

Child Support Report

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COMMISSIONER'S VOICE


VOICE | BLOG

The transition to family-centered services

When I was growing up, my family had a cabin on a small lake in the north woods. Once a year, Grandpa and Dad would take the girl cousins out in the motor boat at sunset to fish. We had to learn three things. We had to put our own worm on the hook. We had to take the fish off the hook without getting stabbed by the fins. And we had to be quiet and patient and not complain.

So, we'd thread the worm on the hook and drop the line over the side of the boat. And wait. And wait. And sometimes, but not very often, we would catch a sunfish or a bluegill, or occasionally a perch. By the time I was eight or nine years old, I was pretty proficient at worms, fins, and patience. But I usually came back to the dock disappointed in my yield.

But my dad and grandpa sometimes caught a bass or northern. As I got older, I began to see that they weren't catching the big fish with worms. They used live minnows, flies, and lures. My dad would open his big tackle box, look over his tackle, and select a red lure with yellow spots or a silver lure with red stripes or a fuzzy little fly. He never bothered with worms. And then I noticed that he wouldn't just drop the line over the side of the boat. He'd stand up and cast. Or he'd start up the motor and troll. And sometimes he caught a big fish. I, on the other hand, never did.

The moral of my story is that to improve our performance, we've got to get beyond worms and use the whole tackle box. Or as my dad might have said, "You gotta use the right bait for the right fish at the right time."

Vicki Turetsky

Editor's note: This is the final edition of 2016. As we close out the year, the Commissioner's Voice reminds us that the child support program should continue its path toward family-centered services. In this November/December edition, you will learn about new approaches some offices are using to increase their performance. If you have other examples of successful family-centered service programs, please let us know!

New guidelines — working with federally recognized Indian tribes

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) issued [Guidelines Stating Principles for Working With Federally Recognized Indian Tribes](#) for agency programs, such as OCSE, to use when we work with federally recognized Indian tribes. The guidelines took effect on October 20.

According to the document, "The Principles are designed to build upon and complement ACF's Tribal Consultation Policy and to articulate ACF's commitment to promote and sustain strong government-to-government relationships, foster Indian self-determination, support tribal sovereignty, and demonstrate transparency in ACF's actions as public servants."

For information, contact Paige Hausburg at paige.hausburg@acf.hhs.gov.

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Tribal innovation grantees are pleased with their results

Jeff Stocks, OCSE

In 2014, OCSE issued the first grant exclusively for tribal child support programs. The two-year [Tribal Innovation Grant](#) (TIG) provided funding for tribes to develop new approaches to increase their performance and provide better outcomes for tribal families. Through a competitive application process, OCSE awarded grants to five comprehensive tribal programs — Port Gamble S’Klallam (Washington), Cherokee Nation (Oklahoma), Forest County Potawatomi Community (Wisconsin), Yurok (California), and Fort Belknap Indian Community (Montana). Their approaches varied, but each has had a positive outcome for participants and their respective communities. Below are experiences from three of the grantees.



Cherokee Nation

[Cherokee Nation Child Support Services](#) used its funds to develop and implement a parenting curriculum called the [Cherokee Nation Building Blocks](#). The curriculum is unique in that it

incorporates Cherokee language and culture along with more standard parenting educational elements. The course is currently court-ordered through the Cherokee Tribal Court and parents have six months to complete the class.

Two tribal members, Erica and Byron, went through the Cherokee Tribal Court to establish paternity and a child support obligation for their child. They set up custody and visitation to work together to co-parent their child. Erica and Byron recently completed the Building Blocks course and found the curriculum helpful in developing their co-parenting responsibilities and understanding the child support process.

Byron has been making his child support payments on a consistent schedule, and Erica feels the curriculum helped them understand the child support process better. “The class was very informative,” offered Erica. “It defined legal terms that are commonly used in child support and custody cases. The class explained the role of the Cherokee Nation Child Support Office and also the expected role of the parents involved in these cases.” She also liked the background she got on the non-tribal court system as well. “I considered both options, tribal and state, before I filed for child support. The class reaffirmed that fact that I had chosen the best option for our situation.”



Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe

The [Port Gamble S’Klallam Child Support Program](#) wanted to improve collaboration with other tribal departments, outside collaborators,

elders, and instructors so it could provide wrap-around family support for parents involved in the child support process. Staff specifically focused on their outreach to noncustodial parents. The tribe provided activities that included the outside partners in engaging programs for parents and families.

The child support program helped facilitate and coordinate nearly 20 activities during the grant period. They included parenting skills training, family craft activities, fitness and health programs, cultural workshops, and employment-related services.

The tribe defined success through family participation. They felt that the more the parents are involved in activities, the more they are involved in their children's lives. Port Gamble S’Klallam Elder Rose Purser said, “The most important thing about child support is that the child knows his or her parents care.”

In 2015, the tribe discovered that more noncustodial parents participated in a job fair for a new hotel under development than they did at other events. Near the end of the construction project, the tribe held a job readiness fair to help their clients become more confident, prepared, and ready to compete for the job openings at the new hotel. The tribe had 26 clients appear for the fair, and 27 percent were custodial and noncustodial parents. Attendees left with refined resumes, completed applications, typing speed certificates, and interviewing tips. Some also received clothing vouchers. “All the staff had great attitudes, were super helpful and supportive,” offered one participant.

