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ABSTRACT

In 1997, the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) funded Responsible Fatherhood Demonstration Projects in eight states (California, Colorado, Maryland, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Hampshire, Washington, and Wisconsin) to improve the employment and earnings of under- and unemployed noncustodial parents and to motivate them to become more financially and emotionally involved in their children's lives. This report is an early implementation analysis of the programs, focusing on: (1) how the programs are administered; (2) the types of services they deliver; (3) the coalitions they create with community-based organizations and with state and local service agencies; (4) how they recruit program participants; and (5) how they monitor client progress. Following an executive summary, Chapter 1 of the report describes the historical context of the programs, gives a demographic profile of the program settings, and gives a child support profile of the program settings. Chapter 2 presents a summary profile of each program in terms of its organization and administration, target population, major service components, outreach efforts, and status at the end of calendar year 1999. Chapter 3 discusses client recruitment and retention, reviews referral sources and their advantages and disadvantages, and reviews policy and philosophical approach to client retention. Chapter 4 examines employment and child support, focusing on method of service delivery. Chapter 5 presents information on other services offered, such as assistance with access and visitation, peer support, and case management. Chapter 6 summarizes some lessons learned to date about responsible fatherhood programs. (Contains 42 references.) (KB)

OCSE Responsible FATHERHOOD Programs:

Early Implementation Lessons

OCSE Responsible Fatherhood Programs

Early Implementation Lessons

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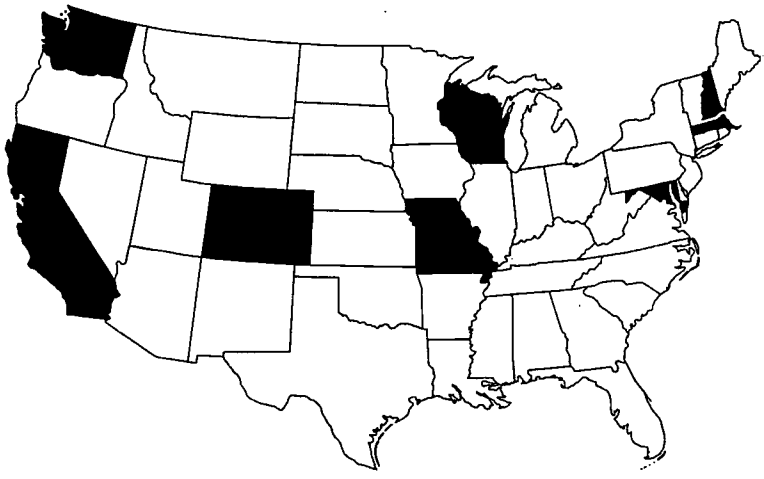

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Executive Summary

In late 1997, the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) funded Responsible Fatherhood Demonstration Projects in eight states. All of these programs attempt to improve the employment and earnings of under- and unemployed noncustodial parents, and to motivate them to become more financially and emotionally involved in the lives of their children. Although the projects share common goals, they do not follow a single format or a specific model of service delivery.

Future reports will focus on the outcomes the projects achieve with respect to employment, earnings, parent-child contact, and the payment of child support. This report is an early implementation analysis of the programs focusing on: (1) how they are administered; (2) the types of services they deliver; (3) the coalitions they created with community-based organizations and state and local service agencies; (4) how they recruit program participants; and (5) how they monitor client progress. Below, we summarize some of the key lessons to be learned from the early experiences of the projects with implementation and operation.

Lesson 1: It is important for architects of programs seeking to increase income and stimulate responsible fatherhood to serve a broad group of participants, be flexible about program design and recruitment, and generate services that match the needs of participants.

No matter how extensive the planning process is, there are always elements of surprise in implementing a responsible fatherhood program. Targeted populations fail to materialize; others appear. Services that are popular at some sites and with some participants are unappealing to others. Programs that define the target population too narrowly or are rigid about the mix of services that they offer experience problems with recruitment and attendance. Program architects should be receptive to serving a wide range of participants, adapting services to accommodate their needs and interests, and creating new services to fill in service gaps in the broader community.

Lesson 2: Programs should take advantage of collaborations with other community agencies, but must be knowledgeable about eligibility restrictions imposed by other programs and funding sources.

While all eight projects have stretched their resources by collaborating with a variety of public and private agencies to recruit participants and provide services, they have problems with restrictive eligibility requirements for some funding streams like Welfare-to-Work and TANF. It is important for programs to know the eligibility rules for various programs so that they steer participants appropriately, and to explore the feasibility of widening of program requirements so that more participants can be served.

Lesson 3: It is important to "customize" and "personalize" services provided to project participants by outside agencies to ensure that they receive adequate attention and appropriate treatments.

While it makes sense for projects to refer participants to existing employment and community services and thus avoid service duplication, participants often need more personal attention and assistance than is normally given to the general public. Some programs hire staff to be present at public employment agencies or use case managers to make sure participants do not get lost in the general flow of agency cases. There is a need for personalized outreach when it comes to recruiting and retaining program participants and cultivating potential employers.

Lesson 4: Programs serving low-income fathers have identified important gaps in employment services to be filled – apprenticeships, on-the-job training opportunities, and jobs with wage growth. Parents with a history of incarceration and other barriers face particular difficulties.

Although there are many employment programs that offer "soft" skills training like résumé writing and interviewing skills, the programs are generally lacking in opportunities for paid apprenticeships or more substantial training programs that lead to the acquisition of marketable skills. Programs also need to develop employment opportunities for participants with a criminal background, limited education, sporadic or limited work history, and other barriers. Developing marketable skills and employing project participants at livable wages is central to the success of responsible fatherhood programs.

Lesson 5: Programs are collaborating with child support agencies in new ways to educate parents about the child support program, understand their cases, and explore their options. Staff at the programs would like the child support system to be even more responsive to participants' needs and financial limitations.

All the programs have developed links with child support agencies that enable them to help participants understand their child support situation, remedy errors in their case records, and pursue requests to adjust their child support orders. These are welcome developments but may not go far enough in addressing the limited income and other financial obligations of program participants and their motivational needs. Four of the programs have adopted more substantial accommodations, including suspending current child support orders during job training and job search, reducing monthly arrears payments, avoiding license suspensions and bench warrants, and reducing child support orders to below guideline levels. Without minimizing the financial needs of children and the importance of personal responsibility, case managers would like child support agencies to consider adopting more flexible policies for low-income noncustodial parents. As it is now, case managers at several sites must follow child support policies that leave them with a limited range of incentives to offer participants.

Lesson 6: Legal information and assistance on access, visitation, and child support has proven to be extremely popular at every site where it is offered.

With the rise in *pro se* divorce, the decline in government-funded legal services (especially for noncustodial parents), and the growth in out-of-wedlock births, many parents have never had access to a lawyer and are mystified about where they stand with respect to child support, custody, visitation, and parenting time. *Pro se* filings are frequently too complicated for participants to complete on their own. Furthermore, many participants have had negative experiences with the criminal justice system, which makes them reluctant to view court staff as potential sources of help. Every program that has offered participants legal information and assistance with legal filings has found this service to be greatly appreciated and utilized.

Lesson 7: Peer support and case management help to cultivate the sense of concern and dignity that participants appreciate experiencing.

Responsible fatherhood programs help participants overcome their isolation and marginalization by helping individuals realize that they are not alone, by listening and according respectful treatment to participants, and by demonstrating genuine concern for and trying to help participants. These are new experiences for many participants, and they are powerful because they contrast so starkly with

the disrespectful treatment participants have often experienced in their normal interactions with bureaucracies. Peer support and case management help programs communicate concern, help participants overcome their isolation, and motivate participants to make pro-social changes in their attitude and behavior.

Lesson 8: There is no single formula for recruitment and retention; many strategies need to be used to attract various populations. Referrals from child support agencies and mandatory referrals are important sources and should not be overlooked.

Recruiting program participants takes a lot of energy, time, and initiative. Programs should use many strategies to attract different populations, including the use of mass media and referrals from public agencies. Even sites that actively cultivate community referrals rely heavily on referrals from child support technicians. The projects help technicians as well by giving them a new, more humane "enforcement" remedy. Mandatory referrals from child protective agencies, courts, jail diversion programs, and criminal justice agencies are also important at most of the sites and are believed to promote cohesion by ensuring a group of regular attendees. The dichotomy between "voluntary" and "mandatory" participants may be less meaningful than expected, with some mandatory clients becoming eager and whole-hearted participants and some voluntary clients dropping out. The key appears to be triggering an individual's internal commitment to the program and the plan of action it inspires.

Lesson 9: Recruiting young or new fathers has not been easy. Efforts based at hospitals have not been successful where they have been tried; programs are experimenting with school-based referrals.

To date, only two sites have aggressively pursued referrals from hospitals and other health facilities that serve newly delivering, unmarried parents. Despite considerable staff energy dedicated to recruitment, however, there have not been many referrals. Several factors make it difficult to do outreach in hospital settings: brief hospital stays, rival goals and concerns, and high staff turnover on maternity floors are but a few. Some of the same factors also affect outreach at postpartum settings, with fathers tending not to be on scene, and visiting nurses and other public health personnel being extremely preoccupied with immunizations, nutrition, and effective baby care. Some programs are exploring alternative ways to reach young fathers, and have begun to teach classes at local high schools and deploy younger staff members to do one-on-one recruiting at youth groups and churches.

Lesson 10: Programs need to have dedicated and energetic staff who know about community services and are good at identifying resources.

The success of the Responsible Fatherhood Demonstration Projects appears to be tied to the commitment of the staff. Reaching alienated and disenfranchised populations and convincing them to change their attitudes and behaviors is hard work. It takes time, persistence, repeated contacts, fast action, patience, firmness, and endless resourcefulness. Programs need to recruit key program staff who are inspired and inspiring. They also need to be knowledgeable about community services in order to maximize opportunities for participants. First-hand knowledge is key. The best referrals are not made out of directories, but result from long-standing familiarity with community services, eligibility requirements, available resources, and relevant personnel. Dedicated, knowledgeable, and energetic staff can better counsel and steer parents into a course of action that makes them more financially and emotionally responsible for their children.

Chapter 1

The Context and Setting for the Responsible Fatherhood Programs

This is a preliminary analysis of the eight Responsible Fatherhood Demonstration Projects funded by the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) in late 1997. It focuses on how the programs are administered; the types of services each program delivers; the coalitions that have been created between the programs, community-based organizations, and state and local service agencies; how program participants are recruited; and how each program monitors client progress. This report covers the time period from initial start-up in late 1997 through December 1999. It documents the implementation of the projects and the major changes that have occurred at the sites with respect to program administration, goals, recruitment, and service delivery. Future reports will focus on the outcomes the projects achieve with respect to enhanced employment, education, access, parenting, and child support payments.

Historical Context of the Programs

Since OCSE's inception in 1975, Congress has gradually expanded the federal role in child support and given the program new tools so that it can more effectively handle increasingly larger caseloads and meet the more aggressive performance goals established by the passage of legislation in 1984, 1988, and 1996. The child support program now includes (Legler, 1996):

- automated case management and information systems;
- the Federal Parent Locator Service (FPLS);
- rigorous paternity establishment performance standards;
- expedited procedures to establish and enforce support orders;
- the mandated use of uniform guidelines to determine award levels;
- immediate and automatic use of wage withholding; and
- use of tax intercepts, property liens, credit bureau reporting, and license revocations.

The adoption of these measures has dramatically improved overall program performance (Sorensen and Halpern, 2000). There is a growing recognition among practitioners, however, that the program has been less effective with low-income and unmarried noncustodial parents than with other groups (Johnson and Doolittle, 1996; Furstenberg, et al., 1992). While tools such as FPLS, automatic wage withholding, credit bureau reporting, or matches with financial institutions are effective with noncustodial parents who have stable employment and residence patterns, they are far less effective with those who are low income, highly mobile, and sporadically employed.

Given these facts, it is not surprising that while state programs have improved outcomes for poor families, they have achieved limited success in generating child support monies from low-income noncustodial fathers.[1] In 1990, only 35 percent of low-income noncustodial fathers paid any child support. Among never-married parents, the problem was even more severe. Census data reveal that only 24 percent of never-married women had a child support order and only about 15 percent reported receiving a child support payment in 1991 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1991). By 1997, the child support receipt rate for never-married mothers had risen to 18 percent (Sorensen and Halpern, 1999a). Looked at somewhat differently, only 29 percent of poor children eligible for child support received some income from this source in 1996 (Sorensen and Zibman, 2000).

Some scholars argue that improved techniques to locate low-income, unmarried fathers will do little to remedy the poor payment pattern. They question the equity of support orders for the very poor, the ability of these fathers to pay, and the ability of child support to lift children out of poverty. For example, Edin, et al. (1998: 12) conclude that:

> Many men's labor barely allows them the resources to get themselves to work the next day. Men earning $5 and $6 an hour, but spending large portions of their income on nightly or weekly residence, pre-cooked and carry-out food, and the clothing necessary to stay on the job, had few resources to share and little cushion to fall back on.

If they pay fully, fathers in the lowest income group pay 28 percent of their income for child support, while fathers in the highest income group pay 10 percent (Sorensen, 1995). More to the point, fathers of poor children are often poor themselves. In 1990, at least 29 percent of all noncustodial fathers had incomes (after paying child support) that were low enough to render them eligible for

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[1] While we recognize that either mothers or fathers may be noncustodial parents, most of the research being cited has been conducted with noncustodial fathers. As a result, this section of the report uses the term "fathers."

food stamps (Sorensen, 1997). Another study concluded that almost 37 percent of young noncustodial fathers were considered to be impoverished (Mincy and Sorensen, 1998). Annual earnings for never-married men stood at only $11,979 in 1997, while earnings for divorced and separated men averaged $33,963 (Sorensen and Halpern, 1999b). Using Survey of Income Program Participation (SIPP) data, Sorensen and Wheaton (1997) report that a $37.6 billion increase in the amount of child support collected in 1989 (the amount of additional child support they estimate noncustodial parents can actually afford to pay) would have reduced total welfare costs by only 8 percent, cut AFDC participation by 9 percent, and reduced the overall poverty rate by 5 percent (Sorensen and Wheaton, 1997). The 1997 National Survey of America's Families finds that child support reduces child poverty by 2 percent and the poverty gap by 8 percent (Sorensen and Zibman, 2000). Along the same lines, another study concludes that only 13 percent of the payment gap is due to the fathers of children on welfare (Oellerich, et al., 1991). Some researchers contend that even perfect collection of child support among the very poor would not result in big changes in child poverty, since the gains would be offset by higher levels of poverty among noncustodial parents, reductions in remarriages, and financial deprivations to children in new families (Bloom, et al., 1998).

Enhancing the employment status and earning capacity of men at lower education and skill levels appears to be one of the most promising ways to encourage poor fathers to assume more parental responsibilities, including the payment of child support. Several studies support this conclusion. In a 1995 study, for example, Testa and Krogh found that single African American men with stable employment are twice as likely to marry the mother of the children they conceive out of wedlock. A 1990 study of 289 single teen-mother families on AFDC in Wisconsin found the father's work experience to be the strongest predictor of his remaining involved in the child's life (Danzinger and Radin, 1990). A 1996 study showed that unmarried parents who are employed are significantly more likely to acknowledge paternity on a voluntary basis (Pearson and Thoennes, 1996). Finally, several studies find that most parents who are not paying child support regularly attribute nonpayment to economic factors and unstable employment patterns (Pearson, et al., 1996; Haskins, 1985; Braver, et al., 1993).

Enhancing the noncustodial parent's access to the child has often been suggested as another means of encouraging voluntary payment among obligors at all income levels. Although the research evidence is mixed (see *e.g.*, Weitzman, 1985; Berkman, 1986), most studies do find a positive correlation between visitation and support performance. For example, more than two decades ago, Chambers (1979) found that fathers with little or no contact with their children after the divorce paid

only about 34 percent of their child support, while fathers in regular contact paid 85 percent. A decade ago, Seltzer (1991) reached similar conclusions when she analyzed a national probability sample of adults in the United States. Two-thirds of those with frequent contact paid child support, while payments were made by only one-fifth of those with no contact. More recent census data show that noncustodial parents who owed child support in 1995 were more than twice as likely to have made payments if they had either joint custody or visitation rights (Scoon-Rogers, 1999).

Improving child support payment may also be a means of increasing access. It has been impossible to definitively discern a causal relationship because access and child support compliance are so interrelated and visitation is so difficult to accurately measure (Cabrera and Evans, 2000; Pearson and Thoennes, 1988). However, in her most recent analysis of the 1987-88 National Survey of Families and Households, Seltzer (2000: 56) concludes that paying "child support may have a small direct effect [on access], even after father's visiting patterns have been established." Similarly, Edin, et al. (2000) conclude that fathers who could not provide economically felt a sense of shame that often led them to withdraw from their children. Whether payment leads to contact, contact leads to payment, or both contact and payment are the result of other variables, such as a sense of commitment, it is clear that fathers who see their children do a better job of paying support.

In light of these findings, child support policies have increasingly moved toward approaches that emphasize ability and willingness to pay support. The Child Access Demonstration Projects were the first official steps that the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement took to support interventions aimed at addressing the issues of access and visitation. Implemented in seven different states, the project involved the use of mediation, parent education, counseling, and other measures to assist parents in communicating about the needs of their children following parental separation and divorce, and to increase the involvement of fathers in the lives of their children.

The evaluation of the Child Access Demonstration Projects revealed that although the interventions had only limited success in solving access problems among extremely disputatious and highly conflicted couples, they did assist many noncustodial parents in the resolution of their access problems. Fully 65 to 70 percent of those who attempted to mediate reached an agreement; mediation and other access interventions garnered high levels of user satisfaction from both custodial and noncustodial parents. Despite these positive outcomes, access interventions had only limited impact on child support payment patterns, which tended to track with the financial resources of the noncustodial parent rather than his access situation (Price, et al., 1994; Pearson, et al., 1996; Pearson and Thoennes, 1997; Pearson and Thoennes, 1999).

In a second demonstration project, the Parents' Fair Share Demonstration (PFS), the Administration on Children and Families (ACF), along with the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE), the Department of Labor, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, experimented with a comprehensive approach to assist under- or unemployed noncustodial parents with becoming more financially and emotionally involved in the lives of their children. The model that was adopted at seven research sites included employment assistance, peer support, case management, and temporarily lowered child support orders. The findings reported to date indicate that offering services helps to distinguish between those who are unwilling to pay and those who are unable to pay (*i.e.*, identifying unreported employment and resources, and raising child support payments). Although there was improved child support compliance, the services had little effect on improving earnings and employment for most participants (Martinez and Miller, 2000; Johnson and Doolittle, 1995; Doolittle and Lynn, 1998). The exception to this were the most disadvantaged fathers, who experienced moderate improvements in employment and earnings (Martinez and Miller, 2000).

Arguing that PFS's disappointing results were due to the fact that most clients were referred by the courts, had substantial child support debts, and had been separated from their children for a number of years, some researchers have urged PFS-like programs to focus on serving unwed fathers at the birth of their babies when they are attached to the mothers and their babies, and have high hopes for raising their children (McLanahan, 1999). This is the approach that will be employed by Partners for Fragile Families. Under this demonstration project, the National Center for Strategic Nonprofit Planning and Community Leadership (NPCL), with Ford Foundation support,[2] made awards to 10 states to implement demonstration projects requiring that child support agencies and community-based organizations collaborate to recruit and assist poor noncustodial parents for the purpose of promoting employment, paternal contact, and child support payment.

Based upon the growing interest in increasing father involvement with their children, Congress included measures in its welfare reform legislation to address the access and economic problems of noncustodial parents. In 1997, 1998, and 1999, Congress appropriated $10 million to states to promote the development of a variety of programs designed to alleviate the problems associated with access and visitation. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act also requires states to have the authority to order noncustodial parents who are delinquent in child support into work activities if their children are receiving public assistance, and approximately 18 states have

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[2] These projects were recently granted waivers to receive matching funds from the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement.

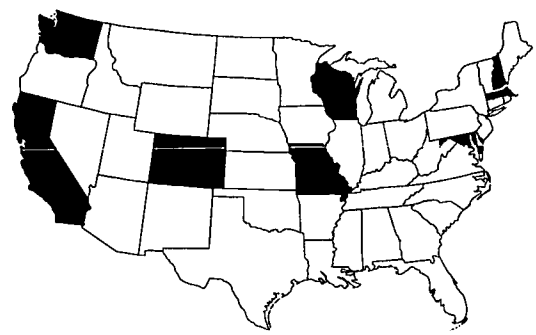
developed programs to provide employment and training services to low-income noncustodial fathers (Sorensen, 1997). Congressional interest has remained high, and in 1999, the House of Representatives passed the Fathers Count Act of 1999 (H.R. 3073), which proposes spending $140 million over four years to support and evaluate projects to help fathers meet their responsibilities as husbands, parents, and providers. To date, no corresponding bill has been passed by the Senate.

Support for demonstration projects promoting responsible fatherhood has continued at OCSE. In 1997, following a competitive process, the agency made multi-year awards to seven states to conduct demonstration projects that provide services to noncustodial parents designed to promote their financial and emotional participation in the lives of their children. In 1997, HHS also granted Washington State a waiver to receive matching funds from the federal child support enforcement agency for programs aimed at providing services to help noncustodial parents. These eight programs, collectively referred to as the Responsible Fatherhood Projects, are the focus of the present report. Below, we provide some basic background information about each of these demonstration sites, including information about each site's child support policies.

Demographic Profile of the Program Settings

The OCSE Responsible Fatherhood Projects are based in the following locations:

- California, in San Mateo County;
- Colorado, in El Paso County;
- Maryland, in Baltimore City;[3]
- Massachusetts, in the City of Boston;
- Missouri, in Cape Girardeau County;
- New Hampshire, in Merrimack, Belknap, and Hillsborough Counties;
- Washington, in Pierce County;
- Wisconsin, in the City of Racine.



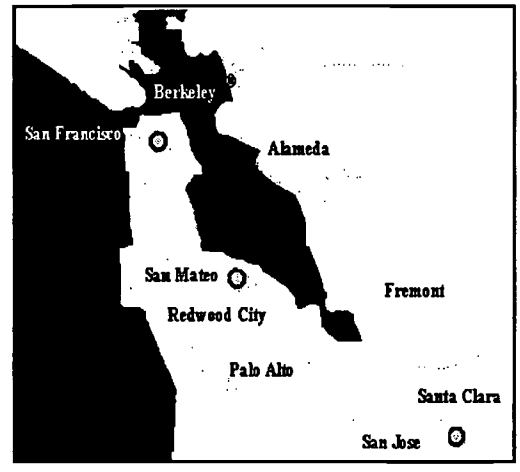
Fatherhood programs operate within a demographic, economic, and public policy context. Programs must tailor recruitment and service strategies to accommodate the opportunities and constraints that each setting presents. The following is a brief overview of some of the relevant characteristics of the sites in which the OCSE Responsible Fatherhood demonstration projects are being conducted,

[3] This report only briefly deals with the Charles County program in Maryland. This program began in late March 1999. By the end of 1999, the project became inactive after the sole staff member accepted another job. A total of 23 fathers were served during the program's operational phase.

including population size, ethnic composition, income and poverty levels, out-of-wedlock birth rates, and child support policies (particularly with respect to the treatment of low-income obligors). These patterns are summarized in Table 1 at the end of this section.

California

The California program is located in San Mateo County. This urban community has a population of slightly over 700,000 and is located approximately 20 miles south of San Francisco. Nearly 100 percent of the county is classified as urban, with less than 2 percent in rural, including farm, settings.



The population is composed primarily of White non-Hispanics (60.6%). The largest minority groups are Hispanics (16.6%) and Asians (16.8%), with African Americans comprising only 5.3 percent of the population. The County is relatively young, with 22 percent of the population under age 18 and 12 percent over 65 years of age.

The most prosperous community in the demonstration project, median household income in San Mateo in 1990 was $53,430, and the median value for homes in 1990 was nearly $344,000 and has now increased to over $550,000. The median income for families with children was $77,838, or twice the average for U.S. families ($33,536). The poverty rate for single parent families (16.8%) was less than half the national average of 38.2 percent. Based on 1990 data, nearly 40 percent of the workforce is employed in professional or managerial positions, and the unemployment rate, as of September 1999, was only 1.9 percent.

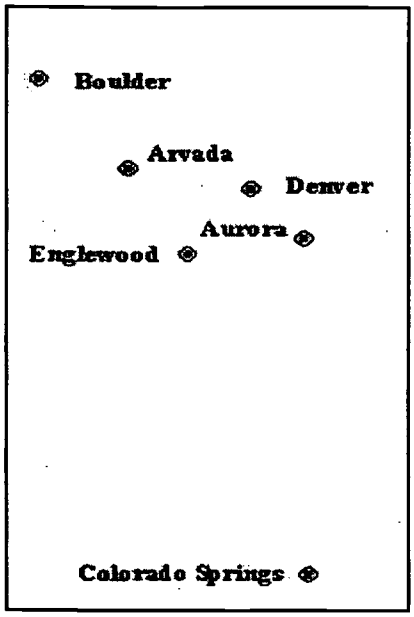
As might be expected, given the economic profile of the County, San Mateo is also a relatively well-educated community. According to 1990 Census data, nearly 85 percent of the adult population in the County hold at least a high school diploma, and nearly a third have a bachelor's or advanced degree.

San Mateo had the lowest non-marital birth rate of all the demonstration project sites (20.1%) and was well below the U.S. average of 32.4 percent in 1997. In part, this may be due to the fact that many of San Mateo's TANF births are handled in birthing facilities in adjacent counties.

Colorado

The Colorado program is located in Colorado Springs, approximately 70 miles south of Denver. The program serves the El Paso County area which has a population of nearly 500,000. The County is largely urban, with only 6 percent of the population in rural or farm areas.

The community is predominantly White non-Hispanic (81.5%), with minorities evenly divided between African Americans (7.1%) and Hispanics (7.9%). Approximately 28 percent of the population is below the age of 18 and approximately 8 percent are age 65 or older.



Median family income in El Paso County was comparable to the national average of $33,932. The percentage of single-parent families with incomes below the poverty level (36.5%) was also quite comparable to the national average at 38 percent in 1990. That same year, approximately 40 percent of the workforce was employed in professional and managerial occupations. The County also has a large military population. According to 1990 Census data, 13 percent of the labor force was in the Armed Forces.

