

THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF STANISLAUS  
ACTION AGENDA SUMMARY

DEPT: Child Support Services

BOARD AGENDA # \*B-3

Urgent  Routine

AGENDA DATE July 10, 2012

CEO Concurs with Recommendation YES  NO   
(Information Attached)

4/5 Vote Required YES  NO

SUBJECT:

Approval for the Department of Child Support Services to Apply, and if Awarded, Accept, the Administration of Children and Families and Office of Child Support Enforcement National Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration Project Grant in the Amount of \$775,000 Over A Five Year Period (Federal Fiscal Years 2012-2016)

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Authorize the Director of Child Support Services, or her designee, to submit an application for funding to the Administration of Children and Families and Office of Child Support Enforcement National Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration Project grant in the amount of \$775,000, and to accept funding if awarded.
2. Authorize the Director of Child Support Services, or her designee, to sign and execute all necessary documents related to the grant.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact at this time. However, if the Administration of Children and Families, and Office of Child Support Enforcement National Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration Project grant is awarded, \$775,000 will be available for project costs. This grant amount will fund five years of staffing and program services at Stanislaus County Department of Child Support Services (SCDCSS) and at Alliance Worknet (AWN). Existing staff, which includes a project manager, the child support case coordinator, an evaluation coordinator from SCDCSS and up to two case coordinators from AWN will support the administration of this grant. (Continued on Page 2)

BOARD ACTION AS FOLLOWS:

No. 2012-352

On motion of Supervisor Withrow, Seconded by Supervisor Monteith and approved by the following vote,

Ayes: Supervisors: Chiesa, Withrow, Monteith, De Martini, and Chairman O'Brien

Noes: Supervisors: None

Excused or Absent: Supervisors: None

Abstaining: Supervisor: None

- 1) X Approved as recommended
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_ Denied
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_ Approved as amended
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_ Other:

MOTION:

Christine Ferraro

ATTEST: CHRISTINE FERRARO TALLMAN, Clerk

File No.

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#### FISCAL IMPACT: (Continued)

If the grant is awarded, the funds will be eligible for Federal Financial Participation match of 66%, making the total available funding for the project \$2.32 million over the five year period from Federal Fiscal Year 2012 through Federal Fiscal Year 2016. DCSS will be the fiscal agent, managing the day-to-day operation of the project, with AWN providing core employment components.

#### DISCUSSION:

The Child Support (CS) Program, authorized under Title IV-D of the Social Security Act, has an impressive record of success and continuous program improvement, removing about one million people from poverty each year, and providing 10 percent of income for all poor custodial families and 40 percent of income for those poor custodial families who receive child support. Child support receipt is also associated with other improvements to child well-being, such as better cognitive development among young children and better academic achievement among older children.

The goal of the Child Support program is that every child can rely on steady financial and emotional support from both parents throughout their childhood. Although the child support program works well for those parents who have steady incomes through regular employment or other means, it has been less effective for the 20 to 30 percent of noncustodial parents (NP's) who have limited earnings. For example, 70 percent of unpaid child support debt is owed by parents with no or low reported earnings.

As of April 2012, the unemployment rate for Stanislaus County was 16.4% ( more than twice the federal rate of 8.1%) with 2,372 non custodial parents paying their monthly child support obligation through withholding Unemployment Insurance Benefits. Many state and local child support programs have developed partnerships to provide employment services for parents using a variety of funding streams, often including child support case management and other wraparound services. Many of these programs are associated with better child support and employment outcomes, and evaluations show they can lead to increased support payments. Stanislaus County DCSS is requesting authority to apply for a National Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration Project grant in the amount of \$775,000 to implement Project "Pathways to Self Sufficiency". The goal of this project is to improve the reliable payment of child support, thereby improving child well-being and avoiding public costs. The federal initiative will also examine the effect of employment services on child support and related outcomes, including the benefits and costs of employment services for noncustodial parents. To accomplish these goals, the

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Department will partner with key county agencies, non-profit organizations and other programs to provide workforce development and employment services, housing assistance, financial literacy training, asset building services, fatherhood/parenting activities using peer support, family violence safeguards per an approved domestic violence plan, legal services, and individualized child support case management services to noncustodial parents in Stanislaus County who are not regularly paying child support or who are expected to have difficulty with making regular child support payments due to underemployment or unemployment.

