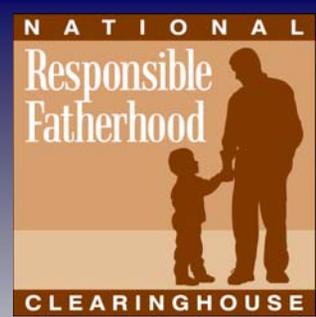


CHILD ACCESS GRANTS



Good News for Parents and Children!

Debra Pontisso
Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement
NRFC Webinar - February 7, 2008

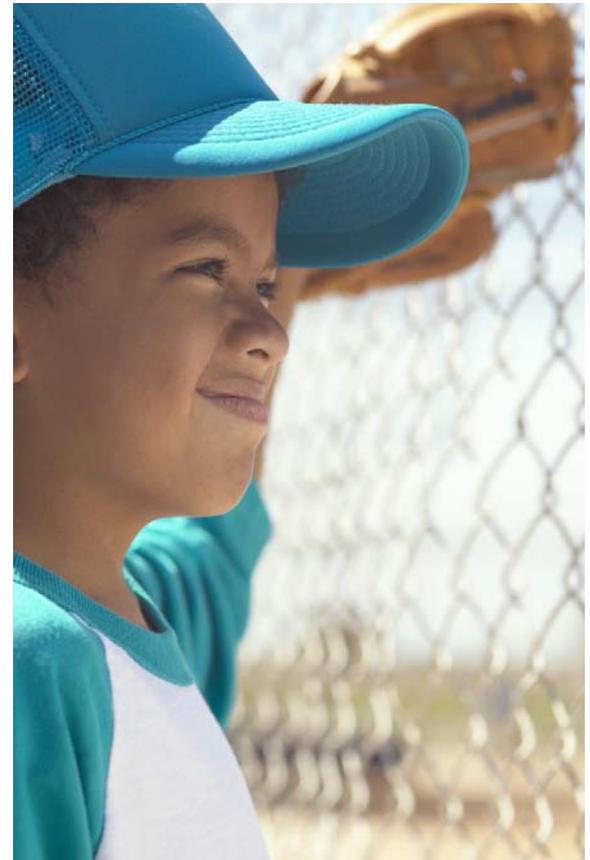
Outline of Remarks

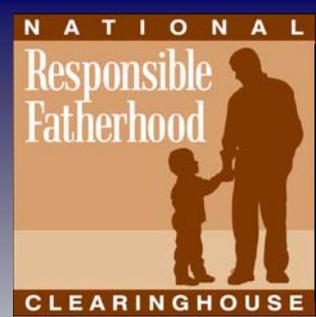
I. Brief overview

- Child Support
- Child Access

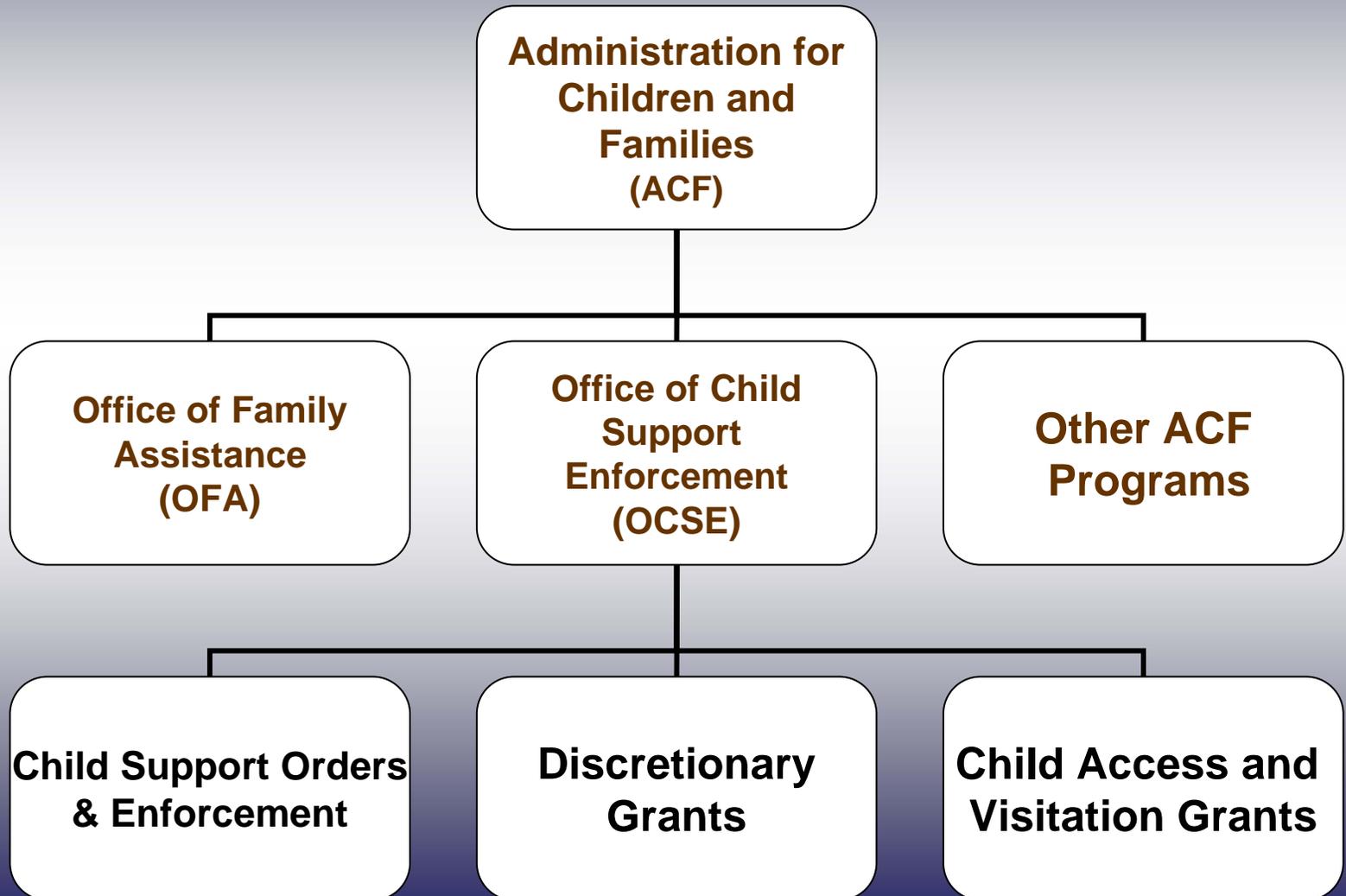
II. Reaching Out to Unwed Parents

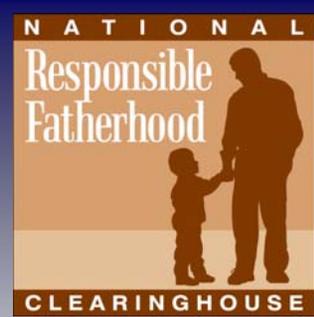
III. Suggestions





Brief Overview: Child Support and Child Access Programs





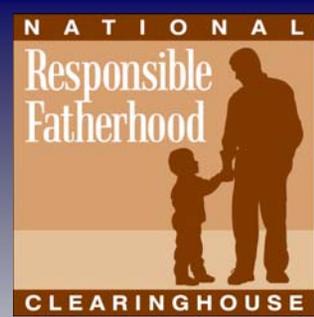
Important Distinctions

Child Support Enforcement

1. Establishment of paternity for children born to unmarried parents
2. Establishment of child support orders for children whose parents are TANF recipients and/or divorced or unwed
3. Federal parent locate services
4. Discretionary program resources (\$3 million annual estimate)

Child Access and Visitation Grants

1. Administered by OCSE but not a child support program
2. Goal is to provide funds to states that will enable them to assist noncustodial parents gain increased access and visitation with their children
3. \$10 million distributed to states annually



Child Access & Visitation Grant

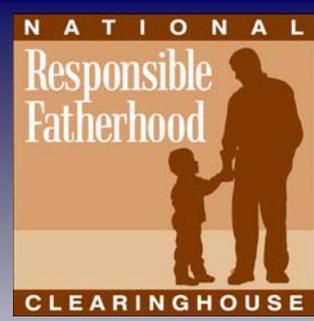
Goal:

“...to facilitate noncustodial parents’ access to and visitation of their children...”

- \$10 million per year is distributed to States (\$100 million since FY 1997)
- To date, over half million parents served nationwide!

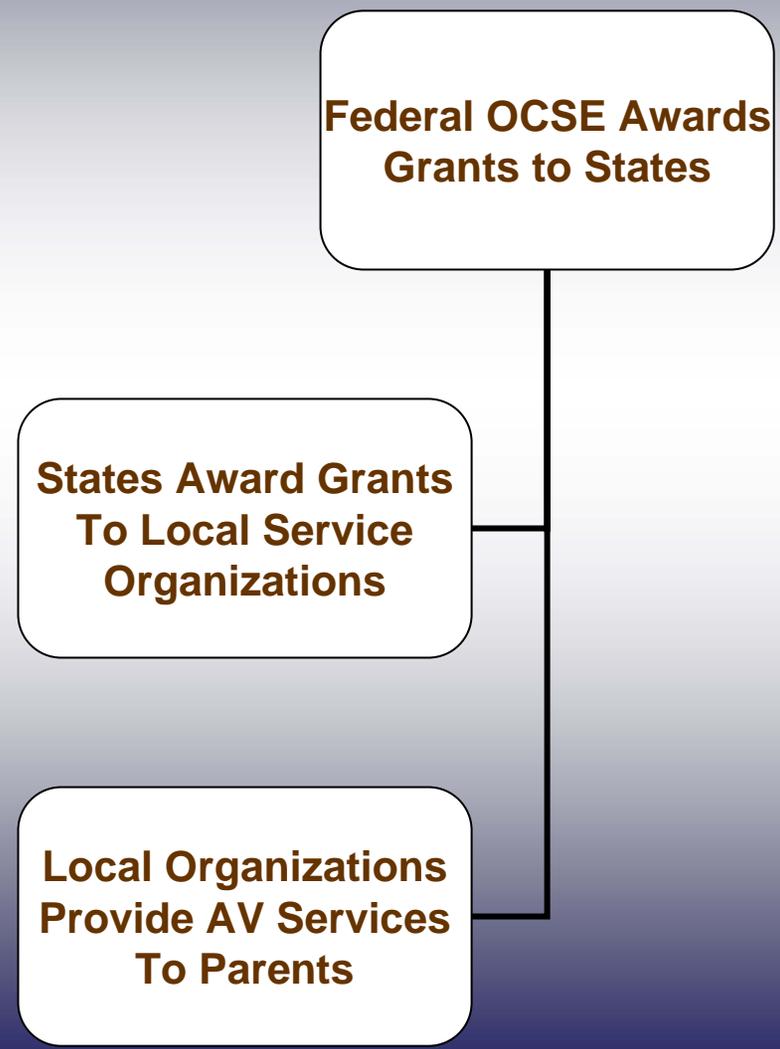
Allowable services:

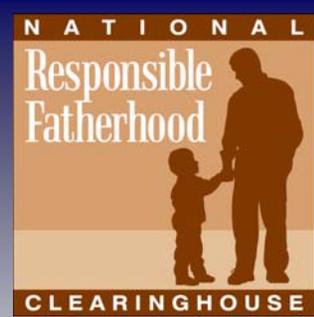
- Mediation
- Parenting plans
- (Parent) education
- Counseling
- Visitation enforcement (monitored/supervised visitation, neutral drop-off and pick-up); and
- Guidelines for visitation and alternative custody arrangements



Funding of AV Services: How it Works

1. **OCSE reviews State plans for funding and providing AV services**
2. **Each year, States are awarded grant funds based on a statutorily-defined funding formula (\$100,000 minimum grant)**
3. **States award grants to local service providers and determine who will receive the funds; what type of services will be provided; and who will be served**





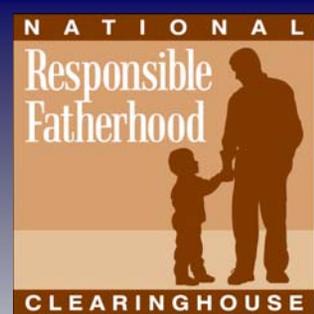
State Administration of the AV Grant



The majority of States have designated either the:

- Office of the Courts; or
- Child Support Agencies

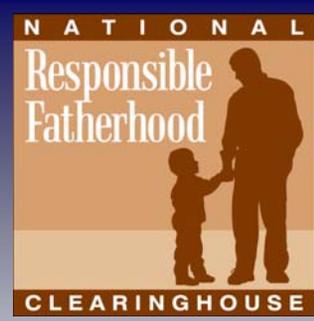
responsibility for managing their AV Grant Programs.



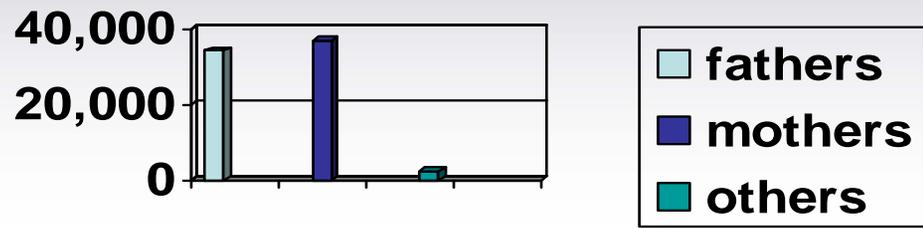
Annual Program Reporting Requirements: Example

- State and local grantees are required to collect program data via the “State Child Access Program Survey”
- Sample of data elements in the table to the right

Identity of Local Service Providers	Referral Source	Client Information (e.g., mothers, fathers, legal guardians, etc.)
Marital Status	Race and Ethnicity	Income
Services Provided	No. of Clients Who Received Services	Outcome Data: #NCPs with increased parenting time



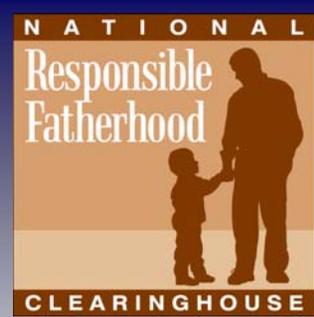
Nationwide Profile of Parents Served (FY 2006 Preliminary Data)



- Majority of parents served (73,477) are:
 - Low-income (\$20,000 less)
 - Unwed; and
 - Nearly equal number in terms of gender
 - fathers (34,212);
 - mothers (36,830);
 - and
 - Legal guardians, grandparents (2,435).

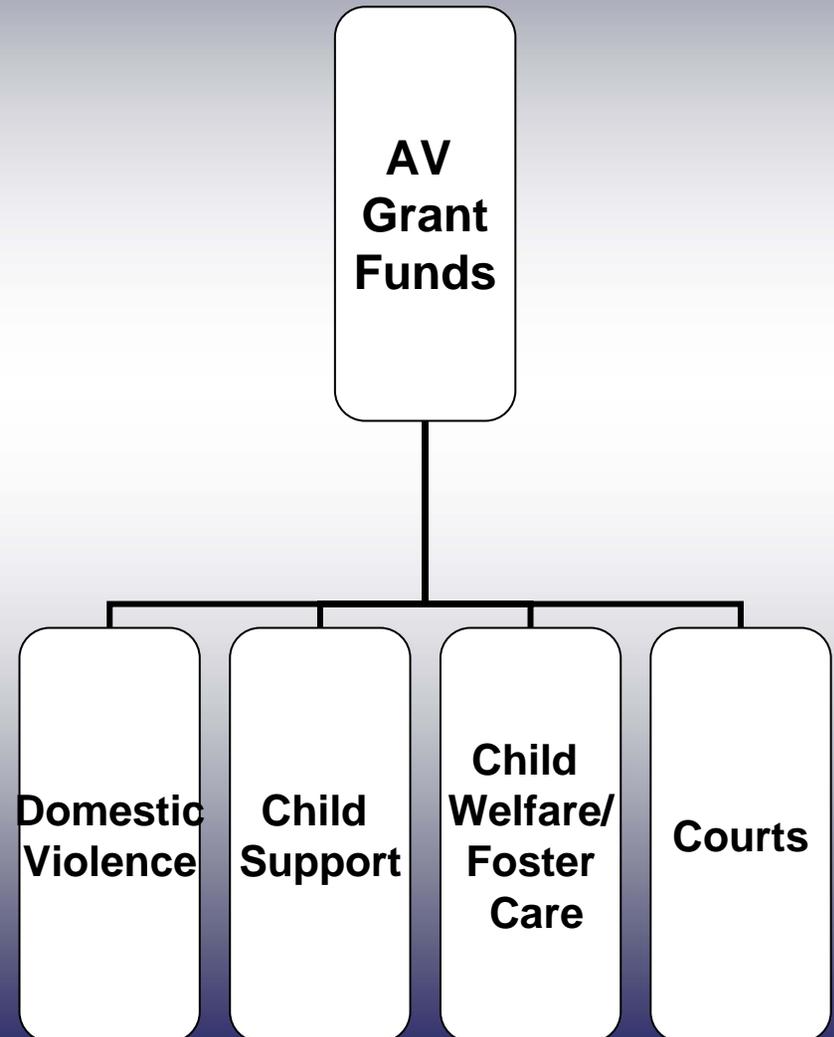
**SOURCE:
CLIENT REFERRAL**

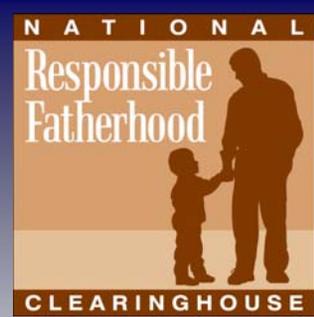
Court	Self	IV-D	Other	Unkown
36,078	6,721	15,927	8,170	6,150



The Reality: Competition for AV Dollars at the State Level

- Some States use the AV grant for child support clients only.
- Others for non-child support cases.
- Majority of States provide services for a mix of child support and non-child support clients.





Reaching Out to Unwed Parents

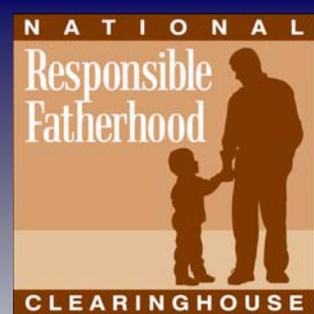
National Out-of-Wedlock Birth Rate:

- **Nearly 37% or 1.5 million live births each year are to unwed parents**

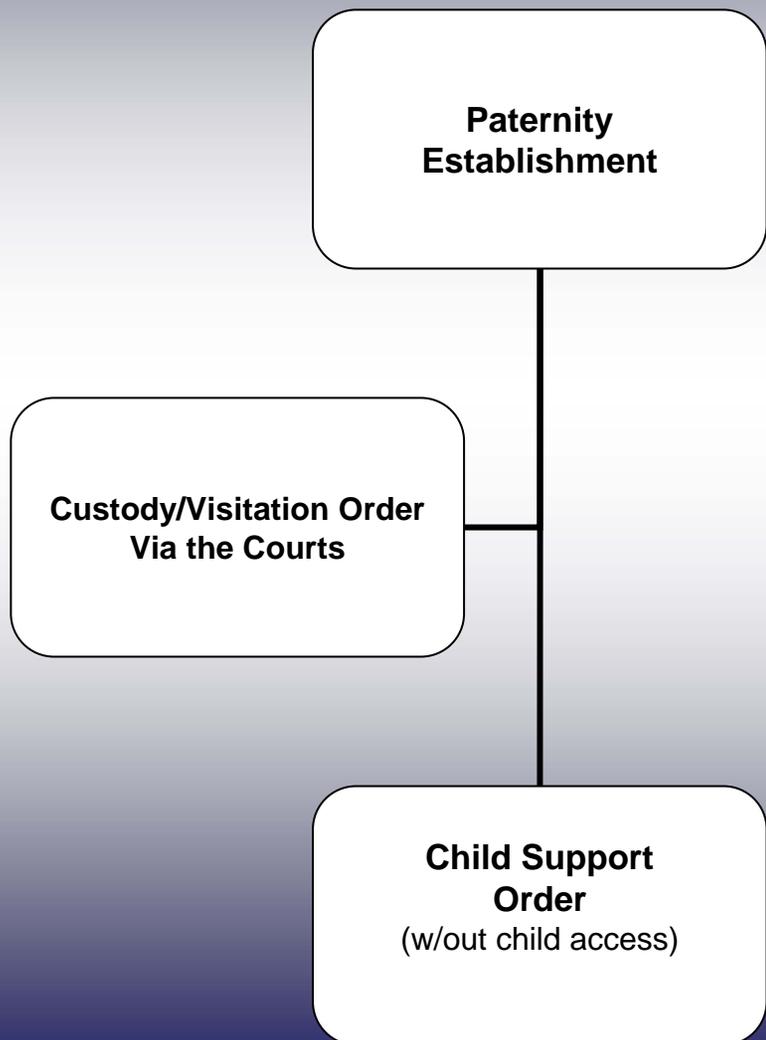
(Source: National Center of Health Statistics, 2005)

Estimated percentage of unwed parents that comprise State IV-D caseload. For example:

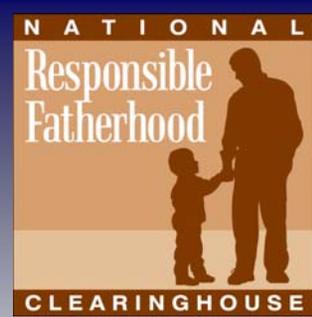
- **Connecticut** **67%**
- **Iowa** **68%**
- **Michigan** **62%**
- **New Hampshire** **63%**
- **Virginia** **66%**
- **Texas** **68%**



Unwed Noncustodial Parents: Out-of-the-Loop (compared to divorced parents)



- Unwed father establishes paternity: name on birth certificate
- Custody or visitation orders – in most states – is a separate court action
- Assumption: most unwed fathers unaware of the need to obtain a child access/visitation order
- IV-D funds cannot be used to establish parenting orders
- Low-income fathers cannot afford to hire an attorney or pay the filing fees (\$175 - \$250)



Barriers Remain: Views from the Front Line

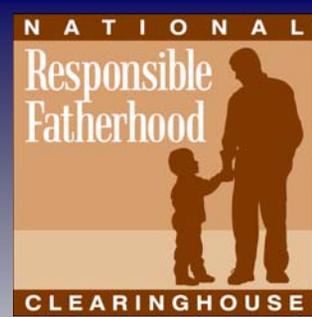
Parents

- **CP does not allow the NCP to see his/her children.**
- **NCP does not have a parenting time (visitation or custody) order from the court.**
- **CPs and NCPs do not have the information or skills on how to effectively co-parent.**

[Source: OCSE-funded “A Collaboration and Strategic Planning Guide for States: Child Access and Visitation Grant Programs”]

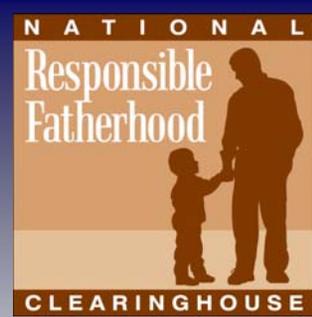
Service Agencies

- **Workers should refer parents w/ access issues to court and/or community-based service providers.**
- **Workers should be able to refer parents to a specialized worker within the agency who can help them with AV problems.**
- **Workers should ask all parents if they are having any parenting time problems.**
- **Some AV programs struggle with client recruitment and retention issues.**



The Result? NCPs Without Child Access Pay Less Child Support

- Census Bureau (2003) reports that 77.1 percent of parents with joint custody or visitation rights paid at least some child support compared with 55.8 percent of their counterparts without visitation rights or joint custody

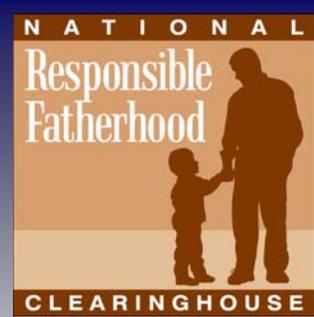


The Good News: AV Services Help NCPs Gain Access to Children and Result in an Increased Payment of Child Support

- **HHS Office of Inspector General Study (2002)**
“Effectiveness of the Access and Visitation Grant Program”
 - **Services:** mediation & development of parenting plans.
 - **Results:** Increased NCP child access and increased child support payment.
- “Prior to services, unwed NCPs paid 52% of child support owed; after services, unwed NCPs paid 70% of amount owed.
- “Prior to services, 69% unwed NCPs had no parenting rights; after services, 66 % gained increased parenting rights.

III. Suggestions





OCSE Program Resources

- OCSE's Child Access and Visitation Grants (contact the State Coordinators)

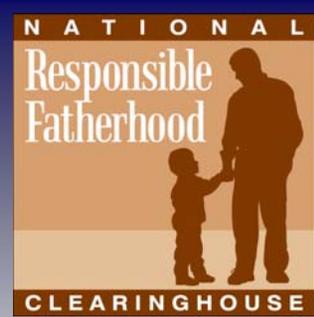
http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/case/access_visitation

- OCSE's Discretionary Grant RFPs

<http://www.grants.gov/search/search.do?&mode=VIEW&flag2006=true&oppld=16681>

- OCSE Reports Related to Access and Visitation

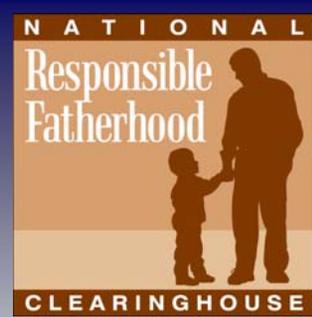
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/open/HHS-2008-ACF-OCSE-FI-0005.html>



Program Resources (continued)



- **Subscribe to on-line Federal list serves re: discretionary program announcements**
www.grants.gov

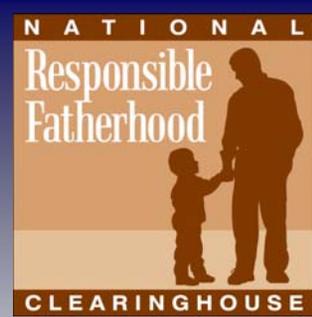


Client Recruitment Problems?

Establish partnerships with:

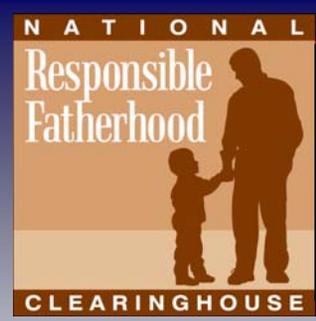
1. National, State, or local fatherhood organizations
2. State Offices of the Courts and/or local family courts
3. State or local Child Support Agencies.

(listing of resources on last page)

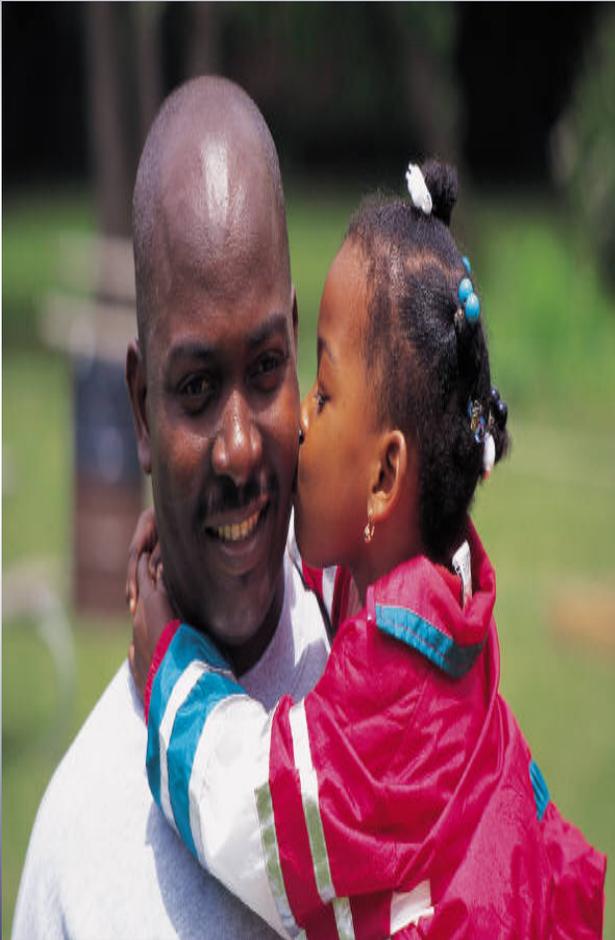


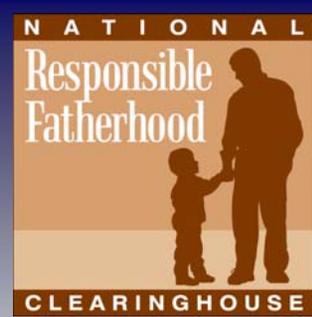
Empowering Parents with “User Friendly” Information

- Resource: Association of Family and Conciliation Courts – pamphlets on co-parenting, unwed parents, consequences of divorce on children, etc. www.afccnet.org
--click on “shopping center” icon
- Information materials such as OCSE’s “The Power of Two” paternity establishment video and child support handbook
(contact Rayetta Byrd rbyrd@acf.hhs.gov)



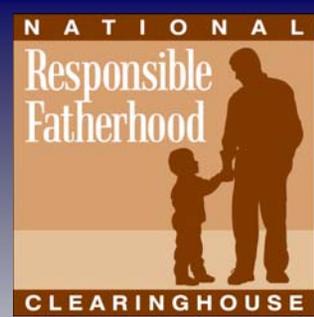
Parenting Connections: A Resource Guide for Unmarried Mothers and Fathers





Sample of Draft Contents

- Section I: Healthy Mothers, Healthy Children
- Section II: Responsible Mothers, Responsible Fathers
 - In-hospital paternity establishment
 - Child support – a shared responsibility
 - Co-parenting relationships
 - Parenting plans
 - Marriage a possibility?
- Section III: Your Child's Health and Well-Being (e.g., immunization, WIC, SIDS, etc.)
- Section IV: Child Care and Education
- Section V: Just for Fathers
- Appendix: Program Information & Resources for Both Parents



Resources

Fatherhood organizations:

www.fatherhood.gov (NRFC Clearinghouse)

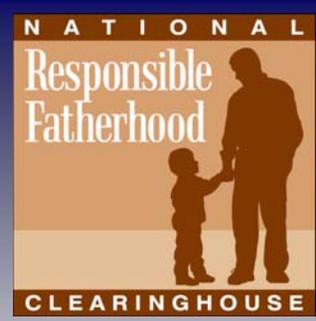
www.nflgonline.org (National Fatherhood Leaders Group)

State Child Access and Visitation Program Contacts:

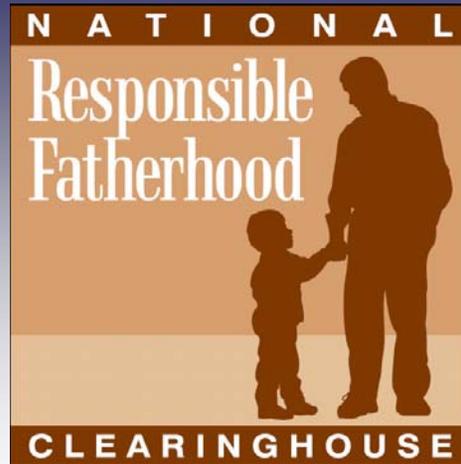
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/case/access> visitation

State Child Support Enforcement Agencies:

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/extinf.html>

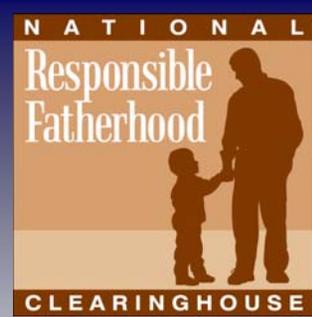


Thank you!



Texas Access & Visitation Programs

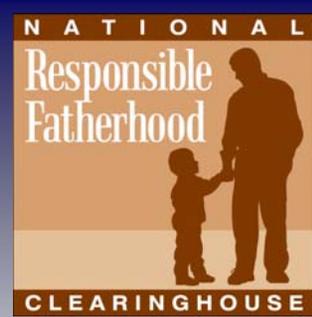
Anita Stuckey



Family Initiatives

As part of the Child Support Division, Texas Office of the Attorney General, we create programs to:

- encourage & support family formation and responsible fatherhood,
- improve the Child Support Division's effectiveness and efficiency, and
- decrease long-term costs to government



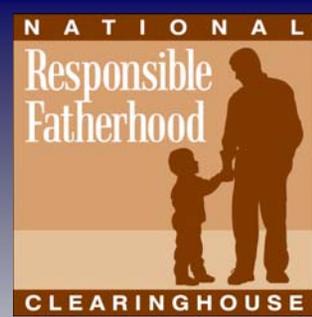
The Vision

- The Federal Office of Child support Enforcement Plan for 2005-2009 Vision Statement and Guiding Principles emphasizes the importance of parents providing both financial ***and emotional*** support to their children.
- The OAG Child Support Division echoes this same philosophical approach and highlights our support for the emotional connection between parents and their children through the OAG Access and Visitation Program.

Balancing Act

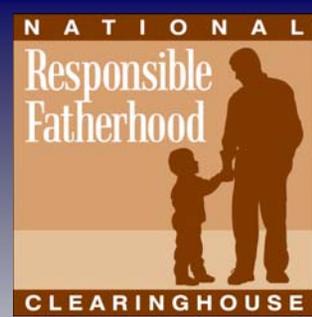


- 1996: Welfare reform law directed child support to go to families first; Access & Visitation grant program established.
- Goal: Increase non-custodial parents access to their children.



Challenges for Parents

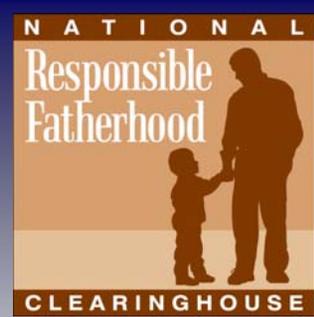
- Federal regulations governing the IV-D program do not permit federal funding to be spent on custody and visitation disputes.
- Parents must apply separately for parenting orders in many states and pay an additional filing fee.
- Parents must file separately to get services related to parenting time conflicts or enforcement of parenting orders.



Strategic Collaborations

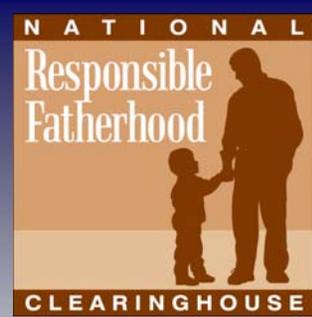
Stretch Grant \$\$\$

- Other State agencies and local governmental units
- Community- and faith-based organizations
- Intra-agency collaboration
- Access & Visitation grants to local governments, community-, and faith-based organizations to provide education on parenting apart, dispute resolution services, and possession order compliance and enforcement



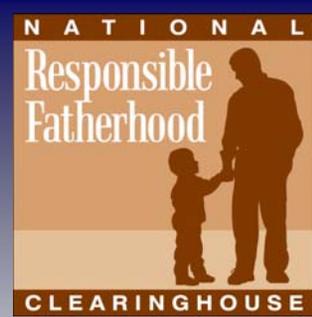
A&V \$ fund:

- **Grants to community- and faith-based organizations and local governments**
 - Goal--increase noncustodial parent contact with children
 - 10 grantees – services include: co-parenting education, mediation, supervised visitation, and enforcement plus 1 grantee for Hotline



Shared Parenting Projects

- **“For Our Children”**
 - Shared Parenting video and written guide
 - Distribution through child support offices/courts/community programs
- **Access and Visitation Hotline**
 - Toll-free, legal education line for CPs and NCPs; companion legal web site www.txaccess.org
 - Monday-Friday, 1-7PM, English or Spanish
- A&V Online Directory
- <https://www.oag.state.tx.us/cs/access/>
 - Lists A&V providers by county/services; in CS staff’s desktop folder

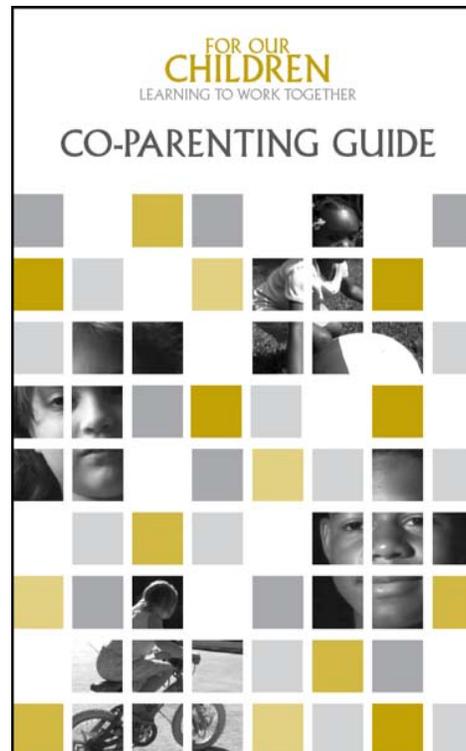


And . . .

- **“Shared Parenting Pilot”** ended January 31, 2008; planning similar project in another child support office
 - On-site facilitator at two OAG units to resolve parenting disputes for parents involved in a Child Support Review Process.
- Parenting Order Legal Clinics—in development (alternate funding)
 - Monthly legal clinics for parents with IV-D child support orders led by attorneys experienced in family law issues from local legal aid providers with support of Assistant Attorneys General from the OAG

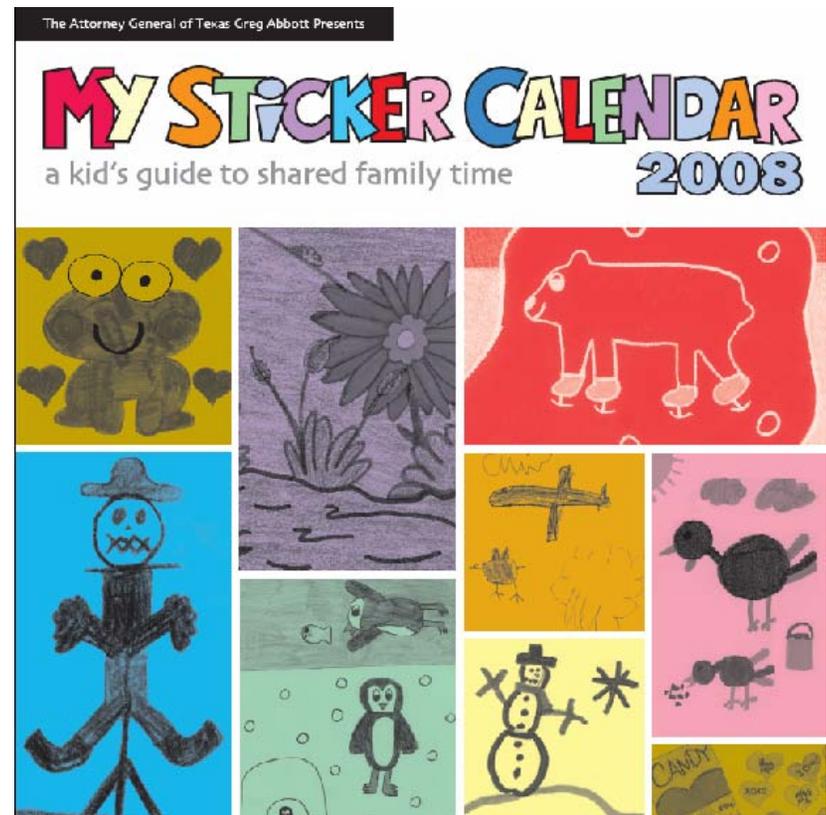
Publications

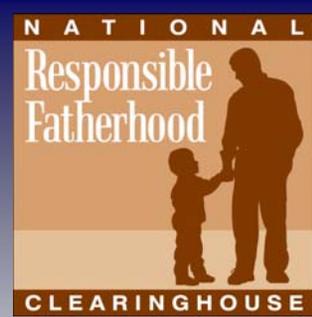
- “For Our Children” Shared Parenting video and printed guide
- Publications, including this guide, are distributed through grantees, child support offices, non-profits, and local governmental agencies as public outreach.



Outreach

The *My Sticker Calendar* gives children a sense of control while helping parents align their busy schedules. Stickers help all see which days the child will be spending with mom or with dad and the planned activities.





Contact Information

Anita Stuckey

(512) 460-6437

anita.stuckey@cs.oag.state.tx.us

Go to <http://www.oag.state.tx.us/>, click on child support, then on Family Initiatives to learn about other fatherhood programs and publications