

Child Access and Visitation: Good News for Fathers and Children!



Top 6 Reasons...

... why IV-D agencies should be interested in the Access and Visitation (AV) needs of non-custodial parents, specifically.....

unmarried fathers

#1: Out-of-Wedlock Birth Rates

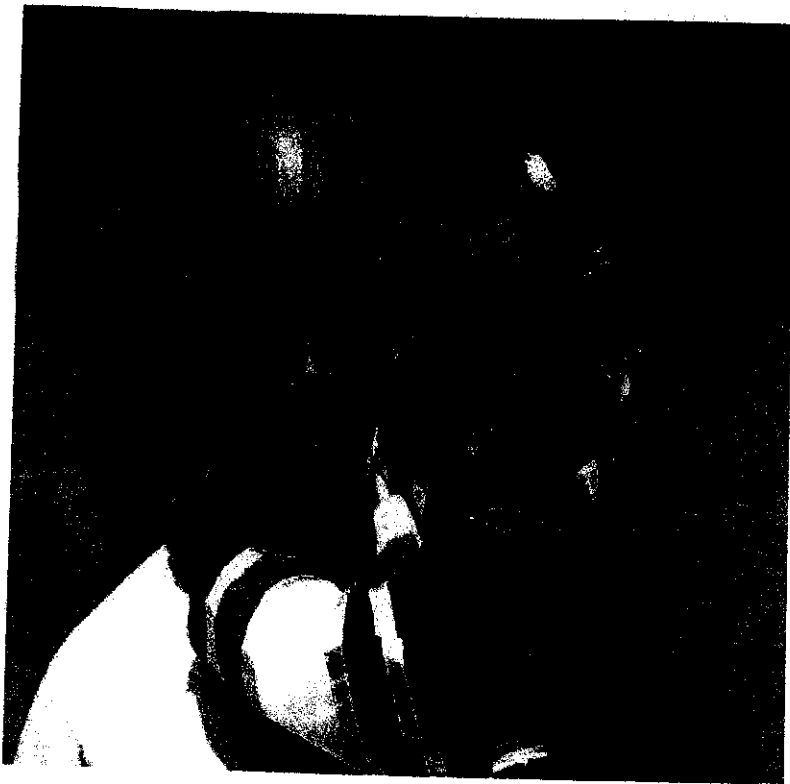
- **Nationwide, nearly 34% or 1.6 million of live births each year are to unmarried parents**



#2: NCPs Without Child Access Pay Less Child Support

- Census Bureau (2003) reports that 77.1 percent of parents with joint custody or visitation rights paid at least some child support compared with 55.8 percent of their counterparts without visitation rights or joint custody

