



Your Guide to Getting Child Support

WI BUREAU OF CHILD SUPPORT



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Do you need help getting child support?

The Wisconsin Child Support Program can help you by:

- finding a missing parent
- establishing legal fatherhood
- asking the court to order child support and medical support
- enforcing child support and medical support orders
- contacting the paying parent's employer and setting up income withholding
- collecting child support from a parent living in another state
- providing help for reviewing or changing a support order for a possible increase or decrease
- providing payment and collection information on your child support case
- providing interpreters and translations of child support information at no cost
- providing privacy protection if the release of your address, telephone number, employer, or other location information would put you at risk

Applying for services

All families may apply for child support (case management) services at their local child support agency without paying an application fee. Parents can download an application form from dcf.wisconsin.gov.

If you are in an aid/benefit program, you automatically get child support services. Aid/benefits programs include the W-2, SSI Caretaker Supplement, Kinship Care, WI Shares (child care), and federally-financed foster care programs. If the BadgerCare Plus program refers you to child support, you will automatically get services. Getting help from the aid/benefit program depends on your cooperation with the child support program. When you no longer receive these benefits, child support services will continue.

Important to know

- Having a court order for support does not mean you are receiving case management (child support) services from your county or tribal child support agency. You need to apply for services if you are not in an aid/benefit program listed above.
- If you are now getting cash benefits from the W-2 or SSI Caretaker Supplement programs, you will only get a part of the paid child support. Please see the "Guide to W-2 Services, Cash Benefits, and Child Support," available online at dcf.wisconsin.gov and from your child support agency.

dcf.wisconsin.gov

How you can help

- Provide copies of any divorce decrees and court orders you have for support or legal fatherhood (paternity) when you apply for child support services.
- Give any information you have about the other parent, including full name, place of birth, current address, employment or other income information, and Social Security or Tax Identification number.
- Always cooperate with your child support worker. Complete forms immediately and keep appointments.
- Please be patient. The courts deal with many cases, and child support agencies have large caseloads. Stay in touch with your child support agency. Report any new information about the other parent that might help with your case.

How support is collected

About 75% of child support is collected through income withholding. Child support agencies automatically send withholding notices to paying parents' employers. Child support may also be withheld from unemployment insurance, workers' compensation, most pension payments, and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits. The Consumer Credit Protection Act limits the withheld amount for current and past-due support to 50% – 65% of a payer's disposable income (gross income minus taxes).

Past-due support may also be collected from a paying parent's tax refunds, Wisconsin lottery winnings of \$1,000 or more, and some saving and checking accounts. If you are owed past-due support, your case may be enforced up to 20 years after your youngest child's 18th birthday. For more information, please see the "Guide to Past-Due Support," available online at dcf.wisconsin.gov and from your child support agency.

Support payments

Child support is sent to parents in one of two ways - direct deposit or the Wisconsin Support Collections Debit Card. If you do not sign up for direct deposit, you will automatically get the debit card. (A paper check can be issued under unusual circumstances if approved by your child support agency.)

You choose which way is best for you. If you sign up for one method, you may later switch to the other. If you want direct deposit, you can download the application form at dcf.wisconsin.gov or call the Wisconsin Support Collections Trust Fund weekdays, from 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. at:

(800) 991-5530 toll free
(877) 209-5209 toll free TTY

Payment information

- **Child Support Online Services** – Provides detailed payment and balance information, and printable account histories at dcf.wisconsin.gov (registration required). Information is updated every night except Sunday.
- **KIDS Information Line** – Provides information about your last two payments. Information is updated every night except Sunday.
(800) 991-5530 toll free
(877) 209-5209 toll free TTY
- **Account histories** – Are now available from Child Support Online Services at dcf.wisconsin.gov (registration required) and by calling the KIDS Information Line weekdays, 8:00 am – 5:00 pm at the numbers above.
- **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.
- **Debit Card Accounts** – Parents may call the phone number on the back of their card. For more options, see the information that came with the card. This information is also online at dcf.wisconsin.gov.

Working with your Child Support Agency

By law, you must tell your child support agency if you move or change jobs, and when your income changes. You can update your address by contacting your child support agency, calling the KIDS Information Line weekdays, 8:00 am – 5:00 pm (phone numbers are on page 2), or online at dcf.wisconsin.gov (registration required).

What can the child support agency do if the other parent is not paying?

Information about the enforcement tools that your child support agency may use is in the “Guide to Past-Due Support,” available from your child support agency or online dcf.wisconsin.gov.

Can my child support agency help if the other parent moves to another state or another country?

Yes. Information about working with other states and countries is online dcf.wisconsin.gov.

My caseworker never calls me. How do I get someone to work on my child support case?

Due to large caseloads, child support workers might not be able to contact you to update you about your case. If the worker does not call you, it does not mean the caseworker is not working on your case. Stay in touch with your caseworker, and report any new information about the other parent that might help with enforcement.

You may also view some activities on your case from Child Support Online Services at dcf.wisconsin.gov (registration required). For a detailed list of services offered through Child Support Online Services, please see “Your Guide to Parent Resources.” Guides are available from your child support agency or online at dcf.wisconsin.gov.

Weeks ago my caseworker said that the agency would take my case to court because the other parent is not paying. Why haven’t they gone to court yet?

It takes time to set a court date. The court might not be able to schedule your case immediately.

I had to tell my caseworker when the other parent moved. Why doesn’t my caseworker know this?

You might learn information about the other parent’s address and job changes before the child support agency. You should inform your caseworker about these changes.

When can enforcement be requested, and how do I ask for enforcement?

You may contact your child support agency and ask for enforcement of your child support order if the other parent does not make a payment for more than a month.

Why does the agency keep sending letters? I want the other parent in jail.

Child support agencies have many tools to help them enforce child support orders. Some tools, such as charging interest on past-due support, are done automatically. For the most efficient and effective use of staff time, child support agencies use their experience to choose what tools (actions) they use and when. For instance, they might write warning letters before they take a more drastic action. Some enforcement tools and actions require due process or a court action. Jail is not always the best way to get money for your children.

Can child support agencies arrest the other parent?

No. Child support agencies cannot arrest anyone. Only the court can authorize an arrest warrant. The warrant gives law enforcement agencies, not child support agencies, the authority to arrest a person.

I am not getting my support. Why?

Your case may be very difficult. Although the Wisconsin Child Support program is a national leader in support collections, not all families receive child support in any given month. The most common difficulty is that the other parent’s address and/or employer are not known.

Can my child support agency help with medical support the court ordered?

Yes, please see the information online at dcf.wisconsin.gov or Your Guide to Support Services.



More about working with your Child Support Agency

I do not agree with what the court decided. What can I do?

When a court rules on a case, the child support agency cannot change the ruling. Decisions of a court commissioner can be reviewed by a judge if a request is filed. A judge's decision may be appealed to a higher court. You may hire an attorney for these actions. You may also ask your caseworker if there are other options.

Can I use a private collection agency?

Yes. You may employ a private attorney, a private investigator, and/or a private collection agency to establish and enforce your child support order. You should inform your child support agency if you do so. All payments must still go through the Wisconsin Support Collections Trust Fund. You, not the other parent, are responsible for all fees the collection agency charges. The federal Office of Child Support Enforcement reports that, "private collection agency fee rates generally range from 25% to 33%. Depending on the contract, a private collection agency may collect fees on any amounts received, even if the money was collected as a result of the work of the state child support program or if the private collection agency received the money as current, rather than past-due support."

Important reminders –

1. You are required, by law, to tell your child support agency of any address, income, health insurance, or employment changes.
2. If you have a Child Support Debit Card, you need to call the number on the back of your card if you move. The post office **cannot** forward replacement/new cards.

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.

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 (800) 947-3529 TTY (Toll Free). For civil rights questions, call (608) 422-6889 or Wisconsin Relay Service (WRS) - 711.