

**State of Washington  
Child Support Joint Agency Collection Project**

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**Final Grant Report  
Child Support Joint Agency Collection Project**

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## I. General Overview of the Project

In 2001, the State of Washington's Division of Child Support (DCS) received a federal grant to study different approaches to assist incarcerated and recently incarcerated noncustodial parents (NCPs). This study is called the Joint Agency Collection Project. The Project brought together three Washington State agencies to study methods of addressing the needs of these NCPs: the Department of Social and Health Services' Division of Child Support (DCS), the Employment Security Department (ESD), and the Department of Corrections (DOC). Each agency has a particular interest in this population: DCS wants to increase child support payments from a group which has traditionally not paid child support on a consistent basis. ESD wants to help NCPs who have recently been released from prison become employed as quickly as possible. DOC wants to decrease the likelihood of inmates re-offending and returning to prison. DCS, ESD, and DOC believe that by working together with this common set of clients, all three agencies might learn ways to achieve a better outcome for incarcerated or recently incarcerated noncustodial parents and their families.

At the outset of the Project, the Project partners believed that inappropriately high child support orders and excessive child support arrearages might combine to create a disincentive to paying support upon an NCP's release from incarceration. That, coupled with employment barriers commonly faced by recently released inmates, might lead to higher recidivism rates. Although remedies exist, many inmates are unaware of the options available to them to mitigate their situation. In an effort to improve employment rates and child support payment rates, the Project partners embarked on a study of two outreach methods to determine if one or the other achieved a significantly more desirable result.

Washington State has 14 major corrections institutions spread across the state. Because of pressure on existing staff resources in all state agencies, the Project partners focused on comparing the benefits of a "low effort" outreach method with a "high effort" outreach method as a way to interact with incarcerated NCPs. All inmates in this study saw a Project video about child support. The video invited inmate NCPs to contact DCS and ESD by using a form called the **Noncustodial Parent Contact Letter**. After viewing the video, inmate NCPs with child support issues could complete **Noncustodial Parent Contact Letters** which were available in every institution. Staff at the corrections institutions forwarded the **Noncustodial Parent Contact Letters** to Project staff in DCS.

The high effort outreach method involved Project staff from DCS and ESD conducting in-person meetings with inmates to review their child support cases, informing them of options available in each inmate's particular situation, explaining the employment assistance available after release, and

answering inmates' questions. In the low effort outreach method, inmate NCPs received the same information and help from DCS and ESD, but by mail in written format.

This report details the staffing of the Project, the two outreach processes, the data collection and analysis, the final results, and the recommendations of the Project partners.

## **II. Project Partners and Their Roles**

The Joint Agency Collection Project is the result of a unique collaboration of three Washington state agencies, the Department of Corrections (DOC), the Employment Security Department (ESD), and the Division of Child Support (DCS), which is part of the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS). Each agency played a vital role in the implementation of the Project. The role of each partner is described below.

### ***Ms. Janet Francis, DOC Transition Specialist***

Ms. Francis obtained authorization for the Project partners and the video production company to enter several different corrections institutions to shoot footage for the Project video. She conducted education sessions for DOC staff and management explaining the Project and the expected benefits. Ms. Francis distributed the finished video and **Noncustodial Parent Contact Letters** to corrections facilities including institutions, pre-release facilities, work release facilities, and DOC field offices. For some institutions and facilities, she was able to deliver to DOC staff an in-person introduction to the Project video and other materials. She attended initial in-person meetings with inmates at DOC institutions, and acted as the DOC Project expert and contact person.

### ***Mr. Jess Wilson, ESD Corrections Employment Coordinator***

Mr. Wilson coordinated the participation of Welfare-to-Work <sup>1</sup> organizations throughout the state. He researched available Welfare-to-Work resources for individual inmates, and responded to each NCP providing either an appointment to meet with a Welfare-to-Work organization or information

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<sup>1</sup> The Welfare-to-Work grants program funded by the U.S. Department of Labor was authorized by Congress in 1997 to provide employment assistance to the most disadvantaged mothers and fathers whose children receive Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) cash welfare. These parents were thought to have such low educational and skills attainment, and such limited work experience, that only intensive assistance and services could help them obtain and permanently retain employment.

about using the ESD WorkSource office to search for employment. Mr. Wilson personally met with inmates prior to their release from a DOC institution. He maintained the ESD Project database, and acted as the ESD Project expert and contact person.

***Ms. Dawn DeLong, DCS Child Support Collections Specialist***

Ms. DeLong managed the administrative details of the Project. She coordinated with partners and with the video production company during the video creation. She researched inmates' child support cases, and sent responses to each NCP explaining available child support remedies based on individual case circumstances. Ms. DeLong coordinated with Ms. Francis and the corrections facility for in-person inmate visits. She maintained the DCS Project database, and acted as the DCS Project expert and contact person.

***Executive Committee***

The executive oversight committee of the Project consisted of management staff from all three agencies: Holly Watson of ESD, Jackie Campbell of DOC, and David Stillman and Ellen Nolan of DCS.

***Assistance from Other DCS Staff***

The Project involved additional assistance provided by a number of DCS staff members including staff from the DCS Community Relations Unit, the Policy Unit, the Program Development Unit, the Cash Special Applications Unit, and the Conference Board Unit.

**III. Project Objectives**

***A. Objectives of the Project:***

1. To increase the number of noncustodial parents in state corrections institutions who seek assistance in establishing and modifying child support orders through the use of an informational video, brochures, and specialized Project forms.
2. To increase the number of noncustodial parents who are linked to an employment program when released from a state corrections institution.
3. To increase the number of noncustodial parents who pay child support after they are released from a state corrections institution.

4. To test multiple approaches to reach both incarcerated inmates and those now released under community supervision.

*B. Essential Questions Posed by the Project:*

From the outset, there were two questions that Project partners felt were most important to answer:

1. Does outreach to incarcerated NCPs, investment of staff resources to address child support issues, and assistance with employment for incarcerated parents result in a better payment record after incarceration compared with previous non-incarceration periods?
2. Do these efforts regarding child support issues make a difference for NCPs who remain incarcerated?

#### **IV. Implementation of the Project – Low Effort Outreach Method**

*A. Creation and Distribution of the Video*

Project partners designed the child support information video to achieve two purposes – to answer common questions that inmates have about child support issues, and to invite inmates to work with DCS and ESD to assist with their child support cases and with obtaining employment upon release.

DCS contracted with a local company, Bristol Productions, to create the video. Bristol Productions researched the demographics of the offender population and interviewed staff from the three Project partners to develop the video script. Bristol Productions discovered that inmates tend to have misconceptions about the child support process and are eager for good information. Project partners wanted to educate inmates about basic child support issues, to explain the importance of proactively seeking solutions, and to give inmates incentives to support their children. *See Appendix A.*

Project partners worked together to create and edit the video script for accuracy, for effectiveness of the message, and for clarity of policy issues. The partners tested the script in informal focus groups with inmates. Mr. Wilson attended offender classes in a work release facility and read the script out loud to the class. He then questioned the inmates to determine if they understood the information presented. Based on the inmate feedback, Project partners were satisfied that the script would effectively convey the intended message.

The final script called for a narrator to portray a former inmate who had successfully worked with DCS to modify his child support order and who had found a job with the assistance of ESD. The partners first attempted to locate an individual with acting ability who had a real life story that fit the needs of the Project. In the end, the partners hired a professional actor to narrate the video. A talent agency provided Project partners with portfolios from several actors, and ran a screen test of the actors reading the video script. From the screen tests, the partners selected an actor who best fit the image of a recently released inmate.

Once all partners approved the final script and selected an actor for the narrator, the filming proceeded. The video crew shot footage at three DOC institutions: Washington Correction Center (Shelton), Washington Correction Center for Women (Purdy), and McNeil Island Correction Center. At these facilities, the video crew filmed scenes of inmates engaged in typical activities – going to class, working in prison industries, eating in the dining hall, and playing sports. Bristol Productions had a great vision for a film that would fulfill the needs of the Project; they used the script, settings, and prison footage to implement that vision successfully.

Project partners ordered copies of the video and distributed the copies to DOC institutions. Partners made a presentation to the DOC management team, explaining the goals and objectives for the Project and showing the video. The DOC management team committed to including the video in inmate orientation sessions at their facilities across the state.

In addition to using the video in the Project, the partners shared it with other states' child support programs. DCS sent a copy to every IV-D Director across the country and showed the video in several presentations at professional conferences. Project staff received very positive feedback about the information and the quality of the presentations. Several counties in California requested a copy for use in their outreach programs.

#### *B. Use of the Video with Inmates in DOC Institutions*

In January 2002, each DOC institution received at least one copy of the child support information video and a supply of the DCS **Noncustodial Parent Contact Letter**. DOC institutions showed the video in the different orientation sessions and classes in each facility. *See Appendix B.* The video reached the largest audience at Washington Correction Center (WCC) in Shelton, Washington. WCC is a receiving center for all male inmates admitted into prison in Washington State. From WCC, inmates are sent to other DOC facilities. Project partners estimate that over the life of the grant Project, approximately 4500 inmates saw the video at least once. The total number of inmate viewings is estimated at nearly 10,000.

As stated previously, the video invites each NCP to complete a **Noncustodial Parent Contact Letter** to inquire about their child support cases with DCS. The video also informs the NCP that returning a **Noncustodial Parent Contact Letter** to DCS will prompt information about job opportunities from ESD. DOC institutions forwarded the NCPs' completed contact letters to DCS.

### *C. Case Evaluation and Response*

The Division of Child Support's receipt of a **Noncustodial Parent Contact Letter** (see *Appendix C*) was the NCPs' entry point into the Project. DCS maintained a database of all the NCPs who sent DCS a contact letter. After entering the NCPs' identifying information into the database, DCS evaluated all child support cases for every NCP in the Project. DCS reviewed every case to determine all of the children for whom the NCP had a support obligation, what type of child support order the NCP had for those children, and how much the NCP owed and to whom. These factors determined what changes, if any, could be made to each NCP's overall support obligation.

