



Institute for  
Research on  
Poverty

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

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# Impact Results from the Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration (CSPED)

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Institute for Research on Poverty  
University of Wisconsin-Madison

# Acknowledgements

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- Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE), Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
  - Elaine Sorensen, Michelle Jadczak, and Lauren Antelo, Project Officers
- Wisconsin Department of Children and Families
  - Kristina Trastek and Becca Schwei, Project Officers
- Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. and the University of Wisconsin Survey Center
- CSPED grantee and partner staff
- Noncustodial parents participating in the study

*Any views expressed here are ours alone and not necessarily those of the sponsoring institutions.*

# Thank You to the Evaluation Team!

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- **IRP: PIs:** Maria Cancian and Dan Meyer. **Co-Is:** Jennifer Noyes, Lonnie Berger, Katherine Magnuson. **Project Manager:** Lisa Klein Vogel. **Research Staff and Analysts:** Steven Cook, Angela Guarin, Leslie Hodges, Lanikque Howard, Danielle Lythjohan, Aaron Reilly, Maggie Darby Townsend, Melody Waring.
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- **Mathematica: PI:** Rob Wood. **Co-I:** Quinn Moore. **Research Staff and Analysts:** Theresa Schulte, Emily Weaver, April Yanyuan Wu

# CSPED Background

# Background (1)

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- Changes in family structure have led to a substantial increase in single-parent households
- The child support system is designed to ensure noncustodial parents (NCPs) contribute financially to the upbringing of their children
- But it does not work well for many families
  - Only 43% of custodial parents (CPs) were supposed to receive child support in 2015. Of these, only 44% received the full amount due
- Why?

# Background (2)

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- Many NCPs have limited earnings and ability to pay
- Some NCPs have had children with more than one partner, making it even more difficult to provide an adequate level of support
- Focus of child support program has primarily been on enforcing collections
  - Tools include threats and punishments
  - Some threats may be counter-productive (e.g. suspending drivers' license; incarceration)
- Growing sense that children in single-parent households could benefit from a child support system that enables, as well as enforces, NCPs' contributions to their support

# Background (3)

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- In Fall 2012, OCSE competitively awarded:
  - Grants to child support agencies in 8 states to provide NCPs struggling to meet child support obligations with enhanced services
  - A Cooperative Agreement to the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families to procure and manage an evaluation through an independent third party
- The Institute for Research on Poverty, along with its partner Mathematica Policy Research, was selected to conduct the evaluation
- Demonstration ran from October 2013 – September 2017

# CSPED Program Design



# Program Model: Key Elements

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## Parenting services partner 16 hours of group sessions on:

- Personal development
- Responsible fatherhood
- Parenting skills
- Relationship skills
- Domestic violence

## Child Support Agency

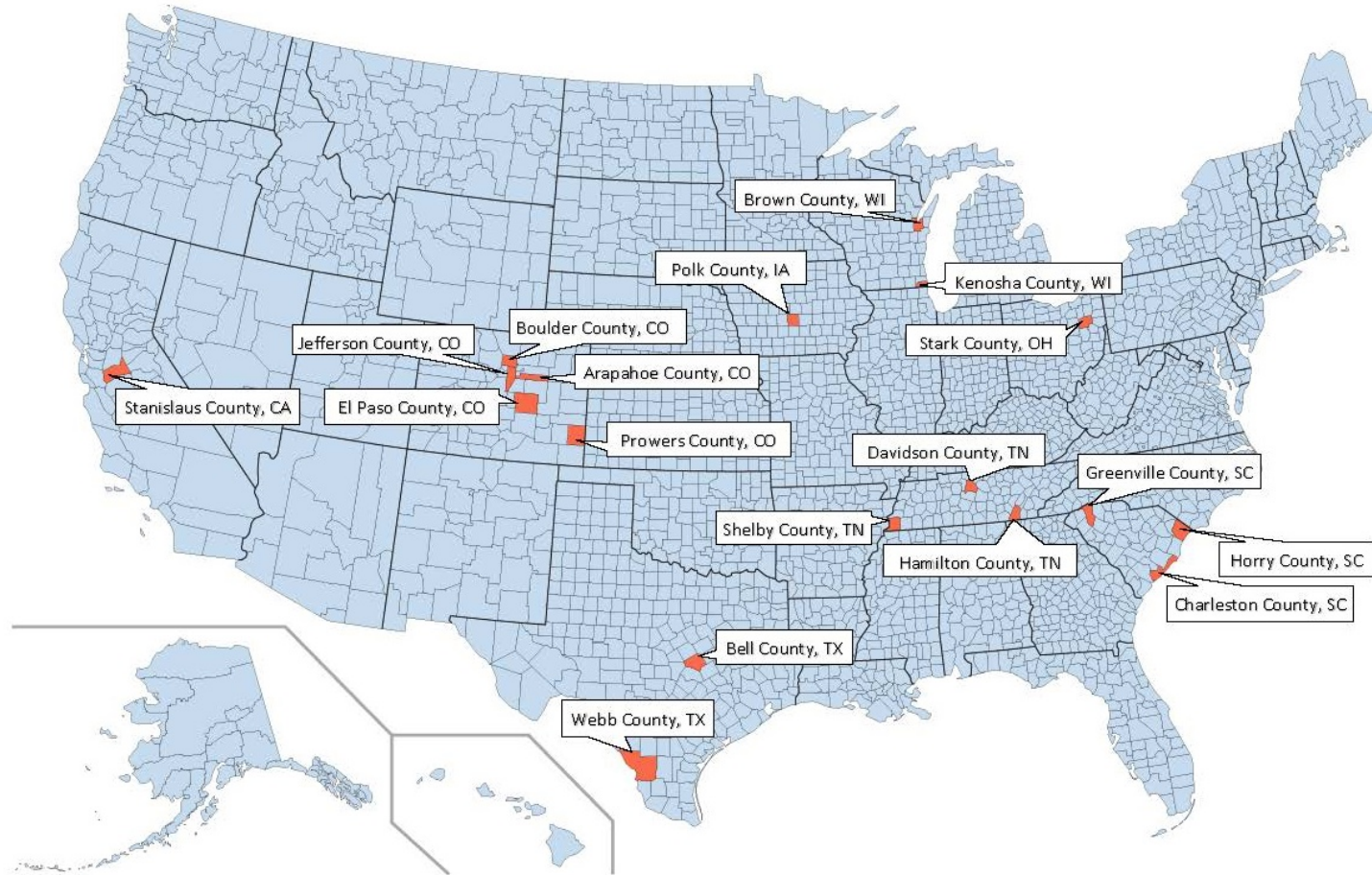
- Leadership, oversight, and coordination
- Enhanced child support services
- Domestic violence screening, referrals, and safeguards

## Employment Services Partner

- Job readiness training
- Job search assistance
- Job placement services
- Employment retention services

**Case management by grantee or partner agency:** including needs assessment, personalized service planning, individual assistance, progress monitoring.

# 8 Grantees (States) & 18 Sites





## The Tennessee Child Support Parent Employment Demonstration (CSPED) Wants You!

**Are you having trouble making your child support payments?**

**Do you need help finding a job?**

**CSPED may be able to help you!**

CSPED can assist selected noncustodial parents willing to participate by:

- Offering services designed to improve opportunities for finding employment and obtaining job skills
- Assisting with transportation needs
- Helping with child support issues, including re-instatement of drivers' licenses and explaining your child support order
- Modifying child support orders, as needed
- Providing parenting classes
- Referring clients for parenting time assistance
- Obtaining employment

**Contact Sandra Covington at:**  
**(615) 726-0530 ext. 7383**  
**Sandra.Covington@tn.gov**

Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration

To learn more about CSPED or to enroll CONTACT:

Sandra Covington  
CSPED Site Manager  
Child Support Division  
44 Vantage Way, Suite 300  
Nashville, TN 37228  
Phone: (615) 726-0530 x 7383  
E-mail: [Sandra.Covington@tn.gov](mailto:Sandra.Covington@tn.gov)



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## Supporting Parents Supporting Kids (SPSK)

**Having difficulty making your child support payments?  
SPSK may be able to help!**



### WHO?

Any non-custodial parent who is:

- Unemployed or underemployed,
- Able to work,
- Involved with an active child support case, and
- Not current in meeting child support payment obligations.

### WHAT?

The Supporting Parents Supporting Kids (SPSK) project helps noncustodial parents find employment so they can make reliable child support payments. If selected for the program, participants may be eligible for the following services:

- Assistance with job search, employability and placement, including obtaining job skills and work supports;
- Partial suspension of administrative enforcement measures (dependent upon full program participation); and
- Parenting programming with peer support.



### WHY?

The Federal Office of Child Support funded this program to improve child well-being and to help non-custodial parents become more emotionally and financially involved with their children.



**Interested? Contact us!**  
**Brown County Child Support Agency**  
**Bonnie Defnet, SPSK Coordinator**  
**(920) 448-7627, [dfnet\\_bl@co.brown.wi.us](mailto:dfnet_bl@co.brown.wi.us)**

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(R.01/2014)



## Colorado Parent Employment Project (CO-PEP)



**Can't make your child support payments?  
CO-PEP may help!**

### WHO

To be eligible, a parent must be:

- Unemployed or underemployed,
- Able to work, and
- With a current child support case.

### WHAT

The Colorado Parent Employment Project (CO-PEP) assists selected noncustodial parents by offering services designed to improve their opportunities for finding employment. Services of CO-PEP may include:

- Assistance with obtaining employment, including assistance with transportation needs and obtaining job skills
- Assistance with child support, including re-instatement of driver's licenses and forgiveness of arrears upon employment
- Modifying child support orders as needed
- Training on how to better parent and co-parent
- Assistance with obtaining parenting time when appropriate

### WHY

CO-PEP is designed to help selected parents with their desire to be more involved and supportive of his or her child or children emotionally and financially.



### WHERE AND HOW TO ENROLL

Call or ask for:

Arapahoe County Child Support Services  
Erica James  
303.752.8999



# Child Support as the Lead Agency





### WHAT DOES RANDOM ASSIGNMENT MEAN?

Random assignment is like picking numbers out of a hat or flipping a coin so everyone is treated fairly. Everyone who is eligible and agrees to participate will be assigned by chance to one of two groups. One of the groups will be able to receive extra program services at no cost to them. The other group will be able to receive regular or "usual" services that would be available to them even if the CSPED study was not taking place. A computer makes the decision about the group to which you are assigned. 50 percent of those who are eligible and interested will be assigned to the group that can receive the extra services; 50 percent of those who are eligible and interested will be assigned to the group that does not receive the extra services.

### PARTNERS

- > Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC)
- > Evelyn K. Davis Center for Working Families (EKD)
- > United Way of Central Iowa
- > Wells Fargo/Financial Capability Network
- > Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence (ICADV)
- > Visiting Nurse Services (VNS) of Iowa

## REACH

Iowa's "Reliable Employment And Child Support Help" Program

## REACH

Iowa's "Reliable Employment And Child Support Help" Program

**Child Support Recovery REACH GRANT**  
1300 Metro East Dr.  
Suite 114  
Pleasant Hill, IA 50327

- ◆ Karmon (515) 264-8643
- ◆ Joni (515) 281-5865
- ◆ Carmen (515) 264-8645



# Do you have a customer who owes child support and needs a job?

of Child Support Services may be able to help  
funded employment opportunity program!

## to Self Sufficiency (PASS)

customer:

Mississippi County

child support case billing

child support

child support payments

parent or underemployment

call 558-1417 to see if they qualify!

If eligible and willing to participate, the customer will receive a \$10 gift card and a free license release!

## STRUGGLING WITH CHILD SUPPORT?



The Right Path for Fathers Partnership is designed to help unemployed non-custodial parents overcome barriers to employment, obtain a job, and develop meaningful relationships with their children.

# RIGHT PATH for FATHERS Partnership



www.starkjfs.org



SCPLUB 308 04/14

If Selected, Benefits may include:

- Job Skills/Employment Services
- Job Coaching and Employment leads
- Delayed Enforcement of Child Support Orders
- Driver's License Reinstatement
- Modification of Support Orders
- Potential to Have Arrears Reduced
- GED Classes

For more information, contact Bob Prince 330-451-8662



# Partners Provide Employment and Parenting Services

# Challenge of a CS-Led Program: Child Support's "Reputation"

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“[The perception is], nothing good comes from child support.”

- Fatherhood Partner

“Child support has had such a negative rep for decades upon decades upon decades, as a collection agency. Some of their staff still think like that, and they’ve been around for 20 or 30 years. So a lot of our participants have had negative experiences with child support in the past. So for the first year, child support just had to sort of re-brand itself, to say, ‘Hey, we’re OK. There’s no tricks.’”

- Fatherhood Partner

“Child support being in the lead has been challenging, I think, because, this has been about recruiting fathers. The men trust us more than they trust [child support]... and so having [child support] be the lead in recruitment, that has been so hard.”

- Fatherhood Partner

# Advantage of a CS-Led Program: System Knowledge and Authority

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- Child support agencies:
  - Can identify, and have access to, the target population
  - Have information about the full family context
  - Can take direct action to address barriers to financial stability the child support system may create

“You are having a more engaged conversation with the NCP about his life situation while you are preparing his order. You aren’t just checking off information and filling in a dollar amount and slapping it over there. You are looking him in the eye, and having a conversation, and asking him questions to make sure that you understand, to make sure that they understand, and it goes back to the individual and making sure that their voice is heard.”

– Project Manager

# CSPED Evaluation Design

# Evaluation Components and Study Goals

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- All grantees and all sites are part of a rigorous, randomized controlled trial (RCT)
- Three main study components: Impact Analysis; Benefit-Cost Analysis; Implementation Analysis
- Goals:
  - Determine how CSPED programs operate, whether they improve outcomes, and whether benefits outweigh costs
  - Increase our understanding of noncustodial parents' lives and inform future public policy

*Key question of interest: did CSPED increase the reliability of child support payments?*



# Data Sources

Data Source	Implementation Analysis	Impact Analysis	Benefit-Cost Analysis	Participant Demographic Characteristics Analysis
Baseline Survey	✓	✓		✓
12 month follow-up survey		✓		
Administrative records		✓	✓	
Service use data (GMIS)	✓		✓	
Semi-structured staff interviews	✓			
Participant focus groups	✓			
Web-based staff surveys	✓		✓	
Program documentation	✓		✓	

# Key Threat to Impact Evaluation: Too Many Comparisons

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- 8 grantees
- Multiple domains of interest (child support, employment, parenting, NCP well-being), each with multiple potential measures
- Potentially important subgroups (new to child support, those with a criminal record, no/low formal earnings, ...)
- Approach: pre-determined a small number of “confirmatory” outcomes

# Confirmatory Measures: 14 Primary Outcomes in 7 Domains

Domain	Outcome	Source
1) Child support compliance	1 - Total current paid/total current due, months 1-12 2 - Total current paid/total current due, months 13-24	AR AR
2) Child support paid	3 - Average current monthly payments, months 1-12 4 - Average current monthly payments, months 13-24	AR AR
3) Child support orders	5 - Average current monthly order, months 1-12 6 - Average current monthly order, months 13-24	AR AR
AR=Administrative Records S=Survey		

# 14 Primary Outcomes, cont.

Domain	Outcome	Source
4) NCP attitude toward child support program	7 - Satisfaction with CS services	S
5) NCP employment	8- Total hours worked during months 1-12 9 - Proportion of months employed during months 1-12 10 - Proportion of quarters employed during quarters 1-8	S S AR
6) NCP earnings	11 - Average monthly earnings during months 1-12 12 - Average monthly earnings during quarters 1-4 13 - Average monthly earnings during quarters 5-8	S AR AR
7) NCP sense of responsibility for children	14 - Attitude toward NCP involvement and supporting children financially	S
AR=Administrative Records S=Survey		

# Impact Evaluation Method

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- Examine whether random assignment worked: Are the 2 groups equivalent at random assignment?
- If so, estimate regression-adjusted differences between two groups within each grantee; calculate the average impact across grantees (Intent-to-treat)

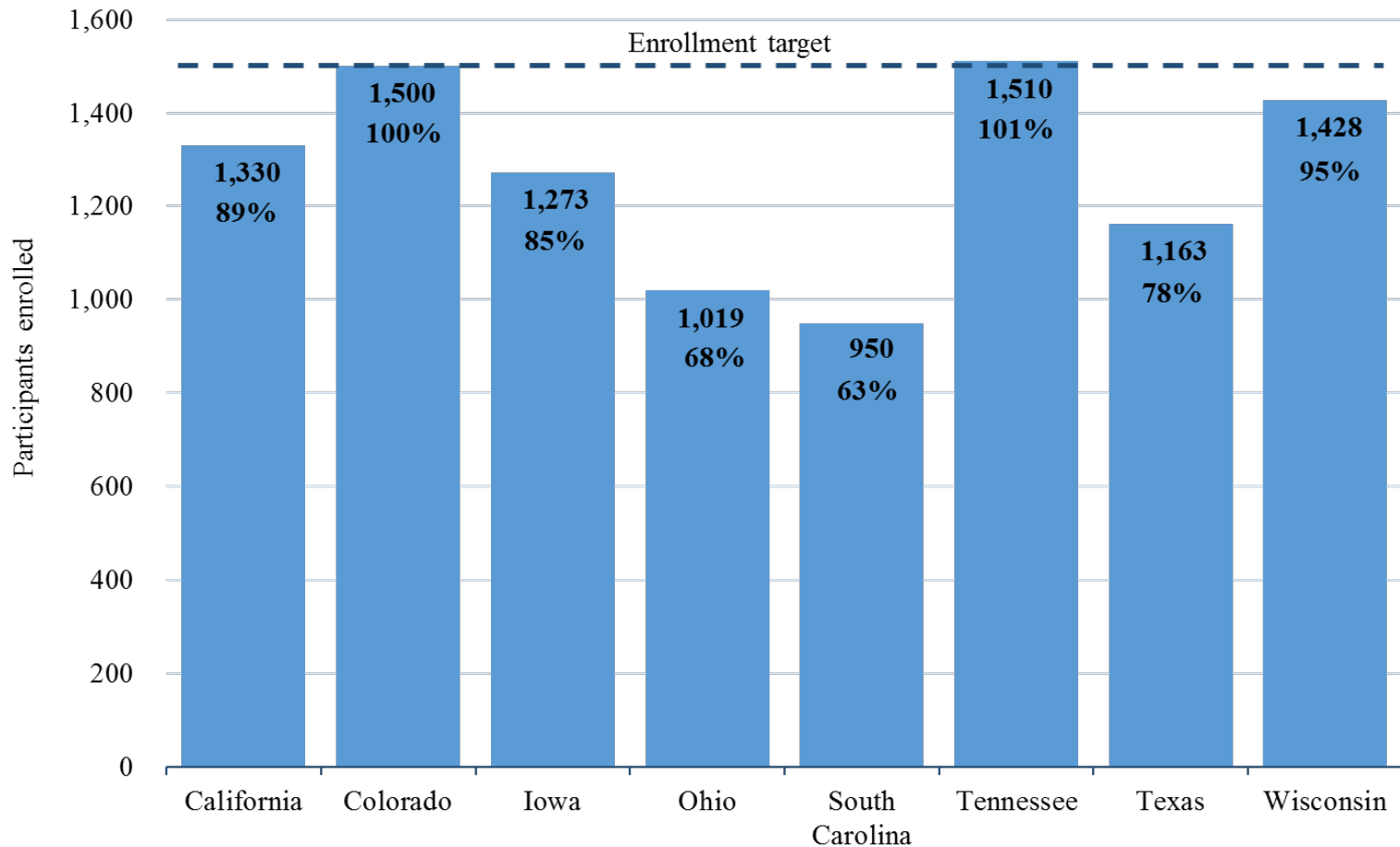
# Enrollment and Baseline Characteristics

# CSPED Enrollment

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- October 2013 – September 2016 enrollment period
- N=10,161 (5,086 Extra Services (E) and 5,075 Regular Services (C))
- As required by OCSE, all participants:
  - Had established paternity for at least one child
  - Had one or more IV-D cases (i.e., cases receiving CS services)
  - Had difficulty paying, or expected difficulty paying, child support due to lack of regular employment

# Enrollment Varied across Grantees





# CSPED Participants at Baseline

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- Average Age: 35
- 33% White NH, 40% Black NH, 22% Hispanic
- 26% <High School, 43% HS, 31% >HS
- 26% with major or severe major depression\*
- 38% 1 partner, 34% 2, 28% 3+
- 30% 1 child, 28% 2, 20% 3, 21% 4+
- 31% living with at least one minor child
- 31% living with partner; 27% with NCP's parent/grandparent\*

\* no data for Texas

# CSPED Participants: Differences by Grantee

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All
California
Colorado
Iowa
Ohio
South Carolina
Tennessee
Texas
Wisconsin

As reported in the baseline survey.

# CSPED Participants: Differences by Grantee

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	Fathers
All	90%
California	94%
Colorado	87%
Iowa	89%
Ohio	87%
South Carolina	88%
Tennessee	94%
Texas	94%
Wisconsin	86%

As reported in the baseline survey.

# CSPED Participants: Differences by Grantee

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	Fathers	Never Married
All	90%	52%
California	94%	48%
Colorado	87%	40%
Iowa	89%	44%
Ohio	87%	61%
South Carolina	88%	64%
Tennessee	94%	56%
Texas	94%	N/A
Wisconsin	86%	64%

As reported in the baseline survey.

# CSPED Participants: Differences by Grantee

	Fathers	Never Married	Worked for pay last 30 days
All	90%	52%	55%
California	94%	48%	47%
Colorado	87%	40%	58%
Iowa	89%	44%	62%
Ohio	87%	61%	39%
South Carolina	88%	64%	65%
Tennessee	94%	56%	57%
Texas	94%	N/A	61%
Wisconsin	86%	64%	52%

As reported in the baseline survey.

# CSPED Participants: Differences by Grantee

	Fathers	Never Married	Worked for pay last 30 days	Average Earnings last 30 days
All	90%	52%	55%	\$769
California	94%	48%	47%	\$841
Colorado	87%	40%	58%	\$894
Iowa	89%	44%	62%	\$974
Ohio	87%	61%	39%	\$498
South Carolina	88%	64%	65%	\$578
Tennessee	94%	56%	57%	\$717
Texas	94%	N/A	61%	N/A
Wisconsin	86%	64%	52%	\$707

As reported in the baseline survey.

# CSPED Participants: Differences by Grantee

	Fathers	Never Married	Worked for pay last 30 days	Average Earnings last 30 days	Using SNAP
All	90%	52%	55%	\$769	35%
California	94%	48%	47%	\$841	38%
Colorado	87%	40%	58%	\$894	29%
Iowa	89%	44%	62%	\$974	48%
Ohio	87%	61%	39%	\$498	42%
South Carolina	88%	64%	65%	\$578	22%
Tennessee	94%	56%	57%	\$717	40%
Texas	94%	N/A	61%	N/A	13%
Wisconsin	86%	64%	52%	\$707	43%

As reported in the baseline survey.

# CSPED Participants: Differences by Grantee

	Fathers	Never Married	Worked for pay last 30 days	Average Earnings last 30 days	Using SNAP	Without Health Insurance
All	90%	52%	55%	\$769	35%	56%
California	94%	48%	47%	\$841	38%	48%
Colorado	87%	40%	58%	\$894	29%	45%
Iowa	89%	44%	62%	\$974	48%	41%
Ohio	87%	61%	39%	\$498	42%	55%
South Carolina	88%	64%	65%	\$578	22%	78%
Tennessee	94%	56%	57%	\$717	40%	77%
Texas	94%	N/A	61%	N/A	13%	N/A
Wisconsin	86%	64%	52%	\$707	43%	54%

As reported in the baseline survey.

