

# **DISH**

## **Data Information Sharing**

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### **Final Report**

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**Prepared for**

**Colorado Department of Human Services Division of Child Support Enforcement  
and the Colorado Judicial Department  
Collaboration Project**

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Points of view expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of OCSE, Colorado Division of Child Support Enforcement or the Colorado Judicial Department.



## Data Information Sharing

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### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The OCSE-funded project described in this report led to the creation of Data Information Sharing (DISH), an interface between the automated databases for the Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Child Support Enforcement (CSE) and the Colorado Judicial Department (Judicial). The purpose of DISH is to exchange information between CSE and Judicial agencies in child support cases established through Administrative Process Action (APA). Approximately 70 percent of Colorado's cases are established through APA. The prior interface required redundant data entry in both systems that could result in errors and cause delays in the execution of child support orders. The goals posited for DISH included:

- Improving the speed of APA case initiation and the execution of the corresponding child support order;
- Reducing manual data entry, improving data reliability, and facilitating the rapid assignment of docket number;
- Eliminating filing of most paper forms and reducing sorting, stamping and storage of documents;
- Allowing orders to move to enforcement sooner, obtaining income assignments more quickly, and getting child support payments to families more rapidly.

Creating the DISH interface required extensive collaboration between CSE and Judicial. Project implementation involved:

- A planning effort to clarify objectives, document the APA process and develop a design solution;
- A preliminary implementation phase that involved the introduction of DISH in two Colorado counties that served as pilot sites;
- A statewide training effort for CSE and Judicial personnel; and
- A rollout process that resulted in the implementation of DISH throughout the state.

To evaluate the project, the Center for Policy Research (CPR) conducted interviews and focus groups, and administered email surveys to a variety of CSE and Judicial personnel at various stages of the four-year project. The key audiences targeted included:

- Key program architects and members of relevant work groups who helped to design DISH during the project's planning phase from September 2006 to May 2008;
- CSE and Judicial personnel in the two pilot county sites where DISH was first introduced from April to May, 2009;
- CSE and Judicial personnel who attended state-sponsored training programs on DISH from August to November 2009; and
- CSE and Judicial personnel throughout the State of Colorado who used DISH following the conclusion of the rollout effort in November 2009.

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In addition to generating information on user reactions and perceptions, CPR obtained and analyzed extracts of data drawn from the automated systems for child support (ACSES) and Judicial (ICON) on time frames for APA cases filed prior to and following the adoption of DISH.

### **The Automated Data Exchange**

The design solution that CSE and Judicial adopted involved a bi-directional, automated data exchange with uniform, centralized information screens for both child support and the court. To accomplish this, the automated systems for child support (ACSES) and Judicial (ICON) were programmed to receive and send pertinent data in XML format, in real time, using the National Information Exchange Model (NIEM), which is an XML-based information exchange framework. Under DISH, data elements for APA child support orders are transferred electronically from ACSES to ICON. Thus, names, addresses, birthdates, and other intake data entered into ACSES when a case is opened at CSE are automatically populated into ICON, thereby eliminating the need for Judicial staff to enter the data. Subsequently, when an APA order has been entered and accepted by Judicial, there is an automatic and timely electronic notification to ACSES so that CSE can activate Income Assignments (IAs) and/or take other critical actions. DISH reduces the paperwork associated with APA filings with all paper documents stored at CSE in cases that result in a stipulated order. Hard-copy documents are still sent to the court for Temporary and Default Orders and the court can still print copies of its records, which contain all of the pertinent elements of the Order.

### **The Planning Process**

Developing the project objectives, the design solution, and the data elements to be exchanged between ACSES and ICON occurred over a 20-month planning process. It involved forming and convening numerous teams and groups comprised of CSE and Judicial administrators, technical personnel, policy staff, line workers, and end users for an extensive array of meetings. The gatherings focused on clarifying how the APA process works, the ways in which the process might be improved through the DISH project, the data items to be exchanged, and the desired technical solution. The key groups that participated in the planning process were an interagency Steering Committee, management team, User Group, and Technical Team. Two key documents were distilled in the planning process. The “elevator statement” was a succinct description of the project mission while the “Statement of Work” was a detailed explanation of project scope, approach, schedule, and risks.

Interviews and surveys with CSE and Judicial personnel who participated in the planning process revealed that they were extremely enthusiastic about DISH and believed that it held great potential to increase efficiency and save time. Participants also viewed the planning process favorably and attributed its success to the regular participation of upper-level managers from both agencies, the effectiveness of the Management Team, and the broad-based input obtained from county personnel from both agencies. User groups were created to develop descriptions of how cases are processed, the data items that should be exchanged, and the best practices that should be implemented.

Virtually all respondents felt that the DISH project helped to improve collaboration between the court and the child support agency and that both agencies compromised about the same amount to make DISH functional.

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### **Implementation at the Pilot Sites**

Weld and Jefferson counties were pilot sites for the DISH project and the data exchange system was implemented in those settings in May and July 2009, respectively. Telephone interviews and focus groups with Judicial and CSE personnel in both counties soon after DISH went live revealed that any initial apprehension about DISH dissolved when personnel observed a live demonstration and saw that “it took 90 seconds to send a filing, receive it back from the court and get a docket and FSR number.” The anticipated benefits of DISH that CSE and Judicial workers reported experiencing included:

- Less time that CSE workers spent copying documents;
- Elimination of the need for court workers to input information; and
- Reduced numbers of cases returned to CSE by the court due to errors.

Other perceived benefits of DISH noted by CSE workers in pilot counties were the receipt of “alerts” that provide real-time information about court actions that transpire in their cases, more rapid transfer of cases to enforcement workers, and the review of documents and procedures used in establishment cases leading to the elimination of some unnecessary steps and materials.

### **DISH Statewide Training**

From August to November 2009, 15 training programs on DISH were conducted throughout Colorado. The day-long program was jointly conducted by CSE and Judicial personnel approximately one week before DISH was implemented in a targeted geographical setting. Each training program consisted of separate, morning sessions for CSE and Judicial staff, respectively, that was followed by a joint session in the afternoon, during which participants were exposed to a live demonstration which gave attendees an opportunity to see what happens on the ACSES and ICON systems. A total of 554 individuals attended the DISH training program, 251 of whom responded to a questionnaire administered immediately after its conclusion.

Respondents rated the training program highly, with the vast majority “strongly agreeing” with a variety of favorable statements including the following:

- The training helped me to understand what the other side has to do” (81%);
- “The training helped me to understand how what I do impacts the other side” (78%);
- “The training was thorough and detailed” (86%);
- “The training covered material that I will need to know in my job” (76%);
- The “morning” (80%) and “afternoon” (76%) “sessions were useful,” the “live data exchange was useful” (80%), and the “combined training session was useful” (78%).

Asked to provide an overall rating of the DISH training session, 73 percent said it was “excellent”, 26 percent rated it as “good,” and only 1 percent said it was “fair.”

### **Reactions to DISH Following Statewide Implementation**

DISH was implemented throughout Colorado from August through November 2009. An online survey was administered from February to March 2010 to assess how court and child support workers

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perceived the rollout to have operated and the utility of the DISH project. In all, 210 individuals responded to the survey: 162 CSE workers and 48 Judicial personnel. Workers' responses were extremely positive. In addition to finding the transition to DISH to be relatively painless, respondents agreed that APA cases were being processed more quickly, relationships between CSE and the courts had improved, and the rate of errors in case processing had dropped.

- Most respondents indicated the DISH implementation process in their county operated “fairly” (37% to 53%) or “very” (54% to 25%) smoothly.
- Nearly all Judicial (94.4%) and most child support (54.5%) workers who routinely handle APA cases believed that DISH saved them time at work;
- Most court workers (69%) and some child support workers (34.6%) definitely agreed that DISH reduced the time to order establishment;
- 90.9 percent of court and 75 percent of CSE workers reported that DISH had improved relationships between the court and CSE;
- Nearly 80 percent of court workers three-quarters of CSE workers who frequently handle APA cases felt that DISH had reduced the number of errors in case filings.

Overall, 30 percent of court workers and 35 percent of child support workers reported that DISH had had a large impact on their job. Many workers hoped that DISH would be expanded into other processes including modification cases. DISH also whetted worker appetite for more comprehensive electronic filing processes and the elimination of paper filings in all child support cases at some future date.

### **Case Processing Patterns Prior To and Following Implementation of DISH**

To compare time frames for APA cases processed before and after DISH, ACSES programmers generated two extracts of cases. The first consisted of 1,515 cases with order establishment conferences held during the first six months of 2008, which clearly preceded the introduction of DISH in Weld County in May 2009. The extract was generated in December 2009 which was 18 months after the last case went to an order establishment conference. The second extract consisted of 2,202 cases with order establishment conferences held from December 2009 to May 2010. DISH was fully implemented in all Colorado counties and Judicial Districts by November 2009 and the extract was created on July 15, 2010, which was a minimum of 45 days after the newest case was filed.

For each sampled case, ACSES programmers provided information on the order type (default, stipulation, temporary); the length of time elapsing between the APA conference and the generation of the child support order; and the length of time between the generation of the child support order and other case milestones. Programmers at Judicial provided information on court events including the date when pending action was completed and hearings were scheduled in non-stipulation cases.

To avoid attributing changes in the post-DISH sample of cases to the shorter follow-up window available for that pool of cases (45 days after the newest establishment cases were filed versus 18 months for the pre-DISH sample) CPR researchers focused the comparison on events occurring before and after the shorter, 45-day time frame. Key findings from the comparison of pre- and post-DISH cases are:

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- Cases moved from the establishment conference to order establishment significantly more quickly following the introduction of DISH, with the percentage traveling within the recommended 5 and 10 days for stipulation and temporary order and default cases, respectively, rising from 71.7 to 82.9 percent for stipulation cases and 57.3 to 71.7 percent for temporary order cases.
- The percentage of cases obtaining a support order on the same day they were filed increased dramatically from 0 to 52.8 percent for stipulation cases.
- Order verification and case transfer to enforcement workers occurred significantly more quickly following the introduction of DISH. For example, among cases with stipulated orders, the percentage of cases that obtained a verified order within five days of order establishment rose from 57.9 to 64.3 percent following DISH, while the percentage that were transferred to enforcement workers in five days or less rose from 45.3 to 61.5 percent (and those that required 45 days dropped from 18.7 to 1.8 percent).
- The time required to get income assignments and child support payments did not change in a consistent way following DISH. For example, while the percentage of cases with first payments within 30 days dropped for stipulated and temporary orders after DISH, the percentage requiring more than 90 days also dropped for stipulations (but rose for temporary orders). The lack of conclusive findings about wage withholding and payments probably reflects the fact that the pace of these events vary with the economy. It is relevant that the unemployment in Colorado increased dramatically from the time the pre and post-DISH samples were generated in 2008 and 2010, rising from 4.9 to 8.0 percent, respectively.
- Following DISH, the court completed pending action on cases significantly faster than had been the case before DISH, with the average number of days for case closure dropping from 8.9 to 3.5 among stipulations and 84.5 to 73.6 among temporary orders. There was no change in the time it took for the court to schedule a first hearing in temporary order cases, with the average remaining 20 days. Court hearings depend upon the court calendar, the attorney resources available to CSE agencies and other factors not affected by DISH.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

DISH was a highly successful project resulting in the creation, development, and statewide implementation of an electronic exchange of information between CSE and Judicial agencies in child support cases filed using APA, which is the most common method of order establishment in Colorado. Conducted collaboratively by CSE and the Judicial agencies, the project was widely viewed to have reduced the workload associated with processing APA cases, cut the rate of errors in such cases, and sped up the process of filing child support cases and obtaining orders. The project was also viewed as having improved relationships between the child support agency and the court and led to a more uniform and efficient way of assigning docket and FSR numbers to new child support cases. An empirical assessment of time frames associated with processing APA cases before and after DISH confirms that many case events occurred significantly faster following DISH, including the establishment of orders and the transfer of cases to enforcement workers at CSE. This is perhaps why a majority of surveyed CSE workers felt that DISH had improved communication between establishment and enforcement workers. DISH also sped up the rate at which pending court action was completed in child support cases. DISH had no consistent impact on income withholding and child support payments, events that depend upon the labor market which deteriorated significantly over the life of the project with unemployment rising from 4.9 percent in 2008 to 8.0 percent in 2010. Nor did DISH affect the speed with which child support cases with

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temporary orders obtain hearings at court which are a function of the court calendar and the attorney resources available to CSE agencies.

The following are some best practices that other states wishing to implement similar projects should consider adopting.

- **Allow time for an extensive planning phase.** CSE and Judicial spent 20 months on a planning process that involved numerous meetings of personnel from both agencies at all levels of the organizational chart: administrators, business planners, technical staff, and end users.
- **Find a shared goal and identify joint benefits.** CSE and Judicial moved forward when they realized that they shared the common, real-world goals of reducing workload and errors, speeding up case processing, and generating orders and payments in a more timely fashion.
- **Clarify the project's scope and distill it to writing in both short and longer formats.** DISH architects prepared written descriptions of the project goals and procedures and referred to them frequently. This minimized the threat of "mission creep," helped to keep personnel from both agencies focused, and enhanced communication between business and technical personnel.
- **Get feedback from a broad range of end users.** Taking the time to hear from users and crafting the solution that they needed meant that the end product was responsive to real needs. It also ensured buy-in by end users and gave personnel in both agencies the opportunity to see what happens in the other agency.
- **Recognize and deal with differences in agency styles, culture, goals, and terminology.** Involving personnel at all levels from both agencies at every step of the planning, training, and implementation process was beneficial. A DISH dictionary was developed to help both sides speak the same language.
- **Assign a management team to the project.** It was helpful to have a management team that consisted of representatives from both agencies who dedicated the time to the project needed to make sure that all tasks were accomplished.
- **Work through the flow process.** It was extremely useful to document the APA process from beginning to end in order to identify places to improve it.
- **Test solutions on a small scale.** DISH was introduced in two pilot counties in order to test its effectiveness and make needed changes.
- **Phase in implementation on a gradual basis.** DISH was subsequently rolled out throughout the state in a phased fashion to allow trainers and technical personnel the opportunity to respond quickly to any identified problems and make localized adjustments (if needed).
- **Conduct a cross-agency training program.** It was effective to train CSE and Judicial workers separately for part of the day, but bring them together for a live demonstration of DISH and respond to questions jointly.
- **Respond to problems quickly.** CSE and Judicial workers appreciated the responsiveness of program architects and programmers to their questions and concerns and their willingness to consider local adjustments.
- **Thank administrators and end users for their participation.** Program architects were gracious and welcoming. They recognized the contributions of administrators, line staff, technical personnel, and trainers. This inspired support among end users and guaranteed the popularity of DISH.



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### **OVERVIEW**

This report describes the Data Information Sharing (DISH) project of the Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Child Support Enforcement (CSE). More specifically, the report:

- Provides a brief introduction to the work undertaken through the project;
- Presents the results of a process evaluation that documented the planning stages of the project;
- Presents the results of a process evaluation of the implementation phase of the project through pilots in two counties;
- Offers reactions from child support and judicial staff following a statewide training effort and the implementation of DISH throughout the state; and
- Compares case processing patterns related to the establishment of child support orders prior to and following the implementation of DISH.

### **DISH BACKGROUND**

In September 2006, the Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Child Support Enforcement (CSE) received a grant from the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) to collaborate with the Colorado Judicial Department (Judicial) on a 36-month project (subsequently extended to 48 months) to exchange information and file child support cases with the court using electronic means.

Approximately 70 percent of Colorado's child support cases are established through Administrative Process Action (APA). As a result, DISH focused on APA cases. The administrative child support process requires interaction between the county child support enforcement units (CSE) and their respective courts at a number of different steps. Although the two agencies had an electronic interface (a batch process system that sent data nightly), the process was manually intensive and required redundant data entry in both systems, which sometimes resulted in data inconsistencies across the systems and, at times, caused delays in the execution of child support orders. Further, subsequent modifications to child support orders could not be automatically communicated between the systems.

DISH required modifications to the Automated Child Support Enforcement System (ACSES); the judicial system's Integrated Colorado Online Network (ICON), and to the processes, procedures, and practices of the CSE and Judicial staff. It created an interface between ACSES and ICON for the electronic exchange of APA case data. ACSES and ICON were programmed to receive and send pertinent data in XML format, in real time, using the National Information Exchange Model (NIEM), which is an XML-based information exchange framework. NIEM represents a collaborative partnership of agencies and organizations across all levels of government (federal, state, tribal, and local) and with private industry. The purpose of this partnership is to effectively and efficiently share critical information at key decision points throughout all agencies that deal with justice, public safety, emergency and disaster management, intelligence, and homeland security.

Under DISH, data elements from APA child support orders and subsequent actions, such as modifications, are transferred electronically from ACSES to ICON. When a case is opened at CSE,

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intake data are entered into ACSES. When the courts open the same case, data elements such as names, addresses, and birthdates are automatically populated into ICON, thereby eliminating the need for Judicial staff to enter the data.

When an APA order has been entered and accepted by Judicial, there is an automatic and timely electronic notification to ACSES so that CSE can activate Income Assignments (IAs) and/or take other critical actions. This automatic data exchange is bi-directional. There are uniform, centralized information screens for both child support and the courts, with information displays that combine data available in both ACSES and ICON. The child support offices store APA hard copy documents and can produce copies if needed. Documents for Temporary Orders and Default Orders are still sent to the court. In addition, the court can still print copies of their records, which contain all of the pertinent elements of child support orders.

## **PLANNING PROCESS**

### **Chartering Session**

The first DISH activity was a chartering session that was held in January 2007 to develop the project vision and objectives. Two counties, Jefferson and Weld, were selected to serve as pilot sites for the development and early implementation of DISH. These counties were chosen because they are both perceived to be progressive in their approach and they are two of the ten largest counties, thus producing a large caseload and docket, respectively.

Representatives of the following organizations participated in the chartering session:

- Jefferson County Child Support Enforcement;
- 1st Judicial District (includes Jefferson County);
- Weld County Child Support Enforcement;
- 19th Judicial District (includes Weld County);
- State Child Support Enforcement;
- State Judicial Department;
- Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement; and
- TRAILS (Colorado's child welfare automated case management system).

At the chartering session, participants developed a short project mission statement called an "elevator statement." It included the following points:

- For families who depend on the timely execution of APA child support orders, the DISH project is an electronic case filing and information exchange program allowing CSE and the courts to exchange data electronically.
- Unlike the current paper dependent systems, DISH will expedite child support orders, reduce redundant data entry, and improve data accuracy.

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In a subsequent, lengthier written document, the Statement of Work, the CSE project manager spelled out the project objectives, approach, schedule, and risks in a more expansive manner.

The project objectives included:

- Improve the speed of APA case initiation and the execution of the corresponding child support order.
- Produce processes that save time for Judicial and CSE staff.
- Produce processes that standardize the issuance and use of court case types (JV or juvenile, and DR or domestic relations).
- Provide centralized information displays combining data available from both the Automated Child Support Enforcement System (ACSES), Integrated Colorado Online Network (ICON), and other judicial systems to give both CSE and Judicial workers an interagency picture of a case at a glance, including a list of all child support cases, names and numbers of CSE technicians, payment history, warrants, contempt actions, and other judicial actions.
- Provide a real-time system interface between ACSES and ICON and other judicial systems to reduce manual data entry; improve data reliability; facilitate rapid assignment of docket numbers; assign and exchange Family Support Registry (FSR) account numbers; and provide automatic, timely notice to ACSES upon the signing of an APA order.
- Provide automatic electronic data updates between ACSES and judicial systems when APA case data are modified.

The hope was that DISH would produce the following benefits once it became fully functional:

- Increase the level of trust between agencies, allowing for a paperless solution;
- Enable auto population of data to:
  - ✓ Reduce redundant data entry and errors;
  - ✓ Improve data consistency between CSE and Judicial.
- Eliminate filing of most paper forms to:
  - ✓ Reduce CSE prep effort;
  - ✓ Reduce paper storage.
- In a majority of cases, eliminate the physical file for Judicial and thereby reduce:
  - ✓ Sorting through documents;
  - ✓ Stamping; and
  - ✓ Data entry for each document.
- Shorten filing and processing times;
- Enable automation of manual processes;
- Assign docket numbers and FSR numbers more rapidly;
- Reduce the time between orders received from the court and verified by CSE;
- Allow orders to move to enforcement sooner;
- Allow for subsequent paperless exchange for modifications of APA orders; and
- Get child support payments to children more quickly.

### Organizational Structure

Several levels of teams and groups were formed to guide program planning and development:

- **Steering Committee.** The steering committee was formed in October 2006 and membership included the Region VIII OCSE representative; the Deputy Director of the Colorado Office of Information Technology; and representatives of State CSE, Judicial Department, and staff from the pilot counties and judicial districts. During the planning phase, the Steering Committee met quarterly.
- **Management Team.** Although not part of the original grant plan, it became evident early in the process that it was necessary to have a group in charge of day-to-day operations. A team was formed to be responsible for the daily progress of the project. It consisted of the CSE project manager, two project managers who work for Judicial, and an analyst from both agencies. The management team crafted the Statement of Work, planned and attended meetings of all the other groups, and drove the solution forward. The team established a DISH web presence on the Judicial Department website, which served as a document repository that could be accessed at any time. The team also created an Interface Control Document (ICD), which provided detail on every data element to be exchanged. The ICD served as a bridge between the “business” staff and the programmers.
- **User Group.** An initial user group was convened with representatives of both county child support and judicial district staff from the two pilot counties as well as other small, medium, and large counties throughout the state. They worked to represent the APA process in flow charts, find differences among county processes, identify areas for improvement in the current processes (particularly, areas where electronic data exchange would be beneficial), craft an “ideal” state-wide process, and review initial computer screens.
- **Technical Team.** This team consisted of two contract programmers and representatives of the information technology groups at both State CSE and the Judicial Department.

### Assessing Reactions to Project Planning

The DISH Steering Committee decided to evaluate the planning process while it was still relatively fresh in the minds of participants, rather than waiting until the end of the project. The Committee wanted documentation for its own benefit, but also to benefit other states interested in conducting similar projects.

Members of the management team and the evaluator met and made up a list of 14 people who should be interviewed about the planning process (see Figure 1). Interviews were conducted between October 22 and November 13, 2008. Eight interviews were done in-person and six on the telephone.

In addition, an email survey was sent to all members of the management team, steering committee, child support and judicial user groups, technical work group, and the legal work group. Of the 72 individuals sent the survey, 53 percent responded. The survey asked respondents to assess how well the project dealt with a variety of tasks, such as developing goals, gathering input, and documenting the process.

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As Table 1 shows, approximately equal numbers of individuals from CSE and Judicial completed the survey. All of the groups, such as management team or legal workgroup, who were sent the survey, are represented in the final results. As Table 2 shows, email survey respondents in CSE tended to say they were either “intensively” or “moderately” involved in DISH. Judicial respondents were fairly evenly divided among those reporting “intensive,” “moderate,” and “minimal” involvement in the project.

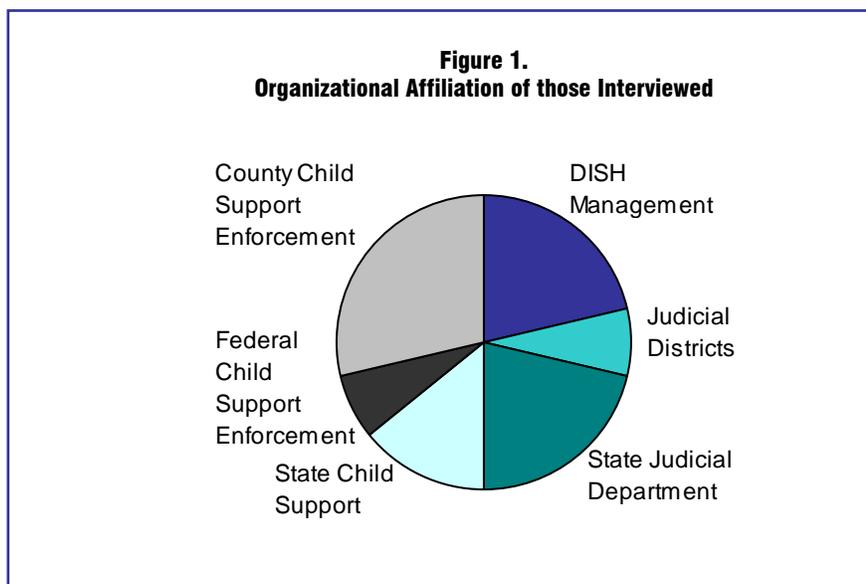


Table 1. Email Survey Respondents by Role in the DISH Project *			
	Judicial	Child Support	Total
DISH Management Team	24%	18%	21%
Steering Committee	33%	35%	34%
Technical Team	19%	18%	18%
Legal Work Group	14%	0%	8%
Judicial User Group	57%	0%	32%
Child Support User Group	9%	59%	32%
	(21)	(17)	(38)

Table 2. Level of Project Involvement Report by Email Survey Respondents by Agency			
	Judicial	Child Support	Total
Intensive involvement in DISH	38%	59%	47%
Moderate involvement in DISH	33%	41%	37%
Minimal involvement in DISH	29%	0%	16%
	(21)	(17)	(38)

\* Note that, in all tables, percentages may range from 99.9 percent to 100.1 percent, due to rounding.

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Finally, as shown in Table 3, the email survey respondents were most likely to report being involved in DISH by helping to streamline the filing process and identify the required documents, helping to identify what their county hoped to gain from the project, and by clarifying procedures and practices related to the APA process. About a third said they were involved in setting the scope of the project, determining what items needed legal clarification, and building cross-agency relationships. Because of the complexity of the project and the project strategy chosen, relatively few respondents were involved in multiple ways, such as working on project evaluation, overseeing the project, or developing programming specifics. Each project participant was specifically selected to participate in the areas where they had most experience.

Table 3. Role Played in DISH Planning by Email Survey Respondents			
	Judicial	Child Support	Total
Streamline the filing process and required documents	57%	71%	63%
Clarify/document procedures/practices related to APA process	52%	59%	55%
Identify “wish list” items and county/jurisdiction goals	43%	65%	53%
Identify issues requiring legal clarification	33%	29%	32%
Negotiate and build relationships across agencies	29%	35%	32%
Clarify and revise the scope of the project	24%	35%	29%
Oversee the conduct of the project	19%	24%	21%
Help determine how to evaluate the program	14%	29%	21%
Develop programming specifications	24%	12%	18%
	(21)	(17)	(38)

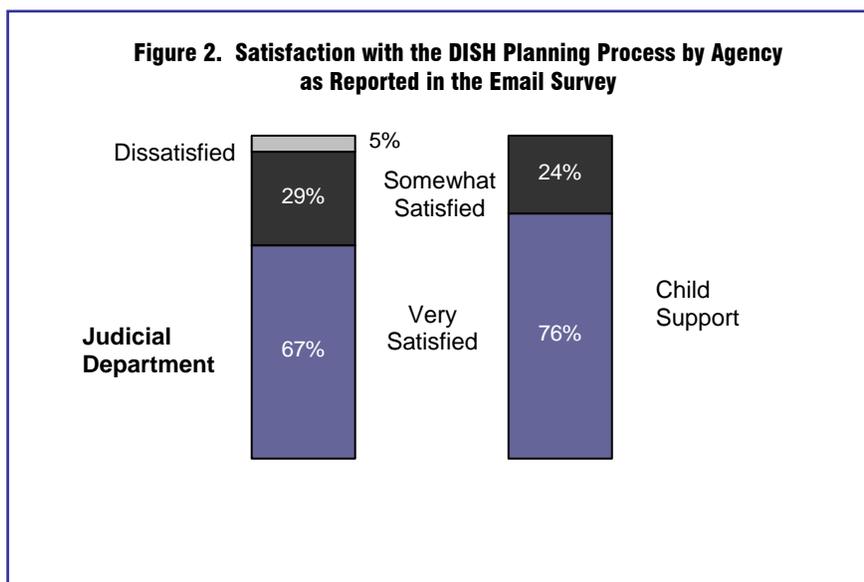
### Reactions to Project Planning

All of the people interviewed about the DISH project had positive reactions and many were enthusiastic. Over and over again, respondents talked about the savings in time and increases in efficiency that they believed would result from the project. Underlying these responses was a strong desire that children and families receive child support faster than under the current processes.

“It’s going to be so much better for all of us. We will stop duplicating efforts. There will be a little learning curve but that will be minor compared to the benefits.”

“These are baby steps but it will work cases faster, get money flowing faster to families and children. We are on the right track.”

Similar results were found among respondents to the email survey. As Figure 2 indicates, over two-thirds of Judicial respondents, and over three-quarters of the child support respondents, said they were “very satisfied” with the DISH planning process.



Most respondents in both CSE and Judicial attributed the success of the planning process to the regular participation of upper-level managers from both agencies; the effectiveness of the management team; and the broad-based input obtained from county personnel from both agencies through the creation of user groups to develop descriptions of how cases are processed, the data items that should be exchanged, and the best practices that should be implemented.

The email survey confirms that there were a number of changes over time in the way some participants viewed the project goals. More than half of the respondents in both Judicial and CSE felt the DISH goals were “about right” in scope but there were approximately a quarter in each organization who felt them to be too broad or narrow. As shown in Table 4, these respondents moved over time to see the scope as “about right.”

	Judicial		Child Support		Total	
	Opinion Initially	Opinion Post-DISH	Opinion Initially	Opinion Post-DISH	Opinion Initially	Opinion Post-DISH
Felt DISH goals were too narrow	14%	0%	0%	0%	8%	0%
Felt DISH goals were too broad	10%	5%	29%	6%	19%	5%
Felt DISH goals were about right in scope	57%	81%	53%	88%	56%	84%
Don't know/Not sure	19%	14%	18%	6%	17%	11%
	(21)		(17)		(38)	

Table 5 shows most of the email survey respondents in both the Judicial Department and child support agency felt the planning process gave them a chance to be heard, addressed their concerns, was inclusive, and made a difference in the outcome of the project. Only about 10 percent felt the planning process was too time consuming.

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Table 5. Email Survey Respondents' Ratings of Their Role in DISH Planning Percent Responding "Definitely"			
	Judicial	Child Support	Total
Do you feel your ideas were heard/considered at the meetings?	76%	94%	84%
Was your participation in the committee acknowledged? ★	91%	71%	82%
Have the concerns of your agency been addressed?	86%	71%	79%
Did the committee you are on make much of difference in project scope?	67%	88%	76%
Was everyone who should have been involved included in planning?	71%	71%	71%
Was the DISH website useful?	24%	29%	26%
Have the meetings been too time consuming?	10%	12%	11%
Did the committees need more team building exercises?	0%	12%	5%
	(21)	(17)	(38)

★Chi square significant at .05.

Perhaps one of the most rewarding aspects of the planning process was the enhanced working relationships between the court and child support offices at both the state and local levels. As Figure 3 shows, virtually all of the email respondents felt that the DISH project ultimately helped to improve collaboration between the court and the child support agency. Further, as shown in Table 6, just over three-quarters of the email respondents from each agency felt that that Judicial and child support both compromised about the same amount to make DISH functional.

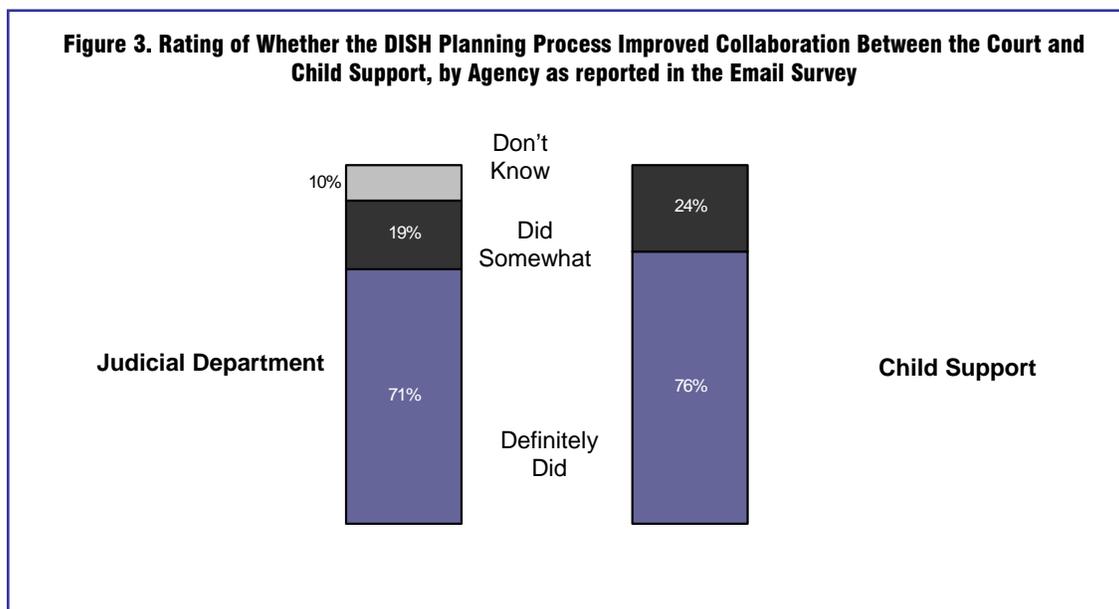


Table 6. Assessment of Compromise in DISH Planning by Email Survey Respondents			
	Judicial	Child Support	Total
Did one agency compromise more than the other in DISH planning?			
Child Support compromised more	0%	6%	3%
Court compromised more	5%	0%	3%
Not sure	15%	18%	16%
Pretty even	80%	76%	78%
	(20)	(17)	(37)

Another benefit of the planning process was the identification of ways to make the filing process more efficient. The biggest changes were in the assignment of docket numbers and account numbers for the Family Support Registry (FSR). Before DISH, the courts in some counties were giving out blocks of case numbers for child support offices to use for filing during the year. This meant that some numbers were given to cases that were never subsequently filed and/or cases were sometimes filed under a different number that had been given out before any paperwork was filed with the court. In a similar fashion, prior to DISH, FSR numbers were assigned to cases based on the clerk’s prediction of the number that would be needed for the year. As a result of DISH, case number assignment was standardized across the state. Docket number were given when the case was filed with the court and FSR account numbers were auto assigned at case creation and activated when the court order event was entered by the court.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF DISH IN PILOT COUNTY SITES

Two counties served as pilot sites for the DISH Project: Jefferson and Weld. To evaluate the early implementation effort in Jefferson County, a telephone interview was conducted with the Clerk of the Court and a focus group was held with seven staff members of the Jefferson County Department of Human Services, Division of Child Support Enforcement (CSE). Included in the group were:

- The agency’s supervisor for establishment cases;
- Three establishment workers;
- A member of the enforcement team;
- A prior establishment worker who had been recently assigned to perform different duties; and
- The worker who serves as a liaison with the court.

To evaluate implementation in Weld County, interviews were conducted with:

- The Clerk of the court;
- A data entry clerk at the court;
- A child support enforcement supervisor; and
- A child support establishment and modification technician.

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DISH went live in Weld County on May 3, 2009, and in Jefferson County on July 6, 2009. Several focus group members reported being apprehensive about DISH when they initially heard about it. Respondents agreed that the moment of reassurance came when they first observed a live demonstration. As one Jefferson County respondent marveled, "It took 90 seconds to send a filing, receive it back from the court and get a docket and FSR number." The same was true in Weld County, where training participants reported special appreciation for the afternoon session when the court and CSE staffs were brought together and there was a "live" demonstration during which data were sent back and forth between the two systems. In addition to observing a live demonstration, the training session led Judicial and CSE staff members to exchange email addresses, so that each agency knew whom to contact with questions or problems.

The electronic features of DISH have obviated the need for workers to perform some of the duties that they used to do when establishing child support orders. As one Jefferson County CSE worker explained, "Standing at the copy machine used to be a big job." DISH has had even more dramatic workload impacts for court personnel. Freed from having to input all the information that is now conveyed electronically, court personnel reported experiencing huge time savings. As the clerk of the court in Jefferson County explained, "The other day I put up 20 cases in four hours while training a new worker. In a paper world, it would have taken every bit of eight hours, if not longer."

While DISH has definitely eliminated some worker duties, it has not lessened others. For example, as a result of DISH, the clerk of the Jefferson County court is now required to enter the support order event in order to trigger the conveyance of a case to the Family Support Registry. Although this is a new duty for the clerk, it is viewed as a "small price to pay" for being freed from data entry for new cases.

As a result of the automated exchange of information between CSE and the court, the court liaison receives regular notices of court activity for Jefferson County cases including hearings that are scheduled, hearing results, motion activity, and judicial orders. Instead of having to wait for the court to mail notices of its actions to CSE, workers obtain real-time information about court actions that transpire on their cases. The liaison can identify and monitor court actions that occur throughout the state on cases held by all child support workers. CSE can acknowledge what court activity has occurred and take the next step. Workers agree that the "alerts" that come from the court as a result of DISH are extremely helpful. However, in Weld County, it was noted that the alerts lack details about particular hearings. As a result, the technicians have to do research to find out if the hearing is relevant to their cases or not.

### **Expected and Unexpected Benefits**

Workers in the pilot counties viewed DISH as having had many anticipated and unanticipated benefits. As noted above, it was perceived to have produced the expected benefit of reducing the amount of photocopying that CSE establishment workers do. It also allowed the court to avoid duplicating data entry for all new cases, including defaults and temporary orders. Another anticipated benefit was faster case processing. CSE respondents reported that APA cases were being returned from the court with a docket and FSR number much more quickly--a perception that was subsequently corroborated in the comparison of case processing patterns before and after the implementation of DISH (See Table 27).

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It was hoped that a faster generation of orders would, in turn, result in the more rapid transfer of cases to enforcement workers, and lower rates of delinquency accrual. According to court and CSE enforcement workers in the pilot counties, these expectations were realized although a comparison of cases processed before and after the implementation of DISH only confirmed that cases were transferred to enforcement workers more quickly (See Table 28).

Court personnel said that eliminating duplicate data entry meant that they were able to move cases much faster. As the clerk in Jefferson County explained, “I used to save these cases because they took so long, now I’ll do these cases first because I can get it done faster.” Interviewed CSE workers felt that the faster promulgation of orders by the court allowed enforcement workers to initiate contact with obligors more quickly with the potential benefits of yielding fresher contact information for obligors and facilitating communication between establishment and enforcement workers if there are questions about a case.

CSE personnel reported that, as expected, DISH reduced the error rate associated with case filings. The Jefferson County court liaison estimated that the average number of cases returned to CSE by the court on a monthly basis due to errors dropped from ten to two. The court corroborated that there had been a decrease in the error rate, although soon after implementation of DISH, there were still issues that they “struggled with.” One was the failure of CSE workers to send documents to the court when they withdrew from a case. Another problem was the lack of correspondence between the list of documents that CSE workers reported sending or storing and what actually happened. Both CSE and court personnel viewed these as “training issues” that would be addressed.

Of course, not all expectations were fully realized in the pilot counties. While the agency thought that data entry would go much faster because many fields would be populated in an automated fashion, CSE workers still need to key in critical information that the court does not provide, including the judgment date, the judgment amount, the monthly amount due, and the order commencement date. CSE workers still need to create a ledger and prepare mailing certifications and commencement dates.

Another perceived limitation was the fact that the nonstandard orders that are described in the comment field on DISH do not get transmitted electronically to the court on case link or Lexis. For example, orders that are set during incarceration at \$50 that include a provision to increase 90 days upon release are conveyed to the court as a \$50 order although the complete terms appear on the order.

Although program architects had hoped that DISH would result in the speedier initiation of income assignments and child support payments, there was no consistent evidence that this had occurred when cases processed prior to and following the initiation of DISH were compared (See Table 29). Of course, it is relevant to note that when the pre-DISH sample of cases was generated in 2008, the statewide unemployment rate was 4.9 percent. By 2010, when the post-DISH sample of cases was generated, the Colorado unemployment rate was 8.0 percent. Higher rates of unemployment undoubtedly delay the initiation of income assignment orders and the flow of child support payments.

While not viewed as a limitation, focus group participants noted that the original plan to develop an information screen that captured key child support and judicial information about a case was never

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developed due to confidentiality constraints in juvenile court cases. On the other hand, as a result of DISH, the court is using some child-support specific data elements generated in the information exchange process to populate a party-specific screen that judges will soon be able to access for all their cases.

DISH also produced a number of unexpected benefits. Because CSE receives immediate notice of any court activity in new as well as older cases, workers can perform important case clean-up activities. Thus, if parties initiate new juvenile actions in a case previously opened with the court as a domestic relations matter, the worker will learn of this duplication and consolidate the case.

Finally, DISH prompted Jefferson County CSE, court workers, and magistrates to review the procedures that they follow in contested cases and make some adjustments. For example, one magistrate realized that she did not have to hold default cases for 18 days, as had previously been her custom. Another byproduct of the DISH planning and implementation process was a review of the documents required by the court for default and temporary order filings and the elimination of those that were not needed.

## STATEWIDE ROLLOUT OF DISH

During 2009, DISH was rolled out in all of Colorado's counties. As shown in Table 7, this rollout began in May 2009 and was completed by November 2009.

<b>County</b>	<b>Size</b>	<b>Date Converted to DISH</b>
Weld	Large	5/3/2009
Jefferson	Large	7/6/2009
Alamosa	Medium	8/23/2009
Archuleta	Small	8/23/2009
Conejos	Medium	8/23/2009
Costilla	Small	8/23/2009
Dolores	Small	8/23/2009
La Plata	Medium	8/23/2009
Mineral	Small	8/23/2009
Montezuma	Medium	8/23/2009
Rio Grande	Medium	8/23/2009
Saguache	Small	8/23/2009
San Juan	Small	8/23/2009
Delta	Medium	9/14/2009
Garfield	Medium	9/14/2009
Gunnison	Small	9/14/2009
Hinsdale	Small	9/14/2009
Mesa	Large	9/14/2009
Montrose	Medium	9/14/2009

Table 7. Timeline of County Conversion to DISH		
County	Size	Date Converted to DISH
Ouray	Small	9/14/2009
Pitkin	Small	9/14/2009
Rio Blanco	Small	9/14/2009
San Miguel	Small	9/14/2009
Chafee	Medium	10/5/2009
Clear Creek	Small	10/5/2009
Custer	Small	10/5/2009
Eagle	Small	10/5/2009
Fremont	Medium	10/5/2009
Grand	Small	10/5/2009
Lake	Small	10/5/2009
Moffat	Medium	10/5/2009
Park	Small	10/5/2009
Routt	Small	10/5/2009
Summit	Small	10/5/2009
Baca	Small	10/26/2009
Bent	Small	10/26/2009
Cheyenne	Small	10/26/2009
Crowley	Small	10/26/2009
El Paso	Large	10/26/2009
Huerfano	Medium	10/26/2009
Kiowa	Small	10/26/2009
Las Animas	Medium	10/26/2009
Otero	Medium	10/26/2009
Prowers	Medium	10/26/2009
Pueblo	Large	10/26/2009
Teller	Small	10/26/2009
Adams	Large	11/23/2009
Arapahoe	Large	11/23/2009
Boulder	Large	11/23/2009
Denver	Large	11/23/2009
Douglas	Small	11/23/2009
Elbert	Small	11/23/2009
Gilpin	Small	11/23/2009
Jackson	Small	11/23/2009
Kit Carson	Small	11/23/2009
Larimer	Large	11/23/2009
Lincoln	Small	11/23/2009

County	Size	Date Converted to DISH
Logan	Medium	11/23/2009
Morgan	Medium	11/23/2009
Phillips	Small	11/23/2009
Sedgwick	Small	11/23/2009
Washington	Small	11/23/2009
Yuma	Small	11/23/2009
Broomfield	Medium	11/23/2009

### DISH Statewide Training

From August to November 2009, 15 training programs on DISH were conducted throughout Colorado. In most instances, the training took place the week before the scheduled implementation of DISH. Child support and Judicial Department personnel jointly conducted the training. Each training program consisted of separate, morning sessions for CSE and Judicial staff, respectively. In the afternoon, representatives of the two agencies were combined for a joint training session, during which participants were exposed to a live demonstration of DISH that gave attendees an opportunity to see what happens on the CSE case management system (ACSES) and the judicial case management system (ICON-Eclipse). The afternoon session also afforded attendees an opportunity to discuss changes in the way they would be doing business with one another and issues pertaining to record retention.

A total of 554 individuals received DISH training. The evaluators designed a questionnaire to assess participant reactions to the training program that trainers began to use in September 2009. Ultimately, workers completed 251 training surveys from September to November 2009, which comprised 45 percent of all training attendees in the state. The survey assessed reactions to the DISH project, worker knowledge of the DISH project before and after the training session, and reactions to the DISH training program.

Table 8 provides a description of the 251 workers who attended the training program and responded to the survey. Respondents held a variety of positions in the court and child support agency: just over one-quarter (27%) of respondents were establishment technicians, 16 percent were supervisors, 12 percent were court clerks, 9 percent were enforcement technicians, 7 percent were administrators, 6 percent were division clerks, 2 percent were judicial officers, and 21 percent held "other" positions.

The majority of respondents said that they handled APA cases "frequently" (42%) or "often" (19%). Just under one-quarter (23%) responded that they only handled APA cases occasionally and 16 percent said they rarely or never handled APA cases. Respondents came from all corners of the state including rural and urban counties (Elbert and Denver), counties located in the mountains (Summit), Western Slope (Montrose), metro area (Adams and Douglas) and the eastern plains (Washington, Yuma). Several counties and judicial districts had participated in training sessions conducted prior to the development of the evaluation questionnaire (Weld and Jefferson, and the 6th, 12th and 22nd Judicial Districts) and were consequently not surveyed in this evaluation effort.

Table 8. Description of Survey Respondents		
		(N=251)
Position:		
	Court clerk	12%
	Establishment technician	27%
	Administrator	7%
	Division clerk	6%
	Enforcement technician	9%
	IV-D attorney	0%
	Judicial officer	2%
	Supervisor	16%
	Other	21%
How often handle APA cases:		
	Frequently	42%
	Often	19%
	Occasionally	23%
	Rarely or never	16%
Worker County (number):		
	Adams	24
	Arapahoe/Douglas/Elbert	22
	Chaffee/Park	11
	Eagle	34
	Fremont	17
	Gilpin	6
	Grand	5
	Lincoln	18
	Montrose	5
	Park	13
	Phillips	9
	Summit	22
	Other ★	65
★ Fewer than 5 attended training at these sites.		

Table 9 compares knowledge levels about DISH and reactions to DISH among workers both before and after attending the DISH training program. Respondents reported that the training taught them a great deal and had a positive impact on their job. They felt that DISH would speed up the process of establishing and enforcing child support and improve data quality at the court and the child support agency.

Before attending the DISH training program, over half of respondents said that they knew very little (38%) or nothing (28%) about DISH and only about a third (36%) felt that it would impact their job “greatly.” After the training program, virtually all attendees reported knowing a “great deal” (68%) or something (31%) about DISH and two-thirds (67%) felt that it would impact their job a “great deal.” As a result of the training program, respondents were more apt to feel that DISH would “definitely” speed up the process of establishing and enforcing child support (28% to 75%) and that it would “definitely” result in more accurate data (28% versus 75%).

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	Before Training	After Training
How much you know about DISH:		
Great deal	6%	68%
Some	28%	31%
Very little	38%	1%
Nothing	28%	0%
Impact of DISH on his or her job:		
Great deal	36%	67%
Some	42%	27%
Very little	17%	5%
None	5%	0%
Think DISH will speed up establishing and enforcing child support:		
Definitely	28%	75%
Probably	62%	25%
Probably not	11%	0.4%
Definitely not	0.4%	0%
Think DISH will result in more accurate data at the agency and court:		
Definitely	28%	75%
Probably	66%	25%
Probably not	7%	0.4%
Definitely not	0%	0%

The survey asked respondents to rate several aspects of the DISH training. Approximately two-thirds of all respondents gave most aspects of the training program a rating of “excellent.” This included: the organization of information and materials (67%), the presentation of information (68%), the techniques used to present materials (66%), the pacing and timing of the instruction (64%), and the level of participation that the instructor encouraged (66%). There were virtually no negative ratings of any aspect of the program. See Table 10.

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Organization of information and materials	67%	33%	0.4%	0%
Presentation was clear	68%	31%	1%	0%
Techniques used to present materials	66%	33%	1%	0%
Pacing and timing of the instruction	64%	32%	3%	0%
Instructor encouraged participation	66%	32%	2%	0%
Trainer’s understanding of practices in your county	57%	37%	6%	0%

Respondents were asked to agree or disagree with a series of statements on various aspects of the DISH training program. The vast majority of respondents “strongly agreed” with most statements including the following:

- “The training helped me to understand what the other side has to do” (81%);
- “The training helped me to understand how what I do impacts the other side” (78%);
- “The training was thorough and detailed” (86%);
- “The training covered material that I will need to know in my job” (76%); and

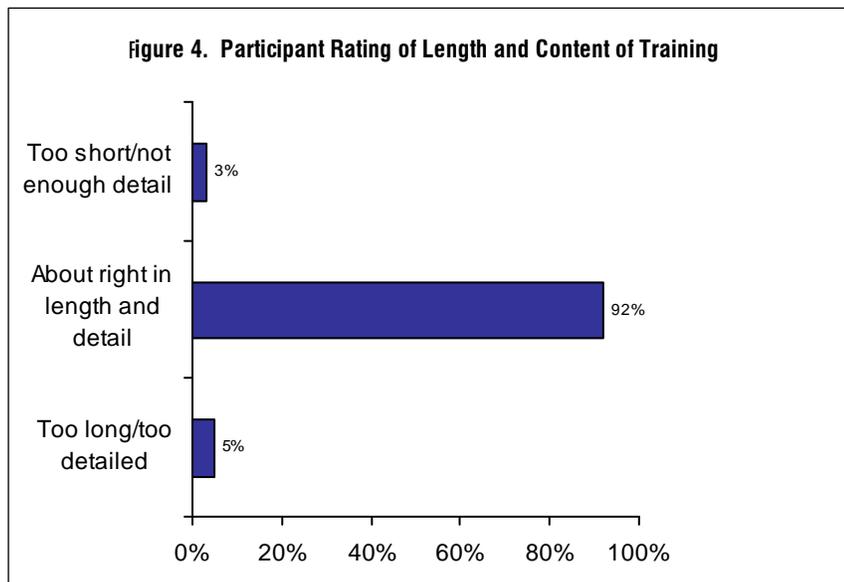
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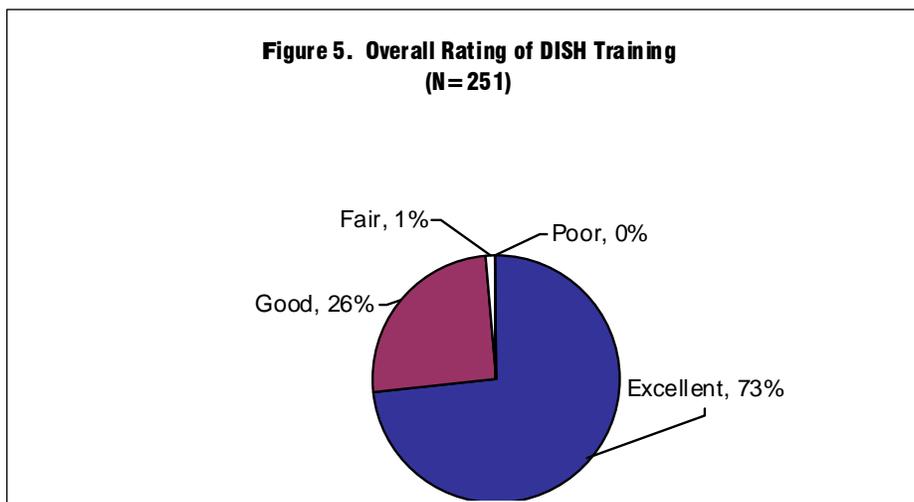
- The “morning” (80%) and “afternoon” (76%) “sessions were useful,” the “live data exchange was useful” (80%), and the “combined training session was useful” (78%).

