

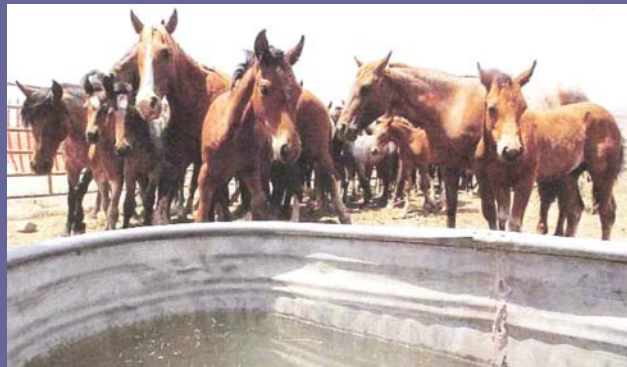


Engaging noncustodial parents

Session presented by
Chisago County
Social Services

January 2009
at the
Minnesota Fatherhood
Summit

You can lead a horse to water, but how do you make them drink?



Engaging the noncustodial parent

System Navigation & Case Management for noncustodial parents (NCP) that are using services from the Chisago County Child Support Unit



“So how do you get a horse to drink after you have led them to water?”

*Presenters: Elizabeth Dodge, Chisago County Social Services Director
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Michael Banken, Chisago County Participant*

Terminology

The Child Support unit works with mothers and fathers who owe child support. We refer to these individuals as noncustodial parent, obligor, participant and client. These will be terms used interchangeably throughout the presentation.

Outline

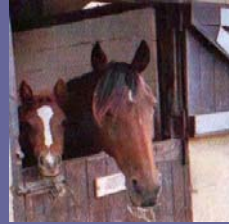
- Inspiration/Customization of nontraditional NCP (noncustodial parent) services
- Hypothesis (directed services)
- Social worker position description, case plans, MSW (social worker) clinical consultation
- Plan for program evaluation

Outline

- Assessment, client directed goals
- New tools for some
- Outcomes-quantifiable & anecdotal
- Participant story
- Question & answer

Inspiration

- Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)



- Intensive case management for noncustodial parents



Nat'l Strategic Plan 2005-2009

National Child Support Enforcement Strategic Plan 2005-9

- Customize enforcement approach
 - Distinguish between those who refuse to pay (e.g., denial/revocation of licenses) and those who cannot pay (e.g., workforce development referral)
- Address perceived obstacles to payment
 - Including access to children, matters of procedural justice and affordability of orders.

MN Strategic Plan 2008-2012

The Child Support Enforcement Program has evolved and matured. It is a family-first program, intended to ensure families' self-sufficiency by making child support a more reliable source of income.



Innovation and Excellence

[MN Plan Continued]

- We seek the most effective and efficient ways to provide child support services
- We promote individual and organizational development
- We set goals to improve overall performance and are accountable for our results
- We use creative problem solving, take calculated risks, and have the courage to act

What we know

- During the first 12 months of the child support order, compliance with different orders is as follows:
 - 52% Paternities
 - 62% Establish Order (Recognition Of Parentage, separated, etc.)
 - 76% Dissolutions

Problem Hypothesis #1

If a child support order from a court determination of paternity has the lowest rate of compliance, then early and frequent case management services will result in increased compliance with the financial obligation(s)



Rationale

1. An offer to assist with the new legal obligation has the potential to build a bridge of understanding.
2. The father who has a contact person (social worker) in addition to the collection person, for questions, concerns, and interpreting legal processes will incur fewer administrative and judicial enforcement actions.

Rationale

3. Fathers who have an interest in getting to know their child will have a case manager who will be understanding and supportive of making forward constructive steps in that direction.



Rationale

4. Fathers who have an interest /investment in the well being of their child, will naturally want to provide emotional and financial support.

Problem Hypothesis #2

If Obligor are not paying and not responding to the Child Support Officer, then at the second stage contempt hearing an Obligor will become motivated to work with the Social Worker in lieu of serving time in jail.



