



Child Support Report

OFFICE OF CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT

Vol. 29 No. 11 November 2007

VA, ND Awards Honor Our National Community

By Margot Bean
OCSE Commissioner



Commissioner Margot Bean addresses the CA Child Support Directors Association Conference in September. (Article page 7)

During the past year, many achievements around the nation have made me feel honored to be the leader of our national child support enforcement community. Perhaps my greatest pleasure has been visiting State and regional child support conferences to meet many of you and

publicly tout your successes in State and local agencies, and as a national partnership.

Recently, two of your triumphs received national recognition, giving me yet another reason to boast and an opportunity to make all of us feel proud.

The Council of State Governments (CSG), at four regional legislative conferences held around the nation, each year invites State agencies to propose innovative programs that are transferable to other States, for consideration in its award competition. This year, two child support agencies are among the eight winners.

The Virginia Division of Child Support Enforcement, under the leadership of Director Nick Young, won for its Cell Phone Records Initiative. (See September CSR, page 2.)

Virginia was the first State to initiate administrative subpoenas to cellular phone companies requesting addresses and phone numbers for delinquent noncustodial parents who owe child support. Director Young is now leading Federal and State efforts to automate the matching of names with these same companies.

The other CSG winner is the North Dakota Child Support Enforcement Division, under the leadership of Mike Schwindt, for its partnership Parental Responsibility Initiative for the Development of Employment (PRIDE).

PRIDE offers an alternative to incarceration when a parent is held in contempt for nonpayment of child support stemming from unemployment or underemployment of a noncustodial parent. The project provides case management, job skills improvement, job placement, and supportive services to help a noncustodial parent obtain or improve employment.

Considering that all facets of State government can offer projects for the CSG awards, having two child support projects as winners is quite an amazing accomplishment. It demonstrates our program environment is supportive of exemplary innovation that can be replicated beyond the borders of individual States to help kids and families.

I anticipate that during this new fiscal year, many of you across the nation will pursue projects and opportunities that will bring honor to us all. **CSR**

Research Responds to Growth in Arrears

By Dennis Putze
OCSE

Results are now available in a study to understand the composition of child support arrears, the causes for its steady growth, and what steps may be taken to curb future arrears growth. For this study, OCSE and the HHS Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation contracted with the Urban Institute to study arrears in nine large States.

The report, “Assessing Child Support Arrears in Nine Large States and the Nation,” is on the OCSE Web site at www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/pubs/#hhs_report.

Some findings from the report:

- Most debtors owe small amounts, but most of the debt is held by persons who owe large amounts. Within the 9 States studied, 11 percent of the noncustodial parents with an obligation to pay child support owed 54 percent of the arrears. Each of these debtors owed over \$30,000 in arrears.
- Charging interest routinely results in significantly higher arrears. Two of the 9 States charge interest routinely, and reported that interest represented over 20 percent of their arrears.
- Based on a simulation model for 7 States, it is estimated that less than half of existing arrears will be collected over the next 10 years. It is predicted that the total arrears in these 7 States will grow by at least 50 percent over the next 10 years.
- A number of State agencies, including the ones studied in this report, have undertaken numerous strategies in order to better manage arrears. Such efforts include adopting new procedures, setting more appropriate orders for low-income parents, and/or expanding resources to enhance collection capabilities. Strategies adopted by the States studied are discussed in the report.

The report offers more about characteristics of debtors, reasons for the increase in arrears, the probability of collecting existing arrears, and what States are doing to manage arrears. **CSR**



Research a Key Ingredient in PAID

Increasing the collection of current support while preventing and reducing arrears is the goal of the national initiative PAID – Project to Avoid Increasing Delinquencies. This goal renews the fundamental priorities of the national child support enforcement program and ensures OCSE resources support States in getting successful results.

Gaining a greater understanding of child support debt can greatly contribute to the success of PAID. With more knowledge about the composition of child support debt, the program can, hopefully, design

and implement more effective strategies to collect debt from those parents who have the ability to pay and develop more appropriate policies for those low-income parents who are unable to pay.

The research detailed in the article above has provided much valuable information that can help OCSE and State child support enforcement staff to gain better insights into managing child support debt, reducing its growth, and enhancing the ability to increase collections to children.

ACF Awards Grants to Strengthen Child Support

The Administration for Children and Families recently awarded nearly \$1.14 million in grants to 12 grantees, including 8 child support agencies, a Tribe, a State court, a local prosecutor's office, and a nonprofit organization. The following list summarizes OCSE Section 1115 Demonstration grants and Special Improvements Project (SIP) grants.



Two Section 1115 Demonstration grants are designed to improve the way current practices are administered:

- New Jersey to implement an approach to establishing and enforcing medical support orders.
- Maryland to partner with the District of Columbia to establish a project for managing its shared interstate caseload.

Two Section 1115 Demonstration grants are aimed at improving State agency results on key child support performance measures:

- The District of Columbia to evaluate a recently expanded pass-through and disregard policy.
- Louisiana to demonstrate improved performance in current collections through collaboration with the courts and early intervention techniques.

Two 1115 Demonstration grants are designed to improve child support results by collaborating with other agencies on shared caseloads:

- Texas to work with the State's Medicaid/SCHIP agency to improve medical support outcomes and reduce Medicaid costs.
- Washington State to strengthen data exchange between the TANF and child support programs.

Two SIP grants are designed to develop strategies to more effectively provide child support enforcement services responding to the unique needs of incarcerated and recently released noncustodial parents to help enable them to fulfill their child support responsibilities:

- Kern County (CA) to partner with Parole Office to provide newly released noncustodial parents immediate access to child support services.
- The Sagamore Institute, Inc. of Indianapolis to develop a timely approach to modifying child support orders for incarcerated noncustodial parents and pilot project to encourage noncustodial parent responsibility.

One SIP grant is designed to promote Tribal parental responsibility and healthy marriage:

- Shoalwater Bay Indian Tribe of Tokeland, WA, for a partnership project to establish an integrated case management process with the State Division of Child Support and provide community outreach and education services to encourage Tribal parental responsibility and healthy marriage.

Three SIP grants were awarded to improve child support enforcement court collaboration, to improve client outcomes and component operating efficiency:



'Rapid Process Improvement' Changing Culture of Service in Peach State

By Gary Driggers

Georgia Office of Child Support Services

The Georgia Office of Child Support Services (OCSS) is implementing a series of faster, friendlier, and easier processes in its offices statewide. The project, known as Rapid Process Improvement (RPI), is being conducted in conjunction with the Governor's Office of Customer Service and the Georgia Institute of Technology. Its purpose is to improve efficiencies within OCSS while developing a culture of continuous improvement.

Two OCSS employees, Tangler Gray and Donovan Emerine, were identified as RPI "champions" and trained in RPI methodology.

The following summarizes results from five RPI events conducted over a 5-month period:

- **Establishment** – It had been taking about 8 weeks to get information to the clerk of court to begin the order establishment process. As a result of RPI, same-day service was established for customers who had the required information. This change represents a 98.6-percent reduction in time.
- **Enforcement** – The enforcement process had been taking 126 days to get the case to the clerk's office and for the contempt to be filed. After establishing an early intervention process, the number of days was reduced to 60; a 52-percent decrease. Through the early intervention process, the case worker calls the noncustodial parent prior to the due date of the first payment. Results show that in cases where the call was successful, the percent of payments increased.
- **Locate** – The locate process required all appropriate resources to be checked within 75 days. A new standardized workflow and definition for the locate function has helped to reduce the number of cases in the locate offices statewide from 17 percent of all cases to 10.7 percent; a decrease of 37 percent.
- **Legal Secretary** – Through standardized work-flow and practices, 5 steps in the process were eliminated, saving 10 hours of time each week. Fewer photocopies and more electronic signatures also save time and resources.
- **Fatherhood Program** – The RPI team was able to reduce the time it took to notify a noncustodial parent of a scheduled Fatherhood orientation from 69 to 14 days; a reduction of 80 percent. A training video for child support agents was developed to improve understanding of the benefits and functions of the Fatherhood Program.



Tangler Gray and Donovan Emerine serve as the RPI "champions" in the Georgia Office of Child Support Services, managing projects under the statewide Rapid Process Improvement program.

See **GEORGIA**, next page

On a Personal Note

A thankful child support employee posted this blog on the Intranet site for the Georgia Office of Child Support Services:

“I work in the Rock Spring Office and we went [through] RPI training. We are enjoying the process, especially same-day service—the clients are especially pleased. In one case where the CP came in and applied on a Friday, the case was set that day. The NCP was called that day and he scheduled an appointment for the coming Thursday. On Monday the CP called and asked to have her case put on hold because we worked it TOO FAST!!! The phone calls are also helping with locate and referrals. I personally am feeling good about being an RPI office.”



This letter from a satisfied customer was published in the newsletter of the Georgia Governor’s Office of Customer Service:

“I would like to thank you for the service I received from you and your staff today. I am a flight attendant and have to take the red-eye to Las Vegas tonight. I didn’t have a long wait in the front lobby. I came right back to your office and you put all the vital information in the computer about my case. I set up my direct deposit and now I look forward to receiving support for my children. Same-day service works incredibly well in your office. All of my needs were met today and I can use my time working and taking care of my children. Also, I recommended your office to a friend who is having trouble collecting child support.”

Additional positive results of RPI include:

- Employees feel better about work and their work environment, and are providing improved quality of service.
- Inquiries from customers to the Governor’s office, DHR Commissioner’s office, and the OCSS Director’s office have decreased by 38 percent.
- The OCSS agents have become more aware of their backlog cases and are taking steps to get those cases through the system, resulting in the decreasing wait time for customers. Customers who do not meet the requirements for same-day service are receiving faster service.
- Interaction between custodial and noncustodial parents is changing from an adversarial approach to a partnership approach.
- Cases with support orders increased from 75 percent in FY 2006 to 78 percent in FY 2007, while current support paid increased from 52 percent to 57 percent; roughly 15,000 more families statewide received their child support.

“These process improvements represent the future of OCSS,” said OCSS Deputy Director Keith Horton. “This is how we will do business each day serving customers more quickly and with higher quality service. Best of all, our teams feel great about their work because they are empowered and able to make a difference.”

For more information, please contact Tangler Gray at tsgray@dhr.state.ga.us or 404-656-1733. **CSR**





WICSEC's 24th Glistens in Idaho

By Mary Ann Reuter

Idaho Department of Health and Welfare

Idaho hosted the Western Interstate Child Support Enforcement Council's (WICSEC) 24th Annual Training Conference, Sept. 30 through Oct. 4. About 390 child support staff from States and Tribes west of the Mississippi converged in Boise for the "Supporting Our Precious Gems" event.

One of the hot topics this year was Tribal child support, according to Linda Jolly, Self-Reliance program specialist in Idaho Child Support Operations. "Two sessions focused on Tribal IV-D programs, and pointed out similarities and differences between State and Tribal child support programs," she said. "Another session featured a panel sharing positive examples of Tribes and States working together. I think Tribal staff as well as State staff who work with Tribes found the sessions filled with important and necessary information."

Other topics included partnering with employers to collect child support, legal enforcement remedies, proving income for child support,



Shannon Barnes, standing, leads a roundtable Q&A discussion about various issues with OCSE Commissioner Margot Bean. Participants included, from left, Judy Manhas, Nebraska; Mary Johnson, Wyoming; Travis Brockie, Lummi Nation; and Mary Smith, Arizona.



Awareness Award on behalf of the agency's "It's All About the Kids!" staff-motivation campaign.

David Stillman, left, WICSEC President and Director of Washington State Division of Child Support, congratulates Steve Flores, Outreach and Media Coordinator for Kern County, CA, Child Support Services. Flores accepted WICSEC's Program

Web research, legal and ethical issues, medical support compliance, interstate case law, child support courts, collaborating with military on child support cases, and "best practices" for customer service, locating noncustodial parents, and performance improvement.

Panelists from California, Idaho, and Nebraska told the audience that early intervention strategies strive to enhance customer service through personal contact, ultimately increasing collections. All three presenters shared that "picking up the phone" and calling noncustodial parents at critical points in the collection process helped decrease the default rate on child support obligations.

"We found that staff spent less than 10 minutes more per case, using personal contact versus sending out letters," said Kathleen Clark, Self-Reliance program manager in Idaho. "Those few extra minutes on the phone resulted in a 6.5-percent increase in child support collections [over a control group who received only letters] in 1 month alone. There were also improvements in arrears collections and in medical support compliance."

"This conference was about looking back at what we've learned and looking ahead to ways we can improve the child support system to continue to support our 'precious gems'—our children," said Kandace Yearsley, Idaho Child Support Services bureau chief. **CSR**

First-Timer Rates CA Conference 'Outstanding'



California Child Support Directors Association staff, from left: Lisa Bispham, Natalie Dillon, David Oppenheim, and Natalie Metzger

By Natalie Metzger

California Child Support Directors Association

Since the day I walked into my interview for the position of Policy/Communications Analyst with the Child Support Directors Association (CSDA), I have heard stories about the Annual CSDA Training Conference. After I was hired, as rookie analyst new to the child support program and fresh out of graduate school, I didn't know exactly what to expect, although I had an idea from all the stories and photos that countless individuals had provided.

I was also confident that the effort put forth by the CSDA conference committee in preparation for this year's conference was one to behold—and I was looking forward to seeing the result of everyone's hard work.

This year, the Annual Child Support Directors Association Training Conference and Expo was held Sept. 18 to 20 in Anaheim. The theme was "Surfing the CCSAS Wave...A Ride to Statewide Excellence," with obvious attention devoted to the California Child Support Automated System (CCSAS).

Over the course of the week, approximately 1,000 attendees from across the State attended a diverse array of workshops, networked with their peers, dined on first-class food, listened

and laughed with our plenary speakers; and some even squeezed in a trip to Disneyland!

My personal experience during the conference was outstanding. As an employee of CSDA, I had the privilege to attend all events on the director's schedule. This included a President's reception with our exhibitors and a lunch with OCSE Commissioner Margot Bean. Commissioner Bean, I believe, left an enormous impression on CSDA. She was attentive, intelligent, and responsive to our questions and concerns. She attended the conference for multiple days, and her candidness, warmth, and obvious commitment to the child support program left me with a positive impression.

More importantly, I left the conference proud to work in the child support program. Over the course of the conference I had the privilege to meet individuals that I had only spoken with on the phone, and some that were essentially legends in the program. The wealth of knowledge that they were able to provide, specifically during workshops such as "Child Support 101" and "Interjurisdictional Issues with Mexico," in which judges from Mexico presented their expertise, was unique and educational.

Next year's conference promises to be even better, and I look forward to becoming an active part of its success. **CSR**

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

Administration for Children
and Families
Office of Child Support Enforcement
Division of Consumer Services
Mail Stop OCSE/DCS
370 L'Enfant Promenade
Washington D.C. 20447

Return this sheet to above address if
 you do not want to receive this material
 a change of address is needed:
indicate change, including zip code.

FIRST CLASS MAIL
POSTAGE & FEES PAID
Administration for
Children and Families
Permit No. 431

GRANTS, from page 3

- Texas to improve parental understanding and compliance with court-ordered child support, medical support and custody/visitation (Travis and Harris counties).
- Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office of Cleveland to deliver cross-training curricula on model collection and enforcement tools for judges, child support staff, prosecutors, probation departments, and numerous financial institutions.
- New York State Unified Court System to expand initiative which previously served only voluntary noncustodial parent participants in Onondaga County, to serve an additional 200 mandated referrals each year.

For further information, visit the OCSE Web site's "Discretionary Grants Information" section at: www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/grants/



Child Support Report

Child Support Report is published monthly by the Office of Child Support Enforcement, Division of Consumer Services. We welcome articles and high-quality photos. We reserve the right to edit for style, content, and length. Contents are for informational purposes only; no official endorsement of any practice, publication, or individual by the Department of Health and Human Services or the Office of Child Support Enforcement is intended. Use of this material is welcomed; please identify *Child Support Report* as the source.

Daniel C. Schneider
Acting Assistant Secretary for Children and Families

Margot Bean
Commissioner, OCSE

Robert Cohen
Director, Division of Consumer Services

Elaine Blackman
Editor
202-401-5353, (fax) 202-205-5927
eblackman@acf.hhs.gov

Subscriptions
202-401-9383
OCSENationalReferenceCenter@acf.hhs.gov

Child Support Report online:
www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse