



# Child Support Report

OFFICE OF CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT

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## We're Partners on a Forward-Thinking Path

By Daryl Wusk, President

*National Council of Child Support Directors*



When I think about our program, the word first and foremost in my mind is partnership. An over-used word, yes; nevertheless, it's the partnerships between federal, state, and local child support enforcement agencies, and among our stakeholders in the communities and courts, that have driven all of us to produce so much in the program's 31 years. Not only that, I believe our power to partner is getting better all the time.

On that note, a few of the issues discussed at our June meeting of the National Council of Child Support Directors (NCCSD) here in Nebraska point to an exciting future for our program: electronic income withholding orders, use of more effective medical support, and continued outreach to diverse communities.

State IV-D directors agreed that, in anticipation of the national implementation of the Electronic Income Withholding Order (e-IWO), state agencies and employers should explore implementation of a centralized portal. The portal would provide employers with a single point of contact for receiving and responding electronically to income withholding orders from multiple states.

E-IWO is a priority for our program and an example of our duty to take every advantage technology offers as we move forward. The more we can do this, the more cost-effective government will be, and the more effective we'll be at serving our customers—parents and children—and working with employers.

As medical support continues to be a prominent issue, I favor looking into a federal registry, perhaps comparable to the National Directory of New Hires, for all health insurance providers through which we could match our caseload. Down the road, state agencies may want to look at how they can show cost-avoidance to benefit the Medicaid program.



Finally, NCCSD members support OCSE efforts to seek broad state participation on a

national task force to study the needs of linguistic and culturally diverse communities. OCSE is demonstrating forward-thinking by proactively involving states that want assistance with community outreach, as well as those with proven projects in these areas. (*See page 2 for information about this new task force.*)

I'm excited about the years ahead as we progress in these and other aspects of the program to improve both performance and our service to families. **CSR**

# Region X Hosts First Tribal, State CSE Conference

By **Janis Jensen**  
*Region X OCSE*

In response to the large number of tribes located in Washington, Oregon, Alaska, and Idaho, and high interest in the Tribal Child Support Program, Region X hosted its first training conference for tribal, state, and Region X child support staff, May 16-18 in Pendleton, OR. About half of the 125 participants represented 20 tribes; others included staff from federal and state programs. The conference was co-hosted by Cathy Sampson-Kruse, manager of the Child Support Program of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation in Pendleton.

During opening remarks, Steve Henigson, Regional Administrator, and Vince Herberholt, Associate Regional Administrator, expressed how impressed they were by the commitment and accountability of the tribes and the cooperation between states and tribes.

Workshops and sessions centered on the theme of “Growing Successful Partnerships,” including those led by Chief Judge Randy Doucet of Lummi Nation, and Tribal President Gordon

James of Skokomish Tribe.

Participants appreciated the opportunity to meet new people and reconnect with others, such as Maxine Schmitz, Civil Attorney of the Coeur d’Alene Tribe in Idaho, who said, “As a newcomer to the tribal child support process, I was very impressed with the willingness to share information and the collaboration between federal, state, and tribal entities. ... To see so many governments working together and agreeing to work together was really impressive.”

Region X’s Nancy Szeto summarized the conference in her remarks: “This event was put together in a relatively short time with help from a group of dedicated volunteers representing a number of tribes, state IV-D agencies, and attorneys. ... The planning group’s enthusiasm was also echoed by the conference participants. ... Participants had a common interest in learning more about the Tribal Child Support program and in building effective partnerships between the tribes, states, and ACF.”

*For more information, contact Jan Jensen, 206-615-3668 or [Janis.jensen@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:Janis.jensen@acf.hhs.gov). CSR*

## OCSE Announces Task Force on Diversity Outreach

OCSE is initiating a National Task Force on Outreach to Linguistic/Culturally Diverse Communities primarily for program and judicial staff to address current and future needs in these areas. The task force will first focus on services to the Hispanic/Latino community, and plans later to adapt products for other bilingual communities (Asian). OCSE expects the group will be similar to the Judicial/CSE Task Force and will support its efforts.

Task force goals include developing a package of strategies, resources, tools, training,

and technical assistance services. OCSE also encourages participation from states that have little experience serving diverse populations, but with such populations increasing.

