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| LOCAL COMMISSIONERS MEMORANDUM |  
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Transmittal No: 90 LCM-202

Date: December 13, 1990

Division: Income Maintenance

TO: Local District Commissioners

SUBJECT: "The Parents' Fair Share Demonstration: A Test of Employment  
and Training Services for Non-Custodial Parents"

ATTACHMENTS: None

This is to inform you of a federal welfare reform demonstration project involving JOBS programs for non-custodial parents, and of New York State's intent to apply for participation. A Request for Proposals (RFP) from the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is expected to be transmitted to states in January 1991.

In anticipation of New York State being selected for participation, the Department would like to determine which local districts are interested in being nominated as a demonstration site. A summary of the demonstration project follows.

"The Parents' Fair Share Demonstration Project: A Test of Employment and Training Services for Non-Custodial Parents" is funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts, The Ford Foundation, HHS, the US Department of Labor and Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC). The project will involve up to five states over a six year period, with programs implemented in selected counties or regions rather than statewide. Funding grants will be provided throughout the project's various phases to help compensate for planning and design aspects, data collection on client flow, staff time for research interviews and other implementation costs. HHS will grant waivers to the project sites allowing them to use Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training (JOBS) Program funds to serve non-custodial parents who are unemployed and unable to meet their child support obligations.

Scant information is available on this target group. No studies have been conducted, few programs exist that specifically address their needs, and employment and training strategies of the past have proven less than effective in moving this population toward self-sufficiency. Given the diversity of non-custodial, non-resident parents (usually disadvantaged males), participating project sites will not be required to operate a single program design, but rather encouraged to design programs around some general requirements and include core elements of two or three recommended models.

Impetus for the project is the 1988 Family Support Act and its idea of "mutual obligation." Parents - both mothers and fathers - should be the primary supporters of their children. Those parents receiving public assistance have a responsibility to participate in employment services and get jobs. Non-custodial parents have a responsibility to pay child support. Government has a responsibility to provide services to promote their self-sufficiency. Portions of the Family Support Act address most elements of the mutual obligation equation through enhanced child support measures and JOBS. The missing piece (and thus the demonstration) centers upon the non-custodial parents who are unable to contribute to the support of their children even when they want to.

The demonstration project is structured in two parts. The initial planning and pilot operation phase will last approximately 18-24 months. During this time promising program models will be developed, sites identified, technical assistance provided, programs operated for 6-12 months and a study conducted of these early operations.

The second part of the project will rigorously test and analyze program implementation, impacts and cost effectiveness. Evaluation will focus upon the differences the program makes in

- o the non-custodial parents' employment earnings;
- o the child support they pay; and
- o the well being of their children.

Several other aspects will be analyzed, including attitudes and reactions of custodial and non-custodial parents to the child support system and the programs under study.

We view the demonstration project with great interest and anticipation, and invite your comments, and/or questions. Should your district be interested in being nominated as a site for this project, please contact Reinaldo Cardona, Director, Bureau of Employment Programs (1-800-342-3715, extension 3-8744).

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Division of Income Maintenance