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CENTER FOR LAW AND SOCIAL POLICY

## **The Child Support Program Promotes Marriage and Reduces Non-Marital Child Bearing**

*Research Fact Sheet*

There is a growing body of research that suggests that child support enforcement has positive effects on family formation and stability. States with stronger child support enforcement programs have lower non-marital birth rates and lower divorce rates than states where child support is not as effective.

- By raising the cost of fatherhood to unmarried men, effective paternity establishment and child support enforcement deter non-marital births.<sup>1</sup>
- States with stricter child support enforcement regimes have lower rates of divorce among families with children. The effect is especially strong for couples in which the wife is likely to become a welfare recipient should divorce occur.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Aizer, A., & McLanahan, S. (2004). *The Impact of Child Support on Fertility, Parental Investments and Child Well-Being*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, Center for Research on Child Well-Being. Available at [http://www.econ.brown.edu/fac/Anna\\_Aizer/childsupport.pdf](http://www.econ.brown.edu/fac/Anna_Aizer/childsupport.pdf); Plotnick, R., Ku, I., Garfinkel, I., & McLanahan, S. (2000). *The Impact of Child Support Enforcement Policy on Non-marital Childbearing*. Paper presented at the 2000 Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management Year 2000 Research Conference. Seattle, WA; Plotnick, R., Garfinkel, I., Gaylin, D., McLanahan, S., & Ku, I. (1999). *Better Child Support Enforcement: Can It Reduce Teenage Premarital Childbearing?* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, Center for Research on Child Well-Being; Case, A. (1998). The Effects of Stronger Child Support Enforcement on Non-marital Fertility. In I. Garfinkel, S. McLanahan, D. Meyer, & J. Seltzer (Eds.), *Fathers Under Fire* (pp. 191-215). New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

<sup>2</sup> Nixon, L. (1997). The Effect of Child Support Enforcement on Marital Dissolution. *Journal of Human Resources*, 32(1), 159-181.