



Child Support Report

OFFICE OF CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT

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A Banner Year

OCSE 17th National Conference Makes the Grade

From Seattle, WA, to Washington County, MD, some 425 child support professionals flocked back-to-school to attend “Child Support University,” the theme for OCSE’s 17th National Training Conference, Sept. 10 – 12 in Washington, DC.

Academic discussions in fields such as leadership, customer service, outreach, partnership, and automation resonated through the halls and classrooms where experts from around the country offered ideas for improving both

professional growth and child support program performance.

Calling for a “culture of civility,” Commissioner Margot Bean encouraged child support professionals everywhere to spread the importance of treating every customer with respect. “By listening politely and trying to help our customers fully understand their options, we give customers the opportunity for success; we create a win for the customer and a win for us,” said the Commissioner in her opening remarks.

See 17TH NATIONAL page 3



SWRSEA Conference Marks OK's Centennial

By Jane Martin
Region VI OCSE

The Southwest Regional Support Enforcement Association (SWRSEA) held its annual conference August 19 – 22 in Oklahoma City, in partnership with the Oklahoma Child Support Enforcement Association, Department of Human Services, and District Attorney's Council, and with Chickasaw Nation, Cherokee Nation, and the Osage Nation.

The conference, SWRSEA's final in 25-plus years, attracted more than 450 child support professionals from Texas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Arkansas, and Oklahoma, including members from the Osage Nation, Cherokee Nation, and the Chickasaw Nation, to celebrate over 25 years of dedication and commitment in meeting the needs of Region VI children and families. SWRSEA was originally formed as the Southwest Attorney Training Association.

This year's theme, "100 Years of Supporting Families," acknowledged Oklahoma's centennial year and recognized SWRSEA's many years of working to make child support a reliable source of income for children and families.

Commissioner Margot Bean served as the conference keynote speaker. She recognized the

accomplishments of Region VI child support agencies; discussed her recent experience at the National Tribal Child Support Association's 7th annual conference; provided updates on the PAID (Project to Avoid Increasing Delinquencies) initiative; and reported on progress in implementing the National Child Support Enforcement Strategic Plan. Additionally, Commissioner Bean held a town-hall "Update from the Commissioner" in which she responded to participants' questions regarding "what is going on in the world of child support."

Commissioner Bean also joined the Region VI OCSE staff, Child Support, Medicaid, SCHIP, and Child Welfare Directors in conducting a Medical Support Roundtable. The meeting served as a followup to last year's National Medical Support meeting in Salt Lake City, and provided an opportunity for States to share accomplishments, results, and any new initiatives in support of improved performance in medical support activities and increased services to foster care children.

A highlight of the conference included honoring an original member of SWRSEA, Leon R. McCowan, Region VI Regional Administrator. McCowan was recognized by Commissioner Bean and SWRSEA President Gary Dart for his longstanding commitment to SWRSEA's mission and goals. **CSR**



From left, James Travis, Region VI Program Manager; Leon McCowan, Region VI ACF Regional Administrator; OCSE Commissioner Margot Bean; Gary Dart, Oklahoma Child Support Director; and Howard Hendrick, Director, Oklahoma Department of Human Services.

Commissioner's Awards

OCSE 17th National Training Conference

September 11, 2007

Innovative Partnership:

- Parental Responsibility Initiative for the Development of Employment, North Dakota
- Non-Custodial Parent Choices Project, Texas

High Performance:

- Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services, Division of Child Support Enforcement
- Circular Advertising Company, Direct Marketing Services, Maryland
- Montgomery County Domestic Relations Section, Pennsylvania

Consistent Commitment to Child Support Enforcement:

- Chriss Walker, Florida
- David Arnaudo, OCSE
- Charlene Butler, OCSE
- William Pinkett, District of Columbia

Exemplary Customer Service:

- Rose Bynum, Pennsylvania
- Pat Driggers, OCSE
- Rebecca Hamil, OCSE

Projects and Work Groups:

- Larry Holtz, OCSE
- Connecticut's Collaborative Effort to Reduce Undistributed Collections
- Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 Distribution Work Group
- Project Save Our Children
- Arrears Management Subcommittee of Colorado's IV-D Task Force

Exemplary Leadership:

- Daryl Wusk, Nebraska
- John Clark, OCSE Region III,
- Alisha Griffin, New Jersey

Innovative Technology:

- Arizona Auto-Dialer Systems & Automation Administration
- Vermont Office of Child Support
- Query Interstate Cases for Kids, OCSE

17TH NATIONAL, from page 1

From the podium at the initial plenary session, State child support managers shared stories and quotes about leadership and motivation, while attendees jotted notes as if preparing for an exam.

"Don't ever underestimate the value of experience," stated Louisiana Child Support Director Robbie Endris. "We need leaders like you in the child support community ... keep on going till you go over the finish line."

And from Virginia Director Nick Young:

"Leadership isn't taught; it is caught—from leaders who went before you." And, "Once the decision is made, you execute it with a willing heart."

First-time courses included lessons in public relations from county, State, and Federal perspectives, and recommendations by Princeton University students based on their research of the national child support program.

As inspired graduates each carried away a Child Support University certificate signed by the Commissioner, the auditorium echoed with "see you again next year!" **CSR**

Texas Fatherhood Conference

First to Link Research With Practitioners

By Michael Hayes

Texas Office of the Attorney General

“From the time we found out we were pregnant, I had to start shifting my focus ... the reality of having a child ... It kind of like blew my mind and I didn't really know how to cope with it.” (David, age 19)

What do you get when you mix OCSE Commissioner Margot Bean with a well-known pediatrician, the president of the National Fatherhood Initiative, leading researchers on fatherhood and family formation, domestic violence experts, and innovators in prenatal care and family medicine?

You get “The First Nine Months of Fatherhood,” the first national conference linking research and promising practices in prenatal paternal involvement to the economic and emotional well-being of children.

This landmark gathering of experts on the prenatal contributions and engagement of “expectant” fathers was initiated through the Strong Start, Stable Families Section 1115 grant awarded to the Texas Office of the Attorney General by OCSE in 2005.

Led by the Office of the Attorney General and enlisting the involvement of an array of public and private partners as varied as the Family Violence Prevention Fund, Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago, and Baylor College of Medicine in its formation, this groundbreaking summit brought together almost 200 participants from across the country to hear and share research findings, promising-practice insights, and policy considerations for intentionally engaging the “father to be” during the prenatal period.

Whether it was Dr. T. Berry Brazelton emphasizing health benefits of fathers’ prenatal engagement, Dr. Kathryn Edin of Harvard describing new research on the surprising number of “do-right” dads during pregnancy, or Anne Menard, Director of the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, reminding participants of the reality of prenatal intimate partner violence—each session held both inspiration and challenge for an audience committed to insuring that fathers are positive resources contributing to maternal and child outcomes.

If the conference had one theme, it was that of promising opportunities during

pregnancy: to engage fathers emotionally and legally, to build family economic and relationship stability, to prevent or intervene in domestic violence, to improve perinatal health, and finally, promising opportunities for child support agencies to build collaborations with professionals from public health programs, domestic violence programs, and prenatal service providers.

As Commissioner Bean noted in her presentation, most people hear child support and think only of the money. The actuality, however, is that “the mission of child support enforcement is to ensure that children receive both the financial and the emotional support they need from their parents.”

It’s that emphasis on child well-being that the “First Nine Months of Fatherhood” conference made clear across the many professional disciplines represented. And it is that greater charge that the participants were challenged to take back to their continuing work with fathers, mothers, and their children. **CSR**



Dr. T. Berry Brazelton addresses audience at Texas conference.

Ohio Activities Promote Child Support Awareness

By Michelle Kohlhorst
Ohio Office of Child Support



In a resolution designating August 2007 Child Support Awareness Month in Ohio, Governor Ted Strickland encouraged “all Ohioans to foster a better understanding of the importance of fulfilling financial responsibilities to our children.”

In keeping with this theme, State Child Support Director Doug Thompson, in partnership with the 88 county child support directors, launched an education and awareness of the Child Support program by promoting the positive contributions of the program. The State promotions included:

- Creation of the slogan “Child Support – An Essential Building Block for a Child’s Success”;
- A poster, designed and produced in-house, made available to counties in two sizes and in English and Spanish;
- A best practices statewide video conference in which selected counties presented initiatives that inspired other counties;
- Distribution of a “Most Wanted” poster to counties for display in August;
- Compilation of scheduled county activities and events which was posted on the State Web site;
- Insertion of taglines on check remittance devices promoting Child Support Awareness Month (CSAM);
- Customer call center operators, receptionists and voice mail greetings referencing CSAM;
- Promoting CSAM on Web pages;
- Issuance of a statewide news release promoting CSAM;
- Production of a public service announcement for statewide release and another in which counties can fill in their statistics and release to local radio and/or television; and
- Working with a member of the State Legislature to develop an amnesty program for suspended driver’s licenses.

Counties Add Local Flair

The county child support agencies incorporated many of the activities described above as well as developing some additional creative activities. For example:

- Hamilton County sponsored a billboard displaying the 2007 poster art and slogan, conducted an amnesty program for warrants and driver’s license suspensions, and participated in local radio interviews.
- Henry County gave away plastic hard hats on “Children’s Day” at the County Fair.
- Athens County placed awareness materials in the Chamber of Commerce Newsletter for employer outreach.
- Trumbull County management staff sponsored an employee appreciation luncheon and also served the meal.

See **OHIO**, next page

New Look for MSER

By Lyyntetta Thompson
OCSE

The Multistate Employer Registration (MSER) form has a fresh, new look. The MSER form is used by employers who have employees in two or more States and wish to report all their new hires to one State Directory of New Hires. The form has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget, replacing the previous version that expired April 30.

Also new are enhancements to the electronic registration process that will allow employers to make changes to their registered information. Employers can add or delete subsidiaries, acknowledge that they are no longer a mul-

tistate employer, revise their contact information, and change their password without contacting the “helpdesk.” The new electronic process makes it easier to navigate through the various fields so that employers complete the registration process much quicker.

States that provide a link to the MSER form and to the electronic registration process on State Web sites do not need to make any adjustments to the Web site.

To get a copy of the new form, visit the OCSE Web site at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/newhire/employer/publication/forms/mse-form6.pdf>. To access the online registration process, go to: <http://151.196.108.21/mser> **CSR**

OHIO, from previous page

- Lucas County held a baseball-themed employee recognition program and presented awards, including the Most Valuable Player and Rookie of the Year. August 8 was Lucas County Child Support Enforcement Night at the Toledo Mudhens’ minor league baseball game where child support staff sold tickets and distributed literature. The opening ceremonies included Lucas County’s very own Child Support Director, Maricarol Torsok, throwing out the first pitch.

- The Cuyahoga Support Enforcement Agency, as well as Lorain, Stark, Summit, Mahoning, Trumbull, Ashtabula, Portage, Lake, and Wayne Counties, ran a program called “Make a Right Turn, Support Your Kids.” Parents who had licenses suspended for failure to pay child support could have them reinstated by paying 1 month of their child support obligation. **CSR**

Congratulating Lucas County’s Maricarol Torsok, second from left, on a job well done, are from far left, Ohio Child Support Director Doug Thompson, Putnam County Child Support Director Keith Kahle, Wood County Child Support Director Frank McLaughlin, and Henry County Child Support Director Diane Sonnenberg.



DC's Amnesty Week Brings 'Heartening' Results

By Justin Latus

*Child Support Services Division
District of Columbia*

The week of August 18-25 marked "Amnesty 2007" for the Child Support Services Division (CSSD) of the Office of the Attorney General of the District of Columbia. During the week, noncustodial parents in contempt of court for failure to pay child support could come to the CSSD to make payments without fear of arrest.

The District received 374 payments totaling \$92,446, with the average payment being about \$250. In addition, many noncustodial parents set up payment plans, and the District was able to initiate 90 wage withholdings.



CSSD staff members were pleased with the turnout, especially on the second Saturday when 239 noncustodial parents came into the office—a lot for the District's relatively small jurisdiction (about 78,000 cases in 2006).

"It was heartening to have all those parents standing in line to do the right thing," said CSSD Director Benidia A. Rice. "We had a lot of fathers who got out of prison and who are re-entering life outside, and we also had a lot of impoverished parents who have little access to information about child support," continued Rice. "Outreach to both of these groups is vital." **CSR**

Father of the Year

By Eugenie Lucas

*Child Support Services Division
District of Columbia*

During DC's "Amnesty 2007" week, child support staff members found that every noncustodial parent who came in had a story to tell. These parents wanted to do the right thing but, because of life's circumstances, had fallen behind in child support payments.

One parent in particular—Michael—stood out. At the start of his interview, Michael immediately said that he wanted to begin having child support taken from his paycheck. He provided letters from his employer stating that the "clients adore him" and that they refuse a replacement if he is not available to provide services.

More remarkable is the fact that he is a recovering addict and has been drug-free for approximately "1 year, 4 months, 8 days, 3 hours, and 10 minutes." He goes to counseling and is a volunteer speaker at various Narcotics Anonymous groups. He was a resident of the Salvation Army's transition program for recovering addicts.

While he was in the DC child support office, Michael paid \$200 towards his arrears and provided employer information so that wage withholding could be started. Since he works part-time, that \$200 probably felt to him like the equivalent to \$2,000.

Michael hasn't seen his son in nearly 15 years and realizes that the relationship has to be cultivated slowly, but he wants to establish visitation rights. He was so proud of all that he has accomplished.

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Health and Human Services**

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New Workplace on Web



The PAID workplace is an online site designed to provide work-group members with up-to-date PAID documents and resources, and to offer a forum for sharing ideas pertaining to the Project to Avoid Increasing Delinquencies—PAID.

The workplace is accessible to both State and Federal staff. To join the PAID workplace, please send an e-mail to: PAID@acf.hhs.gov

For more information about PAID, see Dear Colleague Letter 07-06, available on the OCSE Web site at www.hhs.gov/programs/cse.

Child Support Report

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