

***All Hands on Deck: Customer Service Roundtable***

NCCSD, Norfolk, VA

Wednesday, May 16, 2018

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**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA INITIATIVES: Benidia Rice, IV-D Director**

**Communication/External**

Mobile Application:

- Customers can get information on payment history, service, court dates
- Includes child support game for kids

Texting:

- Started this past year
- Customers have opt-out option
- Provides information on amnesty program and bench warrants. Next: monthly payment reminders

**Communication/Internal**

Started a pilot project beginning with the intake/establishment unit allowing staff to put post-it notes on managers' doors (with or without name) to point out issues/concerns. Managers must respond within 48 hours. They are seeing a decrease in the number of complaints raised to the director's level.

**Court Technology Initiatives**

- Electronic check-in – increases efficiency and decreases wait time
- Court orders are signed electronically and printed in court so customers can take copy with them and/or it can be emailed to them
- In the future, hoping to have data elements automatically populated in child support system

**Domestic Violence**

- Intake centers are doing training to create better process for getting child support
- Cases stay in domestic violence court rather than being moved to child support court
- Agency rented post office box to use as address on court and other documents

**Electronic Acknowledgment of Paternity**

- Completed at hospitals
- Automatically filed with Vital Records and hospital
- Child support staff at hospitals 7 days/week

**Fatherhood**

Conference and Health Fair

**Goals**

- Empower managers and staff
- Create positive impact on employers (personally and professionally), customers, and performance
- Encourage new staff to stay and/or better prepare them for future jobs

**Motto**

Lean Forward

**Outreach**

- Campaigns to Non-IV-D, Medicaid-only, and non-English speaking communities
- Simplified application (decreased from 22 pages to 6) and user-friendly forms
- BICS techniques
- Phone calls, postcards, letters

**Training**

Language access training for all staff, as well as this specialized training:

- Non-attorney Staff—Classes on conflict management, communication, and business writing; can be part of administrative assistant certification program.
- Managers—Leadership training includes a 3-day class on coaching, communication, and change management. With business re-engineering process coming, they need managers that can lead staff through changes.

**Working with Court to Improve Customer Experience**

- Multi-Door Dispute Resolution Child Support Training
- Domestic Violence Intake Centers Training and Process Improvement
- Electronic Court Orders

**GEORGIA INITIATIVES: Tanguler Gray, IV-D Director**

**Customer Portal**

Georgia conducted a heat mapping study to determine what buttons customers clicked on most often. They put only the top three front and center and dropped everything else to side tabs. Also added a chat feature to the communication center.

**Responsiveness**

There is so much distrust with government in general. It is Important to provide accurate information. Following through by returning phone calls is also essential. Workers also need to make it clear to customers that they are being heard.

**Touch Pay**

**QMATIC**

## Group Comments

### Communications

- Mobile App: Baltimore has a mobile app to improve communications. Pennsylvania has a job gateway on its mobile app that links with the Department of Labor's website.
- Texting: Kansas is also using texting more to improve communications.
- Phone calls and face-to-face: While we think we must punch buttons and keyboards to reach millennials, live contact is important for procedural justice. Through BICS, Vermont's first contact after an order is entered is a resolution meeting. Automation can be a "false fantasy." We should "reinvest" the time we save using technology in direct contact.
- Efficiency: We need to get away from rewarding workers for getting people off the phone the quickest.

### Consistency

20-year employees should be providing the same information as 20-year-old employees.

### Core Values

- Leaders must make treating people with respect a core value, set expectations with staff, provide customer services training, and enforce service standards. Must be accountability up and down the line. Leadership team must live what they say.
- Ask workers to ask themselves: "Is this good enough for me?" "Is this how I would like to be treated?"
- Fun and play are important. Leaders participating in employee focus events like dressing up for decade day will spark more involvement.
- Set work goals around the way employees treat people.
- Zero tolerance for rudeness.

### Hiring Practices

Must bridge the gap between thinking about enforcement/collection vs. social services. Relate core values when hiring new workers. Eliminate the collection background questions. Instead, ask interview questions around providing good customer service.

### Internal/External Connection

Leadership must treat employees the way we want them to treat both each other and customers. At work, we all need to be "bucket-fillers." We fill each other's "buckets" so we all have something to give to customers.

### Media

Colorado works to publicize positive success stories to help change parents' perceptions.

