

CHILD SUPPORT MODIFICATIONS

PART II: PAYMENT OUTCOMES

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Krysten Garcia & Letitia Logan Passarella

Child support is an important source of income that can lift families out of poverty. The program served 155,046 children in Maryland in federal fiscal year 2023 (Office of Child Support Services [OCSS], 2024), and in state fiscal year (SFY) 2024, those who were owed support in Maryland received an average of \$7,422 throughout the year (Garcia & Passarella, 2025).¹ Child support will likely become even more vital to families as the nation faces historic disinvestment in children in the coming years, including substantial cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) (Crandall-Hollick et al., 2025).

Modifications to child support orders are important to ensure that orders remain commensurate with child-rearing expenses, cost of living, and parents' income. Given that an order can be in place from a child's birth to age 18, and in some cases beyond age 18, inflation can reduce the value of an order, and expenses may change as a child ages. In addition, income volatility is relatively common, especially among parents engaging in low-wage work (Maag et al., 2017). Maryland allows reviews of orders to determine if there has been a substantial change in income or expenses to warrant modifying a support order (Child Support Administration [CSA], n.d.).²

The first report in this series explored the frequency of modifications, finding that roughly one quarter (26%) of orders established in 2010 had at least one modification between 2010 and 2019 (Passarella, 2024). Furthermore, modifications were about evenly split between upward and downward modifications. Lower order amounts were more likely to be modified upward and higher order amounts were more likely to be modified downward (Passarella, 2024).

This report builds on these findings to show how modifications are related to payments. While research on modifications is generally limited, there is some evidence that modifications can improve payment outcomes. For instance, Aharpour et al. (2020) found

Key Findings

- ❖ Modified orders had a higher median percentage of support paid than non-modified orders in all 9 years after establishment.
- ❖ After modification, average annual current support paid increased by \$2,713 for upward modifications and decreased by \$1,289 for downward modifications.
- ❖ The median percentage of current support paid remained stable (82% to 83%) for upward modifications and increased nearly 20 percentage points (64% to 82%) for downward modifications.
- ❖ Among upward modifications, the percentage of cases with arrears increased (67% to 78%) and the median arrears balance increased nearly three-fold (\$832 to \$2,330).
- ❖ Among downward modifications, there was a decrease in both the percentage of cases with arrears (81% to 69%) and the median arrears balance (\$3,990 to \$3,871).

¹ Data are based on a representative sample of all parents who were owed support in SFY 2024.

² See Passarella (2024) for more information about modification policies and processes.

that modifying or suspending child support orders for parents who are incarcerated can result in less debt accrual and more consistent child support payments after leaving incarceration. Improved payment outcomes may be a result of modifications right-sizing support orders to parents' income, especially if there was missing or incomplete income information when the order was established. Modifications may also increase parents' perception of fairness in the program, which has been found to be important for willingness to pay and cooperation with the program (Ellis, 2005; Vogel, 2019; Vogel et al., 2024). On the other hand, if modifications do not match up with changes in income or are seen as unfair by parents, they may not improve payment outcomes.

Consistent payments that fulfill support obligations are important for ensuring that children receive reliable, adequate financial support. They can also prevent arrears accrual that can ultimately harm both parents and children (e.g., Nepomnyaschy et al., 2021). To that end, this study explores payment patterns for modifications. Specifically, it examines the same study population as the previous report, including all new orders established in 2010 (n=11,549) with follow-up data through 2020 to answer the following questions:

- 1) How does the percentage of current support paid change over time, and is it different for non-modified and modified orders?
- 2) How does current support paid and percentage of support paid change after

modification, and is it different for upward and downward modifications?

- 3) How do arrears balances and arrears paid change after modification, and is it different for upward and downward modifications?

This report helps fill an important gap in research and can also be useful to program administrators and policymakers. Specifically, the payment analyses provide evidence that modifications are associated with several improved payment outcomes, with differences by modification direction. Understanding these outcomes can inform initiatives to improve modification outreach and processes in support of families.

Data and Study Population

Study Population

The population for this study includes all child support orders that were newly established through Maryland's public child support program between January 1, 2010 and December 31, 2010. New orders were identified when a final current support order amount (SOA) greater than \$0 first appeared in the administrative data during the study period. The final population in calendar year 2010 was 11,549 new orders.³

Modifications were identified as new orders that had a change in the monthly SOA at any point between establishment and December 31, 2019. Of 11,549 new orders, 26% (n=3,059) were modified. Some were modified multiple times, resulting in a total of 4,158 modifications. Modifications were

³ Orders that were not based on Maryland's guidelines were excluded, including cases that only address the child's paternity or orders for spousal support. Orders

that were established outside of the public child support program but were included in the administrative data for wage-withholding and collection purposes were also excluded.

about evenly split between downward (49%; n=2,040) and upward (51%; 2,118) modifications. Downward modifications were defined as orders with a lower monthly SOA after modification and upward modifications were defined as orders with a higher monthly SOA after modification.

