



STATE OF MICHIGAN

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING

GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

ELIZABETH HERTEL
DIRECTOR

IV-D MEMORANDUM 2024-004

TO: All Friend of the Court (FOC) Staff

FROM: Erin P. Frisch, Director
Office of Child Support (OCS)

DATE: March 15, 2024

UPDATE(S):

Manual

Form(s)

SUBJECT: Statewide Rollout of the Gain Employment, Maintain Support (GEMS) Program and Introduction of Section 6.10, "Employment Programs," of the *Michigan IV-D Child Support Manual*

ACTION DUE: None

POLICY EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon receipt

PURPOSE:

This IV-D Memorandum introduces policy for the statewide rollout of the Gain Employment, Maintain Support (GEMS) program. GEMS began as a pilot program called Learn, Earn, and Provide (LEAP), and it was authorized by a waiver from the federal Office of Child Support Services (OCSS). The waiver allowed the Michigan IV-D program to use IV-D funds¹ to assist payers of support with obtaining and maintaining consistent employment.² With the publication of this policy, the LEAP program has been renamed GEMS to prevent confusion with Governor Gretchen Whitmer's new department, the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP).

¹ Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds were also used to fund the pilot and will be used to fund the statewide rollout. GEMS (LEAP) was discussed in [IV-D Memorandum 2022-013, Michigan Works! Programs and Services Available to Assist Non-Custodial Parents \(NCPs\)](#).

² The IV-D program typically does not fund employment services for parents; however, during the pilot, the waiver allowed OCS to use federally matched IV-D funds to pay for some services to assist support-paying parents in finding sustainable employment.

The statewide rollout activities will begin the third quarter of fiscal year (FY) 2024. County participation in the statewide program will be voluntary, and GEMS will be rolled out incrementally to interested counties and Michigan Works! regions.³

This IV-D Memorandum discusses the following:

- History of the GEMS program;
- Program goals;
- GEMS statewide rollout process;
- Automation of the referral process;
- Access to the One Stop Management Information System (OSMIS);
- Forms and documents used in the GEMS program; and
- Motivational Interview Training for GEMS.

This IV-D Memorandum also introduces Section 6.10, “Employment Programs,” of the *Michigan IV-D Child Support Manual*. Section 6.10 gives an overview of the roles and responsibilities for FOC and Michigan Works! staff in the GEMS program. It also provides guidelines for the operation of the GEMS program.

Section 6.10 includes the following exhibits that IV-D workers will use during the outreach and referral process for GEMS:

- Exhibit 6.10E1: GEMS Script
- Exhibit 6.10E2: GEMS Participant Handout
- Exhibit 6.10E3: GEMS Referral Form
- Exhibit 6.10E4: GEMS Participant Agreement
- Exhibit 6.10E5: GEMS Talking Points

Finally, this IV-D Memorandum introduces an updated table of contents for the *Michigan IV-D Child Support Manual*. Asterisks have been added to the end of the title of Section 6.10, “Employment Programs,” to indicate the availability of this new manual section.

DISCUSSION:

The GEMS program promotes economic mobility by providing occupational training, employment assistance, and other services related to obtaining sustainable employment with wages exceeding the state minimum wage.

FOC staff identify potential GEMS participants and refer them to the local Michigan Works! office. Michigan Works! provides occupational skills, training, and employment services to help GEMS participants build skills and competencies to obtain employment

³ For an explanation of Michigan Works! agencies, their regions, and their relationship with the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO), refer to [Subsection 2, “Background for Michigan Works! and LEO,” of Section 6.10, “Employment Programs,” of the Michigan IV-D Child Support Manual.](#)

in their local labor market. This should improve the participant's ability to make child support payments.

The ideal GEMS participant is a parent who is ordered to pay child support or has a child support arrearage and:

- Is engaged with his/her family;
- Is engaged with the IV-D program;⁴ and
- Is unemployed, underemployed, or having difficulty retaining employment.

History of GEMS

The federal OCSS awarded OCS a three-year waiver project to focus on employment opportunities for parents who are ordered to pay support or currently have a \$0 monthly support obligation due to unemployment. The three-year waiver began in March 2021 and was extended for one additional year with the evaluation period ending January 1, 2025.⁵

OCS worked with LEO, Michigan Works! Southwest,⁶ representatives from FOC offices, the State Court Administrative Office (SCAO), and OCSS to develop the GEMS pilot. OCS identified a Steering Committee with representatives from each of the four initial FOC offices (Branch, Calhoun, Kalamazoo, and St. Joseph) to review major decisions. Additionally, OCS created several subcommittees to work on program details.

The GEMS pilot began operating in Branch, Calhoun, Kalamazoo, and St. Joseph counties, and Michigan Works! Southwest began accepting GEMS referrals in March 2021. The following counties were later added to the pilot program:

- Muskegon County FOC began sending referrals to West Michigan Works! in January 2022;
- Bay County FOC began sending referrals to Great Lakes Bay Michigan Works! in October 2022; and
- Allegan County FOC began sending referrals to West Michigan Works! in July 2023.

The GEMS program will be offered statewide starting the second quarter in FY 2024.

GEMS Program Goals

The goal of the GEMS program is for participants to retain full-time employment for 180 days or more and make at least six months of consistent (i.e., full and on-time) child

⁴ An individual is engaged with the IV-D program when (s)he regularly communicates with the FOC.

⁵ The OCS Planning, Evaluation and Analysis team is conducting the evaluation and will forward the results to OCS, LEO, OCSS, participating FOCs, and Michigan Works!.

⁶ Michigan Works! Southwest is one of 17 Michigan Works! regions.

support payments on all of their orders. Section 6.10 provides more information about full and on-time payments.

