

A PROFILE OF ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY'S CHILD SUPPORT CASELOAD: 2010 TO 2012

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The recent installment of the annual *People & Payments* series provided a three-year analysis of the public child support caseload in Maryland, detailing notable improvement in the percent of current support and arrears cases with payments.ⁱ In July 2012, more than two-thirds of all arrears cases had at least one payment in the previous year, a considerable increase from July 2010 (from 61% to 68%). In federal fiscal year 2012, the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement reported that four in five cases had an order for support, and approximately two-thirds of current support that was owed was collected.ⁱⁱ

Differences among the 24 jurisdictions in Maryland may often be masked in state-wide analyses. Providing relevant caseload information at the local level is a key component of creating informed policies that support Maryland's diverse child support caseload. In this special brief in the *People & Payment* series, we provide a local perspective on the child support caseload for each of the five largest jurisdictions in Maryland: the counties of Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Montgomery, and Prince George's as well as Baltimore City. These five jurisdictions represented 72% of the statewide child support caseload in July 2012. In particular, this brief provides trends on Anne Arundel County's public child support caseload, including information on support orders and payments.

Methods

Each July, a random sample of active child support cases in the public system is selected for our annual *People &*

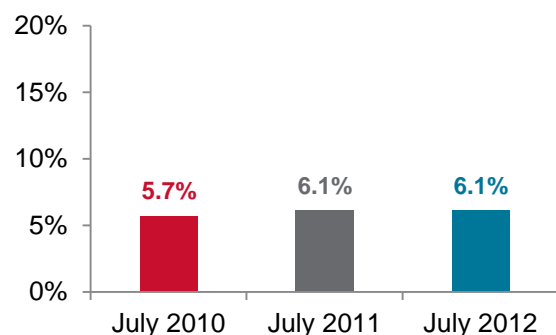
Payment series. This brief utilizes random samplesⁱⁱⁱ that were selected from July 2010, July 2011, and July 2012. The data provided in this brief were retrieved from the Child Support Enforcement System (CSES), a database maintained by the Department of Human Resources, State of Maryland.

Anne Arundel County Characteristics^{iv}

Anne Arundel County, home of Maryland's capital, Annapolis, is the residence of 9.3% of the state's population (550,000 residents). Three-fourths of residents are Caucasian, and half are male. Overall, Anne Arundel County residents are educated. Nine out of every 10 adults over the age of 25 possess a high school diploma, and more than one-third have attained a bachelor's degree. The median household income in the county is nearly \$15,000 higher than the state figure (\$86,987 vs. \$72,999), and poverty is lower than the state figure as well (5.9% vs. 9.4%).

Anne Arundel County has the fifth largest child support caseload in the state, making up approximately 6% (about 13,000 cases) of all Maryland public child support cases, a proportion virtually unchanged in recent years (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Percent of Statewide Caseload
2010 to 2012



Cases with a Support Order

Establishing a support order is one of the first steps to ensure child support can be collected on behalf of families. Two types of support orders exist: current support orders and arrears orders. An order for current support represents the financial support that is necessary to care for a child and is based on the combined income of both parents. When current support is collected each month, it is then distributed to the custodial family's case. If the noncustodial parent does not pay current support, then arrears accumulate, and an order for arrears may be established in order to recoup the unpaid balance.

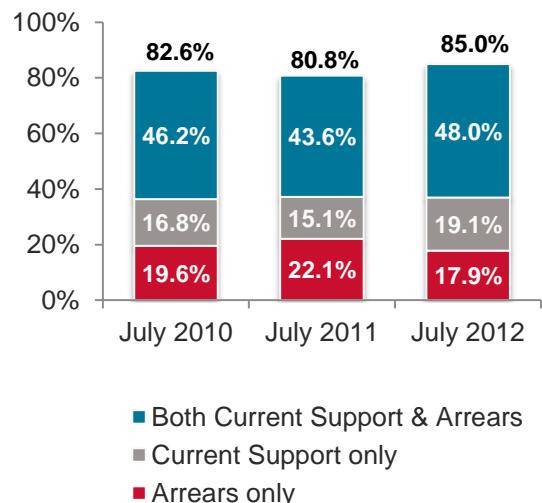
Among all sampled cases in Maryland, about three in four (77.6%) had an order for support in July 2012. Notably, the percentage of cases with an order for support increased between 2010 and 2012 by four percentage points. There was a similar increase among cases in Anne Arundel County, as displayed in Figure 2. In each study month, about four-fifths of all cases had an established order for support. There was a small decline between July 2010 and July 2011 (from 82.6% to 80.8%), but this was made up in July 2012, in which 85% of cases had at least one order for child support.

