

Child Support Report



OFFICE OF CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT

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Passage of Historic New Health Insurance Reform Legislation

By Jennifer Burnszynski
OCSE

On March 23, President Obama signed health reform (P.L.111-148) into law. National health reform makes quality, affordable health care coverage available to 95 percent of all Americans—through their employers, insurance exchanges, and public coverage programs. Health reform brings greater security through a host of new consumer insurance protections to keep premiums down and prevent denials of care and coverage.

Most features will be in effect by 2014, including new guidelines, enforced by the IRS, for who will be responsible for covering themselves and their children.

The parent who claims the child as a dependent on their tax return is responsible for showing that the child has coverage or paying a tax penalty. Acceptable coverage includes eligible private plans, Medicaid, CHIP, Medicare, TRICARE, the veteran's health care

program, and other coverage. Those who cannot afford coverage (for example, because their income is below the federal tax filing threshold or premiums for available family coverage exceed 8 percent of household income) are exempt from this requirement.

Several provisions go into effect this year, such as requiring new health plans to cover, at no cost, preventive care and screenings for infants, children and adolescents; making it illegal for health insurance companies that cover children to deny them coverage based on a preexisting condition; and extending dependent coverage up to age 26.

By July 1, 2010, HHS will establish a Web site to help Americans identify affordable coverage options.



Health Reform Fact Sheets

The White House recently released a series of fact sheets about how health reform affects different groups, including families, children and young adults. These documents are available at www.healthreform.gov and on the [White House Web site](http://www.whitehouse.gov).



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U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Child Support Enforcement

Customer Service is Changing, Too



We read about it every day—state revenues are continuing to deteriorate. In January 2010, states eliminated 18,000 jobs, and they will likely shed more jobs this year. The large scale loss of jobs held by noncustodial parents has taken its toll on child support programs and families. We collect a significantly larger share of child support through unemployment compensation offsets than we used to. In many families relying on child support payments, custodial parents also have lost their jobs or seen scaled back work hours. This financial pressure in turn can create extra relationship strains between the parents.

As a program, we are facing the challenge of balancing the needs and circumstances of both parents and their children when there is not enough money to go around. The nation's economic situation calls for customer service professionals to increasingly help parents with issues such as how to obtain employment and services. Several previous issues of the *Child Support Report* have featured "rapid response" initiatives to review and adjust support obligations in recognition of parents financial circumstances. In addition, some programs provide families with information about and referrals to other assistance programs and services.

We all strive to offer customer service that is timely, respectful and efficient. But part of the answer may lie in changing the way we deliver customer service so that we are both more efficient and more responsive. This is a particular challenge when program staff are stretched thin. But the fact remains that effective communication to parents can actually save staff time in the long run. Clearly written information, improving information access through Web sites and other technology, and more thorough and sympathetic explanations over the phone can help reduce inquiries and repeat calls.

On page 4, we learn about Ohio's "Front Desk/Fast Service" customer service team that offers complete and individualized service to every person who walks through the office door. These trained team members apply extensive knowledge about community resources to offer referrals. With no additional staff, the team has eliminated long lines and improved customer satisfaction.

In particular, one sentence in the article strikes me as the heart of the promising practice in Ohio: "The total annual savings for the agency is about \$60,600—however, the improvements in customer service and in public trust are priceless."

Vicki Turetsky

Grant Projects

New SIP Grant Opportunity

OCSE announced a new Special Improvement Project (SIP) grant opportunity for state and tribal child support programs titled "Creating Family-Centered Approaches to Support Child Support Outcomes." See the notice on the [Grants.gov Web site](#). The closing date for applications is May 17.

OCSE is looking for applications that combine four strategies: 1) educate both parents about child support program processes; 2) address the financial

barriers facing both noncustodial and custodial parents by referring parents to workforce development or other job training or employment services; 3) provide for child support payment options with the agreement of both parents, as state policies permit, when the noncustodial parent is participating in a fatherhood or employment program and making a good faith effort to meet his/her child support obligations; and 4) provide referral to at least one other service such as mediation, healthy relationship education, housing and child access and visitation.



Iowa's Leadership Academy: Planting the Next Generation of Leaders

By Jeffrey Stocks
OCSE Region VII

Much like the rest of the nation's employers, Iowa's Child Support Recovery Unit is experiencing a shift in its workforce. This shift includes an aging workforce and a lack of employees skilled in executive management.

Faced with the reality that many of its managers were reaching to ring the retirement bell, the Child Support Recovery Unit developed an innovative training and mentoring program that allowed them to use their own resources and "train up" the next generation of decision-makers.

Appropriately named the Leadership Academy, it is Iowa's answer to effective succession planning and leadership development. The two-year program is open to qualified supervisors and managers throughout the Child Support Recovery Unit. The number of selected applicants varies depending on the number of qualified applicants and the needs of the agency.

The Leadership Academy was designed to introduce supervisors and managers to the types of issues and challenges faced by the stewards of Iowa's child support program, and to begin the process of global-thinking around issues that affect the child support program as a whole and strategize effective solutions.

These issues, such as a shrinking workforce, increased caseloads, improving customer service, and competing for government funds, are consistent areas of focus for management. The Leadership Academy program also offers participants an opportunity to observe and participate in budgeting, the legislative process, public

policy and resource allocation.

The participants in the Academy are provided an individual development plan and training curriculum. Each participant is assigned a mentor from the ranks of executive staff management who will transfer knowledge directly to potential successors.

The initial Academy accepted applications in June of 2006. Three child support staff members were selected from the pool of applicants. Beyond the skills assessment, training and mentoring, this initial group was assigned a project to redesign a child support form that is sent to customers to obtain financial information. In a pilot, it was determined that customers provided more financial information on the new, more customer friendly form and forms were returned more frequently.

The candidates who graduated from the initial class felt that they had a deeper understanding of the child support program as a whole and a more comprehensive view of management. They were grateful for the opportunity to learn from senior managers and believed the knowledge would be immediately applicable in their usual work responsibilities.

Iowa child support leadership advises any state considering the implementation of such a program to simply do so. Begin with the end in mind and develop the program around the goals and needs of your agency. Evaluate the program throughout and be flexible to change. The benefits include positioning successors to fill the void, creating a positive "buzz" about your program, and spreading leadership principles to your field offices.

For additional information on the program, please contact Pauline Rutherford at pruther@dhs.state.ia.us.





Cuyahoga County, Ohio:

'Front Desk/Fast Service' Counters Customer Concerns

Many child support agencies are faced with increasing workloads and mounting concerns from customers—with no new resources in sight. The largest child support agency in Ohio, the Cuyahoga County Child Support Enforcement Agency (CSEA), has responded to increased customer “walk-in activity” as an opportunity to improve both worker efficiency and customer satisfaction. Its practice is known as “Front Desk/Fast Service.”

The Front Desk/Fast Service has required no additional staff and has successfully eliminated long wait times for customers. About 90 percent of customers get answers and problems solved at the first point of contact. In addition, the agency developed a database tool in-house for tracking walk-in activities, at no additional cost.

The practice saves an average of \$39,480 annually by resolving the issues at the first point of contact. The front desk team saves another \$21,160 by making better use of how questions are escalated to a supervisor. The total annual savings for the agency is about \$60,600—however, the improvements in customer service and in public trust are priceless.

Begin by Defining the Goals

The agency’s managers had committed to making customer service a priority, and they defined the issues that needed more attention, such as offering referrals to community-based resources and eliminating long lines.

The agency provides services to some 160,000 walk-in customers annually. In the past, customers often waited in long lines for 30 minutes or more to talk with a support officer at the front desk—before they were handed off to someone who could assist them.

In spite of increased workloads, the agency did not want to limit walk-in activity to specific days or times during the week—and did want to address questions as soon as possible, building public trust and gaining valuable information from case participants.



Denise Klimak, a support officer with the Front Desk/Fast Service team, helps two parents obtain information and referral sources related to their child support cases.

Putting the Plan into Action

The agency changed the experience for customers by staffing the front desk with skilled, trained and experienced child support professionals, and encouraging complete service at the first point of contact.

The “Front Desk/Fast Service” team includes a “team lead” and “support officers” knowledgeable in all areas of the child support program. Team members also have extensive knowledge in community resources for legal services, employment assistance, and other social services to assist parents with barriers to the payment of support.

By increasing the generalized service at the front desk, case management activities became more specialized and uninterrupted. When walk-in activity is intermittent, the front desk team works on reports and projects to increase overall organizational knowledge.

