

Child Support Report

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TRIBAL MATTERS

One Tribe's Journey to \$1 Million in Collections

Janae Franklet, Manager, Tribal Child Support Unit, *Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska*

The Tribal Child Support Unit staff for the Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska had a real reason to celebrate recently. We collected \$1 million in child support in fiscal year 2018! That's no small feat for the unit, which is located in Juneau but serves all Southeast Alaska villages and communities with the exception of Metlakatla Indian Community.

These villages and communities are spread over 43,200 square miles within the Alaska panhandle. The region encompasses a 525-mile strip of coastline and interior waterways, bordered by Canada on the north, south, and east, and the Gulf of Alaska on the west. We have no road system that links the southeast Alaska communities. We have to use airplanes, boats, or ferries. The geography presents interesting challenges for us to work efficiently and effectively with our clients. We rely heavily on phone calls and email messages.



Hitting the benchmark

Reaching \$1 million in collections was a long-standing goal for us, and we worked hard to reach it. The tribal child support office opened in early 2007 with 24 cases. In our first fiscal year, we collected almost \$32,000. Since then, we've steadily increased our caseload by at least 15% each year except one. In FY 2017, the Alaskan economy took a hit. We also saw a decrease in an annual payment many Alaskans count on, the Permanent Fund Dividend (read about the Alaska Permanent Fund on page 2). Together, these caused a one-year drop. In FY 2018, we ended with a caseload of just over 1,300 and had a 22% collections rate.

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Coming up in April

Last year, President Trump declared April as Second Chance Month, encouraging organizations to help formerly incarcerated individuals become productive citizens.

Find out how state and county agencies helped these parents learn trades, address drug addictions, and find jobs.

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Program improvements

Our staff worked collaboratively with the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) staff to provide better services for our mutual clients. We agreed to have one of our staff available at their office on a full-time trial basis to answer questions from their staff and our mutual clients. The trial was so successful that we've placed the staff member in the TANF office permanently. Both programs continue to find more ways to work together for the benefit of mutual clients, and we hope we'll help more TANF clients and noncustodial parents get jobs and actively engage in their child support cases.

We launched a new data system in February 2018 called Tribal D to automate many processes and improve our reporting capabilities. We entered the information into both systems for the first month to make sure we transferred all our case information correctly. Making all the transfers and learning the new system has been a challenge, so we'll continue training staff and providing updates to improve efficiency, case management, and reporting.

Two of our staff members, Amanda Blackgoat and Carlene Nore, worked with Central Council's Finance office and the State of Alaska Child Support Services Department to automate the payments we receive from Alaska child support. Directly depositing payments into clients' accounts cuts down on processing time and eliminates checks being lost or delayed in the mail.

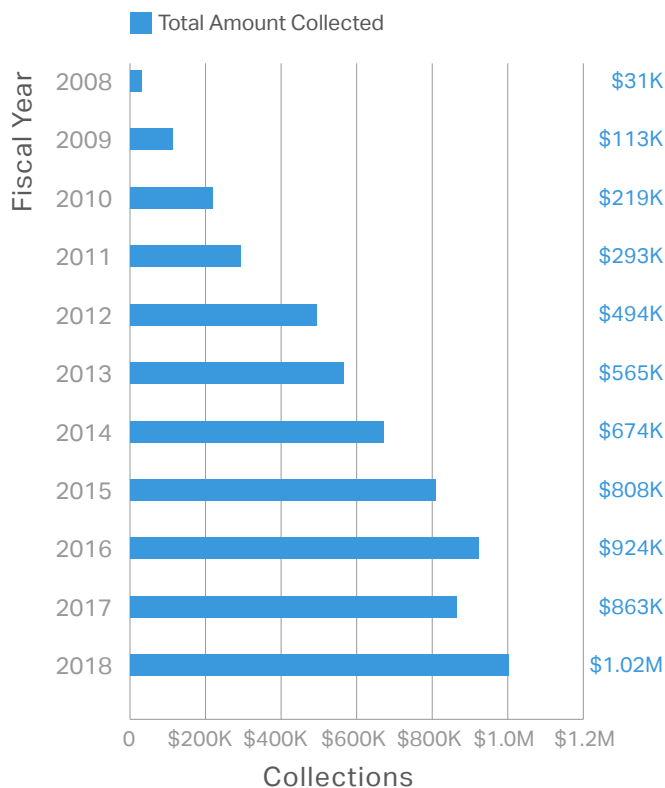
Big impact

Our goal has always been to increase collections. Growth means more child support money going to children. Since FY 2013, over 60% of what we've collected has been disbursed to custodial families. When we disburse child support directly to families, there is less need for families to receive TANF or other public assistance.

Looking forward, we want to implement more ways to connect to our families. Being more accessible will help continue the trend of increased collections. This helps our families be more financially stable. Noncustodial parents also feel the success of their contribution.

For more information about the program improvements that helped the tribe reach their milestone, contact Janae Franklet at jfranklet@ccthita-nsn.gov or 907-463-7138. For general information, visit the [Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska website](#).

Tlingit and Haida Child Support Collections



The Alaska Permanent Fund

In the 1960s, a company discovered a rich supply of oil in Alaska. According to the [Alaska Permanent Fund website](#), the state held an oil and gas lease sale in 1969 that brought in \$900 million in revenue. Because the state was only 10 years old then, many debated what to do with the revenue. They settled on using it to develop infrastructure and social programs.

In the mid-70s, Alaska was on the brink of a new potential revenue source that brought about renewed debate on what to do about the money. A state constitutional amendment authorized Alaska to set up a permanent fund to receive and invest oil revenue. In 1980, the legislature approved the first Permanent Fund Dividend program to distribute a percentage of the funds to each Alaska resident on an annual basis.

Source: [History of the Alaska Permanent Fund webpage](#).

SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Helping Parents Become Health Professionals

Priscila Silva and Kim Stupica-Dobbs,
*Health Profession Opportunity Grants,
Office of Family Assistance*

Lack of education, training, or money doesn't have to prevent some parents from getting a steady or better paying job. Child support caseworkers can steer low-income parents to the [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) (HPOG) Program for training that can help them find a job in the health care profession. HPOG participants can get education and training, along with needed support services, to secure health care employment that pays well and has opportunity for advancement. Participating in the HPOG program can ultimately put individuals on a pathway to financial self-sufficiency so they can pay their child support.



Health Profession Opportunity Grants

OFFICE OF FAMILY ASSISTANCE

The HPOG Program, which is administered by the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, was created to provide in-demand health care training for recipients of public assistance and other low-income individuals. HPOG 2.0, the second round of grants, was awarded in September 2015 to 32 organizations located across 21 states for a five-year period.

[Stephanie's success story video](#) highlights a young mother's journey to employment through her involvement with Alamo College's HPOG in San Antonio, Texas, and how the program helped her overcome personal and professional difficulties. Her success story is a model of a collective effort and is just one example of many HPOG participant success stories.

Each program offers different health care training based on local needs. Most common are nursing pathway trainings, but HPOG programs also offer a variety of non-direct care training opportunities such as those in health care administration. HPOG programs provide participants with basic skills education and a variety of support services so they can overcome potential barriers to success. Support

Child Support Podcast

Colorado and Texas have been successfully implementing changes to their programs to help parents pay their child support on a regular basis. The National Conference of State Legislatures reports on stories like these so that others can learn from their successes. On Feb. 28, they released a new "Our American States" podcast called [Child Support Program Changes Result in Stronger Families](#).

Podcast host Gene Rose reports that the nature and demographics of employment are changing, with fewer men entering the workforce and the gig economy chipping away at traditional job relationships and structures. State child support programs are taking notice. Rose talked with Larry Desbien, director of the Colorado Division of Child Support Services, and Noelita Lugo, assistant deputy director of field initiatives at the Texas Attorney General's Child Support Division about how their states are successfully addressing issues and concerns of parents who owe child support. [Listen to the podcast](#) on the NCSL website or subscribe to it through iTunes or Google Play.

services can include tuition assistance, career readiness, transportation, and child care assistance. Dedicated case managers in every program help individual participants achieve success. As participants decide to advance in their careers, they are able to continue receiving HPOG support. HPOG's [Participant Pathway 2D Animation](#) brings to life the pathway to financial self-sufficiency.

Find an HPOG program in your area. Programs continually recruit potential participants that meet program eligibility requirements, which differ by grantee program. For general HPOG inquiries, email the [HPOG inbox](#).

The Office of Child Support Enforcement provides more services than people generally see. This column highlights tasks that federal child support staff handle. To read previous articles, visit [A Look Inside OCSE](#) on our website.

A LOOK INSIDE OCSE — ACCESS AND VISITATION

Access and Visitation Mandatory Grant Program

John Langrock and Michael Hayes, OCSE

Each year, OCSE provides \$10 million in mandatory grant funding to states and territories to operate the Access and Visitation (AV) program. Legally, it's designed to fund services to help noncustodial parents spend more time with their children. In most states and territories, it's administered by the child support agency. Putting oversight of the AV program within the child support agency increases the likelihood that AV services reach parents in the child support program. We're working with multiple states to expand availability for these parents.

States can provide AV services directly or through contracts with courts, tribes, counties, and organizations such as nonprofits. Parent education, including legal education, accounted for 44% of all AV services in FY 2017. Mediation, at 22%, was second. Other services include parenting plan development and visitation enforcement. All states must have safeguards in place to ensure AV services do not increase the risk of family violence for program participants.

Importance of access and visitation

Researchers have found that financial and emotional supports are interrelated. U.S. Census data consistently show that custodial parents with custody or parenting time arrangements are more likely to receive child support. Congress recognized the public policy value of parental access and visitation in the [Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act of 2014](#). The law encouraged states to use AV funds to support the establishment of parenting time arrangements for parents in the child support program.

Who receives services

In FY 2017, more than 93,000 parents and guardians participated in AV program services, thereby affecting over 100,000 children. While the AV program aims to provide services that support noncustodial parents' time with their children, both parents often participated in many of the allowable services. Following is a breakdown of AV program participants in FY 2017:

- 41% noncustodial fathers
- 36% custodial mothers
- 11% noncustodial mothers
- 7% custodial fathers
- 5% legal guardians and grandparents

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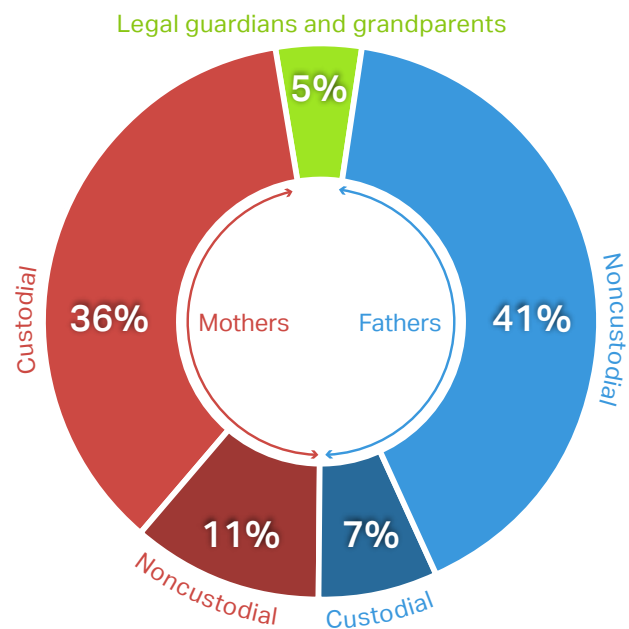
The AV program is a key resource for never married parents who generally don't have a readily accessible formal process for establishing access and visitation rights. This group constituted a majority (57%) of parents using AV program services in FY 2017. While divorcing parents may establish shared parenting time agreements through the family court system, unmarried parents often need to navigate multiple, complex legal proceedings to resolve child support and parenting time issues. AV program services can help bridge this gap.

The AV funding formula

Unlike some other grant programs, AV grants are not competitively awarded. Congress instructed us to distribute funds to each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. We use a formula that includes U.S. Census data on children living with one biological parent and the total number of children in each of the eligible jurisdictions. The program has a minimum grant award of \$100,000.

For more information, see the [Access and Visitation Grant Program Update for FY 2017](#) or contact Michael Hayes at michael.hayes@acf.hhs.gov.

AV Participants in FY 2017



COLLECTION SUCCESSES

2018 Passport Denial Program Highlights

During December 2018, states reported over \$2.1 million in Passport Denial collections, making the total exceed \$33.3 million for calendar year 2018. This is a 5.5% increase over 2017. Since inception of the Passport Denial program in 1996, states have voluntarily reported collecting nearly \$455 million from noncustodial parents who owed past-due support.

In 2018, 52 states and territories reported collecting nearly 1,750 lump sum payments totaling \$12 million. Six of those payments were over \$100,000. [Los Angeles County, California, made history](#) by reporting the largest payment in the program's history, \$714,000. Not all collections came in as a lump sum payment. Some states worked with parents to set up reasonable payment plans so the noncustodial parents could get out of debt and not fall behind in their payments again.

Passport denial collections often have interesting stories. In 2018, we received stories about people who needed their passport for a vacation, like the noncustodial parent who paid Tennessee \$13,000 to go on a family vacation to South America, and another who paid Minnesota \$7,000 so they could join their family on a cruise.

We heard stories about parents who needed passports to do their jobs, including some professional athletes and entertainers. One basketball player paid \$6,000 to Indiana. A musical entertainer paid California \$275,000. And a reality TV star paid Oregon \$25,000 so they could travel for work.

States gave us some unique and fascinating stories, like the noncustodial parent who was chosen in a lottery-style process for a permit to hunt bear in Canada. The would-be hunter had to first pay Utah \$20,000 in order to travel. A parent with plans to travel to Central America to buy an avocado farm paid Kansas \$6,000.

We also received some heartwarming stories. One woman's brother traveled from Europe to Washington to pay her \$20,000 child support payment so she could relocate to Europe to be with her family. Another person paid \$7,000 to the District of Columbia to help his children during the Christmas holiday.

Whatever the reason, families received the past-due child support they might not have gotten through any other means. It was a winning year for them!

To share a success story about a collection your state received, contact the OCSE team at collections@acf.hhs.gov. For more information about the program, read [Passport Denial 101](#) or visit our [website](#).

COMMISSIONER'S VOICE

Professional and Leadership Development

Scott Lekan, Commissioner, OCSE



This month has been meaningful and memorable for OCSE. For the first time in over ten years, we held an all-staff training conference. We brought central and regional office staff and managers together for two days of workshops on technology, policy, cost allocation, communication skills, leadership, and more. I chose to make this investment for the benefit of OCSE's dedicated employees, as well as for our customers — the states and tribes we serve.

The resources required to offer a staff training conference are prohibitive for most state, tribal, county, and local governments, including OCSE. It will be a while before we do that again. We appreciate the child support professional associations, both national and local, that provide annual training and professional development opportunities around the country. And still, only a portion of child support professionals have the chance to attend.

Professional growth doesn't always require formal training, and developing into a leader can be done at any level. The execution of excellence has been my challenge to OCSE since I became commissioner. I offer the same challenge to each of you. Traits of leadership are not reserved for those with titles of supervisor or manager. With supporting quotes from one of my favorite leadership experts, consider my advice for being a star right where you are.

Lead Yourself

"The first person I need to lead is me. The first person that I should try to change is me."

– John C. Maxwell

Embrace your role as a public servant. Remember that you are not 'just' your title, be it clerical, caseworker, administrative, or other staff. You are much more and are able to make an impact through the work you do. I challenge you to commit to doing your job to the best of your ability, every day, delivering to your agency and its customers a solid return on their investment in you. Think of yourself as an innovator — look for ways to improve the way things have always been done. Think creatively about solutions and always bring one when raising issues and concerns. Be prepared to offer suggestions and ideas when asked.

continued

Take the time to ask questions, clarify expectations, and understand what is being asked of you. Meet deadlines, and deliver quality. Take initiative to exceed expectations. And take responsibility without excuses. Remain open and accepting of improvement feedback. Develop your passion and commitment into efficiency and expertise. Determine to continuously identify one new process improvement you can form in your own work habits.

If you don't believe attitude is everything, you will limit your potential. Lead yourself by always keeping a positive attitude.

Lead Teammates

"Every person has a longing to be significant; to make a contribution; to be a part of something noble and purposeful."

– John C. Maxwell

Child support is a noble profession. I encourage you to know your agency's vision and mission, and how your daily work contributes to achieving it. Drive your team's success by knowing your job inside and out, being an expert, and helping others learn. Stretch and grow by offering to learn new responsibilities. Volunteer to take on tasks no one else wants. Develop a proactive approach and anticipate the next question, request, or action that you will need to address. Look for opportunities to be cooperative and collaborative.

Take a moment to thank or applaud teammates for their work — even the ordinary, daily tasks. Offer to help out when needed. Share the credit when you receive recognition. Cultivate a healthy workplace environment. Maintain professionalism in your words, actions, and even your appearance. Don't disparage colleagues, supervisors, or your employer. Deal only in facts, and refrain from participating in office gossip. Treat everyone with dignity and respect. If disagreements occur, think before you speak. Listen and deal with the issue without demeaning the person.

Teams are strongest when every member feels they have something to contribute. Lead at your level by engaging with all teammates, inviting their input and ideas, and projecting enthusiasm about meeting challenges and reaching goals.

Develop Leaders

"If you are a leader, never forget that everyone needs encouragement. And everyone who receives it — young or old, successful or less-than-successful, unknown or famous — is changed by it."

– John C. Maxwell

As a formal leader, in a supervisory or management role, encourage and empower your team members to lead from any role. When resources are limited, it may be the most you can give them. Elevating staff doesn't take anything away from your authority. In fact, it improves their performance, their morale, and their respect for you as a leader.

Ask for new ideas and suggestions from those who are doing the work. Identify processes that can be improved with staff-led re-engineering. Implement cross-training, job shadowing, train the trainer, and other knowledge transfer approaches. Examine practices where a supervisory review could be replaced with quality assurance completed independently within the team. Cultivate creativity and self-confidence.

People respond with higher performance and enjoy greater job satisfaction when leaders support and inspire them to develop, to lead, and to succeed at their career.

Lead Onward

The work you do every day is challenging. It can also be very rewarding. Commit to enhancing your service to families and increasing your value to the agency. See yourself as a leader in your current role, and endeavor to develop those traits. Remember, anything you devote to your personal or professional growth is an investment in your own future.

Scott Lekan

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Lynn Johnson
Assistant Secretary for Children and Families

Scott Lekan
Commissioner, OCSE

Shawyn Drain
Director, Division of Customer
Communications

Kim Danek
Editor
CSR.Editor@acf.hhs.gov

