

Child Support Report

Vol. 37 No. 1 January 2015

COMMISSIONER'S VOICE


VOICE BLOG

Everything I learned about customer service, I learned while I was a waitress

Many years ago (in fact, only a few years after the IV-D program was authorized by Congress), I was a mom on my own with two small children to feed. I did not receive child support, and was the sole breadwinner in our family. I was a full-time waitress then, receiving a very small pay check. To get by, we had to rely on my tips. Every night, my sons and I counted out the dollar bills and rolled

the dimes and nickels. I set aside the quarters for the commercial washer and dryer in my apartment building. I used the pennies for bus fare, to the annoyance of those boarding the bus behind me.

So I worked for tips. I hoped that customers would like my service well enough to give me a good tip. What I quickly learned was that the better my customer service, the better my tips — most of the time. This is what I learned about customer service:

Get organized. Before the first customer walked in, I organized the creamers, the ketchups, the napkins, and the silverware. I arranged the tables and chairs. I put several pens in my pocket. Then, I would down a couple cups of coffee and get into a rhythm. If I came in late or didn't finish prepping on time, I'd lose the flow, and my customer service would suffer.

Listen to your customers. Sometimes they knew exactly what they wanted, and they just needed to place their order. Other times, they needed help selecting their best choice. Each experience is different. You have to give your undivided attention in order to provide the best information possible and be responsive to the interests and preferences of the customer.

Focus on the customer in front of you. Each person wants to feel important. Most of the time that person isn't the only customer you are waiting on, but when you're at that table, the customer should be the center of your universe. Some customers were no-nonsense and expected efficient service. Other customers wanted to talk and appreciated a human connection. Some customers were unpleasant — but sometimes left surprising tips.

Follow through with their requests or tell them in a professional manner why you can't. If the customer orders a salad and asks you to hold the nuts, but the salad is prepackaged with nuts, it might be 'nuts or nothing'. As much as I wanted to, there were times when I just couldn't comply.

Follow up when necessary. OK, they have their food, their glasses are full, and they all have silverware. They should be fine for a while, right? Not always. Maybe the salad has the wrong dressing or their condiment bottle is empty. You won't know until you ask how they're doing. Even if you have a lot of tables to manage, you pay the price if you do not check in with customers that might need a bit of extra attention.

Make amends when you make a mistake. Once I accidentally spilled a glass of ice tea all over a customer's child at the end of the meal. The child wailed and the customer yelled at me. I apologized. I grabbed some napkins. I apologized again. They left. It was a big table. I did not receive a tip. Nor did I expect one.

Start fresh. I had a colleague who grew to resent the customers and stopped trying very hard. Her tips were about half of mine. For me, each table was a new and unique experience. I had some customers who were rude to me and treated me like I was beneath them. I had some customers who demanded special services and were never satisfied. And of course, I

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February is Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month. Look for resources and statistics in the February CSR that parents and child support organizations can use to help combat this problem.

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had the ice tea mom. But I couldn't let that experience carry over to my next table. I would be setting up a domino effect that could ruin an entire night's tip jar. Every evening I went home to my own life, and the day's difficulties faded.

Try to smile, or at least be diplomatic. Just because a customer is rude or obnoxious doesn't mean you have to stoop to the same level. Child support can be frustrating, maddening, and scary. Your calm head, professional skills, helpful demeanor, and friendly face can be enough to alleviate the tension.

We have a lot on our plate this year at OCSE. We are implementing new legislation enacted by Congress last fall (see the [2014 Nov/Dec issue of the CSR](#)). We are preparing a federal report on the program's future requested by Congress. We just published a notice of proposed rulemaking to update some rules that were around back in the day when I was a waitress. We've received over 2,000 comments on the proposed rule from states, tribes, counties, community groups, and parents that we are beginning to read and analyze. And we are conducting a strategic planning process with states and tribes, which we

do every five years. We are reaching out to you and other child support program stakeholders to invite you to give us your ideas on the program's future. We want to know what you think about ways to improve the program to better meet the needs of our customers — the parents and children who participate in the child support program. Watch for information on our website.

A great program starts with customer service. This is why two of this edition's articles focus on customer service. They include tips on developing customer-friendly offices

What customer service techniques have you had the most success in implementing? We'd like to hear from you.



