

Child Support Report

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/pubs/csrindex.html>

To receive an e-mail alert when new issues are posted, send an e-mail to: subscribe-csr-subscription@lyris.acf.hhs.gov

OFFICE OF CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT

Vol. 31 No. 4 April 2009

State Child Support Agencies Reach Out to Families Affected by Sudden Unemployment

By Debra Pontisso
OCSE



The current downturn in the economy is making it more difficult for some parents to provide for themselves and their children. This difficulty can be even more pronounced for noncustodial parents (NCPs) with a child support order, particularly if they have recently lost their job.

According to the Bureau of Labor

Statistics (March 6, 2009, news release), the number of unemployed persons increased by 851,000 to 12.5 million in February and the national unemployment rate rose to 8.1 percent. In some States, such as California, Rhode Island, and Michigan, the unemployment rate is hovering near 10 percent. Job losses have occurred in both farm and non-farm occupations—blue- and white-collar jobs—across the board.

In addition, the unemployment rate continued to trend upward in February for adult men (8.1 percent), adult women (6.7 percent), Whites (7.3 percent), Blacks (13.4 percent), Hispanics (10.9 percent), and Asians (6.9 percent). The number of long-term unemployed (those jobless for 27 weeks or more) increased by 270,000 to 2.9 million in February.

The potential impact of the rising unemployment rate

has significant consequences for families and children, even more so for children living in single-family households whose well-being is dependent upon child support payments.

While the Administration and Congress tackle the economic challenges, the child support community is looking at its role in helping parents adversely affected by the economic downturn.

One way to help is to provide information, education, and assistance to both NCPs and custodial parents (CPs) in requesting a modification of a child support order that reflects a change of circumstance; in this case, sudden unemployment. Here's what some States are doing to help:

New Mexico

New Mexico's Child Support Enforcement Division (CSED) noticed an increase in the number of requests for case reviews and adjustments from 388 in February 2008 to 762 in February 2009—a 96-percent increase.



Inside This Issue

April 2009

DoD's Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program	4
Louisiana's annual training conference	5
Arapahoe County, CO, employment program	6
Tech Talk: CSE/court electronic data exchange	7
Orange County, CA, credit card solution	9
New Link to EITC	10
Project Save Our Children	11
Passport Denial Program	12



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

Recognizing the increased demand for modifications, CSED immediately met with the Office of General Counsel to devise a way to meet the requests and then proceeded with the following:

- First, CSED developed a brochure for customers on how to expedite the process for modifying an order. The brochure is entitled “Steps to Review and Adjust a Child Support Order.” Filing a *pro se* action or hiring a private attorney are also suggested as alternative processes for modifying support orders. The brochures were distributed to CSED offices and district courts throughout New Mexico.
- Second, CSED Director Charissa Saavedra issued a press release to encourage New Mexico citizens to contact CSED immediately if they incurred a substantial change in income due to the economic downturn. The press release was issued to newspapers and public radio stations throughout the State. The week following the press release, requests for modifications increased by more than 50 calls above the average weekly total. Additionally, the number of “walk-ins” at field offices increased, requiring CSED legal assistants to adopt a customer service rotation to alleviate customer waiting times.
- Third, CSED is reminding parents with child support cases of the importance to report significant changes in income, as this could lead to an upward or downward modification of court-ordered child support. CSED representatives are even appearing at local job fairs, and in one instance conducted a child support modification workshop.
- Fourth, Director Saavedra participated in local news interviews promoting CSED services that may assist families during these difficult economic times. She emphasized establishing orders for child support and medical support, as well as order modifications. Director Saavedra also stressed the importance of both parents assuming financial responsibility for their children.

For further information, contact Laura Galindo at laura.galindo@state.nm.us.

Arizona

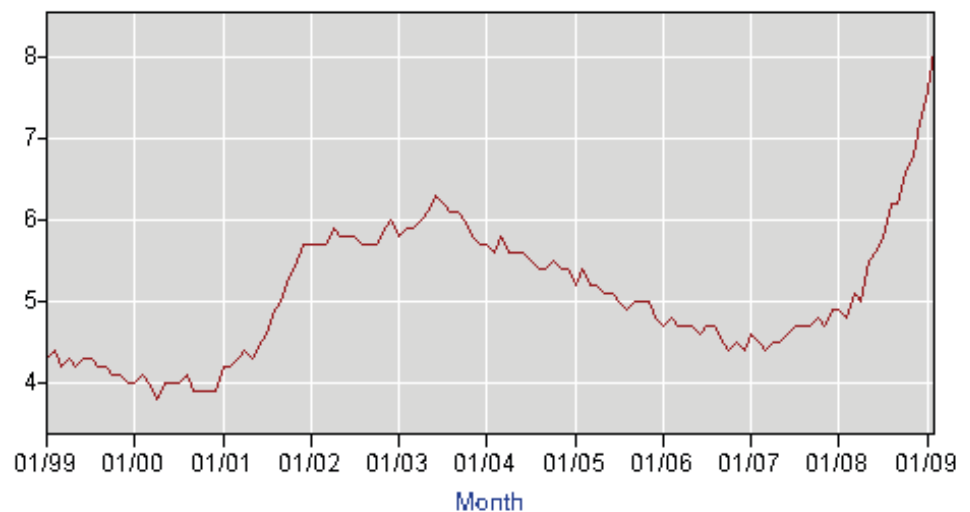
This February the Arizona Division of Child Support Enforcement and the Office of the Attorney General started monthly modification workshops in several Maricopa County offices to address economic hardships among NCPs. In an earlier trial workshop, 21 modifications and 8 stipulations were filed among 32 participants. Arizona is focusing on cases where the NCP recently requested a modification due to a change in circumstances which could include a job loss, reduction in pay, or other change in circumstance.

