

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Child Support AMNESTY WEEK June 19 – June 23, 2017**

There are approximately 450 outstanding arrest warrants for failure to pay Child Support in Baldwin County, therefore the Baldwin County District Attorney's Office in conjunction with the Baldwin County Department of Human Resources will be declaring the week of June 19th – June 23rd, 2017 as Child Support Amnesty Week. This week is significant as it immediately follows Father's Day. We know not all non-custodial parents are fathers, however, statistics show that most absent parents are men. For this reason, we would like to impress upon those who are behind in their support obligations to take this opportunity to turn things around. This could be the week you commit yourself to faithfully supporting your children financially. We understand that "life" sometimes throws a curve ball with sickness or job loss, but children depend on both parents to provide the necessities to live a productive life. Clearly, our main objective is to make sure child support payments are made regularly and in the correct amounts. While most parents pay on time, lapses of payment do occur. When they do, a family's budget can be seriously challenged. Some non-custodial parents spend a lot of time and effort evading their financial responsibility to their children.

Our division Assistant District Attorney, Harry D'Olive, puts it like this – "Our goal, contrary to popular belief, is NOT to put people in jail but to insure the children receive the financial support the Court has ordered for them. Unfortunately, it sometimes takes a short incarceration to get the attention of the parent that is obligated to pay. They must realize that the children are the ones who suffer when that financial obligation is not met. The children had no say as to who would be their parents, or as to what type of environment they would be reared in. The parents made that choice and it's the parents' responsibility to support their children both emotionally and financially."

Andrea Chastang, our Division Director says, "that often-times, we encounter dads or moms who won't pay their child support due to animosity toward the other parent. They let emotional issues get in the way. They let pride or prejudice interfere with the real reason to financially support their children. This is sometimes devastating to the child. Not only are their basic needs not being met, but it puts a label on those children and sends a message that they aren't important enough; that they don't matter. Having said that, we don't want to send folks to jail. We want them to pay their support. We want children to believe they ARE important and deserve support from both parents."

Baldwin County Department of Human Resources Director, ReMigia Coleman reminds us that "The importance of collecting child support cannot be understated in that it helps to provide economic stability for children. Helping a family to become self-sufficient through other forms

of income other than public assistance is critical. Establishing regular payment of child support is a means to that end.”

This is how the plan will work: During the aforementioned week, non-custodial parents, with outstanding child support warrants, may contact the District Attorney’s Office to arrange a payment plan toward back money owed. This project is aimed at giving non-custodial parents the opportunity to get back on track with their child support obligations and to ensure that their children are properly supported. Once an agreement has been reached, the outstanding warrant will be recalled. While past child support arrears will not be forgiven, the District Attorney’s office wants to give people the opportunity to do the right thing, avoid incarceration and support your children.

The time to call is Monday - June 19<sup>th</sup> through Friday - June 23<sup>rd</sup> between the hours of 8:00 am and 4:30 pm. Authorized representatives with the District Attorney’s Office will be available to take calls all week. The number to call is 251-937-0253.

Side note: The District Attorney’s Office and the Department of Human Resources work effortlessly to establish and collect child support in this County. Currently the two offices have a case load of around 6000 cases. I’d like to personally thank our staff and the DHR child support staff for their dedication to this program. It is often a thankless job and their efforts seem to go unnoticed. If not for this team, and their dedication to this program, many children in Baldwin County would go without financial support.