Vicki Turetsky

CUSTOMER SERVICE

To serve or not to serve effectively is a choice

**Judi Albury, Program Specialist,
OCSE Region II**

For any business to survive, it must deliver top-notch customer service. Social service organizations, too, depend on high-quality customer service to succeed, yet many struggle; some people blame the staff, the type of business, or the belief that our customers will never be satisfied. However, effective customer service is a choice for management and staff. The choice is whether you consider "effective customer service" essential or not. The New York and New Jersey child support managers and staff decided it was.

In New York, change and empowerment

As the child support program moved from primarily enforcement ("the enforcers") to family-centered services ("the customer service experience"), many New York state and local staff still found it difficult to change work habits. Child support workers who were accustomed to the "us" versus "them" and custodial parent versus noncustodial parent mentality now consider all parties customers. While the struggle continues for some, many staff have embraced the family-centered services approach. The New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance's Division

of Child Support Enforcement provides online training for local districts to ensure consistency in program policies and practices, and in New York City's Office of Child Support Enforcement, services available to noncustodial parents continue to grow.

Both the customer and customer service staff can have an unsatisfying experience when, during the customer's initial contact, the staff member cannot make a decision or resolve the issue during the customer's initial contact. Whether on the phone or in person, frontline staff must have some power to resolve basic inquiries and requests. "My goal is to eliminate barriers and effectively serve the customer," said

Customers may form their opinion of the agency based on their first point of contact.

And their last point of contact can make their experience positive and memorable. As a rule, treat customers the way you want to be treated.

one New York customer service representative. By ensuring that staff can address or resolve customer concerns during the initial contact, you decrease the opportunity for errors or misinterpretation of the customer's concern.

New Jersey teams with Rutgers University

In New Jersey, soft skills training enhances the staff's ability to provide excellent customer service. The New Jersey Child Support Institute (NJCSI) teaches a five-day professional development series for the Customer Service Call Center staff of the State Disbursement Unit. The series focuses on effective customer service skills and technical knowledge of the state's automated child support system. Training programs teach participants how to use reflective and active listening, ask solution-focused questions, and work with resistant customers. The training also incorporates hands-on activities and trainer demonstrations.

Lisa Bender, a training coordinator at the institute, enjoys delivering NJCSI's IV-D Theory for New Hires course, which is designed for child support staff in their first year of employment. "The participants are with us for five days, so it's a great opportunity for us to take them through the entire child support process," says Bender.

The first day of the training focuses on providing quality customer service, including the initial greeting, interviewing techniques, and listening skills. That is followed by the various levels of communication, including the spoken word, body language, and appearance. Bender said, "We finish the day with strategies for asking effective questions."

Hope Miller said, "Before joining NJCSI as a training coordinator, I worked in probation maintaining a caseload for many years. I have always recognized that sharp customer service skills are critical to successfully providing child support services to families." Her favorite course to teach is the SDU Customer Service series.

"This series navigates call center staff through the child support program from case initiation through case closure, but focuses on specific questions customers may have at each stage of the process," Miller said. They make sure participants can relate to the rules and regulations that govern child support and connect the students to the systems and processes they need to answer customer calls correctly and proficiently. "For me personally," said Miller, "this opportunity to share knowledge and practical skills only reaffirms how important and impactful our work is at NJCSI."

Follow-up and feedback opportunities

The institute believes that evaluating program effectiveness is important to organizational sustainability. Trainers administer an electronic evaluation survey after

each session, and a 60-day follow up evaluation to both the training participants and their supervisors. This process allows the trainers to measure how effectively the learning transfers into the workplace.

The evaluation team has also conducted focus groups and led round-table discussions with training participants, subject-matter experts, and key stakeholders. Findings from these events helped the evaluation team adjust current training offerings to meet the needs of child support staff and create new courses as they identified emerging needs. Institute staff members continue to maintain a collaborative relationship with the leadership team of the New Jersey Office of Child Support Services so NJCSI can assess the strengths and needs of the child support staff.

Setting benchmarks

Many companies have their customer services standards posted for customers to see. Both New York and New Jersey state programs have a standard they expect their staffs to follow. If your office doesn't have one, consider developing a service standard with staff input. It can begin to generate change immediately because it creates a benchmark for staff to work from.

In the end, our service is only as good as our staff; therefore, we must set a standard and hold staff accountable for providing good service. Every customer wants friendly and accommodating staff and a positive experience.

Do your agents see each customer service encounter as an

- Opportunity to provide excellent service Interruption

Does your staff follow through with customers?

- Always Sometimes

How would your customers describe your program/agency's customer service?

