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Noncustodial Parents Step Up to Career Pathways in Baltimore City

New partnerships facilitate job-training, job placement, and family-sustaining wages for Baltimore City noncustodial parents

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Baltimore—Where can a noncustodial parent who was recently released from four years in prison, who has nine children and six active noncompliant cases, find a program that results in his securing two jobs, right-sizing his four child support orders, fully meeting his support obligations, obtaining custody of one of his children, and closing five of his open cases? If the parent lives in Baltimore City, he can turn to STEP Up.

During the 2016 legislative session, the DHR Child Support Enforcement Administration (CSEA) partnered with Maryland State Delegate Samuel I. Rosenberg, who introduced landmark legislation (House Bill 1502) to establish a three-year, city-wide pilot program known as STEP Up (Supporting, Training and Employing Parents). House Bill 1502 received unanimous support from the legislature and was signed into law by Governor Hogan as Chapter 312, Acts of 2016. STEP Up targets Baltimore's low-income, unemployed, and underemployed noncustodial parents, helping them obtain job training and employment, become economically self-sufficient, and make consistent child support payments.

The program was developed by CSEA in partnership with Delegate Rosenberg, DHR's Family Investment Administration, and the Baltimore City Office of Child Support Services in the summer of 2015. STEP Up is also working closely with the Mayor's Office of Employment Development, the local workforce investment board, the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation, Baltimore City Circuit Court, and the Baltimore City Department of Social Services. STEP Up is open to all noncustodial parents who have a Baltimore City child support case and are subject to the jurisdiction of the Baltimore City Circuit Court.

Over the course of the first year of the pilot, CSEA anticipates enrolling about 360 noncustodial parents. Baltimore City has Maryland's largest child support caseload, representing approximately one-third of all child support cases in the state. The city is also home to a powerful network of community-based organizations that administer successful job-driven training programs and are supported by the strong leadership and experience of the Baltimore City Office of Child Support Services.

Those who are interested in getting connected with the program should contact Fatima Lewis or any program STEP Up staff by calling at (410) 951-8000. They can also visit the office in Baltimore City at 1 North Charles Street on the fifth floor. In addition, any organizations or groups who would like to coordinate a visit from the STEP Up! Outreach Team should contact Theresa Lee at tt.lee@maryland.gov.

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