



# Child Support Report



Office of Child Support Enforcement

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## NCCSD President: States to Play 'Critical' Role In Implementing New Legislation

By *Daryl Wusk*

In every bill you have a variety of provisions, and the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005, signed into law last month, is no exception. On the one hand, state IV-D directors (who comprise the National Council of Child Support Directors or NCCSD) are concerned about the child support provision that ends federal matching of state expenditures using incentive payments. On the other, the legislation hands us some very good requirements, including long-sought provisions that will reduce the trigger for passport denial—by half—and improve our chances of passing through more payments directly to families with federal fiscal participation.

The challenge now is how do we implement these provisions over the next few years? To

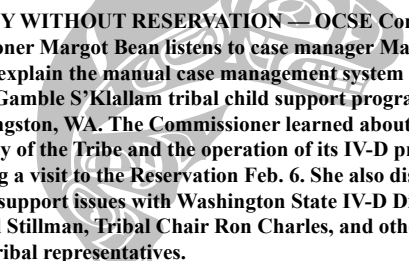


Daryl Wusk

begin, I'm most excited about an upcoming meeting in Dallas, March 14-15, with OCSE staff and IV-D directors from all states and jurisdictions. OCSE put this meeting together quickly after the legislation passed. This is very significant because states will, from the beginning, have critical input into the policies and procedures that will be issued to implement the provisions.

States will each have their own programming issues and legislative changes, and we know it will take a considerable amount of time to execute some of the federal changes. But I have no doubt that we'll power forward from this initial meeting and work to put the new provisions into practice. [CSR](#)

*Daryl Wusk, Director of Nebraska's CSE Program and President of the NCCSD, can be reached at 402-471-1400 or [daryl.wusk@hss.ne.gov](mailto:daryl.wusk@hss.ne.gov).*



**UNITY WITHOUT RESERVATION**— OCSE Commissioner Margot Bean listens to case manager Maria Tran explain the manual case management system in the Port Gamble S'Klallam tribal child support program, in Kingston, WA. The Commissioner learned about the history of the Tribe and the operation of its IV-D program during a visit to the Reservation Feb. 6. She also discussed child support issues with Washington State IV-D Director David Stillman, Tribal Chair Ron Charles, and other state and tribal representatives.





OCSE now is accepting applications for grant projects—both Section 1115 demonstration projects and Special Improvement Projects (SIP)—through May 24, 2006. The main purpose for both Section 1115 and SIP grant projects is to further the mission and goals of the child support enforcement program, ensure children have financial and medical support from both parents, and improve program performance and services to the program’s customers.

### **What’s the Difference?**

In a nutshell, Section 1115 and SIP grants differ in three major ways: eligibility, funding, and evaluation.

Section 1115 grants are available only to state Title IV-D agencies, or to the umbrella agencies of which they are a part. The applicant may subcontract with nonprofit community- and faith-based organizations, universities, etc., and may collaborate with other government agencies—with the understanding that the applicant agency has sole responsibility for the demonstration. SIP applicants may be state, tribal, or local agencies (including the child support agency), and nonprofit community- and faith-based organizations.

For Section 1115 grants, state agencies are required to match 5 percent of the total federal grant, while SIP grants receive full federal funding, with no match required by the grantee. (States may use in-kind services for their 5 percent share.)

Section 1115 grants are required to have an independent evaluation performed, while SIP grants are not. For both types of grants, however, evaluations are important in helping OCSE to assess lessons learned and model projects

for use by other states and localities.

### **Priority Areas**

Each year, projects funded fall into several program priority areas. This year, as last, the priority areas reflect the strategies in the National CSE Strategic Plan for FY 2005 – FY 2009.

#### Priority Areas for Section 1115:

- Timely revisions of orders based on ability to pay for categories of persons affected by lowered pay (layoffs, military personnel, and/or prisoners) and provision of related services;
- Increased child support enforcement collections/efficiencies through increasing levels of automation or reengineering of business practices; and
- Improved child support results through collaboration with child welfare agencies.

#### Priority Areas for SIP:

- Promoting healthy relationships for unwed couples to improve children’s financial and medical security;
- Improving child support by encouraging parents and CSE agencies to work together for better case management and results; and
- Expanding and improving enforcement/collections tools.

For application information, log onto: [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov). For additional information about Section 1115 grants, contact OCSE’s Karen Anthony at 202-690-6275 or [kanthony@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:kanthony@acf.hhs.gov), and about SIP grants, contact Susan Greenblatt at 202-401-4849 or [sgreenblatt@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:sgreenblatt@acf.hhs.gov). **CSR**

# Locked Up, Not Out

## Texas Reentry Program Turns Concerns Into Collections

*By Michael Hayes*

When parents go to prison, they have many worries. For some, it's "Who is caring for my children?" For others, it's "Will I get to see my children?" For most, the question is "How will I survive this?" Child support is not necessarily their main worry.

