

# Child Support

pennsylvania  
handbook



## Bureau of Child Support Enforcement

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

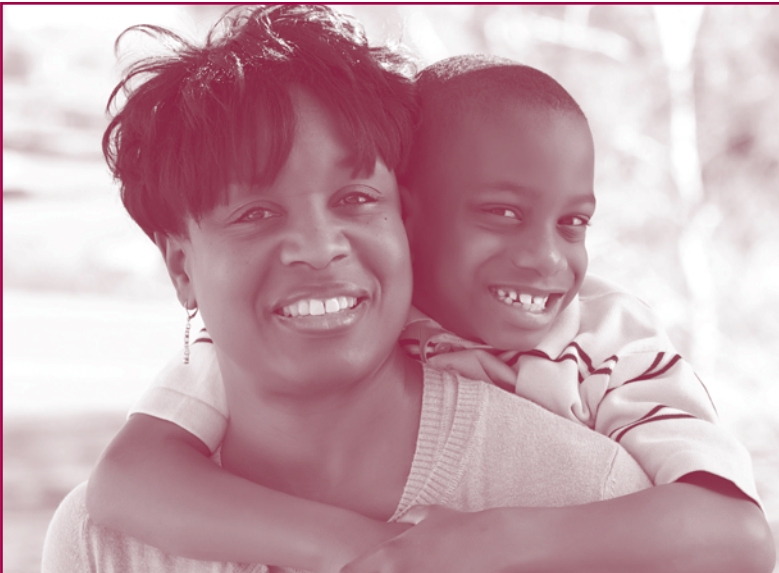
**Child Support Helpline**  
**1-800-932-0211**

## 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 Public Welfare, 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 Sections, DRSs, of the county Court of Common Pleas.

DRSs help 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 5, "Domestic Violence: Addressing Safety Risks in the Support Process," 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 9, "Establishing Paternity for your Child is in your Hands."

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. 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*.

## \$25 Annual Federal User Fee

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 annually 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. The \$25 fee will be collected from the custodial parent in cases

which have annual collections that equal or exceed \$2,000.

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 Enforcement Program

## Parent Locator Service

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 the noncustodial parent's name; date of birth; Social Security number, if you know it; and as much other information as possible for 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 link for "Frequently Asked Questions," you will find more information about what a DRS does to locate noncustodial parents.

## The Support Conference

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.

You must 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.

## Pennsylvania Support Guidelines

The guidelines 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 DRSs 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. Either parent may be ordered 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 "Frequently Asked Questions" on the Pennsylvania Child Support website at [www.childsupport.state.pa.us](http://www.childsupport.state.pa.us). The website also 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.

## 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 between each support case.

A support 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 support order can be appealed. In some counties that appeal is heard by an attorney hired by the DRS; the individual may appeal the attorney's decision to a judge. In other counties, the appeal of the support order goes directly to the judge for decision.

# Pennsylvania Child Support Enforcement Program

## Modifying the 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 Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, 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/plaintiff.
- The noncustodial parent is incarcerated.
- Other substantial changes in circumstance occur.



Many counties charge a fee to accept a request for a modification. You may ask to be excused from paying the fee by filing a petition to proceed *In Forma Pauperis*. It is then up to the DRS worker to accept or decline the request.

## For Your Information

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.

If you have any questions about your case or the amount of your child support order, contact the county DRS handling your case. See page 19 titled “Child Support Resources and Telephone Numbers” for the telephone number of the county DRS.

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.

Contact the county DRS that handles your case if you have any questions about the Pennsylvania Child Support Enforcement Program.

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. You can also call the Child Support Helpline at 1-800-932-0211 or the local DRS for more information.

# Domestic Violence: Addressing Safety Risks in the Support Process

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 Domestic Relations Section, 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.
- 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 7 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.

# Domestic Violence: Addressing Safety Risks in the Support Process

Domestic violence occurs within a family or 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 nonconsensual 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).





# Child Support and Cash Assistance

If a parent or spouse applies for or receives Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, or 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 page 5 titled "Domestic Violence: Addressing Safety Risks in the Support Process" 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 Domestic Relations Section, 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, current support owed during the time you receive cash assistance will be paid to the state. This is called "assignment of support rights" and is required by law. The amount of your support that may be collected by the state is limited to the amount of cash assistance you receive.

Support paid to the state will be limited to the amount of current support owed during the time you receive cash assistance capped by the amount of cash assistance you received.

## 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 State.

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 Refund Offset Program.

# Child Support and Cash Assistance

## What is a support pass-through?

Every month that the amount of current child support owed is paid **on time** for a family receiving cash assistance, DPW pays a portion of the child support to the custodial parent or caretaker. This is called the **child support pass-through**.

- If you have one child, you will receive the first \$100 of the current child support paid in each month;

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

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



# Establishing Paternity for your Child is in your Hands

## Important Information for Unmarried Parents

### What is paternity?

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 Acknowledgment of Paternity 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.

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

### What is an Acknowledgment of Paternity form and when can it be signed?

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

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

An Acknowledgment of Paternity 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. Once BCSE determines the form is valid, it is recorded as an acknowledgement of paternity.

A voluntary Acknowledgment of Paternity may be cancelled 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 the 60 days, the acknowledgment 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.

**Do not sign the Acknowledgment of Paternity 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 20 titled "Child Support Resources and Telephone Numbers" to find the telephone number of your county DRS.

### What if the birth mother will not sign the Acknowledgement of Paternity 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 Acknowledgment of Paternity 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 will establishing paternity do for my child?

When you establish paternity, your child may be eligible for the following:

#### Birth Certificate

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

#### 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.

# Establishing Paternity for your Child is in your Hands

## Important Information for Unmarried Parents

### **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.



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

Contact the DRS for help. See page 19 titled "Child Support Resources and Telephone Numbers."

### **I do not know where my child's father is, what can I do?**

The DRS can help you locate the father if you want to establish paternity.

### **What must I do if I am receiving cash assistance for my child?**

If you receive cash assistance, the law states that you must cooperate in establishing paternity and obtaining a child support order unless there is Good Cause to excuse you from doing so. Tell the CAO if you have domestic violence or Good Cause concerns. For information about domestic violence and Good Cause, see pages 5 and 6 titled "Domestic Violence: Addressing Safety Risks in the Support Process" and pages 7 and 8 titled "Child Support and Cash Assistance."

### **Who do I call if I have questions?**

If you have more questions, contact the Department of Public Welfare 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.

# 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 Public Welfare 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, ATMs. You can get cash back with purchases at many businesses that accept Maestro®, 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

## 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 that accept Maestro®, in addition to grocery stores, will give cash back with no fee when you make a purchase.
- **At ATMs.** You can use any ATM that has the MasterCard® or Maestro® logo. Some ATMs charge a fee for cash withdrawals.

**If you are an EPPICard™ cardholder and you have a question about your support payment, call EPPICard Customer Service at 1-800-304-1669. For information about your direct deposit support payments, contact PA SCDU Customer Service at 1-877-727-7238. Individuals with hearing impairment should use 1-877-676-9582.**

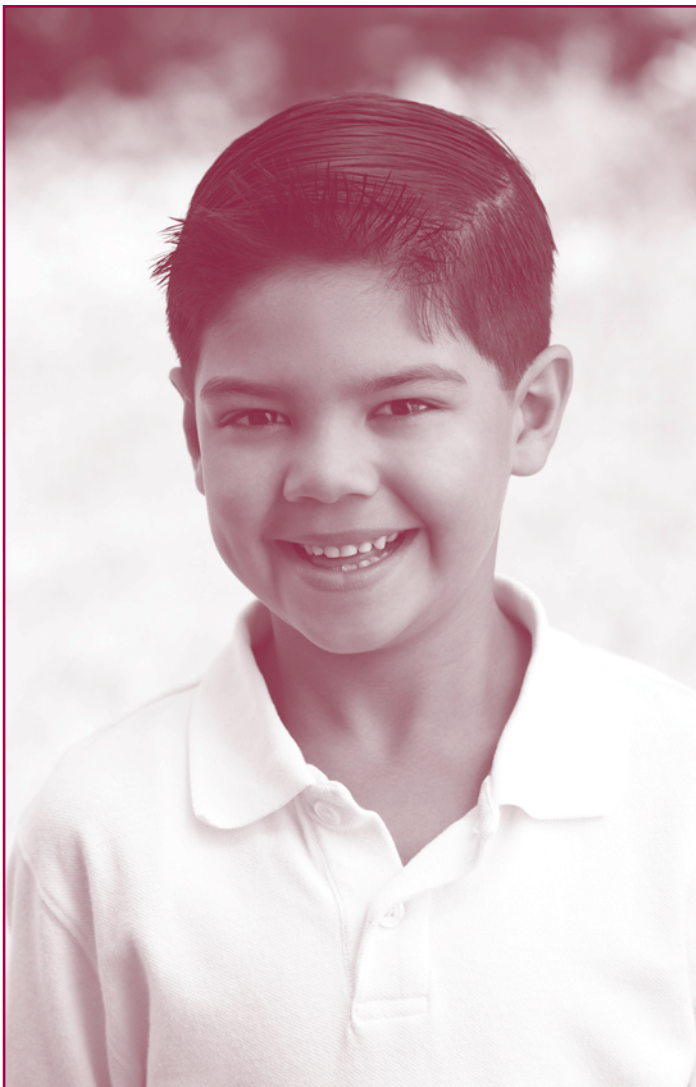
These numbers are toll-free nationwide. You can review your payment information 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. To speak with customer service, call between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

## Must I do anything else?

**The law requires each parent to tell the Domestic Relations Section, 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 the Pennsylvania Child Support Enforcement System, 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 20 titled "Child Support Resources and Telephone Numbers" for the telephone number of the county DRS that handles your case.



# Paying Child Support

Most child support is paid by income withholding as ordered by the court and maintained in the Pennsylvania Child Support Enforcement System, which is the state's child support computer. Pennsylvania maintains 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.

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

PA SCDU sends payment coupons to parents ordered to pay 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 number, which is found on your court order, or Social Security number, 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". PA SCDU also 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 number or SSN on the check or money order and make it payable to PA SCDU.

- **Telephone.** You can make a payment over the phone from your checking or savings account. Contact the PA SCDU Customer Service Unit at 1-877-727-7238 for instructions.
- **Recurring Automatic Withdrawals.** You can choose to have your support payments taken electronically from your checking or savings account. This is called recurring automatic withdrawal. Call PA SCDU at 1-877-727-7238 if you would like to set up recurring automatic withdrawal. You may also have a one-time payment or recurring payments withdrawn from your bank account at [www.expertpay.com](http://www.expertpay.com).
- **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. Because you will not be able to set up your account to automatically charge your credit 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).

For information about your support payment, contact the 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 Domestic Relations Section that handles your case.

# Paying Child Support

## 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.

## 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:

- **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.
- **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 a 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. See page 20 titled "Child Support Resources and Telephone Numbers" or the telephone number of the county DRS that handles your case.



# Medical Support

## Can I get medical support for my child?

Pennsylvania law gives the courts the authority to order parents to provide medical support for their children if it is available at no cost or at a reasonable cost.

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 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 Domestic Relations Section of the Court of Common Pleas. 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 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

## 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.
- Enroll each child named in the support order into the employer-sponsored medical support if it is available at no cost or at a reasonable cost.
- Process and pay claims to the individual with custody of the child.
- Tell the individual with custody of the child about changes in the medical support.
- 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 medical support beginning on the date of disenrollment;

- the employer has eliminated family medical support for all employees;
- any available continuation coverage is not elected; or
- the employee is no longer eligible for family medical support 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 deductibles, 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

## 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.

For more information, contact the DRS that handles your case. See page 20 titled "Child Support Resources and Telephone Numbers."

**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
- 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.**

# 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	Danville	570-271-3031
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	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	800-561-5022
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 Public Welfare, 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 Public Welfare 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.

ព័ត៌មានសំខាន់អំពីកម្មវិធីទាញយកថវិកាចិញ្ចឹមកូននៅរដ្ឋប៉េនស៊ីលវ៉ានី។  
បើលោកអ្នកត្រូវការជំនួយអានព័ត៌មាននេះ សូមទូរស័ព្ទ 1-800-932-0211។  
ជំនួយផ្នែកខាងភាសានឹងផ្តល់ឱ្យអោយដោយឥតគិតថ្លៃ។

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 PUBLIC WELFARE

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