



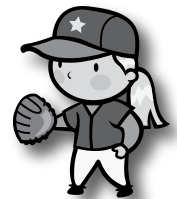
Child Support Report

OFFICE OF CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT

Vol. 29 No. 5 May 2007



Home Run for Milwaukee Custodial Parent Eyes Business Pitch, County Scores Collection



By Elaine Blackman
CSR Editor

Robin Eggert thought she had exhausted all means for obtaining the child support still owed since her divorce 11 years earlier, leaving her with three small children who were not receiving their child support—until one day last November.

Eggert was surfing the Internet for articles about delinquent noncustodial parents when she spotted a news story in the June 2006 *Child Support Report*: Titled “The Right Ballpark, Milwaukee Picks Business Approach to Increase Rate of Collections,” the article described the local child support agency’s success with Six Sigma, a private-sector business method, to better analyze and control data on child support cases.

That’s when Eggert picked up the phone to call child support chief and the article’s author, Lisa Marks. If Eggert’s child support case with the Milwaukee agency fell into the category of “never payers” described in the article, might Marks be able to further pursue her case?

The answer was “yes.”

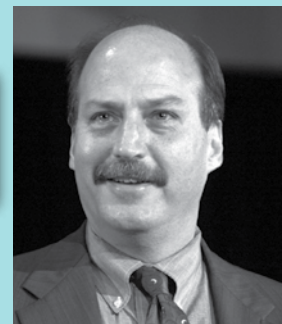
“I was shocked. Lisa responded within 24 hours,” says Eggert, and within 4 weeks—after years of private legal battles and fees, and dead-end child support enforcement efforts—

Eggert received close to \$35,000, most of the arrears total. Eggert says she appreciates that Marks continues to monitor the case (without having to ask) and steadily collect current support.

Since publishing her story about Six Sigma, Marks reports seeing small increases in current support and arrears collections on Eggert’s case and others in the county’s 140,000 caseload. “Challenges exist, but we are still testing and perfecting the process.” Milwaukee has added two software tools to better project desired outcomes: Minitab and Crystal Ball.

See **MILWAUKEE**, next page

Dr. Horn Moves On



Dr. Wade F. Horn has stepped down from his position as HHS Assistant Secretary for Children and Families. During Dr. Horn’s 6-year term, national child support collections increased more than 21 percent, while the national caseload decreased about 7 percent. OCSE thanks Dr. Horn for his dedication to improving the lives of children and families, and wishes him well in his future pursuits. Daniel C. Schneider, ACF Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, is serving as Acting Assistant Secretary.

Offset Change Coming for Non-TANF Cases

By **Scott Hale**
and **Kelley Donovan**
OCSE

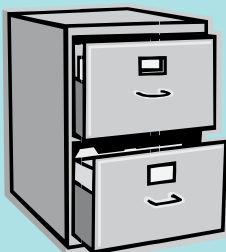
The IRS refund check some obligors found in their mailbox this year may be replaced next year by a Treasury tax offset notice. That's because effective Oct. 1, 2007, States may begin submitting non-TANF cases for tax offset for past-due support owed regardless of the child's age.

Although the pending change may

come as a shock to some obligors, it will be a pleasant surprise to custodial parents who may not have received a payment in years.

While it is difficult to forecast specifics at this time, it is expected that a significant number of cases will be added to the tax offset file, providing a tremendous boost to tax collections for years to come. Certification of

Check those files!
Children over 18 are
eligible for Federal Tax
Offset on Oct. 1, 2007.



See **TAX OFFSET**, next page

MILWAUKEE, from page 1

To compliment traditional Six Sigma, the agency has started Lean training for all staff, “a method that gets everyone to look for ways to streamline processes,” says Marks, and continues to borrow ideas from the private sector in an effort to increase efficiencies.

Marks explains: “We can quickly take an order from court, enter it on the statewide database, and generate a wage garnishment—98 percent are in the mail within 8 hours. How? Agency staff scan orders onto their own secure document database immediately after the hearing. The database is available for all staff to view orders as a PDF document. The order-entry staff and wage garnishment staff see the document at the same

time, both utilizing dual-screen monitors; an order on one, the State database on the other.”

Staff members sit in different areas of the building and enter the information, all without moving any paper or jumping from program to program. Additionally, says Marks, “we are installing a high-speed printer to the front end of our mail (folding and stuffing) machine to take one more step out of the process. The income withholding will be sent directly to that printer, printed, pulled through the folding machine and stuffed into an envelope, and sealed.”

These changes provide staff with additional time for “hands on” case management.

For more information, contact Lisa J. Marks at 414-278-5239 or lmarks@milwcnty.com. **CSR**

New EDM Guide

OCSE is preparing a “Guide for Electronic Document Management” (EDM) to promote State efforts to improve the effectiveness of document management in child support programs, such as that illustrated in this story. OCSE plans to disseminate the guide soon. For more information about the EDM publication, contact John Cheng at 202-401-6499 or jcheng@acf.hhs.gov.

these cases in October or thereafter is optional, and it is understood that some States may need to delay submittal either until a future date or indefinitely. Although we are still a few months from implementation, the Federal Collections team is busy sharing information with your State offset staff about the upcoming change through daily contact and monthly teleconferences.

To ensure you are prepared in the coming months, here are a few steps to take prior to your State certification:

- Remove the tax exclusion indicators from cases that are currently excluded from tax refund offset because the child(ren) are no longer minors, but are being processed at OCSE for MSFIDM, Passport Denial, and/or Administrative Offset.

If your State issues its own Pre-Offset Notice (PON):

- A new PON should be sent for cases currently closed because the child(ren) are no longer minors.
- Update your State's PON if it contains specific language to the ineligibility of children on non-TANF cases because they are no longer minors.

With this change, we anticipate an increase in customer service and case management activity. States may require additional resources to handle calls from new obligors receiving an offset as well as the expected spike in requests for administrative hearings and/or accounting audits.

For more information about this or other offset provisions in the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005, please contact Scott Hale at 202-401-5745. If your State would like to share a best practice, e-mail sollections@acf.hhs.gov. **CSR**

Congratulations!

Access and Visitation Grant Program Exceeds Half-Million Milestone

The Access and Visitation Grant Program has provided services to more than a half million parents since it began 10 years ago!

- **Program Goal:** To enable States to establish and administer programs to support and facilitate noncustodial parents' access to and visitation of their children.
- **Allowable Services:** Mediation (voluntary and mandatory), counseling, parent education, development of parenting plans, visitation enforcement (monitoring, supervisions, and neutral dropoff and pickup), and development of guidelines for visitation and alternative custody arrangements.



Congratulations to all
State Access and Visitation
Program Coordinators
and local service providers
for the A&V program's success!

Learn more about the A&V program on the OCSE Web site, www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse, or contact Debra Pontisso at 202-401-4548 or dpontisso@acf.hhs.gov.

NEON Brightens Lives of Noncustodial Parents in PA

By John Clark
Region III OCSE

Ding, ding, ding sounds the bell over the loudspeaker in the Montgomery County, PA, Child Support Office. “Domestic Relations employees smile when we hear the ring because that means another non-custodial parent has a job,” says County Director Gary Kline.

The bell rings often in Montgomery County, and noncustodial parents frequently are being placed in employment in Allegheny, Delaware, and Philadelphia Counties as well, thanks to the successful “New Opportunities for Non-Custodial Parents” (NEON) program.

The program is designed to help unemployed and underemployed noncustodial parents (NCPs) obtain and retain unsubsidized employment. The program helps these obligors overcome barriers (e.g., criminal records) to provide financial support for their children. The emphasis of the program is to initiate immediate wage withholding.

The program demonstrates an effective partnership between the Pennsylvania Bureau of Child Support Enforcement, County Domestic Relation Sections, and a private vendor whose system defines the clients’ skills and matches them to the best available employment opportunities. Interactive workshops help the clients understand their individual abilities and how to apply them in today’s workplace. The vendor also provides incentives to NCPs to retain employment, as well as effective case management.

From October 2004 through December 2006, the program enrolled 2,034 NCPs and placed

1,269 in employment. More than 77 percent retained their employment with an average hourly wage of \$8.85. The total child support collections from these NCPs reached above \$2.4 million.

Michael Hill is an example for the NEON program’s success. Growing up in New York, Hill first lived in a dysfunctional foster-home environment, and then moved to better conditions in a group home. He attended college and earned a master’s degree in education. However, after his next move to Philadelphia, things took a turn for the worse, and Hill ended up homeless and unable to pay the child support for his daughter and 12-year-old son.



Once homeless in Philadelphia, Michael Hill now serves to help other noncustodial parents obtain new opportunities—and pay child support.

It was then that the child support office referred Hill to the NEON program, where he impressed the vendor’s staff to the point that they hired him as a job developer after he completed the training. Today, Hill meets with employers in the Philadelphia region to obtain career opportunities for welfare recipients attempting to exit the system and become self-sufficient.

“NEON is an extraordinary opportunity for both noncustodial parents and the State’s Child Support Enforcement Program,” according to Dan Richard, Pennsylvania IV-D Director. “NEON is an affirmative effort on our part to help parents contribute more fully to their families’ well-being, and demonstrates our willingness to assist noncustodial parents in meeting their court-ordered obligations for child support.”

For more information, contact Tom Sheaffer at 717-783-7792 or thsheaffer@state.pa.us. **CSR**

Nebraska Summit Hikes Statewide Paternity Establishment Rate

By Nancy Thoma Groetken
Region VII OCSE

For Nebraska Child Support Enforcement Director Daryl Wusk, a big worry about fallen paternity establishment rates has now turned to pride in both a dedicated partnership and improved results.



Reviewing paternity files in the Nebraska Child Support Enforcement office are Sonja Smith, Operations Specialist for Paternity, and Deb Steidley, Field Operations Manager.

In FY 2005, Nebraska's statewide paternity establishment rate dropped, leading Wusk to convene a Paternity Summit in September 2005. There, State and county Child Support, TANF, and Child Welfare staff; Vital Records officials; and birthing-center representatives could focus on the importance of paternity establishment, share information, examine joint efforts and problems, and create an action plan to increase the State PEP (Paternity Establishment Percentage). State information systems staff and Region VII OCSE staff also participated.

Their goal was to increase paternity establish-

ment in FY 2006 and continue to maintain this higher level of performance.

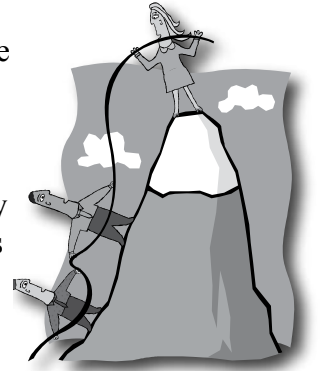
The meeting led to a Paternity Action Plan that defined tasks and assigned staff within five categories: communication/collaboration, systems enhancements, outreach activities, training and education, and utilization of statistical reports/measurements. All participants expressed their commitment to prioritize activities that would help increase the paternity establishment rate.

At a second Paternity Summit in October 2006, participants agreed on a revised Paternity Action Plan for the coming year.

Nebraska believes their PEP has improved as a direct result of the Summit and the cooperative efforts across the State. Wusk also attributes their success to keeping paternity establishment a priority and in the spotlight through closely monitoring progress and widely distributing updates on action-plan activities and paternity statistics.

Wusk applauds Summit staff for their dedication to continued improvement in the establishment of paternity statewide and to maintaining better performance. "Continuation of the Summit and implementation of the action plan is the primary tool to reach that goal," says Wusk.

For more information, contact Deb Steidley at 402- 471-9410 or deb.steidley@hss.ne.gov, or Sonja Smith at 402-471-7324 or sonja.smith@hss.ne.gov. **CSR**



Louisiana Dishes Out Fresh Dialogue—and More

Was it the enticing workshops on new Federal legislation, early intervention in child support cases, interstate communication, and ways of handling overwhelming caseloads that drew more than 500 to attend the Louisiana Child Support Enforcement Association's (LCSEA) annual conference, March 14 to 16 in Lafayette, LA?

Perhaps it was the carefully planned sessions designed to interest attorneys associated with the program about alternatives to incarceration for contempt, applying the evidence code in court, and court-room etiquette for

front-line professionals.

Or—the crawfish boil? Conference goers lined up in droves for this distinctive Louisiana feast: “You take the live crawfish and boil them with Cajun seasoning, corn, and potatoes,” explains Louisiana Support Enforcement Services Executive Director Robbie Endris, a big fan of the delicacy.

All things considered, LCSEA President Bonnie Toups deemed the conference “very successful and informative.”

LCSEA presented its second annual Senator Russell B. Long Legislative Service Award to Louisiana State Representative Ronnie S. Johns of Sulphur (District 33). The award goes to a State or national legislator who has supported the State child support enforcement program.

“The national child support program had its origins right here in Louisiana,” explained Endris in a press release about the LCSEA award, “because Senator Long authored the Federal legislation establishing the national child support enforcement program in 1975. Representative Johns was selected because he authored legislation that protects the rights of children in our State.” — *Elaine Blackman*



Above, from left, Kathryn Hill, Brent Jones, and Starla Van Steenis waited their turn in line for a scoop of the red critters, right, at the crawfish boil/jambalaya feast held in conjunction with the LCSEA conference.



In Focus



Back to Visit NY



OCSE Commissioner Margot Bean, formerly New York State Child Support Director, returned in late March to join child support professionals from across the State for its annual training conference, held this year in Bolton Landing. To Bean's left are Peter Passidomo, Chief Magistrate, and State Child Support Director Scott Cade. During the opening session, Bean announced her pride in the program's recent achievements and shared the top 10 things she's learned since moving to Washington, DC; for one: “The bagels don't compare!”

Do You Own It?

By Joseph Bodmer
OCSE

As OCSE's lead technical consultant to States and Tribes, I am often quizzed on software ownership issues. These queries from States, Tribes, and the vendor community alike, often take the form of "what if" scenarios. And though the rules on software ownership are in regulations, most prominently at 45 CFR 95.617, I am routinely amazed how many different ways these policies are misinterpreted.

First, a primer is in order. The software ownership rules at §95.617 do three things. One, they establish that States must have ownership, not just a license to use, but full, irrevocable ownership of all software and associated documentation designed, developed, or installed with Federal funding.

Second, the regulation goes on to require that in exchange for this Federal funding, the State grants back to OCSE a perpetual, irrevocable license to use that software and to allow others to use it for government purposes. It is this second tenet of the regulation that is the backbone of systems "transfer."

Lastly, the regulation provides some context, clarifying what types of software must be owned by the State versus what may remain proprietary to a vendor. Specifically, it differentiates between *application* software, such as a State's child support system, and *proprietary* software packages. Another term for the latter being "Commercial-Off-The-Shelf (COTS)"; think Microsoft's Office™ or Adobe's Acrobat™ software. These types of packages are excluded from the requirement for State ownership. In fact, when a State (or anyone really) purchases a vendor's software, they are actually only purchasing a license to use the product, not actual title.

So, you may ask, why is this distinction necessary? Because, unlike vendor-owned software that can be used in any number of business situations and is sold to the public at published, market prices, a child support enforcement system is inherently governmental. There is no other practical use for it; not in banking, manufacturing, construction—nothing.

The only reason a child support system exists is for the public service. In the government's view, we created the market. Therefore, if a State uses Federal funding to acquire an application system, the government requires State ownership, and to, in-turn, grant a license in that software back to the Feds.

You may ask, what if a vendor builds a child support system on its own dime, with no Federal dollars involved; can it then lease this proprietary application software to a State? No. The first principle in the regulation, the one that said the State had to have ownership if Federal funding is used to "design, develop, or *install*" the system, kicks in. Those are the rules.

The very act of installing (and operating) the vendor's proprietary child support system with Federal funds effectively imposes the regulation. As it is unlikely that a vendor would turn over ownership to an entity that never paid to have it built, the Federal government will unavoidably have to deny funding for the proprietary system's acquisition, installation, and use.

Our software ownership rules help ensure tax dollars are spent wisely. Paying twice for the same system isn't fiscally prudent. Being able to ensure system transfer is paramount. If you have a question about your next software procurement, call us (202-690-1244). We'll get you answers you can rely on. **CSR**



Tech Talk

**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

Return this sheet to above address if
 you do not want to receive this material
 a change of address is needed:
indicate change, including zip code.

FIRST CLASS MAIL
POSTAGE & FEES PAID
Administration for
Children and Families
Permit No. 275

PSOC News

**Task Force Applauds
Full Payment in PA Case**

Collaboration between Luzerne County, the State of Pennsylvania, and Federal authorities has resulted in full payment in a child support case, including arrears and future support, of \$56,000.

The noncustodial father was released from jail after his father presented the check to Luzerne this March. The jail term resulted from the noncustodial parent's outstanding warrant for contempt weeks earlier. He still faces the Federal charge (18 USC 228) for failure to pay legal child support obligations.

The case began in 1990; total arrears owed to the custodial parent for one child reached \$55,000 as of this February. Wage attachments were not effective since the father has been self-employed in an animal-training service.

To learn about the Project Save Our Children Task Force, contact OCSE's Nick Soppa at nsoppa@acf.hhs.gov or 202-4401-4677.

Child Support Report

Child Support Report is published monthly by the Office of Child Support Enforcement, Division of Consumer Services. We welcome articles and high-quality 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

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

Child Support Report online:
www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse