



Information For Custodial Parents About Disbursement of Child Support Payments

This explains how the Child Support Enforcement Division of the Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR) disburses child support payments to custodial parents and why a custodial parent may receive different amounts of child support each week. This also describes instances in which payments intended as current support to you may have been applied to arrears (past due support) owed to the Commonwealth.

All Money Goes First to Current Support Due in the Month

Your child support order may state that the other parent must pay a weekly amount of support. If the other parent is paying through a wage assignment, his or her employer may send payments to DOR based on the payroll cycle, which can be weekly, bi-weekly or monthly. For accounting purposes, however, DOR converts all child support orders to monthly obligations based on the number of Fridays in the month. For example, if a case has a support order for \$100 per week, \$400 is due in any month with four Fridays. When DOR collects child support, the money goes first to the current support due for that month. Once all of the current support due for that month is paid, any additional money is used to pay arrears. If no arrears are owed, DOR will hold any additional money until current child support becomes due the following month.

The Other Parent May Send Different Amounts Each Week

DOR will send you whatever we receive, up to the amount of current support due for the month plus whatever is owed to you in past-due support. If the other parent pays different amounts each week or if the payment includes an amount toward arrears owed to you, your checks will be for different amounts from week to week.

Example: Your child support order is \$100 per week and there are arrears owed to you. There are four Fridays in May 2000; therefore \$400 in current support is owed to you that month. DOR receives \$150 from the noncustodial parent on May 5th and immediately sends that payment to you. DOR receives \$100 payments on May 12th and May 19th and immediately sends those payments to you. On May 26th, DOR receives \$150 and immediately sends that payment to you. At the end of the month, your total child support obligation of \$400 has been paid in full and the additional \$100 was applied to the arrears owed to you. Because the noncustodial parent sent different amounts of money each week, you received unequal weekly payments; however, all the payments were sent to you.

The Other Parent Owes Child Support to Another Family

The other parent may owe child support to you and to another family or families. In that circumstance, if the other parent sends payments for less than the total amount due for all of the child support orders, the payments are divided, or pro-rated, among all of the child support accounts based on the amount of the current obligations. Dividing payments in this way ensures that all families are treated fairly if the amount of support paid is less than the amount due. As a result, you may receive checks in different amounts each week, and neither you nor the other family will receive the full amount due for the month.

Example: Your child support order is \$200 per week. The noncustodial parent has a child support order for another family in the amount of \$100 per week. Therefore, the noncustodial parent's total weekly obligation is \$300. DOR collects \$150 on May 5th. This payment is divided between the two child support accounts in proportion to the amount of current support owed to each. Your order is for twice as much as the other family's order; therefore, DOR sends \$100 to you and \$50 to the other family. If the noncustodial parent does not pay all of the support owed to both families by the end of the month, he or she will owe arrears to both families.

The Other Parent Is Paying Toward Arrears on a Weekly Basis

If there is a current weekly support order owed to you and the other parent also owes past-due support to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for a period during which you received public assistance benefits, you may receive checks in different amounts each week. This is because DOR pays all of the current support owed to you for the month before applying any payment toward arrears due the Commonwealth.

Example: Your child support order is \$100 per week and there are four Fridays in May 2000; therefore \$400 is owed to you that month. The noncustodial parent owes \$1,000 in past-due support to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for a period during which you received public assistance benefits, and no past-due support is owed to you. Because of the arrearage, DOR collects an additional 25%, for a total of \$125 per week. Since current support is paid before any money is applied to arrears, we send you the full amount we receive in each payment until current support due for the month has been paid. Therefore, DOR receives \$125 from the noncustodial parent on May 5th, May 12th and May 19th and immediately sends those payments to you. On May 26th, DOR receives \$125 from the noncustodial parent and sends \$25 to you. At this time you have received \$400, the total support obligation due to you for the month. The remaining \$100 is applied

toward the past-due support owed to the Commonwealth.

Current Support Payment Applied to Arrears Owed to the Commonwealth

In a month with four Fridays, the other parent's employer may send a fifth regular weekly payment due to its payroll cycle. Because all the current support due you for the month has been paid, DOR may credit the fifth payment to arrears owed to the Commonwealth, rather than to current support due for the next month. If this occurs in your case, please call the Customer Service Bureau at the number below to see if you are eligible to receive this payment.

Example: Your child support order is \$100 per week and there are four Fridays in May 2000; therefore \$400 is owed to you that month. The noncustodial parent owes \$1,000 in past-due support to the Commonwealth and no past-due support is owed to you. The employer's payroll day is Monday and there are five Mondays in May 2000. The employer sends five regular support payments to DOR on May 1st, May 8th, May 15th, May 22nd, and May 29th. Since current support due you for the month was paid with the first four payments, the fifth payment on May 29th is applied to arrears owed to the Commonwealth. The fifth payment, however, should be applied to current support due in the first week of June 2000.

How to Figure Out How Much Child Support Is Owed to You Each Month

Follow the steps below to calculate whether you received the full amount of current child support owed to you in any month:

1. Write the amount of weekly child support due here: = \$ _____

2. Write the number of Fridays in the month for which you are figuring the support owed: = _____

3. Multiply line 1 by line 2 and write the total due for the month here: x = _____

4. Add up all the payments you received from DOR in the month and write the amount here: = \$ _____

- If the amounts in lines 3 and 4 match, you received the correct amount of current child support for the month.
- If the amount in line 4 is more than the amount in line 3, then the additional amount has been applied to arrears due to you.
- If the amount in line 4 is less than the amount in line 3, the difference has been added to the arrears the other parent owes to you.