



Child Support Report



Office of Child Support Enforcement

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Kern County Shows Off Media Campaign Builds Partnerships

By Steve Flores

Imagine developing an outreach program that has people waiting in line to participate with the child support agency. How about an outreach program where educational and community-based organizations, elected officials, and community leaders all want to be publicly associated with child support and this activity?



John Nilon (center), Director of Kern County (CA) Child Support Services, hosts a “Kids Count” media event at Bakersfield College’s Child Development Center. He is flanked by the show’s guest, child support officer Tammi Tilford (left), and Alexis Esparza of “First 5 Kern.”

Welcome to Bakersfield, CA, where Kern County has implemented an innovative marketing approach to a new concept in child support outreach.

“Kids Count” is a 30-minute, weekly television and radio show (co-broadcast), and monthly magazine column. It was designed by Kern County Child Support Services staff to enhance the agency’s public image by providing a new community forum where people, programs, and events that enrich children and benefit families are showcased on a Child Support Services-sponsored media activity.

Each episode of Kids Count is filmed at a different location throughout the community where family or children activities are taking place. Those activities provide the background for an open stage. The hosts are Kern County Child Support Services Director John Nilon, “First 5 Kern” Program Manager Alexis Esparza, and *Kern County Family Magazine* Publisher, LJ Corby. (First 5 Kern is part of a statewide program to promote, support, and improve early childhood development. *Family Magazine* features stories about families, children, and the community.)

The target audiences for Kids Count are primarily noncustodial and custodial parents. The secondary audience is the general community

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- Florida shares success of Spanish Web site for employers *page 4*

OCSE: www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse

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'Breaking the Cycle'

Alternatives to Incarceration Lead to Collections In Wake County, North Carolina

By Judge Kristin H. Ruth

The threat of going to jail—or going to jail—for failure to pay child support is just a temporary *fix* that most district court judges use in collecting child support. The daunting task of trying to persuade noncustodial parents to work and pay their child support obligation is one of the most difficult for judges who listen 8 hours a day to the most depressing cases from the hardest-to-serve population.



Judge Ruth

The Cycle

The cycle is a familiar one: Parent is ordered to pay child support; parent doesn't pay; parent is issued a *show cause*; parent is served; parent comes to court; parent is found in contempt; parent is ordered to pay a purge or go to jail; parent pays the purge (generally \$500); parent is released; and the cycle repeats itself over and over again.

The Model

In hopes of breaking the cycle, I incorporated into my orders the resources already available, and implemented an innovative approach to the collection of child support. Through collaborative efforts of the resources below and others in the community, coupled with frequent court reviews, child support collections continue to increase. Here are the social and economic benefits so far:

"Working for Kids" (a noncustodial parent employment program):

- Puts more money into the family unit.
- Pays back arrears both to the state and to the custodial parent.
- Increases taxes paid to Wake County, the state, and IRS due to employment.
- Infuses money into the local economy.

- Early intervention reduces need for social services.
- Working parents are role models for children.
- Family members' self-esteem is raised if parents are working.
- Some statistics indicate that a child's school performance and attendance are improved when parents work and quality of life is improved.

Carolina Dispute Settlement Services (voluntary mediation and access to custody and visitation clinics through the legal process):

- Prevents unknown numbers of potential conflicts from ever reaching the level of court intervention.
- Reduces the number of cases for disposition in the court system for judges, clerks, staff, and administrative personnel.
- Encourages positive communication with families and visitation of children that correlates with the noncustodial parent paying child support.
- Helps address the barriers mothers and fathers face in being able to financially support their children.

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- Significantly saves the state, county, and taxpayer dollars in a time of financial crisis.

“**Electronic House Arrest**” (EHA), an alternative to incarceration:

- Reduces jail overcrowding.
- Total jail cost-avoidance savings for 2003 of \$1,839,036, and in 2004, \$1,753,380 (Wake County only).
- Encourages persons placed on EHA to participate in court-ordered resource and life skills programs, to work, pay child support through wage withholding, and to be accountable for their particular location and situation.
- Reduces absconding subsequent to court hearings, restricts unproductive behaviors, encourages and motivates the noncustodial parents to be financially accountable to their child or children.

The Vision

The vision is to set a new standard for the collection of child support across the country. Children should not suffer financial hardships when resources are available and alternatives to incarceration are affordable and cost effective.

Jail overcrowding, unemployment, increased court dockets, and staggering numbers of arrears owed to the children and the state—all are universal problems throughout the country, and all have a potential remedy through alternatives to incarceration. The model above exemplifies the success of many and the need to incorporate the same in other counties and states. [CSR](#)

Judge Kristin H. Ruth is the District Court Judge for the 10th District Court District in Wake County, Raleigh, NC. For further information, please contact Judge Ruth at 919-835-3224 or kristin.h.ruth@nccourts.org.

Task Force Brings Law and Order To Ohio Noncustodial Mom

As a result of investigations conducted by the Project Save Our Children (PSOC) Task Force, the State of Iowa recently indicted an aspiring police officer for failure to pay child support. The noncustodial mother had failed to help support her two children since she was ordered to do so more than 10 years ago, and owed \$25,000. Initially she paid \$5,000, hoping to reduce the felony charge to a misdemeanor. She has now provided Iowa a check to cover the full amount.

The PSOC Task Force will continue to report on events such as this in future issues of *Child Support Report*, as well as best practices and profiles of PSOC Task Force members across the country.

For further information about the PSOC Task Force, please contact Nick Soppa, OCSE’s project supervisor, at 202-401-4677 or nsoppa@acf.hhs.gov. [CSR](#)

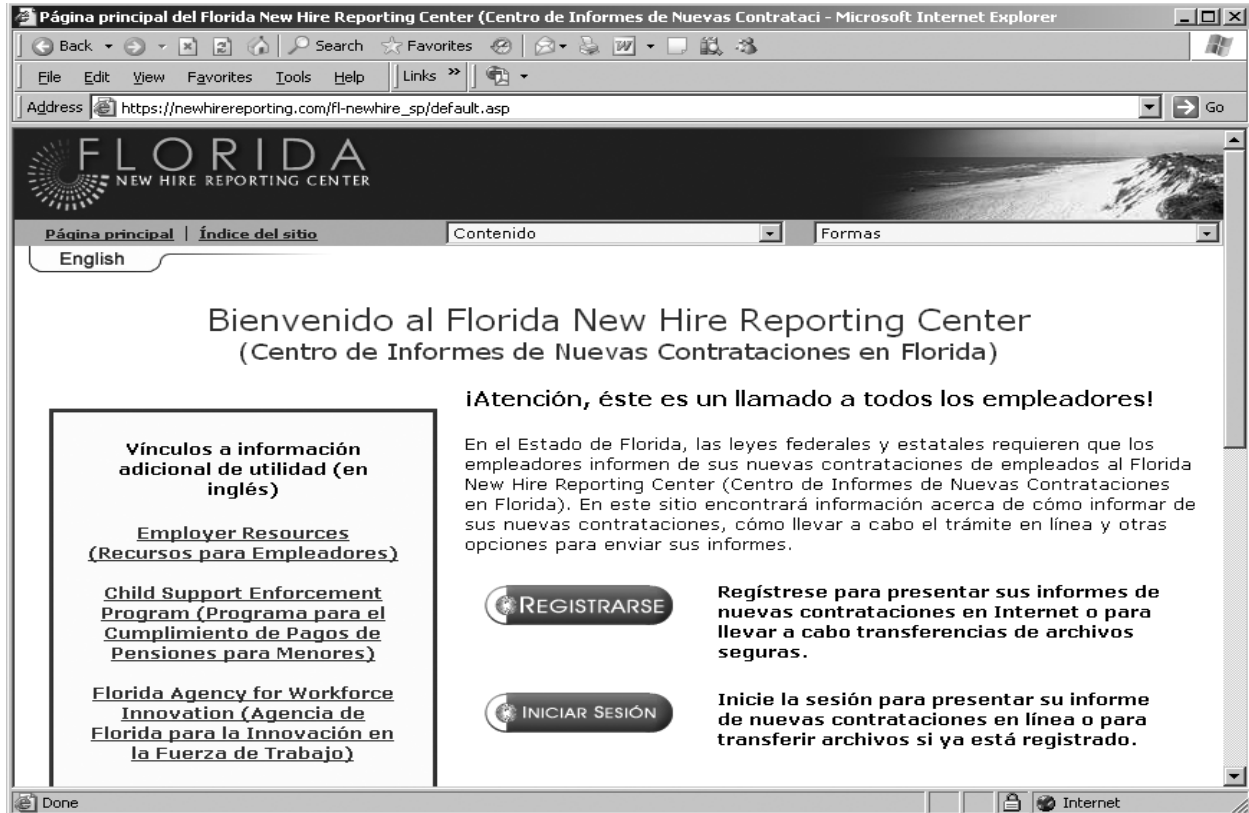
Save the Date!

OCSE 16th National Child Support Enforcement Training Conference

September 11-13, 2006

**Marriott Crystal Gateway Hotel
1700 Jefferson Davis Highway
Arlington, VA 22202
703-920-3230**

Charlene Buter, conference chair:
202-401-5091 or cbutler@acf.hhs.gov



Florida's New Hire Reporting home page on the Web may be accessed at www.fl-newhire.com. Link to the Spanish language site by selecting the *espanol* tab on the top left corner of the page. (According to the 2000 Census, 16.8 percent of Florida's population is of Hispanic or Latino origin--and 57.3 percent of Miami-Dade County's population--compared to 12.5 percent in the United States overall.)

Spanish Web Site Helps Sunshine State Strengthen Vital Link with Employers

By John Calhoun and Laura Reeves

As part of its effort to increase and improve employer New Hire Reporting, Florida Child Support Enforcement launched the nation's first fully functional Spanish language reporting Web site in December 2003. Now, more than 500 employers per month use the Web site for accessing information and reporting new hires. Most of these users were previously registered to use the English site but switched to the Spanish site when it became available.

The Spanish language New Hire Reporting site demonstrates Florida's commitment to provid-

ing innovative tools for making reporting interaction fast, easy and secure. Employers are able to access the site 24/7 using any computer with Internet access. On the home page, employers can learn about the New Hire program, read frequently asked questions, link to the state and federal child support sites, and find a host of other information. Those who choose not to report online may download forms to mail or fax to the reporting office. Formats for electronic tape and disc transmission are also available.

See **FLORIDA**, next page

To begin reporting online, employers must first register with the site and on subsequent visits will log into the secure portal using a password. Once inside they simply list their new employees and transmit the information. The reports are delivered instantly, and employers may print a confirmation in Spanish.

Florida's interactive Spanish language site was built in partnership with the state's New Hire services provider, Policy Studies Inc. (PSI).

An international translation firm was enlisted to ensure that the message and forms on the site were consistent with New Hire law, policy, and procedures. The translation firm (whose other clients include eBay, Hewlett Packard, Oracle, Microsoft, Attachmate, Kodak, and Disney) assisted with the development of a standardized glossary of terms. This was a critical part of the process because of the ethnic and cultural diversity within Florida's Hispanic employer population.

The process of developing the site started with a linguist translating the text from the English Web pages into Spanish. After this, a second linguist then reviewed the translation. As the linguists worked on each page, they continually matched the Spanish text with its English source to ensure grammatical correctness and a consistent message. Prior to taking the site live, the Web pages were reviewed and approved both by state staff and a focus group of Spanish-speaking employers. The entire process from project approval through development, testing, and launch of the Web site took

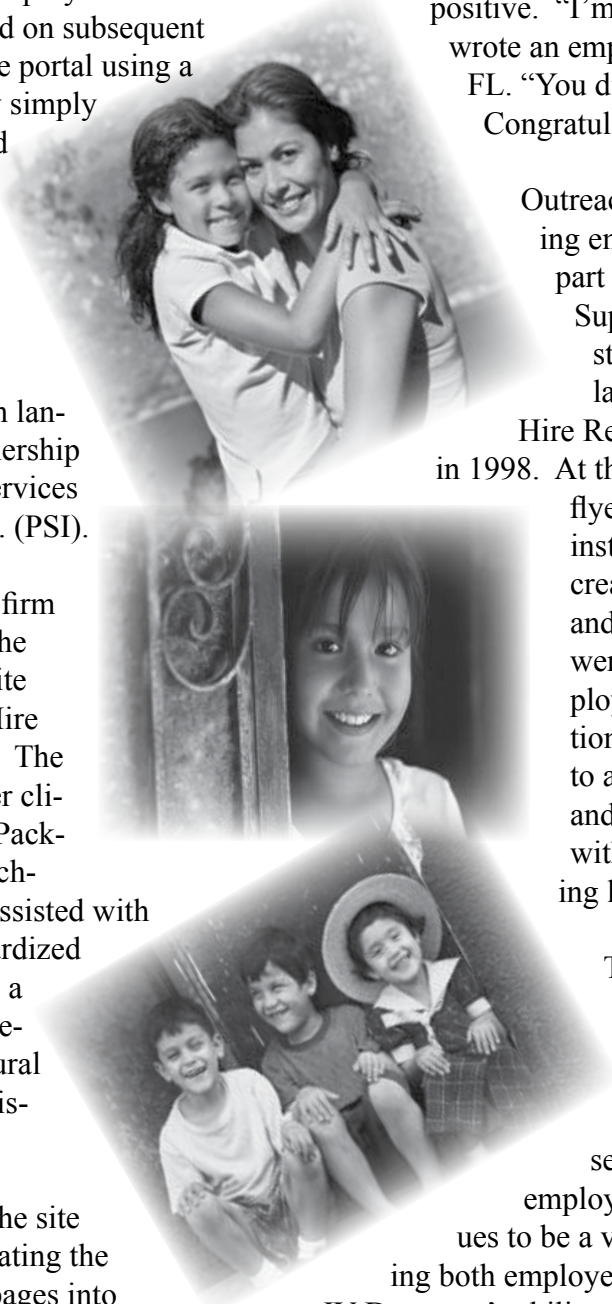
approximately 6 months.

Response to the site has been overwhelmingly positive. "I'm registered now," wrote an employer in Lakeland, FL. "You did an awesome job! Congratulations!"

Outreach to Spanish-speaking employers has been part of Florida Child Support Enforcement's strategy since the launch of the New Hire Reporting program in 1998. At that time brochures, flyers, and a 5-minute instructional video were created in both English and Spanish. These were provided to employers, payroll associations, and related groups to advertise the program and increase compliance with New Hire Reporting laws.

The Spanish language New Hire Reporting site has proven effective in reaching an important segment of Florida employers. The site continues to be a vital tool for increasing both employer compliance and the IV-D agency's ability to quickly connect with parents with child support obligations. **CSR**

For further information, please contact John Calhoun at 850-487-6287 or calhounj@dor.state.fl.us, or visit the Web site at www.fl-newhire.com.



that may have never seen Child Support Services as a positive community partner. Other target audiences are community-based organizations, educational entities, business partners, elected officials, and government agencies.

Another critical target audience is agency staff. Kids Count is enhancing the agency self-esteem of Child Support Services.

Another critical target audience is agency staff. Kids Count is enhancing the agency self-esteem of Child Support Services. Each episode features a Child Support Services segment where agency services are highlighted. Front-line staff from the department that provides that service is brought on the Kids Count show to discuss how the service affects noncustodial and custodial parents, customer service, or the general community.

Internal marketing to agency staff has included weekly billboards posted throughout the agency announcing guests and air dates of each show; daily insertion of media guide in electronic agency news; and promotional products such as shirts, mugs, and pens.

A positive aspect of Kids Count is its natural growth with collaborative efforts. Most community agencies have not had the resources or access to a high-profile public venue to pro-

mote their positive children and family activities. Now Child Support Services is seen as a positive entity to collaborate with. Community agencies that have collaborated with Child

Support Services include television and radio stations, local school districts, Bakersfield Police Department, and an occupation center.

Another positive outcome: The media campaign was recognized last November when WICSEC (Western Interstate Child Support Enforcement Council) presented Kern County CSS with its annual “Program Awareness Award.”

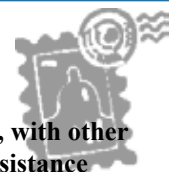


Director Nilon comments, “Our ultimate goal with Kids Count is to enhance our ability to serve and improve the well-being of our children. Our goal aligns with the Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement’s mission to ensure assistance in obtaining support is available to children through locating parents, establishing paternity and support obligations, and enforcing those obligations.” **CSR**

For more information, submit an e-mail via the Kids Count Web site, www.kids-count.net, or contact Steve Flores, CSS outreach and community coordinator, at 661-868-8683 or sflores@co.kern.ca.us.

**From: John Clark
OCSE, Region III**

Interstate Directories



To address the need to contact local workers on an interstate case, Region III, with other ACF Regional Offices, the National Child Support Enforcement Technical Assistance and Training Work Group, and participating states, has developed an Interstate County Contact Directory for 17 states: Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia and West Virginia.

These lists can only be shared with child support professionals. To participate in this initiative and receive a directory, states can send their interstate county contact list to John Clark at jjclark@acf.hhs.gov.

Keeping an Eye on Population Trends

By Frank Fajardo

In January, the United States was expected to register 1 birth every 8 seconds and 1 death every 12 seconds. Meanwhile, net international migration was expected to add 1 person every 31 seconds. The result, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, was an increase in the total population of 1 person every 14 seconds.

Projections such as these, and recent Census Bureau reports that show population trends, as well as current demographics, are giving child support officials useful information for strategic planning in certain aspects of the program.

One aspect is the need for child support enforcement offices and courts to improve outreach to the changing client population and its employers. Nationwide research projections for the CSE program show the traditional caseload is decreasing, while others are increasing, such as the caseload in Hispanic and Asian communities where child support workers may not have acquired the understanding or training needed to reach out to families with language and cultural differences.

The following is a sample of information from Census Bureau reports that may help target these communities. (See *page 8* for a list of publications and Web sites.) While the information reflects national trends, information is available for state and local analysis as well.

Nonmarital Births in 2004

- 88 percent of births to teenage women were nonmarital;
- 52 percent of births to women in their twenties were nonmarital;
- Hispanics: 32 percent of births were nonmarital; Blacks: 62 percent; Asians: 24 percent; Whites: 25 percent.

- Cohabitation may increase likelihood that a woman will have a nonmarital birth, and cohabitation numbers are increasing.

Overall U.S. Population

- Hispanic births were 22 percent of all births (highest birthrate).
- Asians will increase from 3.8 percent to 8 percent in 2050; Blacks will increase from 12.7 percent to 14.6 percent; and Whites will continue to decrease from 81 percent to 72.1 percent.
- Less-educated women, with a high-school diploma or less, have higher birthrate (52 percent, compared with 9 percent to women with a graduate or professional degree).
- Women not in the labor force have a higher birthrate and higher average number of children.

The U.S. Hispanic population is expected to double and has experienced broad geographic growth. As this population grows and matures, its structure is changing in almost every way: educational levels, labor-force composition, household characteristics, native/foreign-born differences, and emerging second and third generations.

The article on *page 4* of this newsletter describes an effort in Florida to reach out to the Hispanic employer population. Future issues will highlight projects across the country to improve outreach to the Child Support Enforcement Program's changing client population. [CSR](#)

For further information, please contact Frank Fajardo in OCSE's Division of Special Staffs, 202-205-4554 or ffajardo@acf.hhs.gov.

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Where to Look for Data On Population Trends

To help with planning outreach to the changing client population, as discussed in the article on *page 7*, child support enforcement professionals may want to check out the following reports:

- Getting to Know the Future Customers of the Office of Child Support: Projections for 2004-2009: www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cse/pubs/reports/projections/index.html
- U.S. Census Bureau national and state projections for U.S. population: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/projections/popproj.html>
- The U.S. Census Bureau report on fertility patterns (2004): www.census.gov/prod/2005pubs/p20-555.pdf
- U.S. Census Bureau report on Hispanic population of the United States; also includes projected population -2000 to 2050: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hispanic.html>
- The U.S. Hispanic Economy in Transition: Facts, Figures, and Trends (2005 Edition): secure.hbinc.com/product/view.asp?id=176

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