

If you or someone in your family has suffered domestic or sexual abuse, consider seeking safety planning advice from a professional advocate or counselor.

Resources

DTA: Ask for the DTA domestic violence specialist at your local office or call the DTA central office

617-348-8500

SAFELINK: Confidential, multilingual, 24 hour and toll-free
877-785-2020

Jane Doe, Inc.: Coalition of domestic violence and sexual assault programs

617-248-0922

www.janedoe.org

Legal Resources

Greater Boston Legal Services

617-371-1234

Legal Aid Alliance of Northeastern Massachusetts

781-599-7730

South Coastal Counties Legal Services

800-742-4107 and 800-244-8393

South Middlesex Legal Services

800-696-1501

Western Massachusetts Legal Services

800-639-1209

DOR Customer Service

If you have questions about child support services, please contact us at:

800-332-2733

(toll free in the U.S. and Puerto Rico)

617-660-1234

(for local callers)

800-255-5587 TTY/TDD/TT

(for the hearing impaired)

To speak with a staff member call

Monday — Friday

between

8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

FAX: 617-887-7540

E-mail: csegen@dor.state.ma.us

For more information or to apply for services visit our website at:

www.mass.gov/cse



Child Support and Your Safety

The Child Support Enforcement Division of the Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR) works with families to establish paternity and establish and enforce child support orders.

This brochure answers questions about establishing and enforcing child support orders safely.

You are the expert on your family's safety.

If you have safety concerns, tell DOR so that we can give you the information you need to make decisions about child support that are right for you.



**Massachusetts
Department of Revenue
Child Support
Enforcement Division**



What is child support?

Child support is a way for parents to share the financial responsibilities for their children even when they do not live together. Child support is not a public assistance program. Child support is provided through a court order directing one parent to make payments for the children. Parents who pay support are usually required to pay a certain amount each week or each month. For parents with an employer, the court will require that the child support be deducted from their wages. Court orders for child support may also include orders that parents provide health insurance coverage for the children.

What does DOR do?

DOR provides child support services to families who receive public assistance as well as to families who do not receive public assistance. For families who do not receive public assistance, parents must apply for DOR services. DOR applications are available on our website or by calling DOR Customer Service (see contact information on back of brochure). DOR works to:

- **Locate parents.**
- **Establish paternity** by arranging for paternity tests, helping parents complete forms to acknowledge paternity, and filing court actions.
- **Establish child support orders** by filing court actions.
- **Enforce child support orders** by taking actions such as those listed at the end of this brochure.
- **Modify** child support to remain consistent with parents' ability to pay.

When are custodial parents required to work with DOR to get child support?

In general, when parents receive TAFDC (cash Assistance) or MassHealth, they are required to cooperate with DOR to establish paternity and enforce child support. Cooperating with DOR

means giving information about the other parent, taking paternity tests, and appearing in court. If cooperating with DOR might be dangerous because of domestic violence or other abuse, parents should contact DTA or MassHealth directly to discuss a Good Cause waiver, and notify DOR that they are seeking a waiver.

What do I need to know about moving forward with child support?

Parents who want child support services but are concerned about their safety should consider the following and contact DOR for more information:

- A court action is required to establish a child support order. Both parents are notified to appear.
- Parents often meet together with DOR staff at court to discuss the case, but can ask for separate meetings.
- If paternity has not been established, DNA tests may be required. Both parties and the children must be tested, but DOR can set up appointments on different days.
- All child support payments go through DOR. DOR sends payments to the custodial parent or (if the family receives cash assistance) to DTA. Parents are not allowed to exchange payments directly.
- Parents may have to appear in court if one parent requests a change to the order (a modification) or if a contempt is filed.
- DOR cannot provide legal advice or other services to help with custody or visitation. Parents who are concerned about how a child support order may affect custody or visitation should seek their own legal advice (see legal resources on back of brochure).
- DOR attorneys represent DOR and do not represent either parent.

Does DOR release information about parents who have child support cases?

DOR has strict rules against releasing personal information. If one parent requests information about the other, DOR cannot provide it. However, DOR cannot guarantee that parents' personal information will be completely confidential. For example, DOR shares information with other state agencies, such as DTA and DSS, and the courts. Also, DOR provides information to other entities (including employers, health insurance companies, and other child support agencies) to enforce child and medical support orders. Even if a judge orders an address to be kept off court documents, when DOR files court actions for paternity and child support, the county and state where each parent lives will appear on the documents.

How does DOR enforce child support?

Most enforcement occurs outside of court and happens without notice to custodial parents. For example, to collect past-due support, DOR can:

- Increase the amount withheld from the parent's pay by an additional 25%.
- Seize bank accounts.
- Suspend driver's licenses, motor vehicle registrations or professional licenses.
- Intercept state and federal tax refunds, insurance claims, worker's compensation or unemployment compensation payments and lottery winnings.
- File an action for contempt in court.

Parents with concerns about how disclosure of information or enforcement actions might affect their safety should contact DOR.