Port Gamble also offered [Positive Indian Parenting](#), a parent education curriculum developed by the National Indian Child Welfare Association. The program emphasizes addressing historical trauma and traditional cultural teaching as a base for effective parenting.

To gauge outcomes, the tribe looked at pre- and post-survey data for the 12 parents who participated in the first workshop. Even though the sample size was small, the results were promising. In particular, the participants reported feeling better about using traditional S’Klallam teachings to support parenting activities. They felt more comfortable with increasing their storytelling, traditional activities, and ceremonies, and talking about traditional beliefs when they worked with their children. Participants, parents, and facilitators were sad when they came to the end of the classes.

continued



Forest County Potawatomi Community

The [Forest County Potawatomi](#) tribe has been able to maximize TIG funding well. In October 2015, a *Child Support Report* article, [Tribal grant success — Forest County Potawatomi](#), highlighted

its successful work with tribal employers and Wisconsin state child support staff. The tribe continued to use this collaborative approach effectively in 2016 because tribal child support collection rates improved from 58 percent to 97 percent.

Forest County Potawatomi partnered with state child support staff on three open houses for tribal employees this year. It is the first time many of these participants had ever met a caseworker face-to-face. Through these open houses, the tribe has been able to help participants modify orders, reduce arrearages, and — in one case — establish an order against the other parent due to a custody change.

Grantees are sharing their stories

In addition to working directly with their own tribal communities, all the grantees have been sought-after presenters at national and regional conferences. The grantees have been freely sharing their approaches, experiences, and materials with tribes throughout the country. The information has inspired other tribal programs to consider new approaches for connecting with hard-to-reach participants.

The grant period is ending soon so each tribe is preparing to move into the next phase by looking for ways to sustain their TIG initiatives. Each grantee plans to continue the activities, possibly by adding them to their core child support work. With the successes each has enjoyed, the tribal families can expect to see positive change throughout their tribal communities.

For more information, contact Jeff Stocks at jeffrey.stocks@acf.hhs.gov.

Kaw Nation — Children Are Our Priority

Aimee Turner, Director, *Kaw Nation Child Support Services*

The [Kaw Nation](#) in Oklahoma took advantage of Child Support Awareness Month to launch a three-month campaign entitled “Children Are Our Priority.” We are using the community-wide promotion to increase collaboration among public and private entities to strengthen the response to children’s issues.

Child Support Services designed the campaign to promote and protect children and to address the ongoing issues children face in today’s ever-changing society.

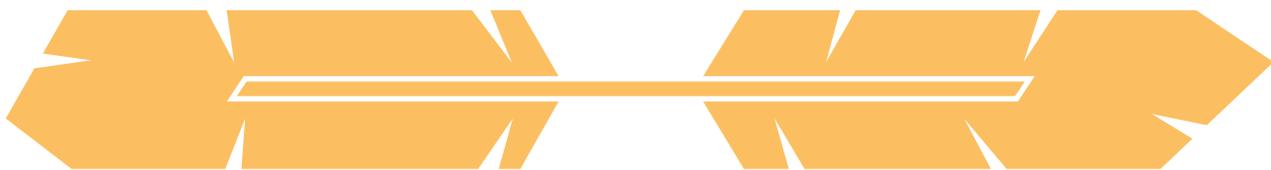
As a Nation, we are working every day to ensure we are providing the best services possible for children.

The Kaw Nation launched the campaign with a back-to-school supply drive that received overwhelming community support. We were amazed at the public’s outpouring which enabled us to donate an enormous quantity of supplies to individuals and schools in our area.

The support from the community proved that we can do more if we work together. From the school supply drive, the ball really got rolling and we are now launching a full campaign that focuses on protecting and promoting children’s rights and family responsibilities.

To make things official, Kaw Nation issued a Proclamation that declared “Children Are Our Priority” between September and December 2016. Officials are getting all tribal program resources to work together to address the issues of families in need.

“Historically, the Kaw have always placed a heavy emphasis on protecting our most precious and vulnerable citizens — our children. Our efforts in this campaign are reflective of Kaw values,” said Kaw Nation Chair Jacque Hensley. “As a Nation, we are working every day to ensure we are providing the best services possible for children.”



Editor's note: According to a recent [population report](#) from the U.S. Census Bureau, almost 62 percent of custodial parents received some type of noncash support for their children from noncustodial parents in 2013. Current federal regulations permit tribal child support agencies to satisfy child support obligations with noncash support. Federal regulations for state child support agencies do not contain this provision. Recent journal articles and studies find that some low-income parents required to pay formal support often contribute in more concrete ways, such as by providing diapers or school supplies. These two articles provide two perspectives on noncash support.