### Partnering

- Connections with TANF agencies are important; negative impressions between agencies are projected to the customers we both serve. Two-way street: IV-A workers may resent mandatory referrals and think of IV-D as the "pay or you go to jail" people; IV-D staff may be offended at being called social workers.

- Tennessee paired front line workers for both child support and public assistance together for training on how their legacy systems interacted. This helped clear up some misconceptions IV-A workers had about the IV-D program.
- Memphis collaborated with state legislators to advertise and hold customer connection events.
- Baltimore cooperated with NCP service providers in allowing them to set up card tables in the waiting rooms a couple of days each week.
- Delaware worked with its departments of labor and corrections to assist NCPs with resume writing, work searches, and job referrals.
- Rhode Island works with Project Restore: job training, fatherhood, providing clothes for interviews.

### **Responsiveness**

- Kansas emphasizes interaction between offices and its statewide call center. They track emails sent to workers from the call center for their response time. The state also tracks second calls and complaints through the central office.
- Some programs require workers to respond to calls within one business day or tell the customer how long it will take.

### **Surveys**

Need to develop ways to measure good customer service. Can have one question follow up from phone calls: “Would you hire the person you just spoke to?”

### **Training**

- Training on procedural justice, implicit bias, and trauma-informed approaches is essential.
- Cross training among child support jobs helps provide perspective. Florida allows workers to try out different departments through shadowing. This gives workers a better perspective and reenergizes them. They may also go out into the field and see locals.
- Important for IT and financial staff to sit in on training to know customer service is important, even when writing code.

### **Words**

- Delaware changed name from “Enforcement” to “Services.”
- Must present program in language that is understandable to most.

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### **OREGON INITIATIVES: Kate Cooper Richardson, IV-D Director**

Oregon’s child support program is developing a new child support system, Origin, and using this as an opportunity to transform the way it does business. Below are some of the ideas and strategies Oregon has implemented or plans to implement in the near future:

### **Books**

Kate started Managers’ Book Club by meeting with her 50 managers in person every other month and providing them all with a copy of *The Science of Service* by Wendi Brick. After they read the book, they

had a facilitated discussion about it. Some people complained about having to read a book, but she said that folks came around. They are busy with the system rollout but she will do this again and plans to continue. She wants her managers to read and have thoughts and ideas to express about the reading – a shared perspective and language. The follow-up discussion is as important as reading the book in the first place. A suggestion that came from one of the groups was to have an NCCSD book list on the website so people can share books that they thought were valuable with each other.

### **Business Practices**

Oregon is reviewing all of its business practices and working to instill a customer-centric focus. What's efficient for the agency or its workers is not necessarily effective for customers.

### **Call Center**

Developed in-house using a single 800 number available to all callers, in-state and out-of-state. Before, each office around the state received customer service calls. Reasons for going with the centralized center and goals for the new center include:

- A live person will answer calls.
- The #1 complaint they received from a survey was that the IVR system was hard to navigate and customers never got to a real person.
- Staff complained that the calls were taking time away from their work. As Kate says, “Your customer is your work.”
- Other staff could easily answer many of the questions case managers received. This way the calls can be answered consistently and free up more time for case managers to do the higher-level work.
- Case managers will only receive calls that require a level of expertise or direct action only the case manager can take.
- A specialized customer service team will take these calls. The position is only a couple levels below case manager, and several workers have volunteered to take a demotion to handle these calls because they like this interaction with customers. This is not a glorified switchboard with entry-level employees. These employees will be able to answer many questions, provide copies of documents, help with PIN numbers, etc.
- Kate was concerned that calls in offices were not being answered or returned timely and she wants to eliminate the voicemail-to-voicemail telephone tag scenarios. That is not helpful for customers.
- This is a “no wrong door” approach—either by phone or electronically. Calling the 800 number will get you a live person who can and will answer your questions.
- After hours, voicemail is activated at the call center and messages will be triaged the next business day.
- Hours for the call center may expand beyond business hours.

### **Website**

Enhancing the customer portal as part of the new child support system will allow customers and the agency to do more. Previously, customers could sign on to the portal and get limited information. Now they will be able to upload documents, get copies of documents, take actions, communicate with

agency, etc. This is likely to decrease the number of telephone calls, partly because more info is available to customers and because some questions or interactions will shift to electronic rather than telephonic.

