

# Child Support

pennsylvania  
handbook



## Bureau of Child Support Enforcement

For general information about child support or to  
discuss specific case problems, contact:

**Child Support Helpline**  
**1-800-932-0211**

## Pennsylvania State Collection and Disbursement Unit

If you pay or receive support and have questions or problems regarding the  
receipt of your actual support dollars,  
you can call the PA State Collection and Disbursement Unit at:

**1-877-727- SCDU (7238)**

**1-877-676-9582**  
(For the hearing impaired)



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# Pennsylvania Child Support Enforcement Program

Child support is money a parent pays to help provide food, clothing and other things for his or her child. Child support may include medical support, payment of uncovered medical bills and contributions to child care costs.

The Department of Human Services, Bureau of Child Support Enforcement (BCSE) administers the Pennsylvania Child Support Enforcement Program. State and federal laws govern how child support orders are established and enforced. These laws also govern how child support is collected.

## County Domestic Relations Sections

Child support enforcement services in Pennsylvania are provided by the Domestic Relations Section (DRS) of the county Court of Common Pleas.

The DRS helps parents apply for child support services, establish paternity and support orders, and enforce support orders. A DRS worker will set up an appointment or help with an application. If you have domestic or family violence concerns, talk with the DRS about safety measures. See page 8, "Domestic Violence: Addressing Safety," for more information about how DRSs handle cases in which domestic violence may be a concern.

The county DRS can also help if the noncustodial parent lives in another Pennsylvania county, a different state or even another country. The noncustodial parent is the parent who does not live with the child and must pay child support.

Feel free to ask questions of the DRS worker. You should keep a written record of contacts with the DRS and the documents received from the DRS.

## Applying for Child Support

When applying for child support, a complaint for child support must be filed with the court. If the mother of the child is unmarried, the DRS will

need proof of the child's paternity. For additional information about establishing paternity, see page 5.

The DRS will schedule a support conference and send notices with the date and time to the parents.

Child support owed to the family usually begins on the date the complaint is filed.

## What do I need to bring with me to the Domestic Relations Section when I apply for child support?

Bring as much information as you can regarding the noncustodial parent including name, Social Security number, place of employment and address. Also bring along information pertaining to your income and assets and information regarding any expenses you pay for your child such as health care, day care and special needs.

## Does it cost anything to file for child support?

Some counties charge a filing fee. If you cannot pay the filing fee, you may ask to be excused from paying the fee by filing a petition to proceed *In Forma Pauperis*.

## Are there any additional fees?

The United States Congress requires collection of a \$25 annual fee each year for open/active child support cases that receive at least \$500 in child support payments if the custodial parent has never received cash assistance. The commonwealth will pay the \$25 fee for families with collections between \$500 and \$1,999.99.

## Who is responsible for paying the annual fee?

The \$25 fee will be collected from the custodial parent in cases which have annual collections that equal or exceed \$2,000.





# Pennsylvania Child Support Enforcement Program

## **When is the annual fee collected?**

The \$25 fee is collected once each Federal Fiscal Year (FFY). The FFY is the period between October 1 and September 30 of the following year. The \$25 fee will be collected between October 1 to November 30 and March 1 to September 30. The fee will not be collected in the months of December, January and February.

## **Pennsylvania Child Support Program Website**

You can learn more about the Pennsylvania Child Support Enforcement Program and check information about your child support case at [www.childsupport.state.pa.us](http://www.childsupport.state.pa.us). You will need to establish a password to view the details of your case on this website. To access the PA Child Support Program website, log into [www.childsupport.state.pa.us](http://www.childsupport.state.pa.us) and register. You will be able to view details and update information about your child support case such as:

- Add or update personal contact information (address, phone number, email, etc.);
- Change your password;
- Update communication preferences to either opt-in or opt-out of text messaging, email or mobile telephone communication;
- Submit employment information;
- View specific child support case information including payment information, scheduled appointments and docket information; and
- Submit support documents online.

## **Can I submit support documents online?**

Support documents may be submitted online at [www.childsupport.state.pa.us](http://www.childsupport.state.pa.us) through the E-Services feature. Select the "Request Support Services" button or go to the "Begin or Resume a Request for Support Services" link under the heading "I Would Like To...". E-Services can be used to submit documents required to open new support orders, modify existing orders and recover overpayments. Documents submitted online are sent electronically to your county DRS.

Information about the next steps in the process will be provided after the documents are submitted.

## **How long will it take to complete and submit documents online?**

The online document submission should take 30 minutes or less to complete.

## **Where do I apply for spousal support?**

The county DRS also handles spousal support matters. Ask the DRS if you have questions about applying for spousal support.

## **Pennsylvania Child Support Enforcement System (PACSES)**

PACSES is the statewide computer system that is used by the county domestic relations sections. Case, personal and payment information are maintained in PACSES. DRS staff use PACSES to monitor support payments and enforce support orders.

## **For Your Information**

Contact the county DRS that handles your case if you have any questions about the Pennsylvania Child Support Enforcement Program. You can also call the Child Support Helpline at 1-800-932-0211 for more information. See page 22 titled "Child Support Resources and Telephone Numbers" for the telephone number of the county DRS.

The information contained here is not intended to give solutions for all situations. Each child support case has individual differences that may require special attention by a qualified professional at the DRS.

# Locating the Noncustodial Parent

## **What happens if I don't know where the noncustodial parent is?**

If you do not know where your child's noncustodial parent lives, the DRS can refer your case to the Parent Locator System. This service uses federal, state and local resources to search for noncustodial parents. You must give the DRS as much information as you know about the noncustodial parent. The DRS will ask you for the noncustodial parent's name, date of birth, Social Security number, phone number, employer and any other information that can be used to conduct the search.

If you go to the Pennsylvania Child Support website at [www.childsupport.state.pa.us](http://www.childsupport.state.pa.us) and click on the "View Frequently Asked Questions/General Subjects" link, you will find more information about what a DRS does to locate noncustodial parents.

## **I know the noncustodial parent moves around a lot. Will this create a problem with locating him/her?**

If the noncustodial parent moves and does not provide new contact information, the Parent

Locator System will be able to search for the absent parent using the information previously given.

## **Is there a time limit on how long you search for the noncustodial parent?**

If the noncustodial parent has not been located after three years using a valid Social Security number, the DRS may close the case. If the noncustodial parent has not been located after one year and the DRS does not have a valid Social Security number, the DRS may close the case.

## **What is the next step after the noncustodial parent is located?**

After the noncustodial parent is located, the next step is to establish paternity for an alleged father. If the noncustodial parent is the mother, the next step is setting up a child support conference.



# Establishing Paternity

## What is paternity?

Paternity means fatherhood. Pennsylvania law requires fathers to share in the legal and financial responsibilities for their child up until the child is 18 years old or graduates from high school, whichever happens last.

## What if the mother is married?

Under current Pennsylvania law, when a child is born to a married woman, the husband is the presumed legal father of the child.

**Note:** Pennsylvania no longer recognizes Common Law Marriage.

## What if the mother and father are not married?

In Pennsylvania, when a child is born to a woman who is unmarried, there is no legal relationship between the father and the child. The father of a child born to an unmarried woman is not the father for legal purposes unless:

- A valid Acknowledgement of Paternity (AOP) form (PA/CS 611) signed by both parents is on record, or
- A court has entered an order that establishes the legal father of the child.

## What is an AOP form and when can it be signed?

If the mother is unmarried, she and the father may sign an AOP form. At the time of birth, the hospital staff will give the unmarried mother and birth father an AOP form to complete. The hospital staff can submit the completed form.

After leaving the hospital, if both parties wish to file an AOP, the form can be obtained at county assistance offices, the DRS or by contacting the Department of Human Services, Bureau of Child Support Enforcement Paternity Coordinator at 1-800-932-0211, option number two. Someone at all of these places will help you complete the form.

An AOP form must include the signed consent of the birth mother and signature of the birth father. The signatures must be witnessed by someone other than the birth mother or birth father. Mail the completed form to BCSE at the address located on the bottom of the AOP. Once BCSE determines the form is valid, it is recorded as an acknowledgement of paternity.

**Do not sign the AOP form if either party is unsure of who is the father. Instead, contact or go to your county DRS to have paternity established through the court. The court may order genetic testing. See page 22 titled "Child Support Resources and Telephone Numbers" to find the telephone number of your county DRS.**

## Can the AOP form be rescinded after it is submitted?

A voluntary acknowledgement of paternity may be canceled by either party within 60 days after the form is signed or before the date of a court proceeding related to the child, whichever is sooner. After 60 days, the acknowledgement of paternity may be challenged in court only on the basis of fraud, duress or material mistake of fact, which must be established by clear and convincing evidence.

## What if the putative father will not sign the AOP form?

The court will order genetic testing. If the putative father fails to report for genetic testing, the court may issue an order finding him to be the father of the child.

## I don't know who the father is, what can I do?

Contact the DRS for help. See page 22 titled "Child Support Resources and Telephone Numbers".



# Establishing Paternity (continued)

## **Is a putative father, who is a minor, legally able to sign the voluntary AOP form?**

A minor can sign the AOP form without parental consent, as long as he/she fully understands his or her rights, responsibilities and obligations with respect to the child and the alternatives to and the legal consequences of signing the AOP form. If there are any doubts, the AOP form should not be signed. The minor is encouraged to speak with his/her parents or a trusted adult for guidance.

## **Who is responsible for paying for DNA testing?**

DNA testing costs are subject to recoupment from the putative father if paternity is established. This cost will be added as a fee to the child support order.

## **Who needs to participate in the DNA testing?**

In order to establish paternity, the mother, the child and the alleged father must all participate in the DNA testing.

## **What is the DNA testing process?**

The DNA collection process is performed using a buccal swab. This procedure is quick and painless. A cotton swab is inserted in the mouth and rubbed along the inside of the cheek. The cells from the cheek are then sent to the laboratory for the DNA testing.

In addition to the buccal swab, the parties will be photographed and possibly fingerprinted.

## **What if the birth mother will not sign the AOP form?**

A man claiming to be the father of the child may make a claim of paternity. The man needs to complete the child's information section, the child's birthplace information section, the mother's name and the father's information section on the AOP form. This allows the man to be notified of certain legal proceedings about the child but does not give him any parental rights. If the man wants parental rights, he may go to the DRS and request genetic testing.



# What are the Benefits of Establishing Paternity?

## Parental Rights

Establishing paternity gives the father certain rights. A legal father has the right to seek court ordered custody and visitation.

## Family History

The child will have the benefit of knowing both legal parents as well as relatives from each side of his/her family.

## Medical Background

The child will have the benefit of access to important medical background from both sides of his/her family.

## Birth Certificate

Your child's birth certificate will show the name of the father.

## Adoption

The legal father of a child has the right to be notified before any adoption proceeding.

## Inheritance

Upon the death of the father, a child may have the right to inherit from his estate.

## U.S. Military Benefits

The child may be entitled to benefits as a result of the father's service in the military.

## Child Support

The court will order the father to pay child support until the child turns 18 or graduates from high school, whichever occurs later, unless otherwise ordered by the court. Fathers who pay child support tend to be more involved in their children's lives and children who receive child support appear to perform better in school and are less likely to become teen parents.

## Health Care Benefits (Medical Support)

If the father's employer provides health care benefits, the father may be able to include the child under his health care plan.

## Social Security

The child may be eligible to receive Social Security benefits if the father becomes disabled or dies.

## Who do I call if I have questions?

If you have more questions, contact the Department of Human Services, Bureau of Child Support Enforcement Paternity Coordinator at:

1-800-932-0211, option number two  
Monday through Friday  
8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Or go to [www.childsupport.state.pa.us](http://www.childsupport.state.pa.us) for more information about establishing paternity.



# Domestic Violence: Addressing Safety

Domestic violence occurs within a family intimate relationship as a way to control another person. Victims suffer physical injury, live in fear in their homes and lose power over their lives. Domestic violence includes:

**Physical Abuse:** Hitting, slapping, shoving, kicking, punching, burning, choking, not allowing you to leave home or using objects to cause injury (guns, knives, baseball bats, etc.).

**Mental Abuse:** Threats, telling you what you can or cannot do, name calling or put-downs.

**Sexual Abuse:** Rape, unwanted touching, forced sexual acts, refusal to practice safe sex or sexual activity involving a dependent child;

- Being forced as the caretaker/relative of a dependent child to engage in non consensual sexual acts or activities;
- Threats of or attempts at physical or sexual abuse; or
- Neglect or deprivation of medical care.

**Property or Economic Abuse:** Stealing or destroying personal belongings, hurting pets, taking money, withholding basic needs such as food and clothing or not allowing you to work.

If you need help about domestic violence problems, call the national helpline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or a local agency. Local agency information for the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence is available at [www.pcadv.org](http://www.pcadv.org).

Everyone involved in a support action needs to understand how the process works. This helps you make informed decisions about whether and/or how to pursue support.

## The Support Process

- The parent or individual with custody of the child, who is called the custodial parent or the caretaker, will be asked to provide information about the parent(s) not living with the child, who is/are called the noncustodial parent(s).

- An individual will be asked to provide information to locate the noncustodial parent or spouse.
- It is necessary to go to the DRS or court to determine if the noncustodial parent or spouse will be ordered to pay support and, if so, how much.
- If the mother is not married when the child is born, paternity must first be established.
- Both adults in the support action will receive court papers that contain the addresses of each party.
- Both adults involved in the support action will be required to attend conferences and hearings.

**These requirements may present safety risks if you are concerned about family or domestic violence.**

## Addressing Safety Risks

Pursuing support may present safety risks for some individuals or families. The support process provides the following safeguards.

- If domestic violence is reported, the DRS or court can place a Family Violence Indicator on PACSES for the custodial parent and/or non-custodial parent, as appropriate, so that addresses and other confidential information will not be given out or printed on any papers that are sent to others. The following factors reported by an individual or reliable source(s) are used to decide whether to mark the case with a Family Violence Indicator:
  - There is an active Protection from Abuse (PFA) order, either temporary or permanent, against the person from whom support would be sought.
  - There is reason to believe that the release of information on the whereabouts of the individual or child may result in physical or emotional harm or the individual's or family's safety would be endangered by this disclosure.



# Domestic Violence: Addressing Safety (continued)

- The DRS or court may provide safeguards if domestic violence is reported. Each county has different safety options and procedures available.
- Individuals applying for or receiving cash assistance may be excused from the requirement to pursue support based on domestic violence or other good cause. See page 17 titled "Child Support and Cash Assistance".

**Note:** Many government agencies and groups that work in the prevention of domestic violence use the phrases "domestic violence", "domestic abuse" and "family violence" to mean the same thing.

Victims or potential victims of domestic violence may include: children, custodial parents, noncustodial parents, caretakers and spouses. Any individual with safety concerns should talk to the DRS or court staff at least one week before a scheduled conference or hearing to review safety options.



# Establishing the Support Order

After paternity has been established, you will receive notice advising you when the support conference is scheduled and what information to bring. You should be prepared to talk about and provide proof of any special needs the child has, such as any medical conditions.

## **Who must attend the support conference?**

Both the custodial parent and noncustodial parent must attend the support conference.

## **What if I cannot attend the support conference?**

Depending on the county, if you believe you cannot attend, you may ask the DRS if you may attend by telephone. You will need to explain why you believe you cannot attend, and you may be required to provide other information. This request must be made as soon as possible. County DRS staff can help with questions and explain the process for obtaining child support.



## **How is the amount of child support to be paid determined in Pennsylvania?**

Pennsylvania has child support guidelines that were developed with the principle that the child(ren) of separated, divorced or single parents should receive the same amount of parental support as if the parents were together. The State Supreme Court issues these guidelines for the DRS to use in calculating how much child support a parent should pay.

The guidelines are based on the needs of the child and the ability of the parents to provide child support until the child turns 18 or graduates from high school, whichever occurs later, unless otherwise ordered by the court.

## **What factors does the guideline consider when determining the child support amount?**

A conference officer will establish the support order based on the income and expense information provided by the parents and in accordance with the Pennsylvania Support Guidelines. The support officer will also consider the time each parent is responsible for the child.

The PA Child Support Program website includes the Pennsylvania Support Estimator, which you can use to estimate the amount of your monthly child support obligation. However, the court will establish the amount of monthly support and it may be different than the amount on the Support Estimator.

## **What details are in the support order?**

The support order is a court order that lists the details about child support payments. The support order tells how much and how often support payments must be made and other expenses the noncustodial parent must pay, such as medical support. When the noncustodial parent has more than one child support order, the support paid is divided proportionally between each support case.

## **Can the support order be appealed?**

The support order can be appealed. Contact your county DRS for guidance on the appeal process.

# Medical Support

## Who is responsible for providing medical support for the child?

Pennsylvania law gives the courts the authority to order either parent to provide medical support if it is available at no cost or at a reasonable cost. "Reasonable cost" is defined as an amount not to exceed five percent of the net monthly income. The incomes and assets of both parents are considered when the court establishes a support order. For detailed information about the support guidelines, check under "View Frequently Asked Questions" in the "Child Support Orders" section on the Pennsylvania Child Support website at [www.childsupport.state.pa.us](http://www.childsupport.state.pa.us).

## Where can I get medical support for my child?

Medical support includes health coverage provided for a child or children in a child support case in which there is a medical support order. This includes private health insurance, publicly-funded health coverage such as Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), cash medical support including payment of health insurance premiums, and payment of medical bills (including dental and eye care). Medical support may be provided by either the custodial parent, noncustodial parent or any 3rd person associated with either parent such as a step-parent or grandparent.

## How do I get medical support for a child?

Anyone who has custody of a child can apply for child support services at the county DRS of the Court of Common Pleas. The DRS will help people seeking child support set up a new support order or change an existing order to include medical support.

The court:

- Will determine each parent's responsibility for the health care coverage for the child.
- Will decide which parent has primary responsibility for medical support; usually, it is the parent who has access to health care coverage at work at a "Reasonable Cost," which is:

- Not more than five percent of the party's net monthly income; and
- If the noncustodial parent is to provide the coverage, the total cost of the premium, the cash and other child support-related obligations are not more than the threshold set forth in the Federal Consumer Credit Protection Act.
- May require one or both parents to pay part of the expenses not covered by the health care coverage, including birth-related expenses that occurred prior to the application for support.
- Will enforce a court order if a parent who is ordered to provide medical support fails to do so.





# Medical Support (continued)

## What must the employer and the health care coverage plan administrator do?

When an employed parent is ordered to provide medical support, the employer and the plan administrator must comply with federal and state laws. A plan administrator who manages the health care coverage for an employer must:

- Make the health care coverage available to the child without regard to custody arrangements, seasonal or other enrollment restrictions or the child's residence.
- Enroll a child born out of wedlock or a child who is not claimed as a dependent on the federal income tax return of the parent without custody.
- Process and pay claims to the individual with custody of the child.
- Tell the individual with custody of the child about changes in the health care coverage.
- Provide health care benefit booklets to the individual with custody of the child.
- Allow the individual with custody of the child to enroll the child.

- Disenroll or eliminate coverage for a child only when:
  - Notified in writing that the court order is no longer in effect;
  - The child is enrolled or will be enrolled in comparable health care coverage beginning on the date of disenrollment;
  - The employer has eliminated family health care coverage for all employees;
  - Any available continuation coverage is not elected by the employer or the period of such coverage expires; or
  - The employee is no longer eligible for dependent health care coverage due to a change in employment status.

## Getting the Facts About A Child's Health Care Coverage

By law, the person with custody of the child must receive the following information:

- The name of the administrator of the medical support;
- Health care cards and identification numbers;
- Instructions on how and where to file a claim;
- Claim forms; and
- Basic benefit facts, including deductible, co-payments and any restrictions on coverage.

## The National Medical Support Notice

The National Medical Support Notice is a medical child support order that state child support enforcement agencies must use to enforce medical child support. The National Medical Support Notice is used when a parent is ordered to provide medical support for his/her child and is employed or in active military or reserve military duty. The county DRS sends the National Medical Support Notice to the employer. The employer and the medical support plan administrator must complete the National Medical Support Notice. The medical support information is then reported to the county DRS.



# Medical Support (continued)

## Confidentiality

The county DRS is responsible for maintaining the confidentiality and security of protected health information in accordance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). This includes information in health records including, but not limited to: names, addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses, medical/health plan numbers, Social Security numbers and birth dates.

Contact the DRS that handles your case for more information. See page 22 titled "Child Support Resources and Telephone Numbers."

You can apply online for any of the commonwealth's health care coverage programs, including Medical Assistance and CHIP at [www.compass.state.pa.us](http://www.compass.state.pa.us).

## For Your Information

The information contained in this handbook is not intended to give solutions for all situations. Each child support case has individual differences that may require special attention by a qualified professional at the DRS.

**If you feel that your rights to medical support are not being met or that you need special help, contact:**

**Child Support Helpline**

**1-800-932-0211**

[www.childsupport.state.pa.us](http://www.childsupport.state.pa.us)

**To learn about the health care coverage programs available in Pennsylvania, which include Medical Assistance and CHIP, visit the website [www.pa.gov](http://www.pa.gov) or contact:**

**Medical Assistance**

**Information Helpline**

**1-800-842-2020**

**Children's Health  
Insurance Program (CHIP)**

**1-800-986-KIDS (5437)**

See next page for general information about the CHIP program.

You can apply online for any of the commonwealth's health care coverage programs, including Medical Assistance and CHIP, at [www.compass.state.pa.us](http://www.compass.state.pa.us).

# Pennsylvania's Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)

## Free or Low-cost Health Insurance

CHIP covers all uninsured children and teens who aren't eligible for or enrolled in Medical Assistance. No one makes too much money. It's easy to sign up and even easier to qualify. Regardless of why your kids don't have insurance right now – maybe you lost your job or health care has gotten too expensive – CHIP may be able to help.

## To qualify, first you need an uninsured kid!

Based on your family's size and income, your child or teen may be eligible if he or she is

- Under 19 years of age;
- A U.S. Citizen, U.S. National or Qualified Alien;
- A resident of Pennsylvania;
- Uninsured and not eligible for or enrolled in Medical Assistance.

## Coverage that can keep up with kids.

CHIP is there for your kids with quality, comprehensive health insurance coverage for routine doctor visits, prescriptions, dental, eye care and much more! You'll have your choice of leading insurance companies you know and trust. In fact, your kids may even be able to keep visiting the same doctors that they see now.

## Is CHIP free for your family?

No family makes too much money for CHIP. Most kids receive CHIP for free. Others can get the same benefits at a low cost. If you make too little for CHIP, your child or teen may be enrolled in Medical Assistance.

## Applying is so easy, a kid could do it.

You can apply online ([www.ChipCoversPAkids.com](http://www.ChipCoversPAkids.com)), over the phone (800-986-KIDS) or by mail. It's easy and we're happy to help you through the process – just call us at 800-986-KIDS. To apply, you will need to gather the following information:

- Your total household income before taxes; and
- Child care and work transportation expenses.

**Learn more and  
APPLY TODAY by visiting  
[www.ChipCoversPAkids.com](http://www.ChipCoversPAkids.com)  
or calling 800-986-KIDS.**



**Pennsylvania's Children's  
Health Insurance Program  
We Cover All Kids.**



# Receiving Child Support

There are two ways to receive child support payments, the **EPPICard™ Debit MasterCard® Card** or **direct deposit** into a personal bank account. You must contact the PA State Collection and Disbursement Unit, PA SCDU, at 1-877-727-7238 to set up direct deposit into your checking or savings account. If you do not choose direct deposit, an EPPICard™ will be issued to you.

PA SCDU receives and sends out child support payments. Pennsylvania's Department of Human Services operates PA SCDU.

## **What is an EPPICard™ Debit MasterCard® Card?**

The EPPICard™ is a fast, convenient way to receive your child support payments. The EPPICard™ is safer than using cash or checks. The EPPICard™ is a type of debit card.

## **How does the EPPICard™ work?**

Your support payments are sent electronically to an account that has been set up only for your child support payments. When payments are sent electronically, you get them more quickly and safely. You cannot make your own deposits into your EPPICard™ account. You will need to select a Personal Identification Number, also known as a PIN, to activate your EPPICard™.

## **Where can I use the EPPICard™?**

The EPPICard™ can be used at any location that accepts MasterCard® or displays its logo such as banks, retail stores and automatic teller machines (ATM). You can get cash back with purchases at many businesses like grocery stores. You can use your EPPICard™ for all of your purchases as long as you have money in your account.



# Receiving Child Support (continued)

## How do I use the EPPICard™?

1. **To make purchases:** Present your card when paying. The amount of your purchase is automatically deducted from your account.
2. **To get cash:**
  - **From a teller at a bank:** Give your card to a teller in any bank displaying the MasterCard® logo and ask for the amount of cash you want that is available to you. There is no charge to you to get cash from a bank teller where the MasterCard®

logo is displayed. When making your cash withdrawal, do not ask the teller for a cash advance.

- **Cash back with a purchase:** Many retail stores accept MasterCard®, in addition to grocery stores, and will give you cash back with no fee when you make a purchase.
- **At ATMs:** You can use any ATM that has the MasterCard® logo. There may be associated ATM fees.

**If you are an EPPICard™ cardholder and you have a question about your support payment, you may call EPPICard™ Customer Service at 1-800-304-1669 or access the website at [www.eppicard.com](http://www.eppicard.com).**

The phone number is toll-free nationwide. You can review your payment information 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

## Must I do anything else?

**The law requires each parent to tell the DRS within seven days of a change happening, such as moving, changing employment or getting married.**

Please be sure the DRS has your current address. The DRS lists your address in PACSES, the state's child support computer. You can update this information online at [www.childsupport.state.pa.us](http://www.childsupport.state.pa.us).

If you have questions about your case that are not related to your support payment, you must contact the DRS that handles your case. See page 22 titled "Child Support Resources and Telephone Numbers" for the telephone number of the county DRS that handles your case.



# Child Support and Cash Assistance

If a parent or spouse applies for or receives Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), also called cash assistance, the law requires cooperation in establishing paternity and pursuing a support order. If domestic or family violence or other circumstances make complying with these support requirements dangerous or inappropriate, the county assistance office (CAO) may excuse an applicant or recipient from cooperating based on good cause.

## What is considered good cause for not filing for support?

**Domestic Violence** - Good cause is granted when pursuing support would:

- Make it more difficult for an individual or family member to escape domestic violence;
- Place an individual or family member at risk of further domestic violence; or
- Unfairly penalize an individual who has been victimized or who is at risk of further violence.

See pages 8 and 9 titled "Domestic Violence: Addressing Safety" for more information.

**Rape, incest or adoption** - Good cause is granted when:

- The child was conceived as a result of rape or incest.
- Court proceedings for adoption of the child are pending or the applicant or recipient is working with an agency that is helping to decide whether or not the child should be placed for adoption and these discussions have not progressed for more than three months.

## How and when can someone request good cause?

**Good cause can be claimed at any time.** When the DRS is told that someone wants to claim good cause, the DRS will not take any action on establishing paternity or support. Applicants for or recipients of cash assistance will be referred to the CAO for help in filling out the Domestic

Violence Verification Form (PA 1747) or providing verification in cases of rape, incest or adoption.

**Ask the CAO staff for help!** The CAO will decide whether or not to grant good cause and will give written notice of this decision to the individual who claimed good cause. If the good cause claim is denied, the individual claiming good cause has the right to appeal and request a fair hearing.

## What does "assignment of support rights" mean?

If you receive cash assistance, you give the DHS (the department) and the DRS the right to pursue and collect the current support that charged during the time you receive cash assistance up to the amount of cash assistance you receive.

## What happens to the "assignment of support rights" when cash assistance ends?

When cash benefits stop, support collections will be paid in the following order:

1. The full amount of current monthly support owed to the family.
2. The full amount of arrears owed to the family.
3. The amount of arrears assigned to the department.

The family will receive all support collections first before the state collects any support that is owed. This includes support collected through the Federal Tax Offset Program.



# Child Support and Cash Assistance (continued)

## What is a support pass-through?

Every month the noncustodial parent pays current child support owed **on time** for a family receiving cash assistance, the department pays a portion of the child support to the custodial parent or caretaker. This is called the **support pass-through payment**. This payment is deposited to the custodial parent's or caregiver's EBT card the first week of the next calendar month.

- If you have one child, you are eligible to receive up to \$100 of the current child support paid in each month;

- If you have two or more children, you are eligible to receive up to \$200 of the current child support paid in each month; or
- If you have an order for spousal support, you are eligible to receive \$50 of the current support paid in each month.

You will receive only one support pass-through payment a month.

If you have any questions regarding support pass-through, contact the Child Support Helpline at 1-800-932-0211.





# Paying Child Support

Most child support is paid by income withholding as ordered by the court and maintained in PACSES, which is the state's child support computer. Pennsylvania uses monthly support orders which charge the first of each month. If your employer gets a court order, the employer will take child support out of your pay and send it to PA SCDU. Support can also be taken from your unemployment compensation, workers compensation, Social Security and retirement and pension benefits.

## National and state new hire reporting:

Your employer must report information on new employees. This information is matched against child support records. The records are used to locate parents, establish child support orders and enforce existing orders.

## How can I pay child support if I don't have income withholding?

PA SCDU sends payment coupons to parents ordered to pay child support who do not have income withholding. You must write on the coupon the amount of money you are paying. **Make your personal check, cashier's check or money order payable to PA SCDU.** A coupon should be sent with every payment to PA SCDU. However, if you do not have a payment coupon, write your PACSES Member ID number, which is found on your court order, or SSN, on your check or money order and send payments to:

PA SCDU  
P.O. Box 69110  
Harrisburg, PA 17106-9110

PA SCDU cannot accept checks that are considered non-negotiable by banking standards. Some examples of non-negotiable items are: checks that are stale dated, post dated or not signed; checks that are not payable to PA SCDU; or the amount in numbers does not match the amount "written out". Also, PA SCDU does not accept temporary checks or starter checks.

## You can pay child support by:

- **Personal check, cashier's check or money order.** Send your payment coupon with the

check or money order so your account is credited. Write your PACSES Member ID number or SSN on the check or money order and make it payable to PA SCDU.

- **Bank account debit.** You can choose to have your support payments taken electronically from your checking or savings account. You may also have a one-time payment or reoccurring payments withdrawn from your bank account at [www.expertpay.com](http://www.expertpay.com). Call Expert Pay customer service at 1-800-403-0879.
- **Credit/debit card.** PA SCDU accepts Visa®, MasterCard® or Discover®. You can pay by telephone with your credit/debit card by calling PA SCDU toll free at 1-800-955-2305. PA SCDU is unable to automatically charge your credit/debit card. You must call PA SCDU every time you wish to make a credit/debit card payment. Credit card payments may also be made online at [www.e-childspay.com](http://www.e-childspay.com). A convenience fee is charged.
- **MoneyGram.** Payment services are available in many local retailers including CVS, Dollar General, and Wal-Mart. MoneyGram retailers accept payments made by cash. Additionally, Wal-Mart will accept debit card payments. Payments may also be made online via debit or credit card at [www.MoneyGram.com/paybills](http://www.MoneyGram.com/paybills). A user fee is charged when using MoneyGram for child support payments.

For information about your support payment, contact PA SCDU at 1-877-727-7238. Individuals with hearing impairment should use 1-877-676-9582.

Both numbers are toll-free nationwide. You can access your payment information 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. To speak with customer service staff, call between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. If you have questions about your case that are not related to your support payment, contact the DRS that handles your case.

## What must I do if I move or change my job?

The law says that parents have 7 days to report to the DRS in writing or in person if they move or change jobs. You may also report changes on the PA Child Support Program website at [www.childsupport.state.pa.us](http://www.childsupport.state.pa.us).

# Child Support Enforcement Measures

## What happens if I don't pay?

If you do not pay your child support, the DRS may order an automatic wage withholding or use one or more of the following enforcement measures:

- **Federal and state tax refund offset program:** Your federal and state income tax refunds can be taken if you owe overdue child support.
- **Financial institution data match:** The court can order financial institutions, such as banks and credit unions, to turn over your financial assets to pay your overdue support.
- **Work requirements:** You can be ordered by the court to work or join an employment program.
- **Credit bureau reporting:** If you are late in paying support, your name and the amount of back support you owe will be reported to the major credit bureaus.
- **License suspension:** If you owe at least 3 months of support and a court has not ordered income withholding, you may have the following licenses suspended, denied or not renewed:
  - Driver's license
  - Commercial driver's license
  - Professional or occupational license
  - Fishing and/or hunting license
- **Passport denial:** The United States Department of State can deny the issuance or renewal of a passport if you have child support arrears over \$2,500.
- **Lottery intercept:** Your lottery winnings of \$2,500 or more can be taken if you owe overdue child support.
- **Intercept of workers compensation and lump sum personal injury payment:** The amount of overdue child support you owe may be taken from your settlement or benefits.
- **Fine or prison:** The federal government funds Project Save Our Children task force, a federal multi-agency law enforcement initiative which investigates and prosecutes the most flagrant child support cases. Federal law makes it a crime

if you owe more than \$5,000 of child support for longer than a year and you do not pay the child support for a child who lives in another state. If you are convicted, the court will order repayment of the unpaid support. In addition, you can be fined and/or put in prison for up to two years.

- **Publication of name:** Your name may be published in the newspaper if you are at least 30 days late in paying child support.
- **Liens on real estate:** Your overdue support automatically becomes a lien against all real estate that you own in Pennsylvania.

## For Your Information

The above information describes actions a DRS may take to enforce a child support order. Each child support case has individual differences that may require special attention by a qualified professional at the DRS. If you have questions about your case or want more information about any of the enforcement measures described above, contact the DRS that handles your case. DRS telephone numbers are located on page 22 of this booklet. Additional contact information for all of Pennsylvania's 66 county DRS offices and other child support resources and telephone numbers are available on the child support website at [www.childsupport.state.pa.us](http://www.childsupport.state.pa.us) in the "Program Information" section under "Child Support Resources and Telephone Numbers".

# Modifying the Child Support Order

## **Under what circumstances can I request a review to modify my child support order?**

Parents can petition the court for a review and modification of their child support order at any time if they feel there is a change in circumstance that may affect the amount of the child support order. Additionally, every three years, the DRS will send each parent a notice asking if they want their support case reviewed. The DRS must review TANF support cases every three years. The review is to make any appropriate increase, decrease, modification or termination of the order taking into account the best interest of the child. The following factors related to the child support order are considered:

- The income of either parent significantly increases or decreases.
- The child now has significant or continuing medical expenses.
- Child care and/or medical insurance changes.
- The parents are now living together.
- The child receiving support is 18 years of age and graduated from high school.
- The child starts living with the noncustodial parent or someone other than the custodial parent.
- The noncustodial parent is incarcerated.
- Other substantial changes in circumstance occur.

## **How do I request a support order modification?**

Contact your local DRS to obtain a Petition for Modification. You may also log into the child support website at [www.childsupport.state.pa.us](http://www.childsupport.state.pa.us) as a payee or payor and submit a Petition for Modification through E-Services. You will be notified by your local DRS of your conference date, time and place. They will also provide you with a list of items to bring to the conference.



# Child Support Resources and Telephone Numbers

## Pennsylvania Child Support website

If you have access to the Internet, you can view the Pennsylvania Child Support website at [www.childsupport.state.pa.us](http://www.childsupport.state.pa.us).

The Child Support website is an interactive online guide to child support information in Pennsylvania. The site is useful to persons who receive or pay child support, as well as employers, financial institutions, attorneys and the public.

You can:

- View your payment information online;
- Provide and update information such as a new address or employment information;
- Locate a Domestic Relations Section in your area;
- View scheduled events;
- Obtain forms; and
- View docket or lien information.

The following additional information concerning child support can also be found on the website:

- Laws and Legislation
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Child Support Terms
- Useful Links

## DOMESTIC RELATIONS SECTIONS TELEPHONE NUMBERS

| County           | City           | Phone        | County         | City           | Phone        |
|------------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| Adams            | Gettysburg     | 888-707-3300 | Lackawanna     | Mayfield       | 570-963-6721 |
| Allegheny        | Pittsburgh     | 412-350-5600 | Lancaster      | Lancaster      | 717-299-8141 |
| Armstrong        | Kittanning     | 800-235-3002 | Lawrence       | New Castle     | 724-658-5651 |
| Beaver           | Beaver         | 724-773-8500 | Lebanon        | Lebanon        | 717-228-4480 |
| Bedford          | Bedford        | 814-623-4813 | Lehigh         | Allentown      | 610-782-3185 |
| Berks            | Reading        | 610-478-2900 | Luzerne        | Wilkes-Barre   | 570-822-0600 |
| Blair            | Hollidaysburg  | 814-693-3220 | Lycoming       | Williamsport   | 570-327-2395 |
| Bradford         | Towanda        | 570-265-1718 | McKean         | Smethport      | 814-887-3377 |
| Bucks            | Doylestown     | 888-848-6538 | Mercer         | Mercer         | 724-662-3800 |
| Butler           | Butler         | 724-284-5181 | Mifflin        | Lewistown      | 717-248-3955 |
| Cambria          | Ebensburg      | 800-638-4409 | Monroe         | Stroudsburg    | 570-517-3845 |
| Cameron          | Emporium       | 814-486-5875 | Montgomery     | Norristown     | 610-278-3646 |
| Carbon           | Jim Thorpe     | 570-325-2179 | Montour        | Bloomsburg     | 570-387-8870 |
| Centre           | Bellefonte     | 814-355-6741 | Northampton    | Easton         | 610-253-3566 |
| Chester          | West Chester   | 800-221-4636 | Northumberland | Sunbury        | 570-988-4227 |
| Clarion          | Clarion        | 814-226-1030 | Perry          | New Bloomfield | 717-582-5178 |
| Clearfield       | Clearfield     | 814-765-5339 | Philadelphia   | Philadelphia   | 215-686-7466 |
| Clinton          | Lock Haven     | 570-893-4055 | Pike           | Milford        | 570-296-6511 |
| Columbia/Montour | Bloomsburg     | 570-387-8870 | Potter         | Coudersport    | 814-274-7020 |
| Crawford         | Meadville      | 800-982-9019 | Schuylkill     | Pottsville     | 570-628-1588 |
| Cumberland       | Carlisle       | 888-697-0371 | Snyder         | Middleburg     | 570-837-4229 |
| Dauphin          | Harrisburg     | 800-328-0058 | Somerset       | Somerset       | 814-445-1440 |
| Delaware         | Media          | 610-891-4314 | Sullivan       | Laporte        | 570-946-5481 |
| Elk              | Ridgway        | 814-772-5155 | Susquehanna    | Montrose       | 570-278-4600 |
| Erie             | Erie           | 814-451-6151 | Tioga          | Wellsboro      | 570-724-9330 |
| Fayette          | Uniontown      | 724-430-1260 | Union          | Lewisburg      | 570-524-8661 |
| Forest           | Tionesta       | 814-755-3840 | Venango        | Franklin       | 814-432-9590 |
| Franklin         | Chambersburg   | 717-264-6144 | Warren         | Warren         | 814-728-3540 |
| Fulton           | McConnellsburg | 717-485-3192 | Washington     | Washington     | 724-228-6756 |
| Greene           | Waynesburg     | 724-852-5214 | Wayne          | Honesdale      | 570-251-9827 |
| Huntingdon       | Huntingdon     | 814-643-1403 | Westmoreland   | Greensburg     | 800-561-5022 |
| Indiana          | Indiana        | 724-465-3940 | Wyoming        | Tunkhannock    | 570-836-8645 |
| Jefferson        | Brookville     | 814-849-1632 | York           | York           | 717-771-9605 |
| Juniata          | Mifflintown    | 717-436-7749 |                |                |              |



# Child Support Resources and Telephone Numbers

## **Paternity**

For additional information, contact the Department of Human Services, Bureau of Child Support Enforcement's Paternity Coordinator at:

**1-800-932-0211 - option number two**  
**Monday through Friday**  
**8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.**

## **Medical Support**

If you feel that your rights to medical support are not being met or that you need special help, contact the:

**Child Support Helpline**  
**1-800-932-0211**  
**[www.childsupport.state.pa.us](http://www.childsupport.state.pa.us)**

To learn about the health care coverage programs available in Pennsylvania, which include Medical Assistance or CHIP, visit the website [www.pa.gov](http://www.pa.gov). You can apply online for any of the commonwealth's health care coverage programs, including Medical Assistance and CHIP, at [www.compass.state.pa.us](http://www.compass.state.pa.us).

## **Legal Assistance**

If you have any questions about your rights, free legal help is available. Local agency information is listed at [www.palegalservices.org](http://www.palegalservices.org).

## **Helpline Telephone Numbers**

If you have questions about public assistance programs in Pennsylvania, including cash assistance; Medical Assistance; Medicare Part B Buy-in; Food Stamps; Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP); the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP); and State Supplementary Payment (SSP), contact:

**1-800-692-7462**

**Department of Human Services Helpline**

**1-800-842-2020**

**Medical Assistance Information Helpline**

**1-800-986-KIDS (5437)**

**CHIP Helpline**

**1-866-857-7095**

**LIHEAP Information**

**1-866-502-9105**

**State Supplementary Payment Hotline**

**1-800-451-5886**

**TDD service for individuals  
with hearing impairment**

**(Callers must have text telephone equipment)**

The HELPLINE numbers are toll free nationwide. They offer recorded information that is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. To speak with a customer service person, call between 8:30 a.m. and 4:45 p.m. Monday through Friday.

## **Domestic Violence**

Domestic violence can affect your family physically, emotionally and financially. Domestic violence services are available through the national helpline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or through a local agency. Local agency information for the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence is available at [www.pcadv.org](http://www.pcadv.org).

## NOTES:

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## NOTES:

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

**Important information about Pennsylvania's Child Support Program.  
If you need help reading this, please call 1-800-932-0211.  
Language assistance is provided free of charge.**

Información importante sobre el Programa de Manutención de los Hijos de Pennsylvania.  
Si necesita que alguien le ayude a leer esta información llame al 1-800-932-0211.  
La asistencia de intérprete es gratuita.

关于宾州儿童援助计划的重要信息。  
如果您需要协助阅读此信息，请致电 1-800-932-0211。  
可提供免费语言协助。

Важные сведения о Программе взыскания алиментов на ребенка в штате Пенсильвания.  
Если вам нужна помощь при чтении данного документа, звоните  
по телефону 1-800-932-0211.  
Помощь переводчика предоставляется бесплатно.

ព័ត៌មានសំខាន់អំពីកម្មវិធីចេញប្រាក់ជួយចិញ្ចឹមកូននៅរដ្ឋប៉េនស៊ីលវ៉ានី។  
បើលោកអ្នកត្រូវការជំនួយអានព័ត៌មាននេះ សូមទូរស័ព្ទ 1-800-932-0211។  
ជំនួយផ្នែកខាងភាសានឹងផ្តល់ដោយឥតគិតថ្លៃ។

Thông tin quan trọng về Chương Trình Hỗ Trợ Trẻ Em của Tiểu Bang Pennsylvania.  
Nếu quý vị cần trợ giúp để đọc bản tin này xin gọi số 1-800-932-0211.  
Trợ giúp về ngôn ngữ được cung cấp miễn phí.



**pennsylvania**  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES