



OFFICE OF  
CHILD SUPPORT  
ENFORCEMENT

**ANNUAL  
REPORT**  
2011

## CONTENTS

3

### MESSAGE

From the OCSE Executive Deputy Commissioner

5

### HIGHLIGHTS

The Year In Brief

6

### THE CHILD SUPPORT PROGRAM: A QUICK REFERENCE

Establishing Paternity

Opening a Case

Establishing an Order

Collecting & Disbursing Money

Enforcing or Modifying Orders

8

### COLLECTING MONEY FOR NYC CHILDREN

Where the Money Comes From

Establishing Paternity

Customer Service

14

### SERVICES FOR PARENTS

STEP: Support Through Employment Program

Problem Solving Court

LIDs: Low Income Dads

Debt Reduction

CAAP: Cash Assistance Agreement Pilot

Mediation Referrals

Reentry Initiatives

18

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Back to Work Child Support Specialists

Noncustodial Parent Earned Income Tax Credit

Department of Homeless Services Partnership

No Kidding: Straight Talk from Teen Parents

Young Men's Initiative and Citywide Fatherhood Initiative

Face Tha Music

Events and Conferences

22

### THE YEAR AHEAD - 2012

Customer Service Walk-In Center Employment Program

E-filing

Settlement Agreements

Office of Financial Empowerment Partnership

Community Partners

23

### THE OCSE TEAM

24

### OUR PARTNERS





New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg and HRA Commissioner Robert Doar announce at a press conference OCSE's record-breaking collections of \$731 million in Child Support in 2011.

# MESSAGE

## FROM THE OCSE EXECUTIVE COMMISSIONER



As a result of Commissioner Doar's commitment to reducing child poverty, he has elevated the importance of the child support program in NYC and he has been a strong advocate for recognizing the important role fathers play in their children's lives. Because of his leadership in this area, OCSE has achieved a new record in collections.

At a press conference on February 8, 2012, New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg summarized the Office of Child Support Enforcement's (OCSE) 2011 accomplishments, saying: "Our City's success in increasing child support collections is helping lift single parents out of poverty while also more actively engaging fathers in their kids' lives." The bottom line? Child support is a family-first program. OCSE works to increase families' self-sufficiency by ensuring that every child receives support from both parents.

This year, we collected nearly three quarters of a billion dollars on behalf of New York City families, 53% more than we were collecting a decade ago. Though it's a popular myth that we keep most of the money we collect, that simply isn't true. 91% of the funds we collect go to families, and every family is first in line to receive current child support dollars collected on its behalf. In total, child support payments benefited 255,630 New York City children in 2011.

The money we collect makes a real difference to families. Nationwide data from the Urban Institute show that child support is the second largest source of income for poor families who receive it, and that on average it makes up 40% of their income.

But we understand there are two parents involved in every case we open. And while it's our job to enforce child support orders the Family Court puts in place, we've learned that sometimes the best way to help children is to help their parents find employment or connect to social services. OCSE has improved its collections—and performs better than many other cities—in part because of the resources we offer noncustodial parents (NCPs) and the time we devote to reaching out to them.

That's why OCSE strengthened and expanded its services for low-income noncustodial parents (NCPs) in 2011. We continued to connect NCPs to work, reduce qualifying NCPs' child support debt, refer parents to mediation services and reach out to them through partnerships with other City agencies and community-based organizations. In addition, in 2011 we fully launched Low Income Dads (LIDs), an integrated employment program for young, low-income fathers with criminal records, and worked with the Brooklyn Family Court to begin piloting a Problem Solving Court for NCPs charged with nonpayment of child support.

As we look ahead to 2012, we plan to continue expanding our services for parents, strengthening our community partnerships and ensuring our operations run efficiently—all while collecting as much money as possible for New York City children.

**Frances Pardus-Abbadessa**  
**Executive Deputy Commissioner, Office of Child Support Enforcement**  
**New York City Human Resources Administration/Department of Social Services**



HRA Commissioner Robert Doar and Senior Executive Deputy Commissioner Thomas DePippo congratulate OCSE staff for record breaking collections in 2011.

# HIGHLIGHTS

## THE YEAR IN BRIEF

### IN 2011, THE OFFICE OF CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT (OCSE):

- Collected a record-breaking \$731 million on behalf of New York City children—continuing a decade-long upward trend in collections, which have increased 53% in total since 2001. 91% of the money went to families.
- Helped hundreds of noncustodial parents (NCPs) reduce child support obligations that were out of line with their incomes through debt reduction programs, now in their third year. In 2011, OCSE helped the 100th parent reduce his/her child support order through the Modify DSS Order (MDO) program and the 800th parent reduce his/her arrears through the Arrears Cap program. 74% of MDO and Arrears Cap participants paid child support after enrolling, compared to 52% who made payments before enrolling.
- Placed 490 NCPs in jobs through the Support Through Employment Program (STEP). These jobs paid an average of \$11 per hour for 34 hours per week. The program also compelled 281 parents to begin making child support payments from previously undeclared income.
- Initiated the Cash Assistance Agreement Pilot (CAAP), which allows eligible parents to establish paternity and enter into child support agreements at OCSE's Customer Service Walk-In Center. The Family Court can approve these agreements without requiring the parents to appear in court, making parents' experiences more collaborative and ultimately increasing compliance with child support.
- Launched the Low Income Dads (LIDs) pilot program with the nonprofit Center for Employment Opportunities. The three-year pilot combines paid transitional work, job placement and retention services, and strong social services support to serve low-income young fathers who have past criminal convictions. It currently serves 180 fathers in the Bronx and Brooklyn.
- Launched a pilot Problem Solving Court in the Brooklyn Family Court, which is a program for low-income NCPs who land in court for non-payment of child support; it offers them the option to agree to a service plan and weekly compliance hearings rather than jail time or fines. The program is currently serving 82 NCPs and has already graduated 12 participants.
- Provided child support orientations to 1,222 Rikers Island inmates and 856 inmates at the Queensboro Correctional Facility. On-site OCSE staff also provided individual child support consultations to 336 inmates at Rikers Island and 231 at Queensboro.
- Participated in Mayor Michael Bloomberg's citywide fatherhood initiative and made plans to collaborate with other city agencies on the Mayor's \$43 million Young Men's Initiative, an effort to address disparities slowing the advancement of young black and Latino men.
- Collaborated with Brooklyn hip-hop artist Face Tha Music, NYC DADS and other City agencies to release the single "4 Tha Kids," which promotes being an engaged parent, spending quality time with one's children and supporting them financially.

# THE CHILD SUPPORT PROGRAM

## A QUICK REFERENCE

### ESTABLISHING PATERNITY

- If children are born to unmarried parents, establishing paternity (legal fatherhood) gives them inheritance rights and gives their fathers custody and visitation rights.
- Parents can do this by signing an Acknowledgement of Paternity (AOP) at the time of the child's birth, any time after leaving the hospital, or through a court order.
- Paternity must be established before a child support order can be put in place.

### OPENING A CASE

- OCSE Borough Office and Family Court Support Services caseworkers work with custodial parents to collect case information, file petitions and schedule family court hearings. Cash assistance clients must open cases if they are custodial parents.
- If a custodial parent cannot or will not provide the NCP's whereabouts, OCSE works to locate the NCP's address, income sources and assets.

### ESTABLISHING AN ORDER

- The Family Court establishes child support orders based on New York State (NYS) guidelines, as a percentage of the NCP's income for each case. The court also considers who should provide medical support and cover education and child care costs. HRA attorneys represent OCSE if the order is payable to the Department of Social Services (DSS).
- Through the CAAP program, eligible cash assistance families can sign agreements at OCSE's Customer Service center; these agreements become orders with Family Court approval.

### COLLECTING & DISBURSING MONEY

- Over 91% of the collections are disbursed to parents. The remainder of the collected funds reimburse DSS for cash assistance benefits—but cash assistance families receive the first \$100 (for one child) or \$200 (for two or more) of current support collected on their behalf. 3/4 of collections come from employer wage withholdings.
- Custodial parents can receive payments through a NYS debit card program, direct deposit or their EBT cards.

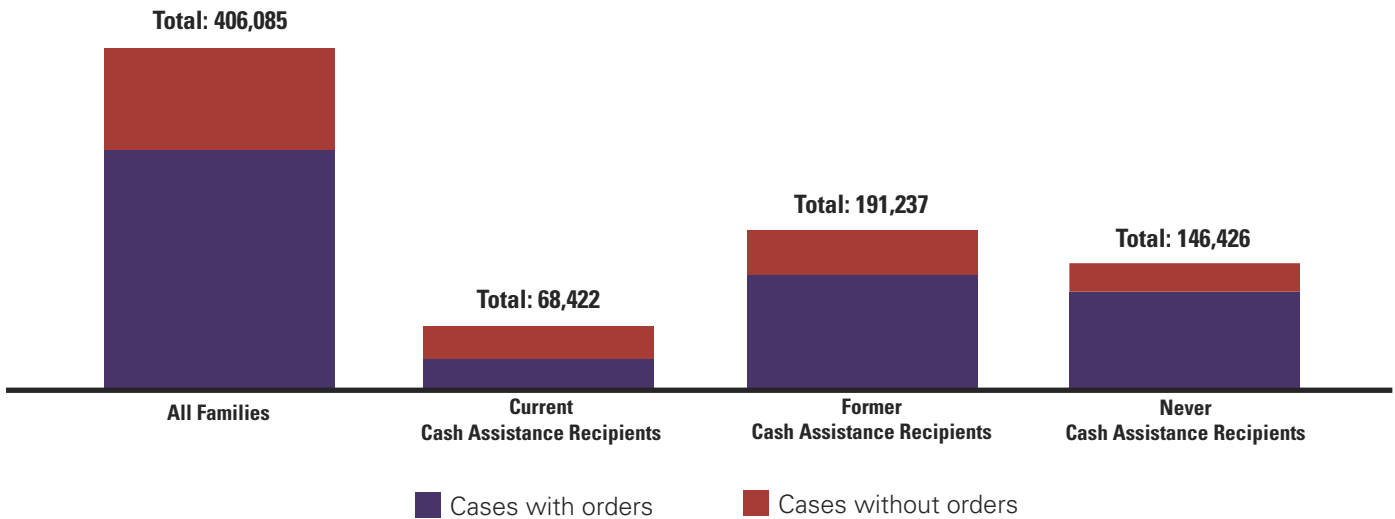
### ENFORCING OR MODIFYING ORDERS

- If NCPs do not pay the support they owe, OCSE's Enforcement, Investigation and Interstate units can find parents and use administrative mechanisms like increasing wage withholdings, seizing tax refunds and suspending driver's licenses.
- If children's needs or NCPs' circumstances change, the Family Court can modify orders. Through debt reduction programs, OCSE can modify certain orders owed to DSS outside court, and reduce debt owed to the government. OCSE can also connect NCPs to employment programs.

“My worker, Ms. A. Awosogba, was courteous, understanding and very nice. It was a truly calm and easy experience, thanks to her.”  
**Borough Office, client**

The child support program has continued to evolve over the years; as you can see from this chart, the majority of the families we serve are not currently receiving cash assistance. Over 80% of our caseload is no longer or has never received cash assistance.

Figure 1. **CHILD SUPPORT CASELOAD PROFILE**  
 Cases With and Without Orders in Place: December 2011



Included among the 406,085 open child support cases in New York City in 2011 were 1,492 international cases. The U.S. has reciprocal agreements with 16 countries to work with their child support programs. The top five foreign countries where parents with open New York City child support cases live are Canada, the United Kingdom, Poland, Israel and Australia.

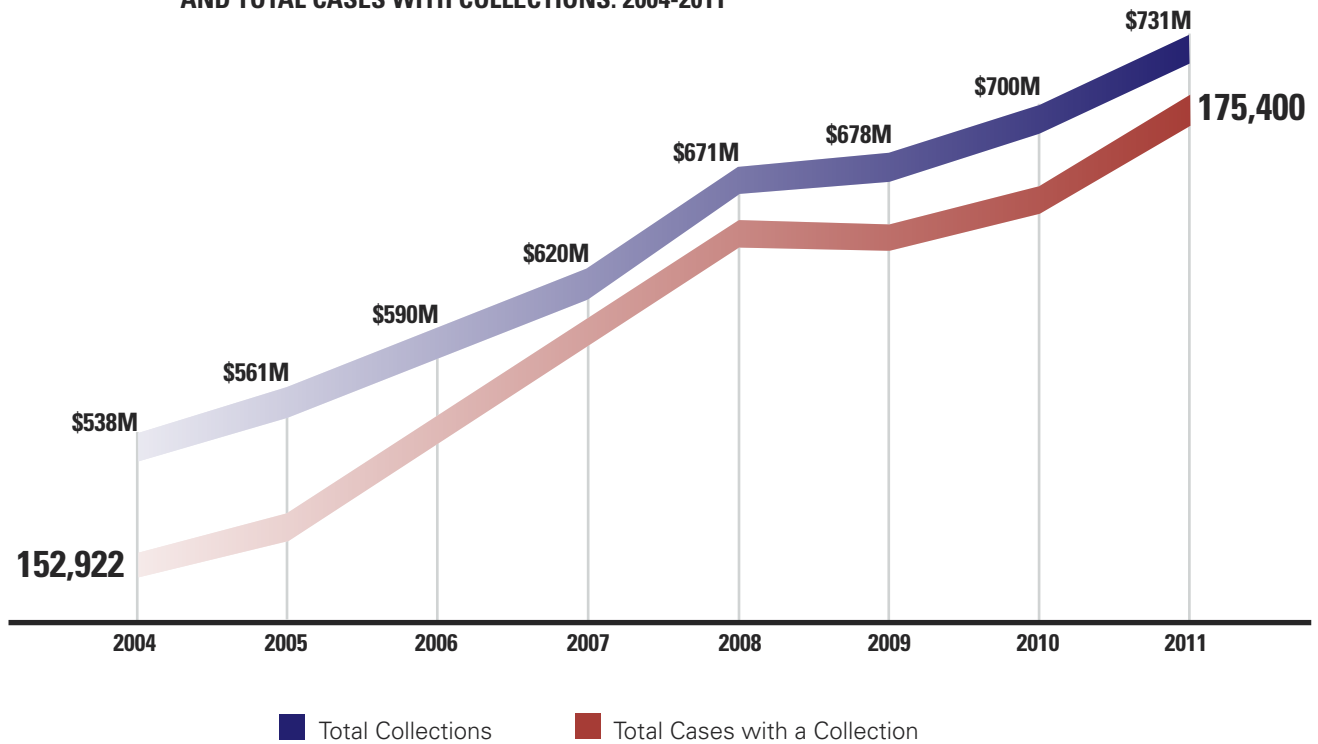
“Ms. Gray was extremely helpful in assisting me with my case. She went out of her way to get the information necessary to help me with all my questions.”  
**Family Court Support Services, client**



# COLLECTING MONEY FOR NYC CHILDREN

In 2011, OCSE collected over \$731 million on behalf of New York City children. 91% of the money OCSE collected went to families, an amount similar to the past several years. This record-breaking amount continues a long upward trend: in total, NYC child support collections have increased by 53% since 2001. More than 175,000 families received child support payments in 2011, and the average family that received at least one payment collected \$4,177 during the year. Child support can make a real difference for low-income families struggling to stay out of poverty: \$4,177 equals nearly a quarter of the federal poverty level for a single parent with two children.

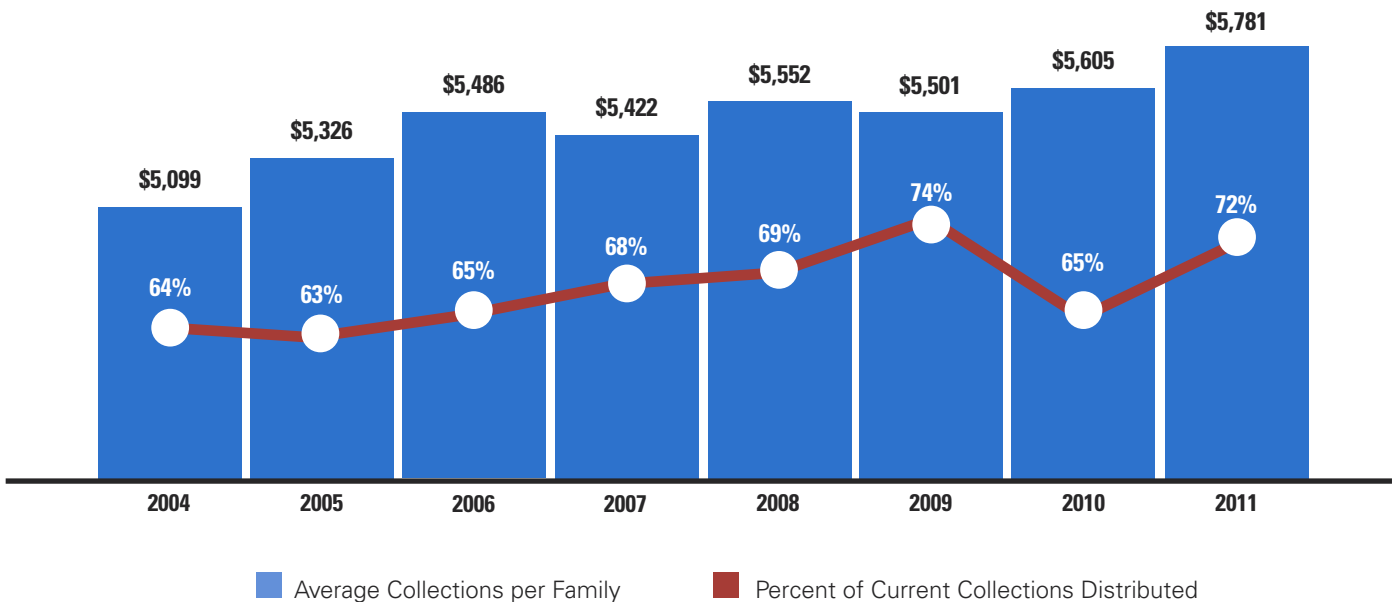
Figure 2. **TOTAL CALENDAR YEAR COLLECTIONS (\$ Millions) AND TOTAL CASES WITH COLLECTIONS: 2004-2011**



"At first, paying child support was stressful for me. ...However, I received so much support from the program that I quickly realized that I needed to make an extra effort and gain and retain full time employment to support my son Elias. Today I can proudly say that I paid off all my arrears in record time. Haide [Elias' mother] and Elias are no longer on welfare. She and I are on very friendly terms and I see Elias more days than not."  
**Jazzwal Stuart, noncustodial dad**

In 2011, child support payments benefited 255,630 children in New York City. Contrary to many years ago, only a small portion of child support dollars is directed to the Department of Social Services (DSS). While these funds repay the cost of cash assistance benefits DSS provides to some families, cash assistance families are first in line to receive child support collected on their behalf. OCSE passes through to families the first \$100 (for one child) or \$200 (for two or more children) of current child support it collects, and families receive these funds in addition to their current amount of government benefits.

Figure 3. **AVERAGE COLLECTIONS PER FAMILY AND PERCENT OF CURRENT COLLECTIONS DISTRIBUTED\*: 2004-2011**



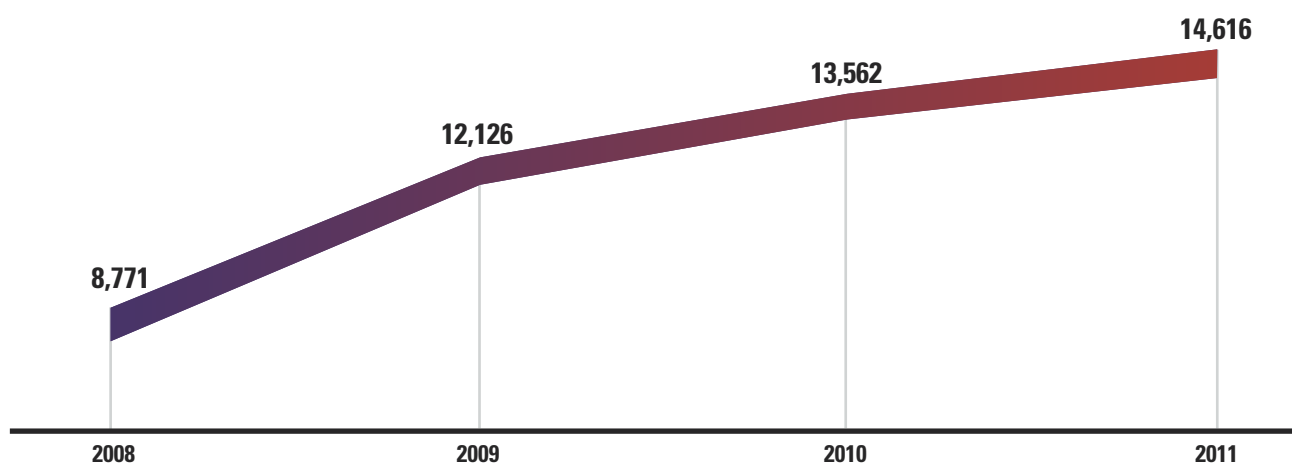
\*Note: This represents the percent of the child support order that is paid on average each month to each family.



HRA Commissioner **Robert Doar** and OCSE Executive Deputy Commissioner **Frances Pardus-Abbadessa** congratulate OCSE staff and some of our key partners to recognize the hard work and dedication for the year. In attendance was the Sheriff's Office, a key OCSE partner.

OCSE worked with the Family Court to establish more than 14,600 new child support and medical support orders in 2011, and more than two-thirds of the families OCSE works with have orders in place—a figure that has remained relatively stable for the past four years. Establishing new orders is crucial because OCSE can collect child support only after the Family Court puts an order in place.

Figure 4. **TOTAL NEW ORDERS ESTABLISHED EACH YEAR: 2008-2011**





OCSE's Enforcement Unit (l to r) Director of Special Investigations **Diana Coyne**, Director of Administrative Enforcement Services **Pauline Allen**, Assistant Deputy Commissioner **Linda LaGreca**, Coordinators **Michelle Francis-Cochrane** and **Bronislava Shmayenik**.

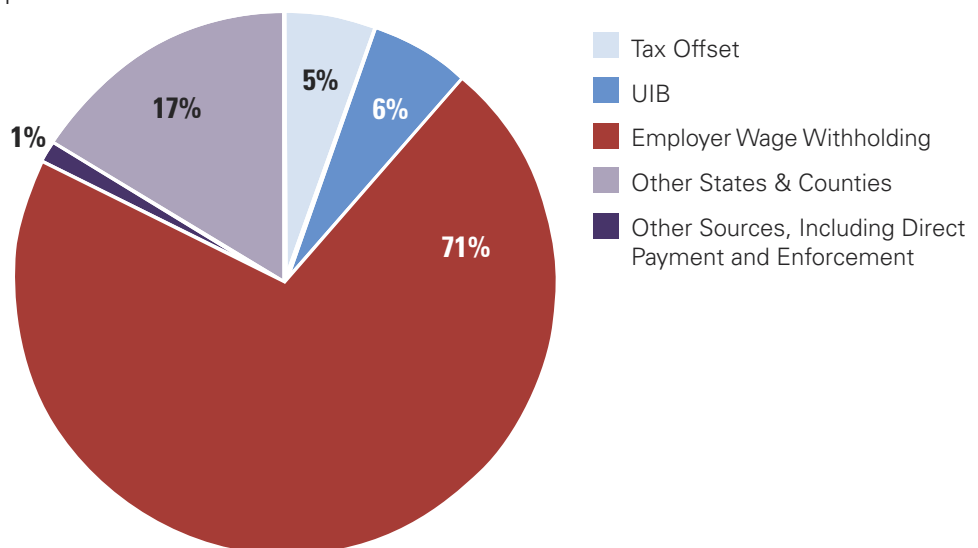
### WHERE THE MONEY COMES FROM

A large percentage of our collections comes from working parents. In fact, employer wage withholdings continued to be the largest source of child support collections in 2011, comprising 71% of collections. OCSE works with employers to ensure they garnish the appropriate amount of child support from each noncustodial parent employee.

Innovative enforcement strategies also help OCSE collect more money for children. These include conducting regular data matches with the New York City Comptroller's Office to identify NCPs who have settled lawsuits against the City so we can seize the funds, as well as partnering with the NYPD to collect child support debt from money seized by the police. In 2011, OCSE collected \$8 million through claims on lawsuit settlements or inherited property, after suspending NCPs' driver licenses, and through other special enforcement actions. OCSE also began using social media to locate noncustodial parents and prompt enforcement actions.

OCSE does not only handle NYC child support cases. If one parent lives outside of New York City, OCSE continues to collect and enforce the case—even if the parent lives out of the state or the country. In 2011, OCSE collected nearly \$9 million for New York City families from NCPs who lived in other states and more than \$500,000 from other NCPs who live in other countries. OCSE also forwarded nearly \$70 million to custodial parents who do not live in New York City, including \$1.7 million to parents who live outside the United States.

Figure 5. **WHERE THE MONEY COMES FROM**  
Collections by Source: 2011

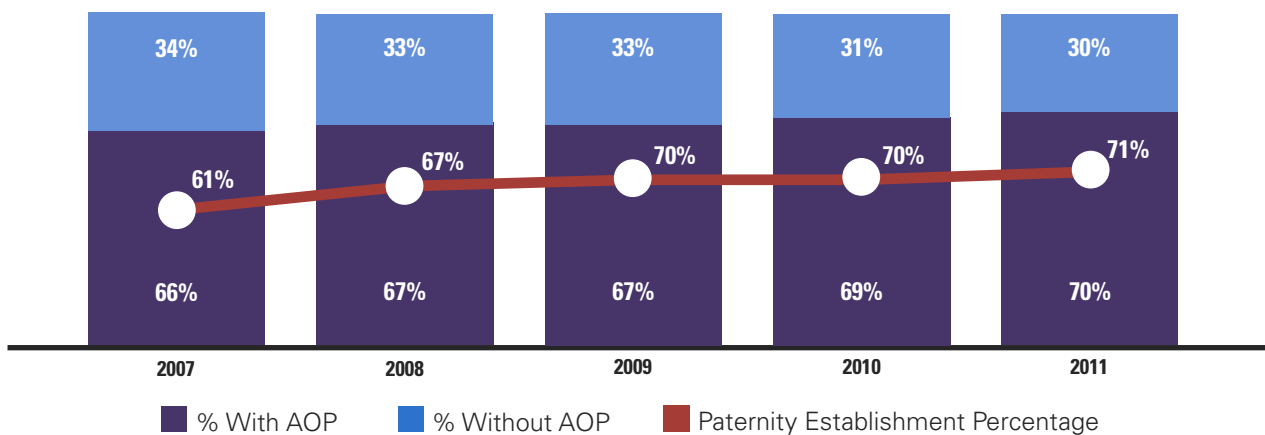


## ESTABLISHING PATERNITY

Establishing legal paternity may be the most important act that unmarried parents can do for their children. Paternity gives fathers the right to request visitation and custody, and also ensures they have a voice in adoption or medical proceedings. For children, it ensures the rights to inheritance, social security, veterans' and death benefits.

Paternity is also the first step toward establishing a child support order, which can provide children with much-needed financial support. More than 40% of New York City children are born to unmarried parents, and NYC children who live in single-parent households are more than twice as likely to live in poverty as their peers who live with married parents. The number of parents who established paternity increased by 16.3% between 2007 and 2011,

Figure 6. **PERCENTAGE OF UNMARRIED BIRTHS IN NYC**  
With/Without Acknowledgement of Paternity (AOP) and Paternity Establishment Percentage: 2007-2011



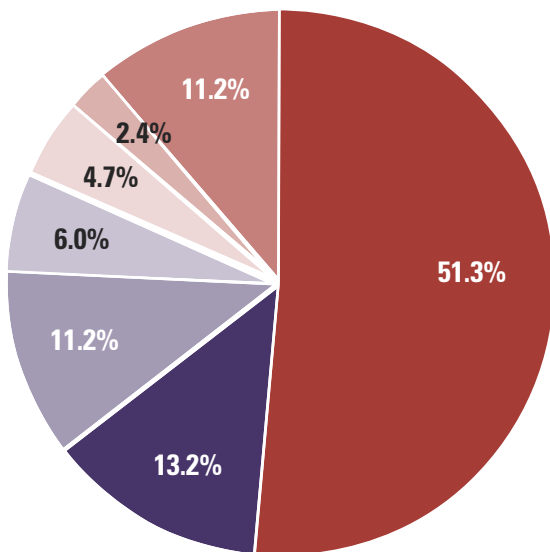
Paternity establishment is one of OCSE's top priorities. OCSE's Parent and Community Outreach staff work with parents, birthing facilities, clinics and doctors' offices, informing them of the Acknowledgement of Paternity process and providing technical assistance on how to establish paternity.



## CUSTOMER SERVICE

Helping parents answer questions and resolve problems about their child support cases is a priority for OCSE. Custodial and noncustodial parents can write or email OCSE, call the New York State Child Support Help Line or visit our Customer Service Walk-In Center in Manhattan. In 2011, OCSE received 160,655 letters and emails, over 48,000 customer service visits and nearly 61,000 referrals from the New York State Help Line requiring local district action.

Figure 7. **TOP REASONS CLIENTS MADE CUSTOMER SERVICE VISITS: 2011**



- Account Questions
- Driver's License Suspension
- Enforcement Actions
- Administrative Change
- MDO/Arrears Cap
- NYS Professional License
- Other Reasons



### Success Story

#### A THANKFUL CLIENT

When a client nearly refused to accept thousands of dollars, OCSE supervisor Janet Binion knew she had to set the record straight about child support. OCSE had already collected over \$18,000 for the client's 15-year-old son, but needed her current address in order to disburse the funds. The client, a victim of domestic violence, did not want to provide her address because she feared that the father of her son might have access to it. Ms. Binion advised her that there would be no contact with the other parent and informed her that OCSE keeps all such personal information confidential. "She was refusing it out of fear," Ms. Binion recalls.

The client decided to accept the money and save it for her son's college education. She signed up for direct deposit and \$18,404 was disbursed to her account. After receiving the funds, she sent a bouquet of flowers, a box of chocolates and a note that read, "Thank you, Ms. Binion, for your hard work. My son and I appreciated it."

# SERVICES FOR PARENTS

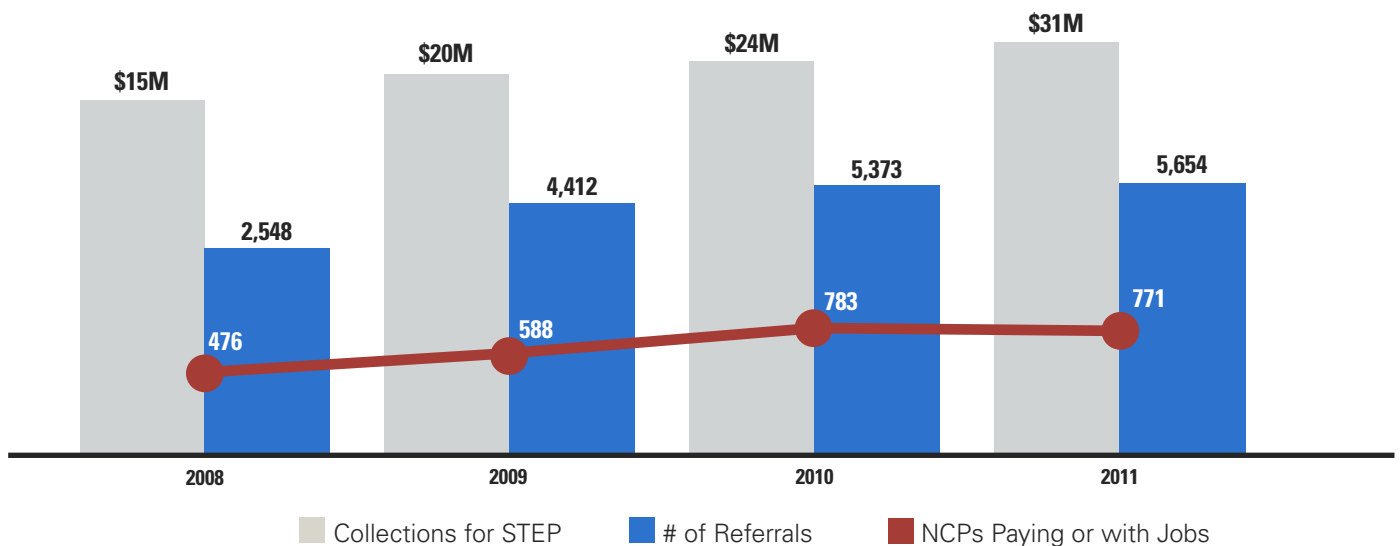
OCSE’s mission is to ensure children receive financial support from both parents. But sometimes NCPs need help in order to meet their obligations. OCSE takes a supportive approach to this problem, helping NCPs find jobs, obtain orders in line with their incomes, resolve issues with custodial parents and engage with their children—focusing on low-income parents and parents involved with the criminal justice system.

Many resources that can help parents—from employment services to mediation—are already available in New York City. OCSE works to connect parents with beneficial public programs and nonprofit organizations, and offers many of the services described below in partnership with other government agencies and community-based organizations.

## STEP: SUPPORT THROUGH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

One of OCSE’s goals is to connect NCPs to jobs, because without jobs, parents cannot pay the child support they owe. Moreover, most NCPs want to provide for their children, but some struggle to pay child support because they have trouble finding work. The Support Through Employment Program (STEP) connects un- and underemployed NCPs with job search and job placement assistance provided by HRA’s Back to Work vendors. Family Court Support Magistrates may refer NCPs to STEP during child support hearings or NCPs may participate voluntarily. In addition to helping NCPs find jobs, referrals to the program also compel some parents to begin making payments from undeclared income.

Figure 8. **ANNUAL CHILD SUPPORT COLLECTIONS FOR NCPs REFERRED TO STEP SINCE 2002**



Notes: “NCPs paying or with Jobs” refers to NCPs who are paying child support because they found jobs through STEP, found jobs on their own, or make payments out of previously undeclared income. All data shown are for calendar year.

In 2011, STEP helped place 490 NCPs in jobs that averaged \$11 per hour for 34 hours per week, and compelled 281 to begin making payments through previously undeclared income. Support Magistrates referred 5,654 NCPs to the program—a number much larger than the number of parents placed in jobs because some parents leave the program before completing it. In 2011, 25% of NCPs referred to STEP have either found a job through the program or begun paying child support through other means. Since 2008, the number of referrals to STEP and the number of parents who found jobs through the program have doubled. In total, current and past STEP participants paid \$31 million of child support in 2011.

## PROBLEM SOLVING COURT

Many low-income NCPs who find themselves in court for non-payment of child support are coping with multiple challenges. To use the court experience as an opportunity for intervention and a positive outcome, OCSE launched a pilot Problem Solving Court in the Brooklyn Family Court in 2011. Problem Solving Court personnel work with each participant to develop a service plan, which may include job placement, education, financial counseling, legal assistance and other individualized services. The court holds participants accountable for completing the service plan through weekly compliance hearings, and considers a case a success when a participant has been employed and made child support payments for six months.

The program is currently serving 82 NCPs. On average, participants have orders of \$317 per month and owe \$13,856 in arrears. 96% of the participants owe arrears to the custodial parent of their children, not DSS. To date, 14 participants have received order modifications and 12 have successfully graduated from the program. For all participants, child support collection amounts have increased from \$24,353 (three months prior to participation) to \$90,333 since entering the program. OCSE is implementing the Problem Solving Court in partnership with the New York State Office of Court Administration (OCA), the nonprofit Center for Court Innovation (CCI) and FECS Health and Human Services System.

## LIDS: LOW INCOME DADS

In 2011, OCSE and the nonprofit Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) launched a new integrated employment program for low-income noncustodial fathers with criminal convictions—one of the most significant challenges to finding a job. Low Income Dads (LIDs) combines traditional employment services with strong social services support. The three-year pilot operates in the Bronx and Brooklyn, and serves men ages 18 to 35 who have past criminal convictions and no more than a high school diploma or GED. As of December 2011, LIDs has enrolled 180 fathers, with a goal of serving 600 participants in total. LIDs offers paid transitional employment, job placement and retention services, parenting classes, child support counseling and mediation with the custodial parent. The program aims to help participating fathers find and keep jobs, pay child support, connect with their children and improve their co-parenting skills.



## Success Story

### MEN IN BLUE

OCSE also continued its partnership with the nonprofit The Doe Fund in 2011. The Doe Fund's Ready, Willing & Able program provides paid transitional work, training and job placement to homeless and formerly incarcerated participants, many of whom are NCPs. In order to begin the program, participants must permit The Doe Fund to check whether they have a child support order in place. If they do have a support order, their case gets reviewed to determine whether they qualify for any of our debt reduction programs (MDO, Arrears Cap or Arrears Credit program). In addition to integrating child support into their program model, The Doe Fund goes a step further and reinforces responsible fatherhood by withholding child support payments from NCP stipends.

Since September 2009, 209 Doe Fund participants and 85 graduates have made child support payments totaling nearly \$400,000.

OCSE staff members help the program's "men in blue," seen cleaning New York City streets each day, obtain information about the child support program, check the status of their cases and request modifications of orders that are out of line with their incomes.

This year, OCSE and Doe Fund staff worked with a Ready, Willing & Able participant to modify his child support order to be more in line with his income. The change enabled him to reengage with his children, ages 10 and 15, whom he now visits twice weekly. After resuming regular child support payments, he also successfully petitioned for reinstatement of his learner's permit. He is on his way to earning his driver's license, a key qualification for the full-time job he hopes to secure after completing Ready, Willing & Able.





OCSE's Customer Service Walk-In Center at 151 West Broadway in Manhattan.

## DEBT REDUCTION

When low-income NCPs face high child support arrears or have orders far out of line with their income, they may stop paying child support altogether. This hurts everyone. NCPs continue accumulating arrears, and children lose out on important financial support. In addition, parents who stop paying child support may withdraw from their children.

In response to this issue, OCSE developed three innovative programs to help low-income NCPs reduce child support orders and arrears owed to DSS. None of these modification programs require a court hearing.

- **MDO (Modify DSS Order)** lowers child support orders owed to DSS for NCPs living at or below the New York State Self Support Reserve (\$14,702 for 2011). As of CY11, OCSE has reduced the child support orders of 122 NCPs from an average of \$327 per month to an average of \$43 per month.
- **Arrears Cap** reduces arrears owed to DSS that NCPs accumulated while living at or below the Federal Poverty Level (\$10,890 for 2011). Through the program, OCSE can cap arrears as low as \$500. To date, OCSE has reduced the arrears of 824 NCPs—by \$8.5 million total—through this program.
- The **Arrears Credit Program (ACP)** extends a similar offer to NCPs who accumulated arrears when they did not live below the Federal Poverty Level. Participants can earn a credit toward arrears owed to DSS if they remain in good standing on their current support payments. The maximum credit participants can earn is \$15,000 over three years. NCPs can enroll in the program at OCSE's Customer Service Walk-In Center. Since its initiation, 20 parents have signed up for ACP.

In addition to helping parents obtain orders in line with their incomes, the goal of these programs is to encourage NCPs to pay child support. The data suggests that these programs are working. To date, 74% of MDO and/or Arrears Cap participants paid child support after enrolling, but only 52% did before they enrolled.

## CAAP: CASH ASSISTANCE AGREEMENT PILOT

OCSE's new Cash Assistance Agreement Pilot (CAAP) extends the idea of increasing compliance with the child support program by improving parents' experiences. As of mid-2011, custodial and noncustodial parents who meet the CAAP criteria can establish paternity and enter into child support and medical support agreements at OCSE's Customer Service Walk-In Center, without necessarily having to appear in court. Their agreements, which are based on interviews with both parents and conform to the Child Support Standards Act guidelines, become formal child support orders when approved by the Family Court. Through CAAP, OCSE aims to create a collaborative and supportive environment, give parents time for discussion when they are establishing support agreements, and allow them to feel that they are a part of the child support process.



Outreach Specialists **Sylvia Cox** and **Trevor Alexander** visit Rikers Island once a week to give workshops and answer questions for incarcerated NCPs.

“I broke up with [my son] Tyler’s father when I was pregnant and, at first, everything seemed like a nightmare because it became a struggle to make him understand his responsibilities as a father. When he received an order of child support, he became even angrier, but the child support program made him get closer to Tyler and his monthly payments are no longer a mental and financial burden for him. I also work full time to support my son and he sees his dad every other week thanks to the program’s mediation services.”

**Raisa Valerio, custodial mom**

By offering this service, OCSE aims to have more parents keep their child support appointments, increase the number of orders established and ultimately collect more money on behalf of New York City children. CAAP also provides an opportunity for OCSE staff to discuss the value of formal child support with parents and answer any questions they have about how the program works.

### MEDIATION REFERRALS

Custody and visitation issues can cause NCPs to feel disconnected from their children, with the end result that they do not pay child support. But these issues are considered legally distinct from child support, and by law, parents cannot discuss them during child support hearings. Addressing custody and visitation through separate court hearings can be time-consuming and costly, and fuel parents’ feelings of resentment.

To help parents resolve custody, visitation and coparenting issues, OCSE encourages them to participate in mediation outside the court environment. OCSE maintains a referral list of community-based organizations that offer low- and no-cost mediation services, and informs parents about these providers through its outreach materials and website.

### REENTRY INITIATIVES

NCPs involved with the criminal justice system face heightened challenges to paying child support because their support obligations are not automatically put on hold during incarceration. OCSE works with the New York City Departments of Correction and Probation, the New York State Division of Parole and other agencies involved with the justice system to help incarcerated and reentering parents address child support issues.

OCSE staff offer on-site child support education and individual consultations for inmates at Rikers Island and the Queensboro Correctional Facility, a minimum-security prison for men who will soon be paroled to New York City. Individual consultations may include discussing the rules that govern child support, reviewing parents’ cases, determining whether they qualify for the MDO or Arrears Cap programs, and referring them to OCSE’s employment programs. Staff refer parents to OCSE’s Customer Service Walk-In Center upon release. OCSE also partners with America Works to offer an on-site employment program at Rikers Island.

While OCSE has worked with Rikers Island for three years, the Queensboro Correctional Facility was a new partner in 2011. Queensboro offers an intensive re-entry program to help inmates develop release plans, and OCSE outreach specialists provide information about child support and how to access legal services, mediation services and OCSE’s debt reduction programs.

1,222 Rikers Island inmates participated in “child support orientation” sessions in 2011, and 336 worked one-on-one with OCSE staff. At the Queensboro Correctional Facility, 856 inmates attended child support orientations and of those, 231 requested individual consultations. In total, OCSE staff reviewed 259 cases for Queensboro Correctional Facility inmates.

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

To engage parents with the formal child support program and educate the public about how it works and its benefits, OCSE conducts several innovative outreach programs.

## BACK TO WORK CHILD SUPPORT SPECIALISTS

To connect families in need with a crucial source of financial support, OCSE partners with HRA's seven Back to Work employment vendors to fund a full-time Child Support Specialist for each Back to Work site. The Back to Work program provides cash assistance recipients with job search and job placement assistance. Specialists work with participating custodial and noncustodial parents to reinforce the idea of responsible fatherhood and the importance of child support income to families. In addition, the specialists address parents' child support needs before they reenter the workforce to increase the likelihood of their retaining their jobs.

Since the partnership began in 2010, Child Support Specialists have referred more than 1,600 NCPs to the MDO and Arrears Cap and Credit programs; helped more than 600 NCPs who signed child support repayment agreements--which enabled the reinstatement of their drivers' licenses--and provided parenting classes to more than 2,500 parents.

## NONCUSTODIAL PARENT EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT

The New York State Noncustodial Parent Earned Income Tax Credit (NCP/EITC) provides a financial incentive to pay child support, and helps make it easier to do so. Through the program, low-income working NCPs can reduce the state taxes and child support arrears they owe, and in many cases, receive a refund check. Parents are only eligible if they have paid 100% of current child support due for the tax year. Before the credit was implemented in tax year 2006, parents could not receive a tax break for paying child support.

Every year, OCSE provides information on this benefit to NCPs who have remained current on their orders—over 60,000 people; OCSE includes information on the NCP/EITC in publications and presentations to community partners, and works with New York City's Office of Financial Empowerment to reach out to NCPs who may qualify. OCSE also includes information on free income tax preparation services in its communications.

## DEPARTMENT OF HOMELESS SERVICES PARTNERSHIP

To improve economic conditions for families and singles residing in a shelter and to help them transition to permanent housing, OCSE works closely with the New York City Department of Homeless Services (DHS) to connect both custodial and noncustodial parents with child support services.

OCSE provides training for DHS staff, delivers presentations about the importance of the child support program to shelter residents and offers on-site consultations to assist families in applying for child support services or in taking advantage of our employment and debt reduction programs. In 2011, OCSE collected \$4.1 million on behalf of 969 families residing in DHS shelters. On average, each family received \$2,752 for the year.

## NO KIDDING: STRAIGHT TALK FROM TEEN PARENTS

In 2010, more than 7,000 New York City births were to teen mothers. Most teen parents lack the means to support themselves, and few are in stable and committed relationships. As a result, many become involved with the social safety net and the child support program.

OCSE has partnered since 2009 with the New York City Departments of Education and Health and Mental Hygiene to provide No Kidding: Straight Talk from Teen Parents. No Kidding uses peer educators—who are teen parents themselves—to educate at-risk teens about the realities and responsibilities of parenting and child support, and urge them to hold off on having children until they are personally and financially stable.

In 2011, peer educators offered their message in New York City high schools, New York City Administration for Children’s Services, Division of Youth and Family Justice detention facilities and Department of Youth and Community Development summer youth programs. Since No Kidding began, nearly 4,000 teens have participated, and after participating, they have consistently shown improved knowledge of paternity and child support issues, as well as a shift in their attitudes toward the challenges of teen parenting.

## YOUNG MEN’S INITIATIVE AND CITYWIDE FATHERHOOD INITIATIVE

In August 2011, Mayor Michael Bloomberg announced the launch of a citywide \$43 million effort to address the disparities slowing the advancement of young black and Latino men. The Mayor’s goals include connecting men to work and helping fathers engage with their children. The Young Men’s Initiative grew out of a citywide fatherhood initiative the Mayor announced in 2010, which aims to strengthen New York City families by helping fathers be active in their children’s lives.

These initiatives highlight priority issues for OCSE and the Human Resources Administration/Department of Social Services (HRA/DSS). Through both the Young Men’s Initiative and the citywide fatherhood initiative, OCSE will continue working to connect noncustodial fathers with employment, help them strengthen their relationships with their children and address child support issues they face.



## FACE THA MUSIC

In June 2011, OCSE, the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development, the New York City Housing Authority and NYC DADS collaborated with Brooklyn hip hop artist Face Tha Music to release the single “4 Tha Kids.” Face Tha Music had a daughter while in his teens and realized the importance of being an involved parent. In “4 Tha Kids,” he promotes being an engaged parent, spending quality time with one’s children and supporting them financially.


“I realized that my financial involvement was only half the obligation. The other half of being a good dad, and just as important, is spending time and building a bond with her,” says Face Tha Music of his now 7-year-old daughter.

## EVENTS AND CONFERENCES

On October 20, OCSE welcomed over 170 prominent leaders of government, community-based organizations and academic institutions to its annual **Policy Conference**. *“The Child Support Connection: Giving Children a Brighter Future,”* held in partnership with Princeton’s Bendheim-Thoman Center for Research on Child Wellbeing and the CUNY School of Professional Studies, focused on ways the child support program can work across sectors to improve services for mothers, fathers and children. Participants heard updates on the New York City and national child support programs, as well as the Fragile Families study, through which Columbia and Princeton University researchers are studying parents and children in unmarried families. Conference attendees also discussed family well-being, employment and incarceration, the connection between child support and workforce programs, and other key issues.

OCSE’s annual **Family Court Support Magistrate Conference** brings together Family Court personnel, attorneys who represent DSS and other jurisdictions in child support hearings, and city and state policymakers. The conference, held this year on May 13, allowed stakeholders in the child support program to discuss accomplishments, problems and challenges so that each party understands how the other units work. Family Court Support Magistrates, Family Court clerks, HRA/DSS and New York City Corporation Counsel attorneys joined representatives of OCSE, the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, the New York City Sheriff’s Office and other organizations.

This year, OCSE Executive Deputy Commissioner Frances Pardus-Abbadessa began a term on the board of the **National Child Support Enforcement Association (NCSEA)**, a worldwide association of child support programs. In August, OCSE and HRA senior staff attended NCSEA’s Annual Conference & Expo to learn about current issues and innovations in child support across the country and showcase New York City’s achievements.



“This is the way an NYC agency office should run. A model or all—I’m very impressed.”

**Customer Service Walk-In , client**



**The Child Support Connection:  
Giving Children a Brighter Future**

US Dept of Health & Human Services OCSE Commissioner Vicki Turetsky  
at HRA's Annual OCSE Policy Conference

# THE YEAR AHEAD 2012

## CUSTOMER SERVICE WALK-IN CENTER EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

Connecting NCPs to employment is a priority for OCSE. In 2011, the office initiated partnerships with several employers and began using its Customer Service Walk-In Center to connect NCPs with jobs. Staff also review NCPs' financial status to determine their eligibility for services such as debt reduction and the NCP/EITC, discuss how to access these services and ensure they understand the rules governing the child support program. By providing financial counseling and connecting NCPs to other child support-related services, OCSE seeks not only to help these individuals find jobs, but reduce barriers they face to keeping their jobs. To help fragile families achieve economic self-sufficiency, OCSE has designed programs that both enforce payment by working NCPs and connect NCPs to immediate employment when they are not working.

## E-FILING

In 2012, OCSE's Borough Offices will begin using e-filing for cash assistance cases. This service, already in place for non-cash assistance clients, will streamline the process of filing petitions by allowing caseworkers to build cases and file petitions directly into New York State's Uniform Court Management System.

## SETTLEMENT AGREEMENTS

OCSE has a record of successfully negotiating with NCPs who request to settle child support debt they owe to DSS. Some NCPs who have very high arrears and/or low incomes are unlikely ever to be able to pay off their full debts, and frustration causes some to stop paying altogether. When NCPs agree to make partial payments in exchange for reduction of their debt, more money goes to New York City children and OCSE can focus its time and resources on cases with collectible debt. In 2012, OCSE will reach out to more NCPs who owe arrears to DSS to explore their interest in settling their debts.

## OFFICE OF FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT PARTNERSHIP

Child support is often a key part of low-income families' finances. Among poor families who receive payments nationwide, child support averages 40% of household income. For NCPs, unmet child support responsibilities can add up to significant debt, and penalties for nonpayment of child support are an additional burden. When parents—especially low-income NCPs—are in control of their financial situations, they are better equipped to plan for the future, keep their jobs and make steady child support payments.

To help NCPs and CPs understand their financial situations and ensure that child support is part of the financial planning conversation, OCSE has established a partnership with the New York City Department of Consumer Affairs' Office of Financial Empowerment (OFE). Through this partnership, OCSE and OFE educate parents about the child support program and how to apply for child support services. They also help NCPs understand their obligations and connect them with services such as OCSE's employment and debt reduction programs.

## COMMUNITY PARTNERS

OCSE works with community partners across New York City to reach out to custodial and noncustodial parents, integrate discussions of child support into their programs and educate the community about the value of the formal child support program. Partner organizations also provide input about how OCSE can improve its services for parents and outcomes for children. OCSE is working to establish a community partners group to explore ways to improve new initiatives and existing programs.



(l to r) Estela Rivera, Thomas DePippo, Linda LaGreca, Ann Martinez, Frances Pardus-Abbadessa, Raymond Singleton, Amy Kearney, Elizabeth Kumar, Sherry Moss, Jackie Palmer

# THE OCSE TEAM

## INTAKE & COURT SERVICES

OCSE's Borough and Court Operations is the point of entry into the child support system for cash assistance and non-cash assistance families. This area is comprised of three units, Borough Office Operations, Central Court Services, and Family Court Support Services. OCSE operates borough offices in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens and the Bronx, servicing Staten Island clients in our Manhattan office. These offices are responsible for processing mandated referrals of cash assistance families; interviewing clients to open or update a child support case; locating the noncustodial parent and preparing and submitting court referrals to establish new order of support, medical support and/or paternity. Central Court Services is located within the Manhattan Family Court and is responsible for initiating the legal process including the scheduling of court hearings, processing summons for personal service through the Sheriff's Office, and preparing case files for OLA representation. OCSE Family Court Support Services (FCSS) staff works out of the Family Courts in each borough. FCSS staff assist non-cash assistance families with opening a child support case and filing a petition.

## FISCAL OPERATIONS

Fiscal Operations staff are responsible for establishing, monitoring and updating all child support accounts to reflect court orders, payments and public assistance status.

## ENFORCEMENT SERVICES

Enforcement Services is comprised of three units, Administrative Enforcement, Special Investigations, and Interstate. Administrative Enforcement oversees administrative enforcement tools (e.g., employer wage withholding, drivers license suspensions, tax refund and bank account seizures), which are automatically initiated when payments are not made. Special Investigations identifies appropriate cases for local or federal prosecution for non-payment of child support. Interstate works with parents and other child support agencies where cases involve New York and another jurisdiction (county, state or country)

## PROGRAM INTEGRITY

The Program Integrity unit reviews and updates cases to ensure accuracy and proper functioning of automated case processing systems. It also administers staff training and creates and maintains our policies and procedures. The Systems Administration unit manages our operational applications and network infrastructure.

## MANAGEMENT SUPPORT & ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

Management Support & Administrative Services directs and coordinates overall support services to OCSE in the areas of: management planning and control, personnel and office/facilities services, budgeting, contracting and internal/external audits.



## PARENT & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Parent & Community Engagement is comprised of several units. Outreach and Paternity Services administers programs and coordinates events that build awareness, educates the public on child support services and establishes and maintains relationships with community organizations as well as other government entities. They offer employment services to connect low-income NCPs with employment programs (either voluntarily or court-ordered). They also work with NYC hospitals, clinics and medical centers to increase rates of paternity establishment. The Customer Services Walk-in Center assists CPs and NCPs with child support related issues, responds to client mail and helps NCPs access services to manage their child support debt, child support order or begin a job search. No Kidding!, our Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program utilizes peer educators to speak to high school students about the challenges of being a child parent. The Strategic Partnerships unit works with community leaders to create relationships and determine effective strategies for intervention to resolve child support issues and better serve the public.

# OUR PARTNERS

We thank all of our partners for their support and collaboration in 2011.

City University of New York  
Greater New York Hospital Association  
HRA Back to Work Vendors  
New York City Administration for Children's Services, Division of Youth and Family Justice  
New York City Comptroller's Office  
New York City Corporation Counsel  
New York City Department of Correction  
New York City Department of Education  
New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene  
New York City Department of Homeless Services  
New York City Department of Probation  
New York City Department of Youth and Community Development  
New York City Division of Consumer Affairs, Office of Financial Empowerment  
New York State Family Courts  
New York City Housing Authority  
New York City Human Resources Administration  
New York City Human Resources Administration, Office of Legal Affairs  
New York City Office of the Mayor, Citywide Fatherhood Initiative  
New York City Sheriff's Office  
New York State Division of Child Support Enforcement  
New York State Division of Parole  
New York State Office of Court Administration  
New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance  
New York City Office to Combat Domestic Violence  
Borough Presidents Office  
US Department of Health and Human Services  
YMS Management Associates, Inc.

In addition to the above organizations we also partner with many community and religious based organizations throughout the city that service parents. By partnering with these CBOs, OCSE is able to communicate the role child support plays in reducing child poverty.



**Michael R. Bloomberg**  
Mayor

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**Human Resources  
Administration**  
Department of  
Social Services

**Robert Doar**  
Commissioner



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