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**BACKGROUND PAPER**

**EVALUATION OF THE B.C. FAMILY  
MAINTENANCE ENFORCEMENT  
PROGRAM'S PILOT OUTREACH  
PROJECT**

**2004-FCY-4E**



# **Evaluation of the B.C. Family Maintenance Enforcement Program's Pilot Outreach Project**

**Prepared by:**  
Focus Consultants

**Presented to:**  
Family, Children and Youth Section  
Department of Justice Canada

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of an evaluation of the British Columbia Family Maintenance Enforcement Program's (FMEP) Pilot Outreach Project. The Pilot Outreach Project (POP) consists of three educational/outreach and enforcement components that involve payors and recipients of maintenance payments.

The three program components include:

- Client Meetings—face to face meetings held with clients referred by Family Justice Counsellors (FJCs). The meetings provide general information about the FMEP and maintenance enforcement to payors and recipients.
- MHR Information Sessions—regular information meetings held in collaboration with B.C. Ministry of Human Resources staff to provide information about the FMEP and maintenance enforcement to recipients of social assistance. Due to a change in program design this component was not addressed in the evaluation.
- Payment Conferences—enforcement mechanisms used with payors in arrears to help establish a Voluntary Payment Arrangement (VPA) in order to avoid a Default Hearing.

The purpose of the evaluation was to address the following questions:

- Are the information needs of Family Justice Centre clients and staff being met through the Client Meetings?
- Are the services provided by the Pilot Outreach Project helpful, client-oriented, personal and accessible?
- Do Client Meetings lead to an increased awareness of the FMEP and the integration of family justice services?
- Do Payment Conferences result in access to new payor financial information, help establish the payor's ability to pay or lead to a Voluntary Payment Arrangement?
- Do Payment Conferences result in the avoidance of a Default Hearing?
- What barriers do payors experience that affect their ability to pay?
- Is the Pilot Outreach Project perceived as a skills development opportunity for staff?

Seven methodologies were used in the evaluation. A telephone survey was conducted with 24 Family Justice Counsellors/Intake Workers at 10 Family Justice Centres to determine screening criteria, barriers to payment and the utility of the meetings to clients and the Family Justice Centres. A written questionnaire was distributed to all clients attending the Client Meetings between September and December 2002. The survey assessed client needs, previous FMEP

contact and the quality and usefulness of the service. Fifty-one (75 percent) of the clients referred to the meetings during the study responded.

Two methodologies were used to assess the outcomes of the Payment Conferences: 1) a detailed review of demographic case data and Payment Conference outcomes based on three sources of data (including FMEP case records), and 2) telephone survey of payors. Twenty-five cases were assessed. This included all the cases seen at Payment Conferences between August 2001 and August 2002. Return rates for the payor telephone survey were low (40 percent), primarily due to an inability to locate payors or their unwillingness to participate.

The evaluation also included a document and statistical review and interviews with key respondents. A Ministry of Human Resources Information Survey was not implemented because no information sessions were held during the study period.

Several data collection problems arose during the implementation of this research. There was a lack of data or incomplete data available on the FMEP forms that record referrals and outcomes for Payment Conferences. Data on the FMEP electronic case management system was also sometimes inconsistent or incomplete. In all cases, information on Payment Conferences was verified using the running record, which is a narrative account of case history.

The evaluation concluded that:

- There is a strong consensus among Family Justice Counsellors, payors and recipients that the personal contact format of Client Meetings is effective and leads to better results (than telephone contact) and increased cooperation between clients and service providers.
- The Pilot Outreach Project is regarded very positively by Family Justice Counsellors who consider it to be a high quality, reliable and client centered service. The interpersonal qualities and expertise of the Outreach Officer are a significant part of the Project's success.
- An expansion of Client Meetings to increase client access at high volume sites, expand the number of Centres involved and open up limited access to other referral sources (e.g. FMEP Enforcement Officers) is recommended by Family Justice Counsellors and other key respondents.
- Direct, personal access to the FMEP provides Family Justice Counsellors with a valuable source of information and education, which is used to provide improved and more comprehensive services to family justice clients.
- The regular presence of FMEP representatives at the Family Justice Centres has significantly improved the reputation of the FMEP among other family justice partners. Family Justice Counsellors stated that one of the impacts of the Pilot Outreach Project is they no longer only see the FMEP as a "collection agency" but as a full partner in the family justice system.

- Most clients surveyed have specific case related problems they wish to resolve with the FMEP but many have been frustrated by the lack of what they perceive to be a compassionate and respectful response (provided through telephone contact). Clients described their meetings with the Outreach Officer as being humane, respectful and considerate, as well as practical and results oriented. There was 86 percent congruence between the assistance clients hoped to receive and actually received at the Client Meetings.
- Many of the payors attending Client Meetings have a history of irregular payments. Unlike the Payment Conferences, however, Client Meetings are oriented towards voluntary, early stage problem solving. For these reasons, the Client Meetings may be a useful preventative approach to payment problems.
- The most frequent outcome of the Payment Conferences was the establishment of the payor's inability to pay and a recommendation to the payor to take steps to vary his/her order.
- Payment Conferences provided only limited new financial/asset information to the FMEP. Only five out of 25 cases concluded in Voluntary or Interim Payment Arrangements. Of these, only three resulted in payments. Three other payors made voluntary lump sum payments to help reduce arrears.
- The Payment Conferences resulted in improved communication and cooperation with most payors, however, this only translated into limited action or information in about half of the cases.
- There is consensus that the Outreach Officer position provides an excellent skills development opportunity for staff. However, due to the small size of the program (one Outreach Worker and one alternate) this opportunity is limited. There are also problems utilizing the expertise gained in this role beyond this position in the organization.

The findings suggest that there is a need to consider an expanded role for the Client Meeting component of the Pilot Outreach Project. This could include expansion of the Client Meetings to more sites—increasing the presence of the Outreach Officer at higher volume sites (such as Surrey and Vancouver) and expanding referral sources to include FMEP Enforcement Officers as well as Family Justice Counsellors. Consideration could be given to expanding the purpose of Client Meetings so they are considered part of an arrears “prevention” approach for payors rather than simply providing an opportunity for information exchange and problem solving.

The FMEP has always been concerned about establishing an alternative service delivery model that cannot be sustained. Referral sources to Client Meetings, however, have already been expanded and now may include the Ministry of Human Resources, Duty Counsel, Enforcement Officers and walk-in clients. It will be important to clarify these sources and referral protocols so that expectations around any expanded use are clear.

The value of the Payment Conferences in achieving payment agreements, producing useful financial information and arrears payments is limited. Some consideration has been given by the FMEP to referring payors with other kinds of backgrounds and payment histories to the Payment Conferences. However, results from this analysis suggest that the majority of the payors now attending Payment Conferences appear to have legitimate issues regarding their ability to pay. A more fruitful approach may be to intervene much earlier in the payment breakdown process. Again, specific criteria need to be developed to identify those payors who might then be more effectively addressed through a voluntary mechanism such as Client Meetings.

# EVALUATION OF THE PILOT OUTREACH PROJECT

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION AND DESCRIPTION OF THIS REPORT

This report presents the findings of an evaluation of the British Columbia Family Maintenance Enforcement Program's Pilot Outreach Project. The Pilot Outreach Project consists of three educational/outreach and enforcement components that involve payors and recipients of maintenance payments. These are: 1) Client Meetings, held primarily with Family Justice Centre clients; 2) Information Sessions provided to Social Assistance Recipients; and 3) Payment Conferences, an enforcement mechanism used for payors with substantial arrears.

The Pilot Outreach Project is managed and staffed by the Family Maintenance Enforcement Program (FMEP). The FMEP is responsible under the *Family Maintenance Enforcement Act* (FMEA) for monitoring and enforcing all the maintenance orders filed with the program. This may involve calculating, reassessing, recording and forwarding payments to the person receiving maintenance payments (recipients) or taking action to ensure the person required to make payments (payor) is making payments. The FMEP is an "opt-in" program with voluntary registration, except in cases where recipients are receiving provincial social assistance benefits.

This report provides a detailed description of the Pilot Outreach Project (Section 2.0), a description of the evaluation framework and methods (Section 3.0), research issues arising from the evaluation (Section 4.0), and evaluation findings related to each of the program components (Section 5.0). Section 6.0 presents the summary and conclusions of the study.



## **2.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE PILOT OUTREACH PROJECT**

### **2.1 BACKGROUND AND HISTORY**

In May 1997 the federal government proclaimed amendments to the *Divorce Act* and *Income Tax Act* and introduced Child Support Guidelines for the determination of child support. In April 1998 the British Columbia Family Relations Act introduced Child Support Guidelines for use under provincial legislation.

To support the implementation of the guidelines and various enforcement measures, the federal government, in 1996-97 entered into a five-year funding arrangement with the provinces and territories. Both an enforcement component and an implementation component (for activities related to Child Support Guidelines) were established under program funding. In February 2000 the federal government extended the provincial and territorial funding to the end of 2002/03 for family justice services and programs to separating parents. The Pilot Outreach Project, which provides information, education and support to payors and recipients, (as well as to others working in the area of family justice) is an example of such a program.

Prior to the passing of the Child Support Guidelines, the British Columbia Family Justice Reform Pilot Project (1993-94) provided support for the improvement of services to parents and children and for increased coordination and liaison between the FMEP and others working in the family justice system. This early initiative, which involved meetings between FMEP staff and clients of the Family Justice Centres to provide support and information, preceded the more formal Client Meetings now coordinated by the Pilot Outreach Project.

The two primary partners in the delivery of services to FMEP clients are the Family Justice Centres and the Ministry of Human Resources Family Maintenance Program (FMP). Family Justice Centres provide alternative dispute resolution services for families involved in maintenance, custody, access, and guardianship and support issues. Family Justice Counsellors use mediation and other assistance to help families to avoid litigation. Family Justice Counsellors are the main referral source for Client Meetings.

The Ministry of Human Resources (MHR) provides British Columbia Employment and Assistance (formerly B.C. Benefits) payments to those who require them. It is a mandatory requirement for recipients of assistance to enroll in the FMEP if child and spousal support is due. A division within the MHR, the Family Maintenance Program (FMP), helps clients establish or vary their maintenance orders. Because it is not within the mandate and expertise of the FMP to provide information and advice about maintenance enforcement, the FMEP has, in the past, provided direct information to some clients on these topics.

## **2.2 UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES AND PHILOSOPHY OF THE PILOT OUTREACH PROJECT**

Over the past several years, the FMEP has been enhancing its customer focus so that its clients (both recipients and payors) feel better served. Although the primary way of dealing with clients is, and will continue to be, by telephone, the FMEP has recognized that client service can be improved by adding a supplementary form of direct access as demonstrated by the Pilot Outreach Project.

The Pilot Outreach Project was developed to provide limited face-to-face access for some clients in specific situations, recognizing that this personal contact might help clients to better understand how the Program operates and to resolve difficult issues.

Some of the specific factors that led to the development of the Pilot Outreach Project were:

- Awareness by the FMEP that payors, as well as recipients, are clients of the program, and that their characteristics and needs should also be appreciated, assessed, considered and incorporated into service delivery decisions;
- Awareness that the current service delivery model has not completely addressed the characteristics and needs of payors who are not meeting the terms of their maintenance order. Payor characteristics should be related to specific payment resolution strategies that will both achieve results and make the payor feel respectfully treated. For example, one of the identified payor “types” is the individual who is suddenly having difficulty paying because of a short term financial problem (e.g. a few weeks lay-off). In these cases the appropriate program response is to try and negotiate a plan for current and future payments based on the duration of the problem (e.g. development of a Voluntary Payment Arrangement);
- Awareness that some kind of assistance is needed for those payors who are willing to pay but who have become overwhelmed by debt or payment problems. These payors may have difficulties resolving their issues through telephone contact alone;
- A need to build coordination, integration and positive partnerships with other service providers into the program, particularly with others working in the family justice system;
- Awareness that payors have legitimate concerns about structural difficulties within the justice system which make it difficult, for example, to vary a maintenance order if the payor’s situation changes. These demands and concerns helped clarify the need for a more personal approach by the FMEP;
- Awareness that payment enforcement occurs within a family context where there are partners and children who are affected, not only by payment requirements, but also by the methods and approaches used to obtain payments. While the goal of obtaining payments is always paramount, the enforcement approach has the potential of increasing or reducing harm to relationships. Ultimately, approaches made by an enforcement agency could affect the well-being of children.

There has been some dissatisfaction with the handling of client calls by the FMEP, which has led to client complaints. Skills training have now been developed for Enquiry Representatives and Enforcement Officers to improve telephone outreach and build more effective relationships with clients.

### **2.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE PILOT OUTREACH PROJECT**

Six objectives were originally developed by the FMEP for the Pilot Outreach Project.<sup>1</sup> These objectives were incorporated into the Evaluation Framework (Section 3.0). The Pilot Outreach Project objectives are:

1. To increase awareness and knowledge about the FMEP within the justice community;
2. To integrate the services of the FMEP with other services provided to mutual clients at the Family Justice Centres;
3. To work together with other programs in the family justice community to provide information to the public and other stakeholders;
4. To pilot the Payment Conference provisions of the Family Maintenance and Enforcement Act;
5. To provide a forum for, and achieve an understanding of, the dynamics of face to face contact with clients;
6. (Secondary objective) To provide a developmental opportunity for both FMEP staff and the Family Justice Centres.

### **2.4 STRUCTURE AND STAFFING OF THE PILOT OUTREACH PROJECT**

The Pilot Outreach Project consists of one primary staff person (Outreach Officer), who is an Enforcement Officer, and one alternate Enforcement Officer. The Outreach Officer plans, coordinates and schedules the Payment Conference and Client Meeting components of the Project. She is coordinated by an Enforcement Manager who designs work processes, implements training for the Outreach Officer and alternate Enforcement Officers and coordinates internal communications. Another FMEP Enforcement Manager coordinates the team that provides the FMEP information sessions for recipients of B.C. Employment and Assistance.

### **2.5 COMPONENTS OF THE PILOT OUTREACH PROJECT**

The Pilot Outreach Project consists of three components. A fourth component, Payor Information Workshops, is not currently being implemented and was not included in the evaluation design or implementation. The three components addressed in this evaluation are:

- Client Information Meetings—held to provide maintenance enforcement information to clients of Family Justice Centres;

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<sup>1</sup> FJC Pilot Outreach Project Progress Report (07/05/01)

- MHR (Social Assistance) Recipient Information Meetings—held with recipients of B.C. Benefits to provide information about the FMEP and maintenance enforcement. The structure and outreach of these meetings is being redesigned and is documented in this report. No meetings were held during the Evaluation Implementation Phase;
- Payment Conferences—enforcement mechanisms held to establish Voluntary Payment Arrangements with payors in order to avoid a Default Hearing.

Until 1999 the FMEP also participated in Payor Information Workshops coordinated by the Family Justice Services Division. The intent of these workshops was to provide payors with information about the Child Support Guidelines, the processes for varying a maintenance order, the role of the FMEP and ways of addressing debt. Although these workshops are not being held at the present time they may be started again in the future.

The three components included in the evaluation are described in detail below.

## **2.5.1 Client Meetings**

### ***2.5.1.1 Description***

Family Justice Counsellors (FJCs), located at Family Justice Centres, provide alternative dispute resolution for families involved in maintenance, custody, access or guardianship issues, through mediation and other mechanisms. Frequently FJC clients also require information about the FMEP or assistance with maintenance enforcement issues.