For information, contact Sherry Seaman at SSeaman@azdes.gov.

Puerto Rico

Puerto Rico’s Department of Labor and Human Resource’s Unit for Dislocated Workers and Employees sponsors a “Rapid Response” task force that is sent to employers who, in compliance with local law, report anticipated layoffs, plant closures, or other matters affecting employment status. Puerto Rico’s Child Support Enforcement Office (ASUME) has been a member of this task force since 2003. For its part, ASUME provides a variety of services, including the following:

- Advises NCPs that upon the date of their anticipated termination they must: 1) notify ASUME so that any income withholding order in effect can be cancelled; 2) request a modification of the child support order upon a substantial change in circumstances (also provided to CPs); and 3) contact ASUME for a referral to job training and placement services.



The unemployment percentage rate over the last 10 years for persons age 16 and over (Labor Force statistics from Department of Labor’s “Current Population Survey”)

- Reminds employers of their responsibility to provide notice of a job termination to employees with child support orders so the income withholding order can be cancelled.

ASUME believes that its proactive intervention through the “Rapid Response” task force has helped to ensure that orders reflect the NCP’s or CP’s loss of employment and to deter inappropriate or inaccurate arrears accumulation.

For further information, contact Jens Feck at jens.feck@acf.hhs.gov.

North Dakota

North Dakota plans to begin a pilot project to assist qualifying NCPs whose job layoffs have affected their ability to meet their child support obligations. The pilot project will involve the Child Support Enforcement Division, Job Service North Dakota, and the State’s court system.

NCPs with child support cases who, for reasons outside of their control, have been either permanently or temporarily laid-off, or whose work hours have been significantly cut, may contact a regional child support enforcement unit for help meeting their child support obligations. Assistance will typically take two forms:

- The regional unit will pursue a modification of the support obligation using the most recent income data and then file a motion with the court for a modified support order. The courts will prioritize the hearings on these cases.
- The child support enforcement program will suspend certain enforcement tools. For example, interest will not accrue and administrative license suspension activities will be put on hold.

In appropriate cases, the NCP will be referred to the PRIDE (Parental Responsibility Initiative for the Development of Employment) program, a multi-agency effort to improve employment opportunities for NCPs.

For further information, contact Mike Schwindt at mschwindt@nd.gov.

South Dakota

South Dakota’s Division of Child Support (DCS) established a *pro se* modification process for modifying orders, in place since 1989. Nearly all CPs and NCPs are familiar with this process and the steps required to file petitions to modify their child support order when

circumstances change.

The forms and a brochure are available through DCS Web site, the clerk of court, and in all DCS field offices. The link to the State’s “Child Support Modification Handbook” and the “Petition for Modification Form” is: <http://dss.sd.gov/formspubs/index.asp?doctype=all>

For further information, contact Terry Walter at terry.walter@state.sd.us.

Lessening the Burden

In these trying times, State child support agencies can help to lessen the burden on parents who lose their jobs by getting the word out about the possibilities available for modifying their child support orders. Failure to do so could result in orders that do not accurately reflect parents’ loss of employment and thereby inaccurately inflate State child support arrearages.

OCSE would like to learn about other ways child support agencies are helping families affected by sudden unemployment. Please send your information to Debra Pontisso at: debra.pontisso@acf.hhs.gov.



OCSE Links

The following links may be useful to child support agencies in their work to help families recently affected by sudden unemployment.

- For information about Federal policy for mandatory review and adjustment of child support orders for families receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, see OCSE Action Transmittal <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/pol/AT/2008/at-08-13.htm>. To request other related policy information, contact paige.hausburg@acf.hhs.gov.
- To view a page on the OCSE Web site titled “Has Your Income Gone Down?” see: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/new/linkdft.html>
- To view a US map with links to each State child support agency Web site, log on to: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/extinf.html>

DOD's 'Yellow Ribbon' May Offer Opportunity to Connect Child Support Services with Military Noncustodial Parents

By Jeffrey Stocks
OCSE Region VII

It can be daunting for civilians to think of the months and years of preparation, training, and sacrifice that a soldier must endure to be ready to face the battlefield. And what happens when the sand and dust of Kirkuk, Iraq, give way to the sidewalks of Main Street in Gary, IN?

Does the training required to react without pause in the face of enemy gunfire prepare the soldier to deal with the still and calm of his or her own home? How can the relative normalcy of domestic life compete with the adrenalin rush that comes from being on a battlefield? Can the combat soldier transition from a regimented life of strict orders to the complex freedom that comes when the tour of duty is over?

With deployment cycles becoming more frequent, the strain on service members, especially those in the National Guard, is an issue not only for the military, but for families and communities. In many cases, the lives that greet the soldiers when they return do not resemble the ones they left. Spouses sometimes relent under the pressure of extended separation and expanded responsibilities and file for divorce. Employment opportunities evaporate.

To address the challenges National Guard combat veterans face, the Department of Defense has introduced the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program. The innovative and comprehensive program coordinates with Federal, State, and community partners to offer tools necessary to address the transition from soldier to civilian with the goal of bringing combat veterans all the way home.

The reintegration program may be helping many of the same individuals who are served by the child support enforcement program. Soldiers who are noncustodial parents have the additional responsibility of child support. Having access to child support information and services with their specific needs in mind could reduce the stress faced by returning service members and help them reconnect with their families and meet their financial responsibilities. A partnership between the child support

agency and this program could provide an opportunity to support soldiers and their families while furthering the goals of both programs.

According to statistics published in a 2007 Department of Defense Task Force on Mental Health report, National Guard soldiers reported significant instances of a range of psychological symptoms, which serve as obstacles to successful reintegration. Within 12 months of returning home, 20 percent plan to separate or divorce. One in four suffers from clinically significant post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Thirty-five percent of soldiers who return to college after deployment drop out within the first semester.

These statistics are significantly higher for National Guard soldiers than their active-duty counterparts because they return not with their fellow soldiers to a military base, but to their own homes with limited support from those with shared experiences. The statistics provide insight into how difficult the transition can be for soldiers to return home as spouse, parent, and provider.

The program, authorized by the National Defense Authorization Act of 2008, provides comprehensive informational services, referrals, and proactive outreach programs to service members, their families, and members of the community throughout all phases of deployment. The mission of the program is to provide this range of services so that all participants are able to fully reconcile and resolve the effects of combat stress and access all of the available support resources.

The program is active in all 54 States and Territories and achieves its mission by partnering with a coalition of Federal, State, county, and community organizations to address the specific needs of each National Guard unit. The services offered to the participants range from comprehensive health assessments to marriage counseling to educating local law enforcement about recognizing symptoms of PTSD.

The program is divided into four phases: Pre-Deployment, Deployment, Demobilization, and Post-Deployment/Reconstitution. Each phase has a targeted set of activities related to the goals of each phase.



- The pre-deployment phase focuses on providing education and ensuring the readiness of members of the National Guard unit, their families, and those affected within the community for the possible repercussions of deployment into a combat zone.
- The deployment phase addresses challenges related to separation and having loved ones in a combat zone.
- The demobilization phase focuses on connecting soldiers to service providers who can assist them in overcoming the challenges of reintegration.
- The final post-deployment/reconstitution phase provides activities and services that focus on service members reconnecting with families and communities, and resources and information necessary for successful reintegration. The reintegration activities for this phase are held at 30, 60, and 90-day intervals following demobilization.

To learn more about the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program, see the National Guard Family Program Web site at www.guardfamily.org, and then click on Local Community Resource Finder and your State to find phone numbers for the Guard Family Program. Once connected, you can request to speak to the Yellow Ribbon staff.

Louisiana Rounds Up Annual Training Event

By Charla Long
OCSE Region VI



More than 400 attended the Louisiana Support Enforcement Association's annual training conference, "Roundin' Up Support," March 11-13 in Baton Rouge. Sessions covered timely topics including UIFSA, customer service, ethics, support in the military, access and visitation, imaging, forensic accounting, genetic testing, and Federal regulations, initiatives, and grants.

The conference held a "baby shower" for its OCSE Section 1115 grantee "Families Matter!" Attendees donated items for a baby store sponsored by the grant. The appreciative grant participants earned "bucks" redeemable at the store, which provides clothes, diapers, books, and toys for children.

