

Child Support Report



OFFICE OF CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT
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JUNE
Happy Father's Day

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Promoting fatherhood collaboration

By Miles Jackson
OCSE

The White House [Federal Interagency Working Group on Responsible Fatherhood](#) advances responsible fatherhood and stable families through coordination and collaboration across federal agencies. The working group is connecting government agencies at all levels; 11 federal agencies participate, including the Department of Health and Human Services, which houses OCSE.

The group's overarching goal is to encourage fathers to take responsibility for the intellectual, emotional and financial well-being of their children. Its strategies are to: 1) identify policy and program changes and activities that promote healthy, ongoing relationships among fathers, families and children; 2) coordinate communication and high-impact public engagement efforts that promote a positive culture shift around fatherhood; and 3) pursue public-private partnerships that leverage outside resources to further promote positive outcomes for fathers and their children.

Diana Zarzuelo of the Domestic Policy Council, who coordinates the group, says the group hopes to strengthen relationships among fathers, children and families at an early stage in the child's life. "We want to create and sustain stable and healthy environments for children and parents, with a focus on strengthening the economic stability of low-income fathers and supporting healthy relationships between parents. The child support program plays a key role in this effort because it serves so many children and both of their parents. Child support is not only a major contributor to families' financial wellbeing, but also promotes parental involvement that is so important to children."

OCSE partnerships

OCSE promotes collaboration in fatherhood efforts, as it demonstrates through partnerships with several other federal agencies.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Public Housing Authority is holding its 2nd annual Father's Day celebration this month. The agency prepared a series of weekly briefs and interviews with agency leaders, including OCSE Commissioner Vicki Turetsky ([See the interview on YouTube.](#))

The Commissioner talks about the child support program's focus on families: "At the federal office we have a new initiative called family-centered child support. This initiative encourages local child support programs to work with both parents more proactively and holistically by helping both moms and dads access services offered by other programs



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like yours [HUD]. Other programs include healthcare, SNAP, TANF, employment services, co-parenting services, and domestic violence prevention.”

The Commissioner also tells how OCSE relates not only to HUD’s Father’s Day celebration, but also to its mission and objectives of creating economic stability for families while reconnecting fathers to their children.

For HUD’s Father’s Day event last year, several child support agencies were eager to partner with public housing authorities. This year, HUD again welcomes child support agencies, parents, local nonprofits, and faith- and community-based organizations to share stories and develop deeper relationships. Learn more about HUD’s Father’s Day 2012 activities on Saturday, June 16, on its [Reconnecting Families and Dads website](#).

The Department of Education, too, will host events in honor of Father’s Day—“Focus Group for Father Engagement in Education” in Atlanta, and “Strong Fathers, Strong Families, Strong Students Education” in Chicago.

OCSE works with the Department of Labor (DOL) to coordinate child support and fatherhood efforts. DOL’s Employment & Training Administration helps strengthen families and fatherhood by supporting organizations across the country that provide employment, training and support services to low-income men, including noncustodial fathers and ex-offenders.

OCSE also collaborates with DOL to support fatherhood and parenting activities using peer support. For example, in FY 2011, OCSE awarded over \$250,000 in five [Section 1115 competitive grants](#) that address workforce strategies and economic stability. Many of these grant activities coordinate with the Employment & Training Administration’s Enhanced Transitional Jobs Demonstration grants at the state and local levels.

The Office of Family Assistance (within the HHS Administration for Children and Families) supports fathers through \$1.5 million in Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Marriage competitive grants that develop and improve healthy marriage and relationships, responsible parenting skills, and economic stability. The Office of Family Assistance plans to collaborate with OCSE to help grantees work with child support agencies to promote strong, stable families. (Watch for more details in next month’s *Child Support Report*.)

OCSE also partners with the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense. For example, OCSE facilitates data matching with state child support agencies to identify veterans in the child support program caseload so that agencies can offer appropriate child services. OCSE helps to identify and support military liaisons in state and tribal child support agencies, and is preparing a child support handbook and other tools for military families and those who serve them.

Across the nation, in central and regional offices, local

nonprofits, and faith- and community-based organizations, the Administration’s attention to fatherhood is connecting government agencies, and also fathers to their children and families, in meaningful and lasting ways. Fathers are meeting their child support obligations, finding and keeping employment, and most importantly, developing and maintaining enduring relationships with their sons and daughters.



In a YouTube video produced by HUD’s Public Housing Authority, Commissioner Turetsky encourages PHAs to partner with their local child support office in helping fathers to obtain housing and connect with their children. The video is one in a series hosted by HUD’s Ron Ashford (above), to encourage PHAs to sponsor Father’s Day events and pursue fatherhood activities year-round.

A son’s inspiration

Miles Jackson, an OCSE Millennial, shares his inspiration for writing the preceding article.

“My father and his two brothers were raised by their mother, and his father was never around to support their family in any way. Throughout my childhood and early adult life, my father has been a constant presence. I am forever grateful to him and cherish him every day for what he has done for my family and me, for taking care of us, and most importantly for always being there.”

“I am inspired by President Obama’s message in his 2010 Father’s Day address: ‘Our children don’t need us to be superheroes. They don’t need us to be perfect. They do need us to be present. They need us to show up and give it our best shot, no matter what else is going on in our lives. They need us to show them—not just with words, but with deeds—that they, those kids, are always our first priority.’”



On Father's Day, the importance of being a father

The role of fathers in the American family is changing. Fathers who live with their children are spending more time with them and taking part in a wider range of activities, according to a recent [Pew Research Center analysis](#).

Almost all fathers who live with their children take an active role in their day-to-day lives through activities such as sharing meals, helping with homework, and playing. At the same time, [Census data](#) reflect that more fathers are single parents—in fact, 18 percent of custodial parents are fathers.

While most fathers live with their children, over one-quarter of fathers live apart. Fathers' living arrangements are strongly correlated with race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status. Black fathers are more than twice as likely as white fathers to live apart from at least one of their children, while Hispanic fathers fall in the middle.

The Pew study found that among fathers who never completed high school, 40 percent live apart from their children. This compares with only 7 percent of those fathers who graduated from college.

Many nonresident fathers are highly involved with their children, even though they do not live together. Others have little or no contact with their children. According to the Pew study, roughly 1 in 5 fathers who live apart from their children say they visit with them more than once a week, while 1 in 4 fathers do not see their children at all.

Involved fathers can help encourage a child's healthy

physical, emotional, and social development. [Research](#) finds that positive father involvement promotes children's early language and cognitive development. Involved fathers also improve their children's academic performance. Fathers also are actively involved in their children's health care.

Here's another bit of good news on the occasion of Father's Day: A recent [blog](#) refers to a 2010 report by the Future of Children, which highlights that "a high proportion of all unmarried fathers say that they want to be involved in raising their child, and the mothers say they want the father's involvement."

Vicki Turetsky



What's the buzz about?

On Father's Day weekend, barbershops across the country are participating in Fatherhood Buzz, an outreach campaign co-sponsored by the Administration for Children and Families' Office of Family Assistance and the White House Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships. The initiative supported the barbershops in connecting dads with local resources to help build strong families.



Learn more:
www.fatherhood.gov/fatherhood-buzz

Coordination Points



Turner v. Rogers – one year later

June 20 marks the one-year anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court decision *Turner v. Rogers*. The decision held that the due process clause of the 14th Amendment does not “automatically” require the provision of counsel to an indigent defendant facing the possibility of incarceration in a civil contempt proceeding for failure to pay child support.

States are encouraged to provide alternative procedural safeguards:

- Notice to the defendant that his “ability to pay” is a critical issue in the contempt proceeding;
- The use of a form (or the equivalent) to elicit relevant financial information;
- An opportunity at the hearing for the defendant to respond to statements and questions about his financial status, (e.g., those triggered by his responses on the form); and
- An express finding by the court that the defendant has the ability to pay.

To commemorate the decision and its implications for increasing access to justice and reducing the use of contempt, OCSE and the Department of Justice, Access to Justice Initiative will co-host an event (details below). These panelists will discuss how the decision has affected the field and engage in Q&A with the audience.

- Alan Houseman, Executive Director of CLASP
- Pamela Lowry, Administrator for Illinois Division of Child Support Services
- Daniel Olmos, Senior Counsel, Access to Justice Initiative, Department of Justice (moderator)
- Diane Potts, Deputy Attorney General of Illinois
- Vicki Turetsky, OCSE Commissioner
- George Sheldon, ACF Acting Assisting Secretary
- Richard Zorza, Self-Represented Litigation Network

OCSE plans to post a recording of the event on the website. For more information, please contact Adrienne Noti, adrienne.noti@acf.hhs.gov or 202-401-3438.

Turner v. Rogers Anniversary Forum: Fundamental Fairness and the Ability to Pay in Child Support Proceedings

June 20, 2012
2:00 – 3:30 p.m.

[Register for the webcast or to attend the DC event](#)

Are you getting the news?

Have you seen the new **OCSE website**? While it's still under construction, we hope you are finding it easier to navigate. Keep up on the latest news in the child support program by subscribing to the RSS feed in the upper right corner on the website.



Online modification process to assist South Carolina parents

By Gale DuBose

South Carolina Center for Fathers and Families

How can I get my child support order modified? It's a question frequently heard by child support workers, clerks of court, fatherhood practitioners, and others working with child support cases. In recent years, as the economy worsened and unemployment grew, staff members at the South Carolina Center for Fathers and Families listened to more and more questions about modification, mostly due to the lack of affordable legal representation.

The Center is a statewide, faith-based nonprofit that focuses on strengthening relationships between fathers and families. The Sisters of Charity Foundation created the Center in 2002 to provide resource and program development, coordination, evaluation and technical assistance for affiliated local fatherhood programs. The Center's mission addresses the root causes of poverty by reconnecting low-income, noncustodial fathers to their children financially and emotionally.

In September 2011, as more individuals needed access to the court system through a pro se modification process, the Center received a Special Improvement Project grant from OCSE. The grant project will develop collaborative strategies to help low-income noncustodial and custodial parents who have obligations become more aware of child support modification and to access easy-to-use, online automated modification forms, as well as directly access the courts through the pro se process.

The Center identified several individuals and entities critical to the project: South Carolina Child Support Enforcement Division; the Center; South Carolina Access to Justice Commission; South Carolina Legal Services; South Carolina Court Administration; and the South Carolina Bar Foundation. The group brought together many years of experience in child support, access to justice, fatherhood, and family law.



As this partnership continued, the United States Supreme Court decided *Turner v. Rogers*, which held that due process requires procedural safeguards for child support obligors in civil contempt proceedings. (See the four safeguards listed in the previous article.)

Following this decision, project participants were eager to develop easy-to-use pro se modification forms. The group quickly realized that bringing together this combined body of experience and knowledge was an accomplishment in itself, but that it was going to take many hours of hard work to finalize the project.

The group has submitted packets to the South Carolina Supreme Court; when approved, the packets will become standard forms available to anyone to file for modification in a South Carolina court.

The final product will be online, interactive software that will guide the individual seeking a modification through a series of questions and then generate the court documents. A training video will accompany the forms to guide self-represented litigants through the decisions to determine if a modification request is appropriate, identify needed forms and documents, and what to expect in a courtroom setting.

The team will also reach out to multiple community-based organizations and agencies to help make the public aware of this online software and the additional information available to self-represented litigants.

The entire team remains engaged and excited as they look forward to completing this project. Making pro se modification forms easier and more available will improve the process for self-represented litigants.

At the end of the grant period, the team knows we will not only have accomplished our goal of developing and providing automated pro se modification forms, but we will have made a real difference for people needing information and access to the courts.

For more information, contact Gale Dubose at gdubose@scfathersandfamilies.com.



Columbus, GA, students learn relationship skills 'right from the start'

Carmen Overton, Executive Director
Right from the Start
Columbus, Georgia

You showed me that I don't want to be another statistic and helped me realize what kind of women I want and what kind of man I want to be. You showed me what a real relationship is." That's what one high school student said after taking a relationship skills class called *Right from the Start*.

Four years ago, the Georgia Family Council visited Columbus, GA, with hopes to establish a community-based healthy marriage program, after receiving an award from the Georgia Department Human Resources Services under the HHS Administration for Children and Families' Healthy Marriage Initiative. *Right from the Start* was surely off to a great start when they formed a community advisory board, identified a fiscal agent (The Pastoral Institute), and hired a full-time director. The program received support and training from the Georgia Family Council.

Right from the Start seeks to lower the divorce rate and out-of-wedlock pregnancy rate and increase father involvement, thus strengthening families in Columbus. It achieves these goals through community education that uses an evidence-based curriculum, and a city-wide media marketing campaign. Since 2009, more than 4,000 individuals have participated in the relationship skills class.

Columbus experiences one of the highest rates of divorce in the southeastern United States. Research suggests that children being raised in a healthy home by a mom and a dad fare better academically and socially, and in general, have a greater chance of being raised with physical and emotional security. *Right from the Start* is grounded in the belief that if the marriages improve, the well-being of children will improve as well.

Today anyone in Columbus seeking to have a healthy relationship can take the class. Trained facilitators work with middle school and high school students to teach them the foundations of a healthy relationship and the basic skills to avoid the pitfalls of an unhealthy relationship. Single adults learn how to "Avoid Falling for a Jerk/Jerkette" by allowing the heart and the head to work together when choosing a dating partner. Engaged couples participate in "Preparing for Marriage" classes to learn communication and conflict-resolution skills that prepare them for a happy and healthy lifetime together. Dads learn how to bond with their children in infancy through "Boot Camp for New Dads"; when their children are a little older, they learn how to be an "All Pro Dad." Married couples can enrich their marriages through community activities such as "10 Great Dates."

Although funding through the Healthy Marriage Initiative grant has ended, *Right from the Start* maintains a solid presence in Columbus and is now a truly community supported initiative. In addition to the full-time director, staff includes three part-time facilitators. The advisory board meets monthly and provides tremendous support through volunteering and fundraising. Georgia Family Council also continues ancillary support through technical assistance and ongoing training opportunities.

And for the first time in over a decade, Columbus is starting to experience a decrease in teen pregnancy rates. While there is a significant amount of work to be done, there is an equal if not greater amount of motivation to see that it is done. *Right from the Start* board member Perry Alexander says, "My dream for Columbus is that in 10 years, anyone who grew up in this community would have a healthy perspective of marriage ... that marriage would be seen as a healthy and best choice."

To learn more about *Right from the Start*, visit rightfromthestart.org. For more information, contact Carmen Overton at coverton@pilink.org or 706-649-6380, ext. 1210.



Banner from
rightfromthestart.org

Alaska joins social media revolution



Alaska Department of Revenue Deputy Commissioner Angela Rodell (*far left*) and Child Support Services Division's Deb Foley unveil the new Alaska CSSD logo. Child Support Specialist Michelle Adams accepts a Certificate of Appreciation from CSSD Director John Mallonee for collaboration on the new logo.

By Timothy Lightner
Client Services Supervisor
Alaska Child Support Services Division

Social media is transforming our lives. Many people use social media to stay in touch with their family and friends; keep up with news and events, organizations and products. More than 66 percent of adults are connected to one or more social media platforms. Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are considered cornerstones of most social media strategies in large companies.

Facebook holds 750 million users worldwide (174.6 million in the U.S.), and Twitter accounts total 165 million (107.7 million in the U.S.). Each week on Facebook, people share more than 3.5 billion pieces of content. Twitter users send 230 million tweets every day—virtually tens of thousands every second. Social media is not a passing trend, but a change in the way people communicate and live.

Engaging parents, involving staff

In January 2012, Alaska Child Support Services Division (CSSD) entered the exciting realm of social media. The venture sprang from a workshop on communication and social media at the National Child Support Enforcement Association's conference last August in Atlanta. For CSSD staff who attended, enthusiasm and anticipation grew for the media that could, and would, be used nearly 4,000 miles away in Alaska!

After returning, Deb Foley (Formal Hearings and Complaint Resolution Manager) and I presented ideas to

Director John Mallonee, and with approval for a trial run, CSSD's Facebook and Twitter social media platforms were born.

Our first tweet and post went out to both Twitter and Facebook simultaneously: "Alaska CSSD launches its new social media communications: Twitter and Facebook. Stay tuned for frequent communiqués to keep you informed."

Since then, we have tweeted and posted information to let custodians know they may receive direct deposits of their child support payments; how to request reviews for support order modifications; how to reduce income withholding due to hardship; how to contact CSSD for support related questions, and more. Our clients receive Twitter posts directly to their smart phones and tablets as text (SMS) messages.

In the short time since our launch, we've had 95 "likes" on Facebook. People in 17 countries have talked about our posts; of those talking about us, 58 percent are female and 42 percent male. We are finding that each social media platform reaches a different segment of our intended audience; the majority of those within the 25 – 34-year-old range.

While Twitter has given us a tool for outgoing communication, we have opened the dialogue on Facebook to answer general questions. In the event a question is too specific for such a public forum, our caseworkers contact those asking questions to ensure every post is answered. The prompt and direct contact has gained favorable public feedback.

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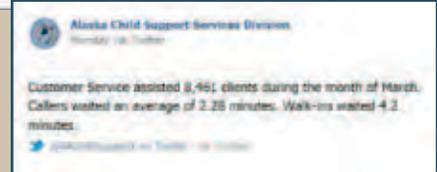
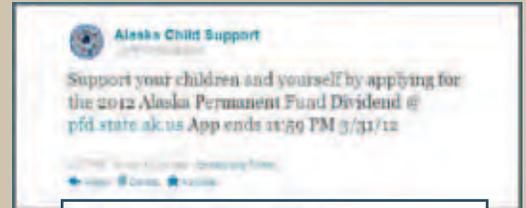
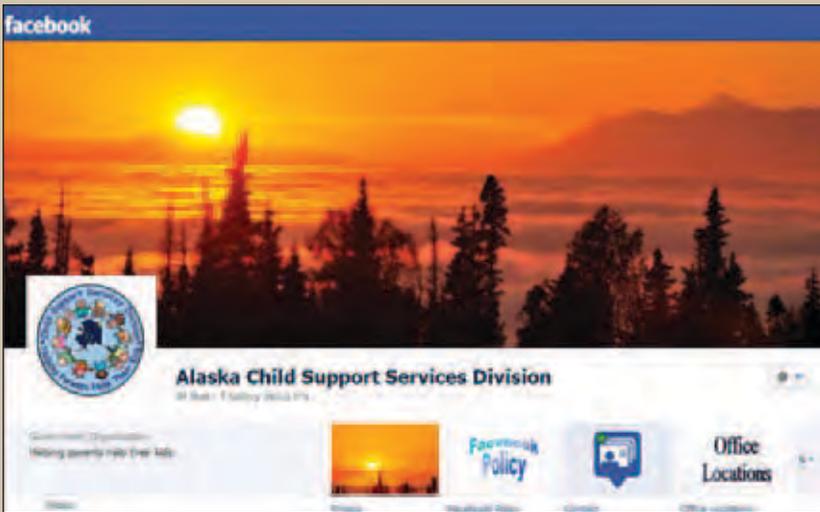
The launch of our social media sites gave staff the opportunity to develop an official a Division logo. Ideas from two CSSD caseworkers (Michelle Adams and Christine Crossen) were combined to create a logo that depicts exactly what CSSD is all about—the kids!

We prominently display the Division’s new logo as the agency’s icon on both Twitter and Facebook. We have also solicited scenic Alaska pictures from staff to showcase on the landing page on Facebook—and it has boosted staff morale and involved our employees in this social media endeavor.

2012 marks the year that Alaska CSSD joined the social media revolution. We have entered into a paradigm shift of digital interchange. For Alaska CSSD, social media is not a fad or a passing trend, but a fundamental shift in the way we communicate with our customers and with the public. We are eager to see what happens next!

For more information, contact timothy.lightner@alaska.gov or see the [CSSD Facebook page](#) and [Twitter site](#).

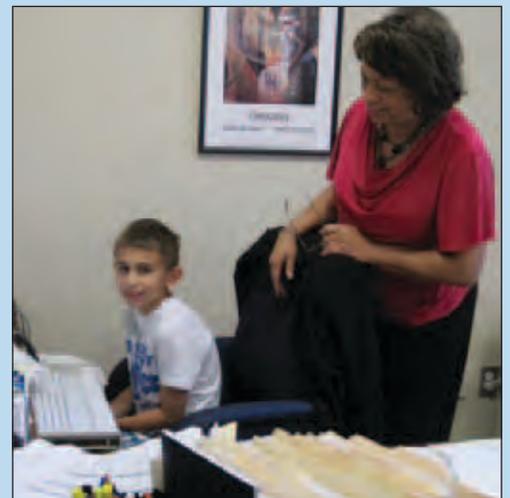
Snapshots from the Alaska Child Support Services Division Facebook page (below) and Twitter site



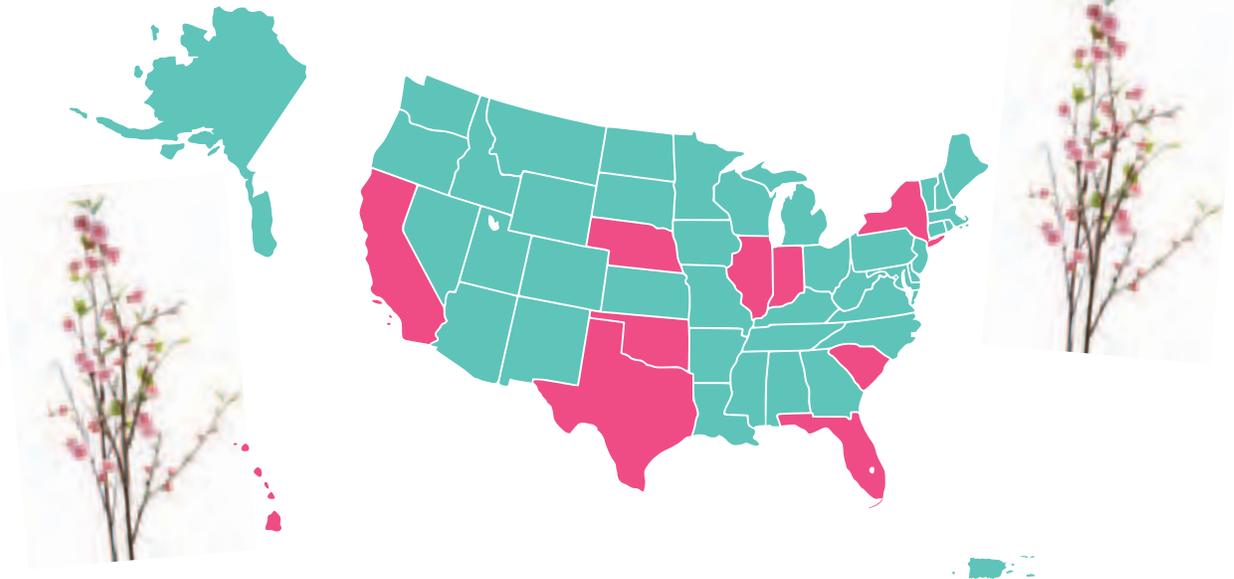
Child Support executives for a day



North Carolina Child Support Services Chief *Daisie Blue* (far right) welcomed seven junior executives on “Take Your Daughters and Sons to Work Day,” April 26. The children earned special “Blue bucks” as they completed tasks in each unit (such as filing, slotting mail, and preparing a slide presentation), and traded them in at the end of the day for prizes. One participant called it the “best day ever.”



Passport Denial payments blossom



Summer is upon us; birds are chirping, flowers blooming—and payments are blossoming for the passport denial program.

Many reconnect with family during summer months. A noncustodial parent visiting family in Cuba paid **Florida** \$19,000; another visiting in-laws in Canada paid **Indiana** \$19,000; and another attending a family reunion in China paid **New York** \$14,000. A noncustodial parent traveling to the Philippines for his daughter's graduation paid **California** \$3,000.

For some, summer is a time of renewal and a fresh start. **Nebraska** received \$74,000 from a noncustodial parent after he refinanced his home. **South Carolina** collected \$11,000 from a noncustodial parent planning to celebrate his wedding anniversary on a cruise. An **Illinois** noncustodial parent paid \$7,000 so he could travel to Canada for volunteer work, while **Oklahoma** received \$9,000 from a noncustodial parent going on a mission trip to the Philippines.

For others, it's business as usual. **Hawaii** received \$76,000 from a noncustodial parent so he could continue to live and work in Japan. A businessman traveling to Thailand paid **Texas** \$32,000, and an employer paid Utah \$4,000 for a noncustodial parent to travel for business.

And finally, **Oklahoma** gained the second highest collection so far for 2012: \$95,000. The noncustodial parent just wanted to close his case.

* * * * *

There is no question that passport denial is an effective enforcement tool. Providing prompt and coordinated customer service to lift restrictions once payment is made is also key to the success of the passport denial program. As one noncustodial parent wrote to OCSE recently:

"Within the last hour, I received a temporary US Passport which will allow me to travel to see my son graduate from high school in Ohio. Honestly... three days ago I did not expect to receive my passport in time for my scheduled travel date. From the bottom of my heart, I want to thank everyone involved in making this happen. It was the combined effort for all of you that has made this possible. I will think of your efforts when I watch my son receive his diploma. I will tell him of this accomplishment ... continue to seek solutions for any problem, reach out to everyone involved for assistance, and never give up until you've exhausted every solution."

Please send your success stories to Lesa Free at lesa.free@acf.hhs.gov.

Child Support Report



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George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for Children and Families

Vicki Turetsky
Commissioner, OCSE

Gabrielle Pagin
Director, Division of Consumer Services

Elaine Blackman
Editor
202-401-5353
elaine.blackman@acf.hhs.gov