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## MARYLAND REVAMPING STATE SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENTS

The state of Maryland is changing how child support collection is conducted as officials are working to fix social services departments across the state, according to [insurancenewsnet.com](http://insurancenewsnet.com). Joseph J. DiPrimio has recently been appointed as the executive director of the Child Support Enforcement Administration, according to the Maryland Department of Human Resources. "There is no reason that in Maryland, the state with the highest per capita income of any state, we cannot lead the nation in collecting the support that is due to our children," Ted Dallas, secretary of the Department of Human Resources, said in a statement. "My goal is to make Maryland one of the top 10 states in terms of child support collections within the next 18 months." The state's child support program is operated by the Child Support Enforcement Administration, which provides services to noncustodial and custodial parents in the state. These services include collection of support payments, establishment of paternity and child support orders, and the distribution of child support funds after collection. According to the United States Census Bureau, 26.8 percent of custodial parents did not contact a child support enforcement office, state department social services, or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families offices for support activities. Marici Kassakatis is one parent who had trouble receiving full child support payments in a Maryland county but was able to receive help from Frederick County using alternative mediation. "I had filed for child support in court because I didn't think mediation would work," said Kassakatis, a mother of two. In the state of Maryland there are over 238,000 cases of child support, according to records from the Maryland Department of Human Resources. In 64.7 percent of those cases, parents involved in the cases are paying a part of the total amount of child support that is owed. The husband of Kassakatis agreed to pay health insurance and child car for the couple's two-year-old daughter, Jasmine. A parenting plan was created by the couple at the Community Mediation and Conflict Resolution Center located in Frederick County. "We cried a lot, we laughed. ... It was hard, but we didn't realize we could agree on almost everything until mediation," she said. A 50-50 custody agreement took roughly six weeks for the couple to agree on, and it includes a visitation and holiday schedule for the daughter. The agency helped roughly 100 parents in 2011, according to CALM director Linda Hardman. She also said that the reason the agency received more requests for help in 2011 is because of the economic recession. There were more than 5,500 cases filed in Frederick County this year. Close to 71 percent of parents in Frederick County received at least partial child support payments in 2011. "I don't receive much," Kassakatis said, while noting that her daughter still has a good relationship with her father.

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