



W12. Connecting Fathers and Families Through Child Support

Wednesday, June 5, 2019
4:15 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Moderator:

- James Murray, Senior Advisor, Office of Child Support Enforcement, Washington, D.C.

Panel Host:

- Demetricus Johnson, Program Specialist, Region 4, Office of Child Support Enforcement

Presenters:

- Charlie Davis, Coordinator Employment and Education, Tennessee Department of Human Services
- Patti Wood, Director of Operations, Tennessee Department of Human Services
- Karen Y. Walker, Director of Family Assistance Contracts, Tennessee Department of Human Services
- Kiska Dennis-Gear, Fatherhood Program Manager, Georgia Department of Human Services
- John Hurst, Deputy Director, Georgia Department of Human Services

Demetricus Johnson: Good afternoon. My name is Demetricus Johnson, program specialist in the Office of Child Support Enforcement. Welcome to Connecting Fathers and Families Through Child Support. I think we all recognize the importance of child support, and the reason why we're here. Earlier James Murray, one of our senior advisors for child support, talked about child support touching one in five families. That is true, but think about the poor families; those families are at risk as well.

If we serve one or two poor families at risk, we connect to more families than probably anyone else within human services. We are the conduit to helping families toward self-sufficiency, engagement and also understanding parental engagement. For many of you practitioners, if you don't have a relationship with child support, you need to get one. Raise your hand if the fathers and families you serve have issues around child support. Raise your hand if you have an existing relationship with child support that you're comfortable with and it's growing, and you have everything you need to know about child support. Look around. That's why we're here. We have experts from Georgia and Tennessee who are going to talk about some of the innovative services they provide within their states to support fathers and families.



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First, I want to introduce John Hurst, Deputy Director of the Georgia Department of Human Services.

John Hurst: Thank you. I'm going to give a quick overview of a couple of the programs that Georgia has in place to help fathers that are in our caseload. Georgia currently has approximately 385,000 cases and, of those, approximately 65 percent of the parents that pay child support, pay on a regular basis. Of those 385,000 cases, approximately 14 percent of those pay zero each month and another eight percent pay zero to 25 percent.

The two programs I'm going to talk about are our fatherhood program and parental accountability court program. These programs were established with a few things in mind. One, to address the chronic non-payers. We understand there are reasons why people don't pay child support. A very small percentage is because they are able and not willing to pay. We're focused on the ones that are willing but unable to pay. We identify what those barriers are that keep them from paying regularly. It could be employment, education, transportation issues, access and visitation issues, addiction and mental health barriers. In working with them, what we try to do is connect them with resources in the local area. That can be employers, local training, education, and also treatment resources. Another large part of these programs is the ongoing support that the participants have. In our fatherhood program we have case managers who provide focused case management and connect them with employment resources. With our PAC, Parental Accountability Court Program, we have superior court judges who we partner with and case managers who provide focused attention as well. Both programs are statewide programs in Georgia. Our fatherhood program was initially piloted in 1997 and rolled out statewide in 1998. Our PAC program initially piloted in 2009, with one court, then began an expansion process in 2012, and currently we have PAC in 45 of the 49 judicial circuits. Both programs are administered by the Division of Child Support Services.

The fatherhood program is a pre-contempt employment-based program that provides training, coaching and mentoring to the participants. We have a strong community resource collaborative approach. We utilize community resources leading to career employment. We're not looking for short-term employment or minimum wage, we want something that'll be meaningful for an ongoing career. The goal is to increase self-sufficiency and the financial, emotional and parental involvement of the participants with their families.

The PAC program is a collaboration between the department and superior court judges. Each judicial circuit that I mention has a superior court judge who basically has volunteered their time to take on this court. This is in addition to their full-time superior court duties. It serves as an alternative to incarceration; and utilizes community resources and judicial oversight to address the barriers with the goal being to increase parental accountability and self-sufficiency. Going





back to state fiscal year 2018, the fatherhood program serviced over 6,500 participants; of those, 1,340 were enrolled in GED training programs and 1,174 were enrolled in short-term training programs. The services provided support to over 15,000 children. Since 2012, our PAC Program has served over 6,200 participants by helping them avoid incarceration. To date we have received over \$7.2M in child support payments from the participants, and over 9,400 children have received support through the PAC Program.

All programs come with challenges. I'm going to let our Fatherhood Program Manager, Ms. Kiska Dennis-Gear tell you about some of those challenges.

Kiska Dennis-Gear: Thank you. We are very proud of the progress we have made over the last federal fiscal year and the years prior. However, we still have areas of opportunity where we can do better. One of the biggest challenges for us is trust and customer engagement. They go hand-in-hand. We have to gain the individual's trust. For years, the Georgia Division of Child Support Services has had this stigma of enforcement. We were there to enforce the order, we were there to collect by any means necessary. Even though we have accepted the mindset that children need both parents, and that we need to work to support the non-custodial parent in order to ensure his stability so that he can better support his child, we continue to carry that reputation. It is a barrier that we are still working on; but one of our major limitations with regard to customer engagement.

The state of Georgia has 159 counties. We want to ensure that we access every resource that we identify, every industry within every county within the state, in order to meet the needs of every individual and that has that need to overcome a specific barrier. We have a few activities that we offer to address those barriers particularly with regard to customer engagement. One of the first things we do to try to engage with non-custodial parents or individuals in the community is we hold Fatherhood Conversation events. During these events, we partner with the Omega Psi Phi organization that serves as a face for the division. What that means is they serve as a face that is closer to the community and meet them where they are, and let them know that this is an organization they can trust. We're changing our processes, so please take advantage of the opportunities. These events are open to the public and livestreamed for individuals to be able to access this information in a way that is inviting if they're not able to attend in person. There are a lot of hard-hitting questions that we have to deal with at these events; but it's wonderful because it opens that dialogue. It lets them know what the Division of Child Support Services does, and what the PAC Program and fatherhood program processes are. Once we have that dialogue, we gain that trust and knowledge and then we're able to engage more. We also hold Fatherhood Celebration events. These are more like carnival events and basically a way for us to publicly acknowledge fathers and the important roles they play in the lives of their children. These events are huge. There's free food, bounce houses, game trucks, entertainment, elected officials that





come and speak for us and also vendor information to help our clients. We want them to know the resources that are available within their community to support them in overcoming barriers.

We also offer a job fair. If there are any employment opportunities within the area, we want to make sure that they're aware of them and they have first-hand access to that information. We also work closely with our Office of Legislative Affairs and Outreach. They hold faith and non-profit meetings with organizations. We provide an overview of the program, and at the end of the meeting we have an ask. And that ask is always the same. "Please partner with us. Please work with us to communicate to the community that we're here and we're willing and ready to serve." Lastly, we have our PAC kick-offs and graduation events. These events are intended to share information about successes that we're having with PAC as well as hearing your community. We're ready to service you and support you, so please take advantage of these resources. If you want any more information about PAC, Wendy Parker is here.

One of our biggest partnerships is the technical college system of Georgia. They provide training and preparation for GED testing, and then offer that testing and short-term training opportunities for our clients to ensure we are helping them overcome that barrier to employment. We are seeking a partnership with Fathers Incorporated to provide cultural sensitivity training to our staff. They will also be offering soft skills training to our individuals. We work closely with community employment resources, the Department of Labor, WIOA, different funding sources to assist us in securing employment opportunities for our individuals who are in need, as well as many community employers. We're always seeking those opportunities. The PAC Program works with the Council of Superior Court Judges which provides oversight to the program and then works with the administrative office of the courts. That process is basically to provide support to the program.

Demetricus Johnson: Thank you John and Kiska for providing that information. We want to provide these summaries very quickly before I get to Tennessee because we want you to understand that it's been a changing face with child support. We've grown as a program. We've realized that in order to help the child, we have to support both parents. We do that by understanding what's going on with both parents. Before we open up to questions, I want both states to give us a summary about what's happening on the ground. I want you to recognize that on one end we're talking about statewide programs, but on the other end we're talking about other types of flexibility and service delivery. If you look at Tennessee it has a lot of different options. Georgia has statewide programs and partnerships, and the reason I say that is because there's flexibility about how you can partner with child support and what type of service we provide to the families. I want to pass it on to Patti Wood, Director of Operations, Tennessee Department of Human Services to introduce her staff.





Patti Wood: I would like to introduce Ms. Karen Walker, our director in our Family Assistance Program and Ms. Charlie Davis, our Employment and Education Coordinator who is going to speak first.

Charlie Davis: We are going to talk about the child support programs that we are administering in the state of Tennessee. We utilize the family center services; an approach we use with our community partners to provide information and specialized services to some of our customers. We have a lot of customers with unique needs. In addition, in 2013 we began our two-generation approach. The two-generation approach is known for providing services to both parents and children together. Recently we have expanded some of our fatherhood programs. We would like to keep expanding but want to ensure we are able to provide the service throughout the expansion. One of the interesting statistics is that Tennessee's number of incarcerated men and women has increased by nearly 12 percent in the last decade. That is a large increase and we want to ensure we have service available for those coming out of incarceration. In addition, we're 12th in the nation for non-custodial parents who are incarcerated. African Americans are 16.8 of Tennessee's population, and 45 percent of Tennessee's prison population. Tennessee is top third of the states that have the most incarcerated parents. The fatherhood and parental services that we offer are definitely needed. With nearly 15,000 parents incarcerated, we want to be able to have a way for them to be able to get the services they need to provide for their families. We are going to talk about some of the specific services that are available in Tennessee. The goal of our parenthood services is to increase communication skills. I've learned a lot today about how fathers can really be more aware and more involved in their children's lives. Active participation of parents is shown to increase the frequency of child support payments.

Karen Walker: I think all of us agree that when both parents are employed and working, they are fulfilling their well-being and financial commitment to their child, which helps the entire family and moves them toward success. I'm going to speak for our TANF program because I go on both sides. We were really focused on just the custodial parent and getting them employment skills and back to work, which is the TANF requirement. By default, we really didn't focus on the non-custodial parent. We know that one of the goals of TANF is to help low income families get back to work, shorten their time in receiving benefits, and putting the whole family back on the path to economic security. We didn't have that view in the beginning. You have to look at the systems and the policies that you put in place; they serve a purpose but sometimes have unintended consequences. With our TANF program, those customers are required to work with us to establish paternity and help with the collection of child support. What we realized was the situation we put that custodial parent in, making the decision whether to share that information and risk not getting benefits or limiting benefits. It puts them in a unique position and what it has done over time is, it has eliminated and removed the father further out of the picture. I think the whole method around child support enforcement was a call for fathers in the 70s and 80s to be





present and financially responsible and get back into the household; but then we didn't shift as the society shifted and as the father started coming to the forefront, we didn't necessarily gear up and get ready to support them. We can't stay there. That can't be our excuse going forward. Let me be very clear because ACF definitely said we could play together a long time ago. I think it was in 1999 that we could play together, gave us the toys to bring to the sandbox. We were still side eyeing you with your toys, in your sandbox. But thanks to the two-generation approach in 2013 it made us evaluate how our policies were strengthening and supporting families. We realized we had some work to do at home, while we were out partnering. That started the conversation with us, as Patti said, and now we have several programs that are supporting both parents. I'm going to give a shout out to our deputy commissioner, Sheryl Campbell Street. We have an amazing leadership who's always in the forefront of driving innovation and allowing us to be creative and receptive.

We are also providing motivational interviewing and training with our staff because nine times out of 10 the father brings the TANF recipient to their appointment. So why not start that conversation and say, "Where are you at? Bring them out. He's working, bring him in. Let me help you parent well together and put you both on a path to success." When you start having those conversations and changing the image and the tone, then they will change with you and see that you're really trying to support families.

I want to highlight one of our projects and partnerships that we have through our two-generation approach. It is called Project Return, working with individuals transitioning back into society after they have been incarcerated. They are doing a wraparound holistic approach of services to support them, but also reconnect them with their families. You don't have to live in the same household to parent well. The most important thing Project Return is doing is they're not just getting our customers jobs, they're getting them jobs that are putting them on pathways toward careers in construction and hospitality, so they're very intentional about where and how they're connecting those individuals. Now I'm going to turn it over to Patti.

Patti Wood: I am the Director of Operations for Child Support in Tennessee. Child support leaves a bad taste in a lot of people's mouths, unfortunately a lot of fathers' mouths. Historically we have been a collection agency. We didn't want to hear the story; we just wanted to establish the order and get the money. But we are changing. It's a slow change because since the 70s we have seen access, visitation, and parenting separate from child support and it's not; but we have been restricted through policies, as Karen said, unintended policies and just not collaborating with each other. We have a lot of programs across the state, but I'm going to highlight some programs that started out as a demonstration grant. You all heard about the 11-15 grants yesterday during our opening session. Tennessee has always been eager to take part in these grants and see what we can do to help our parents.





We do have some other programs including a Parental Assistance Court in Nashville that we recently connected with. It's being hosted at the Child Support Office and is funded through our TANF program. It is a chance for the mother and the father to come in and tell their stories. Where are they at? How are they working together? What do they need from us? Then there are coordinators that can help them overcome any challenges and barriers they have to being good parents. Do they need to get their driver's license back, or can we help with something on the criminal side? Do they need some education? Do they need to be referred to mental health services or substance abuse services? I am looking forward to seeing how the outcomes are going to drive how we expand this across the state.

We also partner with our SNAP program in Tennessee. If someone is receiving SNAP benefits, they can go into employment training. If that person is a parent in our Child Support Program, we stop any kind of enforcement on that parent, give them their driver's license back, and stop some administrative actions. There's some that we can't, like tax offset. If there is legal action pending, we ask the courts to reset it and let the parent go through the program, and then provide our offices updates weekly on the person and how they're doing.

I'm going to talk about our TPOPS program. Our Tennessee Partnership for Ongoing Parental Support. We have to have acronyms because all our names in Tennessee are long. We have CSPED which is our Child Support Non-Custodial Parent Employment Demonstration, and TCSEPP which is the Tennessee Child Support Employment and Parenting Program. CSPED is a demonstration grant that just ended. We were able to roll that out in our Nashville, Memphis, and Chattanooga offices. When you are in the process of going through a demonstration grant, there's a lot you can do and a lot you can't do because you have to control the program to see how effective it is so it can be evaluated. We are now at a good point where we can expand the program to other counties and then expand our services as well. In fact, I believe we are rolling out to three new counties in CSPED, Rutherford in Gibson County, Jackson in Madison County, and Clarkesville in Montgomery County.

TPOPS is very exciting. We work with fathers who are incarcerated at the Morgan County Correctional Complex, or at the Morgan County Residential Recovery Court. This also is a demonstration grant from 2009 that we have now put into our operations and partner with the University of Tennessee to run this program for us. We have two coordinators who conduct classes inside the prison with a focus on child support education and responsible fatherhood. They meet with men that are generally 12 to 18 months of being released. Not all of them have a child support case, and that's okay. It's just if they have a child and they're in this class then we reach out to them.





Upon release, we refer the class participants who have a case in our fourth, fifth or sixth judicial districts to our TCSEPP program or we refer them to other community resources they may need. I do want to mention an event that we're planning at the Morgan County Residential Recovery Court. This is an alternative direct ward where men who would be sent to prison can be sent here instead for intense mental health, drug, and substance abuse services. As long as they stay on the path, then they avoid going to prison. We have been talking about how we can partner in child support with these fathers and children. How can we bring them together? And the tag line that we've been hearing throughout this conference, it only takes a moment to make a moment, is perfect. We've been working with Dr. Jo who runs this program and approached her and said, "Hey, we would like to do something with the incarcerated fathers and their children." A cooking class. They have a very nice kitchen there. So, on June 15th, we're going to be hosting a cooking class with the dads and their children. We want to help them make that moment. They'll prepare a meal with their child and then eat together. And then Second Harvest of East Tennessee is actually providing food for a month that we can send home with the children. Matt from TCSEPP, if you would stand and introduce your team.

Matt Gellar: I'm Matt Gellar and these are my co-workers Pam and Chris and we're really glad to be here.

Patti Wood: TCSEPP was a demonstration grant from 2004. I was a caseworker in the local child support office at the time this grant started. I was not on board, but Matt quickly changed my mind through all the great work that they've done in TCSEPP. Again, this is a partnership with University of Tennessee and we have expanded that to our fourth judicial district, which is Cocke, Grainger, Jefferson and Sevier counties, and Blount county. And Cocke county is actually one of the 15 district counties that has been identified by our governor. It's very rural, there's no transportation, and not a lot of jobs. We have a high substance abuse problem in that county. Matt and his team have been working really hard with our customers there.

TCSEPP is intense case management. Because we are seeing a rise in mothers that don't necessarily have full time custody of their children, it's where parents can come that's safe, non-judgmental and it's coming from a strength-based perspective. What do you bring to the table? Where do you want to go and how can we help you get there? It's employment and parenting focused and very intensive.

Matt and his team actually go and hold people up to go to their jobs. That's what a great team they are. They're a partner with our parents and with our child support.

Charlie Davis: Over the past few years, the Tennessee Department of Human Services has been focusing on connecting our customers, our staff, and our community partners. We talked a little



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that other departments have experienced all threaded silos as well. We have come a long way in communicating and just really connecting everyone so that we have a network of services across the state. Recently, we implemented a new mission vision and core values because we had achieved some of the goals that we had previously worked for. There is a video that we're going to play for you just to show where we're going-

Speaker 1: We have to be revolutionary.

Speaker 2: My name is Jennifer Page.

Speaker 3: Selena Kirkland.

Speaker 4: My name is Betsy Shar.

Speaker 2: I'm the training center manager in Williamson County.

Speaker 3: I'm with the Child Support Field Operations Division.

Speaker 2: Helping an individual build a foundation for themselves and their family.

Speaker 4: One way is by inclusion.

Speaker 2: A lot of individuals just need that temporary assistance.

Speaker 4: Just like the saying goes, "If you give them a fish, they eat for a day."

Speaker 2: Helping educate them.

Speaker 4: "If you teach them how to fish, they can eat for a lifetime."

Speaker 2: Building strong families now.

Speaker 3: There's always room for improvement.

Speaker 1: It's really important to stay on top of the trends.

Speaker 4: That's just the way the world's moving nowadays.





Speaker 1: We need to know what training, what opportunities are out there in the community.

Speaker 3: I think moving fast, we need to stay up with innovation, the technology.

Speaker 1: Being able to log their self in instead of waiting on someone at the front desk.

Speaker 3: We have great opportunities to collaborate with businesses.

Speaker 1: So, the Department of Human Services has been in a period of transformation over the last couple of years. For the last two years we have put a lot of attention on being family focused and really incorporating our two-generation approach. Now are we there? No. Do we have more work to do? Yes ... Our mission is to build strong families by connecting Tennesseans to employment, education, and support services. Our vision is to revolutionize the customer experience through innovation in a seamless network of services. We value high performance, collaboration, continuous improvement, a shared vision, and customer centered solutions.

Speaker 3: With the technology, giving the customer the tools.

Speaker 2: Like the DHS Community Resource Fairs that we're doing.

Speaker 4: What is it that you need to feel like you're successful?

Speaker 3: And they may just need a hand up for a small amount of time.

Speaker 1: One thing I want us to make sure that we do as we continue to move forward is remember that we are one DHS.

Demetricus Johnson: We wanted to show a summary of what's possible. I want to ask the speakers some questions. I know when I first got on child support I came across a report from the Urbanist, back in 2008, that talked about a study of the top eight to 10 child support agencies. They looked at those individuals who owed the most debt. You would probably think individuals who owe let's say \$50,000, \$80,000, \$100,000 may be middle class. They found that those individuals who hold the most debt in a child support caseload are parents who make less than \$10,000 dollars in their life. With all the support services you provide, all the engagement you're providing, how do you assist that father who may have gotten out of prison? How do you assist that father who may have fallen on hard times and his child support order could've been too high at one point? Now he is \$10,000-\$80,000 in arrears. How do you assist this non-custodial parent to stay involved in your program? I could see how it could be a situation where he's thinking,





"Know something? I can't pay this. This is an uncollectible debt. Why should I even listen to you if I can't even pay out this obligation, because I never made more than \$10,000-\$15,000 in my whole life." How do you assist him?

John Hurst: In Georgia when we're talking about people coming out of prison, one of the first things we do is meet with them and look at what we call possible review and modification of their order. We look at what their situation is now and review the modification of their order to see if it could go up, down, or stay the same, depending on the current situation. Also, we have a state debt reduction program where if some of those past due arrears are owed to the state of Georgia, we will work with that participant to come up with a plan to pay some of those. If they're successful in that plan, we will look at possibly waiving even the entire balance of that after a short period of time.

Kiska Dennis-Gear: In addition, through our outreach programs we also offer prison re-entry. With that vendor, we provide information with regard to employment opportunities, assistance with homelessness, assistance with appropriate parenting, as well as outreach services that we offer once they're released. When they are enrolled in our program, very similar to the state of Tennessee, we freeze enforcement actions as well. You have to consider, when you're trying to transition back into society, having that debt and the enforcement that we have, the capabilities of moving forward, it's just a great deal of stress that individuals just do not need when they're trying to transition back into society. In addition to the resources Mr. Hurst has mentioned, our prison re-entry is a good tool because the individual comes out and is prepared to do job search, and try to sustain that stable life style that we want all our Georgia citizens to have.

Patti Wood: In Tennessee we have a debt compromise program. However, it's only for arrears that are not what we call assigned to the state. It's where the custodial parent and non-custodial parent enter into a legal agreement that forgives some or all of the arrears owed to the custodial parent. We've been doing a lot of research about how we can get into law where we can start waiving some of the state debt, because that's usually the highest debt. We are also working on updating our child support guidelines. In Tennessee if you are incarcerated, that is not a reason for a modification. There has to be some other change such as another child.

Demetricus Johnson: The federal office has been involved with assisting the states with that change. I think we recognize over the years that has hurt many families, and we've done our due diligence to advocate policy that works for all involved, especially with evidence-based practices and understanding what other peers are doing throughout the country.

Participant: My name is Tyrone Hunter from Tucker, Georgia. Do men know there is a re-entry program for child support? I have found that men coming out of jail with debt think they have





nothing available to them. They have this stigma already that they're not going to be heard. How do they find out about this information while they're incarcerated?

John Hurst: The answer is probably yes and no. We need to do a better job at getting that information out there. We have recently re-organized that to make it more of a priority. This is a great opportunity for engagement between us and the community too.

Kiska Dennis-Gear: You can also engage the warden's associations and the sheriff's associations. Educate them on what the options are so they can provide that information, especially if you have marketing materials.

Participant: My name is Allen Ferrell, New York City Office of Child Support services. My question is for Georgia. We have a number of reduction programs as well. We initially seek to forgive debt that's owed to the Department of Social Services. We have time limited debt reduction payment programs. How do you advertise? I heard you talk about doing a better job. For example, we had it where you could come into our customer service walk-in center and pursue debt reduction. Then we put the applications online, so now people can download the application, fill it out, and mail it into us with all the required documentation. We're still having challenges. We're in the process of talking to some of our local fatherhood programs to get their feedback. They're very clear, it's not about changing the name but trying to get clarity and some suggestions on better ways to get the word out and what people might gravitate to.

Demetricus Johnson: That's another area of opportunity for us. We have the information on our website and our case managers are aware of the program as well. We may have customers coming in with those challenges and our case managers work with them individually. I will say this, child support is moving toward using more technology. Many of our states are using mobile applications. As we continue to use mobile applications, maybe adding additional components around outreach could be beneficial to everyone involved.

Participant: I'm a policy and regulations person. Thinking about the "sandbox" concept of coming together and sharing the toys, I would be interested in hearing suggestions on how you made that happen.

Participant: I'm Sheryl Campbell-Street, Deputy Commissioner for DHS. We started internally first. We have several programs serving approximately two million Tennesseans each year. Child support is our second largest program followed by SNAP. We made a conscious decision within our department that we were one DHS. The reality is we are seeing the exact same person just coming through a different door. We wanted to say, "We're one DHS. How are we going to learn about each other's programs from an internal standpoint?" Therefore, if I'm seeing someone in a





child support office and they also have a disability, I can speak eloquently about the VR program or I can say, "SNAP has this." We developed training programs for our staff, and then cross-trained people. We have invested a lot of time in training and leadership academies for our internal staff and have called the feds for guidance. We have over 30 partners we do this work with, so it's not about being the one stop answer for everything, but we had to first learn about ourselves, and had to break down silos. We have so many programs under one federal umbrella with separate regulations.

Patti Wood: I'll just add that for the child support programs we wanted to fund under TANF, we called a meeting and Karen said, "Okay tell us about these programs. Let's see if it can fit." We did our sales pitch and she said, "Great, send me the contract." We worked together to make sure that child support needs were being met, and we were meeting our needs for the two-generation approach and the fatherhood vision.

Participant: My name is Jordan from Fathers Building Futures in Denver, Colorado. We're having issues with getting in contact with the child support office to build some of these programs. What are some of the first steps I should take in actually approaching the child support office to create programs like PAC so we can help some of these dads?

John Hurst: The best thing you can do is find out who the decision maker or the coordinator is for the outreach programs in your state. In Georgia, that would be me. I'm Deputy Director over operations, which includes our outreach program.

Patti Wood: A lot of states have great information on their websites, or call the local child support office and say, "I would like to speak with someone at the state level about these programs."

Participant: Does CCAP fall under that same kind of deadline? In Denver a lot of fathers are actually placed on child support because of CCAP and then TANF. Many of the moms fill out the registration for CCAP, and if they don't put the dad on there, or if they don't allow the dad to know that they're filling out the CCAP, then they'll automatically put him on child support based on CCAP and what she's receiving.

John Hurst: Colorado is county based so contact the county child support agency and you're probably going to get a little bit of federal service.

Participant: My name is Kathy Soplin, Tennessee. Are you also engaged with your mothers' employment security department? I know that's been a barrier for some states that are looking to use TANF dollars for child support.





Karen Walker: By default, we are working well together, unlike in the past, but there are still some kinks that we have to work out. They have those outcomes as you said that impact their funding.

Kiska Dennis-Gear: Here in Tennessee we were fortunate with our last administration, under Bill Haslam. He set a goal for Tennessee that we were going to be number one in the Southwest for new jobs. We accomplished that. The one thing that Haslam established, and Governor Lee is carrying forward, is that all of the heads of our department have to talk to each other. It was not a choice whether we had a combined state plan or a unified, they said, "We're going to do this together." We have an amazing working relationship with our Department of Labor and Workforce as well as ECD, Economic and Community Development. It's more than just one DHS, it's one Tennessee. We have an amazing relationship with them.

Patti Wood: What we went through to become one DHS really prepared us to participate in the WIOA state plan. If we weren't talking to each other in programs, how were we going to talk to the other departments? It was a good foundation for starting with the WIOA.

Participant: We have a strong communication with Department of Labor. We participate in monthly or quarterly meetings with them. We share our policy; they share their policy. We advise them to come to our meetings that we have where we bring all of our partners together. We keep the communication open.

Patti Wood: Our TCSEPP coordinators are co-located in the career centers, in the counties that they serve.

Participant: This is to Patti. I manage the child support program in Missouri. We've had a lot of success building into urban areas in St. Louis and Kansas City, but limited success in the rural areas. Can you give us some strategies on how you go about working with those counties within your budget? Our main problem is in order to reach them, it costs money, and there aren't many participants in those counties. I think Clark county was one that you mentioned.

Patti Wood: I'll speak to Clark county. To get into the TCSEPP program it is often court ordered. They can also be self-referred, or someone can refer them, but a lot of times they're in front of the court. They have a contempt petition pending, and the court says, "Okay we can move forward, or we have this program that you can go into." Then they are connected with our TCSEPP program. They are amazing; they help them navigate their issues. If they need the coordinator to help them with anything, the TCSEPP team goes with them. That's the strategy,





meeting people where they're at. Not referring them to services; but because it's so overwhelming, helping them navigate those services.

Demetricus Johnson: I want to thank everybody for joining us and also the leadership in the states.



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