

This issue of Pacific Northwest News Child Support and Financial Recovery Quarterly newsletter was published by the State of Washington Department of Social and Health Services, Division of Child Support.

We hope others from the child support and financial recovery communities will be able to assist with the development of future issues of the Pacific Northwest News. Together, we can build a stronger national community of child support and financial recovery professionals.

Please e-mail any article requests to June.Johnson@dshs.wa.gov.



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ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS – MAKING A DIFFERENCE WITHIN THE DIVISION OF CHILD SUPPORT AND THE COMMUNITY

By Ted Thornton, Alternative Solutions Program Manager

In our April 2014 Pacific Northwest Newsletter, Division Director Wally McClure touched on how the Washington Division of Child Support's (DCS) program is leading some unique efforts to make a difference in our community. One program in particular has taken giant leaps this summer to fulfill our vision. The Alternative Solutions Program, an employment initiative striving to connect obligors to the wealth of community resources throughout Washington State, opened for business in late July (see the article on page two *AmeriCorps Volunteers In Service to America (VISTA) Members Receive Award for Excellence*).



Alternative Solutions Team – From left to right, Tina Burnquist, Ted Thornton, Patrick Whalin and Mindy Houx

In support and alignment of the Department of Social & Health Services Mission 'Transforming Lives', the Alternative Solutions Program aims to 'Make families and communities stronger by connecting people to resources and partners'.

The key to their program's success is connections. In the past year their team worked hard to develop strong staff and community connections, acting as a two-way conduit for staff and partners alike.

Alternative Solutions is focused on helping parents remove barriers such as unemployment, homelessness, transportation and a myriad of other issues by connecting them with community partners who can advocate for them, and ultimately assist them to better care for their families in a sustainable manner.

With the end goal of gaining employment and payment plans, the team offers: stabilization of clients via barrier identification and removal, numerous tools and resources for DCS staff and partner agencies (including a staff accessible database of over 3,300 catalogued by service type and location), re-engagement and increased client rapport through compassionate and caring case work, and enhanced communication and information sharing among staff and partners.

In June the team hired their first two Support Enforcement Officers (Tina Burnquist and Mindy Houx – pictured above). Soon after, they delivered four informational webinars for DCS staff and external partners. The team also traveled throughout the state, attending and presenting program information at many different conferences, talked to DCS field office staff, spoke to vocational classes including a welding program, and generally just spread the word about the program and offering ways to work with the team.

As of July 24, the team began accepting client referrals from DCS staff and external partners. With over 120 referrals received in the first month alone, the team quickly realized the validity of their product and the need they were filling as they strived to assist our most vulnerable obligors.

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Alternative Solutions (continued)

So what does the future hold for DCS and the Alternative Solutions Program? While working with clients facing major uphill battles in their lives, the team plans to offer options and hope. DCS clients may be struggling, thinking everything is 'impossible', that there are no paths to help them conquer barriers. With a strong focus on performance and results, the Alternative Solutions Program will offer resources and options to clients, giving them a realistic chance to overcome, achieve, and find success in their lives, their families, and the communities where they reside. For more information about the program, please email AlternativeSolutions@dshs.wa.gov

AMERICORPS *VISTA MEMBERS RECEIVE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN DIVISION

In the Spring of 2013, DCS started a new program called Alternative Solutions. This program was inspired by Federal and local leaders who reinterpreted our mission to not only support children, but to also provide more holistic services that benefit families as a whole. Alternative Solutions is focused on helping parents remove barriers by connecting them with community partners who can advocate for them, and ultimately assist them to better care for their families in a sustainable manner. This program is a significant change in the culture of administering child support services. To help create the infrastructure for this unique endeavor, DCS broke new ground by enlisting the help of four dynamic and creative *VISTA staff. *VISTA's serve to create infrastructure for programs that work to fight poverty, and the results of their work must be sustainable for the existing program after they complete their service. Their efforts were extremely successful, and after 10 months of diligent work they developed tools, marketing materials, forms, interactive webinar presentations, and conducted focus groups to capture the needs of our staff in the field.

The Alternative Solutions Program is now open for DCS employees' and external partners to refer cases for parents in need of help. As a result, the *VISTA team, Kathleen Perry, Devon Hay, Farrin Sofield, and Mary Bahr were presented an award by our Federal partners in Region 10, Office of Child Support Enforcement for their contributions in making this new program a success. Together, we are leading the charge to provide even more comprehensive services to struggling parents throughout Washington.



From left to right, Mary Bahr (VISTA), Mindy Houx (DCS Staff), Kathleen Perry (VISTA), Devon Hay (VISTA), Levi Fisher (OCSE Region Ten), Tina Burnquist (DCS Staff). Not pictured: Farrin Sofield (VISTA).

THE BUILDING ASSETS FOR FATHERS AND FAMILIES (BAFF) PROGRAM

By Kirsten Jenicek, Grants Manager

DCS has a long history of using grant programs to improve performance outcomes. These grant programs, sometimes called 1115 demonstration projects, provide a way to pilot and test new ideas that we wouldn't otherwise be able to try out with our regular funding. Typically these grant opportunities are offered by the Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE). States develop project proposals and submit applications to receive grant funding, and once a grant award is made the projects are more fully developed. Project periods are anywhere from three to five years, after which states review results and decide what, if any, lessons learned should be incorporated into regular work practices.

In September 2010, DCS received a grant award to pilot and test an asset building program for Non-Custodial Parents (NCPs). This project, called Building Assets for Fathers and Families (BAFF), was designed to help NCPs at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level.

The project provided an array of customized services including financial education, credit repair, work force referral and development, referrals to Bank On (second chance banking) partners, and a connection to community and other social service agencies. At the same time, the program offered Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) which created additional opportunities for NCPs to save and

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The BAFF Program

(continued)

invest. Essentially, these were a 2 to 1 match for NCPs who were trying to buy a home or start their own business. Child Support project staff worked with parents to ensure that child support obligations were set at manageable levels based on individual circumstances.

This project involved staff in both the Vancouver and Spokane DCS field offices, which were the pilot sites for the program. Vancouver's project was headed by Tina Burnquist, and Spokane's by Dave Parman. Tina and Dave worked with program staff at community partner agencies in their areas, the Lower Columbia Community Action Program (LCCAP) and Spokane Neighborhood Action Program (SNAP) to help coordinate services for NCPs. Through assisting NCPs with modifications and referring cases for conference board write-offs, DCS was able to positively impact performance and at the same time build better relationships with the clients we served.

In all, DCS served nearly 600 clients throughout the three-year time span of this grant, which officially concluded in March of 2014 after a six-month extension period. Many of the ideas and concepts from BAFF were used to develop the model for the Alternative Solutions Program.

DCS EMPLOYER OUTREACH

By Wally McClure, DCS Director

Employers are a key partner in Washington State's child support program. They help improve the financial stability of families by withholding child support and enrolling kids in medical insurance. The Division of Child Support (DCS) supports employers through education and training. Our primary goal is to give employers the information and tools they need to efficiently withhold and remit child support.

The DCS outreach campaign is a statewide, comprehensive effort to educate employers about our programs, child support laws, new hire reporting, income withholding, medical enrollment and the use of Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) to submit payments. Employers also learn about Secure Access Washington <https://secure.dshs.wa.gov/dconline>, a one-stop portal used to submit reports electronically to DCS and other Washington state agencies.



Doug Cheney

At Secure Access Washington, employers can:

- ✓ **View or make Child Support payments**
- ✓ **Report newly hired or rehired employees**
- ✓ **Get notified when a Child Support payment is received**
- ✓ **And much more!**



Employers can attend a local, hands-on class or an online web talk to learn about paying support electronically, submitting new hire reports online and how to respond to Income Withholding Orders. Our statewide employer outreach coordinator, Doug Cheney, along with local liaisons, lead these in person and web based discussions. An employer web talk is an easy way for rural employers to directly connect with DCS staff and get information about our programs.

DCS also partners with professional and trade associations to educate their members. These partners publish articles and ads, post program information on their websites and air public service announcements, all at little or no cost to our Division. Washington continues to find creative and innovative ways to get our message to employers.

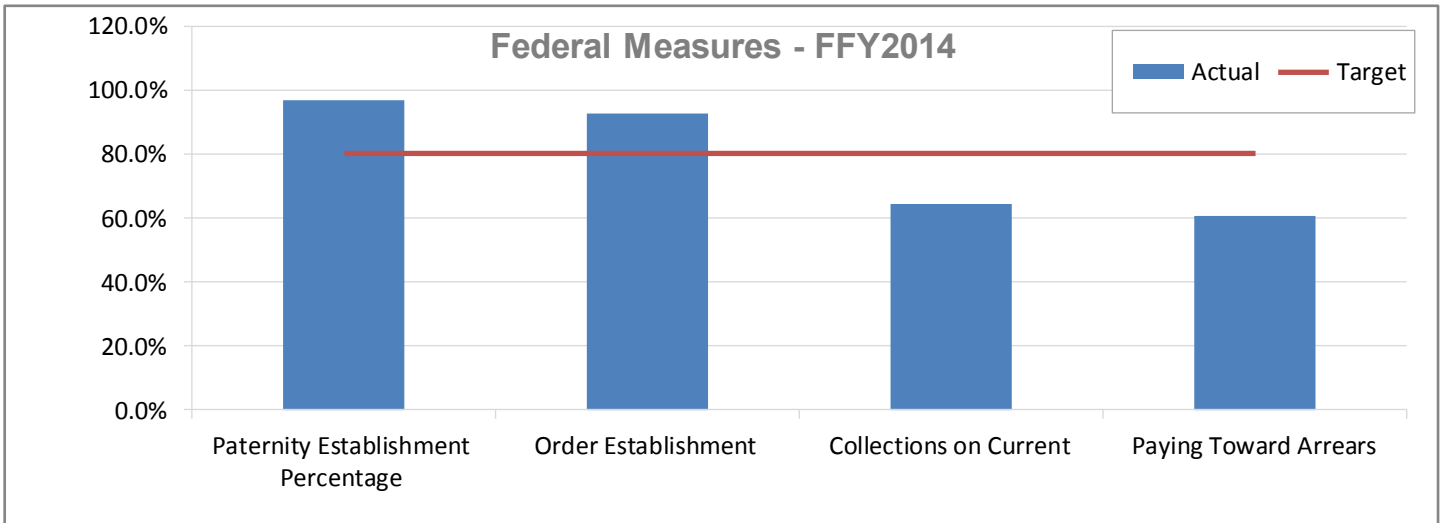
With the support of our partners and the use of technology, Washington DCS has been successful in connecting with employers. In doing so, employers report new hires faster, collect support more efficiently, and make fewer phone calls to child support staff. As a result, Washington is proud to be ranked in the top five states nationally with the highest percentage of electronic child support payments by employers. This saves employers time and helps DCS operate a more cost efficient program.

Many other states have similar outreach and education efforts with their employers. We look forward to continuing a national dialogue and sharing best practices in this area.

DCS Performance Corner

	Actual	Target
Paternity Establishment Percentage	97.0%	80.0%
Order Establishment	92.6%	80.0%
Collections on Current	64.5%	80.0%
Paying Toward Arrears	60.8%	80.0%

Washington is near or above the national average in each of these measures. In fact, we were fifth nationally in order establishment and 2.5% above the national average in parents paying toward current support. Still, readers can see that we have a long way to go to achieve our targets in current support and arrears collections, not just as a state but as a nation, with around a third of children not receiving the support they have a right to expect. The Division of Child Support won't be satisfied until every child receives regular child support. To achieve that, we will need the help from our partners across the state, with services ranging from overcoming barriers to employment, helping them address legal or family violence issues, or connecting them to services vital to their success or the success of their children. We look forward to building and improving our work with those partners.



OFR PERFORMANCE

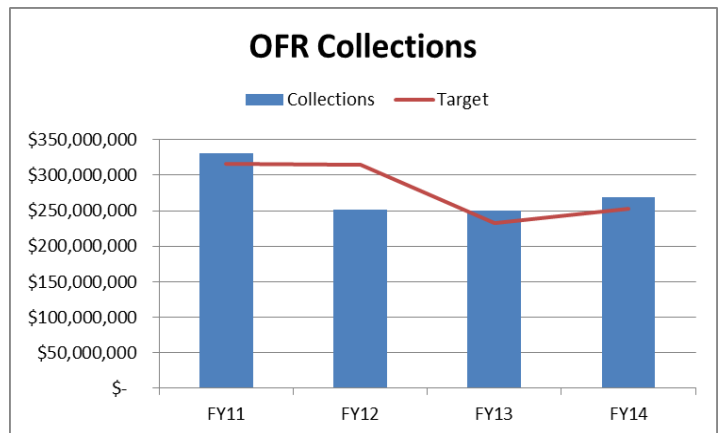
The Office of Financial Recovery (OFR) is a collection arm of the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS). Working with service programs, clients, and customers, OFR focuses on maximizing collections for DSHS, the Health Care Authority, the Department of Early Learning, and state taxpayers. Funds recovered are typically returned to the originating programs to continue providing financial assistance, medical care, and a host of other services for our state's most vulnerable citizens. In state fiscal year 2014, OFR's 75 employees collected \$268.7 million.

The chart shows OFR collections over the past six years. The significant drop in collections from fiscal year 2011 to fiscal year 2012 (and the reason OFR missed its target) occurred because one revenue stream, the Regional Support Network reconciliation function (about \$60 million per year) returned to its source program.

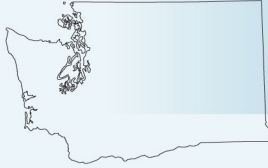
OFR has exceeded targets in three of the last four fiscal years and exceeded its fiscal year 2014 target by more than \$16 million.

For more information:

Brice Montgomery, Office Chief
 360-664-5569
 Brice.Montgomery@dshs.wa.gov



DIVISION OF CHILD SUPPORT FACT SHEET



CHILD SUPPORT More money for Washington families



DCS provides a variety of child support services. Contact us:

Toll Free (800-457-6202) • Olympia (360-664-5200) • FAX (360-586-3274)
E-mail (dcs-cru@dshs.wa.gov) • Web (childsupportonline.wa.gov)

COLLECTIONS

\$695 million

Total child support collections in FY2013



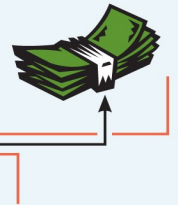
93.8%

Went to families

\$59.2 million was retained by the state to offset public assistance costs.

68.4%

Collected through income withholding from the employee's paycheck



CASELOAD



Number of children served in Washington state

Cost avoidance (Washington savings)

\$53 million

Basic food

\$17.5 million

TANF

\$54 million

Medical*



* Medical data only available for the period Oct. 2012 through Mar. 2013.

COST-EFFECTIVENESS

One of the most cost-effective government programs



for every **\$1** spent...



...the child support program collects **\$4.97**



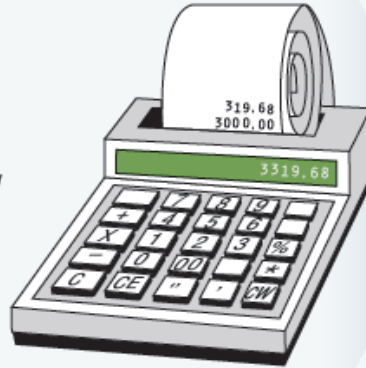
OFFICE OF FINANCIAL RECOVERY
Recovering Taxpayers Dollars



> **COLLECTIONS**

\$269 million

State monetary receipts for cost-of-care, overpayments or fees in FY2014



Billing:

\$24 million

Medical Premiums, Fees

Cost of Care:

\$176.5 million

Estate Recovery, Mental Health, JJ&RA Parent Pay, DDA

Cost Recovery:

\$68.5 million

Client and Vendor overpayments, Interim Assistance

> **AGENCIES BENEFITING FROM OFR SERVICES**



Money to the General Fund



Return money to the Federal Government

> **COST-EFFECTIVENESS**

One of the most cost-effective government programs



for every **\$1** spent...



... the Office of Financial Recovery returns

\$40.53

But we can't do it without the help of our valued partners.

THE DIVISION OF CHILD SUPPORT ATTENDS 2014

SUMMER INSTITUTE REENTRY CONFERENCE

By June Johnson, Child Support Program Administrator

The Community Partnership for Transition Services (CPTS) of King, Pierce, and Snohomish Counties in partnership with South Seattle Community College, hosted the 2014 Summer Institute/Regional Reentry Conference, July 31 – August 1. The annual conference offered an opportunity for reentry service providers, educators, faith-based and community organizations to network, share best practices, expertise, and foster sustainable partnerships.

The theme of this year's conference was *The New Norm: How to Stay in the Game with Re-Aligned Resources*. With budget cuts, reduced workforce, and ever-changing dynamics of the correctional system, a more comprehensive reentry strategy was needed. The complexity of the challenges faced by new and returning reentry clients was cause to recognize that reentry is a process best sustained through collaborative partnerships, meaningful contacts, interagency collaborations, and dedicated individuals. The U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics reported, as of the end of 2012, about 7 million people were under correctional supervision which included those supervised in the community, on probation and parole, and those incarcerated in prison or local jails. Washington State is one of four states that reported having one of the largest increases in probationers in 2012.

The first day was packed with opportunities to network with other community agencies and to attend workshops that continued to create awareness about the changing dynamics of reentry. Attendees learned more about the multiple barriers reentry clients face as well as reasons for the need to reform laws and policies. The re-alignment of resources is a key element of meeting the needs of these clients.



Wally McClure, Levi Fisher, Joseph Garcia and June Johnson

Commissioner Vicky Turetsky, Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE), shared her views with conference attendees in her presentation “Re-Aligned Resources”. Georgia Payne, Support Enforcement Officer (SEO) recalls Commissioner Turetsky pointing out that “We do damage when we abuse our strong tools in the wrong circumstances.” The Commissioner followed with an example: If an order is too high, it can cause child support agencies to sometimes enforce too hard, which can cause the client to go underground or to commit crimes. This can lead to possible prison time, creating new barriers to employment which can impact earning potential. Sometimes there is no recovery for these families.



Commissioner Vicky Turetsky (at right) and DCS SEOs talk about right size orders.

Child Support represents about 45% of a poor family's budget. The re-alignment and coordination of reentry efforts from State, Federal, and Community partners are necessary so that we can examine the big picture and find alternative avenues.

“We must embrace those re-entering or we continue to encourage behavior that compromises public safety.” - Vicky Turetsky

The Division of Child Support's (DCS) Director, Wally McClure agrees. “We need to think that our mission of transforming lives includes the noncustodial parent. To improve the life of the child is to improve the life of everybody, not just collecting child support and meeting federal or local goals.” This is one reason the DCS Alternative Solutions Program is so important. The program aims to work closely with noncustodial parents struggling with barriers to self-sufficiency, ultimately limiting their ability to become employed.



Ted Thornton, Kevin Semler, Ron Hawk and Carol Bryant

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2014 SUMMER INSTITUTE REENTRY CONFERENCE (continued)

Other highlights of the conference include two excellent panel presentations that focused on serving American Indians. Cheryl Miller highlighted the Port Gamble S'Klallam's successful program to assist tribal members overcome barriers to employment due to criminal history. In the other tribal presentation, Etene Taimalelaji (Muckleshoot Tribe), Candi Turningrobe (South Puget Intertribal Planning Agency, "SPIPA"), and Alma Goddard (Seattle Indian Health Board, "SIHB"), shared information about their programs that support individuals in reentry and help reduce recidivism. Etene shared that Muckleshoot's Father's Matter Program includes native and mainstream strategies for parenting, and focuses on ways fathers can be more involved in their children's lives. Candi focused on services offered through the SPIPA Tribal TANF program, and Alma provided information about SIHB services and shared that every person is born whole, complete, and sacred.

DCS has over 15,600 tribal cases involving twenty-nine (29) federally recognized tribes in Washington State. Sustaining and strengthening state/tribal relationships and partnerships allows families to receive reentry services that are culturally relevant.



Cheryl Miller and Jeannie Bowen

"Wow! It was amazing how many resources were at this event. I am excited to see the positive changes that will come from such a meeting. The conference was an awesome opportunity to learn more about 'How to Stay in the Game'."
Carol Van Arnam, Support Enforcement Officer - Wenatchee Field Office

The second day of the conference, Commissioner Turetsky provided opening remarks. She reinforced the need to network with other states, federal entities, and community agencies to learn more about their best practices and to renew/foster sustainable partnerships that are responsive to the ever-changing needs of individuals and families that need reentry services. She also provided a comprehensive overview of the reasons why it is imperative that we join in a collaborative approach and combine our efforts to combat the stigma of reentry and homelessness in order to provide a holistic approach to services that provide life skills and family support which promotes self-sufficiency.

The afternoon included many more workshops and an awards ceremony. The Exceptional Service to the Community Award was awarded to the Division of Child Support's Andrew Chin, Child Support Program Manager, Sylvia Flores, District Manager, and Nancy Mathieson, OCSE Child Support Program Specialist.

