

**An Evaluation of the
Non-Custodial Parent Employment Program (NCPEP)
Miami-Dade, Florida
July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020
With Illustrations and Personal Testimonies**

By

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NOTE

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He has conducted numerous evaluations of intervention programs including programs in the public schools, the courts, law enforcement and corrections agencies, and both public and private treatment programs.

Acknowledgements

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Miami-Dade, Florida

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is an evaluation of the Non-Custodial Parent Employment Program (NCPEP) in Dade County, FL (including the Greater Miami area). Unemployed and underemployed non-custodial parents who are not making their child support payments, and who have children who are eligible to receive State assistance, are court-ordered or self-refer into the program. The Program is operated by Coast Jewish Family & Community Services and is coordinated with the Department of Revenue's Division of Child Support Enforcement and the Courts, and enjoys the strong support of both.

- In these 12 months, 514 individuals contacted the program; 293 were referred from the courts prior to their closure in March and 221 were volunteers
- NCPEP continues to successfully enter into the program 100% of those who show up for their appointment and who are eligible.
- The majority of the clients were between 30 and 49 years of age (half were in their 30's). The proportion of those married, divorced or widowed has not changed. Almost all participants are male. African Americans have become the majority followed by Hispanics.
- The categories of job retention (30, 60, 90, >90 days) also has not changed. That 70% of the clients remain employed for more than 90 days is a credit to the staff.
- Similar proportions are employed full and part time. The average wage has increased slightly and remains over \$11/hour.
- An encouraging pattern documented in earlier reports repeated itself. "New" clients (only those entering the program during FY 2019/2020) were matching 7% of the actual program costs by their payments to the Department of Revenue (see Table 3).
- When we consider all clients currently active in the program, payments by active clients EXCEEDED program costs by 3.9 times. Put another way, for every dollar spent operating NCPEP, \$3.90 was returned to the State in the form of child support payments.
- In addition, many clients who have completed the program continue to make payments. The Pandemic (resulting in fewer job opportunities) and Stimulus Payments (unexpected and unearned income that was also confiscated by DOR) complicated the estimate this year. DOR counted the stimulus checks as earned income, inflating the figures, which suggested a profit of over \$1 million this year.

- The NCPEP program in Miami continues to successfully find jobs for the under-and un-employed non-custodial parents. The Program is also financially successful. .

Introduction:

This evaluation of the Non-Custodial Parent Employment Program (NCPEP) in Miami-Dade, Florida, (11th Judicial District) including the Greater Miami-Dade area covers the 12 months from July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020 (fiscal year 2019/2020). Specifically this evaluation concentrated on:

1. The number of referrals and the number of placements for the above period.
2. A cost-benefit analysis of NCPEP to include (a) the amount of funds expended in NCPEP client services (program costs), (b) child support dollars collected by the Department of Revenue from current NCEP enrollees and (c) the extent to which program enrollees continue to pay child support after they leave the program.
3. NCPEP client demographics
4. Recommendations regarding the program

Before going further, we present a brief overview of the program, its organization, function and purpose.

Program Description:

The 1995 Florida Legislature through Florida Statute originally established the Non-Custodial Parent Employment Program (NCPEP) as a pilot program. Unemployed and underemployed noncustodial parents are assisted in establishing a pattern of regular child support payments by obtaining and maintaining unsubsidized, competitive employment. The program bypasses traditional education and training programs, and requires participants to obtain paid employment as quickly as possible by providing job placement and close monitoring.

The NCPEP program is operated by Gulf Coast Jewish Family & Community Services and is coordinated with the State Attorney's Office, the Department of Revenue's Division of Child Support Enforcement and the Courts, and enjoys the strong support of all. The program serves the 11th Judicial Circuit (Miami–Dade County), 13th Judicial Circuit (Hillsborough County), the 6th Judicial Circuit (Pinellas and Pasco Counties) and

the 5th Judicial Circuit (Hernando County). Gulf Coast Jewish Family & Community Services, Inc. is a nonprofit agency with over 50 year of service to humanity.

The program originally began in June 1996, and began full-time program offices in Miami–Dade County in 2000. Since its inception, funding for the NCPEP program has flowed through various state agencies, including the former Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services, the Florida Department of Labor and the former Pinellas WAGES Coalition. The Department of Economic Opportunity (formerly the Agency for Workforce Innovation) and CareerSource Florida through CareerSource Pasco-Hernando currently funded for all four counties.

This evaluation will concentrate on data obtained from the Miami-Dade County portion of NCPEP.

