



# Child Support Report

OFFICE OF CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT

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## 'The Heart of the Matter'



### Child Support/Child Welfare Connection Beating Stronger

In their opening addresses to a group of child support and child welfare professionals last month in Washington, DC, both OCSE Commissioner Margot Bean and Children's Bureau Associate Commissioner Dr. Susan Orr emphasized the need for child support (IV-D) and child welfare (IV-E) collaboration to achieve positive outcomes for children and families in the two agencies' shared caseloads.

"It is important to take the time now to collaborate," said Commissioner Bean. "We all serve the children and care about child well-being—that is the heart of the matter."

The 2-day meeting set out to replicate and supplement a similar meeting exactly a year earlier, under an OCSE Special Improvement Project grant administered by the Center for Policy Research in Denver. (See an article about last year's meeting at [www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse), and click on *Child Support Report*, September 2006.)



**Andrew Rome, Deputy Regional Counsel, Child Welfare, Massachusetts:** "I'd like to see increased collaboration, especially in locating parents and considering kin—studies have shown the most stable placement of a child is when the child is placed with kin, rather than in a foster home."

**Jessica Pearson, left, Director, and Nancy Thoennes, Associate Director, Center for Policy Research, agreed:** "We've done research for years in both the child welfare and child support fields, and we're seeing a mutual desire to help children in both agencies. The two agencies have histories that are distinct and separate. This project is a necessary first step to help plan collaborations structurally."



This year, representatives from Massachusetts, Oklahoma, Oregon, and Tennessee joined OCSE and Children's Bureau staff to share experiences and ideas to further collaboration. Participants learned of the progress made by last year's participants, including a success story out of Milwaukee where the child welfare agency, working with the child support



**Barbara Siegel, Child Support Policy Analyst, North Dakota:** "As a new grantee overseeing an OCSE 1115 project, I'm excited to be able to share information at this meeting with SIP grantees."



## Oklahoma Honors Judge Norman, Success with ‘Problem-Solving Court’



By Marilyn Durbin

*Oklahoma Child Support Enforcement Division*

Unlike a typical morning in the Muskogee District Court, the court room on May 31 was filled with praises and applause for District Judge Mike Norman. The occasion marked the local celebration for the Judge, who this month will receive a national award of judicial excellence from the National Child Support Enforcement Association, at its annual conference in Orlando. At the celebration, Muskogee Mayor Wren Stratton proclaimed May 31 “Judge Mike Norman Day.”

“The Judge was selected for the award because of his dedication and use of innovative methods to increase the payment of child support for Eastern Oklahoma’s children,” said Victoria Harrison, Oklahoma Child Support Enforcement Division (CSED). These methods include the Court Liaison Program (CLP), a “problem-solving court” approach which now operates in all five counties in which Judge Norman presides: Muskogee, Wagoner, Adair, Cherokee, and Sequoyah.



District Judge Mike Norman listens to Victoria Harrison, Oklahoma CSE Assistant Division Director and Director, Center for Planning and Development, as she shares information about the Judge and the Court Liaison Program before handing him a certificate of appreciation from the State Child Support Enforcement Division. Local dignitaries, members of the community, and CSED representatives attended the ceremony at the Muskogee District Court.

In the past year, the CLP in these counties has saved more than \$2 million dollars in incarceration costs, and generated nearly \$790,000 in payments for children, a 71 percent increase over last year. This success has led to implementation in four Central Oklahoma CSED offices, and is expected to grow into other areas of the State as well.

The CLP, funded and managed through the CSED, represents the first program of its kind in the State. CLP offers referrals, one-on-one coaching, and other support needed to help noncustodial parents become gainfully employed and fulfill their financial obligations to their children. In addition, Judge Norman and CLP coordinators hold the noncustodial parents accountable for fulfilling their responsibilities.

Mary Anderson, Court Liaison Coordinator for Adair, Cherokee, and Sequoyah Counties, said, “There are always people who won’t help themselves or don’t care, but there are a lot of others out there who want to do the right thing. Many simply need help to enable themselves to overcome barriers to meet their financial obligations. We are here to make a difference in that effort.”

