



OCSE OFFICE OF CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT  
**ANNUAL REPORT**

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**2015**

**NYC**™ Human Resources  
Administration  
Department of  
Social Services

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Persons appearing are models, except where indicated.

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# MESSAGE FROM THE OCSE EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER



In 2015 the federal child support program turned forty. Signed into law in 1975 by President Gerald Ford, the Social Security amendments that created the child support program had one overarching purpose: minimizing spending on public

anti-poverty programs by recovering the costs associated with them or by getting people enough financial support to avoid having to enter those programs in the first place.

Over these last forty years, the child support program has come a long way, and looking back on all we have accomplished, I feel confident in saying that New York City's child support program has never been better.

Our passion for helping the most vulnerable support themselves financially remains as strong as ever. In 2015 the New York City Human Resources Administration's Office of Child Support Enforcement broke its own records by collecting approximately \$757 million in child support on behalf of about 190,000 children, an 8% increase since 2010.

At one level, these collections attest to the hard work of OCSE staff and our partners within and outside of HRA, especially in the Family Courts. I am grateful to all of them for their tremendous effort.

Our collections are also a testament to how much fathers, mothers, and guardians in New York City are willing to do for their children. They are the people who dedicate their time, effort, and money to ensuring their children have the financial and emotional support they need. They are the people who sacrifice so that their children can have food and clothing and a safe place to live and grow.

At the same time, we know that there are tens of thousands of parents and guardians out there who should be receiving child support who are not. We also know there are tens of thousands of parents who want to pay child support but find it hard to overcome the barriers preventing them.

Under the leadership of Mayor Bill de Blasio, DSS Commissioner Steven Banks, and HRA Chief Program Officer Lisa Fitzpatrick, we have redoubled our efforts to do more for all of the people we serve and to find more ways to reach those not yet connected to our program. The accomplishments detailed in this annual report—whether in collections or in our growing success with reducing child support debt owed to the government and aligning child support orders with noncustodial parents' income—reflect an urgent sense across all of City government to provide increased services to an expanded number of people in a seamlessly efficient manner. The energy this has added to our program, and the practical results it has already brought, fuel my sense that our program has never been stronger.

Looking to the coming year, I know that we have even more new ideas and approaches to serving New Yorkers in need. We hope that you stay in touch with us about this work during this next year and beyond. We are grateful, as always, for your interest in our program.

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*Frances Pardus-abbadessa*

*Executive Deputy Commissioner, Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE)*

*New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA)/Department of Social Services (DSS)*

# MISSION, WORK, AND VALUES

## Our Mission

OCSE puts children first by helping parents provide for the economic and social well-being, health, and stability of their children.

## Our Work

OCSE offers child support services to all custodial and noncustodial parents, as well as guardians and caretakers, regardless of income or immigration status.

Our services include:

- assistance with locating noncustodial parents
- establishing legal fatherhood
- establishing child support and medical support orders
- collecting and distributing child support payments
- modifying and enforcing child support orders
- helping noncustodial parents manage their orders through programs to reduce debt, align orders to current income, and, when needed, connect them to employment

## Our Values

We believe every encounter with our program should reflect these values:

- **Respect:** the right to be treated with dignity and have your voice heard and concerns addressed
- **Fairness:** the need to be transparent and unbiased when making decisions
- **Clarity:** the need to make processes and criteria for judgment clear and comprehensible
- **Helpfulness:** the recognition that assisting people is at the heart of our work



# VALUES IN ACTION: TWO PARENTS TELL THEIR OWN STORIES

## A Noncustodial Parent

*In 2015 a noncustodial parent graduating from our Kings County Parent Support Program offered his thoughts on his experience with the program. The following excerpt, which comes courtesy of the Center for Court Innovation, has been lightly edited for clarity. For more on the Kings County Parent Support Program, as well as our Support Through Employment Program (STEP), see pages 15 and 16 of this report.*

I found the Kings County Parent Support Program to be a very valuable experience. . . .

The Court monitoring process was helpful in understanding just how serious a situation one is in. The rest of the information came mostly from the most valuable part of the program—namely, the STEP program.

The STEP program supplied not only detailed, step-by-step procedural information about the Family Court, child support, and other related systems but something even more important: the opportunity to interact with other men (and women) in the same situation, to share stories and backgrounds and understand exactly how they got to their current circumstance, and most importantly how to understand and deal with what is a very difficult situation possibly affecting every aspect of their lives.

It was also pointed out that we in New York are fortunate to even have such a program—as an educational platform such as this is virtually unheard of for those in other states involved in the child support system.

Of course a program is only as good as the people administering it, and I was fortunate enough to be with magistrates wise enough to know who to send to the program, like Support Magistrate John Fafone and Support Magistrate Nicholas Palos; and fortunate enough to be under the care of a very kind Ms. Andree Tenemás-Chavez for the Court portion, and the invaluable, priceless Mr. Mike White, who works with the STEP program in Brooklyn. Better public servants you cannot find





**A Custodial Parent**

*In 2015, after a protracted legal process, OCSE and attorneys with HRA's Office of Legal Affairs (OLA) were able to negotiate the release of \$183,000 in past-due child support from a noncustodial parent's bank account. Not long after receiving this money, the custodial parent on this case sent the following handwritten note to Martha Calhoun, HRA's General Counsel, thanking her team for their help. The "Ms. Mariya" referred to in the note is Mariya Kolchina, an attorney at OLA.*

I write with gratitude for the services of your legal team. I have received the finest service. Ms. Natasha Godby has been patient and very helpful with regard to my situation. Natasha has had an attorney, Ms. Mariya, who has called me back almost within 30 minutes every time I have a question.

I have suffered great financial abuse over the last 12 years. I have been blessed to have your team help me with child support issues.

Please reward these fine ladies. God answers prayers and He used your NYC HRA legal team.

Again, no words can explain just how "awesome" these legal ladies performed.

May God bless you all 100 times over.



**2015 By the Numbers: Demonstrating Our Values When Working with Our Clients**

<i>Percentage of Clients Surveyed Who Rate OCSE Staff as Courteous and Respectful</i>	<b>94%</b>
<i>Percentage of Clients Surveyed Who Say OCSE Staff Answered Questions Promptly and Clearly</i>	<b>91%</b>

# UNDERSTANDING THE CHILD SUPPORT PROCESS

## Opening a Case

Child support cases start with the custodial parent—the person living with and taking day-to-day care of the child at the center of the case. Custodial parents can be mothers, fathers, or guardians. Those applying for or receiving Cash Assistance open their child support cases in our Borough Offices. All other custodial parents come to our Family Court offices.

## Establishing Paternity

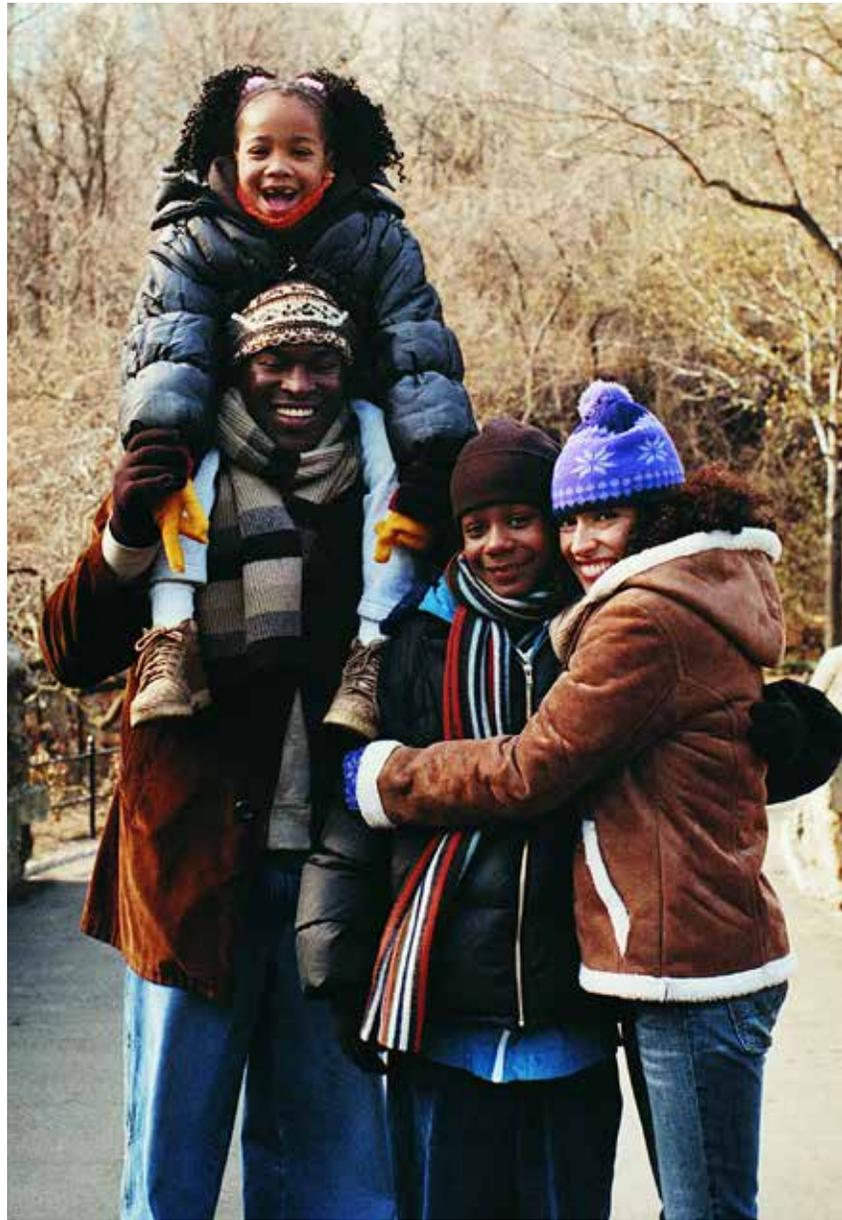
While often done outside of the child support process, establishing legal fatherhood (paternity) is required before establishing a child support order. It also grants important rights to both fathers and children. By establishing paternity, fathers gain the ability to seek court-ordered visitation or custody and to be consulted in legal proceedings related to the child, among other rights. Children gain a broad spectrum of legal rights as well, especially around inheritance and access to potential social security and military benefits.

## Establishing Orders

In New York State, child support orders are set by the Family Court as a percentage of the parent's income. The court also considers whether the custodial parent or the noncustodial parent should provide medical support and cover education and childcare costs.

## Collecting and Distributing Support

Custodial parents not currently receiving Cash Assistance—about 85% of our current caseload—receive all of the money we collect on their behalf. Our Cash Assistance clients get up to \$100 of current support collected for one child or up to \$200 for two or more children, the remainder going to reimburse the Department of Social Services (DSS) for Cash Assistance payments.





### Enforcing and Modifying Orders

For noncustodial parents, the keys to success in the child-support program are engaging with the program from the beginning and having an order that fits their income and the needs of their child. But the needs of their child can change, as can noncustodial parents' income and ability to work. Modifying child support orders allows custodial and noncustodial parents to address these changes in a fair and equitable way. And when parents fail to pay their current support, OCSE and the courts have enforcement options to help ensure that the needs of the child are met.

### OCSE By the Numbers: 2010 vs. 2015

#### 1. Total collections

a. 2010	\$700 million
b. 2015	\$757 million
c. Percentage increase	8%

#### 2. Average collection across all cases

a. 2010	\$5,608
b. 2015	\$6,263
c. Percentage increase	12%

#### 3. Percentage of overall caseload with paternity established

a. 2010	70%
b. 2015	81%
c. Percentage increase	16%

#### 4. Percentage of overall caseload with a child support order

a. 2010	70%
b. 2015	77%
c. Percentage increase	10%

#### 5. New orders

a. 2010	13,562
b. 2015	19,120
c. Percentage increase	41%

### 2015 New York City Child Support at a Glance

1. Number of cases	369,000
2. Number of cases with an order	283,000
3. Number of cases with an order and a collection	170,000
4. Number of children on overall caseload	396,000
5. Number of children on cases with a collection	190,000
6. Percentage of total collections retained	8%
7. Percentage of total collections going directly to families	92%



# BRINGING AN EFFECTIVE TWO-GENERATION ANTI-POVERTY PROGRAM TO NYC

## Reducing Poverty and Improving Outcomes for Children

Census data tells us that in New York City about 1.75 million people meet the federal guidelines for poverty. More than 500,000 of them are children under 18, and about 350,000 of those children live in the Bronx and Brooklyn.

That means there are roughly as many New Yorkers in poverty as the combined populations of Austin, Texas, and San Francisco, California, and more children in poverty in just two of the city's five boroughs than the entire population of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

The New York City Department of Social Services works hard to reduce these numbers and to minimize the effects of poverty on adults and children.

This is done in part by getting low-income custodial parents the child support they need to pay for food, rent, utilities, and the various other necessities children require. The central role these payments play in lives of low-income families is suggested by federal data showing that child support income represents 41% of family income nationwide for the low-income custodial families that receive it.

Receiving child support is also associated with better cognitive and emotional outcomes—and even improved chances of graduating from high school and attending college. Indeed, some experts argue that, dollar for dollar, child support does more than any other income source to improve children's educational outcomes.

But parents can only make payments they can afford, and sometimes not being able to afford a child support order can, for a myriad of reasons, keep noncustodial parents from connecting with their children.

This is why throughout our program we encourage parents to change their child support orders to reflect changes in income. Just as we never want a child to go without, we never want child support to be a barrier keeping noncustodial parents from being a part of their children's lives.

Our belief, supported by research, is that this approach can deliver more consistent financial support to one generation—the custodial parent who receives child support—while also keeping child support manageable for the noncustodial parent. This, in turn, allows both parents to be an active, positive presence for their child, who can then enjoy the long-term benefits of the program and thus end the cycle of poverty, creating a two-generation effect that can help New Yorkers for years to come.

## Strengthening Connections between OCSE and the Department of Homeless Services

For years OCSE has worked with the City's Department of Homeless Services (DHS) to bring child support services to individuals and families residing in shelters.

In addition to introducing a way for family shelter residents to apply for child support services electronically, OCSE shares data with DHS to improve service delivery for both custodial and noncustodial parents in DHS shelters.

In 2015, OCSE's Training Institute provided in-depth child support training to 125 managers in DHS's Single Adults division, an area that often works with non-custodial parents. We plan to expand these trainings further in the year ahead so we can bring child support's anti-poverty benefits to as many vulnerable New Yorkers as possible.



