



**Webinar Transcription**  
**OFA Region X Webinar: Strengthening TANF**  
**and Low-Income Families through Strategic Non-Custodial Supports**  
**Thursday, December 12, 2013**

*Speakers: Frank Shields, Administration for Children and Families, Region X; Earl Johnson, Director, Office of Family Assistance; Artish Jacobs and Angelisa Young, District of Columbia, Office of the Attorney General, Child Support Services Division; Michael Hayes, Texas Attorney General, Child Support Division; Ann Marie Winter, Gulf Coast Jewish Family and Community Services, Inc., and Don Shepherd, WorkNet Pinellas, Inc.; and Lesley Smith, ICF International.*

*Content: This moderated webinar highlighted programs that are promoting the financial and personal responsibility of non-custodial parents (NCP's) to their children, as well as improving their employment and career paths, in the hopes of improving the long-term outlook for children in single-parent families.*

**WELCOME**

[Operator] Good day, everyone, and welcome to the Strengthening TANF and Low-Income Families through Strategic Non-Custodial Supports Webinar. Today's call is being recorded. And now, your host for today's call, Mr. Frank Shields. Mr. Shields, please go ahead, sir.

[Frank Shields] Thank you. Greetings. Welcome to the Strengthening TANF and Low-Income Families through Strategic Non-Custodial Supports Webinar. This Webinar is brought to you today by the Administration for Children and Families, Region X Office, located in Seattle, Washington.

**WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS: FRANK SHIELDS**

[Frank Shields] For the long-term outlook for children in single-parent families, Federal, State, and local governments, along with public and private organizations, are supporting programs and activities that promote the financial and personal responsibilities of non-custodial parents to their children and increase their participation in the lives of their children as well as improve their employment and career paths. TANF agencies are exploring innovative ways to serve non-custodial parents, improve the non-custodial parents' engagement with TANF families, and develop partnerships that meet their needs. This Webinar will highlight specific programs and provide an overview of these key elements.

[Frank Shields] Today you will hear from Earl Johnson, Director of the Office of Family Assistance, and staff from the District of Columbia, Texas, and Florida, who will discuss their strategies in serving non-custodial parents, engagement with TANF families, and key partnerships. At the end of the presentation, you will have the opportunity to ask questions through the Adobe platform. You can submit questions throughout the Webinar using the Q&A pod on the right side of your computer screen, and if you have questions for a specific speaker or program, please specify this in your question. Following the presentations, we will ask you to respond to a brief evaluation poll. Your feedback is important and helps us to shape the delivery of our technical assistance.

**HOW TO ASK A QUESTION**

[Frank Shields] All the materials from today's Webinar will be posted on the Welfare Peer TA Website and will be sent directly to you in a few weeks.

**MODERATOR: LESLEY SMITH**



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[Frank Shields] Our moderator for today is Lesley Smith, a project manager with ICF International.

**EARL JOHNSON**

[Frank Shields] Our first speaker today is Earl Johnson, Director of the Office of Family Assistance with the Administration for Children and Families. Dr. Earl Johnson is the Director of the Office of Family Assistance within the Department of Health and Human Services. He's widely known for his work in developing programs and policies on matters related to TANF and has authored many articles on family issues. His areas of expertise include poverty and fatherhood, both high priority issues for the Administration and HHS. Prior to joining ACF, Earl was the Senior Policy Advisor to Oakland, California Mayor Ron Dellums, where he was responsible for helping set policy and program goals for the city and areas of workforce health and urban affairs. He also worked with the White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships on fatherhood initiatives. It's my pleasure to introduce Dr. Earl Johnson. Thank you, Earl.

[Earl Johnson] Thank you, Frank. Thanks for that kind introduction. While I -- and thank you all for being on today. This is a really important topic for the Office of Family Assistance and for ACF. We are really trying to expand the -- the last letter in TANF from families to mean more than just mom and two children to include, sort of, the network of people that are associated with the well-being of the child in the TANF household, and we believe that the non-custodial parent is one of those entities that we should -- we have an obligation to better serve so that they can actually do the things that are right, both economically and socially, to help the children of the TANF household move forward.

[Earl Johnson] And with that said, I just really want to thank everybody who has taken time and effort to think about how TANF can use its resources in a more strategic way to help non-custodial parents meet their obligations to both the child support system and to themselves and eventually—and, ultimately, to their families. What OFA is trying to do is put together, in the very near future, a compilation of all the available opportunities that TANF has to serve non-custodial parents and put it out there in a consolidated compendium so that States who are trying to address the comprehensive challenges that low-income families face could figure out how they can use their resources to help non-custodial parents; at the same time making sure that we help and are not hurting the actual cash-assisted families on TANF. This is critical, and if you've listened to the President's comments on economic employment, economic opportunity, and employment inequality, we need to do a better job of including the non-custodial parent in all of our programs. This is our first step, and I think with efforts that Michael Hayes has been taking in Texas and Ann Marie and Don have done in Florida, are examples of how States can be innovative in trying to integrate a very flexible program as TANF and tie it to economic self-sufficiency and well-being.

[Earl Johnson] So I won't take up much more of your time other than to say that this is really a priority of OFA. We really would love to see more non-custodial parents served. We'd actually like to see more two-parent families served if we could because there are couples in there that were once probably non-custodial and now are getting back together and trying to overcome some barriers, and if we can help them, we're going to help their children. So I'm glad that you're all online today and want to take this seriously. We really at OFA are taking this extremely seriously and trying to find opportunities to help the whole family do better in the labor market and socially. So, with that, I will pass this back to the moderator and Lesley, and we will look forward to your comments and thoughts.

**ANGELISA YOUNG & ARTISH JACOBS**



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[Lesley Smith] Thank you, Earl. Next, I'd like to welcome Angelisa Young and Artish Jacobs of the District of Columbia, Office of the Attorney General Child Support Services Division. Angelisa?

**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA CHILD SUPPORT, SUPPORTING FAMILIES**

[Angelisa Young] Thank you, Lesley. Today I would like to give you a quick, quick glance at some of the programs that Child Support Office in the District of Columbia to NCPs to help empower families and help families meet their financial obligations to their children.

**LOOK WHAT CHILD SUPPORT HAS TO OFFER**

[Angelisa Young] Some of the programs you will see in this quick at-a-glance are our First Response Unit, Community Outreach, our \$150 Pass-Through, Incarcerated Parents and Returning Citizens program, the Child Support Mobile, the Paternity Establishment Incentive, Free Genetic Testing, Non-Custodial Parent Employment Initiatives, and our Fresh Start Program.

**FIRST RESPONSE UNIT**

[Angelisa Young] Our First Response Unit is primarily a triage unit. As individuals walk into our office, we have dedicated staff who will assist NCPs or CPs in the services that they need. They're also able to kind of, for lack of better terms, minimize bureaucracy by sending individuals straight to the services in which they need.

**COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

[Angelisa Young] We have a Community Outreach team. The Community Outreach team is unlike most government agencies. They have very untraditional hours. They go out morning, noon, nights, and weekends to explain the services, processes, and programs that occur here at child support, and we're finding that people are -- when they become more knowledgeable, they are more able and more ready to take part in the process.

**150 PASS-THROUGH**

[Angelisa Young] We have a \$150 Pass-Through for our TANF recipients. If an NCP pays his child support on time, the CP, the family is entitled to get up to \$150. There are also stipulations pulling on that; things like if they pay on time, and if the child support order itself is \$150. So, it varies per family.

**INCARCERATED PARENTS AND RETURNING CITIZENS**

[Angelisa Young] We have our Incarcerated Parent Program. This is a program to assist our incarcerated NCPs. If an NCP is incarcerated for over 30 days, we will modify their child support order. Now, when I say, "modify their child support order," I mean they still have one. It's usually for them a zero order, which means you still have an order; however, you're not gaining arrears. And we do this so when individuals are released from incarceration, they're more ready to connect with their families. They don't have very high arrears where they are scared to, for lack of a better term, reintegrate into society.

**THE CHILD SUPPORT MOBILE OFFICE VAN**

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[Angelisa Young] We have our Mobile Office. This is part of our outreach; we have an office that can do everything that we could do in our office. We try to take it to neighborhoods that are distressed, neighborhoods where we have very high counts of, say, establishment orders where we've sanctioned a lot of individuals for not participating with our processes and our programs. So, this mobile is able to go all over the city. Last year alone, we saw over 1,000 people with our mobile.

**PATERNITY ESTABLISHMENT INITIATIVE**

[Angelisa Young] We do free genetic testing and acknowledgement of paternity for individuals who have not established paternity. We have a problem with individuals, especially our TANF families, not wanting to participate in genetic testing because they are very frightened of the prices that are associated with it, so we are able to offer them free genetic testing where we do genetic testing on our mobile.

**NON-CUSTODIAL PARENT EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVES**

[Angelisa Young] We have our NCP Employment Program. This is an employment program that we started at the child support office. It started a couple of years ago with a couple of us trying to do job-readiness training for our NCPs. However, we saw that there was a need that went beyond our skill set. So what we've done, we've partnered with multiple agencies, government, non-profit agencies, that will assist us with getting our NCPs employed. And now I'm going to give you to Ms. Jacobs.

**FRESH START PROGRAM**

[Artish Jacobs] The Fresh Start Program—this program was established to assist non-custodial parents in the fact of forgiveness of TANF arrears. So, in exchange to be in this program, you would make a lump sum payment to current support or arrears only in a series of timely full payments.

**CASE ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**

[Artish Jacobs] There is case eligibility; you must have at least \$1,000 in arrears, and that's TANF arrears, no voluntary payments in one year, prior unsuccessful enforcement efforts, no bad faith by NCP, valid NCP address, valid address and payment distribution information for CP (unless owed to the government).

**CASE ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS: CASE TYPES**

[Artish Jacobs] There are several case types that do qualify; so you could have a TANF-arrears only case, a TANF and non-TANF arrears only case, an active non-TANF current support case with TANF arrears.

**DETERMINING ELIGIBLE NCP'S**

[Artish Jacobs] So, determining eligible non-custodial parents—all non-custodial parents who are enrolled into this program must complete a Consent Agreement; that's an Affidavit and a Consent to Access the credit. It's important that we access their credit report because we don't want to have them hiding any income because if -- we feel that you can pay certain bills on time, then you also can pay your child support on time. So we look at ownership of home, car, or value; how you're paying those; any liquid assets; any periods of unemployment; your ability to work; and any periods of incarceration.

**PAYMENT/FORGIVENESS AGREEMENT MATRIX**

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[Artish Jacobs] Now, the payment/forgiveness agreement matrix—if you see before you, there's a month forgiveness. Every six months, we forgive a certain portion of your TANF arrears. So, at six months, there's 25 percent; at 12 months, there's 50 percent; at 18 months, there's 75 percent; and then at 24 months, there's 100 percent. The purpose of doing this in the increments is that sometimes people do fall off, and we do try to reward you even if you're only able to participate in the program for a portion of time.

**FRESH START PARTICIPANTS**

[Artish Jacobs] The total participants, these numbers, are a little bit -- oh, we did these numbers back in September, but at that time, we had 331 participants that were currently still 24 percent active, about 18 percent that completed the program, and 16 percent that were partially successful. Partially successful for us is still important because you were able to make a payment on this case -- on those cases where we were getting no payments at all, and these are numbers currently from this year.

**TOTALS AS OF SEPT. 2013**

[Artish Jacobs] The total forgiveness of TANF arrears has been \$1.2 million dollars, which really has helped us in regards to the 157 in reducing our arrears. Total on lump sum and monthly collections is \$400-and-some thousand, so we had a grand total of \$1.7 million dollars with our Fresh Start program.

**CHALLENGES IN THE PROGRAM**

[Artish Jacobs] Challenges in the program—we do face those daily. Lack of commitment, we have people who really could benefit from the program, especially when you have maybe \$50- or \$60,000 in TANF arrears alone. You know, if you can even commit to -- if there's a -- if it's an arrears-only case, and you commit to paying \$50 a month, look how much arrears you would have taken off of your debt. So we are trying to give you that fresh start. But lack of commitment, we have issues there. Lost employment or under-employment, where you have committed to being in the program; however, you have lost your job. And homelessness, of course, we are in the District here, and there is a huge homelessness population, so we do have that issue.

**COMING FALL 2014: INTENSIVE CASE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM**

[Angelisa Young] Coming in the fall of 2014—well, we are already in it; we have what we call the Intensive Case Management Program. The Intensive Case Management Program has been broken down into three phases. The first phase of which we will implement a questionnaire to see exactly what our NCPs need -- our non-custodial parents need to reach stability. So, instead of us designing a program from the top down, we've decided to go, for lack of terms, from the bottom up from the individuals who need it to the service providers who will give it. The second part of it is establishing formal relationships with different agencies and organizations that are successfully addressing the needs of our customers. And the third phase is creating and implementing the Intensive Case Management Program with processes and established measurable outcomes.

**COMING FALL 2015: NCP TO WORK PROGRAM**

[Angelisa Young] In the fall of 2015, the Office of Attorney General, Child Support Division, will implement a new facet of our NCP Employment Program. We will hire 25 of our previously incarcerated NCP's who have TANF child support cases to work here to gain a work history; as well as, hopefully, to become full-time employees of the Office of Attorney General, Child Support Division. Thank you very much.

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**MICHAEL HAYES**

[Lesley Smith] Thank you, Angelisa and Artish. Next, I'd like to welcome Michael Hayes with the Texas Office of the Attorney General, Child Support Division. Michael?

**CHILD SUPPORT, WORKFORCE, AND TANF PARTNERSHIPS: PUTTING NONCUSTODIAL PARENTS TO WORK**

[Michael Hayes] Thank you very much, Lesley. It's a pleasure to be on the call today. So I'm going to be talking a little bit about the work that we've done in Texas with our child support division and focusing specifically on partnerships that we've built over the last eight years with our workforce and our TANF agency.

**SETTING THE STAGE: WHY CHILD SUPPORT NEEDS TO BE INVOLVED IN HELPING TO PUT LOW-INCOME MEN TO WORK**

[Michael Hayes] In Texas, we've got a broad range of programs, as Earl alluded to in the opening comments that we've developed over the past number of years—military parents, incarcerated non-custodial parents, working with teen parents, family violence, asset building. But I'm going to focus in particular on one that is focused on putting low-income men to work. And so, while it may not need to be reinforced to the audience, I just wanted to -- my first two slides here kind of are setting the stage, the baseline for why child support and -- needs to be involved in helping to put low-income men to work. And so, the first slide being that there are about 7.5 million poor men in the United States, and of those, five million of them have child support cases.

**SETTING THE STAGE: WHY CHILD SUPPORT NEEDS TO BE INVOLVED IN HELPING TO PUT LOW-INCOME MEN TO WORK CONT'D**

[Michael Hayes] If you look at unemployment on the next slide, about 3.6 million poor men were not working in the previous year, and of those, three million of them have child support cases. So, the bottom line is, is we are where the men are, and I think any effort to put low-income men to work has to involve child support. And child support's been involved in non-custodial parent employment programs for a number of years. If you look back, really kind of the first large-scale projects that were developed, excuse me, were developed to help put non-custodial parents to work was the Parents' Fair Share Project, the Partners for Fragile Families Project, the Welfare-to-Work and seeking employment projects. All of those launched late in -- kind of late '90s through mid-2000s. There were several statewide initiatives that were undertaken. We did one here in Texas to try to put low-income men to work, focusing on low-income young fathers. The Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement funded a number of responsible fatherhood projects, and if you look at the evaluations of all those projects, there are -- there were some big themes to those.

**BIG THEMES**

[Michael Hayes] And the first of the big themes was that recruitment was very difficult. Even when people would undertake pretty extensive recruitment efforts, it was very difficult to get men to attend these programs that were designed to help them become better fathers and enter into employment to help resolve some of their legal issues. The second theme was that the outcomes were equivocal. There were not really great outcomes from any of the evaluations of these projects. For instance, the Parents' Fair Share Project found that the participants in Parents' Fair Share paid on average \$12 more child support

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per quarter, not per month but per quarter, than those non-custodial parents who didn't receive any services.

[Michael Hayes] And then, finally, I think the other biggest theme from those projects that we took away was that it really was about work; that when men were asked what they needed help with most, the number one response over and over and over again was, they needed help with employment because it -- you think about the hierarchy of needs, you know, financial resources coming into the household, and then they knew they had a legal obligation to pay child support, so child support was hounding them; they might have had some parole or probation fees; other kinds of financial needs. And so it really was about work, and that while they liked some of the more holistic programming that their driving force to participate and their need was really about employment.

[Michael Hayes] As I said, we engaged in a number of those projects from 1998 until about 2003 here in Texas, and we really weren't all that pleased with the results, and that led us to have a kind of serious, sit-down discussion with our workforce agency, which also administers our TANF employment program in Texas, to say, "Is it even worth considering doing a project to try to put non-custodial parents to work, and what would it take for us to -- for it to be worth that effort?" And so we were willing to give it one last try.

**REMEMBER THE ALAMO!**

[Michael Hayes] And if we go to the next slide, what that led to was this idea of what was going to be the measure of success that would lead us to believe or lead us to continue to provide resources into it. And so for child support, our success measure really is about collections. Will these employment efforts really lead to more collections from the people that participate in the program? For workforce, their success was job entry and retention. They didn't want to engage in a program, spend money on non-custodial parents' employment services, and have non-custodial parents not participate, or have very spotty participation, and have it make their performance on the workforce side look bad. And then on the TANF side of things, success was people who are receiving TANF leaving the rolls and staying off the rolls. And so we wanted to measure if the non-custodial parents' participation in an employment program led to, and then subsequent entry into employment and payment of child support, would really lead to a decline in use of TANF by the associated custodial parents.

**NCP CHOICES**

[Michael Hayes] The program that we ended up designing is called NCP Choices, and it's essentially -- it's an enhanced employment services with sanctions for those who don't comply. And it's modeled in many ways after the TANF employment program for TANF recipients in which there was, "Here are services, but if you don't comply with the program requirements, you're going to get sanctioned." In this particular model, the Child Support Division is the sanctioning arm of the program. It's a partnership between the Office of the Attorney General, which in Texas we are the Title 40 child support agency; our Texas Workforce Commission, which is the employment provider for all of the TANF employment programs in the State of Texas; as well as Workforce Investment Act and other DOL-funded programs; and our Title 40 child support courts. It was funded primarily with TANF statewide funds, TANF employment funds, and to a lesser degree, with some Title 40 child support incentive payments. And, as I said, it was in many ways modeled after the Texas TANF employment and training program, which is called Choices; hence, the name NCP Choices.

**NCP CHOICES MODEL**

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[Michael Hayes] If we go to the next slide, you get a picture of really what the model looks like. You've got a non-custodial parent who -- the custodial parent associated with at least one of that non-custodial parent's cases received or is -- was receiving or is currently receiving TANF or Medicaid. On average, those non-custodial parents, this is kind of the average snapshot of them; they are 36 years old; they were ex-offenders, about 75 percent, high school or less education. On average, they made no child support payment in the previous nine months, and they were on average \$30,000 in arrears. For those of you on the call who work in child support agencies, you will recognize these as our, really, our "frequent filers." These are the guys who we're filing on, trying to get into court, we're trying to track down; they are our hardest to work cases, our least productive cases.

[Michael Hayes] In this model, the OAG, child support, we identify these non-custodial parents in our caseload. They are in our enforcement caseload in court; we bring them before the courts where they are found to be in contempt. The judge gives them some choices; they are limited choices, but they're choices. They can either pay up, so pay what they owe; they can go to jail, which is the more traditional child support contempt action, or they can agree to participate in this workforce program. And workforce staff are right there in court. The requirements of the program are 30 hours per week of employment-related activities; it may be job search, job training, GED, a whole range of activities, which then, we hope, leads to a job and payments. All of that gets reported back to the OAG so he can tell the judge whether it's working or not. If they choose not to take advantage of the services though that gets reported back to the court, and their choices now become more limited. And, generally, the consequence may be that they go to jail because they are in contempt of that court order. So, it's really a jobs-instead-of-jail because it's adding an option to what's available.

**PROGRAM INTEGRATION**

[Michael Hayes] The key to making this program work, if we go to the next slide, is really integrating it into the ongoing operations both of the child support agency, the workforce providers, and the courts. So it has to be us all doing the things that we do best. So, child support, we identify and prep legal cases, we monitor payments and the reports of compliance from workforce, and we prepare legal actions as needed. All things that child support, we know how to do, right? Workforce, they receive the NCPs who are ordered in at court, they do intake and assessment for employment and employment barriers, they provide services, they monitor compliance, and they report that participation in the program to the OAG and the courts. And then the courts, they order participation in the program—they are -- there's the -- in this model, that's the hassle, to get them to participate—conduct compliance hearings and then apply swift and certain consequences. One of the reasons that we need that court order was to address the recruitment problem that we've had that—really, every non-custodial parent employment program has had,—that is the issue of recruitment. In this particular model, the order has solved that.

**KEY PROGRAM ELEMENTS**

[Michael Hayes] So, the key program elements that make the program work are, if we go to the next slide, are the consequences, so there has to be some consequences out there; co-location, so having workforce right there in the court. In fact, workforce staff may be asked by the court to give testimony if the non-custodial parent has been actually participating in program services or if they have not been. The services and, of course, job referrals, job development, support services, there's some subsidized employment and work experience in some of our sites, retention and career advancement assistance, case management, and then the communication between workforce, child support, and the courts.



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[Michael Hayes] A lot of the struggles from earlier efforts, I think, were tied to the fact that while somebody might have been sent; like, say, child support had sent a non-custodial parent, or the courts had sent a non-custodial parent, over to a workforce program, there was no -- the loop wasn't closed. We wouldn't know what they had done when they went over there. And for workforce—in the past, when we said "Oh, we're going to send you referrals," and they would staff up to take those referrals, and we would make the referrals, but non-custodial parents wouldn't show up—they were stuck with costs that they had expended and which there weren't clients actually using those services. So it really took this kind of tight communication which keeps non-custodial parents from either falling through the cracks or slipping through the cracks.

#### **PROGRAM COSTS**

[Michael Hayes] So what does a program like this -- where do the expenditures go? So let's -- in my next slide, I give you a breakdown of the costs of the program, or how they get broken down. It really is primarily in case managers. So, 80 percent is in -- spent on the case managers who are helping the non-custodial parents find employment; there's some support services; little bit on subsidized employment; little bit on training; some costs for the local Workforce Boards.

#### **NCP CHOICES AVERAGE PROGRAM COST AND CHILD SUPPORT PAID OVER 18 MONTHS**

[Michael Hayes] What do we get out of this? Let's go to the next slide. The program costs, on average -- there should be a nice bar chart here. I don't know if you can see it; I can't see it on my screen. But on average, the program costs about \$1,000 per non-custodial parent. That's \$1,000 of workforce expenditures. In 18 months the average paid by the non-custodial parent ordered in the program is \$3,000. So our return on this is three-to-one in terms of child support collections.

#### **NCP CHOICES PARTICIPANTS**

[Michael Hayes] What about workforce performance? We got to the next slide. One of the -- the wins here, one of the successes here for workforce is that eight out of ten of these non-custodial parents enter employment. On average, that's at eight weeks. And seven out of ten meet the six month retention. So these are good performance measures for the workforce; this makes them look good in their universal measures.

#### **AVERAGE QUARTERLY EARNINGS – NCP CHOICES**

[Michael Hayes] What about the earnings for the non-custodial parent? If you go to the next slide, you'll see our average quarterly earnings. Well, you won't see the average quarterly earnings if you're seeing what I'm seeing. But, before entry, the average quarterly earnings for these non-custodial parents was under \$2,000, about \$1800. Within a year that goes up to about \$2750 and then by -- in years two and three, they're right at \$3,500 a month in average quarterly earnings.

#### **AVERAGE MONTHLY COLLECTIONS – FIRST YEAR**

[Michael Hayes] If we go to the next slide, we'll hopefully see the average monthly collections for the non-custodial parents and the impact on this, which, like I said, if you're seeing what I'm seeing, you're seeing a blank screen. So let me tell you what the collections outcomes are. We did a four-year evaluation study of this with the University of Texas Ray Marshall Center -- Ray Marshall Center, and they developed a very rigorous comparison group, treatment group, methodology, and on average, participants in the non-

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custodial parent employment program, in Choices, paid \$176 a month in child support compared to the non-participants in the program, those who are not ordered in, was \$122 a month in child support. So, roughly a \$54 a-month -increase in child support payments by the participants. Now, if you remember, in the Parents' Fair Share Project, the impact was \$12 per quarter. So, we were very pleased with this kind of \$56 a month increase in child support.

**PAID SUPPORT 2 OF 3 MONTHS – FIRST YEAR**

[Michael Hayes] In addition to the increase per month in child support—if we go to the next slide, which is blank again. If we go to the next slide, the—actually, let's back up to that one, let's back up to that blank slide, I don't want to give away all my thunder here yet totally. So, not only did we collect more per month in child support, but the frequency of child support and consistency of child support increased and that's an important -- I'm laying the foundation for the next slide. The consistency issue is really important. That about 50 percent more frequency and consistency in child support between the treatment group and the participating group and that's what leads to the next slide.

**LESS TANF USE BY CUSTODIAL PARENTS TIED TO NCP CHOICES PARTICIPANTS**

[Michael Hayes] So we can go to that next slide now, which is the impact of the non-custodial parent being in the program on the custodial parent associated with that NCP; their use of TANF. So, in Year One, custodial parents tied to these NCP Choices participants, 21 percent decline -- or 21 percent less TANF use than the custodial parents associated with our control group. And, in Years Two–Four, that increased to 29 percent drop. And really, the key here is consistency of child support. For a custodial parent, when they start seeing consistent payments coming in—which, you know, for child support, we know that consistent payments are tied to wage withholding orders, right? We get somebody employed; we get an employer wage withholding in place; the money comes in like clockwork. And that's what made it safe for the custodial parents to go off of TANF is when they started to see that consistent payment of child support, they could count on that, much less need to be on TANF.

**CHILD SUPPORT PAYMENTS: FY 13 YTD (16,509 NCPs)**

[Michael Hayes] So, the final slide, which maybe we'll have a graphic on it or maybe we won't -- let's try to go to that last slide; well, it doesn't have the graphic. I was going to show you how much has been paid by the 16,500 non-custodial parents that have been ordered into the program to date. So, year-to-date in FY13, so for September, October, November, those 16,000 non-custodial parents have paid about \$39 million dollars in child support; and of that, 75 percent of that has come from wage withholding, employer kinds of payments, and the rest are regular payments coming from NCPs. Very few, very small chunks of that are from cash bond or federal offsets. Since we've started the program, \$110 -- \$120 million dollars have been paid by those 16,509 non-custodial parents. So, from a child support collections perspective, from a TANF perspective, from a workforce perspective, it's been a successful model, which has led us to this long-term implementation over the last eight years. So, I'll wrap it up with that.

**ANN MARIE WINTER & DONALD SHEPHERD**

[Lesley Smith] Thank you, Michael. I'd like to remind the participants of the Webinar that, at any time, you can submit questions through the chat box on the screen. Just indicate who the question is for, and we'll put it in the queue for the question and answer time. Next, I'd like to welcome Ann Marie Winter with Florida's Gulf Coast Jewish Family and Community Services and Don Shepherd of Pinellas, Inc. Ann Marie?

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**STRENGTHENING TANF AND LOW-INCOME FAMILIES THROUGH STRATEGIC NON-CUSTODIAL SUPPORTS**

[Ann Marie Winter] Thank you very much. Thank you, Lesley and ACF, for inviting us to today's Webinar. We're delighted to be talking to you today about the partnership that Gulf Coast Jewish Family and Community Services has with the Workforce Board here in Pinellas County to provide non-custodial parents with essentially a self-sufficiency program that provides opportunities to help the whole family in the labor market and promote parent-child relationships.

**WHO WE ARE...**

[Ann Marie Winter] Who we are... next slide please. This program was developed in 1995 as a result of an appropriation by the Florida Legislature to assist unemployed and underemployed NCPs who are not making their child support payments. We help them find employment, make those child support payments, and hopefully, increase and motivate participants to increase their interaction with their children, as well as a decreased dependency on TANF. So this is really a paradigm shift for the State of Florida.

[Ann Marie Winter] What was happening at the time was, as has been mentioned by the other two presenters, often the overlooked family member in the two-parent/child triad. It's been our experience that there are typically multiple barriers to overcome before a non-custodial parent can become self-sufficient and responsible. Those barriers include a criminal record, low -- lack of education, low self-esteem, combined with the financial restrictions of the court, and especially resentment at being ordered to pay child support. These all contribute to making this one of the most hard-to-serve groups within the local One Stop system in communities. Additionally, there are really few real sanctions that can be imposed to enforce program compliance, short of jail time or other legal action, which defeats the program's purpose and further deters participation. However, based on our extensive experience and unique approach in working with non-custodial parents, we seem to be able to meet our numbers every single year, in close collaboration with the Workforce Board. The program really targets all public assistance, child support cases in the counties that we serve. We're currently in Pinellas, Hillsborough, and Pasco Counties in west central Florida, and since 2000, we've been in Miami.

**NCPEP CLIENTS**

[Ann Marie Winter] Let's talk a little bit about [needs of clients now. So, we serve the non-custodial parent. Eligibility is based on having children who are receiving or are eligible to receive assistance, and like Texas, they've been court-ordered into the program. We've had, in the last 18 years that the program has been in existence, we've had a growing number of volunteers. So these are actual non-custodial parents who, either through word of mouth, job fairs, through referrals from the Workforce Board, actually volunteer to join the program. They have to meet all criteria, including TANF eligibility, and our caseload is 80 percent male, 20 percent female, but it's equally divided to about 33 percent between the age groups of 20- to 30-year-olds, 30- to 40-year-olds, and finally, 40- to 50-year-olds. Overwhelmingly, our client bases are African-Americans, representing 65 percent of the clients that we serve, followed by Latinos at 20 percent, and Caucasians at 15 percent. Interestingly, in the last three years, we've seen fewer never-married clients; they represent about 30 percent versus 55 percent of what we've seen in years past. And each of the other groups showed large increases in the 20 percent range, and that would include divorced, married, or separated non-custodial parents. The average wage of this population after we employed them is \$8.88, and 65 percent are employed and retain employment for 180 days. This program is funded by a TANF block grant, and for some more details, I'm going to hand it over to Don Shepherd, the program director at WorkNet Pinellas.

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[Don Shepherd] Thank you, Ann Marie. Thank you, audience. As Ann Marie stated, the funding does stem from Florida's TANF block grant. It is actually a special line-item each year in the State legislature budget and approved specifically to earmark money for the non-custodial, the NCEP Program. It is actually CFDA 93.558, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, which is used. It is definitely -- guidelines that we have to follow are HHS guidelines, as well as Florida Administrative Code 65A-4 for Temporary Cash Assistance. And we do our eligibility, as Ann Marie stated, looking for, and validating, verifying, TANF eligibility for the NCP as well as the CP's children. And some requirements are that both have to reside in Florida, and if the CP is tied to active cash assistance or falls under 200 percent, they meet that umbrella of eligibility, and the NCP as well has to fall below 200 percent of income, poverty. They have to meet a TANF -- one of the four TANF purposes. Thank you, Ann Marie.

#### **WHAT WE DO...**

[Ann Marie Winter] All right. So let's look at exactly what this program tries to do. Next slide. Thank you. So we use a work-first model. We encourage our clients to take eligible, entry-level jobs, because we believe that this is going to lead to successful sufficiency, although we do provide education and training, but they occur generally concurrently with employment. All components of the work-first model send a very clear message about the priority of this objective. In addition, time limits for receipt of cash assistance reinforce the need for early employment. Clients are strongly encouraged to accept jobs for entry-level jobs to begin the process of becoming self-sufficient and less reliant on government-funded financial assistance.

[Ann Marie Winter] We do job development. We work very closely with the Workforce Board, but also local area employers to tell them about the benefits of the program and the support that we provide to the clients. So, while they may be hiring someone who's a non-custodial parent who might have a record, they know that they have the backing of our agency and the life coaches, which work with our clients. We do a supervised job search with these clients, which includes resume writing, interview skill-building, to ensure that the NCP has the best possible chance of being employed. We monitor that case. We have to follow-up each month with our employers and provide that documentation to the Workforce Board, and where appropriate, we do educational assessments and referrals. We have some funding to help clients with different types of trade or skill-building.

[Ann Marie Winter] Another important component of our program, in addition to job placement, is understanding the responsibility of fatherhood or motherhood, and we really try and help the client develop as a parent to their child. We believe that if the non-custodial parent is engaged with their child that they will make greater efforts to make child support payments, and we've been very successful in that regard. So, in addition to the services that we provide, every non-custodial parent is required to go through parenting classes. We find that budgeting and personal finance is a real issue for our clients, so we provide financial literacy training through a sub-contracted partner. Peer support groups are very important. We've had hundreds of clients who have successfully completed the program that serve as volunteer mentors for current clients. We find this to be incredibly rewarding. We have them come to our orientations and talk to new enrollees so that they get a perspective of someone who's successfully completed the program.

[Ann Marie Winter] Our budget also includes funds for contingency services such as transportation to and from the job site, or to and from job fairs, interviews. We also provide work attire that's appropriate to the job, construction boots, scrubs, vehicle maintenance, personal hygiene. We want to ensure that the person sitting in front of the employer is the best person for the job. I mentioned that we do short-term trade and skill training through some sub-contracted partners, and we also understand that some of the

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barriers for this population may include substance abuse and other issues that can be handled by counseling, mediation, and medication, if necessary, and so we refer internally to our counseling programs. Next slide.

#### **AS AN ONE STOP PARTNER...**

[Don Shepherd] Florida was an early implementation State of the One Stop system. We do, in my opinion, enjoy a very high level of integration of service, of a seamless service delivery through our One Stop. And the workforce system, as in Texas, administers the TANF work program. So, there's a lot of services and partnerships that are in place that definitely benefit the non-custodial parent program as another one of those services under the umbrella of what the One Stops do. As a One Stop partner within this system, there are a lot of One Stop resources and support provided or available to the non-custodial parent program, the staff within the program, as well as the clients. We have full access to the Employ Florida marketplace, or that's the State's One Stop job bank, and it's quite a robust system to definitely support labor exchange. So the non-custodial parent program will help feed job orders, job openings, into the system as well as being able to access what's available, and a good fit for the clients that they're serving.

[Don Shepherd] They also have full access to the One Stop Service Tracking system, the OSST system; that's the State case management MIS that is used for the TANF work program as well as the non-custodial parent program. Both the TANF work program and non-custodial parent program enjoy access to our HHS MIS. It's a read-only access, but it's Department of Children and Families in the State of Florida, and it greatly supports or facilitates seamless delivery between the TANF side, the DCF side of the house, and the non-custodial parent or the One Stop, the workforce system. It supports eligibility and other forms of communication.

[Don Shepherd] We also have, for the non-custodial parent program, ease of access to refer qualified candidates to Florida job openings, whether that's internal, external,—external through the Employ Florida marketplace system. Because they're a partner, they definitely are aware and have access to with job fairs, One Stop hiring events that occur throughout the year at our One Stops, or other employer events. They have access to the One Stop workshops or work-readiness training that's available in the One Stop, and in our area, those are done in a traditional classroom, or they're also done online, and the intent is to provide added level of service or access to those services for the web-based customer, as well as the person in need of that human touch.

[Don Shepherd] We also support the non-custodial parent program with our Atlas System, or it's an online electronic document management system, so even our staff customers that are down in Miami are being able to access the same software, the same functionality, as those that are local in Pinellas County. And then there's, of course, a plethora of One Stop resources such as the Federal Bonding program to assist in the actual placement, and it's been a great partnership; it definitely helps the job seekers within the service delivery area. And that, of course, is a key goal of the workforce system.

#### **ACHIEVEMENTS**

[Ann Marie Winter] Let's look at some of the things that we've been able to accomplish together with our clients. Since inception, the program has successfully served 18,605 non-custodial parents, benefitting 48,700 children and the establishment of more than 7,000 jobs. We do an annual, independent evaluation every single year. This is run by a former professor at the University of South Florida who has a background in employment, child welfare, and criminology. And so his findings for fiscal year 2012 have proved that all clients in the program made child support payments and returned more than two and one-

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half times the program costs. So, for every dollar spent operating the program, \$2.64 dollars was returned to the State in the form of child support payments. That's confirmed through the Department of Revenue with which we're able to access their database. This equates to \$1,087,369 for the year, and this is consistently what has been happening each year. Clients who complete the program continue to make child support payments. The evaluator contacted 350 clients to make that assessment. We're really not able to achieve what we do without the strong support and collaboration of a number of different partners, and they include the Florida Legislature, the workforce board, judges, and hearing masters in multiple circuits, and the Department of Revenue and its Division of Child Support Enforcement. And we believe the program continues to be successful, in both human terms and fiscal, and promises to continue to be an asset, not only to the parents and their children, but the criminal justice system and the State.

**PROGRAM CHALLENGES**

[Ann Marie Winter] I wanted to take a moment to talk about some program challenges and how they've been overcome. Funding for this program—interestingly, the State of Florida flows TANF dollars through this program through an annual appropriation of the Florida Legislature. So within the governor's budget, which has been passed by both houses of the Florida Legislature, a certain number of dollars are allocated for this specific program. This requires a lot of advocacy and nurturing relationships with key legislators to ensure that funding continues for this program. There was a county where we were not able to access the EFM or court databases, and this proved a challenge for us to be able to ensure that we were able to place as many people as possible. Since working closely with WorkNet Pinellas, this has since been resolved, and we now have complete access to the databases that we need. And a program challenge, frankly, since 2008, which many of us have seen not only with non-custodial parents, but in the economy in general, is the economy and competition for jobs. We've talked about some of the barriers to entry for this population, and they continue to be so. Unemployment compensation—so, for those clients who receive unemployment compensation, our evaluator found that they were less likely to enroll in the program and look for additional work and make their child support payment until that unemployment compensation ran out.

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

[Ann Marie Winter] Next slide. Next slide. We'd be happy to provide more information for you if you're interested, and there's some information about whom you can contact about this program. Thank you very much for your time.

**QUESTIONS?**

[Lesley Smith] Thank you, Ann Marie and Don. I appreciate that. At this time, we'd like to begin our question and answer session.

**HOW TO ASK A QUESTION**

[Lesley Smith] You will see on your screen sort of a cue on how to submit a question into the chat box. Please follow along. There are some questions already that have been submitted, so we will go ahead and begin with some of those questions. Our first question is for the District of Columbia.

[Angelisa Young] Yes?

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[Lesley Smith] Yes, very good. Thank you. I'm sorry; I was getting the question ready. "Does the law of the District of Columbia permit lowering support to zero dollars during the incarcerated period?"

[Angelisa Young] Yes, it does. It started in 2007; it's modification due to incarceration. So, yes; primarily what it did was it allowed NCPs to identify as having a child support case before sentencing, at the time of sentencing. However, if they're not able to do so, then we have the right to modify their child support orders at that time, and we don't need anybody's permission to do so.

[Lesley Smith] Thank you. For Texas, "What measurement is used for reduction in TANF use? Is it a reduction in the dollar amount, or the number leaving rolls due to income?"

[Michael Hayes] Our evaluators looked at the dollar expenditures per custodial parent, so it's a dollar amount reduction.

[Lesley Smith] Thank you. Back to Washington, D.C. "Does the Washington, D.C. child support have an administrative establishment process?"

[Angelisa Young] No, we don't; we're strictly a judicial State. Even when we do AOPs, Acknowledgement of Paternities, it has to go before a judge so it can be adjudicated.

[Lesley Smith] Thank you. For Florida, "What are some tips for a TANF agency interested in working with their local Workforce Investment Board?"

[Don Shepherd] It's been a while since we started this, so I had to think for a second. But it was actually some lobbying and some groundwork that was laid by Gulf Coast prior to the pulling of the non-custodial parents program under the umbrella of the workforce system, and it was actually a pilot started -- started as a pilot with the State of Florida workforce system. And in the State of Florida, we have Workforce, Inc., which is our State's workforce board, governs pretty much all activities and funding within the workforce system, and I have to say they're quite creative. They actually like to see innovation and try different things, and we're very much behind the start of our non-custodial parent program, and it's been an "if" every year if it's going to retain its funding, but I think the success of the program, the word of mouth and the support in Tallahassee has just kept it going every year. So it's that partnerships in place at the State workforce level, as well as on the DCF and HHS side. And again, for us, it was the strong experience and foundation that Gulf Coast brought to this agency.

[Lesley Smith] Thank you. For Texas, "Partnerships seem to be key here. What are some tips for a TANF agency interested in approaching child support or a community agency about starting programs like these?"

[Michael Hayes] Yeah, see, it has been a long partnership-building process for us. We -- this program wouldn't happen if we didn't have the Texas Workforce Commission and their strong support in it, but that didn't just happen overnight. And so, for me, the biggest tip is you need to take the time to build the partnership and be very clear on what is the measure of success for that partner so that you can be clear in tracking your outcomes so that it reinforces ongoing partnership, right? If -- the NCP Choices model, if -- if we have really good child support collections but the entered employment numbers were bad for workforce, that--they couldn't sustain their involvement in the program. Likewise, if our -- maybe the entered employment rates were really good, but the child support collection rates were not strong on it, we wouldn't have maintained the program from our end as well. And so, from the judges' side of the equation, they appreciate it when they know what's going on; they get good communications from the

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workforce staff as well as the child support staff about what the non-custodial parent that they've ordered into the program is doing; the services that they're receiving. We have regular monthly meetings with each of our -- and we're operating right now in 19 Workforce Board areas, 19 of the 28 Texas Workforce Board areas, and so we have regular monthly meetings that involve child support and workforce and quarterly meetings that we bring the judge in for as well. Communicate, communicate, and then communicate some more.

[Lesley Smith] Great. Thank you, Michael. D.C., if I could ask the same question in terms of partnerships, "What are some tips for TANF agencies interested in approaching child support or a community agency about starting programs like these?"

[Angelisa Young] Hello? Excuse me, we're not quite able to hear. This is Washington, D.C.

[Lesley Smith] Yes. Angelisa, I can repeat the question.

[Angelisa Young] Yes, please; thank you.

[Lesley Smith] No problem. "What are some tips that you could give for a TANF agency interested in approaching child support about starting programs like these?"

[Angelisa Young] One of the first things that we did with our sister agency, with the TANF agency, was we cross-trained. What we found out was a lot of times that neither set of employees knew what the other one was truly doing. We kind of could guess; we kind of had some idea, but we really didn't know in great detail. So the first thing I would say, what you would do is that you would cross-train so that you can get a value in understanding of the services that each of you offers. And then I would say you would go to the table, and you would discuss the needs of your customers because, again, or either like we're doing, doing a questionnaire to find out the needs of your customers, and then you would go from there. That's primarily what I would tell you to do to start programs like this at your TANF office.

[Lesley Smith] Thank you.

[Michael Hayes] Lesley, this is Michael.

[Lesley Smith] Yes.

[Michael Hayes] Can I chime in one more thing on that?

[Lesley Smith] Please.

[Michael Hayes] So, I think in terms of a TANF agency coming to child support, and asking, "Hey, if you're a TANF agency and you're interested in pursuing a non-custodial parent employment type project, you only do child support" and making it clear that what you're gonna need from child support is what child support already does. We're not -- one of the things that you should be prepared for is for the child support staff to say, "Oh, we're not social workers; we're not case managers." And it's fine, you know, in this kind of model, to say, "That's not what we're asking you to do." You can set up an employment model where child support does what it does well—locates non-custodial parents, does the legal work, prepares legal orders. The employment service just really gives another enforcement option to child support. I think describing the employment program as an enforcement option is one of the secrets to a child support agency embracing it. I will also just say that I think most every child support program across the



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country is -- there's a pretty strong sense that non-custodial parent employment programs are an important feature, an important element of service that maybe we've not done very well, and we need to do better on.

[Lesley Smith] Thank you for that. For Florida, "Annually, how much is appropriated by the legislature for this program?"

[Ann Marie Winter] It's 1.4 million dollars per year, \$1,404,000.

[Lesley Smith] Thank you. A second question for Florida, "What are the consequences of non-compliance with your program?"

[Ann Marie Winter] It's possible that the judge will order the person to be incarcerated or back into incarceration.

[Lesley Smith] Thank you.

[Ann Marie Winter] So we work very closely with the hearing masters and the judges to let them know where we are with each individual client, but the judge has the authority to remand the person back into custody, and every client is made aware of that at the orientation and enrollment.

[Don Shepard] On the volunteer side, it would basically be the cessation of services. So that's where there's mostly -- Gulf Coast is marketing the services, enticing the non-custodial to move towards employment and actually word-of-mouth and partner agencies, and we moved—I believe it was like five percent, three percent, actual volunteers at the beginning to now—Ann Marie had said it's over 30 percent volunteers.

[Lesley Smith] Wow, that's great. Thank you. This question is for the entire panel. I'll ask the question and then call on each of the States if I could, "Do the programs utilize subsidized employment from the TANF program as an incentive?" And Florida, we can start with you.

[Don Shepard] To make sure I understood it correctly, you indicated are we using TANF dollars for subsidized employment or OJT-type programs?

[Lesley Smith] Yes.

[Don Shepard] And currently, we do not have the non-custodial parent program funds aligned to where it would support an OJT or another type of subsidized employment, but we can do referrals from the non-custodial parent into alternate programs within the workforce system and thereby assist them with subsidized employment, but not directly through the our TANF dollars aligned to the non-custodial parents' program.

[Lesley Smith] Thank you.

[Artish Jacobs] This is the District of Columbia. We do not use TANF dollars. We would use any incentive monies that we got.

[Lesley Smith] Okay. Thank you. And for Texas?.

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[Michael Hayes] So subsidized employment is one of the options that the local workforce boards have in placing non-custodial parents that are ordered into the program, and they use some of their TANF funding. They also, because the Workforce Board and local workforce centers are providers of Workforce Investment Act-funded and food stamp-funded employment and training services, they will oftentimes co-enroll or blend funding if they can determine eligibility for non-custodial parents. And so they may use WIA funds for job training, or some of the local workforce centers have received special workforce Department of Labor funds to do specialized training for non-custodial parents as part of the program, so maybe, like an OSHA training and then placement for hazardous waste.

[Lesley Smith] Okay, very good; thank you. This question is also for the entire panel. I'll read the question first. This question is related to collaboration of stakeholders such as mental health, health department, VOC-rehab, the National Fatherhood Initiative. "How are these partners involved? How are the costs of service covered? Are there retention incentives? If you could speak to any of those aspects that would be helpful." Texas, why don't you start?

[Michael Hayes] So the -- I was -- as the Florida team was describing the services—but you know they really described pretty much the same kinds of range of services that we provide in Texas with the non-custodial parent choices program. We -- with the exception of the peer group and the parenting time, we did assess our parenting education. We did a pilot test of funding using the curriculum that we developed in a couple of our, in three of our sites, that was a parenting focus curriculum that did have some impact on -- some positive impact on entering into employment. But as far as like, local fatherhood groups or substance abuse treatments, those -- that kind of collaboration is done at the local level by the workforce case managers. And so whatever they can develop at that local level, we don't have any other formal State-level collaborations other than the partnerships between the child support division, the Texas Workforce Commission, and our 4D courts.

[Lesley Smith] Thank you. District of Columbia?

[Angelisa Young] Okay, yes. We have partnerships with a lot of, not only government agencies, but non-profit agencies as well. A lot of times we rely on them meeting just basic individuals who have the need that they serve; that's primarily how we do it. There's already something in place for these individuals. An example would be the Father in Court program we have with Superior Court. They receive grant dollars to serve newly returning citizens, and therefore we partner with them to send our NCP's who were newly coming out of incarceration. So that's primarily how we do that.

[Lesley Smith] Thank you. And Florida?

[Ann Marie Winter] Thanks, great question and very critical to ensuring the success of the non-custodial parent's rehabilitation and self-sufficiency. As an agency, we have in-house counseling capacity. We have a fairly large clinic where we can refer clients to if they need counseling, individual or group therapy, and we do that as needed. And as a non-profit, we just collaborate with other non-profits to provide services. They may refer clients to us. Some of those volunteers may be coming from allied agencies that provide services that our clients access and vice versa. So they may be helping a client with counseling, for example, if they're not in our own agency, and they know that they're a non-custodial parent who's not making child support payments, they'll refer them to us so that we can help with the employment side. So it's critical -- in order for this to work that there be open dialogue and communication across State, local, non-profits, and government agencies. We also do a lot of outreach at job fairs; we do cross-training on what we do, so we're fairly well-known, and that builds over time. That's not something that happens

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overnight, but that's been a successful way for us to provide services beyond the scope of the non-custodial parent program.

[Lesley Smith] Perfect. Thank you. Another question for you, Florida, "How do you use TANF dollars to support NCP services without upsetting TANF work participation rates?"

[Don Shepherd] Hopefully, I've got this correct and respond appropriately. Within our system, the non-custodial parent, the custodial parent, generally, is still cash active, would be within the participation, the TANF pool, and part of our participation rate denominator. Because of the status of the non-custodial, they are not included within that participation rate, as I understand it.

[Lesley Smith] Great. Thank you, Don. This question...

[Don Shepherd] Yeah, we oversee...

[Lesley and Don talking over each other]

[Lesley Smith] Go ahead.

[Don Shepherd] I was just going to say, we oversee the TANF work program and very much aware of participation rates and, hopefully, innovative practices to chart high levels of participation rates. But the non-custodial has not been a piece of that.

[Lesley Smith] Thank you. This question is for the entire panel. "Are entities allowed to participate in the program more than once, say, if they were compliant and subsequently sanctioned and then particularly coming back on into the program?" Maybe we could start with Florida?

[Ann Marie Winter] Sure. Well, a couple of things. Okay, so, a client who finds a job and keeps that job for up to six months is considered successfully graduated from the program. If they should lose their job, they're still a non-custodial parent that is court-ordered to make child support payments, they can come back into the program. However, you know, clients that have non-compliance are terminated from the program. So you can come back if there haven't been any issues with the terms of your enrollment. Thank you.

[Lesley Smith] Thank you. And Texas?

[Michael Hayes] So, we kind of have a three strikes and you're out rule. Of the 16-, 17,000 non-custodial parents that have been ordered into the program, there are probably between -- I'd have to -- I don't have the number right in front of me -- roughly between 900 and 1,100 of those that have been ordered in more than one time. And it can be -- it can happen in a variety of ways. You can have a non-custodial parent who participates, gets a job, stays employed through that six-month retention period, which is what we track them through, or what workforce provides a retention services through that to a six-month retention period. Let's say nine months, 10 months later, they lose that job; they can't voluntarily, in our model, they can't voluntarily come back in to receive NCP Choices services. They could voluntarily go back to the workforce center and get services, but they're not going to get the broader enhanced services as part of NCP Choices. But if they're non-compliant, they get behind in their child support again, we may bring them back into court on an enforcement action, and they might get ordered back into the program. That's one way they might get ordered in.

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The more frequent way is they are non-compliant at some point during the program; they may spend a period of time in county jail; they get out; and they get ordered back in -- and -- to see if they will take advantage of the services the second go-round, and then in rare, certain circumstances, we may give them a third go-round. And we've had those success stories that happened on the third go-round. But for most people, it's a—one-time is all it takes.

[Lesley Smith] Thank you. And District of Columbia.

[Artish Jacobs] What the District of Columbia -- I want to speak on both our employment program and with the Fresh Start program. So we do allow re-entry into the Fresh Start program if you are unsuccessful. However, we do request that any missed payments that you've made that you make those payments back up. If you're not able to make the payments back up for the Fresh Start program, you have to start all over again. With the employment program, we do encourage you that if you have not been successful in the program to reach out to us so that we can either try to get you back into that same program or find another program out there for you to be a part of.

[Lesley Smith] Thank you. There is a follow-up question for D.C., "What kinds of services do you offer or are provided to NCP parents who are newly released from prison?"

[Artish Jacobs] Well, of course, the Fresh Start program is one option that you have when you're newly released. Also that employment program is out there that we offer for you as well.

[Angelisa Young ] We also have driver's license. If your driver's license was revoked during your time of incarceration, you have up to six months for us to reinstate your child support order, and you can get your driver's license during that time. So that's primarily -- and we also have partnerships, like I've mentioned earlier, with the Father in Court program that -- which is a program that specifically deals with incarcerated indivi-- -- well, previously incarcerated individuals.

[Lesley Smith] Thank you. For Florida, for Ann Marie, "What kind of resistance, if any, did you receive from your legislature when seeking the appropriate funds for your program?" Actually that question may need to go to Don, or, however.

[Ann Marie Winter] No, it's Gulf Coast that advocates each year. It's really important to have very good relationships with the legislature. We're very fortunate that members of our Board of Directors are very closely aligned with some of our legislators. So it was a struggle at the beginning, but the program has been really successful, and we tout it as a jobs program. Each year I present to the legislative delegations at public meetings, and I try and focus on what they are going to link to. What is the hook? What is the thing that is going to interest them in funding this program? Our governor, Rick Scott, has made a promise to find 700,000 jobs in his tenure as governor of the State. And so knowing that, when I am before the legislature, I ensure that I talk about this in terms of an economic development program that provides jobs to needy Floridians who cannot otherwise access jobs. You know, one-on-one, we then meet with legislators in each of the counties where the program is funded as well as the chairman of the house and senate committees under which this appropriation comes from. So it really is a year-long process; it doesn't take, you know, 40 hours a week all year, but it is definitely a year-long process to ensure that funding remains for this program. But, again, I think the fact that we are placing more people each and every year, that those people are staying in their jobs and that those people are making consistent child support payments really sells itself.

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[Lesley Smith] Great; thank you. We have one last question for the panel. "If you could just talk a little bit more about the -- expand upon the role case management plays in your program, sort of the key functions and importance, and the role that you see it playing?" Texas, if you'd like to start.

[Michael Hayes] Sure. So, in our model, the case managers are staffed that work at the workforce center, and I'll -- I'll start off by sharing a quote or at least the content of a quote from a non-custodial parent who participated in the program and then was on a subsequent panel. We do, about every 18 months, a Statewide peer learning event where we bring workforce staff, child support staff all together from all of our sites to talk about best practices. And, as a part of that, we also bring in a panel of program participants to talk about their experience in the program and, you know, get their recommendations: what was meaningful about the program; what helped them succeed; what they would do to improve it? One of the fathers that was on that panel remembered when talking about that his experience with public agencies up until that point had been less than stellar or less than -- not all that positive, and that -- he said this was one of the first times, when he met for the first time with the NCP Choices case manager, it was the first time that somebody, he said, "I thought really was going to be on my side or at least really was going to be there for me, like, didn't treat me just like a number, treated me like a person, wanted, you know, not just know what I didn't have in terms of skills or knowledge or employment history but wanted to know kind of what the positives were as well."

[Michael Hayes] And I think that's ultimately the first and most important thing that case managers do is make some kind of human connection. These are non-custodial parents who are being ordered into the program at court as an alternative to going to jail. They're not used to having much human empathy for their circumstance at that point and not particularly trustful of the system, so a case manager who understands the importance of slowly building some trust—and I also think one of the ways that that trust starts to get built is there is some concrete, tangible incentives or supports that the workforce staff offers very early on that kind of shows that they have skin in the game, and kind of the simplest one of those is when they provide a gas card to go out and do job search or bus tokens if they're in an urban that's got a decent bus system, but a lot of it's paying for gas so they can get out there and do job search or getting them the uniform or work boots or whatever it is that gets them in the door for that job. So those tangible kinds of help which—it's one thing to say, "Oh yeah, we're here for you, and we're going to help you get a job." The proof is in the pudding. Do we actually send you someplace that's got job openings that's going to be open to hiring you and then help you get there by putting gas in your car?

[Lesley Smith] Thank you, Michael. District of Columbia?

[Artish Jacobs] Our case managers play a very vital part with their contact with the non-custodial parents. In the District, we certainly reference our non-custodial parents by that name because, you know, we have the female and male population. But we make it imperative for our case managers to when they are seeing these non-custodial parents that come into the office that they are able to obtain the information that they need, try to address any barriers that they may have in the best possible way and fit them in any program that we may have that they're eligible for. So our case managers play a very vital part. They hold lots of cases. So sometimes all those cases, of course, for many workers or case managers that are on this line, can be sometimes very unmanageable, but we try to work with what we can and ensure that our case managers understand the importance of when you have contact with that non-custodial parent, you are trying to determine every need, or what's the hindrance of them not being able to pay that support, and what we could do as an agency to get them to where they need to be so that we can get them on track to paying the support. So their part of this process is very, very pivotal.

[Lesley Smith] Thank you. And Florida, quickly, if you may, as we're --

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[Ann Marie Winter] Sure, respecting the time, I think Artish and Michael did a great job of articulating the importance of a case manager. We call it a "life coach" because we feel that this person is, as Michael said, going to treat the client with the respect and dignity that they deserve, and they may be the first person in that person's life to do so I think you need to look at this from a wellness perspective, in addition to all of the deliverables that we're trying to meet, it's really about mentoring the non-custodial parent to feel good about themselves, to feel like they will with your support.

[Lesley Smith] Thank you, Florida. Very good. Thank you everyone.

**FEEDBACK REMINDER**

[Lesley Smith] That concludes our question and answer. This concludes the end of our Webinar. On behalf of the Administration for Children and Families, Region X Office, we would like to thank everyone for attending this Webinar and for your thoughtful discussions. Thank you to our presenters for sharing their experience and knowledge of implementing their programs that serve non-custodial parents. A transcript and audio recording will be made available for everyone within the coming weeks. We welcome your feedback. A survey will pop-up on your computer screen in a separate window momentarily. Please be sure to provide your feedback on the survey so we can continue to improve our Webinars.

**THANK YOU**

[Lesley Smith] Once again, we would like to thank all of you for participating in today's Webinar. Have a great afternoon.

[Operator] And ladies and gentlemen, this will conclude today's conference. Thank you for your participation.

[End.]