The annual luncheon ceremony recognized staff and the judiciary for exemplary service and dedication. The Honorable Paul D. Connick, Jr., District Attorney, 24th Judicial District, received an award for "Outstanding Support of the Louisiana Child Support Program." The Honorable Patricia Koch, 10th Judicial District was recognized for "Outstanding Commitment to Public Service in the Best Interest of the Louisiana Child Support Program." To honor James Joseph Gleason, III, Hearing Officer, 22nd Judicial District, an award was given posthumously entitled "Displays Outstanding Commitment to Public Service of the Louisiana Child

Support Program."

Finally, an appreciation award was given to Wildlife & Fisheries for outstanding cooperation with the Louisiana child support program. This employer contacted the child support program on its own initiative to implement an offset against those owing child support, but who are receiving grants from this department.

Despite the challenges of high poverty and post-hurricanes Gustav and Ike recovery, State staff, Federal partners, judiciary, legislators, and professionals in fields relative to child support, such as genetic testing, all came together to celebrate a job well done and to share their expertise and commitment in meeting the needs of children.



Enjoying the conference crawfish boil are Leon McCowan, ACF Region VI Administrator, and Robbie Endris, Louisiana Child Support Director (above), and Sona Cook, Region VI Financial Specialist.



In Arapahoe County, CO, Employment Program Puts Noncustodial 'Parents to Work!'

By Nichole Parmelly
Arapahoe County Communication Services Department

A single dad loses his job. He can't find work fast enough and in turn doesn't make his monthly child support payments. Enforcement remedies are put into effect, and the man loses his driver's and/or professional licenses. This makes it more difficult for him to find employment, and the cycle continues to spiral out of control.

For army war veteran Keldrick Hines, this scenario is real. "It was a losing situation for everyone involved, but most importantly my child suffered," says Mr. Hines. Fortunately for Mr. Hines, a new employment program created specifically for obligors paying child support in Arapahoe County was there to help. "Through Parents to Work! I was able to find a good paying job, and now I'm able to provide for my child."

Begun in March 2008, Parents to Work! helps unemployed obligors with open child support cases. In its initial 6 months, it has served 150 clients just like Mr. Hines. It's a collaborative partnership in which the Arapahoe County Human Services Division of Child Support Enforcement works with the Arapahoe/Douglas Works! Workforce Center and the 18th Judicial District.

"Many fathers of poor children are poor themselves; they are dead broke rather than deadbeat," says Arapahoe County Commissioner Frank Weddig. "Our Parents to Work! program helps noncustodial parents break down the barriers to employment and become self-sufficient."

The key has been partnering with an agency that excels in the workforce arena. Arapahoe/Douglas Works! serves jobseekers throughout the Denver metro area and was able to customize this program to provide a wide range of services, including assessments, development of individual employment plans, supervised job search, employer recruitment, on-the-job training or work experiences, and supportive services such as assistance with housing, transportation, work clothes, utilities, and restoring driver's licenses.

With the support of the 18th Judicial District, Parents to Work! has built-in teeth. District courts have

ARAPAHOE COUNTY COLORADO

PARENTS to WORK!

Opportunities for Employment

Having difficulty making child support payments?
Finding it even harder to find or keep a job?

Parents to Work! can help non-custodial parents find jobs and receive needed assistance.

Services include the following:

Employment

We will help you find job leads based on your skills, interests and goals.

Receive support with:

- Resume Writing
- Job Application Completion
- Practice Interviews
- Job Placement Services
- Gaining access to Arapahoe/Douglas Works! customized support for those with criminal backgrounds, veterans and those age 50 and older

"This program has given me more drive than I've had in a long time!"
Bianchi, age 55

Talent Development

To help you get and keep a job, you may receive referrals for services such as:

- Getting your GED
- Commercial Driver's License
- Professional Licenses (ex. electrician license)
- Forklift Certification
- Computer Training
- Paid Training Experience

"I have coming out here; this is a great support system."
Andrew, age 28

Support Services

We'll help you obtain support services too. Each person has different needs, so resources are given on a case-by-case basis.

- Reinstatement of your driver's license and cover related fees
- Fatherhood Programs
- Work and Interview Clothing
- Rental Assistance
- Transportation Assistance
- Free Legal Clinic
- Mediation Services, if you have concerns about your parenting time arrangement.

"I feel like Child Support is finally helping me and giving me a second chance."
Carrillo, age 38

Best of all, it's FREE

With our help, you could find a job in as little as a week.

Keep in mind: Wage garnishments for child support payments will happen but the more you earn, the more you'll keep.

Create a better life for yourself and your kids. Learn more today!
Call 303-752-8909

"I had doubts at first, but I'm glad I gave it a chance."
Lemon, age 32

ARAPAHOE/DOUGLAS WORKS!
WORKFORCE CENTER
Arapahoe County Human Services Division of Child Support Enforcement

Parents to Work! is a partnership between Arapahoe County Human Services and Arapahoe/Douglas Works!

