

Child Support Report

OFFICE OF CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT



Vol. 33 No. 5 May 2011



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Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Referral and Outreach Define Georgia's Model to Address National Trend



By Rita Lang

Georgia Department of Human Services

Grandparents raising grandchildren is a family dynamic that's increasing in our society for a variety of reasons. According to an AARP analysis, 4.9 million children (7 percent) under age 18 live in grandparent-headed households—up from 4.5 million living in grandparent-headed households 10 years ago. *(See more U.S. data on the next page.)*

In Georgia, more than 164,000 children live in households headed by grandparents and another 53,000-plus live in households headed by other relatives. Of all of these children (living in households headed by grandparents or other relatives), more than 98,000 are living there without either parent present (Georgia State University's College of Health & Human Sciences). These numbers are expected to increase based on economic trends.

Single System of Care

To better serve these families, the Georgia Department of Human Services has developed a single system of care model that includes the Division of Child Support Services (DCSS). The model was designed to assist grandparents who may be living on a fixed income and unexpectedly have additional mouths to feed.

The system permits grandparents who are looking for child support services to walk into any DHS office and tell a worker about their situation; the worker will identify appropriate services or agencies to help them and make all

referrals during this initial meeting. A grandparent who has grandchildren living in his or her home can visit one office and leave with a wealth of information—and knowing the next steps.

DCSS provides the full range of child support services for grandparents raising their grandchildren. Also, DCSS can redirect child support payments



Census Bureau photo

continued on next page



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Child Support Enforcement

(in a court-ordered case) from the custodial parent to the relative caring for the child upon receipt of an application or a referral from the Division of Aging or the Division of Family and Children Services.

Other Georgia offices provide the following services for custodial grandparent families:

- **Emergency/Crisis Intervention Services** may help pay for the emergency needs such as rent, utilities, moving or school expenses, furniture, etc.
- **Monthly Subsidy Payments** of \$50 per grandchild per month may be added to the cash assistance check through the TANF program.
- **The Childcare Program** offers services for those with grandchildren under 5.
- **One-on-One Foster Care Training** is given to grandparents not able to go to the regular foster care group training classes and can help those who have a grandchild in foster care custody to receive 100 percent of foster care payments.
- **Family-Driven and Child-Focused Mental Health Services** are available to grandparents caring for a child who is severely, emotionally disabled. They receive family support, education, and family therapy if the child meets the criteria of medical necessity.

Partners at the Local Level

DCSS has taken the mission of helping grandparents to heart with several staff members going above and beyond their daily tasks to meet the needs of grandparents thrust into the role of parenting again.

Kim Aldridge, an “enforcement agent” in the Camilla DCSS office, has worked closely with the Southwest Georgia Council on Aging, supporting their “Grandparents Raising Grandchildren” program for three years.

U.S. Census Bureau numbers

- **6.2 million**—grandparents whose grandchildren younger than 18 lived with them.
- **2.5 million**—grandparents who were responsible for most of the basic needs (food, shelter, and clothing) of one or more grandchildren living with them.
- **482,000**—grandparents with income below the poverty level.
- **732,000**—grandparents with a disability who were caring for their grandchildren.

See more resources about grandparents raising grandchildren on the [usa.gov](https://www.usa.gov) website.

Aldridge attends monthly meetings with the program to explain DCSS services to participants. As the contact person, she answers the grandparents’ questions and addresses their concerns.

“I feel that there is a strong need for this program because there are so many grandparents and other relatives raising children who are not their biological children,” says Aldridge.

“This program provides more than just information that can assist them in caring for the children. It is also a support group that allows the members to discuss issues and concerns with others who are in the same situation. A lot of these grandparents are retired and on a fixed income and have taken on the responsibility of raising children again. It is a much needed program. This has been a rewarding outreach program for me.”

For more information, contact Rita Lang at rblang@dhr.state.ga.us or 404-463-7346.



Why do grandparents call OCSE?

