



Helping Families 101:



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Child Support

How much child support is distributed in Michigan each year?

Non-custodial parents pay about \$1.4 billion in child support each year.

How many children receive child support?

More than 560,000 children are entitled to receive child support; of those, about 70 percent receive some payments. For those children that received some payments, the average monthly payment is almost \$250 and they received payments for an average of eight and a half months in the year.

Can non-custodial parents who don't pay child support have parenting time?

Yes. Child support payments and parenting time are enforced separately. A custodial parent cannot withhold parenting time when payments are not received. A non-custodial parent cannot stop payments if parenting time is not honored.

Children need the financial and emotional support of both parents at all times, regardless of who may be deemed "at fault" when court orders are not followed. The court determines the remedy; not the parents.

Can a parent receive child support if they receive public assistance?

A person receiving public assistance must cooperate with child support efforts to collect from the non-custodial parent. This is achieved by providing information to help locate or identify the non-custodial parent and cooperating with the court in establishing paternity and/or support. While the parent is actively receiving cash assistance the collections are assigned to the state as reimbursement for the public assistance received.

In FY 2009, more than \$89 million was collected as reimbursement to the state and federal government for public assistance.

Are there federal incentives to the state for collecting child support?

Counties and the state receive performance incentives from the federal government when they meet specific performance standards. This money must be reinvested in the child support program to meet the core requirements of the program.

Counties and the state earn about \$27 million per year in performance incentives. That money goes entirely into supporting the administrative costs of operating the program, reducing the need for county and state funding.

more



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Child Support *(cont'd)*

Do custodial and non-custodial parents need to update information with the Friend of the Court after they have a court order?

Yes. It is important that both custodial and non-custodial parents keep the Friend of the Court updated on any changes to their personal information. Updated addresses are especially important.

Thousands of child support dollars go unclaimed every year because contact information is not updated.

When can child support payments end?

Child support debt is owed and collected until the obligation has been fully paid regardless of the child's age.

More than \$400 million in past-due child support is collected each year.

Who is a child's legal father?

If the mother was married when the child was born, her husband is the legal father until a judge decides he isn't the legal father, even if the biological father is someone other than her husband.

If a judge decides the husband is not the father, the judge may also make a legal ruling that makes the biological father the legal father.

Who is impacted when a non-custodial parent doesn't make payments?

First and foremost, the child. Studies show that child support affects child well-being in many ways. Children receiving child support do better in school and experience less child poverty.

The largest group in Michigan's child support program is families leaving welfare. Research shows that families who receive child support are more likely to leave public assistance and less likely to return. For example, 45 percent of child support cases in Michigan from 2004 to 2009 included families that formerly received welfare.