The first Client Meetings were initiated by the FMEP in 1994 as part of the Justice Reform Pilot Project established by the Ministry of Attorney General in cooperation with the Ministries of Social Services and Women's Equality. This initiative established a stand-alone service delivery model (including the development of Family Justice Centres) for the delivery of family justice services. The first Client Meetings were not held on a regular basis and were less formal in structure.

### ***2.5.1.2 Location of Client Meetings***

Client Meetings consist of face to face meetings held between Pilot Outreach Project staff and clients referred primarily by the Family Justice Counsellors at eight Family Justice Centres in Vancouver and the Lower Mainland. The Centres include two locations in Vancouver (Court House and 1<sup>st</sup> and Commercial), Burnaby, West Fraser (Surrey), East Fraser (Abbotsford), Port Coquitlam (includes Coquitlam), Maple Ridge and North Vancouver. Clients referred from other communities (e.g. Richmond, Langley and New Westminster) attend Client Meetings at one of these eight Family Justice Centres. The Pilot Outreach Project Officer visits the centres one to two times per month. Most referrals are made to the FMEP Pilot Outreach Project worker by the Family Justice Counsellors. Client appointments are normally made in advance. Clients are *not* required to be enrolled in the FMEP at the point of referral.

The Pilot Outreach Project worker also receives referrals from the Court Registry, the Court Duty Counsel, Ministry of Human Resources staff, the Parenting After Separation Program and FMEP Enforcement Officers. There are also a number of clients who require brief drop-in

service or counter service. None of these brief service referrals are formally tracked, although the Outreach Officer estimates these contacts to reach 10 to 20 per month.

### ***2.5.1.3 Objectives of Client Meetings***

Client Meetings provide specific information about the FMEP and maintenance enforcement to clients and Family Justice Centre staff. In doing so, they support the integration of family justice services. The specific objectives of the Client Meetings are:

- To distribute informational material and provide education directly to FJC clients about the FMEP and maintenance rights and responsibilities of payors and recipients;
- To provide helpful, client-oriented, personal and professional services in face to face meetings with clients who are referred by Family Justice Counsellors;
- To increase the awareness and knowledge of the role of the FMEP and basic maintenance/enforcement program policies and procedures among Family Justice Counsellors, one of the FMEP's key partners in the family justice system;
- (Through the provision of these services) to increase the comprehensiveness of services provided by the Family Justice Centres.

### ***2.5.1.4 Number of Referrals to Client Meetings***

Not all referrals to Client Meetings are formally tracked. The level of brief service or walk-in clients is estimated to be 10 to 20 clients per month. Data recorded by the FMEP indicate that 314 payors and recipients attended Client Meetings in 2002. Referral sites are described in Table 1 below (data for the two Vancouver sites are aggregated).

**Table 1 Referrals per Site**

<b>Time Period</b>	<b>Sites</b>						<b>Total</b>
	<b>Vancouver (Robson &amp; Commercial sites)</b>	<b>Tri-Cities (Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody)</b>	<b>Burnaby</b>	<b>North Vancouver</b>	<b>West Fraser (Surrey)</b>	<b>East Fraser (Abbots- ford)</b>	
January – March 2002	28	2	16	--	19	11	76
April – June 2002	21	12	10	4	27	15	89
July – September 2002	19	12	8	--	23	9	71
October – December 2002	28	14	12	--	19	5	78
<b>Total</b>	96	40	46	4	88	40	314

## **2.6 MHR INFORMATION SESSIONS**

### **2.6.1 General Description of MHR Information Sessions**

The MHR Information Sessions are general information sessions held with recipients of B.C. Employment and Assistance who are already or will be enrolled in the FMEP and are in receipt of maintenance payments. The meetings were originally organized by the Ministry of Human Resources Family Maintenance Program in Pitt Meadows, British Columbia in 1999 to provide general information to new recipients of British Columbia Employment and Assistance. The FMEP originally participated by observing meetings prior to making presentations in conjunction with the Family Maintenance Program (FMP) of the Ministry of Human Resources (MHR).

The FMEP component of the presentations was usually 20 minutes long. Meetings were held once a month. Topics presented at the Ministry of Human Resources Information Sessions were:

- The role of the FMEP;
- How to obtain an order;
- Payor and recipient obligations;
- Enrollment procedures;
- How to get payments;
- Reasons why payments aren't arriving.

Attendance at past sessions has varied (1-10 participants) but the turnout has frequently been low (1-3). A significant proportion of participants did not have or require maintenance orders. Because the meetings did not target those with maintenance orders, facilitators and the Enforcement Officer coordinating the sessions had concerns about their relevance.

The last information session was held in July 2002. Subsequent sessions were cancelled by mutual consent of the Ministry of Human Resources and the FMEP. A new structure for the dissemination of information about the FMEP and maintenance enforcement has been developed (see Section 2.6.2).

### **2.6.2 New Structure and Outreach for MHR Information Sessions**

In order to increase attendance at the MHR Information Sessions and target information to the most appropriate clients, a new structure and plan for these meetings has been developed by the FMEP in consultation with the MHR.

Under this new plan, only MHR clients who have or are just about to receive maintenance orders will be required to attend the information sessions. Clients will be drawn from Region 3, which covers the area between New Westminster and Hope. The sessions will be held once a month in Coquitlam and will focus only on issues related to maintenance enforcement. At the time of

writing, a draft client contact letter had been completed and the development of protocols and processes for the MHR and the FMEP was underway. The meetings are expected to be mandatory for all clients with new maintenance orders.

The first meeting in this new series was scheduled for early February 2003, after this evaluation was to be completed. Although the MHR meetings cannot be assessed within this evaluation, the client feedback questionnaire developed for the evaluation (see Appendix: FMEP Information Session Feedback Form) could be adapted for future use.

## **2.7 PAYMENT CONFERENCES**

### **2.7.1 General Description of Payment Conferences**

A Payment Conference is an enforcement mechanism used by the FMEP that attempts to reach a Voluntary Payment Arrangement (VPA) with payors owing substantial maintenance arrears in order to avoid a Default Hearing.

All referrals to Payment Conferences are made by FMEP Enforcement Officers. Although no specific written referral criteria exists, the types of payors who are likely to be referred include those payors who are not paying any of their arrears, payors who are uncommunicative and payors who appear unwilling to pay.

Payment Conferences are the last enforcement process prior to the case being referred to a Default Hearing.

The first Payment Conference was held in July 2001. Payment Conferences are held at two Family Justice Centre Rule 5 sites: Vancouver (Courthouse) and Surrey. Rule 5 sites are offices where clients are required to see a Family Justice Counsellor prior to proceeding to Provincial Court. To date, Pilot Outreach Payment Conferences have only been held at Rule 5 sites.

### **2.7.2 Objectives and Outcomes of the Payment Conference**

The principle objective of the Payment Conference is to establish a Voluntary Payment Arrangement in order to reduce payor arrears and avoid a Default Hearing. Other outcomes may also result from a Payment Conference. These include:

- The provision of new financial or asset information to the FMEP which may ultimately assist in the collection of arrears;
- The establishment of the payor's financial status and/or ability to pay;
- The establishment of the need and time frame for the payor to vary his/her maintenance order;
- Information on new or self-employment;

- The referral of the payor to other services and resources;
- The development of a more communicative and on-going relationship with the payor.

### 2.7.3 Number of Clients Referred to Payment Conferences, 2001-2002

Forty-seven payors were referred to Payment Conferences during 2002. This is somewhat higher than the total number referred in 2001 (44 cases).

**Table 2      Number of Referrals to and Attendance at Payment Conferences, January 2002—December 2002 (FMEP Data)**

Number Referred	Jan—Dec 2002 *
	47
Total Attended	16 (34%)
Total No Show	26 (55%)
No Data	4 (8%)
Other	1 (2%)

\* These data cannot be completely verified. Other data compiled by the consultant indicate a higher percentage of no-shows.

The data indicate that only 34 percent (16/47) of payors who were required to attend Payment Conferences attended. The number of no-shows in 2002 was higher than in 2001 (42 percent).

In June 2002, four recommendations were made by the Enforcement Manager of the Pilot Outreach Project to help increase the attendance of payors at Payment Conferences. A plan was initiated to notify all payors about the Payment Conferences by registered, rather than by regular, mail. A second recommendation was that the Outreach Officer include more detail about the results of the Payment Conference on the computer record in order to provide a more detailed case history and improve follow-up and tracking. Two other recommendations are still under consideration. One is that payors who are required to attend Payment Conferences be identified at an earlier stage in their arrears history and the other is that those with a different type of payment history be included. A final recommendation is that a letter be generated by the electronic case management system to remind payors to attend the conference.

### **3.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE EVALUATION FRAMEWORK AND METHODS**

#### **3.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE EVALUATION FRAMEWORK**

An Evaluation Framework, developed in the design phase, provided the plan for assessing Pilot Outreach Project outcomes, effectiveness, impact and client and service provider satisfaction.

Table 3 summarizes all aspects of the Evaluation Framework including Project and Evaluation Objectives, Evaluation Questions, Measurement Indicators and Methodologies. The evaluation objectives were developed from existing program documents, interviews with key respondents and input from the Evaluation Subcommittee advising on the project.

Each component of the Evaluation Framework is described below:

Project Objectives:

- Define the measurable objectives for all components of the Pilot Outreach Project;
- The objectives were identified from planning documents and from consultation with key FMEP staff and members of the Evaluation Subcommittee.

Evaluation Objectives:

- Define the objectives of the evaluation research arising out of the project objectives.

Evaluation Questions:

- Identify the major questions to be addressed in the evaluation research.

Measurement Indicators:

- Define the data that indicate whether an evaluation objective has been achieved;
- Ensure measurement indicators are specific and measurable.

Methods:

- Define the specific evaluation strategies that will be used to meet the data requirements of the Measurement Indicators;
- Strategies are varied and consist of surveys, telephone interviews and file and document reviews.

### 3.2 EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

**Table 3 FMEP Pilot Outreach Project: Evaluation Framework**

<b>Project Objectives</b>	<b>Evaluation Objectives</b>	<b>Questions</b>	<b>Measurement Indicators</b>	<b>Methodologies</b>
<b>1.0 To implement a Pilot Outreach Project that meets the needs of recipients and payors enrolled in the FMEP, FJCs and the Family Maintenance Program.</b>	1.1 To determine whether the Pilot Outreach Project has been effectively implemented.	1.1.1 Are there clear objectives and plans, which define the scope and purpose of the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project objectives and planning documents in place.</li> </ul>	Review of planning documents, Charter, minutes of meetings
		1.1.2 Have all components of the outreach project been implemented?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Components are defined and implemented.</li> </ul>	Key respondent interviews: FMEP, MHR and FJCs
		1.1.3 Has the staff position been clearly defined and appropriate criteria been used for selection?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job description in place.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document review</li> </ul>
		1.1.4 Has training been defined and is it perceived as appropriate?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training is defined and has been implemented.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document review, key respondent interviews</li> </ul>
		1.1.5 Are client referral and follow-up forms in place that provide comprehensive information on client type and use?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Referral forms collect comprehensive client data.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document review</li> </ul>
		1.1.6 Is criteria for referral from the FJCs and from Enforcement staff identified and consistently followed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Referral criteria documented.</li> <li>• Referrals reflect consistent approach (i.e. to arrears and default).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document review</li> <li>• Key respondent interviews (FMEP)</li> <li>• FJC survey</li> </ul>
		1.1.7 Is scheduling and co-ordination between the FMEP and the FJCs appropriate, efficient and well maintained?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scheduling exists, is understood and is viewed as appropriate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key respondent interviews</li> <li>• FJC Survey</li> </ul>

**Table 3 FMEP Pilot Outreach Project: Evaluation Framework (cont'd)**

Project Objectives	Evaluation Objectives	Questions	Measurement Indicators	Methodologies
<p><b>2.0 To collect specific payor information (through Payment Conferences) that will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist in the development of a Voluntary Payment Arrangement (VPA) (and in the collection of arrears) or</li> <li>• Establish the payor’s need to vary the maintenance order.</li> </ul>	<p>2.1 To determine whether payor information is collected that could establish a payor’s ability to pay or assist in the development of a VPA. Payment/asset information could consist of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location information</li> <li>• Employment information (particularly related to self-employment)</li> <li>• Asset information (property, bank accounts, RRSP account, other assets)</li> </ul> <p>Specific financial information could consist of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tax returns</li> <li>• Payment stubs</li> <li>• Copy of other earnings (Employment Insurance, pension, disability, Workers’ Compensation.)</li> <li>• Property assessment notice</li> <li>• Credit card statement</li> </ul>	<p>2.1.1 What client or asset information is collected through Payment Conferences that is relevant to the development of a VPA or the collection of arrears? (see list 2.1)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Client provides (new) payment and employment information.</li> <li>• Information is transferred into the running record.</li> <li>• Information appears to be new to FMEP records.</li> </ul> <p>Information is used to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a payor’s need to vary the maintenance order.</li> <li>• Develop the terms of the VPA.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Payment Conference Outcome Assessment</li> </ul>
<p><b>3.0 To collect information about the personal and institutional barriers to payment and supports to payment that may assist the FMEP in the collection of arrears (applies to Payment Conferences &amp; Client Meetings).</b></p>	<p>3.1 To identify personal and institutional barriers that may act as barriers to payment.</p> <p>3.2 To identify triggers or program responses that may encourage payment.</p>	<p>3.1.1 What informational or other barriers are experienced by clients that may affect payments?</p> <p>3.1.2 What triggers and supports to clients facilitate payments?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data is collected on barriers and responses that affect payments.</li> <li>• Information is incorporated in corporate planning/client response (e.g. client profiles).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Payment Conference Outcome Assessment</li> <li>• Client Meeting Assessment Form</li> <li>• Payor Survey</li> <li>• Key respondent interviews</li> </ul>

**Table 3 FMEP Pilot Outreach Project: Evaluation Framework (cont'd)**

<b>Project Objectives</b>	<b>Evaluation Objectives</b>	<b>Questions</b>	<b>Measurement Indicators</b>	<b>Methodologies</b>
<b>4.0 To distribute informational materials and provide education to payors and recipients about the FMEP program and maintenance rights and responsibilities.</b>	4.1 To determine whether education and information on the MEP and payor/recipient rights and responsibilities is provided.	4.1.1 What information is provided to clients?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clients' information / educational needs are identified.</li> <li>• Project components provide client information through written materials or face-to-face meetings.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document review</li> <li>• Key respondent interviews (FMEP, MHR)</li> <li>• FJC Survey</li> </ul>
	4.2 To determine whether clients' needs for information are being met.	4.2.1 What are the information requirements of clients? 4.2.2 What information do clients perceive as relevant and useful? 4.2.3 Are the needs of clients being met?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clients perceive information as useful.</li> <li>• Family Justice Counsellors and Family Maintenance Workers perceive client needs as being met.</li> <li>• FMEP staff view client needs as met.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key respondent interviews (FMEP, MHR)</li> <li>• FJC Survey</li> <li>• Client Survey</li> <li>• Client Meeting Assessment Form</li> <li>• MHR Recipient Feedback Form</li> <li>• Payor Feedback Form (if Payor meetings held)</li> </ul>
<b>5.0 To provide a helpful client-oriented, personal and professional service to clients referred by FJCs, FMEP and FMP staff.</b>	5.1 To determine whether the service is perceived by clients to be helpful, client-oriented, personal and accessible.	5.1.1 Do clients perceive the service as helpful, client-oriented, personal and accessible?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clients perceive service as being client-oriented, helpful, personal and accessible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Client Meeting Assessment Form</li> <li>• MHR Feedback Form</li> <li>• Payor Survey</li> <li>• Payor Workshop Survey Form (if payor workshops implemented)</li> </ul>

**Table 3 FMEP Pilot Outreach Project: Evaluation Framework (cont'd)**

Project Objectives	Evaluation Objectives	Questions	Measurement Indicators	Methodologies
<p><b>6.0 To achieve one or more of the following outcomes through the mechanism of Payment Conferences:</b></p> <p><b>a) The establishment of a payor’s need to vary an order;</b></p> <p><b>b) The development of a Voluntary Payment Arrangement;</b></p> <p><b>c) An increase in the level and regularity of payments;</b></p> <p><b>d) The avoidance of a Default Hearing.</b></p>	<p>6.1 To determine whether the need to vary an order has been established.</p> <p>6.2 To determine whether payments have commenced or become more regular as a result of participation in Payment Conferences.</p> <p>6.3 To determine whether a Default Hearing has been avoided.</p>	<p>6.1.1 Is the payor financially able to meet the terms of the maintenance order?</p> <p>6.1.2 Have steps to vary an order been undertaken?</p> <p>6.1.3 Has a Voluntary Payment Arrangement been developed?</p> <p>6.1.4 Have payments commenced?</p> <p>6.1.5 Has a Default Hearing been avoided?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Client has attended a Payment Conference.</li> <li>• Payor is perceived to be able to make payments towards arrears.</li> <li>• Client is perceived as more cooperative by Outreach staff.</li> <li>• Client makes steps to vary order (if required).</li> <li>• Client signs payment plan.</li> <li>• Pattern of payment (post Payment Conferences) shows improvements in payment regularity and amount.</li> <li>• Client avoids Default Hearing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Payment Conference Outcome Assessment</li> <li>• Document review</li> <li>• Payor Survey</li> <li>• Payment Conference Summary Sheet</li> </ul>
<p><b>7.0 To increase awareness and knowledge of the role of the FMEP and basic maintenance / enforcement program policies and procedures among key partners in the family justice system.</b></p>	<p>7.1 To determine whether the Pilot Outreach Project has led to an increased awareness of FMEP policies and processes by those in the family justice system.</p>	<p>7.1.1 Does contact and information lead to increased awareness and understanding of FMEP program policies and processes?</p> <p>7.1.2 Do Family Justice counsellors, Family Maintenance staff and others find the information relevant and useful to their own work?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family Justice Center staff, Family Maintenance Program staff and others in the family justice system have increased understanding of FMEP program policies and processes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FJC Survey</li> <li>• Key respondent interviews</li> </ul>

**Table 3 FMEP Pilot Outreach Project: Evaluation Framework (cont'd)**

<b>Project Objectives</b>	<b>Evaluation Objectives</b>	<b>Questions</b>	<b>Measurement Indicators</b>	<b>Methodologies</b>
<b>8.0 To increase the comprehensiveness of services provided by the Family Justice Centers.</b>	8.1 Does the direct access to FMEP information by clients increase the comprehensiveness of services offered by the Family Justice Centres and enhance the integration of services?	8.1.1 What is the range of services offered through the Family Justice Centres? 8.1.2 Does the access to FMEP services expand the range of related services available to clients? 8.1.3 Is the information provided by the FMEP perceived as complementary to the mandate of the Family Justice Centres?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The FMEP provides specialized services that are perceived as directly relevant to Family Justice Centre clients but are not provided by Family Justice Counsellors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FJC Survey</li> <li>• Key respondent interviews</li> </ul>
<b>9.0 To provide an employment skills development opportunity for FMEP staff.</b>	9.1 Is involvement with the Pilot Outreach Project seen as a developmental opportunity for staff?	9.1.1 Do Project Outreach staff feel that project involvement has increased their skill levels and job satisfaction?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FMEP staff perceive skill levels and job satisfaction to have increased.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key respondent interviews (FMEP)</li> </ul>

### **3.3 DATA COLLECTION METHODS**

Seven data collection methods are referred to in the Evaluation Framework and were used in the implementation of the evaluation. These are described below.

#### **3.3.1 Document and Statistical Review**

A number of documents, data collection forms and statistics were reviewed for the evaluation. These included statistics related to the Client Meetings and Payment Conferences, data gathered from data collection forms (Family Justice Centre Referral Forms, Payment Conference Summary and Client Referral Forms) and the FMEP Progress Report. Information from broader program documents (Pilot Outreach Project Charter, program planning documents) was reviewed in the design phase and was also incorporated in this report.

#### **3.3.2 Telephone Survey of Family Justice Counsellors**

A telephone survey was conducted with Family Justice Counsellors (FJCs) who make referrals to Client Meetings. Twenty-four FJCs (65 percent) were randomly selected from a list of the 34 FJCs currently working at 10 Family Justice Centres. Two Intake Workers were included in the list of respondents. The highest proportion of survey participants were from Vancouver (Robson) and West Fraser (Surrey).

The survey was administered by telephone from September to October 2002 and collected information on:

- The approximate number of payors and recipients referred to Client Meetings by the Family Justice Counsellors;
- Criteria used by the FJCs for screening and referral of payors and recipients;
- Specific client needs that led to a referral;
- The helpfulness and benefits of the Payor Outreach Project to recipients, payors and Family Justice Counsellors;
- Barriers to service experienced by payors;
- Limitations of the Client Meetings and ways these could be addressed;
- Whether, and the degree to which, the Client Meetings and Pilot Outreach Project enhance the comprehensiveness of services delivered by the Family Justice Centres.

#### **3.3.3 Client Meeting Survey**

A survey was conducted with clients attending Client Meetings who had been referred by Family Justice Counsellors between September 9 and December 6, 2002. The survey consisted of a brief written questionnaire that was distributed to and completed by clients. To preserve

confidentiality, after completing the questionnaire clients placed the form in an envelope which was then sealed before being given to the Outreach Officer. The survey was completed by both payors and recipients and collected information on:

- Case characteristics (e.g. payment regularity);
- Reasons for referrals;
- Information and/or referrals provided by the Pilot Outreach Project;
- Perceived usefulness and applicability of information;
- Value of face to face meeting in comparison with telephone contact;
- Client assessment of meeting quality;
- Client satisfaction.

Fifty-three clients (75 percent) out of a total of 71 clients who attended the meetings during the study completed the survey form.

### **3.3.4 Payment Conference Outcome Assessment Form**

The Payment Conference Outcome Assessment Form was used to collect information on the outcomes of the Payment Conferences. The data was collected from FMEP case management records (primarily the running record), the Payment Conference Summary Form and FMEP Referral Sheets.

The Payment Conference Outcome Assessment Form collected information on:

- Payor demographic and case characteristics (including status of arrears);
- Payment agreements arising from the Payment Conference;
- Other outcomes arising from the Payment Conference including:
  - The provision of new asset or financial information;
  - The provision of new employment or self-employment information;
  - Information on the payor's ability/inability to pay;
  - Information on the payor's need to vary the order;
  - Status of the Default Hearing;
  - Other outcomes (e.g. increased communication and/or cooperation between the FMEP and the payor);
  - Type and level of referrals to other resources.

Outcome assessments were completed on 25 cases, representing 23 payors (two payors were involved in two cases). These constituted *all* the payors who had attended a Payment Conference (in person or by telephone) between August 2001 and August 2002.

### **3.3.5 Payment Conference Telephone Survey**

#### ***3.3.5.1 Description***

A telephone survey of payors who were notified to attend Payment Conferences was carried out in order to assess the impact and effectiveness of the Payment Conference in removing barriers to the payment of arrears. The Payment Conference Telephone Survey addressed the following:

- Payment characteristics and history;
- History of contacts with the FMEP;
- The payor's assessment of face to face as opposed to telephone contact;
- The payor's assessment of the utility of the Payment Conference in addressing barriers to payment;
- Barriers to payment;
- Outcomes of Payment Conference.

#### ***3.3.5.2 Contact Process for Payor Telephone Survey***

All payors whose files were reviewed for the Payment Conference were contacted for the telephone survey. In order to preserve confidentiality the Director, Family Justice Programs Division, sent a contact letter describing the purpose and nature of the research along with more specific information about the research provided by the consultant. The letters were sent by regular mail.

#### ***3.3.5.3 Payor Response Rates***

Payor response rates for the Telephone Survey were low. Only 35 percent of the payors (8/23) participated in the research. This represented 40 percent (10/25) of the cases. Low response numbers were due to "not in service" numbers (4), payors refusing to participate (4), payors not returning calls in response to a telephone message (3), or payors saying they had not attended the Payment Conference (2). Two respondents denied being or knowing the payor.

The following steps were taken to address the issue of low response:

- FMEP case data was reviewed in order to ascertain whether updated contact information was available;
- A minimum of five calls to each payor contact number was made at different times of the day;
- Varying messages were left on voice mail describing the research and encouraging payor participation.

Despite these attempts, response rates were not improved.

### **3.3.6 Key Respondent Interviews**

Six key respondent interviews were held with key respondents in the research implementation phase to clarify issues related to policies or processes related to the Pilot Outreach Project. Key respondents were from the Pilot Outreach Project, the FMEP and the Family Justice Centres. Information from these interviews built upon more extensive key respondent interviews conducted with 14 key respondents in the design phase.

### **3.3.7 Other Methodologies**

A seventh evaluation method (MHR Recipient Feedback Form) was designed but not implemented due to changes in the structure and delivery of this component of the program (Section 2.6.2).

## **4.0 RESEARCH ISSUES**

Three issues arose in the implementation of the evaluation research. These affected the evaluation process and outcomes.

### **4.1 INCOMPLETENESS OF DATA ON PAYMENT CONFERENCE SUMMARY SHEET AND REFERRAL FORMS**

It was intended that payor data related to Payment Conferences (e.g. new information brought to the conference or current arrears totals) would be extracted from program documents such as the Payment Conference Summary Sheet and the FMEP Referral Form (completed by the FMEP Enforcement Officer). In many cases, data on these forms was missing, incomplete or inconsistent. For example, many FMEP Referral Forms had been discarded and data on the specific financial information payors brought to the Payment Conference was missing. Discrepancies were also found between information provided on the running record (see 4.2) and on the documents.

### **4.2 INCOMPLETENESS AND INCONSISTENCY OF DATA**

There was a lack of data or conflicting data in some FMEP case management fields related to the evaluation. For example, there was often contradictory data on past, current or new employment on the Payment Conference Summary Sheet, the Employer Log and the running record.

To address these inconsistencies, it was necessary to rely on the running record for all information related to case characteristics payor and payment history, Payment Conference agreements and outcomes. The running record is an abbreviated narrative description completed by Enforcement Officers. Its purpose is to record, in a narrative form, all the events and actions in relation to a payor file. It is time-consuming to review and frequently difficult to interpret. The comprehensiveness of data in the running record is difficult to establish because there are no distinctive data fields nor can the narrative be searched by key word.

The FMEP electronic management system (including the running record) was developed for operational not for research purposes. This accounts for some of the difficulties encountered during data retrieval.

### **4.3 LOW COMPLETION RATE OF PAYOR TELEPHONE SURVEY**

The completion rate for the survey of payors who had attended a Payment Conference was low—40 percent of all cases. Although there were a small number of payors with “Not in Service” telephone numbers, the majority of payors could not be contacted or expressed unwillingness to participate because of their negative attitude towards the FMEP. It should be noted that most of these payors had a long history of non-payment and, as a consequence, had been subject to many enforcement actions.

Payors also said that they received so many letters regarding payments that the research contact letter appeared to them to be just another enforcement letter. In these cases, the letter was thrown out before being read.

## **5.0 EVALUATION FINDINGS**

### **5.1 ASSESSMENT OF CLIENT MEETINGS BY FAMILY JUSTICE COUNSELLORS**

Two evaluation strategies were used to address the effectiveness and impact of Client Meetings. These consisted of 1) a telephone survey of Family Justice Counsellors, and 2) a post meeting survey of clients attending Client Meetings. Section 5.1 presents the results of the Family Justice Counsellor survey; Section 5.2 presents the findings of the client survey.

#### **5.1.1 Number of Family Justice Counsellors Participating in the Survey**

Twenty-four (71 percent) Family Justice Counsellors (FJCs) were randomly selected from a list of 34 current Family Justice Counsellors. The highest proportion of Family Justice respondents (23 percent) participating in the research were from the Family Justice Centre on Commercial Drive (Vancouver).

#### **5.1.2 Issues Addressed in the Family Justice Counsellor Telephone Survey**

The FJC Telephone Survey explored the following issues:

- Approximate number of payors and recipients referred to the Client Meetings by the Family Justice Counsellors;
- Criteria used by Family Justice Counsellors for screening and referral of payors and recipients;
- The type of payor and recipient needs requiring a referral;
- The helpfulness and benefits of the Client Meetings to recipients, payors and Family Justice Counsellors;
- Barriers to service experienced by payors;
- Limitations of the Client Meetings and ways these could be addressed;
- Whether, and the degree to which, the Client Meetings enhance the comprehensiveness of services delivered by the Family Justice Centres.

#### **5.1.3 Level of Referrals Made by Family Justice Counsellors**

There are a greater proportion of payors than recipients referred to the Client Meetings by the Family Justice Centres. While all Family Justice Counsellors had made referrals of payors, only 71 percent (17/24) had made recipient referrals. The average number of payor referrals made per month was 4.9. In comparison, the average number of recipients referred per counsellor was low (averaging 1.3 clients per month).

#### 5.1.4 Screening and Referral Criteria Used by Family Justice Counsellors to Refer Payors and Recipients

Family Justice Counsellors are the main referral source for Client Meetings. Some referrals are also made by FMEP Enforcement Officers, the Court Registry, Duty Counsel, and the Ministry of Human Resources. Referrals are also made from among walk-in clients.

Although the FJCs have no specific *written* referral criteria on which to base referrals, 92 percent identified general criteria that they used to determine whether a payor referral would be made. Criteria covered two main areas of service need: payors enrolled in the FMEP with *specific* maintenance enforcement issues and payors with broader issues or concerns who had been unsuccessful in communicating effectively with the FMEP by telephone. Over half the FJCs said that they often referred payors who had found telephone contact with the FMEP to be “frustrating and unsatisfying.”

**Table 4 Reasons for Referrals of Payors to Client Meetings**

<b>Reasons for Referral</b>	<b>Number Reporting * (N = 22)</b>
Payor has issues related to the amount or processing of payments.	11
Payor is frustrated and unable to resolve issues through telephone contact.	11
Payor has specific information issues (e.g. needs copy of order).	8
Case details complex and beyond expertise of FJCs.	4
Payor needs information about enforcement mechanisms.	3
Payor does not understand the system of maintenance enforcement.	3
Payor’s financial circumstances have changed.	2
Payor is motivated to resolve issues related to payments.	2
Court action pending.	1
Screen out history of violence.	1

\* Respondents provided more than one answer.

Only 57 percent (12 out of 21 FJCs who responded to this question) of Family Justice Counsellors said they had specific criteria in mind when determining the referral of a recipient of maintenance to a Client Meeting. The most common reason was the recipient’s inability to resolve issues or acquire information through telephone contact with the FMEP.

**Table 5 Reasons for Referrals of Recipients to Client Meetings**

<b>Screening Criteria</b>	<b>Number of FJCs Reporting* (N = 17)</b>
Recipient cannot resolve problems through telephone contact.	7
Recipient requires information on the status of arrears.	3
Complex case or maintenance order.	2
Recipient wishes to negotiate with payor around arrears.	2
Recipient reports violence in relationship.	2
Recipient requires basic information about maintenance enforcement.	1
Recipient has information to share with the FMEP about case.	1

\* Respondents provided more than one answer.

### 5.1.5 Client Needs

Family Justice Counsellors were asked to identify the most common *needs* of payors in relation to maintenance enforcement.

Client frustration over contact with the FMEP and the need to establish more personal contact were the major issues identified by half of the Family Justice Counsellors. Twenty-five percent of FJCs (6/24) noted that payors wished to make payments or resolve issues around payments.

**Table 6 Payor Needs Identified by Family Justice Counsellors**

<b>Payor Needs</b>	<b>Number of FJCs Reporting* (N=24)</b>
Payor frustrated by attempts to solve problems through telephone contact with the FMEP.	12
Payor unable to make payments.	12
Payor wants to change payment arrangements.	8
Payor lacks understanding of FMEP mandate and process.	8
Payor lacks information related to specific enforcement actions and process.	8
Payor needs clarification regarding specific amount of arrears.	7
Payor wants to make payments.	6
Payor has severe language, skill or other barriers necessitating personal contact.	4
Payments made, not recorded.	3
Payor going to court.	1
No fixed address.	1

\* Respondents provided more than one answer.

While some recipients feel unable to resolve problems by telephone most had specific questions about enforcement mechanisms, receipt of payments or general questions about their own role or what is expected of them by the FMEP.

**Table 7 Recipient Needs Identified by Family Justice Counsellors**

<b>Recipient Needs</b>	<b>Number of FJCs Reporting* (N=17)</b>
Recipient wants information on time frame of payments.	9
Recipient does not understand their role in relation to the FMEP.	7
Recipient feels unable to solve problems on telephone.	5
Recipient wants information on arrears.	4
Recipient has skill, emotional and physical barriers which limit understanding.	2
Recipient wants arrears cancelled.	1
Recipient has problems with enrollment.	1
Complex case with multiple issues.	1

\* Respondents provided more than one answer.

### 5.1.6 Barriers Experienced by Payors

Eighty-three percent (20/23) of Family Justice Counsellors identified specific barriers that payors frequently face in terms of making payments or in relating to the FMEP. Fifty-eight percent of Family Justice Counsellors identified language or cultural barriers; other barriers were a low level of literacy, no employment or ability to pay and a lack of payor understanding of FMEP requirements.

**Table 8 Payor Barriers Identified by Family Justice Counsellors**

<b>Barriers Identified by FJCs</b>	<b>Number of FJCs Reporting* (N=23)</b>
Language or cultural barriers.	14
Literacy problems.	7
No employment affecting an ability to pay.	7
Lack of understanding of FMEP process, policies and procedures.	6
Emotional problems.	4
Limited communication skills.	3
Large debt load (usually supporting multiple families).	3
Social problems.	3
No money for legal assistance.	2
Feeling labeled as “dead beat dad.”	1

\* Respondents provided more than one answer.

### **5.1.7 Rating of the Quality and Value of Client Meetings**

Family Justice Counsellors were asked to assess the helpfulness of the Client Meetings on several dimensions. These included:

- The quality, accessibility and promptness of the service;
- The ability to accommodate all client needs;
- The value and utility of the Client Meetings for clients;
- The value and utility of the Client Meetings for Family Justice Counsellors;
- The degree to which the Pilot Outreach component enhanced the services of the Family Justice Centres.

The Pilot Outreach Project is rated very highly by Family Justice Counsellors in terms of the quality, approach, accessibility and expertise of staff. Particularly high ratings were given for the Outreach Officer’s courteous response, professionalism and level of knowledge. Although still positive, ratings were somewhat less positive for promptness of service (most clients have to wait at least two weeks for a meeting because of the number of sites visited by the Outreach Officer) and *least* positive in terms of providing resolution to some specific client needs.

**Table 9 Rating of Client Meetings by Family Justice Counsellors**

<b>Rating Item</b>	<b>Number of FJCs Reporting</b>	<b>1-2-3 Low</b>	<b>4-5 Medium</b>	<b>6-7 High</b>	<b>Average Rating</b>
Pilot Outreach Project staff are accessible and easy to contact.	24			24	6.87
Pilot Outreach Project staff are courteous and professional.	24			24	7.0
Pilot Outreach Project staff are knowledgeable and well informed.	24			24	6.96
Clients receive assistance promptly from Pilot Outreach Project staff.	22		4	18	6.31
The Pilot Outreach Project addresses all client needs related to maintenance and enforcement.	22		11	11	5.68
Information to clients assists Family Justice Centre service delivery.	24		3	21	6.41
The presence of the Pilot Outreach Project on the Family Justice Centre site has increased understanding of FMEP policies and processes.	24			24	6.79

These data suggest that there is concern that the Client Meeting is not able to resolve some client needs. In fact, the Outreach Officer’s role is primarily to provide information, suggest steps to resolve problems or make referrals to other resources. This may not result in the immediate resolution of the client’s problem.

Family Justice Counsellors are strongly of the view that the presence of the Outreach Officer at the Family Justice Centres has increased FJC understanding of FMEP policies and processes. In a response to a direct question, “Did you feel services provided by the Pilot Outreach Project enhanced the services provided by Family Justice Centres?” all respondents said yes. Half of the FJCs noted that the presence of FMEP on-site allowed the FJCs to offer a comprehensive set of related services to clients in one location. According to the FJCs, more comprehensive service provision reduces client frustration and stress.

Family Justice Counsellors believe that the information provided by the Outreach Officer is valuable to clients *and* their own staff.

“It’s a wonderful resource. She answers all of my questions immediately.”

“Her presence has increased *our* understanding of FMEP.”

The sharing of maintenance enforcement and case information, together with a unified approach to cases, leads to improved planning for clients. The service is experienced as integrated by clients who in the past may have seen the FMEP as a “negative” service within the family justice system.

Family Justice Counsellors also noted that personal client access to the FMEP at the Family Justice Centres allowed them to focus more fully on their own mandate, roles and responsibilities.

“We are able to refer quickly so have more time with other clients.”

**Table 10 Ways in Which the Client Meetings Enhance the Services Provided by the Family Justice Centres**

Service Enhancements	Number Reporting* (N=24)
Enable us to provide a <i>comprehensive</i> set of client services in one location.	12
Provides specific expertise not held by Family Justice Centre staff.	8
Excellent resource for staff dealing with related issues.	7
Increases client satisfaction and reduces stress.	5
Allows FJCs to concentrate on their own service delivery and role.	4
Enables the FMEP and FJCs to work together using a team approach.	4
Improves payments to recipient.	2
Helps resolve client problems without going to court.	1

\* Respondents provided more than one answer.

### 5.1.8 Most Important Benefits of the Client Meetings

Family Justice Counsellor respondents were asked to identify the most important benefits of Client Meetings. There was a strong consensus that access to a personal, face to face meeting that provides specific *case* related information and recommendations in a respectful environment are the most important benefits of the meetings. Having an expert available who is focussed on a specific problem area, and who provides clients with concrete steps to address the problem, is seen as invaluable.

The Outreach Officer is described as empathetic, supportive, helpful and focused. The responsive tone of the Client Meetings provides a constructive environment within which to address client issues.

“Clients feel like someone cares, listens and is offering help.”

“It’s an opportunity for payors to have their story heard, listened to and treated with respect and to be offered options that can work for them.”

“Clients get a good understanding of what they have to do.”

Family Justice Counsellors also noted that the Client Meetings help in diffusing the anger and frustration that payors sometimes feel towards the FMEP that is counter-productive to resolving payment problems.

“It diminishes the anxiety and anger of clients who often hate the process and the FMEP even before they begin.”

**Table 11 Benefits of Client Meetings to Clients (As Assessed by FJCs)**

<b>Benefits to Clients</b>	<b>Number of FJCs Reporting* (N=24)</b>
Direct <i>face to face</i> contact provides better mechanism for problem solving.	19
Allows for specific focus on client problem or case.	10
Clients given specific information and steps to address problem.	10
Quality of staff (empathetic, supportive, respectful and non-authoritarian) enhances problem solving.	10
Client feels someone cares, is listening and offering help.	9
Defuses anger and anxiety clients commonly experience when dealing with the FMEP.	5
Clients get specific information on status (e.g. arrears, need to vary an order).	2
Efficient, time saving.	2
Verbal information better for clients with literacy problems.	1

\* Respondents provided more than one answer.

### 5.1.9 Benefits of Client Meetings to Family Justice Centres

Family Justice Counsellors were also asked to describe how Client Meetings had benefited them. The most frequent comment was that direct access to the Outreach Officer had increased their own knowledge and understanding of the role and mandate of the FMEP and maintenance enforcement policies and procedures. A second benefit was the increased capacity of the Family Justice Centres to offer a more comprehensive and related set of services to clients. Finally, FJCs noted that a referral to the Outreach Officer was always an effective referral and one that could be relied on to provide assistance to clients.

“We have confidence in knowing we can refer clients and that they will receive excellent service.”

“It allows us to terminate contact with clients in a positive way, knowing the Outreach Officer will do the work.”

**Table 12 Benefits of Client Meetings to Family Justice Counsellors**

<b>Benefits to Family Justice Counsellors</b>	<b>Number Reporting* N=24</b>
Excellent source of information about the FMEP and maintenance enforcement.	12
Increases the ability of Family Justice Counsellors to assist clients.	11
High level of confidence in referral.	10
Streamlines service.	3
Reduces caseload.	2
Increases mutual respect and teamwork.	2
Provides a service for clients who do not handle telephone contact well.	2
Avoids going to court.	1
Able to handle complex cases.	1
Reduces client anger.	1

\* Respondents provided more than one answer.

### 5.1.10 Limitations of Client Meetings and Strategies to Address Limitations

Family Justice Counsellors were asked to identify limitations of the Client Meetings in terms of clients or the Family Justice Centres. There was strong consensus that the Client Meetings and access to the Pilot Outreach Project Officer on-site were extremely valuable. Half of the FJCs expressed concern about the limited availability of the service. There is only one Outreach Officer and she has other responsibilities in addition to Client Meetings. Appointments at the Family Justice Centres typically occur no more than two times a month.

“We’d like more contact. It could be expanded. There is just one person covering a large area.”

“I’d like to refer more people to her, so that it becomes standard practice instead of a problem situation.”

Family Justice Counsellors recommended that Pilot Outreach Project staff be placed into the high volume Family Justice Centres on a permanent part-time basis. Others recommended that *all* Family Justice Centres (including New Westminster, Richmond, Langley) receive regular visits from the Outreach Officer.

A third recommendation was that there be more sharing of FMEP case information with Family Justice Counsellors. This would provide background to FJCs, which could be helpful in providing client services.

“We’d like more access to FMEP client records and data bases as it is difficult to prepare background information without this information.”

Several Family Justice Counsellors recommended that FJCs be assigned a code to allow counsellors “read only” access to client files.\*

A final recommendation made by Family Justice Counsellors was that the Pilot Outreach Project take the lead in developing a broader set of education initiatives specifically oriented to payors. Topics could include methods and processes to vary Supreme Court maintenance orders, general information and assistance on completing court related documents and information on strategies for avoiding court.

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\* Due to the confidentiality provision of the Family Maintenance Enforcement Act, direct access to client files by Family Justice Counsellors would be problematic. Other methods of information sharing, such as the use of client consent forms and client access to the FMEP website, could be considered to address the desire to share client enforcement and payment status data.

### **5.1.11 Overall Assessment of the Pilot Outreach Project by Family Justice Counsellors**

There is very strong consensus on the part of Family Justice Counsellors that the Client Meeting component of the Pilot Outreach Project is an effective initiative that is valuable to both Family Justice Centre staff and to clients. The effectiveness of the project is considered to be due, in large part, to the personal qualities of the Outreach Officer.

“The Project is extremely successful. It far succeeded (exceeded) my expectations.”

“The Outreach Officer IS the program. She is the right person to deal with angry, belligerent clients.”

Family Justice Counsellors emphasized that the quality and expertise of staff, the face to face aspect of the meeting, the practical problem-solving approach and responsiveness to FJC information needs were the most valuable features of the program.

Family Justice Counsellors also believe that the Pilot Outreach Project had helped change the reputation of the FMEP among other family justice partners. As well as being a source of relevant and practical information, the Outreach Officer was seen to be responsive to client issues and receptive to FJC concerns.

“We’re working as a team now—instead of us, ‘the good guys,’ and the FMEP, the ‘bad guys.’”

“There is a definite need for the service because clients’ biggest frustration is a lack of ability to get in touch with the FMEP. With the Outreach Officer, the FMEP is not JUST a collection agency.”

## **5.2 CLIENT MEETING SURVEY**

### **5.2.1 Description and Participation Rates**

A survey was conducted with clients attending Client Meetings who had been referred by Family Justice Counsellors between September 9 and December 6, 2002. The survey consisted of a brief written questionnaire, which was distributed and collected immediately after the meetings by the Outreach Officer. The Survey was completed by both payors and recipients and collected information on:

- Case characteristics (e.g. payment regularity);
- Reasons for referrals;
- Information provided;
- Perceived usefulness and applicability of information;
- Value of meeting itself and in relation to previous telephone contact with the FMEP;

- Client assessment of quality of meeting;
- Client satisfaction.

Fifty-three clients (75 percent) out of a total of 71 referrals made during the study completed the survey form.

Completed forms were submitted from clients attending meetings at five centres: East Fraser (Abbotsford), West Fraser (Surrey), Burnaby, Vancouver and Port Coquitlam. The highest level of client participation in the survey was from Surrey. Thirty-eight percent (20/53) of the total number of questionnaires completed were from this Family Justice Centre site.

### 5.2.2 Case Data

Sixty-eight percent of the clients (36/53) attending Client Meetings were payors, 30 percent (16/53) were recipients and one person was both a payor and recipient. The majority of those attending the meetings had maintenance orders (96 percent or 51/53); only four percent (2/53) did not. Fifty-five percent (29/53) of the orders were from Family Court; 26 percent were Supreme Court Orders. One client had orders from both courts and nine clients were not able to provide court level information.

Eighty-five percent (45/53) of the clients attending Client Meetings were already enrolled in the FMEP, while 13 percent (7/52) were not. (In one case the client did not respond.) All of the non-enrollees wanted to discuss enrollment at the meeting.

### 5.2.3 Level of Payments Made

Recipients were asked to describe the level of maintenance payments they had received. While a small percentage had received regular payments, most described their payments as occasional (Table 13).

**Table 13 Recipient Assessment of Payment Level and Regularity**

<b>Recipient Assessment of Level of Payments</b>	<b>Number</b>
No payments.	6 (35%)
Occasional payments.	7 (41%)
Regular payments as required by maintenance order.	3 (17%)
Regular payments then occasional.	1 (6%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>17 (99%)</b>

Most payors attending the Client Meetings had payment problems. Forty-six percent (16/35) described themselves as having made occasional payments; 34 percent described themselves as making regular payments as required by the maintenance order.

**Table 14 Payor Assessment of Payment Level and Regularity**

<b>Level of Payment</b>	<b>Number Reporting</b>
No payments made.	2 (6%)
Occasional payments.	16 (46%)
Regular payments as required by maintenance order.	12 (34%)
Payments exceeded maintenance order.	1 (3%)
Payments made by wage garnishees or deductions.	3 (9%)
No recent payments (past was regular).	1 (3%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>35 (101%)*</b>

\* Totals may not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

#### **5.2.4 Type of Assistance Clients Hoped to Obtain from the Client Meeting**

Clients were asked to describe the assistance that they hoped to obtain from the Client Meeting.

Issues and problems defined by clients were diverse and case specific. Eighty-eight percent (20/53) of the clients described more than one problem or issue. The most common issue identified by payors (17 percent or 9/53) was a problem making payments because of a change in personal circumstances. These clients hoped to change their order or have their new circumstances taken into account. Eleven percent (6/53) wanted clarification on the exact amount of arrears owing and assistance in understanding court procedures or documents and enforcement measures (Table 15).

