

Child Support Report

OFFICE OF CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT



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

Hispanic Organizations in Florida Eager to Play a Part in the 'Changing Face of Child Support'

By Elaine Blackman
OCSE

For the icebreaker at a recent event in West Palm Beach, FL, attendees were asked: "What's the first thing you think of when you hear 'child support program?'" Several quickly shouted: "jail," "only concerned about money," and "collection agency."

By the time the two-day training and outreach event ended, many were surprised to learn that the child support program is concerned with shared parenting and fatherhood issues, healthy marriage, and much more.

Attendees represented 30 Hispanic organizations and their partner and umbrella agencies in the West Palm Beach and Ft. Lauderdale areas. Some said they couldn't remember a time when all three perspectives of the child support program—federal, state, and local—were presented at one event. One attendee remarked, "Yes, it really has changed its face!" Another said, "It's good to see child support look at the family unit and their needs and not just the money the program can collect."

The training and outreach event was deemed a success by its sponsors—a collaboration of OCSE staff in Region IV (Atlanta), the Florida Department of Revenue Child Support Enforcement, and the Florida Department of Children and Families. It was the region's first-of-its-kind proactive approach to presenting information not only on child support services, but also on TANF and Medicaid.

The sponsors' goal was to engage the Hispanic community and create productive working relationships between the government and community agencies.

The organizations and agencies represented provide a range of services. They promote healthy mothers and babies, offer resources for women and children, help



Colaboración – Representatives from Hispanic organizations in Florida share ideas as they learn about the OCSE "bubble chart," which displays the child support program's family-centered approach. (The chart's English version is on page 9.)

continued on page 2

families to address medical needs, and offer therapy to help families become self-sufficient. Also represented were hospitals where “patient advocates” put patients in touch with ACF programs; psychotherapy, education, domestic violence and child abuse counselors; and organizations that offer help with communication devices in the homes of those who receive TANF, Medicaid, and food stamps.

Personal Presence Matters

“What’s important in planning an event like this is that we have that personal interaction with the organizations and we’re able to give the communities what they want from us. It adds credibility to our program and the services we provide,” says Cheryl Reid-Drayton, part of the OCSE Region IV team who handles outreach.

Reid-Drayton presented attendees with copies of the OCSE “bubble chart”—in English and Spanish. Some found it “neat” and engaging, as she explained that the chart illustrates the child support program’s expansion in family-centered services through collaboration, for example, with fatherhood programs to help fathers obtain employment and parenting skills, access and visitation programs to assist parents with child visitation issues, and to secure health insurance for all children. She encouraged attendees to take the bubble chart to their office to show clients the many areas that involve the child support program.

OCSE’s Ja-Na Bordes explained the objectives of the OCSE Hispanic Outreach Initiative—geared to reaching out to populations that use Spanish as their primary language so that all will be able to use the core services of the child support program.

She also presented the online [Hispanic Child Support Resource Center](#). “The audience was clearly enthused to learn about the Resource Center and eager to use the brochures,” says Bordes. (Brochures are available to download from the [toolkit](#) portion of the online Resource Center, in English and Spanish.) Attendees said the toolkit material would be useful for various approaches to reach out to their Hispanic communities, “where many people are unaware of child support services and social services in general,” says Bordes.



Presentadores – From left are Cheryl Reid-Drayton, Beverly Tucker, Kathie Beason, Cheryl Altman, Heath Parker, and JaNa Bordes. Beverly Tucker, Manager with the Florida Department of Revenue Child Support, and staff members Velina Smalls and Nicola Jackson (Ft. Lauderdale) and Heath Parker (West Palm Beach), provided state information for the Broward County and West Palm Beach areas. Kathie Beason and Cheryl Altman, from the Florida Department of Children and Families, answered questions about TANF.

“There’s confusion in the Hispanic communities regarding who is eligible for services based on documentation status. We also know that research about Hispanics stresses the need for strengthening outreach and providing more tangible information to Hispanics.”

Participants Ask for More

From the outreach event for the Ft. Lauderdale and West Palm Beach areas, and from another event in the Miami-Dade area last November, more than 90 Hispanic organizations and partners have learned about child support program. As a result, numerous organizations have asked local child support offices to conduct presentations for staff and clients at their major events and to bring literature on ACF programs.

“Q&A visits would be especially helpful in Miami Dade County, where many migrant workers who have varied work schedules aren’t able to attend educational workshops far from home,” says Reid-Drayton.

“One reason the outreach events have been well received is because the Hispanic organizations were able to ask questions that clients are afraid to ask,” explains Reid-Drayton, “in some cases due to fear, lack of information, language barriers, and cultural sensitivities about privacy of family matters.”

For more information, contact Cheryl Reid-Drayton at 404-562-2708 or Cheryl.Reid-Drayton@acf.hhs.gov.



Comunicación – Heath Parker (left foreground) provides state-specific information to Hispanic organizations and their partners.

Improving Our Outreach to Hispanic and Latino Parents



The United States population is becoming more diverse. The U.S. [Census Bureau](#) estimates that by 2050, Hispanics and Latinos will constitute 30 percent of the U.S. population, up from 16.3

percent in 2010. We know that the composition of the child support program's caseload is changing as well. We have more Latino and Hispanic families, as well as families from a range of other ethnic and immigrant groups.

Child support professionals are increasingly aware of our need to conduct outreach to the Hispanic community. We are doing more to tailor our customer service to address the linguistic and cultural barriers to navigating the child support program and accessing other social services. For example, we are offering more bilingual publications and advertising on local radio and TV.

We are forming and enhancing collaborations with community and faith-based organizations and working with practitioners and advocates, who can help us bridge the gap in providing information to Hispanic families about child support services. The organizations can offer accurate information, answer questions, provide advocacy services, and help to overcome parents' mistrust and misunderstandings about the program.

This spring, an OCSE outreach training event in Florida (*see article on page 1*) furthered the child support program's connections with community organizations. While we sometimes assume that community organizations are aware of our latest services, we know from events like the one in Florida the value of meeting face-to-face with representatives from organizations that have daily interaction with Hispanic families. Outreach events such as these serve as a valuable connection to the Hispanic community.

In Sonoma County, CA, the child support office is striving to increase collections among its Latino parents. The office created two postcards in Spanish and is disseminating them through the Latino community—with help from community organizations. The postcards explain child support services and help to alleviate apprehensions about connecting with a child support office. (*See the postcards on page 4.*)

Earlier this month, OCSE was on hand to answer questions at the [League of United Latin American Citizens'](#) annual conference in Cincinnati with more than 20,000 participants.

And we are looking forward to an outreach event later this month at the National Council of [LaRaza's](#) annual conference, where a national Latino Family Expo draws more than 200 exhibitors and 40,000 attendees! At both events, OCSE staff members share a booth with Head Start (a great way to demonstrate cross-program collaboration) and demonstrate the OCSE online [toolkit](#) on a laptop for passersby.

Recently, HHS announced a new initiative to use [Promotores de Salud](#) to strengthen outreach and education on the availability of health services and insurance coverage to underserved Hispanic and Latino communities. The federal work group guiding the initiative represents several HHS offices including the Administration for Children and Families. OCSE will pay close attention as this initiative takes off.

We also plan to stay tuned-in to ways we can further our outreach to the Hispanic and Latino families through multiple channels of communication. Two national surveys conducted in 2010 by the [Pew Research Center](#)—the Pew Hispanic Center's 2010 National Survey of Latinos and the Pew Internet and American Life Project's Health Tracking Survey—made some very interesting findings. Did you know that [91 percent](#) of Latinos say they get news from network, local, or cable television? Or that [nearly half](#) get their news in both English and Spanish? Or that Hispanics are more likely than whites to engage in [instant messaging](#)—an outreach opportunity for us?

Is technology helping your agency communicate with Spanish-speaking parents? Do you have a Facebook page that answers questions in Spanish? (Hispanics, like everyone else, use Facebook, says this [blog](#).) Do you post blogs that allow readers to submit comments, or use other social media to reach Hispanic and Latino families?

Let us know your thoughts by submitting a comment about this column, which also appears as a [blog](#).

OCSE is learning, too. The more knowledge we can gain about our Hispanic parents, the better we'll be able to reach out and offer responsive services to families.

Vicki Turetsky



Postcards Draw Attention From Sonoma County's Hispanic and Latino Community



Two postcards with child support information in Spanish are getting good responses from customers in Sonoma County, CA. “The Sonoma County Department of Child Support Services is dedicated to trying to increase collections from the Hispanic community—and it is paying off,” says Scottie Ferris, who recently turned over her position as case management supervisor to Section Manager Pamela Crandall.

The department created the postcards “to urge custodial and noncustodial parents to contact the office regardless of their citizenship status and to hopefully have the custodial parents help us with locating the noncustodial parents,” says Ferris. The postcards reinforce to the community that any information provided to the child support office is

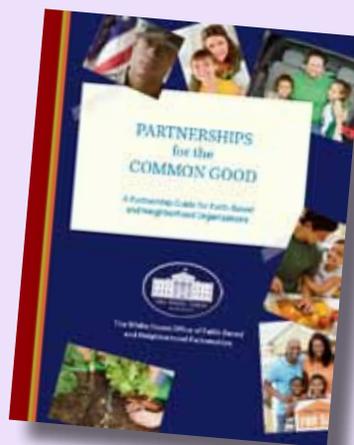
confidential and no one will be reported to U.S. Immigration & Customs Enforcement.

The department used the OCSE Hispanic Outreach Toolkit as the basis for creating the postcards, which they’ve distributed to local markets and day labor spots—centers in the county that assist with communication between potential employers and the people needing employment. “A child support employee will visit the centers to ensure that their members, who are primarily Hispanic and Latino men and women, have access to all of the services we provide,” says Ferris. “We make time to go out there and meet with people or talk to them about our services.”

For more information, contact Pamela Crandall at Pamela.Crandall@sonoma-county.org.

New Guide for Community Organizations

HHS and the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships launched **Partnerships for the Common Good**, a guide for faith-based and community organizations. It provides opportunities to form partnerships across government and covers issues on housing, job creation, supporting healthy children and families, and responsible fatherhood.



Interactive Maps

2010 Census Population Profiles

More and more, federal, state, and local governments are conversing with Latino customers. You can use an interactive Census map to find the percentage of Hispanic population in your state. (Or try an interactive map of Census data showing Hispanic percent of county populations, minus Alaska.)

'Jobs not Jail' Gives South Carolina Parents Opportunities Through Fatherhood Program

This article demonstrates **Economic Stability**. (See the "bubble chart" on the last page.)

By Lisa Potts

Public Policy and Advocacy Director

South Carolina Center for Fathers and Families

A South Carolina program called "Jobs not Jail" is offering an alternative approach to enforcement of child support with a focus on low-income noncustodial parents, and demonstrates that diversionary programs work.

In 2002, the South Carolina Center for Fathers and Families began a pilot for Jobs not Jail to offer critical support services to noncustodial parents in danger of accumulating large arrears in their child support cases. The pilot was based on evidence that the majority of "non-collectable" child support debt is owed by low-income noncustodial parents who lack the capacity to support themselves and consistently pay child support obligations. And, unfortunately, most of it is owed to financially struggling custodial parents who rely on monthly support to meet their child's basic needs. However, these seemingly competing, but equally legitimate concerns could be balanced, and even resolved, by connecting low-income noncustodial parents to critical support services.

Jobs not Jail allows family court judges at initial contempt hearings the option of referring unemployed or underemployed noncustodial parents to a comprehensive fatherhood program. The program delivers support services focused on increasing the parent's ability to provide both financial and emotional support to their child.

The program delivers soft skills training (such as job readiness and job retention skills) and job placement and transportation assistance. Referred clients may be connected to substance abuse treatment, medical providers to help alleviate mental and physical barriers to employment, and workforce investment funds for vocational job skills training. The program forms key partnerships with outside providers to help the noncustodial parents navigate the various complex agencies that offer those services.



Since 2006, nearly 80 percent of participants (1,600 noncustodial parents) completed the six-month Jobs not Jail program. They sustained full-time employment and paid more than \$2 million in child support debt. The program ensures that the parents pay monthly child support, while also reducing incarceration costs. Less than 20 percent of the program's participants face incarceration—not for failure to pay, but for failure to participate per the court order. It is easy to determine a defendant's level of participation by reviewing class attendance records and scheduled appointments.

