

# Child Support Report

OFFICE OF CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT

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## 'Together We Can' Frames National Tribal Child Support Association's Ninth Annual Training Conference

By Jackie Pische  
*Forest County Potawatomi Tribe*

The theme of the National Tribal Child Support Association's (NTCSA) 9th Annual Training Conference—"Together We Can"—was infused with a "can do" attitude throughout the Aug. 12 to 16 event in Milwaukee, WI.

The conference was hosted by the Forest County Potawatomi Tribe, Keweenaw Bay Indian Community, and the Oneida Nation. Attendance exceeded 250 representatives from 38 different Tribal Nations, and many from the State and Federal levels.

OCSE Commissioner Vicki Turetsky galvanized the gathering as she elevated the conference theme into a challenge of "Together We Must." The increasing number

of Tribal child support agencies, with exponential growth from the original 9 to 45 programs in the past 5 years, offers limitless opportunities. Commissioner Turetsky's message encouraged mutually beneficial partnerships and collaboration between Tribal, Federal, and State partners.

Former Comanche Nation Chairman Wallace Coffey spoke of the responsibilities inherent in a government-to-government relationship. Brenda Lyttle, Wyoming Child Support Director and President of the National Council of Child Support Directors, co-presented with Lee Spoonhunter, Director of the Northern Arapaho Tribal child support program, on State and Tribal relations. NTCSA presented Forest County Potawatomi with its Outstanding Tribe award.

Four tracks (Legal/Judicial, Caseworker, Start-up and Comprehensive) presented a variety of topics for the 60 workshops. The Mescalero Apache Tribe offered to host the 2010 NTCSA conference in New Mexico. Watch the NTCSA Web site at [www.supporttribalchildren.org](http://www.supporttribalchildren.org) for further information.



**Deborah Yates, NTCSA President and Comanche Nation Child Support Program Director, accepts the Lucille Dawson Award for Professional Excellence.**

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

## Commissioner's Voice

# OCSE 19th National Conference—Opportunity for Change



The OCSE 19th National Training Conference in November will give me a chance, as Commissioner, to speak directly to many of you as child support professionals from around the Nation and as individuals who work hard each day to deliver services to children and families.

These are challenging times. From the podium, I look forward to discussing my priorities for the program. From the floor, I look forward to meeting you and listening to your initiatives, ideas, and advice.

The theme for this year's conference—Dollars and Sense: Child Support in a Changing Economy—will present us with the opportunity to discuss ways we can streamline and improve our program, without compromising the quality of services to families. Job loss is affecting our ability to continue providing steady income to families and challenging us to implement practical and time-sensitive procedures for reviewing and modifying support obligations. At the same time,

most State and county programs are making do with fewer staff, which takes its own toll on program effectiveness.

I hope we can put our heads together to learn from one another. The National Training Conference will offer a diversity of workshops. They will cover strategies for managing change, mediation for child support cases, partnering with other government agencies, electronic interstate communication, early intervention tools, and much more.

The National Training Conference will provide an important means for deepening our collaborative relationships among our Federal, State, and local partners and to find ways to strengthen our ability to provide more effective services to families, despite budget constraints.

Please see the registration information on this page. I hope to see you at the conference!

*Vicki Turetsky*

*Hurry--the October 9 deadline for registration is approaching fast.*

*OK! I don't want to be caught in the pre-Columbus Day rush!*



**Register Today:**

<http://www.ocseregistration.vovici.net/se.ashx?s=705E3EF37C07B727>

**OCSE 19th National  
Child Support Enforcement  
Training Conference  
November 2 - 4, 2009  
Washington, DC**

***FREE Registration!***

**Renaissance Washington Hotel  
999 Ninth Street, NW  
Washington, DC  
202-898-9000**

***“Dollars and Sense:  
Child Support in a  
Changing Economy”***

# National Judicial/CSE Task Force: Annual Meeting Brings New Members, New Ideas to Collaboration

By Elaine Blackman  
OCSE

Judge Jorge Ortiz of Lake County, IL, spent many years working on OCSE's National Hispanic Task Force to help child support agencies enhance outreach and services to Hispanic families. Now, Judge Ortiz is lending his expertise to the National Judicial/Child Support Enforcement Task Force to enhance collaboration between child support agencies and the courts and judiciary.

On July 21 and 22, Judge Ortiz joined several other new members—Amy Wilson, Oklahoma Child Support Services; Judge Randy Doucet, Upper Skagit Tribe in Washington State; Iris Key, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges; and Juvenile Court Magistrate W. Scott Rosenberg from Tennessee—as first-time participants in the annual meeting of the task force, in Washington, DC.

The Judicial/CSE Task Force, formed in 2004, consists of trial and appellate court judges; State court administrators; representatives from national court and judicial organizations; State child support directors; Federal, State, and Tribal child support program specialists; and OCSE central and regional office staff.

Members from 26 jurisdictions marked the start of the meeting with warm greetings and enthusiasm for their task at hand—to infuse

knowledge and spur discussion that will further the mission of improving collaboration, and ultimately, services to children and families.

## Commissioner on Board

OCSE Commissioner Vicki Turetsky introduced herself to the task force, presenting a brief history of her extensive experience in administration and advocacy related to child support and other human services programs. She noted that the first lawsuit she worked on as a staff attorney in the Minnesota Attorney General's Office was to defend the constitutionality of the Federal tax offset process in 1981. As a legal services attorney, she represented parents seeking child support in family court and observed the difficulty that parents had in explaining



**New members of the National Judicial/CSE Task Force at the meeting in July were (clockwise, from top left) Judge Randy Doucet, Upper Skagit Tribe (Washington State); Judge Jorge Ortiz, Lake County, IL; Amy Wilson, Oklahoma Child Support Services; Iris Key, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges; and W. Scott Rosenbert of Tennessee. (Not pictured, Dennis Jones, Administrative Office of the Court in Sacramento, CA, rejoined the task force after a 2-year absence. He previously served as the representative from the National Judicial College.)**



their circumstances when they were unrepresented. She also noted research that shows that disadvantaged custodial and noncustodial parents often face similar barriers to employment.

The Commissioner referred to her advocacy roles to improve child support services through collaborations among programs that provide services to families, and commended the task force for its work in developing more family-focused approaches to case management through problem-solving courts.



### **Potential Resource for the Pro Se Litigant**

Glenn Rawdon of Legal Services Corporation (the primary funding organization for most Legal Aid offices in the States) presented potential benefits for child support agencies and courts to partner with local Legal Aid offices by using their Web sites to promote more effective delivery of services to pro se litigants.

Rawdon explained that these sites are accessed by a large number of low-income users, as well as some courts and child support agencies. Child support agencies would be able to display and update their information for free.

State Web sites vary, he explained; for example, the Iowa Legal Aid site offers “live” help, with an individual available to instantly provide information about resources. The Arkansas site uploads videos on YouTube to broaden the audience of people searching for legal information.

The meeting participants further discussed such ideas as posting brief videos to show pro se litigants what to expect when they get to court regarding a child support issue.

### **Subcommittees Making Headway**

Task force members reported on recent accomplishments of its six subcommittees: arrears management/order modification; inter-jurisdictional case processing/electronic data exchange; education/cross training; collaborative planning; problem-solving courts; and reducing inappropriate orders. These reports included the following two:

- The arrears management subcommittee, chaired by Virginia Child Support Director Nick Young, has developed an “intensive case management program”—a demonstration model that could enhance child support partnerships with the judiciary in certain cases. For example, through this model, a noncustodial parent was able to acquire a machine to improve his sleep apnea condition, which in turn improved his ability to obtain a job.

- Judge Kristin Ruth of North Carolina, chair of the subcommittee on problem-solving courts, reported on her work on a policy manual, funded under an OCSE 1115 grant, to offer help to judges in setting up problem-solving courts in their localities. Using problem-solving techniques, the judiciary can focus on helping parents address barriers including drug abuse, unemployment, lack of job skills, mental health problems, and issues related to reentry into society following incarceration.

### **Under Construction: Web Site for Courts**

Referee Gordon Bailey from Alabama led a discussion about potential topics, documents, and links that might be included on a Web site designed for courts and the judiciary. The site is accessible via a “Courts” tab on the OCSE Web site: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/>

In conjunction with Bailey’s discussion, OCSE’s Dave Tabler and Richard Ordowich detailed their systems-based work on the Web site. Plans for these resources on the site include business-case templates, a data exchange model with courts, data standards, and links to State child support agencies’ collaborations with courts and data interface projects.

The site now focuses on automated interface between courts and State agencies; additional court links and information will be added later.

### **In Summation**

In the end, participants were eager to discuss the need for a “two-way street”—for child support professionals to learn about the judicial world just as much as courts and the judiciary need to learn about the child support program.

Several judges summed up the work ahead for the task force, as well as the entire child support community: “How do we get the message to more judges that they need to care about child support?”

For more information about the national Judicial/CSE task force, please contact Judge Larry Holtz in OCSE at [larry.holtz@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:larry.holtz@acf.hhs.gov) or 202-401-5376.

# Oregon Child Support Reaps Big Benefits—Quickly—Through SSA Claims Match

By **Elene Orpilla and Chris Tilgner**  
*Oregon Child Support Program*

In less time than expected, the Oregon Child Support Program (CSP) has seen a number of arrears-only cases paid off in lump sums—and is receiving current support on cases for the first time in years—as a result of a match with the Social Security Administration’s (SSA) Title II Pending Claims file.

CSP learned of the SSA Title II Pending Claims file, available through the Federal Parent Locator Service (FPLS), during a visit by the FPLS Technical Support



**Elene Orpilla (seated) and Barb Cooney**

Liaison from OCSE in October 2008. The file identifies individuals who have applied for Social Security benefits, and is available to all States that opt to receive it. States send a withholding order to SSA, where it is entered into its Court Order Garnishment System (COGS), which ensures that withholding will be in place for any initial payments as well as lump-sum payments.



Though automation was not immediately possible, CSP decided the benefit was worth manually processing the match using a report reviewed by two staff members, Elene Orpilla and Amanda Leeth. (Barb Cooney has taken Leeth’s place on the effort.) The staff has reviewed a total 4,015 cases and sent 2,780 withholding orders to SSA.

The FPLS Technical Support Liaison indicated it might take as long as 12 to 18 months to see significant benefits from this match, however, money started coming in on cases just 4 months into the project! Now, only 9 months from the time CSP first heard about this match, it has collected \$84,013 in lump-sum payments and more than \$35,899 in current support collections per month.

These totals only represent the portion of cases tracked by the project team; some cases have been processed by field branch offices and are not included in these totals. CSP has already exceeded expectations! This match is clearly a benefit to the program and to the families who are receiving support.

To learn more about the FPLS Title II Pending Claims file, see the article below on this page or contact your State Technical Support Liaison. For a contact list, please refer to: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/newhire/contacts/fcrtscontacts.htm>

## More States Can Reap Benefits Through OCSE, SSA Collaboration

By **Betty LaCross**  
*OCSE*

During these economic times, when job stability and family income are less certain, the Social Security Administration (SSA) can offer stable and continuing financial payments for families and children.

Did you know that one in six Americans receives a Social Security benefit and that Social Security benefits comprise about 5 percent of the nation’s total economy? Social Security benefits provide income security not just to the elderly, but to dependents, survivors of the deceased, disabled individuals, and many families owed child support. In fact, last month alone, SSA distributed more than \$48 million in child support payments to families.

Recognizing the value of stable SSA income, OCSE has collaborated with SSA to provide a significant amount of benefit information to child support agencies. Since 2002,

States have had access to SSA's State Verification and Exchange System (SVES), which provides information from its databases as follows:

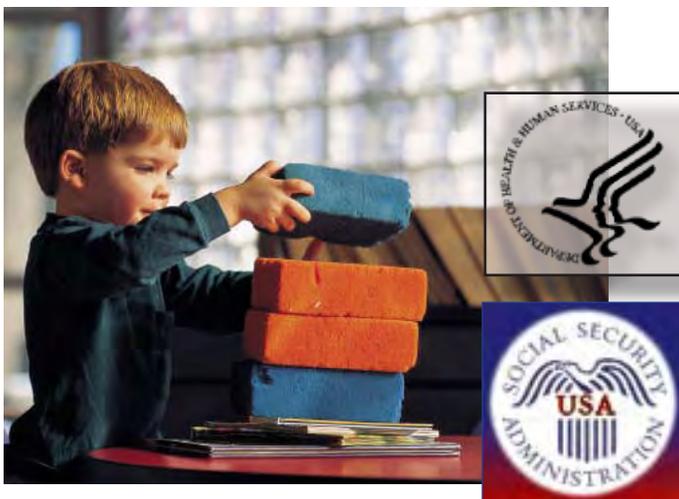
- **Title II benefits** are for people who have worked and contributed to SSA for retirement and disability. The monthly benefit amount is based on the beneficiary's lifetime earnings and can be withheld to meet child support obligations. Additionally, if the beneficiary is deceased, the spouse or children may be eligible for a death benefit. As more States make use of the information from SSA, we expect to see child support collections from SSA increase, and to see more children receiving dependent benefits directly.
- **Title XVI benefits**, also known as Supplemental Security Income (SSI), are provided to aged, blind, or disabled persons who have a limited ability to work. This benefit provides cash to meet basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter. Because these benefits are provided to low-income individuals, SSI benefits cannot be withheld to meet child support obligations. However, the fact that a noncustodial parent or custodial parent receives SSI may trigger review and adjustment activities. In addition, the child support agency may be an important referral source for disabled parents who may be eligible for SSI but do not receive it.
- **Title II Pending Claims data** is available to States that elect to receive it. It represents individuals who have applied for, or made a change to, a current application for SSA benefits online or in person at

an SSA office. The claim is initially set to pending status until SSA has made a decision to approve or deny the claim. This action triggers SSA's pending file database to check the Federal Case Registry (FCR) to see if the claimant has a child support case. If a match is found, the pending claim information is sent to the State notifying it that its case participant has applied for SSA benefits. This information allows a State to then issue an income withholding order (IWO) to SSA for the monthly child support obligation plus a portion of any lump-sum retroactive payments. One State reported a \$20,000 lump-sum collection after it issued an IWO to SSA from information received from the Title II Pending Claims file. Oregon has been successful as well. (*See article about Oregon on page 5.*) It is important to know that this Title II Pending Claims information is not stored in the FCR, so if a case participant signed up for benefits yesterday, and the State has not elected to receive Title II Pending Claims file information, the State will not know to send an IWO to SSA until the person's benefit has been approved or denied, thus missing out on any lump-sum retroactive payments. The sooner a State elects this option, the sooner it can begin to reap its benefits. Even if a State can't currently program for the pending file information, it should at least store the information to be used in the future, or disseminate the information manually so that IWOs can be generated to SSA. Don't let this opportunity slip away!

- **Prisoner information** is sent to SSA from more than 6,500 Federal, State, and local correctional facilities as a cost-recovery program to identify inmates fraudulently receiving SSA benefits. As a result of this program, OCSE is able to share prisoner information with child support agencies. Many States have reported this is a good source for locating case participants.

Several States have been able to automate use of the SVES data and Title II Pending Claims file, but some are still not taking full advantage of this valuable revenue source. Your State Technical Support Liaison can help your program decide how to effectively use this information.

For a list of State Technical Support Liaisons, please refer to: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/newhire/contacts/fcrtscontacts.htm>



# States Report 2008 a Good Year for Collections Through MSFIDM Program

By Matthew Marsolais  
OCSE

In FY 2008, many States successfully attached financial accounts located through the Multistate Financial Institution Data Match (MSFIDM) program. States voluntarily reported collections of more than \$122 million as a result of information provided by OCSE. Texas, New York, and Michigan led the way, reporting more than \$22 million, \$16 million, and \$11 million, respectively.

Many States use an administrative process (no court involvement) to freeze and seize financial accounts belonging to obligors who owe past due support. More than 75 percent of States and jurisdictions have the legal authority to issue actions administratively to financial institutions.

In November 2008, the District of Columbia was added to that group. Prior to that time, the District processed all writs judicially and courts would take months—sometimes even years—to allow the Child Support Division to seize funds. However, with the new capability of issuing administrative writs, the District collected over

\$1.4 million in only 6 months!

The collections through the MSFIDM program make a difference in the lives of children and families. For example, through its “Big Money Project,” Nebraska recently satisfied the arrears on a case by collecting \$53,500 through an administrative action—the largest single collection for Nebraska’s pilot program thus far. The Nebraska central office reviews arrears balances and reports account balances on each MSFIDM match and uses a sort function to find the highest potential collectible amount. This is similar to the Potential Collections Report that OCSE generates upon request for States.

Illinois is on its way to another successful year with MSFIDM. In FY 2008, the State Child Support Enforcement agency netted more than \$9 million in collections and reports collections of more than \$7.8 million thus far in FY 2009. Brad Palmer, FIDM Supervisor, submitted the following story to highlight a recent FIDM collection:

“An Illinois custodial parent was set to celebrate her 50<sup>th</sup> birthday on June 11, 2009. But this year her birthday came a day early when she received a check for \$73,800. Thinking there may be a mistake, the custodial parent called the local Illinois child support agency to confirm that the money belonged to her, and when she learned that it was not a mistake, began crying and thanking staff.”

Please continue to submit success stories for MSFIDM to [matthew.marsolais@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:matthew.marsolais@acf.hhs.gov). These stories serve to remind all child support professionals about the importance of our mission and what it means to the families we serve.

## Project Save Our Children

### Families in Texas, New Hampshire, South Dakota Paid At Last

The following summaries highlight recent cases for which State child support agencies have turned to the national Project Save Our Children (PSOC) task force for help with location, investigation, and prosecution.

- In 2003, Louisiana referred a case to the PSOC task force in Texas, in which a father had been ordered, in 1990, to pay \$450 per month for his three minor children. In March 2009, a Louisiana court ordered payment of a \$37,000 arrearage and \$600-per-month payments, and sentenced him to 5 years probation. Before the sentencing, he had paid \$1,500 towards the ordered restitution. During the hearing, he was allowed to address the court and stated his willingness to pay all he owed. The mother was also allowed to address the court and expressed the difficulty of raising three children without any support. She also stated they have a daughter with disabilities and has had to work four jobs to get by.
- In 1998, a father in New Hampshire was ordered to pay \$77 per week child support for his two minor children. In 2000, the same father was ordered to pay \$77 per week child support to two minor children from a different mother. At the time of



referral to PSOC, the arrearage for both cases had reached \$128,000. The last payment on the orders was nearly 2 years earlier. This July, the father received a suspended jail sentence and restitution for arrearage to be paid to the Office of Child Support Services. He has paid about \$2,000 toward the \$66,000 arrearage at the time of conviction.

- In 2001, a father paid about \$200 toward child support arrears for one child in a South Dakota case that began the year before. In 2007, the State referred the case to PSOC, and later the same year, the father was arrested in Arizona. This April, he was sentenced in South Dakota to supervised probation and restitution of \$34,000, with \$50 weekly payments. Prior to sentencing, he paid \$2,500.
- A California District Court ordered a father, in 2005, to pay \$350 per month for one child. South Dakota,

where the child resides, referred the case to PSOC in 2008, which led to indictment later that year. This May, the father was sentenced in South Dakota to 5 years of probation, restitution of \$16,000, and at least \$50 monthly payments. He has paid about \$2,345.

- In 1997, a South Dakota woman was ordered to pay \$160 per month child support for her two children. The last payment was received in January 2007. In mid-2008, South Dakota referred the case to PSOC, and the mother was indicted in September 2009, after her arrest in Montana. She was ordered in May to pay restitution of \$5,000, with 3 years of supervised probation, and monthly payments of at least \$150. Prior to sentencing, she paid about \$900.

For information about the Project Save Our Children task force, please contact Nick Soppa in OCSE at 202-401-4677 or [nicholas.soppa@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:nicholas.soppa@acf.hhs.gov).

## Passport Denial Program

### Seventeen Sizzling Summer Success Stories

By Rebecca Hamil  
OCSE

As temperatures heated up this summer, so did passport denial collections, with two, from California and Nevada, exceeding \$100,000! Summer travel plans ranged from vacations to exotic locations, family gatherings, and business trips, to just being prepared:

- **California \$179,909:** No immediate travel plans, just wanted a passport
- **Nevada \$148,490:** Traveling to Ireland for vacation
- **California \$65,000:** Pilot flying to Canada for racing team the same day he paid off his past-due child support
- **New York \$62,513:** Identification
- **New York \$41,400:** Travel to Africa to work in his goldmine
- **Tennessee \$39,708:** Visit family in Vietnam
- **Florida \$38,139:** Needs visa for work

- **Louisiana \$35,025:** Attend family gathering in Thailand
- **California \$24,972:** Producer traveling to Iraq to film a documentary
- **New Jersey \$24,000:** Professional umpire with games in Canada
- **Colorado \$23,965:** Business trip to Vietnam
- **Oklahoma \$22,159:** Needed to leave Dubai; hadn't made a payment since 2005
- **California \$18,000:** Travel on a Mexican cruise with 15 siblings to celebrate their sister's 70<sup>th</sup> birthday
- **Hawaii \$16,370:** Representing Hawaii in a voyaging canoe expedition to Polynesia
- **California \$15,000:** Piano player for musicals in Hong Kong
- **Kansas \$15,000:** Bus driver for entertainers
- **South Carolina \$13,944:** Honeymoon cruise via Canada to Alaska

Since 1998, the Passport Denial Program has collected over \$176 million in voluntarily reported lump-sum payments.

For more information on the Passport Denial Program or to report a success story, please contact Rebecca Hamil at [rebecca.hamill@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:rebecca.hamill@acf.hhs.gov).





# Region V Promotes Strategic Planning in Counties, States

By Geneva Bishop  
*OCSE Region V*

Hennepin County, MN's Barry Bloomgren and Illinois' Norris Stevenson presented a workshop on strategic planning at the Indiana Child Support Enforcement Training Conference. Panel moderator Geneva Bishop, OCSE Region V, explained the national Project to Avoid Increasing Delinquencies (PAID) and why strategic planning could help performance planning.

Bloomgren shared experiences using strategic planning in a county-operated environment; Stevenson in a state-operated environment. Both said their goals were to improve program performance and found that a structured approach to planning helped to reach those goals. They found that sharing the challenges and successes of working with larger caseloads and staff has been helpful to them and their programs.

Bloomgren and Stevenson are members of the Region V Urban Jurisdictions Academy, formed several years ago for representatives from jurisdictions "which produce large collections, yet have very different problems," says Linda Lawrence, OCSE Region V Program Manager. "Some of the jurisdictions are located in isolated areas, so the idea of getting together with workers from other large jurisdictions has helped tremendously." Lawrence



**Barry Bloomgren, Hennepin County Child Support Director (left); Geneva Bishop, OCSE Region V (Chicago); and Norris Stevenson, Deputy Administrator-Field Operations, Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services, Division of Child Support Enforcement**

says that she and her staff are pleased with the collegial relationships the academy members established both during and outside of the annual meetings of the group.



**See information about the national Project to Avoid Increasing Delinquencies, referred to in this article, on the OCSE Web site at:**  
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/resources/paid/>

# Region VIII Networks With Interstate Partners

By Regina Bowman  
*OCSE Region VIII*

Region VIII staff hosted a roundtable discussion with partners from its six States, who work on interstate issues, July 21 and 22 in Denver. The meeting's purpose: to share ideas, information, and best practices pertaining to interstate cases. Topics included new UIFSA regulations, State overviews, QUICK (Query Interstate

Cases for Kids), the Interstate Case Reconciliation (ICR) process, and the Child Support Enforcement Network (CSENET).

Also on the agenda were State policies and practices, including: access by other States to case information via the internet; suggestions for handling cases where people move back and forth across State lines frequently; handling requests for modification only, especially when no one is living in the State that issued the order; and handling arrears-only cases. An impromptu discussion focused on document imaging.

The informal atmosphere allowed all to speak openly. State attendees appreciated the face-to-face networking and agreed to participate in bi-monthly conference calls.



## David Shenoda

*“No Kidding: Straight Talk from Teen Parents” is an education initiative developed by the Office of the Attorney General of Texas to provide information on the legal aspects of parenting, and have that information delivered by people who teens are most likely to listen to—their peers. The program is implemented through local collaborations of the Child Support Division, community-based organizations, and school districts. Some have seen presentations about the “No Kidding” program at child support conferences and have asked: “Where do you find the interns?” “How did they get to this point in their lives?” and “What are they doing now?” Meet one of the “No Kidding” interns here:*

When David Shenoda and his long-time girlfriend Claudia headed to college 4 years ago—he to the University of Texas to pursue a degree in aerospace engineering and she to Texas State University to study political science—they had their game plan laid out: finish school and then marry once they had graduated and were established in their respective careers.

Midway through the first semester, however, those plans came to a halt when Claudia discovered she was pregnant. During spring semester, the couple married, and several months later became parents of a baby girl, Kendall. The couple continued to pursue their educations (although each changed career directions, David to graphic design and Claudia to nutrition) while working part-time and raising their daughter.

Then about 2 years ago, when David was looking for a new part-time job, Claudia came across an Internet ad “seeking young fathers to share their stories.” Intrigued, David called and learned that his experiences as a young father could help other young people. As a “No Kidding: Straight Talk from Teen Parents” peer educator, David would be trained to go into middle- and high-school



classes and tell students about the realities and challenges of becoming a parent at a young age.

In his role as a “No Kidding” intern, David spent the next 2 years speaking to well-over a thousand young people, explaining why it is important for a father to establish paternity

for his child and support that child both financially and emotionally. He laid out the costs of raising a child from diapers to day care. Most important, he tried to convey the importance of waiting until you are ready to have a child—in a committed relationship, financially stable, and emotionally mature.

Like fatherhood, David says his experiences presenting the “No Kidding” curriculum have also had a huge impact on his life. “You know there is a lot of stigma and shame when you become a young parent,” he reflects.

“Sharing my story made me more comfortable with my situation. And I also realized that even when you make a mistake, there can still be positive results. Life is full of adversity, and you have to be adaptable. So I became more confident. I also discovered that

I really enjoy teaching and feeling like I am having an impact on my world. I can’t tell you how many times after we finished a presentation, a young mother would come up and share her own story. It was really hard not to cry along with her. I don’t know how much real help we were able to provide, but I think having someone just listen and be understanding, not judgmental, helps a lot.”

After 2 years as “No Kidding” intern (a position in which Claudia still works), David decided to put his schooling on hold while Claudia finished her degree. He decided to look for a position in which he could continue to feel like he was helping people and found that outreach opportunity working full-time as a Child Support Officer in the Texas child support program in the Austin Regional Customer Service Center.

*“I can’t tell you how many times after we finished a presentation, a young mother would come up and share her own story.”*

Because of his experience as a “No Kidding” peer educator, David in some ways entered the position as a walking encyclopedia on child support, bringing everything he had taught *and* learned over the previous 2 years of talking about the realities of being a teen father and hearing the stories of the youth he reached.

As a result, even though he has never been a custodial or noncustodial parent, he has likely heard about every child support scenario; he knows only too well the anger, frustration, pain, and (when it works out well) sense of safety that can accompany the establishment of a legal child support order.

“People who call are angry, frustrated, confused, exhausted,” David explains. “I try very hard to communicate to them that I care about them and their situation. I try to put them at ease, and most importantly, I try very hard not to judge them because I remember all too well what it felt like to be judged.”

Now looking towards a law or criminal justice degree, David reflects: “Who you are is a result of who you were. I can’t imagine what my life would be like if I weren’t a father. And, thanks to my time working with “No Kidding,” I can’t imagine working in something that doesn’t help people.”

—*Michael Hayes, Texas Office of Attorney General*

## Data on Children, Families



Recently published, “America’s Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being” offers data from the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics—a collection of 22 Federal Government agencies involved in research and activities related to children and families (<http://childstats.gov/index.asp>).

The report provides annual updates on the well-being of children and families in the United States across a range of areas: family and social environment, economic circumstances, health care, physical environment and safety, behavior, education, and health. This year’s report has a special feature on children with special health care needs.

The following are excerpts from the section on family and social environment:

- In 2008, 56 percent of children were White, non-Hispanic; 22 percent Hispanic; 15 percent Black; 4 percent Asian; and 5 percent of other races. The percentage of children who are Hispanic has increased faster than that of any other racial or ethnic group, growing from 9 percent of the child population in 1980 to 22 percent in 2008.
- In 2008, 67 percent of children ages birth–17 lived with two married parents, down from 77 percent in 1980.
- The nonmarital birth rate in 2007 was 53 births per 1,000 unmarried women ages 15–44 years. The

nonmarital birth rate has increased annually since 2000–2002, when it was relatively stable at 44 births per 1,000. In 2007, 40 percent of all births were to unmarried women, the highest percentage ever reported. This percentage has increased from 34 percent in 2002.

- In 2007, the adolescent birth rate was 22.2 per 1,000 young women ages 15–17, up from the 2006 rate of 22 per 1,000. This was the second consecutive year of increase in this rate after dropping by almost half from 1991 to 2005.

### *Child Support Report*

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