Strengthening Families Through Stronger Fathers Initiative: Process Evaluation Report

by

Tess G. Tannehill

Carolyn T. O'Brien

Elaine J. Sorensen

July 2009

Submitted to:
New York State Office of
Temporary and Disability Assistance
40 North Pearl Street
Albany, NY 12243

Submitted by:
The Urban Institute
2100 M Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20037

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not reflect the views of the Urban Institute, its board, or its funders.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary iv

Chapter 1. Introduction 1
- A. The Origins of the Initiative 1
- B. An Overview of the Initiative 3
- C. Methodology 7
- D. Scope of the Report 7

Chapter 2. Organizational Structure of the Pilots, Program Models, Staffing and Training 8
- A. Contracting Agencies 8
- B. Key Partners and How They Were Selected 8
- C. Program Models 12
- D. Pilot Staff and Training 15

Chapter 3. Recruitment, Eligibility, Enrollment, and Retention 19
- A. Recruitment: Referral Sources and Outreach Efforts 19
- B. Eligibility 23
- C. Enrollment: Issues and Goals 24
- D. Retention 27

Chapter 4. Program Services 28
- A. Overview of Services Provided 28
- B. Intake, Assessment, and Orientation 29
- C. Overall Case Management 30
- D. Employment-Related Services 30
- E. Parenting, Relationship, and Fatherhood Services 36
- G. Child Support-Related Services 46
- H. Financial Services 47
- I. Incentives for Enrollment and Retention 50
- J. Other Services 51

Chapter 5. Key Linkages with Other Partners 53
- A. Relationship with Local Child Support Agency 53
- B. Role of the Family Courts 55
- C. Relationship with Local Department of Labor, One-Stop, and JOBS Program 62

Chapter 6. Implementation Challenges and Lessons Learned 63
A. Start-up Issues 63
B. Ongoing Implementation Challenges 64
C. Recommendations and Lessons Learned 66
References 72
Appendix A. Site Profiles A-1
Appendix B. Detailed Descriptions of the Pilots' Key Partners B-1

Executive Summary

The New York State Legislature enacted the Strengthening Families Through Stronger Fathers Initiative in June 2006, which authorized the implementation of two innovative approaches to encourage low-income noncustodial parents to find work, pay child support, and improve their parenting skills. The first provision of the legislation authorized funding for pilot programs in five sites to provide intensive employment and other supportive services to low-income noncustodial parents (NY Social Services Law § 335-c). The second provision established a state refundable Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) for noncustodial parents with low earnings who pay the full amount of their current child support obligation in a given year and are otherwise eligible for the credit (NY Tax Law § 606 (d-1)).

The New York Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) is responsible for administering the Strengthening Families Through Stronger Fathers Initiative. OTDA contracted with five organizations to operate pilot programs based in four cities – Buffalo, Jamestown, Syracuse, and New York City. These five organizations established contractual partnerships with other community organizations to provide direct services to noncustodial parents enrolled in the pilots, and in some cases, provided these services themselves.

As stipulated by statute, the pilots target noncustodial parents receiving public assistance or with income at or below 200% of the federal poverty level who are: unemployed or working less than 20 hours a week; have a child support order payable through a New York support collection unit or have had paternity established for a child and have a court proceeding initiated in New York to obtain an order of child support; and receiving, or the custodial parent is receiving, child support services through a social services district in New York. In addition, OTDA specified that the pilots limit enrollment to noncustodial parents between the ages of 16 and 45.

OTDA contracted with the Urban Institute to conduct a multiyear process and outcomes evaluation of the Strengthening Families Through Stronger Fathers Initiative. This is the third of several reports that will be completed by the Urban Institute as part of the evaluation. This report presents cross-site findings from the process study of the pilot programs that were implemented as part of the Initiative. Information for this report was collected during site visits to each of the five pilot sites conducted during June and July 2008. Consequently, this report reflects the status of program operations as they existed at that time and does not reflect changes that may have occurred since that time. Discussions were held with nearly 100 administrators and staff from the contracting agencies and the key partners involved with each program, including community-based organizations, government agencies (including county Departments of Social Services (DSS), local Offices of Child Support Enforcement, and Departments of Labor), and the judicial system. Observations of training sessions, workshops, classes, court proceedings, staff meetings, and other staff-client interactions (e.g., intake sessions) were also conducted during the site visits to the pilot sites. Program documentation such as proposals, contracts, curricula, training materials, and monthly narrative reports were also reviewed.

The Strengthening Families Through Stronger Fathers Initiative Pilot Programs

- *DADS Program* at Erie Community College (ECC), *Buffalo*
- *Strengthening Families Initiative* at the University of Buffalo Educational Opportunity Center (EOC), *Buffalo*
- *Strengthening Families Initiative*, Chautauqua County Department of Social Services, *Jamestown*
- *Parent Success Initiative*, Onondaga-Cortland-Madison Board of Cooperative Educational Services (OCM-BOCES), *Syracuse*
- *Fatherhood Program* at Seedco, *New York City*
- *Dads Embracing Fatherhood* at STRIVE, *New York City*

Organizational Structure of the Pilots

OTDA selected three types of organizations to serve as contracting agencies for the initiative—two government agencies (i.e., County Departments of Social Services (DSSs)), two private non-profit workforce development organizations, and one quasi-school district. The contracting agencies are responsible for the overall contractual and fiscal management of the pilot programs. The selected agencies are all well-established organizations within their communities and have considerable experience serving low-income families.

All of the contracting agencies established formal relationships with other community organizations to provide case management and employment services to pilot participants. In New York City, the two contracting agencies (Seedco and STRIVE) provide case management and employment services to pilot participants directly; however, they also contract with other community-based organizations to provide these services in parts of the city that they do not serve. In contrast, the contracting agencies for the upstate sites do not provide case management and employment services directly to pilot participants; instead, they contract with other organizations in the community to provide these services.

With the exception of the Erie County DSS, all of the contracting agencies established formal relationships with other organizations or individuals to provide a variety of other services to pilot participants. Through these contracts, the pilots are able to provide participants with access to, for example, parenting and relationship building, legal, financial, nutrition, and mental health services. Chautauqua, OCM-BOCES, and Seedco contract with organizations to provide these services, while STRIVE opted to contract with individuals.

Program Models

All of the pilots deliver services to pilot participants using a one-on-one case management approach. However, the pilot programs utilize four distinct organizational structures, or program models, through which these programs operate and services are delivered. These program models

are: the DSS-low involvement model, the DSS-high involvement model, the community-based partner model, and the project office model.

DSS-Low Involvement Model. The Erie County DSS implemented the DSS-low involvement model, in which the County DSS is the contracting and fiscal agent for the pilot, but does not play a strong leadership role in program operations. The Erie County DSS contracted with two higher educational institutions – the Erie County Community College (ECC) and the University of Buffalo Educational Opportunity Center (EOC) – to operate separate pilot programs in Erie County. The project coordinator position at this site is filled by a senior administrator in the County DSS, but no grant funds were allocated to pay for this position. Both Erie County pilot programs also share a primary contact within the Child Support Division of the County DSS, but this individual does not monitor or provide regular oversight for the day-to-day operations of the programs. Rather, pilot staff contact this individual on an as-needed basis to obtain case level child support information for pilot participants.

DSS-High Involvement Model. The Chautauqua County DSS adopted the DSS-high involvement model, in which the County DSS is not only the contracting agency and fiscal agent for the pilot, but also actively manages the program. A child support supervisor works half-time as the project coordinator for this site and 50 percent of his salary if paid for by the OTDA grant. Meetings of key supervisory staff from all of the program partners are held each month where issues and concerns are discussed. The child support supervisor leads these meetings and uses them, along with day-to-day contact with the partners, to provide oversight for the pilot. Because the Chautauqua County program only has one employment/case management service provider, consistency of employment service delivery is not an issue here, but other issues arise with regard to the operation of the program that the child support supervisor works to help resolve. Child support staff also flag potential participants from the caseload for referral by the Family Court to the pilot program. Once cases are flagged by child support staff, child support attorneys recommend that Family Court magistrates make referrals to the pilot program. Family Court magistrates then make the final decision regarding the referral.

Community-Based Partner Model. The two New York City pilots, Seedco and STRIVE, operate the community-based partner model. Unlike the DSS models described above, these contracting agencies provide employment services themselves, but also contract with other local non-profit community-based organizations to provide these services to pilot participants in areas of the city that they do not serve. The community-based partner model takes advantage of the strengths of Seedco and STRIVE, which have robust administrative and fiscal infrastructures to manage and operate large-scale programs, enabling their community-based partners to focus more on providing responsive and direct employment services. This service delivery model expands the reach of Seedco and STRIVE's programs by enabling them to serve noncustodial parents in multiple communities across New York City.

Project Office Model. OCM-BOCES, the contracting agency for the pilot in Syracuse, employs the project office model. The project office model is similar to the community-based partner model, but is distinct because the contracting agency (i.e., OCM-BOCES), which provides fiscal oversight and general management for the pilot, does not also provide direct services. Like Seedco and STRIVE, OCM-BOCES contracts with community-based

organizations to provide employment services to pilot participants. However, these organizations are the only employment service sites for the pilot. OCM-BOCES also contracts with two individuals, an experienced project coordinator and intake specialist, to manage the program's project office, located separately from the OCM-BOCES offices. Project office staff are responsible for coordinating the day-to-day operations of the pilot, including assisting with outreach and recruitment, intake orientations, providing uniform training for new and existing staff, and providing oversight, accountability, and auditing for the pilot's direct service partners to ensure consistency and quality of service.

Recruitment: Referral Sources and Outreach Efforts

Unlike many previous fatherhood initiatives, these pilot programs met or nearly met their enrollment goals and some far exceeded their enrollment goals. Pilot staff used a variety of referral sources and outreach methods to recruit participants, some of which changed as the programs evolved and matured over time. All of the pilots received some referrals from the Family Court, although the proportion of all referrals originating from this source varied. Some programs relied almost exclusively on the Family Court to meet their enrollment goals (e.g., ECC), while others at least initially focused more on referrals from other sources and/or their own outreach efforts. Seedco's approach to identify and recruit low-income noncustodial parents from the high-volume One-Stop Center they operate was successful. STRIVE—EHES and its partner organization Fortune Society regularly recruited pilot participants from within their organizations. OCM-BOCES relied upon television advertisements during the first 18 months of the initiative, which project staff felt was a key recruitment tool.

All sites developed flyers that described available program services and distributed them at various locations throughout their communities. These locations included, for example, local child support offices, Family Court facilities, One-Stop Workforce Career Centers, drug and alcohol treatment centers, Planned Parenthood offices, job fairs, churches, parole offices, and other locations frequented by members of the target population. Pilot program staff also made in-person outreach presentations to numerous organizations with contacts and interest in the population eligible for program services.

Some of the pilot programs have outreach personnel or departments dedicated specifically to recruitment efforts for all programs and activities that are funded through other non-OTDA grant sources. Other sites have high level staff who use grant funds to help their project partners recruit participants. Some pilot staff indicated that both of these strategies may have helped them meet their enrollment goals.

Eligibility and Enrollment Issues

The statute authorizing the fatherhood initiative stipulates specific eligibility criteria for enrollment in the pilot programs. However, the extent to which the pilots adhered to these eligibility criteria appears to have varied by site. For example, pilot staff in Chautauqua County and at OCM-BOCES reported that they followed the OTDA eligibility criteria very closely. At the other extreme, STRIVE altered its eligibility criteria for program participation several times. Initially, STRIVE permitted its partners to enroll participants regardless of employment status.

They later directed partners to enroll only individuals who were employed. At the time of the site visits, OTDA had no mechanism in place to systematically monitor that the pilots were adhering to the eligibility criteria stipulated by statute. This limited the extent to which the pilots could be held accountable for following the eligibility criteria, particularly at sites that do not have internal monitoring.

Verifying that individual participants met the eligibility criteria for the pilot was also a challenge. In general, most sites relied to some degree on self-reported information to determine eligibility. In the fall of 2007, OTDA directed pilot staff to verify three child support-related eligibility criteria. Since many of the pilot participants in the Erie and Chautauqua County programs and at OCM-BOCES are court referrals and therefore meet the child support eligibility criteria, this was not a major issue for the three upstate pilot programs. In addition, staff at these sites can verify that participants meet the child support eligibility criteria through the key staff contacts that they have at their local child support agencies. However, at the time of the site visits, some New York City pilot staff indicated that they were unable to verify whether their participants had a child support case through the local child support agency in a timely and consistent manner.

Delays by OTDA in providing the pilots with second year funding created enrollment challenges for OCM-BOCES and STRIVE, the two sites whose first year contracts ended in 2007. OCM-BOCES's first year funding ended in October 2007, and as of July 2008, staff at this site had not received the second year funding that they anticipated from OTDA. OCM-BOCES staff reported that when they received verbal confirmation from OTDA in July 2008 that they would receive funding for their second and third years, they were one week away from laying off staff. STRIVE's first year funding ended in September 2007, but the program continued to operate without funding for nearly a year. However, the enrollment challenges faced by STRIVE were even more pronounced because unlike OCM-BOCES, STRIVE was unable to continue paying its partners. STRIVE—RDRC could not absorb the costs of the program without being paid, and thus laid off their case manager and court advocate. At the time of the site visits in August 2008, RDRC's program manager had been the only person providing services to pilot participants at this location for several months. RDRC was unable to provide any services or enroll new participants for the three-month period between November 2007 and January 2008.

Retention

Though all of the sites were able to meet or nearly meet their enrollment goals, some program staff reported that maintaining long-term continued contact with the noncustodial parents enrolled in their programs was a challenge. Most of the sites are able to offer incentives that promote participant retention, including cash for work-related supports, stipends, and transportation, legal, and child support assistance. Pilots able to offer these incentives may have been better able to retain participants. For example, STRIVE was relatively successful in retaining participants for its 10-week DEF class, in part because of the $25 per class stipend given to each participant who attended. STRIVE distributed these payments bi-weekly so that participants had to attend all 10 workshops to receive the full $250. Because of the high demand for bus passes and metro cards, staff at EOC, OCM-BOCES, Seedco, and STRIVE were able to use them as a tool to help maintain contact with participants. Participants were required to meet

with case managers to obtain continued access to this transportation assistance, which helped staff at some sites track employment retention milestones and assess the overall progress of their employed participants, with whom sustaining long-term continued contact is particularly difficult.

Program Services

Based on the needs of their pilot participants and available funding, each of the pilot programs offers a range of services that varies in content, structure, and intensity. Some of the services are provided to participants through pilot funding, either directly by the contracting agency or through subcontracts for specialized services. Other services are made available to participants through existing programs administered by the contracting agency or key partner but not funded directly by the pilot programs or through referrals made to organizations in the community. The services offered by the pilot programs include:

- Evaluation and needs assessments;
- Case management and follow-up services;
- Employment-related services, including job readiness assistance, job placement assistance, job skills training, transitional employment assistance, and work supports;
- Parenting, relationship, and fatherhood skills workshops;
- Assistance in obtaining visitation;
- Legal assistance, including access to attorneys or court advocates to help modify child support orders and navigate the driver's license reinstatement process;
- Child support-related services (not provided by attorneys or court advocates);
- Financial literacy services, including financial planning, public benefits screening, and tax assistance;
- Incentives for recruitment and participation, including monetary stipends and transportation assistance;
- Cooking classes;
- Education assistance, including help in obtaining GEDs and enrolling in vocational training programs;
- Mental health and other counseling services; and
- Housing assistance.

Case Management. All of the pilots adopted a one-on-one case management approach for providing services. In some programs, staff share case management responsibilities for all pilot participants, while others assign each noncustodial parent to a dedicated case manager with whom they worked closely throughout the period of participation. Staff in all programs reported that they had some type of contact with participants at least once a month, although most described more frequent interaction, by phone, e-mail and in-person, depending on the level of engagement of participants. On-going case management activities were directed at, for example, following up on milestones outlined in the service plan, making arrangements or referrals for specialized services, assisting with child support issues, following up on job leads and referrals, and providing general support.

Employment-Related Services. One of the most crucial needs of pilot participants is assistance in finding and maintaining employment, and as a result, most programs were designed to focus on the provision of employment-related services. Most of the pilots provide participants with job readiness services, which include assisting participants with, for example, résumé development, interviewing skills, work-related attitudinal training, and guidance in filling out job applications. All of the programs also provide participants with access to job developers, either through their own organization or through relationships with a JOBS program or One-Stop, who assist pilot participants in finding employment through direct links to local employers.

Many programs also offer participants access to short-term job skills training programs, some of which are provided on-site and free of charge to participants. With the exception of ECC, all of the pilots offer participants employment-related supports in the form of cash stipends, transportation, and/or clothing assistance to help them search for, obtain, and sustain long-term employment. In addition, Seedco offers transitional employment assistance to some of its hardest to employ participants through one of its subcontracted partners. Some sites also provide post employment/career enhancement services, including, for example, assisting participants in finding subsequent jobs, while others provide access to long-term employment-related follow-up services for graduates of their programs.

Parenting/Fatherhood/Relationship Services. Parenting services are provided in some capacity by all of the pilots, but the content, structure and intensity of these services varies by program. Most sites provide some parenting instruction or classes, but each uses a different curriculum with a different focus. Some curricula emphasize traditional parenting skills, including how to foster positive parent-child interactions, proper nutrition for children, and child discipline. Others focus more on improving communication skills between noncustodial and custodial parents. These curricula tend to emphasize the development of conflict resolution and anger management skills. Still others focus on developing and maintaining healthy adult relationships and marriages. In addition to the one-on-one and group parenting instructional services that all of the programs offer, most programs also provide assistance in arranging visitation for pilot participants to have contact with their children. Some programs have designated staff who are available to help pilot participants complete visitation petitions to obtain legal authority to visit their children, while others help arrange actual visits.

According to some pilot staff, completing parenting workshops is not a priority for many participants. As a result, pilot staff struggle to persuade pilot participants to attend parenting workshops. To help address this issue, several programs continually made adjustments to the length, format, and location of workshops, and some even found it necessary to provide cash stipends, transportation, and other service incentives to persuade pilot participants to complete their programs' parenting components.

Legal Services. Pilot staff agreed that one of the most pressing needs of pilot participants is legal assistance, particularly as related to child support issues. Three of the pilot programs (Chautauqua, ECC, and EOC) do not have contracts with specialized partners to provide legal services to pilot participants. The other three pilots (OCM-BOCES, Seedco, and STRIVE) do, but even among these programs there is a great deal of variation in the type of legal providers and the services offered. OCM-BOCES, Seedco, and Fortune Society (one of STRIVE's partner organizations) contract with attorneys to provide legal services to pilot participants. OCM-

BOCES chose to contract with two Legal Aid organizations, each of which provides access to one full-time attorney. Seedco contracts with an attorney to provide monthly one hour legal clinics at each of Seedco's partner organizations as well as individual counseling sessions. STRIVE and its partners (except Fortune Society as noted above) do not contract with attorneys, but instead use grant funds to employ court advocates at each partner organization.

Attorneys at OCM-BOCES, Seedco, and Fortune Society are most commonly asked to assist pilot participants with legal matters related to their child support obligations. This includes providing assistance to participants with the order modification process, with arrears forgiveness, and to those facing violation petitions in Family Court. The legal services providers at OCM-BOCES indicated that their close relationship with the county Support Collections Unit (SCU) also enables them to address administrative enforcement measures taken against participants outside of court, resulting in quicker resolution of problems such as driver's license suspensions and unlawful income executions. STRIVE's court advocates coach participants on how to prepare for Family Court, (including what to wear, how to behave, and what to say), assist participants in accessing their child support records, review court documents, file petitions for visitation and modification, and the driver's license reinstatement process, and often accompany participants to court.

Child Support-Related Services. Pilot staff agree that the child support system is a major source of fear and anxiety for pilot participants. As a result, helping noncustodial parents understand, navigate, and de-mystify the child support program is an important service goal. To this end, all of the pilot programs, with the exception of ECC, offer workshops aimed at explaining the workings of the child support program to pilot participants. Most of the programs also work with pilot participants individually to assist them with a variety of child support related services. These include helping participants obtain information on their child support obligations, assisting with reinstatement of their driver's licenses (which are sometimes revoked as a result of not paying child support), and completing modification petitions.

Financial Services. With the exception of ECC, all of the pilots offer some type of financial services to pilot participants, although the extent and format of these services vary by site. Three sites offer these services in regular group workshops, while two provide information in less formal one-on-one sessions. Group workshops cover a range of topics, including basic budgeting skills, financial security, and making ends meet while paying child support. Some of the pilots also help participants obtain credit reports, provide free assistance and advice on tax preparation (including information on the noncustodial parent EITC), and conduct benefits screening. In addition, Seedco uses pilot funding to pay for an innovative loan program to help participants pay back child support arrears.

Incentives for Enrollment and Retention. In addition to the employment-related supports and incentives to complete parenting workshops that most programs offer, most programs also organize and sponsor father-child events, such as picnics, barbeques, and bowling outings as incentives to enrolling in and continuing to participate in their programs. These events, along with other services, such as assistance with the driver's license reinstatement process and legal services, were considered to be important incentives for participant recruitment and retention.

Other Services. In addition to the primary service components discussed above, all of the pilots offer a variety of other services such as GED preparation, mental health and substance abuse counseling, and housing assistance. Some of these services are provided to participants directly by the contracting agency or its partners, while others are provided through referrals to programs outside of the initiative.

Key Linkages with Agencies Outside of Pilot Funding

In addition to the partners with which the pilots have established formal contracts to provide direct services to pilot participants, all of the programs also have relationships with other public agencies that allow them to supplement these services. These include the local Child Support Enforcement agency, Family Court, and the Department of Labor, One-Stop, and/or JOBS program.

Local Child Support Agency. The role of the local child support agency in each of the pilots varies considerably across the sites. In Chautauqua County, the local child support agency is the contracting agency and is central to the day-to-day operations of the pilot. In contrast, in New York City, the local child support agency has comparatively little contact with staff involved with the pilot. Other local child support agencies have dedicated a high-level staff member to ensure that requests for child support information from pilot staff are addressed in a timely manner. Regardless of whether they had their own contact, pilot staff at all of the sites emphasized the importance of having a key high level contact within the child support agency able to provide information for eligibility determinations, resolve problems specific to individual cases, and help schedule child support workshops. With the exception of Chautauqua County, which uses grant funds to pay for the services of a child support supervisor involved in their initiative, any services provided by child support staff are provided in-kind to the pilots.

Role of the Family Courts. Previous fatherhood programs have struggled to meet their recruitment goals (Martinson, Nightingale, Holcomb, Barnow, and Trutko 2007). The five pilots have largely avoided this problem, in part by establishing referral-based relationships with the Family Court. With the exception of three New York City sites, (Fortune Society, RDRC, and UMOS), all of the pilot programs receive Family Court referrals.

ECC received Family Court referrals prior to the start of the initiative, which has helped the site exceed its enrollment goals, while EOC established a referral-based relationship with the Family Court after struggling initially to meet its enrollment goals. Staff from both Erie County programs attend the compliance hearings of noncustodial parents referred to them by the Family Court to update child support magistrates on the status and accomplishments of their individuals.

Staff in the Chautauqua County pilot program also struggled initially to recruit participants to their program, but worked quickly to develop a relationship with the Family Court for referrals. Child support staff flag cases for Family Court support magistrates to consider for referral to the program. Support magistrates typically make referrals for the noncustodial parents in cases that have been flagged, and hearings for these individuals are scheduled for the second full week of each month. Pilot program staff attend these hearings and meet with noncustodial

parents outside of the courtroom immediately after they are referred to the program to describe the program, conduct preliminary intakes, and schedule subsequent meetings at the project office.

OCM-BOCES did not anticipate receiving court referrals as a source for participants. However, in October 2007, the Center for Court Innovation (CCI) applied for and received a federal 3-year $150,000 grant to develop a program to refer unemployed or underemployed noncustodial parents from the Family Court to the OCM-BOCES program. The Parent Support Program (PSP) emerged from this funding and was launched in April 2008. The PSP office is located within the Onondaga Family Court house and the program is staffed with one full-time Resource Coordinator and a volunteer law student. This program does not receive pilot funding, but provides a steady source of referrals to the pilot.

Four of the seven partners associated with Seedco and STRIVE (CAB, EHES, NMIC, and St. Nick's) are employment providers for the Support Through Employment Program (STEP), a court-based employment program for noncustodial parents operated by the child support program in New York City. If a STEP referral meets the OTDA pilot eligibility criteria and is interested in the services offered by the pilot programs, the pilots will enroll the STEP participant in the OTDA pilot. Thus, some pilot participants are dual enrolled in both STEP and the pilot program. For a pilot participant enrolled in STEP, case management staff are required to complete an evaluation and submit it to STEP staff prior to the participant's next court date. The OCSE coordinates the delivery of these evaluations from each STEP provider to Family Court support magistrates.

Local Department of Labor, One-Stop, and JOBS Program. All of the pilots integrate the employment services they offer with those available through the local Department of Labor, One-Stop, and/or JOBS program, although this relationship varies depending on each program's need for additional employment services-related expertise. With the exception of OCM-BOCES, which employs its own employment specialists who are housed at partner sites, the relationships that the upstate pilots developed with these agencies were particularly important, as pilot participants at these sites did not have access to job developers through pilot funding. ECC operates one of two One-Stops in Erie County; Ross IES (i.e., the case management/employment services provider for the Chautauqua County pilot program) formerly operated and is still co-located with the Department of Labor and the One-Stop Center; and EOC is co-located with the local Department of Labor and staff with the JOBS program are housed in an adjacent building. Given these pilots' proximity to and relationships with these agencies, it is not uncommon for pilot participants to work simultaneously with pilot program staff and a job developer from the Department of Labor, a One-Stop, and/or JOBS program.

Seedco operates the Upper Manhattan Workforce 1 Career Center, and pilot participants at this site receive employment services both from staff employed by the OTDA-funded pilot and additional staff and resources available outside of the initiative through the One-Stop. The remaining case management/employment service sites associated with Seedco and STRIVE (i.e. CAB, EHES, Fortune Society, NMIC, RDRC, and St. Nick's) employ job developers and have established employment programs internal to their organizations. Thus, pilot staff in New York

City do not typically make referrals to the local Department of Labor, One-Stop, or JOBS program.

Implementation Challenges

The experiences of the administrators and staff who developed, implemented, and operated the fatherhood programs at the five pilot sites provide a number of important lessons and insights about strategies for designing and administering programs for low-income noncustodial parents. These are summarized below.

- **The relatively narrow age eligibility criteria initially stipulated by OTDA was an initial implementation challenge.** All of the pilots' contracts included an age restriction that noncustodial parents were required to meet to be enrolled in the initiative. Originally, OTDA stipulated that participants must be between 18 and 35 years old. However, once the pilot programs got started, they found that many of the individuals who were interested in the pilot programs were outside of this age range. The pilots requested that OTDA expand the allowable age range to 16 to 45 years old, which it did in early 2007. Some program staff indicated that they would prefer that there wasn't an age restriction so that they could serve older noncustodial parents in need of their services.

- **Without key referral sources at the start of the initiative, some pilots initially struggled with recruitment.** Several programs (e.g., EOC, Chautauqua, and UMOS) were able to overcome this challenge by establishing referral-based relationships with the Family Court or developing procedures to identify potentially eligible individuals from within a One-Stop Career Center. However, RDRC did not receive referrals from the court or One-Stop and struggled with recruitment early on and throughout the initiative.

- **At the start of the initiative, the New York City pilots (Seedco and STRIVE) experienced difficulties verifying child support eligibility criteria and outcome measures with their local child support agency**. Seedco submitted waivers to the NYC OCSE to obtain this information for pilot participants, but initially, responses to these waivers were not forthcoming or received in a timely manner. In July 2008, the NYC OCSE Director devoted more staff to process waivers and directed them to do so in a timely and consistent manner. Since this time, the New York City pilots were asked to resume their requests to obtain child support eligibility and outcome information on their clients.

- **The data requirements for the evaluation proved burdensome for staff at some pilot sites.** Prior to the establishment of the NY DADS database, the evaluator used paper forms to collect information from sites on pilot participants. During the first few months of the initiative, changes were made to these data collection tools regularly. Staff in some of the pilots indicated that changes to paperwork associated with the evaluation were an early implementation challenge. Each time changes were made to the data collection forms pilot staff had to be retrained on how to use them.

- **Funding uncertainties during the pilots' second year were a major operational challenge, particularly for OCM-BOCES and STRIVE, which had first year contracts that ended in 2007**. Both of these sites operated without a contract for over a year. OCM-BOCES was able to continue paying its partners to provide services after not receiving program funding from OTDA, but came within a week of laying off staff. Unlike OCM-BOCES, STRIVE was unable to continue paying its partners after not receiving program funding. STRIVE—RDRC could not absorb the costs of the program without being paid, and thus laid off their case manager and court advocate.

- **Staff turnover, particularly among key high level staff, was a challenge for some sites.** Some pilot staff felt that the constant turnover of high level staff at one site contributed to the changing enrollment criteria at that site. Other program staff felt that turnover among case management staff disrupted service delivery and increased program costs.

- **Some program staff felt that the overall goals and objectives of the initiative were not clearly defined.** As a result, there appeared to be confusion among some staff as to whether the pilots should be structured to focus on the provision of employment or the provision of parenting-related services. Because of this, the pilots were designed without an overall uniform focus. STRIVE, for example, focuses on the 10-week Dads Embracing Fatherhood (DEF) course, which stresses conflict resolution and building relationship skills within romantic relationships as their primary service component. Other sites take a much more employment-focused approach and use parenting classes to supplement the employment services provided.

Recommendations and Lessons Learned

- **Differences in funding can affect a program's ability to offer incentives and wide-ranging services, which may influence recruitment and retention.** OTDA allocated $3 million to the pilots for their first year contracts in the fall of 2006. These contracts ranged from $200,000 over 21 months to serve 300 participants at ECC to $900,000 over 12 months to serve 150 participants at STRIVE. These differences in funding during the pilot phase were viewed as a means for learning what works.

- **The project office model, as implemented by OCM-BOCES, appears to be a promising organizational and service delivery approach for this type of initiative.** With this model, fiscal operations are handled by the contracting agency and services are provided by contracted community-based organizations. The project management function is conducted at a project office, located separately from the contracting agency. Staff at the project office oversee the contractors, coordinate day-to-day operations across all of the partners involved with the project, review the performance of all partners, provide uniform training to all project staff, conduct outreach, establish key relationships with organizations outside of the project (e.g., child support agency), and coordinate overall operations. Project office staff are able to provide oversight for the project without being bound by the interests of any one participating organization.

