

Child Support Report

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COMMISSIONER'S VOICE



VOICE BLOG

Adapting to the cycle of change

My great-grandfather had a 6th-grade education.

He started off his career making wagon wheels in a wagon shop. In 1907, when he was 32 years old, my



great-grandfather got in on the ground floor at the Kissel Motor Car Company in Hartford, WI. The company produced handcrafted luxury cars driven by movie stars in the emerging Hollywood film industry.

He made the “artillery wheels,” made of wood spokes, rims and hubs. He was a master of wooden wheels.

Around 1925, the company began using metal disc wheels, and my 50-year-old great-grandfather was out of a job. He could not adjust to the new manufacturing process. Kissel Motor Company went out of business during the depression in the 1930s. The company could not adjust to the new economic conditions.

“Creative destruction” is an old term in economic theory that is in current vogue. It describes the incessant cycle of business innovation that destroys and transforms the current way of doing business and establishes the new way.

Change is disruptive. No sooner do you get things humming along, when stresses and forces set in. Things work well—until they don't. The first impulse is to try harder using the strategies that worked before. But these efforts no longer seem to pay off in the same way that they used to.

Change is foggy, too. The path forward is inevitable only in hindsight. Change doesn't come with consensus, and it sure doesn't come with new resources. Change is hard on people. It's hard on organizations.

To meet changing circumstances, the child support program has evolved in the past five years, and will evolve some more in the next five years. But it's not just child support. The same forces that are compelling our program to adapt are transforming business models, governance structures, work life, and family life. Our program needs to adapt so that we can continue to be effective in today's world.

Here in the U.S., to take one example, criminal justice agencies—prisons, jails, community corrections, prosecutors, sheriffs, police, courts, community-based organizations—are having almost the same discussion as we are, and they are making parallel changes to the criminal justice system. In both systems, policy and practice discussions center around the:

- impact of aggressive law enforcement practices on work and family
- role of accountability, and the opportunity to turn a life around
- role of services in an enforcement setting
- role of court guidelines
- structure of court hearings, and movement toward problem-solving courts
- impact of reimbursing government costs on compliance and debt
- very nature of justice and fairness

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2.7 MILLION GRANDPARENTS
were responsible for grandchildren under age 18 living with them in 2012

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(continued)

Our automated enforcement tools collect billions of dollars for children and their families—\$32 billion, to be exact. But there is profound instability in family structure and low-wage employment in our country. Our automated tools don't work very well for about one-quarter of the families in our caseload. Our challenge is to increase child support collections by responding to the changes in modern families. And that means adapting

and expanding program strategies to effectively serve all of the families in our caseload. That's why we are in business.

Vicki Turetsky

If you have questions about a child support case, please contact your state or tribal agency.

TECH TALK

Time for the three-year check-up: OCSE revises the IWO form and instructions

By Sherri Grigsby, Employer Services Manager
OCSE

In FY 2013, employers withheld 74 percent of all child support collected nationwide. Employers are critical partners that help the child support community get consistent support to families and children. Employers tell us they need standardized forms and processes to help them send payments quickly to families. That's why the income withholding order (IWO) form and instructions (called "Income Withholding for Support") are so important for state and tribal child support agencies and for the courts.

Every three years, OCSE reviews the IWO form and instructions, seeks public comments, and revises the form based on those comments. On July 15, 2014, we published an [Action Transmittal](#), which highlights some of the changes, including these:

- Instructions for withholding from nonemployees: Since the Consumer Credit Protection Act (CCPA) applies only to payments made when there is an employer-employee relationship, any payments to independent contractors or nonemployees are not covered by the maximum CCPA withholding limits. Income withholders need states to provide limits that should be applied to withholding from nonemployees. We updated the form to let states give that information.
- Withholding limits on tribal orders: We corrected instructions for withholding limits on tribal orders.
- Instructions to issue one IWO form for each IV-D child support case: We clarified that each IWO should apply to one noncustodial party with the appropriate custodial party and children.

Since all parties that send income withholding orders to employers must use the Office of Management and Budget (OMB)-approved IWO, we worked with the National Center for State Courts to send AT-14-05 to the State Administrator of Courts and Chief Judge in every state. We recommend that states contact their courts to explain that courts and attorneys must also use the IWO form and ensure that all employer-withheld payments go to the state disbursement unit for both IV-D and non-IV-D cases and orders.

