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## Quick Facts: Child Support Enforcement

**This Quick Fact guide provides information about how state child support programs enforce and collect child support payments.**

The Child Support Program<sup>1</sup> is a successful federal-state-tribal partnership that seeks to promote economic stability for children whose parents live apart. The program collects \$5.51 for every \$1 in public funds invested. In FY 2020, \$37 billion was collected in 13.2 million cases for 13.8 million children.<sup>2</sup>

The most important enforcement tool is the income withholding order, accounting for 62% - \$23.1 billion of all child support collections in FY 2020.<sup>3</sup> This type of order is part of each state's law and includes a provision that it must be put into effect immediately, with limited exceptions, so that the child support can be deducted from the wages before the balance is paid to the employee. If the parent changes jobs and the new employer reports the employee to the state Department of Labor as a new hire, that information is available to the child support program and an income withholding order is sent to the new employer.<sup>4</sup>

The Program utilizes numerous additional enforcement tools, broken down as follows:

- [Federal and State Tax Refund Offsets](#)<sup>5</sup>
- Unemployment Compensation Garnishment
- Passport Denial<sup>6</sup>
- Insurance Settlement Intercept
- Driver's License Suspension
- Lottery Intercept
- Professional License Suspension
- Bank Liens
- Real Estate Liens
- Civil Contempt
- Credit Bureau Reporting<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Created by Title IV-D of the Social Security Act.

<sup>2</sup> [Office of Child Support Enforcement \(OCSE\) FY 2020 Preliminary Report](#).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, table P-29.

<sup>4</sup> For more information about income withholding, see [Quick Facts: Income Withholding](#).

<sup>5</sup> See Quick Facts: [Federal Tax Refund Offset Program](#), for more information.

<sup>6</sup> See [Quick Facts: Passport Denial](#), for more information.

<sup>7</sup> See [Quick Facts: Credit Reporting](#), for more information.





- Gambling Intercept<sup>8</sup>
- Criminal Prosecution

The ability to collect regular payments from a non-custodial parent depends on the parent's ability to obtain steady employment. During difficult economic times, the Child Support Program's mission becomes more challenging and at the same time more crucial, as the program strives to balance the needs of non-custodial parents' by connecting them to workforce development services that can help them obtain employment so that they can meet their children's financial needs.

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<sup>8</sup> See [Quick Facts: Intercepting Gambling Winnings](#), for more information.