In July 2012, nearly half (48.0%) of all cases had an order for both current support and arrears. This means that half of all Anne Arundel County's cases have a non-custodial parent with two orders for support on a single case. This percentage increased over the previous year, from 43.6% in July 2011. Additionally, the county had a higher percentage of cases with both a current support and arrears order than the state (43.9%) in July 2012.

Statewide, there was a decrease in the percentage of cases that had an order for only arrears between July 2011 and July 2012, while the percentage of cases with an order for only current support grew. We see an identical pattern in Anne Arundel County. About one in five cases had an order for only arrears in both July 2010 (19.6%) and July 2011 (22.1%), but this percentage decreased to 17.9% in July 2012. The opposite was observed for cases with only orders for current support. There was a small decrease between July 2010 and July 2011 (from 16.8% to 15.1%) and an increase in July 2012, with current support-only orders in nearly one-fifth (19.1%) of all cases.

Overall, Figure 2 shows that the percentage of cases with an order for support increased in July 2012, and this was largely among cases with either an order for current support only or for both current support and arrears. On the other hand, the percentage of cases with arrears-only orders declined. For cases without a support order, it is likely paternity had not yet been established or the case had an order for medical assistance only.

Figure 2. Cases with a Support Order
2010 to 2012



Percent of Current Support Paid

After an order for current support is established, the Maryland Child Support Enforcement Administration (CSEA) can collect payments on behalf of the family, and these payments are essential to the well-being of children. If received, child support can represent as much as 40 percent of a low-income custodial family's income.^v In Maryland, the majority of cases with an order for current support receive payments. In fact, 8 in every 10 current support cases statewide receives a payment during a one year period.

On average, Maryland cases with an order for current support were owed about \$4,300 in the year before July 2012. In Anne Arundel County, an average of about \$5,100 was owed to families. Figure 3 shows the percentage of the current support amount that was paid during the 12 months before each study month. For instance, for the July 2012 sample, this figure shows the percent of current support paid between July 2011 and June 2012.

In Anne Arundel County, there is relative stability in the percentage of current support that is paid. In each of the study months, only one in six cases had no payments to current support during the prior year, and about three out of every ten cases received

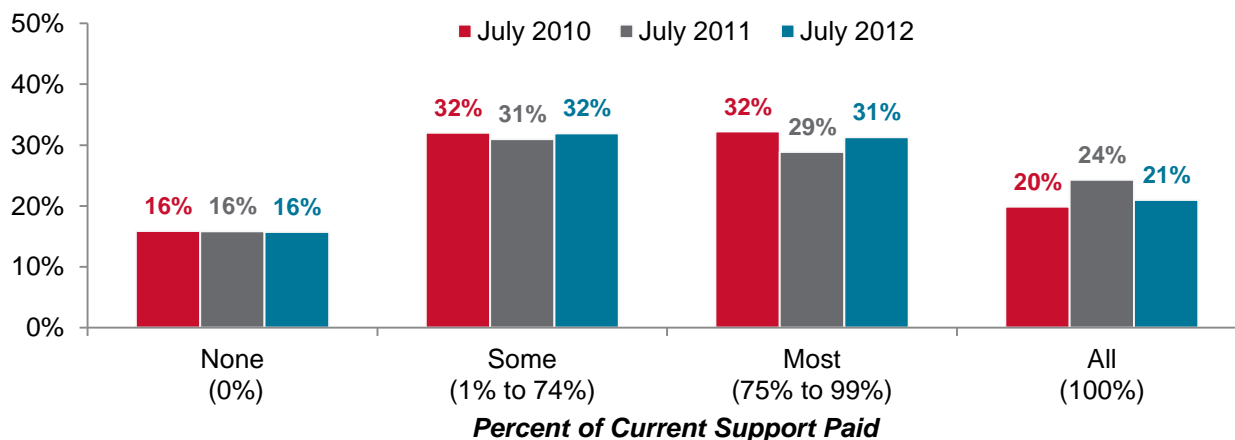
some of the current support that was owed. For example, among the July 2012 sample, 16% of cases received *none* of the current support that was owed. In that same year, 32% of cases received *some* of the current support that was owed; to clarify, these cases received between 1% and 74% of the total current support that was owed.

