

2012

# Child Support: Achieving Better Outcomes for Children

Sept. 6,



NYC HRA OFFICE OF CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT (OCSE)

## **OCSE Policy Conference**

September 6, 2012 - CUNY Graduate Center

## Child Support: *Achieving Better Outcomes for Children*

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Dear Conference Participant,

Good morning and welcome to our 2012 Policy Conference—"Child Support: Achieving Better Outcomes for Children."

This year, we seek to build on the successes of our 2010 and 2011 Policy Conferences, which focused on the role child support plays in strengthening families. Building on the research findings in the "Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study", and having partnered with The Future of Children Project, our goal for those two conferences was to identify ways that we can more fully integrate formal child support services with programs that provide essential supports for both custodial and noncustodial parents. We hope that many of you had the opportunity to attend last year's conference or at least review our report summarizing the event. This year, we are pleased to broaden this meaningful discussion with a conference agenda designed to review, and identify, alternative ways to establish and enforce child support orders that promote communication, mediation, compliance, and family and child wellbeing. Our conference keynote speaker, Richard R. Buery Jr., President & CEO of The Children's Aid Society, will help us set the conference tone with his morning keynote address.

In our continued effort to connect more families to the child support program and increase the number of families with child support orders, we need to be open to discussing and exploring alternative approaches to how we conduct business. Towards that end, this year we will explore how other states approach establishing child support orders. In addition, we will explore the use of a "Problem Solving Court" approach to increasing compliance with child support and minimizing enforcement. During the morning plenaries, you'll hear from panelists representing the Georgia, Colorado and Texas child support programs, as well as leadership within the NY State Family Court and the NYC Mayor's Office. We will then offer an afternoon roundtable discussion, moderated by NYC Human Resources Administration Commissioner Robert Doar, on some of the key outcomes and themes from both morning plenaries. The roundtable will include Federal OCSE Commissioner Vicki Turetsky, NY State Family Court Chief Magistrate Peter Passidomo, and University of Texas Clinical Law Professor Cynthia Bryant.

Our conference isn't possible without your support. We hope you find the conference both informative and productive, and encourage your active participation 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 achieve compliance, 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

NYC HRA OFFICE OF CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT (OCSE)  
2012 OCSE Policy Conference

Child Support: *Achieving Better Outcomes for Children*  
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## Agenda

- 8:00 am**      **Conference Check-in and Continental Breakfast**
- 9:00 am**      **Welcome**  
Robert Doar, Commissioner, NYC Human Resources Administration  
Vicki Turetsky, Commissioner, Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement  
Frances Pardus-Abbadessa, Executive Deputy Commissioner, NYC HRA OCSE
- 2012 Policy Conference Theme
  - OCSE Accomplishments and Updates
- 10:00 am**      **Keynote - Richard R. Buery Jr, President & Chief Executive Officer, The Children's Aid Society**
- 10:30 am**      **Morning Break**
- 10:45 am**      **First Plenary Session: *Alternative Approaches to Establishing Child Support Orders***  
Despite studies showing the positive role child support has on reducing child poverty, not all families are ready or willing to establish child support orders. This poses a challenge to child support programs nationwide in serving the needs of children and families. The purpose of this plenary is to identify and discuss alternative approaches to establishing child support orders so as to engage both mothers and fathers in the responsibility of raising their children. This plenary session will also review national best practices, identify ways to connect more families to child support services and secure valuable feedback from the audience.
- Moderator: Cynthia Bryant, Clinical Law Professor, University of Texas
  - Presenters:
    - Alicia Key, IV-D Director, Texas
    - Robert Prevost, Division Manager, Arapahoe County Child Support Division, Colorado
    - Robert Mulroy, Deputy Chief Magistrate, NYS Family Court
    - Alan Farrell, Citywide Fatherhood Coordinator, NYC Office of the Mayor

**12:15 pm**      **Lunch**

**1:15 pm**      **Second Plenary Session: *A Problem Solving Court Approach to Increasing Compliance with Child Support***

Employment plays a critical role in a noncustodial parent's (NCP) ability to financially contribute to his or her child's development, and lack thereof can serve as a barrier to an NCP's involvement in his or her child's life. Successful workforce development programs strike the right balance between identifying sustainable employment opportunities and providing needed social support services. Unfortunately, despite efforts to connect NCPs to employment, too many still face challenges in remaining compliant. This plenary session will highlight OCSE's successes using a Problem Solving Court approach, review our efforts to engage "hard-to-reach" NCPs, and highlight the successes and challenges faced by similar Problem Solving Court programs nationwide. Finally, this session will provide an opportunity to secure necessary feedback from audience members who work directly with NCPs.