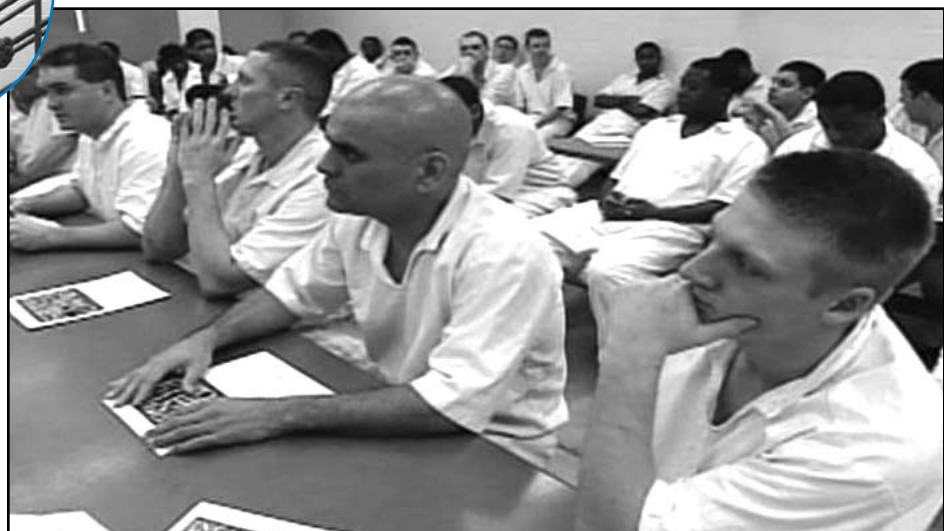
Over the last few years, child support agencies, too, have been concerned, asking: "How will incarcerated parents affect our arrears balances?" "Should incarceration be grounds for downward modifications?" "What kind of outreach should child support do with incarcerated parents that will increase payments after release?"

To find answers to these questions, the Texas Office of the Attorney General Child Support Division received an OCSE Section 1115 grant in 2002 to implement the Family Reintegration

Project—in partnership with the Texas Department of Criminal



Vincent Ivery, above, is coordinator of the Incarcerated Parent Program in the Office of Family Initiatives, Texas Office of the Attorney General. Mr. Ivery is providing an overview of paternity and child support information to a group of state jail inmates who have children and will soon be released.



Justice, local community-based organizations, and local workforce development providers. The project was designed to develop strategies for increasing child support collections, employment, and family connection among recently released and paroled noncustodial parents.

The project (through February 2004) provided reentry services to over 300 noncustodial fathers; fatherhood, parenting, and child support/paternity education to an additional several hundred fathers; 2,000-plus family contacts to assist with reentry and family interaction; expedited child support casework for several hundred reentering noncustodial parents; distribution of educational child support brochures and videos through more than 100 prison facilities to 100,000-plus inmates; and training to 42 IV-D associate judges.

What did families get for all this work? Significant results included:

- Drops in arrears balances for participants: from an average of \$21,000 to \$18,000 (a 14 percent decrease);



# Commissioner Praises Healthy-Marriage Coalition in Idaho

By *Tiffany Barfield*

During a celebration to honor a local program’s annual Marriage Week, Feb. 7 in Nampa, ID, OCSE Commissioner Margot Bean thanked attendees for helping parents and their children through marriage-education activities. At the same time, “this community has become a committed partner to the federal initiative to strengthen the bedrock—the foundation—that can support a more healthy society,” said the Commissioner.

The luncheon event was sponsored by Healthy Families Nampa, a 52-member coalition of churches, state and local government agencies, secular and nonprofit agencies, a hospital, and local media. Funded through a Federal OCSE 5-year demonstration grant waiver (begun in 2003), the organization raises funds to support a variety of healthy-marriage projects.

The Commissioner expressed her pride that the coalition helped to pioneer a movement that is getting the word out to the nationwide child

support community that “marriage counts,” and referred to the National CSE Strategic Plan in which prevention and early intervention techniques in child support cases, such as healthy-marriage education, are key strategies to avoid problems down the road.

“It is thanks in large part to the success of projects such as Healthy Families Nampa,” added Commissioner Bean, “that the Administration proposed a \$100 million annual fund [signed into law Feb. 8] to conduct research and demonstration projects to support family formation and healthy marriages.”

