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August is Child Support Awareness Month in Minnesota

DHS launches child support work group, investments

Minnesota Human Services Commissioner Lucinda Jesson has formed an expert work group to help ensure child support payments are fair and equitable for families. The work group includes legislators as well as experts from the legal, community and advocacy organizations.

The work group will review and recommend adjustments to the child support payment formula and recommend the composition of a permanent child support task force. Work group members will meet four to six times, beginning in August, to submit a final report to the Minnesota Legislature by January 2016.

“Child support plays a vital role in the lives of 262,000 Minnesota children,” Jesson said. “We need to make sure the system is working in a way that best supports them and their families.”

Work group members are:

- Sen. Chris Eaton, Minnesota Senate
- Julie Erickson, Minnesota Department of Human Services Child Support Division
- Marie Garza, Minnesota Battered Women’s Coalition, custodial parent
- Alissa Harrington, Minnesota Department of Human Services Child Support Division
- Kathleen Heaney, Minnesota County Attorney’s Association
- Melinda Hugdahl, Minnesota Legal Services Coalition
- Lisa Kontz, Minnesota Family Support and Recovery Council
- Sen. Scott Newman, Minnesota Senate
- Rep. Kim Norton, Minnesota House of Representatives
- Rep. Peggy Scott, Minnesota House of Representatives
- Brian Ulrich, Center for Parental Responsibility, non-custodial parent
- Pamela Waggoner, Minnesota State Bar Association, Family Law Section.

The work group will draw on the expertise of economist Dr. Jane Venohr, who was involved in reviewing the current child support guidelines. Currently, parents’ child support payments are based on the expenses they have when their children are with them.

In addition to the work group, DHS is strengthening the child support system by implementing recent legislation, including:

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- Investing \$7.9 million in Fiscal Year (FY) 2016-17 to make changes to the Minnesota Family Investment Program, allowing some families to keep more income—up to \$100 for a family with one child, and up to \$200 for a family with two or more children
- Investing \$92,000 in FY 2016-17 to bring child support statutes into compliance with the federal Affordable Care Act
- Eliminating the \$25 child support application fee for federal child support services at a cost of \$34,000 in FY 2016-17.

“Children are in need of not only the strong emotional support of their parents,” said Jesson, “but also their financial support. We know that when families are financially stable, children are better off.”

Gov. Mark Dayton declared August 2015 as [Child Support Awareness Month](#), providing a reminder that children need the emotional and financial support of both parents to reach their full potential in life.

The child support program collected \$604 million in child support in Fiscal Year 2014. More information on child support can be found on [the department’s website](#).