts and generating reports for state and federal governments which are used to measure performance. This task requires significant knowledge of the financial management function of the SETS system. These personnel also perform audits on cases that are going to court for payment. MCSEA also employs five account clerks (5.0 FTEs) who are responsible for analyzing data from Title IV-A cases coming from MDJFS and interfacing the data with the Title IV-D cases in the SETS system.

MCSEA has a legal unit which, as of June 2001, is comprised of one supervising attorney (1.0 FTE), four attorneys which includes a hearing officer (4.0 FTEs), one legal clerical supervisor (1.0 FTEs), and nine clerical specialists (9.0 FTEs). The legal unit at MCSEA is separate from MDJFS. 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 decisions on the administrative process of paternity and support establishment, which can be completed without court involvement if the parties agree. MCSEA's administrative staff in the legal unit performs clerical duties such as maintaining case dockets, filing court documents, and answering and screening calls.

MDJFS human resources division is responsible for all human resources tasks related to MCSEA. Human resources personnel specifically responsible for MCSEA operations include one human resource manager (0.4 FTE), three administrative assistants (1.4 FTEs) and one administrative aide (0.4 FTE). The human resource unit is responsible for making changes to payroll, time accrual and personnel records; posting job openings; creating and revising position descriptions; processing employee benefits and handling grievances. In addition, the County has a central human resources department, which coordinates human resources functions with major County departments, including MCSEA.

The special projects unit functions directly under the MCSEA administrator and consists of one special projects director (0.3 FTE), one administrative assistant (0.1 FTE), one internal auditor (0.5 FTE), one programmer/analyst (0.8 FTE) and one programmer specialist (1.0 FTE). The special projects director is responsible for contract negotiations with the prosecutors office, sheriff's office and courts regarding IV-D contracts; memorandums of understanding; and grants. The internal auditor reports to the director of MDJFS and assists with the coordination and preparation of performance indicator reports. The internal auditor also reviews reports and studies methods of improving measurements, performance standards and procedures. The programmer/analyst and specialist handle computer related issues and staff training on personal computers. The director of MDJFS indicated that the special projects unit, except for the internal auditor position, has been eliminated during the course of this performance audit.

Staffing

Table 2-1 presents the FY 2001 MCSEA staffing levels.

Table 2-1: MCSEA Staffing Levels ¹

Area	Classification	Budgeted	Actual	Net Vacancies
Administration	Director	0.5	0.5	0.0
	Word Processing Specialist	0.5	0.5	0.0
	Assistant Director	0.5	0.5	0.0
	Administrative Assistant	0.5	0.5	0.0
	Subtotal	2.0	2.0	0.0
Pre-Enforcement & Enforcement	Section Chief of Shared Services- Pre-enforcement	0.5	0.5	0.0
	Section Chief - Enforcement	1.0	1.0	0.0
	Intake (Pre-Enforcement) Supervisor	2.0	2.0	0.0
	Support Specialist (Enforcement) Supervisor	4.0	4.0	0.0
	Intake Specialist	15.0	14.0	1.0
	Support Specialist	35.0	23.0	12.0
	Customer Service	4.0	3.0	1.0
	Secretary	1.5	0.0	1.5
	Data Entry	2.0	2.0	0.0
	SETS/Quality Assurance Coordinator	1.0	1.0	0.0
	Help Desk Representative	3.0	2.0	1.0
	Office Manager	0.5	0.5	0.0
	Subtotal	69.5	53.0	16.5
Review & Adjustment	Review and Adjustment Support Specialist Supervisor	1.0	1.0	0.0
	Review and Adjustment Support Specialists	7.0	4.0	3.0
	SETS Team Member (Review & Adjustment)	7.0	4.0	3.0
	Clerical Specialist	1.0	0.0	1.0
	Subtotal	16.0	9.0	7.0
Fiscal Support Staff	Fiscal Administrator	0.3	0.3	0.0
	Financial Analyst	1.0	1.0	0.0
	Assistant Analyst	2.0	2.0	0.0
	Account Clerk Supervisor	0.3	0.3	0.0
	Purchasing Agent	0.3	0.3	0.0
	Audit Supervisor	1.0	1.0	0.0
	Case Managers (Auditors)	10.0	10.0	0.0
	Cashier / Fiscal Supervisor	1.0	1.0	0.0
	Cashiers	4.0	3.0	1.0
	Clerical Specialist	3.0	0.0	3.0
	Data Entry	2.0	2.0	0.0
	Distribution Supervisor	1.0	0.0	1.0
	Account Clerks (Data Entry/IV-A & IV-D)	6.0	5.0	1.0
	Subtotal	31.9	25.9	6.0
Legal	Supervising Attorney	1.0	1.0	0.0
	Legal Services Coordinator	1.0	0.0	1.0
	Attorney	3.0	3.0	0.0
	Hearing Officer	1.0	1.0	0.0
	Legal Clerical Supervisor	1.0	1.0	0.0
	Clerical Specialist	8.0	6.0	2.0
	Clerical Specialist - Records ²	5.0	3.0	2.0
Subtotal	20.0	15.0	5.0	
Human Resources Staff	Human Resource Manager	0.4	0.4	0.0
	Administrative Assistant	1.9	1.4	0.5
	Personnel Officer	0.5	0.0	0.5
	Administrative Aide	0.4	0.4	0.0
	Subtotal	3.2	2.2	1.0
Special Projects Staff	Special Projects Director	0.3	0.3	0.0
	Administrative Assistant	0.1	0.1	0.0
	Internal Auditor	0.5	0.5	0.0
	Programmer / Analyst	0.8	0.8	0.0
	Programmer (PC) Specialist	1.0	1.0	0.0
	Subtotal	2.7	2.7	0.0
Total MCSEA Personnel		145.3	109.8	35.5

Source: MCSEA records

¹ All MCSEA employees are stated in FTEs.

² Although the clerical specialists (records) report to the legal clerical supervisor, these positions perform functions for the whole agency, not solely for legal.

MCSEA is budgeted for 145.3 FTEs and as of June 31, 2001, 109.8 FTEs were filled.

Financial Data

Table 2-2 presents FY 1999, FY 2000 and FY 2001 actual expenditures for MCSEA.

Table 2-2: Child Support Enforcement Agency Expenditures

Appropriation Account	FY 1999 Actual Expenditures	FY 2000 Actual Expenditures	Dollar Change	Percent Change	FY 2001 Actual	Dollar Change	Percent Change
Mahoning County Administration Department							
Salaries	\$3,890,446	\$3,663,216	\$(227,230)	(5.8)%	\$3,347,675	(\$315,541)	(8.6)%
Fringe Benefits	1,585,223	1,472,000	(113,223)	(7.1)%	1,642,070	170,070	11.6%
Supplies	159,253	49,487	(109,766)	(68.9)%	70,064	20,577	41.6%
Professional Services	70,678	29,599	(41,079)	(58.1)%	11,510	(18,089)	(61.1)%
Rent	424,017	358,783	(65,234)	(15.4)%	393,846	35,063	9.8%
Agency Contractual	272,365	727,825	455,460	167.2%	315,332	(412,493)	56.7%
Utilities	88,109	76,411	(11,698)	(13.3)%	121,100	44,689	58.5%
Equipment & Maintenance	37,979	54,772	16,793	44.2%	25,104	(29,668)	(54.2)%
County Cost Allocation Charge	179,211	0	(179,211)	(100.0)%	231,353	231,353	100.0%
Shared Costs	0	0	0	0.0%	659,950	659,950	100.0%
Other ¹	44,048	66,166	22,118	50.2%	65,468	(698)	(1.1)%
Total	\$6,751,329	\$6,498,259	\$(253,070)	(3.7)%	\$6,883,472	\$385,213	5.9%
Security/Deputies Department							
Salaries	\$108,386	\$113,109	\$4,723	4.4%	\$110,651	(\$2,458)	(2.2)%
Fringe Benefits	19,173	19,199	26	0.1%	24,100	4,901	25.5%
Total	\$127,559	\$132,308	\$4,749	3.7%	\$134,751	\$2,443	1.8%
Services/Prosecutor Department							
Salaries	\$63,346	\$61,000	\$(2,346)	(3.7)%	\$62,299	\$1,299	2.1%
Fringe Benefits	14,918	13,695	(1,223)	(8.2)%	16,402	2,707	19.8%
Total	\$78,264	\$74,695	\$(3,569)	(4.6)%	\$78,701	\$4,006	5.4%

Source: MCSEA financial records

¹ The "other" classification includes professional services-other, insurance, extradition services, organization dues, seminar/conference, travel, vehicle maintenance, gas and expense-nonoperating agency.

MSCEA receives the majority of its funding from the State of Ohio. The significant differences in Table 2-2 are discussed below.

MCSEA Administration Department

A decrease in salaries and benefits for FY 2000 and a decrease in salaries for FY 2001: Salaries and benefits decreased in FY 2000 due to MCSEA reducing positions related to the SETS conversion completed in 1999 and a staffing analysis conducted within the same year by MCSEA. The results from the staffing analysis indicated that MCSEA was overstaffed by about 13 positions in certain job functions. As a result, positions were reduced by MCSEA offering early retirement buyouts for certain positions that were duplicating job functions. Furthermore, staffing levels have also been impacted by layoffs and resignations in FY 2001 which resulted in the decrease in salaries for FY 2001.

An increase in fringe benefits for FY 2001: In 2001, Mahoning County went to a retrospective rating plan for Workers' Compensation benefits and established an Internal Service fund. As part of the plan, the estimated premium for FY 2001 which was due in FY 2002 was funded by MCSEA in FY 2001. In addition, the Bureau of Workers' Compensation did not discount the premium that was due in FY 2001, as was done in FY 2000.

A decrease in supplies for FY 2000: Supplies decreased by 68.9 percent in FY 2000 due to the centralization of payment processing. Therefore, MCSEA does not issue and send as many checks through the mail system.

An increase in supplies for FY 2001: Due to the implementation of the SETS system, MCSEA began using more copier and printer paper which resulted in an increase in supply expenditures during FY 2001.

A decrease in professional services for FY 2000 and FY 2001: In FY 2000, MCSEA began planning for constructing a new building to house all of its MCSEA and MDJFS employees. Initially, MCSEA allocated funding for this purpose in FY2000. However, MCSEA did not spend this funding in FY 2000 or FY 2001. In addition, a professional contract used by MCSEA during previous fiscal years was not renewed during FY 2001.

An increase in agency contracts for FY 2000 and a decrease for FY 2001: Agency contracts are related to the Title IV-D (child support) program in which MCSEA reimburses other agencies, such as the juvenile court and domestic relations court, through funding provided by the federal government for costs related to processing child support cases. The federal government reimburses counties 66 percent of the contract costs. The increases for these contracts in FY 2000 was due to ensuring that child support cases processed by these agencies were adequately converted into the SETS system. In addition, in 2000, MCSEA provided Title IV-D contract payments to various Mahoning County departments, which were originally owed in previous years. Therefore, the payments in FY 2000 were higher than in other years.

An increase in utilities for FY 2001: The 67.7 percent increase in utilities is due to a new telephone system which will be installed at MCSEA and MDJFS in FY 2001. MCSEA also paid utility expenses in FY 2001 which were for FY 2000. These expenses were not paid during FY 2000 because the telephone company sent the bills to the wrong department.

A decrease in equipment and maintenance in FY 2001: The decrease in equipment and maintenance expenditures is because MCSEA did not experience a need for new equipment.

An increase in county cost allocation in FY 2001: In 2001, MCSEA paid its share of costs for FY 2000 and one-half of its share of costs for FY 2001. In FY 2000, no cost allocation payments were made by MCSEA.

An increase in shared costs in FY 2001: This is the first time MCSEA has paid shared costs. Shared costs are related to those employees who work in more than one program. In this instance, the employees work in both MCSEA and MDJFS.

A increase in "other" for FY 2000: The majority of the increase in FY2000 was due to staff participating in various training classes, including SETS training.

Security/Deputies Department Contract

A decrease in salaries for FY 2001: Salaries decreased due to the sheriff's office using deputies with lower seniority and lower salary rates to provide security coverage at MCSEA.

An increase in benefits for FY 2001: Fringe benefits increased due to hospitalization being included in the budget, which in the past had been allocated in the sheriff's office budget.

Services/Prosecutor Department Contract

An increase in benefits for FY 2001: Fringe benefits increased due to hospitalization being included in the budget, which in the past had been allocated in the prosecutor's office budget.

MCSEA Key Statistics

Table 2-3 illustrates the social and economic characteristics of Mahoning County and the peers as they relate to child support. These social and economic characteristics affect MCSEA 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 correlates with the absent parents' ability to make child support payments.

Table 2-3: Child Support Enforcement County Population Demographics

	Mahoning	Lorain	Montgomery	Tuscarawas	Peer Average
County Population (2000)	257,555	284,664	559,062	90,914	311,547
One parent families as a percentage of two parent families (2000)	45.3%	41.6%	55.2%	30.5%	42.4%
Divorce Rate per 1,000 Population (1998)	3.5	3.9	3.1	6.0	4.3
Per Capita Income (1999)	\$24,095	\$25,712	\$28,113	\$21,078	\$24,968
% Transfer Payments of Total Personal Income (1999) ¹	20.6%	13.9%	13.7%	16.8%	14.8%
Unemployment Rate (2000)	5.6%	5.1%	3.8%	4.6%	4.5%
FY 2001 Caseload	22,449	24,901	50,459	6,748	27,369
Cases per 1,000 population	87	87	90	74	84
Number of FTEs in 2001	109.8	71.9	109.6	48.0	76.5
Cases per FTE	204	346	460	141	358

Source: County interviews, Ohio Department of Development, ODJFS

¹ Transfer payments are payments to a person, usually in monetary form, for which that person has not rendered a service. Examples include unemployment benefits, retirement benefits, and value of food stamps.

Table 2-3 indicates that Mahoning County is below the peer average population and has the second lowest divorce rate of all the peers. Mahoning County is above the peer average based on one parent families as a percentage of two parent families. Mahoning County has the second lowest per capita income and the highest unemployment rate when compared to the peers. In addition, the percentage of transfer payments of total personal income in Mahoning County is the highest of the peers. Since Mahoning County has the second lowest per capita income, highest unemployment rate and highest percentage of transfer payments as compared to the peers, enforcing and collecting child support payments could be more challenging for MCSEA.

Table 2-4 presents the open cases by type for MCSEA and the peers.

Table 2-4: Open Cases by Case Type, June 2001 ¹

	Mahoning		Lorain		Montgomery		Tuscarawas		Peer Average	
	Cases	Percent	Cases	Percent	Cases	Percent	Cases	Percent	Cases	Percent
Current Assistance	3,502	15.6%	2,674	10.7%	7,040	14.0%	481	7.1%	3,398	12.4%
Former Assistance	7,660	34.1%	7,029	28.2%	14,038	27.8%	2,139	31.7%	7,735	28.3%
Never Assistance	10,111	45.0%	13,317	53.5%	24,873	49.3%	3,792	56.2%	13,994	51.1%
Non IV-D	1,176	5.2%	1,881	7.6%	4,508	8.9%	336	5.0%	2,242	8.2%
Total	22,449	100.0%	24,901	100.0%	50,459	100.0%	6,748	100.0%	27,369	100.0%

Source: SETS Report 4223 Case Inventory, Control-D Report no. QFR094RA for Quarter ending June 2001

¹ Cases will not agree with SETS Report 4223 total due to non-title IV-D cases shown in Column E are reported only, not tallied with the remaining columns. Therefore, this explains the variance between the report total and calculated total.

As shown in **Table 2-4**, the majority of open cases at MCSEA and peers are never assistance cases. MCSEA is below the peer average in the percentage of never assistance cases handled by the agency, but is above the peer average in current and former assistance cases, which may require more effort to achieve collections.

Table 2-5 illustrates collections disbursed to families according to case type for MCSEA and the peers.

Table 2-5: Collections Disbursed to Family by Case Type, June 2001 ¹

Case Type	Mahoning		Lorain		Montgomery		Tuscarawas		Peer Average	
	Collections	Percent	Collections	Percent	Collections	Percent	Collections	Percent	Collections	Percent
Current Assistance	\$402,144	2.7%	\$452,089	2.0%	\$861,915	2.0%	\$119,157	1.7%	\$477,720	2.0%
Former Assistance	\$4,704,674	31.3%	\$4,484,524	19.6%	\$9,389,415	22.3%	\$1,725,865	25.3%	\$5,199,935	21.7%
Never Assistance	\$9,923,492	66.0%	\$17,905,249	78.4%	\$31,942,142	75.7%	\$4,989,736	73.0%	\$18,279,042	76.3%
Total ¹	\$15,030,310	100.0%	\$22,841,862	100.0%	\$42,193,472	100.0%	\$6,834,758	100.0%	\$23,956,697	100.0%

Source: SETS 4289 Report from January 2001 through June 2001

¹ Does not include non IV-D cases because SETS does not track collections on non IV-D cases.

Table 2-5 indicates that MCSEA has the highest percentage of collections disbursed in current and never assistance cases when compared to the peers and, in contrast, the lowest percentage of collections in former assistance cases when compared to the peers. Total MCSEA collections disbursed during the quarter are 34.8 percent lower than the average for the peer agencies.

Performance Measures

The following is a list of performance measures and analyses that were used to review MCSEA's operations:

- Review historical and background information;
- Assess overall case management operations including the use of administrative processes and enforcement tools;
- Review the overall effectiveness and efficiency in processing current assistance, former assistance, never assistance and non-Title IV-D cases;
- Evaluate operations based upon the five performance measures established by the 1998 Child Support Enforcement Act and other available performance measures;
- Assess staffing levels, personnel issues and training;
- Review collective bargaining agreements and compare compensation packages;
- Review customer service and community awareness activities;
- Assess overall planning efforts; and
- Assess the use of CSPC (Child Support Processing Center).

A. Case Management Operations

Findings/Commendations/Recommendations

Case Management Overview

F3.1 A Child Support Enforcement Agency’s (CSEA) primary objective is to effectively manage cases to maximize the number of cases being enforced. By having more cases being enforced, CSEAs are able to provide more child support payments to custodial parents. **Table 3-1** depicts the caseload managed by MCSEA and peers by case mode: intake, locate, paternity, support, and enforcement. Cases that are labeled “locate” can also be captured in the paternity, support and enforcement modes depending on the needs of the case.

Table 3-1: Caseload by Case Mode

	Mahoning		Lorain		Montgomery		Tuscarawas		Peer Average	
	Cases	%	Cases	%	Cases	%	Cases	%	Cases	%
Intake	277	0.9%	98	0.3%	327	0.5%	12	0.2%	146	0.4%
Locate	5,101	17.2%	3,623	12.1%	11,766	18.7%	688	8.9%	5,359	16.0%
Paternity	4,086	13.8%	1,426	4.8%	7,414	11.8%	266	3.4%	3,035	9.1%
Support	4,199	14.2%	2,736	9.2%	6,447	10.2%	566	7.4%	3,250	9.7%
Enforcement	15,970	53.9%	21,970	73.6%	37,006	58.8%	6,157	80.1%	21,711	64.8%
Total ¹	29,633	100%	29,853	100%	62,960	100%	7,689	100%	33,501	100%

Source: Management Overview report, June 2001

Note: Above information includes arrears only cases and undefined cases.

¹ Cases may be maintained in more than one mode.

As shown in **Table 3-1**, MCEA has the lowest percent of its cases in enforcement as compared to the peers. Both Lorain and Tuscarawas CSEAs have a significantly higher percent of cases in enforcement as compared to MCSEA. The number of cases in the enforcement mode directly impacts the amount of child support collections received by MCSEA and subsequently disbursed to custodial parents. **Table 3-2A** presents collections per case in current assistance, former assistance and never assistance caseloads for MCSEA and the peers.

Table 3-2A Collections per Case by Case Type ¹

	Mahoning	Lorain	Montgomery	Tuscarawas	Peer Average
Collections per current assistance case	\$114.83	\$169.07	\$122.43	\$247.72	\$140.59
Collection per former assistance case	\$614.19	\$638.00	\$668.86	\$806.86	\$672.26
Collections per never assistance case	\$981.46	\$1,344.54	\$1,284.21	\$1,315.86	\$1,306.21

Source: SETS 4289 Report from January 2001 through June 2001

¹ SETS does not track collections on non-type IV-D cases.

As indicated by **Table 3-2A**, MCSEA had collected a lower amount per each case type in comparison to the peers. A factor that could impact collections per case are various demographic variables in each county. Mahoning County has the second lowest per capita income and the highest unemployment rate in comparison to the peers. However, the more significant factor impacting collections per case is the significantly lower number of cases in enforcement at MCSEA as compared to the peers (see **Table 3-1**). Increasing the number of cases in the enforcement mode would result in increasing the amount of child support payments collected and subsequently disbursed to custodial parents.

R3.1 MCSEA should develop and implement strategies to improve case management operations and increase the number of cases in the enforcement mode. The effects of how and when cases progress through the system may have the most significant impact on whether families receive whole and timely benefits. This, in turn, is a reflection of MCSEA's overall performance. The analysis in **F3.1** and **Table 3-1** indicates that MCSEA can benefit from improving its processes in order to increase the number of cases in the enforcement mode. The recommendations provided in this report are intended to assist MCSEA in increasing the number of cases it maintains in the enforcement mode in order to increase its collections of child support. The key recommendations that could improve MCSEA's case management process to subsequently increase the percent of cases in enforcement include the following:

- Consider implementing a generalized case management system (see **R3.2**);
- Examine alternative methods of establishing cases in SETS system (see **R3.3**);
- Perform additional administrative processes (see **R3.6** and **R3.9**) and enhance current administrative processes (see **R3.8**, **R3.10**, **R3.11** and **R3.12**);
- Use available enforcement tools (see **R3.6**, **R3.13**, and **R3.14**);
- Track and monitor progress of individuals referred to jobs program (see **R3.19**);
- Streamline interview process (see **R3.20**);
- Monitor cases through SETS reports (see **R3.24**);
- Ensure that staff are appropriately and adequately trained (see **R3.41**); and
- Develop and track additional performance measures (see **R3.55**).

As discussed previously, improving case management operations should result in an increased number of child support payments collected by MCSEA and subsequently disbursed to families. **Tables 3-2B, 3-2C and 3-2D** present three different methods of estimating additional child support payments that MCSEA could collect if it achieved performance comparable to the peers. Collections data obtained from SETS and subsequently used as a basis to estimate additional child support collections in all three methods is for a six month time period (January 2001 through June 2001).

Method #1

Table 3-2B shows an estimate of additional child support collections by assuming that MCSEA could obtain the peer average child support collections per case, which includes all open cases within the different modes (intake, locate, paternity, support and enforcement), and open cases with and without collections. Improving case management operations could increase the number of cases in enforcement. As a result, the collections per case (including all open cases) should increase at MCSEA. Methods 2 and 3 present estimates of additional child support collections based on attaining the peer average percentage of cases in the enforcement mode (method #2) and open cases with collections (method #3).

Table 3-2B: Method #1 (Using Peer Average Collections per Case) ¹

	Mahoning	Lorain	Montgomery	Tuscarawas	Peer Average
CURRENT ASSISTANCE					
Total Current Assistance Collections ¹	\$402,144	\$452,089	\$861,915	\$119,157	\$477,720
Number of Cases	3,502	2,674	7,040	481	3,398
Collections per Case	\$114.83	\$169.07	\$122.43	\$247.72	\$140.59
Total Current Assistance Collections Using Peer Average Collections Per Case	\$492,346	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Additional Current Assistance Collections	\$90,202	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
FORMER ASSISTANCE					
Total Former Assistance Collections ¹	\$4,704,674	\$4,484,524	\$9,389,415	\$1,725,865	\$5,199,935
Number of Cases	7,660	7,029	14,038	2,139	7,735
Collections per Case	\$614.19	\$638.00	\$668.86	\$806.86	\$672.26
Total Former Assistance Collections Using Peer Average Collections Per Case	\$5,149,512	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Additional Former Assistance Collections	\$444,838	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
NEVER ASSISTANCE					
Total Never Assistance Collections ¹	\$9,923,492	\$17,905,249	\$31,942,142	\$4,989,736	\$18,279,042
Number of Cases	10,111	13,317	24,873	3,792	13,994
Collections per Case	\$981.46	1,344.54	1,284.21	1,315.86	\$1,306.21
Total Never Assistance Collections Using Peer Average Collections Per Case	\$13,207,089	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Additional Never Assistance Collections	\$3,283,597	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
TOTAL ADDITIONAL COLLECTIONS ¹	\$3,818,637	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
ADJUSTMENTS FOR DEMOGRAPHIC DATA					
Impact of Unemployment Rate	5.6%	5.1%	3.8%	4.6%	4.5%
Impact of Unemployment Rate on Additional Collections Using Peer Average	(\$933,445)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Per Capita Income	\$24,095	\$25,712	\$28,113	\$21,078	\$24,968
Impact of Per Capita Income on Additional Collections Using Peer Average	(\$133,518)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
TOTAL ADJUSTED ESTIMATE OF ADDITIONAL COLLECTIONS ¹	\$2,751,674	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
ADDITIONAL COLLECTIONS PER MONTH	\$458,612	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: ODJFS and SETS reports

¹ Excludes non IV-D collections. Total actual collections are from Jan. 2001 through June 2001. Therefore, estimate of additional collections is for a six month time frame.

As indicated in **Table 3-2B**, MCSEA has the potential to collect an additional \$458,000 per month in child support collections based upon peer comparisons. This estimate takes into account differences in key demographic variables in Mahoning County as compared to the peers. Since Mahoning County's unemployment rate is higher than the peer average and per capita income is lower than the peer average, the amount of child support collections per case at MCSEA could be lower than the peers. However, the impact of differences in key demographic variables on child support collections could not be as significant as estimated in **Table 3-2B**. For example, although Tuscarawas County has a significantly lower per capita income as compared to Mahoning, Lorain and Montgomery Counties (see **Table 2-3**), Tuscarawas CSEA's collections per current and former assistance cases is the highest and collections per never assistance case is the second highest as compared to the peers (see **Table 3-2**). Therefore, **Table 3-2B** presents a conservative estimate of additional child support payments collected if MCSEA could improve its case management operations and achieve performance comparable to the peers.

Method #2

Table 3-2C presents an estimate of additional child support collections based upon MCSEA increasing the percentage of cases in the enforcement mode to the peer average, which would result in maintaining more cases in the enforcement mode. The increase in the number of cases in the enforcement mode is then multiplied by MCSEA's current collections per case in the enforcement mode. Therefore, adjusting the estimate of additional collections based upon differences in demographic variables is not necessary.

Table 3-2C: Method #2 (Using Peer Average % of Cases in Enforcement) ¹

	Mahoning	Lorain	Montgomery	Tuscarawas	Peer Average
CURRENT ASSISTANCE					
Total Caseload by Case Mode	4,985	3,488	9,915	594	4,666
Cases in Enforcement Mode	1,253	1,404	2,020	287	1,237
% of Cases in Enforcement Mode	25.1%	40.3%	20.4%	48.3%	26.5%
Total Current Assistance Collections ²	\$402,144	\$452,089	\$861,915	\$119,157	\$477,720
Collections per Case in Enforcement Mode	\$320.94	\$322.00	\$426.69	\$415.18	\$386.19
Increase in Cases in Enforcement Mode Using Peer Avg. % of Cases in Enforcement	68	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Additional Current Assistance Collections	\$21,832	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
FORMER ASSISTANCE					
Total Caseload by Case Mode	4,956	1,551	7,141	380	3,025
Cases in Enforcement Mode	2,282	1,063	3,977	264	1,768
% of Cases in Enforcement Mode	46.0%	68.5%	55.7%	69.5%	58.5%
Total Former Assistance Collections ²	\$4,704,674	\$4,484,524	\$9,389,415	\$1,725,865	\$5,199,935
Collections per Case in Enforcement Mode	\$2,061.65	\$4,218.74	\$2,360.93	\$6,537.37	\$2,941.14
Increase in Cases in Enforcement Mode Using Peer Avg. % of Cases in Enforcement	617	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Additional Former Assistance Collections	\$1,272,038	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
NEVER ASSISTANCE					
Total Caseload by Case Mode	15,109	17,979	33,794	4,617	18,797
Cases in Enforcement Mode	8,728	13,686	21,400	3,757	12,948
% of Cases in Enforcement Mode	57.8%	76.1%	63.3%	81.4%	68.9%
Total Never Assistance Collections ²	\$9,923,492	\$17,905,249	\$31,942,142	\$4,989,736	\$18,279,042
Collections per Case in Enforcement Mode	\$1,136.97	\$1,308.29	\$1,492.62	\$1,328.12	\$1,411.73
Increase in Cases in Enforcement Mode Using Peer Avg. % of Cases in Enforcement	1,682	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Additional Never Assistance Collections	\$1,912,384	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
TOTAL ADDITIONAL COLLECTIONS ²	\$3,206,254	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
COLLECTIONS PER MONTH	\$534,376	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: ODJFS and SETS reports

¹ Excludes non IV-D collections. In addition, cases can be maintained in more than one mode.

² Total collections are for a six month time period (Jan. 2001 through June 2001). Therefore, estimate of total additional collections is for six months.

Table 3-2C shows that MCSEA could collect an additional \$534,000 per month if it increased the percentage of cases in the enforcement mode to the peer average. The difference under this method as compared to method #1 is that method #2 determines the increase in enforcement mode cases, which is then multiplied by MCSEA's current collections per enforcement mode case. In contrast, method #1 estimates additional collections assuming MCSEA could achieve the peer average collections per case. In addition, cases in method #1 include all cases within the different modes, not only cases in the enforcement mode.

Method# 3

Table 3-2D presents an estimate of additional child support collections based upon MCSEA increasing the number of open cases with collections. The increase in the number of open cases with collections is then multiplied by MCSEA's current collections per open case with collections. Therefore, adjusting the estimate of additional collections based upon differences in demographic variables is not necessary.

**Table 3-2D: Method #3
(Using Peer Average % of Open Cases With Collections)¹**

	Mahoning	Lorain	Montgomery	Tuscarawas	Peer Average
Open Cases	21,273	23,020	45,951	6,412	25,128
Cases With Collections	7,382	11,644	20,366	4,081	12,030
% of Open Cases with Collections	34.7%	50.6%	44.3%	63.6%	47.9%
Total Monthly Obligations	\$20,512,765	\$35,196,008	\$68,227,001	\$8,503,619	\$37,308,876
Total Monthly Collections	\$16,158,190	\$25,255,386	\$50,146,105	\$6,929,061	\$27,443,517
Collection Rate	78.7%	71.8%	73.5%	81.5%	73.6%
Collections per Case With Collections	\$2,188.86	\$2,168.96	\$2,462.25	\$1,697.88	\$2,281.26
Increase in Open Cases With Collections Using Peer Average	2,808	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Additional Collections²	\$6,146,319	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Additional Collections per Month	\$1,024,387	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: ODJFS and SETS reports

¹ Includes non IV-D collections. Monthly obligations and collections related to these monthly obligations were compiled by aggregating the monthly totals from January 2001 to June 2001.