	Agree strongly	Agree somewhat	Disagree somewhat	Disagree strongly
The training helped me to understand what the other side has to do	81%	19%	0.4%	0%
The training helped me to understand how what I do impacts the other side	78%	20%	2%	0%
The training was thorough and detailed	86%	13%	1%	0%
The training covered material that I will need to know in my job	76%	22%	1%	1%
The morning session was useful	80%	18%	1%	1%
The afternoon session was useful	76%	22%	1%	1%
The live data exchange was useful	80%	18%	1%	1%
The combined training session was useful	78%	20%	1%	1%

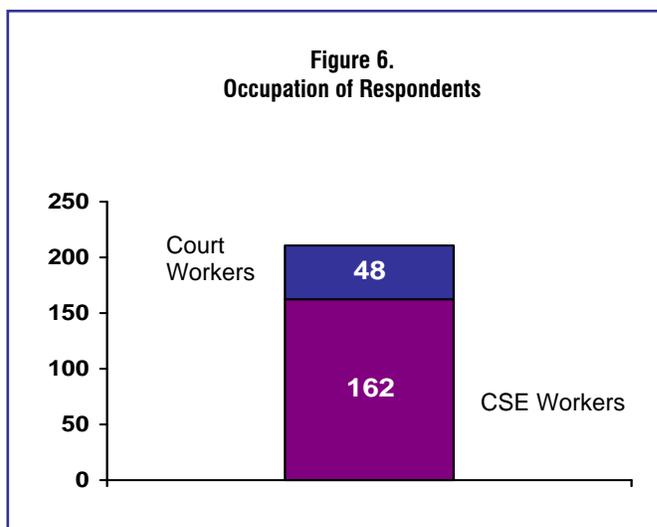
Respondents attending the training were asked to rate the length and content of the program. The overwhelming majority of respondents (92%) said the training was about right in length and detail. Only 3 percent said it was too short and did not provide enough detail, and just 5 percent said it was too long and too detailed.



Finally, when respondents were asked to provide an overall rating of the DISH training session, 73 percent said it was “excellent,” 26 percent rated it as “good,” and only 1 percent said it was “fair.”



### Reactions to DISH Post-Implementation



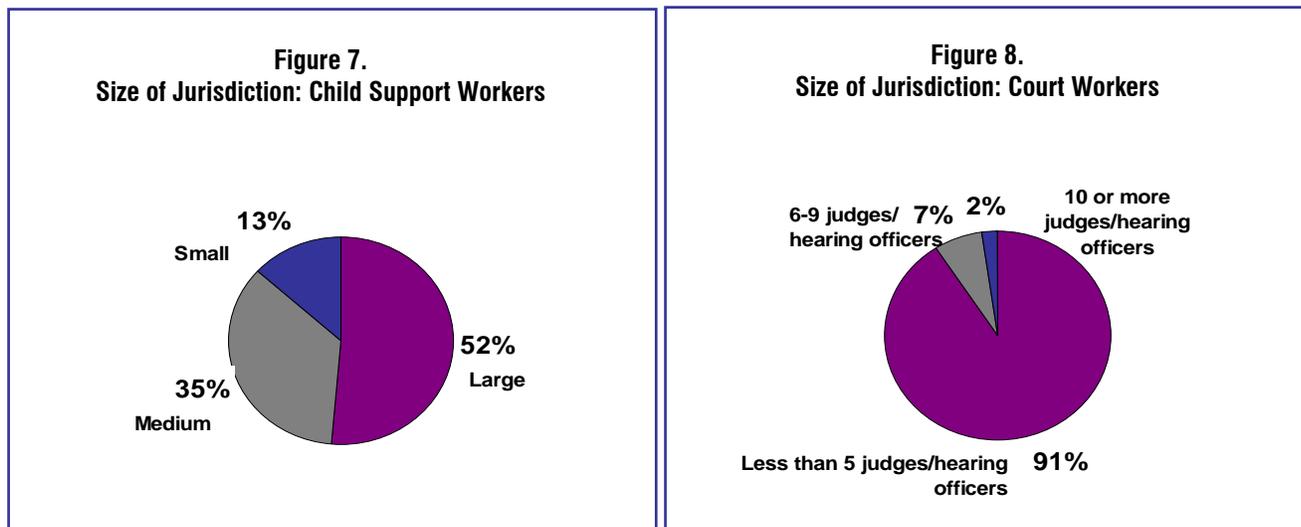
In order to assess workers' perceptions of the rollout and to assess their general impressions of the DISH Project, the evaluation team prepared an online questionnaire for CSE and court workers regarding their experiences with the DISH Interface system. The questionnaire was posted online during February to March 2010, at least four full months after DISH was implemented in the last county in Colorado and ten months after the start of the statewide roll out. To distribute the surveys, child support and court administrators emailed links to relevant workers on their staff and requested that they complete it. In all, 210 workers

responded—162 of which were CSE workers and 48 of which were court workers. CSE responses came from child support supervisors, child support administrators, establishment technicians, enforcement technicians, and IV-D attorneys. Court responses came from clerks of the court and judicial officers.

Only 3 percent of CSE workers did not report the size of the county in which they work. Of those who provided information on county size, about half (52%) responded that they work in large counties. The rest indicated that they work in medium (35%) or small counties (13%).

Court workers were asked to provide an indicator of county size by reporting on the number of judges or hearing officers who handle child support cases. Only 2 percent did not provide this information. Of the remainder, most (91%) responded that fewer than five judicial officers in their

jurisdictions regularly hear child support cases. The rest indicated that five to nine judicial officers are on the bench (7%) or ten or more judicial officers are on the bench (2%).



A variety of different types of child support workers responded to the survey. In the small jurisdictions, slightly more than half (52%) of respondents described themselves as “administrators,” another 19 percent indicated that they perform both establishment and enforcement duties, and 14 percent said they are supervisors. In mid-sized counties, about a third of the child support respondents described themselves as establishment technicians. There were also significant numbers of responses from supervisors (18%) and technicians (16%). In the largest counties, just over a third of the respondents (38%) were establishment technicians and just over a quarter (28%) handled enforcement matters. Cutting across counties of all sizes, the respondents were predominantly child support technicians (60%).

Too few large and mid-sized judicial districts are represented in the survey to allow for a breakdown of respondent’s profession in these settings. Overall, 43 percent of the judicial respondents described themselves as “clerk of the court.” Another 39 percent chose “court clerk.” Only one judicial hearing officer participated in the survey.

	Judicial	Child Support
Clerk of the court	43%	NA
Clerk’s office supervisor	2%	NA
Court clerk	39%	NA
Court judicial assistant	2%	NA
Division clerk	11%	NA
Judicial Officer	2%	NA
	(44)	

**Table 12. Survey Respondents by Role**

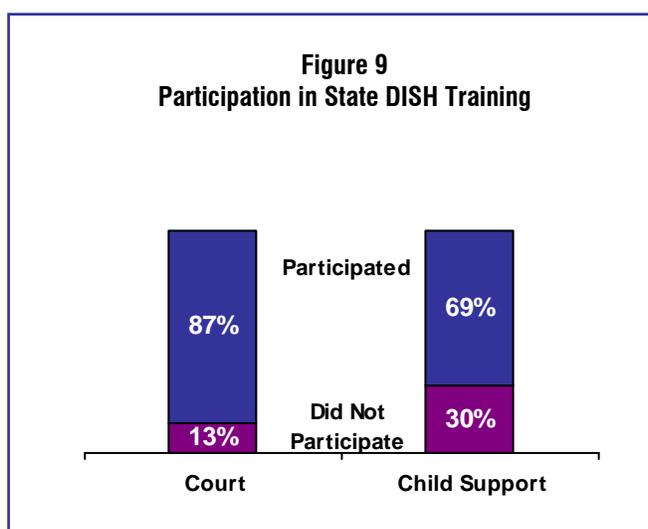
	Judicial	Child Support
Establishment technician		33%
Enforcement technician	NA	18%
Establishment and enforcement	NA	9%
Child support administrator	NA	16%
Child support supervisor	NA	14%
Other ★	NA	11%
		(160)

★ Including modification specialists, support staff, quality assurance, customer service, bookkeeping, and trainers

Virtually all respondents (96%) provided information on how often they handle APA cases. Of those who provided information, many (62%) of the responding CSE workers reported that they often or frequently work with APA cases. Many (61%) of the court workers, however, reportedly worked on these types of cases “occasionally” or “rarely.”

**Table 13. How often do you handle APA cases?**

	Court workers	CSE workers	Total
Rarely or never	17%	23%	22%
Occasionally	44%	15%	22%
Frequently or Often	39%	62%	56%
	(46)	(156)	(202)



Designers of the DISH project aimed to ensure that CSE and court workers would receive training in how to use the new DISH Interface. Most workers (87% of court workers and 69% of CSE workers) reported that they had attended a state-sponsored DISH training program upon the program’s implementation.

Regardless of whether they participated in the state training, most court and child support workers who took part in the survey indicated that the DISH implementation process in their county operated “fairly” or “very” smoothly.

Table 14. How did the DISH implementation process go in your county?						
	Court workers			CSE workers		
	Attend the state training?			Attend the state training?		
	No	Yes	Total	No	Yes	Total
Very smoothly	40%	56%	54%	23%	26%	25%
Fairly smoothly	40%	36%	37%	51%	54%	53%
Some problems	20%	8%	10%	23%	20%	20%
Many problems	0%	0.0%	0.0%	3%	1%	2%
	(5)	(36)	(41)	(35)	(102)	(137)

Child support and court workers who said that DISH implementation went “fairly smoothly” or had “some” or “many” problems were asked to evaluate how quickly their issues and concerns were addressed. Of the 42 court workers who assessed ease of implementation, only 20 (48%) reported that there had been some problems. Those who did report problems were nearly unanimous in reporting that these issues were resolved “fairly” or “very” quickly (95%). Reactions among child support workers were somewhat more mixed. Only about a quarter said the implementation was “very smooth.” Nevertheless, most (85%) of those who felt there had been problems indicated that they had been addressed quickly, with only 15 percent indicating that resolution had come “very slowly,” “fairly slowly,” or not at all.

Table 15. If there were problems, were they addressed?			
	Court workers	CSE workers	Total
Yes, resolved fairly or very quickly	95%	85%	86%
Not addressed or resolved slowly	5%	15%	14%
	(20)	(105)	(125)

Despite some problems, respondents indicated that the adjustment to DISH was relatively easy. Most court workers described it as “very easy” (64%), while most child support workers chose “fairly easy” (69%).

TABLE 16. What was the adjustment process like for you when you switched over to DISH?			
	Court workers	CSE workers	Total
Very easy	64%	18%	29%
Fairly easy	31%	69%	60%
Somewhat difficult	2%	11%	8%
Very difficult	2%	2%	2%
	(42)	(140)	(182)

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Open-ended questions suggest that legal technicians may have found the adjustment most difficult. One CSE worker stated, “I expected [DISH] to be very self-explanatory; however, I found that one must be very careful when clearing the DISH alerts because it could negatively impact the case. This is why I believe a comprehensive training would be beneficial to legal technicians.” Another stated: “I think DISH is a very helpful program. I believe DISH would be even more effective if Legal Technicians [knew] more about the DISH program capabilities. This issue could be solved with a DISH Training class.”

As mentioned, the project sought to improve the APA case process by:

- Increasing the speed of APA case initiation;
- Increasing the speed of the execution of corresponding child support orders;
- Saving time for CSE and court workers;
- Increasing the level of trust and communication between the agency and court;
- Reducing redundant data entry and errors; and
- Getting child support payments to children more quickly.

As part of the evaluation process, child support and court workers were asked to assess the extent to which each of these objectives was achieved.