#3: Changing Make-Up of State IV-D Caseload

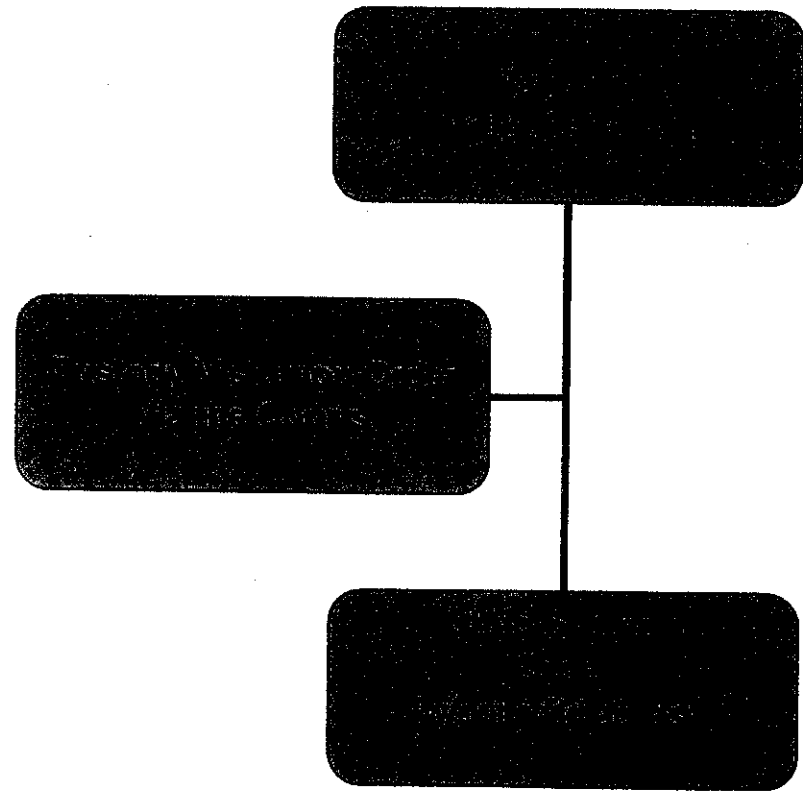


Estimated percentage of unwed parents that comprise State IV-D caseload. For example:

- Connecticut 67%
- Iowa 68%
- Georgia 66%
- Michigan 62%
- New Hampshire 63%
- Virginia 66%
- Texas 65%

#4. Disconnect in the Process: From Paternity Establishment to Parenting Time Orders

- Unwed father establishes paternity
- Father's name on birth certificate
- Custody/visitation: requires a separate court action; most fathers unaware
- IV-D funds cannot be used to establish parenting orders
- Low-income fathers cannot afford to hire an attorney or pay the filing fees (175 - \$250)



#5: Problems IV-D Staff Report Hearing about from Parents

% of workers who agree that:

CP does not allow NCP to see the children.

88% Colorado 89% Texas 90% Tennessee

NCP does not have an AV order from the court.

71% Colorado 28% Texas* 58% Tennessee

- Texas courts have a process for establishing AV orders for unmarried parents.
- Source of Data: OCSE Report, "A Collaboration and Strategic Planning Guide for State: Child Access and Visitation Grant Programs".

#6: Unwed Parents w/ Access to Children Pay More Child Support

- HHS Office of Inspector Study (2002) “Effectiveness of the Access and Visitation Grant Program” – one of many subsequent studies funded by OCSE.
- Services: mediation & development of parenting plans.
- Results: Increased NCP child access and increased child support payment (for example):
 - *“Prior to services, NCPs paid 52% of child support owed; after services, NCPs paid 70% of amount owed.*
 - *“Prior to services, 69% unwed NCPs had no parenting rights; after services, 66 % gained increased parenting rights.*

SOLUTIONS



Solution #1: Utilize the Federal Access and Visitation Grant

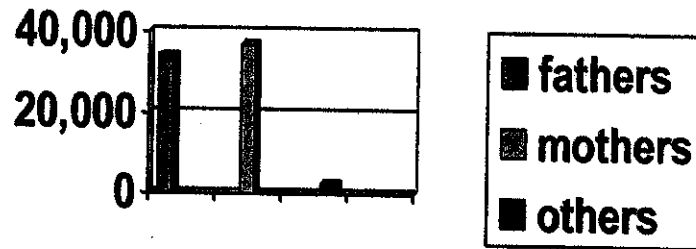
- \$10 million per year formula grant program
- Roughly ½ of State AV Programs administered by IV-D agencies and ½ State Office of the Courts
- Since FY 1997, over a half a million parents served and \$100 million made available to States

Allowable services:

1. Mediation;
2. Development of parenting plans;
3. Counseling;
4. Parent education;
5. Supervised visitation;
6. Neutral drop-off/pick-up; and
7. Development of alternative custody and visitation guidelines.

Nationwide Profile of Parents Served

(FY 2006 Preliminary Data)



- Majority of parents served (73,483) are:
 - Low-income (\$20,000 less)
 - Majority of parents served: Unwed NCPs and CPs
 - Nearly equal number of fathers (34,215) and mothers (36,833 served plus "others" (2,435 legal guardians/grandparents))

SOURCE: CLIENT REFERRAL				
	Self	IV-D	Other	Unkown
Court	6,721	15,927	8,170	6,150
	36,078			

State IV-D Agencies Managing the AV Grant Program:

Arizona
DC
Georgia
Illinois
Indiana
Iowa
Louisiana
Michigan
Massachusetts
Minnesota
Mississippi
Missouri
Nebraska
New Hampshire
New York
North Carolina

Ohio
Oklahoma
Pennsylvania
Puerto Rico
South Carolina
South Dakota
Texas
Virginia
Virgin Islands
Washington
Wyoming

Total: 26 States (including DC, Guam, PR, VI)

What State IV-D Agencies do with the AV Grant Program:

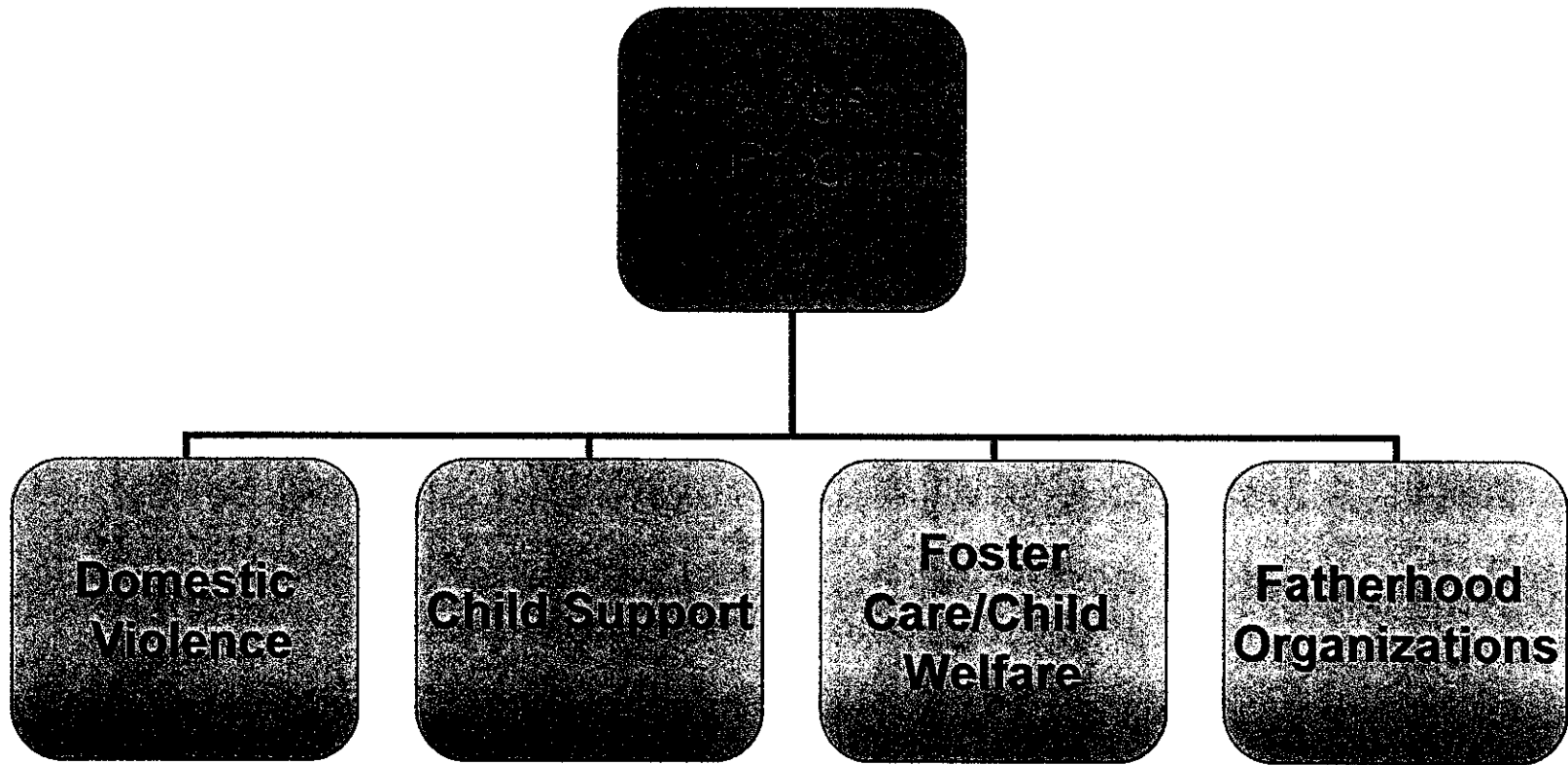
- Some serve only IV-D parents;
- Others serve IV-D and non-IV-D parents;
- Some transfer the grant to other state agencies to administer (e.g., courts)
- Some serve clients of other programs (e.g., supervised visitation in domestic violence or foster care cases)