The initial meeting is set for Aug. 28-30 in Washington, D.C., followed by monthly conference calls to develop a strategic plan and follow-up activities. This will ensure a forum to identify issues for consideration by Federal, state, and local governments.

To learn more, contact Frank Fajardo, 202-205-4554 or [Frank.Fajardo@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:Frank.Fajardo@acf.hhs.gov).

# A Recipe for Improved Collections? Judicial/CSE Task Force Sifts Methods In Problem-Solving Courts



By Judge Larry Holtz

Judicial Court Liaison, OCSE

Do the principles that have been applied for years in so-called problem-solving courts have a place in the family-court venue—one that considers and sets child support orders? This is one of many questions that the National Judicial/CSE Task Force seeks to answer in its mission to improve child support collections through collaboration between the child support community and its court and judicial partners.



## At the Start

Problem-solving courts were introduced in the late 1980s by courts in Miami, FL, to break the cycle of recidivism in drug cases and to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of court interventions in cases where the same litigant would typically appear multiple times.

Successes in applying these techniques in drug cases spread to other court systems. Then, in 2004, the Conference of Chief Justices and Conference of State Court Administrators passed a resolution that supports the use of problem-solving court principles in all courts. These principles include:

- Integration of treatment and rehabilitation services with justice system processing;
- Team approach with judge as the team leader;
- Ongoing, frequent judicial interaction with case participants;
- Frequent monitoring of behavior and application of rewards and sanctions;
- Partnerships with public agencies and community-based organizations to facilitate the delivery of services;

- Strategic use of standard and alternative sanctions; and
- Ongoing training of judges and staff.

## A Key Ingredient

Judicial leadership is an overriding component needed to apply the above principles. The judge must be a community leader with the ability to foster collaborations between child support enforcement workers, attorneys, community service providers, and other stakeholders.

Judicial leadership also must provide case management. Judges who apply a problem-solving approach to their child support docket know that you don't achieve success without investing some time in supervision and oversight. By asking questions in dependency, delinquency, guardianship, and family law cases, judges can ensure that the important issue of a child's financial support is not overlooked.

## Blend as Directed

Judicial leadership is essential, for example, to apply the problem-solving principle of frequent, close monitoring of and immediate response to behavior. Judge Karen Adam from Arizona describes this process of regular review hearings: "Within the first week of my assignment to the family law bench, I began a process of scheduling regular review hearings at which I monitor the parties' progress in staying straight and sober, honoring custody and parenting time orders, distributing debts and assets, and paying child support and spousal maintenance."



As a result of close case supervision, the judge

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## Public Relations Team Champions ‘Peer Power’ In Tulare County, CA

By Elaine Blackman  
CSR Editor

August is Child Support Awareness Month in California, and another opportunity for Tulare County’s Department of Child Support Services to offer quality activities and exhibits. Department Director Peggy Anderson is confident “the promotion will be great” because she knows who’s behind it: public relations staffers Sondra Rester, Valerie Simonich, and Lionel Moreno.

In addition to support from Anderson, the team of three has been attracting attention in the statewide child support community since launching a motivational campaign for staff in October 2004. After An-

derson branded the campaign “Champions for Children,” Public Relations Manager Rester, with Community Liaisons Simonich and Moreno, have created materials that are inspiring the approximate 200 staff members to improve the County’s performance on the federal performance measures and to serve families. To learn more about the campaign, the Central California Child Support Directors invited Rester to make a presentation, and neighboring Kern County recently met with the team.



### Motivation for Children

At the Champions for Children launch, staff members selected a button that let them proclaim “I

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### RECIPE, from previous page

not only can intervene quickly, but can develop a relationship with the noncustodial parent. The judge takes an active interest in the case and offers words of encouragement.

Justice Maura Corrigan, Michigan Supreme Court, recognizes that child support cases would benefit from a systemic change that facilitates collaborative settlements in family law cases: “Tinkering with child support formulas will do nothing to prevent the damage that our traditional adversarial process inflicts on a disintegrating family. Worse, courtroom warfare actually makes it less likely that the noncustodial parent will provide future financial and emotional support to the children.”

On this point, many courts provide nonadversarial ways for parents to resolve their disputes and reach their own agreement about child support and parenting plans.

### Why Test the Recipe?

Managing the child support docket as a problem-solving court is effective because parents pay child support and children and parents have a chance at maintaining relationships that might not otherwise have been encouraged.

Problem-solving court principles also should be applied to child support dockets to increase the amount of money collected for children, reduce arrearages, help parents stay involved in the lives of their children, and increase judicial job satisfaction.

By fostering problem-solving principles and methods in a wider array of trial courts, the child support community and its judicial partners can ensure that children receive the emotional and financial support of both parents.

*For information about the National Judicial/CSE Task Force, contact Larry Holtz at [lholtz@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:lholtz@acf.hhs.gov) or 202-401-5376. CSR*

## CHAMPIONS, *from previous page*

am a Champion for ...” The buttons show first names of children in the caseload and stock (not actual) photos of children. “Seeing your coworkers wearing the buttons encourages commitment to each other and motivation to reach the goals,” says Rester. “It gives staff a feeling of peer power—working together—and personalizes the work they do every day to help children.”

Last October, they renewed the campaign by adding a component to promote both current collections and collections of arrears. To help motivate staff, the team designed round cubicle signs that match the buttons. Each month, the small cubicle button signs go to the teams with the highest percentage of increase of current support and arrears. These snap easily onto the top of a cubicle wall and are clearly visible to all staff. Quarterly, large buttons (made of lightweight foam core board) hang from the ceiling over the two highest-performing team’s work areas, and performance details appear on a Champions Challenge Checkpoint display, updated monthly.

For a newer Champions for Children effort, Moreno created a Champions Moment bulletin board with cards that match the Champion theme to let staff members applaud one another’s good work. Rester explains, “When a staff member wants to acknowledge a coworker for good customer service or any other good work, they can write about it on a Champions Moment card and post it on the board.”

Prior to the Champions campaign, the three organized “Every Penny Counts,” a campaign to focus on the department’s collection goal. Staff received a penny lapel pin “custom-made here in the office,” says Simonich. “It’s an inexpensive way to keep the message in the forefront.”

### More With Less

Rester hopes other public relations offices will be inspired to create similar programs. “We’re self-sufficient; we operate with a few pieces of



Public Relations Manager Sondra Rester, left, with Community Liaisons Lionel Moreno and Valerie Simonich in the Tulare County, CA, Department of Child Support Services. The three have served in the department 6 years, 3 years, and 15 years, respectively.

equipment and a lot of creativity.” With a laser printer, large-format poster printer, graphic-arts software, logo embosser, and a few scrap-booking supplies, Rester says, the three produce eye-catching and educational materials for both internal and external audiences. These include posters, brochures, public service announcement campaigns, and slide presentations, as well as the items for staff.

### Kudos and Complements

Rester attributes the Champion campaign’s “great reactions” to more than a powerful theme and frugal tactics. She explains that with any public relations effort, they first match their desired outcomes with the department’s goals, vision, and mission. They also employ motivational principles gleaned from Harvard Law Review’s “Harnessing the Science of Persuasion.” In addition, they tailor the motivational items for staff to fit the need.

Moreno adds that their projects are successful “because we complement each other very well.” He’s referring to his expertise in graphic design, along with Simonich’s skills in organization and creative direction, and Rester’s managerial, media relations, and writing experience.

Director Anderson agrees: “They’re a winning team.”

For further information, contact Sondra Rester; 559-713-5749 or [SRester@co.tulare.ca.us](mailto:SRester@co.tulare.ca.us). **CSR**

# 'Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative'

## Requirements to Expedite Travel, Enhance Security



By Rebecca Hamil  
OCSE

Cruising in the Caribbean next year? Skiing in the Canadian Rockies or traveling to Mexico for your honeymoon in 2008? The first thing you may want to pack is your passport.

In the past, your birth certificate and/or driver's license would have sufficed as ID when returning home. Not any more. Under the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004, those who travel by land, air, and sea to and from the Americas, the Bahamas, Bermuda, Canada, the Caribbean, and Mexico will need a passport or other secure, accepted document establishing their identity and nationality when they enter or re-enter the United States.

The plan to make this happen is called the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative. Air and sea travel requirements are slated to start in the next year or so, with the border crossing requirement beginning as early as 2008.

