

# Child Support Report

OFFICE OF CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT



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## Passport Denial Program Gains Wintry Mix of Collections for Families

By **Rebecca Hamil**  
**OCSE**



Winter is in the air, but child support collections from the OCSE Passport Denial program have not cooled down. In the recent examples below, seven states—California, Florida, Louisiana,

New Jersey, New York, Ohio and Texas—voluntarily reported lump-sum payments exceeding \$50,000; 11 states reported individual collections of more than \$25,000. All of these provide significant financial support to families. Passports were required for noncustodial parents for their employment, education, family emergencies and more.

- **New York \$100,000** – Resides in Europe and wanted to stay there
- **Louisiana \$80,000** – Employer paid so the parent could continue to work in the Mediterranean
- **Ohio \$78,000** – Vacation paid for in advance
- **California \$71,000** – Vacation
- **California \$70,000** – Traveling to Asia for the birth of a child
- **New Jersey \$68,000** – Security detail for an entertainer
- **Florida \$52,000** – To visit an ailing family member in the Middle East
- **Texas \$51,000** – Visit family member in the Far East
- **New York \$47,000** – Working in the Middle East
- **New York \$46,000** – Business trip to West Africa

- **Virginia \$45,000** – Overseas employment
- **Washington \$42,000** – To visit a terminally ill family member
- **Tennessee \$40,000** – Might travel in the future
- **Oregon \$38,286** – Work-related travel
- **California \$36,000** – Visit in East Asia
- **Michigan \$35,000** – Employment overseas
- **Washington \$35,000** – Mother-in-law paid arrears so family could travel to Asia
- **Oklahoma \$33,000** – Overseas employment
- **Maryland \$32,000** – Business convention
- **North Carolina \$30,000** – Job opportunity in Europe
- **Ohio \$30,000** – Missionary work
- **Georgia \$24,000** – Family vacation
- **Maine \$23,000** – Overseas employment

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



## Passport Denial—A Model of Customer Service

The OCSE passport denial program collects tens of millions of dollars for children every year. We work closely with state child support programs and the Department of State (DOS) to ensure that passports are denied when appropriate and “holds” are released quickly upon payment. Did you know that DOS paralegals (in its Bureau of Counselor Affairs) work with embassies to help parents who are stranded overseas? And OCSE staff members work closely with the DOS “special issuance passport” members who handle all diplomatic and military passports, which take longer to process than others.

A custodial parent recently credited the passport denial program for receiving an unexpected \$75,000—from a father who had never paid child support—on behalf of her now-adult daughter. In fact, she was about to close the case when she got word of the payment. The father’s employer loaned him the money in order to rush the release of the passport.

The director of a large urban child support program sent in a letter from a parent who unexpectedly received nearly \$150,000 from a passport denial action: “I am forever indebted to all your hard work and dedication.



May you all be blessed with much success for other parents seeking support for their children. Realize and understand that you are helping secure the future of our greatest resource, our children!”

A passport hold can be released within a day—in expedited cases, within a couple hours—a model of intergovernmental coordination. “Thank you very much for your help in getting my passport,” said one noncustodial parent. “It is so nice to see someone take pride in their job and go the extra step to help a fellow man in time of need. You went above and beyond and for that I am truly grateful as I did not lose the job and in part it was because of all your help.”

Passport denial is a powerful tool, one that can help children receive the support they deserve. I, for one, appreciate the dedication and care taken by OCSE, DOS and state child support staff to ensure that both custodial and noncustodial parents receive prompt attention and individualized service through the passport denial program.

*Vicki Turetsky*



*Child Support Blog*

OCSE’s **new blog** is up and running. Share your comments with fellow child support professionals and stakeholders on topics that appear in the monthly Commissioner’s Voice column. You can also access the blog through the “Child Support Professionals” tab on the **OCSE website**.

## Utah's Document Imaging Project Saves Cost, Time, Storage

By Diane Degenhart  
OCSE Region VIII  
Tracy Graham, Director  
Utah Office of Recovery Services

About four years ago, Utah child support program managers had a vision to eliminate all hard-copy case files and modernize the case review and child support processes. Utah manages more than 82,000 child support cases and receives about 40,000 pieces of mail each month for distribution to caseworkers throughout the state. Not having to route these documents has significantly saved cost and time.

A dedicated group of child support staff determined which documents to keep and which could go. The up-front work helped make this project a resounding success. After deciding which documents to keep in the digitized case files, the scanning project was completed in just over 8 months—significantly less than the norm.



One of the biggest benefits was elimination of storing 80,000-plus cases in a 20,000 square-foot space. Other benefits included instant access to cases, faster response to complaints and time savings for employees to better serve customers. OCSE auditors can also easily complete the data reliability audit from their office and have found Utah's system to be user-friendly.

An added benefit was an electronic mailroom. All new documents can now be captured in one central location and electronically routed to the appropriate caseworker.

Due to the economic recession, the office lost 100 employees through attrition. Before imaging, caseloads were assigned to local offices based on geography. With digitized cases, Utah can manage the reduction in staff by assigning caseloads alphabetically throughout the state for a more equal sharing of caseload in Utah's five child support offices. In addition, the digitized caseload has allowed centralized key functions (intake, customer service call center) to make the most of efficiencies. Interestingly, collections have been sustained throughout this difficult time.

Hawaii child support program staff and numerous private and government entities have visited Utah to see if its document imaging solution could work for them.

For more information, contact child support director Tracy Graham, [tracygraham@utah.gov](mailto:tracygraham@utah.gov), 801-536-8911, or Les Roberts, [lesroberts@utah.gov](mailto:lesroberts@utah.gov), 801-536-8514.

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- **California \$20,000** – Moving to the United Kingdom
- **Hawaii \$20,000** – Prepaid business trip overseas
- **Massachusetts \$20,000** – Work-related travel
- **Nebraska \$19,000** – Business travel
- **Texas \$19,000** – Touring overseas with music group
- **Idaho \$17,000** – Traveling to receive family inheritance
- **Puerto Rico \$15,000** – Family emergency in South America
- **South Carolina \$15,000** – Working in Europe
- **Kentucky \$10,000** – Working in the Middle East
- **Ohio \$10,000** – Honeymoon
- **New Jersey \$10,000** – Employer paid so parent could accompany a family member for surgery overseas

In 2010, states have voluntarily reported passport denial collections of more than \$25 million, and \$214 million since the program began in 1998.

To report a passport denial success story, please e-mail [sollections@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:sollections@acf.hhs.gov).

# 'Lost' Interstate Child Support Cases

By Pat Conrad  
OCSE

The TV show "Lost" entertained the American public for five seasons in spite of the characters' improbable situations. Unlike fiction, however, real families who feel their interstate child support cases have been "lost" do not find that situation entertaining.

Lost interstate cases? Perhaps not lost, but there were 181,000 cases that one state identified as an interstate case, while the other state did not, so the cases could not be reconciled through the annual Interstate Case Reconciliation (ICR) case match conducted by OCSE.

To assist the states, OCSE implemented a special project to look for these cases on the Federal Case Registry (FCR). The results of that supplemental match were excellent, with 100,000 possible matching cases found. But there were still 81,000 cases that did not reconcile and needed to be researched further.

By doing some great detective work, the ICR team and states are identifying the reasons for most of these inconsistencies. States are now taking action to resolve the issue affecting these cases.

Many times, there's just a quirk in the data stored on the state system, which can be corrected easily.

- Sometimes a worker opens the interstate request, fully intending to send the case to the other state. But in the press of other duties, neither the interstate documents nor the CSENet request transaction is



sent. This worker's state system may be reading the case as an active interstate case, and suppressing alerts to the assigned worker in the belief that the other state would be responding to new information received through the National Directory of New Hires. But the other state never received the interstate request, so it has no case to work.

- Some lost cases are not interstate cases at all, but cases on which a different type of request was made to the other state, perhaps a CSENet Locate request or a Limited Services request. These non-interstate requests can be closed easily so the case no longer appears to be an interstate case.
- Some are the result of data being entered incorrectly onto the state system. For example, the interstate request might have been sent to North Carolina, but the worker incorrectly coded the state system to show the case being sent to South Carolina. North Carolina may be enforcing the case, and the family may be receiving payments, but ongoing electronic communication via CSENet or QUICK could be in jeopardy due to the incorrect coding.

Sometimes the two states need more communication.

- Some cases turn out to be non-child support cases in the other state as the interstate request was sent to a Clerk of Court instead of to the state's Central Registry. The two states in this situation need to determine the action to best serve the family.

Sometimes states discover cases that can be closed to the child support program.

- Some cases are responding state cases where the initiating state's request to the responding state was closed many years ago. The responding state may now close its side of the interstate case as its services are no longer needed.

