



# Child Support Report

OFFICE OF CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT

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## The Commissioner's Voice



OCSE Commissioner Margot Bean, during a break at The Hague Special Commission meeting, detailed in the article on the right.

*"As the new Federal fiscal year approaches, I look back over the past year, my first as OCSE Commissioner, with pride in everything we have achieved together as a national program. I admire all of you who dutifully serve children every day. I thank you and look forward to the year ahead and working with as many of you as I can."*

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## Agreement Nears For International Multilateral Convention

By Katie Donley  
OCSE

We're seeing light at the end of the tunnel for reaching agreement on a new multilateral *Convention on the International Recovery of Child Support and Other Forms of Family Maintenance*. During June, the fourth Special Commission meeting was held at The Hague to work towards agreement on various aspects of the Convention.



### International Update

The U.S. Delegation included OCSE Commissioner Margot Bean, OCSE Policy Division Director Lily Matheson, DHHS General Counsel Bob Keith, and Mary Helen Carlson from the Department of State. NCSEA (National Child Support Enforcement Association) sent a delegation, led by then-President Vernon Drew.

The most important thing about the new Convention is its emphasis on the practical, day-to-day aspects of case processing. The Convention will provide the legal framework for working international cases. Under the Convention, there will be a common understanding and commitment among participating

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## Convention, from page 1

U.S. delegates and participants at The Hague Special Commission meeting included: standing, from left, William Duncan, Deputy Secretary General of the Hague Conference on Private International Law; Robert Keith, DHHS General Counsel; Meg Campbell Haynes, attorney for Tier Technologies and former chair U.S. Commission on Interstate Child Support; Robert Spector, professor, University of Oklahoma School of Law; and Jack Sampson, professor, University of Texas School of Law. Seated, from left, are Maria Kurutz, delegate from Hungary and acting chair of the Special Commission; OCSE Commissioner Margot Bean; Mary Helen Carlson, Department of State; and OCSE Policy Division Director Lily Matheson.



Members of the Permanent Bureau of The Hague Conference on Private International Law are, from left, Philippe Lortie, Premier Secrétaire; William Duncan, Deputy Secretary General; and Hans Van Loon, Secretary General. The Permanent Bureau prepares and organizes the Special Commissions and works closely with experts and delegates of countries involved in this negotiation.



countries about responsibilities for such components of case processing as: what services will be provided, e.g., paternity establishment, and mandatory expedited procedures for recognition and enforcement of existing orders. But, there is more...

Administrative Cooperation is a critical component of how the Convention will actually work once countries become party to the treaty. Many of the 60 countries and organizations involved in the negotiations, including the United States, are working to ensure that accountability and transparency exist.

For example, uniform forms should simplify and standardize the processing of international cases; a *country profile*, which is modeled after the Intergovernmental Referral Guide, will give extensive details on how the child support program works in each country; and an auto-

mated system will allow caseworkers in two countries to see one another's updates.

Both the legal and administrative cooperation components of this Convention are intended to make the lives of child support caseworkers around the world easier so that we will all be able to get child support to families faster!

The Diplomatic Session, at which the final text of the Convention will be drafted, will likely be in the fall of 2007. After the Diplomatic Session, each country will take the Convention home and undertake the internal process of deciding whether to become party to it—whether the light at the end of this tunnel will help their professionals to see the necessary steps to collecting child support more clearly.

*For further information, contact Katie Donley at [kdonley@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:kdonley@acf.hhs.gov). CSR*

# Puerto Rico Enters Reciprocal Arrangement With Dominican Republic

By **Rebeca Dorna Pesquera**  
*Puerto Rico Administration  
for Child Support*

The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico's Administration for Child Support (ASUME, by its Spanish acronym) recently entered into a one-year pilot reciprocal arrangement with the Dominican Republic for the establishment and enforcement of child support orders.

The arrangement was signed by Alfonso Ramos Torres, Puerto Rico's IV-D Director, and Francisco Domínguez Brito, the Attorney General of the Dominican Republic. The signing ceremony was attended by Puerto Rico's Governor Aníbal Acevedo Vilá and Secretary of State Fernando Bonilla, who acted as honorary witnesses.

The Governor's presence emphasized the highest level of commitment to the success of the pilot project. He stated, "By signing this arrangement, we fill an existing void between Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic in matters of child support."

The Attorney General added, "This effort is an extraordinary one to help fortify the responsibility parents have with their children."

The arrangement concludes ACF Region II-supported negotiations that began in September 2004, when OCSE, the U.S. State Department, and ASUME cosponsored a Meeting on International Child Support in San Juan, PR. In fact, the idea for such an arrangement dates back to 1996, when OCSE, ASUME, and Region II invited Dominican representatives to attend a Caribbean Meeting on International Child Support, the first of its kind at that time.

