

## Child Support Services Program Summary

Child Support Services (CSS) are available to anyone who wants or needs help in collecting child support through a network of state and locally run offices.

- Individuals who receive services through Public Assistance (IV-A) or Foster Care (IV-E) programs are automatically referred for CSS free of charge.
- Custodial parents in Non-Public Assistance cases can inquire about CSS by telephone and receive an Application and Supplemental Data Sheet to complete, or they can visit any local CSS office.
- Custodial parents are responsible for paying up to a \$25 non-refundable application fee.

The CSS program is **not authorized** to help with custody, visitation or property settlements.

### Location Services

Noncustodial Parents must be located before Child Support Services (CSS) can establish paternity and support or enforce a child support order.

The following information can help the CSS locate Noncustodial Parents:

- Name
- Date of birth
- Social Security number
- Address
- Employer
- Vehicle ownership information

### Paternity Establishment

Establishing a legal father for a child helps the child receive certain rights, such as:

- Access to paternal medical information
- Social Security benefits
- Death and insurance benefits
- Military benefits

A child support order cannot be established for a child who is born to unmarried parents, unless the alleged father acknowledges paternity or is proven the father.

- The most convenient time for parents to establish paternity for their child is in the hospital when the child is born.
- The father must be present and provide identification to have his name placed on the Affidavit of Parentage.
- When this document is filed with Vital Records, both parents' names are recorded on the birth certificate.

Genetic (DNA) testing is recommended if there are doubts regarding the paternity of the child.

- Blood or tissue samples may be used for testing.
- Test results may provide peace of mind to parents who establish paternity voluntarily.
- Results may be presented as evidence in legal proceedings to establish paternity.

### **Establishment of Support Obligations**

A legal order must be established that specifies the amount of support to be paid for the benefit of a child.

The successful establishment of a support order depends upon several critical areas:

- Locating the Noncustodial Parent
- Determining the financial needs of the child
- Identifying what he or she can pay

The North Carolina Conference of Chief District Court Judges determine the CSS Guidelines.

- These guidelines are based on the needs of the child(ren) and on the ability of parents to pay.
- The Guidelines are used to compute a child support obligation based on the combined gross income of the custodial parent and NCP.

- Either the NCP can agree voluntarily to the amount of support or the obligation can be established through court action.

An obligation to provide medical support in the form of health insurance through the NCP's employer can be obtained either voluntarily or through court action

### **Collection and Distribution of Support**

Child Support Services (CSS) collects and distributes child support payments. A court order for child support dictates the frequency of support payments and the amount of support to be paid.

All child support payments handled by CSS are sent to the Centralized Collections Operation. Payments methods include:

- Direct payments
- Income withholding
- Interception of tax refunds

Child support payments are distributed and disbursed based on federal regulations and state statutes. The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) mails the checks to the appropriate payees.

### **Enforcement of Support Obligations**

Establishing a child support order is no guarantee that the Noncustodial Parent will pay the support. Child Support Services (CSS) identifies these cases and uses several enforcement tools to get payment.

Income withholding by employers is the single most effective method of child support collection.

- The employer deducts a specified amount from the Noncustodial Parent's income for the child support payment.
- The deducted amount is sent to the NC Child Support Centralized Collections (NCCSCC) within seven days of the deduction.
- Employers are required to withhold income for child support orders that are enforced by other states.

Income withholding can be initiated with entities other than employers when the Noncustodial Parent has other sources of income, such as:

- Unemployment insurance benefits (UIB)
- Worker's Compensation
- Social Security benefits
- Veteran's disability benefits

Other enforcement remedies include:

- Monthly billing to Noncustodial Parents who are not under income withholding
- Filing court action against Noncustodial Parents who have not paid support as ordered
- Credit bureau reporting of all child support obligations handled by CSS
- Interception of state and federal tax refunds
- Claims on real or personal property owned by the Noncustodial Parent