January 2020

In This Issue:

Executive Director’s Message

Membership Matters: The Value of Your NCSEA Membership
by Ann Marie Ruskin, NCSEA Executive Director

NCSEA’s mission statement includes the importance of providing professional development opportunities to the child support community and “...to educate, connect, and inspire those who work in child support”. NCSEA values our role in producing timely, relevant programming to those dedicated workers on important topics – at our conferences and through virtual learning programs. In addition, NCSEA shares and disseminates important information in this Child Support CommuniQue (CSQ) newsletter and the weekly Rapid Read news updates.

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Community Corner

Moving from Cooperation to Collaboration
by William Dunn, CPP, Director of Government Relations, American Payroll Association

Since the inception of the modern child support program, state and federal agencies have relied on employers as partners. It has long been a cooperative arrangement. Child support enforcement agencies (CSEA) have one set of tasks, and employers another, each contributing toward a common result.

The overall mission, however, has always belonged to the CSEAs. “My company isn’t in the business of collecting employees’ debts,” a payroll manager said to me in a moment of pique, “we’re in the business of selling widgets.” On reflection, that payroll manager well understood that collecting debts was a part of doing business, just as remitting income, social security, and unemployment taxes are important ways employers contribute to society while doing business.

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Child Support and Foster Care: Are We Meeting the Goals of Title IV-E?
by Steven Eldred, Director, Orange County (CA) Child Support Services

As we examine the wisdom and practices of collecting support obligations from parents whose children are in out-of-home placements, the medical profession’s Hippocratic Oath is appropriate: First, do no harm.

In 1980 Title IV-E was added to the Social Security Act. While the principal purpose was to set up a federal system of oversight for state foster care programs, one aspect critical to child support professionals was the mandate that states attempt to recoup some of the costs of the program from case participants. The child welfare programs have examined their efficacy and best practices in depth, but there has been precious little research into the interplay between the IV-E (child welfare) and IV-D (child support) programs.

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Pursuing Father Inclusion at the State Level Through FRPN Planning Grants
by Jessica Pearson, Ph.D., Founder and Director, Center for Policy Research

In October 2019, the Fatherhood Research and Practice Network (FRPN) released a Request for Proposal inviting states to apply for small planning grants to develop long-term plans to enhance father inclusion in state programs and policies. FRPN is led by Temple University and Center for Policy Research, Denver. To maximize policy outcomes, applicants were required to create state planning teams that included the state child support director, a fatherhood or family-policy researcher, and at least one other state leader. Only one application could be submitted per state. Twenty states applied for a nine-month FRPN planning grant and in January 2019, FRPN made awards of $10,000 to 11 states…

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Featured Articles

New Legislation, New Opportunities
by Jim Fleming, Director, Child Support Division of the North Dakota Department of Human Services

For an institution frequently described as plagued with gridlock, Congress has been quite active lately regarding child support. Child support legislation is introduced from time to time, but the bills introduced in the last few weeks are notable because of their bi-partisan sponsorship and the leadership roles of the primary sponsors. This bodes well for the chances of the bills becoming law.

Interestingly, the provisions in each bill have been included in the budget recommendations of the last two presidential administrations.¹

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A Major Theme in 2019? System Modernization!
by Cynthia Longest, Senior Technical Advisor Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE)

For years, one of the items on many state child support directors’ worry list has been the looming need to modernize their state’s child support system. The age (20-30 years) and impact of potential system problems on families, coupled with system complexity, cost of modernization, and the risk of a failed project, have turned those worries into headaches that must be addressed sooner rather than later. So, not surprisingly, looking back on 2019, state child support system modernization was a major theme throughout the year:

- All three major child support conferences (NCSEA, Eastern Regional Interstate Child Support Association [ERICSA], and Western Intergovernmental Child Support Engagement Council [WICSEC]) included “technology tracks.”

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LIBRARY ON DEMAND

Featuring 18 of NCSEA’s latest web-talks, the NCSEA Web-Talk library delivers relevant, timely topics to the office. NCSEA members can log in from their desk and watch on demand.

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Co-Parenting: Opportunities and Challenges for the Child Support Program
by Michele Ahern, Assistant Deputy Commissioner, New York City Office of Child Support Services

Two parents are better than one. With research that supports this statement in hand, the New York City Human Resources Administration’s Office of Child Support Services explored the role of the child support program in promoting co-parenting relationships during its October 2019 conference.

Frances Pardus-abbadessa, Executive Deputy Commissioner for the New York City Human Resources Administration’s Office of Child Support Services (HRA OCSS), provided a framework for the conference, citing some sobering statistics about children raised by a single parent. She pointed out that we all know children need more than money to prosper. They need parents who are attentive, loving, and involved. A substantial and compelling body of research confirms that children have better outcomes when they are supported by both of their parents, even if the family isn’t intact.

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NCSEA Offers Members Free Web-Talk Training in 2020

NCSEA is very pleased to announce that in 2020 all NCSEA Web-Talks will be FREE to NCSEA members. This valuable member benefit extends to all NCSEA members, including those receiving benefits through their organization’s membership.

Web-Talks provide virtual educational programming on relevant, timely topics of importance to child

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Work/Life Balance: The Never-Ending Pursuit
An NCSEA Blogcast presented by Kim Newsom Bridges, Jennifer Coultas, and Mike Moreno

How many of us are striving for the perfect work/life balance? Almost universally, statistics and articles show that this balance eludes many of us, yet we consistently seek it. We often find ourselves in situations where either work is interfering with life or vice versa. In fact, how many times do we utter the phrase that starts with “when…is over, then…”? How many times do we check our e-mails before going to bed in case something came up that needs our attention? How many times do we find ourselves not in the moment but distracted by a myriad of other things?

Few people would say they don’t want a good balance between their careers and their personal lives but finding that balance is much easier said than done.

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NSCEA Policy Forum Preview
Engagement: Putting Policy into Practice by Carla West and Lyndsy Irwin
2020 Policy Forum Co-Chairs

NCSEA’s annual Policy Forum will be held February 6-8, 2020 at the JW Marriott in Washington, D.C. This year’s theme is “Engagement: Putting Policy into Practice.” This conference will be full of great discussions focusing on engaging other programs and stakeholders and sharing innovative and best practices.

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The points of view expressed in the Child Support CommuniQue are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official positions or policies of NCSEA.

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