OVER >

This card (front and back) gives Arapahoe County parents information about its collaborative employment project Parents to Work!

the flexibility to encourage, recommend, or require obligors to participate in the program. In addition, the magistrate may sentence those who fail to comply with program requirements or pay their child support to ankle monitoring or jail, schedule and conduct review hearings to monitor their participation, and dismiss contempt charges for those who successfully participate in Parents to Work! and pay their support.

"We wanted to serve obligors whose children were current recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families [TANF] and those that are not and had to be creative to find funding to serve both," said Arapahoe County Child Support Enforcement Manager Chad Edinger. "We tapped into TANF funds and Workforce Investment Act [WIA] funds, and received authorization from the Board of County Commissioners to use local county funds."

Another successful tactic is the program's co-location. Both Child Support Enforcement and Arapahoe/Douglas Works! staffs are located in the same area, enabling rapid communication about referrals, client nonperformance, needed agency actions, and court involvement. Workers from the two agencies meet weekly to discuss cases. Bimonthly meetings are held with line staff and administrators, the evaluator, magistrate,

child support enforcement attorneys, and other relevant program partners. These meetings have been effective in developing criteria and procedures, identifying and solving implementation problems and ensuring the collection of evaluation data.

The program is working with two groups—one is referred to Arapahoe/Douglas Works! and the second is a comparable control group that does not receive the specialized support. The two groups are being compared over time for outcomes pertaining to child support payments and enforcement actions. The chart below shows the status of cases for approximately 100 obligors in the experimental and control groups, to date. The results thus far are promising.

Expectations for Parents to Work! are high and enthusiasm is strong. “So far our participation rate is at

74 percent,” shared Edinger. “This is substantially higher than other employment programs across the country. We’ve helped 54 participants find employment, earning an average wage of \$10.54 per hour. This program is helping us take another significant step toward breaking the cycle of children growing up without the support they need and deserve.”

The Colorado legislature recently passed a measure that will extend the use of TANF funds to support services for obligors whose children are not current recipients of TANF.

With such evident success, the odds are strong that Parents to Work! will soon be replicated in other county settings in Colorado. The result: getting parents to work, increasing child support payments, reducing reliance on the State’s financial assistance programs, and ultimately, creating a brighter future for children.

For more information, please call Chad Edinger, Arapahoe County Child Support Enforcement Division Manager, at 303-752-8830 or send an e-mail to cedinger@co.arapahoe.co.us.

	Parents to Work! Participants	Control Group
Employed	59%	17%
Wage withholding order in place	60%	24%
Made child support payments	48%	5%
Job search activities	100%	9%

Tech Talk

Electronic Data Exchange: Child Support and Courts



By David Tabler
OCSE

Are you concerned with the amount of time your child support agency takes communicating information with courts? Is the volume of data when interfacing with courts overwhelming your staff? Is the disparity of communication methods with courts (hardcopy, fax, phone, e-mail) confusing and difficult to manage? Read on.

One of OCSE’s key initiatives to improve communications and standardize data throughout the child support community is to improve electronic data exchange between child support agencies and the court or judiciary.

Whether your State is judicial or administrative, numerous communications occur between child support

agencies and courts. Many child support cases typically require at least one filing with the court; but the number of communications is typically much higher. Streamlining these communications will have a dramatic effect on case handling and workload in your agency.

Several OCSE initiatives are under way to provide a single set of electronic data elements to facilitate exchange between child support agencies and courts:

- First, a collaborative workgroup of judges and child support administrators has come together to define the most common data elements needed when communicating between child support agencies and courts. A data schema has been developed and published combining data standards from both the court and child support enforcement communities,



using the National Information Exchange Model (NIEM). These data standards have been endorsed by both the court and child support enforcement communities, including the National Association for Courts Management, the Joint Technology Committee, and the Conference of Chief Justices. These standards provide the framework on which CSE agencies and courts can build an effective electronic data exchange.

- Second, an OCSE 1115 grant for the Colorado DISH (Data Information SHaring) project is under way. This is an electronic case filing and information exchange program allowing child support enforcement and the courts to exchange data electronically. Unlike the current paper-dependent systems, this solution will expedite child support orders, reduce redundant data entry and dependencies on paper, and improve data accuracy. DISH is scheduled to be in its first pilot site in April. OCSE plans to publish lessons learned from this project.
- Third, OCSE has prepared business case templates for electronic exchanges between CSE and courts. These *templates* can be used to obtain the necessary resources to get started.
- Fourth, OCSE grant opportunities this year include a *SIP grant* for “Improving Child Support Enforcement and Court Collaboration” and an *1115 grant* for “Projects in Support of the OCSE Project to Avoid Increasing Delinquencies (PAID) Initiative.” These provide excellent funding opportunities for agencies wishing to develop an electronic data exchange between CSE and judicial agencies.
- Fifth, OCSE is developing a section on its Web site designed to provide information for courts and child support offices interested in developing a court interface.

