

**2007 Innovations Awards Program
APPLICATION**

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ID # (assigned by CSG): 07-MW-09NDPRIDE

Please provide the following information, adding space as necessary:

State: North Dakota

Assign Program Category (applicant)

Health and Human Services, Children and Families

1. Program Name

Parental Responsibility Initiative for the Development of Employment (PRIDE)

2. Administering Agency

North Dakota Department of Human Services (including the TANF and Child Support Enforcement programs and the Northeast and Badlands Human Service Centers); Job Service North Dakota; Southwest, Northeast, and Northeast Central Judicial Districts; and the county-managed Regional Child Support Enforcement Units.

3. Contact Person (Name and Title)

Mike Schwindt, Director

4. Address

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Child Support Enforcement Division
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8. Web site Address

<http://www.nd.gov/humanservices/services/childsupport/proginfo/misc/pride.html>

9. Please provide a two-sentence description of the program.

The PRIDE project offers an alternative to incarceration when a parent is held in contempt for nonpayment of child support stemming from unemployment or underemployment of a noncustodial parent.

The PRIDE project provides case management, job skills improvement, job placement, and supportive services to help a noncustodial parent obtain or improve employment.

10. How long has this program been operational (month and year)? Note: the program must be between 9 months and 5 years old on April 2, 2007, to be considered.

The pilot project started in the southwest portion of North Dakota in April 2005 and was expanded to the northeast portion of the state in January 2006.

11. Why was the program created? What problem[s] or issue[s] was it designed to address?

Child support obligations are ordered by a court. A person failing to pay child support can be held in contempt of court and incarcerated until making the required payment. However, incarceration is not an effective incentive for making a payment if the parent does not have, or refuses to obtain, a job.

The project stems from a district court's frustration with the lack of options when dealing with chronic nonpayers, because of the parent's refusal or inability to obtain and retain gainful employment, and the desire for an alternative to incarcerating a parent until a payment is made. PRIDE offers the court and the parent an opportunity to avoid future problems by improving a parent's employability, which benefits both children and taxpayers.

12. Describe the specific activities and operations of the program in chronological order.

April 2005 – Planning meetings with Job Service North Dakota, the Regional Child Support Enforcement Unit, and the DHS TANF and Child Support state offices for the southwest portion of North Dakota.

First referral to PRIDE in southwest North Dakota.

September 2005 - Planning meetings with Job Service North Dakota, the Regional Child Support Enforcement Unit, and the DHS TANF and Child Support state offices for the northeast portion of North Dakota.

January 2006 – PRIDE program expanded to two counties in northeast North Dakota using WIA funds.

July 2006 – The proposed budget for the 2007-09 biennium for the Department of Human Services identifies funds from the TANF block grant to expand the PRIDE project to all parts of the state after July 1, 2007.

March 2007 – Both houses of the North Dakota legislature approved versions of the budget that includes the PRIDE project and scheduled a conference committee to work out final details.

13. Why is the program a new and creative approach or method?

This project is new and creative because it involves multiple branches of government and multiple agencies as well as state and local governments.

For many years, the contempt of court process has included a potential for the court to direct a parent to look for work. However, there had been no connection between the court's directive and the ability of Job Service North Dakota (the state's Workforce Investment Act agency) to develop the parent's job skills and employability. As a result, the court's directive often resulted in another court hearing to address the parent's failure to make good faith efforts to look for work, rather than employment and payment of child support.

Under the PRIDE project, the court's order and referral to PRIDE initiates a process in which a caseworker from Job Service North Dakota will meet with the parent and develop an employment plan.

The project also is creative because it is not just about economics. The State's TANF, child support enforcement, vocational rehabilitation, mental health, and substance abuse programs are all within the same umbrella agency. Thus, if a parent is unemployed or underemployed due to disability, mental health or substance abuse issues, the plan for the parent can include treatment from a local human service center.

14. What were the program's start-up costs? (Provide details about specific purchases for this program, staffing needs and other financial expenditures, as well as existing materials, technology and staff already in place.)

The pilot projects each began with the addition of one staff at the local Job Service North Dakota offices in southwest and northeast North Dakota. Total expenditures from program inception through January 2007 were \$199,584. This includes \$25,984 for supportive services such as car repairs, day care, work clothes, transportation, licenses, or tools necessary to enable customers to obtain and retain jobs.

15. What are the program's annual operational costs?

The estimated annual cost for expanding the PRIDE program statewide is projected at \$555,000 including the salaries and operating costs for seven and a half staff positions.

16. How is the program funded?

The program has been funded so far using TANF and WIA incentive funds. Effective July 1, 2007, the statewide program will be funded through the TANF block grant.

17. Did this program require the passage of legislation, executive order or regulations? If YES, please indicate the citation number.

No

18. What equipment, technology and software are used to operate and administer this program?

The PRIDE project required little equipment, technology, or software beyond access to the automated child support enforcement system to identify delinquent parents and schedule appropriate contempt proceedings, along with data collection and report generation software.

19. To the best of your knowledge, did this program originate in your state? If YES, please indicate the innovator's name, present address, telephone number and e-mail address.

Yes.

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20. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If YES, which ones and how does this program differ?

No. We are not aware of other states using a similar partnership among the judiciary and several executive branch agencies and programs.

21. Has the program been fully implemented? If NO, what actions remain to be taken?

No. The project started as a pilot in one area of the state, expanded to another area, and is expected to expand statewide during the next year.

22. Briefly evaluate (pro and con) the program's effectiveness in addressing the defined problem[s] or issue[s]. Provide tangible examples.

The contempt of court and referral process can be narrowly tailored to unemployed or underemployed parents. The potential for incarceration is a powerful incentive for a parent to develop and complete an employment plan.

The four main goals of PRIDE are:

- 1) Securing employment of the noncustodial parent
- 2) Cost avoidance to TANF, Food Stamps, and Medicaid programs
- 3) Increasing the amount of child support payments/reduction in rate of nonpayment
- 4) Providing alternatives to court enforcement actions.

To date, all four goals have been achieved.

- 1) Since most referred parents have a history of nonpayment to a point where alternatives are limited, the changed behavior has been quite positive. For example, 74.1% of parents have obtained employment, taking an average of 1.8 months to find jobs.
- 2) Public assistance benefits to support the parent or the parent's dependents decreased \$123,490 in the six months following referral to PRIDE. The number of benefit months in the six months after a parent's referral to PRIDE decreased 31.3% for Food Stamps, 32.6% for TANF, and 19.2% for Medicaid.
- 3) The average monthly child support payment increased 88.2%, with an 18.5% decrease in the rate of nonpayment of support.
- 4) The average contempt hearings decreased by 60% per month for the referred individuals.

Some parents have barriers to gainful employment that cannot be overcome in a short period of time, such as disabilities, addictions, or convictions for criminal offenses other than nonpayment of child support. Also, a parent can avoid participating in PRIDE by moving to another jurisdiction.

23. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?

After starting in a less populated part of the state in April 2005, the project was expanded to a more populated area nine months later in January 2006. Just over one year later, the number of parents referred in each area was roughly the same (76 in the southwest and 71 in the northeast). The basic programmatic process is essentially the same in both parts of the state.

24. What limitations or obstacles might other states expect to encounter if they attempt to adopt this program?

One of the motivations for participating in PRIDE is avoiding incarceration for contempt of court. Thus, a key component to success is the support of the court and the willingness to insist that parents continue participation in PRIDE, with swift responses if the parent stops participating.

PRIDE success would be diminished if the unemployment rate is high, because of greater competition for available employment.

Parents who are willing to find work and pay child support may still face a variety of obstacles to employment. As a result, there must be a comprehensive network of services available to parents to enhance employability and address need for treatment.

PRIDE is most successful for parents who are willing to work and who are not inclined to flee to another jurisdiction to avoid the contempt of court process.

Another potential challenge is that while PRIDE referrals save staff time in the long run in terms of contempt proceedings and child support collection efforts, there is an immediate investment of time after receiving a referral to meet with the parent and develop an employment plan. In addition, failure to participate requires an immediate and firm response by the court through another contempt proceeding, or parents learn that failure to participate carries little consequence.

2007 Innovations Awards Program Program Categories and Subcategories

Use these as guidelines to determine the appropriate Program Category for your state's submission and list that program category on page one of this application. Choose only one.

Infrastructure and Economic Development

- Business/Commerce
- Economic Development
- Transportation

Government Operations

- Administration
- Elections
- Public Information
- Revenue

Health & Human Services

- Aging
- Children & Families
- Health Services
- Housing
- Human Services

Human Resources/Education

- Education
- Labor
- Management
- Personnel
- Training and Development
- Workforce Development

Natural Resources

- Agriculture
- Energy
- Environment
- Environmental Protection
- Natural Resources
- Parks & Recreation
- Water Resources

Public Safety/Corrections

- Corrections
- Courts
- Criminal Justice
- Drugs
- Emergency Management
- Public Safety

Save in .doc or rtf. Return completed application electronically to innovations@csg.org or mail to:

CSG Innovations Awards 2007
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This application is also available at www.csg.org, in the Programs section.

Deadline: April 2, 2007