

CSRSG Continues to Invite Public Input

In addition to the 10 community forums held in 2001 (see page 2), public input continues to be sought for the recommendations slated to improve the child support system in Ohio. For example, in January and February a statewide survey of child support customers in Ohio will be contacted via telephone. The survey focusing on customer service will be conducted by a professional marketing and research consulting firm, Strategic Research Group, which will gather a statistically valid statewide sample at a 95 percent confidence level. The findings will be distributed to the members of the CSRSG subcommittees as they develop their recommendations for improvement in the system.

Gathering more input is the Parents for Rights and Responsibilities Subcommittee, which plans regional meetings where subcommittee members will talk to child support customers and collect their testimonials.

In July, draft recommendations will be uploaded to the CSRSG website (<http://www.state.oh.us/ODJFS/shareholders/index.stm>) for public input, after which the shareholders will choose the top recommendations, taking into consideration the feedback from the public that has been collected throughout the process, as well as its input on the recommendations.

All Insight recipients will be notified when the draft recommendations are uploaded to the web. If you are not on the Insight mailing list, please contact Valerie Swain at 614-995-2049 or swainv@odjfs.state.oh.us to ensure that you are notified to review recommendations.

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Volume 1, Issue 3
Winter 2002

Insight

Into Child Support in Ohio

New Leadership Announced in the Office of Child Support

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services welcomed Joseph Pilat in November 2001 as its new deputy director of the Office of Child Support. Pilat replaced China Widener, who was promoted to assistant director of the agency, where she will oversee department programs that focus on services to families, including Medicaid, adoption, and foster care, as well as child support.

Pilat was promoted from his position of assistant deputy director in the Office of Child Support, which he had held since May 2001. Prior to that he served 10 years as the director of the Franklin County Child Support Enforcement Agency, and before that was director of the Lucas County Child Support Enforcement Agency. Pilat has 30 years of child support enforcement experience.

"The vision that I have for the child support program is to regain the confidence of the public we serve and regain the respect nationally that our program so richly deserves," says Pilat.

Assuming Pilat's former position as assistant deputy director of programs is Barbara Stafford, who had served as administrator of the IV-D program at the Greene County Department of Job and Family Services since 1975.

"I have been working in the child support program for 26 years and am excited about having the opportunity to continue to be involved in the program at the state level. I hope that my county-based experience and perspective will be useful as we work together

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Child Support Reform Shareholders' Group Has Exacting Task

The Child Support Reform Shareholders' Group was appointed by the director of the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services in March 2001. Its goal is to review Ohio's child support system from top to bottom, identify its shortcomings, and propose solutions for the identified shortcomings. At the end of its 18-month process the CSRSG will make recommendations to the director of ODJFS, the governor, and the General Assembly, as well as other decision-making bodies.

The CSRSG consists of 42 appointed members, including representatives of state, county and federal government; legislators, the court system, attorneys, employers, community and faith-based groups, and parents. It has seven subcommittees, each of which is charged with examining a component of the child support system.

This publication was created to inform Ohio's citizens about the progress and news of the CSRSG and the child support program it serves.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the Child Support Reform Shareholders' Group is to assist the State of Ohio, counties, and child support partners in improving programs and the delivery of quality services to all parents and their children. The shareholders' group will take a holistic approach to establish long-term priorities to develop innovative strategies to create a more effective and efficient child support program in Ohio.

Message from the Deputy Director

"Being named the IV-D director represents a milestone for me and it is my sincere hope that by working with all interested child support partners that we can continue to improve the existing child support program, restore confidence in the system and win back the respect of our clients and those individuals who rely on us to provide them with an important service. As child support professionals we need to remind ourselves that we provide valuable services and that while we are currently facing difficult times, we must remain focused and not lose sight of the mission of the program, namely, collecting court-ordered support for minor children.



The Child Support Reform Shareholders' Group is in the midst of examining the existing child support program with the goal of making recommendations aimed at making broad-based improvements for the clients and for those who work in the system. The Department of Job and Family Services is committed to this process and will continue to share with you the progress of the Shareholders' Group. The CSRSG continues to meet on a regular basis and is working to identify issues and formulate salient solutions. Final recommendations will be developed and presented to the appropriate decision-makers by September 2002.

I am looking forward to continuing the important work that has already started. The dedication and commitment that has been demonstrated by everyone involved is impressive. With this type of commitment, the process will produce a quality recommendation for the benefit of all concerned."

**Joseph Pilat, Deputy Director
Office of Child Support, ODJFS**

Customers Provide Feedback at 10 Community Forums

In order to hear directly from the customer, the Customer Service Subcommittee of the Child Support Reform Shareholders' Group organized 10 community forums to be held around the state during August, September, and October 2001. Two sites were selected in each of the four quadrants of the state, plus the center of the state. Four metro (Cuyahoga, Franklin, Lucas, and Montgomery counties) and six non-metro (Wayne, Washington, Harrison, Fairfield, Allen, and Clermont counties) geographically represented the state as forum locations.

To enable as much customer access as possible, five forums were held in the afternoon over the lunch hour and five were held in the evening. All metro locations were situated on bus lines.

Former CSRSG co-chair Cheri L. Walter and Carri Brown, director, Fairfield County Child Support Enforcement Agency, co-facilitated the forums and invited the attendees to speak. More than 430 people attended the forums, which were two hours in length. The five metro forums were interpreted for the hearing impaired.

People spoke of common themes, including but not limited to:

- Dissatisfaction with the enforcement of child support orders
- Confusion over the complexities of interstate cases
- Frustration with the prosecution of self-employed obligors, and in many cases, wanting stronger enforcement measures
- Dissatisfaction of support orders for an involved obligors
- Dissatisfaction and confusion over large increases in support
- Erroneous and late checks
- Dissatisfaction and unhappiness in general with entire process: courts, attorneys, county and state

Transcripts of the forums were sent to CSRSG subcommittees, as well as the Federal Office of Child Support and the Ohio Judicial Conference, both of whom are represented in the Shareholders. The transcripts provide valuable feedback to Shareholders who will reference them when reviewing the child support program and making subsequent recommendations for improvements.

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to achieve a quality program in the state of Ohio," Stafford said.

Also joining the Office of Child Support as the State Enforcement Tracking System (SETS) bureau chief is Jeff Aldridge. Aldridge has more than 10 years of child support experience with Montgomery County and brings a combination of state and county knowledge to his position. Aldridge has been working on the SETS project since March 2001.

Shareholders Welcome New Members

Several new members have been appointed to the Child Support Reform Shareholders' Group since publication of the Fall 2001 Issue of Insight. They include:

- Donna Childers, Ohio Judicial Conference
- Judge June R. Galvin (retired), Lucas County
- Doris Greenwell, Nationwide
- Judge Jeff Hooper, Muskingum County Court
- Bishop Andy Lewter, Oakley Full Gospel Baptist Church
- Pat Rush, Legal Aide
- Sandra Walker, Assistant Prosecutor, Cuyahoga County

The new members represent a range of perspectives, including those from the court system, large employers, the faith-based community, the legal community, and prosecutors.

In addition, Kenneth Kovach, a professional public policy facilitator, was engaged to lead the group through the challenges of its enormous task of developing recommendations to improve the child support system in Ohio.

Ohio's Child Support Program Holds Top Rankings in the Nation

Ohio, the seventh largest state in the nation, leads the other 49 states in several child support program rankings. For example, according to federal records, Ohio:

- Ranks **first** (second year in a row) in the nation in non-Temporary Aid to Needy Families collections
- Ranks **second** (up from third) in the nation in overall IV-D collections.
- Ranks **sixth** in the nation in paternities established.

In addition, in state fiscal year 2001 Ohio:

- Established 54,198 paternities
- Processed 618,831 cases with support orders
- Collected \$1,810,108,860 in child support.



If you would like more information on the Child Support Reform Shareholders' Group, please visit our website at <http://www.state.oh.us/odjfs/shareholders/index.stm> or e-mail Susan McKinley at ODJFS at mckins02@odjfs.state.oh.us.