



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Family Assistance

National
Responsible
Fatherhood Clearinghouse



NRFC Webinar Series

Working with Child Support – Effective Strategies from Model State and Local Partnerships

March 28, 2013

Webinar Transcript(Provided by PGI Global)

Moderator:

- Patrick Patterson, NRFC Manager

Opening Remarks

- Lisa Washington-Thomas, NRFC COTR, Office of Family Assistance

Presenters:

- Vicki Turetsky, Commissioner, Office of Child Support Enforcement
- Michael Hayes, Deputy for Family Initiatives in the Child Support Division of the Texas Office of the Attorney General (OAG)
- Cedric Petteway, Responsible Fatherhood Specialist/Child Support Liaison, Center for Urban Families (MD)

Operator:

Please stand by we're about to begin. Good day and welcome to the National Responsible Fatherhood Webinar.

Today's conference is being recorded. At this time I'd like to turn the conference over to Patrick Patterson. Please go ahead.

Patrick Patterson:

Thank you sir. I bid a good afternoon and welcome to our listeners our Webinar listeners for our March 2013 Webinar entitled Working with Child Support Effective Strategies for Model State and Local Partnerships.

For some time now we've heard from the field about the importance of working with child support. And what we want to do today is present to you on three levels some of the best practices that we've seen one from the Federal perspective. And we've got really special presenter today.

One from a community based perspective in terms of a state working with the child support. And then last but not least more practitioner grassroots based efforts around effectively working with child support.

We have a really, really strong lineup of three presenters that are going to share on those three levels with you guys. So we're very excited.

My name is Patrick Patterson. I manage the National Responsible Father Clearinghouse. And I'll be facilitating today's Webinar.

We are very excited to say that we promoted this Webinar via our LISTSERV but also the clearinghouse is

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connected social media wise.

So we're on Facebook and Twitter as well. So we've done a really good job of promoting this via those two channels as well.

If you are on Facebook I would encourage you to visit our page at fatherhood.gov. Feel free to like us. Make comments as you see things that we post. And if you're on Twitter you can also find us at fatherhood.gov as well.

During this Webinar we're going to be talking but also sharing questions from both Facebook and Twitter that we receive but also via the Webinar technology.

So if you're tweeting during this Webinar please use the hashtag fatherhood.gov. We're very excited about this opportunity.

Before we get started I'd like to invite for the clearinghouse our Federal Project Officer Ms. Lisa Washington-Thomas who is in Washington DC to provide some welcoming comments from the Office of Family Assistance. Lisa?

Lisa Washington-Thomas:

Thanks Patrick. Hi I'm Lisa. And I just want to thank so many of you for participating in our conference call Webinar today.

We think this is a very important topic. We have a toll free line 1-877-4 dad 411 that calls are referred to child find. Eventually the calls will go directly to child find.

And the - most of their calls are coming from the father - from our clearinghouse are coming because they need help in navigating the child support system.

So through information that we have learned on the ground and through research we realize that child supports an integral part of many fatherhood programs.

And many dads are looking for information of how to help them navigate the system. So we are so pleased that you're here and - thankful to our speakers for participating to talk about possible collaborations and how we can create well rounded holistic programs for dads who are in need.

So thank you so much for joining the Webinar and thank you for our speakers. I think this will be a very good Webinar that you will learn something and enjoy. So thank you. And I'll turn it back to you Patrick.

Patrick Patterson:

Thank you Lisa. I appreciate those comments. And thank you for also sharing information for our call centers number for dads to call.

For today's Webinar we've established three primary objectives. Our hope is that by the end of this Webinar our attendees are listening but also on line would have increased knowledge and understanding of three things and with child support policy and procedures. You're going to hear a little bit about that.

Strategies and resources that fatherhood practitioners can use to help noncustodial fathers understand and manage their child support responsibilities.



And then last but not least examples of successful partnerships between fatherhood programs and child support at the state and local levels.

We've spent significant time thinking about what you've asked us for with this Webinar. And so our goal is to have that.

In addition to that we're also going to have a pretty healthy dialogue with questions that come in from the field around today's topic and presentations.

A few housekeeping notes before we get started this Webinar is being recorded. And so for folks who visit fatherhood.gov our Web site this will be posted there seven to nine business days following today's Webinar.

With our Webinar technology the way that we've tried to make this available is that as you hear or think of things you want to raise questions on you can actually submit questions via the Webinar technology.

And so just for brief one on one on how you submit questions during the Webinar I'd like to invite Jen to talk us through that. Jen?

Jen McHenry:

Thank you Patrick. I'm going to pull up the screen right now that should look a little like the screen that most of you are looking at and walk through how to ask a question.

Throughout the presentations we invite you to send us a question whatever comes up at the top of your mind. We'll try to address as many as we can with our presenters in the time allotted.

Any questions that we're not able to address on the Webinar we will address in a response to questions document after the Webinar has concluded.

So if you have a question please feel free to ask it even if you think maybe it's getting too close to the end of time. We will address them as they come up.

And the way to do this is to go to the Q&A button on the top of your screen that a box will pop up on your monitor, type in a question at the top and hit Ask.

You will get a response back from us letting you know that we received your question, that we've put it in the queue to be answered.

And that'll free you up to ask another question. So please ask as many as come up but again they Q&A button at the top.

There are a couple of other technical issues you may come up with. You may think that this screen is too small for you to see perhaps you're in a room with a couple of other people.

In order to make the presentation slides full screen you can hit the F5 button on your keyboard. If you're watching and someone comes up with a question you're wondering where did the Q&A button go? Hit the F5 button for a second time or the Escape key. That'll take your presentation back down to the smaller size and allow you to ask that question.

If you have any questions following the Webinar or are interested in getting presentation slides emailed to you directly you can contact us at info@fatherhood.gov. And with that I will turn it back over to Patrick.

Patrick Patterson:

Thanks Jen. Let's get into it. For today we have three presenters. So as I mentioned earlier I will introduce them now briefly and we'll do the same as they prepare to present.

For today's Webinar once our first presenter concludes we're going to do a brief Q&A period for her to respond to some specific questions and then we'll have our next two presenters to present.

Our first presenter that we're delighted to have is Ms. Vicki Turetsky. She is the Commissioner Office of Child Support Enforcement US Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families in Washington DC.

Our second presenter that we're very delighted to have is Michael Hayes, Deputy for Family Initiatives Texas Attorney General Child Support Division and he's based in Austin Texas.

And our last presenter that we're delighted to have is Mr. Cedric Petteway. Child Support Liaison for the Center of Urban families and he's based in Baltimore, Maryland.

Three distinct perspectives, three highly respected national experts in the various areas of federal, state, but also community based approaches to work with fathers and so we're very excited to have them each.

As we begin to talk about today's Webinar I want to do a brief orientation to the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse.

As many of you know we are for ACF the Administration for Children and Families and HHS Health and Human Services their clearinghouse on fatherhood.

We've established a number of priorities for ourselves and I want to just briefly highlight what those are for our work during the next couple of years.

We're funded primarily as a resource for practitioners, programs, federal state government, along with the public at large who are serving or interested in serving and supporting strong fathers and strong families.

We're led by our Director Mr. Kenneth Braswell. We've posted his email address in case you want to keep - contact him directly that leads our efforts.

And then again myself Patrick Patterson I'm the Manager of the clearinghouse and my email address is here as well.

We love to hear from the field. We love to connect our work to your work. And so it's very important that we share where we are.

We have a few goals that we try to target each year specifically around working with dads but also equipping the field around becoming better practitioners and service providers to fathers.

We are primarily resourced for anybody who's touching families. If you're in a church or nonprofit, state, city government, federal government, anyone that's touching fathers and families we try the best we can to be a resource to the population.

We've done a few new things that allow us to touch fathers directly as well as you heard from Lisa when she gave the 1-800 number.

Our primary interface with the public is our Web site fatherhood.gov. We probably say that it's never a completed project - product.

We expect that our Web site will evolve as the field evolves. And so we try the best we can to make sure our Web site has the most current information but we also ask that you take as much pride in this subject as we do by sharing with us.

If you go to our site and you see something's not there I gave (Kenny)'s address email address and my address as well.

Folks can feel free to email us and let us know that there is something that's not there on our site. We want to hear that from you.

It goes to a review process to get posted. But I want to make sure that you guys feel as inviting to submit things to us as we try to put things on the site as well.

A second major priority for us each year is our annual media campaign. We just released a new PSA in February the week after the Super Bowl featuring Matt Lauer highlighting the importance of dads being a part of their families.

If you've seen the cheerleader ad from the past those are all media campaign products of the fatherhood clearinghouse.

And our goal was at - is again just to raise the profile of the importance of dads being involved. We do a mixture of TV, radio and print ads to support the work that you're doing locally but also we're trying to promote on a national level.

In this past year we did a new effort called Fatherhood Buzz that again was a new outreach strategy to talk to fathers directly.

Last June we did about 108 barbershops across the country where we actually provided information to barbers to then share with their consumers that came in on the Saturday prior to Father's Day.

It was immensely successful and popular. And our plans are to do that again this June. And so stay tuned as we're going to be posting things on our Web site around our new efforts for Fatherhood Buzz this year.

I will just give a heads up that this Webinar ties into that. Our topic for this year is around legal support. And we're going to be focusing on how do we equip fathers and families with the information that they need to navigate systems to support their families?

Child support being one, custody and visitation, how can we actually equip fathers and families with that information using the barbershops as that vehicle. And so we're very excited about that. So stay tuned for those - that information as well.

Three other products - projects for us priorities are product development disseminating resource information to the field.



We try as best we can to create products each year. We do a limited number in hard copy but they're all posted on our Web site.

We do a series of outreach and presentations at conferences and events around the country mostly local in communities across the country but we do that as well to kind of continue to spread the word.

And then a call center as Lisa suggested earlier 1-877-4 dads 411 it's a resource directly for fathers to call us. But we also receive calls from practitioners in the field as well.

Our last two priorities that we focus on under the clearinghouse one is supporting the President Fatherhood and Mentoring Initiative.

The President's made it very clear that this is important work but in cases where fathers are not present, you know, we look to mentors to step in and fill that void.

And so we've done a number of things with the President - the White House office around supporting the Presidents Fatherhood Mentoring Initiative.

And then last but not least because everybody can't travel to conferences and meetings we try the best we can to continue to be a resource virtually like today's Webinar. We do a series of virtual trainings for the field as well.

And so again if you're on Facebook and Twitter you can find us at fatherhood gov if you're tweeting during this Webinar hashtag fatherhood gov.

But feel free to like us and hit us on Twitter as well because we want to stay connected to you as you're connected to us.

With that said of going to introduce our first presenter Ms. Vicki Turetsky. I'll just briefly read her bio and then I'll turn it over to Vicki.

Vicki was appointed the Commissioner for the Office of Child Support Enforcement in the United States Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families.

As commissioner she oversees the Child Support Program operated by each state and by many tribes.

Ms. Turetsky brings more than 30 years of experience as a public administrator and advocate for low income families.

She is nationally recognized expert in family policy. And has been instrumental in efforts to boost child support payments to families and to establish realistic child support policies and encourage fathers to work and play an active role as parents.

Prior to her appointment she served as Director of Family Policy at the Center for Law and Social Policy otherwise known as CLSP where she specialized in child support, responsive fatherhood and prisoner reentry policies.

The author of numerous publications she was a visiting lecturer at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University and has received several national awards.

She has also held positions at the US Corporation for National Community Service, MDRC Union County Legal Services in New Jersey and the Minnesota Attorney General's Office.

As Division Director at the Minnesota Department of Health and Human Services she received one of the State's first Reinventing Government Awards.

She received her BA from the University of Minnesota and a JV from the University of Chicago Law School. With that I welcome Vicki Turetsky. Vicki?

Vicki Turetsky:

Thank you for that kind introduction and hello to everybody. Let me start with the big picture on child support.

Payment of child support improves children's chances in life that's the bottom line in the research and in our own individual experiences. We were all kids once.

Child support is one of the largest sources of income support for families and when received its 40% of the income of poor families.

What the research says is that a dollar of child support -- in other words a dollar paid by the noncustodial parent to the child -- improves children's educational outcomes more than any other income source and that includes the mother's own earnings.

She has the - you have the non-custodial parent the fathers earnings you have the mother's earnings. What the research says is that a dollar of child support the father's earnings improves children's educational outcomes more than any other income source.

And most children do better when both parents are actively engaged in their children's lives. We know that kids love and need their parents. And parents love and need their children. And parents have the fundamental job to support their kids.

Our job at the most basic level at the Child Support Program is to transfer money from the noncustodial parent's household to the child's household.

And children usually receive reliable child support payments when the noncustodial parent has a steady job, when a payroll withholding or an income withholding order is in place, in fact we collect 70% of child support payments through payroll withholdings.

Children usually receive reliable support when the parenting can comply with the order. In other words that the order is realistic, it's set based on the parents actual income, and it takes into account the parents own need to support himself or herself.

And finally children usually receive reliable support when the parent maintains ties with the child and the parent has access to the child.

But it all starts with the job. Child support payment starts with a job. Payroll withholding works well when the parent is employee.

But not all parents have steady jobs. And many of you most of you know that in the audience because those are the parents that you are working with.

Low income noncustodial parents owe 70% of child support debt. In other words the most of the child support debt that's owed by parents is owed by low income noncustodial parents.

And I'm using the term noncustodial parents because about 20% of noncustodial parents are moms they're women.

But the majority of noncustodial parents are men they're dads. And I will often refer to noncustodial parents as dads although clearly this applies to both mothers and fathers who are noncustodial.

The reality is and you all know this sometimes there's not enough money to go around. Neither the mother nor the fathers have enough money together to support themselves and to support their children at a most basic level.

But it's also true that kids still need to be supported. They still need a roof over their head. They still need school clothes that the children's needs don't go away even when the parents struggle to support them.

Twenty eight percent of custodial families are poor, 25% of noncustodial parents are poor. And this is a pretty self-evident fact in the sense that both mothers and fathers often come from similar communities, similar backgrounds, and they get together and their children are reflect their economic circumstances.

But this is what the data says. This is what the Census data says that custodial and noncustodial parents are roughly at - in the same levels low income.

So what we've done in the Child Support Program across the country is to begin to shift the paradigm in child support.

We are shifting from the idea that orders should be set high and that we should collect every last dollar that we can possibly locate to a model of sustainability with the goal of increasing reliable support, regular payments of child support, month after month, year after year to children all the time that they're growing up.

And to really look at child support as a basic income support for low income kids and moderate level income kids as well.

Part of this paradigm shift is a recognition that orders in the past have been set too high. I'll just put it out there. They have been set beyond the ability of the lowest income parents to pay them.

Now that isn't true for most orders but for the orders that have been set for the lowest income parents the orders have often been set on assumed income not actual income.

And that has meant that the orders are too high for the actual ability of the noncustodial parent to pay them.

We have begun to shift to more realistic orders based on actual income. And this is a shift, you know, partway in progress but it's one that's happening around the country.

We're also shifting to an early intervention model. Early by inter - early intervention I mean working with both parents right up front to help the noncustodial parent get on the right track, to get the services that he needs, and frankly to help the custodial parent and help her get on track and get the services she needs as well.

The goal of early intervention is to really understand the circumstances of both parents that the program is working with and to prevent that buildup.

By setting that realistic order by intervening early when payments don't happen or when they fall off let's find out what the reason for nonpayment is.

And look individually at the circumstances of parents coupled with our standard automated enforcement practices.

We have been linking to employment programs, to healthcare. And there's a real opportunity here to help uninsured low income fathers who are not living with their kids get health coverage under the Affordable Care Act linking them to parenting time procedures.

And we're working hard on that. In fact I just came out of a meeting talking about how to implement parenting time should Congress give us that job, linking parents to community services and in particular fatherhood programs in the community.

And this paradigm shift also reflects the idea that we want to encourage payment by building the ability and willingness to pay the support.

So it's not that our enforcement authorities are going away. And it's not that we're not going to use them anymore. We have standard procedures that work well when noncustodial parents are working at a good job.

But in circumstances where the noncustodial parent the father is really struggling with employment is struggling with issues.

The idea that what we want to do is to work with him and work with her and focus on the underlying reasons for nonpayment by building the ability to pay through jobs for example, and building a willingness to pay through parenting time for example. That's where we're going with the Child Support Program.

The - we have in fact begun to really emphasize five research based evidence based tools to increase regular payments.

One is employment, and employment services, and linkages to employment programs, and many fatherhood programs to offer employment services.

The second is right sized orders based on actual ability to pay.

The third is debt reduction reducing unmanageable debt that often arose out of periods of incarceration, unemployment, and orders being set too high in the past.

The fourth tool is parenting time. And in there the President has a proposal to give the Child Support Program the job of establishing parenting time at the same time that the child support order is established.

These would be separate and independent rights and responsibilities but they would be dealt with the way families think of them which is that these things are connected.

And then finally, family distribution. And what that means is that the money that is collected when a father pays child support that money is treated as support for kids.

It's paid to the family. It's not used as government revenues to repay welfare assistance. And that there is - States have the option to do this now and this is a real emphasis on our part because it makes sense that if you

are, you know, if you are trying to support your kids you want that money to go to your kids and benefit your children.

We call this whole model Family Centered Child Support Services. It's a combination of the five tools policies, practices, service linkages that gets the order right, that helps parents stay on track in a positive way, that deals with issues and helps both parents get the services they need through referral, and information, and partnerships that the Child Support Program forms.

And you've just seen on your screen the six bubbles we call them. They're the six areas where we think child support needs to partner and where there are in fact many partnerships as you'll hear further on in the call.

So we are well on our way to change but we're not there yet. There are about half of states that have taken another look at their order setting process and are setting orders based on current actual earnings.

There are almost all states 44 states are - have some kind of process for reducing child support debt owed to the state. And some places have a process for working with both the mom and dad to reduce overall debt.

And these programs are set up in different ways. Sometimes they're pretty matter of fact and routine. Sometimes they're hard to get.

But most states have a process and you should really check into it on behalf of the clients that you're working with.

And then finally -- and you can turn to the next slide -- you see there the debt compromise policies. And then the next slide.

Our family centered - we have a number of family centered initiatives here at - in the Federal Office of the Child Support Enforcement funding states and counties and tribes to carry out a variety of initiatives related to family centered services and policies.

We have a noncustodial parent employment demonstration project which is a random assignment project where we hope to determine whether child support linked employment services for noncustodial parents get us where we want to go in terms of stable good employment for noncustodial parents so they can support their kids.

We have another project on parenting time really looking at models for improving the connection between child support and parenting time. So noncustodial parents also are having their parenting needs addressed.

We have a major initiative around healthcare as I mentioned to use the Child Support Program as one point of access to help noncustodial parents, and custodial parents, and frankly kids alike who are uninsured get to affordable health care options.

We have an initiative around building assets for fathers and families. And what this is really about is creating a tie with financial management services.

Many of these are community based programs. Many fatherhood programs have financial management component.

It's working with both parents to improve the education and the tools around managing your money.

But it's also looking at ways like matched savings accounts so that both mothers and fathers can save for the benefit of their children.

And we're doing a lot of experimentation in that area for example, you know, what would happen if we reported positive credit upon child support payments?

So we're looking at a number of strategies here and partnering with a variety of other programs at the federal and state level.

We have an Access to Justice Project which is really important. It is - it really stems from US Supreme Court case called Turner versus Rogers which looked - which found that the state at issue did not have adequate due process safeguards for in their contempt proceedings.

Noncustodial - the noncustodial parent plaintiff was incarcerated for nonpayment of child support. He was repeatedly incarcerated. And he did not have or the court did not find they had the ability to pay what was being asked of him.

And so we have a major project to implement Turner versus Rogers. We have new policy. We have best practices in this area.

We're really encouraging state and county Child Support Programs to back away from the routine use of contempt hearings and instead and jail particularly.

And instead look to alternatives to incarceration whenever the issue of nonpayment has to do with an ability to pay child support.

We're not saying never go to jail. We're not saying don't ever use contempt hearings. What we're saying is don't use either of those things routinely when what's really needed is a job not jail.

We have strong outreach to military and veteran families a number of materials partnerships with the Veterans Administration, and military, and states to get the word out to military and veterans families. Again helping them get realistic orders, manage their debt, and see their kids.

We're addressing incarceration and have for a long time. A number of state, and county, and tribal programs work directly in the prison to address child support needs.

And then finally let me mention before I close we have a proposed rule that is in clearance and it was set new policy in this area.

We hope that we will be able to publish it as a proposed rule pretty soon. I hope that you as practitioners will take a close look at that rule.

We'd be happy to - I mean we want to get it out to the field. We want you to take a look at it. And we'd like you to comment on it.

There's a lot in there. And it is designed to update the Child Support Program, create a modern child support program, and recognize the needs and the responsibilities of the lowest income parents.

So with that let me stop and thank you very much.

Patrick Patterson:

Thank you Vicki. That was very enlightening. I think there were several things that I took notes on but we also got a couple of questions that came in.

As I mentioned earlier we did a call for questions in advance of this Webinar so we got a few of those and some ones that just came in.

I'll start with the first one just came - just in. Which states are you seeing these evidence based tools being effective, which states are you seeing these evidence based tool that you mentioned being effective?

Vicki Turetsky:

Most states are trying one or more of these tools at a local level or at a pilot level. I think there is a long way to go in terms of moving from, you know, a sort of trying it to fully implementing it.

And that's going to be a process. It's going to be a process for years. And it's going to have to be balanced with enforcement responsibilities.

But every state is aware that this is where the program is going. They while of course there's a range of viewpoints and circumstances in each state.

There is consensus that this is the way the program needs to go in combination with standard enforcement procedures. As you know we're a highly automated program.

And of course resources are real struggles or government programs of all sorts including the Child Support Program.

So I would refer you to these maps. And we have another map on our - online that shows employment programs. But they do - they are sometimes local and they are sometimes temporary.

But I encourage you to -- and this is sort of the bottom line -- form a relationship with your local child support program and frankly your state child Support Program.

Go to the state director. Go to the county director and work out that relationship. And, you know, say what you need.

Patrick Patterson:

Excellent, excellent. One of the questions that has come in prior to the Webinar but also came in just now is you're talking and you're speaking about somewhat of a new child support approach to working with families.

This is from parenting what I've heard. What's the plan to educate the community on this newer more family friendly, father friendly, child support is there a plan for that?

Vicki Turetsky:

Well we are doing - we're doing a lot to try to get the word out. And so are states, and counties and tribes. We are conducting, you know, we conducted Webinars.

We have good relationships with a number of national and state fathered programs. It's going to take time. And so we are communicating about it but we also recognize that it's going to take time.

And one of the things that I think is challenging to manage is that, you know, a parent a noncustodial parent may walk into a local office and not, you know, there may be a disconnect between the kind of services that the noncustodial parent is offered at the local level and sort of this national message.

So we could really use your help in helping to set expectations and help manage that relationship with a local program in the sense of, you know, everybody's just trying to do their job but...

Patrick Patterson:
That's right.