Example of Innovative Use of AV Grant Funds for IV-D Parents:

- Georgia: AV services only for NCPs who are in the child support caseload; domestic violence cases are excluded.
- Missouri: mediation services and development of parenting plans; 80% of caseload must be IV-D parents.
- Mississippi: exploring the possibility of folding visitation/parenting agreements in IV-D orders.
- South Carolina: part of the grant goes to fund AV services IV-D agencies (1 urban & 2 rural counties); also provides enforcement services when parenting plans are not adhered to by the CP.
- Texas: developed state-of-the art written and video materials for unwed parents; “Shared Parenting” pilot in 3 local IV-D offices; on-line directory of AV services for IV-D workers; & Statewide AV Hotline.

First-Come, First Serve: Competing Interests for AV Grant Funds



Two Options:

- State IV-D Agencies Who Administer the AV Grant
 1. Re-assess the funding priorities and the extent IV-D parents are or should be served.
 2. Use planning process contained in “A Collaboration and Strategic Planning Guide for States: Child AV Grant Programs”.
- State IV-D Agencies who do NOT Administer the AV Grant
 1. Contact State Agency responsible for managing the AV Grant Program.
 2. Ask what the funding priorities are & parents served.
 3. Ask to meet and discuss the needs of IV-D parents (unwed NCP fathers).
 4. Make your pitch!

Solution #2: Federal Responsible Fatherhood Grants

- Administered by the Office of Family Assistance, ACF/DHHS
- \$50 million per year for 5 years
- Allowable services: similar to the AV program
- New grants awarded in FY 2006 (multi-year)

Solution #3: Information and Referral

Suggestions from IV-D workers: (CO, TX, TN)

1. Workers should give parents referrals to community services for AV problems.
2. Workers should be able to refer parents to a specialized worker in the IV-D agency who can help them with AV problems.
3. Workers should ask all parents if they are having AV problems.

Source: OCSE-funded "A Collaboration and Strategic Planning Guide for States: Child Access and Visitation Grant Programs"

OCSE Efforts Underway:

<u>Website</u>	<u>Release of New AV Reports:</u>	<u>Parenting Connections: A Resource Guide for Unmarried Moms and Dads</u>
<p>Access and Visitation Grant <u>hyper-link</u> is being developed for the OCSE website</p> <p><u>Target Date:</u> November, 2007</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Evaluation of AV Outcomes (Target Date: Nov., 2007)2. Section 1115 Demos: GA, CO, FL, TX (Target Date: Spring, 2007)3. State Profiles Report (Target Date: November, 2007)	<p><u>Target Release Date:</u> Spring, 2008</p>

Parenting Connections: A Resource Guide for Unmarried Mothers and Fathers



Sample of Draft Contents

- **Section I: Healthy Mothers, Healthy Children**
- **Section II: Responsible Mothers, Responsible Fathers**
 - In-hospital paternity establishment
 - Child support – a shared responsibility
 - Co-parenting relationships
 - Parenting plans
 - Marriage a possibility?
- **Section III: Your Child's Health and Well-Being (e.g., immunization, WIC, SIDS, etc.)**
- **Section IV: Child Care and Education**
- **Section V: Just for Fathers**
- **Appendix: Program Information & Resources for Both Parents**

In Sum:

A “winning” formula for serving unwed NCP fathers:

- Paternity Establishment + Parenting Time Orders X (referral to other services, e.g., employment training or substance abuse, if needed) = increased NCP involvement w/ children and increased child support payments!

