

NEWS RELEASE

May 30, 2013



ORANGE COUNTY GRAND JURY

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Federal Government & Grand Jury Agree on Fixing the Law

Santa Ana, California--- The 2012/13 Orange County Grand Jury has produced two reports on Child Support. The first, *"The Best Interest of the Child..."* advocates paternal involvement. The second, *"Fixing the Law..."* advocates California amend its laws to permit the Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) to make custody orders.

While the Grand Jury was producing its reports, the federal government was preparing its own proposal in very much the same vein. On April 15, 2013, the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement proposed the *"Child Support and Fatherhood Initiative..."* It proposes among other things:

- The proposal also requires states to establish access and visitation responsibilities in all initial child support orders, just as custody arrangements are typically settled at the same time divorces are finalized.
- Federal resources are made available to states that choose to include parenting time responsibilities in initial child support orders beginning in FY 2014 and all states are required to include parenting time responsibilities in all new child support orders beginning in FY 2019. This phase-in approach will allow some states to begin immediately and will provide an opportunity for all states to learn from the lessons of "early adopters."

Orange County DCSS leadership envisioned just this kind of approach to child support. They provided both the intellectual and the motivational push for the Grand Jury's two studies.

Compared to the cost of poor parenting, collection of child support becomes insignificant. Teenaged girls abandoned by their father are 2.5 times more likely to get pregnant than girls with a father in their lives. Over 80% of prison inmates grew up without paternal involvement. The loss of human potential and the cost of incarcerating youth gone bad far exceeds the child support dollars collected by DCSS. Quoting again from the federal *"Child Support and Fatherhood Initiative..."*

"When fathers are engaged in the lives of their children, they are more likely to meet their financial obligations. This creates a double win for children; an engaged parent and financial security."

The Grand Jury sincerely hopes Orange County will take the initiative to promote legislation encouraged by the federal government, leadership of the DCSS and the Grand Jury's report, *"Fixing the Law..."* To do so would do honor to the County.

The Grand Jury report, including Findings/Conclusions and Recommendations, can be found on the Orange County Grand Jury's website, www.ocgrandjury.org. This report will also be included as part of the Final Report of the 2012-2013 Grand Jury, to be published later this year.

2012-2013 Orange County Grand Jury

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ray Garcia".

Raymond Garcia
Foreman