Clear, easy-to-read signs are posted in the front lobby, giving confidence to the public that the front desk team is trained and ready to meet their expectations.

Tracking the Customer Service

The agency developed a data base to track customer needs or questions by category— along with the agency response. The team member uses the database (with a code in a dropdown box) to populate a narrative to the Support Enforcement Tracking System (SETS), the State Case Registry System where child support cases are administered. This process simultaneously reduces time to retrieve the narrative and increases agency knowledge about customer walk-in activity and needs.

Positive Results Mounting Up

In addition to savings cited at the top of this article, less than 9 percent of the customers need to obtain additional service after they've been helped at the front desk, usually with a support officer or lead worker. Case management is more specialized and efficient.

Because the team members can view all statistical reporting in soft copy, there is no longer a need for paper

reporting, saving costs and promoting an environmentally friendly alternative.

The agency also has experienced improved communication between departments and has a better understanding of customer expectations and the available community resources for information and referral.

Advice for Replication

Cuyahoga child support managers say that leadership must be willing to take a fresh look at staffing resources and position key knowledgeable professionals at the first point of contact. From the top down, managers must demonstrate the value of customer service. Open communication among departments is necessary. Strong stakeholder relationships support accurate information and referral activities.

For further information, contact Michael Falatach, Direct Services Manager, Cuyahoga County CSEA, 216-443-5178.

Collaborators Unite on Health Care Coverage for Children

By **Monique Miles**
OCSE

At the start of the New Year, state grantees, public officials and researchers gathered at the Urban Institute in the nation's capital for a colloquium on increasing health care coverage for children in the Child Support Enforcement program and exploring the interaction between medical support and health reform.

Acting HHS Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation Dr. Donald Moulds, whose office sponsored the colloquium, noted that OCSE grantees in attendance reflect the high priority the department places on children's health care coverage, collaboration between health and human services programs, and evidence-based strategies.

OCSE Commissioner Vicki Turetsky and Director of the Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services' Center for Medicaid and State Operations Cindy Mann shared their commitment

to increase collaboration between child support and Medicaid and CHIP (Children's Health Insurance Program). Both stressed the important role that child support agencies play in securing children's health care coverage and reducing lack of insurance. More than 4 out of 5 uninsured children in custodial mother families are eligible for Medicaid or CHIP.

Director Mann noted Medicaid and CHIP's great progress in reducing the percentage of children who are uninsured. She laid out the challenge: 5 million uninsured children are eligible for Medicaid or CHIP but have not yet enrolled. Hispanic children, older children and low-income children are most likely to be uninsured.

CHIPRA (the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act) provides significant new funding for CHIP, new coverage options, new provisions aimed at

boosting participation among children who are eligible, but not enrolled, and new quality measures. CHIPRA performance bonuses are awarded to states that take certain steps to increase CHIP



and Medicaid enrollment. Mann quoted President Obama: “In a decent society, there are certain obligations that are not subject to tradeoffs or negotiation—health care for our children is one of those obligations.”

Urban Institute researchers reviewed the latest analyses of children’s health care coverage and discussed the major components of national health reform. Over the past decade, the number of people with employer-sponsored coverage fell—fewer companies offer insurance and fewer employees enroll. Family premiums grew by 87 percent between 2000 and 2006. The health reform discussion seeks to address affordability, risk sharing, financing, employer and individual responsibility, and the structure of health insurance exchanges.

OCSE medical support grantees, including state child support and Medicaid representatives, actively participated in the colloquium. OCSE recently awarded 1115 grants to Massachusetts, Michigan and Oklahoma to develop collaborative approaches to improving medical child support and children’s health care coverage in the context of national health care reform.

The OCSE medical support grantees and other states shared progress of their grants or other medical support innovations in their state. The states’ projects include fostering collaborations with state Medicaid/CHIP offices, implementing statewide strategic plans, and developing resource tools for child support families to use in selecting appropriate health care coverage.

Sean Brown of the Vermont Office of Child Support presented the results of its completed 1115 medical support grant in which Medicaid and Child Support together used analysis of the child support caseload to develop effective referral criteria.

Children go without health care coverage for a variety of reasons, including availability and cost of employer coverage, access to and eligibility for public programs, and a family’s income. However, with the partnerships formed across federal, state and local governments, we are discovering new ways to use available resources to overcome obstacles to health care coverage and ultimately decrease the number of uninsured children in our country.



