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Attorney General for the District of Columbia

# Office of the Attorney General for the District of Columbia

## Child Support Services Division

JUNE 2016



## BIENNIAL REPORT FISCAL YEARS 2015-16



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## Child Support Services Division Mission



To enhance the well-being of children by providing assistance in obtaining support, including financial and medical support, to children by locating parents, establishing paternity, establishing support obligations, and monitoring and enforcing those obligations.



## A Message from the Attorney General

The Child Support Services Division provides critical services to the families of the District of Columbia. We help establish paternity for children, so they know who their parents are and can turn to them for support. We go to court on a daily basis to establish child support orders so that children can be provided for financially and we work with parents to help them find jobs that allow them to be the financial backbone of their families.



I am proud of the work we do and am committed to doing even better. We want to partner with the citizens of the District to ensure we can help you meet the needs of your children.

I invite you to learn more in this report about how the Office of the Attorney General's Child Support Services Division works to serve you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be "K. Racine". The signature is stylized with a large, looping "K" and a smaller "Racine" following it.

Karl Racine  
Attorney General



### BACKGROUND

The Child Support Services Division serves customers at 441 4th Street, N.W., the D.C. Superior Court House and its Domestic Violence Intake Center, the Virginia Williams Family Resource Center on Rhode Island Avenue, N.E., area hospitals, and throughout the community.



#### In the Field

CSSD staff members are in District hospitals to assist parents in signing Acknowledgements of Paternity, the document which affords parents full legal rights and responsibilities of parenthood. CSSD has personnel stationed at Washington Hospital Center, Providence Hospital, United Medical Center, and Howard University Hospital. (CSSD's Montega Ward is pictured here at United Medical Center with Nurse Betty Holman.) CSSD also goes to the D.C. Jail to provide child support services to inmates. In addition, CSSD conducts outreach to schools, festivals, and health fairs to provide information about child support services.



From left to right, Saadiq Abdul-Haqq, Tracey Schick, Carol Jeffries, and Mario Hall.

#### Mobile Van

CSSD's outreach van (pictured to the right) travels throughout the area, including to grocery store parking lots, health fairs, hospitals, and community events, to provide full child support services in the community. The outreach van is equipped with CSSD's automated case information computer system, and most services that can be obtained at 441 4th Street, N.W.—CSSD's main office—can be obtained on the outreach van.

The outreach van travels to one-time events and maintains a steady schedule at certain locations. The first Wednesday of every



month, the van goes to Giant Foods at 1535 Alabama Ave., S.E., Washington, D.C. The third Monday of every month, the van goes to Unity Health Care, 3924 Minnesota Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C.

### State Disbursement Unit

The State Disbursement Unit (SDU), formally known as the D.C. Child Support Clearinghouse, is located in the northeast quadrant of the District. Employers, other states, and non-custodial parents send payments electronically or to the post office boxes designated for their use, and the Clearinghouse disburses the funds to families or to the District. There were 390,481 total SDU transactions in fiscal year 2015.



From left to right, Alanna Smith and Isabella Albert.

### Staff

#### Gallaudet Interns

Two Gallaudet University students (pictured here) interned with CSSD's Intake Unit for an entire academic year. The students were senior social work majors. The two students are deaf, and an interpreter was at CSSD to interpret for customers and other CSSD staff.

The interns updated information into two important databases for CSSD—the District of Columbia Child Support Enforcement System (DCCSES) and the Unwed Births System (UBS). The students underwent extensive training and interviewed customers. They also reviewed Acknowledgements of Paternity, sent out contact letters, entered Social Security Numbers and dates, and updated case notes. Additionally, the students improved CSSD's ability to work with the agency's deaf customers.

#### Long-Serving Staff Member

Mary Floyd with the Intake unit (pictured here), celebrated her 89th birthday in 2016! CSSD threw a "Flash Mob" party for her where her colleagues were informed of the celebration by word of mouth minutes before the party began. (A mass e-mail would have alerted the guest of honor.) Mrs. Floyd's coworkers showed up in great numbers, and Mrs. Floyd also received a birthday greeting from Mayor Muriel Bowser commending her service to the District.



CSSD staff member Mary Floyd celebrated her birthday in style.



### Enhancing Skills

CSSD employees have opportunities to learn the latest national developments in child support by attending conferences. Further, it gives them the opportunity to learn best practices in other states that can be applied in D.C. The CSSD staff pictured here attended the National Child Support Enforcement Association Policy Forum.



From left to right, Shelly Mulkey, Andrea Johnson, Mia Olsen, Justin Latus, and Judith Collister.

### Work Environment



Attorney General **Karl Racine** asks a question to the daughter of a CSSD staff member on Bring Your Child to Work Day.

CSSD staff and management work together to create a productive work environment so that the citizens of the District can be served in the best manner possible.

### Bring Your Child To Work Day

The Office of the Attorney General sponsored a “Bring Your Child To Work Day” for the past two years with presentations from Attorney General Karl Racine. In 2015, Council Member Kenyan McDuffie also presented. In addition, several CSSD staff were able to bring their children to the court room of Magistrate Judge Kenia Seoane Lopez (pictured below holding children).



## Renovated Space

The fifth floor of CSSD was renovated in the fall of 2015. Customers are now able to enjoy an improved experience with the renovated space. For the renovation, over half the staff was temporarily relocated to swing space (pictured here) near the NoMa-Gallaudet U Metro stop on Metro's Red Line in northeast Washington, D.C. On Fridays, management brought in breakfast to thank staff for their patience during the renovation.



Swing space at the Penn Center used by CSSD staff while the headquarters was renovated.

## Awareness Campaigns

CSSD staff have organized awareness campaigns to draw attention to such health issues as heart health and breast cancer. Staff are pictured in red for heart health (below) and in pink for breast cancer.





# YEAR IN REVIEW

## **Benchmarks**

A major yardstick for how the Child Support Services Division (CSSD) performs each year is the total amount of child support collections we bring in. To counter challenges related to the recovering economy, we use all collection tools at our disposal and have honed our business processes.



Annie Hammond does bank matching.

### **Bank Matching**

In fiscal year 2015, CSSD collected \$450,658 through the financial institution data match (FIDM) program. Through the FIDM program, CSSD garnishes money from non-custodial parents' bank accounts to pay child support arrears. For cases with active wage withholding, CSSD seizes funds if the non-custodial parent owes at least \$5,000 and has at least \$2,500 in his or her account. If there is no wage withholding in place, CSSD seizes funds if there is at least twice the monthly current support obligation in the account.

## **Acknowledgments of Paternity**

CSSD is required to establish paternity for 90% of out-of-wedlock births in the District of Columbia. If it fails to do so, the District can face financial penalties in the form of reductions in federal funding for the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program. To meet this challenging requirement, CSSD (1) works to obtain adjudications of paternity in court and (2) offers parents the opportunity to sign an Acknowledgement of Paternity (AOP). An AOP is a document that when signed by both parents establishes them as the legal parents of the child. CSSD staff are stationed in the District's hospitals to assist parents in filling out AOPs. Staff review with parents the rights and responsibilities that go along with signing an AOP. Fiscal year 2015 was the fifth year in a row that CSSD met the 90% paternity establishment requirement.



CSSD staff Javier Rivera is seen working with Ms. Cash of the Washington Hospital Center.

## **Electronic Payments**

CSSD has increased the numbers of payments disbursed electronically to custodial parents and other child support agencies. Loading child support payments to the debit cards of custodial



parents or directly depositing them to bank accounts rather than sending paper checks ensures that the money gets to families even when they move and forget to notify CSSD. In 2015, 77% of payments were disbursed electronically, compared to 56% in 2009 and 25% in 2007.

### Federal Incentives and Penalties

The District received \$796,137 in incentives for CSSD's performance on five federal performance measures in fiscal year 2014 and will likely receive about the same for its performance in fiscal year 2015. For the five-year period of fiscal years 2010 through 2014, CSSD earned \$4,222,066 in incentives. In addition, states and the District must maintain certain performance levels or face penalties. Previously, the D.C.'s Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) grant was cut a total of \$4.2 million because of child support performance problems from 2002-2004. CSSD staff and management engineered a significant turnaround in the agency's performance and as a result CSSD has avoided penalties for the past ten years.

Collections (in millions)	2006	2010	2013	2014	2015
<b>Distributed collections plus collections to other states or tribes</b> (34A Lines 8 + 4b)	\$55.1	\$56.2	\$54.6	\$54.1	\$54.1
<b>Distributed collections</b> ("Box Score" on OCSE website. 34A Line 8)	\$48.4	\$49.9	\$48.1	\$47.4	\$47.3
<b>Total collections</b> (34A Line 2)	\$63.0	\$60.2	\$57.3	\$56.7	\$56.8

### Collections and Federal Performance Measures

Distributed collections (line 8 of OCSE-34A, also shown in the Office of Child Support Enforcement's box scores) were \$47.3 million in 2015. This number has held steady over the last several years. CSSD would like total collections to rise from year to year. However, the economy has reduced non-custodial parents' incomes, which impacts child support collections.

Although CSSD was named the most improved child support program in 2007 by the National Child Support Enforcement Association, CSSD staff were not satisfied to remain at that performance level. In the 10-year period from fiscal year 2006 to 2015, CSSD has shown additional noteworthy gains.

CSSD increased its **percentage of cases with orders** from 45% in FY 2006 to 71% in FY 2015. Child support cannot be collected if an order is not in place, making this measure a critical indicator of CSSD's ability to assist families. In just one year, from FY 2014 to FY 2015, CSSD improved its

Performance Measures	2006	2010	2013	2014	2015
Share of cases with orders	45%	65%	68%	68%	71%
Paternity establishment percentage	78%	88%	90%	90%	90%
Percentage of all current support owed that is paid	53%	58%	61%	62%	62%
Share of cases with arrears owed where payment on arrears was made	42%	50%	53%	55%	55%
Cases	77,651	53,781	51,166	51,222	49,342

performance on this measure by three percentage points, from 68% to 71%. (In 2002, only 30% of cases had orders.)

In FY 2015, CSSD established 2,159 orders, a 6% increase over FY 2014 and a 24% increase over FY 2012. (Line 17 of OCSE-157 report.)

In FY 2015, CSSD met one of its most challenging goals related to the **percentage of out-of-wedlock births for which paternity is established**. To avoid risk of a federal penalty, CSSD had to maintain a level of 90%. CSSD increased its performance on this measure from 78% in FY 2006 to 90% in FYs 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2015.

CSSD also increased the **percentage of current support owed that is paid** from 53% in FY 2006 to 62% in FY 2015. This measure adds up all the current support paid during the year and divides it by all of the current support owed in all cases during the year. The **percentage of cases with arrears for which a payment on arrears was collected** increased from 42% in FY 2006 to 55% in FY 2015.

### Self-Assessment

The federal government requires states to sample cases and determine whether they are meeting timeframes for processing cases.

The table on the opposite page shows CSSD's performance on the self-assessment in 2015. CSSD met the federal minimum on eight out of nine measures.



Euline Davis, Darren Catoe, Olivia Jones, and Eugenie Lucas.

Self-Assessment Measures	Performance in 2015	Federal Minimum
Case closure	99%	90%
Establishment	79%	75%
Enforcement	86%	75%
Disbursement	100%	75%
Medical	95%	75%
Review and adjustment	95%	75%
Interstate	70%	75%
Expedited Process 6-Month	97%	75%
Expedited Process 12-Month	99%	90%

### Data Reliability Audit

To be eligible for incentives on the five performance measures (and to avoid penalties), the District must prove to the federal government that the performance data included on its OCSE-157 report—an annual report card—is reliable. After auditing CSSD's data and checking to make sure that obligation amounts entered into CSSD's case management computer system were backed up by court orders, the federal government notified the Office of the Attorney General that CSSD's fiscal year (FY) 2014 data was reliable for all five performance measures. FY 2014 was the twelfth year in a row that the District passed the data reliability audit on all lines.



From left to right, Valerie Johnson and Margaret Bell.



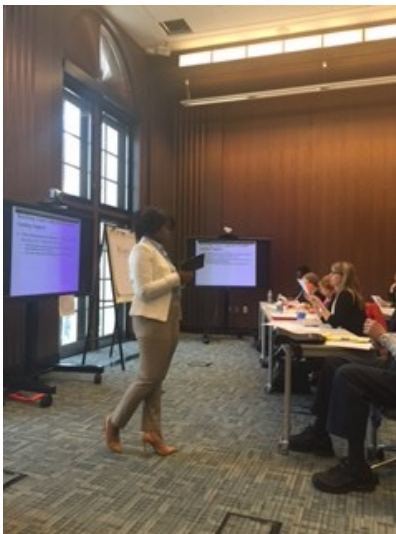
### Outreach

#### **Child Support Awareness Month**

In August 2015, CSSD educated citizens about their rights and responsibilities related to child support and conducted outreach to community-based organizations, including those that serve the homeless. In addition, CSSD gave out scarves and neckties (donated by OAG staff) to mothers and fathers to thank them for their support of their children.



#### **Outreach to Partners**



CSSD could not get its work done without the assistance and hard work of its community partners. CSSD staff reach out to partners, such as the court and hospitals, so they know the latest developments in child support and understand how they assist CSSD in its daily work. Pictured to the left is CSSD staff member Starr Granby-Collins conducting a child support guideline training session to the Superior Court's Family Mediation Program. About 20 court-certified mediators attended. Mediators draft consent agreements and thus it is essential they have a working knowledge of child support guidelines.

Similarly, CSSD conducts an annual paternity conference for its partners in District hospitals who assist CSSD in establishing paternity. At the conference, CSSD shares the latest developments in practices related to the Acknowledgement of Paternity process. CSSD's Harold Johnson is pictured to the right with two Washington Hospital Center staff members at the annual paternity conference.



#### **Outreach to the Community**

Child support can be confusing and complicated. CSSD staff members regularly conduct outreach in the community to dispel myths about child support and answer questions citizens may have. Staff members make presentations to schools, community-based organizations, and



Community outreach manager Angelisa Young.

other government agencies to inform the public about child support.

In fiscal year 2015, CSSD was very engaged with the community. It held outreach events at a provider meeting of the New Heights program for expectant and parenting students, Winter Haven Homeless Stand Down, Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency's (CSOSA) annual women's re-entry symposium, CSOSA/Rivers Community Resource Day, Blair House, Office of Youth Engagement Health and Wellness Team, Strive D.C. Prepared to Work and Determined to Succeed networking event, Latin American Youth Center networking meeting, Career Technical Institute, the Mayor's Office of Returning Citizens, the Health Alliance Network, Edgewood/Brookland Family Support Cooperative, Capitol Hill Pregnancy Center, Far Southeast Family Strengthening Collaborative, MedStar Family Choice city-wide children's health screening fair, Congress Heights Day, MedStar Health Cinco de Mayo Family Fun Day, Men's and Community Health Awareness Day, Annual June Fair in Michigan Park, Health Fair for Men, Community Church of Washington, D.C. Safe Summer Kickoff Health Fair and Block Party, New Heights Summit: Expectant and Parenting Students, Virginia Williams Family Resource Center, Annual Paternity Training Conference, Isle of Patmos Baptist Church, Shepherd Park Family Fun Day, National Night Out, Trusted Health Plan/UMC Back to School Fair, Building Futures, Douglas Knoll Apartments Community Health Day, and MedStar Family Choice Hispanic Heritage Family Fun Day.

In addition, CSSD staff reached out to several D.C. high schools, including Banneker, Anacostia, Ballou, Washington Metropolitan, Roosevelt, Cardozo, and Columbia Heights Education Campus.

At a recent typical outreach event, CSSD staff met with individuals who would be released from prison in 90 days. Staff reminded them of the importance of keeping on top of their child support obligations, and informed them of the CSSD's Fresh Start and Alternative Solutions Center programs that may be able to assist them as they get back on their feet.

## Public Engagement

CSSD strives to make the services it provides meet the needs of today's customers. The agency solicits the input of customers to see how it can provide better information on cases. Based on such suggestions, CSSD is evaluating whether the payment history information it provides to customers can be improved so that customers better understand how much they have paid in child support over the life of the case and how much they still owe.

## **Initiatives**



In addition to Judge Kenia Seoane Lopez, the electronic order design team members included, from left to right, Harold Johnson, Andrea Johnson, Tushar Desai, Benidia Rice, and Joseph Allen.

### **Electronic Orders**

On October 20, 2015, the first electronic child support order was issued out of the courtroom of Magistrate Judge Kenia Seoane Lopez. The order was the first step of a pilot project to replace handwritten orders with electronic ones.

The electronic order is a PDF file that can be filled in and edited. It is pre-populated with information from CSSD's electronic case management system before the court hearing. The judge can view, edit, and sign electronic court orders from his or her bench computer. All parties electronically sign the court order in the courtroom using a stylus and pad. Electronic orders have enhanced legibility—a critical feature, as these orders are used to set up

monthly financial obligations in CSSD's case management system. Improved legibility will mean fewer errors.

### **Revisions to Guideline**

The child support guideline is the formula used to calculate how much a non-custodial parent owes and is based on such factors as each parent's income, other children living in the home, child care expenses, health care expenses, other child support orders, and alimony payments. States and the District of Columbia are required to review their guidelines on a periodic basis and recommend any necessary updates.

Attorney General Karl Racine transmitted to D.C. Council Chairman Phil Mendelson on February 12, 2015, B21-0071, the "Child Support Guideline Revision Act." In his transmittal letter, Mr. Racine noted that the bill would amend D.C. Code Section 16-916.01 to "require military housing and food allowances to count toward income when calculating the amount of child support a parent owes; allow a judicial officer to set a minimum payment amount when there is not enough information to calculate the payment (this typically occurs when the parent owing support is



Guideline Commission  
Chair Cory Chandler.



uncooperative); require a judicial officer to consider the needs of the child and parent owed support . . . [and] increase the minimum monthly child support payment from \$50 to \$75.”

The bill reflects the recommendations of the Child Support Guideline Commission, and a hearing on the bill was held October 8, 2015 before the Committee on the Judiciary. Chief Deputy Attorney General Natalie Ludaway testified on behalf of the Office of the Attorney General. The bill was passed by the Council and signed by the Mayor. It became effective in May 2016.

### Working with the Economic Security Administration

CSSD partners closely with the Department of Human Services Economic Security Administration (ESA), the agency that administers the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program. Applicants for TANF benefits must agree to cooperate with CSSD in establishing paternity and a child support order.

In fiscal year 2015, CSSD worked with ESA to streamline the information-gathering process of TANF recipients to ensure that everything needed to process a child support case is collected. Child support questions are now included as part of ESA's application. CSSD and ESA staff also discussed how to ensure that TANF applicants provide important information regarding the identity and location of non-custodial parents.



Economic Security Administration staff pictured with Child Support Services Division staff.



A session from the Tristate conference.

### Tristate Conference

In October 2015, CSSD sponsored a conference at which over fifty representatives from the District of Columbia, Virginia, and Maryland came together to discuss how to improve interstate case processing. Many of the District's child support cases involve one parent in the District and the other in a neighboring state. As a result, cooperation and communication is key. In addition to

CSSD, participants included representatives from Montgomery, Cecil, Prince George's, Montgomery, Wicomico, and Washington counties in Maryland, and members of Virginia's Central Region Operations and the Northern Virginia office of the Virginia child support agency. Issues discussed included central registries, streamlining enforcement, and CSENet issues. Additionally, participants discussed the reconciliation process, where states compare arrears balances and whether a particular case is opened or closed.

### Order Establishment

One of the most important services provided by the Child Support Services Division is the establishment of child support orders. Without an order, no child support can be collected. In D.C., orders are established at the D.C. Superior Court by a magistrate judge. CSSD's lawyers, called Assistant Attorney Generals, represent the District before the judges. Pictured to the right are members of CSSD's team of attorneys who go to court on a daily basis.



By the time the attorneys appear in court, a lot of work has been done by other members of the CSSD staff, including filling in the necessary details in the petition, locating the non-custodial parent (NCP), and serving the NCP with legal papers to appear in court.

### Behavioral Intervention in Child Support

On September 30, 2014, the Office of the Attorney General for the District of Columbia was awarded \$150,000 from the federal Administration for Children and Families within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services under the 1115 *Behavioral Intervention in Child Support* (BICS) program. With matching funds, first year funding was \$441,176, and five-year funding totaled \$1,147,057.

The program is designed to test behavioral intervention approaches to improve human service outcomes. Previous efforts have examined, for example, how a simpler, better designed letter can increase the likelihood that a non-custodial parent makes payments. Behavioral intervention looks at how reducing the “hassle factor” with government forms and programs can spur individuals to take actions that are in the interests of their families.

As part of this grant, the Child Support Services Division has been paired with a Technical Assistance and Evaluation (TAE) team of outside research experts to design the interventions and ensure they can be evaluated correctly.

In 2015, the TAE team had numerous phone calls with CSSD and visited CSSD twice to map out business processes and to design interventions. CSSD and the TAE team also had an all-day meeting with officials in the Department of Human Services, Economic Services Administration to discuss if the intervention could alter the process for obtaining child support information from Temporary Assistance to Needy Families applicants. An early intervention may focus on obtaining better information about the non-custodial parent from the custodial parent so that more cases can be sent to court to establish an order.



Nicole Reece, supervisor of the BICS project.

## Fresh Start

CSSD's Fresh Start program assists non-custodial parents with inconsistent payment histories to become regular payers or to make lump sum payments on arrears. Parents who fulfill the terms of their Fresh Start agreement to make regular or lump-sum payments receive forgiveness on a share of arrears owed to the government. One non-custodial parent contacted the Director of CSSD to praise the program "so that other people who may have fears associated with facing arrears payments will trust the Child Support Division and a positive end can be accomplished." He noted, "I want to write my support for the program because it helped bring an obligation to a close that had been difficult for years."



Roger Turpin works with the Fresh Start program.

The Center for Policy Research (CPR) evaluated CSSD's Fresh Start program as well as four other state debt compromise programs for the federal Office of

Child Support Enforcement. In its report, CPR writes, "Twenty-four months post-enrollment, the percentage of child support that was paid relative to the amount due increased 32 percent in Washington, D.C., 27 percent in Maryland, 23 percent in California, and 14 percent in Illinois." (*Debt Compromise Programs: Improving Child Support Outcomes*, Center for Policy Research submitted to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, September 2012.)



### Fathering Court

The Fathering Court, a project of the D.C. Superior Court supported by the Child Support Services Division, provides non-custodial parents (NCPs) who are leaving prison the opportunity to get on their feet, find a job, and start paying child support. Participants have the opportunity to obtain job training and other skills that will help them be involved in their children's lives. While the non-custodial parents are participating in the program, CSSD holds back on some of its enforcement efforts to allow the NCPs the chance to become employed and better positioned to support their children.



Magistrate Judge Noel Johnson pictured with Fathering Court graduate. The non-custodial parent graduated in the fall of 2015 and at the time of publication was working full time, visiting his children regularly, and paying child support.

### Alternative Solutions Center

Many of CSSD's non-custodial parents are eager to pay their child support but have no income to do so. CSSD's Alternative Solutions Center connects unemployed non-custodial parents with non-profit organizations that can help them find work.

As part of the Alternative Solutions Center, CSSD has developed a database for staff use with the names and services provided by local organizations that address barriers to NCPs paying off child support, including literacy, mental health, and substance abuse issues. CSSD publishes an electronic newsletter that it shares with the organizations, agencies, and service providers that work with CSSD in providing services to customers. *Inside CSSD* informs stakeholders of the CSSD's outreach schedule, presents an in-depth look at the services provided by various organizations, and shares success stories of non-custodial parents who have found employment.

In January 2016, CSSD launched an application that allows CSSD to assess a person's barriers to employment and refer the person to an appropriate community-based organization through CSSD's case information system. The organization can then update the case information system with details on the person's participation in their program.

### Review and Adjustment of Orders for Incarcerated Parents

When CSSD learns that one of its non-custodial parents becomes incarcerated, it researches to determine whether it is appropriate to file a motion to modify due to incarceration so that arrears do not accumulate during the period of incarceration. For CSSD to take this step, the non-custodial parent must be incarcerated for more than 30 days (and the reason for incarceration

cannot be failure to pay child support), have no assets, and owe current support (i.e., it cannot be a case where only arrears are owed).

### D.C. Jail Outreach

CSSD staff regularly visit the D.C. Jail so that they can offer child support services to incarcerated non-custodial parents. CSSD offers free genetic testing to incarcerated fathers, recognizing that these fathers have little financial resources to pay for genetic tests. (These fathers may want a genetic test before signing an Acknowledgement of



Paternity.) CSSD staff (including Vivian Williams, pictured above sitting with Department of Corrections staff member Betty Green, standing) make regular visits to the D.C. Jail and will make special trips whenever their services are requested or a non-custodial parent has specific questions about his or her case.

### Language Access



CSSD staff member Javier Rivera (left) appeared on Linea Directa to discuss child support.

CSSD provides services to all citizens who seek assistance, including those who are not proficient in English or are limited in their proficiency. CSSD staff members use telephonic interpretive services so that they may interview customers to obtain necessary information no matter what language the customer speaks. CSSD also uses translation services when needed—for example, to translate a birth certificate from El Salvador from Spanish to English. Finally, CSSD has bilingual staff who communicate with customers who are limited- or non-English proficient in person.

In September 2014, CSSD was one of

nine agencies newly designated as having major public contact under the D.C. Language Act of 2004. CSSD has worked with the Office of Human Rights to ensure that it meets its new responsibilities, including writing a Biennial Language Access Plan. CSSD has worked to improve its tracking of the preferred languages of its customers and has retrained staff on language access requirements.

CSSD reaches out to communities for whom English is not the first language to let them know of the services that CSSD provides. For example, CSSD staff shared child support information at a Cinco de Mayo event in Mt. Pleasant and conducted an outreach event at Cardozo High School, which has many limited-English students. CSSD also participated in a Latin American Youth Center networking meeting and conducted outreach at the Hispanic Heritage Family Fun Day.

Furthermore, CSSD's Javier Rivera appeared on the Spanish television program Linea Directa ("Direct Line") on the Telemundo channel. The interview was in Spanish and was an opportunity for Javier to disseminate important information to Spanish speakers about child support services available to all residents of the District of Columbia. Mr. Rivera clarified that all residents are eligible for child support services, regardless of citizenship or legal status.

### **Free Genetic Testing for Minors**

CSSD offers free genetic testing to putative fathers nineteen years of age or younger who have not been established as the father previously and whose name does not appear on the birth certificate.



## SUCCESS STORIES

### Interstate Enforcement

Child support cases often cross state lines, and that requires coordination and cooperation. Without special care these cases can fall through the cracks. CSSD's Matthew LaFratta took that special care for a New Jersey custodial parent whose case was registered in D.C. because the non-custodial parent lived here. Matt executed a property lien, and when the non-custodial parent sold the property, CSSD was able to collect \$44,000 from the proceeds to pay off the arrears on the case. *"Your agency went above and beyond,"* said Betty Robinson, the New Jersey mother. *"Frankly, I didn't expect it. And it happened on my birthday."* See below for Betty's story.



Matt LaFratta



Betty Robinson with her son Adam.

### Support for Adam

My story starts with being totally frustrated. Since 2004, I never received regular child support payments. It was originally ordered to be \$150 per week then went up to \$160 per week.

Whenever there was a child support payment (3-4 times a year), the average payment was approximately \$25-\$35 for that month. This went on for years.

When Mr. Franklin moved from New Jersey to California and then Washington, D.C. without enforcement, I knew he had "beat the system." At that stage, I accepted that there would not be child support for Adam and moved on. I was just thankful that my son and I were healthy and happy being together.

At one point, New Jersey was successful in garnishing an income tax return from Mr. Franklin for a \$1,000 child support collection, but after that, he never filed again. California was never able to collect.

Then came Mr. LaFratta from Washington, D.C. I remember thinking to myself, "This man takes his job seriously." He really cared! (Continued next page)

(From previous page)

He answered every email, returned every phone call (which, in my experience, not all agencies do), shared with me potential strategies, met me at a court hearing in D.C., and then told me about the discovery regarding the property and the lien. That was the win!

The money came at the best time. Adam had just been accepted to the University of Rhode Island. Praise God!

**-Betty Robinson**

### Alternative Solution Center Pays Off

Jamarr Smith is a native Washingtonian who has been paying child support for 5 years. *“I knew it was my duty and responsibility to provide for my son and twin daughters and I had no problem with doing so.”* Mr. Smith entered the Alternative Solutions Center (ASC) (see page 18 for details). Before he entered the employment resource program he worked as a helper to an electrician while struggling to pay his child support obligation. With the help of the Alternative Solutions Center, Mr. Smith was able to gain employment with Keaney Produce Company. Of CSSD staff member Chardonnay Taylor, Mr. Smith says, *“Ms. Taylor was very helpful and enthusiastic during our first meeting.”*

As a truck driver, Mr. Smith delivers produce to various locations through out the Washington D.C. metro area. *“I have been working for about 9 months and I have really enjoyed my experience.”* Mr. Smith also stated that due to his new job he was able to finance his very first car in addition to making timely child support payments.



### New Skills Open New Opportunity

Roderick Dorsey is a native Washingtonian as well and is pleased to pay his child support. *“I knew it was my duty and responsibility to provide for my children and I wanted to do my part as a man.”* Mr. Dorsey entered the Alternative Solutions Center. Before he entered the program he was unemployed for three years and had no way to pay his child support obligation. Due to the help of the Alternative Solutions Center, Mr. Dorsey was able to gain employment with Raine & Son. He describes CSSD staff as being *“very helpful and empowering.”*



As a Plumber Assistant, Mr. Dorsey assists the head plumbers with equipment, measurements, cutting of pipes, and tool collection. *“If I could give any advice to any other non-custodial parents who are thinking about joining the ASC program, I would tell them it’s a great program and to stick with it.”*



### Increased Payments

Audit and Program Management staff (pictured to the left) enter financial obligations into D.C.’s case processing system that reflect court orders that specify amounts to be paid each month toward child support. This case processing system tracks how much is owed and how much is paid each month. Payments made by parents like Mr. Smith and Mr. Dorsey (who were able to get back on track through the assistance of the Alternative Solutions Center) are carefully tracked in the system.



## LOOKING AHEAD

### Performance Measures Fiscal Year 2016

CSSD's goals for fiscal year 2016 are laid out in the chart below.

Performance Measures	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Goal
Share of cases with orders	71%	72%
Paternity establishment percentage	90%	90%
Percentage of all current support owed that is paid	62%	63%
Share of cases with arrears owed where payment on arrears was made	55%	57%
Total collections (34A Line 2)	\$56,759,288	\$58,000,000
Enrollments in Alternative Solutions Center	119	149

### Liens

In FY 2016, CSSD will collect past due child support from insurance payments made to non-custodial parents. These may include payments for worker's compensation or personal injury settlements. The process requires attaching liens and registering them with the Recorder of Deeds and then requesting that the insurance company deduct funds from the settlement to cover child support debt. CSSD published a rule in 2015 that explains the rules governing the lien process, the steps involved, and how a member of the public can appeal CSSD's actions. CSSD has completed the computer programming so it can match its list of non-custodial parents who owe child support with the list of individuals to be paid out insurance settlements. CSSD has also developed the policy that staff will follow in collecting child support from insurance payments and has developed procedures for uploading liens to the Recorder of Deeds website. It has also developed the notice of lien, insurance settlement levy letter, lien notice and right to review, and other forms needed for the process.



Director **Benidia Rice** (holding red umbrella) and **Chris Hart-Wright** (wearing black and white dress) represented CSSD at the Region 3 meeting of state and federal child support officials. (Region 3 includes D.C., Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania.) To Ms. Rice's right in tan skirt is **Vicki Turetsky**, Commissioner of the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement.

### Child Support App for Smart Phones

CSSD strives to make the services it provides meet the needs of today's customers. The agency solicits the input of customers on how it can provide information on cases in an easy-to-use format. In fiscal year 2015, CSSD surveyed customers on their preferences related to a child support application that could be used on smart phones. CSSD asked customers what information would be most useful on the application—whether it be payment information,

court dates, appointments, or other information. CSSD aims to launch the application by the end of calendar year 2016. One feature CSSD will explore is allowing customers to notify CSSD of a change of address by taking a photo of a utility bill or rental agreement via the app.

### Innovative Enforcement Tools

In FY 2016, CSSD is using innovative methods and a multi-pronged approach to increase collections. In addition to liens on insurance settlements, CSSD is working to enter agreements with District banks to match with their account holders so that additional child support can be collected. CSSD will work with the court to increase electronic judgments and orders, which will allow the agency to decrease time needed to enter wage withholding information in CSSD's automated system for new and modified child support orders.

### Alternative Solutions Center at Court

CSSD is exploring working with the D.C. Superior Court so that judges may refer non-custodial parents to obtain employment services through the Alternative Solutions Center. (The Alternative Solutions Center is described in greater detail on page 18.) This would build on CSSD's mission of moving families toward self-sufficiency.

## **A Message from the Director**

We're seeing a turnaround. The economy, hampered by the 2008 recession, is rebounding. Child support collections, which have been down nationwide, are showing signs of stabilizing or even increasing.

This is good news. The needs of the District's children remained the same even during a period when the ability of our non-custodial parents to provide financial support was hampered due to loss of employment and cutbacks in hours. With our non-custodial parents getting back to work, they can provide the support their children need.



We're also working with those non-custodial parents who are still struggling to find employment. We connect them to an array of service providers who can help them meet the challenges of finding work.

We've worked hard in court establishing new orders, and by the end of fiscal year 2015, 71% of our cases had orders. We can't collect support without an order in place, so this is an especially important accomplishment that lays the groundwork for strong collections in the future. As recently as 2006, just 45% of our cases had orders. We've come a long way!

For the cases with orders, in fiscal year 2015 we collected 62% of the current support owed during the year. This is a great improvement over the 2006 level of 53%. We also established paternity for 90% of children born out-of-wedlock for the last five years.

Our work is complicated, technical, and challenging. We deal with customers who are grateful for our services but may be unhappy to have to deal with us. Despite these challenges, we strive to provide superior customer service on a daily basis. The children of the District of Columbia count on it.

Benidia A. Rice  
Deputy Attorney General and Director





Karl A. Racine  
Attorney General for the District of Columbia

# Office of the Attorney General for the District of Columbia

“Everybody can be great...because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love.” Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



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