

Child Support Report

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COMMISSIONER'S VOICE

Working Proudly Beside You



For those of us working in government, the month of May starts and ends with the same idea of being grateful — thankful to those who have served the American people in one way or another. We celebrated Public Service Recognition Week from May 6-12, and now at the end of the month, we observe Memorial Day to honor service members laid to rest. It's important to take time for these remembrances because it is a good and worthy thing to do. But it's also important because, in the act of being grateful, we can examine what our work means — to those we serve, to our fellow professionals, and to ourselves.

From my many years in civil service, I am of the opinion that it takes strength of character to choose a career in helping people. Often, a passion for the greater good leads individuals to take this path. That passion, combined with an openness to learning and a commitment to superior customer service, helps government deliver more. As I've gotten to know many of you in the child support community and see what you do, I've gained a deeper appreciation for the courage and positive attitude many of you have. You know that, to ensure reliable financial support for children, it takes more than dedication. That's why you push further to offer better and better service, keeping up with the times and the ever-changing caseload.

Some of you who have worked in child support for a while have seen how much the program has evolved. Today we are observing new trends, like the decline in mandatory referrals and, more generally, the growing demand for accessible services online. By seeking to understand what's driving these and other changes, we can learn how best to improve our services. Having a polite yet curious attitude also helps. Some parents can face additional challenges, like having their own adverse childhood experiences. Being aware that these issues can become barriers for some parents, as David Kilgore explains in his article on p. 3, helps you understand the parent's perspective, which can lead to improved customer service. Better outreach leads to better outcomes, too. We see that time spent learning how to nudge a parent to return paperwork or take an action can result in a higher modification completion rate, like it did for the BICS team in Franklin County, OH. See Cassie Young's article on p. 5 to learn more about their story.

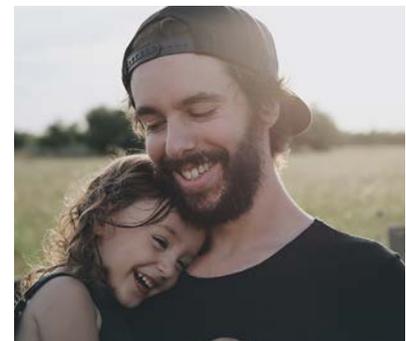
While I want to point out these snapshots of what we're doing to serve parents and children in today's world, I recognize that it can be hard to aim higher if you feel like you already have a lot to handle. Some states are facing challenging caseload-staff ratios. And all of us, at every level of service, have to keep up with technology to be more efficient in our day-to-day work and to remain vigilant in our data security. I see your hard work and I admire the passion you bring to the job. Remember to maintain your balance. Stress creeps up on us. When I was on the force, I saw how we had to change our approach to employees' experiences and incorporate stress management into our goals. You have to see your own health and well-being as part of the mission. This is essential for all public servants, including you.

I'm convinced that when we push ourselves to new limits, we can continue to make a profound impact in the lives of children and parents. Your tireless efforts to deliver on our core services, connect parents to resources, and collaborate with partners — it says a lot about your integrity. Thank you for being a part of your local, tribal, state, or federal child support team. It's an honor to serve beside you.

Scott Lekan

Inside this issue

- 1 Working Proudly Beside You
- 2 FEM Rule Produces Tangible Case Closure Efficiencies
- 3 Understanding Adverse Childhood Experience Scores
- 5 Ohio – New Approach Increases Modification Requests
- 6 Georgia – Winning Over a Child Support Veteran
- 7 Georgia's Award-Winning Mobile App
- 8 OCSE's Veterans and Military Liaison Network
- 9 New Hanover County Initiative — Bridging Change
- 10 Train Your Staff to Help Parents Budget



Father's Day 2018

The National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse's [Planning for Father's Day 2018](#) webinar on YouTube highlights resources to promote the importance of fathers in the lives of their children, including an overview of the Ad Council's [Responsible Fatherhood Campaign Toolkit](#).

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COLLECTION SUCCESSES

FEM Rule Produces Tangible Case Closure Efficiencies

James Fleming, Director, North Dakota Child Support Program



O CSE's adoption of the [Flexibility, Efficiency, and Modernization Rule](#) in December 2016 was the culmination of a long journey toward revisions to federal regulations regarding case closure. At least as far back as September 2010, the National Council of Child Support

Directors had recommended that, for improved program efficiency, certain categories of cases were appropriate to close. It was a long wait, but worth it.

In reviewing the rule for implementation, North Dakota recognized there were some new or expanded case closing criteria that we could implement fairly simply before the end of the federal fiscal year, and several others that would require more analysis and additional support from the automated system. For purposes of our implementation "project," we focused on the closing criteria for cases with:

- Parents who were receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) alone or combined with Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits;
- No current support obligation and where all arrears are assigned; and
- A current, outgoing intergovernmental referral to a federally recognized tribal child support program.

In designing our approach, we felt it was important to maintain North Dakota's program integrity and the level of customer service we were providing to our families. Our goal was not to maximize case closure, but rather to identify the cases where we were spending child support resources without much to show for it. For example, if there was no current support obligation and all arrears were assigned, we did not identify the case for potential closure unless we had it open for the last two years with no collections. We chose a two-year timeframe to correspond to the similar timeframe in the closing criteria for cases where we had been unable to locate an obligor despite having a verified Social Security number.

Likewise, even though we were receiving collections in cases where the obligor was receiving SSI or combined SSI and SSDI benefits, they were rarely the result of any collection efforts. We knew those collections would continue even after the case was closed because the legal obligation still existed as a non-IV-D case. For cases that

we had referred to a tribal child support program, the tribal program was succeeding in the case and our state efforts added very little value.

From our perspective, the ideal case closure project would include a high number of cases closed without losing any collections. North Dakota did not reach that ideal, but we were close. By the end of federal fiscal year 2017, North Dakota closed almost 3.5% of its open IV-D caseload using the new criteria. Had the case closure regulation been effective one year sooner, we would have had only a 0.23% reduction in our 2017 IV-D collections. The current support collection percentage in the closed cases was only 46% and the arrears collection percentage was below 30%. Most of the collections we received were from cases that we had already referred to a tribal program. It was clear to us that the rule succeeded in authorizing closure of a very substantial number of cases with a very small impact on total collections.

We know that our case closure project will be a one and only opportunity to refocus our program resources away from the cases described in the rule, but we appreciate the additional flexibility to focus on the remaining cases where we have a better chance to produce collections for the families we serve.

For more information on North Dakota's case closure project, contact Jim Fleming at jfleming@nd.gov.

HUD Strong Families Initiative

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is holding a [Strong Families Initiative](#) to build upon the

agency's longstanding Father's Day efforts to involve dads in the lives of their children. HUD is asking public housing authorities and multifamily property owners to host resource events in their communities in May and June and to invite community partners to participate.

Check with HUD-supported housing in your community to see if they are holding an event that your child support agency can be a part of.



PROMISING PRACTICES

Understanding Adverse Childhood Experience Scores

David Kilgore, Director, *Riverside County, CA, Department of Child Support Services*

Do you know the adverse childhood experience (ACE) score of the participant you're serving today? An ACE score is a tally of different types of abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction that are hallmarks of a rough childhood. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC-Kaiser ACE study](#)), the rougher your childhood, the higher your score is likely to be and the higher your risk for later health problems. Each of the three broad ACE categories contains a variety of potential adverse experiences a child may face.

ACEs are common

The CDC-Kaiser study reports, "Almost two-thirds of study participants reported at least one ACE, and more than one in five reported three or more ACEs." The more you have, the more likely you are to have negative health and well-being outcomes later in life.

A child exposed to adverse experiences who also has poor support and resources is likely to have:

- Physical effects such as obesity, high blood pressure, and diseases;
- Psychological effects including post-traumatic stress, conduct disorders, and learning and attention challenges; and
- Behavioral challenges like delinquency, teen pregnancy, and challenges finding and maintaining relationships.

Increased costs attributed to health care, lower productivity, prior criminal behavior, and special education needs will also cause many of these parents to face economic barriers.

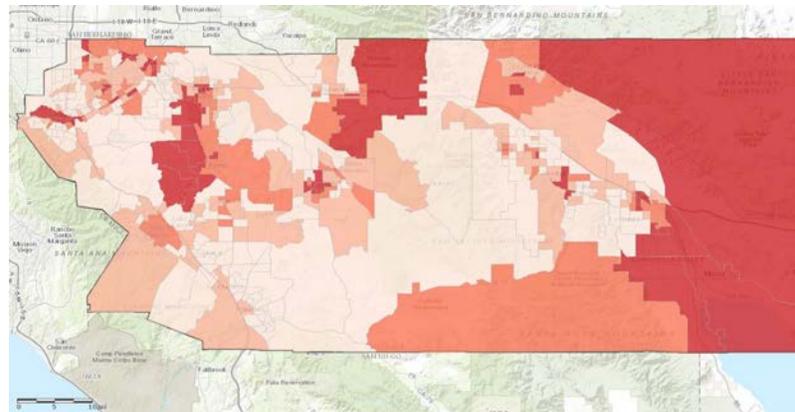
ABUSE	NEGLECT	HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION	
 Physical	 Physical	 Mental Illness	 Incarcerated Relative
 Emotional	 Emotional	 Mother Treated Violently	 Substance Abuse
 Sexual		 Divorce	

Like many other areas, Riverside County is trying to build a resilient community. We've acknowledged that our ability to reshape the future of our adult population declines drastically the older a person gets. We continue to provide services, but the demand is always greater than our capacity and we can't always address the root cause.

Here are some statistics about our county:

- 20% of all Riverside County households have experienced 4+ ACEs
- 31% of students in 7th, 9th, and 11th grades have depression-related feelings
- 19% of students in 9th and 11th grades have considered suicide in the past 12 months
- 25% of youth between ages 12-17 need help for emotional or mental health problems

We gathered statistics from our county departments, school districts, and other program offices, and layered that data geographically in a heat index to see just where we have our largest pockets of ACE residents. When you layer ACE data, probation reports, child support case counts, and poverty figures on top of each other, you see a map like this one below.



Amazingly, in a rough count, we identified more than 100 organizations that provide direct services to individuals ages 0-19 in Riverside County. Those services currently lack coordination. Riverside is resolving to change this situation by connecting the organizations.

Child Support

We all know that our goal is the health and well-being of the children in our caseload. By collecting child support, we hope to provide additional support and resources to combat instances of ACE events and give children the best chance we can for a bright and hopeful future.

Unfortunately, we are often attempting to collect child support from individuals who themselves may have a high ACE score. We don't know their stories. And often, when they do try to tell us, we patiently wait them out so that we can get down to the business of child support. We don't acknowledge their ACE experiences or recognize that it's the years of trauma that has led them to our office.

Child abuse and neglect can cause improper brain development, impaired cognitive and socio-emotional skills, lower language development, smoking, alcoholism, drug abuse, and more. These are often the individuals you're interviewing. We expect them to stand up and take responsibility for themselves and their child even though they may have never seen what that's supposed to look like.

We are often attempting to collect child support from individuals who themselves may have a high ACE score.

Considerations

Child support offices play an important part in battling poverty and building resilient children in our communities. If we're not careful, though, we could be contributing to additional ACE events because of the way we work with the parents.

Child support directors should keep these considerations in mind:

- Increase general adversity awareness. Train everyone on the topic and the types of impacts they could have on the individuals we serve.
- Try to build a systems approach for collective impact. Child support cannot conquer this alone. What other resources can you bring to families' lives to improve their resilience?
- Early intervention and prevention is key! Know protective factors you can put in place and use screenings for detection. Make referrals often and routinely. The one time someone takes you up on a referral might be the turning point in that person's life.
- Identify evidenced-based and research-informed practices you can implement. You have to strive for continuous improvement and consistent reviews to achieve a long term, sustained, impact.

For more information, visit the [CDC ACEs website](https://www.cdc.gov/aces/).



#SelfSufficiency

HHS.gov

Welfare-to-Work Solution Series – Kenosha Successful Co-location

Kenosha County, Wisconsin, is in the HHS spotlight for a successful parent outreach program, Children First SHARP (Supporting Parents, Holistic Case Management, Access to Employment, Reaching Goals, Positive Parenting). For over 20 years, the county has experimented with methods to deliver human services programming to develop an effective model for families to achieve self-sufficiency. Read Commissioner Lekan's essay, [Co-Location: Kenosha County's Strategy to Move Parents to Work](#), in the new HHS blog series [Self-Sufficiency Series: Solutions from the Field](#).

Grant Funding Announcement – Digital Marketing



A new grant funding opportunity announcement for child support agencies has posted on [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). This funding focuses on the use of digital marketing to increase service uptake. Applications are due on July 2 so don't delay! State and tribal child support agencies are eligible to apply. OCSE especially wants to encourage applicants who have not received a grant in the last six years to consider this opportunity. For more information on the grant, read Increase Program Participation through Digital Marketing in the [April 2018 Child Support Report](#).

If you have questions about the funding announcement, contact Michelle Jadczyk at michelle.jadczyk@acf.hhs.gov.

Improving Outcomes by Testing Behavioral Strategies — Lessons Learned from the BICS Demonstration Grants

OCSE awarded five-year [Behavioral Interventions for Child Support Services](#) (BICS) demonstration grants to eight child support agencies in 2014 to test how behavioral economics principles can improve child support program processes and outcomes. The eight grantees are California, Colorado, Georgia, Ohio, Texas, Vermont, Washington, and the District of Columbia. Read about early results from three states in the [October 2017 Child Support Report](#).

In the [April 2018 edition](#), we began a series of stories from BICS grantees so that other child support programs can learn from their experiences. This month, we feature Ohio and Georgia. In each article, the parents' names have been changed.

For more information on BICS, contact OCSE project officers Michael Hayes, michael.hayes@acf.hhs.gov, and Gretchen Lehman, gretchen.lehman@acf.hhs.gov.

Ohio — New Approach Increases Modification Requests

Cassie Young, BICS Project Director,
Franklin County, OH

Kati Stiles and Laura Buehrle were typical Franklin County Child Support Enforcement Agency caseworkers with about 1,000 cases each. They provided customer service, performed financial reviews, initiated enforcement actions, and processed modification requests and reviews. In 2016, Buehrle and Stiles went from being typical caseworkers to “modification masters” because the Ohio BICS project equipped them with an array of tools they could use to help parents navigate and complete the modification process.

Important but cumbersome

Modifying orders is a core child support function. Downward adjustments can be the difference between payment and non-payment for a noncustodial parent who has lost their job or had a significant income reduction. Upward modifications, when a noncustodial parent is making more money, can provide more resources for their children's needs.

Getting from a change in income to a completed modification review is no easy feat — parents must complete lengthy packets, assemble the necessary documents proving changes in income, and remember to return the mandatory paperwork within the required time. The BICS team reviewed child support data for Franklin and Cuyahoga counties and found that this complicated process resulted in a modification completion rate of only about 45%.

Testing a new approach

As the first intervention, the counties decided to try to increase the submission of completed modification packets. Staff from both counties worked closely with MDRC's behavioral science experts to identify where the parents got stuck the most or dropped out. Together, they used behaviorally informed strategies to address these obstacles and redesign the process.

The Franklin County staff tested an intervention where they sent parents simplified modification paperwork and assigned these cases to a dedicated modification unit. Buehrle and Stiles devoted their full attention to working with parents to complete modification requests. They could keep better track of parents' recalculations, note which ones hadn't returned paperwork, make proactive calls, and send email reminders about upcoming deadlines. This helped ensure the parents had all the information necessary to complete the modifications.

Stiles noted, “Even making one outreach made a huge difference, because often when I called a client, they had simply forgotten about the deadline for paperwork.”

Preliminary data showed that the intervention increased the number of parents that completed the modification process by more than 10%.

Effects beyond modifications

The BICS way of doing things has transcended the original scope of the project, expanding into much of Franklin County's child support work. Staff who worked on BICS have carried what they learned into their regular casework.

According to Buehrle, “It became habit to perform extra research and outreach to my clients, so I have noticed my customer service skills have improved even after the project ended.”

Franklin County's BICS team believes that although this work requires an upfront investment, once we incorporate it into regular business practices, it improves government processes and outcomes. That frees up staff time and allows caseworkers to provide more individual attention to their clients. It's a win-win for staff and parents alike.

Franklin County Child Support Enforcement Agency Director Susan Brown reports that the project has caused staff to look at their work with new eyes. “We no longer look at our processes in the same way,” she said. “Now, we are always looking through a behavioral lens and asking, ‘Where are the bottlenecks here and how do we remove barriers so that clients can be more successful?’”

Georgia — Winning Over a Child Support Veteran

Cindy Little, BICS Program Director, Georgia Division of Child Support Services

Theresa is a caseworker in the Macon Child Support office. You might know caseworkers like Theresa. Even after 30 years of child support work, she still has that knack for connecting with customers and still treats every parent with respect and equal importance. Every day, Theresa and workers like her step into their 8-by-8 cubicles and deliver excellent customer service. In spite of their hard work, we still have challenges engaging parents.

Too many missed appointments

Georgia's first BICS intervention addressed the problem of noncustodial parents failing to come in for case establishment appointments. When parents attend these meetings, they eliminate the need to go to court, and they save money by avoiding service process fees. Attendance can also lead to fewer default orders and lower costs for legal filings and court staff time.

Our large office has many cases requiring a support order. This made it ideal to test the BICS approach to increasing noncustodial parent attendance at establishment meetings. We asked Theresa to be part of the BICS Macon team because of her customer service and case management skills; she readily agreed.

New approach, new materials

At her first team meeting, Theresa received new resources, including a script to use with noncustodial parents. Theresa was skeptical because, in her opinion, she already provided more than enough information at establishment meetings. She felt she didn't need a script prepared by behavioral experts to provide excellent customer service! Despite her initial doubts, she agreed to give this new approach a try.

Our BICS intervention also included a simplified appointment letter mailed out in an eye-catching envelope that also held a magnet with the appointment date circled. One week before the appointment date, caseworkers sent out a reminder flyer. Georgia started mailing out these new materials in April 2016 to parents in the intervention.

Quick results

Within a few weeks, Theresa noticed two changes. More parents were appearing at the office for their scheduled appointment, and they were actually thanking her after the establishment meetings. Parents appreciated the clear explanation of the child support process and the benefits of coming into the office. These positive responses from parents made Theresa reconsider her skepticism of the behaviorally informed script.

Our overall data, which is summarized in a [13-page brief](#), backs up Theresa's experience. When we compared parents randomly assigned to the intervention group with parents that we handled using the old process, our intervention increased the number of noncustodial parents that came to the child support office to accept service voluntarily by 8 percentage points.

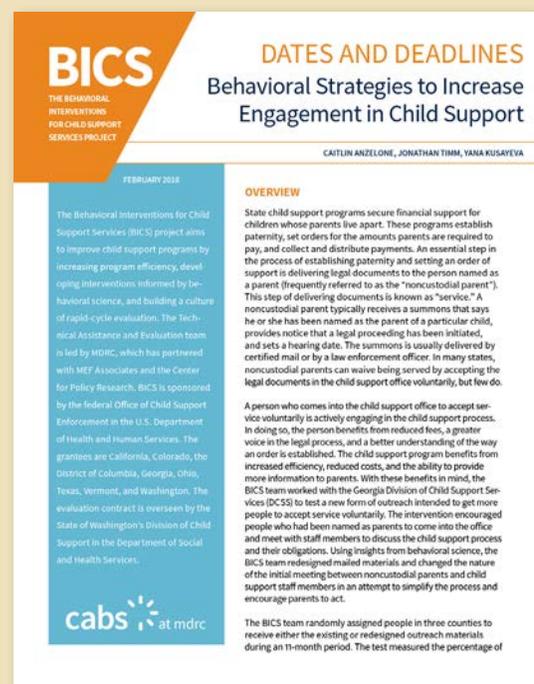
Parents that experienced the new intervention provided comments such as, "I really liked the magnet because it helped me remember the appointment date." Another commented, "I am so relieved that I came into the office. I was unfamiliar with the child support process and I didn't think I would have a say in the outcome."

Parents want to support their children, but the process of establishing a child support order can be overwhelming, confusing, and emotionally challenging. The initial meeting with noncustodial parents can make a huge difference in their ongoing engagement with the program and their child support payments.

The new normal

Theresa is a self-reported behavioral convert. Even though she's no longer required to use the BICS tools, she's sticking with the new way of doing business with parents. Theresa knows it makes her job in that 8-by-8 cubicle a little easier every day.

If you want to learn more about how Georgia increased voluntary service acceptance, read [Dates and Deadlines: Behavioral Strategies to Increase Engagement in Child Support](#), recently posted to the OCSE website.



TECH FOCUS

Georgia's Award-Winning Mobile App

Tatyana Phelps, Communications Specialist,
Georgia Division of Child Support Services

Several states have mobile apps that allow parents access to their child support information quickly and conveniently, but few can boast that theirs has national and state-level awards for innovation. Georgia's Division of Child Support Services (DCSS) can claim that distinction.

In September 2016, the state Department of Human Services Office of Information Technology launched a mobile app that provides the same services that customers receive in local offices with the touch of a few buttons on their smartphones.

"The GA DCSS mobile app is a technological solution, making it easier for customers to engage with the division regarding their child support case," said Chief Information Officer Venkat Krishnan. "The mobile app is an example of what we can achieve when we work together for a common goal."

The app engages custodial and noncustodial parents in self-service options by allowing them secure access to their child support cases on any mobile device no matter where they are. It also provides easy access to case details and general information about programs and services.

"The GA DCSS mobile app not only helps cut heavy call volume and long wait times at local support offices, but is also convenient for our customers, allowing them to have secure access to their case information anytime, anywhere," said Director Tangler Gray.

"The GA DCSS mobile app not only helps cut heavy call volume and long wait times at local support offices, but is also convenient for our customers, allowing them to have secure access to their case information anytime, anywhere."

National recognition

This innovative mobile solution has made such an impact that it received two distinct awards. In October 2017, the National Association of State Chief Information Officers selected the DCSS app out of more than 100 nominees to receive its Digital Government: Government to Citizen IT Recognition Award.

Later in the month, the department received an award that the American Public Human Services Association bestows annually to a tech initiative that has enhanced customer access and public accountability. The DCSS Child Support Mobile App received the 2017 award for Innovation in Service Delivery that Improves Customer Outcomes.

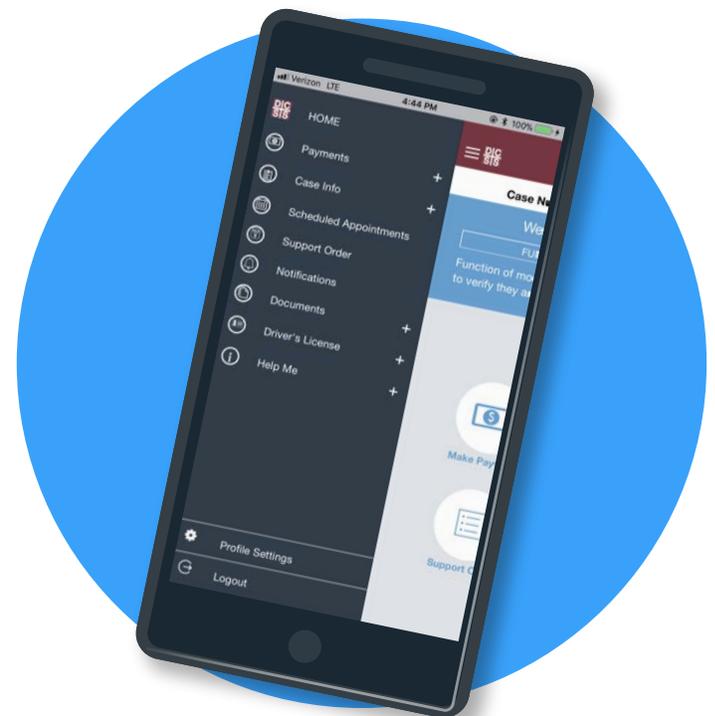
"I am so proud of our IT and Child Support Team's [success] in bringing the mobile app to our customers," said Division of Human Services Commissioner Robyn A. Crittenden. "The mobile app is an example of the outstanding work by [department] staff to strengthen the children and families of our state. Through the app, more of Georgia's children have the opportunity to receive much-needed support from both parents."

Improving functionality

To continue to better serve customers, Georgia deployed new features on the mobile app on March 1, 2018. Customers can set up direct deposits, upload documents, and check their upload histories. Custodial parents can request case closures and noncustodial parents can submit deferral forms for driver's license releases and check driver's license statuses.

At the end of March, the app had more than 108,000 downloads and nearly 61,000 active users. Parents and staff have uploaded nearly 1,000 documents since the release of the new features, and 20,520 users have updated to version 3. As Georgia continues to update the mobile app, they plan to develop even more self-service options.

For more information, watch the [GA DCSS mobile app video](#).



OCSE's Veterans and Military Liaison Network

James Murray, OCSE

May gives us several opportunities to recognize the unwavering service of current and former military members and their families, ranging from [Armed Forces Day](#) to [Military Spouse Appreciation Day](#). We established our Veterans and Military Liaison Network (VMLN) to specifically support the veteran and military families within the child support caseload.

What is the VMLN?

The VMLN is a group of child support professionals across the country that works to improve child support services for veterans, military members, and their families. Other members include service providers in veterans' facilities or organizations. We maintain the VMLN to identify and promote innovative child support services that can help these families have healthy relationships and improve their financial self-sufficiency.

Key activities

We host webinars to provide information about military and child support resources, and child support and Department of Veterans Affairs laws, policies, and procedures to help VMLN members serve veteran and military families more effectively. Members can exchange information and share promising practices for outreach strategies and collaboration.

We provide information on OCSE resources like the [Toolkit: Child Support Collaborations to Engage and Assist Veterans](#) and the [Handbook for Military Families](#). We also help identify the appropriate child support or veteran staff who can resolve unique and difficult cases and make referrals to external partners with technical assistance expertise.

How can I join the VMLN?

If you are a child support professional and want to know more about the VMLN, email us at OCSE.DPI@acf.hhs.gov. We can also answer questions related to veterans and military outreach. You can play an important part in helping us honor veteran and military families and making sure they have positive experiences with the child support program.

For more resources related to working with veteran and military families, see the OCSE [Military & Veterans webpage](#).

The Office of Child Support Enforcement provides more services than people generally see. This new column highlights a task that federal child support staff handles. To begin the series, we're showcasing some of our work on behalf of the military and veteran families in our caseload.



Mary E. Switzer
Building



330
C Street, SW

U.S. Department of
Health and Human
Services

 Entrance

For building information
go to www.gsa.gov/01033



COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

New Hanover County Initiative — Bridging Change

Kate Murphy, Community Services Coordinator,
New Hanover County Department of Social Services

In February, several groups in New Hanover County, North Carolina, launched a new initiative to help families with open child support cases. The county Department of Social Services' Family Support Program, along with staff from Child Support Services and other partners, kicked off the Bridging Change initiative in Wilmington.

We implemented the Family Support Program in 2013 as a IV-D incentive waiver program so we could identify and remove barriers that prevent noncustodial parents from paying child support on a regular and consistent basis. This year, we added a new component to help parents work better with each other.

This new initiative, Bridging Change, focuses on improving positive communication between the two parents, as well as building relationships between noncustodial parents and their children. Through Bridging Change, we offer a variety of services including mediation, constructive communication and effective parenting classes, education and job-readiness services, and visitation assistance for noncustodial parents.

"By addressing some immediate stressors for families, we hope to open more opportunities for trust building among separated parents, and a family environment that supports the child's relationship with the noncustodial parent," said Family Support Program Coordinator Larry Mays. "They say it takes a village to raise a child. Well we, as agents of change, come with the might of that village to Bridge Change!"

Program introduction

At the initiative kickoff, representatives from community agencies exchanged resource information and provided a sample of their services. County Department of Social Services Director Michelle Winstead warmly welcomed the attendees. Mays gave the crowd an enthusiastic overview of the Bridging Change initiative. And Alyssa Harrell, the program manager for Child Support Services, emphasized the importance of a parent's financial and emotional involvement in a child's life.

Participant panel

Individuals who have taken part in New Hanover County's Family Support and Fatherhood programs talked about their involvement during a panel discussion. One father said he initially only participated because he was court-ordered; however, his experience has been positive and he now has a stronger relationship with his teenage daughter. One of the first participants shared that, through the Family Support Program and mediation services, he and his child's mother now communicate in a civil manner and have become better co-parents. He said that's not the only positive result, "The change I've seen in my daughter's face when I pick her up, the huge smile is incredible."

"This kick-off was a successful event, bringing together partnering service agencies and generating excitement to make a positive impact in our community for the families we serve," said Harrell. "The partnering agencies are collaborating to strengthen the community support for families and are committed to work together in the Bridging Change Initiative with the shared vision of parental responsibility and family engagement."

For information on the Family Support Program and Bridging Change, contact Larry Mays at lamays@nhcgov.com.

Train Your Staff to Help Parents Budget

Gretchen Lehman, OCSE

State and tribal child support professionals talk to parents about money and financial issues on a regular basis due to the nature of child support. While they are experts on program guidelines and procedures, OCSE understands that caseworkers may be less equipped to help parents think through the money management issues that arise in these conversations.

To help provide frontline staff with tools for these situations, we've partnered with the [Consumer Financial Protection Bureau](#) (CFPB). We're going to train child support workers on the budgeting tools in the CFPB [Your Money, Your Goals](#) (YMYG) suite of materials. As noted in [Policy Interpretation Question-12-02](#), incidental activities that support the core purposes of the child support program are allowable child support expenditures. Caseworkers can also provide referral information from YMYG to services such as debt counseling to help parents support their children financially and emotionally.

Becoming trainers

In March, 11 OCSE regional and headquarters staff came together in Washington, D.C., to learn how to train frontline staff on YMYG tools. A CFPB-contracted expert trainer, Denise DeVaan, led our discussion on the ways emotions, values, and culture affect how each of us handles money and financial decisions. We talked about how differences in these areas can lead to misunderstanding and judgment, creating obstacles to progress. Training caseworkers to be aware of parents' values and cultural influences and to work to avoid judgment encourages workers to discuss financial issues in a way that helps parents feel understood and respected.

The main financial management strategy we trained on was cash flow budgeting. YMYG has three cash flow budget tools that break down your weekly incoming cash and resources and outgoing bills. This 7-day snapshot easily shows when you're going to come up short on cash.

These tools can be useful for a noncustodial parent trying to figure out how to meet a new or increased child support obligation. For example, it may be easier to pay \$25 each week than to come up with \$100 at the end of the month. Cash flow budgeting may also help a custodial parent who has to adjust to a lower child support payment following a modification.

Looking ahead

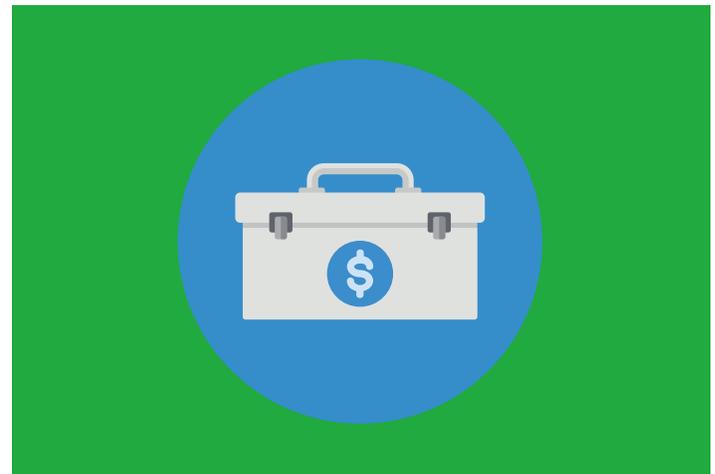
We are working on organizing training opportunities for state and tribal caseworkers. To organize these

sessions, we plan to partner with state and tribal child support agencies and professional associations. We may incorporate them into OCSE site visits, conduct them as workshops at conferences, or provide them in other ways.

We're excited about this work and hope you will be, too. We also want to note that this is exploratory, so we expect to make changes over the next several months.

Under our partnership with the CFPB, OCSE has committed to train at least 135 child support workers by the end of December, a target that we hope to achieve easily. As we consider our goals for this work in 2019 and beyond, we will be assessing your response to this new technical assistance resource and the feedback we get from the child support community.

If you're interested in organizing a training, contact Gretchen Lehman at gretchen.lehman@acf.hhs.gov.



Child Support Report

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