

Connecting With Your Child Support Agency



What is a child support order?

- This is an order from a court or a county Child Support Enforcement Agency.
- It requires a parent to pay the other parent or caretaker a specific amount of money for the care of his or her child(ren).

What is a Child Support Enforcement Agency?

A Child Support Enforcement Agency, or "CSEA," is an agency where both parents (or caretakers) may obtain child support-related services at no charge. **The CSEA is there to help both parents, moms and dads, manage their child support case.** The CSEA is the best place to obtain information about child support and about your case. Services of the CSEA include the establishment of paternity (legal fatherhood), the establishment of a child support order, and the enforcement or modification of a child support order. Each of Ohio's 88 counties has a CSEA.

It is important to stay in touch with the CSEA. For example, the agency needs information about your current address, employment, and income.

Communicating with the CSEA can help avoid misunderstandings about your case.

- If you receive a notice from the CSEA, do not ignore it. If you have any questions about a notice or letter you receive, call the CSEA as soon as possible.
- If you ignore a notice or letter, the CSEA or the court may issue an order you disagree with or may take enforcement action, including seeking a finding of contempt of court or issuing a warrant for arrest.
- If you are working with a child support case manager and still have questions, it is okay to ask to speak to a supervisor.



Will my social security or other benefits be impacted by my child support case?

"SSI" benefits and other benefits that are based on need are sometimes referred to as "means-tested" benefits. Such benefits are **not** subject to withholding for the purpose of child support.

With respect to other types of Social Security or other benefits, it is best to review the facts of the case with the CSEA and with the agency that issues the benefits to determine if child support can be withheld from the benefit. Some benefits may be intercepted to pay child support.

Is there a way to reduce a child support debt owed to the state of Ohio?

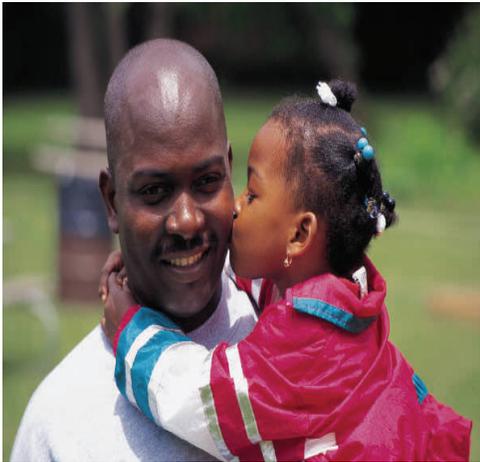
Yes. Each county has its own procedures for addressing a parent's request to reduce arrears, or back child support, owed to the state of Ohio. A payment toward the amount owed may be required. In some circumstances, the state of Ohio must also approve the reduction.

Is there help for parents having problems paying child support?

Yes, there are initiatives to help parents overcome obstacles to paying child support. These initiatives focus on areas where families are experiencing difficult circumstances, such as unemployment. Talk to someone at your CSEA about referrals to programs in your area. County departments of job and family services also have representatives who can refer you to services within your community.



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Can a third party assist me with my child support case?

- Yes. If you sign a third party release form, the CSEA can talk about your case with the person named on the release. To request a third party release form, contact your CSEA.
- You can choose the person who will assist you. Let your outreach case manager (or another person you trust) know you would like for him or her to help you understand notices or letters you receive.

Definitions

- **IV-D** (Pronounced “4-D”) - A section of federal law that establishes the child support program.
- **Obligee** – A person who is to receive child support.
- **Obligor** – A person who is to pay child support.

What should I do if I lose my job, or if my income drops?

- You should contact your CSEA as soon as possible to report your change in employment. You should also ask about a review for a “modification” action.
- The effective date of a modified order will be dependent upon the date that a parent requests the change.
- As a result, it is very important that you stay in touch with the CSEA, to provide proof of your reduction in income and to ask that your payments be modified accordingly.



What is a “capias”? What do I do if there is one issued for me?

- A capias is a “bench warrant” that orders someone to be brought before a court. A capias can be issued because a person did not comply with a court order, such as an order to appear before the court for a hearing.
- If you know there is a capias issued for you relating to child support, contact your CSEA as soon as possible. Ask to speak with someone who can work with you to identify the steps to resolve the matter.

Child support orders can be reviewed for possible modification every 36 months or sooner if a parent:

- Is involuntarily unemployed for at least 30 consecutive days, or
- Experiences at least a 30 percent decrease in gross income for a period of six months because of circumstances beyond his or her control, when such circumstances are expected to continue.

Also, if you are permanently disabled and your disability has not been considered in the past, you should request a review. There are other reasons a review can be completed, as well. Please contact your CSEA for information.

To obtain contact information for your Child Support Enforcement Agency, call the Office of Child Support Customer Inquiry Call Center at 1-800-686-1556 -or- visit

<http://jfs.ohio.gov/County/cntydir.stm> .



Created for Advocates for Homeless & at Risk Families

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