Also during her visit, Ms. Bean met with leaders of several coalition partners to discuss their operations, and observed another in action—a Family Wellness class taught by community volunteers who provide skills to strengthen, support, and empower families. [CSR](#)

*Tiffany Barfield, Special Assistant to OCSE Commissioner Margot Bean, can be reached at [tbarfield@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:tbarfield@acf.hhs.gov).*

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- For those noncustodial parents paying support, a higher percentage of support due was paid: from 54 percent to 77 percent;
- Increased percentage of child support collections coming from wage withholding: from 48 percent prior to incarceration to 70 percent post-program; and
- More contact with children: from 28 percent saying they had no contact with their children prior to incarceration to only 10 percent saying they had no contact post-program.

support agency concerns?

- Incarcerated parents are eager to participate in special programs dealing with parenting, child support, and family reintegration.
- Accurate data-sharing between corrections and child support agencies is critical—and difficult.
- Employment services are integral to any reentry program with transitional employment that is linked to release.
- Child support policies need to be reviewed and adapted in the following areas in order to improve post-release compliance and support: default paternity

What key lessons can help us address our child

See **TEXAS**, next page

## Task Force Helps Bring Noncustodial Parents to Justice

Last June, nearly 5 months after special agents in Chicago arrested a noncustodial father while he was delivering a business presentation, the executive businessman wrote a check for the full \$57,000 he owed to his two children in Connecticut. The original arrest warrant came about as a result of investigations by the Project Save our Children (PSOC) Task Force. The father paid the full amount in anticipation of a plea agreement to avoid jail time as well as a felony charge, but still was ordered, this January, to pay a \$500 fine for a misdemeanor charge of failure to pay child support.



obtain employment because he knew it would make it easier for the North Dakota child support agency to track him down.

According to local media, the U.S. District Court Judge who decided the 10-month sentence said this case ranks within the top five of the worst “deadbeat-dad cases” he has seen in his 15 years as a federal judge.

Known in the nationwide PSOC community as *significant events*, these cases are among many reported each month that the task force members investigate, monitor, and hold up as examples of enforcing cases in which the parent has the ability, but not the will, to pay court-ordered child support.

In another case, resolved last December, a noncustodial father from Grand Forks, ND, was ordered to pay \$378 per month after PSOC investigations showed he was residing in Montana with a female friend. At his trial, the dad admitted to fleeing to Montana to escape his child support obligations and not attempting to

For further information about PSOC, contact OCSE project supervisor Nick Soppa at 202-401-4677 or [nsoppa@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:nsoppa@acf.hhs.gov). **CSR**

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### TEXAS, *from previous page*

and paternity establishment, default support orders, order modifications, arrears negotiation, and remote participation in hearings.

The Family Reintegration Project significantly contributed to broader change and future plans for the Office of the Attorney General Child Support program. We are currently revising policies affecting incarcerated noncustodial parents, developing ongoing special projects to examine expedited casework with incarcerated noncustodial parents, as well as expanding partnerships with corrections, workforce, and nonprofit organizations at the state and local levels.

State child support programs should continue be concerned about incarcerated parents. Our concerns don't begin to compare with those of the parents who find themselves locked up. But if concern drives us to change the way we interact with incarcerated parents, we have the power to make changes to help those parents not be locked out of their children's lives. They need the connection their children can provide; more importantly, their children need them. **CSR**

*For further information, contact Michael Hayes at 512-460-6218 or [Michael.hayes@cs.oag.state.tx.us](mailto:Michael.hayes@cs.oag.state.tx.us), or OCSE project officer Xavier Nelson at 202-401-5536 or [xnelson@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:xnelson@acf.hhs.gov).*

## L.A. County Raises Awareness—and Collections—As Media Help Reach Non-English Speakers

*By Al Reyes*

Outreach to non-English-speaking communities in L.A. County has helped the County Child Support Services Department (CSSD)—the largest locally administered child support agency in the country—improve its performance in recent years. CSSD collections reached a record \$505 million in 2005.

With support from Director Philip Browning and Chief Deputy Steven Golightly, the CSSD's Communications and Marketing Division has spearheaded several partnerships with local media to provide information about child support services to L.A.'s large foreign-language communities: Latinos make up close to 50 percent of the 10 million people living in Los Angeles County. Close to half of CSSD's 500,000 customers are Hispanic, and a third have been identified as predominately Spanish speakers.

Since 2003, L.A. County has partnered with network station KMEX-TV to feature the



Reporter Claudia Botello interviews CSSD Communications and Marketing chief Al Reyes during a KMEX-TV call-in program in L.A. County, CA.

work of L.A. County Child Support Services, each August, on “34 A Su Lado (Channel 34 At Your Side),” a public affairs call-in show from 6 to 11 p.m. The show features a toll-free call center where viewers call to ask questions about child support. A reporter is based at the center with 40 Spanish-speaking child support staff members who volunteer to work through the night. The reporter kicks off the show with news about child support, and the program broadcasts each hour through primetime. Coverage concludes with reports in the 11 p.m. news.