Participants will build a one-on-one relationship with a Michigan Works! career coach to:

- Receive occupational training;
- Obtain assistance in completing GED courses;
- Remove barriers that prevent employment;
- Obtain and maintain consistent employment; and
- Make full and on-time child support payments.

Ongoing status reporting during the pilot highlighted many instances of GEMS participants meeting and exceeding their own goals as a result of Michigan Works! and IV-D offices working together. Michigan Works! staff obtained approval from parents to share some of the parents' success stories with OCS. These stories indicated the effectiveness of, and strong support for, the services provided. Many parents expressed positive perceptions of the GEMS program, Michigan Works! and the FOC office.

Statewide Rollout Process

The GEMS program will be rolled out incrementally to interested counties and interested Michigan Works! regions statewide. To learn which county FOC offices are interested in participating, OCS provided a survey at the summer Friend of the Court Association Conference in July 2023. In addition, OCS will post the survey on mi-support upon publication of this IV-D Memorandum. LEO sent a survey to other Michigan Works! regions to determine those that are interested in participating.

LEO and OCS will create a plan to include the smaller interested counties within the currently participating Michigan Works! Great Lakes Bay and West Michigan regions. OCS and Michigan Works! will then create a schedule⁷ to identify which counties will implement GEMS each quarter going forward. Due to limited resources, only one Michigan Works! region will implement GEMS each quarter.

OCS and LEO will continue to survey non-participating Michigan Works! regions and FOC offices to gauge interest in the program.

Automated Referrals

Currently, participating FOCs send referrals to Michigan Works! by encrypted email. Sending referrals this way will be difficult and time-consuming for larger counties. Michigan Works! regions that partner with the larger counties (e.g., Wayne, Genesee, Ingham, etc.) may not be able to manage the volume of emailed referrals.

⁷ OCS will provide the schedule via an email notification.

OCS’s goal is to automate referrals from the Michigan Child Support Enforcement System (MiCSES) to LEO’s One Stop Management Information System (OSMIS). Michigan Works! offices use OSMIS to gather, update and maintain information on the people they serve. LEO is updating OSMIS and will not be able to automate the referral process until the update is complete.⁸

Access to OSMIS

For counties approved to participate in GEMS, FOC staff may obtain “read-only” access to OSMIS to view case participants who are registered or enrolled in GEMS and check on the progress of their employment service activities. FOC staff must not use OSMIS to view individuals who are not enrolled in GEMS. To request access to OSMIS, FOC staff in counties participating in GEMS will use the *IV-D Program Request for Computer Access* (DHS-393).⁹

GEMS Forms and Documents

All counties that participate in GEMS will use the following forms and documents.¹⁰ These are exhibits to Section 6.10, “Employment Programs.”

Exhibit	Title	Description
6.10E1	GEMS Script	This is a script for Michigan Works! staff that provides answers to frequently asked questions.
6.10E2	GEMS Participant Handout	This is a handout that can be given to potential participants. It explains the GEMS program.
6.10E3	GEMS Referral Form	This is a mandatory form that all FOC staff must complete and forward to Michigan Works!.
6.10E4	GEMS Participant Agreement	This is a mandatory form that all participants must sign upon agreeing to participate in GEMS.
6.10E5	GEMS Talking Points	This document provides information on the GEMS program and the services and design of the program.

Each Michigan Works! region offers different workshops and may provide different resources. Each Michigan Works! office will provide a handout outlining the available workshops and resources. The above documents and some county-specific resources are located on the [GEMS page on mi-support](#).

⁸ OCS will notify IV-D staff when LEO automates the referral process.

⁹ Ref: [Section 1.10, “Confidentiality/Security,” of the Michigan IV-D Child Support Manual](#) for information about completing the DHS-393.

¹⁰ A ticket has been entered to add the GEMS Referral Form to MiCSES as a fillable PDF. OCS will send an email notification when the form is available in MiCSES.

Motivational Interview Training for GEMS

IV-D workers are encouraged to use motivational interviewing techniques when contacting parents about participating in the GEMS program. These techniques will help IV-D workers to:

- Work collaboratively with parents to identify achievable action steps they could take through GEMS; and
- Encourage parents to discuss their personal goals, values and motivations.

Michigan Works! Southwest and Great Lakes Bay Michigan Works! staff have participated in motivational interviewing training. It has helped them interact with parents more effectively.

The SCAO Friend of the Court Bureau (FOCB) is offering motivational interviewing training. FOC offices may request information about the Motivational Interviewing Training for Friend of the Court Workers or sign up for it by emailing focinfo@courts.mi.gov.

Section 6.10, “Employment Programs”

The new Section 6.10 of the *Michigan IV-D Child Support Manual* describes the GEMS program and includes the following topics:

- GEMS participants and eligibility criteria;
- Outreach and referral process;
- Registration, orientation, and enrollment;
- Program responsibilities for FOC and Michigan Works! staff;
- Retention, successful completion, and termination from the program;
- Program evaluation; and
- Communication between the GEMS program partners.

NECESSARY ACTION:

Review Section 6.10 of the *Michigan IV-D Child Support Manual*. For those maintaining a hard copy of the manual, print Section 6.10, its exhibits, and the updated table of contents and add them to the manual.

REVIEW PARTICIPANTS:

Case Management Work Improvement Team
Enforcement Work Improvement Team
Program Leadership Group
LEO

Michigan Works! Southwest
West Michigan Works!
Great Lakes Bay Michigan Works!

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ATTACHMENTS:

Section 6.10:	Employment Programs
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Michigan IV-D Child Support Manual Introduction and Table of Contents

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