Under the arrangement, Puerto Rican and Do-



From left, Fernando Bonilla, Puerto Rico Secretary of State; Alfonso Ramos Torres, Puerto Rico IV-D Director; Francisco Domínguez Brito, Attorney General of the Dominican Republic; and Puerto Rico Governor Aníbal Acevedo Vilá. The children in the photo represent groups of children from the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico who presented their respective flags to the Governor and Attorney General at the signing of the arrangement.

minican authorities will establish procedures and forms for the reciprocal acknowledgment and processing of support orders. Services offered to participants in the pilot program will include: locate services, paternity establishment, establishment and enforcement of support orders, and collection and distribution. These services will be offered free of charge in both jurisdictions except for paternity tests, which will be paid for by the agency where the test is requested and may be subject to individual reimbursement according to respective laws and procedures.

The pilot hopefully will be a first step towards a Federal-level agreement. For now, a significant number of children will, for the first time, have meaningful access to child support enforcement across the Mona Passage that separates Puerto Rico from the Dominican Republic.

*For more information, contact Gema C. Torres at ASUME, [gematorres@asume.gobierno.pr](mailto:gematorres@asume.gobierno.pr), or Jens Feck, ACF Region II, at [jfeck@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:jfeck@acf.hhs.gov). **CSR***



## Dedicated Child Support Professionals Bring Heart to NCSEA Conference



Vernon Drew



Mary Ann Wellbank



Alicia Key



Casey Hoffman

Commitment to children was clearly the cause for hundreds of child support professionals and experts at the 55th Annual Training Conference & Expo sponsored by the National Child Support Enforcement Association (NCSEA), July 30 to Aug. 3, in Dallas.

Among speakers at the day-one plenary were NCSEA President Vernon Drew, President-Elect Mary Ann Wellbank, Texas Child Support Director and conference chair Alicia Key, Deputy Texas Attorney General Casey Hoffman, and Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott.

The day-two plenary featured No Kidding (a Section 1115 grant), a group of young fathers and mothers who represent a partnership between the Texas Attorney General's Division of

Children and Families and YouthLaunch. The group delivers presentations to 6th- through 12th-graders on issues surrounding young unmarried parenting.

Among the awards, NCSEA honored Senior Staff Attorney Vicki Turetsky with its Community Service Award; Illinois DCSE as Most Improved Program; Robert Doar, Commissioner, New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, as State Leader of the Year; Virginia DCSE as Outstanding Program; and California's Charles Mandel, Los Angeles County Child Support Services Division, as Outstanding Manager.

On day three, OCSE Commissioner Margot Bean thanked the nation's child support professionals for their commitment during Federal fiscal year 2005 that resulted in \$23 billion in child support collections, with \$21 billion going to families and children. She lauded their success with automated systems, and called for further participation in intergovernmental and interstate systems that "have made all the difference in the program." **CSR**

The Oklahoma display, left, was one of many at NCSEA's interjurisdictional fair that enabled conference attendees to put names to faces and network about interjurisdictional and interagency case processing.



## **Investigations Lead to Payments From Parents, A Promise to Children**

**I**n a case that resulted in one of the highest restitutions paid by a noncustodial parent, the National Project Save Our Children Task Force (PSOC) located a father who provided \$347,987 on the day of his sentencing this March in Montana. The total included the court-ordered restitution amount of \$321,378, as well as \$26,609 for future child support paid directly to the custodial parent. He has three children; two are emancipated, and one resides with the custodial parent in Montana.

PSOC investigations revealed that the father had been residing in California under an assumed name and had previously worked as a radio talk show host in Phoenix, also under an assumed name. The radio show's Web site included his photo.

In another Montana case, a noncustodial father has paid, as of May, his total restitution amount of \$17,844 for his 14-year-old child who lives with the custodial parent in Helena. PSOC investigations showed the father was a commercial truck driver in Florida.

The District Judge in this case went beyond attorneys' requests for only probationary punishment; he wanted the sentence to reflect the seriousness of the offense and promote respect

for the law, and therefore sentenced the parent to custody of the Federal Bureau of Prisons for six months, followed by one year probation.

Finally, PSOC investigations led to a long-evasive noncustodial parent who not only has begun to pay toward his ordered restitution amount of \$186,000 in California, but also appears to be healing a relationship with his two children, after an emotionally-charged hearing.

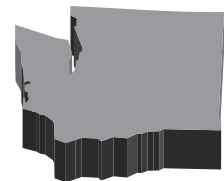
At one point, the children also could not be located, having moved from the care of a family member since their custodial parent passed away several years before. Once found, the children appeared at the father's court sentencing and presented their compelling story of a life without the support of their father. Their emotional and stirring testimony brought everyone in the courtroom to tears, including the presiding Judge, according to the Special Agent assigned to the case. In turn, the father publicly apologized to the children and vowed to make amends.

For further information about the Project Save Our Children Task Force, contact Project Manager Nicholas Soppa at 202-401-4677 or [nsoppa@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:nsoppa@acf.hhs.gov). **CSR**

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### ***Our STATEment***

## **WA's Expertise Extends to Malaysia**



**R**epresentatives from the Government of Malaysia learned about Washington State's expertise in Electronic Funds Transfer/Electronic Data Interchange (EFT/EDI) when the Bank Negara Malaysia, the central bank in Malaysia, invited Wendy Cole-Deardorff, the

Electronic Funds Transfer Program Manager for the Washington State Division of Child Support Disbursement Unit (SDU), to speak at a conference last winter in Kuala Lumpur,

*See WA, page 8*



## A Budding Collaboration

### Child Welfare, Child Support Plant Seeds for Progress

By Elaine Blackman  
*CSR Editor*



Jessica Pearson, Director of the Center for Policy Research in Denver, records talking points during an all-hands discussion about locate resources and paternity establishment.