“(I wanted to) enquire about enrolling and asking questions about the kind of deductions allowed. To have someone help me fill out the forms correctly so that it would ease up time correcting later. Enquire about variance and continued university obligations.”

“Information on course of action due to extreme financial and mental disability. Anxious to look after children but unable to do so. Where do I go? What do I do? Can anyone help me? I’m terrified and alone.”

**Table 15 Assistance Clients Wanted to Obtain from the Client Meeting**

Type of Assistance Required	Number Reporting (N=53)
Strategies to address problems making payments (payors only).	9
Clarification of exact amount owing.	6
Information about enforcement mechanisms—how they work and what they do.	6
Information about court procedures or assistance in filling out forms.	6
General information about case.	4
How to make payments (payors only).	3
Basic information about the FMEP—why enrollment necessary.	3
How to vary an order.	3
Status of variance of order.	3
How to stop enforcement mechanisms (e.g. Default Hearing, License Denial).	3
How to obtain court order.	2
How to file an order in another jurisdiction.	2
How to enroll in the FMEP.	2
Information about maintenance related to older children.	2
Wanting my side of the story heard.	2

### 5.2.5 Information Clients Received from the Client Meetings

Most clients described the Client Meetings as providing four broad types of information:

- The specific processes that need to be taken to address a payment problem;
- Basic information about the role, mandate and expectations of the FMEP;
- Information about maintenance and court processes;
- Details about their case (e.g. specific amount of arrears).

Twenty-six percent of the clients (14/53) said that they received information on the specific steps required to deal with payment problems; 13 percent (7/53) said they obtained specific information about their case of which they were not aware. Clients felt that the information they received was specific, direct and practical and was delivered in an attentive and non-judgmental manner.

“I found out how payments and garnishments occur. All our questions were answered with extra information (i.e. phone numbers and different areas to contact).”

“(The meeting was) very clear and helpful. (I was) advised yes, agreement is valid, and can be filed and court order obtained in England. I was advised what information I would need to provide and I was also advised I could accept a negotiated settlement.”

Table 16 provides detail on the types of information most commonly provided.

**Table 16      Types of Information Provided at the Client Meeting**

<b>Information Provided by Client Meeting</b>	<b>Number (N = 53)</b>
Steps needed to address problems making payments.	14
Specific case information.	7
Information about legal and court proceedings.	7
Referrals to other legal resources.	6
Information about enforcement actions taken against payor.	5
Assistance with specific court procedures/applications.	4
Completion of FMEP enrollment.	4
Handling enforcement mechanisms (payor).	3
Information about setting up a Voluntary Payment Agreement.	2
Review of total account.	2

One-quarter of the clients said they received very basic information about the FMEP and/or maintenance enforcement that they either didn't know about or had never clearly understood.

“I found out how payments and garnishments occur. All our questions were answered with extra information.”

“Helped me to understand what can be done to get money owed, income tax refund, for example.”

These data indicate that there is still a small but significant group of outreach clients who lack understanding of basic FMEP policies and processes, such as information about enforcement mechanisms.

There was a strong positive correlation between the information hoped for and the information received. Of the fifty-one respondents who provided information about both questions on the questionnaire, 86 percent (44/51) said that the information they received completely addressed their enquiry; in 6 percent of cases (3/51), the information partially met the terms of the enquiry; and in 8 percent of cases (4/51), this was unknown. Clients assessed the information they received to be specific, practical and relevant. Two examples are provided below.

**Assistance Wanted**

*“I wanted to know what steps are next because the payor is not paying.”*



**Assistance Received**

*“Found out what has been done trying to locate payor at work, how much he owes and what legal action is being done.”*

*“(I wanted) to clarify the amount owed and how to go about settling that issue with the recipient.”*



*“I was given information on how to make an agreement with the recipient and how to prioritize my options given the specific difficulties of the situation.”*

### **5.2.6 Most Useful Aspect of the Client Meeting**

Clients identified three aspects of the Client Meeting as being particularly useful. The capacity of the Outreach Officer to clearly *identify* their problem and to provide specific options and steps to resolve it was identified by 36 percent (17/47) of the respondents.

“I left with two pieces of written information on what steps to take which I will work on immediately: Step 1: Book an appointment with a resource person. Step 2: Go to website on preparing court paperwork myself. Step 3: Proof paperwork prior to registering in court.”

Thirty percent (14/47) said that they most valued the face to face personal contact of the meeting because it was more respectful, empathetic and allowed for a fuller exchange of information and ideas.

“I like to be able to meet with the enforcement worker face to face because it is almost impossible to talk to someone in the office. With her having the computer right there she can check all the information.”

Twenty-five percent (12/47) of respondents found specific information about the working of the FMEP most valuable, particularly information relating to enrollment and the operation of enforcement mechanisms.

### **5.2.7 Least Useful Aspect of the Client Meeting**

Only thirteen respondents had any criticisms of the Client Meeting. The most common complaint was that although information had been provided it had done little to change their payment capacity problem or the amount of payments they had received.

“Nothing has changed—still paying for two children, even with proof one child is 20 years old and a letter from ex’s lawyer agreeing to eliminate the child from maintenance. FMEP should not be enforcing the order.”

Four of the thirteen clients felt that they had not received information vital to their case or that new information (for example, payor contact information) was not available. Three clients mentioned a lack of sufficient legal information or resources to assist with their case. However, this was seen as an overall problem, not specifically related to the FMEP. One client said that the meeting took up too much time.

### **5.2.8 Evaluation of Quality of Service**

Clients were asked to evaluate the quality of the Client Meeting on five measures: the convenience of the meeting time and location, and the courtesy, knowledge and concern shown by the Outreach Officer. Items were rated on a seven-point scale (1 = very poor service, 7 = excellent service). Results of the quality assessment are provided in Table 17.

**Table 17 Client Evaluation of Quality of Client Meeting**

Aspect of Service	N	Ratings			Mean
		Poor 1-2-3	Average 4-5	Excellent 6-7	
Convenience of location.	51	3 (6%)	10 (20%)	38 (74%)	6.14
Convenience of time.	51	4 (8%)	10 (20%)	36 (71%)	6.27
Courtesy of Outreach Officer.	51	0	1 (2%)	50 (98%)	6.80
Knowledge of Outreach Officer.	51	0	1 (2%)	50 (98%)	6.73
Concern shown by Outreach Officer.	51	0	1 (2%)	50 (98%)	6.71

The majority of clients rated the Outreach Officer as excellent in the areas of courtesy, knowledge and concern. This finding corroborates the results of the Family Justice Counsellor survey. The consensus among both FJCs and clients is that the Outreach Officer is an excellent resource person with very good interpersonal and communication skills who conveys a strong sense of respect and concern for clients. She is a source of comprehensive, accurate, detailed and practical advice.

The convenience of the time and location of Client Meetings were not rated quite as highly. Some clients were frustrated that the meetings were scheduled during the daytime, requiring time taken from work. Because meetings are not held at all Family Justice Centres some clients had a somewhat lengthy distance to travel. This could be a hardship for those without personal transportation.

“It took up too much of my time. Evenings would be better. Had to miss work.”

Clients were also asked to rate how well the Client Meetings helped them understand more about the FMEP or resolve problems specifically related to making or receiving payments. These outcomes were rated on a 7-point scale (1=not helpful, 7=very helpful).

There was a consensus among 82 percent (41/50) of the clients attending the Client Meetings that the meetings were very helpful in increasing client understanding of the FMEP and maintenance enforcement. Payors were somewhat more polarized on the helpfulness of the Client Meeting than were recipients. More payors (76 percent) described the Client Meetings as very helpful in terms of addressing payment problems than did recipients (73 percent). The high positive rating given by most payors suggests that the problem solving approach is seen as helpful by the majority, many of whom have significant payment problems.

**Table 18 Client Rating of Helpfulness of Client Meeting**

Aspect of Service	N	Ratings			Mean
		Not Helpful 1-2-3	Moderately Helpful 4-5	Very Helpful 6-7	
Helping to increase understanding about the FMEP.	50	3 (6%)	6 (12%)	41 (82%)	6.26
Helping recipients with problems <i>getting</i> payments.	15	1 (7%)	3 (20%)	11 (73%)	5.82
Helping payors resolve issues related to <i>making</i> payments.	34	5 (15%)	3 (9%)	26 (76%)	6.04

### 5.2.9 Degree of Prior Telephone Contact and Comparison of Telephone and Personal Contact

Eighty-one percent (42/52) of the clients attending Client Meetings had previously made contact with the FMEP to try to obtain information or resolve issues. Twenty percent of the group who could recall the number of calls made had had thirteen or more telephone conversations in an attempt to resolve issues. Family Justice Counsellors also identified the difficulty of resolving problems through telephone contact as a significant problem for clients.

**Table 19 Number of Prior Telephone Contacts with the FMEP**

Number of Telephone Calls	Number Reporting
1 – 2 calls	10 (25%)
3 – 6 calls	12 (30%)
7 – 12 calls	10 (25%)
13 – 20 calls	4 (10%)
21 + calls	4 (10%)
Total	40 (100%)

### 5.2.10 General Assessment of the Client Meeting

All the clients stated that they found the personal meeting very useful and saw many benefits of this type of meeting in comparison to telephone contact. Forty-four clients identified specific advantages of a personal meeting. Sixty-four percent (28/44) of this group said that they felt face to face meetings are more productive, honest and direct and that they allow for more accurate, comprehensive and frank information exchange.

“It was not until I met in person and they could actually read my court order that they were able to provide me with the information and forms necessary for me to seek court help.”

“Because you can be more open and see for yourself if the other person is actually listening and is not distracted.”

“I feel it helps both parties understand issues better.”

The format of the Client Meetings made people feel more hopeful about being able to resolve their problems. This is because answers are usually immediate and case information can be accessed and reviewed while the payor is present.

“There is more time with you and you can ask all the questions and get answers right away.”

“More personalized and no rush.”

Thirty-six percent of the clients (16/44) said that they felt the meeting was better because the tone was more compassionate, supportive and reassuring. Some felt that, for the first time, there was someone actively listening to their problems.

“The reason I do not phone in is the lack of human contact, willingness to help and long waiting time. These are all very emotional and stressful issues that require human contact.”

“Able to build some kind of rapport. Able to talk to someone who is knowledgeable. Helpful, sincere interaction between human beings. A person does not feel so isolated in difficult times. Very good to feel a little better after this meeting.”

Twenty-seven percent (12/44) of the respondents felt that the details of their case were so complex that it was difficult to get assistance on the phone. Five respondents stated that they had tried to resolve issues over the phone but felt frustrated by the lack of response.

“Do not have to put up with terrible telephone system, just to be told they will get back to you in two working days. Cannot sit by phone for two days waiting for a call.”

Three respondents noted that barriers of language or hearing had made telephone contact difficult. These were addressed in the face to face meeting.

“Clear communication in person is necessary—I am deaf.”

## **5.3 PAYMENT CONFERENCE OUTCOME ASSESSMENT**

### **5.3.1 Description and Participation Rates**

The Payment Conference Outcome Assessment Form was used to aggregate payor demographic and case data and to identify payment and other outcomes arising from Payment Conferences.

The Payment Conference is an enforcement mechanism used by the FMEP to attempt to reach a Voluntary Payment Arrangement (VPA) with payors owing substantial maintenance arrears in order to avoid a Default Hearing. Payors are referred to Payment Conferences by FMEP Enforcement Officers. Conferences are held at two Rule 5 Family Justice Centre sites (Vancouver Courthouse and Surrey). They are coordinated and attended by the Pilot Outreach Project Officer.

Twenty-five Payment Conferences, involving 23 payors, were assessed. The cases included all payors who attended a Payment Conference or had been contacted by telephone between August 2001 and August 2002. Most of the Payment Conferences (23/25) were held in person, in 2/25 cases deliberations were conducted by telephone. Most consisted of one meeting; in two cases a second meeting was held.

### **5.3.2 Description of the Payment Conference Outcome Assessment Form**

The Payment Conference Outcome Assessment Form aggregated data from the following sources: FMEP Case Data (primarily the running record), the Payment Conference Summary Form and the FMEP Referral Form.

The specific types of data collected for the Payment Conference Outcome Assessment were:

- Payor demographic data (e.g. gender, type of order, location and employment);
- Case data (arrear amount, payments made, enforcement and contact history);
- Data on Payment Conference outcomes.

### **5.3.3 Types of Outcomes Measured**

Three outcomes (immediate, intermediate and final), based on the timing of results, were used to reflect the stages and timing of possible outcomes arising from the Payment Conference. Table 20 describes the outcomes assessed in this component of the evaluation.

Most of the data for the Payment Conference Outcome Assessment was collected from the FMEP running record, which compiles, in a narrative form, the actions and outcomes related to each case.

The data was inputted into the *The Survey System* data management and statistical analysis program. Data was aggregated by frequency counts and thematic analysis.

**Table 20 Outcomes Measured by the Payment Conference Outcome Assessment**

Type of Outcome	Description of Outcome	Outcome Questions
<b>IMMEDIATE OUTCOMES</b>	New information arising from the Payment Conference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did the payor provide new financial information at the Payment Conference? (e.g. Statement of Finances, Revenue Canada data, bank statement, personal asset data, credit card statement or loan documentation.)</li> <li>• Did the payor provide new information on self-employment? (e.g. Business Statement, payroll information, business name, assets or location.)</li> <li>• Were new assets found as a result of the Payment Conference? (e.g. vehicle, property, bank account, RRSP.)</li> </ul>
	Establishment of payor’s capacity to pay.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the payor have the capacity to pay arrears?</li> <li>• What factors have limited the payor’s capacity to pay arrears?</li> </ul>
<b>INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES</b>	Development of Voluntary Payment Arrangement (VPA) or Interim Payment Arrangement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was a VPA or Interim Payment Arrangement developed as a result of the Payment Conference?</li> </ul>
	Level and type of referrals made.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What (if any) referral sources were recommended to the payor?</li> </ul>
	Recommendation to vary the maintenance order.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What was the time frame given to the payor within which to vary the order?</li> </ul>
<b>FINAL OUTCOMES</b>	Payments made.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what degree were the terms of the VPA met?</li> <li>• Which (of any) payments resulted from the VPA?</li> </ul>
	Referrals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What referral sources did the payor contact?</li> </ul>
	Varying the Order.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did the payor meet the time frame to vary the order?</li> </ul>
	Improved communication and cooperation with payor.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did the Payment Conference result in improved communication and cooperation with the payor?</li> </ul>
	Default Hearing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was a Default Hearing avoided?</li> </ul>

### 5.3.4 Demographic and Case Data

Twenty-one of twenty-three (21/23) payors were male, 2/23 were female. All payors appeared to be currently living in British Columbia.

Seven of twenty-five maintenance orders covered one child, 15 covered two children and three covered three children.

In 10/25 cases, no employment data was available; in 6/25 cases, the payor was self-employed, and in 7/25 cases, the payor was employed by a company or organization.

Two of the payors had multiple cases.

Five payors were enrolled in the FMEP as recently as 2000; 6/25 were enrolled prior to 1995.

**Table 21 Date of FMEP Enrollment**

Date of Enrollment	Number of Payors
Pre 1995	6
1995 - 1996	6
1997 - 1998	6
1999 - 2000	7
TOTAL	25

### 5.3.5 Payment and Enforcement Data

The monthly payments required by this group of payors ranged from \$50 to \$1,685; the average monthly payment requirement was \$377. Almost half of the cases (11/25) involved relatively small monthly payments (under \$300 per month). Table 22 shows the range of payments required.