If you have questions about using the IWO form, please contact the OCSE Employer Services team at employerservices@acf.hhs.gov.

10 years

and millions of e-IWOs later ...

The federal OCSE electronic income withholding order (e-IWO) project marked its 10th anniversary last month. The project boasts the participation of

32 states and 624 employers

(representing nearly 7,000 Federal Employer Identification Numbers) that send and receive income withholding orders electronically.

Since its start in 2004, the e-IWO system has transmitted more than

2.8 million child support orders

to employers, saving time, money and resources for states and employers. In July 2014 alone, the system processed more than 100,000 orders and at this pace will easily transmit more than 1 million orders this year.

Noncustodial parents in Kansas benefit from college savings program

By Melissa Johnson
Kansas Department for Children and Families
Child Support Services

In June 2013, Kansas began to offer some noncustodial parents an incentive to pay back-owed child support through its Child Support Savings Initiative (CSSI). CSSI is a joint effort between the Kansas Department for Children and Families and the Kansas State Treasurer's office. Noncustodial parents with child support debt have the opportunity to pay \$25 or more to open a CSSI 529 account (college savings plan), and for every \$1 paid into that account, the state will forgive \$2 of state-owed debt. Leveraging state debt write-off creates incentives to the obligor parent while supporting the child's future in a tangible way, making this a truly family-centered strategy.

The noncustodial parents in the program may owe debt both to the custodial parent and the state (if the custodial parent is receiving assistance). The program will still require the noncustodial parents to meet his or her monthly obligation to the custodial parent. The noncustodial parents may use the funds toward any college or university, including a community college or technical college that is accredited to receive financial aid. Since the program's start, Kansas has set up 45 accounts with deposits of roughly \$22,000 into the Kansas Learning Quest Accounts and has forgiven more than \$37,500 of state-owed arrears.

Studies show that not only are child support education savings accounts helpful to pay for school, but they also help promote a positive relationship between children and their noncustodial parent.

As the CSSI enters its second year, the Kellogg

Foundation is helping to further incentivize parents to invest in their children's future with a \$600,000 grant. This grant creates a public-private partnership to strengthen families and help children succeed. For every \$1 invested in the 529 accounts, the Kellogg Foundation will match that amount up to \$500 per child. The Kellogg Foundation funds will go to the custodial parent to pay down the noncustodial parent's child support debt.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation is giving \$50,000 for a statewide ad campaign to promote the program. Kansas will air television and radio ads. The Kansas Department for Children and Families will also work with its community partners to spread the word about this effort.

Department Secretary Phyllis Gilmore issued a press release July 15 to announce the program by saying, "The program is a win-win-win; the noncustodial parent who owes child support will have arrears reduced, the parent who has custody of the child will have the money he/she is owed, and the child will know that money is available when it's time to start college or a technical program."

In the coming weeks, noncustodial parents who are eligible to participate will receive a mailer about the program that invites them to join.

Learn more on the Kansas website for the [Child Support Savings Initiative](#).



Promotional illustrations from the [Child Support Savings Initiative](#)

Telling stories: Two CSPED grantees share personal triumphs

In the August 2014 Child Support Report, OCSE's Lauren Antelo wrote about CSPED—the Child Support Parent Employment Demonstration. CSPED is a national five-year demonstration grant that funds employment-related projects in eight states. The following two stories feature successes in Colorado and Wisconsin.

Colorado's Prowers County project renews hope for noncustodial mom

By Dru Monson and Anthony LaTour, Case Managers
Prowers County Colorado Parent Employment Program

In June 2011, Myranda Garcia's life would change and never be the same. On the 20th day, she had to relinquish custody of her eldest daughter to the biological father. The father was awarded sole decision-making responsibility for his daughter as a result of a child welfare case for maltreatment. (At the time, Myranda was not caring for her daughter safely.)

Immediately after hearing this news, Myranda began to lose what little hope she had. With minimal income and another child to care for, she was running out of money and resources to provide for her family. Once the orders were final on the Allocation of Parental Responsibilities, the visits with her daughter quickly stopped. Myranda completely shut down and lost all hope that her situation would get any better. She fell into deep depression.

In November 2012, Myranda learned that the custodial parent had opened a child support case to assist him with their child's needs. We recall being present at the child support hearing where her monthly support order was established. Myranda took the stand and was overcome with emotions trying to explain why she couldn't pay the suggested \$258 monthly payment. She asked the judge, "How do you expect me to pay this amount? I only make close to \$500 a month. There is no way I can afford that." The judge quickly replied, "There's nothing I can do for you Ma'am."

Employment services begin

From this experience, Myranda had a negative outlook towards child support services. When we received the referral from our child support team and reached out to



Myranda Garcia is primary caregiver for her younger daughter, Niyati.

her about taking the survey, her response was, "I know I need to make a payment. I am trying everything I can to find more work so that I can pay. I just lost my driver's license and won't be able to drive to work." On top of this, her vehicle's engine was giving out.

Before CO-PEP (Colorado Parent Employment Project), Myranda had not made any payments on her account. The day we enrolled her in CO-PEP and she began to receive employment services, she was elated with joy. Exactly two weeks later she made her first child support payment. Although it wasn't the full amount, she felt accomplished to have made some sort of payment.

Myranda was then able to reinstate her driver's license and began looking for a second part-time job. Since she had a background in home health, we were able to reach out to our local and regional home healthcare providers. During a brief phone interview, she was hired. After meeting with her several times each month, we noticed a big difference in her attitude and outlook on life as well as child support services.

Since Myranda has not been able to see her older daughter because the father won't allow contact, the CO-PEP program has established a relationship with a local attorney who will help her gain access and visitation with her child. As of today, Myranda has reliable transportation and two part-time jobs that allow her to successfully provide for her daughters.

Every time we see Myranda one step closer to her ultimate goals of seeing her daughter again and achieving economic stability, we are encouraged to work harder and collaborate more with others in our rural community. In Prowers County, we know that the work we are doing is important and makes a difference. We can already see the tides turning to a brighter and more united future.

Wisconsin father's letter speaks to change in the broader child support program

Nina Taylor, Collections Supervisor
Kenosha County Child Support Program
Site Lead for Supporting Parents Supporting Kids

Since the Supporting Parents Supporting Kids (SPSK) program began in Kenosha and Brown counties, WI, many parents are inspiring us with their achievement. We developed and implemented the program under the Child Support Parent Employment Demonstration (CSPED) grant awarded to the Wisconsin Bureau of Child Support in 2012.

Both the Kenosha and Brown County child support agencies have devoted time and energy toward developing a parenting curriculum, forging relationships with employment providers, creating referral mechanisms between community partners and services, educating staff in depth about domestic violence, and providing expedited child support services to noncustodial parents.

The agencies are providing intensive case management services through SPSK by partnering with parenting and employment services. The program will run for three years, serving 1,500 noncustodial parents. The child support staff in both agencies experienced a cultural shift in the meaning of child support services. In addition to providing the administrative and legal approaches for successful child support outcomes, staff now provides an avenue of diversion to noncustodial parents who are willing to work with parenting facilitators and employment services to achieve success. The results so far point to an increase in employment and payment of child support for the noncustodial parents in SPSK.

In addition, the noncustodial parents are enthusiastic after graduating from the parenting curriculum. A child support representative appears at one of the parenting classes to conduct a session on child support myths and truths. The resounding response from noncustodial parents in SPSK is "now I feel hope" and "thank you!"



Letter from a parent

Recently we received a letter from a 41-year-old father of two children who was hit hard in the recession over the past several years. As his letter shows, the contrast between what this noncustodial parent says about his experiences with the broader child support system and with the SPSK program speaks to our national child support program's change in approach and how noncustodial parents feel about it. Here are excerpts from his letter:

My name is Henry A. Eger J.R. and I am a 41-year-old man with two children. The SPSK or the Supporting Parents Supporting Kids program is a program that I was recommended to attend as a study for CSPED study for the Department of Health and Human Services implemented by the University of Wisconsin and Mathematica Policy Research. I wish to speak or (write) my experience with this study and my experience with being in the arrears of my child support due to lack of work. I was called to court to explain my reason for being in contempt of my arrears.

I am a Union Iron Worker and in light of the economy towards my trade in the past eight years it has been hit and miss and far from fruitful. Being an Iron Worker is my career and not a job. I spent seven years of my life learning my trade in class as I went to work full time and over time in order to feed my family. I have and do live for the welfare of my children. I have many other credentials of education as well that makes me employable in areas most men and women do not have an opportunity at.

The court system and the Child Support Agency have always made me feel lesser than a man and

(continued)

WAR ON POVERTY
50
Years

This article demonstrates that child support lifts children out of poverty

have threatened my lively hood with driver license expulsion and jail time. To say the least Child Support and the courts broke my spirits and gave me a feeling of despair and hopelessness. The SPSK program in turn, gave me guidance, kindness and hope. The SPSK program empowered me and pushed me towards positivity in my outlook of the future. I do not agree with how the system implements structure towards a Union Iron Worker but I respect the program none the less. The SPSK program is a positive and encouraging entity regardless of biasness. I believe the program allows the courts to have a platform of judgment on each individual case of who is truly lacking in effort and integrity of deeds. I believe between the courts and the SPSK program working together through Child Support that the system will meet with more clarity, justice and integrity to those who are involved. I know this program is at its' infancy but I look forward to the future if this is our direction as a public, community and hopefully nation.

I hope and pray that this positive direction through this program will not be hindered but encouraged for it is best to single parents, all families and more importantly our children.

We as a community can bring high esteem to those who need it by care and action, the SPSK program fulfills that goal at the beginning of a future that is most needed and acts with motive instead of expectant let downs and predicted failure.

This program is a hope of a positive future instead of a negative redundancy. I was reluctant and combative in the beginning but the helpful people of the SPSK study and program taught me through kindness and care that I am important to my children's future and to wake up to the reality that my happiness is my hope. My happiness is my children and they need me as this program supports me in that emotion.

The CSPED project grantees expect to convey more success stories as time goes on. For more information on the OCSE CSPED grant, contact lauren.antelo@acf.hhs.gov.

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

Through a holistic lens: Woman dedicates her career to fatherhood

By Kim Danek, Writer/Editor
OCSE

Thirty-plus years ago when Holly Zwerling was studying to be a clinical social worker, several college professors told her that to understand a person's problems she should consider more than the individual. One professor told Holly to look at all the systems in place around the person. "That had a great impact on me," said Holly. "My clinical work made me look at a person's family, where the person lived, and what the community and the society said about this person."

Through this holistic lens, Holly began to see that some support organizations left certain populations out of their assistance programs because of the labels placed on the people by an organization, an agency, or even the society as a whole. She saw this particularly for men. "Fathers are not seen as primary parents. Mothers are primary parents." Holly believed fathers should know they could be primary parents, too, and that support agencies should both understand that concept and relay these messages to men.



Holly Zwerling represented the Fatherhood Task Force of South Florida at the state's first Fathers in Education Day in May.

In 2000, Holly faced a long, hard road when she sought to get support organizations in the Miami-Dade area to help fathers. She petitioned a new foundation, [The Children's Trust](#), to fund and sponsor more programs for fathers in Miami-Dade. She went to meetings and lobbied for fatherhood program funding.

For several years the response was the same. "The board would thank me for my interest but would not act on any of my suggestions or recommendations," said Holly. She finally asked if she could run training programs for their providers to expand fatherhood involvement in their programs. When the board said they had no funding for such a program, Holly offered to do it pro bono.

(continued)



Holly Zwerling and seven fathers visited state legislators, who said they had never seen a group of fathers visit and thought it was great to see. Standing back row center is Rep Joseph Gibbons (Pembroke Park, FL).

“How could they turn away something that was free? If they accepted my offer, it would get my foot in the door with the trust.” They said yes.

Advocacy leads to legislation

In time, Holly was doing more advocacy work and getting more fathers involved. She gathered a group of dads, and they started the [Fatherhood Task Force of South Florida](#) (FTFSF) to focus on efforts such as helping male role models become more active in their children’s lives, and training and guiding local agencies and communities to do more for fathers and children. Recently, Holly took seven fathers to the state capital in Tallahassee to advocate for health and educational issues. “The legislators had never seen a fatherhood advocacy group—let alone one made up of all men—lobby for anything before,” said Holly.

This year, Holly helped state Senator Dwight Bullard get legislation passed in Florida designating May 14 as Fathers in Education Day and May 12-16 as Fathers in Action and Advocacy Week. This resolution encouraged schools throughout the state to invite fathers in to read, tell stories, or share their interests with children. Holly says, “Too often fathers are called into schools because their children are being disciplined.”

“Fathers were and still are seen as ‘helpers’ to Mom and not treated with the importance of a primary parent with equal rights and responsibilities. Fathers are always having to play catch up to mothers in terms of skills and parent knowledge. This puts men in a position of weakness and they don’t like the feeling. Some men relinquish their position to Mom, underestimating the importance of their involvement in their children’s life.”

Holly Zwerling

She tells dads in child support systems to stay involved with their children’s education and support their schoolwork. “Do not let child custody issues distract you from that role. Your children need you to be involved in that capacity and so do the schools.”

Involve women in change

Holly believes women are key to fatherhood programs. “I think there are women like me who believe fathers have been systemically left out of programs, but these women are not in positions to make changes,” she said. “I am very lucky. I have been doing this for more than 35 years. I know the difficulties that women face when they are trying to be advocates.”

She often sees these women working in lower level positions at motherhood and children’s agencies. In order to help get more dads involved, the women would have to change policy in their organizations and find funding to do so, but they are not usually in positions to do that. Holly’s best advice is to find advocates. “It’s very important for women who want to start a program like this to have strong men behind her to help advocate for her so they, in turn, can advocate for fathers.” When they do that, Holly feels it provides better outcomes in the lives of their children.

Pitt County social media campaign engages public to locate noncustodial parents

**By Michele McCorkle,
Child Support Program Manager
Pitt County, NC, Department of Social Services**

Pitt County, NC, wrapped up its annual child support social media campaign in June by bringing in more than \$60,000 in child support payments. The 3-year-old campaign, “Operation Support Your Child: ‘Educate & Motivate,’” has gone beyond monetary success; it has helped the Sheriff’s Office (Child Support Unit) and county Department of Social Services Child Support Unit become more effective through the rest of the year.

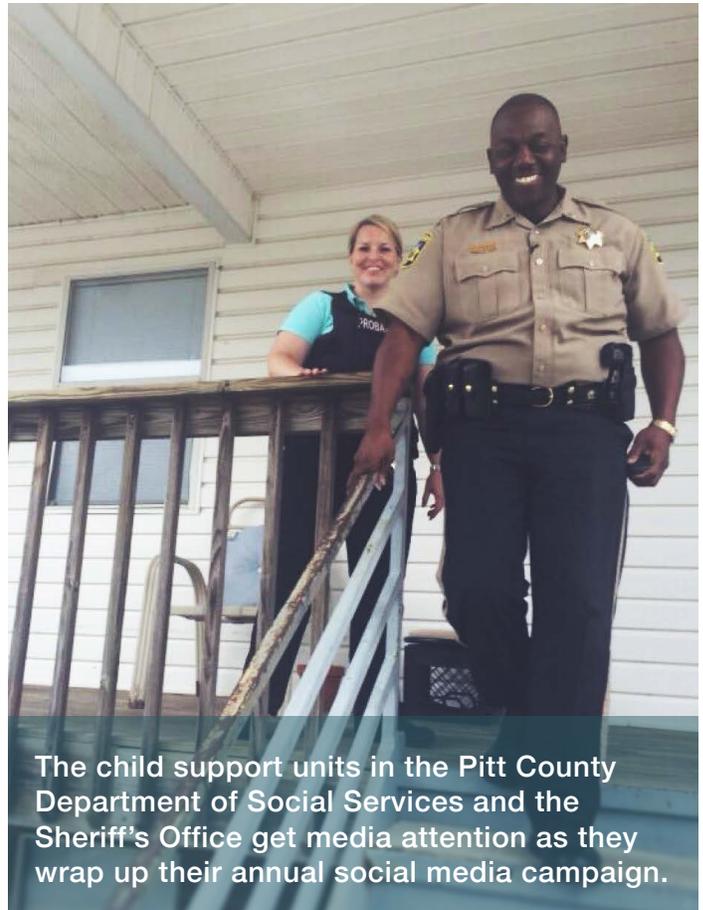
Three years ago, the sheriff’s office was seeking new ways to locate noncustodial parents who were significantly behind in child support payments. That’s when the officers launched a month-long social media campaign that started on Mother’s Day and ended on Father’s Day. One main goal was to engage the public in finding these parents.

“Each year, we have added various outlets to engage the public in these campaigns. The public’s interest is key to the success of each campaign,” said Pitt County Sheriff Neil Elks. “The first year we started with Facebook. Last year, we began showing the pictures of noncompliant parents on an electronic billboard located in a high traffic intersection of Pitt County. We continued to use our Sheriff’s Department [Facebook page](#) and the [shutterfly.com page](#). This year, we added a two-hour ‘Tweet-A-Long’ to the campaign. This spurred the public to be a part of a virtual ride-a-long as we tracked down some of the hardest to find individuals.”

Due to the participation from all involved, this year the sheriff’s officers served papers to establish 50 new cases and over 400 papers ordering individuals to appear in court about an existing child support case. Sixty-two individuals were arrested for failing to comply with a court order, while more than 20 people negotiated payments to dispose of their warrants.

The unit has also used these campaigns to educate the public about the child support process. “Most who are not directly involved in a child support order have few facts regarding the strain the system can place on our society. Even custodial and noncustodial parents do not initially have a complete understanding of the various steps and processes in the system,” said Child Support Supervisor Sonya Scott.

This campaign encourages the offices to work with the media to help get vital information to the community so everyone understands steps needed to benefit all children. Child Support Supervisor Renee Davis-Jones said the concept seems to be working. “This year, there were only 125 warrants for arrest. This is a clear indicator that input from the community, through local media and social media, is working to help locate noncustodial parents.”



The child support units in the Pitt County Department of Social Services and the Sheriff's Office get media attention as they wrap up their annual social media campaign.



Multilingual communication and kindergarten demographics: What's the connection?

By Kim Danek, Writer/Editor
OCSE

Have you looked at the demographics of the kindergarteners in your local school districts lately? If not, you may be missing an important trend. If certain minor populations in your local kindergartens are rising significantly, your office may need more multilingual communication in years to come.

The Pew Research Center released two stories this summer that have prompted discussion in OCSE. The first conversation centers on the two fastest growing racial and demographic groups in the United States. The percentage of Asians and Hispanics are rising each year, but the causes of the increase are different.

According to one article, “U.S. Hispanic and Asian populations growing, but for different reasons,” both populations increased between 2 and 3 percent from 2012 to 2013. More Asians are migrating here than are born here, with 74 percent of Asian adults being foreign born in 2012.

The rise in the Hispanic population was due to natural increases (births minus deaths) rather than migration, representing 78 percent of the increase. While the reasons are interesting, the increases are the most important. In July 2013, the Hispanic population grew to 54 million and the Asian population to 19.4 million.

The other story, “A view of the future through kindergarten demographics,” shows the increase in Hispanic children is not evenly spread across the country. In 2000, the areas of the country where at least 20 percent of the kindergarten population was Hispanic were concentrated in six states in the southwest, and in Illinois and Florida. Today, there are nine more states in this category; three in the upper northwest, two western states, and the remaining four in the northeast. Why is this important?

The Washington State Division of Child Support website offers publications in nine languages other than English; most are Asian. It offers one form in 20 different languages. The New York

Child Support Online website, by contrast, offers key forms in two Asian languages, Spanish, Italian, and

three others. Many others sites have limited outreach in languages other than English. Some have none at all or resources that may be difficult to find.

In December 2012, Census Bureau Acting Director Thomas L. Mesenbourg reported, “The next half century marks key points in continuing trends—the U.S. will become a plurality nation, where the non-Hispanic white population remains the largest single group, but no group is in the majority.”

Where you can find help

Take a look at multicultural communication in your office and where your state’s population is shifting. Find out what other states and agencies are doing.

The OCSE Hispanic Child Support Resource Center may also be a good place to start. In the section called Hispanic Outreach Toolkit, you’ll find brochures and outreach materials, most in English and Spanish. You can customize these to include your local child support office phone number and address.

Focus on the user experience

Digital.gov recently featured OCSE for using focus groups to help improve its website. Read the case study to see why and how OCSE transformed the navigation bar, policy page, and other website components. The experience may help other agencies that seek to make their site more effective and user-friendly.

Child Support Report

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