



COLORADO
Office of Economic Security
Division of Child Support Services

Child Support Services

HANDBOOK

THE BASICS







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INTRODUCTION

Meet Your Child Support Services Caseworker

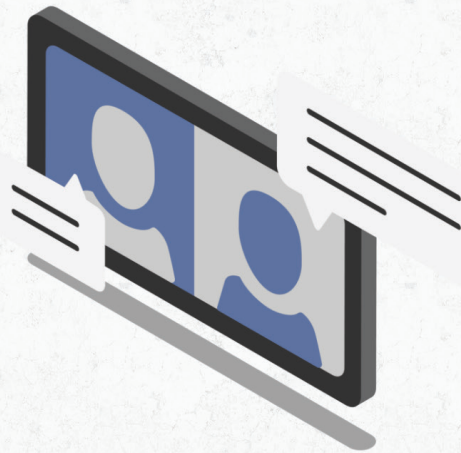
Hi Parents,

I wanted to take a moment to introduce myself. I am your Child Support Services Caseworker.

I started working in Child Support Services because I value children having care and support from both of their parents. I want to let you know I am first and foremost, committed to your child(ren) receiving these supports and helping both parents get what they need to be successful in helping their child(ren) thrive.

Here is what you can expect from me during our time working together:

- Good Communication
- Honesty
- Timely Case Management
- Resource Connections



What do these expectations mean for you, as a parent?

It means that I will make an effort to be reachable. You will soon see there are standard letters that come from our office, but I want you to know that I am available if you have case-specific questions. I will work to communicate with both parents to ensure they know what's available to them and what could potentially happen regarding their Child Support Order.

It means that I will make an effort to be transparent about what's happening with your case. While I cannot share the other parent's personal information and how child support is paid, I will share what I can when I can.

It means I will work to provide timely and effective management of your case. It means I will always be willing to provide information to both parents about resources that already exist in your community that could help support your family. This includes employment services, education services, parenting resources, child-specific resources and more.

By taking an active role in learning about Child Support Services, you'll likely have greater success receiving regular child support payments - or, if you are the paying parent, success making regular child support payments.





01 LET'S GET STARTED

Child Support Orders

In Colorado, child support orders can be established directly through the courts or by the parents if one of the parties apply for services through one of our county Child Support Services offices.

If parties go directly through the courts to establish a child support order or as part of a divorce decree they will be given a Family Support Registry (FSR) account number. The FSR processes payments for the order.

Child Support Services is not involved until one of the parties applies for services through one of our county offices. Once someone applies for services the county can:

- keep track of the payments/balance
- enforce the court order to ensure payments come in
- modify the order

How It Works: An Overview

Before you can be compelled to pay child support, there must be a determination that you are the parent of the child in question and that you have a legal responsibility to provide financial support for that child.

The next step is to calculate the appropriate amount of child support. The formula used in Colorado requires that a number of factors be considered in this calculation, such as the gross incomes of both parents, the amount of time the child spends with each parent, as well as costs for items such as child care and health insurance.

What Does FSR Mean?

The Family Support Registry (FSR) is Colorado's centralized collection and disbursement unit for processing child support and maintenance payments.

The FSR is responsible for activities associated with payment processing, such as:

- Address changes
- Payment inquiries
- Payment records

The Child Support Program: What It Means

Colorado law allows the child support enforcement unit to conduct many of the required activities regarding paternity, establishment, and modification via court process or with county Child Support Services. Your case can be handled faster at the county office than through the court system. You may also be able to avoid many of the costs associated with a judicial court case.

Come To Your Conference!

If you fail to appear, the child support enforcement unit may seek a default order against you, meaning you would have no say in the amount of child support you would owe each month. If you can't make the appointment, be sure to call the child support office to request a continuance of the negotiation conference.

The Choice Is Yours

The choice about whether to accept the results of the negotiation conference is yours. If you accept, the agreement will be filed with the court. If you are not in agreement, a temporary order will be entered and a court hearing will be requested that you must attend. You will still be responsible to pay the temporary order amount until it is heard in court and finishes the traditional judicial process.

Creating A Child Support Order

The process begins when you receive a telephone call or a notice of the negotiation conference, which is a meeting where the child support order is made. You and the other parent will meet with child support personnel to determine if the issues in your case can be agreed upon instead of the case going to court. If you, the other party and the child support unit can reach an agreement, that agreement is then filed with the court and becomes an order of the court. An Administrative order has the same force & effect as an order issued by a judge. As with cases pursued through the formal court process, the end result of a case handled administratively is a binding child support order.



