

Opening a child support case

California Child Support Services assists in establishing and enforcing financial and medical support orders for children. Services are offered to any parent, guardian, or caretaker of minor children, with or without a prior court order. We help both parents navigate the child support and court process.

If you already have a court order, opening a case offers help with every part of the process, keeps records, and helps both parties stay on track. If you do not have a court order, the child support agency in your county or region can help you locate the other parent, establish legal parentage if required, get a court order and see that it is enforced in every state and many foreign countries.

To open a case, you can apply online at www.childsupport.ca.gov or in person at your local office. See the website above for a directory of offices and locations.

How is a child support case enforced?

Most court-ordered child support payments are made through income withholding—when an employer deducts court-ordered child support payments from an employee’s paycheck. For all payment options, visit:

www.childsupport.ca.gov/payment-options

If an order for child support is not paid on time and in full, enforcement actions such as driver’s license suspension, tax and real estate liens, and intercepts of other income are possible. More on enforcement actions is available on our website.

California Child Support Services does not provide legal services to parents or guardians.

What can you expect once a child support case is opened?

Locating the other parent

Before a court order for child support can be made, both parents of the child need to be located. There is no guarantee they will be found, but the more identifying information provided the easier it will be.

Summons and Complaint

A legal document is sent to the parent being asked to pay support with a requirement to respond within 30 days before a court order for child support is made. If you receive a summons and complaint, contact your local child support agency right away – we can help you be sure your situation is accurately presented to the court.

Establishing legal parentage

Any child support office can help you establish legal parentage without going to court if both parents sign a Voluntary Declaration of Parentage. We can help you arrange for genetic testing if you are not certain the child is yours.

Obtain a child support order and enforce it

We can help with all the paperwork required so that when the court sets the amount of child support to be paid, it is fair to both of you. In many cases if both of you can agree on an amount, you can avoid court completely. The court will base the amount of child support ordered by reviewing the income and expenses of each parent and the amount of time each spends with the child -- among other factors.

How to change your court order for child support

If your financial, medical, or other situation has changed and you need a change in your child support order, contact the child support agency handling your case and complete a “Request for Review and Adjustment.” You may also go to court on your own (the Family Law Facilitator’s office at your local court may be able to assist you) or you may hire a private attorney to represent you.

Closing a child support case

There are many reasons why a child support case can be closed. Typically, it’s when the youngest child reaches the age of 18, is no longer a full-time high school student, and no past-due balances are owed, but there are many other circumstances that can affect this. All records are maintained for at least four years and four months in accordance with federal law.

The Complaint Resolution Program

If you’re not satisfied with the service you’re receiving from your child support agency, you have the right to file a complaint through the Compliant Resolution Program. Either the parent paying support or the person receiving support may file a complaint. You may make a complaint by phone or in person, or get a “Request for Complaint Resolution” form from your agency or at www.childsupport.ca.gov. Submit the complaint form by mail or in person.

Someone other than your caseworker will investigate and try to resolve your complaint. You are entitled to a response to every complaint in writing within 60 days.

You must file your complaint within 90 days of the date you know about the subject of your complaint.

The State Hearing Process

If you are not satisfied with the agency's response to your formal complaint, you have the right to have your complaint heard at a State Hearing.

The following cannot be heard at a State Hearing:

- Court-ordered child support amounts
- Parental relationship/parentage
- Child custody or visitation
- Contempt proceedings
- Civil rights violations
- Discourteous treatment by a child support employee

Request a State Hearing

To request a State Hearing you can do one of the following:

- Request a form from California Child Support Services at www.childsupport.ca.gov.
- Contact the State Hearing Office – call toll-free 866.289.4714, fax 916.464.5069, or email StateHearings@dcss.ca.gov
- Mail your request to –
California Child Support Services
Office of Legal Services – State Hearings
P.O. Box 419087
Rancho Cordova, CA 95741-9087

For more information, reasonable accommodation, or assistance call the State Hearing Office at 866.289.4714.

For more information on
child support visit:

www.childsupport.ca.gov

Contact California Child Support

866.901.3212

toll-free (within the U.S.)

TTY | 866.399.4096

**Customer
CONNECT**

See your case information 24/7!



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State of California*



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Managing Your Child Support Case

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