

CSDE Administrative Data Users Guide

Public Use Data

This user's guide describes administrative data collected by the Institute for Research on Poverty for the Child Support Demonstration Evaluation (CSDE) project. A subset of these data are now available to outside researchers. This guide describes the CSDE data collected from the State of Wisconsin's administrative databases. Another set of data, surveys of W-2 recipients and the fathers of their minor children, was also collected as part of the evaluation. The *CSDE Survey Data User's Guide* describes these surveys.

I. The CSDE Project¹

In 1997 Wisconsin introduced a new public assistance program for low-income families with children, Wisconsin Works (W-2). This program replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). One of the major changes inaugurated in W-2 in the handling of child support payments made on behalf of children covered under these public assistance programs. Under AFDC, the state retained all but \$50 a month of child support payments made by a noncustodial parent to a resident parent receiving AFDC, to cover the cost of the AFDC assistance. Under W-2, all child support payments are "passed through" to the custodial parent. In order to receive a federal waiver to institute this change in policy the state was required to evaluate the effects of the "full pass-through" policy.

The CSDE is the evaluation of the experiment being conducted by the state to analyze the effects of this full pass-through policy. In this experiment parents requesting W-2 assistance between September 1997 and June 2000 were randomly assigned to receive either a full pass-through (the experimental group) or partial pass-through (the control group) of child support payments. The Institute for Research on Poverty contracted with the state to analyze this experiment using data extracted from the state's administrative databases.

II. The Administrative Data Sources²

The administrative data used in the CSDE project were collected from databases used by the state to administer public assistance, child support, and unemployment insurance.

CARES (Client Assistance for Re-Employment and Economic Support)

This data system, which began operation in 1995, is used by the state to keep track of various assistance programs for low-income families. It includes information on families' participation in AFDC, W-2, Food Stamps, Medicaid, BadgerCare, and child care subsidies.

¹A fuller description of the project is available in *W-2 Child Support Demonstration Evaluation Phase I Final Report* (<http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/irp/csde/phase1final/vol1-1a.pdf>)

²More information on these administrative databases can be found in Technical Report 3 of the W-2 CSDE Final Report (<http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/irp/csde/phase1final/vol3-tr3.pdf>).

CRN (Computerized Reporting Network)

This database was used by the state to track public assistance programs before 1995 and was superseded by CARES. It is used by the CSDE project to gather information on the historical use of AFDC and Food Stamps.

KIDS (Kids Information Data System)

This data system, which began operation in 1996, is used by the state to keep track of child support orders and payments. The CSDE project also uses KIDS to derive information on the establishment of paternity.

UI (Unemployment Insurance Wage Record File)

This data file is used by the state to keep track of wages for workers eligible for the state's unemployment insurance program. This provides information on wages for most workers in the state except for about 9% who are exempted from wage reporting. Those exempted include the self-employed, federal employees, church employees, and employees of small nonprofit organizations. In addition, wages that are earned outside of Wisconsin are not reported.

III. The IRP Administrative Data Collection Process

IRP staff extracted records from these three data sources each quarter, approximately two weeks after the end of the quarter. Extraction started with a selection of the records from CARES. Extraction was limited to just those cases on AFDC as of August 31, 1997, or those who applied for AFDC or W-2 assistance after that date. Then KIDS cases which corresponded with this set of CARES cases were extracted. Finally, using the Social Security numbers available for both resident and nonresident parents, an extract was drawn from the UI data for quarterly wage data from 1995 through June, 2000. Some parents had no Social Security numbers recorded in CARES or KIDS, so a UI match was not possible for these people.

IV. Administrative Data Available for Outside Researchers

The data available for researchers are derived from the July 2000 extract from the state administrative databases, which include information on public assistance participation and child support accounts through June 30, 2000. This is the extract used for the CSDE Phase I Final Report.

The data available in the public use files consist of a 75% random sample of the CARES cases selected in the July 2000 extract.

V. CSDE Data Files

The CSDE data files are created as a set of "master" files which correspond with different units of analysis and sets of cases. Associated with these master files are several auxiliary files which contain information on use of public assistance programs and child support account activity. Full codebooks for all of these data files are available on the CSDE public use website.

Note: File names for each data file appear in brackets after each descriptive title.

Master Data Files

CARES case / Resident Parent Master File [MasterA_BX]

Each record is a case from the 75% random sample from the July 2000 CARES extract. Each CARES case is identified by a masked case identification number, puCARESCASE.

The file includes information on the CARES case entry into W-2, the demographic characteristics of the resident parent associated with the CARES case, the children in the CARES case, and summary information on nonresident parents who may be associated with the case; it also includes the earnings, employment, and program participation history of the resident parent.

