

CONCLUSION

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MAXIMUS is pleased to have had the opportunity to conduct the Nevada Performance Audit of the Child Support Program here in this state. During the past several months, we have had an opportunity to travel across the state, meeting with child support staff in both the DWSS Program Area Offices as well as in nearly all of the District Attorney Offices. They have opened up their doors to use and spoken freely with us in response to both the Survey Questionnaires that they completed as well as during our on-site visits.

What we have seen and experienced during these travels is sincere, committed staff to Nevada's IV-D program. We have sensed the dedication that Child Support Enforcement case managers have to providing services to the children of this state. What we have also noticed among the staff is a high level of frustration and dissatisfaction with the lack of effective tools to allow them to perform their jobs efficiently and effectively. There are numerous reasons for this from the lack of training, lack of good and reliable tools in the form of the reliable and usable case management reports and useful and meaningful system alerts, inconsistencies and lack of continuity within a team, within a unit, within an office, within the state, in the procedures used to perform a variety of tasks, and at times a sense of lack of guidance for the program itself operating under continually changing policies and procedures.

What Nevada's Child Support Program of the future will look like is dependent upon what recommendations the Nevada legislature selects to adopt and move forward with. While some of the recommendations are major in impact, some will require new legislation or changes in existing legislation, and some will require new resources or a re-allocation of existing resources, the adoption of many of these recommendations will result in improved performance.

At the 23rd Western Interstate Child Support Enforcement Council Annual Training Conference held in Seattle, Washington, the State of North Dakota received the 2006 Excellence Award for Outstanding State Program. When discussing North Dakota's success in achieving an outstanding state child support enforcement program, North Dakota's IV-D Director, Mike Schwindt, attributed the success of the program to multiple aspects. Among these are the support of the North Dakota legislature to North Dakota's IV-D program and trust in the focus and goals of the program, a strong Strategic Plan that provides clear objectives and goals for the IV-D program, a statewide system that not only provides effective alerts but also provides the ability to develop and deliver effective ad hoc reporting to assist managers in targeting problematic areas, and a strong sense of dedication to the IV-D program by child support staff from the Central Office down to the Regional Offices that administer the program at the local level.

What we hope that is gained from the results of our research and analysis presented in the preceding pages, is a roadmap to moving Nevada's Child Support Enforcement Program into a modernized program that will operate in a more efficient manner and raise the level of customer service to Nevada's citizens to a higher level. Nevada has the capability of achieving excellence with an effective and efficient combination of

tools and leadership. As stated in the Executive Summary of this report, if Nevada reorganizes itself into a more efficient operation, its taxpayers will receive better value and parents will receive more support. This reorganization, tied to a new approach to customer service and a focus on performance instead of policy adherence, will make a major difference in the quality of services provided.

We have emphasized throughout the report five major recommendations or opportunities for meaningful program improvement:

- A new emphasis on performance
- A goal of providing improved, excellent customer service
- Centralization of several tools that are currently the responsibility of child support staff in both the PAOs and DA offices
- Regionalization of local casework
- Importance of Strategic and Program planning, effective and adequate training, and the establishment of measurable goals and objectives

Nevada's Child Support Enforcement must have a united focus on Program goals and objectives established in a Strategic Plan, all staff must be aware and knowledgeable what the goals and objectives are. Clearly defined goals and objectives for all Child Support staff, at the Central Office, PAO and DA levels should be established and serve as a basis for measuring performance.

Implementation of the restructuring of Nevada's Child Support Program will have a major impact on all facets of the program from the individual case manager and office assistant to the District Attorney leadership, Hearing Masters as well as Central Office staff. It will mean a major shift in the paradigm under which the program currently operates. When and if this occurs will be the decision of the Nevada legislature. While it appears to be a somewhat radical approach towards the current paradigm, we felt it was incumbent upon us to provide this as a recommendation that would potentially have a major impact in effective and efficient provision of child support services.

What has become quite evident is that serious consideration should be given towards moving forward towards a replacement of NOMADS. The lack of significant, usable case management reports, the overlaying of good information with old information through interfaces with outside entities, the number and frequency of "work arounds" as well as the vast inconsistencies in these "work arounds" being used by case managers in order to enter information into the system has serious implications on the reliability of the data in NOMADS as well as program performance. It is imperative that those tasked with providing child support services be given efficient and effective tools enabling them to provide improved services to their customers.

Regardless of what recommendations the Nevada Legislature chooses to move forward with, or what recommendations for which the DWSS has already initiated action, there should be benchmark dates established by the legislature at which time DWSS should be required to provide a status report on progress and achievements made based on the recommendations with which they are tasked. Also included in such a report should be data reflecting the impact of recommendations implemented

in regard to the federal performance incentive measurements. What has been stressed throughout this report is the need for accountability and if the Nevada Child Support Program is to move forward and the initiation and/or implementation of a change should always be re-evaluated to determine what the impact of the change is.

As stated earlier, it is this report's general conclusion that Nevada's child support program's leadership should focus on ways to improve performance through unprecedented collaboration between the state and the county District Attorney child support staffs through performance rather than policy emphasis, realignment, improved efficiency, provision of effective "tools" to enable them to better perform their jobs, selected functional centralization and an increased focus on customer service. The ultimate goal in the improvements that will be realized through the implementation of the recommendations contained within this report is the provision of improved services to Nevada's children.