Most or all of the current support owed in the prior year was paid to half of the cases in Anne Arundel County. In the July 2012 sample, for example, 31% of cases received *most* (75% – 99%) of the current support owed to them, and one-fifth (21%) of cases received *all* (100%) of the current support that was owed in the prior year. Slightly more of the July 2011 cases received *all* of the current support owed (24%), but a smaller percentage (29%) received *most* of the current support.

Compared to the state, Anne Arundel County had a higher percentage of cases that received most or all of the current support owed (52% vs. 48%), as seen in Figure 4. Among other large jurisdictions, Anne Arundel County had the second highest percentage of cases that received 75% or more of the current support owed in the year before July 2012. Excluding Baltimore City, about half of cases in the large jurisdictions received most or all of the current support owed in the previous year.

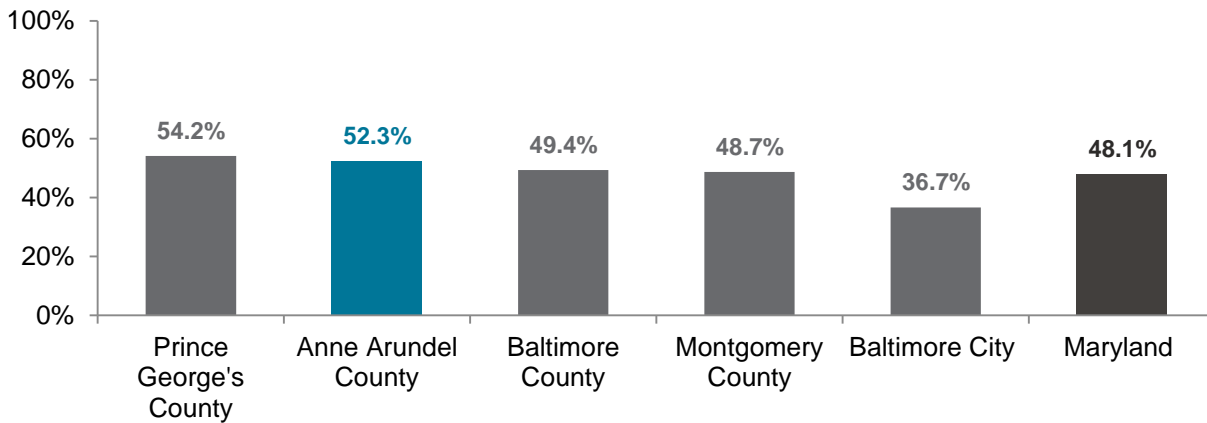
Figure 3. Percent of Current Support Paid in Previous Year

2010 to 2012



Note: Only cases with current support due in the previous year were included in this analysis. Payments made by noncustodial parents are distributed among their various child support accounts; represented in these figures is the payment amount that was distributed to a current support account.

Figure 4. Cases that Received 75% or more of Current Support: Largest Jurisdictions***
July 2012 Sample: Payments between July 2011 and June 2012



Note: Only cases with current support due in the previous year were included in this analysis. Payments made by noncustodial parents are distributed among their various child support accounts; represented in these figures is the payment amount that was distributed to a current support account.

Percent of Arrears Cases with a Payment

If a noncustodial parent falls behind in current support payments, or if a current support order is retroactive, arrears begin to accumulate. When a noncustodial parent gets behind in current support payments, it is difficult to make payments toward both current support and arrears concurrently, especially if the child support due exceeds the noncustodial parent's ability to pay. In July 2012, the average arrears balance for cases with any arrears due in Maryland was about \$10,300. In Anne Arundel County, the average balance was very similar (\$10,200).

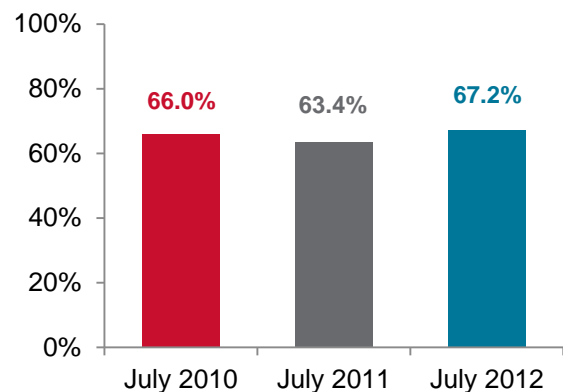
At the federal level, arrears performance is measured by the percent of arrears cases with any payments, rather than the percentage of the arrears that was paid. Hence, Figure 5 provides the percentage of Anne Arundel County cases with an arrears balance that made at least one payment toward that balance in the prior year.