² Estimate of additional collections is for a six month time frame.

As indicated by **Table 3-2D**, MCSEA could collect an additional \$1.02 million per month in child support payments by increasing the percent of cases with collections from 34.7 percent to the peer average of 47.9 percent. However, this method does not take into account obligations and collections based upon the different types of cases because SETS is unable to provide this information by case type. Therefore, this method could be potentially overestimating the additional child support payments MCSEA could collect if it improved its case management operations. Methods #1 and #2 separate collections by the different types of cases.

Conclusion of Different Methods

Since SETS can not provide obligations and collections by each case type, method #3 is potentially not as reliable as methods #1 and #2. Although two different methods are used to estimate additional collections in methods #1 and #2, the estimated increases in child

support collections through improving case management operations in both methods are similar. The estimated additional collections per month in method #2 (\$534,000) are approximately 16.6 percent higher than method #1 (\$458,000). To ensure a conservative approach in quantifying the impact of increasing child support collections, this performance audit estimates that MCSEA could increase child support collections by about \$458,000 per month by improving case management operations.

As discussed previously, MCSEA should prioritize developing and implementing strategies to improve case management operations. Consequently, MCSEA should be able to achieve additional child support collections. MCSEA should measure the increase in additional child support collections once enhancements have been implemented to its case management operations to accurately determine the impact of these enhancements. Furthermore, MCSEA should consider establishing quantifiable goals in its efforts to enhance services provided to families, such as increasing child support collections by \$458,000 per month, and measure progress in attaining those goals.

- F3.2 CSEAs can structure their case management system to either be more generalized or specialized. Montgomery CSEA and Tuscarawas CSEA use a generalized case management system. Under this system, the support specialist (case worker) is responsible for the establishment of paternity, medical and support orders, as well as the enforcement of all orders on that case. In contrast, case workers in the pre-enforcement unit at MCSEA work on establishing paternity, medical and support orders. After these activities have been completed, the cases are assigned to the enforcement unit which ensures that the support and medical orders are enforced. In addition, the quality assurance supervisor at MCSEA tries to ensure that case loads are equitable by reassigning cases between the case workers. While reassigning cases is a way to ensure that there is equal distribution of workload among the case workers, there are potential negative consequences. A case worker who has spent time working on a case and is familiar with the work which needs completed can find that the case is no longer their responsibility. Another potential negative consequence is the inability for clients to know who they need to speak with when they call or visit MCSEA. Case workers could have more cases reassigned to them by effectively processing case activity in a timely manner, which would result in an unequal distribution of workload. Further, case workers may not aggressively work more difficult cases by being aware that it will soon be shifted to another worker to manage.

Tuscarawas CSEA assigns cases to its case workers alphabetically based upon the custodial parent's last name. The case worker who is initially assigned the case is responsible for the case while it remains open. Clients know who their case worker is for all types of services and they are able to develop a personal relationship with their case worker. In addition to assigning cases to specific case workers, Tuscarawas uses a team approach in its generalized case management system by also assigning to each case employees from the audit, review and adjustment, and legal units. Through the use of the generalized case management

system, Montgomery CSEA is able to use its case workers in its call center assisting with customer service (**F3.89**). This has further allowed Montgomery CSEA to be proactive in meeting the needs of its clients and has resulted in fewer customer complaints (**F3.90**). In addition to enhancing client interactions, additional benefits of a generalized case management system include the following:

- Complete activities in a more timely manner by not having to assign cases to another case worker after pre-enforcement activities have been fulfilled;
- Allow case workers to be fully knowledgeable of and capable of processing all case activities, which further ensures that all case workers are effectively cross-trained;
- Allocate managers/supervisors and case workers in a more efficient manner considering that additional resources would likely be necessary with a specialized case management system; and
- Better account for case workers' leaves and absences.

As indicated throughout this report (see **F3.1**), Montgomery and Tuscarawas CSEAs are more effectively processing cases and have more cases in the enforcement mode as compared to MCSEA. As a result, Montgomery and Tuscarawas CSEAs are collecting a higher amount of child support payments per case as compared to MCSEA (see **F3.1**).

R3.2 MCSEA should consider reorganizing its case management structure from a specialized system to a generalized system. Based upon peer information and comparisons, a generalized case management system could result in processing cases more efficiently and effectively and improving customer relations within the community. Clients would know who their case worker is at all times, which could create a more effective working relationship with the client. To ensure that services and operations are not negatively impacted through this reorganization, MCSEA should consider gradually implementing a generalized case management system and provide the appropriate internal training for case workers to be able to effectively process all types of case activity. For example, MCSEA could implement a pilot test of a generalized case management system in a portion of its operations, compare the results of case activity of the pilot to the portion still functioning as a specialized case management system and to historical performance, and make a final decision based on these results.

However, if MCSEA were to maintain the current case management system, it should ensure each case worker is cross-trained in processing all of the various case activities. In addition, MCSEA should assign cases randomly. A case should remain assigned to the same case worker throughout the duration of the open case. The quality and assurance supervisor should monitor case assignment on a continuous basis to ensure an equal assignment of cases. Implementing a pay-for-performance system could reward those employees that continually meet and exceed expectations (see **F3.47** and **R3.24**). Furthermore, the number of cases that

are successfully processed by case workers should be a criteria included in performance evaluations (see **F3.78** and **R3.42**).

F3.3 MCSEA establishes cases in SETS based upon the number of children involved in a case. For example, if there are three children that have the same mother and father, this case will be established as three cases in SETS. In some instances, more than one worker will be assigned to these cases. However, two of the three peer counties (Montgomery and Tuscarawas) establish cases based upon the custodial parent, not the number of children. In the previous example, the peers would create the case in SETS as one case, not three cases. Establishing cases based on the number of children presents several disadvantages:

- Increased postage expenditures due to three separate checks being mailed;
- Increased number of withholding orders that need to be established and sent out;
- Inflated caseload appearance;
- Decreased uniformity in work performed on cases due to assignment of multiple workers;
- Increased number of contacts a non-custodial parent must make to inquire about their case; and
- Increased time spent establishing and processing cases, which impacts staffing levels (see **F3.54**).

The State of Ohio has not required a standard process of establishing cases in SETS. SETS counts cases as determined by the Child Support Enforcement Manual (CSEM)1050. ODJFS had indicated that for reporting purposes, SETS will only count the same absent parent father and custodial parent mother combination as one case, regardless of how many children are involved, and regardless of how many cases CSEAs have built from this combination. Establishing cases in the current manner could prevent MCSEA from getting cases to enforcement in a timely fashion due to the increased time and work involved with establishing cases based upon number of children as compared to custodial parent.

R3.3 In the future, MCSEA should establish cases in SETS based upon the custodial parent (same mother/same father combination) and not based upon the number of children. In addition, MCSEA should work with ODJFS to determine the feasibility of converting the existing cases to be established based upon the custodial parent. The benefits of establishing cases based upon the custodial parent as opposed to the number of children, which would ultimately result in reducing the number of cases established in SETS, include the following:

- Tracking and monitoring the case could be simplified;
- Answering and responding to client inquiries regarding the case could be easier;
- Streamlining the workload involved with the case;

- Improving customer service as clients would be able to inquire to the status of their case once as opposed to multiple times; and
- Decreasing administrative costs.

F3.4 MCSEA has an internal policy and goal of moving cases from intake within 20 days, which adheres to ODJFS's standard of 20 days. However, MCSEA has been maintaining cases in intake beyond this time frame. In addition, MCSEA does not consistently monitor its progress in meeting this goal. Consequently, MCSEA does not know how many cases are not meeting this goal and the actual length of time that cases remain in intake. Although the section chief of pre-enforcement indicated that a lack of adequate staffing levels is the major reason for the cases being held in intake beyond the 20 day time frame, the staffing analyses conducted in this report indicates that MCSEA is adequately staffed in pre-enforcement and enforcement (see **F3.54**). Holding cases in intake and not allowing them to advance to the next phase of the pre-order process impacts MCSEA's overall performance and hinders its ability to provide timely child support payments to appropriate families.

R3.4 Once an internal policy and goal has been established, MCSEA should strive to adhere to the goal, measure its progress in meeting the goal and if necessary, develop strategies to improve its performance in meeting the goal. Various recommendations are provided in this report to improve MCSEA's case management process to move more cases in a timely manner from intake to the enforcement modes. In addition, MCSEA should focus on establishing additional performance goals and measure its progression in meeting these goals, which is further discussed in **R3.55**.

F3.5 All cases have been converted to SETS at MCSEA; however, some of the information did not adequately convert into SETS. The financial analyst indicated that a QuatroPro spreadsheet, that has been utilized for the last six months, was created to help account for financial data on cases that have held funds in the previous system. Held funds are funds that have not been released for various reasons such as:

- Court order,
- Insufficient information,
- Money needs to be redirected to unclaimed funds, and
- Payments incorrectly mailed.

The spreadsheet has been developed so the financial analyst can refer to this report and to SETS to determine amounts to be released. This spreadsheet contains some cases that are already in SETS. The financial analyst stated that this occurred due to staff not checking the old system and SETS to eliminate duplication. Once cases are found to be in SETS and on the spreadsheet, they are eliminated from the spreadsheet the same day. According to the financial analyst, there has not been sufficient staff at MCSEA to assist in processing the held money, due in part to layoffs and considerable time devoted to SETS reconciliation.

However, the fiscal staffing analysis in this report indicates that MCSEA is currently sufficiently staffed (see **F3.61** through **F3.64**). There is currently no staff member devoted one hundred percent to eliminating this held money. Additionally, MCSEA has not determined how many cases are on the spreadsheet or what types of services are needed in order to release the held money. Approximately \$370,000 in held money is waiting to be released. Having two systems to monitor case information not only reduces reporting accuracy, but also requires a considerable amount of staff time. In addition, forecasting the amount of staff resources and time needed to eliminate the spreadsheet and subsequently fully rely on SETS is difficult because MCSEA does not know the exact composition of the cases on the spreadsheet. Not efficiently servicing these cases prolongs families wait time for receiving money that is owed to them.

R3.5 MCSEA's fiscal unit should prioritize eliminating the spreadsheet and disburse the held monies to the appropriate parties by devoting more staff resources to this task. There is a need for research to be conducted on those cases entered on the spreadsheet to determine case composition. Once this research has been conducted, MCSEA should have a better understanding of what services are needed in order to implement a plan for reduction of the amount of held funds. In addition, adequate research should enable MCSEA to determine if there are any cases that can be entered into SETS that are not already in the system. Eliminating the spreadsheet will ensure that all data in SETS is accurate and reliable for monitoring and reporting purposes.

Administrative Processes & Enforcement Tools

F3.6 Administrative processes are used by CSEAs in order to conduct various activities quickly and minimize the amount of cases which must appear in court. MCSEA is performing some activities using administrative processes. The following are the areas where MCSEA is currently using administrative processes and a brief description of what the administrative process entails.

- **Paternity Establishment:** MCSEA establishes paternity administratively using an affidavit which the father can sign at the hospital or at MCSEA. By signing the affidavit, the father is admitting paternity of that child. MCSEA can also establish paternity administratively using DNA testing if the assumed father agrees to the test (see **F3.12**). If the father does not agree to the testing, then paternity must be established in the courts.
- **Support Establishment:** The hearing officer at MCSEA has a meeting with the custodial and non-custodial parent to establish support. For employed non-custodial parents, MCSEA attaches a wage withholding. According to state law, the minimum support order for an unemployed, non-custodial parent is \$50. However, a judge may establish a support order less than \$50 based upon the individual circumstances

of the unemployed, non-custodial parent. In addition to establishing the minimum support for the non-custodial parent, the hearing officer refers the non-custodial parent to the seek-to-work program (see **F3.24**) in order to find employment. If the non-custodial parent neglects to attend the meeting with the hearing officer and the custodial parent, the hearing officer prepares a dismissal and a motion to establish support prior to the court hearing.

- **Review and Adjustments:** A notice is sent to both the custodial and non-custodial parents requesting reports on income. The reports must be sent back to MCSEA where personnel will review the information submitted. A draft proposal of any decisions are sent to the respective parties. If there are no objections to the decision, then a formal recommendation is prepared and submitted to the County judge for signature. See **F3.57**, **F3.58** and **F3.59** for more information on the administrative process used for review and adjustments.
- **Mistake of Fact Hearing:** A default occurs when the non-custodial parent stops paying child support or if the non-custodial parent does not agree with the balance of the cases. If the non-custodial parent believes that no money is owed, then the non-custodial parent can request a mistake of fact hearing within 10 days of receiving the default notice in order to prove that no money is owed. The hearing will be held by the hearing officer.
- **Lump Sum Hearing:** If someone notifies MCSEA that a non-custodial parent will be receiving a large sum of money above and beyond what the non-custodial parent normally receives, then MCSEA can seize the money in order to cover any default payments or arrears. If the non-custodial parent believes that payments are current or no payments are owed, the non-custodial parent can requested a lump sum hearing.

The peer CSEAs are performing the above mentioned administrative processes, in addition to using administrative processes and enforcement tools in areas which are not being used by MCSEA, such as financial institution data match (see **F3.16**). Enforcement tools can be used by CSEAs as an administrative process (e.g., without court involvement) to effectively enforce support orders. Montgomery and Tuscarawas CSEAs conduct emancipations administratively. MCSEA has indicated that emancipations will be conducted administratively in the future. Tuscarawas CSEA uses the following additional administrative processes and enforcement tools, which MCSEA does not conduct administratively:

- Requests for default tax intercepts,
- Recoupment of monies resulting from emancipations,
- Held income tax,

- License suspension,
- Administrative liens, and
- Professional license revocation.

Lack of fully using all available administrative processes and enforcement tools could contribute to MCSEA having the lowest percentage of its caseload in the enforcement mode as compared to the peers and to MCSEA's difficulty in effectively managing its caseload (see **F3.1** and **R3.1**).

F3.7 Maine has been nationally recognized for its administrative processes in paternity establishment, support establishment and enforcement. Specifically, Maine implemented a license suspension/revocation process for cases in which support had not been paid in 90 days. The process is entirely administrative unless court review of an administrative decision or modification of the underlying support award is sought. The obligor has 20 days from the date the notice is served to make a written request for a hearing. Obligor's are given at least two chances to come into compliance before a certification of non-compliance is issued. Since 1993, Maine has sent out 23,500 notices of intent to revoke licenses. Over the eight-year period through October 1999, over \$116 million has been collected from these once non-compliant obligors. In addition, this procedure has contributed to Maine's overall child support performance including a doubling of collections since 1993 and a payment rate on current support for intrastate cases of 60 percent. If MCSEA implemented a license suspension process, it could also increase child support collections and increase the number of cases in the enforcement mode.

R3.6 MCSEA should research, develop and implement the use of more administrative processes and enforcement tools into its operations including the following:

- Emancipations,
- FIDM,
- License suspension,
- Requests for default tax intercepts,
- Recoupment of monies resulting from emancipations,
- Held income tax,
- Administrative liens, and
- Professional license revocation.

By using available administrative processes and enforcement tools, MCSEA could increase arrearage collection, encourage clients to remain current in their support, and more effectively manage its caseload to increase the number of cases being enforced. For example, utilization of FIDM allows a child support enforcement agency to reach an unreachable non-custodial parent by providing access to the non-custodial parent's funds during the collection of arrears (see **F3.16** and **R3.13**). Suspending licenses provides case

workers with a powerful enforcement tool that encourages a non-custodial parent to pay off arrears in order to maintain use of their license. The license remains suspended until the non-custodial parent either pays off the arrears or works out an arrangement to the satisfaction of the case worker. A case workers ability to restrict such personal necessities as bank accounts and licenses provides a tremendous incentive to non-custodial parents who would not otherwise pay child support. In addition to using additional administrative processes and enforcement tools, this section of the report provides methods in which MCSEA can more effectively use its current administrative processes (see **R3.7** through **R3.12**).

After MCSEA fully integrates the use of the aforementioned administrative processes, it should perform a staffing analysis in the legal unit to determine whether staffing levels should be adjusted based upon the changes in workloads caused by the increase use of administrative processes (see **R3.36**). The accuracy of this analysis depends on MCSEA's ability to start using all administrative functions available to them in the establishment and enforcement of child support.

F3.8 MCSEA sends service of process, such as notices to appear at MCSEA for a hearing, by regular mail. By sending a service of process by regular mail, MCSEA cannot ensure the party has received the notice. In addition, according to the MCSEA hearing officer, numerous cases have had to be continued or re-filed because the sheriff deputies are not completing timely services for MCSEA, which can cause delays in establishing paternity and support, and could also result in a lower percentage of cases being enforced (see **F3.1**). In Tuscarawas CSEA, the IV-D deputies are used for personal service or the service is sent by certified mail. Montgomery CSEA sends certified mail and tracks no-shows for its own records and accountability purposes. Further, the recent Senate Bill 180 will have an impact on some processes within MCSEA by requiring service previously sent by regular mail to be sent by certified mail or personal service.

R3.7 MCSEA should send all service either by certified mail or personal service. This should be done to ensure the notice is served to the parties and could possibly decrease the number of no-shows. All notices should be sent using certified mail first, and only those which are returned as undeliverable should be delivered by the sheriff deputies. This will assist MCSEA in minimizing the number of deliveries which the sheriff deputies are required to make as well as permit the deputies to spend more time in law enforcement related functions. In addition, MCSEA should track no-shows to determine the effectiveness of its current service process and alternative methods of delivery to ensure the parties are present for the hearing.

F3.9 MCSEA may have more difficulty securing support for children of unmarried mothers in part because paternity must be determined before an award is established. As a result, counties with high unmarried birth rates may have weaker performance. In addition, since

MCSEA has a high percentage of current assistance cases, MCSEA may have a greater need to direct resources toward paternity establishment, as paternity establishment drives both order establishment and collections on cases. This can change with an increase in aggressive paternity establishment efforts such as voluntary paternity establishment. MCSEA has attempted to increase its establishment of paternity and support through relationships with area high schools and the Early Start Program, which is a day care program for children under three years of age for low income families. Two intake supervisors attend these locations to provide information to teen mothers. As stated previously, the current interview process for current assistance cases occurs via walk-ins, appointments and Title IV-A referrals from the Department of Children and Family Services and the Department of Youth Services. Further, the majority of current assistance cases comprise unwed mothers. By implementing additional means to seek out these unwed mothers in order to establish paternity and/or support, MCSEA could improve its customer service, increase the number of paternities established, and subsequently establish support and enforcement orders in a more timely manner (see **F3.10** through **F3.15**).

F3.10 While it is the responsibility of the Central Paternity Registry (CPR) vendor to ensure that all hospitals and registrars have received the necessary training and updates for paternity establishment, the Ohio Office of Child Support (OCS) performance audit indicated that hospital staff are informed and educated on paternity establishment issues on an as needed basis. As a result of not routinely updating hospital staff on issues, CSEAs run the risk of local hospitals not being aware of important changes in paternity establishment issues. The Montgomery CSEA has indicated that it makes annual presentations to local hospital personnel to provide information on changes related to paternity establishment and discuss problem areas. These annual presentations are also used as a question and answer time for the hospitals. While CSEAs are not required to make annual presentations with local hospitals, Montgomery CSEA is being proactive in assisting hospitals with paternity establishment. MCSEA does not make any formal presentations to its local hospitals on a periodic basis.

R3.8 MCSEA should begin developing and making periodic presentations to local hospital personnel in an effort to ensure all changes are communicated effectively and timely. In addition, MCSEA should develop a personal working relationship with the local hospitals to ensure that all questions are answered. Furthermore, MCSEA should actively solicit feedback from the hospitals as to the frequency and quality of the training being provided by the CPR vendor to ensure that adequate training is being provided to the hospitals. If MCSEA determines that adequate training is not being provided to the hospitals, it should contact ODJFS and communicate areas of concern in the training. Being proactive in ensuring that all changes are properly communicated and answering any potential questions or problems will ultimately assist MCSEA in increasing the rate and number of paternity establishments. In turn, this would increase the number of cases with support ordered and being enforced.

F3.11 In addition to working with area hospitals, Montgomery CSEA's proactive approach to establish paternity and support can also be seen through the following relationships:

- Conducting two public service announcements in 2001 discussing child support program, one with the local ombudsman office and the other with a local county commissioner;
- Conducting quarterly child support summits with local advocate groups, courts, public defender's office and prosecutor's office; and
- Establishing relationship with the Director of Nursing from the Dayton Schools.

In addition, the Illinois Division of Child Support Enforcement has been nationally recognized for its paternity establishment process. The Illinois Division staff make regular presentations on paternity establishment and child support services at Head Start, Woman, Infants and Children (WIC), and child care sites. The Illinois Division of Child Support Enforcement and Catholic Charities of Chicago WIC Food Centers entered into an agreement to establish a pilot voluntary acknowledgment of paternity at four WIC Centers. Paternity Establishment Program Representatives (PEP Reps), who are specially trained WIC staff discuss the importance and benefits of paternity establishment. WIC centers distribute written materials on paternity establishment including a notice of the alternatives to, legal consequences of, and rights about paternity establishment. Since implementing four paternity pilot sites in October 1996, through March 31, 2001, PEP Reps at Catholic Charities of Chicago WIC Food Centers have spoken to 61,690 parents about the importance and benefits of paternity establishment and witnessed 1,148 signed Voluntary Acknowledgment of Paternity forms. In addition, the staff at the Illinois Division produces holiday flyers explaining the voluntary paternity acknowledgment process.

R3.9 MCSEA should establish additional methods to increase the number of paternitys established including the following:

- Conducting public service announcements and periodic information sessions with other appropriate organizations about child support services;
- Establishing relationships with other organizations within the County, such as Head Start, WIC centers and child care sites; and
- Developing and distributing flyers explaining the voluntary paternity acknowledgment process.

These additional efforts could help to establish paternity in a timely manner and build parents' confidence in their ability to approach and work with the child support system. As a result, MCSEA could establish paternity, support and enforcement orders in a more timely manner.

F3.12 When conducting genetic testing in order to establish paternity, MCSEA notifies the potential father as to the date when the genetic test is scheduled. When the potential father arrives, he can either provide a DNA sample or waive his rights to genetic testing and admit that he is the father of the child. If the potential father proceeds with genetic testing, an estimated date is indicated when the results will be given. If the results indicate the potential father is the father of the child, a letter is sent to the father stating when the administrative hearing will be held. Prior to genetic testing, the mother or father can come in for an initial interview with the case worker. However, MCSEA does not administer genetic testing at this time.

As indicated in the performance audit on the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services Office of Child Support (OCS), some CSEAs have streamlined the paternity establishment process by conducting an administrative hearing and collecting the genetic samples at the same time and location. These CSEAs notify parents of the scheduled genetic test through certified mail, and at the same time, set up an administrative hearing to discuss the case. When clients come to the administrative hearing, and the paternity affidavit is not signed, CSEAs can immediately take a genetic sample and send it to a lab for processing.

Conducting genetic testing and the administrative hearing on the same day saves time and money for CSEAs by eliminating the need for multiple hearings and appointments. By simultaneously performing these steps, CSEAs may increase paternity establishment rates by minimizing the chance that the potential father will not show up for additional appointments. If the father does not appear for genetic testing and paternity is not determined, a support order cannot be established and enforced.

R3.10 MCSEA should streamline its paternity establishment process and conduct genetic testing at the same time and location of the initial interview with the case worker. By using this process, MCSEA could increase the rate and number of paternity establishments and decrease the need for multiple meetings, hearings and appointments. Furthermore, limiting the number of multiple meetings, hearings and appointments would save MCSEA resources and time.

F3.13 As discussed in the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services OCS performance audit, the Central Paternity Registry (CPR) vendor produces a detailed paternity establishment activity report and distributes it to OCS contract managers on a monthly basis. The reports are also distributed to OCS's five district supervisors on a quarterly basis. The paternity establishment activity report contains the following information:

- The number of paternity documents processed into the CPR (i.e. affidavits, rescissions, administrative orders, court orders and declarations);
- A list of data transmissions from the vendor to ODJFS and Ohio Department of Health by date and number transmitted;

- A synopsis of ongoing vendor operations, including information on the paternity hotline, training and outreach;
- An affidavit participation report for each hospital, registrar and CSEA;
- A rescission report by county; and
- A state and county-level summary of year-to-date paternity information.

Although CSEAs can request copies of the activity report for the district supervisor, the activity reports are not regularly provided to CSEAs and the information is not available through SETS or the Innerweb. The report can be used to analyze trends and make comparisons with other CSEAs based on the statistical information contained in the report. Information from the report can also be used in the annual reports as well as monitoring the level of paternity establishment in local hospitals compared to other jurisdictions. According to the MCSEA supervisor, this report is not provided from its district supervisor.

R3.11 MCSEA should obtain this report on a regular basis in order to fully measure the effectiveness of the paternity establishment process and to enhance its reporting capabilities. The report should be used to monitor performance in relation with other agencies in order to improve its paternity establishment. As stated throughout this report, if paternity is not established, then a support can not be ordered or enforced. Use of the activity report should also assist MCSEA in evaluating local hospitals' proficiency in submitting voluntary paternity affidavits.

F3.14 Voluntary paternity affidavits in Ohio are all completed and submitted for entry into the CPR in hard copy format. Hospitals, registrars, and CSEAs must fill out the paper documents to obtain signatures and notarize the affidavit. Only the Ohio Office of Child Support (OCS) officially-printed forms are acceptable. If a hospital runs out of the forms, which are only printed on brown, legal-sized paper, the hospital must order more from OCS before it can establish additional paternities. Staff may lose a potential paternity establishment because they do not have a form. The vendor reports that running out of the affidavits is a common complaint of hospitals because staff cannot print or copy the forms onto white paper, since copied forms would be rejected by the State contracted vendor responsible for this process. If a hospital does send in an affidavit on the incorrect paper, the vendor must reject and return the white paper affidavit. In order to correct the situation and establish paternity, hospital staff must get an official form signed and notarized. This task becomes much more difficult once parents leave the hospital, meaning that the likelihood of establishing paternity diminishes.

The Vital Statistics Unit in the Ohio Department of Health, in conjunction with an outside vendor, has recently begun the process of updating the electronic birth certificate system in hospitals across the State. The vendor could also offer Ohio electronic paternity affidavit submission. Such a system would be used primarily at hospitals and registrars around the State but could be expanded to include CSEAs. Electronic submission would allow paternity

affidavits to be filled out on-line using a computer terminal. Pertinent data elements could be pulled from the electronic document and entered directly into the CPR for release to CSEAs. The full document could also be sent directly to Vital Statistics to make any needed changes to the birth certificate and for permanent storage. This would eliminate the need for data entry on the majority of paternity documents and expedite the process of transferring changes that result from the paternity process over to the permanent birth certificate.

F3.15 New Jersey's POP (Paternity Opportunity Program) uses a variety of techniques to increase the rate of voluntary acknowledgments of paternity, and facilitates the easy accessibility of paternity information and documentation to various organizations, especially to birthing facilities. One feature of the program has been electronic imaging of the voluntary acknowledgment forms themselves. These forms, called Certificates of Parentage, are scanned into an electronic format and are available online via personal computers to child support workers, to other workers within the Division of Family Development, and the Department of Health. At hospital and birthing centers, unmarried parents are offered the opportunity to voluntarily acknowledge paternity by signing the Certificate of Paternity.

R3.12 MCSEA should work with ODJFS to determine the potential of implementing on-line electronic submission of voluntary paternity affidavits. Electronic submission of voluntary paternity affidavits could decrease errors, decrease the time involved in data entry and increase the speed in which paternity information is made available to case workers. In addition, electronic submission would eliminate the problem of entities running out of official forms. Overall, electronic submission would provide a more cost and time effective, and more accurate process for submitting and processing voluntary paternity affidavits.

F3.16 Financial Institution Data Match is an enforcement tool available to county CSEAs to secure past-due child support from non-custodial parents. The Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) has entered into agreements with multi-state financial institutions on behalf of state child support agencies. Names of delinquent obligors are sent to multi-state financial institutions by OCSE to determine matches with open accounts which are then forwarded to state child support agencies. In Ohio, matched accounts are sent to CSEAs responsible for the case. CSEA case workers can use the matched account information to seize and freeze monies to collect past-due child support from delinquent obligors. Currently, ODJFS is nearing full implementation of the single-state FIDM and has procured the services of a vendor for purposes of performing matches on the financial accounts of single-state financial institutions. The financial institutions will transmit tapes of data matches with delinquent obligors who hold accounts. The vendor will transmit the data to ODJFS for uploading into SETS. The case worker then will have access to the report that provides the names and account types of the matched obligors.

CSEAs have the option of deciding whether to use FIDM for the collection of past-due accounts. MCSEA has not used FIDM as an enforcement tool and has yet to establish freeze

and seize procedures for case workers to follow. However, Lorain and Montgomery CSEAs do use FIDM as an enforcement tool. In addition, other CSEAs of similar size and in the same district as MCSEA have collected past-due child support payments through FIDM including Columbiana, Jefferson and Wayne CSEAs. Lorain and Jefferson CSEAs collected about \$40,000 and \$22,000 in past-due child support payments in 47 and 18 cases, respectively. From July 1, 2000 to December 31, 2000, Warren CSEA was able to collect approximately \$87,000 through FIDM resulting in a 56 percent success rate on withdrawal directives. As indicated by these peer CSEAs, using FIDM could result in increasing the amount of child support collections and increasing the number of cases being enforced.

R3.13 MCSEA should utilize the resources available through FIDM as a means of increasing both collection of arrears and collection of current support. MCSEA should use FIDM to freeze and seize funds from financial accounts, enforce payment agreements, locate delinquent obligors, and modify support orders. Any collection made either directly through FIDM or indirectly through the threat of FIDM action results in the increase of arrearage collection. In addition, MCSEA should establish standard and uniform procedures for its case workers to follow when freezing and seizing accounts. To ensure that case workers fully understand the FIDM process, MCSEA should provide the appropriate training and contact ODJFS for additional guidance and assistance.

F3.17 ODJFS has a contract with a vendor to provide private collection services (PCS) to local CSEAs throughout the State of Ohio. Since ODJFS has a contract with PCS, county CSEAs are provided with these services at no cost. MCSEA currently does not use PCS. The Association of Federal State County Municipal Employees (AFSME) states the following in regards to the use of private vendors at MCSEA:

- The Union acknowledges that certain agreements and practices currently exist whereby the Employer is using outside sources and independent contractors to:
 - (1) Perform work that is not normally or historically performed by the bargaining unit; and
 - (2) Perform some work that is normally performed by the bargaining unit as an adjunct to the bargaining unit.
- It is also agreed that these agreements and practices shall continue. The Employer shall not contract out any work normally or historically performed by the bargaining unit during any period of lay-off nor shall Employer contract out bargaining unit work so as to erode the bargaining unit. When either party deems it necessary to consider contracting out work, the question will be reviewed during Labor/Management Committee meetings.