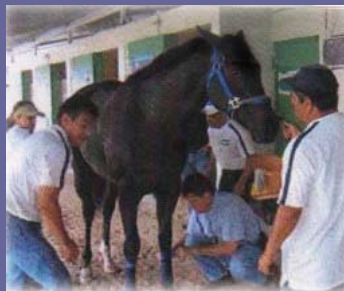
Rationale

1. There is a growing body of research indicating successful service outcomes around the provision of involuntary services.



Rationale

2. Most Obligors want to provide for their child and will avail themselves of help under the right circumstances.



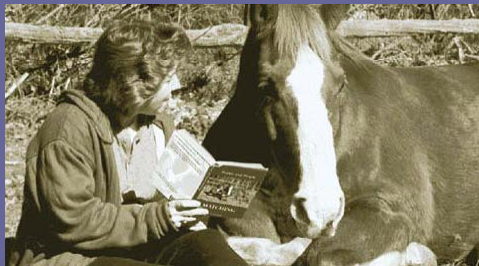
Rationale

3. Serving time in jail is perceived by the Obligor as punitive (instead of compelling future compliance) while meeting with a Social Worker holds out hope for addressing problems and overcoming barriers.



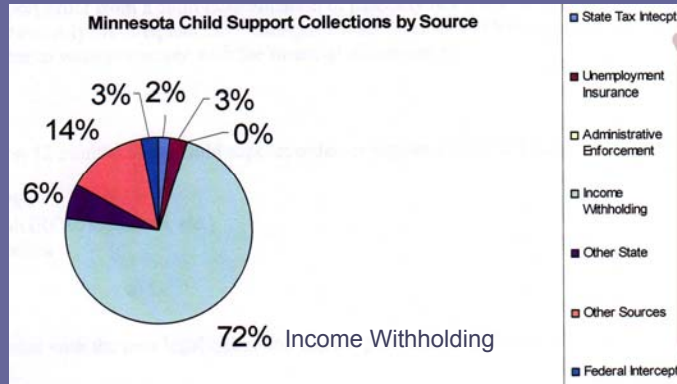
Rationale

4. Generally, the judges welcome an alternative to incarceration. Providing social services holds the prospect for developing the Obligor into a parental provider in more ways than just financial.



Problem Hypothesis #3

If 72% of child support is paid by income withholding, then employment is essential for compliance with the child support order.



Rationale

1. Employment Stability (fulltime employment) is highly valued for the raising of children.



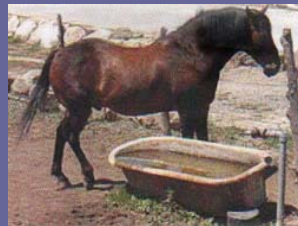
Rationale

2. When employment is not stable, identification of barriers to employment is crucial



Rationale

3. Meeting with the underemployed and unemployed is the first step toward addressing the income shortage issue. (When there is no income, there is also no income withholding).



Rationale

4. Engaging the NCP, building rapport, building trust, sharing information, starts the process of a helper (social worker) customer (NCP) relationship.



Plan for: Program Evaluation of IV-D Social Services

Who we want to serve: NCP's who:

- Have newly established paternity
- Have 2nd stage contempt hearing (exacerbated delinquencies)
- Lives within 30 miles of the Chisago County border (further with unit supervisor permission)

Goals

What we want to see different or changed most for these individuals:



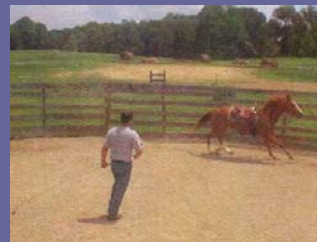
Primary Goal:

- Increasing compliance with the order for financial support including medical support to child

Goals

Secondary Goal:

-Reduce barriers to complying with the court order for child support.



(our belief is that by improving performance in this goal area, we will enhance performance in the primary goal over the long run)

Goal Achievement

We will know this change has occurred when:

Primary Goal:

- Increased percentage of compliance with court order

Secondary Goals:

- NCP gainfully employed
- Proactive use of review & adjust by the child support staff



Goal Achievement

• Secondary Goals:

- Client-identified, miscellaneous barriers addressed
- Parenting time is court ordered and exercised
- NCP's receive assistance in an efficient/responsive way
- Improved interactions between the child support staff & NCP
- Reduction in time expenditure of CSO on the case.

Process



We will take the following steps to accomplish this change:

- Primary
 - Track payments for percentage of compliance 12 months before and after Social Worker services
- Secondary
 1. Track changes in employment status
 2. Track number of court orders modified.

Process cont'd

3. Develop formal case plan & track completion of stated goals
4. Track number of parenting time orders established or enforced
5. Develop a case closing summary tracking form
6. Use customer satisfaction survey
7. Use CSO professional assessment

Case Plan (Social Worker & NCP)

Agency's Expectation/Participant's Responsibilities

- Working with SW is voluntary and can be terminated by participant or by agency.
- Working or not working with SW will NOT change ongoing obligation to provide financial support.



- Participants are expected to keep appointments, maintain contact with CSO and SW.
- SW will guide completion of court documents but not complete them
- SW can't give legal advice and can't do legal advocacy in a courtroom or similar setting

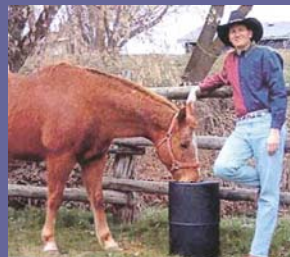


- Notice of Privacy Practices is signed and dated.
- Primary goal for Social Worker is to help participant provide financial support to their children by complying with court order
- Secondary goal for Social Worker is to assist in reduction of barriers for the participant to help comply with court order.

IV-D SW Position Description

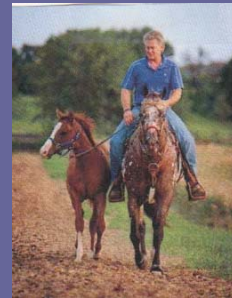
Position Objective:

To promote the responsible involvement of noncustodial parents in the lives of children within the context of Title IV-D Referral Services.



This is achieved by building on parenting skills and overcoming barriers so that a noncustodial parent can better provide financial and relational support to the child and do so in a cooperative manner with the other parent.

(not an Advocate but a Systems Navigator)



Essential Duties & Responsibilities

1. Offer services to Child Support cases as they are referred
2. Contact obligor within 5 days of referral
3. Complete assessment of need to determine factors that limit obligor's capacity to pay ordered amount

Essential Duties & Responsibilities

4. Co-develop a case plan with obligor detailing needs, plan of action, timelines to overcome barriers that enable obligor to comply with court order
5. Provide obligor with ongoing contact support, and accountability of the case plan
6. Track services, professional development via MSW clinical consultation, attend meetings of the agency such as IV-A Job Club & Family Advocacy

How does it work?

Clients come in many varieties; just as there are many different kinds of horses, there are clients with unique problems.

Some are neglected or abused...



Recognizing Diversity

there are clients who are incarcerated...

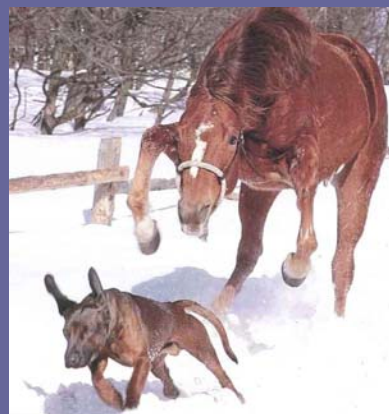


have mental health issues...



Recognizing Diversity

clients who are angry...

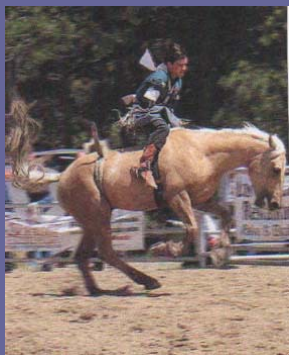


some who have given up...



not working for some...