So the next obvious question you may have is: how can I use these tools and where do I get started?

- First, we suggest looking at some of the available State solutions. In addition to Colorado’s DISH, several projects are under way in other States, including Iowa, Georgia, Maine, New York, California, New Hampshire, Michigan, Idaho, Oklahoma, Missouri, Texas, and North Carolina.

- Next, obtain OCSE’s Child Support and Court/Judicial Message Exchange Data Model in *OCSE DCL-08-19*. This contains the data elements that reside in the NIEM. Also obtain the business case templates at *OCSE DCL-08-01*. These templates contain all the details a project requires and suggests all the factors to address before building a solution.
- Finally, when considering a solution, the sage advice is to start small. Begin with a communication that does not require a great deal of time to develop. Build on that success. Identify which communications can and should be automated. Begin with the simplest and more voluminous communications, such as scheduling a hearing. Review workflows between child support and courts to identify those opportunities. Next look at what data needs to be exchanged using the standard data elements from the NIEM. Then prepare your business cases using the OCSE templates.

There will be challenges as you proceed with the interface automation project. These will include acceptance of digital documents and digital signatures, competing priorities between agencies, testing both sides of the interface, and training CSE and judicial staff. Collaborating with other States to share lessons learned will be a key element in learning how to manage these challenges.

We hope you will share your experiences with OCSE as we all move forward to improve automation of child support enforcement and court interfaces. If you have questions, or want to share information about your project, please contact David Tabler at david.tabler@acf.hhs.gov or 202-401-6502, or Richard Ordowich at richard.ordowich@acf.hhs.gov or 202-260-5495.



Orange County, CA, Studies Payments by Credit Card as Child Support Collections Increase

By Mark Takayesu, Research Manager
Orange County Department of Child Support Services
Robert Jones, Deputy Director
California Department of Child Support Services

Consumer behavior has been studied quite extensively by economists for decades. These studies range from current purchasing trends to how different types of payment methods determine what consumers buy.

In December 2003, the Department of Child Support Services in Orange County, CA, under then Director Jan Sturla, implemented payment by credit cards as an option for customers who make child support payments. Relatively little was known, at the time, of its impact in improving child support collections. Estimates ranged from making no improvement to making a significant one.

Through careful data analysis, the Orange County Research Unit discovered that payment behavior by noncustodial parents (NCPs) was significantly altered as a result of implementing the credit card solution. By

providing payment by credit card as an option, NCPs paid greater and more consistent current support and arrears than previously recorded. As a result, Orange County witnessed an increase in collections.

Measuring Changes in Payment Behavior

The approach to measuring payment behavior of NCPs as a result of the credit card solution was quite simple; extract the population of NCPs paying their child support with a credit card, and plot their monthly level of child support collections 11 months before and 11 months after their initial use of the credit card. After using their credit card for the first time, did collections increase or decrease from a prior historical pattern?

Major Findings

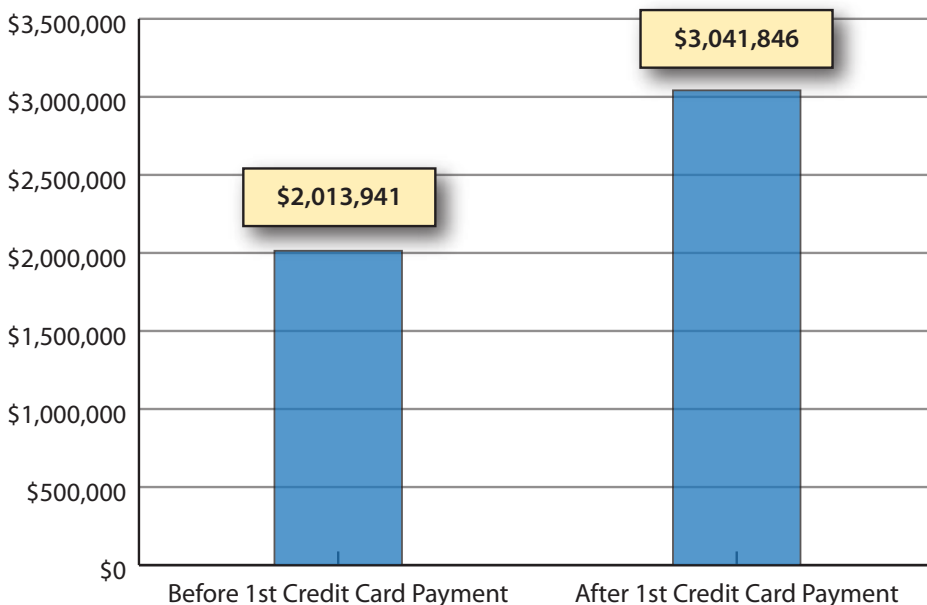
- **Credit Cards Increase Collections:** The impact of the Orange County credit card solution dramatically increased collections (both current support and arrears) to families. When collection patterns were examined from January 2003 to October 2004, there was a 51-percent increase in overall collections in 11 months after parents made their first credit card payment compared to 11 months prior (see chart on this page).

- **Credit Cards Improve Percent of Current Support Collected:** The Orange County credit card solution dramatically increased the percent of current support collected. The chart on the next page shows a 23.5-percent increase in this performance measure from a span of 11 months before compared to 11 months after parents made their first credit card payment.

- **Credit Cards Are Used More Frequently Year After Year:** When examining credit card collections only, the average monthly credit card collection in Orange County increased 109 percent, from a monthly average of \$157,653 in FFY 2004 to \$329,371 in FFY 2007. Furthermore, approximately 20-30 percent of individuals who initially used their credit card continued using their credit card in subsequent months.

Distributed Net Collections

11 Months Before and 11 Months After Initial Credit Card Payment



In total, Orange County's credit card program contributed \$11.1 million in collections in a span of 4 years following implementation in December 2003.

Research suggests that if the credit card program was not in place, the majority of these dollars would not have been distributed to families. Collections of \$11.1 million provided support to many families allowing them to purchase food, clothes, and other necessities for children.

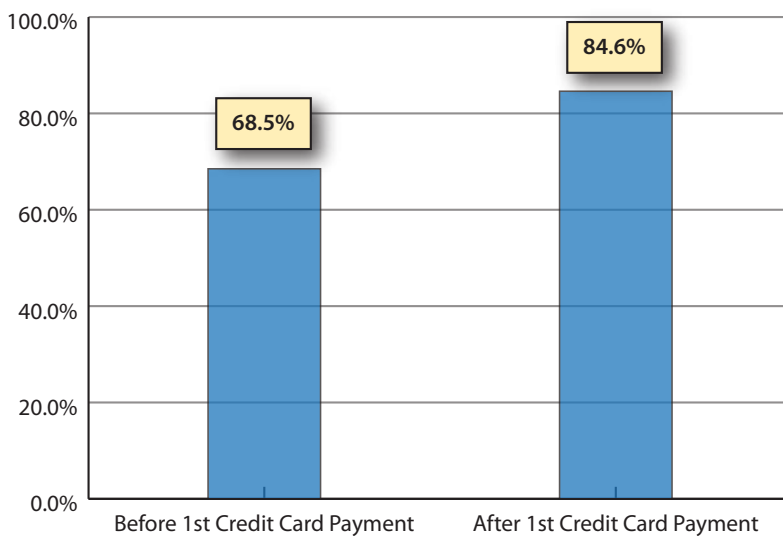
The Statewide Solution

California DCSS implemented a statewide credit card payment processing solution in March 2007. After 16 months of increasing credit card processing, DCSS

introduced an enhancement to the application that resulted in doubling both transactions and dollars. The critical change was to allow initial payments without the need for a Personal Identification Number (PIN). However, a PIN is required to establish recurring credit card payments.

Today this credit card payment processing application supports the statewide child support program. For a 24-month period, from March 2007 through February 2009, California DCSS has processed 104,649 credit card transactions for a total of \$50 million. Staff is currently analyzing the credit card data to determine its affect on statewide program performance.

Percent of Current Support Collected
11 Months Before and 11 Months After Initial Credit Card Payment



The PAID Solution



The California credit card payment solution may interest other child support agencies as they work to increase collections on both current support and arrears,

the goal of the national Project to Avoid Increasing Delinquencies (PAID).

For further information about the California program, please contact Mark Takayesu at 714-347-8223 or mtakayesu@css.ocgov.com, or Robert Jones at 916-845-6542 or robert.jones@fib.ca.gov.

To learn about PAID, please visit the OCSE Web site at: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/resources/paid/>

New Link to Earned Income Tax Credit



Find information on the Earned Income Tax Credit on the OCSE

Web site:

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/eitc.html>

IRS recently updated its Web link to the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). The new link may benefit child support agencies in increasing participation in the EITC. The site includes "EITC Central," the main source of information about EITC and its eligibility requirements and threshold amounts; a "Partner Toolkit" with an interactive EITC assistant and IRS publications; and "Marketing Express" for creating and customizing EITC communication products.