The direction of change in the monthly SOA does not always match the direction of change in support due over an entire year. Among upward modifications, one in 20 (5%) had a decrease in annual support due in the year after modification, despite an increase in the monthly SOA. Among downward modifications, nearly one in five (19%) had an increase in annual support due in the year after modification, despite a decrease in the monthly SOA. This is largely because of differences in the number of months with current support due. For instance, an individual with a downward modification that had more months of support due in the year after modification could have more support due for that year, even though their monthly SOA decreased.

Data Sources

Study findings are based on analyses of administrative data retrieved from computerized management information systems maintained by the State of Maryland. Data on the new order amounts and modifications were extracted from the Child Support Enforcement System (CSES).

CSES was the statewide automated information management system for Maryland's public child support program between March 1998 and September 2022.⁴

CSES supported the intake, establishment, location, and enforcement functions of the Child Support Administration (CSA). CSES contains identifying information and demographic data on children and their parents or caregivers who were receiving services from the public child support program authorized under the Social Security Act. Data on paternity status and payment receipt are also available.

Data Analysis

Analyses of new orders include data through the end of calendar year 2019, representing a full 9 years of follow-up data; we choose to end the follow-up period prior to 10 years to avoid the disruption of court closures during the COVID-19 pandemic. With the exception of Figure 1, the analyses in this report examine outcomes in the year before and year after modification for all modifications. For modifications that occurred in 2019, data from 2020 was used to capture outcomes in the year after modification. This report utilizes descriptive statistics to describe child support orders and modifications, including percentages, medians, and averages. The average represents the number at which one would arrive if the total (e.g., all support order amounts) was divided by the number of orders included in the analysis. We also present the median, which can be found by arranging all values from lowest to highest and selecting the midpoint value. Extreme values do not affect the median, which is why it is sometimes preferred over the average.

⁴ In September 2022, CSES was fully replaced by the Child Support Management System (CSMS).

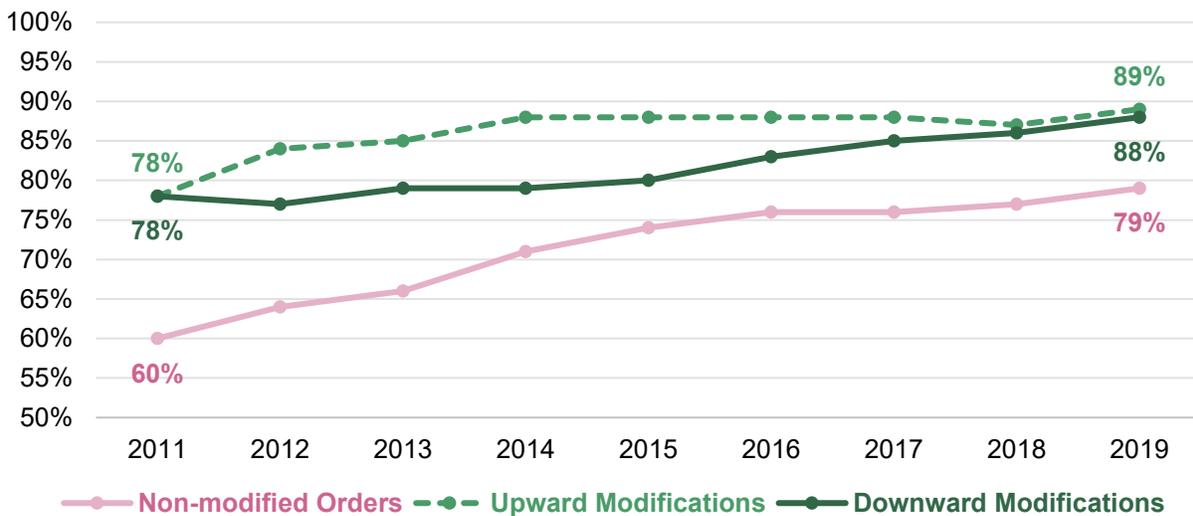
Trend over Time: Modified vs. Non-modified Orders

One way to look at payment outcomes for modifications is to compare modified and non-modified orders. Figure 1 shows the median percentage of current support paid in the 9 years after order establishment for non-modified orders as well as orders that were modified upward or downward at some point in the 9 years. The first report in this series found that one third (33%) of modifications occurred in the year after establishment (i.e., 2011) and an additional two fifths (39%) occurred in the 2 to 4 years after establishment (Passarella, 2024).

Figure 1 shows that the percentage of current support paid increased through the years for all groups. Moreover, the percentage paid was consistently higher for modified orders compared to non-modified orders, especially those that were modified upward. Although not shown in the figure, modified orders also consistently had more support due, more support paid, and better payment consistency (i.e., had a higher percentage of months with support paid). Overall, this demonstrates better payment outcomes among modified orders compared to non-modified orders.

Figure 1. Trend over Time: Median Percentage of Current Support Paid by Modification Status, CY 2011-2019

Among all new orders established in 2010



Note: Findings for each year exclude orders with no current support due in that year. Among orders that were modified, 27% were modified more than once. For those orders, the direction of their first modification was included in this analysis. Regardless of when the first modification of an order occurred, the order was categorized as a modification in all years shown. For example, an order with an upward modification in 2013 is included in the upward modification line in all years 2011 to 2019.