Examples of negative engagement



Reducing Barriers



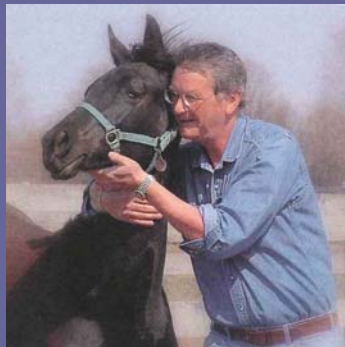
Today's methods focus on reducing barriers to compliance by:

- Moving individuals from blame to accepting personal responsibility
- Access to justice/waiving filing fees (In Forma Pauperis)
- Modification of order
- Reinstating of drivers license through payment agreements/motions



- Obtaining employment
- Applying for Food Support & MN Health Care Programs
- Mental health assessments and treatments
- SSI/RSDI referral and advocacy
- Other social services referrals (taxes, budgeting, culturally competent services, probation agent, counseling)
- Promote communication with CSO

Much in the way a 'horse whisperer' retrains and gentles a horse, this new focus positively engages and encourages the client to accept personal responsibility.



Positive Engagement

We use new tools to positively engage clients

- Face to face interviews in their own pasture
- Interface with Employment Services
- Act as a resource and referral to community services



Positive Engagement

- As new paternities are established we make initial outreach contact to the father



- Engagement strategies that are nonjudgmental and non-adversarial



Positive Results

The positive results of using these tools are:

Self referrals are developed as a result of the history of success



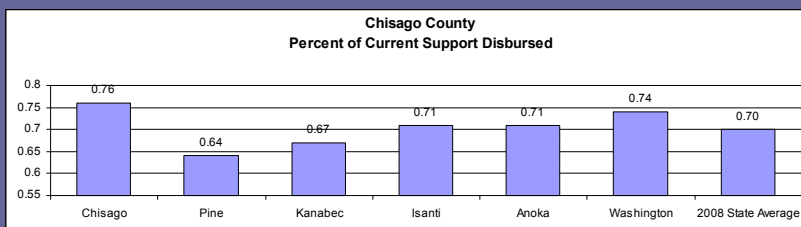
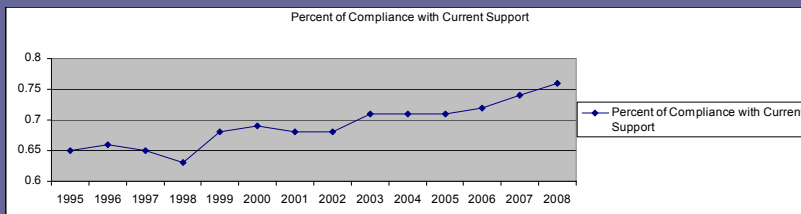
Empowerment

The end result is empowerment of the client to provide for his/her family



% of Compliance Currently

(not all Social Worker related)



Compliance Rate Before and After

Results exclude obligations reserved and set at zero

Sampling size= 50 cases

- Avg. % Compliant 12 mo's PRIOR to wkg. with SW = 31%
- Avg. % Compliant 9* mo's WHILE working with SW = 45%
- Avg. % Compliant 12 mo's AFTER working with SW = 62%

*average intervention period is 9 months

Success Stories

Excerpts from SW Customer Survey Responses

To the Child Support Officer to let you know...

"I appreciate the referral of my case to the SW... The SW helped to get things settled and into court. It was too much to do on my own. I just want to say thank you for the help that I received. The SW got me going on the right track."



SW Customer Survey Responses

"I am currently being denied parenting time with my child. The SW has been nothing but helpful. If not for the SW I would not be able to take the action I am going to take in the courts to see my child, and show him his real father loves him."



another...

“I would like to take this time to thank you for your referral and help in connecting me with the SW that has been helping me with the maze of paperwork and all the ins and outs of child support. Without this help and knowledge I would be in jail. With this support and help I have managed to go through the right paths and legal process that was necessary. The SW went to court with me and helped me all the way. I was sick and lost and just didn't know what to do.

Everything is in order now thanks to the SW and your referral. Thank you very, very much again.

P.S. I know there are a lot of “ME'S” out there who need this type of help.”

In Summary...

The social worker is a resource/tool for the Child Support Officer to use to provide case management services to clients with failed obligations and extend resources/services to those who need it.

Questions?



Now, lets talk about horse sense...

Contact Information

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