

Child Support Report

OFFICE OF CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT



Vol. 32 No. 6 September 2010

Electronic Income Withholding Orders: A Portal for Savings



By **Bill Stuart**
OCSE

How can your state child support agency increase collections, save money and reduce paper, postage and staff time—without having to purchase any new equipment or hardware? The answer: send income withholding orders (IWO) to employers electronically.

Through the e-IWO portal, a state can electronically send an IWO to an employer, and the employer can advise the state that the IWO was accepted or an employee no longer works there. Also, an employer could use the portal to notify the state when it is getting ready to award bonuses. This gives the state the opportunity to attach the bonus.

States using e-IWO receive the first payment three weeks earlier, on average, than with paper IWO. So the e-IWO process gets child support money to the family more quickly and helps to keep the noncustodial parent current with his or her obligation. And states save at least \$1 per IWO sent electronically (the cost of postage, paper, time and printing).

In the past two years, the number of states using the portal to send IWOs has grown to 22: Arizona, California, Colorado, District of Columbia, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia, Washington and West Virginia.

Participating Employers

More than 95 employers representing more than 800 FEINs (Federal Employee Identification Numbers) receive IWOs electronically. The e-IWO project has been well received by employers, and the number participating

continues to increase.

Some of the largest employers and payroll processors using the portal are:

DFAS	Jet Blue
USPS	JCPenney
ADP	KBR
Tyson Foods	Burger King
Dollar Tree Stores	Sun Trust Banks, Inc.
Verizon	State of North Dakota

See a complete list of all employers using e-IWO.

Future Uses for the Portal

OCSE plans to automate the National Medical Support Notice using the e-IWO processes and procedures for the portal. Other frequently exchanged documents, such as verifications of employment, may be added to the portal allowing OCSE and state child support agencies to capitalize on the work already done in e-IWO while improving services to families.

To join the states and employers using e-IWO, please contact Bill Stuart at william.k.stuart@lmco.com. Stay tuned for more articles on other electronic improvements to child support processes.

Inside This Issue

Commissioner's Voice: Efficiency, Innovation and Technology	2
Interstate Communication Gets QUICK Boost	3
Beaver County, PA, Helps Parents 'PAY-UP'	4
Domestic Violence: Safely Pursuing Child Support	6
New Mexico Tribal-State Consortium	7
Urban Jurisdictions Share Challenges	8
Tribal Association Conference in Mescalera, NM	9
Your Reflections on 35 Years of the Program	10



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

Efficiency, Innovation and Technology



Every aspect of the child support program depends on efficiency, innovation and technology to constantly improve and achieve success. We need to keep moving forward as a program. Improving efficiency is especially important in the current budget environment. I am hearing about initiatives in states, local offices and tribes to reengineer business processes and to implement technological solutions. One example is the use of web-based training as training and travel budgets diminish.

Technology is helping our program streamline the delivery of child support services. We use automated data-matches, electronic income withholding orders, and image-based remittance processing to help us quickly establish and enforce child support orders and get the money to families faster. The majority of states have recognized the cost savings related to electronic disbursement and either issue child support payments via direct deposit or a debit card. For the latest news on the income-withholding project, see page 1.

Technology is also helping us select the right tools to increase child support collections. Through web-based

information sharing, we can do a better job enforcing interstate cases.

Through caseload data and segmentation, we can better understand the reasons for nonpayment in each case and take the actions most likely to result in success. Learn about updates with QUICK (Query Interstate Cases for Kids) on page 3.

And technology is helping us better communicate. State and tribal programs are looking to web-based applications, cell-phone technology and social media to engage our customers. To increase access to child support services by underserved populations, we have developed outreach and education tools, such as the [online Hispanic toolkit](#).

I hope you're enjoying reading about the experiences of child support professionals in recent issues of this newsletter, in honor of the program's 35th anniversary (see pages 9-10). I look forward to a retrospective article about interstate child support, in the October issue, and several from the judiciary in November!

Vicki Turetsky



Census: More Children Living in Poverty

U.S. Census Bureau's new national estimates of poverty report both the number of children in poverty (15.5 million) and the child poverty rate (nearly 21 percent) increased from 2008 to 2009. More than a third of all people in poverty in 2009 were children.



Interstate Communication Gets **QUICK** Boost, Wide Praise

By Joyce Myers
OCSE



The ability to process interstate child support cases quickly just got quicker—using QUICK—much to the delight of its users. QUICK (Query Interstate Cases for Kids) is the innovative intergovernmental communication tool that allows caseworkers to view child support case information in real time using case IDs from their state and the other state handling the case.

Since its inception in 2005, the number of jurisdictions using the application has more than quadrupled, from 6 to 25, and 7 more are developing the application. More than 6,000 child support personnel have used QUICK to request more than 236,000 views of case information.

Initially, QUICK offered a financial summary for the case, with noncustodial parent payment and disbursement detail, as well as participant and case status information. In 2007, a new Case Activities module offered completed case actions by the other state in the areas of locate, paternity, order establishment and enforcement. This enhancement also could provide contact information for the caseworker in the other state. The combination of financial and case activities information provided numerous benefits for caseworkers—and their customers.

New “Query by SSN”

As OCSE continuously seeks input from stakeholders about ways to improve QUICK, it has found the number one enhancement requested by users is the ability to query QUICK using the SSN of a case participant when the case number in the other state is unknown.

In response, OCSE released the “Query by SSN” in

December 2009, which queries the Federal Case Registry using the SSN of a case participant.

When the requesting jurisdiction has a case for the participant on the Federal Case Registry, QUICK provides case IDs for all jurisdictions associated with a participant’s SSN. Using the case IDs provided by the search results, caseworkers can then query other jurisdictions participating in QUICK for information on their cases.

Users give this enhancement resounding praise. In addition to locating case IDs, inventive workers are finding uses for the “Query by SSN” in conjunction with a QUICK transaction. According to manager Cynthia Lucas in Columbus, OH, caseworkers are using the query results to:

- Reconcile errors for the Interstate Case Reconciliation Project
- Confirm the existence of cases in other jurisdictions during the intake process, obtain an order if it exists or initiate a UIFSA petition
- Locate addresses and SSNs of parties in other jurisdictions before sending a petition
- Obtain case IDs for cases that are not on QUICK, giving the worker a starting point for contacting other jurisdictions
- Verify IRS payments in other jurisdictions
- Balance arrears records

In one instance, caseworkers queried QUICK within 5 minutes of locating a case ID and generated 11,609 requests to view cases in other jurisdictions.

QUICK records from Oct. 1, 2009, to May 31, 2010, reveal 28,864 successful Federal Case Registry SSN queries, finding 36,991 case IDs.



IN PRAISE OF QUICK – Cynthia Lucas (Ohio), Beth Morris (West Virginia) and Lynn Phillips (Florida)

QUICK Reviews

Reactions to QUICK from caseworkers throughout the nation are overwhelmingly positive. One Pennsylvania worker says: “It is the best interstate communication tool ever invented.”

West Virginians Regina Foster (Charleston) and Beth Morris (Brooke-Hancock County) praise QUICK for allowing them to respond to customers immediately and work cases much faster. Both caseworkers use QUICK to look up payments, determine discrepancies in balances, verify arrears and find orders they did not know existed.

Manager Tony George (Charleston) pointed to yet another use: “When we find an order, we copy and paste the basic information and request a copy of the order from the other state. [This] gets the support payment flowing faster.”

Lynn Phillips in Crestview, FL, uses the Query by SSN extensively. She said her “biggest wish is to be able to

view and print the order or have a scanned copy sent immediately.”

QUICK’s new query function enables workers to locate more participants, verify information, balance records, find orders and take the “next step” case action to bring support to children across the nation.

See information about [QUICK enhancements](#) on the OCSE website.

The CSENet/QUICK End User Support Team (CSENet.2000@lmco.com or 1-800-258-2736) can help you develop and implement these enhancements in your state. See a list of [technical representatives](#) on the OCSE website.

Promising Practices

Beaver County Helps Parents ‘PAY-UP’ to Break Cycle of Nonpayment

By Joseph Signore

Beaver County, PA, Domestic Relations Office

John Clark

OCSE Region III

The Beaver County, PA, Domestic Relations Office has shown certain noncustodial parents they can “PAY-UP” and break their repetitive cycle of nonpayment on child support obligations. PAY-UP—Parental Attention to Youth – Unemployment Program—addresses the unfortunate cycle that starts with arrears build-up and leads to ... determining that the noncustodial parent is in contempt ... imposing a jail sentence or receiving a last-minute payment ... accumulating more arrears when the jail sentence starts, or after the payment because, once again, the parent does not pay.

Intake Process

PAY-UP maintains about 100 cases. Parents who qualify for the program either never paid support or have a limited history of paying and no current employment. The small caseload allows the coordinator to spend valuable time meeting with the parent. The meetings emphasize to the parent the responsibility to pay support regularly and to help him or her obtain a paying position.

If the parent is unemployed upon placement in the program, the court sets a temporary, nonmonetary (or

minimal) order for 6 months. (This is a “selling piece”—that the parent will be getting a job or going to jail within 6 months and that the case will be reviewed after securing employment.)

The primary goal of the initial intake meeting is to have the parent secure employment within 6 months. The intake for PAY-UP includes assessing and prioritizing his or her needs. These needs can include getting a GED, treating drug addiction or alcoholism, eliminating homelessness, expunging a criminal record, etc. The next step involves developing a “goal sheet” to prioritize immediate needs.

Case Management

After the initial meeting, the critical case management involves:

- Developing and maintaining a “plan of action” tailored to the needs of a parent to attain better skills for a job opportunity.
- Contacting all parents at least weekly to ensure they are meeting their plan of action.
- Contacting (weekly) professionals of CareerLink, Adult Literacy, Social Security, Professional Outfitters, GED testing sites and all possible social



service agencies to ensure parents are meeting all requirements of these agencies and the parents' needs are fulfilled.

- Maintaining “aftercare follow-up” with each parent successfully employed for 6 months before releasing the case back to the original conference or enforcement officer for continued, but normal, caseload supervision.

As part of the case management process, the parent is required to appear at the Domestic Relations Office each morning from 8:30 to noon until he or she is employed. This is their “job.” Often, because of this reporting requirement, many defendants who are working “under the table” begin making regular payments rather than reporting to the office daily. In addition, the office encourages parents to take a volunteer position for the benefit of placing that experience on a resume.

Self-Esteem

Many of the parents in the program have very low self-esteem. Four successful techniques help to improve their sense of self-worth:

- Treat them like “part of the staff” (e.g., offer them a cup of coffee while discussing their case);
- Set a goal of making a monthly payment amount (or a \$50 arrearage payment) over 3 months and share how the payment to the custodial parent benefited the child (e.g., used to buy school supplies);
- Share examples of prior successful and unsuccessful PAY-UP participants; and
- Have a successful PAY-UP participant talk to some of the clients who “aren’t getting it.”

Responsibility

If the parents fail in any capacity, they are subject to contempt or probation, and jail time becomes a serious possibility. This requires much coordination and trust between the county director, the PAY-UP coordinator and the judge hearing the case. This enforcement component means that the parents take the program very seriously. Based on word of mouth in the county and discussions with the coordinator,



the parents realize the consequences of not meeting their responsibilities in the PAY-UP program.

Results and Reasons for Success

The program works. Since it started in May 2008:

- 163 noncustodial parents (many with multiple orders) have participated;
- 42 are paying their monthly obligation in full (26 percent);
- 55 have paid their monthly obligation in full for 6 months or longer (34 percent);
- 53 have a monthly order of zero but are successfully completing all requirements of their plan of action (32 percent); and
- 13 others were either removed from the program or the case was closed. (8 percent).

PAY-UP is successful because participants' orders are lowered or set at zero temporarily so additional arrears do not accumulate; effective case management insures that the parents have individualized plans; and daily participant requirements and quick enforcement results in payments by some and enforcement PAY-UP for those not complying. PAY-UP provides the opportunity for noncustodial parents to meet their financial responsibilities to their children by providing effective employment services and improving participants' self-esteem.

Investing Individualized Attention

State Director Daniel Richard summarizes PAY-UP and similar programs in other Pennsylvania counties:

“Many times we find that noncustodial parents benefit tremendously when job placement and retention programs and referrals are offered by the local child support agency. Noncustodial parents are aware of the connection between payment of support and the positive impact on their

children. Current economic realities only serve to underscore that. With the investment of some individualized time and attention, unemployed, underemployed and hard-to-place noncustodial parents are able to secure jobs and contribute financially and meaningfully.”

For more information, please contact Frank Platz, PAY-UP Coordinator, at 724-728-3934, ext. 70.

Domestic Violence: Safely Pursuing Child Support



By Anne Menard

Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Domestic violence and child support often overlap. Domestic violence issues can come up at any point in the child support process, and domestic violence survivors need accurate and complete information about the child support process to plan for their own safety.

To raise awareness about the intersection between domestic violence and child support, OCSE is partnering with the [Family Violence Prevention and Services Program/Family & Youth Services Bureau](#) and the [National Resource Center on Domestic Violence](#). The partnership will develop domestic violence information that may be useful to child support programs.

Victims' Fears

Economic dependence is one of the main reasons that women remain in, or return to, an abusive relationship. In one study, more than half of domestic violence victims surveyed stayed with their abusive partner because they did not feel they could support themselves and their children.

Another study of the “exit plans” of women leaving domestic violence shelters found that access to an independent income, along with child care and transportation, were primary considerations in deciding whether to return to their abusive partners.

Many abused women see child support as an important source of income for their families. They know that time-limited welfare benefits or a low-wage job will not be enough to support themselves and their children. Some, however, will conclude that the very real risks they face make it too dangerous to establish paternity or pursue child support for their children. They may have moved or stayed in a domestic violence shelter to escape their abuser, and fear that involvement in the child support system may disclose their location. Others may be afraid that establishing paternity and seeking support will lead to custody and visitation fights, child support orders that remain unpaid, and a renewal or escalation of physical and emotional violence against themselves, the child, or both.

Consider these examples:

- Marie and her children are hiding from her abusive partner to stay safe. She is afraid that seeking child support will give him an opportunity to find her. He will know when she has to be in court and may gain access to information about her location as part of the legal process.
- Susan fled her abusive partner because the state’s child protection agency told her that he had sexually assaulted their child. She believes if the state pursues child support collection from him he will want and get contact with this child. She is currently working two minimum wage jobs and knows that child support payments would make a huge difference in what she can provide for her children.
- Rosie’s abusive partner has repeatedly threatened that if she ever leaves him she’ll never see her children again because he’ll either snatch them or win custody. She is afraid to cooperate with paternity establishment because this will give him the right to fight for custody and make it easier for him to carry out his threat.

While their circumstances and safety concerns vary, research and experience confirm that most abused women will seek child support if they can do so without risk to themselves and their children; in other words, if child support can be pursued safely.

Offering Protections

In the past, the child support offices typically offered domestic violence victims only two options: fully enforce any support orders and deal with the risks (“green light” responses) or apply for good cause in TANF cases, or forego or withdraw a request for child support services in non-TANF cases (“red light” responses).

About a decade ago, child support offices and advocates began discussing a third option—working with individual domestic violence victims to develop an individualized enforcement plan that includes case management and

selective enforcement options (“yellow light” responses). At that time, OCSE funded “Section 1115” demonstration projects in Massachusetts, Minnesota and Colorado to test this emerging model.

It remains essential that domestic violence victims facing serious abuse have access to the protections afforded by good cause waivers. Some victims will need a more customized “yellow light” response that identify parents with domestic violence concerns and allow them the option to proceed cautiously. Such yellow light responses are tailored to the individualized risks faced by the victim of abuse; ensure their participation in decision-making and provide notice prior to child support actions that might pose risk; use enforcement tools selectively

(avoiding where possible enforcement mechanisms that might increase risk or at least allow time for the victim to design and safely plan); and include safety and confidentiality procedures that reduce the ability of an abuser to track down the custodial parent.

Abused women who are afraid to pursue child support should be given every opportunity to stay out of the child support system, but those who want to pursue child support should be able to do so with greater safety and confidentiality.

For more information, contact Anne Menard at amenard@pcadv.org. Learn more about OCSE’s efforts in the area of domestic violence in next month’s Child Support Report.

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month

In 1995, the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence (NRC DV) convened several national domestic violence organizations—the Family Violence Prevention Fund, the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the National Domestic Violence Hotline and later the National Network



to End Domestic Violence—to launch an effort to support domestic violence programs’ awareness and education efforts for Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM). It is observed annually in October. The collaborative effort became the Domestic Violence Awareness Project (DVAP).

Regional Highlights

New Mexico Tribal-State Judicial Consortium

The New Mexico Tribal-State Judicial Consortium held its quarterly meeting July 23. Its purpose is to strengthen relationships and communication between tribal and state judiciaries. Two comprehensive tribal child support programs operate in New Mexico—the Mescalero Apache Tribe and the Pueblo of Zuni.

For information about the consortium, please contact Carl Rich at carl.rich@acf.hhs.gov or Kathy Spurgin at aockbs@nmcourts.com.



Standing, from left: John Kern (San Felipe Tribal Court Judge); Marilynn Crelier (retired); Carl Rich, Region VI Tribal Team Leader; Robert Medina (Zia Tribal Court Judge); Paul Tsosie (Santa Clara Tribal Court Chief Judge); Samuel Henio (Probation/Parole Officer at To’Hajiilee Tribal Court, Navajo Judicial Branch); Roman Duran (Lt. Governor and Tribal Court Judge, Pueblo of Tesuque and the Consortium’s Tribal Co-chair). Seated: James Wechsler (Judge, New Mexico Court of Appeals); Angela Jewell (Second Judicial District Court Judge); Karen Parsons (Twelfth Judicial District Court Judge); Verna Teller (Isleta Tribal Court Judge); and Peggy Bird (Laguna Tribal Court Chief Judge).

Urban Jurisdictions Share Challenges

This June, OCSE Region IX (San Francisco) partnered with the Los Angeles County Child Support Services Department and the California Department of Child Support Services Los Angeles to host an “urban jurisdictions forum.” The forum brought together state and local child support directors who manage large caseloads and confront similar challenges, including size and diversity of customers.

Twelve jurisdictions were represented: Arizona; California’s Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, Sacramento, San Bernardino and San Diego Counties; Colorado’s Boulder and Denver Counties; Cook County, IL; Clark County, NV; and New York City.

An attendee from each jurisdiction led a 30-minute discussion on a topic of their choice. These included: encouraging customer collaboration, early intervention, administrative process, special enforcement, collecting from the underground economy, employment assistance, caseload stratification, working effectively with employers and data mining. One presenter, Norris Stevenson, Deputy Administrator of the Illinois Division of Child Support Services, talked about Cook County’s experience in improving performance through organizational and procedural changes.

Groups of 30 allowed for lively discussions. Participants appreciated the variety of topics and opportunity to interact with peers from across the country.

For additional information, please contact Elise Wing (elise.wing@acf.hhs.gov) or Rachel Freitas (rachel.freitas@acf.hhs.gov).

—Elise Wing and Rachel Freitas, OCSE Region IX





National Tribal Child Support Association Conference



More than 200 attended the 10th annual National Tribal Child Support Association (NTCSA) Training Conference in July, in Mescalero, NM. Many comprehensive and start-up tribes were represented, as well as several interested tribes. Carlys Balatche, Director of the Mescalero Apache Child Support Program, and NTCSA President Eddie Brakes coordinated the conference on behalf of the host tribe. OCSE Commissioner Turetsky (top right) discussed four points of policy in her keynote speech: 1) developing an ACF consultation policy; 2) tribal automation and the Model Tribal System; 3) reassessing medical support in tribal programs; and 4) case transfer and closure.





Your Reflections on 35 Years of the Program

MODERN MEDIA, TECHNOLOGIES ...

As the federal child support program celebrates its 35th anniversary, we find ourselves at a crossroads. States are challenged with budget and resource uncertainty, yet child support professionals, legislators and the public expect nothing less than our ongoing commitment to continuous program improvement.

Child support has many examples of early intervention efforts and increased technology that can improve service delivery, increase support collection for children, and do so more efficiently. Ongoing program performance will take leadership to engage parents in all the modern media to meet parents where they are when they're ready. Increased use of emerging technologies appears to be a promising means to meeting the dual challenges of high program expectations and limited resources today and in the future.

TRAINING TIP: READ THE REGS ...

After several years working at child support, during an assignment, I read for the first time the 45 CFR [Code of Federal Regulations] and the history of the child support program (SECTION 8) resulting in more knowledge of the federal program guidelines and understanding of our requirements to make a diligent effort to locate the absent parent, establish paternity, support and insurance as well as enforcement and collections across the United States and some counties, thus our intestate. The history also gave me background on how the child support program got started and the disadvantage to the child if there is no financial support from the absent parent(s).

I recommend that this information be used as a training tool (required reading for orientation) to all employees in the child support arena. This also made me a better employee because once I know better, I can do better as a PUBLIC servant and an advocate for children. I really enjoy this worthwhile work—it is rewarding!



Scott Cade
New York State
Division of Child
Support Enforcement



Safiya Felters
Illinois Division
of Child Support
Services



Wayne Doss
Los Angeles
County, CA, Child
Support Services
Department

I AM CONVINCED ...

Congratulations, OCSE, on 35 years of continuing innovation and success in serving America's children. Over the course of the 34 years that I have been involved in the program, I have been pleased to see and participate in so many positive changes and advancements in this vital effort. Of this I am convinced: no program serves the needs of families better or more comprehensively than IV-D!



Your Reflections on 35 Years of the Program

OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE ...

In wishing a happy 35th anniversary to the child support program, I'm adding my personal thanks. Working with the child support program is more than "just work"; it's an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of families.

Beginning in 1990, I've worked on developing training and user documentation for state child support systems in Virginia, Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio and Oklahoma. Some of the best advice I was given came from Connie White in Virginia when she said, "Get out there and see what's happening in child support offices." Turns out workers really don't care how systems operate—what they want to know is how system functionality makes their jobs easier and their work more effective in meeting the needs of families.

I was fortunate to begin supporting OCSE in January 1997 in a role of providing technical support to states. With the passage of PRWORA, the FPLS started making quantum leaps in its usefulness to states. Connie's advice again paid off; by knowing how child support works at the local level, I felt better equipped to translate how the FPLS helps advance casework, helps improve performance, and helps serve families. I also felt an obligation to advocate on the part of states during FPLS system discussions. After all, I wouldn't have had my job without the experience the states had given me.

In 2004, OCSE started a national interstate case reconciliation (ICR) project, which became one of the highlights of my career. Today, because of the ICR, states are better able to communicate with one another, and families dependent on two-state actions are afforded a better chance of receiving services.

As a personal aside: to workers in Indiana who wondered why they kept seeing the names Rachel Rabbit and Kate Kangaroo in early 1990s' training materials—those are my daughters. To Ohio county workers who participated around 1990 in the pilot training of an early version of the child support system, SETS—my daughters enjoyed two wonderful weeks going to camps at the

Columbus Zoo and in an Arts program. And, with a thanks to Laurel Eaton, I'd like to say to workers in Oklahoma: when you started seeing personalized case management Tuser screens around 1995, I guess that's what happens when you get an English major involved.



Christine Jennings
OCSE
Washington, D.C.



Child Support Report



Child Support Report is published monthly by the Office of Child Support Enforcement, Division of Consumer Services. We welcome articles and high-quality digital photos. We reserve the right to edit for style, content, and length. Contents are for informational purposes only; no official endorsement of any practice, publication, or individual by the Department of Health and Human Services or the Office of Child Support Enforcement is intended. Use of this material is welcomed; please identify *Child Support Report* as the source.

David A. Hansell
Acting Assistant Secretary for Children and Families

Vicki Turetsky
Commissioner, OCSE

Robert Cohen
Director, Division of Consumer Services

Elaine Blackman
Editor
202-401-5353, (fax) 202-205-5927
elaine.blackman@acf.hhs.gov