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OFFICE OF CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT

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California Celebrates Certification

By Michael Rifkin OCSE

On June 27, OCSE Commissioner Margot Bean presented a Certificate of Achievement to the California Department of Child Support Services for its newly certified statewide child support enforcement system. The system meets the functional requirement of the Family Support Act of 1988 (FSA 88) and the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA).

Commissioner Bean stated that she was "pleased to be in California to offer my sincere congratulations and commendation to you and all those involved in the success of California's

child support automation system. ... The drive and commitment I have seen from everyone involved with this project is impressive. California's child support program is the nation's largest and arguably one of the most complex child support programs."

The California Child Support Automation System (CCSAS), a collaborative effort between Federal, State, and local governments and the private sector, has been under development since 2003. In 2006, California requested and received a waiver of statewideness and approval of an Alternative Systems Configuration (ASC) comprised of a statewide database, Computer Assistance Support Enforcement System (CASES), the San Francisco County automated system, ACES Replacement System (ARS), the Los Angeles County automated system, and the California Child Support Automated System (CCSAS)—the new single statewide system.



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



David Maxwell-Jolly, Director, California Division of Child Support Services, addresses the audience, while OCSE Commissioner Margot Bean, CCSAS Project Director Dianne Koelzer, and OCSE Lead IT Specialist Michael Rifkin pose with the plaque.

OCSE's Certification Review Team (Michael Rifkin, Joseph Bodmer, David Tabler, Walter Zeitschel, and Elise Wing) conducted system functionality reviews throughout 2007 and 2008, culminating in the final review and certification in June. Presently 41 counties (45 percent of the caseload) have transitioned to CCSAS; 17 counties are using CASES, and 2 (San Diego and Los Angeles counties) are using ARS.

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Past and present key players in the CCSAS, from the State Health and Human Services Agency, Division of Child Support Services, Tax Franchise Board, and OCSE central and regional offices, gathered after the certification ceremony. From left: Gerry Goldberg, Lorna Fong, Teri Taki, Mike Rifkin, Commissioner Margot Bean, David Maxwell-Jolly, Kim Belshe, Dianne Koelzer, Carlos Zamarripa, Selvi Stanislaus, and Greta Wallace

California counties no longer operate as separate systems; they now share their caseloads and are able to provide better service to the children of California. The certified ASC will improve interstate case processing and the national program—all but four child support jurisdictions list California as one of their top 10 interstate exchange partners. California is now capable of accepting and requesting interstate services via CSENet (Child Support Enforcement Network) transactions. California has exchange agreements with Washington, Oregon, Hawaii, Kentucky, Louisiana, Nebraska and Texas, and is entering into agreements with other States to be able to electronically exchange information about shared interstate cases.

You Can Run But You Can't Ride: License Suspension in Massachusetts

By Johanna J. Moran

Massachusetts Department of Revenue

The license suspension program in the Child Support Division of the Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR) is not only one of the agency's most successful tools for collecting child support; it also contributes to making the streets of Massachusetts safer.

Local police chiefs ask DOR for lists of obligors who have had their driver's licenses suspended for failure to pay child support because the lists can help in other law enforcement efforts. In one instance, local police stopped



and arrested an individual whose name appeared on the list for operating without a license. A search of the car turned up a large stash of illegal drugs. Faced with the evidence against him, the individual decided to cooperate with police and helped secure several more arrests and the seizure of more illegal drugs.

While this story shows a side benefit, DOR's license suspension program has proven to be a powerful, efficient, and inexpensive enforcement tool. The key to its success is that DOR can suspend any license issued in Massachusetts administratively, without a judicial proceeding in advance. There is, however, an opportunity



for judicial review for any individual who challenges a suspension. State law allows DOR to conduct data matches with all licensing agencies, including those that issue professional, trade, and recreational licenses, as well as motor vehicle licenses and registrations.

