



# Child Support Report

OFFICE OF CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT

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Margot Bean

## Here's To Another New Year

By **Margot Bean**  
*OCSE Commissioner*

**Donna Bonar**  
*OCSE Acting Deputy Commissioner*



Donna Bonar

**F**or some of us, the start of a new year offers an opportunity to make personal resolutions. Although the government operates according to the fiscal year, we thought we'd join in the spirit of the calendar year by giving you a list of several new year's resolutions for 2007 for the National Child Support Enforcement Program:

- We will increase national child support collections.
- We will work to more effectively prevent and manage arrears.
- We will increase the number of children served through Tribal child support programs.
- We will continue to improve international case processing through our work with The Hague, establishing bilateral agreements with other countries, and technical assistance.

- We will improve our customer service through implementing new technology, and maximizing use of current technology.
- We will expand the number of States using systems such as Query Interstate Cases for Kids (QUICK), electronic income withholding orders (eIWO), and electronic disbursement.
- We will increase the number of children who receive medical coverage, and set a standard to measure medical support.
- We will strive to improve and expand healthy marriage projects and the access and visitation program.

The above resolutions are the responsibilities of all OCSE central and regional office staff as we work to improve the lives of children and families. OCSE's work in these areas will be measured and must show quantitative results.

Whether or not you are involved in one of the aspects of the child support program mentioned above, all of us are members of a 60,000-plus team of child support professionals. Therefore, the success of the program depends on each of us.

Perhaps Abraham Lincoln said it best: "Always bear in mind that your own resolution to succeed is more important than any one thing."

Our best wishes for a healthy and happy new year! *CSR*

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[www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse)

## Ready, Set, 'Get It Started' DC's First Training Conference Re-Energizes CSSD Staff

By Elaine Blackman  
CSR Editor



Beaming with fervor and pride, Benidia Rice, Director of the District of Columbia's Child Support Services Division (CSSD), and staff behind the registration table warmly welcomed 200-plus attendees on Nov. 30 to the division's first (annual) training conference.

In charge of planning the conference was Cory Chandler, CSSD Policy and Training Section chief, who called it "a momentous occasion, with a theme that embodies what we try to do every day: empower families."



Above, from right, OCSE Commissioner Margot Bean, CSSD Director Benidia Rice, and CSSD staff member Justin Latus present local and national program updates at the District's first child support training conference on Nov. 30. In photo at left, Eboni Govan, holding bag, and Tanya Jones-Bosier welcome registrants, along with Cory Chandler, below on right, chief of CSSD's Policy and Training Section.



This fitting theme, Empowering Families: Let's Get It Started, signified a new beginning for the Division, to coincide with its many new initiatives, and the District's newly revised child support guidelines, to take effect April 1.

In her opening remarks, Rice presented an overview of CSSD's mission, recent accomplishments, and projects under way, including a Web-based calculator, stored value cards,



*See DC, next page*



Melvin Coleman, above, a policy writer with CSSD since 1981, is looking forward to the new child support guidelines that “will offer a more equitable approach to treating parents and families.” Below, from left, are customer service staff members Yvette Marbury-Long and Willis Jones, and enforcement specialist Camille Anderson. Marbury-Long appreciates that customer service staff now can view parents’ payment checks on the computer screen.



automated license revocation, and document scanning—an effort Rice hopes will produce paperless files within the next 2 years.

Director Rice also congratulated staff for their continued hard work, and talked about a collaboration with a local university to offer a certification program for CSSD staff.

Following Rice, OCSE Commissioner Margot Bean likewise thanked all attendees, and commended them for the Division’s many achievements and improved performance on national measures. She further announced several national initiatives for the coming year.

The Commissioner also took the opportunity to again congratulate Tawanna Williams to whom she presented the Commissioner’s Award for Exemplary Customer Service at OCSE’s 16th National Training Conference in September. She recognized several additional staff members for their customer service, and others for their efforts to reach out to diverse populations.

Rice later said that “staff thoroughly enjoyed the conference and are fired up to move onward and upward in the new fiscal year!” *CSR*

## DC Partnership to Pilot Fathering Court

DC’s Child Support Services Division (Office of the Attorney General) joined several stakeholders in the District’s Fatherhood Initiative collaboration on Dec. 5 to plan implementation of a Fathering Court pilot project, set to begin this spring.

The project’s objective is to increase the number of noncustodial fathers with support orders contributing to the well-being of their children, as measured by compliance with outstanding child support orders, while increasing contact with their children and improving coparenting relationships.

To achieve this, the court will provide noncustodial parents with the tools they need—education, counseling, and employment resources—to become financially and emotionally responsible for their children.

Parents will be referred to the Fathering Court, with participation voluntary. Classes will end with a graduation and an offer to join a lifetime Fathers’ Fraternity.

For further information, contact Angela Thornton Harvey at [angela.harvey@dc.gov](mailto:angela.harvey@dc.gov) or 202-724-2114.



## Twenty-Third WICSEC Conference Fair's Well in Seattle

**By Kathy Sokolik**  
*Marin County, CA*

*Department of Child Support Services*

Another WICSEC (Western Interstate Child Support Enforcement Council) conference has come and gone, and by all accounts, this year's event, complete with its *interjurisdictional fair*, was a resounding success.

Over 700 attendees representing more than 70 jurisdictions met in Seattle, Nov. 12-16, to learn, network, and have a little fun. The conference offered 48 workshops and 5 plenary sessions, covering such diverse topics as ethics in the public sector and partnering with the courts.

OCSE Commissioner Margot Bean helped kick off the conference, responding to questions about both the local and national levels of the program at an *Ask the Commissioner* plenary.

At 23, WICSEC is a relatively young organization, but we are long on tradition: One of my favorites is our annual auction and raffle in support of a local charity. This year we were proud to write a check to TeamChild, Advocacy for Youth, for \$15,600—a WICSEC record, thanks to the generous donors and buyers.



**Kathy Sokolik**  
WICSEC President

WICSEC also is an innovative organization, as we hosted the first child support *interjurisdictional fair* at last year's conference in San Diego. We've received positive reviews of this year's even bigger fair, so look for its return at the 24th conference in Boise, coming Sept. 30 through Oct. 4. We'll start posting conference information in late spring on our Web site: [www.WICSEC.org](http://www.WICSEC.org). *CSR*



**Left: WICSEC secretary Paula Brown (CO)**

**Right: Sue Bailey (FL), WICSEC's first Lifetime Board Member, presents the Honorary Life Membership Award to Dave Hogan, consultant for MAXIMUS in Federal Way, WA.**



**Left: Kathie McCulley (ID) and Peter Genova (NJ)**

**Right: David Stillman, Washington State child support director, and Karen Colburn (OR)**



# SSA's New Garnishment System Delivers Results

By Lynnetta Thompson  
OCSE

With 48,545 newly established orders, 17,923 terminations, more than 60,000 changes to existing orders, and millions of dollars processed and forwarded to State Disbursement Units since its inception, the Social Security Administration's new child support garnishment system definitely packs a punch!

On March 7, 2006, SSA implemented its new garnishment system, the Court Order Garnishment System (COGS), to improve its ability to respond to income withholding orders (IWOs) from child support agencies. As with the implementation of most new systems, SSA faced a few unexpected challenges, but through the determination of its staff and the continuous collaboration with its partners, SSA's garnishment system has provided cost savings to the agency and immediate benefits to the child support program.

In addition to the statistics reported above, the month of October boasted 204,032 processed checks to SDUs totaling more than \$29.3 million, and 10,845 checks to individuals and courts totaling more than \$1.9 million. SSA

also attached 1,190 lump sum payments, resulting in an additional \$1.9 million to children and families.

Recognizing the benefits of processing child support payments electronically, SSA has begun partnering with States to distribute payments via electronic funds transfer (EFT). In October, payments totaling approximately \$1.6 million were submitted via EFT to Illinois and Michigan. SSA is collaborating with 18 other States to begin converting child support payments to EFT and hopes to work with more States in the near future.

As SSA works to improve processing through COGS, States are reminded to contact their SSA field offices for assistance with child support cases affected by this process. Should a response from the field office become significantly delayed, this e-mail address has been established to assist States: [ssacogsissues@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:ssacogsissues@acf.hhs.gov). Please **do not** include any Social Security numbers when sending your request for assistance through e-mail.

Congratulations to SSA for a job well done!

*\*Statistics as of Oct. 20, 2006 CSR*



## In Focus



**SEASONAL SUPPORT:** Children sang holiday songs, opened gifts, and got a visit from Santa when volunteers from the Tulare County, CA, Department of Child Support Services treated kindergartners at Ducor Union Elementary (Porterville) to a morning of holiday cheer at the Department's fourth annual Letters to Santa event Dec. 11. "Enhancing the well-being of children is the mission of our Department," says Director Peggy Anderson, who hopes efforts like this help the public learn more about the positive impact of the child support system. Tulare staff conducted a similar 15th annual event with Goshen Elementary in Visalia on Dec. 14.

*In this space, Child Support Report would like to spotlight photos from events related to the child support program. To be considered for publication, please e-mail a high-resolution photo taken in the last 3 months to: [elaine.blackman@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:elaine.blackman@acf.hhs.gov).*

## BENCHmarks

# Wisconsin Judge Takes Rehnquist Award



Judge Brunner

**J**udge Edward R. Brunner of Barron County, WI, was honored at a U.S. Supreme Court ceremony on Nov. 16, after being named recipient of the 2006 William H. Rehnquist Award

for Judicial Excellence by the National Center for State Courts.

Judge Brunner is known for his dedication to community collaboration and outreach. His innovative initiatives such as promoting restorative justice and improving relations between State and Tribal courts are

recognized as national models.

Jacquelyn Pische, Child Support Director of Forest County Potawatomi Tribe in Wisconsin, says, “Judge Brunner’s forward thinking in drafting the Teague Protocol in Wisconsin, bringing State and Tribal judges together to resolve interjurisdictional issues, has had a great impact on the Tribal and State IV-D agencies in the 10th District. Thanks to Judge Brunner’s work, our IV-D program now can provide quality child support services to the community.”

One of the most prestigious judicial honors in the country, the Rehnquist Award is presented annually to a State court judge who exemplifies the highest level of judicial excellence, integrity, fairness, and professional ethics.

## PSOC News

# Parent Pays Up In Three Cases, Two States

**A**s of November 2006, two families in Virginia and one family in Colorado have benefited from full restitution and future child support, totaling about \$381,750, from one defendant.

The Virginia orders amounted to about \$271,500 owed, plus \$18,000 in future support for one child, and about \$17,700 owed, plus \$1,350 in future support for another child. The Colorado order totaled about \$50,200 plus future support of \$23,000 for one child.

The cases resulted from investigations by the Project Save Our Children (PSOC) task force, including Assistant U.S. Attorney Sara Flannery, Eastern District of Virginia, and HHS Office of Inspector General Special Agent Paul Doyle, also of the Eastern District. The Colorado case was not referred to PSOC, however, it was addressed by the attorney in a plea agreement.

For further information about PSOC, contact OCSE Project Supervisor Nick Soppa at [nsoppa@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:nsoppa@acf.hhs.gov) or 202-401-4677.

# The Right Person

By Joe Bodmer  
OCSE

Every once in a while it is a good thing to stop, and take a look back over time at what works well, what could use improvement, and what just, well, should not be repeated. This is what the Carnegie Mellon Software Engineering Institute calls *Continuous Process Improvement*, one of many international standards the university has led the creation of across a spectrum of disciplines.

Recently, I did just that here in the Division of State and Tribal Systems. I looked back at past child support enforcement automation projects, and more specifically at those that had failed, to discover if there might be anything useful we can learn from them.

In looking at the failed projects of the eighties and nineties (none have failed since 1997), I principally focused on what common trait each of those projects in the eighties and nineties shared. To my chagrin, I found they all indeed did share one key ingredient, or more accurately, they all lacked one: None of the projects were led by experienced project management professionals.

In fact, in researching the organization of each failed project, what I found were efforts that were all too often directed by managers who, though well-intentioned, had no previous experience in information technology (IT), application development, or project management. This is not an indictment of the skills and abilities of these managers. After all, program managers can possess management, leadership, and administrative skills just as effective as any employed by successful project managers.

So what does differentiate the world of an IT project manager that makes it so unique from that of any other administrator? It is the unique nature of what is called the *project lifecycle*.

## Tech Talk

Project management is so much more than the ability to create a schedule and manage people to it.

Project management are also those activities that define, plan, control, execute, and monitor the work associated with actually building deliverables; in our case, in building a statewide, comprehensive child support enforcement system. It is this construction effort, this *project lifecycle*, which requires a specialized kind of management competency.

The planning, design, code, test, and installation of large, complex computer systems requires us to use staff professionally trained in the development of deliverables unique to each phase of a project's lifecycle. Not knowing

how to accomplish the project's lifecycle is all too often the critical difference between success and failure in an IT project, regardless of past managerial prowess.

This is not to suggest that project management is one of the dark sciences, unbeknownst to all but a few. However, neither is it an expertise that a project owner should assume will be readily acquired on-the-job. It is incumbent upon State program managers to assess the skill sets within their organization and decide whether they possess the necessary expertise. If not, it is critical that programs looking to build new or replacement child support systems go out and acquire knowledgeable, trained project management staff. There are a number of professional certifications that

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can give a IV-D program confidence that a particular individual possesses the project management expertise. One is called the *PMP* or *Project Management Professional* certification, an internationally recognized designation conferred by the Project Management Institute on individuals who, through testing and demonstrated career experience, possess proven project management skills.

Many universities today also are recognizing the need for professionals in the field, and offer specific, advanced graduate degrees in project management. Every major consulting firm, particularly those that focus on delivering information technology services, possess personnel with these and similar project management accreditations.

When we spend the tens and hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars building the next generation of child support systems, we would do well to remember the famous quote from Gene Kranz, Apollo 13 Flight Director: "Failure is not an option." With highly trained, qualified, and certified project management professionals helping you lead your next IT project, your odds of success will increase dramatically. The past proves it. *CSR*

## ***Child Support Report***

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