

VERMONT OFFICE OF CHILD SUPPORT

Response to the Vermont Judiciary's Pandemic Response and Recovery Plan

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Office of Child Support Overview

- OCS provides services to *all* parents
- OCS is a primary user of the Family Court System
- OCS assists parents in establishing parentage, establishing child support, modifying support orders when there has been a change, and enforcing obligations as a result of non-payment
- How child support impacts families
 - All studies and data suggest that children who do not receive adequate support struggle in every realm (socioeconomic; academic; health; etc...)

The problem: COVID-19 Impact

March 2020:

- ❖ Court closes operations to all non-emergency matters;
- ❖ Hundreds of OCS cases taken off the calendar;

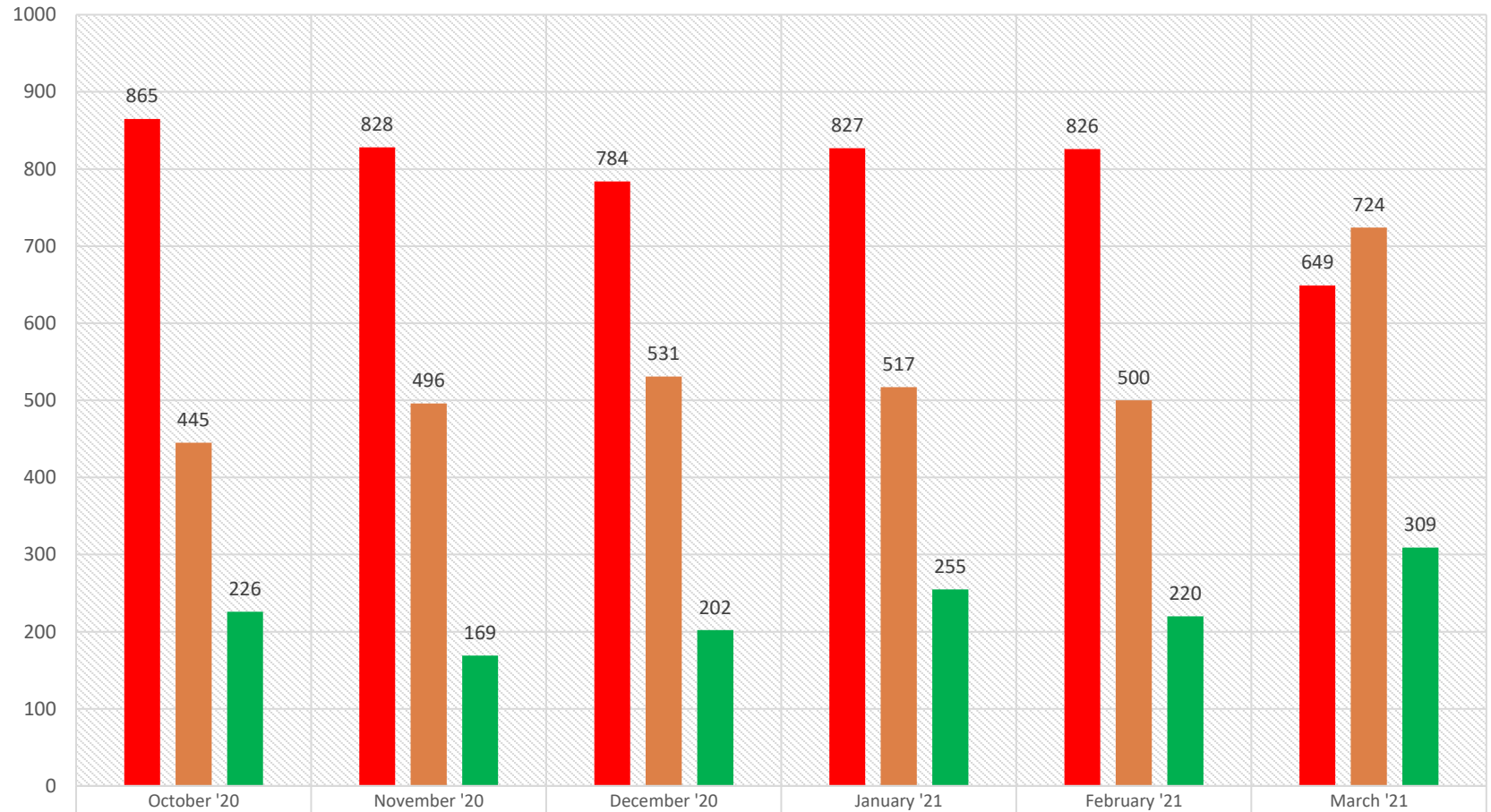
March 2020 – June 2020:

- ❖ No child support court events for nearly 3 months;

June 2020 – present:

- ❖ Court re-opens in a vastly diminished capacity due to COVID protocols and challenges related to the roll-out of the Court's new case management system

OCS CASES IN THE COURT PIPELINE (This does not include cases in the OCS pipeline)

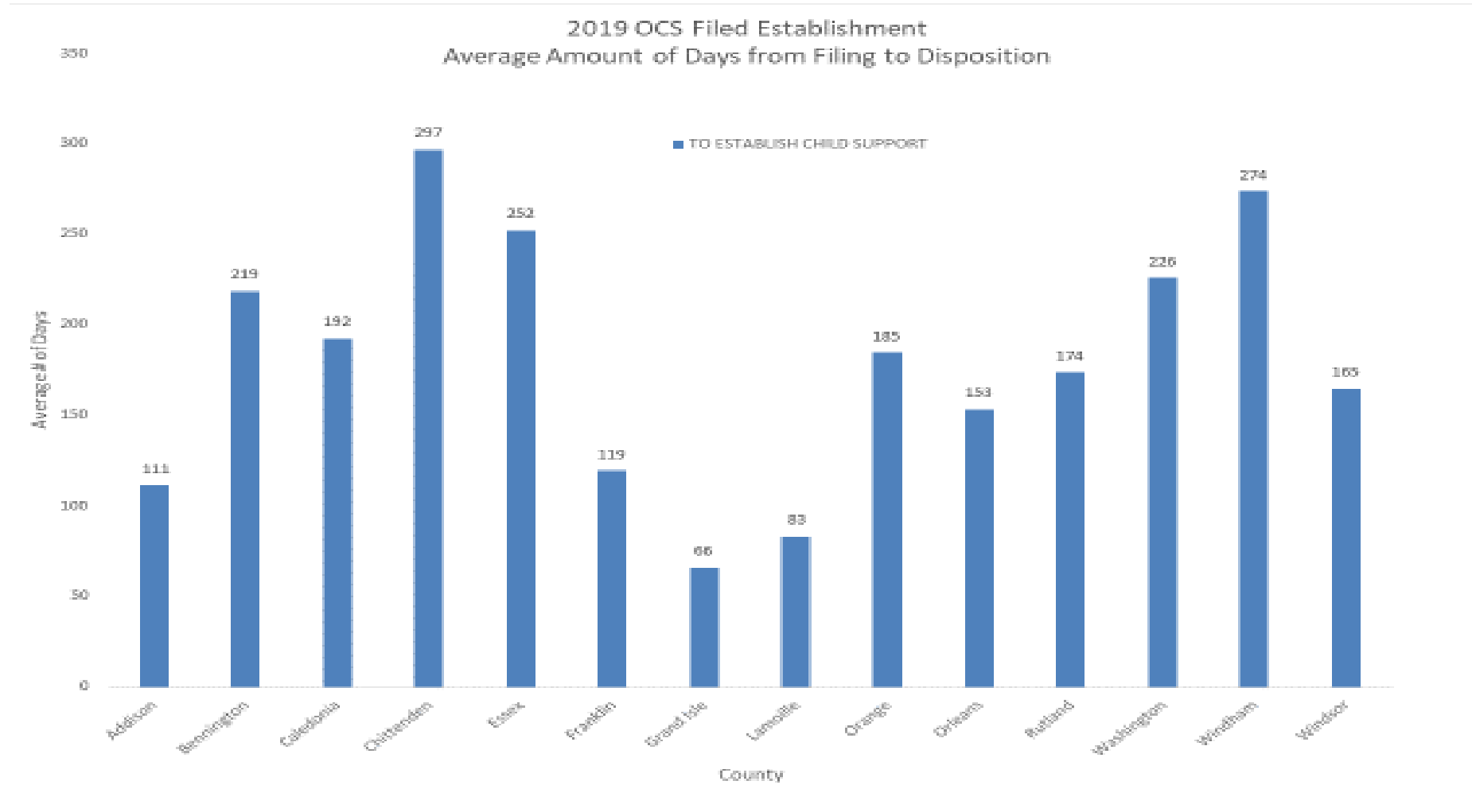


# of filings waiting for court to schedule	865	828	784	827	826	649
# of cases scheduled	445	496	531	517	500	724
# of orders (cases disposed)	226	169	202	255	220	309

■ # of filings waiting for court to schedule
 ■ # of cases scheduled
 ■ # of orders (cases disposed)

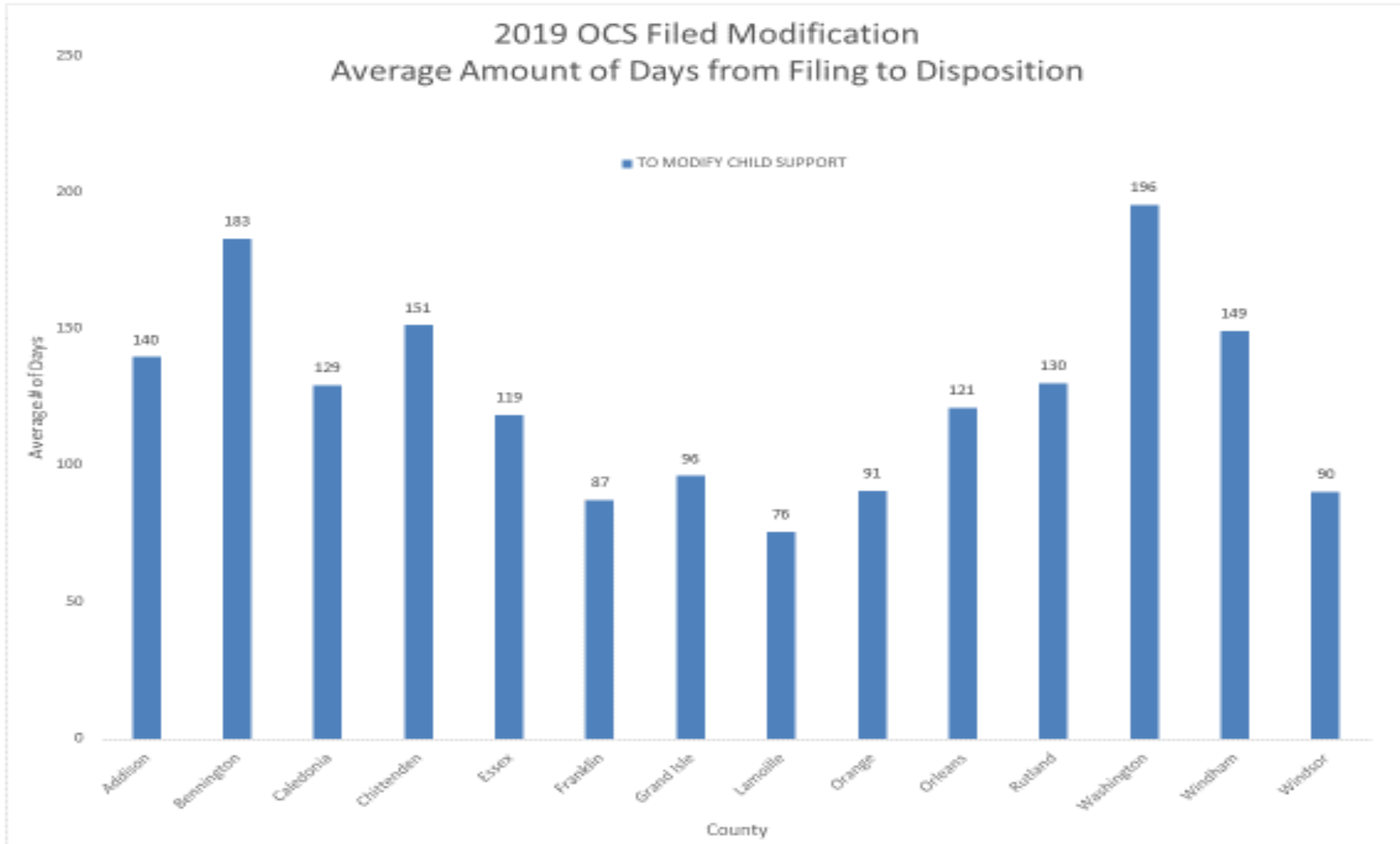
Pre-pandemic: Establishment Cases – New Cases

