



# Child Support Report

OFFICE OF CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT

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## A Little Virtual Technology Goes a Long Way In Florida IV-A/IV-D Cooperation Project

By **Karen Anthony**  
OCSE

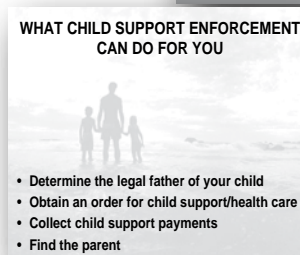
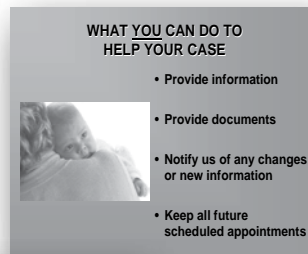
The Florida Child Support Enforcement Program has temporarily suspended a successful partnership project with the IV-A agency. But the team who engineered its success—virtually—is determined to let others learn from their lessons.

Under an OCSE Section 1115 grant, a team of IV-A and CSE workers designed an educational audio PowerPoint presentation to instruct public assistance applicants about CSE services and the need to provide complete and accurate information to the child support case worker.

But long gone is the expensive, sometimes temperamental, video equipment from a decade ago. Instead, the team used the simple Web-cam capability built into many of today's computers. Since the project ended in 2006, the State IV-A agency has launched an online application process; the CSE program plans to follow with some of the recommendations from the project.

The agencies partnered to improve the information-gathering phase of the public assistance

case referral process. The project also aimed to improve the quality of case information from the IV-A agency, streamline the initial cooperation determination process, improve customer service, increase customer knowledge and education, and reduce costs.



These frames are included in the audio PowerPoint developed by Florida's IV-A/IV-D cooperation grant project.

A tall order? Maybe, but the cross-program team was up to the challenge, says Project Manager Susan Mohnen.

The audio PowerPoint instructed IV-A applicants who did not meet initial cooperation requirements about the need for an initial cooperation interview. Interviews via Web-cam were conducted remotely with the IV-A applicant in the

public assistance office and the CSE worker 6 miles away in the CSE office.

The interview technology included Web-cams and electronic signature pads. The IV-A applicant was able to apply and be interviewed for public assistance, meet initial cooperation requirements, be interviewed by CSE, sign all required documents, and receive educational information in one stop. Web-cam interviews eliminated the need to set up an appointment and work out transportation.

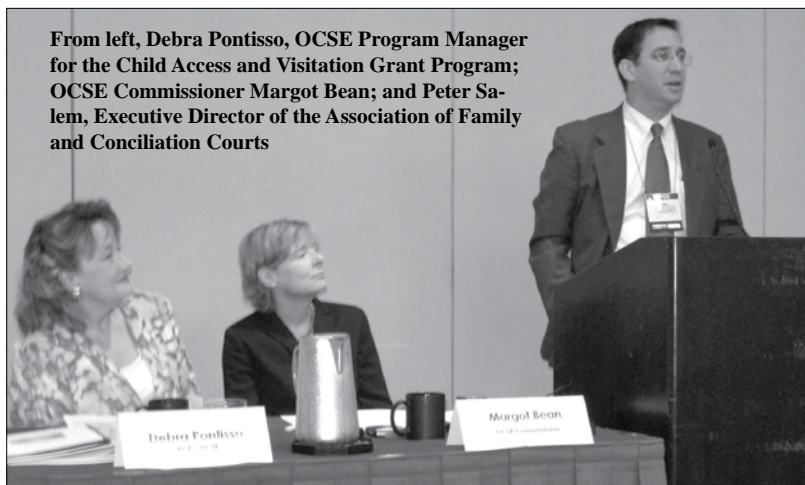
## Two Trainings in One—And Award For State AV Program Coordinators

Participants of this year's State Access and Visitation (AV) Program Coordinators meeting had the opportunity to also attend the national conference of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC), last month in Washington, DC, where the two meetings coincided.

With both groups together, more than 900 attendees at the AFCC conference applauded when AV Program Manager Debra Pontisso accepted an award, on behalf of OCSE, from AFCC in recognition of the 10-year anniversary of the Federal Access and Visitation Grant Program and its success in serving over a half million parents nationwide.

This is the second award OCSE has received from AFCC for its administration, in partnership with the States, of the AV Grant Program. In 2004, the AV Program received AFCC's Irwin Cantor Innovative Program Award.

AFCC ([www.afccnet.org](http://www.afccnet.org)) is an interdisciplinary and international association of professionals dedicated to improving the lives of children and families through the resolution of family conflict. Its membership includes judges, mediators, court administrators, parent educators, psychologists, lawyers, academics, and social workers. AFCC members embody a collective expertise in the use of alternative dispute resolution in parenting disputes over issues such as child access, custody, and parenting time.



From left, Debra Pontisso, OCSE Program Manager for the Child Access and Visitation Grant Program; OCSE Commissioner Margot Bean; and Peter Salem, Executive Director of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts

The day before the AFCC conference, OCSE staff met with about 45 State representatives regarding the ongoing administration of the AV Program and to explore related topics of interest, such as parenting education for high-conflict parents, fathering courts, and addressing the needs of a growing Hispanic population. [CSR](#)



### New Reports Offer AV Help for States

OCSE has prepared two new publications to help States: One, shown at left, is a field-tested process on how to meet child access and visitation needs of noncustodial parents by creating a successful partnership among State Access and Visitation Grant Programs, courts, child support enforcement agencies, and local service providers. (To request a print copy, e-mail [OCSENationalReferenceCenter.acf.hhs.gov](mailto:OCSENationalReferenceCenter.acf.hhs.gov) or call 202-401-9393.) The other report, "Child Access and Visitation Programs: Participant Outcomes," is available on the OCSE Web site only. To view both reports, see Dear Colleague Letters 07-07 and 07-15, respectively, at [www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse).

## National CSE Marks Progress in Australia, The Hague

Melbourne, Australia, set the site for this year's International Heads of Agency Meeting, in April, where officials from five countries exchanged experiences about their child support operations.

The annual meeting rotates among the member countries: United States, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and United Kingdom.

“Learning about advancements in child support in other countries has resulted in new endeavors for our national child support enforcement program, such as pursuing innovative ideas in developing our national strategic plan,” says OCSE Commissioner Margot Bean. “Watching the direction other countries are taking, for example Australia’s development of one-stop centers for social services, encourages our Federal and State partners to examine processes for improving our national program.”

In May, U.S. representatives met in The Hague with representatives from over 60 countries and organizations to continue work on an international child support treaty. The treaty language will be finalized this November, when each of the countries will consider whether they will be able to ratify the treaty.

For further information about international CSE meetings, please contact Katie Donley at 202-401-1381 or [katie.donley@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:katie.donley@acf.hhs.gov). **CSR**

**THE HAGUE** – While in The Hague, representatives from the United States and El Salvador ratified a bi-lateral agreement. At center, an official of El Salvador, Marcos Sanchez Trejo, Attorney General Ministerio Publico Procuraduria General de la Republica El Salvador, presents a signed copy of the ratified agreement to Mary Helen Carlson, Attorney Adviser, Office of the Legal Adviser for Private International Law, U.S. Department of State. Joining them are OCSE Commissioner Margot Bean, second from right, OCSE Policy Division Director Lily Matheson, and Associate General Counsel Robert Keith, DHHS Children, Families and Aging Division.



**AUSTRALIA** – Attending the International Heads of Agency Meeting were, from left, Ken Duford (Canada), Glenys Beauchamp (Australia), Donna Goodwin (New Zealand), Alisha Griffin (President, National Child Support Directors Association), Hillary Reynolds (United Kingdom), Lily Matheson (OCSE Policy Division Director), Margot Bean (OCSE Commissioner), Stephen Geraghty (United Kingdom), Charles Ronaldson (New Zealand), and Matt Miller (Australia). Not pictured: Elissa Lief (Canada), David Udy (New Zealand), and Bruce Findlay (New Zealand).





# Mining for Gold, Federal Offset Style

By Brian Peeler  
OCSE

No, I'm not talking about the precious metal used in jewelry; I'm talking about numbers. Regardless of whether you love them or hate them, numbers can paint a fairly accurate picture of things if you know how to read them. For example, there is an interesting little bit of trivia in a recent piece of correspondence from OCSE to State child support agencies (TCC 07-20, mailed June 1):

“Based on 106,808 offsets, the net collections total for OCSE Cycle 2007-06 as of April 13, 2007, is \$116,376,397. The year-to-date total for 804,203 offsets is \$1,041,342,600.”

## Highest Tax Day Total

Since 1955, working Americans have been required to file their Federal Tax returns by April 15th, a date commonly referred to as “Tax Day.” This is the first year that OCSE Federal Offset collections surpassed the \$1 billion mark prior to Tax Day! Back in 2000-2001, the program didn't hit \$1 billion in collections until mid-May. Since then, the milestone has been reached a week earlier every couple of years.

The reason behind this trend is two-fold. For starters, the Federal Offset Program is simply collecting more money, with collections increasing an average of 2.5 percent per year since 2000. Additionally, with the advent of electronic filing, more taxpayers are filing earlier. So far this year, 69 percent of the returns received by the IRS were electronic. That is almost double the number of e-filers from 5 years ago (36 percent).

This actually brings me to my second little bit of trivia, and the focus of this article:

## Most Important 4 Weeks of the Year

Here's something few people probably realize, but that everyone who works with the Federal Offset Program knows: A whopping one-third of the Program's annual collections (over \$566 million in 2007) are received during a relatively short 4-week period. Starting with the second week of February and going through the first week of March, weekly collections are red hot. In fact, in just one of those weeks we received \$185 million!



**The lesson to be learned here is the importance of States having all of their delinquent child support cases certified through the OCSE Federal Offset process**

**and up-to-date at OCSE by mid-January at the latest.** Up-to-date information ensures that names, addresses, and most importantly arrearages on the OCSE Federal Offset system, reflect the information currently stored on the State systems.

Overall, the chances of receiving an offset on a case each year are decent (1 in 5). However, missing this critical window of opportunity might mean waiting 12 months before you get another shot. My 5 years in child support have taught me, the only collection numbers considered golden are those going in one direction—UP! [CSR](#)

October 1, 2007

Important  
DATE!

Children over 18 eligible  
for Federal Tax Offset



## Colorado Betting on Collections

**By Paula Brown**

*Colorado Child Support Enforcement Program*

**T**his May, Colorado became the first State to require casinos and race tracks to intercept certain winnings if a person owes child support. The law becomes effective July 1, 2008. The limited stakes casinos (none on reservations) and race tracks in Colorado handle more than \$942 million a year.

The Colorado Department of Revenue is required to set up a “registry” where the casino or race track workers can check to see if a winner owes child support. When the lights blink and the bells go off on a slot machine, which is any time a person wins \$1,200 or more, or if they win \$600 or more on a wager at a race track, they have to file a W2G with the IRS.

At the same time the worker is getting information for the W2G, they will check the database to see if they can pay the money out

or if they need to hold it. The workers will hold up to the amount of arrears and return the rest to the winner. The law also requires that the worker provide updated address information to the State child support enforcement agency.

Once the State intercepts the payment, the payee gets information about who to contact at the State Child Support Enforcement Program and the money is sent to the State Treasurer’s Office to be held until the period for administrative review has expired (30 days).

If there is no administrative review, or if it is found that the intercept was taken properly, the money is disbursed to the custodial parent or to the State if there are State arrears.

Due to complaints from the gaming and racing folks in Colorado (After all, why should they have to do the government’s work?), if there are no collections in a year, the entire bill gets repealed. **CSR**

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### **FLORIDA**, *from page 1*

Customer-satisfaction surveys revealed that, after viewing the presentation, many felt better informed about the purpose and processes of both IV-A and CSE agencies, and many gained a better understanding about child support and its mission.

Applicants learned that keeping their contact information current helped both IV-A and child support professionals to work their cases. “Many did not realize the scope of child support services available to them such as enforcement of medical support,” says Mohnen.

Among the project’s results: complete data for

the noncustodial parent’s date of birth showed the most notable increase, from about 50 percent to 73 percent; the proportion of applicants who required an initial cooperation interview declined from 100 percent to 27 percent; customer satisfaction with the IV-A agency increased from 78 percent to 95 percent, and with the CSE agency from 92 percent to 100 percent.

Look for Susan Mohnen’s workshop at the OCSE 17th National Training Conference (*see registration information on page 8*). An abstract about the project is located on the OCSE Web site at: [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/grants/abstracts/fy2004\\_1115\\_abstracts.html#90FD0098](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/grants/abstracts/fy2004_1115_abstracts.html#90FD0098) **CSR**

## DC Spreads the Word

At the first Washington, DC, Fatherhood Initiative Conference in May, attendees from the District’s Child Support Services Division (CSSD) were quite familiar with the message delivered by two keynote speakers.

Both Daniel C. Schneider, HHS Acting Assistant Secretary for Children and Families, and District Mayor Adrian Fenty encouraged participants to continue the “fight” to assist fathers who need help to become more involved in their children’s lives.

Involvement is a message CSSD professionals also have been touting as part of their efforts to draw the public’s attention to child support services through partnership opportunities.

A plenary panel at the fatherhood conference served as one of several forums in recent months for CSSD to promote the program’s vision. Panel members included Shirley Payne, Training Coordinator; Margaret Price, Enforcement Section Manager; Nancy Johnson, Legal Section Chief; and Angela Thornton Harvey, Paternity and Community Outreach Chief.

Also in May, CSSD was invited by local radio station WPGC to tape an interview about its “new and improved” child support guidelines calculator. During the interview, Assistant Attorney General Eboni Govan highlighted the calculator’s easy-to-use design for both non-custodial and custodial parents.

Govan also discussed the objectives of the recently improved child support guidelines:

to treat cases with similar circumstances equally; reflect current economic realities; make income adjustments available to both parents based upon their ability to pay; and have parents share the burden of large expenses such as child care, health insurance, and extraordinary medical costs.

The interview aired June 16, coinciding with Father’s Day, and will air indefinitely on Saturday and Sunday mornings at 6:30 and 7 a.m.

The Annual State Access and Visitation Program Coordinators training meeting and Association of Family and Conciliation Courts’ National Conference (*see article on page 2*) gave Harvey another opportunity to present a workshop about CSSD services. There, she joined DC Superior Court Magistrate Judge Tony Lee to discuss a DC fathering court pilot project.

Finally, this spring CSSD also conducted presentations for Goodwill Industries staff and the Virginia Williams Resource Center’s Coalition for the Homeless staff and clients. CSSD Director Benidia Rice believes collaborations of this sort in the District of Columbia are necessary, as in many other jurisdictions.

“To the extent we are collectively able to decrease unemployment and homelessness, we are better able to increase child support collections,” said Director Rice.

*For further information about these CSSD activities, contact Angela Harvey at 202-724-2114 or [angela.harvey@dc.gov](mailto:angela.harvey@dc.gov). **CSR***



# 'Business Intelligence' in CSE Operations

By Dennis Putze  
OCSE

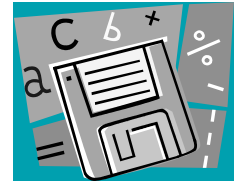
Wikipedia defines “business intelligence” as applications and technologies used to gather, increase access to, and analyze data and information about company operations.

To the child support enforcement community, business intelligence refers to data warehouses, data mining, and predictive analysis. Companies use these tools to predict such things as which customers are most likely to respond to the next company mailing or which are most likely to default on a bank loan. State child support enforcement offices can use business intelligence systems to better understand factors affecting child support enforcement. Statewide automated systems contain a wealth of information for program operations; data warehouses and other tools can access the information and use the data to measure and improve performance, better understand clients, identify risks and opportunities, and support decision-making.

A recently published report by the Department of Health and Human Services shows how some States are using data warehouses to tap into the information in their operational data stores. The report, “Enhancing Child Support Efforts: Summary of Data Warehouse Efforts in Nine States,” is available at: <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/07/CSE-enhancement/data/index.htm>

The report includes State experiences in developing and using data warehouses. It provides case studies about data sources, uses, and users; and systems funding, architecture, security, and implementation. The States studied were Maine, Maryland, Michigan, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

The States cited various uses for their data warehouses. Some use them primarily for Federal reporting, and others for specific child support purposes, such as to locate noncustodial parents (NCPs) or track and enforce medical support orders.



## Tech Talk

Some States use their data warehouses primarily for policy development research and statistical analysis. For example, Washington uses its data warehouse for data mining capabilities to create statistical models that show how caseworker actions affect outcomes. Staff uses the data warehouse to study cause-and-effect relationships between client characteristics, timing of life events, and the payment of child support. A planned in-depth analysis will document what collection techniques work on hard-to-collect cases.

Vermont uses its data warehouse to analyze patterns and trends. For example, it used the data warehouse to explore factors associated with stoppages in payments among NCPs who had previous payment histories. This analysis found that the “stoppers” were likely to be young (19 to 23), newly married, and associated with a young custodial parent and reduced agency contact. Vermont also looked at cases that suddenly began making payments to determine what precipitated the change. It found that the strongest correlation was the level of communication with the NCP.

These are just a few examples of how State child support enforcement agencies are using business intelligence to better understand their clients and processes in order to increase collection of child support for families and children. If you are thinking about building a data warehouse, or want to see how other States are using them, be sure to check out this report. **CSR**

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Health and Human Services**

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**OCSE  
17th National  
Child Support Enforcement  
Training Conference**

**September 10-12, 2007**

**Omni Shoreham  
Washington, DC  
202-234-0700**

**Conference Chairperson:  
Kimberly Mitchell-Harley  
202-205-3496**

***kimberly.mitchellharley@acf.hhs.gov***

For registration information, log on to the  
OCSE Web site ([www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse)), and click on the Training  
Conference icon.

**CORRECTION**—In last month's article  
about a Chatham County, GA, project  
(page 6), the statement about a plan to  
build a diversion center for child support  
offenders should have read "80-bed diver-  
sion center," not "eight-bed."

***Child Support Report***

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