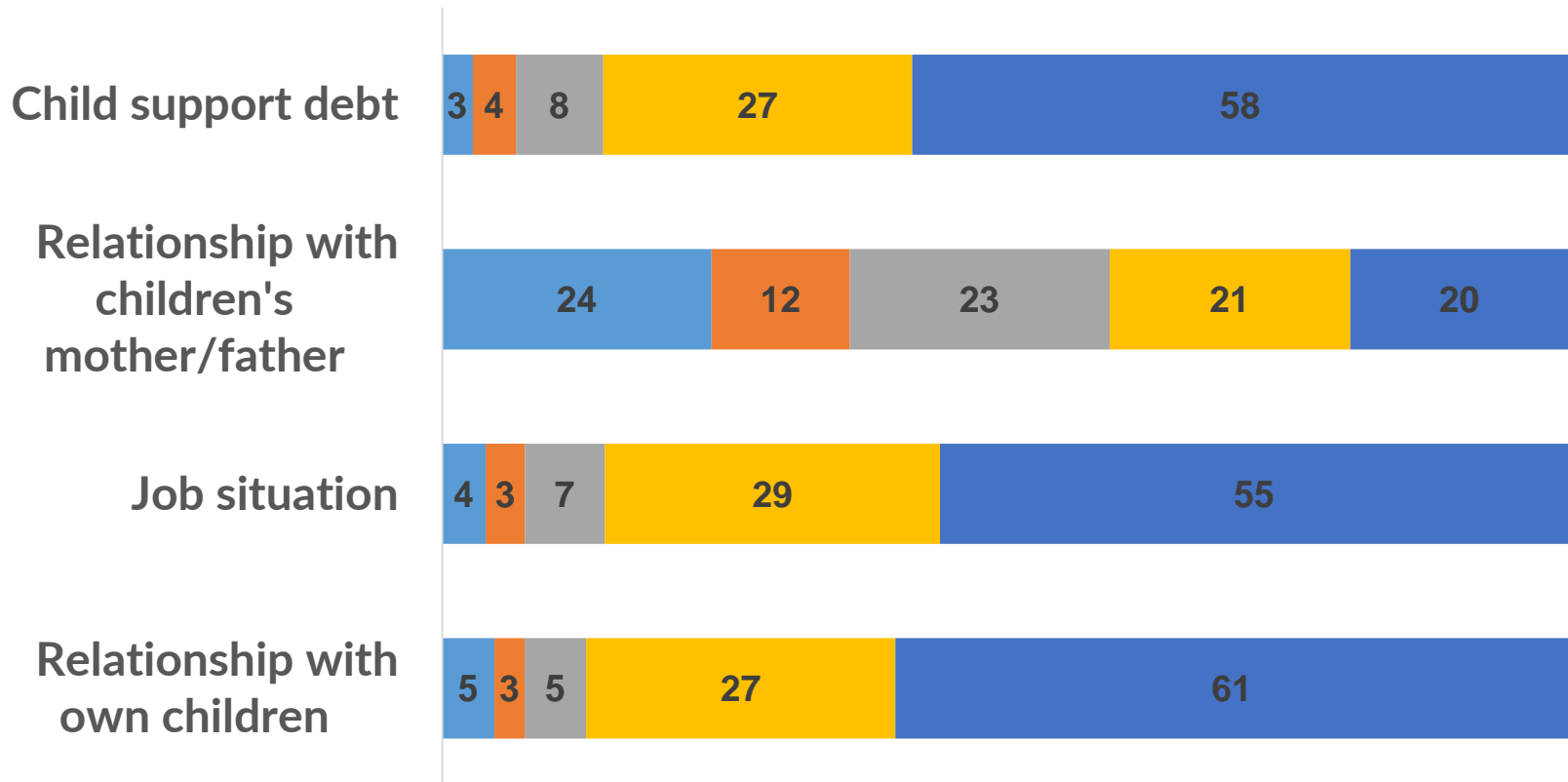


# CSPED Participants: Differences by Grantee

	Fathers	Never Married	Worked for pay last 30 days	Average Earnings last 30 days	Using SNAP	Without Health Insurance	Ever Convicted
All	90%	52%	55%	\$769	35%	56%	68%
California	94%	48%	47%	\$841	38%	48%	54%
Colorado	87%	40%	58%	\$894	29%	45%	70%
Iowa	89%	44%	62%	\$974	48%	41%	76%
Ohio	87%	61%	39%	\$498	42%	55%	80%
South Carolina	88%	64%	65%	\$578	22%	78%	69%
Tennessee	94%	56%	57%	\$717	40%	77%	66%
Texas	94%	N/A	61%	N/A	13%	N/A	56%
Wisconsin	86%	64%	52%	\$707	43%	54%	76%

As reported in the baseline survey.

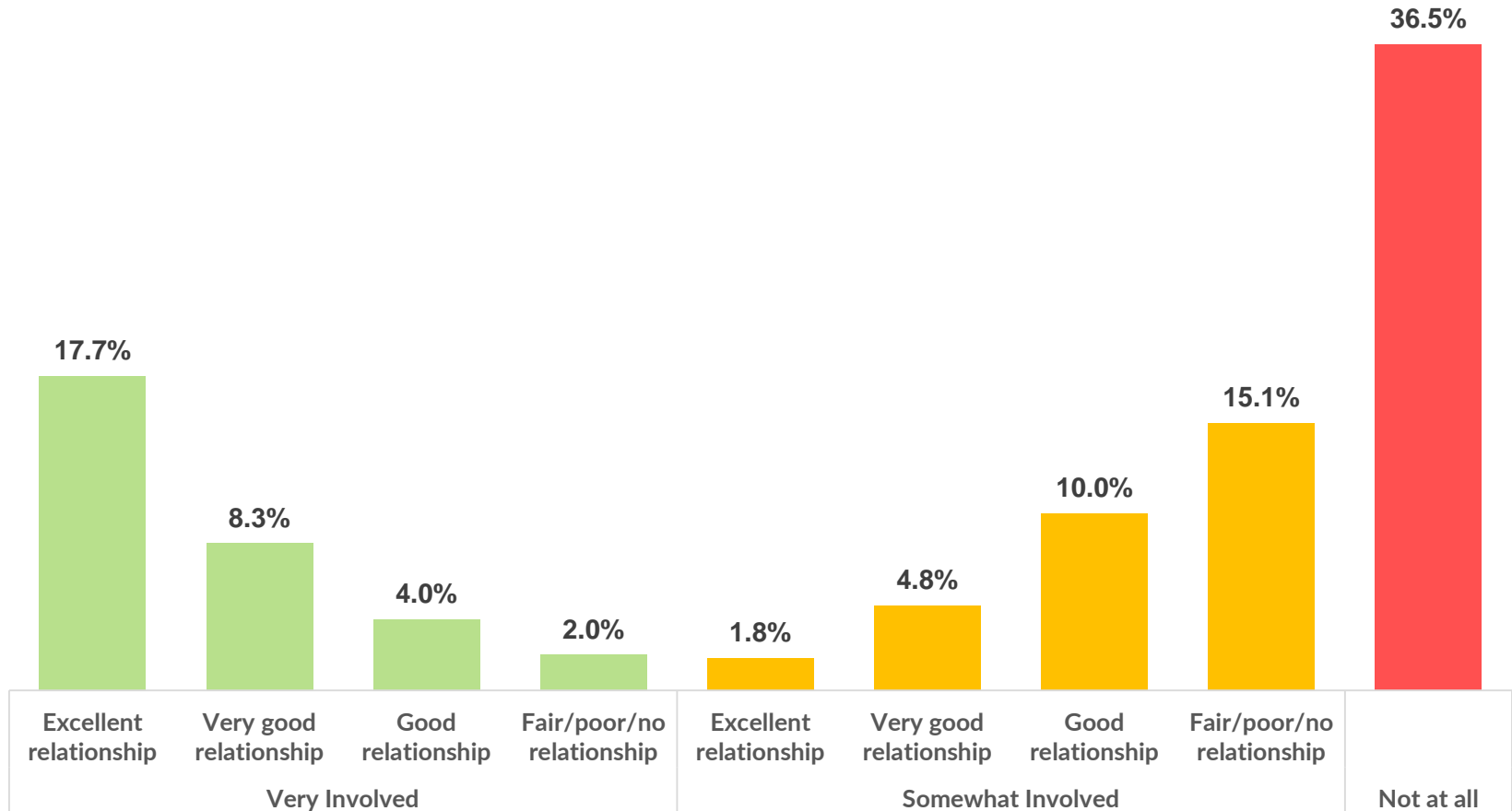
# What Was Important in Deciding to Enroll in CSPED?



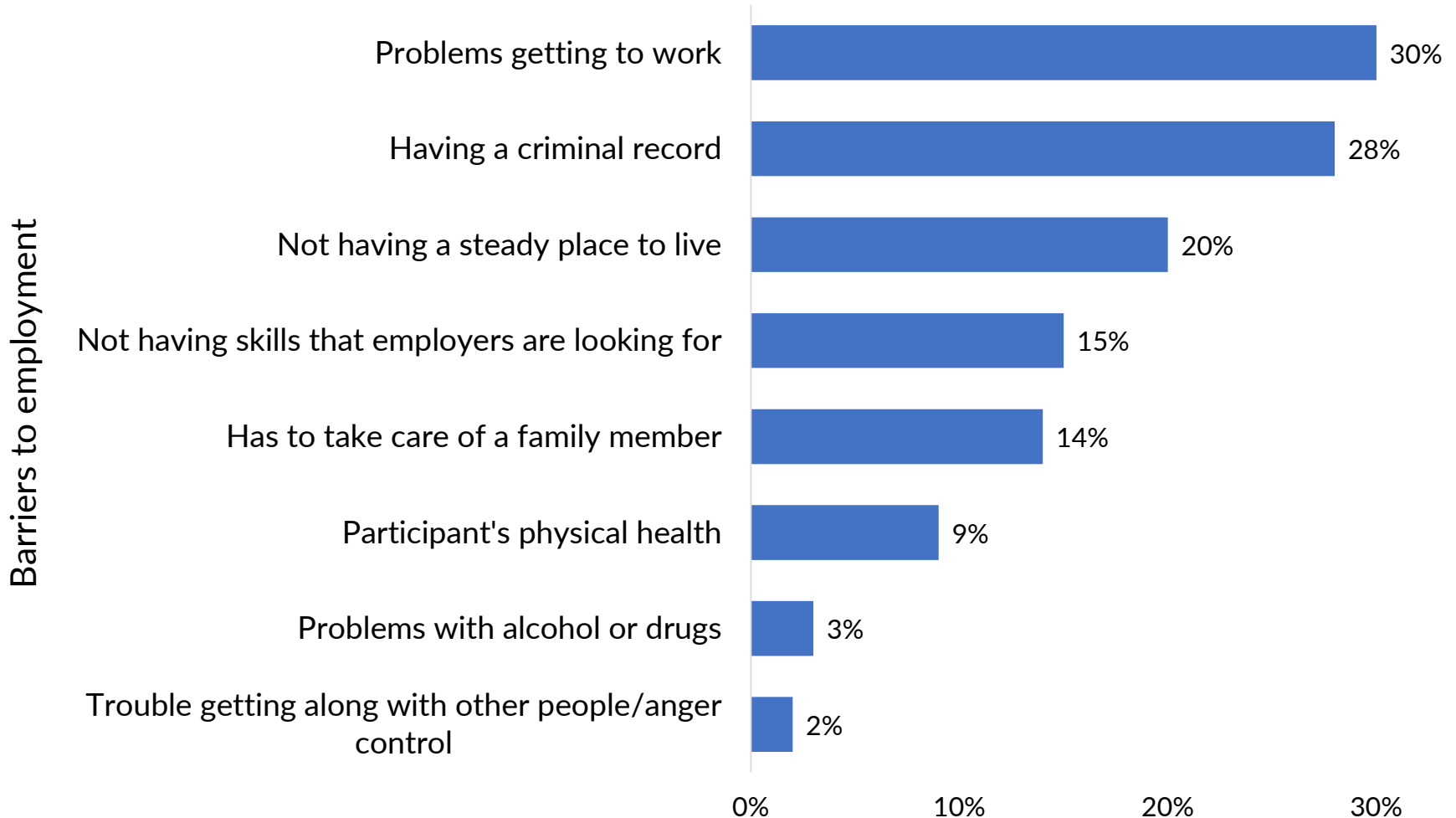
■ % Not at all  
 ■ % A Little  
 ■ % Somewhat  
 ■ % Very  
 ■ % Extremely

