



Office of Child Support Enforcement’s “Pay It Off” Program Helped Noncustodial Parents Repay nearly \$1 Million in Child Support Debt

From November 12 through December 31, 2013, HRA’s Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) offered a special incentive for Noncustodial Parents (NCPs) with child support debt owed to the government. As part of the “Pay It Off” initiative, NCPs who paid at least \$2,500 toward their debt had their payment matched by HRA. HRA also removed nine percent interest charges owed on debt if NCPs paid the principal in full. Overall, 184 noncustodial parents participated in the initiative, 189 agreements were signed, and nearly \$1 million in child support debt was repaid.

The program was initially scheduled to last from November 12 through November 27, and required a payment minimum of \$5,000 to be eligible for HRA matching, but the initiative was expanded, and the minimum payment was reduced due to a high level of interest from NCPs. The program gave noncustodial parents who had not met their obligations in the past a second chance to connect with the program and support their children. The program also helped NCPs avoid driver’s license suspensions, arrest warrants and other penalties from unpaid child support.

OCSE offers a wide variety of programs for low-income noncustodial parents to help them manage child support obligations and support their children financially and emotionally:

- The Modify DSS Order (MDO) program can help noncustodial parents who earn below the State self-support reserve of \$15, 512, and whose children are on cash assistance, to have their child support order lowered, to reflect their actual income without returning to Family Court
- The Arrears Cap and Arrears Credit programs can lower arrears for low-income NCPs who owe child support debt to the government if they meet certain criteria.
- The Support Through Employment Program (STEP) helps unemployed NCPs find employment to support themselves and their children.
- While visitation agreements are not part of the child support process in New York, OCSE can refer parents to free or low-cost mediation services to discuss child rearing and other issues. .

Child support payments are an important tool in the fight against poverty. Studies have repeatedly shown that children who receive the financial and emotional support of both parents have better outcomes.