



Your Guide to Child Support Services

WI BUREAU OF CHILD SUPPORT



Case management (child support) services

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All families paying and receiving support get **financial services**. Support includes child support, family support, and alimony (maintenance). Wisconsin law requires that all support and related payments be made through the Wisconsin Support Collections Trust Fund.

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. Case management services are commonly called “child support services.”

Parents and guardians who want case management services may apply for these services at their local child support agency. Parents can get an application form from their child support agency, or they can download the form from dcf.wisconsin.gov. Wisconsin does not charge an application fee, but other fees may apply. Please see your local child support agency to see what fees may apply to your case.

Families in aid/benefit programs automatically get case management services. Aid/benefit programs include the W-2, Wisconsin Shares (child care), SSI Caretaker Supplement, Kinship Care, and federally-financed foster care programs. Families in the BadgerCare Plus program who are referred to the child support program also automatically get full services. Most services are free for those getting cash benefits from aid/benefit programs.

Case management services (child support services)

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

Finding a missing parent

Child support has many tools to help find missing parents and their income. For example:

- KIDS, the statewide child support computer system, automatically checks other Wisconsin computer systems (such as the Wisconsin’s Department of Transportation and Department of Natural Resources).
- Child support has access to information on workers that have recently been hired by employers across the country through the New Hire reporting program.
- Child support can ask other states to find a parent if he or she has moved to another state.

Paternity Establishment

Parents may ask their local child support agency to help establish paternity. If a child was conceived or born when the parents were married, the husband is the legal father. If the parents were not married, legal fatherhood has to be decided before a court will order child support. Even if the parents live together, establishing legal fatherhood ensures the child’s rights as well as the rights of both parents. Local child support agencies offer genetic testing at a reduced cost.

More child support services

Court orders for child support

The child support agency will ask the court for an order for child support and medical support. Only a court may set or change a support order. Wisconsin courts use the guidelines in the Child Support Percentage of Income Standard for setting support amounts. 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. **Tables** and **calculators** to estimate support are online at dcf.wisconsin.gov.

Can a child support order be changed?

Yes. If the parent's income or the child's living arrangements change, the child support order can change. The ordered amount might increase or decrease. Before an order is changed, it has to be reviewed by the child support agency or by the court. Both parents will be asked to provide current financial information for the review. If the child support agency reviews the order, they will mail a notice about the results to both parents. Families getting **cash benefits** from the W-2, SSI Caretaker Supplement, and the Kinship Care programs will have their court orders reviewed every three years. **Please remember, only a court may change the support order.**

Medical support

In addition to child support, court orders must address medical support if a parent's income is more than 150% of the federal poverty level.

The court may order **either parent or both** parents to add their children to the health insurance provided by the parent's employer

- **if** the parent's cost to add the children to an existing policy (**or** the difference between the self-only and family plan) is not more than 5% of the parent's monthly income
- **or** another amount set by the court.

For details about child support services, see the guides listed on the front page. Guides are available from your child support agency and online at dcf.wisconsin.gov.

The cost of medical support is based on each parent's ability to pay. If a parent's costs are greater than the standard 5%, **or** if 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 provide medical support for the child in another way. For example, the court may order a parent:

- To pay a monthly amount for medical costs not covered by insurance
- To pay a part of the insurance or BadgerCare Plus costs that the other parent carries for the children
- To cover these insurance costs, the court may adjust the amount of child support ordered. The support order may be more or may be less. For details, please see "Your Guide to Setting Support Amounts," available from your child support agency and online at dcf.wisconsin.gov.

If the court order requires a parent to provide health insurance for the child, and the parent 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 the insurance outside of the plan's open enrollment period.
- The application for insurance is submitted by the other parent or the child support agency.

For questions about insurance regulations, parents should contact the Wisconsin Office of the Commissioner of Insurance at oci.wi.gov, or:

125 South Webster Street
Madison, Wisconsin 53703-3474
(800) 236-8517
711 (TDD) (ask for 608-266-3586)

Child support services include monitoring and enforcing medical support orders if the amount is set in dollar amounts (such as \$50/month), and if the order states that the child should be added to the parent's health insurance plan.

More child support services

Monitoring and enforcing child support orders

Child support agencies work with employers to withhold support from the payer's wages and to add children to health insurance. These agencies monitor cases to ensure the court orders are being followed. If the paying parent owes past-due support, they should ask their child support agency about a payment plan.

If the court order is not being followed, the agency will take action. Cases with past-due support may be enforced up to 20 years after the youngest child reaches the age of 18. Child support agencies have many tools to help them enforce child support orders. Some actions, such as interest charges, tax refund intercepts, and child support liens, are automatic when the amount of past-due support reaches a certain level. Other actions, such as license denial, are done on a case-by-case basis. For the most efficient and effective use of staff time, child support agencies use their experience to choose what actions they take and when.

Financial services

Processing support payments

The Trust Fund processes all incoming payments and sends each payment out usually within 2-business days. The Trust Fund maintains payment records. Families getting support can choose to get their payments by direct deposit or debit card. Both methods are safe and secure.

Please note: If a family is now receiving **cash benefits**, the family might not receive all the support that is paid. Some of the support might be used to pay for the cash benefits the family now gets or got in the past.

If the paying parent pays child support to two families, who gets the payment?

Federal rules and state law dictate how support collections are paid out. All payments received during a month will be paid out in this order:

1. to pay all court-ordered current support or alimony due in that month on **all the payer's court orders**
2. to pay any other court-ordered periodic payment on past-due amounts (These are payment amounts with a specific court order for payment. For example: a court order for "\$50/month on past-due support")
3. to pay past-due support or alimony amounts
4. to pay interest and fees

Here is an example:

The paying parent is ordered to pay current support to two families -- \$240 a month to Family A and \$160 a month to Family B. The parent pays \$100 every week.

Each \$100 weekly payment is prorated. Since Family A is owed 60% of the \$400 due each month, Family A will get 60% of the weekly \$100 payment (\$60). Family B is owed 40% of the \$400 due each month and will get 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. Support owed to the state includes support owed, but not paid when the family is getting cash benefits. Birth costs paid by the BadgerCare Plus and Medicaid programs and AFDC debts are also owed to the state.

Payment Information

- **Child Support Online Services**

This free service provides detailed payment and balance information, and printable account histories at **dcf.wisconsin.gov** (registration required). Information is updated every night except Sunday.

- **Monthly Statements of Account**

Paying parents will get a statement and payment coupons each month if they send payments directly to the Trust Fund or if they have not paid the full payment amounts due in a month. All other paying parents can get a monthly statement mailed to them by asking their local child support agency.

More payment information

- **KIDS Information Line**

Parents can call for information about their last two payments. Information is updated every night except Sunday.
Toll Free: (800) 991-5530
TDD: (877) 209-5209

- **Debit Card Account Information**

Parents using the debit can call the phone number on the back of your card. For more options, see the information that came with the card. This information is also online at **dcf.wisconsin.gov**.

- **Child Support Notice of Collection**

The month after a payment is received, families who get cash benefits will get this notice. The notice will tell the family how much support was paid, how much was sent to them, and how much was used to pay for their benefits.

Services not provided

Child support services do not include custody and placement services. Only the court has the authority and responsibility for these issues. Links to the forms needed to ask the court to enforce custody and placement orders are online at **dcf.wisconsin.gov**.

The child support attorney will handle legal issues connected with obtaining and enforcing a child support order. However, their services do not include giving parents legal advice.

A child support attorney who appears at your court hearing is there to represent the interests of the state. The attorney does not represent either parent. There is no attorney-client relationship between parents and child support attorneys.

Need more information?

- Contact your local child support agency for information about your case. Phone numbers are listed under “County Government” or tribal name and online at **dcf.wisconsin.gov**.
- Go to **dcf.wisconsin.gov** for more information about child support and support services. Most public libraries offer free Internet access.

Or contact:

DCF 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 call (608) 266-9909 or the Wisconsin Relay Service (WRS) - 711 TTY (Toll Free). For civil rights questions, call (608) 422-6889 or Wisconsin Relay Service (WRS) - 711 TTY (Toll Free).