The Secretary’s Challenge: Connecting Kids to Coverage

February 4, 2010, marked the one-year anniversary of CHIPRA, the Children’s Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act. CHIPRA provides new funds for increasing CHIP and Medicaid coverage for children, and offers states new options to improve children’s coverage including grants for outreach and enrollment efforts.

HHS Secretary Sebelius marked the anniversary by noting that 2.6 million children gained Medicaid or CHIP coverage in 2009, but 5 million remain uninsured. She issued a challenge to states, local governments,

community-based organizations, health centers and faith-based organizations to enroll all of the children who are eligible for CHIP or Medicaid, but do not have coverage now.

“No child should go without health care in America,” said the Secretary.

At the federal level, OCSE and other ACF programs are collaborating with the Center for Medicaid and State Operations to improve coverage for the children we serve.

For more information on the Secretary’s Challenge, please visit: www.insurekidsnow.gov





NEW: Tribal Information in Intergovernmental Referral Guide

OCSE's updated online *Intergovernmental Referral Guide (IRG)* now includes address information for 35 comprehensive tribal programs and profile information for 16 tribes. Expect to see information about additional tribes soon. Welcome to all tribal IRG users!

The IRG provides the states and tribes with an effective and efficient way to view and update profile, address and location code information. As OCSE continues to enhance the IRG, child support professionals will be able to refer to more, useful information to assist with processing interstate cases.

Profile Information

The IRG profile information for states and tribes includes Uniform Interstate Family Support Act, age of majority, reciprocal agreements with other countries, statute of limitations, support details, income withholding, paternity, support order establishment, support enforcement review and adjustment process, lump sum and insurance match. Links to state and tribal statutory cites also are available.

Updates for location codes and the address section include uniquely identified tribal and international address information and links to the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the International Standards Organization codes. This section also contains contact information for state, county and local offices, and for OCSE central and regional offices.

Security and Access

The IRG security now locks user accounts for failed attempts. The edit user account will lock after three invalid attempts of the username and/or password. If the edit user account is locked, users must contact the OCSE Help Desk at 202-401-9267 to get unlocked.

The view user account will lock after five invalid

attempts of the user name or password. If the view user account is locked, the user must wait 5 minutes for the system to automatically unlock. E-mail your requests for new passwords to the OCSE administrator, via links on the [IRG home page](#) or the [IRG map page](#).



The *Intergovernmental Referral Guide (IRG)* Public Map Page is the entry point for all users of the IRG. From this page, "public users" can access profiles and address and location codes.

Downloading Procedures

The user can download all state and tribal profiles, as well as address information, directly from the IRG. Downloads to the user's hard drive are readable using any word-processing software. If a user downloads another state or tribal profile, the user should periodically check the online version to see if there have been any recent updates to the state or tribal information. The date of the last update appears in

the upper right of the profile screen and periodic checks ensure that the information in the downloaded profile remains as up-to-date as the online version.

Address information is downloaded as a fixed-length text file. This text file can then be used to upload into the state or tribal child support enforcement system. States and tribes can download the entire master file, or single or multiple states chosen by the date they last updated their information.

The download option is only available to state administrators. IRG users can download data from the IRG map page, as well as from the location codes and addresses navigation panel.

Certification Process

Based on users' concerns, OCSE simplified the process of certifying address information. Instead of the administrator certifying the state, region and county addresses individually, the process allows the administrator to certify one address type, which will automatically certify all addresses at the same time.

OCSE plans to enhance the Profile Question Query to allow users to query a profile question for all state and tribal responses.

For more information about the IRG, contact Angela Kasey at 202-690-5378 or angela.kasey@acf.hhs.gov, or program manager Ella Wood at ella.wood@acf.hhs.gov.

Passport Denial Program



Showers of Support

April showers will bring smiles to 18 families this spring when they receive money owed to them by noncustodial parents for past-due child support, courtesy of the federal Passport Denial program. States reported payments to OCSE ranging from \$7,000 to \$132,000 attributable to everything from noncustodial parents' seeking overseas employment to vacations.

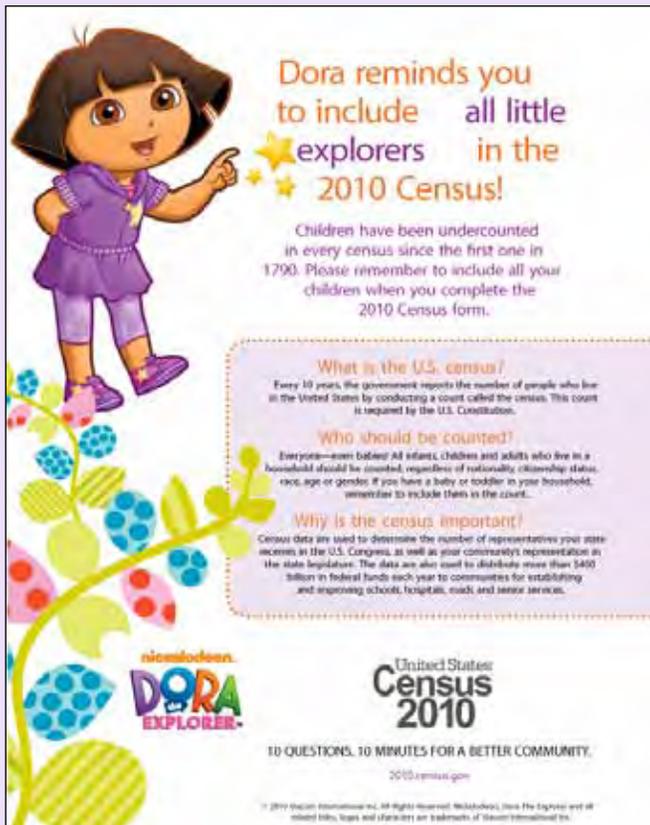
- **California \$132,000:** Traveling to Canada to visit friends
- **New York \$127,000:** Lives and works in the Middle East and needed to renew his passport
- **Connecticut \$100,000:** Businessman needed to travel overseas
- **Tennessee \$48,000:** Vacation in Southeast Asia
- **Virginia \$36,000:** Overseas employment
- **Louisiana \$30,000:** Traveling with parents to their home country



- **Washington \$29,000:** Visit new family in Southeast Asia
- **New York \$21,000:** Son's wedding in Canada
- **Colorado \$20,000:** Employment overseas
- **Illinois \$17,000:** Needed ID to obtain a birth certificate for his new baby
- **North Carolina \$17,000:** Overseas employment
- **South Carolina \$16,000:** Overseas employment
- **Hawaii \$15,000:** Attend celebration overseas
- **District of Columbia \$15,000:** Guest of honor at a wedding celebration in the Far East
- **Pennsylvania \$9,000:** Job opportunity overseas
- **Florida \$7,000:** Working at 2010 Winter Olympics
- **South Dakota \$7,000:** South American vacation
- **Washington \$7,000:** New job opportunity overseas

This year, reported passport denial collections total more than \$4 million, while collections since program inception in 1998 total more than \$193 million. For more information on the passport denial program or to report a success story, please contact Rebecca Hamil at rebecca.hamill@acf.hhs.gov.

Census Campaign Launched



The 2010 Census launched the “*Children Count Too*” public awareness campaign on March 8, reminding parents to include babies and young children on their 2010 Census forms. As census results can impact funding for children’s programs, HHS is an active partner in this campaign.

More Census News

The Department of Commerce *announced* that the Census Bureau will be developing and annually releasing a Supplemental Poverty Measure in addition to the official one. While the official measure will remain for the allocation of federal funds and eligibility determinations in needs-based programs, the supplemental measure will improve the child support program’s understanding of who is poor. This new measure will have many positive effects on family-serving programs including child support, childcare, medical assistance and food stamps.

May 5 National Day to Prevent Teen Pregnancy

The ninth annual National Day to Prevent Teen Pregnancy will take place on May 5, 2010. The purpose of the national day is to focus teens’ attention on the importance of avoiding teen pregnancy and other serious consequences of sex.

Organized by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy,

<http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/>
the National Day has widespread support from more than 200 national organizations and media outlets who serve as official National Day partners.

“OCSE has begun to partner with the national campaign, as we do with many other national and community organizations that help us reach parents with information about child support services,” says Commissioner Turetsky.

The brochure for the National Day states, “We hope that—in some modest way—the National Day will help teens think carefully about sex and contraception, the possibility of pregnancy, and the lifelong challenges of being a parent.”

Child Support Report



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