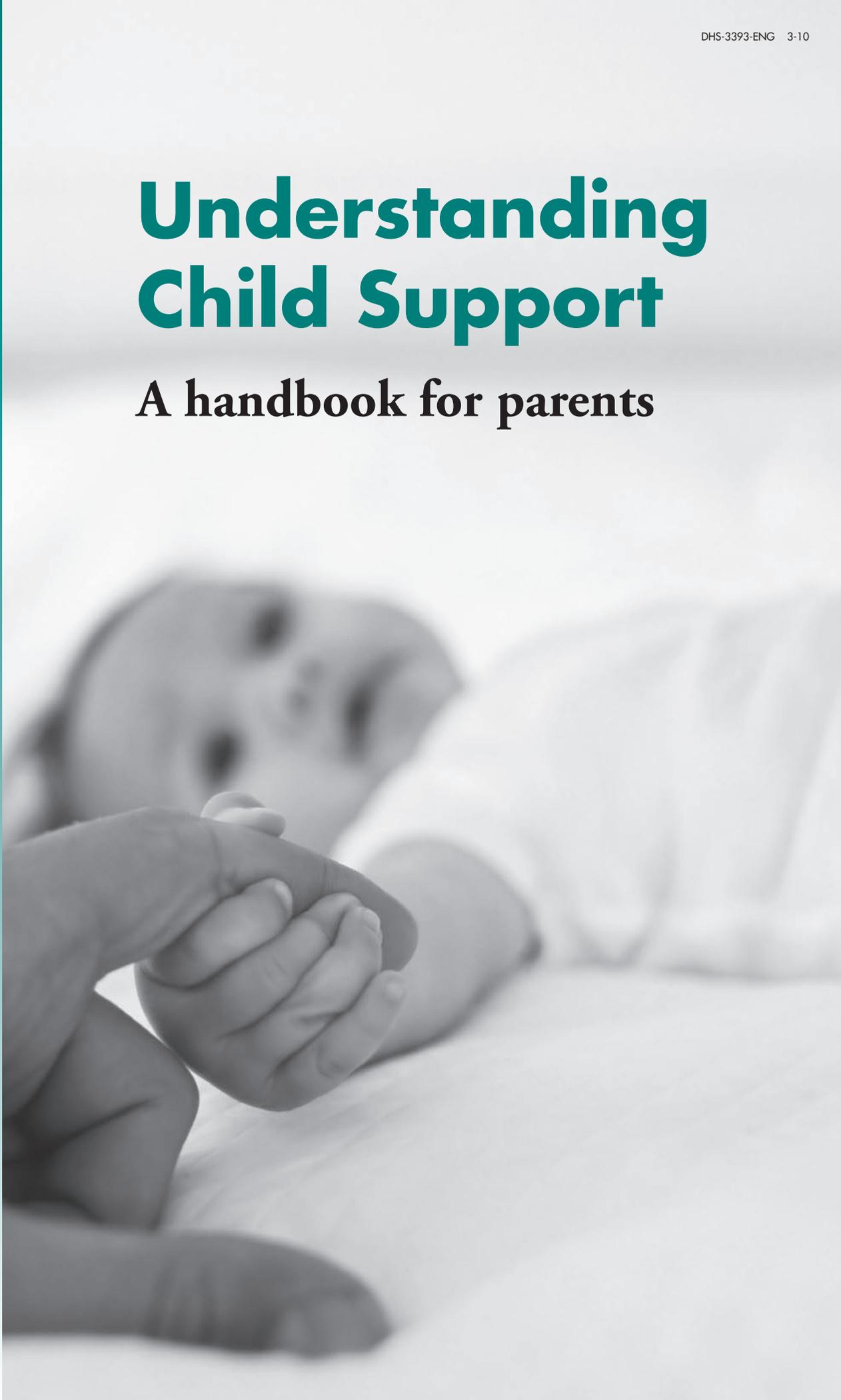




Minnesota Department of Human Services

Understanding Child Support

A handbook for parents



Attention. If you want free help translating this information, ask your worker or call the number below for your language.

ملاحظة: إذا أردت مساعدة مجانية في ترجمة هذه المعلومات، فاسأل مساعدك في مكتب الخدمة الاجتماعية أو اتصل على الرقم 1-800-358-0377.

កំណត់សំគាល់ បើអ្នកមិនបានជំនួយបកប្រែព័ត៌មាននេះដោយមិនគិតថ្លៃ សូមសួរអ្នកកាន់សំណុំរឿងរបស់អ្នក ឬ ទូរស័ព្ទទៅលេខ 1-888-468-3787 ។

Pažnja. Ako vam je potrebna besplatna pomoć za prevod ove informacije, pitajte vašeg radnika ili nazovite 1-888-234-3785.

Ceeb toom. Yog koj xav tau kev pab txhais cov xov no rau koj dawb, nug koj tus neeg lis dej num (worker) lossis hu 1-888-486-8377.

ໂປຼດຊາບ. ຖ້າຫາກທ່ານຕ້ອງການການຊ່ວຍເຫຼືອໃນການແປຂໍ້ຄວາມດັ່ງກ່າວນີ້ພຣີ, ຈົ່ງຖາມນຳພັນກາງານຊ່ວຍວຽກຂອງທ່ານຫຼືໂທໂທຕາມເລກໂທ 1-888-487-8251.

Hubaddhu. Yoo akka odeeffannoon kun sii hiikamu gargaarsa tolaa feeta ta'e, hojjataa kee gaafaddhu ykn lakkoofsa kana bilbili 1-888-234-3798.

Внимание: если вам нужна бесплатная помощь в переводе этой информации, обратитесь к своему социальному работнику или позвоните по следующему телефону: 1-888-562-5877.

Ogow. Haddii aad dooneyso in lagaa kaalmeeyo tarjamadda macluumaadkani oo lacag la'aan ah, weydii hawl-wadeenkaaga ama wac lambarkan 1-888-547-8829.

Atención. Si desea recibir asistencia gratuita para traducir esta información, consulte a su trabajador o llame al 1-888-428-3438.

Chú Ý. Nếu quý vị cần dịch thông tin này miễn phí, xin gọi nhân-viên xã-hội của quý vị hoặc gọi số 1-888-554-8759.

LB2-0001 (10-09)

ADA3 (5-09)

This information is available in alternative formats to individuals with disabilities by calling (651) 431-4199 or (800) 657-3954. TTY users can call through Minnesota Relay at (800) 627-3529. For Speech-to-Speech, call (877) 627-3848. For additional assistance with legal rights and protections for equal access to human services programs, contact your agency's ADA coordinator.

Definitions:

Basic support: Support for expenses relating to the child's care, housing, food, clothing, and transportation. The basic support obligation does **not** include payment towards arrears.

Child: An individual under 18 years of age, an individual under 20 years who is still attending secondary school, or an individual who, by reason of physical or mental condition, is incapable of self-support.

Child support: Money parents pay to help support their children. It may include a monthly court-ordered amount, medical and dental support, and child care support.

Contempt of court: Not doing what the court has ordered you to do.

Custodial parent: The parent with physical custody of a minor child.

Establishing parentage: Determining the legal father of a child born to an unmarried woman; also called establishing "paternity."

Good cause: Good cause means a public assistance recipient does not have to cooperate with the child support agency because the recipient or child may be in danger of physical or emotional harm if efforts are made either to adjudicate paternity or to establish or enforce support.

Joint child: The dependent child who is the child of both parents in the support proceeding. In cases where support is sought from only one parent of a child, a joint child is the child for whom support is sought.

Noncustodial parent: Parent not living with the minor child.

Nonjoint child: The legal child of one, but not both of the parents subject to the legal action being taken. Stepchildren are excluded from this definition.

Obligee: A person to whom payments for maintenance or support are owed.

Obligor: A person obligated to pay maintenance or support. A person who has primary physical custody of a child is presumed not to be an obligor for the purposes of child support. For purposes of ordering medical support, a parent who has primary physical custody of a child may be an obligor subject to a payment agreement.

Parenting time: The time a parent spends with a child regardless of the custodial designation regarding the child. Parenting time has also been referred to as visitation.

Public assistance: Benefits from a state or federal program. Public assistance programs include the Diversionary Work Program (DWP); the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), which is Minnesota's Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program; Tribal TANF; Child Care Assistance; Medical Assistance (MA); MinnesotaCare; and IV-E Foster Care services.

Table of contents

Definitions	i
What is child support?.....	1
How can I apply for child support services?	2
What has to be done before I can get a child support order?	3
How do parents establish parentage?	3
Why is establishing a legal father important?	3
What happens when a parent does not pay child support?	5
What enforcement tools are used to collect child support?.....	6
What happens when one parent does not live in Minnesota?	7
Can a support order be changed?.....	7
How are most support payments made?	8
When does a case close?.....	9
How can I make a difference?.....	9
Resources	10

This handbook gives general information about Minnesota’s child support program. Because parentage and child support are important issues, you may wish to contact an attorney. The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) Child Support Enforcement Division and county child support agencies can help you if you apply for or are referred for child support services, but they cannot give you legal advice about your case.