Based upon this language, it appears that MCSEA could use PCS services. In addition, the director of MDJFS interprets this language to be non-prohibitive in using PCS. Furthermore, neither Lorain nor Montgomery CSEAs' contracts discuss outsourcing or contracting out services.

Typically, CSEAs reserve the difficult cases for referral to PCS. Summit CSEA referred 3,600 cases to PCS during FY 2001, which is about 10 percent of its caseload. The referrals have resulted in \$300,000 in collections from 360 cases. Summit CSEA also benefits from using the vendor by having difficult cases being managed by an external entity and subsequently keeping caseload size manageable for its staff. Montgomery CSEA refers current cases and cases with past-due payments to PCS. In addition, Lorain CSEA uses PCS for approximately 500 cases which have a history of non-payment. Lorain CSEA intends to send more cases to PCS in 2002 because it indicated that the vendor's capacity for handling cases has been growing.

R3.14 MDJFS should consider using PCS. In addition, the County and director of MDJFS should consider in negotiations with MCSEA's current collective bargaining unit to eliminate language pertaining to outsourcing services in order to allow for more flexibility in collections. Referring cases in which MCSEA has exhausted all of its available enforcement tools and which have a long history of non-payment to PCS would provide an additional method of attempting to enforce cases. MCSEA should monitor PCS's success in collecting support on referred cases to ensure that the vendor is effectively providing services. MCSEA should develop specific criteria in determining which cases should be referred to PCS, such as length of time of non-payment and arrearage amounts. In addition, referring the most difficult cases to PCS would reduce the work load for case workers. Consequently, case workers could focus their efforts on working other cases and performing additional required tasks associated with all cases, such as ensuring that medical support is provided (see **R3.25**) and effectively using new hire reporting (see **R3.18**). Further, MCSEA could increase collections by using the services of PCS.

F3.18 Massachusetts has developed a creative and effective process of enforcing child support orders. In Massachusetts, insurance companies licensed to do business in the state must check with the Department of Revenue (DOR) to determine whether a claimant or beneficiary owes unpaid child support. This is done in cases where payment due is \$500 or more. If support is owed, the insurance company pays all bills associated with the claim, then sends DOR the funds in full or partial satisfaction of the child support debt. Any remaining funds are sent to the insured party. This process ensures that parents who are able to pay their child support obligations are doing so. It also serves an additional benefit of providing child support agencies with the location of the non-custodial parent, thereby moving a case from locate to enforcement. Further, this process increases the probability of collection on additional outstanding obligations. DOR uses a secure insurance intercept Website to implement this process, which functions in the following manner:

- Insurers register to use the Website, providing DOR with signed confidentiality statements for each staff person authorized to access the site.
- Once registered, insurance staff can access the Web site at any time, entering the social security number of the claimants or beneficiaries.
- The information is matched against a database of individuals who owe past-due child support and the insurer is notified instantly, via the Web, whether or not child support is owed.
- If child support is owed, a “Notice of Child Support Lien and Levy” can be printed immediately from the Website.
- The notice includes the obligor’s name, social security number and the amount of the child support debt.

Almost \$11.0 million has been collected since DOR implemented its insurance intercept program in May 1998.

R3.15 ODJFS should work with MCSEA to consider developing and implementing the process used by Massachusetts. ODJFS has more resources available to implement and centralize the above process, which would benefit all of the CSEAs throughout the state. Involving insurance companies in the process could increase the potential of collecting and enforcing child support payments. Using a Website and/or the SETS system should ensure that the process is efficiently implemented. Once fully developed, the above process should be relatively easy to operate for CSEAs, ODJFS and insurance companies. Further, developing additional enforcement tools should be a primary goal of ODJFS and MCSEA.

F3.19 Working with local jails and sheriff’s offices is another means used by CSEAs throughout the United States to locate obligors and enforce child support payments. Houston, Texas and Oregon have collaborated with local jail facilities to ensure that inmates owing child support payments are identified. The Division of Child Support (DCS) in Texas is provided with the name, social security number, date of birth and release date of prisoners being released within the next six months from some jails. In addition, prisoners in certain jails fill out an information request form and DCS personnel visit these facilities and discuss services provided by DCS. DCS approaches inmates to “volunteer” to provide the appropriate information. Since these individuals are approached in a non-threatening manner, the barrier to communication with child support has been lowered. At a minimum, local child support offices now have up-to-date locate and release information on non-custodial parents.

Oregon’s Division of Child Support (ODCS) works with the Department of Corrections (DOC) to provide inmates with information regarding their right to modify a support obligation while incarcerated and the right to request an additional modification once released. ODCS personnel provide information about child support to inmates including frequently asked questions, phone lists, and request for modification forms. Anecdotal information shows that inmates, when advised of their rights to ensure an order reflects their

current ability to pay, will request modifications. Obligor who have orders that are correct for their current circumstances could be more likely to pay, and a paying parent is more likely to be a positive factor in the life of a child. In addition, Oregon is planning to link the Child Support Enforcement Automated System and the Department of Corrections computer systems. The goal is to allow automatic updates of certain fields to alert both agencies that an individual is both incarcerated and has a child support case. This will help on enforcing cases where an incarcerated obligated parent still has the means to pay support, identify cases where modifications are necessary, update release information so that cases can be reactivated automatically and to eliminate the need to manually input prison locate information.

Currently, MCSEA uses the Clerk of Courts Computer Systems (Juvenile and Domestic Relations) to share and exchange information to assist in locating absent parents. As discussed previously, other child support agencies throughout the United States use additional agencies to share and exchange information. Furthermore, Clermont CSEA connects with various county agencies including the courts, credit bureau and jails. By sharing and exchanging information with additional county agencies, Clermont CSEA better understands the obligors financial situation, and increases the likelihood of locating non-custodial parents and subsequently enforcing child support collections.

R3.16 MCSEA should work with the Mahoning County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) to obtain and exchange inmate and child support information. MCSEA should provide appropriate information about child support services to MCSO, which should then be provided to all inmates. MCSO should provide a list of new inmates on a periodic basis to MCSEA indicating the name, social security number and other appropriate information. In the future, the County, MCSO and MCSEA should consider developing a plan to link MCSO's computer system to MCSEA or allow select personnel at MCSO access to the SETS system. In addition, MCSEA should be accessing information from all appropriate county agencies as a means of gathering sufficient information on obligors. Obtaining and sharing information with additional county agencies could result in increased collections and more cases being enforced.

Current Assistance Cases

F3.20 The current assistance caseload is comprised of families who are receiving 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. 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 3-3** presents the current assistance cases for MCSEA and the peers for the quarter ending June 2001.

Table 3-3: Current Assistance Caseload, Quarter Ending June 2001

	Mahoning	Lorain	Montgomery	Tuscarawas	Peer Average
Total Current Assistance Cases	3,502	2,674	7,040	481	3,398
Current Assistance Cases as a Percent of the Population	1.4%	0.9%	1.3%	0.5%	0.9%
Current Assistance Cases as a Percent of Total Caseload	15.6%	10.7%	14.0%	7.1%	10.6%

Source: SETS 4223 report, quarter ending June 2001

As shown in **Table 3-3**, MCSEA is slightly above 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 could experience a greater level of difficulty in collecting support payments because most non-custodial parents of assistance cases have no income or assets. 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. As indicated by the pre-enforcement section chief, MCSEA’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. Since the skill, education and income levels of non-custodial parents having current assistance cases are potentially lower as compared to other case types, MCSEA may experience greater challenges in achieving full enforcement of support orders for current assistance cases.

F3.21 Current assistance cases are comprised of both Title IV-A and Title IV-E cases (see **F3.31** for more information on Title IV-E cases). **Table 3-4** presents current assistance caseload by case mode for MCSEA and the peers. Cases in the locate mode can also be in paternity, support and enforcement modes depending on the needs of the case.

Table 3-4: Current Assistance Caseload by Case Mode

	Mahoning		Lorain		Montgomery		Tuscarawas		Peer Average	
	Cases	%	Cases	%	Cases	%	Cases	%	Cases	%
Intake	48	1.0%	17	0.5%	51	0.5%	1	0.2%	23	0.5%
Locate	1,200	24.1%	671	19.2%	2,800	28.2%	92	15.5%	1,188	25.5%
Paternity	1,308	26.2%	498	14.3%	2,646	26.7%	69	11.6%	1,071	23.0%
Support	1,176	23.6%	898	25.7%	2,398	24.2%	145	24.4%	1,147	24.5%
Enforcement	1,253	25.1%	1,404	40.3%	2,020	20.4%	287	48.3%	1,237	26.5%
Total ¹	4,985	100%	3,488	100%	9,915	100%	594	100%	4,666	100%

Source: Management Overview report, June 2001

Note: Above information does not include arrears only cases and undefined cases because the data could not be extracted by case type.

¹ Cases may be maintained in more than one mode.

As indicated in **Table 3-4**, MCSEA has the second lowest percent of its current assistance cases in the enforcement mode as compared to the peers. In addition, MCSEA has the second highest percentage of the current assistance caseload in locate mode when compared to the peers. MCSEA 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. While a low percentage of cases in locate and a high number of cases in enforcement is most desirable, MCSEA’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 MCSEA 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. Currently, according to MCSEA, the SETS system does not have the capability of providing this distinction.

R3.17 ODJFS should work with MCSEA to add a secondary mode identification field within SETS so that cases receiving collections may remain in the locate mode without appearing to negatively impact the County’s mode statistics. The inability to isolate these cases in management reports reduces MCSEA’s ability to demonstrate the effectiveness of its locate function. This distinction will allow MCSEA to better determine case needs.

F3.22 MCSEA is responsible for the collection of payments on all child support cases in Mahoning County. SETS monitors collections on a monthly basis and details the sources of funds within six separate categories. **Table 3-5** presents the collection sources for current assistance cases for MCSEA and the peers.

Table 3-5: Collections for Current Assistance Cases, June 2001

Sources	Mahoning		Lorain		Montgomery		Tuscarawas		Peer Average	
	Collect	%	Collect	%	Collect	%	Collect	%	Collect	%
Federal Income Tax Refund	\$180,144	44.8%	\$152,385	33.7%	\$308,765	35.8%	\$28,701	24.1%	\$163,284	34.2%
State Income Tax Refund	\$11,907	3.0%	\$13,586	3.0%	\$25,273	2.9%	\$3,331	2.8%	\$14,063	2.9%
Offset Unemployment Income	\$5,429	1.4%	\$12,275	2.7%	\$16,191	1.9%	\$2,203	1.8%	\$10,223	2.1%
Income Withholding	\$159,957	39.8%	\$224,493	49.7%	\$393,591	45.7%	\$68,952	57.9%	\$229,012	47.9%
Other States	\$17,892	4.4%	\$5,290	1.2%	\$41,248	4.8%	\$3,044	2.6%	\$16,527	3.5%
Other Sources	\$26,815	6.7%	\$44,060	9.7%	\$76,847	8.9%	\$12,926	10.8%	\$44,611	9.3%
Total	\$402,144	100%	\$452,089	100%	\$861,915	100%	\$119,157	100%	\$477,720	100%

Source: SETS 4289 report, January 2001 through June 2001.

As indicated by **Table 3-5**, MCSEA posted collections which were approximately 16 percent below the peer average for current assistance cases. MCSEA as well as the other counties utilized each of the enforcement tools identified in **Table 3-5**. However, the peers are using additional enforcement tools such as FIDM (see **R3.6**, **R3.13** and **R3.14**). In addition, the majority of collections on current assistance cases in Mahoning County are derived from federal income tax refunds and income withholdings. However, MCSEA’s percentage of collections from income withholding was the lowest of the peers, which could be impacted by insufficient training of MCSEA employees in the new hire reporting database (see **F3.23**) and lack of ensuring that the job programs used by MCSEA are effective (see **F3.19**). In addition, the director of MDJFS indicated that income withholdings preceded the implementation of SETS.

F3.23 An ODJFS contracted vendor is responsible for receiving all the reports of new hires from employers around the State and inputting them into a database, the State Directory of New Hires. CSEAs use the information gathered by the vendor as a means of locating non-custodial parents; however, data issued by the vendor has been found to be out of date. Although staff had experience in the new hire program prior to SETS, MCSEA has indicated that less than 10 percent of its employees have received training on how to effectively use the new hire reporting to help locate non-custodial parents. Therefore, if MCSEA were trained on the new hire reporting process, it could increase the number of non-custodial parents located and subsequently establish additional income withholding orders.

R3.18 MCSEA should send all case workers to SETS Training Centers for training on the New Hire reporting process. This tool is meant to be used for location purposes which could also

increase the number of income withholding orders. Obligor location by CSEAs play a vital role in establishing and enforcing orders involving hard to reach obligors. New Hire information provides case workers with employment information that might give CSEAs the additional knowledge necessary to modify support orders. In addition, MCSEA should work with ODJFS to ensure that the data provided by the vendor is current and reliable. Further, MCSEA should seek to improve on its efforts to obtain income withholdings by considering implementing the following best practice:

- Wenatchee, Washington sought to establish relationships with area employers by inviting them to area workshops with the Child Support Division, to discuss the implementation of a simple post card which employers could use to notify the Division when an employee had left the company and who their new employer was. The employers also used the cards to notify the Division if the obligor on a withholding order did not work there when the order was served initially. It was found that the postcard delivered new employer information 20 to 30 days faster than the new hire reporting.

F3.24 MCSEA works with job programs that influence self-sufficiency among client population and shifts the financial burden from the County to the non-custodial parents. Among these programs are the Seek Work Program and the Welfare-to-Work Program. Each of these programs interfaces with other organizations, including the Community Corrections Action (CCA) and the Mahoning County Chemical Dependency Program (MCCDP). MCSEA also works with the Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections (ODRC) and the Adult Parole Authority (APA). The APA provides an incentive for an offender by offering parole if the offender participates in a MCSEA employment program that enables the offender to receive parole. By participating in a job program, a background search is performed that determines whether there are outstanding paternity, support or arrearage orders. By establishing this relationship, providing timely child support payments to the custodial parent is presumably more likely.

While MCSEA has a great deal invested in these programs intended to increase the probability of collecting and disbursing child support payments, MCSEA's ability to monitor the effectiveness of these programs (i.e., to determine whether such programs are successful in employing non-custodial parents) is limited because MCSEA does not track or request statistics on program performance. As shown in **Tables 3-5, 3-9, and 3-13**, income withholding produce the highest dollar amount for collections. Employment is fundamental to paying child support. The vast majority of money children receive from their non-custodial parent is derived from regular employment. Without knowing the effectiveness of these job programs, MCSEA could have more difficulty in obtaining child support collections. In contrast to MCSEA, other CSEAs throughout the United States monitor the effectiveness of job programs (see **F3.25** through **F3.28**). Furthermore, joint training of employees at MCSEA, MDJFS and job programs has not occurred in Mahoning County.

If joint training was occurring, knowledge of the processes involved with these job programs could be enhanced to ensure all parties fully understand the goals and objectives of the job programs.

F3.25 Cook, St. Clair and Madison Counties in Illinois provide employment services for qualified non-custodial parents through direct referrals to private-sector and community-based providers. In contrast to MCSEA, these counties monitor the job programs and have experienced the following results in FY 1999:

- Five hundred and seventy one (571) individuals participated in the Earnfare Program.
- Five hundred and thirty two (532) payments associated with the Earnfare participants were processed.
- An additional \$26,000 in child support payments from the Earnfare Program was collected.
- One hundred and fifty nine (159) individuals were new participants in the Job Search Program.
- Illinois processed 175 legal action referrals for noncompliance.
- More than 80 individuals were employed in full time positions making in excess of the minimum wage. Each person has in place a withholding order to continue child support payments.

F3.26 Harford County, Maryland has implemented the Absent Parent Employment Program (APEP) to help find employment for non-custodial parents. APEP monitors and tracks the program, and has a working relationship with the Bureau of Support Enforcement to keep it informed of the effectiveness of the program. The following summarizes the process involved with APEP:

- Initial visit to the APEP office includes review and signing of program guidelines, assessment of the parent's skills and experience, and discussion of employment barriers and child support concerns.
- Non-custodial parents visit the APEP office on a weekly basis until the parent finds a job.
- Participants are expected to complete four applications for employment each week and submit a worksheet detailing the search activities for the week.
- Staff spot check with employers to verify applications listed were actually submitted.
- Failure to participate may result in a bench warrant.

Employment is verified once the parent finds a job and the information is forwarded to the Bureau of Support Enforcement so that a wage lien may be sent to the employer directing child support withholding. APEP has produced the following results in Harford County, Maryland:

- In 10 years of operation, APEP estimates that the county has saved over \$1.2 million in incarceration expenses for the 1,300 non-custodial parents referred to the program.
- Eighty percent of program participants were employed in 1997, 81 percent in 1998, and 86 percent in 1999.
- Child support payments received from non-custodial parents in APEP were approximately \$222,000 in 1997, \$250,000 in 1998 and \$214,000 in 1999.

F3.27 Missouri has developed a job program (Parents' Fair Share Program) operated by the Division of Child Support Enforcement (DCSE). Non-custodial parents are invited to attend an orientation of the program if they earn less than minimum wage, work fewer than 40 hours per week, or have multiple orders and are unable to meet all of the obligation due to a low salary. About 25 to every 100 parents invited actually attend an orientation. DCSE does indicate in a letter that if the parent does not choose to attend, the case will be referred back for appropriate legal action. Of the 25 who do attend, 22 or 23 sign up for the program. Ninety-five percent of the participants are unemployed at the time they enroll. The job program benefits non-custodial parents in the following ways:

- Assists in obtaining jobs and job training;
- Assists with transportation costs and work-related expenses;
- Provides referrals for housing and food assistance, substance abuse treatment, parenting classes and GED classes;
- Provides medical coverage through Medicaid (all participants qualify just by enrolling in the program);
- Consolidates child support cases; and
- Implements special arrangements on child support (e.g., reduction in payments during the program).

At the end of 1999, the program included 1,608 participating non-custodial parents. At that time, 980 non-custodial parents were employed, including 807 participants with full-time jobs. In November 1999, 1,022 parents in the program made a child support payment averaging \$196 per payment. From July 1998 through June 1999, over \$1.5 million in child support was paid by program participants. At the end of February 2000, child support collections from this program totaled close to \$1.6 million.

F3.28 Las Vegas, Nevada uses the New Employees of Nevada (NEON) program, which provides job employment and retention services among other services. The program has generated over \$900,000 in child support collections which would otherwise have been uncollected. Between 15 and 18 of the hardest-to-serve non-custodial parents are employed monthly. Non-custodial parents earn about \$8.00 per hour. Notice of employment is automatically provided to the Child Support Office which subsequently initiates a wage withholding order.

R3.19 Although MCSEA does not directly operate the job programs, it should work with the job programs and monitor the effectiveness of these programs to help non-custodial parents find employment to have a means of providing child support to custodial parents. MCSEA should implement the following as a means of ensuring that the jobs programs are effective to subsequently increase child support collections:

- Work with the programs to set effectiveness goals;
- Establish a series of actions to take if goals are not met;
- Require each program to submit reports detailing the programs’ effectiveness in employing non-custodial parents; and
- Monitor effectiveness and take action as needed.

MCSEA should communicate the appropriate processes employed by job programs identified in this report to its job programs to enhance operational effectiveness of the programs. This ongoing communication between MCSEA and the job programs will enable MCSEA to verify non-custodial parents’ employment, thereby allowing for compliance with child support orders through wage liens that may be sent to the employer to initiate direct child support withholdings. As a result, MCSEA may experience an increase in collections attributed to income withholdings.

Furthermore, MCSEA should consider developing a collaborative training curriculum for joint training of line workers in child support, TANF, and the job programs it works with. The training could increase knowledge of the programs and emphasize the benefits to families of coordinated service delivery. An additional benefit of this collaboration may be that workers can in turn help recipients of services better understand the importance of having a steady job and making regular child support payments which in turn could result in an increase in collections for MCSEA.

F3.29 **Table 3-6** presents collections per case for the current assistance caseload.

Table 3-6: Current Assistance Collections per Case

	Mahoning	Lorain	Montgomery	Tuscarawas	Peer Average
Total Collections	\$402,144	\$452,089	\$861,915	\$119,157	\$477,720
Current Assistance Caseload	3,502	2,674	7,040	481	3,398
Collections Per Case	\$114.83	\$169.07	\$122.43	\$247.72	\$140.59

Sources: SETS 4223 and 4289 reports, quarter ending June 2001.

Table 3-6 indicates that as of June 2001, MCSEA’s collection per case was 18.3 percent lower than the peer average. The major factor impacting the lower collections per case is the lower percentage of cases in the enforcement mode as compared to the peers (see **Table**

3-4). Part of the collection process that could contribute to the lower collection is MCSEA’s practice of not using a coordinated interview process with MDJFS for parents on public assistance. The current interview process occurs by walk-ins, appointments, and Title IV-A referrals from children services agencies and the Department of Youth Services. 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 MDJFS. The client also must undergo an interview with a MDJFS case worker. Upon completion of this interview, MCSEA is notified of a potential child support case. A second interview is then scheduled with MCSEA to determine what actions must be taken to commence enforcement efforts. By having two separate interviews, a parent must go to multiple County departments to receive benefits. Parents may be more likely to report fathers as unknown if case workers are met with separately. This may result in a delay in establishing paternity and child support orders, thereby resulting in lower collections on current assistance cases.

In addition, MCSEA’s SETS system and MDJFS’s CRISE system are interfaced, but at times are unable to match cases. The systems are interfaced for purposes of providing relevant and timely information between agencies including the following:

- Alerts (i.e, medical lapse, new public assistance (PA) referral, need for health insurance),
- Changes in order amount, effective date, and frequency,
- Changes in name or address,
- Paternity establishment,
- Absent parent/custodial parent living together,
- Child no longer with custodial parent/caretaker, and
- Possible PA termination (usually occurs when a child is removed from a case).

To date, MCSEA has 4,000 cases that need to be matched with the CRISE system. There has been no research conducted on these cases to determine causes of mismatches. According to MCSEA’s shared services coordinator, this lack of communication between systems has occurred due in part to clients giving the two agencies conflicting sets of information. Although MCSEA’s intake unit is located at MDJFS, as stated previously, joint interviews do not take place. Not having similar information entered into the two computer systems prohibits a match between the cases resulting in many negative implications regarding case management and delivered services including the following:

- Lack of medical insurance enforcement;
- Delay in assigning cases, thereby delaying services;
- Delay in locating non-custodial parents;
- Delay in redirecting payments;

- Decrease in customer satisfaction; and
- Increase staff time utilized to determine missing information and manually updating that information.

F3.30 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.

R3.20 MCSEA and MDJFS should coordinate Title IV-A and Title IV-D interviews to obtain similar information in one interview as opposed to multiple interviews. By streamlining the interview process or implementing cross training between the Title IV-A and Title-D agencies, MCSEA may be able to provide greater levels of customer service to families needing paternity and support orders established by reducing the number of visits a parent must make to various County departments. In addition, immediate locate services can begin, thereby reducing the time spent between locating and establishing paternity and/or support obligation. Coordinating interviews can improve the facilitation of SETS and CRISE interfacing, thereby improving case management and increasing the probability of timely delivered services. In order to reduce the current number of cases (4,000) that require matching, MCSEA should determine through research the extent to which data is missing or is inaccurate. Doing so could allow MCSEA the ability to forecast resources needed to adequately ensure that all appropriate information is captured and potentially reduce the likelihood of future mismatches. Furthermore, coordinating interviews could be performed on an as needed basis. If the information required by MCSEA is sufficiently diverse to warrant separate interviews, MCSEA should consider providing a MCSEA representative to meet with the prospective client at the conclusion of the MDJFS interview.

F3.31 Title IV-E cases are currently not being served by MCSEA. Once Mahoning County Children Services (MCCS) determines that a child who has entered foster care is eligible for TANF, an ODMH form 1435 is filled out and mailed to MCSEA to inform them that services are needed for the child. Additionally, MCCS will notify MDJFS, who will in turn through CRISE and SETS interfacing, send an alert (#208 Possible PA termination) to MCSEA, indicating that the case may require PA termination, which usually occurs when a child is removed from the case. MCCS also informs MCSEA when a foster care child has been taken into permanent custody. In this instance, there is no further child support obligation because the parents rights have been taken away. The Title IV-E Coordinator at MCCS stated that the referrals are not sent to any specific person at MCSEA because a request for a point of contact has not been responded to. Although MCCS was unable to verify the number of referrals made to MCSEA in 2001 due to a lack of statistics being kept, the Title IV-E coordinator did estimate that on average MCCS declares ten children eligible for Title IV-E per month. All of these cases have been referred to MCSEA. Referrals are mailed every one to two months. The Title IV-E coordinator also stated that many times the referrals consist of non-custodial parents who have not been found. This would indicate that the need for locate services is of the utmost importance to enforce these cases.

Furthermore, there are no specific procedures in place at MCSEA to service Title IV-E cases. Therefore, Title IV-E cases are not held to the same standards as other types of cases in regards to providing services. According to the section chief of shared services, in order to redirect child support payments to another party, approval from the court is necessary. Although MCSEA is responsible for initiating this court process, it has not initiated or developed a process to work these cases with the court. The shared service section chief stated that by the time this process is complete, children will likely have been returned back home. In addition, MCSEA indicated that servicing Title IV-E clients is an area that needs attention. As a result of MCSEA's lack of involvement with Title IV-E cases, the foster care maintenance system in Mahoning County has had to take on the sole responsibility of caring for children in foster care. If MCSEA processed Title IV-E cases, collections obtained from these cases could be used to offset the costs of providing foster care services.

R3.21 MCSEA should build on the existing procedures in place for servicing Title IV-D cases to include a process that will encompass referrals from MCCS. There is a need for an assigned person at MCSEA who should be responsible for receiving and integrating Title IV-E referrals into the already existing system of servicing Title IV-D cases. By servicing these cases, MCSEA could increase its overall performance and assist in reducing the County's financial responsibility to foster care maintenance, and thereby hold obligors responsible for the care of their children.

Financial Implication: Based upon projecting MCCS's estimate of referring ten Title IV-E cases per month to MCSEA and the average collections per current assistance case of \$114.84 (see **Table 3-6**), MCSEA could collect about \$13,700 in additional annual payments

to offset the County’s foster care costs by effectively processing Title IV-E cases. However, MCSEA could collect additional payments by improving its case management process to increase the number of cases in enforcement (see **F3.1** and **R3.1**).

Former Assistance Cases

F3.32 Former assistance cases are comprised of families who previously received either Title IV-A or Title IV-E services. For former assistance cases, MCSEA attempts to recoup money that is owed to the government for services formerly rendered by the state. **Table 3-7** presents former assistance cases at MCSEA and peers.

Table 3-7 Former Assistance Caseload

	Mahoning	Lorain	Montgomery	Tuscarawas	Peer Average
Total Former Assistance Cases	7,660	7,029	14,038	2,139	7,735
Former Assistance Cases as a Percent of the Population	3.0%	2.5%	2.5%	2.3%	2.4%
Former Assistance Cases as a Percent of Total Caseload	34.1%	28.2%	27.8%	30.5%	28.8%

Source: SETS 4223 report, quarter ending June 2001

As shown in **Table 3-7**, former assistance cases account for approximately 34.1 percent of MCSEA’s total caseload. MCSEA has the highest percentage of former assistance cases as a percentage of the population. **Table 3-8** presents the former assistance caseload by case mode.

Table 3-8: Former Assistance Caseload by Case Mode ¹

	Mahoning		Lorain		Montgomery		Tuscarawas		Peer Average	
	Cases	%	Cases	%	Cases	%	Cases	%	Cases	%
Intake	21	0.4%	3	0.2%	3	<0.1%	0	0.0%	2	<0.1%
Locate	898	18.1%	166	10.7%	1,308	18.3%	34	8.9%	503	16.6%
Paternity	802	16.2%	117	7.5%	742	10.4%	31	8.2%	297	9.8%
Support	953	19.2%	202	13.0%	1,111	15.6%	51	13.4%	455	15.0%
Enforcement	2,282	46.0%	1,063	68.5%	3,977	55.7%	264	69.5%	1,768	58.5%
Total ¹	4,956	100%	1,551	100%	7,141	100%	380	100	3,025	100%

Source: Management Overview report, June 2001

Note: Above information does not include arrears only cases and undefined cases because the data could not be extracted by case type.

¹ Cases may be maintained in more than one mode.

As illustrated in **Table 3-8**, MCSEA has the lowest percentage of cases in the enforcement mode as compared to the peers. As indicated in **F3.1** and **R3.1**, MCSEA could implement numerous strategies to increase the number of cases in the enforcement mode. In addition, a lower percentage of cases in enforcement can be attributed to the high number of cases in locate mode. This indicates that MCSEA is attempting to locate the non-custodial parent or their assets, or apply direct withdrawal method to the non-custodial parent’s assets. However, MCSEA is unable to determine the number of cases in the locate mode attributed to locating non-custodial parents or applying a direct withdrawal (see **F3.21** and **R3.17**).

F3.33 From January 2001 through June 2001, MCSEA collected over \$4.7 million on former assistance cases. **Table 3-9** presents the sources of collections on former assistance cases.

Table 3-9: Collections on Former Assistance Cases, June 2001

Sources	Mahoning		Lorain		Montgomery		Tuscarawas		Peer Average	
	Collect	%	Collect	%	Collect	%	Collect	%	Collect	%
Federal Income Tax Refund	\$1,046,851	22.3%	\$849,190	18.9%	\$1,445,100	15.4%	\$367,812	21.3%	\$887,367	17.1%
State Income Tax Refund	\$131,234	2.8%	\$102,973	2.3%	\$197,943	2.1%	\$43,860	2.5%	\$114,925	2.2%
Offset Unemployment Income	\$88,884	1.9%	\$133,946	3.0%	\$178,315	1.9%	\$62,941	3.6%	\$125,067	2.4%
Income Withholding	\$2,888,345	61.4%	\$2,722,530	60.7%	\$6,253,033	66.6%	\$1,021,073	59.2%	\$3,332,212	64.1%
Other States	\$51,085	1.1%	\$71,000	1.6%	\$292,362	3.1%	\$59,581	3.5%	\$140,981	2.7%
Other Sources	\$498,275	10.6%	\$604,885	13.5%	\$1,022,662	10.9%	\$170,598	9.9%	\$599,382	11.5%
Total	\$4,704,674	100%	\$4,484,524	100%	\$9,389,415	100%	\$1,725,865	100%	\$5,199,935	100%

Source: SETS 4289 report, from January 2001 through June 2001

Table 3-9 indicates that the majority of collections on former assistance cases in Mahoning County are derived from federal income tax refunds and income withholdings. MCSEA could implement processes to increase collections from income withholdings (see **R3.18** and **R3.19**).

F3.34 Collections per former assistance case are presented in **Table 3-10**.

