

Child Support Report

OFFICE OF CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT



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Reflections on 35 Years of the Program



By Vicki Turetsky
OCSE Commissioner

During the child support program's 35th anniversary year, I have been reflecting on the program's history and looking ahead to the future.

Like many of you, I have been involved with the child support program for longer than I care to admit! My first job out of law school in late 1982 was in the Minnesota Attorney General's Office, where one of my responsibilities was to serve as the lawyer for the state child support, or "IV-D," program, as it was known then.

The child support program was just 7 years old. It was basically a welfare cost reimbursement unit of the old Aid

to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program. Virtually all of the families in the child support program were AFDC recipients, and the government kept nearly all of the collections to repay welfare benefits. Collection rates were very low—less than 10 or 12 percent in most states.

One of the major controversies of the day was the new federal requirement to extend child support services to families who were not receiving AFDC. Some raised concerns about "mission creep." There were no child support guidelines, no automatic income withholding, no genetic tests and no automation. In fact, my first lawsuit was to defend the constitutionality of new IRS tax offset procedures.

Interstate enforcement was limited. Those were the days before UIFSA was enacted, and states entered into interstate "compacts," agreements to collect child support across state lines. For example a state like Minnesota might negotiate an agreement with its neighbor Wisconsin

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Share Your Reflections

The *Child Support Report* wants to hear from you—the child support professionals around the country. Tell us about major and minor accomplishments you have witnessed in the program—at the federal, state, tribal or local level; in a judicial setting; or in a national or community organization. Send your reflections (up to 250 words) to the editor at elaine.blackman@acf.hhs.gov. The *Child Support Report* will share them through the rest of this 35th anniversary year.



Please include your name, place of work and a photo of yourself. (Photo is optional.)

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

to enforce cases over the border. Most of the time, interstate cases stayed in the file drawer. What a far cry from the innovative tri-state “Border Project,” featured on page 4, which builds on federal automated interstate systems CSENet and QUICK (Query Interstate Cases for Kids) to ensure timely and successful enforcement.

From these modest beginnings, the child support program has emerged as one of the “Big 3” income supports for low-income custodial families, along with Earned Income Tax Credits (EITC) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. The collection rate for cases is 57 percent (fiscal year 2009). And, over 90 percent of the money we collect is now paid to families.

Every aspect of the program depends on efficiency, innovation and technology to carry out our mission of collecting support for children. We’ve become one of the most automated and interoperable programs in government—exchanging data not just across state lines, but with employers, financial institutions, insurance companies and other government programs.

We’ve innovated, tested and implemented best practices such as early intervention strategies to help parents stay on track with payments (see “In the Lab” on page 7). And we’ve been expanding our toolkit to collect child support in cases where traditional tools have not worked. For example, some state and tribal programs are helping fathers get jobs and become role models for their children (see “D.C. Helping Parents Get Jobs” on page 6, and “Georgia ‘Teen Dads’ Partnership Program Centers on

Prevention” on page 9). At a recent meeting hosted by the Nez Perce tribal child support program, tribal directors discussed ways to assist in workforce development to increase employment of both parents (see page 8). Other programs help uninsured families enroll in health care programs like Medicaid and Children’s Health Insurance Program, or CHIP (see page 3).

But more, we have had a profound effect on our country’s values and culture, with our message about parental responsibility and commitment and the importance of both parents in their children’s lives. Back when I started working with the child support program, divorcing fathers could make a one-time payment for their children as part of the divorce settlement and then “get on with their lives.” Now society expects parents to be there for their children as they grow up.

As President Obama said in his June 21, 2010, [speech](#):

“Now, I can’t legislate fatherhood—I can’t force anybody to love a child. But what we can do is send a clear message to our fathers that there is no excuse for failing to meet their obligations. What we can do is make it easier for fathers who make responsible choices and harder for those who avoid those choices. What we can do is come together and support fathers who are willing to step up and be good partners and parents and providers.”

(See article below for more about the President’s speech.)

President Obama Announces Fatherhood Initiative

For Father’s Day this year, President Obama announced a nationwide Fatherhood and Mentoring Initiative, a year after he kicked off a national conversation on fatherhood and responsibilities. He described the initiative as “a call to action for raising awareness about responsible fatherhood and working to reengage absent fathers with their families.”

As part of this effort, the President mentioned the proposed new and expanded Fatherhood, Marriage and Families Innovation Fund. Learn more about this fund on the [OCSE website](#).

The President also referred to a new transitional jobs initiative for ex-offenders and low-income, noncustodial fathers “because these are men who often face serious barriers to finding work and keeping work. We’ll help

them develop the skills and experience they need to move into full-time, long-term employment, so they can meet their child support obligations and help provide for their families.”



See the President’s [remarks and a video](#) from a June 21 event in D.C., on www.whitehouse.gov.

Secretary's 5-Year Challenge to Connect Uninsured Children to Medicaid and CHIP

By Crystal Rodriguez
OCSE

HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius has challenged all of us—federal officials, state agencies, governors, mayors, community organizations, tribal leaders and faith-based organizations—to enroll eligible uninsured children in Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). The five-year campaign, "The Secretary's Challenge: Connecting Kids to Coverage," focuses on enrolling the nearly 5 million uninsured children who are eligible for Medicaid or CHIP but not enrolled.

Research shows that children from low-income families are the most likely children to be uninsured. Many of these children are in the child support caseload. Of child support-eligible children, about three-quarters are also eligible for Medicaid or CHIP. Although the cost of private coverage has risen over 100 percent in the past decade, the rates and number of uninsured children have decreased due to public coverage provided by programs like Medicaid and CHIP. Nearly one-third of children in this country hold public coverage; this coverage is effective in providing preventive care and reducing out-of-pocket costs.

The Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2009 (CHIPRA) will help the Secretary's challenge because it makes determining eligibility and enrolling children in Medicaid and CHIP programs easier than ever. CHIPRA offers several options to ease enrollment, including changes to the citizenship documentation process, the "express lane" eligibility option, automatic enrollment for newborns, and outreach and enrollment grants.

ACF Role in the Challenge

To support the Secretary's challenge, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) formed a partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture—demonstrating the commitment of HHS and the Department of Agriculture to improve access to federal benefits for families in need.

At a kickoff meeting in April, representatives from the three agencies identified strategies—short-term and long-term—to meet the challenge. Long-term strategies included how each program can assist in enrolling eligible uninsured children in Medicaid and CHIP.

One of the collaboration's workgroups will focus on the express lane eligibility option. This option was created by CHIPRA to allow states to rely on the eligibility determinations or findings of other programs designated by the state as an "express lane agency" on whether a child meets one or more eligibility factors for Medicaid and CHIP. The option allows the express lane agency to more easily determine eligibility and automatically enroll or renew eligible children in Medicaid and CHIP.

The idea behind this option is to streamline the enrollment and renewal process and ultimately ease the process for eligible children to receive health care coverage. The child support program can be designated by the state as an express lane agency to determine eligibility for Medicaid and CHIP using information collected by the child support program.

The express lane eligibility workgroup will coordinate with CMS to assist the Department of Agriculture and ACF program offices to identify express lane agencies. The workgroup plans to raise awareness of the Secretary's Challenge and how programs can work together to increase enrollment of eligible uninsured children in Medicaid and CHIP, including clarifying the data-sharing authority.

The CMS [Insure Kids Now website](#) is an excellent resource to support this collaboration. The website includes outreach materials in English and Spanish, information about the CHIP and Medicaid programs, and other materials to assist in meeting the Secretary's challenge.

Get the 'Insure Kids Now' Widget

OCSE is doing its part in [Secretary Sebelius's Challenge](#) to enroll all eligible uninsured children in CHIP and Medicaid within 5 years. See the [Insure Kids Now widget](#) in English and Spanish on the [OCSE website](#). The widget links to information about programs by state, and to another widget that links to the [Children's Health Insurance Toolkit](#). (Toolkit materials are available in Spanish, Korean, Simplified Chinese and Vietnamese.) You can customize these materials to distribute in your community.





WI-IL-IN to Create Change

'Border Project' Opens Tri-State Communication to Process Cases ... and Keeps Growing and Growing

Recently Geneva Bishop in the OCSE Region V office in Chicago interviewed Darlene Jaffe-Sandberg of the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, Kenosha County Child Support Agency, about a tri-state partnership named the Border Project. The interview explains the Border Project from its simple beginning, to a national model to improve interstate child support casework and communication. The Border Project now supplements the states' participation in federal interstate systems—CSENet and QUICK (Query Interstate Cases for Kids).



Darlene Jaffe-Sandberg

What was your driving force behind the Border Project?

Interstate casework frustration! The enforcement of child support when all parties live in the same state is difficult enough; it becomes more complicated when the case changes to interstate. There's diversity in each state's requirements, and statewide call centers have limited our ability to speak to a caseworker in another state. Our customers move back and forth across state lines. They frequently have child support cases in more than one state and duplicate orders. Obtaining information from the state they left is problematic and most of the time a lengthy and prolonged process. Once we get the paperwork, we may not even understand what the other state is asking because of our disparity in terms. It was imperative to improve communication for the sake of all the children we serve.

How did the project begin?

Our project began in 2004 with a series of teleconferences between Illinois and Wisconsin to develop a method to improve communication between our states. We decided we needed to meet face to face

in Lake County, IL. Our child support offices are only 13 miles apart.

The energy and enthusiasm in the room was palpable. Our group included all levels of child support professionals having one thing in common: dedication and commitment to improving interstate case processing. Determined to sustain our momentum, we held another meeting in Kenosha, WI. I suggested that the supervisors have their front-line

caseworkers accompany them.

We set up our conference room to encourage open communication between the attending attorneys, managers and caseworkers. I emphatically believe that what set us apart from other projects was the inclusion of caseworkers. We passed around the proverbial sign-in sheet, which became standard for all meetings; we give all attendees a copy.

What were your "worker exchange days"?

Excellent. Seeing first-hand how other agencies managed their cases was a real eye-opener. We paired caseworkers to other caseworkers with similar jobs. They actually discovered some shared cases.

When did Cook County become active in the project?

Fortunately for us, Mary Morrow, Assistant Deputy Administrator, Illinois Division of Child Support, relocated to Cook County. Mary has been an integral member of our Border Project from the beginning. In 2005, we brought caseworkers from Kenosha to Cook County to observe and learn from each other. Mary recruited others from Cook to join us in Kenosha at our next meeting. Durman Jackson of the Cook County States Attorney's office was accompanied by a few of his staff, and Mary was accompanied by other caseworkers

and supervisors. Irene Curran of Lake County State's Attorneys Office, a member of the Border Project since our beginning, also brought a few of her staff members.

Not only did we share information about our differences, we learned what each office requires in order to prosecute an interstate case. Our goal was, and still is, to provide efficient service to our customers in order to help more children receive their child support.

Our meetings became yearly conferences. By 2006, Debbie Packard, Illinois Downstate Field Operations Assistant Manager, became very active in our project. Debbie is an expert in interstate work and a very enthusiastic and hard working member of our group. Mary, Debbie, Irene, Durman and I have become a team of presenters at other Wisconsin child support conferences.

How did Indiana become a member of the project?

Transportation from Kenosha to Illinois and Indiana is easy by train, bus or car. With OCSE regional office assistance, Gina Jones, the Director of Lake County (Indiana) Child Support Agency was invited to attend our July 2007 Border Project conference. Gina brought a few of her caseworkers. To have three states meeting together in an environment that encourages exchange of information is an extraordinary accomplishment.

Last year Indiana invited me to its child support conference to present information about our project. Denette Stokes of the Lake County office accompanied me on a tour of their office and courthouse. Discovering the composition and functions of their office and meeting the other staff members really enhanced my understanding of their program.

What is the new venture called the National Child Support Communication Forum (NCSCF)?

The NCSCF was my brainchild in 2008, as an offshoot to the Border Project. When speaking with multi-state child support professionals, I identified one common problem: Communication! I asked others for ideas about sharing our direct phone lines with other equally dedicated child support professionals. The idea was



enthusiastically received and our data base became a reality. Every week I receive membership requests from other child support professionals. Others throughout the United States have taken notice of our endeavor. Our positive results speak for themselves. We have more than 262 members representing 34 states and 2 countries. We have one rule that preserves the integrity of our forum: You cannot receive a copy of our contact list unless you are a member. Our forum exemplifies the dedication and commitment of child support professionals throughout the country.

What are the Border Project's biggest accomplishments?

In 2006 Wisconsin and Illinois entered into an agreement to share access to each other's child support computer systems. This accomplishment revolutionized interstate casework processing. At Kenosha's annual Border Project conference, all levels of child support professionals from the three states share information. Representatives from Michigan will be attending our 2010 conference, in Kenosha, on Aug. 20. Anyone interested in attending may contact me at dsandber@co.kenosha.wi.us or 262-697-4738. On the agenda: expedited case processing, improved response time to and from other states, improved financial record keeping and effective case prosecution.

Another huge accomplishment: expanded communication with all other states through the National Child Support Communication Forum.

And another: the [Border Project website \(www.childsupportborderproject.com\)](http://www.childsupportborderproject.com). From last October through this April, the website had 6,500 visits. Individuals from 20 countries and territories, including the United States, have visited the site.

Finally, we attained our goals without any additional state or federal funding.

I am fortunate to have had the opportunity to pursue my passion and have had the pleasure of meeting so many dedicated child support professionals. At times we may be tired, overworked and unappreciated, but we never give up. Despite our faltering economy, our projects continue to improve. Today 34 states, tomorrow, the world!

D.C. Helping Noncustodial Parents Get Jobs

By Shirley Y. Payne, April Randal, Angelisa Young and Tanya Jones Bosier
District of Columbia Child Support Services Division

Several years ago, District of Columbia Mayor Adrian M. Fenty charged the District of Columbia Child Support Services Division with assisting noncustodial parents with employment services. The Mayor had recognized the widespread problem of parents who wanted to pay their child support obligations, but had lost their jobs or hours at work. Now more than 100 noncustodial parents have participated in the division's employment program, created in 2008; about half of those have obtained employment or enrolled in vocational programs or apprenticeships.

The employment program has two components. The first component grew out of the division's collaboration with the Department of Employment Services. The Department of Employment Services co-locates an employment specialist at the division office a few days a week to work with noncustodial parents. The specialist works solely with these customers, giving job referrals, case management services and other assistance. The hallmark of this component of the program is that the noncustodial parents have one case manager from the Department of

Employment Services to assist them with all employment needs.

Under the leadership of Tanya Jones Bosier, chief of the policy outreach and training section, the division created the second component of its employment program—two “job readiness workshops,” offered on alternate months. One workshop is about writing résumés and cover letters; the other is about how to get and keep a job—i.e., how to “dress for success” and prepare for job interviews. The instructors, Justin Latus, Shirley Payne, April Randall and Angelisa Young, also address interviewing techniques and engage in mock interviews with the participants.

Both components of the program—working with the specialist and attending workshops—are for noncustodial parents who owe current child support on their orders. When the division created the program, it envisioned that only the division staff would refer noncustodial parents to participate in the program. Today the D.C. Superior Court's Family Division also makes referrals. When the judge orders noncustodial parents to take part in job searches to avoid civil contempt, he or she might also order them to participate in the division's employment program and allow their participation to count as one of their job search requirements.

For further information, please contact shirley.payne@dc.gov.

Training for Kickapoo Tribal Program

Region VI staff in OCSE and the grants management unit trained members of the Kickapoo Tribe of Oklahoma's child support program and judiciary, in the Dallas regional office June 15. The training focused on conversion to a comprehensive program based on the tribe's plan and fiscal and reporting requirements. From left: Honorable Cregg Webb, Judicial Judge, Kickapoo Tribal Court; Bessie R. Scott, Director, Kickapoo Tribe of Oklahoma; Carla “Renee” Sumano, Administrative Assistant, Kickapoo Tribe of Oklahoma; Jane H. Martin, Region VI State and Tribal Program Specialist; Honorable Lisa B. Otipoby, Judicial Judge, Kickapoo Tribal Court; LaMonica Wooten, Region VI Program Specialist; Sona Cook, Region VI Grants Management Specialist; Karen Valdez, Case Manager, Kickapoo Tribe of Oklahoma; and Carl Rich, Region VI State and Tribal Program Specialist.



In the Lab: Tennessee's 4th Judicial District Child Support Office Tests Methods for Workers Statewide

By Kay McCampbell

Tennessee 4th Judicial District Child Support Office

The first five letters of laboratory—labor—describe the intense activity in Tennessee's 4th Judicial District Child Support Office for the last two and a half years. Designated as a "laboratory site" by the state child support office, the 4th Judicial District staff has researched and tested ideas and techniques with the hope of identifying best practices that child support offices across the state can adapt to improve program efficiency and performance—all in addition to their regular work. One of the more unique aspects of this laboratory approach is that the staff consults with veteran state employees on various issues, management and technical aspects of the program.

Customer Service and Early Intervention

For starters, the office developed, delivered and posted online a customer service training module for child support workers across the state—and it has been added to the state's "Child Support Training Toolbox" orientation package. The office also routinely tests the state training initiatives before statewide rollout and has tested best practices in innovative case assessment techniques and paternity model case procedures and shared them across the state.

In another effort, the office expanded its "phone tree system" and shared it with others in the state. The system makes automated phone calls to customers to remind them of court dates, office appointments and payment due dates. One of the most helpful results from the phone tree system has been discovering telephone numbers no longer in use. The automated system also lets staff have more time to work on other pressing business.

Results from the phone tree system show its positive effect on collections. Since the system became part of the daily operation of the 4th Judicial District last September, 48 percent of parents who answered phone calls (548) paid a total \$117,875 in child support. Also, the calls revealed 194 numbers no longer in use.

The 4th Judicial District office also has tested early intervention initiatives, some of which other states are using as well as other areas in Tennessee. Examples include appointments with customers and introductory letters to explain the child support process, courtesy phone calls, intense efforts to obtain agreed upon orders and phone contact numbers. Early intervention helps parents to cooperate earlier in the child support collection process with the hope that parents will feel more a part of the process and develop a trusting relationship with the program and, ultimately, pay more child support for their children.

continued on next page

Tennessee's 4th Judicial District Child Support Office staff: (front row, from left) Patti Wood, Sara Williams, Danny Meredith, Jennifer Buchanan and Misty Fine; (second row) Danyelle Williams, Tina Petit, Debra Watts, Dorcas Phillips, Dan Noe and Melissa Owens; (back row) Nancy Hammer, Susie Wears and Ginger West



Support for District Parents and Counties

The 4th Judicial District gets help from the Tennessee Child Support and Parenting Partnership—a community program that helps struggling parents to overcome barriers to pay court ordered child support. It assists the parents in becoming successfully employed by providing job readiness skills and transportation, and arranging for professional counseling when and where needed. The 4th Judicial District hopes this program, too, will become a valuable resource to the other areas of the state.

The office studied “service of process” issues for counties in the district where it has been difficult to guarantee a dependable system for serving individuals with a pending court date. The experiment has shown it may be cost effective and timely to use a private process server in some instances.

The 4th Judicial District office hadn’t looked at imaging case files (nor had the District Attorney-administered judicial districts) until the lab staff studied the idea and consulted with the department’s systems division. The 4th Judicial District office plans to begin imaging its files soon. As a result, staff will no longer need to use paper files to complete their work and will reduce storage needs, and case information will literally be at the finger tips of the staff via computer.



Retired contract staff who assist with the “lab” projects are, from left, Mary Jo Bates, Kay McCampbell, Carroll Fox and Gaye Cooper.

Plans Underway

To function effectively every day, staff has had to be flexible, open-minded to change and willing to use their creative abilities. They will get more opportunities soon as the lab is planning to use technology to become more efficient at locating noncustodial parents, design a better local system of working with employers, and become even more accessible to the public through an outreach program that, hopefully, will educate and motivate the public to learn about and use the child support program.

For more information, contact Kay McCampbell at kay.mccampbell@state.tn.us or 865-594-6151, ext. 3557.

Nez Perce Tribe Hosts Commissioner Turetsky, Northwest Tribal Programs

Nez Perce Tribe Chairman Samuel M. Penney officially welcomed Commissioner Vicki Turetsky for a visit to the reservation in Idaho this April. Also attending were OCSE Region X representatives and 13 other Northwest tribal child support directors and staff.

Attendees discussed possible ways to measure tribal child support efforts. Tribal directors emphasized that their programs deal with many families living in poverty and unemployed. The additional stress of child support creates even more pressure and conflict between custodial and noncustodial parents. Directors discussed ways to broaden the program’s ability to mediate, work with parents to resolve outstanding debts, recognize in-kind payments, and assist in workforce development to increase employment of both parents.



Nez Perce Tribe’s child support program Director Carla Timentwa

Attendees also discussed how to create meaningful government-to-government consultation on issues important to tribes. The Commissioner expressed her commitment to continue to reach out to strengthen the two-way communications with state and tribal program directors, adding that “I appreciate the number of tribal and state child support programs that have built effective relationships that can tackle such challenging issues as jurisdiction, case transfer and state debt.”

(See the [May 2010 Child Support Report](#), page 2, for more comments by the Commissioner on greater communication with tribal programs.)

Georgia 'Teen Dads' Partnership Program Centers on Prevention

By Sandy Keating

Georgia Division of Child Support Services

The Georgia Division of Child Support Services cannot “tell its story” without including the element of prevention. For any child program to succeed, it needs to help to prevent families from needing welfare or food stamps, children from needing state medical insurance, recidivism of noncustodial parents—and the list goes on.

The Division believes that prevention also should focus on decreasing, if not altogether stopping, the epidemic of absentee parents. More than 70 percent of juveniles in state reform institutions come from fatherless homes, according to the [Family Support Council](#). For these reasons, the Division’s Fatherhood Program seized the opportunity to partner with Georgia’s Department of Juvenile Justice on a project called Teen Dads.

Nexus of Accountability

The objective of this partnership is simple: break the cycle of absentee parents to prevent other children from losing their opportunity to lead healthy and productive lives. The nexus between the partners is accountability. The Department of Juvenile Justice mission includes holding youthful offenders accountable for their actions by helping establish youth in their communities as productive citizens. The mission of the Fatherhood Program includes holding noncustodial parents accountable for becoming self-sufficient and for increasing their emotional and financial support of their children. If teen parents become accountable to themselves, then they are in good standing to become role models for their children.

Pilot Site Sets the Trend

The Department of Juvenile Justice’s Eastman Youth Development Campus is the pilot site for Teen Dads. The program has 2-hour sessions, once a week for 5 weeks. Class size is 10-12 with teen participation voluntary, but strongly encouraged.

The curriculum’s original five modules—fatherhood development, life skills, responsible fatherhood and men’s health and relationships—were constantly reevaluated to keep the teens engaged. Most important to the teens during discussion were topics that affected them daily: decision making, group influence, stereotyping, parental

responsibility, relationship building, learning how to be positive role models and leaving a legacy.

Neal Edalگو, a Division of Child Support Services “fatherhood agent” and training coordinator for Teen Dads, has worked closely with Eastman’s Director Billy Yarborough and Assistant Director Fran Wells. Together they have become trendsetters for this new type of partnership.

“Healing is one of the first components that must be achieved,” said Edalگو. “These teens are defeated by what they perceive as their own shortcomings as fathers and suffer deep wounds from the experiences they had with their fathers.” Teen Dads tries to show these young men that they have a choice in the kind of father they become for their children; the curriculum shows them how to model responsible parenting.

Teen Dads is conducting a new session at Eastman and plans to expand to a second Department of Juvenile Justice facility. The spirit of Teen Dads was captured best by one of its participants who, when asked why he wanted custody of his child, answered, “Nobody can raise my baby in the way that I want him raised, but me.”

For further information, please contact Sandy Keating at 404-657-3861 or smkeating@dhr.state.ga.us.



**Fatherhood agent
Neal Edalگو**

Child Support Report



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