Every child needs financial and emotional support. Every child has the right to this support from both parents. Devoted parents can be loving and supportive forces in a child's life. Even when parents do not live together, they need to work together to support their child.

Without the involvement of both parents, too many children do not get the chance they need and deserve to reach their full potential.

**You make a difference
in your children's lives.
Be there for them.**

Minnesota's child support enforcement program helps parents establish a financial partnership.

The Minnesota Department of Human Services, Child Support Enforcement Division and county child support agencies work with both parents to establish and enforce support orders. Together, they help families become and remain self-sufficient through improved child support collections. Minnesota's child support program helps children receive the financial, medical and child care support they deserve.

What is child support?

Child support is money parents pay to their child's other parent or caregiver to support their children. The court orders the support.

The support may be part of an interim, temporary, permanent or modified court order in a:

- Divorce or legal separation
- Paternity action
- Order for protection
- Child custody action
- Separate child support action.

Who can receive child support?

A person can receive child support if all of these are true:

- The person is the parent of a minor child or is the person who has court-ordered custody of a minor child
- The minor child lives in the person's household
- The child is financially dependent on that person

- One or both of the child's parents are absent from the home
- The court ordered a person to pay child support.

What child support services are available?

Services provided by Minnesota's child support program include:

- Locating parents
- Establishing parentage
- Establishing court orders for basic, medical and child care support
- Reviewing and asking the court to modify basic, medical and child care support orders when appropriate
- Adjusting support orders based on the cost-of-living index (COLA)
- Enforcing support orders
- Working with other states to enforce support orders
- Processing payments received by the Child Support Payment Center for child support and spousal maintenance.

Who can use these services?

Child support services are available to:

- Parents of minor children if one parent does not live with the child
- Parents who pay court-ordered child support
- People who have court-ordered, physical custody of a minor child
- People who receive public assistance for a minor child who lives in their home.

What services are not provided?

Full child support services do not include:

- Divorce assistance
- Parenting time or custody issues
- Spousal maintenance order establishment or modification
- Collection of:
 - Bills not related to support
 - Property settlements
 - Attorneys fees, except in limited circumstances (Minn. Stat. § 518a.735)
 - Legal advice or counsel.

If you need any of these services, contact an attorney or legal services office.

Full child support services are not available if the only obligation owed is spousal maintenance. If you have a full child support case and all child support obligations are fully satisfied, leaving only spousal maintenance obligations owed, your case will automatically become an income withholding-only (non IV-D) case unless the applicant for services chooses to close the case.

How can I apply for child support services?

You can apply for child support services through your county child support agency or you can get an application online (see last page for list of child support forms). Return the completed application to your county child support agency with a nonrefundable \$25 application fee.

If your child(ren) have never received IV-A (cash) assistance under your household and you have received at least \$500 in child support collections, the custodial parent is assessed a \$25 federal annual fee from your child support each federal fiscal year.

When you apply for services, you also agree to pay a one percent cost recovery fee on your payments or on your obligation.

If you or your dependent minor children receive benefits from the Diversionary Work Program (DWP), Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), Tribal TANF, Minnesota Health Care Programs or Child Care Assistance, your financial worker will give the child support agency information about you. The agency will open a case for you and will expect you to provide information and cooperate in establishing paternity, establishing an order for support and collecting support. You do not have to complete an application, pay an application fee or pay other fees. If you receive only Medical Assistance or MinnesotaCare, you may choose to have full child support services or only medical support services.

After I apply, what else must I do?

You must take an active role in your case. Cooperating with your child support agency makes establishing an order more efficient and makes collecting regular support payments more likely.

You must report changes that may affect your case. You must contact your county child support office if:

- You or the other parent moves
- You or the other parent gets a new phone number
- You or the other parent gets a new job

- Your child moves or graduates from high school
- Your child no longer receives child care
- You have new information that might help locate the other parent
- You apply for public assistance
- You are involved in other court actions regarding support payments.

If I am receiving public assistance, are there other things I must do?