In 2009, OCSE awarded the Center for Fathers and Families with a three-year Special Improvement Project (SIP) grant to test the Jobs not Jail program model in a small, rural community with an unemployment rate of close to 25 percent. Early findings indicate that most participants need some basic job skills training to secure viable employment. However, most of those who completed the entry-level skills training secured full-time employment. At the end of the grant period, evaluation will document changes in the amount of child support paid by participants and changes in the relationships between the child support program, family court and community services, including fatherhood programs and workforce agencies.

To learn more about the Jobs not Jail program, please contact the SC Center for Fathers and Families at 803-227-8800 or www.scfathersandfamilies.com.

Now on OCSE Website: FY 2010 Data

After the drop in collections in 2009 for the first time in the program's history, FY 2010 saw total distributed child support collections increase by .6 percent to \$26.6 billion. The percentage of cases with orders receiving a collection decreased for the second year in a row, from over 72 percent in FY 2008 to 71 percent in FY 2009, then to 70 percent in FY 2010. See the [FY 2010 preliminary report on the OCSE website](#).

Oregon Moves Swiftly to Address Drop in Paternity Establishment Percentage

By Dale Slater
Oregon Division of Child Support
David Johnson
OCSE Region X

Wonderful results sometimes evolve out of difficult circumstances. Faced with increasingly tough state budget issues, Oregon also found itself facing potential penalties because its statewide Paternity Establishment Percentage (PEP) result dropped from 94 percent in FY 2008 to 84 percent in FY 2009.

Oregon's first order of business was to examine how the bottom dropped out from its PEP results in one short year. Hospital data showed the state was still performing well in securing affidavits. Establishments through judicial processes, although lagging slightly, were relatively stable and not the sole cause of the sharp decline.

Because the statewide PEP is calculated by comparing two different fiscal years for measuring total unwed births and paternities established, an interesting dynamic results. When unwed birth rates are increasing from year to year, a state effectively rides a positive wave of momentum and can achieve strong results; that is, the state can reach the federal government's minimum 90 percent PEP. Conversely, if the unwed birth rate is declining, a negative wave effectively shrinks the pool of unwed births from which affidavits can be secured. And for Oregon, the vast majority of paternities are established at hospitals through its voluntary acknowledgement program.

Ultimately, the social goal we all aim for is to reduce the number of children born to unwed parents. Oregon's out-of-wedlock birth rate of about 35 percent is well below the national average. But for Oregon, achieving that broader social goal for two consecutive years had a negative influence on Oregon's PEP result in the child support program.

That root cause aside, Oregon forged ahead to implement a strong action plan that included shoring up outreach to hospitals, increasing outreach to and training for their TANF partners, providing free genetic testing options, establishing a new case-type action for paternity establishment-only services, and making second attempts to secure affidavits from parents when a prior affidavit was rejected due to a technical error.

Even Oregon's Attorney General, John Kroger, participated by establishing a paternity task force in the Department of Justice to focus on paternity matters. He also personally

telephoned hospital CEOs to enlist their aid in improving paternity establishments in the hospital setting.

Oregon already had a strong partnership with its Vital Records Program, but that entity also stepped up to the plate and increased its paternity outreach activities, introduced new internal vital records procedures, and updated certain paternity forms.

All of these efforts were important to helping Oregon reach its improvement goals, but also were very labor intensive investments.

By engaging other states' child support program paternity experts and OCSE staff, one technical change played a significant role in turning around Oregon's results. Oregon had not been counting adoptions in its paternity establishment calculation.

OCSE helped Oregon learn that all adoptions of minor children in the state during the fiscal year can be included in the numerator of the PEP calculation as paternity being established. This is true whether or not the child was actually born out-of-wedlock.

The rationale for this approach is based on the fact that adoption records are often sealed and states would be handicapped to know which children are born out-of-wedlock and which are not. Consequently, all children adopted in the fiscal year can be counted in the PEP numerator calculation. This is true when states use the statewide PEP calculation methodology, but the same principle applies for states that use the child support program PEP methodology. Be sure to contact your regional OCSE office if your state needs information about counting adoptions in your annual paternity data reporting.

Director Jean Fogarty said, "We had difficulty taking 'yes' for an answer—that, yes, we could count all adoptions of Oregon children as establishing paternity."

Oregon is forecasting a PEP figure well into the 90th percentile once again, based on raw data as of late October 2010. But, in the end, it's more than just a performance number states try to impact when they focus so much time and attention on a lagging performance measure; it's about the children. Examining systems, bolstering relationships with Vital Statistics and hospitals, launching a new Oregon Paternity Project website and Facebook page...it's very important work that ultimately makes the lives of children and families better.

For more information, contact Dale Slater at 503-986-6262 or dale.slater@doj.state.or.us.



Connecticut's Cash Register System—Getting Payments to Families Faster

By Deborah Tvaronaitis, Supervisor
Connecticut Support Enforcement Services

While Connecticut has operated a State Disbursement Unit (SDU) for more than 20 years, its Support Enforcement Services (SES)—located in the Judicial Branch—serves as the enforcement arm of the state child support program and has always accepted cash payments as a courtesy and convenience to child support payers. Many payers prefer to come to an SES office to pay their child support in cash and receive a receipt for their records or as proof of payment for an imminent court hearing.

Until recently, SES used a laborious manual process to collect, route, and deposit the more than \$9 million in cash payments that annually pass through its 11 field offices. A number of manual steps—from writing out receipts for each cash payment to completing payment transmittals needed by the SDU—were required to ensure payment accuracy and to guarantee that the support reached the appropriate family.

However, since early 2001, SES has worked with determination to develop a more efficient and timely process for staff to handle child support payments. Now, an electronic Cash Register System processes payments more easily and gets payments to families faster.

Timeline to a Better System

Over the past 10 years, SES administration has met with colleagues from other Judicial Branch units (SES is in the Judicial Branch's Court Operations Division) to develop a plan to install cash register systems throughout the state. There were roadblocks, including a lack of funding to pay a vendor to create an application; as a result the project was on hold for quite a while.

Finally, in April 2008, a decision pointed to a cash register system that could be designed and programmed in-house by the Judicial Branch's Computer Systems Unit. A team of SES and Judicial colleagues worked closely to develop a PC-based cash register system for all 12 SES field office locations (one field office is housed in two locations).

In May 2010, after months of designing, programming, user testing, and training, SES was ready to pilot the program in an SES office by conducting parallel testing for one month. During the parallel testing, staff used the cash register system to successfully duplicate every manually processed cash receipt, verifying the program's accuracy.

In June 2010, the first SES office went into production mode, followed over the next nine months by the remaining 11 SES offices. The final site began receipting payments through the



SES employs nearly 250 staff across the state. SES also operates Connecticut's Central Registry and the Child Support Call Center at 1-800-228-KIDS (5437).

cash register system on March 1, 2011.

Beginning June 1, 2010, and continuing through February 28, 2011, SES staff used the cash register system to issue more than 10,000 receipts to payers—almost \$2.6 million in child support payments.

User-Friendly, Time-Saving Results

The new electronic way to process child support payments is a user-friendly system that quickly issues a receipt after entry of minimal case data and tracks all receipt information and entries (edits, voids and adjustments). Near the close of the business day, staff access only one screen to record the total amount of cash and checks in the drawer, print a deposit slip, generate transmittals to the SDU, and print daily reports.

This one screen alone saves staff a considerable amount of time every day. Since everything is recorded in the cash register

system, staff can research previously receipted payments, print duplicate receipts or reports, or print any of several other reports, including an office report that provides the total number of receipts issued and the total dollars associated with those receipts.

In addition, a new banking process complements the cash register system by allowing SES to deposit monies in a local bank and then electronically transfer those funds to the SDU's bank. As a result, child support payments are processed more

quickly by the SDU and are in the hands of families in less time.

The idea behind Connecticut's Cash Register System has taken nearly a decade to come to fruition, but the experience has been rewarding with a positive outcome for SES and its customers.

