



Getting Help from the Office of Child Support Enforcement Fact Sheet

Introduction

Every child living in Arkansas has a legal right to the financial support of both parents, even if the parents are divorced, separated, or were never married.

Help from the Office of Child Support Enforcement (OSCE) is for any parent or person with custody of a child under age 18 or still in high school that needs help to:

- establish a child support court order
- establish medical support order for the child
- collect support payments from the noncustodial parent

Relatives or other caretakers who have physical custody of a child are also entitled to child support services. Services to noncustodial parents are limited to a review and modification of their existing order. There are no income eligibility requirements or restrictions to apply for services.

One Parent Living out of State

Even if you or the other parent live in another state, you can apply for services in Arkansas. However, if you already have a child support case open in the state in which you reside, contact the child support agency in that state to learn if it has requested help from the state of Arkansas. If you do not have an active child support case, you may want to apply for services in the state where you live.

While you can apply directly with the Arkansas OCSE, you should be aware that you might be required to travel to Arkansas to attend court hearings. Individuals receiving cash public assistance or Medicaid benefits from another state may not apply for the services of the OCSE in Arkansas.

Opening Cases with the OSCE

If you are not currently receiving Transitional Employment Assistance (TEA) or Medicaid services through the Department of Human Services, you must apply. Applications are available at your local OCSE office, or you may call (501) 682-8398 to request that an application be sent to you. More information is at the website below.

dfa.arkansas.gov/offices/childSupport/Pages/default.aspx

Reopening Cases

You will need to complete and return an application for services, along with the required \$25 fee.

Costs

The OCSE recovers part of the actual costs of services from both custodial and noncustodial parents who are in neither the TEA nor Medicaid program. Costs include the legal work done by attorneys of the OSCE, establishing paternity, and costs of locating a noncustodial parent.

The costs may be deducted from the child support payment before it is sent to you or may be collected from the noncustodial parent. A fee schedule is provided in the Custodial Parent Application Form and the Noncustodial Parent Application Form. For more information on costs and fees for OCSE services visit:

dfa.arkansas.gov/offices/childSupport/resources/Pages/CostsandFees.aspx

Paying the OSCE

If you are currently receiving TEA or IV-E Foster Care, or if you and your child are on Medicaid, your case is automatically referred to the OCSE if there is a noncustodial parent.

If only your child is on Medicaid or ARKids First, you can have child support services provided by the OCSE. There are no fees charged for these types of cases.

If you are not receiving public assistance, then there is a non-refundable fee of \$25 to process your application and open your case. A separate application plus \$25 is required for each noncustodial parent.

This fact sheet is a collaboration of the Center for Arkansas Legal Services and Legal Aid of Arkansas, Inc. These nonprofit organizations provide free legal assistance to eligible Arkansans who meet income, asset, and other guidelines. Legal assistance may also include advice and counsel, brief services, or full representation depending on the situation. For more information about civil legal aid in Arkansas, please visit arlegalservices.org. For information specific to Legal Aid of Arkansas, Inc., visit arlegalaid.org. Apply for services online or by calling 1-800-9-LAW-AID (1-800-952-9243).

The information and statements of law in this fact sheet should not be considered legal advice. This fact sheet is provided as a broad guide to help you understand how certain legal matters are handled in general. Courts may interpret the law differently. Before you take action, talk to an attorney and follow his or her advice. Always do what the court tells you to do.

**Content provided by:
Legal Aid of Arkansas, Inc.**

Updated March 2017