

Child Support Report

OFFICE OF CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT

Vol. 34 No. 4 April 2012



April
National Minority
Health Month
National Child Abuse
Prevention Month

Inside This Issue

Commissioner's Voice: Interoperable computer systems will mean better customer service	3
OCSE's role in improving health for fathers and families	5
OCSE and Children's Bureau partnership	6
What is family violence?	7
OCSE website: New training material to help survivors of domestic violence	7
Military outreach and beyond!	8
Colorado's 'Parents to Work' deemed success	9



Rural Pennsylvania program helps obligors stay out of jail, find a job

By Carla Smith

Crawford County, PA, Domestic Relations Section

John Clark

OCSE Region III

Dan is 27, has one child and lives in rural Crawford County, PA. He has difficulty with basic spelling and grammar skills and a work history littered with staffing agencies and gaps in employment. He is dependent on his parents for transportation since losing his driver's license from a DUI conviction.

The Crawford County, PA, child support agency, called the Domestic Relations Section (DRS), is helping Dan and other noncustodial parents avoid incarceration for nonpayment of child support while improving their ability to pay. The DRS *Work Search* program is a "carrot and stick" approach that combines job-search services with enforcement tools.

Dan was court ordered to enter the *Work Search* program in 2008, and to fulfill its requirement of applying for five jobs per week. However, every job-search log Dan turned in had misspelled words and was missing information. The *Work Search* program set up appointments for Dan to help him with spelling, grammar and interview skills. This January, Dan reported employment, works 17 hours per week and is paying \$50 per month on his arrears.

For Dan and others, the *Work Search* program leads to greater self-sufficiency, as well as more dollars for their children. Last December, 62 noncustodial parents participated in the program. By mid-February this year, the number was down to 38. In just 10 weeks, 24 were employed and paying child support.

continued on next page



"Rural America—represented by its peoples, businesses, and communities—is central to the economic health and prosperity of our Nation. Rural communities provide our country with affordable agricultural products, competitive manufacturing capabilities, and an independent, renewable energy supply. These communities are also stewards of America's great outdoors—an important source of jobs and an invaluable treasure for all Americans."

—President Barack Obama, August 2011, on establishing
the White House Rural Council

Working its way to success

The DRS began its work-search approach in 2006. That year, it scheduled 247 contempt hearings and had over 100 outstanding bench warrants. The only enforcement tools available to caseworkers were enforcement conferences, contempt filings and automated remedies. In 2007, the DRS reached out to a local work-search office (CareerLink), which led to a partnership that eventually won the DRS a “community partner of the year” award.

The participant process begins when the DRS staff identifies a noncustodial parent who is unemployed or underemployed and who may need additional help to obtain and maintain employment. The court orders the individual to attend weekly workshops and orientations sponsored by the local work-search office and to comply with all aspects of the program. The DRS program coordinator works with the local work-search office to monitor and assure that participants use what they have learned.

Joyce is an active participant in the *Work Search* program process. She entered the program in October 2011 at age 43 and has one child. Joyce was new to the area and unfamiliar with services when the DRS referred her to the local work-search office for resume assistance and instruction on internet resources.

The DRS *Work Search* program coordinator provided one-on-one help with her resume, as well as job leads and directions to employers to submit her application. Working together, Joyce and the coordinator mapped out employers located on a bus route. As of this February, Joyce works as a cashier 30 hours per week. She is paying \$258 per month on her arrears of \$2,350. Her child emancipated last year.

Savings and results

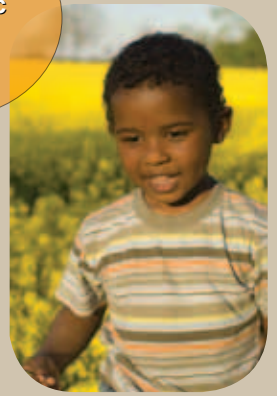
Incarceration is the clear alternative to not paying child support or complying with the *Work Search* program. The cost to house an inmate at the Crawford County Correctional Facility is \$58 per day. Crawford County would have spent \$250,560 for 6 months (at \$10,440 for each 6-month sentence) if the DRS had incarcerated the 24 obligors instead of ordering them into the *Work Search* program. The program has not only reduced contempt filings by 63 percent, but increased collections on cases that otherwise would not have seen a payment.

In 2010, the program became more stringent for obligors failing to appear for weekly work-search appointments. With court approval, the DRS added a stipulation to the court-ordered, work-search requirements that result in an automatic bench warrant for failure to appear. Since implementing the new stipulation, the DRS work-search bench warrants increased from 63 in 2009 to 141 in 2011.

With help from the local Sheriff's Office, the DRS warrants have been served successfully. Every Tuesday, the Sheriff's Office publishes a “County's Most Wanted” list in the local newspaper and has successfully picked up

The *Work Search* program in Crawford County demonstrates the child support program's efforts to improve parents' economic stability. See also the article on page 9 for evaluation results of a collaborative employment program called *Parents to Work* in Arapahoe County, CO.

Economic
Stability



the obligors. After the last sweep in mid-January, the paper quoted the Sheriff as saying, “They have no backlog of bench warrants for Domestic Relations Section.”

With the increase in bench warrants from the new stipulation, noncustodial parents have been more aggressive in searching for a job and finding employment. Many of the work-search participants have no problem securing a job—they have problems maintaining employment; therefore, DRS will focus more on job retention.

Crawford County DRS has about 2,300 child support cases. In federal fiscal year 2011, the county collected more than 87 percent of the current support due and collected on almost 87 percent of the cases.

Daniel Richard, state child support director, believes the Crawford County DRS *Work Search* program brings a thoughtful balance to the child support enforcement agency.

“The DRS acknowledges that noncustodial fathers may not always have an ability to pay child support, or that the ability to pay fluctuates over time. The DRS has implemented effective measures to assist fathers in meeting their obligations to their children by providing job development and placement services for those who are able to work.”

For more information, contact Joyce Parker, Work Search Coordinator at 814-373-2565.■

Summer jobs for youth

The White House and Department of Labor has launched *Summer Jobs+ 2012*, a call-to-action for business, nonprofits and government to provide pathways to employment for low-income and disconnected youth. Find a toolkit for employers, press package, employer partners, and a widget on the program's [website](#).

Interoperable computer systems will mean better customer service

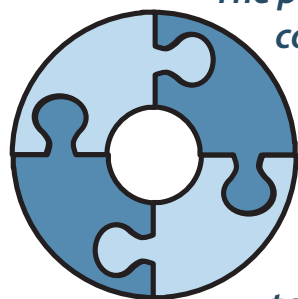


Technology has the power to help break down silos between state health and human services programs and improve customer service. The promise of interoperable computer systems is that families will not have to go through multiple applications, interviews and appointments to receive services, and taxpayers will save money.

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) is spurring states across the Nation to create new eligibility and enrollment computer systems for Medicaid and health insurance exchanges. The ACA presents a unique opportunity for state health and human services programs to integrate their systems both vertically and horizontally, and bring our programs one step closer to the "no wrong door" approach to service delivery. In the past, this was not possible due to the requirement to cost allocate federal dollars across multiple programs.

However, through Dec. 31, 2015, states can design, develop and implement system modules that perform common functions across all health and human services programs with enhanced 90/10 federal funding if they request a federal cost allocation waiver.

Under a waiver, programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, also known as Food Stamps), and child care services can be included in the state Medicaid agency's project to build a new eligibility determination system. Other programs, like child support and child welfare, also can join the effort to integrate service delivery to families.



The promise of interoperable computer systems is that families won't have to go through multiple applications, interviews, and appointments to receive services, and taxpayers will save money.

In anticipation, OCSE's parent agency, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), launched the Interoperability Initiative to help state human services programs effectively collaborate with their health care agency counterparts: Medicare, Medicaid, CHIP, and health insurance exchanges. In late March, OCSE was asked to manage ACF's Interoperability Initiative because we have the background and extensive experience with data exchange standards, systems design and development, and grants management.

Our interoperability project team is busy on a number of fronts:

- We are standing up the first Human Services Domain in NIEM (the National Information Exchange Model). It will eventually establish a common set of data elements and definitions in a format easily exchanged between different human services systems, and in fact with any system.
- We are designing a common architecture and platform for all human services programs, called the National Human Services Interoperability Architecture (NHSIA), to support states to build less expensive, but more integrated human services systems in the future.
- And we recently added a new project called Data Exchange Standardization. It's based on recent legislation applicable to the child welfare and TANF programs funded under titles IV-B and IV-A of the Social Security Act. The new law requires the Office of Management and Budget and ACF, in collaboration with states, to set up a working group to define a standard way for all states to exchange the data they report to their federal programs. HR 4282, introduced by U.S. Representative Rick Berg on March 28, 2012, would extend data exchange standardization requirements to the child support program funded under title IV-D.

continued on next page

continued from previous page

In the child support world, we know the benefits of interoperable systems—and we know we will not get there overnight. Systems interoperability is a long-term vision that will take a generation to achieve. But the technology is here to begin to integrate health and human services systems. Linking them will accomplish two goals: improve client outcomes and enhance operational efficiency.

Imagine a common case intake module shared by the health programs and human services programs, including child support—an intake module that could make sure families receive the services they need. Now, imagine an integrated data warehouse where client information is gathered across all of the different health and human service programs. Using data analytics, we could understand what services a client uses, when and why, and predict the action needed next to achieve the positive outcomes we want for the families who seek our services.

With interoperable systems, we may do a better job of serving the whole person and the whole family; we may more effectively share services, streamline information and business systems, and minimize duplicative costs to build, maintain and update redundant computer systems.

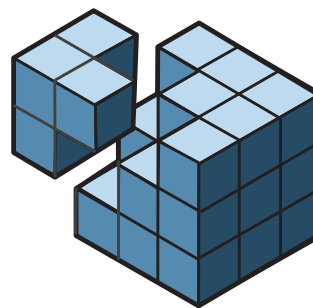
Look for more news on the Interoperability Initiative in the *Child Support Report* soon. We're just getting started, and despite the challenge of budget pressures and doing more with less, we could not let this opportunity pass by to change the landscape of health and human services.

Through increased integration, collaboration and information-sharing across health and human services programs, ACF hopes to improve the lives of America's children and families and provide real value to the public.

Vicki Turetsky



I look forward to exchanging ideas and experiences about your child support agency. Consider leaving a comment on the Commissioner's Voice blog.



How may states request a cost allocation waiver?

On Aug. 12, 2011, OCSE published a [Dear Colleague Letter](#) with a "Tri-Agency Letter" that announced a time-limited exception to the regular cost allocation requirements in OMB Circular A-87. It described how states may request a cost-allocation waiver applicable to enhanced 90/10 funding for integrated health and human services functions as a part of state information technology systems.

Both health and human services programs could share system functions, including data warehousing, master client indexes, eligibility determination functions, customer service portals, and unified case management modules. (See the Jan. 23, 2012, [Second Tri-Agency Letter](#).)

For more information, contact Joe Bodmer (joseph.bodmer@acf.hhs.gov) in OCSE.

OCSE's role in improving health for fathers and families

By Crystal Rodriguez
OCSE

April is Minority Health Month, and this year's theme is "Health Equity Can't Wait. Act Now in Your CommUNITY!" It's a call to action to get involved and invest in reducing health disparities.

Last year in this newsletter ([April 2011 Child Support Report](#)), we announced OCSE's partnership with the HHS Office of Minority Health to explore the role of the child support program as an information and referral point for parents seeking affordable health care options. Research on poverty and family composition provides insight on the vulnerability of low-income families in accessing health care coverage.

A [Census publication](#) reports that among children under age 6 in female-headed households, 58.2 percent were poor in 2010, four times that of children of the same age in married-couple families. In addition, 15.4 percent of poor children were without health care coverage in 2010.

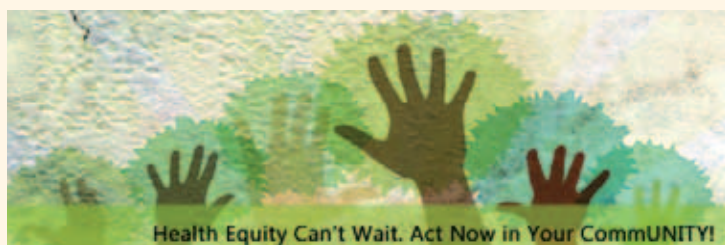
The child support program reaches far and wide to children and parents (including men); of social welfare programs, child support, along with Medicaid and SNAP (food stamps program), serves the most children. With our access to children and both parents, child support can be a connector between low-income families and health care coverage options.

In recognition of Minority Health Month, we want to do our part to raise awareness and highlight two Title X grantees that work to improve health outcomes for fathers and families.

Plan an event

Now is the time to plan an event to help reduce health disparities in your community. Take a look at the HHS Office of Minority Health [outreach materials](#) to promote, improve and amplify your Minority Health Month events.

Visit the [National Minority Health website](#) and stay connected to what's happening in April.



Title X male involvement prevention services

Title X grants give funds to public or private nonprofit organizations for family planning and related preventive health services, training family planning service providers, or conducting research in fields related to family planning.

Title X grantees serve more than 5 million men and women in some 4,500 community-based clinics. These services span from contraceptive services and prevention education to pregnancy diagnosis and counseling. Title X programs serve two-thirds of all clients who receive care at publicly funded family planning centers, and estimates point to at least one of these clinics in 75 percent of all counties in the United States.

Young Men's Clinic (New York grantee)

The Young Men's Clinic is a national model program for delivering health services to men. It provides outreach, health education and other preventive services for males in school settings and other community agencies in New York City. Because men face barriers to accessing the care they need, the clinic offers a step-by-step description of what to expect during their visit and, therefore, reduces men's anxiety when visiting the clinic.

Young Men's Clinic provides low-cost health services to men ages 13 to 35. The clinic's emphasis on young men is evident by its website. It displays [comic strips](#) on issues related to birth control, STD testing and community services. In addition, it features videos on real-life experiences that touch on men's health issues.

The clinic welcomes everyone and considers everyone's ability to pay for services. The clinic provides an array of services including counseling for stress, relationship issues and referrals to employment and vocational programs, as well as other educational, health and social services. Learn more on the [Young Men's Clinic website](#).

Family planning clinic and men's health center (Texas grantee)

The Male Central Clinic is a project sponsored by Family Planning of the Costal Bend in Texas. Its focus is to engage

Health Care
Coverage

This article demonstrates the child support program's efforts to improve health care coverage for families.

men in their health. The Male Central Clinic acknowledges the importance of including both men and women in the family planning discussions and involves men in this process. To address men's health needs, the clinic offers exclusive access to its facilities once a week.

Along with family planning and sexual health services, the clinic refers clients to other health agencies and social service programs including child support. As with New York's Young Men's Clinic, this clinic provides services on a sliding scale to ensure individuals receive the services they need at a reasonable cost. Visit the [Male Central Clinic website](#).

These are just two examples of programs working to reduce health disparities. These programs highlight the need to creatively target specific populations. As described above, men face particular barriers in obtaining the coverage they need. Programs like the child support program can lend a hand by referring fathers to coverage. In 2014, with the expansion of Medicaid, more of our program's clients will have access to coverage and the child support program may have a greater role in connecting families to affordable coverage.

Programs for low-income fathers

To learn more about programs serving low-income fathers, see the ACF Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation report "[Catalog of Research: Programs for Low-Income Fathers](#)." The report presents findings from a systematic review of impact, implementation and descriptive studies of programs serving low-income fathers.



Coordination Points

OCSE and Children's Bureau partnership

By Lauren Antelo
OCSE



April was first proclaimed the National Child Abuse Prevention Month in 1983. Every year since, agencies across the country have promoted child abuse and neglect awareness activities. The Office on Child Abuse and Neglect within the Children's Bureau (under the HHS Administration for Children and Families) coordinates

activities at the federal level. See the website for [National Child Abuse Prevention Month](#) for national statistics on child abuse and neglect and more resources for agencies and parents.

Here within the Administration of Children and Families, OCSE has joined the Children's Bureau in promoting the safety of all children and families, particularly those in our child support caseloads. The Children's Bureau is the office that administers the federal child welfare, foster care and

adoption programs authorized under titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act.

Last year, OCSE and the Children's Bureau formed a workgroup to implement the data sharing provisions of the Fostering Connections to Success and Adoptions Act of 2008, (P.L. 110-351, Oct. 7, 2008) and the Safeguarding Child Support Information Final Rule (75 FR 81894). Staff from OCSE and the Children's Bureau, along with child welfare and child support representatives from five states, participate in the workgroup.

Workgroup representatives have presented workshops to regional child welfare and child support staff and conferences. The workgroup also developed a range of recommendations for coordinated case management. OCSE has drafted joint policy guidance and plans to issue the guidance in the near future.

For more information, contact lashawn.williams@acf.hhs.gov in OCSE.

See the website for [National Child Abuse Prevention Month](#) to learn more and to download this widget.



What is family violence?

Family Violence
Collaboration

Family violence is much more than physical violence. Controlling access to food or sleep and withholding access to money, credit cards or medical care, threatening deportation, harming pets, as well as the repeated use of degrading or coercive language, are also forms of violence. The strategy of preventing family violence against intimate partners and children now has a place on the OCSE bubble chart.

Can violence escalate if a parent pursues child support?

Yes, there are specific risks to pursuing child support when there is family violence. However, over 90 percent of women with current or former abusive partners indicate an interest in pursuing child support, if they can do so safely.

What steps can caseworkers take to help parents safely pursue child support?

Caseworkers can: 1) provide information to parents about potential risks and safeguards at all stages of the child support process; 2) create safe and confidential opportunities for family members to disclose information; 3) build strong partnerships with local and state domestic violence programs and coalitions and engage in cross-training.

Child support agencies may also find helpful a recorded webinar: "Safely Pursuing Child Support: Helping Child Support Workers Address Domestic Violence Issues through Enhanced Training"

For more information on any of the training material, please contact lauren.antelo@acf.hhs.gov.

OCSE website: New training material to help survivors of domestic violence



Look for new **domestic violence training material** on the OCSE website, listed below. The material can help child support professionals ensure that parents have the knowledge, skills and resources they need to care for their children. In this way, the child support community can promote children's social and emotional well-being and prevent child maltreatment within families and communities.

Guide for Trainers: Safely Pursuing Child Support - Training Tools (PDF)

Training on Safely Pursuing Child Support (PowerPoint)

Safely Pursuing Child Support - A Caseworker Desk Card (PDF)

You Have The Right To Be Safe - Outreach Card (PDF); En Español; Double-Sided Bilingual - English/Español

Save the Date

Wednesday, June 20, 2012

Turner v. Rogers – One Year Later

Join us for an interactive panel discussion with the Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Support Enforcement, Department of Justice and other leaders as we discuss promising practices in

reducing the use of contempt and access to justice one year after the Supreme Court decision.

When: 2-3:30 p.m. (live audience and webcast)

Where: Hubert H. Humphrey Building
200 Independence Avenue S.W.
Washington, DC 20201

Look for more details in the *May Child Support Report!*

Military outreach and beyond!

By Maureen Leif, Child Support Coordinator
Colorado Judicial Branch

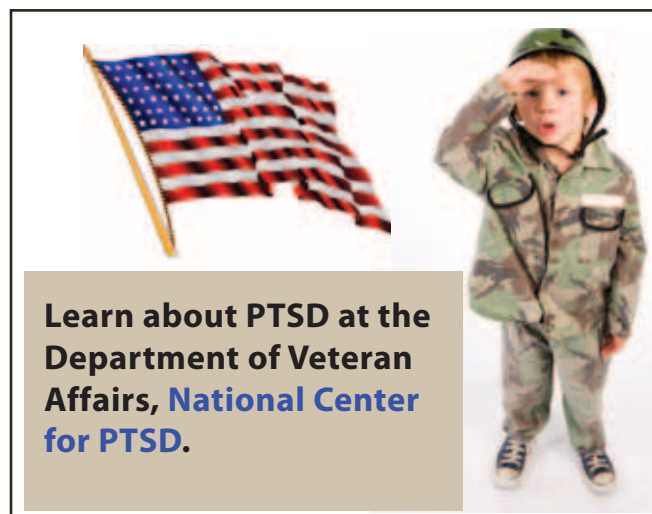
According to the Associated Press, studies show that as many as 1 in 8 returning service members suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and for those with mental health issues, less than half seek help. Many veterans become part of the judicial and social services systems due to undiagnosed PTSD and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI).

The importance of educating ourselves about the issues facing returning service members and providing outreach to the military became very evident to me at a recent training I attended titled “Taking off the Pack,” focusing on PTSD and TBI, and working with returning service members. Understanding and recognizing the symptoms of PTSD and TBI, such as reliving the event, avoidance, numbness, and feeling keyed up (hyper arousal), may assist child support workers when they work with or provide services to these individuals.

El Paso grant program

In El Paso County, CO, a grant program studies best practices for child support agencies to work with the military. El Paso County (Colorado Springs) has a strong military presence in the community and is working with four military installations in the area. The Child Support Services office is providing outreach and education to three main groups.

The first is providing training and support for Judicial Advocate General (JAG) Officers. This training has been well



**Learn about PTSD at the
Department of Veteran
Affairs, [National Center
for PTSD](#).**

received and is allowing JAG to provide more comprehensive information to service members and their families.

The second target group is the community service providers (integrated service group, social workers, domestic violence advocates and military family life program).

Lastly, the child support office has also developed relationships with leaders of area military installations to maintain an ongoing presence on the bases and offer weekly or monthly visits to provide intake and information and resources regarding establishment issues.

These outreach efforts are paying dividends. The El Paso child support office found that having a key point of contact is one secret to the success of maintaining a strong relationship with military installations. Their work is responsible for the new solid working relationship they have with the military. An educated and supportive staff can make a real difference in whether service members feel they are receiving support and services and appreciated rather than being ignored. Child support agencies can be a part of the solution and not add barriers and stress to the lives of service members and their families.

Above and beyond

One definition of outreach is “to go beyond.” The child support program has a strong reputation for going beyond the conventional boundaries of merely establishing and enforcing its orders. We should continue to reach out to our veterans and military families and their advocates. Providing the tools and training for those who served and continue to serve our country helps ensure that we are not creating additional barriers for those who may already be facing significant hurdles in other aspects of their lives. Our service members deserve it.

For more information, contact the author at maureen.leif@judicial.state.co.us.

What can you do?

**What can your child support agency do
to offer services to military and veteran
parents? See the OCSE fact sheets:**

**[Military Services and Child Support
Partnerships](#)**

**[Ending Homelessness Among Veterans:
The OCSE-VA-ABA Collaboration Project](#)**

Evaluation: Colorado's 'Parents to Work' deemed success

By Jessica Pearson, Director
Lanae Davis, Research Associate
Center for Policy Research
Denver, Colorado

More and more, the child support program is realizing that one of the best ways to improve payment among low-income noncustodial parents is to link them with job programs. But getting some parents to participate and succeed can be challenging.

Parents to Work is an employment program for unemployed and underemployed child support obligors in Arapahoe County, CO, begun in March 2008. The project has a number of features that have been associated with success in other settings.

Elements of Arapahoe's successful approach

The *Parents to Work* project uses **mixed funding streams**—TANF funds to serve noncustodial parents whose children are current recipients of TANF and funds authorized by the Arapahoe County commissioners to support interventions with eligible noncustodial parents whose children are not TANF recipients.

The program features a **strong collaborative partnership** between the Division of Child Support Enforcement (CSE), Arapahoe/Douglas Workforce Center and the Arapahoe District Court/18th Judicial District, and an evaluation conducted by the Center for Policy Research of Denver.

The program uses **specialized child support staff** whose job is to obtain and process referrals, enroll project participants, handle relevant child support actions for enrolled noncustodial parents and communicate with the workforce program, court, and child support workers about the participation status of targeted participants.

CSE retained the effective **local workforce center**, Arapahoe/Douglas Workforce Center, to provide services. Dedicated workforce specialists handle project cases. One focuses on assessing clients and managing their cases; one handles job development, provides workshops and operates an intensive job club; and a program coordinator communicates with CSE and ensures coordination of services.

The program offers **varied recruitment sources**. A specialized CSE worker reviews lists of child support cases with obligors who pay less than 66 percent of the child support

they owe and have a verified address, and contacts them to enroll in *Parents to Work*.

Establishment workers refer noncustodial parents who lack employment, work part-time, or earn low wages. The child support magistrate may refer unemployed or underemployed parents who appear in court for nonpayment of child support.

For a **rigorous program evaluation**, eligible participants were randomly assigned to a treatment group for services, and a comparison group was treated in the usual manner. The two groups of cases were compared over time for outcomes pertaining to employment and child support payments.

The program has **strong court involvement**, with a child support magistrate at the Arapahoe County District Court/18th Judicial District who encourages, recommends, or requires parents to participate in *Parents to Work*. In addition, the magistrate conducts review hearings to monitor participation in *Parents to Work* and dismisses contempt charges for those who successfully participate and pay support.

Workers' comments

Child support and workforce staff appreciated the project's high level of flexibility. As one staffer put it, "The strength of the program was its 'Just Do It' " attitude...problems would quickly be identified, agreed upon and fixed." Staff also liked the interagency approach and the explicit division of

labor. "If everyone focuses on what they do well, you get the best bang for the buck and the best benefit for the customer."

However, some staff felt that the level of "communication could have been better." Child support workers wanted to be better informed of client participation in *Parents to Work*; they complained about referring noncustodial parents to the program without getting any follow-up feedback. This underscores the importance of having a web-based client tracking system that workers in multiple agency settings can consult for information on client status.

Greater self-sufficiency, economic benefits

Like other "new generation" noncustodial parent employment programs, *Parents to Work* led to greater economic self-sufficiency on the part of these parents and greater child support payments for custodial parents.

The program also had a positive impact on the local and regional economy. Even during the unprecedented 2008 and



***Parents to Work* exemplifies the child support program's efforts to help parents achieve economic stability. See the next page for key findings of the evaluation.**

2009 economic recession, parents who enrolled in *Parents to Work* participated in workforce development activities at higher levels, obtained jobs and earnings at higher rates, and made greater child support payments. Those who participated more wholeheartedly realized the greatest economic benefits. And even though the recession destroyed jobs and earnings for parents in both groups, parents in the treatment group fared better by not falling as low and by picking up employment more quickly.

Key findings for *Parents to Work*

Between August 2008 and December 2010, 601 noncustodial parents enrolled in the *Parents to Work* experimental group and 349 in the comparison group. During the time when the earliest (August 2007) and final (November 2010) employment and child support outcomes were measured, the unemployment rate in Arapahoe County rose from 3.9 to 8.6 percent. Despite the severe economic downturn, the evaluation produced some promising results.

- **Participants engaged in workforce services at high rates.** Nearly three-quarters of parents (69 percent) in the treatment group participated in workforce services, with 46 percent participating in three or more activities and 23 percent in one or two. Only 31 percent did not participate in any program services.
- **Participants paid more child support.** In the year following program enrollment, the average percentage of owed child support that was paid rose significantly, from 36.6 to 41.3 percent in the treatment group, but was unchanged for the comparison group (28.2 percent versus 27.5 percent). Members of the treatment group who made no payments in the 3 months prior to project enrollment went from paying 16 percent of what they owed to 33 percent, as compared with 15 percent to 23 percent for the comparison group.
- **Participants paid child support more regularly.** Payment regularity improved significantly in the treatment group, rising from an average of 5.3 to 5.7 payments in a 12-month period versus 3.9 and 4.0 payments per month in the comparison group.
- **More involved participants experienced the best earnings outcomes.** Experimental group members who participated in the most workforce development activities were significantly more likely to exhibit post-program earnings (81 percent) as compared with their less involved (72 percent) and uninvolved (68 percent) counterparts. They also experienced a milder decline in earnings due to the 2008/2009 economic recession (4 percent versus 9 percent and 12 percent, respectively).

Many opportunities are upcoming for states and localities to develop collaborative workforce programs for noncustodial parents and realize some of these benefits.

For more information on *Parents to Work*, or to view the full report, please visit the [Center for Policy Research publications page](#).



- **More involved participants have the strongest child support payment patterns.** Child support payment patterns increased significantly only for actively engaged project participants, with the percentage of owed support that was paid rising from 35.9 to 42.9 percent.
- **Workforce programs for noncustodial parents contribute to regional economic growth.** *Parents to Work* contributed positively to the regional economy through job creation, regional sales, and earnings growth. The cost-effectiveness ratio for the program, which considers actual program expenditures and child support collections, were \$1.70 for the first post-enrollment year and \$5.09 after a three-year period, if one-year patterns of collection are sustained. The Return on Public Investment (ROPI) for *Parents to Work* was \$12.72 in regional earnings growth and \$22.51 in sales/revenue growth in the region. When adjusted for experimental-comparison group differences, the ROPIs are \$4.37 in earnings growth and \$7.74 in sales/revenue growth.

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. OCSE does not officially endorse the practices or individuals in this newsletter. You are welcome to reprint an article in its entirety (or contact the author or editor for permission to excerpt); please identify *Child Support Report* as the source.

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for Children and Families

Vicki Turetsky
Commissioner, OCSE

Gabrielle Pagin
Director, Division of Consumer Services

Elaine Blackman
Editor
202-401-5353
elaine.blackman@acf.hhs.gov