- Moderator: Alfred Siegel, Deputy Director, Center for Court Innovation
- Presenters:
  - Sarah Reckess, Judicial Branch Problem Solving Initiative, Syracuse
  - Tangler Johnson, Director of State Operations, Georgia Office of Child Support Services
  - Nicholas Palos, Support Magistrate, NYS Family Court

**2:45 pm**      **Afternoon Break**

**3:00 pm**      **Roundtable**

This roundtable will discuss the feedback and recommendations coming out of the morning and afternoon plenaries. The roundtable panel will include local and national child support leaders, and provide a rich opportunity to discuss the common challenges and complexities that OCSE and other child support agencies face in working to develop a program that is responsive to the comprehensive needs of families. Roundtable panelists will have an opportunity to respond to audience feedback, and promote transparency and understanding among all stakeholders.

- Moderator: Robert Doar, Commissioner, NYC Human Resources Administration
  - Cynthia Bryant, Clinical Law Professor, University of Texas
  - Vicki Turetsky, Commissioner, Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement
  - Peter Passidomo, Chief Clerk, NYC Family Court

**4:00 pm**      **Closing Remarks – Frances Pardus-Abbadessa, Executive Deputy Commissioner, NYC HRA OCSE**

## CONFERENCE SPEAKERS



### Keynote

Born and raised in the East New York section of Brooklyn, New York, the son of a retired New York City public school teacher and a retired lab manager, **Richard R. Buery, Jr.** has dedicated his life to improving educational opportunity and life outcomes for young people in America's most disadvantaged communities.

In October 2009, Mr. Buery was named the 10th President and Chief Executive Officer of The Children's Aid Society. He is the first black leader of Children's Aid and the youngest since Charles Loring Brace founded the agency in 1853. Children's Aid is an independent, non-profit organization established to serve the children of New York City. Its mission is to help children in poverty succeed and thrive by providing comprehensive supports to children and their families in

targeted, high-need New York City neighborhoods. Children's Aid serves New York's neediest children and their families with a network of services and programs that support children and families from before birth through young adulthood.

Mr. Buery previously co-founded and served as Executive Director of Groundwork, Inc., a non-profit organization serving the children and families of Brooklyn public housing developments. Groundwork was the third non-profit organization Mr. Buery founded. While still an undergraduate at Harvard, he co-founded the Mission Hill Summer Program, an enrichment program for children in the Mission Hill Housing Development in the Roxbury section of Boston. More recently, he co-founded and served as Executive Director of iMentor, a technology education and mentoring program that each year connects New York City middle and high school students with professional mentors through both online and face-to-face meetings. Already one of the largest youth mentoring organizations in New York City, iMentor is currently undergoing a national expansion.

A graduate of Harvard College and Yale Law School, Mr. Buery has a background in law, education, and politics. Prior to founding iMentor, Mr. Buery was a staff attorney at the Brennan Center for Justice. He also served as a law clerk to Judge John M. Walker, Jr. of the Federal Court of Appeals in New York City; a fifth grade teacher at an orphanage in Bindura, Zimbabwe; and Chief Political Officer and Campaign Manager to Kenneth Reeves, the Mayor of Cambridge, Massachusetts. He has also served as an adjunct lecturer at the Baruch College School of Public Affairs.

The recipient of many honors and awards, Mr. Buery was a 1992-1993 Michael Clarke Rockefeller Fellow. In 2000, he was named one of Ebony Magazine's 30 Leaders of the Future Under 30 and in 2009, was named one of Crain's New York Business' 40 Leaders of the Future Under 40, in recognition of his contributions to the life of New York City. He has also received the Mary McLeod Bethune Recognition Award from the National Council of Negro Women; the Extraordinary Black Man Award for Humanitarianism from the United Negro College Fund, and the inaugural outstanding alumnus award from the Phillips Brooks House Association at Harvard College. Mr. Buery has been honored by the Rush Philanthropic Arts Foundation, the Brooklyn Borough President, and others. He lives with his wife Deborah, a law professor, and his two sons, Ellis and Ethan.



**Cynthia Bryant** is Clinical Professor of Law at the University of Texas School of Law, where she teaches mediation and dispute resolution, as well as directs the Law School's Mediation Clinic. Prior to joining the University of Texas School of Law, she served as Deputy Attorney General for the Texas Attorney General's Child Support Division and as IV-D Director for Texas. She also served as an Assistant Attorney General in the Child Support Division, Director of Litigation, and Director of Field Operations in the Texas IV-D program. In 1980, she co-founded the Children's Rights Clinic at the University of Texas School of Law, and later taught, wrote, and practiced law there.

