

**Title:** DCSE Paternity Establishment Project (IRB\_2023-20)

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## **Executive Summary**

The Division of Child Support Enforcement (DCSE) modified their procedures for establishing paternity. In a pilot of the procedural changes, five DCSE offices: Abingdon, Central Virginia, Newport News, Northern Virginia, and Valley, volunteered to trial the modified procedures for six months starting June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022 and ending November 30, 2022. The remaining eight offices continued to use the established procedure. The modified procedures include:

- The caseworker completes a thorough case review within five business days of receiving the case and documents the case review in the system.
- The caseworker calls the custodial parent (CP) and putative father (PF). If they are unable to reach them, they leave a detailed message with their direct contact information and try to reach them by other means such as email or the MyChildSupport portal.
- The caseworker creates separate appointments for the CP and PF.
- The caseworker sends the Administrative Summons, and other necessary documents to the CP and PF.

DCSE partnered with the Division of Research and Planning (DRP) to conduct an evaluation to determine if there is an association between the procedural changes and improved administrative outcomes. In addition, an implementation analysis was performed to investigate implementation fidelity in the pilot offices. Key findings in this report include:

- Except for creating appointments and sending administrative summonses to both CP and non-custodial parent (NCP), there are no significant differences in practice between pilot and non-pilot offices.
- Pilot office status did not significantly affect the number of business days to paternity establishment.
- Independent of pilot office status, reviewing a case within five business days was associated with slightly over 11 fewer business days to establish paternity when compared with not reviewing the case within that time frame.
- Pilot office cases are over four times more likely to have an administratively established paternity than non-pilot office cases.
- Independent of pilot office status, cases with personal contact with both the CP and NCP have almost a three times higher likelihood of having an administrative paternity establishment compared to cases without contact.
- The likelihood of establishing paternity administratively is even higher when comparing cases with and without an administrative summons sent to both CP and NCP.