

INFORMATION ON CHILD SUPPORT PAYMENTS PLACED ON HOLD

When DOR receives a child support payment, we apply the payment first to current support due for the month, and apply any remaining amounts toward past-due support (also called “arrears”). In some circumstances payments are placed on hold for a certain period of time. Generally, child support payments may be placed on hold:

- To allow a parent to request a review of an enforcement action;
- If a payment is \$5,000 or over and is made by check;
- If previous checks have been returned for insufficient funds;
- If we do not have the customer’s address; or
- If the amount received is more than the amount owed.

Payments Collected Through Enforcement Measures

When DOR takes an enforcement action to collect past-due child support, any money collected goes on hold for a certain number of days. The purpose of the hold period is to comply with state and federal law requiring DOR to give the noncustodial parent an opportunity to request a review of an enforcement action. The following are the hold periods that apply to payments received as a result of various enforcement measures:

- **45 days:** Payments received from the intercept of all Massachusetts state tax refunds, federal tax refunds if the noncustodial parent filed an individual return, federal tax refunds if the noncustodial parent filed a joint return and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has informed DOR that any non-debtor spouse claim has been resolved, and insurance proceeds. Additionally, if we levy the noncustodial parent’s bank account, the total period of time from the date the bank receives our levy to the date DOR releases the payments is approximately 45 days. This is because the bank “freezes” the account for 21 days after receiving our levy and then DOR puts an additional hold on the payment after we receive it, for a total of approximately 45 days.
- **180 days:** Payments received from the intercept of a federal tax refund if the noncustodial parent filed a joint return with someone else and DOR has not been notified that any non-debtor spouse claim has been resolved.

If the noncustodial parent requests a review of the enforcement action, the funds will remain on hold until the review is completed. The noncustodial parent may notify us that he or she waives his or her right to review of an enforcement action and does not wish the funds to remain on hold.

Payments from the intercept of *joint* federal tax returns, however, *must* remain on hold for 180 days and will not be released even if the noncustodial parent requests that the funds be released early, *unless* the IRS has informed DOR that any non-debtor spouse claim has been resolved. The (IRS) makes determinations whether some or all of the intercepted funds should be returned to the non-debtor spouse. If that happens, the IRS takes funds back from

DOR. Therefore, the intercepted funds must remain on hold for the full 180 days in the event the non-debtor spouse is granted a refund of all or part of the funds.

Note: When some payments collected through enforcement measures are placed on hold, the past-due support balance is displayed as if the parent had been given credit for the payment even though the payment is on hold.

Payments of \$5,000 or Over Made by Check

When DOR receives a payment for \$5,000 or more made by check, the funds are held for 15 days to ensure that the account on which the check is drawn has sufficient funds.

Other Holds

DOR also puts payments on hold if our records show that the noncustodial parent does not owe child support or the case is closed. The hold is removed once we confirm the status of the child support case. If a noncustodial parent has a current child support order but does not owe past-due support, any payment in excess of the current monthly child support obligation will go on hold until the following month. It will then be applied to current support.

In addition, we place a 14 day hold on payments made by check if previous checks have been returned from the bank for insufficient funds. If the bank reports that a “stop payment” has been placed on a check, we put a hold on the payment until the issue is resolved.

DOR places a hold on payments to a custodial parent if mail has been returned *for the second time* from the post office as undeliverable at the address we have on file for the custodial parent. The payments will remain on hold until we can locate the custodial parent and verify his or her address. Similarly, we will hold a refund due a noncustodial parent if mail has been returned from his or her address, until we verify a correct address.

DOR Customer Service

DOR’s web site has information that can help you to manage your case, obtain specific information about your case, or learn more about our services. The Interactive Case Manager is an online tool that provides you access to information about your case and self-help services such as address changes, payment history requests, access code resets, and applying for direct deposit or making changes to your direct deposit account.

To get to our website go to www.mass.gov/cse and click on "Child Support." Once there, click on "Case Manager."

If you don't have access to the Internet, the Voice Response System (VRS) is another option. The VRS offers child support information by telephone. The VRS, available 24 hours per day, provides general information about our services, and updates on your case. You may also change your address or request a payment history using the VRS. For the fastest service on the VRS, call after 5:00 p.m.

**To reach the VRS call toll free:
800.332.2733 or 617.660.1234
Hearing-impaired persons may call:
800.255.5587**