Several other states have also found that modified orders have better payment outcomes compared to non-modified orders. For instance, Nebraska and Pennsylvania found that the average percentage of support paid was 7% and 4% higher for modified orders, respectively (Nebraska

Child Support Advisory Commission, 2025; Venohr & Matyasic, 2021). Additionally, Hawaii found that modified orders had a higher percentage of months with a payment and were more likely to pay their full support obligation (Hawaii State Judiciary, 2023).

There are a few potential reasons why modified orders tend to have better payment outcomes than non-modified orders. It could be a result of the benefits of obtaining a modification, such as right-sizing an order to an obligor's income thereby increasing ability to pay. Similarly, obtaining a modification may improve perceptions of program fairness thereby improving willingness to pay. However, it could also reflect differences in characteristics between those who successfully obtain a modification and those who do not.

While the next report in this series will delve further into characteristics associated with modifications, studies have noted several barriers to accessing a modification. These barriers include (but are not limited to) the administrative burden of applying for a modification, lack of knowledge about the modification process, and lack of financial resources to pay legal fees (Waller & Plotnick, 2001; Vogel et al., 2024; Baird & Miller, 2019; Ha et al., 2010). Perhaps reflective of these barriers, a longitudinal study by Ha et al. (2010) found that most individuals who experienced earnings fluctuations did not receive a modification and non-White mothers were less likely than White mothers to receive a modification. Relatedly, Nebraska and Tennessee have reported that parents with modified orders have higher incomes than those without a modification (Nebraska Child Support Advisory Commission, 2025; Tennessee State Government, 2020). Higher income and access to resources can also improve ability to pay. Thus, more advantaged (e.g.,

in terms of finances, education, etc.) parents may be better able to both pay support obligations and successfully obtain a modification. Nevertheless, Tennessee and West Virginia have demonstrated that modified orders have better payment outcomes regardless of income (Tennessee State Government, 2020; West Virginia Support Enforcement Commission, 2023), suggesting that the modification itself may play an important role in driving payment outcomes.

In order to better understand how modifications affect payment outcomes, the remaining analyses in this report focus only on modifications and examine how outcomes differ in the year before and year after a modification. They also show differences by the direction of modification. This will fill an important gap in research.

Current Support Before and After Modification

The purpose of a modification is to change monthly support order amounts (SOA) to match changes in child expenses and/or ability to pay. The first report in this series showed that average monthly SOAs decreased from \$786 to \$482 for downward modifications and increased from \$400 to \$667 for upward modifications (Passarella, 2024). Moreover, higher SOAs were more likely to be modified downward and lower SOAs were more likely to be modified upward, creating more moderate orders on average (Passarella, 2024).

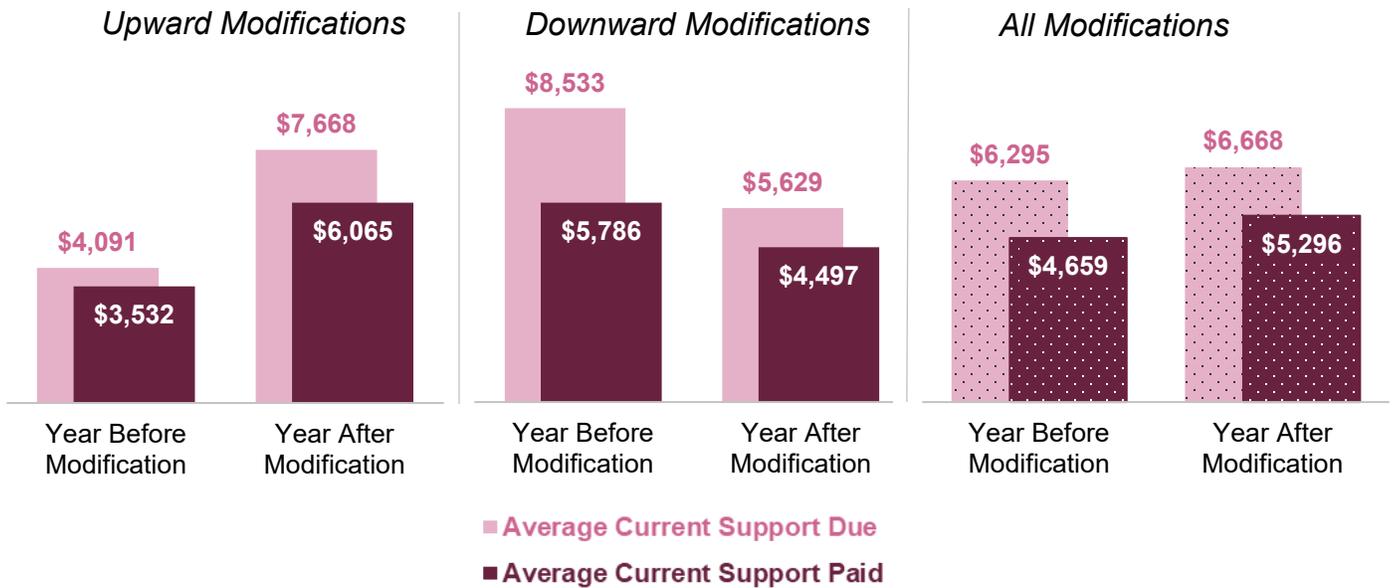
Modifications to monthly SOAs are reflected in Figure 2, which shows the average current support due in the year before and year after modification for upward, downward, and all modifications combined. Average annual current support due increased for upward modifications from \$4,091 to \$7,668 (+\$3,577). Downward modifications initially had more support due than upward modifications in the year before modification at \$8,533. Support due then decreased to \$5,629 in the year after modification (-\$2,904).