- Good (easy to navigate) Bad (difficult to get through)

Do you have a coaching or training program in place to ensure workers are the best they can be, and retraining if it's needed?

- Always Sometimes

Do you know who your customers are?

- Yes No

If you checked the first box in any of the above questions, you are on your way to providing superior customer service.

Using CPR to improve customer service

Rochelle Phillips, Child Support Program Specialist, OCSE Region I

In a recent CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) refresher course, the instructor said that CPR can save lives when given properly and immediately to cardiac arrest victims. Just then, the technique for administering CPR (a combination of 30 heart compressions followed two breaths) reminded me of the critical help that child support staffs give to custodial and noncustodial parents in our caseloads.

Our customers often believe their inquiries need immediate emergency intervention. And, quite often, their heart-breaking stories leave even the most experienced worker misty-eyed. In my experience, however, the very core of the emergency is their desire to receive Courteous, Professional, and Responsive (CPR) service in a timely manner.

Perhaps you were thinking of Considerate, Polite, and Respectful service. If so, any combination of the above-mentioned CPR adjectives results in desirable treatment to the customer. In fact, Careful, Prompt, and Reliable service also comes to mind.

As public inquiry first-responders, we must be mindful. A custodial parent may be in a fragile state while waiting for much-needed payments, or a noncustodial father may be frantic after his wages were garnished for a child he did not know existed.

We should treat both parents' initial and subsequent inquiries with dignity. As customers, surely we expect Considerate, Prompt, and Respectful treatment from the post office, the department of motor vehicles, your local grocer, or local retailer. People appreciate Courteous, Professional, and Responsive service regardless of the circumstances.

Let's always be aware that, as providers and recipients of services, everyone benefits from CPR provided properly and promptly.

Public Law 113-183, Sense of Congress on Parenting Time

Michael Hayes, Program Manager, OCSE

If you're a bit of a child support policy nerd like me, you've likely noted an unusual section buried within [Public Law \(PL\) 113-183](#), Section 303: Sense of the Congress Regarding Offering of Voluntary Parenting Time Arrangement. As I read this section of the law, two big questions popped up. What is a "Sense of Congress"? What does this "Sense of Congress" provision mean for the child support program?

The policy analysts over at the Congressional Research Service (CRS) already answered the first question for us in a March 11, 2013, CRS Report helpfully entitled "Sense of" Resolutions and Provisions. According to the report, "sense of" resolutions and amendments can be used by Congress to express the opinion of one or both houses. These resolutions may be standalone measures or incorporated into a bill that becomes law. In either situation, the resolution has no formal effect on public policy. Now this is where it gets interesting. The CRS report highlights Congress' use of 'sense of' provisions to signal shifts in congressional priorities in both foreign and domestic matters. According to the service, "...Agencies also monitor 'sense of' provisions because they may be an early signal that Congress will alter formal statutory provisions if the informal nature of the 'sense of' provision does not influence agency policy." While not having the force of law, 'sense of' provisions should not be taken lightly.

This leads to my second question. If the sense of Congress about including parenting time in IV-D orders is signaling a shift in Congressional priorities, what does it mean for the child support program? In the law, Congress calls the establishment of parenting time with strong family violence safeguards an important goal. To pursue this goal, Congress directs states to use existing funding sources including "child support incentives, Access and Visitation Grants, and Healthy Marriage Promotion and Responsible Fatherhood Grants." The sense of Congress lays out a goal for states and suggests where at least some of the money to fund pursuit of this goal may be found. What Congress didn't provide is detailed guidance on the how of establishing parenting time. Luckily, a number of states and jurisdictions are already establishing parenting time orders in conjunction with child support order establishment. Readers can find examples of how they are doing this in the OCSE fact sheet on [child support and parenting time](#).

OCSE has funded five parenting time pilot projects to learn more about how child support agencies can safely establish parenting time orders as part of the support order establishment process. Find project information in another OCSE fact sheet on [Discretionary Grants for Parenting Time Opportunities](#).

To learn more about the parenting time pilots, use of Access and Visitation Grant funds, and other state efforts to establish parenting time, contact Michael Hayes at Michael.Hayes@acf.hhs.gov.

