

# Child Support Report

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## Looking back on the Model Cities Program

By Levi Fisher, Regional Program Manager  
OCSE Region X

The Model Cities Program was one piece of President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty. In 1966, Congress funded a competitive bidding process for up to 150 experiments across the country aimed at antipoverty initiatives, building inner city infrastructure, and developing nontraditional forms of municipal and neighborhood government. In some history books, the Model Cities Program is framed as the biggest failure of the War on Poverty, but my experience of how it was implemented in Seattle was not that at all.

I grew up in a working class family in the 1950s and 1960s in Seattle's Central District. By 1962, Boeing was driving Seattle's economy, and although we were hosting the World's Fair that year, the Central District didn't seem to share in the economic and social boom. The World's Fair put a spotlight on Seattle, and we began taking small steps to address social and economic issues, thinking about the kind of future we wanted for our city.

By 1968, I was graduating from the University of Washington and looking for work. It was also in 1968 that Seattle received funding as one of the first Model Cities Programs in the country, part of the larger War on Poverty effort.

When I was hired into Seattle's new Model Cities Program, I helped coordinate community meetings, engaging people in developing neighborhood parks on vacant lots and building health clinics. While many other cities experienced turmoil in the Model Cities application process, Seattle's application was approved quickly with a focus on health education, employment, housing, law and justice, environment, and youth services.

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Levi Fisher (above, then and now) reminisces about working for an anti-poverty program in the '60s. As Regional Program Manager, he oversees state and tribal child support programs in Region X. Learn how the national child support program lifts children out of poverty in the [February OCSE Commissioner's blog](#).

### Inside this issue

- 1 Looking back on the Model Cities Program
- 2 Washington State and Americorps VISTA set to launch poverty-fighting program
- 3 Washington State exercises data security
- 4 Engaging with both moms and dads
- 5 Nebraska employer outreach ... on the road again
- 6 HUD, OCSE partnership reconnects families and dads
- 7 New Fatherhood Research and Practice Network offers funds to evaluate fatherhood programs
- 8 State Department accesses FPLS to locate missing children
- 8 New task force report on My Brother's Keeper'



August 12

OCSE published a competitive grant funding opportunity titled [Tribal Child Support Innovation Grants: Building Family-Centered Services](#). Comprehensive tribal programs may apply by Aug. 12, 2014.

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Some of my fondest memories center around developing and running an outdoor education program for inner-city youth, giving them an opportunity to learn skills in a rural setting during week-long summer camps. Leading a team of 8-10 staff, we created an outdoor education program at the Red Barn Ranch that provided many inner-city youth a first-time opportunity to learn about nature, arts, crafts and the like. Camp counselors also focused the kids' attention on sharpening their math and reading skills.

Seattle was not without its own political wrangling about how to use this money. Civil rights issues were important at this time. When a freeway connector was proposed through the Central District, there was a lot of community debate and uprising. I'm proud to say that the community voice prevailed and this neighborhood is still intact, with one less unnecessary freeway link in our city.

The City of Seattle Archives has many boxes full of history from the Model Cities Program activities. Many of these are still alive and thriving. They range from the Black Academy of Music, a swimming and water safety education program (important here in Seattle!), children's health clinics, community mental health

and addiction centers, tenant and housing advocacy organizations, public defenders, and career education centers.

After my job as Outdoor Education Program Director, I went back to school to earn my Master's Degree. While finishing, I became the first Director of Minority Affairs at a local community college. After that I was hired with the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW as it was known before it became HHS) in June 1972. I credit my experiences at the Model Cities Program and in the newly emerging minority affairs field for my more than 40-year public service career path.

The Model Cities Program not only infused money into our community, it created tangible, lasting assets like parks, health clinics, and the Red Barn Ranch outdoor education camp I ran. More importantly, it infused energy and political weight into our community. I saw first-hand how community-level partnerships are formed and how local governments can sustain good initiatives that are set in motion through grants and special projects. While my work today brings me much joy, I also feel a lot of pride when I look back in time and see community institutions still providing services that had their birth in the Model Cities Program.

## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

### Washington State and Americorps VISTA set to launch poverty-fighting program

By Devon Hay, Americorps Vista Member  
*Alternative Solutions Program*  
*Washington State Division of Child Support*

This September, the Washington State Division of Child Support (DCS) plans to launch a new statewide program to break down barriers that noncustodial parents face in supporting their families. The Alternative Solutions Program will focus on relieving poverty and helping obligor parents solve issues that are keeping them from financial self-sufficiency. Four VISTA (Volunteers In Service To America) members spent the last year designing and building for DCS a strong foundation and infrastructure for this program.