Figure 2 also shows that changes in average current support paid after modification were aligned with the changes in support due. Among upward modifications with support due and a payment, average support payments increased from \$3,532 in the year before modification to \$6,065 in the year after

(+\$2,533). Conversely, average annual current support payments decreased from \$5,786 to \$4,497 for downward modifications (-\$1,289).

Lastly, Figure 2 shows that the effect of a modification on payments is mostly hidden when combining upward and downward modifications. Specifically, annual current support due increased by an average of \$373 and annual support paid increased by an average of \$637. This pattern is observed because upward and downward modifications have opposite effects on support due and payments, and modifications were roughly evenly split between upward (51%) and downward (49%) modifications (Passarella, 2024). The remainder of this report examines upward and downward modifications separately to compare their outcomes.

Figure 2. Average Current Support Due and Paid
Year Before and Year After Modification



Note: Average current support due excludes modifications with no support due. Average current support paid excludes modifications with no support due or no payment made.

Though there was an average increase in annual current support paid for upward modifications and decrease for downward modifications (shown in Figure 2), this was not the experience of all individuals. Figure 3 explores individual variation in current support payments in the year before and after modification. Among upward modifications, most (83%) followed the average trend and had an increase in support paid, with a large average increase of \$3,430. This means that most obligors paid \$3,430 more in the year after modification than year before modification, on average. However, roughly one in seven (14%) did not follow the average trend and had a decrease in support paid, with an average decrease of -\$1,370.

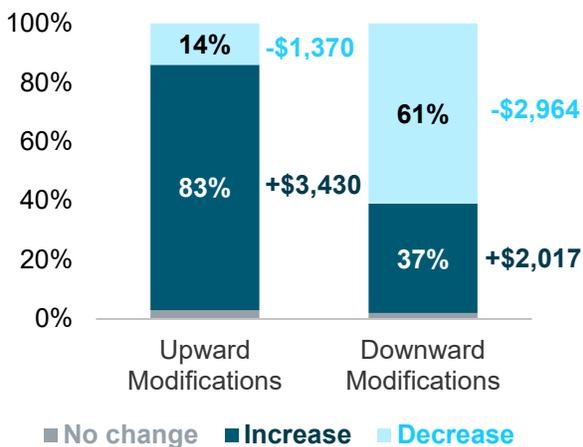
There are several reasons why an individual with an upward modification may have paid less current support in the year after modification than the year before modification. One reason is that a small percentage (5%) of upward modifications had a decrease in annual support due, despite an increase in their monthly SOA, largely due to fewer months of support due in the year after modification (see the Methods section for more details). In addition, changes in income could influence support payments. For instance, an

individual may have lost their job shortly after the modification and were unable to pay support, resulting in a decrease in support paid. It is also possible that an individual may have been less willing to pay support if they viewed the modification as unfair. The final report in this series will explore characteristics of those who received a modification, such as income, which may shed more light on variations in payment outcomes.

There was relatively more individual variation in payments among downward modifications. About three fifths (61%) followed the average trend and had a decrease in current support paid, with an average decrease of -\$2,964. On the other hand, nearly two fifths (37%) had an increase in support paid, with a large average increase of \$2,017. Similar to upward modifications, there are several reasons why downward modifications may have had an increase in support paid, such as changes in income or willingness to pay. In addition, nearly 20% of downward modifications had an increase in annual support due in the year after modification, largely due to more months of support due compared to the prior year (see the Methods section for more details).

Figure 3. Individual Differences in Current Support Paid Year Before and After Modification

Interpretation Example: For 14% of upward modifications, obligors paid less current support in the year after modification compared to the year before. The average decrease in support paid among these cases was -\$1,370.



Note: Analyses exclude cases with no support due in both the year before and year after modification.

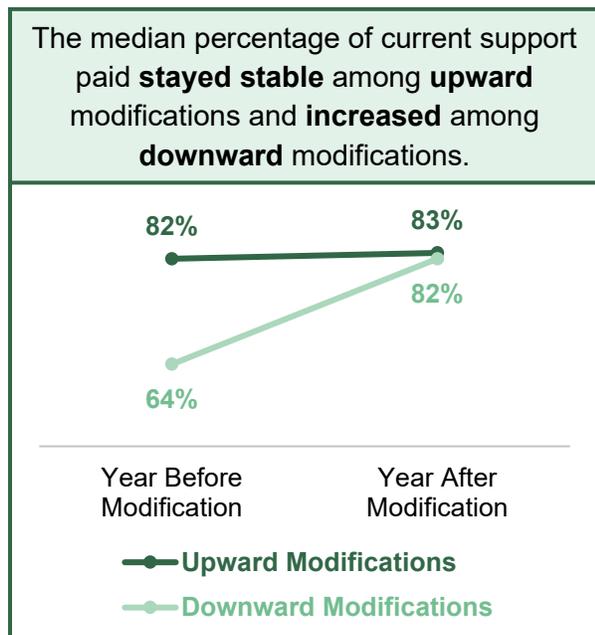
Beyond changes in the amount of current support paid, the percentage of current support due that was paid can provide more details about individuals’ abilities to meet their support obligations. A higher percentage of current support paid also translates to less accumulation of debt (i.e., arrears) from missed current support payments. As previously shown in Figure 1, the percentage paid was higher among modified compared to non-modified orders.

