



Child Support Enforcement **CSE Directive 04-1**

Massachusetts
Department of
Revenue

Mandatory Electronic Delivery of Child Support Payments

Introduction

The purpose of this Directive is to let child support customers know that the Child Support Enforcement Division of the Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR) will begin sending most child support payments electronically. This will benefit customers by expediting payment delivery so that the money is available as soon as it is deposited into the account, eliminating lost or stolen checks, eliminating excessive check cashing fees, increasing safety from theft and providing an electronic audit trail to ensure that payments can always be located. Further, electronic payments will save tax dollars by minimizing the costs associated with printing and mailing checks.

This Directive explains the electronic payment options available to customers and lists the exemptions available to qualify for continued issuance of paper checks.

Directives

Beginning in February of 2005, DOR will issue all child support payments electronically following an incremental implementation with several pilot groups. There are two electronic options available. Recipients may opt to have their child support payments paid through Direct Deposit or via DOR's Child Support Card – a VISA®-branded debit card.

Customers with a checking or savings account or who want to set up a bank account may choose to have payments directly deposited into that account. This is called Direct Deposit. For customers without bank accounts or those who choose not to set up a bank account for receipt of child support payments, DOR will set up a Child Support Card for them. Customers who receive a Child Support Card will be able to withdraw cash from ATM machines throughout the Commonwealth and make purchases wherever VISA® is accepted. Transaction fees will be listed in the informational materials provided to customers.

The customer may claim an exemption and, if approved, may continue to receive paper checks. DOR may authorize the issuance of a paper check only if one of the following exemptions apply:

- (i) A physical or mental disability imposes a hardship in accessing an electronic payment.
- (ii) A language or literacy barrier imposes a hardship in accessing an electronic payment.
- (iii) The recipient's home and work addresses are more than 5 miles from an automated teller machine and more than 5 miles from a financial institution where the funds may be accessed.
- (iv) In any circumstance not noted above, DOR will consider an exemption on an individual basis.

A recipient must claim an exemption on DOR's form. An exemption granted under any of the above conditions may be subject to periodic review by DOR.

Discussion

DOR is authorized to make payments via electronic methods pursuant to G.L. c. 119A, §5(a), which mandates that DOR use "...automated procedures, electronic processes, and computer-driven technology to the maximum extent feasible, efficient, and economical, for the collection and disbursement of support payments." At this time, many child support agencies in other states, as well as the federal government, have already successfully implemented mandatory electronic payment delivery.

Alan LeBovidge
Commissioner of Revenue
December 22, 2004