

Child Support Report

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OFFICE OF CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT

Vol. 30 No. 10 October 2008

WICSEC Conference Bright and Strong

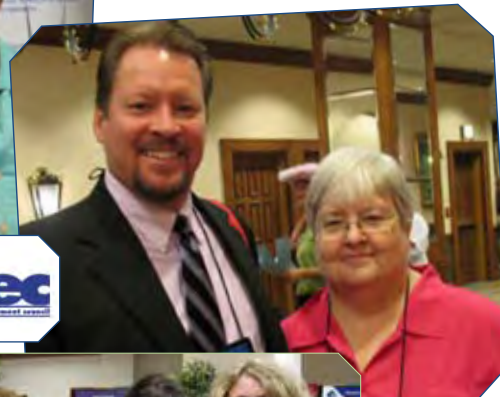
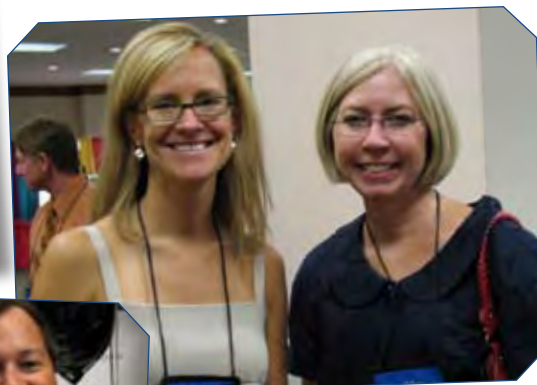
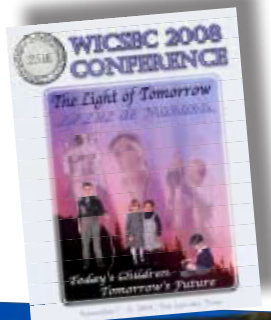
The Western Interstate Child Support Enforcement Council (WICSEC) held its 25th Annual Training Conference and Exposition in San Antonio, Sept. 8 to 11. The West was well represented, from the hills of Oklahoma to the plains of Wyoming; from the oceans of California to the deserts of Nevada and Arizona.

The conference theme, “The Light of Tomorrow, La Luz de Manana; Today’s Children, Tomorrow’s Future,” set the scene for OCSE Commissioner Margot Bean to praise attendees for several of their accomplishments as partners, “a nation of lights strung together” for the common goal of improving the lives of children.

For the future, the Commissioner highlighted the importance of practicing the best possible customer service and updating State computer systems, and noted plans to begin work on the next national child support enforcement strategic plan for 2010 through 2014.

Natalie Dillon, WICSEC President, said during her opening remarks that WICSEC, as a regional organization, joins child support professionals together “in a common cause. As an organization, we make each other stronger by openly sharing best practices to improve the lives of children and families. As an organization, we develop often life-long relationships that make us stronger, better leaders, and give us the ability to face uncertain times. As an organization, we share with each other tools and techniques that enable each of us to go back to our community and be leaders in our collective cause.”

By these terms, says Dillon, “this year’s conference was an overwhelming success!” Furthermore, WICSEC raised over \$10,000 for their selected charity, “Avance” of San Antonio, an organization that provides support and educational services to low-income families.



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



Urban Jurisdictions Rally in Region V

By Geneva Bishop

OCSE Region V

Improving program performance was the goal for the 24 representatives from jurisdictions in five of the Region V States at this year's "Urban Jurisdictions" meeting, Sept. 2 to 4 in Chicago.

Discussion included creative outreach strategies to encourage noncustodial parents to work with the child support agency. Lisa Marks, Milwaukee County Child Support Director, commented, "It is better to have noncustodial parents come in voluntarily than it is to chase them." She cited Milwaukee County's Fatherhood Summit, held Oct. 10, saying "2,600 men attended the 2007 Fatherhood Summit and we are still tallying the numbers for 2008. At the Summit, fathers are able to participate with an assortment of agencies to address issues including driver's license suspension, child support, and employment." Marks said the number of businesses attending this year to recruit for open employment positions increased to 50.

