



MICHIGAN OFFICE OF CHILD SUPPORT USER EXPERIENCE (UX) DISCOVERY



OVERVIEW

UX4Justice partnered with the Michigan Office of Child Support to discover how we might encourage low-income parents to engage and problem-solve in order to increase participation in child support.

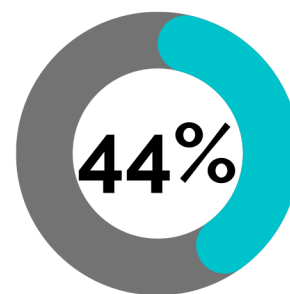
The Michigan Office of Child Support (OCS) was considering implementing an online dispute resolution platform statewide to achieve the goal stated in its recently renewed three-year strategic plan: to help families achieve well-being and self-sufficiency. However, rather than adopt a new technology and hope it would meet the needs of parents, the Michigan OCS partnered with Innovation for Justice's UX4Justice initiative to better understand the obstacles families face with the current system, and to craft human-centered solutions to increasing engagement that address family needs. To make this human-centered shift, UX4Justice conducted a UX discovery project to understand the needs, desires, challenges, and pain points families in the child support system currently face, and to design and test some potential human-centered tech solutions.



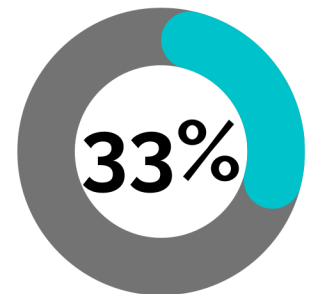
Research Questions

How might we encourage Michigan community members, particularly low-income parents, to engage and problem-solve in order to increase participation in child support?

National Child Support Statistics



of paying parents fulfill their complete child support obligations



of parents who were owed support received none



OBJECTIVES

1 Understand parents' pain points and needs regarding child support

2 Discover intervention points in the system to leverage change

3 Design new child support offerings based on data

4 Test prototypes with parents and make recommendations



PROCESS

1

Interviews

Conducted interviews with child support stakeholders and parents both paying and receiving support to understand their needs, challenges and pain points.

2

Define

Used data to surface insights about root problems and apply systems thinking to identify potential intervention points within the child support system.

3

Ideate

Generated a large number of potential solutions using a variety of How Might We questions to drive brainstorming and innovation. Ranked ideas for ease and impact.

4

Prototype

Developed high-priority ideas into early-state prototypes that were assumption tested with parents, leading the way to the development of wireframe prototypes.

5

Test & Iterate

Parents evaluated potential solutions in moderated prototype tests, which generated ideas for additional refinements that were included in the report and final prototype redesign.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings from the multi-phase research, design, and testing process, the research team made three recommendations for how the Michigan OCS might encourage low-income parents to engage in child support. The research team determined that while technology can augment and facilitate each recommendation, service offering shifts or policy changes are also at the heart of many of them.

1 INCREASE PROCESS TRANSPARENCY AND GUIDANCE

Educate and empower parents early to confidently make the best decisions for their family.

- Create a progress tracker dashboard for parents entering the system with a checklist for next steps, important links to resources, and a way to store key materials.
- Build an interactive process map detailing the child support process so parents can explore their options and make the right choices for their family.

2 STREAMLINE AND TAILOR COMMUNICATIONS

Improve communication, lower barriers to accessing information, and increase trust.

- Offer a text messaging service that allows parents to opt-in to receive text reminders of important dates and deadlines, and to ask questions via text and receive quick responses.
- Offer peer navigation to provide a personalized and trusted human touch for receiving information, asking questions, and requesting help in a variety of modalities.

3 OFFER FLEXIBILITY AND CUSTOMIZATION

Invite parents to define what support means to them and to adapt to changing circumstances.

- Give parents agency to identify flexible ways to give or receive support and adapt to changing circumstances through Child Support Choice options.
- Help parents define what support looks like for their family through Mediation.