HRA Office of Child Support Enforcement Overview
As of November 2011, 41% of children are born out of wedlock nationwide; in NYC it’s about the same.

In NYC, more than 40% of children living in single-parent households live in poverty, compared to 19% of children living in households with married couples.
The Child Support Program is among the strongest anti-poverty programs in the nation.

HRA’s Office of Evaluation and Research estimates that approximately 200,000 low-income children living in single-parent households below 150% of the federal poverty level are not connected to the Child Support Program.
A Strong Anti-Poverty Program

Work Supports for Working People
(based on single mother with 1 school age child and 1 toddler; working full-time, full-year at $8 per hour)

- Medicaid*
- SNAP, school lunch, HEAP
- Child support
- Tax credits (EITC, child tax credit, child care credit**)
- Net pay

* Based on Medicaid Managed Care and Family Health Plus premiums as of January 2013.
** NYS and NYC child care tax credit estimates assume $250/month in child care expenses for child under age 4; SNAP estimate also reflects this assumption.
Child Support Makes a Difference

Nationwide, poor custodial families who receive child support collect $4,503 on average, representing 52% of the average income of poor custodial parents.

For 2014, in NYC, the average amount collected across all families who received a payment was $6,181.
We Have Changed

The Child Support Program has evolved over time from a cost-recovery program to pay back cash assistance to a program that recognizes the value of having both parents involved in a child’s life.

We Have Learned:

- Child support payments can provide economic stability for low-income families to help them to become self-sufficient.
- Having both parents involved in a child’s life improves outcomes on every socio-economic and emotional level.
- Noncustodial parents have barriers to complying with their child support obligations and need assistance.

NYC Human Resources Administration Department of Social Services
Common Misconceptions

Despite this change, the program is still often misunderstood by parents and community-based organizations. These views negatively impact CP and NCP participation in the program:

“The government retains all the collections”

“They care solely about custodial parents”

“They care only about enforcement”

“They only garnish wages from NCPs with debt”
The Child Support Enforcement Program puts children first by helping both parents assume responsibility for the economic and social well-being, health and stability of their children.

- Establishing paternity
- Establishing orders
- Monitoring and enforcing those orders
- Locating parents
- Assisting NCP in debt-management and finding employment
Who Do We Serve?

Cash Assistance Clients
- Eligibility for benefits.
- At OCSE Borough Office.

Non-Cash Assistance Clients
- At their local family court.

All families
- Regardless of income or immigration status.
OCSE provides services for approximately 400,000 cases.

- 71% with orders
- 17% - current Cash Assistance
- 64% actively charging
- 46% - former Cash Assistance
- 35.8% arrears only
- 37% - never Cash Assistance
How Well Do We Do?

Total Collections & Cases with a Collection
CY 2001 - CY 2014

Source: OCSE 157 Report
Most Collections Are Distributed to Custodial Parents

- 92% Distributed to Custodial Parents
- 8% Reimburses DSS
Cash Assistance Families

Families on Cash Assistance receive:

The first $100 (for 1 child) or $200 (for 2 children or more) of current support collected, in addition to their cash grant.
This chart represents only the data for which we have borough-specific information. It does not represent our entire caseload.
Where the Money Comes From

CY 2014

Other Countries 0.004%
State Tax Offset 1.4%
IRS Tax Offset 3.3%
UIB Offset 2.0%
Other Sources 17.8%
Other States 1.01%
Withholding of Wages 74.5%

*Other sources include but not limited to:
Collections received from administrative enforcement in interstate cases; Payments received directly from non-custodial parents; Collections received through the IRS’ full collection process; and Collections received through the Financial Institution Data Match.
Support from the Father Makes A Difference

Studies show that when fathers are actively involved in their child’s life, children are better off because they are:

• More likely to finish high school
• Less likely to use drugs
• Less likely to have behavioral problems & involvement with the criminal justice system
• Less likely to become a teen parent
**Paternity Establishment Benefits the Child, the Mother and the Father:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mother</th>
<th>Child</th>
<th>Father</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• First step in establishing a child support order</td>
<td>• Legally connects the child to the parent</td>
<td>• Gives the NCP the right to custody and visitation and a voice in decisions concerning issues such as adoption or medical care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Shared parental responsibilities</td>
<td>• Information about family medical history</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ensures inheritance rights to benefits (medical insurance, veteran’s benefits, military allowances, death benefits)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How Are Orders Established in New York?

NYS is a judicial state, meaning orders are established in court.

Orders are based on the income of both parents and subtract:

- NYC taxes
- Social Security and Medicare deductions
- Child support or spousal support orders paid to another family

Orders are formula-based depending on number of children:

- One child = 17% of income
- Two children = 25% of income
- Three children = 29% of income
- Four children = 31% of income
- Five or more children = 35% of income
- Orders may also include an additional amount for child care and education expenses
An Alternative to Court: Cash Assistance Agreement Program (CAAP)

- Some parents find the court process adversarial
- Offers a supportive environment for parents to establish an order outside of court leading to increased compliance
- Establish paternity, child support, and medical support orders at OCSE Customer Service Walk-in Center
- Cash Assistance families only
CAAP Benefits

- **Process is faster**
- **Child support order amount should be the same**
- **NCP may owe less child support up front through CAAP**
- **Opportunity to ask questions during CAAP interview**
- **Leave with an understanding of child support, the process and how it can help**

Human Resources Administration
Department of Social Services
CAAP Results and Challenges

• Only 24% of noncustodial parents show up for their appointments

• Those that show do not bring proper documentation

• 533 agreements since inception
Parent Pledge Program

Opportunity for parents to come together outside of court to discuss child rearing and financial support

Create child support and parenting agreements in community-based setting with a trained mediator

Opportunity to request OCSE services if NCP fails to comply with agreement or mediation is not successful
What If the NCP Can’t Afford to Pay?

Minimum and poverty orders are “safe guards”

Orders can be modified if income changes
Programs and Services for NCPs

Align Orders to NCP’s Income

Prevent/Reduce Accumulation of Arrears

More NCPs Paying Child Support

Fewer Children in Poverty
Employment Services for NCPs: Support Through Employment Program (STEP)

Provides NCPs with an opportunity to obtain employment

Although can participate voluntarily, the majority of participants are ordered into the program by a Family Court Support Magistrate

Participants are referred to a contracted employment vendor who provides access to job placement, employment preparation, education and supportive services
STEP in 2014

- 4,100 referrals
- 1,019 Job Placements
- $2.5 million collected from 2014 referrals
- $42 million collected in 2014 from all parents ever referred
Debt Reduction Programs

• These programs:
  – Align orders to NCP’s income.
  – Prevent/reduce the accumulation of arrears.
  – Help NCPs pay their child support.
Debt Reduction Programs

- For NCPs with current support obligations payable to DSS.
- Currently receiving CA, SSI or Medicaid and income falls below the Self Support Reserve.
- Allows NCPs to lower their monthly obligation without having to return to court.
- In 2014, 216 NCPs had their orders reduced by an average of 89% taking the average support order from $357/month to $32/month.
- 65% paid child support nine months after enrolling compared to 43% who did after enrollment.
Debt Reduction Programs

- For NCPs with arrears owed to DSS.
- Arrears must have been built up while income was below Federal Poverty Level.
- Arrears owed to DSS can be reduced down to a max. of $500.
- Since inception in 2008, 2,884 participants had arrears owed to the government reduced by 67%.
- 62% of NCPs paid toward debt compared to 54% who did before enrollment.
- 600+ participants have now paid their outstanding debt in full resulting in collections of $7.3 million.
DEBT REDUCTION PROGRAMS

Arrears Credit Program

- For NCPs with arrears owed to DSS.
- May qualify for up to a $5,000 credit toward DSS arrears after consistent and full current child support payments for one year.
Enforcement

If an NCP does not pay child support, they are subject to OCSE’s administrative enforcement actions.

If parents’ financial circumstances change, either can request to modify child support orders at Family Court.

There are legal protections for NCPs that earn below the State Self-Support Reserve ($15,755) and those earning below federal poverty level ($11,670) are exempt from some enforcement actions.
Administrative Enforcement Actions

Completed without court approval (largely automated)

- Examples are driver license suspension, intercept federal and state income tax and lottery, seize bank accounts, order amount increased by up to 50% (= “Add Amount”).

Multiple actions can occur at one time

- Explains the enforcement process
- Provides a timeframe for compliance
- Provides the due process instructions and criteria to challenge the enforcement action

In most administrative actions, a notice will be sent to the last known address of the non-custodial parent
Judicial Enforcement

Administrative enforcement actions have been exhausted, NCP does not comply

Actions that **only** the court can initiate.

CA cases initiated by OCSE

NCA cases initiated by CP
Problem Solving Court

Parent Support Program is a partnership between OCSE, NYS Family Court, and Center for Court Innovation to serve low-income NCPs summoned to Brooklyn Family Court for violation of their child support order.

NCPs are referred to a contracted employment vendor for access to job placement, employment preparation, education and supportive services.

Since inception in 2011, 304 NCPs have participated; 105 graduated; and 70% are actively paying child support since enrollment.
A Graduate’s Perspective

I would just like to take a moment to reflect on my experience with the Parent Support group, and acknowledge how much it has helped me to become focused and more responsible. I initially looked at the situation as a hassle and a waste of time because of the fact that I had to report to court so often. But the experience has taught me the value of holding myself accountable, and that there is no change of progress without a substantial amount of uncomfortability to challenge us to thrust ourselves into a more productive situation. I would like to thank Ms. Chavez for her continued inquiries and support, which was a constant source of motivation. I would also like to thank the judge for his patience and understanding with me and thank you both for believing in me and helping me tap into my untapped potential. I look forward to continuing on an upward journey that will help me evolve into a better man and a better father. Thank you for everything.
Additional Information/Assistance

- **Help Line:** (888) 208-4485; TTY *(Hearing Impaired)*: (866) 875-9975
- **Automated Account Information Line:** (800) 846-0773
- **Websites**
  - nyc.gov/hra/ocse *(HRA OCSE web page)*
  - childsupport.ny.gov *(access personal account information)*
  - nyc.gov/html/hra/nycdads/html/contact/contact.shtml *(NYC Dads contact page)*
- **Videos**
  - [http://www.youtube.com/user/HRANYC](http://www.youtube.com/user/HRANYC)
- **Links to Other Materials**
  - **Handbook for Custodial Parents**
  - **Handbook for Noncustodial Parents**
  - **Manage Your Child Support (Debt-Reduction Programs)**