Noticing Results

The suspension process is fairly simple. DOR sends delinquent obligors an initial warning notice advising that licenses and motor vehicle registrations could be suspended or revoked if regular support payments do not begin forthwith. If the parent does not contact DOR within 30 days to make a lump sum payment or establish a payment plan, a final notice is sent indicating that the licenses will be suspended immediately. The appropriate licensing agency then issues its formal notice of suspension. By statute, any appeal must follow the administrative review process that governs DOR's cases and is not done through the licensing agency.

In the 6 years the program has been in effect, DOR has sent initial notices of suspension to approximately 81,000 parents. Because questions about account arrears are addressed and resolved directly with the DOR case manager, only one case has gone to formal administrative hearing.

Most parents contact DOR when they receive the initial

warning letter. They often make lump sum payments, sign payment agreements to stay current in their support payments, and work with DOR staff to resolve other outstanding issues related to their cases. Many of these parents have taken advantage of the offer of a waiver of interest and penalty owed by paying all principal owed to the custodial parent and the State as well as interest owed to the custodial parent. (DOR charges 1 percent interest and .5 percent penalty per month on the total past-due support amount in any month where the support due is not paid.)

In addition to the 81,000 notices, between January 2002 and May 2008 the program has resulted in suspension of 44,000 driver's licenses, 1,200 motor vehicle registrations, and 1,300 professional licenses, and collections of \$139 million—most going directly to families.

Police Partners

As for the police departments, after ensuring disclosure met applicable requirements, DOR began providing Massachusetts police chiefs with information about delinquent obligors in their communities who have had licenses suspended. The Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association posts this information on a secure Web site for the chiefs. Local police are then better able to prevent unlicensed drivers from operating a motor vehicle, while



The local townissued hackney license for taxis is located above the bumper.





work with them on plans to pay past-due support debts. If the parents do contact and work with DOR after their release, they are exempt from license suspension as long as they continue to remain accountable.

also helping DOR with locate and enforcement efforts.

In one town, the police department sent an officer door to door looking for noncustodial parents who had had their licenses suspended. DOR got updated address information for several parents. The parents—and the town's citizens—got the message that the police were working closely with DOR.

Exemptions Apply

DOR exempts certain individuals from the license suspension process, including those who receive cash public assistance benefits, are disabled, or are reunited with their families and children. In a special program with the regional Veterans Administration (VA), veterans in selected in-house programs agree to pay—out of wages that are otherwise not subject to garnishment—a set amount towards their child support arrears. In return, DOR agrees to exempt these veterans from certain enforcement actions, including license suspension.

In one case, DOR worked with the VA to help a noncustodial parent veteran who wanted to reestablish contact with his seven children, most of whom were adults. In that case, not only did the custodial parent start to receive payments on the past-due support, a father and his children renewed their relationship.

License suspension also provides leverage for DOR's work with incarcerated parents. Inmates are encouraged to contact DOR upon release and make arrangements to comply with their child support obligations. DOR can connect the parents with workforce opportunities and

Employers Comply

Finally, DOR has found license suspension useful in encouraging employers to comply with their obligations to withhold and remit support payments. Massachusetts law allows DOR to use its administrative remedies, including license suspension, against noncompliant employers.

Recently DOR used license suspension to compel compliance from a taxi company that withheld but failed to remit child support for two employees. Numerous attempts to contact the company were unsuccessful and DOR assessed a penalty against it. When the penalty did not elicit compliance, DOR started the process to suspend the company's hackney license, issued through the town. DOR was also in contact with the town counsel, who was very cooperative. The town counsel did not want to have to suspend the license if it could be avoided because it meant taking 40 cabs off the road immediately; clearly something that would have been a hardship for the town's residents. She told DOR that she would contact the taxi company and "read them the riot act." The employer contacted DOR immediately thereafter and offered to have one of his drivers hand-deliver cashier's checks in the middle of a snowstorm!

DOR is continuing to look for more ways the license suspension program can enforce child support obligations and encourage ongoing compliance. Some suggest using the motto: "Parents who don't pay their child support can run, but they can't drive!"

For more information about the Massachusetts license suspension program, please contact David Norcross at 617-626-4025 or *norcrossd@dor.state.ma.us*.