Other outreach strategies and updates included:

- "Walk in Wednesday" program in Marion County, IN, where noncustodial parents can come into the office to meet with a case manager for employment referrals.
- DuPage County, IL, has a child support worker in court to meet with noncustodial parents and introduce and explain the child support processes.
- Cuyahoga County, OH, has a Speakers Bureau which visits high schools. The staff presents a skit for teens which explains child support procedures.
- Hamilton County, OH, has a drop box at the library for participants to use for returning documents for the child support agency. A staff member retrieves the items each day.
- Jeff Startzman, Hamilton County Director, enjoys participating in a weekly on-line chat room in which he responds to general queries about child support. Individual case requests receive a personal response, but those requests are handled offline.

- Darlene Sandberg of Kenosha County, WI, provided an update on the Illinois/Wisconsin/Indiana Border Project with Lake, DuPage, and Aurora, IL; Lake County, IN; and Kenosha and Milwaukee Counties, WI. The Border Project's purpose is to improve communication between the participating agencies and to learn more about the differences in the administration of child support in the States to enable processing of cases more efficiently and effectively. (See <http://childsupportborderproject.com/>)

Feedback Counts

Minnesota's Hennepin and Ramsey Counties presented their arrears management strategies, which were well received by attendees. Hennepin's Director Barry Bloomgren is a strong supporter of the annual meeting and follows up during the year through regular contact with fellow directors. The following examples summarize the overall feedback from the meeting.



Barry Bloomgren

- Susan Schroeder, Allen County, IN: "Every year I walk away with wonderful ideas and the feeling that we are not alone out there, but have lots of friends and colleagues trying to paddle upstream with us. One of the most important things I get out of this conference every year is the chance to make contact with others in our same positions. Every one of the people at this conference is more than willing to respond to any of my questions or concerns or problems I might have with their jurisdictions. This does not end when we leave Chicago, but remains a lasting network."
- Norris Stevenson, Deputy Administrator, Illinois Child Support Enforcement: "The meeting was very helpful to the Illinois delegation. We have been looking at methods for early intervention in collections and the ideas shared by the attendees were helpful in formulating our plan."

- Linda Derks, Assistant Director, Ramsey County, MN: “After our group’s discussion on managing arrears, it pleased me that we in Minnesota, and specifically Ramsey County, are ahead of the game in this area. Ramsey County started out several years ago with a strong arrears management project and our State Office took our information and used it when they developed our Minnesota SHLIF (Strategies to Help Low Income Families) policies. We are very proud of the work we have done in Ramsey County on the Public Assistance (TANF) arrears and we will continue to make this a priority in Ramsey County.”
- Casey White, Human Services Program Manager, Hennepin County, MN: “Hennepin County continues to gain new and valuable information from meeting with Region V urban jurisdictions. This is one of only a few opportunities we have to engage in discussion with like situated jurisdictions. As a result of this year’s meeting, Hennepin intends to further investigate the expedited modification process run by community outreach partners in Illinois.”
- Marion County, IN, Deputy Prosecutor Michael McGuire: “We anticipate that we will develop strategies based on these ideas which will allow us to improve our performance and service. [This meeting] was especially helpful in a time of fiscal crisis and the unique challenges we face as an urban jurisdiction[s].”
- Bob Clifford, OCSE: “Each year I hear new ideas or new ways to approach old ideas. I find that participants listen, raise real concerns ask great questions, evaluate how they can implement change, and come back the next year to share what they did. I am also extremely impressed by the high caliber of managers in the jurisdictions.”

For more information, contact Linda M. Lawrence, CSE Program Manager, 312-353-7481 or linda.lawrence@acf.hhs.gov, or Geneva Bishop, 312-353-8416 or geneva.bishop@acf.hhs.gov.

Region I Tackles Issues of the Day

All six Region I State IV-D Child Support Directors joined OCSE Central and Regional Office staff for 3 days in early September, for the annual Region I Child Support Training Conference, held in Hyannis, MA.

Following OCSE Deputy Commissioner Donna Bonar’s keynote address and a Federal overview on strategic and policy



initiatives by OCSE Policy Division Director Lily Matheson, the audience of more than 60 State and Federal staff tackled an agenda that underscored the importance of IV-D collaboration with other agencies and organizations, and highlighted new techniques and technologies that promote secure, accurate, and efficient case management, strengthen enforcement activities, and manage arrears.

—Chuck Kenher, Region I

OCSE, TANF, Workforce Development Plan Collaboration Strategies

Collaboration across Federal, State, and local agencies is essential to provide the full range of services to help the neediest populations achieve sustainable employment and self-sufficiency. With this knowledge, OCSE, the Office of Family Assistance, and the Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration co-sponsored a “Collaboration Institute” in September for medium-sized urban areas across the country.

The 2-day event in Washington, DC, brought together leaders from Child Support Enforcement, TANF

(Temporary Assistance to Needy Families), and Workforce Development agencies. Attendees formed 13 city teams to engage in strategic planning and develop an action plan that each team plans to implement in their jurisdictions.

The teams focused also on examining the close link between welfare, workforce development, and child support; understanding how collaborative efforts are addressing State work participation rates; and providing a platform for key issues in child support and workforce development that impact TANF recipients.

By all accounts, the meeting proved useful in bringing together experienced leadership from the various levels of the three programs to partner for the good of the children and families each serve.

In New Mexico, PANning for Lasting CSE Gold

By Jeremy Toulouse

New Mexico Child Support Enforcement Division

We all know that our work in child support enforcement is, ultimately, about the children we serve. We also know in New Mexico, as in other parts of the country, many children who need our services do not get them early enough in the process. This is caused by many roadblocks very familiar to us all.



Jeremy Toulouse

The New Mexico program has many custodial parents (CPs) who, because of the complexity of the process, are intimidated and often end up not cooperating with the child support agency. For them, it is too often ambiguous in spite of caseworkers' best efforts. This, combined with all the other problems young parents are dealing with, causes New Mexico to end up with a large number of uncooperative CPs, whose children sometimes never receive the vital services of legal paternity establishment and lasting financial support.

Additionally, we have many noncustodial parents (NCPs) who are teens or young adults, and they, more so than those with a work history, are also intimidated by the child support process and have many misconceptions regarding how we can help them.

For these reasons, our staff decided, in April 2007, to focus on young parents, 18 to 30, who are new to the child support enforcement program.

Planning an Approach

We knew we would need to do something extraordinary to better serve this target age group. We, therefore, decided to start by developing a process to address

paternity and support with these NCPs. We named the new procedure the "Project to Accommodate Non-custodial parents," or PAN. It strongly focuses on newer cases with young NCPs, especially when the CP also is not cooperating with our child support staff.

We believed that if these NCPs could be brought into the child support process early

on through outreach and awareness, then they would soon better understand their real world responsibilities to their children, and focus more on meeting them, given other competing priorities of many young men and women. PAN also works to ensure that younger NCPs fully understand that they, too, can ask us for guidance, even if later they begin to have difficulties meeting their financial responsibilities.



Golden Opportunities

This approach for working with younger NCPs early on not only gets them on board from the start in meeting their financial responsibilities, it may also get them more involved in their children's lives. Outside of court proceedings, child support is one of the major events requiring both parents to sit down with each other, face to face, and begin to work out important dual responsibilities for raising their children. This opportunity must be taken advantage of to foster long term financial and emotional support.

The first step in PAN is contacting the located NCP to make an appointment; however, instead of meeting with a child support caseworker, the NCP meets with a child support worker with the title of Social and Community Services Coordinator (SCSC), who not only understands child support rules, but other social services as well. Among the issues discussed at this meeting are options for the NCP; typically there are many for them to consider.

Success hinges on the interview being conducted by the SCSC, who offers the NCP the experience of



meeting with someone other than an enforcement officer directly tied to the case. Young NCPs can freely raise all of their concerns with a nonbiased staff member who is there to do three things: listen, educate, and offer workable options that both parents may welcome. (When dealing with NCPs who deny paternity or have other intentions, staff will be asked to remain focused on moving forward because these matters all will be addressed fairly through the court process.)

The NCP can address other issues affecting the child support enforcement progress, including domestic violence, custody, incarceration, and behavioral health issues, such as substance abuse and mental illness and cases in which the child is being raised by relative, not the CP. All of these situations, too, can be handled with a focus on moving forward to have resolution obtained in court. Any information obtained is better than none, so every case for which we have either parent's cooperation can be counted as a success.

PANning Results

We have found that most younger NCPs want simply to be treated fairly and, unfortunately, many of them have gross misconceptions about what will happen to them if they owe child support. To help alleviate these concerns, a letter is mailed to them that is inviting and positive in nature, helping to encourage NCPs to make their appointment.

Is PAN successful? Since April 2007, we have mailed 430 letters to younger NCPs meeting PAN's criteria: 82 cases (19 percent) have been successfully adjudicated or closed. Interestingly, many uncooperative CPs decided to begin working with us after the NCP met with a SCSC. Many CPs told us they decided to now work with us because they believe the process has started and they have a fighting chance for receiving child support.

Of course, we want a higher success rate with PAN than we have now, but we believe in time news about this project will spread and more new NCPs may soon be calling us for an interview.

For further information, please e-mail JeremyToulouse@state.nm.us.

Community Paves Paths for Reentry in Sedgwick County, Kansas

By Roberta Coons
OCSE Region VII

The Kansas Department of Corrections (KDOC) has funded two initiatives using two different approaches in working with incarcerated noncustodial parents. The August Child Support Report featured the El Dorado Correctional Facility, which addresses child support issues in the early stages of the parents' incarceration. This article features the second initiative, the Sedgwick County Reentry Program.

The Sedgwick County Reentry Program, based in Wichita, provides male and female offenders with the tools necessary for successful reentry into the community. The program identifies the areas of risk and the needs of high-risk offenders through a comprehensive plan 12 to 18 months prior to their release.

This voluntary program has an average enrollment of approximately 200 to 250 parents at any given time.



Reentry staff continues working with them after release, alongside a Parole Officer, for 6 to 8 months. The program offers training and services to assist in successful reintegration into the community, and networks with the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services (SRS), Child Support Enforcement, and various other community providers and supports.

Training includes new cognitive behavioral (social and decision-making) skills, job readiness, housing/tenant responsibility, and parenting. Parents also receive support in getting connected to services, disability benefits, housing, and other support in the community.

The program also includes a Business Developer, Curtis Cline, who works with the parents and employers in the community. By identifying employer workforce needs, and connecting the individuals with necessary skills to employers, they can achieve sustained employment, which is a significant factor in success after release.

Cline helps address workplace culture, work department, and how to be a reliable employee with job

skills and problem-solving abilities. He also provides information to employers about the positive reasons to consider hiring an ex-offender.

Recently Cline worked with a small business association by providing presentations and articles for a monthly newsletter highlighting the federal bonding program (insurance for employers for some types of jobs if offenders are hired for the positions), job skills, and supervision, and random drug-testing while on parole. The articles address reasons why hiring an ex-offender may have benefits for the employer.

On the flip side, Cline also offers mentoring on how to handle questions during an interview, such as how to address their conviction, teaching how to sell themselves in an interview, and asking the employer to take a chance on hiring them.

Cline is also the administrator for the federal bonding program that provides insurance to the employers. The bond is utilized as a last resort when it is the only thing standing between the ex-offender and employment. As of September 2008, Cline has issued three federal bonds and has had no claims filed.

Case managers, parole officers, and offenders appear before Accountability Panels made up of community representatives who come together to review the reentry plan and provide the necessary support. These panels greet returning offenders, recognize successes and accomplishments, and address noncompliance with them to relay the community's expectations about them being law-abiding; while at the same time helping to identify strategies and resources for success.

Julie Barber is also employed by the program and acts as a liaison between SRS and KDOC for former inmates returning to Sedgwick County. She also serves on the Accountability Panels. Barber offers SRS services to the offenders and/or their families and acts as a liaison in child support matters.

Barber routinely talks with inmates regarding their child support obligations and coordinates with the caseworker if she identifies a candidate that may be eligible for arrears forgiveness and case management services. She provides

educational workshops and presentations to inmates on SRS-related matters and receives requests for their location from child support caseworkers.

Barber works with the parents and with their families to assure awareness of and participation in available services that will help with reentry. She is interested in strengthening the relationships between the inmates and their children in hopes of giving the inmate a reason not to offend again and reducing the risk of the their children also becoming incarcerated.

Barber's position at the Sedgwick County Reentry Program is relatively new and presently few statistics regarding the impact of the services she provides are available, but will be available in the future. With the two KDOC-funded initiatives, Kansas is in the forefront of working with offenders to reduce recidivism and strengthen their families upon reentry.

Paula Scott and Julie Barber contributed to this article.



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Child Support Report is published monthly by the Office of Child Support Enforcement, Division of Consumer Services. We welcome articles and high-quality digital photos. We reserve the right to edit for style, content, and length. Contents are for informational purposes only; no official endorsement of any practice, publication, or individual by the Department of Health and Human Services or the Office of Child Support Enforcement is intended. Use of this material is welcomed; please identify *Child Support Report* as the source.

Daniel C. Schneider
Acting 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

To receive an e-mail alert when new issues are posted, send an e-mail to:
subscribe-csr-subscription@lyris.acf.hhs.gov

Public Input Key in Ohio's Guidelines Review Process

By Carri Brown

Ohio Department of Job and Family Services

“There is a need for education and outreach because of the complexities of the administrative and court processes and because of the intimidation factor associated with the government,” said one Ohio father, pleased with the opportunity to speak at a recent public forum to review the State's child support guidelines.

Every 4 years, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services is required by law to review its basic child support guidelines to determine if child support orders issued in accordance with the guidelines adequately provide for the needs of children.

In so doing, a child support guidelines advisory council was formed to help prepare a report of recommendations for the General Assembly. The advisory council membership is comprised of State and county child support professionals, stakeholder association members (Ohio County Child Support Enforcement Agency Directors' Association, Ohio Bar Association, and Ohio State Legal Services Association), judges, magistrates, legislators, attorneys, and parent advocacy groups.

Doug Thompson, Ohio IV-D Director, stated, “Adapting to the changing needs of parents and children requires us to seek out public opinions and then use that input and feedback in our work.”

Recognizing the importance of public participation, the advisory council conducted an intensive effort to hold community forums so that parents and stakeholders could voice their opinions and make suggestions to the council.

Ten community forums were held during lunch and evening times in all parts of the State. An additional forum was held at the request of an advocacy group.

During the forums, a member of the council provided an overview of the guidelines, the history of the child support program, and the overall purpose of the council. Participants were asked to provide input or feedback in any way they felt comfortable. Formal testimony was accepted, as were suggestions placed more privately in a suggestion

box. In all cases, participants stated that the community forums were appreciated and helpful in increasing their understanding of child support. Parents were eager to hear of the council's next steps, too.

Often, parents and stakeholders expressed opinions about the following:

- The need for a parenting time adjustment to the guidelines;
- The importance of child support education and outreach;
- Modification of orders for incarcerated obligors;
- Fair treatment of low income obligors, especially when dealing with multiple cases or when imputing income;
- Accountability of both parents, financially and emotionally;
- The use of enforcement tools; and
- The connection between paying child support and an obligor's ability to find work.

Parents and stakeholders also offered general recommendations on how to handle deviations, health insurance costs, child care expenses, or local tax credits when calculating support.

Council members observed the strong turnout of obligors and the detailed child support knowledge of the parents participating. In addition to the community forums, parents and stakeholders had the opportunity to provide written comments online at a Web site available for 4 months.

In March 2009, the council's report, including the input and feedback received, will be posted at: <http://www.jfs.ohio.gov/csguidelines/>

For more information, please contact Carri Brown at carri.brown@jfs.ohio.gov.



Facing the audience are guidelines council members, from left, Carri Brown, Assistant Deputy Director, Office of Child Support; Steve Killpack, Community Endeavors President; and Elaine Hogan, Cuyahoga County Hearing Officer.

QUICK Goes Live in Florida

By Joyce Myers

OCSE

Across the country, QUICK (Query Interstate Cases for Kids) is boosting child support performance and client satisfaction. Caseworkers are excited by the application that allows them to see real-time case information in another State.

Think back to when it took weeks or months to receive interstate data from another State. Now, with a few key strokes, the data is available instantaneously.

Gone are the days of manila files, paper, copying, folding, faxing, stuffing envelopes and licking stamps. Now child support workers can view the data of other States participating in QUICK, in seconds, and it's all in the same format, no matter which State the data is from! No phone calls, no deciphering unique codes or language; just child support data that flows along the electronic highway.

Currently 11 States are in production (Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Nebraska, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Virginia, and Washington) and 16 States are developing QUICK (Arkansas, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Georgia, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Nevada, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Puerto Rico, Utah, West Virginia, and Wisconsin).

QUICK allows users to view financial and basic case data, as well as other States' contact information. Moreover, the Case Activities module recently developed by OCSE allows access to completed case actions for NCP locate, paternity, order establishment, enforcement activities, and case status.

Florida is the most recent State to place QUICK into production. When asked why Florida undertook the QUICK project, Ann Coffin, IV-D Director, and Pat Salapa, Process Manager, Systems Support Process, replied:

“We felt it would enhance two-way communication with other States and provide more timely information to assist customers and case processing. We saw a benefit for other States needing information from Florida and we hope to see a workload reduction in the long term. When staff can obtain information while working the case, they reduce the need to touch that case a second time once the information is returned via CSENet,

From left, Ron Vandenberg (Revenue Program Administrator II - Design & Development), Diane Binkley (Government Operations Consultant III - QUICK Project Lead), and Ernie Spangler (Systems Programmer III)



paper, or phone call. Eventually, workload reduction will be two-way: our staff will touch the same case less often, and we see fewer requests for information from other States.”

Florida, under the dynamic leadership of Ron Vanderburg, demonstrated exemplary team collaboration in designing, developing, and implementing the application in a very short timeframe. In February, OCSE sent a team, Todd Smith (QUICK Technical Lead) and Bill Stuart (State Systems Subject Matter Expert), to assist Florida with the technical issues local staff was experiencing. Working in tandem, the OCSE and Florida teams found efficient solutions to some of the problematic areas the State faced in developing QUICK.

Florida deployed QUICK in record time. Between March and July 2008, Florida's highly energized staff operated under an accelerated schedule to develop and implement QUICK's Financial module. It was implemented on July 21.

How, you may ask, was this accomplished so rapidly?

- First, Florida organized an integrated team comprising the Information Systems team (Infrastructure, Application Development, Security and Technical Architecture), Business Process Evaluation team, Operational Procedures and Training teams, and the Florida System Support Process.
- The team met weekly and communicated about issues and progress.
- They conferred regularly with the QUICK Technical team to resolve problems.
- Florida's QUICK team regularly attended the OCSE QUICK Technical Workgroup teleconferences with other States developing QUICK.

In the first part of this June, Florida began testing. As user acceptance testing moved forward, the CSE program team opted for a statewide roll out—all 67 counties throughout the State would have access to this innovative application.

Florida has over 805,000 child support cases, of which 157,215 are interstate cases. Interestingly, according to the Interstate Case Reconciliation (ICR) team, Florida is one

of the top 10 trading partners with 49 other States.

Diane Binkley, CSE QUICK Coordinator, reported that the caseworkers are extremely excited about the application. There are over 273 users statewide and she says that workers are able to identify Federal tax intercepts, look up payments, reconcile cases, and do fast audits. Most important, customer service is already witnessing improved satisfaction.

Project Save Our Children



The Project Save Our Children (PSOC) task force is a multi-agency law enforcement initiative that investigates and prosecutes the most egregious child support matters. Its members are investigative analysts from the Office of Child Support Enforcement; Special Agents from the HHS Office of Inspector General, Office of Investigations; the United States Marshal's Service; United States Attorneys and their assistants from the Department of Justice; the DOJ Office of Probation and Parole; State and local partners in law enforcement; along with the IV-D child support agencies across the United States.

These entities together identify, investigate, and prosecute noncustodial parents who knowingly fail to pay their support obligations and meet the criteria for Federal prosecution under 18 USC sec. 228 (Deadbeat Parents Punishment Act).

In recent months, PSOC has successfully investigated cases that resulted in payments for children and families in the national child support enforcement caseload, including the following:

- **South Dakota**—A noncustodial parent paid nearly \$37,000, the full arrearage on a case that began in 1996, for his two 17-year-old children. At the time of his arrest this March, he was residing and working in Texas.
- **South Dakota**—In a case that began in 1991, a noncustodial parent has paid the remaining portion of his restitution in the amount of \$20,000. He had paid the first portion of the total \$36,000 in January 2007. He has two children.

- **South Dakota**—A 10-year-old child has received child support after the noncustodial parent, residing and working in Nevada, paid about \$3,800 toward his restitution amount of \$22,000.
- **South Dakota**—A noncustodial parent paid his entire outstanding arrearage of \$14,000 prior to his sentencing, on a 2002 case for one child. He had been residing and working in Arizona.
- **Florida**—A noncustodial father was sentenced to 1 year of prison and 1 year of supervised release, and ordered to pay restitution of close to \$29,500 plus \$308 per month, on a case that started in 1994 for one child. He provided \$5,000 at the time of sentencing.
- **Utah**—Between the time of his arrest in California in December 2007 and sentencing in August 2008, a noncustodial father paid nearly \$32,000 toward his outstanding arrearage balance of \$135,000 plus \$2,500 in monthly payments.

For information about the national Project Save Our Children task force, contact Nick Soppa in OCSE at 202-401-4677 or nicholas.soppa@acf.hhs.gov.





The Cutting Edge

By Joseph Bodmer
OCSE

For the first time in any federally funded human services program, an automated computer system is being built entirely on an open source software platform with 100 percent compliance with industry standards. In fact, we are hard-pressed to find any system supporting any Federal program, from Justice to Indian Health, to have built such a fully open, compliant system. What, you might ask, is the big deal about open source or open standards?

Well, first, the software tools used to build this automated system, and the fully relational database it runs on, are all open source software. This means the tools and the database are supported by an international community of developers dedicated to creating powerful, compatible, cross-platform software that is notable for another reason—it is free to use!

Second, being fully compliant with open standards means the automated system will run on any other standards-compliant database. This includes industry leaders like Microsoft's SQL Server, Oracle, and DB2, and open source databases such as MYSQL and PostgreSQL. Written in the Java programming language (J2SE and J2EE), the user interface is Web-based and employs a Multimedia eXtensible Markup Language (MXML) through a product called Flex.

Between these two development choices, the standard user experience goes from green screen, data-entry clerk simple, to Internet time, next generation interactive. Providing advanced behaviors such as intelligent, built-in, document generation, management, and print capabilities that allow for document creation and editing on the fly. This new system provides a heretofore-unseen level of sophistication, supporting total customization out-of-the-box.

With a wizard-based configuration module that asks questions and requires only choices, a system administrator can now design his/her own system. From

deciding what flavor of distribution and disbursement to run, or whether to even use the financial module in the system or just turn it off. From whether or not certain forms, notices, or letters should print automatically based on case circumstances, or require worker initiation, the decisions are nothing more than selecting the right check boxes. From loading an agency seal or logo that will print on many documents, to allowing the complete reconfiguring of which screens will be used and in what order, to creating new staff security profiles to make use of the agency's new business process, the system offers an unprecedented level of flexibility.

Designed for raw data processing power, the system employs what is called *caching* to preload program modules and case data in system memory. This

dramatically improves processing speeds by avoiding the need to repeatedly go back to the database to fetch more case data. Developed for future growth and maintainability, the system comes with all

of the program code, development tools, database, and its design, user and operational documentation.

So, where'd we get this system? Who thought this system's design up? Moreover, where, you might ask, can you get a copy? Well, the answer to the first question is that OCSE built it for the answer to the second question—the Tribal Child Support Enforcement community. Called the Model Tribal System (MTS), it is the result of 3 years of painstaking work by the original nine Interim Tribal IV-D Program Grantees, work that demanded—and received—collaboration and consensus in all facets of the MTS's design.

To be completed later this month, general availability will not come for some months yet, as publication of a final Tribal systems regulation is required. But it'll be ready when that finally happens. Imagine. A system, designed by Tribes, for Tribes. The Model Tribal System: the very model of cooperation.

The author is the Project Director of the MTS project. He can be reached at 202-690-1234 or joseph.bodmer@acf.hhs.gov.



Model Tribal System

Designed By Tribes, For Tribes