The project's core team, made up of a collaboration of staff from SDCSS, AWN and the Stanislaus County Superior Courts will focus on noncustodial parents with sporadic monthly child support payment records over the past twelve (12) months before they began receiving unemployment insurance benefits. Many of these participants may have low-skilled entry level positions which are difficult to obtain during the economic downturn or are the victims of a local industry failure. Once enrolled in the project, participants will be referred to their designated AWN project liaison who will plan workforce development services such as skill assessment, vocational training, on-the-job training, paid internships (work experience), supportive services and job search assistance. Job-ready noncustodial parents will receive basic core services while those facing greater barriers will benefit from AWN's more intensive programs, such as obtaining their GED, receiving on-the-job training, or enrolling in available occupational training. Referrals to secondary agencies will also occur during this initial assessment stage.

The Stanislaus County Superior Courts will partner on this project for the modifications of child support court orders. In addition, they will actively participate in forums to educate project participants about the importance of engaging in the child support process with emphasis on compliance with child support orders to provide a stable source of income for children during these difficult economic times.

Additionally, preliminary discussions have occurred with a number of secondary partners to ensure specific needs of each project participant are addressed. The following organizations have tentatively agreed to participate on the Pathways to Self Sufficiency Project if Stanislaus County is awarded the grant: Housing and Urban Development; Stanislaus County Superior Courts Family Law Facilitator legal services; Stanislaus County Community Services Agency ( health care and family violence concerns); The Center for Human Service fatherhood-parenting peer sessions and planning for future childbearing; Stanislaus Literacy Center

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core literacy and GED preparation, and MOCSE Federal Credit Union for financial literacy and asset building services.

Grantees of this award will be part of a national evaluation to assess the impact of these programs in order to evaluate successful replication nationwide. The evaluation will be conducted by an independent evaluator, with grantees actively contributing to all aspects of participant and programmatic data collection. The evaluation will include an implementation study component (e.g., documenting the characteristics of the demonstration programs, participants, and management structures and practices; experiences of staff and participants; and challenges and lessons learned), and a benefit and cost analysis.

At the local level, data will be collected and analyzed to track participant progress and impacts on the collection of child support payments. This data will evaluate the participant's frequency of payment and percentage of current support obligation paid while in the program. Anticipated outcomes of this project will be an increased percentage of current support collected for cases within the project and the number of cases making payments towards their arrears balance being greater than those in the control group.

#### POLICY ISSUE:

This grant supports the Board's priorities of A Healthy Community for the children on impacted cases, and Effective Partnerships by supporting collaboration between departments and organizations to increase and improve child support payments to families within the County.

#### STAFFING IMPACT:

Existing Child Support services staff will administer the National Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration Project Grant. There is no staffing impact associated with this grant.

#### CONTACT PERSON:

Tamara Thomas, Interim Director/Assistant Director, (209) 558-3062

## DCSS Grant Concept Proposal Format

**LCSA:** Stanislaus County Department of Child Support Services

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**LCSA Contact Information:**

Name: Tamara Thomas  
Phone Number: (209) 558-3062  
Email Address: [tthomas@stancodcss.org](mailto:tthomas@stancodcss.org)

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**Name of Granting Entity and Type of Grant:**

Administration of Children and Families, Office of Child Support Enforcement – Section 1115 Grant (National Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration Project)

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**Grant Due Dates:**

Concept Proposal to DCSS: June 5, 2012  
Grant Application & Package to OCSE: July 27, 2012

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**Grant Amount:**

Amount Sought: \$200,000  
Is a Match Required? No. If so, Amount of Match: \$0.00

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**Target Population:** Noncustodial parents who are not fully and consistently paying child support or who are expected to have trouble making fully and consistently child support payments because they are not regularly employed.

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**Grant Concept Proposal:**

**Executive Summary:**

The “Pathways to Self Sufficiency” Project will partner Stanislaus County Department of Child Support Services (SCDCSS), with key county agencies, non-profit organizations and other programs to provide workforce development and employment services, financial literacy training, asset building services, fatherhood/parenting activities using peer support, family violence safeguards per an approved domestic violence plan, legal services, and individualized child support case management services to noncustodial parents in Stanislaus County who are not consistently paying child support or who are expected to have trouble making consistent child support payments because they are not regularly employed.

The objective of this project will be a measurable increase in the amount and regularity of child support payments made by noncustodial parents participating in the Pathways to Self Sufficiency project.

## **Stanislaus County Department of Child Support Services Pathways to Self Sufficiency**

**Administration for Children and Families and Office of Child Support Enforcement**

**National Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration Project**

**Section 1115 Grant: HHS-2012-ACF-OCSE-FD-0297**

As of April 2012, Stanislaus County Department of Child Support Services (SCDCSS) had an overall caseload of 32,297 cases with 29,987 having a child support order established. Of those cases with a support order, 6,792 (23%) are in a delinquent status, having not made a payment within the last 30 days or longer. The remaining 23,195 cases made a payment towards their child support obligation (either current or arrears balances) with 2,372 (7.91%) paying their monthly child support obligation via Unemployment Insurance Benefits (UIB).

As of April 2012, the unemployment rate for Stanislaus County was 16.4%, over twice the federal rate of 8.1%. The "Pathways to Self Sufficiency" Project will partner the Stanislaus County Department of Child Support Services with key county agencies, non-profit organizations and other programs to provide a holistic, solution based approach to the myriad of problems experienced by unemployed parents. Specifically, the project will provide access to workforce development and employment services, housing assistance, financial literacy training, asset building services, fatherhood/parenting activities using peer support, family violence safeguards per an approved domestic violence plan, legal services, and individualized child support case management services to noncustodial parents in Stanislaus County who are not consistently paying child support or who are expected to have trouble making consistent child support payments because they are not regularly employed.

The project's core team, made up of a collaboration of staff from the primary partners, namely SCDCSS, Alliance Worknet (a workforce development agency) and the Stanislaus County Superior Courts will focus on those Noncustodial Parents with sporadic monthly child support payment records over the past twelve (12) months before they began receiving unemployment insurance benefits. Many of these participants may have low-skilled entry level positions which are difficult to obtain during the economic downturn or are the victims of a local industry failure. The core team will determine the participant's needs, evaluate their skillsets, provide guidance and one-on-one caseworker support to encourage participant success and the project goal of obtaining consistent and sustainable payments on their child support obligations.

This project emphasizes partnering among the primary agencies, but preliminary discussions and support has been obtained from a number of secondary partners to ensure the specific needs of each project participant is addressed. The following agencies, non-profit organizations and other entities have tentatively agreed to participate on the Pathways to Self Sufficiency Project if Stanislaus County is awarded the grant: Housing and Urban Development, Stanislaus County Superior Courts Family Law Facilitator for legal services, Stanislaus County Community Services Agency (a social services agency) for health care and family violence concerns, The Center for Human Services, (a non-profit organization) for fatherhood/parenting peer sessions and planning for future childbearing; Stanislaus Literacy Center for core literacy and GED

preparation, and Mocse Federal Credit Union for financial literacy and asset building services. Participation of these various secondary partners would be via a referral process as well as possible involvement in group training sessions.

In addition to the regular duties associated with the project, the core agencies will participate in regularly scheduled forums to introduce participants to the project, explain how the project will work and review the expected outcomes. Secondary partners will have the option to attend these forums. The goal of these sessions will be for the participants to have the opportunity to meet representatives from all of the partnering agencies and to provide an open venue for the group to address questions and discuss the overall effectiveness of the project from the participant perspective.

Initial recruitment of the treatment group for the project will be performed by SCDCSS from the current caseload of Noncustodial parents residing in Stanislaus County who are currently delinquent on their child support obligation or are making child support payments via Unemployment Insurance Benefits. SCDCSS staff will make direct contact with the Noncustodial Parents to advise them of the new project. Depending upon case circumstances, several incentives will be available as negotiation tools to encourage Noncustodial Parent continued participation. Those incentives may include, but are not limited to, negotiation and release of driver's licenses and/or other professional licenses; modification of current support obligation while the Noncustodial Parent participates in the project; and evaluation to determine if the case qualifies for the Compromise of Arrears Program. Once a participant has agreed to participate on the project, their case will be referred to the Superior Courts for a Family Code section 4505 Employment Search Order and enrollment in the Pathways to Self Sufficiency Project. A second, control group, will also be randomly selected from this same subset of Noncustodial Parents for parallel comparison of outcomes and evaluation of project results.

To facilitate efficient communication and timely coordination between the core agencies, the SCDCSS will act as primary caseworker of the project cases and will be located at the Alliance Worknet One-Stop location within the Employment Development Department building in central Modesto, CA. This location and integrated approach will provide for greater communication and involvement between the core agencies. In addition, the SCDCSS staff person will be able to attend project participant court sessions and collaborate on a daily basis with their case management peers at Alliance Worknet.

A pattern of past work history is not a guarantee for employment in these difficult economic times. Once a participant has been enrolled in the project, they will be referred to the designated Alliance Worknet project liaison. Alliance Worknet staff will complete workforce development service elements consisting of skills assessment, core services/workshops, vocational training, on-the-job training, paid internships (work experience), supportive services and job search assistance. Job ready Noncustodial Parents will receive basic core services while those facing greater barriers will benefit from Alliance Worknet's more intensive programs, such as obtaining their GED, receiving on-the-job training, or enrolling in available occupational training. Referrals to secondary agencies will also occur during this initial assessment stage.

Regular meetings between staff from SDCCSS and Alliance Worknet will ensure open communication and comprehensive case monitoring during the span of the project. Monthly reports will track participant progress in the project and data related to their child support payments. This data will evaluate the participant's frequency of payment and percentage of current support obligation paid while in the program. Said data will then be compared to the control group results for the same time period. As of September 2011, SDCCSS received 58.1% of current support owed and had 60.8% of cases with arrears balances made a payment. Control group estimates should mirror prior year results. Anticipated outcomes of this project will be an increased percentage of current support collected for cases within the project and number of cases making payments towards their arrears balance will be greater than the control group.

If a participant is no longer cooperating in the project, SDCCSS staff will initiate personal contact to reiterate the court ordered terms of the project. Failure to remain in the project would negate those terms and result in possible immediate revocation of their licenses, restoring child support orders to pre-project monthly obligation amounts, or removing the case from the compromise of arrears review process.

The Stanislaus County Superior Courts will partner on this project for the modifications of child support court orders. In addition, they will actively participate in the forums to inform and instill in the project participants the importance of engaging in this process. The Child Support Commissioner will reiterate how compliance with their child support order will provide a stable source of income for their children during these difficult economic times.

Proposed project outcomes:

- 1) As a result of enhanced employment search resources and services, SDCCSS will see a five percent (5%) increase in current support collected from participants in the Pathways to Self Sufficiency Project.
- 2) As a result of enhanced employment search resources and services, SDCCSS will see a three percent (3%) increase of cases in the Pathways to Self Sufficiency Project making payments towards their arrears balances.