

Child Support Report

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OFFICE OF CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT

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On-Site Office Essential to Bringing Child Support Message to Minnesota's Incarcerated Parents

By Elaine Blackman and Karen Anthony
OCSE

Working from inside a prison cell block in St. Cloud, MN, Lori Lofrano is changing the way incarcerated parents view the child support program. Lofrano is not a fellow prisoner; she is the "Child Support Liaison," and her office is housed in a cell block within the Department of Corrections' intake center for adult males. The department places offenders in St. Cloud prison to learn the prison rules and to receive their security classification.

Lofrano, a former Child Support Officer and Supervisor, is currently employed by the Minnesota Department of Corrections. Her job is to educate and inform offenders, facilitate communication between offenders and county child support agencies, and help families provide for their children when parents are incarcerated. Lofrano's position, which she began last August, is the centerpiece of a contract for services with the Minnesota Child Support Enforcement Division (CSED).

Strategies to Help Low-Income Parents Applied to Incarcerated

The concept behind the Child Support Liaison position came from a project called SHLIF (Strategies to Help Low-Income Families) that CSED implemented about 2 years ago.

In planning SHLIF, project members formed a county work group and also met with representatives of various community organizations. They discussed how to address child support barriers facing their mutual customers and identified tools CSED could develop to assist community partners and the clients they serve.

"We wanted a comprehensive project that looked at multiple barriers, and we needed to improve our work with community partners, including faith-based agencies,"

says Pat Krauth, CSED Direct Services Manager. At an initial meeting with representatives from 60-some organizations, Krauth began with the question: "What do you need to know about the child support program to deliver the best services to your clients?"

"SHLIF focuses on the management of arrears through early intervention and other strategies directed at assisting low-income families, including incarcerated obligors. Timely modifications prevent or minimize the accumulation of arrears that are often considered uncollectible," says Krauth.

According to Jill Hausman, SHLIF project manager, "The reality is that we are changing our approach to child support enforcement. We're excited about the number of county IV-D agencies that are on board."

"CSED decided to move forward with the SHLIF project to improve outcomes for Minnesota families. The SHLIF project team analyzed various national studies and worked with fatherhood and family advocacy groups in Minnesota. This work identified not only an increase in the nonpayment of current child support and mounting

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

child support arrears balances, but also the affect of inappropriate child support obligations and large arrears balances on the relationship between noncustodial parents and their children. We anticipate that the SHLIF initiative will not only improve child support outcomes for children, but will have other significant benefits to the family as well,” says Hausman.

Lofrano’s position at the St. Cloud Correctional Facility was one of the first things to come out of the series of meetings between CSED and their community partners. The SHLIF project team also developed a DVD designed specifically for incarcerated obligors that is broadcast daily in all State prisons through the prison’s internal broadcast system. The DVD, “Getting the Right Order While Incarcerated,” is narrated by a popular local news anchor, selected for her easily recognizable face and voice. She graciously agreed to a small stipend, making it a low-cost, in-house production.

Even before the SHLIF project began, when Legal Aid funding was cut, CSED began onsite visits to Minnesota prisons and jails to explain parents’ options in the child support program.

“We were encouraged to learn that offenders are genuinely interested in their child support cases,” explains Mike Caris, a Policy Advisor with the State office.

“This was also evident when we participated in ‘transition fairs’ at the correctional facilities where representatives from nonprofit and government agencies talk to offenders about resources available to them during their transition back to the community,” says Caris. “These resources include help with finding suitable housing, aftercare and treatment facilities, child support, employment and training, health care, and so forth. The effort has paid dividends for CSED because it cemented working relationships with Department of Corrections’ staff and other stakeholders in the corrections network.”



Breaking Down Barriers

Inside the prison, Lofrano has identified many barriers that incarcerated parents face in navigating the modification process. For example, if incarcerated parents want to appear at a hearing by phone, they must request it in advance and the Child Support Magistrate must approve it. In addition, the incarcerated individual must put in a written request to use the corrections case manager’s phone for the hearing. If the hearing is delayed, which is often the case, it’s burdensome for the case manager, who can’t work on confidential files with the offender sitting there waiting for the hearing to begin.

