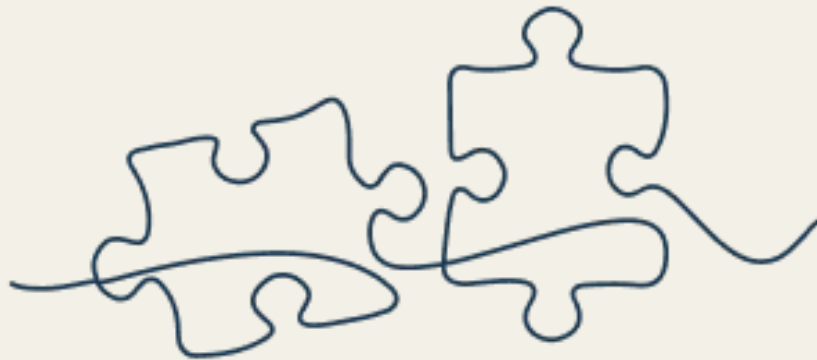


Your Ex Isn't Paying Child Support: A 50-State Guide to Child Support Services





When state enforcement may help, what these agencies actually do, and where to start before automatically calling your divorce lawyer

When a former spouse stops paying the full amount of court-ordered child support, many parents assume their only option is to go back to their divorce attorney. But there is another route that often gets overlooked: state child support services.

Every state operates a public child support program under the federal Title IV-D system. Although the structure differs—some programs are highly centralized while others are administered through counties or courts—the core functions commonly include establishing and enforcing child support orders, collecting and distributing payments, locating parents and establishing parentage. Income withholding is one of the principal ways child support is collected.

That doesn't mean every state agency works equally quickly, or that state enforcement is the right answer for every post-divorce dispute.

But if the problem is essentially: “There is already an order. My ex isn’t paying it. I don’t want to hire my lawyer again if I don’t have to.” your state’s child support program may be a very reasonable place to start.

My Next Chapter’s existing guidance emphasizes both sides of this equation: child support is highly state-specific but creating clear mechanisms for how support gets paid—including direct deposit or an Income Withholding Order—can help prevent future conflict.



First: What Can State Child Support Services Usually Do?

The details and enforcement thresholds vary, but state programs may be able to help with:

- collecting and distributing child support
- issuing or implementing income withholding
- maintaining an official payment and arrears record
- locating a parent or employer
- establishing parentage and support when an order does not yet exist
- enforcing an existing order
- intercepting certain tax refunds or other funds when arrears qualify
- pursuing liens, license-related remedies or other administrative enforcement available under state law
- reviewing an order for possible modification under the state's rules
- coordinating cases when parents live in different states

What they generally are not: your personal divorce attorney.

The agency represents the state's child-support program and administers the support case. It usually will not litigate every provision of your divorce agreement, resolve a custody disagreement, decide whether an ambiguous expense is reimbursable, or develop a broader post-divorce strategy for you.

That distinction matters.



New York: Why This Can Be Worth Trying

The My Next Chapter Community discussion that prompted this guide came from a New York member whose ex was not paying the full support required by their agreement and was refusing to engage.

Another member strongly recommended New York's child support services based on her own experience. Once wage withholding was put in place, she said the support came through the system rather than requiring her to continually deal with her co-parent.

For a high-conflict co-parenting relationship, that can be a significant benefit: you are no longer personally acting as the bill collector.

New York provides a particularly useful illustration of what state enforcement can do.

When an eligible New York child-support order is payable through the Support Collection Unit, child-support authorities can use administrative enforcement measures without requiring a new court hearing for each action. New York lists remedies that can include increased withholding toward arrears, state and federal tax-refund offsets, financial-asset enforcement, credit reporting, driver's-license suspension and other measures, depending on the amount and circumstances of the arrears. Judicial enforcement remains available when necessary.

For New York City parents, the Office of Child Support Services, or OCSS, collects and sends payments after an order is in place and provides services to both custodial and noncustodial parents. It expressly notes that it does not handle custody or visitation, although it can connect parents with other resources.

The MNC Member Lens

What worked: Wage withholding removed recurring arguments about payment and created a third-party payment system.

What My Next Chapter Legal Expert Renee Bauer cautions:

Support enforcement is absolutely an option and may be a good place to start, but experience with government agencies can be frustrating and results vary. Cases involving public benefits may also interact with the state system differently.

Those two observations aren't contradictory. The state system can be extremely useful when the problem fits what the system is designed to solve.

Is Your Problem an Enforcement Problem—or Something Else?

Before deciding where to go, identify what is actually wrong.

Your situation	State child support services may be a good first stop?
The order says \$1,500 and your ex is sending \$1,000	Often yes. This is primarily an enforcement/arrears issue.
Your ex has stopped paying entirely	Often yes.
Payments arrive unpredictably and you want wage withholding	Often yes.
Your ex changed jobs and payments stopped	Often yes. The agency may be able to locate employment and implement withholding.
Your ex says income fell and unilaterally reduced payments	Worth contacting the agency, but modification rules may also become important.
You disagree about what the divorce agreement means	Maybe not enough. This may require legal interpretation.
Your ex refuses to reimburse extracurricular expenses	Depends. These may not be part of the state's basic collection function.
You want to change custody or parenting time	Usually no. That's a separate family-law issue.
You believe income is being hidden through a business, bonuses or complex compensation	Consider legal advice. State enforcement may not replace individualized financial/legal work.

The 50-State Child Support Services Guide

How to read the chart

All states operate Title IV-D child-support programs, but who you actually interact with varies. The federal Intergovernmental Reference Guide tracks state program structures, including whether states primarily use administrative procedures, court procedures or a combination.

“Full IV-D services” below generally means: establishment/parentage where needed, payment collection and distribution, income withholding, enforcement and arrears management, interstate assistance, and some mechanism for review or modification. The exact eligibility rules, enforcement thresholds and procedures vary.

The “What to know” column is intentionally more useful than a state ranking. There is no reliable national apples-to-apples measure showing that one state’s child-support agency is universally “better” than another. County, caseworker, court and case complexity can significantly affect individual experiences.

State	Who to Contact	How the System Is Organized	Typical Scope	What to Know
Alabama	Alabama Child Support Enforcement / Department of Human Resources	State program with local offices	Full IV-D services	Start with the state/local child-support office for straightforward nonpayment or arrears.
Alaska	Child Support Services Division, Department of Revenue	Primarily statewide	Full IV-D services	A centralized agency can be a logical first stop when an existing order isn't being paid.
Arizona	Division of Child Support Services, Department of Economic Security	Statewide	Full IV-D services	Particularly relevant for collection, withholding and arrears rather than custody disputes.
Arkansas	Office of Child Support Enforcement	Statewide/local offices	Full IV-D services	Ask specifically whether your existing order is already registered for state collection.
California	California Child Support Services / Local Child Support Agency	County-administered under a statewide system	Full IV-D services	Your experience may depend partly on the county; California also provides an ombudsperson/complaint process for agency-service issues.
Colorado	Colorado Child Support Services	Largely county-based	Full IV-D services	County administration means timelines and process can vary geographically.
Connecticut	Department of Social Services, Office of Child Support Services; Judicial Branch Support Enforcement Services	State + judicial hybrid	Collection, establishment and enforcement	You may interact with both an administrative agency and Judicial Branch services depending on what needs to happen.
Delaware	Division of Child Support Services	Statewide	Full IV-D services	Good place to investigate a clear payment or arrears problem before assuming private litigation is required.
Florida	Florida Department of Revenue Child Support Program	Statewide	Full IV-D services	Child-support enforcement and parenting-time disputes are separate issues.
Georgia	Division of Child Support Services, Department of Human Services	Statewide	Full IV-D services	Administrative enforcement may provide an alternative to direct parent-to-parent collection.
Hawaii	Child Support Enforcement Agency, Department of the Attorney General	Statewide	Full IV-D services	Begin there for collection/enforcement questions.
Idaho	Idaho Child Support Services	Statewide	Full IV-D services	Ask whether the agency can take over payment processing and enforcement of your current order.
Illinois	Child Support Services, Department of Healthcare and Family Services	Statewide	Full IV-D services	Available beyond families receiving public assistance; useful for payment processing and enforcement.
Indiana	Child Support Bureau / local county child-support offices	State + county hybrid	Full IV-D services	Local prosecutors/counties play an important role, so the path may feel more local than in centralized states.
Iowa	Iowa Child Support Services	Statewide	Full IV-D services	State services can address collection and enforcement without necessarily returning first to private divorce counsel.
Kansas	Kansas Child Support Services, Department for Children and Families	State/regional system	Full IV-D services	Ask the program which regional office or contractor is responsible for your case.
Kentucky	Kentucky Child Support Enforcement	State/local network	Full IV-D services	Local offices/county involvement can affect where you start.



