



Child Support Report



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More States Get on Board to Pilot QUICK Project Lets Caseworkers Share Data in Seconds

By Joyce Myers
OCSE

Four states—Arizona, Colorado, North Carolina, and Virginia—now use QUICK—Query Interstate Cases for Kids—a pilot project developed by Federal and state partners to help states share one another’s data quickly. Both Pennsylvania and North Dakota are in the final phases of development. Almost 20 states are in various stages of analysis and planning to join the project.

QUICK is allowing caseworkers in the pilot states to access and view each other’s selected case information in real-time through a standard and secure user interface.

Why Use QUICK?

Imagine this: A custodial parent comes into the

office to find out why the child support hasn’t arrived in a few months. The client is upset and wants to know if a payment from the noncustodial parent living in another state is in the system. The caseworker tries to call the other worker, but the line is busy. The caseworker sends an e-mail, but there is no response. Sending a fax would take too much time. The worker has to followup on the case later. The client is not happy.

The scenario ends differently in a QUICK pilot state. After a few keystrokes—and within seconds—the caseworker is viewing the financial screens in the other participating state’s system. The worker relays the information to the custodial parent within minutes. If a payment is on the system, the client knows and, if not, the worker can take the next action on the case. Customer satisfaction is increased and case activity is stepped up. It’s a win-win situation.

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INSIDE:

Two articles examine methods that offer child support agencies the potential to boost both performance and client satisfaction:

Alternative Dispute Resolution page 4
Child Access and Visitation . . page 5

Bonar to Fill OCSE Deputy’s Chair



Donna Bonar, Director of OCSE’s Office of Automation and Program Operations, has been named as the new OCSE Acting Deputy Commissioner. OCSE Commissioner Margot Bean says, “Donna’s innovative leadership, exceptional intellect, and disciplined focus on measurable results have fostered collaborative partnerships with government agencies, the private sector, colleagues, and the public.” During 29 years in the Federal OCSE, Bonar oversaw the expansion and operation of the Federal Parent Locator Service.

Commissioner Bean Takes Southern Route To Mississippi, Georgia



By **Tiffany Barfield**

Special Assistant to the Commissioner

OCSE Commissioner Margot Bean returned from visits to Mississippi and Georgia in May inspired by strides in both states and throughout the Region.

In her address to the Mississippi Child Support Enforcement State Conference, Commissioner Bean praised IV-D Director Walley Naylor and all staff for their efforts during the trying times since Hurricane Katrina, saying, “The spirit in all of you has not gone unnoticed by the national child support enforcement commu-

nity.” She recognized the State’s advances with automation, including setting the example as the first state to conduct a data match between OCSE’s Federal Case Registry and the Department of Defense.

Commissioner Bean also presented an award to Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour from Dr. Wade Horn, Assistant Secretary for Children and Families, in honor of his tireless efforts for the children and families of Mississippi in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS) Executive Director Donald Taylor accepted the award on behalf of the Governor.



During her visit to Mississippi, OCSE Commissioner Margot Bean, second from left, met with State IV-D Director Walley Naylor, center, and, from left: MDHS Deputy Director Richard Harris, MDHS Executive Director Donald Taylor, Mississippi Child Support Association President David Love, DCSE Director of Operations Martha Benjamin, and MDHS Director of Enforcement and Tracking of Support Systems Debra Johnson-Cockrell.

On her next stop, the Commissioner toured new facilities and met with staff of the DeKalb County, GA, Child Support Enforcement office. She found Georgia’s motto for their staff—*everybody owns all cases*—was clearly reflected in their work.

While in Atlanta, the Commissioner visited the OCSE Region IV staff to discuss progress in the Region’s eight states and their continued collaboration with Central Office. **CSR**

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QUICK How-To

To access QUICK, caseworkers in the participating states log on to their state-authorized PCs. As an authenticated user in a participating state, the worker may request data on a child support case from another participating state. Requests will go to the other state over the Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) Network, the same secure network that supports the Child Support Enforcement Network (CSENet) batch application.

QUICK has its roots in the Workgroup on Interstate and Interagency Data Access. Representatives from 11 states and OCSE convened in November 2002 to examine impediments to exchanging data on interstate cases. The workgroup determined the type of information the caseworker would need to access to manage a two-state case effectively.

*For further information, please contact the QUICK End User Support Service Desk at 1-800-258-2736, or Raheja Kishore at 703-367-5449 or kishore.m.raheja@lmco.com. **CSR***

Families Receive Past-Due Support Following National Task Force Investigations

The Project Save Our Children (PSOC) task force has been instrumental in locating and indicting parents across the country who, in recent months, have paid thousands in child support owed to their children. The following highlights three such cases.

As of mid-April, a noncustodial father—a licensed cardiologist now living in Hawaii—has paid \$125,750 toward his arrearage amount of \$144,500 due to his child. He was arrested last December in North Carolina after an officer, who was called to the home of a domestic dispute, ran a check on the individual and found he had a federal warrant for failure to pay child support. The parent was initially located and indicted last November in Missouri.

On May 11, PSOC realized a similar success when a parent wired his ordered restitution amount of \$449,000 to the U.S. Court in

Denver the same day he was detained at the Denver International Airport. He had been on his way from Mexico, where he owned a hotel, to attend his daughter's graduation in Denver. He had been ordered in 1994 to pay \$5,000 per month for three children who then resided in California.

Also on May 11, a noncustodial father paid \$50,000 to the Illinois child support office for an ordered restitution amount of \$44,440. He opted to pay the larger amount after his ex-wife told him that the Office of the Attorney General was opening an investigation regarding his child support. His payment included the current obligation, as well as support that would be required until his two children become emancipated.

For information about the PSOC task force, contact Project Manager Nick Soppa in OCSE at 202-401-4677 or nsoppa@acf.hhs.gov. **CSR**

Peer-to-Peer Training: A Successful Sequel

By Nehemiah Rucker

*Division of Planning, Research and Evaluation
OCSE*

As a sequel to last year's Peer-to-Peer Training Conference on Paternity Establishment, OCSE sponsored a similar conference on the Collection of Current Support and Arrears, May 16-18 in La Jolla, CA. The conference brought together mentors representing states with effective program practices with students from states seeking to improve program performance in this area of the Child Support Enforcement Program.

The 110 participants included representatives

from 47 states and territories who shared research and successful collections strategies in four areas: prevention of arrears, order establishment, early intervention in the collection of current support, and management of accrued arrears.

Research findings discussed included the subject of who owes child support debt, while strategies discussed included use of incentives and penalties as leverage to prevent arrears and increase collections.

OCSE plans to disseminate a summary of the conference to participants, as well as to all states, tribes, and territories. **CSR**



Beyond Mediation

Dispute Resolution Methods Show Promise For CSE Program, Clients

By Cynthia Bryant
University of Texas School of Law

The phrase *dispute resolution* usually brings to mind the word mediation. Although mediation is the process most widely used in the family law arena, alternative dispute resolution (ADR) encompasses a variety of processes beyond mediation.

All dispute resolution processes share a common characteristic: Disputing parties attempt to reach an agreement that disposes of their claims against one another outside the courtroom, rather than allowing a judge to resolve their case following a contested hearing or trial.

Particularly in family law cases, the benefits that flow from ADR have been well documented:

- Parties are more satisfied with an outcome that they help create than with an outcome imposed on them by a judge who knows little about their families.
- Parents understand their responsibilities when they help craft the agreed order, and consequently they are more likely to comply with agreed orders.
- Parents avoid litigation that can increase hostile feelings and, instead, focus on a problem-solving process that can increase effective communication.
- Cases resolved with ADR require fewer judicial resources, freeing scarce docket time for difficult cases in which the parties do not agree.

Moving Toward ADR

The ADR processes used most are negotiation, mediation, and arbitration. Although IV-D programs already negotiate agreed orders, the negotiation process often occurs in a hallway outside a courtroom shortly before a hearing is set to begin. Hurried five-minute conversations between a parent and a child support professional to negotiate may indeed resolve the case, but it bears little resemblance to a true ADR process.



Changing the negotiation process to look like true ADR would involve modifications such as changing the location of the negotiation conference to the child support office; inviting parents to participate, rather than serving them

with a notice; informing parents of their alternatives so they may give informed consent to an agreement; seeking information from parents about current family circumstances to improve the accuracy and fairness of an agreed order; and similar efforts to craft an agreement that meets the needs of the children and complies with the law.

Who Uses ADR?

Although ADR processes like mediation are almost universal in family law cases outside the IV-D program, few child support programs make use of ADR as a tool to resolve IV-D cases. In contrast, the success of ADR to resolve disputes about parenting time is evident in the choice that 38 states have made to use Child

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Growing Evidence

When Noncustodial Parents Visit Children, They Pay More Child Support

By Debra Pontisso
OCSE

We've all heard the story before: The custodial parent (CP) denies the noncustodial parent (NCP) access to their child because the NCP is behind in child support payments. Or conversely, an NCP refuses to pay child support on the grounds that the CP is preventing the person from seeing their child.

For the child support program, the NCP's inability to see the child usually means less child support collected. For the child—it's a no-win situation.

Since its start nine years ago, the Federal Child Access and Visitation (AV) grant program has served more than 400,000 NCPs and CPs who have had parenting disputes regarding child access and visitation.

In recent years, the number of unwed parents served through the AV grant program has slightly exceeded the number of divorced and separated parents. This is encouraging because unwed parents usually do not have access to court-connected, alternative dispute resolution services available to parents seeking a divorce or separation.

The unwed NCP faces an additional hurdle—a disconnect between the effectiveness of the hospital-based paternity program and the information needed by unwed fathers to secure a visitation order through the court to guarantee their parental rights. Lack of assistance, know-how, and apprehension to file a motion with the court—and filing fees ranging from \$175 to \$225—discourage parental involvement.

Nonetheless, growing evidence shows that if NCPs obtain greater access to their children,

they are more likely to pay child support. The results are even more significant among unwed NCPs.

Highlights of Federal Findings

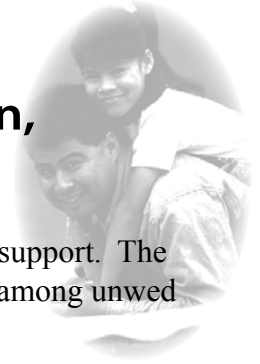
According to the 2003 U.S. Census Bureau survey, 77.1 percent of NCPs with visitation rights or joint custody paid at least some child support, compared with 55.8 percent of NCPs without visitation rights or joint custody (available at <http://www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/p60-225.pdf>).

A DHHS Office of Inspector General report (2002), "Effectiveness of the Access and Visitation Program," focused on 190 families in four states who received mediation services to deal with access problems. Key findings include:

- Over 76 percent of the cases resulted in mediated agreements.
- In 86 percent of these cases, access rights (court orders, formal agreements) were established or increased.
- Prior to mediation, 69 percent of the cases (unwed NCPs) had no access rights.
- 66 percent gained increased access rights whether or not agreement was reached in mediation.
- 61 percent of NCPs increased amount paid on their current child support obligation.
- Prior to mediation, NCPs paid 52 percent of amount owed in current child support; after mediation, NCPs paid 70 percent of amount owed in current child support.

To download a copy of this report, log on to: <http://oig.hhs.gov/oei/reports/oei-05-02-00300.pdf>.

See EVIDENCE, next page



RESOLUTION, *from previous page*

Access and Visitation grant funds for mediation programs. Some IV-D programs do handle child support issues through ADR processes, including:

- Delaware: By court rule, parties in all Delaware’s family law cases, including IV-D cases, must attempt to resolve legal proceedings to establish a child support order through mediation.
- Texas: By statute, Texas allows IV-D cases to be resolved through its child support review process, which includes an in-person negotiation conference at a child support office between the parents and agency staff.

- Navajo Nation: Building on a cultural tradition of dispute resolution, Navajo Peacemaker Courts involve extended family members with parents to resolve child support disputes.

Re-engineering child support processes to incorporate ADR holds the promise of improving both program performance and customer satisfaction while reducing costs. This promise makes ADR even more attractive as IV-D programs struggle with reduced funding and changing program requirements.

*Ms. Bryant, a clinical law professor, may be reached at cbryant@law.utexas.edu or 512-232-1574. **CSR***

MORE ON ADR—The Center for the Analysis of Alternative Dispute Resolution Systems (CAADRS) offers a variety of related research on its Web site: caadrs.org/index.htm.

EVIDENCE, *from previous page*

An OCSE-funded study, “Child Access and Visitation Program: Participant Outcomes,” examined three types of AV services (mediation, parent education, and supervised visitation) by measuring the success of the program against a variety of program outcomes. Preliminary results show that one such outcome was an increase in child support payments.

For those NCPs who were paying less than 100 percent of owed support prior to participation in either one of the three services, the majority increased child support payments after program participation, as follows:

- 64 percent of NCPs participating in mediation services;
- 93 percent of NCPs participating in parent education; and
- 53 percent of NCPs participating in supervised visitation services.

Further, five OCSE research and demonstration projects are testing models of providing access and visitation services to NCPs. The goal of these projects is to assess the models’ success in helping NCPs gain access to their children that would result in an increase in child support compliance and/or payments.

An upcoming issue of this newsletter will summarize these projects in addition to steps that child support agencies can take to address the access and visitation needs of NCPs.

It might be time to consider that NCPs with parenting disputes over visitation, and/or unwed NCPs who do not have access rights to their children, may be more likely to fulfill their financial responsibility if they are able to assume an increased role in their children’s lives.

*For further information, contact Debra Pontisso at debra.pontisso@acf.hhs.gov or 202-401-4548. **CSR***

National Child Support Interstate and Systems Symposium

Attendees Get A Dose of Reality

When They Meet Face-to-Face in Maryland, June 6-9



MSFIDM

AEI

Above, Barry Burger from North Carolina, with Alaska's Deborah Weiner and Julie Garoutte, prepare with others in their group to *audition* interstate and intergovernmental systems that are working in their state programs for a mock "American Idol" reality-TV show. During the symposium's opening session, OCSE Commissioner Margot Bean honored Burger on his pending retirement after 30 years in the child support program.



EPLN

From right, OCSE's Kathy Miller, Mary Loven from Iowa, and Shari Anderson from Minnesota await the judges' decision during a "Family Feud"-style game on the subject of interstate communication systems. Miller later said about the symposium, "You can't put a value on meeting people face to face."



SVES

FCR

CSENet

Ted Keenagahn from Rhode Island and Jeff Rowe from Pennsylvania discuss insurance-match projects after a "Survivor"-style session about the impact new legislative provisions will have on this and other child support automated systems.



Wisconsin attendee Ike Anyanike is pleased to hear success stories about the 8-year-old Passport Denial Program: Collections have totaled \$68.2 million; \$16.5 in 2005. The largest individual collection—\$289,500.



ICR

Georgetta Thomas from Maryland wins a prize after a correct answer in a "Name That Tune" revue of TV themes. The game led into an update on OCSE's Guide for Enhancing Review and Adjustment Automation.



Joyce Becker-Match from Pennsylvania and James Fricke from Michigan share ideas following a panel presentation about review and adjustment of child support orders.

**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
Washington D.C. 20447

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Matter of Facts

**Nonmarital childbearing:
About 1/2 of the men with-
out a high school educa-
tion have fathered a child
outside of marriage com-
pared with about 6 percent
among college graduates.**

**Teen fathers: Among non-
Hispanic black fathers, 25
percent fathered their first
child before they were 20
years old; 19 percent of His-
panic fathers also became
fathers as teenagers, and
11 percent of non-Hispanic
white men became fathers
while they were teens.**

Source:
Center for Disease Control, National
Center for Health Statistics:
[www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/
06facts/fatherhood.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/06facts/fatherhood.htm)

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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

Michell D. Butler
Subscriptions
202-401-5605
mdbutler@acf.hhs.gov

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