Occasionally, an offender’s participation in a court hearing is immediately terminated because there are several times during the day when offenders must return to their cells to be counted, which takes priority. There are also occasional lock-downs for security reasons.

One possible solution is to ask court personnel to schedule the hearing for the first position in the afternoon session on any given day. That would ensure a timely start right after the lunch break and the hearing would be concluded before the afternoon count.

“The complexity of the modification forms is another problem,” adds Krauth. “But now we have the advantage of having Lori Lofrano there to help parents better understand the forms and the modification process.”

Lofrano has been holding biweekly child support sessions at the facility. Offenders who attend a session can get information on the entire child support program, from how orders are established to paternity issues.

“Offenders come with lots of questions,” says Lofrano. “Some have had negative experiences with child support. It’s rewarding to take the time to explain the program and how it can benefit all of the parties involved. Most offenders will not be incarcerated forever. At the time I see them, they are somewhat of a ‘captive’ audience. If I can engage them in their child support cases, and help them view the child support program in a more positive light, the hope is that they will continue to participate in their child support cases upon release.”

Of the State’s 186,152 obligors this March, 4,141, or 2.2 percent, are incarcerated. “The odds that they’ll pay are slim,” explains Krauth, “but by using the SHLIF strategies and by having Lofrano in the prison to assist incarcerated parents early on, we expect these obligors to get appropriate orders based on their ability to pay now and in the future.”

Minnesota will present a workshop about this effort at the OCSE 18th National Conference, Aug. 25-27, in Washington, DC. ■

Louisiana Conference: Director Endris Awarded For Excellence, Outstanding Leadership



By Charla Long
OCSE, Region VI

Louisiana hosted more than 500 attendees at its annual training conference, held March 12 – 14, at the Paragon Casino and Resort in Marksville. This beautiful resort provided an ambiance typical of Louisiana charm, and even included many alligators sunning on rocks in the hotel lobby's atrium.

One highlight was seeing OCSE Commissioner Margot Bean, on behalf of all Louisiana staff, surprise State Director Robbie Endris with an award from her staff for excellence and outstanding leadership.

More than 13 major topics were presented during the conference, including PAID—Project to Avoid Increasing Delinquencies, healthy marriage and fatherhood initiatives, and PSOC (Project Save Our Children) and Federal Criminal Nonsupport referrals. Sessions on case intake—from its beginning to paternity establishment, collections and payments, obligation establishment, and obligation of enforcement tools were presented as roundtable game shows with prizes for those who answered correctly. The conference culminated with Commissioner Bean's Federal report and words of encouragement for all child support staff and partners.

The conference also held a "baby shower" for participants of the State's Section 1115 grantee, titled "Families Matter!" Conference attendees were invited to donate items for the baby store sponsored by the grant project. Participants of this grant earn "bucks" redeemable at the store, which provides clothes, diapers, books, and toys for children. This incentive has been warmly received by appreciative participants, some of whom are still living in abandoned buildings, tents, and cars in the greater New

Orleans area. Conference attendees generously donated more than 16 boxes of items for the baby store.

Sprinkled throughout an excellent conference, full of substantive legal and administrative guidance, were acknowledgements and awards for individuals who exhibited outstanding service. The Honorable Jeannette Knoll, Justice of the Louisiana Supreme Court, applauded the persistent hard work of all attendees, and Robbie Endris, Executive Director of Louisiana Support Enforcement Services, presented the 3rd Annual Russell B. Long Legislative Service Award to Representative Glenn B. Ansardi and Senator Arthur J. Lentini. Director Endris presented a plaque to Armand Graves, retired Program Specialist with the Administration for Children and Families, for 35 years of hard work and service.

As Adren Wilson, Assistant Secretary of the Department of Social Services, stated in his inspirational welcome and report, "It takes a team to make the dream." Despite the challenges of high poverty and post Katrina and Rita recovery, State staff, Federal partners, judiciary, legislators, and professionals in fields relative to child support, such as genetic testing, all came together to share their expertise, commitment, and support in meeting the needs of children. And all had a lot of fun in the bargain—the Louisiana conference wouldn't have been complete without a dance and a crawfish boil topped off with jambalaya. ■



OCSE Commissioner Margot Bean, left, and Louisiana Director Robbie Endris



Robbie Endris and Armand Graves



National Systems Symposium Gets Two Thumbs-Up

The 72 child support staff, representing 46 States, had nothing but positive comments after attending OCSE's 2nd National Child Support Systems Symposium, held in Washington, DC, March 18 – 20.

The conference offered two tracks: one for the States planning to replace their current automated child support enforcement systems; the other track for States not seeking to replace, but rather upgrade or enhance certain aspects of their automated systems.

Common themes at roundtable discussions for States enhancing existing systems included: implementing Deficit Reduction Act provisions, especially distribution options; enhancing the document generation module; document imaging; enhanced interfaces with TANF, Child Welfare, licensing agencies, enforcement modules, and courts; customer service, including electronic disbursement, outbound IVR/predictive dialing; employer enhancements, especially to employer address tables; the QUICK (Query Interstate Cases for Kids) and eIWO (electronic income withholding orders) systems; and utilizing data warehousing and data mining.

In general, State participants noted that some of the most valuable knowledge is gained during the breaks or during the question and answer portion of sessions. They found it helpful talking to other States and Territories in similar situations and trading not only ideas, but data, sample Feasibility Studies, business process reengineering studies, research, and cost-benefit data for different initiatives or projects. They valued hearing about what works, but also what doesn't, and that sometimes lessons learned are helpful to avoid similar pitfalls.



OCSE's Nancy Benner conducted a session about the employer as a major CSE customer. She is wearing a dunce cap to encourage audience members that there are no stupid questions.



Jim Fricke of Michigan, left, and Jeff Rowe of Pennsylvania shared their knowledge as experienced IT project managers.



Jim Fricke from Michigan said: "It was a very enjoyable and educational conference. I always come away with new ideas, both from what the "older" systems folks are doing and from the fresh perspective of the 'rookies.' Providing all of the information on CDs is great; I have already made copies to share with both system and program staff who were not able to attend."

Jeff Rowe, Pennsylvania: "I always enjoy the opportunity to exchange information with other people who are doing the same thing each day as me. I always come back to Pennsylvania refreshed with a couple of things we should be doing and also what things we want to stay away from. It's always good to know what the 'competition' is doing."

David Seidman, Washington, DC: "We are starting our interviews this week with the District's Child Support staff for our feasibility study. Those are two sessions I found especially important because of the knowledge they provided on additional sources of information on the location of noncustodial parents and how to access them. I'd like to be able to tell the staff of some of these sources, to see which ones are of particular interest."

Daisie Blue, North Carolina: "I found the symposium to be most useful. The State roundtable was very helpful and interesting to me as well. I was able to make contact with a couple of States, New York and Pennsylvania, who appear to be doing some of the kind of upgrades we would like to do. ... As always, I enjoyed the sessions where

[Robin Rushton was] the presenter."

Beth Gravett of Kentucky: "I enjoyed not only the opportunity to meet with the other States, hear what they are

doing, and get ideas for the future, but the sessions and information provided in them was excellent.”

Attendees were provided CD-ROMS that contained all

of the session presentations as well as additional guidance materials. For further information about the symposium, contact Robin Rushton at robin.rushton@acf.hhs.gov. ■

Improving Locate and Enforcement



Child support programs across the country are focusing on PAID – the Project to Avoid Increasing Delinquencies. This national initiative, aimed at increasing collections and reducing

arrears accumulation, has highlighted innovative efforts in locate and enforcement techniques that could improve program performance. Child support agencies might wish to focus on automation efforts and consider the following questions from the “PAID Practices Guide” that address locate and enforcement activities:

- Have we implemented projects that increase employer compliance with new hire reporting?
- Does our system automatically issue income withholding orders (IWOs) based on receipt of New Hire, Quarterly Wage, Unemployment Insurance, and SSA benefits data?
- Are we sending IWOs electronically to those employers participating in the eIWO project?
- Have we monitored for and reduced delays between order entry and first payment?
- Have we fully automated our process for freezing and seizing financial accounts including determining eligible accounts and generating notices to financial institutions?
- Are we sending freeze and seize requests to financial institutions with out-of-state addresses? Are we conducting matches with insurance companies and intercepting insurance claims?
- Have we fully automated our process for intercepting insurance claims including determining eligible claims and generating notices to insurance companies?
- Are we conducting matches with workers compensation processors and intercepting workers compensation claims?
- Have we fully automated our process for intercepting workers compensation claims including determining eligible claims and generating notices to workers compensation processors?
- Are we processing all of the data available from the State Verification Exchange System through the Federal Parent Locator Service, i.e., SSA benefits (Title II), Supplemental Security Income (Title XVI - SSI) and prisoner data?
- Are we using license suspension effectively, e.g., matching with recreational, driving, and occupational licenses? Are our data match and follow-up actions fully automated?
- Are we matching NCPs with cell phone company data?
- Do we refer cases to State or County Attorneys for criminal prosecution?
- Do we utilize Project Save Our Children (PSOC) for appropriate locate and prosecution cases?
- Do we allow NCPs to work and pay support in lieu of contempt of court and jail time in appropriate cases?
- Have we fully automated the use of Title II (SSA benefits), Title XVI (SSI benefits), and prisoner data obtained through the FPLS?
- Do we use our Department of Revenue to pursue the “hard to collect” cases?

To view the full “Paid Practices Guide,” please log on to <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/pol/DCL/2007/dcl-07-17.htm> on the OCSE Web site. To learn more about PAID and to gain access to the PAID Workplace, which includes other PAID materials, please contact PAID@acf.hhs.gov. ■

A Cruise Ship to Justice

By **Jens A. Feck**, *OCSE, Region II*
and **Kathryn B. Houston**,
Virgin Islands Paternity and Child Support Division

If you think a Caribbean cruise outside of hurricane season is a guaranteed good time, think again. And, if you believe that the Federal Deadbeat Parents Punishment Act provides for the only legal process that can reach across State lines and return a delinquent child support obligor to face justice, keep on reading.

This past February, two delinquent obligors who had the money and time for a cruise to America's Paradise unexpectedly learned that the US Virgin Islands offers more than duty free shopping, clear blue waters, and luxury hotels. Neither apparently realized that every US port stopover entails a customs clearing process which can include a passenger list match against the National Crime Information Center (NCIC).

Well, that is what happened. On Feb. 5, 2008, a passenger who had planned to be the best man for an on-board wedding was found to have an outstanding warrant for a child support probation violation. The warrant was placed into NCIC by the 11th Judicial Circuit Court, St.

Charles County, MO. On Feb. 15, another passenger, who was on authorized Military leave, was matched with an outstanding arrest warrant. That warrant was placed into NCIC by the District Court of Elizabethtown, Hardin County, KY, for the offense of Flagrant Non-Support, a Class D Felony.

On each occasion, the US Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) requested and received a faxed copy of the warrant, verified the intention to extradite, and, upon the ship's arrival, detained the passenger. CBP then called the Virgin Islands Department of Justice, which houses the Paternity and Child Support Division (PCSD, the Virgin Islands' IV-D agency), to request that the Department take the passenger into custody.

That task was given to Kathryn B. Houston, a Special Agent with the Department's Special Investigations Division. Houston, assigned to PCSD, is no stranger to delinquent obligors—in addition to investigating local child support cases, she frequently assists Puerto Rico-based HHS Office of Inspector General Agents in PSOC (Project Save Our Children) with Federal nonsupport offenses, investigations, and arrests.

Upon arrival at the West Indian Company dock in St. Thomas, Special Agent Houston was able to confirm the detained passenger's identity in both instances. The former passengers were duly arrested and transported to the Department of Justice for fingerprinting and photographs. They were subsequently booked by the Virgin Islands' Police Department and turned over to the custody of the Bureau of Corrections pending the completion of the extradition process.

The two interrupted cruisers eventually left the Virgin Islands in the respective company of Missouri and Kentucky law enforcement officials. If you were to meet them today, they might emphatically warn you not to book that cruise unless your child support obligation was *PAID* in full.

