Director’s Role in the Budget Process

8:30 to 10:00 AM | 90 minutes

Presenters: Michele Cristello, Steve Roddy, Valeria Garcia, Kristen Erickson-Donadee

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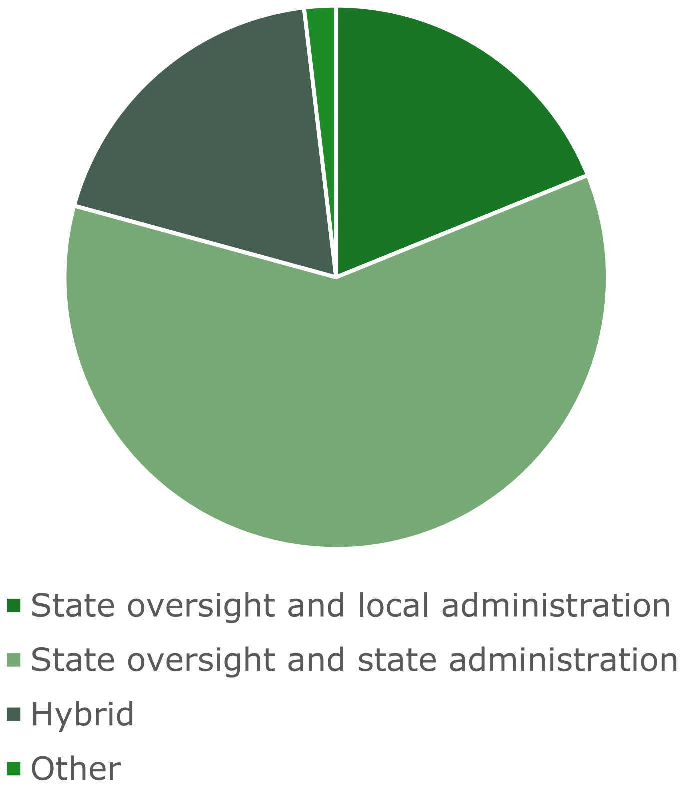
National Council of Child Support Directors

2026 Conference

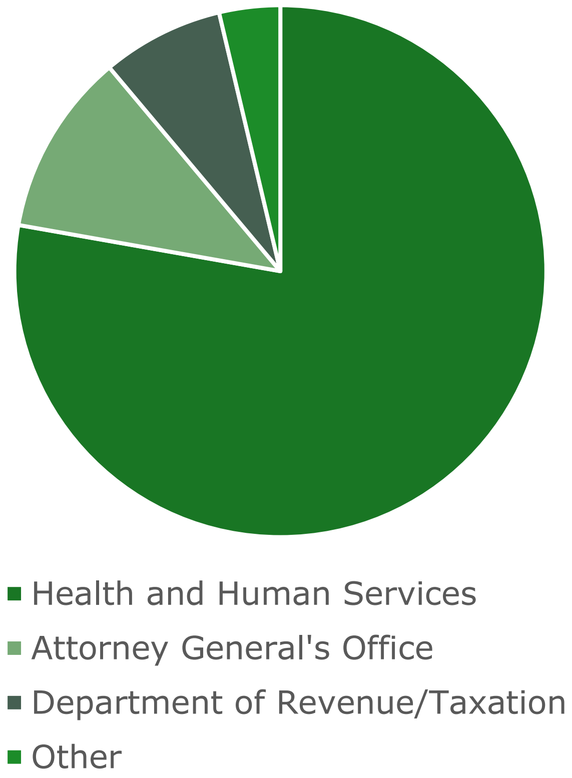
Growing Our Impact

State Statistics

State structure (includes territories)

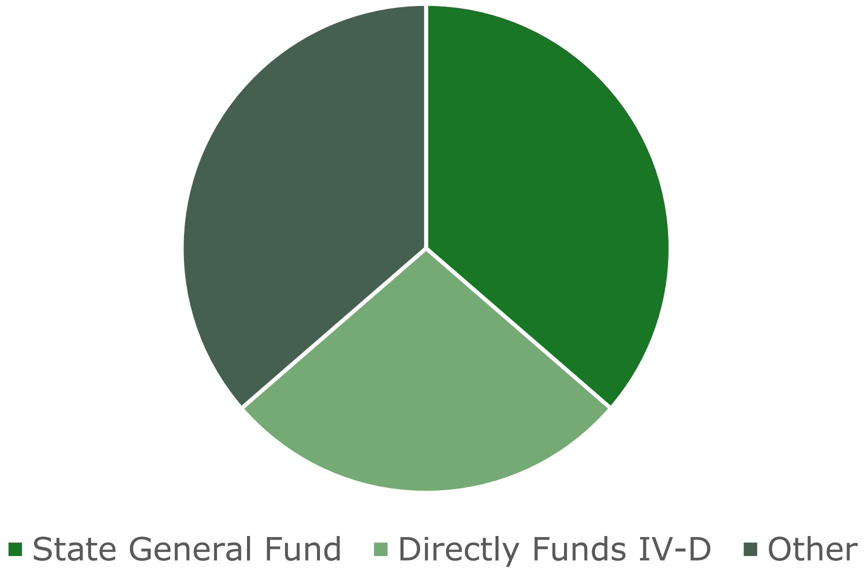


Where departments are housed within states (includes territories)

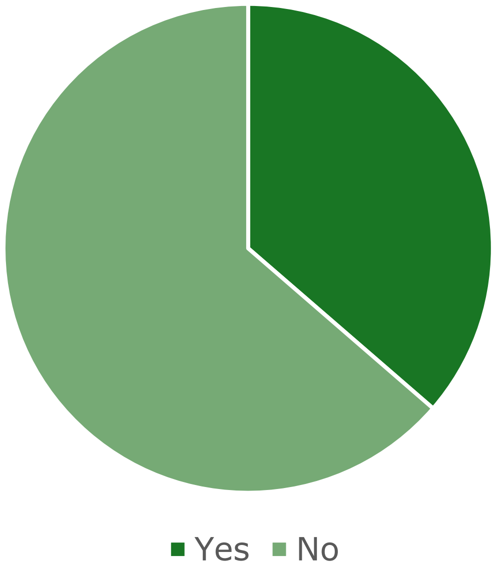


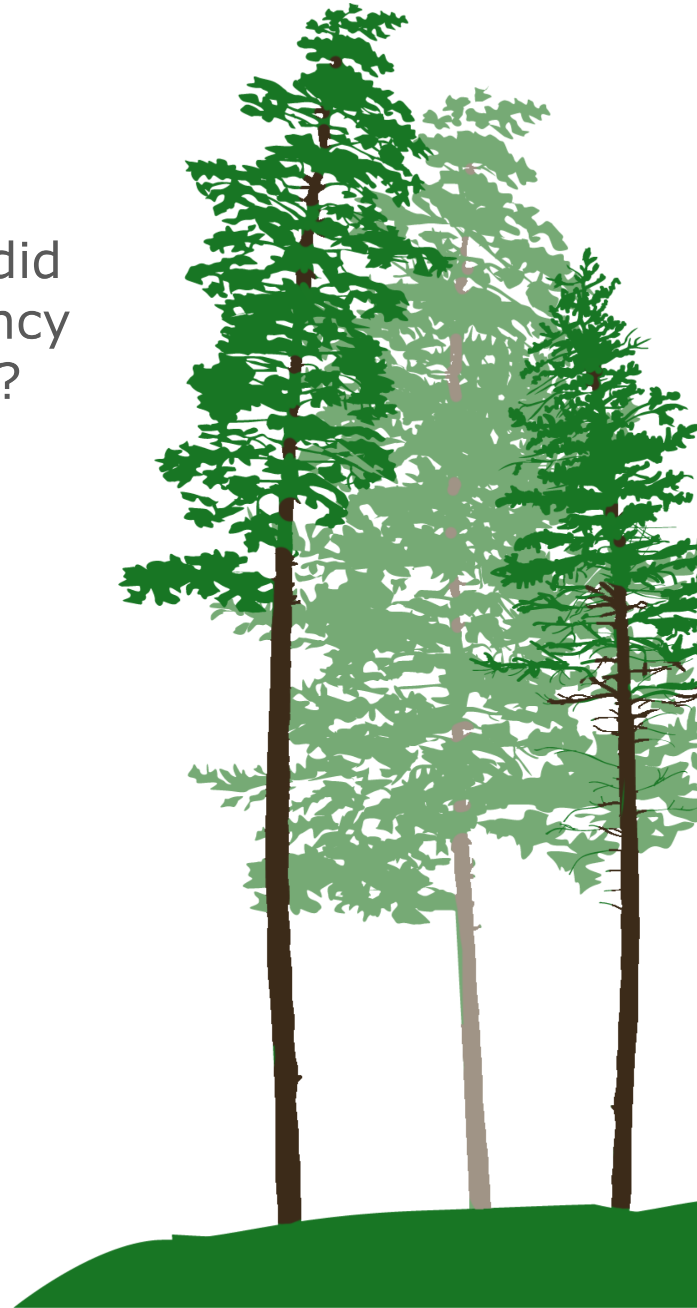
Survey Results

How does your state treat the state share of recoupment dollars?



Within the past two years, did your state engage in efficiency measures, i.e., DOGE-like?





Know Your Program and Its Cost Drivers

- Understand where funds are spent (staffing, contracts, office space, technology, incentives).
- Track expenditures by meaningful categories throughout the fiscal cycle.
- Review spending patterns regularly—monthly reviews were called out as particularly helpful. (Mississippi and North Dakota emphasize this)
- Use historical actuals, vacancy rates, and cost trends to create accurate projections.

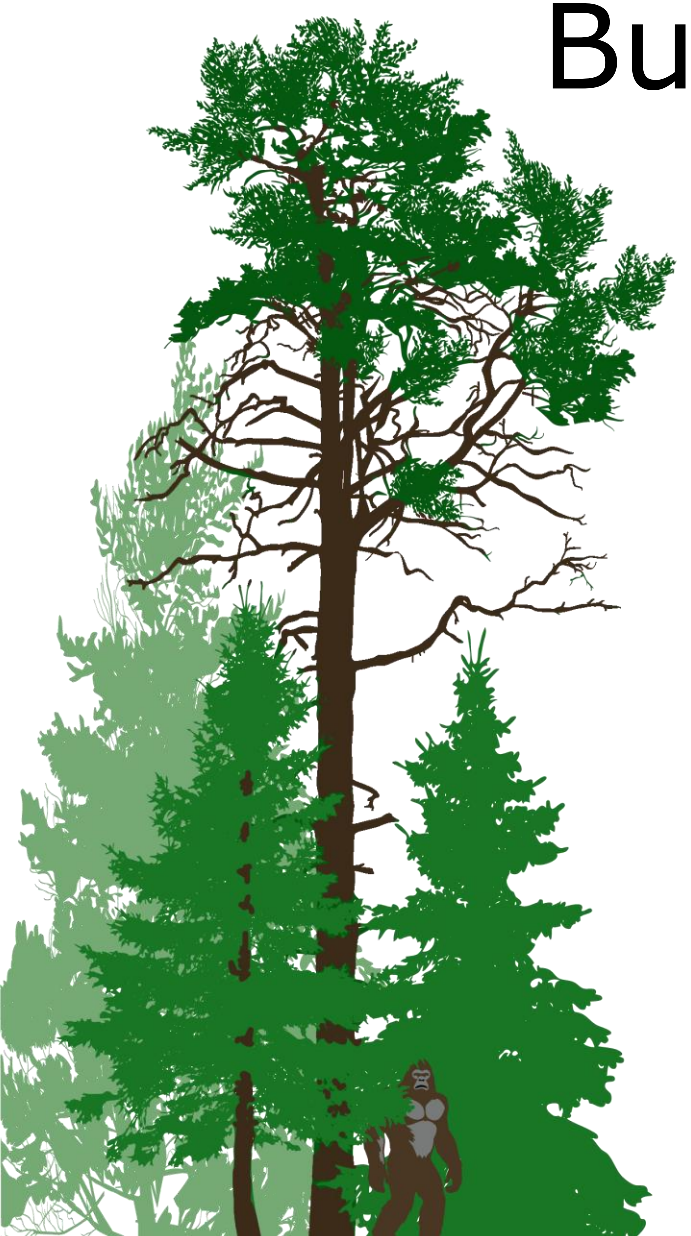
Build a Strong, Evidence-Based Budget Request

- Support budget requests using:
  - Collections vs. expenditures data.
  - Cost-avoidance impacts to related state programs.
  - Federal requirements for IV-D services. (Tennessee approach)
- Highlight when initiatives or inflationary contract costs require additional funding.
- Prepare narratives, presentations, and financial documentation for budget reviews with central budget offices or legislative staff. (Georgia, Delaware, Florida, Texas)

Maintain Close Communication with Budget Offices

- Meet regularly with the central budget team to monitor fiscal status. (Mississippi, New Mexico, Texas, California)
- Ask questions—budget staff may not fully understand IV-D specifics.
- Proactively notify budget staff if additional funding may be needed.

Use Zero-Based or Hybrid Budgeting Approaches



- Begin each cycle by validating each expenditure instead of rolling previous budgets forward. (North Dakota’s recommendation)
- Examine mandatory vs. non-mandatory costs to identify possible savings.

Manage Contracts Strategically

- Monitor contract cost increases and forecast future market impacts (e.g., CPI changes). (Florida, Tennessee)
- Conduct internal cost-benefit analyses to evaluate state-run vs. vendor-run service models.
- Don’t hesitate to change vendors if performance or price no longer align with program needs. (New Mexico recommendation)

Leverage Space and Operational Efficiencies

- Downsize or close offices where remote or hybrid work allows. (Georgia, North Dakota, Texas)
- Reduce leased space and review costs such as utilities, janitorial services, and technology. Increase virtual training and conferences to cut travel and space costs. (Georgia)

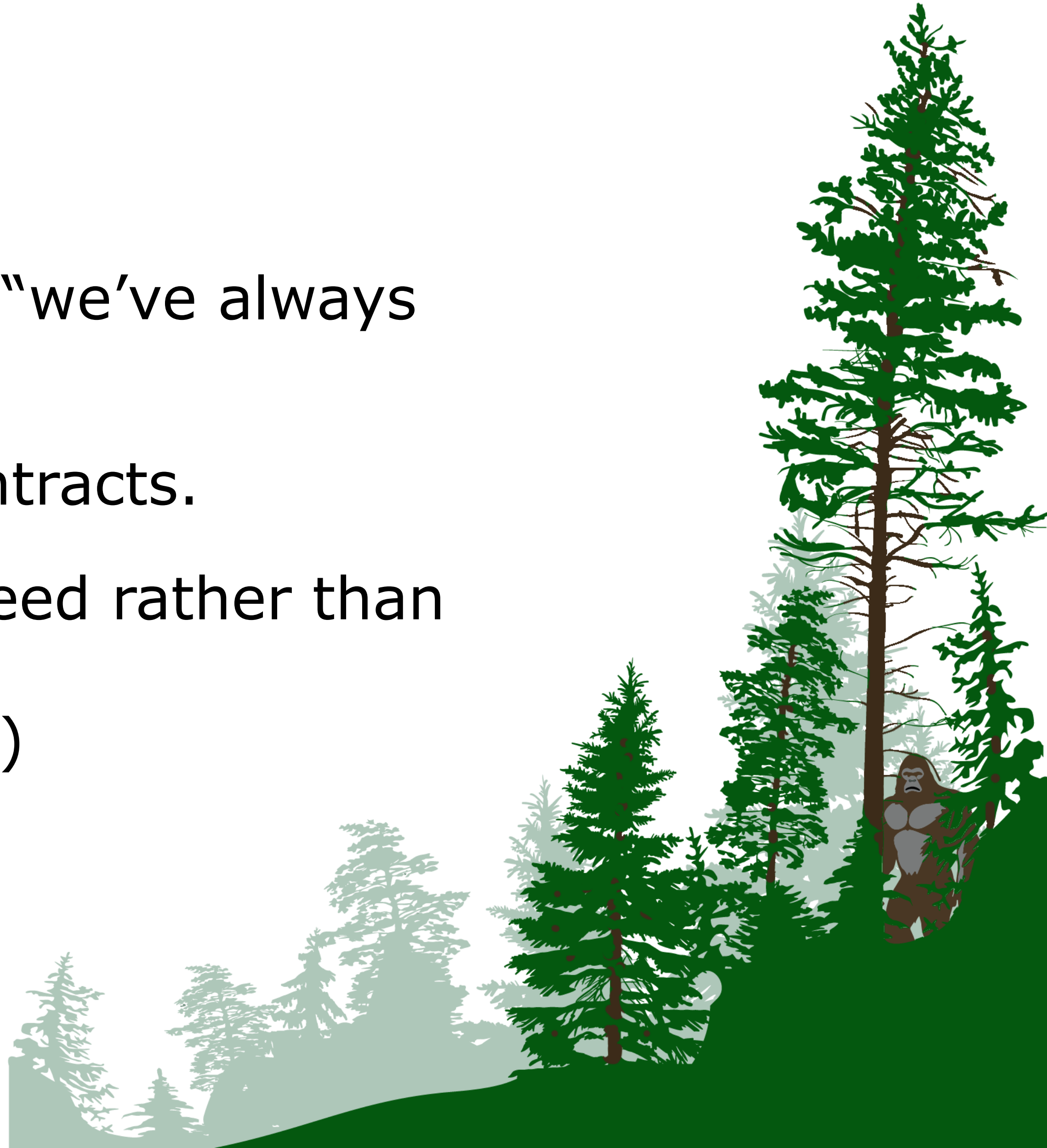
Implement Staffing and Salary Best Practices

- Understand what raises are controlled by:
  - Legislature
  - Governor's office
  - Union contracts
  - Agency discretion
    (Georgia, Washington, Massachusetts, Texas)

- Use vacancy rate projections to support salary leveling or retention initiatives. (Florida)
- Ensure pay alignment internally—bring employees to appropriate pay-band midpoints when possible. (New Mexico)

Practice Rigorous Review and Approval of Costs

- Question all recurring costs—avoid “we’ve always paid this” spending. (Kansas)
- Validate deliverables for vendor contracts.
- Reallocate funds based on actual need rather than historical formulas.
  (Florida’s allocation model example)

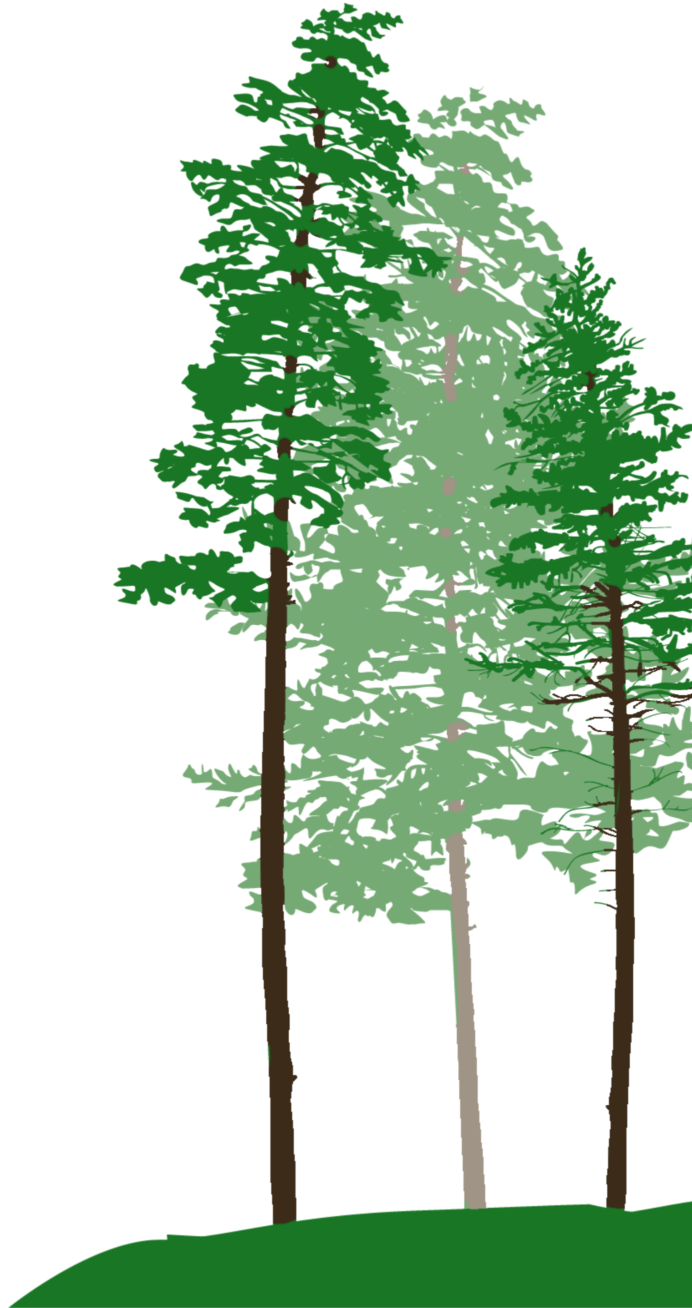


Prepare for Efficiency Mandates or Cuts

- Many states face annual or periodic reduction targets (5–10% or more). (Washington, Florida, Kansas, California)
- Identify operational changes that preserve frontline services while reducing spending, such as:
  - Telework
  - Space consolidation
  - System access reductions
  - Virtual training (Georgia)