Resident / Nonresident Parent Pair Master File [MasterFX]

Each record corresponds with a legally established nonresident parent from the KIDS database who is associated with a CARES case in the Resident Parent Master File. Note that a single CARES case may have multiple nonresident parents associated with the case. A person may also be a nonresident parent on multiple CARES cases, and in this situation will appear in the Nonresident Parent data file multiple times. If there is no legally established nonresident parent associated with the CARES case, there will be no record in the Nonresident Parent Master File for this CARES case. Each CARES case is identified by the variable puCARESCASE and each nonresident parent is identified by the masked personal identification number, puKIDSPINNCP. Each resident/nonresident parent pair is identified by a combination of the two variables.

The file includes information on the relationship between the resident and nonresident parents and the children of the two parents, the demographic characteristics, and earnings and employment history of the nonresident parent.

Auxiliary Data Sets

These auxiliary data sets can be matched to the Resident Parent Master File to derive information on resident parents' participation in W-2, Food Stamps, the state's child care subsidy program, Medicaid, and BadgerCare. It also includes information on the resident parent's receipt of child support and on child support which is retained by the state to reimburse the state for AFDC or W-2 grants provided. Auxiliary files can be matched to the Nonresident Parent Master File to derive information on the amounts of child support owed and paid by nonresident parents on behalf of children in the associated CARES cases.

The auxiliary data files relating to resident parents' participation in public assistance programs are:

W-2 Grants Paid to CARES Cases [Grant]

Each record is a monthly payment of a W-2 grant to a CARES case resident parent. Can be matched to the master files using the variable puCARESCASE.

W-2 Slot History for CARES Cases [Slot]

Each record has monthly information on the W-2 slot assigned to the CARES case. Slot assignments determine the type of services to be provided to the resident parent, including whether the parent receives a monthly monetary grant and the level of employment assistance. Can be matched to the master files using the variable puCARESCASE.

Food Stamp Benefits Paid to CARES cases [FS]

Each record is a monthly payment of Food Stamp benefit to a CARES case resident parent. Can be matched to the master files using the variable puCARESCASE.

Child Care Subsidy Benefits Paid for CARES cases [CC]

Each record is a monthly payment of child care subsidy on behalf of a CARES case resident parent. Can be matched to the master files using the variable puCARESCASE.

Medical Assistance Benefits Paid for CARES cases [MA]

Each record is a monthly record of Medicaid eligibility and the capitation rate (determined by county and time period) applicable to each CARES case. Can be matched to the master files using the variable puCARESCASE.

BadgerCare Benefits Paid for CARES cases [BC]

Each record is a monthly record of BadgerCare medical assistance eligibility and the capitation rate (determined by county and time period) applicable to each CARES case. Can be matched to the master files using the variable puCARESCASE.

The auxiliary data files relating to child support are:

Child Support Owed by a Nonresident Parent to a Resident Parent [CSOWX]

Each record is a monthly amount of child support owed by a nonresident parent to a resident parent. Amounts may be reported as dollar amounts or as a percentage of the nonresident parent's income. Records can be matched to the MasterFX using the variables puCARESCASE and puKIDSPINNCP

Child Support Paid by a NonResident Parent to a Resident Parent's Account [CSPAYX]

Each record is a monthly amount of child support paid by a nonresident parent to a resident parent's account. Includes payments which may be retained by the state instead of being passed on to the resident parent. Records can be matched to MasterFX using the variables puCARESCASE and puKIDSPINNCP

Child Support Retained by the State [CSRETAINX]

Each record is a monthly amount of child support retained by the state from a resident parent's account in order to reimburse the state for AFDC or W-2 payments made to the resident parent. Records can be matched to the master files using the variable puCARESCASE.

Child Support Received by Resident Parents [CSRCX]

Each record is a monthly amount of child support sent by the state to a resident parent. For each month there are separate records for regular child support (child support that is not subject to retention by the state), passed-through child support, and excess-over-grant child support. Passed-through and excess-over-grant child support are amounts that are kept by the state until the end of the month in order to determine how much should be retained by the state. Records can be matched to the master files using the variable puCARESCASE.

VI. Selecting Cases

The Resident Parent Master file comprises a 75% random sample of all CARES cases on AFDC on August 31, 1997, or in which the parent applied for AFDC or W-2 assistance between September 1, 1997, and July 8, 1998. Researchers may wish to examine subsets of this 75% CSDE sample. This section describes how to select cases for subsets of interest. The primary variable to consider in selecting these cases is ANALYZE, but other variables may be used to make further selections.

