

ADMINISTRATIVE



The Child Support Program establishes paternity and child support obligations administratively. These orders have the same force and effect as a court order.

An administrative action starts by serving a notice on the parent who owes or may owe support. Genetic testing is used when paternity needs to be established. We ask both parents for financial and other information needed to determine the child support amount. Based on the information provided by the parents and the Florida Child Support Guidelines, we calculate the amount of child support to be ordered and mail both parents a proposed order.

Parents can agree to the proposed order, provide additional information, meet with us or request a hearing.

A final support order that includes an income deduction order is issued and filed with the Clerk of Court. The order is mailed to the parents with instructions on how to make payments.



PATERNITY

Children with unmarried parents need to have paternity established before support can be ordered.

Establishing paternity identifies a child's legal father.

Florida allows parents to establish paternity voluntarily at the hospital when the child is born or any time after leaving the hospital by signing a voluntary acknowledgment of paternity.

If paternity is not acknowledged, it is established administratively or by going to court. We use genetic testing to determine who is the biological father. Genetic test samples are collected in our offices and sent to a lab for testing.

The final step in establishing paternity is updating the child's birth certificate with the father's name at the Bureau of Vital Statistics.

ESTABLISHING A CHILD SUPPORT ORDER

The first step in a child support case is establishing a support order. We work with families and partners to help children get the support they need and deserve.

A child support order sets the amount of support a parent is required to pay. The order can also establish paternity, and require health insurance and payment of medical expenses. Support orders can be changed as the circumstances of the parents and child change.

Orders are established and changed administratively and by going to court. Other child support agencies may be involved when one parent lives in another state or country.

ORDER MODIFICATION

A child support order may need to be changed to reflect

the current circumstances of the parents and child. Either parent can ask us to review their support order or they can try to modify the order themselves if circumstances have changed. The Child Support Program collects information on the change of circumstances and financial information from the parents to determine if the Program should attempt to modify the order. Orders are modified administratively and by going to



COURT



The Child Support Program partners with public and private attorneys and the Clerks of Court to establish court orders for paternity and child support.

A court action begins when the Program's attorney files a petition in circuit court and it is served on the parent who owes or may owe support. Information provided by the parents is used to calculate the amount of child support to be ordered under the Florida Child Support Guidelines.

A hearing is held, and the court issues a support order that includes an order requiring the parent's employer to deduct child support payments automatically from the parent's income. The order provides the parents with instructions on how to pay their child support.