Interstate cases will always be challenging because of our highly mobile society. But thanks to the good work by the states with their ICR-FCR response data, the number of cases not reconciled will continue to decline.

## My Experience with Responsible Fatherhood

**By Mustafaa El-Scari**  
*ACF Region VII  
Kansas City, MO*

*Mustafaa El-Scari is a Head Start program specialist in the Administration for Children and Families' Region III office. He works part-time as an instructor in a workshop for noncustodial parents. Here are his personal reflections in working with noncustodial parents.*



**Mustafaa El-Scari**

I have been working with the National Center for Fathering (NCF) and the Jackson County Prosecutor's office for about 10 years. Our relationship started while I was an employee with a Kansas City, MO, Head Start grantee. I was trained as an instructor for NCF's curriculum to train Head Start fathers around the virtues of "responsible fatherhood."

I also partnered with NCF in writing a book and curriculum called "Coach Dads: Getting Dads off the Bench and into Play." I was substituting for instructors in the Drug Court, as well as the Father Court, which is where I cut my teeth on the real issues of becoming a "responsible father."

As a part-time instructor, I found it increasingly difficult to keep men ages 18 to 67 engaged around a message of playing and reading to their children. This was especially difficult to do with fathers of adult children who have a set of social, economic, health and other issues.

I then started to gather and present information about establishing paternity, relationships, TANF, child support enforcement law and the changing role of dad in the nuclear family. My reason for

supplementing the material was that I found the men had additional questions not addressed by the curriculum. The men were coming into the classes frustrated with the mothers of their children, their employers, the legal system and others.

I found it wasn't enough to tell these men to just go get a job, pay the support and play with their kids. I felt like I had to inform them of the social reasons and ramifications of their conditions beyond the court. I had to remind them they were

not victims and they had made some poor decisions, but that didn't make them a deadbeat! I told them they were not the only ones going through relationship drama and social stigma. I told them my story of not having a father in the house, but having good models and support. I told them that it wasn't easy, but they had to "Man UP" for the sake of their children, family and community.

Finally, I apologized to every class I instructed, because when the men came into my class I assumed two things: they could read and they cared about their children. I was totally blind to the anger and frustration that came with every class, so I assumed a lot. I was even blind to my own anger and frustration from being called a dead-broke dad, even though I was homeless and still paying child support.

As an advocate and instructor I saw a real need for healing for the men we have labeled, isolated and basically thrown away without addressing the big picture. That picture is a snapshot of a society that needs to redefine how it helps men understand what a dad does and what a father is.



# New Zealand Hosts International Partners

By Robbie Endris, Past Director  
*Louisiana Child Support Enforcement*



On August 28, with temperatures in the 90's in Washington, DC, and Baton Rouge, a US delegation of two, Commissioner Vicki Turetsky and I, traveled “down under” to attend the International Head of Agencies (IHOA) meeting in New Zealand, where evening temperatures dipped to the 40's. We made the adjustment from summer to winter, and spent three days meeting with international partners on our favorite subject—child support.

The IHOA meeting is held annually in one of these English-speaking countries: Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom or the United States. Two delegates from each country report on child support activities in their own countries, share information about best practices, and discuss issues involving international child support. No delegates attended from the United Kingdom this year due to budget constraints, but others presented their reports.

There were many interesting moments, but I found the country reports enlightening. These points give a sample of what we learned:

- Australia has implemented an income shares model, which has been accepted well and is perceived as being fair to both parties.
- Australia is reforming service delivery, with a focus on three P's: population, productivity and participation. It is streamlining services and offering more services online.
- Canada is investigating greater use of electronic means for working cases and delivering services. Canada is interested in our National Directory of New Hires.
- New Zealand announced new child support guidelines while we were there, prompting considerable media coverage. The new plan includes a requirement for income assignment orders to be sent to employers for direct wage withholding, a model that has worked very well for the United States.
- New Zealand is revising its guidelines to include the costs of raising children, the degree of shared care between parents, and the income of both parents.

Differences in law, national environment and program administration were obvious, but even more obvious was the shared mission of the delegations—providing quality services to help children and their families. On this we all agreed!





National Child Support Program  
Celebrating Our Past, Charting Our Future

# Reflections From Former OCSE Directors



*Over the past 35 years, nine leaders have been appointed to head the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement and its national partnership with child support programs. The reports below summarize reflections from five; three are personally penned and two are based on brief interviews.*

## Louis B. Hayes, Deputy Director, 1975 – 1981

It's hard to believe that 35 years have gone by since Congress passed federal child support enforcement legislation, and the Office of Child Support Enforcement began. I started working on child support legislation in 1974, as the Senate Finance Committee's then-Chairman Russell Long of Louisiana and his staff person, Bill Galvin, began developing the legislation.

I was a 29-year-old attorney and policy analyst working in the Social and Rehabilitation Service (eliminated in the reorganization that included changing HEW to HHS during the Carter administration). I was chosen to head up the new organization because I was a lawyer with modest experience with the subject of child support due to my service as a member of the County Counsel's office in Los Angeles County, and because I was available.

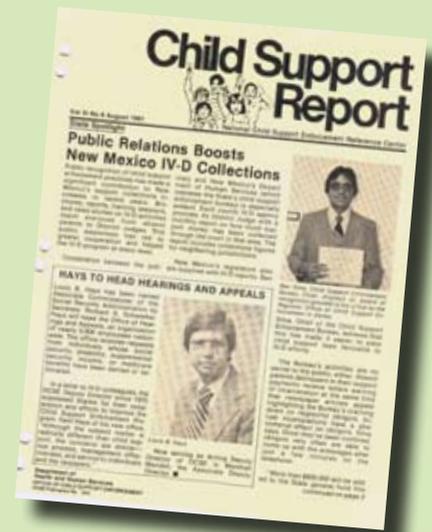
We put together a small band of hard-working federal employees and OCSE was born. There was a mad scramble to get implementing regulations together, and the Congress granted a last-minute, one-month extension of the law, from July 1 to Aug. 1, 1975. We worked with a small group of representatives of state and local agencies with real world experience in locating absent parents, establishing paternity and collecting child support. They were primarily from state attorney general offices and local district attorney offices. There was very little federal experience with child support at the time.

There was an amazing camaraderie among the pioneer members of OCSE plus their counterparts in the regional offices. We did what at the time was cutting edge work in setting up the Federal Parent Locator Service to run matching programs between

state and federal records in what were primitive times for data matching, and encouraged the use of deductions from payroll and tax refunds to increase collections.

After getting the federal regulations ready, and running training programs around the country to explain the regulations and the new program, I worked extensively through governors' offices in many states to, in effect, lobby the states and their legislatures to take the program seriously, to adopt new state legislation when necessary, and to deploy sufficient resources to make the program work.

In many ways, we were in the middle: between Congress that wanted to assure that the program was successful, and the state and local governments that were ultimately responsible for most of the actual work of child support enforcement. It was difficult, challenging, yet among the most rewarding work of my career with the Federal Government. I left OCSE in 1981 to become the Associate Commissioner of Social Security for Hearings and Appeals, later served in the White House, and concluded my federal service in the Health Care Financing Administration, now the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid. I currently serve as an Episcopal priest in Pittsburgh, PA.



## Allie Page Matthews, Deputy Director, 1990 – 1993

What Allie Page Matthews remembers most about her time at OCSE is the struggle in implementing the legislation that gave OCSE access to the Department of Labor’s unemployment data. “It took four years to get them to allow us to have the information that the law said we should be getting.”

Page Matthews remembers the frustration of that Washington political battle, but also the excellence of the child support program and the dedication of those who work in the program at the national, state and local levels. In the future, she would like to see the program have the independence and resources it needs to continue the good work that it does.



## Judge David Gray Ross, Commissioner, January 1994 – 2000

Judge Ross is very proud of the relationship forged with the states during his years as Commissioner. While in those days states didn’t initially trust the Federal Government, he saw a true partnership develop in the program, reflected in the first national strategic plan created during his term. “The plan reflected the consensus goals that we all shared for the program.”

The biggest accomplishment during his term, says Judge Ross, was the 1996 welfare reform legislation. “This was a bill in which we got everything we asked for. It was full of good ideas, many of which originated with the states and the things that they were already doing that were proving to be successful.”

Judge Ross is proud that his administration tried to reach out to and engage fathers and fatherhood programs, which had never before been “at the table.” He remembers with pride the national advertising campaign created during this time aimed

at encouraging fathers to support their children.

In the future, Judge Ross hopes that the child support program continues to be service-oriented and to provide services to both parents for the good of the children.



## Sherri Heller, Commissioner, 2001 to 2004

The real genius of this program is how states can customize it to fit their values and cultures (so that it gets local support and really works and has the support of local officials), while the underlying program is consistent across the country, with a focus on uniform outcome measures. Everybody has the same objectives (and they're ones that really matter to families), but states can go about accomplishing them their own way.

While I was Commissioner, I recall focusing on: making child support a reliable source of regular

income that could be counted on, rather than an occasional big-dollar collection that is unpredictable; telling the public the story behind the numbers (e.g., income levels of who owes arrears, why some collections go undistributed); improving and getting public recognition of the program's cost-effectiveness; the push to get all the systems certified; the difficult culture change associated with moving the program from TANF cost-recovery to income support for low-income working families (while still preserving states' options if that is key to local support).

But mostly what I remember is getting to know the commitment and creativity and compassion of the child support program leaders across the country—what an amazing group of colleagues; people who have insights into every nuance of the program (legal, technological, ethical, political, operational, moral and financial).

What I see coming at us now: using automation to make the program more customized, more responsive to individual families' needs. The first stage of automation was about making things more consistent, so everybody was treated the same and got the same access to the same enforcement mechanisms. The next stage is about everybody getting just what they need when they need it.



## Margot Bean, Commissioner, 2005-2009

As the national program has matured from a cost-recovery program to one that assists families to establish and collect support, it has been able to achieve ever-increasing outcomes for families by thoughtfully automating case management. This, along with the creation of performance measures beyond dollars collected, has provided a focus for our work and led to the highest results for children.

What has allowed our program to succeed was implementing major legislative changes in the program, collaboration in developing the national



*continued on next page*

strategic plan, and increasingly broadening its partners: federal, tribal, state and county child support agencies; federal and state social service and medical support agencies; community organizations; employers; the judiciary; fatherhood organizations; the private sector; international child support agencies; and advocates.

I am proud of the collaboration between OCSE and the child support directors in creating PAID (Project to Avoid Increasing Delinquencies) to renew the program's emphasis on activities that increase collection of current support and prevent and reduce arrears.

I am also proud of the collaborative effort of the US team—representatives from state programs, the State Department, OCSE, private lawyers, law professors, judges, the Uniform Law Commission—in concluding the Hague International Child Support treaty negotiations, and reaching consensus on UIFSA 2008. We are poised to help children internationally in our ever-expanding, global mobile world.

I am very proud of the expansion of the tribal child support programs. Tribal nations provide culturally sensitive child support services using innovative techniques, and collaboration between states and tribes continues to grow. I am also pleased with the collaborative development of a model automated system for tribes.

Finally, I am proud of expanding the collaborative partnerships with Medicaid, child welfare, workforce and TANF agencies; the judiciary; Hispanic organizations; and employers and insurance companies.

The child support program will continue to become more efficient, effective and responsive to families by making more effective use of automation and collaborating with an increasing number of partners. Technology will help caseworkers focus on the cases that need a personal touch, while effectively handling the routine activities. The program will be seen as a partner for not only custodial parents, but also noncustodial parents, while retaining its enforcement effectiveness.



## Reflections From the Editor

Thirty-three years ago, an OCSE employee started the monthly *Child Support Report*—the first title to cross her mind, and it turned out to be the timelessly appropriate name for the “administrative newsletter for child support workers nationwide.” The *CSR* ever since has featured news, views, resources and profiles for professionals and stakeholders throughout the national child support program.

As the *CSR*'s editor in the early '80s, and again since late 2005, I've witnessed the transformation from “typewritten” articles pressed on pasteboard, to the desktop-publishing software I now enjoy. (*See a snapshot of an issue that features each director, on pages 7 - 9.*)

Over the years, it seems the need for a varied communitywide communiqué hasn't changed. So, while the media has changed, the message is still what's important; it's all about communication. Further, it's about pursuing content—and new technologies—that continue to interest *CSR* readers.

So...what would *you* like to see in this newsletter that you don't see now? And what do you see that you would like to see changed? Let me know: [elaine.blackman@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:elaine.blackman@acf.hhs.gov). And thanks for your attention each month!

### *Child Support Report*

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David A. Hansell  
Acting Assistant Secretary for Children and Families

Vicki Turetsky  
Commissioner, OCSE

Gabrielle Pagin  
Director, Division of Consumer Services

Elaine Blackman  
Editor  
202-401-5353  
[elaine.blackman@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:elaine.blackman@acf.hhs.gov)