There is little research on how the percentage of current support paid changes from before a modification to after. However, some research suggests that the percentage of obligors who make a current support payment increases after modification. In the most recent review of

Oregon’s child support guidelines, they found that the percentage of obligors who made at least one payment increased from 75% before modification to 88% after modification (Oregon Department of Justice, 2024). In addition, the most recent review of Maryland’s child support guidelines found that among downward modifications, the percentage of obligors who made at least one payment over 3 months increased from 76% before modification to 85% after modification. Among upward modifications however, there was no effect of modification; the percentage that made at least one payment remained at 87% (Demyan & Passarella, 2022). Taken together, these findings suggest that the percentage of current support paid may also increase after modification, particularly for downward modifications.

Figure 4 shows the median percentage of current support paid in the year before and year after modification. The median percentage of current support paid was initially higher for upward modifications than downward modifications in the year before the modification (82% vs. 64%). This may indicate that obligors who went on to receive a downward modification had a SOA that was too high and they struggled to meet their previous obligation. In the year after modification, the median percentage paid was similar for upward modifications at 83%, but it increased substantially from 64% to 82% for downward modifications. Thus, there was virtually no difference in the median percentage paid between upward and downward modifications in the year after modification. This suggests that downward modifications may be particularly important for right-sizing SOAs and improving ability to pay.

Figure 4. Median Percentage of Current Support Paid
Year Before and Year After Modification



Note: Analyses exclude modifications with no current support due in the year before or after modification.

Although not shown, parents’ payment consistency improved for both upward and downward modifications. Payment consistency refers to the percentage of months in which a payment was made out of all months in which current support was due. In the year before modification, median payment consistency was higher for upward modifications (support was paid in 92% of months with support due) compared to downward modifications (83%). In the year after modification, median payment consistency increased to 100% for upward modifications and 92% for downward modifications. This further indicates that modifications may be beneficial for improving current support payment outcomes.

Arrears Before and After Modification

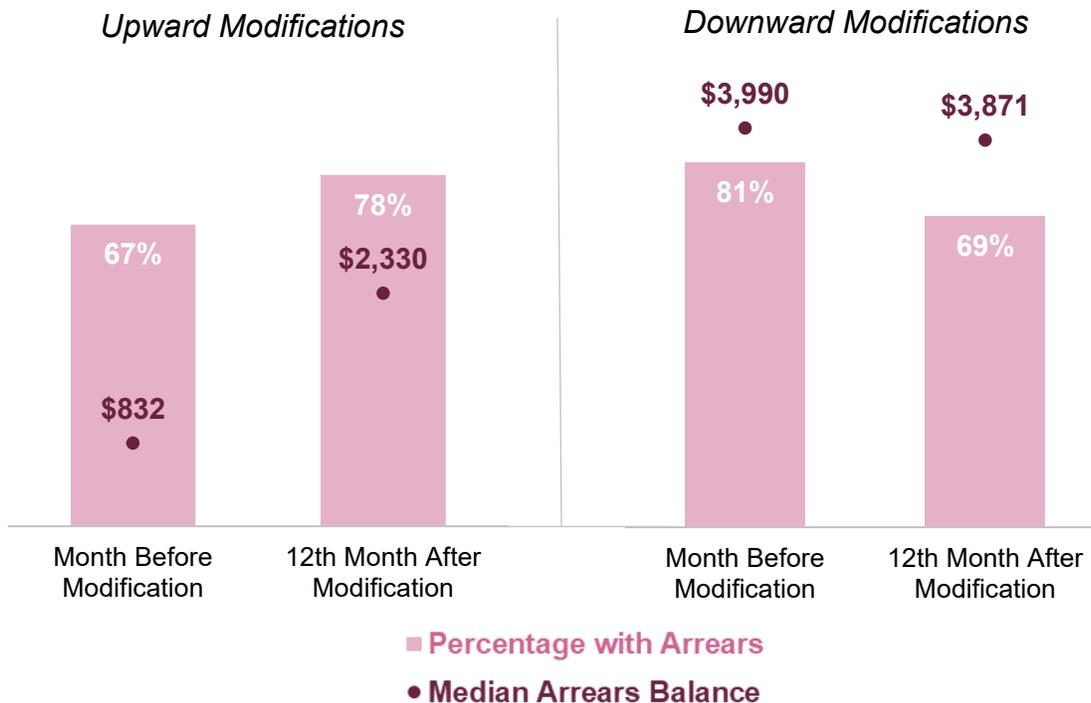
This next section focuses on how arrears payments and balances change after

modification. Arrears accumulate when obligors miss current support payments or do not pay the full obligation. Research has shown that arrears can have negative impacts on future payments, family relationships, and child health (e.g., Nepomnyaschy et al., 2021). However, there is a lack of research on how modifications affect arrears.

