

Child Support Collections Top \$1.5 Billion



The money benefitted approximately 637,000 children, and topped the previous year's collections of \$1.409 billion by \$158 million.

During the state fiscal year (SFY) that ended August 31, the Child Support Division of my office collected more than \$1.567 billion.

But, this isn't just a bunch of numbers my office is touting. The payments make a real difference for the families who receive them. And most important to me, this money represents hope to children who rely on child support for a fair start in life.

The children we serve need child support to put clothes on their backs and a roof over their heads, literally. This year employees of the Child Support Division made the dream of a home come true for a single mother of two girls, who collected thousands of dollars in unpaid child support. The Division's efforts included filing a lien in the county where the delinquent father owned property, resulting in a lump sum payment of \$27,500 when the property was sold. The woman, who with her 10- and 13-year-old daughters, had lived in a rented duplex for 11 years, used

the money to buy a home in Arlington, which they moved into this year.

The Attorney General's office uses every available tool to see that parents meet their legal obligation to pay child support. More than 60 percent of the \$1.567 billion collected in 2003 was made possible by withholding income from a parent's paycheck. Almost \$115 million resulted from intercepting delinquent parents' IRS refund checks. Other measures to collect child support include seizure of assets held in financial institutions and suspension of driver, professional and recreational licenses.

If you need help to collect child support, my office accepts applications from mothers, fathers, and other individuals who are taking care of a child. To request an application for services, call our toll-free telephone number at (800) 252-8014, or visit the Web site www.oag.state.tx.us.

My office strives to be accessible to all of our clients, who often need up-to-date information about their child support case. Moms and dads can obtain round-the-clock help from the agency's toll-free automated voice response system (800-252-8014), which handled 18 million calls during the past fiscal year. With one phone call, both parents who receive child support and parents who pay child support can obtain a record of recent child support payments, dates and

locations of pending court hearings, dates of service on current legal actions, availability of genetic test results, and amount due for current and past-due child support.

Child Support Interactive, which can be accessed from the main Attorney General Web site at www.oag.state.tx.us, is used by the public to obtain general information about the child support program and apply for services. Those with child support cases can obtain specific case information from a secure section of the site. Child Support Interactive received more than 7 million visits in SFY 2003, a 95 percent increase over visits to the Web site during the previous fiscal year.

I appreciate the hard work of the child support employees that made our record-breaking year possible. However, there are still many children going without a parent's financial support. My office will not be satisfied until all children receive the support they are due.

POINTS TO REMEMBER CHILD SUPPORT

An application for child support services can be obtained by:

- Visiting Child Support Interactive, located on the main Attorney General Web site at www.oag.state.tx.us
- Calling the 24-hour voice response system at (800)252-8014

Provide the following information about the other parent with your application:

- Current address;
- Current (or last known) employer's name and address;
- social security number and date of birth;
- names and addresses of relatives and friends;
- names of banks or creditors such as utility companies;
- names of organizations, unions or clubs to which the other parent belongs; and
- places where the other parent spends free time.

If possible, also be prepared to submit copies of official documents like your:

- divorce decree,
- children's birth certificates, and
- signed acknowledgment of paternity.



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

Information on this and other topics is available on the Attorney General's Web site at www.oag.state.tx.us.