Maine’s Non-Custodial Parent Outreach and Investigation Project

Final Report

February 2004
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Submitted by:

Division of Support Enforcement and Recovery (DSER)
Bureau of Family Independence
Department of Human Services
State of Maine

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Maine Division of Support Enforcement of Recovery (DSER) in conjunction with the Maine Attorney General’s Office and the University of Southern Maine, Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Service, Institute for Public Service (IPSI) launched Maine’s Non-Custodial Parent Outreach and Investigation Project (NCPOIP) to better understand why Maine non-custodial parents (NCPs) are not paying child support and why putative fathers (PFs) are not acknowledging paternity. This project sets forth to contribute to U.S. child support literature by providing data from NCPs and PFs who live in a rural, low-income state with a geographically dispersed population. This pilot project, funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Child Support and Enforcement began in October, 2000 and ran through June, 2003.

The project employed two outreach coordinators in two Maine counties – York and Somerset – to determine if a more individualized case management approach to managing chronic non-paying child support cases might lead to better payment rates. York and Somerset counties were chosen because they provided a distinct contrast. By Maine standards, York County has a high population density that includes affluent, suburban, and low-income people. Somerset County is larger geographically, sparsely populated, and primarily low income and very rural. This report summarizes the findings from this 33-month demonstration project.

The outreach coordinators were assigned to work with a selected set (using criteria) of NCPs and PFs. The PFs had to be statutorily in default in paternity proceedings (i.e. had not responded to notice of paternity proceedings) in order to qualify. The NCPs in the Appear and Disclose process had not paid in 90 days – most were chronic, long-time non-payers.

As the data suggest, the outreach coordinators achieved several noteworthy accomplishments with their PF caseload. These included an increase in the number of acknowledgements of paternity, facilitated agreements on child support orders, facilitated agreements on child support arrearages, and paternity tests and converting statutory default cases to productive cases all speak to the positive influence that the outreach coordinators had with the PFs.

- The outreach coordinators secured 44 acknowledgements of paternity.
- The outreach coordinators facilitated agreements on 31 child support orders.
- The outreach coordinators facilitated agreements on 30 child support arrearage cases.
- The outreach coordinators helped with paternity testing in 29 cases.

While funding for this demonstration project was not renewed by the federal government or by the state, this project was considered a success in Maine. The Maine Commission on Fatherhood Issues proclaimed it a model for working with NCPs and PFs and recommended its continuation. However, a $1 billion state budget shortfall during the legislative biennium rendered the recommendation impossible.

Maine DSER agreed that strengthening contact with PFs was beneficial, but because they are under-staffed and have high caseloads, it would not be cost-effective at this time to dedicate staff to an activity that required so many person hours with so few cases.
II. BACKGROUND

From 1998-2000, over a quarter (28%) of all Maine children lived in a single-parent household (Davey, 2003). Nationally, in 1997 only 35% of poor children resided with their biological father (Feeley, 2000). Without a second wage earner, many of these children live in or close to poverty. Some single parents rely on child support or alimony payments to provide the basic essentials for their children and themselves.

Maine has a strong track record of securing child support payments from parents who owe child support. In 2001, collections were received in 67% of child support enforcement cases (Davey, 2003). This rate compares favorably with the national rate of 44%. However, these figures mean that in one third of the cases, no collections were received at all.

In some child support cases, the non-custodial parent’s (NCP) economic circumstances prevent him/her from making full or partial payments. Many NCPs are unable to pay child support because they are poor themselves. Sorensen and Zibman (2001) found that 2.5 million, out of 7 million, fathers who do not pay child support do so because they are indigent. For many of these fathers, their poverty stems from being under-educated and having barriers to gainful employment. The reasons why NCPs fail to make timely child support payments are many. NCPs have an obligation to support their children; however, each NCP has a unique set of circumstances that contribute to his or her decision to make or withhold child support payments.

Among the one million poor nonresident fathers who do make child support payments, 25% pay more than 50% of their gross income in support (Sorensen, 2002). Sorensen and Zibman (2001) found that many NCPs are poor and have little means to pay child support. Maine’s experience with the Appear and Disclose process (a procedure designed to identify and assess the non-custodial father’s assets) confirms the existence of a significant proportion of non-custodial fathers who are unable to pay child support due to a multiple barriers.

Many payment agreements may not be economically feasible because NCPs and putative fathers (PFs) are either developmentally delayed, lack interpersonal skills, have little to no job experience, and are otherwise unable and/or unwilling to pay child support. For example, in 1999, 40% of poor fathers nationwide did not complete high school and more than 40% were jobless at least for a year (Sorensen, 2002). Many have health conditions that prevent them from working. Others lack health insurance. Increasing numbers of child support agents realize that the standard use of enforcement remedies is not always appropriate for this segment of the NCP population.

With this in mind, the Maine Division of Support Enforcement of Recovery (DSER) in conjunction with the Maine Attorney General’s Office and the University of Southern Maine, Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Service, Institute for Public Service (IPSI) launched Maine’s Non-Custodial Parent Outreach and Investigation Project (NCPOIP) to better understand why Maine NCPs and PFs are not paying child support and encourage them to make timely payments. This project sets forth to contribute to U.S. child support literature by providing data from NCPs and PFs who live in a rural, low-income state with a geographically dispersed population. This pilot project, funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human

III. PROJECT OVERVIEW

The project focused on young fathers who have defaulted in a pending paternity action and parents who have not paid support in over a year. The aim of the project included:
- a reduction in the backlog of non-payers;
- elimination of future non-payers by intervening early in defaulting paternity cases;
- identification of barriers to non-payment; and
- creation of a model for pursuing future cases.

The project employed two outreach coordinators in two Maine counties – York and Somerset – to determine if a more individualized case management approach might lead to better payment rates. York and Somerset counties were chosen because they provided a distinct contrast. By Maine standards, York County has a high population density that includes affluent, suburban, and low-income people. Somerset County is larger geographically, sparsely populated, primarily low income and very rural. This report summarizes the findings from this 33-month demonstration project.

The NCPOIP Oversight Committee, made up of representatives from DSER, the Maine Attorney General’s Office, and the Family Division of the Maine Court, provided guidance to the project staff and the outreach coordinators.

The NCPOIP project had two key phases – Planning and Implementation. The Planning period ran from October, 2000 through October 2001. The Implementation period began with the hiring of the two Outreach Coordinators in November, 2001. This phase of the project lasted 21 months and ended June, 2003.

IV. METHODOLOGY

An evaluation team from the Muskie School of Public Service measured the capacities of the two experimental counties to develop and implement systems aimed at encouraging NCPs/PFs to become more responsible in terms of providing financial and emotional support to their children.

The evaluation team was also charged with assessing whether outreach coordinators would enhance DSER’s capacity to collect child support from PFs and chronic non-paying NCPs. The evaluation also called for gauging the levels of community collaboration that are created within each county in developing and implementing community programs that support NCPs and PFs.

Originally, the evaluation design targeted three counties, the two demonstration counties – Somerset and York - and a control county – Androscoggin County. A delay in DSER’s conversion to a new management information system prevented the evaluation team from collecting the necessary control data.
The evaluation employed a mixed methodology of both quantitative and qualitative approaches. On the quantitative side, the evaluation analyzed how the project’s activities impact such child support performance incentives as the number of paternity establishments, payment on arrearages, and the number of paying cases.

On the qualitative front, the evaluators made use of NCP/PF case histories to add some further context to the NCPs/PFs’ circumstances. Some of these vignettes appear later in this report. To ensure confidentiality all names have been removed from the case histories. What these vignettes demonstrate is that each case is unique. The vignettes also provide some examples of how the outreach coordinators impacted individual NCPs and PFs.

The evaluation team also assessed the level of collaboration among the various community-based organizations in Somerset and York counties that potentially could provide services to NCPs/PFs. Lastly, the evaluation team, along with NCPOIP coordinators, documented the collaboration between the local DSER offices, the DSER central office, the Maine Attorney General’s Office, and the Family Division of the Maine District Court.

The evaluation team was responsible for all forms development, database design and development, data collection training, data collection, analyses, and report development.

Initial and Intermediate Outcomes

The evaluation team established a number of initial and intermediate outcomes for this project. The key initial outcomes were:

1. Increased attention to domestic violence in dealing with chronic non-paying NCPs/PFs. The evaluation team focused on what organizations and individuals were part of the domestic violence discussion and how this issue was addressed in project planning, literature development, training, and forms development.

2. The Development of referral networks in both Somerset and York counties. The evaluation team assessed the number of organizations in both counties that serve or would serve NCPs/PFs and how collaborative these organizations are with other county agencies.

3. Recruitment of NCPs/PFs into the Project. This process included identifying barriers to regular child support payments.

The key intermediate outcomes were:

1. Acknowledgements of paternity
2. Facilitated agreements on child support orders
3. Facilitated agreements on child support arrearages
4. Assistance with paternity testing
5. Child support payments
6. Assistance in modifying a child support order
7. Help with child support arrearages
Domestic Violence Protocols
In designing the project, program developers recognized that the outreach coordinators’ involvement in some of the cases could precipitate domestic violence between the NCP/PF and the custodial parent and or child(ren). To minimize this possibility, the Project Coordinator met with a domestic violence consultant from the Muskie School of Public Service. The consultant urged a cautious outreach approach to ensure the safety of the custodial parent, the children, and the outreach coordinators. To help the outreach coordinators, the consultant and the project coordinator developed protocols to screen out NCPs/PFs with a history of domestic violence.

The screening tool that emerged from this meeting was NCPOIP Domestic Violence Questions for Custodial Parents. This two-page questionnaire addresses specific degrees of domestic violence from the custodial parent’s general feelings of concern based on past incidents, verbal threats to physical violence, threatening and attacking with a weapon. In addition, the screening protocols ask if there is a Protection from Abuse Order in effect and whether the custodial parent currently has any concerns for her/his family’s safety.

As part of the project, the coordinators first contacted the custodial parents to explain the project and screen the case for domestic violence. If serious domestic violence was alleged, the case was screened out as a safety precaution and continued to be included as an active case for the enforcement agent. If the case remained in the project, the coordinators next contacted PFs and NCPs to arrange interviews and explain the project. The coordinators obtained demographic information from both the custodial parent and the NCP/PF. The coordinators identified barriers (i.e., literacy, mental illness, substance abuse, etc.) to the participation in the process or the payment of support. The coordinator worked with the individual to resolve barriers and refers the individual to community-based organizations who are able to help resolve barriers.

Study Population

The evaluation team in conjunction with the NCPOIP Oversight Committee developed initial and secondary selection criteria for both NCPs and PFs. The criteria are summarized below.

Putative Fathers - Expedited Paternity Process:
Initial Criteria:
PFs who have been identified by the custodial parent as the father.

Secondary Criteria:
• PFs who have defaulted by not contacting DSER after 20 days having been served a notice of paternity in hand
• PFs within the 18-30 yrs age range who have multiple cases
• PFs within the 18-30 yrs age range who are just starting a family

Non-custodial Parents - Appear & Disclose Process
Initial Criteria:
NCPs who have not paid child support in a year, who are either self-employed or unemployed.
Secondary Criteria:

- NCPs who fail to appear for the Appear & Disclose meeting
- NCPs who have a seek work order but have failed to report and DSER has no verification of ability to pay
- NCPs who failed to resolve their issues with DSER during the Appear & Disclose meeting
- NCPs who DSER has suspicions are lying about their situations (potential chronic non-payers)

Initially, the plan called for DSER to provide the outreach coordinators with a list of 20 NCPs/PFs each for both counties. This trial run gave the coordinators and program staff a sense of the time it takes to manage a caseload.

Maine DSER referred cases to the AAG that met the criteria for the project. Any legal referrals for PFs or NCPs, were sent to the AAG and screened to determine if they could be included in the project. It was quickly determined that DSER did not have enough legal referrals already filed and a request went out to the DSER offices covering York and Somerset counties to refer more cases that would fit the criteria of the project. It was also determined that Somerset County could not provide a viable sample for the project; many cases that might have met these criteria were excluded because of a high level of domestic violence. The project steering committee agreed to expand the sampling to include legal referrals from the DSER Bangor office.

Secondary Data

Prior to the project’s initiation, data were collected on several key socio-demographic, economic, housing, education, health, and crime indices. The rationale for this exercise was two-fold. One, the project team wanted to distinguish how the counties differed from one another. Second, the information would be useful background information to the outreach coordinators as they began work in their respective counties. Some of the information collected is in the Appendices.

The two counties selected for this pilot demonstration project provide an interesting contrast. By Maine standards, York County is a rapidly growing county, especially along the coastline. As the southernmost county in the state, York County has become more suburban as more and more people relocate there and commute to the Boston area and southern New Hampshire. By contrast, Somerset County is very rural with a fairly stable population.

Table 1. Selected Socio-demographic Data for Somerset and York counties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socio-demographic Data</th>
<th>York</th>
<th>Somerset</th>
<th>Maine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Land area (square miles) (U.S. Census Bureau)</td>
<td>991</td>
<td>3,926</td>
<td>30,862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons per Square Mile, 2000 (2000 Census)</td>
<td>188.5</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>41.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population % change 1990-2000 (2000 Census)</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Somerset County is four times larger in land area than York County. However, York County has a density (persons per square mile) 14 times greater than that of Somerset County. York County’s population growth rate was nearly six times than that of Somerset County.

On the economic front, rural Somerset County had nearly double the percentage of people living in poverty. Somerset County median household income and per capital income were 70% and 73% respectively of the York County figures. In addition, Somerset County’s unemployment rate was more than double that of York County.

**Table 2. Selected Economic Data for Somerset and York counties**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic Data</th>
<th>York</th>
<th>Somerset</th>
<th>Maine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># and % of people of all ages in poverty 2000</td>
<td>15,007</td>
<td>7,471</td>
<td>135,501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2000 Census)</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Household Income 2000 (2000 Census)</td>
<td>$43,630</td>
<td>$30,731</td>
<td>$37,240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per Capita Income 2000 (2000 Census)</td>
<td>$21,225</td>
<td>$15,474</td>
<td>$19,533</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% students eligible for free or reduced lunch, 1999-00, (DOE)</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
<td>45.7%</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment rate – 2000 average (ME DOL)</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

York County has nearly twice the percentage of college graduates (B.A. or more). Among recent high school graduates, more York County teens are intending to attend college. Among the graduating class of 2001, 66.3% of York County graduates indicated they would be going on to college. By comparison, just over half (52.5%) of Somerset County high school graduates intended to seek a college degree.

**Table 3. Selected Education Data for Somerset and York counties**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Data</th>
<th>York</th>
<th>Somerset</th>
<th>Maine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of Adults lacking H.S. diploma (2000 Census)</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College graduates (B.A. or more), age 25+ (2000 Census)</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Graduates intending to attend post-secondary education: 2000-01 (ME DOE, 2001)</td>
<td>66.3%</td>
<td>52.5%</td>
<td>66.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Crime figures differ among the two counties. The rate of domestic violence, the adult arrest rate for drug-related crimes and the adult arrest rate for operating under the influence (OUI) are all higher in York County. On the other hand, the adult arrest for personal (violent) crimes is higher in Somerset County.
Table 4. Selected Crime Data for Somerset and York counties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crime Data</th>
<th>York</th>
<th>Somerset</th>
<th>Maine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rate of domestic violence arrests per 1,000 pop. 18+, 5-yr ave. 1990-1994 (Dept. of Public Safety)</td>
<td>4.92</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>4.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult arrest rate for personal (violent) crimes, per 100,000 pop. 18+, 5-yr ave. 1990-1994 (Dept. of Public Safety, Uniform Crime Rep.)</td>
<td>83.86</td>
<td>90.71</td>
<td>100.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult arrest rate for drug-related crimes, per 100,000 pop. 18+,5-yr ave. 1990-1994 (Dept. of Public Safety, Uniform Crime Rep.)</td>
<td>1,431.8</td>
<td>699.3</td>
<td>1,148.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult arrest rate OUI, per 1,000 pop. 18+,5-yr ave. 1990-94 (Dept. of Public Safety, Uniform Crime Rep.)</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

V. PHASE I – PROJECT PLANNING

Planning started in October 2000 and extended to September 2001. During this period, much of the work focused on systems development among the project partners. NCPOIP staff met with representatives from DSER and Attorney General’s Office to discuss the coordinator’s role in both the Expedited Paternity and Appear and Disclose processes. With both processes, the project partners detailed how and when the coordinators would be involved in a case. As part of the planning process, project partners created matrices that delineated the steps in each process. With each step, the matrices summarize who does what, the consequences of each step, and the benefits/key points. These matrices can be found in the Appendices.

Expedited Paternity Process

Briefly, the expedited paternity process outlined how a case is referred to the Attorney General's Office by a DSER paternity agent. Once the referral is made, it was the AAG’s responsibility to flag cases for the project. After it was determined that the case should go to the coordinators, an effort would be made to contact the custodial parent (CP) to explain the project and gauge her interest. If the CP is interested, the coordinators ask the CP if the PF has any barriers to work and if he has ever committed any domestic violence.

If the case is not excluded for domestic violence, the coordinator then contacts the PF to explain the project and to determine if he is interested in the project. If the PF is interested, the coordinator will identify any barriers to employment and whether he is making any type of child support payments.

If the PF refuses to cooperate, the coordinator has the option of referring the case back to court. If the PF denies paternity and wants to be tested, the coordinator working through the Attorney General’s office can secure testing for him. At this juncture in the process, the PF might decide that he wants to acknowledge paternity. If this occurs, the coordinator facilitates the acknowledgement of paternity process and refers the case back to DSER.

The coordinator then meets with a DSER agent to discuss what he learned about the PF and makes a recommendation. The information gathered often determines what the child support
obligation will be. In most cases, the DSER agent accepted the recommendations of the Outreach Coordinator. The case is then presented to the case management officers by the DSER agent authorized to present to the courts.

Once the order is established, the coordinator monitors the case to see if the PF needs assistance. Throughout this process, the coordinator is gathering data on the case, which is sent on a monthly basis to the evaluation team.

**Appear and Disclose Process**

Appear and Disclose cases are referred by the Attorney General’s office to the coordinator when the NCP has defaulted on his or her child support payments. Similar to the process sketched out above, the coordinator sends the CP a letter about the project stating that he will be calling to gauge her/his interest. When the telephone call is made to the CP, the coordinator screens the case for domestic violence and identifies any barriers that the NCP may have.

If the case has not been ruled out for domestic violence, the coordinator calls the NCP for an interview. During the interview, the coordinator explains the project to the NCP, gathers any data on barriers to paying child support, assesses willingness to pay child support, and determines whether the NCP has paid any child support to the CP.

If the NCP expresses an unwillingness to cooperate or pay, the coordinator may investigate further the NCP’s ability to pay child support. This additional information is turned over to the DSER agent who originally handled the case. Depending on the extent of the NCP’s unwillingness to pay, the coordinator may drop the cases from NCPOIP and return it to the local DSER agent.

If the NCP is cooperative, the coordinator makes a recommendation to the DSER agent and the Attorney General’s Office for them to negotiate an individualized plan. Depending on the plan, the coordinator and/or agent may choose to refer the NCP to community-based organizations for additional services. Similar to the expedited paternity process, the coordinator submits tracking information on all cases to the evaluation team.

**Community-Based Organizations**

In anticipation of the coordinators’ placement in Somerset and York counties, the NCPOIP project team assessed the extent of community-based organizations in both counties that might offer some type of services to NCPs/PFs. During this assessment process, the project team learned that each county had a coalition of community-based organizations that met monthly.

Once briefed about the project’s aims, both the Somerset County Association of Resource Providers (SCARP) and York County Welfare to Work Task Force (YCWTWTF) welcomed project staff to meetings and allowed them to make presentations and regular updates to the group at each meeting. By coalition standards, SCARP has a longer history. For the better part of ten years, SCARP has facilitated service coordination among Somerset County community-based organizations. YCWTWTF formed in the late 1990s in response to federal budget cuts targeting welfare recipients.
Community Collaboration Assessment

In exchange for their help, the evaluation team administered a collaboration checklist to both groups as a planning tool. The checklist was adapted from nineteen key factors that have been found to be critical to the success of collaboration by Mattesich and Monsey. A copy of the instrument is in the Appendices.

In Somerset County, the collaboration instrument revealed that there was a strong history of collaboration among service agencies in the county. In addition, SCARP members share an understanding, trust, and a respect for each other and their respective organizations. Lastly, the checklist revealed that group members are able to compromise. Among YCWTWTF members, the three items that garnered the most support were identical to those identified by SCARP members.

Funding was identified as a problem area for SCARP and YCWTWTF and its members. In addition, a majority of SCARP and YCWTWTF respondents both indicated that their groups are not perceived by others within their respective counties as providing leadership.

Project staff shared these results with both coalitions at a subsequent meeting and engaged in brainstorming sessions on how to address these problem areas.

Community Resource Guides

Project staff also helped the coordinators by assembling community resource guides for both Somerset and York counties. These resource books documented the network of community-based organizations in Somerset and York counties to which NCPs/PFs might be referred to for services. Numerous organizations were sent questionnaires asking them to provide information on how their organization might be able to serve NCPs and PFs. The questionnaire asked for the following information:

All told, 38 and 49 Somerset and York organizations respectively responded to the questionnaire. The guides were categorized by the following 18 types of services: 1) Abuse/Assault/DV; 2) Child Services; 3) Crisis Hotlines; 4) Disability; 5) Educational/Literacy; 6) Employment; 7) Financial; 8) Food/Nutrition; 9) Health/Dental/Medical; 10) Housing; 11) Legal; 12) Mental Health/Counseling; 13) Parenting; 14) Father’s Programs; 15) Substance Abuse; 16) Support Groups; 17) Transportation; and 18) Utilities. Since the guides are lengthy, the table of contents and one chapter are included in the Appendices as an example.

Once completed, the resource guides for both counties were distributed to the following groups:

- DSER agents and supervisors serving Somerset and York counties
- SCARP and YCWTWTF members
- York County Allied Health group members (a smaller health coalition serving York County
- Assistant Attorney Generals connected with Biddeford, Sanford, Augusta offices
- Family Court and District Court judges in York and Somerset Counties
- Somerset County Sheriff’s Department
In May and July 2002, project staff mailed surveys to approximately 60 resource book recipients asking for their feedback. While only 14 organizations responded to the survey, some of the findings are helpful. Respondents were asked how often they use the guide. Over a third (36%) of respondents use the guides once a month, while 29% each use it more than once a month and once a week respectively.

Almost two-thirds of respondents (64%) answered “Yes” when asked if they have referred clients to community resources based on the information provided in the Resource Guide, while 36% answered “No.” Nearly all (93%) of the respondents answered “Yes” when asked if they would recommend the Resource Guide to others working in the community; one respondent (13%) did not provide an answer to the question.

Respondents were asked to rate the Resource Guide for layout and design, ease of locating information, and quality of information.

Table 5. Resource Guide Feedback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>No Response Given</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Layout</td>
<td>36%, n=5</td>
<td>43%, n=6</td>
<td>7%, n=1</td>
<td>14%, n=2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease</td>
<td>36%, n=5</td>
<td>43%, n=6</td>
<td>7%, n=1</td>
<td>14%, n=2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>29%, n=4</td>
<td>57%, n=8</td>
<td></td>
<td>14%, n=2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lastly, the resource guides were an important tool for the coordinators when they first started their assignments, enabling them to learn what services were available and who could assist them in their efforts.

Brochures

Project staff developed eight brochures and information sheets to help all project participants including custodial parents as well. The title of each brochure/information sheet is listed below with a brief explanation. Please see the appendices for copies of the brochures and information sheets.

1. *What You Need to Know About Good Cause.* This brochure details some reasons for not naming the father of the child. Typically good cause is invoked when the custodial parent fears for her and/or her child’s safety.
2. *What Happens When You Are Named The Father Of A Child?* This brochure explains what happens when a mother applies for public assistance and reports the name of the father. It lists the options for the putative father.
3. *Information About Driver’s Licenses.* This brochure specifies how DSER can revoke a father’s driver license for not paying child support. The brochure also outlines how a father can get this license reinstated.
4. *Establishing Paternity For Your Child.* This brochure was originally developed by Maine Acknowledgement of Paternity Project staff, a previous OCSE funded project, and re-issued for this project. This pamphlet delineates what paternity is and why it is
important. It also describes where a putative father can sign a voluntary
acknowledgement of paternity form and where he can obtain genetic testing if he disputes
fathering the child.
5. Legal Terms. This information sheet defines some of the legal terms a NCP or PF
encounters when they negotiate the legal and child support system.
6. Free and Reduced Fee Legal Assistance for Low-Income People Living in Maine. This
fact sheet provides the names of several organizations that provide free and reduced legal
assistance.
7. Additional Resources to Help You Fill Out Legal Forms or Do Your Own Legal
Research. As the title suggests this information sheet provides tips and advice on how to
complete legal forms.
8. How to Ask for Modification to Your Child Support Order. This fact sheet lists some
reasons why a father might seek to modify a child support order.

Monthly Tracking Forms Development

Prior to implementation, the evaluation staff scanned the literature for other fatherhood
initiatives. The purpose of this search was to determine what other projects across the United
States were measuring and to ascertain how difficult it was to collect this information. One of
the more valuable sources of information was the city of Portland, Maine. Just prior to the
NCPOIP project, the city’s Health and Human Services Department had started a transitional
employment program for men recently released from jail/prison. Some of the forms used by this
program were helpful to the evaluation staff in deciding what forms to develop and when to use
them. Also, the evaluation team found various forms developed by the Responsible Fatherhood
Program very useful. The evaluation team borrowed heavily from their monthly tracking form in
crafting its own tracking forms.

In creating the forms, the evaluation team was cognizant of the time it would take the outreach
coordinators to collect demographic and ongoing information from the NCPs/PFs and the CPs.
The evaluation team settled on data and tracking forms for NCPs and PFs as well as a separate
data form for custodial parents. Please see the appendices for a copy of the data form. The Custodial Parent Data Form was used to verify the NCP/PF’s information as well as to
determine the CP’s economic status.

The evaluation team designed two monthly tracking forms, one for non-custodial parents and the
other for putative fathers. These forms were used by the coordinators to document any monthly
changes in the NCP or PF’s status. The NCPOIP Appear & Disclose Tracking & Progress Form
and the NCPOIP Expedited Paternity Tracking & Progress Form gathered monthly information
on whether the NCP or PF had received and completed the following services: 1) Education/
Training/Job Placement, 2) Child Support/Parenting/Visitation, and 3) Other Services.

In addition, the coordinator ascertained what change in the NCP/PF employment and living
status had occurred during each month of the project. A copy of each form can be found in the
appendices.

All forms were reviewed by project stakeholders and went through several iterations. During the
outreach coordinators’ orientation, project evaluation staff provided a thorough training on how
to use the forms and when to submit them. Once the project started, project evaluation staff performed ongoing quality control on the data submitted. Every three to six months, project evaluation staff sent the coordinators a report identifying what data were missing from each case.

**Integrating Domestic Violence into Data Collection Forms**

Domestic violence questions were included in all NCPOIP data collection forms. The *NCPOIP Appear & Disclose Tracking & Progress Form* and the *NCPOIP Expedited Paternity Tracking & Process Form* also had sections asking if custodial parents need help dealing with child abuse or neglect and if they needed information on services related to partner abuse.

**VI. PHASE II – PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION**

**Location**

Shortly before the project started, the decision was made that the outreach coordinators would be based in regional Attorney General Offices proximate to the target counties. The Somerset County Outreach Coordinator was housed at the Bangor area Attorney General Office and the York County Outreach Coordinator was located in the Portland Attorney General’s Office.

Both coordinators met every other week with the lead AAG for Child Support Enforcement to review cases and the project coordinator. The frequent meeting schedule helped the AAG stay abreast of project’s successes and challenges and the coordinators’ caseload. These meetings were even more important after the AAG, the coordinators’ supervisor, took a new position in the AG’s office. The new AAG found the meetings helpful in learning of the details of the project and the outreach coordinators’ workload.

The meetings were also beneficial for discussing troublesome cases. Both coordinators were able to rely on each other as well as the AAG for feedback and guidance on cases. Since most of the coordinators’ work was done independent of the AG’s Office, the meetings enabled the outreach coordinators to give each other and the AAG updates on progress reports. In addition, the Muskie Project Coordinator’s attendance provided an administrative liaison between all project partners.

Both coordinators enjoyed the relationships they established working out of regional AG offices. Both mentioned the resources, including the office attorneys that were available to them. One of the coordinators mentioned that being housed in AG’s Office allowed them to establish even more productive working relationships with NCPs and PFs. Both coordinators felt that if the project was housed at DSER, the NCPs and PFs might view them as solely concerned about enforcement and consequently not be as willing to enter into negotiations with them about child support payments.

Having the coordinators based in the Attorney General’s Office was a boon. Shortly before the end of the project, the second AAG for Child Support Enforcement mentioned that the coordinators and the project had served to better communication with the people they serve. The AAG also perceived a tremendous cost benefit to state child support operations, because the project had prevented several default paternity orders, a costly court proceeding, and increased
the number of cases in which fathers were availing of genetic testing, preventing the possibility of costly after-the-fact paternity proceedings.

In September 2001, the two outreach coordinators were hired. Both candidates were former DSER child support enforcement agents. One had previously worked as an agent in York County and was hired for this project to work in that same county.

In October and November 2001, NCPOIP Project staff organized a three-week training for the new outreach coordinators. The topics covered in the training are included in the Appendices.

**Domestic Violence Training**

The training used parts of the *Caring for the Abuse Affected Child and Family* curriculum. This curriculum is the only training model in the United States that combines the three problems often encountered in families: substance abuse, domestic violence/abuse, and child abuse and neglect. It was developed collaboratively by the Maine Department of Human Services, the Maine Office of Substance Abuse, Maine Office of Children and Headstart, the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence, Family Crisis Services, and the Muskie School. The curriculum has been presented at several national conferences.

**VII. RESULTS**

The project demonstrated that trust was crucial to the coordinators’ success. The coordinators’ willingness to meet the NCPs/PFs on their turf (e.g. home work, etc) at all hours of the day enabled them to be perceived as confidants more than coordinators. To both coordinators, each case was a unique one that merited a fresh approach. Knowing when to be an investigator and when to be a resource person was an important function of the coordinators’ success.

At times, the coordinators assisted the NCPs/PFs in dealing with the myriad of organizations and services potentially available to them, often referring them to a community-based organization. At times, the coordinators became part-time counselors dealing with the aftermath of a troubled relationship between the CP and NCP/PF and the frayed bond the NCP/PF had with his or her child (ren).

As the project evolved, most successful cases were those that required paternity establishment. In most of these cases, the coordinators were not required to be enforcers; instead they focused on educating the PFs on their options.

NCPs on older child support cases were more resistant to contact by an outreach coordinator.

**Relationship with Division of Support Enforcement and Recovery Offices**

DSER outperforms most states when it comes to federal performance indicators and it has been very successful in garnering collections from a higher percentage of NCPs. What this means is that the department has fewer non-compliant cases. However, the remaining appear and disclose cases are among the toughest cases in the department’s caseload.
This project was designed to help agents with some of these cases by having the outreach coordinators conduct in-depth investigations that DSER agents generally do not have time to complete. The results of the outreach coordinator's efforts to find information and contact the NCPs were often very useful to DSER agents attempting to establish paying cases based on the NCPs ability to pay.

The NCPOIP project was designed to fit within the "natural flow" of the state's child support program of the system. Further, the project required only a nominal amount of extra time on the child support agent's part to identify which cases might benefit from any additional information that could improve the quality of the NCPs payment agreement; making the agreement acceptable to DSER and livable for the NCP.

Many cases were initially excluded from the project due to domestic violence. The number of cases that met the criteria for the project was fewer in Somerset County. This phenomenon was not experienced at the same levels in York County. Most of the projects success with paternity cases came from York County. Appear and disclose cases in York County were closer to the Somerset County experience. Another factor contributing to low number of referrals was staff turnover in the Augusta regional office at the beginning of the project.

The low number of referrals for Somerset County led the project director and the Attorney General's Office to decide to broaden the northern outreach coordinator's catchment area to include Penobscot County as well. While the addition of Penobscot County slightly boosted the number of referrals, the outreach coordinator in that area did not acquire a full caseload until the last couple months of the project.

The York County Outreach Coordinator enjoyed a more productive working relationship with agents in both York County DSER offices. It certainly helped that the outreach coordinator had been an agent in the Biddeford (York County) office before accepting a position with the project. Both offices gave the coordinator referrals, though similar to Somerset County, nearly all cases were very difficult.

The evaluation team interviewed agents and supervisors from both York County DSER offices to get their impressions of the project. The agents and supervisors stated they were open to new and innovative ways of increasing child support payments. Many of those interviewed offered that NCPOIP’s emphasis on referring NCPs/PFs to various services might help them overcome their barriers and meet their obligations. While some agents were initially skeptical of the project and the coordinators, many became convinced that the coordinators were working in tandem with the local DSER offices. Lastly, several supervisors and agents stated the outreach coordinators improved relationships within NCP/PF families.

The project’s intention of having regular team meetings among the outreach coordinators, the AAG, and local DSER agents and then with the NCP or PF did not become a regular part of the project. The coordinators opted to keep in touch with agents on their caseloads via e-mail and phone calls.
Relationship with the Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Service

The Muskie School of Public Service provided a project coordination role for NCPOIP. When necessary, the project coordinator arranged meetings and tried to troubleshoot when problems arose. The coordinator often served as an intermediary between DSER, the Attorney General’s Office, and the outreach coordinators.

The Muskie School oversaw the development of the project’s brochures, which the coordinators and DSER praised. In addition, the Muskie School provided the coordinators with some administrative support.

The Muskie School also evaluated the project. The evaluation team was separate from the project coordination team, with the evaluators based in Portland and the project coordination team located in Augusta.

The evaluation team handled all monthly data entry and correspondence with outreach coordinators. The coordinators found all the data collection demands somewhat onerous. The York County Outreach Coordinator, who had the larger of the two caseloads, found that he was spending nearly a week a month on data collection and documentation efforts. Ultimately, while some of the forms and information requested were a bit problematic, the coordinators appreciated the usefulness of the data collected for the project and gave the forms a “thumbs-up.”

Somerset and York counties - Child Support Figures

York County is served by two local DSER offices, one located in Biddeford and the other in Sanford. Somerset County is covered by the Augusta Regional DSER office. For planning purposes, the three offices provided the project team with caseload summaries. In the Augusta regional office, staff separated out the Somerset County caseload from the rest of caseload. Some summary information on the caseload is provided in table 6.

As the table below demonstrates, the York County offices differ from the Augusta regional office in the number of obligated cases and the total number and percentage of obligated paying cases.

For 2001-03, the percentage of obligated cases to total cases was about 80% for both York County offices for the three year period. Meanwhile the figure for the Somerset County caseload was near or above 90% during the three year period.

Table 6. Selected Child Support Caseload Information for Somerset and York counties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total # of cases by county/office</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San. = 2,525</td>
<td>San. = 2,525</td>
<td>San. = 2,525</td>
<td>San. = 2,627</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bid. = 3,260</td>
<td>Bid. = 3,475</td>
<td>Bid. = 3,284</td>
<td>Bid. = 3,284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Som. = 2,506</td>
<td>Som. = 2,057 cases</td>
<td>Som. = 2,287</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total obligated cases by county/office</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San. = 2,025</td>
<td>San. = 2,005</td>
<td>San. = 2,152</td>
<td>San. = 2,152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bid. = 2,642</td>
<td>Bid. = 2,805</td>
<td>Bid. = 2,620</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Som. = 2,354</td>
<td>Som. = 1,795</td>
<td>Som. = 2,124</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total # and % of obligated cases who are paying by county/office</td>
<td>San. = 1,158 = 57%</td>
<td>San. = 1,139 = 57%</td>
<td>San. = not available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bid. = 1,581 = 59%</td>
<td>Bid. = 1,661 = 56%</td>
<td>Bid. = 1584 = 61%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Som. =1,458 = 62%</td>
<td>Som. = 1,239 = 69%</td>
<td>Som. = 1,296 = 61%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total number of cases needing orders by county/office</th>
<th>San. = 300</th>
<th>San. = 320</th>
<th>San. = 269</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bid. = 1,813</td>
<td>Bid. = 250</td>
<td>Bid. = 225</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Som. =100</td>
<td>Som. = 198</td>
<td>Som. = 163</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total number &amp; % of Cases needing paternity establishment by county/office</th>
<th>San. = NA, done in Biddeford</th>
<th>San. = NA, done in Biddeford</th>
<th>San. = NA, done in Biddeford</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bid. = 425 (13%)</td>
<td>Bid. = 350 (10%)</td>
<td>Bid. =243 (7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Som. = 50 (2%)</td>
<td>Som. = 64 (3%)</td>
<td>Som. = 37 (2%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) Overview

The outreach coordinators had considerable more success working with PFs. Many of the PFs were relatively new to the child support system and were more cooperative and willing to work with the coordinators and DSER to resolve their cases. As the data suggest, the outreach coordinators achieved several noteworthy accomplishments with the PF caseload. These included an increase in the number of acknowledgements of paternity, facilitated agreements on child support orders, facilitated agreements on child support arrearages, and paternity tests and converting statutory default cases to productive cases all speak to the positive influence that the outreach coordinators had with the PFs.

The NCP caseload yielded far fewer significant results. The Appear and Disclose cases were typically older and the NCPs owed legally established, enforceable, support debts. These NCPs were also chronic non-payors who had often spent much time avoiding DSER's attempts to make contact with them. They were unwilling to meet and work with the coordinators. For example, within the York County caseload, the time between when an order was established and when the outreach coordinator first had contact differed dramatically for PFs and NCPs. Among the active PF caseload, the mean interval was just 145 days or almost five months. By comparison, the mean interval for the NCPs was 2,925 days or 8.01 years.

(2) Tracking Data

The following information was gleaned from the NCPOIP Evaluation Database, a Microsoft Access database that links information from the Non-Custodial Parent and Putative Data Form, Custodial Parent Data Form, Appear and Disclose Tracking and Progress Form, and the Expedited Paternity Tracking and Progress Form.

**Expedited Paternity Tracking:**
During the project’s 21-month run, the outreach coordinators established a caseload of 122 putative fathers (14 Penobscot, 18 Somerset, and 90 York). Coordinators:

- Conducted in-depth interviews with 66 (54%) of them.
- Secured acknowledgement of paternity with 44 (36%) of them.
- Facilitated agreements on child support orders with 31 (25%) of them.
- Facilitated agreements on child support arrearages with 30 (25%) of them.
Helped with paternity testing in 29 (24%) cases.

Some PFs opted not to participate in the project and some were not fully interviewed before the project’s completion.

**Appear & Disclose Tracking:**
The outreach coordinators established a caseload of 136 non-custodial parents. Many of these parents are chronic non-payers (21 Penobscot, 37 Somerset, and 78 York). Coordinators:

- Conducted in-depth interviews with 32 (24%) of them.
- Provided help with modifying a child support order with 6 (4%) of them.
- Provided help with child support arrearages with 7 (5%) of them.

**Barriers to Regular Child Support Payments**
Putative fathers made up 48% of the entire caseload; however, they were far more likely to share information about barriers to regular child support payments. For example, 68 of 122 (55%) of the PFs provided the outreach coordinators with information on their housing status. Less than a quarter, 32 of 136 (24%), of NCPs provided this information.

In terms of barriers to regular child support payments, over a third (38%) of the fully assessed NCPs/PFs were living in rental, unsubsidized housing; however, the percentages were different for each population. PFs were twice as likely (46% vs. 22%) to be living in rental housing than NCPs. Living with friends was far more likely among the NCPs than the PFs (34% vs. 3%).

Transportation was more of a barrier for the Penobscot and Somerset caseload. While only 22% of the caseload assessed for transportation barriers was from these two counties, more than half (55%) had transportation problems, compared to 27% in York County.

On the employment front, just over half (51%) of the NCPs/PFs whose employment status was fully assessed were engaged in full time work. The mean pay for those working full-time was $12.60 an hour. Assuming a 40-hour work week over 52 weeks, this hourly rate translates to $26,208 a year.

Twenty (20%) percent of those assessed for employment status were working part-time. Their mean wage was $10.90 an hour. If the NCP/PF worked part-time, the outreach coordinators did not ascertain the number of hours they worked.

Almost a third (30%) of those assessed for employment status were unemployed. Among the unemployed, over half (52%) said they could not work due an illness, disability, or because of some other medical condition. More than a quarter (28%) claimed they could not find work.

The evaluation team examined the barriers to employment cited by a sample of NCPs/PFs and their respective CPs. The authors matched 72 NCPs/PFs with CPs. The CPs were far more likely to cite substance abuse issues as a barrier to employment for the NCP or PF than they were themselves. CPs were also more likely to cite the NCPs/PFs’ lack of anger management as a
barrier to employment. NCPs/PFs were more likely than their CPs to cite a physical disability as an obstacle to employment.

Almost half (47%) of the NCPs/PFs assessed for access and visitation information indicated they had no or limited contact with their children. Just over a quarter (26%) saw their child(ren) daily or a couple times a week.

The outreach coordinators asked all the CPs they interviewed whether they had been subjected to domestic violence from the NCP or PF. In over a third (37%) of the cases, the CP cited a history of domestic violence. More importantly, one in every 11 cases was screened out for domestic violence. This means that the outreach coordinators opted not to question the NCP or PF because doing so might endanger the CP and her child(ren).

1. Housing Status
The outreach coordinators fully assessed the housing status of 100 NCPs/PFs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing Status</th>
<th># of NCPs/PFs</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>By NCP/PF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rental, Unsubsidized Housing</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>7 NCPs &amp; 31 PFs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living with Family</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>9 NCPs &amp; 21 PFs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living with Friends</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>11 NCPs &amp; 2 PFs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own Home</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>1 NCP &amp; 8 PFs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsidized Housing</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2 NCPs &amp; 4 PFs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelter</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1 NCP &amp; 1 PF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeless</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1 NCP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correctional Facility</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1 PF</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Transportation
The outreach coordinators fully assessed the transportation needs of 100 NCPs/PFs.

Reliable Transportation (N=100)
Yes (n=67)               67%        (4 Penobscot, 6 Somerset, 57 York)
No (n=33)                33%        (4 Penobscot, 8 Somerset, 21 York)

3. Education
The outreach coordinators fully assessed the educational attainment levels of 98 NCPs/PFs. Just over half (52%) had finished high school or had received a GED. Forty percent (40%) had not finished high school and 8% had some post-secondary education.

4. Employment Status
The outreach coordinators fully assessed the employment status of 97 NCPs/PFs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment Status</th>
<th># of NCPs/PFs</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>By County</th>
<th>Wages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>2 Penobscot, 3 Somerset</td>
<td>Mean: $12.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The 29 NCPs/PFs were asked to explain the reasons for their unemployment.

**Table 9. Unemployed Reasons (N=29)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th># of NCPs/PFs</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>By County</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ill/Disabled/Unable to Work</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>4 Penobscot, 3 Somerset &amp; 8 York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannot Find Work</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>2 Somerset &amp; 6 York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>4 York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking Care of Home or Family</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1 Penobscot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going to School</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1 York</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The responses from 72 NCPs/PFs to a question on barriers to employment were matched with responses from CP. As Table 10 illustrates, the CPs gave more reasons than the NCPs/PFs. While responses were fairly similar, the CPs cited substance abuse and anger management issues more often as barriers to employment for the NCPs/PFs. The NCPs/PFs cited physical disabilities more often as a barrier to employment.

**Table 10. Barriers to Employment for NCP/PF (N=72)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barrier</th>
<th>NCP/PF Responses (N=72)</th>
<th>CP Responses (N=72)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mental Disability</td>
<td>n=7 (10%)</td>
<td>n=8 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance Abuse Issues</td>
<td>n=5 (7%)</td>
<td>n=19 (26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Disability</td>
<td>n=15 (21%)</td>
<td>n=11 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Disability</td>
<td>n=7 (10%)</td>
<td>n=7 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>n=21 (29%)</td>
<td>n=22 (31%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td>n=3 (4%)</td>
<td>n=4 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Driver’s License</td>
<td>n=32 (44%)</td>
<td>n=31 (43%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger Management</td>
<td>n=9 (13%)</td>
<td>n=17 (24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>n=5 (7%)</td>
<td>n=6 (8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. *Access & Visitation*

The outreach coordinators obtained access and visitation information from 95 NCPs/PFs. Nearly half of those assessed have very limited contact with their child(ren).

**Table 11. NCP/PF Nature of Contact with Children according to NCP/PF (N=95)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of Contact</th>
<th># of NCPs/PFs</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>By NCP/PF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None/Limited Contact</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>19 NCPs &amp; 26 PFs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily/1-3 times a week</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>7 NCPs &amp; 18 PFs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Domestic Violence
The outreach coordinators obtained domestic violence data from 155 CPs. Of these, 92 (59%) had experienced some form of domestic violence.
- History of DV = 58 (37%)
- Good Cause = 20 (13%)
- Screened out for DV = 14 (9%)

The Case Logs kept by the outreach coordinators provide a range of abusive situations.
- One custodial parent was in such fear she did not want child support. She described incidents by the non-custodial parent such as participating major drug usage and drug dealing, abusing to the family dog and being extremely violent—“a time bomb.”
- One custodial parent had been punched, choked, and hit in the face in front of her children. She was hospitalized.
- Another CP stated the non-custodial parent put a gun to her head and went to jail for domestic violence in another case.
- Another CP stated, “One time he hit me so hard, that he gave me a concussion, because he was drunk out of his mind, and he reported it himself to the police.” “He stalked me…and that’s why I had to move…”

(3) VIGNETTES
While the statistics are compelling, they do not tell the entire story. The qualitative data contributes significantly to understanding how the case management approach works with NCPs and PFs in these two Maine counties. In the section below, three cases, quoted directly from the outreach coordinators’ case files, are presented to demonstrate the complexities in each case as well as how the outreach coordinator was able to assist the NCP/PF. To ensure confidentiality, no names are used.

Case 1 – PF
This case demonstrates that an outreach coordinator’s involvement can have many beneficial results including family re-unification.

*The custodial parent had not had any contact with the putative father in over four years and before that it had been by telephone. The child, born in 1994, had not any contact with the putative father. Through the Aspire Program, the CP had received an education and now holds a Masters in Social Work and is employed.*

*The CP mentioned that there had been some domestic violence eight years ago, but she is unaware if the PF has changed. She was not concerned for her own safety; however, she was worried about her son’s well-being.*

*I tried to locate him with the address given to me by DSER. According to the individual now living in the apartment, the PF must have moved out in early summer as this person has been in the apartment for 4 months. I asked DSER to complete another postal search.*
A month passed by and DSER was unable to locate the PF. I decided to check WELFRE system to discern whether the PF was receiving any assistance and learned he is and that his address had been updated. It turns outs his residence is within ½ mile of my Portland office.

I decided to make contact with the PF that day. I discussed the process of paternity with him. PF elected to sign the denial of paternity. He also expressed a desire to meet his son. I gave the original denial to DHS and will secure testing. I conveyed my findings to the CP who was very appreciative and she indicated that she would speak with her son about possible next steps.

A week later, I spoke with the CP and she stated that they were ready to establish contact. I offered to facilitate the first meeting between the parties, but that it was up to them whether the meetings would continue.

The following day, the PF expressed some concerns to me that this not be a one-shot meeting as he believes it would be problematic for his son. I advised him that I would contact the CP about his concerns.

Nearly three weeks have passed since I touched this case. The CP called me today and asked me for the PF’s phone number. She wants to initiate contact by phone first. I learned from the PF that he does have a phone; however, he gave me a number where the CP could reach him.

Eight days later I checked in the CP and she informed me that the PF had not contacted her. Later in the day, I met with the PF who reiterated his interest in talking with the CP using the only phone available to him, my cell phone. I notified the CP of time and she said she would be ready.

The next day, the CP and PF talked by phone for 35 minutes. After the call, I spoke with the CP and the PF and they agreed to have their first in-person meeting two weeks hence at the AG’s Office.

The day before the meeting, I met with the PF who looked better than I had ever seen him. He was shaved and his one room efficiency was well cleaned. The next day, the CP, PF and the child met at the AG’s Office for over an hour. They left the office together and went out to eat.

The CP called three days later to thank me for facilitating the first meeting. She stated, “Given our history together, this was the most peaceful meeting that could have occurred. It went very well and (the PF) is seeing his son again this weekend. Thank you again for being there to do this. We all appreciate it.”

A month later, the PF appeared for his paternity test. Subsequently, the results confirmed his as the father. A month later, he signed the acknowledgment of paternity.

Case 2 - PF
This case illustrates the time and follow through required of the outreach coordinator to resolve the situation.
The custodial parent has four children under the age of four living in a small apartment that appeared to have many more children living there. The custodial parent described the PF’s multiple barriers. He doesn’t get physically violent but can be boisterous and flustered when frustrated or angry.

This putative father turned 18 last June and had been in state custody since the age of 16. He has worked sporadically and stated he is “really lazy….and I don’t like to take orders from people and I don’t like meeting new people.” He stated his relationship with the custodial parent is basically good, though “off and on.” He sees his daughter just about every day and watches all her children while the custodial parent is attending the ASPIRE Program.

This putative father needs strong intervention with job seeking and retention skills. He has applied for SSDI due to his inability to work with others. I made contact with a community transportation program as a possible source of employment for the putative father, then later discussed this and other options with the putative father. They also had a discussion about sobriety and that he needs to be clean for employment.

The putative father appeared in court and the order was established at the levels we had previously discussed.

A possible mental health assessment may lead to vocational rehabilitation referral. His employment placement would have the benefit of a safety net for him. I contacted another community based program with a job-shadowing approach, which may lead to skills development and Extended Care Program (V-9) would provide funding for his GED, or life skills, or move out from his mothers and start an independent living plan. The putative father has informed me he wants to become a responsible adult.

Case 3 - NCP
This case shows what the outreach coordinator was able to accomplish once he was able to establish a trusting relationship with the NCP.

The non-custodial parent is a 50 year old male with four cases. The Outreach Coordinator met with him and discovered that two of the children from the two ongoing cases had been living with him. He is a 100% disabled veteran living off his pension with no health insurance for him or his children. He has not had good relations with DSER and regularly discards paperwork from support enforcement when it comes in the mail.

I worked with him, gained his trust and arranged a meeting with a DSER Agent. At the meeting, they agreed to a small monthly payment on his $50,000+ arrearage. There had been no payments made on these cases since 1995. As a result of my meeting with the NCP, DSER stopped the ongoing child support. The non-custodial parent applied for Medicaid for himself and his children and was approved. He is now exempt from making payments on current or arrears debt. DSER has transferred these cases to “No further action taken.”

Case 4 - NCP
This case demonstrates that some cases are not readily resolved. For each step forward there can be a small step backward.

This non-custodial parent is a 30 year old male who has not made regular payments on two child support cases that were opened more than two years ago.

I learned that he sometimes lives with his mother sometimes with the custodial parent of one of his children. This custodial parent has three children though only one of them is with the non-custodial parent.

He cannot hear and his teeth are so decayed he is in constant chronic pain. He was hit by a car when he was six years old that caused some damage to his back. He attended special education classes until the 9th grade when his education ended. The hearing problem is a result of a medical problem, possibly related to his decayed teeth. Lacking insurance, he has not sought our assistance for all these disabilities. It was explained to the non-custodial parent that involvement in this program would help him and his two children.

I provided the non-custodial parent with a Medicaid application and delivered the completed form a week later to DHS with the request that it be expedited. About a week later the non-custodial parent went to work at a local business. I explained to him that DSER would be garnishing his wages for the on-going child support, but could wait on arrears until his health improved.

A couple of months later the non-custodial parent was informed that his request for Medicaid had been denied. The non-custodial parent had failed to provide DHS with recent pay stubs from work. I called his employer, picked up his earning sheets and dropped them off to DHS where he was subsequently approved for medical benefits.

Six months have passed. The non-custodial parent had gone to the doctors and continued working. Child support payments were made while he continued to work. I assumed he had received appropriate medical attention for all of his medical issues.

The payments suddenly stopped. After a call to the non-custodial parent’s mother, she stated he had never returned to the doctors for any follow-up care and his ears were still bothering him. His employer cut his hours so he quit his job. He has no support system in place to help him keep his medical appointments. I continued to stay in contact and help him resolve these issues. The non-custodial parent is still an open Medicaid case and receiving food stamps.

VIII. KEY OBSERVATIONS & KEY FINDINGS

While funding for this demonstration project was not renewed by the federal government or picked up the state, this project was considered a success in the state of Maine. The Commission on Fatherhood Issues proclaimed it a model for working with NCPs and recommended its continuation of funded positions at the State Attorney General’s office. However, a $1 billion state budget shortfall during the legislative biennium rendered the recommendation impossible.
Maine DSER agreed that strengthening contact with PFs was beneficial, but because they are under-staffed and have high caseloads, it would not be cost-effective at this time to dedicate staff to an activity that required so many person hours with so few cases.

Regardless, program staff learned many valuable lessons in serving NCPs/PFs. If a similar project is launched in the future, it may want to consider some of these observations and key findings.

**Key Observations**
The observations in this section pertain to the outreach coordinators’ role in the project.

1. **Role of Coordinator**

Most of the project's success was realized in the paternity process. Paternity issues required different skills on the part of the coordinators. The coordinators had to be both good educators, on the benefits of acknowledging paternity, and listeners, on the needs of PFs, to get a case into compliance. The younger men often viewed the coordinators as mentors. Many PFs were new to the child support system and were possibly less cynical about being approached by the outreach coordinators and more willing to talk with them.

2. **Training Component for Outreach Coordinators**

As the project unfolded, both coordinators lamented that not all key partners were fully educated about the project. One coordinator indicated that most Bureau of Family Independence specialists knew very little about the project. This division could have been an instrumental resource for case history. Had the NCPOIP project facilitated a better relationship with the specialists and their supervisors the project might have gotten more information from them. Another coordinator mentioned that the project would have been enhanced if both project staff and the outreach coordinators had more time to develop relationships with the case management officers who are part of the Family Court system.

During the training, the outreach coordinators were trained to screen out cases for domestic violence. As the project unfolded, the coordinators found that most cases were touched by domestic violence. To screen out all domestic violence cases would have left the project with very few cases. The coordinators opted to listen to how the custodial parent felt about the coordinators contacting the non-custodial parent or putative father. When there was significant concern about the outreach coordinators’ contact or pursuance to contact the non-custodial parent or putative father regarding paternity or child support debt, the coordinators encouraged the custodial parent to seek Good Cause relief through the Department.

While the background information and reading were helpful, both coordinators stated that the training was too long. Some sessions, such as the safety training, needed to be shortened, while material on community based organizations in the target counties needed to be enhanced.
3. Relationship with Community Coalitions

The coordinators made some good initial contacts with community based organizations in the two target counties. However, more follow-up could have been done to better involve these coalitions in a more comprehensive way. If the project was continued or started in other counties, some community based outreach organizations should be included in the initial project planning phase.

4. Being Part of the Attorney General’s Office or DSER or other agency

Both coordinators welcomed being a part of the AG’s Office. This arrangement opened doors for the coordinators. It gave them better access to the staff attorneys. Likewise, having the coordinators within their office enabled the AG’s office to craft better orders because they had better information on the NCP or PFs’ financial, social and emotional backgrounds.

5. Relationship with the Muskie School

The outreach coordinators had few criticisms of the way the Muskie School administered and evaluated the project. The data collection forms need to be streamlined for any future project. While the coordinators found the forms helpful and easy to understand, they did find them duplicative at times. The forms were also time consuming to complete on a monthly basis. Developing a web-based reporting system might have facilitated the data collection process.

6. Relationship with Fathers and Children after NCPOIP Intervention

In several cases, the outreach coordinators were able to foster a new or renewed dialogue between the NCP/PF and the CP. In one case (Vignette #1), one of the coordinators was able to help reunite a family. Please see the appendices for a copy of a “thank you” letter from the reunited family. Several studies have found that men who maintain relationships with their children are more likely to monetarily support them (Amato and Gilbreth, 1999; Perloff and Buckner, 1996; Coley, 1998).

7. Qualifications of Outreach Coordinators

Good communication and listening skills are important qualifications in an outreach coordinator. It also helps if the coordinator has experience as a DSER agent. They should be socially sensitive, not judgmental, comfortable with poverty issues, and understand the barriers disadvantaged and low-income people confront on a day-to-day basis.

8. Relationship with DSER

The coordinators felt that they did not need the involvement of DSER agents as much as they had anticipated at the project’s outset. As mentioned earlier, group meetings between the coordinators, agents, and putative fathers did not happen with any regularity. The Bureau of Family Independence workers (see step 9) were not needed as the outreach coordinator easily assumed this role.
Key Findings

1. Individualized Case Management Approach

The data results demonstrate that this approach is an effective way to reach PFs and some NCPs. The personal connection allows a father to have a voice and to hear their personal story. The outreach coordinators showed that the negative attitudes could be reversed, child support payments could begin and in some cases a father can enter their child’s life for the first time. However, given the State's resources this may not be the most cost-effective way for the State to manage a very large caseload.

2. Resource Guides

Initially, the resource guides were a helpful tool to learn more about Somerset and York counties; however, they were largely unused after the first couple of months. While some organizations responded that they still use the guides, they required a great deal of time to develop them. This time could have been better spent on other project activities.

3. Population Criteria Eligibility for Project

Due to the success the outreach coordinators had with the putative father caseload, many people involved in the project felt that if the project was to be repeated the coordinators should focus on the PFs in the expedited paternity process. The outreach coordinators were able to prevent a number of default orders.

4. Brochures and Information Sheets

The outreach coordinators deemed the following brochures effective.
1. “What You Need to Know About Good Cause.” When the outreach coordinators encountered cases with serious domestic violence, or the threat of violence from contacting the putative father or non-custodial parent, this brochure was an easy explanation of the procedure.
2. “What Happens When You Are Named the Father of a Child?”
3. “Establishing Paternity for Your Child.” This booklet was a byproduct of the Maine Acknowledgment of Paternity Project. This was one of the most useful resources. The Maine Department of Human Services has had a hard time keeping these booklets in stock.
4. All of the information sheets: “Free and Reduced Legal Assistance,” “Legal Terms,” and “Additional Legal Resources,” were very useful, especially for those people who were starting to enter the court proceedings time period of their cases.

The brochure, “Information About Driver’s Licenses,” was only used a couple of times by the outreach coordinators, but continues to be used frequently by DSER agents.

5. Maine State Policies and Laws Regarding Fatherhood Initiatives

Mandatory genetic testing legislation should be enacted. The disestablishment of paternity process can have a detrimental impact on families. A good deal of the Assistant Attorney General’s time is spent in courts dealing with cases in which fathers were established without
genetic testing and subsequently secure testing that shows they are not the biological father. The York County Outreach Coordinator had eight exclusions during his time on the project.

6. Involvement of the Family Court and CMO’s

The Case Management Officers (CMO) could have a huge asset to the project. If the project was to be continued, the project, its objectives, and what role the Family Division of the Court has, as well as the CMOs’ role in the referral process should be better explained to them.

7. Maine Commission on Fatherhood Issues

In 2002, the Maine Legislature convened the Commission on Fatherhood Issues, a legislative group that studied ways to improve the involvement of non-custodial fathers in their children's lives. The coordinators, project administration staff, and the evaluators all provided testimony at a hearing in the fall of 2002. The Commission recommended that the state assume the funding of the project; however, the state budget crisis prevented this from occurring. (An article on the Commission appears in the Appendices).
IX. REFERENCES


Households: The Importance of Fathers and Other Men.” Child Development 69(1) 219-30.

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Them Contribute to the Support of Their Children.” Washington, DC: National Association of 
Child Advocates.


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Disadvantaged?” Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.
APPENDICES

A. Selected Background Data for Somerset and York counties
B. Appear and Disclose Matrix
C. Expedited Paternity Matrix
D. Collaboration
E. Sample Community Resource Guide
F. *What you Need to Know about Good Cause*, brochure
G. *What Happens When You Are Named the Father Of A Child*, brochure
H. *Information about Driver’s License*, brochure
I. *Establishing Paternity for Your Child*, brochure
J. *Legal Term*, Fact Sheet
K. *Free and Reduced Fee Legal Assistance for Low-Income People Living in Maine*, Fact Sheet
L. *Additional Resources*, Fact Sheet
M. *How to Ask for Modification to Your Child Support Order*, Fact Sheet
N. Non-Custodial Parent Appear & Disclose and Putative Father Data Form
O. NCPOIP Appear & Disclose Tracking & Progress Form
P. NCPOIP Expedited Paternity Tracking & Progress Form
Q. Outreach Coordinator Orientation Training Topics
R. Reunification Letter
S. Fatherhood Commission Article
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