### 2015 By the Numbers: Child Support and the Most Vulnerable New Yorkers

Collections for Families Currently or Formerly Receiving Cash Assistance	\$425 million
Average Number of Cases in DHS Shelters with a Child Support Order	4,446
Average Number of Cases in DHS Shelters with a Child Support Payment	1,498
Total Amount Collected for OCSE Clients in DHS Shelters	\$6.3 million
Percent Increase since 2011* in Total Collections for OCSE Clients in DHS Shelters	54%
Average Annual Amount Collected for OCSE Clients in DHS Shelters	\$4,234

\*2011 is the earliest year for which comparable data is available.

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## ENSURING LOW-INCOME NONCUSTODIAL PARENTS RECEIVE THE LEGAL PROTECTIONS THEY DESERVE

**New York State provides a variety of important protections to low-income noncustodial parents. These include:**

- Poverty orders for noncustodial parents earning at or below the federal poverty level (\$11,770 in 2015) that set their current child support obligation at \$25 per month and limit their debt to \$500
- Minimum orders of \$50 per month for noncustodial parents earning at or below the state's self-support reserve (\$15,890 in 2015)
- Hardship exemptions that reduce the additional amount garnished from a noncustodial parent's paycheck to reduce debt (the so-called add-on amount) when those payments would bring a noncustodial parent below the self-support reserve
- Exemptions from particular enforcement actions (including driver's license suspensions, professional license suspensions, and property liens) when noncustodial parents are receiving certain public benefits, such as Cash Assistance, or have low income
- The ability to request that a child support order established after October 13, 2010, be lowered as a result of the noncustodial parent's incarceration

These provisions form the basis of some of the programs described in this report's "Helping More Children by Helping More Parents" section.

We hope all New Yorkers keep these in mind when working with our program, whether doing so directly as a client or when assisting others with child support questions.

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# SERVING PARENTS IN OCSE OFFICES

## Getting Parents Started with Child Support

New York parents applying for child support services come to OCSE by one of two routes. Those seeking or receiving Cash Assistance are referred by HRA's Financial Independence Administration to our Borough Offices in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens. All others visit our offices in the city's Family Courts, located in each of the five boroughs.

Regardless of how a parent first connects to us, the goal of our work with them is the same: securing fair and consistent support for the child. To do that we offer help with:

- Locating the other parent
- Establishing legal fatherhood for the child
- Preparing and filing the court papers necessary to establish child support and medical support orders
- Serving summonses (a service offered to both custodial and noncustodial parents)

Establishing a child support order also involves screening custodial parents for domestic violence. To further enhance these services, in 2015 we provided additional child support training to the Domestic Violence Liaisons in HRA's Emergency and Intervention Services program who work with Cash Assistance clients.

## Staying Connected with Child Support

Custodial and noncustodial parents with existing child support orders visit our Customer Service Walk-In Center in Lower Manhattan.

There clients can get help with:

- Understanding their current child support account
- Updating their account information
- Reducing child support debt through one of our special programs (see pages 15 - 16 for more information)
- Addressing current enforcement actions (such as driver's license suspensions)

Clients can also visit the Customer Service Walk-In Center to make child support payments by debit or credit card. Unlike with some electronic child support payment systems, OCSE does not charge a fee for this service.

## WHAT OUR CUSTOMERS SAY ABOUT OUR SERVICE

Every month OCSE surveys its clients for the Mayor's Customer Service Report. The following are lightly edited quotations from those surveys.

### Customer Service Walk-In Center

*"[My caseworker] deserves an award. She is the best government employee I have ever met. Very polite and helpful. She is very respectful, straightforward, and fair. With employees like her, HRA will make a bigger difference."*

### Bronx Borough Office

*"My caseworker was so helpful and understanding. She made me feel real comfortable and assisted me with everything that I came here to do. She also gave me great advice and was very resourceful."*

### Manhattan Family Court

*"Thank you for assisting and not judging me as a single young mother."*

### Queens Family Court

*"I'd like to thank you for your help. Everyone was very amicable, helpful and made this nerve-wracking process as easy as possible. I'm grateful to the wonderful and caring staff at this facility."*

## 2015 By the Numbers: Client Services at OCSE

Number of Client Meetings with OCSE Caseworkers	
Family Court Offices	29,000
Borough Offices	44,000
Customer Service	55,000
Total Value of Debit or Credit Card Payments Made in Customer Service	\$4.1 million
Number of Noncustodial Parents Making Card Payments in Customer Service	3,000
Average Debit or Credit Card Payment Made in Customer Service	\$771

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## Adding Services for Noncustodial Parents to OCSE's Family Court Locations

While OCSE's five Family Court locations have long provided informal assistance to noncustodial parents, the primary focus in these offices has traditionally been on helping custodial parents establish child support orders.

Now, as part of a shared desire across all of HRA to bring our services into the community, OCSE has expanded our services in these locations so that noncustodial parents can get answers to certain questions about their cases and guidance about our complete range of services. Though these expanded services came to these offices only in the second half of 2015, nearly 1,100 noncustodial parents were seen in our Family Court offices over those few months.

Noncustodial parents who are unemployed or under-employed and would like to volunteer for our Support Through Employment Program (STEP) can also come to our Family Court locations. See page 15 for more information.

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# HELPING MORE CHILDREN BY HELPING MORE PARENTS

The special services we offer noncustodial parents are informed by a few simple precepts:

- Parents want to support their children
- Some face barriers that make it hard to find or keep the job that would allow them to pay that support
- Others have accumulated so much debt that paying it off seems almost impossible

The research and experience supporting these ideas also suggests that removing these barriers can bring more frequent—and in some cases larger—child support payments. This, in turn, can improve the lives of both parents, as well as their child.

## **Providing Multifaceted Assistance to Noncustodial Parents**

### *Early Intervention*

With 80,000 more cases on its caseload than the average US state and yet only about half as many staff per case, the New York City child support program is unfortunately not able to manage each of its cases individually. But by using a predictive data model to determine which cases would seem to benefit most from additional staff assistance, we are able to pair noncustodial parents who recently joined the program with individual caseworkers who can answer their questions and help them solve any problems as soon as they arise.

Launched in 2014, the Early Intervention Program was expanded in 2015 to include all cases with a noncustodial parent age 24 and under.

### *STEP (The Support Through Employment Program)*

STEP pairs unemployed or under-employed noncustodial parents with organizations that provide job placement services as well as vocational training in such fields as food service, security, transportation, and healthcare.

The program's job-readiness training, literacy education, and high school equivalency classes help hundreds of noncustodial parents find work every year. A substantial number of other participants begin to pay as a result of being ordered into the program.

In 2015, to further encourage participants to stay in the program and maintain employment, we added incentives that allowed successful participants to reduce child support debt owed to the government by as much as \$3,500.

In August of that same year, as part of our celebrations of National Child Support Awareness Month, OCSE staff filled 450 backpacks with an array of school supplies and distributed them to STEP participants across the city, so they could give them to their children in time for the new school year. Many of the parents who received the backpacks said that they appreciated the program recognizing their efforts to support their children.



Staff with Goodwill, one of our employment services providers, and parents participating in our STEP program show off the backpacks filled with school supplies put together by OCSE staff.

### *Kings County Parent Support Program*

The Kings County Parent Support Program connects noncustodial parents to employment, mediation, education, and other services designed to address their specific needs. Drawing on the combined experience of OCSE, the Family Court, and the nonprofit Center for Court Innovation, the program expects participants to attend frequent compliance hearings, gain and maintain employment, and make child support payments. Participants graduate from the program after six months of making payments.

During the ceremony to celebrate their graduation, participants often express deep gratitude for all the program has done for them. A sample of a noncustodial parent's statement appears on page 7.

### *Jobs-Plus*

Jobs-Plus is a multifaceted program that brings employment services directly to residents in New York City public housing. A collaborative effort led by HRA but with significant support from the New York City Housing Authority, the Center for Economic Opportunity, the Department of Consumer Affairs Office of Financial

Empowerment, and the Department of Small Business Services, Jobs-Plus includes help with child support services as part of its proven three-pronged approach, combining employment services, financial incentives, and community supports.

OCSE provides child support training to Jobs-Plus staff, as well as case information that helps Jobs-Plus counselors work with their clients on child support issues that may be a barrier to employment.

### **Reducing Debts and Making Orders Fit Parents' Current Income**

OCSE offers three year-round debt-reduction programs aimed at removing the barriers caused by debt and orders that are out of alignment with a parent's current income. Information about how to qualify for these programs, none of which requires participants to go to court, is available online at <http://bit.ly/ManageYourSupport>.

#### *Modify DSS Order (MDO)*

With MDO, parents who have incomes below the New York State self-support reserve (\$15,890 in 2015) and child support orders payable to the New York City Department of Social Services (NYC DSS) can have their order lowered to reflect their current income.

#### *Arrears Cap*

Under Arrears Cap, parents who built up child support debt to the NYC DSS while earning at or below the federal poverty level (\$11,770 in 2015) can have that debt reduced to as little as \$500.

#### *Arrears Credit Program*

With the Arrears Credit Program, parents who pay their child support in full for a year can have child support debt owed to the NYC DSS reduced by up to \$5,000 a year for three years, for a total maximum possible benefit of \$15,000.



**2015 By the Numbers: Removing Barriers, Increasing Support**

<b>STEP</b>		
Job Placements for 2015		960
Average Hourly Wage for Placements		\$11.66
Total Amount Collected from All Participants Referred in 2015		\$2.6 million
Total Amount Collected from All Participants Ever Referred to the Program		\$47 million
<b>Kings County Parent Support Program</b>		
Total Number of Participants		443
Total Number of Graduates		172
Total Amount Collected from All Participants Ever Referred to the Program		\$693,000
<b>Jobs-Plus</b>		
Total Number of Participants		1,500
<b>MDO</b>		
Average Monthly Child Support Order after Participating in MDO		\$29
Average Amount Reduced per Month in the Participant's Child Support Order		\$281
Average Percentage Decrease in Order Amount		90%
Average Percentage Increase in Child Support Payments after Participating		37%

### *Arrears Cap*

Total Number of Participants since 2008	3,600
Total Reduction in NYC DSS Debt since 2008	\$37 million
Average Percentage Increase in Child Support Payments after Participating	23%
Number of Participants Who Have Paid All Outstanding Debt in Full as of December 2015	1,200

### *Arrears Credit*

Total Number of Participants Who Have Completed the Program since 2010	690
Total Number of Participants Still Active as of December 2015	700
Total Reduction in NYC DSS Debt since 2010	\$1.3 million
Total DSS Debt Reduced in 2015 Alone	\$944,000

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## **Applications for Arrears Cap and Arrears Credit Now Available Online**

In 2015, OCSE made it possible to apply for two of our three standing debt-reduction programs by downloading online forms and returning them to us by mail.

### **Arrears Credit Program**

English      <http://bit.ly/ArrearsCreditApp>  
Spanish      <http://bit.ly/ArrearsCreditSpanish>

### **Arrears Cap Program**

English      <http://bit.ly/ArrearsCapApp>  
Spanish      <http://bit.ly/ArrearsCapSpanish>

Each of these forms is also available in Arabic, Chinese, Haitian Creole, Korean, and Russian through individual language links on HRA's Immigrant Resources page: <http://bit.ly/HRAImmigrants>

The forms are also available to users of our online Child Support Snapshot. See page 21 for more information.

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# STRENGTHENING CONNECTIONS TO BUILD STRONGER FAMILIES

Providing education, training, and other services to New Yorkers and the organizations that serve them is critical to what OCSE does.

In 2015 our core outreach work was enhanced by a suite of additional initiatives, including:

- Hosting a highly successful Policy Conference focused on the needs of young parents
- Implementing a Training Institute to help educate whole sectors about child support services
- Creating an online portal called the Child Support Snapshot to get outside organizations up-to-date information about individual child support cases
- Publishing our new Parenting Calendar, featuring art by children associated with the child support program
- Working with the social service research organization MDRC to learn how to integrate concepts from behavioral economics into our communications and services

## Community Outreach

Every week, often in the evening or during the weekend, OCSE staff meet with individuals and groups at social services agencies, schools, hospitals, and community- and faith-based organizations in an effort to ensure New Yorkers understand the services OCSE provides.

OCSE proactively contacts organizations to develop sustainable partnerships and welcomes the opportunity to regularly provide information and assistance to them and their clients. Because service providers work directly with many of the same people we do, we offer a variety of workshops to their staff so that they can knowledgeably advise their clients about child support.

Presentations are often followed by one-on-one conversations about their individual cases, and staff take care to suggest possible next steps or follow-up actions that might resolve any lingering issues.

## No Kidding: Teen Pregnancy Prevention

Now in its seventh year, OCSE's teen pregnancy prevention program, No Kidding: Straight Talk from Teen Parents, connects peer educators to teens in schools, community-based organizations, and correctional facilities to emphasize the importance of waiting to have children until they are older, in a committed relationship, and emotionally and financially prepared for the responsibility. The feedback we receive from the teens and young adults who attend these presentations is always strongly positive.

## Providing Services to Incarcerated Parents

High levels of child support debt and orders that are too high for their income can weigh on noncustodial parents involved in the criminal justice system. To help alleviate these problems, OCSE has for many years worked with partners at the City, State, and federal level to provide services to incarcerated parents that can lower their debts and make their orders manageable.

Our work includes weekly visits to Rikers Island as well as regular visits to the Edgecombe Residential Treatment Facility, the Queensboro Correctional Facility, the Metropolitan Correctional Center, the Metropolitan Detention Center, and (by video conference) facilities under the control of the Northeast Region of the US Bureau of Prisons.

Our goal here, as with our strong partnerships with the City's Department of Probation and the New York State Division of Parole, is to ensure parents who are or have been involved in the criminal justice system can focus on finding and maintaining employment and supporting the children who depend on them.



### 2015 By the Numbers: Bringing More Information to More People

#### Outreach Unit

Total Number of Presentations Made	760
Total Number of Community Fairs and Other Events	380
Total Number of Participants at Presentations and Events	17,000

#### No Kidding

Presentations in 2015	239
Total Number of Presentation Participants	7,824
Percentage Increase over 2014 in Number of Participants	43%

#### Services in Criminal Justice Facilities

Participants in Presentations in 2015	1,300
Total Number of Individual Inmate Consultations	177

# ENRICHING THE CHILD SUPPORT CONVERSATION



DSS Commissioner Steven Banks



Dr. Linda Lausell Bryant of the NYU Silver School of Social Work

## Policy Conference

Representatives of over 120 different organizations came together in October 2015 for the latest of OCSE's series of popular policy conferences. Titled "Child Support: Forging Positive Partnerships with Young Families," and cosponsored by the CUNY School of Professional Studies, this year's conference broke new ground by asking attendees to think of ways OCSE can better serve young families, headed by parents between 18 and 24 years of age.

