

CHILD SUPPORT PROGRAM FACT SHEET

Services Available:

The Child Support Program is administered through the Tennessee Department of Human Services (DHS). The following services are available:

- Establishment of paternity,
- Establishment and enforcement of child support orders,
- Establishment and enforcement of medical support,
- Collection and distribution of payments,
- Modification of child support orders, and
- Enforcement of spousal support orders if child support is also involved.

NOTE: The Child Support Program cannot help with civil matters such as divorce petitions, custody, or parenting time/visitation, nor can they provide legal advice on these issues. Contact the court clerk in your judicial district to discuss how these matters can be addressed by the court.

Applying for Services:

If you are a recipient of Families First/TANF benefits, Transitional Child Care, and/or, in some cases, TennCare/Medicaid, the Department of Human Services (DHS) will automatically refer your case to the local child support office. Your local child support office will contact you when the referral is received. If you have questions regarding your child support case, you should contact your local child support office.

If you are not a recipient of state benefits, you may apply for child support services by completing an application. Once you have completed, signed and dated the application, you may take it in-person or mail it to your local child support office.

If a family has never received Families First/TANF benefits, Federal statute requires that states charge an annual fee of \$25.00 for child support services. This fee is collected after \$500 in child support payments have been received in the case. Again, this is an annual fee that is taken once a year.

If a family has been recipients of Families First/TANF benefits, they are not required to pay the annual fee of \$25 dollars.

Child Support Enforcement:

If a child's parents were never married, or if paternity has never been legally established, paternity must be established before a child support order and health insurance coverage can be established.

In order to locate a non-custodial parent, the state child support agency automatically conducts a search of certain records, including:

- Drivers' license records
- Wage and unemployment records
- Vital records
- Criminal records
- Health records (TennCare)

On the federal level, the child support agency has access to the following records:

- The Federal Parent Locator Service, which includes information from the Internal Revenue Service and the Social Security Administration
- The National Directory of New Hire, which is a nationwide directory of all newly hired or rehired employees
- Federal Case Registry, which is a nationwide directory of child support orders.

Some of the actions our agency can take to enforce child support orders are:

- Automatically withhold wages and other income
- Seize assets identified by the Financial Institution Data Match (FIDM) program, or by other means
- Intercept federal tax refunds and deny passport applications using the IRS Treasury/Administrative Offset program
- Revoke driver's licenses, professional licenses, and various other licenses,
- Report a child support debt to the credit reporting agencies
- Place liens against real or personal property

If the non-custodial parent resides out-of-state, child support can be pursued across state lines under the Uniform Interstate Family Support Act (UIFSA). Using standardized forms, one state can request another state for assistance with the activities necessary to establish, enforce, and collect child support.

Child Support Payments:

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA), P.L. 104-193, required all states to establish and operate a centralized unit to collect and disburse any support collected for cases in which support is being enforced under the provisions of Title IV-D of the Social Security Act. These are referred to as IV-D child support cases.

Payments for other child support cases (non-IV-D cases) must also be collected and disbursed by the centralized unit if the initial support order was issued on or after January 1, 1994 and the payments are being made by income assignment.

Tennessee has a centralized unit to collect and disburse child support payments; it is called the State Disbursement Unit.

Most non-custodial parents pay child support through *Income Withholding Orders*, if this is not an option, the non-custodial parent can pay their court ordered obligation by mail or on-line by automatic withdrawal, phone, mobile website or credit card.

Income Withholding Order

An *Income Withholding Order* (IWO) is an order that a court or Child Support Office sends to the non-custodial parent's employer. It provides the employer specific information on the amount to withhold from the non-custodial parent's income to meet the child support obligation. The child support obligation is withheld automatically by the employer and sent to the State Disbursement Unit for distribution to the custodial parent. It is the non-custodial parent's responsibility to send the payment to the State Disbursement Unit (as detailed below) until the Income Withholding Order is put into place by the employer.

Make Payment by Mail

If paying by mail, a non-custodial should make their check or money order payable to Tennessee Child Support and mail it to the following address:

**State Disbursement Unit
P.O. Box 305200
Nashville, TN 37229**

Payments mailed to the State Disbursement Unit (SDU) must include the following information to ascertain the payment is applied to the correct child support case.

- Name of the non-custodial parent
- Docket and Court ID Number*
- Social Security Number

**If Docket Number and Court ID Number are not provided, the Tennessee Child Support Enforcement System (TCSES) case number must be provided.*

Non-custodial parents should return the payment coupon received from the Department of Human Services (DHS) with their payments, or include the appropriate identifying information mentioned above on their check or money order. Payments not properly identified cannot be processed.

Make Payment On-Line (automatic withdrawal, phone, mobile website or credit card)

A non-custodial parent can pay via automatic withdrawal, phone (844-324-3856), or credit card by going to <https://tn.smartchildsupport.com> and registering an account. It is important to note that once the non-custodial parent registers, the information must batch overnight before he/she can schedule a credit card payment.

A non-custodial parent may schedule non-recurring **or** recurring payments. We encourage non-custodial parents to take advantage of the recurring payment option in order to save time and ensure child support payments are made timely. **Important Note:** It is the non-custodial parent's responsibility to cancel their recurring payments once their obligation has been met.

If a non-custodial parent has additional questions or needs assistance with regard to making an on-line payment, they may select the "**Contact Us**" option on the website and send an e-mail. E-mail requests are monitored closely and answered within 24 hours. If the non-custodial parent wishes to speak with someone by phone, they may contact the **Child Support Disbursement Unit at (615) 253-4394 (local) or 1-800-838-6911 (toll free)**. ** If you are calling from a cell phone and have free long distance, please call the local number instead of the toll free number.*