Paternity in Paradise Hawaii Promotes Message Through And Training, Media

By Rosemary McShane and **Sheri Wang** *Hawaii Child Support Enforcement Agency*

Our climate may make Hawaii seem like Oa paradise in which to live and work, but we still face the same challenges in our child support program that everyone else faces. These challenges include achieving and maintaining a high paternity establishment rate, which is no small feat in an island State with a population that is transient and has a high rate of inmigration.

Yet, in the spirit of continuous improvement, we began to tackle this challenge by examining the reasons parents do not establish paternity and considering ways to address them. A multi-faceted outreach campaign was one opportunity we identified as being within our ability to design and implement. So, with financial help from OCSE, under a 3-year 1115 demonstration grant, we began our work.

In our project planning, we laid out a series of paternity outreach activities, some for the immediate and some for the longer term. We first developed a paternity training package that we could present to hospitals, clinics, social services programs, community-based organizations, and other groups that work with new or expectant parents.

In addition to a formal presentation, the package included a brochure advertising the benefits of paternity materials to our child support staff and our key stakeholders, local hospitals and clinics in Honolulu, and public and private agencies serving families

and children. We have now held two paternity training sessions and are planning our third for this October.

These sessions have been very successful in educating new staff in the basics and complexities of paternity establishment and reinforcing among more experienced staff the importance of paternity establishment in improving outcomes for children and creating strong families. The sessions have had the added benefit of building stronger links with our partners in encouraging parents to acknowledge paternity at the child's birth.

Within the last 18 months, we have expanded our paternity message to the general public through a series of activities and outreach efforts. This has included participation in both large and small events that attract parents with young children and prospective parents who are preparing for a birth (e.g., community fairs and the area's "New Baby and Kids" and "Oh Baby!" expos), and advertising in local publications (e.g., "Hawaii Parent" magazine).

Recently, our efforts also have included placing placards about paternity establishment on public buses that serve Honolulu and the entire island of Oahu and securing a

establishment for all family members, a poster that provided a contact number for more information that offices could prominently display, and small flyers about paternity that parents could take with them after an office visit. We used similar graphics for all the materials in hopes of building awareness and support for the program among health care and social service providers and creating a brand that the public would easily recognize.

Our second step was to roll out the presentation and

The Hawaii Child Support Enforcement Agency's Section 1115 demonstration grant project is working on a collaborative approach to reach unwed parents prior to the establishment of a child support order. Its purpose is to educate them about their parental responsibilities and the importance of marriage, and to assist them in making better choices and a parenting plan for their child.

The project includes three major components: specialized case managers co-located in the TANF agency; community outreach and education; and research and analysis. This article details paternity and outreach education; the other components also are in the works.

An evaluation of the grant project, once complete, will be available on the OCSE Web site at: http://www. acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/grants/ commitment from two radio stations to run public service announcements (PSAs) about the benefits of establishing paternity.

Both of these efforts took some leg work to develop. The bus placards were placed free of charge under a Department of Transportation (DOT) policy that allows State government agencies to run one ad for one month a year if they provide the ad material. Since the Attorney General's Office, of which the child support division is a part, had not





used its allotment, we were able to run the ads on all 525 buses for the month of May. And, since the DOT did not have other ads to replace ours, the paternity placard was displayed on buses during June as well.

For the PSAs, we first identified the two radio stations that had the greatest number of listeners and approached both about reading our paternity establishment script. We were surprised and pleased when both agreed to run the PSA.

We could not have accomplished this work without the funding available through the 1115 demonstration grant. The grant has given us an opportunity to develop a paternity outreach program and build linkages and

The placard is displayed on all 525 Honolulu city/county buses that serve the island of Oahu. where the paternity message can be seen by anyone riding the buses on the island, not only people in the city/county. The brochure advertises the benefits of paternity for all family members.

low to Establish Paternity Voluntarily if You're an Unmarried Parent

r Your Child

partnerships with some of our stakeholders that were not in place before the grant. Furthermore, we now have a program and a set of materials that we can continue using beyond the grant period to educate people about paternity establishment and to build awareness for the child support program.

For further information, please contact Sheri Wang, Hawaii Child Support Enforcement Agency, 808-692-7131 or *sheri.wang@hawaii.gov.*

Getting a Good Rap HUHY Helps Baltimore Customers Find Employment, Pay Support

By Elaine Blackman OCSE

Lucky are the people who land the job of their dreams. No such luck for many customers of the Baltimore City Office of Child Support Enforcement (BCOCSE), who are likely to have problems finding any job due to a history of incarceration or substance abuse, inadequate education, or lack of job-searching skills. Outreach Coordinator Richard Dumas can recall that prior to 2004, when BCOCSE referred cases to court, judges often would not order child support from unemployed parents "because they simply could not pay." After confirming that some of these parents were in fact homeless, while others had drug or literacy problems, BCOCSE decided to widen its outreach efforts with community organizations.

"Born out of necessity," is the way Dumas describes "Help Us Help You," or HUHY (pronounced *Huey*)—a program that continues to change and grow. Its purpose, though, has remained the same: to assist noncustodial parents in overcoming barriers to employment, including making appropriate referrals to community organizations, so that they can meet their child support obligations.

From Good Faith to Good Standing

At the onset, HUHY staff obtained a list of community organizations and matched their zip codes with those of area employers willing to hire its customers. Next, they compiled a list of child support customers who would have been referred to court as a result of actions taken through automatic enforcement tools.

Rather than refer certain cases to court, says Dumas, the office would reissue a parent's driver's license that was automatically revoked so the parent would be able to look for a job or acquire necessary technical training. In turn, "we required a 'good faith payment' in hopes that many of the parents would make an initial child support payment and then show up to pay on a regular basis." Parents who agreed to the good-faith requirement usually paid a small amount, \$20-25.



Several months ago, BCOCSE renewed the good-faith requirement to help "reacclimate some of these parents to making regular payments, as well as, hopefully, prompt connectivity with their children," says Dumas. BCOCSE will not suspend a customer's driver's license if he or she remains in the HUHY program in good standing.

Some HUHY participants have indicated that although they understand the concept behind such intercepts as lottery winnings, when it comes to a driver's license that's something they can't do without. One parent recently called Dumas to thank him for reissuing his license, saying that had he not had the license, he wouldn't have been able to pay child support—or fulfill his lifelong dream to obtain a commercial driver's license.

HUHY results so far have shown that after one payment many parents are meeting the requirement to pay again. "Although there is no set amount, a greater number of people are bringing payments a second time," says Dumas. "The process ends up flushing out the underground economy because it gives people an opportunity to make payments of any amount, rather than the conventional way."

In 2 recent consecutive months, BCOCSE received a payment on about 55 percent of its cases overall. About 30 to 35 percent have not made a payment in the past 4 or 5 years, including some who may be working "under the radar," says Dumas, and are afraid to come into the office for fear of being turned over to law enforcement authorities. While only about 25 percent of HUHY customers make a payment at the initial meeting, those who make payments at the follow-up meeting are up to about 40 percent.

Spreading the Good Word

HUHY has been modified twice to expand its components. Referrals now originate from BCOCSE's enforcement, establishment, and customer service teams; courts (Masters, Judges, States Attorneys); outreach efforts in the community; and past participants in the HUHY program. It is the last two, however, which are helping to build trust among fathers in the child support program.

HUHY partners with 23 community fatherhood organizations whose leaders are telling fathers that child support is serious and the child support office can help. In turn, these fathers are telling others. "It's what I call 'test balloons,'" says Dumas, when two out of three fathers who have heard fatherhood groups talk about child support and HUHY show up at the child support office.

"People tend to be a little more serious when they initiate contact; they at least trust [child support workers] enough to take the first step," says Dumas.

At first many parents in the community are apprehensive about coming in to the office because they've heard about 'sweeps' and license suspensions," explains Dumas, "so it becomes really hard for child support to do their work." But with the introduction about the child support office coming from fatherhood groups, the child support office "is coming in like a friend, and the word through fatherhood groups is coming fast."

Between 2,500 and 3,000 from Baltimore and

surrounding counties attended one recent fatherhood conference, sponsored by the Casey Foundation, in which HUHY staff led a breakout session. Reactions were positive. "The better the experience with us, the better the testimony they tell someone else."

In all outreach settings, HUHY staff encourages parents to participate in the program. A HUHY staff member also represents the program in Baltimore's one-stop employment centers for recently released incarcerated adults, and the centers' staffs recommend the HUHY program to parents. BCOCSE does not have a formal means of getting the information about HUHY to the public, however, says Dumas, "we also do not appear to have a shortage of candidates."

The office receives about 75 referrals per month; all of those referred from contempt cases in court show up for HUHY's orientation classes, held twice a month. Those who don't show up are referred back to the judge who sent them, so the case is back in the hands of court.

Getting Into the Habit

At the orientation, HUHY staff explains a requirement to come into the office once a week with updates and any additional payments parents may have obtained—a process continued until they are employed. A weekly visit encourages consistency, getting participants in the habit of coming routinely and in the habit of being accountable.

"In every class, says Dumas, "we stress the bottom line: 'You need to start making some kind of payment toward your child support case.' We need them to know the outcome is that they will be able to pay child support. This bottom line remains constant, and parents are told that they will be in a position to be self-sustaining and to be able to pay."

For further information about HUHY, contact Richard Dumas at 410-951-8009 or *rdumas@Policy-Studies.com*

South Carolina Leads Interstate Data Network

By Larry J. McKeown, Director South Carolina Child Support Enforcement

A tool that takes the most solid, verified information available and puts it at the fingertips of line workers is a valuable one indeed; even more so, when it puts money into the households of your clients.

The Interstate Data Exchange Consortium (IDEC) does both. Over the last 20 years, the network has become an integral component of South Carolina's case processing—from beginning to end. South Carolina, which proudly serves as the Seat A gency of IDEC, has

proudly serves as the Seat Agency of IDEC, has seen continual success in crucial areas such as identification of noncustodial parents, location of absent parents, disbursement of undistributed collections, and, of course, the Financial Institution Data Match (FIDM) and Automated Enforcement of Interstate (AEI) program.

Using IDEC's Shared Database, workers are able to electronically cross State lines and search for noncustodial parents by name, partial name, misspelled name, and



Larry J. McKeown

even mispronounced name. On top of that, the worker's search can be refined by agerange and locale. It is common knowledge that identification of these absent parents early in the process can mean the difference between an unlikely future closure and an all-around successful case for paternity, support, medical support, and collection.

The Shared Database houses not only "fill in the blank" demographic information, it has each participating State's best and often most current information, generally

> including DMV, Food Stamp, Unemployment, Corrections, and Employment and New Hire information from both the State and Federal governments. In fact, as of February 2008, a survey of the Shared Parent Locate Database shows updates within the last month of 52 of

these databases. We know of no other database that can put this kind of current information at the fingertips of its workers.

The Shared Database has other applications as well. Not limited to any single participant type in a case, information is readily available for custodial as well as noncustodial parents. South Carolina has made undistributed collections (UDC) a priority for some time and IDEC has proved a vital search tool for these situations—enabling almost \$360,000 in UDC disbursement within the past 15 months. Likewise, there is no faster means of verification of a suspect Social Security Number than IDEC's Shared Database. A number's entry into the SSN field yields generally conclusive results immediately—not days later.

IDEC's contributions to the South Carolina child support program do not end there. In fact, more visible are smooth, cost-effective FIDM and AEI processinghallmarks of the network. All told, almost 4,000 financial institutions, using both methods, are providing financial and lead data to its members. In the fourth quarter of 2007, IDEC States received close to a half-million matched accounts, with more than 60,000 of them being interstate accounts. In addition to the members' FIDM collections, the participating States can boast well over \$1 million to date in AEI collections. This is real money going to real homes. While some are still trying to define AEI, IDEC is practicing it in the form of a tested, userfriendly collection tool that identifies, filters, executes, and monitors AEI transactions using parameters prescribed by the participating States.