Program Process. The NCPEP program targets all public assistance child support cases. Unemployed and underemployed noncustodial parents who are not making their child support payments, and have children who are receiving or are eligible to receive assistance, were originally court-ordered into the program. The program also accepts volunteers who meet the eligibility criteria.

At the initial court appearance, an NCPEP Employment Specialist typically met with the participant to explain the program, and give the participant a notice of when and where to appear for program registration, orientation, and vocational and educational assessment. An Employment Specialist would then be assigned to each participant enrolled in the program. The Employment Specialist supervises participants in their job search, tracks progress toward obtaining gainful employment, monitors the participants while employed and, as appropriate, provides support to help remove barriers to employment and/or visitation.

Until March of this year, the majority of clients were referred from the Court. However, COVID forced the closure of the Courts and there has been no additional contact to date. Thus, Gulf Coast JFCS staff doubled their active Community Outreach efforts to encourage and support individuals to volunteer for the program. This effort successfully identified additional persons eligible for NCPEP. Gulf Coast JFCS staffers were able to get these clients working and taking care of their children quicker than those for whom a court appearance and referral would be required.

Intensive contact is maintained with all participants during their job search. Once employment is obtained, participants are seen on a weekly basis during their first month of employment, and bi-weekly for five additional months. To complete the program participants must be continuously employed for six months, allowing a break in employment of no more than 30 days, and make consistent child support payments. If the time of unemployment exceeds the 30 days, the participant is required to restart the program. These meetings are virtual through Zoom, emails, Doc u sign and phone.

The NCPEP program provides the following services:

- Job development
- Supervised job search
- Job placement
- Case monitoring
- Educational assessment
- Educational referrals
- Vocational assessment
- Parenting training
- Financial literacy training
- Peer support group
- Contingency funds for:
 - Transportation
 - Work attire and other work related items
 - Vehicle maintenance
 - Personal hygiene
 - Car insurance

Short-term trade/skills training: i.e. construction trades helpers, Security Guards, etc.
Support service referrals (mediation, substance abuse counseling, etc.)

Vocational and educational testing is given to participants. Those individuals who have clear deficiencies in job-seeking and job-keeping skills are required to attend an employability skills training component. When funds are available, staff assist participants by eliminating obstacles to search for or accept employment such as providing for bus passes, gas cards, paying for car repairs or buying required work clothes and/or tools.

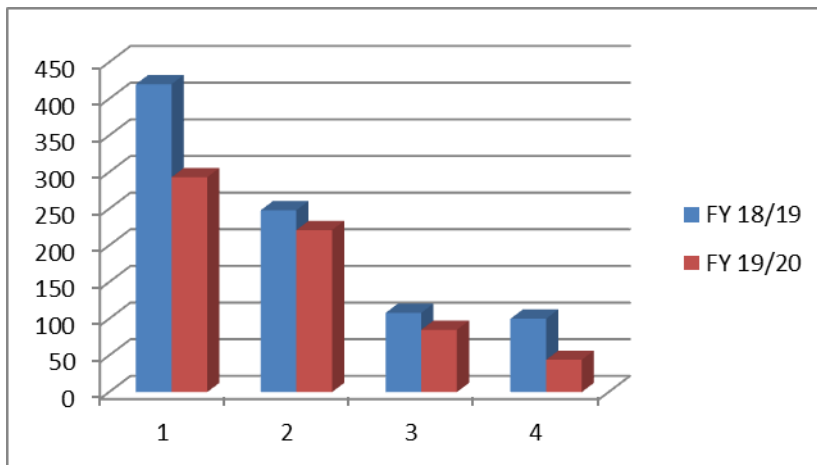
The Department of Revenue is regularly informed of participants' employment status. Participants who fail to cooperate with the program are in direct violation of their court order and are referred back to the Department of Revenue, States' Attorney and the Court for possible legal action. These participants are subject to indirect criminal contempt and arrest for failure to comply with their Child Support court order. In addition, they may have to pay a "purge" (a lump sum of money) by a specific date and/or have their driver's license suspended or revoked.

Referrals to the Program:

Table 1 presents the information concerning referrals and enrollments. Note that referrals from the Courts fell because of Court closures and other measures associated with the Pandemic, which was matched by increased efforts by the Staff to recruit volunteers, which has become the primary source of clients. We expect this to have more of an impact in 20/21.

