



Helping Both Parents Care for Their Children

August is Child Support Awareness Month, and HRA would like to highlight the great work the Child Support program does to help New York City children. HRA's Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) exists to assist both custodial and noncustodial parents with a variety of services that help keep children out of poverty.

"We are here to help both parents do what's best for their children," said OCSE Executive Deputy Commissioner Frances Pardus-abbadessa. "There are many ways we can help, whether you are the parent taking day-to-day care of the child, or the parent providing support but living elsewhere. We want to make the process as easy and effective as possible for everyone."

OCSE serves custodial parents by working to set up child support cases, locate noncustodial parents, establish paternity when necessary, and collect support payments. OCSE also has a wide variety of programs that can help noncustodial parents meet their child support obligations more easily.

The Support Through Employment Program (STEP) helps unemployed or underemployed noncustodial parents find work, and can also help with other valuable employment skills. Most jobs found through STEP pay above the minimum wage.

The Child Support program also has several ways for noncustodial parents to manage their payments or debts. Low-income noncustodial parents who can't make child support payments due to a loss of income can modify their child support order without going back to court, provided the order is payable to the government, through the Modify DSS Order program. If noncustodial parents go into debt to the government, the Arrears Cap program can help by reducing child support debt to just \$500 during any period the parent was earning under the federal poverty level. The Arrears Credit program helps noncustodial parents lower or even pay off their debts by removing up to \$15,000 in debt owed to the government when a parent makes all of their child support payments over a three-year period.

Additionally, OCSE has programs designed to help new noncustodial parents stay involved with the program and making a difference in their children's lives from the beginning. The Early Intervention program pairs low-income noncustodial parents who need individual assistance with caseworkers who can help them deal with problems as they arise. The Kings County Parent Support Program is an in-depth partnership with the Kings County Family Court that combines the authority of the court with the nurturing skills of a case manager to help connect noncustodial parents to a wide variety of services, including employment, mediation, education and more.

When clients qualify for reductions in debt, OCSE has begun automatically providing these reductions to serve clients better. These programs have shown a high rate of success in getting noncustodial parents to work with the program and provide their children with a steady source of support.