



HAPPY FATHER'S DAY, DAD!

by Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott

ON JUNE 15TH, CHILDREN ACROSS Texas will celebrate their fathers and thank them for a job well done. It is on this special day that dads will receive the praise they deserve year round.

The employees of the Attorney General's Child Support Division (CSD) extend well wishes and thanks to Texas fathers for giving their children the love and support they deserve. Last year, the CSD collected a record \$2.3 billion in child support — and most of the money came from fathers.

A father's job is an important one and it often is not easy. Daily sacrifices and struggles, some larger than others, are a common part of fatherhood. We all face challenges in life, whether it be a disability, the loss of a job, or distance from our children, but these challenges don't have to define our lives. Inevitably, we will face many more challenges and its how we respond to the challenges that matter. In the end, our children will remember the examples set for them and the love and support provided to them.

Thank you for doing the right thing by taking care of your children. You are the unsung heroes in your children's lives.

Over the last several years, the CSD has demonstrated its commitment to fathers by recognizing the important and irreplaceable role they play in their children's lives. Several notable resources that serve Texas fathers include:

The Paternity Opportunity Program gives unmarried fathers the opportunity to acknowledge their children's paternity at the time of birth. The Office of the Attorney General (OAG) trains and certifies hospital and birthing center staff to assist parents with

the Acknowledgement of Paternity process so that the child will have a legal father right from the start. Last year, POP gave more than 114,000 Texas children a good start in life by helping their fathers establish legal paternity.

Maps for New Dads: Handbook for Expectant and New Fathers is a publication designed to help expecting dads transition into fatherhood. Maps covers everything from what to expect on a prenatal visit to making homes "baby safe" — all in a manner designed to reinforce the special role fathers play. Additional resources developed by the OAG include "A Dad" posters, Parenting Two-together Handbook for New Parents, and the For Our Children DVD.

The NCP Choices Project aims to increase child support collections by increasing employment and training services for non-custodial parents (NCPs) and tightening sanctions for non-cooperation with these services. A judicial order requires un- or under-employed NCPs currently not paying child support to participate in employment services with strict sanctions for non-compliance, which could include jail time. Local workforce development boards provide intensive employment services designed to meet the needs of NCPs and facilitate their entry into stable employment. The project is a collaboration between the OAG, the Texas Workforce Commission and child support judges.

Access and Visitation programs promote non-custodial parents' access to and visitation with their children, when appropriate, through a variety of shared parenting projects. Awarding grant funding

to local organizations is one way the Attorney General's Office can help children whose parents are engaged in custody or visitation disputes, since federal funding to run the child support program cannot be used to handle these issues. The services provided under this grant include co-parenting education, alternative dispute resolution, development of parenting plans, supervised visitation and visitation enforcement. The OAG also funds a toll-free assistance hotline and provides a Web-based directory of services available in Texas communities.

The Parenting and Paternity Awareness (p.a.p.a.) program is an innovative educational curriculum designed for secondary school students and young adults. The p.a.p.a. program focuses on the "rights, responsibilities and realities of parenting." Key themes in the curriculum focus on the importance of father involvement, the value of paternity establishment, the legal realities of child support, the financial and emotional challenges of single parenting, the benefits of both parents being involved in a child's life, healthy relationship skills, and relationship violence prevention.

The No Kidding: Straight Talk From Teen Parents project trains and equips young parents to deliver educational curriculum on the realities of being a young parent to students in middle and high school. No Kidding educators use their experiences as teen/young parents to deliver a memorable message about paternity establishment, father involvement, the challenges of parenting and the benefits of postponing parenthood until economically stable and in a marital relationship.

POINTS TO REMEMBER



THE OAG FATHERHOOD PROGRAM

The Office of the Attorney General provides help to fathers seeking to become more financially and emotionally involved in their children's lives.

The OAG Child Support Division helps fathers with:

- child support services
- employer and job training referrals
- establishing paternity for their child
- education about their rights and responsibilities
- information on how to build healthy relationships with their children and the mothers of their children

Call **1-800-252-8014** or visit the Attorney General's Web site at **www.texasattorneygeneral.gov** to find out more.



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