

Child Support Report

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OFFICE OF CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT

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National Tribal Association Conference Draws on Diversity, Growth



This roundtable discussion, left, was one of several at the National Tribal Child Support Association's (NTCSA) 8th Annual Training Conference, held June 9-12, in Cherokee, NC. The conference was hosted by the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, the Modoc Tribe of Oklahoma, and NTCSA. The theme, "Diversity and Responsibility in Tribal Child Support," reflected the growth in Tribal IV-D programs, which now number 24 comprehensive and 16 start-up programs. Sessions featured the how-to's of paternity and enforcement, finance and reporting, a mock court, and roundtables on compassionate case management and responsible parenting. The flag procession and registration desk, below, kicked off the conference, which drew 206 Tribal members from 26 Tribes. For more information about NTCSA, see its Web site: <http://www.supporttribalchildren.org/default.htm>

OCSE Publishes NPRM on Tribal Systems

On June 11, OCSE published a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) in the Federal Register, which addresses Tribal Systems requirements and further information on upcoming consultations on the NPRM.

The proposed rule would enable Tribes and Tribal organizations currently operating a comprehensive Tribal Child Support Enforcement program under Title IV-D of the Social Security Act to apply for and receive direct Federal funding for the costs of IV-D automated data processing.

The NPRM can be viewed at: 73 FR 33048 (see link: <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2008/pdf/E8-13042.pdf>) OCSE will accept comments through Aug. 11.

A copy of this regulation may be downloaded from: www.regulations.gov. To transmit comments electronically, see <http://regulations.acf.hhs.gov> and follow the instructions.

OCSE held one informational meeting, at the National Tribal Child Support Administration at Cherokee, NC, to introduce the NPRM, and is holding three Tribal consultation meetings to solicit public comments on this proposed regulation. One consultation was held June 27 in Seattle; the others will be held July 8 in Catoosa (OK) and July 9 in Milwaukee.

See details at these two links: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/pol/TDCL/2008/tdcl-08-01.htm>, and <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/pol/AT/2008/at-08-07.htm>



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U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Child Support Enforcement

Partnering with Drug Courts to Help Child Support Customers



Child support agencies around the country are teaming up with drug courts, which employ problem-solving court techniques to deal with addiction issues, to promote alternatives to incarceration and give hope to children and families. Drug courts attempt to quickly identify substance abusing offenders and place them under court monitoring and community supervision, coupled with effective, long-term treatment services. In addition, they routinely offer job skills training, family or group counseling, and many other life-skill enhancement services. The following two articles highlight child support agency partnerships with drug courts—one in the small jurisdiction of Bannock County, ID; the other in San Diego County. For information about Federal agencies that fund drug court grants, see these three Web sites: <http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/enews/07juvjust/070924.html>, <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/grant/drugcourts.html>, and http://www.samhsa.gov/Grants/2008/ti_08_007.aspx

Drug Court Judge Teams with Bannock County Child Support, Changes Lives for Families

By Leslie Betty

Child Support Field Program Manager
Bannock County, Idaho

“The mission of the Drug Court programs is to protect society by providing treatment alternatives to drug and alcohol addicted offenders that minimize the cost to the criminal justice system and the risk to the community. Our goal is to return clean and sober, law-abiding citizens to the community.”

This admirable quote is from an admirable judge in Bannock County, ID. Now, through his DUI/Drug Court’s partnership with the Child Support Office, admiration for Judge Robert C. Naftz has spread.

During the past few years, Judge Naftz had sought ways for participants to make amends to their families as part of their recovery process from the substance abuse issues that brought them to his court.

Having previously worked in the area of child support, the Judge was sensitized to the issues and noticed that many participants were experiencing difficulty surrounding the support of their children. That’s when he contacted the Bannock County Child Support Program Manager to discuss several mutual goals: making children’s lives better; helping parents meet their financial obligations; and focusing on sustained improvement with participants to enable stable, safe, and healthy families, even if both parents do not live in the same home with their children. This new partnership led to a pilot for the child support agency.

To identify common participants, the Drug Court exchanges the names of current participants with a child



Judge Robert C. Naftz, with bow tie, serves as leader of the DUI/Drug Court staff in Bannock County, ID, which collaborates on every aspect of services needed to produce success for participants. The staff includes Probation Officers, Public Defenders, Prosecuting Attorneys, Family Court Coordinators, Substance Abuse Counselors, and Mental Health Counselors.

support worker, who determines which names are also in the child support system. The worker analyzes each identified case before attending a monthly staffing meeting at the Drug Court. The worker also attends the DUI/



Drug Court session. However, the Drug Court cases involve a high level of confidentiality, and to respect the participant’s privacy, the child support worker attends only the portions of the meetings and court sessions that pertain to child support issues.