Vicki Turetsky:
...change doesn't happen overnight and...

Patrick Patterson:
That's right.

Vicki Turetsky:
...we don't want to set parents up for an unrealistic expectation.

But neither do we want them to hang back or avoid the child support office because of the fear of, you know, not having the ability to talk through issues.

Patrick Patterson:
Excellent, excellent. Well I think we all on the line hold in high regard the fact that you're championing this effort because it's been talked about for years but this is really rewarding to hear the approach you're taking.

Another question that came in the State of Louisiana has a constitutional prohibition against forgiving debt owed to the state which includes child support arrears.

Are there any practices in other states that progressively address debt associated with unrealistic child support orders? I'll read that again.

The State of Louisiana has a constitutional prohibition against forgiving debt owed to the state which includes child support arrears.

Are there any practices in other states that progressively address debt associated with unrealistic child support orders? Did you catch that?

Vicki Turetsky:
Yes I did. Thanks. And I want to before I answer this directly I do want to say that in some ways this is new in some ways this is a decade old.

That counties, and states, and tribes have all been moving forward in this area for the last decade. And so, you know, we're naming it, we're pushing it.

But the truth is the invasion happens at the local and state level. So I think don't underestimate the partnerships you can form at that level.

I - in terms of debt reduction practices every states legal framework is different. But the practices there are a couple different practices that may be good models to look at and consider promoting.

One is what's called debt leveraging. And this is a - this was an approach first piloted 20 years ago in Maryland in partnership with the Center for Urban Families.

The debt leveraging approach is to say we're not forgiving debt. We're not writing off debt. We're asking you to do some very specific behavioral things in exchange for reducing the debt.

So a typical debt leveraging program might say to a noncustodial parent if you - if we help you get a job or if you find a job, and you stay in that job, and you pay a realistic current support amount for a certain period of time let's say six months then we will write off a certain amount of debt.

And if you continue to pay for a year we'll write off more debt. These programs are structured in different ways, different time frames different expectations.

Some expectations are easier to meet than others but it's kind of a quid pro quo rather than a forgiveness type of strategy.

You could use a strategy that isn't just monetary. You know, if you stay in school. If you take care of your child every week, you know, that kind of thing you can structure a quid pro quo get leveraging approach.

Another approach is to look at the underlying I don't want to say validity but the underlying integrity of the original child support order.

And if you have an order that is set beyond ability to pay there's no question that it was set legally. That's not the question.

But it is it an order that - that complies with or that comports with the actual income of a noncustodial parent or was the order flawed in that way?

And if so there may be an argument that again that we're not talking about debt forgiveness we're talking about debt correction.

And there are different - different states have different rules around this. It's very much about a legal process of how you go about changing an order.

I wouldn't want to presume that, you know, that we would override state law. But there are sometimes mechanisms at a state level to take another look at the underlying effectiveness if you will of the order. And that's another way to get at we're not forgiving we're doing something else.

Patrick Patterson:

Excellent. Well I'll ask one last question as I think about the audience ((inaudible)) so on many of them are either working with or continuing to seeking to work with child support city, county state.

What advice would you give them as if they are new reaching out first time reaching out to a child support agency what advice would you give them going into that meeting?

Vicki Turetsky:

Many programs, many, many state local and tribal programs have a fatherhood coordinator. And if so that's a great place to start because it means that that jurisdiction has a structure for addressing community needs related to low income fathers.

If you - if you're not aware of a structure like that my own advice would be go to the child support director at the county or the state level not to say don't work with, you know, work with everybody in between. You need to. You need to have those relationships.

But build a relationship at the top as well as throughout the program. And put it on the table what you see with your fathers and what you're prepared to do in an partnership what you can bring to the table that would be my advice.

Patrick Patterson:

Excellent. Excellent well thank you so much Vicki. Your championing this effort is - we just appreciate it.

It's been an issue that for fatherhood the fatherhood field for the last 15, 20 years this has been a real serious matter.

And I just want to thank you for joining us today but also for giving of your time and sharing what you see at the Division for Child Support. So thanks so much.

Vicki Turetsky:

You're absolutely welcome. I'm happy to do it.

Patrick Patterson:

Okay. All right well with that I'll transition to our next presenter. Michael Hayes many of you if you've traveled the country if you've been to Texas for sure you've seen or heard of Michael as he's been doing this work for a number of years.

Michael Hayes is Deputy for Family Initiatives in the Child Support Division of the Texas Office of the Internal General OAG where he leads a multidisciplinary team of project developers, curriculum designers, program specialists, educators, and attorneys working to implement a family centered approach to child support.

His work in child support includes the development of statewide prevention education program and for teens, perinatal family support serve as intervention for unmarried couples, court workforce child support collaborations to help unemployed NCP's noncustodial parents, find work and pay child support, enhanced child support and parenting legal resources for military and veteran families, and co-parenting resources for couples in the child support system, and family violence collaborations to help survivors of inter partner violence access to child support system safely.

That's a lot Michael. That's a lot.

Immediately prior to his work with the OAG Michael helped create and was Director of the Texas Fragile Families Initiative.

A statewide initiative bringing together more than 30 private foundations, multiple state agencies, and community and faith based organizations in 12 sites across Texas to support fragile families. With that I give you Michael Hayes. Michael?

Michael Hayes:

Thank you Patrick very much for that nice intro. I really love presenting with Vicki or following Vicki because she does lay out a challenge for us in the state Child Support Programs to kind of grow in what we do.

And my presentation is going to try to build on Vicki's advice about how to make that connection with a state child support program or county child support program.

To set the stage though I want to give you the listeners, the participants in the Webinar a little bit of my background and why I think I have a helpful - may have a helpful perspective on how to make connections from a local responsible fatherhood program perspective connecting with a state or county child support agency.

So my first kind of work in responsible father dates back about 15 years to when a time when I was working with a young father's group in the juvenile justice setting.

And at the time all I knew about child support was that I paid it. And that my one kind of face to face contact with my local County Child Support Agency was when I was changing jobs and I was having to figure out where my child support payment was supposed to be sent.

And I went down to the office and I asked to speak to someone about kind of where I needed to send my payment.

And there was like this kind of oh well, you know, you sit right here and don't move and we'll get somebody to come out and talk with you.

And then somebody else came out and said now what's the problem? And I said well just I'm trying to figure out where I'm supposed to be sending my payments.

And then somebody else came back out and said oh I need - I understand you need to talk to a child support officer. So come back here back to my desk and, you know, so what's the problem? It was like there's not a problem. I just need to figure out where I'm supposed to send my child support.

And he's like well that's all? I said yes.

And it was real - I was really struck by the sense that when I showed up I was kind of like an immediate kind of suspect or a problem in that setting.

And so that was where - that was my experience of child support more than 15 years ago.

And then as I was as a practitioner working with this group of young fathers and I had the opportunity to go through a training The Fatherhood development Curriculum Training that was at that point being led by folks from public, private ventures who done the Young Unwed Fathers Pilot Project and then it transformed into the Ford Foundation Strengthening Gradual Families Initiative.

But I went through that training. And one of the things that came up in that training was you need to learn to work with your local child support agency.

And I was - I will tell you that I was at that point pretty much skeptical about that idea of how you would work as a practitioner with young fathers or with any fathers with your local child support agency.

Then I went to work on that Strengthening Gradual Families Project and as Patrick said did the Texas Gradual Families Project. And we reached out to the state child support program. And we did just what Vicki said. We went to the top. And we went to the director of the state program and described what we were trying to do.

And that - we were welcomed at that point and started to make that connection and it really for me started to be driven home the why it made sense.

Because as we worked with the fathers in our programs and our 12 sites across the state one of the issues that was kind of like a, you know, it just stopped us in our tracks was if there was a child support problem because you can't, you know, I think as Vicki identified you can't go back and forgive a lot of the debt that was legally established.

You know, it's - the courts and federal law won't let you go back and retroactively change certain things.

And so it - we really started to see this issue where you've got to get it right like at the beginning and you've got a deal with it because the longer you don't deal with it the deeper you get into a situation that is sometimes it feels insurmountable if it doesn't - if it isn't actually insurmountable.

So that's the background that I bring into thinking about this.

And so I put myself in my shoes 15 years ago when I was first starting to reach out to child support and thinking about what it is that a responsible fatherhood practitioner needs to know about child support.

And so that's if we go to my next slide I thought about in fact titling this slide kind of what makes child support tick? Because I think from a practitioner's perspective you need to know what's driving our business, driving our work with families.

And the first thing is the federal authorizing statute. And Vicki diagram, her bubble chart if you remember there were four things were kind of like as our child support core purposes.

And those are locating absent parents, establishing paternity or legal fatherhood, establish enforcing and modifying child support orders and then collecting and distributing support.

And while that's our purpose under the federal statute, the federal authorizing statute for child support programs it's even more important to understand that unlike most public programs child-support actually gets incentive payments.

We get, kind of there's additional funds that the federal government gives to child support agencies based upon their performance on a certain set of child support performance measures.

So we are very performance driven. And it's not just a pat on the back hey, you've done a good job. It's a this is part of your funding for what you do as a state program.

So I think that's an important lens to have because like for instance here in Texas each of our local offices, they have goals that are set that are part of the federal performance standards.

And each worker in the office has goals based upon those federal performance standards.

So know that that's one of the things that's always on the back of the mind of somebody working in this in the child support agency.

And that links to the second thing I think you need to know. And that is in the child support program we are managing really large caseloads. And I think managing is putting it politely or putting it nicely.

I mean we're kind of - I think most programs are in a certain amount of crisis managing mode. For instance in Texas I don't know, you know, working at a fatherhood room I remember we used to talk about oh, you know, caseload of between 25 and 60 fathers or something like that that's probably a reasonable caseload as you're working with it.

Well our child support staff, we have more than 700 child support cases per staff in our field offices. And the metaphor I heard one of our - one of my colleagues whose over our field operations use the other day that I thought was really apt was that when your cup is running over anything you add to that cup it just goes over the lip that much more.

So when you're - when it comes time to reaching out to your local child support or your state child support leadership for you as a practitioner that they are working just as fast as they can to get their cases managed, to - a - and they're already kind of maxed out.

Another thing is is that it's important to know that the bottom line matters and that child support staff are very pragmatic.

I remember in those early days when we made this outreach charts the child support director we put together a statewide meeting with the leaders, the regional directors and our state office directors.

And we came in to talk to them about working with fathers, this kind of idea that, you know, not all fathers are deadbeats, many of them really want to provide support to their kids. Here's this initiative were launching to help them be more able to provide support to the kids. And we had this whole day and a half long meeting.

And, you know, kind of at the end of it one of those regional leaders said so when are you going to tell us what we're supposed to do or what you need us to do? You talked about, a lot about ideas but we're, you know, so what are we supposed to do?

And that, you know, I do think there's a certain amount of being really clear about what this means in practical terms when it comes to building a partnership between responsible fatherhood programs and the state child support program.

Another thing is that, you know, we've all heard the 80/20 rule of business. I don't think that's quite apt for child support. But I do think it's important to note that - and this comes back to what Vicki said in talking about low income fathers, low income noncustodial parents having about 70% of the debt, 70% of the child support arrears and that 25% of noncustodial families are poor.

I do think it's - it is the - accurate to say that about 30% of our child support caseload takes about 70% of the child support staff's time and impacts our workload.

And I want you to remember that because I think that's an opportunity for responsible fatherhood programs.

And I think the other thing you need to know at the very bottom line is our child support staff, they do this because they care about children and families.

Our child support staff what drives them isn't oh I'm going to get, you know, 73 more legal filings done today. That is not what makes them tick.

And in fact I was having dinner with a friend of one of our call center staff who said oh I was just meeting with them today. And she talks about how she loves her job at the call center. So I'm thinking the call center? Oh that's the hardest work.

But she loves it because she goes if I feel like I make a difference in families lives. And so I think that's an important thing to remember as you reach out to us.

So if you go to the next slide I'm just going to highlight the things I think of from my perspective as a fatherhood program that fatherhood programs bring to this partnership. So if we could go to the next slide.

The first thing is you all have an ability to reach distressful and disconnected parents. They've had bad experiences with our system, with our - with child support. They don't trust us. They've heard about stings. They've, you know, all that kind of stuff.

And so for those fathers, those Knoxville parents that you're working with, you have this ability to connect to them.

I think another thing is you focus on empowering and motivating. And they - if they've had a hard time negotiating the child-support system they need somebody else out there kind of helping empower and motivate them.

And that's linked to the next thing which is I think you - because you've come to this from a strength based approach in child support we tend to react to people who are failing.

And that can be - that can kind of jade our perspective on families. And so - and on noncustodial parents in particular.

And the fact that you come to this from a strict based approach can help us kind of get re-grounded in the fact that the parents want to do the right thing for the kids, they want to be good parents, that they're doing things that actually are responsible. And we sometimes will overlook because it doesn't fit within our, kind of our lens of what a parent does.

And quite frankly what rises to our attention are those parents that aren't failing that are being strong.

I think another thing you bring is your training capacity, your ability to do training and equipping of parents.

And then finally, you know, you bring the fact that you care about children and families. There's this nice common ground for working with child support.

If we go to the next slide I think the key for you is to frame your strengths in terms of child support in child support terms.

So for instance we have this shared commitment to children and families.

And that's an important place to start when you reach out to your state child support director. And that's a different place to start from than a prospect that says I'm here because you all are horrible to fathers and we need to represent them. That's a very different starting point.

Now it may be that by working with your state child support agency - I will say not maybe, it will be that by working with your state or local child support agency it will improve father's experiences and their access to justice.

But if you start with I'm here because I care about children and families that's a common ground point for your local child support and your state child support program.

I think another way you frame your strengths as a practitioner is that you have the ability to help with the 20% or the 30% of our caseload, that ability to reach the distrustful, reach the disconnected, your training capacity, your ability to perhaps help us work some of those cases.

Another is any kind of consumer education and parent education, busting myths about child-support, busting myths about paternity establishment.

I can remember, you know, like the guys would say oh well, you know, I don't need to sign this paperwork that says I'm the dad because I know I'm the dad.

Well there was this myth around, you know, that the paper didn't mean anything. But then when it came time for that young man to try to get access to spend time with his kids when the mother was saying oh no, you know, we've broken up and I don't like your new girlfriend or you don't like my new boyfriend my boyfriend doesn't like you around he realizes that all of a sudden he has no legal access to his kids because he hadn't yet established paternity and so there's this idea of you all being able to help be a myth buster.

And in the final kind of strength I think you have is - or a strength I think you should frame well is your ability to be kind of this navigator and/or ambassador for public systems.

We're complicated, there's all kinds of stuff going on. And so your knowledge of the system can be used to help your clients, the participants in your program navigate child support.

There are a couple of deal killers that I want to highlight briefly if we go to that next slide. And this is where - and these words deal killers, all things that I was guilty of my first when we were - when I was working with young fathers because my first instinct was to collude with the fathers to avoid child support. It was like man I've been down to that child support office. You don't want to deal with those folks. They were - you know, I'm paying my support and they were ugly to me.

But that is - it may be short term feel good, long term it's going to be a deal killer so really being clear that there's not collusion with fathers.

I think anything that sounds like anti-CP or anti-custodial parent language. And in our work that's anti-mother language like oh she just wants the money for this or all you do is care about mothers or all, got a be careful about that.

I think the third is and all you care about is the money kind of approach to child support. Because was that does is it discounts the fact that the majority of child support staff that's not what they care about. They care about kids. It's just that our job happens to be collecting and distributing money. And that's doing our job.

So don't be - don't misinterpret the fact that most of our work is focused on money to mean that that's all child support cares about.

And then the final thing is kind of this idea of passivity. It's like well if child support really wants to work with me they'll reach out to me.

Remember 700 cases per caseworker. Our cup's running over. It's important for you to do the outreach to child support.

So I just want to inclosing give you an example of success from our work in Texas.

And it's kind of at multiple levels. One is kind of this county level in Tarrant County which is where it's the county that Fort Worth is located in.

There is a coalition that that is worked closely with their - the regional and our child support offices that's led to funding, special funding to that county, child support grants that funded workforce services.

It's led to expanded community organization training, so a lot of training that our programs provided to them, resources.

And as the final bullet is is this kind of idea of being co-applicants on grant funded projects.

Right now Tarrant County has multiple grant funded projects that are in part due to the partnership between the county coalition and the child support program.

At a community-based level the St. Angelo Healthy Families Program which is a program that works with mothers and fathers, newborns and their children and one of the things the staff there has done is they've all got been trained to do paternity establishment.

So they can kind of be that navigator for their parents. And they've also because they've built this relationship with their local child support office they oftentimes accompany parents into the child support office. They - or the staff office knows them. They allow them to sit in as we're explaining things so that they can then be kind of the interpreter to the parent if need be.

And in St. Angelo we've been co-applicants on grant funded projects over the last almost ten years with the Financial Healthy Families Program with the state child support program and the local office.

And then finally in Texas are federal access and visitation, so as co-parenting funds run through the state child support agency.

And two of our projects that we fund, one is the New Day Family Services in Fort Worth which has the FOCUS which stands for Fathers Offering Children Unveiling Support program.

We helped develop the curriculum with them. They provide these resources to fathers who are having trouble seeing their kids. They're also having trouble complying with child support. So it's a nice combination of resources to help them kind of get to a better spot in their parenting.

And then in Houston Escape Family Resources has a Dad's Count program which is a - once again it's one of these kind of parenting education programs but it's funded through our access and visitation plans. And that's the- so a very clear connection between a local community organization and the state child support program.

So with that I'm going to wrap it up because I want to hear from Cedric.

Patrick Patterson:

Good afternoon. Again thank you -- awesome presentation. A couple things I noted Michael while you're talking, one is your personal testimony. I thought that was powerful.

The stat you gave which was 30% of child support caseload takes about 70% of staff time I thought was an interesting approach to think about how you guys are moving your office.

But also I think you're affirming statement, you know, supporting Vicki's comment that the child support staff do want to see this work is also something that is probably not shared publicly enough so all of three of those things are appreciative comments.

I'm going to introduce our last speaker Cedric Petteway. Cedric, known him for a number of years, works in program in the Fatherhood in Baltimore, probably one of the best programs in the country.

But he's going to bring up the rear with a ((inaudible)) perspective as he serves as the liaison for child support with the Center for Urban Families Fatherhood program.

Cedric Petteway is the epitome of second chances. And I'm reading the bio that he shared with me.

After completing an eight year sentence in the Baltimore City Correctional System Cedric came out with a new mentality and outlook on life.

Well incarcerated Cedric received a number of professional certifications. He was then released to a to a pre-released minimal security facility in Baltimore, Maryland where he failed at every opportunity given to him.

He was placed at a part-time job at McDonald's. Only making minimum wage Petteway's persistence and determination grew stronger. He knew that he had been given a second chance. It was time to make the best of it.

After staying employed with McDonald's for one year Cedric resigned and enrolled in the Strive program, a three-week intense job readiness and attitudinal training program an initiative of the Center for Urban Families in Baltimore that he had heard about from friends.

Cedric excelled in the Strive training room. He was voted Manager of the Class for the entire three weeks.

After completing the Strive program Cedric was referred to the Baltimore Convention Center for employment. With already acquired skills and the skills he learned from strive Cedric secured the position.

Due to his hard work and dedication he was promoted as a manager within six months of his start date.

In addition to working as manager for the Baltimore Convention Center, Cedric secured a position as Office Intern at the organization that gave him the skills needed to be a successful productive citizen, the Center for Urban Families.

After interning at CFUS for three consecutive terms Cedric was hired as a full-time responsible Fatherhood Specialist with the Baltimore Responsible Fatherhood Project at the Center for Urban Families.

Cedric's role as Fatherhood Specialist includes client intake and case management, collaborating with the Baltimore City Department of Social Services and Child Support Enforcement Offices conducting father focused employment and parenting workshops working in conjunction with workforce development specialists to ensure

job placement for program participants, conducting orientation sessions regarding the Center for Urban Family Services to prospective clients and key community stakeholders and providing additional services to clients at the center for urban families.

Currently Cedric is enrolled in college pursuing a degree in business administration. When asked what is your favorite part about working in human services Cedric responds I do this work for the men who have a lot of talent and potential but just need a strong network of people to help them tap into that potential and get on the right track -- strong quote.

Cedric is dedicated to helping others and wants to continue to work as a Father Specialist with the Center for Urban Families to give second chances and to organizations that are providing him with a second chance. With that I bring you Cedric Petteway. Cedric?

Cedric Petteway:

Good afternoon family and friends. I first like to thank Mr. Patterson for that warm introduction and secondly my two teammates Vicky Turetsky and Michael Hayes for brilliantly setting the tone for me to be able to articulate those type of strategies forged between the Baltimore Responsible Fatherhood Project and the Baltimore Office of Child Support Enforcement. You can forward to the next slide for me please.

This is me in the center doing street outreach in one of Baltimore's most impoverished neighborhoods where dads are apprehensive about opening up their closet of issues to possibly get diagnosed.

The key strategies that I've used to hammer down the wall of apprehensiveness are one, my ability to relate to the social issues that plagued these dads.

I speak to incarceration. I speak to healthy relationships. I speak to job readiness and employability. And most of all I speak to child support.

My second strategy which is an innate gift is my ability to activate my interpersonal skills when speaking with dads for the first time laying out at comfortable forum for these dads to articulate themselves.

Now let's take a look at this last bullet, the baggage factor.

Everyone comes with baggage, all right. I'm passionate when I engage dads for the first time offering solutions in a comfortable place where dads can come and unpack their baggage.

Now we all know right that these dads come with loads of baggage -- criminal backgrounds, minimal communication skills, minimal workplace etiquette and multiple child support cases just to name a few. You can forward to the next slide for me please.

When I introduced the services of Baltimore Responsible Fatherhood Project that troubleshoot the issues that these dads bring to this initial meeting dads are comfortable with unpacking their issues with our program specifically because of how I approach them activating my interpersonal skills which in turn is just a friendly knock at their door of issues asking if I could come in and have a conversation.

When dads in Baltimore City enroll in our Fatherhood program they get an opportunity to meet key people who support the efforts that they are making to better themselves.



In the picture to your left you'll see Benjamin Segal of the Obama administration. You'll also see Sean Dove, Manager of the Campaign for Black Male Achievement and (Jarrell Hammond), one of our responsible fathers competing in a diaper changing contest.

This is an exercise that we do in our fatherhood and healthy relationship module. This exercise awakens the nurturing side of our dads.

We use artificial doll, simulated baby feces, cloth diapers, real safety pins, baby wipes and baby powder.

To the right you'll see an intergenerational mix of dads. This is the Baltimore Responsible Fatherhood Project.

The four key objectives that we address throughout our four month cohort model are improving our acquisition and demonstration of parenting skills, increasing healthy related relationships and marriage readiness, increasing client job readiness and employability and increasing current child support payments.

Now I want to talk a little bit about the history of the Baltimore Responsible Fatherhood Project and its relationship with the Baltimore Office of Child Support Enforcement which is a relationship that's a little bit over a decade old.

