

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
744 P Street, Sacramento, CA 95814



October 2, 1997

ALL-COUNTY LETTER NO. 97-56

TO: ALL COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEYS
ALL TITLE IV-D ADMINISTRATORS
ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL WELFARE TO WORK
PROGRAM COORDINATORS

REASON FOR THIS TRANSMITTAL

- State Law Change
 Federal Law or Regulation Change
 Court Order or Settlement Agreement
 Clarification Requested by One or More Counties
 Initiated by CDSS

SUBJECT: NONCUSTODIAL PARENT EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING
DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) is soliciting counties to participate in a positive and innovative demonstration project aimed at providing employment and training services to the unemployed, noncustodial parent (NCP) whose children are receiving public assistance. The purpose of this three-year demonstration project is to determine if providing employment services and training, supportive services, as well as parental training to noncustodial, unemployed parents will result in an increase in the amount and consistency of child support payments, a reduction in public assistance to the children of these parents, and an increase in the parents' involvement in their children's lives. If this pilot is successful and cost-effective, it may be implemented statewide.

BACKGROUND

There has been growing concern over the number of children receiving public assistance and the failure of many NCPs to provide for the financial and emotional needs of their children. In state fiscal year (SFY) 1995-96, California collected \$566 million of the more than \$1.6 billion owed by NCPs for current child support collections. More than \$1 billion in child support was unpaid. In cases where children were receiving AFDC, 58 percent of the NCPs never paid. Many of those parents cited unemployment as the reason for not paying child support. This demonstration project will address these concerns.

One of the guiding principles of the new welfare system is to make both the mother and the father mutually responsible for the financial support and nurturing of their children. By offering employment services and training, supportive services, and parental responsibility training to NCPs, we hope to educate NCPs on the positive impact of their participation in their children's lives. By providing these services, we hope to not only decrease poverty, but also to improve children's well-being.

Federal and state legislation promote employment and training programs for NCPs who are delinquent in their child support. Under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, Section 365, all states have the authority to require an individual who owes past-due child support and whose child is receiving assistance under a state program, to pay child support or participate in work activities. Under the California Family Code, Section 3558, a court has the authority to order either parent in a proceeding involving child support to attend job training, job placement, vocational rehabilitation and work programs. Failure to comply with the court order could result in a contempt action against the NCP.

Several national demonstration projects providing job training to NCPs have produced favorable results such as increased employment, increased child support collections, and a decrease in public assistance. Other intangible benefits have emerged as well, such as increased parental responsibility, improved relationships between NCPs and their children, improved relationships between mothers and fathers, and a measure of family reunification.

DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

The final State Budget for SFY 1997-98 contains \$2.5 million to fund the first six months of the three-year project. It is anticipated that subsequent years will be funded at approximately \$5 million annually subject to state budget appropriations. Up to five counties will be selected to participate with the implementation date scheduled for January 1, 1998. Counties are encouraged to collaborate with other organizations such as county, state and community service agencies to utilize additional resources to implement this demonstration project.

Based on a cooperative partnership between the District Attorney's Office (DA) and the County Welfare Department (CWD), each participating county will have the flexibility to design and implement a program to meet the needs of the local community. Components of the program may include, but not be limited to, employment and training services, child support enforcement, parental training, mediation, and any supportive services that the county may feel are appropriate.

The Department is currently developing the Child Support Assurance (CSA) Demonstration Project recently enacted by Assembly Bill 1542. This demonstration project is intended to lift children out of poverty by guaranteeing the family a minimum child support payment as long as the custodial parent is employed, while encouraging noncustodial parents to financially support their children. The CDSS is interested in having at least one county participate concurrently in both demonstration projects when the CSA project is implemented at a later date. Additional information on CSA will be forthcoming under separate cover.

The Research Branch of CDSS will contract with an independent evaluator to conduct a formal evaluation to determine the success of this demonstration project. The evaluation process

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may require counties to randomly assign eligible NCPs to a control group and an experimental group. Each demonstration site will be required to compile certain data elements such as child support payment histories and welfare grant histories to be used in the evaluation.

Counties interested in participating in this demonstration project must submit a joint proposal signed by both the CWD and the DA by November 1, 1997 to:

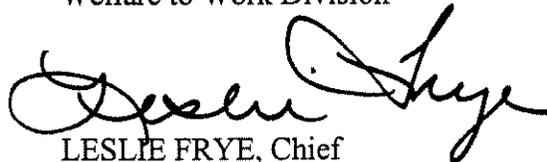
California Department of Social Services
Employment Operations Section
Attn: Kris Howard
744 P Street, MS 6-136
Sacramento, CA 95814

Specific guidelines and instructions for completing your proposal are attached. If you have any questions regarding this demonstration project, please contact Kris Howard of the Employment Programs Bureau at (916) 654-1419. Any questions regarding the Child Support program should be directed to Ed Flores of the Child Support Management Bureau at (916) 654-1214.

Sincerely,



BRUCE WAGSTAFF
Deputy Director
Welfare to Work Division



LESLIE FRYE, Chief
Office of Child Support

Enclosures

NONCUSTODIAL PARENT
EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING
DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

GUIDELINES

GOALS:

- To increase employment and earnings of unemployed noncustodial parents (NCPs) to a level at which they can support themselves and their children
- To reduce the need for public assistance to the children of NCPs by increasing the amount and consistency of child support collections
- To assist NCPs in assuming a larger role in their children's lives by providing not only financial, but emotional support as well

TARGETED GROUP :

(Participants must meet all of the following criteria):

- NCPs whose children are receiving public assistance;
- NCPs who cite unemployment as the reason for not paying child support;
- An order for child support has been established in accordance with state law and the obligor is delinquent;
- NCPs who have the right to work in this country; and
- NCPs who are not receiving social security disability insurance.

PROJECT PARTNERS:

(Must include):

- Family Support Division of the District Attorney's Office
- County Welfare Department

(May also include, but not be limited to):

- Employment Development Department (EDD)
- Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) Agencies
- Community-based Organizations
- Private Sector

SERVICES:

(May include, but not be limited to):

- EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

The main objective of this demonstration project is to help participants find employment that will allow them to support themselves and their children. It is important to move participants into work activities as quickly as possible and establish the practice of paying child support immediately. Counties are encouraged to develop their own program of employment and training services which may include, but not be limited to: orientation, assessment, job search assistance, job clubs, on-the-job training, vocation-specific education and training, job development, and job retention training.

- CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT

The second objective of this program is to increase regular child support payments to families receiving public assistance. Although legal and administrative structures already exist to establish and enforce child support obligations, the DA may wish to develop new procedures and services in this area. These may include steps to increase early identification of NCPs, expedite the establishment of paternity and child support orders, increase child support collections, and provide an incentive for noncustodial parents to participate in this program. Effective communication between the DA, the participants, and the CWD will be essential for a successful program.

- PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Initial research from national demonstration projects indicates that employment and training programs by themselves may not necessarily lead to changing the NCP's attitude toward providing voluntary child support payments, nor increasing positive parental involvement in his/her child's life. Counties may wish to develop a training program that will accomplish these goals. The training program may be presented in a variety of

ways, such as peer support groups, classroom instruction or mentor programs. The curriculum may include educating the NCPs on the positive impact that their presence can have in their childrens' lives, legal advice on the rights and responsibilities of the NCP, strengthening the NCP's commitment to work, and strengthening the NCP's commitment to provide financial support for his/her child. Other curriculum may include parenting skills, communication, coping as a single parent, building a supportive network, self-sufficiency, problem solving skills, anger and conflict management, understanding male/female relationships, encouraging sexual responsibility, and planned parent-child recreational activities.

- **MEDIATION**

Often disagreements between custodial and noncustodial parents about visitation, custody, health care, household expenditures, lifestyle, child care and school will have a negative impact on child support payments. For this reason, some type of mediation service to resolve these problems may be a useful tool to incorporate into your project.

- **SUPPORTIVE SERVICES**

We recognize that the participants in this project may have obstacles to overcome in order to be successful. In keeping with the recent CalWORKs legislation, you may wish to provide supportive services to enhance the participants' chances for success. These supportive services may include child care, transportation, ancillary expenses, personal counseling, substance abuse treatment, mental health services, and counseling for domestic violence.

EVALUATION PROCESS:

The Research Branch of the CDSS will be responsible for coordinating all research and evaluation activities to determine the success of this project. The CDSS will contract with an independent evaluator to conduct the formal evaluation. Each demonstration site will appoint a Research Coordinator to be the single point of contact who will fully cooperate with the independent evaluator and the CDSS to comply with the formal research design requirements and to provide all required data such as child support payment histories and welfare grant histories. The evaluation process may require counties to randomly assign eligible NCPs to a control group and an experimental group. The CDSS will also be utilizing information from the EDD and the California Department of Health Services (CDHS) for wage and welfare eligibility histories.

PROGRAM MANAGER:

Each demonstration site will appoint a Program Manager to be the single point of contact to work with the CDSS to develop and implement this demonstration project.

CRITERIA:

The CDSS will choose up to five counties to participate in this demonstration project based on the following criteria:

1. County demographics
2. AFDC/population density
3. Labor market conditions
4. Child Support Enforcement Caseload
5. Child Support Collections
6. Number of potential participants
7. Cost per participant
8. Use of additional funding resources (community funding, grants, etc.) to maximize program dollars.

Counties will be selected to reflect a cross section of the State's NCP population.

NONCUSTODIAL PARENT
EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING
DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

**PROPOSAL
INSTRUCTIONS**

We are seeking innovative, flexible programs that will meet the goals and objectives in the attached guidelines and be cost-effective. You may design your own method of service delivery. Please use the following template to submit your proposal:

COUNTY NAME

NONCUSTODIAL PARENT
EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING
DEMONSTRATION PROJECT
PROPOSAL

DATE SUBMITTED

SUBMITTED BY:

Director
County Welfare Department

District Attorney
County District Attorney's Office

Please provide your proposal in the format listed below in order to facilitate the review process:

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Provide a brief overview of your county proposal including:

- (1) A mission statement;
- (2) A list of your project goals and objectives; and
- (3) A description of the major program elements which will accomplish your goals and objectives; and

TARGET GROUP

Describe how you will identify the target group.

ELIGIBILITY

Identify the number of noncustodial, unemployed parents that are eligible for this program in your county.

SERVICES

Describe the specific services you will provide to the target group and how you will provide these services.

BUDGET

Provide a budget specifying your estimated expenditures and the sources of your project's funding (i.e. demonstration project funds, JPTA funds, etc.) for the current fiscal year (1/1/98 to 6/30/98) and for each fiscal year of the project. Include an estimated cost per participant for each fiscal year.

EVALUATION

Provide the name, address and telephone number of the County Research Coordinator who will be responsible for cooperating with the CDSS and the independent evaluator in accordance with the attached guidelines and conditions of county participation. Describe what other data could be used to measure the success of this demonstration project.

PROGRAM MANAGER

Provide the name, address and telephone number of the Program Manager who will work with CDSS to develop and implement this demonstration project in accordance with the attached guidelines and conditions of county participation.

COOPERATIVE PARTNERS

Describe the roles and responsibilities of the County Welfare Department, the District Attorney's Office and any other organizations involved in this project. Describe how you will initiate and ensure ongoing communication and collaboration between the organizations.

COUNTY PARTICIPATION CONDITIONS

Please include a signed copy of the County Participation Conditions (attached).

COUNTY PARTICIPATION CONDITIONS

Please sign and return this form along with your county proposal.

To participate in the Noncustodial Parent Employment and Training Demonstration Project, we agree to do the following:

- Guarantee continued participation in this demonstration for the life of the project.
- Upon the request of the CDSS, participate in the Child Support Assurance Demonstration Project concurrently when it is implemented.
- Designate a Program Manager to be the single point of contact to work with the CDSS to develop and implement this demonstration project. This person must be able to meet in Sacramento with CDSS staff and representatives from other counties to exchange ideas and work out the details of the project.
- Designate a Research Coordinator who will fully cooperate with the independent evaluator and the CDSS to comply with the formal research design requirements and provide all required data in a machine readable format specified by the evaluator. This person must be able to meet in Sacramento with CDSS staff and representatives from other counties to exchange ideas and work out the details of the evaluation.
- Have the ability to track or identify program participants and gather needed information.
- Provide all necessary data to the CDSS for purposes of creating public use data sets.
- Provide monthly data to the evaluator no later than 30 days after the end of each month.
- Provide historical data on each custodial parent regarding earned income and welfare grants for the 12-month period prior to implementation, during the life of the demonstration, and for the 12-month period after the demonstration ends for both the control group and the experimental group.
- Provide historical data on each participating noncustodial parent regarding child support payment histories for the 12-month period prior to implementation, during the life of the demonstration, and for the 12-month period after the demonstration ends for both the control group and the experimental group.
- Cover all costs in the program budget associated with data collection and program implementation, including the Program Manager's and the Research Coordinator's salaries and travel expenses.
- Agree to share project participant data between the CWD and the DA.

We have read the County Participation Conditions above and _____ County agrees to meet all of the conditions if we are selected to participate in the Noncustodial Parent Employment and Training Demonstration Project.

Director
County Welfare Department

Date

District Attorney
County District Attorney's Office

Date