



County of Orange

California

Michael B. Giancola
County Executive Officer

May 9, 2013

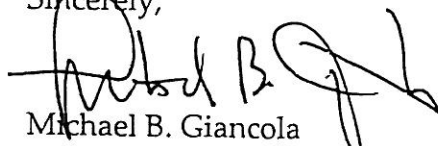
Honorable Thomas J. Borris
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court of California
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Subject: *"Best Interest of the Child" – Lost Child Support Costs
\$1.3 Billion*

Dear Judge Borris:

Per your request, and in accordance with Penal Code 933, please find the County of Orange response to the subject report as approved by the Board of Supervisors. The respondents are the Department of Child Support Services and the Health Care Agency. If you have any questions, please contact Margaret Cady (714-834-3646) in the County Executive Office who will either assist you or direct you to the appropriate individual.

Sincerely,



Michael B. Giancola
County Executive Officer

Enclosure

cc: FY 2012-13 Orange County Grand Jury
Rob Richard, Assistant CEO
Steve Eldred, Interim Deputy CEO
Winnie Hewitt, Child Support Services
Mark Refowitz, Health Care Agency
Mary Hale, Health Care Agency
Frank Kim, CEO/Budget Director
Margaret Cady, CEO/Budget

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2012-2013 Orange County Grand Jury Report
“Best Interest of the Child” – Lost Child Support Costs \$1.3 Billion
Department of Child Support Services (CSS) and Health Care Agency (HCA)
Responses to Finding and Recommendations

BACKGROUND

Orange County Department of Child Support Services (OC CSS) is a separate County agency created on July 1, 2002, by the Orange County Board of Supervisors as required by passage of SB 941 in 1999. From 1974 to 2002, the mission of child support enforcement was performed by a bureau within the Office of the District Attorney. The program is wholly funded through the Social Security Act Title IV-D. State of California Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) is the single point of contact for the administration of the Title IV-D program in California. CSS receives 100% of its funding from the State DCSS which represents 34% state General Fund dollars and 66% federal matching funds. All funding is subject to state and federal audit for compliance with OMB Circular A-87, limiting time, amount and purpose of expenditures for federal grant programs. No child support program may expend funds in violation of the restrictions of A-87, nor may it expend Title IV-D funds for purposes other than those specifically authorized under the federal regulation of the State IV-D Plan.

Orange County Board of Supervisors directs the activity of OC CSS through its Director. OC CSS is charged with using the funds and tools provided by DCSS to complete its mission of establishing and enforcing paternity and support orders consistent with state and federal law, at the highest levels of performance and customer service possible. OC CSS is consistently one of the highest performing “large” county child support agencies in California. In establishing paternity and support orders, collecting current and past-due support, OC CSS is #1 or #2 among the largest counties. For dollars collected per case and per child, OC CSS has been #1 of the largest counties for the past ten years, and is approximately 60% higher than the average of the next 5 counties. Overall, OC CSS has been a success story since its beginning based on results of federal performance measures, distributed collections, per case collections and customer service surveys.

Parents seeking assistance from CSS come from a wide variety of backgrounds and circumstances. CSS seeks to assist parents with the least-intrusive, most customer-friendly option available for their case. The physical safety of parents and the confidentiality of their personal information are paramount concerns as CSS accomplishes its mission. In setting new paternity and child support orders, approximately 28% are done with the participation and agreement of both parents. Approximately 39% use the services of the Family Court to assist in setting orders. The remaining 33% of cases have obligors who do not participate in the order-setting process despite repeated attempts by staff to engage them. These cases are also the least likely to pay support and make up a large portion of the non-paid support bill each year.

OC CSS proceeds from the belief that almost all parents want to reach agreement with the other parent and want to support their children to the best of their ability. This philosophy is borne out by the success of the Orange County program to encourage parents to reach agreements in the child support office and avoid the time and expense of court hearings. For those parents unable to reach an agreement, the courts are available to assist in setting or enforcing orders. For the parents who

cannot currently pay their ordered support because of an identifiable barrier (criminal conviction, educational degree issue, language, low wages or unemployment), OC CSS has an on-site Community Resource Center (CRC) designed to assist parents with referrals to assisting agencies.

OC CSS partners with other County agencies such as the Probation Department and the Public Defender's New Leaf Program (assisting parents to reduce or expunge their past convictions from their records); Orange County Superior Court partners (the Family Law Facilitator), community service agencies (housing, food assistance, medical care, child care, transportation, etc.), or job assistance through partnerships with Workforce Investment and Working Wardrobes. Workshops and workstations are also available to support customers in completing and sending court forms electronically. The CRC at 1015 N. Main Street, Santa Ana, has professionals trained in assisting with these and a variety of other programs to make parents successful.

For those parents who have the ability but choose not to comply with court orders, state law empowers OC CSS with a variety of tools, including the ability to suspend drivers and professional licenses; suspension of passports; wage assignments and liens on property; intercepts of workers compensation, income tax refunds, unemployment, disability and Social Security payments. The court may order incarceration in particularly egregious cases.

The Grand Jury report was accurate in its statement that for cases enforced by CSS, in approximately 88% the father is ordered to pay support. Despite that overwhelming number, CSS finds it better practice not to generalize 'father' as synonymous with 'financially obligated parent'. There are many family constructs, including grandparent or relative caretaker cases, foster-care cases, cases where neither parent is present, and cases where the parents are the same gender. CSS uses the terms 'custodial party' (CP) to mean the person(s) who has primary parenting time and 'non-custodial parent' (NCP) to mean the parent with less parenting time. The NCP is usually the parent who has agreed to, or is ordered to pay support.

Responses to Findings F.1 through F.17

F.1 *The sum of uncollected child support ordered in 2011/12 (\$70,360,647) plus the accumulated arrears going back many years total over \$1.3 billion. Uncollected dollars of this magnitude scream for attention.*

CSS Response: Agrees with the finding.

F.2 *The two most salient statistics that lead to payment of support as ordered are:*
1. Orders that demand more than 20% of a father's income tend not to be paid.
2. Orders that grant fathers significant custody/visitation with their children tend to yield payment as ordered.

CSS Response: Agrees with the finding.

F.3 *California Family Code § 4055 dictates what percent of a father's income he must pay based primarily on his time share with his child(ren) and the parents' respective incomes. The time share and the amount of income attributed to each parent is a matter of judicial discretion. California Family Code charges CSS to set and collect child support. There is no provision for advocating for factors which will yield pragmatic orders; that is orders that will maximize income for the mothers and compliance by the fathers.*

CSS Response: Agrees with the finding.

F.4 *Fathers routinely accept orders granting them about 20% time share with their children.*

CSS Response: Agrees with the finding.

F.5 *Reasons for fathers' acceptance of minimal time shares with their child(ren) are many and beyond the scope of this study; however, from anecdotal stories from the parenting programs referenced in this study, some reasons are:*

- 1. Lack of appreciation of their own worth as fathers,*
- 2. Perception they have no time to care for their child in spite of the fact that the mothers miraculously care for their children with utilization of the very same 24 hours per day,*
- 3. Fear of the responsibility and "know how" of parenting,*
- 4. Often parenting is not seen as "macho",*
- 5. Reluctance and outright refusal by mothers to permit fathers to have contact with "their" children due to:*
 - a. Animosity toward the men who got them pregnant,*

- b. *Animosity toward the men who have ignored their children to date,*
- c. *Animosity toward the men who scorned them (“...hell than no fury...”),*
- d. *Distrust of a father’s capability to care for the child (they never saw “Three Men and a Baby”)*
- e. *Animosity over differing and/or conflicting parenting styles and issues.*

CSS Response: Agrees with the finding. However, the reasons for intra-family conflict, and solutions for such conflict are many, and there is danger in simplifying or generalizing individual motives based on anecdotes.

HCA/Behavioral Health Services Response: Agrees with the finding. The observations of the Grand Jury based on anecdotal evidence appear reasonable. However, the reasons for intra-family conflict, and solutions for such conflict are many, and there is danger in simplifying or generalizing individual motives based on anecdotes.

- F.6 *Orders for support that are more than 20% of a father’s income will likely result in less actual support paid. An order for \$400 for a man earning \$2,000 is likely to yield an actual payment of \$400. An order for \$600 for a man earning \$2,000 is likely to yield no payment at all. Even if CSS is able to enforce collection, the cost to collect the extra \$200 will likely be equal to or greater than the \$200. Fathers tend to take the attitude that if they are to be delinquent for a penny they might as well be delinquent for a dollar.*

CSS Response: Disagrees partially with the finding. There is a significant shift in likelihood of payment once the ‘tax rate’ of support ordered for one child exceeds 20%. Maximum dollars collected peaks at 18-19%. Tax rates above that amount tend to yield fewer dollars collected. Likelihood of payment for 2 or more children also shifts, but at a higher percentage of income, perhaps signaling recognition of a higher burden for more children. The motives of an obligated parent for partial payment or non-payment have not been studied.

- F.7 *Fathers who significantly participate in parenting their child(ren) pay the most child support. Aside from the actual support order, they can also be counted on to pay for the children’s extracurricular activities and luxury items.*

CSS Response: Agrees with the finding. National studies as well as Orange County CSS research supports the assertion that obligor parents who are more involved through visitation pay at a higher rate, and vice versa. OC CSS did not study extracurricular or luxury spending.

HCA/Behavioral Health Services Response: Agrees with the finding. Although HCA is not involved in collection of child support payments, National research supports the correlation between parenting and child support collections. However, we do not have any experience with and are unaware of any research regarding parent payments for a child’s extracurricular activities and luxury items.

F.8 *Payment or non-payment of child support is only symptomatic of a much greater parenting issue. Children raised without paternal parenting fall prey to a plethora of social ills ranging from dropping out of high school to criminal incarceration. Every child growing up without a father is not doomed; but, statistics show a hugely disproportionate number of children without paternal care suffer very serious human and social ills.*

CSS Response: Agrees with the finding.

HCA/Behavioral Health Services Response: Agrees with the finding

F.9 *Counseling men who have ignored their children can, and has, turned them into devoted fathers as evidenced by the success of the now defunct Fatherhood 101 program.*

CSS Response: Agrees with the finding. In general, counseling does work to help men to be better fathers and become more engaged with their children. However, CSS does not have enough information to comment on Fatherhood 101.

HCA/Behavioral Health Services Response: Agrees with the finding. In general, counseling does work to help men to be better fathers and become more engaged with their children. However, HCA does not have enough information to comment on Fatherhood 101.

F.10 *Hispanics constitute over one third of the population of Orange County. This increasing demographic deserves sympathetic attention to their unique conditions, including among other things: language, culture, and economic status.*

CSS Response: Agrees with the finding. CSS strives to provide services in a manner that is sensitive and linguistically appropriate to all of the diverse cultural and ethnic populations of Orange County.

HCA/Behavioral Health Services Response: Agrees with the finding. HCA strives to provide services in a manner that is sensitive and linguistically appropriate to all of the diverse cultural and ethnic populations of Orange County.

F.11 *Counseling the adult female, the adult male and the children of their union has and can have the following positive effects:*

1. The counseling creates understand and empathy between the adults for their respective roles as mothers and fathers. This is not small thing. It decreases the animosity and outright hatred between the adults that so often bleeds onto the children.

2. The understanding and empathy in turn results in:

a. better compliance with support orders and

b. better compliance with custody/visitation exchanges and happier, less stressed

children.

CSS Response: Agrees with the finding. While the proposed results appear plausible, CSS does not have information that the counseling suggested has the effects proposed.

HCA/Behavioral Health Services Response: Agrees with the finding. However, HCA does not have enough information to comment on #2 in regards to better compliance with support orders and custody/visitation exchanges.

F.12 *The law, California Family Code §§ 3190 -3191 gives the court the authority to order counseling at its discretion and there exists the means to pay for the counseling for parents and children, specifically:*

1. *The parents themselves can pay,*
2. *Lag money can be used to pay,*
3. *Orange County MHSA (Prop 63) has discretionary money for counseling.*

CSS Response: Disagrees partially with the finding. Family Code §§ 3190-3191 authorizes the Superior Court to order counseling in appropriate cases. The methods suggested to pay for this counseling are not in the Family Code. Parents may be able to afford counseling in some cases. “Lag money” as described in the Report is the property of the custodial party for the benefit of the child(ren).

HCA/Behavioral Health Services Response: Disagrees partially with the finding

HCA does not have the expertise to comment on the court order. MHSA does allocate funding to support counseling. However, the decision to allocate MHSA funding to a particular program is based on an extensive community planning process. Sections of the Welfare and Institutions Code govern many aspects of the planning process.