State	Who to Contact	How the System Is Organized	Typical Scope	What to Know
Louisiana	Child Support Enforcement Services, Department of Children & Family Services	Statewide	Full IV-D services	Appropriate first inquiry for unpaid current support or accumulating arrears.
Maine	Division of Support Enforcement and Recovery	Statewide	Full IV-D services	Maine's program is specifically structured around support enforcement and recovery.
Maryland	Child Support Administration, Department of Human Services	Statewide with local offices	Full IV-D services	Local offices administer cases within the state framework.
Massachusetts	Department of Revenue Child Support Services	Statewide	Full IV-D services	A relatively centralized route for collecting and enforcing established support.
Michigan	Office of Child Support + county Friend of the Court	Strong state/court/county hybrid	Full IV-D services	Members may deal with both the state and the local Friend of the Court; know which part of the system owns your issue.
Minnesota	Child Support Services / county and tribal agencies	County-administered	Full IV-D services	Individual experience may differ by county; begin with the agency handling your county case.
Mississippi	Mississippi Child Support Program / Department of Human Services	Statewide	Full IV-D services	Worth exploring for clear nonpayment, income withholding and arrears.
Missouri	Family Support Division – Child Support	Statewide	Full IV-D services	Administrative collection may reduce the need for repeated direct payment requests.
Montana	Child Support Services Division	Statewide	Full IV-D services	Start here when the support amount is established but isn't being paid as ordered.
Nebraska	Child Support Services, Department of Health and Human Services	Statewide with court/local involvement	Full IV-D services	Some enforcement actions may involve the courts even though the agency administers the case.
Nevada	Child Support Enforcement Program	State/local hybrid	Full IV-D services	Depending on location, county district-attorney offices can play a significant role.
New Hampshire	Division of Child Support Services	Statewide	Full IV-D services	A straightforward collection problem is generally a better agency fit than a dispute over agreement language.
New Jersey	Office of Child Support Services / NJ Child Support	State + county/court system	Full IV-D services	Payment processing is centralized, while court/county involvement remains important for some actions.
New Mexico	Child Support Services Division, Health Care Authority	Statewide	Full IV-D services	Note the agency's newer Health Care Authority structure when searching older resources.
New York	NY Child Support Services; NYC residents: OCSS	Statewide with county/local support units; NYC has OCSS	Full IV-D services plus significant administrative enforcement	Member report: wage withholding eliminated recurring payment conflict; individual results vary.
North Carolina	North Carolina Child Support Services	County/local administration within state system	Full IV-D services	County-level differences can matter, so another parent's experience may not mirror yours.
North Dakota	North Dakota Child Support	State/regional	Full IV-D services	Contact the program serving your region for enforcement of an existing order.