- If you or your dependent minor children receive public assistance, the other parent may be ordered to pay child support. When the child support agency collects current basic support, they send the support to you. Two months later, DHS may adjust your public assistance amount or grant.
- If you receive court-ordered child support directly from the other parent, you must report it to your county child support agency. Obligor should pay child support through the state and not directly to the other parent.
- If the child support agency has to establish paternity for your child or locate the other parent, you must cooperate by providing complete and correct information.
- If you do not cooperate with the child support agency, DHS may reduce your public assistance benefits and end your coverage under MinnesotaCare and Medical Assistance. If you have reason not to cooperate, you may claim “good cause.” Good cause means a public assistance recipient does not have to cooperate with the child support agency because the recipient or child may be physically or emotionally harmed if efforts are made to legally determine paternity, to establish support or to enforce support.
- If the state makes a mistake and gives you more money than you should have received, DHS may adjust your grant and may also require you to repay all or a portion of the overpayment.

If I apply for child support services, do I have any rights?

Yes. You have the right to:

- Receive fair and nondiscriminatory treatment
- Be notified of all important actions concerning your case
- Participate in any court action involving your case
- Ask the child support agency to review and file a motion with the court to modify your support order if appropriate.

Is my child support information private?

Child support information is classified as private data under the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act. The child support agency can give private or nonpublic data about individuals to:

- The person who is the subject of the data
- Others who the law says can see the data
- Others who the subject of the data states, in writing, can see the data.

What has to be done before I can get a child support order?

Before the child support agency can get an order from the court, it must notify the people involved that it is trying to establish an order. The child support office cannot take action in some cases if it cannot locate both parents.

If the child support agency does not know where a parent lives or works, it gathers information from many places including:

- Unemployment records
- Credit-reporting agency records
- Financial records
- Public assistance and food support records
- Social services records
- Motor vehicle registration and driver's license records
- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources records
- United States Postal Service
- Current and previous employers
- Current and previous utility companies
- Law enforcement agencies, parole and probation offices
- State licensing boards
- Military records
- Federal Case Registry
- National Directory of New Hire Reporting.

The Federal Case Registry contains limited information about each child support case in the United States. It matches quarterly wage information and unemployment insurance records submitted by each state with the National Directory of New Hire Reporting.

Federal law requires all employers to report information about newly hired and rehired employees. Employers report the information to their state.

The state then reports the information to the National Directory of New Hire Reporting.

How do parents establish parentage?

If a mother is unmarried when her child is born, the child does not have a legal father. Unmarried parents can establish a legal father for their child by going through a legal action in court or by signing the Minnesota Voluntary Recognition of Parentage (ROP) form (DHS-3159) and filing it with the Minnesota Department of Health, Office of the State Registrar. The hospital staff tells unmarried parents about their options and gives them the form at the time of their child's birth. The child support agency can help you establish parentage for your child.

Why is establishing a legal father important?

Parentage must be established before the court can order a father to pay child support. A child must have a legal father before a father's name can be placed on the child's birth record. Children with legal fathers are entitled to benefits, including Social Security benefits, veteran's benefits and inheritance rights, through their fathers. Children may also benefit by knowing their families' biological, cultural and medical histories.

What is the difference between a legal father and a biological father?

Every child has a biological father. The biological father is the man with whom a child's mother became pregnant. The legal father may not necessarily be the biological father. The legal father is the man the law recognizes as the father of the child. Sometimes parents may want proof that the man is the biological father of the child before he is named the legal father. Parents can request genetic testing. This testing can exclude a man who is not the biological father of the child or it can show a greater than 99 percent probability that the man is the biological father. The child support agency can help you with information about genetic testing.

Who establishes support orders?

The court establishes child support orders. The child support agency or a parent may ask the court to issue a support order. The support order may be part of a temporary, permanent or modified court order in: divorce, paternity, child custody or a separate child support action; a legal separation; or order for protection. The court generally orders the parent not

living with the child to pay support for the child to the other parent. The court may order past support and set the ongoing amount of basic support, medical support and child care support the parent must provide.

What does a child support order include?

Orders for child support generally include three types of support: basic child support, medical support and child care support. In Minnesota, the court must address all three types of child support, but may reserve rather than order all or any of the three.

Basic support

Basic support is for expenses relating to the child's care, housing, food, clothing, and transportation. The amount is determined by applying the parent's combined parental income for determining child support (PICS) and the number of joint children to the basic support guidelines table. The basic support obligation does not include payment toward arrears.

Medical support

Medical support is for expenses related to health care coverage, which may include medical, dental and/or vision insurance:

- Medical support may also include the court ordering the parents to contribute a monthly dollar amount towards the cost of health care coverage, Medical Assistance or Minnesota Care.
- The court may also order parents to pay a portion of the uninsured and/or unreimbursed medical expenses, which may include dental or vision costs.

Child care support

Child care support is for child care expenses that occur when the parent the child lives with works or goes to school. After reviewing income information from both parents, the court decides each parent's portion of financial responsibility for child care support.

How is the amount of child support determined?

Child support is determined using the guidelines established in Minnesota law. The guidelines consider the incomes of both parents, the number of children and the actual cost of raising a child at various income levels. The final child support order designates the amounts owed for basic support, child care support and medical support. The court may deviate from

guidelines to encourage prompt and regular payment of child support and to prevent either parent or the joint children from living in poverty.

Important: If you have joint physical custody, shared custody or split custody of your child, determining child support can be complicated. Contact an attorney or your county child support agency about your case.

Gross income

- The guidelines use the gross income of both parents in determining the basic support amount. Gross income includes any form of monthly income received, but does not include:
 - Compensation for employment in excess of 40 hours per week, with some exceptions
 - A child support payment received by a party
 - The income of the obligor's spouse or the obligee's spouse
 - Public assistance benefits
- The guidelines require the addition of potential income and the child's Social Security or Veteran benefits that come from a parent's eligibility
- The guidelines require the subtraction of child support and/or spousal maintenance payments ordered by the court for a nonjoint child or former spouse
- The total of this calculation is the parties' gross income.



Parental Income for Determining Support (PICS)

Parties who have nonjoint children living within their home receive a deduction from their gross income. The maximum number of deductions allowed for nonjoint children is two. The resulting amount is the Parental Income for Determining Child Support (PICS).

Basic support amount

The basic support amount is determined by using the combined PICS of both parents and finding the corresponding income bracket in the basic support guideline table. The basic support guideline table is found in Minnesota statutes 518A.35.

Percentage contribution

Determine the percentage contribution of each parent to the combined PICS by dividing the combined PICS into each parent's PICS. The obligor's basic support obligation is determined by multiplying the basic support amount by the percentage contribution.

Parenting expense adjustment

The obligor is entitled to a parenting expense adjustment for costs incurred while exercising parenting time, such as food, transportation, recreation and household expenses. The parenting expense adjustment is based on the percentage of time a child is scheduled to spend with the parent during a calendar year according to a court order.

Self-support adjustment

A child support order should not exceed an obligor's ability to pay. To determine the amount the obligor has the ability to pay, the court calculates the obligor's income available for support by subtracting a self-support reserve equal to 120 percent of the federal poverty guidelines for one person from the obligor's gross income.

If the obligor's income available for support is less than the basic support amount, then the support is reduced until the support order is equal to the obligor's income available for support.

Minimum basic support amount

If the obligor's gross income is less than 120 percent of the federal poverty guidelines for one person, the court must order the following amount as the minimum basic support obligation:

- \$50 per month for one or two children
- \$75 per month for three or four children
- \$100 per month for five or more children

If the court finds the obligor receives no income and completely lacks the ability to earn income, the minimum basic support amount does not apply.

How to estimate your child support obligation using the guidelines calculator

The Department of Human Services, Child Support Enforcement Division maintains a Web-based calculator on their public Web site. To access the calculator, go to:

<http://childsupportcalculator.dhs.state.mn.us/>

This will bring you to the worksheet, worksheet instructions, and calculator.

Important Disclaimer:

The child support guidelines worksheet, instructions and calculator are for informational and educational use only and are not a guarantee of the amount of child support the court will order. The results obtained are only as accurate as the information used. Other factors may affect the actual child support order. The court has the final authority to determine the amount of the child support order.

What happens when a parent does not pay child support?

When your child's other parent does not pay the child support obligation and you have an open case, the child support agency takes action to enforce the support order. Interest may be added to past-due child support. Past-due child support remains due until paid.

Cases must meet certain criteria before the child support agency can take action. Generally, child support policy allows enough time for the child support agency to give an obligor proper notice and an opportunity to pay the past-due amounts or to establish a payment agreement. Some enforcement actions take time and some actions may not be appropriate for a case. The child support agency and the county attorney may decide to take some actions based on the circumstances of the case and the likelihood of success.

What enforcement tools are used to collect child support?

Contempt of court

The child support agency may ask the court to find an obligor in contempt of court for not making support payments when the agency has reviewed the circumstances of the case and the likelihood of success and after other enforcement tools have failed. The parent must:

- Be at least three months behind in support payments
- Not be following a payment agreement.

