



HELPING NON-CUSTODIAL PARENTS FIND WORK AND STAY EMPLOYED

by Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott

TO ENSURE TEXAS CHILDREN HAVE the support they need to lead happy, healthy lives, the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) looks for innovative solutions to help Texas families.

For example, the OAG partnered with the Texas Workforce Commission on a project designed to empower parents with jobs and the ability to provide much-needed support for their children. The **Non-custodial Parent (NCP) Choices** project, which was initiated in 2005, aims to increase child support collections and family economic stability by providing employment and training services to mothers and fathers who are required to pay child support.

NCP Choices is a multi-site employment project that links the IV-D courts, OAG child support, and local workforce development boards. Under the project, which currently operates in 12 counties, the OAG's Child Support Division identifies parents who are behind on their child support payments and whose children are receiving or have received public assistance.

Judges order parents to participate in job search and training efforts, and

local workforce development boards follow up with targeted services, close monitoring and verification. Parents ordered into the project are unemployed or underemployed, have unpaid child support and are associated with children who are receiving or have received public assistance at any time. Non-participation results in swift, certain consequences — up to and including jail time.

The project has put more child support in the hands of families who need it most. Since the project began two years ago, more than \$3 million has been collected to date from 1,400 project participants. Factors important to the project's success include requiring participation as part of court orders, having concrete choices, providing immediate Workforce intervention at court, and imposing clear consequences for non-compliance.

The OAG's partnership with the Texas Workforce Commission helps provide parents without custody with the tools they need to get and keep a job. In addition to increasing child support collections and reducing the

need for public assistance, the project also helps parents regain confidence in taking care of their families. Everyone, including the taxpayer, benefits when parents take financial responsibility for their kids.

According to an evaluation by The University of Texas, parents in the NCP Choices project paid their child support more often and paid more of it, than parents in a comparison group. Reduction in public assistance receipt also was seen for custodial parents associated with the NCP Choices participants.

Last year, the OAG and the Texas Workforce Commission received the Commissioner's Award for Innovative Partnership from the Administration for Children and Families' Office of Child Support Enforcement for the NCP Choices project.

The OAG strives to continue developing innovative solutions to help Texas families. For more information on this project and others, visit the Attorney General's website, www.texasattorneygeneral.gov.

POINTS TO REMEMBER



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Factors important to the project's success include:

- Requiring participation as part of court orders,
- Having concrete choices,
- Providing immediate Workforce intervention at court, and
- Imposing clear consequences for non-compliance.

For more information about family initiatives projects call (512) 460-6400. To apply for child support services, call (800) 252-8014 or visit the Attorney General's website, www.texasattorneygeneral.gov.



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