



National Council of Child Support Directors June Meeting in Little Rock Arkansas

Last month, child support leaders from around the country convened in Arkansas, “The Natural State,” for the annual conference of the National Council of Child Support Directors (NCCSD). Arkansas IV-D Director and NCCSD President Dan McDonald warmly welcomed the attendees, and opened portions of the meeting to federal and private sector partners. The topics of these open plenary sessions included:

- A report by OCSE Commissioner Vicki Turetsky
- Oklahoma’s Healthy Families Program
- Predictive Analytics
- An update from the National Council of State Legislatures (NCSL)
- Updates from State IV-D Directors/Deputy Directors around the country on challenges and activities in their respective states

OCSE Commissioner Turetsky’s Report

Commissioner Turetsky began by recalling the Report to Congress issued twenty years ago by the U.S. Commission on Interstate Child Support. Many of the recommendations in this Report were enacted in the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), and the 1998 Child Support Performance Incentive Act (CSPIA). She spoke of the impact of these two pieces of legislation on the IV-D program, and addressed how the program has evolved from a cost recovery program to a family support program.



Through additional research, evidence-based strategies, consensus building, and partnerships with stakeholders, the program is still transforming, and needs to continue to do so. The IV-D program is very successful, but the challenge today is for the program to be perceived as “fair,” to take steps to prevent the accumulation of debt, and to customize services for families. The Commissioner encouraged state IV-D agencies to continue to move toward the Family Centered Services depicted in the “Bubble Chart,” while maintaining the focus on the core mission of collecting support for families.

Oklahoma’s Healthy Families Program

Oklahoma IV-D Director, Gary Dart, provided an overview of Oklahoma’s initiative to change the culture of the program to achieve the best results for families. Oklahoma took the “Bubble Chart” concept and rolled it all into a program to promote and support “healthy families,” which are described as follows: “Healthy Families work together to

provide an environment where their children are physically, emotionally, and financially secure. Healthy Families know how to access resources to meet current and future needs.”

Gary explained how Oklahoma created its program within the parameters of federal law and regulations. Each program and its caseworkers make choices every day, but the ultimate decision is whether the outcome will be a healthier family. (For more details, see Gary Dart’s column in the [June 2012 CSQ](#).)

Predictive Analytics

Presenters Alisha Griffin, New Jersey IV-D Director; Wally McClure, Washington IV-D Director; Asaph Glasser, MEF Associates on behalf of Washington State; and John White, Deloitte Consulting on behalf of Pennsylvania described tools used by their respective state’s IV-D programs to analyze data, predict behavior, and improve program performance.

Washington State

Wally McClure explained that Washington State has undergone various iterations of its data warehouse. One of the features of the most recent versions is a “contempt prediction tool” that uses a complex algorithm to score a single case or a group of cases as to the potential for a successful contempt action. Using criteria such as payment and earnings history, and employment/unemployment history, cases are scored and assigned to one of the four quadrants that rank cases from a poor to good choice for a contempt action. Another feature, though seldom used, allows caseworkers to categorize cases as “Need Help.” These difficult cases can then be accessed and worked by any caseworker in the office.

The topic of Asaph Glosser’s presentation was a recent partnership between the Washington Child Support program and the University of Washington funded by an 1115 grant. The project involves leveraging local research resources to support program improvement, with a rigorous test of enforcement approaches (experimental design, effect of case characteristics), and an emphasis on policy relevant tests. The goal is to increase the effectiveness of enforcement measures on hard to collect cases. Desired outcomes are policy and procedure changes, with a focus on new and innovative efforts.

Glosser emphasized the importance of “random assignment” and referred to it as “the gold standard.” Random assignment can show what would have happened in the absence of an intervention. Other benefits of random assignment are that it is easy to interpret, and easy to explain the results to key stakeholders. It is also cost effective with minimal impact on staff.

New Jersey

Alisha Griffin introduced New Jersey's Business Information (BI) Portal. The BI provides a high performance, managed reporting environment that empowers users by providing current information that enables them to make decisions. Business intelligence makes it easier to get the right information to the right people at the right time.

She cautioned the audience to "Be careful what you ask for." When she asked for the portal, she created a monster, which might be her! It was very demanding in terms of thinking, and changes both thinking about and managing the program. Griffin expects the BI portal to be a very effective tool with respect to improving customer service and service delivery. As a result of BI, New Jersey is revising its business model: it is moving fiscal services and establishing a customer service hotline to deliver a "concierge level" of services to clients.

New Jersey is now moving toward development of performance e-portals, which Griffin sees as a real benefit. This process entails reviewing all current performance areas and looking at cases in light of key performance indicators. For example, managers can use the tool to analyze employer performance and behavior with respect to response time for implementation of income withholding. As a result of a recent income withholding analysis, income withholding responses from employers jumped by 5.69% in the past sixty days.

Pennsylvania

John White began by providing an overview of "predictive analytics." He defined it as "a business solution that uses historical data to predict future outcomes." Analytics is a big term covering many areas: It includes operational reporting, queries, ad hoc performance reporting, analytical insights, innovation – predicting future behavior - using those tools to make better business decisions. Marketing companies are using analytics to market products and services – for example, every time we buy books on line, swipe grocery cards, data are captured. The Child Support Enforcement program will be using similar concepts. There is a big explosion in predictive analytics: information is immediately accessible; storage is cheap; algorithms are cheap; and open source programs are available.

Pennsylvania developed a model to predict the likelihood of someone's paying in three months from the establishment of the order. One aspect of the model is a payment score calculator. It includes five questions that need to be asked during the establishment conference, as well as fifteen prepopulated questions. During the establishment conference, the caseworker must input the responses to the five questions. The five questions caseworkers asked the NCP include: what is the NCP's monthly income, has there been an active income attachment, how many residential addresses has the NCP had in the past three years, how many employers has the NCP had in the past three years, and what is the approximate distance in miles between the

defendant and plaintiff. Caseworkers must fill this out before doing any guidelines calculations.

To make it easy for caseworkers, the scores fall into various quartiles. For example, the likelihood of an NCP's paying eighty percent of child support in the three months after the order is issued or modified is scored as follows: 1- very unlikely payor; 2- unlikely payor, 3- probable payor, and 4-payor. Scores are based on percentages of an NCP's likelihood of paying. The tool identifies cases that are ripe for early, tailored intervention, and recommends actions that can be taken to move the case toward payment. White believes this tool will bring incredible results.

Update by National Conference of State Legislatures

Senior Federal Affairs Council, Sheri Steisel, provided an update of child support issues under consideration by state legislatures, and reported on the NCSL contract with OCSE. The purpose of the contract is to work intensively with state lawmakers on child support, and talk with them about how the IV-D program fits in with other issues, such as child poverty, that lawmakers are struggling with in this economy.

NCSL will hold a [Legislative Summit](#) in Chicago on August 6 to reconsider policy positions the organization has taken on child support and other human service issues. State legislative leaders will decide which legislators attend, but in most cases, the summit will be attended by chairs of state Human Service Legislative committees. (NCSL will provide a report on the Summit for inclusion in one of the upcoming CSQs.)

Under the guidance of NCSL Program Manager, Rochelle Finzel, NCSL is developing Child Support 101 and 301 training curricula, as legislators have varying degrees of understanding of the IV-D program. Steisel pointed out that many seasoned legislators are retiring, and that approximately twenty-five percent (25%) of 7,380 state legislative seats will change in the 2012 elections. IV-D directors will need to identify new legislative child support champions. NCSL will try to help identify champions, and encourage legislators to contact their IV-D directors to discuss the child support program. Steisel predicts a very difficult session ahead, as state and federal legislators look at budget cuts, and where the child support program fits.

The [NCSL website](#) contains a plethora of information that might be useful to child support agencies, including lists of members of its committees, and child support legislation states have considered.

Updates from State IV-D Directors/Deputy Directors around the Country

State child support directors and managers provided an overview of activities and/or challenges underway in their respective states. Two questions were posed to the state participants. Each participant responded to one of the two questions.

The first group responded to the question: *What have you done or are doing to implement activities like those identified on the “bubble chart” and what kind of issues and/or benefits have you encountered?*

- Mississippi is working on access and visitation, incarceration, and domestic violence issues.
- Washington is adopting the [Texas Parenting and Paternity Awareness \(PAPA\)](#) project in schools, as well as working on worker training, and domestic violence issues.
- The Healthy Families project, described above by Gary Dart, is Oklahoma’s current focus and the next step is to measure outcomes.
- Texas has a military 1115 grant entitled [“HEROES”](#) (Help Establishing Responsible Orders to Ensure Support for Children in Military Families), as well as engaging fathers through its ongoing [PAPA](#) program, and learned that an unexpected benefit is that the 6,000 teachers involved have turned into public relations representatives for the program. Texas is also engaging fathers from birth through partnerships with WIC staff, juvenile justice, teen programs, community programs, prenatal, and clinics.
- Nebraska has a teen parent outreach program in its Omaha schools conducted by its contractors; worked with courts for custody and visitation; and reached out to the county jail and state penitentiary to speak about child support.
- The State of Nevada and Clark County have worked on engaging fathers from birth, and access and visitation.

The second group of presenters responded to the question, *“Hold ’em, fold ’em or moving on out”.....which best describes where you are in the operation of your program? Tell us what you are facing presently and what are you looking forward to in the next year.*

- Nevada has a pilot program in its 8th Judicial District to establish a second court, and plans to centralize intergovernmental cases of the State and Clark County effective July 1, 2012.
- After scrutinizing its budget, Tennessee has been able to fund a few additional employees, and has implemented a contract with the District Attorneys that incorporates performance measures. The program is also looking at scanning and centralizing documents and mail, as well as implementing data warehouses and performance analytics.
- West Virginia is trying to do more with less by leveraging technology. The state is investigating the upgrade of its old legacy system, nearing completion of its document imaging project, and exploring outbound calling.
- North Carolina has implemented cuts to its administrative budget by reducing office space, and consolidating all human service calls in its child support call center. The program is working on succession planning, as it is facing retirement of experienced personnel over the next five years.
- Kansas is focusing on the basics, as well as looking at an arrears forgiveness program that incorporates a college savings plan.

- Delaware is looking forward to completion of its new automated system, DECS, in October 2013, and also expects to implement a web-based payment system in the near future.
- Maine has just gone live with its new automated child support system, and is planning to implement a new payment processing system for its SDU.
- Louisiana is in the middle of a big reorganization, working on a new enterprise system with a common access front end to all systems. Imaging is also underway, as is a centralized document-processing center.
- North Dakota is facing an oil boom, which has increased the state population, and strained resources. (April 2012 edition of the CSQ has an article entitled [“Careful What You Wish For: Child Support in the Middle of an Oil Boom.”](#) which explains the impact of the boom on the IV-D program.) The program also completed a new hire project, resulting in a significant increase in reporting.
- Oregon is looking toward technology and vacancy savings to conserve resources. An [1115 grant](#) is being used to employer portal to allow the National Medical Support Notice (NMSN) to go out electronically, and the program also rolled out payments by debit credit card. The program is implementing specialized teams, establishing a cold case unit within a judgment resolution team, and looking at social networking as an investigative tool for the underground economy. A long-term project is to modernize the antiquated system.
- Wisconsin has lost experienced child support staff in the state and local offices and is exploring ways to move forward with the program. There are tribal IV-D programs in Wisconsin, which are excellent partners.
- Massachusetts is moving toward a statewide PEP, and considering replacement of its automated system, as well as introducing a data-modeling project.
- Michigan is moving toward an on-line intake/interview process for TANF recipients. This is expected to help alleviate the need for more intake workers, and assure information is complete before TANF grants are authorized.
- Idaho has assigned different offices for case initiation, maintenance, and enforcement. In addition, Idaho has a pay online option; despite a \$7.00 fee, this option has been very successful.
- Utah has sustained significant cuts to its program, and is focusing on efficiencies, including: document generation, on-line application, and increasing electronic payments to its SDU.
- Vermont prepared a Report to the Legislature entitled [“The Cost Benefit of Compliance of OCS Orders”](#). The report encourages courts to use alternatives to incarceration, and also discusses the Vocational Rehabilitation agency, which may be able to help qualifying NCPs.

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