

COVID-19: COMMON CHILD SUPPORT QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Document last updated: April 10, 2020

Is the Office of Child Support Services open?

Our office lobby is currently closed to the public. Child support professionals are still working in the building. You can contact your child support agent by phone. Click <http://www.cse.ri.gov/contact/index.php> for a directory of phone numbers. You can also gather information about your case by calling 458-4400 and entering your case id and pin number or accessing the client portal at <https://www.cseinfo.dhs.ri.gov/clientPortal/index.jsp>.

Can I get information about my child support case online?

Yes. We offer online account services to participants. You can sign up for an account at <https://www.cseinfo.dhs.ri.gov/clientPortal/accountCreationOne.do>.

I need to discuss something with my child support professional—can they answer all my questions over the phone?

Yes, most questions can be answered by phone. For a directory of direct phone numbers: <http://www.cse.ri.gov/contact/index.php>.

Will it take longer than usual to receive a return phone call from my child support case manager?

Possibly. As we all know, this is an unsettled time for our country and all business. At this time, our offices are staffed, and work is continuing. The Rhode Island Office of Child Support Services is committed to getting support to families. We have a plan in place to make sure critical services continue. If we have office or workload impacts due to the COVID-19 virus, we will post updates on our website at <http://www.cse.ri.gov/>.

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If I am the non-custodial parent and I am not working how can I stop my order?

OCSS may file a *Motion for Relief* on your behalf asking the Court to modify your child support order or to suspend or stop the order because you are unemployed and have no income available. Contact your child support agent to request that a motion be filed. The motion can be filed electronically with the RI Family Court.

Will I be able to have a hearing on my motion immediately?

No. A future court date will be assigned. You and the other parent will be served by constable. The constable will not have you sign the legal documents but will leave it at your doorstep.

Please make sure to watch for your mail. You ***may have been or will be served*** for a court date that has been continued by the court to a different date in the future. When you appear for your hearing, and if you are not receiving any unemployment benefits, the motion for relief *may be granted* retroactive to the date of service. This will help decrease the amount of past due support you owe.

However, you should be applying for unemployment benefits through the Rhode Island Department of Labor website <http://www.dlt.ri.gov/>. Once you receive unemployment benefits your child support should automatically be withheld from your benefit. If it is not: it is important that you send in child support payments, so you do not fall behind.

Can I still take a paternity (DNA) test?

Genetic testing has been suspended through the end of June. Current appointments are being rescheduled. New appointments are being scheduled for the month of June.

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What if the non-custodial parent is receiving unemployment benefits, will I still receive my child support weekly?

Yes. It may take a several weeks for the income withholding order (IWO) to be sent to the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training (RI DLT) – *(or another states unemployment agency)* to process your case information in order to begin withholding your child support payments.

The new stimulus law enacted March 27, 2020 includes a Federal Stimulus payment to individuals. When will I receive it? Will it be intercepted if I owe child support arrears?

We do not yet have any information about when or how the federal stimulus payments will be distributed.

The law passed by Congress states that the stimulus payments would be subject to interception for past-due child support, but we have very few details at this time.

We are awaiting information and guidance from the federal child support agency, the Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) in the U.S. Health & Human Services Administration for Children & Families. OCSE is reviewing the provisions of the new law.

When we know more, we will post information on our website, <http://www.cse.ri.gov/>.

I'm the parent who pays support. If I have been laid off due to COVID-19, what happens to my child support obligation?

A court order for child support continues until it is modified or terminated. That means your child support is still due.

Depending on the length that you are out of work, a modification of your child support order may be appropriate. Contact us to discuss your circumstances.

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Will there be an RI stimulus check?

We don't know. That's a decision and action the Rhode Island legislature must take.

PAYMENT QUESTIONS

I am the parent that receives child support. Can you tell me if my child support payments will keep coming?

Processing payments is one of the critical functions of the Rhode Island Child Support Program. We will continue to process payments as they are received.

We are unable to predict if payments on your case will be affected by COVID-19.

If the non-custodial parent is still employed and his paycheck is being garnished your payments will not be interrupted. The process is electronic. The payment will appear on your RI Kids Card or in your designated checking account.

My income has been reduced because of COVID-19 related layoffs/closures/quarantines, and I'm unable to pay my full child support amount. Am I at risk for license suspension or other enforcement actions such as credit bureau reporting, or a bank account lien?

The Rhode Island Child Support Program understands many people are experiencing a reduction in income related to COVID-19. If you are unable to pay your support, contact your case manager as soon as possible to discuss your situation and available options.

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I am the parent that receives child support. If the child support office closes, will I still get my payment?

The Rhode Island Child Support Program is committed to getting support to families. Processing payments is one of our critical services. We have a plan in place to make sure critical services continue. If we have office or workload impacts due to the COVID-19 virus, we will post updates on our website at <http://www.cse.ri.gov/>.

If the RI Family Court and/or the child support office is closed, do I still have to make my payment?

Yes.

See the COVID-19 Guidance Information <http://www.cse.ri.gov/covid/index.php> page as well as the Payment Options <http://www.cse.ri.gov/payments/> page on our website. You will find alternative methods that you can use to make child support payments.

If my employer temporarily closes, will they still send in my child support payment?

Your employer is responsible for withholding child support from any earnings you receive and sending those withheld payments to the RI SDU (*RI Payment Processing Center or State Disbursement Unit*). If you are experiencing unpaid time off, we recommend you make other arrangements to pay your support obligation. We highly recommend that you apply for unemployment compensation benefits <http://www.dlt.ri.gov/ui/> so that you can continue to meet your obligation.

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I need to pay my child support directly because my employer has closed, and I am not being paid. What are my options?

You can mail your payment:

Rhode Island Family Court
c/o RI Child Support Payment Service Unit
P.O. Box 5073
Hartford, Connecticut 06102-5073

For a detailed explanation, and information for submitting payments online, view our “Payment Information” page at <http://www.cse.ri.gov/payments/>.

EMPLOYER QUESTIONS

My employee is not working enough hours to continue medical insurance, but they have a National Medical Support Notice. What do I do?

If an employee isn't working enough hours to qualify for health insurance, we do not require you to continue providing insurance pursuant to the National Medical Support Notice. If the children are unenrolled, notify us so the case can be updated.

My business has temporarily closed due to COVID-19. Will we be sanctioned if we don't respond within a required time?

No, but you need to respond as soon as possible.

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My employees are working reduced hours. How do I withhold child support if their paycheck is reduced?

Withhold the full amount based on the pay period frequency, subject to the withholding limits explained in the income withholding order.

For answers to other child support questions please follow the links provided in other parts of the website at <http://www.cse.ri.gov/>.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has resources on preparing your family for the spread of COVID-19 in the community.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>