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# 2016 EXCELLENCE IN INNOVATION Awards Program

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<b>Project ID</b>	HS-9
<b>Title of Program</b>	Fatherhood Initiative Program (Show Me the Way)
<b>Program Category</b>	Human Services
<b>Submission Date</b>	6/10/2016 4:59:37 PM
<b>County</b>	Edgecombe
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<b>County Manager</b>	Eric Evans
<b>Supervisor</b>	Edgecombe County Commissioners
<b>Implementation Date</b>	8/1/2015
<b>FLSA Designation</b>	Exempt
<b>Project Team Members</b>	<b>Marva G. Scott</b> , Director and <b>Betty Battle</b> , Deputy Director

**Description of Productivity Improvement**

According to the North Carolina Child Support Office statistics for March 2015 through March 2016, Edgecombe County Department of Social Services has been listed as one of the top five (5) counties who increased their caseload under orders; as well as one of the top five counties to increase in child support collections at a rate of 7.5%. This is the result of our implementation of a Fatherhood Initiative Program called "Show Me the Way". We began this new Initiative August 1, 2015.

### **Description of why this project was initiated**

From time to time I sat in Child Support Court and got to see first-hand the response of the non-custodial parent, (absent parent), the custodial parent, Attorney as well as our Child Support Agents when the Judge ordered an absent parent to go out and bring back twenty (20) job applications to prove he looked for employment. Often at that moment, the non-custodial parent believes that he has gotten away without being ordered to pay child support. I believe there was limited success with this method. I along with my Deputy Director spoke with our Attorney about implementing a different approach to addressing the issues of men not being responsible in reference to not paying their child support obligations. We met with our Chief District Judge William Farris, our Attorney and Child Support staff to discuss a more comprehensive model for Edgecombe County DSS Child Support Program. I believed that a new model would allow non-custodial fathers to get the necessary training and/or certification so that they could obtain and keep a job. This model includes fathers who have criminal records who have used the excuse "I can't get a job because of my record." In this new Initiative we work with employers who hire those with a felony or misdemeanor conviction.

### **Quantifiable results (sustainability, cost savings, cost avoidance and/or a higher level of service).**

#### **Indication of what resources were used and what was done with any accrued time savings**

Here is how the Initiative works: When the non-custodial parent comes to court and has not paid his child support or is not employed our DSS Attorney recommends to the Judge that the non-custodial father enter our program. Referrals are also made by the Judge and the Child Support Agents. A non-custodial father can volunteer as long as he has an active case and/or owes arrears. He is required to do the following: Attend a mandatory 6 Week 24/7 Dad Class each week for two (2) hours. Upon graduating from the 24/7 Dad Class the non-custodial father is required to attend weekly Soft Skills Classes and Pre-Employment Classes in order to better prepare him to get and keep a job. These classes are taught our Human Resources Placement Specialist who focus on identifying and addressing some of the barriers to employment that fathers face. Local employers attend the Pre-Employment classes and acts as Speaker for each class. The employers most often than not interview and hire on the spot. The non-custodial father is required to register with NC Works. If he refuses a job or quits a job without just cause he is brought back to court the following month and his case is heard before the Judge for non-compliance. During participation in the Fatherhood Initiative fathers are exempt from court for 90 days as long as he is actively participating in the program. Our goal is to have non-custodial fathers into a job within 30 days after completing the classroom portion of the program. When we speak with fathers whom have graduated from the program they express that they have a better understanding of the importance of paying child support to care for their children and being a more responsible father. When we first began our program in August 2015 we had 13 father enrolled and 8 of them became employed. In just nine months after program implementation 179 fathers have enrolled in the Fatherhood Initiative and 103 are actively employed. The employment of these fathers has contributed to an increase in our child support collections. Almost

60% of our enrollment in the Fatherhood Initiative Program are now employed in just nine months. Our year one goal is to have 200 fathers participate in our Fatherhood Initiative. At our May 2016 Child Support court we had 35 new fathers to enroll in our Fatherhood Initiative Program. As a result, we will exceed our year one goal. In addition, several community partners and employers are helping to fund our Fatherhood Initiative through In-Kind Contributions. This Initiative has been a cost savings to our agency and county in the time that an Agent would spend processing, preparing and filing a motion, the time that the Deputies would have to spend serving the motion and the time that the DSS Attorney and Judges would have to spend hearing these cases.

**Other descriptive information**

This Initiative can be implemented in all 100 counties of North Carolina at a very low cost to the counties.