

# Child Support Report



OFFICE OF CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT Vol. 35 No. 1 January 2013

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## The changing nature of human services delivery

By Robert A. Gruhl, Assistant Director  
*Montgomery County Department of Job & Family Services*  
*Child Support Enforcement Agency*  
*Dayton, Ohio*

As the child support industry continues to evolve in this complex age of unprecedented technological advancement and business practice reengineering, there is but one constant among these paradigm shifts. That constant involves the children and families we serve.

With decreasing resources comes the challenge of delivering our services in a more efficient and effective manner while keeping in mind that never before has personal customer engagement been more important. While the basic tenets of our program remain unchanged, the philosophy of our vision and service delivery implementation is in rapid transition. The key is to get out in front of these changes in order to positively promote and advance them, rather than simply react to them as they unfold.

In early December, I had the pleasure of addressing all 860 of our Job & Family Services employees at our annual all-staff meeting (Montgomery County, Ohio, is a quadruple combined agency, administering TANF, child support, child welfare, and workforce program areas). The essence of this discussion centered on the perception, myths and changing nature of our human services system. More specifically, the overarching theme was the need to balance technology and human interaction. As the child support program moves forward to create strategies that center on a family-focused concept—while promoting parental responsibility—the need to reach equilibrium between these two remains a daunting paradox.

I reminded staff that many things in our system are rapidly changing; namely the cost of doing business, the expansion of our laws and rules, and the technical sophistication of our systems and customers. Yet many things have remained static over the past few years, most prominently the essential need for our services.

The topic quickly turned to the evolution of social services and the myths that continue to plague and perpetuate within our world. The fact that some people view child support agencies (and other social serving entities) as overly bureaucratic, uncaring, and detached was discussed as a major driving force behind the need for conversations around rebranding and the re-imaging of our value.

Indoctrinating families to our system in a more precise, yet comprehensive manner was seen as an excellent starting point to allow the rebranding message to take hold.



Robert Gruhl continues our series of articles on managing change in the child support program.

continued ►

Happy **35th** birthday,  
**Child Support Report!**



As a result, the Ohio Child Support Directors Associations Urban Jurisdiction Working Group created a subcommittee to devise strategies and recommendations to strengthen customer service delivery at all entry points within Ohio's child support program. Staff believes the working group is a critical element to help counties promote the holistic approach that Commissioner Turetsky and OCSE are aiming to achieve with families and community stakeholders.

So in the end, the question remains: How do we go about creating a delivery system that is both efficient and reduces the enigma associated with providing the personal touch that is increasingly more vital for our customers as family structures becomes less traditional and more complex?

One common denominator, for certain, revolves around technology and employing the latest-and-greatest gadgets and gizmos to reach our consumers. In Montgomery County, for example, we use Bold Chat®, an instant messaging service that customers can access from our website. This technology is incredibly popular with our customers and an invaluable tool for us, moving forward.

We are also developing a child support smart phone/tablet app and will unveil it later this month. In addition to these customer-friendly information sources, many Ohio counties use unique, county-specific case management tools that deliver custom dashboards and reporting mechanisms that help drive the state's performance upward.

To complement these local items, the state Office of Child Support has developed (and continues to refine) a state-of-the-art, customer service web portal that puts individual

case information at the customers' fingertips, 23 hours a day, 7 days a week. In addition, the state office created a panel of state child support leaders to address the future of our program as it relates to communication, technology, resources, training, consistency, service integration and rebranding.

Finally, during my address to staff, I introduced the theory of behavioral economics—considering customers' values, belief systems, and norms as we try to coach, nudge and direct their choices. While the world of marketing has used behavioral economics for generations, public agencies consider this concept novel and revolutionary as they strive to deliver products and services. Serving an individual through that customer's unique and specific lens will help us craft strategies and policies designed to impact each and every customer at a far greater level than we ever

thought possible.

In the end, I told staff that better technologies, increased access to information, and greater stakeholder expectations are driving the child support program forward. As our program grows, it can undoubtedly reach new heights when staffs can validate their contact with customers with attention to detail, individual customization, and personable, positive interaction.

The resonating key will be to remind all child support professionals that while advancing technology is great, it should always support our efforts, and not replace them. After all, keeping the "human" in human services is what creates value and separates us from the rest.

*Serving an individual through that customer's unique and specific lens will help us craft strategies and policies designed to impact each and every customer at a far greater level than we ever thought possible.*

## Share your agency's resources on the OCSE website

The [Families page on the OCSE website](#) features videos and resources—and soon, family success stories, too—to help parents and families learn about the child support program. Here's what you can send us:

### Video

Send us a link to your child support-related video (under 3-minutes), along with a transcript.

**Examples:** Parent Up Denver's [DHS PSA - Truck](#); Fatherhood.gov's [Cheerleader](#)

### Resource

Send us an electronic publication or other resource useful to families in your program.

**Example:** Texas Office of the Attorney General's [Co-Parenting Guide](#)

### Success story

Did you refer a family to other services and see positive results? Did a parent express appreciation for your customer service? Send us a story (up to 400 words), that explains how your agency helped solve a problem with a positive benefit or outcome to a family.

**Examples:** [Daughter's Head Start Experience](#)  
[Allows Mom to Get Jump Start on Dream, Collaboration project helps homeless veterans with child support issues](#)

Please send your entries to [Crystal Rodriguez](#) in OCSE for consideration on the [Families page on the OCSE website](#).



**Commissioner's  
Voice**

# Setting our sights high in 2013

This New Year, I want to first congratulate all of you—child support professionals in state, tribal and local agencies, and in OCSE offices around the country—for setting your sights high on helping children, parents and families throughout 2012, and succeeding in countless ways.

January always seems to call out for an ambitious list of plans. As we work together to improve the lives of families in 2013, here are three aspects of our program that OCSE will focus on next year.

## Program modernization

Today's technology makes it possible to use data analytics to stratify child support caseloads and identify specific strategies to maximize success. We are no longer in a world that requires us to throw every enforcement tool at every case to see what sticks. Instead, we have the know-how to use program resources more efficiently by matching the right child support tools to the right case at the right time.

The key words here are "caseload stratification"—the idea that different cases should be handled equitably but differently, depending upon the financial circumstances of both parents, to improve performance outcomes and customer service. In 2013, OCSE will examine ways to increase our effective use of national data under a contract with Deloitte Consulting LLP.

Program modernization also requires updated policies and procedures. Over the last two years, we've benefitted from state and tribal program input to develop a proposed rule to support state program flexibility, efficiency and modernization. Although we cannot say for certain when, we hope to publish the proposed rule in 2013 and incorporate your comments to draft the final rule.

In 2013, OCSE also will conduct a set of national and regional conversations to inform development of medical child support policy options that support an evolving health care system.

Program modernization also requires a focus on training, change management and program messaging, which OCSE will continue to highlight in 2013—including a proposed name change to Office of Child Support Services (CSS) in the works.

## Intergovernmental enforcement

We live in an increasingly complex and global child support world. As Congress considers legislation to update the Uniform Interstate Family Support Act (UIFSA) to

implement the Hague Convention on the International Recovery of Child Support and Other Forms of Family Maintenance, OCSE continues to prepare for ratification of the Hague Convention by strengthening OCSE's capacity to serve as Central Authority for international child support cases.

At the same time, the number of tribal child support programs in this country has more than doubled in the past five years. As we complete our pilot phase of the Model Tribal System conducted by Forest County Potawatomi Community and Modoc Tribe of Oklahoma, we will make the MTS available to all interested tribes and tribal consortia beginning next year.

We also will continue to expand state use of our FPLS portal services (including QUICK). Our ambitious goal is to add 10 more states this year, for a total 48 states by the end of the year.

In 2013, we will continue to promote technologies, policies, and best practices to support efficient intergovernmental case processing.

## Research

We have launched the National Noncustodial Parent Employment demonstration project to conduct a rigorous national evaluation, including a random assignment research design and benefit-cost analysis, to determine whether unemployed noncustodial parents who receive employment services pay more child support.

This is a five-year grant-funded project that will be evaluated by Mathematica and Institute for Research on Poverty at the University of Wisconsin, with demonstration sites in eight states.

We also have a grant project to identify successful parenting-time models in five states and are managing an ACF grant project in seven states to identify models for effective systems interoperability and innovative cross-program technology.

In 2013, we also will continue to expand our activities to identify demographic, performance and budget data trends impacting the child support program.

As we look ahead, 2013 promises to be another busy year at OCSE and throughout the national (and international!) child support program. I am so grateful for your commitment to families and children, and wish you a very happy and productive New Year.



*Vicki Turetsky*

## Strengthening tribal families, one mother at a time

By Nancy Mathieson, *OCSE Region X*  
 Janice Ellenwood, *Nez Perce Tribe Child Support Program*  
 Elaine Zapata, *Nooksack Tribe Child Support Program*

### Nez Perce plans to balance outreach

The Nez Perce Tribe cannot overemphasize the importance of parental involvement with their children. To help fathers engage with their families, the Nez Perce Tribe's Child Support Enforcement Program in Lapwai, ID, recruited participants for its 24/7 DAD Program from the Nez Perce community. (See the [May 2011 Child Support Report](#) article.) On the heels of this fatherhood outreach, program leadership heard criticism: "You *always* provide services to the dads, and you do nothing for the mothers! We need services too!"

To balance services to both parents, Nez Perce community outreach coordinator Janice Ellenwood is creating a mothers' support group called *Pikeenm Pi'amkin*, Gathering of Mothers. The group will give mothers the chance to discuss issues and share ideas. The tribe plans to use a Native Wellness curriculum about healthy relationships and financial literacy material and collaborate about domestic violence concerns with the Nez Perce Tribe's Women's Outreach Program. Through the support group, the tribe also plans to help mothers learn how to heal by using affirmations and positive thinking.

The Nez Perce Child Support Program leadership recognizes that many mothers are noncustodial parents. If the program only addresses issues through fatherhood programs and ignores the importance of motherhood, mothers may feel additional animosity toward fathers and the child support program, resulting in another unhealthy division between parents. If the program is truly committed to a holistic approach for families, tribal staff needs to provide equal services to all clients and their families. The Gathering of Mothers is still in the planning stages, but staff is ready to get things started in early 2013.

### Nooksack Motherhood/Fatherhood partners with Child Support

The Nooksack Tribe's Child Support Program, located in Deming, WA, refers both custodial and noncustodial parents to a Motherhood/Fatherhood Program, operated through the Nooksack Tribal TANF Program, to teach productive

parenting to both mothers and fathers.

The program staff consistently meets one-on-one with clients to help them with resources, transportation, advocacy, job skills and follow up. The Motherhood/Fatherhood Program seeks to support mothers in overcoming barriers to allow them to be the best mother possible. Often child support clients have multiple personal and professional barriers such as lack of access to safe housing, lack of job skills or education, legal issues, and a general mistrust of the law and court system.

The Motherhood/Fatherhood Program provides skills and knowledge to work toward co-parenting in the best interest of the child. Parents develop an understanding that, when possible, both parents need to raise and support the child so he or she will have both parents in his or her life with the best opportunities to succeed.

Working with both the Nooksack Tribal Child Support Program and Motherhood/Fatherhood Program, many mothers and fathers are becoming self-sufficient. The Motherhood/Fatherhood Program provides hope where hope was previously lost for some parents.

When one of the mothers was asked what she found most helpful about the Motherhood/Fatherhood Program, she responded, "...As a parent, I found the community support and educational trainings provided for parents and families most helpful. The gas vouchers and stipends for attendance were an added incentive to continue to participate even through financial struggles."

One case in particular highlights the success of the Nooksack Child Support Program's collaboration with the Motherhood/Fatherhood Program: A mother used the program to build self-confidence and return to school to get her GED and obtain employment, and she no longer needs Tribal TANF. She continues to work on co-parenting and relationship skills to raise her child in a healthy lifestyle.

## Coordination Points

# In Kansas, fathers take steps toward employment, child support payments

By Barbara Lacina  
*OCSE Region VII*

Connections to Success is a community-based, nonprofit employment program serving Kansas and Missouri since the late 1990s, with a vision of breaking the cycle of poverty one family at a time. The program received a 2011 Responsible Fatherhood grant from the Office of Family Assistance (in the HHS Administration for Children and Families) and has used the funding to add a fatherhood initiative called Successful STEPS—Services and Training to Empower Parents—to the program.

Successful STEPS has operated in the Kansas City, KS, metro area since February 2012, running consecutive sessions that meet daily for two weeks, with an average of 10-12 participants in each session. The employment portion of the program provides skill building, financial education, mentoring, job readiness and placement, and intensive case management. The fatherhood portion of the program uses several nationally recognized curricula to provide responsible parenting and healthy relationship education.

Noncustodial parents involved with Kansas social service programs (food stamps, child welfare, etc.) are referred for voluntary participation in Successful STEPS. Kansas Child Support Services is contributing to the fatherhood curriculum by delivering a child support education presentation during one class period and following up with participants to complete modification requests, genetic testing, and general case management. Participants with state-owed child support arrears may earn credit toward



From left: Otis Cobbins, Successful STEPS fatherhood instructor; Cedric Finley, Successful STEPS outreach coordinator; Nicolette Bennett, Kansas CSS supervising attorney; and Pam Cobbins, Connections to Success director of programs

their debt at a rate of \$50 per hour for the first 15 hours of program attendance and \$25 for every hour thereafter, for a maximum of \$1,625.

Through October 2012, 99 men with child support obligations have participated in the program, and 39 have obtained employment (40 percent). During October and November, 49 of the 99 participants made a support payment (24 via income withholding order, 20 direct payments, and 5 via unemployment insurance benefit). Seventy-three participants owe arrears to the state, and their participation in the program has earned them a combined \$101,387 credit toward their debt. Anecdotally, one employer reported that the participant he hired is one of his best employees!

Successful STEPS is set to begin operation in the Kansas City, MO, and St. Louis metro areas. This expansion, along with the early results from Kansas City, KS, and a grant period that runs through September 2014, indicate a strong potential of positive outcomes for many parents and their children.

*For more information, contact Renee Van Nieuwenhuyse, Kansas CSS Regional Manager, at [renee.vannieuwenhuyse@dcf.ks.gov](mailto:renee.vannieuwenhuyse@dcf.ks.gov).*

## Promising Practices

# Nebraska assesses early intervention calls to both parents

By Lori Bengston  
*Nebraska Child Support Enforcement*

In October 2004, Nebraska Child Support Enforcement received a Section 1115 demonstration grant to outreach to noncustodial parents with new court orders. The agency modeled the outreach after the client-focused approach to child support collection used by the Australian child support system.

When the project began, Nebraska focused on building a relationship with the noncustodial party in a knowledgeable and professional manner. The workers encouraged new noncustodial parents to make regular payments and to build a working relationship with the caseworkers and the Nebraska Customer Service Call Center to address concerns and issues throughout the life of the order.

For the group of new court orders they received each month, workers kept payment records that identified the

payments for the noncustodial parties that the workers contacted and for those they did not contact after six months. The chart below captures the results of improved collections six months after contact over time.

The agency conducted further research to see if the pattern of increased collections continued after one, two or three years of payment on the order.

In October 2010, Nebraska outreach representatives began to extend outreach to the custodial parties. During the call, they explain the State Disbursement Unit function, methods for payment receipts, process for filing nonmonetary receipts, and the \$25 fee. They encourage custodial parties to use the services of the Nebraska Child Support Call Center, obtain correct address and phone information, and explain processes affecting both parties that were not clear when the information was first delivered to them in the courtroom.

Any errors in entry of the order such as incorrect birthdates, transposed payors or payees, or order start dates are corrected immediately rather than waiting until something doesn't process correctly and leaving the parties to figure out what to do. Many times the judge or private attorneys will require direct payments at the beginning of the order and the outreach staff is able to assist with getting the balance adjusted and payments going to the State Disbursement Unit.

Outreach staff members believe that the increase in cell phone use since 2007 has improved their ability to contact both the custodial and noncustodial parent. People tend to have personal phones and answer them, even when at work. Both parents also have one another's cell phone number if the staff members make contact early in the life of the court order.

As a result of contacting both parties and equipping them with facts, child support promotes healthy family relationships and alleviates some of the misunderstandings at the beginning of the order. Many times the custodial and noncustodial parents thank the outreach team members for

their calls and express appreciation for the help in explaining questions they have as shown by the following quotes from custodial parents:

“I was not aware of Nebraska Customer Service and am glad to know there is a resource available.”

“Thank you for outreaching to me!”

“I'm thrilled that someone called me!”

Noncustodial parents also express appreciation:

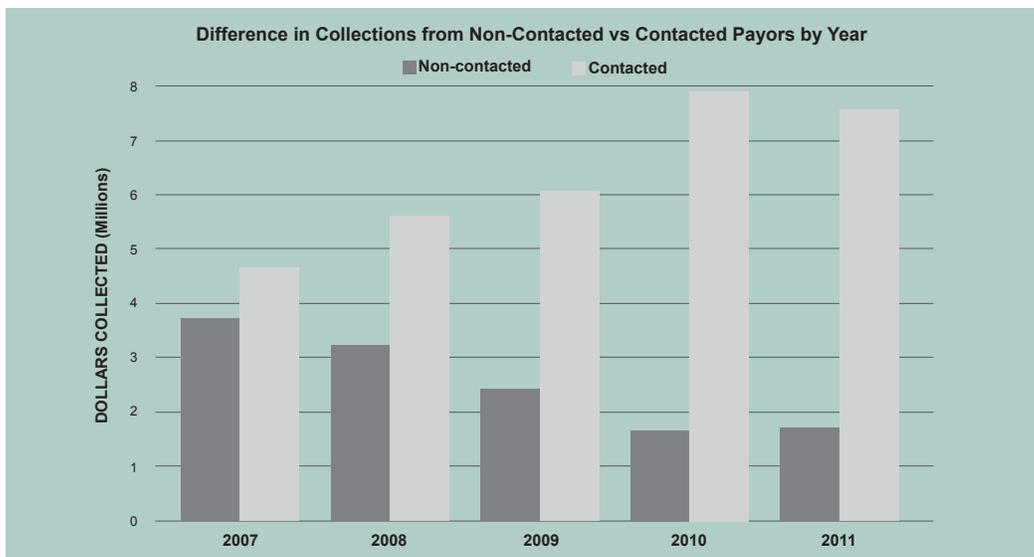
“This call was very timely. I didn't know who to call or what to ask.”

“Thanks for putting everything in terms that I can understand and for taking the time to answer my questions.”

Often the parties have already received billing statements, letters regarding Consumer Credit Reporting, and collection or other letters they don't understand and sincerely appreciate the nonthreatening attitude of the two-member outreach team and the timely courtesy call.

The outreach program provides the tools, resources and support parents need at a critical time in the life of the family. Although the Nebraska outreach program has measurable results, no dollar value can be put on personal contact at the appropriate time. It is an opportunity to bring down barriers and clear up misconceptions at the beginning of the order. It increases collections. It is the right thing to do for families.

Contact [Lori.Bengston@nebraska.gov](mailto:Lori.Bengston@nebraska.gov) for more information.



*If you build it, they will come* — Two counties in California recently opened new customer service centers where families are reaping benefits from research to improve customer service.

# Orange County center ‘exemplifies our sincere commitment to families’

By Jesse Guillen, Public Information Officer  
Orange County, CA, Child Support Services

In September 2011, Orange County Department of Child Support Services (CSS) set out to identify community resources that could help its customers meet their basic needs, including employment, food, shelter and clothing. CSS also researched barriers that prevent consistent child support payments and the positive influence that meeting their basic needs may have on child support payments.

CSS collaborated with community agencies to identify available community resources so that customers could take positive steps to potentially reduce or eliminate the barriers to payment. Training the child support professionals was critical to understanding the resources available so they could refer customers to these agencies.

The initiative led to a landmark moment for CSS and its customers. In an exciting ribbon-cutting ceremony featuring local, state and federal officials, CSS unveiled a 5,000-square-foot Community Resource Center (CRC) on Nov. 13.

The new CRC boasts several large areas in positive and warm atmospheres where CSS staff connects with customers:

**Forms Workshops** – Staff and volunteers help customers to complete child support forms. The workshops take place three days a week and serve an average of 70 customers each week.

**Online Services Room** – The room contains six self-help computer workstations for customers to request a child

support service online, such as a modification, case opening application, change of address and submittal of forms to court electronically. They can also access community resources and applications for programs such as SNAP and Medi-Cal. CSS is conducting customer surveys to learn about customers’ computer skills to improve their computer experience.

**Community Resource Library** – The library houses information on community partners in brochures, books and flyers. CSS partners provide the information on housing, health services, financial assistance, food distribution, veteran support, employment, child care, legal aid, and youth and senior services. The library also has a play area for children.

**Employee and Community Partner Work Area** – CRC staff and community partners such as the Office of the Family Law Facilitator and Lab Corp provide personal services in their offices located at the CRC.

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Ribbon-cutting ceremony in the Orange County customer service center

**Lobby** – The lobby is warm, invigorating and spacious, and customers can know CSS staff is there to help. Customers check-in with friendly staff and can wait comfortably as the staff prepares to help them.

The CRC was the vision of former CSS Director Steven Eldred, who was inspired by OCSE Commissioner Vicki Turetsky a year earlier. He was on hand to do the ribbon-cutting honors. “It is amazing to see the finished product. This truly exemplifies our sincere commitment to the families we serve.”

Since implementing the Family-Centered Services model in September 2011, CRC staff has served over 1,500 customers and connected parents with hundreds of resources. CSS staff incorporates the Family-Centered Service

approach to their daily business, always being conscientious to identify family needs through daily interactions with customers.

“This is the new way of doing business,” says Interim Director Winnie Hewett. “Finding solutions for parents at every opportunity offers the best possible outcome for children and families to become self-sufficient.”

The CRC plans to host workshops about various topics and needs that CSS identifies through ongoing customer surveys. These workshops may include resume building, debt management, parenting courses, relationship building, and presentations about child support processes. In addition, CRC continues efforts to establish partnerships with more community resource agencies to expand its range of referrals for families.

## Los Angeles County opens customer service ‘office of the future’

By Al Reyes, Division Chief  
*Outreach Services Division*  
*Los Angeles County Child Support Services Department*

**Ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Antelope Valley Division customer service office in Los Angeles County**



The Los Angeles County Child Support Services Department (CSSD) held a grand opening for a new office in northeast Los Angeles County designed to improve customer service.

Los Angeles County Supervisor Michael Antonovich and CSSD Director Steven J. Golightly gave keynote addresses for the opening of CSSD’s new Antelope Valley Division, in Lancaster, CA. A hundred community leaders, court officials, Los Angeles County executives and CSSD staff attended the event.

“This is, in fact, our prototype for the CSSD office of the future in Los Angeles County, which is focused on enhanced customer services,” said Director Golightly at the ceremony. Golightly pointed out that the office features a customer-friendly lobby and interview area that eliminates physical barriers and provides play areas for children.

Supervisor Antonovich represents the Antelope Valley area serviced by the new office. He pointed out that the child support program is very important to the welfare of children in Los Angeles County and that CSSD has made great strides in improving customer service.

“This new facility provides great access to the public because it is located closer to public transportation and the freeway,” said Antonovich. He noted that county supervisors are pleased with Director Golightly’s leadership and his department’s efforts to improve child support services in the county.

# Contra Costa County paternity program going mobile

By Peggy Hawkins, Chief Assistant Director  
Contra Costa, CA, County Department of Child Support Services

Unmarried parents in the California Department of Child Support Services (CDCSS) can declare paternity of a child without having to go to court. The Paternity Opportunity Program (POP) gives these parents a way to declare the paternity of their child at the hospital after the birth. The parents complete a Declaration of Paternity on a four-part form right in the hospital and then CDCSS receives it for review and processing. The POP program makes the most use of the form in these hospital situations and with much success.

In 2010, Contra Costa County Department of Child Support Services began to review the existing POP process and found they could improve efficiency by having an electronic paternity declaration process. Capturing and sending the POP data electronically could significantly reduce the error rate and reduce the time between collecting the data to making it available in the statewide case management system, from 6-12 weeks to a few days.

Contra Costa and CDCSS are working on a proof-of-concept project to create an electronic POP (e-POP)

Contra Costa County's electronic proof of paternity application will run on a tablet.



mobile solution. They designed the e-POP application to run on a Windows-based tablet with touch screen and stylus use. It will be available in English and Spanish. Playing a paternity video and listening to an audio file of the rights and responsibilities are available options of the system, which will improve the parents' understanding of the paternity program. In addition, the system will capture electronic signatures of both parents and the witness. This proof-of-concept project also will generate paper copies of the declaration. The copy filed with CDCSS will contain the electronic signatures as well as "wet" signatures.

The e-POP process will be ready for live testing at the Contra Costa County Regional Medical Center in early 2013.

Contact Peggy Hawkins at [peggy.hawkins@dcss.cccounty.us](mailto:peggy.hawkins@dcss.cccounty.us) or 925-313-4401 for more information.

# Analysis: Pennsylvania's success to resolve undistributed collections

By John Clark, OCSE Region III

Every state struggles with reducing the amount of undistributed collections (UDC) in the child support program. For FY 2011, the national child support program left more than \$550 million in UDC.

Why do these collections remain undistributed to families? Financial analysts in the child support community often divide the reasons into resolved and unresolved undistributed collections. The reasons for resolved UDC include the agency receiving collections within the past two days, tax offsets withheld up to six months, and future payments. The agency delays distribution, with plans to distribute the collections soon.

The reasons for unresolved UDC are very different. These include unidentified collections and child support payments with inaccurate or missing information. There is reasonable probability that the agency will never distribute unresolved UDC to families.

## Four reasons for success

For FY 2011, Pennsylvania distributed 99.3 percent of all collections, while the national average was 97.8 percent.

For FY 2012, the state systematically reduced unresolved UDC. Unidentified collections decreased by \$189,000 (68.8 percent), and collections with inaccurate or missing information decreased \$129,000 (20.9 percent).

Pennsylvania attributes its success to four reasons:

- More resources to focus on UDC: Because the state processes most collections (76 percent) and disbursements (98 percent) electronically, employees can focus on UDC.
- Efficient system of contract management: The state holds the vendor to a very high standard of performance.
- Effectively uses all locate resources: These include FPLS programs (e.g. National Change of Address) and state resources to locate custodial and noncustodial parents.

- New leader: The Pennsylvania Bureau of Child Support Enforcement's Division of Financial Services' Tammy Barrick invigorated the unit and improved the division's already productive performance.

Child Support Director Daniel Richard explains Pennsylvania's commitment to reduce UDC: "Ultimately, our mission is to deliver money paid on behalf of children to their families to ensure that the children's needs can be met. Through concerted review of reports and use of expanded technological resources, we have made it a priority to fulfill that mission."

## It's a wrap: Passport Denial stories from 2012

As we reflect on the following successes in the OCSE Passport Denial program, please keep sending yours to [scollections@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:scollections@acf.hhs.gov).

### Business travel

An employer paid **Louisiana** \$35,000 so the noncustodial parent could travel.

**Oregon** received \$11,000 from a contractor traveling to Afghanistan.

A businessman in India had his passport confiscated at an embassy upon presenting it to add pages. When he refused to pay the arrears, a **Colorado** case manager explained that he would not be able to obtain his passport without payment. After a few weeks, he paid \$26,000.

### Weddings and family

A noncustodial parent in **Minnesota** paid \$27,000 so he could travel to Japan to hold his newborn son.

**Maryland** collected \$6,000 so that the noncustodial parent could attend his sister's wedding.

**Hawaii** received \$3,900 from a noncustodial parent who was traveling to the Philippines to get married.

### Win, Place and Show

The highest collection this year was from **California** in August. The noncustodial parent had plans to travel to Canada and paid \$225,000.

Placing second was a collection from **Puerto Rico** in May for \$210,000 from a businessman working for an international company with headquarters in South America.

The third highest collection came in September from **Pennsylvania** for \$103,000, its largest single collection from the passport denial program. The noncustodial parent needed to travel to Egypt for personal reasons.

### 2013 resolution

The Passport Denial program is optimistic it can surpass 2012's \$30 million in voluntarily reported lump-sum payments.

## 2013 Calendar of child support conferences

**NCSEA (National Child Support Enforcement Association) Mid-Year Policy Forum**  
February 6 – 9, 2013  
Washington, DC

**ERICSA (Eastern Regional Interstate Child Support Association) Annual Conference**  
May 19 – 23, 2013  
Lake Buena Vista, FL

**NCCSD (National Council of Child Support Directors) Annual Conference**  
June 2013  
Washington, DC

**NTCSA (National Tribal Child Support Association) Annual Conference**  
June 23 – 27, 2013  
Oneida, WI

**NCSEA Annual Conference**  
August 5 – 7, 2013  
Baltimore, MD

**WICSEC (Western Interstate Child Support Enforcement Council) Annual Conference**  
October 21 – 24, 2013  
Kansas City, MO

# Child support is helping poor families in tough times

By Joan Entmacher  
Vice President for Family Economic Security  
National Women's Law Center

The economy is gradually recovering, but millions of Americans—especially single parents and their children—are still struggling. As the Commissioner reported in her [September 2012 Commissioner's Voice column](#), Census Bureau data released in September 2012 show that while the number and percentage of children living in poverty leveled off in 2011, the numbers remain painfully high.

But child support and income from various public programs are helping to lift families out of poverty. Using additional data and tools released by the Census Bureau in November 2012, the National Women's Law Center measured their impact.

In 2011, about 4.7 million people reported receiving income from child support, with a median amount of \$3,600. The bullets below show the role that child support played in reducing poverty among families who received it. (Note that the statistics are not mutually exclusive. For example, a family who started in deep poverty—below 50 percent of the federal poverty line—and was lifted above the poverty line would be counted as both lifted out of deep poverty and poverty.)

In 2011, income from child support lifted:

- 818,000 people, including 532,000 children, out of deep poverty.
- 922,000 people, including 526,000 children, out of poverty. They included 285,000 White, non-Hispanic children; 116,000 African-American children; 85,000 Hispanic children; 25,000 Asian children; and 15,000 American Indian or Alaska Native children.

Without income from child support, the child poverty rate would be 22.6 percent instead of 21.9 percent. But even with child support, child poverty rates were 38.8 percent for African-American children, 38.2 percent for American Indian or Alaska Native children, 34.1 percent for Hispanic children, 13.5 percent for Asian children, and 12.5 percent for White, non-Hispanic children.

The child support income that families receive comes from payments by noncustodial parents, not public funds. Public funding supports the child support enforcement program, which collected \$5.12 in private child support for every \$1 in administrative expenditures, according to preliminary data for Fiscal Year 2011. Child support enforcement is one important and effective anti-poverty strategy, but it has limits; some noncustodial parents are poor themselves.

Direct income supports are also needed to help families escape poverty.

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly Food Stamps) lifted many more families with children above the poverty line than child support did (or would have, if those benefits were counted as income in the official poverty measure). In 2011, the EITC lifted the incomes of about 5.7 million people, including 3.1 million children, above the poverty line; SNAP lifted the incomes of about 3.9 million people, including 1.7 million children, above the poverty line.

In contrast, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) had a more limited impact in bringing children and families out of poverty and extreme poverty. In 2011, TANF benefits brought only 276,000 children out of poverty, compared to 526,000 for child support.

Since TANF benefits are well below the poverty line in most states, it is not surprising that TANF lifted so few children above the poverty line. But in a year when nearly 7.3 million children were living in deep poverty, TANF benefits lifted only 401,000 children out of deep poverty, compared to 532,000 for child support.

The latest Census data show that child support enforcement—and some income support programs designed to help low-income families—are making a real difference. But they also show that we have a long way to go.

*Articles in the Community Perspective column do not reflect the views of OCSE or HHS.*

## Child Support Report

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