MO, NH, PA, SD Get Long-Owed Child Support Payments

The Project Save Our Children (PSOC) task force is a multi-agency law enforcement team that investigates and prosecutes the most egregious child support matters. In recent months, PSOC has successfully investigated cases that resulted in payments for children and families in the national child support enforcement caseload, including the following:

- In a Missouri case that began in 2003, a noncustodial father was ordered to pay \$3,900 a month for two children. When the case was referred to PSOC, in January 2007, arrears totaled \$135,700; the last payment was received in June 2006. This February, the father was sentenced to 5 years probation and full restitution in the amount of \$301,000. In addition, the court stipulated that he obtain a second part-time job within 2 weeks of the sentencing—or he may face incarceration. Since his arrest, he has paid \$13,800 toward his arrears.
- In 1998, a New Hampshire court ordered a noncustodial father to pay \$100 a week for his child. In 2005, when the case was referred to PSOC, the arrearage totaled more than \$37,000. The parent never made a payment toward the order until his indictment in September 2007, when he began to make sporadic payments totaling about \$7,400. This March, he was sentenced to 12 months in a New Hampshire correction facility, with the sentence suspended for 3 years, and 3 years probation. He was also ordered to pay \$10,000 immediately. The arrearage had increased to \$43,500, of which he has paid a total of \$17,400.
- In 2001, a Pennsylvania father was ordered to pay \$143 a month in child support for two children. In 2007, the State referred the case to PSOC. He owed about \$20,000 in restitution. In September 2008, he was arrested in New Jersey, and this February sentenced to 1 month time served and 1 year of supervised release, and ordered to pay \$26,600. Since his arrest, the father has been gainfully employed and making payments, totaling around \$2,600.
- In December 2000, a South Dakota court ordered a father to pay \$593 a month child support for 3 children. The State referred the case to PSOC in August 2007, and a month later he was arrested in his resident State of Colorado. This February, he was sentenced to 5 years of supervised probation and restitution of \$37,700, of which he has paid \$866.
- In March 2005, a South Dakota court ordered a noncustodial father to pay \$200 a month for one child; his last payment of \$115 was received in May 2005. In February 2008, South Dakota referred this matter to PSOC, and in May the father was arrested in Colorado, where he resides. He was sentenced to 5 years supervised probation and restitution of \$21,000. Prior to sentencing, he paid \$2,400 toward his arrearage.
- In June 2008, South Dakota referred to PSOC a case that began 9 years earlier, in which a noncustodial father was ordered to pay \$189 a month. In September the same year, the noncustodial father was arrested in Washington State. This February he was sentenced in South Dakota to 5 years of supervised probation and ordered to pay restitution of \$13,600, and a monthly payment of \$200 or more. Prior to sentencing, he paid \$760 toward his arrearage balance.
- In March 2008, South Dakota referred to PSOC a case that began 15 years earlier. Following the investigation and indictment in South Dakota, the noncustodial father surrendered to HHS OIG Agents in Texas. At the time of his arrest, he was residing in Missouri. This February, he was sentenced to 2 years probation and restitution of \$9,000, and ordered to pay at least \$250 monthly

for his child, now 16 years old. Prior to sentencing, he paid \$2,500 toward his arrearage.

- In 2003, a South Dakota court ordered a noncustodial mother to pay \$245 a month for her child. In September 2007, the State referred the case to PSOC. She was indicted in December the same year, and this February arrested in Georgia, where she resides, by HHS OIG Special Agents.

This March, the mother was sentenced in South Dakota to 5 years probation and restitution of about \$17,700. Prior to sentencing, she paid \$1,500 toward her arrearage balance.

For information about the Project Save Our Children task force, please contact Nick Soppa in OCSE at 202-401-4677 or nicholas.soppa@acf.hhs.gov.

Passport Denial Program

VT, IL, MN, WA Collect Over 200K for Kids



Below are several recent collections voluntarily reported by State child support agencies under the national Passport Denial Program:

- Vermont - \$113,454: New York collected for Vermont when a businessman needed to travel to Southern Asia.
- Illinois - \$92,000: A noncustodial parent needed to obtain a visa for his spouse residing in eastern Asia so she could stay with him while he is employed in the Middle East.
- Minnesota - \$15,000: An individual needed more pages added to his passport while traveling in Eastern Asia.
- Washington - \$10,482: A window cleaner's employer paid his child support debt in full and also paid for his airplane ticket so he could wash windows in Central America.

Since 1998, the Passport Denial Program has collected over \$165 million in voluntarily reported lump sum payments.

For more information on the Passport Denial Program, or to report your own success story, contact Rebecca Hamil at rebecca.hamilton@acf.hhs.gov.

National Child Abuse Prevention Month



Strengthening Families and Communities

April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month. For information, visit:
<http://www.childwelfare.gov/preventing/preventionmonth/>

Child Support Report

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/pubs/csrindex.html>

Child Support Report is published monthly by the Office of Child Support Enforcement, Division of Consumer Services. We welcome articles and high-quality digital 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.

Curtis L. Coy
Acting Assistant Secretary for Children and Families

Donna J. Bonar
Acting Commissioner, OCSE

Robert Cohen
Director, Division of Consumer Services

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

To receive an e-mail alert when new issues are posted, send an e-mail to:
subscribe-csr-subscription@lyris.acf.hhs.gov