In September 1999, El Paso County's unemployment rate was 3.2 percent. This figure is higher than the rates reported at many other project sites, but lower than the national average.

Like San Mateo, the El Paso County population is relatively well-educated. In 1990, over 88 percent of the adult population had completed high school and slightly more than a quarter had a bachelor's degree or advanced degree.

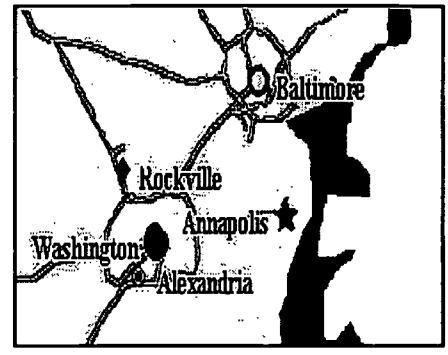
Finally, El Paso County has a relatively low non-marital birth rate of 24.5 percent and a below-average rate of single-parent families (21.8% versus 24.7% for the U.S. as a whole),

Maryland

The OCSE demonstration project is currently being conducted in Baltimore City. Baltimore, located approximately 35 miles northeast of Washington, D.C., has a population of 645,593 and is categorized as entirely urban in nature. For approximately eight months in 1999, services were also

provided in Charles County, which is located about 70 miles from Baltimore, has a population of 101,154, and is 40 percent rural.

Baltimore City is comprised primarily of African Americans (59%) and non-Hispanic Whites (38%). In Charles County, approximately 78 percent of the population is non-Hispanic White, while 18 percent are African Americans. Charles County has a relatively young population profile, with 29 percent below age 18 and 6 percent above age 65. Baltimore has a somewhat older age distribution, with 24 percent below age 18 and 14 percent above age 65.



The median family income in Baltimore in 1990 was $29,363, and 40 percent of all single-parent families were living below the poverty line. A total of 31 percent of the workforce is categorized as professional or managerial. Baltimore City had one of the highest unemployment rates among the demonstration project sites and was 3.9 percent in September 1999.

Compared to Baltimore, Charles County is a more prosperous county, with a median family income approaching $50,000 in 1990 and only 16 percent of the single-parent families below the federal poverty level. Based on 1990 Census data, approximately 36 percent of the workforce is employed in professional and managerial occupations. As of September 1999, the Charles County unemployment rate stood at 2.1 percent.

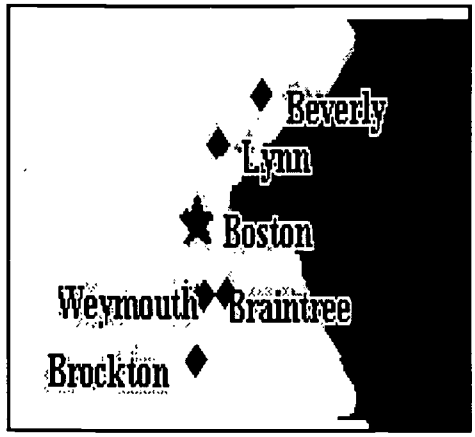
Just over 60 percent of the Baltimore population age 25 and older had graduated from high school, and 15 percent held a bachelor's or advanced degree. In Charles County, over 80 percent of the adults age 25 and older had completed high school, and 16 percent held a bachelor's or advanced degree.

In Baltimore, nearly 70 percent of all births were to unmarried parents, while in Charles County the non-marital birth rate was close to the national average of 32.4 percent.

Massachusetts

The Massachusetts project is being conducted in Boston, an entirely urban location with a population of 555,447. About half of the population (52%) is composed of non-Hispanic Whites. African Americans constitute 42 percent, and there is a small population of Hispanics (8.6%) and Asians (4.0%).

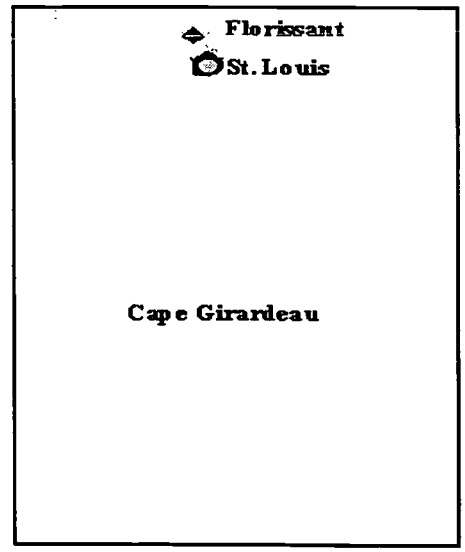
Overall, Boston median family income in 1990 was $30,223 and individual income was $12,061. A substantial proportion of single-parent families had incomes that fell below the poverty level (45.4%). Approximately 44 percent of the workforce is employed in professional and managerial occupations, and unemployment in September 1999 was 3.4 percent. The non-marital birth rate, at 45 percent, exceeded the national average.



The higher educational profile of Boston residents resembles San Mateo, with 30 percent holding a bachelor's or advanced degree (but only 75% completing high school, which is comparable to the national average). Boston has the oldest age distribution among the project sites, with only 19 percent under age 18 and 11 percent over age 65.

Missouri

Missouri's demonstration project is being conducted in Cape Girardeau County, which is located in the southeastern portion of the state, approximately 50 miles south of St. Louis. With a population of only 66,314, it is the smallest setting among the OCSE demonstration projects. A third of the County is considered rural.

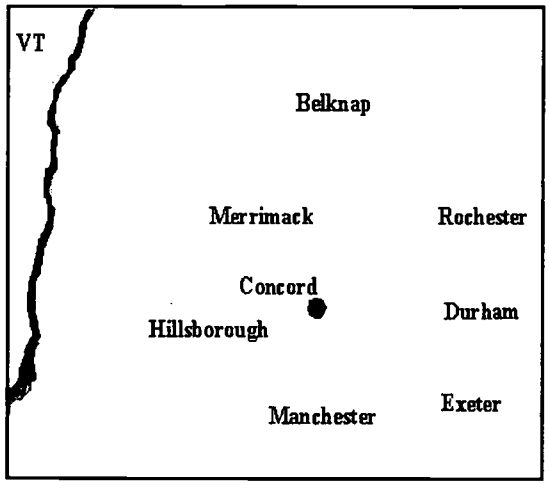


Cape Girardeau is primarily non-Hispanic White (93%). The largest racial minority group is African American (4.5%). Approximately 14 percent of the population is over age 65, while 24 percent is below age 18. The out-of-wedlock birth rate was 30.5 percent in 1997.

Among adults age 25 and older, 74 percent are high school graduates, and 19 percent have a college degree. The median family income stands at $30,795, with about 43 percent of single-parent families living below poverty. The unemployment rate is 2.6 percent, and 28 percent of the labor force is managerial or professional.

New Hampshire

The New Hampshire projects are being conducted in three contiguous counties: Merrimack, Belknap and Hillsborough. Hillsborough is the largest of the three counties (363,031), and Belknap is the smallest (49,216). The combined population for the three is approximately 542,893. Overall, 41 percent of the population in these three counties reside in rural areas.



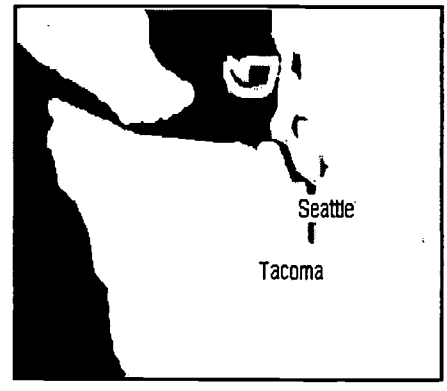
Nearly all (96%) of the population in these counties is White non-Hispanic. The percentage of the population under age18 is 26, and 21 percent is over the age of 65.

The percentage of the population (age 25 and older) that has graduated from high school ranges from 80 to 83 percent across the counties. Between 20 to 26 percent have a college degree. Approximately 36 percent of the labor force population is employed in professional and managerial occupations.

Median family incomes in the three counties range from $36,260 to $46,249. Unemployment rates are very low, ranging from 1.4 percent to 2.1 percent. Not surprisingly, the percentages of single-parent families living below poverty were relatively low, ranging from 17.9 percent to 22.5 percent. The rate of non-marital births approached the national average in Belknap (32%), while falling well below it in Merrimack (24%) and Hillsborough (23%).

Washington

Washington's project is being conducted in Tacoma (Pierce County), which has an entirely urban population of 179,814.



Its ethnic distribution closely resembles the U.S. profile, with about three-quarters (76.6%) classified as White non-Hispanic

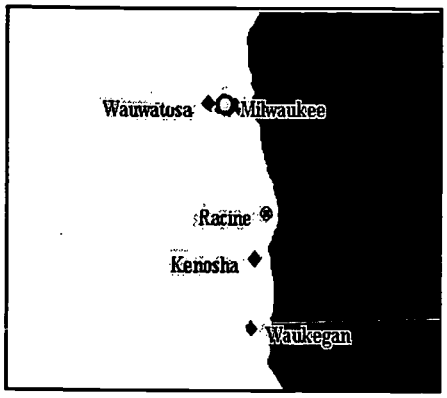
and 11.4 percent classified as African American. Asians comprise the next largest minority group (7%), and 2.9 percent are Hispanic. Just over a quarter of the population is under age 18, and 14 percent is over age 65.

Nearly 80 percent of the population age 25 and older has completed high school. Approximately 16 percent have a college degree.

Approximately 30 percent of the labor force is employed in professional and managerial occupations. The unemployment rate stands at approximately 4.4 percent. Median family income in Tacoma falls somewhat below the U.S. average at $31,203. The percentage of single-parent families living below poverty is 43.3 percent. The city's out-of-wedlock birthrate is 43.3 percent.

Wisconsin

The Wisconsin project is being conducted in Racine, a city of 90,199 approximately 25 miles south of Milwaukee. Nearly three-quarters (72.9%) of Racine's residents are White non-Hispanic, 18 percent are African American, and Hispanics make up 7 percent of the population. The city has a large population under age 18 (29%), while those over age 65 make up about 13 percent of the population.



Among residents age 25 and older, 72 percent have a high school diploma and 15 percent have completed college. Racine's out-of-wedlock birth rate is close to the national average (33.1%).

Just over a quarter of the work force population is employed in professional and managerial positions. The unemployment rate in Racine was 5.9 percent in November 1999, the highest of any of the sites. Median family income in 1990 was $31,847. A substantial proportion (44.3%) of single-parent families live in poverty.

Summary

As Table 1 demonstrates, the nine program sites represent a diverse cross-section of the nation. Included are three sites with relatively large rural populations, as well as six urban settings ranging in size from 90,000 to over 700,000. The demonstration sites include one setting with a significant

Hispanic population, and four with relatively large African American communities. Educational attainment also varies considerably across the sites. For example, high school graduation (among those 25 and older) ranges from a high of 88 percent to a low of 61 percent. Similarly, median family incomes range from less than $30,000 to over $50,000.

In many respects, San Mateo is the most affluent of the sites, while Baltimore (and to a slightly lesser extent, Racine) are the least affluent. For example, median income is greatest in San Mateo and lowest in Baltimore. College graduates are most common in San Mateo (and Boston) and least common in Baltimore (and Racine). Unemployment is lowest in San Mateo and highest in Baltimore and Racine.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Counties in Which the Programs are Based

	San Mateo, CA	El Paso County, CO	Baltimore, MD	Charles County, MD	Boston, MA	Cape Girardeau, MO	Belknap, Hillsborough, & Merrimack Counties, NH	Tacoma, WA	Racine, WI	U.S. Total
Population	700,765	490,378	645,593	117,963	574,283	66,314	542,893	179,814	90,199	270,299,000
Rural	1%	6%	0%	40%	0%	29%	41%	0%	0%	25%
White/Non-Hispanic African American Hispanic	61% 5% 17%	81% 7% 8%	38% 59%	78% 18%	52% 42% 9%	93% 4% 1%	96% 0.3% 1%	77% 11% 3%	73% 18% 7%	76% 12% 8%
Under 18 Over 65	22% 12%	28% 8%	24% 14%	29% 6%	19% 11%	24% 14%	26% 21%	26% 14%	29% 13%	26% 13%
High School Graduate College Graduate	85% 31%	88% 26%	61% 15%	81% 16%	76% 30%	74% 19%	82% 26%	79% 16%	72% 15%	75% 20%
Median Family Income	$53,430	$33,932	$29,363	$29,724	$30,223	$30,795	$36-46,000	$31,263	$31,846	$35,225
Single Parent Below Poverty	17%	36%	40%	16%	45.4%	43%	18-22%	43%	44%	38%
Unemployment Rate	1.9%	3.2%	3.9%	2.1%	3.4%	2.6%	2.1%	4.4%	5.9%	4.1%
Non-Marital Births	33%	24%	69%	33%	45%	30%	23-32%	43%	33%	32.4%

Child Support Profile of the Program Settings

Child support agencies are key partners at all the Responsible Fatherhood Projects sites. While some manage or help manage the program, others serve primarily as a source of referrals. In Chapter 4, we describe the specific role the child support agency plays at each site. Here we present an overview of statewide IV-D operations in the eight project states.

As a result of the Child Support Performance Incentive Act of 1998, there are now generally accepted and nationally agreed-upon measures for comparing the performance of states and individual offices within states. These new federal performance standards place increased pressure on states to improve their program outcomes in several key areas.[4] These areas include: (1) the paternity establishment percentage (PEP), (2) the percentage of IV-D cases with a support order, (3) the proportion of current support owed on IV-D cases that was collected during the fiscal year, (4) the proportion of IV-D cases with collections on child support arrears, and (5) the cost-effectiveness ratio. Table 2 presents data on the last four of these performance measures, based on preliminary data released by the Federal OCSE for fiscal year 1998.[5] (States' PEP measures are not provided in the OCSE statistics.) The table also displays some other features about the IV-D programs in the eight states with Responsible Fatherhood demonstration sites.

Program Administration: The eight states are divided equally on this feature; that is, four states have state-administered IV-D programs, and four have county-administered programs. However, in two of the states with county-administered programs, the IV-D child support programs where the demonstration sites are actually located are operated by private contractors (El Paso County, Colorado, and Baltimore City, Maryland).

Order Establishment Process: Nationally, all states allow orders to be established judicially. However, in an attempt to streamline the process for entering child support orders, some states have also implemented an administrative process for the entry of orders. For the purposes of Table 2, we have defined an administrative process to mean that the IV-D agency can enter consent and default orders without filing a judicial action prior to entry of the order. Using this definition, three of the project site states (Colorado, Missouri, and Washington) allow orders to be established administratively, and thus have both an administrative and judicial process to establish orders. The other project site states use judicial processes exclusively to establish IV-D child support orders.

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[4] Beginning this year (Federal Fiscal Year 2000), states will compete with each other for a share of the incentive payment pool appropriated by Congress each year. The actual amount each state will be entitled to receive from this pool is not easy to determine because it depends on a complex set of calculations as well as each state's performance relative to other states. Furthermore, the incentive formula is being phased in, with one-third of the incentives calculated based on the new formula in FY 2000, two-thirds in FY 2001, and 100 percent in subsequent years.

[5] State-level statistics are used for comparison purposes, primarily because the program sites do not all correspond exactly to the jurisdiction of a IV-D office, but also because data are more difficult to obtain for local offices than they are for states.

Child Support Guidelines: Five of the project states (California, Colorado, Maryland, Missouri, and Washington) use an Income Shares model to compute the amount of the support order, meaning that the income of both parents is considered in setting the order amount. One project state (Wisconsin) uses a Percentage of Income guideline that is based only on the noncustodial parent's income, with the assumption that the custodial parent will contribute an equal proportion of his/her income to the care of the child. The New Hampshire guideline is a Percentage of Income, but uses both parents' incomes. Massachusetts uses a hybrid model, where the custodial parent's income is not considered in setting the order amount until it reaches a certain threshold.

All the project states, except Wisconsin, allow adjustments to support order amounts for noncustodial parents whose incomes are below a certain level. The threshold in California is $1,000 per month, the highest in the nation. Most of the other project states have thresholds that are set based on the federal poverty level for a single person at the time the guideline became law.[6] Below that level, a minimum order is established which recognizes that, while the obligor has a duty to pay support, he/she also requires a minimum level of disposable income to meet basic needs. Minimum orders typically range from $20 to $50 per month.

Program Performance Measures: As Table 2 illustrates, the statistics for the four federal performance indicators are not very useful in distinguishing between high and low performing states (much of the data for California and Wisconsin are largely missing). For example, Wisconsin has the best cost-effectiveness ratio (*i.e.*, $5.43 of IV-D child support collected for every dollar of IV-D administrative costs spent), but also has the lowest proportion of the IV-D caseload under order (58.5%). Among the eight project states, the best performing state overall, based on the statistics for FY 1998, appears to be New Hampshire. It shows the highest proportion of current support due that was paid (68%), the highest proportion of arrears cases that paid (70%), the third highest proportion of the IV-D caseload with support orders (79%), and one of the highest cost-effectiveness ratios (4.49:1). By contrast, Missouri's performance ranks as the lowest of these eight states.

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[6] The federal poverty level is updated every year by the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The poverty level for calendar year 2000 is $696 per month for a single person living in the contiguous 48 states and the District of Columbia. All of the states that use this statistic have thresholds that are less than $696 per month. For example, Colorado and Maryland use minimum orders when the noncustodial parent's income is less than $447 per month.

Table 2. IV-D Child Support Profile of States with Project Sites

	California	Colorado	Maryland	Massachusetts	Missouri	New Hampshire	Washington	Wisconsin
State/County Administered	County	County[1]	County[1]	State	State	State	State	County
Administrative/Judicial order establishment process[2]	Judicial	Both	Judicial	Judicial	Both	Judicial	Both	Judicial
Guideline used to establish support order amount	Income Shares	Income Shares	Income Shares	Percent of income/Income Shares hybrid	Income Shares	Percent of Income	Income Shares	Percent of Income
Minimum order amount	Varies by # of children	$20-$50	$20-$50	$50	$20-$50	$50	$25	Varies by # of children
Cost/effectiveness ratio[3, 4]	$2.72	$3.11	$4.31	$4.53	$3.36	$4.49	$3.74	$5.43
% caseload with support orders[4]	63.0%	73.4%	64.8%	82.4%	75.5%	79.1%	89.4%	58.5%
% ordered cases with collections	NA[5]	60.8%	60.9%	64.0%	45.6%	77.5%	64.6%	NA
% current support due that was paid[4]	NA[5]	58.3%	55.2%	53.9%	14.7%	67.8%	50.3%	NA
% cases with arrears that paid[4]	NA[5]	42.5%	50.5%	48.6%	17.1%	70.4%	50.2%	NA

1 Child support offices in El Paso County, Colorado and Baltimore, Maryland are operated by a private contractor.
2 By administrative process, we mean that the IV-D agency can enter consent and default orders without filing a judicial action prior to entry of the order. Since all states have judicial processes, "both" indicates that the state also has an administrative order establishment process.
3 Cost-effectiveness ratio is the ratio of total IV-D child support dollars collected to total IV-D administrative costs spent on the child support program.
4 Federal performance measure for the IV-D program.
5 NA means that information for this measure was not available.

Sources: National Child Support Enforcement Association, *1999 Interstate Roster and Referral Guide* (Washington, D.C.: December 1999) and Office of Child Support Enforcement, *Child Support Enforcement FY 1998 Preliminary Data Report*, Department of Health & Human Services (Washington, D.C.: June 1999).

Organization of the Report

The remainder of this report is organized into five chapters. Chapter 2 presents a summary profile of each program in terms of its:

- organization and administration, particularly its relationship to the child support agency, to community-based organizations, and to local public service agencies;
- target population;
- major service components;
- outreach efforts; and
- status at the end of calendar year 1999.

These issues are discussed in greater depth in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 3 discusses client recruitment and retention, issues that every program has struggled to address. The chapter examines the different approaches the programs have used to attract voluntary participation in services and the degree to which each is perceived to be effective. It also reviews the sources of referrals, and their advantages and disadvantages. Finally, the chapter reviews each program's policy and philosophical approach to client retention.

Chapter 4 looks at two areas of service delivery: employment and child support. The services in these two areas offered at each project site are reviewed, including their content and method of delivery.

Chapter 5 presents information on other services the projects are offering, such as assistance with access and visitation, peer support, and case management. The chapter documents the sites' efforts to implement and maintain selected services, and how the content of services and service delivery have evolved as the programs have matured.

Finally, Chapter 6 summarizes some of the lessons learned to date about responsible fatherhood programs. These lessons are far from final. The programs are still growing and evolving, and the conclusions to be drawn about them may change over time. However, the early experiences of these programs may be useful to other new programs that attempt to serve similar populations.

Chapter 2

Profile of the Programs

The following is a brief description of the responsible fatherhood programs operating at the eight sites funded by OCSE and their status as of December 31, 1999. Some elements of these dynamic projects undoubtedly have changed since then. Across the sites, the purpose of the programs was to explore ways of improving parental involvement among low-income noncustodial parents from both an emotional and financial point of view. Beyond this commonality, however, the sites had complete latitude in program design. The funders did not require the use of a single model of service delivery. Every site was at liberty to craft unique collaborations, select different clients, and offer different services. Highlights of the programs are summarized in Table 3 at the end of this chapter.

California

Administered by the child support enforcement agency in San Mateo County (known as the Family Support division), this project has two major components: services to promote contact between noncustodial parents and their children, and employment services. Services to promote contact are frequently referred to as access and visitation services, and include interventions like mediation and supervised visitation.

The most commonly used intervention to resolve parental conflict after a separation or divorce and to promote parent-child contact is mediation. Mediation services are provided by a mediator at the domestic relations court, who was hired expressly under the grant to serve program clients. The court-based mediation program conducts divorce mediations for the court, but has traditionally served cases set for hearing. Thanks to the grant, all Family Support Division clients are eligible for mediation services at no charge to the parties, although participation is voluntary. Referrals are made by all types of child support personnel, including customer service representatives, attorneys, establishment technicians, and enforcement staff. Child support staff view the offer of free mediation as an effective way of responding to parents who mention access problems when

discussing their non-compliance with child support. Staff refer clients regularly for mediation, and program staff report that about half of those referred follow through and attend a mediation session. Mediation is typically conducted in a single session, although clients can pursue additional mediation with staff at a community-based organization providing a variety of support services for families.

Employment assistance is available for parents who indicate that they are unemployed and consequently unable to pay child support. Staff make referrals to Success Central, the county vendor providing employment assistance to TANF clients. To date, very few noncustodial parents have taken advantage of this option.

Normally, there is no case management for project participants; most are served in a single mediation session. A fraction of clients, however, may be referred by mediators for case management, parent education, and/or supervised visitation services offered at the Family Service Agency. In addition, some families may avail themselves of these services directly as a result of public outreach campaigns conducted by both the child support agency and the Family Service Agency.

As part of its fatherhood project, the San Mateo County Family Support Division hired a half-time community outreach coordinator to improve both client and community knowledge about the child support program and the services available to assist clients of the Family Support Division. The Division's outreach activities have included:

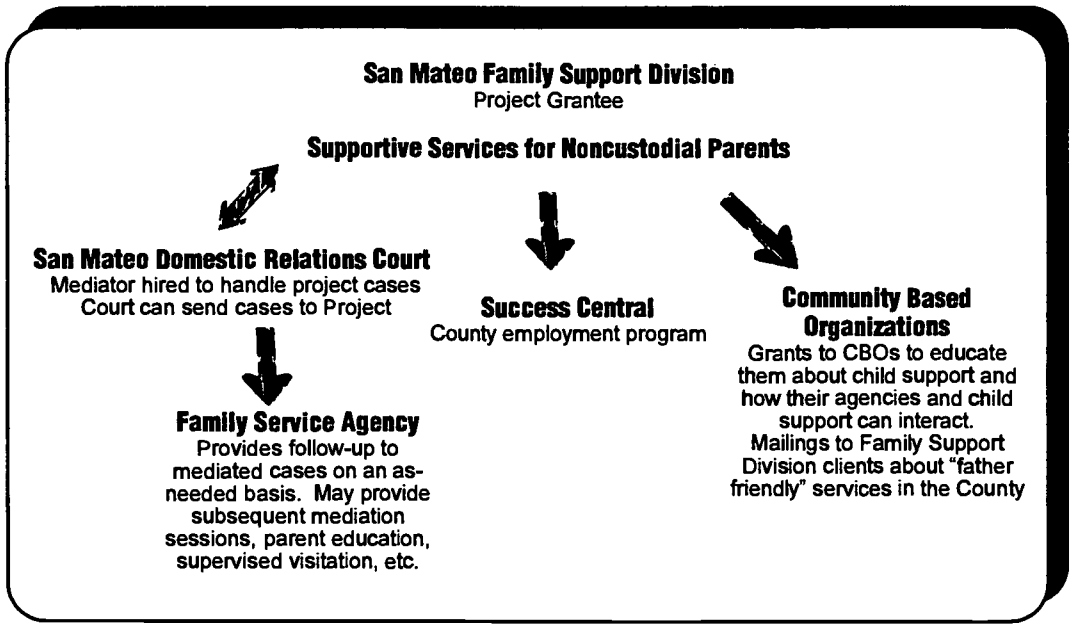
- Editing, printing, and distributing a newsletter to all Family Support Division clients highlighting the mediation and employment assistance services;
- Developing and printing three new brochures for noncustodial parents in Spanish and English on child support, including paternity establishment and child support order modification;
- Developing a summary brochure that lists all "father friendly" services in the county that is sent to new Family Support Division clients and fathers signing the in-hospital paternity declarations;
- Providing in-service training programs for other county agencies and community-based organizations to educate them about the child support process;

- Implementing a high school "child support and parental responsibility class" in a number of schools throughout the county;

- Participating in numerous city, county, and community events to provide information about the Family Support Division services; and

- Working with other county and community agencies to create the "San Mateo County Fatherhood Collaborative," which will promote and coordinate programs throughout the county that support fathers.

Project staff estimate that 300 clients received mediation services in 1999 and that 51 clients were referred for employment services. Project staff believe that the offer of employment services has had the effect of identifying previously undisclosed employment among some targeted clients. Among those referred, none had any payments in the 12 months prior to referral. After referral, about half made at least one child support payment. Staff also estimate that mediation stimulated payment among those who had made no child support payments in the six months prior to mediation, with the average increase in collections standing at $1,461 for each case that reached an agreement. The evaluators will be assessing these patterns in greater detail in subsequent studies of project outcomes.



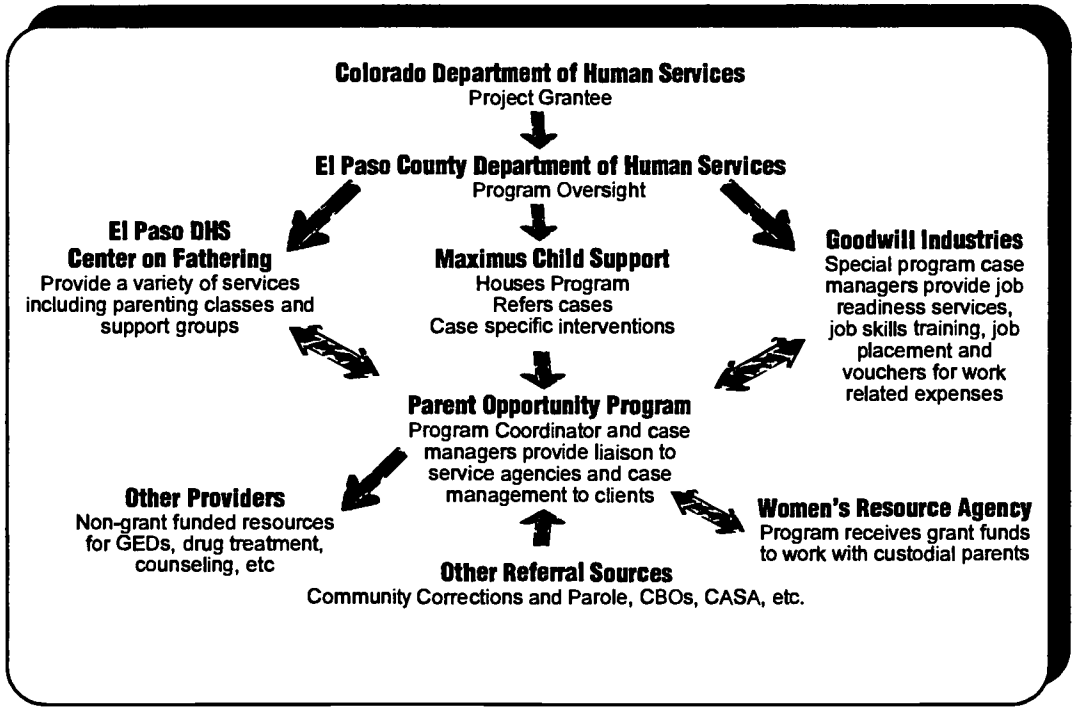
Colorado

Administered by the El Paso County Department of Human Services in Colorado Springs, this project, called the Parent Opportunity Program (POP), targets unemployed and under-employed noncustodial parents for job training and placement, parenting education, access assistance, and child support help. It involves a collaboration among a variety of public and private agencies: the El Paso Department of Human Services, including its special Center on Fathering; Maximus, the privatized child support vendor; Goodwill Industries, the privatized employment vendor; and the Women's Resource Agency.

The project is staffed by a coordinator and one full-time and one half-time case managers, with specialized liaison workers at Maximus, Goodwill, and the Women's Resource Agency. During an intake interview with a POP case manager, noncustodial parents tell their story, develop a case plan (which results in a signed contract), and receive referrals to appropriate support services, including employment assistance and personalized child support interventions. Other agencies provide services on an as-needed basis, including mediation through the Office of Dispute Resolution in the Fourth Judicial District, and other community organizations for supervised visitation, counseling, drug and alcohol evaluations, and mental health treatment. The child support agency suspends child support obligations for eligible participants for up to three months and will review and modify orders. The Women's Resource Agency has been especially helpful in contacting custodial mothers to see if they are willing to mediate or agree to temporary support abatements. The Agency also offers supportive services to custodial parents, and stresses the importance of fathers in children's lives.

The majority of the 100 clients referred to the project by the end of 1999 were referred by child support technicians. In the first year of operations, each establishment technician at Maximus was instructed to send a specified number of cases to the program each month. This policy was subsequently revised, and both establishment and enforcement technicians have been asked to refer any relevant case to the program. Technicians convey their referrals directly to POP case managers so that project staff may make direct contact if individuals fail to make contact on their own. Over time, referrals from other sources have grown considerably. Non-child support referrals are routinely made by community corrections and parole officers, court-appointed special advocates in child abuse and neglect cases, and other community agencies.

The Center on Fathering, which is a special unit within social services, has provided a variety of services to POP participants, including (at various times) peer support interventions, classes on conflict resolution, and fathering/co-parenting classes.



Maryland

The OCSE grant to the Community Services Administration of the Maryland Department of Human Resources funds two Responsible Fatherhood Demonstration Projects. In Baltimore, the grant builds on the Young Fathers/Responsible Fathers Program (YF/RF), a state-funded initiative in operation since 1994. The OCSE-funded initiative is known as the Responsible Fatherhood Project (Baltimore RFP). The grant funds one staff member, but the project also draws on seven additional YF/RF staff members. The grant also affords the initiation of father-focused programming in Charles County, a suburban portion of the state.

One objective of Baltimore RFP was to expand the type of services provided by YF/RF to the southern quadrant of the city, which is economically distressed and geographically isolated. As part of that effort, Baltimore RFP collaborated with two key entities in South Baltimore: Harbor Hospital, which houses the project office and whose pediatric social work staff agreed to assist with

recruiting new parents and pregnant teenagers; and the Southern Neighborhood Service Center, which has linkages to neighborhood associations and community groups in the area. Other major project collaborators are the Baltimore Urban League and the Baltimore Employment Exchange, which provide employment services and weekly employment development classes.

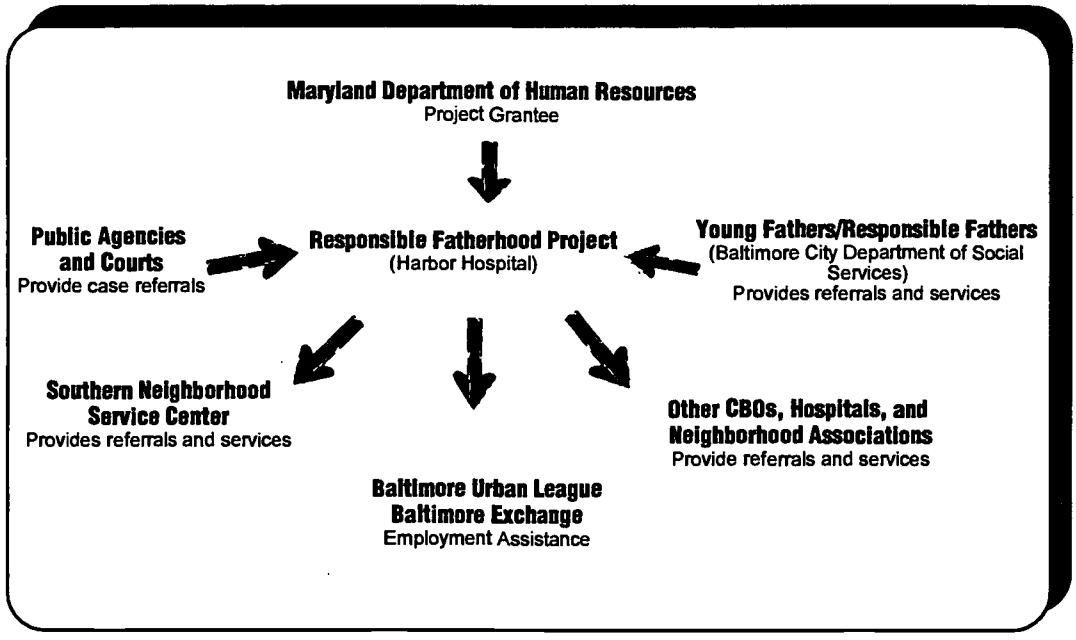
Baltimore RFP targets unwed or expectant fathers (including those who are in intact families) ages 14 to 45 who "are at risk of forsaking their parental responsibilities . . . due to social and economic disadvantages." Clients meet with case managers for an intake assessment, during which they identify their needs, capabilities, and goals.

All clients are instructed to attend six months of weekly, two-hour parenting/peer support sessions. Baltimore RFP uses the Responsible Fatherhood Program curriculum developed by the National Center for Strategic Nonprofit Planning and Community Leadership (NPCL), which includes parenting, life skills, and relationship components. Those who attend at least 80 percent of the class sessions receive a certificate at a formal graduation ceremony. Graduates may participate in an "After Care Program" for continued group support. To promote attendance, participants receive two free bus tokens and a $4 MacDonald's gift certificate each time they come to Baltimore RFP for a class or meeting with a case manager. They also get a stipend of $50 at graduation and an interim stipend of $50 if they attend regularly for the first four months.

In addition to the parenting/peer support component, clients who are under- or unemployed may be referred for job search and employment skills training. Referrals may also be made for other services as needed, such as substance abuse treatment, mediation, or counseling. Baltimore RFP offers a court-approved treatment program for batterers at no charge to the participants. At the close of 1999, the program had served 75 fathers, the majority of whom were referred by the courts, the correction system, or by word-of-mouth.

The Charles County program, begun in late March 1999, served 23 participants by the end of 1999. At that point, the case manager, the only person staffing the project, changed jobs and the program became inactive. Operated through the Charles County Department of Social Services, the program targeted unemployed fathers of children receiving TANF. One of the primary objectives of the program was to recruit fathers into the employment program currently available to Charles County TANF recipients. Fathers were to participate on a voluntary basis. Only a few fathers actually participated in the employment program by the end of 1999.

When the project was in operation, referrals were mostly obtained by directly telephoning delinquent obligors and later through word-of-mouth. The case manager spent a considerable amount of time working with fathers on a variety of issues: visitation, transportation, lack of an identification card. Eventually, the case manager set up a peer support group, which was suspended when the case manager changed jobs. There are no plans to reactivate the project in Charles County at this time.



Massachusetts

The Father Friendly Initiative (FFI) is a service program for men that is operated under the Boston Healthy Start Initiative, a program of the Boston Public Health Commission. It involves a collaboration between the Boston Public Health Commission and the Department of Revenue, which operates the child support program in Massachusetts. FFI seeks to serve fathers with low to no income and enhance their participation in their children's lives by addressing their needs and concerns. Designed to reintegrate the father into the family, the FFI case manager works with each client to assess the barriers to family reintegration that he faces and to identify the appropriate mix of services that he needs.

FFI publicizes its services aggressively and has gained visibility through the use of radio commercials and bus advertisements, as well as giveaways in Boston Healthy Start booths at job

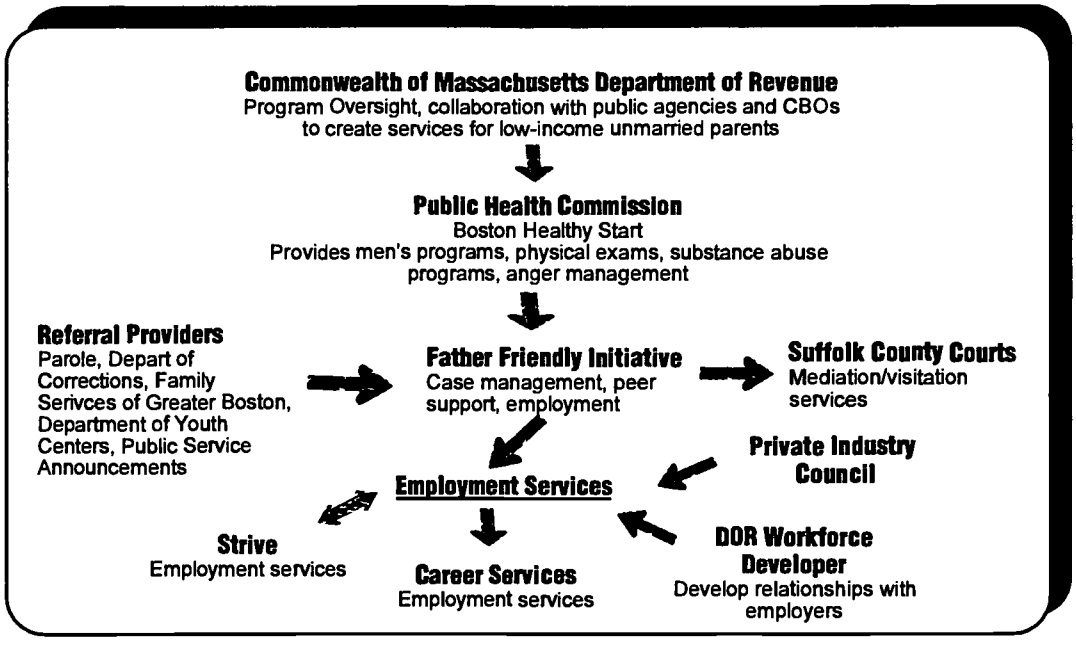
fairs, concerts, and other public events that attract families. FFI also accepts referrals from a variety of community groups, as well as child support, health service providers, the court, the Department of Corrections, and other public agencies.

A key service provided under the program is a weekly peer support group that involves 16 lessons and is offered at four different locations. In most cases, participants attend the support group on a voluntary basis; a few of the participants who are referred by the criminal justice system are mandated to attend. The intervention is both educational and therapeutic. The curriculum is adopted from the NPCL curriculum and covers the issues of self-esteem, child care, child development, relationships, and parenting. In addition to presentations and activities on these topics, there is also open-ended discussion about these and other issues relevant to the participants.

FFI seeks to place participants in quality jobs that offer liveable wages and have the potential for wage growth. Employment services, including job readiness, job training, and job search, are provided through a variety of collaborations. For example, FFI collaborates with STRIVE, a community-based non-profit organization that serves the hard-to-employ, to offer basic employment training, and Massachusetts Rehabilitation, which offers longer-term vocational training programs. FFI also works with a job developer retained by the Department of Revenue to cultivate employers willing to hire hard-to-place populations.

Individuals may receive a variety of other services as needed. These services are provided through collaborations with local community health centers, public agencies, and its on-site resources. For example, FFI offers participants assistance with paternity establishment, child support review, advocacy in obtaining visitation and custody rights, health services, and counseling.

FFI began to accept referrals in March 1999 and had 140 participants by the end of 1999. FFI is also participating in the Partners for Fragile Families Demonstration Project, which focuses on younger fathers who have no history with the child support agency.

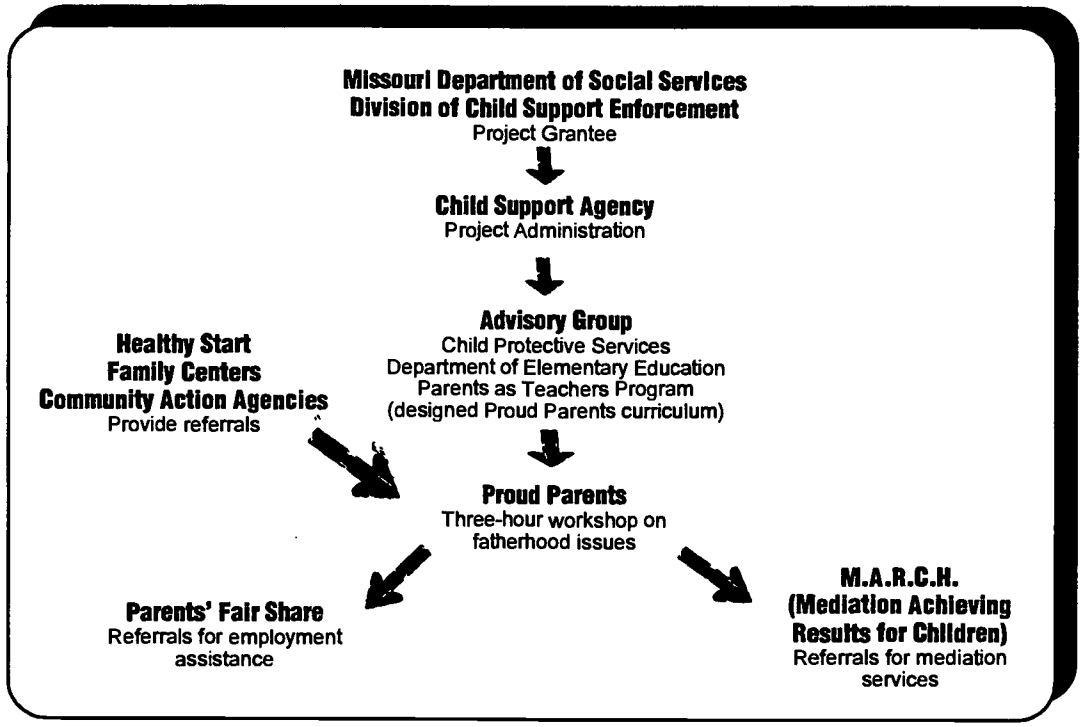


Missouri

The Proud Parents program is administered by the Office of Child Support Enforcement of the Missouri Department of Social Services. It currently operates in Cape Girardeau County. Plans to expand the program to additional counties have been delayed due to problems with contracts, staffing, and other issues. The goal of the program is to offer a three-hour workshop for noncustodial fathers to address a wide range of fatherhood issues, including self-esteem, father-child relationship, mother-child relationship, and financial responsibilities. Seminar participants who need help with employment are referred to Parents' Fair Share, a statewide employment program that originated in the pilot phase of the national demonstration project of the same name, but is not independent and different. Those who need help seeing their children are referred to family mediation through Mediation Achieving Results for Children (MARCH).

The project has had major problems with recruitment. First, staff tried to recruit participants for its parenting workshop by mailing invitations directly to poor unmarried parents in cases with children less than two years old and asking them to participate. This effort yielded virtually no attendees. Since then, an independent, part-time outreach worker was hired to recruit fathers from child support agency referrals, Missouri's Parents' Fair Share, Department of Probation/Parole, Head Start, and other agencies. Proud Parents now targets unwed fathers with children age five or younger.

Outreach workers receive a $10 bonus for each father they recruit to the parenting seminar. These efforts yielded 22 participants for three workshops between August and November, 1999.



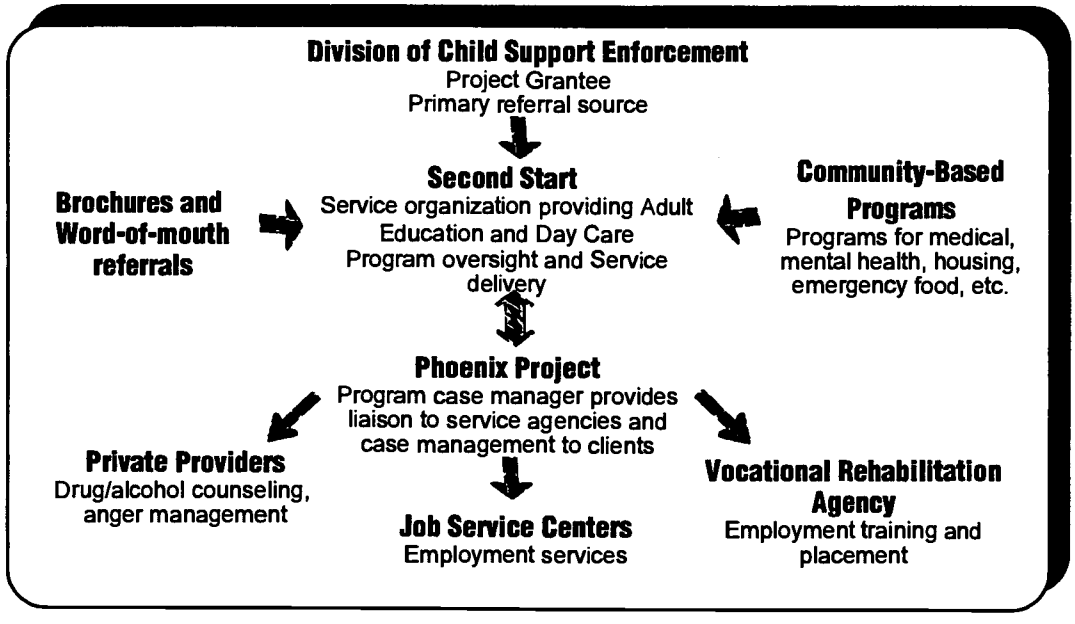
New Hampshire

The program in this state, known as Phoenix Project, operates in three counties: Merrimack, Belknap, and Hillsborough. The Division of Child Support is the program grantee, but Phoenix Project is housed in Second Start, a community organization involved in adult education, day care, and a variety of other issues. The program serves noncustodial parents with low incomes who have child support orders and are delinquent in their child support payments. The primary source of referrals is the child support agency. Support technicians target unemployed individuals or those with low orders (*i.e.*, those with $50 per month orders). Technicians give noncustodial parents a brochure and some information about the program and encourage them to call a case manager and enter the program. The case manager believes that most people follow through on this suggestion and do call to schedule an intake interview. In addition to child support, some clients are referred by adult education programs and community agencies such as those involved with consumer credit counseling.

Participants meet with the project case manager for an intake interview. At this time, the case manager determines client needs, which might include education, locating a job, or assistance with

child support. The educational component can include adult basic education testing to assess the client's needs and/or referral to a GED program. The job component relies on existing community resources, such as job service centers. However, the case manager works with each individual to provide a personal introduction to these resources and assists clients with their effective utilization. Among the employment services available are vocational assessment; help with job readiness and résumé preparation; and assistance in using the community job center to find employment, or better employment at a higher pay level or with better benefits. The case manager also works with every client to check on his or her child support situation. This can include setting up and attending meetings or court hearings with the client and the child support agency to obtain information on paternity, order establishment, enforcement, or modification. Project participants may experience relief in their arrearage obligations during their enrollment, as child support technicians are able to suspend payments on arrearages during project participation.

The program does not focus on access. Attempts to hold parenting classes and peer support groups have been unsuccessful. Nor does the program offer mediation or legal services, although staff can refer interested clients to relevant service providers in the community. The New Hampshire project had 70 participants by the end of 1999. Staff estimate that about one-fifth of the clients are noncustodial mothers.



Washington

Devoted Dads is housed and operated by the Metropolitan Development Council (MDC) for Pierce County, an established, multi-service, non-profit organization that operates more than 30 social services programs. Washington receives federal child support enforcement matching funds for Devoted Dads. The Pierce County Health Department provides Devoted Dads with the non-federal funds that are needed to draw down federal dollars. MDC is responsible for program oversight, and several of the sister programs housed at MDC offer critical services to participants in Devoted Dads.

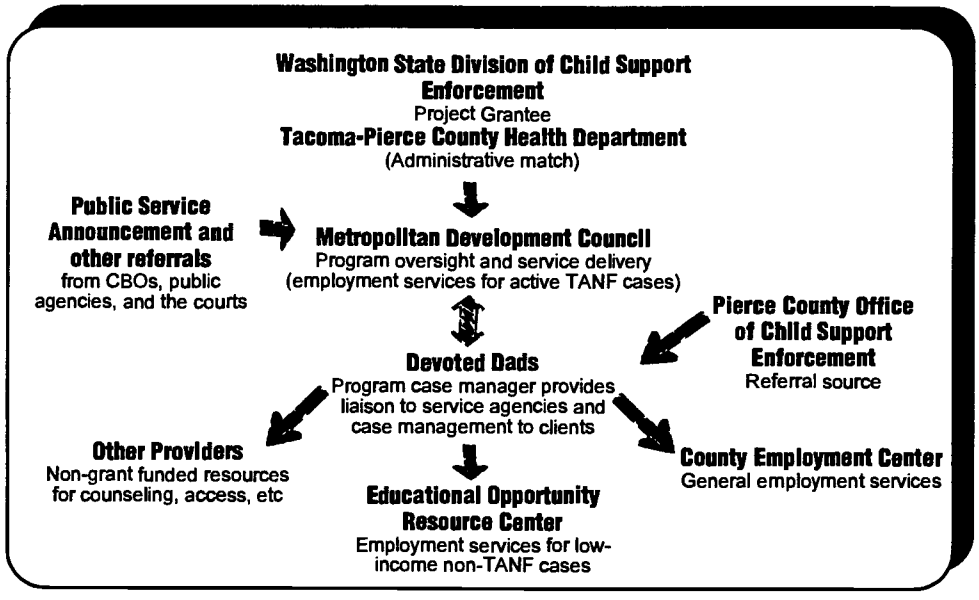
In addition to collaborations between and among the programs sponsored by MDC, Devoted Dads reflects a wide collaboration of agencies in Pierce County. The primary partners are agencies dealing with child support, health, economic development, and employment. The goal of the project is two-fold: to increase public awareness of the importance of the role of fathers in the lives of their children, and to improve the ability of young, low-income fathers to participate responsibly in the lives of their children. The original target population for the project was low-income fathers under the age of 25 who live in the Empowerment Zone.

Devoted Dads has conducted a public education campaign to heighten public awareness about the importance of fathers. The program has recruited participants through public service announcements on radio and television, flyers and brochures, presentations to community groups, and through its contacts with staff at child support and health services agencies. About half of all cases are referred by child support technicians. Devoted Dads also receives referrals from a jail diversion project offering early release options to targeted offenders who participate in services leading to employment and responsible fatherhood.

Program staff screen clients at intake for employment, child support, access, parenting, substance abuse, and other problems. During this intake, an individualized service plan is developed. In the past, classes have been held at the Devoted Dads location on parenting, childbirth, cooking, and budgeting/money management. Participants are also referred for a wide array of services at other MDC programs and other organizations in Pierce County. One of the most popular features of the program has been a contract attorney who provides seminars, and limited individual assistance on access and child support issues. The attorney can also refer clients to legal aid, mediation, or other relevant resources.

The Devoted Dads staff consists of three full-time employees: a social worker and two fatherhood development specialists. They are assisted by two student interns. The contract attorney spends one day per week at the project office; a paralegal helps participants complete forms and other *pro se* filings two days per week

By the end of 1999, project evaluators had received information on 237 noncustodial parents being served at Devoted Dads. During the first three months of 2000, evaluators received information on another 88 clients. Staff report that the flow of new clients has grown to about 50 per month, as jail diversions have increased and word spreads about the legal seminars and assistance offered by the contract attorney.



Wisconsin

Children UpFront was founded in 1990 by Jerry Hamilton, one of the pioneers of fatherhood programs. It is administered by Goodwill Industries and, in addition to Hamilton, the staff consists of a program coordinator, an administrative assistant, an outreach specialist, a marketing specialist, a job specialist, and four case managers.

The OCSE grant has allowed Children UpFront to extend its services to both mothers and fathers and pursue the concept of "team parenting," which aims to reduce conflict between parents, increase

the child's time with each parent, increase the earning potential of parents, and encourage voluntary child support and financial contributions of both parents to the child. Children UpFront targets young, unmarried, and economically disadvantaged parents under the age of 30. In some cases, the first overture is made with a young, unwed mother, and after establishing a relationship with her, the outreach specialist pursues contact with the father. Alternatively, if contact is made first with a father, the outreach specialist will try to locate the mother and elicit her participation

Children UpFront receives referrals from a variety of public agencies and community-based organizations. Two major referral sources for the project are the TANF and child protective services agencies. TANF workers refer mothers who are not complying with agency requirements, and child protection workers refer mothers who should be paying child support for children in foster care. In addition, Children UpFront receives referrals from probation and parole. Referrals may be made by individual child support workers. At one time, the project also received referrals from the court as part of its Children First intervention, which mandates delinquent noncustodial parents with unemployment or low employment situations to engage in 32 hours of employment-related activities per week. The project no longer has the contract to serve these cases, and it is experimenting with alternative recruitment techniques. Finally, a Children UpFront outreach specialist regularly sets up a table with fliers every week at key service organizations, such as WIC, health clinics, community centers, planned parenthood, and schools with teen parent programs, to solicit referrals.

Recruits attend a one-hour orientation session, which is held three times per week. A few days later, they meet with a case manager to conduct a full assessment and construct a "personal development plan." The core of the program is a course on parental responsibility that all participants must attend. Program completion requires an attendance rate of 80 percent or better. One week of the course (8 to 10 hours) is a co-ed motivational workshop on parental responsibility that covers the significance of paternity and the child support system. The next part of the program is Fatherhood and Motherhood Development classes, which are sex-segregated courses comprised of 25 sessions that deal with child development, anger management, and communication issues. There are also peer support meetings for open discussions of material covered in the classes on parental responsibility. All programs are open-ended, allowing participants to enter and exit on their own schedule.

There is an employment resource room at Children UpFront that contains two computers and a printer that participants may use for résumé and letter writing. The center is linked to Wisconsin Job Net, which includes local and national job listings. The project hired an employment specialist in

late 1999. One of her responsibilities is to offer job readiness classes on site. There are no on-the-job training opportunities.

Case managers have on-site access to child support records so they can apprise participants of their child support status. However, the child support agency does not offer special accommodations for low-income project participants with respect to current support and/or arrears. Under the Wisconsin child support guidelines, order amounts are set at 17 percent of gross income for one child, with the minimum order being $32 per week. Interest is charged on arrears at 18 percent compounded.

Finally, Children UpFront provides case management with the objective of helping parents meet their basic needs and make positive changes. Case managers have access to vouchers that can be used to obtain housing, clothing and other living requirements. Case managers also help to informally mediate access and visitation problems and develop parenting plans that specify how the child's time will be divided between the parents. Case managers monitor client progress, suggest additional services, and push clients toward meeting their goals. According to case managers, fathers are chiefly interested in employment, continuing education, and housing. Mothers, on the other hand, are interested in paternity, child care, parenting plans, and the motherhood development programs. This is particularly true for those who seek the return of their children from foster care.

Children UpFront is also a PFF demonstration site, which will be conducted in both Milwaukee and Racine. By the end of 1999, the project had provided services to 87 participants. Approximately 18 of this number were team parents; that is, there were nine couples where both the mother and father were enrolled in services.

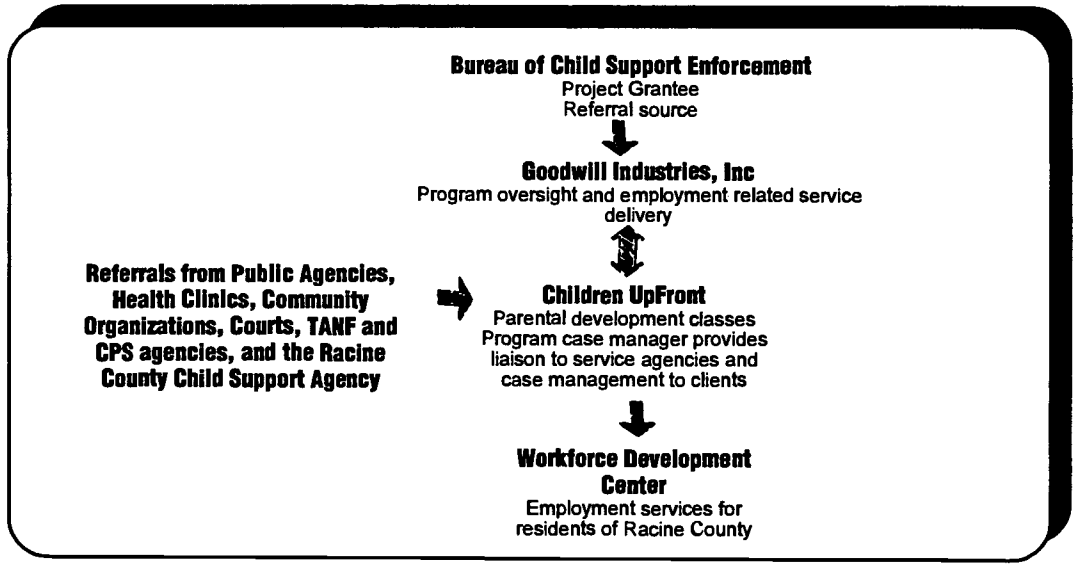


Table 3. Overview of Site Operations: December 1999

	San Mateo, CA	El Paso County, CO	Baltimore, MD	Boston, MA	Cape Girardeau, MO	Belknap, Hillsborough, & Merrimack Counties, NH	Tacoma, WA	Racine, WI
Title	Supportive Services for Noncustodial Parents	Parent Opportunity Project (POP)	Responsible Fatherhood Project (Baltimore RFP)	The Father Friendly Initiative (FFI)	Proud Parents	Phoenix Project	Devoted Dads	Children UpFront
Program Start	1998	1998	1994	1999	1999	1998	1998	1990
Administration	Child Support	Dept of Human Services	Dept of Human Resources	Child Support	Child Support	Child Support	Child Support Health Dept	Child Support
Housed	DA's office	DHS, Child support	Harbor Hospital	Boston Healthy Start	Child Support	Second Start	Metropolitan Development Council	Goodwill Industries
Goals	•Improve child supp •Child access •Improved parenting •Employment •Community awareness	•Improve child supp •Child access •Improved parenting •Employment	•Paternity estab •Improve child supp •Child access •Improved parenting •Employment	•Improve child supp •Child access •Improved parenting •Employment	•Improve child supp •Child access •Improved parenting	•Improve child supp •Child access •Improve parenting •Employment	•Improve child supp •Child access •Improved parenting •Community awareness •Employment	•Team parenting •Improve child supp •Child access •Paternity estab •Improved parenting •Employment
Primary Project Staff	•Investigator •½ time coordinator •½ time clerical •mediator	•2 Case managers at POP office •Liaison workers at Goodwill, Maximus, Women's Resource Agency, Center on Fathering	•Program manager •2 admin •Assessment coordinator •6 outreach workers	•Project director •Project manager •Job resource coord •2 outreach workers •Case manager	1-2 recruiters/ site workshop coord	Project coordinator	•Project manager •Project supervisor •2 fatherhood specialists •1 contract attorney •1 paralegal •2 interns	•Program director •Program coord •1 outreach worker •4 case managers •1 job specialist •1 marketing specialist
Original Population Targeted for Services	Parents not paying support	Low income Under- & unemployed	At risk of non-support (ages 14-45)	Fathers 16-35	Low-income Unmarried fathers with children ≤ 5	Unemployed and low-income noncustodial parents	Fathers 18-25 low income children ≤ 6 Empowerment Zone residents	Unmarried mothers & fathers Under- & unempld Parents under age 30 Parents with children in foster care
Date first case enrolled☆	June 1998	August 1998	July 1998	March 1999	August 1999	July 1998	August 1998	January 1999

Table 3. Overview of Site Operations: December 1999

	San Mateo, CA	El Paso County, CO	Baltimore, MD	Boston, MA	Cape Girardeau, MO	Belknap, Hillsborough, & Merrimack Counties, NH	Tacoma, WA	Racine, WI
Services ★	employment access child support parenting skills class mediation supervised visitation public education	employment access child support peer support mediation case management supervised visit parent education services to mothers	employment child support peer support 6 mo parenting classes other as needed case mgt "after care" for graduates	employment access child support peer support - core other as needed case management	employment access parenting child support mediation father's rights ed	employment child support GED others as needed case mgt	employment child support parenting seminar other as needed system changes case management legal seminars money management	employment parenting programs mediation child support peer support team parenting case mgt
Clients enrolled through 3/00	53 (1/00 - 3/00) 300 reported by staff in 1999	136	Baltimore: 66 Charles County: 23	153	22	77	325 (500 reported by staff)	96
Referral sources attempted to date	Identified by techs Non-paying cs cases 7 CBOs with grants to explain cs to NCP Mailing to CSE clients Press release Misc	Mailing to non-pay CSE techs Hospital contact Court Churches Community corrections Court appointed special advocates Other community Word-of-mouth	Courts Other community Word of mouth	Radio ads Courts Health centers Other community	Parenting Workshop to groups of NCPs (e.g., thru existing jobs programs) Community recruiters	Child support techs Community groups Courts	Child support Cases with child ≤ 6 Health centers Word-of-mouth Jail diversion project	Courts Community gourps Referrals pursued by outreach workers based at WIC Health clinics Schools Voluntary except for court referrals

☆ Includes only new cases enrolled after OSCE grant award

★ "Employment" indicates the program plans assistance such as job training, job readiness workshops, job search ; "Child support" indicates the program plans to work with the child support agency to revise orders, abate orders, establish paternity, reduce debt etc.; "Access" indicates the program will provide assistance around access/visitation issues

Chapter 3

Participant Recruitment, Qualifications, and Retention

Recruitment

The most frequently used method of recruiting fathers in order to assist them with jobs and other support services is to obtain referrals from the courts and child support agencies. For example, participants in the Parents' Fair Share (PFS) projects consisted exclusively of unemployed or underemployed, non-paying obligors whose children received TANF benefits and who could be located and ordered by the court to attend. Wisconsin's Children First program also mandates noncustodial parents who do not pay child support to seek employment or face incarceration.

Even programs that use court referrals, however, face significant recruitment problems. Many individuals do not show up for court hearings; many do not follow up and attend programs the court orders them to try. In the seven PFS demonstration projects, for example, researchers estimate that only 5 to 70 percent of the located, eligible noncustodial parents showed up in court or before the administrative agency for a hearing and were referred to the project. The pool of actual participants was further reduced by the fact that one-third of qualifying individuals who were ordered by a judge or hearing officer to attend PFS never showed up for an orientation (Doolittle and Lynn, 1998).

The funders of the Responsible Fatherhood Demonstration Projects were interested in broadening the recruitment effort and exploring the efficacy of engaging noncustodial parents voluntarily, particularly at time points close to the birth of their children. There was particular interest in the feasibility of recruiting noncustodial parents in prenatal, at-birth, and postpartum settings and in cultivating referrals from hospital-based paternity programs. There was also interest in pursuing referrals from community-based organizations that serve low-income families.

This chapter describes the different methods that programs used to recruit and retain participants.

Child Support Referrals

Child support technicians, judges, and hearing officers are primary sources of referrals at half the many program sites. In *California*, for example, child support is the exclusive source of program referrals to the Supportive Services for Noncustodial Parents Project. Child support workers offer employment services to noncustodial parents who are delinquent in their child support payments and cite problems with work as the reason for their nonpayment. They extend the mediation offer to all agency clients who have problems with access regardless of their payment status. Interested clients complete a referral form to Family Court Services for mediation or to the county employment program, Success Central, for job skills training. Referrals to the Supportive Services Project can also come from judges and hearing officers at court during non-support proceedings. Finally, some referrals are due to mailings by the child support agency to 28,000 existing clients and to parents who acknowledged paternity in hospital settings.

Referrals by child support technicians are also the mainstay of Phoenix Project in *New Hampshire*. According to the project brochure, Phoenix Project "works with unemployed and underemployed noncustodial parents who are referred through the Division of Child Support Services." Child support technicians tell delinquent noncustodial parents who are unemployed or those with minimum child support orders about the project and give them the case manager's telephone number. The judge who hears child support cases may also order parents into the program. Child support technicians relay information about potential clients directly to the case manager, and project intakes are typically conducted at the child support agency. The case manager estimates that most of the project participants are referred by the child support agency, although word-of-mouth referrals have picked up with the passage of time.

While Maximus, the child support agency in El Paso County, *Colorado*, is not the exclusive source of referrals for the Parent Opportunity Project, it is a primary source. Unlike New Hampshire, however, child support technicians in Colorado are more aggressive in their referral protocol. Technicians on the agency's establishment team urge qualifying parents to contact the POP case manager. Noncustodial parents who are delinquent on their child support payments and who are either under- or unemployed may be told by Maximus to contact a POP case manager to avoid other more serious enforcement remedies. Those who ignore this advice are at risk of being referred to the court's contempt calendar. The technicians also send the noncustodial parent's name and phone number directly to the POP case manager via e-mail. If the potential participant fails to contact the POP case manager on his/her own, the case manager may contact him/her directly to offer services.

Project staff at *Washington*'s Devoted Dads project estimate that about half of its referrals are from the child support agency. Most referrals are made directly by child support technicians. However, Devoted Dads has also left tear-off flyers about the project in elevators at the child support agency, and this has generated some participants, as has word-of-mouth. Devoted Dads also pursues referrals from many other community agencies and receives a growing number of referrals from a jail diversion program.

The other sites (Massachusetts, Maryland, Wisconsin, and Missouri) receive child support referrals much less frequently and rely on other recruitment techniques discussed below.

Direct Phone Calls and Mailings

Four projects – the Parent Opportunity Project in *Colorado*, *Missouri*'s Proud Parents, *California's* Services for Noncustodial Parents, and the former project based in Charles County, *Maryland* – experimented with direct mailings and cold calls to generate project participants. The case manager in Charles County phoned 120 noncustodial parents on the child support agency's master case list who were delinquent in their child support. About one-third of the phone numbers were good numbers; the remaining were out of service or the parent was no longer at that number. When the case manager reached a father, he would explain that Charles County was starting a new program for fathers, and he would ask fathers about their relationship with their children and what type of services they need. Somewhat less than half agreed to set up an appointment to discuss these issues in more detail. In all, about ten percent of the original calls led to a personal contact. While direct phoning did not yield many responses, the individuals who responded frequently brought a friend in a similar situation to the program, and this started the word-of-mouth process that was used to generate the remainder of the participants at this small site.

In El Paso County, *Colorado*, the Parent Opportunity Program began operations by mailing information about the program to all noncustodial parents who appeared in the automated child support system as located but not paying support. Noncustodial parents were invited to call the POP case manager to receive services dealing with employment, parenting, and child support. The tone of the letter was positive and helpful; there was no sanction for failure to contact POP. Only three intake interviews resulted from over 300 mailings, and this approach was subsequently abandoned due to a lack of response.

In a similar vein, the child support agency in San Mateo County, *California*, sent a letter advertising the employment services offered by its job vendor to every noncustodial parent in its caseload without a known employer. Staff report that there was not a single response to the 800 letters they mailed. Nor were any project participants generated from the mailings the agency does to all fathers who sign paternity declarations in hospital settings. The mailed brochures list "father-friendly" services in the community, including those offered through the project.

Finally, Proud Parents in *Missouri* used lists generated by the child support agency to target attendees for its parent education program. In its original format, the intended population for Proud Parents consisted of unmarried parents with a child under the age of 24 months (later extended to 5 years) who were receiving public assistance and were known to the child support agency. Evaluators for Proud Parents at the University of Missouri mailed flyers to 800 parents inviting them to attend a program and attempted to extend phone invitations to as many of these parents as possible. They offered a catered dinner, child care, and gifts for the children as incentives to promote attendance. In Kansas City, ten mothers and their families registered, but only six actually attended. In the Cape Girardeau area, letters were sent to 22 parents identified by the child support agency (although the agency was not identified on the letterhead or anywhere else in the literature on the program). In addition to a catered dinner, program planners offered child care and transportation to the Head Start Center where the class was to be held. Despite these incentives, no parent called to reserve a spot and no one showed up on the designated date.

The University of Missouri evaluators noted several difficulties with their recruitment approach. Due to the transience of the populations being recruited, address and telephone numbers for urban residents were frequently incorrect, making phone contacts virtually impossible, and many letters were returned as undeliverable. Another problem was the individual's lack of knowledge about the sponsoring organization. The mailed information was released under the name of Proud Parents, which was unrecognizable to participants. And although there was no mention of the child support agency, the phone number to call to make a required reservation for the dinner/program was a state agency number. As a result of these experiences, program architects decided to refocus the program to serve low-income unmarried fathers, and rely on paid community recruiters to identify relevant participants.

Word-of-Mouth Referrals

Four of the eight Responsible Fatherhood Demonstration Projects report success with word-of-mouth referrals, especially as the programs become more established. Word-of-mouth referrals are key recruitment mechanisms for the Children UpFront Project in *Wisconsin* and Baltimore RFP in *Maryland.* Children UpFront was founded in 1990 by Jerry Hamilton, one of the pioneers of programs to promote fatherhood. It has served over 1,000 individuals during the past ten years. For nine of those years, the project was the vendor for the county's Children First program, which mandates nonpaying obligors with high arrears to engage in 32 hours per week of employment-seeking activities or face incarceration. Project staff maintain that as a result, Children UpFront is well known among poor, vulnerable families.

Baltimore RFP grew out of YF/RF, which began in 1993 in Arundel County. YF/RF was expanded in 1994 to five additional counties, including Baltimore City, where it enjoys high visibility and has a track record of serving poor fathers. Consequently, as a result of its association with YF/RF, Baltimore RFP enjoys this same visibility, and it is estimated that half of the participants are word-of-mouth referrals.

Word-of-mouth referrals have also increased at the projects in *Massachusetts* and *Washington*. For example, program staff in Washington report that many new clients come to Devoted Dads because they have heard about the legal seminars and free assistance offered by the project's contract attorney and paralegal. Massachusetts staff also characterize a significant proportion of new clients as friends and family of existing clients.

Community Agency Referrals

Several projects have experimented with generating referrals from a variety of community agencies. For example, *Wisconsin*'s Children UpFront employs an outreach specialist whose job it is to solicit participants at other service organizations. With the consent of agency directors, the outreach specialist regularly sets up tables with project flyers at designated agency settings. He also meets with agency staff to explain the program and elicit their support in making suitable referrals. The settings targeted for recruitment activities are WIC offices, health clinics, community centers, Planned Parenthood, and schools.

After its disappointing experiences with direct mailings and phone calls using lists maintained by the child support agency, *Missouri*'s Proud Parents hired a part-time recruiter whose job it is to

cultivate relationships with key organizations that serve low-income fathers in Cape Girardeau, the site of the project. The recruiter focuses on pediatric centers that serve low-income populations ("Healthy Start"), the child support agency, the agency that provides employment, and other organizations involved with community action.

Case managers with the *Colorado* POP project did extensive community outreach to cultivate referrals. They have made presentations at shelters and have presented information to TANF workers. They have also formed partnerships with several key community entities that not only provide services, but can also make referrals to the program, such as the Department of Human Services. These partnerships also include the Center on Fathering, which provides supportive services to custodial and noncustodial fathers of all ages and backgrounds, and the Women's Resource Agency, which assists custodial and noncustodial mothers. Staff recently began to teach a course for young fathers at a local high school.

Staff at *Washington*'s Devoted Dads have also reached out to many community agencies and organizations through its brochures, flyers, and networking. A key source of referrals are the sister agencies that are located at the Metropolitan Development Council or within a few blocks of the Devoted Dads. These include an employment program for noncustodial parents (Work First); a career center, the Educational Opportunity Resource Center; a substance abuse treatment clinic; and adult education providers. Staff say that geographical proximity makes it easy for Devoted Dads to collaborate with such agencies for referrals and service delivery. Among the other community outreach efforts Devoted Dads has pursued are brochures at WIC sites, presentations to schools, and outreach to area recreation centers and youth agencies serving young, low-income men. While Devoted Dads has attempted to recruit at HeadStart programs and preschools, this has proven to be less effective since fathers are rarely present at these settings and/or they fall outside the age and income range targeted for project participation. Staff are reporting more success reaching young fathers by recruiting at a class offered at the Urban League and by using its young staff interns to do one-on-one outreach at area churches and organizations that attract young people.

Although the *California* project relies exclusively on referrals from child support technicians, the child support agency tried to increase its visibility among community agencies that serve low-income populations. Using grant resources, the child support agency made $5,000 awards to seven community organizations that agreed to educate their staff about child support matters. A representative of each recipient agency attended a three-day training program on child support. The

trained staff member was required to introduce the rest of the staff to the issue of child support. Four months later, the trainees returned to the child support agency for a debriefing. The selected grantees included entities dealing with health, child care, substance abuse, and teen health. According to the project director, the most valuable outcome was cultivating personal ties between child support and community personnel. As the child support director puts it:

> These CBO workers know that if they see people who have child support issues, they now know a child support worker they can contact. By the same token, child support workers now know CBO staff and that makes the referral process work better both ways.

Referrals from Hospitals and Birthing Facilities

Staff at two of the projects have attempted to generate referrals from maternity departments at area hospitals, but neither has had much success. Case managers at *Colorado*'s POP project have a hospital maternity ward representative serving on the advisory board. They were also successful in including a project flyer in the packet of information given to all new parents at the area's largest birthing facility. In addition, case managers are in regular contact with the maternity department to determine whether there are any new parents who might fit the program's requirements (low income, unemployed or underemployed, unmarried, or at risk of family dissolution). Case managers made regular visits to the hospital to keep the program visible to staff at the maternity departments and to explain POP to parents. However, to date there have been few referrals as a result of these efforts. POP staff also pursued the possibility of making presentations at prenatal hospital orientations, but the prenatal program staff were reluctant to include POP in the curriculum.

Staff at *Washington*'s Devoted Dads have also tried to cultivate referrals of young, new fathers by developing a collaboration with maternity support nurses based at decentralized health offices at 13 different locations in Pierce County, known as Family Support Centers. Maternity support nurses attempt to conduct home visits or telephone interviews with all newly delivering mothers in Pierce County. One of the objectives of these visits and calls is to refer new parents to relevant community services, including Devoted Dads. Staff have also done outreach to maternity support nurses located at WIC offices, which provide nutritional supplements for pregnant women, infants, and children under the age of five, as well as refer parents to various community services.

Despite these efforts, *Washington* staff estimate that only a few referrals have come from maternity support nurses. One impediment to reaching new fathers at Family Support Centers and WIC offices

is that fathers are rarely on scene. At both sites, maternity support nurses tend to interact with mothers who do not always relay information about Devoted Dads to the baby's father. Another obstacle is the sheer number of rival concerns that maternity support nurses have when they meet with mothers during their pregnancy and after the birth of their babies. In addition to trying to address the health and nutritional needs of mothers and babies, maternity support nurses are expected to deal with immunizations and screen for a variety of risk factors, such as child abuse and neglect. While father involvement is valued, it is a newer focus for overworked and understaffed hospitals and health agencies. In the absence of a tradition of interviewing mothers about the father's involvement and referring him to programs like Devoted Dads (or a mandate to do so), it is an easy topic to be overlooked.

Referrals from Courts, Child Welfare, and Correctional Agencies

Half of the programs have a substantial group of participants who are referred by a court, correctional institution, or child protective services agency. In some cases, participation is mandated, either for non-payment of support or for reasons unrelated to child support. Baltimore RFP in *Maryland* has perhaps pursued court-mandated referrals most aggressively. Staff maintain that some judges use the program as an alternative to incarceration for misdemeanors. In addition to child support nonpayment cases, judges reportedly send individuals to Baltimore RFP if they have been involved in domestic violence matters and child abuse and neglect filings. The program also receives referrals from parole officers and case managers at the juvenile court and the Department of Juvenile Justice. As one staff member put it, "We get referrals from the court by the busload."

In response to its domestic violence referrals, Baltimore RFP recently added treatment for batterers to the array of services that it offers. Individuals who are required to attend a program for batterers may do so at Baltimore RFP without paying the $35 per session fee charged by other community providers. Fathers involved in child protection matters may be required by the juvenile court to take the parent education curriculum.

Staff at *Wisconsin*'s Children UpFront project also serve court-referred populations, although the number of referrals is less than it used to be since Children UpFront is no longer the entity handling the county's court-ordered program for delinquent child support obligors. As a parenting program that serves both mothers and fathers, most of the mandated referrals it receives come from the child protective services agency and the juvenile court. As a result, some mothers and fathers in the program who are involved in dependency and neglect cases attend the Motherhood and Fatherhood

Development classes to try to regain custody of their child(ren). Children UpFront also gets referrals from probation officers and parole workers for parents who have been convicted of other types of offenses.

Incarcerated noncustodial parents who have children who receive TANF and are selected for jail diversion may be referred to *Washington's* Devoted Dads for job development and assistance with parenting. While participation is not mandated, only those who are actively involved with the program may qualify for early release. At this time, participation is limited to those with a TANF connection, but program architects hope to expand the effort to include a broader group of noncustodial parents. The program targets lower-risk offenders at the Pierce County Correctional Facility, but includes domestic violence offenders and others who have committed serious assaults.

Media Events

Massachusetts' Father Friendly Initiative (FFI) has been successful in using the media and other marketing techniques to make itself known and generate referrals. Based in a public health organization that serves low-income populations, FFI piggybacked on Boston Healthy Start's aggressive outreach efforts to reach low-income men. During its first summer of operation, FFI staff and Healthy Start outreach workers "blitzed every public event that might attract families and men." At Healthy Start booths, staff distributed T-shirts, tote bags, and water bottles advertising FFI to every man who filled out a brief survey. They went to job fairs, jazz concerts, and street fairs. They also ran radio commercials on a popular radio station. By teaming up with radio stations, FFI co-sponsored some popular events like baseball tournaments and barbeques. Program ads featuring photos of fathers and their children were displayed on buses and trains. According to FFI staff, these partnerships, along with FFI's popular giveaways and its presence at community celebrations, have generated a great deal of program visibility and name recognition.

