

Child Support Report

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COMMISSIONER'S VOICE

Celebrating Parents



Those of us working in the child support program have the opportunity and privilege of celebrating Mother's Day and Father's Day in both our professional and personal lives. Many state and tribal child support agencies actively recognize the parents in their caseloads with messages of thanks for supporting their children. Some also participate in community events promoting the vital role parents have within their families as well as in society. In this issue, we feature several child support agencies as they applaud the efforts of mothers and fathers and implement approaches that can expand parents' capacity to strengthen their families.

Parent and family appreciation days

Families have celebrated Mother's Day and Father's Day for many years with cards, flowers, brunches, and backyard barbecues. Now, through national and international resolutions, we can formally recognize our parents and families on several other days throughout the year. Do you know about or celebrate these?

Adopted by a Congressional Resolution in 1994, Parents' Day is the fourth Sunday in July. It commemorates the efforts of both parents together, recognizing the role of parents, promoting responsible parenting, and uplifting parental role models as a source of hope, help, stability, and love for children.

On the first Sunday after Labor Day, Grandparents Day is celebrated in the U.S. and several other countries. This day of respect celebrates the significant role grandparents play in their families, particularly for young people, providing the roots, strength, wisdom, and guidance to future generations.

The International Day of Families, observed on May 15, reflects the shared value of the family as the fundamental unit of society throughout the world. This day has a specific theme each year, such as education, health, mothers, fathers, and work-life balance. The focus is on increasing awareness about social, economic, and demographic processes affecting families.

Annually on June 1, the Global Day of Parents is observed, emphasizing the primary responsibility of parents to nurture and protect their children. This day focuses on ending poverty and hunger, promoting economic prosperity, and improving social development for children's well-being into adulthood.

Changing families and parenthood

During the nearly 45 years that the federal child support program has been in existence, there have been significant shifts in family composition and societal norms. More recently, research has informed us about the significant impacts of parental involvement and family formation on child development, well-being, and life outcomes.

These developments and changes have informed our program and practices. We are no longer focused solely on welfare cost recovery and the transfer of financial support from one parent to the other. We now recognize that in order to effectively accomplish our mission of consistent support for children, we must fully engage with

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Fatherhood Campaign

Every June, the Administration for Children and Families, in coordination with the [National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse](#), launches new [public service announcements \(PSAs\)](#) recognizing the critical role fathers play in the lives of their children. Go to their website to see the new PSAs or previous [campaigns](#).

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both parents, promote responsible fatherhood, connect parents with jobs, and provide resources to address the range of services parents need to be successful.

Adapting services

The important role of parents increasingly comes to our attention. I want to emphasize the importance of the child support program in elevating the identity of parents and enhancing their ability to fulfill their role. I encourage you to consider several approaches that are in practice and have shown promising results.

For years, some state and tribal child support programs have operated parenting awareness and preparation programs, in partnership with their school systems, to educate teens about the financial, legal, and emotional responsibilities of parenthood. These programs have been shown to increase the likelihood that young people will follow the optimal sequence of life events for economically stable families: complete an education, start a career, establish a healthy marriage, and then have children.

Some child support agencies have established local partnerships with responsible fatherhood, cooperative parenting, and healthy relationship education providers. They actively refer parents to these services and benefit from the providers' positive messaging to parents about the child support program.

Within the past year, OCSE began training caseworkers on ways to incorporate budgeting information into routine conversations with parents, using specific cash flow tools to address financial issues. To advance core program goals, budgeting tools can enhance the effectiveness of conversations with parents about establishment, review and modification, nonpayment, tax refund offsets, and even emancipation of a child.

Vermont, one of our [Behavioral Interventions grantees](#), has tested the use of an 'identity priming' exercise, a behavioral economics concept. While parents are waiting in the office for a scheduled meeting, they are given an optional activity sheet that asks them to select three actions from a list of eight that they believe are important things they could do to support their children. This activity is intended to encourage participants to think about their roles as parents and to focus first on the interests of their children. Parents are told that the activity is optional, their answers do not have to be shared with anyone, and they can keep the activity sheet for themselves.

Public service to parents

In early May, we recognized public service week. I would like to close by recognizing all of you whose dedicated service has a positive impact on the parents in your caseload. Child support enforcement can be a

challenging profession. Yet there are few that are nobler. Like the work of parenting itself, this can often be a thankless job. Please know that you have my thanks, my respect, and my applause. The work you do every day is making a real difference in the lives of real families. You are strengthening parents to become the providers and role models they want to be, to build self-sufficiency, and to give their children a better life.

One such dedicated public servant, Donna Bonar, is leaving OCSE at the end of June. I congratulate Donna on her years of dedication and service to the child support community and its families. Please read more about Donna's career on page 9, and join me in wishing her well!

Scott Lekan

Parents — Franklin County Thinks You're Great

In honor of Mother's Day and Father's Day, the Franklin County, Ohio, [Procedural Justice-Informed Alternatives to Contempt](#) (PJAC) project director developed these postcards to send to parents enrolled in the project to remind them how important they are. The grant's service delivery model requires that grantees reach out and engage with both parents. PJAC sites develop scripts and content that uses behaviorally informed language and procedural justice principles. When parents understand the child support process and believe that it is fair to all parties, they are more likely to comply with their support order and work together for the best interest of their children.



Turning Tragedy into Triumph

Abel Guerrero, PJAC Case Manager, and Will Williamson, PJAC Project Manager, *San Bernardino Department of Child Support Services*

In our office this Mother's Day, we reflected on how life's difficulties and family complexities can often provide valuable surprises. Stephanie, a custodial mother we serve, brought us this perspective.

Stephanie has two teenage children with separate child support cases with noncustodial fathers who have not been financially supportive. In November 2017, we randomly assigned one of these noncustodial fathers to our [Procedural Justice-Informed Alternatives to Contempt](#) project when he was referred for contempt in two cases. Randall was not making payments and had accrued arrears of over \$65,000 in Stephanie's case and more than \$8,000 in the other.

The PJAC caseworker tried repeatedly to contact Randall to assess and identify any barriers preventing him from making monthly child support payments. When those attempts were unsuccessful, the caseworker tried reaching out to Randall's extended family and made contact with his sister. She said Randall had a substance use issue and that their mother had stage 4 cancer. Despite continued attempts to engage him, Randall did not cooperate, so the caseworker filed appropriate contempt actions.

Consistent with PJAC procedures, the caseworker maintained routine contact with Stephanie and the custodial parent of Randall's other child. Through this communication, the caseworker could provide child support agency updates, and the mothers could share information on their children and even on Randall if they had any.

In January, Randall's sister notified the PJAC caseworker that their mother had passed away, and she and her brother were due to receive an insurance payout. She provided the life insurance information to us, saying she would rather see the money go to Randall's children than to his substance habit. With this information, we ensured that Stephanie received a payout of over \$65,000 for her child, and we provided a portion of the money to the custodial parent on Randall's other case as well.

Stephanie let us know that her child turned 19 in May, recently graduated high school, and is now attending college. She said the insurance money would go a long way in helping to support her child's college education. She also reflected that something positive came out of a difficult situation. "My daughter had a good relationship with her grandmother," Stephanie said. "To find value, meaning, and purpose out of life's difficulties and to turn tragedy into a triumph, we must become present in life and reach some level of acceptance of 'what is.'"

Names have been changed to protect privacy. For more information about procedural justice, [visit the PJAC webpage](#) or contact OCSE project officers Tanya Johnson, tanya.johnson@acf.hhs.gov, and Michael Hayes, michael.hayes@acf.hhs.gov.

Happy Mother's and Father's Day in Ohio

Paula Mason, PJAC Case Manager, *Franklin County, Ohio*

PJAC staff in Franklin County, Ohio, helped a family resolve their complex child support issues, helping them celebrate both Mother's and Father's Days this year.

Jenny and Abdul's child support order was established administratively in 2011 when Abdul was homeless. Although Jenny and her children had dual insurance coverage through state Medicaid and private health insurance through her employer, the agency did not have the proper documentation for her private coverage at that time.

In 2015, Jenny and Abdul reconciled and began living together as an intact family, so they called to notify the agency. The caseworker advised them to "file a motion in court to terminate your support order," but they didn't understand what they needed to do.

Three years later, they received notification of pending contempt action against Abdul for nonpayment of child support. Their case was assigned to PJAC, and, despite some successful contact, there continued to be challenges understanding and addressing the issues on the case. Eventually, the health insurance issue came to light.

The PJAC caseworker conducted additional case assessment, working closely with Jenny to contact her previous employers to verify whether she actually had private coverage. The caseworker was able to establish that the entire arrears of \$25,000 was owed to Jenny, and nothing was owed to the state.

In January, a judge officially approved Jenny and Abdul's agreement to waive all arrears and terminate support. Jenny is so thankful that her family is no longer burdened by the child support case and that Abdul, as primary breadwinner, is not facing jail.

Abdul, who was previously reluctant to engage, recently contacted the PJAC caseworker about the case to get help to release his passport. He said, "Without this hanging over my head, I would like to take the family on vacation."

Names have been changed to protect privacy.

COMBATING ADDICTION

Child Support Treatment Court Gives Parents a Second Chance

Cathy Ann Hardaway, Director, *Domestic Relations Section, Lackawanna County, Pennsylvania*

To combat drug and alcohol addiction that could be causing child support arrearages in the Scranton area, the Lackawanna County Court of Common Pleas recently implemented a pilot treatment court program. It's open to defendants who have dependency issues and face contempt penalties for nonpayment of child support. Rather than a six-month jail sentence, the county Child Support Diversion Program offers qualified individuals an opportunity to earnestly begin recovery and find employment.

"When we know how serious the opioid epidemic is and see how many people are dying every day, every chance we get to change the intervention point means one more life that we can save," said President Judge of Lackawanna County Michael J. Barrasse to local ABC affiliate WNEP-TV. Judge Barrasse pioneered treatment courts in Pennsylvania nearly 20 years ago and now serves as chair of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals. His approach provides the model for Lackawanna County's newest problem-solving court.

Offering a new beginning

Officer Kelly McAndrew of Lackawanna County Domestic Relations and Judge Julia K. Munley supervise the participants. "This program gives the defendant, a parent, a second chance to turn their life around, get sober, get a job, and get monetary support to their child. The program is about second chances, but it's not a 'Get Out of Jail Free' card," explains Judge Munley.

Domestic Relations makes the initial inquiry into a defendant's qualifications. Each individual must voluntarily enter the program, obtain a confidential drug and alcohol evaluation, and follow all recommendations. McAndrew and others at Domestic Relations work closely with inpatient and outpatient providers to make sure the individuals have access to appropriate care and assistance.

Following the rules

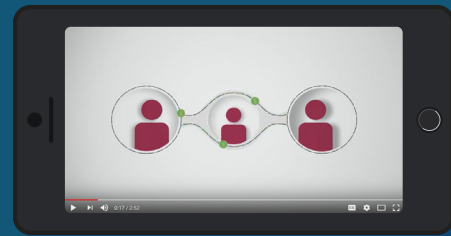
Participants must find jobs to begin repaying support and reducing arrearages. The staff works closely with other county agencies, including the Office of Drug and Alcohol and Adult Probation and Parole, which administers the random drug and alcohol screenings. Daily support group meetings are also mandatory and the staff tracks compliance. Each week, individuals must visit or phone Officer McAndrew and attend a hearing before Judge Munley who provides positive, supportive feedback where warranted.

Multiple benefits

The Child Support Diversion Program provides moms and dads with drug and alcohol treatment instead of incarceration, which has saved over \$260,000 in jail costs. More importantly, the program has collected over \$65,000 for Lackawanna County children. "The added benefit is we have seen that children have a second chance to reunite with parents who are now in a better place," adds Judge Munley. "It has helped to heal families."

For more information about the Lackawanna County Child Support Diversion Program, contact Cathy Ann Hardaway at CathyAnnHardaway@PACSES.com or call 570-963-6721.

YouTube How does child support work? 🔍



OCSE's "What Is Child Support?" Video

Gretchen Tressler, *OCSE*

Did you know that OCSE has a new video for parents about the common services the child support program offers? We created this sleek video, in [English](#) and [Spanish](#), to give parents a quick glimpse into the program so they know who we are and what we do. Focusing on the services parents most often encounter gives them a brief overview and can help address questions or concerns they might have. With this easy-to-understand, 2-minute video, parents can feel more confident about what to generally expect when they apply for services.

Of course, parents should contact their local child support office for more specific information, but this video is a great springboard – especially for parents who want a general awareness of the program first. After all, we get it. Sometimes parents just want to think through their options or learn about us from a distance. This video can help with that.

We're proud to offer this resource and hope state, tribal, and local offices will take advantage of it. Designed with the broadest audience in mind, this video can be used in social media outreach or direct marketing. We encourage you to share it with your partners, too, so even more parents can learn about the program.