Average number of days to receive an order



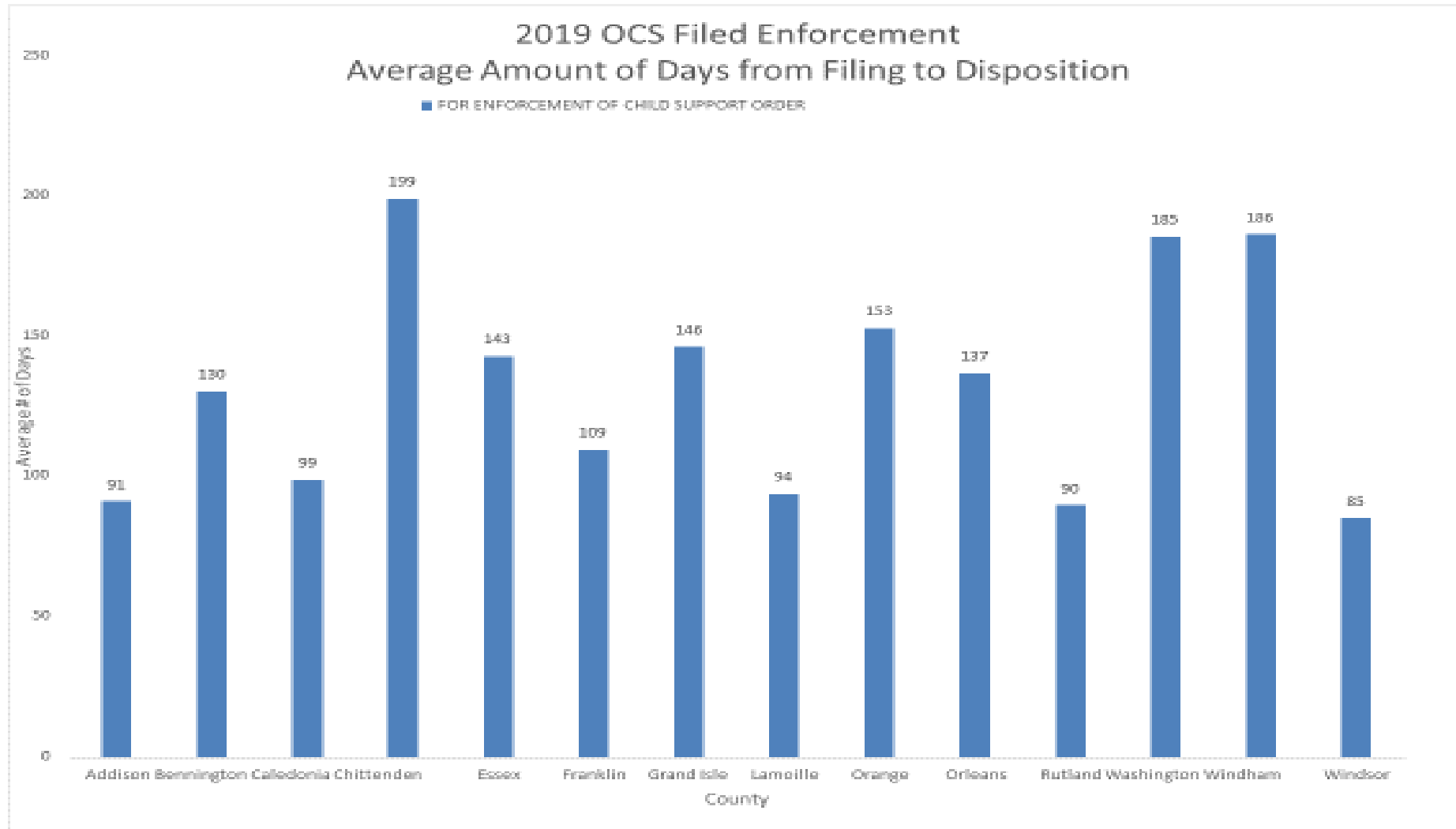
Pre-pandemic: Modification Cases

Average number of days for the Court to adjust and “right-size” an existing order



Pre-pandemic: Enforcement Cases

Average number of days for the Court to enforce an existing order when paying parent falls delinquent



Proposal:

- Help reduce the backlog through an OCS administrative process at no extra expense to the state.
- Pilot this process in three Vermont counties with largest backlog: Chittenden, Bennington, Rutland
- Improve and stabilize the financial situation for families as quickly as possible for both the receiving and paying parents
- Federal funding for OCS is dependent on meeting performance standards

OCS Administrative Process:

- Expand OCS' administrative authority to allow OCS to hear *certain* types of child support matters that are perfunctory:
 - Stipulations
 - Straight-forward modifications and establishments
 - No cases where parentage is contested
 - No cases involving complex income determinations or complex deviations
 - Work 4 Kids reviews and other enforcement reviews
 - Motions to Stay/Escrow pending modification
- Cases would be heard by duly qualified OCS Attorney (3-5 years of experience)
- Same evidence & evidentiary standards that apply before the Magistrate
- De Novo appeals before Family Court Magistrate
- Any orders issued as a result of the administrative process would be filed with the Court