**Table 22 Monthly Payment Requirements**

Payments Required Per Month	Number of Payors
Under \$100	2
\$100 - 299	9
\$300 - 499	8
\$500 - 699	3
\$700 - 899	2
\$900 +	1
TOTAL	25

Most cases (20/25) had three to four *active* enforcement mechanisms in place prior to the Payment Conference. Specific enforcement mechanisms are described in Table 23.

**Table 23      Number and Type of Active Enforcement Mechanisms in Place  
Prior to the Payment Conference**

<b>Enforcement Mechanism</b>	<b>Number of Payors (N = 25)</b>
NOFI (Notice of Federal Interception of Funds)	25
NOA (Notice of Attachment)	9
CPA (Compulsory Payment Allotment—Military)	--
Reg. Land (Registration Against Land)	1
NOFG (Notice of Federal Garnishment of Salaries) (GAPDA)	--
Credit Bureau	22
Federal License Denial	7
Driver's License Withholding	21

None of the payors had been involved in a previous Default Hearing.

### **5.3.6    Level of Arrears and Payment Regularity**

Total arrears ranged from \$2,226 to \$73,340. The average amount of arrears per payor was \$25,353. Approximately half of the payors had an arrears total under \$15,000; 5/25 payors had arrears totalling over \$30,000.

**Table 24      Amount of Arrears Owed by Payors**

<b>Amount of Arrears</b>	<b>Number of Payors</b>
\$1 – 5,999	3
\$6,000 – 9,999	3
\$10,000 – 14,999	6
\$15,000 – 19,999	5
\$20,000 – 29,999	2
\$30,000 – 39,999	2
\$40,000 – 49,999	2
\$50,000 +	1
Total	25 (note: totals 24)

### **5.3.7    History of Payments**

The average amount of payments made by payors to the FMEP was \$9,151. Only two payors in the study group had previously made *no* payments to the FMEP; two others had made very sporadic payments. The total value of these payments (per payor) was, in most cases, small—in the range of \$1,000 - 4,999.

**Table 25 Total Payments Made**

<b>Total Payments Made</b>	<b>Number of Payors</b>
No payments	2
\$0 – 999	2
\$1,000 – 4,999	11
\$5,000 – 9,999	3
\$10,000 – 14,999	2
\$15,000 – 24,999	3
\$25,000 – 49,999	1
\$50,000 +	1
Total	25

In the 12 months prior to the Payment Conference approximately half of the payors (11/25) had made no payments; five had made some level of payments and nine had made more than seven payments. In the 14 cases where payments had been made, seven payors had made more than 12 payments. In eight cases where payments were made and data was available, seven were completely from attached sources; one was from a VPA. \*

A review of the payment history of these cases reveals five distinctive patterns of payment.

- Payors who had made no payments (2/25 payors);
- Payors who had made very occasional payments (10/25);
- Payors who had made somewhat regular payments but who had not made payments in full compliance with their maintenance orders (5/25);
- Payors who had been paying sufficiently and regularly but who had stopped in response to a specific financial event (4/25);
- Payors who had been irregular payors but who had made regular payments after the application of an enforcement mechanism (4/25).

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\* Establishing the source of each payment and whether the payments were voluntary or made as a result of a deduction was problematic.

### 5.3.8 Outcomes of the Payment Conference

#### 5.3.8.1 Financial Information Provided

One of the objectives of the Payment Conference is to acquire new financial or asset information from the payor that may help in future enforcement of maintenance provisions. The payor is instructed to bring the following documents to the Payment Conference:

- A copy of the three most recent income tax refunds;
- Pay stubs;
- A copy of statement of income from other sources;
- Property assessment notice;
- A copy of each credit card statement over the past 12 months.

Table 26 provides an overview of the financial and asset information provided at the Payment Conferences. It indicates that a partial or complete Statement of Finances or Income Tax was provided by 11/25 payors. In most cases, very little asset or personal financial information was provided. For example, a credit card statement was supplied in only 3/25 cases. No new business asset information was found in any of the cases.

**Table 26 Financial or Asset Information Provided at the Payment Conference**

Type of Financial Data	Not Applicable	Level of Information Provided		
		No Information	Some Data Provided (no complete data)	No Data / Unknown
Statement of Finances.		12	11	2
Business Statement.	2	21	1	1
Business Asset Information.	14	11	--	--
Bank Statement.		21	3	1
Income Tax Statement.	1	12	11	1
Credit Card Statement.		22	3	
Payroll Information.		19	6	
Loan Documentation.		25	--	

#### 5.3.8.2 Employment and Personal Asset Information Provided

In one case, new employment related information was provided; this was related to regular, not self-employment (name of employer).

No personal assets (such as RRSPs, vehicle or property ownership) were disclosed as a result of the Payment Conference.

### 5.3.8.3 Status of Payment Arrangement and Referral Outcomes

In 14/25 cases the Payment Conference established that the payor did not have the ability to pay.

Three intermediate outcomes were also assessed: the number of Voluntary or Interim Payment Arrangements made, the number of recommendations to vary the maintenance order and the number of referrals. These outcomes are summarized in Table 27.

**Table 27 Intermediate Payment Related Outcomes of the Payment Conference**

<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Number of Cases</b>
Payor lacks ability to pay.	14/25
Voluntary or Interim Payment Arrangement made.	5/25
Recommendation that payor vary maintenance order.	20/25
Referrals made.	21/25

A principle objective of the Payment Conferences is to establish a Voluntary or Interim Payment Arrangement, which is an agreement that the payor will pay a regular pre-established amount to reduce arrears. There were limited results in this area. A VPA was established in only 3/25 cases; in one other case, an Interim Payment Order was put in place until the process to vary the maintenance order was completed. In another case, an agreement in principle was made to turn over anticipated income tax return refunds to the FMEP to settle arrears.

In 20 cases, it was recommended that payors take steps to vary their maintenance orders. Time durations of from seven to 10 weeks were given to complete this process. These data suggest that 60 to 80 percent of the payors required to attend Payment Conferences are assessed as having legitimate issues that affect their ability to pay.

In most cases (21/25), referrals to other services or resources were an outcome of the Payment Conferences. The most frequent recommendation (20/21 cases) was to the Salvation Army Pro Bono Service, followed by referrals to Family Justice Counsellors (16/23). Ten payors were referred to Debtor Assistance.\*

### 5.3.8.4 Payment Outcomes

Three of the five payors with specific payment agreements made payments in full or partial compliance with the agreement. The total amount of these payments was \$15,300. Payments were tracked from immediately after the Payment Conference to the time of data compilation. This time period varied from three to 15 months. In one case, the payor made no payments, and in the fifth case, the payor was waiting for an income tax return refund in order to make payments.

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\* This service has been terminated.

In addition to payments arising from specific agreements, four additional payors with no agreements made lump sum payments to assist in the reduction of their debt. These additional voluntary payments totalled \$5,799.

In total, 7/25 payors made payments as a result of the Payment Conferences, for a total of \$21,099.

Table 28 describes the history of payments of all types in the tracking period after the Payment Conference. Over a third of all payors (9/25) made no payments (either regular or to reduce arrears) after the Payment Conference; nine made regular payments but did not reduce arrears and seven made some payments to reduce arrears.

**Table 28 Post Conference Payments Made (All Types of Payments)**

Payor Made No Payments	Payor Made Regular Maintenance Payments Only	Payor Made Arrears Reduction Payments Only	Payor Made Regular and Arrears Reduction Payments
9	9	4	3

**5.3.8.5 Compliance with Agreement to Vary the Order**

An agreement was made with 20/25 payors to begin the process of varying their maintenance order. At the time this research was completed only two of these processes had been completed. In 8/25 cases the process was still underway. However, in 50 percent of the cases (10/20) no action towards varying the order had been taken.

**5.3.8.6 Default Hearings**

Payment Conferences are one enforcement tool used to address the non-payment of arrears. If a Voluntary Payment Agreement or another acceptable outcome does not result from a Payment Conference a recommendation will likely be made that the case proceed to a Default Hearing.

At the time of this study, thirteen of the twenty-five cases had been recommended to proceed to a Default Hearing because of a lack of payments or progress on the varying of the order within the specified time frame. Only one Default Hearing had been completed. Evaluating the process of the Default Hearings was not part of this evaluation.

**Table 29 Status of Default Hearings**

Status	Number (N = 13)
Recommended but no action taken by the FMEP.	2
Default Hearing process underway.	10
Default Hearing completed.	1

### ***5.3.8.7 Additional Payment Conference Outcomes***

No follow-up data was available on whether referrals to resources such as the Salvation Army Pro Bono Service were contacted. Some data, however, was collected on whether the Payment Conference led to improved communication and cooperation between the FMEP and the payor. It is surmised that a more cooperative and regularized relationship could assist the FMEP in the collection of future payments.

In 17/25 cases, Payment Conferences appeared to lead to improved and more regular contact with payors. In 8/17 cases, this increased contact led to greater sharing of information that was relevant to the FMEP or to the payment of arrears. This included information about:

- Payments made but not reported by the recipient;
- Payor illness;
- The impact of enforcement mechanisms on the ability to work and make payments.

However, in 6/17 cases, the increased regularity of contact and cooperative attitude of the payor did not translate into specific action or information related to payments. In three other cases, the outcome was unknown.

## **5.4 PAYMENT CONFERENCE TELEPHONE SURVEY**

### **5.4.1 Description and Participation Rates**

A telephone survey of payors who had attended Payment Conferences was carried out in order to assess the outcomes, impacts and effectiveness of the Payment Conference. The telephone interviews collected data on:

- Payment issues and barriers experienced by payors;
- History of previous contact with the FMEP;
- The payor's assessment of the quality of the Payment Conference;
- The payor's assessment of the utility of the Payment Conference in removing barriers to payment;
- The payor's assessment of the value of in-person versus telephone contact.

Response rates for the telephone survey were low. Only 8/23 payors (representing 40 percent or 10/25 of the cases) responded, despite extensive contact efforts on the part of the researcher. The lack of response was due to Not in Service telephone numbers (4), direct refusals (4), payors not returning calls (3), payors denying attendance at the Payment Conference (2) or denial from the person answering the telephone that s/he was the payor (2).

#### **5.4.2 Contact with the FMEP Prior to Payment Conference**

Surprisingly, of the eight respondents to the survey only two said that they had had any prior telephone contact with the FMEP. Only one of these payors said that this contact had been regular. One payor rated this contact as not helpful; the other payor said telephone assistance was moderately helpful because a consistent worker was involved with his case.

“I worked with the same worker who always called me back. It was very helpful once a single worker was handling my case.”

The payor who described the telephone contact as not helpful said that this was because case information had not been passed on.

“I explained to them that my son was very ill so I could not be in court. The FMEP did not even bother to pass the information along, so I was arrested.”

The reasons cited for past telephone contacts with the FMEP were:

- Problems making payments;
- Desire to vary an order;
- Questions related to enforcement;
- Incorrect information on file.

#### **5.4.3 Previous Payment Issues**

Five of the eight payors described job loss as a major factor in not being able to make the required payments. In two other cases, payors described themselves as not making enough money to make payments and survive. In another case, a payor had a custody issue related to the children that he felt affected payments. In a case where the payor had lost his employment, the eligibility of an older child was questioned.

Despite the fact that many payors felt they were unable to pay, only 3/8 said that, prior to the Payment Conference, they realized that they needed to vary their maintenance orders.

#### **5.4.4 Issues Discussed at the Payment Conference**

Despite the fact that many payors did not identify the need to vary their orders, this was one of the issues most frequently discussed at the Payment Conference. The limited data suggest that a significant number of payors in arrears may need information on this option.

“I was unable to pay—lost my employment. I was unaware of being able to vary my order, so the arrears mounted up.”

Four of the eight payors wanted information on enforcement mechanisms, some of which had affected their employment (e.g. Driver’s License).

**Table 30 Issues Dealt with at the Payment Conference**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Number* (N = 8)</b>
Payor's ability to pay.	7
Need to vary the maintenance order.	6
Information about enforcement mechanisms.	4
Change in financial status.	3
Asset and financial information.	2
Eligibility issues.	2
New employment information.	1
Arrears.	1
How the FMEP works.	1
Legal issues.	1

\* Respondents provided more than response.

### 5.4.5 Payor Assessment of the Quality of the Payment Conference

Five aspects of the quality of the Payment Conference were rated by payors using a seven-point scale.

The convenience and accessibility of the meeting location were given the lowest rating by payors. This may reflect the fact that the conferences are held at only two sites, necessitating a long drive for some. The convenience of the meeting time was given only a moderate rating by most. Payors may have to take time off work to attend the meetings.

**Table 31 Payor Rating of the Quality of the Payment Conference N=8**

<b>Quality Aspects of Payment Conference</b>	<b>Ratings</b>		
	<b>Poor 1 2 3</b>	<b>Moderate 4 5</b>	<b>Excellent 6 7</b>
Accessibility and convenience of meeting location.	3	3	2
Convenience of meeting time.		6	2
Professionalism and courtesy of staff.		1	7
Knowledge of FMEP staff person.		2	6
Staff willing to listen to (payor) concerns.		2	6

The attitude and response of the Outreach Officer was rated very highly by the payors, particularly in the area of professionalism and courtesy. These positive assessments corroborate the positive ratings given by Family Justice Counsellors and clients attending Client Meetings.

Because of their past negative payment history, many of these payors have a negative attitude towards the FMEP. These ratings suggest that responsive and respectful communication can change attitudes, although it is not clear whether this change is long lasting.

#### 5.4.6 Specific Result of the Payment Conference

Payors were asked to describe the results of the Payment Conference from their perspective. In 4/8 cases, the result of the conference was a recommendation to vary the payor’s maintenance order. In one case, the payor was given help to renegotiate the amount of his garnishee and in another case a Voluntary Payment Arrangement was arranged. Two payors said the result of the meeting was that the FMEP had a better “understanding of their situation and inability to pay” (no concrete results were identified).

#### 5.4.7 Payor’s Assessment of the Helpfulness and Limitations of the Payment Conference

Payors were asked to assess the helpfulness of the Payment Conference in three areas:

- Whether the Payment Conference had helped them understand more about the role and mandate of the FMEP;
- Whether the Payment Conference helped them address problems affecting their ability to pay;
- Whether the Payment Conference assisted the payor to meet the terms of the maintenance order.

**Table 32 Helpfulness of the Payment Conference N=8**

Aspect of Payment Conference	Not helpful			Moderately helpful		Very helpful	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Increasing understanding of the role and mandate of the FMEP.		2		2		4	
Addressing problems that affected the payor’s ability to pay.				3		5	
Assisting payors to meet the terms of their* maintenance orders.		3				4	

\* One case—no data.

Payors described the most helpful outcome of the Payment Conference as the addressing of problems that had affected their ability to pay. Five out of the eight payors said that they were not aware of options to deal with their arrears until they had met with the Outreach Officer.

“Until then I had no idea of what I could do. I thought it was jail time as there were no other avenues open.”

Six of the payors described the information they received about the FMEP at the Payment Conference to be moderately or very helpful.

“It (Payment Conference) certainly enlightened me.... I didn’t know the system.”

Several payors said that even though they received information about the FMEP at the Payment Conference, they still did not understand or find acceptable the mandate of the program.

“It is very one sided—makes the payor feel like a criminal and to feel persecuted. I had some prior knowledge, but although it was explained well, I was not impressed with the mandate.”

Opinions were polarized on whether the Payment Conference had helped payors meet the terms of their maintenance order. In three cases, the payors said the information didn’t actually change or help their situations; in four other cases, payors said that they were given information about what they needed to do to pay their arrears or vary their orders.

Payors identified three specific aspects of the Payment Conference that they considered to be “most helpful.” The first was that the Outreach Officer listened to the payor’s side of the story, showing sympathy and not stereotyping the payor.

“It was the fact that I was listened to. I was not treated like a deadbeat. I became part of the solution rather than the problem.”

The second aspect of the Payment Conference considered to be helpful was that the meeting provided specific, concrete advice based on the details of the payor’s case. The advice given was practical and based on the payor’s situation.

Finally, most of the payors valued the empathy and willingness to help conveyed by the Outreach Officer. This was in contrast to the way some felt about previous contacts with the FMEP, which they described as one-sided.

“She defused the problem. (The) FMEP are like a collection agency. Everyone’s back is up. I felt she was there for me as well as for the recipient.”

Four of the eight payors identified aspects of the Payment Conference that were not helpful. In one case, a payor said the introduction to the meeting was negative because it started with threats of enforcement and jail. In another case, the payor was disturbed that garnishee payments sent to the recipient (that were later reduced) were not repaid to him. In one other case, the payor was frustrated that the FMEP could not arrange for an enforcement measure to be terminated. Finally, a payor complained that information on his case was not readily accessible on the computer at the time of the Payment Conference.

#### **5.4.8 Does the Payment Conference Change the Payor’s Outlook on Making Maintenance Payments?**

Two out of the eight payors said that the Payment Conference had little or no impact on their outlook and attitude towards making payments. Three said it had a moderate impact and three said it improved their attitude towards making payments. In one of the two cases where the outlook had not changed, the payor said that that he had always had a good attitude towards making payments.

“The Payment Conference had nothing to do with my making payments. I feel that my kids are my responsibility. It was my inability to pay that started the whole crisis.”

The payors who felt that the Payment Conference had a very positive impact on their outlook cited three reasons: 1) a feeling that the Payment Conference helped defuse their animosity towards the FMEP; 2) assistance with steps to vary the order; and 3) the development of a Voluntary Payment Arrangement to address the arrears.

“The FMEP approaches payors with terrible animosity. There is no accessibility to them and it seems impossible to talk to anyone. No names are used when they talk to you. They make it as painful as possible. The Outreach Officer was very empathetic and helped me to solve some of my problems.”

#### **5.4.9 Value of Face to Face Meetings in Comparison with Telephone Contact**

One payor said that he preferred telephone contact to a face to face meeting because it was more convenient and less time consuming. The other seven payors identified many advantages of a personal meeting over telephone contact. The most important was that, in the personal meeting, they felt listened and responded to in a personal and compassionate way. Several noted that they did not get this kind of response through telephone contact with the FMEP.

“It is easier. The FMEP worker can ignore you on the telephone. It is much more personal. The Outreach Officer is very honest and is a great listener.”

Payors also said that there is a quality to a personal meeting that is lacking in telephone contact.

“Face to face establishes rapport. It is a tremendous advantage. You get to know people.”

“I could see the seriousness of the situation when face to face. I can see desperation in a person’s face. I felt listened to and acknowledged. I felt some humanity at the meeting.”

Payors felt that a face to face meeting is more professional, less secretive and allows for more possibility to mediate and resolve issues.

“How can you resolve issues without a face to face sit down with the parties involved? There should be an investigative branch in the FMEP to get both sides of the story.”

“Face to face allows for more answers. It is also easier to come up with questions when you lose your paranoia about whether the conversation is being taped.”

## **5.5 VALUE OF THE PILOT OUTREACH PROJECT AS A STAFF SKILLS DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY**

### **5.5.1 Overview**

A final issue addressed by this evaluation was whether the Pilot Outreach Project provided a skills development opportunity for FMEP staff. This question was primarily addressed through interviews with key respondents.

In the past, staff skill development was primarily supported through the appointment of staff to special projects or committees. Reduced funding in recent years has eliminated some of these opportunities. The Pilot Outreach Project has provided an opportunity for one staff member to embark on a specialized training and development process and to implement a challenging, multi-faceted initiative.

### **5.5.2 Assessment of the Pilot Outreach Project as a Staff Skills Development Opportunity**

By all accounts, the Pilot Outreach Project has been a successful staff development initiative. The Outreach Officer has had to develop and put into practice interpersonal, communication and mediation skills with a group of clients who are often angry, frustrated, worried, fearful and hostile. She has also had to overcome a somewhat negative attitude towards the FMEP by other family justice partners and develop a cooperative and responsive approach. The development of the project has allowed for the use of creativity and initiative. Feedback from both Family Justice Counsellors and clients affirms the appropriateness of the staff person selected for the position.

The position, however, leaves little room for advancement. The question must be asked: Where can a highly qualified staff member with this experience be utilized by the organization beyond this position? Without some resolution of this question these skills and expertise may be lost to the organization.

Because this is only a one-person role it presents only a limited opportunity for other staff or for the building of additional staff expertise. The expansion of the position may allow for the inclusion of more staff, even if only on a part-time basis. Some rotation of staff, under the coordination of an experienced Outreach Officer, could also be considered.

## **6.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

### **6.1 SUMMARY OF BROAD OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGIES**

This report presents the findings of an evaluation of the British Columbia Family Maintenance Enforcement Program's Pilot Outreach Project. There are three main components of the Pilot Outreach Project: Client Meetings, Payment Conferences and Ministry of Human Resources (MHR) Information Sessions.

- Client Meetings are an educational/informational outreach to clients referred by Family Justice Counsellors that are held on-site at seven Family Justice Centres. They provide information on the FMEP and maintenance enforcement to both payors and recipients.
- Payment Conferences are an enforcement mechanism that is used to establish a Voluntary Payment Arrangement with payors owing substantial arrears in order to avoid a Default Hearing.
- MHR Information Sessions are regular information meetings held in collaboration with B.C. staff to provide information about the FMEP and maintenance enforcement to recipients of social assistance. Due to a change in program design this component was not addressed in the evaluation

Six main methodologies were used to measure the findings:

1. a telephone survey of Family Justice Counsellors;
2. a survey of clients who attended Client Meetings;
3. a comprehensive case/file outcome review for payors who attended Payment Conferences;
4. a telephone survey of payors who attended the conferences;
5. a document and statistical review of records; and,
6. key respondent interviews.

A seventh methodology: a Survey of Ministry of Human Resources Information Survey, was not used as there were no information sessions held during the study period.

The purpose of the evaluation was to address the following questions:

- Are client and Family Justice Counsellor information needs being met through the Client or MHR Recipient Information Meetings?
- Are the services provided by the Pilot Outreach Project helpful, client-oriented, personal and accessible?

- Do Client Meetings lead to an increased awareness of the FMEP among Family Justice Counsellors and the integration of family justice services?
- Do Payment Conferences result in access to new payor information, help establish the payor's ability to pay or lead to Voluntary Payment Arrangements?
- Do Payment Conferences result in the avoidance of a Default Hearing?
- What barriers affect the payor's ability to pay?
- Is the Pilot Outreach Project perceived as a skills development opportunity for staff?

## **6.2 CONCLUSIONS**

The study found that the Client Meetings were effective in meeting the information needs of recipients and payors attending Client Meetings. Payors and recipients required specific information about the role of the FMEP, status of arrears, enforcement mechanisms and ways of meeting payments.

Clients emphasized the value of two aspects of the Client Meetings: the compassionate, humane and professional tone of the interaction and the concrete, practical information provided. There was an 86 percent level of agreement between the type of information requested and provided.

Clients at the Client Meetings and payors attending the Payment Conferences rated the courtesy, professionalism and concern shown by the staff highly; the location (quite limited for the Payment Conferences) and the timing of the meetings (during working hours) were rated less positively.

Family Justice Counsellors defined specific case related needs of payors and recipients requiring contact with the FMEP. These included information on the amount of arrears, enforcement mechanisms, how to make payments in changed financial circumstances and how to change payment arrangements. FJCs identified one of the most important client problems as being an inability to resolve payment problems through telephone contact with FMEP enforcement staff.

Family Justice Counsellors valued access to the Pilot Outreach Project and felt it increased their own understanding of the FMEP and maintenance enforcement. Access to the FMEP through the Pilot Outreach Project allowed them to provide a more comprehensive and reliable set of services to clients. The regular presence of the FMEP at many of the Family Justice Centres created a more positive image of the FMEP and has led to it being seen as an important family justice partner.

A significant number of payors who are referred to Client Meetings have payment problems that they recognize and want to deal with. They expressed slightly more satisfaction than recipients with the outcome of the Client Meetings. This suggests that Client Meetings may be a useful tool to address arrears issues among clients at the pre-crisis stage.

The results of this study indicate that the Payment Conferences led to only a limited amount of new financial information. Very limited information on new employment or business assets was provided. Voluntary or Interim Payment Arrangements were concluded in five out of 25 cases. Payments resulted from 3/5 cases where Voluntary Payment Agreements were made; in three other cases, voluntary payments were made (not related to VPAs).

Over half of the payors (14/25) were assessed by the Outreach Officer as lacking the capacity to pay the level of payments required. In 21/25 cases, a recommendation was made to vary the maintenance order. These data suggest that many of these payors have legitimate problems making payments.

Referrals were another important outcome and were made in 21/25 cases. Improvements in communication and cooperation were noted in the majority of cases sent to Payment Conferences (17/25), but in half of these cases, these improvements led to no concrete action or attempts to make arrears payments.

Default Hearings were not significantly avoided as a result of the Payment Conferences. Thirteen cases were recommended for Default Hearing at the time of this report; of these, only one had been completed.

The availability and completeness of data on the data collection forms and within the electronic case management system did not fully meet the needs of the evaluation. There is currently no method for collecting data on the exact source of referrals (from all sources) for the Client Meetings. The Pilot Outreach Project would benefit from a review of data collection methods now in place and an increased focus on the systematic collection of referral and client data for all components of the program.

### **6.3 RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS**

The findings of this study suggest that there is room for an expanded role for the Client Meeting component of the Pilot Outreach Project. This would mean an expansion into more Family Justice Centre sites and an increased presence at high volume sites such as Surrey and Vancouver. The opening up of referrals internally, and more formally, to include other family justice partners (e.g. MHR), is a further consideration.

There is a case to be made for considering an expanded form of Client Meetings as a preventative approach to addressing payment problems *before* they become overwhelming and insurmountable. While not applicable to all payors, there is sufficient enthusiasm among payors attending Client Meetings to assume that the voluntary problem-solving approach could be effective in the long term.

At the same time, the FMEP has always been legitimately concerned about creating an alternative service delivery model that is unsustainable. The expansion of a Client Meeting component would require a clear understanding of screening and referral criteria by all partners.

Outcomes from the Payment Conferences were limited. Further consideration should be given by the FMEP to clearly identifying clients who have the ability to pay but who are not making payments. This may require the earlier identification of payors by Enforcement Officers.

The recommendation to the payor to vary his/her order was the most frequent recommendation made to payors attending Payment Conferences. This was also a frequent issue identified by clients and Family Justice Counsellors. Payor Information Workshops have been a component of the Pilot Outreach Project in the past. These data suggest that this need still exists and may intensify with changes in the delivery of legal support in the province. Family Justice Counsellors also noted this need.

By all accounts, the Pilot Outreach Project was considered to offer a positive skills development opportunity for the staff member involved. However, problems may arise in the utilization of these skills in another part of the organization or in expanding these skills to other staff. Consideration could be given to using the current Officer to provide supervision and training to other FMEP staff providing related services.

## **APPENDICES**



# APPENDIX 1: CLIENT MEETING SURVEY FORM

## FMEP PILOT OUTREACH PROJECT

*The information you are providing on this form will be used to assess the value of the FMEP Outreach Project's Client Meetings. Please complete this form, place it in the envelope provided, seal the envelope and place it in the secure box. Your name is not required on this form and all the information you have provided is confidential.*

1. What is the location of the Family Justice Centre where the meeting with the Family Maintenance Enforcement Project was held. \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Are you:  A RECIPIENT (Person entitled to receive maintenance payments)  
 A PAYOR (Person expected to make maintenance payments)
3. Do you have a maintenance order or written approval at the present time?  
 YES  NO  
    ↳ IF YES, AT WHAT COURT LEVEL?  
         SUPREME COURT  
         FAMILY COURT  
         DON'T KNOW
4. How many children are covered by this maintenance order? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Are you currently enrolled in the Family Maintenance Enforcement Program?  
 YES  NO
6. If you are not enrolled in the Family Maintenance Enforcement Program did you wish to discuss possible enrollment at the Client Meeting?  
 YES  
 NO  
 DOESN'T APPLY
7. If you are already a **recipient** of maintenance payments, how would you describe the general level of payments you have received in the past? (check one answer)  
 HAVE NOT RECEIVED ANY PAYMENTS  
 HAVE RECEIVED ONLY OCCASIONAL PAYMENTS  
 HAVE RECEIVED REGULAR PAYMENTS AS REQUIRED BY THE MAINTENANCE ORDER  
 Other (Please describe PAYMENT LEVEL)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. If you **pay** maintenance payments please describe the general level of payments you have made in the past (check one answers).

- HAVE MADE NO PAYMENTS
- HAVE MADE OCCASIONAL PAYMENTS
- MAKE REGULAR PAYMENTS AS REQUIRED BY THE MAINTENANCE ORDER
- Other payment situation (Please Describe THE LEVEL OF PAYMENT YOU HAVE BEEN MAKING)

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9. Please describe the specific help or information you hoped to receive from the Family Maintenance Enforcement Program at this meeting. For example, if you are a payor you may have wanted to discuss difficulties you are having in making payments. If you are a recipient issues might include not receiving payments. **Please be as specific as possible.**

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10. Please describe the information and help you received at the Client Meeting.

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11. What was the most useful part of the meeting with the Family Maintenance Enforcement Program?

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12. What was the least useful part of the meeting with the Family Maintenance Enforcement Program?

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13. Please rate the meeting you had with Family Maintenance Enforcement Program staff on the following scale of 1–7. On this scale 1 = very poor, 7 = excellent

1.0 ASPECT OF CLIENT MEETING	Rating Scale						
	Very Poor						Excellent
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
a. Convenience of meeting location	<input type="checkbox"/>						
b. Convenience of meeting time	<input type="checkbox"/>						
c. Courtesy of FMEP staff	<input type="checkbox"/>						
d. Knowledge of staff person	<input type="checkbox"/>						
e. Concern shown by staff	<input type="checkbox"/>						

14. How helpful did you find the Client Meeting in terms of the following?

How helpful was the Family Maintenance Enforcement Program in:	Did Not Apply	Rating Scale						
		Not Helpful						Very Helpful
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
a. Helping you understand more about the Family Maintenance Enforcement Program, its mandate and what it does	<input type="checkbox"/>							
b. Helping you with problems you have in getting payments	<input type="checkbox"/>							
c. Helping you to solve issues related to being able to make payments	<input type="checkbox"/>							

15. Have you ever contacted the Family Maintenance and Enforcement Program by telephone for help or information in the past?

YES → APPROXIMATELY HOW MANY TIMES \_\_\_\_\_

NO → IF NO, WHY NOT?

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16. If you have issues related to maintenance enforcement (either getting or making payments), do you feel there are benefits to a face to face meeting with FMEP staff (in comparison to telephone contact)?

NO

YES PLEASE EXPLAIN ANY BENEFITS

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6. Do you use specific criteria to screen and refer **recipients** of maintenance to the POP (e.g. by type of issue, financial status of recipient, history of violence, financial means test)?

NO

YES Please describe specific criteria used:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

7. What are the main **payor** needs which lead to a referral to a Client Meeting?

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

8. What are the main **recipient** needs which lead to a referral to a Client Meeting?

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

9. Please rate the helpfulness of the Pilot Outreach Project using a seven point scale:

1 = strongly disagree ... 7 = strongly agree

<u>Pilot Outreach Project</u> <b>PROJECT ISSUES</b>		<b>Rating Scale</b>						
		<b>Strongly Disagree</b>						<b>Strongly Agree</b>
		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
9.1	POP staff are accessible and easy to contact.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
9.2	POP staff are courteous and professional.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
9.3	POP staff are knowledgeable and well informed.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
9.4	Clients receive assistance promptly from POP staff.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
9.5	The Pilot Outreach Project accommodates all client needs related to maintenance enforcement.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
9.6	Specific information needs of POP clients appear to have been met.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
9.7	Information provided by the Pilot Outreach Project to clients assists Family Justice Centre service delivery.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
9.8	The presence of POP on site has helped increase my (FJC) understanding of FMEP policies and processes.	<input type="checkbox"/>						

10. Are the payors who are referred to the Pilot Outreach Project typically facing any form of barriers to making payments (e.g. language, understanding or other personal barriers, lack of access to services in general, lack of comprehensiveness or immediacy of services)?

NO

YES

Please describe:

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11. What is the most important benefit of the Pilot Outreach Project?

11.1 To clients \_\_\_\_\_

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11.2 To FJC counsellors \_\_\_\_\_

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12. Do you feel the services provided by the Pilot Outreach Project enhance the services provided by Family Justice Centres?

NO

If NO, Please explain your answer: \_\_\_\_\_

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YES

If YES, Please describe your answer: \_\_\_\_\_

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13. Please describe any problems with or limitations to the Pilot Outreach Project).

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14. Please identify the ways any limitations of the Pilot Outreach Project (as identified in Q 13) could be addressed or the service improved.

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THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS SURVEY



**APPENDIX 3: PAYMENT CONFERENCE OUTCOME  
ASSESSMENT FORM**

**October 24, 2002**

**Section I. Demographic and Case Data**

FMEP Case Number \_\_\_\_\_

From Summary  
Sheet

1. NAME OF PAYOR \_\_\_\_\_  
(first) (last)

2. ADDRESS  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. PHONE NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_

4. GENDER  Male  Female

Summary Sheet

5. LOCATION  BC  
 Outside Province

Address Log

6. NUMBER OF CHILDREN ON ORDER \_\_\_\_\_

Order Schedule

7. CURRENT EMPLOYMENT

- Unknown
- Self Employed  
Describe \_\_\_\_\_
- Employed
- Student
- Retired
- Disabled
- Unemployed
- Other  
Describe \_\_\_\_\_

Employer Log /  
Running Record

8. NUMBER OF MONTHS SINCE  
LAST DIRECT PAYOR CONTACT PRIOR TO PC: \_\_\_\_\_ Months

Running Record

9. ACTIVE ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS IN PLACE IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO PAYMENT CONFERENCE

- NOFI
- NOA No. \_\_\_\_\_
- CPA
- Reg. Land
- NOFG
- Credit Bureau
- FLD
- Previous DH Number \_\_\_\_\_
- Other (DLD) \_\_\_\_\_

Payment  
Conference  
Referral Form

Enforcement  
Activity  
Summary Screen  
FMPEP  
Summary Screen

10. DATE OF ENROLLMENT IN FMPEP \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_  
Day Month Year

11. DOES THIS PAYOR HAVE MORE THAN ONE CASE ON FILE?

- Yes → Fill out form for each case.
- No

FMPEP  
Summary Screen

**Section II. Maintenance Payment and Arrears Data**

12. TOTAL AMOUNT PERIODIC PAYMENTS REQUIRED PER MONTH \_\_\_\_\_ Schedule Summary
13. AMOUNT ARREARS (PRIOR TO PC) \_\_\_\_\_ Payment Status
14. TOTAL AMOUNT PAID (PRIOR TO PC) \_\_\_\_\_ Payment Status
15. NUMBER OF MONTHS SINCE LAST PAYMENT MADE \_\_\_\_\_ Payment Status
16. NUMBER OF PAYMENTS IN PAST 12 MONTHS \_\_\_\_\_
17. SOURCE OF LAST PAYMENT Payment Status
- No payments
  - Voluntary payment
  - Attached source
  - Unknown
18. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF PAYMENT REGULARITY PRIOR TO PAYMENT CONFERENCE Payment Status
- No payments
  - Very occasional  
(less than two times over a period of 12 months)
  - Occasional (2-5 times over 12 months)
  - Somewhat regular (6 times over 12 months)
  - Payments regular – stopped \_\_\_\_\_ months previously
  - Other payment pattern (describe) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Section III. Payment Conference Data**

19. DATE PAYMENT CONFERENCE \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_  
Day Month Year Summary Form
20. ATTENDED CONFERENCE:  
 Yes  
 No  
 Did not attend but contact made  
Payment Conference Summary
21. NUMBER OF PAYMENT CONFERENCE MEETINGS ATTENDED \_\_\_\_\_  
Running Record
- 22.. REASONS FOR REFERRAL \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Payment Conference Referral Running Record
23. FINANCIAL DATA PROVIDED AT PAYMENT CONFERENCE (LIST ONLY NEW DATA)  
 None  
Statement of Finances  
 Complete  
 Incomplete  
 Business Statement Information  
 Data related to new employment  
 Name of Business \_\_\_\_\_  
 Location \_\_\_\_\_  
 Assets \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_  
 Data related to new self employment  
 Name of Business \_\_\_\_\_  
 Location \_\_\_\_\_  
 Assets \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_  
 Bank Statements  
 Income Tax Statement  
 Past Year  
 Previous to past year  
 Credit Card Statement  
 Payroll information  
 Loan document  
 Other (describe) \_\_\_\_\_  
Payment Conference Summary Form Running Record

24. NEW ASSETS FOUND (ALL SOURCES OF INFORMATION)

- None
- Vehicle
- Bank Account Number
- RRSPs
- Property data
- Business Assets Describe \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Payment  
Conference  
Summary Sheet  
Running Record

**Section IV. Payment Conference Outcome**

25. OUTCOME OF CONFERENCE

Payment  
Conference  
Summary Form  
  
Running Record

- Arrears payment plan developed
- Payor appears to lack capacity to make payments  
Describe \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Payor recommended to apply to vary order  
In \_\_\_\_\_ Weeks (Date \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ )  
Day Month Year
- Temporary agreement in place until application to vary order heard.  
Describe Agreement: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Referrals:
  - None
  - Unknown
  - Legal Services
  - Salvation Army  
(Pro Bono Lawyer Consultant program)
  - Family Justice Counsellor
  - Other  
Describe \_\_\_\_\_
- Default Hearing to proceed
- Payor referral to Default Hearing
- Other Outcomes \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

26. DESCRIPTION OF PAYMENT AGREEMENT  
(IF APPLICABLE)

Payment  
Conference  
Summary Form  
Running Record

- Regular payments of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ per (time) \_\_\_\_\_
- Arrears \$ \_\_\_\_\_ per \_\_\_\_\_
- Lump Sum Amount \_\_\_\_\_
- Agreement Effective Date \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_  
Day Month Year
- Duration of Agreement \_\_\_\_\_ Months

27. VARIANCE OF ORDER Running Record

- Not required
- Application recommended, not followed through
- Appointment re-booked
- Progress underway to vary order
- Order changed: Date      /      /       
Day      Month    Year
- Other Outcome Describe \_\_\_\_\_

28. PAYMENT OUTCOME Payment Status  
Screen

- No payments made within two months
- Partial payments made within two months
- Terms of agreement fully met
- Other payment outcomes \_\_\_\_\_
- Amount Collected:
  - VPA \_\_\_\_\_
  - Attached Source \_\_\_\_\_
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
- TOTAL AMOUNT COLLECTED \_\_\_\_\_

29. OTHER OUTCOMES (EG. IMPROVED CO-OPERATION AND DIALOGUE WITH PAYOR) (FROM RUNNING RECORD OR CONTACT WITH OUTREACH STAFF) Running Record

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

30. STATUS OF DEFAULT HEARING Enforcement  
Action Screen  
Default Hearing  
Screen

- Process for Default Hearing Underway
- Default Hearing process cancelled.
- Other Describe \_\_\_\_\_

31. FURTHER DESCRIPTION OF OUTCOMES \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX 4: PILOT OUTREACH PROJECT

October 31, 2002

### Telephone Survey: Payors Who Have Attended Payment Conferences

*The BC Ministry of Attorney General and the Federal Department of Justice are conducting an evaluation of the Family maintenance Enforcement Program's Pilot Outreach Project. One part of the Pilot Outreach Project is the Payment Conference. The Payment Conference is a meeting where payors of maintenance are expected to attend in order to discuss their maintenance arrears and to find solutions for the payment of these arrears.*

*In this telephone interview we will be asking you to discuss how you felt about the Payment Conference Meeting that you had with Susan Hamilton on (day, month, year) and whether it was helpful to you.*

*This evaluation is being conducted by Focus Consultants, an independent research company. All the information you provide in this interview is confidential and will be used for evaluation purposes only. Your name will not be used and the individual survey results will be destroyed after the evaluation has been completed.*

1. Payor's Name \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_  
first last

2. Date of Payment Conference \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_  
d m y

3. Prior to being asked to attend the Payment Conference did you have any contact with FMEP by telephone?

YES

Approximately how many times did you have telephone contact with FMEP prior to the Payment Conference? \_\_\_\_\_

No

↳ Proceed to question #6.

4. If you had previous contact with FMEP by telephone, what types of issues did you discuss with FMEP in these calls?

Problems making payments/reasons for non-payment.

Problems with current Maintenance Order.

Desire, and/or methods, to vary an order.

Questions related to enforcement mechanisms.

Changes in financial status.

Desire to make payment arrangements.

Clarification of arrears.

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
Detailed description: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Telephone contact with FMEP:

5.1 If you had previous telephone contact with FMEP how helpful was this in helping you to resolve problems you had in making payments?

(1 = not helpful, 4 = neutral, 7 = very helpful)

Not Helpful ←				→ Very Helpful		
<input type="checkbox"/>						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

5.2 If you considered the telephone contact helpful (5,6,7), please explain how it was helpful.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5.3 If you considered the telephone contact to be of limited or no help (1,2,3,4), please explain why.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Please describe any problems you have had in making maintenance payments in the past. (Probe: Custody and access issues, ability to pay, factors influencing non-payment.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. Prior to attending the Payment Conference, did you think that you needed to change your Maintenance Order?

Yes Please explain why. \_\_\_\_\_

No

8. What issues were discussed at the Payment Conference?

Your need to vary the order.

Your capacity to make payments.

Changes in your financial status.

Development of a new VPA.

Enforcement mechanisms.

New employment status.

Asset/financial information.

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Detailed description: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

9. Please rate the following aspects of the Payment Conference using the following 7 point scale. 1 means the meeting was very poor, 7 means the meeting was excellent.

Aspect of Payment Conference	Rating Scale						
	Very Poor						Excellent
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.1 Accessibility and convenience of meeting location	<input type="checkbox"/>						
9.2 Convenience of meeting time	<input type="checkbox"/>						
9.3 Professionalism and courtesy of FMEP staff	<input type="checkbox"/>						
9.4 Knowledge of FMEP staff person	<input type="checkbox"/>						
9.5 Staff willing to listen to your concerns.	<input type="checkbox"/>						

10. How helpful did you find the Payment Conference in terms of the following?

Aspect of Payment Conference	Rating Scale						
	Not Helpful						Very Helpful
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10.1 How helpful was the Payment Conference in helping you understand more about the role and mandate of FMEP?  Please explain your answer: _____ _____	<input type="checkbox"/>						
10.2 How helpful was the Payment Conference in addressing problems which affected your ability to make payments?  Please explain your answer: _____ _____	<input type="checkbox"/>						

<p>10.3 How helpful was the Payment Conference in terms of assisting you to meet the terms of your maintenance order?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>						
<p>Please explain your answer:</p> <hr/> <hr/>							

11. What was the specific result of the Payment Conference? (List terms of Voluntary Agreement, Agreement to Vary the Order.): \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

12. On a scale of 1 to 7 (1 = meaning the meeting had a no impact, 7 meaning a great impact, To what degree do you feel that attending the payment conference changed your outlook on making maintenance payments?

Please explain your answer: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

13. What was the most helpful aspect of the Payment Conference?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

14. What was the least helpful aspect of the Payment Conference?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

15. When there are issues or problems related to maintenance enforcement, do you feel there are advantages to a face to face meeting in contrast to telephone contact?

- No
- Yes

↳ Please describe the advantages of a face to face meeting:  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 5: FMEP PILOT OUTREACH PROJECT

### FMEP INFORMATION SESSION FEEDBACK FORM

*Completion of this form is voluntary. The information you are providing on this form will be used by the BC Ministry of Attorney General and the federal Department of Justice to assess the value of information you received about maintenance payments and enforcement provided by the Family Maintenance and Enforcement Program. Please fill out the form before leaving the meeting and return it to the meeting coordinator. Your name is not requested so all your answers are confidential.*

1. What was the date of this meeting?     $\frac{\quad}{d} / \frac{\quad}{m} / \frac{\quad}{y}$
  
2. Where did you attend the meeting? (Name of city or town)  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
3. When did you start receiving income assistance?     $\frac{\quad}{m} / \frac{\quad}{y}$
  
4. Do you presently have a maintenance order or a written agreement?  
 YES  
    WHAT YEAR WAS YOUR MAINTENANCE ORDER FINALIZED? \_\_\_\_\_ (YEAR)  
 NO
  
5. If you have a maintenance order are you currently enrolled in FMEP?  
 YES HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN ENROLLED? \_\_\_\_ YEARS  
 NO
  
6. Please list the ages of your children \_\_\_\_\_
  
7. If you are already a **recipient** of maintenance payments, how would you describe the frequency of payments that you now receive?  
 HAVE NOT RECEIVED ANY PAYMENTS  
 RECEIVE PAYMENTS OCCASIONALLY  
 RECEIVE PAYMENTS OFTEN  
 RECEIVE REGULAR PAYMENTS EXACTLY AS REQUIRED BY THE MAINTENANCE ORDER
  
8. Before attending this session what questions or concerns did you have about enrolment in the Family Maintenance Enforcement program and the enforcement of maintenance?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

9. How helpful was the FMEP information provided to you at this meeting? Please use the 7 point scale below: 1 = not helpful, 7 = very helpful.

<b>HOW HELPFUL WAS THE FAMILY MAINTENANCE ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM IN RELATION TO THE FOLLOWING:</b>	Did Not Apply	<b>Rating Scale</b>						
		← Not Helpful			→ Very Helpful			
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Helping you understand what the Family Maintenance Enforcement Program does.	<input type="checkbox"/>							
Helping you understand what a maintenance order is.	<input type="checkbox"/>							
Helping you understand how a maintenance order is enforced.	<input type="checkbox"/>							
Helping you solve specific problems you have in receiving maintenance payments	<input type="checkbox"/>							
Answering your questions or concerns about enrolment in the FMEP and the enforcement of maintenance	<input type="checkbox"/>							

10. How do you rate the following aspects of the meeting? (Please rate only the part of the meeting dealing with the *enforcement* of maintenance orders).

<b>1.1. ASPECT OF CLIENT MEETING</b>	<b>Rating Scale</b>						
	← Very Poor					→ Excellent	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Convenience of meeting location	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Time of meeting	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Friendliness and courtesy of FMEP staff	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Knowledge and information of FMEP staff	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Willingness of FMEP staff to answer questions	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Duration of meeting (enough time available)	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Organization of the meeting	<input type="checkbox"/>						

11. How could a presentation by FMEP for other MHR recipients be improved in the future?

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