As with current support, the impact of modifications on arrears differed by the direction of modification. Figure 5 shows that in the month just before the modification, many cases had an arrears balance, especially for downward modifications. Specifically, roughly two thirds (67%) of upward modifications and four fifths (81%) of downward modifications had an arrears balance. A different pattern was observed in the 12th month after modification. The percentage with an arrears balance increased by 11 percentage points for upward modifications and decreased by 12 percentage points for downward modifications. This means that in the 12th month after modification, it was more common for upward modifications to have an arrears balance compared to downward modifications.

Similarly, median arrears balances increased for upward modifications and decreased for downward modifications. Among those with an arrears balance, median balances nearly tripled for upward modifications from \$832 to \$2,330. Downward modifications had a much smaller change in median arrears balances, decreasing from \$3,990 to \$3,871. Overall, these findings suggest that downward modifications may be beneficial for reducing or even eliminating arrears, while upward modifications may result in more accumulation of arrears.

Figure 5. Percentage with Arrears and Median Arrears Balances
Month Before and 12th Month After Modification



Note: Median arrears balances exclude modifications with no arrears balances. The median arrears balance captures the balance in the month just before modification and in the 12th month after modification. Balances are therefore affected by payments made in the year before and year after modification.

Arrears balances are affected by the magnitude of change in support due after modification.

For example, among upward modifications, those with larger increases in support due had larger increases in median arrears balances.

See the Appendix on page 15 for more details.

the percentage change in support due increases, there is a larger increase in arrears balances for upward modifications. This suggests that modifications may be too large for some obligors, leading to an accumulation of arrears. Individuals with large upward modifications may be less willing to pay support because they view the increase as unfair. They may also have less ability to pay if the increase does not match their income. For downward modifications, the same pattern was observed but in the opposite direction. Larger percentage changes in support due were associated with larger decreases in arrears balances (see Figure A1 for more details). This again suggests that downward modifications may help reduce arrears.

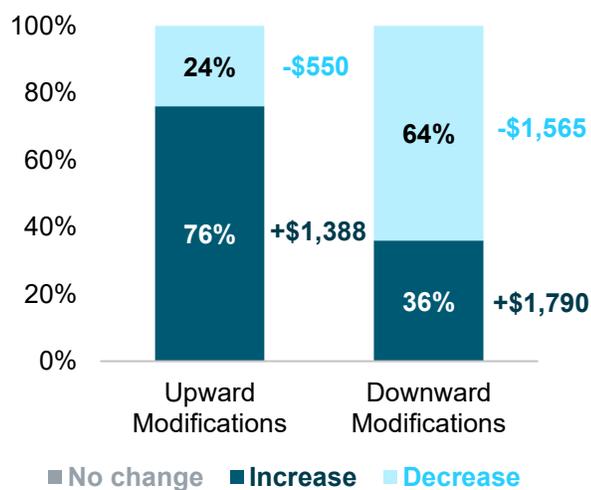
Notably, larger changes in current support due from the year before to year after modification were associated with larger changes in arrears balances. Figure A1 in the Appendix (pg. 15) demonstrates that as

While median arrears balances increased for upward modifications and decreased for downward modifications, not all individuals followed this trend. Figure 6 shows the percentage of modifications with an increase, decrease, or no change in arrears balances from the month before modification to the 12th month after modification. Roughly three quarters (76%) of upward modifications followed the overall trend shown in Figure 5 and had an increase in arrears balances, with a large median increase of \$1,790. This means that the median arrears balance was \$1,790 higher in the 12th month after modification compared to the month before modification. Conversely, almost one quarter (24%) of upward modifications had a decrease in arrears after modification, though with a median decrease of just \$550.

Similar to current support, there was more variation among downward modifications. Almost two thirds (64%) followed the overall trend shown in Figure 5 and had a decrease in arrears, with a large median decrease of -\$1,565. This means that the median arrears balance was \$1,565 lower in the 12th month after modification compared to the month before modification. On the other hand, more than one third (36%) of downward modifications had an increase in arrears after modification, with a large median increase of \$1,388. These opposing outcomes could explain why the overall decrease in median arrears balances for downward modifications shown in Figure 5 is a small decrease. As described earlier, several factors likely impact outcomes after modification, such as changes in income. The next report in this series will provide more information about characteristics of modifications.

Figure 6. Individual Differences in Arrears Balances
Month Before and 12th Month After Modification

Interpretation Example: For 24% of upward modifications, obligors had a lower arrears balance in the 12th month after modification compared to the month before modification. The median decrease in arrears among these obligors was -\$550.



Note: The arrears balance captures the balance in the month just before modification and in the 12th month after modification. Balances are therefore affected by payments made in the year before and year after modification.

Figure 7 builds on the findings related to arrears balances by comparing change in arrears balances to change in arrears payments. This figure shows percentage change, capturing the magnitude of difference in arrears payments and balances from the year before to year after modification (see the text box below for more details). Positive percentages indicate an increase in arrears payments or balances, with larger percentages indicating

more change. Negative percentages indicate a decrease in arrears payments or balances, with larger percentages indicating more change. Importantly, arrears balances were captured at the end of each respective year (i.e., the month right before modification and the 12th month after modification). Therefore, arrears payments made in the year affect the balance at the end of the year.

Percentage Change Explained: Arrears Balance

$$\frac{\text{Arrears After Modification} - \text{Arrears Before Modification}}{\text{Arrears Before Modification}} \times 100\% = \% \text{ Change in Arrears}$$

Example A: An individual who owed \$1,000 in arrears in the month before modification and \$1,500 in the 12th month after modification would have a 50% increase in arrears.

$$\left(\frac{\$1,500 - \$1,000}{\$1,000} \right) \times 100\% = +50\%$$

Example B: An individual who owed \$1,000 in arrears in the month before modification and \$800 in the 12th month after modification would have a 20% decrease in arrears.

$$\left(\frac{\$800 - \$1,000}{\$1,000} \right) \times 100\% = -20\%$$

Note: If an individual **did not** owe any arrears in the month before modification but did owe arrears in the 12th month after modification, they were coded as having a 100% *increase* in arrears. If an individual **did** owe arrears in the month before modification but did not owe arrears in the 12th month after modification, they were coded as having a 100% *decrease* in arrears.

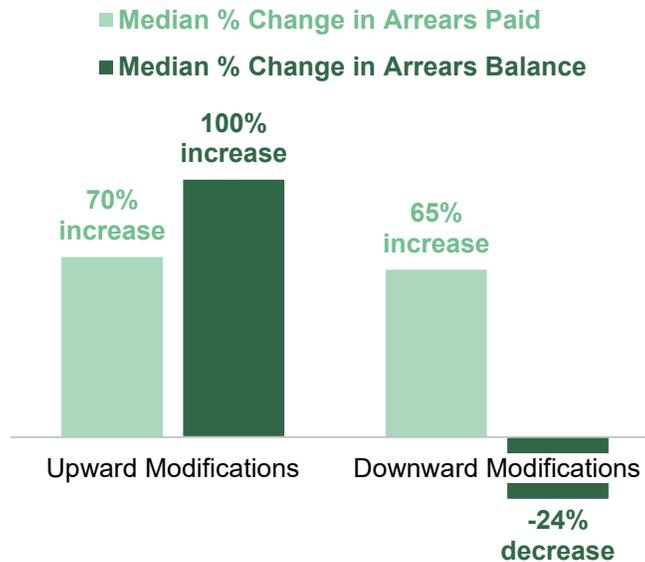
Figure 7 shows that both groups increased arrears payments in the year after modification, but only downward modifications had a decrease in the arrears balance. Among upward modifications, arrears payments increased substantially by a median of 70% in the year after modification compared to the year before

modification. This means that obligors with an upward modification paid a median of 70% more towards arrears after modification. Despite this large increase in payments, median arrears balances in the 12th month after modification were still 100% higher than in the month before

modification.⁵ This suggests that upward modifications can lead to accumulation of arrears, even if obligors are paying more towards their arrears. Some modifications may be too large for obligors to keep up with. Comparatively, downward modifications also had a substantial 65%

increase in arrears paid, though they experienced a median 24% decrease in arrears balances. This suggests that downward modifications may help obligors be able to pay more towards arrears and reduce their arrears balance.

Figure 7. Median Percentage Change in Arrears Paid and Balance



Note: Arrears paid captures the sum of payments made in the entire year, while the arrears balance captures the balance in the month just before modification and in the 12th month after modification. Balances are therefore affected by payments made in the year before modification and year after modification. Percentage change in the arrears balance excludes modifications with no arrears due in both the month before and 12th month after modification. Percentage change in arrears paid excludes modifications with no arrears due in either the month before or 12th month after modification.

Conclusions

Throughout the lifespan of a child support order, parents' financial circumstances and expenses for children may change. Modifications can address these changes to ensure that SOAs remain equitable. The first report in this series showed that modifications are not uncommon, occurring for about one in four (26%) orders in the 9 years since establishment in 2010. This

report provides important data on payment outcomes for these modifications.

This report found that modified orders had better payment outcomes than non-modified orders. The median percentage of support paid was higher for modified orders, especially upward modifications, in all 9 years since establishment. This is consistent with findings in other states and may mean that modifications improve

⁵ Percentage change in arrears balances cannot be compared to arrears balances shown in Figure 5. Balances in Figure 5 exclude modifications with \$0

balances while Figure 7 accounts for increases from \$0 or decreases to \$0.

payment outcomes. Alternatively, it may reflect differences in characteristics between those who do and do not obtain modifications due to barriers in accessing modifications.

When comparing payment outcomes in the year before and year after modification, this report found differences by the direction of modification. Upward modifications had an average increase of \$2,533 in current support paid after modification although the median percentage of support paid remained stable, just above 80%. This indicates that many obligors on these cases likely had the ability to pay more, and it means that custodial parents received more income to support children. However, there was more than a three-fold increase in median arrears balances for upward modifications. Furthermore, modifications with larger increases in support due tended to have larger increases in arrears balances. This suggests that modifications may have been too large for some obligors. Taken together, these findings suggest that more moderate modifications may improve payments without leading to large increases in arrears.

