



MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

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TENNESSEE SETS CHILD SUPPORT COLLECTION RECORD *STIMULUS CHECKS, TAX REFUNDS AND LOTTERY WINNINGS HELP BOOST COLLECTIONS*

NASHVILLE, Tenn.— The Tennessee Department of Human Services collected more than \$530 million over the last state fiscal year for child support, surpassing the previous year's record collection of \$508 million. Federal tax refunds, stimulus checks and even lottery winnings have helped get these dollars into the hands of Tennessee children and families.

"The recent economic stimulus checks have paid off for children across Tennessee who have not had consistent support from their parents," said DHS Commissioner Gina Lodge. "When parents are not paying, we will use all enforcement tools Congress and the General Assembly have provided to us, including intercepting stimulus payments, tax refunds, and even lottery winnings."

More than 50,000 stimulus checks and IRS tax refunds have been intercepted over the last six months, totaling over \$50 million. A parent has to be at least \$500 in arrears before these checks can be diverted to the children who are not receiving support.

In addition to the Tax Refund Offset Program, the Department uses enforcement tools such as administrative wage assignments, license revocation and liens. Parents who are playing the lottery but are not paying support will find themselves big losers if they hit it big. A Georgia man who owed nearly \$30,000 to his children in East Tennessee had to pay off his child support debt before collecting the remainder of his original prize of \$150,000, won by playing a Lottery scratch-off game. The Child Support program has collected and distributed \$500,000 in lottery winnings since the games began in 2004.

The Tennessee Child Support program has partners in all 31 judicial districts across the state and handles 421,000 cases. More than 65 percent of cases—or 274,000—are under a court order.

"We are committed to this program and the children of Tennessee," said District Attorney General for the 31st judicial district Lisa Zavogiannis. "Getting an order established is the first step in the process. Without an order, we can't collect the first dime of child support, so it's imperative that we get these cases to court as quickly as possible so the children can start receiving their support."

General Zavogiannis and her staff in Van Buren and Warren Counties are in the top three districts with cases under order, with more than 78 percent. The district leads the state in increasing their collections, which have jumped 23 percent in just one year—up from \$3.9 million to \$4.8 million.

Other program highlights from this fiscal year include \$109.5 million in collections for Shelby County, an increase of six percent over the previous year and \$21.4 million in collections for the 19th judicial district, which encompasses Montgomery and Robertson Counties. This is an increase of ten percent from the previous year.

For more information on the Tennessee Child Support Program, visit:
<http://www.state.tn.us/humanserv/child-support.htm>

For more information on Federal Offset Programs, visit:
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/newhire/fop/fop.htm>

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