The Alternative Solutions Program concept of linking specialized, custom-fit services to struggling noncustodial parents was part of the DCS strategic plan for many years. The idea gained more traction after



Counterclockwise from top: Devon Hay, Farrin Sofield, Kathleen Perry, and Mary Bahr

Washington's experience with a federal demonstration grant called Building Assets for Fathers and Families. As one of the seven states to receive the grant in 2010, Washington saw that many parents need very basic assistance to stabilize their lives. Following Maslow's hierarchy of needs (a theory that prioritizes needs to attain psychological health), many parents were unable to participate in asset-building activities because they had greater needs. That's when the state began to seek "alternative solutions" in hopes to fill the gap of participants by connecting noncustodial parents with

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government and community organizations that would open doors to parental self-sufficiency.

The program's partner organizations provide direct services that address employment opportunities or training, housing, GED, legal resources, addiction, mental health treatment, and transportation. These partnerships strengthen the ability of program staff to provide wraparound case management to parents in their caseload.

To bring innovative services to clients, the Alternative Solutions Program recruited AmeriCorps VISTA members to help develop its infrastructure. Established in 1964 as part of the domestic War on Poverty, VISTA members are enlisted as full-time volunteers to combat poverty through capacity-building indirect service. As a poverty-fighting service organization, AmeriCorps VISTA is uniquely situated to develop the Alternative Solutions Program. In 2009, an estimated 63 percent of families in child support programs had reported incomes under 200 percent of the poverty line, according to the U.S. Census. Seventy percent of total child support arrears are owed by noncustodial parents with incomes under \$10,000 per year. (See the OCSE Story Behind the Numbers, ["Understanding and Managing Child Support Debt,"](#) May 2008).

None of the four VISTA members had previous child support experience, but all had zeal to attend to an impoverished population they knew was historically

underserved. With varied collegiate backgrounds in social sciences and social inequities, the members were eager to build a statewide program to support this population. VISTA members nationwide are usually placed in small nonprofits and focus on fundraising and volunteer management, so the Alternative Solutions volunteers were excited for the unique service site and the ability to have a permanent effect in their state.

The VISTA members built a database of community-based organizations for referrals and cultivated partnerships with organizations that have a large reach to increase the efficacy of Alternative Solutions. They have also marketed to other organizations to increase awareness that DCS is willing and able to work together to support mutual clients. Part of this marketing plan is to host a webinar that will educate community partners about DCS practices and how to work with the Alternative Solutions Program to more effectively serve families.

One million families are said to be raised above the poverty line by the added income from child support. Washington's Alternative Solutions Program is doing its part to increase that number by empowering noncustodial parents to take control of their financial situations and support their families before judicial enforcement and contempt procedures may coerce those activities.

## Washington State exercises data security

A recent Washington State audit revealed that confidential and personally identifiable information remained on at least 9 percent of old computers the state was disposing as surplus. Ouch! But true to form, none of those computers was from the Division of Child Support.

As child support programs replace old computers with newer, faster models, staff must completely erase any client information on those machines before releasing them to state surplus programs.

Washington State's routine practice not only includes digitally wiping each computer of all data, but going an extra step to punch a hole in each hard drive, making each one completely unusable. We hear it's a great stress reliever—punching holes in things—as you can see here with Washington's child support director Wally McClure getting his frustrations out for the day.





**VOICE BLOG**

## Engaging with both moms and dads

Unlike many social services programs, child support regularly interacts with both parents. Child support agencies in states, tribes and local jurisdictions often provide educational materials, such as [brochures](#), fliers, posters, videos, [infographics](#) and website information about what to expect

and how to begin a case with the child support program. The agencies make these materials available for all parents.

Many child support agencies use early intervention methods, such as phone calls and mailings, to reach both parents. Reaching out to parents early in the child support process can encourage and empower both parents to interact with the child support program in a positive way. Some child support agencies work with both parents together.

