



# The Child Support Connection: Giving Children a Brighter Future

The Graduate Center of the City University of New York  
New York, NY  
October 20, 2011





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Dear Conference Participant,

Good morning and welcome to today's conference "The Child Support Connection: Giving Children a Brighter Future".

We are pleased to partner, for a second year, with The Future of Children project, a collaboration of Princeton University and the Brookings Institution, and the CUNY School of Professional Studies. We hope that many of you had the opportunity to attend last year's conference or to at least review our report summarizing the event.

Last year's conference provided discussions about how the child support program has evolved significantly over the years and focused on our goal to more fully integrate child support with programs that deliver social services; and to work closely with mothers and fathers so that more children can realize the program's benefits and receive support from both parents.

This year's conference will build on the discussions from last year and offer more specific ways we can all work together to improve the services that we provide to mothers, fathers, and children. During the morning session, you'll hear from professors Irv Garfinkel and Lenna Nepomnyaschy who will provide a more in-depth look at child support data within the Fragile Families study. We will then offer breakout sessions on some of the key issues involving child support and families including: child support and family wellbeing, employment and incarceration, and the connection between child support and workforce programs. Finally, our afternoon panel of practitioners and researchers will weigh-in on the ideas generated from the breakout sessions.

We hope you find the conference both informative and productive as we put forth new ideas on ways to engage more families in the child support program and to help low – income non-custodial parents obtain employment, establish financial stability and fulfill their child support obligations. Thank you for joining us today and I look forward to a productive exchange of ideas and a successful conference.

Sincerely,

Frances Pardus-Abbadessa  
Executive Deputy Commissioner  
New York City Human Resources Administration  
Office of Child Support Enforcement

## Conference Program

- 8:00 am**      **Conference Check-in and Continental Breakfast**
- 9:00 am**      **Welcome**  
Robert Doar, NYC HRA Commissioner
- 9:15 am**      **Opening Remarks**  
Vicki Turetsky, Commissioner, Office of Child Support Enforcement, ACF  
  
Frances Pardus-Abbadessa, OCSE Executive Deputy Commissioner
- 9:45 am**      **Child Support in the Context of Fragile Families: A Review and Reassessment**  
Irwin Garfinkel, Professor, Columbia University and Lenna Nepomnyaschy, Assistant Professor, Rutgers University
- 10:45 am**      **Morning Break**
- 11:00 am**      **Breakout Sessions**
- Why Child Support Matters: Connecting Families to the Child Support Program*  
Studies have shown the positive impact that child support has on families, in many cases serving as a catalyst to reduce child poverty. One of the challenges OCSE faces is engaging more families to participate in the child support program and establish formal orders. The goal of this breakout session is to strategize on ways to connect more families to the child support program.
- Moderator: Lauren Moore Kase, Future of Children
  - Practitioner: Mark Kleiman, Community Mediation Services, Inc.
  - Research Presenter: Maureen Waller, Cornell University
  - Research Presenter: James McHale, University of South Florida, St. Petersburg
- Employment & Incarceration*  
Having a positive relationship with one's family, securing employment, and reintegrating into one's community reduces the likelihood of recidivism. Upon release, many NCPs have difficulty obtaining employment and successfully paying their child support orders. The goal of this breakout session is to discuss the best approaches to connect formerly incarcerated NCPs to employment while assisting them with their child support orders.
- Moderator: Valentina Duque, Columbia University
  - Practitioner: George T. McDonald, The Doe Fund
  - Practitioner: Kathleen Coughlin, NYC Department of Probation
  - Research Presenter: Amanda Geller, Columbia University

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## *Linking Child Support to Workforce Programs*

The goal of this breakout session is to strategize ways that workforce programs and the child support program can work together to connect low-income fathers to employment. High child support arrears and orders can potentially serve as a barrier to both employment and job retention. Discussion about managing child support should be part of the intake assessment or screening for workforce programs to support them and increase their rate of job retention.

- Moderator: Rae Linefsky, Consultant
- Practitioner: Virginia Cruickshank, F.E.G.S.
- Research Presenter: Elaine Sorensen, The Urban Institute
- Research Presenter: James Riccio, MDRC

12:30 pm

**Lunch**

2:00 pm

**Conference Keynote Speaker**

Hillard Pouncy, Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Princeton University

2:30 pm

**Recommendations from Breakout Sessions**

3:00 pm

**Afternoon Break**

3:15 pm

**Roundtable: Reactions and Recommendations**

- Moderator: Robert Doar, NYC HRA Commissioner
- Vicki Turetsky, Commissioner, Office of Child Support Enforcement, ACF
- Larry Mead, Professor, New York University
- Liberty Aldrich, Director, Center for Court Innovation

4:45 pm

**Closing Remarks**

Frances Pardus-Abbadessa, OCSE Executive Deputy Commissioner

## CONFERENCE SPEAKERS



**Liberty Aldrich**, General Counsel at the Center for Court Innovation, and the author of numerous articles on domestic violence law and policy, provides technical assistance on the development and implementation of problem-solving courts, both nationally and internationally. She and her team work with government and non-government agencies to improve community response to entrenched social problems; and train judges, court personnel, and stakeholders in a wide range of social and court-related issues.

Before joining the Center, Ms. Aldrich was the director of legal services at Safe Horizon; founded and directed Legal Information for Families Today (LIFT), which assists 30,000 New Yorkers every year by providing information and supportive services to litigants in the Family Courts; and served as chair of the Domestic Violence Task Force of the Association of the Bar of the City of New York.

A graduate of Harvard University and NYU School of Law, Ms. Aldrich received the Association of the Bar of the City of New York's Equal Access to Justice Award in 2000.

**Kathleen E. Coughlin** joined Commissioner Vincent Schiraldi's management team at the NYC Department of Probation in October, 2010. In this capacity, she manages training and planning and community partnerships in support of the New York Model of Probation. Prior to this experience, Ms. Coughlin was deputy commissioner for programs and discharge planning for the NYC Department of Correction, where she directed programs and services for inmates in NYC jails, focusing on the creation of opportunities and the reduction of recidivism. In that role, she worked with many NYC and NYS agencies, as well foundations and community partners, to identify resources for those in need and to develop and implement NYC's Discharge Planning Collaboration.



Before her work in these positions, Ms. Coughlin's career was in addiction treatment, prevention, and training efforts that were focused primarily in NYC and on Long Island. Her undergraduate work was in sociology and political science; her graduate studies were in public administration.

**Virginia Cruickshank**, Senior Vice President of Employment, Career and Workforce Development, oversees numerous programs that serve more than 25,000 individuals annually. The agency addresses the needs of the current and emerging workforce as it faces the challenge of preparing for and sustaining employment; and assists individuals such as those on public assistance, refugees, immigrants, youth, the disabled, baby boomers, unemployed executives/managers, and those seeking entrepreneurship opportunities. Specialized services are provided to noncustodial parents, foster care youth, and individuals with low literacy. Web-based learning and administrative technology are used in managing performance-based workforce development programs and in implementing welfare-to-work initiatives in New York City.



Ms. Cruickshank's recent work includes developing and overseeing the agency's refugee resettlement programs. She serves as chair of the NYC Employment & Training Coalition, is an advisory board member for the NYC Labor Market Information Service/CUNY, and is a member of the NYC Department of Education Advisory Council for Career & Technical Education.

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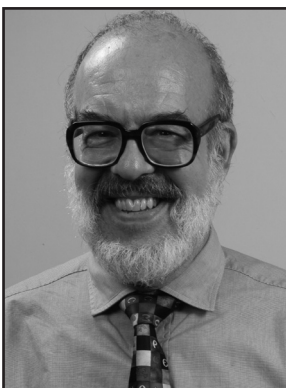
**Robert Doar** was appointed Commissioner of the New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA) in 2007 by Mayor Michael Bloomberg. As chief executive of the largest local social services agency in the country, Mr. Doar administers more than 12 major public assistance programs, including temporary cash assistance, public health insurance, domestic violence assistance, child support services, and adult protective services.

Mr. Doar's "work first" emphasis has seen nearly 350,000 individuals placed into employment, and he has successfully promoted the expansion of programs that help people stay out of poverty, including food stamps and Medicaid: New York City children now have the lowest poverty rate and the lowest medically uninsured rate of the eight largest U.S. cities. In addition, Mr. Doar is a leading advocate in combating fraud; pursuing revenue reimbursements in government assistance programs; and promoting responsible fatherhood, both through increased efforts to collect child support and through initiatives such as NYC DADS, which encourages fathers to take an active role in their children's emotional lives.

**Valentina Duque** is a doctoral student in Social Policy Analysis at Columbia University's School of Social Work. Her research interests are labor markets, wealth inequality, and public policies and their influence on family well being. Her current work examines the effects of the armed conflict in Colombia on children's health outcomes.

Using the Fragile Families and Child Well being study, Valentina collaborates with Professor Garfinkel at Columbia University in studying the effects of social programs on children's well-being and the impact of the Great Recession on family assets and liabilities.

She earned her B.A. in Civil Engineering (2004) and her M.A. in Economics (2008) at the University of Los Andes in Colombia.



**Irwin Garfinkel** is the Mitchell I. Ginsberg Professor of Contemporary Urban Problems at the Columbia University School of Social Work, and co-founding director of the Columbia Population Research Center. He was the director of the Institute for Research on Poverty (1975-1980) and the School of Social Work (1982-1984) at the University of Wisconsin. Between 1980 and 1990, he was the principal investigator of the Wisconsin child support study.

A social worker and an economist by training, Dr. Garfinkel has authored or co-authored over 200 scientific articles and sixteen books; and has edited volumes on poverty, income transfers, program evaluation, single-parent families and child support, and the welfare state. His research on child support and welfare influenced legislation in Wisconsin and other American states, the US Congress, Great Britain, Australia, and Sweden. He is currently the co-principal investigator of the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study. His most recent book is *Wealth and Welfare States: Is America Laggard or Leader?*

**Amanda Geller** is an Associate Research Scientist at the Columbia University Schools of Social Work and Law, and a faculty affiliate of the Columbia Population Research Center. Her research examines the interactions between criminal justice policies and socioeconomic disadvantage, and their effects on urban neighborhoods, families, and individuals.

Currently, Dr. Geller is working on studies that examine the role of incarceration in urban families, and the effects of incarceration on family economic circumstances and child well-being. Using the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, her work has identified effects of incarceration on the insecurity of fathers' housing, mothers' socioeconomic well-being, and children's aggression. Dr. Geller is also engaged in a set of studies that identify racial and socioeconomic disparities in the administration of justice.







**Mark Kleiman, J.D.**, is the Founder and Executive Director of Community Mediation Services, Inc. This agency, located in Queens, NY, has developed court diversion programs across the New York City since 1983 in the areas of juvenile justice, community and family mediation, education, child welfare, youth development, and homelessness. Its initiatives include a Fatherhood Program, a Homelessness Prevention Program, and the first Family Court Custody Mediation Program.

Mr. Kleiman is a founding member of the New York City and New York State divorce mediation councils, a former board member of the New York State Dispute Resolution Association (NYS DRA), and a board member of The National Association for Community Mediation (NAFCM). An OCA certified trainer, he co-wrote the organization's custody/visitation mediation curriculum, as well as the curricula on conflict resolution for the National Association for Community Mediation (NFCM) and many other systemic applications, including a definitive approach: "Value Centered Mediation."

**Rae Linefsky** has become widely recognized, during her thirty years of service to the public sector and not-for-profit fields, as an expert in social service policy issues, including poverty, workforce development, youth, education, criminal justice and literacy, and managing the unique challenges confronting not-for-profit organizations. She currently works as a consultant for clients that include many not-for-profits and foundations, and serves as the Executive Director of the Trustees of The Sailors' Snug Harbor in the City of New York.

In addition, she has been executive director and senior executive of several well-known New York City organizations, and served as (acting) commissioner of NYC's Human Resources Administration. She was also supervisor of Adult Basic Education for the Massachusetts Department of Education, and a director at the first School Without Walls in Philadelphia. A member of the NYC Workforce Investment Board (WIB), she is vice-chair of the Youth Council and Chair of The Financial Clinic.



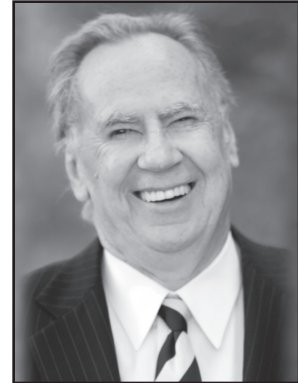
**James P. McHale** is Chair of the Psychology Department at the University of South Florida, St. Petersburg, and Director of the St. Petersburg Family Study Center. His work has aimed to create a fresh understanding of the nature of co-parenting and of children's development in diverse families by providing an innovative, inclusive model for understanding the strengths and needs of children and of the adults principally responsible for their development. Since 1996, his studies have been grant-supported by the National Institutes of Health.

Dr. McHale has been a keynote speaker at the World Association for Infant Mental Health and Zero To Three conferences, and has provided national and international workshops and services on co-parenting and infant mental health to a wide variety of service agencies. His 2007 book on early co-parenting was awarded the Irving B. Harris National Book Award of the Zero To Three Press; and his most recent book, with Kristin Lindahl, *Coparenting: A Conceptual and Clinical Examination of Family Systems*, reviews current thinking about co-parenting within a variety of family forms, including fragile families.



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**George McDonald** is Founder and President of The Doe Fund. He has spent the last 25 years helping individuals with histories of incarceration and homelessness become law-abiding citizens and responsible parents by providing them with paid work. Primarily through Ready, Willing & Able, its transitional work program, The Doe Fund serves 1,000 people each day, which has earned it recognition by federal, state, and local government entities, including the U.S. Department of Justice. McDonald chaired the Independent Committee on Reentry and Employment, whose report has guided criminal justice policy innovations in New York and elsewhere; and has testified numerous times before the U.S. Congress on prisoner re-entry matters.



McDonald has received an honorary degree from Hobart and William Smith Colleges; the New York Post Liberty Medal; the William E. Simon Prize for Lifetime Achievement in Social Entrepreneurship; St. John's University's Spirit of Service award; the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives' Honor of Hope award; and the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness' Innovator of Special Merit award.



**Lawrence M. Mead** is Professor of Politics and Public Policy at New York University, where he teaches public policy and American government. He is also a Visiting Scholar at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington; and has been a visiting professor at Harvard, Princeton, and the University of Wisconsin, as well as a visiting fellow at Princeton and at the Hoover Institution at Stanford.

Professor Mead's expertise is in the problems of poverty and welfare in the United States and other Western countries. Among academics, he was the principal exponent of work requirements in welfare, the approach that now dominates national policy. His books and articles on the politics and implementation of welfare reform and work programs for men have contributed to shaping social policy in the United States and abroad.

**Lauren Moore Kase** is the Program Manager for The Future of Children at Princeton University, a collaboration between the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University and the Brookings Institution. Its mission is to translate the best social science research about children into information that is useful to policymakers, practitioners, grant-makers, advocates, the media, and students of public policy. The project publishes two journals and policy briefs each year, and coordinates outreach to bring research to practitioners and policy makers.

Prior to working at Princeton, Ms. Kase directed development for New York University's Silver School of Social Work. She has her master's degree in social work from the University of Pennsylvania, and her B.A. in public policy studies from Duke University.





**Lenna Nepomnyaschy** is an Assistant Professor at Rutgers School of Social Work. Her research interests are broadly focused on how poverty and inequality impact child and family health and well-being. One line of inquiry examines the impact of social policies on the well-being of families and children, particularly in relation to fathers and child support. Another strand examines socioeconomic and racial/ethnic disparities in child health and development.

Dr. Nepomnyaschy's current work is funded by the Foundation for Child Development Young Scholars Program and the Research Program on Childhood Hunger through the University of Kentucky's Center for Poverty Research and the U.S. Food and Nutrition Service.

She received her Ph.D. from Columbia University in 2003; and an MSW from Rutgers University in 1991.

**Frances Pardus-Abbadessa** is the Executive Deputy Commissioner of the New York City Human Resources Administration's Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE). OCSE manages the child support program in NYC, working to ensure that noncustodial parents share the responsibility of supporting their children. The agency's approximately 850 staff members provide an array of services, including locating absent parents, establishing paternity, collecting support, and modifying and enforcing child support orders. In addition, they develop and oversee programs that raise awareness of the ways in which formal child support benefits both custodial and noncustodial parents, which increases parental compliance with the program.

Before coming to OCSE in 2004, Ms. Pardus-Abbadessa began her career in NYC HRA in 1986 as a budget analyst and worked her way up to the position of Executive Deputy Administrator of the HRA Finance Office, where she was responsible for ensuring the integrity of the agency's finances and its annual budget of more than \$5 billion.



She received a B.A. from Syracuse University, majoring in Political Science and American Studies; and in 1986, was awarded an M.A. in Public Administration from New York University's Robert F. Wagner School of Public Service.



**James A. Riccio** is Director of the Low-Wage Workers and Communities policy area at MDRC. In this capacity, and in collaboration with the NYC Center for Economic Opportunity and the Mayor's Fund to Advance NYC, Dr. Riccio leads MDRC's design and evaluation work on a federal Social Innovation Fund grant to replicate and test promising social initiatives in New York City and seven other urban areas across the country. He is also directing randomized trials that test a conditional cash transfer (CCT) program for low-income New Yorkers, as well as a British program to promote employment retention and advancement among low-wage workers (UK ERA). Dr. Riccio holds a Ph.D. in sociology from Princeton University.

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**Elaine Sorensen** is a nationally recognized research expert on the child support program, which serves one in four children in the United States. She is best known for her research on child support arrears, which shows that 70 percent of arrears are owed by parents who have reported earnings of less than \$10,000 a year. A pioneer in the use of census data to study noncustodial parents, she found that about a quarter of these are poor. She has examined the effectiveness of many child support policies, including pass-through initiatives, modification of orders for incarcerated obligors, and employment-oriented programs for low-income noncustodial parents.

Dr. Sorensen has worked at the Urban Institute for 24 years. Prior to joining the Institute, she taught economics at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and received her Ph.D. in Economics from the University of California, Berkeley.

**Vicki Turetsky** is Commissioner for the Office of Child Support Enforcement in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families. In this capacity, she oversees the child support program operated by each state and by many tribes, and brings to the position more than 25 years' experience as a public administrator and advocate for low-income families, as well as nationally recognized expertise in family policy. She has been instrumental in efforts to boost child support payments to families and to establish realistic policies that encourage noncustodial parents to work and become active parents.



Prior to her current appointment, Ms. Turetsky served as director of family policy at the Center for Law and Social Policy, where she specialized in child support, responsible fatherhood, and prisoner re-entry policies. The author of numerous publications, she was a visiting lecturer at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University and has received several national awards.

She received her B.A. from the University of Minnesota and her J.D. from the University of Chicago Law School.



**Maureen Waller** is Associate Professor of Policy Analysis and Management at Cornell University. Her research has documented how unmarried parents in low-income communities view fatherhood and marriage, and how social policies that address recent changes in families correspond to parents' lived realities.

Dr. Waller is the author of *My Baby's Father: Unmarried Parents and Paternal Responsibility* (Cornell University Press), which includes an investigation of unmarried parents' ideas about paternal responsibility and informal systems of paternal recognition and support. Waller's research examining unmarried fathers' relationships with mothers and their children has appeared in scholarly journals and has received support from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, the National Science Foundation, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and private foundations. She is associate editor of *Fathering*, and co-editor of a forthcoming special issue of *Family Process* that focuses on co-parenting in fragile families.

## Conference Host Committee Members

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Lauren Moore Kase, Project Manager, CRCW

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