



A Simpler, More Collaborative Approach: Reaching Child Support Agreements at OCSS

We often hear from our community partners that the uncertainties of court—and the confrontational nature of the process—keep people from seeking child support or changing child support orders.

To simplify the process and encourage parents to work together, we developed a process that lets families settle the terms of a child support order in our offices. The Family Court still makes the final decision. But our approach should make that process easier for custodial and noncustodial parents alike, so they can stay focused on their child.

Child support program across the country take this kind of approach every day—and have seen how it benefits families. But an approach like this has never been tried at this scale in New York.

Agreeing to an Initial Child Support Order

Nothing in our program is quite as consequential as that initial child support order. Getting this part right—especially the amount of the noncustodial parent is required to pay—can make the difference between years of reliable support for a child or the accumulation of unproductive, even debilitating debt.

We think reaching an agreement outside of court can give more parents time to understand the process and why their order is set where it is.

The process starts with both parents meeting with an OCSS intake worker to check the necessary documents. They use those to calculate an order amount that follows New York State guidelines—the ones a Support Magistrates would use.

If the parents agree, the proposed amount is reviewed by members of the Department of Social Services' Office of Legal Affairs before being submitted with the petition.

Completing the process should require only a single appearance in court. Rather than having to rehash all of the underlying financial questions of the case, that hearing should focus on confirming that the parents entered into the agreement voluntarily and know their rights.

Changing an Existing Child Support Order

Research shows that many people who seek to change their child support orders never reach that goal and instead have

to wrestle with an old order that may not fit their current circumstance.

As part of our broader goal of ensuring that current child support orders are properly aligned with the parents' income, we have extended our agreement process to order modification through our [Modifying Orders Through Stipulation](#) (MOTS) program.

As we mentioned in January, one recent participant in MOTS was able to change their order from over \$600 per month to \$25. In the process, we also eliminated more than \$10,000 in child support debt owed to the New York City Department of Social Services.

We believe many more people could benefit from this program, but we need your help reaching them

What We're Asking You to Do

Please tell the parents you work with about these path-breaking new approaches to setting and changing child support orders in New York City.

The more agreements we can reach to set up new child support orders or change existing ones, the more likely we are to be able to ensure that parents can provide sustainable support to their children and, we hope, improve the child's well-being in the short and long term.

Child Support App Going Strong

More than a thousand clients have already used our new (free!) NYC Child Support – ACCESS HRA Mobile app. To download the app, use this QR code or go to nyc.gov/childsupportmobile. Mobile users following that link should be redirected to either the [App Store](#) (Apple) or [Google Play](#) (Android).



In the Know

Child Support How-to Videos on YouTube

To help partners and program participants navigate child support, we regularly post new videos to the Human Resources Administration's [YouTube channel](#). The videos cover everything from [How to Request a Phone Appointment](#) to [How to Change Your Address or Employment Information](#), with more being added all the time. If you have ideas for other videos, email us today!

Contact OCSS

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