

How does child support work?

Child Support is payments that one parent makes to the child's other parent or legal guardian to help with the costs of raising the child. Parents and guardians can receive services from their local child support office.

Here are the main services your local child support office provides:

Locate the other parent

Child support agencies can try to locate the other parent using information like their date of birth and Social Security number.

Establish parentage

It's important to establish a legal relationship with the child. Parents can make a voluntary acknowledgement of their parentage or arrange for genetic testing.

Establish a support order

Child support agencies can establish the child support order and determine the payment amount. They use child support guidelines to calculate how much a parent should contribute to the child's financial support.

Set up payment

The most common way to pay child support is to deduct the payment from the parent's paycheck and distribute the money to the other parent or guardian. It's an easy way to make and keep a record of child support payments.

Enforce the support order

When the parent doesn't pay the full amount or doesn't pay at all, child support agencies can use enforcement remedies like:

- Withholding child support from paychecks, unemployment, or worker's compensation benefits
- Intercepting income tax refunds
- Reporting delinquent child support payments to credit bureaus

Review or modify the order

Either parent can ask their local child support office to review their order three years after the order is set. They can request a review before three years if a parent experiences substantial changes in circumstances, such as job loss or incarceration.

To sign up, contact your state or tribal child support office.

https://www.acf.hhs.gov/css/ContactMap

ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES
Office of Child Support Services