



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
ADMINISTRATION FOR  
**CHILDREN & FAMILIES**



**Office of Family Assistance  
Strategies to Assist Noncustodial Parents in Improving Economic Well-Being  
Webinar Transcript  
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2:00 p.m. Eastern Time**

**Presenters:**

- **James Butler, Office of Family Assistance, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**
- **Joan Schatz, TANF, North Dakota Department of Human Services**
- **Terry Peterson, Child Support, North Dakota Department of Human Services**
- **Pat Anderson, Job Service North Dakota**
- **Melissa Johnson, Kansas Department of Children and Families**
- **Joseph Jones, Jr., Center for Urban Families**
- **Catherine Pitchford, Center for Urban Families**
- **Otis Buckson, Jr., Center for Urban Families**
- **Steve McLaine, OFA Peer Technical Assistance Network**
- **Emily Appel-Newby, OFA Peer Technical Assistance Network**

**Operator:** Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for standing by. Welcome to the Strategies to Assist Noncustodial Parents in Improving Economic Well-Being webinar. During the presentation, all participants will be in a listen-only mode. If at any time during the conference you need to reach an operator, please press Star 0. As a reminder, this conference is being recorded Wednesday, October 15, 2014. I would like to turn the conference over to Steve McLaine. Please go ahead, sir.

**Steve McLaine:** Thanks, Melody, and thank you to all of you for your participation. We would like you to be active participants, so to submit questions during the session, please use the chat box in the lower left corner of your screen. To ask a question, you just type into the text messaging box and then press "Send." We will collect all of the questions during the presentations and then submit them to the presenters at the close of the webinar during the Q&A session. Thank you again for participating, and for some



introductory remarks, I'm going to turn it over to James Butler, Self-Sufficiency Program Specialist in the Office of Family Assistance.

James Butler:

Hello, everyone, and welcome to today's webinar on strategies to assist noncustodial parents in improving economic well-being. This webinar, as mentioned already, is being sponsored by the Office of Family Assistance Self-Sufficiency Branch here in Washington, D.C., and we thank you for taking time out of your schedules to join us today. In a few moments, you'll hear from a few people who are doing some really innovative work in their States around this topic.

But first, I'd like to give you a little bit of background information about noncustodial parents, who they are as a group, and what challenges they may face. According to Census, in 2009, about 14 million parents were raising children while the other parent lived elsewhere. Since about 82% of custodial parents are mothers, we can infer that about 80% of noncustodial parents are fathers.

Throughout the presentations, you -- we may use the term "noncustodial parent" and "father" interchangeably. Estimates suggest that about a quarter of all fathers in the U.S. or 12 to 14 million men have children with whom they do not live. Noncustodial fathers also experience disadvantage in the labor market. One-third of noncustodial fathers dropped out of high school, while another third hold only a high school diploma or GED.

It's interesting to note that almost 90% of the fathers whose children receive TANF work, but they are less likely to have full-year full-time employment and earn less than other fathers. When fathers lack



employment, the pressure to cover basic needs and the blow to their self-image as providers can negatively affect their ability to parent. Many noncustodial fathers have complicated romantic and family lives as well.

About 40% of noncustodial fathers are married, though not to the mother of their non-residential child. A significant portion has children by more than one woman and may live with some children and not with others. This multiple partner fertility complicates their ability to participate in their children's lives, of course, emotionally and financially. Research, however, has suggested that noncustodial fathers may become more involved in their children's lives when their employment situation improves.

Because of the TANF program's emphasis on promoting job preparation and work for both parents, it is permissible for State and local TANF programs to use funds to serve noncustodial parents. And while many States include initiatives to engage both parents in their TANF State plans, many struggle to find effective ways to do so. So our hope during today's webinar is to give you some ideas about how you can start engaging and serving noncustodial parents of children on your caseload.

We have presenters from three States with us today -- North Dakota, Kansas, and Maryland -- each with different models for engaging noncustodial parents and helping them achieve their personal goals. Today, we're going to try something a little different. We want to give you an opportunity to vote on topics for each presenter to give some additional details on after their 15-minute presentation ends. So after each presenter, you will see a poll set up three questions that you can choose from.



Whichever question you pick, we will have the presenter to respond to later on towards the end of the presentation. You can also do a full Q&A session. You can submit your questions to be answered as Steve mentioned earlier during the sessions or throughout the webinar using the question and answer panel on your WebEx screen. If by chance your question is for a specific speaker, please be sure to specify that on your question.

What I'd like to do now is start out by introducing our first group who will provide you some information today. That will be North Dakota PRIDE. PRIDE stands for **P**arental **R**esponsibility Initiative for the **D**evelopment of **E**mployment. PRIDE is a partnership between North Dakota's Department of Human Services, Job Service North Dakota, and the Child Support Enforcement Division. And we have speakers representing each of those agencies.

Joan Schatz has been with the North Dakota Department of Human Services for four years, and currently serves as the TANF program administrator. Prior to joining the department, she was an eligibility worker at the county level for over 20 years, where she determined eligibility for systems programs with a primary caseload of TANF individuals.

Terry Peterson, also joining her as part of this presentation, has been with Child Support Program for 30 years and currently serves as the Assistant Director for Regional Operations and the Quality Assurance Manager. In her quality assurance role, she plays a key part in assessing the impact that the PRIDE program has on payment of child support.



Pat Anderson, also joining as part of the team, has worked for the State of North Dakota for 18 years. She has been a program administrator with Job Service North Dakota for 5 years, which includes administering the Workforce Investment Act and other programs. In addition, she has been managing the PRIDE program for three years. So without further ado, I will turn it over to Joan Schatz. Joan, you have the floor.

Joan Schatz:

Thank you. As Mr. Butler stated, our PRIDE program is a collaborative effort between TANF program, Child Support unit, Job Service -- and it was initially started with the three departments along with the District Court. It was implemented in April of 2005 to address non-payment of child support resulting from the unemployment or underemployment of the noncustodial parent.

The project was later expanded in 2006 to include another location. The project expanded statewide in 2009; through a request for proposal, the Client Services were awarded to Job Service North Dakota. The PRIDE project was modeled after our TANF Jobs Opportunity and Basic Skills program in providing case management, job skills improvement, and job placement to help noncustodial parents obtain or improve their employment in order to pay child support.

The Child Support unit makes referrals of noncustodial parents for whom they may feel will benefit from the project. TANF's involvement is in providing funding for client services and supportive services. The supportive services are provided to alleviate the initial burden of barriers to employment. The supportive services provided to our PRIDE



participants are similar to the supportive services of our TANF individuals.

Job Service involvement may provide one-on-one assistance to underemployed or unemployed noncustodial parents who are delinquent in the payment of their child support obligations. This is accomplished through case management services provided by PRIDE coordinators. Job ready individuals are placed in monitored job search activities. The PRIDE coordinator looks for employment openings which are applicable to the individual. The PRIDE coordinator determines if supportive services are needed to secure employment. At this point, I'm going to turn the presentation over to Terry.

Terry Peterson:

All right -- for obligors -- in other words, our noncustodial parents who owe child support in four of these cases can be referred to the PRIDE program, and referrals can originate from one of two sources: one, of course, during the contempt hearing for non-payment of child support, a court might order that an obligor work with the PRIDE program, or another source of referrals would be a child support worker and an obligor might decide together that the PRIDE program could be helpful and the obligor voluntarily agrees to begin working with the program.

For court-ordered referrals, in some jurisdictions the PRIDE coordinator attends the child support contempt hearings and immediately following the hearing will talk to the obligor briefly and set up a time to meet. In other jurisdictions and when the PRIDE coordinator cannot attend for some other reason, the obligor who is ordered to participate in the program must contact Job Service within seven days.



For a child support referral, the worker and the obligor might reach consensus that it would be useful for the obligor to receive PRIDE services. This collaborative agreement happens in the natural course of business of the child support worker working with the obligor in efforts to collect the child support that's due, and just like with the court referrals, the goal is for contact between that PRIDE coordinator and that obligor to occur within seven days.

Now whether the referral to PRIDE is a court-mandated referral -- in other words, whether it's a judicial referral or whether it's a referral from the Child Support program, and we refer to those as an administrative referral, the actual process of referring the individual to PRIDE is exactly the same. What happens is, a child support worker enters referral data into the Child Support's automated system.

Our system is called FACES. This then causes an e-mail to be sent to the PRIDE coordinator providing notification of the referral. After that e-mail is received, then the PRIDE worker accesses FACES and retrieves the referral details needed to begin working. Now sometimes following a referral, all goes well and the obligor participates fully in the PRIDE program. Other times, obligors are noncompliant.

If participation in PRIDE was court-mandated, but the obligor is noncompliant, the obligor may need to appear before the court to explain the noncompliance. Depending on the case specifics, a warrant for arrest might be issued and when picked up is brought back to court. Other times, Child Support will request another contempt hearing and the order -- the obligor will be ordered to appear before the court to explain the noncompliance.



And still in other situations, when an obligor is noncompliant with PRIDE but does secure employment on his or her own and actually pays the child support that is due, in those situations bringing the obligor back to court to explain the noncompliance with the PRIDE program serves little practical purpose and it does take up court time and thus is not brought back to court. Now I'm going to turn it over to Pat from Job Service.

Pat Anderson:

During the initial meeting with the PRIDE coordinator, the obligor, and we call -- we refer to them as clients when they're in our Job Service office -- receives an orientation to the PRIDE program which includes information related to employment, general information on supportive services, what the responsibilities, rights, and duties of the participants are, and plans to transition to employment.

Everyone referred to PRIDE is expected to complete an assessment. The individual skills, talents, training, work history, and capabilities are assessed so the PRIDE coordinator can identify appropriate employment or training opportunities. The assessment is then used to develop an employment plan. An employment goal is established, and the plan outlines how the client will reach that employment goal.

The PRIDE application is entered into our system, online system, which is -- if you're familiar with Virtual OneStop -- the employment plan then includes the training or work search plan, the service strategies which are provided by the PRIDE coordinator, and they say who they may refer to, what other agencies might be able to help that particular individual, and the supportive services that are needed to meet the employment goal.





Supportive services include things like housing or shelter, if they need things like clothing or they even need to pay a utility bill, that's considered part of job readiness. License or exam fees, relocation assistance, tools for employment, transportation assistance -- excuse me, and some vehicle repair and insurance. PRIDE coordinator and the client both sign the employment plan, so the participant has to agree to the plan and say, "Yes, this is what I will do."

If occupational training is needed, a client may be referred to a program such as Workforce Investment or WIA to be co-enrolled, and then training may be provided through that program. If employed, the individual is placed in worktrack, which is unsubsidized employment, for six months. If they do not become employed, they are placed in a non-worktrack, and the PRIDE coordinator provides services -- referral support services -- to help them overcome the employment barriers while they search for work.

Even though there are over 26,000 job openings in North Dakota, many of those jobs require a certain skill set, credentials, a positive work history, or a clean record to secure the position. And some PRIDE clients do not meet the criteria to become employed. If they have an offender status, depending on the offense and the requirements of the job openings, some individuals may be excluded.

If substance -- excuse me, I have a dry throat -- if substance abuse is a current issue, the client may be referred to an alcohol or drug evaluation for -- for an alcohol or drug evaluation. If the person has lost their driver's license due to a DUI or driving under the influence, the job



options are extremely limited. Truck drivers are in demand in North Dakota, but if a person cannot drive to work or drive company vehicles, options are very limited.

And individuals with disabilities also have limited job options, as do individuals without a high school diploma or GED. So we do have some success or we do know -- we track the number of participants in State fiscal year 2014. There were 718 individuals referred to PRIDE. In the first 7 months of 2014, an average of 218 individuals were enrolled each month, and an average of 259 individuals were served by the PRIDE program each month.

And an indicator of success, and that worktrack which I explained briefly is, you know, it's a tracking mechanism, so once the person becomes employed if they're in unsubsidized employment, they're tracked for a six-month period. If they retain employment for the six months, they are exited from PRIDE with a successful completion code. And another indicator of success is we track wages and we look at people who are employed.

We look at the quarter prior to the PRIDE enrollment, and then we look at the first and second quarter after they exit the PRIDE program to get these numbers. So in the first and second quarters of 2013, 263 people exited and 138 of them had a wage increase. So the average increase was about almost \$3,000 for those quarters. The only thing that we have trouble with when we look at wages is we can't include people with jobs in other States or if they're self-employed. Okay. And now I will turn it back to Terry.



Terry Peterson:

Okay. One of the measures we use to determine the successfulness of PRIDE is the payment of child support. So for all of the obligors referred to PRIDE, in our program in calendar year 2013, we found that there was a 35% increase in the amount of child support paid and a 34% increase in the frequency of the child support payments. And I -- as I mentioned on an earlier slide when we talked about compliance, not all obligors that are referred are compliant.

Some obligors in fact don't even show up for the first appointment with the PRIDE coordinator, and thus, they're never even formally enrolled in the PRIDE program, and we make that distinction between referral and enrollment, but for those who are referred and at least get as far as being enrolled in the program, we found that there was a 37% increase in the amount of child support paid, and a 43% increase in the frequency of the child support payments.

So in other words, if the PRIDE coordinator is able to actually work with the obligor, even more positive results are achieved for the child support payments. To determine these increases, what we did is, we compared what happened with the child support payments during the six months immediately before and the six months immediately after the referral, and then when we're evaluating the effect on the enrollment, we looked at six months before and six months after enrollment.

For analyzing the frequency of payments, multiple payments received in a single month were summed and considered as one payment. That ensures the results aren't artificially increased or decreased due to the pay cycles of obligors for those where we are receiving income withholding payments, and in particular we get some employers that pay weekly and



so if we would count those as four instead of one, that would skew the results.

In assessing the tool -- when we assess the total child support paid, only payments that can be reasonably attributable to the work of the PRIDE program are considered. For example, if we seize the bank account or if we offset a tax refund, we ignore those collections in the analysis and instead, we just took into consideration payments that were received directly from the obligor, and those resulting from income withholding orders.

We thought that would give our best assessment of the change in the child support payments. Now while a 30-plus percent increase is quite impressive, it is particularly impressive when recognizing that overall, child support collections in North Dakota increased a comparative 2.2% when looking at calendar years 2013 and 2012. Now we're going to turn it over to Joan to talk about some of the challenges with the program.

Joan Schatz:

Some of the challenges that were faced upfront and continue to be challenges is the number of individuals who are referred versus the number enrolled. Some individuals do not enroll as they obtain employment prior to enrollment. Identifying employment barriers that were common or maybe unique to a specific situation and how those could be resolved, items such as transportation, an individual who does not have a driver's license, vehicle, insured vehicle, et cetera, lack of communication tools to communicate with an employer such as a telephone, housing, substance abuse, mental illness, criminal background.



Evaluation tools since the project was implemented -- evaluation tools have been modified and added. For example, we want to analyze the data for the supportive services to help identify if the needs of the individual are being met -- to use that as a resource for future supportive service changes or what we could do better. At this point I'm going to turn it back over to Emily.

Emily Appel-Newby: Thanks so much, Joan, Terry, and Pat for your wonderful presentation. Just so everyone on the phone knows, they're -- the contact information for our three speakers from North Dakota are included in the slides which will be posted along with the transcript and an audio recording to the Peer TA Web site in the coming weeks after the webinar.

We are going to transition over to that audience poll to give you a chance to vote on an issue that you might like to hear a little bit more about from the speakers we have from North Dakota. So three questions that may be of interest to you that you can vote on that you'd like to hear them give a couple more minutes' talking points about -- the first one is: "How did you establish that you were allowed to share participant data between your agencies?"

The second one is: "What precipitated the expansion of PRIDE to the rest of the State in 2009?" The third question is: "How is the PRIDE program coordinator's position funded?" So now I'm going to open up a poll on your screen where you can click on which result you would like to -- which question you would like to have them answer in more detail. And Steve, does it look like the poll is being presented correctly, or maybe if I'm doing something wrong?



Steve McLaine: Let me check, one second.

Emily Appel-Newby: All right, well now, I see -- it looks like -- now it looks like a poll and we're starting to get the results in. Thank you so much for that. I'm not sure what I messed up, but thank you for that. We'll give it a couple more seconds here for people to respond about what it is that they are interested in hearing more about in the short run here.

Okay. It looks like the topics are of a lot of interest -- it looks like the topics are actually pretty much of equal interest among people so we'll hold onto some of the other ones for our Q&A session at the end, but just in the short term now, Joan and your team, could one of you speak to the funding for the program coordinator for the PRIDE program?

Joan Schatz: The PRIDE program coordinator's positions are funded through the TANF plan.

Emily Appel-Newby: Okay, wonderful, and with that, I will turn it over to James to introduce the presenters -- the presenter from Kansas.

James Butler: Thanks again, Pat, Carol, and Terry, and as Emily just mentioned, we will now hear from Kansas -- specifically Melissa Johnson -- about the Kansas Child Support Savings Initiative. A little bit about Melissa: she is a graduate of Kansas State University and Washington University School of Law. In September of 2006, she began working for the Department for Children and Families as a child support establishment attorney.

A few short years ago, specifically in September of 2011, she accepted the position as senior attorney in Child Support Services Central Office



and was recently promoted in 2012 to Deputy Director. Melissa, you have the floor.

Melissa Johnson: Thank you so much. We started back in the fall of 2011 having a discussion on what the child support community in our State could do as far as revamping our arrears compromise, our arrears forgiveness programs that we currently had in place for noncustodial parents. There had to be a way that we could do something that would provide the benefit of arrears reductions for noncustodial parents but also would provide also a benefit -- a great benefit to the children that we serve as well.

That fall, our governor in the State of Kansas had a task force on reducing childhood poverty, and I don't think it's probably any surprise that education's one of the greatest ways to reduce poverty for children. The research shows that if a child has a savings account that has between \$1 and \$500 that that child is over 4 ½ times more likely to graduate from college than a child that would have no savings account.

So we started conversations with our State treasurer's office in the fall of 2011 about whether we could partner with them because they administered the 529 higher education savings funds for the State of Kansas, so that we could offer some type of an incentive for our noncustodial parents to be saving for their children's higher education, while also possibly reducing their burden of their child support debt.

And all of the logistics and everything was finally tuned and we launched the program in June of 2013 so that we offered to our noncustodial parents that had arrears owed to the State of Kansas, and the offer to them



was for every \$1 that they would deposit into the child's savings account, we would write off \$2 of State-owed arrears. And the arrears for child support would be due only to the State, because the child had been on TANF or that child had been in foster care or we had a judgment for Medicaid to repay the birth expenses for that child.

So we were dealing with a lot of the children that have been in poverty situations within the State of Kansas. So as we moved forward, we had to establish set guidelines. The child still had to be a minor. We had some concerns that we didn't want noncustodial parents to be able to deposit the money into the 529 account but not pay their current child support obligations. So the core criteria -- they still had to meet their current support obligation.

The child still needed that monthly support. If, for whatever reason, the child support obligation would only be an arrears-only, there was no current amount that was due, it was just past due, they would only have to pay \$1 through our payment center in order to get this two-for-one credit for every \$1 of their deposit. That letter that launched in February of 2013 -- it was just a single letter that we sent to the noncustodial parents, and we sent it out to about 6,600 of them -- we set up the account so that the State of Kansas was the account owner.

And one of the benefits about this would be that the noncustodial parents in our caseload a lot of times don't believe that the custodial parent uses their child support for quite the things that they think they should, and so neither the custodial parent nor the noncustodial parent has any control to withdraw the funds once they're placed into this 529 account -- only the





child, the beneficiary, can come in and ask for the withdrawal of the funds.

We set it up so that at age 25 if the child has not gone on to any higher education, the child can ask for the withdrawal of the funds, and any tax penalties will just come out of the withdrawal. Now after we launched this in June of 2013, it was again only targeted to a small group of noncustodial parents, and they only owed arrears for the State of Kansas. So when you start thinking about, “What else can I do?”, we had a whole population of noncustodial parents that owed arrears to the custodial parent, the mom or maybe even a dad, the custodian of the child at the moment.

So we started searching for what we could do and how we could reach a broader audience. In December of 2013, we received a grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation that basically allowed us to do more publicity and focus groups to help determine what we need to do to reach people. Then in May of 2014, we just received a grant from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, and it is what is providing us the opportunity to reach those custodial parent arrears.

So under the Kellogg grant, we have \$500,000 of matching funds that we can match, so every dollar that the noncustodial parent will put into the 529 savings account, those matching Kellogg Foundation grant funds will actually go to our -- instead of matching and going into the 529 account, the match will go through our payment center so it'll get distributed out as an arrears payment, so in those -- in that portion of it, the custodial parent will get their arrears payment. The noncustodial parent will get the debt reduction, and the child will have the savings account.



Through the use of some of these grant funds, we were able to launch a commercial in August and we have targeted mailers that are going to be going out in the next 30 days. A portion of the requirements with the Kellogg grant funding is that we have to have somebody come in to handle research and evaluation. We didn't have that set up at the start when we launched a year ago. It was simply just an Excel spreadsheet we've been using to track everything.

So we're now working with NDRC who has received a grant to handle the research and evaluation. The custodial parent arrears portion has not launched yet. It goes live -- we're going to do a pilot of 1,000 people in November, and then we'll roll out the full portion of it in early 2015, so we're anxious to get that done so we can see some results on the custodial arrears. Where we're at as of right now, we have -- at the end of September -- 66 child 529 savings accounts have been opened.

And in that roughly, what, about 15 months, these noncustodial parents have invested over \$23,000 for their children's higher education, and we've managed to reduce -- actually, I guess it's over \$26,000 that they've invested -- and we've managed to reduce the amount of debt they owe to the State of Kansas by over \$52,000. A lot of times, I get the question of "Why would health and human services agencies get involved in this? Why is this child support?"

And the best example I can give is, we had one gentleman who called in, and he was needing help -- he had the children back in his care so it was just an arrears amount that he owed to the State of Kansas, and we had received an offset from a tax refund, and he was needing some of those



funds. We took over \$4,000, and he was needing \$1,600 of it so that his children and he would not get evicted. By having him fill out an affidavit we were able to route that refund over to the 529 account for his two children.

So both his children got over \$900 in their accounts and he got a refund of \$1,900, and we were able to do that because that \$4,000 and change, that tax off that we had taken, it paid his case in full, but by giving him the two-for-one credit and using the 529 accounts, he paid his account off in half the amount of money. So that gentleman, you know, really avoided needing to come in to ask for additional assistance or being evicted and not having a home for him and his children.

I think that's a pretty clear indication of why the health and human service agencies get involved in initiatives such as this, because it can be such a preventative measure of helping the child and the noncustodial parent at the same time. And I think with that, I'm ready for the polling question.

Emily Appel-Newby: Great. Thanks so much, Melissa. Again, Melissa's contact information is here in case you have any more questions after we wrap up, but the poll questions for us for today -- the choices are as follows: the first one -- "What percentage of noncustodial parents with arrears have you been able to reach, and how would you explain it?" Number two is: "How are you building the program to be sustainable beyond the grant funding?"

And number three is: "What other services do you provide to participants to keep them engaged?" And it looks like we have -- the poll is open now. Okay. It looks like our presentation -- our responses have leveled



off, so it looks like the question that people were most interested in was: “How are you building the program to be sustainable beyond the grant funding that you’re receiving now?”

Melissa Johnson:

That’s the question that I’m probably most interested in as well. You know, we started this program focusing just on the forgiveness of State arrears, and that had no grant funding, no outside funding, so obviously that portion of the program can continue on indefinitely because we’re still going to have State arrears, we’re still going to have TANF and foster care happening for our children that is accruing those State arrears.

The custodial arrears portion -- those conversations on, and brainstorming ideas on how we’re going to make that portion sustainable beyond the grant funds are still continuing. We’re excited that we have the opportunity to have the research and evaluation to show us the propensity of whether the noncustodial parents pay their child support more frequently, whether they were more involved in their children’s lives after they started this, the impact on the children, and their relationship with that noncustodial parent – even, I think, the impact between the custodial and noncustodial parent when -- knowing that that noncustodial parent is saving for the child’s further education.

We’re hopeful that the research and evaluation from that project will make it such that other entities will be interested in it. Maybe there will be additional sources of funding that may come available. There’s a lot of growth in the child savings movement right now. There’s operations such as -- there’s one called the One-to-One Fund that basically takes donations from individuals and businesses and uses it as a match to match other child -- the deposits in other child savings programs.



So we're not ruling out any type of optional funding that may come along in the future. We're open to whatever ideas and things may come along. Those two grants that we received kind of happened out of the blue, and so we're just plugging along and hoping that we'll find a way to keep it going.

Emily Appel-Newby: That's wonderful. Thanks, Melissa. James, would you like to introduce the speakers from Maryland?

James Butler: Yes, and thanks again, Melissa. So now we're going to hear from Maryland -- a team from the Center for Urban Families. Just a little bit about the Center for Urban Families: it is a nonprofit service organization in Baltimore, Maryland, established to empower low-income families by enhancing both the ability of women and men to contribute to their families as wage earners and of men to fulfill their roles as fathers.

We have three staff joining us from the Center for Urban Families today. First is Mr. Joseph Jones, Jr., who is the founder for the Center for Urban Families. Prior to founding the Center for Urban Families, he directed the men's services program for the Baltimore Healthy Start Initiative and developed the Baltimore affiliate of the STRIVE Employment Services program. Joe is also recognized as a national leader in workforce, fatherhood, and family services programming. And he currently serves on President Obama's Task Force on Fatherhood and Healthy Families.

Joining him is Mr. Otis Buckson, Jr. He is an Oregon State University alum, educator, advocate for at-risk youth, and a program manager of Children And Family Service programs at the Center For Urban Families.



Over his professional career, he has worked to create professional development tools and healthy relationship skill building for clients. His experience has allowed him to work with an array of students which included learners and at-risk teens.

Finishing up that team is Catherine Pitchford, who joined the Center for Urban Families as an intake specialist about seven years ago. She has since led the creation of a new department titled Client Services, which specializes in assisting clients in reducing barriers in order to support them changing their paths.

Catherine graduated with honors from Baltimore City Community College with an Associate's Degree and is now pursuing her bachelor's degree in human services administration from the University of Baltimore. So Joe, I will turn it over to you to start off the conversation.

Joseph Jones, Jr.:

Great, good afternoon, everybody, and almost afternoon for those folks who may be on from the west coast. Today, my team and I are going to talk a little bit about a new -- our newest initiative, our Couples Advancing Together program. We'll talk a little bit about how we got there and some of the nuances. Cathy will give you a little bit of an overview and see how CAT fits into the overall integrated strategies model for the Center.

And Otis will give you specific information about the CAT model itself. Relative to CAT, in 2011, I had an opportunity to be invited to give a policy talk at Johns Hopkins University to a group of business and civic leaders. In the audience was one of our State delegates, Delegate Sandy Rosenberg.



And during my presentation, I tried to make the case that State TANF agencies have a very difficult time being able to provide services to dads of children born to women who apply for public benefits -- and I'm particularly talking about the subset of those women who indicate at the time of the application that they're still in a romantic relationship with the father of their child or children.

And I said it really didn't make a lot of sense to not necessarily engage the guy with the exception of paternity establishment and child support, and that we should work to change that paradigm so that States have the resources, tools, and influence to change the way in which dads are not as easily engaged at the time that a mom applies for benefits.

That led to Delegate Rosenberg drawing interest in this conversation, and together we worked on drafting a bill that he introduced in the Maryland State legislature in 2012. That bill did not pass either chamber in 2012. We continued to work with our legislature. In 2013, Delegate Rosenberg reintroduced the bill. It passed both chambers, and in May of 2013, Governor O'Malley signed the bill into law.

This law requires the Department of Human Resources -- and in this case, for the State of Maryland -- that means the three key agencies under the direction of the Secretary of the HR -- being the TANF program, the Child Support program, and the Family Investment program -- would be required to work in partnership with the Center for Urban Families to pilot a systems change model that would be a hybrid to work with moms and dads who indicate at the time that the mom applies for public benefits



that they're in a romantic relationship. And this is a component of our integrated services delivery model. Cathy?

Catherine Pitchford: In our integrated delivery service model, we conduct a grassroots outreach to do an intensive interview process, and we give a battery of assessments to determine eligibility, and that eligibility will go into our core program, which is Baltimore Responsible Fatherhood Project, the Workforce Development, and our Couples Advancing Together. We also use intensive case management, supportive services case management to reduce the barriers.

And one of the key issues faced by the male population is the large amount of arrearage that males face and as such we have partnered with the Office of Child Support to design the R.O.L.E. program. But again, the program that we want to highlight today is the Couples Advancing Together model, based on these -- trying to get these recipients off public benefits.

Joseph Jones, Jr.: Thanks, Cathy. So the CAT program is designed to enhance relationship skills. We have a curriculum -- the blueprint that guides that stability and economic success which is used to help couples apply relationship skills with a cohort model of between 8 to 12 couples each, and Otis will talk more about that. It is designed to create family-friendly career goals and provide employer support so that both moms and dads can get into the labor market simultaneously or at the appropriate time depending on how they are assessed and the stages of whether or not someone is pregnant. It's also to increase financial literacy and to create a family self-sufficiency plan.





But the key driver to us to be able to change the system is the establishment of our peer strategy group. The peer strategy group is comprised of a group of stakeholders which includes representatives from the TANF Child Support and Family Investment programs, the State legislature, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, our evaluation partner BCT Partners -- and it's facilitated by a consultant that we have contracted with to be a documentarian, as well as to make sure that the tasks we identify that need to be put forward are monitored on a monthly basis, and we come back to determine whether or not we've made progress with those particular goals.

Changing the culture of the agency that has been historically recognized -- that has not been historically recognizing the father in the child support equation -- is a key driver of our discussions relative to changing the system, building trust, marketing and recruiting TANF customers are also a part of the driving force behind our peer strategy group, and the program refinement systems change is what we ultimately want to hold ourselves accountable for.

Yes, it is a program that service is being delivered to TANF beneficiaries. However, the primary driver of this model is to change the system, so that when moms apply for public benefits and she indicates that she's still in a romantic relationship with the father of her children, that the system engages the guy at the time of application, and we create the case management support and the cohort curriculum support that will allow the couple to move simultaneously up through and off of the TANF program as a couple, as opposed to mom receiving Welfare-to-Work support and the dad simply be given a debt or a child support equation.



Otis Buckson, Jr.: So I'm going to talk about the CAT model itself. Some of the programmatic goals -- the main focus is that we want the families to achieve family stability and economic success, and how we do that is we use a curriculum developed by the Center called the Blueprint, which is the guide to family stability and economic success, and within that blueprint are several activities and goals as it relates to raising your children and working together as a couple.

And so they set goals as it relates to finances, education, and career advancement. And also one of our goals is to increase financial stability. So we pull that credit report, we talk about what is credit, how is it affected by delinquencies and things of that nature? And one of the things that we do with the couples, each couple, is they create what we call a family self-sufficiency plan, and in that plan is lists of goals as it relates to those things I mentioned prior.

So the couples know what path they're on as it relates to finances and their employment and their education. And another thing that we're working on is policies -- policy reform goals -- because like Mr. Jones said, we want to increase the fathers' participation at the beginning of the process opposed to after they have been set amounts for them to pay child support.

And another major goal that's included in the bill -- in this House Bill 333 -- is that we develop a department referral process with other local and State agencies so couples may jointly have access to our programs and services which includes some of the programs discussed earlier, Workforce Development and particularly here, Couples Advancing Together.



So the CAT model is based -- it's a six-week model over 12 sessions and it occurs on Tuesdays and Thursdays. We provide door-to-door transportation to and from the center. We provide child care on the premises for the families so they can bring their children, and because it's on a school night in the evening, we provide catered meals for all of the families, and we give them access to case management, and at the completion there's a two-year follow-up.

So the eligibility requirements for the couples: first of all, they must currently be receiving benefits from the Maryland Department of Social Services. They must be in a committed relationship raising a child in common, and in between the ages of 18 and 36 years of age. Some of the facts -- that from the CAT project, the CAT model became operational June of 2014. Our goal is to service 100 couples by June 2015, and the program is designed to serve 8 to 10 couples per cohort, and thus far we've serviced 48 couples enrolled, 27 couples have completed, and ten individuals have received employment during or post-program completion.

Joseph Jones, Jr.:

I mentioned before some of our key partners, and I won't regurgitate them here, other than, on your right hand side of this slide, you'll see under employer partners, our key employer partners are the hospitals in the Baltimore area, including those we work with who have become ex-offender friendly, who open up their hiring practices to allow folks with criminal records to actually get nonclinical positions within a hospital.

The building trade is another major industry for us, as well as hospitality, as three examples of our key employer partners. Funding sources for the



CAT model include the Department of Human Resources, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, more recently the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, the Center for Urban Families who's got some skin in the game, and private donors.

Catherine Pitchford: And as you can see, we face -- there are challenges we face with working with TANF agencies, but the peer strategy group works together to address those challenges, and just say, for instance, the marketing recruiting that we received is one of our -- was one of our challenges, and with the CAT peer learning sessions, we definitely worked and created the position where we could have a CAT participant as in current be -- to work with the front line staff in the local TANF offices to recruit for potential recipients, which is a great part of the program that they did that.

Otis Buckson, Jr.: And ideally, what this allows us -- this CAT model allows us to do is to prevent young men from accruing child support, if we can work with closer to the front end at the time that the mom applies for public benefits, and that concludes our presentation.

Emily Appel-Newby: Great. Thank you so much. So the poll questions that we have lined up for the Center for Urban Families for the audience to choose from. The first one is: "Of the 48 couples in the program, what percentage owe child custody arrears?" The second one being: "How are you building the program to be sustainable beyond your current grant funding?", and the third one being: "What services do you offer to clients to help them increase their financial literacy, which is one of the program's stated goals?"



So the poll is now open for the audience to vote on which of those questions they would like to hear more about from the Center for Urban Families staff. All right, it looks like we've leveled off in terms of our responses, and it's actually pretty close between the two, so Joe, Catherine, and Otis, why don't you tell us a little bit about sustainability and we'll hold the financial literacy questions for later?

Otis Buckson, Jr.: Yes, we've been very, very fortunate with particularly the private foundation community, but I think as many folks on the phones would know -- on the webinar would know -- that's not necessarily a sustainability structure, so we've begun to engage a group called Sage Policy Group that does program internal investment and cost benefit analysis. What we want to be able to demonstrate over time -- and keep in mind this program became operational in January of this year, so just a few short months as a pilot -- and what we want to be able to do over time, the first stage was to do a process evaluation which we are just about completed with our evaluation partner, but with Sage Policy Group, what we want to ultimately do is to show the savings to the State. If we can demonstrate that we can save the State dollars by providing services to quote unquote intact families, then some of those savings should be then passed back on to the Center to continue operating the programs to serve additional families.

Emily Appel-Newby: That's a great point. Thank you for that insight and to hear your approach to beginning to establish sustainability for the program. So now we're going to transition into the question and answer section of the presentation. So we have received a couple of questions throughout the presentations so far that we are going to start out with, but of course if you have questions now that you've heard from all three sets of



presenters, go ahead and type it into the chat box that's in the lower left hand side of the screen.

But like I said, we have a good queue, so I'm going to start with some questions that are specific to each program, and then we'll move into maybe some more general questions. So the first question was for North Dakota PRIDE, and the person asked: "What assessment tool do you use for your assessment process?"

Pat Anderson: This is Pat in North Dakota. And the assessment tool that we use at Job Service is a paper form that again looks at all the criteria for work history, work experience, skills, training, any of those kinds of things, and they can use that form or else we also have an assessment built into our -- you know -- online system, and they can complete the assessment online, so they have the option of doing one or the other.

Emily Appel-Newby: Great. Is there a specific name of the assessment that you use, or is it one you created yourself?

Pat Anderson: It's one that we've created ourselves.

Emily Appel-Newby: Okay. Great.

Pat Anderson: And it's also built into our box system if they use the online one.

Emily Appel-Newby: Okay. Great. The second question is for Melissa in Kansas. The question is: "Did the Kansas legislature appropriate money to pay the Federal share of the TANF debt, or did the Federal Government forego any reimbursement for the TANF originally provided?"



Melissa Johnson: Our State government in Kansas has not appropriated any funds for our Child Support Savings Initiative. Back in 1999, the Office of Child Support Enforcement, they issued a PIQ that specifically set out that the State had the authority to settle and take reduced reimbursements on all of this -- on all the debt that had been assigned to the States that would also include what we get reimbursed back to the Federal government. So we do it under the operations of the guidance from that policy document.

Emily Appel-Newby: Okay. That's very helpful context. Thank you. The next question was for the Center for Urban Families, and the question is: "Are there any statistics related to the success of this program? Also what is the cost allocation for the program?"

Joseph Jones, Jr.: Can you repeat that again? Just a little bit of static.

Emily Appel-Newby: Sorry about that. So the first part of the question is: "Are there any statistics related to the success of the program?" The second part: "What is the cost allocation for the program?"

Joseph Jones, Jr.: Yes, so right now it costs approximately \$5,000 to serve each couple that enrolls in Couples Advancing Together. That cost allocation could change depending upon whether or not the individuals participate in another CFUF service. So for example, the couples come to the Couples Advancing Together program in a cohort of 8 to 10 couples.

However, the mom or the dad then is eligible to participate in our Workforce Development program, either individually or as a couple depending on their employment needs, and the dad is eligible to



participate separately in our Responsible Fatherhood program. So the range could be from \$5,000 upwards to \$10,000 depending on whether or not they take advantage of one or multiple programs. Otis?

Otis Buckson, Jr.: And we do have some successes, so we spoke earlier about the number of people that have found employment post the CAT intervention, and so we do capture that information, so there are -- thus far there are 11 individuals because one just got employed today -- became an employee today. So -- and then we also looked at the number of couples -- we have 10 couples where both of the persons have found employment. And we think that's important. That goes into our goal of family-friendly employment for one or both partners.

Emily Appel-Newby: Great. Thank you. Circling back to the North Dakota PRIDE program, we have a question about how the program design impacts outcomes. The question is: "Are there different outcomes depending on whether the PRIDE staff attend court hearings and enroll immediately, versus programs where the noncustodial parent must report to the job center to enroll?"

Terry Peterson: This is Terry with Child Support, and that's not something that we have tracked to date, because sometimes the coordinator will attend regularly, and then in other jurisdictions they don't attend as often, and it might be intermittent depending on their schedule. It may be something that we look at in the future, however, because we are really trying to dig into the question of why we have more people that get referred to the program than are enrolled.





And we're wondering if that would make a difference if that -- if they had that personal contact right after that hearing, and then would they be more likely to follow through and enroll? That's something we don't know, but it's something we may be looking at into the future.

Emily Appel-Newby: Yes, that could be an interesting -- another approach. For the Kansas program, someone asked: "Have you tried other outreach methods to reach noncustodial parents?"

Melissa Johnson: We have. Shockingly, you know, a response of 38 people only responding to 6,600 letters wasn't very encouraging, but at the same time, I'm an attorney and I'm the one that wrote the letter, so the odds of them understanding it were probably pretty slim. We used some of the grant funds that we received from Annie Casey and we had a commercial. The commercial started airing in August, right after the primaries.

I'm not running a ton of commercials right now just because there's some heated elections going on in Kansas, so commercial time is pretty expensive. I anticipate after the elections in November, the commercials will ramp up again. We've also got some radio spots. We've done some community outreach and some community meetings, so we're trying to get the word out.

We also go to prisons routinely. We visit the State and Federal prison and we talk about the arrears compromise programs that we have, this being just one of them, but we talk about all of them that we have with the inmates there and any time we can be out in the communities, we're talking about it.



Emily Appel-Newby: Great. Another question for the Center for Urban Families -- someone asked: “Are families mandated to attend, or do they always attend voluntarily?”

Joseph Jones, Jr.: Yes, it’s strictly a voluntary program. We don’t want to force anyone. We just want to work with those couples who believe they need help and resources. The other side of the equation, the -- all of the couples are screened for domestic violence at intake, and they’re screened individually or separate from one another.

If there’s any indication of any issue with domestic violence, then we work in tandem with the House of Ruth Maryland, which is one of the premier domestic violence advocates in the State. They have worked with us in partnership to design the screening tool, and we also do referrals of clients to them, should they screen at intake or should issues arise post-enrollment.

Emily Appel-Newby: Okay. That makes sense. We have a question that is not targeted at any of the specific projects, but maybe all of you could take turns answering it. The person is interested in learning if any of the programs are working with noncustodial parents before they get behind in their child support payments, either with dads at risk of nonpayment or as a preventative universal approach to noncustodial parents of children receiving TANF support.

Joseph Jones, Jr.: Who was that question to?



Emily Appel-Newby: It's to everyone, so to all of the speakers, so North Dakota, do you want to give us your insights first about any preventative work that you may be doing or may have planned?

Terry Peterson: Sure, I guess I wouldn't -- this is Terry from Child Support. I wouldn't call it a universal approach to trying to do that, but we certainly don't exclude those obligors. Our requirement is that there is an order for child support to be paid. There is no requirement that the obligor has to be behind in the child support that is due.

So if we had a situation where the obligor was dealing -- or the child support worker for example would feel that the obligor is at risk of not being able to maintain the child support payments, and there -- through discussion believes that the PRIDE program could help make that obligor more employable, more marketable in the jobs that are -- we have available for us today, we would definitely look towards referring that individual to PRIDE to get the obligor in a better position so that the obligor would be more able to meet the obligation and become more employable and you know, increase his or her own earnings. So we definitely wouldn't exclude them, but I don't know that we -- I couldn't say that we necessarily target them, but they aren't excluded. Does that help?

Emily Appel-Newby: Yes, I think that that answers the question and that shows where there's -- where that opportunity could lead, and Kansas, it sounds like you're pretty broad as well.

Melissa Johnson: Well, obviously the incentives that we're providing as far as the Child Support Savings Initiative for our types is generally having an arrears



balance, so that this program may not be targeted necessarily to the noncustodial parents that don't have arrears. I would say one caveat to that is a lot of times when you get the initial order against the noncustodial parent, at the time you get the order there's already a judgment for a past due amount.

So there's a judgment for TANF reimbursement that's happened for the last year, so it's -- at the time that we get the initial order we're also providing them this information so that they know right up front when they get that order and there's a judgment owed to the State of Kansas that they know right then that they could pay off that judgment for basically \$.50 on the \$1 and get the child a savings account at the same time.

So it's making sure that they know that at the instance that the order goes into effect, so hopefully they can get it paid off in a faster time period than if they weren't aware of it. We do have some other programs in Kansas that target noncustodial parents that have been on TANF or are on TANF. Connections to Success is one of them, and that's an ACF or an HHS... -- they have a grant that deals with noncustodial parents.

And they have six-week courses and classes where they come in and they have training, and we also provide arrears reduction if they have an arrears when they go through that program, and we've modeled that Connections to Success program, basically to take it statewide through TANF grants, and those have just gone into effect, and those are called Work for Success. So that provides the noncustodial parents that have been on TANF an avenue to try to get some additional training and assistance to get them up on their feet and ready to go into the workforce.



Emily Appel-Newby: Great. That's good to hear about, and what about at the Center for Urban Families?

Otis Buckson, Jr.: Well, I think that everybody knows that the issue around child support, arrears, and you know, dead broke dads is very, very complicated for us. We're located -- our physical plant is in the heart of Baltimore city. We're in ZIP code 21217. Two adjacent communities, 21215 and for an orientation, if you ever watch the Preakness Stakes, you know, the horse race, that community is called Park Heights, relatively impoverished community, and 21216, which is to the other side of us, which is right near Coppin State University, one of the HBCUs --in those three ZIP codes alone are in Baltimore City, there are approximately 2,400 men who owe more than 20-plus million dollars in back ---they owe State-owed child support. That was an indication of the level of you know, of degradation that takes place in our community and a likelihood that it could thrive, so in partnership with the State Child Support Enforcement Administration, we came together to brainstorm how would we address this issue among this group of noncustodial dead broke dads in the Baltimore city community?

Those three ZIP codes also happen to be three of the top ZIP codes that people who return to from incarceration, and so what we did in partnership, we designed a program which we indicated earlier on one of the slides. You'll see it if you access the PowerPoint later, called R.O.L.E. It's an acronym -- it stands for **R**ight-size your child support obligation based on your present ability to pay, **O**btain a job so you can pay your right-sized obligation, **L**ist any child support suspension of your



Maryland driving and occupational licenses, and Earn reduction of child support arrears owed to the State of Maryland.

So if these guys enroll in one of CFUF's programs, what they're able to do -- and they complete, they're able to receive a percentage reduction of their arrears, and what that does, it allows them to come up above ground and play the mainstream game while we also provide some structure and discipline in helping them to not only get connected to the labor force, but connected to their children and helping them to manage co-parenting situations, because often times these guys are no longer in a romantic relationship with the child's mother.

And that becomes, you know, just more complicated for them, and so you know, in partnership with the State, and I would say not just in partnership with the State, we actually drafted this letter. The first draft went to a group of our dads in our Responsible Fatherhood program who basically looked at us with twisted eyes and said "this letter makes no sense. The language doesn't work for us. If we get it, we are likely not to open it or even begin to read beyond the first couple of sentences."

They asked us to go back to the drawing board. We did. We redrafted the letter. We gave it back to them. They asked us to make some additional changes, and the third go round, what you see on your screen is the letter they agreed would make sense to be sent out to guys in the community, and we do outreach in the community to target those guys in those ZIP codes to get them into the center, get them in R.O.L.E., get them assessed, and get them into services, and then get the reduction in child support. And we've begun to see those arrears reductions take place among this group of guys.



Emily Appel-Newby: That makes sense. I can see where that would have impact. Another question for you at the Center for Urban Families, when are the results from the evaluation going to be released?

Joseph Jones, Jr.: So the first draft of the process evaluation, or the Year One report, is being done now. It will be distributed among our peer strategy group and to the Casey Foundation and the State, and then we will use that as a basis for building on the next layer of evaluations to look at outcomes, related evaluations. The ultimate goal over the next two years is to prepare the model for participation in randomized controlled trials so that we can have the empirical evidence to demonstrate that it is effective.

In addition to the program return on investment models, it looks at the cost implications of saving dollars to the State. So again, this process evaluation will be available in you know, about a month or two, and then the rest of the outcomes will be subsequently available as we continue to drill down into those issues that allow us to determine the effectiveness of the model.

Emily Appel-Newby: Okay. Thank you, and the last question we have here is back for the North Dakota PRIDE program, and the person asks: “How does a noncustodial parent exit the PRIDE program if they do not obtain employment?”

Pat Anderson: They can generally -- we work really hard for them to become employed, so there are some cases where a person just may not no matter how hard anyone tries, they may not become employed and so they would just exit the program if the participant, the individual says you know, “I just can’t



do anymore. I've come to the end of the road and I'm not willing to do this," and the PRIDE coordinator feels the same way, they may just exit the program and try something different.

Emily Appel-Newby: Great, I understand. Okay. Well that is the last question that we have received from the audience at this point, so with that, I am going to turn it over to James Butler to close us out.

James Butler: So thanks so much everyone for joining us today, and we hope that you've heard something during today's presentations that has sparked an idea for you and as to how you can do something innovative in the programs that you work through with your clients. For our TANF colleagues, we encourage you to request technical assistance through the OFA Peer TA site, or you can contact one of our team members directly to discuss any next steps.

I would also like to thank again our presenters for today from North Dakota, Kansas, and Maryland, for the welcomed information that you share as you go through your day-to-day work in serving families. As all of our OFA Peer TA webinars, a transcript and audio recording will be made available in the coming weeks, and it will be posted to the OFA Peer TA Web site.

As we come to a close, please be sure to fill out the evaluation poll that will pop up automatically as you exit the webinar. On behalf of the Office of Family Assistance and Lisa Washington-Thomas, once again I thank you for joining us today and everyone enjoy the remainder of your day.





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Operator: Ladies and gentlemen, that does conclude today's conference call. We thank you for your participation and ask that you please disconnect your lines. Thank you and have a great day.

END