WIC § 5848 states that each Annual Update shall be developed with local stakeholders, including:

- Adults and seniors with severe mental illness
- Families of children, adults, and seniors with severe mental illness
- Providers of services
- Law enforcement agencies
- Education
- Social services agencies
- Veterans
- Representatives from veterans’ organizations
- Providers of alcohol and drug services
- Health care organizations
- Other important interests.

CCR Title 9 Section 3300 further includes:

Representatives of unserved and/or underserved populations and family members of unserved/underserved populations

Stakeholders that represent the diversity of the demographics of the county, including but not limited to, geographic location, age, gender, and race/ethnicity.

Clients with serious mental illness and/or serious emotional disturbance, and their family members.

WIC § 5848 states that an Annual Update shall be prepared and circulated for review and comment for at least 30 days to representatives of stakeholder interests and any interested party who has requested a copy.

Additionally, the Orange County Mental Health Board conducts a public hearing on the draft Annual Update at the close of the 30-day comment period. Each Annual Update shall include any substantive written recommendations for revision.

Thus, the concept of “discretionary money” from the MHSA can be misleading. Any decision to allocate funds to a particular project is contingent upon the community planning process resulting in a decision to use MHSA funds for that program. Furthermore, there are guidelines that govern the types of projects for which each MHSA component may be used. There are also guidelines that specify the type of costs that are an allowable use of MHSA funds. For instance, MHSA funding may not be used for court costs.

Thus, the current array of services funded by the MHSA was created based on extensive planning processes. These processes included hundreds of focus groups, community planning meetings, approval by the Orange County MHSA Steering Committee and public hearings held by the Orange County Mental Health Board. As required by statute, MHSA planning process included a diverse group of stakeholders including clients, family members and representatives of unserved and underserved populations.

F.13 *Ignoring paternal parenting is too expensive to allow it to continue. The many hundreds of millions of dollars in unpaid child support and the social failings result in both an incalculable loss in human potential and the financial cost of incarcerating society’s failures.*

CSS Response: Disagrees partially with the finding. CSS believes that there are social costs to split-parenting. Not all social ills are related to split-families, and determining the ‘loss of human potential’ and ‘cost of incarcerating society’s failures’ is beyond the scope of CSS to determine. Determination of the costs and benefits of interventions and the allocation of government resources to those issues is a policy issue better left to elected officials to issue guidance.

HCA/Behavioral Health Services Response: Disagrees partially with the finding. HCA does not track unpaid child support as part of its business operation and does not have the expertise to determine the correlation between the amounts of unpaid child support and the loss in human potential as well as the financial cost of incarcerating society’s failures. However, HCA does agree that parenting is important and that the provision of parent education and support can be an effective way to address many family issues such as domestic violence, school failures, arrests and incarcerations, and behavioral health problems.

F.14 *CSS had a \$350,000 net county contribution in 2011/2012.*

CSS Response: Agrees with the finding.

HCA/Behavioral Health Services Response: Agrees with the finding

F.15 *Orange County MHSA (Proposition 63) is obligated to use 20% of its budget for programs for prevention and intervention, and of that Orange County has committed that 75% is to be used for the County’s youth.*

HCA/Behavioral Health Services Response: Agrees with the finding

F.16 *Promotion of mental wellness includes, among other things, support of programs that prevent youth suicides, youth runaways, unwanted teenage pregnancy, behavioral disorders, juvenile delinquency and high school drop outs. Children of divorced and separated families are recognized as high risk for such behaviors.*

HCA/Behavioral Health Services Response: Agrees with the finding.

Reponses to Recommendations: R1 through R6

R.1 *Orange County Child Support Services is to recommend support orders that will most likely result in payment. Any proposed order in excess of 20% of the father’s income should be viewed as unlikely to be collectable. This study acknowledges CSS’s role per California Family Code § 17000 as an extension of federal law limiting it to the collection of support. Again, this study recommends CSS actively aid parents in seeking orders that will most likely result in payment – not just printed numbers on paper orders. See Findings 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 13, 14.*

CSS Response: The recommendation has been implemented. In contested cases before the Family Court, CSS has always kept a policy of following state law by recommending orders consistent with the facts derived in the investigation of the case. In appropriate cases, CSS attorneys make the Court aware of circumstances that would assist the Court in deviating from the state support guideline to make an order that better suits the needs of the family. In some cases, that recommendation is for an increase from guideline, in other cases a decrease. CSS believes that the Courts are aware of the latest research findings on the effectiveness of support orders.