EITC can promote upward mobility

John Langrock, Program Specialist, OCSE

The Earned Income Tax Credit, or EITC, is one of the nation's largest and most effective anti-poverty tools. It is a refundable federal income tax credit for low- and moderate-income working families. It promotes work, particularly among custodial parents who earn low wages because it offsets the cost of work-related expenses such as transportation and child care. Child support caseworkers should talk to customers they think might qualify for an EITC, and encourage them to apply because research reveals that up to 25 percent of tax filers who are eligible for the EITC fail to claim it.

Studies show that the federally funded EITC has been instrumental in closing the poverty gap for many of the nation's working poor. For tax year 2013, EITC provided \$62.9 billion in tax credits to over 28 million eligible families and individuals. The IRS credits the EITC for lifting more than 6 million people out of poverty in tax year 2013, including 3.3 million children.

A growing body of research finds that the EITC and additional state and local child tax credits are effective tools for boosting incomes and promoting economic mobility over a sustained period of time. For the children, the impact of moving out of poverty has positive short-term and long-term effects. Aside from the tendency to improve a child's immediate well-being, research has found that "climbing the ladder out of poverty" is linked with better health outcomes and higher high school completion rates, and leads to more stable and consistent employment histories and overall greater earnings in adulthood.

In summary, it is critically important for state and local caseworkers to encourage and direct their eligible working families to the OCSE website for information and next steps in filing claims for the EITC and other available state and local tax credits.

Our [EITC webpage](#) contains the following information:

- EITC — what it is and its impact on boosting families out of poverty and promoting upward economic mobility.
- How to qualify — information on eligible levels of earned income and the corresponding credits given based on the number of children in the family.
- Useful resources — links to the IRS Earned Income Tax Credit home page and a page with state and local tax credit information; locator information for free tax preparation services; and other useful tax credit information.



Child Support Anniversary

The Child Support Program turns 40 this year! On January 4, 1975, Congress passed Public Law 93-647, "To amend the Social Security Act to establish a consolidated program of Federal financial assistance to encourage provision of services by the States."

The law, commonly called the Social Security Amendments of 1974, had many provisions, but the important part for us is Part D—Child Support and Establishment of Paternity. This section was added to Title IV of the original Social Security Act. Part D gave the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, (which eventually became HHS) the authority to establish a child support office. This is why many people refer to child support programs as 'Title IV-D' programs. We'll have more on the 40th anniversary of the Child Support Program later this year.

Affordable Care Act facts

Kathy Sokolik, OCSE

Because the Affordable Care Act (ACA) is still new, I frequently find myself in a position to dispel some myth or misunderstanding about it. Some recent examples:

“I don’t want government health insurance.”

Fact #1: The Affordable Care Act is not a health insurance plan. When you shop for health insurance through the Marketplace, you are shopping for a private health insurance plan — Blue Cross and Kaiser Permanente are two examples. The Marketplace will help you determine whether you are eligible for financial assistance to help pay the premium costs. Of course, depending on your income and where you live, you and/or household members *may* be eligible for Medicaid or CHIP at little or no cost to you.

“I didn’t sign up for Obamacare last year, and I’m not going to this year either. I like the insurance plan I get at work.”

Fact #2: If you have employer-sponsored medical insurance coverage and want to keep it — excellent! You’ve met your responsibility under the ACA because you’re covered! The ACA does not force people to give up their employer insurance and purchase a plan through Healthcare.gov or another Health Insurance Marketplace. What the Marketplaces *do* provide is a way for consumers to compare medical insurance plans and potentially receive financial help — in the form of premium tax credits and cost sharing reductions — if they are income-eligible and purchase a Marketplace plan.

“I’ll just wait ‘til I need insurance and buy it then. I hear catastrophic coverage is pretty cheap.”

Fact #3: There are two problems here. Generally speaking, you can only purchase a plan during an open enrollment period unless you have what the ACA calls a special qualifying event. A serious injury or illness is usually not an event that will allow you to buy Marketplace insurance outside the open enrollment period. Next, catastrophic coverage is relatively inexpensive, but you can only purchase catastrophic coverage if you are under age 30 or if you have specific hardship exemptions. And, back to the first point, you have to buy it during open enrollment — before a catastrophe hits. As long as you’re shopping, though, take a look at the Bronze level plans as an alternative. They carry low monthly premiums and lower out-of-pocket costs than catastrophic coverage when you receive medical care.

“I’m not going to focus on health care coverage right now. It’s just too political.”