The IDEC is made up of a group of States whose common objective is to pool resources to provide costeffective solutions for interstate and intrastate child support issues. IDEC is State owned and operated. States may join as either "full members" or as "limited partners" through a State contract containing a memorandum of understanding agreement administered by the South Carolina Department of Social Services (SCDSS), which serves as the "Seat Agency."

Each full member State has a representative and a vote on the IDE Consortium Board of Directors, which meets semi-annually. SCDSS provides oversight and maintenance of a contract with a vendor for the development, operation, maintenance, and marketing of the IDEC services.

IDEC full member States are Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia.

Please take a look at IDEC (*www.IDEConsortium.com*) and consider joining the consortium of 15 States that refuse to let borders get in the way of a successful child support case.

The Power of PAID in Region III

By John Clark OCSE Region III



L ast month more than 190 child support professionals, representing all Region III States, gathered in Lancaster, PA, for one in a series of "Good Ideas and

Promising Practices Meetings." The meeting focused on the power of the national initiative PAID—Project to Avoid Increasing Delinquencies.

The event was hosted by Diane Fralich, Director, Lancaster County Domestic Relations Section. Eileen Brooks, Director, OCSE's Division of State, Tribal and Local Assistance, provided an overview of the impact and strategies for achieving the objectives of PAID, and was followed by an informative discussion of how several States in Region III are implementing such goals. The discussion panel consisted of IV-D child support



Above are members of the Lancaster County Domestic Relations Section staff. Front row, from left : Mary Jordan, Joanne Sierra, and Ann Manuel. Back row, from left: Diane Fralich, Connie Cole, Melissa Kreitz, Chris Bailey, Julie Sterner, Jill Keiser, and Kelly Slein.

Directors from Delaware (Charles Hayward), Maryland (Joseph Jackins), and Virginia (Nick Young) and the Pennsylvania Director, Division of Program Development and Evaluation (Thomas Sheaffer).

The meeting featured presentations and discussions on many effective projects primarily related to the PAID initiative, including:

- New enforcement initiatives in Crawford and Carbon Counties (PA), Delaware, and West Virginia;
- Effective customer outreach in Delaware and Harford County (MD);
- Early intervention to motivate noncustodial parents to get on the "right track" in the District of Columbia, Prince George's County (MD), and Virginia;
- Increasing use of the telephone for locate and enforcement purposes in Allegheny and Montgomery Counties (PA), Allegany County (MD), and Virginia;
- New and creative ways to use liens in Pennsylvania and West Virginia; and

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> Registration information: http://www.wciconferences.com/ocse

Contact person: kimberly.mitchellharley@acf.hhs.gov, 202-205-3496



Beyond the Bench

Partnering for Excellence in Child Support through the Courts, Fatherhood, and Employment Initiatives • The National Directory of New Hires (NDNH) Attributable Collection Study, which is designed to demonstrate that State child support offices are successfully using NDNH data to collect and increase child support payments.

Extensive handouts accompanied the approximately 30 presentations on Region III State initiatives relating to PAID. The presentations from the meeting should be posted to the Region III ACF-OCSE Web site soon at: *http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/region3/program_info/*

The importance of the Good Ideas and Promising Practices Meetings was shown by a neighboring office's registration of 34 child support professionals for the June training event. County and State Directors in Region III indicate that five people can attend this meeting for the same cost as sending one person to a national conference.

Joan Kennedy, Director, Prince George's County Office of Child Support Enforcement, plans to adapt a PAID strategy implemented by Lancaster County. Gary Kline, Director for Montgomery County Domestic Relations Section, summarized the viewpoint expressed by numerous participants: "This is always one of my favorite meetings. I always get a 'good idea' or two that I can 'steal' and use in my county."

To learn more about the Good Ideas and Promising Practices Meeting, please contact John Clark at *john.clark@acf.hhs.gov* or at 215-861-4067.

Child Support Report

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

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