

## **2009 Innovations Awards Program APPLICATION**

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ID # (assigned by CSG): 09-W-15WA

**Please provide the following information, adding space as necessary:**

**State:** Washington State

Assign Program Category (applicant): Health and Human Services, Children and Families

1. **Program Name:** Division of Child Support Employer Training & Outreach Program
2. **Administering Agency:** DSHS Division of Child Support (DCS)
3. **Contact Person (Name and Title):** David Stillman, DCS Director
4. **Address:** P.O. Box 9162, Olympia, WA 98507-9162
5. **Telephone Number:** 360-664-5440
6. **FAX Number:** 360-586-3274
7. **E-mail Address:** [dstillman@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:dstillman@dshs.wa.gov)
8. **Web site Address:** [www.childsupportonline.wa.gov](http://www.childsupportonline.wa.gov)
9. **Please provide a two-sentence description of the program:**  
The employer outreach program is dedicated to enhancing communication and relationships with employers and is responsible for increasing electronic data exchanges and for promoting the use of Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT). The program manager works closely with field and headquarters staff to provide employers in-depth, program specific training designed to save them time and money and help DCS operate a cost efficient program.
10. **How long has this program been operational (month and year)? Note: the program must be between 9 months and 5 years old on March 2, 2009 to be considered.**  
April 2006 (2 years, 11 months)
11. **Why was the program created? What problem[s] or issue[s] was it designed to address?**  
The employer outreach program was created to assist and educate Washington State employers about compliance with child support laws and encourage employers to send withheld child support payments electronically.

Although employers are required to report all newly hired workers through the New Hire Reporting program, only about 50-60% actually report, resulting in less child support collected for families and a greater dependence on public assistance. Data shows that as employers learn of the requirement to report new hires, they comply, thus underscoring the value of an outreach and education program for employers as opposed to utilizing an approach that emphasizes enforcement or punitive action for noncompliance.

Nearly 65% of the \$705 million collected by DCS during the last state fiscal year was remitted by employers through wage withholding. The division processed over 3.5 million payments for child support during the past year. Payments received by check are labor intensive and costly to process. Electronic payments help get money to families faster and require much less staff time to process. Checks can get lost in the mail. Electronic payments are more accurate, cheaper, and safer for employers and DCS.

**12. Describe the specific activities and operations of the program in chronological order.**

Beginning in April 2006, Washington DCS began the following statewide activities:

- Hired Employer Outreach Manager to lead effort
- Developed employer workshop curriculum and materials
- Worked with the American Payroll Association to certify workshop. Professional certification program provides credit to payroll professionals which increased attendance
- Partnered with influential professional organizations and school districts to promote programs
- Contacted Chambers of Commerce statewide to reach out to employers
- Produced and distributed an Employer Training DVD
- Developed a professional training [workbook](#)
- Produced marketing materials including promotional items, television and [radio PSA's](#) and mouse pads. The television and radio spots were also produced and aired in Spanish.
- Published [print ads](#) in various employer related publications (see link, bottom of page 43)
- Trained employers in conference and non-conference settings with influential business, finance, HR and payroll organizations
- Partnered with other state agencies to promote DCS programs via websites and press releases
- Appeared on the Association of Washington Business radio show to promote programs
- Began advertising blitz with Comcast Spotlight which included a six month television ad campaign
- Established a new website for employers: [www.childsupportonline.wa.gov](http://www.childsupportonline.wa.gov)

**13. Why is the program a new and creative approach or method?**

The program uses both private organizations and public agencies to educate employers. With the current budget crisis, it is important to find creative, innovative ways to get our message to employers and maintain a cost efficient program. Partners help DCS by publishing articles and ads, posting web site links and airing public service announcements, all at little or no cost.

The outreach program is a statewide, comprehensive effort designed to inform employers in both rural and metropolitan areas alike of our programs and requirements.

We use conventional methods of classroom training combined with creative and informative presentations. One such class is the DCS "Deal or No Deal" presentation. Employer outreach

staff present important employer training in a game show format. The energy and involvement is phenomenal as employers learn about withholding requirements, New Hire Reporting, electronic payment methods and medical support requirements.

DCS reaches out to employers by offering classes where employers live and work including rural locations. Washington employers no longer have to rely solely on “mail-only” outreach.

**14. What were the program’s start-up costs? (Provide details about specific purchases for this program, staffing needs and other financial expenditures, as well as existing materials, technology and staff already in place.)**

With the current economic climate, it is important to keep costs low and still meet program objectives. The only start-up costs were management’s commitment to funding a full time position solely dedicated to employer outreach and education. After that, approximately \$5,000 was spent on developing and creating outreach and marketing materials.

**15. What are the program’s annual operational costs?**

Annual costs include one full-time position salary and benefits of \$65,000 and travel costs of approximately \$2,000.

**16. How is the program funded?**

Through our organization’s general budget.

**17. Did this program require the passage of legislation, executive order or regulations? If YES, please indicate the citation number.**

No.

**18. What equipment, technology and software are used to operate and administer this program?**

Depending on the needs of the employer, technology including training DVD’s, PowerPoint presentations, TV and radio public service announcements (PSAs) and email communications are used to reach and inform our target audience.

At large conferences we show Seattle Seahawks (NFL) PSA’s to grab the attention of conference attendees.

At times, a phone call or personal visit is the best method to reach a non-technical business such as a small farm or construction employer.

**19. To the best of your knowledge, did this program originate in your state? If YES, please indicate the innovator’s name, present address, telephone number and e-mail address.**

Washington State Division of Child Support has been ranked in the top five states nationally per Federal performance measures for the past several years. While the employer outreach program did not originate in Washington State, a number of program enhancements have originated in the state such as the American Payroll Association Workshop Certification program and unique training materials. Additionally, Washington is one of the few states to earmark a full time position for this specific purpose.

**20. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If YES, which ones and how does this program differ?**

Yes, similar program exist in states such as California and Texas. During recent conference calls with these states, we have learned that Washington's program is a comprehensive, statewide program that actively reaches out to employers and employer related organizations on a regular basis. Washington's employer outreach program is dedicated to a consistent, long-term effort. Many other employer outreach programs are one-time efforts and may provide information on their websites and through staff but are not as proactive or in-depth.

**21. Has the program been fully implemented? If NO, what actions remain to be taken?**

No, DCS is developing an employer database that will allow us to better communicate with employers. DCS would also like to develop an on-line system for workshop reservations and on-line tutorials or webinars for employers to learn about DCS programs wherever or whenever is convenient to them.

**22. Briefly evaluate (pro and con) the program's effectiveness in addressing the defined problem[s] or issue[s]. Provide tangible examples.**

Pros:

- Since April 2006, the number of employers participating in DCS' Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) programs increased 52%.
- Washington State's DCS EFT program estimates a savings of \$0.75 per transaction. Over the past several years DCS' efforts to convert businesses and individuals to electronic payments has saved Washington tax payers an estimated \$3.6 million annually.
- 85 % of employers that attend a workshop switch to electronic reporting.
- There has been an increase of 25% in workshop attendance connected to the development of the professional certification program.
- With increased electronic payments, support enforcement officers have fewer payment problems and fewer phone calls which frees up their time for other complex collection work.
- In July 2008, DCS achieved a significant milestone as it processed more than 50% of incoming payments electronically. The continued growth in electronic payments contributes to our ability to process payments daily with fewer resources. Currently, DCS electronically processes 190,000 payments totaling over \$30 million monthly using only one staff member.
- **DCS was honored with the National Child Support Enforcement's 2008 Program Awareness Award. The award singled out DCS from all 50 states for its outreach efforts to the employer community in Washington State.**

Cons:

- At times, the managers who make the decision for the employer to switch to EFT do not attend the workshops.
- Businesses say they do not "trust" electronic payments methods.
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- Difficulty getting "real" answers from employers involved in focus groups.
- Difficulty obtaining data.
- Small businesses may not have or believe they do not have necessary equipment and resources to participate in electronic reporting or electronic payment processing.

**23. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?**

DCS participated in more than 30 training events in 2008 versus 13 in 2007. Employers now contact DCS to ask about training. More professional organizations see the benefit to having DCS participate in their conference and non-conference training events. Support enforcement officers in the ten Washington field offices have one point person to contact regarding many employer related issues.

**24. What limitations or obstacles might other states expect to encounter if they attempt to adopt this program?**

One obstacle other states may encounter is low management or leadership support. Getting buy-in from executive leadership is important.

Other states may not see instant results and subsequently pull back resources. Success has come through a sustained, long term effort. Payroll staff that typically withhold and remit child support are often very busy and may not see the benefits at first glance. Follow up is a key to success.

Another obstacle is locating available training and outreach staff in training sites.

## 2009 Innovations Awards Program Program Categories and Subcategories

Use these as guidelines to determine the appropriate *Program Category* for your state's submission and list that program category on page one of this application. Choose only one.

### *Infrastructure and Economic Development*

- Business/Commerce
- Economic Development
- Transportation

### *Government Operations*

- Administration
- Elections
- Public Information
- Revenue

### *Health & Human Services*

- Aging
- Children & Families
- Health Services
- Housing
- Human Services

### *Human Resources/Education*

- Education
- Labor
- Management
- Personnel
- Training and Development
- Workforce Development

### *Natural Resources*

- Agriculture
- Energy
- Environment
- Environmental Protection
- Natural Resources
- Parks & Recreation
- Water Resources

### *Public Safety/Corrections*

- Corrections
- Courts
- Criminal Justice
- Drugs
- Emergency Management
- Public Safety

**Save in .doc or rtf. Return completed application electronically to [innovations@csg.org](mailto:innovations@csg.org) or mail to:**

CSG Innovations Awards 2009  
The Council of State Governments  
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This application is also available at [www.csg.org](http://www.csg.org), in the Programs section.

**Deadline: March 2, 2009**