Noncash payments further tribal cultural values

Marsha Harlan, Tribal Law Consultant,
Indian Collaborative Consultants

Prior to the March 2004 promulgation of the [Final Rule on Tribal Child Support Enforcement Programs](#), the issue of allowing parents to satisfy their child support obligation with noncash support was one of the most discussed components of the regulations. For many non-tribal commenters, the idea of allowing noncash support was a foreign concept. Tribes, however, readily accepted the provision as a complement to their culture of placing a higher value on subsistence than money.

During the consultation period, many tribal leaders urged the Secretary of Health and Human Services to include provisions for noncash support. We felt it was important to accommodate the realities of living in rural Indian Country where economic conditions are generally harsher than that of urban areas. When the Final Rule was published, it allowed tribes to satisfy their child support obligation with noncash support and resources for current support as well as arrears, with the exception of assigned support obligations, which must be met financially. The regulations stipulated that all noncash payments had to be specifically addressed in the tribal support order with a specified value attached to the goods or services.

This provision for noncash payment is consistent with the overriding purpose of child support enforcement — to provide for the needs of the child. Tribal noncash payments may be satisfied in a variety of ways, including but not limited to:

- Supplying fish, game, or produce;
- Securing home or auto repairs;
- Providing culturally significant regalia or other resources necessary to a child's participation in traditional customs and practice; and
- Contributing to the upkeep of property.

Of the more than 60 tribal child support programs, most include provisions in their enforcement codes for some type of noncash payment; however, it is generally the more rural areas that utilize this type of support most frequently, said Amber Ahola, President of the [National Association of Tribal Child Support Directors](#).

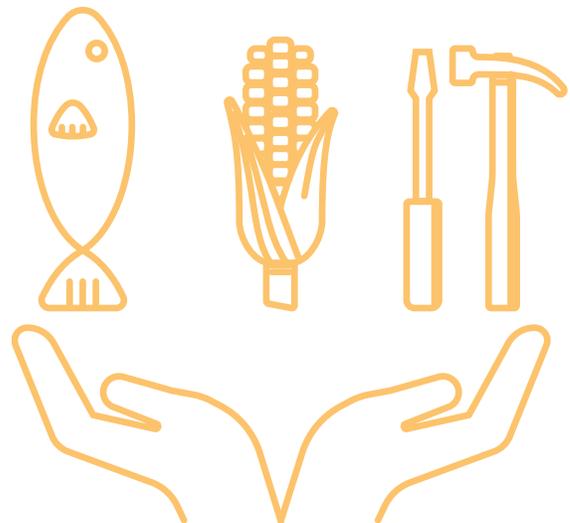
“There appears to be some correlation with the economic status of a specific area and the use of noncash payments,” Ahola said. “Tribal IV-D programs most often utilizing this part of the regulations are generally located in areas where there are no major industries to support the economy and employment opportunities may be scarce.”

Satisfying support obligations with noncash payments such as sharing the harvest from hunting and fishing are a significant complement to respecting traditional tribal ways and customs.

According to Ahola, the use of noncash payments is not limited to economically depressed areas. People living in communities that depend on game or fish for food often use this provision.

“There are many tribal communities whose custom it is to harvest wild rice, walleye, salmon, or specific wildlife such as elk or deer,” she said. “Satisfying support obligations with noncash payments such as sharing the harvest from hunting and fishing are a significant complement to respecting traditional tribal ways and customs.”

For more information about provisions for tribal noncash support, contact [Marsha Harlan](#) at indiancountryconsultants@yahoo.com.



COMMUNITY VIEWPOINT

Rethinking noncash support from low-income fathers

Margaret Stapleton, Director,
Community Justice, *Sargent Shriver*
National Center on Poverty Law

I have been thinking recently about the ever-increasing research scholars such as Kathryn Edin have published about very-low-income families and their insight into the efforts of low-income fathers to support and be involved with their children. I began rethinking the topic of “noncash child support.” The scholars and my own experience as an advocate working with low-income parents tell me that low-income fathers yearn to give their children the concrete things or experiences that their children need or want. Fathers want to give their children experiences like going to a movie or a sports event and getting a giant box of popcorn or a hot dog, or providing them things like diapers, shoes, school supplies and trip fees, jackets, books, and toys, but all these cost money. The message I took away from my readings and discussions was that these fathers felt more connected to their children when they gave them things or experiences that their children would remember as coming from their dad. The other side of this was that fathers felt bad or sad when they always had to say “no” to their children’s requests, no matter how modest.

... I’m suggesting that for the lowest income fathers, we explore ways for those fathers to fulfill part or even their entire child support obligation with noncash support.

The dads I’m talking about here are those who are paying, partially paying, or trying to pay the child support they owe, but are so low income themselves that if they pay their support obligation and their other bills (such as rent, utilities, food, and transportation) they literally have no money left over to spend on their children. And their inability to ever, or hardly ever, be able to say, “Sure, let’s do it” adds to their sadness and embarrassment about not being able to help their children enough. Making things worse, the custodial households where their children live are usually very poor. (The average monthly amount of assistance for TANF recipient families was \$378 in fiscal year 2013. See ACF’s [11th Annual Report to Congress](#), April 7, 2016.) The bottom line is that neither their mothers nor their fathers can provide anything but the

bare necessities for their children, and sometimes they cannot even do that.

