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Secretary Gassman Announces State Will Begin Issuing Wisconsin Support Collections Debit Card

*Parents Will No Longer Have to Wait for Checks in the Mail;
New Service Provides Direct Deposit or Visa Debit Card*

MADISON – Parents who receive support payments such as child support and alimony will no longer have to wait for checks to arrive in the mail or pay often expensive check cashing fees, thanks to the new Wisconsin Support Collections Debit Card.

Beginning as a pilot this fall in St. Croix and Jefferson counties, parents can either choose between direct deposit or a Visa debit card to receive their support payments, Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman announced today. The program is expected to expand to the rest of the state early next year. By early 2008, parents in all Wisconsin counties who have not yet signed up for direct deposit will receive a Visa debit card in the mail. Cards will be sent to families based upon which county is handling their child support case, not based upon where the parent lives.

“We are proud to provide this convenient new service,” Secretary Gassman said. “This program will enable the state to quickly and conveniently distribute child support and alimony payments to parents so they can provide for and support their families.”

Secretary Gassman said she expects the debit card – a prepaid electronic payment card otherwise called a check card – to be especially attractive to the child support customers who do not have bank accounts. This new program will provide families easy access to their support payments while avoiding expensive check cashing fees. Each time a support payment is made, the amount will post automatically to the debit card. Parents can use the card to purchase goods anywhere that accepts Visa and can use ATMs to obtain cash.

To help parents decide which payment option is best for them, a comparison of the two services is posted on the Department’s website at dwd.wisconsin.gov/bcs/card.htm. Local child support agencies will have debit card brochures and other information for parents who do not have Internet access.

Since June, DWD has been sending notices about direct deposit and debit cards with support checks. Parents will be notified again shortly before their debit card is issued. The card will come with additional information, and the card provider, JP Morgan Chase, will provide account and balance information online at www.myaccount.chase.com and toll-free at 866-817-0761. Individuals should not call JP Morgan Chase until they receive and activate their card. Parents will also receive a monthly statement of their debit card accounts.

More than 100,000 support payments are sent out each week totaling almost a \$1 billion each year. Currently, about half of the support payees have signed up for direct deposit. With the addition of the debit card, more payments will get to families more effectively, Secretary Gassman said.