Promote Transparency and Internal Communication

- Share budget realities with staff so they understand constraints and can identify savings.
- Engage managers in reviewing spending requests before escalating them. (Florida's Financial Management Team)

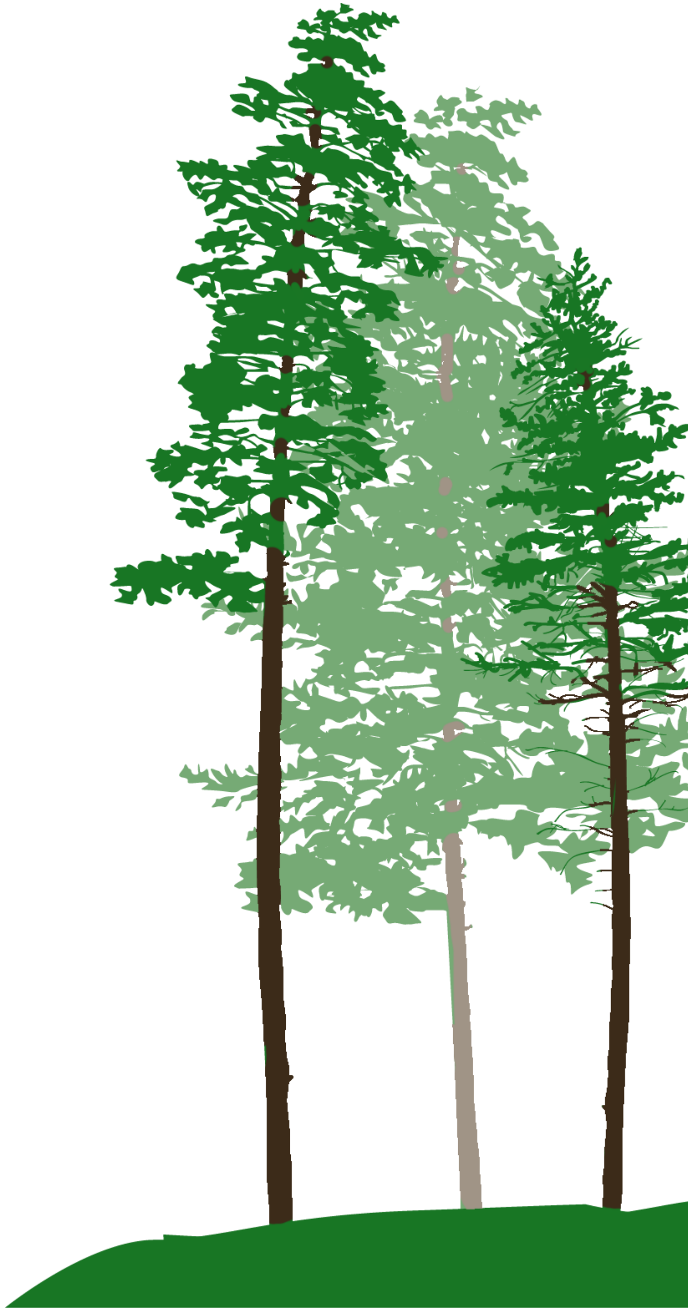


Maintain a Proactive, Future-Focused Mindset

- Look several years ahead for:
  - Salary impacts
  - Contract expirations
  - System modernization costs
  - Opportunities to use federal incentive funding strategically
    (Florida, North Dakota)
- Evaluate recurring vs. nonrecurring needs and plan accordingly.

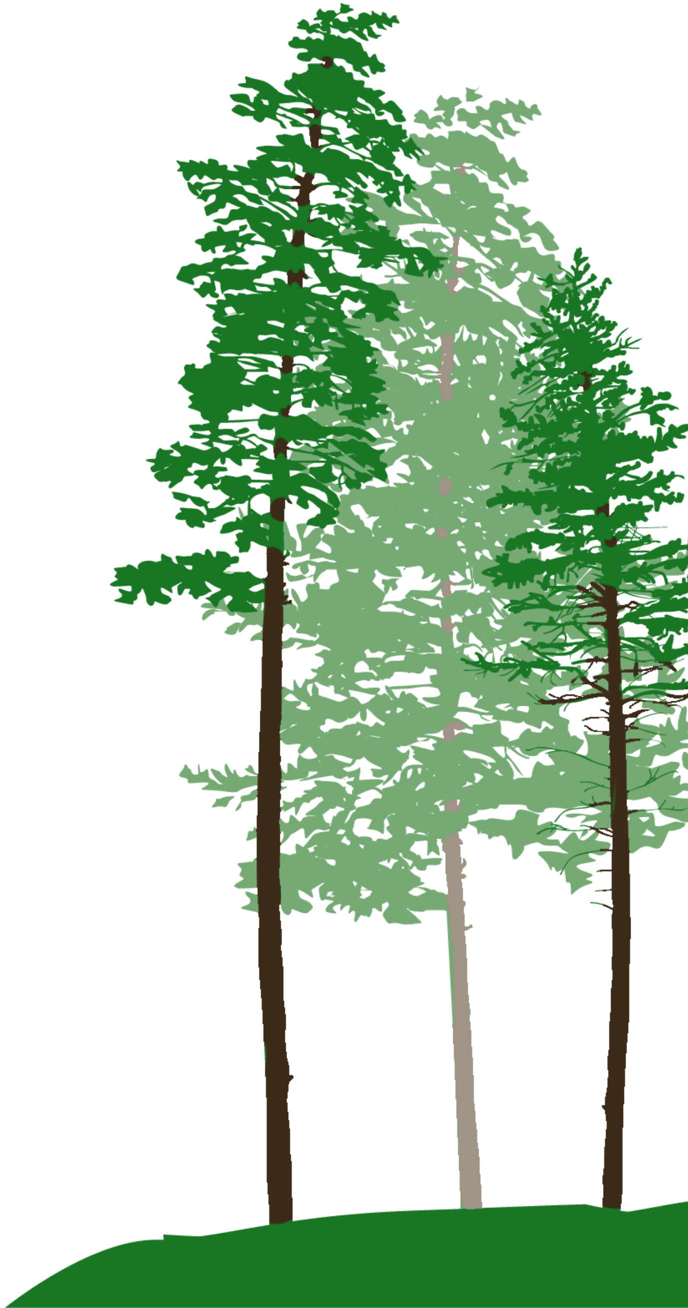
State Perspective: Massachusetts

- Child support is part of the Department of Revenue
- Caseload: 174,000
- Annual budget: $92M



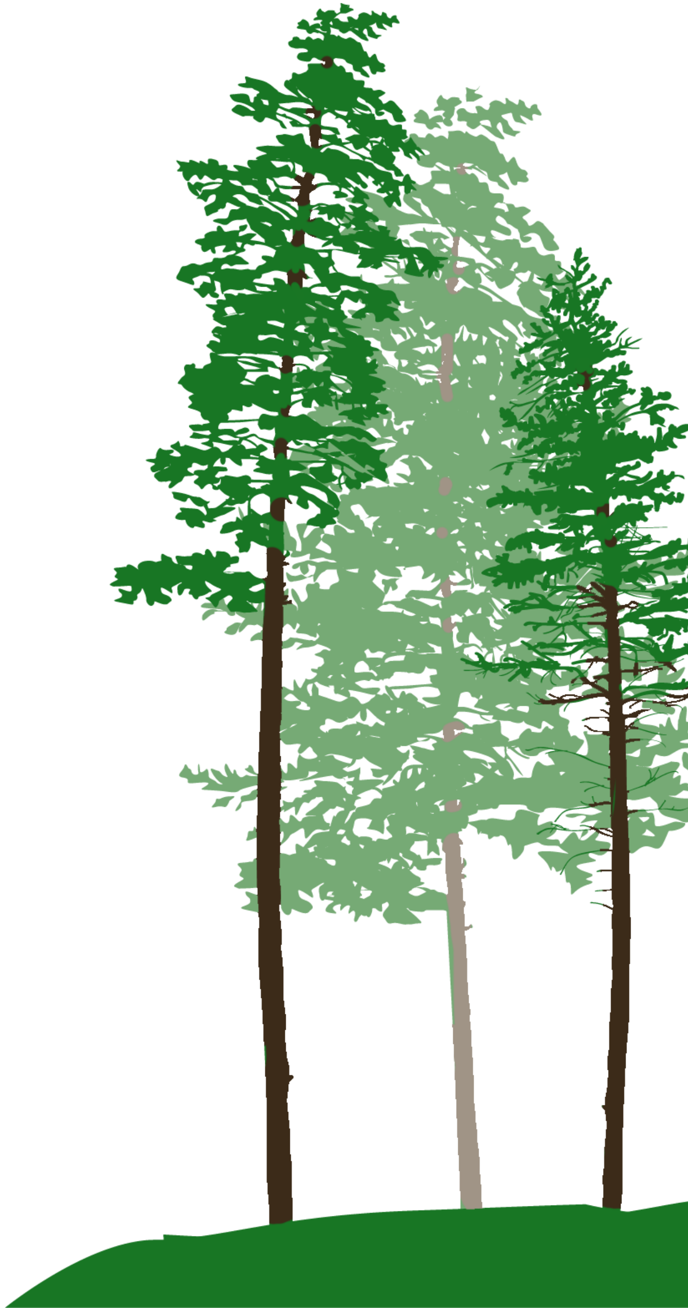
State Perspective: Texas

- Child support is part of the Attorney General’s Office
- Caseload: 1.4M
- Annual budget: $400M

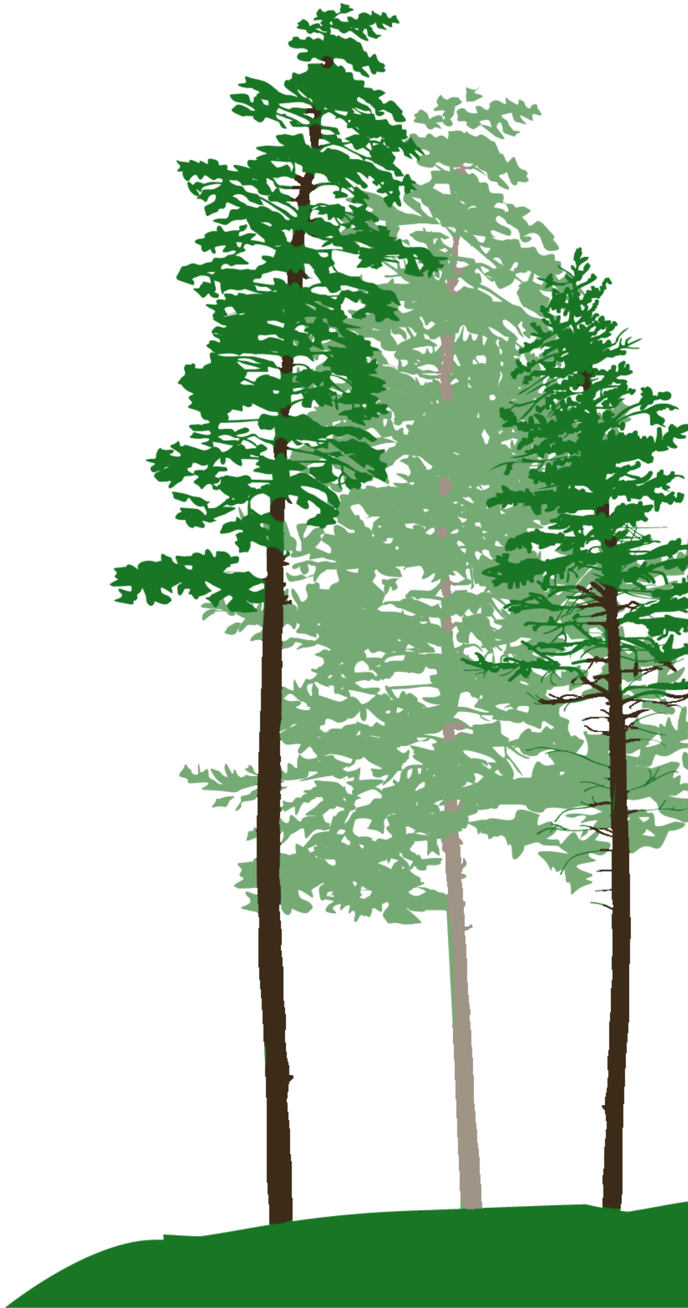


State Perspective: Arizona

- Child support is part of the Health and Human Services Agency
- Caseload: 134,000
- Annual budget: $79M



State Perspective: California



- Child support is part of the Health and Human Services Agency
- Caseload: 985,000
- Annual budget: $1.2B