The award is not intended to honor any one specialized service program or individual, but rather to recognize instances where a broad-based collaboration has developed between the nominee(s) and the community served.

The leadership of Ron Hawk, SEO 4 in the Seattle Field Office, and others demonstrate the outstanding level of commitment to the community and child support program to "Stay in the Game".



Levi Fisher, Andrew Chin, Sylvia Flores, Nancy Mathieson, and Vicky Turetsky

BENEFITS OF APPOINTING TRIBAL LIAISONS AND SPECIALIZING TRIBAL CASELOADS

BY SAUNDRA CHEEK, CHILD SUPPORT PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR

Twenty Division of Child Support (DCS) Tribal Liaisons manage over 15,606 DCS tribal cases involving 29 Federally recognized tribes in Washington State. The benefits of a specialized caseload allow DCS staff to develop relationships with their local tribes and serve as the local contact for tribes and tribal members.

DCS Tribal Liaisons receive additional state/tribal relations training including: [Government-to-Government training](#) offered by the Washington State Governor's Office of Indian Affairs and the on-line [Working Effectively with Tribal Governments training](#). Tribal Liaisons are familiar with local tribal processes and agreements, are the local resource on DCS Tribal policies, and they serve as the point of contact with local tribes.



DCS Statewide Tribal Liaison Team

DCS tribal cases include:

- Non-custodial parents (NCPs) who are members of one of the twenty-nine Federally-recognized Tribes in Washington State.
- NCPs employed by a tribe.
- Individuals who receive services from a Federally-funded Tribal TANF or Child Support program in Washington State.
- Individuals included under a Cooperative Agreement.

Working government-to-government often requires close communication with a tribe before taking certain child support actions. Having specialized caseloads with Tribal Liaisons who have received specialized training facilitates the communication and collaboration with tribal partners needed to achieve the best results for tribal families. Tribal Liaisons also provide outreach services to interested tribes which further builds relationships with our tribal partners and allows Tribal Liaisons to meet face-to-face with tribal families.

The foundation for specializing tribal caseloads began 25 years ago:

- In 1989, Washington state Governor Booth Gardner and the Tribal Chairs of federally-recognized tribes in Washington State negotiated and signed a [Centennial Accord](#). This document formalized the government-to-government relationship for all parties to recognize and respect the sovereignty of the other. Each subsequent Governor has reaffirmed this commitment by Proclamation, and in 2013, this commitment was made into state law ([RCW 43.376](#)).
- The Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) [Administrative Policy 7.01](#), American Indian Policy, outlines DSHS' commitment to planning and service delivery to tribes and tribal communities. The Policy requires that DSHS Administrations assign Tribal Liaisons and partner with tribes to develop yearly plans that address communication, consultation, budgets, policies, and operational procedures to ensure programs and services are culturally relevant.
- Based on recommendations made by tribes in the early 1990's, DCS assigned tribal cases to DCS Tribal Liaisons so that they could serve as the local contacts for tribes and tribal members. The specialization of tribal cases also benefited DCS as designated Tribal Liaisons could exclusively focus on tribal cases and work government-to-government with local tribes.
- In 1997 tribal-specific legislation ([RCW 26.25](#)) was enacted into law. This legislation recognizes the sovereign relationship between the state and tribes, supports tribes operating child support programs, and encourages state/tribal cooperative agreements.

So, why does DCS appoint Tribal Liaisons and specialize tribal caseloads? **Because doing so strengthens state/tribal relationships and partnerships, and allows families to receive greatly improved and culturally-relevant child support services.**

Visit the [DCS Tribal Relations Website](#) for more information about DCS State/Tribal Relations and our [Partnerships with Tribes](#) over the past 25 years.

NCSEA - COMMON GROUND FOR THE MODERN FAMILY

By June Johnson, Child Support Program Administrator

Did you know child support laws existed in the 13 colonies and have existed in the states since the beginning of the nation's history? By the late 1800s, 11 states had made it a penal offense for a father to abandon or refuse to support his minor children. Typically, without child support, families had to rely on public assistance and they struggled to achieve and maintain self-sufficiency.

It was not until the 1900s that the American courts addressed the problem of dependency among single mothers and their children by creating a legally enforceable child support duty. This included the establishment of the partnership between the federal government (Aid for Dependent Children and Families-AFDC) and the states by providing apportionments to those states which adopted plans approved by the Secretary of Health and Human Services. The states in turn provided a minimum monthly subsistence payment to families meeting established requirements. This led gradually to child support enforcement, as a way to reduce expenditure of AFDC.

Challenges to enforce child support across state lines brought about the Uniform Reciprocal Enforcement of Support Act (URESA) which was enacted in all 50 States, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. URESA provided a system for interstate enforcement of support orders without requiring the person or legal representative to go to the state in which the noncustodial parent resided.

From the expansion of technology, cost recovery and law enforcement roots, we have emerged as a family-support program providing significant income for vulnerable families. In fiscal year 2013, the program collected \$32 billion nationally, served 17 million children and for every dollar spent the child support program collected \$5.31. While welfare cost-recovery still remains an important function of the program, its other benefits include the promotion of self-sufficiency and parental responsibility.

This brings us to the 2014 National Child Support Enforcement Association (NCSEA) annual conference "*Common Ground for the Modern Family*" held August 11-13, in Portland, Oregon. Over 700 individuals attended the conference from across the country and around the world.

Conference attendees networked with other states, federal entities, and

community agencies to learn more about the variations in child support programs from a national and global perspective, increasing participants' knowledge and understanding of the ever-changing structure of the family unit. The conference provided an opportunity for professional development and resulted in a wonderful experience for attendees.

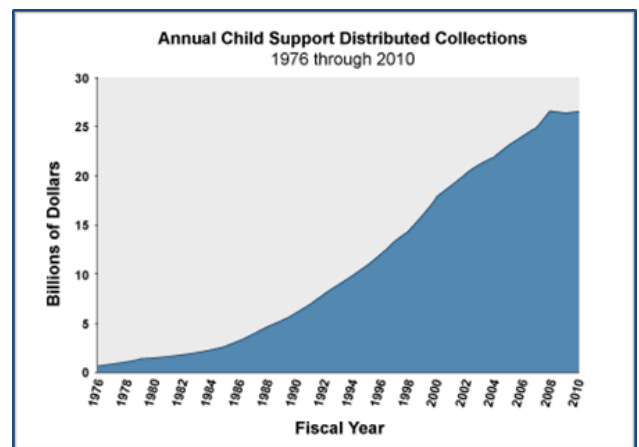
One of the outstanding benefits of having NCSEA so close to Washington State this year is that we had several opportunities to share child support program issues and processes with international visitors.

On the Friday before the NCSEA conference, visitors from New Zealand, Australia, Germany, Switzerland, Canada, Brazil, Sweden, Scotland, and Norway visited the Division of Child Support (DCS) Vancouver field office where staff gave a tour, explained our administrative processes, showcased new programs, and exchanged ideas.

Special thanks to everyone that helped make that visit a grand success: From the DCS Vancouver Field Office – Donna Collins, Kirsten Jenicek, Amy Sehl, Tina Burnquist, Dieter Jacobs, Brandon Glover, Oliver Redman, Janet Hatfield, and Delores Becker; and from DCS Headquarters - Wally McClure, Rena Hect and Sharon Redmond.

The first day of the conference was packed with opportunities to network with other child support professional and to attend workshops that continued to create awareness about the changing dynamics of the modern family as well as the child support program.

One such workshop was the Veteran Child Support Courts – A New Type of Problem Solving Court. Most veterans are strengthened by their military service, but the combat experience has unfortunately left a growing number of veterans with Post-Traumatic Stress and Traumatic Brain Injury. One in six veterans who served in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom suffers from a substance abuse issue. Research continues to draw a link between substance abuse and combat-related mental illness. Left untreated, mental health disorders common among veterans can directly lead to involvement in the criminal justice system.



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NCSEA (continued)

Veterans Treatment Courts allow jurisdictions to serve a large segment of the justice-involved veteran population, providing a holistic approach towards veterans in the criminal arenas. Veterans Court judges handle numerous veterans' cases and are supported by a strong, interdisciplinary team. They are in a much better position to exercise discretion and effectively respond than a judge who only occasionally hears a case involving a veteran defendant. Veteran Treatment Court judges are also more familiar with issues that a veteran may be struggling with. The veteran is required to attend regular court appearances, mandatory treatment sessions, and frequent and random testing for substance use. Veterans respond favorably to this structured environment given their past experiences in the Armed Forces.

Stand Down events are held across the country, and serve as a one-stop-shop bringing together community-based organizations, programs, and benefits. Since 2008, Stand Down events in San Diego have included a child support court as part of the services offered, which resulted in veterans being more involved in their child support cases, and in some instances, their children's lives. Shortly after in 2009, Washington's Thurston County Veterans Court held its inaugural hearing. Currently, the State of Washington has seven counties that offer Veteran Treatment Courts: Clark, King, Kitsap, Pierce, Spokane, Stevens, and Thurston.

The second day of the conference was just as engaging and interesting.

Since 1989, federal regulations require each state to provide presumptive guidelines (formulas) for determining the amount of child support awards and to review their guidelines at least once every four years. States developed their guidelines based on similar premises and guideline models and relied on a limited number of available economic studies on the cost of child-rearing. In the past 20 years, most states have made some change to their guidelines, but a few states have made no changes to their core formula/schedule for over 10 years.

Child support guidelines play an important role in the financial well-being of many children. In 2010, there were about 20 million children eligible for child support in the U.S. National research finds that on average, child support contributes to about 45% of a family's income among poor custodial families, and without it, child poverty would increase by 4.4%.

Child poverty rates in the U.S. are on the rise; about 23% of children in 2012 are living in families below the poverty line. Many low-income families are still struggling to recover from the recession. With fewer resources available from government programs, higher costs for housing and food, low income-families appear to stay at low-income levels. This is one reason why receiving child support is so important.

Director Wally McClure presented with panel members from Alameda County and Orange County, California in a session entitled "Sustaining High Performance ... Counting What's Important". The session explored the plateau in performance most states reached following the implementation of automation and what steps various child support agencies are taking to continuously improve their ability to serve families.

“ To improve the life of the child is to improve the life of everyone, not just collect child support and meet federal or local goals. ”

Wally McClure, Director



Kimberly Curtis – Uniform Interstate Family Support Act (UIFSA) & Beyond: Searching for Common Ground for Mobile Families

Washington State DCS had several other presenters at this year's conference including:

- Kimberly Curtis, Policy Attorney, who presented "Uniform Interstate Family Support Act (UIFSA) & Beyond: Searching for Common Ground for Mobile Families."

The purpose of UIFSA is to establish a one-order system. Prior to UIFSA there was a multi-order system whereby a family could have several orders of support in effect and enforcement was dependent upon where the noncustodial (NCP) parent was residing at the time. This system was confusing for enforcement purposes, especially when trying to determine the amount, if any, of arrears owing. UIFSA now requires that there be one order.

(continued on Page 12)

NCSEA (continued)

Families can now rely on one order and enforcement of that order without undue delay when the NCP moves from one state to another.

Additionally, UIFSA provides where and when an order can be modified, which states' laws will apply in certain situations, and various civil provisions such as special rules of evidence.

- Nancy Koptur, Policy Attorney, presented “Cultivating Competence Working with Inter-Jurisdictional Families.” Attendees learned about the impacts of language barriers, cultural differences, currency conversion and record discrepancies that impact the collection of arrears as well as current support.
- Matthew Parascand and Janina Oestreich, Management Analysts with DCS, wrapped up the conference by presenting, “Are We There Yet? The Road to Strategic Planning.” Once the Strategic Plan has been developed the next question is “How Do We Get There?” Strategic Planning is the core work of an organization. Without a strategic framework you don't know where you are going or why you are going there.



Nancy Koptur (left) – Cultivating Competence Working with Inter-Jurisdictional Families



Matthew Parascand (center), Janina Oestreich (next to Matt) – Are We There Yet? The Road to Strategic Planning

Many organizations are experiencing budget cuts, reduced workforce, and coupled with the changing dynamics of the economic forecasts a more strategic approach is needed. A strategic roadmap will assist with documenting the mission, vision and core values.

This year's conference definitely fulfilled the opportunity to explore best practices, discuss innovative ideas, cultivate new relationships, while incorporating fun activities. Next year's NCSEA conference will be held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, August 10-12, 2015.

Find out more about NCSEA and future conferences by clicking this link <http://www.ncsea.org/>.