For two days in July, about 40 representatives from Child Support (IV-D) and Child Welfare (IV-E) agencies in four large urban jurisdictions and from Federal offices set plans for a growing partnership to provide better outcomes for children in these agencies' shared caseloads.

The meeting in Washington, D.C., was led by Jessica Pearson, Director of the Denver non-profit Center for Policy Research, as part of a two-year collaborative pilot to enhance coordination between the two agencies. Pearson is spearheading the project under an OCSE Special Improvement Project grant. The four participating jurisdictions are Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Camden, and Milwaukee.

In opening remarks, OCSE Commissioner Margot Bean stressed the importance of collaboration through automation interfaces and via communication between front-line workers in the two agencies. Susan Orr, Associate Commissioner of the Children's Bureau, agreed that permanency for children can be obtained with help from the child support program.

When the project is completed in late 2007, OCSE will share the results throughout the child support and child welfare communities. For more information, contact Karen Anthony in OCSE at [kanthony@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:kanthony@acf.hhs.gov). **CSR**



Mark Schwartz, Arizona Division of Children, Youth and Families; Kathleen Abbott, Camden County Board of Social Services; and Patricia Risch, New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Family Development, consider whether Wisconsin's referral process would transfer to New Jersey.



During a break, Jessica Pearson discusses next steps with Carolyn Wilson-Hurey, Child Welfare Program Manager in Region V.



Linda Mellgren, left, from the DHHS Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, reviews plans with OCSE's Angela Ingram-Jones. During the meeting, Mellgren presented a DHHS study on father involvement in the child welfare program.



# To Understand and Effectively Manage Your Project: Break It Down



By Joe Bodmer  
OCSE

When I plan a project, I usually have a good idea of my high level requirements. But the devil is in the details, and without those fine points, it is almost impossible to build a useful project workplan.

## Tech Talk

To solve this problem, I first try to flesh out large chunks of the work, and then break these larger blocks into smaller pieces. In turn, I take these smaller pieces and break them down into lesser, even more discrete activities. This process results in a product referred to as the *Work Breakdown Structure* (WBS).

In creating a WBS, you will inevitably arrive at the point where you have to ask, “Are the tasks broken down enough?” This place in the process is called the *estimating threshold*. Though the work can always be further disassembled, there is a limit. In developing a WBS, bear in mind that the estimating threshold can be different for each project, but will always be based on two factors: the size of your project and your comprehension of the work to be done.

I use the following criteria as guides in creating a WBS: In a typically large project, one using 10,000 labor hours or more, I decompose any task in the project requiring more than 80 hours of effort. For mid-size projects, those that run about 2,500 hours, I try to make sure no task exceeds 40 hours. Finally, in small projects, those of 500 hours, more or less, I try to break down the activities into steps requiring no greater than 20 hours each to complete.

Of course, these thresholds are what I have found to be a useful range; your limits may be different.

But always keep in mind that the smaller the threshold you use, the more predictable, and hence, manageable, the work becomes. Think of it this way: If you estimated your project at 200 total hours, and your WBS breaks that down into tasks 80 hours long each, there really isn't enough time to recover should one or more tasks come in late. However, if your WBS used a more discrete, 20-hour level of tasking, not only could you better predict the shortfalls, but you would also be able to recover faster from them.

The second key consideration to managing your project more effectively is to ensure everyone understands the work. Nothing in the act of assigning a task to a person automatically imbues that individual with an understanding of its purpose. So when you decompose your project, make sure each task is discrete enough to be relevant and understandable. If the team member assigned to an 80-hour task doesn't understand what is expected, then perhaps that task is better broken down into four, more comprehensible, 20-hour tasks.

So, employ a Work Breakdown Structure to help achieve success in your next project. Your work will be better defined and your staff better informed, helping you manage your time and efforts more effectively and efficiently.

Watch for more Tech Talk in future issues. CSR

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Malaysia. Titled "Payment System Forum and Exhibition 2005 – Migration to E-Payments," the conference brought together governmental officials and representatives from financial institutions and the corporate sector.

Washington was among the first states to receive electronic payments from employers, and now receives about 40 percent of its payments electronically, including payments from employers, as well as from interstate, direct payers (noncustodial parents), unemployment insurance, worker's compensation, and payments seized through the Financial Institution Data Match.

Recognizing that some small businesses and individuals do not have software for remitting payments electronically, Washington developed an award-winning Child Support Internet Payment Service (CSIPS) to facilitate electronic debit authorization of employers' bank accounts through a Web-based, ACH (Automated Clearing House) debit application.

Washington has shared the program code for CSIPS, which is available for download from the OCSE Web site at this address:  
[www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/stsys/tab8.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/stsys/tab8.htm)

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### ***Child Support Report***

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