



## **HRA'S Office of Child Support Enforcement Releases 2011 Annual Report**

HRA's Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) recently released their annual report for 2011, outlining the program's most recent accomplishments in serving the children of New York City and their parents, both custodial and noncustodial. In the past year OCSE collected a record \$731 Million in child support payments, an increase of 4.4 percent from \$700 million collected in 2010. This also marks the continuing upward trend of collections which has increased 53 percent overall since 2001, even in the face of the struggling economy. Ninety-one percent of the money was given directly to families. More than 175,000 families, including 255,630 children, received support payments in 2011 with the average family collecting \$4,177 for the year.

"The money we collect makes a real difference to families," said Executive Deputy Commissioner of OCSE Frances Pardus-Abbadessa. "Child Support is a family-first program. OCSE works to increase families' self-sufficiency by ensuring that every child receives support from both parents."

One of OCSE's goals is to offer assistance to low-income, noncustodial parents (NCP's) to help them become financially stable, make consistent child support payments, and become more involved in their children's lives. This approach has helped the children of New York City get the money they need. In 2011:

- OCSE assisted their 100<sup>th</sup> parent in reducing his/her child support order through the Modify DSS Order (MDO) program
- OCSE assisted the 800th parent in reducing his/her arrears through the Arrears Cap program
- Seventy-four percent of MDO and Arrears Cap participants paid child support after enrolling, a 22 percent increase from prior to their enrollment
- OCSE collected nearly \$9 million for New York City families from NCPs who lived in other states and more than \$500,000 from NCPs who live in other countries
- OCSE also forwarded nearly \$70 million to custodial parents who do not live in New York City, including \$1.7 million to parents who live outside the United States.

OCSE expanded its existing services that help parents support their children, such as the pilot Problem Solving Court in the Brooklyn Family Court, a program for low income NCP's who are brought to court for failure to comply with their court order. The program gives these parents the option of setting up a plan for payment and agreeing to weekly compliance meetings in lieu of jail time or a money judgment. For all participants, child support collection amounts have increased from \$24,353 (three months prior to participation) to \$90,333 since entering the program.

OCSE also continued referring parents with custody and visitation issues to mediators. OCSE maintains a list of free and low-cost mediation services and encourages parents to use them. In 2012, OCSE plans to expand the role of mediation through the Parent Pledge Project, a pilot program that will allow parents to work out their own child support and co-parenting agreements with mediators, and then submit them to the Family Court.

OCSE worked with the Family Court to establish more than 14,600 new child support and medical support orders in 2011, and more than two-thirds of the families OCSE works with have orders in place.

OCSE also initiated the Cash Assistance Agreement Pilot (CAAP), which allows eligible parents to establish paternity and enter into child support agreements at OCSE's Customer Service Walk-In Center without having to appear in a courtroom.

OCSE continued to collaborate with other city agencies to forward their goals, including participation with Mayor Michael Bloomberg's Fatherhood and Young Men's initiatives, which aim to address the challenges the city's young black and Latino men face. The Young Men's Initiative, launching in August of 2011, has worked closely with OCSE and the Citywide Fatherhood Initiative to connect fathers to their children both emotionally and financially.

"OCSE has improved its collections—and performs better than many other cities—in part because of the resources we offer noncustodial parents (NCPs) and the time we devote to reaching out to them," said Executive Deputy Commissioner Pardus-Abbadessa. "As we look ahead to 2012, we plan to continue expanding our services for parents, strengthening our community partnerships and ensuring our operations run efficiently—all while collecting as much money as possible for New York City children."