During the evening, county staff is interviewed about child support topics that also are presented on the following morning's news show, “Primera Edición.” Topics have included: how to

CSSD Director Philip Browning and staff members who work with KMEX-TV, division chief Maggie Lien, left, and supervisor Esther Chapa

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open a child support case, establish paternity, locate a noncustodial parent, and modify a child support order.

CSSD's first appearance on "34 A Su Lado" was a great platform to educate the Spanish-speaking public on child support issues, and CSSD employees were able to handle some 2,700 calls. Through this collaboration—the result of talks between CSSD and KMEX's Christina Sanchez Camino—CSSD is reaching a huge audience, as Channel 34 at times pulls in larger audiences than even the large network-owned television stations in Los Angeles.

L.A. County's partnership with KMEX-TV includes a tie-in with *La Opinión*, the oldest and most respected Spanish-language daily newspaper in Southern California. The morning following the department's appearance last August on Channel 34, *La Opinión* ran a half-page ad listing "The Ten Most Asked Questions about Child Support."

Another television station, KWHY-TV (NBC), explored child support issues on "Aquí A Las Cuatro," a 4 p.m. news show with anchors Jose Ronstadt and Palmira Perez. L.A. County also was invited to the phone-in show "Gracias Doctor" on KWKW, the Spanish-language radio station of the Los Angeles Dodgers and Lakers.

L.A. County also has reached out to its large Asian Pacific American community through the *Chinese Daily News*, the largest and oldest Chinese-language newspaper in the U.S. The newspaper responded with an informative article on child support services.

In 2004, Communications and Marketing worked with Korean-American staff members to bring more child support information into L.A.'s Korean-American community. The result was a front-page story in the *Daily Hankyoreh*, a respected Korean-language newspaper. And as part of its observance of the state's Child Support Awareness Month in 2005, CSSD began outreach with newspapers in the Cambodian communities in Long Beach and Los Angeles counties.

CSSD's Call Center handles 4 million calls a year and is well-equipped to respond to



L.A. child support staff answer calls during "34 A Su Lado" call-in show.

non-English-speaking clients. Not only does CSSD employ child support professionals who are fluent in various languages, it provides a language interpretation service through its Call Center that can accommodate over 100 different languages. Further, to improve media outreach about child support in the diverse communities, the CSSD has participated in conventions of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists and the Asian American Journalists Association. **CSR**

*For further information, contact Al Reyes, director of CSSD Communications and Marketing, at 323-832-7216 or [al\\_reyes@childsupport.co.la.ca.us](mailto:al_reyes@childsupport.co.la.ca.us). The speaker bureau e-mail: [cssd\\_speakers@childsupport.co.la.ca.us](mailto:cssd_speakers@childsupport.co.la.ca.us).*

**U.S. Department of  
Health and Human Services**

Administration for Children  
and Families  
Office of Child Support Enforcement  
Division of Consumer Services  
Mail Stop OCSE/DCS  
370 L'Enfant Promenade  
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**Nonprofit 'Runaway' Organization  
Offers Parents Advice on Prevention**

The National Runaway Switchboard (NRS) reported in January that one in seven youth between the ages of 10 and 18 will run away. NRS believes runaway scenarios may be prevented by being aware of the warning signs, and by parents maintaining open lines of communication with their children. Warning signs may include:

- Changes in behaviors or patterns
- Rebellious behavior
- Disclosure of intentions to run away
- Accumulations of possessions

Parents need to confront their suspicions immediately if they think their child may be considering running away from home. The parent should try to convey in a clear and calm manner that they are concerned and their child's behavior makes them feel afraid that they might run away from home. Parents should invite the child to talk with them directly or another trustworthy adult about what is on their mind.

If a child should run away from home, call the police immediately to file a Missing Persons File. There is no waiting period for law enforcement to take a report on a missing child.

The NRS crisis hotline is 1-800-RUNAWAY. For the complete press release and more information, visit [www.1800RUNAWAY.org](http://www.1800RUNAWAY.org).

***Child Support Report***

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Wade F. Horn, Ph.D.  
Assistant Secretary for Children and Families

Margot Bean  
Commissioner, OCSE

Robert Cohen  
Director, Division of Consumer Services

Elaine Blackman  
Editor  
202-401-5353, (fax) 202-205-5927  
[eblackman@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:eblackman@acf.hhs.gov)

Michell D. Butler  
Subscriptions  
202-401-5605  
[mdbutler@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:mdbutler@acf.hhs.gov)

OCSE Web site:  
[www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse)