

Child Support Enforcement Agencies Assist Parents

Q: What services can a Child Support Enforcement Agency provide?

A: Ohio's child support program is based on the fundamental belief that children deserve financial support. Nearly one million children are directly impacted by this program.

The Child Support Enforcement Agency (CSEA) can assist parents by providing services that include:

- establishment of paternity by acknowledgment of the parties or by genetic testing;
- establishment of a child support and medical support order;
- collection and disbursement of ordered payments and an accurate record of payments;
- location of a non-custodial parent;
- modification of an existing support order, if specific criteria are met;
- enforcement of orders by administrative and judicial methods (i.e., through license suspension, freezing and seizing of bank accounts, liens against real and personal property, contempt actions and felony indictments);
- initiation of interstate actions when the person responsible to pay support lives in another state;
- interception of federal and state tax refunds to collect on past due support;
- referrals to other agencies for additional government and community services.

Q: Who is eligible to receive these services?

A: Unmarried parents may apply for services to establish paternity as well as for child support and medical support. Parties that are married but living apart and parents that are divorced may also apply for services. In some circumstances, grandparents and caretakers of minor children may also be eligible for services.

Q: How do I apply for services?

A: If you are interested in services, you will be asked to complete a IV-D (pronounced "four-D") application. You must submit your application to the CSEA in the county where you live. If you are a parent who currently receives certain types of state assistance (i.e., Ohio Works First), your case may be referred automatically for services through CSEA.

Q: Are there services that a CSEA cannot provide?

A: Yes. A CSEA cannot:

- mediate visitation rights or disputes or become involved with custody disputes or changes in custody;
- collect or enforce property settlements or collect medical bills other than those that the court has previously ordered to be paid;

- determine who is entitled to claim a child on tax returns or help to locate estranged children; or
- act as your private attorney or personally represent you.

Q: Where can I get more information about child support issues?

A: The Ohio CSEA Directors' Association provides information on a variety of child support topics through its website at www.ocda.us (click on "Fact Sheets").

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Law You Can Use is a weekly consumer legal information column provided by the Ohio State Bar Association. This article was prepared by Amy Roehrenbeck, Esq., Senior Policy Analyst for the Ohio CSEA Directors' Association (OCDA).

Articles appearing in this column are intended to provide broad, general information about the law. Before applying this information to a specific legal problem, readers are urged to seek advice from an attorney.