Speakers and panelists included a number of young parents, some of them part of OCSE's No Kidding program, as well as DSS Commissioner Steven Banks, HRA Chief Program Officer Lisa Fitzpatrick, Dr. Linda Lausell Bryant of the NYU Silver School of Social Work, and Dr. Jeff Gardere, a noted psychologist and a frequent contributor to television and radio.

## Training Institute

Designed to maximize opportunities for discussion and questions, our recently launched Training Institute allows us to share information about child support with whole sectors of the New York City public service world at once by conducting intensive trainings in various service sectors such as child care,

criminal justice, domestic violence, employment, and homeless services. Classes not only give a standard overview of the program, they also go into detail about the child support process and the options that both parents have over the life of a case.

## Child Support Snapshot

In 2015 OCSE replaced its old paper-based Case Financial Status Form (CFSF) system with a new online portal, called the Child Support Snapshot. Intended to bring more services directly into the community, the Snapshot grants approved organizations access to critical child support information about their clients—once their clients have agreed to share that information. Used by other government agencies as well as community-based organizations, the Snapshot provides information on noncustodial parents' current order amounts and debts, last payment dates, and even suggestions for next steps.

Already used by approximately 60 New York City agencies and organizations, the Snapshot will continue to expand in the year ahead.



Dr. Lausell Bryant, noted psychologist Dr. Jeff Gardere, HRA Chief Program Officer Lisa Fitzpatrick, OCSE Executive Deputy Commissioner Frances Pardus-abbadessa, and OCSE Deputy Commissioner Elizabeth Kumar



2015 Policy Conference speakers included staff from OCSE's No Kidding program—Outreach Coordinator Jelysa Roberts and Peer Educators Alexander Guzman and Joseph Vicente—as well as Dr. Gardere, Director of Program Strategy for the NYC Department of Education's LYFE Program Ashleigh Washington, and custodial parent Nydydra Briggs

### Parenting Calendar

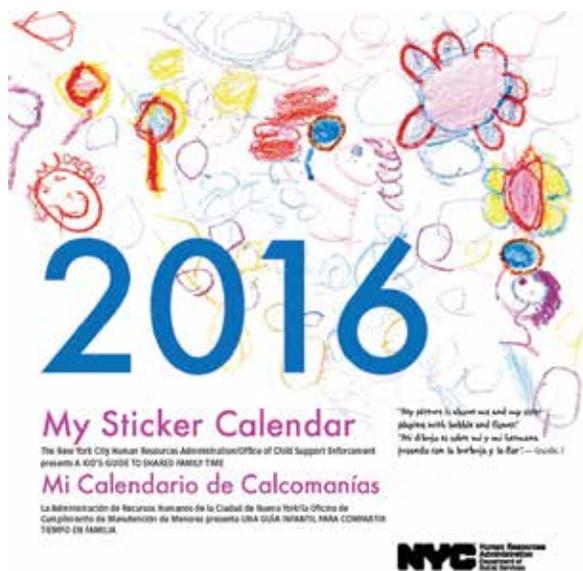
In 2015 OCSE published its second annual parenting calendar. Building on the success of parenting calendars in states such as Texas and Oregon and featuring a selection of art done in OCSE's offices by children connected to the New York City child support program, the calendar takes an innovative approach to helping families comfortably address some of the issues that arise with co-parenting arrangements. The dual-language (English/Spanish) calendar lets children choose from hundreds of imaginative and colorful preprinted stickers to mark an upcoming event or activity on a given day. The hope is that kids and their parents will both have a handy way to plan their time, particularly around shared parenting time.

### MDRC and Behavioral Economics

To help us find ways to make our services even more effective, especially among people facing the many strains and stresses of poverty, OCSE recently began working with the social research organization MDRC to evaluate and recommend changes to some of our communications and procedures. MDRC brings not only decades of experience conducting rigorous evaluations of social services, including child support, but also particular expertise in the field known as behavioral economics.

Combining research from psychology, microeconomics, and neuroscience, behavioral economics (also known as behavioral science) attempts to understand the non-rational sides of human decision making.

We believe that by integrating the insights gained from these studies into our work, we can improve outcomes for the families we serve—especially the most vulnerable.



The 2016 OCSE Parenting Calendar

# NEW INITIATIVES

## ▶ SIMPLIFYING THE PROCESS FOR SEEKING TO CHANGE A CHILD SUPPORT ORDER

Under this new process, parents will be able to generate the necessary court petition in our Customer Service Walk-In Center. We will then file the petition with the court and serve it to the other parent.

## ▶ FINDING MORE WAYS TO PROACTIVELY SERVE NONCUSTODIAL PARENTS IN SHELTERS

Our hope with doing this is to bring even more debt-reduction and order-modification services to this group of particularly vulnerable New Yorkers.

## ▶ ENHANCING OUR OUTREACH TO GIVE A BROADER SENSE OF HRA SERVICES

A new partnership with HRA's Constituent Affairs program will allow us to integrate more information about other HRA services into our presentations and the events we attend across the city.

## ▶ DEVELOPING A NEW APPROACH TO SERVING YOUNG PARENTS

To address points raised in our 2015 Policy Conference, we have brought together a group of OCSE staff and outside experts to develop a new model for providing child support services to parents age 24 and younger.