\*No data for Texas

# Two-Generational Parenting Issues: Involvement of Own Father



# Barriers to Employment



# 3 Preliminary Questions before Sharing Impacts

# Preliminary Question 1

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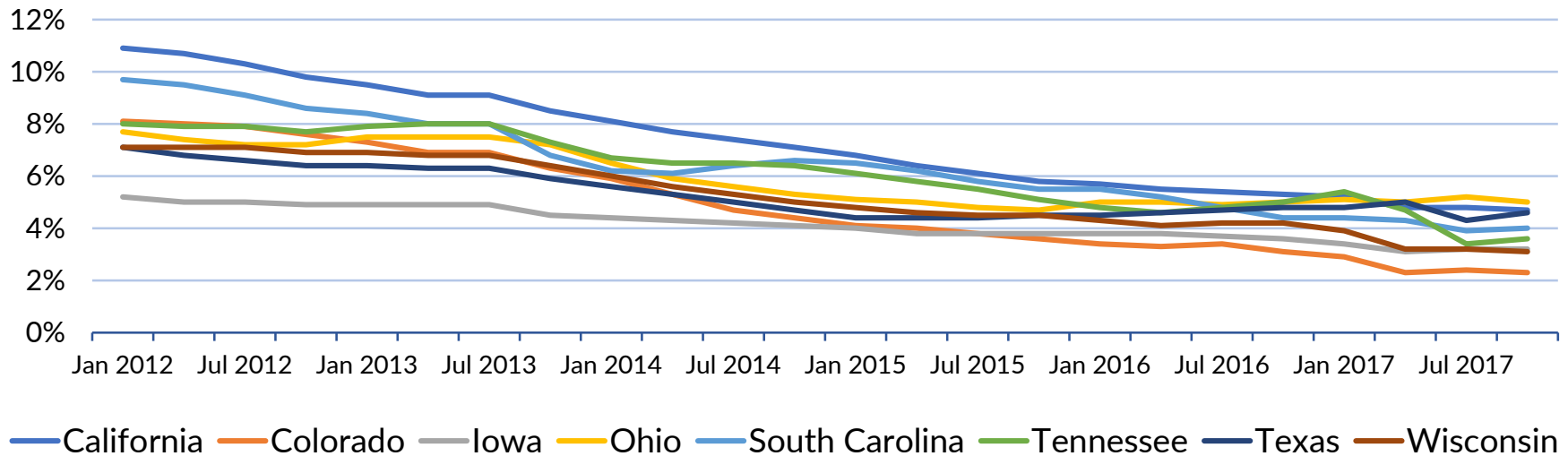
- **Did randomization work?**
- **YES**
  - Comparison of extra-services group (E) and the regular-services group (C) across all confirmatory outcomes measured at baseline, and all control variables found 2 of ~60 variables different at  $p < .10$  level (fewer than expected by chance)

# Preliminary Question 2

- Was an RCT necessary?

- YES

– Unemployment declined substantially in all states



Among those **not** receiving CSPED services, between the year before and the year after random assignment, employment rates increased by 3 pts, annual earnings by \$975, and annual child support payments by over \$200

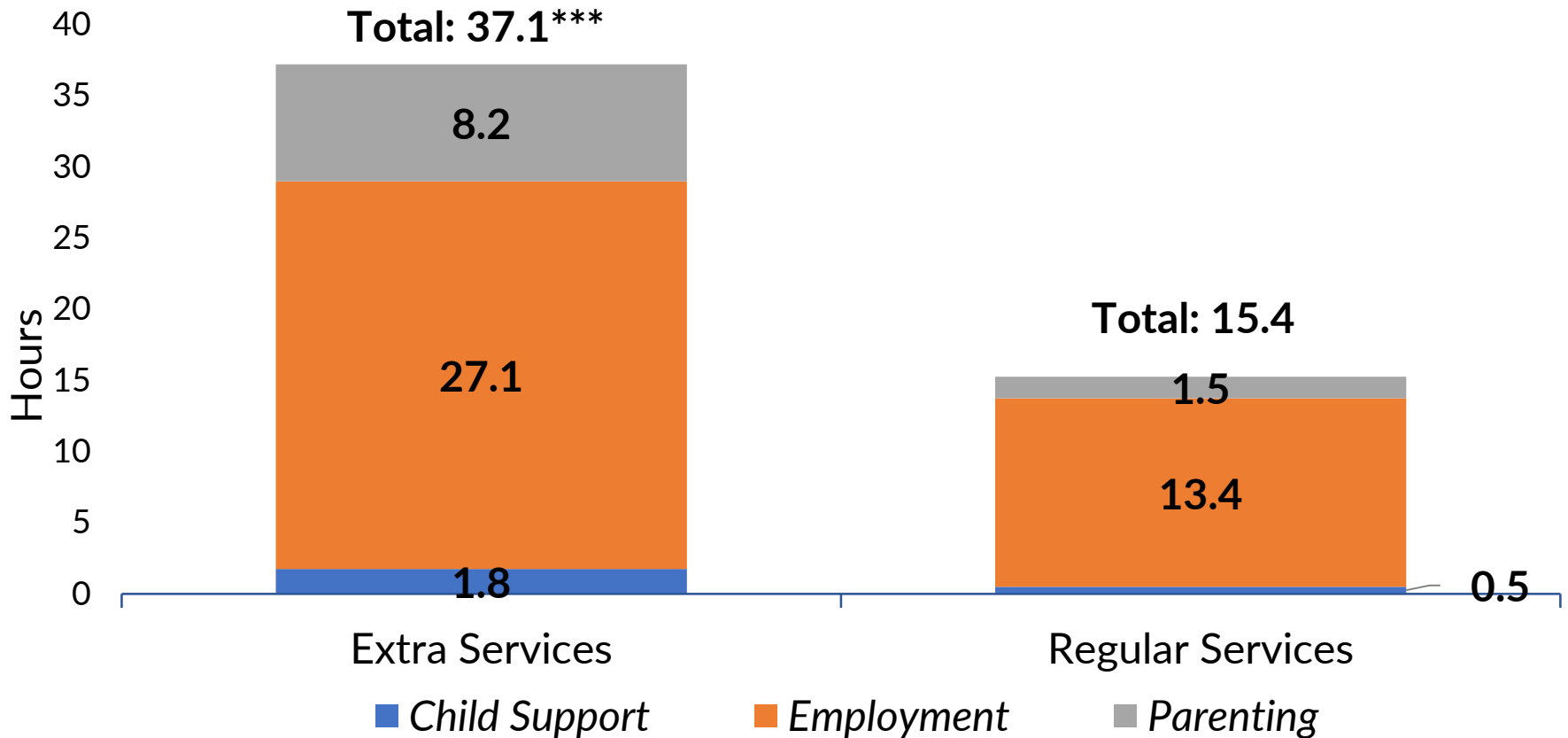
# Preliminary Question 3

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- **Did the extra-services group actually get more/different services than the regular-services group?**
- **YES**
  - They reported more child support, employment, and parenting services (37 E v. 15 C total hours)
  - 14 additional hours employment services; 7 additional hours parenting services; 1 additional hour child support services



# Services Received



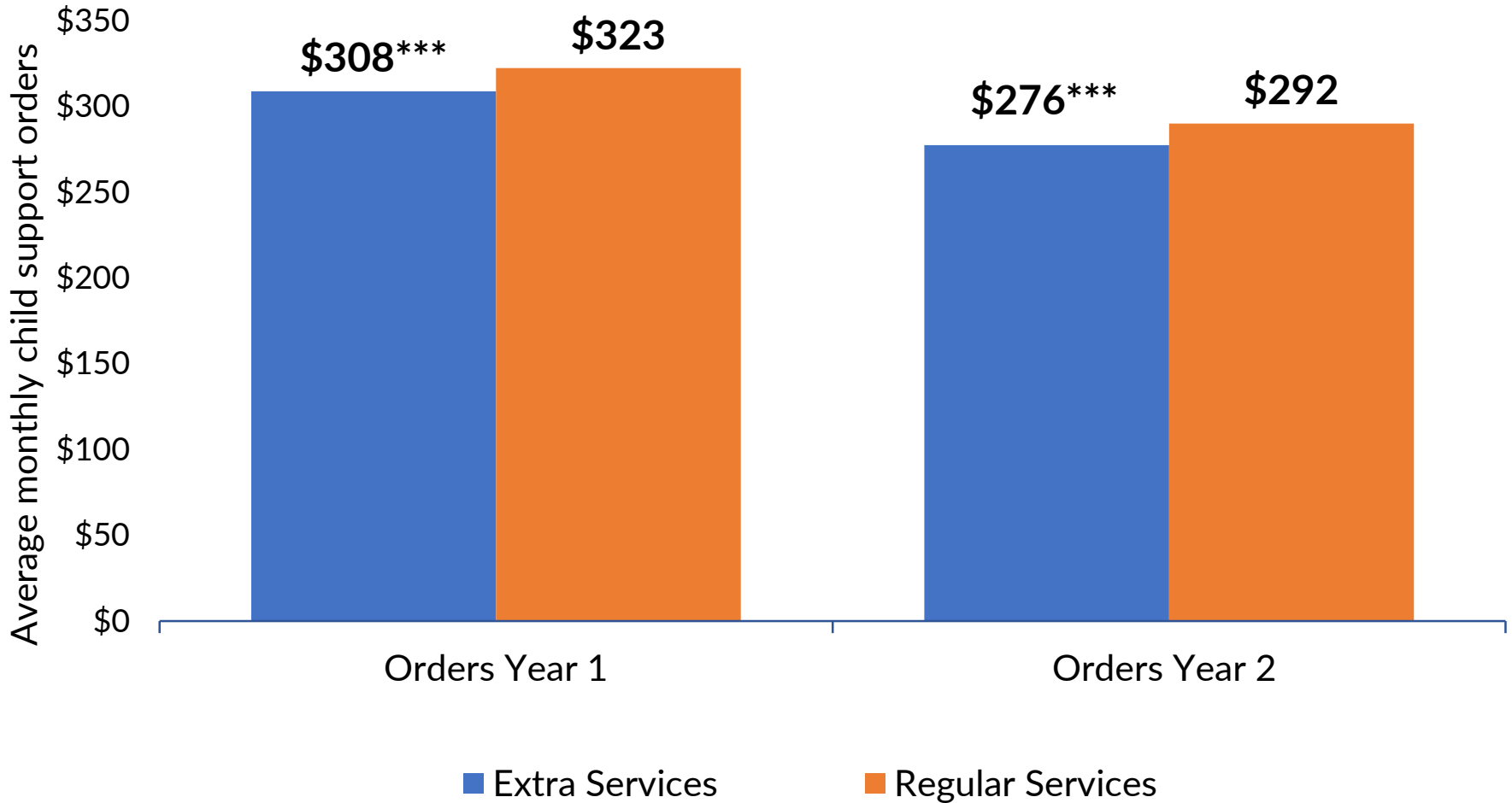
# Service Differences, cont.

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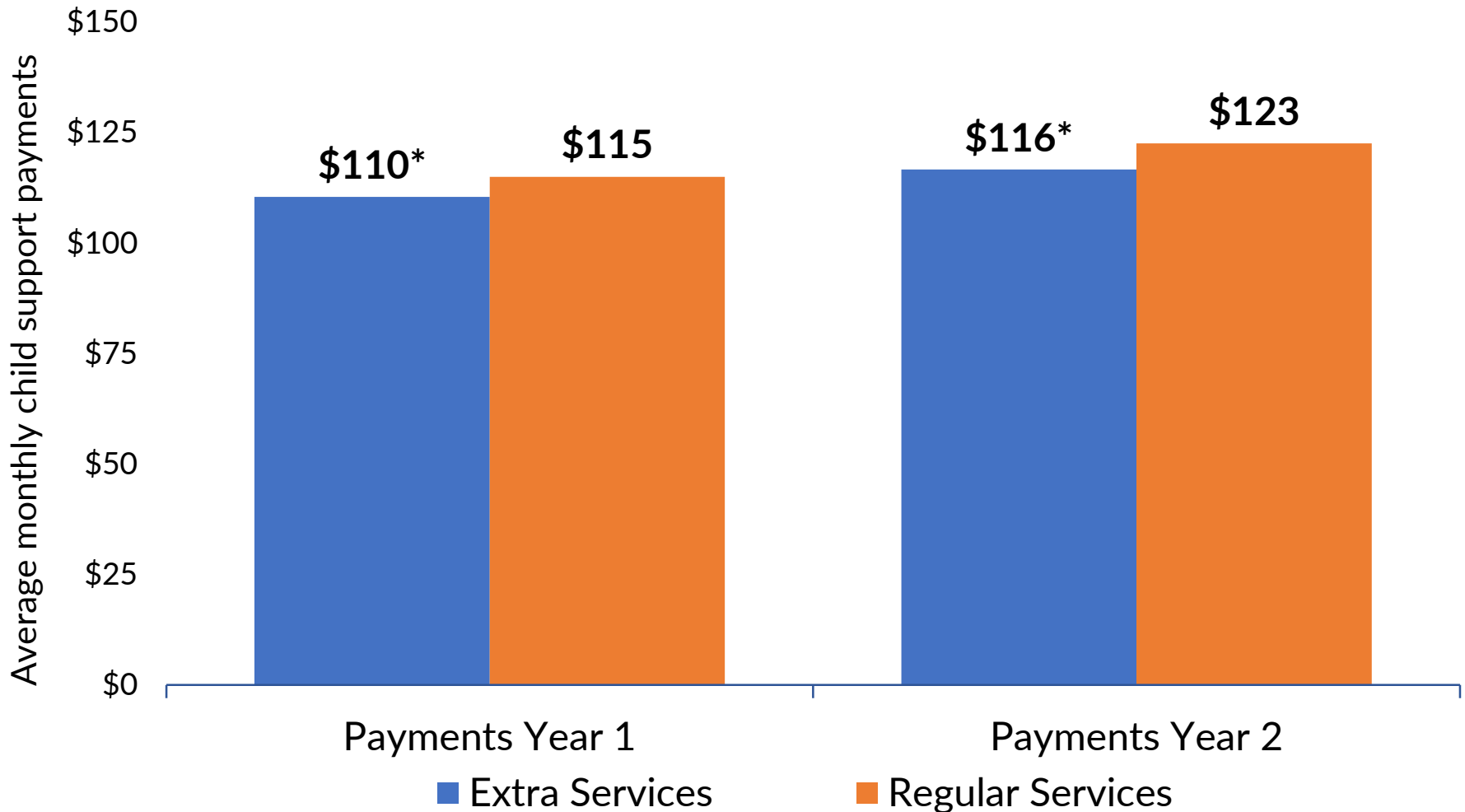
- Extra-services group was less likely to face punitive enforcement in their first year in the program
  - Contempt hearing: 14% E v. 16% C
  - Warrant issued: 8% E v. 10% C
  - License suspended 21% E v. 25% C

# Results from the Impact Evaluation Released Today!

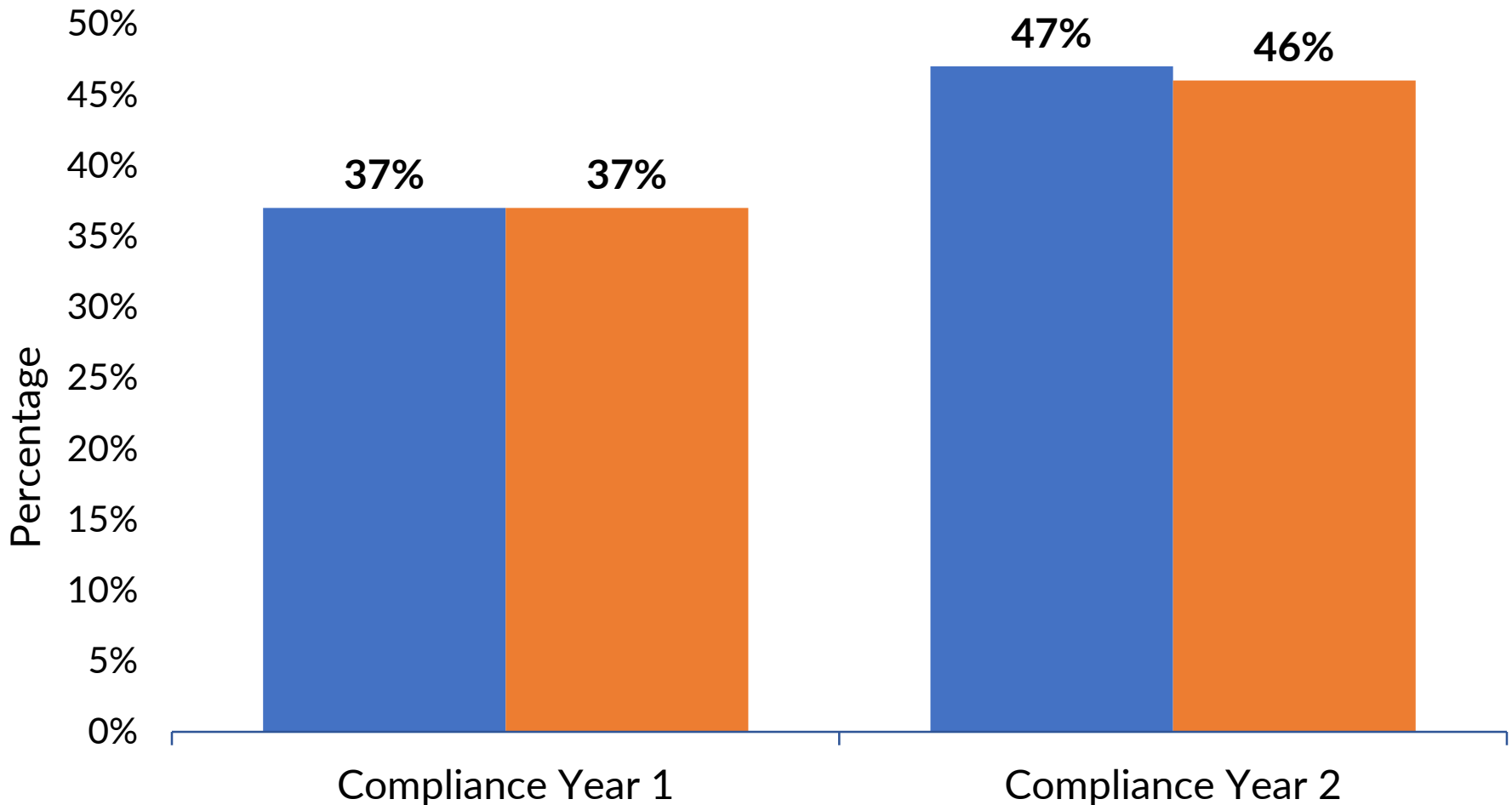
# Decrease in Monthly Child Support Owed



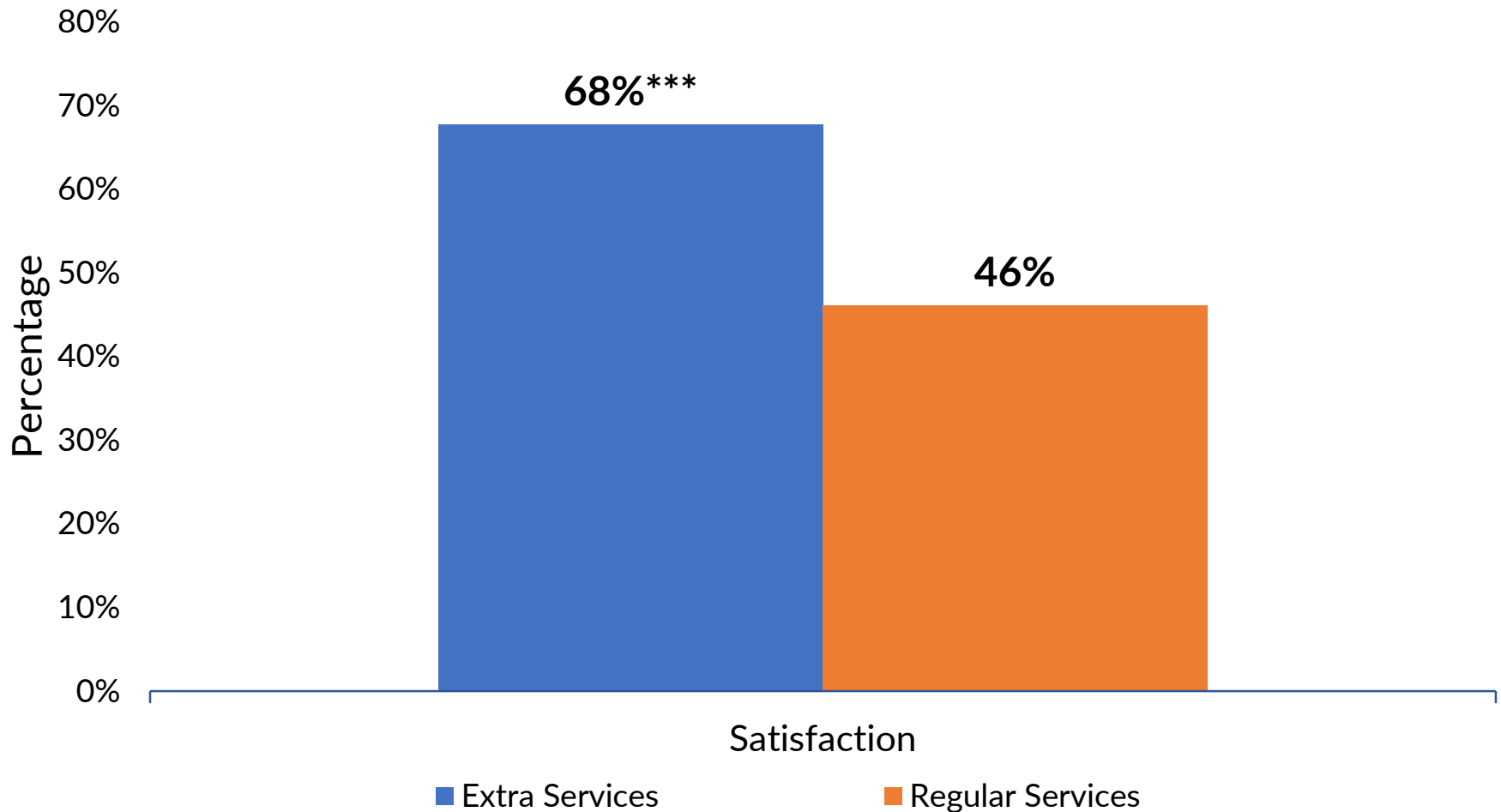
# Decrease in Monthly Child Support Paid



