

Child Support Report

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Commissioner's
VOICE
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Stepping Up to the Plate

Stanislaus County child support division teams with minor league to pitch importance of dads

By Sharon Wardale-Trejo

Stanislaus County, California, Department of Child Support Services

Kids who attend minor league baseball games in Stanislaus County have a chance to go out on the field and play ball, thanks to the Stepping Up to the Plate campaign. The campaign is a partnership between the Stanislaus County Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) and the local Modesto Nuts baseball team to raise awareness about the child support program and the importance of dads participating in their children's lives.

In 2012, DCSS set an outreach goal to increase public awareness of local child support services and seek opportunities to encourage dads to engage more in their children's lives. The DCSS caseload is 32,335; the county population 515,000. With a typical season attendance of 180,000 for the home games, DCSS believed the Modesto Nuts partnership would offer a natural venue for reaching a large audience in a fun environment.

The campaign targets single parents who would benefit from DCSS and noncustodial parents who may not be involved in their children's lives. It uses several tools to relay the outreach message. First, at every Sunday home game, DCSS sponsors the "Catch on the Field" activity where parents and their children are invited onto the field 30 minutes before the game to play catch. The Modesto Nuts mascots also come out and play ball with the kids. While they play, the video board displays the DCSS sponsorship; it also appears in the pocket game calendar.

continued on next page



Families cheer for the home team in this screenshot from the PSA video for the Stanislaus County Stepping Up to the Plate campaign. The video plays during the home games and on the Stanislaus County DCSS website.

Second, at the ticket booths, fans get a DCSS brochure, “Your Guide to Child Support Services,” placed inside the program during the Sunday home games. Third, DCSS staff set up an information booth during two home games—in June to coincide with Father’s Day and August to highlight Child Support Awareness Month. Parents can talk with child support staff and get material and services.

Finally, DCSS and Modesto Nuts collaborated on a 30-second public service announcement, which plays at every home game—71 in all—for the 2012 season. The PSA highlights the importance of a dad’s engagement in his children’s lives and national statistics to emphasize the consequences of their absence. It airs once every home game, either pre-game, during the seventh-inning stretch, or post-game before the fireworks. For less than \$5,000, the Modesto Nuts developed, filmed and edited the PSA, while DCSS staff members filled in as actors. The Modesto Nuts also developed the video screen slide for the Catch on the Field Day sponsorship.

“Taking kids to a ball game is an inexpensive way to spend memorable time with family. Introducing child support through sponsorship of the Catch on the Field event lets parents see that the child support program encourages their efforts to spend time with their children in a fun venue,” says DCSS Director Tamara Thomas. “The PSA message of how important it is for a dad to engage in their children’s lives focuses more on the family-centered approach, with the Stanislaus County DCSS encouraging and supporting that participation.”

And, with 2,000-plus attendees at each of the 71 home games, the outreach message has the potential of reaching 142,000 during the 2012 baseball season—a ballpark estimate—and a successful campaign for raising awareness of program services.

For more information, contact the author at swardale-trejo@stancodcss.org, or Tamara L. Thomas, Interim Director-Assistant Director, Stanislaus County DCSS, 209-558-3062 or tthomas@stancodcss.org.



Batter up! Families play ball before the game. The Modesto Nuts team is affiliated with the Colorado Rockies and based in Modesto, the county seat of Stanislaus.

National Child Support Enforcement Association connects a mountain of ideas

The mountains just west of Denver set the scene for the National Child Support Enforcement Association (NCSEA) training conference, Aug. 5 to 8, as 600-plus attendees exchanged lessons from projects that are “moving mountains” for families in the national child support program.

One of the projects is a Jefferson County, CO, fatherhood program touted by four fathers during a “moving” presentation from the stage of the filled auditorium. These dads boldly revealed their life-changing experiences, which, ultimately, led to positive relationships with their children.

In OCSE Commissioner Turetsky’s keynote address, she discussed the need to close the “compliance gap”—the gap between the amount of support paid and the

amount of support owed—by routinely setting orders based on actual income, not imputed income.

Conference goers learned of OCSE plans to change its name to Child Support Services; some jurisdictions also have changed the name of the child support agency—or plan to—to reflect the program’s trend in delivering family-centered services.

Workshops and crowd-sourcing sessions focused on “moving mountains” within child support agencies and at the national level. During the conference, NCSEA presented its Program Awareness Award to the Stepping Up to the Plate campaign, detailed in the previous article in this newsletter.





Poverty data matter to our program

On Sept. 12, the U.S. Census Bureau released its annual household income report, [Income, Poverty and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2011](#). Each year, child support professionals eagerly anticipate this release as we develop our priorities and projects that will best serve families. The report is based on a yearly Census survey and represents the official federal poverty numbers. These numbers reflect money income only and do not reflect in-kind public assistance or tax credits. (You can see a [summary brief](#) from the HHS Assistant Secretary of Planning and Evaluation.

First the good news: the Census Bureau data indicate that the number and rate of children living in poverty has leveled off. There were 16.1 million children under 18 years old living in poverty in 2011, not a significant change from 2010. The child poverty rate was 21.9 percent in 2011, also not a significant change. In 2011, the poverty threshold for a family of one adult and two children was \$18,123, and for one adult \$11,702.

In addition, the proportion of children living in deep poverty (those with income below one-half of the federal poverty threshold) has declined slightly. In 2011, 7.3 million children, or 9.8 percent, were living in deep poverty, compared to 9.9 percent in 2010. Children in deep poverty represented 45 percent of all children in poverty.

The number and percentage of children without health coverage remained level in 2010 and 2011. In 2011, 7 million children, or 9.4 percent, did not have health insurance. Children 12 to 17 had a higher uninsured rate than those under 12. Children in poverty were more likely to be uninsured (13.8 percent) than all children, and Hispanic children were most likely to be uninsured (15.1 percent).

The number of men working full-time, year-round with earnings increased by 1.7 million between 2010 and 2011; however, this was 5 million less than in 2007, the year before the most recent recession. The number of women working full-time, year-round increased by .5 million, but was 1.9 million less than in 2007. In addition, the percent of people without health insurance coverage declined from 16.3 percent in 2010 to 15.7 in 2011.



Although the economy is recovering, the big picture is that the child poverty rate rose in seven of the last 10 years. Children living in female-headed families with no spouse present had a poverty rate of 47.6 percent in 2011, over 4 times the rate of children in married-couple families (10.9 percent). The child poverty rate in 2011 was 5.7 percentage points higher than in 2000, when the child poverty rate was 16.2 percent. And the proportion of children living in deep poverty was 3.1 points higher in 2011 than the 6.7 percent rate in 2000. Among children:

- The poverty rate for African-American children was 37.4 percent in 2011. This is up 7.2 points from 30.2 percent in 2001.
- The poverty rate for Hispanic children was 34.1 percent in 2011, up 7.2 points from the 2006 low of 26.9 percent.
- The poverty rate for White (non-Hispanic) children was 12.5 percent in 2011, up 3.4 points from 9.1 percent in 2000.

The real median income for all households was 8.1 percent lower in 2011 than in 2007 and 8.9 percent lower than the median household income peak in 1999. The real median earnings of both men and women working full-time, year-round declined 2.5 percent between 2010 and 2011. The median earnings of women who worked full-time, year-round (\$37,118) was 77 percent of that for men working full-time, year-round (\$48,202)—compared to just under 59 percent in 1975.

Other Census Bureau data indicate that about 28 percent of the U. S. population had at least one spell of poverty lasting two or more months, but that chronic poverty was relatively uncommon, with 4.8 percent of the population living in poverty for all 24 months.

I look forward to hearing about ways your agency is putting the data to work.

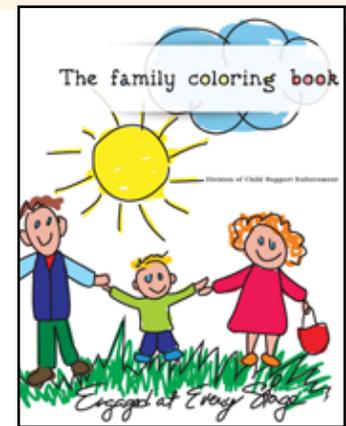
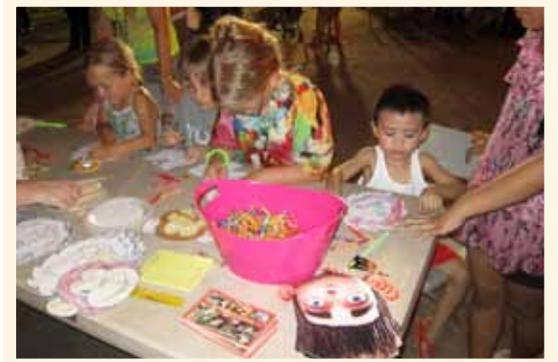
Vicki Turetsky

Spreading the word about child support services

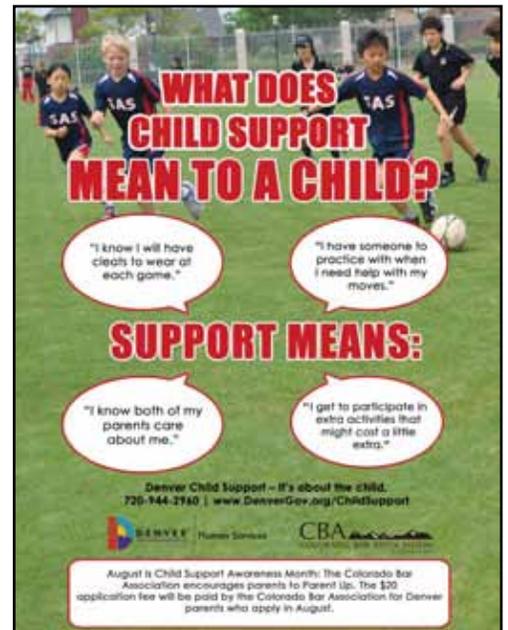
Many jurisdictions commemorated Child Support Awareness Month in August and offered events for families. Stanislaus County, CA , child support staff brought information and services to baseball games (*see article on page 1*). The photos below reflect a few other activities around the country.



The Arizona Division of Child Support Enforcement staffed a mask-making activity at the Phoenix Zoo and information tables around the state. The division distributed posters in English and Spanish to all child support offices and designed a coloring book for kids. It also collaborated with numerous organizations in Goodyear, AZ, to sponsor Project Connect for veterans who are homeless, with services such as haircuts and food.



Oregon's child support program promoted a license release opportunity. During its new "Get Back On The Road" campaign, the program encouraged parents to call a toll-free number to discuss how they could get their license reinstated.



In honor of Pennsylvania's Child Support Awareness Day on Aug. 6, Domestic Relations staff wore a blue ribbon .

In Denver County, CO, residents who applied for child support throughout August had the \$20 fee paid by the Colorado Bar Association.

Health workers in the Latino community

By Crystal Rodríguez
OCSE

Promotores de Salud (or Promotoras) are Community Health Workers (CHWs) who serve as liaisons by helping people in the community access and enroll in health and social services. Promotoras generally share similar characteristics to other people in the community—language, life experiences, socioeconomic status; having an understanding of the culture and community makes them trusted sources of information.

Duties of promotoras

The promotoras perform a range of activities such as community education and outreach, informal counseling, social support, and advocacy among communities including the Latino community (see the HHS Office of Minority Health [Definition of Promotores de Salud](#)).

Promotoras are an important component to health and social service programs. One promotora from Maryland said she talks to everyone about everything. She helps young mothers navigate through programs in the community, from free shuttle services to summer lunch programs, and tells them where to apply for social services. She said sometimes men are hesitant to ask questions, but she's not shy. She'll warn them about the consequences of not using contraceptives and the risks of unprotected sex. She's a paid community health worker and receives training on a variety of issues and programs. She's a recognized health advocate and noted as a leader in the community.

HHS initiative to support promotoras

Last spring, HHS announced the Promotores de Salud Initiative. It recognizes the great work promotoras do to reach vulnerable, low-income, and underserved members of the Latino community.

Through this initiative, HHS plans to develop a database of CHW networks that will include information on the CHWs' training and where they work. This will encourage collaboration among the promotoras and the health and social service sectors.

Child Support and promotoras

The Office of Minority Health coordinates the Promotores de Salud Initiative along with several HHS agencies and promotoras from across the United States. In our work with the Office of Minority Health,

we are exploring opportunities for collaboration to address health disparities. Several factors affect health, many of which the promotoras/CHWs address. For instance, language and educational levels can be barriers to accessing health and social services. Promotoras can help alleviate the burden by referring people to appropriate services or providing information in Spanish.

Promotoras can be a great resource for the child support program. Some families might need our services but are not aware that the child support program exists. Promotoras/CHWs can provide information about our program and refer families to a local child support agency.

Have you interacted with promotoras in your community? OCSE would like to learn how you are working together to reach Latinos in your community. If you haven't yet connected but have ideas for how your program might benefit from working with promotoras/CHWs, contact Crystal Rodríguez at crystal.rodriguez@acf.hhs.gov.

For additional information, see the [Promotores de Salud Initiative](#) in the HHS Office of Minority Health.



National Hispanic Heritage Month

Do you know why the U.S. Congress chose Sept. 15 as the starting point for National Hispanic Heritage Month? Because it is the anniversary of independence of five Latin American countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. In addition, Mexico and Chile celebrate their independence days on Sept. 16 and Sept. 18, respectively. And more ...

- In 2009, the child support program served 2,662,000 Hispanic customers, according to the [Current Population Report](#) issued in December 2011 (on page 6).
- Get a glimpse of [Latinos by geography](#) on a U.S. map that lets you navigate by year for population, share and growth, at the Pew Hispanic Center website.
- The Administration for Children and Families (the HHS agency that oversees OCSE), offers a monthly e-newsletter to display its work with the Latino community: [Infórmate](#): Information on ACF Programs, Outreach, Resources and Employment Opportunities.

Commissioner Turetsky talks with state legislators at national summit

By Rochelle Finzel

National Conference of State Legislatures

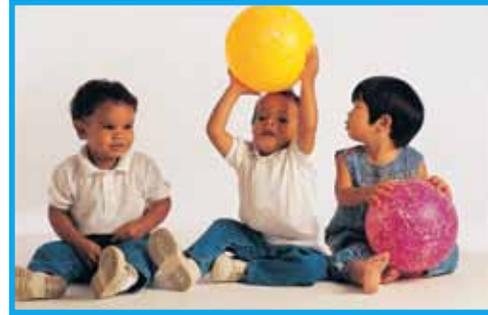
Alzata Ross

OCSE

State legislators and legislative staff from across the country heard OCSE Commissioner Vicki Turetsky speak on the importance of child support to the well-being of children and the resulting public benefits. The workshop, titled “Child Support: Beyond Enforcement to Engagement,” was part of the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) Legislative Summit in Chicago, IL, in August.

NCSL is a bipartisan organization serving the nation’s 7,000-plus state legislators and staff. The Summit brings together policymakers from the states, territories and other countries to discuss the most pressing policy issues.

The session was part of a new contract between OCSE and NCSL to create a clearinghouse of [resources](#) on child support policy for legislators and to build relationships between legislators and state child support directors. The [NCSL Child Support Homepage](#) gives legislators child support information, including a [family law legislation database](#). Commissioner Turetsky opened her remarks by emphasizing how child support improves child well-being by reducing child poverty, promoting parental responsibility, and improving educational outcomes. She stressed the importance of child support as a key source of income for low-income custodial families, specifically the deeply poor.



The Commissioner also underscored the cost-effectiveness of child support programs and explained how child support avoids other public costs.

“The OMB has found child support to be one of the most successful government programs. Child support programs collect \$5 for every public dollar spent,” said Commissioner Turetsky.

The Commissioner went on to discuss ways to ensure children receive reliable support payments, outlining five evidence-based tools that increase regular payments. These tools are part of the paradigm shift in child support to focus on short- and long-term strategies to collect support, including greater use of data and early intervention with parents to make sure they are on the right track to meet support obligations.

Participants also heard from U.S. Rep. Dave Heaton (Iowa) about the legislative perspective on child support programs. Heaton is a small-business owner and spoke to the importance of income withholding as both an employer subject to income withholding orders and one who employed custodial parents who relied on child support.

“I felt good writing those checks because I knew how important [child support] was for the custodial parent,” said Heaton.

Heaton told the audience that specific constituent concerns often influence child support legislation. He acknowledged the budget cuts states have made to child support programs and the challenges those cuts created for staff. He also mentioned the inconsistency of driver’s license suspension rules and the inability of noncustodial parents to get to work if they cannot drive.

Legislators in the audience asked questions about where to find data on effective programs, how to better coordinate services, and suggested convening legislators to discuss child support issues. Legislators left the session with a better understanding of the child support program and its importance to children and families.

To join the NCSL listserv to receive alerts of new child support-related material, send an email to cyf-info@ncsl.org and type Child Support Listserv in the subject line.



The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) publishes a child support [website](#), which includes a [Child Support and Family Law Legislative Database](#), a clearinghouse of [resources](#) on child support policy, and the first quarterly [Child Support Digest](#).

Access and Visitation program marks 15th anniversary, 1 million parents served



By Debra Pontisso and Sara Amiri

OCSE

At their annual meeting this June in Washington, D.C., state Access and Visitation (AV) program coordinators marked the 15th anniversary of the program's implementation and celebrated the its success of having served more than a million parents.

Representatives from 44 states, along with 53 state AV program staff, saw a demonstration of a web-based reporting system that promises to make it easier for states to compile and submit individual program data to OCSE.

Linda Mellgren of the HHS Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation presented on how the AV program is connected to the national fatherhood agenda, referring to the White House report "[Promoting Responsible Fatherhood](#)."

Child Trends researcher Dr. Mindy Scott discussed father involvement and the transition to multiple-partner fertility among unmarried nonresident fathers, based on data in the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth. That 1997 report revealed that out of a sample group of 534 nonresident, unmarried first-time fathers, 68 percent lacked either a formal or informal custody/visitation agreement with the biological mother; 29 percent had children with an additional partner(s) following the birth of their first child.

Dr. Scott also discussed a new [Child Trends Research Brief](#) on characteristics and circumstances of teen fathers. A key finding caught the attention—and concern—of meeting participants: Almost one-half of the men who fathered a child as a teen have more than one child by the time they are between ages 22 and 24.

Overall, the state AV coordinators have successfully used limited grant resources to serve as many parents as possible despite the growing need and demand for services. In 1997,

the first year of the program, the national out-of-wedlock percentage was 32.4 percent; as of 2009, it is nearly 41 percent ([Births: Final Data for 2009](#), National Vital Statistics Reports). There is strong demand for AV services, and each year states must make the difficult decision about who to serve, the geographic area, and the types of services to get funds.

In addition to these decisions, states must ensure they meet the statutory goal of the program—increasing noncustodial parent access to and visitation with their children. It is no surprise, therefore, that strategic planning and interagency collaboration were the final topics for the meeting.

What is the Access and Visitation grant program?

The federal Access and Visitation (AV) grant gives states funds to establish and administer programs to support and aid noncustodial parents' access to and visitation with their children.

The grant program divides \$10 million among states annually based on a statutory funding formula.

Allowable services include mediation, development of parenting plans, education, counseling, visitation enforcement (monitored and supervised visitation, along with neutral drop-off and pick-up), and development of guidelines for visitation and alternative custody arrangements.

Child support agencies represent over half of the state entities that administer the AV grants.



Debra Pontisso leads a discussion with AV coordinators. For information on your state, see the [Access and Visitation](#) section on the [OCSE website](#) or contact debra.pontisso@acf.hhs.gov.

National Tribal Child Support Association Conference



At the conference in Bar Harbor, ME, (from left): Jennifer Galipeau, Child Support Case Aid/Administrative Coordinator; Sonya LaCoute-Dana, Social Services Director; Vicki Turetsky, OCSE Commissioner; Mali Dana, Child Support Assistant Director; and Andrew Dana, Social Services Business Manager

The Penobscot Nation in Bar Harbor, ME, hosted 300 attendees at the 12th National Tribal Child Support Association Training Conference, July 22 to 25. Topping the agenda was a demonstration and discussion of the Model Tribal System (MTS). The MTS is a child support system designed for tribal child support programs using tribes' recommended requirements. The MTS offers a comprehensive option for tribal programs to meet their automation needs. The Modoc and Forest County Potawatomi tribal programs are testing the MTS.

Commissioner Turetsky reiterated to the audience that OCSE has been working with tribal programs to develop a system flexible enough to meet the needs of the different tribal programs. The Commissioner praised the tribal programs for their efforts to serve tribal families and acknowledged the conference theme, "Taking care of our children is a cultural responsibility as ancient as each of our tribes." The national child support program includes 43 comprehensive tribal programs and 12 in the start-up phase.

Coming in the October *Child Support Report:*



"Change management" is a familiar term for leaders seeking to improve efficiency and effectiveness in a changing program environment. Two child support directors will share their approaches in a new series of articles about managing change.

In honor of Domestic Violence Awareness Month, we'll read about several programs that are making a difference for families.

Child Support Report

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