Happy watching!

Get more information from the Division of Customer Communications at ocsecommunications@acf.hhs.gov.

MILITARY AND VETERANS

San Bernardino's Solid Partnerships with Military Bases

Alan Skidmore, Child Support Attorney,
Department of Child Support Services,
San Bernardino County, California

Sometimes, military families can be stronger when they have local partners in addition to their on-base support systems. Over the past several years, the San Bernardino County, CA, Department of Child Support Services has developed professional relationships with our local military bases to the benefit of everyone involved. For several years, we've collaborated with the Office of the Staff Judge Advocate (commonly referred to as JAG) for the National Training Center and Fort Irwin near Barstow, CA. We've recently started forging relations with the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center in 29 Palms. JAG offices in both installations are very receptive to learning about our child support services, information, and the direct assistance we can provide to them and the military members and families they serve.

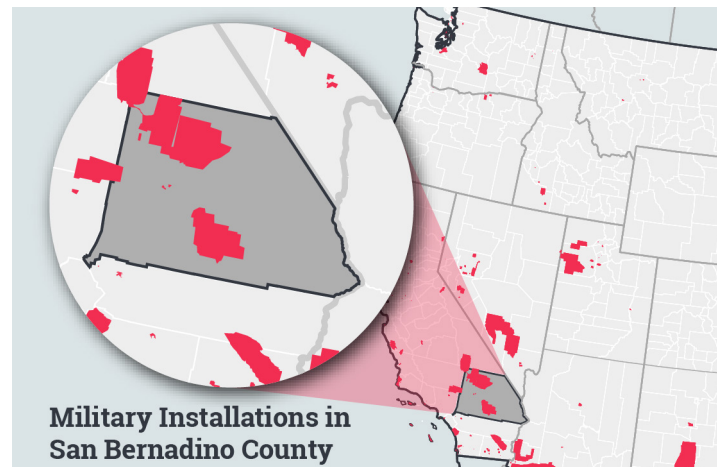
Our collaboration has been informational and practical. It's informational in that we provide resources and education, and practical in the form of hands-on assistance with service members' cases. In the past several years with Fort Irwin, and more recently with 29 Palms, we've provided comprehensive presentations to JAG officers, and the legal support and command staffs.

We've traveled to Fort Irwin and 29 Palms for in-person outreach events to educate our JAG counterparts about the child support resources we can provide. We also hosted the entire Fort Irwin JAG staff at our offices and courthouse so they could observe child support hearings and participate

in question and answer sessions with our child support commissioners. Our staff has provided presentations on a variety of relevant child support topics including case law updates, the [Servicemembers Civil Relief Act](#), and interstate issues. We'll be hosting the 29 Palms JAG staff soon.

Recently, we had the opportunity to present to the federal [Veteran and Military Liaison Network](#) regarding our collaboration and outreach efforts with our local military installations. We were honored to have Captain Sergio L. Suarez from the Office of the Staff Judge Advocate as our co-presenter. He was able to provide special insight into the value of our ongoing collaboration from the viewpoint of our military customers. It was heartening to hear Captain Suarez tell us that our outreach efforts are enabling him and his JAG staff to provide better advice to their service members. We all look forward to our ongoing collaboration and mutual commitment to provide the finest child support services possible to our customers in uniform and their families.

For more information, contact Alan Skidmore at alan.skidmore@hss.sbcounty.gov or Will Williamson at will.williamson@hss.sbcounty.gov.



San Bernadino Child Support staff joined by the Fort Irwin legal team after a presentation on the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act and other relevant child support issues.



Last October, the Lac Courte Oreilles Tribal Child Support Agency hosted staff from seven tribal programs for a daylong domestic violence and child support training. Michael Hayes and Tami Masuca from OCSE conducted the training along with representatives from several tribal domestic violence agencies. Recently, *Child Support Report* checked in with three of the participants: Linda Moser-Buse (Director, [Ho Chunk Nation Child Support](#)), Sue Smith (Director, [Lac Courte Oreilles Child Support](#)), and Tish Keahna Kruzan (Attorney, [Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Child Support](#)). They discussed their participation and how they've used the knowledge and skills gained during the training. What follows are highlights of their conversation.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Reflections on Domestic Violence Training: A Tribal Conversation

Sue Smith: In the past, we've had our domestic violence (DV) program provide trainings to child support staff. These brief presentations centered on the services the DV program provides to survivors. What we needed in addition to these presentations was training on what child support staff need to know about identifying and responding to domestic violence, and what they can do to help survivors within our areas of responsibility in the child support process. I was looking for a DV training that could be designed specifically for child support staff, and when I heard about the OCSE DV training program, it seemed like the perfect fit.

Linda Moser-Buse: When I heard about this training from Sue at the Woodland Gathering of tribal child support agencies, I had many doubts about it. I didn't see how this could relate to the work that we do. I learned that child support is a necessity for the families to thrive, but the process can inflict real fear and there is real danger for the families. After taking this DV training, which only touched the surface, I am more conscious of our process and the safety of the parents in the program.

Tish Keahna Kruzan: Staff and directors have raised the need for greater information on domestic violence in child support cases several times. In the past, we'd only get this information piecemeal at national or regional conferences, but never in a comprehensive manner. We realized we're likely missing important information by structuring our questions about safety concerns in too limited a way.

Linda: We've made lots of changes based on the training. Now, when we suspect there's domestic violence on a case, our supervisor helps plan how to proceed safely. We tell victims they can appear for court by phone with prior approval, and we use a substitute address on every foreign order we register so the custodial parent's address remains confidential. We do this since we don't have the chance to speak to the parents and the DV box may not be marked on the transmittals we receive. These are just a few of the changes we were able to implement right away.

Tish: We were really surprised by the now obvious need to separate the parties before hearings, not just during and after. We've begun arriving much earlier for hearings, and we maintain our presence in the public areas before and after. We've also been able to come to agreement with our court personnel that if both parties are present, our staff sits between parties to maintain some separation.

We left the training with a clearer understanding of what our needs were for improving day-to-day child support operations and how our actions intersect with survivors' concerns and needs.

Sue: We left the training with a clearer understanding of what our needs were for improving day-to-day child support operations and how our actions intersect with survivors' concerns and needs. What we learned at the training will help ensure that our policies and procedures contribute to the safety and well-being of parents and families participating in child support services.

Linda: It was very helpful to hear that it's okay not to know everything, and even the best laid out intentions can fail. What I mean by that is — we can meet the person outside the courtroom, we can have an advocate present, we can even provide a safe room for the parent and advocate to meet — we can feel like we did everything right, but when the person gets home, they may face retribution for pursuing child support. We know that happens, but we cannot let that thought or outcome prevent us from trying our best and doing our job to help support the family.

Sue: Having staff from our DV program attend was extremely beneficial for child support staff. It really helps to have that connection for a coordinated response to the survivors' needs. It was also very important to have experienced training facilitators, such as Michael Hayes and Tami Masuca, because their presentation opened up a number of discussions and created awareness that would not have materialized without the expertise they brought.

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Tish: I think this is too important an issue not to send all staff for training because we all interact in some way with case participants. Everyone plays a role in making sure we don't miss important signs or information. I wish DV program staff from all our tribes had participated. It would help build the relationship between them and child support staff and ensure we're all working together for survivor safety.

Linda: One thing I'd tell other child support directors who are wondering about DV training is to shut down their offices for the day and take their whole staff. I wish everyone in my office would've attended this training. It brought in the domestic violence aspect to child support. We are so focused on the court process that we forget the human factor and the real fear that a survivor has about child support.

The [OCSE Family Violence webpage](#) has resources and tools that child support programs can use to help victims safely and confidentially obtain child support. For information about OCSE domestic violence training and technical assistance, contact Michael Hayes at michael.hayes@acf.hhs.gov.

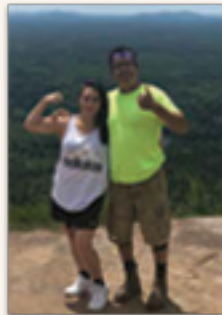
New Grant Opportunity

A new funding opportunity announcement for child support agencies is on [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). The Child Support Intergovernmental Case Processing Innovation grant aims to improve efficiency and customer service for parents with cases involving multiple jurisdictions. Projects should strive to increase payments on intergovernmental cases and improve case processing procedures. The deadline for applications is July 17 with an anticipated project start date of September 30, 2019. Interested state and tribal child support agencies are eligible to apply.

For information about the funding announcement, contact Tanya Johnson at tanya.johnson@acf.hhs.gov.

Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe Celebrates Fathers

In honor of Father's Day, the Saint Regis Mohawk child support staff launched a program to celebrate great rakeni — the Mohawk word for fathers. They dedicated a page of their May-June community newsletter to the [Best. Rakeni. Ever.](#) It was the tribe's way of celebrating the contributions of dads in strengthening families and communities. Here are some of the amazing rakeni and their children.



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

Interstate and International Case Processing Training

Eliza Lowe, OCSE

Have you ever deliberated about an interstate case closure situation, or wondered about the alphabet soup of OCSE's interstate tools? Have you ever pondered basic questions about the [Uniform Interstate Family Support Act](#) (UIFSA), let alone advanced questions on topics like interstate modification? Are you unsure about the difference between interstate payment forwarding and UIFSA section 319 redirection? In terms of international cases, when you come across a case with a parent in a foreign country, do you know what forms to use, when to translate documents, and generally how to proceed?

If you've ever been puzzled by these or other interstate or international case processing issues, OCSE has resources for you! Policy staff have held several multi-part training sessions to help state, local, and tribal child support professionals understand these often complicated cases.

Interstate training

From July 2018 to February 2019, OCSE rolled out six live, interactive webinars on interstate case processing topics ranging from basic principles to advanced payment processing scenarios. The OCSE Interstate Case Processing Training Series attracted audiences of up to 1,000 child support professionals who were eager to learn and gave the series high marks.

The series includes sessions on these topics:

- Introduction to interstate case processing principles ("Interstate 101")
- In-depth explanation of interstate case processing principles ("Interstate 201")
- Case scenarios
- Payment processing
- Case closure
- OCSE's interstate tools and resources

The complete webinar series — including the recordings of the live webinars and the PowerPoint slides with presentation notes — is available on the OCSE [Interstate Case Processing Training Materials webpage](#). State caseworkers can listen to the webinars or view the slides at their convenience, and trainers may convert and adapt the material for use in their states. The interactive format of many of the webinars invites participants to test their knowledge during the training through polling questions. The PowerPoint slides also offer resources for further research and references on each of the topics.

International case processing

The website also offers a series of training modules for [International Case Processing Under UIFSA 2008](#). The staff developed and held this training in 2016-2017 to help state and local child support agencies understand new case processing procedures that began in January 2017 when the United States joined the multilateral Hague Child Support Convention. Under the Hague Convention, the U.S. has a reciprocal relationship with approximately three dozen countries and the list keeps growing.

The nine-module training series begins with an overview of the 2007 Hague Child Support Convention and continues with explanations of central authorities, incoming and outgoing applications, establishing orders and parentage, and order modifications. It wraps up with presentations on special topics such as currency conversion, and finally processing cases with countries that are not yet part of the Hague Convention (for example, Canadian provinces and territories).

These are just two of the trainings OCSE has provided to help child support professionals. On the OCSE [Child Support Professionals webpage](#) you can also find training on intergovernmental forms; state plans; and the Flexibility, Efficiency, and Modernization in Child Support Enforcement Programs final rule. We hope our state and local partners find the resources and training tools useful.

If you have questions about OCSE training, contact the Division of Policy and Training staff at ocse.dpt@acf.hhs.gov.



DONNA BONAR RETIRES

From Paper to Portal - it's been a great journey



My career in child support began in Indianapolis in 1977. I was the manager of the Paternity Division in the Marion County Prosecutor's Office (before genetic testing and in-hospital paternity establishment). My first exposure to the national program was a regional office meeting in Chicago where I got to hear from others in the program and talk about the challenges we faced. We learned from each other, as we still do today, the best practices and processes to get the job done.

In 1980 I joined OCSE in the Program Operations Branch. The Federal Parent Locator Service existed, in theory, but there was no automated interface between the states and the federal government. The Tax Refund Offset Program began in 1981. I recall IRS returned the offset case information and amounts on spreadsheets to our team of four! Our challenge was to get that information in a format to provide to states. My, how things have changed.

Over the years I've seen how technology has played a key role in the phenomenal success of our program, but so has the dedicated staff across the country who use these tools to serve families.

In 1984 Congress passed the Child Support Enforcement Amendments without a single dissenting vote in Congress – something practically unheard of, even in those days. I had the good fortune to attend the OCSE-hosted Presidential signing event, along with others. In 1988 the Family Support Act made income withholding mandatory in new or modified orders, and required all states to submit a plan for automated data processing systems by 1991. Then, in 1996, Welfare Reform legislation was enacted that included a directive that OCSE establish the National Directory of New Hires and the Federal Case Registry. I worked with a team of dedicated federal and contractor staff who hit the ground running and did something else that was rarely ever achieved in the government: The NDNH became operational, on time and within budget!

Over the years I've seen how technology has played a key role in the phenomenal success of our program, but so has the dedicated staff across the country who use

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OCSE bids a fond farewell

At the end of June, OCSE will say goodbye to a pillar in the federal office. Deputy Commissioner Donna J. Bonar will retire with 40+ years of service in the child support program.

Donna helped the federal program attain many milestones. She was instrumental in the expansion of the Federal Parent Locator Service, overseeing development of the National Directory of New Hires and the Federal Case Registry – resources that have had a profound impact on the child support program's success. Donna oversaw implementation of the Federal Tax Refund Offset Program and the Multistate Financial Institution Data Match Program, and she implemented the Administrative Offset Program in conjunction with the Department of Treasury. She established OCSE's National Training Center to help state and local child support agencies learn about technical aspects of the program and systems. She made sure there were courses to train judges and judicial staff as well.

These are just a few of Donna's career accomplishments, and they didn't go unnoticed. She was a Sammies finalist – Samuel J. Heyman Service to America Medals – for her work to build the FPLS. She was a finalist for the Harvard Kennedy School's Innovations in American Government Award for establishing the National New Hire Reporting Program. And she won the National Partnership for Reinventing Government's "Hammer Award" for leading the FPLS expansion team.

Donna led critical initiatives during a time when the federal program was growing, and she has been the constant leader through many administrations. It's hard to imagine OCSE without her. We are grateful for her motivation, her effective leadership, and her commitment to improve the lives of America's children.

Congratulations from all of us, Donna, and enjoy your well-deserved retirement!

these tools to serve families. Regular timely payment of child support is a key component of assuring stability in countless families' lives, and the IV-D program is integral as we collaborate with the many other programs that address the broader needs of families. We have also done a far better job of including noncustodial parents' needs and making the program less adversarial and more inclusive.

There is much that remains to be done. Social media is being used to communicate the availability of services. The state automated systems that were developed in the 1990s need to be updated or replaced. Interstate and tribal case processing will also profit from improved electronic communication. The Hague Treaty, already ratified by three dozen countries, holds promise for the future as we make progress in improving efficient transfer of money from one country to another.

I stayed in this program for over 40 years because of all the dedicated and talented people who were, and still are today, committed to solving the new challenges presented at every level of government. The program has changed immensely, but your professionalism and commitment to improving the lives of children has always been our greatest asset. Thanks to each and every one of you!

– Donna Bonar

Child Support Report

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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



PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Working Together for the National Child Support Program

The Public Relations Committee is exploring ways to promote a more positive, holistic image of the child support program. At the 2017 National Council of Child Support Directors (NCCSD) conference, state directors and OCSE leaders discussed the trend of declining child support caseloads. We recognized that there are children and families outside the program who would benefit from child support services.

Some questions came up during the discussion.

- Why are the caseloads declining?
- How do we get more parents to use our services?
- What is the public perception of the child support program?
- What can we do to improve parents' understanding of child support services?

To tackle these questions, we formed the Public Relations Committee with representatives from the NCCSD, OCSE, and the National Child Support Enforcement Association (NCSEA).

We dedicated time and resources to the committee for the benefit of the child support program nationwide. We started by developing a committee charter with our goals and shared it at conferences and on web talks to get feedback from the child support community. We also surveyed state child support directors to find out how their programs communicate with the public.

The results have been compiled and analyzed. Now we're developing a follow-up survey and finalizing a media guide of terminology to help writers accurately convey the work of the child support program. We'll share the guide with each member organization and make it available for jurisdictions to share with their communications offices. We plan to coordinate outreach around child support awareness month in August and use research to inform our future actions.

Today's families are much different from families we served in the past. Our program has also changed. The general public, potential customers, other service providers, and even government officials may not be aware of the program's changes or the benefits it can provide to children and families. We want to spread a positive message about the child support program, accurately and consistently convey what we do, and raise awareness about how we can help families.

The Public Relations Committee wants your input, so please send your ideas and suggestions to committeefeedback@acf.hhs.gov.