Approximately two-thirds of arrears cases had at least one payment. There was a small decrease in the percentage of arrears cases with a payment between the July 2010 and July 2011 sample (66.0% to

63.4%). For the July 2012 sample, though, this percentage increased to 67.2%.

Furthermore, Anne Arundel County is on par with other large jurisdictions and the state with regard to payments to arrears cases (Figure 6). Baltimore City aside, two-thirds or more of arrears cases in the largest jurisdictions had at least one payment in the year prior to July 2012.

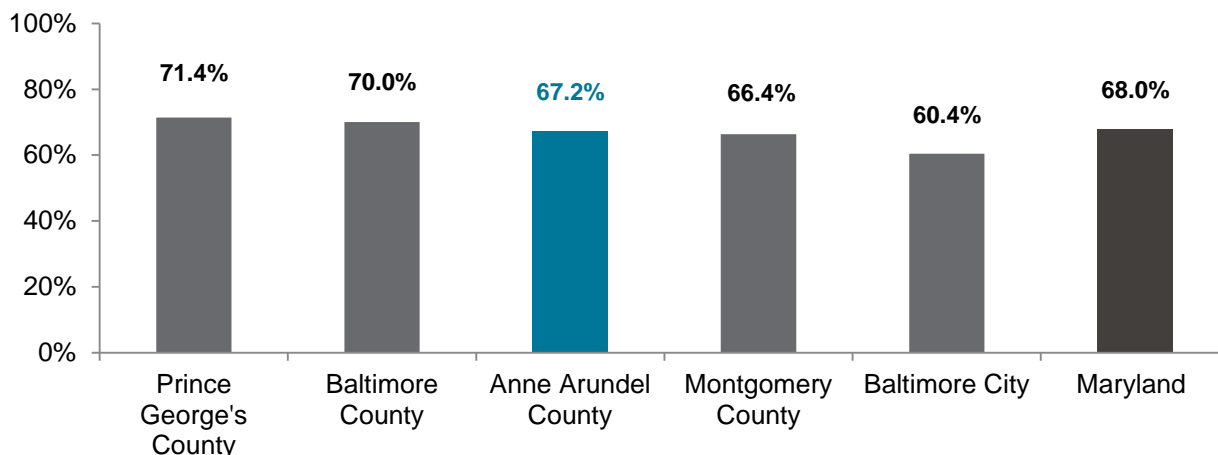
Figure 5. Arrears Cases with a Payment
2010 to 2012



Note: Only cases with an arrears balance were included in this analysis.

Figure 6. Arrears Cases with a Payment: Largest Jurisdictions***

July 2012 Sample: Payments between July 2011 and June 2012



Note: Only cases with an arrears balance were included in this analysis. *p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

Welfare Participation

To receive benefits through Maryland's welfare program, Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA), most applicants must pursue child support through the public child support system. Establishing a child support order for these poor families is beneficial in two ways. First, it allows them to recoup some of the costs associated with benefits paid through the TCA program. In Maryland, families are not able to receive TCA and child support concurrently; rather, the state retains child support collected while the family is receiving public welfare benefits. Second, it ensures that an order is in place for when the family leaves TCA, and may increase the likelihood that parents receive child support after they leave welfare. Receipt of child support may also reduce a family's need to return to TCA.

Although TCA recipients are required to participate with child support, not all cases are in the public child support system due to TCA receipt. Nonetheless, more than half of the custodial families in Anne Arundel County's child support caseload are former or current TCA recipients. As shown in Figure 7, the percentage of Anne Arundel County's child support cases that received TCA increased over time. In July 2010, 42.1% of child support cases had formerly received TCA benefits and

6.4% received TCA in that month. By July 2012, nearly half (48.7%) of all cases previously received TCA and 7.2% received TCA benefits in that month.

Figure 7. TCA Receipt

2010 to 2012

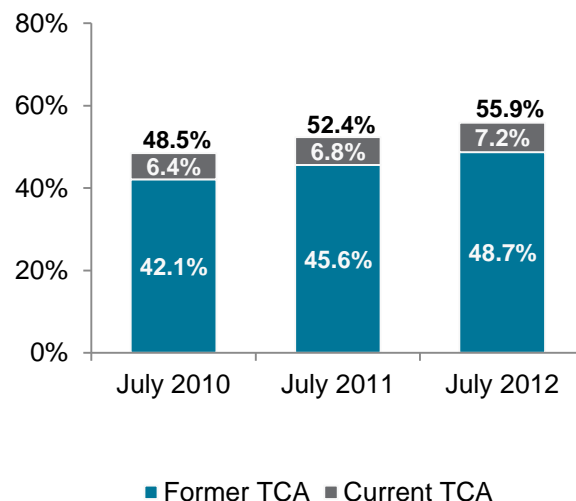


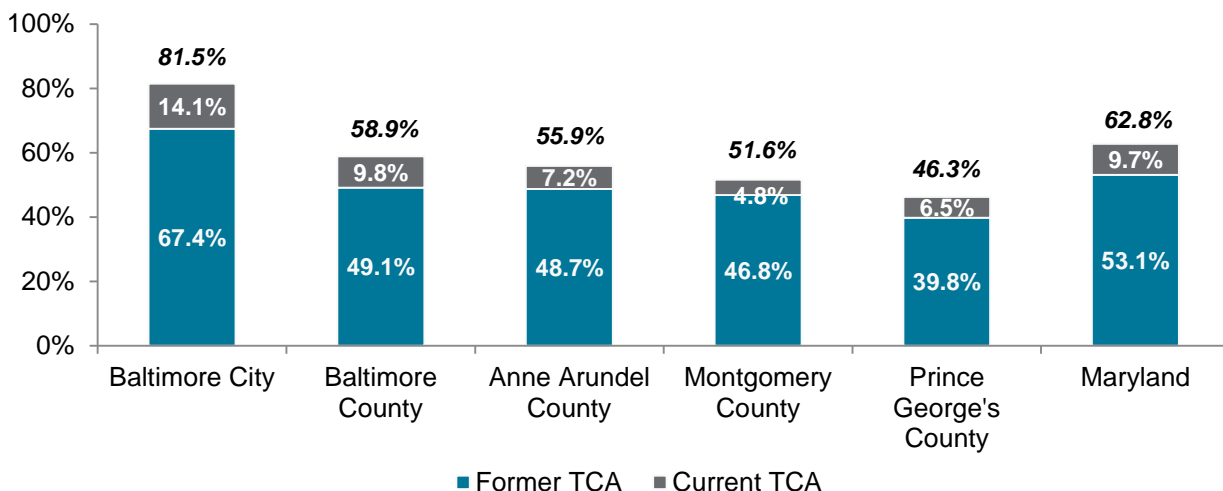
Figure 8 shows the percentage of custodial families with a child support case that had former or current TCA receipt among the July 2012 sample in each of the largest jurisdictions. In Anne Arundel County, just over half (55.9%) received TCA at some point, a percentage that was lower than the overall percentage for the state (62.8%), but higher than Montgomery (51.6%) and Prince George's (46.3%) counties.

The receipt of child support among these families is critical. In fact, the receipt of child support—particularly for families that have required cash assistance benefits—may keep a family above poverty. Certainly all custodial families deserve child support, but for some, it could facilitate a family's self-sufficiency.

Summary

This brief provides a local perspective of the public child support caseload in Anne Arundel County and highlights differences compared to other large jurisdictions and the state. Anne Arundel County has the fifth largest child support caseload in Maryland, representing approximately 6% of all public child support cases. Between 2011 and 2012, the percentage of arrears-only cases decreased and the percentage of cases that owed either current support only or both current support and arrears increased, a pattern also documented for the state as a whole. In the year prior to July 2012, half (52%) of all cases that were owed current support received 75% or more of that support, a percentage higher than the state as a whole (48%). During this same year, more than two-thirds (67%) of all arrears cases had at least one payment, similar to the state average (68%). As shown, the Anne Arundel County child support caseload has patterns similar to those experienced by the state as a whole, which includes continued improvement between 2010 and 2012.

Figure 8. TCA Receipt: Largest Jurisdictions***
July 2012 Sample



Note: *p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

Sources:

- ⁱ Passarella, L. & Born, C.E. (2014). *People & Payments: A profile of Maryland's child support caseload in July 2012*. Baltimore, MD: University of Maryland School of Social Work.
- ⁱⁱ Office of Child Support Enforcement. (2013). *FY2012 Preliminary report*. Washington, DC: Author. <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/css/resource/fy2012-preliminary-report>
- ⁱⁱⁱ In July 2010 (n=12,545) and July 2012 (n=10,952), a five percent random sample was drawn. In July 2011 (n=7,270), a three percent random sample was drawn.
- ^{iv} Data retrieved from the United States Census Bureau: <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/24/24003.html>
- ^v Sorensen, E. (2010). Child support plays an increasingly important role for poor custodial families. Retrieved from the Urban Institute website: <http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/412272-child-support-plays-important-role.pdf>

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