State	Who to Contact	How the System Is Organized	Typical Scope	What to Know
Ohio	Office of Child Support / County Child Support Enforcement Agency (CSEA)	County-administered	Full IV-D services	Your county CSEA is often the practical first call.
Oklahoma	Oklahoma Child Support Services, Department of Human Services	Statewide	Full IV-D services	State administration can be useful when income withholding or arrears enforcement is the primary objective.
Oregon	Division of Child Support, Department of Justice	Statewide with local DA participation	Full IV-D services	Depending on the case, either DOJ or a local district-attorney child-support office may be involved.
Pennsylvania	Bureau of Child Support Enforcement + county Domestic Relations Sections	Strong county/court model	Full IV-D services	Start with your county Domestic Relations Section; experiences can vary significantly by county.
Rhode Island	Office of Child Support Services	Statewide	Full IV-D services	State office is the primary entry point for enforcement and collection.
South Carolina	Child Support Services Division, Department of Social Services	Statewide	Full IV-D services	Appropriate first inquiry for support that is ordered but not arriving.
South Dakota	Division of Child Support	Statewide	Full IV-D services	Ask about payment processing and withholding before relying on direct payments between parents.
Tennessee	Child Support Services, Department of Human Services	State system delivered through district/local offices	Full IV-D services	Which local office or contractor handles the matter may depend on where the case is located.
Texas	Child Support Division, Office of the Attorney General	Highly centralized statewide system	Full IV-D services	Strong distinction between support enforcement and visitation/custody issues; the agency is not your private attorney.
Utah	Office of Recovery Services – Child Support Services	Statewide	Full IV-D services	ORS can be the natural first stop for collection and enforcement of an existing support obligation.
Vermont	Office of Child Support, Department for Children and Families	Statewide	Full IV-D services	Centralized program; contact OCS for an existing-order enforcement question.
Virginia	Division of Child Support Enforcement, Department of Social Services	Statewide	Full IV-D services	Particularly useful for established obligations where collection is the principal problem.
Washington	Division of Child Support, DSHS	Statewide	Full IV-D services	Washington has a substantial administrative child-support system, so many support issues start with the agency.
West Virginia	Bureau for Child Support Enforcement	Statewide	Full IV-D services	Begin with BCSE for support collection, arrears and enforcement questions.
Wisconsin	Wisconsin Child Support Program / county child-support agencies	County-administered	Full IV-D services	Your county agency is typically the practical starting point, and responsiveness may differ locally.
Wyoming	Child Support Program, Department of Family Services	State/local offices	Full IV-D services	Contact the program serving the county where the case is administered.

Also: Washington, D.C.

The District of Columbia's IV-D agency is the Office of the Attorney General's Child Support Services Division. The federal 2026 profile describes D.C.'s system as primarily judicial, meaning court proceedings play a greater role in establishment, modification and contempt matters than they do in some more administrative states.

A Better Question Than “Is My State’s Program Good?”

It’s tempting to ask whether New York is “better” at child-support enforcement than Connecticut, California or Pennsylvania.

But that comparison can be misleading.

A member with an ex who has a regular W-2 job and simply stopped paying presents a very different enforcement problem from a member whose former spouse owns several businesses, is self-employed, receives irregular bonuses or disputes what the divorce agreement requires.

Likewise, someone dealing with a centralized statewide agency may have a very different experience from someone whose case is administered by an individual county.

A better assessment is:

1. Is there already a clear child-support order?

If yes, the state agency has something concrete to enforce.

2. Is the problem nonpayment—or interpretation?

Nonpayment: “He owes \$2,000 and sent \$1,200.”

That’s the kind of problem a child-support enforcement system is designed to address.

Interpretation: “Our agreement says we share ‘reasonable extracurricular expenses.’ Does travel hockey count?”

That’s more likely to require negotiation, mediation or legal advice.

3. Does the paying parent have identifiable income?

Income withholding can be extremely effective when someone receives a regular paycheck. Federal child-support materials identify employer income withholding as the source of most child-support payments.

Collection can become more complicated when income comes from self-employment, cash businesses, variable compensation or harder-to-trace assets.

4. Do you mainly want enforcement—or individualized strategy?

State services can enforce support.

Your attorney represents **you**.

Those are different jobs.



What Residents Say: How MNC Should Use Member Feedback

We would **not recommend giving states star ratings** based on online reviews.

People are most likely to publicly review government agencies when something has gone wrong, and the experience of one county office may say very little about another.

Instead, MNC can build something more useful over time: **real member experience layered onto verified state information.**

For Example...

New York

Member experience: Wage withholding worked extremely well and reduced direct interaction with a high-conflict co-parent.