## ▶ CREATING A SERIES OF FREE WORKSHOPS ON CHILD SUPPORT AND RELATED ISSUES

Part of our newly created Strong Families Studio in Lower Manhattan, the series will feature experts who can address both larger procedural questions as well as individual case concerns.

## ▶ REINTRODUCING PAY IT OFF

Offered previously in 2013 and 2014, Pay It Off is a special limited-time debt-reduction program that matches payments of \$1,000 or more toward debt owed to the New York City Department of Social Services.

## ▶ FURTHER IMPROVING OUR COMMUNICATIONS WITH OUR CLIENTS

We plan to introduce additional automated appointment reminders, including information about upcoming hearings, and continue our efforts to introduce concepts from behavioral economics into our forms, letters, and publications. We also plan to train Customer Service staff on the concepts of Procedural Justice.

## ▶ JOINING THE FAMILIES FORWARD DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

OCSE will be participating in the national Families Forward Demonstration, a project to test new strategies to improve the earnings capacity and financial literacy of noncustodial parents who owe child support but are unable to fully meet their obligations due to low earnings.

## ▶ EXPANDING OUR CHILD SUPPORT SNAPSHOT

By integrating child support forms, videos, and other helpful resources into the Snapshot portal, we hope to make it a one-stop child support information spot for our partners in other government agencies and community-based organizations.

# PARTNERS

*We thank all of our local, state, and federal partners (listed below) for their collaboration and support. We also thank our partners in HRA and DHS and the numerous community and faith-based organizations throughout the city that assist us in bringing special programs and our message of responsible parenting to New York City families.*

APS International  
Borough Presidents Offices  
Center for Court Innovation  
Center for Economic Opportunity  
Center for the Support of Families  
Citizen's Committee for Children of New York  
City University of New York  
Community Mediation Services  
District Attorneys' Offices of the City of New York  
Doe Fund  
Fortune Society  
Goodwill Industries of Greater New York and Northern New Jersey  
Greater New York Hospital Association  
Legal Information for Families Today  
Legal Services NYC (Bronx)  
Mayor's Office of Veterans' Affairs  
MDRC  
New Alternatives for Children  
NYC Administration for Children's Services  
NYC Comptroller's Office  
NYC Corporation Counsel  
NYC Department of Correction  
NYC Department of Education  
NYS Department of Taxation and Finance

NYC Department of Finance  
NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene  
NYC Department of Probation  
NYC Department of Youth and Community Development  
NYC Division of Consumer Affairs, Office of Financial Empowerment  
NYC Housing Authority  
NYC Office to Combat Domestic Violence  
NYC Office of the Mayor, Citywide Fatherhood Initiative  
NYC Police Department  
NYC Sheriff's Office  
NYC Taxi and Limousine Commission  
NYS Division of Child Support Enforcement  
NYS Division of Parole  
NYS Office of Court Administration  
NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance  
New York University Silver School of Social Work  
Neighborhood Trust Financial Partners  
Resilience Advocacy Project  
Scholastic  
US Attorney's Office  
US Department of Health and Human Services  
US Federal Bureau of Prisons  
YMS Associates  
Youth Development Institute  
Youth Represent

# CONTACTS AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

## Contact by Phone

### New York State Child Support Helpline

To speak to a representative  
8:00 a.m.–7:00 p.m., Monday–Friday  
888-208-4485  
TTY (Hearing Impaired): (866) 875-9975

### New York State Information Line

For automated information  
24 hours a day/7 days a week  
800-846-0773

## Contact in Person

### New York City OCSE Customer Service Walk-In Center

151 West Broadway, 4th floor  
(between Worth and Thomas Streets)  
New York, NY 10013  
8:00 a.m.–7:00 p.m., Monday–Friday (walk-in)

## Correspondence by Mail

### New York City Office of Child Support Enforcement

P.O. Box 830  
Canal Street Station  
New York, NY 10013

## Individual Payments by Mail

### NYS Child Support Processing Center

P.O. Box 15363  
Albany, NY 12212-5363

## On the Internet

### OCSE/New York City Office of Child Support Enforcement

[www.nyc.gov/hra/ocse](http://www.nyc.gov/hra/ocse)

For OCSE documents in Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, Haitian Creole, Korean, and Russian, see links to individual languages available on HRA's Immigrant Resources page: <http://bit.ly/HRAImmigrants>

### HRA YouTube Channel

[www.youtube.com/HRANYC](http://www.youtube.com/HRANYC)

### New York State Division of Child Support Enforcement

View account information with your social security number and the PIN for your account  
[www.childsupport.ny.gov](http://www.childsupport.ny.gov)

## Feedback on Our Annual Report

OCSE welcomes your comments on our annual report.  
Please send them to:  
[outreach@dfa.state.ny.us](mailto:outreach@dfa.state.ny.us)







**Bill de Blasio**  
Mayor

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**Human Resources  
Administration**  
Department of  
Social Services

**Steven Banks**  
Commissioner