

Can I get child support?

You can get child support if

- you have custody or the child lives with you,
- the other parent can be found, and
- a court orders child support.

If you're having trouble finding the other parent, the state can help. Call 1-800-228-5437.

How can I get child support?

You will need a court order to get child support. You can get help from

- your local Department of Social Services (1-800-228-5437);
- a Court Service Center (found in most courthouses);
- the Children's Law Line (1-888-529-3667); or
- the CT Women's Education and Legal Fund (1-800-479-2949).

How much support can I get?

The court uses guidelines from the state to figure out how much child support you should get.

First, the court looks at the parents' **combined net weekly income**, which is the total amount both parents take home in their pay each week.

For example, if each parent takes home \$500 per week, then their **combined net weekly income** is \$1,000.

Then the court uses the guidelines to figure out the **basic child support obligation**, which is the percentage of the parents' total income that should be used to support the children.

The **basic child support obligation** for parents earning \$1,000 per week is

- \$229 (or about 23%) of the combined net weekly income for 1 child,
- \$322 (or about 32%) for 2 children, and
- \$385 (or about 39%) for 3 children.

The percentages used in this example are for parents earning \$1,000 per week, and they will be different for parents who earn more or less than \$1,000. More about the guidelines can be found on the CT Judicial Branch website.



Next, the court looks at **how much each parent contributes** to the combined net weekly income.

Since the parents in our example take home the same amount of money each week, they each contribute 50% of the combined net weekly income. In this example, each parent would be responsible for 50% of the costs to raise the children. So the parent who has to pay child support would pay 50% of the **basic child support obligation**, or **half of**

- \$229 for 1 child,
- \$322 for 2 children, and
- \$385 for 3 children.

▶ The court may order more support for health expenses or child care.

Please remember that this is just an example. The cost of child support will depend on each parent's income and situation.

What if the other parent and I agree on an amount?

You will still need a court order or the agreement can't be enforced.

Call 1-800-228-5437
for help getting the other parent to pay.

Important! Keep records of any payments you get. If you have not been keeping track of child support payments, start now.

Can I get child support for the past?

Yes, as long as the other parent was able to afford to pay child support during that time. This is called *retroactive child support*, and the court can only order payment

- for up to three years in the past, or
- to the child’s birth date if the child is under the age of 3.

What if the other parent does not pay the support that the court ordered?

Call Child Support Enforcement at 1-800-228-5437 to get help collecting the child support you are owed. Child Support Enforcement can help collect support in different ways, including taking the money from the other parent’s paycheck, tax refund, and bank account. It can also

- bring the other parent to court for not obeying a court order (*contempt of court*),
- put a lien on the other parent’s property,
- report the other parent to credit bureaus, and
- stop the other parent from getting a passport.

Can I get the child support amount changed?

Yes, but you will need a new court order. A court might give you a new order if there was a big change to your income, the other parent’s income, or to other circumstances that involve the child. Here are two ways you can ask the court to change the amount:

- ▶ **Get help from Support Enforcement Services (SES).** Ask SES to look at your support order. You can get a form online at www.jud.ct.gov/childsupport or by calling the Child Support Hotline at 1-800-228-5437. SES will ask the court to change the order if it finds the court order is too low or too high.
- ▶ **Do it yourself.** You will have to file court papers asking for a *Modification*. You can get help at a Court Service Center (in most courthouses). You can get the pamphlet, *How to Change Your Child Support Order*, at a Court Service Center or online. **Note:** You may get a court date faster if you file the paperwork on your own. But you may want to call SES to find out.

The court can **increase** or **decrease** the support amount, so you should talk with a lawyer first. Call the Children’s Law Line at 1-888-529-3667 for more information.

Can the other parent get visitation or custody?

Yes. Even if there are problems collecting support, both parents have the right to ask for visitation and custody.

Will my contact information be given to the other parent?

No. Child Support Enforcement will only use your information to get, change, or enforce the support order. If you are worried about your safety or the safety of your children, tell the people you speak with not to share your information.

Can I still get child support if I get state cash assistance?

Yes, but you won’t get all of your child support. Each month you will get

- the full amount of your state cash assistance, and
- \$50 of each child support payment (the state will get the rest).

You will get *all* of your child support when you stop getting cash assistance.

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