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Creating a New Approach to Contacting Child Support Payors

Introduction / Purpose

The Child Support Recovery Unit (CSRU) in the Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) is responsible for collecting child support payments. A new approach is needed for CSRU to keep risky payors from missing payments and to help lapsed payors resume their payments. A majority of child support payments are collected using income withholding orders (IWO) with employers.

Research Question

What new approach will help the Iowa CSRU collect child support payments in a more effective way?

Sample and Methods

❖ The sample contains 8,193 cases with the following characteristics:
  • Payor not incarcerated
  • At least one payment between July 2009 and September 2013
  • At least one stopped payment since their first payment
  • Has payment history 24 months or longer since their first payment
❖ Sept 1 - Separated the cases into three groups:
• Currently Paying Cases – With an IWO
• Currently Paying Cases – Non IWO
• Currently Stopped Cases
❖ Step 2 - Used a statistical selection approach to develop a predictive evaluation procedure which indicated where there was a higher priority needed for contacting payors
❖ Step 3 - Workers called the payors on the "Contact List"
❖ Step 4 - Evaluated the outcome of the pilot (July 2016 - December 2016)

Predictive Evaluation Procedure

❖ **Currently Paying Cases: Risk Potential**
Based on cases' payment and employment histories, we identified some RISKY cases. The variables used to evaluate stop payments potential:
  • Last Payment Length
  • Average Payment Duration Length
  • Total Paid Percent
  • Paid Month Percent
  • Unemployed Days Percent
  • Average Days with Employment*
  • Longest Payment Duration Length*
  • Unpaid Month Percent When Unemployed**
* only apply to IWO Group **only apply to Non-IWO Group

❖ **Currently Stopped Cases: Resume Payment Potential**
Based on cases' payment histories, we identified some RESUME cases. These cases were evaluated to be more likely to resume their payment with CSRU contact. The variables used to evaluate resume payments potential:
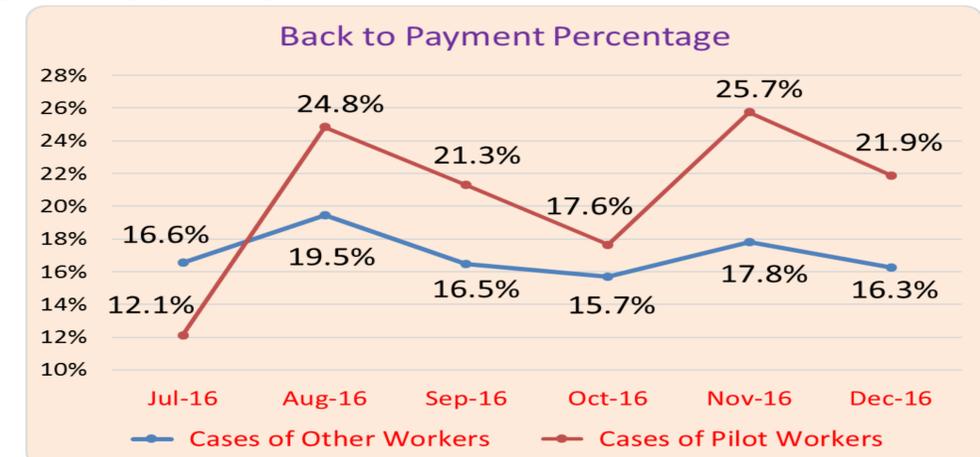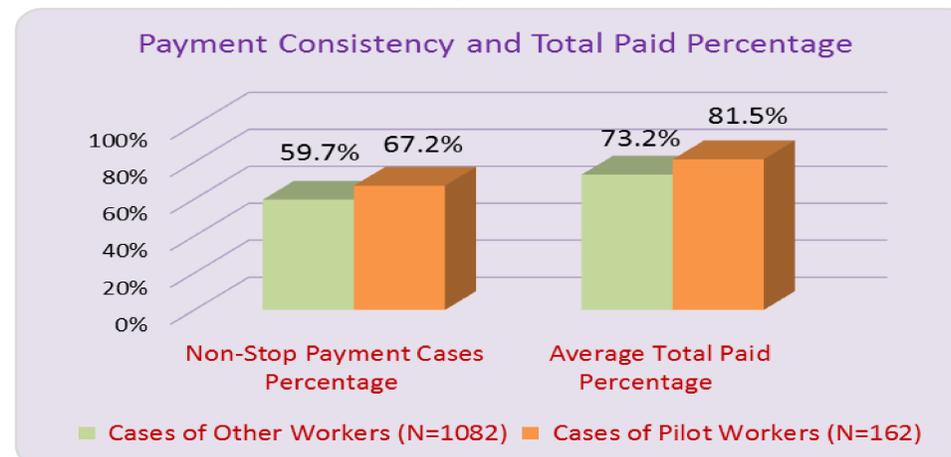 • Stopped Length
  • Continuous Payment Duration Length before Stop
  • Total Paid Percent
  • Paid Month Percent
  • Payment Stop Frequency

Implementation & Evaluation

Each month, CSRU workers called the payors on the "Contact List" prepared using the predictive evaluation procedure. In addition to contacting payors with longer period of non-payment, the worker prioritized calling payors who:
• Had currently made payments, but overall had a significant history/pattern of starting and stopping payments
• Had currently not made a payment, but historically overall had a positive payment pattern

Payment Consistency and Total Paid Percentage

Non-Stop Payment Cases Percentage: 59.7% / 67.2%
Average Total Paid Percentage: 73.2% / 81.5%

■ Cases of Other Workers (N=1082) ■ Cases of Pilot Workers (N=162)

Back to Payment Percentage

	Jul-16	Aug-16	Sep-16	Oct-16	Nov-16	Dec-16
Cases of Other Workers	16.6%	19.5%	16.5%	15.7%	17.8%	16.3%
Cases of Pilot Workers	12.1%	24.8%	21.3%	17.6%	25.7%	21.9%

Considerations & Recommendations

❖ The selected pilot workers were identified for their effective communication skills, which might affect the results of the evaluation. We recommend a training related to these communication methods for workers who take on the contact list approach.
❖ Since there are many other factors that might have impact on the payment consistency, of which we have no control, our contact list might not be the only reason the pilot workers' cases show a better result compared to the other workers.
❖ Recommend the procedure for all CSRU office workers in the state.