Selecting W-2 CARES cases

Researchers may be interested in examining only those CARES cases that entered the W-2 program. To do this select cases where ANALYZE is not equal to 1.

Removing CARES cases not subject to the CSDE experiment

Researchers interested in analyzing the effects of the full pass-through treatment of the CSDE may want to limit their analyses to CARES cases which actually had the potential to receive child support or, if they were in the control group, to have their child support retained by the state. Cases that do *not* have the potential to receive child support include those in which all the nonresident parents are deceased or the resident parent received a good-cause waiver from cooperating with child support enforcement (usually granted to domestic abuse victims). Cases in which the state does not retain child support are those in which a child in the family is receiving SSI benefits. To remove these cases, the researcher should delete cases in which :

ANALYZE = 2 – nonresident parent deceased

ANALYZE = 4 – child received SSI benefits at any time before June 30, 2000

ANALYZE = 5 – case granted a good-cause waiver

Removing CARES cases which experienced administrative errors or delays

The CSDE project has also excluded cases which experienced various administrative errors or delays in entry into W-2.

Cases with administrative errors include those in which a resident parent has two or more separate CARES cases with active W-2 participation in each of the cases. All public assistance activity by a resident parent is supposed to be recorded in one CARES case; when separate CARES cases have been created for a resident parent, that parent may have experienced both the experimental and control treatments. Another administrative error involved cases which left AFDC after September 1, 1997, but were reassigned to AFDC later after returning for public assistance. All new requests for assistance after September 1, 1997, were supposed to be assigned to W-2, but in several cases returning AFDC participants were incorrectly reassigned to AFDC.

Cases in which the start of W-2 was delayed were excluded from CSDE analyses since the delays may have arisen when participants learned of their experimental assignment and decided not to begin W-2. Excluded cases include those who learned their experimental assignment while on AFDC, left AFDC, and then took longer than 2 months to begin a W-2 spell. Other excluded cases involved new requests for assistance during which individuals learned of their experimental assignment and then took longer than 30 days to begin a W-2 spell.

To remove these cases exclude the following values of the ANALYZE variable:

ANALYZE = 6 – cases incorrectly reassigned to AFDC after Sept. 1, 1997

ANALYZE = 7 – cases which entered W-2 more than 2 months after leaving AFDC

ANALYZE = 8 – cases which entered W-2 more than 30 days after being assigned

ANALYZE = 9 – cases with a resident parent with multiple active W-2 cases

Replicating the CSDE Phase I Final Report research sample of resident mothers

For the Phase I Final Report, the CSDE project excluded all the cases described above. In addition, a few other exclusions were made from our main resident-parent research sample. Several analyses in the final report were compared to results using CSDE survey data and, in order for our administrative data sample to reflect the population from which the survey data were drawn, we limited the sample to cases (1) in which the resident parent was a mother and not a father, and (2) in which the youngest child in the household would not be expected to turn 18 before January 1, 2000.

These cases can be selected in MasterA_BX by the variable SCIRSAMPLE2 = 1.

Replicating the CSDE Phase I Final Report sample of nonresident fathers at entry

In the CSDE Phase I Final Report, the primary sample used to analyze nonresident parents made several exclusions from the cases in MasterFX. Analyses were limited to cases (1) with a resident parent in the resident-mother research sample, (2) in which the father had been established as a legal nonresident parent before the mother's entry into W-2, and, (3) in which the father was still living at the time of the mother's entry into W-2.

These cases can be selected in MasterFX by the variable SCIRSAMPLE3=1.

VII. Merging Files

The primary variable used to identify CARES cases and resident parents is puCARESCASE. This variable can be used to merge CARES cases in MasterA_BX with associated nonresident parents in MasterFX and with the resident-parent-based auxiliary data files.

To merge nonresident-parent-based auxiliary data files with resident/nonresident parent pair cases in Master FX, the researcher must use both merge variables: puCARESCASE and puKIDSPINNCP.

VIII. Analyzing Experimental Effects

To examine differences between cases eligible for the full pass-through of child support (the experimental treatment) and those eligible only for partial pass-through of child support (the control treatment), it is important to understand the assignment of cases to these treatments. Cases could be assigned to one of three groups:

Control group (partial pass-through): W-2 participants in the Control group received the first \$50 or 41% (whichever was greater) of any child support paid for the period beginning October 1, 1997, as long as the primary person was in a Community Service Job, was in the W-2 Transitional slot, or was receiving the custodial-parent portion of an Infant payment (CMC). If the primary person was receiving child care only, case management only, was in a Trial Job (TJB), or was an "SSI child" case, the full amount of current child support was passed through, despite their Control status.

Experimental group (full pass-through): W-2 participants in the Experimental group received all current child support paid on the family's behalf, even while receiving W-2 payments.

Nonexperimental group (full pass-through): W-2 participants in the Nonexperimental group

received all current child support paid on the family's behalf, even while receiving W-2 payments.

From the beginning of random assignment on August 31, 1997, to March 15, 1998, 20% of cases were randomly assigned to the control group, 20% to the experimental group, and 60% to the nonexperimental group. As the number of cases entering W-2 was lower than expected, the percentage of cases being assigned to experimental and control treatments was increased at two points. From March 16, 1998, to May 8, 1998, 30% of cases were randomly assigned to control, 30% to experimental, and 40% to nonexperimental status, and from May 9, 1998, to July 8, 1998, half of all new W-2 cases were assigned to control and half to experimental treatment.

Researchers may wish to limit analyses to only those cases assigned to the control group or the experimental group, or, since the nonexperimental cases received the same treatment as the experimental group, they may wish to combine the experimental and nonexperimental cases into a larger experimental treatment group.

To identify the treatment group of a case there are two variables available in MasterA_BX. CRESGRP1 identifies cases in the groups E (for experimental), C (control), and N (nonexperimental). CRESGRP2 combines the experimental and nonexperimental cases and identifies cases as EN (experimental or nonexperimental) and CC (control).

Since the percentages of cases assigned to the treatment groups varied over time it is important to weight analyses of the effects of the experimental treatment. See section IX of this document for more information.

IX. Using Weights

Since the CSDE Public Use Administrative Data files are composed of a 75% random sample of all cases in the full CSDE file, researchers wishing to scale their number of cases to reflect the full population should use the weight variable, WEIGHTBASIC.

As mentioned in the previous section, analyses of the experimental effects of the evaluation will need to account for the differing percentages of W-2 cases assigned to experimental, control, and nonexperimental groups over time. Researchers wanting to consider the experimental and nonexperimental cases together (since they received the same treatment) and compare them to the control cases should use the variable WEIGHT2 in MasterA_BX to weight these analyses. When researchers drop the nonexperimental cases from the analyses and consider only the experimental and control cases, they should use the variable WEIGHT1 in MasterA_BX.

X. Understanding When Cases Are Considered to Have Entered the Experiment

The entry of W-2 cases into the experiment involved several steps. Cases must have an initial interview, must be assigned to a research group, and then actually enter into a W-2 slot. Cases which were on AFDC on August 31, 1997, were assigned to a research group first, and then later possibly interviewed and possibly started on a W-2 slot. Later entrants usually were assigned to a research group at the time of the initial interview.

Because of the variety of entry paths, a date variable called CBASDATE in MasterA_BX was created to reflect the time at which the experiment was considered to have started (the baseline date) for each case. For the August 1997 AFDC participants, the initial interview is usually when they were informed of their research status, so the interview date is considered their baseline date.

Later applicants were informed of their research group at the time it was assigned, so their baseline date is their research group assignment date.

XI. Summary of important variables

This section lists the variables mentioned in the previous sections:

Variables used to select cases:

ANALYZE (MasterA_BX) - identifies cases which researchers may wish to exclude from analysis because they never started W-2, were not subject to the experimental treatment, or had administrative errors or delays.

SCIRSAMPLE2 (MasterA_BX) - identifies a sample of resident mothers based on the same criteria as used for the CSDE Phase I Final Report.

SCIRSAMPLE3 (MasterFX) - identifies a sample of nonresident fathers who were legally established at the time mother entered W-2 based on the same criteria as used for the CSDE Phase I Final Report.

Variables used to identify cases and merge files:

puCARESCASE (MasterA_BX) - identifies CARES cases.

puCARESCASE/puKIDSPINNCP (Master FX) - these two variables used together identify resident/nonresident parent pairs.

Variables used to identify experimental treatment groups:

CRESGRP1 (MasterA_BX) - identifies experimental (E), control (C), and nonexperimental (N) treatment groups.

CRESGRP2 (MasterA_BX) - combines experimental and nonexperimental cases to identify the combined experimental/nonexperimental (EN) and control (CC) treatment groups.

Variables used for weighting:

WEIGHTBASIC (MasterA_BX) - weight for use in scaling the 75% sample to reflect the full population.

WEIGHT1 (MasterA_BX) - weight for use when comparing experimental (E) and control (C) cases as identified by CRESGRP1.

WEIGHT2 (MasterA_BX) - weight for use when comparing experimental/nonexperimental (EN) and control (CC) cases as identified by CRESGRP2.

Variable used to identify date of entry into the experiment:

CBASDATE (MasterA_BX)