Washington's Devoted Dads also invests a good deal of project energy in publicizing the program to the general public. Like FFI, staff at Devoted Dads have prepared public service announcements to air on local television and radio stations. In its early months of operation, staff distributed over 1,200 pamphlets advertising the program. Staff also attend relevant events and conferences such as the state conference on responsible fatherhood where the project was featured.

Table 4 summarizes the various methods of recruitment employed at the project sites.

Table 4. Primary Methods of Recruiting Project Participants*

Site	Child support referrals	Word-of-mouth	Community agency referrals	Courts and correctional agencies	Media
California	✔				
Colorado	✔		✔		
Maryland	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Massachusetts		✔		✔	✔
Missouri	✔		✔		
New Hampshire	✔				
Washington	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Wisconsin		✔	✔	✔	

*Recruitment at hospitals and prenatal clinics was attempted in Colorado and Washington, but yielded few takers.

Target Population

The Responsible Fatherhood Demonstration Projects vary considerably with respect to who is targeted for services. They also vary in the degree to which they provide services to those who do not fit their program's guidelines for qualifications. Not surprisingly, projects that promote themselves among the general public and use the media to generate name recognition attract a diverse array of participants. For example, *Massachusetts* FFI staff say that although the project seeks to serve low-income or under- or unemployed fathers, they "do not turn anyone away." As a result, somewhat more than half of the participants "fit the target profile." Through its broad-based outreach efforts, the program attracts some middle and upper-income men who are drawn to various components. As one case manager explained:

> We get some middle and upper-income men who want help with substance abuse or anger management and don't want the stigma of going to a batterer's group. Other 'high end' guys just want to be part of a support group.

Staff characterize the project participants as extremely diverse, including men who are not yet fathers but want to do something "preventive;" men in intact families who want to be part of a support group; men who are referred from probation, social services, and prison; and under- and unemployed fathers who need help with employment and child support.

Washington's Devoted Dads also draws a wide variety of participants. As a "self-help center," it attracts many noncustodial parents who want to use the program's resource room and are interested in the legal assistance offered by the project's contract attorney on access and child support matters. Aiming to "empower fathers in the court system," the contract attorney and the project staff offer noncustodial fathers legal education and assistance with *pro se* filings. Staff estimate that they are serving many fathers and mothers who are older and more financially stable than those originally targeted. They are also serving noncustodial mothers. According to the early project documents, the project aimed to serve "fathers under the age of 25, married or unwed with at least one child with income insufficient to meet household/individual needs and a client-initiated desire to become more involved in the child's life."

Some sites have established stricter criteria for eligibility. For example, the *Colorado* POP procedures manual establishes the following "requirements" for POP eligibility: "a noncustodial parent for one or more of their children" (except for hospital referrals where intact families may be accepted for preventive services if they are "deemed at risk"); unemployed or under-employed and having problems paying their child support obligations or having problems with access or visitation; live in El Paso or Teller Counties; and have a legal right to work. The "flexible" definition of under-employment adopted by project staff is income "at or below 185% of the federal poverty level." Noncustodial parents with incomes above this level are referred to other community service providers who offer supportive services for custodial and noncustodial parents of all ages and income levels.

California targets any child support obligor who cites problems with employment and/or access. It also serves custodial parents who have access/custody concerns. There are no income considerations in the allocation of program services and the program director believes that it serves a wide range of income groups. Indeed, 25 percent of clients who requested mediation in 1999 had paid the full amount of child support in the six months prior to the mediation request; another 31 percent had made partial payments. This suggests that the California project may serve middle class obligors as well as those considered to be low income.

New Hampshire targets clients who are delinquent in their child support obligations, with a special emphasis on obligors who are unemployed and/or have minimum orders. Unlike California, it does not serve middle class clients.

Three of the programs – Massachusetts, Maryland, and Missouri – serve only men. Maryland tries to be preventive and serve "men who are at risk of being fathers," as well as those who have children already. The other three focus more exclusively on fathers. The California project serves noncustodial parents of both sexes and also accepts requests for mediation from custodial parents. In serving low-income noncustodial parents, the projects in Colorado and New Hampshire necessarily attract some women who do not have custody of their children. In addition, some programs (*e.g.*, POP, FFI) are extending services to custodial parents in order to enhance visitation and access and encourage flexibility on child support.

Wisconsin's Children UpFront program stands alone in defining itself as a parenting program for both parents. They use the phrase "team parenting" to stress the importance of both parents in a child's life, and encourage both parents to participate. While this results in both men and women being served, both parents are not required to participate in order for a case to be served, and most active cases in Wisconsin do not involve both parents.

Table 5 summarizes the qualifications for participation imposed by the projects.

Table 5. Populations Served at the Projects

	Noncustodial Fathers	Custodial Fathers	Noncustodial Mothers	Custodial Mothers	Low-Income Only
California	✔	✔	✔	✔	
Colorado	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Maryland	✔	✔			✔
Massachusetts	✔	✔			
Missouri	✔				
New Hampshire	✔		✔		✔
Washington	✔	✔			
Wisconsin	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔

No Shows and Retention

For most programs, getting an adequate number of participants is only half the battle. They must also retain them. Retention is not an issue for only two Responsible Fatherhood Projects. Designed as a self-help center to be accessed by individuals on an as-needed basis rather than a multi-session intervention with a program curriculum and case management, *Washington*'s Devoted Dads does not pursue participants who fail to return for services or classes. *Missouri*'s Proud Parents project is designed to be a single-session intervention offering parent education and information about employment and job training services. The sessions are offered in the evening, include a meal, and are held in neighborhoods where participants reside. Referral information is provided for various community services. There is no requirement that participants follow through, although the outreach worker attempts to follow up with all participants, and may assist the clients in making and keeping appointments.

Retention is also a somewhat less critical issue in *California*, although attention to client participation has grown at this site. For example, although child support staff in California began the project with plans merely to mail notices to parents who expressed an interest in mediation, they switched to making telephone contacts with both parents to schedule the mediation session and to remind them to attend. The change was undertaken to reduce the no-show rate, which reportedly dropped from 50 to 20 percent. Since most mediations last only for a single session, retention is not an issue in the California project. Non-appearance, however, is a big problem for Success Central, the project's employment vendor. Staff estimate that only about 15 of the 51 individuals referred in 1999 attended an employment orientation, which translates into an appearance rate of approximately 30 percent. There is no effort to track down and pursue those who fail to appear (although the court may cite a non-attendee to the employment program with a charge of contempt).

All of the remaining programs do face retention issues, although program staff have differing views on retention, the techniques that yield the best results, and the types of participants who are most and least stable. For example, staff at *Maryland's* Baltimore RFP program report that mandated populations are the easiest to engage and retain, and attrition is highest among the voluntary population. As one case manager put it, "When there is a court mandate, you see outcomes. When there isn't a mandate, people walk." Mandated participants may have spillover effects on voluntary clients. For example, FFI staff in *Massachusetts* contend that the faithful attendance patterns exhibited by court-ordered participants helps to build group cohesion and promote the retention of voluntary clients as well.

Staff at *Wisconsin*'s Children UpFront program, on the other hand, view the mandated population as the most challenging. They report that court-ordered participants "come in with an attitude," and that program staff have to work hard to engage them. As the director observed, "You have to turn the court-ordered program to voluntary services or it doesn't work." Fortunately, this is a transformation that is possible to accomplish. As a participant in a support group in the *Massachusetts* FFI observed about his participation status:

> Initially it was a court order but now it has become more voluntary. It is an opportunity to talk with peers about the issues I deal with.

Other approaches to maintaining client participation include the modest food and transportation incentive at *Maryland's* Baltimore RFP. Participants receive a $4 gift certificate to McDonald's and two bus tokens every time they come to a program class or peer support session. They get a stipend of $50 at month four or five of the six-month program and another $50 stipend at the conclusion of the program. Other programs try to facilitate participation by providing bus vouchers or other transportation assistance, and by keeping in regular contact with clients to provide encouragement. Despite these efforts, at many sites attrition is a problem. For example, in *Maryland*, although employment and parenting classes are offered both during the day and night, attendance drops off once participants become employed. Finally, some participants just use the program to get immediate relief and emergency assistance, such as getting their utilities turned on. In these cases, case managers see the participant "once or twice and never again."

Baltimore RFP participants are classified as "active, inactive, and gone." Active participants attend regularly. Inactive participants do not attend classes or peer support group sessions, but "stay in touch." Those who are gone have no contact with project staff. Case managers are ambivalent about those who go. They think that in some cases, the individual does not want to bother and just wants to "spend time with his homies." Others are too frustrated, demoralized, and "knocked down" to continue, and might benefit from home visits and other efforts to keep them engaged. Still others become employed and do not need program services. As one case manager put it:

> The more you coddle them and hand hold, the more they will stay around. So we don't want to be enablers and just try to keep them in the program for six months when they are ready to move on. We are trying to strengthen them and not just be protective (to get a high graduation rate).

Program policy is to send participants who miss more than two consecutive sessions a letter of warning informing them that they will be dropped if they do not contact a case manager within five days. Those who fail to respond to the letter are dropped after five days. Case managers do not routinely make home visits to reestablish contact with lapsed participants.

Case managers at *Colorado*'s POP handle retention much like the case managers in Maryland. Cases are classified as "active," where the participant receives services from one or more providers arranged through the project; "maintenance," where the participant has completed a designated service plan or is approaching completion and needs little oversight by case managers; and "closed," where the participant has either completed all elements of the service plan or has lost contact with the case manager. Individuals who are dropped due to a lack of contact are those who fail to respond to repeat letters from the case manager requesting that they contact the project. Home visits are not routinely used to boost retention.

Case managers at *Wisconsin*'s Children UpFront acknowledge that they walk a fine line when it comes to recruitment and retention. Many clients need a "push" to stay involved. As one case manager said of his clients, "Their nature is not to do anything." Case managers expect to have to keep after their clients in order to keep them engaged. At the same time, they want clients to assume some responsibility for their participation, and those who fail to do so are dropped. In the words of another case manager, "Clients must be able to give at least 50 percent. They can't be dragged along in the program." Like other programs, participation reportedly drops off once clients fulfill required components or achieve the immediate relief that they came in seeking.

Case managers at *Massachusetts*' FFI do follow up telephone calls to participants who fail to appear for a peer support group meeting. They estimate that about 40 to 50 percent of participants access the program in a partial way and come for some specific form of assistance, only to disappear after they receive it. Others leave and resurface and are re-enrolled when they "pop up a second time." Case managers believe that establishing an emotional connection with the individual is the best method of promoting loyalty to the program. The comments of some of the fathers who attended an FFI peer support group during Hurricane Floyd on September 16, 1999, echo this sentiment.

> I work at UPS and I take this night off to come here regularly. It's that important to me.
>
> It's medicine for the mind. They can't give you all the answers but you get advice.

It helps me cope.

I learn things.

This group gives me hope.

The case manager at *New Hampshire*'s Phoenix Project believes that client retention is tied to the individual hands-on attention that she provides. Clients typically do not know about resources that can help; they lack the knowledge, transportation, and skills to access them. She sees her job as providing the one-on-one support needed to link participants to the people, programs, and paths that can improve their lives. In the course of doing this, she accompanies clients to meetings and even transports them if they are unable to get there on their own..

Clients are classified as "active" when they are receiving services through the project. They are classified as "inactive" when initial employment and child support goals have been met, but other issues remain that might warrant project attention over time. "Closed" cases consist of those who have met their goals and do not anticipate needing additional services, as well as those who have been non-compliant, moved out of state, or are incarcerated.

Table 6 summarizes whether retention is a project objective, and if so, how the project attempts to achieve it.

Table 6. Approaches to Retention of Participants

	Retention is not a key objective	Letters and phone calls	Home visits
California	✔		
Colorado		✔	
Maryland		✔	
Massachusetts		✔	
Missouri	✔	✔	✔
New Hampshire		✔	
Washington	✔		
Wisconsin		✔	✔

Chapter 4

Services and Service Integration: Employment and Child Support

The Responsible Fatherhood Demonstration Projects provide an array of services to project participants in order to increase their capacity to support themselves and promote financial and emotional involvement with their children. Each project has selected services believed to be of key interest to its target population and determined whether these services will be provided by in-house staff, contractors, collaborators or other community agencies. Finally, each project must determine how participants will be connected with various services.

These next two chapters summarize the different types of services that programs offer, and the ways they foster collaborations with service-providers and channel participants to activities. First, we focus on employment and child support services. In the following chapter, we discuss other services dealing with access, parenting, and the miscellaneous services that are provided under case management.

Employment

Employment is a goal of every Responsible Fatherhood Demonstration Project. However, the sites place different degrees of emphasis on employment services.

Focus	Secondary
Colorado New Hampshire Maryland Massachusetts Wisconsin	California Missouri Washington

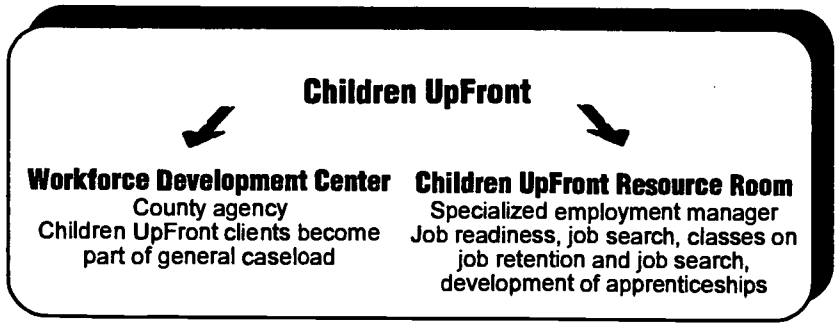
Employment services, including job readiness, job skills training, and job search and placement, are key objectives of the projects in Colorado, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Wisconsin. The programs have tried to find ways to utilize existing community employment services rather than developing and funding such services from scratch. At the same time, the programs have tried to find ways to ensure that their clients receive individualized attention within these larger community services. The programs

have also confronted the challenge of finding employment at a wage level that will allow the client to meet his child support obligations, a challenge often made more difficult by past felony convictions, lack of job skills, and the lack of a high school diploma.

Wisconsin

In Racine, Wisconsin, Children UpFront participants are generally referred to the state's Workforce Development Center. Open to the entire community, the Center has daily workshops on subjects like job searches, interviewing skills, and job readiness. Like other one-stop centers, it has Internet job search resources and newspapers. There are employers who do on-site interviews to fill vacancies. Clients who are associated with an active TANF case are eligible for some additional support services. Although there are on-site employees, Children UpFront participants receive no special treatment or accommodation, and the chief drawback to this model of service delivery is its impersonality. As the manager of Children UpFront observes, "They go to a big room with staff who can help, but they are treated like any other customer."

To provide more personalized service, Children UpFront is developing an Employment Resource Room at its facility, and recently hired an employment case manager. The resource room is linked with JobNet, the statewide, computerized resource for job search. There are computers available for résumé preparation and newspapers for job hunting. In addition to one-on-one assistance from the employment specialists, Children UpFront participants can attend weekly classes on employment retention and job seeking. The employment advancement class focuses on résumé writing and interviewing skills. The class on job seeking serves as a supervised job club. In these structured settings, individuals can pursue their job search together, and report on their progress and impediments under the supervision of the employment specialist.



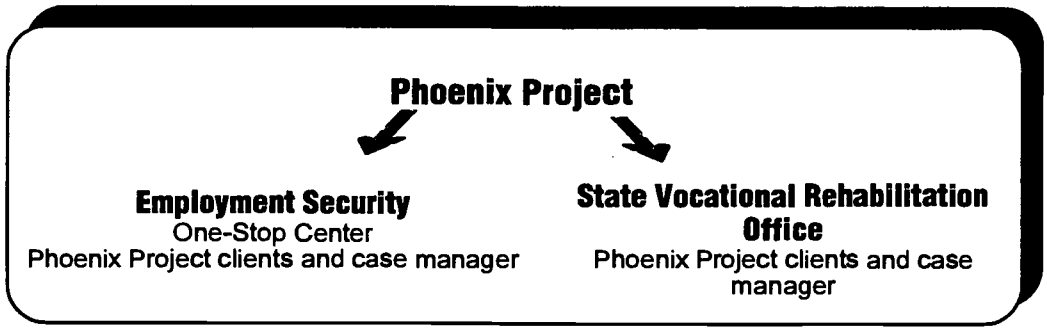
Children UpFront is currently in the process of trying to develop apprenticeships for participants in the trades industry. Under the proposed arrangement, project participants would receive scholarships for training for jobs in carpentry, plumbing, electrical work, painting, etc. It is hoped that this

collaboration with the construction and trade industries will prove to be successful and lead to replications in other industry settings. Children UpFront conducts brief educational assessments as part of its intake process and refers interested individuals for education at various community locations: the Literacy Council for Pre-GED and ESOL training, and the local technical college for GED.

New Hampshire

Staff at New Hampshire's Phoenix Project have also learned that participants require more personal attention than that which is normally accorded to individuals who frequent state and local employment centers. As the director of the project observed:

> I used to just refer them to our one-stop, Employment Security, but then I discovered that they are usually so overwhelmed and intimidated that they can't use the place effectively. They're afraid to go in the building or they don't know how to check the job board or use the computers once they get inside. If I show them how to do these things, they're going to be able to help themselves later on.



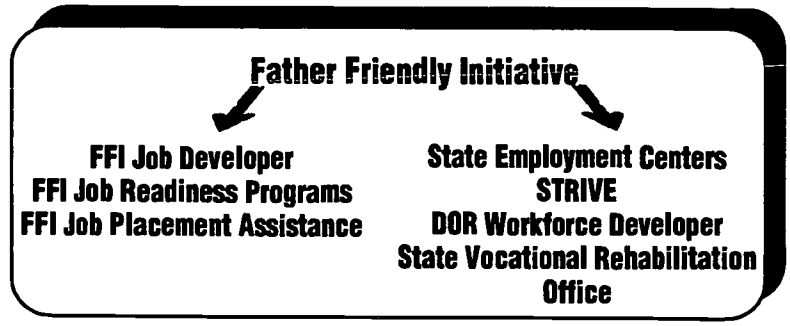
Phoenix Project participants who are unemployed and those looking for employment at a higher wage and/or with benefits are first asked to fill out a generic job application form, which serves to highlight the assistance they need with application preparation. Next, both they and their case manager visit the local state employment office. The presence of the case manager "customizes" the visit and turns a confusing setting into a one-on-one intervention. Project participants learn how to read the job board, use the job search computer, and access other resources and opportunities. According to the case manager, the "hands-on" support helps boost the self-esteem of clients, improves their follow-through, and enhances their ability to use the center on their own.

In addition to accessing state employment resources, the case manager for Phoenix Project utilizes the state's Vocational Rehabilitation Agency. As a former Vocational Rehabilitation counselor, she

knows the resources available through the agency and appreciates its evaluation, assessment, and planning capacities. One of the key benefits of intervention by Vocational Rehabilitation is the identification of options for employment not previously considered by the applicant. As with referrals to Employment Security, the case manager accompanies Phoenix Project participants who are referred to Vocational Rehabilitation; they typically do not attend initial meetings on their own. This "customization" enhances client follow through and maximizes the use of state services by the Phoenix Project population. It also leads to the creation of a team intervention, with the project case manager, employment security worker, and vocational rehabilitation counselor all working together to develop suitable employment plans.

Massachusetts

Boston's Father Friendly Initiative also believes that it is more effective to pave the way for clients who visit state employment centers and other one-stop career centers. Accordingly, there is a job developer on the FFI staff who cultivates relationships with employers, counsels participants seeking employment, and makes appropriate job placements. There is also a job developer at the child support agency who develops employer contacts, identifies their workforce needs, and coordinates with FFI to make suitable placements. Finally, the FFI job developer works with designated staff at the state rehabilitation agency to ensure that participants receive personal treatment.



In addition to collaborating with these employment resources, FFI has also initiated its own job readiness program. Conducted on a monthly basis, the five-day program is designed to quickly and efficiently address the issues that are central to project participants: interviewing successfully, showing up for work regularly and on time, dressing appropriately for work, exhibiting appropriate workplace attitudes, dealing with authority, and communicating with people who are culturally different. At the conclusion of the FFI job-readiness training program, employers come to FFI offices to interview applicants. Interviews at FFI are perceived to be less intimidating than those conducted in office settings that are unfamiliar to FFI participants. As the job developer

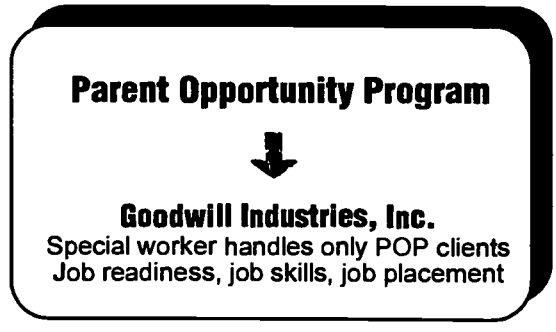
explained, "Interviews [at FFI] are less intimidating. They show up and they do a better job of presenting themselves."

Another salient issue at this site, and at many sites, is dealing with a criminal background. Since many FFI participants have had some experience with the criminal justice system, they need help learning how to find desirable employment despite this obstacle. FFI staff feel that this topic is neglected in many other job-readiness programs. The DOR workforce developer has conducted focus groups with employers to understand their reactions to job applicants with criminal backgrounds. She expects to work closely with FFI to market these individuals more successfully with area employers using the insights she has gleaned in her outreach efforts to employers.

FFI is collaborating with STRIVE, a community-based organization serving the hard-to-employ, to channel participants into STRIVE's job training programs. One is a 15-week course leading to becoming a computer repairman. Another option is an 8-week program leading to jobs in asbestos removal and the handling of hazardous material. STRIVE also sponsors a training program in financial services, although this is not an option for individuals with a criminal background or a bad credit record. Through its collaborations with area job developers, FFI has succeeded in arranging apprenticeships and on-the-job training opportunities in a variety of industries, including food and construction.

Colorado

The Parent Opportunity Program (POP) in Colorado provides employment services to clients through Goodwill Industries. For many years, Goodwill has provided employment services to the El Paso County Department of Human Services for TANF recipients, and has experience in working with hard-to-place individuals, including former felons. With the start of the Parent Opportunity Program, the agency has expanded to serve noncustodial parents.



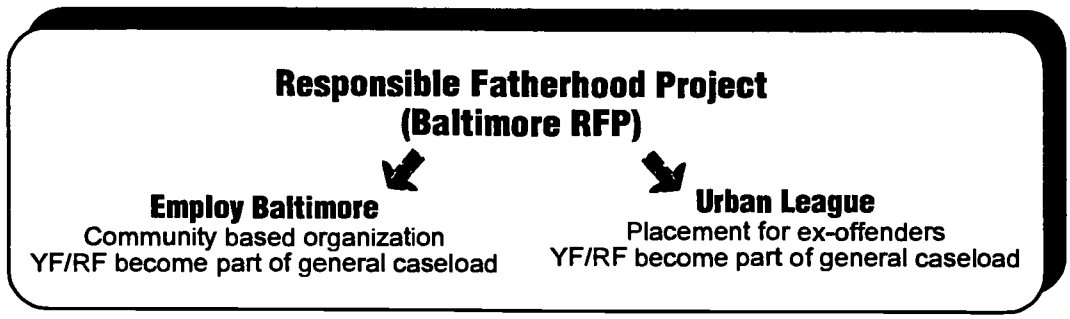
By funding a position at Goodwill Industries, POP has avoided the pitfalls often associated with referring clients to outside employment services, such as a lack of individual attention. Since the Goodwill case manager can serve all clients, POP also avoids the problems Welfare-to-Work

programs have in providing services to noncustodial parents whose children are not TANF recipients. One individual at Goodwill Industries handles all POP referrals. Following the POP intake, the case manager sends clients who need help with employment services to this specialized worker at Goodwill. The frequent contact between the specialized worker at Goodwill and the POP case manager means that the client's situation is known to both workers, and the client's progress is carefully monitored.

Based on the needs identified through their initial intake and their first meeting with the specialized POP worker at Goodwill, POP clients can receive a wide array of employment services. Some clients will start with GED services, others receive job skills training or take part in job readiness classes. Those who are interested in and ready for immediate employment will receive placement assistance. Clients may move into immediate job placements but continue to work with Goodwill to improve their skills and enhance their employment options.

Maryland

Baltimore RFP uses two community-based programs for employment services: Employ Baltimore and the Urban League. All participants are required to attend employment classes for six months at Employ Baltimore, the employment program for TANF recipients and other social services clients. All project participants are qualified to receive services at Employ Baltimore. Baltimore RFP participants attend a class of their own and a project case manager is based at Employ Baltimore to monitor project cases. The classes are offered during the day and the evening to accommodate various work schedules. For those who are not employed, classes cover the issues of résumé writing, mock interviews, and getting a job. For those who are employed, classes focus on job retention issues: communication and conflict at the workplace, and dealing with authority.



Employ Baltimore does job development, and Baltimore RFP staff credit it with opening up some apprenticeship programs that have afforded participants the opportunity to pursue paid training in electronics, carpentry, and plumbing. Maryland's Office of Male Initiatives is perceived to be a key to the success that Employ Baltimore has experienced with job development. This highly visible office has received strong endorsement from the governor and a good deal of publicity. As a result, staff say that employers have responded to the call to collaborate and hire Employ Baltimore clients and Baltimore RFP participants.

Baltimore RFP turns to the Urban League for job placement assistance with ex-offenders. In addition to placing individuals, the job developer at the Urban League does on-the-job troubleshooting to prevent problems from developing and growing.

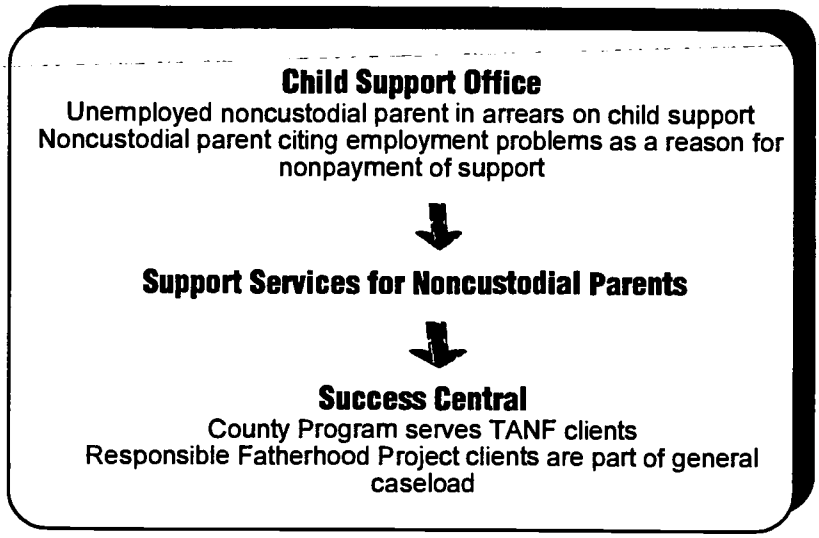
Compared to other sites, employment services receive somewhat less emphasis in the projects based in California, Washington, and Missouri.

California

Given the site's highly educated, professional, and affluent population, and exceptionally low unemployment rate, developers of San Mateo, California's Services for Noncustodial Parents Project decided to try to improve the payment of child support by focusing on problems of access and visitation rather than employment. As the county's child support director put it:

> There is a zero unemployment rate in the county. There are only 2,500 people on TANF, down from 6,000 a few years ago. The average house sells for more than $550,000. It is an expensive place to live. Essentially, if you were truly unemployed, it would be very difficult to live in San Mateo.

While employment services have not attracted many users in San Mateo's project, they are offered. The project has contracted with Success Central, a County employment program that has traditionally served TANF clients. The Family Support Division orders noncustodial parents who have no known employer and fall into arrears on child support to obtain employment or to attend Success Central, where they will be required to attend a half-day orientation, one week of classes, and six weeks of supervised job search. As part of the Services for Noncustodial Parents Project, nonpaying obligors are referred to Success Central by child support technicians if they attribute their payment behavior to problems with under- or unemployment. However, in 1999, project staff report



that only 51 of an estimated 700 noncustodial parents considered for project treatment cited employment as a factor for nonpayment of support and were referred to Success Central.

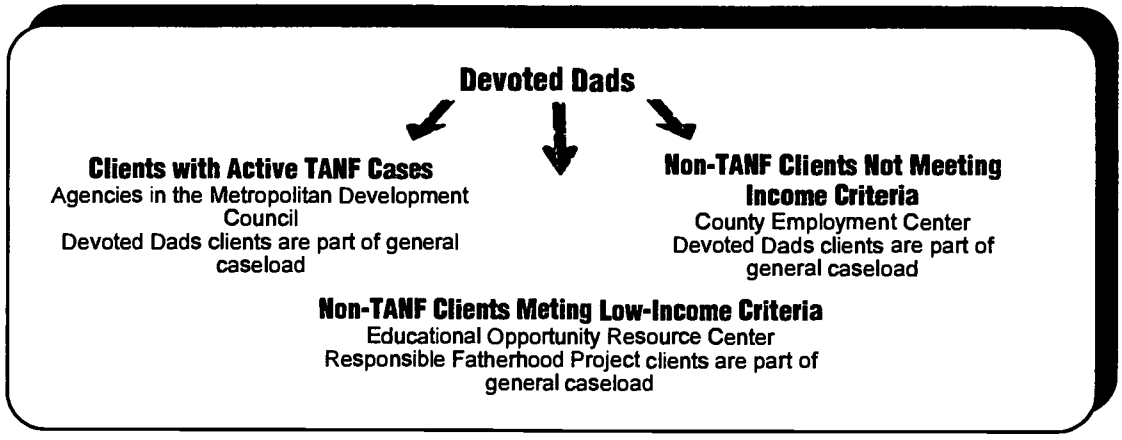
Despite the routine promulgation of contempt filings for noncustodial parents who fail to report employment or to appear at Success Central, non-appearance is a major problem. For example, of the 51 noncustodial parents who were referred to Success Central in 1999, only 15 attended the orientation. As in Parents' Fair Share, referral to the employment program is perceived to boost child support payment chiefly through the identification of undisclosed employment. Faced with the requirement to attend a week-long orientation and six weeks of supervised job search, some noncustodial parents have made a child support payment.

In early April 2000, a job counselor from Success Central began attending weekly court sessions for unemployed noncustodial parents in an attempt to improve the referral process. Future assessment will consider whether the commissioner's ability to make direct and immediate orders to obtain employment assistance increases the number of noncustodial parents who participate in the Success Central employment program

Washington

Devoted Dads in Tacoma also focuses most project energy on non-employment issues, such as child support adjustments, access, and fatherhood development. However, it does provide employment-related services through other agencies affiliated with the Metropolitan Development Council, which administers Devoted Dads. The principal entity it collaborates with for employment is a new Welfare-to-Work program for noncustodial parents that is housed with Devoted Dads. As part of this program, eligible noncustodial parents may receive paid tuition for training courses at local technical colleges, as well as a variety of supportive services, including assistance with housing. According to Devoted Dads staff, one problem with the Welfare-to-Work program has been its strict eligibility requirements. Until recently, it was necessary for noncustodial parents to

be associated with an active TANF case in order to qualify for the Welfare-to-Work program. For Devoted Dads, this has meant that the many noncustodial parents whose children are not recipients of public assistance have not been served. It remains to be seen whether eligibility changes contained in the amendments of 1999 widen the service options available to program participants (U.S. Department of Labor, 1999).



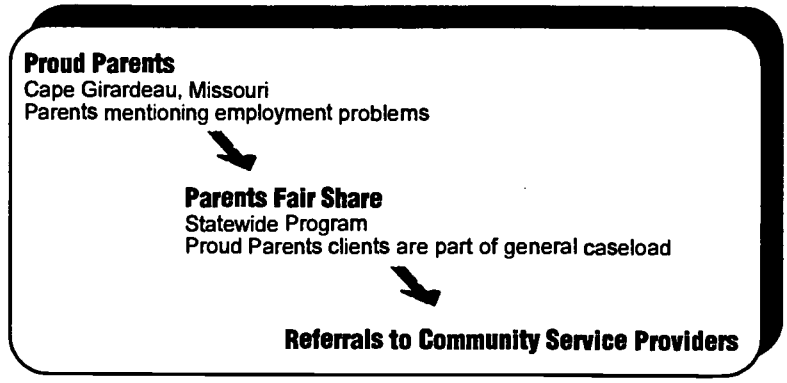
Those who fail to meet the eligibility criteria for Welfare-to-Work are referred to yet another program housed at the Metropolitan Development Council: the Educational Opportunity Resource Center (EORC). Funded by the Department of Education, EORC serves as a clearinghouse for employment services, primarily at the college level. It too has strict eligibility criteria, principally based on gross income and household size. Child support payments are not taken into account. As a result, many noncustodial parents fail to qualify for reasons of excessive income, even if their take-home pay after child support has been deducted is quite low.

Program participants who fail to qualify for both the Welfare-to-Work and EORC programs are sent to the County Employment Center. Like all one-stop employment centers, it offers a full array of classes and services to assist job seekers. Devoted Dads participants, however, are not accorded any special treatment or personalized case management at the County Employment Center.

Missouri

Missouri's Proud Parents program focuses primarily on access and parenting issues rather than employment. Like California and Washington, however, it refers program attendees to another employment resource. In Missouri's case, this is the state's Parents' Fair Share program (PFS).

Originally a single county pilot project that was part of a national demonstration project by the same name conducted by Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, PFS became a statewide program administered by the state's IV-D agency in 1997. PFS offices are located throughout the state and may be housed in a IV-D agency or other relevant locations: IV-A agencies, One-Stops, and PIC offices. Like California's referrals to Success Central, referrals frequently come from child support technicians who generate child support orders based on imputed income levels to individuals with no apparent employment. Parents' Fair Share referrals are also made in license suspension cases and contempt matters.



PFS does not deliver direct employment services. Instead, PFS offices refer participants to appropriate service providers. They also provide participants with various incentives to encourage their work participation, including assistance to cover work-related transportation costs, tuition payments for training programs, and $350 for work-related expenses. Approximately 10,000 noncustodial parents are referred to PFS per year, and 22 percent of the referrals attend an orientation and enroll. To date, six Proud Parents attendees have enrolled in PFS.

Child Support

The Responsible Fatherhood Projects raise a number of difficult philosophical and practical challenges for child support agencies and the programs. Both wrestle with the issues of child well-being, mounting child support debt, fairness, and achieving collection activity. While federal law prohibits adjusting past support obligations, there are a number of more flexible policies that agencies might adopt with respect to noncustodial parents who have very low incomes. They include:

- Increasing the "self-support" reserve so that only a token order would be imposed if the noncustodial parent's income falls below a certain level;[1]

[1] Currently only the Melson formula, which is used in three states, exempts the noncustodial parent from paying child support if his or her own income is not sufficient to meet a self-support reserve.

- Holding child support in abeyance while noncustodial parents participate in employment and training programs aimed at increasing their earning capacity;

- Providing amnesty, forgiveness, and debt compromise programs for noncustodial parents with arrears owed to the state as rewards for good behavior, such as the completion of a training program and/or the regular payment of support; and

- Suspending interest and penalties on unpaid child support.

For their part, programs are being asked to endorse unpopular policies that are frequently viewed as biased and unfair, such as the collection of monies owed to the state for past payments of public assistance. Programs also face tensions over the timing of new hire reports to the child support agency regarding participants and the initiation of wage withholding.

This section of the report describes the role that the child support agency plays in each project. While all are sponsored by the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement and share a commitment to paternity establishment and the payment of child support, they differ with respect to the involvement of the agency in day-to-day management, communication with project staff and participants, and the adoption of flexible procedures. For example, the child support agency may administer the project on a day-to-day basis, as it does in Missouri and California. More typically, it serves as a collaborative agency and the project is administered by a community-based organization (Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Washington, Wisconsin) or a social services agency (Colorado, Maryland). Child support plays an important role in referring clients at five of the project sites. At six of the sites, the agency provides child support information on program participants, responds to questions, processes requests for modification, corrects case errors, and educates clients about their status and options. At half the sites, the child support agency has adopted a blanket policy for program participants (or a sub-group) that involves the suspension of child support, arrears, or certain enforcement activities during successful engagement in the program. Finally, the child support agency in Massachusetts has retained a job developer to augment the employment and placement activities pursued by project staff on behalf of participants.

The following describes the different roles that the child support agency plays at the project sites in more detail.

California

The Supportive Services Project for Noncustodial Parents is administered by the child support agency in San Mateo, California. The project director is the director of the San Mateo County Family Support Division. The agency's outreach efforts are coordinated by an employee of the Family Support Division, as is the process of referring agency clients to project services, scheduling mediation sessions, and placing reminder calls to clients the day before a mediation is scheduled to occur. Finally, staff at the child support agency document referrals to program services, enter the information on a special screen developed for the project on the agency's automated system, and generate reports comparing child support payment patterns for project participants prior to and following their receipt of services.

The child support agency also serves as the exclusive source of referrals for project services. Like all project sites, the California project seeks to improve child support payments by providing supportive services. As a result of project-funded collaborations with the court (Family Court Services) and a multi-service agency (Family Services Agency), noncustodial (and custodial) parents who experience problems with parenting time after their separation and divorce may utilize a variety of remedial services: mediation, case management, parenting classes, and supervised visitation. To date, the service that has attracted widest usage by clients of the child support agency is mediation.

Referrals to services are generated several different ways. The child support agency conducted a mass mailing to clients with open child support cases, describing the services available through the project. The agency did special outreach training with staff at selected community organizations to inform them of project services. And child support technicians extend the offer of project services to clients who say they are thwarted in their access and visitation objectives.

According to the director of the Family Support Division of San Mateo, the collaboration with Family Court Services for mediation has proved to be very popular with clients and child support technicians. The agency receives 40 to 60 requests for mediation per month, approximately half of whom attend the mediation session. Of those who attend mediation, 71 percent reach a stipulated agreement. Although the request for mediation typically comes from noncustodial parents (73%), a significant number of custodial parents (27%) initiate the process. Most parents (84%) want help with visitation issues, although a substantial proportion (40%) want to deal with custody. The agency contends that mediation has made a big difference in parent-child contact as well as the payment of child support.

Based on its experiences with mediation, the IV-D agency has concluded that "resolving access issues increases the voluntary payment of child support." Child support staff also value mediation as a customer service tool. Family members with visitation problems are typically frustrated by their interactions with child support technicians because visitation is outside the scope of child support enforcement (these issues are treated separately by law). The opportunity to refer families to mediation affords workers the chance to be empathic and responsive. Like employment services, the offer also serves to identify those who use access issues as excuses for non-payment of support. Finally, attention to visitation issues allows the agency to deal with noncustodial parents in a more holistic manner and to pursue a new role that is more progressive and customer friendly.

Missouri

The Missouri Child Support Agency also plays an administrative role in the Proud Parents project. Most importantly, it convened an inter-agency advisory board to plan the intervention and develop the curriculum used for the parent education program. Child support agency staff provide names and contact information for fathers who meet the criteria for referral to Proud Parents. The emphasis is on fathers of children for whom paternity is not an issue, but prior to the entry of a support order. Unsuccessful early attempts by agency staff to recruit project participants by letter was replaced by a paid recruiter/outreach worker employed by a local community action agency. The recruiter is responsible for contacting the fathers and getting them to the meetings. The meetings are facilitated by a child support agency staff member. There are no child support adjustments or accommodations for project participants. Nor does the agency provide client-specific child support information since the intervention consists only of a one-time parenting class and there is no case management or other follow-up services.

Washington

Child support technicians in Tacoma, Washington, refer noncustodial parents to the Devoted Dads program if they have complaints about their access and visitation arrangements, or about their child support situation. Project staff estimate that child support is a salient issue for virtually all their clients. Accordingly, Devoted Dads has tried to address the child support concerns of their clients several different ways:

- They have retained a private attorney on a contractual basis to conduct a monthly workshop dealing with the issues of custody, visitation, and child support. At these well-attended evening sessions, noncustodial parents learn about their rights and responsibilities and their legal remedies.

- Another evening each month, a child support technician comes to Devoted Dads to meet with interested noncustodial parents to explain child support laws and regulations and assist them with the preparation of requests to modify child support orders.

- Project participants can obtain additional assistance with child support modifications that require a judicial remedy by requesting to meet with the contract attorney (or the project's paralegal) during their weekly, daytime visits to the project.

- Project staff assist clients with the preparation of modification requests for cases that can be pursued through administrative channels.

- Finally, noncustodial parents who have a TANF connection and are enrolled in a qualifying work readiness program may be eligible for suspensions of support during training. Devoted Dads will assist eligible noncustodial parents in applying for agreements to pay less than current support on a temporary basis during job training, with gradual increases over time.

The staff of Devoted Dads have no on-site computer link to child support information for project participants. Satisfactory arrangements exist to obtain this information, with project staff communicating with individual child support technicians by fax and phone. Response patterns differ by technician, with some showing more flexibility and sensitivity than others. With the exception of temporary waivers of support for noncustodial parents who have a TANF connection and are enrolled in a qualifying job training program, the agency has not adopted any special policy for project cases. As project staff put it, "they go by the book." Requests for modification of child support orders is the chief intervention available to participants, and the outcome of the request depends on the guideline calculation. Flexibility may also depend on whether the case is under court or agency jurisdiction. Staff report that the agency has demonstrated little willingness to adjust arrearages. Getting the child support agency to "cut noncustodial parents some slack" is high on their wish list. And although project staff have made special efforts to recruit young, unmarried new parents in hospital settings and pursue paternity establishment, participation by this population has failed to materialize. To date, most of the project's paternity establishment activities result from the pursuit of parenting plans by project participants with the help of the contract attorney. These actions are typically taken by fathers who acknowledged paternity in the hospital and are interested in obtaining visitation rights.

New Hampshire

New Hampshire's Phoenix Project is closely tied to the child support agency since virtually all of its clients are referred by child support technicians. Technicians target delinquent noncustodial parents, unemployed parents, or those with minimum child support orders that are set by statute at $50. As in Tacoma, project staff do not have access to child support information at project offices, but since most client meetings occur at the child support agency, this is not viewed as a barrier, and information about a client's child support standing is readily available.

Once a client is accepted into Phoenix Project, the case manager meets with the child support agency about making certain accommodations. Essentially, while they actively participate in Phoenix Project, clients are required to pay only current support. Although their arrearages are not forgiven, they are put in abeyance, with payments suspended during active program participation. The goal is to match the child support burden with the capacities of the client. On a weekly basis, the case manager meets with the child support agency's ten technicians to review client progress and discuss needed adjustments.

Massachusetts

Boston's Father Friendly Initiative has an evolving relationship with the Department of Revenue (DOR), Massachusetts' child support agency. Like Tacoma and New Hampshire, project staff have no on-site access to child support records. However, there are two dedicated staff members at DOR who respond to requests and supply FFI staff with child support information. This direct pipeline to DOR has many benefits for FFI participants. For example, FFI staff can make direct contact at DOR to help clients who are having trouble working with their support technician. Quick access means that clients get fast responses to their questions and corrections to case errors.

In addition to making DOR personnel available to FFI for individual case consultations and reviews, DOR recently hired a job developer to augment the employment opportunities available to project participants. The DOR workforce developer identifies employers who can offer quality employment opportunities to project participants. The developer also gathers information on the hiring needs of employers who have positions to fill. The developer is able to coordinate informational sessions and recruitment events with hiring employers. Finally, the workforce developer meets regularly with FFI staff and state employment personnel to match participants to opportunities and identify barriers that participants face.

Still another form of project support is the educational role that DOR staff play. By attending peer support sessions on a periodic basis, DOR staff are able to explain to participants their legal obligations, how to establish paternity, how child support is set, and how it is enforced. In these informal sessions, FFI participants have a chance to ask questions about their legal situation. DOR staff also keep up with the concerns of participants and their experiences with the child support agency.

Through other project initiatives and funding mechanisms, DOR has arranged for the provision of parent education services at court and faith-based locations. It has also contracted with social service providers to provide supervised visitation and mediation interventions. It is currently collaborating with legal service providers to arrange for fathers enrolled in FFI and other social services programs to meet with attorneys for group information sessions, brief individual consultations, and continuing telephone advice on issues like visitation. Finally, DOR is piloting a project with the County Sheriff to identify offenders with child support issues and develop workable enforcement orders based on a realistic assessment of their ability to pay.

Despite these many DOR-inspired measures to promote responsible fatherhood among low-income parents, there are no special policies for program participants on order levels and/or arrearage payments. Although there has been some discussion of pursuing modifications for individuals who enroll in STRIVE's eight- or 15-week employment training programs, the judicial process required to modify frequently takes longer than the employment training program itself. FFI staff would like to see an exploration of the forgiveness of state arrears for those who make regular payments of current support and/or achieve various program milestones. At the same time, they are mindful of the difficulties that such policies might pose for DOR. As one staffer explained:

> There is no child support carrot attached to the program. They say they can't do something special for this population. And we don't have any quarrel with money owed to the custodial parent. They had those kids and they have to support them. But it would sure be a motivator if we could reduce the penalties and interest owed to the state if he paid regularly and did the right thing.

FFI staff favor expedited wage withholding for participants who become employed. Rather than allowing participants to become accustomed to receiving a full paycheck, they believe that child support should be withheld during the very first pay period. This represents a change in staff thinking from the early days of the project, when there was some desire to "stabilize" clients who

were sometimes homeless and recovering addicts before involving DOR in their lives and requiring them to make child support payments.

Wisconsin

Although Children UpFront has enjoyed a healthy relationship with the Racine child support agency for many years, the agency formally withdrew from the project during its first year of operation. In addition, as of 1999, Children UpFront no longer administered the Children First program, which mandates delinquent child support obligors to engage in 32 hours of employment-seeking behavior. As a result of these developments, the project received fewer referrals from the child support agency than expected.

Despite the severing of a contractual relationship, project staff work closely with child support technicians at the county level to address the child support needs of program participants. One way they accomplish this is by accessing child support records directly at Children UpFront offices. Case managers have direct access to the state automated system with read-only functionality. This allows them to know the child support situation of participants during the program assessment. As a result, case managers are sometimes the ones to "have to break the bad news to clients" about where they stand with respect to child support, arrears, and anticipated enforcement remedies.

Case managers have the paperwork for child support modifications at Children UpFront offices and complete forms on behalf of clients. Because case managers have relationships with technicians, they can access them more readily than clients on their own and attempt to negotiate, correct errors, and effect other needed child support actions. There are no adjustments to current support orders or arrearages for project participants on a program-wide basis.

Colorado

In Colorado Springs, the privatized child support agency, Maximus, has been involved with the Parent Opportunity Project in a variety of ways. The agency is involved in the administration of the grant and participates on both an advisory board and a management team on a regular basis. The POP case managers have offices at Maximus and have direct access to the child support computer system.

The agency has been a major source of referrals for POP. Child support technicians routinely send clients to POP who appear to fit the project target profile: low-income, under- or unemployed

noncustodial parents. The agency has special staff who serve as liaison to the project. Case managers identify clients who are complying with program requirements. For these clients, case managers work with Maximus to explore possible child support adjustments, such as suspensions while the client participates in job skills and job search programs, or modifications of orders. Suspensions of support are available for participants who have children collecting TANF benefits; in non-TANF cases, the custodial parent must sign a legal stipulation agreeing to the suspension. Child support suspensions are typically granted for 90 days while the client is receiving services, although this may be extended. Suspensions are only granted if the client has been actively involved in POP for at least 30 days. If the client becomes noncompliant, the suspension is discontinued.

Cases that receive these child support services are individually monitored on a monthly basis by the liaison worker at Maximus to ensure that the automated child support enforcement computer system accurately reflects the changes made to the client's case. An additional duty the child support technician performs is the informal calculation of the guidelines to determine whether child support would decrease, increase, or stay the same if a client requests a modification. The program case managers routinely report to Maximus when clients obtain employment; they do not wait for the new hire reporting process to take effect. As a result, wage withholding is implemented on an expedited basis. This policy was instituted when case managers discovered that newly employed clients failed to report their employment to Maximus and did not make voluntary support payments while waiting for a wage withholding order to take effect.

Maryland

The grant to the Maryland Department of Human Resources is jointly administered by the Community Services Administration Office of Community Initiatives and Child Support Enforcement. As a result, Baltimore RFP staff have ready access to child support information for project participants. Maximus, the privatized child support vendor, has designated one child support technician to serve as a liaison with Baltimore RFP. Case managers relay their concerns to this individual, who deals with individual technicians. Although there are uniform policies governing child support calculations, and case managers feel that technicians are often reluctant to deviate from them, there are some accommodations for Baltimore RFP. There is typically a lag of "2-3 paychecks" between employment and the commencement of wage withholding, and this is appreciated by project participants. In addition, technicians avoid imposing some enforcement remedies with Baltimore RFP participants who have arrearages, such as driver's license suspensions and bench warrants. Unemployed participants receive Maryland's minimum child support order of

$25 per week plus an arrearage contribution. According to the project manager, case managers at Baltimore RFP routinely contact the child support agency when a participant becomes employed and provide the information the agency needs to begin a wage withholding. Case managers, on the other hand, report that the child support agency gets this information through new hire reporting.

Table 7. Role of the Child Support Agency in the Responsible Fatherhood Project

	Conducts the project	Collaborative partner agency	Direct access to child support records	Major referral source for project	Makes adjustments, abatements, suspends enforcement	Program staff assist clients in working with child support staff	Participate in education programs for program participants	Assists with job development
California	✔		✔	✔				
Colorado		✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	
Maryland		✔	✔		✔	✔		
Massachusetts		✔				✔	✔	✔
Missouri	✔			✔				
New Hampshire		✔		✔	✔	✔		
Washington		✔		✔	✔	✔	✔	
Wisconsin		✔	✔			✔	✔	

Chapter 5

Services and Service Integration: Access, Parenting, and Case Management

While stable employment at liveable wages and the payment of child support are the central objectives of the Responsible Fatherhood Projects, they are far from the only ones. All sites are interested in improving the parenting skills of participants and connecting them with their children. To different degrees, the programs also try to address the more general needs of participants, and to enhance their chances of success in becoming self sufficient and involved parents. This chapter describes the services the programs offer to enhance access and parenting/peer support. We also discuss each program's experience with case management, and their mechanisms for monitoring client involvement and progress on an individual basis.

Access and Visitation

Focus	Secondary
California Colorado Maryland Washington	New Hampshire Massachusetts Missouri Wisconsin

All the projects share the objectives of linking noncustodial parents with their children and increasing their contact. As with the issues of employment and child support enhancement, however, they have developed different ways of pursuing these goals. Some programs focus on the legal barriers to parental contact and provide legal services, mediation, and supervised visitation. Other programs work on motivating fathers to spend quality time with their children. They provide parenting classes, support groups, and group activities to enhance parent-child contact. The programs operating in California, Colorado, Washington, and Maryland offer services to remove legal barriers to access such as mediation, supervised visitation or neutral exchange sites, or legal services. Four of the programs – Wisconsin, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Missouri – promote access through peer support and parenting programs (which are discussed in the next section).

California

San Mateo focuses on the provision of court-based mediation services. At root, the Supportive Services for Noncustodial Parents Project tries to improve the child support performance of non-paying obligors by addressing their problems with access and visitation. Without making child support payment conditional on visitation or linking the two issues in the same intervention, child support technicians acknowledge their practical interconnectedness. The remedy that is available is mediation. In designing the project, the child support agency built upon California's sophisticated system of court-based mediation services for custody and visitation disputes that has long been available to the State's divorcing parents who have a pending court hearing. Indeed, since 1981, mediation has been mandatory for divorcing couples in California who disagree about custody and visitation arrangements. Funded by earmarked filing fees, the intervention is available at no charge to litigants with a pending court hearing in every court that handles domestic relations matters.

Because child support matters consume less court time than contested divorces and frequently involve never-married parents, mediation has been less extensively used with clients of the child support enforcement agency. One exception was a program in New York that provided telephone mediation services to families with disagreements over visitation that were referred by the child support enforcement agency. Characterized as "brief and directive" mediation, with an average of no more than 75 minutes devoted to each case, the program operated for 19 months and served more than 700 families at a cost of approximately $115 per case. Despite an agreement rate of 71 percent where mediation was attempted and favorable reactions by parents and child support technicians, the program was canceled due to across-the-board cuts in county funding (Coltri and Hunt, 1998).

Through the OCSE responsible fatherhood grant, the Superior Court of San Mateo was able to hire a bilingual mediator to handle cases referred by the child support enforcement agency. Eligible parties are never-married, separated, or divorced parents in the child support agency caseload who disagree about custody or visitation arrangements for their children. The intervention is available for non-paying, partially paying, and fully paying child support clients. The goal of the intervention is to develop or modify a parenting plan. Among the visitation issues that are addressed are where the children will live, how often and when each parent will see the children, problems with the visitation schedule, fighting between parents during pick-up and drop-off, reintroducing a parent into a child's life after a long absence, visitation for grandparents and other relatives, what goes on during visits, and the children's safety during visits. Mediators also address the issue of physical and legal custody.

Perhaps the chief difficulty the program has experienced has been in scheduling mediation. Because both parents must participate, it is necessary to contact each parent separately, explain the intervention, and schedule a session. San Mateo reduced its attrition rate by moving from a mail to a telephone notification system and assigning all mediation coordination tasks to a single worker at the IV-D agency. After receiving a referral for mediation assistance by a child support technician, this worker contacts both parents to explain the mediation process and schedule an appointment. A day before the scheduled mediation session, she phones both parents to remind them to attend.

According to the child support agency, approximately 40 to 60 parents request mediation every month. About 46 percent of these will fail to appear for mediation. While noncustodial parents are most apt to initiate the request for mediation (73%), a significant proportion of the requests come from custodial parents (27%). And although the issue parents want to deal with usually involves visitation (84%), 40 percent want help with custody issues too. Of those who attend mediation, 71 percent reach an agreement, a rate that is almost identical to those observed in many other studies of divorce mediation. The program believes that mediation leads to increased parent-child contact and the initiation of contact in cases where there has been none. It is also associated with better child support payment patterns.

While mediation is the main intervention offered to parents in San Mateo, other services to improve access and visitation are also available. The Family Service Agency, a multi-purpose, non-profit organization, provides supervised visitation services and neutral exchange services for families who have visitation orders that contain these provisions. The Family Service Agency offers follow-up mediation interventions for couples who need continued discussion about their visitation arrangements, fine-tuning, or other adjustments with the assistance of a neutral third party. Finally, the Agency provides case monitoring services for families who have continued problems managing their visitation situation and would benefit from periodic third-party intervention. To date, relatively few IV-D clients have used the services offered at the Family Service Agency, which, like mediation, are voluntary and available at no cost to the parties.

Colorado

POP staff in Colorado Springs use a variety of forums to try to address the access and visitation concerns of project participants. The project refers participants to El Paso County's court-based mediation program for services. In addition, POP collaborates with the Women's Resource Agency, a non-profit organization that provides services for low-income women, including counseling, anger-

management, and referrals for child care, employment, and education. POP staff notify staff at the Women's Resource Agency about noncustodial parents who are interested in improving their access and visitation situation. The Women's Resource Agency contacts custodial parents to inform them about the Agency and the services it offers. It also initiates discussions with custodial parents about access and visitation issues and conducts informal mediations aimed at ironing out differences between the two parents.

The chief problem that POP encounters with mediation at both the court and the Women's Resource Agency is the reluctance of many custodial parents to participate. There are many understandable reasons why this is the case. Unlike divorce mediation, where the courts can require parents to try to mediate before they are given a court hearing, mediation in a responsible fatherhood program is totally voluntary. In addition, unlike divorce mediation, which typically involves parents who have lived together, mediation in responsible fatherhood programs frequently involves unmarried parents who may not have had lived together. Based on the reluctance of many custodial parents to mediate, the Women's Resource Agency has made concerted efforts to incorporate educational components about the importance of fathers into the programs they offer and to encourage mothers to participate by offering them services and assistance. The POP program also offers supervised visitation at a special visitation facility funded by the Department of Human Services.

Washington

Another route that one program has pursued to promote access and visitation is through legal services. Tacoma's Devoted Dads retains an attorney to conduct monthly education sessions on custody, visitation, and child support issues. In addition, interested noncustodial parents can schedule a free appointment with the contract attorney and the programs paralegal to help prepare court forms dealing with access and child support, which the participant then files on his own. Program staff maintain that this is the most popular aspect of the program. As word about the contract attorney and paralegal has spread, many noncustodial parents have flocked to Devoted Dads, which currently accepts about 50 new clients each month. Free legal help, however, is not the only type of assistance they get. Prior to meeting with the attorney or paralegal, clients must complete intake forms and meet with a case manager. In the course of this process, they disclose many other problems and learn about the program's other services. If the parties can be convened, the project attorney and paralegal will also attempt to mediate custody, visitation, and child support matters. Finally, staff will also refer participants to mediation providers in the community.

Maryland

The Baltimore RFP program also has forms to establish and modify custody, visitation, and child support available at project offices, and Baltimore RFP staff have been trained on how to complete them. The court waives the $75 filing fee for Baltimore RFP participants, and all filings by project participants are heard by two masters or one judge, all of whom have had extensive exposure to the project and the population it serves through periodic gatherings orchestrated by Baltimore RFP staff.

The Baltimore program has also made court-based mediation available to clients, although it is not widely used. Staff perceive court-based mediation as "rushed," and feel that mediators try to push clients into an agreement. Instead, Baltimore RFP staff report more success trying to mediate access issues informally using project case managers as facilitators.

Still another way projects promote access and visitation is to sponsor group outings, trips, and other recreational activities for noncustodial parents and their children. Staff at Baltimore RFP try to host periodic trips, outings, and events for fathers and children. This is also the approach favored by FFI in Boston. Staff are hoping to promote parenting by normalizing it and making it a less isolated activity. Figuring out what to do during a visit is challenging to many fathers. Group events and suggested activities are viewed as ways to make visitation less intimidating and more successful.

Wisconsin

"Team parenting" is the central goal of Wisconsin's Children UpFront program, and this is emphasized in the parenting curriculum offered to both mothers and fathers. Perhaps because the program serves both custodial and noncustodial parents, staff report that visitation denial is rarely a problem. More typically, mothers want the fathers to visit, but the fathers have trouble following through. Staff report that they work with fathers to emphasize the importance of following a regular visitation schedule. Supervised visitation is offered at the Children UpFront building, but is not used too often. Nor is formal mediation. On the contrary, if there are communication problems between the parents, they are sometimes ironed out by the case managers. Although the project strives to get couples to enroll, this has been a difficult goal to achieve, and by the end of 1999, only 18 project participants were couples where both the mother and the father were enrolled.

Missouri

Proud Parents encourages paternal participation in its parent curriculum, but as a single-session education intervention, it provides no relevant services. At the intervention, presenters introduce

program attendees to the mediation services available in the area. Clients who have an open child support case can receive free mediation services from MARCH, a community-based organization that receives funding from OCSE's visitation and access grants to the states. Proud Parents' intervention on access and visitation, however, is extremely limited and does not go beyond presenting literature on MARCH and explaining the importance of parental involvement and communication.

New Hampshire

The case manager for New Hampshire's Phoenix Project also prepares a newsletter with suggested low-cost visitation activities, which she distributes to project participants. She also solicits and distributes donated tickets to events suitable for parents and their children. Finally, the case manager has purchased cribs and strollers for noncustodial parents and provided other practical forms of assistance to facilitate visitation. She has given participants phone cards to help them stay in touch with their children, the program, prospective employers, and other service providers.

Massachusetts

The FFI presently refers clients with access problems to court-based mediation services or works with the parents directly to try resolving the issues. Supervised visitation services are available through OCSE's access and visitation grants. As previously noted, FFI sponsors periodic trips and outings for fathers and children in order to promote access and make it more enjoyable. Through a collaboration with the Boston Bar Association's Family Law Section, plans are underway to provide legal assistance to fathers participating in FFI and other social service programs for low-income parents. Like Washington, Massachusetts is expected to offer free information sessions on legal issues and give brief individual consultation and follow-up telephone advice on matters typically dealing with visitation.

Table 8. Services Available at the Responsible Fatherhood Projects to Promote Access and Visitation

	Formal Mediation	Informal mediation or assistance by program staff	Supervised visits	General legal education	Case specific legal assistance	Help with legal paper work and filings
California	✔		✔			
Colorado	✔	✔	✔	✔		
Maryland	✔	✔				✔
Massachusetts	✔	✔	✔			
Missouri	✔					
New Hampshire		✔				
Washington		✔		✔	✔	✔
Wisconsin		✔	✔			

Peer Support and Parenting

Focus	Secondary
Colorado **Maryland** **Massachusetts** **Missouri** **Wisconsin**	California New Hampshire Washington

There is often little practical distinction between peer support groups and parenting classes. Classes often begin with the presentation of information and then move to group discussions about how the topic affects the participants. Peer support groups often feature a special speaker or are organized about a specific topic. At some of the sites, peer support and/or parenting classes are the most popular program components. At other sites, they are little used.

For example, in *California*, all clients of the child support agency have the option of attending formal parenting classes offered by the Family Service Agency, a multi-service organization that also offers supervised visitation and counseling services. Known as "Kids in the Middle," the class is designed to alert parents to the damaging effects of parental conflict on children subject to separation and divorce. With grant support, the curriculum was translated into Spanish to meet the needs of the Latino population served by the child support agency. Brochures on Kids in the Middle were mailed to 24,000 child support clients. Despite this massive outreach effort, only 121 attendees of Kids in the Middle in 1999 were also clients of the child support agency.

New Hampshire has shied away from offering parenting classes because of transportation issues. The program serves a largely rural area, with no public transportation. Indeed, due to the small size of the project, the rural nature of its setting, and lack of transportation, staff avoid classes and group formats or services and prefer one-on-one interactions with case managers. In *Washington,* Devoted Dads attempted to provide parenting classes in the past, but discontinued them due to a lack of client interest. The program plans to try classes in the future, such as an anticipated cooking class for noncustodial parents ("Cooking for Kids") that stresses low-cost, fast, and economical recipes.

The other six programs offer more substantial peer support and/or parenting programs. Past research has found that clients enjoy and value such services. As an analyst of the Parents' Fair Share demonstration observed about the peer support component:

> Ideally, participants learn that they are not alone in their problems and derive a sense of belonging, support, and encouragement from participation. The group serves as a natural experiment in interpersonal relations, helping participants to discover how what they say or do affects other people, what attitudes or situations make them angry or resentful, and how to practice better coping strategies (Johnson, et al., 1999:116-117).

The OCSE projects used variants of existing curricula dealing with responsible fatherhood for their peer support programs. The original curriculum for Parents' Fair Share, developed by MDRC, has 18 sessions with many interactive exercises that were designed to prevent the sessions from turning into classes or lectures. A second model is the curriculum developed by National Center for Strategic Nonprofit Planning and Community Leadership (NPCL). It involves 24 sessions and also includes many activities and interactive exercises. Like the MDRC program, it covers the topics of personal development, child development and parenting skills, life skills, relationship issues, health and sexuality, and violence prevention.

The three projects that report the greatest success with peer support groups are Children UpFront in Racine, *Wisconsin*; Baltimore RFP, *Maryland*; and the Father Friendly Initiative in Boston, *Massachusetts*. All three projects are located in dense, urban settings that have a high proportion of African Americans. Finally, all three sites are also part of the PFF demonstration projects sponsored by NPCL and the Ford Foundation, which strongly emphasize peer support and other fatherhood development activities.

Children UpFront requires participants to attend a week-long, co-educational class dealing with parental responsibility. It covers child support issues, basic parenting, and life skills. According the project staff, an initial exercise that is particularly helpful is to have participants write an obituary for themselves. This is viewed as an excellent tool to help individuals reflect on their current situation and their life path. Next, mothers and fathers separate and attend a 25-session, sex-segregated class called Motherhood and Fatherhood Development. An open-enrollment program, participants must attend 80 percent of the sessions in order to receive a certificate of completion. In addition, participants are expect to attend peer support meetings. These open discussion forums are keyed to material covered in the Motherhood and Fatherhood Development classes. Each participant has a different attendance requirement.

FFI adapted the NPCL curriculum dealing with responsible fatherhood to suit its purposes. FFI's 16-lesson course is described by staff as "holistic," focusing on the "mind, the body and the spirit." Like Children UpFront, individuals enter on a rolling basis. Groups are held in the evening at four different sites. Each two-hour session has both a structured and unstructured component. As the facilitator puts it "We listen to the guys. It is not just didactic. It is psycho dynamic." In addition to parenting, self-esteem, employment and child support issues, the groups address other problems of participants, including substance abuse and anger management. FFI characterizes its peer support groups in the following way:

> FFI is a 'one stop' service designed to reintegrate the father into the family. FFI uses a holistic approach and offers a comprehensive program designed to accommodate the psychological, physical and spiritual needs of low-income men. We offer individual and group counseling and weekly support groups. More importantly, FFI has developed a culturally sensitive curriculum to instruct men in the practice of preventative health care techniques and to prepare them for the many challenges of fatherhood (e.g., issues addressing manhood, self-esteem, pre- and post-natal child care, child development, father/child and male/female relationships, parenting etc). FFI also provides assistance to men dealing with issues around substance abuse, anger management and/or domestic violence.

Baltimore RFP utilizes the NPCL curriculum without modification. It consists of a six month series of sessions that are held once a week and facilitated by a case manager. All Baltimore RFP case managers have received training by NPCL in the responsible fatherhood curriculum. Individuals enter the program twice a year and attend for six months. Upon satisfactory completion of the curriculum, there is a graduation. Participants receive a $50 incentive during the fourth month of attendance and another $50 upon graduation. The sessions have both educational and group therapy

components. Among the most popular topics are discussions of appropriate discipline techniques, caring for a sick child ("Dr. Dad"), male-female relationships, birth control, and sexually transmitted diseases. Baltimore RFP graduates have started a program for graduates known as Respectfully Organized and Obligated to Teach (ROOT). The goal of the program is to mentor at-risk youth in school settings. In addition to their mentoring activities, graduates meet amongst themselves for continued discussions.

POP in Colorado Springs, *Colorado*, has provided parent education classes that incorporate group discussion. The classes are offered through the Center on Fathering, and deal with child development, relationship issues, and conflict management. A more extensive conflict management class is also offered at the Center. The six-session class is composed of POP clients as well as non-POP clients being served by the Center on Fathering.

Of course, the site that focuses exclusively on parent education is *Missouri's* Proud Parents project. It consists entirely of a three-hour instructional session that is taught by an attorney-mediator and a parent educator associated with the National Parents as Teachers Program. The course has three components. One component deals with parental rights and responsibilities, and is aimed at promoting paternity establishment and child support. The second component deals with attachment and bonding issues and is designed to underscore the importance of fathers in the lives of their children. The third component of the program deals with communication with the child's mother and methods of avoiding interparental conflict.

Proud Parents has had a very difficult time attracting participants to attend its educational program. The problem is not unique to Missouri or the Proud Parent program. Nationally, parent education classes for separated and divorced parents have become the newest and most dramatic development in domestic relations courts in the U.S. However, nearly all of the 1,516 counties or cities reporting such a program (Geasler and Blaisure, 1999) compel parents to attend. Indeed, 25 states have enacted statutes, and 19 states have enacted local court or administrative rules that require parents with minor-aged children who separate or divorce to attend an approved education program (Clement, 1999). Although parents who attend rate these programs highly, there is little evidence that they will attend spontaneously. A survey of programs finds that mandatory ones are significantly less likely than voluntary ones to report problems getting parents to attend (Geasler and Blaisure, 1999).

Case Management and Other Services

A common theme in the study of fatherhood interventions is that men need to develop the capacity to care for themselves in order to become more effective and responsible fathers (Levine and Pitt, 1996). Case managers in fatherhood programs play a critical role in this process. They may enhance the participation of noncustodial parents through personal outreach efforts including phone calls, home visits, and one-on-one intake sessions. Case managers can also link project participants to a variety of needed community services. By encouraging participants to pursue things they have either avoided or never considered and advocating on their behalf, case managers can achieve results for participants that they would not have achieved on their own. Finally, by demonstrating care, concern, and respect, case managers can help participants overcome their extreme sense of isolation and powerlessness.

In three programs (Colorado, New Hampshire, and Washington), case management is strongly emphasized, with relatively little attention devoted to peer support and/or parenting classes. In three programs (Maryland, Massachusetts, and Wisconsin), case management and peer support are both offered and receive equal emphasis. The two other programs (California and Missouri) do not offer case management or peer support to participants.

Case Management	Case Management and Peer Support	No Case Management or Peer Support
Colorado New Hampshire Washington	Maryland Massachusetts Wisconsin	California Missouri

New Hampshire

Case management is the core feature of New Hampshire's Phoenix Project. Due to the low density of the three New Hampshire counties that the project serves and the lack of public transportation, individualized approaches are favored over group interventions. In addition to doing an individualized intake, the Phoenix Project case manager routinely accompanies participants when they go to various appointments: the state employment office to investigate job leads, vocational rehabilitation for assessment, and the child support office for case review. According to the case manager, without this individualized attention, clients are likely not to show up, or to appear but fail to use the resources that are available, like job boards and computerized job resources. The case manager may even drive participants to their jobs for the first few days while they make arrangements for rides and explore car pools.

The Phoenix Project case manager also works with clients on problems that may be fairly unique to a given parent. For example, she refers clients in need of clothing to the Dress for Success program, where they can be outfitted with donated work clothes; provides referrals for those who need to access food pantries; arranges for clients to receive drug, alcohol, and psychiatric evaluations (sometimes through the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation); and refers sick clients to doctors and dentists who provide no- or low-cost services. And given the lack of public transportation, it is perhaps not surprising that the case manager frequently is asked to help with transportation costs. This includes paying for car repairs, filling gas tanks so participants can get to project appointments, paying for car registrations or car inspections, paying driver's license fees, and providing taxi fares.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, the Phoenix Project case manager says that clients check in with her "all the time." She maintains consistent contact with both active and inactive participants. An important component of the one-on-one interaction is to remind participants about how important it is to be a parent and to encourage them to make the effort. As she explains it:

> I honestly found that they need hands-on help. A lot of them are procrastinators. Without meeting them at the employment office, they won't follow through or they'll get there, but be too afraid to go in. Some of the biggest barriers they face are their emotional problems and feeling beaten down. That's why they need the individualized, one-on-one help.

Of course, there are still unmet needs. The lack of reliable transportation remains a big problem for many participants, and this can impede both their work and visitation efforts. Housing is another big problem, and although the case manager refers clients to community-based housing programs that provide shelter residents with a security deposit and the first month of rent, getting affordable housing for project participants is an ongoing concern.

Colorado

The Parent Opportunity Project in Colorado Springs has a heavy case management component as well. Prior to meeting with a new participant for an in-person assessment, the case manager reviews the automated child support records to assess the client's child support situation. The intake appointment allows the case manager to learn more about the participant's situation, needs, and goals. It is essentially an opportunity for the potential participant to "tell his/her personal story." Following the intake, the case manager can provide clients with referrals to agencies that will assist with child support, employment, housing, food, clothing, counseling, and other services.

There are also specific expectations regarding ongoing contact between case managers and clients. During the first month of participation in POP, case managers are expected to have phone or in-person contact at least once a week, with face-to-face contact at least once every two weeks. After the first month, case managers are instructed to have contact with participants at least once every two weeks, with face-to-face contact at least once every six weeks.

POP case managers are also in regular contact with specialized service providers handling active cases. At least once a week, they need to verify that clients are complying with their service plan and meeting the program requirements. With respect to the employment vendor, Goodwill Industries, client compliance means attending all scheduled meetings with Goodwill case managers and job developers, attending training sessions, and making at least four contacts with potential employers each week. Depending upon the specific plan agreed upon by the case manager and the client, the case manager will monitor to see that the client is cooperating with other service providers. This includes staying in close contact with the child support agency to ensure that child support suspensions are only in effect for clients who are actively participating in the program. If the case managers discover that clients are not complying with program requirements, they are instructed to "confront the problem quickly to avoid losing all contact with the participant."

In older cases that are no longer actively receiving services ("maintenance cases"), case managers are instructed to have contact with participants at least once a month and face-to-face contact at least once every three months. At all contacts, case managers update project files and the telephone information needed to conduct follow-up interviews. Case managers document all their contacts with participants; they also make note of attempted contacts and actions taken. Similar records are maintained for contacts with service providers. Clients who fail to cooperate with a service provider are sent a discontinuation letter and asked to contact their case manager to prevent its implementation.

Washington

Washington extends case management services to some, but not all, of its clients. The director estimates that 60 percent of Devoted Dads participants come to the program for the free legal assistance provided by the contract attorney and paralegal, but that the remaining 40 percent engage more fully and receive case management services. These individuals disclose a variety of needs during the intake process, and case managers match them with suitable community-based service providers. In addition to making referrals and dispensing information about community resources,

case managers phone clients to check on their progress, help them negotiate bureaucracies in order to obtain benefits, and help them fill out applications, forms, and other paperwork,

Maryland

Although case managers in Maryland conduct one-on-one assessments with participants as they enter the program and every participant is assigned to a case manager, most clients are monitored through the weekly group sessions. Led by case managers, the groups meet on a weekly basis for six months and involve informal discussions, as well as review of a standard curriculum. As a result, staff feel as though the groups provide ample information on how participants are doing. As a further check, Baltimore RFP case managers get together on a weekly basis to discuss every client in the program. Additional in-person meetings with participants may be scheduled on an as-needed basis, with the goal being one meeting per month. These are generally scheduled before or after group sessions to minimize inconvenience for the client.

Participants who miss more than two consecutive group sessions receive a letter of warning and are instructed to contact their case manager within five days. If there is no response, they are dropped from the program.

Regardless of whether they are employed, Baltimore RFP participants are required to participate in employment training and also required to attend parenting classes. Both programs run for six months and there are day and evening options to accommodate various work schedules. In addition to these core program components, Baltimore RFP recently began to offer classes for batterers. Led by certified treatment providers, the classes satisfy the domestic violence treatment component required by the court. While regular treatment programs for batterers in Baltimore charge $35 per session for participants, those who attend the Baltimore RFP program pay nothing and their participation fee is paid by the project with surplus TANF dollars. Project staff believe that this component of the program is a big draw for participants.

Massachusetts

FFI case managers in Boston rely on individual meetings with clients at project offices and biweekly group sessions to keep up with participants. The group sessions involve 16 lessons. They are designed to be psycho-educational, and attendees are encouraged to check in and report on how things are going. In addition, interested participants can meet with the case manager for individual counseling sessions before or after the group meeting. As the employment component of FFI has

evolved, case managers have also scheduled more one-on-one appointments with clients to monitor their progress and lead them to successful work outcomes.

FFI sponsors periodic events and trips for fathers and their children to help further the parenting objectives of the program. They also arrange for every project participant to get a physical examination and to enroll for medical insurance, a feature that reflects the unique affiliation of the program with a public health agency. Case managers try to handle the housing, clothing, and emergency food needs of participants, using a variety of community agencies.

Wisconsin

Children UpFront also relies both on its case management and parent development classes to keep up with participants. There are four case managers: two males and two females. Like the other programs, case managers conduct assessments and work with clients to create a personal development plan. This charts the objectives of each participant and the range of needed services. All participants are required to attend parent development classes that run for 25 sessions, and this helps case managers keep track of participants and monitor their progress in the project. In addition, case managers try to schedule regular meetings with participants but are often thwarted by their mobility. As one case manager observed, "Case management requires creativity."

Case management is viewed as a way to provide more customized service interventions. One particular area of need is housing, and case managers struggle to find emergency housing and rent assistance for participants. Case managers also have access to vouchers for food and clothing to help participants meet their basic needs. In addition, case managers help clients complete forms requesting child support modifications. They also serve as facilitators in informal mediations between parents to develop parenting agreements and address communications issues and problems with access and visitation.

Chapter 6

Lessons Learned

OCSE's eight Responsible Fatherhood Demonstration projects share a common goal of helping poor, noncustodial parents get their lives together and become more effective parents. At their root, all the projects attempt to improve the employment and earnings of under- and unemployed noncustodial parents, and to motivate them to become more financially and emotionally involved in the lives of their children. This preliminary assessment of the projects demonstrates that there are many different paths to pursue in the quest to achieve these goals. The projects have not followed a single approach or format and they have not been required to test a specific model of service delivery. In subsequent reports, we will explore how well each project meets its key objectives.

This chapter highlights some of the early implementation lessons from these diverse "responsible fatherhood" pilot projects with respect to program organization, service delivery, and client recruitment. Table 9 summarizes these lessons.

Table 9. Summary of Lessons Learned

Lesson 1:	It is important for architects of programs seeking to increase income and stimulate responsible fatherhood to serve a broad group of participants, be flexible about program design and recruitment, and generate services that match the needs of participants.
Lesson 2:	Programs should take advantage of collaborations with other community agencies, but must be knowledgeable about eligibility restrictions imposed by other programs and funding sources.
Lesson 3:	It is important to "customize" and "personalize" services provided to project participants by outside agencies to ensure that they receive adequate attention and appropriate treatments.

Table 9. Summary of Lessons Learned

Lesson 4:	Programs serving low-income fathers have identified important gaps in employment services to be filled: apprenticeships, on-the-job training opportunities, and jobs with wage growth. Parents with a history of incarceration and other barriers face particular difficulties.
Lesson 5:	Programs are collaborating with child support agencies in new ways to educate parents about the child support program, understand their cases, and explore their options. Staff at the programs would like the child support system to be even more responsive to participants' needs and financial limitations.
Lesson 6:	Legal information and assistance on access, visitation, and child support has proven to be extremely popular at every site where it is offered.
Lesson 7:	Peer support and case management help to cultivate the sense of concern and dignity that participants appreciate experiencing.
Lesson 8:	There is no single formula for recruitment and retention; many strategies need to be used to attract various populations. Referrals from child support agencies and mandatory referrals are important sources and should not be overlooked.
Lesson 9:	Recruiting young or new fathers has not been easy. Efforts based at hospitals have not been successful where they have been tried; programs are experimenting with school-based referrals.
Lesson 10:	Programs need to have dedicated and energetic staff who know about community services and are good at identifying resources.

Lesson 1: It is important for architects of programs seeking to increase income and stimulate responsible fatherhood to serve a broad group of participants, be flexible about program design and recruitment, and generate services that match the needs of participants.

No matter how extensive the planning process is, there are always elements of surprise in implementing a responsible fatherhood program. Program architects should be receptive to serving a wide range of participants and to adapting services to accommodate their needs and interests. They should also be willing to create new services to address new client demands and to fill in service gaps in the broader community.

Flexibility on Population Targets

It is risky to define the target population for responsible fatherhood programs too narrowly. Programs that do so typically experience problems with recruitment. Programs must be ready to reconsider the criteria they use in selecting clients, and ready to serve the unexpected. For example:

- Missouri found that trying to recruit young, unwed fathers with children under age two was too limited, and ultimately broadened its focus to include all low-income, noncustodial parents.

- Baltimore found that its original plan to draw participants exclusively from the southern quadrant of the city was too confining and dropped that geographical requirement in favor of recruitment throughout the city.

- New Hampshire discovered that its original exclusive focus on obligors with minimum child support orders of $50 per month was unwise since these individuals often lacked the incentive to work. Instead, it broadened its target population to include parents who were unemployed and/or delinquent in their payments, as well as those with minimum orders.

- Tacoma and Boston anticipated serving young fathers, but both programs have attracted many participants in their 30s and older.

- New Hampshire anticipated that most of their participants would be male noncustodial parents, but to their surprise, a substantial proportion of their participants are female noncustodial parents.

- Wisconsin's program was designed to focus on "team parenting" and to serve couples, but discovered that engaging both parents was harder than expected and only enrolled nine couples during a year of operation.

- Although Wisconsin had expected to receive many referrals from the child support agency during the first year of implementation, this did not materialize due to an administrative change at the county level.

- Staff at both the Boston and Colorado programs were surprised to find that they were attracting a large number of fathers on parole and probation. Although program architects had not designed the program with these clients in mind, they quickly decided to target the courts and criminal justice agencies for program recruits.

- Washington also received an unexpected influx of ex-offenders as a result of a jail diversion program for fathers with a child on TANF.

- Colorado adapted its program to serve pregnant women who have lost custody of their older children in child welfare proceedings and need help improving their parenting skills.

Matching Service Offerings to Participants' Needs

When participants differ from those that architects planned to serve, the mix of program services may have to be altered. Services that are popular with some populations have less appeal for others. For example, peer support was not a core service anticipated in the Implementation Plan for Charles County, Maryland, but was a planned component for Colorado's POP. To the surprise of program staff, Charles County found there was a need for peer support and later implemented a well-attended peer support group. Colorado project staff, on the other hand, found that peer support was not heavily utilized. Rather, participants in Colorado have favored one-on-one interactions with case managers to address their issues about relationships, divorce, and limited contact with their children. This is also the preferred approach in New Hampshire where, like most rural areas, public transportation is non-existent, and it would be impractical to expect participants to attend group meetings after work.

Contrary to original expectations, there is also limited interest in purely teacher-focused classes on parenting. Parent education tends to be more popular when it includes group discussion, much like peer support groups. More instructional formats only tend to work with mandated populations in dependency and neglect actions who are required to attend parent education in order to be able to have contact with their children. This is consistent with courts' experiences with education programs for divorcing parents. Sparse voluntary attendance patterns have led courts in most jurisdictions to make attendance mandatory and require parents to attend before they receive a court hearing, or, in some cases, a divorce decree.

Still other service needs evolve over time and cannot be anticipated up front. For example, Maryland added a treatment program for batterers as part of its offerings to accommodate the needs of participants and has found that this helps with recruitment and retention. Colorado and Massachusetts discovered that they needed to cultivate relationships with employers who would accept persons with a felony background in order to meet the needs of their service populations. Also, the Colorado POP has worked with the Women's Resource Agency to help it expand its role in providing a range of support services to custodial parents.

Lesson 2: Programs should take advantage of collaborations with other community agencies, but must be knowledgeable about eligibility restrictions imposed by other programs and funding sources.

There are many public and private agencies in the community that can provide services or funding for fatherhood programs. In addition, some states have been able to extend TANF funding to programs assisting noncustodial parents (*e.g.*, New Hampshire and Washington). Eligibility requirements, however, may preclude the delivery of services to some program participants and result in service inequalities.

Building Collaborations

All eight projects involve collaborations with a variety of public and private agencies in the community for both the recruitment of participants and the provision of services. The collaborations they have developed are diverse.

- Projects typically rely on public agencies for employment services, and frequently utilize local employment centers that serve either TANF clients and/or the general public for classes on résumé writing and soft skills development, as well as job leads and placement services. Some sites also use rehabilitation agencies for employment assessments, training, education, and placement services.

- Projects turn to existing public and private entities for GED classes and other educational programs.

- The projects use existing court and community-based providers for mediation services and supervised visitation.

- The projects rely on existing food banks, secondhand clothing stores, housing programs, and other social services provided by community agencies to help program participants achieve self sufficiency.

- Some projects help participants access health services in the community, as well as substance abuse treatment providers and counseling.

By pursuing collaborations, projects have augmented the range of services they can offer, stretched their resources, and minimized their out-of-pocket expenses. Indeed, some projects say that they only need to pay for case managers to perform recruitment, intake, supervision, and referral services, along with the facilitation of peer support or parenting sessions. Among the major funding streams

that projects have accessed through interagency collaborations are Welfare-to-Work, TANF, and OCSE Access and Visitation grants.

Know Eligibility Requirements

Although most programs take advantage of existing community services, not all fatherhood program participants are eligible for all services provided by collaborative agencies. Sometimes, the father's ineligibility is not known until after he appears at the collaborative agency's doorstep. For example, convicted felons may be ineligible for various programs offering employment training or those providing supervised visitation. Other programs may have educational prerequisites. Means testing may exclude noncustodial parents if only gross income is considered and deductions are not allowed for child support payments. Still other training options may prove to be impractical if the individual has a parole plan requiring full-time employment. Finally, many services, such as Washington's jail diversion program and its below-guideline reductions in child support, are only available for noncustodial parents who have a TANF connection and are enrolled in an approved training program.

Need for Flexible Funding

There is clearly a need to develop more flexible funding sources for parents enrolled in responsible fatherhood programs. One possibility is TANF program funds. These funds may be used for supportive services like employment, job preparation, job training, transportation assistance, marriage counseling, and any activities that promote the objectives of "job preparation, work and marriage."

States have a tremendous amount of discretion in how they use federal TANF funds and state maintenance-of-effort (MOE) funds. Some states only extend these services to noncustodial parents whose children are current recipients of TANF. Other states adopt a more liberal definition of "needy parent" that would permit the provision of services to parents with low incomes whose children are not current TANF recipients. These definitions are critical to the responsible fatherhood programs. In an era of declining TANF caseloads, fewer program participants with low incomes have children who receive TANF. Restrictive definitions limit the range of services that programs and their collaborative partners can offer to project participants and mean that different services are available for different participants.

It is important for programs to know the eligibility rules for various programs so that participants do not experience discouraging rejection when they pursue recommended services. It is also important for programs to explore the feasibility of widening program requirements so that more noncustodial parents can be served.

Lesson 3: It is important to "customize" and "personalize" services provided to project participants by outside agencies to ensure that they receive adequate attention and appropriate treatments.

While it makes sense for projects to refer participants to existing community services and avoid service duplication, participants often need more personal attention and assistance than is normally accorded to the general public. For example, participants in New Hampshire often do not know how to use the Internet employment resources or the job boards at the job service centers. Projects attempt to make existing community services work for participants through their case management interventions and other efforts at customization.

The Need for Customized And Personalized Services

In programs that exclusively serve low-income parents, participants are frequently unable to utilize public agencies effectively and lack the education, skills, and self-esteem needed to advocate on their own behalf. Without personal attention, they may miss appointments, misrepresent their situation, or neglect to take advantage of opportunities. For this reason, a number of programs try to ensure that project participants receive more personal, intense, and focused interventions when they visit employment centers and other public entities. Programs accomplish this in different ways. Some programs, like Wisconsin, hire staff to be present at the agency exclusively to serve project participants. In other programs, such as New Hampshire, the case manager accompanies the participant to his or her meetings at the child support agency, employment center, or education provider. Finally, in some programs like Colorado, the agency designates a specialized worker to handle project participants and ensure that they do not get lost in the general flow of agency cases.

Access and visitation services may also need to be customized. For example, some programs, like Maryland, find that court-based mediation is too directive and/or the court setting is too intimidating and have developed an in-house capacity to try to resolve parenting disputes. Others, like Washington and Wisconsin, offer informal mediation opportunities at the project site as a convenience to participants and to circumvent client discomfort with courts.

The Need for Personalized Outreach

Outreach must also be personalized to recruit and retain program participants. As one case manager observed, "This is a difficult population to engage." Given this characterization, it is not surprising that mass mailings have been the least effective recruitment tool. More effective recruitment mechanisms involve a personal touch, such as "word-of-mouth," booths at public events, public awareness campaigns targeted to the characteristics of the population, or direct referrals from other agencies.

Personalized Contact with Employers

Some placement specialists emphasize the importance of establishing personal relationships with potential employers and cultivating those ties. For example, Goodwill Industries, the employment vendor for Colorado's POP, has an advisory board comprised of about 20 area employers. Through monthly meetings of the board, directors of the Human Resources Departments for these companies are exposed to the project and the staff. To put a human face on the project, the meetings occasionally feature some participants who present their stories. The employment case manager turns to these companies to place participants. For their part, employers know whom to contact if they have problems with placements.

Staff at the Massachusetts FFI and the Department of Revenue's workforce development specialist are also working hard to develop personal relationships with employers who can offer quality jobs with wage growth potential. They have conducted interviews with employers to better understand their needs. They have conducted focus groups to pinpoint employers' concerns about hiring ex-offenders. Finally, they have customized informational sessions and interview events with hiring employers to facilitate the recruitment process and enhance the retention of suitable project participants.

Lesson 4: Programs serving low-income fathers have identified important gaps in employment services to be filled: apprenticeships, on-the-job training opportunities, and jobs with wage growth. Parents with a history of incarceration and other barriers face particular difficulties.

Although there are many employment programs that offer "soft" skills training like résumé writing and interviewing skills, the programs are generally lacking in opportunities for paid apprenticeships or more substantial training programs that lead to the acquisition of marketable skills. Lacking

income to support themselves while in a training program and under pressure to pay child support, participants face the pressure to find quick employment. This may lead them to accept temporary jobs or low-paying positions with no opportunities for wage growth or benefits. Under- and unemployed participants in responsible fatherhood programs clearly need apprenticeships and on-the-job training programs.

Programs also need to develop employment opportunities for participants with a criminal background. Case managers report that employment programs serving the TANF population and the general program frequently do not address the needs of ex-offenders, including ways to present a criminal history on an application and in an interview. Nor do employment programs serving TANF clients necessarily cultivate relationships with employers who will accept applicants with a history of incarceration. This is an area of need that programs in Massachusetts and Colorado are trying to fill through direct outreach to employers.

Finally, programs are trying to boost the number of employers who will accept poorly educated individuals, ex-offenders, and other hard-to-place individuals. Some have aggressively tried to cultivate ties with targeted employers. Others like Wisconsin are working on apprenticeships and paid training positions. Construction jobs are believed to be particularly suitable since these jobs pay well and can often accommodate poorly educated individuals who have limited work experience.

Developing marketable skills and employing project participants at livable wages is central to the success of responsible fatherhood programs. Without quality employment, participants are unable to sustain themselves, pay their child support obligations, play a meaningful role in the lives of their children, and envision a future. No amount of peer support or case management can ultimately compensate for a lack of employment opportunity. And no adjustment in child support can be enough for individuals who only earn the minimum wage and live in dire poverty themselves. These are tall orders for programs that typically serve individuals who are hindered by their low educational attainment, limited work experience, substance abuse problems, criminal justice history, and alienated, discouraged world view. Skill development and employment at livable wages, however, must be primary goals for individual programs and the responsible fatherhood movement as a whole.

Lesson 5: Programs are collaborating with child support agencies in new ways to educate parents about the child support program, understand their cases, and explore their options. Staff at the programs would like the child support system to be even more responsive to participants' needs and financial limitations.

Most program participants are confused and/or unhappy about the rules of child support and their own personal situation. They welcome the more personalized and understandable explanations of the child support system and the options afforded them through the responsible fatherhood programs. But there are serious philosophical and practical issues for both child support agencies and programs. Child support agencies are being asked to be more flexible in their policies for low-income noncustodial parents who have taken many wrong turns and have incurred overwhelming debts. Among the steps they might take are higher self-support reserves, suspension of child support during education and training, and amnesty and/or debt compromise in cases with state arrears. Fatherhood programs are being asked to enforce unpopular policies that are frequently viewed as biased and unfair, particularly the collection of monies owed to the state for past payments of public assistance on behalf of children.

Helping Participants Understand Child Support and Comply with the Program

All programs try to help participants understand their child support situation, remedy errors in their case records, and pursue requests for modification. A key to their ability to do so is having access to a child support worker who understands the program and is willing to respond to requests for information, review, and modification on a timely basis. Child support agencies and programs have forged new relationships to ensure the flow of information about participants and to make case-by-case adjustments. The fact that case managers can either access the child support records themselves or reach a technician to review child support records means that project participants quickly and expeditiously learn about their status and their options. In addition to getting the facts, participants are shielded from insensitive and unresponsive child support workers. In the course of reviewing the records for participants, program staff and child support workers have an opportunity to assess whether errors have been made and to make needed adjustments. Finally, program staff can help participants apply for child support modifications. Although modification forms are designed to be completed by parents on their own, this is frequently an unrealistic expectation for the poorly educated and disenfranchised populations served by the programs.

Child Support Policies

With few exceptions, local child support agencies appear to be "playing by the book" with project participants and have not developed more flexible procedures with respect to order levels and payments. Thus, child support orders are established according to the guidelines, with the traditional self-support adjustments for low-income noncustodial parents, and there are no routine adjustments of child support arrears, including money owed to the state for past payments of public assistance. Finally, at most sites, orders are being enforced using standard remedies in accordance with federal mandates that preclude the retroactive modification of arrearages.

Nevertheless, a few sites have implemented some modifications to standard practice for project participants. These modifications include:

- Colorado suspends current child support orders for project participants during job training and job search.
- New Hampshire allows reductions in monthly arrears payments (but no forgiveness).
- In Maryland, project participants can avoid license suspension and bench warrants.
- Washington reduces child support orders to below guidelines levels for noncustodial parents if they have a child receiving TANF benefits and they are enrolled in a qualifying work-readiness program.

Without minimizing the financial needs of children, the importance of personal responsibility, and the critical role of child support in self sufficiency, program staff are painfully aware of the very difficult financial circumstances that participants face. As a result, most case managers feel that more flexible child support policies are needed to motivate participants to participate in projects, pursue the low-wage employment options that are typically available to them, and re-engage them with their families. They believe that order levels are often too high for low-income parents, especially when arrears payments are taken into account. Those on parole and in community corrections programs face particular challenges, since they often have to pay restitution as well as fees for substance abuse treatment classes and other mandatory programs. Parents often cannot afford to participate in lengthier training programs without incurring more child support debt. While they recognize that the ultimate solution for project participants is skill development and quality

employment at jobs that offer wage growth, staff are aware of the practical realities that participants face, and would welcome more flexibility in making adjustments for the limited income and other financial obligations of their clients.

Case managers would also like child support agencies to review their policies on arrears and consider adjustments to state debt levels as rewards for good behavior, including the completion of educational programs, job training, and/or the regular payment of child support. They believe that these forms of flexibility would go far in helping to motivate participants to take the long, hard road to self sufficiency, financial responsibility, and employment in the legitimate economy.

Perhaps because they perceive the child support agencies to be relatively inflexible, some programs are ambivalent about how and when they report participant employment to the agency. Some staff take the stance that it is up to child support to "discover" employment through new hire wage reporting and see the opportunity for participants to receive a few full paychecks before wage withholding takes effect as a way of helping them get on their feet. Staff at Colorado's POP and Massachusetts' FFI, however, report more success with immediate reporting to the child support agency and the initiation of wage withholding on an expedited basis. In their view, noncustodial parents do better if they never experience an ungarnished paycheck. As one staffer put it, "People don't miss what they never see."

Lesson 6: Legal information and assistance on access, visitation, and child support has proven to be extremely popular at every site where it is offered.

Every program that has offered participants legal information and assistance with legal filings has found this service greatly appreciated and utilized. For example, Washington cites the services offered by its contract attorney and paralegal as the program's biggest attractions. Although California does not offer legal services as part of its responsible fatherhood project, the state does have Family Law Facilitators in every Superior Court to assist parents with *pro se* filings regarding child support and access. Project staff value the facilitators' services to *pro se* litigants (including project participants). Wisconsin and Maryland project staff prepare *pro se* filings on child support and access for participants. And Massachusetts is currently developing an arrangement for volunteer attorneys to provide participants with information and brief advice and assistance on visitation matters.

With the rise in *pro se* divorce, the decline in government-funded legal services (especially for noncustodial parents), and the growth in out-of-wedlock births, participants usually need and appreciate information on their rights and responsibilities. Many have never had access to a lawyer, and they are mystified about where they stand with respect to child support, custody, visitation, and parenting time. *Pro se* filings are frequently too complicated for participants to complete on their own. Many have had negative experiences with the criminal justice system, which makes them reluctant to view court staff as potential sources of help. Clearly, some find it empowering just to talk to a lawyer. While a legal remedy may not be likely or even possible, there appears to be some value to having an assessment of options made by an expert in a dignified and respectful manner in a welcoming and supportive setting.

Lesson 7: Peer support and case management help to cultivate the sense of concern and dignity that participants appreciate experiencing.

Responsible fatherhood programs help participants overcome their isolation and marginalization by helping individuals realize that they are not alone, by listening and according respectful treatment to participants, and by demonstrating genuine concern for and trying to help participants. These are new experiences for many participants, and they are powerful because they contrast so starkly with the disrespectful treatment so many experience in their normal interactions with bureaucracies. Peer support and case management help programs communicate concern, help participants overcome their isolation, and motivate participants to make pro-social changes in their attitude and behavior. They also attempt to foster an interest in fatherhood and cultivate both the desire and the ability to perform better as parents.

Peer Support Groups

Although peer support was the most popular feature of the Parents' Fair Share demonstration projects, it does not work with every demographic group or in every program setting. It appears to be extremely popular with poor, minority men in dense, urban settings (*e.g.*, Maryland, Massachusetts, Wisconsin). It seems to be somewhat less critical in locations that are predominately white and less impoverished (Colorado and Washington). It may be impractical in rural settings that lack public transportation (New Hampshire). Perhaps this reflects the fact that peer support groups help participants grapple with the issues of racism and discrimination that are felt more acutely by racial minorities. Regardless of the reason, however, peer support groups help many poor, minority men feel connected and combat the sense of isolation and marginalization they feel.

Case Management

Case managers can also provide the sense of support and concern that is typical of peer support groups. It is used in the sites that do not have peer support (Colorado, New Hampshire, Washington), as well as in sites that also conduct support groups (Maryland, Massachusetts, Wisconsin). An active case manager can help boost a client's participation in the project by accompanying him to meetings and community-based services and ensuring that he does not get "lost in the crowd." Through frequent calls and visits, an energetic case manager demonstrates concern and helps participants overcome their sense of isolation and estrangement. Case managers can provide one-on-one counseling about the importance of parental involvement, and build client confidence to take important first steps with respect to both job seeking and parent-child contact. By regularly checking in with clients and monitoring their progress, case managers believe that they help clients perform and follow through with their plan of action. Finally, case management is believed to cultivate attachment and commitment to the program and promote retention.

Lesson 8: There is no single formula for recruitment and retention; many strategies need to be used to attract various populations. Referrals from child support agencies and mandatory referrals are important sources and should not be overlooked.

Recruiting program participants takes a lot of energy, time, and initiative. Programs should use many strategies to attract different populations. Over time, word-of-mouth referrals may develop, but at least in the early stages, program staff must be highly visible and aggressive in cultivating referrals from all possible sources. Boston's experience using the mass media and promoting FFI at a wide variety of community events suggests that public outreach pays off. Mass mailings and cold calls to child support clients, such as those who are behind in their payments, yields few participants. There are better ways to cultivate referrals from public agencies. Indeed, collaborations with community agencies are important for service provision, but are equally important for recruitment.

Referrals from Child Support Agencies

PFS relied exclusively on referrals from child support agencies. One goal of the OCSE demonstration programs was to broaden the referral base and generate clients from a variety of sources. This has happened, but even sites that actively cultivate community referrals rely heavily

on referrals from the child support agency too (*e.g.*, Colorado, Washington, California, New Hampshire).

Child support agencies routinely deal with noncustodial parents who are behind in making payments – the very population that the programs hope to serve. Technicians routinely hear noncustodial parents complain about visitation denial and other problems with access, and they regularly learn about under- and unemployment situations. Most child support technicians ignore these issues and try to enforce orders without reference to a noncustodial parent's social circumstances. Programs of the type funded by OCSE offer agencies a new, more humane "enforcement" remedy. Instead of ignoring the employment and child access concerns presented by noncustodial parents, technicians can refer clients to the programs. In time, this should widen program acceptance by noncustodial parents, and improve perceptions of responsiveness and customer satisfaction. As evidenced in the PFS demonstrations, referrals by child support technicians also have the potential to lead to higher payments of child support through the discovery of previously undisclosed employment activity.

Mandatory Referral Sources

NPCL, the architect of the Partners for Fragile Families (PFF) demonstration projects, emphasizes the importance of cultivating voluntary referrals from community-based organizations rather than "mandatory" referrals from child support and criminal justice agencies. The OCSE demonstration projects, however, suggest that so-called "mandatory" referrals help some programs generate needed numbers of participants. It also appears that the dichotomy between "voluntary" and "mandatory" participants may be less meaningful than expected. Many clients who are compelled to attend become eager and whole hearted participants. Conversely, many clients who are voluntarily attracted to the program drop out or fail to adhere to their plan for intervention. The key appears to be triggering an individual's internal commitment to the program and the plan of action it inspires. Mandated participants can respond fully and positively. For example, program staff in Massachusetts and Maryland believe that those who are compelled to attend actually participate more completely and that their more regular attendance patterns help to inspire group cohesion and commitment among all participants. The debate about the value of mandatory interventions is an old one in the social services arena. Studies of services such as mediation, substance abuse counseling, and anger management often conclude that mandated interventions can be compatible with voluntary participation patterns and consensual outcomes. They also inspire high levels of client satisfaction.

Lesson 9: Recruiting young or new fathers has not been easy. Efforts based at hospitals have not been successful where they have been tried; programs are experimenting with school-based referrals.

In order to prevent the problems associated with an accumulation of unpaid child support, OCSE had hoped to generate program participants at hospitals and other settings that serve new parents. Hospitals are required to present voluntary paternity acknowledgment forms to unmarried parents. It seemed logical to combine information about programs for fathers with the paternity offer, and to refer interested parents soon after the birth of their children.

To date, only two sites have aggressively pursued referrals from hospitals and other health facilities that serve newly delivering parents. Despite considerable staff energy, however, this outreach has not generated many referrals. Several factors make it difficult to do outreach in hospital settings. Hospital stays are extremely brief; the nursing staff changes regularly; and new parents and hospital staff have many rival goals and concerns, including breast feeding and the care of infants and mothers. More to the point, research suggests that fathers who visit and acknowledge paternity may well be the more stable ones who are employed and have long-term relationships with the other parent, while those who fail to visit and do not acknowledge paternity may have more tenuous relationships with the other parent. New mothers may be understandably uninterested in worrying about the employment needs and child contact concerns of uninvolved fathers at such moments.

Some of the same factors also affect outreach at postpartum settings: visiting nurses and other public health personnel are extremely busy and are preoccupied with the issues of immunization, nutrition, and effective baby care. They are also expected to screen for a host of problems like child abuse and neglect, and make relevant referrals. They are not mandated to address the issues of paternal involvement on both emotional and financial levels, and, in the absence of requirements to do so, other priorities may prevail. Finally, fathers tend not to be on scene at many public health and education settings that are frequented by new mothers and babies. This includes public health clinics, WIC offices, Head Start programs, child care providers, and pediatricians. When fathers are not around, all project overtures must be made through the mother, and this limits the effectiveness of program outreach efforts.

An alternative way to reach young fathers is through the schools, and some programs have initiated outreach programs in high schools. For example, staffers at El Paso County's Center on Fathering

teach a parent education class for fathers at a local high school. The three enrolled students receive course credit. Over time, POP staff expect that the class will attract more takers. Washington is also beginning to focus on schools, local churches, and neighborhood youth programs to reach young parents and is deploying its younger staff members to do one-on-one recruitment in those settings.

Lesson 10: Programs need to have dedicated and energetic staff who know about community services and are good at identifying resources.

The eight demonstration programs provide relatively few services for participants on an in-house basis; they tend to rely on community providers. This type of format requires that program staff be knowledgeable about community services in order to maximize opportunities for participants. For example, program staff who are familiar with public benefits are often able to link participants with programs specifically designed for low-income populations. Those who know about vocational rehabilitation are adept at referring participants to those agencies and the services they provide. Still others are familiar with public health resources. And some staff have excellent connections with employers and are effective in finding jobs for hard-to-employ populations.

Programs should recruit staff who have extensive familiarity with relevant community services and can access resources for program participants. First-hand knowledge is key. The best referrals are not made out of directories, but result from long-standing familiarity with community services, eligibility requirements, available resources, and relevant personnel. By the same token, many jobs for hard-to-serve populations come through personal ties, word-of-mouth referrals, and targeted job development efforts rather than from newspaper classified ads, Internet listings, and job postings.

Most importantly, the success of the Responsible Fatherhood Demonstration Projects appears to be tied to the commitment of the staff. Reaching alienated and disenfranchised populations and convincing them to change their attitudes and behaviors is hard work. It takes time, persistence, repeated contacts, fast action, patience, firmness, and endless resourcefulness. Like so many areas of human services, there is no single solution that will work for every individual; outcomes are nebulous and performance benchmarks are hard to monitor and assess. Thus, programs need to recruit key program staff who are inspired and inspiring. Dedicated and energetic staff can better counsel and steer parents into a course of action that makes them more financially and emotionally responsible to their children.

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