# No Impact on Child Support Compliance



# Substantial Increase in Satisfaction



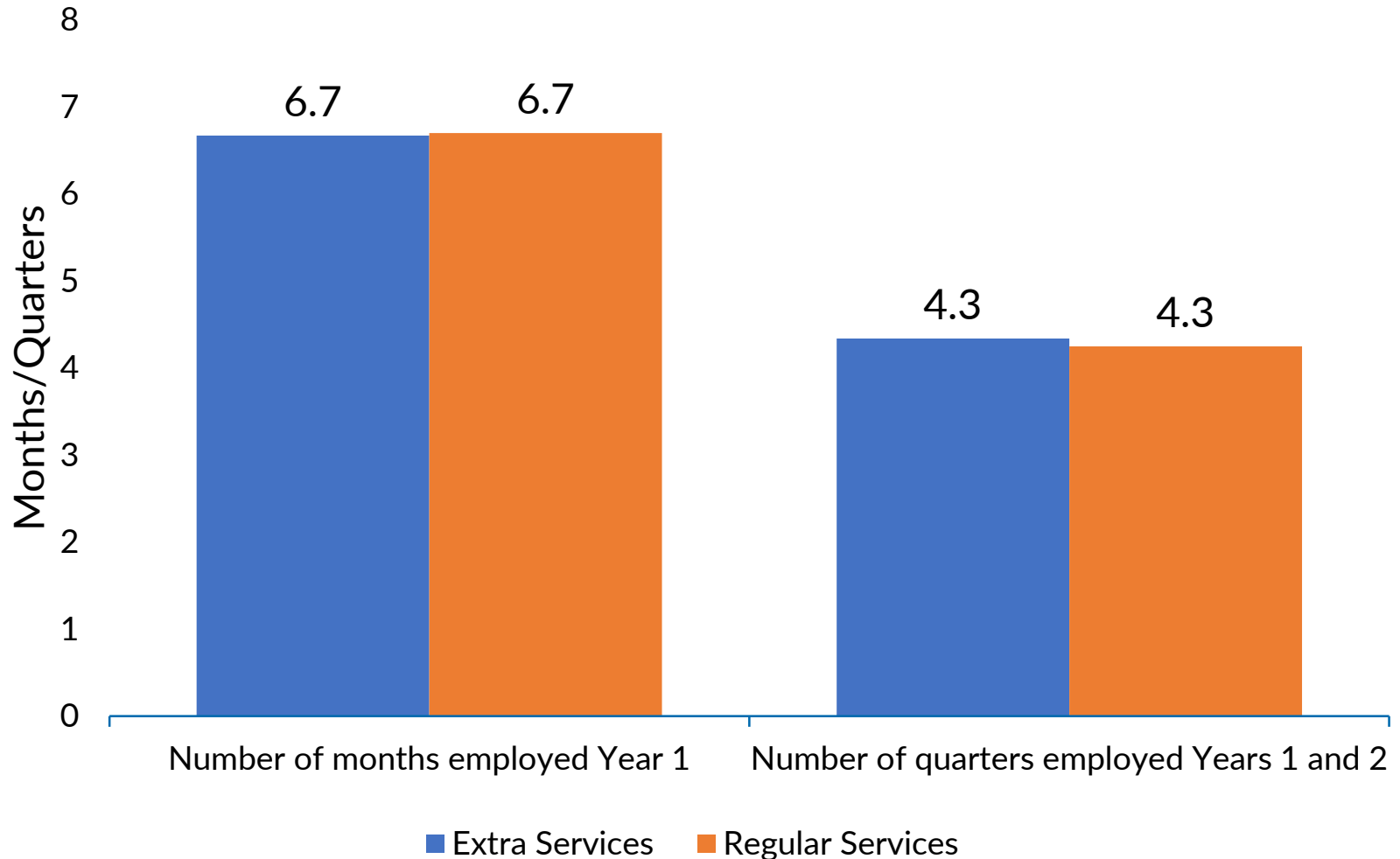
# Summary of Child Support Impacts

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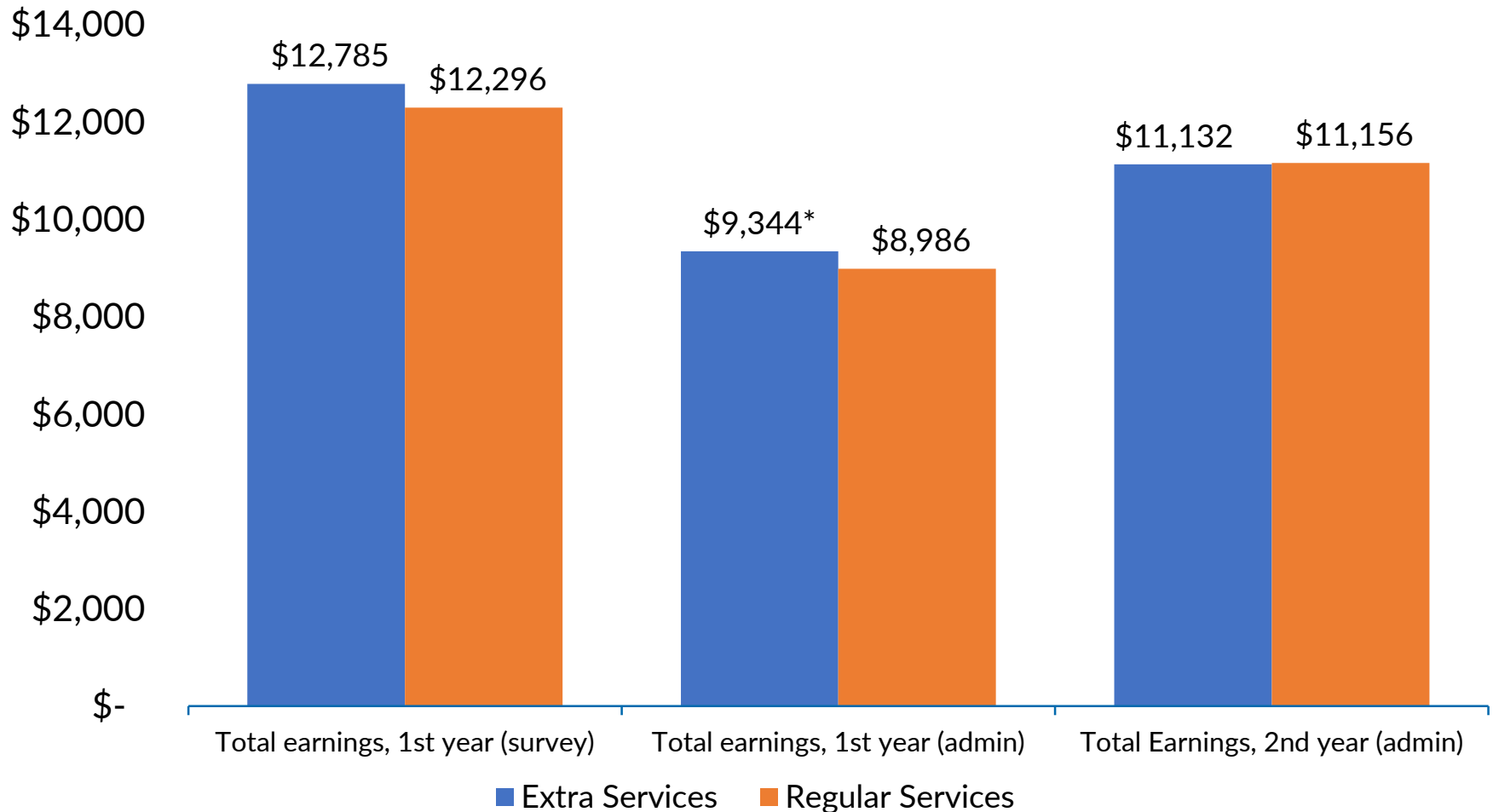
- Reduced **CS orders** (\$15-16/month)
- Reduced **CS payments** (\$4-6/month,  $p < .10$ )
- No impact on **compliance with CS orders**
- Substantially increased **satisfaction with CS services** (% agree or strongly agree that satisfied: 68% E vs. 46% C)
- Other impacts: less burdensome orders (1<sup>st</sup> year); less owed in total arrears (end of 2<sup>nd</sup> year,  $p < .10$ ) and state-owed arrears (end of 2<sup>nd</sup> year)



# No Impact on Employment



# Some Increase in Earnings



# Summary of Labor Market Impacts

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- No effect on **employment**
- Mixed results on **earnings**: increase in admin data (about 4% in 1<sup>st</sup> year,  $p < .10$ ) not survey
- Other impacts:
  - Small impacts on any employment over two-year period and in some quarters

# Increased Sense of Responsibility for Children

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- Scale with four questions:
  - Importance of parents who live apart to support their children financially
  - Importance for parents living apart to be involved in children's lives
  - Even if custodial parent has a new partner, NCP should be required to pay child support
  - Even if NCP has a child with a new partner, NCP should still be required to pay child support to previous children
- Average score: 4.27 E\*\* vs. 4.23 C

# Summary of Parenting Impacts

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- **Increased sense of responsibility for children** (scale 4.27 E vs. 4.23 C)
- **Increased contact with nonresident children** (13 E vs. 12 C days/month)
- **Decreased harsh discipline strategies** ( $p < .10$ )
- **No impact on any other parenting measure** (e.g., parenting skills, quality of parenting or co-parenting, warmth)

# Summary of Other Impacts

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- No impact on criminal justice involvement, emotional well-being
- Some impacts in economic well-being: less housing instability ( $p < .10$ ), more with bank accounts, higher personal income (1<sup>st</sup> year only,  $p < .10$ )
- Impacts in 2/8 measures of public benefit use: increased SNAP benefits and Medicaid months (2<sup>nd</sup> year only,  $p < .10$ )
- No impacts on custodial parents
- No differential impacts on subgroups
- No grantee with substantially different impacts across all domains

# Bottom Lines

# Bottom Lines (1)

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- **Can child support lead an intervention that has integrated case management, employment and parenting components?**
  - Yes
  - The implementation analysis documents many advantages and challenges to this approach, and implications for policy and practice.



# Bottom Lines (2)

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- **Can the child support program be changed to be less punitive?**
  - Yes
- **Does the new approach change attitudes of NCPs towards the program?**
  - Yes– major improvements
- **Does the new approach substantially increase or decrease CS payments and compliance?**
  - No. Modest declines in payments; no measureable change in compliance

# Bottom Lines (3)

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- **Why were most impacts modest?**
  - Very disadvantaged population
  - Relatively modest intervention
  - Hard to evaluate programs that change culture of agencies (regular-service groups affected too)
  - New program models may become more effective over time; changes in attitudes about the system and parental responsibility may shape future behavior.

# Modest Impacts – What Were the Costs?

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- Modest additional costs: \$2,505/participant
- Modest additional benefits: \$1,663/participant to society over the 2 years
  - Benefits to CPs and children \$852, to NCPs \$546, to government \$244
- Costs outweigh benefits in short-term; under most reasonable assumptions, benefits outweigh costs in longer-term

# Thank You!

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## Questions?

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