So, when I say rethinking, I’m suggesting that for the lowest-income fathers, we explore ways for those fathers to fulfill part or even their entire child support obligation with noncash support. My initial suggestion is that state child support agencies, with the okay of both the mother and the father, encourage entry of total or partial noncash support orders for families, within their state child support guidelines.

State agencies might want to explore noncash orders with subsets of parents. For example, they might offer the possibility of total or partial noncash orders to new parents as their first child support order is being set. The order might come right out and say that the noncash part was for the purchase of diapers, an expensive necessity for infants and young children. See [The Diaper Divide](#) and what the White House is doing about it to better understand the harm caused to children and parents when an adequate supply of diapers is not available. Whether states offer noncash orders to subsets of families or to all families, such orders could direct that the parents agree on what the father will buy for the child with his noncash support, similar to the kinds of negotiations that take place in households where the parents live together. The orders could be modified to orders for cash support if the payors did not follow through.

This proposal for noncash support lines up with the thinking in the OCSE [National Child Support Strategic Plan 2015-2019](#) whose first principle is “Families First” and which specifically suggests a noncash strategy for very young parents — setting noncash accountability obligations such as staying in school and helping provide child care for young parents.

Margaret Stapleton is the director of Community Justice at the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law. In this role, she supports the improvement of the child support and criminal justice systems to assist low-income individuals and families. She has significant policy experience at the federal and state level including working on legislation and participating in the rulemaking process. For more information on this topic, contact her at mstapleton@povertylaw.org.

Low-income families in America spend **twice as much** as some families that have access to bulk-buying options for diapers.

Let’s make diapers more accessible and affordable for everyone.

Wh.gov/DiaperGap



Collaboration helps veterans support children

Jeanne Sparks, Family Support Division Outreach Coordinator, *Missouri Family Support Division*, and Becky Miles, Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist, *St. Louis VA Health Care System*

Child support issues can be a barrier to a veteran's reintegration into society. Since 2005, the Missouri Family Support Division (FSD) has collaborated with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Compensated Work Therapy (CWT) program to help veterans meet their child support obligations.

CWT helps unemployed or underemployed veterans successfully reenter their community and live productive lives. It uses a holistic approach to help veterans with barriers that may impact their employment, such as physical limitations, mental health issues, homelessness, and child support.

When veterans enter the CWT Program, they discuss their employment barriers. If vets identify child support as a barrier, vocational rehabilitation specialists obtain signed releases from the veterans and contact FSD to discuss the cases. FSD reviews the cases and provides the information to the CWT specialist. Together, FSD liaisons and rehabilitation specialists help the veterans establish action plans so they can meet their child support obligations.

As long as the veteran complies with the payment agreement, FSD agrees to:

- Exempt from lien the first \$2,500 of the veteran's bank account;
- Forgo suspending a veteran's driver's, professional, or recreational licenses; and
- Forgo a referral to an attorney's office for legal enforcement action.

FSD liaisons will continue to take any other appropriate enforcement action, but they allow the veteran to request a review of any action that may result in an undue hardship.

While the veteran is enrolled in the CWT Program, the rehabilitation specialists notify liaisons about any significant changes, such as new employment or a change of address. They also let the liaison know when a veteran graduates, is discharged, or otherwise leaves the CWT Program. The FSD liaisons review child support cases at least once a month, and notify rehabilitation specialists and veterans about any issues relevant to the child support cases.

The program has been successful in helping veterans with Missouri child support issues become more consistent in paying their child support obligations. In July 2016, 71 percent of the cases in this program received a payment.

Veterans are more willing to address their child support obligations when they feel they are able to support themselves and connect with a specific contact to discuss their case.

Both agencies want more veterans to succeed, but child support cases enforced by another state offer a significant barrier. The two groups signed formal Memorandums of Understanding, but they are limited to veterans who have child support cases enforced by Missouri. That is why states may see a request for assistance on a case involving a Missouri CWT Program veteran. The FSD staff also welcomes information from other child support agencies about programs that could benefit veterans with intergovernmental cases.

For more information on the program, contact Jeanne Sparks at jeanne.sparks@dss.mo.gov.

First tribal Federal Parent Locator System user

Susan Clapp, OCSE

In July, the [Muscogee \(Creek\) Nation](#) became the first tribe to join the [Federal Parent Locator Service](#) (FPLS) community of users. Access to the FPLS through the Child Support Portal gives tribal users access to the Locate, Department of Defense Entitlement, and Federal Case Registry Query applications.

"The Muscogee (Creek) Nation Office of Child Support Enforcement has worked hard over the last few years to improve our child support services and the use of the FPLS will greatly assist in that effort," said Tribal Program Director Susan Arkeketa. "Furthermore, the access to the FPLS will help tribal child support agencies find information on locates and employment in a quicker, more efficient manner and help reduce staff time in these efforts."

Danny Markley and Jay Butler, members of the OCSE Division of Federal Systems, provided training for tribal users so they could begin accessing data through the Child Support Portal. The tribe found it very helpful. "I greatly appreciate the time and effort and coordination of the federal Office of Child Support services and our office staff to accomplish the goal of implementing the FPLS for our agency," said Arkeketa.