Table 1				
Program Referrals and Enrollments				
	FY 2018/2019		FY 2019/2020	
	#	%	#	%
Referrals from court	420	62.87%**	293	57.00%**
.+ Volunteers	248	37.13%**	221	43.00%**
Total referrals to NCPEP	668		514	
No Shows	108	25.71 %*	85	16.54%**
Not Eligible	100	14.97%**	44	8.56%**
Enrolled (completed Orientation)	447	66.92%**	370	71.98%**
* % based only on those referred from the court (excluding volunteers)				
** % based on the total referrals (includes volunteers)				

% eligible who were enrolled = 100%



Axis codes: 1 = Court Referrals 2=Volunteers 3=No Show
4=Not Eligible

Efforts to recruit volunteers now consumes a good deal of staff time. Staff have reached out to their partners in other programs to assist in identifying individuals who might qualify. As Staff are prescreening Clients, “Not-Eligible” has dropped.

“Non-Eligible” should be interpreted to mean that the referred individual did not meet the TANF requirements associated with the NCPEP program. That is, the children in

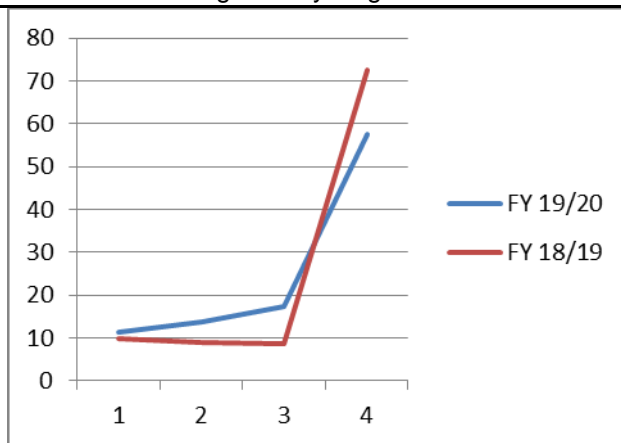
question were not eligible. Funding restrictions are such that NCPEP Miami can only accept individuals for whom there is an associated open case.

All individuals who were eligible successfully completed the orientation and were assigned an Employment Specialist. Thus, NCPEP continues to successfully enter 100% of those who report and who are eligible into the program – an admirable achievement. Once entered into the program, the Employment Specialist begins the process of facilitating employment possibilities.

Placements and Duration of Employment

Table 2 presents the information concerning the number of clients who were placed in jobs during this 12-month period and the duration of their employment.

Table 2				
Placements and duration of employment				
	FY 2018/2019		FY 2019/2020	
	#	%	#	%
Number of participants employed up to 30 days	33	9.88	19	6.29
Number of participants employed for 30 to 60 days	30	8.98	32	10.60
Number of participants employed for 60 to 90 days	29	8.68	47	15.56
Number of participants employed more than 90 days	242	72.46	204	67.55
Employed Full Time	152	45.78%	129	42.72%
Employed Part Time	180	54.42%	173	57.28%
Total	332		302	
Average hourly wage	\$11.18		\$11.55	



1=up to 30 days / 2=30-60 days / 3=60-90 days / 4=>90

The proportion of clients in each duration category is remarkably stable in spite of the effects of COVID. Quite a complement to the staff.

The 50/50 split between full and part time employment was maintained again this year. There was also a small increase in the average hourly wage.

Cost Benefit Analysis

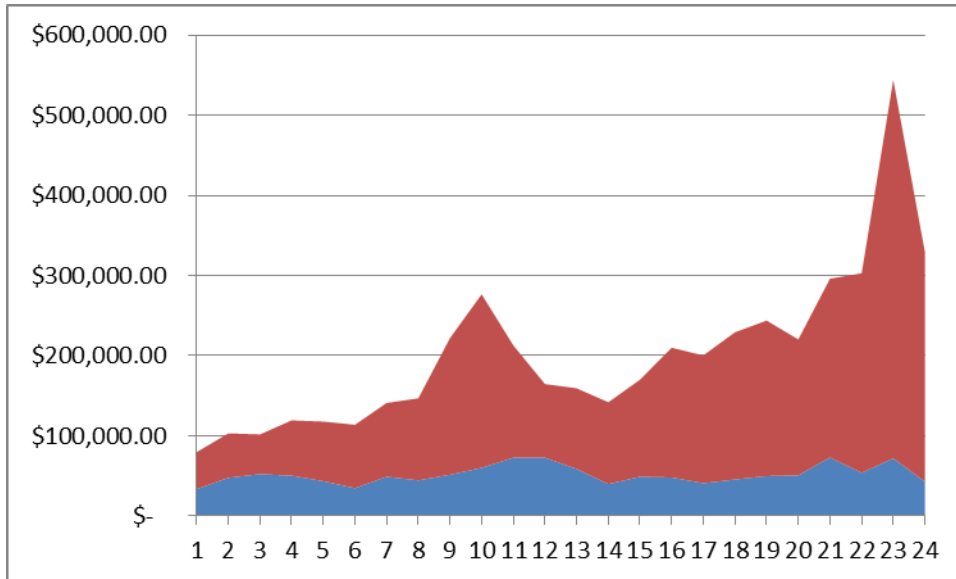
The issues here concern (a) the amount of funds expended in NCPEP client services (program costs), (b) child support dollars collected by the Department of Revenue from current NCPEP enrollees and (c) the extent to which program enrollees continue to pay child support after they leave the program.

