



MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JULY 21, 2009

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TENNESSEE SEES RECORD CHILD SUPPORT COLLECTIONS *DESPITE TROUBLED ECONOMY, CHILDREN STILL RECEIVING SUPPORT*

NASHVILLE, Tenn.— The Tennessee Department of Human Services collected more than \$557 million for children through its child support program over the last state fiscal year, surpassing the previous year's record of \$530 million.

"Children depend not only on the emotional support from their parents, but their financial support as well," said DHS Commissioner Gina Lodge. "DHS and our child support partners across Tennessee are committed to improving the lives of children and ensuring that they receive their court-ordered support."

The majority of child support collections are made through wage withholding, or garnishments to a parents' paycheck. DHS also uses license revocation, federal offset programs and liens to collect child support dollars from parents who aren't paying their support on a regular basis. More than 24,000 tax refunds totaling \$33.25 million were collected in SFY 2009. Nearly \$420,000 in federal stimulus checks were intercepted and sent to children whose parents were not paying their support. DHS last month collected \$155,000 in unpaid child support from an inheritance in Shelby County. After years of non-payment, the two children in this case finally received support they were owed.

The Tennessee Child Support program has partners in all 31 judicial districts across the state and handles 431,000 cases. More than 67 percent of cases—or 289,000—are under a court order. A case must be "under order" before child support can be collected.

Child support services are available to any resident who needs help. A parent who needs to have paternity established, an order established or enforced can apply for assistance at their local child support office.

More than \$59 million in ordered child support is owed to children across the state each month, however only 53.3 percent of the support is actually paid.

"DHS wants to work with parents who are having a hard time during this economic downturn," said Lodge. "Parents who have seen their wages decreased or who have lost their job may be entitled to an order modification. We want to make sure that their children receive some support and the parent isn't penalized during these tough times."

Parents should contact their local child support office if they wish to have their orders modified. For more information on the Tennessee Child Support Program, visit:

<http://www.state.tn.us/humanserv/child-support.htm>

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