CALIFORNIA
CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES

Understanding the Enforcement Process:

California

January 2026 Child Support Forum

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The Enforcement Process

- In California, the enforcement of child support is managed by local offices called local child support agencies (LCSA), of which there are 47.
- Cases are assigned to an office based on the debtor's county of residence.
- A case specialist in the county will review the application for service and contact the debtor to discuss the case and next steps.
- California has a judicial system. The LCSA will submit the foreign order to the court for recognition and enforcement.
- The debtor has the opportunity to object to recognition of the order as well as to disagree with the amount of accrued past due support.

The Enforcement Process

- Once the decision has been recognized, the obligation is entered into our system of record and enforcement actions are established.
- The amount of past due support is determined at the time of recognition.
- These actions include requesting voluntary payments from the debtor and/or issuing an order to withhold income from the employer.
- If payments are not made, then additional enforcement actions such as liens or levies can be issued against private property or other assets.
- California maintains the financial records for the case, including collections and distributions to the parties.
- California will commonly be in touch periodically to update case balances and currency conversion rates.

Maintenance Claims and Priority

- If there are multiple enforcement claims for a single debtor, the ongoing obligations for children under the age of 18 are given priority in the distribution of funds.

Ongoing Enforcement of Maintenance Decisions

- The California Central Authority receives, reviews, and assigns the application to a local child support office.
- The central authority personnel are subject matter experts on the processing of Hague Convention applications and act as liaisons to assist in resolving case management issues between two countries.
- The central authority provides training and ongoing support for our local child support offices.

Exemptions from Costs?

- The California Department of Child Support Services does not charge families for child support services.

Advantages of the California Enforcement Process

- The California Department of Child Support Services has an automated statewide case management and enforcement system that contains the record of all cases within the state. Case specialists from any local office can view case information for any case within the state. This includes current location data, enforcement actions, financial transactions, actions other child support obligations.
- The department maintains communication with state and local partners to automatically issue enforcement actions, freeing our case specialists to focus on difficult cases.
- The system of record is connected to other state agencies, via the federal case registry, to avoid duplication of enforcement actions across the US.
- The department maintains a secure website for parents or legal guardians to request services, make payments, and access case information from anywhere in the world.
- California family courts accept electronic service from our case management system which reduces paperwork delays and allows for quicker response times for families.

Disadvantages of the California Enforcement Process

- Before enforcement can begin, judicial recognition of a decision requires positive debtor location information in to serve the documents.
- Automated locate tools require US social security numbers, limiting enforcement actions against obligors.
- Due to the number of child support cases in California, enforcement actions are generalized across the state and not specific to each individual case.

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Questions?

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Thank you!

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