### TIME SAVINGS

Most child support and court workers believe that DISH has produced time savings (e.g., by reducing the need to make copies, enter data, etc.). This opinion is most pronounced among court and child support workers who routinely process APA cases.

	Court workers			CSE workers		
	Work APA only occasionally or rarely	Work APA often	Total	Work APA only occasionally or rarely	Work APA often	Total
Definitely agree	60%	94%	74%	37%	55%	48%
Agree somewhat	24%	6%	16%	43%	25%	31%
Disagree somewhat	4%	0%	2%	16%	7%	10%
Definitely disagree	12%	0%	7%	4%	14%	10%
	(25)	(18)	(43)	(49)	(88)	(137)

Most court workers (87%) and child support workers (72%) also reported time savings in establishing child support orders with the DISH Interface. All of the court workers who regularly handle APA cases felt that DISH reduced the amount of time required to establish an order. Among child support workers who handle APA cases on a routine basis, the figure was 71 percent.

Table 18. DISH resulted in Reduced Time to Order Establishment						
	Court workers			CSE workers		
	Work APA only occasionally or rarely	Work APA often	Total	Work APA only occasionally or rarely	Work APA often	Total
Definitely agree	55%	88%	69%	50%	31%	35%
Agree somewhat	23%	12%	18%	25%	40%	38%
Disagree somewhat	9%	0%	5%	5%	16%	15%
Definitely disagree	14%	0%	8%	20%	13%	12%
	(22)	(17)	(39)	(44)	(86)	(130)

Child support workers were asked if they thought DISH reduced the amount of time elapsing between initiation of the order and the receipt of the first child support payment. Table 19 shows that two-thirds child support workers felt that DISH “probably” or “definitely” reduced the time to the first payment (although a comparison of pre and post-DISH case processing patterns presented in Table 29 showed that this expectation was not consistently realized).

Table 19. DISH resulted in Reduced Time to First Payment			
	Child Support Workers		
	Work APA only occasionally or rarely	Work APA often	Total
Definitely agree	15%	20%	18%
Agree somewhat	58%	43%	49%
Disagree somewhat	19%	19%	19%
Definitely disagree	8%	19%	15%
	(48)	(81)	(129)

### Improved Relationships

One of the most rewarding aspects of the processes of planning and implementing DISH was improving the relationship between CSE and the courts. Workers responding to the online survey agreed that DISH had improved this relationship: 91 percent and 75 percent of court and CSE workers, respectively, reported an improved relationship. A court clerk stated that DISH “drastically improved communication between [CSE] and the court” and that it also encouraged the court “to make internal changes that have benefited everyone, e.g., the support docket is now handled by one clerk and one magistrate rather than being shared among many.” One CSE worker enthusiastically commented that “Having the buy-in from both the CSE office and the courts made it a ‘win-win’ situation for everyone! Getting to hear the comments in the user[‘s] group meetings helped my understanding of their jobs too.”

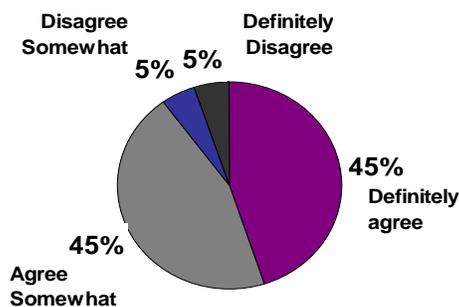
**TABLE 20: DISH Resulted in an Improved Relationship between the Court and Child Support**

	Court workers	CSE workers
Definitely agree	52%	28%
Agree somewhat	39%	47%
Disagree somewhat	5%	20%
Definitely disagree	5%	5%
	(43)	(137)

Both court and child support workers also credited DISH with improving their knowledge of case processing in the other’s system. That is, 90 percent of court workers said DISH helped them to better understand what was happening to a case in the child support agency, while more than 80 percent of the child support workers said DISH helped them to better understand a case’s filing status. One CSE worker summed up the general appreciation for the improvements of the process resulting from DISH in stating that, thanks to DISH, workers “Definitely [have] an improved understanding of how the process works at the court.”

In addition to improving relationships across agencies, almost 60 percent of the child support workers who participated in the study also credited DISH with improving communication between establishment and enforcement workers within the agency. Workers in the pilot counties said that after DISH, new cases moved to enforcement workers more quickly and establishment workers were consequently better able to answer questions about them. Table 28 confirms that cases entered the enforcement caseload significantly faster following the implementation of DISH.

**Figure 10.**  
DISH Resulted in Improved Knowledge of Case Filing Status:  
Child Support Workers



**Figure 11.**  
DISH Resulted in Improved Knowledge of CSE Case Activity:  
Court Workers

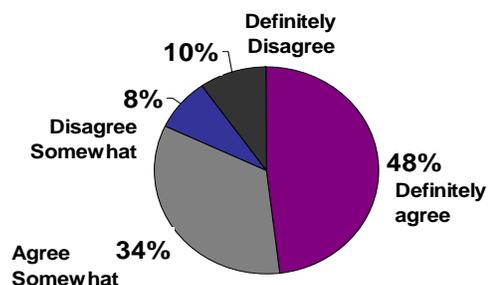


Table 21. DISH Resulted in an Improved Relationship between Establishment and Enforcement Child Support Workers	
	CSE workers
Definitely agree	16%
Agree somewhat	43%
Disagree somewhat	29%
Definitely disagree	11%
	(122)

### Reduction of Errors in Case Filings

Many workers agreed that DISH resulted in fewer errors in case filings. Among court workers who frequently handle APA cases, nearly 80 percent “definitely agreed” that this was the case. Over three-quarters of child support workers who frequently process APA cases agreed either “definitely” or “somewhat” that DISH reduced errors. One CSE worker volunteered that “Customers get their orders faster from the court and cases move to enforcement with fewer mistakes.”

Table 22. DISH Resulted in Reduced Errors in Case Filings				
	Court workers		CSE workers	
	Work APA only occasionally or rarely	Work APA often	Work APA only occasionally or rarely	Work APA often
Definitely agree	48%	78%	27%	41%
Agree somewhat	40%	17%	52%	36%
Disagree somewhat	8%	6%	21%	14%
Definitely disagree	4%	0%	0%	9%
	(25)	(18)	(48)	(88)

Both court and child support workers also agreed that DISH increased worker accountability. This was true for workers regardless of how frequently they worked APA cases.

Table 23. DISH Resulted in Increased Worker Accountability				
	Court workers		CSE workers	
	Work APA only occasionally or rarely	Work APA often	Work APA only occasionally or rarely	Work APA often
Definitely agree	52%	63%	23%	49%
Agree somewhat	39%	31%	55%	36%
Disagree somewhat	0%	6%	19%	10%
Definitely disagree	9%	0%	2%	6%
	(23)	(16)	(47)	(84)

### DISH Expectations

As shown in Table 24, about 18 percent of court workers and 28 percent of child support workers expected DISH to have a major impact on their jobs. The actual impact was somewhat greater than anticipated. Around 30 percent of court workers and 35 percent of child support workers reported that DISH had had a large impact on their job.

Table 24. What Impact Did You Expect DISH to Have On Your Job?		
	Court workers	CSE workers
Large impact	18.2%	27.6%
Some impact	43.2%	47.6%
Little impact	29.5%	19.3%
No impact	9.1%	5.5%
	(44)	(145)

Table 25. What Impact Has DISH Had On Your Job?		
	Court workers	CSE workers
Large impact	30.4%	35.4%
Some impact	30.4%	39.6%
Little impact	21.7%	18.8%
No impact	17.4%	6.3%
	(44)	(145)

Nevertheless, workers' responses to the post-implementation online survey were positive. As a result of DISH, APA cases are perceived to be processed more quickly. Relationships between CSE and the courts have improved. The rate of errors in case processing has dropped. One CSE worker enthusiastically commented, "I wish all cases could be filed this way!"

Many workers responding to the survey reported that they are anxious to see DISH expand into other processes. One worker expressed a hope that one day all documents can be filed electronically so that CSE and the courts can eliminate paper filings altogether. Another worker suggested that modifications also be filed through DISH. Finally, another worker expressed appreciation for the improved coordination between the courts and CSE and the greater-than-expected improvements in the efficiency of the APA process. The same worker was also excited to see the long-term impacts of DISH on the relationship between the court and CSE.

## **CASE PROCESSING PATTERNS PRE- AND POST-DISH**

The final component of the evaluation of DISH involved a comparison of time frames and time lags associated with filing and processing APA cases before and after the initiation of the DISH Interface. The purpose of the assessment was to determine whether some of the case processing objectives posited for DISH have been achieved using objective, empirical information drawn from the automated data systems for child support (ACSES) and Judicial (ICON).

In order to establish a baseline against which improvements due to DISH may be compared, ACSES programmers generated an extract consisting of 1,515 cases with order establishment conferences held during the first six months of 2008. This time period clearly preceded the introduction of DISH, which was first initiated in Weld County in May 2009. Information on post-DISH case processing patterns was drawn from an extract of 2,202 cases with order establishment conferences generated by ACSES programmers from December 2009 to May 2010. DISH was fully implemented in all Colorado counties and judicial districts by November 2009.

For each sampled case, ACSES programmers provided information on the order type (default, stipulation, temporary); the length of time elapsing between the APA conference and the generation of the child support order; and the length of time between the generation of the child support order and other case milestones including the transfer of the case to the enforcement unit, the initiation of wage withholding, and the actual collection of support and its distribution to families. Programmers at Judicial provided information on the date each case in the pre- and post-DISH samples was closed and the date of the first scheduled event at court in cases with temporary orders where a court hearing might be expected to occur.

The analysis compared the two samples of cases on selected case processing time frames and lags. The extract for pre-DISH cases was generated by ACSES programmers in December 2009. This was at least 18 months after the last case in the pre-DISH sample went to an order establishment conference on June 30, 2008.

The extract of post-DISH cases was generated by ACSES programmers on July 15, 2010. This was only 45 days after the newest establishment cases were filed in May 2010. To avoid attributing changes in the post-DISH sample of cases to the shorter follow-up window available for that pool of cases, the researchers adjusted the response categories for the comparison of pre- and post-DISH cases to capture activity occurring before and after the 45 day time frame available for both groups of cases. This improved the reliability of the comparison but made it impossible for researchers to calculate and compare mean and median numbers of days elapsing between various case events and conduct t-tests to determine whether observed differences were statistically significant.

### **Pre-DISH Case Characteristics and Case Processing Patterns**

Table 26 shows that the distribution of case types in the pre- and post-DISH samples was similar, but not identical. At both time points, approximately 60 percent of the cases had orders established through stipulation. In the pre-DISH sample, however, just over a quarter (28%) was set by default, and 12 percent had temporary orders. The opposite was true of post-DISH cases where 19 percent were set by default and 20 percent had temporary orders. Colorado has been actively discouraging the use of default orders and making strong efforts to include noncustodial parents in the establishment process so that orders are based on actual earnings and true circumstances. In

addition, counties appear to be using temporary orders more routinely, as is statutorily required, rather than moving cases that do not result in stipulations from the APA track to a judicial one, as had previously been the case.

	Pre-DISH	Post-DISH
Default	28%	19%
Stipulation	60%	61%
Temporary	12%	20%
	(1,515)	(2,202)
Percentage of cases with valid information	100%	100%

Table 27 compares the amount of time it took to establish a child support order in the pre- and post-DISH environments. For both samples of cases, researchers compared the number of days between the date of the conference to establish a child support order and the date on which the order was actually established. The analysis was conducted separately for default, stipulation, and temporary orders. For the purposes of this project, and in consultation with legal staff, the Colorado CSE established a standard of 5 days for stipulated cases and 10 days for cases with default or temporary orders, as a guide for the maximum number of days that should elapse between these two events. The results show:

- The percentage of cases that complied with the 10-day standard recommended by CSE rose for all case types following the introduction of DISH, although the change was statistically significant only for stipulation and temporary order cases. For stipulations, the rate of compliance went from 71.7 to 82.9 percent. For temporary order cases, compliance went from 57.3 to 71.7 percent. For default cases, the percentage in compliance rose a non-statistically significant amount, from 33.1 to 35.7 percent.
- The percentage of cases that obtained a support order on the same day they were filed increased dramatically following the introduction of DISH. While none of the cases were processed on the same day in the pre-DISH environment, this was the case for about half of post-DISH stipulations (52.8%) and 11.4 percent of post-DISH temporary orders.

Table 28 provides information on the time lags following order establishment. As Table 28 indicates:

- The proportion of cases moving from order establishment to order verification within a five-day period of time rose significantly for stipulations and default cases. Among stipulation cases, verifications occurred within five days of order establishment for 57.9 percent of the pre-DISH sample and 64.3 percent of the post-DISH sample. Among default cases, the incidence was 37.1 and 52.7 percent, respectively.

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Conference Date to Order Date	Default		Stipulation		Temporary	
	Pre-DISH	Post-Dish	Pre-DISH	Post-Dish	Pre-DISH	Post-Dish
Percent at 0 days	0.0%	0.5%	0.0%	52.8%	0.0%	11.4%
1 day	0.9%	2.1%	25.2%	16.1%	5.4%	9.5%
2 days	1.9%	1.2%	17.9%	4.3%	2.7%	6.5%
3 days	3.3%	1.7%	9.3%	3.7%	2.7%	4.6%
4 days	3.1%	1.7%	11.9%	3.3%	5.4%	5.6%
5 days	3.1%	1.7%	7.4%	2.7%	4.3%	9.0%
6 days	4.0%	3.8%	5.2%	2.2%	7.6%	6.5%
7 days	4.7%	7.3%	3.2%	2.4%	11.4%	6.3%
8 days	6.6%	6.1%	3.2%	1.6%	8.6%	7.0%
9 days	3.1%	5.7%	1.4%	1.2%	7.0%	3.7%
10 days	2.4%	4.0%	0.8%	0.5%	2.2%	1.6%
11 or more days	66.9%	64.3%	14.5%	9.1%	42.7%	28.3%
Percentage in compliance	33.1%	35.7%	71.7%	82.9%	57.3%	71.7%
	(424)	(423)	(906)	(1,348)	(185)	(431)
Percent of cases with valid information	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	Percent at 11+ days Not significant		Percent at 6+ days Chi Sq significant at .00		Percent at 11+ days Chi Sq significant at .00	

- All case types were transferred to enforcement workers significantly more quickly following the introduction of DISH. After DISH, the proportion of cases that took 45 days or more to move from order establishment to enforcement dropped from 18.7 to 1.8 percent for cases with stipulated orders, 24.9 to 1.7 percent for cases with temporary orders, and 16.7 to 2.6 percent for cases with default orders.
- Looked at somewhat differently, the proportion of cases that were transferred to enforcement workers in five days or less rose following the introduction of DISH from 45.3 to 61.5 percent for cases with stipulated orders, 32.8 to 47.3 percent for cases with temporary orders, and 31.8 to 50.2 percent for cases with default orders.

Table 28. Pre- and Post-DISH Time Lags Following Order Establishment						
	Default		Stipulation		Temporary	
	Pre-DISH	Post-Dish	Pre-DISH	Post-Dish	Pre-DISH	Post-Dish
Total number of cases	423	423	903	1,348	185	431
Order Date to Court Order Verified Date						
0 – 5 days	37.1%	52.7%	57.9%	64.3%	44.1%	47.3%
6-10 days	30.0%	31.2%	24.8%	25.8%	31.3%	30.9%
11-20 days	19.6%	11.1%	12.6%	7.9%	17.9%	15.9%
21-44 days	10.6%	4.3%	4.3%	1.9%	6.1%	4.3%
45 days or longer (including those not verified at extract)	2.6%	0.7%	0.3%	0.1%	0.6%	1.7%
	★		★			
	(423)	(423)	(902)	(1,347)	(179)	(421)
Order Date to Date Case Entered Enforcement Caseload						
0 days	2.4%	5.3%	10.0%	4.6%	8.5%	4.3%
1 -5 days	29.4%	44.9%	35.3%	56.9%	24.3%	43.0%
6-10 days	23.9%	28.6%	20.2%	24.5%	20.3%	30.9%
11-20 days	17.5%	13.4%	11.1%	8.6%	14.7%	15.7%
21-44 days	10.0%	5.3%	4.6%	3.5%	7.3%	4.5%
45 days or longer (including those not in enforcement at extract)	16.7%	2.6%	18.7%	1.8%	24.9%	1.7%
	★		★		★	
	(418)	(419)	(886)	(1,331)	(177)	(421)

Table 29 shows the amount of time required for other post-order events to occur in cases prior to and following the introduction of DISH. Researchers focused on two specific payment events: the date of the first payment and the date of the first income assignment. Since income assignments and child support payments frequently take a considerable amount of time to realize after an order has been established, the post-DISH analysis was limited to the pool of cases filed during December 2009 to March 30, 2010. This means that even the newest cases with establishment conferences held on March 30, 2010, would have had at least 90 days to generate an income assignment and/or child support payment when the extract was produced on July 15, 2010.

- The comparison of pre- and post-DISH patterns that appear in Table 29 are inconclusive. While the percentage of cases with first payments occurring within 30 days dropped for post-DISH orders established by stipulation and for temporary orders, the percentage of cases that took more than 90 days was somewhat lower for stipulations and somewhat higher for temporary orders. A more definitive analysis would require the calculation of mean and

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median numbers of days for these events to occur and the conduct of appropriate tests of significance to determine whether DISH affected the rate at which payment was received.

- The patterns were also inconclusive with respect to the production of wage withholding orders before and after the introduction of DISH. While the proportion of cases obtaining income assignment orders within 30 days rose following DISH for cases with orders established through stipulated and default orders, it dropped for cases with temporary orders. At the other end of the spectrum, the proportion of cases requiring 90 days or more to obtain an income assignment rose after DISH for cases with default orders and cases with temporary orders, but declined for cases with stipulated orders.

The economic downturn clearly affected these income assignment and child support payment patterns. During the pre-DISH study period of 2008, the statewide unemployment rate in Colorado was 4.9 percent. In 2010, when the post-DISH case data was extracted, the unemployment rate stood at 8 percent.

	Default		Stipulation		Temporary	
	Pre-DISH	Post-Dish	Pre-DISH	Post-Dish	Pre-DISH	Post-Dish
<b>Order Date to Date of First Payment</b>						
0-30 days	8.1%	10.4%	29.5%	24.5%	25.4%	16.9%
31-60 days	13.7%	15.6%	26.7%	34.9%	23.8%	22.3%
61-89 days	5.7%	4.7%	7.5%	6.7%	7.2%	14.4%
90 or more days	72.5%	69.4%	36.4%	33.9%	43.6%	46.3%
	(422)	(385)	(896)	★ (1,100)	(181)	★ (367)
<b>Order Date to First Income Assignment</b>						
0-30 days	37.8%	41.3%	45.3%	48.1%	47.5%	34.1%
31-60 days	12.3%	8.3%	7.4%	8.9%	4.4%	11.4%
61-89 days	5.7%	2.9%	3.1%	5.2%	3.8%	5.7%
90 or more days	44.2%	47.5%	44.2%	37.9%	44.3%	48.8%
		★ (423)		★ (1,105)		★ (183)
		(385)	(903)		(183)	(369)

★Chi square between pre and post is significant .05 or less

Table 30 shows the average number of days between the APA conference and the date the pending court action was completed for cases with orders established by stipulation, default, and temporary orders in the pre- and post-DISH samples. As the table indicates, cases were processed significantly faster after DISH for cases with orders established by stipulation and for temporary orders. It took an average of 3.5 days for the court to close the case in stipulation cases, as compared with 8.9 days in the pre-DISH environment. Although temporary order cases took much more time to process, they too moved more quickly after DISH was implemented, with cases closed by the court in an average of 73.6 days, as compared with 84.5 days.

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	Default		Stipulation		Temporary	
	Pre-DISH	Post-Dish	Pre-DISH	Post-Dish	Pre-DISH	Post-Dish
Average number of days	24.9	21.6	8.9	3.5	84.5	73.6
			★		★	
	(358)	(368)	(846)	(1,339)	(146)	(310)

★ T-test of differences between pre- and post-test means significant at .05 or less.

Only 131 cases with temporary orders had court hearings scheduled in the pre-DISH sample. In the post DISH sample, 290 cases had court hearings schedule. On average, it took an identical 20 days for scheduling to occur following case filing in both samples of cases. The scheduled events included child support hearings, hearings on permanent orders, paternity hearings, and hearings to be advised of a case filing.

	Temporary	
	Pre-DISH	Post-Dish
Average number of days	20.6	20.8
	(134)	(290)

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The OCSE-funded project described in this report led to the creation of Data Information Sharing (DISH), an interface between the automated databases for the Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Child Support Enforcement (CSE) and the Colorado Judicial Department (Judicial). The purpose of DISH is to exchange information between CSE and Judicial agencies in child support cases established through Administrative Process Action (APA). Approximately 70 percent of Colorado’s cases are established through APA. The prior interface required redundant data entry in both systems that could result in errors and cause delays in the execution of child support orders. The goals posited for DISH included:

- Improving the speed of APA case initiation and the execution of the corresponding child support order;
- Reducing manual data entry, improving data reliability, and facilitating the rapid assignment of docket number;
- Eliminating filing of most paper forms and reducing sorting, stamping and storage of documents;

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- Allowing orders to move to enforcement sooner, obtaining income assignments more quickly, and getting child support payments to families more rapidly.

Creating the DISH interface required extensive collaboration between CSE and Judicial. Project implementation involved:

- A planning effort to clarify objectives, document the APA process and develop a design solution;
- A preliminary implementation phase that involved the introduction of DISH in two Colorado counties that served as pilot sites;
- A statewide training effort for CSE and Judicial personnel; and
- A rollout process that resulted in the implementation of DISH throughout the state.

To evaluate the project, the Center for Policy Research (CPR) conducted interviews and focus groups, and administered email surveys to a variety of CSE and Judicial personnel at various stages of the four-year project. The key audiences targeted included:

- Key program architects and members of relevant work groups who helped to design DISH during the project's planning phase from September 2006 to May 2008;
- CSE and Judicial personnel in the two pilot county sites where DISH was first introduced from April to May, 2009;
- CSE and Judicial personnel who attended state-sponsored training programs on DISH from August to November 2009; and
- CSE and Judicial personnel throughout the State of Colorado who used DISH following the conclusion of the rollout effort in November 2009.

In addition to generating information on user reactions and perceptions, CPR obtained and analyzed extracts of data drawn from the automated systems for child support (ACSES) and Judicial (ICON) on time frames for APA cases filed prior to and following the adoption of DISH.

### **The Automated Data Exchange**

The design solution that CSE and Judicial adopted involved a bi-directional, automated data exchange with uniform, centralized information screens for both child support and the court. To accomplish this, the automated systems for child support (ACSES) and Judicial (ICON) were programmed to receive and send pertinent data in XML format, in real time, using the National Information Exchange Model (NIEM), which is an XML-based information exchange framework. Under DISH, data elements for APA child support orders are transferred electronically from ACSES to ICON. Thus, names, addresses, birthdates, and other intake data entered into ACSES when a case is opened at CSE are automatically populated into ICON, thereby eliminating the need for Judicial staff to enter the data. Subsequently, when an APA order has been entered and accepted by Judicial, there is an automatic and timely electronic notification to ACSES so that CSE can activate Income Assignments (IAs) and/or take other critical actions. DISH reduces the paperwork associated with APA filings with all paper documents stored at CSE in cases that result in a stipulated order. Hard-copy documents are still sent to the court for Temporary and Default Orders

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and the court can still print copies of its records, which contain all of the pertinent elements of the Order.

### **The Planning Process**

Developing the project objectives, the design solution, and the data elements to be exchanged between ACSES and ICON occurred over a 20-month planning process. It involved forming and convening numerous teams and groups comprised of CSE and Judicial administrators, technical personnel, policy staff, line workers, and end users for an extensive array of meetings. The gatherings focused on clarifying how the APA process works, the ways in which the process might be improved through the DISH project, the data items to be exchanged, and the desired technical solution. The key groups that participated in the planning process were an interagency Steering Committee, management team, User Group, and Technical Team. Two key documents were distilled in the planning process. The “elevator statement” was a succinct description of the project mission while the “Statement of Work” was a detailed explanation of project scope, approach, schedule, and risks.

Interviews and surveys with CSE and Judicial personnel who participated in the planning process revealed that they were extremely enthusiastic about DISH and believed that it held great potential to increase efficiency and save time. Participants also viewed the planning process favorably and attributed its success to the regular participation of upper-level managers from both agencies, the effectiveness of the Management Team, and the broad-based input obtained from county personnel from both agencies. User groups were created to develop descriptions of how cases are processed, the data items that should be exchanged, and the best practices that should be implemented.

Virtually all respondents felt that the DISH project helped to improve collaboration between the court and the child support agency and that both agencies compromised about the same amount to make DISH functional. Another benefit of the planning process was the identification of unnecessary processes that resulted in changes at the local level that made child support enforcement more efficient including the elimination of some documents the CSE had been sending to the court.

### **Implementation at the Pilot Sites**

Weld and Jefferson counties were pilot sites for the DISH project and the data exchange system was implemented in those settings in May and July 2009, respectively. Telephone interviews and focus groups with Judicial and CSE personnel in both counties soon after DISH went live revealed that any initial apprehension about DISH dissolved when personnel observed a live demonstration and saw that “it took 90 seconds to send a filing, receive it back from the court and get a docket and FSR number.” The anticipated benefits of DISH that CSE and Judicial workers reported experiencing included:

- Less time that CSE workers spent copying documents;
- Elimination of the need for court workers to input information; and
- Reduced numbers of cases returned to CSE by the court due to errors.

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Another perceived benefit of DISH for CSE workers was the receipt of “alerts” that provide real-time information about court actions that transpire in their cases. This eliminates the need to wait for the court to mail notices of its actions and allows CSE workers an opportunity to perform important case clean-up activities in a more timely manner. On the other hand, since the alerts lack details about particular hearings, CSE workers still have research to find out whether an alert about a hearing is relevant to their cases.

It was hoped that faster generation of orders would result in the more rapid initiation of enforcement actions and lower rates of delinquency accrual. According to court and CSE enforcement workers in the pilot counties, this expectation was realized. The speedy generation of orders was perceived to permit enforcement workers to contact obligors more quickly with the potential benefits of yielding fresher contact information and better coordination between establishment and enforcement workers on problem cases.

DISH did not resolve all issues associated with order establishment. Respondents indicated that CSE workers sometimes neglected to send documents to the court when they withdrew from a case and that there was sometimes a lack of correspondence between the list of documents that CSE workers reported sending or storing and what actually happened. Nor did DISH satisfy every expectation with CSE workers discovering that they still needed to manually enter critical information that the court does not provide electronically, including the judgment date, the judgment amount, the monthly amount due, and the order commencement date.

DISH prompted CSE, court workers, and magistrates in Jefferson County to review the procedures they follow in contested cases, clear up some misapprehensions, and make some adjustments, including reducing the amount of time that the magistrate held default cases. Another byproduct of the DISH planning and implementation process was a joint review by CSE and Judicial personnel of the documents required by the court for default and temporary order filings. Finally, DISH led to statewide uniformity and greater efficiency in the assignment of docket numbers and FSR numbers for new child support cases.

### **DISH Statewide Training**

From August to November 2009, 15 training programs on DISH were conducted throughout Colorado. The day-long program was jointly conducted by CSE and Judicial personnel approximately one week before DISH was implemented in a targeted geographical setting. Each training program consisted of separate, morning sessions for CSE and Judicial staff, respectively, that was followed by a joint session in the afternoon, during which participants were exposed to a live demonstration which gave attendees an opportunity to see what happens on the ACSES and ICON systems. A total of 554 individuals attended the DISH training program, 251 of whom responded to a questionnaire administered immediately after its conclusion. The survey assessed reactions to the DISH project, worker knowledge of the DISH project before and after the training session, and reactions to the DISH training program.

Respondents rated the training program highly, with the vast majority “strongly agreeing” with a variety of favorable statements including the following:

- The training helped me to understand what the other side has to do” (81%);

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- “The training helped me to understand how what I do impacts the other side” (78%);
- “The training was thorough and detailed” (86%);
- “The training covered material that I will need to know in my job” (76%);
- The “morning” (80%) and “afternoon” (76%) “sessions were useful,” the “live data exchange was useful” (80%), and the “combined training session was useful” (78%).

An overwhelming majority of respondents (92%) said the training was about right in length and detail. Asked to provide an overall rating of the DISH training session, 73 percent said it was “excellent”, 26 percent rated it as “good,” and only 1 percent said it was “fair.”

### Reactions to DISH Following Statewide Implementation

DISH was implemented throughout Colorado from August through November 2009. An online survey was administered from February to March 2010 to assess how court and child support workers perceived the rollout to have operated and the utility of the DISH project. In all, 210 individuals responded to the survey: 162 CSE workers and 48 Judicial personnel. Workers’ responses were extremely positive. In addition to finding the transition to DISH to be relatively painless, respondents agreed that APA cases were being processed more quickly, relationships between CSE and the courts had improved, and the rate of errors in case processing had dropped.

- Regardless of whether they participated in the state training, most court and child support workers who took part in the survey indicated that the DISH implementation process in their county operated “fairly” (37% to 53%) or “very” (54% to 25%) smoothly.
- The few court (n=20) and more numerous CSE workers (n=105) who reported experiencing some implementation problems were nearly unanimous (95% and 85%) in saying that these issues were resolved “fairly” or “very” quickly.
- Overall, respondents indicated that the adjustment to DISH was relatively easy, with 64.3 percent of court workers describing it as “very easy” (64.3%) and 69 percent of CSE workers characterizing it as “fairly easy.”

With respect to key project objectives dealing with faster case processing, the surveys revealed that:

- Nearly all Judicial (94.4%) and most child support (54.5%) workers who routinely handle APA cases believed that DISH saved them time at work;
- Most court workers (69%) and some child support workers (34.6%) definitely agreed that DISH reduced the time to order establishment; and
- Most child support workers (66.6%) felt that DISH probably or definitely reduced the time from order establishment to the first child support payment.

One of the most rewarding aspects of the DISH project was improved relationships between CSE and Judicial and between establishment and enforcement workers within CSE.

- 90.9 percent of court and 75 percent of CSE workers reported that DISH had improved relationships between the court and CSE.

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- 90 percent of court and 80 percent of CSE workers said DISH helped them to better understand how cases are handled at the opposite agency.
- Almost 60 percent of the child support workers credited DISH with improving communication between establishment and enforcement workers within CSE.

One expected benefit of DISH was a reduction in errors in case filings.

- Nearly 80 percent of court workers who frequently handle APA cases felt that DISH had reduced the number of errors in case filings.
- Over three-quarters of CSE workers who frequently process APA cases agreed either “definitely” or “somewhat” that DISH reduced errors.

Overall, 30 percent of court workers and 35 percent of child support workers reported that DISH had had a large impact on their job. Many workers hoped that DISH would be expanded into other processes including modification cases. DISH also whetted worker appetite for more comprehensive electronic filing processes and the elimination of paper filings in all child support cases at some future date.

### **Case Processing Patterns Prior To and Following Implementation of DISH**

A comparison of time frames and time lags associated with filing and processing APA cases before and after the initiation of the DISH interface provides a more objective assessment of DISH impacts. To conduct the comparison, ACSES programmers generated an extract consisting of 1,515 cases with order establishment conferences held during the first six months of 2008, which clearly fell before the date when DISH was first initiated in Weld County in May 2009. The extract was generated in December 2009 which was 18 months after the last case went to an order establishment conference. Information on post-DISH case processing patterns was drawn from an extract of 2,202 cases with order establishment conferences generated by ACSES programmers from December 2009 to May 2010. DISH was fully implemented in all Colorado counties and Judicial Districts by November 2009 and the extract was created on July 15, 2010, which was a minimum of 45 days after the newest case was filed.

For each sampled case, ACSES programmers provided information on the order type (default, stipulation, temporary); the length of time elapsing between the APA conference and the generation of the child support order; and the length of time between the generation of the child support order and other case milestones, including the transfer of the case to the enforcement unit, the initiation of wage withholding and the actual collection of support and/or initiation of enforcement activity. Programmers at Judicial provided information on the date each case in the pre- and post-DISH samples were closed and the date of the first scheduled event at court in non-stipulation cases where a hearing or other court activity might be expected to occur.

To avoid attributing changes in the post-DISH sample of cases to the shorter follow-up window available for that pool of cases (45 days after the newest establishment cases were filed versus 18 months for the pre-DISH sample) CPR researchers focused the comparison on events occurring before and after the shorter, 45-day time frame. This improved the reliability of the comparison but made it impossible to calculate and compare mean and median numbers of days elapsing between various case events.

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Key findings from the comparison of pre- and post-DISH cases are:

- Cases moved from the establishment conference to order establishment significantly more quickly following the introduction of DISH, with the percentage traveling within the recommended 5 and 10 days for stipulation and temporary order and default cases, respectively, rising from 71.7 to 82.9 percent for stipulation cases and 57.3 to 71.7 percent for temporary order cases.
- The percentage of cases obtaining a support order on the same day they were filed increased dramatically from 0 to 52.8 percent for stipulation cases.
- Order verification, ledger initiation, and transfer to enforcement workers all occurred significantly more quickly following the introduction of DISH. For example, among cases with stipulated orders, the percentage of cases that obtained a verified order within five days of order establishment rose from 57.9 to 64.3 percent following DISH, while the percentage that were transferred to enforcement workers in five days or less rose from 45.3 to 61.5 percent (and those that required 45 days dropped from 18.7 to 1.8 percent).
- The time required to get income assignments and child support payments did not change in a consistent way following DISH. For example, while the percentage of cases with first payments within 30 days dropped for stipulated and temporary orders after DISH, the percentage requiring more than 90 days also dropped for stipulations (but rose for temporary orders). The lack of conclusive findings may reflect the fact that these events frequently take more than 90 days to accomplish and depend upon employer actions and obligor behaviors that are beyond the control of CSE and the courts and are not likely to be affected by the DISH intervention. It is also relevant that the rate of unemployment in Colorado increased dramatically from the time the pre and post-DISH samples were generated in 2008 and 2010 from 4.9 to 8.0 percent, respectively.
- Following DISH, cases were closed at the court significantly faster than had been the case before DISH, with the average number of days for case closure dropping from 8.9 to 3.5 among stipulations and 84.5 to 73.6 among temporary orders.
- There was no change in the time it took for the court to schedule a first hearing in temporary order cases following the introduction of DISH, with the average remaining 20 days.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

DISH was a highly successful project resulting in the creation, development, and statewide implementation of an electronic exchange of information between CSE and Judicial agencies in child support cases filed using APA, which is the most common method of order establishment in Colorado. Conducted collaboratively by CSE and the Judicial agencies, the project was widely viewed to have reduced the workload associated with processing APA cases, cut the rate of errors in such cases, and sped up the process of filing child support cases and obtaining orders. The project was also viewed as having improved relationships between the child support agency and the court and led to a more uniform and efficient way of assigning docket and FSR numbers to new child support cases. An empirical assessment of time frames associated with processing APA cases before and after DISH confirms that many case events occurred significantly faster following DISH, including the establishment of orders, the initiation of ledgers, and the transfer of cases to enforcement workers at CSE. DISH also sped up the rate at which cases were closed at the court.

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DISH had no consistent impact on income withholding and child support payments, events that depend upon the labor market which deteriorated significantly over the life of the project with unemployment rising from 4.9 percent in 2008 to 8.0 percent in 2010. Nor did DISH affect the speed with which child support cases with temporary orders obtain hearings at court which are a function of the court calendar and the attorney resources available to CSE agencies.

The following are some best practices that other states wishing to implement similar projects should consider adopting.

- **Allow time for an extensive planning phase.** CSE and Judicial spent 20 months on a planning process that involved numerous meetings of personnel from both agencies at all levels of the organizational chart: administrators, business planners, technical staff, and end users.
- **Find a shared goal and identify joint benefits.** CSE and Judicial moved forward when they realized that they shared the common goals of reducing workload and errors, speeding up case processing, and generating orders and payments in a more timely fashion. It was important to identify these real-world goals at the beginning of the planning process.
- **Clarify the project's scope and distill it to writing in both short and longer formats.** DISH architects distilled the scope of the project and its goals to writing, disseminated the written descriptions, and referred to them frequently. These key written products were a brief "elevator statement," a more extensive Statement of Work, and an Interface Control Document (ICD), which provided detail on every data element to be exchanged. It was believed that these written documents minimized the threat of "mission creep," helped to keep personnel from both agencies focused, and enhanced communication between business and technical personnel.
- **Get feedback from a broad range of end users.** Taking the time to hear from users and crafting the solution that they needed meant that the end product was responsive to real needs. It also ensured buy-in by end users. DISH architects involved people in the planning process who would be using the data exchange system on a daily basis. Bringing together representatives of CSE and Judicial gave personnel in both agencies the opportunity to see what happens in the other agency.
- **Recognize and deal with differences in agency styles, culture, goals, and terminology.** Involving personnel at all levels from both agencies at every step of the planning, training, and implementation process was beneficial. Another beneficial feature of DISH was having a project manager who had served as a liaison between the two agencies. She understood the APA process from both sides and was trusted by both agencies. A DISH dictionary was developed to help both sides speak the same language.
- **Assign a management team to the project.** It was helpful to have a management team that consisted of representatives from both agencies who dedicated the time to the project needed to make sure that all tasks were accomplished.
- **Work through the flow process.** It was extremely useful to document the APA process from beginning to end in order to identify places to improve it.
- **Test solutions on a small scale.** DISH was introduced in two pilot counties in order to test its effectiveness and make needed changes.

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- **Phase in implementation on a gradual basis.** DISH was subsequently rolled out throughout the state in a phased fashion to allow trainers and technical personnel the opportunity to respond quickly to any identified problems and make localized adjustments (if needed).
- **Conduct a cross-agency training program.** It was effective to train CSE and Judicial workers separately for part of the day, but bring them together for a live demonstration of DISH and respond to questions jointly.
- **Respond to problems quickly.** CSE and Judicial workers appreciated the responsiveness of program architects and programmers to their questions and concerns and their willingness to consider local adjustments.
- **Thank administrators and end users for their participation.** Program architects were gracious and welcoming. They recognized the contributions of administrators, line staff, technical personnel, and trainers. This inspired support among end users and guaranteed the popularity of DISH.