02 WHAT'S NEXT?

Establishing Parentage

Q: *What is Parentage?*

A: *“Parentage” refers to the status of being a legal parent.*

If you are married and have a child, the law assumes that you and the other parent are both legally responsible for the child. If you were never married and your name does not appear on your child’s birth certificate, other steps will be taken before a child support amount can be calculated. It must be shown that you are the legal parent of the child before you can be ordered to provide financial support.

Establishing parentage gives certain rights for both parents and children, such as:

- **IDENTITY** - Child’s birth certificate will show both parents’ names.
- **RELATIONSHIPS** - Making the relationship legal from the beginning may create a greater opportunity for a healthy parent/child relationship.
- **FINANCIAL SUPPORT** - Child can gain access to child support, social security for a deceased or disabled parent, inheritance rights, life insurance and veterans benefits.
- **MEDICAL SUPPORT** - Insurance may be available for a child through a parent’s employer, military service or union. It is also important to know of inherited health problems from either side of the family.
- **PARENTING TIME** - Ensures parents’ rights to motion the court for visitation.

Establishing parentage may create a greater opportunity for a healthy parent/child relationship

In Colorado, if both parents agree on who is legally responsible for a child, parentage can be established by an Acknowledgment of Parentage form. This document may be completed at the hospital after the birth of your child, filed directly with the Office of Vital Records, or at a child support office during a negotiation conference.



If the parents do not agree on parentage, genetic testing may be requested. The results of the genetic tests can create a legal presumption of paternity and are admissible in court as evidence of the existence of a father-child relationship. If you'd like to take further steps to contest the paternity, you can request a court trial.

The State Department of Human Services, Office of Child Support Services can assist with establishing parentage and child support matters. Establishing parentage can make a difference in a child's life. For more information, please call the Paternity Information Line at 303-866-6430, or visit the website at <https://childsupport.state.co.us>.

Medical Support

A child may be covered by Medicaid, Child Health Plan Plus (CHP+) or insurance obtained through a Marketplace (Federal or State), to satisfy the terms of the child support order for covering health insurance. **If your child is not covered by any health insurance plan**, then the child support office can send a notice to the other parent's employer requiring enrollment of your child in their plan. **If the other parent is not enrolled in a plan**, then you can choose a plan offered by the employer or the child can be enrolled in the employer's standard plan. If you choose to secure a health insurance plan but are not the party ordered to provide health insurance, you may request a review and adjustment of the child support order.



03 APPLYING FOR SERVICES

Are you looking to establish child support? Do you already have an order but need help enforcing it?

Child Support Services can help in both situations.



Start Here!

To apply for services, visit our website: www.childsupport.state.co.us and select the Apply for Services link on the right side. You can also stop by or call your county office to receive a paper application to complete. Whichever way you prefer, there is an application fee of \$20 unless you are receiving public assistance, in which case the fee may be waived.

If you DO NOT have a child support order...

Once you apply, your county office will establish a court order for child support. To do this, the office will gather information needed from all parties to establish and enforce the support order.

If you DO have a child support order...

After you apply for services, the county office will add your order to our system and assist with enforcing the order. The county office can assist by locating the parent ordered to pay, sending an income withholding order to the paying parent's employer and other enforcement actions as needed.



Don't Forget To Bring These Documents!

Do you have everything you need to complete an application?

- Birth certificate and Social Security card for child(ren)
- Personal identification (driver's license, passport, state issued ID)
- Verification of income (pay stubs, etc.)
- Payment record of support paid
- Copy of marriage certificate (if applicable)
- Copy of court order if already in place (if you don't have a copy of the order, supply the date, county and state of the order as well as the court case number)





04 MAKING PAYMENTS

As the parent paying child support, you have several options when selecting your preferred payment method.

Online

- Recurring automatic withdrawal - Using your personal bank account information
- Electronic Check - Using your personal bank checking information
- Credit or debit cards

Phone

- Set up payments that can be scheduled by telephone (Using your personal bank account information)
- Credit or debit cards

Cash

- We have several options for making cash payments by choosing one of our cash processing vendors

Mail

- Checks and money orders only (DO NOT SEND CASH)
- Make payable to: Family Support Registry or FSR
- Include: Name, FSR Number, Court Case Number, Amount to remit for each FSR account if paying on multiple FSR accounts

Mail to:
Colorado Family Support Registry
PO BOX 2171
Denver, CO 80201

Income Assignment

- One way to make sure the assigned child support gets paid is having it come directly out of your paycheck. This will happen automatically if you have a listed employer. Keep in touch with your Child Support Services office when you change employers.



We understand that paying child support may be difficult at times.

Staying on track with your child support payments is important for your family's future, but we understand that paying child support may be difficult at times. We try to make it easier by providing flexibility. As long as your full monthly payment is paid and processed before the end of each month, your payment will always be on time. For example, January's child support payment needs to be paid and processed by January 31st to be on time. Processing may take up to three business days.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
JANUARY						
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

Ideal Time To Make Your Payment!

View all of the payment option details at <https://childsupport.state.co.us> or contact FSR Customer Service for more information.

Phone: 303-299-9123, 1-800-374-6558

Email: cdhs_fsrcustomerservice@state.co.us

Making sure your child support payments are received and processed on time is a key factor in supporting your family's economic stability.

The two most important things to ensure your payments are processed on time are:

#1 *Make sure to provide the correct account identifying information.*

If you do not provide all the information needed to identify the payment, your payment processing will be delayed significantly. Always include the following:

- Your FSR account number
- Your full name
- The amount for each FSR account when you are paying on multiple FSR accounts. The FSR or the county that is managing your case can provide you with this information.

#2 *Send your payment between the 1st and 20th of each month.*

If a payment is mailed to the FSR on October 26th and the FSR receives the payment on November 1st that payment is credited to November and not October. It is best to send your payment between the 1st and the 20th of each month to make sure it goes toward that month.

A Note On Arrears

The goal of our services is to ensure that children receive reliable financial support from their parents. The most effective way to avoid **child support debt, known as Arrears**, is to make sure that you attend the Negotiation Conference where an order will be established and you'll get to know the payment calendar!



05 RECEIVING PAYMENTS

Are you the parent receiving the child support?
Here's how that works.

Once the other parent makes a payment to the Family Support Registry, the payment is processed within 2-3 business days. Then, it is sent to you. If you are receiving child support, you have several ways from which to receive child support. (Visit the *Receiving Payments* section of the webpage (<https://childsupport.state.co.us>) for more details.)

Online

Electronic Disbursement Options (sign up online)

- Direct Deposit - Through your bank account
- FSR Debit Card - No bank account required

Mail

Default Option

- Personal Check - We'll mail a check to you at your specified address

To avoid delays receiving your child support payments, it is important to always keep your address and contact information current with the FSR. You can verify this with FSR Customer Service at 303-299-9123.





06 ENFORCEMENT

When Payments Are Missed

A consistent and timely payment ensures that your child will have what they need for health and well-being such as secure housing, enough food, appropriate clothes and reliable transportation.

Once a child support case is opened in a county child support office, the order will be enforced for the monthly financial support order and medical support, if ordered. The case will remain open until the child reaches the age of emancipation (19) and there are no arrears owed.

There are several ways a child support order can be enforced to encourage consistent and timely payments.

- **INCOME ASSIGNMENT:** When an Income Withholding Order is sent, this notifies your employer that child support payments must be taken from your paycheck similar to taxes or health care premiums.
- **DRIVER'S LICENSE SUSPENSION:** If you do not make the full monthly payment or only make partial payments, a driver's license suspension may happen. Get in touch with your county child support worker to discuss options if you receive a missed payment notice. To get your license reinstated, you'll need to contact DMV and follow their reinstatement process.
- **OTHER LICENSE SUSPENSIONS:** Professional or occupational licenses and recreational licenses (such as hunting and fishing) may also be suspended. Requirements for compliance vary for each professional licensing agency. This suspension for a recreational license is a minimum of one year, so it's best to avoid suspensions before they happen.
- **SOCIAL SECURITY:** If child support and/or arrears are due when you apply for Social Security, child support may be deducted.
- **OTHER MEANS OF ENFORCEMENT:** The unpaid monthly payment due will be reported to the credit reporting agencies and bank accounts may be seized. If you do business with the State of Colorado, your payment for services can be offset, your passport can be denied, insurance settlements can be intercepted and property liens can be placed. Federal and State tax interception occurs when there is a balance due and is not based on monthly payments.

This is a long-term situation, and we're in it together for the well-being of your child(ren).

Remember, we are here to support both parents in an effort to offer the most stable situation for the child(ren).

Never hesitate to reach out to start a conversation with your county child support worker. We're here to answer your questions and help address your concerns.

If you have questions, concerns, or simply want more information, start with your county child support worker.

*Don't know who your worker is?
Call the FSR Customer Service at
303-299-9123 or 1-800-374-6558*



One last thing! Ask about our website and texting program that can help you stay up-to-date with payments and information. You and your child's well-being are the top priority, and we're here to help!



07 MODIFYING AN ORDER

What if my circumstances change?

The initial calculation of child support is done at the time the original child support order is entered. However, the law recognizes that circumstances, as well as income and expenses, may change over time. The order can be reviewed and the process of updating an existing child support order to reflect these changes, if appropriate, is called modification.

If you think a change in your income, the other parent's income, or some related qualified expense necessitates a change in the support amount, your first step should be to run the numbers through a new child support calculation (this can be done at www.courts.state.co.us or by requesting a review of your order). If the resulting figure differs from the current child support order by more than 10% either way, a modification may be in order.

Some of the more common situations that may lead to a modification include:

- A significant change in the number of overnights a child spends at a parent's residence
- A parent's loss of employment or change in income
- Changes in child care or medical expenses of the child

If you believe you are entitled to a modification of your support amount, you may contact the child support enforcement unit to seek their assistance. You may also try to bring a legal action to modify your support order to court independently, with or without the assistance of an attorney.



08 CASE CLOSURE

What does case closure mean? Here are some common reasons why child support cases are closed.

Have you reconciled?

One reason for case closure is when the parents have worked out an agreement or reconciled and no longer want our agency involved. The order, however, is still in effect. To have the child support order ended, parents may go to court but the court won't necessarily terminate the order; there may be other circumstances. If you want to pay through the FSR and no longer have Child Support Services involved, that may be an option. At that point, you would only have an FSR account for payment processing and it would no longer include services like tracking balances or missed payments.

Is there a lack of cooperation?

If the applicant fails to cooperate with the Child Support Unit and the unit is not able to take the next step to enforce or establish the child support order, the case may be closed. This could be related to not turning in paperwork or not following through on requested information from the Child Support Services office.



Was another state involved?

Sometimes, a state that had asked us to enforce a child support order against a parent on its behalf, can ask us to close the case. This happens for several reasons but the most common are:

- If the other state can verify that the paying parent is no longer in our state, they can ask that we close our case.
- The case was paid in full and current support is no longer in effect.

Is the child emancipated?

In most cases, the age of emancipation for a Colorado child support order is 19 years old, unless the child is still in high school or is disabled. At that time, a current monthly support amount will end. Any arrears balance will still be due. A case will close once the current support order ends and there are no arrears due.

Cases can usually be reopened at any time if the original case was closed per the applicant's request. There is a \$20 fee required every time a case is reopened unless the applicant is receiving benefit assistance such as Colorado Works.

Only the person that applied for our services can close their case if the child has not emancipated (19 years old). With an intergovernmental case, the state that requested that Colorado open a case can request that Colorado close its case at any time.





09 OUT OF STATE

What happens when the parents live in different states?

When parents live in two different states or countries, cases are often more complex and the time-frames associated with case processing are typically longer since two states are involved in the case instead of one.

In some cases, the federal law gives Colorado the ability to handle the case the same as an in-state case. In other cases, the local county Child Support Services (CSS) Unit must request assistance from the other state to establish paternity and/or support or to enforce a child support order.

The Uniform Interstate Family Support Act (UIFSA) gives states the authority to reach beyond their borders for the establishment and enforcement of support orders. It also allows states to enforce a support order issued in another state. However, the county Child Support Services Unit must work with the other state to take the next appropriate action on the case.

If the county Child Support Services Unit asks for help from another state to establish or enforce a support order, the other state becomes responsible for most actions taken on the case.

According to federal regulations, if the Colorado county receives a case from another jurisdiction, the Colorado County Child Support Services unit is responsible for communicating with the other state.

If another jurisdiction receives a case from Colorado, the Colorado County Child Support Services unit is responsible for communication with both the other state and the parent who opened the case.

Please contact the caseworker in the state where you applied for services for case status information.



WE ARE HERE FOR YOUR KIDS



The fact is, your children are counting on you to be there, no matter what your family situation may be.

Parents love their children and want to do the right thing. Child Support Services wants to work with both parents to provide accurate and timely services that can help parents address the issues that stand in the way of being the parent they want to be. We want to make it as easy as possible for children to have the love and support of both their parents throughout their lives while also ensuring that child support orders are fair so that children receive regular support payments.

Thank you for partnering with us to help make your child's future bright!

MY PAYMENT INFO

Name of your child(ren)

FSR #

Monthly Payment Due

I WILL PAY:

Weekly Biweekly Monthly

Each time I make a payment I will pay:

\$

If you cannot make your payments, please call us at _____

For payment options and more information, call 1-800-374-6558
or visit our website childsupport.state.co.us

We are here to help you.



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Funded by Colorado Division of Child Support Services

2018