



Child Support Services

Marie Girulat
Director

Overview- Provide a brief 25 word summary

The Service of Process Program provides expedited service processing and reduced costs by utilizing certified mail for child support customers residing outside of California.

Challenge

San Bernardino County Department of Child Support Services (**SBCDCSS**) manages a caseload of approximately 103,000 cases and 16,032 non-custodial parents (**NCP**) with an open child support case have a mailing or physical address outside of California. SBCDCSS faced a lengthy and costly process to obtain timely and completed proofs of service, from private out-of-state Process Servers. This delayed and/or prevented those cases from progressing towards a reliable support order. We recognize that the faster we are able to establish support orders, the more children will benefit from our services, prompting us to develop an improved method of serving these customers.

Solution

Over the past year, SBCDCSS has focused on serving our out-of-state NCPs with the Summons and Complaint (**S&C**) by certified mail. Utilizing the United States Postal Service (**USPS**) has allowed us to reach customers quickly, track certified mail packets online, and engage our customers in an innovative and non-threatening fashion by removing the personal Process Server. We identify NCPs that reside outside of California and require service of an S&C by querying the system. The out-of-state caseloads are isolated so they receive individualized attention. The Child Support Specialist (**CSS**) managing the case manually prepares and packages the S&C to send to the out-of-state NCP by certified mail. The packet provides the NCP with detailed instructions and provides the name and direct phone number for the assigned CSS. The intent is to make the packet welcoming, non-threatening, and provide easy to understand steps for the NCP to follow. By using the USPS tracking number and the online tracking capability, we are able to track the location of

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packets, the expected delivery date, and determine the outcome of the mailing including if the customer signed for the packet or if the USPS determined the address is undeliverable. This allows SBCDCSS to avoid lost time by proactively determining if service of the legal documents was successful. After confirmation that the NCP signed for the packet the CSS takes the opportunity to call the NCP and initiates engagement. This gives the NCP the opportunity to ask questions and gain a better understanding of the child support process.

Innovation

SBCDCSS is continuously looking for innovative approaches to move from the opening of a case to the establishment of a reliable court order in the most efficient way possible. Utilizing this process, we are able to initiate immediate customer engagement, reduce the time to establish an order, and reduce the cost of personal service. The cost of postage for each packet sent using certified mail as compared to a private process server saved approximately 83% per packet. As the program evolved and improved, SBCDCSS changed the mailing envelope to powder blue with a smaller window to increase customer appeal to open the package.

Results

During the 12-month period from December 2017 thru December 2018, SBCDCSS mailed 271 S&Cs by certified mail to out of state NCPs. The process resulted in 52% of the packets being delivered and 92% of these resulted in a reliable child support order. SBCDCSS saved over \$21,000 in process service fees. The average number of days between sending the packet and obtaining an order reduced from 40 days to 30 days.

Replicability

The process is easily to replicate. There is no additional monetary cost to the department for the planning and implementation. Manually sending the packets requires minimal changes to office procedures.

Projects or Program Contacts

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