- **Pilot staff reported that many pilot participants are transient, and, as a result, it is often difficult to maintain long-term continued contact with them.** Many pilot participants cycled in and out of the programs during the first two years of the initiative. Many sites used transportation assistance as a way of remaining in contact with participants. In order to receive bus tokens and metro cards, participants had to come into the office at least once a month, during which time case managers were able to review participant progress toward their goals. Adequate funding for continued post-employment services, including, for example, monetary incentives for reaching employment milestones, free GED or post secondary classes, and short-term skills training is another important way of maintaining a connection with this population.

- **Many pilot participants have criminal records, short or no job histories, and lack high school degrees, and are consequently hard to employ. Providing participants with access to job developers, transitional employment assistance, short-term job skills training programs, and a variety of employment-related supports is crucial to helping this hard to employ population find and retain jobs.** Pilot case management staff and job developers should be well connected to specific employers in their communities committed to hiring individuals regardless of their criminal histories. The provision of pre-employment services, including access to job readiness training to help participants develop the soft skills necessary to find and retain work, is also important.

- **Several of the pilots struggled to offer parenting classes or integrate them with other services in a format convenient for participants.** Offering parenting workshops in a variety of formats, at various locations throughout the community, and/or integrating them with employment workshops helped increase the number of participants who completed this component of the program. Given that most pilot participants are referred from the Family Court and their primary concern is typically to find employment, providing incentives specifically to encourage participants to complete this program component is also helpful.

- **Because many pilot participants view the child support enforcement program and Family Courts with distrust and fear, efforts to help noncustodial parents understand, navigate, and de-mystify the child support enforcement system is an important service goal for most sites.** The pilots that offer participants access to legal representation indicated that this is critical for recruitment, retention, and meeting the service needs of low-income noncustodial parents.

- Many of the pilots did not stop enrolling participants in their programs upon meeting their enrollment goals. However, sites that exceeded their enrollment goals did not receive additional staff or funding to serve these additional people. **Enrolling and serving additional participants may affect the intensity of services that sites are able to provide, but this merits further study**.

- **Recruiting mentors and past participants who have successfully completed the fatherhood program is an important strategy that pilot staff use to reinforce program goals.** Helping participants establish relationships with individuals who have

overcome the challenges that they face is helpful. Pilot staff indicated that the experiences they share are more powerful and well-received if they come from mentors or individuals who have overcome some of the challenges that pilot participants face.

- **Working with local CSE agencies to design innovative and specialized services for disadvantaged and hard to serve noncustodial parents who enroll in fatherhood programs can contribute to a successful program.** Seedco designed its own innovative loan program to help its participants reduce child support arrears, but fatherhood programs could work with local CSE agencies to design other innovative services for their clients. In the past, CSE agencies have suspended or reduced child support orders, stopped driver's license revocation, temporarily adjusted child support orders upon obtaining employment, and developed arrears forgiveness programs for noncustodial parents enrolled in fatherhood programs (Martinson, Trutko, Nightingale, Holcomb, and Barnow 2007).

- **Pilot staff benefit from having a high level contact within the local CSE agency who can assist them with the child support-related needs of participants.** OCM-BOCES has a particularly effective relationship with its local CSE agency, which allows it to receive weekly child support information on its clients. In Chautauqua County, the local CSE agency is responsible for overall program management and thus this site has daily access to the local CSE agency. Participants also benefitted from having child support workshops facilitated by child support staff at the pilot site.

- **The Family Court and One-Stop Career Centers proved to be very successful referral sources for the pilots.** Strengthening existing or establishing new referral-based relationships with Family Court support magistrates along with screening clients already receiving services from One-Stop Career Centers largely enabled the pilots to meet their enrollment goals.

- **Assigning specific Family Court support magistrates to oversee follow-up hearings for all individuals referred to an employment program appears to be a promising practice for this type of program.** This allows program staff to develop close working relationships with Family Court magistrates, which may ultimately increase their capacity to advocate on behalf of clients. In addition, programs with staff that work directly with support magistrates appear to more easily work through emerging challenges and address changing needs.

- **Organizations without access to their own job developers can establish relationships with JOBS programs or One-Stop Career Centers to help provide job readiness and placement assistance to participants.** Developing relationships with these local organizations able to assist in these efforts at no cost to the programs can only enhance the services provided to participants.

Chapter 1. Introduction

A. The Origins of the Initiative

In 2008, 17 million children, or 23 percent of all children in U.S. households, lived with one parent – their mother (U.S. Census Bureau 2009). Although welfare reform has successfully reduced the dependency of many of these families on welfare and substantially increased the employment of single mothers, the poverty rate among children living in these families is still high. In fact, poverty rates are highest for families headed by single women, particularly if they are African American or Hispanic.

Child support is an important source of income for these families. In 2008, 31 percent of single mothers received child support; the average amount received was $5,348.[1] Moreover, single mothers who received child support had significantly lower poverty rates (30 percent) than single mothers who did not (47 percent). Thus, increasing child support payments is one way to help lift families out of poverty.

Although child support compliance has increased in recent years, billions of dollars of current support go uncollected every year. In FY 2008, $11 billion of current support payments were unpaid (OCSE 2009). The greatest challenge for the child support enforcement program is to increase collections among low-income noncustodial parents. Recent research shows that most uncollected child support is owed by noncustodial parents with little or no reported incomes (Sorensen, Sousa, and Schaner 2007). In seven large states, 61 percent of unpaid current support was owed by noncustodial parents with no reported income or reported incomes below $10,000 a year.

New York has a particularly high proportion of noncustodial parents with no reported earnings or reported earnings of less than $10,000 a year. In 2004, 55 percent of noncustodial parents in the New York IV-D system fell in this category; thirty-two percent of these parents had no reported earnings at all (Sorensen and Sousa 2005). This does not mean that these noncustodial parents had no earnings, but rather that they had no *reported* earnings. However, prior research suggests that noncustodial parents with no matches to reported wage data are more similar to low-wage workers than to high-wage workers (Sorensen et al. 2003).

Low-income noncustodial fathers tend to face multiple employment barriers, many of which are similar to those faced by poor custodial mothers. Although most low-income noncustodial fathers have some work experience, many work intermittently. Less than 10 percent have full-time year-round work and 40 percent report being jobless for a year or more (Sorensen and Oliver 2002). Lack of education also contributes to the difficulties that low-income noncustodial parents face in finding jobs that will enable them to support themselves and their families. Forty percent lack a high school diploma or general equivalency diploma (GED), and only 6 percent report having received job-specific training or education. These employment barriers are compounded by other indicators of economic distress. Over half of low-income noncustodial fathers report that they do not have health insurance and half of them report that

[1] Based on authors' calculations of the March 2008 Current Population Survey. Single mothers do not include widows since they are not eligible for child support.

they worry about being able to afford food. In addition, many low-income noncustodial fathers have a criminal record, which inhibits their access to employment.

Despite not keeping up with their child support payments, many low-income noncustodial fathers do have some contact with their children and appear to be involved in their lives in some way. One study found that approximately 36 percent of poor noncustodial fathers (excluding incarcerated fathers) reported that they had seen their youngest child at least once a week in the preceding 12 months, compared to 27 percent who had not seen their youngest child at all during this time (Sorensen and Oliver 2002).

Conventional means for collecting child support, such as wage withholding, have not been particularly effective with low-income noncustodial fathers. As a result, policy attention has turned to other approaches. One important effort to increase payment of child support obligations among low-income noncustodial fathers was the Parents' Fair Share (PFS) program, a national demonstration conducted between 1994 and 1996. As part of this demonstration, the courts ordered unemployed noncustodial parents who were behind in their child support payments and whose children were currently or previously on cash assistance to participate in programs that offered employment services and other support services. Overall, the evaluation of Parents' Fair Share found that the program had positive but limited impacts (Miller and Knox 2001). Across all sites, a referral to the PFS program increased the percentage of noncustodial parents who paid child support, but not the average amount of child support paid. The program was moderately successful at increasing earnings among more disadvantaged fathers, but it had little effect on the earnings of more employable fathers. PFS did not have an overall effect on fathers' involvement with their children, but it encouraged some fathers, particularly those who were least involved with their children, to take a more active parenting role. The evaluation also identified several implementation issues, including the need for diligent oversight to sustain the partnerships among the agencies involved and other challenges associated with the new methods of delivering services.

In 1996, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), the federal entitlement program that had provided cash assistance to poor families for over 50 years, was replaced with Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), a block grant program with a strong emphasis on moving recipients to work and time limits on cash assistance. Also during the 1990s, the federal government and some state governments greatly expanded their Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) programs that provide an earnings supplement to low-income working parents to help them better support their families. These policy changes are widely accredited to have reduced child poverty and increased employment among low-income mothers.

Because of the success of these policies, New York policymakers chose to implement an initiative directed at improving the employment prospects of low-income noncustodial fathers and their ability to provide financial support for their children. In June 2006, the New York State Legislature enacted the Strengthening Families Through Stronger Fathers Initiative. The legislation authorizes two innovative approaches to help low-income noncustodial parents meet their child support obligations – employment programs for low-income noncustodial parents and a state refundable earned income tax credit for those who pay their full child support obligation.

B. An Overview of the Initiative

As noted above, New York adopted a unique approach to helping low-income fathers find and maintain employment and meet their child support obligations. The Strengthening Families Through Stronger Fathers Initiative includes two key components:

1. Funding for pilot programs in five sites to provide employment and supportive services to low-income noncustodial parents and
2. Establishment of a statewide refundable earned income tax credit for low-income noncustodial parents (NCP EITC) who work and pay their child support in full.

This report focuses solely on the first component of the Initiative, the pilot programs developed to provide employment and supportive services to noncustodial parents.

New York's Employment Programs for Noncustodial Parents

As stipulated by statute, the pilot programs are to target noncustodial parents receiving public assistance or with income at or below 200% of the federal poverty level who are: unemployed or working less than 20 hours a week; have a child support order payable through a New York support collection unit or have had paternity established for a child and have a court proceeding initiated in New York to obtain an order of child support; and receiving, or the custodial parent is receiving, child support services through a social services district in New York. In addition, OTDA specified that the pilots limit enrollment to noncustodial parents between the ages of 16 and 45.

The New York State Legislature authorized $3 million to support the operation of the five pilot programs for noncustodial parents during their first year contracts. The intent was that these programs would develop and test strategies for collaboration between local government agencies and community organizations for the purposes of assisting noncustodial parents in meeting the financial and emotional needs of their children. Specifically, the goals of the pilot programs are to connect parents who are eligible for the program to services that will enhance their ability to find and retain employment, pay child support, and be involved in their children's lives.

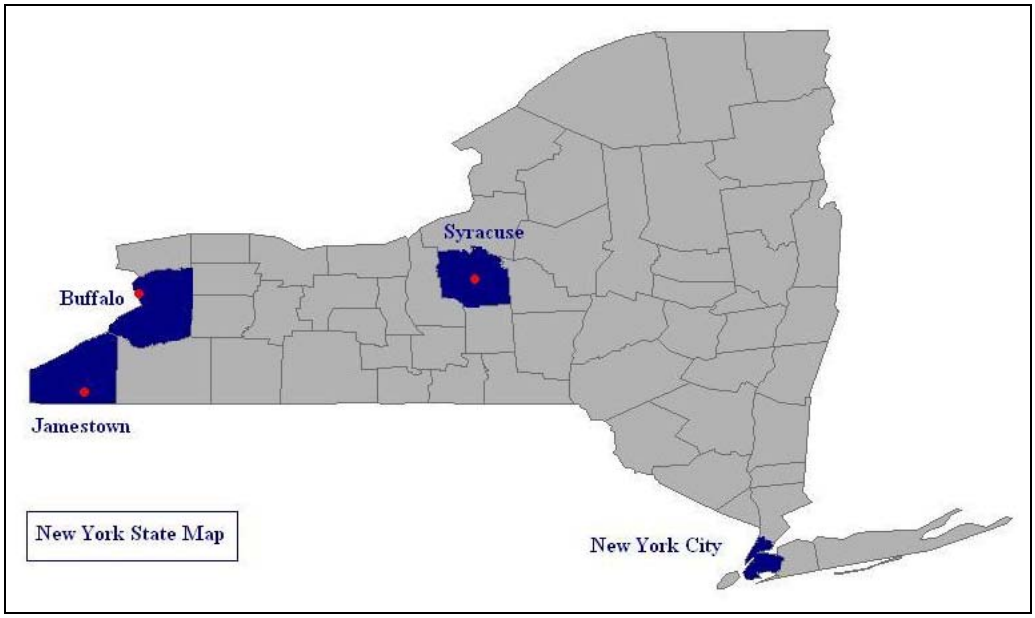
Because of budget-related time constraints, New York's Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) was granted permission to forego a competitive bidding process and instead establish sole-source contracts with a selected group of government agencies and community organizations who were known to the agency. Most of these entities had demonstrated prior success providing services to the target population and/or operating similar fatherhood programs and met OTDA's key criteria for being able to launch a pilot program quickly. Geographic distribution of pilot resources was also a consideration in the selection of pilot program sites.

Table 1.1. Strengthening Families Through Stronger Fathers Initiative Pilot Programs

Site Name	Program Name	Location	Program Description
Erie County – ECC	Dedicated, Accountable, Dependable, and Self-Sufficient (D.A.D.S.)	Erie County (Buffalo)	The Erie County Department of Social Services contracted with Erie Community College (ECC) to operate this program. ECC contracts with Lakeshore Behavioral Health, Inc. to provide a court liaison/case manager who works at the City Court in Buffalo. All other pilot-funded services are provided by ECC staff. This program relies primarily on Family Court referrals for recruitment.
Erie County – EOC	Strengthening Families Initiative (SFI)	Erie County (Buffalo)	The Erie County Department of Social Services contracted with the University of Buffalo Educational Opportunity Center (EOC) to operate this program. All pilot-funded services are provided by EOC staff. This program relies primarily on Family Court referrals for recruitment.
Chautauqua County	Strengthening Families Initiative (SFI)	Chautauqua County (Jamestown)	The Chautauqua County Office of Child Support Enforcement provides program oversight and identifies potential participants for court referral. It contracts with several organizations to deliver case management, employment services and other support services. This program relies primarily on Family Court referrals for recruitment.
Seedco	Fatherhood Program	New York City	This program is operated by Seedco, a non-profit workforce intermediary. It delivers pilot services at the Upper Manhattan Workforce1 Career Center, which it operates. It also partners with several organizations to deliver services in other parts of New York City, including employment, fatherhood, legal, and financial services. This program relies on Family Court referrals, internal referrals, and self-referrals for recruitment.
STRIVE	Dads Embracing Fatherhood (DEF)	New York City	This program is operated by STRIVE, a non-profit workforce development organization in East Harlem, where it delivers pilot services. It also partners with several organizations to deliver pilot services in other parts of New York City and with individuals to conduct relationship-building workshops and provide other support services. This program relies on Family Court referrals, internal referrals, and self-referrals for recruitment.
OCM-BOCES	Parent Success Initiative (PSI)	Onondaga County (Syracuse)	This program is operated by the Onondaga-Cortland-Madison Board of Cooperative Educational Services (OCM-BOCES), a quasi-school district that provides educational, vocational, and employment services. OCM-BOCES does not provide direct services to pilot participants; it provides oversight, outreach, referrals, training, and data management. It contracts with several organizations in Syracuse to deliver direct services to pilot participants. This program relies on Family Court referrals, internal referrals, and self-referrals for recruitment.

OTDA established contracts with five organizations to operate the pilot programs in four cities — New York City, Buffalo, Syracuse, and Jamestown (see figure 1.1 below). The contracting agencies included two non-profit organizations, Seedco and STRIVE, in New York City, and in Upstate New York, two Departments of Social Services and one quasi-school district. These five contracting agencies operated the Initiative's six pilot programs (see table 1.1. above).

Figure 1.1. Geographic Location of the OTDA Pilots



Economic and Demographic Characteristics of the Pilot Sites. The cities in which the pilots operate vary significantly in their size, racial composition, and other socioeconomic characteristics (see table 1.2 below). Some of them also vary significantly from New York State as a whole. With the exception of Jamestown, which has a population that is 91 percent white, all of the cities in which the pilots operate have minority populations larger than the state average. According to the 2000 Census, 37 percent of the population in Buffalo identifies as black, compared to 16 percent statewide and 3 percent in Jamestown. Male educational attainment also varies considerably across these cities and in some cases compared to data for the state as a whole. In New York City and statewide, 29 percent of the male population at or above the age of 25 has a bachelor's degree or more; only 15 percent of the male population in Jamestown fits into this category. Furthermore, with the exception of New York City, at least half of single-mother headed households in the pilot cities live in poverty, compared to 39 percent statewide.

Over the course of the initiative, the economic conditions of the cities in which the pilots are located have worsened, following the national economy. The unemployment rates in all of the pilot cities exceed the statewide average; they have also increased significantly since 2006. Between 2006 and 2008, the unemployment rate in Jamestown increased by 27 percent, moving from 4.8 percent in 2006 to 6.1 percent in 2008, the highest of any pilot city. During this time,

the unemployment rate in New York City has remained the most stable, increasing an average of only .5 percentage points between 2006 and 2008.

Table 1.2. Economic and Demographic Profile of the OTDA Pilots

	New York State	Jamestown, NY	Buffalo, NY	Syracuse, NY	New York, NY
Population	18,976,457	31,730	292,648	147,326	8,008,278
Percent white	68	91	55	64	45
Percent black	16	3	37	25	26
Percent Asian	6	0	1	3	10
Other race	8	3	4	4	14
Two or more races	3	3	2	4	5
Male education level[1] (%)					
No diploma	21	20	25	23	27
HS graduate or GED	27	35	30	29	24
Some college	23	29	26	24	20
Bachelor's degree or more	29	15	19	25	29
Median Income, 1999					
Family	$51,691	$33,675	$30,614	$33,026	$41,887
Household	$43,393	$25,837	$24,536	$25,000	$38,293
Median Male Earnings[2], 1999	$31,096	$22,280	$21,551	$18,744	$29,155
Single-mother households below poverty, 1999 (%)	39	53	51	50	44
Unemployment Rate[3] (%)					
Annual Average 2006	4.6	4.8	6.3	5.5	5.0
Annual Average 2007	4.5	4.9	6.0	5.1	4.9
Annual Average 2008	5.4	6.1	7.2	6.5	5.5

Sources: U.S. Census 2000, Summary File 3 and Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.
[1] Education level for male population 25+.
[2] For men 16+ with earnings.
[3] Not seasonally adjusted.

Service Delivery in the Pilots. All of the pilots offer the same set of core services, which include:

1. Case management;
2. Employment services;
3. Fatherhood, parenting, and/or relationship skills; and
4. Child support–related services.

All the pilots adopted a one-on-one case management approach, which means that pilot participants are assigned to a case manager with whom they work closely throughout the period of participation. Case management services involve a range of activities but are typically directed at maintaining regular contact with participants, following up on milestones outlined in a service plan, making arrangements or referrals for specialized services, and providing general support. The employment services offered by the pilots include job readiness and placement services. All

the pilots offered specialized job placement services to help place this hard-to-employ population in jobs. The job placement services offered by the pilots range from providing participants with access to job developers to providing transitional employment assistance, short-term job skills training, and employment-related supports. All the pilots also offer access to fatherhood, parenting, and/or relationship skills services and assist participants address a multitude of child support–related needs.

C. Methodology

OTDA contracted with the Urban Institute to conduct a multiyear process and outcomes evaluation of the Strengthening Families Through Stronger Fathers Initiative. This is the third of several reports that will be completed by the Urban Institute as part of the evaluation. This report presents cross-site findings from the process study of the pilot programs that were implemented as part of the Initiative. Information for this report was collected during site visits to each of the five pilot sites conducted during June and July 2008. Consequently, this report reflects the status of program operations as they existed at that time and does not reflect changes that may have occurred since that time. Discussions were held with nearly 100 administrators and staff from the contracting agencies and the key partners involved with each program, including community-based organizations, government agencies (including county Departments of Social Services (DSS)), local Offices of Child Support Enforcement and Departments of Labor), and the judicial system. Observations of training sessions, workshops, classes, court proceedings, staff meetings and other staff-client interactions (e.g., intake sessions) were also conducted as part of the site visits. Program documentation such as proposals, contracts, curricula, training materials, and monthly narrative reports were also reviewed.

D. Scope of the Report

The chapters that follow describe the implementation and operation of the five pilot programs that are part of this initiative. Chapter 2 describes the program design and organizational structure of the pilots. Chapter 3 discusses issues related to recruitment, eligibility, enrollment, and retention of participants. Chapter 4 summarizes the services available to participants, including employment, parenting, child support, and case management services. Chapter 5 describes the linkages that the pilots developed with key partners. Chapter 6 presents a summary of key challenges and lessons learned. Two appendices are also included. Appendix A provides a site profile summary for each pilot program and Appendix B provides detailed descriptions of the contracting agency's key partners.

Chapter 2. Organizational Structure of the Pilots, Program Models, Staffing and Training

OTDA selected a diverse group of organizations to operate the pilot programs. This chapter first describes the types of agencies or organizations chosen to serve as the contracting entities for the pilot programs. This is followed by a discussion of the key partner organizations selected by the contracting agencies to provide services to pilot participants, how they were selected, the program models used to deliver services, and staffing and training.

A. Contracting Agencies

OTDA selected three types of organizations to serve as contracting agencies for the initiative—two government agencies (i.e., County Departments of Social Services (DSS)), two private non-profit workforce development organizations, and one quasi-school district (see table 2.1 below). The contracting agencies are responsible for the overall contractual and fiscal management of the pilot programs. The selected agencies are all well-established organizations within their communities and have considerable experience serving low-income families.

With the exception of the Erie County Department of Social Services, all of these agencies also had prior experience operating or participating in other fatherhood initiatives. OCM-BOCES, for example, developed the Parent Success Initiative (PSI), which operated between 1999-2005 with a $3.9 million federal welfare-to-work grant. PSI provided employment and support services to low-income noncustodial parents in Onondaga County. In addition, STRIVE was one of thirteen organizations to operate a program for noncustodial parents under the Partners for Fragile Families demonstration. These organizations were able to benefit from their prior experiences implementing and operating these programs.

B. Key Partners and How They Were Selected

All of the contracting agencies established formal relationships with other community organizations to provide services to pilot participants. The primary services provided by partners were case management and employment services, but some of these agencies also contracted with partners to provide other supportive services to pilot participants. Table 2.1 summarizes the case management/employment and support services providers by pilot program. Detailed descriptions of the pilots' key contracted partners are provided in Appendix B.

Case Management and Employment Services

In New York City, the two contracting agencies (Seedco and STRIVE) provide case management and employment services to pilot participants directly; however, they also contract with other community-based organizations to provide these services in parts of the city that they do not serve. In contrast, the contracting agencies for the upstate sites do not provide case management and employment services directly to pilot participants; instead, they contract with other organizations in the community to provide these services.

Table 2.1. Organizational Structure of the Pilots

OTDA Pilot Program	Chautauqua County	ECC	EOC	OCM-BOCES	Seedco	STRIVE
Contracting Agency	Chautauqua County Department of Social Services	Erie County Department of Social Services	Erie County Department of Social Services	Onondaga-Cortland-Madison Board of Cooperative Educational Services (OCM-BOCES)	Seedco	Support and Training Result in Valuable Employees (STRIVE)
Case Management and Employment Services Provider(s)	Ross Innovative Employment Solutions (Ross IES)	Erie Community College (ECC)*	University of Buffalo, Educational Opportunity Center (EOC)	Center for Community Alternatives (CCA), Spanish Action League**, Syracuse Model Neighborhood Inc. (SMN), Westcott Community Center (WCC)	Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation (NMIC), Saint Nicholas Neighborhood Preservation Corporation (St. Nicks), Upper Manhattan Workforce 1 Career Center (UMOS)	Fortune Society (FS), Rockaway Redevelopment Revitalization Corporation (RDRC), Saint Nicholas Neighborhood Preservation Corporation (St. Nicks), STRIVE—East Harlem Employment Services (EHES)
Providers of Other Services	Center for Family Unity, Cornell Cooperative Extension	None	None	Center for Community Alternatives, Consortium for Children's Services, Spanish Action League, Frank H. Hiscock Legal Aid Society, Legal Aid Society of Mid-State New York Inc.	Bronx Defenders, Center for Employment Opportunities Inc., Credit Where Credit is Due Inc.	Fortune Society, Rockaway Redevelopment Revitalization Corporation, Saint Nicholas Neighborhood Preservation, STRIVE, 4 MSWs

* ECC also contracted with the C.O.U.R.T.S. program to provide a full-time case manager/employment services provider at the Buffalo City Court in Erie County.
** At the start of the initiative, OCM-BOCES contracted with the Spanish Action League (SAL) to provide case management and employment services to pilot participants. However, in February 2008, SAL was replaced by SMN as a case management/employment services site.

Other Services

With the exception of the Erie County DSS, all of the contracting agencies also established formal relationships with other organizations or individuals to offer a variety of other services (i.e., besides case management and employment services) to pilot participants. Through these contracts, the pilots are able to provide participants with access to, for example, parenting and relationship building, legal, financial, nutrition, and mental health services. Chautauqua, OCM-BOCES, and Seedco contract with organizations to provide specialized services, while STRIVE opted to contract with individuals.

Selection Process

Contracting agencies employed different processes for identifying and selecting community partners to provide direct services to program participants. Two agencies, Chautauqua County DSS and OCM-BOCES, utilized a competitive bidding process, issuing formal requests for proposals to select partners in their communities that could provide employment and other specialized services to pilot participants enrolled in the initiative. For example, Chautauqua County DSS received nine bids from organizations in their community to provide intensive case management, parenting, and/or financial literacy services. From these bids, the Chautauqua County DSS awarded contracts to three providers, all of with whom they currently or had previously worked. Ross IES received a contract to provide pilot participants with case management and employment services. Two non-profit organizations were also awarded contracts, the Center for Family Unity (CFU) and Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE). CFU provides the program's parenting and visitation services and CCE provides the program's financial literacy and nutrition services. OCM-BOCES utilized a similar process for the selection of its key partners, which is described in box 2.1 below.

Box 2.1. OCM-BOCES: Selection of Multiple Partners

OCM-BOCES also submitted a request for proposals to solicit bids from organizations in their community that could provide employment and parenting services to pilot participants. Five organizations submitted proposals to be one of three primary case management and Employment Service Specialist (ESS) sites. Members of the Greater Syracuse Works (GSW) Advisory Committee evaluated the proposals and selected three organizations, the Center for Community Alternatives (CCA), the Spanish Action League (SAL), and Westcott Community Center (WCC) as their original ESS sites. These private non-profit community organizations all provided case management and employment services to noncustodial parents for OCM-BOCES during its federal welfare-to-work project. CCA also received a contract to provide civic restoration services (i.e., "rap sheet" cleansing) to participants with criminal histories. OCM-BOCES also selected its parenting providers through a competitive bidding process, and awarded contracts to the Consortium for Children's Services and SAL to provide these services. In addition, OCM-BOCES contracted with the two Legal Aid societies in their community to provide legal services to pilot participants. In February 2008, SAL was phased out as a contracted partner for employment services because of performance issues. At this time, OCM-BOCES issued another RFP and Syracuse Model Neighborhood, Inc. (SMN) was selected to replace SAL as this site's third ESS provider.

Rather than using a competitive bidding process, other contracting agencies selected key partners with whom they had existing relationships to provide services for their initiatives. As noted above, Seedco and STRIVE provide direct case management and employment services to pilot participants, but they also chose to contract with other community-based organizations to provide these services in areas of the city that they do not serve.

Seedco, a workforce intermediary, developed and manages the EarnFair Alliance, a structured network of 16 community-based non-profit organizations in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Manhattan that provide employment and wrap-around support services to individuals facing employment barriers. For its fatherhood initiative, Seedco contracted with three organizations that are members of this alliance, Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), the Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation (NMIC), and St. Nicholas Neighborhood Preservation Corporation (St. Nicks) to provide case management, employment, and other support services to pilot participants. Seedco also operates the Upper Manhattan Workforce 1 Career Center (UMOS) and designated this site as the fourth of its case management and employment services locations. Seedco initially contracted with the Bronx Defenders to provide legal services, the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) to provide transitional employment services and parenting workshops, and Credit Where Credit is Due, Inc. (CWCID) for financial services. However, in the summer of 2008, Seedco ended its contractual relationships with CEO and CWCID to provide parenting and financial services workshops and began training case management staff internally to provide these services to pilot participants themselves.

Beginning in 1990, STRIVE began to embed its program within non-profit organizations throughout New York City in order to extend the reach of its services. This resulted in the formation of STRIVE's "New York Network," which is comprised of the East Harlem Employment Services (EHES) program and six other well-established agencies in three boroughs of the city. STRIVE contracted with three non-profit community-based organizations that are part of this network to provide case management, employment, and other supportive services to pilot participants. These organizations are: the Fortune Society (FS), Rockaway Development and Revitalization Corporation (RDRC), and St. Nicholas Neighborhood Preservation Corporation (St. Nicks). St. Nicks is an employment services provider for both the Seedco and STRIVE pilots. STRIVE's East Harlem program is also used as a case management and employment services site. STRIVE also contracted with several different individuals to provide a range of other services, including four individuals who provide a 10-week series of workshops focusing on relationship building, a paralegal professional to provide legal services to fathers struggling with child support, child custody, or visitation issues, and a mental health professional to provide mental health counseling to pilot participants if such services were requested.

The Erie County programs were the only two that did not establish contracts with multiple partners to provide services to their participants. ECC did contract with Lakeshore Behavioral Health, Inc. to provide a court liaison/case manager who works at the Buffalo City Court. EOC did not establish formal contractual partnerships specific to this initiative, but it collaborates with other service providers in the community.

C. Program Models

The contracting agencies for the pilots utilize four distinct models to deliver services to pilot participants. These are: the DSS-low involvement model, the DSS-high involvement model, the community-based partner model, and the project office model. Each model is described below.

1. DSS-Low Involvement Model: Erie County DSS

The Erie County Department of Social Services (DSS) contracted with two higher educational institutions that are part of the State University of New York system to operate pilot programs in Erie County. Both of these higher educational institutions – the Erie Community College (ECC) and the University of Buffalo Educational Opportunity Center (EOC) – have considerable experience providing employment services to low-income families and noncustodial parents.

Compared to the other contracting agencies, the Erie County DSS does not play a strong leadership role in the pilot programs. The project coordinator position at this site is filled by a senior administrator in the County DSS, but no grant funds were allocated to pay for this position. Both Erie County pilot programs also share a primary contact within the Child Support Division of the County DSS, but this individual does not monitor or provide regular oversight for the day-to-day operations of the programs. Rather, pilot staff contact this individual on an as-needed basis to obtain case level child support information for pilot participants.

