

DSER Guide to Services

What is “DSER,” and what does it do?

The Division of Support Enforcement and Recovery (“DSER”) of Maine DHHS locates parents when necessary, establishes paternity, and establishes and enforces child support obligations.

If you are receiving TANF, you will receive child support services from DSER without asking for them. In fact, you need to cooperate with DSER to establish and enforce child support in order to receive your part of your TANF grant, unless your TANF worker grants you good cause not to cooperate. If you have been receiving TANF, and your TANF ends, you will continue to receive DSER’s services until you tell us in writing that you don’t want them.

If you are not receiving TANF and would like DSER to establish or enforce child support for you, you may contact us in any of the following ways:

- Apply on line at our Client Portal:
<https://gateway.maine.gov/dhhs/mecportal/ApplicationLogin.aspx>
- Call the DSER Voice Response System at (800) 371-7179 (in state only) or (207) 624-7830
- Download our application at <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/ofi/dser/application.html>
- Email Case.Review@maine.gov
- Call DSER at (207) 624-4100 to speak to a representative
- Mail to DSER, 109 Capitol St., 11 State House Station, Augusta ME 04333
- Visit us at your regional DHHS office

CLIENT ONLINE SERVICES

DSER has an online portal where clients can complete many actions 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

To register go to: <https://gateway.maine.gov/dhhs/mecportal/ApplicationLogin.aspx>.

Services available online include:

- Applying for services to establish or enforce child support.
- Reviewing case summary information regarding the orders, financials, and recent activities on your case
- Submitting inquiries regarding your case
- Submitting address, employer, and contact information for yourself or the other parent
- Printing collection and disbursement reports.
- Seeing any scheduled appointments you have with the Division of Support Enforcement

TO COMPLETE AN APPLICATION FOR SERVICES

The application for services must be filled out completely. The highlighted portions of the application must be completed or the application will be returned to you. No action will be

taken on your case until your application is complete.

The following documents must accompany your application:

- If your child was born in Maine we need a copy of the **birth certificate**
- If your child was born **outside** of Maine we need a **certified birth certificate**
- If you have a Maine court order we need a copy of the **complete order**
- If you have an order from another state or jurisdiction we will need **3 certified court orders**
- If your child's other parent owes a child support debt, please complete the **Statement of Child Support Paid**, attached to your application package

When your application is complete, DSER's Central Office will create a case.

Initially you will be enrolled in the Reliacard Debit card to ensure any collections we receive are paid to you promptly (see the fee schedule below). However, you have the option as to how you receive your payments, including direct deposit to your bank account. If you would like direct deposit please contact (207) 624-4100 to request the paperwork.

U.S. Bank ReliaCard® Pre-Acquisition Disclosure
 Program Name: Maine Child Support

Monthly fee	Per purchase	ATM withdrawal	Cash reload
\$0	\$0	\$0 in-network \$1.75* out-of-network	N/A
ATM Balance Inquiry (in-network or out-of-network)			\$0
Customer Service (automated or live agent)			\$0 per call
Inactivity (after 365 days with no transactions)			\$2.00 per month
We charge 2 other types of fees. One of them is:			
Card Replacement (standard or expedited delivery)			\$0 or \$15.00
* This fee can be lower depending on how and where this card is used.			
No overdraft/credit feature. Your funds are eligible for FDIC insurance.			
For general information about prepaid accounts, visit cfpb.gov/prepaid . Find details and conditions for all fees and services inside the card package or call 1-855-282-2021 or visit usbankreliacard.com .			

CR-17723775

FEE FOR CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES:

The Federal government requires DSER to collect a \$35.00 annual federal fee for each case in which the State has disbursed at least \$550.00 of child support for a person who has never received cash assistance from TANF/AFDC.

If you have **never** received public assistance for the children involved in your case, you will be charged this fee. For more information, visit our web site at:
<http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/ofidser/service-guide.html>

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A CHILD SUPPORT CASE IS OPENED OR REOPENED?

Before a new or reopened case can be sent to the field office where the support enforcement work is done, DSER's Central Office must create or amend the computer files for the case and verify the information that you provide. If you have little or no information about the other parent, it could take a few months to begin your case. The case cannot be sent to a field office until DSER establishes where the other parent lives or works.

When your case goes to a field office it is assigned to an agent who will manage the case.

PATERNITY

You must name the father of your child in order to receive DSER services. Until a man becomes the legal father of a child, whether by agreement or by a court order, he is referred to as the "named father." Other terms used when a man is not yet legally the father are "putative father" or "alleged father." DSER will help to establish paternity of named fathers so that all children are financially supported by both parents.

If the parents of a child are married, they are each presumed to be the legal parent of the child. If the parents of a child are not married, the named father may sign an Acknowledgement of Paternity if he agrees that he has fathered the child. If the parents of the child are not married and the named father does not agree that he is the father of the child, paternity must be proven through genetic testing. Additional steps must be taken before a named father becomes a "legal" father.

If the Named Father is in Maine

The named father may agree that he is the father after he is notified by DSER. In that case, both parents will sign an Acknowledgement of Paternity, and a child support order will be established for him.

If he does not agree that he is the father, he may ask for genetic testing to establish paternity. The named father will go to a DSER regional office (or the DSER representative will go to the jail or prison if the named father is incarcerated) to have a DNA sample taken (through a non-

invasive swab of the inside of the cheek) for testing. Samples will also be taken from the mother and child. If the test shows that he is the father of the child, the parents may then sign an Acknowledgement of Paternity and a child support order will be established. If he refuses to participate in the genetic testing process, or doesn't agree that he is the father despite a positive DNA test, the case will be filed in the Maine District Court.

This process could take up to six months; longer if the named father disputes paternity.

If the Named Father is in Another State

When the named father is in another state, the process takes longer, though the time it takes varies depending on the state in which the named father lives. DSER must request the child support enforcement agency of that state to establish paternity, as Maine would not have jurisdiction to establish paternity here.

GETTING A SUPPORT ORDER

If the Non-Custodial Parent is in Maine

Once the legal father has been established, DSER starts a proceeding to obtain an order that will create obligations for current and ongoing child support, child support debt (if any), health insurance, and child care costs for the parent with whom the child does not primarily reside. This parent is called the Non-Custodial Parent or "NCP." The NCP will be notified of the intent to establish this order as the process begins. It may take approximately 2-6 months following service of the initial Notice on the NCP for the obligation to be established.

If the NCP is in Another State

If the child was conceived in Maine, or the parents and the child have lived together in Maine, DSER may proceed as if the NCP resides in Maine. However, when the NCP is in another state, DSER must request the child support enforcement agency of the state in which the NCP is living to establish these obligations. While the time it takes varies from state to state, it usually takes longer than a proceeding in Maine. Although it may take longer, it is worth the wait to ensure that your children get the financial support they deserve.

COLLECTION OF CHILD SUPPORT

When the NCP is in Maine

Current Support: Almost all orders for child support now include immediate income withholding orders (IIWOs) for current support. If DSER knows where the NCP is employed, it will send the IIWO to the employer right away, so that the employer may begin automatically deducting ordered support from the NCP's wages.

Arrears (Past-Due Support): In order to collect the debt as well as current support, DSER must serve an NCP with a Notice of Debt that states what the NCP owes. If an NCP requests a hearing on the notice of debt, the hearing process will increase the time before collection on the debt begins, and 3-4 months may pass after service of the Notice of Debt before DSER is in a position to collect arrears by these methods.

If the NCP does not challenge DSER's finding of debt owed within 30 days, and does not pay what's owed or enter into a payment plan, DSER may then attempt to collect the debt that is past due by:

- Filing liens against personal and real property
- Collecting from bank accounts
- Reporting debts of more than \$1,000 to credit bureaus
- Taking settlements and other lump sum amounts
- Taking gambling and lottery winnings
- Revoking or denying passports
- Taking state income tax refunds
- Attaching wages or unemployment for current support and the debt
- Certifying the NCP's licenses for revocation
- Ordering the NCP to Appear and Disclose

License Revocation: DSER may begin a License Revocation Proceeding when the NCP has not paid child support for 60 days. This includes revocation of driver's licenses, professional licenses, hunting and fishing licenses, etc. Non-custodial parents must make a payment agreement with DSER to prevent DSER from asking the Secretary of State to revoke a license. Broken agreements result in license revocation without further notice. Your help in alerting us to the licenses the NCP holds is a critical part of making this very effective incentive for support payment successful. License Revocation can be stopped if the NCP pays what is owed.

Order to Appear and Disclose: This method is for debt collection only. The Order to Appear and Disclose is used to locate the NCP's assets and source of income by compelling the parent to answer questions about finances under oath. If the parent doesn't appear or refuses to answer, these proceedings can be filed in court for examination and adjudication. This action is used as a last resort for tough non-paying cases and takes time to resolve.

When the Non-custodial Parent is in Another State

DSER can serve both Immediate Wage Withholding Orders and Orders to Withhold and Deliver across state lines when there is a Maine support order. DSER may also take the NCP's federal income tax refund for arrears in interstate cases.

DSER can also request the child support enforcement agency of the state in which the NCP is living to collect the child support. The process required under federal law for DSER to initiate an interstate proceeding is such that it doesn't move quickly, but it is often the best remedy when a parent doesn't want to pay and chooses to avoid the responsibility.

MODIFYING/AMENDING A CHILD SUPPORT OBLIGATION

GENERAL INFORMATION

You may request a review of your order for possible modification if circumstances have changed substantially since your order was signed. If your current order for support is at least three years old, you may have your order reviewed without having to prove that your circumstances have changed.

To have us help you with the review and modification process by contacting DSER's Case Review Unit (please refer to "IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS OR INFORMATION FOR DSER ABOUT YOUR CASE," below, for more information).

If the Non-Custodial Parent (NCP) is in Maine

After you request a review of your order, the field office that has your case will send you a form requesting financial information, usually within two weeks. If you do not receive this paperwork within 30 days of your request for an Order Review, contact the Case Review Unit and ask for it again.

When DSER sends its information request to you, it sends one to the NCP also, so that his or her financial information may be used to calculate child support. However, DSER will do the calculations regardless of the NCP's cooperation. DSER will review the figures and tell you if a modification can be made. If calculations show that it is likely that a change in your order will be granted, then we will initiate a process to modify your order. Please note that your order may increase, but it may also decrease upon modification.

How quickly DSER is able to respond to your modification will depend on the number of other order review cases already in process, and staff resources available for order review activity. It may take months for the order review process to reach completion. If you desire a quicker process, then you should consider initiating a modification proceeding on your own or with an attorney. Please note, a change in an order can only be made retroactive to the date the papers are filed in the Maine District Court. A change in an obligation established by a DHHS administrative decision may only be made retroactive to the date DSER serves the NCP with papers in its modification proceeding.

If the NCP is in another state

If the support order originates in a Maine court or a DHHS order, the procedure is the same as it is for the NCP who lives in Maine.

If the order is from another state, DSER must request the support enforcement agency of the state the NCP is living in to conduct the order review process. Because of limited resources available for modification/amendment activity in the other state's agency, the process may be very slow.

Navigating the Voice Response System (VRS)

You will need your:

SSN and 4-Digit DSER PIN number

1. Dial the VRS at **1-800-371-7179 (in Maine) or 1-207-624-7830**
2. Press 1 if you have an open case.
3. Press 2 for general information or to apply for services
4. Enter your Social Security number
5. Enter your personal identification number (PIN)
6. Press * if you don't know your PIN
7. Once you enter your PIN on the VRS, listen to the prompts or follow the menu below to give or receive the desired information

For information about Disbursements or to update your address

Press 1, then:

Submenu: Press 1 to hear the last 3 disbursements
Press 2 if you would like an application for direct deposit to be sent to you
Press 3 if you would like to stop a current direct deposit
Press 4 to update your address
Press 5 to request a 12 month disbursement report
Press 6 to report a lost check
Press 0 to speak with a representative M-F from 10:00 AM to 3:00PM
Press * to repeat this menu

For Case specific information Press 2, then:

If you have more than one case you will be able to select which case you want information on.

Submenu: Press 1 to hear the last 3 collections on your case
Press 2 to report that payments have stopped
Press 3 to dispute disbursements
Press 4 to report an address for the Non-Custodial Parent
Press 5 for options on reporting an employer for a Non Custodial Parent
Press 6 to request a 12 month payment report
Press 9 to return to the main menu
Press 0 to speak with a representative M-F from 10:00 AM to 3:00PM
Press * to repeat this menu

To Change your PIN Press 3, then:

Sub menu: Press 1 to request a new PIN
Press 2 to change your PIN yourself
Press 9 to return to the main menu
Press * to repeat this menu