

# Guide to Child Support Services



People paying and receiving child support get **financial management services**; this includes processing payments and providing payment information. Support includes child support (including medical support) and arrears, family support, and alimony (maintenance/spousal support). Getting a support order from a court does not mean a family is also getting case management services from their county or tribal child support agency.

Parents and guardians who want **case management services**, which include locating a missing parent, establishing court orders, or establishing paternity, may apply at their local child support agency. An application form is available from <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cs/apply>. Wisconsin does not charge an application fee, but other fees may apply. Contact the local child support agency for information on fees.

Families in benefit programs such as W2, Wisconsin Shares (childcare), FoodShare, SSI Caretaker Supplement, medical assistance, Kinship Care, and the federally financed foster care program, automatically receive case management. Most services are free for those receiving cash benefits.

## Case Management Services

In Wisconsin, county and tribal child support agencies provide case management services.

### Locate a Missing Parent

Child support has many tools to locate missing parents and their income:

- Access KIDS, the statewide child support computer system, automatically checks other Wisconsin computer systems such as the Department of Transportation and Department of Natural Resources.
- Access to information on new hires by employers nationwide through the New Hire reporting program.
- Collaborate with other states to locate a parent.

### Establish Paternity

If a child was conceived or born when the parents were married, the husband is the legal father. If the mother was not married, legal fatherhood may be acknowledged or decided before a court will order child support. Even if the parents live together, establishing legal fatherhood ensures the child's right as well as the rights of both parents. Local child support agencies offer genetic testing at a reduced cost when you receive case management services.

### Establish or Modify Court Orders

Wisconsin courts use the guidelines in the Child Support Percentage of Income Standard for setting support amounts. Visit [https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admin\\_code/DCF/101\\_199/150](https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admin_code/DCF/101_199/150) for more information on DCF 150 guidelines. **Only a court can set or change a support order.** The standard assumes that both parents share part of their income with their children when they live together, and should do so when they live apart. Tools to estimate support are available online at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cs/order/tools>.

If a parent's income or the child's living arrangements change, the child support order can be modified. Before an order is changed, it has to be reviewed by the child support agency and by the court. Parents will be asked to provide current financial information for the review. Families receiving cash benefits from W2, SSI Caretaker Supplement, and Kinship Care will have court orders reviewed every three years.

### Medical Support

Court orders must address medical support. The court may order **either or both parents** to add their children to the health insurance provided by a parent's employer if the out of pocket cost for the policy is not more than 10% of a parent's monthly income or another amount set by the court.

If a parent's costs are greater than the standard 10%, the health care provider is more than 30 miles or 30 minutes away from where the child lives, or if the insurance does not cover some medical costs, the court may order a parent to:

- Pay uninsured costs (50/50), based on their ability to pay.
- Pay a part of the insurance or BadgerCare Plus costs that the other parent carries for the children.
- Cover insurance costs; the court may adjust the amount of support ordered. For details, see "Guide to Setting Child Support Amounts," available from a child support agency or at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/publications>.

If a parent is required to provide health insurance and is eligible for family coverage, state law requires insurance companies and self-insured employers to insure the child even if:

- The parents were never married.
- The parent applies for insurance outside of the plan's open enrollment period.
- The application for insurance is submitted by the other parent or the child support agency.

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Child support services include establishing, monitoring, and enforcing medical support orders.

### **Monitor and Enforce Child Support Orders**

Child support agencies notify employers to withhold support from the payer's wages, add children to health insurance, and ensure court orders are being followed. If the paying parents owe past-due support they can ask their local agency about a payment plan.

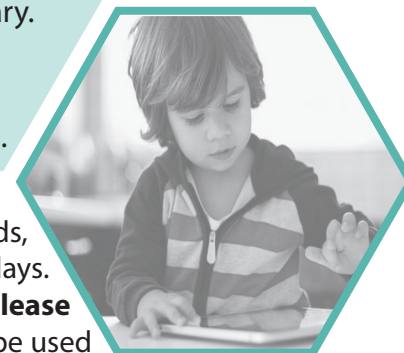
Cases with past-due support may be enforced up to 20 years after the youngest child on the court case reaches the age of 18. Child support agencies have many tools to enforce support orders. Some actions, such as interest charges, tax refund intercepts, and liens, are automatic when the amount of past-due support reaches a certain level. Other actions, such as license certification, are discretionary.

## **Financial Management Services**

County and tribal child support agencies provide financial management services.

### **Process Support Payments**

The Wisconsin Support Collections Trust Fund (WI SCTF) maintains payment records, processes all incoming payments, and sends out each payment within two business days. Families receiving support can get their payments by direct deposit or debit card. **Please note:** if a family is receiving cash benefits from the state, some of the support may be used to reimburse the cash benefits the family is receiving or received in the past.



By law, all payments received during a month will be paid out in this order:

1. All court-ordered current support or alimony due in that month on **all the payer's court orders**.
2. Any other court-ordered, periodic payment on past-due amounts (payment amounts with a specific court order for a payment such as an order for \$50/month on past-due support).
3. Past-due support, alimony amounts, interest, and fees.

For example:

The paying parent is ordered to pay current support to two families: \$240/month to Family A and \$160/month to Family B, totaling \$400/month. The parent pays \$100/week. Each \$100 weekly payment is prorated. Since Family A is owed 60% of the \$400 due monthly, Family A will receive 60% of the weekly \$100 payment (\$60). Family B is owed 40% of the \$400 due each month and will receive 40% of the weekly payment (\$40).

The exception is a payment from a federal tax refund. By law, the payments from federal tax returns must first pay any support owed to the state, which includes support owed, but not paid when the family is receiving cash benefits. Birth costs paid by the Medicaid programs and AFDC debts are also state-owed.

### **Payment Information**

**Child Support Online Services (CSOS):** this free application provides detailed payment and balance information and printable account histories at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cs/csos/3step-help>.

**Monthly Statements of Accounts:** paying parents receive a statement and payment coupon each month if they send payments directly to WI SCTF or if they have not paid the full payment due in a month. All other paying parents can get a monthly statement mailed to them by contacting their local child support agency.

**KIDS information Line:** parents can call (800-991-5530 or TTD: 887-209-5209) for information about their last two payments. Information is updated every night except Sunday.

**Debit Card Account Information:** parents using the debit card can call the phone number on the back. For more options visit <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cs/cp/pay/debit-card>.

**Child Support Notice of Collection:** the month after a payment is received, families who receive cash benefits will get a notice informing the family how much support was paid, how much was sent, and how much was used to pay for their benefits.

## Services Not Provided

Child support services do not include custody and placement decisions; only the court has the authority for these issues. A child support attorney will handle legal issues connected with obtaining and enforcing a child support order for those receiving case management services. However, their services do not include giving parents legal advice. An attorney who appears at your court hearing is there to represent the interests of the state and does not represent either parent. There is no attorney-client relationship between parents and child support attorneys.

## For More Information Contact:



The Department of Children and Families is an equal opportunity employer and service provider. If you have a disability and need to access this information in an alternate format, or need it translated to another language, please contact (608) 266-3400 or the Wisconsin Relay Service (WRS) - 711. For civil rights questions, call (608) 422-6889.