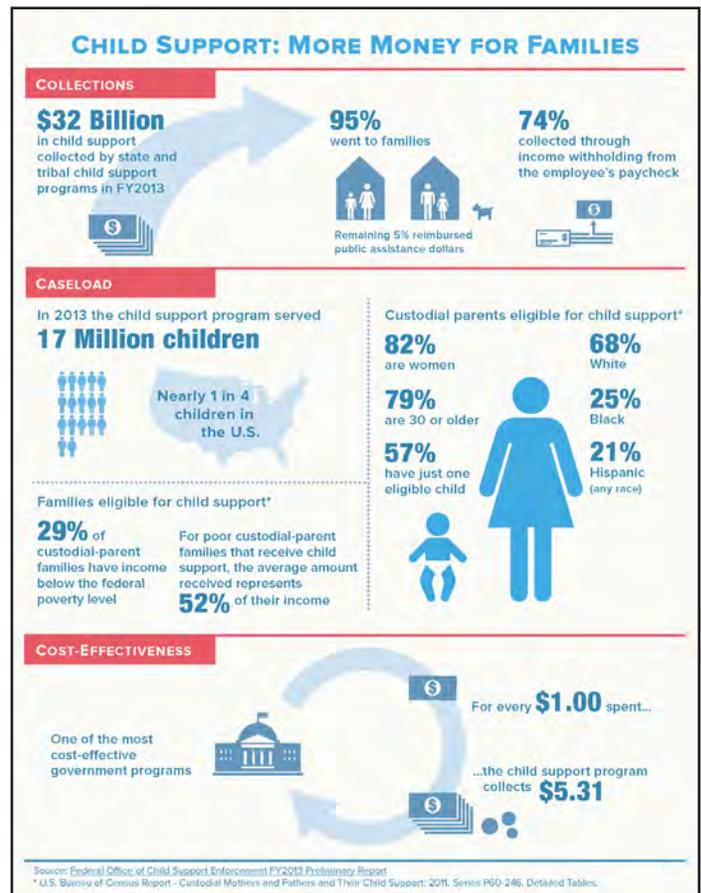
Agencies may collaborate with partners as another way to ensure that all voices are represented (such as fatherhood groups, domestic violence organizations, and Hispanic organizations). Child support agencies often bring together diverse groups to collaborate on projects that help to engage moms and dads. In December 2012, I issued a [Policy Interpretation Question](#) document that explains that child support is in a great position to foster collaborations to help families holistically.

Our program routinely accepts applications for services from either parent, and enforces support against both mothers and fathers. Our program reaches out to engage both custodial and noncustodial parents whether they are moms or dads or another guardian such as a grandparent. We also collect data in OCSE that will help us understand parents of either gender. And we stay abreast of research in the field. We know, for example, that in 2011, an estimated 18.3 percent of custodial parents were fathers, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Populations Reports ("[Custodial Mothers and Fathers and Their Child Support: 2011](#)").

Child support professionals follow trends as well. Pew Research Center data on the "[Growing Number of Dads Home with the Kids](#)" shows that the number of stay-at-home fathers is rising. Another Pew report, "[5 Facts about Today's Fathers](#)," says fewer dads are their family's sole breadwinner as dads' and moms' roles are converging—over the years, fathers have taken on more housework and childcare duties, and women have increased their time spent in paid work.

Our [new OCSE infographic](#) (below on this page) helps us visualize OCSE data for FY 2013. It may help you picture some of the changes taking place in our program. As we continue to manage program changes, we will keep our focus on treating both mothers and fathers fairly in their custodial or noncustodial roles.

**Vicki Turetsky**



**Have you seen our [new OCSE infographic](#)? We created it to help you visualize the information in the [OCSE FY2013 Preliminary Report](#). Please share the infographic with your child support community.**

# Nebraska employer outreach... on the road again

By Jeffrey Stocks, *OCSE Region VII*

Nebraska's Employer Outreach program, affectionately known as the "roadshow," is beginning its 11th year of taking the child support message directly to Nebraska employers. These outreach events began as a way to educate employers on the child support process and their role from "hire to fire." They have since become a core component of the state's child support program.

Staffed by a team of two employees—from the child support agency and the Nebraska Child Support Payment Center—the duo generally complete 20 outreach events annually throughout the state. From humble beginnings in 2004 in the small town of Beatrice, NE, the team has traveled over 26,000 miles, visited 21 cities, and presented to 4,000 employers.

To prepare for each event, the team sends invitations to all employers in the destination city based on recently submitted income withholding orders. The events are free and generally held in public places such as libraries and community centers. Each one focuses on income withholding orders, e-IWO, new hire reporting, medical support, and accessing the State Disbursement Unit's Employer website. Through these events, employers can ask questions about child support and the website.

These events have proven helpful in ensuring accurate employer data such as phone numbers, addresses, and

**The team has traveled over 26,000 miles, visited 21 cities, and presented to 4,000 employers.**



points of contact. Boasting an attendance of 92 percent of invitees, Nebraska uses this forum to publicize statutory or policy changes. One example is a statutory change in 2008 that required employers with more than 50 employees to submit all child support payments electronically through the payment center website. Through the roadshows, the state child support agency encourages employers to pay electronically, "go green." The combination of direct employer contact and the statutory change has helped Nebraska achieve one of the highest electronic child support payment percentages in the nation at over 70 percent.

Child support program specialist Lisa Maddock says of the program, "Employers in Nebraska really appreciate the information we share with them. Many attend the session in their community year after year so they can keep up with what's happening in child support."

As the team pulled into the next town on the list, the May sky darkened and the weather threatened, but the show went on. After the final question and answer, the duo set out on the road again to another town to begin the process once more.

For more information on the Employer Outreach program, please contact [lisa.maddock@nebraska.gov](mailto:lisa.maddock@nebraska.gov) or [tom.hinds@nebraska.gov](mailto:tom.hinds@nebraska.gov).



# HUD, OCSE partnership reconnects families and dads

By Kim Danek, OCSE

Child support professionals know that when children have the love and support of both parents, they have a greater chance of succeeding in life. However, a two-parent household is not always realistic. For years, OCSE has encouraged child support agencies to help fathers stay involved in their children's lives if they do not live in the same household. Recently OCSE worked with another federal agency that has a similar goal.

This May, Department of Housing and Urban Development officials Linda Bronsdon, Public and Indian Housing Environmental Clearance Officer, and Ron Ashford, Director of Public Housing Support Services, visited OCSE to develop a new partnership that could bring more services to fathers through local events sponsored by HUD's Public Housing Support Services. Local public housing authorities (PHAs) across the country were hosting Father's Day events where dads could bond with their children through fun activities such as reading aloud together. In many cases, the event also offers fathers a place to learn about employment programs and health and legal resources.

The HUD officials briefed child support regional program managers on its Reconnecting Families and Dads program and asked for help in linking local

child support agencies to these public housing Father's Day festivities. Organizations such as the [Fatherhood Initiative of Connecticut](#) and the [Louisiana Department of Children & Family Services](#) office in Lafayette have joined with the public housing projects in their area.

HUD started the program four years ago to help fathers reconnect with their families for many of the same reasons as OCSE. HUD officials knew that many of the families they touched through public housing programs were led by single mothers. "We want fathers to connect with their children, but we're also eager to give mothers a break," says Bronsdon. The officials chose Father's Day as a starting point to get fathers involved in their children's lives.

According to the [Reconnecting Families and Dads](#) website, in 2009, "209 PHAs from 33 states held Father's Day events. An estimated 22,000 fathers, children, mothers and many others participated in events that local public housing authorities held all over the nation."

While it is too soon to tell how fruitful this partnership will be for fathers and their families, OCSE and HUD believe it will succeed. Bronsdon says, "Initial contacts between regional managers and specific housing agencies seem promising; either to work together for a Father's Day event in 2015 or to start dialogues with either parent through the local public housing agency."

*For information on the HUD program, visit the [Reconnecting Families and Dads](#) website.*

**LOUISIANA**—On June 14, Iberia Housing Authority in Louisiana sponsored its first event for fathers: "Iberia Housing Authority Father's Day – Reconnecting Families with Dads." Pictured are housing specialist Tyra McWhorter, who organized the event, and the Iberia Housing Authority executive director Elton Broussard. Attending from the state child support agency, manager Delores Mercer and administrative supervisor Pattie Lanclos-Meche assisted visitors in the community. Perhaps the most significant outcome was that Louisiana child support invited HUD to participate in its quarterly outreach resource meetings to connect various state agencies—child support, workforce, SSA, child welfare, economic stability (TANF)—and now HUD.



**CONNECTICUT**—The Connecticut state child support agency participated in an event sponsored by the John S. Martinez Fatherhood Initiative of Connecticut and the New Haven Housing Authority, as part of a Father's Day celebration and the Housing Authority's work on father engagement in the Elm City Community. Pictured below, the initiative's fatherhood banner hung on the "wall of fame" at the state office building (across the street from the State Capitol)—a high visibility area. The banner hung June 16 to 22.



# New Fatherhood Research and Practice Network offers funds to evaluate fatherhood programs

**Dr. Jessica Pearson, Director  
Center for Policy Research**

We are all aware of the statistics on the increasing number of children in the United States growing up with non-resident fathers. Most of these fathers do want to be involved in their children's lives; however they are facing significant barriers. A familiar research hub in the child support community, the Denver-based Center for Policy Research has collaborated with Temple University to launch the [Fatherhood Research and Practice Network](#) (FRPN). I serve as co-director for the network along with Temple University's social work professor Dr. Jay Fagan.

Funded through the HHS Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, the FRPN seeks to:

- Promote rigorous evaluation of fatherhood programs that serve low-income dads.
- Expand the number of practitioners and researchers collaborating to evaluate these programs.
- Disseminate information that leads to effective fatherhood practice and evaluation research.

Forty nationally recognized fatherhood practitioners, evaluation researchers, and policymakers are providing direction for the project.

The FRPN will focus on three areas: fathers' engagement with their children, economic security (fathers' ability to provide for themselves and their families), and co-parenting and healthy relationships. Over the past few months, FRPN workgroups, made up of fatherhood researchers and practitioners, drafted reports on available research on these subjects and knowledge gaps that present opportunity for future FRPN study. ([Download the reports.](#))

Over a staggered three-year period, the FRPN will allocate \$1.2 million in grants to support rigorous evaluation of fatherhood programs; \$300,000 is available now. The FRPN expects to make three awards of approximately \$50,000 and one or two awards in the \$100,000-\$150,000 range.

Through these grants, FRPN hopes to increase the number and quality of evaluations of fatherhood



Fatherhood Research & Practice Network

Introducing...

## The Fatherhood Research and Practice Network

Funded through the US Administration for Children and Families, Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, the Fatherhood Research and Practice Network (FRPN) seeks to:

- 1 Promote rigorous evaluation of fatherhood programs that serve low-income populations. FRPN will fund the evaluation of programs that aim to increase paternal engagement and parenting skills; improve fathers' ability to provide economic support; and increase parenting time, father-child contact, positive co-parenting and healthy relationships.
- 2 Expand the number of fatherhood researchers and increase the number of practitioners who use evaluation research in their programs through in-person and virtual trainings.
- 3 Disseminate information, including new evaluation findings, that leads to effective fatherhood practice and evaluation research.

This five-year national project will be led by Jay Fagan, PhD, professor of social work at Temple University and founding editor of the journal *Fathering*, and Jessica Pearson, PhD, director of the Center for Policy Research in Denver, Colorado. FRPN also includes a steering committee and four workgroups consisting of 40 leading national fatherhood researchers and practitioners who will help guide the direction of the project.

► Continued on back

programs and learn how to better serve low-income fathers, racial and ethnic minorities, and other populations that have not been widely studied.

You can download the FRPN [request for proposals](#) from the [FRPN website](#). The site also contains FRPN activities, evaluation research, training and technical assistance opportunities, and other resources. It includes a Researcher & Practitioner Forum to connect with one another by location and research area.

"This is an exciting opportunity for the fatherhood field," said Dr. Fagan about the FRPN launch. "In order to better serve fathers, we must have an understanding of what types of programs are most effective. The FRPN will help build capacity to support and conduct well designed, scientifically valid evaluation studies that improve program delivery and ultimately, the way dads engage in their children's lives."

To help FRPN understand the training and technical assistance needs, practitioners, researchers, and program managers can complete the needs assessment. FRPN will use the responses to develop future in-person and virtual training, connect researchers and practitioners, and create funding opportunities.

# State Department accesses FPLS to locate missing children

By Ruth Clark, OCSE

For too many families in the United States, a child's abduction is devastating. OCSE is instrumental in locating missing children through operation of the Federal Parent Locator Service (FPLS).

The State Department responds to international abductions and is a party to civil treaties with 72 countries to locate abducted children. As the "Central Authority" designated by the President, in accordance with section 7 of the International Child Abduction Remedies Act, the State Department has the legal authority to access specific FPLS data to help parents whose children are victims of international parental child abduction. Federal law allows that OCSE will provide

only information for the most recent address and place of employment of any parent or child.

Other sources also enhance the State Department's efforts to locate abducted children. For example, the FPLS can access external locate sources, such as the Internal Revenue Service, Social Security Administration, Veterans Affairs, Department of Defense, National Security Agency, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. With address information from the FPLS and other sources, the State Department has located 395 of 400 abducted children.



## New task force report on 'My Brother's Keeper'

The President's Task Force on the [My Brother's Keeper](#) initiative presented its [90-day report](#) in May. The Task Force identified key milestones in the path to adulthood that may predict later success and where interventions can have the greatest impact:

- Getting a healthy start and entering school ready to learn
- Reading by third grade
- Graduating from high school ready for college and career
- Completing post-secondary education or training
- Entering the workforce
- Keeping kids on track and giving them second chances

See the [fact sheet and report](#) on the White House website.

## Child Support Report

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