These cruise ship collections provide a unique example of State activities that reflect the national child support priority called PAID—Project to Avoid Increasing Delinquencies. For more information about this or other PAID-related activities in Region II, please contact Jens Feck at jens.feck@acf.hhs.gov. ■



Special Agent Kathryn B. Houston, left, and Virgin Islands' Paternity and Child Support Division Director Regina deChabert Petersen

Child Support Population Demographics – Helping Point the Way

By Angela Ingram-Jones
OCSE

Recently, OCSE sponsored a pilot State demographic survey to identify state-level demographic data on the social and economic characteristics of the child support population. (*Survey developed and conducted by Courtland Consulting and its subcontractor Urban Institute.*) This was OCSE's first effort at obtaining and analyzing demographic information including estimates of income and poverty, race/ethnicity, public assistance status, employment status, marital status, geographic distribution, and education. While the demographic characteristics of the child support population have been explored in prior studies, the data that was collected with this demographic survey was unique in that it was collected directly from State IV-D programs.

Nine states with the largest IV-D programs were selected to participate in this survey: California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Texas. (*The survey was conducted during the second quarter of FFY 2007 and States had the option of completing the survey electronically through a web-based questionnaire or in hard-copy form.*) States completed three sections of the survey: one for custodial parents, one for children, and one for noncustodial parents. All of the States were able to provide some of the requested demographic information.

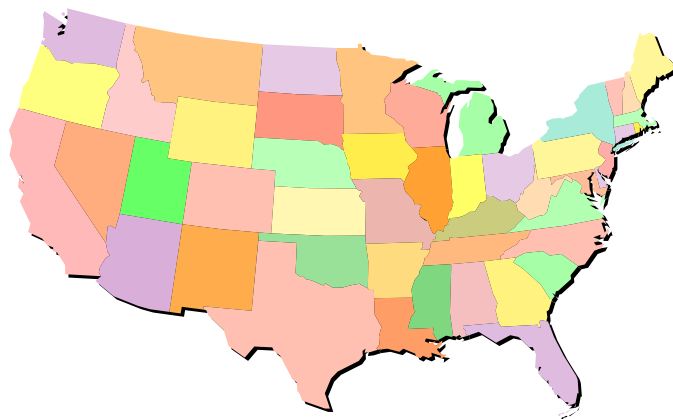
The demographic survey was successful in obtaining data for a variety of characteristics, such as the age and racial distribution of parents and children, living arrangements of children, employment status of parents, and the number of children and parents with private health insurance. However, very little information was collected for some demographic characteristics such as poverty status, marital status, educational attainment and monthly earnings of custodial and noncustodial parents, public assistance use of programs other than TANF and Medicaid; and the extent to which noncustodial parents have a Tribal case.

Despite these limitations, the findings from the survey are indicative of a very diverse child support population and help point the way to improved services that are more closely tailored to the needs of the children and families.

Key Findings of the Demographic Survey

- 46 percent of noncustodial parents and 39 percent of custodial parents were over 40 years old and 22 percent of children were 18 years of age or older;
- 84 percent of children served by the IV-D programs lived with their biological mother, 5 percent lived with their biological father, and 11 percent of children lived with a third party;
- At the time of the survey, 10 percent of custodial parents and 12 percent of children in the IV-D programs were receiving TANF; 26 percent of custodial parents and 32 percent of children were receiving Medicaid; and 2 percent of children were receiving Foster Care Services;
- 11 percent of custodial parents and 18 percent of noncustodial parents had private health insurance for their children; 22 percent of children in the IV-D program had private health insurance;
- 57 percent of custodial parents and 64 percent of noncustodial parents were employed at the time of the survey.

For a copy of the full report, contact Angela Ingram-Jones at aingram-jones@acf.hhs.gov or 202-401-5735. ■



Census Data on Hispanics in US

A PowerPoint presentation about sociodemographic data on Hispanics for 2006 is now available from the US Census Bureau at: http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hispanic/files/Internet_Hispanic_in_US_2006.pdf

A Preliminary Look at CSE Program Performance During FY 2007

By **Nehemiah Rucker**
OCSE



Based upon preliminary national child support enforcement program performance data submitted by States for FY 2007, progress continues toward making child support a reliable source of income for many families in the Title IV-D caseload.

These preliminary data reveal that, of the total 15.8 million cases in the IV-D caseload in FY 2007, 12.3 million cases, or 78 percent of the total caseload, had orders established (a 1-percent increase over cases with orders established in FY 2006); and 8.7 million cases, or 55 percent of the total caseload, had collections (a 2-percent increase over cases with collections in the previous fiscal year).