My CEO, Joe Jones informed me about a week ago -- and I'm paraphrasing -- he said every time there has been executive shift at the head of the Baltimore Office of Child Support Enforcement he makes an effort to reach out, meet with and magnified the similarities and differences of the executive heads specifically because it's better for fatherhood practitioners to reach out to their states executive director of Child Support Enforcement and know that your thoughts are not aligned than to never reach out at all, never receiving confirmation that there could be a relief for your dads or if rigid enforcement will continue.

You can click to the next slide for me please.

I had an opportunity in 2012 to further nurture this decade old relationship by partnering with personnel from the Maryland Department of Human Resources Policy Studies Inc. in Baltimore City and Columbia University Center for Research on Fathers, Children and Family Well-being.

It was with my involvement in this grant where the foundation was laid for me to understand this quote. A strategy without metrics is just a wish and metrics that are not aligned with strategy are a waste of time.

Fatherhood practitioners, okay I'm talking to you specifically now. There has to be an algorithm in place that will begin to troubleshoot the issues of our noncustodial dads.

Metrics and strategy go together like a husband and a wife. A husband and a wife can copulate and produce a beautiful baby boy or baby girl. When metrics and strategy intertwine for the betterment of the dad to be served we then have a success story which in turn positively impacts our community.

Some of the issues that are brought to the Baltimore Responsible Fatherhood Project, and you can forward to the next slide for me please.

Yes, okay, some of our dads didn't graduate from high school. They also haven't obtained a general equivalency diploma. This has led to little or no work experience which takes us to our second bullet, dads having poor soft and hard skills.

If this problem isn't addressed at its core the dads that we serve will continue living lethargically unable to compete in the labor market which in turn leads to all sort of criminal activities.

A lot of the dads we serve live in poverty. And my street outreach efforts are in impoverished neighborhoods.

It's at this initial meeting where I learn that these dads' experiences with child support and other public agencies are like walking in a minefield. So there's a low, a low level of trust with public institutions.

But if you can activate your interpersonal skills at this initial meeting offering dads a comfortable place to unpack their baggage -- and you can forward to the next slide for me please -- then and only then are these dads ready to be infused.

This is me conducting a child support workshop for Talbert and Montgomery Counties. These dads came to this child support workshop with their backpack full of concerns, their significant others and their children.

I carefully disseminated the importance of noncustodial dad's relationship with their local programs. Local programs partnership with their State Office of Child Support Enforcement and the State Office of Child Support Enforcement partnerships with their federal child support leaders.

Breaking down the child support verbiage, putting it in a language easy for dads to comprehend is vital. You can forward to the next slide for me please.

This is the Baltimore Responsible Fatherhood Project Child Support Workshop held at our home office.

Facilitating the workshop on the level the dads can understand is (Jim Gratinger), Site Manager for the Baltimore Office of Child Support, Ms. (Calore West), Program Coordinator for the Payment Incentive Program and her assistant.

This is the most attended workshop that we have out of the four throughout our four month cohort model.

This partnership is the result of our CEO, Joe Jones reaching out to state and federal child support heads magnifying the differences and similarities conveying pertinent information back to his fatherhood staff so that we continue to be the GPS system needed to help our noncustodial dads carefully navigate to public institutions and achieve family stability and economic success. You can forward to the next slide for me please.

Okay, tips for dads and fatherhood practitioners. Okay first I want to address the dads.

Check with your local child support office for enrollment in eChild Support which can help dads monitor, track and make payments.

There is a benefit to enrolling in eChild Support which is one of the electronic portals here in Baltimore that are used to help dads when they get employed through the Baltimore Responsible Fatherhood Project keep track of their child support payments.

And one of the beautiful things about eChild Support that we were able to track last year at the Baltimore Responsible for Fatherhood Project, these numbers right here, we enrolled 112 dads last year in the Baltimore Responsible Fatherhood Project. We successfully graduated 47 right?

And with the help of eChild Support 23 to 47 dads who successfully graduated out of the program came in unemployed.

Once they completed the Responsible Fatherhood Program and through our workforce development training they wind up obtaining employment.

And according to last year's numbers these dads collectively have contributed over \$67,000 to child support.

And that's one of the benefits programmatically from eChild Support. The system can help dads keep track of their payments.

Like (Matt) was talking about his first interaction with child support, you know, he was going down to the child support office trying to figure out where does he send his child support. Guess what (Matt) you're going to stay home now. You ain't got to go to child support now.

And moving onto the next bullet, the payment incentive program, this program is a - is designed to encourage noncustodial parents to consistently make payments for the first 12 months.

And they will receive 50% of their stakeholder (Res) abolished, 50% of their stakeholder rate will get abolished.

And if they continue for an additional 12 months with enrollment into this payment incentive program 100% of their stakeholder (Res) will be completely abolished.

This will also enable obligors to have driver's license reinstated in addition to possibly arranging a payment plan. Let me give you an example, a tangible example.

Sometimes we get dads who they secure employment with employers who need their employees to have a driver's license.

So these dads, you know, they'll hit the (grind). And this payment incentive program, one of the requirements is that you have to have two recent pay stubs in order to enroll. That's one of the requirements.

And a lot of the dads they come through fatherhood program once they get the two payment stubs, you know, we can tap into our connections down at the payment incentive program and get these dads to negotiate a payment plan and get their license reinstated. And they can get back on the road and being mobilized toward family stability and economic success.

That's one of the benefits of enrolling in this payment incentive program besides getting an astronomical a (Res) reduced significantly.

Okay I want to talk with fatherhood practitioners.

You should always have a relationship with your local child support office personnel. This is vital specifically because child support personnel are likely to be less rigid with their enforcement tactics regarding your clients.

But you have to establish that relationship. That's pivotal. You have to establish this relationship with your local child support personnel.

If they see that your clients are doing as best that they could possibly do to better their situation I assure you that these personnel child support officers will be less rigid on them versus an individual who's not trying to do anything to benefit the child.



Moving on to the last bullet, another important, important tip, invite your local child support office personnel to your place so they can facilitate a workshop for your clients regarding all aspects of enforcement so that they can better manage their child support cases.

This debunks myths of child-support as an adversary by providing dad's firsthand information. Dads will be more willing to address and communicate with child support because their relationship that you develop and they trust you. And dads overall knowledge and understanding will be enhanced. It will be enhanced.

Now in concluding I want to tell you a story real fast. And it actually ties into one of the five evidence-based tools to increase regular payments that Ms. Turetsky talked about, parenting time.

So listen real quick. I'm going to be real quick. So at daughter is sitting on the end of her bed. She has \$4 under her pillow. Her dad is at the dining room table prioritizing the bills for the month.

She walks out to the dining room table to her dad she says dad can I have \$10? Her father says what do you need \$10 for? And she just hung her head sadly and just slowly walked back into her room and sat on the side of her bed.

Three minutes later the dad walks in. Baby I'm sorry. Here's the \$10. The daughter is illuminated. The dad is illuminated. The dad leaves off the room, goes back to the dining room table prioritizing his bills for the month. The daughter reaches under the pillow, grabs the \$4, adds it with the \$10. She has \$14.

She goes back to the dining table to her father. She says dad can I ask you a question? He says what now? She said dad I have this \$14. I know you make \$14 an hour on your job. I just wanted to know could I buy an hour of your time?

The moral of the story is spend a little bit more time with her children.

You can forward to the next slide for me please. And I thank you all for giving me an opportunity to share.

Patrick Patterson:

Thank you Cedric.

Cedric Petteway:

Thank you sir.

Patrick Patterson:

I think you ((inaudible)) this throughout your presentation you shared your passion but also just your experience but also gave some real practical tips around how practitioners can partner with child support.

And I think you added a human element to you've got to treat people a certain way if you want to get the something back for your clients. And so that's very important.

