

Access & Visitation Demonstration Projects

Good News for Fathers and Child Support

Jessica Pearson, Ph.D.

Center for Policy Research, Denver, CO

National Child Support Enforcement Training Conference

DHHS/ACF/OCSE

Washington, D.C.

September 11, 2007

Evolution of Child Support Law and Policy Concerning AV Issues

1975: Congress established the national child support program by adding Title IV-D to the Soc. Sec. Act; cost recovery programs signed into law; child support payments kept legally distinct from visitation.

1991-1996: OCSE funds Child Access Demonstration projects in 10 states; PS/CPR evaluation finds AV problems in 13-20% of new cases, 31% post-decree cases; recommend no- and low-cost AV programs.

1996: Welfare reform law directs child support to go to custodial parent.

1997: Access & Visitation grant program established; \$100 million annually to states to increase non-custodial parents' access to children.

2002: OIG evaluation finds payments for AV grant participants range from 52 to 70% of owed CS;

2004: CPR evaluation finds payments for never-married parents from grant programs go from 59 to 79% of owed child support.

2004: OCSE funds 1115 grants to states to examine and improve AV services in CSE agencies.

Challenges for Parents

- Federal regulations governing the IV-D program do not permit federal funding to be spent on custody or visitation issues.
- Parents must apply separately for parenting time in most states and pay an additional filing fee.
- Parents must file separately to get services for parenting time conflicts or enforcement of court orders.

Two Section 1115 Demonstration and Evaluation Projects

- **“Ensuring Access—Encouraging Support”**
Texas Office of the Attorney General (90FD0092)
- **“Colorado Parenting Time Project”**
Colorado Department of Human Services (90FD0092)
- **Time Period: October 2004 to December 2006**
- **Goal: Explore ways of integrating AFS services with other agencies**
- **Evaluation Questions:**
 - **Who are AFS problems in the child support system and how are they identified?**
 - **What percentage of NCPs with identified problems use AFS services?**
 - **What types of interventions help to resolve child support problems?**
 - **Do visitation services improve child support compliance?**
 - **Do visitation services improve parenting time and parent-child relationships?**
 - **Do visitation services improve image of child support?**

Project Design

TEXAS

- Focus on one region in the state, Harris County, TX
- Collaborate with DRO, a court-based ADR program
- Cases flagged by child support workers when NCPs mention TV visitation program
- Random assignment to low and high level treatment groups
- Offer attorney consultation, parent conference, referral to litigation by DRO lawyer
- Send printed information
- 875 NCPs enroll
- 150,000 open cases

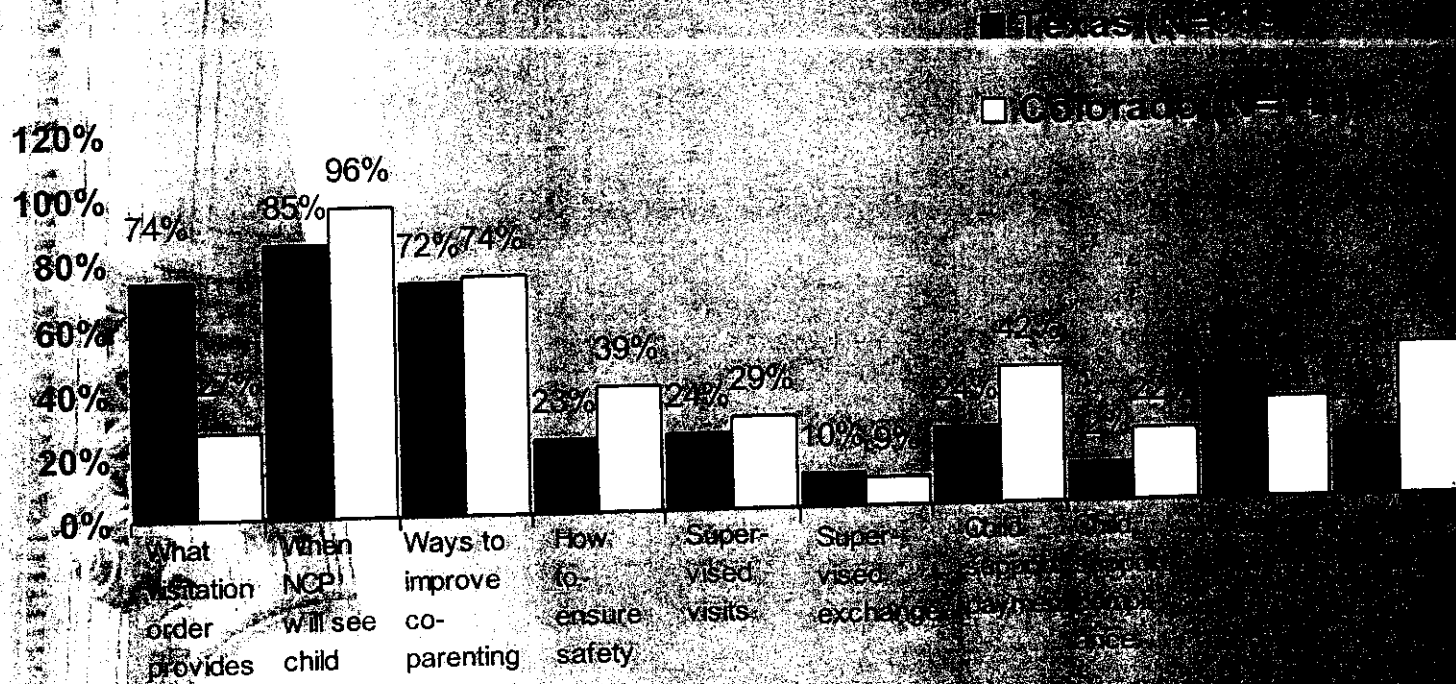
COLORADO

- Two county courts, Pueblo and Poudre Courts in CO
- Specialized workers
- Access to specialized and parenting classes, referrals to mediation
- Parenting classes
- Cases referred to workers
- Workers assign to low and high level treatment groups
- Random assignment to low and high level treatment groups
- In Pueblo, 100% of cases referred to mediation
- Entering mediation with 100% of cases
- Successful mediation
- 716 NCPs enrolled
- 30,000 open cases

NCPs Served By AV Program

	Colorado Parenting Time (N=524)	Texas Parenting Time
Average Age	34.9	
Percent African-American	15%	
Percent white	57%	
Percent Hispanic/Latino	28%	
Percent with High School Diploma	53%	
Percent earn \$20,000 or less	46%	
Percent employed full-time	72%	
Percent with one child	76%	
NCP never married to child's other parent	67%	
Percent reporting high conflict with other parent	25%	
Percent reporting no contact with other parent	25%	
Percent NCPs w/contact 1X/week	14%	
Percent of NCPs reporting no contact w/kids in 6-12 months	46%	

Topics Discussed in Parent Conference/Facilitation



Agreements Produced and Satisfied With AV Services Received

Colorado

	High-level	Low-level
Agreement in Facilitation/Parent Conference	74%	N/A
Number	(70)	
Agreement in Mediation	65%	87%
Number	(31)	(27)
Percent somewhat/very satisfied with:		
Facilitation/Parent Conference	71%	67%
Attorney Consultation	N/A	N/A
Mediation	74%	87%
Parent Education	94%	97%
Court	55%	58%
Printed Information	79%	76%

Ensuring Access-Encouraging Support Due and Paid in the Months Prior To Project Enrollment by Group

	High Treatment (N=360)	
	Pre	Post
Average Amount Due	*\$4,051	*\$3,481
Average Amount Paid	*\$3,215	\$2,647
Average percent of MSO due that was paid	*73%	86%
Number	(357)	(357)
Average number of months of payment on the case	*14.8	16.9
Average monthly amount due	*\$282	\$208
Number	(312)	(312)
Average monthly amount paid	*\$211	\$143
Number	(313)	(313)
Percent paying nothing	9%	10%

- *T-test between High Treatment Pre and Post is significant at 0.1
 - *T-test between Low Treatment Pre and Post is significant at 0.5
 - *T-test between High Treatment Post and Low Treatment Post is significant at 0.05
- Percent of agent support due that was actually collected in claims: 80% (2007)

Colorado Parenting Time Program Child Support Paid Pre and Post Treatment by Group