In addition, in FY 2007, distributed collections totalled \$24.9 billion dollars, and 1.7 million paternities were established or acknowledged, which represent increases of almost 4 percent and 2 percent, respectively, over corresponding amounts for the previous fiscal year.

Through intensified efforts designed to increase collections and reduce arrears through the national Project

to Avoid Increasing Delinquencies (PAID), continued progress toward increased collections in key categories was made in FY 2007. In FY 2006, 60.4 percent of current child support due was collected and distributed and, in FY 2007, 61.2 percent of current collections were collected and distributed. Likewise, collections on cases with arrears increased from 60.8 percent in FY 2006 to 61.3 percent of cases in FY 2007.

Similar improvements in other categories are highlighted in the “FY 2007 Child Support Enforcement Preliminary Data Report,” available on the OCSE Web site at: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/pubs/2008/preliminary_report_fy2007/ ■



PSOC Locates NCPs in New York and South Dakota Cases

At a hearing this March in New York State, a noncustodial parent was required to provide a lump sum payment of \$10,000 for his 4-year-old child, and ordered to pay the full restitution of \$18,259. The parent was arrested by HHS Office of Inspector General Agents in California in April 2007, where he was employed as a botanist.

The State of New York had referred the case for failure to pay child support obligations for federal investigation and prosecution in October 2006, after the parent had not made a payment for more than



a year.

A custodial parent who had never paid child support for a case that began in South Dakota in 1995, decided to pay his arrearage—\$18,786—prior to sentencing in November 2007. He was arrested 8 months earlier in Wisconsin, where he was working in a food packing company. The child is now 14.

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

New Mexico Directors Proceed QUICK-ly With Interstate Communication Project

By Reta Oliver
OCSE Region VI

New Mexico county child support program directors showed keen interest during a presentation about the benefits of QUICK—Query Interstate Cases for Kids—during the February County Directors’ meeting in Santa Fe. OCSE’s Brenda Cunningham and Shabbir Bharmal conducted the presentation as part of an outreach initiative to encourage States to participate in the QUICK project.

QUICK’s real-time viewing on the computer screen of financial, case activities, and basic case information, as well as the one-on-one review of a single case, saves time for child support staff and is safe on a secure network.

With many States starting the updating and enhancement process for their systems, including QUICK as part of the updating process would provide a secure interface to access and view information from other States’ systems. QUICK provides meaningful data, some that is not available through other electronic means, in a consistent format with standard definitions, and the system, not the worker, responds to questions.

States are already reporting that some courts are accepting printed financial records and basic background information from QUICK, as QUICK contains the financial information from the Central Case Registry for

balancing arrears. Additionally, QUICK assists workers with Interstate Case Reconciliation to reconcile case IDs, obtain recent financial and case activity, determine case status, confirm case participants, and respond to customer service inquiries.

Currently, 10 States are in production and 9 States are developing QUICK, with another 18 States actively exploring QUICK. Phil Herndon, a member of the original QUICK work group, facilitated the presentation. State Child Support Enforcement Division staff and county directors with a mix of technical and business prospective, and representatives from the Navajo Nation and Mescalero Apache Tribe attended. An overview of the Insurance Match, eIWO, ICR, and Improving CSENet activities were also provided to the group. ■



Prior to the County Directors’ meeting presentation, a luncheon meeting was held to address program and system requirements for QUICK. Attendees, from left, were Shabbir Bharmal, FPLS Team and QUICK presenter; Don Levering, Program Bureau Chief; Reta Oliver, ACF CSE Program Specialist; Mary McCorvy, Program Bureau Centralized Services Manager; Brenda Cunningham, FPLS Team and Federal Overview/QUICK presenter; Jason Romero, ASB/Division IT Business Manager; and Ron Lucero, Administrative Support Bureau Chief.

Interstate Partners Share in \$12.3 Million Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend

By Nancy J. Mathieson
OCSE, Region X

If you read the September 2007 issue of *Child Support Report*, you may have noticed an article about a Bi-regional Interstate Workgroup meeting that highlighted the annual Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend (PFD). The PFD pays every Alaskan resident who meets certain eligibility criteria a share of the profit from this investment fund. Since 1982, these dividends have provided an annual infusion to the Alaskan economy and to the families of noncustodial parents (NCPs) who are delinquent in their child support payments.