- **Most of the grandparents who contact OCSE receive TANF or other limited fixed income. They may have guardianship because the parents are not able to care for their children due to incarceration or drug abuse. Because the grandparents receive TANF, they are required to apply for child support services.**
- **Many grandparents are caring for grandchildren due to military deployment. When the custodial parent goes on a tour of duty, the grandparent may be the logical caretaker. The custodial parent can make the grandparent (or other caregiver, such as an uncle, aunt, etc.) the payee for their child support payments while deployed.**
- **Some grandparents want to adopt their grandchildren so they will have access to certain benefits not available if they only have guardianship (such as the Veterans Educational Assistance Program for dependents). However, the parents may not want to sign over the rights.**
- **Some grandparents who are legal custodians of their grandchildren may not be fully aware that they, too, are eligible for certain services and benefits or how to access them.**

Child Support's Role in Grandparents Raising Grandchildren



Roughly 10 percent of the phone calls that ring in our OCSE customer service office are from grandparents seeking information about child support services; some have

custody of their grandchildren. From conversations with these callers, we know that most grandparents who are thrust into custodianship of their grandchildren depend on access to public financial resources. Many, who may have accumulated some financial assets from years of working, are now living on fixed incomes. The OCSE staff helps to answer the grandparents' questions about child support services, and often refers grandparent callers to other services, including SNAP (food stamps) and Access and Visitation services.

An AARP [article](#) tells its readers, "As increasing numbers of grandchildren rely on grandparents for the security of a home, their grandparents are taking on more of the responsibility for raising them in a tough economy—many with work challenges of their own. For these grandparents, raising another family wasn't part of the plan. But they step up to the plate when their loved ones need them."

A Pew Research Center [analysis](#) of Census data reports that 1 in 10 children in the United States lives with a grandparent. This ratio increased slowly and steadily over the past decade before rising sharply from 2007 to 2008, the first year of the recession. About 41 percent of those children are being raised primarily by

the grandparent. And, nearly 20 percent of grandparent caregivers are living below the poverty level.

It isn't a new phenomenon that grandparents often step in as primary caregivers. Grandparents step in, for example, to prevent the child from being moved into foster care or as a result of the parent's military deployment, unemployment or incarceration. (A [report](#) from the Bureau of Justice Statistics estimates that more than half of state inmates are parents.)

What is changing, however, is that child support agencies are beginning to help grandparents in a proactive customer-responsive manner. The article on page 1 gives a snapshot of the Georgia Department of Human Resources' holistic approach to providing grandparents with all of the available state services they might need. Georgia's family-centered approach puts the OCSE "bubble chart" into action by providing a collaborative and coordinated approach to child support service delivery.

Does your state offer a holistic approach to providing services to grandparents? Please let me know by posting comments to the Commissioner's Voice [blog](#).

Vicki Turetsky

*Share your thoughts on the
Commissioner's Voice [blog](#).*



In Honor of Mother's Day

While millions of families celebrate Mother's Day this month, OCSE honors mothers everywhere for the dedication and hard work it takes to raise healthy, happy children.

Vicki Turetsky



Pennsylvania NEON Program Marks \$10 Million Milestone

By Daniel Richard, Director
Pennsylvania Bureau of Child Support Enforcement
John Clark
OCSE Region III



The New Opportunities for Noncustodial Parents program (known as NEON) in Philadelphia, PA, marked a milestone last December when child support collections from participants exceeded \$10

million, since its start in July 2005. NEON has enrolled about 3,000 noncustodial parents in the program. For every dollar spent on the NEON program, the children of Pennsylvania receive \$2.41.

What is NEON?

NEON is a partnership between the Pennsylvania Bureau of Child Support Enforcement's County Domestic Relations Sections and a private vendor. It operates in four urban and suburban counties: Delaware, Montgomery, Allegheny, and Philadelphia.

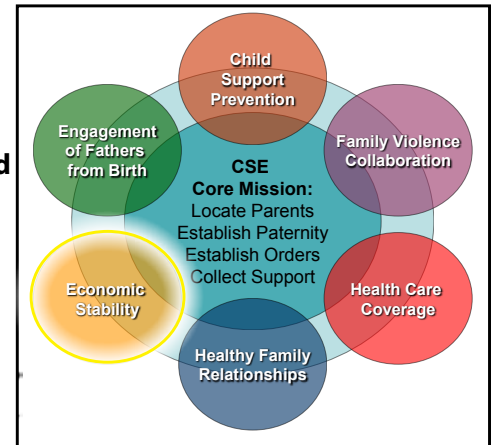
The program successfully resolves all major barriers facing low-income noncustodial parents as they seek to financially support their children. It is a unique workforce placement and retention program that assists these parents to rapidly obtain unsubsidized employment.

The NEON program provides a thorough assessment of an individual's strengths, barriers, and job readiness; short-term, hard skills training; drug and alcohol referrals and legal assistance, if required; transportation assistance; intensive case management; and incentive awards for continued employment.

Between 60 and 85 percent of NEON customers have a criminal background. In addition, Pennsylvania, like many states, has faced additional challenges to its rapid-attachment efforts due to the larger economic downturn.

However, NEON has overcome these barriers and continues to obtain and retain unsubsidized employment for about 80 percent of its participants; about 40 percent of the participants provide medical coverage for their children.

The NEON program gives an example of the OCSE "bubble chart"—it demonstrates a child support program collaboration to help noncustodial parents obtain employment and achieve economic stability.



Why is NEON Unique?

NEON is unique for several reasons:

- Both the training and employment placement aspects of the program are based on the noncustodial parent's skills and experience.
- The program provides intensive case management even after the noncustodial parent obtains employment.
- The private vendor only receives payment for a successful job placement over a period of time.
- The noncustodial parent receives assistance with clothing and transportation expenses if necessary.
- The noncustodial parent is rewarded (e.g., with gift cards) for achieving milestones (such as continuous employment for a certain number of days).

Why is NEON Successful?

Several factors contribute to NEON's success:

- The program maintains a close relationship between the court and the other partners; the court has options to divert clients away from incarceration and into the program. Plus the court receives immediate notice on the status of the client (start dates of employment, salary, benefits, etc.).
- NEON's relationship with employers is critical to its success. It refers clients to employers based on the clients' proven skill sets. Employers depend on the program's recommendations and the assessment tools used to identify the skills of the client.
- Data collection shows success which is proven rather than anecdotal.

- NEON provides skills training after the client obtains employment, and it's based not only on the client's desires but also the employer's requirements. The additional training usually results in higher pay and increased wage attachments.

The result of all of these factors is a win for the children receiving financial support, a win for the parents who obtain and retain regular employment, and a win for the county and state due to a reduced number of enforcement actions.

State Child Support Director Daniel Richard says,

"NEON demonstrates the positive and cost-efficient potential of practical, focused outreach to fathers. Tremendous synergy is achieved between Pennsylvania's state-level program, county/judicial Domestic Relations Sections, and fathers who, with mentoring and immediate attachment to the workforce, are able to contribute materially in all aspects of their children's lives despite difficult barriers. The screening and long-term, follow-through practices of Philadelphia Family Court's Domestic Relations Division are innovative and continue to make the NEON program exemplary."

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

Media Matters

Texas Taps Internet to Search for Noncustodial Parents

By Charles Smith, Deputy Director
Child Support Division
Texas Office of the Attorney General

An army travels on its stomach" is a quote attributed to Napoleon Bonaparte. Military strategists understand that soldiers must be well fed during a military campaign. Therefore, every battle plan addresses the ability to keep essential resources flowing to troops to ensure a successful campaign or mission.

In the world of child support, the ability to locate parties is critical to our mission. Without a confirmed locate, we cannot establish orders, collect support, or offer the various array of newer programs and services to both custodial and noncustodial parents. Therefore, locate is as essential and basic a function to our child support program as food is to the military.

With many noncustodial parents turning to the underground economy and people in general using the internet for business, news, and social media, the Texas Child Support Division began to tap internet sources to improve locate effectiveness.

In September 2007, we created a Cold Case Unit to focus on locating noncustodial parents (and their assets) with high arrears cases. In the three ensuing years, the investigators' efforts have led to increases in payments to children without increasing our operational budget.

The Cold Case Unit

The Cold Case Unit, in full operation since January 2008, targets hard-to-locate or "dormant" child support cases. (A dormant case might not have received a locate lead from any of the automated interfaces or a call from a custodial parent.)

The unit's team—a supervisor and 10 investigators—received training from our division's in-house locate specialist, the Project Save our Children (or PSOC) investigator, and the training department. The training covered interviewing skills, and how to perform skip tracing and conduct "interview" searches (where the parent may have participated in an interview).

To work on more cases, our investigators remain in the office rather than conduct interviews in the field. They find leads on the internet from the myriad

of social networking sites, internet search engines and government websites.



Useful Tips

The team has found that no one internet site produces results for every situation. Just as with traditional locate sources, internet sites must be used selectively based on case specifics. Therefore, it is important to know as much as possible about the person you're seeking before you start. A quick review of the online case diaries (where

Texas caseworkers make notes about cases) or a quick telephone call to the custodial parent will usually help. Armed with the subtle nuances of a noncustodial parent's hobbies, habits, likes and dislikes, our investigators will hit the internet.

The team has found these free sites to be fruitful in a variety of situations:

- **Myspace.com** – social networking site
- **Driverfacts.com** – accesses employment history from employers in the transportation industry
- **Dogpile.com** – aggregates the most relevant searches from Google, Yahoo!, and Bing
- **Facebook.com** – social networking site
- **Ancestorhunt.com** – searches surnames in genealogy databases online
- **Real Estate Investment Club (reiclub.com)** – browses real estate investing articles, discussion groups
- **Manta.com** – promotes small companies, connects them with customers
- **Craigslist.com** – classified advertising
- **Blackbookonline.info** – searches public records

Following are a few examples of how the sites can help:

- **Myspace.com**, a social media site, is useful for finding people who are promoting themselves or their business. Many noncustodial parents work in the cash economy and have small businesses (photographers, landscapers, plumbers, etc.) or are in the entertainment industry (singers, performers, etc.). Once you have their personal page, pay close attention to hobbies, future performances, employment references, and monetary expenditures.
- **Driverfacts.com** can be used to search by name and SSN of a driver to determine the companies for whom he or she has worked.
- **Ancestorhunt.com** allows people to search for ancestors and locate their family surnames in genealogy databases online.

Making a Difference

Since January 2008, the investigators have located more than 10,000 hard-to-find noncustodial parents and have issued more than 3,000 withholding orders. They have uncovered thousands of dollars in hidden property and assets. The investigators have also helped to close hundreds of high-arrears cases after exhausting all locate avenues and being unable to find assets.

The internet has proven to contain a treasure trove of information that can assist child support programs in making child support payments a reality for families. We are thrilled at the success of our Cold Case Unit and the difference it's making in our program and in the lives of Texas families.

For more information, contact Charles Smith at charles.smith@cs.oag.state.tx.us.

Four New OCSE Grant Opportunities

OCSE announced four grant funding opportunities—three “Section 1115” and one “Special Improvement Project” (SIP). You can find them on grants.gov (type OCSE in the Keyword Search). Two are designed to develop partnerships—one with universities and the other with the workforce community; the third responds to the economic downturn; and the fourth is to test a data warehouse model. Applications for Section 1115 grants are due by June 27; the SIP grant by June 29. (None require applicant matching funds.)

In addition, see summaries of recently awarded and previous OCSE grant projects in the grants section of the OCSE [website](#). Consider displaying the link to that website on your child support agency intranet—or saving it in your bookmarks—to stay informed about upcoming grant opportunities and results. Your experiences and lessons learned in testing new methods through grant projects serve as valuable tools for everyone in the child support community.



A First for Tribal Directors in Region VI

More than 45 people attended the first Tribal Child Support Director's Roundtable for Region VI, co-hosted by the Cherokee Nation Office of Child Support Services and the OCSE regional office, March 8 and 9, in Tulsa, OK. Represented were nine of the region's 11 tribal programs: Cherokee Nation, Chickasaw Nation, Osage Nation, Comanche Nation, Kaw Nation, Kickapoo Tribe of Oklahoma, Modoc Tribe of Oklahoma, Muscogee (Creek) Nation, and the Pueblo of Zuni.



Based on involvement from tribal directors (from left) Cassandra McGilbray (Chickasaw Nation),



Greg Kidder (Osage Nation), and Kara Whitworth (Cherokee Nation), the meeting focused on identifying common concerns to both administrators and frontline workers, and then exchanging innovative strategies and solutions to improve delivery of child support services.

Case manager Dawn Briner (Kaw Nation) and legal assistant Patricia Sanders (Chickasaw Nation) led a roundtable for case managers who shared best practices on processing cases with Indian child welfare, tribal TANF, and income assignments. The meeting opened with a Cherokee Friendship Dance (left) led by Ryan Mackey, curriculum specialist at the Cherokee Nation Immersion School.

—Kara Whitworth, Director, Cherokee Nation Office of Child Support Services, and Jane Martin (jane.martin@acf.hhs.gov), OCSE Region VI

Seattle Partnership Sponsors Resource Fair

On March 18, Seattle's Community Partnership for Transitional Services (CPTS) sponsored a Resource Fair for adults transitioning out of incarceration. CPTS brings together government and community-based organizations to provide comprehensive services for individuals in the corrections or work-release systems.

More than 100 individuals in work release and reentry programs—many of whom have child support issues—came through the fair to meet with service providers, who offered information about services ranging from “clean-and-sober” housing assistance, employment and job training, resume and interview skills development, access to public benefit programs such as TANF, Medicaid, SNAP (food stamps), and, of course, child support.



Washington State child support staff set up live computer access at a special interview booth inside the fair—and parked outside. The “Mobile CSO”

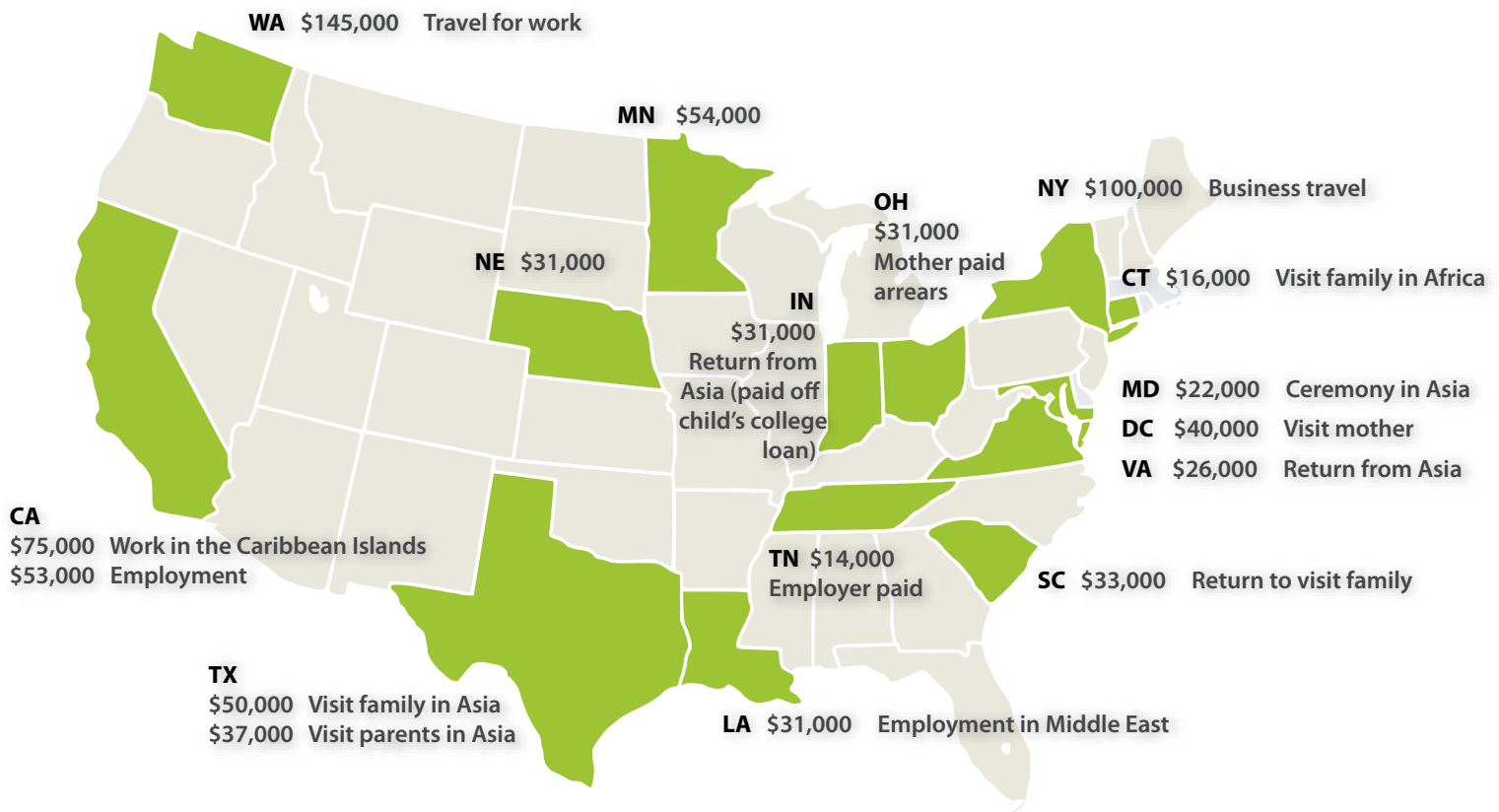
(Community Service Office) primarily provides public assistance benefits (TANF, Food Assistance, Medicaid, Day Care, etc.), but the child support office had a place in the mobile CSO at this event, too. About 35 noncustodial parents benefited at the fair.

—David Johnson (david.johnson@acf.hhs.gov) and Levi Fisher (levi.fisher@acf.hhs.gov), OCSE Region X

New Season of Passport Denial Payments



Spring has sprung and collections from the OCSE Passport Denial program are raining in for families across the country. The program delivers noteworthy financial support for many families. In recent months, more than a dozen states reported individual collections exceeding \$20,000, with two states reporting lump-sum payments of \$100,000 or more. These payments came in because noncustodial parents required passports for vacations, family emergencies, employment, and more. Some of the payments had no explanation other than to pay off the remaining past-due balances.



To report a passport denial success story, please e-mail collections@acf.hhs.gov.



Arizona: \$65,000 from Lottery Win!



Arizona's Division of Child Support Enforcement collected \$65,000 in child support arrears from a Lottery jackpot winner. The noncustodial

parent had a winning quarter-million-dollar ticket in Kingman, AZ.

Working with Lottery officials, the division collected the debt for the noncustodial parent's two adult children. "If there's a child support obligation, we go after it," said Director Veronica Ragland. "When you go for years avoiding your responsibility, time will catch up with you."

—**Rachel Freitas** (rachel.freitas@acf.hhs.gov),
OCSE Region IX

New York City: Record \$3 Million from Settlement

Last month, the New York City Office of Child Support Enforcement collected nearly \$3 million from the NYC Comptroller's Office after the *McBean v. City of New York* class action lawsuit settlement. The lawsuit resulted from illegal strip searches of individuals formerly incarcerated in a NYC Department of Correction Facility. The settlement amount was \$29 million, to be divided among 52,000 recipients.



The amount intercepted for child support came from awards to 2,998 noncustodial parents (who had 3,556 child support cases among them). The collection represents the largest Comptroller award the NYC OCSE has ever received. OCSE's Enforcement Operations and Systems units and the NYC Comptroller's Office, Law Department, and State Child Support Processing Center cooperated closely in the collection effort.

In Focus



The Tide is Turning: The Evolution of Problem-Solving Courts

By Judge Kristin Ruth

Wake County District Court, Raleigh, NC



Harriet Beecher Stowe once said, "Never give up, for that is just the place and time that the tide will turn."

Those words have inspired me throughout the years as the child support problem-solving court has evolved from a vision of hope and opportunity

for those who were caught in the cycle of recidivism...a vision that there had to be a better way.

Breaking the cycle of unproductive behaviors is no easy task as the challenges are formidable to eliminate the endless number of barriers as to why a parent is unable or

unwilling to pay their child support.

A problem-solving court offers alternatives to incarceration for those parents unable or unwilling to pay child support by partnering with community resources that can help the parents seek employment or obtain other assistance to overcome barriers such as drug or alcohol abuse. The problem-solving court is a collaborative effort between the court, resource programs, fatherhood initiatives, grant projects, and child support leaders across the country.

We see evidence of the problem-solving court's success in collections and compliance, but most importantly in parents and children who have been positively affected by the problem-solving court principles. Success is gauged not only by numbers, but by the affect it has on those

who work in the child support arena. For example, Katie Smith, a child support supervisor from Jefferson County, CO, recently announced that her agency has changed its name from Child Support Enforcement to Child Support Services.

Today, the tide is turning as numerous jurisdictions across the country are working hard to implement unique problem-solving courts. Each court takes on a life of its own as it develops a protocol. Depending on each court's demographics, and whether urban or rural, the tools and resources should parallel the needs of the parents.

Every jurisdiction will not have the same resources or funding, but it may be surprising how many new ideas and processes are generated through communication, collaboration, and planning.

Listen to Experiences

You can listen to experiences of some of those who have implemented a problem-solving court in a discussion titled "Putting it All Together – Lessons Learned & Next Steps for Your Problem-Solving Court," [recorded](#) in March.

Rob Lafer, Legal Council in San Diego, talks about bringing the child support court to a local park where veterans are more comfortable talking with court personnel.

Even in rural Georgia, Judge John Simpson explains that through innovative efforts he has created and enacted a logic model that addresses jobs, child visitation, mental health, and education.

Judge Linda Wihbey from Connecticut proclaims success in her problem-solving court as she shows that 93 percent of all community referrals match the parent's needs, and 100 percent of the respondents reported they were treated fairly by the magistrate and case manager.

Each problem-solving court is unique and yet the focus is the same—to provide remedies to willing parents faced

with barriers to employment in order to break the cycle of recidivism. The child support culture is witnessing a change in spirit, creativity, enthusiasm and success as parents and children find financial and emotional stability in challenging economic times.

I believe that the tide is turning when I watch a parent graduate from a program or earn a GED. I believe the tide is turning when a parent stops by my courtroom to tell me "thank you," or when a parent leaves a message on my telephone letting me know that he or she has been "clean" for two years or was able to spend time with the children over the holidays.

I believe the tide is turning and I will never give up.

Learn more about problem-solving courts in the "[Courts](#)" section on the OCSE website.



Listen to a recorded [discussion](#) of "Putting it All Together – Lessons Learned and Next Steps for Your Problem-Solving Court."



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 digital photos. We reserve the right to edit for style, content, and length. Contents are for informational purposes only; no official endorsement of a practice or individual by the Department of Health and Human Services or the OCSE is intended. You are welcome to reprint articles; please identify *Child Support Report* as the source.

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