

Office of Child Support

State law requires the Office of Child Support (OCS) to provide services to all Vermonters with child support orders— unless all parties agree that support will be paid 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. There are two options:

1. Full OCS Services

This includes help to:

- ➔ Modify/enforce an order
- ➔ Establish parentage
- ➔ Locate a parent
- ➔ Assess a parent's ability to pay support
- ➔ Determine a parent's employment status

To get full OCS services, you must submit a completed *Application for Child Support Services*. All services are provided for free if you apply.

2. Limited OCS Services

Services are limited to the collection and distribution of child support. There is a \$5 monthly fee for services. You don't have to apply.

Can OCS help with matters related to custody, visitation or guardianship?

No. OCS cannot help you to establish or modify:

- ➔ Parental rights & responsibilities (*custody*)
- ➔ Parent-child contact (*visitation*)
- ➔ Guardianship

These decisions are made by the court. Consult your attorney or the Family Division of Superior Court if you need assistance.

Visitation & Child Support

- ➔ **Parents receiving support:**
You can't refuse to honor visitation because support is not paid.
- ➔ **Parents paying support:**
You can't refuse to pay support because visitation is not honored.

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

OCS Customer Service Unit

Phone: 1-800-786-3214

Email: OCSCSU@vermont.gov

OCS Regional Offices

Central Region

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

North Region

(Franklin & Grand Isle counties)
27 Federal Street, Suite 400
St. Albans, VT 05478 — (802) 527-5006

Northeast Region

(Caledonia, Lamoille & Orleans counties)
1153 Main Street, Suite 2
90 Prospect Street, Suite 301
St. Johnsbury, VT 05819 — (802) 751-2650

Northwest Region

(Chittenden county)
32 Cherry Street, Suite 310
Burlington, VT 05401 — (802) 863-7444

Southeast Region

(Windham & Windsor counties)
100 Mineral Street, Suite 202
Springfield, VT 05156 — (802) 536-1880

Southwest Region

(Addison, Bennington & Rutland counties)
420 Asa Bloomer State Office Building
4th Floor, 88 Merchants Row
Rutland, VT 05701 — (802) 786-5060



Guide for parents Understanding Your Child Support Order

 **VERMONT**
DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES
OFFICE OF CHILD SUPPORT

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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
- ➔ When, how often and how payments must be made

Amount To Be Paid

On page 2 of your order, you'll find:

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



Arrears To Be Paid

On page 3 of your order, you'll find the amount of any arrears owed to:

- ➔ The Office of Child Support (OCS)
- ➔ The parent receiving support (*obligee*)
- ➔ 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 or monthly).

Method of Payment

On page 4 of your order, you'll 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 through wage withholding:

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

Is wage withholding always used?

No. The court may waive wage withholding if:

- ➔ The paying parent has a history of being financially responsible
- ➔ Both parents ask the court to let them handle payments on their own

If the court authorizes direct payment, page 4 of your order will tell you where to send/make payments.

How does wage withholding work?

The employer:

1. Automatically deducts child support payments from the paying parent's paychecks — just like other deductions such as taxes
2. Forwards payments to OCS for processing and distribution

When does withholding start?

It can take several weeks to begin. Until then, the paying parent must either:

1. **Pay online:** go to EZpay4kids.vt.gov to pay by credit card, debit card or electronic check (24/7).
2. **Pay in person:** visit a regional OCS office to pay by credit card, debit card, cash or check.

3. **Pay by mail:** send a check or money order and a payment coupon to: Office of Child Support, PO Box 1310, Williston, VT 05495. Write the OCS case number & name of the parent getting support on the check/money order.
4. **Pay by phone:** call 1-800-786-3214 to pay by credit or debit card.

Duration of Support

Support typically 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, 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
- ➔ Court review of the support order, which either parent may request once every three years