R.2 *CSS should recommend orders that offer the father lower current support so he can afford payment towards arrears. See Findings 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.*

CSS Response: The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. CSS is required to follow the laws of the State of California. Consistent with those laws, the Department works with both parents and when necessary, the Court, to fashion a support order that maximizes benefit to the children. That benefit is not always measured in dollars ordered or received. It would be inappropriate for CSS to have a policy of seeking ‘lower current support’. It would also be inappropriate for CSS to have a policy of offering fathers benefits not available to mothers in a similar situation. CSS always seeks agreements or orders that maximize the long-term benefit for the child.

R.3 *As appropriate, CSS should seek orders that mandate the father have counseling or attend an educational program. The word “appropriate” in the prior sentence acknowledges the courts ultimate jurisdiction as to which fathers would benefit. Upon completion of such counseling, father time with the child(ren) should be increased resulting in affordable child support. The cost should be paid with lag money if possible and from Orange County MHSA funds if beyond the father’s ability to pay. See Findings 9, 10, 11, 12.*

CSS Response: The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not reasonable. Current state law, and restrictions on use of funds allocated pursuant to Title IV-D, do not allow CSS staff to make recommendations for orders that one parent seek counseling or assistance. Under the current Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement guidance (PIQ 12- 02) CSS staff may:

“In this PIQ, we clarify that certain activities are allowable child support expenditures under title IV-D of the Social Security Act (the Act) if they are

incidental and related to establishing paternity, or establishing, modifying, enforcing, and obtaining support. This PIQ recognizes certain allowable activities, such as referrals to other programs, development and dissemination of educational materials about the child support program, child support educators or liaisons, child support case management, and other incidental activities that support the core purposes of the program.”

- R.4 *As appropriate, CSS should seek an order as appropriate for both parents and the child(ren) to complete counseling. (A caveat to this recommendation is that a “counseling order” should not delay an immediate support order.) The cost of such counseling should be paid by the parties if they can afford it or with lag money if possible or from Orange County MHSA funds. See Findings 4, 5, 10, 11, 12.*

CSS Response: The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not reasonable. See Recommendation #3, above. This is not an appropriate action for funding under Title IV-D. CSS may make referrals to programs related to improved parenting skills for those parents seeking assistance.

HCA/Behavioral Health Services Response: Response: The recommendation will not be implemented as it is not reasonable.

However, there are currently several programs funded by MHSA that assist with meeting this recommendation. See response to Recommendation #6 for program descriptions. All of the programs listed with the exception of one, Stress Free Families are able to accept referrals from any agency in the community and are open to any eligible resident of Orange County at no cost. All programs have the capability of providing services in English and Spanish as well as other languages such as Vietnamese and Farsi. If additional programs are requested by the community, the MHSA Steering Committee and/or Subcommittees, as described in response to finding #12, would need to consider and if appropriate add County MHSA Plan. In addition, it is important to note, if individuals will be court ordered to complete counseling, they must still voluntarily agree to participate in these programs as MHSA funding cannot support involuntary services.

- R.5 *CSS should form a Parenting Commission composed of following:*
- 1. At least one representative from CSS.*
 - 2. One member from Court Services – Mediation.*
 - 3. One attorney from the Family Law Section of the Orange County Bar.*
 - 4. One attorney from Legal Aid.*
 - 5. At least one representative from a participating counseling program.*
 - 6. One family oriented social worker.*
 - 7. One attorney from the Hispanic Section of the Orange County Bar.*
 - 8. One representative from Orange County MHSA.*

The Commission should do, among other things:

- 1. Collect money and/or seek commitments from Orange County MHSA. Make the money available to mothers, fathers and children if ordered by the court to get counseling.*
- 2. Monitor counseling programs to determine their effectiveness.*
- 3. Work with other groups that might promote justice between separated mothers and fathers to protect children from the potential devastation of growing up without a father.*
- 4. Promote orders in the family law arena that will likely yield compliance and maximum contact with both parents.*
- 5. Child Support Services should initiate the creation of this commission utilizing part of its County Contribution (\$350,000) in 2011/2012). Future costs should also be borne by CSS. See Findings 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17.*

OC CSS Response: The recommendation requires further analysis. CSS will work with its community partners, at the direction of the County Executive Office and the Board of Supervisors, to meet the spirit of this recommendation while respecting all funding and scope limitations. A status report will be provided to the Grand Jury six months following the receipt of this response by the Grand Jury.

