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**STATE CHILD ACCESS AND
VISITATION PROGRAMS:
A PRELIMINARY REPORT**

1999

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In late Fiscal Year 1997, all States and Territories applied for and received funding for Child Access and Visitation Grants from the total of \$10 million available under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. This report presents preliminary findings for 131 local projects in 28 States and two Territories.

Nearly 20,000 individuals were served during the first year of this new Grants program, and this figure is expected to rise, significantly, when all States report. Wide discretion is permitted in States' determination of which activities to fund at the local level. Most States and their local projects report providing a comprehensive mix of services. There is a healthy balance of services provided with respect to urban, suburban, and rural locations and administration by state and county agencies, courts, and non-profit organizations. There is also a healthy balance regarding the racial and ethnic mix and marital status -- divorced, separated, never-married -- of the population served. Most individuals received parenting education, assistance in developing parenting plans, and mediation services, and the majority of individuals referred completed their program activities.

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STATE CHILD ACCESS AND VISITATION PROGRAMS: A PRELIMINARY REPORT

INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the first year's preliminary findings (Fiscal Year 1998) from a new federal grant program to fund State child access and visitation initiatives. The federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) in the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) was authorized in the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. The purpose of the grants, according to the Act, is:

"...to establish and administer programs to support and facilitate non-custodial parents access to and visitation [with] their children by means of activities including mediation (both voluntary and mandatory), counseling, education, development of parenting plans, visitation enforcement (including monitoring, supervision and neutral drop-off and pick-up), and development of guidelines for visitation and alternative custody arrangements."

These grants to State child support enforcement agencies represent a significant departure from Congress' and OCSE's historical view of the State IV-D agencies' role. Historically, their role has been viewed as one of enforcing child support orders and collecting payments due to custodial parents and their children. With enactment of the Access and Visitation grant program, the federal

Exhibit 1: Size of Access and Visitation Grant, by State, FY 1998

States	Amount
Alabama	\$176,664
Alaska	50,000
Arizona	138,986
Arkansas	95,926
California	1,113,752
Colorado	93,206
Connecticut	124,181
Delaware	50,000
District of Columbia	50,000
Florida	533,258
Georgia	219,034
Guam	50,000
Hawaii	50,000
Idaho	50,000
Illinois	449,673
Indiana	353,005
Iowa	89,393
Kansas	116,319
Kentucky	185,334
Louisiana	205,732
Maine	50,000
Maryland	187,471
Massachusetts	171,787
Michigan	387,344
Minnesota	182,788
Mississippi	137,458
Missouri	173,392
Montana	50,000
Nebraska	50,000
Nevada	50,000
New Hampshire	50,000
New Jersey	202,220
New Mexico	70,682
New York	697,054
North Carolina	233,772
North Dakota	50,000
Ohio	401,541
Oklahoma	102,649
Oregon	113,558
Pennsylvania	356,165
Puerto Rico	109,276
Rhode Island	50,000
South Carolina	130,040
South Dakota	50,000
Tennessee	201,540
Texas	704,262
Utah	72,829
Vermont	50,000
Virgin Islands	50,000
Virginia	194,015
Washington	177,241
West Virginia	57,170
Wisconsin	191,285
Wyoming	50,000
Nationwide Total	\$10 million

government provides funding for services that will facilitate parental involvement beyond the payment of financial support.

Beginning September 12, 1997, OCSE awarded the first round of grants to every State and four jurisdictions — District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Virgin Islands. A total of \$10 million was disbursed, according to a formula based in part on the number of children in a state who do not live with both biological or legal parents. Each State received at least \$50,000 and the average grant size was \$190,000. The highest funded State, California, received over \$1 million. (See Exhibit 1: *Size of Access and Visitation Grant, by State, FY 1998.*)

States were allowed to administer programs directly or through contracts or grants with courts, local public agencies, non-profit organizations, or other capable entities. States were not required to operate programs on a Statewide basis.

As a condition of receiving a grant, the Act required States to monitor, evaluate, and report on programs funded through these grants. On March 31, 1999, the final regulation that established the requirement for States to report on their access and visitation grants was published in the Federal Register. According to the Final Rule, information collected through reporting will be used to assess:

- (1) the demand for the program and effectiveness of outreach and the ability of the program to

**Exhibit 2: Number of
Local Projects
FY 1998**

meet demand; (2) population served and scope and size of the program; and (3) whether such recipients are completing standard program requirements.

To facilitate uniform reporting OCSE, and the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation in HHS, commissioned the American Institutes for Research to develop a simple instrument for States to report on their access and visitation activities, and to provide assistance to States in reporting their activities. This preliminary report summarizes the data from 28 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico (hereafter referred to as States), in which 131 local projects were conducting activities that serve non-custodial and custodial parents and their children. See Exhibit 2: *Number of Local Projects* for a listing of States reporting and the number of local projects funded within those States.

Not all States are represented in this preliminary report because some states' initial grant award activities have not been completed,¹ and three States — Iowa, Maine, and Montana — used their initial year's grant for extensive planning, so had not yet begun to implement service activities.

¹ The liquidation period permits States one year beyond the end of the obligation period, which ended September 12, 1998, to expend their funds on, for example, non-profit service organizations or local projects. Thus, some States are not required to report until October 12, 1999 (30 days after the end of the liquidation period).

States Reporting [†]	Local Projects
Arkansas	1
California	14
Colorado	1
Connecticut	1
District of Columbia	1
Delaware	2
Florida	9
Georgia	1
Hawaii	1
Illinois	2
Indiana	6
Kansas	6
Kentucky	7
Louisiana	1
Missouri	1
Mississippi	3
Nebraska	2
New Jersey	11
New York	9
Ohio	10
Oregon	3
Puerto Rico	1
South Carolina	2
Tennessee	6
Texas	11
Utah	1
Virginia	7
Vermont	3
Washington	3
West Virginia	5
Total	131

[†]At the time of this preliminary report, not all States had reported on their FY 1998 grants.

FINDINGS

As evidenced by the local projects they funded, States embraced creativity, innovation, and variation in the projects they funded. There is great variation across states in the number of projects funded, project goals, the services offered to prospective clients, service providers, use of Access and Visitation grant funds in combination with other funding sources, and program features. Included in this preliminary report are 30 States and jurisdictions that have funded 131 local projects to which 21,770 parents and children were referred and 19,454 individuals received services.

Most data in this report reflects information at the project level rather than at the State level. This allows the report to capture the diversity and volume of services and program features within States funding multiple projects. Four States, Arizona, Colorado, Hawaii, and Louisiana, reported implementing Statewide programs, while the remainder of those included in this preliminary report implemented programs in selected jurisdictions.

Project Goals

The goals reported by the local child access and visitation projects represent the comprehensive nature of these projects. Local project sites were asked to indicate their projects' goals, and were

encouraged to check off multiple goals, where appropriate. Possible goals were:

- ❖ To improve child well-being
- ❖ To improve compliance with child support orders
- ❖ To increase visitation between non-custodial parents and their children
- ❖ To improve the relationship between non-custodial and custodial parents
- ❖ To strengthen non-custodial parents as nurturers
- ❖ To promote public awareness about responsible parenthood
- ❖ To broaden custody options for parents
- ❖ Other

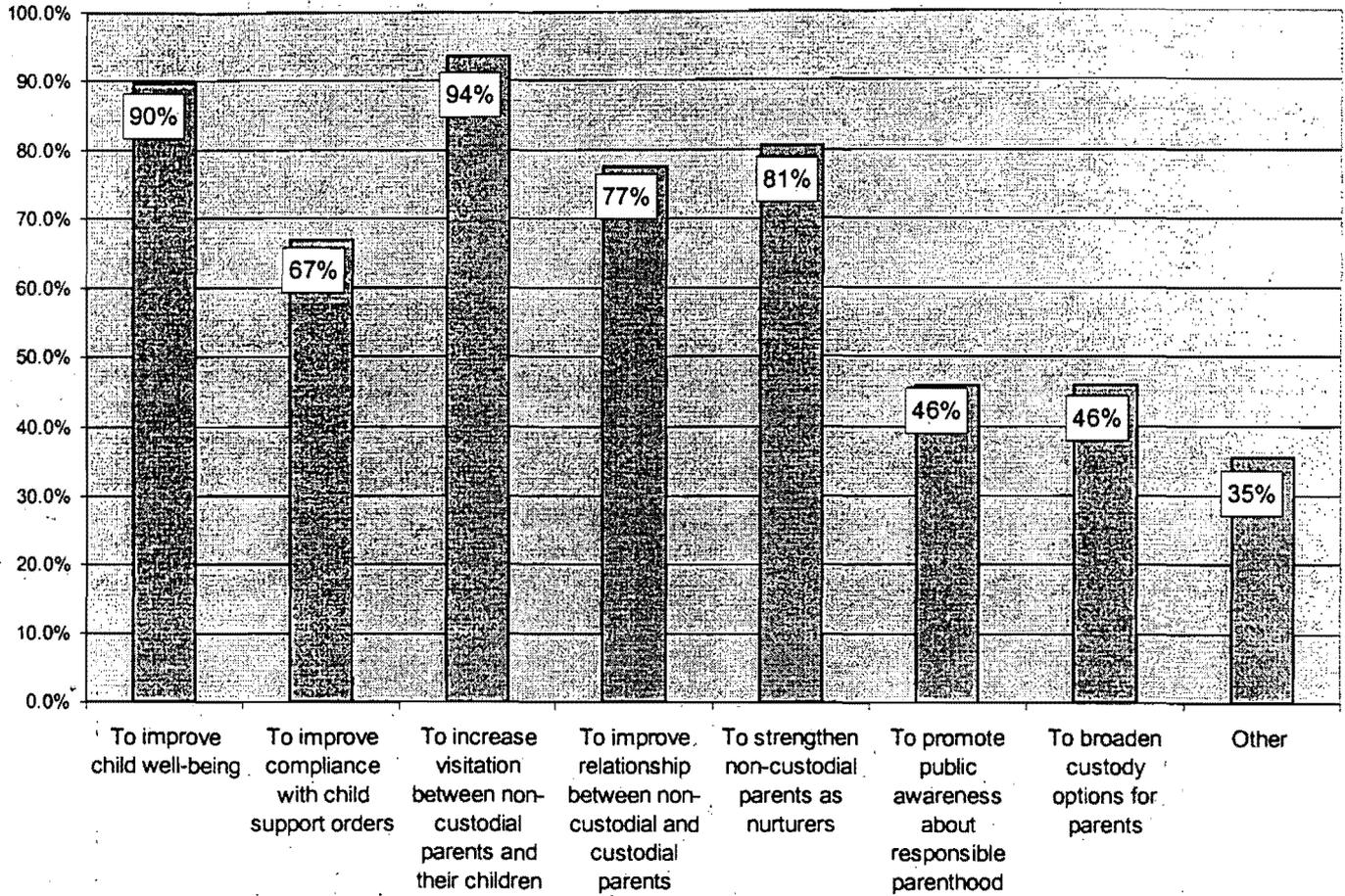
porting on project goals, the top three most prevalent goals were to:

- increase visitation between non-custodial parents and their children (93.5%),
- to improve child well-being (89.5%), and
- to strengthen non-custodial parents as nurturers (80.6%).

Some local Project Directors cited other goals, such as "to provide a safe, and stress-free environment for children and non-custodial parents, where the court has said the child is at-risk for harm", and "to increase public awareness about [availability of] divorce mediation."

Among 124 local projects reporting on project goals, the top three most prevalent goals were to increase visitation between non-custodial parents and their children (94 percent), to improve child well-being (90 percent), and to strengthen non-custodial parents as nurturers (81 percent). Some local Project Directors cited other goals, such as "to provide a safe, and stress-free environment for children and non-custodial parents, where the court has said the child is at-risk for harm," "to educate custodial and non-custodial parents in the traits that enable improved outcomes in both themselves and their children," "to allow for visitation and exchange while keeping apart families involved in domestic violence with restraining orders," and "to increase public awareness about [availability of] divorce mediation." (See Exhibit 3: *Local Project Goals*).

Exhibit 3
Percent of Local Projects Reporting Each Goal
FY 1998



*Not all states reporting, and less than 131 of the local projects reported on their project goals.

Service Activities

States and, thus, local projects have considerable flexibility in the kinds of service activities they can undertake with Access and Visitation grant funds. The regulations specify broad categories of eligible activities that include mediation, counseling, [parenting] education, development of parenting plans, development of guidelines for visitation and custody arrangements, and visitation enforcement. Within visitation enforcement, local projects are offering several types, including:

- ❖ *Monitored visitation*, which involves an outside individual recording whether or not visitation occurred;
- ❖ *Supervised visitation*, which is court-ordered visitation after an allegation of abuse, or other situations involving acrimony, in which an outside individual is present during the visitation session, and observing participants;
- ❖ *Therapeutic visitation*, which involves a "counselor" facilitating interactions between the non-custodial parent and the child; and
- ❖ *Neutral drop-off and pick-up*, which refers to a location other than the custodial parent's home or relative's home where the custodial parent can leave the child for the non-custodial parent to pick-up for his/her visiting period, and vice versa.

Across all types of visitation enforcement, often the court is notified when visitation fails to occur and legal actions, such as a finding of contempt, can ensue.

States have funded, and local projects are offering, all these services, as well as other innovative services consistent with (the spirit of) the law and regulations.

Many local projects offer multiple service activities, simultaneously, while some concentrate on one service. Three States are concentrating on a single service. Delaware and Hawaii are providing only visitation enforcement, and Puerto Rico is only providing counseling. Nine States have funded all eligible service activities. (See Exhibit 4: *Activities by State* and Exhibit 5: *Percent of Local Projects Conducting Each Activity*.)

Twenty-three of the 30 States reporting have funded local projects that offer parenting education and twenty-four that offer development of parenting plans. Twenty-four States have funded local projects that offer mediation and fifteen that offer counseling. Sixteen States have funded local projects that help parents develop guidelines for visitation and custody arrangements.

Twenty-one States have funded local projects that offer visitation enforcement. Visitation enforcement includes any one of four types of visitation enforcement: monitored visitation, supervised visitation, therapeutic visitation, and neutral drop-off and pick-up. Of the 21 States that offer visitation enforcement, all 21 States offer two

**Exhibit 4
Activities by State
FY 1998**

State	Mediation	Counseling	Education	Develop- ment of Parenting Plans	Develop- ment of Visitation Guide-lines	Visitation Enforce- ment	Other
Arizona	✓		✓	✓			
California	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Colorado	✓		✓	✓			
Connecticut	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
District of Columbia						✓	
Delaware						✓	
Florida	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Georgia	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hawaii						✓	
Illinois	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Indiana	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kansas			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kentucky	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Louisiana			✓	✓			✓
Missouri	✓			✓	✓		
Mississippi	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Nebraska	✓			✓			
New Jersey	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
New York	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Ohio	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Oregon	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Puerto Rico		✓					
South Carolina	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tennessee	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
Texas	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Utah	✓				✓	✓	
Virginia	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Vermont	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Washington	✓		✓	✓			✓
West Virginia	✓		✓	✓			
Total	24	15	23	24	16	21	18

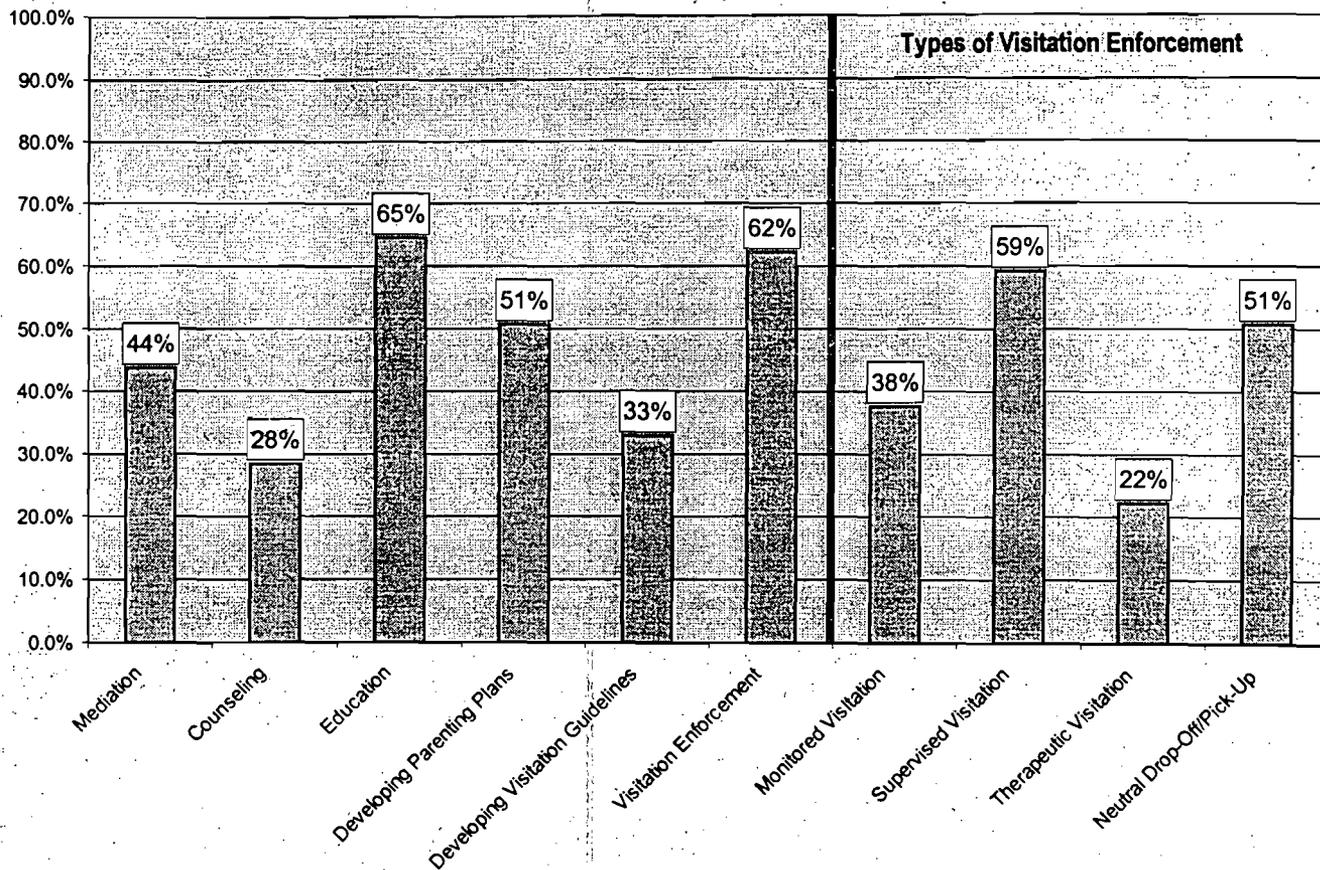
Note. At the time of this preliminary report, not all States had reported on their FY 1998 grants.

Exhibit 4A State Visitation Enforcement Activities

State	Monitored Visitation	Supervised Visitation	Therapeutic Visitation	Neutral Drop-Off/Pick-Up
Arizona				
California	✓	✓	✓	✓
Colorado				
Connecticut		✓	✓	
District of Columbia		✓		✓
Delaware	✓	✓		✓
Florida	✓	✓	✓	✓
Georgia	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hawaii	✓	✓		✓
Illinois		✓	✓	✓
Indiana	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kansas	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kentucky	✓	✓	✓	✓
Louisiana				
Missouri				
Mississippi	✓	✓		✓
Nebraska				
New Jersey		✓	✓	✓
New York	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ohio	✓	✓		✓
Oregon	✓	✓	✓	✓
Puerto Rico				
South Carolina	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tennessee				
Texas	✓	✓	✓	✓
Utah	✓	✓		✓
Virginia	✓	✓	✓	✓
Vermont	✓	✓		✓
Washington				
West Virginia				
Total	17	21	14	20

Note. At the time of this preliminary report, not all States had reported on their FY 1998 grants.

Exhibit 5 Percent of Local Projects Conducting Each Activity FY 1998



or more of these types of visitation enforcement services, and 11 States offer all four services.

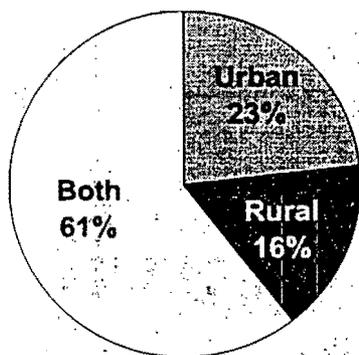
Nineteen States offer innovative access and visitation activities. For example, in Oregon one site reported developing a *Parenting Time* Web site. An Illinois project makes an attorney available in court to assist *pro se*² clients in drafting their visitation plans and in obtaining required court

² *Pro se* clients are those representing themselves in court, without benefit of an attorney.

orders for access and visitation. Examples of other services include legal services for filing a visitation petition, teaching conflict resolution skills, providing transportation to visitation, and role playing the signs of depression and anger.

Service Areas and Service Providers

Exhibit 6
Service Area of Local Projects
FY 1998

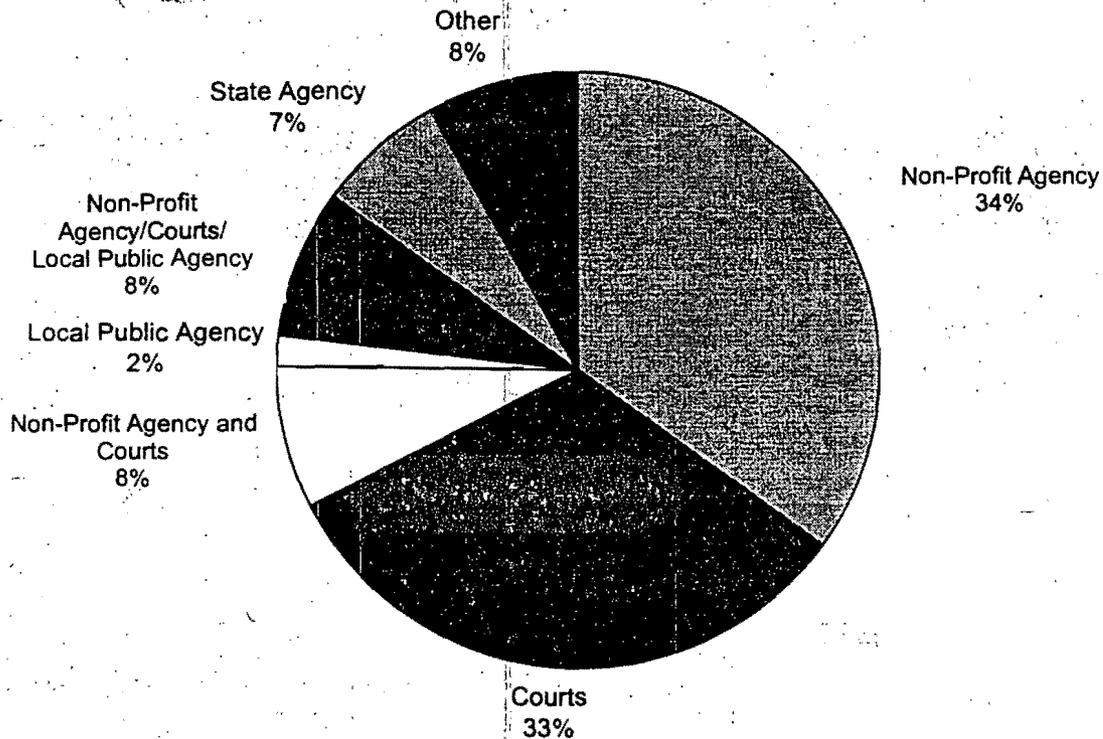


Among the 30 States reporting data on access and visitation services to individuals, 26 States reported information on the service areas and providers for 125 local projects. Among these local program sites, 23 percent served only urban areas, 16 percent served only rural areas, and 61 percent served areas that included both urban and rural populations (see Exhibit 6: *Service Area of Local Projects*).

A variety of entities administer the local access and visitation projects, including State agencies, non-profit entities, courts, local public agencies and other service provider/administrator (see Exhibit 7: *Service Providers of Local Projects*). States reported that non-profit entities were the most prevalent administrator of local projects, serving as the service provider in 34 percent of the local projects. For 33 percent of local projects, Courts were identified as the service provider. Eight percent of projects were identified as partnership between the courts and a non-profit entity, and another eight percent of projects were administered through a joint effort of the courts, a non-profit

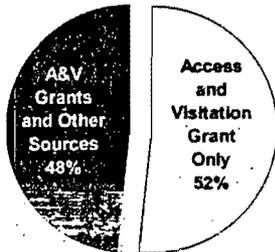
entity, and a local public agency. Other service providers or administrators (eight percent) included for-profit organizations and State Universities. See Exhibit 7: *Service Providers of Local Projects* for a summary of the different service providers.

Exhibit 7 Service Providers of Local Projects FY 1998



Note. Some projects are joint efforts of multiple entities.

Exhibit 8
Funding Sources for Access
and Visitation Projects
FY 1998



Access and Visitation grant funds may be used to fund stand-alone services or may be combined with other state and local funds to provide their child access and visitation services. Among the 29 States reporting, 14 States indicate they fund services with a combination of Access and Visitation grant funds and other funding sources.

Combining Funding Sources

Access and Visitation (A&V) grant funds may be used to fund stand-alone services or may be combined with other state and local funds to provide their child access and visitation services. Among the 29 States responding to this question, 14 States (48 percent) indicated they fund services with a combination of Access and Visitation grants and other funding sources. On average, among States combining funding sources, 52 percent of the funds come from Access and Visitation grant funds. The survey did not solicit the source of those other funds, but anecdotal information from States suggests that one supplemental funding source is domestic violence grants from the Administration for Children and Families. See Exhibit 8: *Funding Sources for Access and Visitation Projects*.

Mandatory or Voluntary Nature of Activities

Local Project Directors reported to States which of their service activities required mandatory participation, which permitted voluntary participation, and which were offered on both a mandatory and voluntary basis. As seen in Exhibit 9: *Mandatory and Voluntary Nature of Activities*, most of the services, except supervised visitation, were not exclusively mandatory. About half of the projects reported that counseling and the

development of parenting plans were exclusively voluntary. Many projects, however, reported offering most activities on both a mandatory and voluntary basis.

EXHIBIT 9
Mandatory and Voluntary Nature of Activities
FY 1998

ACTIVITY	PARTICIPATION BASIS		
	Mandatory Only	Voluntary Only	Both Mandatory and Voluntary
Mediation	12%	39%	49%
Counseling	16%	51%	33%
Education	30%	30%	41%
Visitation Enforcement	31%	22%	47%
• <i>Monitored Visitation</i>	32%	13%	54%
• <i>Supervised Visitation</i>	51%	8%	41%
• <i>Therapeutic Visitation</i>	29%	21%	50%
• <i>Neutral drop-off/pickup</i>	33%	14%	53%
Development of Parenting Plans	20%	48%	32%

*Preliminary data; not all states reporting.

Sources of Referral

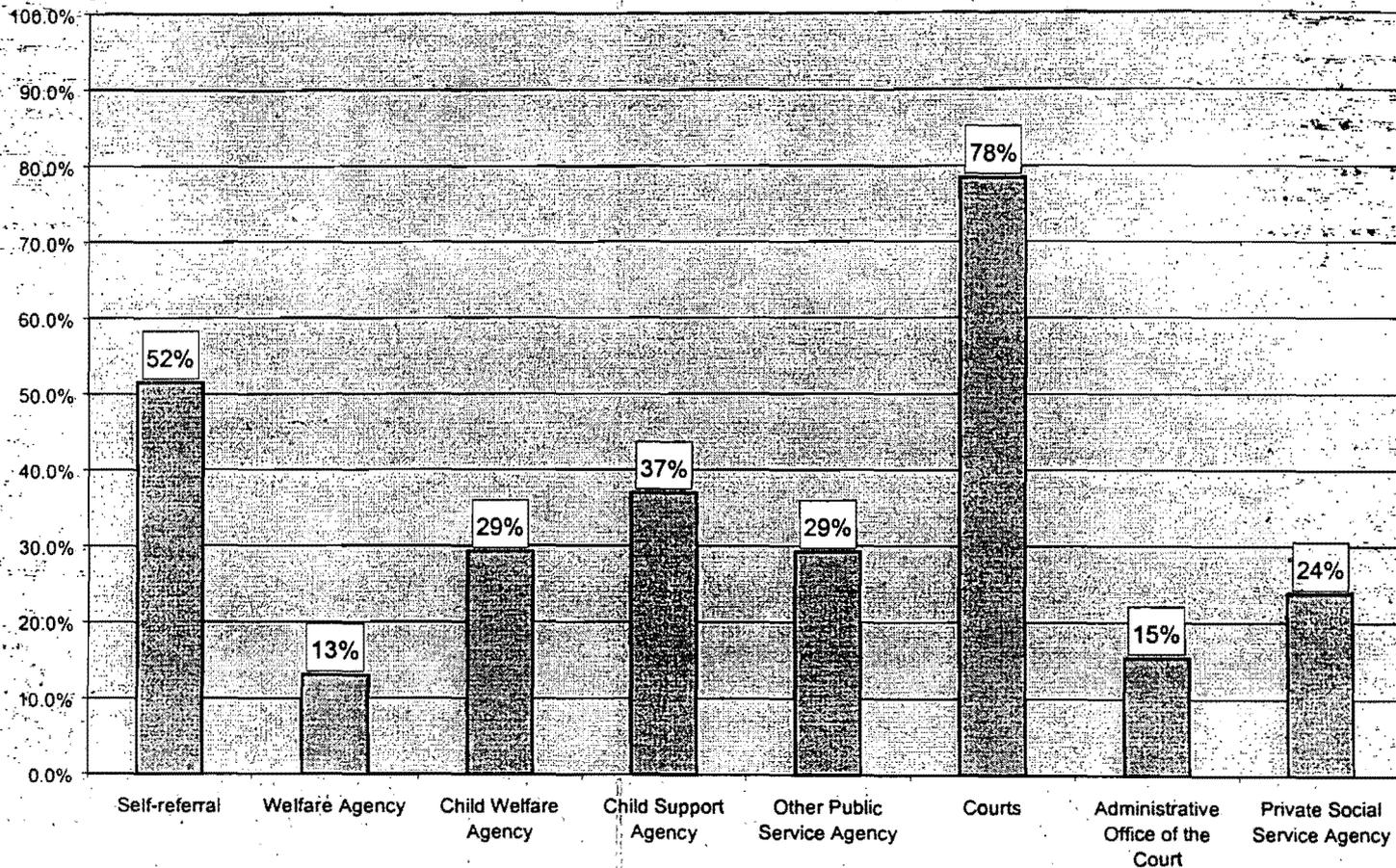
Participants are referred to local project offices from a wide variety of sources. Common sources of referral reported were:

- ❖ self-referral/individual initiative;
- ❖ welfare agency;
- ❖ child welfare agency;
- ❖ child support agency;

- ❖ other public social service agency;
- ❖ court or administrative office of the court;
- ❖ private social service organization; or
- ❖ other.

The primary entity referring clients to the five major service activities was the courts, followed by self-referral (see Exhibit 10: *Sources of Referral*). Seventy-eight percent of local projects received referrals from the courts and 52 percent of local projects received self-referrals. There was wide variety in the types of courts referring parents to services. Referrals come from Superior, Circuit, Family Law, and County Criminal courts, as well as Court Masters for the child support agency. Thirty-seven percent of local projects receive referrals from the child support agency. Twenty-nine percent of local projects receive referrals from the child welfare agency, 24 percent of referrals come from private social service organizations, and 13 percent receive referrals from the welfare agency.

Exhibit 10 Sources of Referral to Local Projects FY 1998



Other interesting sources of referral were reported. Georgia indicated that some referrals come from their fatherhood initiative projects, and from retail services such as the local barber shop. Indiana funded programs that receive some referrals from the District Attorney's office, attorneys, and volunteer Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) for abused and neglected children. At a Nebraska project, some clients are referred by the Children's Rights Council, and at one New York project by school social workers. An

Georgia indicated that some referrals come from their fatherhood initiative projects, and from retail services such as the local barber shop. Indiana funded programs that receive some referrals from the District Attorney's office, attorneys, and volunteer Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) for abused and neglected children. Oregon noted that some referrals come from other family members. Texas pointed to programs where guardians of the children and mediation service providers refer parents to access and visitation services.

Oregon project noted that some referrals come from other family members. A local project in Texas pointed to programs where guardians of the children and mediation service providers refer parents to access and visitation services.

Intake Procedures

The predominant intake procedure involves interviews between the non-custodial parent and various program staff. Ninety-four (72 percent) of the 130 local projects reporting on intake procedures related that an interview of both the custodial and non-custodial parent is conducted as part of the intake procedure for some activities. Interviews were also conducted with children in 39 percent of local projects. Some projects also conducted interviews with a judge or other court officer (24 percent), a mediator (25 percent), or another individual. At a Kentucky project, for instance, interviews were conducted with grandparents, stepparents, counselors and attorneys of the parents. Ohio projects sometimes interviewed Child Protective Services workers. In addition to interviews, other intake procedures included review of written referral information and mediators screening for domestic violence, emotional problems, and substance abuse. Written applications were used as part of the intake process in 48 percent of local projects.

Length and Features of a Complete Service

Local sites were asked to report to States on the typical sequence or cycle of services offered to participants. A sequence or cycle was defined as a set number of days, weeks, or months that participants are supposed to continue in the service. Among the five principal service activities of mediation, counseling, education, visitation enforcement, and development of parenting plans, most activities (64 percent) did have a typical sequence or cycle. Mediation, for example, generally lasts for less than 4 weeks, while counseling tends to occur for 3 months. Parenting education lasts, on average, for less than 3 months, with a range of one 1-hour session to a 14 week class. Participation in the development of parenting plans generally is scheduled to continue until both parties agree on the provisions of the parenting plan.

Visitation enforcement cycles are more difficult to generalize, and elicited more "situational" responses. Often the courts determined the length of visitation enforcement. Common responses were "until the least restrictive level of visitation has been reached" or "depends upon the court order" or "until parents mutually agree on visitation" or "until the parent terminates." Some local projects do have specific time frames for visitation enforcement. For example, one local project in

Vermont requires parents to continue weekly monitored and supervised visitation for one year, while a project in Georgia requires that visitation is established and maintained for 90 days.

In addition to the typical sequence or cycle, the survey asked local sites to report on how long, on average, mothers and fathers actually participate and receive services. Again, mediation participation continued on average for less than 4 weeks and counseling continued for less than 3 months, with fathers and mothers participating for the same length of time. Participants continued in parenting education for less than four weeks with, again, no difference between fathers' and mothers' participation. In fact, the vast majority of projects reported no difference between fathers' participation and mothers' participation. Furthermore, the length of time mothers and fathers actually received services closely approximated the full project cycle.

In a separate study conducted on supervised visitation, researchers found few variations among project sites in client attendance and behavior patterns. Across project sites, there were similar rates of failure to appear for intake, scheduled and actual visits, and comparable problems with missed visits.³

³ Pearson, J., Thoennes, N., *Supervised Visitation: A Portrait of Programs and Clients*, Center for Policy Research, Denver, December 1997.

Completion, Follow-up and Sanctions

Sites reported to the States on what constitutes *completion* of program services, what follow-up activities staff conduct with participants who have left the program, and what sanctions there are for mandatory participants who fail to comply or complete the program.

Completion

The range of responses to what constitutes completion of program activities is broad. Several projects report that completion of mediation occurs when the partners reach agreement on a co-parenting or visitation plan, or one party terminates. Completion of parenting education is more quantifiable, and projects defined it as attendance at 6 hours of classes, or 14 sessions, or 6-11 weeks of attendance. Appendix A conveys the wide variety of what constitutes completion in visitation enforcement services for each activity by State.

Follow-up

Slightly more than half of local projects (54 percent) report that they *do not* follow up with participants who have left the program. Sixteen States report that one or more projects systematically send client satisfaction surveys to parents, either by mail, telephone, or both. Ohio reports exit surveys following mediation and that

the juvenile court follows up with 30-, 60-, and 90-day phone calls to parents.

Sanctions

Sanctions vary widely for participants who drop out of program services, and 48 local projects impose no sanctions at all. Where sanctions are imposed, they vary by State, by projects within a State, and by service. A common sanction is for the service agency to refer/report the offending parent back to court where there may be a finding of contempt. There, one project noted that the judge may suspend visitation privileges until compliance with program requirements is achieved.

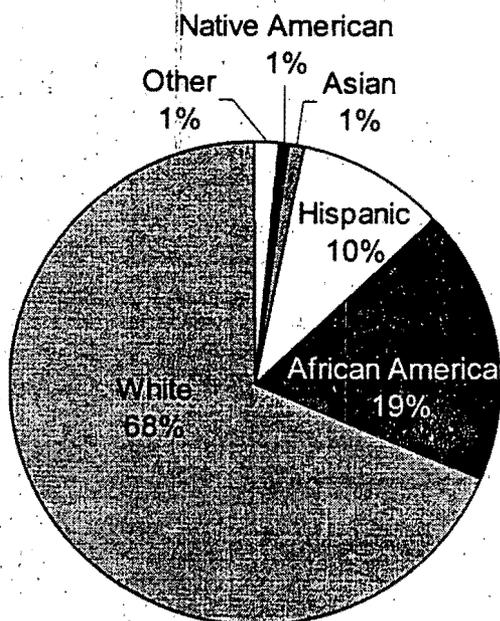
Sanctions vary widely for participants who drop out of program services, and 48 local projects (36 percent) impose no sanctions at all. Where sanctions are imposed, they vary by State, by projects within a State, and by service. Of a total of 131 local projects submitting data, 83 (63 percent) report imposing sanctions for at least one service component. A common sanction is for the service agency to refer/report the offending parent back to court, where there may be a finding of contempt. There, one project noted that the judge may suspend visitation privileges until compliance with program requirements is achieved. The local project in Arkansas reported that in some areas where divorce education is mandated, the court will not set a hearing until the education course is completed. The Utah and West Virginia projects report that sanctions can include a change in custody of the child(ren).

Composition of Participants Served

To determine who was being served in local projects, respondents were asked about the racial composition and marital status of participants. Across the 105 local projects reporting on the racial composition of participants, 69 percent of participants served were white (non-Hispanic), 19

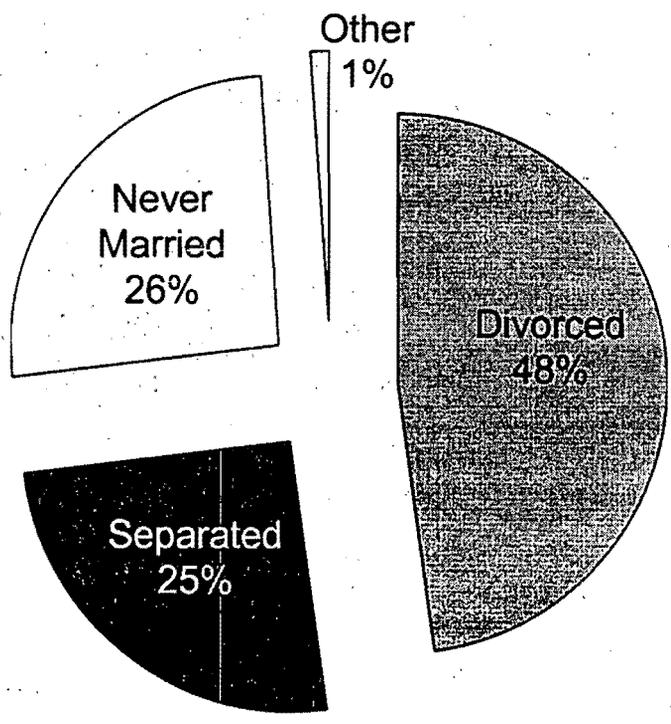
percent were African-American, and 10 percent were Hispanic. Much smaller percentages of participants were Native American (1 percent) and Asian (1 percent). See Exhibit 11.

Exhibit 11
Racial Composition of Participants in Local Projects
FY 1998



Of interest to policymakers are data on participants' marital status, particularly as projects begin to reach out specifically to the never-married population. Among the 101 local projects reporting on the marital status of participants, 48 percent of participants were divorced, 25 percent separated, and 26 percent were never married. Exhibit 12 summarizes the marital status of participants in local projects.

Exhibit 12
Marital Status of Participants
FY 1998



Participant Data

Finally, local project sites reported on the total numbers of applicants/referrals to program activities, total numbers of participants, and totals completing program activities. A total of 109 project sites in 29 States and jurisdictions reported these data. The results are presented in Exhibit 13.

Projects reported to States that a total of 19,454 participants were served across all services and that 11,714 participants completed program activities. Of those, the largest number — 10,130 — participated in parenting education and 8,408 completed this activity.

However, data is not complete for all local projects. Totals do not reflect the sum of mothers and fathers. Instead, some States reported all individuals served, including children, grandparents, other family members. Local projects defined referrals differently. Some counted total number of individuals referred, others counted total families referred. Completion figures may be misleading in that many individuals had not yet had a chance to complete program requirements, rather than having failed to complete these requirements.

**Exhibit 13
Participant Data
FY 1998**

ACTIVITY	APPLICANTS OR REFERRALS	PARTICIPANTS			THOSE COMPLETING PROGRAM ACTIVITIES		
		Total	Fathers	Mothers	Total	Fathers	Mothers
TOTAL IN PROJECT	21,770	19,454	8,492	9,178	11,714	5,306	5,325
	Total	Total	Fathers	Mothers	Total	Fathers	Mothers
1. Mediation	4,334	3,787	1,142	1,419	1,810	765	932
2. Counseling	2,562	1,879	808	1,048	1,646	458	669
3. Education	12,996	10,130	4,609	5,236	8,408	3,902	4,462
4. Visitation Enforcement	1,229	816	399	417	374	176	189
4a. Monitored Visitation	1,307	878	448	430	442	231	201
4b. Supervised Visitation	4,451	3,476	1,787	1,689	1,213	593	567
4c. Therapeutic Visitation	320	333	167	166	99	61	38
4d. Neutral drop-off/pickup	1,021	780	335	331	308	107	129
5. Development of Parenting Plans	6,339	4,699	2,168	2,374	4,214	1,914	2,150
6. Other	1,837	1,264	388	399	681	94	104

CONCLUSION

This preliminary assessment of the first year of the Access and Visitation grant program demonstrates that all States (as well as the District of Columbia and eligible territories) participated in the program (by applying for their full allocation of grant funds) and that States are serving a significant number of individuals — nearly 20,000 in the 29 States reporting participant data. Given that this is the first year of a brand new Federal/State initiative, these numbers are impressive. And the numbers served are likely to grow substantially, when the remaining States report.

States embraced creativity and innovation as reflected in the numbers of projects funded and the variation in project goals. The local projects, in turn, offered a wide variety of services to diverse clients, utilizing numerous different service providers. Most states are using multi-faceted approaches to facilitate the program goal of increasing non-custodial parents' access to visitation with their children. Parenting education and the development of parenting plans were the two most frequently used services and most of those referred completed their program.

Local projects represented a variety of service providers and the providers, in turn, served a diverse population in terms of racial composition

and marital status. There is, for example, a balance of providers in urban and rural areas of the States. And it is noteworthy that approximately one-quarter of participants were never married (to the custodial parent of their children), as this group is more difficult to target for services than those who are separated or divorced.

Finally, it should be remembered that this preliminary report only reflects reports from 40 of the 54 jurisdictions that received FY 1997 access and visitation grants. When reporting is complete, we anticipate that there will be a substantial increase in the number of participants served and additional diversity in the services provided. These trends will accomplish Congress' goal of better serving non-custodial parents and their children.