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ABSTRACT

This document is comprised of the 12 monthly issues of the 1998 "Child Support Report," which explores problems related to child support enforcement, reports on federal and state government child support enforcement initiatives, and summarizes research related to child support. Editorials and information on events and conferences of interest and funding opportunities are featured regularly. Major topics include: (1) the effects of divorce on children, and the Federal Parent Locator Service (January); (2) Connecticut's child support campaign, and nonresident parents' characteristics and child support (February); (3) reorganization of the Office of Child Support Enforcement, and interagency collaboration (March); (4) computer-based training for child support (April); (5) child support office safety, and state court involvement in support programs (May); (6) privatization of support services, and support enforcement programs among Indian tribes (June); (7) the Virginia KidsFirst Campaign, and self-assessment under welfare reform (July); (8) the Deadbeat Parents Punishment Act of 1998, California Supreme Court ruling on noncustodial parents seeking work, and improving the usefulness of websites (August); (9) the Child Support Performance and Incentive Act of 1998, and the use of probation as a collection tool in Texas (September); (10) co-locating welfare and support agencies in Oregon and in Virginia, and Washington's video conferencing project (October); (11) the Federal Case Registry containing records of parents who owe child support, and notice of employee termination sent to child support agencies (November); and (12) family court mediation in New York, and efforts to solve Y2K problems at the Office of Child Support Enforcement. (KB)

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Child Support Report

Office of Child Support Enforcement

Vol. XX, No. 1, January 1998

State Legislators and Child Support

An Interview with Ohio State Representative Joan W. Lawrence

On December 16, CSR spoke with the Honorable Joan Lawrence, Ohio State Representative and Chair of the National Conference of State Legislatures' (NCSL) Child Support Task Force. As a legislator with long-standing interest in child support enforcement, Representative Lawrence has supported efforts to do what is right for children, fair to parents, and reasonable for the citizens of Ohio.

CSR: *From your perspective as a legislator and as Chair of NCSL's Child Support Task Force, what do you see as most important in child support enforcement in this coming year?*

RJL: The crucial thing is for States to get their child support enforcement programs into conformity with the requirements of the new law. Let me be clear about this. While there are concerns among State legislators about some child support provisions of welfare reform, all State legislators want to see child support enforced, want to see that children receive the support

they need and deserve. After all, a great deal of the bill's child support provisions are little more than a restatement of what States have been doing for years. Reading the federal law for the first time was, for me, a lot like reading Ohio's law, which I worked on in '95. We already had administrative process, mandated cooperation, hospital paternity establishment—there was very little that was new. The federal law is, by and large, acceptable to most State legislators. It's just that pieces of it are troublesome. And we want to work with federal and State officials to get a consensus on those.

CSR: *What's the Child Support Task Force all about?*

RJL: The Task Force, which is made up of eight legislators and four staff, was established by NCSL's Executive Committee following passage of the federal welfare reform legislation. As I indicated, there was concern among State legislators about some child support enforcement provisions of the bill. Some felt that Congress had exceeded its authority in de-



creeing that parties to an action to establish paternity are not entitled to a trial by jury. Others were concerned about provisions related to the revocation of hunting and fishing licenses—a very difficult area of enforcement for many States. And there was a general sense on the part of many legislators that Congress should have given States more flexibility of action. So, the Task Force was set up to look at some of these issues and to make recommendations to the Executive Committee. Also, the Task Force will take a

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look at NCSL's child support policies generally in light of changes in the law. And it provides an opportunity to work with federal officials in making sure that States are doing what they need to do to enforce child support. This is a short-term group, by the way. NCSL already has two standing committees with child support responsibility: Human Services and Law and Justice. And there's really no need for a third. We're hoping to finish our work by mid-1998 when we'll provide a report and recommendations to the Executive Committee.

CSR: *State legislatures are still something of a mystery to many of us. What should we know about them?*

RJL: The big difference between legislators and administrators in a bureaucracy is this: legislators are directly responsible to the citizens of their States—their constituents—who hold them accountable for their actions. That sets a very different tone in the work environment. Also, legislators wrestle with a greater variety of issues and problems than a typical program administrator. As a former State legislator, Judge Ross understands this. It takes time for a legislator to know everything he or she needs to know about an issue to cast an informed vote. So, when federal legislation, such as child support enforcement, imposes new requirements on States, legislators need time to consider how best to respond. Yet, time is what we never seem to have enough of. Most legislatures don't meet year round. Some don't even meet every year. These are part-time jobs in many States, although you wouldn't know it from the hours: 60 and 70 hour weeks are common during the legislative season.

CSR: *How can the CSE program help legislators cope with these challenges?*

RJL: One very important thing federal officials can do—as well as the States' child support directors—is to maintain communication with legislators. The recent addition of legislative chairs to your publications mailing list is a step in the right direction. A legislator may not read everything that comes across the desk but just in looking, for example, at a child support newsletter, he or she will be reminded that this is an important topic for a lot of people. A sense of being part of the normal everyday process is very important to legislators. So, talk to us more. Keep us informed of what you're thinking and doing. The tendency is for bu-

reaucrats to talk to each other and ignore the legislators, perhaps hoping we'll go away. But for the benefit of long term relationships we need to keep the lines of communication open.

CSR: *What should child support staff know before giving testimony before a legislature?*

RJL: I was active in the League of Women Voters before coming to the legislature, and I've given many talks on how to testify before a legislative body. Staff should recognize that the legislators listening to them may not be familiar with their issue, and they may have short attention spans, as well. So they should start at the beginning and tell the legislators exactly what they need to know. Be concise, but be clear. Stick to the point. Reference a bill by its name, not its number. Speak in nontechnical language, and keep agency jargon to a minimum. Otherwise, there's a good chance of losing the audience in the first couple of minutes.

CSR: *Any last thoughts?*

RJL: Over this past year or two I've noticed an emphasis on child support enforcement partnerships with the States, with other programs, and with advocates. I'd like to see that partnership extended to State legislators. We have a very important job to do around the implementation of the child support provisions of welfare reform, and we can be much more effective if we are working closely with child support enforcement program officials.

CSR: *Thank you.* □

More State System Certifications

Four more states received statewide automated systems certification in December.

- Guam
- Iowa
- New York
- Rhode Island. □

The Future of the Family

Academics Debate the Effects of Divorce on Children

The University of Virginia's Center for Children, Families, and the Law sponsored a three-day forum on the Future of Families in Charlottesville, Virginia, November 12 - 14, 1997. The Center for Children, Families, and the Law is a multidisciplinary group of University of Virginia faculty from a wide range of disciplines, whose work focuses on children and families.

One of the goals of the Center is to promote informed policy and increase public understanding of family issues by disseminating information among professionals working with families, policy makers, and the public at large.

The conference brought together an outstanding line-up of researchers and speakers. William Galston of the University of Maryland, and a former Deputy Assistant to President Clinton for Domestic Policy, opened the conference with an overview of "The Needs of the American Family." Dr. Galston reviewed data on divorce, its effects on children (mostly negative, he said) and the difficulties faced by single parents raising children.

*Most of the children
of divorced parents
do not suffer
long-term damage.*

.....Andrew Cherlin

All other things being equal, Galston concluded, most children have more opportunity and do better across a range of variables when they are part of a family that has both a father and a mother.

A conference highlight was a scholarly debate among Andrew Cherlin of Johns Hopkins, David Popenoe of Rutgers, and Sara McLanahan of Princeton on the effects of divorce on children. Cherlin, conceding that in most cases two parents are better than one, argued from his data that most of the children of divorced parents do not suffer long-term damage. The effect of divorce on children, he said, is "a cause for concern but not alarm."

Popenoe was more pessimistic about the effects of divorce on children. A decline in child well-being in our society, he said, can be traced directly to the decline of the family. Noting that out-of-wedlock births were rapidly replacing divorce as the cause of single parent families, he said that America is the first nation in history where children are worse off than adults.

As a remedy, he proposed later marriage, high school courses in human relations, more rigorous pre-marriage counseling, and recognition that a successful marriage requires work.

*America is the first nation
in history where children
are worse off than adults.*

.....David Popenoe

Sara McLanahan of Princeton, agreeing largely with Cherlin, suggested that family difficulties and the serious problems many children confront might stem not so much from divorce but from couples not marrying in the first place. As a result, she advised focusing on ways to motivate couples to marry and to reward those who maintain their marriages.

For further information about the conference, contact the Center for Children, Families, and the Law at the University of Virginia, 102 Gilmer Hall, Charlottesville, Virginia 22903, telephone (804) 924-4029. □

New Hire Update

From 10-1-97 to 12-15-97:

- New hire information was received from 47 states and territories;
 - The Federal Parent Locator Service received 696,704 locate requests and provided employment information for 33,551; and
 - The customer hot-line received 3,889 calls: 1,043 from multistate employers. □

One-Stop Service Centers in Delaware

GPRP Project Reduces Case Processing Time

By: Gail Chupein and John Clark

In Delaware, customers may walk into one of the State's one-stop service centers seeking a single service. But their success in achieving self-sufficiency is increased when a case manager can make connections with a variety of appropriate helping programs such as child support, Medicaid, TANF, and WIC.

The concept of Delaware's one-stop service center was expanded and refined through a grant from OCSE under the Government Performance Results Act (GPRP) to the State's Division of Child Support Enforcement (DCSE). The GPRP project was designed and developed as a community-based child support team utilizing "one-stop shopping" in a state service center.

Members of the team are cross-trained and capable of completing all child support functions for the customer. Goals of the GPRP project include streamlining TANF intake and paternity establishment processes by conducting child support interviews at the time of application for TANF and enhancing locate success through expanding automated interfaces and emphasizing timely interviewing of TANF customers.

An example of a successful interface occurred shortly after the GPRP project was implemented. Elva Roscoe, a member of the GPRP child support team, conducted an intake interview for a custodial parent referred to the GPRP project by TANF staff. As the interview progressed, Ms. Roscoe sensed that the custodial and noncustodial parent were still together—but not living together because of fears that the custodial parent would not qualify for assistance.

Ms. Roscoe explained that the Delaware TANF program was designed to keep families together and that they could both benefit by telling TANF staff they were an intact family. As a result of the information provided to the custodial parent by Ms. Roscoe and another member of the GPRP team, the custodial parent decided to talk to her TANF worker about adding the noncustodial parent to the grant. The GPRP team's sensitivity and alertness helped keep this family together and prevented child support from wasting time and effort by pursuing misinformation.

Development and early implementation of this project included a strong focus on making sure the GPRP team understood the relationship DCSE maintains with other agencies in order to coordinate services to clients. Emphasis was placed on communication between the TANF staff and DCSE and training was provided on recent changes in referring customers to child support.

As the project was implemented, On-Site Supervisors and GPRP Project Managers made themselves available on an as-needed basis to answer questions and resolve problems as they arose. Several months after initial implementation was completed, further training was scheduled to update TANF staff, respond to concerns, and clarify procedures.

*Members of the team
are cross-trained and capable of
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Early results indicate that the GPRP project has been successful in reducing overall case processing time and increasing the percentage of noncustodial parents who are located. TANF workers, who can frequently schedule their customers for same-day interviewing by GPRP staff, report satisfaction with the new process. This process is more convenient for the customer, reduces the number of missed appointments, and helps the customer see the connection between receiving TANF benefits and cooperating with DCSE to obtain child support from the noncustodial parent. □

John Clark is a Program Specialist in ACF's Region III, Philadelphia, Office. Gail Chupein is a Social Services Administrator for the Delaware Division of Child Support Enforcement.



States' Use of Access and Visitation Grants

By: David Arnaudo

In Fiscal Year 1997, all states, Puerto Rico, Guam, the District of Columbia, and the Virgin Islands applied to receive a share of the \$10 million authorized for grants to states for access and visitation programs (see November '97 *CSR*). As the following summary shows, states and jurisdictions plan to fund a variety of projects with these grants. In most instances more than one project will be funded in a given state or jurisdiction.

Project	Number of States
Voluntary mediation	37
Mandatory mediation	31
Counseling	24
Education	33
Parenting plans	32
Visitation enforcement	12
Monitored visitation	16
Supervised visitation	22
Neutral drop-off/pick-up	17
Guidelines—visitation and alternative custody.	16

Specific projects include: court reforms (California, Michigan, Oregon); services in Head Start settings (Georgia and Mississippi); services in responsible-fatherhood project settings (Maryland); hotlines (Guam); parenting education for parents emerging from in-hospital paternity projects (Massachusetts); mediation referrals at the time of paternity establishment, child support establishment, review and modification, and child support parent notification (Missouri); statewide registry for visitation (Oklahoma); and extended hours for supervised visitation after work and on weekends (Rhode Island).

Some states are asking local areas to compete for projects (Georgia, Ohio); others are allotting funds by local areas (Arizona, Indiana); still others are holding public forums and appointing task forces to determine the use of funds (Alabama, Iowa, Montana, South Dakota). For further information, contact David Arnaudo at (202) 401-5364. □

David Arnaudo is OCSE's Liaison for Advocacy Relations.

Teen Birth Rates

Final data for 1995 and preliminary data for 1996 from the National Center for Health Statistics show that the teen birth rate has declined slowly but steadily for five years. The teen birth rate reached 50.2, its lowest point in more than half a century, in 1986.

Between 1986 and 1991, the teen birth rate rose by one-fourth, peaking at 62.1 in 1991. Since 1991, the rate has declined by approximately 12 percent, to 54.7 in 1996.

Most of these births are nonmarital. This data has important implications for child support enforcement since unmarried teen mothers tend to be disproportionately poorly educated and less apt to receive adequate prenatal care. Babies born to unmarried teen women are at elevated risk of low birthweight (see March '96 *CSR*).

Teen Birth Rate (Births per 1,000 Females Aged 15-19; 15-17; and 18-19)

Ages:	1960	1980	1990	1992	1994	1996
15-19	89.1	53.0	59.9	60.7	58.9	54.7
15-17	43.9	32.5	37.5	37.8	37.6	34.0
18-19	166.7	82.1	88.6	94.5	91.5	86.5

The marital birth rate among teens has declined substantially since 1960, while the nonmarital teen birth rate increased through 1994 and declined slightly in 1995.

Marital (M) and Nonmarital (NonM) Birth Rate (Births per 1,000 Females Aged 15-19)

	1960	1980	1990	1991	1993	1995
M	531	350	420	410	388	362
NonM	15	28	43	45	45	44

In 1996, teens had 386,371 nonmarital births and 119,142 marital births; thus, 76 percent of teen births were nonmarital. □

**LET'S TAKE CARE
OF OUR KIDS.
CHILD SUPPORT.**

FPLS Transition

By: Nancy Bienia



Some of OCSE's FPLS Workgroup membership.

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (welfare reform) expanded the Federal Parent Locator Service (FPLS). The expansion included establishment of a National Directory of New Hires (NDNH) and a Federal Case Registry (FCR). Because of the magnitude and complexity of this task, the expanded FPLS development covers three phases.

The first phase began on October 1, 1997, when the FPLS started accepting new hire data from the State Directories of New Hires. By mid-December over six million records had been submitted to the NDNH. OCSE expects now that states will submit approximately 60 million new hire records each year.

To insure the quality of those records, before being placed in the NDNH data base the names and Social Security Numbers (SSN) of all new hire submissions are verified and, if necessary, corrected using the Social Security Administration's (SSA) Enumeration Verification System (EVS). So far, the quality of new hire data being submitted by the states is excellent, with 92 percent of the data passing the EVS system.

All cases submitted to the FPLS are matched against the NDNH. This has resulted in more than 5,000 non-custodial parents being located since October 1. To take full advantage of this new locate source and obtain the most up-to-date employer and home address information, data in the NDNH will be matched against cases in the Tax Refund Offset data base.

During the second phase, the NDNH will become an even richer source of data with the addition of quarterly wage and unemployment insurance claimant information supplied by the State Employment Security Agencies (SESAs). It is estimated that 140 million wage and 25 million unemployment insurance records will be submitted quarterly to the NDNH.

Quarterly wage information will include the following data: employee name and SSN; employer name, address, federal identification number, and the wages paid to the employee in the quarter. In addition, the unemployment insurance information will provide the name, SSN, and address of individuals who are receiving or have applied for unemployment benefits.

The third and last phase of the expanded FPLS implementation is to be completed by October 1, 1998, with the establishment of the Federal Case Registry. The FCR will contain an abstract of information on all IV-D, as well as nonIV-D, cases from each state.

The primary function of the FCR will be to facilitate location in interstate cases—those cases in which participants have cases in other states. Information on these persons in any and all cases will be returned to the appropriate states. This information will enable the states to contact each other and determine which has continuing exclusive jurisdiction.

Additionally, data in the FCR will be matched against data contained in the NDNH. When matches occur, the information will be sent automatically to the appropriate state(s) for processing and enforcement.

As in the case of the NDNH, only verified data will be placed in the FCR. To lessen the burden, therefore, of an expected high volume of cases being sent to the FCR in October, 1998, *OCSE requests that states validate the SSNs of participants in their caseloads prior to implementation of the FCR.* (A letter recently mailed to all IV-D directors describes more fully how this process will work.)

Upon full implementation, the expanded FPLS will provide the most comprehensive and up-to-date information available from a national source. Together, the NDNH and FCR will dramatically improve communication of child support case information among the states, and, over the next ten years, could deliver an estimated \$6.4 billion of increased support for children.

If you would like more information, contact the FPLS information line at (202) 401-1267. □

Nancy Bienia is a Special Assistant for Systems Development in OCSE's Division of Program Operations.

State New Hire Agency Organizational Locations

- Child Support Enforcement Office 34
- State Employment Security Office 19
- State Treasury (Michigan) 1. □

1998 Conference Calendar

The Calendar is printed quarterly in *CSR*: in January, April, July, and October. If you are planning a meeting or conference and would like for it to be included in the Calendar, please call OCSE's Bertha Hammett at (202) 401-5292 or fax her at (202) 401-5559. The Calendar is accessible through the Federal OCSE web site under the "News" section: <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/ACFPrograms/CSE/index.html>.

The listing is also available on the OCSE Section of ACF's Bulletin Board at (800) 627-8886.

January

12-14 *National CSE Training Work Group Meeting*, Sheraton Crystal City Hotel, Arlington, VA, Charlene Butler (202) 401-5091.

12-15 *ACF Region VI Mid-Winter Leadership Conference*, Hyatt Regency Hotel Downtown, Dallas, TX, Shirley Gray (214) 767-9648.

14-15 *Eighth National CSE Training Conference Planning Committee Meeting*, Sheraton Crystal City Hotel, Arlington, VA, Mae Frances Rowlett (202) 401-3443.

22 *State Child Health Insurance Program: Best Practices, Conference*, DHHS Region II, Mt. Sinai Medical Center, New York City, Shirley Turner (212) 264-2560.

26-28 *NCSEA Mid-Year Policy Forum and Conference*, Washington Hilton and Towers, Washington, DC, Holly Powell (202) 624-8180.

February

9-11 *Bi-Regional (IX & X) Domestic Violence Conference*, Double Tree Hotel, Lloyd Center, Portland, OR, George Lund (206) 615-2552 X3053.

16-20 *California Family Support Council Annual Meeting*, Hyatt Regency, Burlington, CA, Noanne St. Jean (209) 582-3211 X2403.

March

2-4 *OCSE Systems Integration Regional Meeting*, Omni Inner Harbor Hotel, Baltimore, MD, Robin Rushton (202) 690-1244.

9-11 *OCSE Systems Integration Regional Meeting*, Cathedral Hill Hotel, San Francisco, CA, Robin Rushton (202) 690-1244.

16-18 *OCSE Systems Integration Regional Meeting*, Adams Mark Hotel, Kansas City, MO, Robin Rushton (202) 690-1244.

24-26 *North Carolina 15th Annual CSE Conference*, Grove Park Inn, Asheville, NC, Barry Miller (919) 571-4114 X219.

30-April 3 *Training of CSE Trainers (TOT)*, Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites, Alexandria, VA, Bertha Hammett (202) 401-5292.

April

6-8 *Mississippi CSE Association, 7th Annual Training Conference and Business Meeting*, Broadwater Beach Resort East, Biloxi, MS, Shirley A. Buford (601) 359-4883.

15-17 *National Council of State Child Support Enforcement Administrators IV-D Annual Meeting*, Tara Hyannis Hotel and Resort, Cape Cod, MA, Jerry Fay (617) 577-7200 X30482.

May

3-7 *ERICSA 35th Annual Training Conference*, Hyatt Regency-Riverfront, Savannah, GA, Nancy J. Crawford (703) 359-1278.

4-8 *California District Attorneys Association First Nationwide Family Support Symposium*, Disneyland Pacific Hotel, Anaheim, CA, Kristen Gingg (916) 443-2017. □

Support From Johnny Cash

In recent years, child support has become a highly visible public issue. The regular payment of legally obligated support is now seen by many people as one of the most important responsibilities of a non-custodial parent.

Country music legend Johnny Cash, in an interview in the November, 1997, *Vanity Fair* is asked: "Which living person do you most despise?" Cash's response, "Fathers who won't pay child support," resonates throughout all levels of American society. □

With permission from the November, 1997, issue of Vanity Fair.

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FYI: Census Bureau News You Can Use

Persons aged 20-29 most likely movers.

When considering the locate function, it may be helpful to bear in mind that:

- 43 million Americans, 16 percent of the population, moved during the period March 1995 - March 1996;
- About two-thirds of movers (26.7 million) stayed in the same county, 8 million moved between counties within the same state, and 6.5 million changed states; and

• Moving rates generally decline as persons get older. In the period of the survey, persons aged 20-29 were the most likely movers (33 percent). □

Source: Census Bureau, Document CB97-194. For more information call (301) 457-3030.

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Child Support Report

Office of Child Support Enforcement

Vol. XX, No. 2, February 1998

Connecticut Announces New Child Support Campaign



As part of a continuing effort to collect child support payments from noncustodial parents, Governor John G. Rowland and Commissioner Joyce A. Thomas recently unveiled new child support billboards that will be posted around the State. The billboards are the first step in a new awareness campaign that the Department of Social Services (DSS) is developing as a method of getting the issues of child support into the community.

The campaign begins with the question, "Need Help With Your Child Support?" The billboard message is intended to be nongender specific, thereby offering help to both parents. The message is designed to work with two new public awareness projects, both of which include elements for noncustodial parents.

"Strengthening child support enforcement as a way to move parents from welfare to work, as well as to promote economic independence for families, has always been a high priority for this agency," said Commissioner Thomas. "Over the past year we have seen

many new programs implemented: improved wage withholding, license suspension, the on-line most wanted posters, and an Internet resource center for people seeking child support assistance. This new publicity campaign is one more tool we can use to help reach those goals."

"As a state we have a responsibility to ensure that our children are taken care of," said Governor Rowland. "Part of that responsibility means doing everything we can to lessen tolerance for delinquent child support payments. This new initiative is going to open new lines of communication with parents who need our assistance."

In addition to the new advertising campaign, the agency is going to be operating two other outreach initiatives that include forging partnerships in the community and with other State agencies. These new projects and the billboard campaign will emphasize the movement towards making child support integral to self-sufficiency.

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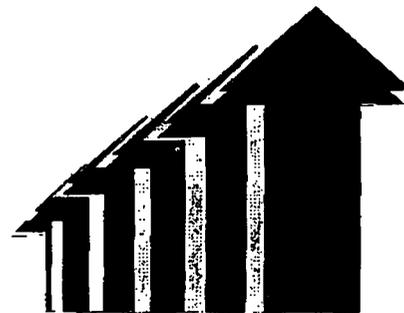
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Federal Income Tax Refund Offset Collections Up Again



A new record amount of \$1.1 billion in delinquent child support was collected by the federal government from federal income tax refunds for tax year 1996, according to DHHS Secretary Donna Shalala. The average collection was \$856.84. The amount was 10 percent higher than the previous year and a 66 percent increase since 1992. Nearly 1.3 million families benefitted from these collections.

The well-being of children is enhanced when they receive financial and emotional support from both parents.

.....OCSE Commissioner David Gray Ross

In making the announcement, the Secretary said, "With the toughest child support enforcement measures ever enacted, we are sending a strong message to noncustodial parents that they must support their children."

Under the federal tax refund offset program, state child support agencies report names of parents who owe child support payments and the overdue amount to the DHHS Federal Office of Child Support. These individuals are then notified in writing of the amount that will be withheld to cover their child support debt. That amount is then deducted from their income tax refund. The delinquency may also be reported to credit reporting agencies.

"The well-being of children is enhanced when they receive financial and emotional support from both their parents," said OCSE Commissioner David Gray Ross. "As new child support enforcement provisions, such as the National New Hire Directory, go into effect," he continued, "noncustodial parents will find it more and more difficult to ignore their legally obligated support payments to their children."

Parents whose children receive Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and whose unpaid child support totals \$150 or more may have their federal income tax refunds withheld. For tax year 1996, refunds were withheld on behalf of over 875,000 families with children receiving TANF. Parents of chil-

dren who do not receive TANF must owe at least \$500 to have their refunds withheld. Over 385,000 nonTANF families benefitted from the program in 1996.

The partnership between states and the federal government continues to result in unprecedented financial support for children. In 1996, the federal/state child support enforcement system collected more than \$12 billion, an increase of more than 50 percent from the nearly \$8 billion collected in 1992. And paternity establishments rose to more than 1 million in 1996, doubling 1992's total of 516,000. □

NPRM Issued on Paternity

A notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) on implementation of the paternity establishment provisions of welfare reform was published on January 5, 1998, in the Federal Register (63 FR 187). Section 331 of welfare reform amended the Social Security Act to impose new statutory requirements for a state's voluntary paternity acknowledgment process.

The Secretary is required to promulgate regulations governing voluntary paternity establishment services and identifying the types of entities other than hospitals and birth record agencies that may be allowed to offer these services. States will be required to adopt laws and procedures that are in accordance with the statutory and regulatory provisions covered in the proposed rule. The proposed rule would revise 45 CFR parts 302, 303, and 304.

Consideration will be given to written comments received by March 6, 1998. Public comments may be addressed to: Deputy Director, Office of Child Support Enforcement, DHHS, 370 L'Enfant Promenade, SW, Washington, DC 20447, Attention: Director, Division of Policy and Planning. Comments may also be submitted by sending electronic mail to jjrothstein@acf.dhhs.gov, or by fax at (202) 401-3444. Electronic comments must be in ASCII format. □

Nonresident Parents' Characteristics and Child Support

By: Pamela J. Smock and Wendy D. Manning

Changes in family formation behavior over the past three decades have altered the context in which children are raised. Trends show increase in cohabitation, nonmarital fertility, and marital disruption. The upshot of these trends is that in 1990 at least 25 million children, about 40 percent of all children in the U.S., did not live with their biological father and about half of all children are expected to live in a single-parent household before adulthood.

The characteristics of nonresident parents are central to understanding levels of child support.

A large body of literature focuses on the effects of family structure on children's well-being. These studies generally show that living without both biological parents has a negative effect on children's life chances. Children living with only one parent receive less schooling, are more likely to have nonmarital births, and are more likely to grow up to be poor themselves.

A good deal of this relationship stems directly from lack of income. Due to the low potential earnings of many single mothers and little or no child support, nearly a majority of these children live in poverty.

Thus, a national focus on child support reform as one way to improve the well-being of children has emerged, and many recent studies have been devoted to understanding the determinants of child support payments. Yet, what is generally missing is information from and about the nonresident parent. Due to data limitations, most studies attempt to explain the receipt of child support by relying on the characteristics of the resident parent.

Our research evaluated the implications of having data on only the resident parent in child support analyses and, more broadly, the implications of ignoring nonresident parents in national data collection efforts.

Drawing on new, matched ex-partner data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, we examined

whether significant differences exist in levels of child support received and paid, as reported by the resident parent and nonresident parent, respectively. We also assessed the relative merits of predicting child support payments using solely the characteristics of the resident parent, compared with using the nonresident parent's or both parents' characteristics. And we examined the extent to which it is necessary to have both parents' reports of child support by assessing whether bias is present in the data.

We found the amounts that nonresident parents report paying to be slightly higher than the amounts that resident parents report receiving but the differences are not statistically significant. While this finding is inconsistent with the commonsense notion that there is a "his and hers" of child support, it is consistent with Seltzer's and Brandreth's (1994) findings based on an unmatched sample from the National Survey of Families and Households.

Our results imply that relying on either the resident or nonresident parent's report is satisfactory, at least to describe levels of child support.

We also examined child support transfers from nonresident parents to children, using statistical methods that enabled us to account for unobserved factors that affect both amounts reported paid and amounts reported received. Our major aim was to evaluate whether relying only on the resident parent's characteristics, as is usually done, provides satisfactory representations of the nonresident parent's economic ties to his or her children.

Our overall finding is that the nonresident parent's characteristics are more central to understanding child support than the resident parent's characteristics. Thus, to understand the determinants of child support, information on the nonresident parent is crucial. □

[With permission, from The Journal of Marriage and the Family, November, 1997, Volume 59, Number 4.]

Pamela J. Smock is in the Department of Sociology and Population Studies Center, University of Michigan; Wendy D. Manning is in the Department of Sociology, Bowling Green State University.

More State System Certifications

Alabama and Texas have joined the states that have received certification of their state-wide automated systems. □

Quick Access To Resource Materials

Want to find out quickly about a model state administrative process, get the latest research findings on privatization, or access a worker training curriculum on-line? You'll be able to do this and much more through a national electronic resource system under development by OCSE, which builds upon our current Web system.

A centralized automated index will permit users to search and access material by program area, topic, type of material, state, and author.

The system is being developed based upon OCSE's more than two years experience with its Web site and the numerous requests for additional material to be placed on the site. It will offer most federal, state, and local resource materials electronically, either directly or via linkage with state web sites and Internet networks.

Child support enforcement practitioners will be able to quickly access resource materials such as model forms, best practices, research findings, policy guidance, and outreach materials. A centralized automated index will permit users to search and access material by program area, topic, type of material, state, and author.

Ten states are participating in an electronic resource system implementation pilot which started in January, 1998, and is scheduled to be completed in April. (See box, below.) As implementation goes forward nationally, every state will need to identify and provide materials that will be helpful to the child support enforcement community.

For more information about this new and important system, contact Susan Greenblatt, either by Internet (sgreenblatt@acf.dhhs.gov), or by phone at (202) 401-4849. □

Ten Implementation Pilot States

Colorado	Nebraska	Vermont
Hawaii	New Jersey	Washington
Kentucky	Texas	West Virginia
	Wisconsin. □	

Children in Poverty

In 1995, there were 14 million related* children under 18 years of age living in families with income below the federal poverty level of \$15,569** for a family of four. This population comprised 20 percent (1 in 5) of all related children living in families.

Between 1980 and 1995, the number of children living in poverty increased by almost 2.9 million. In contrast, the number of persons 65 years of age and over living in poverty *decreased* by nearly 0.6 million.

Of the 14 million related children under 18 years of age living in families with income below the federal poverty level:

- 59 percent lived in homes headed by only a mother;
- 36 percent lived in homes headed by married parents; and
- 5 percent lived in homes headed by only a father. □

* Related children in a family include householder's own children and all other children in the household who are related to the householder by blood, marriage, or adoption.

** Based on the U.S. Census Bureau's poverty threshold, which is calculated using the Consumer Price Index from the previous calendar year.

Source: *Child Health USA '96 - 97*, U.S. DHHS, Public Health Service, Health Resources & Services Administration, Maternal & Child Health Bureau. DHHS Publication No. HRSA-M-DSEA-97-48, September 1997, for sale by the U.S. Government Printing Office, Superintendent of Documents, Mail Stop: SSOP, Washington, DC 20402-9328.



February 1998

Noncustodial Fathers: What Some Think

On January 12, CSR spoke with Bettie L. Applewhite, Ph.D, of Applewhite Research and Management Services. A social science researcher and consultant of wide experience, Dr. Applewhite, under contract to OCSE, recently conducted a series of focus groups of low-income noncustodial fathers to gain a more systematic understanding of their views. The project is part of OCSE's continuing customer service outreach to maximize the child support system's performance.

CSR: *Dr. Applewhite, tell us something about the group of men you've been working with.*

BLA: We worked with six different focus groups of low-income and no-income African American noncustodial fathers residing in a large eastern city. Each focus group had 7 - 10 participants with an average age of 30 years old. The majority of participants were single and employed but in low-paying jobs.

CSR: *What was the relationship of these men with the child support enforcement system?*

BLA: More than half of the men were currently involved with the child support enforcement system. Some of the others were young fathers who were themselves not in the system but were sons and nephews of men who had been involved with it in some fashion.

CSR: *How did these men view child support enforcement?*

BLA: Many of the participants reported having negative feelings about child support enforcement. They feel generally that program staff are biased in favor of the custodial parent, make few efforts to understand a noncustodial father's point of view, and have little interest in hearing his side of the story. While the system *is* interested in them from the standpoint of getting their money, minimal attempt is made to work with them to see what they realistically can afford to pay. Some participants feel that they have been treated discourteously by program staff and that much of the system's efforts result in keeping families apart.

CSR: *How would they like to see things change?*



BLA: Being treated fairly and respectfully would be at the top of their list. They feel the program has been designed to help women and to ignore men. They would also like to see program staff take a broader view of their problems and the reasons for their inability at times to make their support payments.

CSR: *Are there specific suggestions . . . ?*

BLA: Yes. Child support enforcement should do something to help a child's parents resolve their differences over support, when these differences threaten to have an adverse affect on the child's well-being. Program staff should provide information, including information about rights, to both the custodial and noncustodial parent, as the Planned Parenthood program does. The program should also be in a position to refer unemployed noncustodial fathers to other community resources that might be able to help them find work. And program staff should give recognition to a father's efforts to spend time with and care for his children and not base everything on the amount of money paid.

CSR: *Any other thoughts?*

BLA: Almost all of the men who participated in the focus groups said they wanted to be responsible fathers. Some feel handicapped, however, because their own fathers did so little to help them learn what fatherhood is about. They also pointed to a general lack of community resources, training, and support services for men that hindered their efforts to be good providers and to build healthy relationships with the child(ren)'s mother.

CSR: *Thank you.* □

Financial Industry Work Group Meets

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (welfare reform), which dramatically changed the nation's welfare system, contains comprehensive child support provisions of importance to the financial community. A major requirement is quarterly matching of financial institution account data with the names and Social Security numbers of delinquent noncustodial parents.

This provision was based on proven state successes. For example, Massachusetts, through its bank match program, has collected more than \$21 million over the past several years. In one instance, by using the bank match program to levy a father's bank account, the State was able to collect and disburse \$15,525 to the family.

From November 12 - 14, 1997, to assist states in implementing the data match, the Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement held the initial meeting of the Financial Institution Work Group. In attendance were representatives from such organizations as: the American Bankers' Association, America's Community Bankers, American Council of Life Insurance, Boston Financial Data Services, the Credit Union National Association, First Union, Norwest, and the Securities Industry Association. Altogether 32 states and 33 financial institutions and/or their associations participated.

*One of the primary elements
of any streamlining effort
is the development
of a uniform file format.*

The purpose of the meeting was to develop structural and operational processes to streamline the quarterly financial data match process. Small group sessions grappled with five issues: a draft Q & A action transmittal on data match provisions; model agreements for matching; outreach strategies; fee structures; and uniform file formats.

The exchange of views brought both child support enforcement agencies and financial institutions to a better understanding of each other's operations. This enabled conversations on complex topics such as

streamlining and uniformity to proceed in a direction that responded to the concerns of both groups. One industry participant noted, "I came here with some reservations but I must say I'm impressed with the candor and good will of everyone at this conference and their readiness to focus on what is needed right now."

Attendees agreed that one of the primary elements of any streamlining effort is the development of a uniform file format—one that can limit the time and costs involved in data software development and computer processing. Such a format would enable financial institutions to respond quickly to inquiries from more than one state—simplifying the process for those with multi-state offices. A second meeting of the group is scheduled for February 24-26.

If you would like to know more about the conference, contact OCSE's Pat Hagen at (202) 401-5684. □

Systems Workshops Change

Dates and locations for OCSE's workshops on "Child Support Enforcement Systems: Bringing Us Together" (listed in the January, 1998, *CSR Conference Calendar*) have changed. The new dates and locations are as follows:

- March 9-11, Alexandria, VA (registration due February 13);
- March 16-18, Kansas City, MO (registration due February 20);
- March 23-25, San Francisco, CA (registration due February 27).

Each state can send up to five individuals (including contractors) to these workshops, which have been planned to emphasize the "big picture" in helping participants understand how everything fits together.

Targeted to systems, policy, and program personnel, the workshops will provide the latest information on issues related to these critical functions. For more information, call J & E Associates at (301) 495-0400: ask for Shelly Wood at extension 268 for information on Washington; Leisa Coles-Winters at extension 265 for information on Kansas City; and Margo Smith at extension 254 for information on San Francisco. □

Training of Trainers

On December 8 - 12, 1997, OCSE's Division of State and Local Assistance's National Training Center (NTC) presented a Training of Trainers (TOT) course in Alexandria, Virginia. Nine states sent 29 participants to the course. Two staff from OCSE regional offices and three from the central office also attended the session, conducted by NTC's Mae Frances Rowlett.

*Trainers can apply
the TOT's principles
to adapt generic or general courses
on training
to child support's specific needs.*

A fast-paced and lively mix of training theory and practice, the intense 4-day course is targeted to child support enforcement professionals who shoulder a variety of training responsibilities and tasks, such as needs assessment, curriculum development, course delivery, and evaluation.

Commented one state participant: "Having had this course, I am better prepared to design, develop, and deliver quality training when I get back to my state."

The TOT gives state trainers the know-how to design and deliver effective job-oriented courses. Trainers can apply the TOT's principles to:

- adapt generic or general courses on training to child support's specific needs;
- modify training developed at the federal level for state/local use; and
- design and deliver customized in-house courses.

The next TOT will be held during the Washington, DC area's Cherry Blossom season (March 30 - April 3, 1998). For registration information call NTC's Bertha Hammett at (202) 401-5292 or Mae Frances Rowlett at (202) 401-3443. □

Preventing Teenage Pregnancy in NY

*Videotape Explains the Facts
About Child Support*

As part of Governor George Pataki's continued emphasis on child support, New York State's Office of Child Support Enforcement, in cooperation with the State's education and health departments, has developed a 15-minute videotape, presenter guide, and handouts entitled, "Facts . . . Just the Facts About Child Support." The package is part of an ongoing campaign in New York to reduce teenage pregnancy.

The materials, designed to complement current pregnancy prevention efforts, contain legal and financial information about child support that is often missing in discussions with teens. They are suitable for use in any setting where young people gather, such as schools, churches, and health clinics.

The message is that the teenage years are a time to be enjoyed—a time for growth and freedom—and that parenthood should be put off until adulthood.

In January, OCSE's National Training Center, as part of its continuing effort to assist states with training, mailed a copy of the videotape/guide/handouts package to each State Training Liaison. □

Connecticut

Continued from page 1

The projects are designed to show that responsible parenthood includes not only financial support to a child, but social and emotional support as well. In one project, outreach will be conducted in selected child care centers around the State, with a special component for noncustodial fathers. In the second, the department and the judicial branch will conduct an access and visitation project designed to assess, mediate, and monitor visitation disputes.

If you would like more information, contact Connecticut's Tom Horan at (860) 424-5270. □

**U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services**

Administration for Children
and Families
Office of Child Support Enforcement
Division of Consumer Services
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Washington D.C. 20447

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Child Support Report

New Publication: Standards for Parentage Testing

The American Association of Blood Banks (AABB) publishes a wide range of reference and research oriented books on timely topics in blood banking and immunohematology. Just out: the third edition of *Standards for Parentage Testing Laboratories*.

The standards define the criteria by which parentage testing laboratories can become part of the AABB Parentage Testing Accreditation Program.

The publication encompasses necessary and recommended policies and procedures involved in the collection, processing, and

interpretation of genetic tests performed to resolve cases of disputed parentage.

The standards cover: general policies; identification, specimen collection, and documentation; serological testing for red blood cell surface antigens; serological testing for HLA antigens; red cell enzyme and serum protein testing; DNA polymorphism testing (RFLP and PCR); immunoglobulin allotyping; and calculations and reports. For information, call the AABB's Sales Desk at (301) 215-6499. □

Child Support Report

**Vol. XX No. 2
February 1998**

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Olivia A. Golden

Commissioner, OCSE
David Gray Ross

Director, Division of Consumer Services
David H. Siegel

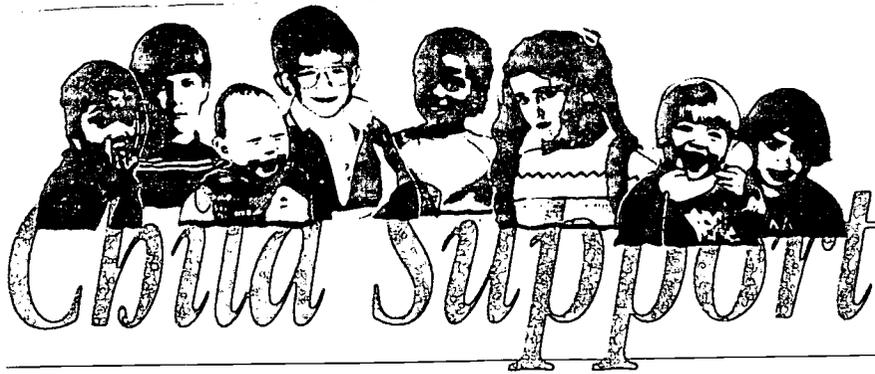
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please pass it on to a co-worker or friend.*



Child Support Report

Office of Child Support Enforcement

Vol. XX, No. 3, March 1998

OCSE Reorganization Is Goal Directed



OCSE Commissioner David Gray Ross

In January, Olivia Golden, Assistant Secretary for Children and Families, approved and signed a request by David Gray Ross to reorganize the Office of Child Support Enforcement. (See page 2 for the new organizational chart.)

In planning for the reorganization, Ross said, "We want to be in a position to act quickly when that is necessary, but, more importantly, we want to be a proactive force for getting things done—on time and on budget." As part of the reorganization, Ross' title changes from Deputy Director to Commissioner, Office of Child Support Enforcement.

The child support systems requirements prompted OCSE to review its organizational structure to ensure a focus on program priorities and results-oriented management. Following this review came Ross' decision to reorganize the agency to better respond to these requirements and to provide greater federal leadership of the program.

"I have made the certification of the states' systems my number one priority this year," Ross said, "and this reorganization is a reflection of that determination."

A key part of the reorganization is the move of Norman L. Thompson, formerly Director of ACF's Office of Program Support, to OCSE as Associate Commissioner for Automation and Special Projects. Thompson brings strong management, systems, and budgeting skills to this new position, which provides states with a single point of reference and one voice on systems issues.

The child support enforcement system now has 19 million cases, a fact that makes automated systems in the states crucial to program success. The importance of automation can also be seen in the statutory requirement for states to have "certified" systems. Currently, 38 states and territories have indicated that they have systems in place. Of those, 24 are certified and OCSE is in the process of reviewing the other 14.

Increasing collections and the numbers of support orders and paternities established also remain major agency goals. To move effectively on these fronts, the reorganization includes an emphasis on technical assistance to states, including continued work with the "Big 8 States" (see page 3); enhanced management and oversight of grants; improved consumer services, including the development of tools to measure the satisfaction of customers with the child support program, and reaching out to child support's increasingly multicultural customer base; an augmented international effort; and a strong, specific commitment to the Native American population.

Continued on page 2

U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Child Support Enforcement

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Reorganization

Continued from page 1

In this past year OCSE has assisted states in working to completely pass necessary state implementing statutes. And as a result of these and other efforts, the state/federal partnership has significantly increased collections. In fiscal year 1997, an estimated \$13 billion was collected on behalf of American children—an amount 63 percent greater than in fiscal year 1992.

During the same period, from 1992 to 1997, the number of paternities established jumped to over one million—an increase of more than 100 percent. These paternities include more than 350,000 established through the in-hospital voluntary acknowledgment program. And in 1997 a record \$1.1 billion was offset from the federal tax refunds of delinquent noncustodial parents and provided to their families.

“Despite these gains, there is more to do. With more than half the states’ systems still to be certified,” Ross says, “the challenge is formidable. But we can meet it if we are determined and committed to succeed. The reorganization, by placing leaders where they can be most effective, and by taking advantage of the skills of all staff, can help us do that.”

Welfare Reform Update

As of February 13, 1998, new hire information was received from 51 of the 54 states and territories, bringing the total number of records in the National Directory of New Hires (NDNH) database to 13,718,021. New hire information has been received from 77 federal agencies.

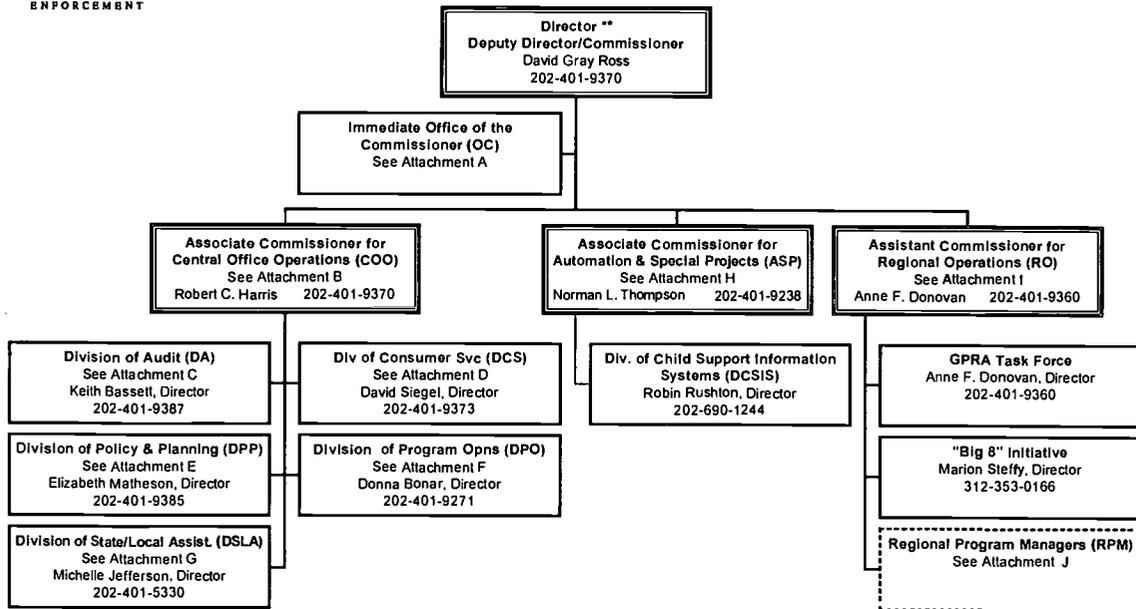
The Federal Parent Locator Service (FPLS) received 1,266,762 locate requests. NDNH has provided employment information for 111,605 of the requests. The FPLS customer hotline has received 6,749 calls, of which 2,285 were from employers.

Readiness testing for quarterly wage data (QW) and unemployment compensation claim information data (UI) began in January. This is data reported to the NDNH by the State Employment Security Agencies. Forty-six states have completed QW testing, while 41 have completed UI; completion of QW and UI testing by all states is expected shortly.

Fifty-one of the 54 states and territories have passed the Uniform Family Interstate Support Act. Still out: Guam, Kentucky, and the Virgin Islands. New Jersey has passed, but not yet implemented, the legislation. □



Office of Child Support Enforcement Organizational Structure



INTERNET: <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/CSE/>

** Assistant Secretary for Administration for Children & Families serves as statutory Director

— Line of authority
- - - - - Line of coordination

Updated: February 2, 1998
(file: ocsehead.doc)

Big 8 Interstate Work Group Meets

By: Marion Steffy

The Big 8 Initiative is a federal/state/local partnership to increase paternity establishment and child support collection rates (see April '97 CSR). The eight states (California, Florida, Illinois, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Texas) are a powerful alliance committed to making large-scale improvements to benefit children and families throughout the nation.

The Big 8's Federal/State UIFSA Workgroup, chaired by Texas IV-D Director David Vela, met in Chicago November 18-20, 1997. Part of the Big 8's charter is to improve interstate collections—interstate cases in these states make up more than 60 percent of the total interstate caseload.

Vela kicked off the strategy meeting by observing that "improving interstate collections must continue to be a priority of state and federal partners. Working together as a child support family," he said, "we can aggressively address existing barriers in order to meet the needs of our nation's children."

"In the end, every state will benefit from the lessons learned and products produced by this national initiative."

.....David Vela

Discussions focused on UIFSA implementation but also covered automated systems, training, communications, operations, volume processing, and resources. Participants noted that in many cases states which have already implemented UIFSA (50 of the 54 states and territories) report an increase in collections due to efficiencies made possible by the new law and that opportunity for even greater increases exists if the Big 8 states implement UIFSA in a coordinated and uniform fashion.

OCSE Commissioner David Gray Ross urged the group to be open to new ideas and new ways of doing business and to look for creative means of addressing the problems associated with interstate caseloads. "We must," he said, "reinforce the message that fathers cannot cross state lines to avoid their responsibilities."

Calling the meeting "a great start," Wally Dutkowski, Director of Michigan's Office of Child Support, pointed to his State's "proactive role in problem solving through development of the Michigan Interstate Improvement Initiative."

While the Big 8 Initiative is targeted to a relatively few states, their caseloads and distributed collections make up about half of the national total. In the end, as David Vela said, "every state will benefit from the lessons learned and products produced by this national initiative." If you would like to know more about the Big 8, contact Marion Steffy at (312) 353-5160. □

Marion Steffy is Director of OCSE's Big 8 Initiative.

More to Do, President Says

strong nation rests on the rock of responsibility. A society rooted in responsibility must first promote the value of work, not welfare. We should be proud that after decades of finger-pointing and failure, together we ended the old welfare system. And we're now replacing welfare checks with paychecks. But we still have a lot more to do, all of us, to make welfare reform a success: providing child care, helping families move closer to available jobs, challenging more companies to join our welfare to work partnership, and increasing child support collections from parents who have a duty to support their children. □

Excerpted from President Clinton's State of the Union address to Congress, January 27, 1998.

Over \$100 million Collected Since 1975

The child support enforcement program strengthens families by helping children get the support they deserve from noncustodial parents. In fiscal year 1999 it is estimated that a total of \$4.1 billion in federal and state dollars will be expended in order to collect over \$16.3 billion in payments. This represents a 10 percent gain in collections over fiscal year 1998 and a total return of almost \$4 for every dollar invested in the administration of the child support program. Since its beginning in 1975, over \$100 billion has been collected. □

Source: Administration's budget proposal.

NFL Responsible Fatherhood Campaign Continues to Grow

The National Football League Atlanta Falcons have joined the NFL's campaign to promote responsible fatherhood (see February '96 and June '97 *CSR*). Organizers of the campaign use public service announcements, posters, and billboards to get the attention of teen fathers who tend to emulate their role models—in this case responsible NFL fathers who are present daily and supporting the financial and emotional well-being of their children.

"When you miss out on any part of a child's growing up," says Falcons linebacker Jessie Tuggle, "you miss out on a great part of your own life."

The Atlanta Falcons Youth Foundation donated the billboards, the billboard company donated the billboard space, and a local television station developed and is airing public service spots featuring the players and their children. Georgia CSE paid only for the posters and bus cards.

For further information contact the Georgia CSE's Gary Driggers at (404) 657-3853 or Gail Moon at (404) 657-3866. □

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JESSIE TUGGLE & HIS CHILDREN

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HOLDING**

Employer Outreach

On February 5-6, 1998, 40 participants from 20 states attended an OCSE-hosted two-day seminar on "Planning for Employer Outreach: Keeping the Momentum Going."

The seminar provided an opportunity for state New Hire Reporting administrators to meet each other and exchange information about reaching out to employers. During the fast-paced two-day seminar, participants designed an employer outreach plan, learned new ways to market the plan to employers, and got tips on how to deliver a successful presentation.

But for many participants, the best part of the seminar was just being able to spend time with their colleagues in other states. As one said, "It was a great opportunity to trade ideas with others who are facing similar problems—one of the most useful meetings I've been to in this past year."

If you would like more information, contact OCSE's Carol Callahan at (202) 401-6969. □

Welfare Continues Decline

The number of persons on federal welfare rolls has dropped below 10 million for the first time in more than 25 years. Fewer than 4 percent of Americans are now on welfare.

"In August 1997, the most recent month for which we have figures available," said Melissa T. Skolfield, DHHS Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs, "there were 9,995,000 people on welfare. That's a drop of more than 2.2 million since the welfare reform law was signed in August, 1996. The number is at its lowest point since February, 1971, when it was 9,952,000."

Officials say the decline in welfare rolls results in part from aggressive collection of child support. □

Paternity Acknowledgment Affidavit: Required and Optional Data Elements

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (welfare reform) requires the Secretary of DHHS to specify the minimum requirements of an affidavit to be used for the voluntary acknowledgment of paternity. Also, states must enact laws requiring the development and use of such an affidavit and give full faith and credit to the affidavits of every other state.

To develop a form that all states could use and recognize, a task group composed of federal and state staff (including vital statistics) was appointed to recommend the minimum data elements and information requirements for all state paternity acknowledgment affidavits. After thorough review, including seeking input from advocates, the group members agreed that an affidavit—in addition to including the Social Security number of each parent—should:

- be user-friendly;
- address only the basic data elements necessary to establish legal paternity; and
- serve as a tool for collecting important information that could be used in the establishment of a child support order at a future date.

The task group members studied affidavits or acknowledgment of paternity forms from every state to identify information requirements commonly used by the majority of them. They classified data elements as either required or optional, taking into consideration the possibility that an overly-prescriptive paternity acknowledgment affidavit could actually discourage parents from signing the form.

For more information contact OCSE's Jan Rothstein at (202) 401-5073. □

Required Data Elements

1. Current full name (mother, father, and child)
2. Social Security number (mother and father)
3. Date of birth (mother, father, and child)
4. Address (mother and father)
5. Birthplace - child (city, county, and state)
6. Legal finding - 60 day rescission
7. Rights and responsibilities; alternatives and consequences
8. Signature lines for parents
9. Notary seals/witnesses: signature lines.

Optional Data Elements

1. Daytime phone number (mother and father)
2. Birthplace - mother and father (city, county, and state)
3. Hospital of birth (child)
4. Sex of child
5. Father's employer
6. Ethnicity of father
7. Medical insurance
8. Maiden name of mother
9. Place where acknowledgment or affidavit completed
10. Offer of name change (child)
11. Minors: signature line for guardian ad litem or legal guardian
12. Three-way signature offered on form (husband, wife, and biological father)
13. An advisory to parents that they may wish to seek legal counsel or obtain a genetic test before signing
14. A statement concerning the custody status of the child vis-a-vis state law. □

Source: OCSE Action Transmittal (OCSE-AT-98-02) January 23, 1998.

North Carolina System Certified

The certification of North Carolina's automated system on February 26, 1998, brings to 24 the number of states and territories with certified systems. □

Ohio Judicial Retreat Draws A Crowd

More than 100 participants gathered recently at Salt Fork State Park in Ohio for a judicial retreat on child support enforcement issues. Attending with judges and hearing officers were representatives of the Governor's office, Ohio state child support enforcement officials, and regional and central office OCSE staff. At least one representative from each of Ohio's 88 counties attended.

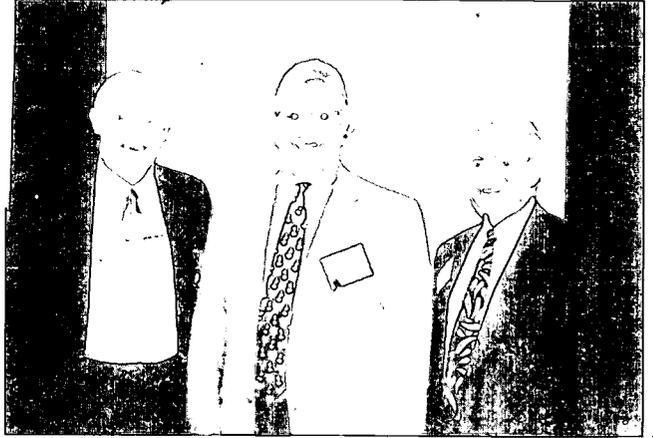
Ohio Assistant Deputy Director Barb Saunders, with OCSE Region V Specialist Gale Quinn and OCSE Court Liaison Larry Holtz, planned and organized the retreat, which was designed to be a catalyst for future judicial initiatives.

Chief Justice A.M.Keith of Minnesota delivered the keynote address, focusing on the changing role of the courts in child support. Justice Keith was an early proponent in Minnesota of moving child support cases out of the courts and to an administrative process, which can more efficiently accommodate a large number of cases (see July '96 CSR). While some of his colleagues "resisted the new process at first," Justice Keith said, "most of them now give enthusiastic support to it—having seen first-hand how an expedited judicial process can benefit everyone, both in and out of court."

The ultimate success of the retreat will be measured by the subsequent initiatives and programs that are developed as a result of it. Immediate plans are to focus attention on an area requested by the conference attendees and also of regional concern: providing follow-up training on UIFSA. The Regional Office is working with Ohio staff and OCSE central office staff to provide three one day UIFSA training sessions in strategic geographic locations in the State.

In addition to this training, the State plans to enhance the newly formed judicial partnership by forming a standing committee comprised of Ohio judges, county child support enforcement directors, State child support staff, and federal child support representatives—one from the regional office and one from the central office. The purpose of the committee will be to identify and address interface issues and barriers that hinder the establishment and enforcement of child support orders.

If you would like more information contact OCSE's Gale Quinn in the Chicago Regional Office at (312) 353-3315. □



Minnesota Chief Justice A. M. Keith, OCSE's Larry Holtz, and Judge Lynn C. Slaby, Ohio Court of Appeals Ninth Appellate District.

Region II's Jens Feck Receives Award

Region II's Jens Feck recently received a Certificate of Appreciation from the Virgin Islands' Department of Justice, Paternity and Child Support for his "Devoted and Invaluable Services." Deputy Attorney General Alva A. Swan and IV-D Director Aurjul H. Wilson presented the Certificate to Jens, a Program Specialist, during a December 22, 1997, year-end review ceremony outlining IV-D successes and new challenges.

In making the award, Wilson said that "Jens played an integral part in the success of the Virgin Islands' child support program, in particular his drafting of a comprehensive law that met all the requirements of welfare reform, and his planning of two vital technical assistance projects related to new hire reporting and in-hospital paternity establishment."

As Jens noted in his acceptance, the award also reflects the fact that the Region II New York Child Support Enforcement Office has established an effective long-term partnership with the Virgin Islands. Jens, who served as the Virgin Islands' IV-D Director from 1991 to 1993, is especially honored by the award since it comes from former colleagues who continue to view him as an important contributor to the ongoing effort of providing hope and support to children in the Virgin Islands. □

OCSE/TANF Collaboration Encouraged

OCSE Commissioner David Gray Ross and Diann Dawson, Acting Director of the Office of Family Assistance, recently joined forces to encourage the programs' state and local agencies to collaborate closely with one another in carrying out their common mission of family empowerment. (See examples on this page.) Excerpts from their joint letter to the state directors of their respective programs follow.

New welfare-to-work grants and proposed regulations for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program underscore how critical to family well-being is collaboration between child support and welfare programs.

Because welfare today is time-limited and child support is becoming a key family resource, both agencies are experiencing a role shift from income maintenance to family empowerment through self-sufficiency. Welfare reform shifted our focus from providing cash benefits to single mothers to preparing both parents, fathers as well as mothers, to take responsibility for the support of their children.

Because welfare is time-limited and child support is a key family resource, both TANF and CSE are experiencing a role shift from income maintenance to family empowerment.

A recent study shows how much child support payments can help families leaving welfare to maintain their self-sufficiency. Using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, the study found that women who did not receive child support payments had a 31 percent chance of returning to welfare within the first six months. In contrast, women who received as little as one dollar to a hundred dollars a month had only a 10 percent chance of returning to welfare. (See the May and June, 1997, issues of *CSR* for more information on this study.) □

Collaboration Examples

Virginia

In Virginia, the Division of Child Support Enforcement (DCSE) has co-located CSE staff with local social services agencies in 16 of the largest urban areas. The child support workers are to take part in interviews of new TANF applicants and to participate in redetermination reviews. The effect is that local TANF caseworkers and child support workers become a team informing customers of resources available to them as they plan for self-sufficiency. Also, TANF customers learn the importance of cooperating with DCSE to pursue child support as a significant addition to their income.

Wisconsin

In Kenosha County, Wisconsin, the Job Center program offers an example of multiple agency co-location which could be a particularly apt model under welfare reform. In Kenosha, as in Virginia, TANF and child support staff work side by side, but they are joined by other human services program staff, such as adult and vocational education, child care, the Private Industry Council, job service, and counseling to form a single unified delivery system.

Parents' Fair Share Projects

Many states have piloted Parents' Fair Share projects which require unemployed, noncustodial parents (usually fathers) whose children receive public assistance to participate in employment-related services when they are unable to meet their child support obligations (see July, '94, *CSR*). Participating states were encouraged to establish linkages among the agencies involved in Parents' Fair Share, including welfare and child support. Preliminary findings show that Fair Share programs can increase child support by providing work-related services.

Minnesota

In Minnesota, for example, the Parents' Fair Share Minnesota Fatherhood Program assists noncustodial parents to overcome barriers to employment so their children can receive financial and emotional support from both parents. The program offers on-the-job training, job search, basic education, peer support, mediation services, community work experience, conflict resolution, and parenting skills.o

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Health and Human Services**

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Child Support Report

Case Closure NPRM

A Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM), published in the Federal Register on February 24, 1998 (Volume 63, Number 36), would revise Federal regulations outlining the criteria for closing CSE cases. The effect of proposed changes is to clarify the situations in which states may close child support cases; make it easier to close unworkable cases; and ensure that viable cases remain open.

The proposed rule implements many of the recommendations of the regulation reinvention workgroup and the state IV-D directors' group. Consideration will be given to written comments received by April 27, 1998. Comments should be sent to the Commissioner, OCSE, 370 L'Enfant Promenade, SW, Washington, DC 20447, Attention: Director, Division of Policy and Planning; or, by electronic mail to: scesar@acf.dhhs.gov.

Proposed ADP Rule Limits Funding

Section 344 of welfare reform provides funding at an enhanced matching rate of 80 percent for approved development and implementation costs of automated CSE systems. The federal share of funding available at the enhanced rate is limited to \$400 million for fiscal years 1996 through 2001.

The proposed rule, published March 2 in the Federal Register, Volume 63, Number 40, responds to the requirement that the Secretary of DHHS issue regulations which specify a formula for allocating this sum among the states and territories. Welfare reform requires that the formula take into account the relative size of state child support caseloads and the level of automation needed to meet title IV-D automated data processing requirements. Comments by May 1 to OCSE Commissioner, Attention: Associate Commissioner for Automation and Special Projects.

Child Support Report

**Vol. XX No. 3
March 1998**

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Commissioner, OCSE
David Gray Ross

Director, Division of Consumer Services
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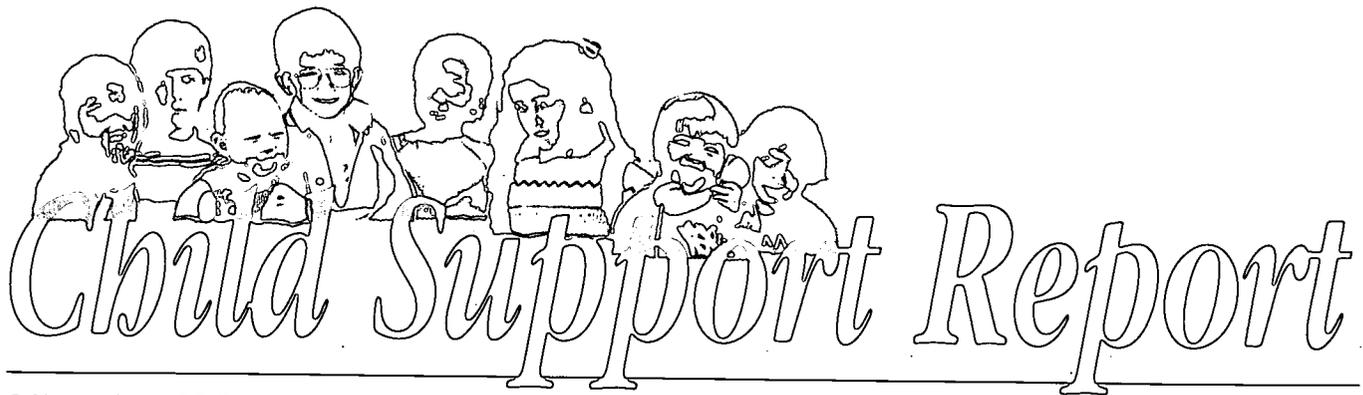
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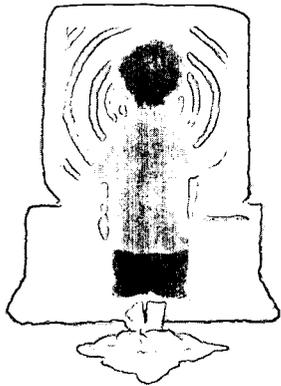
Child Support Report

Office of Child Support Enforcement

Vol. XX, No. 4, April 1998

CBT: A Tool for Maximizing Training Funds

By: Ted N. White and Shannon Hills



Beginning in the summer of 1998, the first of six computer-based training (CBT) modules will be available for use by the child support community. These modules are being developed by the Graduate School, U.S. Department of Agriculture, pursuant to an interagency agreement with OCSE (see "A Learning Partnership" in this issue).

The modules will be ready for use as developed, or they can be adapted (using CBT development software) to meet the needs of any state or county program.

The use of technology-enabled training is gaining in popularity, partly because technology makes high quality repetitious training

available to multiple staff at their worksites. While innovative training methods, such as CBT for use on the personal computer, can greatly assist in maximizing training dollars, advance planning remains critical to success.

OCSE's National Training Center, in conjunction with the regional offices, recently polled the child support community to determine at what systems level CBT courses should be developed. Systems capabilities vary among states, but a decision was made—with solid state support—to develop the courses at a level commensurate with industry standards for optimal use of multimedia capabilities (see box).

These system requirements will allow states to take full advantage of the training programs being developed by OCSE, as well as others that may be developed locally. We do not suggest that states discard any of their current systems and procure new ones with the recommended requirements; rather, they should purchase or upgrade a sufficient number of personal computers (PCs) to meet their training needs.

Continued on page 7

Specs for CBT Courses

- ◆ Computer: IBM Compatible Pentium, 133 MHz:
 - ◆ Windows operating environment: WIN 3.1 requires 16 mb Ram. WIN 95 requires 32mb Ram:
 - ◆ Hard drive: 2.1 Gb:
 - ◆ Monitor: Color, 15 inch:
 - ◆ Multi-media capability: video card 8 bit color (256 colors), 16 bit (64,000 colors) preferred, CD ROM 6x, 12x preferred, Sound Card (SoundBlaster or compatible), speakers, headphones:
 - ◆ World Wide Web access: 28.8 modem, minimum:
 - ◆ Internet Browser: Netscape version 4.0 preferred (browser differences can impact view of training program).
- Based on our assessment of states' capabilities, those states using 486 computers can upgrade to the minimum specifications. Because of the rapid changes in technology, we are recommending that any procurement requests that you make exceed the minimum specifications listed above. □

U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Child Support Enforcement

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New Ideas in Training

By: Michelle Jefferson

Part of OCSE's legislative mandate is to provide technical assistance to states to help them operate effective and efficient child support enforcement programs. From the beginning, training has been part of that technical assistance. A great deal of training provided to states by OCSE in past years was traditional "classroom based."



"We must harness technology to our needs—in training as in other areas—to be able to provide the level of service children and families deserve."

.....OCSE Commissioner David Gray Ross

Now, in keeping with the President's directive to federal agencies "to investigate how to make full use of emerging technologies" in order to upgrade the quality of training and improve its cost effectiveness, we are moving toward a more technology-based training. Training, after all, is a means to an end—not an end in itself. And, in child support enforcement, the "end" is simply doing the best job possible on behalf of the children and families of America.

As OCSE Commissioner David Gray Ross says, "We must harness technology to our needs—in training as in other areas—to be able to provide the level of service children and families deserve."

In this issue, devoted entirely to training, we look at trends, such as satellite and computer based training, showcase what some states are doing in training, and provide an overview of what is happening in training at the federal level. I hope you enjoy the issue. After you have read through it, why not take a minute to let us know what you think? We'd love to hear from you. □

Michelle Jefferson is Director of OCSE's Division of State and Local Assistance.

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A Learning Partnership

By: Charlene Butler and Dick Morton

A partnership has been formed between OCSE and the Graduate School, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Together, we are developing training materials that will take the learning process directly to the learner, augmenting other training opportunities. The concept is to build on the training needs assessment completed last year by developing and delivering training products that will support agreed-upon learning goals and foster staff success at all levels of the program.

The USDA Graduate School is a continuing education school offering career-related courses to all adults. Through the use of video conferencing, computer-based training (CBT) and web-based training, they have expanded the concept of distance learning by providing a wide variety of alternative learning opportunities that can meet virtually every participant's needs.

Under the partnership arrangement, Graduate School staff meet and work closely with members of OCSE's National CSE Training Work Group on content, design, development, and delivery of the training materials. Based on information obtained from an assessment of state capabilities and staff preferences, CBT will be the primary vehicle for the transfer of training to case workers.

Current plans call for the development of six CBT training applications, two distance training events using satellite links, and a course to teach trainers the use of distance learning equipment and techniques. As design and development are finalized, the applications will be piloted in various locations. And by late September, we hope to be in a position to demonstrate the courses at OCSE's Eighth Annual National Training Conference. □

Charlene Butler is a Child Support Program Specialist in OCSE's National Training Center and Project Manager for this partnership with USDA. Dick Morton is Program Manager with the National Capital Trading Center, a regional headquarters for the Graduate School, USDA.

Technology and Tradition: A Healthy Mix

By: Yvette Hilderson Riddick

○ CSE's National Training Center (NTC) has from time to time provided states with on-site course deliveries. That is, however, not our usual practice. NTC's role, as it has evolved, is to support the states' training units through:

- ◇ developing curriculum for dissemination and use by state trainers;
- ◇ developing trainer skills through training of trainer (TOT) course deliveries; and
- ◇ encouraging certification programs through which the knowledge and experience of state trainers can be recognized.

Much of this *Child Support Report* special issue on training is concerned with computer-based (CBT), satellite, and distance training. These are new and important efforts to solve a training dilemma: how to get the same information to all staff at the same time and have it understood in the same way. A difficult occurrence, to say the least! But together we must keep trying to get as close as we can to the ideal.

Taking advantage of technology can help us. By satellite, thousands of staff can hear the same message from the same voice at the same time for far less than it would cost to deliver the same message via traditional classroom style training. By using computer based training, staff can move ahead as quickly—or as slowly—as needed to fully assimilate needed information. Technology at once broadens the reach of training and enables concentration on individuals in ways that traditional training cannot match.

Does this mean that classroom training's "day" is over? No. Courses that depend on face-to-face interaction and discussion for their full benefit—such as cooperation in interstate case processing—are not always good candidates for CBT and satellite training. Nor are those, like OCSE's well-known training of trainers course, where group dynamics play a major role in the quality of instruction. Technology can add flavor to a trainer's platform skills and, in some settings, expand what can be accomplished, but it should not be seen as a replacement for on-site trainers.

The end result of all good training is learning, and we know that learning can and does occur in a variety of settings. Sometimes a CBT course is the answer for a training need; sometimes distance learning is the right choice. And sometimes a trainer face-to-face with her participants in a "traditional" classroom setting is the

best solution. Knowing how to select from the many choices available to us, thanks to advances in technology, is a big part of being a successful trainer today. □

Yvette Hilderson Riddick is Chief of OCSE's National Training Center.

CBT: A Manager's View

By: Leon R. McCowan

Attempting to do more with less is a constant challenge for all of us in child support. Our customers have diverse, ever-evolving needs that require knowledgeable staff, but finding the occasion and resources to train personnel is often a time-consuming and difficult process.

That is why I am very pleased that OCSE has entered into an interagency agreement with the USDA Graduate School to develop six computer-based training (CBT) courses for the child support community. CBT courses have been around since the late 1970s, but their popularity as a training tool has increased exponentially over the past decade, due in large part to the advent of affordable PCs equipped with CD-ROM drives.

CBT training combines multimedia capabilities such as video, graphics, and sound to create dynamic training curriculums that can be delivered to staff at their home worksites—eliminating travel time and costs normally associated with traditional instructor-led training courses. Moreover, CBT courses empower staff by permitting them to control the pace of their training.

I strongly urge all managers to support procurement or upgrading of hardware equipment to the level recommended by OCSE's National Training Work Group. Here in Region VI we have several computers that enable staff to take advantage of CBT training; I hope you will join us in making this exciting opportunity available to your staff. □

Leon R. McCowan is Regional Hub Director, West Central Regional Hub, Dallas Regional Office, and Lead Regional Administrator for Child Support.

State and Regional Training Liaisons

State Training Liaisons

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AZ	Anne Marie Mena (602) 274-1482	NE	Judy Manhas (402) 471-9419
AR	LeAnn Rollins (501) 682-3483	NV	Leslee Arnold (702) 687-3026
CA	Marie Coughlin (916) 263-1766	NH	Nancy Simpson (603) 271-4749
CO	Diane Young (303) 866-5997	NJ	Doris Sims (609) 588-2401
CT	Thomas Horan (860) 424-5270	NM	Bruce Clendenin (505) 827-7726
DE	Cathy Donofrio (302) 577-4815	NY	Lee Sapienza (518) 473-0188
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GU	Margot Bean 9-011 (671) 475-3360	OK	Mike Moore (405) 522-2661
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MI	Chuck Beldin (517) 373-3691	VA	Peggy Friedenber (804) 692-1471
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		WI	Todd Kummer or Barb Foley (608) 266-9909
		WY	James Mobler (307) 777-6958. □

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New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands
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- IX.** Debra Baunert (415) 437-8462
Arizona, California, Guam, Hawaii, Nevada
- X.** Vince Herberbolt (206) 615-2552 X3043
Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Washington. □

PCs Open Up New Possibilities For Connecticut

By: Diane Fray

As the administrator for the child support program in Connecticut, I am excited about what we can achieve with personal computers (PCs). We recently replaced the terminals in our central and regional offices with PCs, and while their physical acquisition was a great first step, we are just beginning to explore all the possibilities that this technology opens to us.

Our training program provides a recent example of one application. We amended a computer-based (CBT) UIFSA training course developed by another state to make it specific for Connecticut. The course was then made available through our Local Area Network to allow staff access in their offices.

Staff were required to review this course—an introduction to UIFSA with definitions of common terms and concepts—before attending a more in-depth classroom training course instructing them on the procedures of implementing UIFSA. This assisted the trainer greatly because staff brought a general understanding of UIFSA to the more extensive training session. (PC courses such as this one can also be useful as refreshers for staff and as primers for new staff.)

Other concepts that we are presently exploring include:

- ◆ the creation of an "Intranet" which will allow access for a selected group of users in a manner similar to Internet access. We intend to place our child support policy manual on this network—for easier and more timely access and as a way to solicit comments on draft policy from regional office staff; and

- ◆ the design of "help" files and links between our automated child support system and the policy, procedures, and systems user manual. We feel this will facilitate communication in a state where responsibility for the child support program is shared among four agencies.

We are also exploring the use of a specific electronic communication system for child support outside the normal agency-wide process, and internal directories to help organize and support our state child support strategic plan.



Diane Fray

For any state considering the purchase of new equipment, I urge consideration of PCs instead of terminals. The recently distributed Dear Colleague Letter DCL-98-19 from OCSE Commissioner David Gray Ross describes the specifications that should be considered when shopping for PCs (see "Specs for CBT Courses" in this issue).

Those specifications outline what is needed to take advantage of technology that will become available over the next few years and the automated tools and materials that OCSE is in the process of developing. After reviewing them, we think that one of our next steps may be to add sound cards to at least one PC in each office.

Connecticut is eagerly awaiting the six generic CBT courses being developed for OCSE by the USDA Graduate School so that we may make them State specific and add them to our CBT library. We also are looking forward to OCSE's National Electronic Child Support Resource System, which will enable accessing of training materials prepared by other states, Action Transmittals, Information Memoranda, the Compendium of Best Practices, and other information (see February '98 CSR).

I invite questions and suggestions that other states may have, or may wish to share, on the uses of PCs. Please E-mail me at Diane.Fray@po.state.ct.us. □

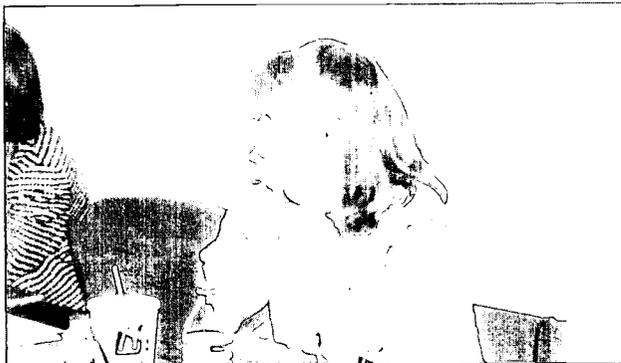
Diane Fray is the IV-D Administrator for Connecticut.

Correction

The March '98 CSR states that the child support enforcement program has collected over \$100 million since 1975. The figure should have read \$100 billion. □

Statewide UIFSA Training in Michigan

By: Kelly Morse



Kelly Morse at OCSE Training Work Group meeting.

Five training sessions in four cities, co-sponsored by Michigan's Office of Child Support and Family Support Council, drew more than 600 participants who were provided with an overview of UIFSA, instructions in how to complete forms, and other practical information.

Experienced trainers from each of three agencies—the Office of Child Support, Friend of the Court, and Prosecuting Attorneys—conducted the training. Presenting a uniform message, the trainers detailed the duties and roles of each agency and broke down by topic and job each area of enforcement.

The trainers also focused on improving customer services. Negative phrases such as, "That's not my job," and "I'll transfer you," were outlawed from the training module, while practices such as "case dumping" and "throwing a case over the wall" (giving a hard case to another agency), were banned after training. New phrases to be used included "May I help You?" and "We don't usually handle this area but let me make that call for you and have it taken care of."

To improve cooperation and communication among local agencies after the sessions, trainers encouraged each county to hold a monthly meeting to discuss interstate issues and conduct problem solving sessions. "This first training was a good beginning, a good introduction, to changes brought by UIFSA," said child support district manager Kathleen Cox. A second round of training is tentatively scheduled for later in the year. For further information, contact Kelly Morse at (517) 335-0890. □

Kelly Morse is a Policy Analyst in Michigan's Office of Child Support.

NYC Cross-Training

By: Monique Rabideau

Understanding the complex workings of the child support program is a challenge in large organizations such as New York City's Office of Child Support Enforcement (NYCOCSE), where the job tasks of its nearly 1,000 workers are broken into small parts of specific functions. Recently, the New York State Office of Child Support Enforcement, in cooperation with the City's program, sought to increase worker knowledge of the functions of the child support program through a cross-training of NYC child support workers.

There were two objectives: to provide workers with baseline knowledge of intake, location, paternity establishment, support establishment, enforcement, and collections; and to increase their awareness of how important it is to be accurate and timely in completing their work.

The training was delivered to 700 City workers in late 1997. Participants represented all five NYC boroughs and had different levels of experience and responsibility. Training activities required them to make decisions based on a variety of realistic case circumstances (including processing errors). This format "allowed us to make mistakes in a safe setting," one participant noted, "and learn skills that will help us avoid future mistakes on the job."

Evaluation results, as measured by pre- and post-tests, indicated an average increase of 35 percent in participant baseline knowledge. In addition, participants expressed an increased understanding of the significance to the program of their accuracy and timeliness in completing work.

As a result of the baseline knowledge gained by participants during the cross-training, future training curricula can be developed at a more advanced level, with an assurance that participants will be prepared to meet the challenge of more difficult material. Overall, this approach is expected to result in better utilization of training resources in the design, development, and delivery of future curricula. For more information, contact Monique Rabideau at (518) 474-0997. □

Monique Rabideau is the Principle Education Specialist for the NY State Child Support Enforcement Program.

1998 Conference Calendar

The Calendar is printed quarterly in *CSR*: in January, April, July, and October. If you are planning a meeting or conference and would like it included in the Calendar, please call OCSE's Bertha Hammett at (202) 401-5292 or fax her at (202) 401-5559. The Calendar is accessible through the Federal OCSE web site under the "News" section: <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/ACFPrograms/CSE/index.html> The listing is also available on the OCSE Section of ACF's Bulletin Board at (800) 627-8886.

April

6-8 *Mississippi CSE Association, 7th Annual Training Conference and Business Meeting*, Broadwater Beach Resort East, Biloxi, MS, Shirley A. Buford (601) 359-4883.

14-17 *National Council of State Child Support Enforcement Administrators IV-D Annual Meeting*, Tara Hyannis Hotel and Resort, Cape Cod, MA, Jerry Fay (617) 577-7200 X30482.

27-May 1 *3rd Annual Bi-Regional Interstate Task Force Conference for Region IX and X States*, Federal Office, San Francisco, CA, J.P Soden (415) 437-8421.

May

3-7 *ERICSA 35th Annual Training Conference and Exposition*, Hyatt Regency-Riverfront, Savannah, GA, Nancy J. Crawford (703) 359-1278.

4-8 *California District Attorneys Association First Nationwide Family Support Symposium*, Disneyland Pacific Hotel, Anaheim, CA, Kristen Gingg (916) 443-2017.

5-8 *California Family Support Council Quarterly Meeting*, Double Tree Hotel, Sacramento, CA, Noanne St. Jean (209) 582-3211 X 2403.

June

1-2 *NCSEA "UIFSA in the USA Regional Training,"* Catamaran Resort Hotel, San Diego, CA, Holly Powell (202) 624-8180.

8-10 *Colorado Family Support Council Annual Conference*, Snowmass Conference Center, Snowmass, CO, Marcie Garcia (970) 352-6933 X 6414.

25-26 *NCSEA "Building Partnerships for Safety and Self-Sufficiency: Welfare, Domestic Violence, and Child Support,"* Boston, MA, Holly Powell (202) 624-8180.

July

6-8 *1998 Southwest Regional Support Enforcement Association Training Conference*, Menger Hotel, San Antonio, TX, Debbie Walden (512) 460-6263.

19-22 *American Public Welfare Association National Council of State Human Service Administrators, Summer Meeting*, Washington Court Hotel, Washington, DC, Kelly Thompson (202) 682-0100.

August

2-6 *NCSEA 47th Annual Conference and Exposition*, Washington Hilton & Towers, Washington, DC, Heather Tonks (202) 624-8180.

September

28-30 *OCSE Eighth National CSE Training Conference*, Hyatt Regency Washington, Washington, DC, Mae Rowlett (202) 401-3443. □

CBT: A Tool

Continued from page 1

As CSE agencies struggle to meet an increased demand for services, technology-enabled training can be a useful tool for maximizing return on the training investment. At the same time its use represents an important investment in staff—an agency's most valuable asset. □

Ted White is Manager of Legal Process Training for the Texas Child Support Division. Shannon Hills is a Child Support Program Specialist in OCSE's Dallas Regional Office.

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Office of Child Support Enforcement
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Child Support Report

Distance Learning in Minnesota

Minnesota's distance learning program was developed by the Child Support Enforcement Division's (CSED) Julie Swinland and Donna Wilson. The program was highlighted last fall at OCSE's Seventh National Training Conference as one of the few programs to use a variety of media, including video and audio conferencing, video and audio training tapes, and satellite broadcasting.

These tools enable CSED communication and training to be immediate, interactive, and—by bridging the distance gap—cost efficient. Mary Anderson, manager of User Support at CSED, says the interactive video conferencing makes it possible for CSED “to quickly assemble

people and communicate immediate and important information that they need to do their jobs effectively.”

Kathy DeNeui, program manager for Faribault and Martin counties, adds that, “CSED has done an excellent job defining distance learning techniques, perfecting them, and modeling them for Minnesota and the nation.”

Currently Wilson and Swinland are working to add computer-based training to CSED's distance learning arsenal. If you would like further information call Julie Swinland at (612) 282-5274. □

Based on an article published in the Winter, 1998, Minnesota Child Support Quarterly. Used with permission.

Child Support Report

**Vol. XX No. 4
April 1998**

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Child Support Report

Office of Child Support Enforcement

Vol. XX, No. 5, May 1998

Child Support and the State Courts

By: William E. Hewitt

A National Symposium on Children, Courts, and the Federal Child Support Enforcement Program is scheduled for September 16-17 in Denver, Colorado. By invitation only, the conference will bring together state court judges and administrators and state child support agency officials.

The purpose is to provide an opportunity for the states' judiciary and child support service administrators to work together in developing a comprehensive, integrated service delivery system for improved family support programs.

The Symposium objectives include:

- educating participants about welfare reform and its impact on state courts;
- creating and evaluating education programs for replication in tribal, state, or regional judicial programs;
- facilitating personal and inter-organizational acquaintance and communication; and
- gathering and documenting information about how child sup-

port enforcement structure and process varies from state to state.

Achieving effective administration of the child support program and services requires a determined effort by government agencies, communities, and courts to work in a collaborative manner as equal partners. Since the beginning of the Federal Child Support Enforcement Program, however, the role of state courts in national child support program reform efforts has not been widely recognized or well-understood (see box on page 7).

The role of state courts in national child support program reform efforts has not been well-understood.

In order to clarify the state court role, the Conference of Chief Justices (CCJ) and Conference of State Court Administrators (COSCA) have joined together to work with OCSE to develop and conduct the

Continued on page 7

Mother's Day



As we celebrate Mother's Day this month, some facts of interest.

◆ In 1993, 73.9 million of the Nation's 103.4 million women 15 years old and over were mothers.

◆ Of those, 23 percent had given birth to one child, 35 percent to two children, 21 percent to three, 11 percent to four and 10 percent to five or more.

◆ The number of single mothers in America has increased more than 50 percent since 1980. In 1996, there were 9.9 million single mothers.

◆ In 1996, 70 percent of women who were married with children were in the labor force, up from 40 percent in 1970.

Happy Mother's Day! □

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Child Support Enforcement

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Systems Workshops Look at “Big Picture”

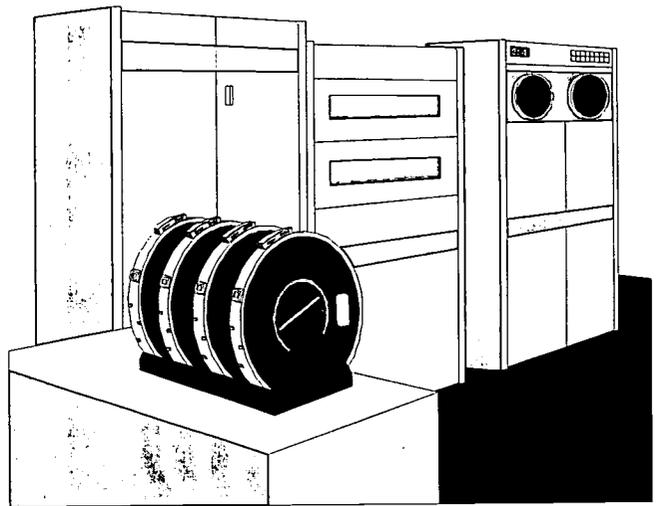
In March, OCSE hosted three regional workshops on the interrelationships among policy, programs, and child support systems. The workshops were held in response to comments from states that, with so many programs under development at the same time, many in the child support community were losing sight of the “big picture.”

In order to reach as many areas of the country as possible, the same conference was held in three cities:

- Alexandria, Virginia (180 participants): March 9-11;
- Kansas City, Missouri (120 participants): March 16-18; and
- San Francisco, California (140 participants): March 23-25.

Each conference brought participants together in plenary sessions to hear presentations on:

- The Expanded Federal Parent Locator Service, including the National Directory of New Hires and the Federal Case Registry;
- High Volume Quick Administrative Enforcement;
- Interstate issues;
- CSENet;
- Financial institution data matching;
- Administrative and tax offset programs;
- State Disbursement Units;
- Electronic Funds Transfer/Electronic Data Interchange;
- Distribution Test Deck; and
- Financial and statistical reporting and reliability of data.



technical information on subjects that were discussed more broadly during the general sessions.

These sessions proved to be very popular, and at each conference more of them were added. Hot topics included State Distribution Units and the Distribution Test Deck; the submission of nonIV-D case data to the Federal Case Registry; administrative enforcement; and problems with alternate or erroneous Social Security numbers.

Attendees were especially eager to learn about the experiences of other states in implementing the various programs. “To my mind this is one of the best conferences ever hosted by OCSE,” North Carolina’s Barry Burger said. Speaking for the other participants, he added “A big thanks to OCSE staff for the effort and obvious hard work.”

If you would like more information about these conferences, contact OCSE’s Robin Rushton at (202) 690-1244. □

*Attendees
were especially eager
to learn about
the experiences of other states
in implementing
the various programs.*

Instead of break-out sessions, lunches were turned into “Brown Bag Techie Talks” so that participants could meet in smaller groups to exchange specific and

More System Certifications

New Jersey’s and Vermont’s automated systems are the latest to be certified. This brings to 26 the number of states that have received certification of their statewide automated systems. □

Divorced and Never-Married Adults: Facts

Research shows that the standard of living for a woman with custody of a child, or children, is generally reduced following a divorce and that never-married women with children have a very difficult time financially. The need for regular child support, which can make a real difference to these families, has never been greater, as the statistics below demonstrate.

Between 1970 and 1996, the number of divorced persons has more than quadrupled, from 4.3 million to 18.3 million, while the number of never-married adults has more than doubled, from 21.4 million to 44.9 million, according to a recent report by the Commerce Department's Census Bureau.

"High levels of divorce and postponement of first marriage are among the changes that have reshaped the living arrangements of children and adults since the 1970s," said Terry Lugaila, a Census Bureau analyst.

*Between 1970 and 1996,
the number of women
living alone doubled,
while the number of men
living alone tripled.*

The report, *Marital Status and Living Arrangements: March 1996*, contains historical data on marriage, divorce, living arrangements of adults and children, and unmarried households by age, race, and sex.

Highlights:

- Between 1970 and 1996, the proportion of children under 18 years of age living with one parent grew from 12 percent to 28 percent.
- Between 1970 and 1996, the number of women living alone doubled from 7.3 million to 14.6 million, while the number of men living alone tripled, from 3.5 million to 10.3 million.
- Between 1970 and 1996, the number of unmarried-couple households (couples of opposite sexes) grew from 523,000 to 4 million.
- Between 1970 and 1996, the proportion of 18-24 year-olds who were family householders decreased from 38 percent to 20 percent; for 25-34 year-olds, the

proportion decreased from 83 percent to 61 percent.

- The median age at first marriage has been rising since the mid-1950s, to 24.8 years for women and 27.1 years for men in 1996.

For more information on the report, call the Census Bureau's Public Information Office at (301) 457-3030. □

Data are from the Census Bureau's March, 1996, Current Population Survey.

Top 10 Training, TA Requests

1. Tribal Child Support Programs

Ensure that Native Americans receive child support services; address funding issues and program requirements. Eight regions.

2. Training Generally

Emphasis on computer-based training (CBT). Eight regions.

3. In-hospital Paternity Establishment

Best practices; improve vital statistics and hospital relationships; develop training and outreach videos/materials. Eight regions.

4. Self-Assessment

Assist in implementing self-assessment units (auditing guidelines, staffing and organization). Seven regions.

5. UIFSA

Training in new interstate law. Six regions.

6. Distribution

Provide policy guidance and training, including systems-related issues. Six regions.

7. Systems

Assist with systems development/enhancements to meet the requirements of welfare reform. Six regions.

8. Centralized Collections

Identify best practices; assist in request for proposals (RFPs); assist with systems issues. Five regions.

9. New Hire Directory

Conduct training/outreach to employers. Five regions.

10. Fatherhood

Provide resources for projects; provide information and training materials. Five regions. □

Source: OCSE Needs Assessment.

Military Matters of Interest

By: Sheck Chin

Child support enforcement cases involving military personnel can sometimes be a challenge for caseworkers. Sheck Chin, OCSE's Military Liaison Officer, responds to inquiries on establishing and enforcing child support against personnel in the military. Two recent questions may be of interest.

Q. Garnishment checks for the military are sent out once a month. However, on occasion we receive two child support checks in the same month from the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS). Why? (This question was asked last year and is repeated here to provide an update—see May '97 CSR.)

A. *Wage withholdings for active duty military are prepared and mailed on the first of the month after the month from which the money was garnished. The military pay system is programmed so that when payday falls on a weekend or holiday, checks are mailed on the last business day before the holiday or weekend. The chart below shows the month of deduction and the date when checks will be sent in 1998. Child support agencies will receive two checks in 1998 for the months of July, October, and December.*

Q. Is the 1998 military pay chart available?

A. *Yes. It can be accessed at the DFAS Web site: www.dfas.mil/money/index.htm. However, the chart for basic allowance for quarters (BAQ) is no longer available. The Department of Defense is transitioning to a new housing allowance, to be called Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH). BAH will replace the separate monthly payments of Variable Housing Allowance (VHA) and BAQ. BAH rates are based on paygrade, dependency status, and location of duty station. This new system is scheduled to be fully implemented over six years. In the first and early years of the transition, the BAH rate can be estimated as BAQ plus VHA. An accurate BAH rate for a member can be obtained from the Web site.*

If you have questions about military matters, call Sheck Chin at (202) 260-5830. □

Sheck Chin is OCSE's Military Liaison Officer.

Month of Deduction

January
February
March
April
May
June
July
August
September
October
November
December

1998 Payday

Friday, January 30
Friday, February 27
Wednesday, April 1
Friday, May 1
Monday, June 1
Wednesday, July 1
Friday, July 31
Tuesday, September 1
Thursday, October 1
Friday, October 30
Tuesday, December 1
Thursday, December 31. □

CSE Office Security and Personal Safety

By: Terry Justin

As part of *CSR's* effort to keep its readers informed about issues in the program that are relevant to staff, we present the following on office security and personal safety. Recent information received by OCSE indicates that serious steps are being taken at federal, state, district, and local offices to improve security.

Many states are now identifying and up-grading security measures to protect employees in the workplace.

These steps are a response to reports of incidents in which child support office workers have been killed, seriously injured, or harassed, and offices vandalized by angry customers.

Many states are now identifying and up-grading security measures to protect employees in the workplace. These measures include:

Uniformed Guards

In many offices visitors must check in with uniformed guards when entering and leaving the building. In some cases this means going through a metal detector and undergoing a weapons check.

Building Security

Many states report that buildings are secured with a variety of protective devices, including: keyed entrances, swipe cards, cipher locks, key pads, and electronic door buzzing. A designated staff person may receive visitors in the lobby and call for staff who may then escort the visitor to the appropriate office. Some report that separate entrances and exits to the building are provided for employees.

In some buildings first floor windows are blocked and secured to prevent break-ins and/or harassment through the window. In other cases, child support offices are located on floors above the ground level to prevent such occurrences.

One state reports placing planters and concrete barriers in front of building entrances to prevent vehicles which may be carrying explosives from gaining close proximity to the building.

Customer Service Area

A few states use designated customer service areas for receiving and interviewing clients. Those using these types of reception areas report the use of chest high counters between employees and visitors, unmarked doors on offices, interview rooms equipped with panic buttons, and directories that carry no office designations.

Best Practice Recommendations

- Establish phone trees for notification of emergencies;
- Develop and provide employees with emergency escape routes from the building and immediate area. Ensure familiarity with practice drills.
- Develop and have on hand a current floor plan for use by police or emergency personnel.
- Develop wall placards with emergency information, including phone numbers and short instructions for evacuating the building. Post laws applicable to threats, including the name of the person to notify. Ensure that all employees are familiar with the procedures they are expected to follow.
- Request training or assistance from local/state police and fire departments on topics such as violence in the workplace, defusing potential violent situations, bomb threats, first aid, and CPR. Establish contacts within police/fire organizations.
- Develop training for personnel on recognition of suspicious packages and letters, managing/defusing hostile clients, and properly documenting threats taken by phone and other means.
- Designate person(s) to be notified of threats and train them on followup and resolution. Address your employees' emotions and concerns by taking threats seriously, providing a response, and letting the employees know the outcome.
- Develop an incident reporting system to track threats and keep a history of all threats made.
- Establish a "Threat Book" and place it in the customer service area with photos and other applicable information about those who have made threats.

For more information about this important issue, contact Terry Justin by Internet (tjustin@acf.dhhs.gov) or by phone at (202) 401-5522. □

Terry Justin is OCSE Law Enforcement Program Specialist.

Cooperation/Good Cause Grantees Meet

By: Susan Greenblatt

On March 31, 1998, OCSE held a meeting in Washington, DC, for cooperation/good cause and domestic violence grantees, to provide them an opportunity to share information with each other and discuss their projects with federal staff.

All five States with grants—Illinois, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, and New York—sent representatives. Since the grantees are in the planning or early implementation phases of their projects, the meeting gave them an opportunity to share implementation plans/strategies and ideas for addressing potential issues. They also learned more about federal initiatives and were provided an array of resource materials regarding cooperation/good cause and domestic violence.

OCSE is enthusiastic about these projects and the opportunity they bring to:

- learn about approaches that could be used to increase cooperation;
- gather information on the reasons customers give when claiming and being granted good cause;
- gain more knowledge about the incidence of domestic violence among child support customers; and
- become better informed about strategies that agencies can use to help victims of domestic violence safely pursue child support when they wish to do so.

If you would like more information about these grants, contact OCSE's Susan Greenblatt at (202) 401-4849. □

Susan Greenblatt is Special Assistant to the Director, Division of State and Local Assistance, OCSE.

Of Interest to the Field . . .

Grants to States for Access and Visitation Programs

A Notice of Proposed Rule Making (NPRM) on grants to states for access and visitation programs was published March 31, 1998. The NPRM prescribes requirements for monitoring, evaluating, and reporting of state programs designed to support and facilitate absent parents' access to and visitation of their children.

Recent Action Transmittals (ATs)

High Volume, Automated Administrative Enforcement in Interstate Cases: OCSE-AT-98-05. dated March 2, 1998. Requirements for and answers to questions on high volume, automated administrative enforcement in interstate cases.

New Hire Reporting: OCSE-AT-98-06. dated March 2, 1998. Policy questions and responses on the National Directory of New Hires and the State Directory of New Hires.

Financial Institution Data Matching: OCSE-AT-98-07. dated March 2, 1998. Policy questions and answers regarding the financial institution data match requirements.

Federal Case Registry and State Case Registry: OCSE-AT-98-08. dated March 5, 1998. Policy questions and responses regarding the State Case Registry and the Federal Case Registry of Child Support Orders.

Self-Assessment Units: OCSE-AT-98-12. dated March 31, 1998. Summarizes the activities, processes and recommendations of the Self-Assessment Core Workgroup, which includes the Group's consensus on review requirements and the minimal review requirements instrument developed by them. □

Let Us Know What You're Thinking

Surely this is one of the most exciting times to be working in child support enforcement since the beginning of the program. The idea behind the *Child Support Report* is to promote an interchange of news and ideas among federal, state, and local child support enforcement personnel.

Your opinion matters to us. Any comments, concerns, or compliments you can share with us

will help us do a better job for you. Tell us how we can improve *CSR* to make it a more useful publication for you. Take a minute to send a note to me, Phil Sharman, Editor, *Child Support Report*, 370 L'Enfant Promenade SW, 4th Floor, Washington, DC 20447. Or call me at (202) 401-4626.

And thanks for reading us. □

State Courts

Continued from page 1



The Honorable, A. M. Keith, Minnesota Chief Justice, retired.

National Symposium. A primary goal of this working conference is to create a plan which will help to ensure the delivery of effective support services to children.

Recently retired Chief Justice A.M. Keith of Minnesota (see July '96 *CSR*), in his capacity as Chair of the Children and Families Committee of CCJ, has been active in working with OCSE Commissioner David Gray Ross to make the Symposium a reality. Implementation of the new child support provisions of welfare reform will have a significant impact on state courts, including:

- new rules for determining judicial jurisdiction and due process requirements;
- new procedures for ensuring public access to appeals from administrative processes;
- additional data elements for court documents; and
- extensive automated data reporting requirements.

Policy for implementing welfare reform must balance the proper role and activities of administrative and judicial entities and should recognize the different service delivery methods that exist. Keith believes that effective implementation of the goals of the federal policy underlying welfare reform will require developing and maintaining working partnerships between the leadership of the state courts, the states' child support agencies, and OCSE. The National Symposium is an important step toward achieving that goal. □

William E. Hewitt is Senior Research Associate, National Center for State Courts.

State Courts and Child Support

State court involvement in child support programs is extensive and fundamental. Sometimes a child support system in a state is described as an "entirely administrative process: the courts are not involved." But every state court system is involved in child support and will continue to be as long as divorce is the business of the state courts.

- about 1.5 million judgments of divorce are entered in state courts annually; and
- about 52 percent of divorce decrees include orders of support.*

*Every state court system
is involved in child support
and will continue to be
as long as
divorce is the business
of the state courts.*

No one knows how many, and how often, divorce cases return to court for modification. What is certain is that no matter how much "administrative process" exists in a state, the need for timely and accurate information exchange between courts and child support operational units continues to be immense. □

**Source: National Center for State Courts, paper in progress regarding the interrelationship between court cases and child support cases.*

CSE/TANF Cooperation in Virginia

In 16 Virginia counties, the Division of Child Support Enforcement (DCSE) has placed child support staff in local welfare offices. Child support staff will work with customers during the intake and eligibility redetermination processes to secure cooperation in locating noncustodial parents and in establishing and enforcing child support orders. In some rural areas where co-location is not cost-effective, video teleconferencing is being piloted. For more information, contact Julie Cooper of the Virginia DCSE at (804) 692-1504. □

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New Best Practices Compendium

OCSE has compiled and published a new *Compendium of State Best Practices in Child Support Enforcement*. The purpose is to share emerging innovations in program functions, techniques, and management that have shown encouraging results.

*To share emerging
innovations in
program functions,
techniques, and
management.*

All of the practices highlighted in the Compendium are accompanied by the name of a

specific person to contact for additional information. Readers are encouraged to call these persons.

If you have questions about a particular practice, contact your OCSE Regional Office. You may also contact Duke Wilson in OCSE's Technical Assistance Branch at (202) 260-5981.

A limited number of copies of the Compendium are available from OCSE's National Reference Center. Call (202) 401-9383. Compendiums can also be obtained electronically from OCSE's Home Page on the Internet:

<http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/ACFPprograms/CSE/index.html>

Child Support Report

**Vol. XX No. 5
May 1998**

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Child Support Report

Office of Child Support Enforcement

Vol. XX, No. 5, June 1998

Child Support Oversight Hearing Testimony

On May 19, Donna Bonar, director of OCSE's division of program operations, testified before the Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Human Resources, U.S. House of Representatives, on the role of the National Directory of New Hires (NDNH) in strengthening the child support enforcement program. Also testifying were Diane M. Fray, administrator of Connecticut's child support enforcement program; Alisha Griffin, acting assistant director of New Jersey's division of family development; and Jeffrey Cohen, director of Vermont's child support enforcement program.

Ms. Bonar reported that, as of May 4, 1998:

- the NDNH had 23 million new hire records, 159 million quarterly wage records, and 9 million unemployment insurance claims records; and that
- more than 100 federal agencies had transmitted over 350,000 new hire records and 5 million quarterly wage records.

She also noted that since October 1, 1997, 700,000 state interstate locate requests had been matched against individuals in the national new hire directory. When states receive this matched information, they are able to quickly establish an interstate case or enforce an existing order.

"By locating parents owing child support and expediting the transfer of an income assignment to a new employee," Ms. Bonar said, "the National Directory of New Hires plays a pivotal role in promoting both parental responsibility and family self-sufficiency."

Since October 1, 1997, more than 700,000 state interstate locate requests have been matched against individuals in the National Directory of New Hires.

Ms. Fray reported that one of the keys to Connecticut's success with the new hire program was the close relationship maintained with the employer community. From October, 1997 through March, 1998, new hire reporting was responsible for \$4.7 million in collections in Connecticut.

Ms. Griffin spoke of the success of New Jersey's Paternity Opportunity Program (POP). Since the beginning of POP in late 1995, more than 45,000 voluntary paternity acknowledgments have been obtained—making it one of the most successful voluntary paternity establishment programs in the country.

Mr. Cohen testified about Vermont's efforts to establish parentage in cases involving out-of-wedlock births. He reported that in 1988 only 42 percent of Vermont's unwed caseload had parentage established. By 1996 that number had risen to 82 percent—a significantly higher percentage than the 1995 national average of 55 percent. □

U.S. Department of
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Helping Fathers Become More Involved with Their Children and Families

By: David Arnaudo

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) of the Department of Health and Human Services has a number of initiatives in place to help fathers become more involved with their children and families. All 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands, for example, have Access and Visitation grants from ACF to assist noncustodial fathers in becoming more involved with their children (see January '98 *CSR*).

Funded services include: counseling; guidelines for custody and visitation; parenting plans; education; mediation; and visitation enforcement, including neutral drop-off and pickup, and monitored and supervised visitation.

Funded services include: counseling; development of guidelines for custody and visitation arrangements; development of parenting plans; education; mediation; and visitation enforcement, including neutral drop-off and pickup, and monitored, as well as supervised visitation.

Eight states (California, Colorado, Maryland, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Hampshire, Washington, and Wisconsin) have received demonstration grants or waivers from ACF to allow testing of comprehensive approaches to encourage responsible fatherhood behaviors by noncustodial fathers. The approach is to provide low-income or unemployed fathers with needed services (e.g., job services and training, access and visitation, social services referral and case work, and child support services) to enable them to pay child support.

Fathers are referred by schools or social service agencies, or by self-referral, following in-hospital or judicial paternity establishment.

For a number of years, sites in California, Florida, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, Ohio, and Ten-

nessee have received grants under the ACF Parents' Fair Share Program, which has served more than 1600 noncustodial parents (see July '94 *CSR*).

These programs provide a variety of services aimed at increasing child support payments, including on-the-job and employment skills training and related educational services, to secure employment or increase earnings. They also provide peer group support, parenting education, and mediation services to encourage low-income minority unwed fathers to become involved with their children.

If you would like more information about these or other ACF projects to help fathers, contact David Arnaudo at (202)401-5364. □

David Arnaudo is OCSE's Liaison for Advocacy Relations.

Illinois Says Thanks to Dads

This June marks Illinois' fifth annual pre-Father's Day "Thanks for Putting Children First" event. Fathers who are involved with Chicago's Paternity Involvement Project are honored for putting their children first. The event is an outcome of collaboration between the Illinois Department of Public Aid and the Chicago Area Project—an umbrella organization for some 40 Chicago-area community agencies.

The Illinois Department of Public Aid has also produced a 30-second public service announcement (PSA) for Father's Day.

Illinois PSA

Thanks Dad!

Paying child support is not the only way to show you love your child . . . but it's a very important one.

As we celebrate Father's Day, children across the state say, "Thanks, Dad!" to all the fathers who faithfully provide emotional and financial support.

If you would like more information, call Lois Rakov in the State's Child Support Enforcement Division at (312) 793-4790. □

Happy Fathers Day to All!

Privatization in Nebraska: Five Year Trial A Success

By: Jan Overmiller

There has been in the past several years a great deal of interest in the privatization of some child support enforcement (CSE) services and programs. In January, 1996, CSR summarized the General Accounting Office's report on the privatization of CSE services. And in an interview with CSR (August, 1996) Montana child support director Mary Ann Wellbank reflected on her State's experiences with the private sector. This account of Douglas County, Nebraska's, five years of experience with privatization continues CSR's coverage of this important trend.

Having enjoyed five years of positive experience with privatization in Douglas County, the State of Nebraska, after a competitive bid, recently awarded a new contract to the incumbent for a minimum of three years, with options for further extensions. Said Nebraska Child Support Administrator Daryl D. Wusk, "Child support enforcement continues to be at the forefront of welfare reform. We are pleased with the results we have achieved through our public/private partnership in Douglas County."

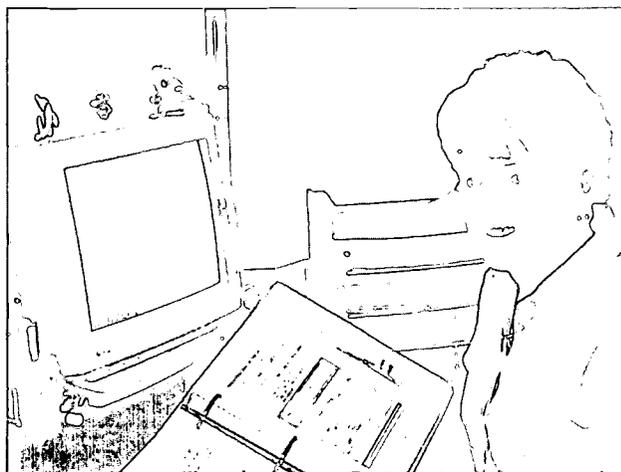
"Child support enforcement continues to be at the forefront of welfare reform.

We are pleased with the results we have achieved through our public/private partnership in Douglas County."

.....Nebraska Administrator Daryl D. Wusk

These results in a jurisdiction with one-third of the State's caseload include eliminated case backlogs, increased collections, achieved audit compliance, and improved customer service.

The impetus to privatize came from a need to address compelling performance issues in a jurisdiction



Nebraska's Angela Paasch in CHARTS

where responsibility was divided between State and County offices. Concerns included a backlog of paternity and order establishment cases, fragmentation of duties, and a lack of clear lines of authority. Although total collections were considered to be at a reasonable level, shortcomings in audit compliance and customer service marred the overall performance.

Following the award of the contract, employment offers were made to all current child support staff at comparable compensation levels. Employees took a five-year leave of absence to preserve their civil service rights in case they later decided to transfer back into positions with the State or County.

Under the contract, authority is shared in a partnership arrangement between the contractor and the State, with the contractor being responsible for daily operations and the State for oversight management. Over the past five years, this combination has brought many benefits to the Douglas County child support enforcement program, including:

- increasing collections by 81 percent;
- putting the establishment caseload current.

The rate of paternity establishment has increased by more than four and one-half times and the rate of support order establishment by more than two and one-half times;

- increasing enforcement productivity, with the office executing almost 10,000 income withholding orders and initiating more than 4,400 contempt hearings in 1997;

- resolving outstanding audit issues; and
- enhancing customer service. The office is accessible, the waiting area is pleasant and comfortable, and customer concerns are promptly addressed.

Continued on page 7

Puerto Rico Meets Distribution Deadlines

By: Angel Marrero



Angel Marrero

Welfare reform legislation mandates that child support collections must be distributed within two business days after receipt. Puerto Rico has been in compliance with this requirement for several years, even though more than 100,000 checks and electronic transactions are processed every month. The successful pre-Act implementation of this requirement is based on two factors: (1) a 1995 reorganization which turned a splintered IV-D program into a separate and single-purpose child support administration (ASUME), with new authorities, enhanced visibility, and improved salary scales; and (2) maximum utilization of electronic funds transfer technology (EFT) in support payment transfers.

The EFT results already exceed expectations. More than 7,000 custodial parents in Puerto Rico receive their child support payments via the direct deposit system. Many noncustodial parents pay child support through PC banking, using free personal computer-based software. And more than 500 employers use EFT to transmit income-withheld support payments under Puerto Rico's legislation that authorizes ASUME to order employers to transmit payments via EFT.

Direct deposit allows ASUME to automatically deposit child support payments into custodial parent checking or saving accounts nationwide. To sign up for this service, a support recipient is required to complete and sign an Authorization Agreement. The authorization can be completed at any local or regional ASUME office, at any of the more than 200 bank branches operated by the privatized collections vendor, or forwarded by mail.

To complete the application process the obligee must attach a copy of a voided check or deposit slip to the agreement, and provide certain bank information.

It takes ASUME approximately 30 days to contact the obligee's financial institution and set up future payments for direct deposit. All transactions are processed through the National Automated Clearing House (NACH) system pursuant to the guide and standard of the Bankers EDI Council of the NACH Association.

*More than 99.5 percent
of all payments are processed
within 24 hours.*

ASUME continues to expand the use of EFT, so that as many of our customers as possible can benefit from this cost-effective and efficient technology. The Government of Puerto Rico has already agreed to transmit all child support payments withheld from state employees using EFT. And ASUME is in the process of requesting that the Social Security Administration, the Department of Defense Accounting Office, and other federal agencies use EFT for the transfer of support payments, as envisioned by the Debt Collection Improvement Act of 1996.

We likewise encourage all of our state partners to use EFT in the transfer of interstate child support payments. We believe that as other states increase their use of EFT in both intra and interstate transactions, they will see results similar to ours, of which we are very proud: a decrease in the rate of unidentifiable payment transactions from 34 percent in 1995 to 0.41 percent in 1998. Thanks to EFT and our highly skilled and motivated staff, as of today more than 99.5 percent of all payments are processed within 24 hours. The remainder are processed within the 48 hour window.

For more information about establishing EFT transactions to and from Puerto Rico, or for information about our payment processing system, recently described as "efficient, innovative, and highly automated," please contact our office at (787) 767-1828. □

Angel Marrero is Deputy Administrator for Puerto Rico's Administration for Child Support.

June 1998

Indian Tribes and Consultation



Judge David Harding addressing Tribal consultation conference

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (welfare reform) and technical amendments authorize the Secretary of DHHS to make direct payments to Indian Tribes or Tribal organizations to establish and operate their own child support enforcement programs. A Tribe's eligibility for direct funding is contingent on the Secretary's satisfaction with the Tribe's capacity to operate a program that meets the objectives of welfare reform, including:

- establishment of paternity;
- establishment, modification, and enforcement of support orders; and
- location of absent parents.

Under this law, Tribes can establish child support enforcement programs based on their own tribal law, including norms, traditional practices, and customs.

To assist Tribes in preparing for this opportunity and responsibility, OCSE hosted a series of three regional Tribal consultation meetings: in Albuquerque, New Mexico (April 22-24), Portland, Oregon (May 20-22), and Nashville, Tennessee (June 4-6). The purpose of these consultations was to solicit Tribal input into the Tribal child support enforcement regulation development process.

At each consultation site, Tribal representatives received a briefing from federal speakers on the fundamentals of the child support enforcement program and the importance of participating fully in the regulations development process. Lucille Dawson, OCSE's Native American Program Officer, told the group in opening remarks at Albuquerque, "These are your sessions. We are here to listen to what you have to say."

Tribal speakers emphasized the significance of taking part in historic sessions that, for the first time, give Tribes a strong voice in a federal program designed to serve them. "Take full advantage of this opportunity," Judge David Harding said, "to develop policy that will incorporate Native American values into Tribal child support enforcement programs."

*"These are your sessions.
We are here to listen
to what you have to say."*

.....OCSE's Lucille Dawson, speaking to Indian Tribes in Albuquerque.

After opening presentations on child support enforcement, the new legislation, and the regulations-writing process, participants broke into three consultation groups: for Tribal leaders, Tribal judges and attorneys, and Tribal front-line workers. Led by Tribal judges, with federal staff participating, these sessions were intensive exercises in the unfolding of an overall approach to the development of regulations that would be faithful to Tribal cultures and values and supportive of vigorous child support programs.

Following the three conferences, Tribal recommendations will be organized and presented to OCSE for consideration as the Tribal regulations are written.

In addition to the three formal Tribal consultations, there is an 800 number (1-800-433-1434) for communication between OCSE and Tribes on the formulation of regulations. Other communication tools are also planned, including forums in regional and national Indian organization meetings and conferences.

If you would like more information, contact Lucille C. Dawson, OCSE Native American Program Officer, at (202) 401-5437. □

The National CSE TRaining Workgroup

By: Carol Monteiro and Tom Horan

April '98 CSR presented a number of articles on different aspects of training: computer-based, learning partnerships, cross-training, distance learning, and traditional classroom training. Much of the credit for OCSE's diversified approach to training belongs to the forty members of OCSE's National Training Workgroup, who represent a broad cross-section of state, local, and federal child support staff. The following is a brief account of some of their training-related activities.

The National Training Workgroup (NTW) was formed in 1995 with federal, state, and local child support representatives. The Workgroup members work closely with OCSE's National Training Center and with State Training Contacts and Regional Training Liaisons.

Workgroup Mission Statement

"As a collaborative effort with the child support community, to develop a national strategy for meeting our diverse training needs in order to improve child support enforcement program results and customer services at the federal, state, and local levels. This strategy supports the mission of the child support enforcement program to improve the lives of America's children."

*Workgroup members
work closely with OCSE's
National Training Center
and with
State Training Contacts and
Regional Training Liaisons.*

Initial Workgroup Tasks

- conducting a training needs assessment;
- fostering use of innovative technology in training operations;
- developing a training strategy;
- developing and maintaining a training resource index; and
- coordinating training activities to maximize resources.

This year the NTW, along with representatives from OCSE's central office divisions, is serving as the planning committee for OCSE's Eighth Annual Training Conference (see below).

Major Accomplishments

The NTW's major accomplishments to date reflect the information derived from the Training Needs Assessment conducted in 1996 (see April '97 CSR). They include:

- development of an Electronic Resource Center;
- development of computer-based training (CBT) training modules;
- development of training courses using satellite video conferencing technology; and
- assessment of state and regional technology and recommendation of suggested technology levels in anticipation of CBT training.

Other initiatives, such as establishing a child support training Website, are being planned. If you would like more information about the National Training Workgroup, contact OCSE's Charlene Butler at (202) 401-5091. □

Carol Monteiro is a Child Support Program Specialist in OCSE's Boston Regional Office. Tom Horan is a Public Assistance Consultant and Trainer in Connecticut's Child Support Program.

Get Ready!

OCSE's Eighth National Child Support Enforcement Conference will be held September 28-30, 1998, at the Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC.

This year's conference theme: **Meeting the Child Support Challenge—Children First.**

The agenda is designed for state and federal child support professionals, with an emphasis on welfare reform changes, cross-program collaboration, and training technology. The registration fee of \$100 is eligible for Federal Financial Participation at the regular matching rate.

For registration information contact OCSE's Bertha Hammett at (202) 401-5292. □

Partners for Fragile Families

As part of its commitment to help improve the child support system's response to young low-income unemployed and underemployed nonresidential fathers, OCSE has awarded a grant to the National Center for Strategic Nonprofit Planning and Community Leadership (NPCL). The project also aims to help these fathers work with the mothers of their children in sharing the legal, financial, and emotional responsibilities of parenthood.

The project includes:

- holding Fatherhood Development Workshops to train practitioners on effective practices for working with young unemployed and underemployed fathers;
- developing a manual for practitioners to use in helping low-income fathers learn to interact more effectively with the child support enforcement system; and
- developing and implementing a Peer Learning College for child support enforcement experts to identify systemic barriers these young fathers face in becoming responsible fathers.

For more information contact Jeffery Johnson at NPCL (202) 822-6725 or Susan Notar at OCSE (202) 401-4606. □

Program Announcement: CSE Demonstration and Special Projects

OCSE invites eligible applicants to submit competitive grant applications for special improvement projects which further the national child support mission, vision, and goals as outlined in the CSE Strategic Plan with Outcome Measures for Fiscal Years 1995-1999. A copy of the CSE Strategic Plan may be obtained upon request (see below).

Awards will be contingent on the outcome of the competition and availability of funds. The closing date for submission of applications is July 7, 1998.

Application kits containing the necessary forms and instructions to apply for a grant under this program announcement, and the CSE Strategic Plan, are available from: ACF/OCSE/Office of Automation and Special Projects, 370 L'Enfant Promenade, SW, 4th Floor, West Wing, Washington, DC 20447, Attention: Jay Adams (202) 401-9240. □

Nebraska

Continued from page 3

All of these improvements have been made while maintaining the State's cost-effectiveness. During the past four years, for example, IV-A collections have increased by 56 percent, even while the IV-A caseload dropped by 16 percent.

Results were achieved by a mix of management and technological strategies and a blending of the components of the operation into an integrated, team-based management structure. Productivity and quality goals were established for staff, with merit pay and bonuses tied to goals. All employees received training during the transition period, with strong emphasis placed on customer service.

A Windows-based case management and document generation system was developed to supplement the State's financially oriented computer system. This step greatly increased the ability of staff to prepare legal documents quickly and track case actions effectively.

The new contract will zero in on meeting new federal performance standards. The proportion of cases under order already has increased from 39 percent to 60 percent. An increase to 70 percent is expected by the end of the first renewal year and to 80 percent (the top of the new federal incentive scale) no later than the end of the third renewal year.

A major focus of the new contract will be on the implementation of CHARTS, Nebraska's new automated child support enforcement system. A user-friendly, Windows-based system, CHARTS will provide greatly enhanced case tracking and automated enforcement capabilities that will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Douglas County program.

Through privatization, Nebraska has successfully forged a long-term public/private partnership that has improved child support outcomes in its largest county. Partnering, cost effectiveness, and performance are the underlying themes of its approach. For Nebraska, and for Douglas County, privatization has proven to be an effective tool for increasing the support provided to the State's children and families.

For more information, contact Jan Overmiller at (402) 479-5505. □

Jan Overmiller is Manager of Field Operations for Nebraska's Department of Social Services.

