

**NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services
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North Dakota Child Support Program announces results from recent Amnesty Project

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Human Services' Child Support Program announced today results from its Amnesty Project, an effort to help parents who were behind on child support payments establish regular monthly support payments for their children. The project was launched on June 1 and extended through July 31, 2016.

During the two-month Amnesty Project, the number of payment plans signed by parents doubled in comparison to the monthly average from the past year. Parents signed 163 payment plans in June, and 144 payment plans in July. Typically the agency negotiates about 73 payment plans per month.

“The increased volume of payment plans indicates a strong level of interest in the Amnesty Project and parents wanting to support their children,” said Jim Fleming, director of the Child Support Program. “About 87 percent of the payment plans signed in June were still in effect at the end of July meaning the plans yielded more than just a one-time payment. Of the June plans that were not followed, a number have already been re-negotiated with a payment toward past-due support.”

The Amnesty Project also included a match incentive. For every \$2 paid toward past-due support, eligible parents received a “write-off” of \$1 toward accrued interest or past-due support assigned to the state. A total of 64 parents took advantage of the match incentive. The total reduction in past-due support, combining the payment and the match, was over \$108,000, averaging about \$1,700 per participating parent. The largest payment was over \$11,600.

“This project included some limited-time incentives, but Child Support has ongoing flexibility to work with parents who are behind on support but willing to make ongoing, reliable payments to support their children,” Fleming said.

To raise awareness about the Amnesty Project, the Child Support Program sent letters to nearly 2,600 parents with suspended driver's licenses, or outstanding warrants for non-payment of court-ordered child support.

Fleming said the Amnesty Project gave parents who were behind in child support a chance to voluntarily start paying support, and now the division will need to look at increasing enforcement efforts with parents who are able to pay but did not participate in the opportunity to enter into a payment plan.

This was the first time the North Dakota Child Support Program offered the Amnesty Project. Over \$250 million in past-due support is owed in cases being enforced by the Child Support Program.

The North Dakota Department of Human Services' Child Support Program serves about 66,400 children per year by helping disburse nearly \$158 million in support payments to their families. The program also helps to establish paternity and child support orders, and takes enforcement action against those parents who are not supporting their children.

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