Judge Norman clearly appreciates the work. “I love to do what I do. It’s like falling out of a tree. You just let go and do it,” he said. “But really, I look around the court room at these people, the child support CLP coordinators, case workers, and attorneys. They handle all the background work and paperwork. They make me look good. They deserve a lot of credit.”

See **JUDGE**, next page



## Long-Due Arrears Arrive In OK, SD Cases

A noncustodial parent, self-employed as a contractor, recently paid his entire child support arrearage of nearly \$27,000, after Project Save Our Children (PSOC) Task Force investigators located him in Iowa.

The parent had been ordered to pay child support in a 1993 Oklahoma case for a then-2-year-old. He had made only sporadic payments between 1997 and 2002, via Mandatory Income Withholding, as well as in the past year.

In South Dakota, one case turned into two after PSOC investigators found a news-

paper article, in 2005, showing a daughter had been born to the parent already under investigation.

This parent, an accomplished musician and teacher living in Montana, recently paid about \$25,000 toward an arrearage of \$39,000 for his three children, now in their twenties, and the young child. He was ordered to establish an agreement to pay past-due and current monthly support.

For information about the PSOC Task Force, contact Nick Soppa in OCSE at [nsoppa@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:nsoppa@acf.hhs.gov) or 202-4401-4677.

### **JUDGE**, from previous page

A recent study of the longest-term CLP sites in the 5 Eastern Oklahoma counties and in the South Oklahoma City Office revealed that in 1 year, 3 full-time employees (assisted by 1 part-time person) worked with 469 participants, as well as networked in the community to build partnerships and referral sources.

As a result, 72 percent of the participants (339) experienced positive outcomes of getting jobs and consistently paying child support. Another 11 percent (53) received other assistance, such as health care or drug rehabilitation; issues that must be addressed before child support can be consistently paid.

Participants in the study generated a 69-percent increase in child support payments, in contrast to the previous year's record (a \$398,000 increase, or \$978,000 paid in 1 year). Finally, 403 participants yielded tax savings of more than \$3 million in county funds not used for

incarceration costs.

In addition to cost savings and higher child support collections, the CLP helps people turn their lives around. "The CLP helps noncustodial parents identify and break down barriers to employment, upgrade skills when needed, find good jobs, consistently pay their child support obligations, and most importantly, improve the lives of their children," said Ted Williams, who supports the Muskogee and Wagoner programs. Williams served as the State's first Court Liaison Coordinator.

Muskogee CLP Coordinator Jerry Clouse explains further: "We communicate [sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly] our belief in the customer's potential to do better. That positive belief in others has a power of its own. When combined with incentives, resources, coaching, and accountability, you've got a formula to make a real difference in helping someone help themselves. When they do that in this program, they help their children even more." **CSR**

# 'PAID' Guide Now Available to CSE Agencies



As part of the national PAID initiative (Project to Avoid Increasing Delinquencies), OCSE has posted a guide on its Web site to help interested child support agencies improve

practices that may lead to collection of current support and arrears and reduction of growth in arrears—the goals of PAID.

The “PAID Practices Guide” offers information based on strategies and activities already in place across the country to help child support professionals think about their business practices, as they work to address the root causes of nonpayment of support and target opportunities for automation.

The information is categorized into five main areas: setting appropriate orders, early intervention, order review and modification, locate and enforcement, and managing existing arrears. By listing questions for each of the five areas, the guide can help to foster discussion about practices among States, Tribes, Territories, and OCSE.

Sample questions from the guide, in the category of “setting appropriate orders,” is shown on the right side of this page.

You, the workers in child support agencies, are the best source for good ideas for improving the “PAID Practices Guide” and other PAID tools. Please send your suggestions to *Linda.Keely@acf.hhs.gov*.

For further information about the “PAID Practices Guide” and other PAID tools, see Dear Colleague Letter 07-17, dated May 30, 2007, on the OCSE Web site at [www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse). **CSR**

## Setting Appropriate Orders

Because many people who owe child support arrears have low incomes, a child support agency may wish to review its practices regarding setting orders by using some questions posed in the “PAID Practices Guide.” These include:

- Do we make an effort to obtain and use income data (e.g., quarterly wage data from National and State Directories, State Income Tax Data, SSA Retirement, Survivors, Disability, and Health Insurance benefits) to help determine appropriate order amounts?
- Do we presume income at a reasonable standard when no income information is available (such as presuming minimum wage rather than the State standard of need or State average income)?
- Does our jurisdiction limit retroactive support amounts and other add-on judgment amounts (e.g., reducing time frames for retroactive support)?
- Have we implemented procedures to reduce the number of default orders (e.g., procedures that encourage NCPs to participate in hearings, policies that allow a default order to remain open for a set period of time to allow for easy amendment if the parent provides new information)?
- Do we use parent conferences, informal mediation, or dispute resolution prior to court to get better orders and buy-in of both parents?

# OCSE Maps Updates for Interagency Web Tool

As more Tribes implement child support enforcement programs, the need will grow for Tribal and State systems to communicate about common cases. For this reason, plans are under way to expand OCSE's Intergovernmental Referral Guide (IRG) to include Tribal profiles. Six Tribes have submitted information for the profiles update, set for completion this summer.



State profiles include information about the Uniform Interstate Family Support Act, reciprocal agreements with other countries, age of majority, statute of limitations, paternity establishment, review and adjustment process, and lump sum payments. Links to statutory cites also are available.

The list of location codes and addresses contains contact information at the State level, including names, addresses, and telephone numbers. This list also provides location codes for State, county, and local offices, OCSE central and regional contact information, and international location codes and addresses.

The address section of the IRG also will be expanded to include *uniquely identified* Tribal address information that will link to the Bureau of Indian Affairs codes, and *uniquely identified* international address information that will link to the International Standards Organization codes. A link to the National Child Support Enforcement Association's Web site also will be added for international addresses. This expansion is scheduled to take effect late this fall.

Access to the location codes and address portion of the IRG is limited. Only State IRG administrators have editing capability. The State administrator also is responsible for disseminating a username and password to case workers. Address information is not available to the general public.

The IRG, located on the OCSE Web site ([www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse)), helps States exchange child support enforcement information, which is organized in these areas: profiles of services, location codes and addresses, Federal and regional office data, and demographic data on international child support agencies.

For more information about the IRG, contact Angela Kasey in OCSE at 202-205-3423 or [angela.kasey@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:angela.kasey@acf.hhs.gov), or Program Manager Ella Wood at [ewood@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:ewood@acf.hhs.gov). **CSR**

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## HEART, from page 1

agency, was able to place children with fathers when the mothers lost custody. From there, participants discussed their existing working relationships and made plans to enhance these collaborative efforts.

For some, it was a new beginning. For others, it was clear that when child support workers discuss a child's "permanency plan," some significant discussion and work has already taken place in the child welfare agency.

## Log On For More

To further strengthen IV-D/IV-E collaboration, OCSE has posted a new "workplace" on its Web site to provide a forum for child support and child welfare professionals to both submit information and discover what jurisdictions around the country are doing to link the two agencies.



For instructions on how to log on to the IV-D/IV-E workplace, contact Karen Anthony in OCSE at [karen.anthony@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:karen.anthony@acf.hhs.gov) or 202-690-6275. **CSR**



## Wichita Collects Largest 'Bonus' for Kids

By **Lisa Long-Horton**  
*Wichita, Kansas*

Last December, when news media announced that a large company in Wichita would be giving bonuses to its employees, the 18th Judicial District Office of the Court Trustee in Sedgwick County quickly took note. The news spurred a brief partnership with Spirit AeroSystems, Inc. ("Spirit"), and, although not the first such arrangement, gleaned a record \$109,457 for children in Kansas.

Based on this success, the Kansas Child Support Enforcement Association awarded the Sedgwick Office a "Certificate of Achievement in Recognition of the Most Unique Collection," at its annual conference in June.

Julie Orr, Senior Attorney/Deputy Court Trustee, first brought the news story to the attention of her office, which led Customer Service Representative Sandy Sills to spearhead

the arrangement with Spirit. The arrangement ensured that Spirit would hold the bonus monies and that garnishments would reach Spirit before it paid out the bonuses.

Initially, Sills discovered that only certain employees, and over a certain time period, would receive the bonuses, and worked with Spirit to obtain a list of potential recipients. Sills, Orr, and Spirit representatives also resolved confusion about what percentage of bonus monies would be withheld, and from whom; whether garnishments would have to be filed; and if Spirit could withhold garnishes based on the income withholding orders (IWOs).