CSS willingly forms partnerships with County agencies, community-based organizations and other groups with common clients, common issues or interests. Participation in a multi-disciplinary group to support the success of parents is consistent with CSS’ mission. Each partnering opportunity must be evaluated frequently for cost-effectiveness, compliance with funding restrictions, and alignment with Board guidance for use of County resources.

1. CSS believes that under current statutory and regulatory restrictions it could not act as a collection conduit or clearinghouse for MHSA funds. Distribution of MHSA funding must follow the planning process as described by HCA.
2. CSS believes that it may not, under current statutory and regulatory limitations, expend CSS program funds to perform an audit function over a counseling program. It does currently perform research on the effectiveness of a variety of interventions and programs on the collection of child support and compliance with child support orders. CSS is likely to continue such research, contingent on funding availability.
3. CSS may work with other groups, both in and outside of government, to support its core mission of establishment and collection of child support. Goals and initiatives beyond that scope are inappropriate uses of program funding.
4. CSS may seek orders to maximize compliance with child support agreements and orders. The goal of seeking orders ensuring ‘maximum contact with both parents’ is beyond the legal scope of the Department.
5. CSS believes that the \$350,000 net County contribution is a requirement of County budget practice under the county-wide cost allocation plan (CWCAP). This money is not a discretionary expenditure of CSS, but rather a cost for services provided by the County. Further, it is not clear in the recommendation what ‘costs’ the Grand Jury foresees, above

nominal costs of meetings. Strict restrictions exist on the expenditure of program funds, and do not allow funding of the educational or counseling programs outlined in the report.

HCA/Behavioral Health Services Response: The recommendation requires further analysis.

If CSS forms a Parenting Commission, HCA will appoint a staff person to participate.

In regards to Commission’s duty to collect money and/or seek commitments from OC MHSA, HCA recommends that an individual from CSS or the Commission be appointed by HCA Behavioral Health Director to serve on the MHSA Steering Committee to provide input on allocating additional funding to stressed families.

As mentioned previously in response to finding #12, the decision to allocate Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funding to a particular program is based on an extensive community planning process. The concept of “collecting money” from the MHSA is misleading. Any decision to allocate funds to a particular project is contingent upon the community planning process resulting in a decision to use MHSA funds for that program. Furthermore, there are guidelines that govern the types of projects for which each MHSA component may be used. There are also guidelines that specify the type of costs that are an allowable use of MHSA funds. For instance, MHSA funding may not be used for court costs.

Thus, the current array of services funded by the MHSA was created based on extensive planning processes. These processes included hundreds of focus groups, community planning meetings, approval by the Orange County MHSA Steering Committee and public hearings held by the Orange County Mental Health Board. As required by statute, MHSA planning process included a diverse group of stakeholders including consumers, family members and representatives of unserved and underserved populations.

It is possible that additional programs that consist of counseling for mothers, fathers, and children could be considered in future MHSA planning processes; however, a decision to fund such a program would have to be made through the required planning process and it would have to fit within the guidelines of an MHSA component.

In regards to the Commission’s duty on monitoring counseling programs to determine their effectiveness, it is HCA’s opinion that it is not a role of the Commission. Monitoring the effectiveness of a program usually lies in the duties of the County to determine whether a contract provider is in compliance of the contractual agreement to provide the intended services to the target population and/or its effectiveness.

- R.6 *The Department of Mental Health Services should continue supporting counseling/educational of at least 18 hours. The curriculum should be geared to teaching fathers the skills, rights and responsibilities necessary for parenting. This may be best done with social service agencies in the community. The counseling should be sensitive to Hispanic issues and include classes in Spanish. See Findings 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17.*

HCA/Behavioral Health Services Response: This recommendation has been implemented.

The Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) plan was developed and implemented through a planning process involving stakeholders from a wide variety of organizations, community groups, and consumers. Focus groups were held to determine the direction and needs of the community to determine programs to be funded with the MHSA dollars. There are currently seven parenting-focused PEI programs and one Innovations program, also funded by MHSA that could assist in meeting the needs and intent of this recommendation. The following programs are currently operational:

1. The **Children's Support and Parenting Program (CSPP)** was implemented July 2009 serving families that have a common parental history of serious substance abuse and/or mental illness; children living in families that are impacted by divorce, domestic violence, trauma, unemployment, homelessness; and children of families of active duty military/returning veterans. This program works with the entire family with the goals of strengthening the family unit, building a supportive network and developing protective factors and resiliency in the children. Program services include family assessment, group interventions for children, teens and parents, brief individual interventions to address specific family issues, and referral/linkage to community resources.

For more information about this program, please check the BHS directory at <http://ohealthinfo.com/bhs/about/pi/support/cspp>

2. The **Stop the Cycle Program** was implemented in November 2009 serving families with youth with actual or potential involvement in the juvenile justice system. This program has a similar structure to CSPP and also works with the entire family with the goals of strengthening the family unit, building a supportive network and developing protective factors and resiliency in the children. Program services include family assessment, group interventions for children, teens and parents, brief individual interventions to address specific family issues, and referral/linkage to community resources.

For more information about this program, please check the BHS directory at <http://ohealthinfo.com/bhs/about/pi/support/stc>

3. The **Youth As Parents** Program was implemented in November 2009 serving pregnant and parenting youth including fathers who are at risk of behavioral health problems and their

children. Program services were designed to prevent or mitigate the onset of behavioral health issues in the teen parents and to identify such issues in their children early in their development. Program services include case management, parent education, individual and family interventions, referral/ linkage to community resources and parenting workshops provided in the community.

For more information about this program, please check the BHS directory at <http://ohealthinfo.com/bhs/about/pi/support/parent>

4. The **Connect the Tots** Program was implemented in November 2009 serving families with children age 0-6 years who are exhibiting behavioral problems, putting them at increased risk of developing mental illness and experiencing school failure. The focus of this program is to reduce risk factors for emotional disturbance in young children and to promote school readiness and prepare them for academic success. Program services include case management, parent education, individual and family interventions, referral/ linkage to community resources and parenting workshops provided in the community.

For more information about this program, please check the BHS directory at <http://ohealthinfo.com/bhs/about/pi/support/tots>

5. The **Stress Free Families** Program was implemented in December 2011 serving families that have been reported and investigated by Child Protective Services for allegations of child abuse and/or neglect. The program is designed to reach and support these families whose stressors make the children and parents more vulnerable to behavioral health conditions. Services include short term interventions, brief counseling, parent education and training, case management and referral/ linkage to community resources. The Social Services Agency is the sole referral source for this program.

For more information about this program, please check the BHS directory at <http://ohealthinfo.com/bhs/about/pi/early/stressfree>

6. The **Brighter Futures** Program was implemented in April 2012 and is an Innovations Program also funded by MHSA providing community-based services to families with children age 6-13 who experience social, emotional, and behavioral health problems to reduce isolation and form a supportive network with other families. The program offers brief interventions; helps build personal resiliency and healthy relationships between parents and children. A multidisciplinary clinical team provides culturally and linguistically appropriate peer-mentorships, case management, parent education, psychotherapeutic services and linkages to supportive community services.

For more information about this program, please check the BHS directory at <http://ohealthinfo.com/bhs>

7. The **Parent Education and Support Services, Parent 2 Parent** was implemented in May 2012 and is a contracted PEI program facilitated by the Orange County Child Abuse Prevention Center. The program provides a ten week parenting course for any parent or caregiver of a child ages 0-12 in community locations throughout Orange County. Child care is offered as part of the program. The program can also provide parenting classes at requested locations at no cost.

For more information about this program, please check the BHS directory at <http://ochealthinfo.com/bhs/about/pi/support/capc>

8. The **Family Support Services Common Sense Parenting** was implemented October 2012 and is a contracted PEI program facilitated by Boystown. The program provides a six week parenting course for any parent or caregiver of a child ages 13-18 in community locations throughout Orange County. The program can also provide parenting classes at requested locations at no cost.

For more information about this program, please check the BHS directory at <http://ochealthinfo.com/bhs/about/pi/support/boystown>

All of these programs with the exception of the Stress Free Families Program are able to accept referrals from any agency in the community and are open to any eligible resident of Orange County at no cost. Participation in all programs listed is voluntary, and all programs have the capability of providing services in English and Spanish as well as other languages.