Cedric Petteway:

Absolutely, absolutely.

Patrick Patterson:

We've got about ten minutes. So I want to give at least a couple of questions to both you and Michael. And I'll start with a question for you Michael. It's a similar question that I asked Vicki. You are on the state level. And I

think for a lot of these folks the first place they'll go is either local or county government and in some cases state government.

What's your advice for listeners on the line around working with state child support?

Michael Hayes:

Patrick I think Cedric highlighted this as did Vicki and ((inaudible)). And that is want to find out who that person is.

I would say find out if, you know, there are kind of two ways that states run their child support programs. You have state run and administered programs which is like which is what we have in Texas where we have our state office. We have 65 local offices but they still all answer to our state office in one way or another.

In some states you have a state administrative office but at each county there is a child support director in that county and they really kind of run the show in their county.

So one is to find out what - which system you're in so you'll know who you're going to talk to because if you were in Texas and you went to the office manager of one of our local offices and said we want to partner with you and do this work they would probably say well I need to talk to somebody at state office to figure out what's going on, so just that's important for (Stefan).

And I think the second thing is to reiterate what I said in my slide, start with what you have in common. We are - we want to reach out to you in child support because we care about children and families and not with necessarily what your differences are.

Patrick Patterson:

Excellent. Cedric question for you, how much have you or your team members had to learn child - I'm sorry, family court as you're working with child support?

Cedric Petteway:

Say again?

Patrick Patterson:

How much have you had to learn about family court as you're helping fathers deal with child support and what have you done around that?

Cedric Petteway:

Oh man that's a key element that a lot of the father and staff have had to learn. And some of the work that we've done around that is not too long ago -- a few years back -- I had two teammates (Eddie White) and (Eddie Pitchford).

And they were actually sit in in family court and actually be like an advocate or a support system for dads who are like on their last limbs.

And they were in a - this was a contempt case. And it was either go to jail or enter into this fatherhood program.

And those were one of the avenues that Mr. Jones opened up for fatherhood staff to possibly grab a noncustodial dad and introduce them to the objectives that we highlight here in the bottom of responsible fatherhood program before the end up in a jail cell and come back home in the same position that they were in before they got sentenced.



Patrick Patterson:

Excellent, excellent. Another question for you Cedric. How would you advise practitioners who have fathers who come back with, you know, the story this they've encountered a person was not as nice as that child support? How would you advise them as that father to go back to child support?

Cedric Petteway:

Well one of the key things that I do when a lot of the dads experienced a negative child support personnel, you know, I call the child support myself with them right there right, so that they can hear me navigate the conversation right?

When they hear me navigate the conversation and when I navigate the conversation it empowers them to take control of their own lives because I talked about breaking down the child support verbiage so that dads can understand it right?

Patrick Patterson:

Right.

Cedric Petteway:

A lot of these dads, they don't have the communication skills to fend for themselves.

So when they come back because, you know, they couldn't articulate themselves correctly and they just got, you know, just all kind of - kinds of negative vibes when they went down to child support, you know, that's because, you know, they didn't have information that they needed to defend themselves down there.

So when I get on the phone and they hear me navigate that conversation right, that empowers them to navigate their own conversations from that point forward.

So I would encourage our fatherhood practitioners to let your fathers see how you do it right? Give them an example of how you do it. Set the example, set the standard for them so that they can start empowering themselves through the information that you disseminate. That's what I would give them.

Patrick Patterson:

So you role model that. That's the key.

Cedric Petteway:

Absolutely.

Patrick Patterson:

That's a key point.

One last question. This is for you Michael then we're going to get ready to close out. I'm reading specifically from a question that came in.

President Obama said in a speech in Chicago in February that we should reform our child support law to get more men working and engage with their children.

Are you aware of any specific legislation that is currently considered to reform our child support laws at either the federal or state levels? I'll read it real quickly again.



President Obama said in a speech in Chicago in February that we should reform our child support laws to get more men working and engaged with their children.

Are you aware of any specific legislation that's currently being considered to reform our child support laws at the federal or state levels?

Michael Hayes:

Okay so legislation I think is yet to be developed. I do know that, you know, when Vicki was - when Commissioner Turetsky was talking about the proposed rule one of the things that this current administration is doing is looking at how they came through rule encourage states or push states towards expanding employment services for noncustodial parents.

They've also as Vicki said, you know they are - one of their initiatives are - is this big noncustodial parent employment project, the (CSPED) project which is a random assignment evaluation project.

And one of the goals of that project is to demonstrate to Congress that these child support led noncustodial parent employment programs are effective child support strategy that can be used by members of Congress who are interested in this to change the law and expand the availability of funds for employment services. But they're trying to create this evidence base to kind of lay the foundation for that legislative change.

So there's rule change going on at the federal level right now that's pushing states towards expanding employment services. I don't know of any state legislation that's doing that. And then there is this research project that's being implemented to lay the foundation for federal legislative change.

Do you want to give out any last minute Web sites Michael and Cedric that people might go to to track whether it be research or information besides fatherhood.gov, any other resources that you guys want to share with folks?

Cedric Petteway:

Sure. I definitely would like to share. Our company is center for urban family particularly our Practitioners Leadership Institute Training and Technical Assistance module.

If any of the fatherhood practitioners listening - are listening if you would - I would encourage you to find out about our Practitioners Leadership Institute because there are a lot of relevant legislations that we deal with in this practice leadership about training and technical assistance as well as we have four curriculum - four curriculums that we are teaching in this Practice and Leadership Institute to help our fatherhood practitioners better enhance the quality of their fatherhood programs.

Patrick Patterson:

Excellent, Michael?

Michael Hayes:

And I would just say to one of the great places to start is to go to your state child support Web site and, you know, read everything you can there about the way they do business, the information that they're putting out, who are the people to talk to. That's a good place to start.

Patrick Patterson:

Excellent.



Well I want to thank all three of our speakers. We've had really, really, really good questions that came in. And Jen mentioned earlier we're going to take the questions that were answered, do a summary of responses but also many of those that were not answered we're going to circle back with our speakers to provide questions that we consider a frequently asked question document that we posted on our Web site.

I want to thank specifically Vicky Turetsky, our Commissioner of Child Support for her excellent presentation and giving her time.

I want to thank my long-time friend and colleague, one of the first guys I met 15 years ago or so during this work, Michael Hayes for his time but also sharing his perspective as well and then last but not least Cedric Petteway for giving us a real perspective on the ground and day to day in terms of working with community park programs and connecting fathers and families to child support in a meaningful way.

Our next set of slides for audience are going to give us feedback on what you thought about today's Webinar.

We have four poll questions that we're going to pose to you guys. You can vote just like you would any other voting situation. Once the screen changes you can't change your vote.

So I'm going to just highlight each question and then we'll move to the next slide.

In general I received good information that I can use in my work with fathers and families? In general I received good information that I can use in my work for fathers and families?

Next question, I learned practical strategies and ideas of ways to help noncustodial fathers understand and manage their child support responsibilities? I learned practical strategies and ideas of ways to help noncustodial fathers understand and manage their child support responsibilities?

Next question, the examples of successful partnerships between fatherhood programs and child support agencies were helpful? The examples of a successful partnership between fatherhood programs and child support agencies were helpful?

Next question, I have a better understanding of child support policies and procedures? I have a better understanding of child support policies and procedures?

Again I want to thank our audience for joining us. This was an enlightening Webinar. We're going to post the materials from our Webinar on fatherhood.gov our Web site.

If you have not, please join us on Facebook and Twitter. Like us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter. And if you were tweeting throughout this Webinar we use the hashtag [#fatherhoodgov](https://twitter.com/fatherhoodgov).

Thanks again to our presenters and we'll talk to you guys during our next Webinar. Think so much.

Operator:

That concludes today's Webinar. We appreciate your participation.

END