For the participants who are noncustodial parents not paying their child support, the Judge discusses their responsibilities during DUI/Drug Court and obtains their commitment to meet their obligations. Yet, there are times when the child support worker has reported to the Judge that a participant is current in their child support. Understanding the need for positive reinforcement at this critical time in the parent’s life, Judge Naftz takes every opportunity to praise the parent publicly as an example of parental responsibility.

Empathy and compassion in this setting go a long way with parents. A parent who had never made a child

support payment because substance abuse was a barrier to employment had a fear of approaching the child support agency to make things right. After meeting the child support worker in the supportive environment of the DUI/Drug Court, the client voluntarily came to the child support agency to arrange wage withholding at a new job. A new and rewarding relationship was formed between the child support worker and the parent. Long after successful completion of the court program, this parent remains employed and is making regular child support payments and communicating with the child support agency voluntarily.

Not all child support case participants in the DUI/Drug Court are obligors. One memorable case involved a custodial parent whose monthly child support payments appeared to be suspiciously low on a very large arrearage. The caseworker contacted the child support office in the other State involved in the case and asked if anything else could be done to make this case pay a bit more. Additional income, they reasoned, would go a long way in stabilizing this parent's situation. The responding State caseworkers did find a way to boost the parent's monthly income.

Although the volume of child support cases identified is low, the child support staff sees the DUI/Drug Court

partnership as a great opportunity to obtain payments on cases where success had not come in other ways. The child support agency has resolved many issues for parents, such as providing modifications, when appropriate, reducing or suspending arrears payments temporarily, communicating to the custodial parent in an effort to avoid conflict in families, restoring driver's licenses that had been suspended for nonpayment of child support, and resolving balance amount disputes.

Caseworkers feel a tremendous sense of reward because they are part of a team of professionals working to help get lives back on track. In many instances, the DUI/Drug Court partnership has enabled child support staff to form successful working relationships with their clients. A parent whose life has been turned around benefits not only the immediate family, but the whole community. And for the community of Pocatello, they have the leadership of Judge Naftz to thank.

Leslie Betty and Judge Naftz will present a workshop about their Bannock County partnership at the OCSE 18th National Child Support Enforcement Training Conference, Aug. 25 – 27 (see page 9 for details). For additional information, contact Leslie Betty at 208-235-2878 or bettyl@dhw.idaho.gov. ■

Drug Court Protocol: San Diego County Child Support Reaches Out to Parents With Substance Abuse Problems

By Shannon Welton
Child Support Program Attorney



Child support is not always the first thing on a parent's mind when struggling with substance abuse. Often an addicted parent will stop paying support and walk away. When the time comes to face their addiction and address the problems created by it, the child support debt may have grown so large that it overwhelms the parent and threatens to cause a setback in their recovery efforts.

California's San Diego County Department of Child Support Services (SDDCSS) recognized this problem and focused additional outreach on parents trying to overcome addiction. In February 2006, SDDCSS joined forces with San Diego's Drug Court Program in an effort to work



From left are Jeff Grissom, Director, County of San Diego Department of Child Support Services; Rob Lafer, Chief Legal Counsel; and Child Support Program Attorney Robert Harris, who was the agency's lead attorney on designing and implementing the drug court program.

with recovering addicts who had child support obligations being enforced by SDDCSS.

San Diego's Drug Court oversees people who have committed minor offenses and have been referred for diversion rather than being sentenced to jail time. Under the supervision of the Court and Probation Department,

offenders are ordered to abstain from drugs and attend treatment programs aimed at giving them the tools to stay off drugs and become responsible members of society.

To get started, the role of SDDCSS in the Drug Court Program was two-fold. First, SDDCSS educated drug treatment providers, the courts, and law enforcement about child support in general, the law, and the options available to parents who are not meeting their child support obligations. Next, SDDCSS developed a referral process through which Drug Court participants could seek assistance with their child support issues without having to file a motion in court.

“Our first priority is collecting support for children,” says Robert Lafer, Chief Legal Counsel for SDDCSS, “and a good way to do that is to reach out to parents who are trying to turn their lives around.” Through the Drug Court partnership, SDDCSS has been able to work with recovering parents to resolve their child support issues. SDDCSS found that many of the Drug Court participants who owe child support have administrative remedies available to them that could support the recovery effort and hopefully lead to compliance with the child support obligations.

“Often, parents are not aware of their options and choose to ignore their child support issues out of a feeling of helplessness,” says Lafer. However, through Drug Court, SDDCSS has been able to assist parents with child support enforcement issues and offer relief the participants may not have known was available.

“We review each Drug Court referral and consider each individual situation with an eye toward improving the chances that a parent will start to pay their child support and perhaps even reenter the child’s life. Sometimes this means Drug Court participants need their driver’s license to look for work or they may be entitled to a modification of the support order if there has been a change in income or visitation,” Lafer says. If there is potential relief, SDDCSS has offered it to the Drug Court participants referred to them.

Since SDDCSS began its partnership with Drug Court, over 220 case review referrals have been received. Of those, SDDCSS was able to offer some form of relief on 129 cases. The relief ranged from filing Notices of Motion for Modification, release of driver’s licenses and review of default orders to providing applications for compromise of welfare arrears.



Child Support Staff Attorney Natasha Esses and Paralegal Paul Murphy work on the drug court cases for the County of San Diego child support office.

In the cases in which SDDCSS could not provide assistance, either there was no open case, the Drug Court participant had not provided contact information, or the participant did not respond to SDDCSS staff members.

“Unfortunately, not every case can be resolved through this program,” says Jeff Grissom, SDDCSS Director, “but we are pleased with the success we have seen on the cases that have reached some form of resolution.”



“We review each Drug Court referral and consider each individual situation with an eye toward improving the chances that a parent will start to pay their child support and perhaps even reenter the child’s life.”

Within the first year of the program, SDDCSS saw a 30-percent increase in the total percentage of support collected on Drug Court referral cases. Now in its third year, the Drug Court partnership

with SDDCSS continues to show positive results. Over 76 percent of the obligors referred through Drug Court have made payments since entering the program. Those payments have amounted to almost \$350,000 in support.

Grissom is encouraged by the results SDDCSS has seen. “Through the Drug Court Program, SDDCSS has been able to assist parents who are recovering from addiction. Parents who were once apprehensive or unable to address their child support cases are now working in partnership with SDDCSS for the benefit of their children. We are optimistic about the future of this program and the continued success of its participants.”

For further information, contact Jeff Grissom at 619-578-6220 or jeff.grissom@sdcounty.ca.gov. He will present a workshop about the Drug Court program at the OCSE 18th National Child Support Enforcement Training Conference, Aug. 25 – 27 (see page 9 for details). ■

Urban Jurisdictions: Take It Away!

Meeting Goes Spotlight, Exchange Winning Practices from Jurisdictions Large and Small



Last month, representatives from 22 urban jurisdictions across the country took away ideas to improve child support performance in their home jurisdictions, after they met

in Washington, DC, for an OCSE-sponsored Urban Jurisdiction Collaboration Forum.

The meeting was intended to include jurisdictions that do not have the opportunity to participate in the annual Region II and III, or Region V annual Urban Jurisdiction meetings. Attendees came from not only the largest urban jurisdictions, such as Los Angeles, but also smaller ones, such as Washington, DC, and Albuquerque.

In general, Urban Jurisdiction meetings offer attendees an opportunity to exchange successful practices and then plan for setting in motion certain of those most viable in their jurisdictions.

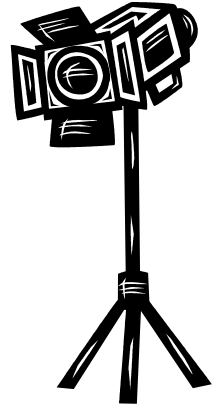
In keeping with the meeting's theme—PAID (Project to Avoid Increasing Delinquencies)—attendees came equipped with practices that have proven successful to help increase child support collections on both current orders and arrears, and to prevent arrears on cases, the goals of the national PAID initiative.

Presentations focused on five facets of the child support program that fall under the scope of the PAID initiative: setting appropriate orders; employing early intervention; order review and modification; improving locate and enforcement; and managing existing arrears.

By the meeting's end, attendees from each jurisdiction developed an action plan that documented “next steps” to investigate the feasibility of implementing one or more best practices they had learned about at the meeting. The following are examples of these practices:

- Increase noncustodial parent cooperation through establishing relationships over the phone or face-to-face and train staff in early intervention strategies.
- Develop a pilot for stratifying caseloads into never paying, sometimes paying, and regular paying (paying for the last 3 months) categories.

- Publish district “report cards” of performance to promote healthy competition among offices.
- Train caseworkers in proactive case management techniques (for example, focus on the “top” arrears cases).
- Implement a “Three C’s” technique for each case: Collect, Correct (update case information), or Close.
- Establish a relationship with a local university to assist with management efficiency methodologies.
- Develop relationships with Workforce Development and community-based groups.
- Determine if the local Public Defender’s office can represent incarcerated noncustodial parents in review and adjustment.
- Implement debt compromise or payment incentive plans.
- Implement flow-chart business processes to identify ways to improve cycle times.
- Train staff to ask for payment at every opportunity, including at court after order is established.



Highlights from participant feedback at the meeting noted the importance of exchanging worthwhile practices among child support jurisdictions:

- “We came away from the conference energized and filled with new thoughts and ideas. ... This has stimulated a lot of conversation and hopefully we will see some tangible results from the excitement generated!”
- “Thank you for offering us the opportunity to participate in the Urban Jurisdictions Forum; we came home with loads of valuable ideas and are very excited to begin working on our project! It was a pleasure to meet so many of our colleagues from all over the country, too.”
- “I am so pumped up and ready to get back to the office to utilize the suggestions and ideas. It felt good to know that there are offices out there that are facing the same problems that we have.”
- “I appreciate the opportunity to have local jurisdictions involved in higher level discussions on best practices and challenges. The networking and participation affords the local jurisdictions with contacts to assist in implementing new practices.”

QUICK Update: More States, Improved Efficiency, Expanded Resources

By Brenda Cunningham
OCSE

To date, the OCSE browser-based application known as QUICK (Query Interstate Cases for Kids) is in production in 10 States and in development in 12 more.

QUICK allows an authorized user to view financial and basic case data, as well as contact information for the caseworker in another State. QUICK also allows access to information about noncustodial parent locate, paternity, order establishment, enforcement activities, and case status, including business actions on a case that was completed by another State.

QUICK is a tool to improve the quality and timeliness of customer service responses by providing the information in real-time, without involving a worker in the other State, almost instantly—the average response time is 14 seconds! Some 1,200 caseworkers use QUICK, and positive feedback asserts greatly improved efficiency.

OCSE provides States with the following resources:

- Ongoing QUICK support services
- Hands-on technical and business consultation
- Reference material and coding on the QUICK Workplace
- Regular technical meetings
- Site visits
- Cost-savings resource material, i.e., QUICK Toolkit



The QUICK Toolkit is a reference guide designed to assist States with the integration of QUICK into their CSE systems. The toolkit provides platform-specific development instructions as well as sample code. It is useful from a technical aspect, as well as for business and management teams who help define the scope of work, resources needed, and a high level overview of the QUICK application. The QUICK Toolkit may be found on the QUICK

Workplace in the Technical Documents section. To obtain more information about QUICK, contact the QUICK Help Desk at 800-258-2736.

To get started with QUICK, review the “Terms for Participating” in the Getting Started section of the QUICK Workplace. Your State will need to obtain IV-D Director approval, as well as send an e-mail to Federal Manager Helen Smith: helen.smith@acf.hhs.gov ■

It's All 'Business' in Vermont



Vermont Child Support Director Jeff Cohen holds the OCSE Commissioner's Award for “Outstanding Leadership and Sustained Contributions to the Lives of Children and Families in Vermont,” presented at the annual statewide Vermont training conference in May. He is flanked by Commissioner Margot Bean and Regional CSE Program Manager Chuck Kenher. The meeting's theme, “Business Process Improvement,” represented part of an ongoing, structured way of analyzing and mapping child support processes to identify inefficiencies and potential areas for improvement. Staff members from around the State got a chance to help target five child support processes that would be the focus of future improvement efforts. Cohen has served as IV-D Director since 1989, the 3rd longest-serving active director in the United States. In recent years, the child support agency has been recognized for its technological innovation and strategic planning. In addition, Vermont was the first State in Region I to implement the OCSE Query Interstate Cases for Kids (QUICK) application.

VINE: Another Tool Helps Caseworkers Find Prisoner Data

By Betty LaCross
and Linda Hudson
OCSE

Child support caseworkers nationwide already know the value of prisoner data provided by OCSE's interface with the Social Security Administration's State Verification Exchange System (SVES).

SSA receives prisoner information from approximately 6,500 institutions that participate in the Incentive Payment Program for Prisoner Reporting. Under this program, Federal, State, and local correctional institutions assist SSA to identify people who were receiving SSI/SSA benefits at the time of incarceration. This reporting helps avoid erroneous payments, but SVES prisoner data also provides State IV-D agencies with valuable data that can help locate parents' whereabouts and income.

While this information is very helpful, it only provides the data that was available at the time of incarceration and is not updated throughout the prisoner's incarceration. Case officers in Washington have identified an additional source of prisoner data that is proving to be a valuable tool for caseworkers. VINE—Victim Information and Notification Everyday—offers information on prisoners and provides automated notification to interested parties when there has been a change in the prisoner's status, such as release, transfer, or escape.

VINE Growing Through States

VINE is a free service funded and provided by local and State agencies. It allows the general public access to inmate information, and child support caseworkers are finding this to be a valuable tool as well. Anyone can call a local toll-free number or visit www.vinelink.com to register to receive telephone or e-mail notification when a prisoner's custody status changes, or to search for information regarding a prisoner's custody status.

More than two-thirds of the nation is currently using the patented VINE system to keep the public informed about



prisoners. The data is collected and stored in the Appriss Data Network, the nation's largest integrated criminal justice information database. Updates are processed every 15 minutes for jails and twice each day for prisons, handling over 13 million transactions each month. Since VINE tracks a prisoner's current custody status and date of release only, prisoners are usually deleted from the database within 2 weeks of release.

While VINE is available in 42 States and the District of Columbia, not all counties within each State may be participating. Accessing VINE, caseworkers can view the counties within each State that participate.

Also, VINE does not maintain information for Federal prisoners. The Federal Bureau of Prisons updates and maintains that data at: <http://www.bop.gov/iloc2/LocateInmate.jsp>

Uses Stemming From VINE

To effectively use the VINE Web site, a caseworker should have a reason to believe that the person is incarcerated and where he/she might be incarcerated. Washington started using the VINE prisoner location and notification Web site in August 2007. As workers discovered that an NCP was incarcerated, they used VINE to track the NCP's movements in the jail or prison system. The e-mail notification option for prisoner transfer or release was especially useful, and it also provided the name of the community corrections (parole) officer to obtain location information about the prisoner after release.

Washington is planning to conduct a pilot with Appriss to match its database of NCPs with the entire database of prisoners. This should allow Washington to find NCPs that it might not have known about previously.

For other States, when prisoner data is returned in the SVES response file or when the caseworker suspects that the NCP is incarcerated, it may be helpful to search VINE to learn the latest status of the prisoner. And caseworkers may then register to receive automated telephone or e-mail notification when this status changes.

Caseworkers now have three valuable resources for locating prisoners: SVES, the Federal Bureau of Prisons, and VINE. Accessing and using all these sources to obtain available data on prisoners helps with location efforts and managing arrears effectively. ■



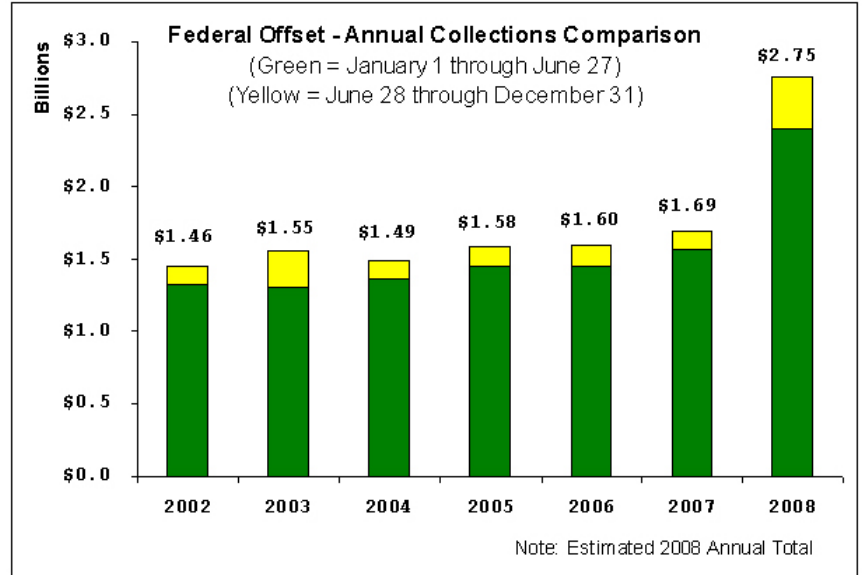
Stimulated Collections

By Brian Peeler
OCSE

For the first time in the history of the program, collections through the Federal Offset System have surpassed the \$2 billion mark. As of June 27, 2008, OCSE has collected \$2.31 billion through tax refund offset. This is an increase of over \$750 million compared to this time last year. The graph helps to put both the year to date and annual figures in perspective.


There are two factors at play contributing to the amazing performance of the program. First, between October 2007 and January 2008, States added just over 900,000 non-TANF cases as a result of the non-TANF, non-minor child Deficit Reduction Act provision. These cases represent an additional \$10.5 billion in arrearage. It is very likely that between \$200 to \$300 million of the \$750 million increase in collections is due to those 900,000+ additional cases.

The other factor impacting collections is the Economic Stimulus Payments. As of this writing, OCSE has intercepted almost 770,000 of these payments totaling over \$460 million. These collections should keep coming in for another couple of months, eventually bringing the



total amount collected on these payments to \$750 million.

Last year, States collected a record-breaking \$1.69 billion. When it is all said and done, we are expecting to finish out 2008 with Federal Offset collections totaling around \$2.75 billion—or over \$1 billion more than last year! With such impressive figures, you can be certain OCSE will provide another update on collections around the first of the year. ■



Take a Look: Arrears Management Resource Guide

Now on the OCSE Web site, “Arrears Management: Practical Resource Guide” offers research material on arrears management and analysis, order establishment, prevention of arrears, early intervention, management of accrued arrears, and policy and legal considerations. The guide also contains abstracts of over 30 grants on these subjects. To view or download, log on to:
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/pol/DCL/2008/dcl-08-22.htm>

Child Support Report

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/pubs/csrindex.html>

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OCSE 18th National Conference: Exciting New Sessions Await You

The projects featured in the articles on pages 2 and 3 of this newsletter will be presented in more detail in a workshop at the OCSE 18th National Child Support Enforcement Training Conference in August. Below are highlights of two more conference sessions you won't want to miss!

DRA is Here to Stay

At times child support distribution might seem overwhelming and difficult to understand; some have described it as the feeling you had when you took those

dreaded standardized tests in high school. Possibly adding to the difficulties, the distribution provisions in the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (DRA) have created a number of changes to child support distribution rules. But don't worry—OCSE distribution experts will offer an easy-to-follow “DRA Distribution Series” of three workshops at the conference.

Each workshop in the series covers a separate area of distribution and serves as a prerequisite for the subsequent workshops. Workshop topics range from basic distribution terminology to understanding how DRA Distribution differs from PRWORA Distribution. The sessions offer training exercises, opportunities for discussion, and user-friendly handouts and packets on child support distribution under the DRA.

The distribution experts will be ready to answer your questions at the Tuesday and Wednesday workshops. Space in each workshop will be limited to 25 participants, on a first-come first-served basis. So don't walk; RUN to secure your seat at Distribution Series at the conference.

Register Now!

**OCSE 18th National
Child Support Enforcement
Training Conference
August 25 – 27, 2008
Washington, DC**

Registration information:

<http://www.wciconferences.com/ocse>

Contact person:

kimberly.mitchellharley@acf.hhs.gov, 202-205-3496



Beyond the Bench

**Partnering for Excellence
in Child Support
through the Courts, Fatherhood,
and Employment Initiatives**



The Changing Face of Fathers and Families

Compared to several decades ago, the landscape of families and children in America has changed significantly. Out-of-wedlock birth rates, increases in teen pregnancies, record-setting incarceration rates, and other socio-economic factors are sure to impact child support collections in years to come.

All of these changes foretell the new face of the State IV-D caseload. These changes may also make it more difficult for State child support agencies to ensure the financial and emotional well-being of children.

Distinguished panelists at Wednesday's “Fatherhood” plenary session will discuss the implications of these national trends on child support collections and, of equal importance, propose options that will enable the child support program to more effectively respond to the special needs of a changing caseload.

Want to learn more about the conference? See the orange box, left, for the link to registration information. Or click on the gavel below. 