

INFORMATION FOR ALL POTENTIAL CHILD SUPPORT APPLICANTS ABOUT GETTING CHILD SUPPORT SAFELY

Benefits of opening a child support case

Raising a child alone in New York City can be difficult. The Office of Child Support Services (OCSS) is committed to making the child support process as safe as possible for you and your children. OCSS offers many services including parentage and support order establishment.

					<i>WITH PARENTAGE ESTABLISHED:</i>	
Legal parentage	Child support payments	Parent-child relationship	Health Insurance	Neutral Intermediary		
					Pension Funds	Military allowance

Safety considerations

To apply for child support services, you must provide information about yourself, your child, and the noncustodial parent. As you read the steps below, you may want to think about any safety concerns this may raise.

- **Parentage Establishment:** If parentage is unknown, OCSS will help you file a petition for parentage establishment with the Family Court. Both parents will be required to ***appear in court*** (virtually or in person) to testify about the facts and circumstances of the case. You can request that the court order ***genetic testing appointments*** at separate times and days.
- **Support Establishment:** OCSS will help you file a child support petition with the Family Court. You will be required to ***appear in court*** (virtually or in person). Both parent's ***income and expenses will be presented*** and used to determine the amount of the child support order.
- **Support Collection:** A noncustodial parent's ***employer will be contacted*** to deduct court ordered child support payments from their paycheck to be sent to the OCSS. If an employer is not known, a ***monthly billing statement*** is mailed to the noncustodial parent and they are expected to pay OCSS directly.
- **Modification:** When circumstances change, you or the noncustodial parent may file a petition requesting the Family Court to ***modify an existing order of support*** because the child's needs have changed and/or the noncustodial parent's income has changed.
- **Support Enforcement:** If the noncustodial parent misses payments, ***enforcement actions*** are initiated in accordance with legal timeframes. These actions can occur at the same time and include the following:
 - Federal and State tax refund intercept
 - Lottery intercept
 - Reporting debt to credit agencies
 - Suspension of driver license
 - Bank account seizure
 - Referral to the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance
 - U.S. passport denial
 - Intercept of personal injury settlements/workers compensation
- **Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA):** Child support orders at least two years old are eligible for COLA review. This review may ***increase the amount of child support*** that the noncustodial parent must pay without going to court.

Staying safe while seeking child support

The Child Support Program and the Court have ways to help you access child support services safely.



Request electronic testimony instead of an in-person appearance in court by completing the Electronic Testimony Application available at <https://www.nycourts.gov/LegacyPDFS/FORMS/familycourt/pdfs/4-24.pdf>.



Request the Court to not reveal your location, residence, or employer. The Court can offer additional precautions before, during, and after a hearing for your physical safety.

Learn more about Address Confidentiality at <https://www.nycourts.gov/CourtHelp/Family/confidentiality.shtml>.



Your location/residence or employment information can be removed from petitions, notices, or any required financial disclosures. **While your address can be suppressed from all forms, it is not possible to suppress the name of the county, child support agency or the court that issued the order.**



Request your laboratory appointment for genetic testing to establish parentage be scheduled separately from the other parent.



File for an Order of Protection by completing the Family Offense Petition. Learn more at <https://www.nycourts.gov/CourtHelp/Safety/familyfiling.shtml>.

If you need to talk to someone immediately about safety, contact:

NYS Domestic and Sexual Violence Hotline	Call: 1-800-942-6906	Text: 1-844-997-2121	Chat: www.opdv.ny.gov
NYC Domestic Violence Hotline:	Call: 1-800-621-HOPE	1-800-621-4673	

Highly-trained advocates are available 24/7/365 to talk confidentially with anyone experiencing domestic or sexual violence, seeking resources or information, or questioning unhealthy aspects of their relationship.

To learn more about what constitutes family, domestic, and sexual violence and what resources are available, visit <https://opdv.ny.gov/about-domestic-violence> and www.nycourts.gov/CourtHelp/Safety/DVindex.shtml.

You can update information about safety at ANY TIME. Even if you've already told the child support worker that you didn't have any safety concerns, things change and OCSS wants to help you stay safe.

About public benefits and child support

If you are, or are considering, applying for or receiving Cash Assistance, a child support case may be opened automatically and will require you to cooperate with the Child Support Program. There are steps that OCSS can take to keep you and your children safe throughout the process. A domestic violence waiver and/or good cause determination can release you from all or part of the requirements to cooperate with the Child Support Program.

Learn more about child support today at nyc.gov/hra/ocss or email us at dcse.cseweb@dfa.state.ny.us.