



## MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

*Maryland's Social Services Agency*



### PRESS RELEASE

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**For more information:**

Paula Tolson

[ptolson@dhr.state.md.us](mailto:ptolson@dhr.state.md.us)

410-767-7758

### **PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY OFFICE OF CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT SECURES \$900,000 GRANT TO ASSIST UNEMPLOYED NON-CUSTODIAL PARENTS**

**BALTIMORE** – The Prince George's County Office of Child Support Enforcement, an arm of the Department of Human Resources, will establish the "Survive and Thrive" program to address the sudden and prolonged effect of the economic downturn on the child support caseload and program operations. In Prince George's County, the number of unemployed individuals has increased from 16,400 in 2007 to 30,600 in 2009, which is in line with national trends.

"Survive and Thrive" helps non-custodial parents who receive unemployment insurance benefits, are work and job ready, and are not making full payments on his/her child support. Letters will be sent to those non-custodial parents informing them of the program benefits, and inviting them to come in to meet with project staff. The initiative will assist a minimum of 300 participants to reach independence and maintain stability through gainful employment.

This grant aligns and coordinates with existing employment services programs such as the DHR's MD RISE program (Reaching Independence and Stability through Employment) and the Prince George's County Non-Custodial Parent Employment Program (NPEP) to reach an underserved segment of the population.

"This grant strengthens the coordination of programs aimed at removing employment barriers for non-custodial parents," said Joan Kennedy, director of the Prince George's Child Support Enforcement Office. "We frequently see parents who want to pay child support, but do not have the ability to pay. We will work with them to remove their payment barriers."

The child support office coordinates with the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation's One-Stop Career Center, the Prince George's County Government/Office of Community Relations/Community Mediation, the Prince George's County Circuit Court, and the Prince George's Department of Social Services. Together they provide a range of services for noncustodial parents who want to meet their child(ren)'s financial needs, but are unable to do so because of job loss.

The Project team will consist of a local project manager and three staff persons, who will manage the caseload, modify orders, complete data entry, assess the project participants, and facilitate mediation where there is a need.

This demonstration grant will operate until 2011.

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The Maryland Department of Human Resources is the state's social service provider. The agency collaborates with 24 local jurisdictions to: provide foster care, adoption, and protective services to children; collect and distribute child support payments; provide protective services, case- management, supportive housing, in-home aide services, and respite care to vulnerable adults; and provide temporary cash, food stamps, and medical assistance to families. It also funds programs for homeless persons, refugees, and migrant- workers, victims of crime and women who are displaced, battered, or assaulted. Last year, DHR served 760,000 people in need. In terms of its annual budget, DHR is Maryland's fourth largest state agency