

Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE)

MISSION STATEMENT

To assure that assistance in obtaining support (both financial and medical) is available to children through locating parents, establishing paternity and support obligations, and enforcing those obligations.*

*The Child Support Enforcement Program is authorized and defined by statute, Title IV-D of the Social Security Act. The purpose and the mission of the Program are derived from the Act.

MAJOR GOAL

The nation's Child Support Enforcement Program (CSE) is a Federal/State/Tribal/local partnership to help families by promoting family self-sufficiency and child well-being.

About CSE

All States and territories run a child support enforcement program, usually in the human services department, department of revenue, or the State Attorney General's office, often with the help of prosecuting attorneys, district attorneys, other law enforcement agencies and officials of family or domestic relations courts. Native American Tribes, too, can operate culturally appropriate child support programs with Federal funding. **Families seeking government child support services must apply directly through their State/local agency or one of the Tribes running the program.** Services are available to a parent with custody of a child whose other parent is living outside the home. Services are available automatically for families receiving assistance under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.

Services within the CSE:

- [locating non-custodial parents](#)
- [establishing paternity](#)
- [establishing support orders](#)
- [collecting support payments](#)
- [services for Non-Custodial parents](#)

PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

Locating Non-Custodial Parents

Child support enforcement officials can use information from highly computerized State and Federal Parent Locator Services (FPLS) to locate parents and their income and assets.

Establishing Paternity – Legally Identifying a Child's Father

Legally identifying a child's father is called paternity establishment. This is the necessary first step for obtaining an order for child support when a child is born out of wedlock. In addition to providing a legal relationship between a father and child, establishing paternity can provide a child with:

- access to Social Security benefits, pension and retirement benefits
- medical insurance and health information
- important interactions and relationships with both parents.

In a disputed case, father, mother, and child can be required to submit to genetic tests. States must have procedures that allow paternity to be established up to the child's 18th birthday. Hospitals must provide fathers the opportunity to acknowledge paternity voluntarily at the time of birth.

Establishing Support Orders

States must have guidelines to determine how much a parent should pay for child support. Child support orders can be established by a court or by an administrative hearing process. Provisions for health insurance coverage must be included in the support order.

Collecting Support

A parent can be required to pay child support by income withholding. Nationally, over 69 percent of child support is paid in this manner. Overdue child support can be collected from:

- Federal and state income tax refunds
- liens placed on property
- sale of property.

When past-due child support is owed, the following may occur:

- Unpaid child support can be reported automatically to credit reporting bureaus.

- Drivers, professional, occupational and recreational licenses can be suspended if the obligated parent is not paying required support.
- The U.S. State Department will deny a passport to someone who owes more than \$2,500 in back child support.
- Child support agencies have agreements with financial institutions to freeze and seize accounts of those identified as owing back child support.
- In certain states and under certain circumstances, criminal actions can be taken against chronic delinquent parents who owe large sums of child support.

Services for Non-Custodial Parents

Non-custodial parents can use the CSE program to establish paternity, establish wage-withholding and to request a review of their support orders if circumstances have changed. The Federal Parent Locator Service is available through State CSE programs to locate a child whose whereabouts has been hidden in violation of a custody or visitation order.

CSE Highlights:

In 2007, 92 percent of child support collections have gone to families. Welfare recipients now make up just 14 percent of our caseload; the largest group of clients is families who no longer need public assistance, in large part because of child support collections. Preliminary data indicate that, in FY 2007:

- The program collected nearly \$25 billion.
- The total caseload was 15.8 million.
- The FPLS returned employment or address information for over 4.9 million individuals.
- The Multistate Financial Institution Data Match (MSFIDM) program located a quarterly average of 2.6 million accounts containing financial assets owned by over 1.3 million obligors.
- The number of paternitys established or acknowledged was 1.7 million.
- The number of new support orders established was 1.2 million.

With the publication of Final Rules and Regulations for Tribal Child Support Enforcement in March 2004, Tribes and Tribal organizations can choose to operate a Title IV-D Tribal Child Support Enforcement Program. Thirty-two comprehensive Tribal programs now can establish paternity, modify and enforce support orders, and locate absent parents. Ten others are receiving Federal funding to start new Tribal

programs. This will continue to change, however, as more Tribal IV-D programs that operate with start-up funds receive comprehensive status, and as more Tribes receive funds to start new IV-D programs. For a current list of Tribal IV-D programs, log on to:

<http://ocse.acf.hhs.gov/int/directories/index.cfm?fuseaction=main.tribalivd>

In FY 2007, \$3.7 billion in Federal funding was provided to States to help defray the costs of the program. Nearly \$25 billion was collected at a combined State/Federal cost of \$5.6 billion; more than \$4.73 was collected for each \$1 spent. In FY 2007, Tribes across the nation collected and distributed \$15.7 million, and forwarded to States an additional \$2.2 million, for a total of almost \$18 million.

CSE Special Initiatives

OCSE continues to provide technical assistance and training to State CSE agencies through ongoing initiatives such as: the Judicial/Child Support Enforcement Task Force; Hispanic Workgroup; Employer Outreach; and Urban, Interstate, and Interagency initiatives. The Project to Avoid Increasing Delinquencies (PAID) began an overarching, national initiative that emphasizes State and local child support activities to increase child support collections as well as prevent and reduce past-due child support obligations. OCSE developed a model automated child support system for use in Tribal IV-D programs, and is working on a regulation that will govern Tribal systems development and use of the model system.

Grants provided by the Federal government are providing funding to States for programs designed to:

- provide timely revisions of orders based on ability to pay for categories of persons affected by lowered pay (layoffs, military personnel, prisoners) and related services;
- increase child support enforcement collections and efficiencies through increasing levels of automation or re-engineering of business practices;
- improve child support results through collaboration with other public agencies;
- promote healthy relationships for unwed couples to improve children's financial and medical security;
- improve child support by encouraging parents and CSE agencies to work together for better case management and results; and expand and improve enforcement and collection tools.

Funding

In FY 2009, it is estimated the Federal Government will provide \$3.8 billion to the States for Child Support Enforcement.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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