In addition to the familiar book passport, the Department of State (DoS) is planning to issue a card-format passport for border crossings. Both types will be issued under the same law and be subject to the same adjudication and issuance process, although appearing in different formats.

Whether an individual applies for the book or card passport, their application will be matched against the DoS Consular Lookout and Support System – Enhanced. The passport will be denied if their name has been certified by HHS for child support arrearages. The DoS expects to issue as many as 12 million passports this year, 14 million in 2007, and 17 million in 2008.

Effective Oct. 1, 2006, Congress enacted a



From left, Theresa Meredith, Lamonda Fraley, Margaret Carter, and Rebecca Hamil work with OCSE's Passport Denial, Tax, and Administrative Offset Programs.

change in the threshold amount for certification of obligors to the Passport Denial Program lowering it from \$5,000 to \$2,500. This will increase the number of obligors submitted to DoS from 3.6 to over 4 million.

The Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative requirements, combined with the lower threshold certification amount, are expected to generate a significant increase in child support collections and more calls to local child support offices. In fact, some state child support agencies already are seeing results from the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative:

- Arkansas collected \$35,025 from an obligor who frequently travels to Mexico for medication.
- New York received \$20,277 from an obligor traveling to the Dominican Republic to visit relatives.
- An obligor going to Mexico to help build an orphanage paid Nevada \$16,182.
- A truck driver, with a route that takes him through Mexico and Central America, paid Washington \$9,000.
- A pit crew member for a race car team traveling to Mexico paid Missouri \$3,360.
- Illinois collected \$3,117 from an obligor so he could go on the cruise his parents gave him for his birthday.

# PA Answers to Changing Nature of Customer Service

By John Clark  
*Region III OCSE*

This spring, Region III OCSE, in cooperation with the Pennsylvania Bureau of Child Support Enforcement, arranged three conference calls with various county child support offices throughout Pennsylvania to examine how customer service has changed. More than 50 of the 67 counties participated in one of the three separate calls for rural, mid-size, and large counties.

Participating counties confirmed that customer service has changed dramatically over the past five years. As a result, many counties continue to modify their customer service operations.

### More Complex Calls

These days, many Pennsylvania customers can call a central 800-number and/or access their account information via an Internet portal. In addition, almost every custodial parent receives payments either through debit cards or direct deposit. Calls from custodial parents pertaining to payment used to comprise about 80 percent of the inquiries. With the exception of occasional calls about postings to the debit card, calls about receipt date and amount have disappeared.

However, receptionists often cannot answer the more case-specific, time-consuming, and complex questions of today. Counties also indicated that new clients may feel overwhelmed by the amount and complexity of material they receive from the agency. New customers may remain angry and only hear selective items or not listen at all. And, while many clients are accessing their case via the Internet, counties have observed that poor clients have difficulty using the Web.

### Expanding Services

Pennsylvania counties that have initiated early intervention programs also are taking steps to

assist new customers, for example, by calling to explain answers to questions from defendants. Staff in these counties report often getting a sincere “thank you” from the customer for the explanation.

Other initiatives to better serve Pennsylvania customers include the following:

- Numerous counties are offering telephonic testimony on internal and external county cases, which are especially helpful to noncustodial parents who just started working and have difficulty taking time off for a hearing. In addition, one county is using telephonic testimony on in-county cases for TANF mothers. This substantially increases participation and reduces noncooperation due to no-shows.
- Many counties provide new customers with a packet of information to help reduce their confusion.
- Bucks and Montgomery Counties have extensive community outreach programs to provide child support information to all stakeholders including court organizations, case workers, adult probation, and County Assistance Offices.

As they continue to modify their child support programs, the Pennsylvania counties are viewing their improvements in customer service as an opportunity to achieve the goal in the National CSE Strategic Plan that states: “The IV-D Program will be efficient and responsive in its operations.” **CSR**

Lisa Pozza, left, Director, Domestic Relations Section for Jefferson County, gives a packet of information to a new plaintiff. “We encourage customers to maintain court papers in the same folder,” says Pozza.



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For the latest updates concerning the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative and the passport application process for adults and children, visit the DoS Web site at [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov).

*For more information on the Passport Denial Program, or to report your own success story, contact Rebecca Hamil at [rebecca.hamil@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:rebecca.hamil@acf.hhs.gov). CSR*

***Child Support Report***

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