



MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

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Contact: The Mississippi Department of Human Services, Office of Communications
Lynne Myers, (601) 359- 4612, Lynne.Myers@mdhs.ms.gov OR
Paul J. Nelson, (601) 359-4517, paul.nelson@mdhs.ms.gov OR
Vanessa C. Lowe, (601) 359-4183,
vanessa.lowe@mdhs.ms.gov

MDHS Celebrates August as Child Support Awareness Month

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Annually, the Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS) celebrates August as Child Support Awareness Month and it is now that time of year again! The Child Support Program strives to promote parental accountability so that children in Mississippi receive reliable financial support from both parents. Currently, MDHS serves more than 390,000 children through the Child Support Program. Local child support offices will celebrate Child Support Awareness month during the week of August 19-23. Please stop by a local office for information about the program! For office locations, <https://www.mdhs.ms.gov/information-resources/contact/>.

“MDHS continues to improve performance in the child support program year after year,” said Jacob Black, Deputy Executive Director. In state fiscal year 2019, MDHS collected more than \$371 million, and continues to be one of the most cost effective programs in the nation by collecting more than \$10 for every dollar expended on the program. “Four short years ago, the percent of cases in the MDHS caseload with child support orders established was below 77%, and today that number is over 84%, well above the federal threshold of 80% and closer to the national average of 87%,” said Black.

Improving partnerships and processes has been a priority this past year. Since early 2018, MDHS has partnered with the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) on a peer learning project to use behavioral interventions to improve the reporting of family violence. “It is imperative that the child support program is aware when there are safety concerns in a family so that services are delivered without putting the safety of participants at risk,” said Lyndsy Irwin, Director of Child Support. “Through this process, we have discovered many areas for improvement, and we are actively working to address those concerns. MDHS partnered with the federal OCSE to host training sessions on family violence awareness with child support staff in March. Family violence service providers were invited to these trainings, and they participated in a planning session with MDHS to start developing a plan for ongoing partnerships,” said Irwin. During the month of August, some local child support offices will be collecting and donating supplies to support domestic violence shelters across the state.

It has almost become tradition to announce a new payment option during child support awareness month. “This year, we are pleased to announce that parents can start making child support payments using a credit card through MoneyGram. The great thing about this option is that these payments can be made online at any time,” said Irwin. For more information, visit <http://www.mdhs.ms.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Updated-Quick-Reference.pdf> or visit www.moneygram.com/mgo/us/en/paybills, and use code 14666 to locate billing information.

During the month of August, MDHS will also be announcing some exciting new tools that it hopes will improve the customer experience. “As we look toward the future, we know that our customers are less interested in traveling to physical office locations or waiting on hold for assistance, and more interested in 24/7 access to self-help options and case information from their phones and computers. We have a long way to go to catch up with the world, but we are getting there, and we realize that upfront investments in technology will pay dividends in improved customer service, programmatic performance, program integrity, and cost-savings,” said Irwin, “stay tuned throughout the month for exciting news.”

To learn more about the Child Support Program, please visit <http://www.mdhs.state.ms.us/child-support/> or call 1-877-882-4916.

Information about payment options is available at <http://www.mdhs.state.ms.us/child-support/choose-a-payment-option/>

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