

Georgia Department of Human Resources

OFFICE OF CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT

Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) services are available to Georgia parents who need assistance. The custodial parent may apply at the OCSE office that serves his/her county. There is an application fee of \$25 (free for recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families). The custodial parent is asked to furnish legal documents, if available, and information about the non-custodial parent.

OCSE's budget for state fiscal year 2005 is \$68.6 million, including \$52.9 million in federal funds and \$15.7 million in state funds.

Child support services include:

- Locating non-custodial parents;
- Establishing paternity;
- Establishing and enforcing child support orders;
- Establishing and enforcing medical support orders;
- Collecting and distributing support payments.

Recent customer service improvements:

- Custodial and non-custodial parents may now enter and receive information about their case and apply for services through an expanded Internet portal, using a password to protect confidentiality.
- All Georgia child support recipients now receive regular payments through direct deposit or debit cards. This has eliminated the problems of checks lost, stolen, or returned because the recipient moved with no forwarding address; shortened the time between collection and distribution; and saved an estimated \$6 million per year in postage, printing and staff time.

Collection and enforcement tools available to OCSE:

- Withholding child support from paychecks or unemployment benefits;
- Intercepting federal and/or state income tax refunds to pay child support arrears;
- Garnishing workers' compensation benefits;
- Reporting parents owing more than \$1,000 in child support payments to credit bureaus;
- Suspending or revoking driver's, professional or occupational licenses for failure to pay child support;
- Reviewing and modifying child support orders periodically;
- Intercepting lottery winnings of more than \$5,000;
- Filing contempt of court actions which may result in a jail sentence if the non-custodial parent is found in contempt of court;
- Filing liens and levy on tangible or intangible property;
- Seizing bank accounts after notice.

Collections and distribution:

- Georgia distributed \$549 million to child support recipients in FY 2004.
- Of the \$549 million distributed in FY 2004, \$7.4 million was collected from intercepted state tax refunds, \$30 million from federal tax refunds, \$3.3 million from unemployment compensation benefits, \$40,656 from lottery winnings and \$34.3 million in payments by the Family Support Registry to parents whose case was not established by OCSE.
- In July 1999, the Family Support Registry began processing child support payments made by payroll deduction. The Registry, required by federal law, gives employers a central destination for all support payments.
- Since 2000, Georgia has collected \$2.5 billion in child support payments.

Caseload:

- OCSE has 481,718 cases in Georgia.
- The cases represent 516,000 children.
- Twenty-four percent of all children under 18 in Georgia have a case with OCSE.
- Georgia child support agents have an average caseload of 641 cases each.

Parents under court order to pay child support through OCSE:

- 344,308 in Georgia;
- About 50 percent of those who owe child support in Georgia pay;
- About 95 percent of non-custodial parents owing child support in Georgia are fathers.

Fatherhood Program:

The Fatherhood Program helps non-custodial parents paying child support through OCSE who lack the ability to do so adequately because they are unemployed or underemployed. The program offers job counseling and placement assistance, vocational training, educational assistance and classes on parenting, job interviewing and financial management.

Child Access and Visitation Program:

The Child Access and Visitation Program helps non-custodial parents who want visitation with their children. Research has shown that payment of child support is related to parent-child contact, and that the father's involvement improves children's development and self-esteem. The non-custodial parent must have an active case with OCSE or MAXIMUS Child Support Services to be eligible for the program.

OCSE does not:

- Help anyone get a divorce;
- Find custodial parents;
- Take legal action about visitation rights or custody;
- Enforce court-ordered payment of unpaid bills not related to child support payments;
- Help legitimize children.

Child Support Hotline:

- In the 404, 678 or 770 area codes, call 404-463-8800.
- In the 229, 478, 706 and 912 area codes, call 800-227-7993.