Downward modifications, on the other hand, had an average decrease of \$1,289 in current support paid, but a nearly 20 percentage point increase in median percentage of support paid. In addition, the percentage of cases with an arrears balance and the median arrears balance decreased. This suggests that downward

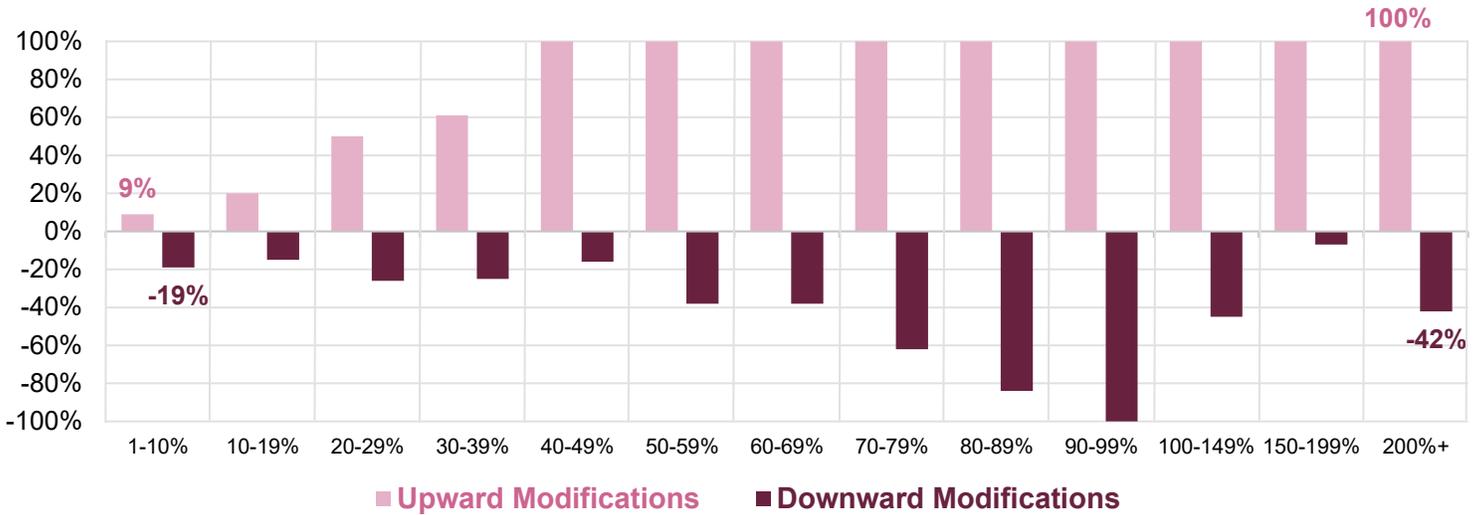
modifications may help right-size orders, though it does mean that custodial parents received less income to support children. While the child support agency has limited ability to influence broader economic conditions, it is important to note that reforms that aim to stabilize parental earnings as well as increasing access to multiple types of financial support could help ensure that children receive adequate, consistent support.

Some modifications did not follow the trends described above. For instance, roughly one quarter (24%) of upward modifications had a *decrease* in arrears and more than one third (36%) of downward modifications had an *increase* in arrears. Factors beyond the modification amount, such as changes in income or perceptions of fairness, likely impact payment outcomes. The next report in this series will explore characteristics of the parents who received modifications, which may help explain differences in outcomes.

This report helps fill a gap in research on modifications of child support order amounts by exploring outcomes right before and after a modification. The findings suggest that modifications can improve payment outcomes, with differences by the direction of modification. Increasing access to modifications and ensuring they are commensurate with parents' income may be helpful for maintaining fair orders that are consistently paid.

Appendix

Figure A1. Median Percentage Change in Arrears Balances by Percentage Change in Support Due Month Before and 12th Month After Modification



% Change in Support Due	% Change in Arrears Balances for Upward Modifications	% Change in Arrears Balances for Downward Modifications
± 1-9%	9%	-19%
± 10-19%	20%	-15%
± 20-29%	50%	-26%
± 30-39%	61%	-25%
± 40-49%	100%	-16%
± 50-59%	100%	-38%
± 60-69%	100%	-38%
± 70-79%	100%	-62%
± 80-89%	100%	-84%
± 90-99%	100%	-100%
± 100-149%	100%	-45%
± 150-199%	100%	-7%
± 200%+	100%	-42%

Note: The percentage change in support due can be positive (indicating an increase in support due) or negative (indicating a decrease in support due). The arrears balance captures the balance in the month just before modification and in the 12th month after modification. Balances are therefore affected by payments made in the year before and year after modification. Analyses exclude modifications with no arrears balance in either the month before or 12th month after modification.

Interpretation: Cases with a larger percentage change in support due after modification were associated with a larger percentage change in arrears balances, with opposite effects by the direction of modification. For example, when support due changed by 30-39% for **upward modifications**, arrears balances *increased* by a median of 61%. When support due changed by 30-39% for **downward modifications**, arrears balances *decreased* by a median of 25%.

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For additional information about this research brief, please contact Letitia Logan Passarella (410-706-2479; llogan@ssw.umaryland.edu) at the School of Social Work.

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