Alaska Child Support Services Division (CSSD) and OCSE Region X together want to increase awareness of the PFD as a potential source of child support collection from NCPs who are residents of Alaska.

The 2007 Permanent Fund Dividend for each Alaskan resident was \$1,654. Total child support collections from the 2007 PFD between October 2007 and January 2008 totaled \$12,360,960—an increase of \$2,801,236 over the previous year.

Garnishment of the PFD is part of the regular enforcement on appropriate full collection cases referred

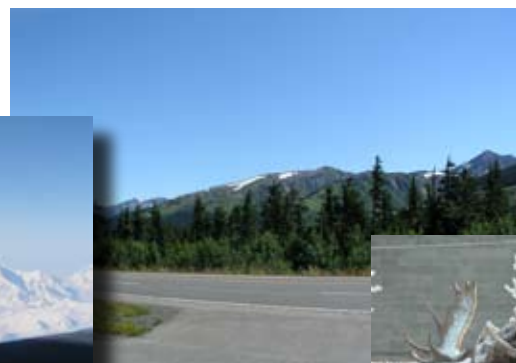
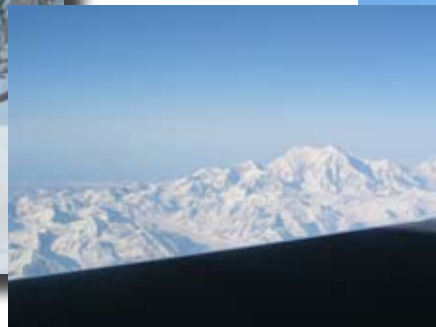
to Alaska. However, as States and Tribes increase the use of long-arm tools to collect child support, they may overlook the Alaska PFD as a source of child support revenue for Alaskan resident NCPs.

After marketing the PFD collection option to the members of the Bi-regional Interstate Workgroup meeting last year, several States who had not previously asked the Alaska State IV-D Program to intercept this dividend made the request.

Specific data about the number of children and families who receive child support only when PFD funds are intercepted is not currently available. Anecdotally, Alaska CSSD Director John Mallonee and his staff know that their efforts provide needed funds to children and families who would not otherwise receive any support.

Please contact Dale Ludwig at Alaska CSSD, 907-269-6980, for more information about the Alaska PFD Intercept, or access the Alaska PFD information at: <http://www.csed.state.ak.us/Resources/OtherStates.asp> ■

ONLY IN ALASKA – Camera-shy child support workers opted to submit picturesque photos of the Alaska skyline, and a moose, who spent several hours outside of their office building, in Atwood Courtyard, before wandering around downtown Anchorage.



'Fathering Court' Prompts Dads' Participation in Child's Life

By Sherri Larkins
OCSE, Region VII

The Jackson County, MO, Fathering Court is a county-funded, innovative alternative to prosecution and incarceration for noncustodial parents, usually the father, who fail to pay court-ordered child support. This court-supervised diversionary program seeks to address the underlying issues of failure by the noncustodial parent to actively participate financially and emotionally in their child's life. Participants in the program are primarily men who have not paid child support for at least 12 months and have criminal nonsupport charges pending against them.

The participants are assigned a case manager who completes a comprehensive assessment for each parent that focuses on their employment status, educational level, and unresolved legal problems, and also screens the client for substance abuse. This information is provided to the prosecutor, the judge, and the client's attorney who sit down together during court, with the participant, to discuss their needs, progress, and plan.

Fathering Court has a more personal, nonadversarial atmosphere where there is a collaborative discussion of how best to provide assistance to the participant. Depending on the individual's needs, each participant can receive assistance with employment training and placement, educational assistance, substance abuse



treatment, medical concerns, disability resources, modification of the support amount, and other needs.

In addition, each participant must attend a 12-week Fathering Class featuring a curriculum developed by the National Center for Fathering. Also available is an after-care group for the men called Dad's Fraternity which continues to support them through the rest of their journey through Fathering Court.