	High-Level Treatment/Received Services		High-Level Treatment/Not Served	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
6 months pre and post	★			
Average monthly amount paid:	55%	63%	43%	55%
Percent paying nothing	15%	12%	33%	16%
	(142)	(142)	(269)	(269)
12 months pre and post	★			
Average monthly amount paid:	54%	64%	40%	55%
Percent paying nothing	12%	8%	12%	12%
	(90)	(90)	(202)	(202)
18 months pre and post	★			
Average monthly amount paid:	52%	63%	35%	53%
Percent paying nothing	11%	6%	12%	12%
	(613)	(160)	(215)	(215)

★ Pre and post t-test is significant at .05 or less

Percent of current support due that was actually collected in Jefferson County, 2005-2006

Percent of current support due that was actually collected in El Paso County, 2005-2006

Percent of Child Support Due That Was Paid Within 30 Days of Due Date 12 Months Before/After Enrollment in the Child Support Time Project for Cases WWO Enforcement

	High-Level Treatment/Received Facilitation		Intermediate Treatment/No Facilitation Services	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
	★		+	
Percent of MSO Due That Was Paid in cases that had a driver's license suspension or contempt action initiated post enrollment	43%	55%	40%	51%
Number	(59)	(59)	(147)	(147)
Percent of MSO Due That Was Paid in cases that did not have a driver's license suspension or contempt action initiated post enrollment	74%	82%	65%	77%
Number	(31)	(31)	(52)	(52)

★ Differences are significant between Pre and Post amounts paid within 30 days of due date.

Texas Parent Reports of Changes in Parent-Child Contact and Parental Relationship Following Program by Receipt of Services

	Received AV Services		Did Not Receive Services
	Before	After	Before
How often NCP saw children		★	
More than once a week	13%	15%	7%
A few times a month	39%	36%	31%
A few times year	26%	10%	5%
Never	21%	39%	25%
Number	(112)	(106)	(105)
Nature of relationship with the other parent		★	
Cooperative	28%	48%	25%
Hostile, angry	46%	14%	49%
No contact	25%	38%	30%
Number	(138)	(140)	(136)

★ Chi-Square is significant between Received and Did Not Receive Services P's

Colorado Parent Reports of Frequency of Parenting and Parental Relationship Status Following Enrollment By Agreement Status

	High Level Parenting Agreement
*Status of Relationship with other parent	
Improved	44%
Stayed the same	41%
Become worse	15%
Number	(39)
*Amount of time spend with children following project enrollment has:	
Increased	63%
Stayed the same	23%
Decreased	15%
Number	(40)

*Chi square is significant at .1 or less.

Key Outcomes from Texas

- Many NCPS are skeptical of an offer of help.
- It is challenging to get CSE staff to help.
- AV programs serve a fraction of the population.
- Most parents who disclose AV problems are poor and have extremely low incomes.
- Many parents have entrenched, long-term problems.
- It is difficult to deliver AV services: GPs and parents don't show up.
- Legal enforcement remedies rarely used, but printed information is helpful but especially need to get in-person help.
- Those who participate in services produced high rates of satisfaction.

Key Outcomes from Texas and Colorado continued

- Those who participate in services (and reach goals) report higher rates of parent-child contact.
- Those who participate in services (and reach goals) report better parental relationships.
- In Texas, those who participate in services pay less more child support over time (73 to 68% of income).
- In Colorado, both parents who participate in services pay more child support over time than parents who do not pay more child support over time.
- Among decent payers, AV services trigger even higher payments.
- Among poor payers, enforcement triggers higher payments than AV services.
- AV services improve the image of the child support system.
- Future AV referral and service activities at state and federal reimbursement policies.

Next Steps re Child Support and AV Issues

- Screen for AV problems or require them w/o prompting?
- Offer ADR services at CS level in community?
- Require CP to cooperate with ADR?
- Use new/trained CSE and CS staff?
- Intervene at establishment of CS stages?
- Offer services to payers and payees?
- Include AV issues in CS and ADR?
- Enforce AV orders in CS and ADR?
- Include AV referral and services in federal reimbursement?

Contact Information

- Center for Policy Research
Jessica Pearson (303) 837-1775
jspearson@centerforpolicyresearch.org
- Texas Office of the Attorney General
Michael Hayes (512) 460-6218
Michael.Hayes@CS.OAG.SBA.gov
- Colorado Department of Information
Dan Welch (303) 866-4152
Dan.welch@state.co.us