Issues (a) and (b): As mentioned in earlier reports, restrictions associated with the Department of Revenue database prohibit an exact accounting of moneys paid in by clients. Thus, while the dollars reported represent our best efforts to secure these data, we consider the dollar amounts to be underestimated.

The importance of including all clients active in the program is illustrated by comparing the final two columns in Table 3. Table 3 indicates that “new” clients (only those entering the program during FY 2019/2020) were matching 7 % of the actual program costs by their payments to the Department of Revenue. (Total column 3 / total of column 2: \$44,700.03 / \$623,038.82 x 100 = 7.17%).

Table 3			
Program Costs versus Child Support Payments			
Month	Program Costs	Payments only from those CLIENTS ENTERING the program this period	Payments from ALL CLIENTS active during this period
.July 2019	58,609.16	2,881.72	100,701.97
.Aug 2019	39,823.49	1,878.119	102,082.28
.Sep 2019	48,899.99	2,986.48	121,052.30
.Oct 2019	47,939.47	2,522.64	162,018.90
.Nov 2019	40,734.91	299.96	159,558.34
.Dec 2019	45,517.42	1,327.66	183,631.48
.Jan 2020	49,644.32	5,711.20	194,174.15
.Feb 2020	50,583.90	5,836.5	169,676.23
.Mar 2020	72,952.91	3,102.05	223,007.43
.April 2020	53,799.96	11,098.08	248,966.57
.May 2020	71,864.95	5,914.16	472,204.39
.June 2020	42,668.34	1,141.39	286,391.28

Including ALL active NCPEP clients provides the figures in the last column of Table 3, which indicates that the active clients not only matched program costs, they exceeded them 3.9 times That means that for every dollar spent on the Miami NCPEP program, the State recovered \$3.90. (Total column 4/ total of column 2: \$2,423,465.32 / 623,038.82 = 3.89.)



This is a pattern, which has continued for several years. The graph tracks two years of data. The Blue area represents Program Costs and the larger Red area represents monies paid in by clients active at the time. The 2 spikes were influenced by the stimulus checks, which were treated as earned income by DOR and collected.

Issue (c): As was the case in earlier reports, “the extent to which program enrollees continue to pay child support after they leave the program” can only be estimated at this time. In the past, Department of Revenue (DOR) personnel have been of great assistance in helping NCPEP staff identify dollars paid by NCPEP participants, before, during and after participation in the NCPEP program. It was through such cooperation that, after several years of operation, we were able to document the return of all NPCEP operating costs as well as a substantial and continuing profit for the State.

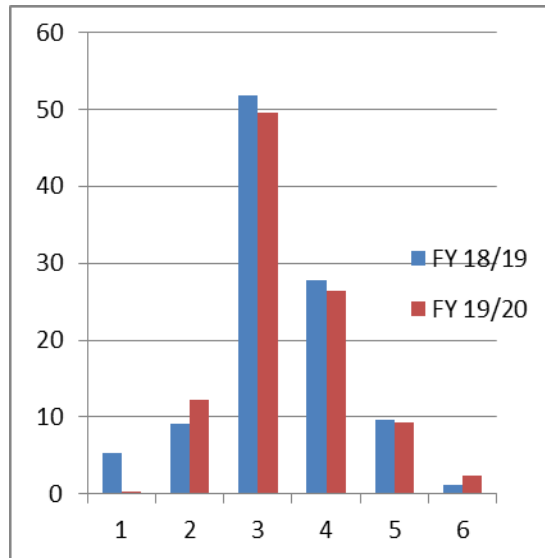
Unfortunately, data of this nature are not currently available. However, using NCPEP’s termination summaries, staff attempted to discover an answer to this question. Unfortunately, COVID and stimulus checks simply made any accurate assessment impossible. What is reflected is \$1,798,019 paid to DOR by former Miami clients. Thanks to the inclusions of stimulus checks, NCPEP made a huge profit this year in spite of having fewer clients

Again, NCPEP has proven that this social program cannot only be cost effective but can also provide a new revenue stream for the State.

Client Demographics:

As Table 4 indicates, the ages of the clients have remained fairly stable. Overall, the majority of the clients continue to be between 30 and 49 years of age, and half of the clients are in their 30's.

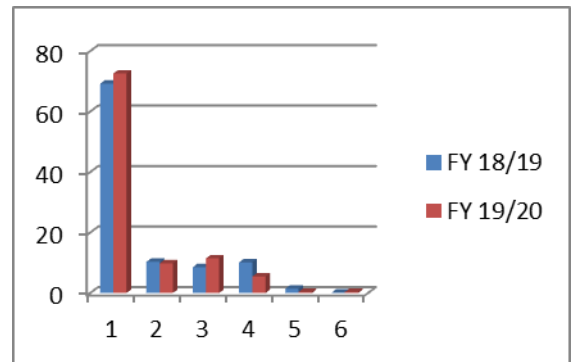
Table 4				
Age Groups				
Range	FY 2018/2019		FY 2019/2020	
	#	%	#	%
under 20	3	5.30	2	0.36
20-30	51	9.07	67	12.18
30-40	291	51.78	272	49.47
40-50	156	27.76	145	26.36
50-60	54	9.61	51	9.27
60-70	7	1.25	13	2.36
unknown				
Total	562	100%	550	100%



1=under 20 / 2=20-30 / 3=30-40 / 4=40-50

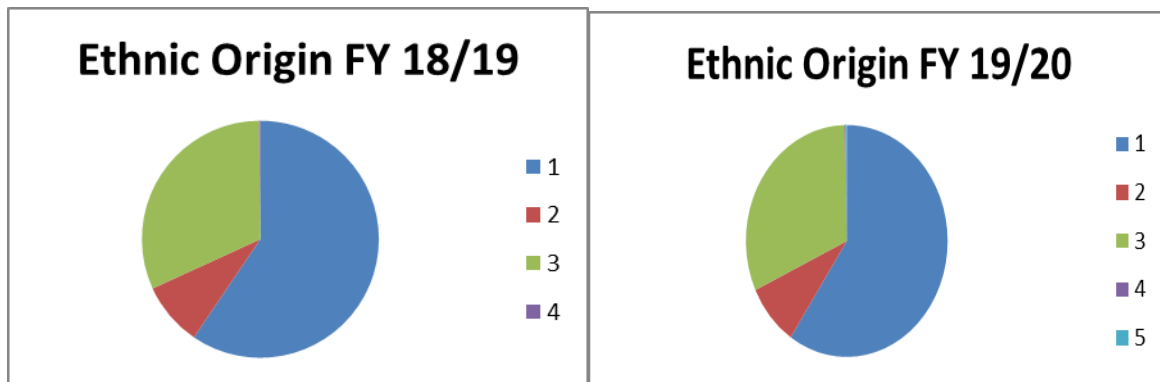
Table 5, marital status, also reflects stability in the population demographics.

Table 5				
Marital Status				
Category	FY 2018/2019		FY 2019/2020	
	#	%	#	%
Never Married	389	69.21	399	72.56
Divorced	58	10.32	54	9.82
Legally Married*	48	8.54	63	11.45
Separated	57	10.14	30	5.45
Widowed	8	1.42	2	0.36
Unknown	1	0.17	2	0.36
Total	562	100%	550	100%
* and living with spouse				



There has been no appreciable change in the ratio of males to females as seen in Table 6. Not surprisingly, almost all the Clients are male. As is true in Greater Tampa Project, African Americans clearly dominate followed by Hispanics.

Table 6				
Race and Gender				
	FY 2018/2019		FY 2019/2020	
	#	%	#	%
Race				
African American	329	58.55	332	61.82
Caucasian	48	8.55	77	14.34
Hispanic	175	31.14	123	22.91
Asian/Pacific	1	0.18	3	0.56
Unknown/Other	1	0.18	2	0.37
Gender				
Male	545	96.98	529	96.18
Female	17	3.02	21	3.82
Total	562	100%	550	100%



Code: Blue = African American / Red = Caucasian / Green = Hispanic

Client Comments

“The Employment Specialist is always helpful, professional and willing to help. Also always answered questions about child support.”

“I really appreciate you always contacting me and pushing me to find a job because it shows that you actually care. Much respect. That helps me believe in my goal.”

Recommendations

- 1) Provide additional resources necessary to maintain and enhance the current program, including their needs for more supportive services related to short-term vocation and certification. Currently they are quite limited in the type of supportive services they can provide.
- 2) Continue to review the program on an annual basis
- 3) Expand the program into Broward County.

Conclusion:

The NCPEP program in Miami continues to be successful and promises to continue to be a definite asset to the participants, the criminal justice system and the community.