The entire program runs a minimum of 12 months, but depending on the severity of the issues, may last many more months. Participants who successfully complete it graduate from the program paying current child support regularly, including a payment towards arrears, and have their criminal nonsupport charges dismissed.

Originally designed to provide services to 50 clients, there are now 200 active participants. Since the inception of the program in March 1998, over \$2,766,000 has been collected from about 300 participants, most of whom had never paid support before entering Fathering Court. Participants' progress continues to be tracked and services are available to assist them after leaving the program.

The Fathering Court has hosted visits from other State agencies and courts interested in replicating the program. The Judge, case manager, prosecutor and court personnel provide an overview of the program and invite their guests to view the court proceedings. Courts in Louisiana, Iowa, Illinois, Texas, and Washington, DC, have implemented or plan to develop programs similar to Jackson County's. For more information, contact Commissioner Patrick W. Campbell at 816-881-3730, or Melissa Mauer-Smith at 816-881-3488. ■

The Magic in Learning Princeton Student Reflects on Group Study of Child Support Services

By Susan Lyon
Princeton University Student

In January 2007, a group of Princeton University undergraduates traveled to OCSE to present recommendations following their semester-long study on strategies for improving child support enforcement. (See February 2007 Child Support Report at: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/pubs/csrindex.html>) This January

a new crop of students dropped by to talk about their new research of the national child support program.

On the first day of our policy task force entitled "Poor Children and U.S. Family Policy," our professor, Dr. Hillard Pouncy, promised us a "magical semester" working with OCSE. As Princeton University undergraduates in the Woodrow Wilson School of Public Policy and International Affairs, we initially had no idea what he meant.

The very next week, we were introduced to the world of Federal child support enforcement with a visit from Commissioner Margot Bean and staff members. They





First row, from left: James Coan, Sian O’Faolain, Susan Lyon, Vicki Turetsky (Center for Law and Social Policy) OCSE Commissioner Margot Bean, Cindy Hong, Brittany Stanley, Angela Cai, and Eileen Brooks (OCSE). Second row, from left: Ronald B. Mincy (Urban Institute), Myles Schlank (OCSE), William Wallace, Lauren Barnett, and Dr. Hillard Pouncy (Princeton Professor).

provided us with the foundations for a solid understanding of the child support system: its recent successes and reforms, its ongoing challenges, and its goals for the future. From then on, the magic of such a dynamic and constantly evolving policy arena was evident— States were experimenting with new programs just as fast as I could research them.

In its broadest sense, the main question posed to us by OCSE seemed to be how it could continue to better help and protect the many special populations that it serves. This umbrella theme enabled each of us to research unique topics with the ultimate prospect of being able to package a compilation of all six of our projects. Our two “senior commissioners,” Sian O’Faolain and Lauren Barnett, alums of last year’s task force, compiled our six documents into one cohesive document. We then presented this report to OCSE in Washington DC, on January 9.

From the variety of issues presented to us in the first few weeks, we collectively settled on six separate subject areas to concentrate on—from attending to the portion of the caseload with domestic violence and healthcare concerns to transnational child support treaties to varieties of arrears-related programs—and began to research. Along the way, one student, Will Wallace, was able to travel with OCSE to the Hague and work on the 2007 Hague Convention on the International Recovery of Child Support.

I personally focused on various Early Intervention strategies that would enable low-income noncustodial parents to identify and overcome barriers to payment earlier with the goals of preventing high arrearages and making larger, steadier payments to their children. I worked in the context of the recent PAID (“Program to Avoid Increasing Delinquencies”) Initiative released in 2007. I was struck by the fact that all of our six topics,

though vastly different, all placed attention, in one dimension or another, on the noncustodial parent and the hardships they face when making current support payments.

The task forces we participate in as juniors are a primary component of the junior year curriculum for undergraduate students in Princeton University’s Woodrow Wilson School policy program. Many of us plan to incorporate the research we do now into our year-long senior year independent work. Others, particularly interested in domestic policy, see it as an opportunity to gain insight into political careers. Our task force, conducted under the guidance of Dr. Pouncy and Vicki Turetsky of the Center for Law and Social Policy, enabled us to glimpse the diverse interests incorporated into policy-making even within just one Federal office. ■

Child Support Report

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