



PENNSYLVANIA CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT SYSTEM (PACSES)
JOBGATEWAY/PA CAREERLINK INTEGRATION INITIATIVE

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

Nominating Category
DIGITAL GOVERNMENT: GOVERNMENT TO CITIZENS

Nominator
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Project Initiation and Completion Dates
May 2016 – February 2018



Executive Summary

The Pennsylvania Child Support program serves as a critical tool for providing income for the care of over 540,000 children and distributes over \$1.8 billion per year in child support payments to families. One of the most significant challenges to collecting child support is the unemployment of non-custodial parents (NCPs). Pennsylvania currently has over 18,000 open cases with no indicated active employment, no other income and no payments in the previous 90 days. This has resulted in total missed payments in the last 90 days of over \$3.8 million and arrears totaling over \$90 million.

In 2016, Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS) began efforts to integrate with the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) JobGateway/PA CareerLink website to provide employment services as part of the child support program. The JobGateway/PA CareerLink portal was integrated with the DHS Child Support Website (CSWS) in order to provide NCPs with job alerts and access to their top JobGateway/PA CareerLink job matches through the CSWS. Whenever unemployed NCPs log into the CSWS to check the status of their child support cases, they are alerted to the availability of potential job opportunities, rather than having to access the JobGateway/PA CareerLink portal separately. Additionally, the backend Pennsylvania Child Support Enforcement System (PACSES) case management system was also integrated with the JobGateway/PA CareerLink website to automate work search tracking and reporting for NCPs and enable caseworkers to more effectively enforce work search orders and verify the completion of court-ordered work search activities. This multi-agency initiative required not only system integration, but legal coordination and cooperation by both departments.

The integration project was completed in February 2018. As of March 2019: **5,417 court orders have been issued to NCPs to perform work searches in the JobGateway/PA CareerLink portal**, helping to connect NCPs with employment resources and enabling automated work search tracking by caseworkers; **2,977 NCPs were automatically enrolled in the work search process** (this is in addition to the 117,670 who already have existing accounts on JobGateway/PA CareerLink); and there have been **1,787 verified job placements** for NCPs resulting in wage attachments totaling **\$1,641,017**. As a result, **over 2,500 additional children in low income families now have reliable financial support from their non-custodial parents**.

By serving unemployed NCPs and their families in a manner that better facilitates the job search process, the PA DHS/DLI partnership is now a model for employment and training programs for the national child support community.

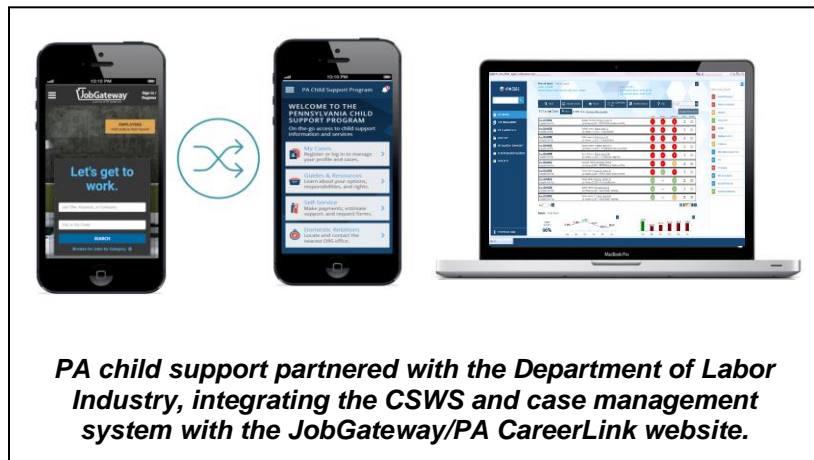


Project Narrative: Concept

Pennsylvania's child support program is focused on delivering financial and medical support to ensure the well-being of families and children. The program collects an average of \$3,113 per case annually and pays out millions of dollars in support to families. One of the key challenges to collecting support is the unemployment of non-custodial parents (NCPs). Research by the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) estimates that 13% of NCPs are unemployed for an extended period of time. Statistics gathered from the Pennsylvania child support program show that there are over 18,000 open cases with no indicated active employment, no other income and no payments in the previous 90 days. This has resulted in total missed payments in the last 90 days of over \$3.8 million, and arrears totaling \$90 million. This creates a number of adverse consequences for families and undermines the core mission of the child support program to enforce support obligations for families.

Prior to the PACSES JobGateway/PA CareerLink Integration initiative, there was a significant and clear need to better serve unemployed NCPs and to more effectively facilitate work search initiatives that can lead to parents finding work, paying child support, and staying out of jail.

Recognizing the vital need for an improved interaction between government and citizens, the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS) partnered with the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry (DLI), which has experience and expertise in connecting individuals with employment opportunities and administering a variety



of career resources and tools to help individuals find jobs. Through this partnership, the Pennsylvania Child Support Website (CSWS), a citizen-facing mobile-enabled website providing child support self-service capabilities, as well as the Pennsylvania Child Support Enforcement System (PACSES) case management system, were integrated with the DLI JobGateway/PA CareerLink website. JobGateway/PA CareerLink is a public facing website to help individuals find employment opportunities and to enable employers to find qualified applicants. The site enables individuals to access over 160,000 job openings. Registered users can create or upload a resume, apply directly to job postings and complete court-ordered job search activities that are automatically tracked by the system. The website also contains a variety of career resources and tools to help individuals gain employment.



The systems integration was achieved through the creation of a web service that retrieves data in an XML format in near real-time from the JobGateway/PA CareerLink website to be used by the CSWS and PACSES.

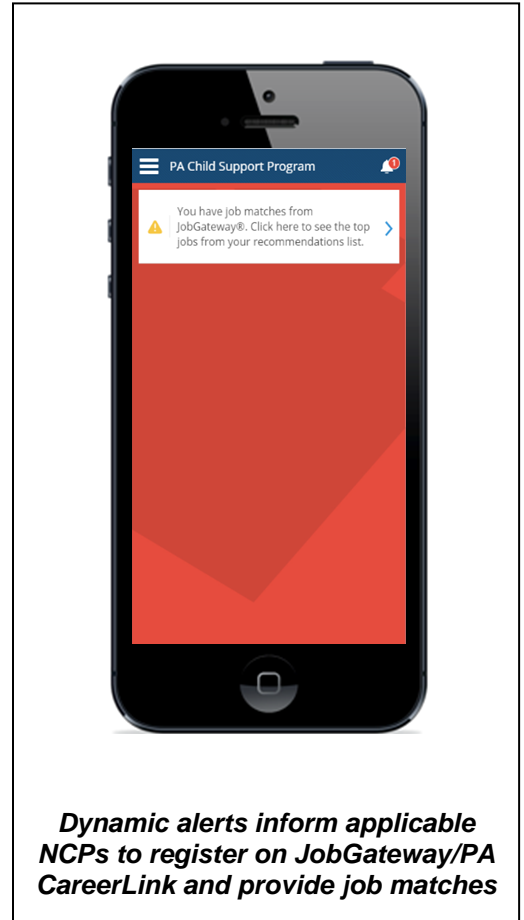
CSWS Integration

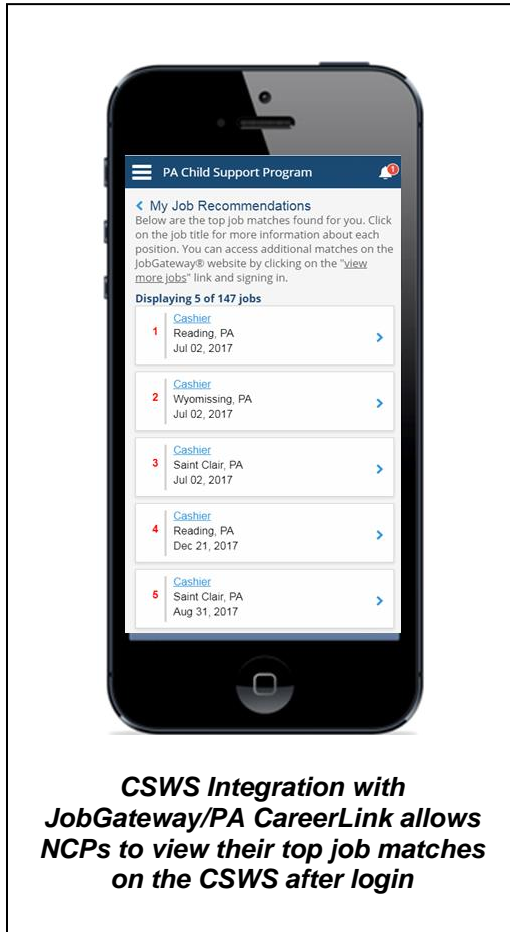
The JobGateway/PA CareerLink data is used to provide NCPs with access to job resource information, job alerts, and a link to their job matches in CSWS. After logging in to the CSWS, the system confirms that the NCP has an Active Work Search Order (WSR) Non-financial obligation (NFOB and has either:

1. No current employment, no payment in 35 days, no other income except unemployment, and the case has not been suspended, reviewed, or closed in enforcement due to medical leave, incarceration, or drug/alcohol rehab or,
2. Current employment, no payment in 95 days, and the case is not suspended, reviewed, or closed in enforcement due to medical leave, incarceration, or drug/alcohol rehab

After confirming that the NCP meets the business logic outlined above, the CSWS makes a near real-time call to the JobGateway/PA CareerLink website to confirm whether or not the user is registered on JobGateway/PA CareerLink. If the user is not registered, the individual is issued a registration alert requesting that the user register on the JobGateway/PA CareerLink website and take advantage of the resources available for finding employment. This alert continues to display on the CSWS until the user completes the registration. After completing registration, the alert is dynamically removed and replaced with a job recommendation alert, if applicable.

If the system receives confirmation that the NCP user is already registered on the JobGateway/PA CareerLink website, the system attempts to retrieve the user's top job matches being returned from the user's primary saved job search on the JobGateway/PA CareerLink website. The CSWS displays a job recommendation alert notifying the NCP that they have job matches. Selecting the alert provides the NCP with their top five job recommendations being returned from JobGateway/PA CareerLink.





The job match alert feature in CSWS allows NCPs to easily access their top job recommendations and view the total number of job recommendations that are currently available to them. The alert encourages individuals to view their top job matches after logging in to the CSWS and serves as a continual reminder of the job opportunities that are available for them.

PACSES Integration

JobGateway/PA CareerLink integration is also provided via the PACSES case management system. Prior to this initiative, enforcement of work search orders was done manually by caseworkers. After a work search order was issued by the courts, the NCP was provided with a paper form to manually track their job search activities on JobGateway/PA CareerLink. A caseworker was then responsible for reviewing and verifying that all of the activities had in fact been completed. This manual reporting and reviewing process was inefficient and burdensome for both the NCPs and caseworkers.

Following this initiative, a new page was added to the PACSES case management system that dynamically displays when the NCP has an active JobGateway work search order and an active work search order (WSR) non-financial obligation. This new tab provides a variety of information from JobGateway/PA CareerLink to the caseworker in near real-time, including the ability to:

- Review the NCP's saved job search details
- View the last time that the NCP logged in to JobGateway/PA CareerLink
- Review the NCP's resume on JobGateway/PA CareerLink
- View tracked job search activities
- Access up to 90 days of job search activities

Through the integration of the PACSES case management system with JobGateway/PA CareerLink, the manual work search reporting process has been eliminated and case management activities have been significantly streamlined.

This initiative required significant interdepartmental collaboration and involved a number of legal considerations. Before the initiative could move forward with development, DLI



and DHS had to formally agree to data sharing through the completion of a memorandum of understanding.

Seven counties volunteered to serve as pilots for the initiative. Webinar training sessions were held with pilot counties prior to implementation and self-paced training courses were made available online for caseworkers. Following the implementation, on-site training and support was provided to the seven pilot counties, including the establishment of required work search orders to enable JobGateway/PA CareerLink integration to occur for individual NCPs.

Significance

The Pennsylvania child support program is focused on improving outcomes for families, improving performance metrics, and aligning with an OCSE initiative to encourage employment services as a way to improve outcomes for states and families. Pennsylvania is already the highest performing state in the nation for child support with an 84.3% current collections rate. The key was offering a new service to a subset of parents who needed additional help in re-entering the workforce.

The integration initiative is helping the child support program complete its core mission. By offering employment resources and job recommendations, the child support program is helping NCPs find employment rather than focusing strictly on punitive measures. By better serving NCPs, the Pennsylvania child support program is working toward advancing the well-being of the entire family.

Benefits of the PACSES JobGateway/PA CareerLink Integration initiative are realized by four groups of individuals: non-custodial parents, custodial parents, children, and child support caseworkers. According to analysis by OCSE, “when large numbers of noncustodial fathers are out of the labor force, they suffer a decrease in life satisfaction, potentially adverse health consequences and their families suffer from a lack of reliable child support payments”. By providing NCPs with resources and support to help them find employment, the Pennsylvania child support program is helping to increase their likelihood for success and consequently improving collections and outcomes for families. Research by OCSE has shown that “job services are effectively helping parents find work, stay employed, pay child support and avoid crime—at relatively little cost”. A study by OCSE highlights that when job services are provided, over 80% of unemployed or underemployed NCPs find work within 2 months, NCPs pay 51% more in child support and custodial parents and children are 21% less likely to receive public assistance.

The PACSES JobGateway/PA CareerLink initiative is an example of how job services can be effectively implemented at a low cost. The cost to build was a one-time expense of \$1.3 million for modifications to the case management system and ongoing costs of \$66,000 per to operate the program. By comparison, offering these services to parents



using traditional employment and training contracted programs would have cost \$16.6 million.

Child support case workers have also benefited from this initiative through the automation and streamlining of work search reporting and tracking. Caseworkers are able to use the new JobGateway/PA CareerLink work search order to mandate that individuals register on the JobGateway/PA CareerLink website and to enable the integration of the PACSES case management system with JobGateway/PA CareerLink. This allows caseworkers to easily track and verify that NCPs are completing job search activities. It also results in less paperwork for both the case worker and the NCP, as well as more accurate tracking and confirmation of those work search activities.

Impact

Through integration of the CSWS and the PACSES case management system with the DLI JobGateway/PA CareerLink website, Pennsylvania is working to solve key business challenges for NCPs that are underemployed or unemployed. A central goal of this initiative was to improve access to employment options and foster the success of non-custodial parents who do not currently have employment or income. In accomplishing this objective, the Pennsylvania child support program is also improving collections, federal performance metrics, and outcomes for families. As of March 2019:

- **5,417 JobGateway court orders have been issued to NCPs to perform work searches**, connecting NCPs with JobGateway resources and enabling automated work search tracking.
- **2,977 NCPs have been automatically enrolled to the work search process on JobGateway** (this is in addition to the 117,670 who already have existing accounts on JobGateway).
- **1,787 verified job placements** have occurred for NCPs placed under a new JobGateway work search order. Wage attachments were subsequently established for all of those parents with **total collections of \$1,641,017**.
- **Over 2,500 children in low income families have reliable financial support from their non-custodial parents.**