Fact #4: The Affordable Care Act is the law, and there are consequences for failing to abide by the law. Aside from the tax penalty, you could be risking your health, your family’s health, and everyone’s financial security if you don’t have medical insurance. A broken bone could mean five-figure health care bills, let alone what a serious illness like cancer or a heart attack would cost. In fact, a leading cause of bankruptcies is overwhelmingly high medical bills resulting from a family illness or accident. If you know people who don’t have health insurance, help them understand the importance of getting covered.

Access to quality, affordable health care can be a life saver. Help spread the word.

The Affordable Care Act and your 2014 income taxes

During this year’s tax filing season, the Affordable Care Act requires tax filers to report their health insurance coverage.

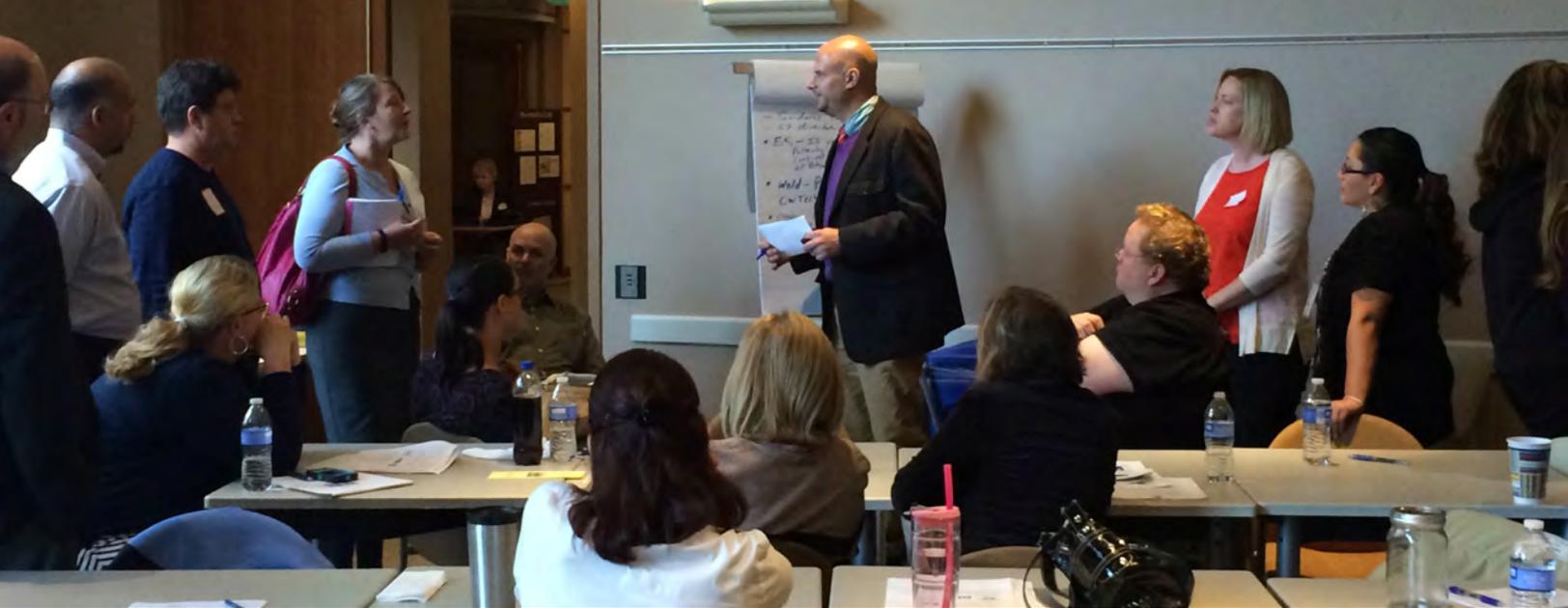
Treasury Secretary Jacob Lew and Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Sylvia Burwell understand that many filers may have questions about this process and have published a [joint statement](#) on preparing for the upcoming tax season.

Most Americans will only have to check a box to show they maintained health coverage throughout 2014. People who purchased coverage through the Marketplace will receive an IRS Form 1095-A in the mail “that they will use to reconcile their upfront financial assistance,” according to the release.

General resources can be found at <http://www.IRS.gov/ACA> or <https://www.healthcare.gov/taxes/>.

“..We are working to ensure that whatever their experience, consumers can easily access clear information since this is the first year they will see certain changes to their tax returns.”