Ms. Bryant has served on the Board of Directors of the National Child Support Enforcement Association. She also received the State Bar of Texas Child Abuse and Neglect Committee's Forshey Award, the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement's Commissioner's Award, and the federal Administration for Children and Families' Regional Administrator's Leadership Award.

Ms. Bryant received her J.D. from the University of Texas School of Law in 1976.

**Robert Doar** was appointed Commissioner of the New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA) in 2007 by Mayor Michael R. 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, the earned income tax credit, 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.



**Alan S. Farrell** was appointed New York City's first Fatherhood Services Coordinator in September 2010 and serves out of the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services. In this position, he is responsible for planning and implementing NYC DADS - The Mayor's Fatherhood Initiative, where he works with over a dozen City agencies to maximize opportunities to engage fathers in the lives of their children. Mr. Farrell has also been instrumental in launching the CUNY Fatherhood Academy, the City's first ever community college-based effort to support the growth and development of fathers, as well as the Parent Pledge Project, a community-based mediation pilot designed to help parents develop voluntary agreements and child support orders.

Mr. Farrell received a B.A. in African American Studies with a concentration in Literature from Oberlin College. He also received an M.S. in Urban Policy Analysis and Management from The New School's Milano School of International Affairs, Management, and Urban Policy, as well as an M.A. in Urban Missions from Westminster Theological Seminary/City Seminary of New York.

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**Tanager Gray Johnson** is Director of State Operations for the Division of Child Support Services (DCSS) in Georgia. She provides leadership and oversight for DCSS's Contact Center, Director's Communication Group, Financial Support Team, Policy and Paternity Unit, and Outreach Programs, which include the Fatherhood Program, Community Outreach, and Problem Solving Court. Mrs. Johnson spearheaded DCSS' Rapid Process Improvement (RPI) Initiative, which resulted in the reduction of a 71-day establishment process to same-day service. In November 2007, Governor Sonny Perdue awarded DCSS the Governor's Customer Service Improvement Initiative Award and DCSS' RPI Implementation Team also won the Commissioner's Award for High Performance at the 18th Annual Child Support Enforcement Conference in Washington, D.C.

Mrs. Johnson has over 16 years of experience with DCSS and has served in many capacities there, including accounting, as Customer Service Director/RPI Champion, and as Region 8 Manager. She also served as Operations Manager with MAXIMUS Child Support Services for three years.

She received her B.A. in Accounting from Valdosta State University.

**Alicia Key** was named Deputy Attorney General for Child Support for the Texas Office of the Attorney General in January 2007, where she has served as the Child Support Director since her appointment on December 1, 2004. She returned to the OAG from the Office of Court Administration, where she served as Administrative Director from 2002 to 2004. Before that, Ms. Key worked for over 12 years in the child support program in Texas, beginning as Title IV-D Master for the Eighth and Ninth Administrative Judicial Regions in 1989. Joining the Attorney General's Office in 1992, she served as the managing attorney of an Austin field office, and then as General Counsel of the Child Support Division from 1999 to 2002.

Ms. Key has been a guest commentator for Sampson & Tindall's Family Code Annotated annually since 1997, as well as a member of the State Bar of Texas Family Law Section Formbook Committee since 1999. She is past President of the National Council of Child Support Directors and is a board member of the Western Interstate Child Support Enforcement Council.



**Robert Mulroy** is Deputy Chief Magistrate for the Family Court of the State of New York. He served as a Support Magistrate in the Bronx County Family Court from 1996 until his appointment as Deputy Chief Magistrate in 2010. Mr. Mulroy has presented many Continuing Legal Education lectures and trainings throughout the State of New York, including talks for the Office of Court Administration, New York County Lawyer's Association, Appellate Division First Department Office of Special Projects, National Child Support Enforcement Association, and In Motion. He has also taught at Mercy College, Berkeley College, and Lehman College.

Mr. Mulroy graduated from Fordham Law School in 1983. He was admitted to practice law before the courts of the State of New York and the Federal Court for the Southern District of New York in 1984.



**Nicholas Palos** is a Support Magistrate with the New York State Family Court in Kings County (Brooklyn), where he is responsible for hearing the full spectrum of support cases, including those brought under the Uniform Interstate Family Support Act. Prior to this role, he served as a Support Magistrate with both the Citywide Child Support Enforcement Team and New York County (Manhattan) Family Court; the Court Attorney for Judge Susan Larabee; and as an attorney with HRA's Family Law Litigation Unit.

Mr. Palos currently serves on the Child Support and Paternity Advisory Committee of the Administrative Judge of the Family Court in the City of New York, as well as the Board of Directors of the National Child Support Enforcement Association. He also served as President of the New York State Magistrate's Association from December 2003 to May 2005.

Mr. Palos was awarded a B.A. in Theology Magna Cum Laude from Fordham University and a J.D. from Fordham's School of Law. He is admitted to the New York State Bar, as well as to practice before the U.S. Supreme Court.

**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.



**Peter Passidomo** was appointed Chief Clerk of the New York City Family Court in 2009, where he hears more than 250,000 petitions each year. He also serves as Co-Chair of the Family Court Advisory and Rules Committee, which drafts court rules and legislation that affect family court. Mr. Passidomo was appointed Vice-Dean of the NYS Judicial Institute in 2006, which is charged with training New York's 1,200 State judges, 2,000 court attorneys, and 2,000 town and village judges. In 2003, he was appointed Chief Magistrate of NYS Family Court, where he oversaw the State's 120 support magistrates and 50 court attorney-referees, who hear more than 350,000 cases filed in family court each year. Prior to this appointment, Mr. Passidomo served as Chief Court Attorney of the NYC Family Court, as well as Family Court Hearing Examiner (the title has since been changed to Support Magistrate).

Mr. Passidomo is an Adjunct Professor of Law at Pace University School of Law in White Plains. He received his B.A. from the State University at Albany in 1982, and his J.D. from Fordham Law School in 1985.

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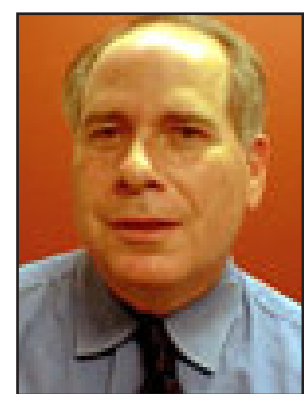


**Bob Prevost** is Division Manager of Child Support for the Arapahoe County of Colorado Department of Human Services, where he oversees an award-winning team working to ensure that children receive the support they deserve from both parents. He joined Arapahoe County in 2009 as an Intake Supervisor, prior to being named Division Manager in 2010. Under Mr. Prevost's leadership, Arapahoe County helped to create and pilot the state's online application process, create an automated arrears calculation program, and implement an early intervention process that helps parents to identify and overcome barriers to meeting their child support obligations.

Mr. Prevost began his career in child support in 1992. He spent eight years as a generalist and nine years as Division Manager in Morgan County. He has served as president, moderator, and member on several community and government boards. He and his wife, Kim, have twin daughters, Megan and Mikayla.

**Sarah Reckess** is a Senior Associate with the Center for Court Innovation's Syracuse, New York office. She oversees the Onondaga County Parent Support Program, an innovative problem-solving court model that links non-custodial parents to employment services and training. Before joining the Center, Ms. Reckess provided legal assistance at Legal Services of Central New York and the Syracuse Medical-Legal Partnership. She also served as Interim Director at the Family Law and Social Policy Center at Syracuse University College of Law.

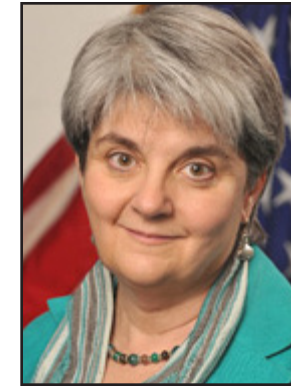
Ms. Reckess received her B.A. from Mount Holyoke College, her M.A. from the University of Nevada - Reno, and her J.D. from Syracuse University College of Law.



**Alfred Siegel** is Deputy Director of the Center for Court Innovation, an independent non-profit organization that provides technical assistance to national and international jurisdictions that are considering the implementation of community justice and problem-solving court projects. He directed the design and implementation of many of the Center's problem-solving court projects, including the Red Hook and Harlem Community Justice Centers; Bronx Community Solutions; and alternatives to juvenile detention and placement in Queens and Staten Island. Mr. Siegel is currently directing the planning for the Center's newest project, a community court to be located in Brownsville, Brooklyn, which will focus on juveniles and adolescents.

Mr. Siegel served as a member of Governor David Paterson's Task Force on Transforming New York State's Juvenile Justice System and as chair of its sub-committee on Reentry and Alternatives to Placement. Prior to joining the Center for Court Innovation, he was Deputy Commissioner of New York City's Probation Department, an Inspector General for the City's Department of Housing Preservation and Development, and an Assistant District Attorney in Bronx County.

He received a master's degree from New York University and his J.D. from Rutgers University.



**Vicki Turetsky** is Commissioner of the Office of Child Support Enforcement at 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 many tribes, and brings to the position more than 25 years of 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, as well as 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. She has also held positions with the U.S. Corporation for National and Community Service, Union County Legal Services in New Jersey, the Minnesota Attorney General's Office, and the Minnesota Department of Human Services. 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.

**Save the date!**

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October 22, 2013  
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