For more information about the SES cash register system, please contact Deborah Tvaronaitis, Project Manager, 860-569-6233, ext. 3010, or Deborah.Tvaronaitis@jud.ct.gov.

Community Connections

'No Kidding' Teaches Responsibility to New York City Teens

Lisa Rosario, Director

*No Kidding: Straight Talk from Teen Parents
New York City Office of Child Support Enforcement*

Teen parents are less likely than older parents to be in stable and committed relationships or have the means to meet their financial responsibilities. As a result, governments provide services like health care and public assistance. Because teen parents often face barriers to higher education and employment, their child support cases are particularly difficult to manage.

In 2009, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene recorded 7,806 births to teenage mothers. The same year, the NYC Office of Child Support Enforcement

launched "No Kidding: Straight Talk from Teen Parents," a program that approaches teen pregnancy prevention through responsible parenting education. Originally developed by the Texas Attorney General's Office, NYC OCSE tailored "No Kidding" to fit its own needs and requirements.

The program now has reached nearly 1,700 teens. In addition to working in schools, OCSE has developed partnerships with the NYC Department of Youth and Community Development, where "peer educators" present to teens in its summer Youth Employment Program, and the Department of Juvenile Justice, which provides access to teens in correctional facilities.

This article demonstrates **Child Support Prevention**. (See the "bubble chart" on the next page.)

Teens Teaching Teens

The No Kidding program uses peer educators (themselves teen parents) to teach students about the importance of delaying parenthood until they are more financially and emotionally stable. Peer educators present to schools and community programs in a fun and interactive way. They engage and inform students in four, one-hour sessions: In session 1, they share their experiences as teen parents; session 2 covers financial and emotional responsibility and the benefits of establishing paternity; session 3 discusses the costs associated with raising a child; and session 4 discusses



Director Lisa Rosario, front center, with the teen peer educators

the value of being in a healthy and committed relationship before having a child.

OCSE has partnered with the Departments of Education and Health and Mental Hygiene to approve the curriculum and select participating schools. Qualifying schools are located in zip codes identified with a high teen pregnancy rate, and have health education and health services available, including a full-time health teacher, school-based health center, and condom availability program.

Finding its Way

In implementing the program, OCSE faced several challenges. First, only a limited number of schools initially met the eligibility criteria. Next, schools had a limited number of weeks available for No Kidding, resulting in scheduling conflicts. To address these issues, the program expanded to other smaller schools that were on the same campus as approved schools (and met some of the other criteria), and scheduled sessions far in advance.

OCSE also confronted difficulties in hiring and retaining peer educators. Recruiting fathers proved challenging and many of the young parents initially selected, both male and female, failed to fulfill their commitments to No Kidding due to personal and financial barriers. So OCSE expanded recruitment efforts, increased the number of available work hours (by having the peer educators work in the OCSE office when not presenting), and provided peer educators with training in communications skills.

Valuable Feedback

Students in No Kidding fill out pre- and post-surveys, answering a series of knowledge and attitude questions about teen parenting. An analysis (by the Human Resources Administration's Office of Evaluation and Research) shows that No Kidding students improve their knowledge of paternity and child support and positively shift attitudes about postponing parenthood. OCSE also received a high level of buy-in from teachers and administrators, with most schools inviting the program back.

The program offers peer educators a chance to develop their skills and gain valuable work experience. Ocha-Grace Solomon says, "Becoming a peer educator [in May 2010] for the No Kidding program has enhanced my knowledge of the child support system, while allowing me the opportunity to change people's lives through my experiences."

This summer OCSE will again work with Youth Employment Program participants, and has identified another 11 schools to receive No Kidding this fall. OCSE also plans to increase collaboration with community-based organizations and public health centers throughout the city.

For more information, please contact Program Director Lisa Rosario at Lisa.Rosario@dfa.state.ny.us.

New Fact Sheets on Bubble Chart



OCSE has launched seven fact sheets to kick off its "Promoting Child Well-Being and Family Self-Sufficiency Fact Sheet Series." A fact sheet for each bubble in the "bubble chart" describes how and why the child support program is innovating in that area and highlights state examples. Keep an eye on this series for promising practices, new research, and other useful information.

Child Support Report



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