

# 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. BCSE manages the program's funding and ensures that child support orders in Pennsylvania follow federal and state child support regulations.

## County Domestic Relations Sections

The Domestic Relations Sections (DRSs) of the county Court of Common Pleas provide child support services in Pennsylvania.

The DRS helps parents apply for child support, establishes paternity and support orders, and enforces support orders. DRS workers can answer your questions about support and help you start your application. They can also discuss how their office helps clients facing domestic violence. See the "Domestic Violence: Addressing Safety" section for more information about how DRSs handle cases involving domestic violence.

The DRS can also help if the other parent lives in another Pennsylvania county, a different state or even another country.

Feel free to ask your DRS workers questions. You should keep a written record of contacts and documents you receive from the DRS.

## Applying for Child Support

You must file a complaint for child support at your local DRS to start the child support process.

The DRS will ask you for supporting documents, including evidence establishing the father of the child. See the "Establishing Paternity" section for more information.

After you file your complaint for support, the DRS will schedule a support conference and send notices, with the date and time, to you and the other party.

## 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 other parent including name, Social Security number, place of employment, and address. Also bring along information about your income, assets, and 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?

No, Pennsylvania does not charge any filing fees to file for child support.

## Are there any additional fees?

Federal law requires child support agencies to collect a \$35 annual fee. You will not have to pay the annual fee if you have ever received cash assistance benefits. You will also not pay the fee if you receive less than \$2,000 in child support during the year.

## Who is responsible for paying the annual fee?

The child support program collects the \$35 fee from the parent receiving support when they receive collections that equal or exceed \$2,000.

## When is the annual fee collected?

The child support program collects the \$35 fee once each federal fiscal year (FFY). The FFY is the period between October 1 and September 30. The program does not collect the fee during December, January, and February.

## Pennsylvania Child Support Program Website

You can learn more about the Pennsylvania Child Support Enforcement Program, apply for support, and check information about your child support case at [www.humanservices.dhs.pa.gov/CSWS](http://www.humanservices.dhs.pa.gov/CSWS). You will need to establish a password to apply for support or view the details of your case on this website. To access the PA Child Support Program website, log into [www.humanservices.dhs.pa.gov/CSWS](http://www.humanservices.dhs.pa.gov/CSWS) and register. You

# Pennsylvania Child Support Enforcement Program

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 apply online?

Yes, you can submit an online application directly to your local DRS through the child support website.

Visit [www.humanservices.dhs.pa.gov/CSWS](http://www.humanservices.dhs.pa.gov/CSWS) and click

"Request Support Services" to get started.

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

It should take 30 minutes or less to complete the application.

## Where do I apply for alimony pendente lite (APL)/spousal support?

The county DRS handles APL and spousal support matters. You may apply for spousal support online through the child support website. Contact your local DRS if you have questions about applying for APL or spousal support.

## 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 other parent is?**

If you do not know where your child's parent lives, the DRS can help you locate them. You must give the DRS as much information as you know about the other parent. The DRS will ask you for their name, date of birth, Social Security number, phone number, employer, and any other information that can be used to conduct the search.

You can find more information about how the DRS locates absent parents by visiting the child support website at [www.humanservices.dhs.pa.gov/CSWS](http://www.humanservices.dhs.pa.gov/CSWS) and clicking on the "View Frequently Asked Questions" link.

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

It might be harder for us to locate the other parent if they move frequently, but that generally will not

prevent us from finding them. The most important thing you can do to help us find them is to provide us with their Social Security number and date of birth.

## **How long will the child support program search for the other parent?**

This question is difficult to answer without knowing the specifics of your case. Generally, the program will spend more time looking for a parent when we have their Social Security number. Talk to your local DRS workers for more information.

## **What happens when you locate the other parent?**

After the child support program locates the other parent, the next step is usually to establish paternity of the children. If the other parent is the mother, the next step is setting up a child support conference.



# Establishing Paternity

## **What is paternity?**

Paternity refers to the biological relationship between father and child. Pennsylvania law requires fathers to share 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 parents were married when the child was born?**

Pennsylvania law presumes that the husband is the father of any child born during a marriage between a man and women.

**Note:** Pennsylvania no longer recognizes common law marriage.

## **What if the parents were in a same sex marriage when the child was born?**

Pennsylvania's child support regulations currently only address paternity – the biological relationship between father and child. However, the DRSs can still help same sex parents establish who has a legal duty to support their children.

## **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:

- Both parties sign a valid Acknowledgement of Paternity (AOP) form (PA/CS 611) and file it with the state, or
- A court establishes an order naming the legal father of the child.

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

Unmarried mothers and fathers may sign an AOP form. When the child is born, the hospital staff will give the unmarried mother and birth father an AOP form to complete. The hospital staff will submit the completed form.

After leaving the hospital, if both parties wish to file an AOP, they can receive a blank form from county assistance offices, the DRSs, or by contacting the Department of Human Services, Bureau of Child Support Enforcement Paternity Coordinator at 1-800-932-0211, option number two. Officials at each of these locations can help you complete the form.

Each AOP form must include the signed consent of the mother and father. Someone other than the mother and father must witness the parents signing the form. 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.

Parents should not sign the AOP form if they have any doubt about who the father is. 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?**

Either party may cancel the AOP within 60 days of signing the form, or before the date of a court proceeding related to the child, whichever is sooner. After 60 days, the parents may challenge the AOP in court only through a claim of fraud, duress, or material mistake of fact. The parents must support their claim with clear and convincing evidence.

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

The court will order genetic testing. If the named 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)

## **Are minor parents 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 and responsibilities with respect to the child and the legal consequences of signing the AOP form. If the minor has any doubts, they should not sign the AOP form. The minor should speak with his/her parents or a trusted adult for guidance.

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

The father is responsible for paying genetic testing fees.

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

The DRS will ask the mother, father, and child to appear for genetic testing. The child and the named father must participate in the DNA testing. The mother should participate as well, but the DRS can establish a genetic match for the child with just the father if necessary.

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

The DRS or their genetic testing partner collects a genetic sample using a buccal swab. This procedure is quick and painless. The sample collector inserts a cotton swab in the subject's mouth and rubs along the inside of the cheek. The DRS sends the sample cells from the cheek to the laboratory for the DNA testing.

In addition to the buccal swab, the DRS must photograph and fingerprint the parties to record the identity of the person providing the sample.

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

A man claiming to be the father of a 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. Fathers who file an AOP without the mother's signature can learn about certain legal proceedings related to the child, but they do not gain 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 both parents certain legal rights. It gives the absent parent the right to seek custody, visitation, and file to pay support. It allows the custodial parent to seek child support from the absent parent.

## 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.

## Adoption

The 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

Parents 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.humanservices.dhs.pa.gov/CSWS](http://www.humanservices.dhs.pa.gov/CSWS) for more information about establishing paternity.



# Domestic Violence: Addressing Safety

Domestic violence is a form of violence involving intimate partners and their children. Abusers subject their victims to mental and physical harm to assert control over their victims' lives. 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, neglect/deprivation of medical care, or using objects to cause injury (guns, knives, baseball bats, etc.).

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

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

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

If you need help with 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).

## Addressing Safety Risks

Pursuing support may create safety risks for you and your family. The DRS can provide the following safeguards to help keep your family safe if you are at risk for domestic violence:

- The DRS or court can designate the case as a domestic violence risk in our system to protect addresses and other confidential information from the other party.

- The DRS can keep you physically separated from the other party during conferences and court appearances, allow you to appear for proceedings by phone, provide security to escort you to your choice of transportation, and connect you with domestic violence resources available in your area. 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

The DRS will send you a notice providing the date/time of your support conference and instructions for what to bring with you. You should be prepared to talk about and provide proof of your income, expenses, and any special needs your child has.

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

In most instances, both parties must attend the support conference.

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

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. You must make this request as soon as possible.

## **What are the support guidelines?**

The support guidelines are rules and tables that provide recommendations for support order amounts in Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania's state supreme court consults with an economist to determine how much Pennsylvania families spend on their children at different income levels. The court uses this information to create support guidelines for the state. The supreme court developed the child support guidelines using 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.

## **How does the DRS use the guidelines to set a child support amount?**

The DRS will use your income and expense information to set a support amount based on the guidelines. The DRS will also consider other factors, such as how often each parent has custody of 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 estimator will only give you a general idea of how much support you might receive.

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

The support order tells the obligor how much support they must pay each month and identifies any other expenses they must pay, such as medical support.

## **Can I appeal my support order?**

Yes, you can appeal your support order. 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 involved in a child support action to provide medical support if it is available at a reasonable cost. "Reasonable cost" is defined as an amount not to exceed five percent of the net monthly income.

## What is medical support?

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).

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

You must apply for child support. The DRS will determine whether to order medical support along with child support. Anyone who has custody of a child can apply for child support services at the DRS. The DRS will help people seeking child support to 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 obligor 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.

## 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:



# Medical Support (continued)

- 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 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 (continued)

medical support plan administrator must complete the National Medical Support Notice. The medical support information is then reported to the county DRS.

## 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.

## 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.

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.dhs.pa.gov](http://www.compass.dhs.pa.gov).

**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.humanservices.dhs.pa.gov/CSWS](http://www.humanservices.dhs.pa.gov/CSWS)

**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.dhs.pa.gov](http://www.compass.dhs.pa.gov).

# 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.

## How do I know if my child qualifies?

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**  
**(5437)**.



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

# Receiving Child Support

There are two ways to receive child support payments, the Pennsylvania child support payment card (also known as Way2Go 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, you will receive a PA child support payment card.

## **What is a Pennsylvania child support payment card?**

The Pennsylvania child support payment card is a fast, convenient way to receive your child support payments. A type of debit card, the PA child support payment card is safer than using cash or checks.

## **How does the Pennsylvania child support payment card work?**

The child support program deposits your child support payments in an account linked to your card. You will need to select a Personal Identification Number (PIN) to activate your card.

## **Where can I use the Pennsylvania child support payment card?**

You can use the Pennsylvania child support payment card 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 PA child support payment card for all of your purchases as long as you have money in your account.



# Receiving Child Support (continued)

## How do I use the Pennsylvania child support payment card?

- 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 that accepts MasterCard®. When making your cash withdrawal, do not ask the teller for a cash advance.

- Cash back with a purchase:** Many retail stores accept MasterCard® 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. You may have to pay an ATM fee to use this service.

**If you are a Pennsylvania child support payment cardholder and you have a question about your support payment, you may call customer service at 1-800-304-1669 or access the website at [www.GoProgram.com](http://www.GoProgram.com).**

The phone number is toll-free nationwide. You can review your payment information 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. There is no balance inquiry fee for the first 6 calls each month. After the 6th call you will be charged \$.25 for each balance inquiry.

## Must I do anything else?

**The law requires each parent to tell the DRS within seven days of any major change in your life, 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.humanservices.dhs.pa.gov/CSWS](http://www.humanservices.dhs.pa.gov/CSWS).

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.

**Note:** Title 12 of the Code of Federal Regulations requires government issuers of prepaid cards to clearly explain the terms of use, policies and fees associated with their prepaid card, as well as any alternative payment methods that the agency provides. The DRS will give the client a document which explains the card fees and other important information.



# Child Support and Cash Assistance

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) clients must seek child support and cooperate with DRS staff. Families at risk for domestic violence are exempt from this requirement. This exemption is called “good cause.”

## **When are TANF clients excused from cooperating with the child support requirement?**

**Domestic Violence** – TANF clients can be excused from the child support requirements when cooperation 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** - TANF clients can also be excused from cooperation requirements 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?**

**TANF clients can claim good cause at any time.** When a TANF client claims good cause, the DRS will not take any action to establish paternity or support. The DRS will refer TANF clients that claim good cause at the DRS to the CAO for help with filling out the Domestic Violence Verification Form (PA 1747). The CAO will decide whether to grant the good cause exemption and will give written notice of this decision to the individual who claimed good cause.

## **What does “assignment of support rights” mean?**

If you receive cash assistance, you give DHS 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 your cash benefits stop, you receive the full amount of your support collections and any arrears owed to you. You will receive all support due to you before DHS collects any debt owed to the state.

# Child Support and Cash Assistance (continued)

## What is a support pass-through?

If the obligor pays the child support they owe for the month on time, DHS pays a portion of that child support to the TANF client. This is called the **support pass-through payment**. DHS deposits this payment to the TANF client's EBT card 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

The most common way to pay child support in Pennsylvania is through an income withholding order. Income withholding orders instruct employers to withhold a portion of their employee's pay to satisfy the employee's child support debt. If your employer gets a court order, they will take child support out of your pay and send it to the child support program. The court can also attach your unemployment compensation, workers compensation, Social Security, 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?**

### **You can pay child support by:**

- **Personal check, cashier's check or money order.** The child support program sends payment coupons to support obligors that do not have an income withholding 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 may send one-time payment or recurring payments from your bank account at [www.expertpay.com](http://www.expertpay.com). Call Expert Pay customer service at 1-800-403-0879 for more information.
- **Credit/debit card.** The child support program accepts Visa®, MasterCard® or Discover®. You

can pay by telephone with your credit/debit card by calling toll free at 1-800-955-2305. The child support program does not accept recurring credit/debit card payments. You must call the toll-free number every time you wish to make a credit/debit card payment. You may also make credit/ debit card payments online at [www.tpchildsupport.com/childsupport/PA](http://www.tpchildsupport.com/childsupport/PA) or at [www.expertpay.com](http://www.expertpay.com). There is a convenience fee for both services.

- **MoneyGram.** MoneyGram accepts child support payments 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. MoneyGram also accepts online payments via debit or credit card at [www.MoneyGram.com/mgo/us/en/paybills](http://www.MoneyGram.com/mgo/us/en/paybills). MoneyGram charges fees for their services.

For information about your support payment, contact the child support program 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.humanservices.dhs.pa.gov/CSWS](http://www.humanservices.dhs.pa.gov/CSWS).

# PA CareerLink®

PA CareerLink® is Pennsylvania's statewide employment and training program. This program provides all Pennsylvanians access to career and job training services, including job postings and opportunities for work. PA CareerLink® is the name for the program's physical locations as well as its website.

PA CareerLink® is a project involving multiple agencies designed to assist job-seekers in finding family sustaining jobs and assist employers in finding skilled candidates to fill job openings.

Noncustodial parents can be court ordered to perform PA CareerLink® work searches. PA CareerLink® is also available as a resource to noncustodial parents ordered to perform a traditional work search.

PA CareerLink® offices and access points are available in each of the 67 Pennsylvania counties. The PA CareerLink® offices are a valuable resource that provide many different services to individuals. In-person PA CareerLink® services include:

- Services to help persons with disabilities through the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation's Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation Services,
- Services to help persons who are blind or visually impaired through the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation's Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services,
- The future road builders program, where individuals can learn about the opportunities and realities of highway construction careers,
- In-house web resources for individuals to view workforce and career-related websites,
- Assistance with Unemployment Compensation,
- Several training programs designed to help individuals learn new skills or enhance existing skills, and
- Veteran focused information, including assistance with finding jobs, acquiring skills and career planning.

Many PA CareerLink® services are also available online. Online services are accessible at [www.pacareerlink.pa.gov/jponline/](http://www.pacareerlink.pa.gov/jponline/). The PA CareerLink® website gives job-seekers access to more than 200,000 job openings, allows users to create and upload resumes directly to the website and provides job recommendations based on chosen preferences. PA CareerLink® allows individuals to manage all their job search activities in one place.

Job-seekers will receive personalized recommendations based on their qualifications, and both Domestic Relations Sections and noncustodial parents can track job applications electronically. The entire process is paperless and much simpler for both noncustodial parents and Domestic Relation Sections.

Noncustodial parents that meet certain criteria will also receive PA CareerLink® alerts when logging into the Child Support Website (CSWS) and CSWS Mobile. They will first receive a Registration Alert with a link to PA CareerLink® and then receive Job Recommendation alerts once registered and logged into the CSWS or CSWS Mobile.

The DRS can order obligors to complete a work search using the PA CareerLink® Website. Obligor ordered to complete a PA CareerLink® work search must register on the PA CareerLink® website and use it to complete their job search activities. The website will track your applications and other job search activities and report that information to the DRS. It will also send you personalized job recommendations based on your qualifications and past experience. Your DRS worker will provide you with more information regarding this program if you are ordered into a work search.

# 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:** The DRS can intercept your federal and state income tax refunds.
- **Financial institution data match:** The court can order financial institutions, such as banks and credit unions, to turn over your financial assets.
- **Work requirements:** The court can order you to work or join an employment program. See the PA CareerLink® section for more information.
- **Credit bureau reporting:** If you don't pay your child support, the DRS will report your name and the amount of back support you owe to the major credit bureaus.
- **License suspension:** If you owe at least three months of support and don't have an income withholding order, the DRS may suspend, deny, or not renew the following licenses:
  - 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 owe more than \$2500 in child support.
- **Lottery intercept:** The DRS can intercept your lottery winnings of \$2,500 or more if you owe overdue child support.
- **Intercept of workers compensation and lump sum personal injury payment:** The DRS can intercept the amount of overdue child support you owe from your settlement or benefits.
- **Fine or prison:** The federal government funds the Project Save Our Children task force, a federal multi-agency law enforcement initiative

which investigates and prosecutes the most flagrant instances of non-payment of child support. 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 you to pay the unpaid support. In addition, the court can fine you and/or send you to prison for up to two years.

- **Publication of name:** The DRS can publish your name in the newspaper if you are at least 30 days behind in your support payments.
- **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 is different and 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 65 county DRS offices and other child support resources and telephone numbers are available on the child support website at [www.childsupport.pa.gov](http://www.childsupport.pa.gov) in the "Program Information" section under "Child Support Resources and Telephone Numbers".

## About Enforcement

You can avoid these enforcement actions by paying your support or reporting changes in your income and expenses to the DRS. If you have a hardship or change in your financial circumstances, then you can go to your DRS and explain the situation. The DRS may be able to modify your order or work with you on a payment plan to avoid enforcement.

# Modifying the Child Support Order

## **When can I request 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 their child support order. Additionally, every three years, the DRS sends each parent a notice asking if they want their support case reviewed. The DRS must review TANF support cases every three years to determine if the order should change. The DRS decides whether to modify an order based on the following factors:

- Significant changes in income for either party.
- New or ongoing medical expenses for the child.
- Child care and/or medical insurance changes.
- Age and graduation date of the child.
- The living arrangements of the family and custody status of the child.
- Whether either parent is incarcerated.
- Any other substantial change in circumstances.

## **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.humanservices.dhs.pa.gov/CSWS](http://www.humanservices.dhs.pa.gov/CSWS) and submit a Petition for Modification through E-Services. The DRS will provide you with a date and time for your modification conference. 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.humanservices.dhs.pa.gov/CSWS](http://www.humanservices.dhs.pa.gov/CSWS).

The website is an interactive online guide to child support information in Pennsylvania. The site is useful to anyone who is receiving or paying 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 is available on the website:

- 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/Warren	Warren	814-728-5534	Venango	Franklin	814-432-9590
Franklin	Chambersburg	717-264-6144	Warren	Warren	814-728-5534
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 Coverage**

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.dhs.pa.gov](http://www.compass.dhs.pa.gov).

## **Legal Assistance**

Visit [www.palegalaid.net](http://www.palegalaid.net) to learn more about free and low cost legal services in Pennsylvania.

## **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).





**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.

ព័ត៌មានសំខាន់អំពីកម្មវិធីទាញយកប្រាក់ចិញ្ចឹមកូននៅរដ្ឋប៉េនស៊ីលវ៉ានី។  
បើលោកអ្នកត្រូវការជំនួយអានព័ត៌មាននេះ សូមទូរស័ព្ទ 1-800-932-0211។  
ជំនួយផ្នែកខាងភាសានឹងផ្តល់អោយដោយឥតគិតថ្លៃ។

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