When Spirit announced it would need garnishments within 24 hours, office staff prepared and faxed 14 of them in record time. From these garnishments and IWOs, the office received monies in 30 cases: the lowest amount

See **KANSAS**, next page

### *In Focus*



## Hoopla and Heroes



This little piggy, held snugly by Kristie Haynes, got a kiss from Kansas Child Support Enforcement Director Jim Robertson, one of three selected by popular vote to pucker up, at the Kansas Child Support Enforcement Association's annual conference in June. Attendees David Addington and Renee Van Nieuwenhuysse also won the distinct honor. The "Kiss the Pig" contest debuted this year to help raise funds for an annual scholarship. In keeping with the conference theme, "Heroes Among Us," OCSE Commissioner Margot Bean called Robertson a hero—not for kissing the pig, but for having devoted 32 years of service to the National Child Support Enforcement Program, including 20 as Kansas Director, the longest serving IV-D director in the nation. The Commissioner also commended the audience as heroes for going the extra mile to help customers, looking for ways to make the work more efficient, and helping to get money to families more quickly.



# E-IWO On the Move

By **Lynnetta Thompson**  
*OCSE*



**M**ove out of the way, paper—automation is movin' in. The automated world of child support processing is soon to get a boost with the help of a centralized electronic portal for the Electronic Income Withholding Order (e-IWO) project.

The project enables State Child Support Enforcement agencies to electronically communicate with employers using standardized data drawn from the Order/Notice to Withhold Income for Child Support.

Seven States are transmitting files with employers; six additional States will implement e-IWO within the next few months. Employers participating in the project include the Defense Finance and Accounting Service, Meijer Corporation, and Labor Ready. The e-IWO project has increased child support collections; saved time, money, and resources; and provided more accurate and reliable data.

A centralized e-IWO portal will enable States and employers to send and retrieve e-IWO documents at one location. The portal will

operate in a secure environment via the Internet on the OCSE network (OCSENet).

Once the portal is implemented, an income withholding order made available for electronic processing will be pulled from the State's system via OCSENet, validated for errors, and then forwarded to the employer.

The employer will generate an electronic acknowledgement indicating whether the e-IWO was implemented or denied, along with the reason (e.g., the noncustodial parent is not employed there). This acknowledgement process enables States to be notified within days if employment has ended or the person has never been employed by the employer.

OCSE encourages more States and employers to join the e-IWO movement.

For more information about the project, visit the Employer Services Web site at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/newhire/employer/home.htm> or contact Bill Stuart at [william.k.stuart@lmco.com](mailto:william.k.stuart@lmco.com). **CSR**

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**KANSAS**, *from previous page*

in a case was \$192; the highest, \$10,723; and more than \$8,900 in each of 5 cases.

Based on smooth handling of this partnership, and others arrangements in the past few years with Wichita companies, the 18th Judicial District Office of the Court Trustee staff foresees a long working relationship with Spirit.

*For more information, contact the author at Sedgwick County Court Trustee's Office, 316-660-5833 or [lhorton@dc18.org](mailto:lhorton@dc18.org). **CSR***



As she momentarily donned her bike helmet at the Colorado Family Support Council's 33rd Annual Training Conference in June, OCSE Commissioner Margot Bean led the audience on a "tour" of recent Federal and State achievements and plans to strengthen technical assistance to States under the national Project to Avoid Increasing Delinquencies (PAID). The Commissioner thanked all for their patience with customers and enthusiasm to enhance the program, and for "pedaling forward every day to obtain support for children."

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## ***Fatherhood.gov on Web***

The Administration for Children and Families has launched a Web site for the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse (NRFC): [www.fatherhood.gov](http://www.fatherhood.gov).

The site offers access to print and electronic publications, information on fatherhood issues, tips for dads, frequently asked questions, and a subscription service for visitors to connect to the latest information on responsible fatherhood.

The NRFC promotes responsible, caring, and effective parenting; enhances the abilities and commitment of unemployed or low-income fathers to provide material support for their families; improves fathers' ability to effectively manage family business affairs; and encourages and supports responsible fatherhood in the context of marriage.

The NRFC can also be reached by telephone at 877-4DA-D411.

## ***Child Support Report***

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