The court may find parents in contempt if they have the ability to pay but are intentionally not paying their child support obligation. If the court finds the obligor in contempt, the court may order the obligor to serve a jail sentence unless the obligor begins to meet certain conditions, such as making regular support payments.

Credit bureau reporting

The child support agency may report obligations that are past due to credit bureaus if a parent is at least three months behind in paying support.

Criminal non-support

Obligor who do not pay support and who have previously had a nonsupport contempt action initiated against them may be charged with criminal nonsupport. Obligor may be charged with a misdemeanor, gross misdemeanor or a felony depending on the number of months behind and the past-due amount. If convicted, the court may order obligors to pay fines and serve prison time.

Federal criminal prosecution

The court may charge parents with a federal crime if they:

- Owe at least \$5,000 in past-due support or have not made a payment in a year
- Live in a different state from the child
- Can pay support, but intentionally fail to pay.

Financial institution data match

The child support agency matches information about parents who owe past-due child support with data from financial institutions to find assets. The child support agency may levy and take an obligor's assets if the child support agency has already certified the arrears to take tax refunds and the parent is:

- At least five months behind in paying a child support obligation
- Not following a payment plan.

License suspension

The child support agency may suspend a driver's license or an occupational license of a parent who is in a job that requires a license from a state, county or municipal board, or from an agency (e.g., realtors, barbers, lawyers) if the parent is:

- At least three months behind in paying a child support obligation
- Not following a payment plan.

The child support agency may suspend a recreational license for a parent who is:

- At least six months behind in paying a child support obligation
- Not following a payment plan
- Not responding to other enforcement actions.

New hire reporting

The child support agency uses data from employers to locate parents. Employers report basic information about newly-hired employees to the state's new hire reporting center. In Minnesota, employers must provide information within 20 days of the day the employee starts work. Employers also report when employees no longer work for them. Every state sends information and gets data from new hire reporting.

Other income

If a parent owes past-due child support, the child support agency may take employment bonuses and periodic or lump sum payments the parent gets from state or local agencies, including unemployment insurance, worker's compensation and lottery winnings. The child support office may also take assets held in financial institutions or in retirement accounts.

Passport denial

A parent's application for a passport may be denied if the parent is:

- At least \$2,500 behind in paying a child support obligation
- Not following a payment plan.

State lottery winnings

The child support agency may take state lottery winnings if a parent is at least one month behind in paying a child support obligation.

Student grant denial

A parent's application for a student grant may be denied if the parent is:

- At least one month behind in paying a child support obligation
- Not following a payment agreement.

State tax refund intercept

The child support agency may be able to collect past-due child support from a parent's state income tax refund or property tax credit income if the parent:

- Is at least one month behind in paying a child support obligation or the past-due support has been entered into public record as a judgment
- Owes at least \$25 in past-due support
- Is not following a payment agreement in which state tax interception is prohibited.

Federal tax refund intercept

The child support agency may be able to collect past-due child support from a parent's federal income tax refund if the parent owes at least \$500 in nonpublic assistance arrears or at least \$150 in public assistance arrears.

Many children involved in Minnesota's child support system receive child support payments regularly. However, even though we continue to strengthen child support laws and increase penalties for parents who refuse to pay, some parents have circumstances that prevent them from paying their child support and some do not accept their responsibility. If an obligor works for cash, hides assets in other names, is self-employed or actively evades the child support agency, usual enforcement actions may be difficult, if not impossible, to implement.

What happens when one parent does not live in Minnesota?

Some of the most difficult cases to enforce are those in which the parents live in different states. All states must provide child support services and with the Uniform Interstate Family Support Act (UIFSA), interstate enforcement of child support obligations is improving. UIFSA includes laws that require states to work together to establish and enforce child support orders. State child support agencies must cooperate and help each other in handling requests for assistance.

Can a support order be changed?

Child support orders can be changed by court orders and by cost-of-living adjustments. Either parent may request in writing that the child support agency review their support order. The written request should state reasons for the review.

The county child support staff will determine whether the existing order meets review requirements. If it does, they will complete the review and file a motion asking the court to modify the order. If the case does not meet the requirements, the county child support agency will notify the parent who requested the review. If the parent still wants the order changed, the parent can file a motion asking the court to modify the order.

The court may change a child support order if:

- There is a substantial increase or decrease in either parent's gross income
- There is a substantial increase or decrease in the needs of a party or the child
- One of the parties or the child receives public assistance
- There is a change in the cost of living for either parent
- There are extraordinary medical expenses for the child
- There is a change in the availability of health care coverage or a substantial increase or decrease in health care coverage costs
- There are additional work-related or education-related child care expenses of the obligee or a substantial increase or decrease in existing work-related or education-related child care expenses
- The child is emancipated.

The court will consider that there has been a substantial change of circumstances and presume any of the above circumstances makes the terms of the existing order unreasonable and unfair if:

- Applying the guidelines would change the current order by at least 20 percent and at least \$75 higher or lower than the current order. If the current support order is less than \$75, it results in a calculated court order that is at least 20% per month higher or lower.
- The medical support provisions of the order are not enforceable.

- The health coverage ordered is not available to the child for whom the order is established.
- The current order is for a percentage of income, not a fixed dollar amount.
- The gross income of a party has decreased by at least 20 percent through no fault or choice of the party.
- A deviation was granted because the child lived in a foreign country and the child no longer resides in the foreign country.

The court may also change a support order if custody has changed.

Cost-of-living adjustments

Most Minnesota basic support orders require a cost-of-living adjustment every two years. The child support agency takes steps necessary to get the cost-of-living adjustment for these orders. Unless the obligor contests the cost-of-living adjustment in court, the child support agency will adjust the basic support obligation every other year on May 1.

How are most support payments made?

In Minnesota, more than 70 percent of all support payments paid on cases are made through income withholding. Parents who have a child support case and do not pay through income withholding pay their child support payments through automatic-recurring withdrawal or by mailing payments to the state.

If the child support agency is enforcing your order, child support should be paid to the state, not directly to the other parent. If you receive a payment directly from the other parent or make a payment directly to the other parent, report it to your child support agency.

Income withholding

The court may determine that child support payments are subject to income withholding. If the child support agency is enforcing the order, they will notify the obligor's employer or payor of funds to withhold the child support from the obligor's income. After notification, the employer or payor of funds must withhold child support from the obligor's paycheck. The employer can mail a check to the state payment center or electronically transfer the funds to the state.

Employers and other payors of funds may withhold income from one or more checks per month as long as they withhold the entire amount due every month.

Based on the number of times per month the employer withholds money, the other parent may get weekly, biweekly or monthly child support payments from the state.

If you apply or are referred for full child support services, the child support agency will identify employers and work with them to withhold support.

If you apply for income withholding-only services, the child support agency will process payments after you establish income withholding. If there is no open child support case, either party may request income withholding-only services. The obligor is charged a \$15 per month fee for this service. Applicants must send their own income withholding notices to the obligor's employer. The employer sends child-support withholding to the child support agency and the agency sends it to the obligee. For income withholding-only services, the child support agency will not use any other collection methods to collect child support. For example, the child support agency will not assist in getting cost-of-living adjustments, modifications to a support order or tax intercepts.

If you have an open child support case, the court may waive income withholding if:

- Good cause exists, and the court makes written findings that income withholding would not be in the best interests of the child. In good cause cases involving modifications of support, the court must also find that support payments have been made timely, or
- The court approves a written payment agreement between the obligee and obligor for an alternative payment arrangement.

If you have an open child support case, child support payments should be paid directly to the state by income withholding, cash, check, money order or by automatic recurring withdrawal.

Where are support payments sent?

If you have an open child support case and you owe child support, send your payments to the state child support office:

Minnesota Child Support Payment Center
P.O. Box 64326
St. Paul, MN 55164-0326

How quickly does the state process support payments?

Staff at the payment center receive payments Sunday through Friday. Within 24 hours of the time they receive the payment, they record the payment on the child support computer system and send most payments out the next working day.

What if the obligor owes support to more than one parent?

If an obligor owes current child support to more than one parent, the state sends a portion of each payment it receives to each parent.

How do I receive the support collected?

The child support agency collects the support from the obligor. In most cases, the child support agency sends the support collected and owed to the obligee within two days. Funds collected through certain tax intercepts may be held for up to six months to make sure the refund was properly intercepted. Once you apply for services, all support payments must come through the state. If you receive a support payment from the obligor, you must tell your child support worker. You may be asked to send the payment to the Child Support Payment Center so that it can be disbursed according to federal guidelines.

For up-to-the-minute case and payment information, you may:

- Go online at: www.childsupport.dhs.state.mn.us/Action/Welcome
- Call the Child Support Payment Line at:
 - (800) 657-3512 outside the Twin Cities metro area, or
 - (651) 431-4340 in the Twin Cities metro area, or
 - TTY at (888) 234-1208 outside the Twin Cities metro area, or (651) 431-4196 in the Twin Cities metro area.

To get information, you must know your personal identification number (PIN) that the child support agency will assign to you.

What are my direct deposit choices?

To increase the efficiency, convenience, speed and safety of payments to you, the state sends support by direct deposit. Through direct deposit, you may choose to have your support payments electronically deposited into a checking account, savings account or stored value card account. After your support case is open, the child support office will send you more information on how to set up direct deposit.

When does a case close?

A child support case does not automatically close when a child turns 18 or emancipates. Your court order will tell you when your obligation ends. If you have child support arrears, your case may stay open until the arrears are paid in full.

If you are a child support obligee who does not receive public assistance and you applied for child support services, you may choose to close your child support case. However, any portion of your case that is for collecting public assistance obligations cannot be closed. If you are a child support obligor who applied for child support services, you may also be able to close your nonpublic assistance child support case. In either case, if you close your child support case, you will be responsible for maintaining payment records and the obligor will be responsible for payments due the obligee.

Federal law allows the child support agency to close a child support case. If your children receive public assistance from the Diversionary Work Program (DWP), Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), Tribal TANF, Minnesota Health Care Programs, Child Care Assistance or IV-E Foster Care, your case cannot be closed except in limited circumstances. If your children received public assistance in the past, the public assistance portion of your case may not be closed. In general, child support agencies close cases when an obligation ends and all support is paid, or the person who asked for child support services requests that the case be closed and the case qualifies.

How can I make a difference?

We recognize that fathers and mothers are important in the lives of their children, and we encourage parents to be involved with their children's lives whether they live with them or not. Staying involved is important even though it may not always be easy.

The more you know about Minnesota's child support program, the better you will be able to exercise your rights and responsibilities under the law and the more successful you will be in providing support to your children.

Resources

Child support information telephone lines and Web sites provide easy access to child support and payment information 24 hours a day.

Payment and case information

- Minnesota Child Support Online at www.childsupport.dhs.state.mn.us provides up-to-the-minute case and payment information on a secure Web site.
- Payment Information Line (651) 431-4340 (metro) or (800) 657-3512 provides up-to-the-minute payment information.

General information

- Minnesota Department of Human Services at <http://www.dhs.state.mn.us> provides more information about child support services, online forms and brochures and other programs.
- General Information Line (651) 431-4199 (metro) or (800) 657-3954.

Child Care Assistance Programs help families provide safe, nurturing, and affordable care for their children. Contact your county human services office.

Child Care Resource and Referral can assist you in selecting a child care provider. Contact your county human services office.

211 Minnesota Information and Referral is a United Way-sponsored resource that provides information and referral to community services. Call (800) 543-7709 to reach their 24-hour answer line or go online at www.211unitedway.org

MinnesotaHelp.info™ is an online directory of services designed to help people in Minnesota identify resources such as human services, information and referral, financial assistance, and other forms of aid and assistance within Minnesota. It is especially rich in resource information for seniors and their caregivers; people with disabilities and their caregivers; parents and families; and low income people. To visit MinnesotaHelp.info™ go online at www.minnesotahelp.info

The Diversionary Work Program (DWP), Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) and Tribal TANF are public assistance programs designed to help families reach self-sufficiency. Contact your county human services office.

For more information about these and other programs, visit the Minnesota Department of Human Services' Web site at www.dhs.state.mn.us

Workforce Centers provide services that help people find jobs. To find the office in your area, call (888) 438-5627. Information is also available from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development at www.mnwfc.org

Minnesota Child Support Enforcement forms:

(These forms are available online at www.dhs.state.mn.us by clicking on "A-Z Topics" then "Child Support" and then "Forms" in the left column.)

- DHS-1958 Full Child Support (IV-D) Services Application and Information on Child Support Enforcement
- DHS-3159 Minnesota Voluntary Recognition of Parentage (ROP) form
- DHS-3159A Being a Legal Father: Parentage information for mothers and fathers
- DHS-3159B Minnesota Voluntary Recognition of Parentage Revocation Form
- DHS-3159C Minnesota Voluntary Recognition of Parentage Husband's Non-paternity Statement
- DHS-3159E Minnesota Husband's Non-paternity Statement Revocation Form
- DHS-3393 Understanding Child Support: A handbook for parents

Minnesota Department of Human Services
Child Support Enforcement Division
PO Box 64946
St. Paul, MN 55164-0946
www.dhs.state.mn.us