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FOREWORD

President Clinton has made improving child support enforcement and increasing child support collections a top priority. This **21st Annual Report to Congress** highlights the Child Support Enforcement (CSE) program's accomplishments and demonstrates the progress made during fiscal year 1996.

Since taking office, President Clinton has cracked down on nonpaying parents and strengthened child support enforcement. In fiscal year 1996, a record \$12 billion was collected on behalf of children, an increase of more than 50 percent since fiscal year 1992. In addition, more than one million paternities were established, an increase of more than 100 percent since fiscal year 1992--largely attributable to paternities established through the voluntary in-hospital paternity programs.

Gains also were made in establishing support orders and in locating noncustodial parents who were not paying child support. More than one million orders were established and the income, assets, or employers of 5 3/4 million parents were located. These numbers--a testimony to the commitment and dedication of individuals at the local, state, and federal levels of the CSE program--send a strong message that parental responsibility is not an option.

As important as this work is for millions of children, however, millions more are still being deprived of the help they need and deserve. Child support is a crucial part of this Administration's resolve to help families attain self-sufficiency. As the President said on signing the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, "There is no area where we need more personal responsibility than child support." When paid regularly, it provides millions of children and families the resources needed to improve their daily lives.

Donna E. Shalala

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