Working Better Together for Families and Children

A Summary of OCSE Child Support Enforcement and Judicial Collaboration Grants

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I. Introduction

This document is designed to provide summary highlights, results and lessons learned from a variety of 28 Section 1115 and Special Improvement Project (SIP) grant projects involving collaboration between child support enforcement (CSE) agencies (also known as IV-D agencies) and the judicial system. Over the past seven years, the Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) has funded a number of projects that have extensive court involvement. In fact, the lead organization for nine of the SIP grants is a State/local court or national court organization.

The courts play an intricate role in processing and enforcing child support cases. The OCSE grant projects demonstrate that enhanced collaboration between CSE agencies and the judicial system generally improves child support program efficiencies and/or provides better services for parents.

These grant projects represent a wide-range of strategies from improving child support case management to the provision of child support services. Some grant projects have focused on improving collaboration, case processing and other management-related areas, while others have focused on services addressing non-custodial parent issues related to incarceration, access and visitation, and employment. As noted in the descriptions below, results are included for those grant projects that have been completed; however, some projects are still being implemented.

The summary below focuses on three major topic areas: collaboration, case processing/outreach strategies, and service approaches for special populations. At the end of the summary is a listing of projects with contact information.

II. Collaboration

All of the OCSE grant projects contained strategies to improve collaboration between CSE agencies and the courts. Several collaboration approaches included formal structures such as partnerships and advisory committees while others took steps to improve collaboration through more routine processes (e.g., regular meetings and/or training) in order to achieve project outcomes. One grant (Connecticut) was funded to establish a partnership structure in order to provide a holistic approach to coordinating the work of child support among various entities. Lessons from these grants demonstrated that cooperation among partners: a) encouraged entities to look at the program as a whole with more understanding of other partner concerns, and b) helped agencies better address a common goal or accomplish specific cross-program tasks.

**Formal Partnership:** During 2000-2004, the Connecticut Section 1115 grant, *Partners Executive Council (PEC)*, established a formal partnership structure to coordinate the child support work of five agencies which have child support responsibilities including the Bureau of Child Support Enforcement (BCSE) in the Department of Social Services (DSS), Support Enforcement Services (SES), the Court Operations Unit, the Attorney General’s Office (AGO) and the Family Support Magistrate Division. The Council
developed action steps to coordinate the work of all agencies on strategies in order to implement the National Child Support Enforcement FY 2005-2009 Strategic Plan. The Council has been instrumental in making several positive changes to the program. These included improving court case processing, implementing the National Medical Support Notice, working collaboratively to secure a vendor for the State Disbursement Unit and Interactive Voice Response System, and completing a draft IV-D program and agency duties handbook. The biggest accomplishment of the PEC has been the increased communication and cooperation among the partners in working together to improve the child support program.

**National Work Group:** Under a SIP grant, the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) joined with the Legal XML Court Filing Work Group and OCSE to establish standards for exchanging child support information electronically between State IV-D agencies and their respective court systems. The Courts/CSE Work Group was composed of 32 members from 13 States, 20 of whom were from CSE agencies and six of whom were from court systems. Other work group members were from OCSE, NCSC, and Lockheed Martin Corporation, which maintains the OCSE Network. Work group participants were asked to contribute documents, offer information on local practices, discuss data exchange processes, review related standards development efforts and XML applications, and help formulate draft standards for data exchange using XML. An OCSE Dear Colleague Letter (DCL-03-01) was issued January 28, 2003, making the proposed child support standards available to the IV-D agencies and the court community.

**Advisory Committees:** Two OCSE grantees formed advisory committees to ensure project oversight and management. They involved judges up-front in the development of project goals and in identifying the issues and solutions related to child support services and case processing.

- **Texas’ Family Reintegration Project,** recognizing the key role that judges play in establishing and modifying orders, fostered judicial involvement and ensured judges were aware of the particular issues surrounding child support and incarceration. At the Houston project site, two IV-D court masters served on the project Advisory Board. Also, one of the court masters continues to visit a local state jail with the Office of Attorney General project staff to educate inmates on the court process and the other is active in a collaborative effort to encourage Houston-area employers to hire released offenders.

- **Virginia’s Strengthening Case Management of Child Support Cases (Court Improvement Study) grant** established a Project Advisory Committee which was essential to the success of the project. Its membership was drawn from Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court judges, Circuit Court judges, clerks of court, attorneys, and representatives from a legal aid organization, Division of Child Support Enforcement (DCSE) and the Department of Health, Division of Vital Records. The Committee identified pilot court sites to develop best practices to improve case management of child support cases in the Juvenile and Domestic
Relations District Courts. These best practices are discussed in more detail below under Case Processing/Outreach Strategies.

**Training and Meetings:** Several grantees focused on involving and educating the judiciary through specific training at judicial forums or through special initiatives. In Virginia’s *Improving the Court-Order Paternity Process*, the grant Project Coordinator trained court clerks at regional meetings and via videoconferencing on the importance of certifying documents submitted to Vital Records. The *Texas Family Reintegration Project* sponsored a forum and trained 42 IV-D associate judges on incarcerated parents and child support issues. To educate judges about the value of its program, the Baltimore County, MD *Family Employment and Support Program* developed a power point presentation, “Ten Important Steps in Developing Successful Employment Programs,” which was distributed to all Administrative Judges in Maryland.

### III. Case Processing/Outreach Strategies

Many of the child support-judicial collaborative grant projects were designed to demonstrate improvements in processing child support cases more timely and accurately as well as to be more responsive to non-custodial parents. As described below, some of these grants focused on internal processes within the court/child support systems to reduce errors, increase efficiency of case processing and/or better address the needs of parents. Many of these projects focused on outreach approaches to better inform non-custodial parents about the child support program through proactive written and personal contact, including personal service of process. Some projects focused on ways to better address the needs of non-custodial parents by offering alternative service strategies such as the use of teleconferencing, nontraditional office hours or informal court hearings.

**Enhanced Case Processing:** Some grants have focused on strategies to improve child support case processing or to develop model practices resulting in more accurate and responsive child support actions. These projects reflect the importance of joint court and child support program efforts in the development and implementation of effective practices.

- Arizona Department of Economic Security/Division of Child Support Enforcement’s *Arizona Statewide Arrears Calculation Tool (eCalc)* project developed and implemented a web-based arrears calculation tool, *eCalc*, to allow courts, customers and IV-D staff to better manage child support arrears. The project is a collaboration between DCSE, the Maricopa County Family Court, the Arizona Attorney General’s Office and the Arizona Administration of Courts. All customers with an Arizona (AZ) court order, including those with an Arizona case who no longer reside in the State, have self-service access to this web-based, portable tool 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This tool eliminates the need for members of the judiciary to reschedule hearings in order to obtain a current arrears amount and allows for immediate recalculation of arrears based on testimony presented in court. The tool also reduces the time expended by IV-D staff performing arrears calculations in
complex cases and allows custodial and non-custodial parents to easily obtain
detailed information about the amount of support owed without having to contact the
IV-D agency or a Clerk of the Court.

With less than 4 months of data, the evaluation of eCalc demonstrates some
promising results:

--In 100 percent of the 399 cases, eCalc was able to produce real time web-
based arrearage calculations with no need for batch processing.

--In 100 percent of the cases, eCalc imported data from the State Case Registry
and State Disbursement Unit.

--eCalc calculated arrears in 64 percent of the time it took staff to calculate with
the previously existing tool (ARCA) -- i.e., in 399 cases, eCalc saved 472 days of
processing time, in addition to the staff time saved.

--eCalc was found to be as accurate as or more accurate than ARCA in 97
percent of the cases studied. An unintended outcome of the research was that
eCalc was able to identify data integrity issues in ATLAS (AZ IV-D computer
system) and the non-IV-D State Case Registry, giving DCSE, its partners and the
Clerks of Court an opportunity to address those issues. Because eCalc is very
sensitive to the data that are entered by the Clerks of Court and IV-D staff, eCalc
has resulted in providing a quality assurance tool that can now be used by all
staff involved in child support arrears calculations.

Although IV-D staff have begun using the eCalc tool on a regular basis, usage of
eCalc is below expectations. Court officials are not using the tool to its full potential.
Court officials are continuing to request ARCA calculations as well until they are
more comfortable with the eCalc tool. Project staff has identified the need for
additional training and assistance, particularly for those parents and partners who
have limited or no prior experience calculating debts. The eCalc appears to be
portable and could be used by any other state that uses J2EE/Java Web
environment, although adaptations may be necessary to accommodate unique State
rules and regulations.

- Colorado Department of Human Services Division of Child Support Enforcement’s
Data Information Sharing (DISH) Project is a collaboration initiative with the
Colorado Judicial Department, to plan, implement and evaluate a process to allow
for the data transfer of child support case information to and from the courts. Over
the course of the project, planning for the data exchange will occur on both the state
and county levels. Two pilots of the system will be designed and implemented, first
in a mid-sized judicial district and then in a larger judicial district. These pilots will
include extensive process evaluations, and the results will be used to revise the
system as needed prior to a gradual statewide roll-out of the automated data
exchange system in the third year of the project grant. The evaluation will also
document the planning and implementation process to help guide other States through the issues they are likely to confront in using a similar data exchange process and will explore the impact of this process on time savings, staff savings and cost savings for both the child support program and the Judicial Department. (Project ends 09/14/2008).

- The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) Grant, *Judicial Tools to Improve Court Practices in Child Support*, will create innovative resources to assist with achieving the goals of the National Child Support Enforcement FY 2005-2009 Strategic Plan that all children have parentage established, have support orders established, have medical coverage and reliably receive financial support from parents as ordered. State court judges are an integral part of the success of the child support system. The achievement of the strategic plan’s objectives relies upon judges who are fully informed and actively involved in ensuring appropriate process service, reducing the number of default orders, setting appropriate child support orders, awarding retroactive support only for appropriate and reasonable periods, crafting support orders that adequately provide for the medical support needs of children, and taking a problem-solving approach to ensure that child support is a reliable source of income for families. The proposed project will develop a medical support guide, a bench book and a publication on the application of specialty court techniques to improve court practices in integrating problem-solving court principles into the child support docket. The project will then pilot the tools, evaluate their usefulness, and revise them. The finished products will be unveiled at two NCJFCJ-sponsored national judicial education programs and disseminated nationwide. (Project ends 3/31/2008).

- Virginia has had several grants designed to improve CSE case processing:

  Under the *Strengthening Case Management of Child Support Cases (Court Improvement Study)* project, Virginia developed several case processing best practices including reduction of litigant waiting time and reduction in the proportion of incomplete paternity orders. The results of the project are promising. For example, four of the eight pilot courts did show a decrease in the mean waiting time, although most of the pilot sites did not implement the best practice of no more than one-hour waiting time for both lawyers and litigants. Five of the pilot courts that submitted paternity orders for baseline and pilot periods decreased the mean percentage of incomplete orders from 43 to 23 percent. Also, the project identified better measures for some practices. Virginia expects that the project best practices will serve as a foundation for widespread improvements in child support case processing throughout the State. The pilot courts continue to use the improvements they developed and a number of these are being adopted by Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Courts throughout the State.

  Virginia’s *Court-Ordered Paternity Process* improved communications among the courts, Vital Records and the Project Coordinator (child support agency) to
increase the accuracy of paternity documents submitted to Vital Records to correct birth certificates. At regional meetings and other training venues, the Project Coordinator educated court clerks on the importance of providing Vital Records with complete and accurate paternity documents and of having the clerk/deputy clerk of the court certify the forms establishing paternity as authentic and accurate in order to be accepted by Vital Records. As a result of the project, Vital Records is receiving more complete and accurate information that meets its requirements to amend birth certificates. The percentage of changes to birth certificates submitted to Vital Records with correct information increased from 25.2 percent in 1999 to 33.4 percent in 2002. This improvement meant that correct information for an additional 597 birth certificates was submitted to Vital Records.

Virginia’s Chesapeake Dead File Project was designed to test the effectiveness of a Child Support Enforcement Unit (CSEU) in the Chesapeake Sheriff’s Office. The demonstration focused on eliminating a backlog of Dead File (unworked) cases, by increasing the use of personal Service of Process ([SOP] serving the non-custodial parent personally as opposed to his/her substitute), and improving procedures among the CSEU, the Chesapeake Sheriff’s Office, the Chesapeake District Office and the Chesapeake Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court (JDRDC). The demonstration resulted in increases in docketed cases, personal SOP of documents, arrests, support payments and non-custodial and custodial parent court appearances. The project identified and eliminated a backlog of 1,600 Dead File cases, many due to lack of current non-custodial parents’ address information and lack of SOP. The CSEU achieved a 95 percent success rate in completing personal SOP compared to 26 percent for the Civil Process Unit. By properly identifying child support documents, CSEU worked with JDRDC to get cases processed and placed on the docket more timely. At the end of the grant project, forms for support documents were generally processed within the week of the filing date of the court. Also, in an experimental study, non-custodial parents who received personal SOP of administrative support order documents made 34 percent higher monthly payments, and paid 11 percent more of the monthly obligation amounts, in spite of having 21 percent higher monthly obligation amounts.

Outreach/Alternative Service Strategies: A number of grants attempted to take a more proactive role by personally contacting parents to educate them about the child support system and the consequences of not fulfilling their child support obligations timely, and/or engaging them more directly in the management of their cases. A common lesson learned from these grants is the need to employ a variety of early or proactive intervention techniques, including educating parents on child support processes with continued follow-up, providing personal contact, addressing literacy and access issues, and encouraging parental responsibility.
• California Department of Child Support Services' (DCSS) *California Resolves* Project proposes to re-engineer California's business processes for order establishment and modification by incorporating alternative dispute resolution processes into both the child support program and the judicial system. The project will offer parents the opportunity to participate in a collaborative negotiation conference conducted in the local child support office and in a mediation conducted by the local court family law facilitator, with the goal of reaching a stipulated agreement establishing or modifying a child support order. California's Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), particularly its judicial officers and its family law facilitators, will collaborate with DCSS and will provide mediation services for project cases. This proposal will test whether establishing and modifying child support orders through alternative dispute resolution processes increases current support orders, speed of order establishment and modification, and parent satisfaction with outcomes, as compared to establishing and modifying orders through the traditional courtroom processes. (Project ends 09/14/2008).

• Connecticut Judicial Branch, Support Enforcement Services Unit's *Connecticut Customer Service Outreach Project* implemented a proactive, client-focused approach to collection of child support. Organizationally, the IV-D program is administered by two agencies within the State: the Bureau of Child Support Enforcement (BCSE) located within the Department of Social Services, and Support Enforcement Services (SES) located in the Connecticut Judicial Branch. SES is responsible for enforcement of child support cases while BCSE is responsible for initiating the child support case and administrative enforcement activities such as tax offset, liens/levies, policy, etc. This project administered by SES focused on three areas of enhancement. First, staff initiated contact with non-custodial parents prior to the occurrence of any problems with their case; secondly, clients were given increased access to assistance to help manage their case; and thirdly, improvements were made in the clarity and availability of case-related information. The project made use of a combination of automated and personal outreach tools (including written materials, correspondence and phone contact) to actively seek contact with non-custodial parents and provide them with the information they needed to better manage their obligations. The project tracked payment rates, appearance rates and resolution rates as well as related data in three pilot sites and in three comparable control sites. Findings indicated that there was no consistent pattern for all three pilot sites in comparison to their control sites for these measures. However, in looking at the type of intervention, the project did find that all forms of phone contact correlated to higher payment rates, appearance rates and resolution rates than no phone contact (mail only) in the pilot offices. A significant issue impacting the project was the difficulty in obtaining good phone numbers for non-custodial parents.

• The Third Judicial Circuit Court, Detroit, Michigan's *Reducing Paternity Defaults with E's (Explain, Educate, and Encourage)* project seeks to assure that child support orders more appropriately address the circumstances of both parents by improving service of process procedures, and using voluntary agreements to establish
paternity and support. It also expects to improve access to the courts by using more culturally sensitive documents and by overcoming perceived obstacles to procedural justice. The project's title, "Reducing Paternity Defaults with E's," emphasizes three initiatives to improve paternity establishment by reducing the number of defaults: explaining the process to fathers; educating them on the importance of participation and the consequences of non-participation; and encouraging future participation. Under the project, process servers give fathers easy-to-understand answer forms and encourage them to either acknowledge paternity (skipping much of the formal hearing process and setting support based on the circumstances of both parties), or to deny paternity and have genetic testing. Following service of process, the customer service unit (hotline representatives) contacts the non-custodial parents (or responds to questions if contacted by them), provides any additional information needed on the paternity establishment process, gives information on parenting time and custody and advises them of their court hearing date. Although the project has not yet ended, preliminary data is encouraging -- as of December 2006, the non-default rate has increased from the traditional one-quarter to one-third to 45 percent based on 1,018 orders. Furthermore, of the 343 non-default orders, 270 (or 79 percent) of the defendants who showed up at hearings had phone contact, demonstrating the importance of educating and encouraging defendants to appear. (Project ends 05/31/2008).

- New Jersey's The Use of an In-Court Facilitator Project was designed to increase the number of children who have medical coverage and to provide an easier and more cost-effective way to disseminate New Jersey Family Care information to those individuals involved in child support matters as well as the general public. This project established a successful collaboration between Child Support and Family Care and facilitated an overall increased awareness regarding the importance of working together to make medical coverage possible for more children. All partners in this endeavor worked well together to integrate the Family Court/Child Support activities with the referral/screening/application process for Family Care. During the project, the Family Division (court) staff provided a medical insurance questionnaire/referral form and brochure on Family Care to individuals coming to the Family Division to file a motion. Family Division staff made referrals to the Board of Social Services, where staff followed up with those clients requesting additional information and/or services. Family Care applications were mailed to individuals who expressed an interest in applying for the program and staff made follow-up calls to those potential applicants when a completed application was not received within 30 days of being sent. However, only a small number of Family Care applications were received in either Middlesex or Ocean County. It was found that almost 20 percent of those that expressed an interest in Family Care already had some type of medical coverage. Although the In-Court Facilitator Project did not achieve its goal to increase the number of Family Care participants, project staff believed it to be an effective avenue of distributing Family Care information as well as information on other state programs (food stamps, the child support program, etc.).
San Francisco, California’s *Enhanced Parental Involvement Collaboration (EPIC)* Project was designed to reduce the number of default cases and/or the number of cases in which imputed income was used to establish child support orders. The San Francisco Local Child Support Agency partnered with the San Francisco Unified Family Courts and its Family Law Facilitator to implement the project. The project design emphasized enhanced customer service and outreach strategies to encourage non-custodial parents to participate in the child support process. The alternative outreach strategies offered to non-custodial parents under EPIC were designed to enhance notice provision, address comprehension and literacy issues, and increase the amount of personal contact. If the non-custodial parent didn’t respond to initial EPIC outreach efforts (such as written and personal contact, personal service of process and post-service outreach), then they were notified to appear for a status conference court hearing. For the majority of non-custodial parents the initial outreach efforts were effective, so only a small number of non-custodial parents were required to attend a status conference. At the status conference, the non-custodial parent met with the Family Law Facilitator, and the EPIC-Child Support Officer. He/she was informed about the child support process and required documentation, as well as given referrals for appropriate community and government agencies. If the non-custodial parent failed to show at the status conference, then the collaborative partners used this forum to further analyze locate and financial information about the non-custodial parent and to formulate next steps.

Results of the EPIC outreach efforts are impressive: the EPIC group established 89 percent non-default judgments compared to the non-EPIC group which established only 35 percent non-default judgments, and the EPIC group compared to the non-EPIC group had a 16 percent higher rate of collections on current support and a 13 percent higher rate of collections on arrears. The success of EPIC has made it the standard for all new cases in San Francisco beginning October 1, 2006. Between October 2006 and March 2007, a total of 1,781 new cases were established through the EPIC process. Of that, only 2 percent were based on presumed income and 15 percent were based on default orders.

The Court of Common Pleas of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania's *Improving Judicial Processing of Child Support Enforcement Cases Through the Use of Technology* project, was designed to test the effectiveness of allowing non-resident non-custodial parents to “appear” at court conferences and hearings to establish or modify child support orders using video and teleconferencing techniques. By making the video and teleconference option available to all non-custodial parents in local cases where the non-custodial parent lived outside of Allegheny County, the court hoped to improve the rate of participation in order-making proceedings. A further expectation was that participation would lead to the generation of more appropriate orders that were better paid over time. Under the grant, the court installed electronic equipment in a courtroom and developed written materials explaining the option to appear via video or teleconference. Parents in the treatment group (non-custodial parents who had a zip code outside of Allegheny County) were mailed materials about the teleconference option with an application to participate.
Over the 17-month recruitment period, 325 cases were offered the teleconference option and 32 percent participated. Of the 103 cases with remote participation, all used teleconference techniques; no one requested to participate by video. Nearly all (91 percent) of the non-custodial parents who teleconferenced said they did so because it was more convenient and less expensive than traveling into Allegheny County. Generally, teleconferencing appealed to non-custodial parents who were better educated and wealthier (annual incomes of $30,000 or more) and those who lived a great distance from the court (55 percent lived over 300 miles and 70 percent lived over 100 miles away). Despite favorable user assessments of the teleconference experience, it did not result in any improvement in the appearance or agreement rate at order-making proceedings or in the subsequent child support payment rate. However, it does appear to be a more convenient way to serve a segment of the child support population, especially those living some distance from the agency. The process was well liked by those who opted to use it, custodial parents did not object, and conference and hearing officers found the format to be satisfactory and no more arduous or time-consuming than in-person approaches. The project was unable to assess videoconferencing proceedings since Allegheny was the only jurisdiction to possess this equipment and only a few other jurisdictions were willing to accommodate videoconferencing. Allegheny plans to expand the use of teleconferences to all intrastate cases with a non-custodial parent who lives outside of the County, and they will use videoconferences in all child support matters involving incarcerated obligors.

IV. Service Approaches for Special Populations

A number of OCSE grant projects were designed to address issues related to non-payment of child support. These grant projects provided a variety of services to accommodate the needs of special populations including incarcerated, paroled and released non-custodial parents, parents with access and visitation concerns, teen parents, or parents who were unable to pay child support due to under-employment, unemployment or drug abuse.

Most of these projects included referral of parents to job-readiness and employment services to help them increase their earnings and thus increase their child support payments. Some projects were designed to offer alternative services to incarceration for nonpayment of support. Success of these projects depended on educating parents about the child support system, strong case management, and continued follow-up to ensure parents understood their responsibilities, program requirements and consequences of nonparticipation. In addition to program services, other successful incentives for parents’ participation included order reviews, possible arrears reduction and repayment plans.

**Incarcerated/Released Non-custodial Parents:** These projects address the needs of incarcerated and released non-custodial parents regarding help with the modification process and/or employment and reintegration services.
• District of Columbia Office of the Attorney General Child Support Services Division's (CSSD) *Modifying Orders for D.C. Prisoners* project tests a new approach to modifying orders for District of Columbia prisoners. The District of Columbia enacted a law that requires judges to inform individuals being sentenced to prison that they have the right to petition the court for a modification of their child support order. It also requires that the court give individuals the opportunity to fill out a petition for modification during their sentencing hearing. This grant allows CSSD to reach as many obligors going to prison as possible. CSSD will also use this grant to develop and implement a method of identifying obligors already in prison who have a current support order and offering them assistance in completing and processing petitions for modification if circumstances warrant. In this way, CSSD hopes to eliminate the backlog of cases involving inmates that need an order modification. It will also serve to strengthen ties to the District criminal justice agencies and the broader community. Ultimately, the District hopes that the project will improve ex-prisoners’ chances of successfully reintegrating in their communities once they are released from prison and make it easier for them to pay child support. (Project ends 09/14/08).

• Under Illinois' *Father Reintegration Project*, the child support agency collaborated with the State Department of Corrections and the Circuit Court of Cook County. One of the goals of the initiative was to provide incarcerated individuals with a wide array of services including information on the child support system and special assistance to address barriers such as employability through the Non-custodial Parent Services Unit. The project provided general and case-specific information about child support, responsible fatherhood classes, and case management services to 190 inmates with child support involvement. CSE agency staff provided both technical and hands-on assistance to incarcerated individuals to help prepare essential documents to expedite the modification process.

The inmates were housed in two Illinois Department of Corrections Adult Transition Centers (ATCs, also known as work-release programs) operated by the Safer Foundation, a well-known provider of employment and reentry services to released offenders. In addition to helping ATC residents determine their child support status, project staff helped those with existing orders to apply for modifications that were processed through special arrangements developed with the Circuit Court of Cook County. Court personnel at the Expedited Child Support Division of the Cook County Circuit Court anticipated that modification hearings involving incarcerated non-custodial parents would take longer than usual and began to schedule cases for project participants for time slots that allowed for longer proceedings. As a result of planning and communication between the child support agency and the court, the hearings were successful, and the outcomes were regarded as satisfactory. During the project, 63 participants (roughly two-thirds of those who were eligible) requested a modification. While a few cases (13 percent) were still pending when the project ended, 44 percent were granted a modification, while 43 percent were closed and the request was dismissed, typically because the non-custodial parent failed to appear in court or was remanded to prison.
• The Michigan Supreme Court's *Prisoner Support Adjustment Project* studied prisoners' use of review and modification processes and tested the effectiveness of using audio and video technology to allow prisoners access to Michigan's child support proceedings. The Office of Child Support provided monthly data-match reports on child support cases and prisoner records. The Department of Corrections coordinated prisoner appearances by electronic means. Local circuit courts supplied facilities, equipment and staff to fulfill support modification and judicial duties. Support orders were modified in 3,370 prisoner-related cases and reduced an average from $220 per month to $19 per month. Over one year, these modifications will prevent the accumulation of over $8,150,000 in uncollectible past-due support. Electronic appearances saved the State over $60,000 in transportation and prisoner escort costs. The project established new working relationships among local friend of the court offices, the Michigan Department of Corrections, the State Court Administrative Office and the Office of Child Support. The project found that utilizing administrative processes to review and hold electronic-appearance hearings only when a party objects to a proposed outcome permits faster modifications and reduces the number of support modification hearings.

• The *Texas Family Reintegration Project* was designed to develop strategies for increasing child support payment, employment, and family reintegration among paroled and released parents. Texas provided a variety of services including employment services, parenting assistance, order reviews and reunification services to paroled and released non-custodial parents. State-level collaboration included the criminal justice system, IV-D court masters and workforce development boards. Although project participation did not lead to any overall change in payment behavior, inmates who paid support paid more of what they owed, and the payment was more likely to come from wage withholding. Program participants showed a 50 percent increase in the amount they paid on what they owed in child support over what they paid in the year prior to incarceration. Texas child support policies and statutes preclude aggressive child support actions to modify child support orders or address inappropriately high arrears balances (e.g., state law requires that orders be based on the minimum wage at 40 hours per week). The OAG has convened a statewide workgroup to review agency policies and procedures that impact incarcerated parents.
Parents with Access and Visitation Concerns: Three grants have addressed the needs of parents with access and visitation issues.

- Florida’s *Impact of Mediation on Non-Compliant Non-custodial Parents Who Indicate Reason for Nonpayment Project* created a new Family Division Section within the court system to address access and visitation (A&V) issues in addition to paternity and child support issues. Eligible participants included never-married parents and only those non-custodial parents who expressed A&V issues as a reason for non-payment of child support. Eligible participants were randomly referred to receive services as currently provided (usual services) or, for comparison purposes to treatment services. Treatment participants were referred to an intake specialist who administered a questionnaire, updated the parties’ locate information, provided information and education about parenting classes, played a video on co-parenting issues and referred parties to mediation services. The major goal of the project was to foster non-custodial parents’ involvement with their children and thus increase child support compliance. The project results found that 65% of the treatment participant group (65 cases) received court-approved mediated A&V agreements versus only 2% of those assigned to the usual services (51 cases) and 94% of non-custodial parents and 78% of custodial parents indicated that visits actually took place and gave positive ratings to the visits with their children. However, there were no differences in payment compliance between the treatment and usual services group. This may be due to the use of Florida Income Deduction Orders for both groups of the study, in which most non-custodial parents who were non-complying before a child support hearing became compliant post hearing. Florida recommends that a larger sample size and a longer post-intervention observation period to follow-up with both groups are required to produce more definitive outcomes.

- Georgia’s *Integration of Access and Visitation (AV) and Child Support Enforcement Project* served 135 non-custodial parents: the control group (71) received a proscribed amount of services consistent with prior integrated access and visitation services including mediation, parenting seminars, and counseling services, while the experimental group (64) was able to avail themselves of a larger quantity of the same services. The project was implemented in five metro Atlanta counties: Cobb, Fulton, DeKalb, Clayton and Gwinnett. Cases were selected from court hearings where child access was the major factor in non-payment. Various recruitment activities were used including mass mailings to parents in child support cases where non-payments were identified, public service announcements, program flyers distributed at courts and family law centers, and staff visits to local child support offices and to child support delinquency court hearings. Project participation increased most significantly from project staff visits with judges and at court hearings.

Outcomes with respect to the amount and frequency of child support payments and total number of visitations were tracked for the control and experimental groups. Although payment differences between the control and experimental groups were not statistically significant, there were several interesting findings. The experimental
group paid a higher percentage on average of their child support payments initially after intervention, but there was little difference between the groups in terms of percent change over time. This result may be due to the notion that expanded quantity of services allowed for greater results quickly and gave the experimental group of non-custodial parents an increased sense of control. This feeling may be important since non-custodial parents in focus groups have expressed feelings of powerlessness. Although the project did not find a significant increase in total number of visitations and child support payments between the groups, each group did show an increase in visitations and payment obligations during the project period. It appears that the regular service model is generally effective for this group of parents and that the expanded service model does not affect outcomes. The study did find a significant correlation between income and payment as well as education and payment. This may suggest that the issue of nonpayment may be less associated with desire to pay than ability to pay.