There are two types of child support orders--administrative orders and court orders. The type of order determines what kind of relief might be available to a particular NCP through DCS. An NCP with an administrative order might be entitled to a late hearing right, which would allow the NCP to challenge the entire amount of support; depending on the circumstances, the NCP may only be able to request a prospective modification of the support order. An NCP with a court order might have options limited to a review for a prospective modification of the order. For most incarcerated NCPs, modification is an appropriate and available remedy, but it is not automatic. If an NCP owes child support arrearages to the State of Washington under either type of order, the NCP can request that a DCS Conference Board write off some or all of the debt. The Conference Board is the informal DCS process for resolving complaints and problems on child support cases. A Conference Board may grant specific relief for a number of issues, including debt forgiveness. The Conference Board does not, however, have authority to change a child support order or to write off debt owed to someone other than the state of Washington, such as the custodial parent, an Indian tribe, or another state.

For every NCP who entered the Project, DCS reviewed all of the NCP's cases and sent a response. DCS used the forms **Child Support Case Status Response** and **Child Support Obligation Information** (see *Appendix C*) to explain the current status of each case and to recommend options the NCP might pursue. For any recommended action, DCS provided the required forms along with a pre-paid envelope for a reply. If the NCP responded by completing and returning the recommended forms, Project staff forwarded the documents to the appropriate DCS field office for processing.



*D. Referring NCPs to ESD for Welfare-to-Work*

Once DCS responded to a **Noncustodial Parent Contact Letter**, DCS forwarded a copy of the contact letter and a **Welfare-to-Work Referral Verification Form** to ESD. The ESD Project partner, Mr. Wilson, then entered the data from the forwarded forms as well as data from the DOC database (Offender Based Tracking System - OBTS) into an Access database for tracking program participants. ESD staff then sent a letter of eligibility, as well as employment resource brochures to each NCP participant to notify them if they qualified for the program. Those that did not qualify, either because they were not Welfare-to-Work eligible or because their release date was beyond the grant time lines, did not receive any further information or contact through the Project. The eligibility letter advised those that did qualify that they would be contacted prior to their release. They were also given a **Workforce Investment Act/Welfare-to-Work** application and an **NCP Authorization for Disclosure** form with instructions on how to fill out and immediately return all forms.

ESD had a system in place to track qualified NCPs by their release date. As the NCP got within 14 days of release (confirmed once more by checking the OBTS system), ESD sent another letter to the NCP explaining what the NCP needed to do upon release in order to receive services, along with the Welfare-to-Work coordinator contact information. At the same time, a letter was sent to the Welfare-to-Work coordinator along with copies of the **Workforce Investment Act/Welfare-to-Work** application, **NCP Authorization for Disclosure** form, and Welfare-to-Work verification forms notifying the coordinators that the NCP had been referred to them for Welfare-to-Work services.

At each point in this process, the ESD Access database was updated to indicate current status. When necessary, ESD staff made contact with the NCP's Corrections Counselor to provide information and to coordinate the Welfare-to-Work services. For the in-person visits at corrections facilities, the processes for verifying, tracking, and confirming the necessary information for those NCPs who qualified for Welfare-to-Work services were the same as noted above. During the in-person visits Mr. Wilson hand-delivered the letters and forms, and was thus able to answer questions about Welfare-to-Work services as well as ESD's other employment-related services in person.

One of the critical pieces in coordinating services to the Project population was frequent meetings with the local Welfare-to-Work coordinators. On a monthly basis, Mr. Wilson participated in meetings to give updates as well as status of expected upcoming releases. This proved to be an invaluable component in maintaining the interest of Welfare-to-Work coordinators from around the state for this special group of NCPs.

## V. Implementation of the Project – High Effort Outreach Method

### A. *In-person Visits to Incarcerated NCPs*

By definition, every NCP in the Project study viewed the outreach video and submitted a **Noncustodial Parent Contact Letter** to DCS. In addition to this low effort method of outreach, Project partners selected a small number of NCPs from the whole population of Project NCPs for an in-person visit. Ms. Francis coordinated in-person visits with NCPs at WCC in Shelton, Washington. DOC suggested WCC for the main emphasis of the Project for several reasons. Staff members at this facility were prepared to communicate with the Project partners concerning which inmates desired an in-person visit. Also, Shelton is geographically convenient to the Olympia area where the Project partners are located. Additionally, the selection of this facility was advantageous because it is the DOC receiving center and processes all new male inmates for the entire state.

At WCC, after viewing the video, inmates indicated whether or not they were interested in talking to Project staff in person. WCC staff maintained a list of those inmate NCPs expressing this interest. With the exception of May 2002, Project staff had a meeting each month at WCC from February through October 2002, for a total of eight months. About ten days before the scheduled meeting, WCC staff would send DCS a list of interested inmate NCPs. This list typically contained 25 – 40 names from which Project staff selected 8 – 12 NCPs. Since meetings were scheduled for only two hours each month, Project staff attempted to meet with those individuals who had the greatest need. Staff chose inmates who were eligible for Welfare-to-Work, were close to release, had large current support orders and/or very high child support arrearages, or had a combination of these factors.

After paring the list down, both ESD and DCS researched each inmate's situation to be able to make recommendations tailored to the individual. Mr. Wilson had access to the OBTS database from DOC. Ms. DeLong had access to the DCS case management system database (Support Enforcement Management System - SEMS) and to the DOC Felony Offender Reporting System (FORS) database.

When Ms. DeLong met with each NCP, she explained the current status of the NCP's case(s) and the options available to the NCP to deal with his<sup>2</sup> child support obligation. She reviewed all of the documents with the NCP, showed

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<sup>2</sup> Because of the selection of WCC as the location where project staff met with inmates, and because Washington State has only one female corrections facility, DCS and ESD met only with male NCPs. DCS did receive contact letters from female NCPs and female NCPs were included in the Project, but project staff were unable to meet directly with them.

him how to complete the forms, and explained what other information he needed to include in his request. Ms. DeLong also provided each NCP with relevant DCS informational brochures.

## VI. Project Data Collection Methods

DCS entered every NCP who sent a **Noncustodial Parent Contact Letter** into a main Access database. As work progressed, DCS staff updated the Project database with additional information. The database contained the following data elements:

1. Name of the incarcerated NCP.
2. Child support case number(s).
3. DOC identifying number.
4. Estimated date of the NCP's release from incarceration.
5. Date DCS received the **Noncustodial Parent Contact Letter**.
6. Whether or not DCS met with the NCP in person.
7. Date of the in-person meeting, if any.
8. Date DCS mailed a response back to the NCP.
9. Actions DCS recommended to the NCP:
  - a. Modification of administrative order.
  - b. Hearing or late hearing on an administrative notice.
  - c. Modification of a court order.
  - d. Conference Board charge off request.
10. Date the NCP returned completed documents to DCS.
11. Whether or not DCS reviewed the NCP's situation for Welfare-to-Work eligibility.
12. Name of the DOC institution from which the NCP sent the **Noncustodial Parent Contact Letter**.

Project staff compared cases in the low effort and high effort outreach categories to determine whether the NCP was more likely to respond and follow through with the process. Staff compared differences in child support order amounts and debt amounts. Staff examined study cases after the NCPs were released to determine the difference in the number and amounts of child support payments in comparison to previous periods when these NCPs were not incarcerated. Staff evaluated the effects of employment, changes to the monthly child support order, and changes to the overall debt amount to determine the effects on payment rates. Specifically, Project staff tracked:

1. What relief, if any, the NCP requested.
2. What relief, if any, was granted for current support and for arrears.
3. After release:
  - Did the NCP obtain employment?
  - Did the NCP pay child support?

- Did the NCP continue to pay child support?

To draw comparisons, Project staff divided the NCPs into eight groups (See **Incarcerated NCP Study Groups** chart below). Every NCP received a response from DCS; some received information by mail, others met in person with DCS staff to receive information plus a detailed explanation of their case status and what actions were available to them. First, partners divided the groups of NCPs based on whether or not DCS met with the NCP in person. The partners further divided the groups based on whether or not the NCP followed through and sent the necessary documents back to DCS to request such things as a modification of a high child support order amount or forgiveness of back child support. Finally, the partners further split the groups into categories depending on whether the NCP's estimated date of release from incarceration fell either before or after April 2003.

DCS received 1531 **Noncustodial Parent Contact Letters** through October 31, 2002. Of the 1531, 59 inmates had no child support case in Washington, leaving the total universe of NCP inmates at 1472. Project staff selected a random sample of 30 NCPs in Groups 1 through 4; staff included all NCPs for Groups 5 through 8.

### **Incarcerated NCP Study Groups**

<b>Incarcerated NCPs Who Sent in a Noncustodial Parent Contact Letter</b>							
<b>No In-person Visit with NCP</b> (NCP received DCS info by mail)				<b>DCS Visited NCP In Person</b> (NCP received DCS info in person)			
NCP Sent Response		NCP Did Not Send Response		NCP Sent Response		NCP Did Not Send Response	
Release Date		Release Date		Release Date		Release Date	
6/01 – 3/03	4/03 - and after	6/01 – 3/03	4/03 – and after	6/01 – 3/03	4/03 -and after	6/01 – 3/03	4/03 – and after
<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Group 2</b>	<b>Group 3</b>	<b>Group 4</b>	<b>Group 5</b>	<b>Group 6</b>	<b>Group 7</b>	<b>Group 8</b>
30 NCPs	30 NCPs	30 NCPs	30 NCPs	36 NCPs	27 NCPs	14 NCPs	15 NCPs

Project staff evaluated each NCP's cases in each of the eight groups and entered the findings into a database which contained the following data elements:

1. NCP name.
2. NCP child support case numbers.
3. Total amount of beginning debt on all cases.
4. Total amount of ending debt on all cases.
5. Total of beginning current support amounts for all cases.
6. Total amount of ending current support amounts for all cases.
7. New case or order.

8. Type of relief requested.
9. Type of relief granted.
10. Reasons for no relief if no relief granted.
11. Dates of immediate pre-prison period.
12. Number of payments due during pre-prison period.
13. Number of payments made during pre-prison period.
14. Dates of immediate post-prison period.
15. Number of payments due during post-prison period.
16. Number of payments made during post-prison period.
17. Number of quarters of earnings reported to ESD.

## VII. Analysis of Project Data (See Appendix D - Tables 2, 3, 4 & 5)

### *Response Rates*

As mentioned earlier, altogether, DCS received 1531 **Noncustodial Parent Contact Letters** from inmates in Washington corrections facilities. Of these, 59 inmates did not have a child support case with DCS, leaving a total effective population of 1476. After DCS sent a response to each NCP with recommendations for actions that the NCP might take, 525 returned the necessary documents to implement the recommendations--an overall response rate of 35.5%. By contrast, DCS and ESD were able to meet in person with 92 NCP inmates. After the meeting, 59 NCPs returned documents to DCS, for a greatly increased response rate of 64%.

### *In-person Contact versus No In-person Contact*

The following analysis compares groups 1-4, who received child support and employment information by mail, and groups 5-8, who received child support and employment information in person.

#### *A. Released NCPs with No In-person Visits Who Responded versus Released NCPs with In-person Visits Who Responded*

*Group 1 (NCPs who received **no** in-person visit, who sent in a response, and who had a release date between June 2001 and March 2003) compared to*

*Group 5 (NCPs who received an in-person visit, who sent in a response, and who had a release date between June 2001 and March 2003)*

NCPs in both of these groups returned the necessary documents to DCS and were released from June 2001 through March 2003. One group of these released NCPs did not meet with Project staff while the other group did. This comparison yielded an unexplainable result for changes to support arrears and

current support. Child support arrears decreased by 21.2% for the group of released NCPs who had no in-person visit and by only 0.4% for the group of released NCPs who did have in-person visits. Current child support decreased by 24.3% for the group without in-person visits and was essentially unchanged (.09% increase) for the group that had in-person visits. Isolating just those cases for which the support order was modified or arrears were written off, arrears for the group without in-person visits decreased by 38.4% and by 41.3% for the group with in-person visits. Current support for the group that had no in-person visits decreased by 74.8% and by 27.4% for the group that had in-person visits.

Payment rates increased similarly for both groups. The pre-incarceration period is defined as the 12 months immediately preceding the incarceration period during which the NCP entered the Project. The post-incarceration period includes the time from release through March 2003. NCPs in the group without in-person visits increased their payment rate from 18.2% to 26.3% and the group with in-person visits increased from 16.1% to 17.7%.

Employment rates for the two groups followed the same trend. Six NCPs in the group with no in-person meeting qualified for employment services and had an average of 2.5 quarters of reported earnings; four NCPs in the group with in-person meetings qualified for employment services and had an average of .75 quarters of reported earnings.

Overall, the group that did not have in-person visits and only received information by mail had more significant changes than did the group who met in-person with DCS and ESD representatives. The in-person visit did not seem to improve the outcomes for this second group.

*B. NCPs with No In-person Visits who Remained Incarcerated and Sent in Responses versus NCPs with In-person Visits who Remained Incarcerated and Sent in Responses*

***Group 2** (NCPs who received **no** in-person visit, who sent in a response, and who had a release date after April 2003) compared to **Group 6** (NCPs who received an in-person visit, who sent in a response, and who had a release date after April 2003)*

NCPs in these two groups followed through by sending necessary documents back to DCS and had a release date from April 2003 forward. One group did not meet in person with Project staff while the other group did. Child support arrears decreased by 13.5% for the group of NCPs who had no in-person visits and remained incarcerated and by 6.8% for the group of NCPs who had in-person visits and remained incarcerated. Current child support decreased by 49.4% for the group who had no in-person visits and by 40.4% for the group who did have in-person visits. Looking at solely those NCPs who received relief

in the form of debt reduction or current support modification, the group without in-person visits decreased child support arrears by 66.5% and current support amounts by 84.8% while the group with in-person visits decreased arrears by 26.6% and current support amounts by 88%.

A comparison for payment rates and employment rates is not possible here because both groups include NCPs who have release dates after the analysis period and are still incarcerated.

It appears that for these two groups, there was no significant difference between meeting in person with DCS and ESD representatives and only receiving the necessary information by mail.

*C. Released NCPs with No In-person Visits Who Did Not Respond versus Released NCPs with In-person Visits Who Did Not Respond*

***Group 3** (NCPs who received **no** in-person visit, who did **not** send in a response, and who had a release date between June 2001 and March 2003) compared to*

***Group 7** (NCPs who received an in-person visit, who did **not** send in a response, and who had a release date between June 2001 and March 2003)*

The NCPs in these two groups sent a contact letter to DCS, yet did not respond to our recommendations; both groups had release dates from June 2001 through March 2003. One group did not meet with Project staff, while the other group did. As expected, the differences before and after the program activities were less dramatic for these groups than for the groups of NCPs who did respond. Child support arrears for the group of NCPs who received an in-person visit, who were released, and who did not send in a response increased by 2.6% and arrears for the group who did not receive an in-person visit, who were released, and who did not respond increased by 18.5%. Average current child support decreased by 4.5% in the group who did not receive an in-person visit and by 24% in the group who received an in-person visit. None of the changes in the two groups can be associated with the Project since the NCP did not, in effect, participate.

NCPs in the group who did not have an in-person visit increased their child support payment rate from 11.7% to 22.3% and NCPs in the group that had an in-person visit increased their rate from 25% to 27.7%. Seven NCPs in the group with no in-person visit received a referral to employment services and had an average of 1.1 quarters of employment reported after being released from prison. One NCP in the group with in-person visits received a referral to employment services and did not have any reported employment after prison.

*D. NCPs with No In-person Visits who Remained Incarcerated and Did Not Send in Responses versus NCPs with In-person Visits who Remained Incarcerated and Did Not Send in Responses*

***Group 4** (NCPs who received **no** in-person visit, who did **not** send in a response, and who had a release date after April 2003) compared to **Group 8** (NCPs who received an in-person visit, who did **not** send in a response, and who had a release date after April 2003)*

NCPs in these two groups did not respond to the child support recommendations DCS sent to them; the NCPs were scheduled for release from April 2003 forward. The first group did not meet with Project staff and the second group did. Child support arrears for the group of NCPs who did not receive an in-person visit, did not send in a response, and who had a release date after April 2003 decreased by 10.3% and the group of NCPs who did receive an in-person visit, did not send in a response, and who had a release date after April 2003 increased by 17.9%. Current child support in the group who did not have in-person visits decreased by 17.8% and by 2.5% for the group who did have in-person visits. Again, these changes cannot be attributed to program efforts, since the NCPs did not respond and participate.

There is no analysis of payment rates and employment successes of these two groups because these groups consist of NCPs who either were released after the end of the Project time frame or are still incarcerated.

### **VIII. Reasons for the Results**

Based on the data Project staff compiled and analyzed and on the anecdotal evidence observed during the course of the Project, the partners are able to draw some conclusions on the results that the Project achieved. The partners feel that some inherent limitations, unfortunately, kept them from obtaining the kind of statistical data they had hoped to gain at the inception of the Project.

All three partners experienced a significant problem as they proceeded with this Project – a universal shortage of staff resources. Every aspect of the Project required much more staff time than the partners originally estimated. Due to the staff shortage, an NCP who sent a **Noncustodial Parent Contact Letter** did not receive a reply as quickly as partners had originally anticipated. It took several months in some cases before any actions were completed. An NCP who returned the necessary documents to request a modification, an administrative hearing, or a Conference Board experienced delays in these processes. The result of these delays was that Project staff then had less time to track the effects of any relief achieved on the NCP's case before the Project ended. The number of NCPs with changes to their cases in the overall Project was less than



the Project would have experienced if DCS had been able to respond more quickly. This may simply have been a result of having less time to work on the NCPs cases; it is also possible that the NCP may have lost interest or felt disconnected from the process because of the delay in receiving a response from DCS.

Washington State Division of Child Support, like nearly all other IV-D programs across the country, has experienced funding reductions that have affected staffing levels. DCS had a limited ability to pull in additional staff resources to address a workload that was higher than expected. DCS did devote more staff to the Project than the original proposal called for, and yet was unable to meet the staff demands of the Project completely.

Another significant factor influencing the results of the study was the shortage of funding for Welfare-to-Work organizations as the Project progressed. More Welfare-to-Work funds were available at the time the original grant proposal was submitted. As time went on, fewer organizations were able to offer employment assistance and by October 31, 2002, Project partners ceased referring NCPs to Welfare-to-Work programs because funding had been exhausted. Project partners referred a significantly smaller number of NCPs into employment programs than initially anticipated.

In spite of these limitations, the partners did accomplish some success. First, Project staff created an excellent video to educate NCPs and invite their participation in addressing issues with their child support case situations. Project partners have heard from child support and corrections professionals who work with incarcerated NCPs indicating that the video contains needed information and addresses the concerns of incarcerated NCPs in a way that they can understand. Partners also reached many more incarcerated NCPs than they had been able to reach before this Project. Although there are no available figures measuring outreach before the Project, partners know that the volume of outreach significantly increased, in particular at the state intake facility, Washington Correction Center in Shelton. Partners continue to receive, on a regular basis, **Noncustodial Parent Contact Letters** from NCPs in Shelton because this facility continues to show the video.

Project partners know for sure that the Project was able to bring about changes for some support amounts to reflect the NCP's actual financial circumstances. NCPs who responded did show greater changes to their cases than those who did not. They also showed improvements in payment rates. It appears that viewing the outreach video and responding did indeed result in a better outcome. It is unclear if an in-person visit made a significant difference in the result. It is certainly questionable if there is a benefit to be achieved considering the additional cost in staff resources.

DCS, ESD, and DOC created new program linkages. More staff members in each agency have more contact across agency lines. The three agencies are more knowledgeable about the services the other agencies provide to this common set of clients.

There is now increased awareness among DCS staff of the importance of working with incarcerated NCPs to make changes based on their current circumstances. DCS staff further promoted DCS policy that it is better for families when the NCP is required to pay an appropriate amount of child support. DCS has conducted studies that show that excessive arrears create a barrier to payment; DCS staff can take reasonable efforts to avoid or rectify these situations.

DCS studies also show that receiving regular child support is an important factor in helping families achieve and maintain self-sufficiency. NCPs are more likely to pay support regularly when the amount they are required to pay is appropriate for their financial circumstances. The NCPs in this Project who achieved a change to their child support order amount have a better chance of paying support more regularly both now and in the future. Custodial parents will then have a more reliable income stream and their children will have a chance for economic stability. When the NCPs are released and find employment, their child support orders can be modified based on increased earnings, and their children will then receive an even greater benefit.

## **IX. Recommendations**

Although the Project partners are unable to make a firm recommendation to other states to adopt a high effort or a low effort outreach program to incarcerated NCPs, the partners do have recommendations for consideration by other states.

1. Incarcerated NCPs represent a small but significant segment of the child support caseload. The great majority of imprisoned NCPs have no ability to pay child support during their incarceration, while the support obligation continues. It is important to remember that when an NCP is released, most often the NCP's children will still be minors in need of support. Child support agencies, then, have an opportunity to help an NCP avoid the accumulation of excessive support arrears while in prison. This population is deserving of some attention during the incarceration period.
2. The Project's ability to reach a great number of noncustodial parents was a direct result of the collaboration with the Washington State Department of Corrections. Participation by DOC

in the creation, distribution, and usage of the outreach video was a key element to the success this project. Because of DOC's participation and commitment, Project partners were able to educate, inform, and engage a vastly greater number of NCPs than any previous efforts had afforded. The DOC Project partner also educated her peers and staff within DOC. The Project partners recommend that child support agencies develop a relationship with their state corrections agencies to better serve their common clients.

3. Other states that develop outreach programs to serve this population would benefit from focusing attention on their states' intake prisons. By far, the institution from which this project received the most **Noncustodial Parent Contact Letters** was Washington Correction Center, the intake prison for male inmates for the whole state. Many NCPs also viewed the video at other institutions but did not complete a **Noncustodial Parent Contact Letter** because they had already done so at WCC. If a state has limited ability to have a virtual presence in the corrections institutions, the intake prison is the place on which to focus resources.
4. Project partners recommend putting effort into a good education program aimed at corrections institution staff so that they can, in turn, educate NCPs about child support. Corrections institution staff can then answer questions on-site, help with forms, and help inform NCP inmates.
5. Project partners recommend that corrections institutions and child support enforcement agencies explore together the limited ability of many NCPs to communicate with their child support caseworker. NCPs in prison do not often have ready access to telephones to communicate with their caseworkers. This often makes it difficult for the child support agency staff to explain case status, to assist with completing forms, or to offer assistance in other areas. Child support caseworkers could more quickly and easily respond to an inmate NCP if the inmate were more easily able to call the caseworker. It would be worthwhile for agencies to consider some expanded communication options, such as offering to inmates the use of toll free telephone numbers, or allowing inmates to make collect calls to the child support agency.
6. To truly evaluate the benefits and effectiveness of a project such as this it is recommended that this be undertaken as a long term project. Given the length of sentences inmates must serve, it may take several years to know if efforts will truly result in improved

payment rates. Projects like this one could yield much more information if partners are able to revisit the study cases in an additional year or two.

7. States which undertake this type of effort must have realistic expectations of what can be accomplished and learned from a project such as this. Incarcerated NCPs have many barriers to success – illiteracy, drug and alcohol addictions, mental illnesses, poor work history, etc. The effect of these barriers on an NCP's ability to pay child support may outweigh the benefit of appropriate changes to the NCP's child support case.

Through research into the history of many child support cases of incarcerated NCPs, it appears that the child support order often is set at an amount that is inappropriate, even when the NCP is not currently incarcerated. With expanded access to information pertinent to child support orders, public assistance benefit history, reported wage information, and corrections institution incarceration information, the child support agency can make better determinations about the financial circumstances, ability to earn wages, and ability to pay child support than in previous times. This project demonstrated the importance of carefully looking at an NCP's earning history before setting a support order amount at an arbitrary level. As a result of the Project, DCS instituted a policy to deal more effectively with incarcerated NCPs to insure more accurate child support orders and to avoid the accumulation of excessive arrears. *See Appendix E.*

## **X. Conclusion**

Of all the child support cases included in this Project, the vast majority either currently or formerly received public assistance in the form of TANF. Approximately 28 % were cases in which the families were receiving TANF and 51 % were cases in which the families formerly received TANF, 15 % were cases in which the families were not associated with TANF, and 6 % were cases of other types (foster care, responding interstate, or medical assistance only). If we consider that TANF and former TANF cases are those in which custodial parents may have the most difficulty in achieving or maintaining financial self-sufficiency then this issue is an important one for the great majority of cases. Any efforts to assist incarcerated or recently incarcerated NCPs in making changes to their child support cases benefit the children of these NCPs both now and in the future. Accomplishing these changes will achieve an important goal not only for the child support program, but for the programs that serve the public assistance population.

Overall, the data suggests that the most successful group in this project was the group of NCPs who received no in-person visit, were released from prison within the Project time period, and who did actively seek relief on their cases by responding to DCS information. These NCPs did not receive any special in-person attention on their individual cases. In spite of this, they showed the most consistent results. They owed less back child support and had more appropriate orders by the end of the Project, showed the most improvement in payment rates, and had the best employment success of all the NCPs in the study.

In order to firmly draw the conclusion that the treatment for this group was the reason for the success, the Project would have had to include a larger group of incarcerated NCPs and Project partners would have had to track the results for all groups for a longer period of time. It is the firm belief of the Project partners that given the resources and the time, other partnership studies of incarcerated noncustodial parents would yield important gains.

Project partners believe that the efforts of the Joint Agency Collection Project were beneficial for a large number incarcerated NCPs who now have better relationships with the Division of Child Support, more equitable child support amounts, more hope of consistent payments in the future, and children who enjoy more consistent support. Department of Corrections staff, Employment Security Division staff, and Division of Child Support staff have a better understanding of the roles that each partner organization plays in working with these important inmate clients. Project partners believe that the valuable information gained from this study is of benefit not only to the State of Washington, but to other states that have an interest in improving relationships with their inmate noncustodial parent population, as well.

## **XI. Thank You**

Project partners wish to express deep gratitude to the Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) for the privilege and opportunity to experiment with these new ideas, and the encouragement to engineer and manage a project of this type. The partners have appreciated the support and flexibility of OCSE staff when the Project experienced modifications and adjustments over the course of the study. The Joint Agency Collection Project could not have enjoyed this amount of positive gain without such generous support.

## **Appendix A**

### **State of Washington Joint Agency Collection Project Frequently Asked Questions of Incarcerated NCPs**

1. What kind of order do I have? Where did it come from?
2. How much is my monthly support? How much back support do I owe?
3. I don't think I'm the father, how do I get blood tests?
  - I think I am the father, can you help me?
  - How can there be an order when I never had blood tests?
4. How can you expect me to pay (or pay so much) when I'm incarcerated?
  - What can I do about my large child support debt?
5. Why should I bother to stay in touch with DCS when I get out?
  - What do I do when I get out so you won't take 50% of my wages?
  - You knew I was here, why didn't you lower my child support?
6. When I get out, how can I make a fresh start with all this child support and these other obligations hanging over my head?
7. Does my support automatically reduce to \$0.00 when I'm in prison?
8. If my case is closed, does that mean I don't have to pay?
9. I lost contact with my child, can you help me?
  - How do I get my children's address?
10. Why should I pay if she won't let me see my kids?
  - How come she gets welfare when she won't let me see my kids?
  - How can my parents see the kids?
11. How do I get a modification?
12. How do I get my arrears reduced/written off?
13. Why is it my fault if she got pregnant? She told me she was on the pill.
14. What if she's spending the child support on drugs?

15. What do you mean, you can take my drivers license?
16. We were living together while she got welfare; why do I have to pay?
17. How do I contact my child support officer?

## Appendix B

### Child Support Information Video Inmate Viewing Information through October 2002

Institutions	How Shown	# Of Inmates
<i>Monroe Correction Center</i>	Orientation	150
<i>Clallam Bay Correction Center</i>	Weekly Orientation	645
<i>Stafford Creek Correction Center</i>	3 days per week twice each day	1563
<i>Washington Correction Center *</i>	5 days per week	4320
<i>Airway Heights Correction Center</i>	Shown twice	Unknown
<i>Olympic Correction Center</i>	Weekly Orientation	650
<i>Washington State Penitentiary</i>	Weekly Orientation	1000 to 1200
<i>McNeil Island Correction Center</i>	Weekly Orientation	320
<i>Coyote Ridge Correction Center</i>	Weekly Orientation	415
<i>Washington Correction Center for Women</i>	Unknown	Unknown
<b>Pre-Release</b>		
<i>Pine Lodge</i>	4 times per month (2 classes)	330
<i>Tacoma</i>	3 times per month	360
<b>Camps</b>		
<i>Airway Heights Correction Center</i>	Shown 12 times	144 to 192
<i>Cedar Creek Correction Center</i>	No report	No report

The information provided is an estimate only, based on the arrival of new prisoners each week. Staff members at the institutions were not instructed to track usage or the number of inmates viewing the video. This was a joint decision made by the Project team in an effort to minimize the workload for DOC staff. Most DOC staff found the video to be very informative and useful and made it a program piece of offender orientation. Some found it not to have a significant impact on the populations they serve, for example, dangerously mentally ill inmates or female inmates. Staff turnover impacted whether and how often institutions showed the video.

\* The Washington Correction Center (WCC) is a reception center that all new admits to prison for males for the entire state. From WCC, inmates are disbursed to the other facilities based on various criteria for housing. The video is shown at highest capacity to reach the greatest number of people at this facility. This is the first introduction of the video to the inmate population in Washington State. It is viewed again at most institutions during inmate orientation. WCC reports that approximately 30% of the inmates who view the video submit a contact letter to the Division of Child Support.

Work Release facilities and DOC field offices showed the video infrequently, if at all, because inmates reported that they had seen the video in the institutions. The video remains available to anyone who might wish to use it.



## **Appendix C**

### **Division of Child Support Contact and Response Forms**

**18-613 - Noncustodial Parent Contact Letter**

**18-616 - Child Support Case Status Response**

**18-618 - Child Support Obligation Information**

**DSHS 18-613**

**NONCUSTODIAL PARENT CONTACT LETTER**

**USE**           Used by NCPs to request DCS to research their case and suggest how the NCP should proceed.

The Department of Corrections gives the NCPs this form.

**COMPLETION  
INSTRUCTIONS**

1.       The issuing agency, facility, etc., enters their name in the "Issuing Facility" field.
2.       The NCP completes the remainder of the form.



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES  
DIVISION OF CHILD SUPPORT (DCS)

**NONCUSTODIAL PARENT CONTACT LETTER**

If you have children, you may have a child support case. If you would like the Division of Child Support (DCS) to check our records and tell you if you owe child support through DCS, complete this form. Please use a separate sheet to list any additional questions or concerns you would like answered. We will research your case, tell you what is happening, and make some suggestions about how to deal with your child support obligation.

Issuing Facility:			
<b>YOUR PERSONAL INFORMATION</b>			
Name:			Date of Birth:
PO Box or Street Address:	City:	State:	ZIP Code:
DOC Number:		Social Security Number:	
If Incarcerated, Where:	Earliest Release Date:	Name of Counselor (if any):	
If in the Community, Which Community Corrections Office:		Name of Community Corrections Officer (if any):	
<b>INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR CHILDREN</b>			
List your children's names and dates of birth. Also list the name of the person your child lives with and the relationship of that person to your child. If you have more than five children, attach a separate sheet with the information for the additional children.			
Child's Name:		Date of Birth:	
Lives With (name):		Their Relationship to the Child: <input type="checkbox"/> Mother <input type="checkbox"/> Father <input type="checkbox"/> Other	
Child's Name:		Date of Birth:	
Lives With (name):		Their Relationship to the Child: <input type="checkbox"/> Mother <input type="checkbox"/> Father <input type="checkbox"/> Other	
Child's Name:		Date of Birth:	
Lives With (name):		Their Relationship to the Child: <input type="checkbox"/> Mother <input type="checkbox"/> Father <input type="checkbox"/> Other	
Child's Name:		Date of Birth:	
Lives With (name):		Their Relationship to the Child: <input type="checkbox"/> Mother <input type="checkbox"/> Father <input type="checkbox"/> Other	
Child's Name:		Date of Birth:	
Lives With (name):		Their Relationship to the Child: <input type="checkbox"/> Mother <input type="checkbox"/> Father <input type="checkbox"/> Other	

**GENERAL QUESTIONS**

If you were married to the other parent of any of the children listed on page 1, list the children.

If you owe child support for any of the children listed on page 1, list the children.

If someone owes you child support for any of the children listed on page 1, list the children.

If you are currently married, list your spouse's name.

**CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT**

We realize that it is hard for you to communicate with us while you are incarcerated, homeless, or have limited access to a telephone. It may be easier to have someone else talk with us, like a friend, relative, or attorney. Under Washington law, all information about your case with DCS is confidential. This means that we need your permission to discuss your case with anyone else. If you want DCS to talk with someone else about your case, please complete and sign this authorization. If you need more space, attach a separate sheet.

**I authorize the Department of Social and Health Services, Division of Child Support, to disclose confidential information and records about me to the Department of Corrections, the Department of Employment Security, and the parties listed below (list the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the individuals):**

Name:	Telephone Number (include area code): (        )
-------	---

PO Box or Street Address:	City:	State:	ZIP Code:
---------------------------	-------	--------	-----------

I do not want DCS to disclose the following things to the person listed above:

This authorization remains in effect until (enter date):

Date:	Signature:
-------	------------

Return this completed form to:  
DIVISION OF CHILD SUPPORT  
PO BOX 11520  
TACOMA WA 98411-5520

No person because of race, color, national origin, creed, religion, sex, age, or disability, shall be discriminated against in employment, services, or any aspect of the program's activities. This form is available in alternative formats upon request.

## DSHS 18-616

### CHILD SUPPORT CASE STATUS RESPONSE

**USE** Used to inform a NCP, that returned a completed **Noncustodial Parent Contact Letter**, DSHS 18-613, about the results of DCS's records review.

**REFERENCE** CN-232.

**SERVICE** Regular mail.

**ENTRY  
EXAMPLE** Use case comment code 32.

**18-616, #6, with 18-618 to NCP. Regular mail.**

#### **COMPLETION INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Enter the NCP's name and address (usually a corrections facility address) in the "TO" field.
2. Enter the total current support amount in the fourth paragraph, subparagraph 1.
3. Enter the total arrears amount in the fourth paragraph, subparagraph 2.
4. Mark the applicable boxes in the fifth paragraph, subparagraphs 1 -8, indicating the results of the records review.
  - a. If you mark the subparagraph 1 box, mark the applicable box in subparagraph a or b indicating the results of the review of the administrative orders.
    - If you mark the subparagraph b box, mark the applicable boxes in subparagraphs (1) or (2) indicating the NCP's hearing options.
  - b. If you mark the subparagraph 2 box, mark the applicable box in subparagraph a or b indicating the results of the review of the court orders.
  - c. If you mark the subparagraph 6 box, enter the NCP's BI number.
  - d. If you mark the subparagraph 7 box, enter the name of the child for which you did not find an open case.
  - e. If you mark the subparagraph 8 box, enter the specific information needed.
5. Enter the IV-D case number in the sixth paragraph.
6. Enter the date.
7. Enter the originator's name.

**COPIES AND  
OTHER FORMS**

1. In all cases enclose an **Authorization to Disclose Personal Information**, DSHS 17-063.
2. If you mark the fifth paragraph, subparagraphs 1 or 2, enclose a **Child Support Obligation Information**, DSHS 18-618.
3. If you mark the fifth paragraph, subparagraph 1b box, enclose a **Petition for Late Hearing - Administrative Orders**, DSHS 09-392.
4. If you mark the fifth paragraph, subparagraph 2b box, enclose a **Request for Review of Child Support Order**, DSHS 09-741, and a blank **Washington State Child Support Schedule**.
5. If you mark the fifth paragraph, subparagraph 3 box, enclose a **Request for Conference Board**, DSHS 09-520, and a **Do you Need a Conference Board**, DSHS 22-386 brochure.
6. If you mark the fifth paragraph, subparagraph 5 box, enclose a **Statement of Resources and Expenses**, DSHS 18-097.



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES  
DIVISION OF CHILD SUPPORT (DCS)  
**CHILD SUPPORT CASE STATUS RESPONSE**

TO:

The Division of Child Support (DCS) received an inquiry from you about your child support obligation. This letter tells you about your child support cases and explains your options.

**Please contact DCS about your cases as soon as you can. DCS wants to work with you to get child support for your children. DCS wants your child support obligations to fit your ability to pay. As you may know, there are many ways DCS can enforce your support obligations but we cannot help you unless you contact us. If you want your counselor, your Community Corrections Officer, or someone else talk to us on your behalf, please complete the enclosed *Authorization to Disclose Personal Information* form and return it to the DCS address listed on page 2.**

DCS based your support obligations on one or more child support orders. The payment amounts required by your child support orders will stay the same until a court or administrative law judge changes the amounts. You will find more information about the number, dates, and amounts of your support orders in the enclosed ***Child Support Obligation Information*** form. If your support orders were not correct when entered or are not correct now, you may be able to change the amounts you must pay.

**Our records show that you:**

1. **Should pay a total of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ per month for current child support.**
2. **Owe a total of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for past-due child support.**

The following details apply to your cases:

1.  You have one or more administrative support orders. DCS served you notice of the orders by either certified mail or personal service.
  - a.  DCS believes the support amounts stated in your orders are correct.
  - b.  DCS believes the amounts stated in your orders may not fit your ability to pay.
    - (1)  You may have the right to a hearing or a late hearing on the orders. If you can show good cause or a good reason for a late hearing, a judge may recalculate your support obligation.
    - (2)  You may have a hearing to change or modify the amount of current monthly support to fit your ability to pay. DCS will include the other parties to your support orders in the hearing process.
2.  You have one or more court orders.
  - a.  DCS believes that the support amounts stated in your orders are correct.
  - b.  DCS believes you should ask for a modification of your orders to fit your ability to pay. To ask for a change to your support amount, you must complete the enclosed ***Washington State Child Support Schedule*** and the ***Request for Review of Child Support Order*** and return them to the DCS address listed on page 2.

3.  DCS may be able to charge off some or all of any child support debt that you owe to the Department of Social and Health Services. DCS cannot charge off any child support debt that you owe to another person. DCS has a process called a Conference Board where you can tell DCS why we should charge off your child support debt. Read the enclosed brochure that explains the Conference Board process and the reasons DCS may charge off your child support debt. To ask for a Conference Board, complete the enclosed *Request for Conference Board* form and return it to the DCS address listed below.
4.  DCS closed your cases. DCS may reopen your cases in the future but will probably wait until you are released from custody and employed. DCS may reopen your cases sooner if we have another application for child support services. Even though your cases are closed, your child support debt may still increase each month.
5.  If you are working, DCS can negotiate the amount you should pay each month. To give DCS a picture of your financial situation, please complete the enclosed *Statement of Resources and Expenses* form and return it to the DCS address listed below. DCS may be able to take less than 50 percent of your net wages.
6.  DCS will accept any payment you make. Even small payments will help your children and reduce your child support debt. Include your social security number and account number **IN**\_\_\_\_\_ on all payments and correspondence. The DCS payment address is:

WASHINGTON STATE SUPPORT REGISTRY  
 PO BOX 45868  
 OLYMPIA WA 98504-5868

7.  You asked DCS about a child named \_\_\_\_\_. DCS does not have a case for this child. If you want to open a case for this child, contact DCS at the address or telephone numbers listed below. Use the toll-free telephone number for long distance calls only.
8.  Other:

If we enclosed forms for you to complete, please return them to the address listed below. If you have any questions, contact the Support Enforcement Officer at the address or telephone numbers listed below. Please use the toll-free telephone number for long distance calls only.

**When you contact DCS, please refer to case number** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Authorized Representative  
DIVISION OF CHILD SUPPORT

DIVISION OF CHILD SUPPORT

Or if calling long distance  
 TTY/TDD services available for the speech or hearing impaired  
 Visit our web site at: [www.dshs.wa.gov/dcs](http://www.dshs.wa.gov/dcs)

No person, because of race, color, national origin, creed, religion, sex, age, or disability, shall be discriminated against in employment, services, or any aspect of the program's activities. This form is available in alternative formats upon request.



**DSHS 18-618**

**CHILD SUPPORT OBLIGATION INFORMATION**

**USE** Used to provide an NCP, that returned a completed **Noncustodial Parent Contact Letter**, DSHS 18-613, with the specifics of the NCP's support orders.

**REFERENCE** CN-120.

**SERVICE** Regular mail.

**ENTRY EXAMPLE** Use case comment code **32**.

18-616, #6, with 18-618 to NCP. Regular mail.

**COMPLETION INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Enter the children's names in the "CHILD'S NAME" fields.
2. Enter the children's dates of birth in the "CHILD'S DATE OF BIRTH" fields.
3. Enter the IV-D case numbers in the "CASE NUMBER" fields.
4. Enter the names of the children's other parents in the "OTHER PARENT'S NAME" fields.
5. Enter the names of the persons the children live with in the "CUSTODIAN'S NAME" fields.
6. Enter the dates the support orders were entered and the monthly support amounts in the "ORDER # DATE AND MONTHLY AMOUNT" fields.
7. Mark the applicable boxes in the "TYPE ORDER" fields indicating the types of child support orders involved.
8. Enter the county and state where the support orders were entered in the "LOCATION - ORDER" fields.
9. Enter any specific case information not previously addressed in the "COMMENT" fields.

**COPIES AND OTHER FORMS**

Enclose with a **Child Support Case Status Response**, DSHS 18-616.



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
 DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES  
 DIVISION OF CHILD SUPPORT (DCS)  
**CHILD SUPPORT OBLIGATION INFORMATION**

Child's Name	Child's Date of Birth	Case Number
Other Parent's Name	Custodian's Name	
Order #1 Date and Monthly Amount \$	Order #2 Date and Monthly Amount \$	
Type Order - Order #1 <input type="checkbox"/> Administrative Order <input type="checkbox"/> Court Order	Type Order - Order #2 <input type="checkbox"/> Administrative Order <input type="checkbox"/> Court Order	
Location - Order #1	Location - Order #2	
Comment:		
Child's Name	Child's Date of Birth	Case Number
Other Parent's Name	Custodian's Name	
Order #1 Date and Monthly Amount \$	Order #2 Date and Monthly Amount \$	
Type Order - Order #1 <input type="checkbox"/> Administrative Order <input type="checkbox"/> Court Order	Type Order - Order #2 <input type="checkbox"/> Administrative Order <input type="checkbox"/> Court Order	
Location - Order #1	Location - Order #2	
Comment:		
Child's Name	Child's Date of Birth	Case Number
Other Parent's Name	Custodian's Name	
Order #1 Date and Monthly Amount \$	Order #2 Date and Monthly Amount \$	
Type Order - Order #1 <input type="checkbox"/> Administrative Order <input type="checkbox"/> Court Order	Type Order - Order #2 <input type="checkbox"/> Administrative Order <input type="checkbox"/> Court Order	
Location - Order #1	Location - Order #2	
Comment:		
Child's Name	Child's Date of Birth	Case Number
Other Parent's Name	Custodian's Name	
Order #1 Date and Monthly Amount \$	Order #2 Date and Monthly Amount \$	
Type Order - Order #1 <input type="checkbox"/> Administrative Order <input type="checkbox"/> Court Order	Type Order - Order #2 <input type="checkbox"/> Administrative Order <input type="checkbox"/> Court Order	
Location - Order #1	Location - Order #2	
Comment:		
Child's Name	Child's Date of Birth	Case Number
Other Parent's Name	Custodian's Name	
Order #1 Date and Monthly Amount \$	Order #2 Date and Monthly Amount \$	
Type Order - Order #1 <input type="checkbox"/> Administrative Order <input type="checkbox"/> Court Order	Type Order - Order #2 <input type="checkbox"/> Administrative Order <input type="checkbox"/> Court Order	
Location - Order #1	Location - Order #2	
Comment:		

## **Appendix D**

### **Tables**

**Table 1 - Sample Groups**

**Table 2 - Change in Arrears Amount and Current Support Amount**

**Table 3 - Conference Board and Modification Requests**

**Table 4 - Payment Rates**

**Table 5 - Post-Incarceration Employment**

**Table 1**  
**Sample Groups**

<b>Incarcerated NCPs Who Sent In a Noncustodial Parent Contact Letter</b>							
No In-person Visit with NCP (receives DCS info by mail)				DCS Visits NCP In Person (receives DCS info in person)			
NCP Sends Response		NCP No Response		NCP Sends Response		NCP No Response	
Release 6/01 – 3/03	Release 4/03 ->	Release 6/01 – 3/03	Release 4/03 ->	Release 6/01 – 3/03	Release 4/03 ->	Release 6/01 – 3/03	Release 4/03 ->
<b>Group 1</b> n= 30	<b>Group 2</b> n = 30	<b>Group 3</b> n = 30	<b>Group 4</b> n = 30	<b>Group 5</b> N = 36	<b>Group 6</b> N = 27	<b>Group 7</b> N = 15	<b>Group 8</b> N = 14

**Key**

<b>Group 1</b>	<i>(NCPs who received <b>no</b> in-person visit, who sent in a response, and who had a release date between June 2001 and March 2003)</i>
<b>Group 2</b>	<i>(NCPs who received <b>no</b> in-person visit, who sent in a response, and who had a release date after April 2003)</i>
<b>Group 3</b>	<i>(NCPs who received <b>no</b> in-person visit, who did <b>not</b> send in a response, and who had a release date between June 2001 and March 2003)</i>
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<b>Group 8</b>	<i>(NCPs who received an in-person visit, who did <b>not</b> send in a response, and who had a release date after April 2003)</i>

**Table 2**

**Change in Arrears Amount and Current Support Amount**

	<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Group 2</b>	<b>Group 3</b>	<b>Group 4</b>	<b>Group 5</b>	<b>Group 6</b>	<b>Group 7</b>	<b>Group 8</b>
<b>Child Support Arrears</b>								
Total Beginning Arrears	601,026	524,491	353,426	387,615	808,216	845,176	173,333	179,538
Average Beginning Arrears	20,034	17,498	11,781	12,920	22,450	31,302	12,381	11,969
Total Ending Arrears	473,249	453,697	362,914	347,517	837,930	787,198	205,400	212,582
Average Ending Arrears	15,775	15,123	12,097	11,583	23,276	29,155	14,671	14,172
Percent Change	-21.2%	-13.5%	+ 2.6%	-10.3%	- 04%	-6.8%	+ 18.5%	+ 18.4%
Number of NCP's w/Increased Arrears	14	18	16	13	22	17	11	9
Number of NCP's w/Decreased Arrears	13	9	9	6	14	9	2	1
Number of NCP's w/Arrears Unchanged	3	3	5	11	0	1	1	5
<b>Current Child Support</b>								
Sum of Beginning Current Support	9465	8,684	3,287	5,470	11,089	11,404	3,078	2,456
Average Beginning Current Support	315	289	110	182	308	422	220	164
Sum of Ending Current Support	7164	4,392	3161	4,499	11,100	6,798	2,338	2,381
Average Ending Current Support	239	146	105	150	308	251	167	159
Percent Change	-24.3%	-49.4%	-4.5%	-17.8%	0%	-40.4%	-24.0%	-3.0%
Number of NCP's w/Increased Support	3	0	2	2	7	1	4	1
Number of NCP's w/Decreased Support	14	16	9	4	7	14	4	4
Number of NCP's Support Unchanged	13	14	16	24	22	12	6	10

**Key**

<b>Group 1</b>	<i>(NCPs who received <b>no</b> in-person visit, who sent in a response, and who had a release date between June 2001 and March 2003)</i>
<b>Group 2</b>	<i>(NCPs who received <b>no</b> in-person visit, who sent in a response, and who had a release date after April 2003)</i>
<b>Group 3</b>	<i>(NCPs who received <b>no</b> in-person visit, who did <b>not</b> send in a response, and who had a release date between June 2001 and March 2003)</i>
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<b>Group 8</b>	<i>(NCPs who received an in-person visit, who did <b>not</b> send in a response, and who had a release date after April 2003)</i>

**Table 3**

**Conference Board and Modification Requests**

	<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Group 2</b>	<b>Group 3</b>	<b>Group 4</b>	<b>Group 5</b>	<b>Group 6</b>	<b>Group 7</b>	<b>Group 8</b>
<b>Conference Brd: #requested (#held)</b>	21 (12)	24 (5)	--	--	24 (19)	17 (7)	--	--
<b>Modification: #requested (#held)</b>	22 (7)	22 (11)	--	--	22 (6)	17 (9)	--	--
<b>Admin Hearings: #requested (#held)</b>	5 (3)	4 (3)	--	--	6 (3)	3 (1)	--	--
<b>Total beginning arrears</b>	183,817	63,969	--	--	110,379	77,275	--	--
<b>Avg beginning arrears</b>	20,424	15,992	--	--	9,198	11,039	--	--
<b>Total ending arrears</b>	113,189	21,425	--	--	64,753	56,691	--	--
<b>Avg ending arrears</b>	12,577	5,356	--	--	5,396	8,099	--	--
<b>% change to arrears</b>	- 38.4%	- 66.5%	--	--	- 41.3%	- 26.6%	--	--
<b>Avg beginning current support</b>	342	297	--	--	213	466	--	--
<b>Avg ending current support</b>	86	45	--	--	155	54	--	--
<b>% change to current support</b>	- 74.8%	- 84.8%	--	--	- 27.4%	- 88%	--	--

**Key**

<b>Group 1</b>	<i>(NCPs who received <b>no</b> in-person visit, who sent in a response, and who had a release date between June 2001 and March 2003)</i>
<b>Group 2</b>	<i>(NCPs who received <b>no</b> in-person visit, who sent in a response, and who had a release date after April 2003)</i>
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<b>Group 8</b>	<i>(NCPs who received an in-person visit, who did <b>not</b> send in a response, and who had a release date after April 2003)</i>

**Table 4**  
**Payment Rates**

	<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Group 2</b>	<b>Group 3</b>	<b>Group 4</b>	<b>Group 5</b>	<b>Group 6</b>	<b>Group 7</b>	<b>Group 8</b>
<b>Pre - Incarceration</b>								
# of months payments due	324	311	266	260	426	312	144	132
# of months payments received	59	48	31	48	62	45	36	5
Payment rate	18.2%	15.4%	11.7%	18.5%	16.1%	14.4%	25%	3.8%
<b>Post – Incarceration</b>								
# of months payments due	232	--	175	--	164	--	38	--
# of months payments received	61	--	39	--	29	--	10	--
Payment rate	26.3%	--	22.3%	--	17.7%	--	27.7%	--

**Key**

<b>Group 1</b>	<i>(NCPs who received <b>no</b> in-person visit, who sent in a response, and who had a release date between June 2001 and March 2003)</i>
<b>Group 2</b>	<i>(NCPs who received <b>no</b> in-person visit, who sent in a response, and who had a release date after April 2003)</i>
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<b>Group 7</b>	<i>(NCPs who received an in-person visit, who did <b>not</b> send in a response, and who had a release date between June 2001 and March 2003)</i>
<b>Group 8</b>	<i>(NCPs who received an in-person visit, who did <b>not</b> send in a response, and who had a release date after April 2003)</i>

**Table 5**

**Post-Incarceration Employment**

	<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Group 2</b>	<b>Group 3</b>	<b>Group 4</b>	<b>Group 5</b>	<b>Group 6</b>	<b>Group 7</b>	<b>Group 8</b>
<b>With Employment Services</b>								
# of NCP's with WtW referral	6	--	7	--	4	--	1	--
Avg # of quarters wages reported	2.5	--	1.1	--	.75	--	0	--
<b>Without Employment Services</b>								
# of NCP's w/o WtW referral	24	--	23	--	33	--	13	--
# of quarters wages reported	.58	--	.52	--	.06	--	.46	--

**Key**

<b>Group 1</b>	<i>(NCPs who received <b>no</b> in-person visit, who sent in a response, and who had a release date between June 2001 and March 2003)</i>
<b>Group 2</b>	<i>(NCPs who received <b>no</b> in-person visit, who sent in a response, and who had a release date after April 2003)</i>
<b>Group 3</b>	<i>(NCPs who received <b>no</b> in-person visit, who did <b>not</b> send in a response, and who had a release date between June 2001 and March 2003)</i>
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<b>Group 8</b>	<i>(NCPs who received an in-person visit, who did <b>not</b> send in a response, and who had a release date after April 2003)</i>



## Appendix E

**Subject:** Child Support Issues When the NCP is Incarcerated

**Date:** January 16, 2003

**Approved:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Georgiann DeKay, Director

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#### **V. Frequently Asked Questions**

## **I. Introduction**

### **A. What is the background of this CN?**

DCS serves a wide spectrum of clients, including NCPs who are incarcerated. Collecting child support from this population is difficult. Given the difficulty, DCS can still pursue beneficial outcomes on these cases.

The intent of this CN is to promote several DCS goals, which are to:

1. Establish and maintain accurate financial and medical support orders;
2. Increase the likelihood of getting payments on cases where the NCP is incarcerated, recently released or soon to be released;
3. Decrease barriers to regular support payments; and
4. Improve DCS performance on the incentive measure of current support collected as a proportion of current support owed.

Many NCPs who are incarcerated for a long time will be released before their children are emancipated. Therefore, it is important that the NCP's order is set according to accurate financial information and that, as much as possible, we avoid accumulation of excessive arrears.

This CN outlines DCS policy regarding establishing and collecting child support from incarcerated NCPs.

### **B. Where do I place this in my Handbook?**

1. Place this notice in front of Support Enforcement Handbook Chapter 10 Collection Tools and Assets.
2. Note on the Canary Notice Control Sheet the subject, date, and placement of this notice in your Handbook.
3. The text of this notice will be available on the DCS Intranet.
4. We have highlighted affected sections of the Support Enforcement Handbook in the Intranet presentation, with links to this CN.
5. The author of this Canary Notice is Dawn DeLong.

## II. Knowing When an NCP is Incarcerated

This section describes the different ways DCS learns that an NCP is incarcerated.

Laws	
Policy	
Procedure	Use FORS to find information about incarcerated NCPs
Visual Aids	
Automated Actions	
SEMS Screens	
Forms Used	18-613
Hearing and Conference Board Rights	
See Also	CN 210 FORS User Guide <a href="http://www.dcs.dshs.wa.gov/dcs/sems/othersys/fors_man.pdf">http://www.dcs.dshs.wa.gov/dcs/sems/othersys/fors_man.pdf</a>
Contact for more information:	Dawn DeLong ddelong@dshs.wa.gov

## **II. Knowing When an NCP is Incarcerated**

### **A. What are some ways DCS may learn that an NCP is incarcerated?**

1. You may find information about an NCP's incarceration through normal locate efforts using FORS, or other prison or jail information sources.
2. You may be given information provided by the custodial parent, an NCP's relative or friend, or some other person.
3. You may learn about incarceration from contact with the NCP, such as through a **Noncustodial Parent Contact Letter**, DSHS 18-613.
  - During the Criminal Justice Project (see CN 210) DCS produced a child support information video that Department of Corrections (DOC) staff show to inmates at their institutions. In addition, DOC maintains a supply of 18-613s for inmates to use to contact DCS about their child support case. DOC will show the video in their institutions indefinitely. Therefore, DCS can expect to receive 18-613s from inmates as we have in the past.

### **B. What happens when DCS receives a Noncustodial Parent Contact Letter, DSHS 18-613?**

1. Currently, Criminal Justice Project staff in DCS Headquarters receive 18-613s from incarcerated parents. Before now, CJP staff researched the NCP cases and sent a response to the NCP using the **Child Support Case Status Response** DSHS 18-616 and **Child Support Obligation Information** DSHS 18-618.
2. **Effective January 6, 2003, field office staff receive contact letters and respond to the NCP as part of their normal casework.** (See below, Section III, B, 3.)

### III. Managing a Case with an Incarcerated NCP

This section describes what changes or adjustments DCS pursues for cases where the NCP is incarcerated.

Laws	<p>WAC 388-14A-3130 Hearings on administrative notices</p> <p>WAC 388-14A-3135 Late hearings on administrative notices</p> <p>WAC 388-14A-3500 Good cause for late administrative hearing</p> <p>WAC 388-14A-3925 Modification of administrative order</p> <p>RCW 74.20.220 Court order modification authority</p> <p>RCW 74.20A.220 Authority for accepting settlements and writing off debt</p> <p>WAC 388-14A-6415 Scope of authority for Conference Board chair</p>
Policy	<p>Establish and maintain accurate financial and medical support orders.</p> <p>To the extent possible, avoid excessive arrears that accumulate under inaccurate orders.</p>
Procedure	
Visual Aids	
Automated Actions	
SEMS Screens	BC, CC, CF, CH, OR (also FORS)
Forms Used	18-613, 18-616, 18-618, 14-057b, 09-392, 09-838, 09-520, 09-741
Hearing and Conference Board Rights	<p>NCP has a right to request a late hearing on a default administrative order</p> <p>NCP has a right to petition to vacate a default initial decision</p> <p>NCP has a right to request a modification of a court or an administrative order</p> <p>NCP has a right to request a debt charge off of DSHS arrears</p>
See Also	<p>CN 210</p> <p>CN 198</p> <p>Chapter 13</p> <p>Section 6.035</p> <p>Section 6.090</p>
Contact for more information:	Dawn DeLong ddelong@dshs.wa.gov

### III. Managing a Case with an Incarcerated NCP

#### A. What do I look for in a case that has an incarcerated NCP?

- When you are aware that an NCP is incarcerated, review the NCP's cases to determine if the child support orders are set appropriately and whether or not excessive arrears have accrued that present a barrier to future collections. Look for:
  - a. Default orders that were established using unknown or inaccurate wage information;
  - b. Orders that are no longer appropriate for the NCP's current financial circumstances;
  - c. Large arrears that accumulated under orders that were originally inaccurate or have since become inaccurate. Keep in mind the amount of the NCP's current support order and how much may accrue before the NCP is released from incarceration.
  - d. A history of incarceration that affected NCP's ability to pay.

#### B. What kind of remedies could I explore for an incarcerated NCP?

1. Determine if there are any possible remedies that could address the NCP's issues.
  - a. If the NCP defaulted on an administrative notice, inform the NCP that he or she may request a late hearing (**Petition for Late Hearing - Administrative Orders**, DSHS 09-392). Later, if the NCP cannot show good cause for a late hearing, their hearing request will become a request for a modification of their administrative order.
  - b. If the NCP has a default initial decision, inform the NCP that he or she may petition to vacate the decision (**Petition to Vacate a Default Child Support Order**, DSHS 09-838).
  - c. If the NCP has exhausted the hearing process on an administrative order, initiate a **Petition for Modification - Administrative Order**, 09-280b.
  - d. If the NCP has a court order, initiate a modification in court.
  - e. If the NCP is a member of a Washington tribe, additional remedies may exist in tribal court. *See Chapter 13 or consult with your tribal liaison.*
2. If the NCP owes a DSHS support debt, inform the NCP that he or she may request a Conference Board write-off. In some instances it may be appropriate for DCS to initiate a Conference Board charge-off.

3. When an NCP contacts DCS using a **Noncustodial Parent Contact Letter**, DSHS 18-613 or otherwise requests information about his or her case, you may use the **Child Support Case Status Response**, DSHS 18-616 and **Child Support Obligation Information**, DSHS 18-618 to inform the NCP of the possible courses action he or she may take to address their issues. **Note:** When DCS implements the Windows version of SEMS, all forms will be available on forms gen.
4. If you have informed the NCP that he or she may request a late hearing, modification, or Conference Board, send the NCP all the necessary forms along with a prepaid envelope for return of the completed documents.

**C. What happens if an NCP contacts me about a closed case?**

- Sometimes an NCP will contact you about a case that DCS closed. Under PCM 01-005 DCS closed many cases where the NCP was incarcerated for more than a year. This PCM is now repealed.
  - a. DCS has created a second workgroup that will decide if DCS will reopen these cases and how.
  - b. Until that workgroup makes its recommendations, if the NCP's case is closed, but no longer meets case closure criteria (incarcerated during the child's minority with no available assets), reopen the case. Make sure you inform the CP before reopening the case to give the CP a chance to claim good cause.
  - c. If the NCP contacts you, for instance, and claims he is not the father on a default paternity order, you may send the NCP a **Noncustodial Parent Child Support Enforcement Application** DSHS 14-057b with any other documents that the NCP may need. Some county prosecutors may be willing to reopen a default paternity case under certain circumstances.

**D. How should I calculate support for an incarcerated NCP?**

1. If establishing or modifying a support obligation, refer to Section 6.090, if the NCP will be incarcerated over one year.
2. If the case does not meet the criteria in Section 6.090, use the NCP's actual income. Some NCPs earn wages or have assets available, even while they are incarcerated. Do not impute income to an incarcerated NCP, since they are not voluntarily unemployed or underemployed when they are incarcerated.

#### IV. Communicating with an Incarcerated NCP

This section explains how to communicate with NCPs who are incarcerated.

Laws	
Policy	Provide NCPs and CPs, including incarcerated NCPs, a clear, timely and appropriate response to their written correspondence.
Procedure	
Visual Aids	
Automated Actions	
SEMS Screens	
Forms Used	18-616, 18-618
Hearing and Conference Board Rights	
See Also	DOC Institution Addresses, Brochure: Dealing With Child Support Issues When You Are In Prison (DSHS 22-423X)
Contact for more information:	Dawn DeLong ddelong@dshs.wa.gov



#### **IV. Communicating with an Incarcerated NCP**

##### **A. How is communicating with an incarcerated NCP different than communicating with an NCP who is not incarcerated?**

1. Incarcerated NCPs are limited in their ability to communicate with DCS about their child support case. They can't conduct business in person, they do not have Internet access, and their access to a telephone is extremely limited. Incarcerated NCPs will most commonly communicate by written letter.
2. Inmates in corrections facilities, as a whole, have higher rates of illiteracy, mental illness and drug/alcohol addictions. These problems may result in a need for extra assistance from DCS.

##### **B. What do I do if the NCP returns incomplete forms to me?**

- If the NCP returns incomplete forms or doesn't return all of the required forms, return the forms to the NCP with a letter of explanation about what additional forms or information DCS needs to process the NCP's request. Include a prepaid envelope for the NCP's reply.

##### **C. How do I respond if the NCP sends a letter asking for information or asks case questions?**

1. Since the NCP can't call or come in to the field office he or she will usually contact you in writing.
2. Send the NCP a timely response that answers all questions clearly and succinctly. Answer the NCP's letter as soon as possible, within five business days.

##### **D. What do I do when the NCP moves from one institution to another?**

1. During the period of his or her incarceration an NCP is likely to move from one institution to another. Washington Correction Center in Shelton is the receiving center. An inmate will usually be in Shelton for a limited time before being assigned to a different institution. Toward the end of his or her sentence, the NCP may be assigned to a pre-release or a work release facility.
2. Before you send anything to an inmate check FORS for their current location. Please see the list of addresses to DOC

institutions. <http://www.wa.gov/doc/directionstofacilities.htm>  
Include the NCP's DOC number on all correspondence.

**E. What if the NCP has an issue or problem that DCS can't address?**

1. If an NCP raises an issue or asks a question about something outside of DCS control, tell the NCP why DCS can't assist with that issue. Wherever possible tell the NCP about other resources to assist him or her in this area. Some other resources include:
  - a. The DCS brochure **Dealing With Child Support Issues When You Are In Prison**, DSHS 22-423X. This brochure includes a list of legal resources.  
<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/dcs/pdf/22-423.pdf>
  - b. The Directory of Washington Courthouse Facilitators  
<http://www.courts.wa.gov/directory/facilitators.cfm>.
2. You or your field office may have other local resources to which you can refer the NCP.

## **V. Frequently Asked Questions**

- 1. If a court order was entered within the last twelve months and took into consideration already that the NCP was incarcerated, or if DCS just completed a modification review which took the NCP's incarceration into consideration, do I still need to inform the NCP that he or she may request a modification?**

We are responsible for informing parties of what remedies may potentially address their issues. In the above scenarios, you should inform the NCP that the way to change the amount of current support is through a modification. However, you can also tell the NCP that if the NCP were to request a modification review, it is very unlikely that it would meet the DCS criteria, as there has not been a substantial change in circumstance since the last modification review, or since the order was entered. You may then go on to suggest that the NCP wait until circumstances change enough to request a modification review or pursue modification on his or her own.

- 2. Now that PCM 01-005 has been rescinded, what should I do if I receive a new referral on a case that was closed because the NCP is incarcerated, but the closure does not meet the federal case closure criteria?**

Reopen the case and assess support for the period of time that the case should have been assessed if the case was closed for a reason that does not meet the federal case closure standards. If DCS is establishing a support obligation, the NCP can object if he or she disagrees that the support should be assessed for the entire period if the case hadn't been closed. Make sure to apply the sixty-day rule. If there is an existing support order, the NCP can request a conference board if he or she disagrees with assessing support for the entire period.

- 3. Why is this a separate CN from CN 210 The Criminal Justice Project?**

CN 210 was written specifically for cases that Headquarters was handling, pursuant to a federal grant project. Since the case information gathering portion of the grant has now ended, headquarters no longer needs to intervene in these field office cases. However, because DCS is committed to continuing to try to reach these hard to collect cases, we are publishing this CN, which contains new policy and procedures on addressing cases where the NCP is incarcerated.

4. **Does this mean that we treat incarcerated NCPs specially? And does this mean that they are automatically entitled to relief, for instance, in a conference board?**

Part of the purpose of this CN is to ensure that our policy reflects that parties to a case have the right to be informed regarding possible remedies to address the issues on their cases. DCS must make sure, for instance, that a CP who believes a support order is too low may consider requesting a modification of the support order. Similarly, an NCP who believes that he or she cannot afford to pay off large arrears has the right to be informed of any possible actions they could request that may alleviate part or all of their debt. This is not to say that they are automatically entitled to relief, as relief is granted based on the merits of the case. When an NCP is incarcerated, it is often more difficult for them to communicate with DCS, so it was important that DCS create policy and procedures to help ensure that staff are communicating with incarcerated NCPs, and to offer some tools that may help with the communication. We have had similar policies, for instance, in CN 180 - **Revisiting Default Orders that Set Support Obligations** or PCM 02-001 - **How DCS Works With Parents Who Become Unemployed**. Incarcerated NCPs always have and always will be part of the DCS caseload. When the data gathered pursuant to the criminal justice project is finally evaluated, we hope to determine whether our concerted effort on these cases results in better collections on these cases.

5. **What do I do if I receive a document that should be associated with the NCP's case and the case is in 'R'?**

Image and associate the document with the case regardless of the field office designation on the case.

6. **What do I do if the NCP sends a letter asking for information and the case is in 'R'?**

When DCS receives inmate correspondence and the NCP's case is in R, Central Mail staff send this mail to the route box of the previous field office. Field office staff send a response to the NCP as specified in this CN.

7. **What do I do if I receive a request from an inmate and DCS has no case on SEMS?**

You should still respond to the NCP. You may use the DSHS 18-616 (box 7) to tell the NCP that DCS has no case for the child he or she named. When Central Mail staff receive a Noncustodial Parent Contact Letter from an inmate with no cases in SEMS as an NCP, forward the 18-613 to

the Central Registry Supervisor. Staff in Central Registry will respond to the inmate. *[added 02/10/03]*

**8. What cases are part of the CJP and what cases are not?**

DCS Headquarters CJP staff collected Noncustodial Parent Contact Letters, DSHS 18-613 from inmates from June 2001 through October 2002. During that time we received a little over 1500 requests. We maintain a database with project information about these requests; this is the CJP database of cases. Any requests we received after October 31, 2002 are not officially part of the CJP. We send those 18-613s to field office staff and staff will find the imaged documents in their Route Boxes. See CN 210. *[added 05/02/03]*