Expert perspective: Renee recommends considering support enforcement, while cautioning that depending on the state and case, relying on an agency can sometimes be frustrating.

California

Member experience: MNC feedback needed.

Useful question for members: Did your local child-support agency successfully implement withholding or recover arrears? How long did the process take?

Pennsylvania

Member experience: MNC feedback needed.

Useful question: Because cases run through county Domestic Relations Sections, which county were you in and how responsive was the process?

Connecticut

Member experience: MNC feedback needed.

Useful question: Did you work primarily with DSS, Judicial Support Enforcement Services or your own attorney—and what made you choose that route?

This turns the Community into something more useful than anonymous internet reviews: **a growing state-specific knowledge base from people actually navigating divorce and post-divorce enforcement.**



Before You Contact Child Support Services

Have a few things ready.

Your support order or final divorce judgment.

Find the exact provision establishing child support.

Your payment history.

Create a simple month-by-month record showing what was due and what you actually received.

For Example:

Month	Ordered	Received	Difference
May	\$1,800	\$1,800	\$0
June	\$1,800	\$1,200	\$600
July	\$1,800	\$900	\$900
August	\$1,800	\$0	\$1,800
Potential arrears			\$3,300

Don't assume your own calculation is the agency's official arrears calculation, but this gives you a clear starting point.

Any existing case or account number.

If support already runs through a state disbursement system, you may already have a child-support case.

Employment information you have for the paying parent.

Employer name, recent employment changes and other available information can be useful.

Relevant written communication.

Keep it factual. You don't need to assemble every argument you've ever had about money.

6 Questions to Ask the State Agency

When you contact the agency, try asking:

1. Can you enforce the child-support order I already have?
2. Do I need to open a case, or is my order already in your system?
3. Can support be collected through income withholding?
4. Can you calculate and maintain the official arrears balance?
5. What enforcement measures may be available if payments continue to be missed?
6. What issues would require me to return to court or obtain private legal counsel?

Those questions should tell you fairly quickly whether the state system fits the problem you're trying to solve.

When It May Be Time to Bring Your Lawyer Back In

State enforcement can be powerful, but it doesn't eliminate the need for lawyers in more complicated cases.

Consider individualized legal advice when:

- The parties disagree about what the judgment actually requires
- The unpaid amount includes expenses outside basic child support
- Income or assets may be hidden
- The paying parent is self-employed or has unusually complicated compensation
- One parent is trying to modify the support amount
- Substantial arrears have accumulated and administrative enforcement hasn't worked
- The dispute crosses state or international boundaries in a complicated way
- Enforcement has become intertwined with other provisions of the divorce judgment
- You need a court to make a decision the agency cannot make

And remember: a paying parent generally should not simply decide to reduce court-ordered support because their circumstances changed.

A change in circumstances may support a request for modification—but modification and enforcement are different processes, and state-specific rules matter.



The Bottom Line

If your ex isn't paying child support, your choices aren't necessarily:
Keep chasing them yourself or Hire your divorce lawyer again immediately.

There may be a third option sitting between the two: **your state's child-support services program.**

For a relatively straightforward enforcement problem—especially when there is already a clear order and identifiable employment—state services may be able to collect payments, implement income withholding, track arrears and pursue enforcement while reducing the amount of direct financial interaction between co-parents.

For complicated disputes, state enforcement may be one tool rather than the entire solution.

The key is to figure out **what kind of problem you have first.** If it's:
“The order is clear. The money isn't coming.”

Child support services may be a very good place to start.

MNC Resource Note

Because child-support programs, agency names, procedures and enforcement thresholds change, My Next Chapter should treat the 50-state chart as a **living resource** and review it periodically. The federal Office of Child Support Services' Intergovernmental Reference Guide provides current state program profiles and is a strong source for ongoing updates. This guide is for educational and planning purposes only and is not legal advice. Child-support enforcement, modification procedures, agency responsibilities and available remedies vary by state and individual circumstances. Contact the child-support agency or a family-law attorney in your state for guidance about your particular case.