

*Priority Area 5: Helping Noncustodial Parents (NCPs) Meet Their Child Support and Family Responsibilities*

Projects would demonstrate effective child support strategies to help low-income NCPs meet their child support and family responsibilities. There is a very high rate of default cases where the noncustodial parent is either not appropriately served or simply does not show up for either paternity or child support hearings. As a result, orders are not always appropriate for the NCP's financial situation, or are not based on the NCP's actual income. Further, many low-income NCPs fall behind in their payment of child support due to unemployment or underemployment. This solicitation would address at least one of the following design elements:

- Develop, implement and determine the effectiveness of alternative measures for avoiding default cases, and/or using imputed income/minimum order amounts in establishing child support orders which can create excessive payment levels for low-income NCPs. These alternatives could include adopting more customer-friendly approaches in establishing orders for low-income fathers to avoid a high level of default orders (such as using alternative service of process methods to ensure NCPs get served and understand the notice to avoid defaults); and/or securing and using more complete income information, e.g. using New Hire data for the NCP and custodial parent in default situations or where incomplete income information is given. Order amounts should be reasonable for low-income NCPs, taking into account their ability to pay when confronted with intermittent unemployment. Applicants must provide assurance that, under State guidelines, orders can be established based upon the NCP's ability to pay. We are looking for outcome measures which would demonstrate that effective alternatives for establishing child support orders in low-income cases result in increased payment rates for low-income NCPs.

- Develop and implement strategies to provide employment services to low-income fathers who are unemployed or under-employed and cannot meet their child support obligations. Projects should include voluntary and/or mandatory referral, as appropriate, of NCPs for employment and training services by child support agencies or courts/tribunals, to local workforce development agencies or other public employment agencies and local organizations, including community-based and faith-based organizations. For example, projects could include

collaboration with TANF agencies to use TANF funds to support employment and training services for NCPs in public assistance cases to demonstrate whether custodial parents left TANF more quickly because of child support receipt. Incentive to NCPs could be reduction/compromise of arrears. Or, projects could develop partnerships with workforce development boards and courts/tribunals to demonstrate the impact on child support outcomes if unemployed or under-employed NCPs, who had past due child support obligations, were required to participate in a job training/placement program or be sentenced to a period in jail. Outcome measures would include increased payment rates on orders, as well as increases in employment, job retention rates and wages.

*Funding:* A total \$400,000 is anticipated to be available for projects in this priority area and OCSE anticipates funding two grants of approximately \$200,000 each.

*Budget Period:* For Priority Area 5, the budget period will be up to 17 months.

*Priority Area 6: Improving Child Support Services for Ethnic and Culturally Diverse Populations*

Under this solicitation, projects would target underserved ethnic and culturally diverse populations, including, but not limited to, the Hispanic/Latino community, the Asian-American and Pacific Islander community, the African-American community, and Native Americans, American Indians, and Alaskan Natives so that they may receive more effective child support enforcement services. OCSE has funded several small-scale community projects which developed outreach media campaigns and language-appropriate materials and/or used community and volunteer resources to help these groups better understand the child support program. Under this solicitation, we are looking for projects which are either statewide or serve multiple counties or a large county. We are interested in collaborations between State/local governments and courts/tribunals with community-based and faith-based organizations to offer model service approaches (not outreach campaigns) that will result in large-scale, systematic, institutionalized approaches to service delivery to underserved populations. Projects should identify nature/causes of barriers to effective child support enforcement service delivery for customers with language and diversity barriers and develop/implement approaches to reduce or eliminate them. Such approaches could

include providing bilingual staff, resources, training, etc. to judges/attorneys to address the needs of these customers and assure judicial fairness and/or development of new delivery strategies within the community to increase child support outcomes, such as an increase in numbers of orders established and collections. This solicitation is not designed to provide funding for the development and implementation of Tribal child support enforcement programs since these provisions are being addressed through Federal regulation.

*Funding:* A total \$200,000 is anticipated to be available for projects in this priority area and OCSE anticipates funding two grants of approximately \$100,000 each.

*Budget Period:* For Priority Area 6, the budget period will be up to 17 months.

*Priority Area 7: Furthering the Child Support Mission to Ensure All Children Receive Financial and Medical Support From Their Parents*

Under this announcement, OCSE is looking for projects that are not covered by any of the above priority areas. OCSE is looking for projects that will test new interventions and approaches to increase paternity and support order establishments and collections. Applicants would propose new ways of doing business, within Federal law and regulations, and put them into effect. We encourage collaborations among entities which may include State/local governments, non-profit organizations, faith-based and community-based organizations, and tribal governments and universities (including historically black colleges and universities).

*Funding:* A total of \$100,000 is anticipated to be available for one grant in this priority area.

*Budget Period:* For Priority Area 7, the budget period will be up to 17 months.

## II. Award Information

*Availability of Funds.* Approximately \$1.5 million is available for all priority areas. OCSE expects to award a total of approximately 13 grants, approximately two grants per priority area, ranging from \$100,000 to \$200,000, as specified under each priority area.

Over the past five years, OCSE has awarded an average of 9 grants per year, totaling approximately \$1.3 million per year. All grant awards are subject to the availability of appropriated funds. A non-Federal match is not required. The anticipated start date for the new awards is May 1, 2004; projects may go through September 2005, for a period of up to 17 months.