



# HELPING NONCUSTODIAL PARENTS FIND WORK AND STAY EMPLOYED

by Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott

THE OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (OAG) works to ensure that Texas parents provide their children with the resources they need to lead happy, healthy lives. To help make this happen, the OAG partnered with the Texas Workforce Commission on a program designed to empower parents with jobs and the ability to provide much-needed support for their children.

The Noncustodial Parent (NCP) Choices program aims to increase child support collections and family economic stability by requiring participation in employment and training services through a court order for parents who have unpaid child support. The program, which was initiated in 2005, now operates in 15 workforce boards, 39 child support offices and 23 courts. The program will be statewide by August 2010.

NCP Choices is a multi-site child support enforcement and employment program that links the IV-D courts, OAG child support and local workforce development boards. Under the program, 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 program has put more child support in the hands of families who need it most. In almost four years of operation, more than 3,300 parents — who were neither working nor paying child support when ordered into the program — have paid more than \$10 million in support to their children. Factors important to the program's success include requiring participation as part of court orders, having concrete choices, providing enhanced child support monitoring, 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 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 program 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 program 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.

In 2007, 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 NCP Choices.

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 Web site, [www.texasattorneygeneral.gov](http://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov).

## POINTS TO REMEMBER



### NCP CHOICES

Factors important to the project's success include:

- Requiring participation as part of court orders
- Providing enhanced child support monitoring
- Having concrete choices
- Providing immediate Workforce intervention at court
- 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 Web site, [www.texasattorneygeneral.gov](http://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov).



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