The Muscogee (Creek) Nation is one of many tribes adding technology improvements that will help them enhance the well-being of all Indian children, increase family stability and self-sufficiency, reestablish the parent-child relationship, and reduce Indian child poverty.

For information on tribal access to the Child Support Portal or the FPLS, visit the OCSE [Federal Systems and Services](#) webpage.



Toolkits help kids manage difficult life events

Tara Wright, Project Coordinator, U.S. Social Impact, *Sesame Workshop*

Sesame Workshop is the nonprofit educational organization behind *Sesame Street* and so much more. Our mission is to help kids grow smarter, stronger, and kinder. Working at the national, regional, and local levels, we rely on people and organizations like child support offices and nonprofit groups to help us accomplish our mission.

We appreciate the work child support offices do to educate, engage, and support young children and families, and we are here to support your efforts. Sesame Workshop offers free resources in categories like health and wellness, early learning, and social-emotional wellbeing.

[Sesame Street for Military Families: Transitioning to civilian life](#)

We created this research-based, multimedia initiative to help military families ease the transition from active duty to civilian life. The project includes digital resources, videos, a parent-facing e-newsletter campaign, partner toolkits, and a printed activity book, *My Story, My Big Adventure*. Great for kids, ages 2 to 6, the interactive pages help parents and kids talk together about the transition in positive ways. This is one of several military- and veteran-themed toolkits in [Sesame Street for Military Families](#).

[Little Children, Big Challenges: Incarceration](#)

This bilingual (English/Spanish) multimedia community engagement initiative supports children, ages 3 to 8, and their caregivers during the incarceration of a parent. It also includes a parent/caregiver guide, a children's storybook, and tip sheet, along with a mobile app for adults.

[Little Children, Big Challenges: Divorce](#)

This toolkit provides resources for families with young children, ages 2 to 8, as they encounter the tough transitions that come with divorce. The kits include a parent/caregiver guide, children's storybook, and a tip sheet for friends. A mobile app for adults is also available!

These toolkits and many more are available for download at www.SesameStreet.org/toolkits.

Additionally, printed toolkits for some initiatives are available at no cost. You can order them by sending an email to outreach@sesame.org.





IN FOCUS

Reentry simulation provides new awareness

Jeff Stocks, OCSE

You are already on probation and you just failed a drug test, so now you must go back to jail. You have a few dollars in your pocket, but not enough to cover a fraction of what you owe this month or even enough to just survive. You have a small computer that your aunt gave you as a gift to help you with your job search after you left prison. Your only option is to trust a friend to pawn it so you can post bond and try to get back on your feet. You wait and hope.

This scenario and many others were part of an August prisoner reentry simulation co-facilitated by the OCSE staff here in [Region VII](#) and the Bureau of Prisons (BOP). Forty participants from Missouri, Iowa, and Kansas met in Kansas City to experience what it is like to be out of prison and have many obstacles but few options. The participants came from a range of backgrounds including child support, head start, and fatherhood practitioners, but they all left with the same view — reentering individuals face odds that can seem insurmountable.

The simulation gave them a month's glimpse into the life of an individual recently released from prison. Each participant received a packet with a specific identity — name, educational background, list of belongings, money, current living situation, and general information on the offense committed. A laminated card provided the requirements each individual had to meet during the month. BOP staff manned 15 different stations including places such as a food pantry, a probation and parole office, an employment services center, an alcohol and drug treatment facility, and a jail. On the facilitator's signal, the mass of participants scanned the room to see where to start. The way the participants navigated the stations and requirements created a unique experience.

Because it was a four-week simulation, each week was only 10-15 minutes long. The participants had to complete their assigned activities for each week, such as meeting



Participants receive information about the simulation.

with parole officers, going to an alcohol addiction meeting, paying rent or child support, or getting or losing a job. The participants received curve balls between each week such as failing a drug test, going back to jail, or becoming homeless. On top of that, some of the station staff were not helpful and others were absent from their tables. The confusion and lack of direction helped to reinforce what life can be like for a formerly justice-involved individual.

At the end of the three-hour session, the OCSE regional program members and BOP staff provided sobering statistics around incarceration rates and their impact on children. We also focused on child support-related issues and provided resources designed to ease the confusion around child support and incarceration.

Participants provided overwhelmingly positive feedback and many felt compelled to explore new partnerships and develop new programs to assist re-entering individuals. We hope to continue this partnership with the BOP so we can facilitate this simulation in local high schools and colleges, and for other regional child support agencies.

For additional information, please contact Jeff Stocks at jeffrey.stocks@acf.hhs.gov.

GRANTS

Grant focuses on procedural justice

Tanya Miller, OCSE

On September 30, 2016, OCSE issued a \$2.1 million five-year national demonstration project called [Procedural Justice Informed Alternatives to Contempt \(PJAC\)](#). Five state child support agencies — Arizona, California, Michigan, Virginia, and Ohio — received the grants. The sites will use the funding to develop and implement programs that give parents alternatives to civil contempt for nonpayment of support.

The Georgia Department of Human Services received funding to evaluate the programs. Each grantee has agreed to participate in the OCSE-funded evaluation that will randomly assign parents to treatment and control groups to determine impacts of the PJAC interventions. The evaluation will also include an assessment of each state's implementation of PJAC and document key program lessons.

PJAC requires grantees to incorporate the following five key elements of procedural justice principles into their program designs.

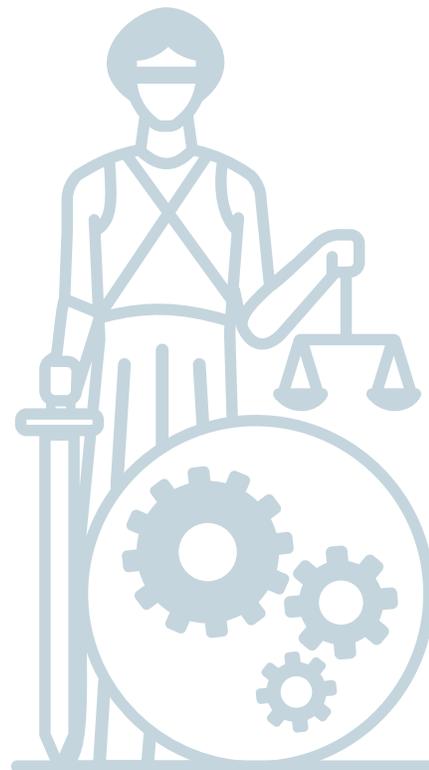
- Voice and Participation — participants must have the opportunity to tell their side of the story and the decision-maker must consider those stories when determining outcomes.
- Neutrality of the Process — participants should see that the decision-making process is unbiased and trustworthy.
- Respect — the system must treat participants with dignity and respect.
- Understanding — participants should be able to clearly understand the process and how officials make decisions.
- Helpfulness — officials must show they are interested in every participant's situation to the extent the law allows.

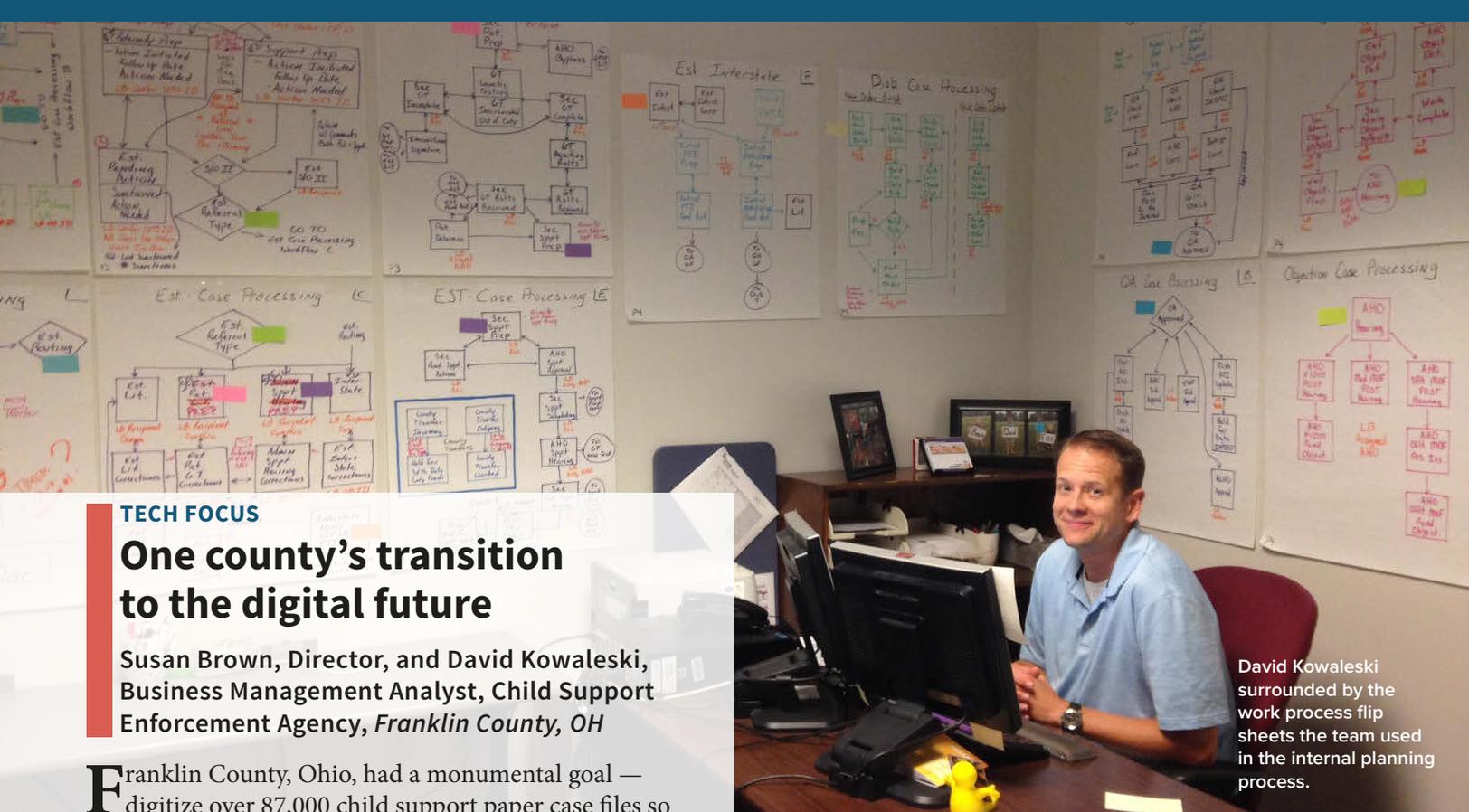
The grantees will test the efficacy of alternatives to contempt by incorporating and emphasizing procedural justice principles. They will build these into the following business practices on cases that would otherwise be subject to civil contempt filings: (1) initial screening; (2) outreach and engagement (3) case conferencing; (4) assessment and action planning; (5) enhanced child support services; and (6) other support services. PJAC seeks to increase parents' trust and confidence in the child support process, improve payment compliance, reduce arrears, minimize the need for continued enforcement actions and sanctions, and reduce the inappropriate use of contempt.

Procedural justice, sometimes referred to as procedural fairness, is an approach designed to increase the perception of fairness in legal and government proceedings. A study by Tom Tyler, [Procedural Justice and the Courts](#), showed that when individuals believe a process and its outcome are fair, they are more likely to accept decisions made by courts and other public authorities and are more willing to comply in the future. Tyler also suggested that procedural justice is "effective in both creating positive dynamics within families and in facilitating long-term adherence to agreements."

The PJAC evaluation will determine whether procedural justice practices improve reliable child support payments, impact other program outcomes, and provide more cost effective options than traditional contempt practices. Grantees will dedicate their first year to refining program designs and working with the evaluation team to develop procedures to randomly assign potential participants into treatment and control groups. The enrollment period will last for three years. The final year will focus on evaluation, project closeout, and continued services.

For more information on the grant, contact OCSE Program project officers Tanya Miller, tanya.miller@acf.hhs.gov, and Michael Hayes, michael.hayes@acf.hhs.gov. For information on the evaluation, contact Project Officer Elaine Sorensen at elaine.sorensen@acf.hhs.gov.





David Kowaleski surrounded by the work process flip sheets the team used in the internal planning process.

TECH FOCUS

One county's transition to the digital future

Susan Brown, Director, and David Kowaleski, Business Management Analyst, Child Support Enforcement Agency, Franklin County, OH

Franklin County, Ohio, had a monumental goal — digitize over 87,000 child support paper case files so 250 staff members could easily store, search, and access the entire database as needed. In 2008, Child Support Enforcement Agency Director Susan Brown, took on that task to move her agency forward. It started as a simple request for ideas and bids and will eventually become a system that will not only store electronic documents, but also generate personalized forms, automate 30 different workflows, and dramatically improved agency services.

2008: Research and planning

Many counties had either purchased or created an electronic system that scanned, uploaded, stored, and retrieved documents, but Brown envisioned more. “I wanted a system that would allow workers to move cases from one worker to another so that necessary action could be taken on the case.” After research and discussions with vendors, Brown’s team created a document for the county commissioners and leadership that graphically explained the problem and proposed their solution.

2012: The bid process

In order to develop a solid request for proposals, the county hired a consultant to conduct a needs analysis and create procurement specifications. The consultant helped the staff create technical specifications for a state of the art system that could gather data from the state’s case tracking system; upload, store, and retrieve documents; and create electronic versions of their workflows.

In 2013, they began negotiating with two sets of vendors — one to scan the existing case files and another to develop electronic document management and business process management systems.

2013: Overwhelming cost forces reevaluation

The price of the custom-built system was too high for a county just coming out of the recession. Brown, her agency, and county leaders spent most of 2013 looking for less expensive options but could not find any that would create the system they envisioned. The county’s chief information officer, however, saw the value in the project so he supported the request for increased funding.

2014: It all comes together

The county took a wider view by letting the child support office pilot the document conversion project while continuing to search for a more robust business process management system that could also be used by other county agencies.

The county assembled its team, selected a software partner, and chose a system to be the vehicle for the ambitious experiment. Key members started the technical training they would need to operate the system and began to develop the initial process workflows. Working with partners at the county data center, the staff continuously refined document indexing and workflows so the enforcement department could begin pilot testing.

continued

2015: Going live

The agency launched its completely customized document imaging and case management system and then trained staff to prepare paper files for scanning. The new single-application system eliminated several individual databases while providing enhanced tracking and reporting capabilities.

In May, staff started e-capturing all the new documents that came in. They scanned, stored, and then routed the files to the appropriate worker. This cut days off the process of locating and delivering paper files because everything was available to every staff member instantaneously. A month later, the Establishment Department started e-filing all the new cases it received from child support applications, walk-ins, and through referrals from Job and Family Services.

Workers can prepare and track cases to completion. Both parts of the project — application development and conversion of the existing files — are on time and on budget. The Agency is currently in the development portion of the largest and most complicated task — encompassing all of the major case management enforcement functions.

The staff are happy with the product and looking forward to getting more functionality when the final phase is complete. Even though all of this has happened in the background, customers are also happier. The staff can check the status of documents while the client is on the phone rather than having to call a parent back.

Based on the success of the program, Brown received a [NextGen 'Courageous Champion' Public Service Award](#) at the group's training summit in Washington, D.C. During the August awards ceremony she said, "It was truly a team effort. I can't wait to take this back and show everyone that their work and dedication has been recognized!"

For information, contact Susan Brown at susan.brown@jfs.ohio.gov.



Susan Brown (right) accepts the NextGen Courageous Champion award.

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

HealthCare.Gov open enrollment season

Open enrollment for health care coverage in 2017 is going on right now. You can enroll, re-enroll, or change a 2017 insurance plan through December 15, 2016, if you want coverage to start January 1.

Tuesday, January 31, is the last day you can enroll in or change a 2017 health plan. According to the [HealthCare.Gov](#) website, after this date, you can enroll or change plans only if you qualify for a [Special Enrollment Period](#). People who need coverage can sign up to receive important information through email. The HealthCare.Gov website also has a downloadable [Marketplace Application Checklist](#) so people can make sure they have everything they need to apply.

Marketplace navigators

Some people may still need extra help. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services provides navigator grant funding that helps people find appropriate coverage through the Health Insurance Marketplace. "We are committed to making sure consumers have all the resources they need to find the right plan when open enrollment begins on November 1," said Kevin Counihan, CEO of the Health Insurance Marketplace. "We know in-person assistance is critical to connecting individuals and families with quality, affordable health coverage that best meets their needs."

Navigators are trained individuals and organizations who help consumers, small businesses, and employees as they look for health coverage options and financial assistance through the Marketplace. Navigators can meet in person with consumers and help them understand the coverage options available to them as well as help them pick, apply for, and enroll in a plan of their choice. Consumers in federally facilitated and state partnership marketplaces can find [local help](#) to apply for coverage.



No customer inquiry is too big or small

Division of Federal Systems, OCSE

When the OCSE federal collections team handles customer service inquiries, the work is often complex and usually involves multiple parties. It is also very rewarding because they alleviate difficult situations. Recently, the team's swift actions quickly resolved challenging situations for two different state child support directors.

In one case, the federal collections team received an emergency request from a state child support director. In April 2016, the state referred a suspicious tax refund offset to OCSE and the IRS fraud investigation team to determine whether the payment was fraudulent. In June, the noncustodial parent informed the state that the offset was, in fact, valid. In the meantime, the IRS investigation team had researched the offset and responded that it looked erroneous. So, based on the results of their investigation, the IRS was going to reverse the payment in the state's future collection file.

As soon as OCSE Analyst Angie Tutwiler received the director's request to have the IRS stop the reversal, she researched the issue and began corresponding with the state and the revenue service fraud team. Fortunately, although IRS had scheduled the offset's adjustment, the transaction had not processed yet. The IRS pulled the planned reversal from its database. Through quick work, Angie was able to prevent the offset reversal so the state could make its distribution without worrying about deductions from future offset collection deposits.

The next day, the federal collections team received another urgent request from a state director, this time for a passport denial release. A father wanted to attend his daughter's wedding in Mexico but the passport agency denied his request because he owed past-due support. Since he was scheduled to fly out within a few days, the dad hand-delivered a cashier's check to the child support office to repay part of his past-due balance. He also set up a payment plan to clear the rest of his debt.

Unfortunately, the state did not submit a request for passport release, which prompted the director's urgent call. Theresa Meredith and Rebecca Hamil sprang into action. In one day, they placed multiple phone calls and worked with the state, the noncustodial parent, and the State Department to clear the passport. Thanks to their quick coordination, the father did not have to reschedule his flight.

People who have worked with the federal collections team know that their willingness to help extends far beyond senior-level requests. Team members treat every

inquiry as their number one priority no matter who is on the other line. A customer recently sent a letter to Theresa thanking her for going above and beyond and said Theresa established the "bar to which customer service should be set."

For more information the Federal Collection and Enforcement Program, visit the [OCSE Federal Systems and Services](#) webpage.

Virtual detective finds payment money

Kathy Miller, OCSE

The insurance match program is like a computer super sleuth that helps the state's child support program collect money for past-due child support payments. The program operates behind the scenes comparing names of individuals who owe past-due support with claimant information from participating insurance companies. This provides information that child support agencies may not receive from any other source.

Nearly 1,000 insurers are sharing claims information. About 30 states have voluntarily reported over \$48 million in child support collections since the program started. In 2015, states began reporting child support collections to OCSE from all insurance match sources. To date, 12 states voluntarily reported over \$408 million in collections from all insurance match sources. Reporting collections shows how the insurance community is helping improve children's lives.

To learn more about the OCSE Insurance Match program, contact us at insurancematch@acf.hhs.gov.

Child Support Report

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