



# Child Support Report



OFFICE OF CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT

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## United States Signs Agreement For International Convention

The new global Convention on the International Recovery of Child Support and other Forms of Family Maintenance was finalized Nov. 23, in The Hague, when delegates from 70 countries, the European Community, and other organizations signed the “Final Act” of the new Convention.



Delegates joining the Commissioner included OCSE Policy Director Lily Matheson and DHHS Associate General Counsel Robert Keith.

With OCSE Commissioner Margot Bean’s signature, the United States became first to formally approve the Convention, which establishes a comprehensive system of cooperation among child support authorities and should result in more children receiving more support more quickly.

“Every child deserves the support of both the child’s parents. And yet recovering child support when the child and one parent are in one country and the other parent is in another is difficult and often impossible,” said Commissioner Bean at the signing ceremony.

The Convention must now be submitted to the US Senate for advice and consent to ratification. At least two countries must ratify the Convention before it goes into effect.

The new Convention will provide the legal framework for working international cases, and a common understanding among participating countries about responsibilities for case processing, including paternity establishment and mandatory expedited procedures for recognition and enforcement of exiting orders.



“Given the importance of this topic to US families, and because the number of transnational cases will continue to increase, the United States has been an active participant in this negotiation,” said Commissioner Bean. “This new Convention is necessary to modernize and improve the existing international system.”

For further information, log on to the Web site for the Hague Conference on Private International Law at [www.hcch.net](http://www.hcch.net). For more about OCSE international agreements, log on to [www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/international](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/international).

OCSE Commissioner Margot Bean, center, signed the new Convention in The Hague, with OCSE’s Lily Matheson, left, and Mary Helen Carlson from the Department of State. Also at the table is a Dutch government official.

## 'Fragile Families' Increases Incomes, Child Support

By David Arnaudo  
OCSE

From 2000 through 2003, nine States conducted "Partners for Fragile Families" (PFF) demonstrations, which were designed to help fragile families by helping fathers work with mothers in sharing the legal, financial, and emotional responsibilities of parenthood.



Services were targeted at young, never-married noncustodial parents who did not have a child support order in place and faced obstacles to employment.

The PFF projects tested new ways for state-run child support enforcement programs and community-based organizations to work together to help young fathers obtain employment, make child support payments, and learn parenting skills and to help parents build stronger partnerships.

The sites completing the demonstrations were in Baltimore, Boston, Denver, Indianapolis, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, New York, and West Chester (PA). These projects received up to \$1 million in OCSE formula funds via Section 1115 waivers, which were matched by funds provided by the Ford Foundation and other local foundations. The projects were managed by the National Partnership for Community Leadership (NPCL), Ford Foundation, and State and Federal staffs. The evaluation was conducted by the Urban Institute of Washington, DC. Federal funds were provided by OCSE and the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation in the Department of Health and Human Services.

The Urban Institute conducted a process and outcome evaluation, interviewing all service providers (including child support enforce-

ment, community-based organizations, and partner agencies) and analyzing client data matched with administrative wage data before and after the PFF program. This evaluation did not have a control group. In-depth interviews with selected fathers were also conducted.

### Project Results

The critical results of the PFF demonstrations for the participants studied are as follows:

- With the exception of Denver, employment rates for participants were largely unchanged after the demonstration.
- On average, about half of the PFF participants worked in a given quarter.
- Average quarterly earnings improved from \$1,501 at the time of enrollment, to \$2,470 two years after enrollment.
- The child support order rate for participants increased from 13 percent of the participants at enrollment, to 35 percent two years after enrollment.
- Child support, in terms of months with a payment, increased steadily from 1 year to 2 years after enrollment, but it was at a low level, averaging payments in only 5 months.
- For those who paid child support, the average child support payment was \$1,569 for the first year following enrollment, and \$2,296 for the second year after enrollment.



*The reports and evaluation are available online at <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/07/PFF/outcomes/index.htm>.*

## Healthy Marriage Grants Help Families, Children

By David Arnaudo  
OCSE

In recognition of financial and emotional problems for children living in single-mother, divorced, or fragile families, OCSE since 2003 has placed a great priority on providing healthy marriage and child support education. This education, with varied 6 to 8-week curricula, informs voluntarily participating parents of the benefits of marriage, especially for children, and provides couples and individuals with relevant couple skills.