Table 3-10: Former Assistance Collections per Case

	Mahoning	Lorain	Montgomery	Tuscarawas	Peer Average
Total Collections	\$4,704,674	\$4,484,524	\$9,389,415	\$1,725,865	\$5,199,935
Former Assistance Caseload	7,660	7,029	14,038	2,139	7,735
Collections Per Case	\$614.19	\$638.00	\$668.86	\$806.86	\$672.26

Sources: SETS 4223 and 4289 reports, quarter ending June 2001

MCSEA has the lowest collections per case on former assistance cases, approximately 12.8 percent less than the peer average. The lower collections per case are directly related to its low number of cases in enforcement as shown in **Table 3-8**.

Never Assistance Cases

F3.35 **Table 3-11** presents the never assistance caseloads for MCSEA 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 Title IV-D services.

Table 3-11: Never Assistance Caseload

	Mahoning	Lorain	Montgomery	Tuscarawas	Peer Average
Total Never Assistance Cases	10,111	13,317	24,873	3,792	13,994
Never Assistance Cases as a Percent of the Population	3.9%	4.7%	4.4%	4.2%	4.4%
Never Assistance Cases as a Percent of Total Caseload	45.0%	53.5%	49.3%	56.2%	51.1%

Source: SETS 4223 report, quarter ending June 2001

As indicated in **Table 3-11**, never assistance cases comprise 45.0 percent of the total caseload in Mahoning County. MCSEA’s never assistance caseload is the lowest as a percentage of the total population and total caseload when compared to the peers and the peer average.

F3.36 **Table 3-12** shows the never assistance caseload by case mode for MCSEA and the peers.

Table 3-12: Never Assistance Caseload by Case Mode

	Mahoning		Lorain		Montgomery		Tuscarawas		Peer Average	
	Cases	%	Cases	%	Cases	%	Cases	%	Cases	%
Intake	94	0.6%	40	0.2%	40	0.1%	4	0.1%	28	0.1%
Locate	2,300	15.2%	1,890	10.5%	5,809	17.2%	341	7.4%	2,680	14.3%
Paternity	1,944	12.9%	801	4.5%	3,851	11.4%	164	3.6%	1,605	8.5%
Support	2,043	13.5%	1,562	8.7%	2,694	8.0%	351	7.6%	1,536	8.2%
Enforce	8,728	57.8%	13,686	76.1%	21,400	63.3%	3,757	81.4%	12,948	68.9%
Total ²	15,109	100%	17,979	100%	33,794	100%	4,617	100%	18,797	100%

Source: Management Overview report, June 2001

Note: Above information does not include arrears only cases and undefined cases because the data could not be extracted by case type.

¹ Cases may be maintained in more than one mode.

Table 3-12 indicates that MCSEA has the lowest percentage of never assistance cases in the enforcement mode. As indicated in **F3.1** and **R3.1**, MCSEA could implement numerous strategies to increase the number of cases in the enforcement mode. In addition, the lower percentage of cases in the enforcement mode are reflective of the number of cases maintained in the locate mode, though MCSEA could not break down the types of cases in the locate mode to determine those awaiting the establishment of direct withdrawal orders due to limitations of the SETS system (see **F3.21**).

F3.37 **Table 3-13** shows collections on never assistance cases for the first six months of 2001 (January through June 2001).

Table 3-13: Collections on Never Assistance Cases, June 2001

Sources	Mahoning		Lorain		Montgomery		Tuscarawas		Peer Average	
	Collect	%	Collect	%	Collect	%	Collect	%	Collect	%
Federal Income Tax Refund	\$458,618	4.6%	\$786,376	4.4%	\$1,289,684	4.0%	\$242,034	4.9%	\$772,698	4.2%
State Income Tax Refund	\$111,602	1.1%	\$193,894	1.1%	\$307,476	1.0%	\$63,065	1.3%	\$188,145	1.0%
Offset Unemployment Income	\$107,544	1.1%	\$316,925	1.8%	\$360,543	1.1%	\$101,036	2.0%	\$259,501	1.4%
Income Withholding	\$7,830,525	78.9%	\$14,089,467	78.7%	\$24,052,088	75.3%	\$3,908,498	78.3%	\$14,016,684	76.7%
Other States	\$157,564	1.6%	\$182,763	1.0%	\$689,305	2.2%	\$51,688	1.0%	\$307,919	1.7%
Other Sources	\$1,257,639	12.7%	\$2,335,824	13.0%	\$5,243,046	16.4%	\$623,415	12.5%	\$2,743,095	15.0%
Total	\$9,923,492	100%	\$17,905,249	100%	\$31,942,142	100%	\$4,989,736	100%	\$18,279,042	100%

Source: SETS 4289 report, from January 2001 through June 2001

Table 3-13 indicates that Montgomery CSEA collected a higher percentage of child support payments from other states as compared to MCSEA. Montgomery CSEA initially requests assistance from other states via Uniform Interstate Family Support Act (UIFSA) transmittals, which is a uniform request process for all CSEA’s in Ohio including MCSEA. However, if another state is not receptive to assisting Montgomery CSEA via the transmittal referral, it will refer the case to the prosecutor’s office interstate unit for additional assistance. By working with the prosecutor’s office, Montgomery CSEA is taking a proactive and aggressive measure to locate non-custodial parents and enforce child support orders.

R3.22 Considering Mahoning County’s close proximity to Pennsylvania, the probability of non-custodial parents moving to another state could be potentially high. Therefore, MCSEA should work with the prosecutor’s office to enact more aggressive measures to locate non-custodial parents that move to other states similar to Montgomery CSEA. Implementing

more aggressive measures for interstate cases could result in higher child support collections disbursed to custodial parents.

F3.38 **Table 3-14** presents the never assistance collections per case.

Table 3-14: Never Assistance Collections per Case, June 2001

	Mahoning	Lorain	Montgomery	Tuscarawas	Peer Average
Total Collections	\$9,923,492	\$17,905,249	\$31,942,142	\$4,989,736	\$18,279,042
Never Assistance Caseload	10,111	13,317	24,873	3,792	13,994
Collections per Case	\$981.46	\$1,344.54	\$1,284.21	\$1,315.86	\$1,306.21

Sources: SETS 4289 and 4223 reports, quarter ending June 2001

MCSEA has the lowest collections per case on never assistance cases with \$981 per case, which is 25.0 percent less than the peer average. As indicated throughout this report, MCSEA has a lower percentage of cases in the enforcement mode as compared to the peers, resulting in overall lower collections per case. As indicated in **F3.1** and **R3.1**, MCSEA could implement numerous strategies to increase the number of cases in the enforcement mode and subsequently increase the amount of child support payments collected per case.

Non IV-D Cases

F3.39 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. MCSEA is responsible for collections and disbursements, as well as modification and emancipations for non IV-D cases. **Table 3-15** presents the non IV-D caseload for MCSEA and the peers.

Table 3-15: Non IV-D Caseload

	Mahoning	Lorain	Montgomery	Tuscarawas	Peer Average
Total Non IV-D Cases	1,176	1,881	4,508	336	2,242
Non IV-D Cases as a Percent of the Population	0.5%	0.7%	0.8%	0.4%	0.6%
Non IV-D Cases as a Percent of Total Caseload	5.2%	7.6%	8.9%	5.0%	8.2%

Source: SETS 4223 report, quarter ending June 2001

MCSEA has the second 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.

F3.40 **Table 3-16** presents the non IV-D caseload by case mode for CSEA and the peers.

Table 3-16: Non IV-D Caseload by Case Mode

	Mahoning		Lorain		Montgomery		Tuscarawas		Peer Average	
Intake	1	0.1%	2	0.1%	2	<0.1%	0	0.0%	1	0.1%
Locate	112	8.5%	149	7.0%	470	9.1%	20	5.5%	213	8.4%
Paternity	28	2.1%	7	0.3%	171	3.3%	2	0.6%	60	2.4%
Support	26	2.0%	71	3.3%	241	4.7%	19	5.2%	110	4.3%
Enforce	1,150	87.3%	1,906	89.3%	4,261	82.8%	321	88.7%	2,163	84.9%
Total	1,317	100%	2,135	100%	5,145	100%	362	100%	2,547	100%

Source: Management Overview report, June 2001

Note: Above information does not include arrears only cases and undefined cases because the data could not be extracted by case type.

¹ Cases may be maintained in more than one mode.

As shown in **Table 3-16**, MCSEA and the peers have a majority of non IV-D cases in enforce mode reflecting the high percentage of spousal support cases. However, MCSEA has the second highest percentage of cases in locate mode which is consistent with the high percentages in locate mode for current, former and never assistance cases.

F3.41 Non IV-D source 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.

F3.42 **Table 3-17** illustrates case collections per case on non IV-D cases.

Table 3-17: Non IV-D Collections per Case, June 2001

	Mahoning	Lorain	Montgomery	Tuscarawas	Peer Average
Total Collections	\$1,935,916	\$3,169,888	\$9,050,732	\$549,088	\$4,256,569
Non IV-D Caseload	1,176	1,881	4,508	336	2,242
Collections Per Case	\$1,646	\$1,685	\$2,008	\$1,634	\$1,898

Sources: SETS 4289 and 4223 reports, quarter ending June 2001

MCSEA collected approximately \$1,646 per case on non IV-D cases for the quarter ending June 2001, which is 13 percent lower than the peer average. According to MCSEA supervisors, 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.

Federal Performance Measures

F3.43 MCSEA 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 2001, 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. The other three measures listed above 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.

F3.44 **Table 3-18** presents a three-year performance history for MCSEA and the comparative counties based on the five federal performance measures.

Table 3-18: Federal Performance Measures, Three Year Aggregate¹

Performance Measure	Mahoning	Lorain	Montgomery	Tuscarawas	Peer Average	State Average
IV-D Caseload	37,972	29,047	36,455	8,887	24,796	9,944
IV-D Collect	\$27,573,699	\$36,947,039	\$71,979,952	\$11,499,056	\$40,142,015	\$14,502,008
Average Collections per Case	\$726	\$1,271	\$1,974	\$1,293	\$1,618	\$1,458.32
Paternity Establishment	82.27%	78.46%	75.28%	88.88%	80.87%	77.59%
Support Establishment	67.97%	68.03%	79.16%	86.87%	78.02%	72.67%
Collections on Current Support	74.25%	72.19%	59.29%	91.94%	74.47%	68.04%
Collections on Arrears	59.79%	40.43%	48.25%	35.06%	41.25%	50.31%
Cost Effectiveness	\$4.87	\$9.75	\$6.15	\$7.84	\$7.91	\$7.00

Source: ODJFS performance measure reports

¹ Information is based on SFY 1998, 1999, and 2000.

As shown in **Table 3-18**, MCSEA collected the lowest amount of payments per case as compared to the peers and significantly lower as compared to the state average. In addition, MCSEA's cost-effectiveness ratio is the lowest of the peers and state average. Although the higher unemployment rate and lower per capita income could impact the collections per case and cost-effectiveness ratio at MCSEA, the more significant variable impacting collections per case and cost-effectiveness is the lower number of support establishments indicated in **Table 3-18** and the lower number of cases in the enforcement mode (see **Tables 3-1, 3-4, 3-8, 3-12**). If MCSEA implemented strategies to improve case management to increase the number of cases being enforced (see **F3.1** and **R3.1**), the amount of child support payments collected per case and the cost-effectiveness ratio could increase. However, the cost-effectiveness ratio could also be increased by reducing expenditures while maintaining the current level of child support collections.

In addition, **Table 3-18** indicates that MCSEA's percentage of collections on current support and on arrears is adequate as compared to the peers. However, since MCSEA has the lowest percentage of cases in the enforcement mode as compared to the peers, it is collecting payments on a lower number of cases which could explain the statistics for collections on current support and arrears. As indicated throughout this report, MCSEA could improve its operations to increase the number of cases in enforcement. As a result, MCSEA would have more cases to collect child support payments and potentially more arrears cases to collect on. Furthermore, since the data presented in **Table 3-18** is older and coincides with the initial implementation of SETS, the information contained in **Table 3-18** may not be fully accurate and reliable. For example, **Table 3-18** indicates that MCSEA has a higher caseload than Montgomery CSEA. In contrast, the more current data presented throughout this report indicates that Montgomery CSEA has a significantly higher caseload than MCSEA, which is expected since Montgomery County has a significantly higher population as compared to Mahoning County.

F3.45 Additional data was requested from MCSEA and peers for the purpose of more fully assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of its operations. Although the federal performance measures do provide a means of assessing performance, there are additional performance measures that could be used to assess a CSEA's performance (see **R3.55**). However, MCSEA and peer CSEAs indicated that additional performance measures such as average time to establish paternity or support can not be obtained from SETS. Through this performance audit and the Clermont CSEA performance audit, it was determined that a limited range of management information is produced by the SETS system.

R3.23 MDJFS should contact ODJFS and stress the importance of ODJFS surveying the counties to determine relevant management reporting elements currently not available through the SETS reporting package. The director of MDJFS indicated that staff have attended meetings with ODJFS to discuss these issues. Additional reporting capabilities should be developed for the SETS system and implemented within the next year so that counties can track their performance from a variety of angles.

Detailed, relevant, timely and accurate management reports are crucial to the continued success of 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. See **R3.55** for additional data and performance measures that could be incorporated in the SETS system and monitored on a consistent basis by MCSEA.

F3.46 SETS quarterly reports can be used to monitor the types of services required by MCSEA clients. **Table 3-19** illustrates Title IV-D cases for the quarter ending June 2001 in which paternity and support orders were required and established.

Table 3-19: Title IV-D Services Required and Provided

	Mahoning	Lorain	Montgomery	Tuscarawas	Peer Average
Cases Open Requiring Paternity Establishment	4,054	1,523	7,836	274	3,211
Paternities Established During the Quarter	128	106	171	20	99
Percent of Paternities Established	3.2%	7.0%	2.2%	7.3%	5.5%
Cases Open Requiring a Support Order	7,808	3,914	13,185	767	5,955
Support Orders Established During the Quarter	89	407	551	83	347
Percent of Support Orders Established	1.1%	10.4%	4.2%	10.8%	8.5%
Total	11,862	5,437	21,012	1,041	9,166

Source: SETS 4223 Report, quarter ending June 2001

As indicated by **Table 3-19**, MCSEA had the second lowest percentage of paternitys established and the lowest percentage of support orders established as compared to the peers. Counties that perform well in paternity establishment also may tend to perform well in support establishment, as is the case with Lorain and Tuscarawas CSEAs. This is expected because paternity establishment is a precursor to creating an order of support. Effective completion of paternity and support establishment is necessary to begin collections of child support funds. As presented in **F3.1**, **F3.21**, **F3.32** and **F3.36**, MCSEA has the lowest percentage of its cases in the enforcement mode indicating that MCSEA could improve case management operations to establish paternity and support in a more timely manner (see **F3.1** and **R3.1**). In addition, the fewer amount of administrative processes used by MCSEA could impact the number of paternity and support orders established (see **F3.6** and **R3.6**).

F3.47 Although SETS quarterly reports are available to be used as a management tool (see **Table 3-19**), MCSEA does not use these quarterly reports on a consistent basis to monitor the types of services required by clients. The report can be used to determine which aspect of case activity needs greater attention and problem areas can be identified. Therefore, MCSEA would have the ability to be more proactive and develop strategies to solve these problems. If the case activity is not monitored consistently, viable cases may be neglected and support orders may not be established in a sufficient time frame. Ultimately, collecting child support payments may be more difficult.

Colorado’s Division of Child Support Enforcement trained 440 county staff to use system-generated reports to manage caseloads. The training was conducted in order to meet state wide generated performance goals, to reduce excessive “deadwood” in the caseload and to ensure cases moved through the system efficiently. In addition, the training was designed

to help supervisors manage their teams by identifying overall problems to determine areas that the team needs to focus their efforts. This training also gave the state the opportunity to explain to county staff the federal performance measures on which the state is now evaluated in order to receive federal incentives. The Colorado Division indicated that the training resulted in the state achieving its Year 2000 collections goal in 1999, the state achieving its overall performance measures in 1999, and making case workers more aware of how to manager their caseload.

R3.24 MCSEA 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. If necessary, MCSEA should contact ODJFS to obtain the appropriate training on how to extract and use the quarterly reports. Compiling and extracting this information could be added to the internal auditor’s job function (see **F3.65**) considering that this individual has the knowledge of reporting tools in SETS, and monitoring activities coincide with the internal auditor’s job responsibilities.

In addition, MDJFS should consider implementing an incentive system for MCSEA staff, such as a pay-for-performance system, for each of the units responsible for establishing paternities and support orders which rewards reductions in the numbers of open cases in these categories. If a pay-for-performance system is pursued, MDJFS should develop a structure for the system using the performance measures discussed in **R3.55** and available through the SETS system. Tracking employee performance and correlating monetary rewards to above average performance should be emphasized. Pay for performance rewards should correlate with the mission and goals of MDJFS and MCSEA, and should link with achievement or promotion of those goals. Additional recommendations to reduce the number of services required are found throughout the this report. Furthermore, a pay-for-performance system would have to be negotiated in the collective bargaining agreements before such a system could be implemented at MCSEA.

F3.48 **Table 3-20** illustrates the number of cases within MCSEA and the peers that received some form of collection for the quarter ending June 2001.

Table 3-20: Title IV-D Cases with Collections

	Mahoning	Lorain	Montgomery	Tuscarawas	Peer Average
Open Cases	21,273	23,020	45,951	6,412	25,128
Cases With Collections	7,382	11,644	20,366	4,081	12,030
Percent of Open Cases with Collections	34.7%	50.6%	44.3%	63.6%	47.9%

Source: ODJFS 4223 report, quarter ending June 2001

As indicated in the **Table 3-20** and since MCSEA has the lowest percentage of its cases in the enforcement mode (see **F3.1**), MCSEA received the lowest percentage of collections from its cases as compared to the peers. **Table 3-21** compares collections at MCSEA and peers for a six month time period (January 2001 to June 2001).

Table 3-21: Monthly Collections Comparison

	Mahoning	Lorain	Montgomery	Tuscarawas	Peer Average
Monthly Obligations	\$20,512,765	\$35,196,008	\$68,227,001	\$8,503,619	\$37,308,876
Monthly Collections	\$16,158,190	\$25,255,386	\$50,146,105	\$6,929,061	\$27,443,517
Collections as a Percentage of Obligations	78.7%	71.8%	73.5%	81.5%	73.6%

Source: ODJFS monthly web report, January 2001 through June 2001

As shown in **Table 3-21**, MCSEA’s collections up to June 2001 were approximately 78.7 percent of obligations which was the second highest of the peers and 5.2 percent above the peer average. This indicates that MCSEA collects obligations on a high percentage of its current paying cases. The use of the locate mode to identify assets for direct withdrawal orders may contribute to the high percentage of obligations collected. However, MCSEA could increase its number of paying cases if it increased its percentage of cases in the enforcement mode (see **F3.1** and **R3.1**).

F3.49 As a component of child support, medical insurance is often ordered to be provided by the non-custodial parent. The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) has recognized the following reasons during studies into the performance in medical support experienced throughout the state:

- There are no alerts in SETS if the Medical Support Order screen (MSO) has not been filled out. The investigation into insurance coverage is often initiated by any alert within SETS. Medical support is required to be included in all newly established and modified support orders. However, if the case worker has not correctly filled out the MSO screen, there will be no alert to signal to the case worker that an obligor is not fulfilling his medical support obligation.
- Reasonable cost to determine medical support is subjective and inconsistently applied. ODJFS established guidelines in the Child Support Enforcement Manual (CSEM) for employers receiving medical support notices to base reasonable cost on standards set forth in the Consumer Credit Protection Act (CCP). However, some CSEAs allow courts to establish reasonable cost based on a variety of factors, including income and employer provided coverage. ODJFS is awaiting a definition established by the federal government before further defining the current practice of determining reasonable cost.

- Affordable insurance is not always available. CSEAs perform investigations on an obligors ability to obtain insurance. Oftentimes, once the case worker determines that the obligor is unemployed and therefore has no access to insurance, the case worker does not revisit the case in order to assess whether circumstances have changed.
- Case workers oversee large caseloads. Many CSEAs employ overworked case workers who handle caseload sizes too large to fully work every case. These CSEAs must choose which areas will be worked on all cases and concentrate their efforts on excelling in specific areas. One area chosen by some CSEAs as too time consuming is medical support.
- Case workers are not using tools available in SETS.

Table 3-22 below shows medical insurance provisions on cases for MCSEA and the peers.

Table 3-22: Medical Support Orders

	Mahoning	Lorain	Montgomery	Tuscarawas	Peer Average
Health Insurance Ordered, Title IV-D Cases	380	1,557	5,815	1,305	2,892
Health Insurance Provided, Title IV-D Cases	206	1,022	3,245	1,081	1,783
Percent of Medical Insurance Provided as Ordered	54.2%	65.6%	55.8%	82.8%	61.7%

Source: ODJFS 4223 report, quarter ending June 2001

As indicated in **Table 3-22**, MCSEA ordered a significantly lower number of medical support orders as compared to the peers. The largest contributing factor to the low rate of medical support enforcement at MCSEA appears to be inconsistencies which occurred during the conversion to SETS. ODJFS provided each county with a conversion team to help with the process of converting all cases into SETS. The team informed the counties that they were not to fill in the medical support screen during conversion. Consequently, the counties updated the medical insurance screen after conversion and many counties are still trying to complete the process. MCSEA is one county still updating medical support information to the cases converted.

Other factors have also contributed to MCSEA’s low rate of medical support enforcement. MCSEA uses the CSEM to determine reasonable cost for medical insurance by whether it is offered by the employer at a reasonable cost according to the obligor’s income or whether either party can obtain it at a reasonable cost as determined by the Administrative Hearing

Officer or Courts. An order is made to the custodial and non-custodial parents indicating that they are obligated to obtain medical insurance if it becomes available at a reasonable cost. However, Ohio Revised Code (ORC) §3119.30 requires CSEAs to include medical support orders in all newly issued or modified support orders regardless of reasonable cost. Since circumstances impacting medical support orders are subject to change (e.g., employment) and medical coverage could become available to either party in the future, including medical support in all child support orders could allow MCSEA to identify these changes and subsequently enforce a medical support order. In addition, the courts in Tuscarawas CSEA determine reasonable cost by recognizing any employer provided coverage as reasonable in cost. Furthermore, MCSEA does not pursue medical support inclusion in cases of divorce or dissolution where no order has been established. However, case workers at Tuscarawas CSEA review every divorce or dissolution to ensure that all orders contain language that address the issue of medical support.

F3.50 Montgomery CSEA has identified other reasons to explain low medical support enforcement. ODJFS has not provided CSEAs sufficient information regarding medical support in SETS, which results in an uncertainty about the necessary fields to fill out in SETS in order to have a case pass as providing medical insurance. Reports generated within SETS have been found to contain inaccurate numbers. Medical insurance is not always brought to the workers attention. Case workers oversee numerous cases requiring multiple alerts to be worked daily. Medical support alerts initialize a workers attention to the medical portion of certain cases. However, the alert is not repeated and hence case workers must manually remind themselves to revisit the case in the future in case circumstances have changed. Some medical support information has been loaded wrong and if the right fields are not filled in, then the case will appear as not providing insurance. During ODJFS provided training, Montgomery CSEA discovered that they were filling in the wrong field on the medical insurance screen and consequently, have started filling in the Medical Support Order (MSO) correctly. Tuscarawas CSEA has indicated that its case workers have manageable caseloads and have the necessary knowledge that allows them to use the tools available in SETS. As indicated in **Table 3-23**, MCSEA is maintaining the second lowest number of cases per case worker as compared to the peers.

F3.51 Best practices have been identified in the annual self assessments of each CSEA throughout the state in regards to establishing and enforcing medical support. In Champaign County, a desk review of 10 to 20 cases is done each week to help identify cases needing medical support. Huron County takes full advantage of SETS down days (days during which SETS is in read-only mode) through the following:

- Having staff access a new or revised area of Computer Based Training (CBT) or the InnerWeb and subsequently share findings via e-mail;
- Holding unit or team meetings;
- Providing training modules that are able to be done in short notice; and

- Playing a version of “Jeopardy” that requires knowledge of Child Support Enforcement Manual (CSEM) or agency procedural manual.

Further, Ross County provides case workers two hours of protected time each morning to work their alerts, defaults and Corrective Action Plan (CAP) cases. CAPs are developed when CSEAs fail to pass certain areas in the Annual Self Assessment.

R3.25 Since medical support is required to be included in all newly issued or modified support orders to better allow CSEAs to enforce a medical support order, MCSEA should establish medical support orders in all cases. Medical support language dependent on an obligor’s income should stipulate that enforcement is subject to current income limitations to ensure that regular child support obligations are not impacted by medical support orders. MCSEA should review all divorces or dissolutions to ensure that support orders contain language that includes the assignment of medical support. MCSEA should work with the local courts to establish standard criteria for determining reasonable cost. Criteria should include the provision that coverage is reasonable when offered through the employer. By establishing criteria centered around employment, MCSEA could increase the number of obligors providing medical coverage. Increasing the number of cases with private coverage will improve MCSEA’s medical support performance as well as reduce the number of cases that are covered by public dollars through Medicaid.

MCSEA should ensure that all case workers receive adequate training on the proper procedures to follow when filling out the MSO screen. Inadequate training currently provided to case workers through ODJFS resulted in case workers improperly filling in the MSO screen. By training all case workers on proper procedures, MCSEA could increase the number of cases that are recognized by SETS as having medical support enforced. To minimize travel and meal expenses associated with ODJFS training, MCSEA should consider sending select staff to these training classes and have these employees provide the knowledge gained from the training to the remaining employees. Further, MCSEA should implement other strategies to ensure that medical support orders are established and enforced including the following:

- Review cases on a regular basis to determine the adequacy of medical support enforcement. By reviewing cases on a regular basis for medical support, MCSEA emphasizes the priority of medical support to ensure that case workers pay greater attention to medical support.
- Use SETS down days as a means of familiarizing case workers with best practices and efficient use of SETS, providing staff with necessary training and SETS updates, and/or having staff question/answer sessions where experienced staff can help less experienced case workers.
- Provide case workers with an hour or two of “protected time” each morning to allow case workers sufficient time in which to work alerts.

F3.52 Through innovative public-private partnerships, Sacramento County, California has made low-cost, private health insurance available for hundreds of children involved in child support cases since 1996. County, state and federal governments garner over \$450,000 per year in medicaid savings and many children gain health coverage they previously lacked. The project, originally known as “CallKids,” was developed as a Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) under the auspices of the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE).

Two insurance companies agreed to provide the insurance for Title IV-D children for premiums of under \$80 per month. The coverage was equivalent to that provided under county employee health plans. If a non-custodial parent does not provide proof of insurance coverage to the child support hearing commissioner, he or she may be ordered to provide coverage through the IV-D Kids Program. A withholding order, in conjunction with a wage assignment, directs employers to withhold premium payments and forward them to the program’s Third Party Administrator (TPA). Self-employed obligors are ordered to pay the TPA directly. Non-custodial parents may also voluntarily enroll their children in the program, also making direct payments to the TPA. Results of implementing the IV-D Kids Program include the following:

- A total of 500 children have been enrolled in the program.
- County, state and federal governments have saved over \$450,000 per year in Medicaid expenditures, solely attributed to the program in Sacramento County.
- Non-custodial parents who initially indicate that no health insurance is available have enrolled their child in an employer-sponsored plan when an order to withhold for premiums is served on their employer. It has been estimated that this may double the number of children who obtain private coverage as a result of the program.

R3.26 In an effort to increase the probability of providing medical support in child support cases, ODJFS should work with MCSEA to develop a program similar to the one implemented in Sacramento County, California. An effective partnership would have to be established with insurance companies to develop and implement such a program. A creative partnership between ODJFS, MCSEA and insurance companies could result in an increased number of children provided with medical support coverage. Consequently, Mahoning County and the State of Ohio could save costs associated with medicaid.

B. Staffing, Personnel Issues & Collective Bargaining

Upper-Level Management

F3.53 The director and assistant director of MCSEA are also the director and assistant director of MDJFS. Approximately 50 percent of the director and assistant director's work days are spent on MCSEA functions while the remaining 50 percent are spent on MDJFS activities. In contrast, Lorain CSEA and Montgomery CSEA each have a full-time assistant director who monitors the day-to-day operations of CSEA, and a director who splits times between the county CSEA and the county DJFS. Because Tuscarawas CSEA is a stand-alone entity (it is not combined with DJFS), it has its own full-time director. MCSEA had a full-time assistant director until March 2001; however, the position has not been filled. According to the peers, it is necessary to have a full-time position specifically dedicated to the day-to-day operations of child support enforcement. Although the director and assistant director of MDJFS and MCSEA allocate time to manage child support, the lack of employing one full-time professional to be solely responsible and accountable for MCSEA operations could contribute to the agency's overall success in providing services and achieving high-levels of performance.

R3.27 The director of MDJFS and the County should fully evaluate the options of either employing one full-time professional or using existing management staff to be ultimately accountable for child support operations and implement improvements at MCSEA. Specific functions that need to be performed by upper-level management at MCSEA include the following:

- Implement and oversee strategies to improve MCSEA's case management system (see **R3.1**) to process cases in a more timely manner and subsequently increase the number of cases being enforced;
- Work with ODJFS in areas impacting MCSEA's ability to improve and enhance operations (see **R3.3**, **R3.15**, **R3.17**, **R3.18**, **R3.26** and **R3.30**);
- Implement improvements in MCSEA's customer service operations (see **R3.44**);
- Develop a strategic plan defining the mission and vision of MCSEA (see **R3.54**);
- Develop and monitor formal agency-wide performance measures (see **R3.55**);
- Establish an effective working relationship with the various collective bargaining units within MCSEA (see **F3.79**); and
- Use this performance audit as a "blue print" to improve MCSEA operations.

Employing a full-time professional could increase accountability over MCSEA operations. Using existing management staff to implement improvements at MCSEA could help to foster continuity and consistency as the County strives to implement a single-service agency in

which all staff would perform MCSEA and MDJFS job functions. Regardless, this report indicates that significant improvements should be made at MCSEA to ultimately enhance the quality of services provided to MCSEA's clients. Therefore, the director of MDJFS and the County should fully assess these two options to make a fully-supported decision on which option to implement. In addition, the director of MDJFS indicated that management has attempted to take measures to improve MCSEA operations, such as attending district and state meetings, assisting a state group in implementing Web reporting, and participating in a work group to implement credit reporting procedures.

Pre-Enforcement & Enforcement

F3.54 At MCSEA and peers, certain employees (data entry/IV-A & IV-D support staff) are responsible for processing the initial child support case referrals, and establishing and interfacing the cases in SETS. After the case has been established in SETS and before a child support enforcement agency can begin collecting on a case, several orders must be established including paternity, medical and support orders. At MCSEA and Lorain CSEA, the establishment of each case is completed by intake specialists. After paternity, medical and support orders have been established at MCSEA and Lorain CSEA, the cases are enforced by the support specialists. MCSEA and Lorain CSEA both employ 2.0 FTEs to supervise the establishment of cases, and 4.0 and 2.0 FTEs, respectively, to supervise the enforcement of cases. The type of system used at MCSEA and Lorain CSEA is a specific (specialized) job function system.

In comparison, Montgomery CSEA and Tuscarawas CSEA use a generalized job function system. Under this system, there are no division of duties. When a case worker receives a case, it is the responsibility of that case worker to establish paternity, medical and support orders as well as enforce all orders on that case. Montgomery CSEA employs 4.0 FTEs and Tuscarawas employs 2.0 FTEs, respectively, to supervise case workers. **Table 3-23** presents a staffing analysis of the case workers (intake/support specialists) at MCSEA and the peers. All staffing numbers are illustrated in FTEs.

Table 3-23: Intake/Support Specialist Staffing Analysis

	Mahoning		Lorain	Montgomery	Tuscarawas	Peer Average
	Budgeted	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual
Managers	1.5	1.5	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.2
Supervisors	6.0	6.0	5.0	4.0	2.0	3.7
Total Intake & Support Specialists	50.0	37.0	28.0	28.5 ⁵	20.0	25.5
Customer Service	4.0	3.0	2.0	15.5 ⁵	2.8	6.8
Data Entry/IV-A & IV-D Support Staff	8.0 ²	7.0 ²	N/A ⁴	5.0	4.0	4.5
Other Support Staff ¹	6.0	3.5	4.0	7.0	0.0	3.7
Total Staffing (pre-enforcement and enforcement Staff)	75.5	58.0	39.0	60.5	28.8	44.4
Administrative staff per pre-enforcement and enforcement staff³	1:9.1	1:6.7	1:6.8	1:12.4	1:13.4	1:10.4
Cases as of June 2001	22,449		24,901	50,459	6,748	27,369
Absent Parents as of October 2001	20,716		24,969	43,483	6,802	25,085
Collections through June 2001	\$15,030,310		\$22,841,862	\$42,193,472	\$6,834,758	\$23,956,697
Cases per Intake & Support Specialists	449.0	606.7	889.3	1,770.5	337.4	1,073.3
Absent Parents per Intake & Support Specialists	414.3	559.9	891.8	1,525.7	340.1	983.7
Collections per Intake & Support Specialists	\$300,606	\$406,225	\$815,780	\$1,480,472	\$341,738	\$9,939,478
Cases per Customer Service	5,612.3	7,483.0	12,450.5	3,255.4	2,410.0	4,024.9
Cases per Data Entry/IV-A & IV-D Support Staff	2,806.1	3,207.0	N/A ⁴	10,092.0	1,687.0	6,082.0
Cases per Other Support Staff	3,741.5	6,414.0	6,225.3	7,208.4	0.0	7,397.0

Source: MCSEA reports, ODJFS monthly web report from MCSEA and the peers

¹ Other support staff includes clerical, office managers, quality assurance and other various personnel.

² Includes 2.0 data entry FTEs who establish cases in SETS and 5.0 account clerk FTEs (1.0 vacant) who interface cases in SETS. Since one classification at peers is responsible for performing both of these job functions, data entry and account clerk staff at MCSEA are grouped together to adequately compare similar job functions to peers.

³ For the purpose of this calculation, administrative staff are defined as managers and supervisors.

⁴ Lorain CSEA could not provide information about this position.

⁵ Montgomery CSEA has six full-time individuals (6.0 FTEs) who operate the phone and answer questions. In addition, each of Montgomery CSEA's support specialists (38.0 FTEs) spend two hours (25 percent of their day) answering calls in the call center. Montgomery CSEA's support specialist FTEs and customer service FTEs have been adjusted for an accurate comparison.

As illustrated in **Table 3-23**, MCSEA has the second lowest ratio of cases per actual intake and support specialist, and cases per actual data entry support staff when compared to the peers. In addition, MCSEA has the lowest ratio of administrative (managers and supervisors) staff to all other staff (1:6.7). The statistics and ratios in **Table 3-23** appear to indicate that MCSEA is overstaffed in intake and support specialists, data entry support staff

and administrative staff as compared to the peers. However, MCSEA appears to be adequately staffed with other actual support personnel. For a detailed analysis on the customer service staffing levels, see **F3.55**, **F3.56** and **R3.29**.

The lower number of cases processed per data entry support staff, and intake and support specialist at MCSEA; and the higher number of supervisors and managers at MCSEA as compared to the peers could be attributed to the following factors:

- Inadequate training provided to employees (see **F3.74** to **F3.77** and **R3.41**);
- Process of assigning and managing cases (see **F3.2** and **R3.2**);
- Ineffective use of SETS (see **F3.75**);
- Process of establishing cases in SETS (see **F3.3** and **R3.3**);
- Lack of using administrative processes (see **F3.6** and **R3.6**);
- Lack of using all available enforcement tools (see **F3.6**, **R3.6**, **R3.13** and **R3.14**);
- Larger percentage of its caseload comprising current assistance cases (see **F3.30**); and
- Lower percentage of its caseload in the enforcement mode (see **Table 3-1**).

A major factor contributing to the lower number of cases per data entry support staff could be the manner in which MCSEA establishes cases in SETS (see **F3.3**) and the current backlog of cases that need to be interfaced with the CRISE system (see **F3.29**). MCSEA establishes cases in SETS based upon the child as opposed to the custodial parent, which could require increased time spent establishing and processing cases. A major factor contributing to the lower number of cases per intake and support specialist, and higher supervisor and management staffing levels at MCSEA could be the low number of cases in the enforcement mode. Cases in enforcement indicate that child support orders have been established and custodial parents are receiving child support payments. Since MCSEA has a lower percentage of its caseload in enforcement, it can experience a greater level of workload involved with its cases. In addition, a specialized case management system could require higher supervisor/ manager staffing levels considering that case workers would only be processing specific tasks related to cases. **Table 3-23** indicates that Tuscarawas and Montgomery CSEAs (generalized case management) are more efficiently staffed with supervisors/managers as compared to MCSEA and Lorain CSEA (specialized case management). **Table 3-24** presents staffing and caseload ratios for intake and support specialists at MCSEA and peers by excluding the percentage of cases in the enforcement mode.

Table 3-24: Adjusted Intake/Support Specialist Staffing Analysis

	Mahoning		Lorain	Montgomery	Tuscarawas	Peer Average
	Budgeted	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual
Total Intake & Support Specialists	50.0	37.0	28.0	28.5	20.0	25.5
Adjusted # of Cases ¹	13,663		7,883	25,954	1,532	11,790
Adjusted Cases per Intake & Support Specialists	273.3	369.3	281.5	910.7	76.6	462.4

Source: MCSEA reports, ODJFS monthly web report from MCSEA and the peers

¹Based upon the number of cases in each mode. The number of cases in the enforcement mode have been excluded. Also, cases may be maintained in more than one mode. See **Table 3-1** for more information on caseload by case mode.

By excluding the number of cases maintained in the enforcement mode, MCSEA is processing the second highest number of cases per intake and support specialist as compared to the peers. In addition, **Table 3-23** and **Table 3-24** and the analyses in this report indicate that MCSEA is adequately staffed with its currently filled intake and support specialist staff, data entry support staff and other support staff. Furthermore, this report provides numerous methods in which MCSEA can improve its processes to operate more efficiently (see **R3.1**) including increasing the number of cases maintained in the enforcement mode and subsequently improving its overall case management system. Increasing the number of cases maintained in enforcement could eventually lessen the workload involved with cases and allow the intake and support specialists at MCSEA to maintain an adequate caseload.

R3.28 Based upon the staffing analysis conducted in **F3.54** and the improvements MCSEA can make to increase the number of cases in the enforcement mode, MCSEA should consider not filling its vacant intake and support specialist positions (13.0 FTEs), data entry support staff (1.0 FTE) and other support staff positions (2.5 FTEs). If MCSEA alters its case management system (see **R3.2**), it should consider reducing 2.0 FTE supervisor positions. After MCSEA has implemented improvements to its case management system, the internal auditor and other appropriate management personnel should reassess staffing levels to determine any additional staffing changes, such as reducing the manager staffing levels especially considering that none of the peers employ a full-time manager for these areas.

Financial Implication: By not filling 13.0 FTE intake/support specialists, 1.0 FTE data entry support staff and 2.5 FTE other support staff vacant positions, MCSEA could realize an annual cost avoidance of approximately \$548,000 in salaries and benefits. By reducing 2.0 FTE supervisor positions, MCSEA could realize an annual cost savings of approximately \$93,000 in salaries and benefits.

F3.55 As indicated in **Table 3-23**, MCSEA has the second highest ratio of cases per currently filled customer service FTE as compared to the peers. The intended responsibilities of the customer service personnel include answering general telephone inquires on payment information, status information on cases, and changes in benefits and employment. The goal

of implementing a separate customer service unit at MCSEA was to limit the large number of calls which were being handled by the support specialists (case workers). However, the employees within the customer service unit never received the appropriate training in order to perform the intended responsibilities (see **F3.87**). As a result, MCSEA customer service personnel answer the calls and transfer the caller to someone who can answer the question. In addition, MCSEA customer service personnel handle all day-to-day incoming and outgoing mail.

- F3.56 Tuscarawas CSEA has developed a customer service program which encompasses 3.0 FTEs (**Table 3-23**). The customer service personnel at Tuscarawas CSEA are responsible for handling all day-to-day incoming and outgoing mail; switchboard duties; correcting all CSPC errors resulting from the mis-application of payments and answering payment related questions from the public. Based upon these additional duties, Tuscarawas CSEA customer service staff is performing more job functions as compared to MCSEA, which could also contribute to the lower number of cases maintained by Tuscarawas CSEA customer service staff.

While Tuscarawas CSEA has a separate unit responsible for customer service, Montgomery CSEA has developed and implemented a customer service program which has been recognized by its peers and the state of Ohio as a world class program (**F3.89**). Montgomery CSEA has six individuals (6.0 FTEs) which work in the call center throughout the entire day answering questions from individuals. In addition, the Montgomery CSEA customer service program uses the case workers to provide additional customer service functions. The case workers are assigned a time slot of two hours when they are responsible for answering incoming calls which the other customer service representatives can not answer. When the case workers are not answering incoming calls, they are working on their assigned caseload. As stated in **Table 3-23**, Montgomery CSEA maintains 15.5 FTEs within its call center (customer service unit). Montgomery CSEA has experienced a dramatic decrease in customer complaints as a result of its customer service program (**F3.89** and **F3.90**). Furthermore, Montgomery CSEA personnel indicated that it plans to eventually phase out the six full time individuals (6.0 FTEs) and use case workers exclusively within its call center.

- R3.29** MCSEA should provide training to its current customer service personnel so they can perform the services which were intended when developing the customer service unit (**F3.87** and **R3.46**). In addition, the customer service personnel should assume the responsibilities of the cashier positions which could be minimal and eventually be reduced by implementing a new process for handling cashier job functions (see **R3.58**). Training existing customer service personnel as well as absorbing additional functions will assist MCSEA in implementing its designed customer service unit which is similar to the customer service unit in place at Tuscarawas CSEA. Based upon the staffing levels in the customer service units of MCSEA and the peers (**Table 3-23**), MCSEA should fill its one vacant position (1.0 FTE)

in the customer service unit in order for this unit to fulfill the responsibilities of this recommendation and the additional responsibilities identified in **R3.58**. In order to ensure that the highest level of customer service is being provided, MCSEA should conduct phone studies on an ongoing basis (**R3.45**). This will assist MCSEA in conducting trend analyses, determining adequate staffing levels and identifying areas which need continuing intervention.

In the long-term, MCSEA should consider implementing a customer service unit similar to Montgomery CSEA (**R3.47**) by developing a method to more effectively use case workers to assist with customer service responsibilities. Having case workers assist with customer service activities allows the customer to speak directly to a case worker, get the response they need on first contact and reduce the number of return calls to be made. Based upon the trend analysis identified by Montgomery CSEA (**F3.90**), this customer service program should assist MCSEA in providing a higher quality service to the public thereby decreasing the number of complaints. MCSEA should use the results of its phone studies and trend analyses to determine the proper allocation of case worker assistance needed in the customer service unit. Implementation of a customer service unit similar to Montgomery CSEA would permit MCSEA to eventually phase out its full-time customer service positions and use case workers exclusively in the call center (see **R3.47**). This would result in further annual cost savings for MCSEA and the County.

Financial Implication: MCSEA would realize an additional annual cost of \$36,600 in salaries and benefits as a result of filling the one vacant customer service position.

Review & Adjustment

F3.57 Review and adjustment personnel are responsible for performing mandated modifications on current (public) assistance cases, modifications due to increases or decreases in income and modifications to cases effected by emancipations. All current assistance cases must be reviewed once every three years. In addition, any custodial or non-custodial parent can request a review of a case as long as it meets one of the eight criteria for review. These eight criteria include the following:

- There has been a loss of income for six months.
- There has been a 30 percent change in income by either party.
- Either the custodial or non-custodial parent become permanently disabled.
- Either party is permanently incarcerated.
- Either a child is emancipated or a child has been born.
- No health insurance is available.
- A minimal order was originally established.
- There is a change in circumstances which would result in a deviation from the child support guidelines.

The eight criteria are used to limit the reasons whereby a review can be requested. If a child support enforcement agency deviates from the eight criteria, it could potentially be conducting more reviews than which it is legally required to perform. MCSEA personnel have stated that it determines if one of the eight criteria are met before a review is completed. Further, a case must be reviewed within 45 days of the request (F3.59). MCSEA personnel as well as personnel from the peers have indicated that no tracking is done on the nature of a review. As a result, MCSEA and the peers can not state how many reviews were conducted because of legal requirement or how many reviews were requested based upon one of the eight criteria.

F3.58 **Table 3-25** presents a staffing analysis of the review and adjustment personnel. All staffing levels in **Table 3-25** are illustrated in FTEs.

Table 3-25: Review and Adjustment Staffing Analysis, September 2001

	Mahoning	Lorain	Montgomery	Tuscarawas	Peer Average
Supervisor	1.0	1.0	0.3	0.3	0.5
Review & Adjustment Specialist	8.0 ²	5.0	2.0	2.0	3.0
Total Review and Adjustment Staff	9.0	6.0	2.3	2.3	3.5
Supervisor to Review and Adjustment Staff	1:8.0	1:5.0	1:6.7	1:6.7	1:6.0
Number of Reviews and Adjustments ¹	2,426	1,367	1,800 ³	260	1,142
Review & Adjustments per Specialist	303.3	273.4	782.6	130.0	326.3

Source: MCSEA and peer documentation

¹ The number of reviews and adjustments is from January through September 2001.

² MCSEA has 6.0 vacant review and adjustment specialist positions.

³ Due to reporting difficulties, Montgomery CSEA could only provide the number of review and adjustments for January 2002 which was 200. Therefore, this data is projected for nine months for comparison purposes.

As illustrated in **Table 3-25**, MCSEA conducted more reviews and adjustments through September 2001 than all of the peers. In addition, the number of reviews and adjustment per specialist (303.3 to 1.0) at MCSEA is comparable to the peer average (326.3 to 1.0). The total number of reviews conducted in **Table 3-25** includes reviews of current (public) assistance cases as well as non-current (non-public) assistance cases.

The number of reviews which are conducted on an annual basis could be caused by various factors including unemployment, the use of transfer payments, the establishment of a minimal order and changes in circumstances. As stated in **Table 2-3**, the unemployment rate in Mahoning County is higher than the peer counties. **Table 3-3** indicates that the number of current assistance cases as a percentage of the County population at MCSEA (1.4 percent) is higher than the peer average (0.9 percent). Transfer payments as a percent of total personal income at MCSEA is higher than the peers, which could indicate a high use of public assistance in Mahoning County (see **Table 2-3**). The higher unemployment rate,

higher percentage of current assistance cases and higher percentage of transfer payments in Mahoning County could cause more changes in income levels, which could explain the higher number of review and adjustments at MCSEA (see **Table 3-25**). The impact of ordering minimal child support orders and changes in circumstances relating to child support orders can not be measured because MCSEA and the peers do not track this information. However, “change in circumstances” could be interpreted and defined differently by CSEAs, which could cause the number of reviews and adjustments to vary between CSEAs. If a CSEA is more lenient in interpreting “changes in circumstances,” then that would increase the number of cases reviewed.

Furthermore, the number of review and adjustments is directly impacted by current assistance cases. Because current assistance cases are required to be reviewed every three years, some CSEAs can be more diligent in getting these reviews completed than other CSEAs.

F3.59 When either a public or non-public assistance case is being reviewed, MCSEA is using an administrative process to verify the income of the parties involved. A notice is sent to both the custodial and non-custodial parents requesting reports on income. The reports must be sent back to MCSEA where personnel will review the information submitted. A draft proposal of any decisions are sent to the respective parties. If there are no objections to the decision, then a formal recommendation is prepared and submitted to the County judge for signature.

If either of the parties object to the decision rendered by MCSEA personnel, then a hearing is held with the administrative hearing officer. If an agreement is reached during this hearing, a recommendation is prepared and submitted to the County judge for signature. However, if an agreement is not reached, then a hearing date is set with either the County Domestic Relations Court or County Juvenile Court where a judge will hear the case and conduct the final review.

All cases must have the initial review completed within 45 days. Montgomery CSEA has developed an in-house system to track whether or not the cases have been reviewed within the 45 day time frame. MCSEA personnel have indicated that there is no process in place to monitor if cases are reviewed within the requirements.

R3.30 MCSEA should develop and implement an in-house system to track the nature of all reviews. The system should monitor the nature of the review (whether it is a public assistance case or a requested review) and which of the criteria are met for requested reviews. This type of system will assist MCSEA in identifying increases or decreases in reviews between years as well as potential increases or decreases in collections. In addition, MCSEA should work with ODJFS to ensure that it is interpreting “change in circumstances” appropriately and to

determine a more definitive interpretation of this criteria, which will ensure that MCSEA is not conducting an inappropriate amount of review and adjustments.

In addition to a system to track the nature of all reviews, MCSEA should seek assistance from personnel at Montgomery CSEA in developing, implementing and applying a system into its operations for determining if cases are being reviewed in compliance with the 45 day requirement. Failure to have a system in place to track how efficiently cases are reviewed hinders MCSEA's ability to determine if it is meeting legal requirements.

Based upon the staffing analysis (**F3.58**, **F3.59** and **Table 3-23**), MCSEA should consider not filling the 6.0 FTE vacant review and adjustment specialist positions. However, MCSEA should reassess its staffing levels after implementing the tracking system. The tracking system will assist MCSEA in determining if review and adjustment personnel are efficient and in identifying where improvements can be made within the operations.

Financial Implication: MCSEA could avoid incurring salary and benefit costs of about \$210,000 annually by not filling 6.0 FTE vacant review and adjustment positions.

Fiscal & Audits

F3.60 **Table 3-26** presents FY 2001 staffing information for fiscal personnel at MCSEA and the peers.

Table 3-26: Fiscal Personnel Staffing Analysis, June 2001

	Mahoning	Lorain	Montgomery	Tuscarawas	Peer Average
Managers	0.3	1.1	1.0	0.0	0.7
Supervisors	2.3	3.1	0.3	1.0	1.5
Cashiers	3.0	2.4	2.0	0.0	1.5
Fiscal Account Clerks	0.0	1.5	2.0	0.0	1.2
Auditors	10.0	2.0	9.0	2.0	4.3
Fiscal Support Staff ¹	5.3	10.7	3.1	0.0	4.6
Total Fiscal Staff	20.9	20.8	17.4	3.0	13.8
Administrators per Fiscal Staff ²	1:7.0	1:4.0	1:12.4	1:2.0	1:5.3
Fiscal Support Staff to all other staff	1:2.9	1:0.9	1:4.6	N/A	1:2.0
Receipts at Cashier Window, as of June 2001	\$700,802	\$881,177	\$1,323,075	\$0	\$734,751
Audits, as of September 2001	833	252	8,094	936	3,094
Receipts per Cashier	\$233,601	\$367,157	\$661,538	N/A	\$489,834
Audits per Auditor	83.3	126.0	899.3	468.0	719.5

Source: CSEA documents

¹ Fiscal support staff includes financial analyst, assistant analyst, purchasing agent, clerical specialist and data entry.

² For the purpose of this calculation, administrative staff are defined as managers and supervisors.

As indicated in **Table 3-26**, MCSEA has a high number of fiscal staff when compared with the peers. The number of cashiers at MCSEA (3.0 FTEs) is higher than the peers and the peer average (1.6 FTEs). As stated in **Table 2-1**, there is also one vacant cashier position (1.0 FTE). In addition, MCSEA's staffing levels in the supervisor and auditor classifications are higher than the peer average. See **F3.61** through **F3.65** for further staffing analysis in regards to fiscal personnel.

F3.61 As indicated in **Table 3-26**, MCSEA has more FTEs classified as cashiers compared to the peers and the peer average. According to MCSEA personnel, cashiers are responsible for receiving all over the counter and mail payments, processing cash payments, forwarding check payments to Child Support Processing Central (CSPC), answering client payment-related questions, and assisting with the mis-application of CSPC errors. The cashier supervisor indicated that MCSEA has attempted to minimize the number of payments sent to the agency by sending a letter to the employers; however, it continues to receive checks from employers.

Tuscarawas CSEA no longer accepts payments at its location nor does it forward checks received from employers to CSPC. When CSPC became law (**F3.116**), Tuscarawas CSEA began copying all checks and placed copies in the case files. The checks were then returned

to the employer with instructions of where to mail child support payments. Individuals who attempt to make child support payments in person at Tuscarawas CSEA are also provided information on where to send payments. As a result of this practice, Tuscarawas CSEA does not have the responsibility of receiving any monies. The cashiers were reclassified as customer service personnel. See **F3.55** and **F3.56** for further discussion on the duties of Tuscarawas CSEA customer service personnel and how the duties relate to MCSEA's cashier and customer service personnel.

R3.31 MCSEA should develop and implement a process similar to Tuscarawas CSEA by eliminating the collection of cash and checks for child support payments (see **R3.58**). If needed, MCSEA should seek assistance from Tuscarawas CSEA in developing and implementing the formal policies and procedures. CSPC was implemented so that all child support receipts and disbursement would take place in a central location. As stated in **Table 3-26**, MCSEA has received approximately \$700,000 in over-the-counter child support payments through June 2001. In addition, MCSEA continues to receive checks from employers.

To ensure that customer service is not negatively impacted by this policy, MCSEA should gradually implement this recommendation. A notice should be provided to all custodial and non-custodial parents informing them of this change. In addition, individuals who continue to make child support payments at MCSEA should be provided with another notice and personnel should fully explain the new policy that all child support payments be sent to CSPC. Taking this approach would ensure that all parties are adequately informed about this new policy.

As a result of implementing this process, MCSEA should eliminate the one vacant cashier position (1.0 FTE) and reduce the three filled cashier positions (3.0 FTEs). The remaining job functions of MCSEA's cashiers should be absorbed by the customer service personnel which is similar to the functions of the customer service personnel at Tuscarawas CSEA.

Financial Implication: MCSEA would realize an annual cost avoidance of about \$36,000 as a result of not filling the one vacant cashier position. In addition, MCSEA would realize an annual cost savings of approximately \$109,000 if it were to reduce its cashier personnel.

F3.62 The Montgomery CSEA employs two fiscal account clerks (2.0 FTEs) who are responsible for various fiscal functions related to payment corrections, recoupments, processing manual checks, releasing monies and preparing affidavits for lost checks. Some of these responsibilities (payment corrections and recoupments) are required because an error was made when the account information was posted by CSPC. However, Montgomery CSEA personnel have indicated that the posting errors made by CSPC are usually a result of errors made by employers when payment and information are submitted incorrectly. Montgomery CSEA uses a spreadsheet software package to track the errors made by employers. When

an error has been recognized, the employer is contacted and made aware of the problem. If the problem persists, then Montgomery CSEA contacts the employer again and indicates that the case will be referred to the Montgomery County Prosecutor's Office if the problem is not corrected. Montgomery CSEA must use the Montgomery County Prosecutor's Office because it does not have any attorneys on staff (**F3.66** and **Table 3-28**). The employer could be charged with employer contempt.

MCSEA does not employ fiscal account clerks within its fiscal unit. The responsibilities of the fiscal account clerks at Montgomery CSEA are completed by the MCSEA fiscal and cashier supervisor and encompasses approximately 30 percent of the supervisor's day (0.3 FTE). This is to have an additional internal control over cash sensitive and cash-related functions. The fiscal and cashier supervisor indicated that notations are made in the case files regarding why errors are made. Employers are contacted regarding errors which they made. However, MCSEA does not track this information with a spreadsheet software and it does not refer cases to its legal personnel so legal action may be taken. Not tracking the error information with a spreadsheet or database software precludes MCSEA from being able to easily identify how many errors were made and the party responsible for the errors. In addition, MCSEA would have limited supporting documentation if it were to take legal action.

R3.32 MCSEA should develop and implement either a spreadsheet software or database software in order to track the posting errors which must be adjusted. The software package should include the case number, date of the error, description of the error, the party responsible for the error and the date and contact of who was informed of the error. MCSEA should also refer cases which have frequent and routine posting errors to its legal personnel. Use of a spreadsheet or database software will assist MCSEA in analyzing error information and also serve as supporting documentation if a case is referred to the MCSEA legal personnel. Based upon conversations with the fiscal and cashier supervisor, it would appear that the current staffing levels are adequate at MCSEA and no further staffing allocations would be needed to implement this recommendation. MCSEA would incur no additional costs as it already has spreadsheet software.

F3.63 MCSEA auditors are responsible for conducting all audits which are requested by either a judge or a magistrate. An audit is needed in order to verify the account balances of a case. An audit is different from a review in that it takes into account the receipts as well as the disbursements. In order to conduct an audit on a case, an auditor at MCSEA must first compare the information in the court file as well as the case files to ensure that all facts and entries are the same. If a custodial parent has been on public assistance, the auditor must determine the dates when public assistance was used. Information is gathered from the computer systems on the payment history of the non-custodial parent. This is compared to the monthly payment schedule which was originally established. The auditors at MCSEA also examine the disbursements for each month to ensure that the amounts are allocated as

required by law. All audits are completed using spreadsheet software and the electronic file is saved. This is to minimize the work an auditor will need to do if the case must be audited in the future.

The audits conducted at MCSEA are completed in greater detail than the audits conducted by the peers. The audit supervisors at Montgomery CSEA and Tuscarawas CSEA indicated that their auditors only verify the amount which is ordered to be paid and the actual amount received. The disbursements are only examined if it is requested at a later date.

C3.1 Conducting more detailed audits provide benefits to MCSEA. All relevant parties (auditors, case workers and court personnel) have all of the needed information immediately. MCSEA and the courts fully understand the specific allocation of all payments as required by law. In addition, MCSEA is ensuring that custodial parents are receiving the fully stipulated amount of child support payments by conducting detailed audits.

F3.64 Montgomery CSEA’s internal policy is to have all requested audits by a judge or magistrate completed within one week of the hearing date. In order to track the timeliness of audits, Montgomery CSEA has developed a database which contains the date the audit was received as well as the date which the audit was assigned to the auditor. Each month, 10 audits are randomly selected for each auditor to determine the timeliness of completing the audit. Montgomery CSEA applies these results to the evaluation of each auditor. Currently, the database used by Montgomery CSEA does not include the date each audit was completed; however, personnel indicated that this could be a valuable benefit. MCSEA does not have a system in place to track the timeliness of audits.

R3.33 Because MCSEA requires its auditors to perform a more detailed audit which provides greater benefit to its operations as well as court operations, MCSEA should maintain its current 10.0 FTE auditors. However, MCSEA should develop and implement either a spreadsheet software or database software in order to track the timeliness of audits. The software should include the case number, date of the audit is requested, the individual who requested the audit, the auditor assigned to the case, and the date the audit was finalized. MCSEA should use the software to ensure that audits are completed in a timely manner. In addition, the software will assist the administrators of MCSEA in monitoring the effectiveness of its audit process, as well as determining the number of FTEs which it should maintain in its audit department. MCSEA would incur no additional costs as it already has spreadsheet software.

F3.65 MDJFS employs an internal auditor with job responsibilities equally allocated between MDJFS and MCSEA, and reports to the director of MDJFS. Some of the internal auditor’s responsibilities include: analyzing caseloads and workloads; identifying issues and problems impacting workloads and caseloads; and reporting issues to the director and assistant director of MDJFS. According to the internal auditor, this position functions more as an analyst than

as an internal auditor. Peer CSEAs indicated that many of these job responsibilities are either performed by supervisors or quality and assurance personnel. According to the director of MDJFS, the SETS coordinator is responsible for some of the case tracking and sampling to ensure accuracy and to enhance the accountability for case worker corrections.

One of the major activities completed by the internal auditor was a staffing analysis performed in 1999 to determine the number of workers needed in units to perform necessary job functions. All positions were analyzed except for the following: data entry, intake, location, distribution, and client services. The internal auditor indicated that distribution and location were not analyzed because these units would no longer be used after the SETS conversion. The staffing analysis was completed by identifying activities performed to obtain volume and workload counts for each worker. From the data collected, spreadsheets were developed to formulate calculations for analysis purposes, which is still in effect at MCSEA. **Table 3-27** presents MCSEA historical staffing levels during the past three years compared to the number of cases and amount collected during the same three years.

Table 3-27: MCSEA Caseload, Staffing and Collections, Three Year History

	FY 1999	FY 2000	FY 2001
FTEs	149.0	134.0	109.8
Cases	18,818	21,457	22,449
Cases per FTE	126.3	160.1	204.5
Collections	\$31,888,741	\$30,703,306	\$32,316,380 ¹
Collections per FTE	\$214,018	\$229,129	\$294,320

Source: SETS 4223 and 4289 reports and MCSEA records.

¹FY 2001 are projected based on collections in the first six months of 2001 and assuming collections in the remaining six months are constant (see **Table 3-21**).

As shown in **Table 3-27**, the number of cases and collections per FTE increased over the three year time period indicating more efficient staffing levels at MCSEA. Due to the implementation of SETS and CSPC, job functions at CSEAs had to be reassessed and analyzed. Based upon these changes, MCSEA was proactive in taking measures to alter staffing levels by having the internal auditor conduct an activity-based staffing analysis.

C3.2 By having an internal auditor perform these types of activities is indicating that MCSEA is committed to enhancing its operational efficiency. Determining the adequacy of staffing levels is an important function of any organization.

R3.34 MCSEA should expand the role of the internal auditor to continue to assess staffing levels on a periodic basis and perform additional activities intended to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of its operations. For example, this report provides numerous recommendations that the internal auditor could assist in implementing including developing

agency-wide performance measures (see **R3.55**), monitoring progress in achieving goals and objectives (see **R3.54** and **R3.55**), and conducting additional staffing analyses after specific improvements have been made to the case management system (see **R3.28** and **R3.36**). In addition, the internal auditor and MCSEA management should develop an appropriate method of planning various audit-related activities to ensure that the purpose and goals of an audit activity are fully understood and subsequently achieved.

Legal Unit

F3.66 MCSEA and the peers have legal units which are responsible for handling all legal matters facing child support cases. The following is a description of the job duties for the staffing classifications within the legal unit at MCSEA.

- The *supervising attorney* is responsible for supervising the day-to-day operations within the legal unit. Unlike the attorneys at MCSEA, the supervising attorney is not responsible for preparing and presenting cases to court or the preparation of legal briefs, pleadings and correspondence due to the classification of this positions as a non-bargaining unit employee.
- The *attorneys* are responsible for reviewing, preparing and presenting legal briefs, pleadings and correspondence. Attorneys are also responsible for reviewing referrals; answering questions from MCSEA staff and clients; and writing judgment entries.
- The *hearing officer* is responsible for conducting the administrative hearings; reviewing and assessing testimony and evidence; drafting findings and recommendations; and answering telephone inquiries.
- The *support staff* include clerical personnel. The clerical personnel are responsible for assisting the attorneys and the hearing officer in managing child support documents, updating SETS screens, and producing various administrative documents. The support staff supervisor oversees the day-to-day operations of the support staff as well as assists with the processing of judgment orders.

The responsibilities of the legal personnel at the peers have similar job functions as the legal personnel at MCSEA. The major difference is within the attorney classification at Lorain CSEA and Montgomery CSEA who do not have in-house attorneys on staff. All cases requiring legal work are referred to the county prosecutor's office. In addition, no administrative process that is objected to by the non-custodial parents may be settled without referring the case to the prosecutor's office.

C3.3 Employing attorneys on-site allows MCSEA to avoid sending cases to the prosecutor's office. As a result, MCSEA can work on and resolve legal issues in a more timely manner; and subsequently provide more efficient services to its clients. However, MCSEA could better utilize attorneys on-site by increasing the use of administrative processes and enforcement tools (see **R3.6**)

F3.67 The MCSEA hearing officer is the only individual at MCSEA who can conduct administrative hearings. This is because the other attorneys have not received the necessary training to conduct administrative hearings, which could limit the number of hearings conducted at MCSEA. During June 2001, the MCSEA hearing officer was on a leave of absence. As a result, no administrative hearings could be held because none of the other attorneys on staff had the necessary training. In contrast, Tuscarawas CSEA attorneys also function as hearing officers.

R3.35 MCSEA should require that all attorneys receive the necessary training in order to function as hearing officers. The more personnel which are able to hold administrative hearings will assist MCSEA in performing certain job functions more efficiently. During the course of this audit, the MCSEA hearing officer indicated that one of the other attorneys has received the necessary training and will begin conducting some administrative hearings. In addition, it is the intent of the MCSEA supervising attorney to have all attorneys receive the necessary hearing officer training.

F3.68 **Table 3-28** presents FY 2001 staffing ratios for legal personnel at MCSEA and the peers. All staffing levels are illustrated in FTEs. Although file room personnel are responsible for filing and maintaining the case files and performing tasks related to the entire agency, not solely the legal unit, an analysis of these staffing levels will be conducted in this section because these personnel report to the support staff supervisor.

Table 3-28: Legal Personnel Staffing Analysis

	Mahoning	Lorain	Montgomery	Tuscarawas	Peer Average
Supervising Attorney	1.0	0.0	1.0	0.5	0.8
Attorneys	3.0	N/A ⁵	14.5 ⁶	N/A ⁷	N/A
Hearing Officers	1.0	2.0	4.0	2.5 ⁷	N/A
Total Hearing Officers/Attorneys	4.0	N/A ⁵	18.5	2.5 ⁷	10.5 ⁸
Supervisors	1.0	0.0	1.5	0.0	0.8 ⁸
Support Staff ¹	6.0 ²	2.0	N/A ¹	3.0	2.5 ¹⁰
Total Legal Staff	12.0 ³	N/A ⁵	N/A ⁶	6.0	N/A
Supervisors to Legal Staff	1:5.0	N/A	1:7.0	1:11.0	1:7.6
Number of Administrative Hearings Held	569 ⁴	1,292 ⁴	2,235 ⁴	431 ⁴	1,319
Number of Cases (June 2001)	22,449	24,901	50,459	6,748	27,369.0
Administrative Hearings to Case Ratio	1:39.5	1:19.3	1:22.6	1:15.6	1:20.8
Administrative Hearings per Hearing Officer	569.0	646.0	558.8	N/A ⁷	602.4 ⁹
Administrative Hearings per Hearing Officer & Attorney	142.3	N/A ⁵	120.8	172.4	125.6
Administrative Hearings per Support Staff	94.8	646.0	N/A ¹	143.7	527.6
Administrative Hearings per Total Legal Staff	47.4	N/A ⁵	N/A ⁶	71.8	N/A
Records Room Personnel	3.0 ²	2.0	11.0	2.0	5.0
Number of Cases per Records Room Personnel	7,483.0	12,450.5	4,587.2	3,374.0	5,473.8

Source: MCSEA and the peers

¹ Support staff includes various clerical personnel. The Montgomery County Prosecutor’s Office has support staff assigned to CSEA cases. However, an estimate from the Prosecutor’s Office could not be provided.

² MCSEA has 2.0 FTE vacant support staff positions and 2.0 FTE vacant records room personnel.

³ Currently, the legal services coordinator position at MCSEA is vacant. None of the peers have a legal services coordinator position.

⁴ Because the MCSEA hearing officer was on a leave of absence during June 2001, no administrative hearings were held. Therefore, the peers’ data have been adjusted to show an eight month total of administrative hearings.

⁵ Lorain CSEA refers cases requiring legal work to the prosecutor’s office. An estimate of FTEs could not be provided.

⁶ Montgomery CSEA refer cases requiring legal work to the prosecutor’s office. According to the director of MCSEA, about 14.5 FTEs at the prosecutor’s office work on CSEA cases. However, an estimate from the Prosecutor’s Office for support staff could not be provided.

⁷ Tuscarawas CSEA attorneys are also hearing officers. In addition, the supervising attorney is also a full-time attorney.

⁸ Does not include Lorain CSEA because an FTE estimate for attorneys could not be provided, which could impact staffing levels in this area.

⁹ Does not include Tuscarawas CSEA.

¹⁰ Does not include Montgomery CSEA.

As indicated in **Table 3-28**, MCSEA conducted a significantly lower number of administrative hearings as compared to the peers. As discussed in **F3.6**, MCSEA is performing a limited number of administrative processes. Administrative processes are used by child support enforcement agencies in order to conduct various activities quickly and minimize the amount of cases which must appear in court. The fewer administrative processes which are used could result in a fewer number of administrative hearings, which

could explain the lower number of administrative hearings held at MCSEA. **Table 3-28** shows that MCSEA is conducting an adequate number of administrative hearings per hearing officer and attorney. However, MCSEA is conducting a significantly lower number of administrative hearings per support staff as compared to Lorain and Tuscarawas CSEAs. In addition, Montgomery CSEA indicated that it intends to work with the prosecutor's office to have the attorneys work under the authority of CSEA. According to the director of Montgomery CSEA, 4.0 FTE attorneys would be able to effectively handle the workload in its legal unit. Furthermore, current staffing levels in the records room appear to be adequate based upon the number of cases per FTE compared to the peer average.

R3.36 MCSEA should conduct more administrative processes to provide clients with services in a more timely manner (see **R3.6**), which would result in more administrative hearings being conducted. After MCSEA has conducted administrative processes for a certain length of time, staffing levels in the legal unit should be fully assessed. MCSEA should determine if staffing resources need to be reallocated within the legal unit. For example, MCSEA could reallocate current support staff positions to hearing officer and attorney positions once additional administrative processes are being conducted, which would minimize the personnel costs associated with altering the legal unit staffing levels. **Table 3-29** presents revised staffing comparisons assuming that MCSEA conducts additional administrative process and subsequently conducts the peer average of one administrative hearing for every 20 cases (see **Table 3-28**), which would result in approximately 1,100 administrative hearings.

Table 3-29: Revised Legal Personnel Staffing Analysis

	Mahoning	Lorain	Montgomery	Tuscarawas	Peer Average
Supervising Attorney	1.0	0.0	1.0	0.5	0.8
Attorneys	3.0	N/A ⁵	14.5 ⁶	N/A ⁷	N/A
Hearing Officers	1.0	2.0	4.0	2.5 ⁷	N/A
Total Hearing Officers/Attorneys	4.0	N/A ⁵	18.5	2.5 ⁷	10.5 ⁸
Supervisors	1.0	0.0	1.5	0.0	0.8 ⁸
Support Staff ¹	6.0 ²	2.0	N/A ¹	3.0	2.5 ¹⁰
Total Legal Staff	12.0 ³	N/A ⁵	N/A ⁶	6.0	N/A
Supervisors to Legal Staff	1:5.0	N/A	1:7.0	1:11.0	1:7.6
Number of Administrative Hearings Held	1,100 ⁴	1,292 ⁴	2,235 ⁴	431 ⁴	1,319
Number of Cases (June 2001)	22,449	24,901	50,459	6,748	27,369.0
Administrative Hearings to Case Ratio	1:20.4	1:19.3	1:22.6	1:15.6	1:20.8
Administrative Hearings per Hearing Officer	1,100.0	646.0	558.8	N/A ⁷	602.4 ⁹
Administrative Hearings per Hearing Officer & Attorney	275.0	N/A ⁵	120.8	172.4	125.6
Administrative Hearings per Support Staff	183.3	646.0	N/A ¹	143.7	527.6
Administrative Hearings per Total Legal Staff	91.7	N/A ⁵	N/A ⁶	71.8	N/A
Records Room Personnel	3.0 ²	2.0	11.0	2.0	5.0
Number of Cases per Records Room Personnel	7,483.0	12,450.5	4,587.2	3,374.0	5,473.8

Source: MCSEA and the peers

¹ Support staff includes various clerical personnel. The Montgomery County Prosecutor’s Office has support staff assigned to CSEA cases. However, an estimate from the Prosecutor’s Office could not be provided.

² MCSEA has 2.0 FTE vacant support staff positions and 2.0 FTE vacant records room personnel.

³ Currently, the legal services coordinator position at MCSEA is vacant. None of the peers have a legal services coordinator position.

⁴ Because the MCSEA hearing officer was on a leave of absence during June 2001, no administrative hearings were held. Therefore, the peers’ data have been adjusted to show an eight month total of administrative hearings.

⁵ Lorain CSEA refers cases requiring legal work to the prosecutor’s office. An estimate of FTEs could not be provided.

⁶ Montgomery CSEA refer cases requiring legal work to the prosecutor’s office. According to the director of MCSEA, about 14.5 FTEs at the prosecutor’s office work on CSEA cases. However, an estimate from the Prosecutor’s Office for support staff could not be provided.

⁷ Tuscarawas CSEA attorneys are also hearing officers. In addition, the supervising attorney is also a full-time attorney.

⁸ Does not include Lorain CSEA because an FTE estimate for attorneys could not be provided, which could impact staffing levels in this area.

⁹ Does not include Tuscarawas CSEA.

¹⁰ Does not include Montgomery CSEA.

MCSEA should fully evaluate staffing levels once additional administrative processes are being conducted. Based upon the staffing analyses in **Tables 3-28** and **3-29**, MCSEA should not fill the 2.0 vacant support staff positions, 2.0 vacant records room personnel and the 1.0 FTE vacant legal services coordinator position. If MCSEA does not implement additional administrative processes comparable to the peers (see **R3.6**), it should not add or fill any positions in the legal unit, and it should consider reducing additional staffing levels within

support staff. According to MCSEA, administrative procedures for emancipations and terminations, FIDM, and driver’s license suspension have been developed prior to the final release of this performance audit.

Financial Implication: By not filling 2.0 FTEs vacant support staff positions, 2.0 FTEs records room personnel and 1.0 FTE vacant legal services coordinator position, MCSEA could realize an annual cost avoidance of approximately \$158,000 in salaries and benefits.

Human Resources

F3.69 While the County has a centralized human resources department, individual agencies within the County have personnel designated to perform key human resources related functions. Within MDJFS including MCSEA, there are five employees (5.0 FTEs) who have human resources functions. Approximately 2.2 FTEs are dedicated to MCSEA human resources functions.

The Bureau of National Affairs and the Society of Human Resource Management (BNA-SHRM) produced a report in 2000 which identifies median ratios for various industries for human resources staffing. The BNA-SHRM report indicates that in 2000, the national median ratio for human resources staffing in the education/government sector is 0.8 human resources FTEs per 100.0 FTEs. However, this study does not take into consideration human resources personnel within payroll related functions. **Table 3-30** compares MDJFS and MCSEA human resources staffing levels with the County central human resources department and other various agencies within the County, as well as comparison to the BNA-SHRM median ratio.

Table 3-30: Human Resources Staffing Analysis of County Agencies

	Central HR Department ¹ / MBOCC Departments	MDJFS and MCSEA	Sheriff's Office	MRDD	Engineer	CSB ²	Other Appointing Authorities	Total
Number of FTEs	206.0 ³	360 ³	259.0	270.0	115.0	109.0	465.0	1,784.0
Human Resources FTE's	4.0	5.0	1.0	0.5	1.0	0.5	N/A ⁴	12.0
Human Resources FTEs per 100.0 FTEs	2.0	1.4	0.4	0.2	0.9	0.5	0.0	0.7
Human Resources FTEs over/(under) 2000 BNA-SHRM Median Ratio	1.2 ⁵	0.6	(0.4)	(0.6)	0.1	0.3	(0.8)	(0.1)

Source: December 2000 Mahoning County staff listing from the PeopleSoft system

¹ The Mahoning County central human resources department represents all MBOCC employees.

² Mahoning County Children’s Services Board

³ The number of FTEs excludes the FTEs of the other departments included in **Table 3-30**.

⁴ The number of FTEs can not be estimated since human resources functions are a fraction of responsibilities for these appointing authorities.

⁵ These FTEs coordinate personnel functions for the entire County, not just the employees under the MBOCC.

In comparison to other County agencies and the County central human resources department, it would appear that the total staffing levels for human resources related functions at MDJFS including MCSEA appears to be adequate. However, as indicated, only 2.2 FTEs are responsible for the human resources related functions at MCSEA.

F3.70 **Table 3-31** compares human resources dedicated FTEs at MCSEA to the peers. **Table 3-31** also compares the human resources FTE allocation at MCSEA and the peers to the 2000 BNA-SHRM education/government industry standard of 0.8 FTEs per 100.0 FTEs.

Table 3-31: Human Resource Staffing Analysis

	Mahoning	Lorain	Montgomery	Tuscarawas	Peer Average
Number of FTEs	109.8	71.9	109.6	48.0	76.5
Human Resources Manager ¹	0.4	0.1	0.3	0.3	0.2
Human Resource Support Staff ¹	1.8	0.5	1.2	0.5	0.7
Total Human Resources FTEs ¹	2.2	0.6	1.5	0.8	0.9
Administrators per Human Resources Support Staff	1:4.5	1:5.0	1:4.0	1:1.7	1:3.5
Human Resources FTE per 100.0 FTEs	2.0	0.8	1.4	1.7	1.2
Dedicated Human Resources FTEs over/ (under) 2000 BNA-SHRM industry standard	1.2	0.0	0.6	0.9	0.4

Source: CSEA documents from MCSEA and the peers

¹ These human resources FTEs are dedicated to just CSEA operations.

According to **Table 3-31**, the number of dedicated human resources staff at MCSEA is 1.2 FTEs higher than the 2000 BNA-SHRM standard of 0.8 FTE per 100.0 FTEs. However, human resources personnel identified in **Table 3-31** includes an individual (1.0 FTE) who is responsible for payroll related functions. If this individual is not included in the analysis conducted in **Table 3-31**, MCSEA has 1.1 human resources FTEs per 100 FTEs. This is 0.3 FTEs greater than the 2000 BHA-SHRM median ratio and less than the peer average.

According to the director of Mahoning County’s central human resources department, the responsibilities of MCSEA human resources personnel expanded when the PeopleSoft system was introduced into MCSEA’s operations. Responsibilities became more payroll sensitive which could explain the higher staffing levels. There has also been some difficulty in the installation of the PeopleSoft system. Finally, due to the three separate bargaining units and three separate union contracts maintained within MCSEA, human resources personnel at MCSEA have increased responsibilities as compared to the peers (see **F3.79**). The director further indicated that after PeopleSoft is fully implemented, any reduction in

responsibilities will be filled by additional responsibilities identified in the performance audit conducted on the central human resources department (see the **personnel and benefits** section of the Mahoning County Performance Audit).

R3.37 MDJFS should work together with County personnel in order to complete and implement the PeopleSoft system into MCSEA's operations in a timely and efficient manner. This will enhance information management and record keeping for MCSEA human resources personnel. In addition, it will increase the efficiency and effectiveness of human resources operations.

As indicated by the County human resources director, the additional bargaining units in MCSEA increases the workload of MCSEA human resources personnel. However, after the PeopleSoft system has been fully implemented into MCSEA operations, human resources personnel should experience a reduction in responsibilities. As a result, these personnel should assume additional responsibilities relating to the development and implementation of a compensation and classification plan and other activities identified in the **personnel and benefits** section of the Mahoning County performance audit released on January 9, 2002. As noted in that performance audit, the County's central human resources department may need to seek additional resources in completing this task.

Personnel Issues & Training

F3.71 According to MDJFS's policy and procedure manual, an exit interview is to be conducted when an employee voluntarily terminates employment. However, MCSEA personnel have indicated that this procedure is not followed. Generally, exit interviews provide an employer with the opportunity to determine an employee's reason for leaving the organization. Exit interviews also assist an organization in identifying and tracking the reasons for employee turnover, as well as developing programs designed to minimized future turnover.

At Montgomery CSEA, all employees receive an exit interview upon termination of their employment. The personnel office for the Montgomery DJFS is responsible for completing the exit interview and necessary paperwork. The employees are asked for their reason of departure as well as their satisfaction or dissatisfaction in various areas. Upon completing the exit interview and necessary paperwork, the personnel office forwards all comments to the assistant director of Montgomery CSEA where the comments are discussed with the division administrator. Although the Montgomery CSEA does not compile annual results from the exit interviews, the agency does conduct an employee survey which is distributed to the employees. The survey is to inquire what current employees think of the organization and from that information, the agency can determine potential changes within the organization.

R3.38 MDJFS should develop, implement and follow a formal exit interview process for employees including MCSEA similar to the one in place at Montgomery DJFS. The exit interview should be a one-on-one interview with the employee conducted by the human resources department. During the exit interview, the employee can discuss reasons for leaving and express opinions on such topics as job classification, training and evaluations. Feedback should also be received regarding any suggestions which the employee has to improve the operations of working conditions. Upon completion of the exit interview and completion of the appropriate forms, the MCSEA section chief and other supervisors should discuss the exit interview to determine if any actions should be taken to improve the operations or working conditions of MCSEA.

MDJFS should also prepare an annual compilation of the exit interview comments. The annual compilation should summarize key points emphasized during the exit interview. This should assist County and MDJFS administration in analyzing issues raised during the exit interview process.

F3.72 MCSEA is responsible for its own recruitment initiatives as well as filling its vacancies. However, MCSEA personnel indicated that it does not participate in any recruitment initiatives but it is looking at various recruiting options. MCSEA maintains applications on file and uses these to fill vacancies within the organization. The peer CSEAs have also indicated that no formal recruiting initiatives are conducted.

R3.39 MCSEA should examine the various types of recruiting resources and activities which can be used to increase the number of candidates for each vacant position and work with the County's Central HR Department in using additional recruiting resources. Increasing the number of candidates increases the likelihood of hiring qualified individuals. Various types of recruiting resources which MCSEA may want to consider using include the following:

- Post job vacancies with the MBOCC, Ohio Bureau of Employment Services, minority agencies, social services agencies, college and universities;
- Advertise in trade journals and newspapers;
- Conduct presentations at college and university career fairs;
- Utilize internet recruiting services; and
- Establish a job line (a separate phone line that individuals can call to find out about available positions).

MCSEA should also examine the benefits of implementing a policy which rewards employees for recruiting candidates to fill vacant positions. During the performance audit on the Cuyahoga County Juvenile Court, it was discovered that the Hamilton County Juvenile Court instituted a policy which rewards employees for recruiting candidates to fill vacant positions. Upon successful completion of the new employee probationary period, the employee who made the referral receives a "Recruitment Incentive Day." The recruitment

incentive day is one day of paid leave which can be accrued from year to year. Implementing such a policy will encourage employees to recruit for vacant job positions as well as increase the number of candidates eligible for each position.

F3.73 According to MCSEA personnel, there is no formal mentoring program developed and implemented for new personnel hired at MCSEA. As stated in an article titled “The Mentor” in the February 2000 issue of *Training & Development*, “the traditional use of the word *mentor* connotes a person outside one’s usual chain of command who ‘helps me understand this crazy organization.’” As a result of MCSEA not having a formal mentoring program, new employees may not fully understand the policies and procedures of Mahoning County or MCSEA or be comfortable understanding and completing job duties and responsibilities. According to the director of MDJFS, help desk staff are on site to help assist new employees.

R3.40 MCSEA should develop and implement a formal mentoring program into its daily operations for all personnel and guidelines should be included in the policies and procedures manual. The human resources director for MCSEA should be responsible for contacting individual supervisors to determine who will be the senior staff member assigned to mentor the new employee. The mentoring program policy should include the following:

- The policy should state the length of time that the mentoring program will be in effect for each new hire. It is recommended that each new employee interact with their mentor for at least 30 days. However, during the mentoring period, interaction between the new employee and the mentor can take place in the form of direct or indirect interaction.
- There should be daily interaction between the mentor and the new employee. The daily interaction does not necessarily need to last for an entire day; however, it should give an opportunity for the new employee to ask pertinent questions, as well as receive guidance on different job tasks and assignments.
- A schedule should be prepared and followed for each day of the mentoring program. The schedule should include discussions on policies and procedures applicable to Mahoning County, MCSEA operations, job tasks and other related topics.

By developing and implementing a mentoring program, MCSEA will be making an effort to assist new employees feel comfortable, learn their jobs and be effective and efficient in their new daily tasks.

F3.74 MDJFS has a SETS training unit which is responsible for providing training and cross-training for new and current employees within MCSEA. In addition, help desk staff are on site to help assist MCSEA employees. All new employees receive one week of training on SETS through documentation as well as hands-on training. After training has been

completed, it is the responsibility of each employee's supervisor to ensure that the SETS system is understood and being used correctly. Supervisors make these decisions based upon the review of the employee's work as well as personal interaction with the employee. One or two day SETS refresher courses are also offered to new or current staff members. According to the chief steward of Teamsters Local 377, MCSEA is in the process of expanding the job duties of the SETS training unit to include all types of training for staff.

In addition to SETS training, MDJFS also is responsible for providing training to MCSEA employees in many different areas including the following: confidentiality, customer service, interstate cases, telephone, administrative enforcement techniques and GroupWise. In addition, when employees are notified of training courses which are being offered, it is up to the supervisor to ensure that the employees attend. If an employee does not attend, the supervisor must ensure that the employee receives the necessary information.

F3.75 While training personnel indicated that the current level of training being offered is adequate to the needs of MCSEA, other personnel have indicated there is not enough training given to employees. MCSEA appears to not be using aspects of the SETS system effectively or to its full functionality. Aspects of SETS not being used effectively at MCSEA include the following:

- MCSEA personnel indicated that less than 10 percent of its employees have received training on how to effectively use new hire reporting (see **F3.23** and **R3.18**).
- Adequate training about the necessary procedures for case workers to properly enter information in the medical support order (MSO) screen has not been provided (see **F3.49** and **R3.25**).
- MCSEA does not appear to be using SETS quarterly reports on a consistent basis to monitor the types of services required by MCSEA clients (see **F3.47** and **R3.24**). According to the director of MDJFS, help desk staff are on site to help assist employees with SETS issues.

MCSEA customer service personnel are not adequately trained (see **F3.87** and **R3.46**). In addition, MCSEA has not used the FIDM enforcement tool (see **F3.16**), so additional training on effectively using this tool is highly warranted. Furthermore, MCSEA does not have a formal policy of disseminating information that select personnel gain through certain training classes to other employees.

F3.76 MCSEA personnel are not effectively cross-trained in certain areas. For instance, there is only one employee at MCSEA trained on administrative hearings (see **F3.67**) and the case workers only handle specific activities associated with a case (**F3.2**). This could have an impact on the number of administrative hearings which MCSEA can conduct and the overall effectiveness of MCSEA's case management and assignment process.

According to various personnel, there is no standard stipulating the minimum number of hours of training which should be given to employees working at a child support enforcement agency. However, e-Knowledge Source (a company with expertise in business performance measurement and expertise), indicates that “three quarters of employees now consider training as important as salary, health insurance and a short work week.” In addition, e-Knowledge Source has also stated that “95 percent of employees think their career prospects are increased by training.”

F3.77 Montgomery CSEA has developed a formal in-house training program which lasts approximately three months for new employees. The in-house training begins with an overview of operations, a SETS overview and SETS hands-on training. When that portion of the training is completed, the individual is assigned to a team leader who functions as a mentor to ensure the staff are knowledgeable of the training recently completed. Furthermore, Montgomery CSEA indicated that current employees are provided with ongoing training through its in-house program. For example, Montgomery CSEA provided an in-house training update to its staff, court employees and prosecutor’s office about the recent PRWORA changes in SETS.

R3.41 MCSEA should conduct an employee survey to determine all of the staff’s training needs. While MCSEA personnel indicated that a standard evaluation form is used to evaluate the adequacy of the training provided, MCSEA should develop procedures to ensure that employees are filling out the evaluation forms. MCSEA should also develop an annual compilation of all training evaluations to determine if the needs of the employees are being met and to determine what changes should be made to the training programs. In addition, MCSEA should establish a formal reporting system to inform all employees of knowledge gained from training classes attended by select personnel.

Merely sending staff to training classes does not ensure that employees will be adequately trained in important job functions. Therefore, supervisors should ensure that employees fully understand information obtained through training classes. In addition, supervisors should ensure that employees are effectively applying knowledge gained from these training classes in their daily work. MCSEA management should follow-up with supervisors on a periodic basis about employees’ progress since attending a training class.

MCSEA should also establish a formal mentoring program to supplement the one week of training provided to new employees (see **R3.40**). Further, MCSEA should consider cross-training employees to perform additional job functions to ensure that operations are not adversely impacted during absences and leaves. However, cross-training issues are subject to collective bargaining agreements, so MCSEA should consider including this provision in future negotiations. Ensuring that MCSEA employees are effectively trained to perform their job functions could improve the quality of services provided to its clients.

F3.78 **Table 3-32** indicates key information in regards to the performance based evaluation process of child support enforcement agency employees.

Table 3-32: Evaluation Process

<i>Frequency of evaluations:</i>	
During the introductory “probation” period	Line staff employees are evaluated once after three months of employment and a second time after six months of employment. Supervisors are evaluated once after two months of employment and a second time after four months of employment.
After the introductory “probation” period	All employees are evaluated on an annual basis. In addition, special performance evaluations are conducted to recognize an employee for outstanding performance or to convey improvement in a previously unacceptable area.
Is there a process which assist employees who exhibit poor performance?	A performance improvement plan may be included but is not required to be completed by the employee and the supervisor in areas where an employee needs improvement.
Are evaluation forms included in the personnel policies and procedures manual?	No
When was the last update of the evaluation forms?	1998
<i>Quality of evaluation forms:</i>	
Number of criteria evaluated	Between 10 and 13
Is the evaluation form aligned with job descriptions?	No
Rating System	Outstanding, Exceeds standards, Meets standards, Below standards and Unacceptable.
Is attendance a rated criteria?	Yes

Source: MCSEA Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual

During the evaluation process, if it is determined that employees need to improve their performance in certain areas, a performance improvement plan can be developed. Although the director of MDJFS indicated that corrective action plans are a part of on-going supervision, there is no policy which currently requires a performance improvement plan to be developed. In addition, **Table 3-32** states that employee evaluations are not directly tied to job descriptions. This is due, in part, to the lack of job descriptions for every employee within MCSEA. In addition, job descriptions have not been updated frequently based upon current responsibilities of individuals.

C3.4 The frequency of evaluations allows MCSEA to evaluate employees efficiently. Including attendance in the evaluation process permits a higher degree of accountability for attendance in the evaluation process. Furthermore, not including a sample evaluation in the personnel policies and procedures manual allows MCSEA to modify evaluations when necessary.

R3.42 MCSEA should develop and implement a policy which requires that a performance action plan be created for all employees who receive sub-par evaluations in a particular area. The performance action plan should be developed by the supervisor and the employee and should be designed to help identify specific areas where performance can be improved upon and actions taken in order implement the plan. The performance action plan can be used as a tool of MCSEA to improve employee performance as well as organizational performance.

Employees should be evaluated against the criteria and responsibilities specified within the job descriptions. After MCSEA creates and updates job descriptions for each position, managers and supervisors should ensure that all evaluations are related to the job description for each position. Job descriptions are used to provide employees a clear understanding as to their responsibilities and the criteria by which they will be evaluated.

Collective Bargaining Agreements & Compensation

F3.79 This section of the performance audit focuses on comparing collective bargaining agreements at MCSEA to the peers. MCSEA has three separate collective bargaining agreements: AFSCME #3577 for line staff, Teamsters #377 for attorneys and hearing officers, and Teamsters #377 for supervisors. According to the director of Mahoning County's Central Human Resources Department, the only difference between the two Teamster agreements is that the County provides for continuing education and parking spaces in the attorney agreement. In contrast to MCSEA, Lorain and Montgomery CSEAs have one collective bargaining agreement representing direct child support services staff. In addition, Tusawaras CSEA does not have any collective bargaining agreements. Negotiating, managing, interpreting, and maintaining three separate collective bargaining agreements for one county department requires numerous management and union resources.

F3.80 According to the State Employment Relations Board (SERB) personnel, any public employee has the right to seek union representation. However, supervisors are under an additional constraint of the Ohio Revised Code (ORC) § 4117.01F, which states that a supervisor is not eligible to join a bargaining unit if the employee has the authority to do all of the following:

- Hire, transfer, suspend, lay off, recall, promote, discharge, assign, reward, or discipline other public employees;
- Have responsibly to direct employees;
- Adjust employee grievances; or

- Effectively recommend such action, if the exercise of that authority is not merely routine or clerical in nature, but requires the use of independent judgment.

Based on the definition provided by the ORC, it would be reasonable to assume if supervisors have not been given the authority to perform the duties as described, then they are not, in effect, supervising and should not be classified as such.

The events that lead to the unionization of the supervisors at MCSEA began in 1994 when attempts were made to negotiate a compensation package that would place supervisors in a pay scale above the staff they supervised. According to the chief steward, this attempt failed and employees at the supervisory level then agreed to pursue union representation.

Two separate elections were held on the same day, December 4, 1997, which later resulted in a board certified unit known as the Teamsters Local #377 for MCSEA supervisors (non-professional) and attorneys (professional) personnel. The executive director of SERB indicated that it is not unusual to maintain separate contracts of this nature, especially considering that all parties agreed to the separate contracts by specifically stipulating this separation in the agreements. Further, attempting to combine the two Teamsters agreements into one contract would take a significant amount of management and union resources because the stipulations establishing the separation of agreements are very strict and clearly defined. However, the last set of negotiations for both Teamsters agreements occurred simultaneously (i.e., multi-unit bargaining) to save time and resources involved with holding separate negotiations for each agreement.

Additionally, the executive director of SERB indicated that even though agreements were made between the County and the Teamsters, significant changes to the agency could warrant re-examining the participating positions within the bargaining unit to determine if eligibility still exists. Changes such as the restructuring proposal within customer service, lay-offs, and combining MCSEA with the Department of Job and Family Services all may qualify as significant changes within the agency.

A random selection and review of three Teamster bargaining unit job descriptions, all dated May 20, 1998, suggest that supervisors appear to meet the criteria of ORC § 4117.01F. Therefore, it appears that these job classifications may need to be reassessed to adequately determine any potential contradictions to the stipulations set forth in ORC § 4117.01F.

F3.81 **Table 3-33** illustrates the major policies for direct child support services staff in MCSEA and peers' union contracts.

Table 3-33: Comparison of Staff Union Contracts

	Mahoning AFSCME #3577	Lorain, UAAAW #2192 ³	Montgomery AFSCME #101	Tuscarawas Policy
Number of actual hours worked each day.	8.0, each bargaining unit employee shall receive 3% hourly increase in lieu of 15 minutes paid lunch. ²	7.5	8.0	8.0
Max. # sick leave days	Accrued at 4.6 per 80 hours worked to an unlimited amount.	Accrued at 4.0 per 80 hours worked to an unlimited amount	Accrued at 4.6 per 80 hours worked to an unlimited amount	Accrued at 4.6 per 80 hours worked to an unlimited amount
Sick and personal leave incentives	When an employee uses no non-FMLA sick leave, no more than 1 emergency vacation call-off and 24 hour notice on personal leaves every quarter, they will earn 2 hours of personal leave per quarter.	None	When an employee uses no non-FMLA sick leave, in a calendar year, one additional personal day is awarded.	None
Max. # of sick days paid out at retirement	25% of accumulated, unused sick leave up to 30 days	Upon separation with five years or more public service under PERS, employee shall receive cash payment of sick leave not to exceed 62.5 days.	33% of first 30 days accumulated, unused sick leave hours; 50% of second 20 days accumulated, unused sick leave hours and 100% of the remaining 40 days for a maximum payment of 60 days	25% of accumulated unused sick leave up to 30 days.
Number of years required for severance pay ¹	Ten years from active service in county plus eligibility with PERS requirements.	Ten years from active service under PERS agreement or permanent disability regardless of service years.	Ten years from active service in county plus eligibility with PERS requirements.	Ten or more years of service in county plus eligibility with PERS requirements.
Vacation time accumulation	1 - 7 years: 10 days 8 - 14 years: 15 days 15 - 22 years: 20 days 23+ years: 25 days	1 - 8 years: 10 days 8 - 15 years: 15 days 15 - 25: 20 days 25 + years: 25 days	1 - 6 years: 10 days 7 - 12 years: 15 days 13 - 18 years: 20 days 18+ years: 25 days	1 - 8 years: 10 days 8 - 15 years: 15 days 15 - 25 years: 20 days 25+ years: 25 days
Number of personal days	4 days per year	4 days per year	2 days per year	None
Union leave for representation/ official business	Stewards: maximum 10 hours per month (120 hours annually) Alternate Stewards: maximum 5 hours per month (60 hours annually) Total maximum hours used by stewards and alternate stewards can not exceed 40 hours per month (480 hours annually). All hours are paid by the County.	Employer shall allow stewards or alternate stewards (up to five each) a reasonable amount of time off with pay to conduct appropriate Union representational business.	Stewards: 75 hours Chief stewards: 100 hours Chapter Chairpersons: 150 hours annually, excluding time spent in fourth step grievance meetings. All hours listed are paid by the County. (325 hours annually)	N/A
Union leave for attending seminars, meetings and conventions	Union president is granted 5 days per year paid by County and 5 days paid by Union. Union president determines which union officials are eligible to use leave.	70 days per contract year (560 hours) for up to a total of 10 employees. Union reimburses employer for total employee cost while on union leave.	A maximum of 96 hours of paid leave per calendar year to be divided among Chapter Chairpersons, Vice Chairpersons, and stewards. No more than 16 hours may be approved per employee in a calendar year. All hours listed are paid by the County.	N/A
Days to file a grievance	5 working days	5 working days	7 working days	5 working days

Source: MSCEA, Lorain and Montgomery Collective Bargaining Agreements, and Tuscarawas CSEA personnel and policy manual

¹ The term severance is used to describe the fact that unused vacation time is paid out at the time of separation from the agency.

² According to the Central Human Resource Manager, this item will not appear in the next contract.

³ The United Automotive, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America Local union #2192.

F3.82 **Table 3-34** presents a comparison of MCSEA’s attorney contract with Tuscarawas CSEA’s attorney policy. Montgomery and Lorain attorneys are not employed under their county’s CSEAs and therefore, are not included in this comparison.

Table 3-34: Comparison of Attorney Contracts/Policies

	MCSEA Teamster # 377	Tuscarawas CSEA Policy
Number of working hours per day	8.0	8.0
Max. # sick leave days accrued	Unlimited	Unlimited
Sick and personal leave incentives	Two personal hours for non-use of sick leave per quarter. Four additional personal hours added for non-use of sick time of four consecutive quarters.	None
Max. # of sick days paid out at retirement	25% of accumulated, unused sick leave up to 30 days.	25% of accumulated, unused sick leave up to 30 days
Number of years required for severance pay	Ten years from active service in county plus eligibility with PERS requirements.	Ten years from active service in county plus eligibility with PERS requirements.
Vacation rate accrual (biweekly)	1 - 6 years: 10 days 6 - 14 years: 15 days 14 - 20 years: 20 days 20 + years: 25 days	1 - 8 years: 10 days 8 - 15 years: 15 days 15 - 25 years: 20 days 25+ years: 25 days
Number of personal days	4 days per year	None
Number of leave days for association/union leave	15 cumulative days per calendar year, six of which are paid by the County for each union official	None
Number of days to file a grievance	5 working days	5 working days

Source: MSCEA Collective Bargaining Agreements, and Tuscarawas CSEA personnel and policy manual

F3.83 **Table 3-35** presents contract and policy data for CSEA supervisory level employees.

Table 3-35: Comparison of Supervisor Contracts/Policies

	Mahoning Teamster #377	Lorain Supervisor Policy	Montgomery Supervisor Policy	Tuscarawas Supervisor Policy
Number of actual hours worked per day	8.0	7.5	8.0	8.0
Max. # sick leave days accrued	Accrued at 4.6 per 80 hours worked to an unlimited amount	Accrued at 3.4 per 80 hours worked to an unlimited amount.	Accrued at 4.6 per 80 hours worked to an unlimited amount.	Accrued at 4.6 per 80 hours worked to an unlimited amount.
Sick and personal leave incentives	Two personal hours for non-use of non-FMLA sick leave per quarter. Four additional personal hours added for non-use of sick time of four consecutive quarters.	None	When an employee uses no non-FMLA sick leave in a calendar year, an additional personal day is awarded.	None
Max. # of sick days paid out at retirement.	25% of accumulated, unused sick leave up to 30 days.	Upon separation with five years or more public service under PERS, employee shall receive cash payment of sick leave not to exceed 100% of 62.5 days.	Up to 50% of 375 days.	25% of accumulated unused sick leave up to 30 days.
Number of years required for severance pay	10 years from active service in county plus eligibility with PERS requirements.	10 years from active service under PERS agreement or permanent disability regardless of service years.	10 years from active service in county plus eligibility with PERS requirements.	10 or more years of service in county plus eligibility with PERS requirements
Vacation rate accrual (biweekly)	1 - 6 years: 10 days 6 - 14 years: 15 days 14 - 20 years: 20 days 20 + years: 25 days	1 - 8 years: 10 years 8 - 15: 15 days 15 - 25: 20 days 25 + years: 25 days	1 - 6 years: 10 days 6 - 12: 15 days 12 - 18: 20 days 18 + years: 25 days	1 - 8 years: 10 days 9 - 15: 15 days 16 - 25 : 20 days 26+ years: 25 days
Number of personal days	4 days per year	4 days per year	2 days per year	None
Number of leave days for association/union leave	15 cumulative days per calendar year, six of which are paid by the County for each union official	None	None	None
Number of days to file a grievance.	5 working days	5 calendar days	10 calendar days	5 working days

Source: MSCEA Collective Bargaining Agreements, and Lorain, Monthgomery and Tuscarawas CSEA personnel and policy manual

F3.84 In addition to comparing collective bargaining agreements and personnel policies, a compensation analysis was conducted to compare MCSEA and peer CSEAs overall compensation and benefits packages. The following factors were used to calculate the compensation package to make adequate comparisons to the peer CSEAs:

- Average 2000 base salary for job classifications;
- Value of the PERS contribution paid by the department on behalf of the employee;
- Employee healthcare contribution;
- Actual time worked during the work day; and
- Cost of doing business factor.

Table 3-36 presents the FY 2000 compensation levels (average hourly employee compensation) for job functions at various CSEAs.

Table 3-36: FY 2000 Child Support Enforcement Agency Compensation ¹

	Mahoning	Lorain	Montgomery	Stark	Trumbull	Tusc.	Peer Average	% Above/ Below Peer Avg
Administrative Assistant/Secretary	\$13.86	None	\$16.97	N/A ⁶	N/A ⁶	None	\$16.97	(18.3%)
Attorney/Hearing Officer	\$20.40	\$17.70	\$18.01	N/A ⁶	N/A ⁶	\$18.61	\$18.11	12.6%
Case Worker	\$13.13	\$11.26	\$15.23	N/A ⁶	\$12.96	\$11.70	\$12.79	2.7%
Cashier	\$13.54	N/A ²	\$12.25	N/A ⁶	N/A ⁶	N/A ⁷	\$12.25	10.5%
Clerk	\$10.98	\$10.94	\$12.25	N/A ⁶	\$11.39	\$10.17	\$11.19	(1.9%)
Customer Service	\$13.55	N/A ³	N/A ⁵	N/A ⁶	N/A ⁶	\$9.67	\$9.67	40.1%
Manager	\$22.02	N/A ⁴	\$20.58	N/A ⁶	N/A ⁶	N/A ⁴	\$20.58	7.0%
Supervisor	\$17.34	\$18.56	\$20.39	N/A ⁶	N/A ⁶	\$12.37	\$17.11	1.3%
Managers and Supervisors	\$18.74	\$18.56	\$20.39	N/A ⁶	N/A ⁶	\$12.37	\$17.11	9.5%
Department Average	\$14.20	\$12.53	\$15.31	\$14.45	\$13.74	\$12.36	\$13.68	3.8%

Source: Mahoning County and peers

¹ Includes all positions as of Dec. 2000.

² This function is performed by clerks.

³ Data could not be provided.

⁴ Managers and Supervisors are a combined level/classification.

⁵ This classification is being phased out of the organization.

⁶ Compensation information could not be provided for these classifications.

⁷ This function is performed by customer service personnel.

Table 3-36 indicates that the department average compensation for MCSEA is 3.8 percent higher than the peer average. In addition, in seven of the nine job functions, MCSEA’s compensation package is higher than the peer average.

R3.43 Since MCSEA’s department average compensation is 3.8 percent higher than the peer average and since the overall benefits outlined in the collective bargaining agreements

appear to be favorable to Mahoning County, the County and MCSEA management should consider the following when negotiating future contracts:

- Exclude the paid union leave benefit or require the union to reimburse personnel expenses associated with union leave. As indicated in **Tables 3-33**, Mahoning County has agreed to pay designated AFSCME local #3577 union officials a maximum of 480 total hours per year for all officials for union representation/official business. In addition, as indicated in **Table 3-34** and **3-35**, the County has also negotiated to pay six days per year to each Teamster union official for union business. In contrast, Lorain CSEA (see **Table 3-33**) requires the union to reimburse the county for all personnel costs incurred as a result of union leave. If employees are absent due to union business, it would be appropriate for the union to incur these expenses.
- The County and the Teamsters should continue to maintain a multi-unit bargaining arrangement whereby one set of negotiations would take place for both contracts. Under this scenario, the attorneys and supervisors could continue to save the county the additional resources it takes to manage and negotiate a second agreement.
- Since the inception of the Teamster agreements in 1997, MCSEA has undergone many changes with regard to employee layoffs, restructuring proposals such as the customer service plan, and inclusion as a combined entity with the Department of Job and Family Services. As a result of these changes and the language contained in several supervisory job descriptions, MCSEA and the County should re-examine the positions originally deemed eligible for union representation to ensure that they are in fact still fully eligible. If a position is judged to be in accordance with the ORC § 4117.01F, that position should be removed from the bargaining unit in cooperation with SERB. If a supervisory position is judged as eligible to remain in the bargaining unit, those positions should be re-classified into non-supervisory classifications.

Financial Implication: Assuming that the maximum number of days are taken for union leave in all three collective bargaining agreements, Mahoning County could save approximately \$10,400 annually by either excluding the paid leave benefit for union business or requiring the union to reimburse the County for the expenses in all three union agreements.

C. Customer Service & Community Awareness

Customer Service

F3.85 An important component of any County Department of Job and Family Services (DJFS) including child support enforcement activities is customer service. The effectiveness of the customer service unit directly impacts the public's perception of CSEA's and could affect its overall performance. Analysis throughout this section of the report indicates that MCSEA could improve its customer service operations. Furthermore, analysis contained throughout this report (see **F3.86** through **F3.103**) indicates that MCSEA could improve its overall performance.

R3.44 Since customer service is a critical component of its operations, MCSEA should make it a priority to improve customer service and develop strategies to enhance its customer service unit. The recommendations contained in this section of the report are intended to improve operations in MCSEA's customer service unit. Key recommendations to improve customer service at MCSEA include the following:

- Conduct phone studies and monitor customer service activities (see **R3.45**);
- Restructure the customer service unit (see **R3.47**);
- Provide training for customer service personnel (see **R3.46**);
- Ensure that staff use the SETS system to effectively communicate customer service issues (see **R3.49**);
- Implement a formal customer complaint procedure (see **R3.50**); and
- Foster community awareness about its services (see **R3.51**).

By developing and implementing strategies to improve customer service, MCSEA could enhance its public perception as a quality service organization and improve its overall performance.

F3.86 A call tracking/traffic study, provided by Ameritech, was conducted in July 1999 at MCSEA. Data was collected from the period of July 12 through July 26. The "daily report" provided statistics on the hour during the day when the most customer calls occurred. The "peak report" provided statistics on the day and hour when the most customer calls occurred, and the "hourly report" provided statistics on each hour of each day studied and noted the busy hour for each day. **Table 3-37** represents the call traffic pattern at MCSEA. Although hold times were not specifically measured, the following summarizes the information provided to MCSEA according to the system's capabilities at that time:

Table 3-37: 1999 Operator Statistics

	Lowest Busy Hour	Highest Busy Hour
Calls Offered	29	128
Calls Answered	28	99
Percent Abandon Call Rate/Hang Ups	0%	28.0%
Average Call Duration (Seconds) ¹	21.7	89.3
Console 1, %Time Idle ²	63.9%	30.6%
Console 2, % Time Idle ²	91.4%	33.3%

Source: MCSEA Phone Study

¹ Includes hold time.

² Represents the amount of time that a console was not in use because no calls were received.

According to MCSEA personnel responsible for the administration of telephone services throughout the agency, the data in **Table 3-37** was provided to assist in the determination of whether enough lines were installed to handle all the incoming calls. The telephone system administrator stated that additional lines would have been necessary if the abandoned rate had exceeded 35 percent at the highest busy hour and if the percentage of time the console was idle was below 10 percent. The data represented as Console 2 in **Table 3-37**, was not actually a console but merely a telephone designed to handle the overflow of calls.

Without adding additional lines, the following actions were taken as a result of the study performed:

- A second console was purchased and put in the waiting area. Calls could now be received and transferred from both consoles.
- Another workstation was placed at the front desk.
- A more-detailed listing of customer options was added to the voice greeting.
- Employees received an upgrade from a level 1 to a level 2 job classification (see **F3.87**).

Although MCSEA implemented actions as a result of the study, it appears that the actions were not fully justified and practical. For example, placing the second console in the waiting area may have been an impractical solution since the customer service personnel were reluctant to use it due to confidential considerations. Additionally, customer service personnel contend that because one of the customer service employees was moved to the other building, remaining staff no longer had the resources to operate the console. See **F3.55** and **F3.56** for more information on customer service staffing levels. Furthermore, MCSEA has not conducted any additional phone studies for monitoring purposes.

R3.45 Prior to making decisions impacting any area of operations including customer service, MCSEA should fully evaluate the situation and fully support necessary actions intended to improve operations. As discussed in **F3.86**, the actions taken as a result of the phone study were not effective or fully supported. Fully evaluating and justifying actions prior to implementation should ensure that the actions being implemented will improve operations.

In addition, MCSEA should conduct 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 MCSEA to ascertain potential service problems in a timely manner. Quarterly analysis of phone call levels would also assist MCSEA in conducting trend analysis, determining staffing needs and identifying areas which may need continued intervention. Further, MCSEA should monitor customer hold times periodically to ensure that customer requests are being handled efficiently and effectively. The new phone system implemented by MCSEA has the ability to produce reports and measure hold times (see **F3.88**).

F3.87 As discussed in **F3.86**, customer service employees received an upgrade from a level 1 to a level 2 job classification in anticipation of receiving more client responsibility. As detailed in the Proposed Restructure of the Switchboard/Reception Unit plan, customer service personnel were to receive training on how to answer general telephone inquiries such as payment calls, status information, benefit or employment changes, and additional training on administrative, judicial, and state hearings. This plan was created to alleviate the large volume of calls that were going directly to the support specialists. However, even though the employees received higher salaries, they never received the intended training and thus do not perform the associated duties.

In addition and according to the director, a major reason for the public's negative perception of MCSEA is due to lack of training in how to effectively interact with the public. Based upon AOS observations, it would appear that personnel in the customer service unit have received little or no formal training. In a very busy period of over an hour, the customer service operator was completely overwhelmed with calls and was, in most cases, unable to understand the nature of the call prior to transferring the call. Also, it was witnessed that clients were asked to call back in an "hour or so" because the operator did not know the location of specific MCSEA personnel.

R3.46 MDJFS should provide training to its customer service personnel including MCSEA to more effectively interact with the public and respond to client inquiries. Prior to making personnel decisions regarding promotions, management should ensure that agency personnel are fully qualified by assessing employee characteristics against documented and established criteria as well as providing these employees with appropriate training. As changes to job duties occur, management should effectively amend associated job descriptions, evaluation criteria, and training records in a timely and appropriate manner to fully justify promotions.

F3.88 As a result of the inefficiencies and limitations of the phone system, a new phone system has been proposed, approved and implemented as of year end 2001. This new phone system is the same system used by 80 percent of the other government offices in Mahoning County allowing the different offices to call each other as though they were in-house calls. For example, MCSEA would be able to call the County Commissioners Office by dialing a four-digit extension and not have to get an outside line beforehand. The total cost of equipment and installation is approximately \$146,000 and future provisions have been accounted for when MDJFS and MCSEA combine locations at one building providing for minimal disruption and ease of transition (see **F3.115**).

In addition to the system's ease of use, this new phone system is also capable of providing quality assurance monitoring reports. MCSEA can develop customized quality assurance reports that more clearly pinpoint areas of concern. For example, a report that indicates routinely excessive hold times on a particular extension may be interpreted as a potential training need for personnel.

C3.5 MCSEA has implemented a more efficient telephone system as compared to the previous system. Phone calls can be made more efficiently to other County agencies and the new system is easy to use. In addition, the new phone system allows MCSEA to monitor important information to ensure that staff efficiently respond to customer inquiries.

F3.89 The staff at Montgomery CSEA has been recognized by its peers and the State of Ohio as possessing a world class customer service program. Montgomery CSEA began its effort by first developing a mission and vision that placed a strong emphasis on providing quality customer service. Among its many accomplishments, it has implemented the following improvements:

- Effectively incorporating training techniques into the customer service system, including the use of case worker personnel;
- Using basic call center technology;
- Effectively using quality assurance tools and mechanisms that allow management to monitor calls and set and achieve objectives.

Montgomery CSEA call center works as a team with four team leaders. These team leaders help with difficult customer situations as well as mentoring and coaching new staff. All new hires are trained in-house incorporating SETS and policies. All incoming and outgoing calls are recorded and monitored to ensure and maintain a high level of customer service. Montgomery CSEA also uses the recorded calls to coach and train employees. A well trained and informed customer service unit enhances public awareness and improves public perception. In addition, Montgomery CSEA has three wallboards to display the number of callers waiting and how long they have been waiting. When the number of calls on hold reaches six, available employees are empowered with the authority to answer the calls on

hold to get the number of calls below six. Montgomery CSEA uses an auto-attendant to play a greeting to all incoming callers, as well as gives callers updated information on SETS, IRS, or any other relevant topic.

F3.90 In contrast to MCSEA, Montgomery CSEA has its case workers function as customer service personnel. Montgomery CSEA indicated that the separate customer service unit comprising 6.0 FTEs will eventually be phased out and that only case workers will be used in customer service activities (see **F3.56**). Montgomery CSEA has implemented a workforce management software to create a phone schedule for the case workers. This schedule takes into account all union requirements such as breaks, lunches, and personal preferences of individual employees, while ensuring that there are enough employees on the phones to continue to meet their customer service goals. Each case worker is assigned a set time to be logged in and available to incoming calls, and focuses the remainder of the day to manage their caseload. The case workers are generalized workers in the sense that they perform both establishment and enforcement duties, as well as take responsibility for any inquiries that they receive (see **F3.2**). While performing customer service activities, case workers place little importance over who the case belongs to; their goal is to service the customer.

Additionally, all call center personnel at Montgomery CSEA are trained and committed to utilizing the SETS software comments section so that in servicing the customer, no hard copy files are needed to be pulled and anyone handling the case inquiry has access to the necessary information. However, MCSEA does not consistently use the SETS comments screen. Management of the call center is accomplished with monthly monitoring through call center reports. Abandonment rate, service level, alerts, correspondence, default and default follow-ups are specifically measured.

According to the Montgomery CSEA director, the implementation of the call center environment within CSEA has brought professionalism into the organization. The number of complaints to the Commissioner's Office decreased by 75 per month to one or two per month. It has allowed the agency to become more responsive. Problems in the operations are identified early and corrective actions are quickly taken to significantly reduce the adverse effects. Additionally, Montgomery CSEA has employed a private vendor to survey their customers on a quarterly basis which has indicated a positive public perception and increased level of customer service at the agency. The environment has allowed mentoring and coaching to become more dominant which has enhanced the value of their new training program.

R3.47 In the long term, MDJFS should consider restructuring MCSEA's customer service function according to Montgomery CSEA model. This restructure should include the following:

- Streamline customer service activities resulting in personnel cost savings (see **F3.55** and **F3.56**);

- Train all case workers in effectively handling customer service activities;
- Consider purchasing wall boards, a recorder to document all calls, and workforce management software program to assist in the scheduling of case worker phone time;
- Set goals and continuously monitor the results; and
- Survey clients on a periodic basis (see **F3.91** and **R3.48**).

A reduction in the employment of full time customer service representatives could be gained since the employees assigned to the call center in Montgomery CSEA are case workers. See **F3.55** and **F3.56** for a detailed analysis of customer service and case worker staffing levels. Having case workers utilized in this way allows the customer to speak directly to a worker, get the response they need on first contact and reduce the number of return calls to be made.

Financial Implication: If MCSEA purchased the workforce management system software to schedule phone time among its case workers, the cost would total approximately \$60,000 in one-time expenses plus \$5,000 per year for maintenance based upon information obtained from Montgomery CSEA. In addition, the total implementation costs for a wallboard system and a recorder could be \$16,000 and \$60,000, respectively, based upon information received from Montgomery CSEA. According to the programmer/analyst, MCSEA's telephone system is able to accommodate an Automatic Call Distribution (ACD) system, which is necessary to adequately implement wallboard technology. The total costs of implementing these technological enhancements would be about \$136,000 in implementation costs and \$5,000 in additional annual maintenance costs. However, implementing these technological enhancements to rely on case workers to perform customer service functions would allow MCSEA to reduce its 4.0 FTE customer service unit, resulting in \$146,400 in annual cost savings related to salaries and benefits. Therefore, MCSEA would realize a one-year payback on this investment by implementing this recommendation.

F3.91 MCSEA has not surveyed its customers regarding the quality of its services. However, Clermont County CSEA obtains the needs and expectations of its residents by using a customer survey. The main purpose of the survey is to understand the customers' expectations so that SMART (SETS Management and Response Team) can conceptualize quality functional deployment into the work processes necessary to satisfy and exceed customer expectations. Obtaining the voice of the customer is the focal point of the work process. Surveying the customer in this way allows Clermont County to design functionality within SETS that responds accurately and rapidly to customer expectations.

Since 1999, Clermont's Board of County Commissioners (BCC) has surveyed customers and employers by utilizing contracts with the University of Cincinnati and the Clermont Chamber of Commerce. This partnership has allowed for the expansion of the existing survey process by interweaving SETS issues which provide the framework for the work process and development of customer expectations related to SETS. For more information on SMART, see **F3.101**.

In addition, the Delaware Division of Child Support Enforcement conducted a customer satisfaction survey in 1997 to randomly selected customers. The survey revealed that customers were overall satisfied with services, but it did indicate that customers were dissatisfied with the availability of case workers to answer phone calls and the timeliness of returned phone calls. As a result, the Delaware Division of Child Support Enforcement can now take appropriate measures to improve in these areas.

R3.48 MDJFS management should develop and implement a customer survey to obtain formal feedback from its customers about child support activities. 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, it may be necessary to develop different surveys for each party. Obtaining actual customer information through a survey will allow MDJFS to identify problem areas and anticipate future customer needs. MDJFS should contact and use Clermont County as a resource in developing an effective customer survey.

Survey results can be used to measure client service performance. MDJFS 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 MCSEA 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, MDJFS has many options for disseminating the survey. MDJFS could use the following methods:

- Mail or telephone surveys,
- Point of service surveys, and/or
- Focus groups.

Financial Implication: According to the Public Children Services Association of Ohio's (PCSAO) *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.

F3.92 When MCSEA customer service personnel are able to discern and resolve a client issue (e.g., a change of address), they are required to make the change into SETS and complete a form called Customer Service Turnaround Document. This form is a handwritten duplicate of what was entered into the SETS system which is copied and forwarded to the case worker's supervisor informing them of the changes that were made. A copy of the form is retained in the customer service personnel's file for evidence of work performed.

R3.49 MCSEA should make better use of the SETS notes system by removing the need for hard copy evidence of work performed. Montgomery CSEA has removed the need for hard copy files to be pulled as well as the need for duplicate information. Effective training and commitment in the utilization of SETS as well as a strategic customer service structure are the main contributing factors to their success.

F3.93 The customer service supervisor indicated that as complaints are received by the customer, a form is filled out by the customer service representative and forwarded to the MCSEA ombudsman. Further discussion with the ombudsman indicated that only certain complaints are handled through the ombudsman's office and are loosely defined as those that were either not solved through an earlier process or are those received directly from MBOCC, governor's office, or other government agency.

Although no formal procedure or forms currently exist, the ombudsman was able to verbally describe the process for handling this level of complaints as follows:

- Complaints are received via phone, fax, or electronic mail.
- If not already provided, case number and associated case worker is obtained.
- If the complaint is under the authority of a case worker, the complaint is forwarded to that section chief with a specific request to respond. Sometimes, complaints are forwarded to attorneys or other areas of MCSEA but usually the corrective action response lies within the case worker's arena.
- There is an unwritten response time requirement of one week. If no answer is received within the one week time frame, the ombudsman sends out reminder calls. No formal tracking methodology is used.
- When the response is received, the ombudsman forwards the answer and files the complaint.
- If no other correspondence occurs after the response is forwarded to the complaining party, then the ombudsman assumes the complaint is closed.

F3.94 A written and key goal of the Montgomery CSEA is to provide excellent service to its customers. With that key goal in mind, Montgomery CSEA developed a procedure for effectively handling customer complaints through the office of its ombudsman. The procedure clearly establishes that all complaints, inclusive of facsimile, phone, and computer, are forwarded to the ombudsman's office for tracking of the resolution which must be completed within 72 hours of receipt of the complaint.

In addition to resolution tracking, the procedure also clearly defines the personnel responsible for answering and following-up on the complaint to be completed within specific time frames utilizing specific forms. The ombudsman is responsible to provide daily, weekly, and monthly reports to the agency director, all supervisors and administrators as appropriate. The performance of this function is evaluated quarterly and annually.

F3.95 PCSAO's *Standards for Effective Practice* recommends including the following items in a formal written complaint/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.

R3.50 MDJFS should implement a customer complaint system for MCSEA similar to that of Montgomery CSEA and incorporating the elements identified by PCSAO. Effectively handling and monitoring customer complaints will eventually serve as a tool for preventing them. As more effective systems evolve through effective corrective actions, complaints will ultimately decrease. To implement a more effective customer complaint system, MDJFS should consider incorporating the following steps:

- Develop a policy and a supporting procedure describing the steps and associated responsibilities and authorities of specific MCSEA personnel.
- Establish a form to be used, whether hard copy or electronic.
- Establish reasonable response time frames and then enforce them.
- Set goals and develop a method to monitor the progress.

In addition, MDJFS should develop and implement a centralized, searchable database to track client complaints regarding MCSEA activities. 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 **R3.55**), tracking client complaints could assist MCSEA 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 complaints. Also, recurring issues could be addressed in future training. The database could be developed at no additional cost to MDJFS by using its available database technology, although additional training may be necessary to fully implement a complaint 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.

Community Awareness

F3.96 MDJFS including MCSEA does not actively participate in community awareness programs. In contrast, other child support agencies throughout the United States have implemented various strategies to promote community awareness (see **F3.97** through **F3.99**). By actively promoting community awareness, CSEAs are ensuring that custodial parents are fully aware of child support services as well as making the entire community aware of the important services provided by a CSEA.

Montgomery CSEA has developed the Quarterly Child Support Summit program. This program invites partners of the child support enforcement agency (i.e. Domestic Relations, Children Services Board, Dayton Bar Association and clients) to meet on a quarterly basis to discuss problems and solutions within their respective agencies or with the interaction between the agencies. These meetings have been effective by helping these partners to improve their communication with each other and to identify specific needs or issues that may be easily resolved through discussion and understanding. In addition, other community outreach programs in Montgomery CSEA include having representatives from Montgomery CSEA speak at various local organizations around the community such as Dayton schools and Goodwill to explain the child support process, the law, and other related child support issues.

F3.97 To promote community awareness and increase client access to its services, the Delaware Division of Child Support hosts a Child Support Information Night twice a year. The Division advertises the event through paid newspaper ads, flyers placed in the community, and mass mailings to all names in the system, including custodial parents and non-custodial parents. These events are held in the evening outside of normal business hours to give clients an opportunity to resolve case-specific issues that are difficult to resolve through daily business hours. To assist and educate clients about the process, employees are available with computers connected by modems to the state's caseload database. Several top management staff also attend to offer assistance to clients. This helps to give the clients the feeling that the entire agency is committed to helping them. In addition, it gives the front line staff the feeling that everyone is a part of the team and will work together. Also, a suggestion box is available at the registration table.

The Division indicated that it has experienced the following results from implementing the Child Support Information Night:

- Of the events held through October 1998 to September 1999, a total of 641 people participated.
- Clients commented that they were pleased to be able to speak to a person about their issues during convenient hours.
- Staff felt a sense of accomplishment.
- Semi-annual events are planned in each county indefinitely.

F3.98 Illinois Child Support Enforcement Division has been nationally recognized for their community 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. 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.

F3.99 In an effort to promote community awareness and educate adolescents about child care and support responsibilities, 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.

R3.51 MDJFS should make community outreach a priority for MCSEA by developing and implementing strategies to promote community awareness, which could include the following:

- Conducting events outside of the normal work-day hours involving its clients and community;
- Creating public service announcements;
- Developing newsletters to be provided to county hospitals, clerks and registrars to keep them up to date on developments and progress in the child support program.
- Developing flyers explaining the voluntary paternity acknowledgment process.

Actively promoting community awareness about its services could enhance customer service, improve the public's perception of MCSEA and potentially increase the number of cases being enforced. MDJFS may, in the future, wish to consider allocating resources for a public relations position. Since public relations can assist MCSEA in increasing collections, public relations activities should become an integral component of the MCSEA's strategic plan.

F3.100 MDJFS has developed a Web site to provide basic information about establishing paternity, enforcing support, making payments and instructing non-custodial parents to contact MCSEA directly regarding any changes (e.g., change in address or employment). Clermont

CSEA has provided additional information on its website and includes 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, and
- Awards.

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

F3.101 Licking 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.

F3.102 The New Mexico Human Services Department uses technology to enhance customer service and promote community awareness. The Department partnered with a contractor to develop an Internet-based solution to enable parents and employers to perform tasks and exchange information that until recently could only be handled on the phone or in person with agency staff. Through the use of the Department's web site, clients now can do the following:

- Apply for child support services;
- Inquire about child support payment status;
- View payment history;
- View child support owed on the case;
- Provide address updates;
- Provide locate leads on the whereabouts of the non-custodial parent;
- Have payments automatically deposited into their bank accounts;
- Arrange to pay for child support electronically;

- Update employment information; and
- Update asset information.

Improved customer service, empowered parents, improved results for complex cases, and extended reach of existing information system were the main results upon the effective implementation of the Internet solution.

C3.6 MDJFS's Web site provides clients and community members with an additional avenue to reach the its offices and provide basic information about its services. In addition, the Web site serves as a public relations tool by publicizing MCSEA functions.

R3.52 In addition to the information found on the Web site, MDJFS 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,
- Forms, notices and other documents that could be downloaded and used,
- Agency mission, history and services,
- Applications for services and direct deposit,
- Most Wanted Poster,
- Email capabilities,
- Links to other web sites including State of Ohio and federal child support programs,
- Apprehended absent parents, and
- Frequently Asked Questions.

Expanding information on its Web site could enhance MCSEA's customer service while more effectively providing appropriate information to its clients and community.

F3.103 MDJFS does not routinely use the local media to help expose non-custodial parents to the entire community. 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 a 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.

Although aggressively pursuing non-custodial parents through the local media could result in increased child support collections, drawbacks of this process could exist. For example, witnessing a parent being negatively portrayed on television could have an adverse impact on a child.

R3.53 MDJFS should consider developing an agreement with the local media in both Mahoning and Trumbull counties similar to the agreement used by Hamilton County. The agreements could be developed either through MDJFS or the County media relations representative. MDJFS and the Sheriff's Office should develop a working relationship to facilitate the reporting and arrest of non-paying parents (**F3.19** and **R3.16**). MDJFS should also develop appropriate agreements with local television and print media. Increased advertisements of non-paying parents could improve the County's collection rates on arrears. However, prior to using local media to more aggressively pursue child support payments, MDJFS should fully consider the potential drawbacks of implementing such a process.

D. Planning Efforts & Child Support Payment Central

Planning Efforts

F3.104 Strategic planning is a management tool used to provide structure to an organization's operations. A strategic plan can help an organization focus its vision and priorities in response to its changing environment, help ensure that all members of an organization are working toward the same goal(s), and serve as a roadmap to define how an organization will get where it wants to be. Strategic planning is first, a process and second, a vision. The Texas Legislative Budget Board defines strategic planning as "a long-term, future-oriented process of assessment, goal-setting and decision-making that maps an explicit path between the present and a vision of the future, that relies on careful consideration of an organization's capabilities and environment, and leads to priority-based resource allocation and other decisions."

Elements for managing strategic planning are generally divided into four phases which pose the following four questions:

- Where are we now?
- Where do we want to be?
- How do we get there?
- How do we measure our progress?

The assistant director stated that MCSEA's strategic plan is a relatively new endeavor beginning in June 2001 with a two-day retreat (see **F3.105**). However, MCSEA's strategic plan does not fully answer all four questions of strategic planning. For example, while the plan describes where they want to be, they are not written in measurable terms, making assessment of progress problematic.

F3.105 In June 2001, MDJFS management including MCSEA attended a two-day retreat with a contracted consultant to begin the development of a strategic plan. As a result of that retreat, representatives from upper and middle management and each of the unions were nominated to participate on one of the following six teams:

- *Building Team*: To investigate the possibility of physically joining with MDJFS into one building.
- *Staffing Team*: To develop written and uniform guidelines for hiring and promoting, and determine proper staffing levels.
- *Organizational Structure Team*: To determine the optimal organizational structure.

- *Attitudes and Relationships Team:* To provide solutions toward improving labor/management relations.
- *Public Relations and Image:* To improve public image.
- *Decision-Making and Communication:* To develop more effective ways of communication between and within levels of staff.

In addition to the developed teams, a mission statement for the agency was prepared as well as a list of potential key performance measures. During the course of this audit, some meetings have occurred with little or no action as a result. Some team members have commented that lack of funding will prevent action plans from taking place.

F3.106 Clermont County CSEA has designed a team call S.M.A.R.T. which stands for SETS Management And Response Team. The team's mission is to design a quality function deployment process that enhances local operations with the SETS system. The discoveries made by the SMART staff will be incorporated into an overall strategic plan. The plan will map strategies that redefine local operations and provide guidance to the ODJFS to assist with the development of a national and statewide continuous improvement plan. A goal of Clermont County's CSEA is to promote the goals designed in the SETS system by supporting and strengthening working parents and ensuring prompt child support payments, establishing new child support enforcement orders, and reducing risk factors for low income children.

Accepting and adopting change has become an integral part of Clermont County's Board of County Commissioners (BCC) and has fostered an environment of competition among the departments in order to build additional capacity to meet future needs while operating under existing allocations and resources. Clermont CSEA is developing strategies that are designed to strengthen families by improving service delivery systems that include child support.

F3.107 Since 1988, Colorado has used strategic planning as a tool to enable the state and counties to work together to set and meet goals for the Colorado child support program. In 1999, Colorado achieved its collection goal of \$200 million, a year ahead of schedule. The emphasis of the strategic planning process has been based on excellent communications between state and county partners. Counties receive regular reports on how they are doing in meeting their own goals in comparison with other counties in the state. The key goals for the 1992-2001 Strategic Plan include the following:

- To collect \$200 million in the year 2000;
- To reach a paternity establishment percentage of 50 percent; and
- To improve compliance with federal requirements.

Goals are set for five to eight-year periods, with annual goals set for each year. Once statewide goals are established, a corresponding goal is established for each county. Monthly reports provide feedback to the counties on performance and compliance on fifty plus indicators, including the five federal performance standards. On a quarterly basis, the state office compiles a performance report and scores counties on how well they are performing as measured by the set goals and through data in mandatory reports. Counties meet annually with state officials to discuss progress in meeting their goals. Each year, the six lowest performing counties are identified and technical assistance is provided to them by the state. Further, the task force updates the goals in the long-term strategic plan each year, based on changes in state and federal law, accomplishment of goals and changing priorities. Results of Colorado's strategic planning process include the following:

- Collecting \$200 million in 1999, which was one year ahead of schedule;
- Increasing the paternity establishment percentage from 34 percent in 1992 to 83 percent in May 2000; and
- Increasing the percentage of cases with support orders from 48 percent in 1992 to 75 percent in 2000.

F3.108 In 1996, the Bureau of Collections in Iowa developed Policy Improvement Team Crews (PIT), with each PIT specializing in one process (i.e., case set-up, income withholding, medical support). Each team consisted of two field staff who actually performed the process from each of the state's three regions, a supervisor, an attorney, a policy representative from the central office and one of the three regional project managers. Specific tasks delegated to the teams included addressing the backlog of policy issues, identifying best practices for each process, reviewing functionality of the computer systems, developing a centralized customer service unit and determining training needs. Specific objectives of the PIT included the following:

- Increase the percentage of cases with established orders from 72 percent to 90 percent by the year 2000;
- Fully implement welfare reform in all the agency's processes; and
- Significantly improve customer service ratings.

The results of PIT included the following:

- Percentage of cases in court-ordered status increased from 73 percent at the end of 1996 to 87 percent by July 1999. The statewide goal of 90 percent of cases in court-ordered status is expected to be met by the end of 2000.
- A strategic review weeded out "old bad cases" for closure.
- Factors impeding establishment of orders were examined and addressed.
- Customer satisfaction surveys show improved customer relations.
- PIT Crews have become experts in their processes and are setting a benchmark.

- Iowa is nearly caught up on unresolved policy issues. Problems are addressed more quickly and are resolved quickly.

F3.109 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.

F3.110 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

R3.54 MDJFS should place a high priority on formulating a long-term strategic plan comprising MCSEA functions that includes objectives, definitions of desired outcomes, and realistic time lines for implementation. 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; and
- Increase accountability for stakeholders and management.

The strategic plan should:

- Establish the overall mission, vision, goals, objectives and strategies of MCSEA, 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; and
- 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. MDJFS should also ensure that the plan is updated to accommodate the rapid changes taking place in the field of child support enforcement. Further, MDJFS should link the strategic plan to developing, monitoring and improving outcomes in key performance measures (see **F3.111**, **F3.112** and **R3.55**).

F3.111 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.

F3.112 MCSEA uses formal performance measures on a limited basis. Most measures used by MCSEA are derived from the five 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 MCSEA. Additional performance measures have not been widely implemented and links between performance measurement and MCSEA objectives or goals are unclear.

F3.113 In 1999, Child Support Services of Davidson County in Tennessee established a performance management system for the entire agency based on four of the five federal performance standards and a future standard. The plan was to steadily work toward meeting those standards on an agency-wide basis by creating goals for every worker and measuring them monthly. Key inputs, outputs and outcomes were identified to measure the performance

of each group of workers. Time motions studies were used to determine how long an average or above average worker spent on the various tasks required by the job.

In addition, managers established accuracy standards. Five cases are pulled at random from those handled by each worker each month. These would be reviewed by the manager to ensure that appropriate action was taken, action was taken within the federal time frames, and actions were fully documented on the automated system. Monthly quality/accuracy goals were set for each worker in addition to production goals. A data-keeping system was developed to track workers actions. Workers who meet their goals are recognized each month at a staff meeting and given small rewards. Performance standards are reviewed on a quarterly basis, to see whether adjustments are needed. Results of the performance management system include the following:

- The agency is near to achieving its goal of a minimum accuracy of 90 percent.
- Outcomes have improved, with each month showing steady improvement.
- The number of crises are reduced.
- Employee surveys show higher job satisfaction rates among workers.
- Employee turnover rates have been reduced.

R3.55 MDJFS including MCSEA should consider developing formal agency-wide performance measures to augment the performance measures established by the federal government. Performance measures should be aligned with MCSEA’s objectives to effectively evaluate and continuously improve the performance of MCSEA.

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 MCSEA’s efficiency and should better inform County employees and constituents of MCSEA

performance. Examples of additional data and performance measures that MCSEA could use to assess its performance include the following:

Intake Mode

- Number/percentage of cases with intake completed within 20 days of cases opening
- Average length of time a case stays in intake mode
- Number/percentage of cases with case record established within three working days of receiving a referral or application
- Number/percentage of incoming cases by referral, application, and court order
- Number/percentage of IV-D applications provided on a day requested by phone or mail
- Average amount of time spent in intake interview

Locate Mode

- Average length of time a case stays in the locate mode
- Number/percentage of cases in which all appropriate location services were used
- Number/percentage of cases in locate mode and simultaneously in paternity, establishment, and enforcement mode
- Number/percentage of cases where parent is not located
- Number/percentage of cases in which initial locate effort was unsuccessful and location efforts were repeated quarterly or when new locate information was received
- Number/percentage of cases in which location and income status of both parents is known
- Number/percentage of cases found with each locate tool (state parent locator service and federal parent locator service)
- Average number of searches conducted to locate missing parents

Paternity Establishment Mode

- Average length of time a case stays in the paternity mode
- Current number of unprocessed paternity claims
- Number of voluntary declarations
- Number of no-shows for paternity interviews

Support Establishment Mode

- Average length of time a case stays in the support
- Average length of time for clients to start receiving their child support payments
- Number/percentage of cases in which support order was established or service of process completed within 90 days of location of the non custodial parent or of establishing paternity
- Number/percentage of support orders established through court hearings

Enforcement Mode

- Average length of time for a case to reach enforcement
- Number/percentage of cases that defaulted and went back to the locate mode
- Average length of time to notify non-custodial parent/custodial parent of support order after a support order has been established
- Number/percentage of cases that do not receive support payments on time
- Number/percentage of cases with inadequate information to provide payment
- Number of assists to other states for collection orders (response time)
- Average length of time to terminate child support payment after a child reached age 18

Arrears/Outstanding Collections

- Outstanding obligations (dollar amount) by case type
- Cases in arrears by case type
- Average length of time a case has been in arrears

Review/Modification

- Average length of time to review/modify case
- Number of requests by non-custodial and custodial parents for case reviews and modification
- Average Length of time for review/modification

Other

- Number of cases processed administratively where enforcement has been maintained
- Average length of time to schedule a hearing after a hearing has been requested
- Percentage of cases meeting closing criteria that are not closed
- Number of cases closed within each closing criteria (example: insufficient information)
- Number of cases closed that did not meet closing criteria
- Length of time to resolve appeal disputes
- Number of complaints and subsequent response time
- Percentage increase in response times to complaints

In addition to developing and monitoring performance measures, MCSEA should establish goals and benchmarks to strive to attain. For example, MCSEA should establish a time frame defining the number of days that a paternity and support order should be established. Linking goals to actual performance would allow MCSEA to assess its progression in meeting goals as well as provide an opportunity to develop strategies to improve on its performance.

MCSEA 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, MCSEA would be able to identify trends in cases such as actions that result in successful collections or more effective methods of location. In addition, MCSEA would be able to determine the average length of time from initial application to paternity establishment and from paternity establishment to support order. MCSEA could also follow public assistance cases through the process to identify any actions that may cause the client to be removed from public assistance. Furthermore, MCSEA should contact ODJFS to stress the importance of incorporating additional data and performance measures in SETS (see **F3.45** and **R3.23**). The lack of additional and important data in the SETS system directly impacts MCSEA's ability to implement and monitor agency-wide performance measures.

F3.114 MDJFS does not have a formalized quality improvement system designed to measure MCSEA performance with regards to outcomes, and has not developed a process for measuring these outcomes and incorporating the results into its 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.

R3.56 MDJFS should design a quality improvement system to develop and assess outcome measures. In designing such a system, MCSEA should consider following the recommended steps.

- With the input of key stakeholders, identify three to five target outcomes which are consistent with MDJFS's mission;
- Develop a set of measurable indicators for each target outcome by which progress may be assessed;
- Structure MCSEA's information system to be able to collect data on outcome indicators; and
- Incorporate the focus on outcomes into all levels of MCSEA 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, MCSEA management will be better able to make decisions regarding performance and resource allocation. By involving key stakeholders in the process, MCSEA will become more accountable for obtaining financial support from non-custodial parents.

F3.115 Although planning discussions have occurred for a new building, MCSEA functions in two locations with approximately five miles between the two sites. According to the director, the two current buildings can not support both MCSEA and MDJFS staff. In addition, the leases on the current buildings have expired. Difficulties resulting from operating in two different sites include problems with adequately providing training to staff (see **F3.74** and

F3.75) and promoting a sense of unity. In addition, working and scheduling cases with the legal staff and the hearing officer present problems when a case is sent back to the case worker at the other location which could have been initially rectified on-site. Furthermore, customer service could be adversely impacted. For example, if a client comes to one location with questions and has cases in pre-enforcement and enforcement, the client may have to find transportation to the other site for assistance. The costs are potentially higher by operating in two separate locations, such as costs related to security, staffing and maintenance.

R3.57 Considering that MDJFS has allocated over \$300,000 in the current year's budget for obtaining a consultant to help plan for the construction of a new building, MDJFS and the County should consider implementing the plan for a new building. Since the leases have expired on the current buildings, this would be a good opportunity to consider a new site. Operating at one location would allow employees to receive better training on site and obtain more direct assistance for daily issues. Also, this could promote unity within the workplace.

Child Support Payment Central (CSPC)

F3.116 The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) required all states to implement a statewide disbursement unit (SDU) to centralize support payment processing, thus requiring one SDU per state for all employer payments. To implement this law, the first step in the process was the development of a computer system that all of Ohio's 88 counties could use. Before the new requirement, each of Ohio's 88 counties had their own computer system, of which no two were alike. After the new requirement, all 88 counties use the Support Enforcement Tracking system (SETS).

The Child Support Payment Central (CSPC) is Ohio's SDU. Under CSPC, all employers are required to remit payments for their Ohio employee wage withholdings to a central address, regardless of which county sent the employer the withholding notice. The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) determined that centralized collections processing of child support payments from both the employers and individual obligors would be accomplished in three phases:

- Phase one started for Mahoning County on June 28, 2000 and ended on September 29, 2000. At this point, employers noticed no difference in how payments were processed because the only notable change was that all incoming checks were sent from MCSEA to Back One in Columbus via United Parcel Service. The checks of the custodial parents were issued and mailed from Columbus and now had the signature of the Treasurer of State instead of the county MCSEA director.

- Phase two began on October 1, 2000 and primarily addressed the full development and implementation of the new processing procedure by preparing both employers and individual obligors who are not on income withholding. Starting in July, ODJFS started sending out information to the obligors explaining the new process. All employers were assigned third party numbers (TPN) and employee wage withholdings were subsequently tied to their employer TPN. In September, employers were sent an employee roster by TPN that showed the employees associated with that TPN. These rosters contained the names of the employees who would be on the first bill sent to employers in September. Some employers received multiple lists because they had multiple payroll operations, business units, or other county CSEA's that were administering their employee cases. No matter how many TPN's a employer had, the employer could still remit one check to the lockbox if they chose.
- Phase three will allow employers to send in payment electronically over the Internet. An exact date for this phase to be completed has not been announced by ODJFS.

F3.117 The following is the workflow that MCSEA has followed since October 2001:

- MCSEA "scrubs" payments. Scrubbing payments involves reviewing the remittance documents to ensure that the information necessary for the lockbox to process the payment is on the remittance. If the necessary information is not on the remittance document, MCSEA writes in the information on the remittance.
- MCSEA sends a compliance letter prepared by the ODJFS to the employer or obligor. This letter informs the employer or obligor to start remitting payments to the lockbox in Columbus.
- MCSEA bundles all checks and sends them via UPS in a next day package to Columbus. However, all of these payments should be going directly to Columbus from the employer.

If employers were sending remittances to CSPPS, MCSEA would not have to be performing the above process. The following is the process that is followed by the State of Ohio for employers and obligors who send in their payments to the lockbox in Columbus:

- All checks received by 8:30 am are processed by Bank One the same day that the payment is received. For a payment to be processed by Bank One, a minimum of two of the following (and in some cases four) four data elements must be included on the check or the remittance document to be considered postable by Bank One:

- ▶ Obligor name
- ▶ S.E.T.S. Case Number
- ▶ S.E.T.S. Order Number
- ▶ Obligor Social Security Number

If the required information is not included with the payment, the payment is labeled as unpostable and is forwarded to Central Support Services (CSS) for research. CSS loads all unpostable payment information received from the lockbox in the CSS Central Data Repository that is used to track research activity. CSS researches the payment for 48 hours. The tools that CSS uses are a remitter database, a read-only access to SETS, employer/individual obligor contact and a Mahoning County Spearhead contact. If CSS identifies the unpostable payment, it becomes a “Resolved Lockbox Exception Payment.”

If CSS is unable to resolve any of the unpostable payments within 48 hours of receipt from the lockbox, the unpostable becomes a “hardcore” unidentified payment. These payments are returned to the sender if a return address is provided. The unidentified payment will remain in the CSS data repository and an Unidentified Report will be sent to the Payment Analysis Center (PAC).

The Payment Analysis Center (PAC) uses any means available to identify the payment that is now over 72 hours old. The PAC contacts the remitter, researches S.E.T.S. and contacts MCSEA to try and link the payment to a case. If an unidentified payment is not resolved within 180 days, it is assigned to Unclaimed Collections.

Clients who want payment information still must contact MCSEA. The following is a list of some common issues that clients call MCSEA about since CSS will not accept phone calls from clients:

- Has the check been lost?
- Did the obligor make the payment?
- When was the last payment received on the case?
- Why did the payment allocate a certain way?

The State of Ohio also provides a voice response unit that people with child support cases can call and get limited information on a child support case. This limited information includes the following:

- Last payment received,
- Last check issued, and
- Total balance due.

For more information on CSPC activities, see the 2002 Ohio Department of Job and Family Services Performance Audit.

F3.118 *The Plain Dealer* article entitled Parents will get Checks for Withheld Child Support described that the Director of ODJFS experienced significant problems with Bank One. Announcements of this nature illustrate that some of the problems that MCSEA may be facing with the CSPC may be rooted in a much bigger area and well beyond their control to correct or prevent. Without effective controls at the source, proper implementation (and compliance) at the supporting levels is very difficult. For more information on SETS and other state-level child support activities, see the 2002 Ohio Department of Job and Family Services Office of Child Support Performance Audit.

F3.119 **Table 3-38** illustrates one of the problems the counties face in regard to CSPC, which is the continuing volume of walk-in and employer payments made at the county level.

Table 3-38: Comparison of County’s Compliance With CSPC

	MCSEA	Lorain	Montgomery	Tuscarawas	Peer Average
No. of checks received ¹	170	400	223	N/A	312
Money sent to Columbus Lockbox	\$30,877	\$52,503	\$33,192	N/A	\$42,848

Source: MCSEA and Peers

¹ Data was provided from a random week in late year 2001.

As indicated in **Table 3-38**, MCSEA has the lowest number of checks received as compared to the peer average. However, Tuscarawas CSEA has indicated that it does not receive any payments, with some minor exceptions. Tuscarawas CSEA’s policy is to return all checks received from employers back to the employers. In the returned envelope, Tuscarawas CSEA includes instructions on how to make future payments to the CSPC. With this policy, Tuscarawas CSEA does not receive payments and is enforcing the requirement of employers to send payments to CSPC. Therefore, Tuscarawas is saving time and resources that MCSEA allocates to this activity. Further, if MCSEA implemented a similar policy, it could devote additional time and resources to case management activities such as focusing efforts to increase the number of cases in enforcement mode (see **F3.1**).

R3.58 MCSEA should enforce the requirement for employers to remit payments to CSPC, similar to Tuscarawas CSEA. In addition to ensuring that this activity becomes centralized in the state, MCSEA could save time and resources devoted to this job function. To ensure that customer service is not negatively impacted by this policy, MCSEA should gradually implement this recommendation. A notice should be provided to all custodial and non-custodial parents informing them of this change. In addition, individuals who continue to make child support payments at MCSEA should be provided with another notice and

personnel should fully explain the new policy that all child support payments be sent to CSPC. Taking this approach would ensure that all parties are adequately informed about this new policy. Furthermore, MCSEA should consider granting some exceptions to this policy to ensure that non-custodial parents provide the required child support payments. The overall objective of this policy should be to ensure that MCSEA is complying with CSPC requirements while providing quality service to custodial and non-custodial parents. For information on how this process would impact cashier staffing levels, see **F3.61** and **R3.31**.

Financial Implications Summary

The following table represents a summary of the revenue enhancements and annual cost savings discussed in this section. For the purposes of this table, only recommendations with quantifiable financial impacts are listed.

Summary of Financial Implications

Recommendation	Estimated Revenue Enhancements (Annual)	Estimated Cost Savings (Annual)	Estimated Implementation Cost (One-time)	Estimated Implementation Cost (Annual)
R3.21 Service Title IV-E cases which will help offset foster care costs.	\$13,700			
R3.28 Do not fill these vacant positions: 13.0 intake/support specialist FTEs, 1.0 data entry support staff FTE and 2.5 other support staff FTE.		\$548,000 (Cost Avoidance)		
R3.28 Reduce 2.0 FTE supervisor positions.		\$93,000		
R3.29 Fill the vacant customer service position (short-term solution).				\$36,600
R3.30 Do not fill 6.0 FTE vacant review and adjustment specialist positions.		\$210,000 (Cost Avoidance)		
R3.31 Do not fill the one vacant cashier position.		\$36,000 (Cost Avoidance)		
R3.31 Implement alternative processes to reduce 3.0 FTE cashier personnel.		\$109,000		
R3.36 Do not fill 2.0 FTEs vacant support staff positions, 2.0 FTEs vacant records room positions and 1.0 FTE vacant legal services coordinator position in the legal unit.		\$158,000 (Cost Avoidance)		
R3.43 Either exclude the paid leave benefit for union business or require the union to reimburse the County for the expenses in all three agreements. ¹		\$10,400 ¹		
R3.47 Purchase workforce management system software, wall board system, and recording device to improve customer service operations and eventually phase out the customer service unit.		\$146,400	\$136,000	\$5,000
R3.48 Develop and implement a customer survey.				\$4,800
Totals²	\$13,700	\$1,310,800	\$136,000	\$46,400

¹ Subject to Union Negotiations

² According to MCSEA and the County, about 34 percent of MCSEA’s funding comes from the County’s General Fund and 66 percent comes from Federal and State sources; and therefore, these financial implications would impact the General Fund accordingly.

Conclusion Statement

MCSEA could improve its operations in a number of areas. Overall, MCSEA had the lowest percentage of cases in the enforcement mode as compared to the peers. As a result, MCSEA is collecting a much lower amount of child support payments per case as compared to the peers. Since effectively managing caseloads to collect and subsequently provide timely child support payments to custodial parents is the primary objective of CSEAs, MCSEA should develop and implement strategies to enhance its case management system such as implementing a generalized case management system, examining alternative methods of establishing cases in SETS, performing additional administrative processes, using available enforcement tools, tracking and monitoring progress of individuals referred to jobs program, streamlining the interview process, monitoring cases through SETS reports, ensuring that staff are appropriately and adequately trained, and developing and tracking additional performance measures. If MCSEA could improve its case management operations and achieve performance comparable to the peers, MCSEA has the potential to collect an additional \$458,000 per month in child support collections based upon peer comparisons.

The staffing analyses conducted in this report indicated that MCSEA does not have a significant need to fill vacant positions in numerous areas. Currently, MCSEA is processing the second lowest number of cases per case worker as compared to the peers. Implementing an alternative method of managing caseloads and establishing cases in SETS could result in enhancing the operational efficiency in the pre-enforcement and enforcement units. In addition, improving the case management system to increase the number of cases in enforcement could result in a more balanced workload for the case workers. Therefore, MCSEA should consider not filling the 13.0 FTE vacant case worker positions. The current staffing levels in the legal unit do not warrant any changes. However, MCSEA should reassess staffing levels in the legal unit after it has expanded and increased the use of administrative processes and enforcement tools to more effectively service its clients in a timely manner. Based upon the staffing analysis and peer comparisons in this report, MCSEA should consider not filling 2.0 FTE vacant support staff positions and 1.0 FTE vacant legal services coordinator position in the legal unit. If MCSEA fully enforced the requirement for employers to remit payments to CSPC, similar to Tuscarawas CSEA, it could reduce 3.0 FTE cashier positions.

The director of MDJFS and the County should fully evaluate the options of either employing one full-time professional or using existing management staff to be ultimately accountable for child support operations and implement improvements at MCSEA. Specific functions that need to be performed by upper-level management at MCSEA include the following: implement and oversee strategies to improve MCSEA's case management system, work with ODJFS in areas impacting MCSEA's ability to improve and enhance operations, develop a strategic plan defining the mission and vision of MCSEA, and establish an effective working relationship with the various collective bargaining units within MCSEA. The overall benefits outlined in the three collective bargaining

agreements at MCSEA appear to be fair to the County and employees. In addition, MCSEA's department average compensation is 3.8 percent higher than the peer average.

Customer service activities at MCSEA could be significantly enhanced. Immediate measures that should be taken to improve customer service operations include conducting phone studies and continually monitoring activities, providing appropriate training, implementing a formal customer complaint procedure and developing a customer survey to obtain valuable feedback and determine areas that need to be further enhanced. In the long-term, MCSEA should consider implementing technological enhancements to customer service operations which could result in further streamlining and improving customer service activities. In addition, MCSEA should make community outreach a priority by developing and implementing strategies to promote community awareness about its services. Enhancing customer service operations and actively promoting community awareness could result in a positive public perception of MCSEA and create an environment in which clients are fully willing to work with MCSEA in the process of supporting their child.

MCSEA has not effectively conducted planning activities to develop strategies and subsequently improve services provided to its clients. At the administration level in conjunction with the County, effective strategic planning efforts should be clearly defined, implemented, communicated and supported in the form of key objectives and measurable goals. With these objectives clearly defined, MCSEA would foster a continually improving culture and environment. The strategic plan should be flexible enough to accommodate the changes that occur at the county, state and federal levels, and should also promote effective interaction and communication among their peers and up through the levels of the agency's organization. In addition, MCSEA should consider developing formal agency-wide performance measures to augment the performance measures established by the federal government, which should be aligned with its objectives and strategic plan to effectively evaluate and continuously improve the performance of MCSEA.

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