**U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services**

Administration for Children
and Families
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Division of Consumer Services
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Child Support Report

States/Territories Now 100 Percent UIFSA

Another child support enforcement provision of the welfare reform legislation is now fully implemented. The law requires states to adopt the Uniform Interstate Family Support Act.

With the passage of UIFSA legislation in the Virgin Islands on May 6, 1998, as part of a comprehensive welfare reform legislative package, *all states and territories are now carrying out their interstate activities under the Uniform Interstate Family Support Act, or UIFSA.* □

System Certifications Continue: Total of Certified States Now 30

A total of 30 states/territories have now had their automated systems certified. The latest to be added: Maine, Minnesota, Puerto Rico, and Tennessee. □



Child Support Report

**Vol. XX No. 6
June 1998**

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*If you have enjoyed this issue of **Child Support Report**,
please pass it on to a co-worker or friend.*



Child Support Report

Office of Child Support Enforcement

Vol. XX, No. 7, July 1998

Virginia KidsFirst Campaign

First Year Nets \$25 Million

By: Phyllis J. Sisk

After one year, Virginia's KidsFirst Campaign has netted an astonishing \$25 million from noncustodial parents in the Commonwealth who owed back support. "The success of the Campaign has surpassed our expectations," said Nick Young, Director of Virginia's child support enforcement program. "When we started out, we viewed the Campaign as just one more tool with which to arm our workers—one more way to get the attention of noncustodial parents. We didn't anticipate that this initiative would reap such a response."

In early June, 1997, as part of Virginia's landmark welfare reform initiative and a gubernatorial commitment to enforce the child support laws, Virginia's Division of Child Support Enforcement (DCSE) issued notices to 57,000 noncustodial parents who were delinquent in their child support. The accompanying message was clear: the Commonwealth would no longer tolerate parents who don't pay child support.

Said Virginia Commissioner of Social Services, Clarence H. Carter: "The collection of child support is a key facet of welfare reform that reinforces a non-custodial parent's responsibility to support his family. We salute those who pay, and we will work harder and smarter to ensure that those who are not paying now start to pay."

The official notice formally offered the Governor's limited, one-time amnesty until June 20, 1997, and urged noncustodial parents who owed support to con-



Nick Young, Virginia DCSE Director

tact their local child support district office to arrange for a payment plan. Otherwise, they faced a possible jail term.

Letters were sent only to those parents who owed more than \$500 in back support or had not made a payment in 90 days. What constituted an acceptable payment, or an appropriate payment plan, was left to the discretion of the 22 field office managers. "Wherever possible, we try to maintain flexibility and discretionary authority with our field managers—doing so allows them to accommodate varying circumstances and secure the most appropriate agreement," Young said.

During the two-week amnesty, more than 13,000 parents responded and paid—or made arrangements to pay—a total of \$6.8 million.

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U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Child Support Enforcement

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KidsFirst

Continued from cover

In a related activity, the child support office worked with local law enforcement officials to round up delinquent noncustodial parents with outstanding capias warrants and to issue new warrants to many others. This intensive crackdown, resulting in 512 arrests and show cause notices issued, reinforced the Commonwealth's tough new message. A second roundup in September, tied closely to children going back to school, netted \$4.4 million, with 27 arrests and 675 summonses.

*"This is what we are here for,
this is what we work for."*

.....Virginia support workers

November saw the debut of a new tool to encourage delinquent parents to pay up: the use of boots to disable their cars. Boots are steel mechanisms that attach to a car's wheel, putting it out of commission until the legal matter in question has been settled. "The booting of cars," Young said, "is not aimed at denigrating offenders. It's simply meant to get their attention and have them do the right thing."

The most recent roundup, conducted during the last two weeks of May in anticipation of summer vacation, was targeted to those parents who had made payment agreements but failed to keep them. It resulted in the issuance of notices to suspend 1,411 drivers' licenses statewide. In addition, more than 37,000 hunting and fishing licenses have been revoked under the KidsFirst Campaign.

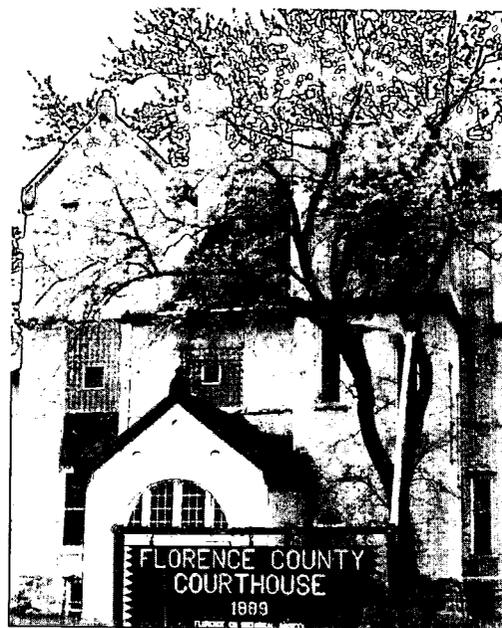
These activities have required extensive locate work and continuous, intensive coordination with courts and local law enforcement. Local DCSE service hours were expanded to meet demand as phones rang off the hooks and lines of delinquent payors trailed out the office doors. Tired, yet elated, child support enforcement workers faced grueling hours in response to the initial amnesty and subsequent roundups. Their answer: "This is what we are here for, this is what we work for."

The first-year collections of \$25 million are eloquent testimony to the success of KidsFirst. □

*Phyllis J. Sisk is Principal Assistant to the Director,
Virginia Division of Child Support Enforcement.*

NonIV-D Case Conversion in Wisconsin

By: Prudy Stewart



September, 1996, marked Wisconsin's successful conversion of child support cases from all 72 counties to its statewide child support system, the KIDS Information Data System (KIDS). The two-year process involved a team of State and vendor staff (IBM Global Services) working directly with county agencies.

The effort required converting financial data from clerks of court offices and case management data from child support agencies. Wisconsin has a total of 485,000 cases on KIDS, including 70,000 nonIV-D cases. Individual county, IV-D, and nonIV-D caseloads range from 260 to 210,000. (See box for conversion tips.)

The Clerks of Court wanted a single system to manage the financial accounts for all their family cases, including IV-D and nonIV-D. As a result, Wisconsin elected to convert nonIV-D cases to KIDS at the same time IV-D cases were converted. Counties were assessed a \$3.07 charge for each nonIV-D case converted to KIDS. This charge was based on the number of nonIV-D cases converted, divided by vendor conversion costs. Wisconsin funds the data processing costs associated with managing these cases on KIDS.

In bringing about the conversion, the vendor converted data from 45 automated county systems, 16 manual county systems, and a State system that 11 counties were using. Department of Workforce Development Secretary Linda Stewart identified the

Wisconsin, *continued*

"commitment of both State and county staff to creating the best system possible" as a key component of the successful implementation effort. In addition, communication, information gathering, and on-site support of county staff were critical elements.

Communication

A team of five state and four vendor staff met weekly to plan and monitor the conversion and resolve issues. Developing a relationship with the Office of State Courts and the Clerk of Court's Association, the KIDS Project Manager held regular meetings with staff of the Office of State Courts. The Clerk of Court's Association was represented on the KIDS Advisory Council. Vendor staff were encouraged to communicate directly with county data-processing staff, and the conversion team ensured that county agencies received full instructions regarding conversion processes.

Information Gathering

This involved asking and answering "who, what, where, and how"? Who had the data necessary for conversion? What case and financial data was stored in each county? Where was it stored? How would data be transferred from each county to the State?

On-Site Support

State and vendor staff worked closely with individual counties from January, 1995, to September, 1996, visiting every county and identifying data: where it was stored and how it would be transferred.

A unique conversion plan, provided to each county, included a mapping of the county's data to the required conversion data elements. The vendor developed multiple options for accepting conversion data from all the counties. To ensure the integrity of converted data, a vendor assisted the counties with data clean-up.

In addition, the vendor developed an automated application for manual counties to use in converting their data. This application was also used by a few "automated" counties to convert data not contained in their automated systems.

In summary, good communication, clear conversion instructions, thorough information gathering, and on-site support were the keys to Wisconsin's successful conversion to its statewide automated child support system. For more information about KIDS, contact Prudy Stewart at (608) 267-7323. □

Prudy Stewart is a Child Support IT Consultant in Wisconsin's Department of Work Force Development.

Non IV-D Conversion

The Data-Gathering Phase

Who: Identify . . .

who maintains the nonIV-D record;
a local contact person—obtain phone and fax numbers;
the local agency technical conversion lead; and
who "decides" when there is discrepant data.

What: Identify . . .

what indicates the case is a nonIV-D case;
nonIV-D data elements collected by local agency;
if open cases are separated from closed cases;
if SSNs are collected and stored as identifiers;
if information is collected on all case participants;
if paternity cases are separated from cases with orders;
whether a master list of nonIV-D cases is maintained at state or local level; and
what data elements are stored electronically and manually.

Where: Identify . . .

where nonIV-D cases/orders are physically located;

where data elements are stored in paper/automated records and map data; and

if cases are on microfiche or other nonpaper media.

How: Identify . . .

how to determine if cases are duplicate cases;
how name changes are handled; and
how new cases are created.

The Data Transfer Phase

Develop . . .

a profile to map data to the state IV-D system;
a transfer sheet to collect all required data elements maintained on paper;
a file extract with data specifications to collect data maintained electronically;
a method to merge data obtained from automated and paper records;
a method to verify and match merged automated and manual conversion data to eliminate duplicates and identify errors;
error reports to send to the custodians of the data; and
a method for running conversion data through an SSN verification process. □

Colorado Project Addresses Domestic Violence

By: Esther Ann Griswold

Successful child support collection is one of the cornerstones of the welfare reform law, whereby public assistance recipients leave the welfare rolls and move into self-sufficiency. Custodial parents who apply for public assistance must take an active role in establishing paternity and pursuing child support.

Acknowledging that this may endanger some custodial parents who have experienced domestic violence, Congress attached the Wellstone/Murray Family Violence Option to the welfare reform legislation. This statute gives states the right to waive, under certain circumstances, federal or state requirements that make it more difficult for women to escape situations of domestic violence, or that unfairly penalize a parent or child who has experienced domestic violence.

Approximately 40 percent of the applicants who were screened disclosed they had experienced family violence.

Although Colorado has not adopted Wellstone/Murray, it follows some of its provisions. County social services agencies are now required to provide information to all TANF applicants regarding domestic violence and available counseling and supportive services. When an applicant identifies herself as someone who has been subjected to violence within the family, the agency must ask her to complete a Domestic Violence Screening Document and must provide written notification of her right to apply for a waiver from work program requirements. The information gained from screening may be used to determine if the applicant should be exempted from cooperation with the child support enforcement agency.

These steps follow a year of research, screening, and data collection in Colorado, conducted by the Center for Policy Research in concert with child support and self-sufficiency agencies in Denver, Mesa, and Archuleta Counties. The research was a component of the Colorado Model Office Project (MOP) a three-year demonstration/evaluation funded by OCSE. In 1997, MOP addressed domestic violence for applicants/recipients of public assistance, including training, screening, and providing information.

Self-sufficiency and child support workers attended training conducted by domestic violence professionals. Besides information on the dynamics of domestic violence, workers were given materials about local service providers who deal with family violence issues.

Intake and child support workers participated in screening and providing information. Applicants for public assistance were given basic information about domestic violence and asked to answer a short set of screening questions about their experiences.

For those who disclosed that the abuser was the father of one or more of their children, a child support technician conducted a more extensive interview. Applicants were asked if they believed the pursuit of child support payments would increase or renew the abuse. They were informed of the option to apply for a good cause exemption, and when an applicant expressed interest, a technician explained the various items that would be needed to document the claim.

Approximately 40 percent of the applicants who were screened disclosed they had experienced family violence, and in 75 percent of those cases the applicant named the father of one or more of her children as the abuser. But less than seven percent of the applicants who disclosed domestic violence wanted to apply for a good cause exemption. Most applicants said they needed and wanted child support to be collected.

In focus groups, child support and self-sufficiency technicians were positive about the program, suggesting that attitudes regarding domestic violence had changed in the department. Screening for domestic violence did not make the intake process unmanageable. In fact, it contributed to beneficial communications and interactions between TANF and child support staff who worked in teams on the project.

The research and screening in Colorado demonstrate that child support agencies can provide information and referrals regarding domestic violence, without fearing that applicants who have experienced domestic violence will request exemption from cooperating with child support. Most custodial parents understand the limits of TANF and want child support.

For more information, contact Jessica Pearson, Director of the Center for Policy Research in Denver, at (303) 837-1555. □

Esther Ann Griswold is a Research Associate with the Center for Policy Research.

Self-Assessment Under Welfare Reform

An Interview with OCSE's Director of Audit, Keith E. Bassett

On May 25, CSR spoke with Keith E. Bassett, Director of OCSE's Division of Audit, about the new state self-assessment requirements of welfare reform. Effective October 1, 1997, states are to conduct annual reviews of their child support enforcement programs to measure state compliance with federal regulations and report the results of these self-assessment reviews to the Secretary of the federal Department of Health and Human Services.

CSR: *What is self-assessment?*

KEB: Essentially, it's a transfer of some audit functions and responsibilities from the federal government to the states. A major way that self-assessment differs from a traditional audit is that it's more closely tied to program management—the internal understanding and control of day-to-day operations. It's a mechanism that gives management an opportunity to make mid-course corrections. Another significant way it differs is that there are no penalties or threat of penalties.

CSR: *What's the idea behind it?*

KEB: Partnership between states and the federal government is part of it, but the concept is also an outcome of listening to the voices of the advocate community. Advocates had some concern that states, under the new incentive funding structure created by welfare reform, would put the bulk of their effort and resources into areas that return incentives—that the incentive structure, in effect, would drive a state's program. Therefore, other parts of the program might be less of a priority as states focused on those aspects with incentives. Self-assessment acts as a corrective influence by measuring a program's overall compliance.

CSR: *How would you assess the states' readiness to assume this new responsibility?*

KEB: As expected, the readiness varies among states, but overall it's pretty good. Some states have been doing self-assessment for years, only not under that name. For example, Ohio began an internal audit process to overcome compliance problems and the



Keith Bassett assessing the photographer.

imposition of audit penalties, and this effort, which was successful, led straight into the self-assessment concept. Other states in similar situations have done the same sort of thing.

*Self-assessment
is a
management tool.*

CSR: *Will states be assessing areas that used to be a focus of federal audits?*

KEB: Yes, although it's going to be a gradual process. States will need time to assume these duties. Initially, they will deal with a limited number of areas that were formerly subject to audit: for example, interstate, medical support, case closures, expedited process.

CSR: *Isn't self-assessment a little like "letting the fox guard the hen house?"*

KEB: It might seem like that but remember that self-assessment is a management tool. It's important for managers to understand program operations and to be able to maximize performance to earn incentives. Self-assessment integrates management into program operation, so there's built-in motivation for excellence.

Continued on page 6

July 1998 • 5

Interview: Self-Assessment

Continued from page 5

CSR: *What's the federal audit role under welfare reform?*

KEB: We will be concentrating on financial audits—administrative costs and collections. Also on data reliability audits: audits of systems-generated data on which incentives are paid—with a focus on accuracy, completeness, reliability, and security.

CSR: *What happens when the findings of a federal audit conflict with a state's self-assessment, or perhaps reveal that a self-assessment is lacking in rigor?*

KEB: There might be some potential for that. As we audit data reliability and financial matters, we'll also review what the states are reporting to the Secretary. If there are differences of consequence, we'll examine the state's position—and our own. If it's a state issue, we'll ask them to work with their program and audit staff to find a solution. It's a technical assistance approach—how can we get this resolved so that the program is operating at peak—not an effort to fix blame or assess penalties.

CSR: *Will the states' self-assessment units be audited?*

KEB: They won't be audited as such, but they will be looked at informally to see that the process is being conducted soundly and that the operation is running smoothly.

CSR: *Anything else?*

KEB: A recent study surveyed the states and identified good models and practices for them to consider as they develop self-assessment programs. States have a copy of this report, and I urge them to use it as a resource.

CSR: Thank you. □

FYI... Census Bureau Families Begin to Stabilize

There is welcome news for those persons who have mourned the decline of the traditional family—a married couple with children. According to a recently released Census Bureau report, "Household and Family Characteristics: March 1997," traditional families have begun to stabilize as a percentage of all families in the 1990s. And the growth of single-parent families—those maintained by a mother or father with no spouse present—has slowed, according to the report.

"The perceived decline of the American family is vanishing."Ken Bryson

Ken Bryson, the report's co-author with Lynne Casper, says: "The perceived decline of the American family is vanishing and the '90s represent a stabilization period. For example, the percentage of married couples with children fell from 50 percent to 37 percent of all families between 1970 and 1990. It only dropped 1 percentage point (to 36 percent) since then."

Adds Lynn Casper, "Growth in the proportion of single-parent families had slowed in the meantime. The percentage of single-parent families doubled between 1970 and 1990, from 6 percent to 12 percent of all families. Since 1990, it has only increased 2 percentage points (to 13 percent)."

This trend has implications for child support enforcement, in particular, since a large proportion of many state caseloads are made up of single parent families. If you would like more information, contact the Census Bureau's Public Information Office at (301) 457-3030. □



1998 Conference Calendar

July

19-22 *APWA National Council of State Human Service Administrators*, Summer Meeting, Washington Court Hotel, Washington, DC, Kelly Thompson (202) 682-0100.

19-22 *NCJFCJ 61st Annual Conference*, Ocean Reef Club, Key Largo, FL, Diane Barnette (702) 784-6012.

20 *APWA Child Support Committee Meeting*, Washington Court Hotel, Washington, DC, Kelly Thompson (202) 682-0100.

20-22 *Nevada CSE State Conference*, Tropicana Hotel, Las Vegas, NV, Lisa Swearingen (702) 687-8703.

20-22 *Federal OCSE Processing Interstate/UIFSA Child Support Cases (Training Pilot Test)*, Holiday Inn Chicago City Center, Chicago, IL, Bill Clair (312) 886-4919. **Invitation Only.**

29-31 *CSENet Technical Workshop*, Washington, DC, Helen Smith (202) 690-6639.

31 *Kansas CSE Association 11th Annual Conference*, Emporia State University, Emporia, KS, David Addington (785) 296-1955.

August

2-6 *NCSEA 47th Annual Conference and Exposition*, Washington Hilton & Towers, Washington, DC, Heather Tonks (202) 624-8180.

10-11 *FPLS Training of Trainers*, Washington, DC, Leisa Coles (301) 495-0400 X 265.

25-26 *FPLS Training of Trainers*, San Francisco, CA, Leisa Coles (301) 495-0400 X 265.

September

TBA (Early September) *Region III IV-D Directors' Conference*, West Virginia, John Clark (215) 596-5147.

15-16 *FPLS Training of Trainers*, Dallas, TX, Leisa Coles (301) 495-0400 X 265.

17-19 *Judicial Symposium on Children, Courts, and the Federal Child Support Enforcement Program*, Adam's Mark Hotel, Denver, CO, Amy Gober (202) 401-4965.

28-30 *OCSE Eighth National CSE Training Conference*, Hyatt Regency Washington, Washington, DC, Mae Rowlett (202) 401-3443.

October

4-7 *Western Interstate Child Support Enforcement Council*, Double Tree Hotel, Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, Seattle, WA, Sue Bailey (509) 886-6218.

6-9 *California Family Support Council Quarterly Meeting*, Radisson Hotel, Visalia, CA, Noanne St. Jean (209) 582-3211 X 2403.

11-14 *Minnesota Family Support and Recovery Council 25th Annual CSE Training Conference*, Madden's Resort, Brainerd, MN, Grant Forsyth (218) 726-2479.

14-15 *FPLS Training of Trainers*, Washington, DC, Leisa Coles (301) 495-0400 X 265.

14-16 *Michigan Family Support Council Annual Training Conference*, Boyne Highlands Inn, Harbor Springs, MI, Terry Novakoski (616) 336-2618.

14-16 *17th Annual Maryland Joint Child Support Training Seminar*, Princess Royale Hotel, Ocean City, MD, Donna Sims (410) 767-7876.

26-28 *Nebraska CSE Association Annual Training Conference*, Regency Inn, Kearney, NE, Bill MacKenzie (402) 593-4464. □

National New Hire Directory Recognized

The successful implementation of the National Directory of New Hires (see October '97 *CSR*) has been selected as a semifinalist in the prestigious 1998 Innovations in American Government awards program.



*"Children are better off
because of
what we have accomplished."*

.....OCSE Commissioner David Gray Ross

The program is administered by the John F. Kennedy School of Government in partnership with the Council of Excellence in Government and is a joint program of the Ford Foundation and Harvard University. "We were given just one year to develop

and implement the National Directory," said OCSE Commissioner David Gray Ross, "and with our partners, stakeholders, and the employer community's help, we did it. Children are better off because of what we have accomplished with the new hire program."

The National Directory of New Hires is one of 96 exceptional programs so recognized from the initial 1,400 applicants. Finalists and the 10 winning programs will be announced in October, 1998.

"Our selection as a semifinalist is testimony to the months of hard work and dedication on behalf of America's children," said Donna Bonar, director of OCSE's division of program operations, "the unit responsible for the National New Hire Directory. □

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Child Support Report

Directory of Interstate Central Registry Offices



CSE-IM-98-01,
issued April 28,
1998, provides an
updated directory of each
child support enforcement
Interstate Central Registry
office.

The central registry is
primarily used for receiv-
ing, distributing, and re-
sponding to inquiries on all
incoming interstate IV-D
cases, including requests
for wage withholding

assignments.

The list is available on
OCSE's Home Page at:
[http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/
ACFPrograms/CSE/
index.html](http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/ACFPrograms/CSE/index.html) .



Child Support Report

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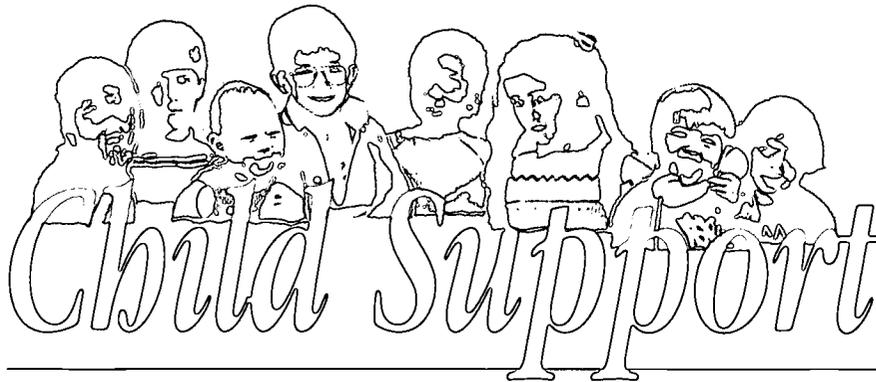
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please pass it on to a co-worker or friend.*



Child Support Report

Office of Child Support Enforcement

Vol. XX, No. 8, August 1998

President Signs Tough New Penalties Into Law

On June 24th, President Clinton signed into law new legislation that he called "a gift to our children and the future." The law, Public Law 105-187, the Deadbeat Parents Punishment Act of 1998, creates two new categories of felonies, with penalties of up to two years in prison.

"In the most outrageous cases, tough new law enforcement measures are needed." OCSE

Commissioner David Gray Ross



OCSE Commissioner David Gray Ross, right rear, looks on as President signs bill.

- Traveling across state or country lines with the intent to evade child support payments will now be considered a felony if the obligation has remained unpaid for a period longer than one year or is greater than \$5,000; and

- When the obligation has remained unpaid for a period of longer than two years or is greater than \$10,000, willful failure to pay child support to a child residing in another state will be considered a felony.

"In the most outrageous cases, such as these," OCSE Commissioner David Gray Ross said in reaction to the new legislation, "tough new law enforcement measures are needed."

The President noted in his remarks that the failure of fathers to meet their responsibilities to their children is one of the reasons single mothers go on welfare. Even in those cases where a family manages to stay out of poverty, a father's failure to pay child support can

bring significant pressures to bear on mothers who are raising children by themselves. "When fathers neglect support of their children," the President said, "it aggravates all the other problems a family faces."

In welcoming OCSE Commissioner David Gray Ross to the signing, the President reviewed the gains made by child support over the past several years.

In 1997, the child support enforcement program collected a record \$13.4 billion, an increase of

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68 percent over 1992, when \$8 billion was collected. Almost a million and a half more children are getting child support today than in 1992. And in 1997, paternity was established in 1.3 million cases, a figure two and one-half times greater than 1992's 510,000.

Also, since October 1, 1997, the beginning of OCSE's National Directory of New Hires, more than 1 million noncustodial parents who were delinquent in their child support payments have been located.

*In 1997,
the child support enforcement
program collected
a record \$13.4 billion
for children and families.*

"The quiet crisis of unpaid child support," the President said, "is something that our country and our families shouldn't tolerate. Our first responsibility, all of us, is to our children." □

MD Delegate Hubbard Honored

On June 15, OCSE Commissioner David Gray Ross presented Maryland State Delegate James Hubbard with a Certificate of Appreciation from OCSE for his contributions in the Maryland legislature to child support and family issues. "Delegate Hubbard," the Commissioner said in presenting the award, "has consistently been at the forefront of efforts to make Maryland's child support enforcement program a model of excellence on behalf of the State's children and families." □



L. to r., David Gray Ross, James Hubbard, and MD DHR Secretary Alvin C. Collins.

FPLS Training Sessions

CSE has scheduled a series of Training of Trainers (TOT) sessions to provide state and regional child support trainers with information on the expanded Federal Parent Locator Service (FPLS). The dates: **August 10-11 (Washington, DC); August 25-26 (San Francisco, CA); September 15-16 (Dallas, TX); and October 14-15 (Washington, DC).**

Attendance at each session is limited to 25 state and regional staff who have training responsibilities. Only one person from each state and regional office may attend a session. The state participants' hotel expenses will be paid by OCSE.

The goals are: to provide participants with information about the expanded FPLS and the child support requirements of welfare reform and how each affects state CSE case workers; to provide participant trainers with case studies and other information to help them train case workers; and to encourage state-level discussion of the anticipated uses of increased information as a result of FPLS.

Topics include: how FPLS is changing the way we do business; FPLS matching; access to FPLS; family violence and FPLS; CSENet and FPLS; child support requirements of welfare reform; automation; state new hire directories; the National Directory of New Hires; data transmission; the Federal Case Registry; state case registries; handling of IV-D and nonIV-D cases; SSN verification; and security and privacy. For more information call Leisa Coles at (301) 495-0400 X 265. □

OCSE's 8th National

OCSE's Eighth National Child Support Enforcement Training Conference will be held September 28-30, 1998, at the Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC.

With the theme: "Meeting the Child Support Challenge—Children First," this conference promises to be the best yet. The agenda is designed for both state and federal child support professionals and will emphasize welfare reform changes, cross-program collaboration, training technology, and customer service.

The registration fee of \$100 is eligible for FFP at the regular matching rate. Register now for this important conference. For information contact OCSE's Bertha Hammett at (202) 401-5292. □

California Supreme Court Contempt Ruling

By: John S. Higgins, Jr.

In a very important decision, the California Supreme Court ruled that a noncustodial parent may be held in contempt when he or she fails to seek work to earn money to meet a support obligation.

The opinion, *Moss v. Superior Court of Riverside County* (1998) 17Cal.4th 396, arose out of a contempt citation for nonpayment brought against the father. Supervising Deputy District Attorney James P. Fullmer and Deputy District Attorney Glen O. Brandel petitioned for review after the Court of Appeal held that it was bound by an 1897 California Supreme Court decision (involving alimony) which held that a court could not compel a man to work to meet that obligation.

In its opinion, the Court examined what it assumed was the basis for the 1897 opinion: that to compel an obligor to work violated either the prohibition against involuntary servitude, found in the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, or the prohibition against imprisonment for debt, found in the California Constitution.

The opinion noted that the United States Supreme Court has found Thirteenth Amendment violations where the employment condition is equivalent to peonage, under which a person is bound to the service of a particular employer.

A support order, it noted, "does not bind the parent to any particular employer or form of employment. . ." The support obligation, being in no way comparable to peonage or slavery, "is among the most fundamental obligations recognized by modern society."

The prohibition against imprisonment for debt is found in Article I, Section 10 of the California Constitution. In a 1948 case, the Court found that the provision had been adopted to protect the poor but honest debtor and held that an employer who willfully fails to pay wages to his employees could be prosecuted for that crime.

The Court in the Moss opinion held that family support obligations are not ordinary debts. Even if they were, failure to pay the debt is entitled to an exception to the prohibition against imprisonment. Family Code section 4505 provides that an obligor parent alleging unemployment as a reason for nonpayment of child support may be ordered to seek work.

The Court found that this section expressed the clear intent of the legislature that nonpaying parents could be compelled to seek employment when necessary to meet the obligation.

Code of Civil Procedure section 1209.5 states that proof of a child support order being made, filed, and served (or proof that the obligor was present in court at the time it was pronounced) and proof of noncompliance create a prima facie case of contempt. As noted by the Court of Appeal in *In re Feiock* (1989) 215 Cal.App.3d.141, inability to pay is an affirmative defense to the charge.

The Court held that California Family Code section 4505 provides that an obligor parent alleging unemployment as a reason for nonpayment of child support may be ordered to seek work.

California's Supreme Court, however, disapproved the part of Feiock which stated that all the citee needed to do was to raise the issue of inability, at which point the burden would shift back to the prosecution. The rule as stated by the Supreme Court is: "the elements of this contempt are only a valid court order, the alleged contemner's knowledge of the order, and noncompliance. If the petitioner proves those elements beyond a reasonable doubt, the violation is established. To prevail on the affirmative defense of inability . . . the contemner must prove such inability by a preponderance of the evidence." [Ellipses in original.]

This shift of the burden of proof is perhaps the most significant part of the Moss opinion and helps make contempt a vastly more effective remedy against nonpaying parents. □

John S. Higgins, Jr. is a Tulare County (CA) Deputy District Attorney.

[This article originally appeared in *Support Line*, Vol. 1, No. 2, a publication of the California District Attorneys Association, and is reprinted with permission.]

Case Registries and Their Effect on Courts

Welfare reform requires the establishment of a Federal Case Registry (FCR) of child support orders by October 1, 1998. The FCR will serve as a pointer system to advise authorized users of the presence of child support cases or support orders in other states. Child support enforcement (CSE) agencies will then use CSENet, an already established state-to-state communication system, to transmit further details about the cases or orders.

Each state CSE agency must establish a State Case Registry (SCR) from which required data elements will be taken and transmitted to the FCR on a routine basis. Both the SCR and the FCR will contain information on persons receiving services from a state CSE agency. In addition, information on private (nonIV-D) orders entered or modified by a court or administrative agency on or after October 1, 1998, will become part of the FCR. State case registry access to nonIV-D orders may be established by linking local case registries of support orders to the SCR through an automated information network.

Information on all child support orders must be placed on the FCR and SCR registries, regardless of the context in which they are entered, including divorce actions and orders for protection from abuse.

Also beginning October 1, 1998, requirements for state centralized collections and payments will go into effect. These will call for joint efforts between the court systems, where much of the required nonIV-D data is, and the state CSE agencies that must submit the data to the FCR and implement new payment procedures. Court staff can play an important role by helping to design and implement an automated interface to transmit information from court records to their state's CSE system.

Developing an interface between state automated systems and the FCR begins with close coordination between the state CSE agency and the court system. Most agencies have already begun working with their local courts to identify how data will be transmitted to their system. To assist state officials in devising methods to collect and transmit data appropriately, FCR record layouts and privacy/security provisions have been made available to all state CSE agencies. Required FCR data elements include a case identification number and the name, date of birth, and Social Security number (SSN) of both the custodial and non-custodial parent. After October 1, 1999, each child's name, date of birth, and SSN will also be required.

Once the state mechanisms are in place, data will be transmitted by the CSE agencies to OCSE through a national communication network using CONNECT:Direct. A CONNECT:Direct link has been established between each state and the FCR. To guard against security breaches, data will be transmitted over secure and dedicated lines. In addition, all names and SSNs provided by the states will be verified by SSA prior to being placed on the FCR.

The success of the FCR depends on a strong partnership between the judicial and child support enforcement communities. To further this, OCSE Commissioner David Gray Ross has established a judicial work group comprised of State Chief Justices, trial court judges, and court administrators to facilitate interface between the courts and the CSE program. Additionally, OCSE's National Training Center is working with the National Center for State Courts on an invitational judicial symposium, to be held in Denver, September 17-19, 1998.

For more information about federal or state case registries, contact Philip Browning at (202) 401-5530; for information on judicial and court relations, contact Larry R. Holtz at (202) 401-5376. □

GAO Endorses Systems Certification Effort

The General Accounting Office (GAO), in a recent report, "Child Support Enforcement: Certification Process for State Information Systems" (June 1998) gives high marks to OCSE systems certification. The report finds that:

- guidance for certification reviews complies with Family Support Act provisions and implementing regulations;
- OCSE is consistent in the way it administers certification reviews;
- OCSE analysts have used a consistent method for conducting reviews and for reviewing draft certification reports; and
- an increased workload (the number of reviews conducted in the first six months of 1998 equalled the number for all of 1997) did not affect the staffing or quality of the certification reviews.

For a free copy of the complete report, call the GAO at (202) 512-6000. □

The Impact of Child Support Following Divorce

By: Judi Bartfeld

Research has found strikingly different economic impacts of divorce for men than for women and children. After divorce, women and children generally experience large drops in their standard of living, while men often experience gains. The economic hardship experienced by divorced women and their children, has prompted policy-makers to focus on child support as one way to help these families.

After divorce, mothers and their children would be substantially worse off without child support.

Most of the existing research in this area is based on divorces that occurred as early as 1970. Because women are much more likely to be employed now than in the past, and because the child support system has been strengthened in recent years, the old results may no longer be accurate. In this article, I provide recent national estimates of the economic outcomes of divorce for mothers, fathers, and children, and I examine how child support influences these outcomes. I use data from the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), a longitudinal survey conducted by the Census Bureau. The results are based on a sample of married parents who separate or divorce over the eighteen months covered by the survey.

Immediately before separation, average monthly income for these families is \$3,659. Monthly incomes fall for fathers and for mothers after separation, but the drop for mothers is much more precipitous: \$2,387 for fathers, compared to \$1,557 for mothers. Because mothers are more likely than fathers to assume physical custody of children, gender differences in needs adjusted income are even greater than differences in total income. After adjusting for household size, fathers on average are better off financially after separation than before, while mothers experience much worse income-to-poverty ratios.

Mothers also have much higher poverty rates than fathers after separation. Before separation, the family poverty rate is 11 percent. For fathers, this remains largely unchanged after separation. Among mothers, on the other hand, the poverty rate increases to 38 percent immediately after separation and remains above 30 percent over the following 18 months.

Benefits of Child Support

Although mothers and their children bear the brunt of the economic hardships of divorce, they would be substantially worse off without child support. Among the 57 percent of mothers who received any support 7 to 9 months after separation, the average amount was \$439 per month—27 percent of their total income. While payment of child support had an important impact on the economic well-being of mothers and children, it did not cause substantial hardship among nonresident fathers. As a result of child support payments, the poverty rate among resident mother families fell from 39 percent to 27 percent—a drop of more than 30 percent. Yet, this resulted in an increase in the poverty rate of nonresident fathers of just three points: from 9 to 12 percent.

Overall, this paper finds that, despite changes in the employment of women and in child support policies, mothers continue to fare substantially worse than fathers following separation. However, the differences between mothers' and fathers' well-being following divorce would be much greater in the absence of child support. For further information call Judi Bartfeld at (608) 262-4765. □

Judi Bartfeld is an Assistant Professor, Consumer Science, an Extension Specialist, and an Affiliate at the Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin, Madison.

President Signs Child Support Performance and Incentives Act

The Child Support Performance and Incentives Act of 1998, passed by Congress on June 26, was signed by the President on July 16, as CSR was going to press. This bill contains the new incentives formula developed by a state-federal workgroup, an alternative penalty for failing to meet automated systems requirements in the Family Support Act and PRWORA, new provisions for medical support enforcement, and a series of technical amendments. We will provide more information on this important new legislation in the September issue of CSR. □

Making Your Web Site Useful

By: Margreta Silverstone

Web sites abound and meet a variety of needs. They provide an efficient vehicle to present a consistent message about services and programs. Web publication saves printing costs, and referring students and other callers to the web site can reduce staff time answering common program questions. But the key question remains: how useful does your audience find the information provided?

“Web useability”—lingo used to define what makes a web page useful—provides some common answers for content development on the web. Of primary importance, content needs to be relevant, timely, and credible. Graphics can assist in providing information or in navigating the site. Testing your web pages on your audience can provide feedback for improvement.

The key question:

How useful does your audience find the information provided?

Content

To be useful to an Internet audience, a web site must deliver entertainment or knowledge or improve the way its audience accomplishes some important task. The members of your audience need to quickly get where they want to go, find what they're looking for, and do what they want to do.

Using common news-oriented writing skills can enhance content developed for the web. Answer the key questions first and write concisely. Identify key items by:

- Highlighting words;
- Using meaningful sub-headings;
- Bulleting lists; and
- Dating materials and providing links to other web pages that may be of interest to your audience.

Often the materials made available on web sites by government agencies cannot be rewritten for a web audience. Policy or audit procedure documents, for example, are written to educate an audience about an activity. These documents follow different writing styles, but stylistic aids can still be employed within them to help the audience find key items.

Graphics

A picture is worth a thousand words but only if used wisely. Graphics can provide valuable information about the material in quickly accessible ways and can help the members of your audience find where they want to go. Poor use of images, however, can be a hindrance. Web pages that dazzle the viewer can be distracting and can hide important information. Also, over-reliance on images may turn an audience away because each image included in a page will increase the time it takes to load. In designing your web site:

- Only use graphics critical to content;
- Limit images used solely for visual appeal;
- Keep the total size of all images on a page to less than 30K;
- Use graphic bullets purposefully; and
- Supply alternate text for graphic navigation buttons.

Feedback

Useability testing, a process for getting feedback from your audience on your web materials, provides input on web page design and content. A variety of methods, varying from simple to complex, are available to test the usefulness of materials.

Given the opportunity, your audience will provide feedback about the materials presented. If audience members cannot find the information they want, they will tell you. A feedback mechanism in web materials can be as simple as an e-mail address.

The host computer for your web pages can provide a log of audience activity. Web log analysis through commercial off-the-shelf products yields information about the members of your audience and the information they want. The analysis can identify which pages are accessed most or least frequently, track the number of pages your audience views before leaving the site, and identify the type of Internet accounts your audience is using.

Other methods of testing include observing a representative group of volunteers navigating through the materials, conducting a treasure hunt of your materials with a representative group, and surveying your customers. If you would like more information about web sites, contact Margreta Silverstone at (202) 401-4596. □

Margreta Silverstone is a Public Affairs Specialist in ACF's Office of Public Affairs.

Nurturing Fatherhood

New research findings underscore the critical role of fathers in child development, according to a recently released report, "Nurturing Fatherhood: Improving Data and Research on Male Fertility, Family Formation and Fatherhood." Commenting on the report, Vice President Al Gore said, "I believe that all children can benefit from the involved presence of a father in their lives."

Concern about child well-being has pushed the study of fathers beyond research on nonmarital childbearing, child support, and child poverty to the investigation of father involvement (quality and quantity) and its effect on children and families. This growing body of research has called into question a popular assumption that the primary contribution fathers make to their children's lives is financial support.

*"I believe that all children
can benefit
from the involved presence
of a father in their lives."*

.....Vice President Al Gore

In January of 1996, the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics began to explore the adequacy of research and data collection on the issue of fatherhood. A major conference was held in March, 1997, on improving data and research on fathering, fertility, and family formation.

The Forum's review indicated that fathers are absent from the lives of many children and that both father absence and father presence affect child and family development in multiple ways.

Some fathers spend considerable time with their children, of course, but many men do not live with their children and/or are not highly involved in their children's lives. Divorce and nonmarital childbearing have reduced the amount of time that many fathers spend with their children over the course of childhood, and nearly half of nonresident fathers do not see their children during the course of a year.

The review found that marriage confers important health and economic benefits to parents and to the children the married couples raise. But in many instances marriage is delayed or foregone. This is par-

ticularly true in disadvantaged populations, where economic constraints and changing values and norms have increasingly distanced marriage as a viable option.

The Forum's review also found that the absence of their biological father from the home has adverse consequences for children's school achievement, labor force attachment, early childbearing, and risk-taking behaviors. Family structure makes a difference, even when income is taken into account. While most children raised by Dad alone or Mom alone make a successful transition from childhood into adulthood, having both parents is better than having one parent.

Research that separates father involvement from mother involvement indicates that fathers have an independent effect on child well-being. For example, the father's parenting style, level of closeness, monitoring, and other family processes affect the child's development.

The positive effects of father involvement have been a fairly consistent finding in studies of two-parent families. Now there is a growing body of research showing that financial support and the positive involvement of a father, including cooperation between parents, increase positive outcomes for children who do not live with both of their parents.

Copies of "Nurturing Fatherhood" can be purchased for \$19.95 from Child Trends, Inc., 4301 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20008. The executive summary of the report is available at www.childtrends.org. The full text of the report is available at <http://aspe.os.dhhs.gov/fathers/fhoodini/html>. □



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Child Support Report

Slovak Republic Declared Reciprocating Country

By: Stephen Grant

The Secretary of State and the Secretary of Health and Human Services have declared the Slovak Republic to be a foreign reciprocating country for support enforcement for children and custodial parents in cases which involve the two nations.

Services must include the establishment of paternity and support orders for children and custodial parents, enforcement of support orders, and collection

and distribution of support payments under such orders.

Requests for services may be sent to the Center for International Legal Protection of Children and Youth, Spitalska 6, P.O. Box 57, 814 99 Bratislava, Slovak Republic.

For further information about the Slovak Republic reciprocity declaration or other international child support matters, contact Stephen Grant, OCSE's International Child Support Officer, at (202) 260-5943. □

Child Support Report

Vol. XX No. 8

August 1998

Child Support Report is a publication of the Office of Child Support Enforcement, Division of Consumer Services.

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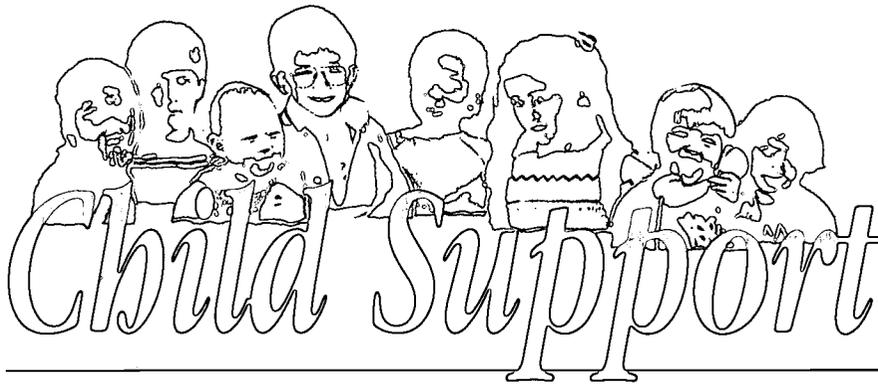
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Child Support Report

Office of Child Support Enforcement

Vol. XX, No. 9, September 1998

Seahawks and States Team Up for Kids

By: Cheryl Reed



Governor Locke signs child support proclamation, while Michael Sinclair and son (to l. of Gov.) look on.

In a Region-wide media campaign, Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington have teamed up with the Seattle Seahawks to promote responsible fatherhood. The four States represent Region X of the Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE). The responsible fatherhood campaign is part of a nationwide joint venture between the National Football League (NFL) and the nation's child support community. (For more information, see the June '97 CSR.)

With their children, Seahawks' defensive end Michael Sinclair and quarterback Jon Kitna (the son of Washington Support Enforcement Officer Fay Kitna) recently filmed public service announcements (PSAs), which began airing in August. Both Seahawks players are volunteering their time in support of what they say is the most important role they play—that of being a father.

In June, Washington State Governor Gary Locke signed a proclamation declaring August Child Sup-

port Awareness Month. Michael Sinclair and his son joined Governor Locke for the signing. In his remarks, the Governor stressed the need for all fathers to stay involved with their children and noted the importance of child support in helping to move families out of poverty. Following the signing, television crews interviewed Sinclair for a feature on the 5 o'clock news that evening.

"... the most important role they play—that of being a father."

.....Seahawks' players Sinclair and Kitna

Seahawks officials have been helpful in numerous ways in assisting the Region X States with the responsible fatherhood campaign. After the PSAs were completed, for example, the Seahawks' photographer shot still photos of the players and their children for use by the States in additional promotional endeavors.

On August 28, the Sinclair/Kitna PSAs could be seen during the Seahawks' nationally televised home game against San Francisco. In addition, the team donated booth space in the pavilion outside the stadium for child support program staff to hand out promotional items before and during the game.

If you would like more information about the Region X fatherhood campaign, contact Cheryl Reed at the Washington State Division of Child Support at 360-664-5445. □

Cheryl Reed is Program Manager, Community Relations Unit, for Washington State's Division of Child Support.

U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Child Support Enforcement

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Commissioner Speaks at NCSEA



OCSE Commissioner David Gray Ross

OCSE Commissioner David Gray Ross addressed an overflow audience at NCSEA's 47th Annual Conference and Exposition in Washington, DC. Exploring the conference theme of,

"Child Support, Now More Than Ever," Ross said that with the clock of time-limited assistance ticking it was vital for the child support enforcement program to improve its performance. He cited three critical areas:

- implementing the welfare reform legislation's automation requirements;
- ensuring a sound financial basis for the program as the twenty-first century approaches; and
- making sure that all children are provided with medical support.

"The simple fact is," the Commissioner reminded his audience, "that the child support enforcement program has more children in its caseload for a longer period of time than any other service program. With long term welfare benefits giving way to temporary assistance, the work we do will help define, now more than ever, the future for millions of children." □

Reaching Out to Hispanics

The Census Bureau projects that within the next decade Hispanics will comprise 13.6 percent of the U.S. population, making Latinos the largest ethnic population. A July, 1998, Census Bureau Report indicates that there are now 10.5 million Hispanic children under age 18 in the U.S. For those Hispanic children and families needing child support enforcement (CSE) services, research indicates that there may be gaps in our knowledge of how to market such services to Latino customers.

To address the needs of Hispanic families, OCSE contracted with HMA Associates, a nationally recognized communications firm, to conduct focus groups with Hispanic community leaders who work directly with Latino customers. The focus groups, held in Los Angeles, Miami, New York City, San Antonio, and Washington, DC were structured to identify Latino knowledge, perceptions, and attitudes towards CSE; develop strategies to facilitate communication with Latino customers; and detect factors that may hinder effective communication.

A key finding: there appears to be minimal knowledge within the Hispanic community about specific child support laws and provisions. When asked who they would call for information on child support, most participants said family, friends, or professional colleagues because of their trust in these sources.

Community leaders also believe that some noncustodial Hispanic parents who are legal residents and want to meet their financial obligations hesitate for fear of immigration issues.

Community leaders zeroed in on the need for culturally relevant Spanish and English language materials.

When asked for suggestions about how child support services can be communicated effectively to Latino's, community leaders zeroed in on the need for culturally relevant Spanish and English language materials. These are critical in light of new CSE requirements brought about by welfare reform. Bilingual staff are also needed, and, to maximize the impact of child support messages to Hispanics, cultural factors must be understood and taken into account. Focus group participants also suggested that community partnerships be formed to assist the nation's child support community in disseminating materials to Latino customers.

For more information, call Vilma Guinn at (202) 401-5355. □

The Child Support Performance and Incentive Act

The Child Support Performance and Incentive Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-200), passed by Congress on June 26, was signed by the President on July 16. (See August '97 CSR.) The bill contains a number of major child support enforcement provisions.

Alternative Penalty Procedure

Provides an alternative to the penalty in current law for state failure to have a complying automated data processing (ADP) system in operation in its child support enforcement (CSE) program by the statutory deadline. If the Secretary of DHHS determines that the state is making a good faith effort to comply and has submitted a satisfactory corrective action plan, the state will qualify for a new penalty of 4, 8, 16, 25, and 30 percent, respectively, for the first, second, third, fourth, and fifth or subsequent year of failure to comply. This penalty percentage is applied to the amount payable to the state for the preceding fiscal year as federal matching of CSE administrative costs.

A state subject to a penalty reduction for a fiscal year that achieves compliance by the beginning of the succeeding fiscal year will have its penalty reduced by 90 percent.

Authority to Waive Single Statewide Automation Data Processing and Information Retrieval Requirements

Gives the Secretary broad authority to waive requirements concerning state CSE ADP systems, and requires the Secretary to waive the requirement for a single statewide ADP system if the state demonstrates to the Secretary's satisfaction that the proposed alternative will be equally effective and reliable and will meet all functional requirements.

Provides payment for costs of qualifying alternative state systems at the 66 percent administrative matching rate, but only to the extent that such costs do not exceed those estimated in the waiver request.

Incentive Payments to States

Adds to title IV-D a new section 458A (Incentive Payments to States). The new section provides that the incentive payment for a state for a given fiscal year is calculated by multiplying the incentive pay-

ment pool for the year by the state's incentive payment share for the year. The incentive payment pool is \$422 million for fiscal year 2000, rising incrementally to \$483 million for fiscal year 2008, and for succeeding fiscal years the amount for the preceding fiscal year, adjusted by the Consumer Price Index.

States are required to spend incentive payments to carry out their CSE programs or closely related activities.

States' shares are calculated based on the quality of their performance with respect to five measures: paternity establishment, establishment of support orders, collections of current payments, collections of arrearages, and cost effectiveness. States are required to spend incentive payments to carry out their CSE programs or closely related activities.

Safeguard of New Employee Information

Provides several protections against misuse of information in the National Directory of New Hires (NDNH). Adds administrative penalties up to and including dismissal from employment, and a \$1,000 fine, for each act of unauthorized access to, disclosure of, or use of NDNH information by any U.S. officer or employee. Limits the Secretary's access to NDNH data to 12 months after data entry, except where a match has resulted, and limits retention of NDNH data to 24 months except for samples retained for research purposes only.

Also in the bill: a measure to eliminate barriers to the effective establishment and enforcement of medical child support; a requirement that Social Security numbers be on driver's licenses by October 1, 2000; the elimination of unnecessary data reporting; and technical corrections. □

OCSE 8th National Conference

○ CSE's 8th National Training Conference is coming soon: **September 28-30, 1998**, at the Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC.

With a theme of "Meeting the Child Support Challenge—Children First," and an agenda designed for both state and federal child support professionals, this conference promises to be the best yet. If you were planning to attend but haven't yet registered, call Bertha Hammet at (202) 401-5292. □

Financial Distribution Test Deck Available

OCSE has created a revised Federal Financial Distribution Test Deck Generator to assist states in assessing processing compliance with welfare reform child support distribution requirements. The test deck generator prints a defined set of processing scenarios and tailored results intended to illustrate key features of federal processing requirements. States are expected to establish these scenarios within their current child support applications to verify that their distribution modules generate the expected outcomes.

State CSE system development projects might want to make use of this test deck as part of a comprehensive systems acceptance process, and its use may help to identify potential problems prior to a systems operational use.

Within the new test deck, users are asked a series of policy questions that impact on scenario outcomes. This version contains 25 scenarios and has been enhanced to incorporate design documentation to assist states in deciding how best to modify their systems to meet the current welfare reform requirements. Additionally, the test deck generator contains copies of relevant federal statutes, regulations, and PIQs (policy interpretation questions) related to welfare reform distribution changes.

As with the original release, the revised test deck does not address each collection/distribution scenario which a state will encounter in actual operation. Nor does it encompass all the federal requirements under which state systems must operate and be evaluated against. States should use this test deck only as a supplement to enhance their system acceptance test cases. While the test deck distribution scenarios will not change, OCSE intends to provide additional updates for the test deck help system. These updates will contain additional design materials to assist states in implementing distribution-related changes.

The test deck is available in either Windows 95 or Windows 3.1, with a choice of floppy disks or CD-ROM. To date, OCSE has received and distributed over 350 copies of the test deck generator.

Additional information can be found in OCSE-AT-98-15 and OCSE-AT-97-17. For copies call OCSE's Resource Center at (202) 401-9383. For more information contact Robin Rushton at (202) 690-1244. □

Distribution Training

By: Lourdes Henry

Working with its state partners during the past year, OCSE's National Training Center (NTC) developed a course on the Child Support Distribution Requirements of the welfare reform legislation. Targeted to policy, program, systems, and financial staff who need to understand the intricacies of child support collections distribution, the curriculum can also be modified for more general audiences.

Three-member training teams from each of the 10 Regions, made up of staff knowledgeable in the new distribution requirements, received training during pilot testing of the course in Washington, DC, June 9-11 and July 14-16, 1998. These teams are now responsible for providing distribution training to the states in their regions (see page 5 for team members).

Targeted to policy, program, systems, and financial staff, the curriculum can also be modified for more general audiences.

The Trainer Guide, developed by NTC staff, contains in-depth information on distribution and numerous exercises using actual case scenarios from the distribution test deck. In August, each Regional Training Team received the finalized distribution training package containing a hard copy of the Trainer Guide with an accompanying Powerpoint presentation and a copy of the distribution test deck (see accompanying article).

NTC would like to thank each of the pilot test participants and the others who contributed to the design and development of this training and to the success of the pilot tests. □

Lourdes Henry is a Program Specialist in the National Training Center.

More State System Certifications

Arkansas, Florida, Kentucky, Maine, and South Dakota received certification of their systems in August. OCSE Commissioner David Gray Ross presented certificates of achievement to the States' directors at the NCSEA conference. *Thirty-five* states' automated systems are now certified. □

PWORA's Child Support Distribution Requirements

Regional Training Teams

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- **Chris Arciero** (617) 565-2472, (617) 565-2493-fax, carciero@acf.dhhs.gov.
- **Tom Belcher** (617) 565-1032, (617) 565-2493-fax, tbelcher@acf.dhhs.gov.
- **Nancy Simpson** (603) 271-4749, nsimpson@dhhs.state.nh.us.

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- **Diane Schwartz** (212) 264-2970, (212) 264-0013-fax, dschwartz@acf.dhhs.gov.

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- **Elise Wing** (415) 437-8480, ewing@acf.dhhs.gov.

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- **Carl Christensen** (360) 753-9432, (360) 753-9422-fax, cchristensen@dshs.wa.gov.
- **Sandra Lee** (360) 664-5186, (360) 664-5143-fax, slee@dshs.wa.gov. □

Bexar County, Texas, Uses Probation as Collection Tool

By: Michael Kopatz

In San Antonio, Texas, Bexar County's child support probation unit, staffed by six certified juvenile probation officers, works closely with Bexar County's child support enforcement staff and the Attorney General to enforce child support orders.

The probation unit caseload consists of noncustodial parents who have been held in contempt of court for nonpayment of child support. The cases are prepared and presented in court by staff of the Office of the Attorney General or Bexar County's Child Support Enforcement Office. Court masters hear the noncustodial parent cases, which usually result in civil probation of six months to five years as an alternative to incarceration. Probation enables these parents to remain employed while receiving on-going supervision to ensure compliance.

Orientation classes, begun in 1997, are mandatory for all new probationers. The classes meet twice a month in the evening to accommodate work schedules and provide valuable information to help the probationers pay their child support consistently. Topics include: the conditions of probation, the child support system, parenting, employment, visitation, second families, substance abuse/mental health, and welfare reform.

*Probation enables parents
to remain employed
while receiving on-going supervision
to ensure compliance.*

The unit has adopted a strong service-oriented approach to the casework, constantly making referrals to appropriate community agencies to help the probationers deal with their problems. If a probationer is noncompliant, a violation report is submitted by the probation officer to the responsible office handling the case. That office in turn files a Motion to Revoke Probation which returns the probationer to court for further action.

In following the philosophy of prevention and

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early intervention established by David Reilly, Bexar County's Chief Probation Officer, the staff is developing a presentation for targeted groups in the Juvenile Probation Department, as well as in high schools. The presentation focuses on responsible sexual behavior and the legal/emotional/financial responsibilities of having a child, as well as the consequences of not providing financial support.

The success of Bexar County's child support probation unit, which now has more than 1,700 cases on supervised probation, has stimulated other Texas counties to explore this option—one that helps to assure that all children receive the child support to which they are entitled.

If you would like further information about Bexar County's program, call Michael Kopatz at (210) 335-2815. □

Michael Kopatz supervises Bexar County's Child Support Probation Unit.

OIG Survey Finds States Satisfied with OCSE

In the fall of 1997, as part of its customer satisfaction initiative, OCSE requested the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) to undertake a child support enforcement state satisfaction survey. OCSE was the first federal agency to request such a study.

Using a structured telephone format, OIG contacted all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands—in most cases speaking to the child support program director. The survey covered each state's program highlights, working relationships with OCSE, and suggestions for improving service. Respondents were asked to differentiate their answers between the central and regional offices for most questions. Six States (Colorado, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New York, South Carolina, and Texas) were selected for on-site visits and in-depth interviews.

The results of the survey are very supportive of the services OCSE provides to states and of the relationship between OCSE and its state partners. Forty-seven states are very or somewhat satisfied with OCSE's central office, while 49 states are very or somewhat satisfied with their regional OCSE offices. A majority of states say their satisfaction with OCSE's services has increased over the past two years. Forty-four say it has increased with the central office and 28 say it has increased with the regional office. □

Putting Customers First in Cuyahoga Co.

By: Daryl Novak

When I became the Director of the Cuyahoga Support Enforcement Agency (CSEA), a large, high-volume metropolitan area in Ohio, one of the first questions I asked staff was: "If the Cuyahoga Support Enforcement Agency were a bank, would you bank here?"

The ensuing silence confirmed that serious changes needed to be made for the agency to fulfill its mission as a professional service organization. We began by placing emphasis on improving customer access and improving casework service. To make certain that the right information reached the right person at the right time, we put a personal computer, linked by local area network, on every desk. We also established an Office of Customer Affairs to coordinate calls, track complaints, and ensure that problems get solved in a timely and professional manner.

Most importantly, perhaps, the staff was asked to rethink the way business was done at every level of the organization—to apply what came to be known as the "CSEA Test" to every decision.

- Will the proposed action increase the dollars collected, bringing more money to more families?
- Is the proposed action customer-driven and will it enhance customer services?
- Is there a good business reason for the proposed action?
- Will the proposed action increase staff accountability?

Unless the answer to each of these questions is yes, the proposal is rejected. The CSEA Test, which has become a benchmark for measuring customer service and outcomes, has helped the Cuyahoga Agency keep its focus on performance in the face of increased demands on staff and rapid program changes. Today in Cuyahoga County, we are building an organization that's focused on our clients and on getting things done. We're working on raising our standards across the board, from hiring to performance outcomes and everything in between. The CSEA Test is only the beginning. □

Daryl Novak is Director of the Cuyahoga Support Enforcement Agency.

FYI: Census Bureau News You Can Use

Unwed Pairs on the Increase

Unwed pairs now make up 4 million households in the U.S.—eight times as many as in 1970. A substantial share of these unmarried couples—nearly 36 percent—have children under the age of 15 living with them. Of children under the age of 18, close to 28 percent live with just one parent—85 percent with their mothers. Of those living with their mothers, 40 percent of the mothers have never been married.

Single parent mothers who are divorced are more likely to receive some child support than single parent mothers who have never been married.

This information is important for child support enforcement, since, according to the Census Bureau's Terry Bugaila, single parent mothers who are divorced are more likely to receive some child support than single parent mothers who have never been married.

Americans on the Move

Between March, 1996 and March, 1997:

- about 42 million Americans (16 percent of the population) moved;
- most (66 percent) stayed in the same county;
- 19 percent moved to another county in the same state; and
- 15 percent took up residence in a new state.

The report, "Geographical Mobility: March, 1996 to March, 1997," contains detailed statistics on the characteristics of movers, including age, sex, race, Hispanic origin, educational level, occupation, and income. Sample highlights: renters moved at 4 times the rate of homeowners; moving rates decline with age—a third of those 20-29 moved in the period but only 5 percent of those over 65; and central cities lost 3 million people due to migration.

A faxed copy of the one-page Geographical Mobility report can be obtained by calling the Census Bureau Public Information Office's 24 hour Fax-on-Demand service at 1-888-206-6463 and requesting document number 1309. □

**U.S. Department of
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FYI: FPLS Requests for Enforcing Child Custody or Visitation

Federal law does not permit a noncustodial parent to directly submit a request either to the IV-D agency's State Parent Locator Service (SPLS) or to the Federal Parent Locator Service (FPLS) for purposes of enforcing child custody or visitation. However, the IV-D agency should advise noncustodial parents about the proper steps for submitting such requests for FPLS information.

A noncustodial parent may request that an appropriate state official, who is an "authorized person" within the meaning of the statute, submit the request to

the FPLS via the SPLS, provided that the state has a law that empowers the official to act on behalf of the state to enforce a child custody or visitation determination. The noncustodial parent may also petition a court with proper jurisdiction to submit the request to the FPLS via the SPLS on his or her behalf. A private attorney is not considered to be an agent of the court for the purposes of the statutory definition of "authorized person."

If you would like further information, contact OCSE's Anne Benson at (202) 401-1467. □

Child Support Report

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Child Support Report

Office of Child Support Enforcement

Vol. XX, No. 10, October 1998

Child Support and TANF Combine for Success in Oregon

By: Cheri Breitenstein

In Oregon, co-locating TANF and child support agencies in the same office is already beginning to show positive results. Representatives from the Support Enforcement Division of the Department of Justice are joining offices of the Adult and Family Services Division of the Department of Human Resources, the State's TANF agency, to improve service delivery to customers. There are currently five TANF and child support offices co-located and two more in the planning stage. Staff say that the arrangement makes it easier for them to carry out their responsibilities, give customers high quality service, and get information out to their communities and community partners.

Co-location Benefits

- Immediate access by customers to the combined resources of public assistance and child support. Customers come to one location for the services they need;
- By participation in TANF interviews, child support staff get up-front information, which decreases the time needed for locating the noncustodial parent and establishing paternity. The result: families receive child support payments sooner;
- TANF and child support staff can attend each other's meetings, schedule "all staff" meetings, and conduct cross-functional training including accessing computer screens. This encourages new ways of looking at services and assists in identifying problems and training needs; and

Special Issue

Child Support and TANF:
Teaming up to help children
and families.

- Domestic-violence issues can be addressed immediately. TANF and child support staff attend agency domestic violence training and conferences together, meet with their local domestic violence advocates, and work in concert with the advocates to develop case management plans.

In the first week of co-location at one office, child support staff were able to issue wage withholdings on three cases where the custodial parents previously had been unwilling to cooperate. All three custodial parents received support payments within one month, including one who hadn't received a payment in four years. In another office, joint caseload reviews have helped to significantly reduce the "unknown father" caseload.

Merging two previously perceived "separate cultures" has presented some problems, including changing staff outlook: learning to say "that's *our* job," instead of "that's not my job." There have also been increases in walk-in traffic, which can tie up staff time. And since the Support Enforcement Division is a division of the largest law firm in the State, confidentiality

Continued on page 2, "Oregon."

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CHILD SUPPORT



Oregon

Continued from page 1

and adherence to professional ethics is paramount. The challenge has been for child support and TANF management and staff to identify legal barriers and reach solutions which are acceptable to both, thus creating an environment which meets the needs of families and assists them in becoming self-sufficient.

*TANF and child support staff
have learned
to know and trust one another.*

But the positive outcomes of co-location far outweigh any obstacles to it. In Oregon's case, TANF and child support staff have learned to know and trust one another, share information, and participate in cross-training. This has led to an increased understanding of how both agencies, working together, can better assist participants in finding work, obtaining child support, and reaching the goal of self-sufficiency. □

Cheri Breitenstein is a Policy Analyst in Oregon's Child Support Program.

Promoting Collaboration

Dear Colleague Letter Spells It Out

○ CSE and the Office of Family Assistance urge state and local agencies to collaborate with each other in carrying out their common mission of family empowerment (DCL 98-11, February 9, 1998). The letter describes collaboration strategies and provides examples of how some states are collaborating.

- Virginia and Wisconsin (Kenosha County) co-locate CSE and TANF staffs;
- Athens County, Ohio, Community Work Experience, assigns public assistance participants to the local IV-D office;
- Maryland's "Child Support First" initiative requires that the IV-D agency be included in the initial TANF application process; and
- Parents' Fair Share Projects require unemployed noncustodial parents whose children receive public assistance to participate in employment-related services when they are unable to meet their child support obligations. □

TANF and Child Support Partnership

Helping Others Help Themselves

A round Christmas of 1993, Sheila Grayson lost her job of five years. The sole provider for her five-year old daughter, she had no choice but to turn to public assistance. Her daughter's father was often unemployed and moved frequently. Unable to have paternity established, Sheila could not secure a support order.

Taking advantage of the opportunities offered through Virginia's public assistance program, in October, 1995, Sheila started working for the Manassas Office of the Division of Child Support Enforcement (DCSE) as a Community Work Experience participant. Performing the work voluntarily, in exchange for her public assistance benefits, Sheila began to regain her confidence and renew a determination to succeed.

Within two months she attained a contract position as receptionist with DCSE and by June, 1998, gained promotion to Support Enforcement Specialist at the Manassas DCSE office. In this position she is dedicated to helping others find self-sufficiency through hard work and determination, as she has done. And because of her experiences, Sheila has a special empathy for custodial parents who find themselves struggling to overcome obstacles and regain their own independence.

Sheila Grayson's story is inspirational in part because it says so much about what a determined person can do. But it also illustrates the value of cross-program cooperation. Public assistance program staff helped Sheila find an entry back into employment. DCSE staff worked hard to help her master the tools she needed to grow and succeed in her work. And everyone involved recognized the importance to her of becoming self-sufficient and supported her in the achievement of that goal. □

**LET'S TAKE CARE
OF OUR KIDS.
CHILD SUPPORT.**

Virginia Co-Location

By: Julie G. Cooper

Virginia's Division of Child Support Enforcement (DCSE) began experimenting with co-location of public assistance and child support staff in the summer of 1993. As we began to understand the partnership role that child support enforcement would play with public assistance in promoting customer self-reliance under welfare reform, co-location efforts were intensified and have been shown to be a successful way to manage TANF and CSE caseloads and provide customers with high quality service. "Co-location has enhanced working relationships between the IV-A and IV-D programs," said Nick Young, DCSE's Director, "and the result has been to the benefit of our mutual customers." For example:

- CSE obtains more complete information about the noncustodial parent early in the application process;
- Collaboration is fostered between TANF and child support to help customers move toward self-reliance;
- Customers receive a clear message about cooperation with DCSE and its role in the process;
- Customer "no shows" for initial DCSE interviews are virtually eliminated;
- The TANF and child support programs' awareness of each other's roles and responsibilities is heightened;
- Duplication of processes between DCSE and local public assistance social services agencies is eliminated;
- Flexibility to accommodate differences in the various public assistance localities is facilitated;
- A more effective use of resources, including the use of advanced technology, is made possible; and
- Administrative costs are reduced.

In Virginia, we have found, in terms of co-location, that one size does not fit all. The concept has developed in distinct ways across the State, with the operational model differing according to the characteristics of the locality. Currently, there are five models of co-location operating in Virginia.

Model 1: Public Assistance In-House Intake

Child support enforcement specialists are stationed full-time in the IV-A office, performing joint customer intake and interviews with IV-A staff, in addition to other specialized DCSE required processes. In this setting, CSE caseloads are assigned to workers by

function. The CSE workers can be housed in the IV-A office and still manage a locate caseload because of the features of DCSE's automated case management system.

Model 2: Public Assistance In-House Referral

CSE staff members are stationed full-time in the IV-A office with the responsibility for an assigned TANF caseload, enabling them to be available for interviewing customers as they are referred by the IV-A workers.

Model 3: Circuit Rider

CSE workers are out-stationed, but their time is allocated between several IV-A localities to conduct customer interviews on an established schedule. This model also facilitates the availability of CSE workers to perform outreach activities within the communities they serve.

Model 4: Expanded Service Points

CSE employees travel to IV-A offices on a regular basis to interview customers and perform outreach activities. IV-D workers are housed in the DCSE district offices and are assigned a caseload. The activities they perform in the local social services offices are carried out in addition to their assigned caseload responsibilities in the DCSE offices.

Model 5: Video Teleconferencing

Video teleconferencing technology allows CSE workers to participate with IV-A workers in interviewing TANF customers or, at times, noncustodial parents, while remaining in the DCSE district office. Face-to-face interaction occurs between the IV-A worker, the IV-D worker, and the customer without either caseworker having to leave his or her respective work site. This arrangement is a convenience for TANF customers who may face transportation difficulties in getting to the DCSE office.

The result of this flexible approach to co-location has been a strengthened partnership between TANF and child support in exploring the resources available to customers who want to gain independence from welfare.

"DCSE's philosophy is that the road to self-reliance begins with child support enforcement," Nick Young sums up, "and co-location of these programs supports welfare reform goals in the same way that a united family supports the goals of its children." □

Julie Cooper is the Assistant Director of the Virginia Division of Child Support Enforcement.

Working Together to Help Families

By: Mack Storrs

Welfare is now about work. More welfare parents are working than ever before: in 1993 one in 14 had earnings; now it is one in 8. The average monthly earnings for these working families increased from \$450 in 1996 to \$550 in 1997. Almost one-third of families who were on welfare in 1996 were working in 1997, compared to one in four in the prior year. That's 1.7 million parents who were working in 1997 after being on welfare the year before.

There are many reasons for these results: a good economy, an increase in the minimum wage, the earned income tax credit, and state and federal welfare reform initiatives have all made work more attractive.

But these dramatic gains still leave too many of our customers without work or in entry-level jobs, with below-poverty incomes that make it difficult to support families. Some studies are showing that within a year, 30-40 percent of these families are back on assistance or combining welfare with work. And we know that poverty is significantly correlated with negative outcomes for families, including poor nutrition and health, unsafe housing, dangerous neighborhoods, and children's developmental problems.

So, we are far from finished with the task of welfare reform. For a parent, getting a job is the first step. But essential support services are needed as well, to help parents succeed at work — to hold onto jobs, move on to better jobs, and move out of poverty. These support services include adequate child care, reliable transportation, education and training opportunities, and the commitment of community resources to create jobs and rebuild neighborhoods.

Child support enforcement agencies play a pivotal role in helping families become self-sufficient. The receipt of child support collections can make a critical difference to families struggling to gain their financial independence. And while collections have increased dramatically in recent years, there is still a need for the child support community to collaborate with their TANF counterparts to ensure that children have the financial and emotional support they deserve from both parents.

With the new requirements and flexibility of the

welfare reform legislation and the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, fundamental issues of collaboration between the welfare and child support agencies continue to need attention. As more customers are diverted from TANF assistance at application through lump-sum payments, employment services, and job search requirements, good communication between staff of the agencies becomes even more important.

Collaboration across agencies is also important to a wide range of fatherhood initiatives. There is growing recognition among Child Support, TANF and Welfare to Work (WtW) agencies of the need to engage noncustodial fathers emotionally and financially in the lives of their children.

Child support agencies are exploring new and innovative visitation and custody arrangements. TANF agencies are considering and adopting more father-friendly welfare policies, such as: eliminating the former unemployed parent rules of attachment to the workforce and working less than 100 hours; providing employment and training services to noncustodial parents; and including the financial needs of unemployed, noncustodial parents in the grant. And, using WtW funds, agencies are dramatically expanding Parents' Fair Share type services to unemployed or underemployed, noncustodial parents.

As we address these challenges together, we have a real opportunity to improve the lives of our nation's children and families. □

Mack Storrs is Director, Division of Self-Sufficiency, Office of Family Assistance, ACF.

Innovations in American Government New Hire Directory Advances

OCSE's National Directory of New Hires has been named a finalist in the 1998 Innovations in American Government awards program. The program is administered by the John F. Kennedy School of Government in partnership with the Council of Excellence in Government and is a joint program of the Ford Foundation and Harvard University. "We are proud of what we have achieved with the New Hire Directory," said OCSE Commissioner David Gray Ross, "and pleased to be recognized in this manner, but the real winners are children, on behalf of whom all of our programs strive for excellence." The ten winning programs will be announced in October, 1998. □

Washington State's Video Conferencing Project

By: Steve Strauss and Bill Jack

This is part 1 of a two-part look at Washington State's innovative video conferencing project. Part 1 provides project background and information on support enforcement referral interviews. Part 2, in next month's issue, will cover paternity interviews, administrative hearings and conferences, and video interview success stories.

Consider the possibilities . . .

- Applicants for child support services participate in "virtual" face-to-face interviews in the convenience of the worker's cubicle without having to travel long distances to the child support office.
- Custodial parents are interviewed, affidavits drawn up, and paternity proceedings initiated in one session without ever leaving the office.
- Administrative hearings are held at any of several remote sites, saving time and money, permitting the scheduling of additional interviews, and reducing no-shows.

A demonstration project turning these possibilities into reality is underway in Washington State.

*The goal:
to develop a coordinated
interagency effort to divert custodial
parents from TANF
by expediting
the collection of child support.*

Region 3 of the State's Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) encompasses 6,350 square miles, five counties and several large islands in northwestern Washington. In early 1997, OCSE's Seattle Regional Office agreed to provide Region 3 with funding and technical assistance for a two-year demonstration project to test the efficiency and effectiveness of using video conferencing equipment to provide face-to-face interviews in three distinct applications:

- support enforcement referrals;
- paternity interviews; and
- administrative hearings and conferences.

The goal was to develop a coordinated interagency effort to divert custodial parents from TANF by expediting the collection of child support.

Child Support Referrals

The first video referral interview was held on May 1, 1997. Since then, over 1,154 video referrals have been completed. The process is straightforward. A community service office worker shows the applicant to the interview area, establishes a telephone connection with the child support worker, and the interview commences.

The child support case is set up during the interview, which is scripted to ensure that no pertinent information is overlooked. The applicant is asked to leave copies of court orders or other paperwork and to mail in any additional required documents.

The required equipment (television, telephone, video conferencing unit, and regular phone line) is inexpensive and simple, with total cost per station around \$1,000. And prices are dropping.

The effectiveness of the process is being measured by comparing cases initiated using the video process with those initiated using traditional paper referrals. Two performance indicators are being used:

- percentage of sample cases with collection actions taken within sixty days of application; and
- percentage of diverted cases in the sample.

For purposes of the study, diverted cases are defined as those in which the custodial parent was off TANF within 90 days from the date of application.

Although it is too soon to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of the video process, preliminary data from 170 sample cases is encouraging: video referral service is producing a higher percentage of both diverted and 60-day paying cases. □

Steve Strauss and Bill Jack are Support Enforcement Supervisors in Washington State's Division of Child Support.

Quarterly Conference Calendar

October

4-7 *Western Interstate Child Support Enforcement Council (WICSEC)*, Double Tree Hotel, Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, Seattle, WA, Sue Bailey (509) 886-6218.

6-9 *California Family Support Council Quarterly Meeting*, Radisson Hotel, Visalia, CA, Noanne St. Jean (209) 582-3211 X 2403.

11-14 *Minnesota Family Support and Recovery Council 25th Annual Child Support Training Conference*, Madden's Resort, Brainerd, MN, Grant Forsyth (218) 726-2479.

14-15 *FPLS Training of Trainers (TOT)*, Capitol Hill Suites, Washington, DC, Leisa Coles (202) 495-0400 X 265.

14-16 *Michigan Family Support Council Annual Training Conference*, Boyne Highlands Inn, Harbor Springs, MI, Terry Novakoski (616) 336-2618.

14-16 *17th Annual Maryland Joint Child Support Training Seminar*, Princess Royale Hotel, Ocean City, MD, Donna Sims (410) 767-7876.

18-20 *Illinois Family Support Enforcement Association Annual Meeting*, Ramada Inn South Plaza, Springfield, IL, William Henry (217) 785-9007.

26-28 *Nebraska CSE Association Annual Training Conference*, Regency Inn, Kearney, NE, Bill MacKenzie (402) 593-4464.

TBA *National Child Support Enforcement Association UIFSA in the USA Regional Training*, Atlanta, GA, Holly Powell (202) 624-8180.

November

1-5 *ACF Users' Group Fall Conference*, Terrance Garden Hotel, Atlanta, GA, Robin Rushton (202) 690-1244.

December

1-3 *FPLS Users' Group Meeting*, Grand Hyatt Hotel, Washington, DC, Linda Deimeke (301) 495-0400.

6-9 *APWA National Council of State Human Service Administrators (Council) Winter Meeting*, Hyatt Regency, LaJolla, San Diego, CA, Kelly Thompson (202) 682-0100.

7 *APWA Child Support Committee Meeting*, Hyatt Regency, LaJolla, San Diego, CA, Kelly Thompson (202) 682-0100.

9-11 *New Jersey 17th Annual Child Support Conference*, Trump Plaza Hotel and Casino, Atlantic City, NJ, Eileen Coughlin (609) 588-2385. □

Employer Outreach

Employer outreach never ends. New employers are always entering the business community and existing employers need to be kept abreast of legislative and policy changes that will affect how they do business. To assist state IV-D offices in their employer outreach efforts, OCSE has developed several products, in collaboration with states and employer groups, to inform employers about their child support enforcement responsibilities pertaining to new hire reporting, income withholding, and medical support.

Throughout the past year, we have sent numerous products in hard copy and diskette to the State IV-D Directors, State New Hire Contacts, and ACF Regional Offices for their own outreach efforts. In addition to distributing hard copies, we have provided some on diskette so that states can add their own state-specific information and logo. State IV-D offices are encouraged to use the diskettes to print parts or all of the text for their own brochures.

The diskettes can be ordered in Mac-format, which contains both text and graphics, or in IBM-format with text only. States can also make copies of videos for distribution. For information, call Mironda Thomas at J & E Associates at (301) 495-0400 X254.

In addition, most of the material can be found at our website: <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cse>. □

OCSE FPLS Employer Outreach Materials

Brochures (sent to 6.4 million employers via IRS mailings)

Increasing Financial Support for Our Nation's Children

New Hire Reporting: Answers to Your Questions
Employers and Child Support: New Hire Reporting and Income Withholding

New Hire Reporting Material

New Hire Reporting (information package)
New Hire Reporting (12-minute video)
New Hire Reporting Presentation (script and transparencies for trainers to use)
Bright Ideas: New Hire Reporting Employer Outreach (a compendium of best practices)

ABCs of Child Support

The ABCs of Child Support: Employer Overview (information package)
The ABCs of Child Support (16-minute video)
The ABCs of Child Support Presentation (script and transparencies for trainers). □

Missouri Child Support and Family Services

By: Jim Carney

To improve the quality of information being provided to child support by TANF applicants, Missouri's Divisions of Child Support Enforcement (DCSE) and Family Services (DFS) have established co-locate projects throughout the State. Piloted in St. Louis City in March, 1997, the pilot's success has made it a standard part of DCSE offices, which tend to be located in the larger population areas of the State and serve multiple counties.

*With co-location,
the families of Missouri
are better served and children receive
the support
to which they are entitled.*

DCSE has allocated child support enforcement technicians to work in the DFS offices in the counties in which DCSE offices are located: two in larger metropolitan area offices and one in areas with smaller DFS offices. The CSE technicians assigned to DFS offices review the Referral for Services at the time of the custodial parent's application for TANF benefits. They conduct an interview with the parent to obtain additional information or clarify conflicting information previously provided by the parent. This interview is designed to assist the "case carrying" technicians by providing information that will assist in locating the noncustodial parent and lead to the establishment of paternity and a support order or the enforcement of an existing order. The interview takes place prior to the determination of eligibility and, in most instances, DFS requires the child support technician to sign off on the application before the eligibility determination is made. Technicians assigned to the DFS offices do not carry any additional caseload responsibilities, as the number of interviews they conduct each month warrants their full attention.

Missouri's DCSE has realized three major benefits from this project. First, the quality of information the "case carrying" technicians receive has improved. In many cases, they are able to begin a location, establishment or enforcement function upon receipt of the

Referral for Services without the need to contact the custodial parent for additional information.

Second, we have found that, in many instances, the noncustodial parent brings the custodial parent to the DFS office and is thus available to be interviewed at the time of the TANF application. The benefit from this is that the noncustodial parent may sign the Affidavit Acknowledging Paternity at the DFS office, thus creating a presumption of paternity, and saving everyone a great deal of time and trouble. It also allows the case carrying technician to move to the establishment function, as the paternity presumption has been created up-front by both parents signing the Affidavit. The third benefit we have derived from this project has been the increased communication and networking with front-line DFS workers. Since the CSE technicians are seen as part of the DFS office, DFS caseworkers now feel comfortable approaching them with questions regarding child support and requests for non-cooperation sanctions. This enables questions to be answered quickly and leads to better cooperation among DCSE and DFS staff.

Co-location has proven to be a win-win proposition for both DCSE and DFS. The number of paternity acknowledgements and the receipt of accurate information up-front have led to more productive work by the case carrying technicians. DFS staff appreciate DCSE being in the office, as it gives them a contact person when the need arises and reduces the time they spend filling out DCSE paperwork. The end result is that the families of Missouri are better served and children receive the support to which they are entitled.

If you would like more information about Missouri's co-location project, contact Valerie Davis or Marla Ashley at (573) 751-2648. □

Jim Carney is Outreach Coordinator for Missouri's Division of Child Support Enforcement.



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Health and Human Services**

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Child Support Report

Secretary Shalala Commends American Payroll Association

Department of Health and Human Services' Secretary Donna E. Shalala commended the American Payroll Association and its 15,000 members for their work in helping children "receive the child support they need and deserve." The Secretary's letter to APA Executive Director Dan Maddux said, in part:

"Without you and the nation's payroll professionals many more children would be without financial and emotional support from both of their parents. Your work truly makes a difference in many

lives. Everyday, payroll professionals assure that orders are implemented and that information on newly hired employees is forwarded to our National Directory of New Hires."

Currently, over 60 percent of child support is paid through wage withholding dollars that are helping children grow up with financial security.

"National Payroll Week," the Secretary concluded, "is a fitting way to say 'Thank You' for all you do and will be doing in the future." □

Child Support Report

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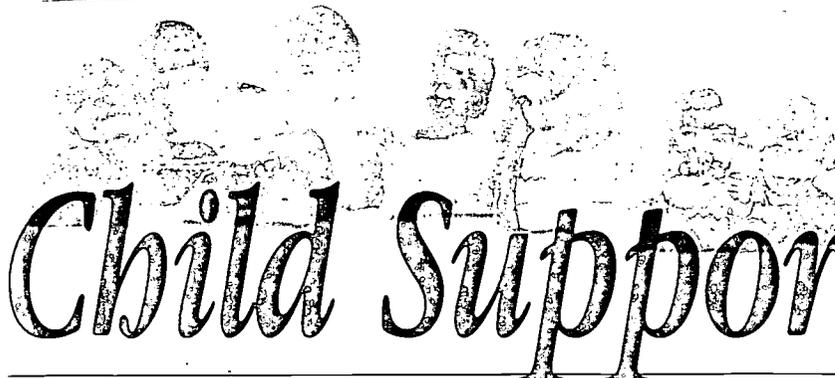
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Internet:
<http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cse/index.html>

Permission to reprint articles is granted. Acknowledging **CSR** is appreciated. □

*If you have enjoyed this issue of Child Support Report,
please pass it on to a co-worker or friend.*



Child Support Report

Office of Child Support Enforcement

Vol. XX, No. 9, September 1998

Federal Case Registry to Track Parents Who Owe Child Support

The new Federal Case Registry (FCR), which will contain records of parents who owe child support, began operations on schedule October 1, 1998. "With everyone's help, we succeeded," said OCSE Commissioner David Gray Ross.

The FCR, combined with the National Directory of New Hires, strengthens the capability of the nation's child support system to find noncustodial parents and assure they pay child support.

"We are excited about the case registry and its expected results," said Commissioner Ross. "The Federal Case Registry, by providing timely information on those who evade their responsibilities, will benefit children for years to come."

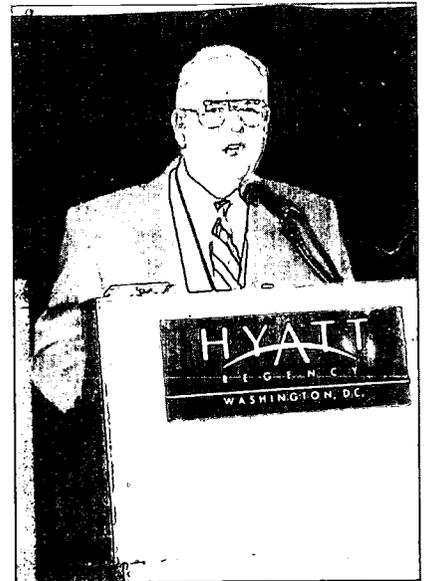
Already, with select information submitted by states, the National Directory of New Hires has found over 1.1 million delinquent parents since October 1, 1997. With the new Federal Case Registry in operation, OCSE has "improved tools to ensure that children receive the support they need

and deserve," said Donna Bonar, director of OCSE program operations. The registry will soon compile records on 16 million noncustodial parents who owe support to an estimated 32 million children.

"The Federal Case Registry...will benefit children for years to come."

.....OCSE Commissioner David Gray Ross

Under welfare reform, states are required to maintain their own case registries and provide data to the federal registry on noncustodial parents, custodial parents, and children who need support. As data is provided, the federal registry matches millions of records automatically. The match with employer and wage information is then sent to the state to place a wage withholding order on the delinquent parent's paycheck.



OCSE Commissioner David Gray Ross.

There are strict security and safety provisions in the use of the Federal Case Registry's information. States must identify cases where the custodial parent may be a victim of domestic violence or have an order of protection, indicating that disclosure of information could be harmful to the parent or child. Congress prohibited unauthorized access, use of, or disclosure of information from the registry by federal employees, punishable by dismissal and a fine.

Continued on page 2, "FCR."

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Child Support Enforcement

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OCSE Dedicates A Conference Room



New York Congressman Amory Houghton, Jr.

On September 29, 1998, OCSE Commissioner David Gray Ross dedicated an agency conference room in memory of four caseworkers in Watkins Glen, Schuyler County, New York, who were killed while on duty in October, 1992.

The Schuyler County Room honors caseworkers *Phyllis Caslin, Florence Pike, Denise Miller Van Amburg, and Nancy Wheeler*, who were shot and killed on October 15, 1992. Family members representing the four women at the dedication expressed appreciation for this public recognition of their sacrifice on behalf of children and families. Congressman Amory Houghton, Jr. (New York, 31st district) spoke on their behalf as well. □

HHS Awards Grants for Child Support Efforts

HHS Secretary Donna E. Shalala recently announced the award of more than \$1 million in grants to states and tribal organizations to strengthen their child support enforcement programs. "These grants will provide opportunities to further improve state and local child support efforts," Shalala said. The grant recipients are:

For New Enforcement Mechanisms

<i>Idaho</i>	\$59,176
Rhode Island	\$149,820
<i>Texas</i>	\$123,870

For New Paternity Establishment Procedures

California	\$180,000
<i>Illinois</i>	\$149,686

FCR

Continued from page 1

In a unique collaboration with child protective services, certain child welfare agencies can request the registry to locate an absent parent for a child who is in foster care and seeking a parent, or to terminate parental rights for the child to be adopted.

The Federal Case Registry also provides other benefits to children. In a unique collaboration with child protective services, for example, certain child welfare agencies can request the registry to locate an absent parent for a child who is in foster care and seeking a parent, or to terminate parental rights for the child to be adopted.

If you would like more information about the Federal Case Registry, contact Donna Bonar, Director of OCSE's Division of Program Operations, at (202)401-9271. □

For Innovations in Support Enforcement

<i>Confed. Tribes of Colville (WA)</i>	\$32,800
Puyallup Indian Tribe (WA)	\$69,531

For A Fatherhood Initiative

<i>Washington State</i>	\$17,171
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For TANF-related Innovations

Florida	\$25,864
<i>Maryland</i>	\$100,312
San Mateo, Co. (CA)	\$97,437

"These grants will help us ensure," OCSE Commissioner David Gray Ross said, "that parents meet their financial responsibilities to their children." □

Program for Fathers of Children on Welfare Leads More to Pay Child Support

A study released at the end of September by the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC) shows that Parents' Fair Share (PFS)—the largest national demonstration program for unemployed noncustodial fathers of children on welfare—has succeeded in increasing participating fathers' child support payments, a key goal of the demonstration.

Researchers found that Parents' Fair Share increased parents' child support in two different ways. Parents subject to a special case review involved in PFS intake made more payments to the child support agency than those subject to standard child support enforcement. In three sites, where a special study of this aspect of the program was conducted, the increase (relative to a control group) in the proportion of parents paying child support because of the special case review alone ranged from 6 to 15 percentage points, and average total child support payments per parent subject to the extra outreach increased by \$160 to \$200 over the 18 months of follow-up.

“Working with a group that has sometimes been viewed as unlikely to respond to enforcement efforts, Parents' Fair Share got more fathers to pay child support.”

.....Fred Doolittle, study author

Separate from the effects of this special case review, a larger number of parents who were referred to PFS services and were subject to its participation requirements paid child support than would have paid in the absence of the program. Across all PFS sites (Dayton, OH; Grand Rapids, MI; Jacksonville, FL; Los Angeles, CA; Memphis, TN; Springfield, MA; and Trenton, NJ), relative to the control group, the proportion of parents paying support during the 18 months of follow-up increased by about 4.5 to 7.5 percentage points.

Fred Doolittle, the lead author of the study, summed up the basic findings as follows: “Working with a group that has sometimes been viewed as unlikely to respond to enforcement efforts, Parents' Fair Share got more fathers to pay child support.”

With poverty and welfare receipt concentrated among single mothers and their children—and with time limits on welfare looming—federal and state welfare reforms have made it a high priority to increase the financial support provided by the children's fathers. Parents' Fair Share was the first major national effort to develop and test a program aimed at fathers who are behind in their child support payments because they are unemployed.

Despite improvements in the child support enforcement system, low-income fathers outside the economic mainstream are often missed by the usual enforcement efforts (such as computer searches for the fathers' addresses, employment, and income). And with many low-income fathers, courts and support enforcement agencies cannot be sure whether a parent has hidden income but is unwilling to pay support or is unable to pay and needs assistance in getting and keeping a job. Parents' Fair Share was a direct response to these challenges.

The program offered job training, help in looking for work, peer support groups focused on the rights and responsibilities of fatherhood (the “glue” of the program), and voluntary mediation between the fathers and mothers to work out conflicts. To create an incentive to participate, the program temporarily reduced the child support orders of parents who met program requirements. Fathers who were behind in their support payments and claimed unemployment were ordered by the courts to participate in the program. □

Missouri . . . becomes 36th State to gain automated system certification □

Part 2 of the article, “Washington State's Video Conferencing Project,” will appear next month.

Final Rule on Automated Systems

On-site TA and Early Reviews Promised

Welfare reform specifies a number of enhancements to statewide automated child support enforcement systems. With publication of the final regulation related to those requirements on August 21, 1998 (OCSE-AT-98-26), OCSE met the requirement to publish final regulations within two years of enactment.

OCSE is committed to frequent on-site technical assistance visits and early and multiple reviews in all states.

The final regulations reflect lessons learned during the states' efforts to meet the systems requirements of the Family Support Act of 1988. In response, OCSE has made changes in regulations to strengthen management and oversight.

Close Monitoring

The first change is to more closely monitor the states' CSE development efforts. OCSE is committed to frequent on-site technical assistance visits and early and multiple reviews in all states. States whose systems development efforts are lagging will receive additional attention.

In addition, states' Advance Planning Document (APD) submissions—the vehicle for receiving approval for federal financial participation—will be closely re-

viewed with respect to the state resources available to:

- monitor the progress of systems development efforts;
- assess deliverables; and
- take corrective action if the project goes astray.

A state's project plan will not be given federal approval if the state cannot demonstrate that it has adequate resources to manage the project and a well conceived project management approach. It is essential that states have adequate staff resources to maintain the existing automated system as they implement the welfare reform enhancements.

One of the major lessons learned from Family Support Act systems development efforts is that states whose staffing resources are stretched too thin are at the highest risk of failure.

APD Requirements

Moreover, a state's APD submission must contain an estimated budget and schedule for automation enhancements by task — such as State New Hire, State Case Registry, State Disbursement Unit, changes in allocation and distribution of child support payments, enhancements to interstate case processing, reporting and enforcement techniques.

Each of these tasks may have different life-cycle milestones and project deliverables (modules) related to the different tasks, but the APD needs to specify the applicable milestones and deliverables for each task. The state also needs to identify critical milestones which, if not met, would jeopardize its ability to meet program timeframes and successfully com-

plete the automation project.

States' failures to meet critical milestones and deliverables, or to report promptly and fully on their progress toward meeting those milestones, will be treated seriously. If a state fails to meet milestones in its APD, OCSE may fully or partially suspend the APD and associated funding. OCSE currently has authority under 45 CFR 307.40 to suspend a state's APD if "the system ceases to comply substantially with the criteria, requirements, and other provisions of the APD."

The state needs to identify critical milestones which, if not met, would jeopardize its ability to meet program timeframes.

This action may include suspension of future systems efforts under the APD until satisfactory corrective action is taken. In such cases, funding for current efforts, i.e., those not affected by the suspension, would continue to be available, although OCSE would closely monitor such expenditures. In more serious cases, suspension would involve cessation of all federal funds for the project until such time as the state completed corrective action.

A major change in the new child support automation regulations expands on the existing requirement that a state have an

Continued on page 6, "Rule."

November 1998

Postcard Simplifies Notice of Termination

By: Lyn Rindy

Acting on a suggestion from Debbie Thompson of American Silicon Technologies, the Wenatchee Office of Washington State's Division of Child Support (DCS) implemented a simple office practice that has made compliance easier for the employer community. Ms. Thompson suggested that it would make her life less complicated if there were an easy way for her to inform the child support office when an employee leaves the company.

She suggested a postcard an employer could just drop in the mail. And so, on August 1, 1997, the Wenatchee Office began to enclose an Employment Termination Notice postcard with every income withholding order it sends to employers. Each postcard is already stamped and addressed to the Wenatchee Office.

This change in office practice is an example of several innovations that resulted in the Wenatchee Office being honored with the Outstanding Program Achievement Award at the 1998 conference of the National Child Support Enforcement Association.

The response from the employer community has been one of overwhelming approval, as measured by a telephone survey of employers and also from responses received during the Wenatchee Office's regularly scheduled employer workshops. Many large employers have requested a supply of the cards to notify the Wenatchee Office of the termination of employees who had begun working before inauguration of the postcard policy.

STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES
DIVISION OF CHILD SUPPORT (DCS)

EMPLOYMENT TERMINATION NOTICE

Use this form to report termination of employees for whom you had a requirement to withhold child support or enroll the employee's children in a health insurance plan. Be sure to print your return address on the reverse side.

EMPLOYEE'S NAME	DCS CASE NUMBER
EMPLOYEE'S LAST-KNOWN PO BOX/STREET ADDRESS	TELEPHONE NUMBER
EMPLOYEE'S LAST-KNOWN CITY STATE ZIP CODE	SUBJECT TO REHIRE? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
NEW EMPLOYER'S NAME (IF KNOWN)	DATE TERMINATED BY YOU
NEW EMPLOYER'S CITY STATE ZIP CODE	NEW TELEPHONE NUMBER

EMPLOYMENT TERMINATION NOTICE
DSHS 18-560 (05/1997)

The Postcard.

During the seven-month pilot project, from August 1997 through February 1998, the Wenatchee Office received 625 postcards back from employers. Nearly one-third of the cards reported an employee's termination, and many of those postcards included the name of a new employer or a new address.

*The Employment
Termination Notice
postcard
has been adopted
for use
throughout the State.*

Lyn Rindy, Supervisor/Employer Relations Manager for the Division of Child Support in Wenatchee, describes the advantages of using the Employment Termination Notice postcard:

Saves Time and Money for Both the Employer and DCS

Every postcard that comes back reporting a termination saves

a phone call between the employer and the child support office. Without the postcard, employers who needed to report a termination had to call or write the child support office, which necessitated finding the phone number or address of the field office.

The postcard also has been used instead of the Answer to the Notice of the income withholding order because the self-addressed, stamped postcard is easier to submit.

Improves Public Relations

Prior to the postcard project, many employers sent a note with their last payment, informing the child support office of the termination. The note was sent to the centralized cash department in headquarters, which led to delay in the information reaching the district field office. In the meantime, the Support Enforcement Officer might find that a payment had been missed and would call the employer. Besides being a waste of time, this had a negative affect on DCS's credibility with employers.

Continued on page 7, "Postcard."

November 1998 • 5

Domestic Violence

A recent Dear Colleague letter from Commissioner Ross to all state child support directors provides information on domestic violence. The National Resource Center on Domestic Violence (NRC) has produced two papers that may be helpful in implementing the family violence indicator and safeguarding information provisions of welfare reform.

The papers are *Building Opportunities for Battered Women's Safety and Self-Sufficiency* and *Family Violence Protocol Development*. They provide information on what constitutes domestic violence, safety strategies and universal notification/screening for battered women, development of domestic violence protocols, and approaches to staffing offices to handle domestic violence. Excerpts follow:

"Given the importance of child support to children, it is essential that support be pursued whenever possible. Many battered mothers will want child support enforced, and some will not. If child support enforcement will increase a battered mother's or child's danger, current approaches generally force her to choose between two alternatives: (1) enforce the support and face the danger; or (2) do not enforce child support. In addition, battered mothers who need TANF assistance will need to ask for a good cause exception to the cooperation requirement. In order to meet the important goals of child support enforcement and to avoid 'rewarding' batterers for their threats and violence, states might consider developing a third option—safely enforcing child support." *[Building Opportunities for Battered Women's Safety and Self-Sufficiency]*

"Safe child support enforcement means careful implementation of the cooperation/good cause or other exceptions provisions. It also means working with battered mothers to develop safer enforcement strategies when regular enforcement approaches may increase danger. Since enforcement activities, such as court hearings, may bring parents physically together, agencies should plan to provide physical protection to battered mothers as well (e.g., sheriffs, metal detectors at hearing locations, etc.)." *[Family Violence Protocol Development]*

For further information contact OCSE's domestic violence liaison, Susan Notar, at (202) 401-4606, or the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence at 1-800-537-2238. □

Rule

Continued from page 4

implementation plan in place, along with back-up procedures. OCSE will now require a state to obtain independent validation and verification services in certain instances.

In addition, OCSE is adopting a "zero tolerance" policy with respect to required reports and APD updates. Late reporting will trigger deferral of state claims for federal financial participation or, if late reporting is persistent or prolonged, suspension of a state's APD. □

DHHS Reaches Out to Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders

The DHHS Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Initiative for child support includes outreach to AAPI communities to provide consumer education about the importance of child support and the new child support enforcement provisions in welfare reform. An initial activity was to translate a child support pamphlet into Vietnamese and, in collaboration with ACF's Office of Refugee Resettlement, share the publication with the Vietnamese community through mutual assistance associations. In addition, OCSE has developed and updates on a regular basis its WEB site as a place for timely and useful information to all consumers. □

Legler Named Assistant Commissioner

CSE Commissioner David Gray Ross has announced the appointment of Paul K. Legler as Assistant Commissioner, with responsibilities to assist states in operating their child support enforcement programs in accordance with the provisions of welfare reform.

"Paul's work in developing the welfare reform proposals," the Commissioner said, "gives him in-depth understanding of the critical issues states face and particular insight into resolving them." □

OCSE's 8th National Training Conference

Meeting the Child Support Challenge: Children First



Olivia Golden, Assistant Secretary, Administration for Children and Families, DHHS.

Drawing more than 400 participants, OCSE's 8th National Child Support Enforcement Training Conference showcased training technology in a variety of satellite, video conferencing, and computer based training (CBT) sessions. OCSE Commissioner David Gray Ross opened the conference by remarking that everything we do is and must be aimed at strengthening the lives of children and families. "This is not easy work," he said, "which is why we need to come together periodically to engage each other and to learn new skills and techniques that will help us do our jobs better."

*"As people move
from welfare to work,
child support
takes an increasingly important
role..."*

.....ACF Assistant Secretary Olivia Golden

There were plenty of new skills and techniques to be learned at this conference. A CSE Technology Learning Center gave participants a look at how CBT can support classroom training while "disc-to-go" sessions using authoring software helped participants de-

velop professional quality training discs that they could take back to their offices.

The Assistant Secretary for the Administration for Children and Families, Olivia Golden, in remarks to the conference, reminded participants that "as people move from welfare to work, child support takes an increasingly important role, allowing families to remain independent when they might otherwise lose their footing."

Other conference highlights included a satellite plenary session on customer service, and workshops on: state self-assessment (also on satellite); the effective use of videoconferencing; the National Child Support Electronic Resource Center; new rules for distribution; performance-based incentives; and CSENet.

"Innovative and challenging," said one state participant. "A welcome change from the usual conference format," said another. To stay ahead of the learning curve, OCSE's Training Center staff have already begun to plan for next year's conference. If you have ideas or suggestions for the agenda, contact the National Training Center branch chief, Yvette Hilderson Riddick, at (202) 401-4885. □

Postcard

Continued from page 5

Increases the Timeliness of Collections

When an employer reports a termination and includes the name of the new employer, the information may be gathered even more quickly than by the New Hire Reporting Program.

Based upon the enthusiastic support of the employer community, the Employment Termination Notice postcard has been adopted for use throughout the State. This is a prime example of the value of soliciting input from employers and then using that information for the overall benefit of the program.

If you would like further information about Wenatchee's postcard project, contact Lyn Rindy at (509) 886-6252. □

Lyn Rindy is Supervisor/Employer Relations Manager for the DCS office in Wenatchee, WA.

**U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services**

Administration for Children
and Families
Office of Child Support Enforcement
Division of Consumer Services
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370 L'Enfant Promenade
Washington D.C. 20447

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51 GERTY DRIVE
CHAMPAGNE IL 61820

Child Support Report

One More Indication of the Importance of Regular Child Support Payments

The National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) says that 10 million Americans, including almost 4 million children, do not get enough to eat.

*Americans
most at risk
of food insufficiency
are
children
and the poor.*

According to the Third National Health and Nutrition Ex-

amination Survey, conducted by the NCHS and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, some 4 percent of Americans live in families in which there is not enough to eat—either sometimes or often.

Americans most at risk of food insufficiency are children and the poor. About 6 percent of children and 14 percent of America's low-income population reported they do not have enough to eat.

For more information contact the NCHS Press Office at (301) 436-7551.

Child Support Report

**Vol. XX No. 11
November 1998**

Child Support Report is a publication of the Office of Child Support Enforcement, Division of Consumer Services.

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*If you have enjoyed this issue of **Child Support Report**,
please pass it on to a co-worker or friend.*



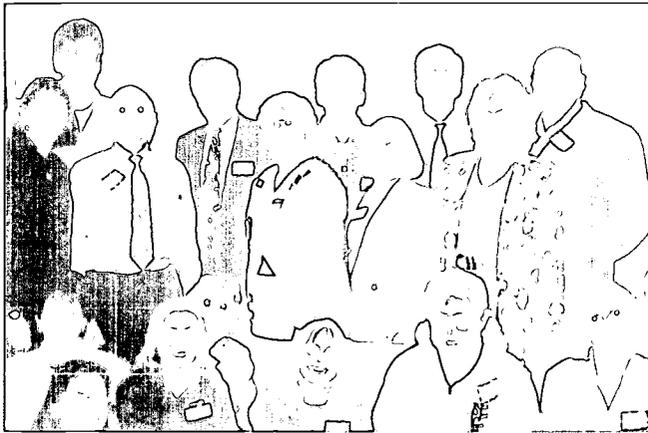
Child Support Report

Office of Child Support Enforcement

Vol. XX, No. 12, December 1998

Family Court Mediation in New York

By: Eileen M. Goodspeed



Lee Goodspeed, standing far left, center row, and her team of mediators at Mediation Services.

Thanks to the support and encouragement of the Honorable Judith Kaye, Chief Judge of the New York State Unified Court System, court-annexed mediation—in which child support issues are a frequent point of conversation—is growing in New York State, especially in the family court arena. State-funded in New York since the early 1980s, court-annexed mediation can be flexibly designed for both customers and courts and can honor and support local needs.

The services provided to the family courts by Mediation Services of Saratoga, Warren & Washington Counties are free to parents, who generally prefer sessions led by both a male and female mediator—the “co-mediation model.” The mediators take an oath of

confidentiality in which nothing said in mediation is to be told to anyone outside of the mediation session—including the judge. Parents sign a document testifying to full and truthful disclosure of all financial information.

Mediators must have good listening skills, be unbiased, know how to ask questions that enable the parties to reach their own agreements, and be good facilitators.

At Warren County Family Court, mediation staff are present every morning and are available to meet with individuals who come in to file family court petitions. If there are no domestic violence or power imbalance issues, mediation may be conducted without delay at the courthouse, though often it is scheduled during evening hours at a time and location more convenient for the parents. When the parents reach an accord on issues, the signed, mediated agreement is turned into a court order by the judge.

At Saratoga County Family Court, judges allow mediation staff to sit in during court to identify situations where mediation may be beneficial. Judges and court administrators recognize that mediation can be effective in reducing court backlogs and can empower parents to make decisions based on what is best for their children.

Continued on page 7, “Family Court.”

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Child Support Enforcement

Inside

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My View

David Gray Ross

Five years have now passed since I became Commissioner of the Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement. During that time, we have greatly increased the impact of our program on our nation's families. Since 1992, collections have increased nearly 70 percent, from \$8 billion to more than \$13 billion. Paternities established have more than doubled in the same period. We have substantially increased the numbers of new support orders established and the number of noncustodial parents located. A recent survey of states' satisfaction with OCSE, conducted by the DHHS Office of the Inspector General, found nearly all states to be satisfied with the assistance we are providing to them and with the leadership of the program.

*At this season of giving,
let's pledge ourselves—
all 55,000 of us in the nationwide
child support program—
to work as hard as we can to assure
the best of all gifts
to the children and families we serve:
a chance for a better life.*

When I accepted the challenge of running the national child support enforcement program, I said I had three goals: to make the support of children a national priority—to put children first; to increase OCSE's visibility as an agency; and to help states operate more effective and successful child support programs. There is little doubt that the support of children by both parents—emotional support as well as financial—has become a national priority. And most of you, I believe, would agree that OCSE has become a much more visible agency during these past five years.

We have also made considerable progress in assisting states to improve their programs. The welfare reform legislation, for which the entire child support community worked so hard, has provided states with a long list of significant new tools to increase collections and improve the well-being of children and families. One tool is the National Directory of New Hires.



OCSE Commissioner David Gray Ross emphasizes a point in speech to the nation's child support trainers.

Since new hire became operational October 1, 1997, more than a million noncustodial parents who were delinquent in their child support have been located and this information has been provided to states for action to recover payments.

The national new hire directory became operational on time and under budget, thanks in no small part to the cooperation and support of our state partners, other federal agencies, and the nation's employers. For our collective efforts, we received the honor of being named one of 25 finalists in the Innovations in American Government awards program, administered by Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government in partnership with the Council of Excellence in Government and the Ford Foundation.

Automation is another area in which we have made progress. The child support enforcement system now has some 19 million cases, a fact that makes automated systems in the states crucial to program success. As part of a major agency reorganization this year, we established the position of Associate Commissioner for Automation and Special Projects and made certification of the states' systems our number one priority in 1998. The payoff: 37 states have received certification of their automated systems.

Looking ahead to 1999, our priorities include: child support program financing, implementing the medical support provisions of the Child Support Performance and Incentives Act (HR 3130), continuing to

Continued on page 7, "View."

Preparing for the New Millennium: Y2K

The advent of the Year 2000 represents one of the largest single information technology problems ever faced. As you know, the Year 2000 (Y2K) problem exists because many computer programs use two digits to record the date. These programs may, on January 1, 2000, recognize "00" not as 2000, but as 1900. This problem may cause such programs to stop running or to start generating erroneous data.

The Y2K problem affects many automated systems, including those used by the child support enforcement program. The Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) has worked to ensure that its internal systems—especially those essential to fulfilling its mission—are Y2K compliant. Five mission-critical legacy systems have been converted to Y2K specifications at OCSE:

- The Federal Parent Locator Service;
- The Federal Tax Refund Offset Program;
- The 1099 Project;
- The Enumeration Verification System; and
- The Interstate Referral Guide.

Because effective child support enforcement requires constant data exchange, we are reaching out to all our partners to encourage efforts to achieve Y2K compliance. Some of the oldest child support enforcement systems were developed in the early 1980s and may not be Y2K compliant. In addition, the dependence of state child support enforcement systems on interfaces with other organizations makes them especially vulnerable to problems associated with Y2K, even if the child support enforcement system is Y2K compliant. For example, a state child support enforcement system may have interfaces with state agencies related to TANF, child welfare, and Medicaid. They also interface with State Employment Security Agencies, Motor Vehicle Departments, Vital Records, and other public and private automated systems.

Reducing the impact of the Y2K problem on state automated systems is a top priority. The General Accounting Office (GAO) is currently surveying states to assess progress toward Y2K compliance in child support enforcement statewide systems. As of July 21, 1998, GAO had received about one-third of the questionnaires sent to states and was contacting the remaining states to provide assistance in completing the survey. In addition, OCSE distributed Y2K compliant record specifications to all states in March, 1998.

Despite our best efforts, we recognize that there may be situations that prevent some states and federal agencies from being Y2K compliant. To be of assistance in these cases, OCSE will, for a limited time, provide bridging services that will convert data between compliant and noncompliant formats. We are prepared to run the bridge programs on a case-by-case basis until Spring, 1999. States or federal agencies that wish to use bridging services must notify OCSE.

For more information about bridging, or Y2K, call Tony Hardy at (202) 401-9231. GAO documents, including a Y2K assessment guide, are available at <http://www.gao.gov/special.pubs/publist.htm>. □

Asian American and Pacific Islander Population Gains

Persons of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) descent currently make up about 3 percent of the U.S. population, with most residing in California, which, in 1997, had an AAPI population of 3.8 million. Other states with significant AAPI populations are New York, Hawaii, Texas, and New Jersey.

Among counties, Los Angeles County, California, led all counties in increases of Asian American and Pacific Islander persons in the period between 1990 and 1997, with a gain of 829,623. Other counties gaining significant AAPI population during this period were Orange County, California; Santa Clara County, California; Queens County, New York; and San Diego County, California.

According to Census Bureau data, AAPI persons make up 14.6 percent of individuals in poverty and 12.4 percent of families in poverty (1995 and 1996 data). In addition, some 15.8 percent of AAPI children are not covered by health insurance (1996 data).

Although the 1990 Census lists 25 separate Asian and Pacific Islander ethnicities, most data related to them are limited to Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, and, in some cases, Native Hawaiians and Vietnamese. Because of this, significant gaps remain in understanding the diverse health and social services needs of Asian American and Pacific Islander children and families. □

More Than Just a Job

Reflections on 17 Years with OCSE

By: Robert C. Harris

Reflecting on a career spanning almost four decades, a host of images come to mind: high and low points, co-workers and people with whom I've interacted, experiences of all kinds.

My 17 years with the Office of Child Support Enforcement have been especially rewarding. The child support program has witnessed remarkable progress and growth: in public recognition of the dimensions and implications of the nonsupport problem; in output indicators like paternities established and dollars collected; in caseloads; in the degree of automation; and in the range and caliber of enforcement tools and techniques available.

*I've never ceased to be impressed
by how workers strive for
a successful outcome
on behalf of every child.*

Some things have remained constant, however. One is the dedication of child support workers. Very few other government programs can come close to child support enforcement on that score. I've spoken with many child support staff over the years—in operations, staff, or management positions—at meetings and conferences, and at offices in every part of the country. And for many of them, the work they're doing is much more than just a job. They may have grown up in a single parent household, or they were (or are) a single parent raising a family, or they have relatives or friends who've had personal contact with the support enforcement system. I've never ceased to be impressed by how workers strive for a successful outcome on behalf of every child and offer the best service possible under circumstances which, too often, may be far from ideal.

Another constant has been the level of public—and hence political—support for program improvement. Here again, child support enforcement is an unusual government program. The vast majority of the public is highly supportive of the program's goals. And this public backing is picked up and mirrored by elected officials from all across the political spectrum.



Bob Harris.

The result has been a torrent of legislation at both the federal and state levels of government, all aimed at program improvement.

The third constant has been continuous change—and change for the better. In my time with OCSE, there has never really been an extended period of stability. Change was always being planned, promoted, enacted into law, or implemented. And repeatedly, people in all parts of the child support program have tried their best, risen to the occasion, and accomplished more than they might have thought possible at the outset.

The final constant, from my perspective, has been the need to do even better, to get “more bang for the buck.” Great strides have been made on a whole host of performance measures, and prospects are even brighter for the future. But so much more has to be done to ensure that all children receive the financial and emotional support they deserve. The statistics underlying pressure for program improvement were compelling in the early 1980's, when I first arrived in OCSE, and they are no less compelling today. One only has to read the continuing flow of constituent letters referred to OCSE by members of Congress and other officials to put a human face on these seemingly dry numbers.

I'll be leaving OCSE on December 31. More power to all of you in the days ahead! □

Bob Harris is OCSE's Associate Commissioner for Central Office Operations.

Florida Redesigns Its Child Support Program

By: Nancy Luja

In 1994—despite collection increases—Florida's Child Support Enforcement Program faced a series of challenges related to productivity, staff turnover, and caseworker training. To address these and other issues, and to improve overall effectiveness, management began an experiment in redesign.

Placing the program within the Department of Revenue was the first step. Next came visits to field offices, other states' child support enforcement programs, and private industry leaders to collect "best practices." Then, using one of the mid-size field offices as a test site over a six-month period, we developed a "model office."

*Applying
a process management
approach to any endeavor
requires continuous refinement
to keep it workable.*

At this stage we purposefully kept to a flexible approach—one that would allow the model to be replicated throughout the State while maintaining a framework for continued experimentation and the incorporation of local requirements. Line staff were enabled, encouraged, and expected to provide ongoing suggestions for improvement.

With the help of flowcharts, we analyzed the process of establishing an obligation for child support, identifying and separating critical from incidental functions. Concentrating on basic activities—intake, screening, interviewing, scheduling, genetic testing, location, etc.—made us aware that the management of process was as important as the management of people. "Generalist caseworkers" transitioned into "process specialists" as we started to realize the payoff: better matching of employee skills with job requirements.

Before we began redesign of the program, it took a minimum of six weeks to train new caseworkers.

Now, process specialists are trained in two weeks or less. They are on the job and producing in one-third the time it formerly took us to put generalists to work—an immense productivity bonus! The challenge of keeping the interest of staff who specialize in routine tasks is being met through cross-functional training and sharing of program duties.

*Performance accountability
measures
that focus on outcomes
enable fast identification of areas
where improvement is needed.*

The first twelve months of our "journey" was a time for risk-taking, devising creative solutions to problems, and learning from our mistakes. In the past six months we have begun to stabilize and be comfortable with our ability to operate within the process. Now, a comprehensive analysis of our program performance is underway.

Applying a process management approach to any endeavor requires continuous refinement to keep it workable, but we have found the effort to be well worthwhile. Performance accountability measures that focus on outcomes enable fast identification of areas where improvement is needed, and the flexibility of the approach means that resources can quickly be shifted to implement process improvement initiatives.

Someone has said that if an organization is standing still it doesn't stub its toes, but neither does it make much progress. In Florida, we have been willing to stub our toes because the direction we're moving in makes sense to us, we are learning as we go, and our efforts are resulting in more money going more quickly to more children. □

Nancy Luja is the Establishment Process Manager, Child Support Enforcement Program, in Florida's Department of Revenue.

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Video Conferencing in Washington State

By: Steve Strauss and Bill Jack

This is part 2 of a two-part look at Washington State's innovative video conferencing project. Part 1 (see October '98CSR) provided project background and information on support enforcement referral interviews. Part 2 covers paternity interviews, administrative hearings and conferences, and customer satisfaction.

The second phase of Washington State's video conferencing project involves use of the equipment by county prosecutors for paternity interviews and administrative law judges for child support-related hearings. These applications require "document sharing" and the ability to read correspondence over the monitor. The PC-based equipment used for this has more features and better resolution than that used for child support referrals, but the cost for each station (\$7,700) is significantly higher.

Paternity Interviews

Early research had indicated that no-shows for paternity interviews were exceeding 50 percent. In August, 1998, PC-based systems were installed in the Everett, Washington, child support office and the Snohomish County prosecutor's office (also in Everett). As with video referrals, the custodial parent can conduct her business with the prosecutor's office remotely from the child support office while applying for TANF.

*The custodial parent
can conduct business
with the prosecutor's office
remotely
from the child support office
while applying for TANF.*

In the future, project staff will compare paternity cases employing video conferencing technology against a control group of paternity cases employing traditional in-office, face-to-face interviews. The results should indicate the extent to which video conferencing decreases the rate of no-shows and subsequently increases the speed with which cases move from the paternity establishment phase to the collection phase.

Administrative Hearings and Conferences

The first shipment of PC-based video conferencing equipment is scheduled for installation at two remote child support offices and at DCS headquarters over the next few months. A recent informal test call from an administrative law judge in Everett to a counterpart in Connecticut worked very well. The success of this application will hinge on the extent of savings realized in travel costs and staff time.

Customer Satisfaction

Exit interviews with 641 video referral customers from May, 1997, through June, 1998, revealed that 93 percent were comfortable using the video equipment, while 98 percent felt that the interviewers were helpful with their questions and concerns.

For more information about Washington State's video conferencing project, contact Kathy Ellington, Project Coordinator, at the Division of Child Support, PO Box 4282, MS: 31-2, Everett, WA 98203-9282. □

Steve Strauss and Bill Jack are Support Enforcement Supervisors in Washington State's Division of Child Support.

Support
Comes
In Many
Different
Packages



December 1998

View

Continued from page 2.

provide technical assistance to states on effective systems, and increasing collections and the number of paternities and support orders established. Achieving these goals, of course, will require the dedicated efforts of all of us who work in the child support program. I know, as always, that I can count on you.

Should we be satisfied with the progress we have made? No, we must never rest until all children for whom we labor are receiving the support they need and deserve. At this season of giving, let's pledge ourselves—all 55,000 of us in the nationwide child support program—to work as hard as we can to assure the best of all gifts to the children and families we serve: a chance for a better life.

*We must never rest
until all children
for whom we labor
are receiving
the support they need and deserve.*

Before closing, I want to say a word about someone who has meant so much to the child support enforcement program. Bob Harris, OCSE's Associate Commissioner for Central Office Operations, is retiring December 31st after 17 years with the agency. Bob has served with distinction in numerous senior level positions, including that of acting deputy director, and he has regularly provided us with the benefit of his policy and program expertise.

Bob, you will be missed by all of us in OCSE and by your many friends and colleagues around the country. But you leave with our heartfelt thanks and appreciation for what you have contributed to the program and, through it, to the children and families of America. The best to you in the days ahead!

And to all of you in child support: My thanks once again for your commitment and for your diligence in service. Best wishes for a joyful holiday season and for success—personal and professional—in the new year. □

Family Court

Continued from page 1.

The 60 professional mediators who volunteer their time for Mediation Services of Saratoga, Warren & Washington Counties represent a variety of professions: attorneys, psychologists, social workers, judges, researchers, and professors. But they also include housewives, business people, parents, and nurses. Many are retired; all are effective.

*Each volunteer must meet
the training and experience standards
set by
the New York State Community
Dispute Resolution Centers Program.*

Each volunteer must meet the training and experience standards set by the New York State Community Dispute Resolution Centers Program. The special qualities needed to be an effective mediator, however, are not necessarily guaranteed by a degree or by particular expertise. Mediators must have good listening skills, be unbiased, know how to ask questions that enable the parties to reach their own agreements, and be good facilitators.

Mediation offers parents a confidential setting in which, guided by skilled and sympathetic professionals, they can discuss issues that are important to themselves and to their children. But not everyone benefits from mediation. It seems to be most effective for those separating or separated parents who retain an element of trust in their relationship and who want their children to have a healthy relationship with both parents.

For more information about upstate New York's mediation program contact Eileen M. Goodspeed at (518) 584-6361. □

Eileen M. (Lee) Goodspeed is Program Director, Mediation Services of Saratoga, Warren & Washington Counties, Saratoga Springs, New York.

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Administration for Children
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Child Support Report

Federal Case Registry Documentation

OCSE routinely updates and creates documents concerning the Federal Case Registry. Over the past year, numerous documents, bulletins, dear colleague letters, and videos have been developed and distributed by OCSE. (See below for a partial list.) If you need additional copies, or other information, please contact the FPLS Information Line at (202) 401-9267. In addition, some of the material can be found at OCSE's website: <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cse>.

Documents List

- *FCR Implementation Guide*
- *FCR Interface Guidance Document*
- *FCR Initial Load Process Document*

- *FCR Technical Assistance Guide (with skeletal code)*
- *FCR Technical Assistance Guide Questions and Answers*
- *FCR Implementation Plan Template*
- *Informational Papers on Domestic Violence*
- *Action Transmittal on Family Violence*
- *Newsletter Article for the Court Technology Bulletin*
- *Dear Colleague Letter on Year 2000 Bridging Programs*
- *Child Support and the Courts (22-minute video for court personnel)*
- *Expanded FPLS Training of Trainers (script and transparencies for trainers)*
- *FCR to FPLS Conversion Program (includes diskettes)*

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