

Vol. 2 No. 1	<i>Everyone Deserves to be Safe</i>	April 1998 - 2
<b>FRAGILE: Handle With Care</b>		
An AFS Newsletter on Domestic Violence		

**From the desk of Sandie Hoback, AFS Administrator:**

Within the AFS self-sufficiency strategy, child support is one of our most important tools in helping welfare clients achieve self-sufficiency. Not only for its obvious financial value, but because we believe that *both* parents have a responsibility to support their children. AFS will continue to expand its emphasis on collecting child support. But as we do, it's important that we remain mindful of the special sensitivities faced in collecting child support for victims of abuse. I want to assure you that, in these situations, our primary concern will always be the safety of the family. There can be no compromise on that. What we in AFSF must do now is find new and effective methods of obtaining the child support these families deserve. This will take a lot of cooperative work with the state's Child Support Program and domestic-violence advocates, and a lot of creative thinking on everyone's part. I know we are all up to the challenge, and I look forward to the time when many more families who have been victimized by domestic violence are able to use their child-support payments to help rebuild their lives.

**Safe Collection of Child Support is the Goal**

There is little disagreement with the principle of holding absent parents accountable for their responsibility to support their children. However, in attempting to establish paternity and pursue child support it is of vital importance for everyone in contact with a DV case to be aware of the need to safeguard information relating to the location of victims in order to avoid inadvertently reintroducing the abusers back into their lives and exposing the victims to further harm or distress. Communication among AFS, Child Support, and providers is essential when DV may be at issue. With this in mind, it should be encouraging to learn that in some areas AFS and local DV providers are moving into joint case management in cases where DV is an issue. The following is an excerpt from a letter to Sandy Day, District 1 Community Resource Coordinator, from Jo Jenkins, Director of the Tillamook County Women's Crisis Center: "The Tillamook County Women's Crisis Center (WCC) and the Tillamook Branch of Adult and Family Services have had the opportunity this February and March to partner in a rather unique way. In an effort to have better communication and understanding between the two agencies, a joint training project was undertaken. WCC and AFS brought in Margaret Frimoth of Astoria to educate the offices on Communication Skills and Conflict Resolution, Oppression Awareness, and Supportive vs Enabling/disempowering Case Management. Each of the three sections were 3 hours in duration and very well attended by, not only participants from Tillamook, but from St. Helens and Astoria branches as well. The workshops were highly beneficial to both WCC and AFS because they opened the door for true partnering and collaboration in the area of providing services to victims of domestic violence. The next phase of this joint effort will include case studies for review and discussions around joint case management between WCC and AFS. This collaborative venture is a first in Tillamook County and both agencies are committed to a successful outcome".



**ADDRESS OF WHAT ?????**

Q. I understand that if an AFS client who is fearful of her ex-partner, the absent parent, does not want to claim good cause for not pursuing child support but also does not want her address known to the absent parent, she can use an "address of record" to avoid disclosing her home address. How does that work?

A. The address of record is a mailing address that can be used for child support purposes only. The address of record will appear on legal documents such as pleadings, returns of service, child support orders and other documents which are sent to the obligor. For example, the obligee may designate a post office box or relative's address. When an AFS client wants to use an address of record, the AFS case manager will notify SED of the mailing address by using the child support referral screen (SMAC).

Q. I've heard that using an address of record hasn't been completely successful in the past. Is that true?

A. Actually, it has been a problem in some cases. Oregon statutes were believed to have covered use of a contact address for a limited time only, and after six months it would be dropped. However, when this issue was discussed during the April 13th meeting of the legislative Confidentiality Interim Committee, it was determined that the intent of the legislation was not to delete the address of record if there was still a reason to use it. Since this was a manual process, Support Enforcement Division agreed to change the prior practice immediately so that from now on, the address of record will stay operational until the obligee informs the child support program it is no longer needed.



**QUIZ**

Non-payment of child support is a key cause of child poverty in the United States.

1. According to recent research, what percent of all non-custodial fathers either pay no child support or less than 15 percent?
  - (a) over 40%
  - (b) over 60%
  - (c) over 80%
  
2. In 1993, out of five million family welfare eligibility determinations in the United States, how many custodial parents claimed "good cause" for refusing to cooperate in establishing paternity and child support?
  - (a) 6,585
  - (b) 40,000
  - (c) 65,000.
  
3. According to a 1996 Bureau of Justice Statistics report, women living in households with annual incomes below \$10,000 are
  - (a) two times
  - (b) four times
  - (C) six timesmore likely to be violently attacked, usually by intimates.
  
4. According to the same report, how many male defendants in spousal homicide cases were separated from their victims at the time of their murder?
  - (a) nearly a third
  - (b) over half
  - (c) two thirds
  
5. According to the Administration for Children and Families, in today's society, what percent of custodial parents are women?
  - (a) about 75%
  - (b) about 85%
  - (c) about 95%

Answers:

Highlight inside the box below:

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## Congratulations

Each year the staff at Battered Persons' Advocacy (BPA) in Douglas County recognizes a community partner for the work they do for joint clients. This year the Roseburg Branch of Adult and Family Services received the award for work they have done assisting domestic violence victims through partnering with BPA. Sharron Kipling, Community Resources Coordinator for District 6, reports that "we are very proud of this award and the commitment our staff has shown working with BPA through AFS and as volunteers using their own time."

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## MYTHS & FACTS

*Myth:* Women who have been victims of domestic violence are more likely to have been single and in an uncommitted relationship.

*Fact:* A new study at the University of Massachusetts Boston found that women who have been victims of domestic violence are more likely to have been married and to be in current conflict over child support, custody, and visitation with a former or current boyfriend or husband.

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