The couple skills involve communication, anger management, and commitment. Child support enforcement information, paternity establishment, order establishment, and problem-solving are also featured, as is help with employment and other services. All sites have domestic violence protocols to refer couples with domestic violence issues to appropriate services. Media campaigns are featured also.

Fifteen States have received child support waivers using non-State IV-D matching funds, and 7 States and local organizations have received SIP (Special Improvement Project) and Section 1115 demonstration grants.

Waiver sites include Nampa (ID), Grand Rapids, Minneapolis-St. Paul, New Orleans, Chicago, Boston, Jacksonville (FL), Lakewood and Yakima (WA), Atlanta and other cities in Georgia, Lexington (KY), San Angelo and Houston (TX), Denver and other cities in Colorado, Clark County (OH), and Marion and Hamilton Counties (IN).

SIP and Section 1115 demonstration sites include: Michigan State University, Baton Rouge, Baltimore, Houston (two waivers), and Alabama.

Under Federal contracts, Research Triangle Institute of North Carolina is doing an evaluation of the waiver sites and the Lewin Group of Virginia has provided technical assistance for the waiver sites and the nonwaiver projects. The nonwaiver sites do independent evaluations as part of their grant awards.



As of September 2007, over 7,000 couples and individuals have received healthy marriage and child support education. Retention in classes and parental satisfaction is high. Recruitment is from a wide variety of organizations, including community, faith-based, ethnic, and fatherhood organizations; media; Child Support Enforcement; TANF; WIC (Women, Infants and Children); courts; birthing clinics; post-natal and in-hospital paternity programs; Head Start; Healthy Start; and military bases.

*For more information about OCSE grants, including healthy marriage grants, log on to [www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/grants/](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/grants/).*





## 'The Best Investment' Redefines Washington's Outreach to Noncustodial Parents

**Adolfo Capestany**

*Washington State Department  
of Social & Health Services*

**C**hild Support: The Best Investment You Will Ever Make” is the official slogan for the Washington State child support program. The slogan grew out of the State’s effort to create a campaign to bring noncustodial parents closer to the children for whom they pay support.

Three years ago, the State embarked on an effort to change its previous slogan, “Child Support Pays,” from a financial-payment to a parental-investment focus. The IV-D agency held a slogan contest and solicited entries from its 1,200 employees throughout the State. Several were received, and after narrowing the field to three finalists, staff voted online for the eventual winner. The slogan now is used on all of its outreach and educational materials, as well as publications.

More recently, the slogan was used as the basis for producing a 60-second video that was shown during the “Roll Call of the States” presentation and competition at the National Child Support Enforcement Association’s (NCSEA) annual conference last August in Orlando. The video captured first-place in the “compelling” category.

Washington had submitted award-winning entries in the NCSEA competition each of the past 3 years that were humorous in nature; however, “this year we wanted to do something that would focus on the very real and emotional side of child support and an example of how paying parents make a tremendous difference in the lives of children,” said Division of Child Support Director David Stillman. “We



A freeze-frame image from Washington’s “compelling” video shows a noncustodial father meeting with his grandson for the first time.

wanted to show that noncustodial parents can and do have strong emotional feelings for their children.”

The video portrays a noncustodial dad on camera showing photos and talking about his daughter, who he has been supporting for years, but who he hadn’t seen much because she lived across the country and he couldn’t afford the travel. The parent then talks about how, after many years, his daughter paid him a surprise visit, bringing with her a grandson for him to meet.

The video finishes with the parent talking in an emotional voice about how paying child support for all those years helped his daughter with school, a job, and now her family, and what a great investment it turned out to be.

The video has now evolved from an entry into the NCSEA competition to its use as a public service announcement (PSA) by other States. It was also shown at the OCSE 17th National Training Conference last September by Commissioner Margot Bean during her opening speech.

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## Utah Creates Memorable, Low-Budget PSAs

By Liesa Corbridge

*Utah Office of Recovery Services*

Looking back, it seems like the perfect challenge for an episode of a job-application reality TV series: Create a 30-second public service announcement (PSA) that explains “paternity” and teaches the audience that paternity establishment is important. There are no professional actors or writers available, and all purchases must fall within a limited budget.

Against those odds, the four commercials created by Utah’s Office of Recovery Services (ORS), as part of a 2005 OCSE 1115 demonstration grant project, are proof that any child support agency can use PSAs as an educational tool for the public.

To capture the audience’s attention, the commercials portray fun and memorable experi-



Volunteer actors and donated props in this wedding scene helped to cut costs for Utah’s public service announcements.

ences that go along with fatherhood.

The question “Why will paternity matter to you?” is answered by images of a father being called “Daddy” by his baby, another father giving his twin boys a “piggy-back ride” in the park, and a third father walking his daughter down the aisle on her wedding day.

Since 30 seconds is not enough time to explain the legalities of paternity establishment, the message had to be simple: “Paternity means fatherhood. If the parents are not married when the child is born, they must take extra steps to protect important legal rights.” Each commercial ends with a phone number and Web site where parents can obtain more information.

Discovering that ORS’s umbrella department had a media specialist was the major breakthrough for this project. David Thomas came with the necessary equipment, award-winning filming and editing skills, and many ideas for telling a 30-second story on film. He also came with connections to a local radio personality, Doug Wright.

“Actors” were recruited from ORS employees, friends, and families. As the casting call went out, female employees graciously nominated male coworkers as “looking like the dad type,” and conversations turned to “Do you still have your wedding dress?”

Cost-management was critical. Filming and editing were free, with the agreement that Thomas would work with ORS during downtime between regular assignments. Voiceover work was reasonably priced due to the volume of work Wright does for State government. Actors either volunteered or were already on staff. Prop and costume costs were minimized by using items belonging to the actors, where possible. Still, floral arrangements and tuxedo rentals made the wedding the most expensive scene. In the end, the total cost was \$1,350—not bad for four commercials, all suitable for television and radio!

*For further information about the PSAs, contact Liesa Corbridge via e-mail at [lcorbri2@utah.gov](mailto:lcorbri2@utah.gov) or phone at 801-536-8986.*

# New Guide for Electronic Document Management

By John Cheng  
OCSE Region X



OCSE has prepared a guide to encourage and support States to improve case management productivity and efficiency through the use of Electronic Document Management (EDM) technologies. It provides valuable information for analyzing and developing EDM and detailed case studies. The guide has been designed for State child support enforcement technical, policy, and program operations personnel and their contractors, and Federal OCSE technical assistance staff.

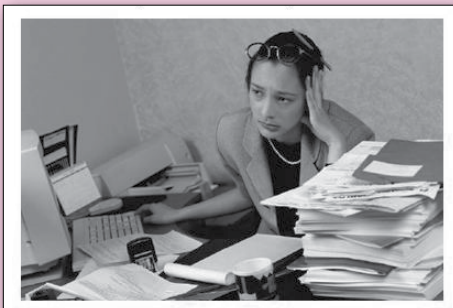
In recent years, a few States have adopted EDM technologies for case management. Some States are also using EDM for records management and even workflow. EDM technologies—that is, document imaging, electronic records management, and electronic workflow—have been utilized in many facets of government and industry for decades because of all the obvious benefits. For example, by incorporating paperless processes and workflow, case workers will be able to access documents from their desktop and perform their duties easier and quicker. The child support enforcement community has likewise started to realize the benefits of these technologies.

One State in particular (Washington) employs an automated workflow process leveraging the tremendous productivity improvement potential available through EDM. Washington has also incorporated many advanced document imaging features, allowing for scanning and indexing with minimal human intervention. Washington also employs imaging technology for payment processing with unrivaled efficiency.

The guide includes the following information and analysis and design aides:

- A detailed technology discussion
- Make-or-buy analysis table
- A step-by-step implementation guide
- Requirements analysis overview and questionnaire
- Good ideas, suggestions, and considerations summary table
- A side-by-side comparison of the State/county systems reviewed
- Case studies from Washington, Rhode Island, Illinois, and Butler County (OH)
- Glossary of terms

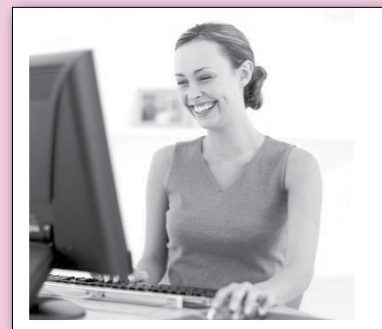
To download the guide, log on to:  
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/pol/DCL/2007/dcl-07-36.htm>



Paper-Based System



EDM System



- Paper-based case files just don't work anymore in today's heavy IV-D caseload environment.
- Reduce your dependence on costly paper processes and streamline case management through EDM.

- In Washington State, there is no file room. It's all digital!
- All documents are scanned in the mail room and are available digitally within 24 hours of receipt—and many of those documents are indexed automatically using advanced technologies.
- Case workers perform all their work on screen.
- Paperless centralized case management.



## MO, GA Teams Accept Governors' Awards

The Missouri Family Support Division was recently presented with the Governor's award for Quality and Productivity for the Division's Child Support Enforcement Structure and Workflow, a team effort which stratifies cases based upon noncustodial parent circumstances and allows staff to specialize in enforcement techniques geared toward a particular case circumstance. The award honors teamwork in service excellence, efficiency, innovation, technology, process improvement, and employee development in State government. The group, right, was recognized for process improvement and commended for its commitment to implementing a structure that is innovative, brings greater efficiencies, improves services, and allows staff to manage the work in a much more productive and focused manner.



Georgia's Office of Child Support Services (OCSS) recently received the Governor's award for Outstanding Process Improvement for its Rapid Process Improvement (RPI) Initiative. (See November 2007 CSR.) Among other process changes, OCSS has reduced its establishment process from 71 days to same-day service. OCSS' parent agency, the Department of Human Resources, was recognized as the "Customer Service Agency of the Year." From left are Tommy Hills, State Chief Operating Office; Tangler Gray, Office of Child Support Services; B.J. Walker, DHR Commissioner; and Jim Lientz, State Chief Financial Officer.

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"While it wasn't our intent for the video to be a PSA, if others can use it as a way to reach out to noncustodial parents and send the message that child support is about kids and about improving their lives, then we are more than happy to share it," said Stillman.

Like many other States, Washington has focused its outreach and overall message during the past decade on responsible and involved parenthood regardless of the parents' situation. This has included producing PSAs with professional sport teams, such as the Seattle Seahawks and Seattle Mariners, as well as

holding fatherhood conferences and working closely with a variety of community-based organizations.

"We all realize that the more noncustodial parents are involved in the lives of their children, the more likely they are to pay their child support," said Stillman. "So the video is truly a win-win effort to send a positive message to paying parents, with the ultimate goal of more support more often for children."

*For more information, or to obtain a copy of the video, contact Adolfo Capestany, Washington's communications chief, at [acapestany@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:acapestany@dshs.wa.gov) or 360-664-5445.*

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## Census Updates Child Support Data

A Census Bureau report issued in September, "Custodial Mothers and Fathers and Their Child Support: 2005," focuses on the child support income that custodial parents reported receiving from noncustodial parents living elsewhere, as well as other types of support, such as health insurance and non-cash assistance. Among the highlights:

- The proportion of custodial parents who received the full amount of owed child support increased from 37 percent in 1993 to 47 percent in 2005.
- In 45 percent of child support agreements that specified who was to provide health care coverage, the noncustodial parent provided health insurance. Overall, approximately 3.3 million noncustodial parents provided some type of health insurance for their children.

The most recent data in the report are from the "Child Support Supplement to the April 2006 Current Population Survey," which gives information about the amount of child support received during calendar year 2005.

The report is available on the Census Bureau Web site at <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/cs05.html>

## State Systems Symposium March 18-20, 2008 Washington DC

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### *Child Support Report*

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