

Office of Child Support

The Vermont Office of Child Support (OCS) is the state agency responsible for establishing, collecting, enforcing, and modifying child and medical support orders for children.

OCS *cannot* help you:

- Establish or modify parental rights and responsibilities (*custody*);
- Establish or modify parent-child contact (*visitation*); or
- Establish or modify guardianship.

Visitation & Child Support

Support and visitation are separate issues.

- **Parent receiving support:**
You cannot refuse to honor visitation because support is not paid.
- **Parent paying support:**
You cannot refuse to pay support because visitation is not honored.

If you need help with visitation, consult your attorney or the Family Division of Superior Court.

Do I have to apply for OCS services?

Vermont law requires OCS to provide services to all Vermonters with child support orders — unless all parties have agreed that the obligor will pay support directly to the obligee. OCS services begin when we receive a copy of the court order.

You get to choose the level of service you receive. You have two options:

1. Full OCS Services

This includes help:

- Modifying / enforcing an order;
- Establishing parentage;
- Locating a parent;
- Assessing a parent's ability to provide support; and
- Determining a parent's employment status.

To receive these services, you must submit a completed *Application for Child Support Services*. There is no charge for these services.

2. Limited OCS Services

Services are limited to collecting and distributing support payments. There is a \$5 monthly fee for these services.

If English is not your primary language and you need help understanding this information, please let us know.

OCS Offices

Northwest Regional Office

(Chittenden, Franklin & Grand Isle counties)
32 Cherry Street, Suite #310
Burlington, VT 05401 — (802) 863-7444

Southwest Regional Office

(Addison, Bennington & Rutland counties)
420 Asa Bloomer State Office Building
Rutland, VT 05701 — (802) 786-5060

Southeast Regional Office

(Windham & Windsor counties)
100 Mineral Street, Suite 202
Springfield, VT 05156 — (802) 885-6212

Northeast Regional Office

(Caledonia, Lamoille & Orleans counties)
1153 Main Street, Suite 2
St. Johnsbury, VT 05819 — (802) 751-2650

Central Regional Office

(Essex, Orange & Washington counties)
162 North Main Street, Suite 205
Barre, VT 05641 — (802) 479-4204

Customer Service Unit

Mailing Address:

103 S. Main Street, Waterbury, VT 05671

- 1-800-786-3214
- OCSCSU@state.vt.us

Ask for a copy of *Child Support in Vermont: A Handbook for Parents*.

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Guide for Parents Understanding Your Child Support Order

 VERMONT
DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
OFFICE OF CHILD SUPPORT

Your Child Support Order

Your Child Support Order is a court document that spells out:

- Who must pay support (*obligor*);
- Who receives support (*obligee*);
- The children covered by the order;
- The amount to be paid; and
- When, how often, and how payments must be made.

Amount To Be Paid

On page 4 of your order, you'll find:

- The amount of child support to be paid;
- When payments start; and
- How frequently payments must be made (e.g., weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly).



Arrears To Be Paid

On page 4 of your order, you will find the amount of any arrears owed to:

- The Office of Child Support (OCS);
- Parent receiving support (*obligee*); and
- Another person or agency.

Arrears are payments owed for past-due child support, medical expenses, service fees, penalties, surcharges, and other child support-related expenses.

If you owe arrears, your order will list when these payments begin and how frequently they must be made (e.g., weekly, bi-weekly, monthly).

Method of Payment

On page 5 of your order, you will find information about how payments must be made. It will most likely be through wage withholding, since Vermont law requires it in most cases.

Paying support this way:

- Is convenient;
- Helps make sure payments are made on time; and
- Creates an accurate record of the payments made and received.

Is wage withholding always used?

No. The court may waive wage withholding if, for example:

- Both parents ask the court to let them handle payments on their own; or
- The paying parent has a history of being financially responsible and requests direct payment.

If the court authorizes direct payment, page 5 of your order will tell you where to send payments: either to the other parent or to OCS.

How does wage withholding work?

1. Employers automatically deduct support payments from the paying parents' paychecks — just like other deductions such as taxes; and
2. They send payments to OCS for processing and distribution.

When does withholding start?

It can take several weeks for withholding to begin. Until it does, the paying parent must send payments to:

Vermont Office of Child Support
PO Box 1310, Williston, VT 05495

Please write your Social Security number (or OCS case number if available) AND the name of the parent receiving support on the memo line of the check or money order.

Duration of Support

Unless the order says differently, support continues until a child turns 18 or completes high school — whichever is later. If your order also covers a younger child, you must petition the court to modify the order and change the amount of support.

What if circumstances change?

Once a support order is issued, only the court can change (or *modify*) it. Either parent can petition the court to modify the order when there is a:

- Real, substantial and unanticipated change in circumstances (e.g., job loss, significant income change, disability, or change in custody);
- Need to suspend wage withholding;
- Change that will result in child support that's at least 10% higher or lower than ordered; or
- Court review of their support order, which either parent may request once every three years.