- Tennessee's Testing Approaches to Developing Amicable Family Relationships Among Unmarried Parents Project is a collaborative effort between the Tennessee Child Support Enforcement Division and the Administrative Office of the Court. The project is designed to identify unmarried parents with access and visitation (AV) concerns and provide them the necessary services to enhance parental relationships and parent-child contact, and to avoid adversarial proceedings. Parenting Coordinators and pro se specialists have been placed in each of three child support offices and juvenile courts in Nashville, Chattanooga, and the Jackson/Lexington/Henderson area, representing both urban and rural judicial districts. They publicize the project and work with child support workers, court personnel and other relevant service providers to identify parents in the child support caseload with visitation problems. Under the project, unmarried parents with access and visitation issues have been randomly assigned to either a low-level treatment (receive a packet of information and referrals) or a high-level treatment (in-depth needs assessment, case management, educational programs facilitated by a parenting specialist, and other service referrals). A random assignment outcome evaluation will compare payment activity, paternity acknowledgment, established child support orders, and enforcement actions across the two treatment groups. (Project ends 07/31/2008).

Parents Behind in Child Support Payments: These projects addressed issues of underemployment, unemployment or substance abuse. All of these projects offered employment referral as a major component service.

- The Christian Community Council (CCC) of Albany, Louisiana's Fill the Gap Program operates a community outreach program that works with non-custodial parents who have not been meeting their child support obligations. These parents are referred to Fill the Gap by its partners – the State’s 21st Judicial Court District and the Amite District Support Enforcement Services Office. The 10-week program is designed to help these non-custodial parents gain a better understanding of child support enforcement and the court system, find full-time employment, build positive
relationships with their children and the custodial parent or guardian, and begin meeting their child support obligation voluntarily and consistently. The Fill the Gap Program has been in operation since 2003 and has steadily grown. In 2005, it served 44 participants, and showed 75 percent of participants having made a child support payment in the previous six months of program participation. The grant enables the program to expand services, implement more effective management, and increase their staff. The grant also enables them to develop an online, secure database, program website, and program manual and this will allow the project to be duplicated in other Regions. Recent data indicate that for 2006, the program served 33 participants with 73 percent considered compliant with program requirements. The reduction in the number of participants served in 2006 is due to the economic and population changes caused by Hurricane Katrina. The project staff expects participation to increase in 2007.

The project will utilize pre-/post-data collection to evaluate participants' confidence level in dealing with CSE and the Court, willingness to meet child support obligations, employment status and place of employment, contact with children, and perceptions of the program's effectiveness. (Project ends 08/31/2008).

- Episcopal Social Services (ESS), Wichita, Kansas' Reliable Income for Kids Coalition (RIK) tested proactive interventions called "pro se legal facilitation" separately and in tandem with a customized system of arrears forgiveness. The RIK partnership, consisting of the local IV-D agency, the State District Court, Kansas Workforce Development, and the county parole office, cooperated to manage referrals, incentives, and outcomes. The project began in October 2005 and ended April 2007. The chief goal was to make child support a reliable source of income by helping non-custodial parents comply with child support orders which they have been reluctant or unable to pay. RIK offered free legal facilitation coupled with arrears forgiveness incentives in exchange for consistent payment of support to a targeted group of non-custodial parents who have been found in contempt of court as well as a pilot group of recently released felons. Participants were provided access to proactive interventions such as one-on-one meetings with a pro se legal facilitator, cooperative parenting and money management classes, access to the ESS job search lab, and the assistance of family support caseworkers to monitor job search activities and assist in removing barriers that may prevent employment. The approach included the establishment of four experimental groups to test the effect of each intervention separately and in tandem against the results from a control group. Results are encouraging and statistically significant. Data collected from November 2005 through April 2007, indicate that 207 participants who enrolled in the RIK project remained active in the RIK project. Of these, Group A, participants who received pro se facilitation, 61% paid their full child support ordered amount; Group B, who received the opportunity to earn arrears forgiveness, 54% paid; Group C participants who received both the pro se facilitation and the arrears forgiveness opportunity, 62% paid; and the control group who received neither pro-se facilitation nor the arrears forgiveness opportunity, 51% paid. Non-custodial parents in the RIK project paid a total of $491,761 in child support during the duration of the project.
Participants in Groups B and C earned arrears forgiveness totaling $24,578 in state debt. Other notable results include: 74% of participants resumed or commenced paying child support within 90 days of enrollment; 66% of those unemployed upon entering RIK obtained employment within 90 days of enrollment; and 46% of participants (19 of 41) seeking help with visitation problems reported increased contact with their children.

- The Circuit Court of Baltimore County, Maryland’s Family Employment and Support Program (FESP) was under the direct leadership of the Court. The project was designed to help non-custodial parents, who were behind in their child support payments, obtain full-time employment. FESP participants were required to submit employment applications and meet regularly with employment coordinators for job referrals. All child support dockets were consolidated under one judge to ensure that the same policy was consistently applied to all participants. Professional employment coordinators were hired who had experience working with similar populations. Under the project model, the employment coordinators worked directly for the court and responded to court policies and procedures. The key to the success of this project was the constant follow-up and assistance provided by the court so that non-custodial parents would continue to pursue employment to support their children. Another important aspect of the program was the use of Writs of Attachment (i.e., a warrant to bring the non-custodial parent before the court) for parents who refused to participate in the program. Although this mechanism was used sparingly, it reinforced the idea that the court would take action so parents would take the program seriously. At the end of the two-year project, about two-thirds of current participants (135 of 201) were employed and paying child support. The average length of time of employment was 8.4 weeks and the median wage of the parents was $12.62 per hour. In terms of child support collected, the FESP Program was responsible for collecting $382,505 in calendar year 2006 and expects to collect over $400,000 annually. The FESP model can be adapted to various settings, depending on the size of the court and its locale. It can be integrated into a family court or can remain a separate program within the court.

- The Michigan 14th Circuit Court’s The Non-Custodial Parent Program (NCPP) targeted unemployed and underemployed non-custodial parents. The NCPP coordinated services for participant non-custodial parents to help them gain employment and pay child support. A 14-day window was given to the non-custodial parent to enroll in the program, to begin making payments or to provide employment information to the Friend of the Court. If employment information was not provided, or the non-custodial parent did not enroll in NCPP, the matter was set for Show Cause Hearing. Incentives such as modification reviews, repayment plan, and possibility of arrears reduction were built into the program to promote non-custodial parent compliance with program requirements. Program compliance monitoring data were provided electronically via internet between the Michigan Works! Center and the Court. Over the project period of two years, over 900 non-custodial parents participated in NCPP and over $400,000 was collected in child support. The
program had a 35 percent successful employment rate which the project staff believe was good, given the high unemployment rate for Muskegon County.

- The Eighth Judicial District Court’s *Nevada Child Support Drug Court Project* was designed to deal with non-custodial parents who fail to comply with their child support obligations, primarily as a result of a severe substance abuse addiction. The program goal was to increase the amount of collections and frequency of payments. The comprehensive program provides judicial supervision and treatment focusing on obligor sobriety and accountability, and utilizes sanctions and incentives to help individuals take control of their own recovery. Eligible non-custodial parents, who admit to a substance abuse problem, are referred to the program by the Child Support Hearing Master. The individual must sign a consent agreement to release treatment information to the court. Also, the participant and the Hearing Master sign a contract which describes the treatment regimen and consequences for non-performance, including the possibility of being held in contempt of court. The program provides ongoing monitoring and supervision including regular drug testing and appearances in court. Services consist of intensive mental health and substance abuse counseling, vocational assessment, job assistance, and aftercare support. In order to graduate, the participant must have met all treatment and financial obligations, must be working, and must be drug-free for 6 months.

The Court has continued to fund the Child Support Drug Court Program beyond the grant period because of its positive results. While the number of participants remains small (averaging about 16), the majority realize significant increases in earnings (71 percent – 88 percent) and increases in child support payments (43 percent – 75 percent). Graduates from the program had a 24 percent compliancy rate for one year prior to admission, a 72 percent compliancy rate while in the program, and a 75 percent compliancy rate post program.

- Virginia’s *Barriers Program* was designed to provide special services to non-custodial parents facing incarceration for non-payment of child support and to assist them in overcoming barriers that prevented their payment of child support. The project had two phases: Barriers I was conducted from March 1, 2000 – April 1, 2001 and Barriers II was conducted from April 1, 2001 to June 1, 2005. Juvenile and Domestic Relations (J&DR) District Courts judges in the Fredericksburg, VA area referred 294 non-custodial parents representing 490 cases for case management services, in lieu of incarceration for non-payment of child support. The most frequently used services provided by case managers were referral of non-custodial parents to employment services (mainly through temporary employment agencies or the VA Employment Commission), mailing of monthly statements to non-custodial parent participants, and written and oral communication with non-custodial parents to reinforce the importance of making regular payments. Six months after enrollment in the BP, non-custodial parents entering between March 2000 and June 2004 made payments that were 106 percent greater (representing $211,869 additional dollars) than they made 6 months prior to enrollment. For all BP participants, this trend in additional payments –ranging between 16 and 70 percent
greater – continued for 18 months after enrollment in the program. Arrearages for 29.7 percent of the non-custodial parents declined an average of 20.2 percent.

Significant costs were also avoided in terms of having an alternative to incarceration. For example, if 260 non-custodial parents had been incarcerated for 6 months in lieu of being referred to the program, incarceration costs to Virginia would have been over $2.3 million and $412,000 in payments for the support of their children would have been lost.

**Teen Parents:** One grantee has established a coalition to adapt the TX PAPA curriculum to address the needs of unmarried teen parents and increase their use of child support services.

- The Georgia State University (GSU) Research Foundation, Inc., *MAMA and PAPA: Real World* project proposes to facilitate a collaboration of interested partners to address the issues of unmarried teen parents between the ages of 17 and 20. The partners will include several churches and faith-based organizations, representatives of the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), Juvenile Courts and Court support staff and associates in DeKalb and Fulton counties along with Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) personnel. This coalition proposes to import the highly successful Parenting and Paternity Awareness (PAPA) project from the State of Texas. The AOC, OCSE, GSU law students and other associated legal professionals will provide the technical assistance involved in adjusting the Texas PAPA curriculum to fit Georgia state laws and requirements. Two new Georgia laws related to child support will also be incorporated into the curriculum revision. One changes the method of setting guidelines for child support from gross income model to shared income model and the second law allows a father to legitimate his child by taking one action to acknowledge paternity.

Participants will be recruited through referrals from OCSE, juvenile courts, the Georgia Fatherhood Program, churches and other faith- and community-based organizations. This project has a goal of conducting a minimum of two training sessions each month for a total of 24 sessions. It is anticipated that 10 teen parents will be served in each session for a total of 240 participants. The program evaluation will be based on data collected by several partner providers and from OCSE records. The program will measure success using the following indicators: participants who open an OCSE case (who did not have a case previously); establishment of paternity; establishment of child support obligations; increase in the amount and frequency of child support payments; entering the Georgia Fatherhood Program; entering the Georgia Child Access and Visitation Services; legitimating their child; and becoming engaged or married. (Project ended September 29, 2007; final report expected by the end of December 2007).
### V. Contact Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grantee</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AZ Department of Economic Security Division of Child Support Enforcement</td>
<td>Arizona Statewide Arrears Calculation Tool (eCalc) Section 1115 Grant No. 90FD0112 Project Period: 08/01/2005-05/31/2007</td>
<td>Veronica Ragland Assistant Director, Child Support P.O. Box 40458 Phoenix, Arizona 85067 (602) 274-7646</td>
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<tr>
<td>CA Department of Child Support Services</td>
<td>California Resolves Section 1115 Grant No. 90FD0114 Project Period: 09/15/2006-09/14/2008</td>
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<tr>
<td>CA, San Francisco Department of Child Support Services</td>
<td>Enhanced Parental Involvement Collaboration (EPIC) SIP Grant No. 90FI0063 Project Period: 07/01/2004-06/30/2006</td>
<td>Karen M. Roye, Director SF Department of Child Support Services 617 Mission Street San Francisco, CA 94105 (415) 356-2700 <a href="mailto:Karen.Roye@sfgov.org">Karen.Roye@sfgov.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>CT Department of Social Services</td>
<td>Partners Executive Council Section 1115 Grant No. 90FD0037 Project Period: 09/30/2000-02/29/2004</td>
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<tr>
<td>CT Judicial Branch, Support Enforcement Unit</td>
<td>CT Customer Service Outreach Project SIP Grant No. 90FI0068 Project Period: 07/01/2004-11/30/2006</td>
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<tr>
<td>CO Dept. of Human Services, Division of Child Support Enforcement</td>
<td>Data Information Sharing (DISH) Section 1115 Grant No. 90FD0115 Project Period: 09/15/2006-09/14/2008</td>
<td>Dan Welch Grant Manager 1575 Sherman Street 5th floor Denver, CO 80203-1714 (303) 866-4452 <a href="mailto:dan.welch@state.co.us">dan.welch@state.co.us</a></td>
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| FL Department of 
Child Support 
Enforcement Program | Impact of Mediation on Non-Compliant 
Non-custodial Parents Who Indicate 
Reason for Nonpayment Relates to 
Access and Visitation 
Section 1115 Grant No. 90FD0099 
Project Period: 09/30/2004-02/28/2007 | Velva Knapp 
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Project Period: 09/01/2006-08/31/2008 | Cheryl Breaux 
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SIP Grant No. 90FI0057 
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<td>MI Supreme Court</td>
<td>Prisoner Support Adjustment Project SIP Grant No. 90FI0064 Project Period: 07/01/2004-11/30/2005</td>
<td>William Bartels Prisoner Support Adjustment project Coordinator State Court Administrative Office MI Supreme Court PO Box 30048 Lansing, MI 48909 (517) 373-5975 <a href="mailto:BartelsB@courts.mi.gov">BartelsB@courts.mi.gov</a></td>
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<td>MI 14th Circuit Court Muskegon, MI</td>
<td>The Non-Custodial Parent Program SIP Grant No. 90FI0050 Project Period: 01/01/2003-09/30/2004</td>
<td>Kevin Eaton Muskegon County Family Court Services Work First Program Family Division of Circuit Court Muskegon, MI (231) 724-6312 <a href="mailto:vasquezro@co.muskegon.mi.us">vasquezro@co.muskegon.mi.us</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>MI, Third Judicial Circuit Court, Detroit</td>
<td>Reducing Paternity Defaults with E’s SIP Grant No. 90FI0081 Project Period: 09/30/2005-09/29/2007</td>
<td>Joseph Schewe Wayne County Friend of Court Special Assistant Prosecuting Attorney 645 Griswold, Suite 323 Penobscot Bldg. Detroit, MI 48226 (313) 224-6639 <a href="mailto:Joseph.Schewe@3rdcc.org">Joseph.Schewe@3rdcc.org</a></td>
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<td>National Center for State Courts</td>
<td>Automating the Exchange of Court Data SIP Grant No. 90FI0034 Project Period: 08/30/2001-02/01/2002</td>
<td>Kay Farley, Executive Director Government Relations 2425 Wilson Blvd., Ste. 350 Arlington, VA 22201 (703) 841-5601 <a href="mailto:kfarley@ncsc.dni.us">kfarley@ncsc.dni.us</a></td>
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<td>National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges</td>
<td>Judicial Tools to Improve Court Practice in Child Support SIP Grant No. 90FI0082 Project Period: 09/30/2005-09/29/2007</td>
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<td>NJ Department of Human Services Division of Family Development</td>
<td>The Use of an In-Court Facilitator Section 1115 Grant No. 90FD00038 Project Period: 09/30/2000-08/31/2003</td>
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<td>NV 8th Judicial District Court</td>
<td>Nevada Drug Court SIP Grant No. 90FI0030 Project Period: 10/01/2000-12/31/2001</td>
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<td>PA, Court of Common Pleas of Allegheny County</td>
<td>Improving Judicial Case Processing Through the Use of Technology SIP Grant No. 90F0065 Project Period: 07/01/2004-11/30/2006</td>
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<td>TN Child Support Enforcement Division</td>
<td>Testing Approaches to Developing Amicable Family Relationships Among Unmarried Parents Section 1115 Grant No. 90FD0108 Project Period: 08/01/05-07/31/08</td>
<td>Charles Bryson Director, Child Support Field Operations and Management Department of Human Services Citizens Plaza Bldg., 12 Floor 400 Deaderick St. Nashville, TN 37248 (615) 313-5126 <a href="mailto:Charles.bryson@state.tn.us">Charles.bryson@state.tn.us</a></td>
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<td>TX Office of Attorney General</td>
<td>TX Family Reintegration Project Section 1115 Grant No. 90FD0073 Project Period: 09/30/2002-03/31/2005</td>
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<tr>
<td>VA Department of Social Services Division of Child Support Enforcement</td>
<td>Improving the Court-Ordered Paternity Process Section 1115 Grant No. 90FD0051 Project Period: 09/30/2000-02/28/2003</td>
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<td>Court Improvement Study Section 1115 Grant No. 90FD0087 Project Period: 09/30/03-02/28/06</td>
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<td>VA Department of Social Services Division of Child Support Enforcement</td>
<td>The Barriers Program Section 1115 Grant No. 90FD0063 Project Period: 03/01/2000-04/01/2001 and extended 04/01/2001-06/01/2005</td>
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<td>VA Department of Social Services Division of Child Support Enforcement</td>
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