— Treasury Secretary Jacob Lew



COORDINATION POINTS

Judicial, child support staffs ‘huddle’

**Maureen Leif, Child Support Coordinator,
Colorado Judicial Branch**

The definition of a “huddle” is to confer or consult, meet to discuss, exchange ideas, or make a decision. On Oct. 17, more than 60 child support and court professionals and judicial officers met to huddle at the Jefferson County Courthouse for an inspirational day of reflection and idea sharing. The event was sponsored by the Colorado Court Improvement Program, which is funded through an Administration for Children and Families grant to enhance the court’s role in achieving stable, permanent homes for children in foster care. Welcoming the group was Magistrate Tims from Jefferson County and Larry Desbien, Colorado’s acting child support director.

This huddle was the first event of its kind in Colorado, bringing together judicial and county child support staffs. The theme was actually a question: “Why do we do what we do?” To start, the group watched a [TEDx](#) video of Simon Sinek called [How great leaders inspire action](#).

Throughout the day, participants reflected on “why do we do what we do?” as they discussed three topics: child welfare/child support crossover, parenting time, and early intervention and right-sized orders. Some wrote down these answers: “I love helping families,” “Raising kids and families out of poverty,” “Brings meaning to my life.”

Both new and experienced child support and judicial professionals exchanged ideas, and presenters from across the state shared innovative practices related to the huddle topics. Then participants divided into groups to brainstorm about the possibility of both the judicial and child support professionals working together.

Participants discussed how Colorado may begin to address parenting time at the point of establishing child support, and how child support can work more closely with child welfare and begin to cross-train each other. They talked about how they can provide adequate outreach and information to individuals who are not in the child support caseload (non-IV-D), and ensure that they serve all in need. Attendees also talked about how the judiciary can support early intervention efforts of the child support agencies.

Judicial officers learned about child support’s data collection and performance measures; child support participants learned about data collected and tracked on the court side. One participant “appreciated the opportunity to network with magistrates and hear their perspectives.” Casie Stokes, child support attorney from Jefferson County, said, “The huddle was very enjoyable. It was engaging the whole time, and I feel encouraged and informed.”

The huddle brought both judicial and child support workers together to network, be inspired, and learn from each other – and by all accounts it succeeded.

Want to plan a huddle in your jurisdiction? To learn more, contact the author at maureen.leif@judicial.state.co.us.



Maureen Leif (left) and Dee Price-Sanders, FPLS
Technical Support Liaison

Lawsuit settlement pays child support arrearages

William “Bill” Woods, Staff Attorney

Through extreme diligence and patience, North Dakota’s Three Affiliated Tribes Division of Child Support Enforcement ended 2014 on a high note. By mid-December, the division collected more than \$240,000 in payments from a 1996 class action lawsuit that had been applied to child support arrearages. The litigation, *Cobell v. Salazar*, involved claims that the federal government violated its trust duties and mismanaged individual Indian trust funds.

The Cobell case was finally settled in 2009 for \$3.4 billion. Plaintiffs would get \$1.4 billion through Individual Indian Monies accounts and the rest would go to other types of distributions. President Obama signed legislation in December 2010 approving the funding, so child support officials anticipated receiving timely payments after fourteen years of litigation, but that was not the case. There was a lot of work to be done.

The child support office had the authority to restrict certain Individual Indian Monies accounts if there were child support arrearages. Program officials decided to make a concerted effort to restrict the accounts of obligors with arrears exceeding \$1,000 so the office could attach the Cobell funds. Staff members filed numerous motions and participated in court hearings to get orders in place before the funds were distributed.

However, the Cobell attorneys notified the Three Affiliated Tribes that individual settlement funds would not be distributed through the individual money accounts. They arranged for direct payments to class members, which took the child support staff by surprise and caused them to re-think their options. The local tribal members in the lawsuit who owed back support had nearly \$2.5 million in combined arrearages. Officials hoped to collect enough to reduce that amount by about \$200,000. Because that was such a significant amount, the office suspended other child support duties for a two- to three-day period so all staff could obtain proper orders from the tribal court, and prepare and issue lump sum income withholding orders.

They mailed the package of legal paperwork to Garden City Group Inc., the company hired to make distributions, and waited for the allotments to begin. Unfortunately, there was another setback. In February 2013, the law firm representing the class members believed the documents were invalid and unenforceable. This required that child support staff members file the first of several additional legal proceedings.

