

## Important Information about Applying for Child Support Enforcement Services and Customer Responsibilities

### Safety and Applying for Child Support

You are in the best position to decide whether applying for child support will be safe for you and your child.

When we receive your application, we send a letter to the other parent explaining that we have opened a case to establish or enforce a child support order.

If you are not sure if child support services will be safe for you, before you submit your application, please call us at (800) 332-2733 or email us at [csesafety@dor.state.ma.us](mailto:csesafety@dor.state.ma.us).

### What child support services does DOR offer?

- **Locate a child's parents.**
- **Establish paternity** (legal fatherhood) if your child is under 18 years of age. This may include DNA testing.
- **Establish a child support and a medical support order** in the Probate and Family Court.
- **Enforce child support and medical support orders.** This may include requiring the parent's employer to withhold child support from the parent's paycheck and to enroll a child in the parent's health insurance plan.
- **Collect payments** and send them out using direct deposit or a debit card.
- **Collect past-due child support** in any of these ways:
  - Withhold 25% more from the parent's paycheck (for example, if we were collecting \$100 of each paycheck for current support, we may start collecting \$125).
  - Collect child support from bank accounts, state and federal tax refunds, insurance claims, workers' compensation, unemployment compensation, or lottery winnings.
  - Suspend the parent's driver's license and other licenses, such as business, trade, recreational and professional licenses.
  - Suspend the parent's motor vehicle registrations.
  - Prevent the parent from getting or renewing a passport.
  - Place a lien on real estate and other property (for example, if the parent tries to sell a house, DOR may collect some of the money from the sale).
  - Notify credit reporting agencies the parent owes child support.
  - Ask the court to find the parent "in contempt" for not following the child support order (the court may send the parent to jail or order the parent to participate in a seek work program.)
- **Assist you in returning to court to change** your child support order. You can ask for the amount to be higher or lower.
- **Work with child support agencies in other states.**

**You can help!** We are not successful when we don't have good location or asset information about parents or do not have copies of documents we need. Parents are often the best source of this information. If we're not with you in court when you get your child support order, make sure we get a copy so your child support payments aren't delayed.

**If you DO want full child support services from DOR:**

**You will have to:**

- Provide the information we need for your case.
- Sign forms when asked.
- Come to court and other appointments.
- Tell us **before** you agree to any changes that affect your child support order. This is so that we can give the court information about your child support case.
- Tell us if you get a new child support order or if your order changes.
- Look at the information on documents we send to you (such as checks, statements, court orders, direct deposit and debit card information) and tell us if you see anything wrong.
- Send us back a payment if we sent it to you in error.
- Give us copies of documents we may need such as birth certificates, marriage certificates, court orders, and divorce orders.
- Make payments to DOR, not the other parent directly.

**If you DO NOT want full child support services from DOR and the court DID order the parent to pay child support by income withholding (having money withheld from wages):**

- **We will** send a bill to the parent's employer. Then we'll send the payments to the parent who gets child support.
- **We won't** take any actions if the parent doesn't pay.
- **We won't** keep track of how much is owed or when the order ends.
- **You must** tell us when the order ends.

**If you DO NOT want full child support services from DOR and the court DID NOT order the parent to pay child support by income withholding (having money withheld from wages):**

- **We won't** collect child support payments or take any actions if the parent doesn't pay.
- **We will** keep a record of your child support order. The law requires us to keep a record.

**What information do I have to give to DOR?**

Whether or not you want our child support services, you must give us information, including your:

- Name
- Social Security number
- Home and mailing addresses
- Home and cell phone numbers
- Driver's license number
- E-mail address
- Employer's name and address
- Employer's phone number

You must also tell us if any of your information changes.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Do I have to pay for DOR's services?

No. There is no charge for our services.

### Do DOR lawyers represent me?

No. DOR lawyers represent only DOR. They do not represent either parent. They present facts to the court whether they benefit you or the other parent. You may want to hire your own lawyer to represent you. We will work with your lawyer, but your lawyer must tell us if he or she takes any action on your case.

### Will I have to see the other parent in court?

Yes. If a hearing is scheduled and both parents come to court, you will see the other parent in court. While you can't request separate court dates, you can ask to talk with DOR staff without the other parent present.

### Will DOR help me with visitation and parenting time issues?

No. We don't provide services for visitation and parenting time. If you need help with visitation or parenting time, contact your local Probate & Family Court for help.

### Do I need to apply for full services if I want DOR to arrange for paternity testing?

Yes. If you want DOR to help you with paternity testing, you need to request full child support services on the application.

### Can I choose how DOR handles my case?

No. You can't choose which actions DOR takes on your case. We will decide what services are best for your case. We may handle your case differently from what you would like. We offer child support services based on state and federal law and our own policies and procedures. There may be times when it is not possible to provide as much attention to your case as you or DOR would like.

### If I'm the custodial parent, will DOR tell me in advance before they take any action to enforce my child support order?

No. Most enforcement occurs outside of court and happens without notice to the custodial parent.

### Why do I need to give DOR my Social Security number?

We use Social Security numbers to make sure that we have the right person and to find parents so that we can establish paternity, establish child support orders, and collect child support. Federal law requires that you give your Social Security number to DOR. 42 USC Section 405(c)(2)(C).

### Does DOR share my information?

We keep your personal information as private as we can. Because of state and federal law, we must share your information with:

- **Other state agencies or entities:** This is so we can enforce child and medical support orders. For example, if there is a medical support order we may need to give your address to the other parent's employer so that the employer can enroll the children in a health care plan. The other parent may see these forms.
- **The court:** The other parent may see court documents that have your personal information on them. A judge may remove your address from court documents, but the county and state where you live may still be on the documents.

### How will I get payment from DOR?

We'll send you payments by direct deposit into a bank account or by debit card. We don't usually send checks by mail – if you have a special reason why you can't use direct deposit or a debit card, call us to ask for a "hardship exemption."