### **Words**

Oregon is significantly changing terminology externally and internally (including in the system)—no more government-speak. Oregon has not used CP and NCP as terms but it did use obligor and obligee, which are not much more helpful. They are trying to simplify and avoid legalese. They are also trying to remove and eliminate using acronyms. The language they now use internally in their computer system and externally is “parent”—“parent receiving support” and “parent paying support.” First and foremost, these people are parents and should be treated that way. Words really matter. The agency has customers, not clients; regardless, they are parents first. Oregon has also held focus groups with customers and the public to see if forms and terms make sense to them.

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### **VIRGINIA INITIATIVES: Diane Asbury – Director of Field Operations–West**

Virginia established an Outreach & Pre-Court Diversion Project in rural areas with the highest unemployment rates which:

- Increased access and improved outcomes for families, including custodial parents, children and noncustodial parents, through dialogue.
- Coordinated with local departments of social services to improve relationships with this important external customer.
- Included a pathway for child support staff to meet with all noncustodial parents prior to court proceedings to present information on Family Engagement Services and resources available.
- Provided an opportunity to obtain information from the noncustodial parent, which could prevent court enforcement.
- Offered agency the opportunity to personally meet with noncustodial parents and discuss the ability to pay and review case for right sizing the order prior to filing court action.

Transportation is another barrier for many clients in the area, which is why meeting them in their localities can remove significant burdens.

Part of the program also includes reminders if a payment is missed, after contact has been made with a parent, and before filing a petition with the court.

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### **Group Q & A / Comments**

- *What are “Family Engagement Services”?* These are intensive case monitoring services that assist noncustodial parents in overcoming barriers to meeting their full child support obligation. In this area of Virginia, this often includes barriers around addiction and health services. There are often connections with local departments of social services, parenting classes, VIEW services (TANF employment program), and referrals to partner organizations. There is at least one family engagement services worker in each Virginia district office, and the exact services depend partially upon the worker. For example, a newer employee is not struggling with the “old

mode” of child support enforcement. The worker in Abingdon went out to employers to connect parents directly with job opportunities as part of their work.

- *Do you have employment resources?* Yes, this varies by district/locality. Workers know how to navigate the resources in their areas. In addition, there are significant drug addiction issues in the Abingdon area.
- *Do you have a way to identify these cases separately in your system?* Yes, we have a code for family engagement services participants.
- *How is the family engagement services program funded?* These are DCSE employees, and they carry caseloads of 100-150. We have indicators on our system to identify these cases as being enrolled in a program.
- *What costs were invested in order to obtain results?* This was a no-cost program activity. Current staff who work caseloads were used, with certain duties reassigned to other staff.
- *Are these child support workers?* Yes, they are caseworkers.
- *What is their caseload?* Approximately 150, depending on the district office and intensity of needs.
- *Were only NCPs allowed to participate?* Yes.
- *How did you identify the original group of participants to contact?* Every case was included prior to filing a show cause petition in court.
- *How was contact made with individuals?* Both letters and phone calls. The letters were more of an invitation and did not look like our normal letters sent out.
- *How did you notify clients of the pre-court diversion program?* We sent “invitations” to meet in their own locality.
- *Was the “invitation” special or different than a normal letter/communication?* Yes. It was more inviting and friendly, and not threatening in any way. It was also not system generated.
- *Did your show cause petitions drop? If so, by how much?* Yes they did, but I am not sure by how much exactly. In addition, cases that are sent to court have better information for the judge about the situation and/or lack of cooperation.
- *Why so few requests for modifications?* Many people in this region of Virginia already had minimum orders so for a large number they would not qualify for any additional downward modification.
- *Have you considered expanding the program to earlier in the case processing, well before consideration of court action?* Yes, in Virginia some districts already do this and we call it early intervention. Our establishment workers also screen parties for family engagement services.
- *Did you need to file an agreement with the court?* No. This was an intervention prior to court action.
- *How large is the area this district office covers?* Some localities are over two hours away by car. Most are very rural, impacted by drugs, and transportation is a significant barrier. This is why traveling to the localities is so useful in this area.

- In San Diego, Veterans Affairs is a resource and there are many cases with veterans. Veterans sometimes feel that their problems are so connected to their service, such as PTSD sufferers and the homeless, that they often cut themselves off from contact with their families, thinking this is in the best interest of the children and partner. This is another aspect of parenting issues.
  - In Delaware there was a movement to send staff out into the community but that shifted to using libraries.
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### **WASHINGTON INITIATIVES: Wally McClure, IV-D Director**

In addition to identifying and recognizing exceptional customer service, Washington's initiatives include:

#### **Books**

Wally read Wendi Brick's book, *The Science of Service*, over two Saturdays. Finding that it was excellent, he mandated that all managers read it. The book's basic premise is to treat people with dignity and respect.

#### **Listening**

Wally visited all nine of his field offices for a Customer First Listening Tour where he:

- Shared his customer service philosophy with staff and management.
- Asked them to send him stories of providing good customer service, as they do with outstanding collection efforts.
- Requested that supervisory staff coach those with issues with providing good customer service.

#### **Motto**

"Respect & Resolution with Everyone Everyday"—Staff hates using the word "resolution," as they feel not all matters can be resolved right away. Wally will keep it in place internally for 6 months and revisit it with staff then.

#### **Partnering**

Assigned a manager to identify and arrange for physical space-sharing partnerships with community organizations and sister agencies as leases end.

#### **Surveys**

- From conducting a semi-annual customer survey for the past two years, Washington was surprised to discover that NCP responsiveness was more positive because of their full-fledged effort to provide good, quality customer service. Surveys conducted in office lobbies and post-phone call.
- Also conducted a staff survey that asked: How do you talk about your job to friends and family?

#### **Training**

Developed a menu of four options for customer service that all staff will be required to take:

- Motivational Interviewing
- Customer Service



- Bridges Out of Poverty
- Verbal De-escalation

### **Workgroup**

Developed a Customer First Workgroup comprised of line staff and supervisors statewide. Their mission was to recommend how to do a better job in customer service delivery. Recommendations included:

- Decrease the response time to the customer from 48 to 24 hours.
- Have toys in the wait area for kids.
- Improve the lobby experience.
- Develop a standard policy on how to treat an NCP who visits office A, but the case is housed in office B.
- Install phone booth in lobby for customer to have privacy when making calls.

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### **Group Comments**

#### **Responsiveness**

One state indicated that their turnaround time to return calls from the state office was 24 hours; their call center, two-days.

#### **Surveys**

Wanted to do interviews with NCPs who had positive experiences, but they were hesitant to tell their stories.

#### **Words**

Identified the need to look at child support agency's and court's forms; revise language as suggested in BICS; forms need to be easily understood. For example, in Kansas when a paternity petition is served, the respondent has to file an answer within 20 days, but nowhere does it explain what an "answer" is.

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### **WYOMING INITIATIVES: Kristie Arneson – IV-D Director**

Wyoming handles all customer service in-house. They do not have a call center for their customer service. They are starting with internal customer service before going external.

#### **Books**

The leadership team formed a book club and is reading *Sticking Points: How to Get Four Generations Working Together in the Twelve Places They Come Apart*, by author and conference speaker Haydn Shaw, as their first book.

#### **Community Service**

Office staff are working on community service as an office-Habitat for Humanity

#### **Guidelines**

Wyoming just changed their guideline. The threshold used to be 40% and now has changed to 25%. They also added a multiplier, which will be fair to both parties. Also changed policy regarding abatements.

### **Kiosks**

In the process of putting computer kiosks in each office for parents to be able to apply for services, access the portal, access other programs, make child support payments, pay application fee.

### **Listening**

Listening sessions conducted within their state have offices bonding more with one another.

### **Motivational Interviewing**

This year they rolled out motivational interview skill training for all staff via train-the-trainer. This teaches staff a different way to interact and talk with customers, as well as other staff. They experienced resistance to change at first, but are now feeling a change in culture. They are definitely having different conversations started with open-ended questions. They also try to speak with both customers (CP & NCP). Great positive results overall.

### **Online Application**

Wyoming is in the final stages of their online applications, modeled after turbo tax.

### **Outreach**

Community engagement efforts strengthen the relationship with the community and strengthen the office staff.

### **Texting**

Wyoming is working with a vendor for text messaging.

### **Training**

Initial and on-going customer service training.

### **Website**

- Self-service Portal—under contract with a vendor for enhancements so that NCPs & CPs will have access to payment and some case information.
  - Payment Portal— just finished a payment portal that allows multiple ways for those parents owing child support to make payments, including by credit card. They also have the “pay near me” where customers can pay with cash.
  - Employment Portal—enhancing to allow easier use and ways for employers to set up payments for employees owing child support.
-