Other delays occurred before the office worked out the following deal with Garden City Group — individuals would receive 50 percent of funds due and payable to them, and the child support office would receive the other 50 percent. In October 2014, the first portion of the Cobell money began arriving at their office, \$43,000. The payments were in the exact sums of \$1,000 to all class members, so the child support share was \$500 from each person with an arrearage. Unfortunately, because there were two sets of litigants, there were two types of disbursements, so they began their waiting game, again hoping for the rest of the payout.

Thankfully, the Three Affiliated Tribes did not have to wait long. The second disbursement arrived on December 16, just in time for Christmas. Through hard work and tenacity, the staff secured more than \$240,000 that they will use to decrease tribal arrearages, which is \$40,000 more than they had hoped to secure.

A Year of Health

The National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (NIAMS), part of the National Institutes of Health, has created a set of free, multicultural health planners titled *A Year of Health: A Guide to a Healthy 2015 for You and Your Family*. The planners are a component of the NIAMS National Multicultural Outreach Initiative to help address disparities in access to health information among multicultural communities.

The health planners are tailored for four multicultural populations and include 12 months of research-based health tips, resources, and information about managing conditions of the bones, joints, muscles, skin, and pain. They also include space to write down notes and stickers to track medications, health appointments, and other important dates.

For more information or to order your free *A Year of Health* planners today, visit: <http://www.niams.nih.gov/multicultural>.

California launches mobile app

By the California Department of Child Support Services

Even though California’s child support mobile application, [CAChildSup](#), is barely a year old, customers have already downloaded it nearly 60,000 times.

“About 62 percent of customers accessing our website today do so with mobile devices,” said Suzanne McBride, who managed the Systems Architecture Services Section at the California Department of Child Support Services during the mobile apps’ creation. “Supporting our mobile customer base and building an application that takes them directly to their child support information just made sense.”

DCSS released the app on October 13, 2013, for Android and Apple devices after more than a year of work.

It began with an idea

David Kilgore, Chief Deputy Director of the Los Angeles County Child Support Services Department believed that participants in the child support program would benefit from real time information about their accounts and would like to use their mobile devices to view that information. In 2012, Kilgore gathered representatives from the local child support agencies in Orange, Napa, Contra Costa, San Bernardino, San Mateo, Santa Cruz, Shasta, and Ventura counties, and two vendors to develop the initial mobile design and capabilities.

Once that was done, the state conducted a comparative analysis, applied mobile state standards set by the California Department of Technology Services, and collaborated with LA county on a mobile strategy and implementation.

Getting the website ready

Building on the planning efforts of that initial workgroup, the state-level child support staff moved the effort forward by tapping into [Customer Connect](#), California’s real time, online customer access portal. At the time, the portal did not offer an intuitive interface for mobile devices. The pages in Customer Connect, and other select webpages, needed to be updated to a responsive design so they would display properly on a mobile device. In June 2013, the department began designing and building the app.

Designing and building

The department’s Application Design Session Team and participating local child support agencies focused on delivering a mobile application that would give participants direct, one-touch access to their now mobile-friendly Customer Connect accounts. This required extensive

CAChildSup app features

To keep up with the pressing needs of its clientel, the California Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) created a free, “one touch access” mobile application called CAChildSup. With this mobile app, child support program participants have easy and secure access to their child support information while on the go. CAChildSup allows parents to:

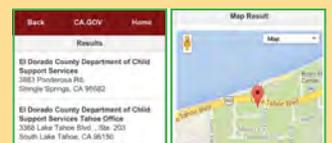
- Make an electronic payment.
- Check upcoming appointments.
- Find the closest child support agency.
- Check the status of a payment.
- Learn about available child support services.

Learn more online at www.childsup.ca.gov or [Child Support Information on the Go](#).

Access child support case information (requires Social Security Number or Participant ID Number and PIN)

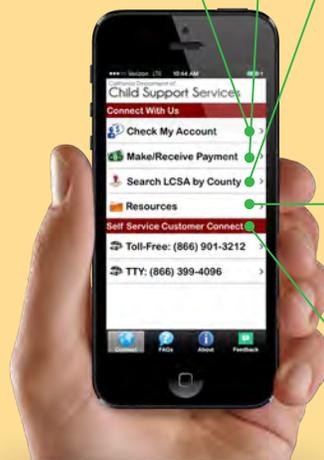
Options for submitting or receiving child support payments

Find the nearest local child support office



Information such as how to apply for assistance and answers to frequently asked questions

Lists the main telephone numbers



planning, which started with defining the technical aspects of the project and deciding what type of architecture they would use to develop the programs.