ECC and EOC have separate contracts and operate independent programs. ECC contracts with Lakeshore Behavioral Health, Inc. to help provide case management and employment services, but this is the only service component of the ECC program that is contracted out. All other services are delivered by program staff at ECC. The EOC program is operated entirely with its own staff. Both programs refer participants to other service providers in the community, but these other service providers are not funded by the OTDA pilot.

Although the ECC and EOC programs have designated project directors, these positions are not funded through the OTDA grant. Consequently, these project directors do not provide full-time monitoring and oversight of the day-to-day operations of the programs. These duties fall to case management staff who are also responsible for delivering services.

2. DSS-High Involvement Model: Chautauqua County DSS

The Chautauqua County DSS's child support enforcement program oversees the operation of this program. In other words, DSS is not only the contracting agency and fiscal agent for the pilot; it also actively manages the program. A child support supervisor works half-time as the project coordinator for this site and 50 percent of his salary is paid for by the OTDA grant. Meetings of key supervisory staff from all of the program partners are held each month and shared issues and concerns are discussed. The child support supervisor leads these meetings and uses them, along with day-to-day contact with the partners, to provide oversight for the pilot. Because the Chautauqua County program only has one employment/case management service provider, consistency of employment service delivery is not an issue here, but other issues arise with regard to the operation of the program that he works to help resolve.

Another key role that the child support program plays in this pilot is that it flags potential participants from its caseload for referral by the Family Court to the pilot program. Once cases are flagged by child support staff, child support attorneys recommend that Family Court magistrates make referrals to the pilot program. Family Court magistrates then make the final decision regarding the referral.

The Chautauqua County DSS contracts with Ross IES to provide case management and employment services. Ross IES, which operated the Chautauqua County One-Stop Career Center in the past, is co-located with the One-Stop. The Chautauqua County DSS also contracts with the Center for Family Unity and Cornell Cooperative Extension to provide parenting, nutrition, and financial services to noncustodial parents enrolled in the pilot program.

3. Community-Based Partner Model: Seedco and STRIVE

Seedco and STRIVE are non-profit organizations that focus on the provision of workforce development services to low-income people across a large geographic area. Unlike the DSS models described above, these contracting agencies provide employment services themselves, but also contract with other local non-profit community-based organizations to provide these services to pilot participants in areas of the city that they do not serve.

Seedco's partners, CAB, NMIC, and St. Nicks, are members of Seedco's EarnFair Alliance, and thus have experience providing employment services to hard-to-serve populations. However, these community-based partners operate settlement houses, not workforce development organizations, and work primarily to combat residential blight, poverty, and crime in the communities in which they are located. Similarly, through its New York Network, STRIVE's community-based partners also have experience providing employment services, but as with Seedco's partners, the missions of these organizations are not primarily employment focused. STRIVE's partners, Fortune Society, RDRC, and St. Nicks work in local communities to provide a variety of services, including neighborhood economic development, housing assistance, youth and family services, and specialized services for ex-offenders.

The community-based partner model takes advantage of the strengths of Seedco and STRIVE, which have robust administrative and fiscal infrastructures to manage and operate large-scale programs, enabling their community-based partners to focus on providing responsive and direct employment services. Moreover, disadvantaged populations, like the noncustodial parents being served under this initiative, may be more receptive to receiving services from organizations familiar and comfortable to them with long-standing histories in the communities in which they live. Furthermore, using this service delivery model expands the reach of Seedco and STRIVE's programs by enabling them to serve noncustodial parents in multiple communities across New York City, including, the Bronx, Washington Heights/Inwood, the Williamsburg-Greenpoint community of Brooklyn, and Queens. The community-based partner model may not be possible to implement in communities without a sufficient number of non-profit partners available for collaboration. Thus, rural communities, such as Chautauqua County, which tend to be less "service rich" than New York City and other urban areas, may be limited in their capacity to implement a service delivery model of this kind.

A key difference between the STRIVE and Seedco projects is the extent to which each contracting agency provided program oversight. In this model, the contracting agency does not strictly dictate how all aspects of case management and employment services will be structured and delivered by the partners. Seedco and STRIVE view their relationships with the other organizations as a collaborative partnership rather than a one-size fits all model. Seedco chose to utilize service contracts that were partially performance-based, thus building some degree of accountability into its relationship with its partners. Seedco also assigned a staff member to provide ongoing oversight of the pilot partners during the first 18 months of the pilot. In contrast, because of constant turnover in the site coordinator position, STRIVE was not equipped to provide consistent and effective program oversight during the same period.

4. Project Office Model: OCM-BOCES

The OCM-BOCES program delivers employment services to pilot participants using a centralized project office model. The project office model is similar to the community-based partner model, but is distinct because the contracting agency (i.e., OCM-BOCES), which provides fiscal oversight and general management for the pilot does not also provide direct services.

Like Seedco and STRIVE, OCM-BOCES contracts with community-based organizations to provide employment services to pilot participants. These organizations, CCA, SMN Inc., and WCC, are the only employment service sites for the pilot. OCM-BOCES also contracts with two individuals, an experienced project coordinator and intake specialist, to manage the program's project office, at a site located separately from the OCM-BOCES offices.

OCM-BOCES based their service delivery model on the structure of their federal welfare-to-work program, such that project office staff are responsible for coordinating the day-to-day operations of the program. This includes assisting with outreach and recruitment, intake orientations, providing uniform training for new and existing staff, and providing oversight, accountability, and auditing for the pilot's direct service partners to ensure consistency and quality of service. Neither OCM-BOCES nor project office staff provide direct services to pilot participants. OCM-BOCES staff indicated that using this model, in which the contracting agency/fiscal agent supports a strong central office but is not involved in the provision of direct services, enables project office staff to provide comprehensive oversight and accountability among partners without being tied to the interests of any one organization. They also felt that employing a project coordinator to oversee the pilot's project office provides a central point of contact for the program's direct service partners.

OCM-BOCES is the only contracting agency to establish a Planning Advisory Committee. The committee consists of the project director at OCM-BOCES, the project coordinator at the project office, the Onondaga County Child Support Enforcement Director (a non-contracted partner of the pilot), and supervisory staff from each of its employment and specialized service partners. One of these individuals is also the director of Greater Syracuse Works (GSW), an incorporated organization of non-profits that serves the greater Syracuse area. The committee meets monthly and is the major decision making body for the pilot. OCM-

BOCES originally instituted a planning advisory committee to govern the activities of its much larger federal welfare-to-work program, and based the formation of its current committee on the success of this effort.

D. Pilot Staff and Training

This section of the report discusses staffing arrangements and training in the pilot sites. Table 2.2 describes the number and types of staff employed by the pilot programs.

Pilot Staff

Staffing arrangements in the pilot sites generally included supervisory staff for the program, including a project director and/or coordinator; case managers and part-time supervisors; and part-time staff to provide a variety of specialized services.

Supervisory staff for the programs are typically responsible for general program oversight, coordination, and monitoring. With the exception of the Erie County programs and OCM-BOCES, supervisors generally work part-time for the pilot programs, supplemented with additional assignments to other programs. Neither of the Erie County programs allocated grant funding to pay for non-case management supervisory staff to oversee their programs, which as noted previously may have resulted in limited oversight at these programs. As shown in table 2.2 below, ECC and EOC did share an unpaid project director; however, as noted above, this individual had limited involvement in the programs' day-to-day operations. In contrast, OCM-BOCES employed a part-time project director, an experienced full-time site coordinator, and a full-time intake specialist to oversee program operations at OCM-BOCES and the project office. All of the other pilots used grant funding to employ a part-time project director or site coordinator to manage the day-to-day operations of the programs. However, as discussed previously, there was significant turnover in the site coordinator position at STRIVE during the first two years of the pilot.

All of the pilots employed at least one full-time case manager; most also employed a part-time case management supervisor. Pilot participants were typically assigned to one case manager with whom they worked while enrolled in the program. In ECC, however, case management responsibilities for pilot participants were often shared between multiple staff members. This arrangement was initially a challenge for ECC, but by communicating with each other daily, case managers at this site were able to develop a workable system within this structure. Case managers are the key points of contact for participants enrolled in the pilots. They handle a myriad of tasks, including coordinating the day-to-day provision of a variety of services for each case; organizing employment activities, such as job readiness, résumé development, and job search and placement assistance; and providing participants with follow-up services. In general, case manager positions are paid for by grant funds. Supervisors at the case management site(s) are generally experienced staff within their respective organizations and typically hire and

Table 2.2. Primary Staff by OTDA Pilot Site

OTDA Pilot Site	Primary Pilot Staff		
	Supervisory and Lead Staff	Case Management and Employment Services Staff	Specialized Services Staff
Chautauqua County	▪ Project Director (half-time)	▪ 1 Case Manager/Employment Provider ▪ 1 Case Manager Supervisor (part-time)	▪ 1 Parenting Provider (part-time) ▪ 1 Parenting Supervisor (unpaid) ▪ 1 Financial and Nutrition Provider (part-time) ▪ 1 Financial and Nutrition Supervisor (unpaid)
ECC	▪ 2 Co-Project Coordinators (unpaid)	▪ 4 Case Managers (1 part-time)	
EOC		▪ 3 Case Managers	
OCM-BOCES	▪ Project Director (part-time) ▪ 1 Site Coordinator ▪ 1 Intake Specialist	▪ 3 Case Managers/Employment Providers ▪ 3 Case Manager Supervisors (part-time)	▪ 2 Parenting Providers (part-time) ▪ 3 Legal Providers (1 is part-time) ▪ 2 Legal Supervisors (part-time)
Seedco	▪ 1 Site Coordinator (half-time) ▪ 1 Site Assistant (part-time)	▪ 4 Case Managers ▪ 1 Case Manager Supervisor (part-time)	▪ 1 Legal Provider (part-time) ▪ 1 Parenting Provider (part-time)* ▪ 1 Financial Provider (part-time)* ▪ 1 Transitional Employment Provider (part-time)
STRIVE	▪ 1 Site Coordinator (part-time and changing)	▪ 4 Case Managers ▪ 3 Case Management Supervisors (part-time)	▪ 3 Court Advocates ▪ 1 Attorney (part-time and for FS participants only) ▪ 4 DEF Facilitators (part-time) ▪ 1 Mental Health Therapist (part-time) ▪ 1 Paralegal (part-time)

Note: ECC and EOC shared an unpaid Project Director; however, this individual worked for the County TANF program, not ECC or EOC.
* The Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) and Credit Where Credit is Due, Inc. (CWCID) provided parenting and financial services workshops to participants enrolled in the Seedco pilot during its first 22 month contract period. In August 2008, Seedco completed the development of its own parenting and financial literacy curriculums and thus ended its parenting and financial services contracts with these partners. However, at that time, CEO continued to provide transitional employment assistance to a subset of participants enrolled in Seedco's pilot.

train case management staff, oversee their activities, and coordinate communication between the contracting agency, other service partners, and the case managers that work for their organization.

All of the pilots, with the exception of ECC and EOC, employed a variety of specialized services staff. In Chautauqua County, STRIVE, Seedco and OCM-BOCES, specialized staff provide participants with a variety of services, including, for example, parenting and fatherhood workshops, legal services, financial literacy, and specialized services for ex-offenders. With the exception of STRIVE's legal advocates and the two attorneys that provided legal services to pilot participants at OCM-BOCES, all of the specialized services staff worked part-time for the pilots. Some specialized services staff, including the parenting, financial, and nutrition services supervisors for the Chautauqua County program, provided all of their support to the pilot through in-kind services.

Nearly all of the pilots experienced some staff turnover during the first two years of the initiative, most commonly among case managers. Given that most of the pilots have supervisory staff at the contracting agency or direct service sites to train new case management staff and fill in while case management positions are vacant, this generally was not a major disruption to the provision of services to pilot participants. However, as discussed elsewhere, STRIVE experienced repeated turnover among its management staff, which created challenges for STRIVE and its partners.

Staff Training

STRIVE and Seedco have multiple employment service sites that hire their own case management staff, many of whom had experience providing services to low-income and underserved populations prior to the start of the initiative. Thus, at the start of the initiative, case managers at these sites typically did not receive general training on how to provide one-on-one case management services to pilot participants. However, case management and supervisory staff at STRIVE meet separately each month to discuss ongoing issues related to the pilot. Similarly, Seedco hosts regularly scheduled joint meetings between supervisors and case managers who work at all of their direct service sites. During these meetings staff share information and discuss programmatic challenges.

OCM-BOCES also has multiple employment service sites that hire (and in some instances provide some training for) their own case management staff, some of whom have more case management experience than others. Because of the range of experience among case managers at this site and the structure of the OCM-BOCES pilot, the project coordinator at this site provides extensive training to all case managers involved with the initiative. During this training, case managers typically shadow other more experienced case management staff and in combination with one-on-one training, learn how to proceed during an intake session, develop a service plan, conduct an assessment, and complete the program's required documentation. Some of the organizations associated with the pilots also conduct internal training not specific to the fatherhood initiative for new staff. For example, an ESS for CCA began training to become a certified notary and fingerprint roller soon after being hired as a case manager for the program. In addition, some case managers at other sites attend facilitator training seminars for other

programs operated by the organizations at which they work. OCM-BOCES also coordinates monthly strategy meetings for supervisory staff from the program's key partners.

The Erie and Chautauqua County programs do not employ multiple employment service partners, so existing case managers or employment services supervisors at these sites typically help train each other. However, the Chautauqua County DSS does coordinate monthly meetings that include supervisory staff from the program's key partners.

OTDA also hosted annual conferences attended by staff from each of the pilots. Program staff indicated that these meetings were helpful in that they provided a forum in which pilot staff across sites could share ideas, discuss solutions to common problems, and identify best practices.

Chapter 3. Recruitment, Eligibility, Enrollment, and Retention

Although past fatherhood programs have struggled to meet their enrollment goals, the programs involved in this pilot initiative adopted a variety of recruitment strategies, which, for the most part, allowed them to overcome this problem. This chapter describes these recruitment strategies, focusing on the specific referral sources and outreach efforts that appear to have been the most successful for the pilots. We also discuss the issues that the pilots faced related to determining eligibility, enrollment practices, and retention.

A. Recruitment: Referral Sources and Outreach Efforts

All of the pilots used a variety of referral sources and outreach methods to recruit participants, some of which changed as the programs evolved and matured over time. In general, referral sources are individuals, organizations, or agencies such as Family Courts or One-Stop Career Centers that identify and refer potentially eligible individuals to the pilot sites for services. Outreach methods are efforts undertaken by the pilots to inform the general public and the eligible population in particular about their programs and the variety of available services.

All of the pilots received some referrals from the Family Court, although the proportion of all referrals originating from this source varied. Some programs relied almost exclusively on the Family Court to meet their enrollment goals (e.g., ECC), while others at least initially focused more on referrals from other sources and/or their own outreach efforts. Compared to the consistency and volume of referrals received from the Family Court, many of these other sources for pilot participants proved less reliable and effective in terms of meeting enrollment goals. However, there were two notable exceptions. Seedco's ongoing efforts to identify and recruit low-income noncustodial parents from the customer base at the high-volume One-Stop Center it operates were successful. In addition, OCM-BOCES staff felt that the airing of repeated short television advertisements describing program services during the first year of the initiative was a key recruitment tool.

Below, we describe these recruitment sources and outreach efforts undertaken by the pilots that proved effective in helping them meet their enrollment goals. We also provide a brief overview of the pilots' other referral sources and outreach activities that appeared to be less effective overall in recruiting a large number of pilot participants. Finally, we discuss how employing non-case management staff to assist and in some instances coordinate recruitment efforts may have helped some of the pilots meet their enrollment goals.

Family Court Referrals

As noted above, all of the pilots receive referrals from the Family Court. Overall, this referral source has been critical to many of the pilots' success in meeting or exceeding their enrollment goals. Some of the pilot programs received Family Court referrals from the very beginnings of their initiatives (i.e., ECC; Seedco—CAB, NMIC, and St. Nicks; and STRIVE—EHES) and thus had a steady source of referrals from their programs' start. Two pilots, Chautauqua and EOC, did not request referrals from the Family Court until after their initial efforts to recruit participants through other means proved largely unsuccessful. OCM-BOCES did not begin receiving regular

Family Court referrals until April 2008, but prior to this time staff were able to recruit sufficient participants using television advertising. Three pilot partners did not receive Family Court referrals at all— STRIVE-Fortune Society, STRIVE-RDRC, and Seedco-UMOS. Further details on family court referrals for the pilot sites are provided in box 3.1 below.

Box 3.1. The Pilots' Referral-Based Relationships with the Family Court

ECC, which began receiving Family Court referrals prior to the start of the initiative, receives its referrals almost exclusively from the Family Court, and at least initially, received far more Family Court referrals than any other pilot program. ECC has received as many as 88 new clients in one month, nearly all of which were referrals from the Family Court, and routinely receives well over 10 Family Court referrals monthly. Since EOC initiated a relationship with the Erie County Family Court, the court refers some individuals to ECC and others to EOC, depending on the particular needs of the individual. The large number of Family Court referrals received by ECC from the start of the initiative has allowed this site to significantly exceed its enrollment goals.

Three of Seedco's partners (CAB, NMIC, and St. Nicks) and STRIVE-EHES are employment service providers for New York City's Support Through Employment Program (STEP), and, as part of that program, were already receiving Family Court referrals prior to the start of the initiative. These four pilot partners receive about five STEP referrals monthly. For CAB and NMIC, the five monthly STEP referrals were more than enough for these two programs to meet their enrollment goals.

Three other pilots, Chautauqua, EOC, and OCM-BOCES established relationships with the Family Court after the start of program operations. Chautauqua and EOC both struggled initially to meet their enrollment goals through grassroots recruitment efforts, and consequently, moved to establish relationships and referral processes with the Family Court. OCM-BOCES was able to meet its enrollment goals without referrals from the Family Court, in large part because its lead project staff had extensive experience using television advertising to effectively recruit low-income noncustodial parents. Although OCM-BOCES case management staff indicated that they would have continued to meet their enrollment goals without referrals from the Family Court, average monthly enrollment at this site increased by 239 percent after the Family Court referrals began in April 2008.

Fortune Society, RDRC, and UMOS do not receive referrals from the Family Court. Fortune Society specializes in providing comprehensive rehabilitative services to ex-offenders and is a high volume organization, serving approximately 4,000 individuals annually throughout the five boroughs. Thus, by recruiting participants from within their organization they are able to meet their enrollment goals. Seedco is able to recruit a sufficient number of pilot participants from the Upper Manhattan Workforce 1 Career Center (UMOS). RDRC, located in the more remote area of Far Rockaway Queens, serves far fewer clients on an annual basis than either Fortune Society or UMOS, and thus struggles to meet its enrollment goals without the Family Court as a referral source.

Direct Connection to High Volume One-Stops

Having a direct connection to a high volume One-Stop Center also contributed to one pilot's relative success in meeting its enrollment goal. As noted, Seedco operates the Upper Manhattan Workforce 1 Career Center (UMOS) and selected this site as one of its four primary service locations. UMOS is one of the busiest One-Stop Centers in the country, serving approximately 285 walk-in customers per week. The UMOS site served 242 participants during the first contract period, far exceeding its original goal of 80. This suggests that high volume One-Stop Career Centers may be another promising referral and recruitment source for noncustodial parents in need of employment services.

Box. 3.2. Challenges to Identifying Participants from within a One-Stop Center

Despite its eventual success, Seedco initially struggled to establish procedures to successfully identify eligible participants for the initiative from within the One-Stop it operates. Seedco staff added several questions to UMOS's intake form to screen individuals who were already receiving One-Stop services but customers found the questions confusing and either self-identified as noncustodial parents incorrectly or were hesitant to reveal their status as noncustodial parents. Developing the appropriate questions so that mothers would correctly self-identify as noncustodial parents was particularly difficult. Seedco eventually developed better screening questions so that potentially eligible noncustodial parents can be correctly identified. In addition, UMOS pilot staff make daily presentations during the One-Stop's registration sessions to inform potentially eligible people of the services available through the pilot program.

Television Advertising

Two sites took advantage of the broadcast media to disseminate information about their services during the early implementation stages of their initiatives, with mixed results. OCM-BOCES staff, building on their experiences operating an employment program for noncustodial parents under the welfare-to-work program, ran over 800 ten-second spots advertising their services on five local television stations. These five stations also committed to running additional advertisements at no cost to the pilot when possible. The site allocated $10,529 in grant funding between January and June of 2007 to pay for these advertisements. OCM-BOCES staff indicated that using television advertisements to recruit pilot participants was a key factor in enabling them to meet their enrollment goals at the start of the initiative.

EOC staff also employed broadcast media in an effort to recruit participants to their program. Pilot staff at this site discussed their program during interviews that aired on a local radio station and the "Buffalo Matters" television program. However, these radio and television interviews were not regularly scheduled events. Moreover, EOC did not have funding allocated to pay for television advertisements that could be aired routinely. According to EOC staff, recruiting participants through isolated radio and television appearances was largely ineffective.

Other Referral Sources and Outreach Efforts

All of the pilots also receive some referrals from sources other than the Family Court or a One-Stop Center and participate in outreach efforts other than television advertising as described above. However, with the exception of the cross-program recruitment efforts of Fortune Society, most of these referral sources and outreach efforts appeared to be less effective in terms of recruiting large numbers of pilot participants and helping the pilot programs meet their enrollment goals.

All of the sites developed flyers that describe program services and distribute them throughout their communities. Locations where flyers are distributed include, for example, local child support offices, Family Court facilities, One-Stop Workforce Career Centers, drug and alcohol treatment centers, Planned Parenthood offices, job fairs, churches, parole offices, and other locations frequented by members of the target population.

Pilot program staff also make in-person outreach presentations to numerous organizations with contacts and interest in the population eligible for program services. For example, members of the Chautauqua team conducted informational sessions for various community groups, including the local faith-based initiative, a community transitional program for ex-offenders, and the local United Way. STRIVE-RDRC made contacts and developed relationships with the local schools, the veteran's administration, churches, and the department of probation.

Sites also make recruitment presentations to noncustodial parents enrolled in other programs offered by their organizations. EHES case managers regularly recruit for the pilot program through informational sessions conducted during STRIVE's Core Training program, a four week job readiness workshop at their site. ECC informs participants of the Education 2 Recovery program that it operates for alcohol and substance dependent individuals of the services available through the pilot. In addition, St. Nicks recruits pilot participants from its job skills training programs. As noted above, the Fortune Society stands out by being able to successfully meet its enrollment goals by recruiting participants from its high volume court referral Alternative to Incarceration (ATI) program.

EOC, NMIC, and RDRC reported receiving referrals from the departments of parole and/or probation, while others (e.g., OCM-BOCES, RDRC, and St. Nicks) received a number of "word-of-mouth" or self-referrals. With the exception of Chautauqua, where child support staff identify and recommend noncustodial parents to support magistrates for referral for services, staff in the other pilot sites generally felt that direct referrals from either child support or TANF staff were limited.

Non-Case Management Staff Able to Assist with Recruitment

Some of the pilot programs had outreach staff or departments dedicated specifically to recruitment efforts for all programs and activities that were funded through other non-OTDA grant sources. CAB, for example, employs an outreach specialist who is able to help recruit participants for the pilot program. However, because many pilot participants at this site are referred from STEP, not much assistance from this specialist is needed. Other sites have high

level staff who use grant funds to help their project partners recruit participants. For example, OCM-BOCES employs a project coordinator who helps facilitate the program's linkages with the Family Court and other recruitment activities. Similarly, staff in Chautauqua and Seedco who do not have case management responsibilities assist partners with recruitment efforts. Some pilot staff indicated that having non-case management staff available to assist with, and in some instances help coordinate, recruitment activities may have helped them meet their enrollment goals.

B. Eligibility

The statute authorizing the fatherhood initiative stipulates specific eligibility criteria for enrollment in the pilot programs. These criteria are:

1) Must be a noncustodial parent;
2) Must be a public assistance recipient or have income that does not exceed 200% of the federal poverty level;
3) Must be unemployed or working less than 20 hours per week;
4) Must have a child support order payable through the support collection unit or have had paternity established for his or her child and a court proceeding has been initiated to obtain an order of child support; and
5) Must be receiving, or the custodial parent must be receiving, child support services through a social services district.

In addition, the eligibility criteria initially stipulated that pilot participants were to be between 18 and 35 years old. However, once the pilot programs began, staff identified many otherwise eligible participants in need of pilot services who were outside of this age range. OTDA was asked to expand the eligibility requirement to 16 to 45 years old, which it did in early 2007.

The extent to which the pilots strictly enforced these eligibility criteria appears to have varied by site. For example, pilot staff in Chautauqua County and at OCM-BOCES reported that they followed the OTDA eligibility criteria very closely. Child support enforcement staff in Chautauqua County who flag potential referrals for Family Court support magistrates check for program eligibility at this time. Because Chautauqua County support magistrates also directly refer individuals who have not been pre-screened by CSE staff, program staff also determine that referrals meet the OTDA eligibility criteria again during intake sessions, consulting their Project Director at the local child support office when necessary. PSI also indicated that they strictly adhere to the OTDA eligibility criteria using a combination of screening by pilot staff and verifying eligibility data through their local child support office.

STRIVE, on the other hand, altered its eligibility criteria for program participation several times. Initially, STRIVE permitted its partners to enroll participants regardless of their employment status. STRIVE later directed its partners to enroll only individuals who were employed, but not limited to those working less than 20 hours per week or with income less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level. The criteria changed again to allow enrollment of both the unemployed and employed but required that a child support order be in place. However, in

the summer of 2008, OTDA directed STRIVE to revise the eligibility criteria to be consistent with the requirements outlined in the statute, which they did. Staff felt that these constant shifts in eligibility criteria during the first two years of program operation, attributed to frequent staff turnover during that time, negatively affected program recruitment and enrollment for the STRIVE partners. For example, when enrollment was restricted to employed individuals St. Nicks recruited many employed graduates of its job training programs as STRIVE participants. However, when STRIVE changed its eligibility criteria to be consistent with the OTDA criteria and limited enrollment to unemployed people or those working less than 20 hours per week, St. Nicks struggled to find alternative sources for recruitment.

EOC adheres to selected eligibility criteria stipulated by OTDA. EOC requires that participants be noncustodial parents who meet the age and income guidelines, but requires that participants meet only one of the remaining three eligibility criteria (i.e. numbers 3, 4, or 5 above). ECC deems everyone referred to them by the Family Court as eligible for the pilot, regardless of whether they meet all of the eligibility criteria. Seedco reported adhering to the eligibility criteria.

At the time of the site visits, OTDA had no mechanism in place to systematically monitor that the pilots were adhering to the eligibility criteria stipulated by statute. This limited the extent to which pilots could be held accountable for following the eligibility criteria, particularly at sites that do not have internal auditing.

Verifying Eligibility Criteria

OTDA did not specify how the pilot programs were to verify that program participants met the eligibility criteria listed above. In general, most sites relied to some degree on self-reported information to determine eligibility. In the fall of 2007, OTDA directed pilot site staff to verify the three child support-related eligibility criteria (i.e. numbers 1, 4, and 5 above). Given the difficulty of verifying the income, public assistance, and employment eligibility criteria, OTDA agreed to accept self-reported information to meet these criteria.

Verifying child support eligibility is not a major challenge for the three upstate pilot programs. Many of the pilot participants in the Erie and Chautauqua County programs and at OCM-BOCES are court referrals and therefore meet the child support criteria. In addition, staff at these sites can verify that participants meet the child support eligibility criteria through the key staff contacts that they have at their local child support agencies. However, some New York City pilot staff indicated that they were unable to verify whether their participants had a child support case through the local child support enforcement office in a timely and consistent manner. Thus, they continued to rely upon self-reported information to verify these criteria. In July 2008, the New York City OCSE Director directed her staff to conduct the necessary verification process in a timely manner. Since then, the New York City pilot programs have been instructed to begin requesting verification of the child support eligibility of potential participants again.

C. Enrollment: Issues and Goals

OTDA did not establish a uniform definition of enrollment at the start of the pilot. Thus, the pilots were free to develop their own definitions of enrollment, resulting in variations in terms of timing and level of involvement required on the part of the enrollee and pilot staff to be considered enrolled across the pilots.

ECC initially adopted the broadest definition of enrollment. Staff considered that individuals were enrolled in the pilot immediately upon being referred to the program by the Family Court, regardless of whether they completed an intake assessment or received any program services. However, at the time of our interviews in June 2008, ECC had changed its enrollment policy and reported that participants were only considered enrolled after they completed a one-on-one intake session. EOC and Seedco also enrolled eligible participants in their programs immediately upon completion of one-on-one intake sessions.

Chautauqua and STRIVE developed a much narrower definition of enrollment. In Chautauqua County and at STRIVE, noncustodial parents are not enrolled in the pilots until after they complete an intake assessment and at least one employment or fatherhood workshop central to the core services offered by these programs. In Chautauqua County, noncustodial parents are required to complete a one-on-one intake assessment and the first employment workshop of the Steps to Economic and Personal Success (STEPS) curriculum prior to being enrolled in the pilot. At the start of the initiative, STRIVE required that noncustodial parents complete a one-on-one intake assessment and two DEF workshops prior to being enrolled. STEPS and DEF workshops are typically scheduled every two and eight weeks respectively, meaning that individuals who completed intake assessments may have had to wait weeks before completing the required workshop(s) needed to be considered enrolled in the programs. This definition of enrollment prevented these pilots from receiving enrollment credit for those individuals who did not attend the requisite number of workshops despite the invested staff time to complete the intake process. In addition, this definition of enrollment made it difficult for these sites to measure attrition rates between the time of intake and eventual enrollment. In the summer of 2008, STRIVE addressed these issues by changing the time of enrollment to consider a participant enrolled after completion of an intake assessment.

In the summer of 2008, OCM-BOCES instituted an intake orientation session at their project office for noncustodial parents referred to their program by Family Court support magistrates. Prior to being enrolled in the pilot, OCM-BOCES requires that all court referrals complete both this intake orientation at the PSI project office and a one-on-one intake session with a case manager at the employment services site to which they are assigned. Staff at OCM-BOCES felt that offering group orientations at their project office allowed them to streamline the general program information that they provided to pilot participants who would otherwise initially learn about the program from staff at different partner organizations. Non-court referrals who walk-in for services at partner sites Westcott Community Center or Syracuse Model Neighborhood, Inc. who are eligible for services can be enrolled upon completing a one-on-one intake. CCA, an employment services partner of OCM-BOCES, requires that court referrals complete the project office intake orientation, a CCA-specific orientation, and a one-on-one intake session with a case manager prior to being enrolled. Staff at CCA, which specializes in serving ex-offenders, reported that requiring participants to attend multiple intake sessions prior to being enrolled improved the effectiveness of their program. They felt that this set apart

potential participants who were serious about the program and were most likely to engage in the services it offered from others.

Enrollment Goals

A major success of these pilot programs over previous fatherhood programs was their success in meeting or nearly meeting their enrollment goals. As shown in table 3.1 below, two sites, ECC and Seedco, surpassed their enrollment goals by a significant margin. From the start of the initiative through August 2008, ECC and Seedco reached 233% and 217% of their enrollment goals, respectively. EOC and OCM-BOCES also reached their enrollment goals enrolling sufficient participants to reach 113 percent and 110 percent of their enrollment goals, respectively. As discussed above, the relationships that these pilots established with the Family Court or a One-Stop Career Center for referrals likely contributed to their ability to meet these enrollment goals. In fact, some sites (e.g., OCM-BOCES) indicated that the connection to the Family Court gave them more referrals than they could serve. As noted, after EOC and OCM-BOCES began receiving court referrals, enrollment at these sites grew significantly. Some sites did not stop enrolling new participants when they reached their enrollment goals (e.g., ECC and UMOS), which allowed more participants to be served than originally expected. Thus, successful recruiting efforts at these sites resulted in more participants being served, but with finite staff and funding, the quality of services provided to these participants is not known at this time.

Chautauqua and STRIVE were the only sites to fall short of their enrollment goals, each enrolling enough participants to reach 96 percent of their enrollment goals. However, Chautauqua and STRIVE missed these goals by very small margins, 7 and 11 participants, respectively. As discussed previously, Chautauqua and STRIVE chose to define enrollment narrowly. This is one possible factor that may have contributed to these sites falling just short of their enrollment goals. STRIVE's changing and limited eligibility criteria may also have affected enrollment at this site. Furthermore, funding uncertainties negatively affected enrollment for OCM-BOCES and STRIVE, which we discuss further below.

Table 3.1. Enrollment Goal, Actual Enrollment, and Percent of Enrollment Goal Reached by OTDA Pilot Program

	Chautauqua	ECC	EOC	OCM-BOCES	Seedco	STRIVE
First Contract Start Date	11/1/2006	10/1/2006	1/1/2007	11/1/2006	9/1/2006	10/1/2006
Enrollment Goal Through 8/31/2008	165	329	243	286	251	288
Actual Enrollment Through 8/31/2008	158	764	274	315	545	277
% of Enrollment Goal Reached Through 08/31/2008	96	233	113	110	217	96

Funding Uncertainties

Delays by OTDA in providing the pilots with second year funding created enrollment challenges for OCM-BOCES and STRIVE, the two sites whose first year contracts ended in 2007. OCM-BOCES's first year funding ended in October 2007, and as of July 2008, staff at this site had not received the second year funding that they anticipated from OTDA. Still, during this time, OCM-BOCES continued to pay for program staff, enroll clients, and provide most services to pilot participants.[2] OCM-BOCES staff indicated that when they received verbal confirmation from OTDA in July 2008 that they would receive funding for their second and third years, they were one week away from laying off staff.

STRIVE's first year funding ended in September 2007, but the program continued to operate without new funding for nearly a year. However, the enrollment challenges faced by STRIVE were even more pronounced because, unlike OCM-BOCES, STRIVE was unable to continue paying its partners. RDRC could not absorb the costs of providing program services without being paid, and thus laid off their case manager and court advocate. At the time of the site visits in August 2008, RDRC's program manager had been the only person providing services to pilot participants at this location for several months. RDRC was unable to provide any services or enroll new participants for the three month period between November 2007 and January 2008.

D. Retention

Though all of the programs were able to meet or nearly meet their enrollment goals, some program staff reported that maintaining long-term continued contact with the noncustodial parents enrolled in their programs was a challenge. One case manager noted that she is unable to contact some participants each month; some of the participants with whom she looses contact just "pop-up periodically." Most of the programs are able to offer incentives that promote participant retention, including cash for work-related supports, stipends, and long-term transportation, legal, and child support assistance. Pilots able to offer these incentives may have been better able to retain participants. For example, STRIVE was relatively successful in retaining participants for its 10-week DEF class, in part because of the $25 per class cash stipend that it gave each participant who attended. STRIVE distributed these payments bi-weekly so that participants had to attend all 10 workshops to receive the full $250. Because of the high demand for bus passes and metro cards, staff at EOC, OCM-BOCES, Seedco, and STRIVE were able to use them as a tool to help maintain contact with participants. Participants were required to meet with case managers to obtain continued access to this transportation assistance, which helped staff at some programs track employment retention milestones and assess the overall progress of their employed participants, with whom sustaining long-term continued contact is particularly difficult.

[2] The exception to this is the Consortium for Children's Services, which was unable to provide parenting services for one month while they were not being paid.

Chapter 4. Program Services

In this chapter we describe the range of services offered to participants at each of the pilot programs.

A. Overview of Services Provided

The Strengthening Families Through Stronger Fathers Initiative was designed to provide low-income noncustodial parents with an array of services to help them find work, pay their child support, and become successful parents. Based on the needs of their pilot participants and available funding, each of the programs offers a range of services that varies in content, structure, and intensity. Some of the services are provided to participants through pilot funding, either directly by the contracting agency or through subcontracts for specialized services. Other services are made available to participants through existing programs administered by the contracting agency or key partner but not funded directly by the pilot programs or through referrals to other organizations in the community. Below, we provide a list of the types of services offered by the pilots:

- Evaluation and needs assessments;
- Case management and follow-up services;
- Employment-related services, including job readiness assistance, job placement assistance, job skills training, transitional employment assistance, and work supports;
- Parenting, relationship, and fatherhood skills workshops;
- Assistance in obtaining visitation;
- Legal assistance, including access to attorneys or court advocates to help modify child support orders and navigate the driver's license reinstatement process;
- Child support-related services (not provided by lawyers or court advocates);
- Financial literacy services, including financial planning, public benefits screening, and tax assistance;
- Incentives for recruitment and participation, including monetary stipends and transportation assistance;
- Cooking classes;
- Education assistance, including help in obtaining GEDs and enrolling in vocational training programs;
- Mental health and other counseling services; and
- Housing assistance.

All of the pilot programs adopted a one-on-one case management approach, which means that pilot participants are assigned to a case manager with whom they work closely throughout the period of participation in the pilot. Case management services involve a range of activities but are typically directed at maintaining regular contact with participants, following up on milestones outlined in a service plan, making arrangements or referrals for specialized services, and providing general support. Employment services are a key element of the services delivered. All of the pilot programs offer job readiness and placement services as well as specialized job placement services to help place this hard-to-employ population in jobs. All of the pilots also offer access to fatherhood, parenting, and/or relationship skills services and assist participants

address a multitude of child support–related needs. The following sections describe in detail the types of services available to program participants in the pilot sites.

B. Intake, Assessment, and Orientation

During the initial intake meeting, which typically involves a case manager and noncustodial parent, program staff complete a variety of intake forms, including those required for the pilot project as well as others that are in some cases unique to a particular organization. Some of these forms include, for example, an eligibility certification checklist, a participation agreement outlining responsibilities of both the participant and the case manager, and a consent form. Information collected from these forms is used to assess the pilot participant's family and living situation, work history, participation in other public programs (e.g., TANF), financial needs, child support obligations, and any other service needs. Based on a participant's needs, program staff describe the program services they offer and then work with the noncustodial parent to develop a service plan or "road map" outlining next steps. In addition, as part of the intake process, some partner programs of Seedco and STRIVE conduct automated benefits screenings for various public assistance programs for pilot participants. These initial intake and assessment sessions range in length from 10-15 minutes in some programs to over an hour in others.

In Chautauqua, ECC, and OCM-BOCES some pilot participants have multiple intake sessions prior to completing the intake and assessment process. Upon being referred to the program by the Family Court, most noncustodial parents in Chautauqua initially meet with program staff stationed at the court, but they are also required to complete individual intake sessions at a program office at a later date[3]. Similarly, individuals referred by the court to the ECC pilot complete two separate intake sessions—one with a case manager at the C.O.U.R.T.S. program, followed by another with a case manager at ECC. Some pilot participants at OCM-BOCES are required to complete up to four intake sessions, depending on how they are referred to the program and the partner agency to which they are assigned. As noted earlier, with the program's recent increase in court referrals, OCM-BOCES instituted a group orientation, which is facilitated by the program's intake specialist at the project office and provides noncustodial parents with a general overview of services prior to being referred to partner organizations. This means that court referred participants are required to meet with staff at the court; attend a group orientation at the project office; and complete an individual intake with the case manager to whom they are assigned all as part of the program's orientation process. In addition, participants assigned to CCA are required to attend a second intake orientation prior to meeting individually with a case manager.

As described in Chapter 3, staff at these programs felt that requiring participants to attend multiple intake sessions improved the effectiveness of their programs. Furthermore, case management staff reported that this multi-step intake process set apart potential participants who were serious about the program and were most likely to engage in the services it offered from other participants. Staff in Chautauqua indicated that meeting with noncustodial parents at the Family Court upon being referred to their program allowed them to ease the anxiety that

[3] During the first few months of program operation Chautauqua required that pilot participants complete group intake orientations, but later switched to cover this same information in the one-on-one sessions that are currently used.

potential participants had about being ordered to attend their program. Because of this, they felt that noncustodial parents that Chautauqua program staff met with in court were more likely to schedule and attend individual intake sessions in the future.

C. Overall Case Management

As noted above, these programs all adopted a one-on-one case management approach for providing services. In some programs, staff shared case management responsibilities for all pilot participants, while others assigned each noncustodial parent to a dedicated single case manager with whom they worked closely throughout the period of participation. Staff in all programs reported that they had some type of contact with participants at least once a month, although most described more frequent interaction, by phone, e-mail, and in-person, depending on the level of engagement of participants. Staff at CAB indicated that they met with an average pilot participant 3 times per week. On-going case management activities were directed at, for example, following up on milestones outlined in the service plan, making arrangements or referrals for specialized services, assisting with child support issues, following up on job leads and referrals, and providing general support. Case managers and other program staff agreed that an important component of the services they offer is developing trusting relationships with pilot participants through an intensive case management approach.

D. Employment-Related Services

One of the central needs of pilot participants is assisting them in finding and maintaining employment, and as a result, most programs were designed to focus on the provision of employment-related services. Most of the programs used additional funding from sources outside of the initiative to provide or supplement the employment services they offered. Many programs, for example, referred participants to short-term skills training programs offered through other non-Initiative funded programs within their organizations, while others established relationships with local JOBS programs or One-Stop centers who provided staff to facilitate job readiness and placement services. In part because of this, the employment-related services offered varied considerably across the pilot programs, and, in some cases, among the partner organizations associated with each program. In the following section, we discuss the employment-related services offered by each of the pilot programs in further detail.

Job Readiness Assistance

In general, program staff agreed that most pilot participants initially lacked the necessary soft skills required for immediate job placement. Program staff felt that referrals of unprepared and unqualified job candidates would limit the employment opportunities of participants referred to employers from their organizations in the future. Because of this, most programs required that participants complete job readiness training, through one-on-one assistance (which all programs provide) or group classes prior to receiving job placement services.

Job readiness services consist of assisting participants with résumé development, interviewing skills, work-related attitudinal training, and guidance in filling out job applications. One-on-one assistance often involves case managers working individually with participants to

create résumés and navigate the Department of Labor website to find available jobs for which participants are interested in applying. As noted, group job readiness assistance is not offered by all programs, and in table 4.1 below, we show the programs and corresponding partner organizations that offer these classes along with the duration of the services provided.

Table 4.1. Pre-Employment Job Readiness Classes Offered by Pilot Program

OTDA Pilot Program	Job Readiness Class Offered	Duration of Class
Chautauqua	√	24 hours during 5 classes in 1 week
ECC	√*	2 hours during 1 class offered periodically
EOC	√**	2 hours during 1 class offered bi-weekly
OCM-BOCES		
CCA	√	24 hours during 8 classes in 2 weeks
SMN		
WCC		
Seedco		
CAB	√	2 hour classes offered weekly
NMIC	√	Regularly scheduled workshops
UMOS		
STRIVE		
EHES	√	160 hours during 20 classes in 4 weeks
Fortune Society	√	80 hours during 10 classes in 2 weeks
RDRC	√	120 hours during 15 classes in 3 weeks
St. Nick's	√	24 hours during 3 classes in 1 week

* The Job readiness classes offered by this program are facilitated by a job developer from a local One-Stop. ** The job readiness classes offered by this program are facilitated by a job developer from the OTDA JOBS program.

Chautauqua offers a 5-day, 6 hours per day workshop that pilot participants (and custodial parents enrolled in their TANF work program) are required to complete, which includes, among other components, 24 hours of soft skills and job readiness training. To facilitate this workshop, the program uses a motivational job readiness curriculum developed by the Pacific Institute called Steps To Economic and Personal Success (STEPS). Case managers supplement the material addressed in this curriculum by assisting participants develop résumés and engage in mock interviews during the last two days of the class. Chautauqua also developed a once-a-week 2-hour job club, in which participants who complete the week-long STEPS workshop can obtain additional assistance with their résumés, along with job placement services, including job leads and referrals.

With the exception of UMOS, which is designated as Seedco's "fast-track" site for participants who need less intense job readiness training, each of Seedco's partner organizations facilitates group job readiness workshops. CAB conducts 2 hour job readiness classes weekly that both pilot participants and TANF recipients attend. St. Nick's offers an intensive 3 day, 8 hours per day job readiness workshop to which some pilot participants are referred. NMIC also offers regularly scheduled employment workshops.

As described above, all of STRIVE's partners are also contractors of STRIVE through their New York Network and prior to 2007 offered their intense short-term CORE program that emphasizes attitudinal development and job readiness skills. Each of STRIVE's partner organizations continues to offer some variation of this CORE model to which some participants of the DEF program are referred for job readiness assistance. However, for a time, STRIVE and its partner organizations only enrolled noncustodial parents who were employed, so many of these participants did not receive referrals for job readiness training, or in some cases, had already completed these services prior to enrolling in the DEF program. Thus, even though the group job readiness services offered by STRIVE and its partners were on average longer than other programs, the participants who were employed at enrollment and had not already completed these classes did not benefit from the availability of these services.

CCA is the only OCM-BOCES partner that offers group job readiness workshops, which it recently developed (through funding for its prisoner reentry program) to address the pre-employment barriers that its clients face. Pilot participants are referred to this 8-day, 3 hours per day workshop, and receive a certificate upon completion. CCA is also in the process of acquiring the National Work Readiness Credential, which will enable them to provide an official "work-ready" certification which participants can present to potential employers. SMN and WCC do not provide group job readiness workshops, though each of these partners, along with CCA, has an Employment Service Specialist (ESS) who works with participants on a one-on-one basis to provide these services.

With the exception of the ECC and EOC programs, group job readiness workshops are offered jointly to pilot participants and individuals being served by other programs within each organization. Chautauqua and all of the Seedco partners, for example, receive TANF workforce development grants to provide, among other services, job readiness assistance to individuals receiving public assistance. Similarly, CCA provides job readiness services jointly to pilot participants and participants in its prisoner reentry program, REAL. Thus, in some sites, pilot staff are able to piggyback on existing job readiness and enroll their pilot participants in these classes. ECC and EOC, on the other hand, made arrangements to have staff from a local One-Stop and JOBS program facilitate job readiness classes specifically for their participants.

Job Placement, Training, and Retention Services

Pilot staff generally agreed that the noncustodial parents being served by this initiative are, for a number of reasons, a particularly difficult population to employ. Over half of the pilot participants have criminal backgrounds, while many others do not have high school diplomas or GEDs. Many lack or have inconsistent employment histories, and many struggle with issues related to substance abuse. These problems, coupled with the limited availability of affordable housing in New York City and public transportation upstate, make job placement a major challenge for pilot staff. Because of this, all of the programs took steps to engage specialized staff and create programs and supports to help find and maintain employment for this hard to serve population. As shown in table 4.2 below, the type and extent of the services offered vary by program, and in some cases, between the partner organizations associated with a program.

Table 4.2. Job Placement Services, Training Programs, and Supports Available to Pilot Participants by OTDA Pilot Program

OTDA Pilot Programs	Job Developer: Available through Program	Job Developer: Available through One-Stop or JOBS Program	Transitional Employment Assistance	Job Skills Training	Employment-Related Supports
Chautauqua		√			√
ECC		√		√**	
EOC		√		√***	√
OCM-BOCES					
CCA	√			√**	√
SMN	√*			√**	√
WCC	√*			√**	√
Seedco					
CAB	√				√
NMIC	√			√	√
St. Nick's	√			√	√
UMOS	√				√
CEO			√		
STRIVE					
EHES	√			√	√
FS	√				√
RDRC	√			√***	√

*Case management staff are Job Developers. **Services are not provided for free on-site. ***Services are not provided on-site.

Job Developers. All of the programs provide participants with access to job developers, either through their own organizations or through relationships with a JOBS program or One-Stop. With the exception of OCM-BOCES, all of the upstate programs developed relationships with One-Stops or an OTDA JOBS program (with which they are co-located or located nearby) to provide participants with access to a job developer, which they are able to do at no cost to the pilot. Other programs also had established relationships with a One-Stop or JOBS program (e.g., Seedco operates the Upper Manhattan Workforce 1 Career Center). These types of relationships may not be as crucial for OCM-BOCES, Seedco, and STRIVE, as they have their own on-site job developers (and/or employment specialists) able to provide employment-related expertise to case managers and pilot participants.

The availability of job developers provides pilot participants at many programs with a direct link to local employers. Job developers contact employers to place participants who have completed job readiness training, and in some cases, skills training, in industry specific jobs. Due to the size of their caseloads and other responsibilities, case managers at most programs are

limited in their ability to provide direct placement services, making the availability of job developers a key component of the employment services these programs provide.

EOC staff initially scheduled individual appointments for their noncustodial parents to meet with the JOBS program job developer, but as their caseload grew, they worked with the JOBS team to hold twice-monthly, 2-hour job clubs specifically for SFI participants. EOC also encourages pilot participants to attend bi-weekly job fairs sponsored by the Employment Division of the Erie County Department of Social Services, with whom the program is co-located. ECC made arrangements with staff from the One-Stop to facilitate on-site employment workshops, though these classes focus on job readiness assistance rather than placement services. The Chautauqua County One-Stop is co-located with Ross IES, the employment services provider for the Chautauqua County pilot, and participants at this program are frequently referred by case management staff to the One-Stop's job developer for individual assistance, including, for example, help in using the Department of Labor website to search and apply for jobs.

Transitional Employment Assistance. Seedco contracts with the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) to provide transitional employment assistance to hard-to-employ participants, and is the only program to provide this type of service. CEO's transitional employment program targets parolees with no recent work history, and provides them with immediate, paid, short-term employment. Participants in CEO's transitional work program work in small crews with a CEO-employed supervisor at one of its 35 worksites in New York City, where they perform minor repair, maintenance, grounds keeping, and janitorial work for public agencies that pay for these services. The transitional employment program is aimed at providing hard to employ participants with the essential skills and experience to rejoin the workforce and transition back into their communities.

Job Skills Training. Program staff indicated that a number of industries, including, for example, construction, telemarketing, security (for those with no criminal records), waste removal, and fiber optics, are relatively well suited for the noncustodial parents that they serve. These are also the industries that tend to pay more than minimum wage, which given the high cost of living in New York City, is of particular concern for pilot participants at Seedco and STRIVE. To help participants acquire the skills necessary to be placed in these jobs, most programs provide participants with access to an array of job skills training programs, although only three programs, EHES, NMIC, and St. Nick's provide these services on-site and free of charge to participants. Some of these training programs are described in box 4.1 below.

Employment-Related Supports. With the exception of ECC, all of the pilots offer participants employment-related supports in the form of cash stipends, transportation, and/or clothing assistance to help them search for, obtain, and sustain long-term employment. OCM-BOCES allocates up to $500 for each pilot participant for employment-related purchases, which can be used to cover the costs of training, uniforms, clothing for interviews, tools and equipment, fees (not fines), and short-term counseling services. However, access to this benefit is limited to $100 until a participant completes the required parenting classes, described below.

Four of the six pilot programs (Seedco, STRIVE, OCM-BOCES and EOC) also provide transportation assistance in the form of bus tokens, bus passes, and/or metro cards to assist

participants with the cost of travel while searching for jobs and getting to and from work once employed. Because of the high demand for these items, staff at these programs developed guidelines for distribution. For example, EOC only provides tokens for the local street car and bus to participants who are "actively involved in a job search." To receive these tokens, pilot participants are required to provide program staff with the names and contact information of employers with whom they are scheduled to meet, enabling case managers to verify job searches if necessary. EOC also provides monthly bus passes to participants who are unemployed at the time of enrollment and find a job while enrolled in the program to use during their first month of employment.

Box 4.1. Some Jobs Skills Training Programs Available to Pilot Participants

St. Nick's provides Environmental Remediation training to pilot participants enrolled at both STRIVE and Seedco (although most participants who received this training were in the Seedco program because the STRIVE participants at St. Nicks were more likely to be employed). The 3 week training provides participants with the tools to obtain jobs in Brownfield remediation and asbestos removal and includes a combination of classroom and hands-on training. St. Nick's also offers a commercial driver's license certification program. EHES also offers Environmental Remediation training for its pilot participants. In addition, EHES provides participants with access to technical computer training, leading to A+ certification. NMIC's job skills training program focuses on the construction trades, including building maintenance and weatherization programs.

With the exception of Chautauqua, which due to its size and remote location has limited job opportunities for participants (particularly during the winter), the upstate programs, ECC, EOC, and OCM-BOCES offer skills training programs through their affiliations with local community colleges or technical education institutions. These programs refer participants for job skills training at nearby off-site locations. Although financial aid may be available to those who apply, fees for these classes are generally not paid by the pilot. Pilot participants at RDRC are also referred by the program's job developer for job skills training off-site. Unlike participants at EHES, NMIC, and St. Nick's, which offer these services on-site at no cost to participants, enrollees at ECC, EOC, OCM-BOCES, and RDRC do not participate in these services regularly.

The employment-related transportation assistance offered by the other three programs, OCM-BOCES, Seedco, and STRIVE, is more extensive. Like EOC, these three programs also provide short-term transportation assistance to participants prior to obtaining employment, however, these programs continue to provide bus passes to participants even after they complete their first month of employment. OCM-BOCES provides monthly $40 bus passes to pilot participants who request them, complete the program's parenting component, and verify employment. STRIVE and Seedco distribute weekly or monthly metro cards to pilot participants

who obtain employment for up to six months. Pilot participants are required to meet with case managers regularly to receive metro cards. The promise of the metro card acts as a 'carrot" to encourage continued contact with program staff, thus enabling them to track employment retention milestones and assess the overall progress of their employed participants with whom long-term continued contact is often difficult to sustain.

Chautauqua does not provide participants with employment-related cash or transportation supports, however, like EOC and Seedco, provides clothing assistance to pilot participants through a partnership with a clothes closet established prior to the start of the initiative. Case managers at OCM-BOCES can purchase clothing for pilot participants with the $500 allocated per participant for work-related supports.

Post Employment/Career Enhancement Services. Some staff indicated that they begin helping a client find a second job immediately after placement in the first job. STRIVE staff reported that they work with employed clients on job search for a subsequent job.

Follow-up Services. STRIVE—EHES has a department that manages employment-related follow-up services for all graduates of its CORE job readiness program. Pilot participants who graduate from this program receive follow-up services from staff in this department for 2 years, and also have access to a lifetime of employment-related services from any of STRIVE's affiliated network sites.

Case managers from all of the pilots attempt to contact pilot participants after being employed for 90 and 180 days, as they are required to track these job retention milestones for reporting purposes. All of the programs also maintain an open-door policy for pilot participants who need employment-related assistance after graduating or being terminated from the program.

E. Parenting, Relationship, and Fatherhood Services

Parenting services are provided in some capacity by all of the pilots, but the content, structure, and intensity of these services vary by program. A brief overview of the parenting, relationship, and fatherhood services offered by each pilot program is provided below.

- **Chautauqua County – Active Parenting Now: The Basics for Parents of Children Ages 5 – 12.** The Chautauqua County Department of Social Services contracted with the Center for Family Unity (CFU) to provide parenting services to pilot participants. It also contracted with Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) to provide classes on nutrition education (as it relates to parenting) in addition to other services described later in the report. CFU uses a condensed and slightly modified version of the 14 hour Active Parenting Now curriculum, which focuses on traditional parenting skills, including responsibility and discipline; understanding and redirecting misbehavior; and building courage, character, and self-esteem. Communication skills and conflict resolution are also addressed. This curriculum is covered during Chautauqua's 1-week workshop, Steps to Economic and Personal Success (STEPS), which all pilot participants are required to complete. During the STEPS program, 1-hour seminars across 3 consecutive days are devoted to parenting classes; a portion of an additional 1-hour seminar is devoted to nutrition education.

- **Erie County (ECC) – Parenting Skills and Conflict Resolution Curricula.** ECC developed parenting skills and conflict resolution curricula for pilot participants enrolled in the D.A.D.S. program. The parenting skills curriculum addresses maintaining parent-child relationships during divorce, child discipline, legal issues and the Family Court, and dealing with drug abuse and domestic violence, while the conflict resolution curriculum focuses on general communication skills and stress relief. Each of these curricula was designed with five two-hour modules, but in practice, each curriculum is provided to pilot participants in five one-hour sessions.

- **Erie County (EOC) – Individual Consultation.** EOC does not contract with specialized partners and did not develop a specialized curriculum for its parenting services. Instead, it provides parenting services as part of its one-on-one case management services.

- **OCM-BOCES (PSI) – Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP).** OCM-BOCES contracts with the Consortium for Children's Services and the Spanish Action League (SAL) to facilitate parenting workshops for PSI participants. The facilitators follow a 12 hour program based on the STEP curriculum, but also supplement this material with components of the 24/7 Dad and Active Parenting curricula. The curriculum emphasizes communication skills between noncustodial and custodial parents and children in addition to effective parenting techniques.

- **Seedco – Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) Curriculum.** CEO provided parenting workshops to pilot participants at each of Seedco's partner agencies during the program's first 22 month contract period. CEO's curriculum focused on parenting skills, child development, effective discipline, and communication skills, and was presented to pilot participants in one session classes. However, in August 2008, Seedco completed the development of its own curriculum based on a review of existing parenting curricula, including the 24/7 Dad curriculum and materials provided by CEO. This is the curriculum that Seedco now uses to provide parenting workshops to pilot participants.

- **STRIVE – Exploring Relationships and Marriage (ERM) for Fragile Families.** The ERM curriculum, developed by Joseph Jones and Julia Hayman Hamilton, is the primary component of the DEF program. STRIVE contracts with four licensed social workers who facilitate workshops using this curriculum at each of STRIVE's partner agencies. The ERM curriculum was developed from an Afro-Centric perspective as a couples' curriculum. It uses a peer support model and emphasizes communication skills within permanent relationships, including, but not limited, to marriage. Pilot participants complete the 8 week ERM curriculum, along with a supplementary class on domestic violence and another on financial planning in 10 week cohorts, which meet weekly for 3 hours. Male mentors from the community are invited to attend one class during each DEF cohort to share their experiences as noncustodial parents. In addition, two of STRIVE's partner organizations, Fortune Society and RDRC, offer participants parenting skills workshops to supplement the ERM curriculum.

Focus of Parenting Curriculums

Three of the five pilot programs with parenting curricula (Chautauqua, OCM-BOCES, and Seedco) contracted with specialized partners who had developed the curricula or were instrumental in their development[4]. STRIVE, on the other hand, contracted with specialized partners (social workers) who facilitate the parenting workshops, but the curriculum and facilitator training were received directly from the author, Joseph Jones. Given that prior to the start of this initiative, none of the grantees had significant expertise in the provision of parenting services specific to low-income noncustodial parents, it is not surprising that four out of five of them that use parenting curricula obtained them from individuals and organizations outside of their agencies. The exception to this is ECC, which did not contract with specialized partners, but instead used case management staff to develop its curricula and facilitate its workshops, a decision that may have been made at least in part due to the limited funding that this program received.

With the exception of EOC's Strengthening Families program, parenting services are offered by the pilots through instructional group classes, each of which uses a different primary curriculum, with some overlap in the topics that are covered. Most of the curricula focus at least in part on improving communication skills between noncustodial and custodial parents. These curricula tend to emphasize the development of conflict resolution and anger management skills. Some, however, place more emphasis on traditional parenting skills, including how to foster positive parent-child interactions, proper nutrition for children, and child discipline. STRIVE offers a curriculum that focuses on developing and maintaining healthy romantic relationships and marriages.

Table 4.3. Focus of Parenting Curriculum

OTDA Pilot Program	Parenting Skills	Conflict Resolution/ Anger Management/Negotiation Skills with Custodial Parent	Relationship Skills with Romantic Partner
Chautauqua	√	√	
ECC	√	√	
EOC			
OCM-BOCES	√	√	
Seedco	√	√	
STRIVE		√	√
Total	4	5	1

Most of the curricula include modules that integrate written and oral exercises and role-playing scenarios intended to engage pilot participants with the material. However, one parenting

[4] As mentioned previously, Seedco contracted with CEO to develop its parenting curriculum and facilitate workshops during its first 22 month contract. However, as of July 2008, Seedco began developing its own curriculum (based on the knowledge acquired from CEO and other research materials) and using case management staff to facilitate these workshops internally.

provider noted that in trying to engage participants instructors should be mindful of variation in reading abilities, as calling on individuals rather than asking for volunteers during these exercises may make some participants uncomfortable.

Length and Intensity of Parenting Services

Among the four programs that offer regularly scheduled parenting classes, the duration of services range from 3 hours in Chautauqua County to 30 hours at STRIVE. Pilot participants in Chautauqua complete three hours of parenting instruction, which is provided in 1-hour seminars across 3 consecutive days as part of the program's core week-long job readiness program. The parenting curriculum provided by STRIVE, however, requires that participants complete 10 3-hour workshops (i.e., 30 hours total) held in the evening once a week. ECC developed two required course curricula, and each of these classes consists of 5 1-hour sessions (i.e., 10 hours total) offered once a week, which pilot participants can complete in five weeks. OCM-BOCES requires that pilot participants complete 12 hours of parenting classes, which program staff prefer to offer during 2-hour seminars 3 days a week for 2 consecutive weeks.

Seedco offers group parenting classes and EOC incorporates parenting services into their individual case management sessions, but neither program requires that pilot participants complete a parenting component. Therefore, the length and intensity of parenting services received by participants at these two sites depend entirely on a participant's interest in engaging in the parenting services that each of these programs offers.

Table 4.4. Length and Intensity of Parenting Services by OTDA Pilot Program

OTDA Pilot Program	Total Duration of Services (Hours)	Time Span of Services
Chautauqua	3 hours	3 days
ECC	10 hours	5 weeks
EOC	As Needed	None
OCM-BOCES	12 hours	Preferred 2 weeks
Seedco	As Needed	1 workshop
STRIVE	30 hours	10 weeks

Structure of Services and Type of Instructors

Structure of Services. As table 4.5 shows, five of the six pilot programs offer group parenting classes, but only participants in Chautauqua, at OCM-BOCES, and STRIVE are required to complete a sequence of classes in a cohort[5]. Requiring that participants complete parenting classes in cohorts, as at STRIVE where the sequence of classes extends over a ten week period, enables the class to become a cohesive group in a way that may not be possible if classes were composed of different groups of individuals in each session. One instructor commented that offering classes in cycles in which the same individuals attend each session "helps participants talk and open up. When classes first start, everyone is sort of walking on egg shells, but over the course of the class, the guys become family."

Table 4.5. Structure of Services and Type of Instructors by OTDA Pilot Program

OTDA Pilot Program	Structure of Services			Type of Instructors		
	Group		Individual	Instructors with MSWs	Staff from Community-Based Parenting Organization	Case Management Staff Only
	Cohort	No Cohort				
Chautauqua	√				√	
ECC		√				√
EOC			√			√
OCM-BOCES	√				√	
Seedco		√			√*	√**
STRIVE	√			√		
Total	3	2	1	1	3	3

*During first contract period; ** During second contract period.

However, offering parenting classes in this format means that at these three sites, there is often lag time between when a participant enrolls in the program and the time when a participant begins receiving services. This can result in a participant losing interest in the program. To mitigate the loss of clients during this period, case managers in Chautauqua try to schedule meetings with participants each week in which no STEPS class is offered. Similarly, case managers at each of STRIVE's partner organizations try to engage participants in other program services when participants enroll in the middle of a cycle. Despite these efforts, a staff member at one of STRIVE's partner organizations said, "Some guys come in and just don't want to wait until the start of the next cycle, so we lose a lot of people this way."

The other two pilot programs that offer group parenting classes (Seedco and ECC) do not require that pilot participants attend each consecutive session. Seedco provides parenting services to pilot participants in one session classes, and pilot participants can attend multiple sessions. However, the same information is covered in each session. The structure of ECC's

[5] In Chautauqua there are some exceptions to this general rule. Pilot participants who are unable to complete the week long job readiness, parenting, and financial literacy class on five consecutive days are allowed to complete the first two days of the class one week and the last three days another week. Parenting services can also be provided on a one-on-one basis if participants miss group classes.

parenting component is similar in that participants are not required to complete classes sequentially as a group. To complete ECC's parenting component, a participant is required to attend ten classes, regardless of whether the class is a parenting skills or conflict resolution class and the information covered. Therefore, it is possible that a participant could attend ten classes, each of which cover the same information, and still complete ECC's parenting component. Offering parenting services in a way that does not require participants to attend a sequence of regularly scheduled classes provides participants with flexibility, but may also limit the comprehensiveness of the information provided and the personal connections that may occur between participants who complete workshops as a cohort.

EOC is the only program that does not provide group parenting classes. This program incorporates parenting services into their one-on-one case management sessions, and in some cases, makes referrals for these services to other organizations in the community.

Type of Instructors. Four of the grantees (Chautauqua, OCM-BOCES, Seedco, and STRIVE) contract with specialized partners to facilitate parenting workshops for pilot participants[6]. However, STRIVE is the only program that contracts directly with professional social workers to facilitate its workshops. Box 4.2 below provides more detail on STRIVE's parenting workshop facilitator strategy.

Box 4.2. STRIVE's Parenting Workshop Facilitator Strategy

Each of STRIVE's parenting workshops is facilitated by one male and one female co-facilitator, who remain the same throughout the eight week series of classes. One respondent indicated that the predominantly male clients served by STRIVE's DEF program benefit from having a female co-facilitator. "Participants really looked for and value her opinions. Both [of STRIVE's] female co-facilitators are very strong women; they say how they feel and participants respect this." Furthermore, respondents indicated that having two facilitators, who varied not only by gender, but also by age, was helpful in connecting with participants who range in age considerably.

Chautauqua, OCM-BOCES, and Seedco also contract with specialized partners to facilitate parenting workshops for pilot participants. The organizations that these programs contract with are well known in their communities for having developed and administered parenting curriculums. However, unlike the facilitators of STRIVE's DEF program, staff from these community based organizations are not required to have expertise in facilitating group workshops.

Neither Erie County program contracts with specialized partners to facilitate parenting services for pilot participants. Case management staff at ECC, who have backgrounds in substance abuse counseling, are responsible for facilitating the program's parenting workshops.

[6] As noted, Seedco contracted with CEO during its first 22 month contract to develop a curriculum and provide facilitators for its parenting workshops. However, after the end of this contract, Seedco developed its own curriculum and began using case management staff at each of its partner sites to facilitate parenting workshops.

As noted, EOC does not offer parenting workshops, and instead provides parenting services through individual appointments with case management staff. In addition, OCM-BOCES contracts with two parenting providers, but only one is known specifically for its expertise in parenting services. The other provider specializes in case management services within the Hispanic community.

Visitation and Other Parenting-Related Services

In addition to the one-on-one and group parenting instructional services that all of the programs offer, most programs also provide assistance in arranging visitation for pilot participants to have contact with their children. Some programs have designated staff who are available to help pilot participants complete visitation petitions to obtain legal authority to visit their children, while others help arrange actual visits. For example, CFU, the parenting provider in Chautauqua, is licensed to provide oversight during court ordered supervised visitation sessions and makes this service available to pilot participants. Given that many participants live with friends, relatives, or in rented rooms (particularly in New York City where housing costs are high), arranging visitation is a challenge for some participants.

To help mediate the often strained relationships between the noncustodial parents being served through the pilot programs and the custodial parents of their children, several programs also began attempting to engage custodial parents. For example, during child support hearings in Chautauqua County when noncustodial parents are referred to the program, child support staff also inquire as to whether custodial parents want to be contacted regarding pilot services. Custodial parents who are receptive are contacted by program staff within one week, and home visits are made to provide appropriate parenting services to these individuals. Similarly, RDRC, a STRIVE partner, invites the custodial parents of their clients' children to attend their parenting workshop that staff created to supplement STRIVE's DEF curriculum. RDRC has been successful in engaging approximately 20 percent of these custodial parents, and those who attend the workshops create and sign individualized parenting agreements with the noncustodial parents of their children. Program staff in Chautauqua and at RDRC feel that working with the custodial parents associated with their clients' child support cases is an innovative way to indirectly assist pilot participants and their children.

Challenges to and Incentives for Completing Parenting Services

Given the majority of noncustodial parents enrolled in the pilot programs are referred from the Family Court for employment-related services, completing parenting workshops is not a priority for many participants. As a result, pilot program staff struggle to persuade participants to attend parenting workshops. To help address this issue, several programs continually made adjustments to the length, format, and location of workshops, and some even found it necessary to provide cash stipends, transportation, and other service incentives to persuade pilot participants to complete their programs' parenting components.

Chautauqua and OCM-BOCES, for example, offered parenting workshops in a number of formats throughout the course of the initiative in an effort to accommodate the schedules of pilot participants. Because they learned that retaining pilot participants for the complete sequence of

parenting workshops became more challenging as the length of time over which the workshops span increased, both Chautauqua and OCM-BOCES shortened their workshops. Chautauqua condensed and integrated their workshops into their weeklong STEPS program and OCM-BOCES shortened its curriculum to fit into two hour seminars conducted three days a week for two consecutive weeks. Offering parenting classes at a number of locations in the community, particularly locations served by public transportation, was another step taken by some programs to make attendance at these workshops more convenient for participants.

The four programs that offer regularly scheduled parenting classes (Chautauqua, ECC, OCM-BOCES, and STRIVE) all recognized the importance of offering participants incentives for completing the parenting component of their programs. From the start of the initiative, STRIVE allocated funding to provide participants with a $25 stipend for attending each of the 10 classes that are part of the program's DEF workshop, for a total payment of $250 per participant. After struggling to get participants to complete their parenting component, OCM-BOCES began distributing $50 gift cards to each participant upon completion of the workshops. In addition, OCM-BOCES allocates $500 in transitional employment-related assistance for each pilot participant, only $100 of which is made available to a participant prior to completing the program's parenting workshops.

As described above, three programs, OCM-BOCES, Seedco, and STRIVE also provide transportation assistance in the form of bus passes or metro cards to help defray the cost of attending parenting workshops. As an additional incentive to attend classes, each program with group parenting workshops (with the exception of ECC) provides hot meals for participants during each class meeting.

Finally, two programs limit access to certain services prior to the completion of their parenting components. Chautauqua participants are not able to access one-on-one assistance with the driver's license reinstatement process until they complete parenting classes. Pilot participants at OCM-BOCES must complete this component as a prerequisite for receiving legal services (with the exception of those facing immediate legal needs).

F. Legal Services

Pilot staff agreed that one of the most pressing needs of pilot participants is legal services, particularly as related to child support issues. However, three of the pilot programs (Chautauqua, ECC, and EOC) do not have contractual arrangements with specialized partners to provide legal services to pilot participants. The other three pilot programs (OCM-BOCES, Seedco, and STRIVE) do, but even among these programs there is a great deal of variation in the types of legal service providers engaged and the services offered. These variations are discussed below.

Type of Providers and Structure of Services

OCM-BOCES, Seedco, and Fortune Society (one of STRIVE's partner organizations) contract with attorneys to provide legal services to pilot participants. OCM-BOCES chose to contract

with two Legal Aid organizations[7], each of which provide access to one full-time attorney to reduce the impact a conflict of interest could have on the ability to provide legal services to a participant. For example, OCM-BOCES pilot staff reported that in the past, a noncustodial parent participant was assigned to a legal services provider that was already representing another party in the case. Contracting with two local Legal Aid organizations minimizes the likelihood that this type of conflict will prevent a pilot participant from receiving needed services.

Fortune Society uses the funds allocated by STRIVE for a court advocate to pay for a portion of their family law staff attorney's time to work with pilot participants, making them the only STRIVE site that provides access to an attorney as part of pilot services. OCM-BOCES and Fortune Society not only provide pilot participants access to attorneys, but also permit the attorneys to represent participants in court. One legal services provider said that the ability to provide this service is a critical asset to the pilots, as participants who go to court on their own, without legal representation, "do not fare as well." Court advocates also emphasized the importance of this, noting "in court fathers don't always know what they're being told, and they need legal representation to understand this."

To provide legal services, Seedco contracts with an attorney from the Bronx Defenders; however, unlike the arrangement in place with OCM-BOCES and Fortune Society, this attorney is not able to represent Seedco participants in court. Seedco staff indicated that allowing the attorney to do this would be "very expensive." Rather than representing participants in court, Seedco's attorney provides monthly one hour legal clinics at each of Seedco's partner organizations along with individual counseling sessions for participants who register for them in advance, during which legal plans of action are developed.

Table 4.6. The Type of Legal Services Providers Available to Pilot Participants by Pilot Program

OTDA Pilot Program	No Legal Services Providers	Court Advocate	Paralegal	Attorney	Attorney Provides Legal Counsel in Court
Chautauqua	√				
ECC	√				
EOC	√				
OCM-BOCES				√	√
Seedco				√	
STRIVE		√	√	√*	√**
Total	4	1	1	3	2

*Fortune Society is the only STRIVE partner with an attorney on staff; **Fortune Society is the only STRIVE partner with an attorney who provides legal counsel to participants in court.

[7] OCM-BOCES contracts with the Frank H. Hiscock Legal Aid Society and Legal Aid Society of Mid-State New York to provide legal Services to pilot participants. Both of these legal services providers worked with the Parent Success Initiative while the program was funded through the federal welfare-to-work grant.

STRIVE does not contract with any attorneys, but instead provides grant funds to each of its partner organizations to hire a court advocate. With the exception of Fortune Society, described above, each of STRIVE's other partner organizations has a full-time in house court advocate. STRIVE's court advocates work with participants on a one-on-one basis to address their legal concerns. In addition, STRIVE also has a small contract with a paralegal (a former STRIVE employee) professional who provides guidance to program staff and participants on how to handle some of the more complicated legal matters that arise.

As noted, Chautauqua County, ECC, and EOC do not have formal contracts with legal services providers. However, in some cases pilot staff at these programs refer participants to legal providers in the community, although it is unknown to what extent referred participants actually follow up with referrals and/or receive assistance.

Focus of Legal Services

Attorneys at OCM-BOCES, Seedco, and Fortune Society are most commonly asked to assist pilot participants with legal matters related to their child support obligations. This includes providing assistance to participants with the order modification process, arrears forgiveness, and violation petitions in Family Court. The legal services providers at OCM-BOCES indicated that their close relationship with the county Support Collections Unit (SCU) also enables them to address administrative enforcement measures taken against participants outside of court, resulting in quicker resolution of problems such as driver's license suspensions and unlawful income executions.

Compared to the legal services offered by attorneys, particularly those at OCM-BOCES and Fortune Society, those available to participants through court advocates at STRIVE are more limited. STRIVE's court advocates coach participants on how to prepare for Family Court, (including what to wear, how to behave, and what to say), assist participants in accessing their child support records, review court documents, file petitions for visitation and modification, and the driver's license reinstatement process, and often accompany participants to court. However, because court advocates are not attorneys they cannot represent participants in court. In addition, because STRIVE's court advocates are not parties to the participant's case, magistrates typically do not allow them to speak on the participant's behalf during courtroom proceedings. Court advocates indicated that this limits their ability to assist participants in court. STRIVE's court advocates felt that having collegial relationships with magistrates, which case managers in some upstate sites have, would allow them to be more effective advocates for participants.

Case managers in Chautauqua County, ECC, and EOC help participants address their legal needs, including assisting them in preparing for court, completing petitions for visitation and order modification, and navigating the driver's license reinstatement process. For reporting purposes, some of these case managers consider providing status reports on pilot participants to magistrates during compliance court "other legal assistance," so we mention it here as a legal service. However, for the purposes of this report, we consider the role of case managers as court reporters a service provided to the court, and therefore we discuss this in further detail in the following chapter describing the pilots' key linkage and partnership with the Family Court.

In addition to the general legal services provided by OCM-BOCES and Seedco, both programs also offer civic restoration services to assist pilot participants with criminal records complete the "rap-sheet" cleansing process. To provide these services, OCM-BOCES has a contract with the Center for Community Alternatives (CCA), an organization with an attorney and three legal interns available to assist pilot participants with the "rap sheet cleansing" process and obtaining certificates of good conduct and relief. The attorney that provides legal services for Seedco's participants also assists with "rap sheet cleansing," and does so during individual consultations and group legal clinics.

G. Child Support-Related Services

Pilot staff agree that the child support system is a major source of fear and anxiety for pilot participants. As a result, helping noncustodial parents understand, navigate, and de-mystify the child support program is an important service goal. To this end, all of the pilot programs, with the exception of ECC, offer workshops aimed at explaining the workings of the child support program to pilot participants. Chautauqua offers a 1 hour child support workshop developed by their Project Coordinator (a child support enforcement supervisor) as part of their week-long STEPS class. In New York City, staff from the Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) facilitate 2-hour workshops once per month at each of Seedco's partner sites, which cover the basics of the child support program (known as 'Child Support 101'), enforcement processes, interstate cases, and Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) processes. OCM-BOCES and STRIVE use their legal services providers to facilitate child support workshops, though these are not scheduled regularly[8]. EOC case managers facilitated a child support workshop at the beginning of the initiative, but they eventually stopped offering this due to poor attendance and a lack of enthusiasm among participants. In contrast, case managers at Seedco indicated that there is interest among participants in attending child support workshops.

With the exception of ECC, all of the other programs also work with pilot participants individually to assist them with a variety of child support-related services. These include helping participants obtain information on their child support obligations, assisting with reinstatement of their driver's licenses (which are sometimes revoked as a result of not paying child support), and completing modification petitions. These services are often provided by a partner who works with pilot participants to compile the required documentation and then contacts child support staff to complete the process. Even though noncustodial parents can receive these services from the child support agency on their own, program staff feel that providing these individual services through the program benefits participants, and helps improve the relationship between participants and the child support agency.

As discussed in box 4.3 below, Seedco used grant funds to establish a loan program to provide pilot participants with assistance in paying back child support arrearages. For pilot participants that qualify, Seedco makes up to $1,500 in payments toward a participant's arrears

[8] Since St. Nick's is a partner of both Seedco and STRIVE, STRIVE participants enrolled at St. Nick's in STRIVE's DEF program could attend the child support workshops facilitated by OCSE at this site.

directly to the New York City OCSE. This is considered a loan to the participant, but once half of the loan amount is repaid (i.e., up to $750) the other half is forgiven by Seedco.

Since the start of this initiative, the New York City OCSE has developed several innovative programs to specifically address the child support needs of low-income noncustodial parents. In September 2008, the New York OCSE developed a program called the Arrears Adjustment Demonstration Pilot. Through this program, OCSE forgives up to $35,000 in arrears for each participant who pays child support obligations in full for 3 years and attends a job training and parenting class. OCSE recently developed two other programs, the Default Order Initiative and the Modify DSS Orders program. The Default Order Initiative targets noncustodial parents with default orders and families receiving cash assistance, and allows noncustodial parents to meet with a child support worker to modify their child support order(s) to reflect their actual income. The Modify DSS Orders program expands on the Default Order Initiative and targets noncustodial parents with incomes below the self-support reserve[9]. Eligible noncustodial parents can have their cases reviewed by a child support worker to ensure that any arrears accumulated while the noncustodial parent earned less than the self support reserve did not exceed $500. Both of these programs allow noncustodial parents to modify their orders administratively, which is a more efficient process than going through the court, and can make orders more commensurate with noncustodial parents' ability to pay.

H. Financial Services

With the exception of ECC, all of the pilots offer some type of financial services to pilot participants, although the extent and format of these services vary by site—three sites offer these services in regular group workshops, while two provide information in less formal one-on-one sessions.

Group Financial Planning Workshops

Two sites, Chautauqua County and Seedco, established formal contracts with local non-profit organizations to provide financial services to pilot participants. The Chautauqua County program contracts with Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) to provide three one-hour workshops during the program's week long STEPS class. To provide these services, CCE uses a condensed and modified version of the All My Money curriculum, which covers a range of topics, including basic budgeting skills, financial security, and making ends meet while paying child support. Similarly, during its first contract period, Seedco contracted with the non-profit Credit Where Credit Is Due, Inc. (CWCID) to provide participants with a series of five two-hour financial planning workshops tailored to address the needs of noncustodial parents with child support orders. However, after the end of its first contract period, Seedco decided to provide these services internally, and therefore ended its contract with CWCID. As a result, case managers at most of Seedco's partner organizations began providing financial services directly to pilot participants during regularly scheduled group workshops or in individualized one-on-one sessions.

[9] The self-support reserve is a factor used to calculate how much child support is owed when either parent is at or near the federal poverty level. The self-support reserve in New York is 135% of the federal poverty level. The self-support reserve for 2008 was $14,040 a year in New York.

In addition to the availability of financial services in the form of group workshops, pilot participants in Chautauqua County and at Seedco also receive assistance in obtaining credit reports. As part of this initiative, Seedco also developed a loan program, described below (see box 4.3), which enables pilot participants who meet certain eligibility criteria to receive financial assistance in paying back their arrears.

STRIVE also provides financial services in group workshops to pilot participants, though unlike the Chautauqua County and Seedco programs, STRIVE does not contract out for these services. Rather, STRIVE offers one session workshops facilitated by a volunteer from the National Association of Black Accountants (NABA) that are integrated with the program's 10 week DEF curriculum. These workshops cover a range of financial literacy and planning topics.

Box 4.3. Seedco's Loan Program: Financial Incentives for Paying Child Support

In the fall of 2007, with assistance from its financial services subsidiary and $37,500 in grant funds, Seedco developed and began enrolling pilot participants in an innovative loan program aimed at increasing eligibility for the NCP EITC and assessing whether positive incentives increase arrears payments among noncustodial parents. The program allows Seedco to make up to $1,500 in individual low interest loans to pilot participants with the understanding that each participant who receives a loan will repay half of the loan amount. The amount provided upfront by Seedco is used as a direct payment toward a participant's outstanding arrears, and upon paying back half of the loan, the remaining half is forgiven. The loan program targets a financially insecure and transient population, which Seedco indicates makes the loan program difficult to operate and manage. However, Seedco created the program to assist pilot participants in a way that no other financial institution would. To be eligible for the program, a pilot participant is required to be employed for at least one month and cannot have accumulated more than $3,000 in arrears in the most recent calendar year. With the grant funds available, Seedco hopes to provide loans to approximately 20 pilot participants, and though the loan program was in its early stages at the time of the site visits, 18 loans had already been approved. Five of these participants had successfully completed the loan program, and 11 more were repaying their loans successfully.

Individual Financial Services

The financial services offered by EOC and OCM-BOCES are less formal in that neither site offers regularly scheduled workshops or has contracts with financial services experts to assist in the provision of these services. EOC provides financial services to its participants primarily through its relationship with the EOC's BRIDGE program, which offers free assistance and advice on tax preparation to low-income individuals. EOC staff notified all of their participants of the availability of these services during the 2008 tax season, and staff reported that a number of participants received tax assistance. Additional financial services are provided to participants if requested, as case management staff can refer participants to the EOC's financial

independence course and provide individual counseling. However, several case managers indicated that participants generally are not interested in these services, because "the biggest piece seems to be assisting them in finding employment."

OCM-BOCES case managers are trained by OCM-BOCES project staff to assist participants in accessing online credit reports and the noncustodial parent EITC so that this information can be given to pilot participants during one-on-one case management sessions. These are the only financial services that OCM-BOCES provides to pilot participants. No specific financial services are available at ECC.

Table 4.7. Structure of Financial Services by OTDA Pilot Program

OTDA Pilot Program	Group	Individual
Chautauqua	√	
ECC		
EOC		√
OCM-BOCES		√
Seedco	√	
STRIVE	√	
Total	3	2

Benefits Screening

In addition to the aforementioned financial services, some of the pilots also screen participants to determine whether they are eligible to receive public benefits, and if eligible, assist them in applying for those benefits. Seedco does not require that its partners offer these services, but most of them have staff dedicated specifically for this purpose through the *Earn Benefits* program. Two of Seedco's partner organizations, CAB and St. Nick's, indicated that benefits screening/application assistance is integrated into the intake process and is a standard service provided to all individuals who receive services from their organizations. STRIVE offers benefits screening, though some case managers indicated that they do not consistently provide these services to all pilot participants[10]. Program staff also noted that because access to affordable housing in New York City is a major issue, screening participants for benefits is often the first step in assisting them with their applications for housing subsidy programs.

OCM-BOCES asks individuals whether they are eligible for and/or are receiving public benefits to determine eligibility for their program, but assistance in obtaining benefits is not systematically provided. However, the OCM-BOCES legal services partners reported assisting some pilot participants determine eligibility and/or apply for public benefits. Pilot participants in

[10] The exception to this is St. Nick's, a partner organization for both Seedco and STRIVE, which provides automated benefits screening and application assistance at intake to all individuals receiving services from their organization.

Chautauqua County and EOC are also not systematically screened for public benefits; however, if these services are requested, program staff typically refer participants to the county Department of Social Services office where they can apply for benefits directly. Program staff reported that many pilot participants are probably eligible for but not receiving public benefits, and some felt that systematically providing these services in the future may be an important step in improving the circumstances of the low-income noncustodial parents served by these programs.

NCP EITC

Staff at the five pilots that provide financial services indicated that information on the NCP EITC is provided to participants in some form; however, some programs are more systematic in the presentation of this information than others. Case managers at OCM-BOCES are trained to provide pilot participants with information on the EITC for noncustodial parents, including the purpose of the tax credit, eligibility requirements, and estimated benefits, but it is unknown how regularly this information is actually passed on to participants[11]. Pilot participants in Chautauqua County and at STRIVE provide information on the noncustodial parent EITC during intake and the programs' financial services workshops. Staff from EOC indicated that state Initiative staff provided them with materials on the NCP EITC to share with participants. They reported that participants are also made aware of the tax credit if they receive assistance and/or advice through the free local tax assistance program offered by EOC's Bridge program. Staff from Seedco were unsure how regularly the tax credit is discussed at UMOS and their other case management sites.

Although staff reported that they provide information on the NCP EITC to program participants, they overwhelmingly agreed that even if given this information, relatively few of them are likely eligible to receive the credit because they are rarely in compliance with their child support order(s). The Family Court, a major source of referrals for all of these programs, typically refers individuals for failure to comply with their child support order(s), and none of the participants referred for this reason would qualify for the credit. In addition, respondents reported that many pilot participants are unemployed or work in the underground economy, which makes satisfying the requirement to pay child support equal to the amount of current support due for one year difficult. As one respondent said, "We discuss the NCP EITC with participants, but the way that it's currently structured, the credit is not designed to help low-income noncustodial parents—not many of them are eligible."

I. Incentives for Enrollment and Retention

In addition to the employment-related supports and incentives for completing parenting workshops that most programs offer, most programs also organize father-child events, such as picnics, barbeques, and bowling outings as incentives to enrolling in and continuing to participate in their programs. These events, as well as other services, such as assistance with the driver's license reinstatement process, child support issues, and legal services, were all discussed as important incentives for participant recruitment and retention. Program staff at most sites felt that available funding for participant supports and incentives was inadequate in light of the

[11] At the time of the site visit, newly hired staff had not yet been trained on the noncustodial parent EITC.

demand for such services. A respondent at ECC said, "I would love to be able to provide transportation assistance to participants. If I were able to do this, participants would not have the cost of transportation as an excuse for not showing up to appointments." The extent to which programs offer these incentives varies greatly, and in some cases, may be the result of disparate funding among sites.

J. Other Services

In addition to the primary service components that we discuss above, all of the programs offer a variety of other services, including cooking classes, GED preparation, mental health and substance abuse counseling, and housing assistance. Some of these services are provided to participants directly by the contracting agency or its partners, while others are provided through referrals to programs outside of the initiative. These additional services are described below.

Cooking Classes

STRIVE—Fortune Society offers a cooking class to pilot participants that has grown significantly over the life of the program. The class is held in the afternoon each week for 2.5 hours and is taught by a nutritionist. For eight weeks the participants cook 1 meal per week from scratch, including a meat dish, two vegetables, a salad, and dessert. The meal is served at a table at the end of the class while participants discuss their relationships with their children.

Education Services

All of the pilots offer program participants access to free GED preparation and exams. EOC is able to provide free services to participants interested in obtaining a GED through the University of Buffalo's Educational Opportunity Center. In addition, three of Seedco's partners—CAB, NMIC, and St. Nick's— and two of STRIVE's partners—Fortune Society and St. Nick's— offer free GED preparation to pilot participants on site. Seedco and STRIVE's other partners as well as Chautauqua County and OCM-BOCES refer pilot participants looking to take GED classes to local community programs. ECC helped participants obtain grant assistance to cover the cost of GED classes through Erie Community College, and participants are also referred to the Buffalo City Schools program for free GED services. St. Nick's, a partner organization of both STRIVE and Seedco, also makes English as a Second Language (ESL) classes available to pilot participants.

In addition to GED preparation, both Erie County programs and OCM-BOCES provide participants with access to a variety of vocational training programs. However, because some participants are required to pay for these programs and because they are generally more interested in finding employment, few participants enroll in these programs.

Mental Health, Counseling, and Other Health Services

STRIVE is the only site that contracts with a mental health therapist to provide counseling to pilot participants. The mental health therapist made short presentations during DEF sessions at most of STRIVE's partner organizations to provide participants with information about the available services. Participants interested in receiving these services notify the therapist in person or speak with their case managers to schedule appointments. However, with the exception of a few participants at EHES, staff reported that participants did not generally use these services. Case managers felt that this may be because participants did not feel that they needed these services or that they already have access to social workers through other program components who can help address these issues.

Rather than providing these services directly, both Erie County programs and Chautauqua County refer participants to organizations outside of their programs for mental health and substance abuse counseling. In addition, several of ECC's case managers are graduates of the college's associate's degree program in substance abuse counseling. Fortune Society has an Oasis license that enables them to provide substance abuse counseling to pilot participants on site; however, like Erie the and Chautauqua County programs, they also make referrals to other programs for mental health counseling and treatment. Some case managers felt that some participants probably need intensive long-term mental health and substance abuse treatment, but because these problems often go unreported, relatively few referrals are made.

St. Nick's also provides anger management classes to participants. As noted previously, ECC facilitates conflict resolution/anger management workshops as well. In addition, NMIC, one of Seedco's partners, refers participants to a local young men's clinic for no-cost physicals.

Housing Assistance

One of the biggest service needs of pilot participants, particularly those living in New York City, is assistance in finding affordable housing. As one case manager indicated, "It is virtually impossible to find your own housing as a low-income male in New York City." As a result, many of these participants rent single rooms, stay with friends, or live with family members. Fortune Society is unique in its capacity to address the housing needs of pilot participants, as it operates a transitional housing facility that is open to those in need of short term housing assistance. In addition, Fortune Society operates a long-term housing facility that is open to pilot participants who meet certain eligibility criteria; eligible participants can stay in this facility until they are able to obtain adequate and stable housing elsewhere. Most of the other sites, including those upstate where housing is typically not a critical issue, refer participants in need of housing assistance to local shelters and County Social Services offices. Some sites, however, will assist pilot participants complete applications for publicly available housing.

Chapter 5. Key Linkages with Other Partners

In addition to the community partners with which the pilots have established formal contracts to provide direct services to pilot participants, all of the programs have relationships with other public agencies that supplement these services and provide referrals to their programs. This chapter describes the pilots' relationships with three of these agencies: the local Child Support Enforcement agency, Family Court, and Department of Labor, One-Stop, and/or JOBS Program.

A. Relationship with Local Child Support Agency

The role of the local child support agency in the operation of each of the pilots varies considerably across the sites. In Chautauqua County the local child support agency is the contracting agency and is central to the day-to-day operations of the pilot. In contrast, in New York City, the local child support agency has comparatively little contact with staff involved with the pilot. Some local child support agencies have dedicated a high-level staff member to ensure that requests for child support information from pilot staff are addressed in a timely manner. Pilot staff at all of the sites emphasized the importance of having a key high level contact within the child support agency able to help provide information for eligibility determinations, resolve problems specific to individual cases, and help schedule child support workshops. With the exception of Chautauqua County, which uses grant funds to pay for the time of a child support supervisor involved in their initiative, any services provided by child support staff are provided in-kind to the pilots. An overview of the relationship between the pilot programs and local child support agencies is provided below.

The County Department of Social Services, which administers the local child support program, is the contracting agency for the pilot in Chautauqua County. Alone among the sites, the Chautauqua County program uses a portion of its grant funds to pay for a child support supervisor to work half-time on the project. This individual (and other staff) provide oversight, monitoring, contractual management, recruitment and screening of potentially eligible participants for court referral to the program, and individualized support on child support matters. In addition, this staff person provides information about the pilot program and the available services throughout the community and within the child support agency. As part of this effort and to better orient the child support enforcement staff to the OTDA pilot, the local child support agency made arrangements for its staff to participate in New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OFCS)-led training sessions, based on the engaging fatherhood toolkit. This training was targeted to both child support and TANF caseworkers and addressed strategies for better understanding and interacting with noncustodial parents. Much of the training focused on changing the culture that typically characterizes interactions with noncustodial parents. This training was not paid for by the OTDA grant, but was one of the goals of the pilot.

The three other upstate programs, ECC, EOC and OCM-BOCES, have ready access to an upper level child support enforcement staff member who ensures that requests for information are responded to in a timely fashion. All OCM-BOCES pilot participants must have a child support order that has been verified with the local child support office before enrollment even if they are referred to the program by the Family Court. Pilot staff provide the local child support

office with a weekly list of the names and social security numbers of potentially eligible participants and child support staff check their database to see if these individuals have a child support order, whether they are making child support payments, and whether they are employed. Most EOC and ECC pilot participants are court-referred and this is generally considered to be sufficient to determine that a participant is child support eligible for the program. For pilot participants not referred to the program by the court, EOC and ECC staff work with their child support enforcement staff contact to verify child support orders. Both pilots also rely on this child support staff member to answer any child support-related questions that arise.

In the past, the two programs in New York City had comparatively less contact with the New York City Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE), particularly in terms of obtaining case records for pilot participants. According to several of the Seedco and Strive partners, during the first two years of the pilot project they submitted waivers to the child support office to request child support information on pilot participants, but responses to these requests were not timely or not forthcoming at all. Some sites were submitting 30-40 waiver requests to the child support office monthly and OCSE simply did not have the staff time available to respond to the volume of these requests. During this time, pilot staff asked that participants obtain documentation of their child support order(s) and payment history on their own, which many were able to do, but some programs reported losing potentially eligible clients. In July 2008, OCSE allocated additional staff to process the influx of waivers. At the time of the site visits staff reported that OCSE had begun providing child support information on individuals within two weeks of waiver receipt.

Although some of the Seedco and STRIVE partners initially struggled to obtain case level child support information on pilot participants, the New York City OCSE does provide staff from their outreach unit to conduct regularly scheduled informational workshops at the four Seedco partner sites (i.e., CAB, NMIC, St. Nick's, and UMOS). With the exception of UMOS, these partners are all providers for OCSE's STEP program and thus had relationships with the child support program prior to the start of the initiative. At the time of the site visits, OCSE staff did not conduct child support workshops at EHES, Fortune Society, or RDRC, but could if requested.

Perceived Conflict of Interest and Other Challenges

The child support program operates primarily as a support collections agency. In the past, it has often been perceived as taking an adversarial position toward noncustodial parents, most of whom are men. Though the pilot initiative is funded by OTDA, which operates New York's child support program, some of the project and partner staff felt that the conflict of interest between the child support agency's goals of collections and enforcement and the pilots' goal of advocacy on behalf of noncustodial parents is often noticeable.

Possibly due to the culture and priorities of the child support program, there was not an initial "groundswell of support" from line workers within some of the local child support agencies associated with the pilot programs in response to the fatherhood initiative. As described above, some of the pilots had contacts with child support staff who were able to educate other child support staff on the potential of the pilot programs to improve child support collections and

enforcement while also helping low-income noncustodial parents. For example, the child support agency in Chautauqua County organized a training session that focused on productive ways to interact with noncustodial parents within the child support program. Key child support contacts at other sites explained that providing referrals to these pilot programs can increase an individual's wages and in turn improve collections. Despite these efforts, pilot staff and partners overwhelmingly agreed that child support programs need relationships with organizations outside their agencies to act as intermediaries between them and noncustodial parents. Although pilot participants can work directly with child support staff and receive the same services, staff reported that participants generally prefer that case management staff act as "advocates of sorts" and initiate contact with the child support program.

As noted above, many of STRIVE and Seedco's partners struggled during the first two years of the pilot to obtain child support information on their clients, making it difficult to determine eligibility and, in many cases, inhibiting program staff from tracking child support payments required for reporting purposes. A monthly statewide data exchange was implemented in the summer of 2008 to help track child support payments of participants, but the data exchange is not used to inform the pilots whether their clients meet the eligibility criteria for participation. Sites are still expected to obtain this information from their local child support programs.

Pilot staff at OCM-BOCES meet quarterly with the Onondaga County Department of Social Services Commissioner and the Director of the Child Support Enforcement Unit (who provides child support data) to discuss ongoing and emerging challenges related to pilot participants, their child support obligations, and the child support data that is provided to the program. One ongoing challenge that has emerged from these discussions is the burden that high arrears pose on noncustodial parents trying to become compliant with their order(s) and pay down their debt. In New York, interest can be assessed on arrears, and, according child support staff, the judgments that are granted "can get a little bit ridiculous." Sometimes the interest that one owes is larger than the principle. At the local level, OCM-BOCES and the Onondaga County child support agency are trying to develop strategies to address this problem.

B. Role of the Family Courts

Previous Fatherhood programs have struggled to meet their recruitment goals (Martinson, Nightingale, Holcomb, Barnow, and Trutko 2007). The five pilots have largely avoided this problem, in part by establishing referral-based relationships with the Family Court. As discussed in Chapter 3, with the exception of three New York City sites (Fortune Society, RDRC, and UMOS), all of the pilot programs currently receive Family Court referrals. However, because the relationships between the pilot programs and the Family Court vary considerably, this section begins with an overview of these relationships by pilot program.

- **Erie County (ECC and EOC)**

In Buffalo, the City Court, which has criminal jurisdiction over misdemeanors and civil jurisdiction over claims under $15,000, has operated a successful problem-solving court for drug offenders since 1995. This program operates as a unit of the City Court called C.O.U.R.T.S.

(Court Outreach Unit: Referral and Treatment Services), which connects individuals to an array of social and treatment services within the community. In 2004, the Chief Administrative Judge for the 8th Judicial District (which includes Erie County) asked that the C.O.U.R.T.S. program be expanded to the Family Court to provide employment and education services to noncustodial parents. Through a partnership between the Family Court, C.O.U.R.T.S., and ECC, this program began serving noncustodial parents in early 2005. Initially, the Court provided funds for the program, but now it is funded through the Erie County OTDA pilot program.

The Erie County Family Court and the Buffalo City Court had referral-based relationships with ECC and the C.O.U.R.T.S. program prior to the start of the initiative, which allowed this site to "hit the ground running" and helped it exceed its enrollment goals. Alternatively, pilot program staff at EOC struggled initially to meet their recruitment goals, and because they did not have a pre-existing relationship with the Family Court, did not begin receiving court referrals until the spring of 2008 when a formal relationship was established.

Currently, Erie County support magistrates use a form to refer noncustodial parents to either ECC or EOC. Pilot staff are then required to appear in court during compliance hearings to review the progress of the noncustodial parents referred to their programs. These referrals are transferred to the calendar of one support magistrate who schedules all compliance hearings for EOC and ECC participants one afternoon per week for each site. ECC and EOC program staff fax reports to the designated support magistrate several days prior to scheduled compliance hearings outlining the activities in which these individuals participated and appear in court to read them.

- **Chautauqua County**

In Chautauqua County, pilot program staff struggled initially to recruit participants to their program but worked quickly to develop a relationship with the Family Court within months of the start of the initiative. Child support staff flag cases for Family Court support magistrates to consider referring to the program. Support magistrates typically make referrals for the noncustodial parents in cases that have been flagged, and hearings for these individuals are scheduled for the second full week of each month. Pilot program staff attend these hearings and meet with noncustodial parents outside of the courtroom immediately after they are referred to describe the program, conduct preliminary intakes, and schedule subsequent meetings at the project office. Pilot program staff felt that the noncustodial parents who have that initial meeting in court are more likely to participate in the program. Pilot program staff do not attend follow-up hearings, but provide reports to the court and child support agency on the status of the noncustodial parents referred by the court to their program. Because of their close working relationship, support magistrates are also able to contact pilot staff directly by phone if they need clarification on particular cases.

- **OCM-BOCES (PSI) – Parent Support Program (PSP)**

The PSI program did not anticipate receiving court referrals as a source for participants. However, in October 2007, the Center for Court Innovation (CCI) applied for and received a federal 3-year $150,000 grant to develop a program to refer unemployed or underemployed

noncustodial parents from the Family Court to the OCM-BOCES program. The Parent Support Program (PSP) emerged from this funding and was launched in April 2008. The PSP office is located in the Onondaga Family Court house and the program staffs one full-time Resource Coordinator and a volunteer law student. This program does not receive any pilot funding.

During child support hearings, Onondaga County support magistrates use a PSP-designed form to conduct a preliminary screening of noncustodial parents potentially eligible for program services. The form prompts support magistrates to ask:

1. Are you currently an Onondaga County resident?
2. Are you between the ages of 16 and 45?
3. Do you have a child 18 years old or younger who does not live with you?

Noncustodial parents who answer "yes" to these questions can be given an order requiring them to meet with PSP staff.[12] Support magistrates keep a copy of the form, fax one to the PSP office, and give another to the noncustodial parent. Upon receiving this order, noncustodial parents are told to immediately report to the PSP office, where the Resource Coordinator conducts a more thorough eligibility screening and schedules those deemed eligible for an intake orientation at the PSI program office. Some noncustodial parents are referred to PSP, but do not meet with staff in the program office as ordered. PSP staff attempt to contact these individuals three times, but typically after three failed attempts, support magistrates are notified. A small portion of the noncustodial parents who go to the PSP office for services are not court referrals; some are self-referrals and some are referred from Legal Aid.

With information collected through consultations with case management and project office staff at OCM-BOCES, the PSP Resource Coordinator completes status reports on noncustodial parents referred by the court to PSP, which are then made available to magistrates during noncustodial parents' compliance hearings. The PSP Resource Coordinator acts as the liaison between pilot staff and the Family Court, and in contrast to the process in Chautauqua and Erie Counties, no direct contact occurs between these two entities. Prior to the launch of PSP in April 2008, the Family Court had no involvement with the OCM-BOCES PSI program[13].

Between May and July 2008, 74 noncustodial parents were referred to the PSP. Of these, most (52, or 70 percent) met with PSP program staff and were referred to PSI. Of the remaining 22 people, 8 (11 percent) met with PSP program staff but were not eligible for PSI; 12 (16 percent) did not report to the PSP office (and did not respond to attempted contact); and 2 (3 percent) met with PSP program staff but declined services. Of the 52 who met with PSP staff and were referred to PSI, 33 (64 percent) either completed or were scheduled for PSI's initial orientation. The remaining 19 people were not contacted by the assigned case management partner, did not meet with PSI program staff after being referred, or independently obtained employment between the time they met with PSP and PSI program staff[14].

[12] While Onondaga County support magistrates use an order to refer clients to PSP, Erie County and Chautauqua County support magistrates do not use an order to refer clients to the pilots.
[13] The federal funding for the PSP program ran out in April 2009, but the Onondaga County Family Court agreed to take over the program's costs at that time.
[14] These data were provided to the Urban Institute by staff of the Parent Support Pilot in July 2008.

New York City (Seedco and STRIVE) – Support Through Employment Program (STEP)

In February 2002, the New York City Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) began operating the Support Through Employment Program (STEP), a court-based program that allows support magistrates to refer noncustodial parents in need of employment assistance to service providers throughout the city. This program is independent of the OTDA pilot, but four of the seven partners associated with Seedco and STRIVE are STEP providers (CAB, EHES, NMIC, and St. Nick's). A brief description of the STEP program and its interactions with the pilot programs is provided below.

Individuals referred to STEP meet with a STEP staff member in the court, and based on their needs are assigned to a service provider, generally located near the residence of the noncustodial parent. The New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA) contracts with vendors to provide employment services to TANF recipients through its Back to Work program. OCSE, an agency within the New York City HRA, relies on a subset of the Back to Work service providers as well as other service providers to serve STEP participants. CAB, EHES, and NMIC are Back to Work vendors and therefore receive performance-based funding through HRA with which they can serve STEP referrals.

If a STEP referral meets the OTDA eligibility criteria and is interested in the services offered by the pilot programs, the pilots will enroll the STEP participant in the OTDA pilot. Thus, some pilot participants are dual enrolled in both STEP and the pilot program. For a pilot participant dual enrolled in STEP, case management staff are required to complete an evaluation and submit it to STEP staff prior to the participant's next court date. The OCSE coordinates the delivery of these evaluations from each STEP provider to Family Court support magistrates. Pilot program staff are not expected to attend the court hearings of these clients as part of the STEP program[15].

Family Court Referrals and Relationships

As described above, some of the pilot programs had referral-based relationships with the Family Court prior to the start of the initiative through other programs operated by their organizations, while others established these relationships to address emerging recruitment needs after the start of the initiative. As part of the effort to establish relationships between the Family Court and some of the pilot programs, the Director of the New York Fatherhood Initiative gave a presentation on the Initiative to support magistrates at a statewide conference in early 2008.

Family Court support magistrates refer individuals either directly or indirectly to the pilot programs to receive assistance with finding employment, typically due to a child support delinquency. As we show in table 5.1 below, support magistrates in Chautauqua and Erie Counties refer individuals directly to the pilot programs, which is possible in part because of the

[15] According to data provided to the Urban Institute by staff of the New York City OCSE, in Fiscal Year 2008, 2,062 noncustodial parents were referred to STEP. Just over half of these noncustodial parents (1,153) reported to an OCSE worker and the employment program to which they were assigned, and as of January 2009, 20% of them were employed.

small number of support magistrates in these jurisdictions[16], many of whom know the pilot programs and their staff well. Support magistrates in Erie County, for example, met with pilot program staff at their offices to learn more about the different services that each program offers, which gave them the information needed to make direct referrals to the appropriate program.

Table 5.1. Family Court Referrals by OTDA Pilot Program

OTDA Pilot Program	Receives Family Court Referrals		Family Court Referral Process Established	
	Directly	Indirectly	Prior to Start of Initiative	After Start of Initiative
Chautauqua	√			√
ECC	√*		√	
EOC	√			√
OCM-BOCES		√		√
Seedco				
CAB		√	√	
NMIC		√	√	
STRIVE				
EHES		√	√	
Fortune Society	**			
St. Nick's		√	√	

* ECC receives direct referrals from the Criminal and Family Courts.
** Fortune Society receives direct referrals from the Criminal Court to its Alternative to Incarceration (ATI) program, and some of these referrals are enrolled in the pilot program.

Alternatively, in New York City and in Syracuse, support magistrates refer individuals to intermediary programs located within the court. At OCM-BOCES, support magistrates refer eligible individuals to the PSP, which, in turn, refers them to the pilot program. Similarly, in New York City, support magistrates refer noncustodial parents to STEP, which, in turn, determines the workforce development program for the referral. In this way, support magistrates in Syracuse and New York City do not choose the specific program for referral.

The structure of the STEP and the sheer number of New York City support magistrates may have prevented staff at Seedco and STRIVE from establishing close working relationships with the Family Court. Support magistrates in the upstate sites were supportive of the pilot programs and the services they could provide and, as a result, many were eager to make referrals. However, support magistrates in New York City were less likely to be familiar with the pilot programs and, in some cases, were somewhat skeptical of the STEP program's effectiveness. Some of the support magistrates questioned the quality of services provided by STEP staff, noting that most of the noncustodial parents they refer to STEP do not obtain "good jobs." In

[16] Erie and Chautauqua Counties employ 7 and 2 support magistrates, respectively, who oversee the child support matters in each of these counties. PSI is located in Onondaga County, which employs 4 support magistrates. New York City employs many more support magistrates than Erie, Chautauqua, and Onondaga Counties combined.

addition, some support magistrates expressed frustration because they did not receive follow-up reports on the individuals they referred to STEP or because the reports they received were not accurate.

Program staff in Erie County and at OCM-BOCES indicated that at times the number of noncustodial parents referred by the Family Court exceeded the number they could serve with their existing staff and funding. Some pilot staff also reported that the number of court referrals they received varied considerably from month to month; at times they could have served more referrals. They also found that some of the court-referrals were ultimately not eligible for program services. To address these problems, program staff at several sites maintained regular contact with support magistrates to make them aware of their changing capacity to serve clients. Having working relationships with the Family Court, either directly with support magistrates or through intermediaries, allowed pilot program staff to address some of these issues.

As discussed above, the pilot programs' referral-based relationships with the Family Court helped the pilot programs meet their recruitment goals. However, receiving court-based referrals also created new challenges, including the obligation to provide services to the Family Court. The remainder of this section highlights these challenges and addresses some additional benefits associated with the relationships between the pilot programs and the Family Court.

Pilot Programs' Obligations to the Family Court

In exchange for referring potentially eligible noncustodial parents to their programs, the expectations of support magistrates for pilot program staff are twofold: to help the individuals referred to their programs find employment and to submit status reports to the court on their progress.

Employment Services. Support magistrates refer noncustodial parents to the pilots when noncustodial parents fail to obtain employment and/or meet their child support obligations. Although the sites are able to offer an array of services, referrals are made almost exclusively so that noncustodial parents can receive employment-related assistance.

The ability to refer noncustodial parents who are non-compliant with their child support obligations to a workforce development program provides support magistrates with an alternative to recommending incarceration. One support magistrate noted, "Referring people to the program gives them [noncustodial parents] the opportunity to get a decent job and start paying. Before this, my hands were tied. All I could do was grant money judgments or put people in jail." Therefore, the availability of these and other workforce development programs for referrals could potentially reduce the use of incarceration and other punitive enforcement measures in cases involving child support delinquency.

Reporting Requirements. In addition to helping court-referred noncustodial parents find jobs, support magistrates require that pilot program staff update the court on the status of these referrals by appearing in court, faxing a report, and/or sending updates through a court intermediary at least several days prior to a scheduled compliance hearing. In Chautauqua and Erie Counties and at OCM-BOCES, compliance hearings are scheduled within 3 to 6 weeks of a

noncustodial parent's initial referral to the program. However, due to the size of the child support caseload in New York City, compliance hearings for STEP referrals typically are not held until 3 months after an initial referral is made.

With the exception of OCM-BOCES, case managers from all of the pilots spend a considerable amount of time preparing reports (and in Erie County appearing in court as well). While the staff time required to complete these tasks is paid through pilot funding, this is a service to the court rather than to pilot participants directly. However, the ability of case management staff to provide input on the compliance of court-referred participants, particularly in Erie County where pilot staff speak in court, allows them in some capacity to be advocates for the participants. This may be particularly important in Chautauqua and Erie Counties where the pilot programs are not able to offer participants access to legal services. However, because case managers are not attorneys, their primary responsibility within the Family Court is to provide status updates to support magistrates. Thus, the extent to which they can act as advocates is limited, but one case manager stated, "The court has given [the pilot] their full fledged support, and the importance of our relationship with them [and the recommendations we provide] should not be underestimated."

Table 5.2. Requirements for Submitting Status Reports by OTDA Pilot Program

OTDA Pilot Program	In Person at Hearing	Faxed Directly to Magistrate	Sent to Court through Intermediary	Prepared by Intermediary
Chautauqua	*	√		
ECC	√	√		
EOC	√	√		
OCM-BOCES				√
Seedco				
CAB			√	
NMIC			√	
STRIVE				
EHES			√	
St. Nick's			√	

* Pilot program staff report on participant progress via reports faxed directly to magistrates; however, they typically appear in court and speak to support magistrates when individuals are being referred to their program. Support magistrates in Chautauqua County are also able to call program staff directly if specific questions arise regarding a participant.

The OCM-BOCES process is unique in that the PSP Resource Coordinator with whom PSI staff partners is responsible for completing status reports for all PSI participants. At the time of the site visits, the Resource Coordinator was paid through non-initiative, PSP funding[17].

[17] As of April 2009, the funding that paid for this position was exhausted, and the Family Court agreed to take on the cost of this position at that time.

C. Relationship with Local Department of Labor, One-Stop, and JOBS Program

None of the pilots work in a vacuum, and to provide employment services to participants nearly all of the programs have relationships with the Department of Labor, One-Stop, and/or OTDA JOBS Program in the counties in which they are located. Three programs, Chautauqua, ECC, and Seedco, currently operate or have past experience operating a local One-Stop Center. Although another provider has taken its place, Ross Innovative Employment Solutions (Ross IES) operated the Chautauqua County One-Stop Center for three years and is still co-located with the Department of Labor and One-Stop. ECC operates one of the two One-Stops in Erie County. Seedco operates the Upper Manhattan Workforce 1 Career Center (UMOS), which is one of its primary service sites. EOC does not operate a One-Stop, but is co-located with the Department of Labor, and staff from the OTDA JOBS program are housed in an adjacent building. STRIVE does not operate a One-Stop, but there is a One-Stop Center located in each of the five boroughs such that pilot participants throughout the city have access to their services.

As discussed in Chapter four, pilot staff at all of the sites supplement the employment services they offer with those available through One-Stop Centers or OTDA JOBS programs, though the extent of coordination and collaboration varies depending on each site's need for external employment services-related expertise. Employment Service Specialists (ESSs) at each of OCM-BOCES's service sites are responsible for direct job development and establishing relationships with the local One-Stop, which offers computer literacy and application software package training and access to Department of Labor counselors and a job bank. Similarly, in Erie County, a job developer from the OTDA JOBS program facilitates a bi-weekly job club for pilot participants at EOC. EOC pilot staff and participants also attend bi-weekly job fairs sponsored by the Department of Labor. With the exception of OCM-BOCES, which employs its own employment specialists, the relationships that the upstate pilots developed with these agencies were particularly important, as pilot participants at these sites did not have access to job developers through pilot funding. At these sites, it is not uncommon for pilot participants to work simultaneously with pilot program staff as well as a job developer from the Department of Labor, a One-Stop, and/or JOBS program. According to a case manager in one of the upstate sites, "The connection we have with the JOBS program is a partnership that we need. We can do the education piece, but once a participant completes this, they need someone who can work with them to write résumés, develop interviewing skills, and assist with job leads." The relationships the pilots established with these agencies strengthen the employment services they are able to offer without adding to the costs of the pilots.

As mentioned above, pilot participants at Seedco's Upper Manhattan Workforce 1 Career Center receive employment services both from staff employed by the OTDA-funded pilot and additional staff and resources available outside of the initiative through the One-Stop. The remaining case management/employment service sites associated with Seedco and STRIVE (i.e. CAB, EHES, Fortune Society, NMIC, RDRC, and St. Nick's) employ job developers and have established employment programs internal to their organizations. Thus, these pilot staff do not typically make referrals to the local Department of Labor, One-Stop, or OTDA JOBS program.

Chapter 6. Implementation Challenges and Lessons Learned

The experiences of the administrators and staff who developed, implemented, and operated the fatherhood programs at the five pilot sites provide a number of important lessons and insights about strategies for designing and administering programs for low-income noncustodial parents. This chapter first describes some of the key start up issues and ongoing implementation challenges that the pilots encountered. It then summarizes and highlights some recommendations and lessons learned from the process analysis component of the evaluation, which may be relevant to those designing new programs to meet the employment, parenting, and child support needs of this population in the future.

A. Start-up Issues

The pilots faced a number of initial start-up issues while launching their programs. In this section of the report, these initial start-up issues are summarized.

At the start of the initiative, a tight timeline for roll-out of the pilots and delays in receipt of funding presented design and operational issues for both ODTA and local pilot site administrators. The legislation and state budget authorizing the initiative passed in July 2006 with the stipulation that the $3 million in funding had to be allocated by April 2007. OTDA was responsible for selecting the pilots and allocating funding within this time frame. With little time and a substantial amount of money to allocate, OTDA obtained authority from the State Comptroller's office to use sole source contracts for the pilots rather than submit a request for proposals. Thus, due to time constraints, select local programs were invited to submit proposals describing their proposed initiatives rather than being selected through a competitive bidding process. Moreover, without a formal request for proposals, the design of the pilots was guided by only a few relatively broad parameters.

Seedco experienced a delay between their contract start date and when they received first year funding from OTDA, which was a start-up issue for this site. Because Seedco was not operating a fatherhood program at the time that their OTDA contract started, they had to postpone hiring pilot staff, finalizing the coordination of services, and recruiting participants until funding was available. Thus, these initial funding delays delayed the start of program operations.

Another initial implementation challenge for the pilots involved the relatively narrow age eligibility criteria initially stipulated by OTDA. All of the pilots' contracts included an age restriction that noncustodial parents were required to meet to be enrolled in the initiative. Originally, OTDA stipulated that pilot participants be between the ages of 18 and 35. However, once the pilots got started, they found that many of the individuals that were interested in their programs were outside of this age range. The pilots requested that OTDA expand the allowable age range to 16 to 45 years old, which it did in early 2007.

Without key referral sources at the start of the initiative, some of the pilots also initially struggled with recruitment. Several programs (e.g., EOC, Chautauqua, and UMOS) were able to overcome this challenge by establishing referral-based relationships with the Family Court or

developing procedures to identify potentially eligible individuals from within a One-Stop Career Center. However, RDRC did not receive referrals from the court or One-Stop, and in part because of this struggled with recruitment early on and throughout the initiative to meet its enrollment goals.

At the start of the initiative, the New York City pilots (Seedco and STRIVE) also struggled to verify the child support eligibility criteria with their local child support agency. Seedco submitted waivers to the NYC OCSE to obtain this information for pilot participants, but initially, responses to these waivers were not forthcoming or received on a timely basis. In July 2008, the NYC OCSE Director devoted more staff to process waivers and directed them to do so in a timely and consistent manner. Since this time, the New York City pilots were asked to resume their requests to obtain child support eligibility on their clients.

Finally, the data requirements for the evaluation proved burdensome for staff at some pilot sites (e.g., ECC). Prior to the establishment of the NY DADS database, the evaluator used paper forms to collect information from sites on pilot participants. During the first few months of the initiative, changes were made to these data collection tools regularly. Staff in some of the pilots indicated that changes to paperwork associated with the evaluation were an early implementation challenge. Each time changes were made to the data collection forms pilot staff had to be retrained on how to use them.

B. Ongoing Implementation Challenges

This section of the report describes the ongoing implementation challenges that some of the pilots faced during the first two years of program operation. The ongoing implementation challenges that are summarized below are divided into the following categories: funding issues; program staff, goals, eligibility criteria, and services; and relationships with key partners.

Funding Issues

Funding uncertainties during the pilots' second year were a major operational challenge, particularly for OCM-BOCES and STRIVE, which had first year contracts that ended in 2007. OCM-BOCES was able to continue paying most of its partners to provide services after not receiving program funding from OTDA for nearly a year, but came within a week of laying off staff. STRIVE, however, was unable to continue paying its partners without OTDA funding. As a relatively small organization, STRIVE-RDRC could not absorb the costs of the program on their own and completely stopped program operations for three months. For RDRC, this disrupted recruitment, resulted in staff layoffs, and temporarily ended ongoing services for existing clients.

In addition, the designation of the Erie County Department of Social Services as the contracting agency for the Buffalo pilots presented some ongoing challenges. ECC and EOC are required to obtain approval from the County DSS for expenditures, which proved cumbersome, slowed down the flow of money, and in some instances, affected their ability to provide services in a timely manner.

Program Staff

Many of the pilots experienced significant staff turnover during the first two years of the initiative. At some sites, this appeared to be the result of funding uncertainties, but at others it was perceived as a relatively common problem with no easy fix. STRIVE experienced repeated turnover in its Project Coordinator position, while other sites experienced turnover among case managers. The pilots felt that constant staff turnover disrupts service delivery and increases program training costs.

Program Goals

Some program staff felt that the overall goals and objectives of the initiative were not clearly defined. As a result, there appeared to be confusion among some staff as to whether the pilots should be structured to focus on the provision of employment or the provision of parenting-related services. Because of this, the five pilots were designed without an overall uniform focus. STRIVE, for example, focuses on the 10-week DEF course, which stresses conflict resolution and building relationship skills within romantic relationships as their primary service component. Other programs take a much more employment focused approach and use parenting classes to supplement the employment services being provided.

Eligibility Criteria

The eligibility criteria at STRIVE changed over the course of the initiative, which affected recruitment and enrollment efforts at some of its partner organizations. For a time, STRIVE and its partners were only allowed to enroll employed individuals in the program. However, STRIVE later changed its employment eligibility criteria to comply with the eligibility requirements stipulated in the statute authorizing the initiative. Staff felt that these changes were the result of changes in program leadership and shifts in the vision and purpose of STRIVE's program.

In addition, pilot staff at some sites indicated that the age eligibility guidelines limit their ability to provide services to older noncustodial parents who need them. Some sites would like to see the age eligibility criteria expanded from 16-45 to 16-60, which would allow them to provide employment services to older workers who are displaced from their jobs.

Program Services

Most of the pilots struggled to some extent to keep participants engaged with the long-term services that they offer. Some programs were able to offer incentives to help mitigate attrition. However, many participants are court referrals, and once they obtain employment (either through the program or on their own), they often stop meeting with program staff regularly.

Relationships with Key Partners

Many of STRIVE and Seedco's partners struggled during the first two years of the pilot to obtain child support information on their clients, which made it difficult to make eligibility determinations and in many cases prevented program staff from tracking child support payments

required for reporting purposes. A monthly data exchange was implemented in the summer of 2008 to help track child support payments of participants, but the data exchange is not used to inform the pilots whether their clients meet the eligibility criteria for participation. Programs are still expected to obtain this information from their local child support programs which do not receive additional funding for the staff time required to compile data for the pilots.

In addition, the New York City pilots were unable to establish direct working relationships with Family Court support magistrates. While some upstate pilots were able to develop a collaborative arrangement with a subset of magistrates, Seedco and STRIVE have not done so and consequently have been unable to distinguish themselves from other STEP vendors, work through challenges that emerge, and potentially obtain more court referrals.

Lastly, though the pilot initiative is funded by OTDA (which oversees the child support program), some program staff and partners indicated that at times the perceived conflict of interest between the child support agency's goals of collections and enforcement and the pilots' goal of advocacy on behalf of noncustodial parents is apparent. Chautauqua County attempted to overcome this adversarial perception among its child support staff by offering training to child support staff that highlighted the benefits to the child support program of programs like the OTDA pilot.

C. Recommendations and Lessons Learned

The experiences of the pilots offer many insights and important lessons about the design and operation of programs aimed at meeting the employment, parenting, and child support needs of noncustodial parents. This section of the report describes some of these recommendations and lessons learned by pilot administrators and staff during the first two years of the initiative. These recommendations and lessons are grouped into the following categories: funding issues, program design and organizational structure, program staff and training, population characteristics and service needs, program services and operations, relationships with key partners, and reporting requirements.

Funding Issues

OTDA allocated $3 million to the pilots for their first year contracts in the fall of 2006. These contracts ranged from $200,000 over 21 months to serve 300 participants at ECC to $900,000 over 12 months to serve 150 participants at STRIVE. Disparities in funding can affect a programs' ability to offer incentives and wide ranging services, which may influence recruitment and retention. ECC for example, which received $200,000 over 21 months to serve 300 participants, was not able to offer any incentives or specialized services. ECC was able to exceed its enrollment goals because of its referral-based relationship with the Family Court; however, the range and intensity of services was relatively limited at this site. Disparate funding among the pilots may ultimately affect participant outcomes, but making that determination is beyond the scope of this report.

Program Design and Organizational Structure

The project office model, as implemented by OCM-BOCES, appears to be a promising organizational and service delivery model for this type of initiative. With this model, fiscal operations are handled by the contracting agency, services are provided by staff employed by the project but stationed at contracted partner sites, and project office staff oversee the contractors and coordinate day-to-day program operations across all of the partners involved with the project. Project office staff review the performance of all partners, provide uniform training to all project staff, conduct outreach, establish key relationships with organizations outside of the project (e.g., child support agency), and coordinate overall operations. Project office staff are able to provide oversight for the project without being bound by the interests of any one participating organization.

Program Staff and Training

The pilots emphasized the importance of hiring qualified program staff with experience providing case management, pre-employment, and job development services to low-income people. The case management model that the pilots have adopted appears to work best with well trained staff, which is "expensive, but works." In addition, administrators and staff felt that hiring staff with extensive training and experience working with peer support groups to facilitate group parenting classes increased the quality of these services. One of the pilots indicated that having one male and one female co-facilitator who remain with the class throughout the duration of a series of parenting workshops is crucial to its success.

In addition, scheduling regular meetings between program administrators and management staff and case management staff across the partner agencies within a program, particularly during the early implementation phase of the project, was critical for the pilots. These intra-site cross-partner meetings created a forum for programs to address operational issues in a group setting and in a timely manner. OCM-BOCES helped create a Planning Advisory Committee for PSI, which included management and administrative staff at the partner agencies associated with the pilot. The Planning Advisory Committee meets regularly and functions as the joint decision making body for the pilot. Staff at some programs also indicated that more regularly scheduled cross-pilot meetings coordinated by OTDA with program administrators and case management staff would have provided them with more of an opportunity to learn from each other by sharing ideas and developing and discussing solutions to common problems.

Population Characteristics and Service Needs

Pilot staff reported that many pilot participants are transient, and, as a result, it is often difficult to maintain long-term continued contact with them. Many pilot participants cycled in and out of the programs during the first two years of the initiative. Adequate funding for continued post-employment, job retention, and enhancement services, including, for example, monetary incentives for reaching employment milestones, free and condensed GED or post secondary classes, and short-term skills training may be useful to maintaining a connection with this population.

Many pilot participants have criminal records, sporadic or no job histories, and lack high school educations, and consequently are hard to employ. Providing participants with access to job developers, transitional employment assistance, short-term job skills training programs, and a variety of employment-related supports is crucial in helping this hard to employ population find jobs that pay livable wages. Pilot case management staff and job developers should be well connected to specific employers in their communities committed to hiring individuals regardless of their criminal histories. The provision of pre-employment services, including access to job readiness training to help participants develop the soft skills necessary to find and retain work is also important. Furthermore, given that 60 percent of pilot participants have criminal records, and the impact that this can have on employment opportunities, the provision of civic restoration services may be an important component to consider when designing programs to meet the needs of low-income noncustodial parents in the future.

Finally, one of the biggest service needs of pilot participants, particularly those living in New York City, is assistance in finding affordable housing. As one case manager indicated, "It is virtually impossible to find your own housing as a low-income male in New York City," and as a result, many of these participants rent rooms, stay with friends, or live with family members. Transportation is a major barrier to employment upstate.

Program Services and Operations

None of the contracting agencies had expertise in providing parenting services, so many of them contracted with partners to develop curriculums and deliver these services. Without guidelines, the curricula that the pilots used varied considerably among the sites. In addition, several pilots struggled to offer parenting classes or integrate them with other services in a format convenient for participants. Offering parenting workshops in a variety of formats, at various locations throughout the community, and/or integrating them with employment workshops helped increase the number of participants who completed this component of the program. Offering incentives to complete parenting classes were also used by several sites to increase participation in parenting classes. Given that most pilot participants are referred from the Family Court and their primary concern is typically to find employment, providing incentives specifically to encourage participants to complete this program component is also helpful.

Because many pilot participants view the child support enforcement program and the Family Court with distrust and fear, efforts to help noncustodial parents understand, navigate, and de-mystify these systems is an important service goal for most programs. While pilot participants appear to appreciate being accompanied to court by a case manager or court advocate, having attorneys who can speak in court, advise clients on their legal rights, and advocate on their behalf may be more helpful. The pilots that offer participants access to legal representation indicated that this service is critical for recruitment, retention, and meeting the service needs of low-income noncustodial parents. Sites without grant funding for this purpose were largely unsuccessful in obtaining free legal services for clients from lawyers in their communities.

Case management staff felt that having a multi-step intake process helped to set apart potential participants who were serious about the program and were most likely to engage in the services it offered from other participants. However, multi-step intake processes may also contribute to attrition. Given the barriers to participation that this population already faces, limiting the number of meetings that potential participants must attend and the number of program staff with whom they are required to meet to complete the intake process might ease the burden on participants and be a more efficient use of staff time.

The ability of the pilots to coordinate a broad range of services and deliver them to participants at a central location is a major strength of these programs. Many of the community based organizations with whom the pilots have contracted are able to do this because they do not operate in isolation; rather, they tend to be well established and connected with other local providers able to serve the needs of the people within their communities.

Many of the pilots did not stop enrolling participants in their programs upon meeting their enrollment goals. However, sites that exceeded their enrollment goals did not receive additional staff or funding to serve these additional people. Enrolling and serving additional participants may affect the intensity of services that sites are able to provide, but this merits further study.

In-kind services were provided by individuals and organizations associated with all of the pilots, including, for example, high level management staff within partner organizations, accounting staff, and local child support enforcement agencies. In-kind services were essential to successful program operation for many of the pilots.

Finally, recruiting mentors and past participants who have successfully completed a program to participate in fatherhood or parenting components was an important strategy for pilot staff. Helping participants establish relationships with individuals who have overcome the challenges that they face is helpful. Pilot staff indicated that the experiences they share are more powerful and well-received if they come from mentors or individuals who have overcome some of the challenges that pilot participants face.

Relationships with Key Partners

Working with local CSE agencies to design innovative and specialized services for disadvantaged and hard to serve noncustodial parents who enroll in fatherhood programs of this kind is crucial to successful implementation and program operation. Pilot staff indicated that many of their clients are hesitant to work “above ground” in the legal economy because it is difficult for them to work and pay child support while supporting themselves and the children who may live with them. Designing programs within CSE agencies that encourage disadvantaged noncustodial parents to enroll in wage enhancing GED and job skills training programs and pay back arrears will help address the needs of this population while also increasing collections. One possible way to do this is to temporarily suspend or reduce orders while a noncustodial parent is enrolled in a wage enhancing program. Providing these specialized services that would not otherwise be available to noncustodial parents may also assist pilot staff with recruitment and retention. In the past, CSE agencies have suspended or reduced child

support orders, stopped driver's license revocation and tax interception, temporarily adjusted child support orders upon obtaining employment, and developed arrears forgiveness programs for noncustodial parents enrolled in fatherhood programs (Martinson, Trutko, Nightingale, Holcomb, and Barnow 2007). As we discuss in the services chapter of this report, the CSE agency in New York City recently developed several innovative programs of this kind.

Pilot staff benefit from having a key high level contact within the local CSE agency who can assist them with the child support-related needs of participants. This allows pilot staff to act as intermediaries between participants and the child support program. Participants also benefitted from having child support workshops facilitated by child support staff at the pilot site. Having DSS as the contracting agency for the pilot was not necessary for collaboration between the pilot and CSE agency to occur.

Pilot staff indicated that many of their clients feel disconnected from the child support system because of the way they are treated in court. They felt that support magistrates sometimes defer to custodial parents before taking judicial action. Providing workshops for support magistrates and child support staff to further increase the court and child support agency's sensitivity to issues relating to low-income noncustodial parents may ultimately benefit CSE agencies in their efforts to reach out to noncustodial parents.

The Family Court and One-Stop Career Centers proved to be very successful referral sources for the pilots. Strengthening existing or establishing new referral-based relationships with Family Court support magistrates along with screening clients already receiving services from One-Stop Career Centers largely enabled the pilots to meet their enrollment goals.

Using a compliance court model where specific Family Court support magistrates are assigned to oversee follow-up hearings for all individuals referred to an employment program appears to be a promising practice for this type of program. This allows program staff to develop close working relationships with Family Court magistrates, which may ultimately increase their capacity to advocate on behalf of clients. In addition, programs with staff that work directly with support magistrates appear to more easily work through emerging challenges and address changing needs, including, for example, changing recruitment needs and requesting that support magistrates screen potential participants to determine eligibility prior to making referrals. Furthermore, this type of model seems to better enable support magistrates to hold noncustodial parents referred to programs and program staff accountable.

Organizations without access to their own job developers can establish relationships with JOBS programs or One-Stop Career Centers to help provide job readiness and placement assistance to participants. Sites that employ Employment Service Specialists (ESSs) who provide participants with employment and a range of other case management-related services may also benefit from the services that job developers at local JOBS programs or One-Stop Career Centers can offer. Because ESSs are often occupied with a myriad of tasks outside of assisting clients find employment, developing relationships with these local organizations to assist in these efforts at no cost to the programs can only enhance the services they are able to provide participants.

Reporting Requirements

Paperwork and reporting requirements associated with the evaluation are a burden for some sites. Some sites struggled with retraining staff each time the paperwork changed at the start of the initiative. Finalizing the reporting requirements prior to the start of program operations at the sites may have helped to mitigate these challenges.

References

Martinson, Karin, John Trutko, Demetra Nightingale, Pamela Holcomb, and Burt Barnow. 2007. *The Implementation of the Partners for Fragile Families Demonstration Projects*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

Miller, Cynthia and Virginia Knox. 2001. *The Challenge of Helping Low-Income Fathers Support Their Children: Final Lessons from Parents' Fair Share*. NY: MDRC.

Sorensen, Elaine and Helen Oliver. 2002. *Policy Reforms are Needed to Increase Child Support from Poor Fathers*. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute.

Sorensen, Elaine, Heather L. Koball, Kate Pomper, and Chava Zibman. 2003. *Examining Child Support Arrears in California: The Collectability Study*. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute

Sorensen, Elaine, and Liliana Sousa. 2005. *Assessing Child Support Arrears in New York*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

Sorensen, Elaine, Liliana. Sousa, and Simone Schaner. 2007. *Assessing Child Support Arrears in Nine Large States and the Nation*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

Sorensen, Elaine, Carolyn T. O'Brien, and Ronald Mincy. 2009. *Strengthening Families through Stronger Fathers Initiative: Lessons from the First Year Evaluation*. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute.

U.S. Census Bureau. 2009. Data table C3 from, *America's Families and Living Arrangements: 2008*. Washington, D.C: United States Census Bureau. http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hh-fam/cps2008.html (retrieved May 15, 2009).

Appendix A. Site Profiles
(Alphabetically by City)

Pilot Site Name:
Erie County - ECC

Program Name:
Dedicated, Accountable, Dependable, Self-Sufficient (D.A.D.S.)

Location:
Buffalo, Erie County

Contracting Agency:
The Erie County Department of Social Services (DSS) is the fiscal agent for the pilot.

Case Management/Employment Services Provider(s):
The Erie County DSS contracted with Erie Community College (ECC) to provide case management and employment services to pilot participants (see Appendix B for a detailed description of ECC). ECC in turn contracted with Lakeshore Behavioral Health, Inc. to provide a court liaison/case manager who works at the Buffalo City Court for the Court Outreach Unit: Referral and Treatment Services (C.O.U.R.T.S.) program.

Other Contracted Service Provider(s):
None

Overview of the Pilot:
The Erie County DSS is the only contracting agency that did not allocate funding to pay for a project coordinator to oversee, monitor, and manage overall program administration and operations for the two Erie County pilots. Erie County has an unpaid project director; however, because this person is not involved in the day-today operations of the pilot, the extent to which he provides oversight and monitoring is limited. ECC is part of the State University of New York system and provides academic and training programs, as well as related services. The D.A.D.S. program began in 2005 as a collaboration between the Buffalo City Court, the C.O.U.R.T.S. program, and ECC. At that time, the program offered case management services, referrals for vocational training, employment services, and judicial monitoring of the court compliance of program participants. ECC's current OTDA-funded pilot is an extension of this previously established program and is also called D.A.D.S. The ultimate goal of the program is to increase the child support compliance of pilot participants.

Primary Pilot Staffing:
Pilot staff include two unpaid Project Coordinators, the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs at ECC and the Director of the Buffalo City Court program, C.O.U.R.T.S. In addition, the pilot funds three paid full-time and one paid part-time case management/employment service providers. One case manager/employment service provider is employed by Lakeshore Behavioral Health, Inc. and is stationed at the Buffalo City Court. The remaining three staff are employed by and have offices at ECC. The pilot's parenting and conflict resolution classes are facilitated by one of ECC's full-time case manager/employment services providers.

Recruitment—Referral Sources and Outreach Efforts:
Prior to the start of the initiative, ECC had a referral-based relationship with the Erie County Family Court and Buffalo City Court and continued to receive referrals from these sources for the OTDA funded pilot. The pilot receives nearly all of its referrals directly from the Family Court. ECC contracts with a case manager/employment services provider at the Buffalo City Court who meets with individuals referred by the court to the program. ECC also accepts walk-ins to the program.

Primary Services:
Individuals referred by the court to the Erie County ECC pilot are required to complete two separate intake sessions—one with a case manager at the C.O.U.R.T.S. program followed by another with a case manager at ECC. Following an intake session, participants who enroll in the ECC pilot typically receive one-on-one assistance with developing résumés and navigating the Department of Labor website to find available jobs for which they are interested in applying. In addition, ECC periodically sponsors a 2-hour job readiness seminar that is facilitated by staff from the Erie County One-Stop that ECC operates.

ECC also developed parenting skills and conflict resolution curriculums for the pilot, each consisting of five two-hour modules. (However, in practice, each curriculum is taught in five one-hour sessions). The parenting skills curriculum addresses maintaining parent-child relationships during divorce, child discipline, legal issues and the Family Court, and dealing with drug abuse and domestic violence, while the conflict resolution curriculum focuses on general communication skills and stress relief.

ECC also helps participants obtain grant assistance to cover the cost of GED classes, or participants are referred to a Buffalo City Schools program that offers these services for free. The program also provides participants with access to vocational and job skills training programs at the community college. Because some participants are required to pay for these services, and because most participants are most interested in finding employment, few participants enroll in these programs. Participants at this site also receive referrals for specialized services as needed.

Child Support Related Services:
Program staff typically refer pilot participants to the Erie County child support agency for assistance with child support-related needs. However, ECC has a designated contact within the child support agency who can answer case specific questions for pilot staff as needed. In addition, ECC employs a court liaison/case manager who attends the child support compliance hearings of noncustodial parents referred to the pilot by the Family Court to update child support magistrates on their progress.

Innovative Practices and/or Services:
ECC received Family Court referrals prior to the start of the initiative and thus had a steady source of referrals from the start of the program. ECC's relationship with a job developer from the Erie County One-Stop that ECC also operates helps to provide pilot participants at this site with specialized employment services.

Key Non-Contracted Local Partnerships:
The Erie County-ECC pilot program partners with the Erie County Family Court, which provides most of the referrals to the program. In addition, ECC operates one of the two One-Stop Career Centers in Erie County and partners with them to periodically provide job readiness seminars to pilot participants.

Pilot Funding:
ECC received $200,000 during their first 21-month contract period, which began October 1st, 2006 and ended June 30th, 2008. Thus, during this time, the program had an average monthly budget of approximately $9,524. ECC's goal was to enroll 300 participants during this period.

Pilot Site Name:
Erie County - EOC

Program Name:
Strengthening Families Initiative (SFI)

Location:
Buffalo, Erie County

Contracting Agency:
The Erie County Department of Social Services (DSS) is the fiscal agent for the pilot.

Case Management/Employment Services Provider(s):
The Erie County DSS contracted with the University of Buffalo Educational Opportunity Center (EOC) to provide case management and employment services to pilot participants (see Appendix B for a detailed description of the EOC). EOC did not establish formal contractual partnerships specific to this initiative to provide any additional case management, employment, or other services to pilot participants; however, it does collaborate informally with other service providers in the community.

Other Contracted Service Provider(s):
None

Overview of the Pilot:
The Erie County DSS is the only contracting agency that did not allocate funding to pay for a project coordinator to oversee, monitor, and manage overall program administration and operations for the two Erie County pilots. Erie County has an unpaid project director; however, because this person is not involved day to day operations of the pilot, the extent to which he provides oversight and monitoring is limited. The EOC in Buffalo is part of a statewide network of Educational Opportunity Centers operated by the State University of New York. The mission of these centers is to provide urban communities with innovative academic and vocational training programs that allow individuals to pursue additional higher education or gainful employment. The Buffalo EOC has for many years administered a joint program with the Employment Division of the Erie County DSS to provide public assistance recipients with job readiness, academic and vocational training, and case management services. In 2003, it created the Fathers Forever Program (FFP), which provides case management, employment assistance, and support services to noncustodial parents. EOC's OTDA-funded pilot is a separate extension of the ongoing FFP and is called the Strengthening Families Initiative. The primary aim of the pilot is to use an intensive case management approach to help low-income noncustodial parents become economically self sufficient to meet the needs of their children.

Primary Pilot Staffing:
The pilot is staffed by three full-time case management/employment service providers. Pilot participants are assigned to one of these three staff and work with them individually during their enrollment in the pilot.

Recruitment—Referral Sources and Outreach Efforts:
EOC initially struggled to meet its enrollment goals through grassroots recruitment efforts, which prompted staff to establish a referral-based relationship with the Family Court. The pilot now receives nearly all of its referrals directly from the Family Court; however, EOC also accepts walk-ins to the program.

Primary Services:
EOC has a non-contractual partnership with a job developer from the OTDA JOBS program, with which the pilot is co-located, to facilitate bi-weekly job readiness training workshops and provide one-on-one employment assistance for pilot participants. EOC also encourages pilot participants to attend bi-weekly job fairs sponsored by the Employment Division of the Erie County DSS, which are held in the same building. It also offers pilot participants access to job skills training programs through its affiliation with the University of Buffalo Educational Opportunity Center; however, these programs are not available on-site and pilot participants do not frequently enroll in them.

EOC provides bus tokens to assist pilot participants with the job search process. To receive these tokens, pilot participants are required to provide program staff with the names and contact information of the employers with whom they are scheduled to meet, enabling case managers to verify job searches. EOC also provides monthly bus passes to participants who are unemployed at the time of enrollment and find a job while enrolled in the program, which can be used during their first month of employment. EOC also provides participants with access to a clothes closet, and through its relationship with the EOC BRIDGE program, offers free assistance and advice on tax preparation.

Child Support Related Services:
Program staff typically help pilot participants with their child support-related needs. EOC has a designated contact within the Erie County child support agency who can answer case specific questions for pilot staff as needed. EOC staff also attend the compliance hearings of noncustodial parents referred to the pilot by the Family Court to update child support magistrates on their progress.

Innovative Practices and/or Services:
EOC provides employment supports including access to a clothes closet and transportation assistance for pilot participants. It also established relationships with the OTDA JOBS program and Employment Division of the DSS to provide specialized employment services for pilot participants.

Key Non-Contracted Local Partnerships:
The Erie County-EOC pilot partners with the Erie County Family Court, which provides most of the referrals to the program. In addition, EOC has a close, but non-contractual partnership with a job developer from the OTDA JOBS program who facilitates bi-weekly job readiness workshops and provides one-on-one employment assistance for pilot participants. Pilot staff also work with staff from the Employment Division of the Erie County DSS to help participants access bi-weekly job fairs.

Pilot Funding:
EOC received $300,000 during their first 18 month contract period, which began January 1st, 2007 and ended June 30th, 2008. Thus, during this time, the program had an average monthly budget of approximately $16,667. EOC's goal was to enroll 219 pilot participants during this period.

Pilot Site Name:
Chautauqua County

Program Name:
Strengthening Families Initiative (SFI)

Location:
Jamestown, Chautauqua County

Contracting Agency:
The Chautauqua County Department of Social Services (DSS) is the fiscal agent for the pilot.

Case Management/Employment Services Provider(s):
The Chautauqua County DSS contracted with Ross Innovative Employment Solutions (Ross IES) (see Appendix B for a description of Ross IES) to provide case management/employment services to pilot participants.

Other Contracted Service Provider(s):
The Chautauqua County DSS also contracted with the Center for Family Unity (CFU) to provide parenting/fatherhood services and Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) to provide financial and nutrition education services (see Appendix B for descriptions of these key partners).

Overview of the Pilot:
The Chautauqua County Child Support Enforcement Unit provides oversight, monitoring, and contractual management for the pilot, and also identifies potential participants for referral by the Family Court to the pilot program. It contracts with Ross IES, a for-profit workforce development company that formerly operated the One-Stop Service Center to deliver case management and employment services. It also contracts with CFU and CCE to provide parenting/fatherhood, financial, and nutrition education services. The pilot serves low-income noncustodial parents in Chautauqua County. The aim of the pilot is to assist unemployed or underemployed noncustodial parents become compliant with their child support obligations and reestablish relationships with their children.

Primary Pilot Staffing:
Pilot staff include a Project Director, who is a child support supervisor who works half-time for the pilot; one full-time case management/employment services provider and one part-time supervisor at Ross IES; one part-time parenting/fatherhood services provider and one unpaid supervisor at CFU; and one part-time financial and nutrition services provider and one unpaid supervisor at CCE.

Recruitment—Referral Sources and Outreach Efforts:
The Chautauqua County program struggled initially to meet its enrollment goals through direct referrals from the child support program and other grassroots recruitment efforts, which prompted staff at this site to establish a referral-based relationship with the Chautauqua County Family Court shortly after the start of the initiative. The pilot currently receives nearly all of its

referrals directly from the Family Court. Child support enforcement staff, under the direction of the Project Director, flag potentially eligible participants for child support attorneys who recommend that Family Court support magistrates refer these noncustodial parents to the pilot during child support hearings. Case management staff from Ross IES are stationed at the Family Court three days a week during the second full week of each month to meet with noncustodial parents immediately after being referred to the program.

Primary Services:

The primary services for the program are integrated into a 5-day, 6 hours per day workshop that pilot participants are required to complete. The weeklong workshop includes 24 hours of soft skills and job readiness training based on a curriculum developed by the Pacific Institute called Steps To Economic and Personal Success (STEPS). Case managers supplement the employment-related material addressed in this curriculum by assisting participants in developing résumés and engaging in mock interviews during the last two days of the class.

The weeklong STEPS workshop also includes 3 one-hour parenting education/nutrition seminars based on a condensed and modified version of the 14-hour Active Parenting Now curriculum, which focus on traditional parenting skills, including responsibility and discipline; understanding and redirecting misbehavior; and building courage, character, and self-esteem. Communication skills and conflict resolution are also addressed. Three one-hour financial planning seminars based on a condensed and modified version of the All My Money curriculum are also integrated with the STEPS class. These seminars cover a range of topics, including basic budgeting skills, financial security, and making ends meet while paying child support.

The Chautauqua County program also developed a once-a-week 2-hour job club, in which participants who complete the week-long STEPS workshop can obtain additional assistance with their résumés, along with job placement services, including job leads and referrals. Pilot participants also receive individualized assistance from program staff and referrals for specialized services as needed.

Child Support-Related Services:

The program integrates a one hour child support workshop (developed by the program's Project Director, a child support enforcement supervisor) into their week-long mandatory STEPS class. Case management staff also work with pilot participants individually to assist them with a variety of child support related services, including helping them obtain information on their child support obligations; reinstating their driver's licenses, (which are sometimes revoked as a result of not paying child support); and completing modification petitions. In Chautauqua County these services are provided by a partner who works with pilot participants to compile the required documentation and then contacts child support staff to complete the process. In addition, Ross IES staff complete and send compliance reports to child support magistrates for noncustodial parents referred to the pilot by the Family Court.

Innovative Practices and/or Services:

In response to the program's initial struggle to meet its enrollment goals, child support staff began flagging cases for child support attorneys who recommend court referral to support magistrates during child support hearings. In addition, Ross IES staff are available at the court to

meet with individuals immediately after being referred to the pilot. Having pilot staff at the Family Court allowed the program to establish a close working relationship with support magistrates, which increased court referrals to the program and helped them meet their enrollment goals. CCE staff also work to provide intensive one-on-one assistance with the driver's license reinstatement process for pilot participants who request help and have completed the weeklong STEPS class. Staff felt that this was an important incentive for recruitment and retention.

Key Non-Contracted Local Partnerships:

Ross IES, which hosts the program's weeklong STEPS class, is co-located with the Chautauqua County One-Stop Career Center. Though the Chautauqua County DSS did not contract with the One-Stop to provide services to pilot participants, participants enrolled at this site are frequently referred to the One-Stop's job developer for individual assistance, including, for example, help in using the Department of Labor website to search and apply for jobs.

Pilot Funding:

The Chautauqua County DSS received $200,000 during their first 20 month contract period, which began November 1st, 2006 and ended June 30th, 2008. Thus, during this time, the program had an average monthly budget of approximately $10,000. The Chautauqua County DSS's goal was to enroll 150 pilot participants during this period.

Pilot Site Name:
Seedco

Program Name:
Fatherhood Program

Location:
New York (Bronx, Kings, New York, and Queens Counties)

Contracting Agency:
Seedco, a non-profit workforce intermediary with locations in several cities throughout the country, is the fiscal agent for the pilot. Seedco oversees the EarnFair Alliance, a network of community-based organizations that provide employment and other support services to low-income adults. It has also operated the Upper Manhattan Workforce 1 Career Center (UMOS) since 2004.

Case Management/Employment Services Provider(s):
Seedco contracted with Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation (NMIC), and Saint Nicholas Neighborhood Preservation Corporation (St. Nick's) to provide primary case management and employment services to noncustodial parents enrolled in the pilot. In addition, the Upper Manhattan Workforce 1 Career Center (UMOS), which Seedco operates, is also a case management/employment services site for the program (see Appendix B for detailed descriptions of these organizations).

Other Contracted Service Provider(s):
Bronx Defenders— provides legal counseling services; Center for Employment Opportunities Inc. (CEO)— provides transitional employment assistance to a subset of pilot participants and provided parenting workshops during the pilot's first contract period; and Credit Where Credit is Due Inc.(CWCID)— provided financial literacy services during the pilot's first contract period (see Appendix B for detailed descriptions of these key partners).

Overview of the Pilot:
Seedco provides case management and employment services to pilot participants directly through the UMOS; however, it also contracts with other community-based organizations to provide these services in parts of the city it does not serve. Seedco established contracts with case management and employment services partners located in four of New York City's five boroughs. Seedco employs a paid half-time project coordinator to oversee and monitor the administration of the pilot across the program's partner agencies; however, each partner has primary responsibility for hiring, training, and providing supervision for their own staff. Case management and employment services vary for participants enrolled in the Seedco pilot depending on the particular site. However, pilot participants at all case management/employment services sites have access to legal services from the Bronx Defenders and parenting and financial literacy workshops that follow a uniform curriculum.

Primary Pilot Staffing:
Pilot staff include a half-time Project Coordinator, a full-time Project Assistant, four case management/employment services providers (one at each of its four case

management/employment service sites), and one part-time case management/employment services supervisor (at St. Nick's). Seedco has one part-time transitional employment assistance provider and during its first contract period also had one part-time staff person to facilitate parenting workshops. However, at the end of Seedco's first contract period, it ended its contract with CEO to facilitate parenting workshops. During its first contract period, Seedco also had one part-time staff to facilitate financial literacy workshops, but it opted not to renew this contract at the end of its first contract period as well. Seedco also contracts with one part-time legal services provider from the Bronx Defenders.

Recruitment—Referral Sources and Outreach Efforts:
Three of Seedco's partners (CAB, NMIC, and St. Nicks) are employment services providers for New York City's Support Through Employment Program (STEP) and thus began receiving Family Court referrals prior to the start of the pilot. Each of these organizations reports receiving about 5 STEP referrals monthly and this alone is more than enough for Seedco to meet its enrollment goals.

Seedco is able to recruit a large number of pilot participants from the One-Stop that it manages, which serves many members of the target population (i.e., low-income noncustodial parents). UMOS pilot staff make daily presentations during the One-Stop's registration sessions to inform potentially eligible people of the services available through the pilot program.

Seedco's Project Coordinator, who does not have case management responsibilities, also helps with recruitment for the pilot. In addition, CAB employs an outreach specialist who is able to help recruit pilot participants.

Primary Services:
The services offered by Seedco and its three case management/employment service partners focus on helping noncustodial parents find employment. With the exception of UMOS, which is designated as Seedco's "fast-track" site for participants who need less intense job readiness training, each of Seedco's partner organizations facilitates group job readiness workshops. CAB conducts 2 hour job readiness classes weekly and St. Nick's offers an intensive 3-day, 8 hours per day job readiness workshop to which some pilot participants are referred. NMIC also offers regularly scheduled workshops. Each of Seedco's primary service sites also have their own job developers (and/or employment specialists) available to provide employment-related expertise to case managers and pilot participants.

Seedco also contracts with the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) to provide transitional employment assistance to a subset of hard-to-employ participants, and is the only site to provide this type of service. This program targets parolees with no recent work history, and provides them with immediate, paid, short-term employment.

NMIC and St. Nick's also provide pilot participants with access to an array of job skills training programs on-site and free of charge. St. Nick's provides Environmental Remediation training to both STRIVE and Seedco pilot participants. The 3 week-long training focuses on environmental remediation, and includes a combination of classroom and hands-on training. St. Nick's also offers a commercial driver's license certification program. NMIC's job skills training

program focuses on the construction trades, including building maintenance and weatherization programs.

Seedco distributes metro cards to employed pilot participants for up to six months. Clothing assistance is also provided to pilot participants as an employment support.

CEO provided parenting workshops to pilot participants at each of Seedco's partner agencies during the program's first 22 month contract period. CEO's curriculum focused on parenting skills, child development, effective discipline, and communication skills, and was presented to pilot participants in one session classes. However, in August 2008, Seedco completed the development of its own curriculum based on a review of existing parenting curriculums, (including the 24/7 Dad curriculum and materials provided by CEO), and began training staff at each of its employment service sites to facilitate parenting workshops themselves. Parenting classes are not a required component for pilot participants enrolled in Seedco's program.

During its first contract period, Seedco also contracted with Credit Where Credit Is Due, Inc. (CWCID) to provide participants with a series of five two-hour financial planning workshops tailored to address the needs of noncustodial parents paying child support. However, after the end of its first contract period, Seedco felt that it had the capacity to provide these services internally, and therefore ended its contract with CWCID. As a result, case managers at most of Seedco's partner organizations began providing financial services directly to pilot participants during regularly scheduled group workshops or individual one-on-one sessions. Assistance in obtaining credit reports is also provided.

Seedco also contracts with an attorney from the Bronx Defenders to provide legal assistance to pilot participants. St. Nick's also has a court advocate on staff, paid through its contract with STRIVE, who can help participants enrolled in the Seedco program navigate, for example, the modification and driver's license reinstatement processes.

Through the *Earn Benefits* program, most of Seedco's employment service partners have staff dedicated specifically to helping screen pilot participants for a variety of public benefits programs. Two of Seedco's partners (CAB and St. Nick's) indicated that benefits screening and application assistance is well integrated into the intake process and is a standard service provided to all individuals who receive services from their organizations. Three of Seedco's partners— CAB, NMIC, and St. Nick's— also offer free GED preparation to pilot participants on site.

Child Support-Related Services:

Seedco used grant funds to establish a loan program designed to provide pilot participants with assistance in paying back child support arrearages. In addition, staff from the New York City Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) facilitate 2-hour workshops once per month at each of Seedco's partner sites, which cover the basics of the child support program, enforcement processes, interstate cases, and Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) processes.

Seedco case managers also complete compliance reports for pilot participants referred to them by the Family Court through STEP, make referrals to the local child support agency as

needed, and complete and submit waivers to the child support program to help participants access their child support records. .

Innovative Practices and/or Services:
Seedco used grant funds to establish a loan program designed to provide pilot participants with assistance in paying back child support arrearages. Seedco made $1,500 payments toward a qualified pilot participant's arrears directly to the New York City OCSE. This was considered a loan to the participant, but once half of the loan amount was repaid (i.e., $750) the other half was forgiven by Seedco.

Seedco also sponsors ongoing child support workshops facilitated by staff from the New York City OCSE on a variety of topics and provides extensive transportation and transitional employment assistance. According to staff, the job skills training programs offered at NMIC and St. Nick's are key to helping pilot participants find employment. Staff also felt that the designation of UMOS, a high volume One-Stop Career Center, as one of the pilot's primary services sites, was a successful recruitment strategy.

Key Non-Contracted Local Partnerships:
Three of Seedco's case management/employment service sites receive referrals from the Family Court through the New York Child Support agency's Support Through Employment Program (STEP), a court-based employment program for noncustodial parents operated by the New York City OCSE. The partnership between Seedco's partners and STEP help the pilot meet its enrollment goals.

Pilot Funding:
Seedco received $900,000 during their first 22 month contract period, which began September 1st, 2006 and ended June 30th, 2008. Thus, during this time, the program had an average monthly budget of approximately $40,909. Seedco's goal was to enroll 230 pilot participants during this period.

Pilot Site Name:
STRIVE

Program Name:
Dads Embracing Fatherhood (DEF)

Location:
New York (Bronx, Kings, New York, and Queens Counties)

Contracting Agency:
STRIVE, a nonprofit organization with affiliates throughout the country, is the fiscal agent for one of two pilots in New York City. It has a network of nonprofit organizations within New York City that use the STRIVE service delivery model. STRIVE has worked with noncustodial parents since 1999, when it was selected as a site for the Partnership for Fragile Families (PFF) demonstration project. Participation in this demonstration led to receipt of a multi-year grant from the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development to operate a fatherhood program, which is currently ongoing.

Case Management/Employment Services Provider(s):
STRIVE contracted with Fortune Society (FS), Saint Nicholas Neighborhood Preservation Corporation (St. Nick's), and Rockaway Development Revitalization Corporation (RDRC) to provide case management/employment services to pilot participants. STRIVE—East Harlem Employment Services (EHES) is also a case management/employment services site (see Appendix B for detailed descriptions of these organizations). Each of STRIVE's contracted partners were contractors of STRIVE through its New York Network and offered STRIVE'S short-term CORE job readiness/job search program until 2007. Some variation of this CORE model continues to be offered at these partner organizations and is available for pilot participants.

Other Contracted Service Provider(s):
STRIVE contracts with the same organizations listed above that provide case management/employment services to provide legal services to pilot participants. EHES, St. Nick's and RDRC hire a court advocate to deliver these services, while Fortune Society funds a portion of their family law staff attorney's time to work with pilot participants. STRIVE also contracted with a paralegal professional to assist in the delivery of legal services. STRIVE contracts with four master's level social workers to facilitate fatherhood workshops at each of the pilot's primary service sites. It also contracts with a mental health professional to provide mental health counseling to DEF participants if such services are requested.

Overview of the Pilot:
STRIVE provides case management and employment services to pilot participants directly through EHES; however, it also contracts with other community-based organizations to provide these services in parts of the city it does not serve directly. STRIVE has contracts with case management and employment services partners in four of New York City's five boroughs. The core component of the STRIVE pilot is the DEF curriculum, an eight-week series of workshops focusing on relationship building, with two supplementary workshops – one on financial literacy and planning and one on domestic violence – for a total of 10 classes. Each of STRIVE's case

management/employment service partners has primary responsibility for hiring, training, and providing supervision for their own staff. Case management and employment services vary for participants enrolled in the STRIVE pilot depending on the site at which an individual is enrolled. However, participants at sites are required to complete the uniform ten-week, three hours per week series of DEF workshops. Pilot participants receive a $25 cash payment per workshop (for a total of $250) and transportation assistance to attend. Participants at this site also have access to legal services (through a court advocate, paralegal, and/or attorney) and a mental health therapist.

Primary Pilot Staffing:

Pilot staff include one part-time Project Coordinator, four case management/employment services providers (one at each of its four employment service sites), and three part-time case management/employment services supervisors. Pilot staff also includes three full-time court advocates (one at EHES, RDRC, and St. Nick's) to provide legal services to pilot participants. STRIVE's contract with Fortune Society also pays for an on-staff family law attorney to work part-time for the pilot. In addition, STRIVE contracts with four master's level social workers to facilitate the DEF curriculum at each of its four primary service sites. A portion of STRIVE's OTDA contract is also used to pay for a mental health therapist and paralegal professional who work part-time as needed for the pilot.

Recruitment—Referral Sources and Outreach Efforts:

Two of STRIVE's partners (EHES and St. Nicks) are employment services providers for New York City's Support Through Employment Program (STEP) and thus began receiving Family Court referrals prior to the start of the pilot. Case managers at all of STRIVE's primary service sites also make recruitment presentations to noncustodial parents enrolled in other programs offered by their organizations. EHES case managers, for example, regularly recruit for the pilot program through informational sessions conducted during STRIVE's Core Training program, a four week job readiness workshop at their site. RDRC reported receiving referrals from the Departments of Parole and/or Probation and others received a number of "word-of-mouth" or self-referrals. RDRC also established relationships with the local schools, veteran's administration, and churches as part of their outreach efforts. However, in part because of its remote location, RDRC struggled more with recruitment than any other STRIVE partner during the first two years of the pilot.

Primary Services:

STRIVE's core service and only required component is a ten-week series of workshops called Dads Embracing Fatherhood, or DEF. The DEF curriculum is based on "Exploring Relationships and Marriage with Fragile Families," a curriculum developed by Joseph Jones and Julia Hayman Hamilton. The curriculum focuses on relationship building, with a supplementary workshop on financial literacy and planning and another on domestic violence. The curriculum is presented during ten three-hour workshops held once a week in the evenings for a total of 30 hours. STRIVE allocates pilot funding to provide participants with a $25 stipend for attending each of the ten DEF workshops, for a total payment of $250 per participant. STRIVE also provides participants with transportation assistance to help offset the cost of attending each workshop. It also offers a hot meal during the workshops.

The employment services that participants receive vary depending on the service site at which they are enrolled. Each of STRIVE's case management/employment service partners was a contractor for STRIVE prior to the start of the pilot through its New York Network and thus offered STRIVE'S short-term CORE job readiness/job search program. Some variation of this model continues to be offered at each of these partner organizations and is available for pilot participants interested in receiving these services. Each of STRIVE's primary service sites also has job developers on staff able to assist pilot participants search for and apply for jobs.

STRIVE also has a contract with a paralegal to assist program participants with legal matters. In addition, STRIVE allocated grant funds for each of its partner organizations to hire a court advocate. With the exception of Fortune Society, which uses these funds to pay for a portion of its family law attorney's time, all of STRIVE's partners have a full-time court advocate on staff. STRIVE's court advocates coach participants on how to prepare for Family Court, including what to wear, how to behave, and what to say. They also assist participants by helping them access their child support records, review court documents, file petitions for visitation and modification, and reinstate their driver's licenses. They also accompany participants to court.

EHES and St. Nick's provide pilot participants with access to an array of job skills training programs on-site and free of charge. St. Nick's provides Environmental Remediation training to pilot participants of both STRIVE and Seedco. The 3 week-long training focuses on Brownfield remediation, and includes a combination of classroom and hands-on training. St. Nick's also offers a commercial driver's license certification program. EHES also offers Environmental Remediation and asbestos removal training. In addition, EHES offers participants access to technical computer training, resulting in A+ certification.

In addition to providing transportation assistance to help pilot participants attend DEF workshops, STRIVE also distributes metro cards to employed pilot participants for up to six months.

STRIVE has a department that manages employment-related follow-up services for all graduates of their CORE job readiness program. Pilot participants who graduate from this program receive follow-up services from staff for 2 years, and also have access to a lifetime of employment-related services from any of STRIVE's affiliated network sites.

Child Support-Related Services:

Staff from the New York City Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) facilitate 2 hour workshops regularly at St. Nick's, a partner of both STRIVE and Seedco, and cover the basics of the child support program, enforcement processes, interstate cases, and Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) processes.

STRIVE also allocated grant funds for each of its partner organizations to hire a court advocate. With the exception of Fortune Society, which uses these funds to pay for a portion of its family law attorney's time, all of STRIVE's partners have a full-time court advocate on staff. STRIVE's court advocates coach participants on how to prepare for Family Court, including

what to wear, how to behave, and what to say. They also assist participants by helping them access their child support records, review court documents, file petitions for visitation and modification, and reinstate their driver's licenses. They also accompany participants to Family Court.

STRIVE case managers at EHES and St. Nick's complete compliance reports for pilot participants referred to them by the Family Court through STEP. STRIVE's partners also make referrals to the local child support agency as needed and complete and submit waivers to the child support program to help participants access their child support records.

Innovative Practices and/or Services:
St. Nick's sponsors ongoing child support workshops facilitated by staff from the New York City OCSE on a variety of topics. STRIVE also provides extensive transportation and cash stipends for pilot participants enrolled in the program. Staff feel that the job skills training programs, particularly those offered at St. Nick's, are key to helping pilot participants find employment.

Key Non-Contracted Local Partnerships:
Two of STRIVE's case management/employment service sites receive referrals from the Family Court through the New York Child Support agency's Support Through Employment Program (STEP), a court-based employment program for noncustodial parents. The partnership between STRIVE's partners and STEP help the pilot meet its enrollment goals. In addition, STRIVE has informal partnerships with the National Association of Black Accountants (NABA) and a local Safehouse, to facilitate workshops integrated into the DEF curriculum.

Pilot Funding:
STRIVE received $900,000 during their first 12 month contract period, which began October 1st, 2006 and ended September 30th, 2007. Thus, during this time, the program had an average monthly budget of approximately $75,000. STRIVE's goal was to enroll 150 pilot participants during this period.

Pilot Site Name:
OCM-BOCES

Program Name:
Parent Success Initiative (PSI)

Location:
Syracuse, Onondaga County

Contracting Agency:
The Onondaga-Cortland-Madison Board of Cooperative Educational Services (OCM-BOCES) is the fiscal agent for the pilot in Syracuse. OCM-BOCES operates similarly to a school district and provides a wide range of educational, vocational, and employment services. OCM-BOCES was also the contracting agency for a $3.9 million federal Welfare-to-Work competitive grant awarded in 1999. Under this grant, OCM-BOCES operated a voluntary employment program for low-income noncustodial parents called the Parent Success Initiative (PSI), using 11 different subcontractors to provide direct services.

Contracted Case Management/Employment Services Provider(s):
OCM-BOCES contracts with three case management/employment service providers. Initially, these three providers were: the Center for Community Alternatives (CCA), Spanish Action League (SAL), and Westcott Community Center (WCC). However, in February 2008, SAL was replaced by Syracuse Model Neighborhood Inc. (SMN) (see Appendix B for detailed descriptions of these organizations).

Other Contracted Service Provider(s):
Center for Community Alternatives — provides civic restoration services (i.e. "rap sheet" cleansing); Consortium for Children's Services — provides parenting workshops; Spanish Action League — provides parenting workshops; Frank H. Hiscock Legal Aid Society — provides legal services; Legal Aid Society of Mid-State New York — provides legal services (see Appendix B for detailed descriptions of these key partner organizations).

Overview of the Pilot:
OCM-BOCES does not deliver direct services to pilot participants, but provides overall contractual and fiscal management for the pilot. OCM-BOCES contracts with two individuals, a full-time project coordinator and an intake specialist, to oversee the program's project office. Project office staff are responsible for providing general oversight and managing program operations provided by the pilot's partners. Through its project office, OCM-BOCES has instituted procedures to monitor the activities of its service providers to ensure consistency and quality of service, including regular staff training and on-site case file reviews. In addition, project office staff spend considerable time recruiting participants to the program using television advertisements, brochures, regular contacts with referring agencies, and outreach events. Project office staff also perform initial intake functions and orientations for new referrals.

OCM-BOCES retained the name of its welfare-to-work program, the Parent Success Initiative (PSI), for the current OTDA pilot initiative. OCM-BOCES initially contracted with

three private community organizations to provide case management and employment services to PSI participants. They were: Center for Community Alternatives (CCA), Westcott Community Center, and the Spanish Action League (SAL). SAL was phased out as a contracted partner for employment services in February of 2008 due to performance issues and was replaced by Syracuse Model Neighborhood Inc. OCM-BOCES also contracted with the Consortium for Children's Services and SAL to provide parenting services. OCM-BOCES has contracts with two legal aid societies and CCA to provide legal services. In addition, in the spring of 2008 the pilot established a non-contracted partnership with a mandatory court-based employment program called the Parent Support Pilot (PSP). PSP staff refer noncustodial parents in need of employment assistance to PSI for services.

Primary Pilot Staffing:

The pilot funds a paid part-time Project Director, the Coordinator for Career and Employment Services at OCM-BOCES, a full-time Project Coordinator, and a full-time Intake Specialist. The pilot also provides funding for a full-time Employment Service Specialist (ESS) and one part-time ESS supervisor at each of the pilot's three ESS sites. The pilot also funds two part-time parenting workshop facilitators, 2 full-time attorneys and 2 part-time supervising attorneys, and one part-time CCA attorney to facilitate the provision of civic restoration (i.e. "rap sheet" cleansing) services for pilot participants.

Recruitment—Referral Sources and Outreach Efforts:

OCM-BOCES staff, building on their experiences operating an employment program for noncustodial parents under their Welfare-to-Work program, ran over 800 ten-second spots advertising their services on five local television stations. OCM-BOCES was able to meet its enrollment goals without referrals from the Family Court using television advertising; however, additional funding became available in the community to facilitate a referral-based partnership between the Family Court and the OTDA pilot. This court program, called the Parent Support Pilot (PSP), began in April 2008, and provides initial screening for the referral of noncustodial parents from the Family Court to the OTDA pilot program. The pilot also accepts walk-ins.

Primary Services:

The case management and employment services available to participants vary depending on the ESS site. CCA is the only OCM-BOCES partner that offers group job readiness workshops, which it recently developed (through funding for its reentry program) to address the pre-employment barriers that its clients face. Pilot participants are referred to this 8-day, 3 hours per day workshop, and receive a certificate upon completion. SMN and WCC do not provide regularly scheduled group job readiness workshops, though each of these partners, along with CCA, has an Employment Service Specialist (ESS) who works with participants (in most cases individually) to provide them with employment services.

The pilot offers participants access to skills training programs through its connection to OCM-BOCES, a quasi-school district with a variety of technical education programs. The ESS sites can refer participants for job skills training near program offices, but not on-site or for free (though financial aid may be available to those who apply). OCM-BOCES does allocate $500 to purchase employment-related supports for each pilot participant, which can be used to subsidize part of the cost of a job skills training program. OCM-BOCES also provides $40 bus passes to

pilot participants who request them, complete the program's required parenting component, and verify employment.

OCM-BOCES contracts with the Children's Consortium and Spanish Action League (SAL) to facilitate the pilot's mandatory parenting component. Facilitators use a 12 hour program, typically provided during 2-hour classes held 3 days per week over 2 weeks. The workshops are based on the curriculum, Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP), but are also supplemented with components of the 24/7 Dad and Active Parenting curriculums. The curriculum emphasizes communication skills between noncustodial and custodial parents and children in addition to effective parenting techniques. Pilot participants are generally not able to access legal services until they have completed this component of the program.

OCM-BOCES contracts with attorneys to provide legal services to pilot participants. OCM-BOCES chose to contract with two Legal Aid organizations, each of which provide access to one full-time attorney (and one supervising attorney who works part-time on the project), to provide legal services to pilot participants. The pilot also offers participants with access to civic restoration services. To provide these services, OCM-BOCES has a separate contract with the Center for Community Alternatives (CCA), an organization with an attorney and three legal interns able to assist pilot participants with the "rap sheet cleansing" process and obtaining certificates of good conduct and relief.

The financial services offered by OCM-BOCES are informal in that they did not contract with a financial services provider to provide these services and none of its partners hold regularly scheduled group workshops on their own. Case managers are trained by project office staff to assist participants in accessing online credit reports and the noncustodial parent EITC so that this information can be given to pilot participants individually during one-on-one case management sessions.

Child Support-Related Services:

The attorneys contracted to provide legal services for the pilot are most commonly asked to work on child support-related requests. This includes providing assistance to participants with the order modification process, arrears forgiveness, and facing violation petitions in Family Court. The legal services providers at OCM-BOCES have a close relationship with the county Support Collections Unit (SCU) which has enabled them to address administrative enforcement measures taken against participants outside of court, allowing problems such as driver's license suspensions and unlawful income executions to be resolved more quickly. OCM-BOCES also uses their legal services providers to facilitate child support workshops, though these are not scheduled regularly.

Innovative Practices and/or Services:

OCM-BOCES coordinates monthly strategy meetings attended by partner supervisory staff. The group of individuals that attend these meetings are part of this site's Planning Advisory Committee, the decision-making body for the site. The pilot also has an innovative project office model, in which the fiscal agent (i.e., OCM-BOCES) supports a strong central office not involved in the provision of direct services, enabling project office staff to provide oversight for the pilot without being tied to the interests of any one organization. Finally, the pilot's close

relationship with the local child support agency, multiple legal and parenting services providers, contracted attorneys that can represent participants in court, extensive cash work supports, television advertising, and availability of civic restoration services are key innovative components of the program.

Key Non-Contracted Local Partnerships:
The pilot's key non-contracted partnerships are with the Onondaga County Family Court through the Parent Support Pilot and local child support agency.

Pilot Funding:
OCM-BOCES received $500,000 during their first 12 month contract period, which began November 1st, 2006 and ended October 31st, 2007. Thus, during this time, the program had an average monthly budget of approximately $41,667. OCM-BOCES's goal was to enroll 156 pilot participants during this period.

Appendix B. Detailed Descriptions of the Pilots' Key Partners (Alphabetically by Contracting Agency)

A. Chautauqua County Department of Social Services

The Chautauqua County DSS contracted with three service providers to serve noncustodial parents enrolled in their Strengthening Families Initiative. Ross IES has a contract to provide case management and employment services. The Center for Family Unity provides parenting services and the Cornell Cooperative Extension provides financial and nutrition services. These three partners are described below.

Ross Innovative Employment Solutions (Ross IES) is a for-profit organization that has provided workforce development services since the 1970s (http://www.rossprov.com). With sites in five states, its mission is to partner with state and local agencies to design and implement high-quality job readiness and workforce development programs to address the needs of the community. In Chautauqua, it services noncustodial parents and welfare-to-work participants.

Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE), an arm of Cornell University, has offices in nearly every county in New York and employs over 400 educators statewide (http://www.cce.cornell.edu). Their mission is to enable people to improve their lives and communities. The Chautauqua County CCE has a staff of 20, with program areas in agriculture, family life, and child development (http://counties.cce.cornell.edu/chautauqua).

Center for Family Unity (CFU) is a non-profit organization serving families in New York's Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, and Allegany Counties (http://www.centerforfamilyunity.org). Founded in 1990, it began as a child abuse prevention center and currently provides parenting classes, in-home and supervised visitation programs, and other family support services.

B. Erie County Department of Social Services

The Erie County Department of Social Services contracted with two local organizations in Buffalo to fund two separate pilot programs. Each of these organizations provides direct services to noncustodial parents enrolled in the OTDA initiative. Both organizations are part of the State University of New York system and have prior experience serving noncustodial parents. These two partners, Erie Community College (ECC) and the University of Buffalo Educational Opportunity Center (EOC) are described further below.

Erie Community College (ECC) provides academic and training programs, along with related services (http://www.ecc.edu). Since 2001, ECC has worked with Buffalo's City Court to provide a court-monitored academic recovery program for non-violent drug offenders. It worked with the Court Outreach Unit: Referral and Treatment Services (C.O.U.R.T.S.) program, which is part of Buffalo's City Court, to design and implement the Education 2 Recovery (E2R) program. ECC administers this program through the college's Department of Mental Health and the Department of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse. Individuals eligible for the program are enrolled in remedial literacy, academic, certificate training, and employment services. Building on these experiences, a similar program was developed to meet the needs of the Erie County Family Court. This program, Dedicated, Accountable, Dependable and Self-Sufficient, or D.A.D.S, began in 2005. It offered case management services, vocational training, employment

services, and judicial monitoring of participants' compliance with court orders. ECC's current OTDA-funded program is also called D.A.D.S.

University of Buffalo Educational Opportunity Center (EOC) is part of a statewide network of Educational Opportunity Centers operated by the State University of New York. The mission of these centers is to provide urban communities with innovative academic and vocational training programs that allow individuals to pursue additional higher education or gainful employment (http://www.eoc.buffalo.edu). The EOC in Buffalo has administered a long-term successful program with the Employment Division of the Erie County Department of Social Services to provide public assistance recipients with job readiness, academic and vocational training, and case management services. Since 2003, EOC has operated the Fathers Forever program, which provides case management, employment, and supportive services for noncustodial parents. EOC's OTDA-funded program is called the Strengthening Families Initiative.

C. OCM-BOCES

OCM-BOCES initially contracted with three private community organizations to provide case management and employment services to PSI participants. They were: Center for Community Alternatives (CCA), Westcott Community Center, and the Spanish Action League (SAL). In February 2008, SAL was phased out as a contracted partner for employment services because it had trouble recruiting participants and poor case management performance. It was replaced by Syracuse Model Neighborhood, Inc. OCM-BOCES also contracted with the Consortium for Children's Services and SAL to provide parenting services. In addition, they have contracts with two legal aid societies and CCA to provide legal services. These organizations are described below.

Center for Community Alternatives (CCA) provides community-based alternatives to incarceration. The mission of the organization is to promote re-integrative justice and reduce reliance on incarceration (http://www.communityalternatives.org). CCA serves people in trouble: youth at risk; families in crisis; people with drug and alcohol problems and HIV/AIDS. CCA's programs provide court services, health and HIV/AIDS education, drug treatment, employment, re-entry, and community services.

Westcott Community Center (WCC) is a non-profit community center serving the Westcott neighborhood of Syracuse. The community center's goal is to provide a safe, accessible community space for activities and programs that meet community needs. Most of their program services are directed toward youth and seniors (http://www.westcottcc.org).

The Spanish Action League (SAL) of Onondaga County Inc. is a non-profit, bilingual organization that provides comprehensive services to the Latino community in Onondaga County (http://www.indiraguzman.com). The Spanish Action League provides the following social services: housing assistance; domestic violence prevention; family support; and translation and interpretation services. Although SAL's contract to provide employment and case management services was cancelled in early 2008, the organization continues to provide parenting classes.

Syracuse Model Neighborhood (SMN) was founded in 1975 as a settlement house. Its mission is to help people better manage their lives by offering a wide array of services through community oriented programming (http://www.swccsyr.org). It is also the governing agency of the Southwest Community Center (SWCC), which focuses its services on residents of the predominantly African-American, low-income neighborhood of southwest inner-city Syracuse. SMN was added as an employment and case management service provider in the spring of 2008.

Consortium for Children's Services is a non-profit organization that works with caregivers to promote successful emotional, physical, educational, and economic outcomes for children and their families (http://www.consortiumchildren.org). They provide home- and center-based services that target family literacy, parent education, and employment opportunities in Onondaga County, New York.

Frank H. Hiscock Legal Aid Society was founded in 1949 to provide free legal assistance to indigent residents of Onondaga County. The Hiscock Legal Aid Society currently employs a staff of 36, including 21 attorneys (http://www.hiscocklegalaid.org).

Legal Aid Society of Mid-State New York is a non-for-profit law office that provides free legal information, advice, and representation in civil matters to people who can't afford a lawyer in 13 counties in Mid-New York (http://www.lasmny.org). Eligibility for services is based on income and family size.

D. Seedco

Seedco contracted with three non-profit community organizations to provide case management, employment services, and other supportive services for pilot participants. They are: Citizens Advice Bureau, the Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation, and St. Nicholas Neighborhood Corporation. Seedco initially contracted with the Bronx Defenders to provide legal services, the Center for Employment Opportunities to provide transitional employment services and parenting workshops, and Credit Where Credit is Due, Inc. for financial services. These organizations are described below.

Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) is a non-profit community-based organization in the Mott Haven section of the Bronx that works to improve the economic and social well-being of individuals, families, and communities who are most in need. Originally a settlement house, CAB started Bronx Works as a welfare-to-work program for women who had been long-term public assistance recipients (http://www.cabny.org). CAB is a member of the EarnFair Alliance and works with HRA/OCSE as a STEP program provider.

Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation (NMIC) provides support to low-income residents in the community of Washington Heights/Inwood (http://www.nmic.org). NMIC offers an occupational skills training and job placement program targeted to building maintenance and construction trades, with a focus on superintendent jobs in residential buildings in Upper Manhattan. As a member of the EarnFair Alliance, NMIC has experience working with hard-to-serve individuals. NMIC also has experience working with HRA/OCSE as a STEP program provider.

Saint Nicholas Neighborhood Preservation Corporation (St. Nicks) is a non-profit community-based organization providing services to residents of the Williamsburg-Greenpoint community (http://www.stnicksnpc.org). It operates a workforce development and adult education program called Williamsburg Works. It is a member of the EarnFair Alliance and a member of the STRIVE Network of service providers. It also has experience working with HRA/OCSE as a STEP program provider.

The Bronx Defenders/Reentry Net provides a range of community-based legal and advocacy services for low-income and indigent individuals (http://www.bronxdefenders.org). Bronx Defenders trained Seedco and the other direct service providers in the OTDA initiative to educate formerly incarcerated individuals of their legal rights; assisted program participants in cleansing their criminal records, and provided them with facilitated access to Certifications of Relief from Disability; and represented a subset of participants with acute legal needs.

Center for Employment Opportunities, Inc. (CEO) specializes in providing comprehensive employment-related services for men and women returning from prisons, and for others under community supervision in New York City (http://www.ceoworks.org). CEO's Responsible Fatherhood Workshops stress parenting skills to help parents resolve visitation and custody issues and become more actively involved in the lives of their children. CEO's transitional employment program, the Neighborhood Work Project (NWP), provides immediate, paid, short-term employment and serves as an "employment lab", giving participants the essential skills they need to rejoin the workforce and quickly transition back into their community.

Credit Where Credit is Due, Inc. (CWCID)**,** founded in 1994, is a nonprofit organization that promotes economic empowerment among low-income families by increasing access to, understanding of, and control over financial services (http://www.cwcid.org).

E. STRIVE

STRIVE partnered with three non-profit organizations to provide case management, employment services, and other supportive services to participants of its pilot program. They are: The Fortune Society, Rockaway Development and Revitalization Corporation, and Saint Nicholas Neighborhood Preservation Corporation. This latter organization is a partner of both Seedco and STRIVE. These organizations are described below (except for St. Nick's which was described above). STRIVE also contracted with several different individuals to provide other services. It contracted with four individuals to provide a 10-week series of workshops focusing on relationship building, a paralegal professional to provide legal services to fathers struggling with child support, child custody, or visitation issues, and a mental health professional to provide mental health counseling to participants if such services were requested.

Fortune Society (FS) offers a holistic, one-stop model of service provision for incarcerated or formerly incarcerated adults that includes: substance abuse treatment, counseling, career development, education, housing, recreation, and lifetime aftercare. Fortune Society provides services at four New York City-area locations – lower Manhattan, Long Island City, West Harlem, and Queens (http://www.fortunesociety.org).

Rockaway Development and Revitalization Corporation (RDRC) is a non-profit local development corporation serving the residents of the Rockaway region of Queens. Its mandate is to develop solutions to problems such as deteriorating commercial areas, residential blight, substandard housing, and high rates of poverty, unemployment, and crime (http://www.rdrc.org).