To build a one-touch access mobile application, team members agreed on using hybrid mobile application architecture because it combines the best of both the native and HTML5 worlds. A native app will only work on the mobile platform it is designed for, such as an iPhone or Android phone. HTML5 uses standard Web technologies that work on multiple devices. The hybrid app makes it possible to embed HTML5 apps inside a native app so it can provide access to the native platform features.

Once software was built, it had to be tested. DCSS selected a software program that allowed team members to perform design testing on their mobile devices. The program let them see how the design would look and work on the target devices — iPhones, iPads, and Android-based phones.

Outreach Strategy

With development completed, DCSS established a strategic campaign to advertise the new app. The Office of Legislative and External Affairs created a poster, a Web banner, and a webpage explaining the new app. The Statewide Customer Service Branch recorded phone messages about the app for customers to listen to when they called about their cases. The branch also developed scripts

for local child support agencies to use when answering customer's questions about the mobile app. Once all of this was finished, the application was published to Google Play and the Apple App Store.

Results

Overall, it was an enormous endeavor and partnership by state and local child support professionals. The mobile app adds greater convenience and access for customers because they can review their child support payment options, make payments, check their accounts, find local child support offices, and perform other tasks. This convenience has reduced the number of calls and visits to child support service offices.

Today, the team is developing another child support application in Customer Connect. The eCommunications enhancement will allow customers to receive email notifications about their cases, including appointment reminders, payment information, online statement availability, and payment services access. This expanded service will reduce the customers' needs to login and explore their account for changes because the information will come to them.

Read more about the development of CACHildSup in a 2013 WICSEC presentation called [Multi-Channel Two-Way Communication](#).



LA County recognized for collaboration

Dr. Steven Golightly, Director (right) and David Kilgore, Chief Deputy Director (left), receive an award on behalf of the Los Angeles County Child Support Services Division at the California Child Support Directors Association 2014 Annual Training Conference and Expo. LA County received the award for the collaborative work that Kilgore started in the CACHildSup app's early development.

New *Child Support Report* Editor



Readers: I am very pleased to reintroduce Kim Danek, our new editor of the *Child Support Report*.

Kim grew up in Iowa. Her parents were divorced when she was 10 and her mother was awarded custody of Kim and her two younger sisters. In high school, Kim knew there was no way her mother could pay for college, so Kim joined the Army so she could pay her own way through college. She started her career as an Army broadcaster after graduating from the [Defense Information School](#) in 1983.

Kim and her husband, also a soldier, lived on three different continents throughout their careers. In the 1980s and 90s, Kim's radio and television work was broadcast around the world over the Defense department's American Forces Radio and Television Service. She has also been published in several defense, veteran's affairs, and national service organization flagship publications. Kim has a Bachelor of Science in Management Studies from the University of Maryland University College and a Master of Communication degree from Johns Hopkins University.

Kim is devoted to her husband and children and makes sure she is a positive part of their lives. Throughout their school years, she has been an active member of their school's parent-teacher-student organization executive

committee and taken Tae Kwon Do classes with both children. She also teaches Tae Kwon Do.

One of Kim's strengths is making connections with people so she can gather information and then share it with the people who need it. Taking care of soldiers and their families was a passion of hers during her military career and one that we've seen her bring to her work here in child support. Kim also brings a strong orientation toward on-line and social media, and is helping OCSE enter the modern communications era.

A privileged position



It is an honor to be the new editor of the *Child Support Report*. I plan to continue the newsletter's practice of giving readers a good balance of stories — some with a federal perspective and some that come to us from states, territories, tribes, and even local child

support offices. This allows us to learn from each other through stories of best practices, successful events, and forward-thinking ideas. From readership comments OCSE has received over the years, many of you agree.

I welcome any suggestions you have about potential improvements to the *Child Support Report*. If you have story ideas, or would like to find out how you can submit a story for an issue, please contact me at kim.danek@acf.hhs.gov. I look forward to hearing from you.

Technology advancements, family structure, and how we approach service delivery have changed significantly since we first opened our doors. The *Child Support Report* has featured a series of articles about how agencies are changing to meet the needs of families, and we have compiled these articles on a new webpage, [managing change in the child support program](#). The articles touch on four areas around change management in the child support program:

- Behavior
- Program Operations
- Technology
- Collaboration

We will also add future CSR articles on change management to the page. If your organization has experienced significant changes, we would love to share your story with our readers.

Child Support Report

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