



**DOMESTIC RELATIONS SECTION  
THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS – CIVIL  
LEBANON COUNTY MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
400 SOUTH 8<sup>TH</sup> STREET, ROOM 202  
LEBANON, PA 17042**

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**Office Hours: Monday – Friday 8:30am – 4:30pm**

**Visit the following websites for further information:**

**[www.childsupport.dhs.pa.gov/csww](http://www.childsupport.dhs.pa.gov/csww)**

**[www.lebanoncountypa.gov/departments/domestic-relations-office](http://www.lebanoncountypa.gov/departments/domestic-relations-office)**

**POLICIES AND PROCEDURES OF LEBANON COUNTY DOMESTIC  
RELATIONS OFFICE**

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

The Lebanon County Domestic Relations Section (DRS) is a section of the Court of Common Pleas. Our services are available to all residents of Lebanon County who need assistance in obtaining child support, spousal support, alimony pendente lite (APL), medical support and establishment of parentage.

Since the Domestic Relations Section is part of the court system, all actions are handled through the legal process. **Plaintiff** is a word used to describe the person seeking support or to whom support is paid. **Defendant** is the person who pays support or from whom support is requested.

Any person appearing in the DRS to conduct business must present a valid picture ID. Please provide our office with either your member number or case number when calling the office. This information is contained on the ID card or IVR worksheet provided to you by the office.

A Judicial Computer System (JCS) fee of \$40.25 will be charged for all initial filings. This fee will be collected from the defendant as part of the court order. An annual user fee of \$35.00, is a mandatory collection by the federal government. This fee is collected from the plaintiff in cases which meet the annual collection requirements.

Domestic Relations files are confidential and information contained in them will only be released under limited circumstances.

There may be circumstances where clients are required to sign designated consent forms which allows the Domestic Relations Section to release to or receive information from other agencies. One example of this is any client receiving Social Security benefits.

The following pages further describe the rights and responsibilities of parties using these services. For additional information, please refer to the ***Pennsylvania Child Support Handbook*** published by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, which is provided by the Domestic Relations Section to all parties at the initial conference.

## **BENEFITS OF ESTABLISHING PARENTAGE AND RECEIVING SUPPORT**

Pennsylvania law presumes that a child born of the marriage is a child of that marriage and paternity is not in question.

When a child is born to unmarried parents, parentage must be established. This can be done through Genetic Testing or by signing an Acknowledgement of Paternity. By establishing parentage, a legal relationship is created that may result in children being eligible for future benefits from the other parent, such as inheritance, veteran's benefits, social security benefits or life insurance.

A support order, along with addressing monthly payment of support, will also address health care coverage, payment towards uncovered medical expenses and may include contribution towards child care costs.

## **ADDRESSING SAFETY RISKS**

Pursuing support may present safety risks for individuals or families. The Domestic Relations Section will provide safeguards if domestic violence is reported. Each County has different safety options and procedures available to the client seeking safeguards against family violence. Victims or potential victims of domestic violence may include: children, custodial parents, non-custodial parents, caretakers and spouses.

If domestic violence is reported, the Domestic Relations Section will place a Family Violence indicator on the case so that staff are aware of the issue. Confidential information will not be printed on any papers that are sent to others.

Individuals applying for or receiving cash assistance may be excused by the County Assistance Office from the requirement to pursue support based on domestic violence or other good cause.

Any individual with safety concerns should try to contact the Lebanon County Domestic Relations Section or Family Court Staff at least one (1) week before a scheduled conference or hearing.

## **THE SUPPORT PROCESS**

The party with whom the child resides will be asked to provide information to locate the non-custodial parent(s). If the parents were not married at the time of the birth of the child, parentage must be established prior to setting a support order.

Parties involved in the support action will receive court papers which will indicate the date and time of the conference or hearing. These papers may include the address of each party.

Parties involved in the support action will be required to participate, either in person or by telephone, in conferences and hearings and provide required documents.

Please note that children are not permitted in intake meetings, conferences, hearings or courtrooms. Please do not bring children with you when filing for support or attending an event through our office **unless we have directed you to bring them.**

## **UPDATE IN INFORMATION**

The plaintiff and defendant must inform the Lebanon County Domestic Relations Section and the other party in writing within seven (7) days of any material change in circumstances relevant to the amount of support or the handling of the support order. This includes, but is not limited to, loss or change of employment, loss or change of income, loss or change of insurance coverage, change of personal address or change of address for any child receiving support. If a party fails to inform the Lebanon County Domestic Relations Section of the required information, the court may establish parentage, may enter a support order and/or may find the party in contempt of court and may order the party to be punished by jail or fine.

## **CHARGING SUPPORT ORDERS**

Proof of income and expenses are required for the conference or hearing. The information from both parties is used to set a support amount based on the support guidelines.

All orders could be established retroactive to the effective date of when the complaint or modification was filed. The accrual (charge) will be entered retroactive to the filing date and charge a prorated amount for that effective month. The accrual will then charge on the first of every month thereafter. For example, if the effective date of the order is November 15, the order will accrue a prorated amount for November 15 – 30 and then accrue the full monthly support obligation December 1 and the first of every month thereafter.

## **MODIFICATION**

All orders for support are subject to review three years after the date of entry of the last order. Orders payable to the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services will be automatically reviewed by the Domestic Relations Section. All other orders will be reviewed upon request from either of the parties involved.

Support orders are modified only by an order of court. An order of court can come directly from the court or as the result of an agreement between the parties which is approved by a judge.

If there is a material change in circumstances, a petition for modification of the support order should be filed promptly. The court will only use the date the petition was filed as the effective date of the order. There are very limited circumstances, and at the court's discretion, where the effective date may be different.

Unless the child is disabled and is not self-supporting, child support will be terminated when the child reaches the age of eighteen (18) and has graduated from high school, whichever occurs last. If there is only one child on the order, this order will be done administratively. For those support orders with more than one child, a review conference will be scheduled to recalculate support for the remaining child(ren). Verification of the child's emancipation status will be requested prior to the child's eighteenth (18<sup>th</sup>) birthday.

*Court orders established in another state will follow that state's emancipation laws.*

## **PAYMENTS**

**The defendant should be prepared to make an initial support payment at the initial support conference.** This payment may be in the form of cash, money order or certified check made payable to Lebanon County DRS. Credit card payments are accepted through the TouchPay counter top kiosk or cellphone app. For complete payment options, please go to [www.lebanoncountypa.gov/departments/domestic-relations-office](http://www.lebanoncountypa.gov/departments/domestic-relations-office).

**If an income attachment is issued to an employer, the defendant is responsible to make support payments on their own until the payments are deducted from their paycheck.** Defendants should refer to the website or the payment options sheet included in their folder to determine the best way for them to make a support payment.

Payments to the Pennsylvania State Collection and Disbursement Unit (PA SCDU): Cash payments cannot be mailed to PA SCDU. Each payment sent to PA SCDU must include the defendant's social security number and/or their PACSES Member ID. All checks and money orders must be made payable to PA SCDU and mailed to:

PA SCDU  
P.O. Box 69110  
Harrisburg, PA 17106-9110

If a defendant's wages are not attached, they will receive a billing statement and coupon from PA SCDU. The Domestic Relations Section will provide an initial set of payment coupons. However, the defendant must begin making support payments as indicated above.

**The defendant should not pay the plaintiff directly.** Payment must go through the child support system (by paying in the Domestic Relations Office or to PA SCDU) to receive credit for the payment. Credit will not be given for payments made directly to the plaintiff.

PA SCDU will post all payments by the defendant's member ID. Payments will remit to the plaintiff through the Way2Go Card, direct deposit or in special cases, by check. No action is necessary for the plaintiff to receive the Way2Go Card. To receive payments by direct deposit, there is a direct deposit form the plaintiff must complete and send to PA SCDU.

If either party has questions about the current case balance and/or dates of most recent payments posted, the information is available at [www.childsupport.dhs.pa.gov/cswws](http://www.childsupport.dhs.pa.gov/cswws). Information is also available at the Lebanon County Domestic Relations Section Interactive Voice Response (IVR) at (717) 228-4480 or the PA SCDU Customer Service Unit at 1-877-727-7238. The plaintiff may also call the Way2Go Card, however, after a limited number of inquiries each month, the Way2Go Card will charge a fee for each additional inquiry (please refer to the Way2Go Card information for specifics). For other payment information, questions or concerns, please contact the Lebanon County Domestic Relations Section at (717) 228-4480.

## **ENFORCEMENT**

The defendant has the entire month to pay the support obligation before the support obligation is considered past due. Requests for enforcement by the plaintiff can be made in person, by telephone or email.

Most court orders designate an amount to be paid towards any arrears that may be owing on the case. Typically, this amount is 10% of the support obligation. If arrears are owing on the case, the defendant will be required to pay the support obligation as well as the amount to be paid towards arrears each month.

Inability to comply with the support order should be reported to the Lebanon County Domestic Relations Section immediately. Inability to comply due to a medical issue must be verified by a medical statement. The Lebanon County Domestic Relations Section can provide a Physicians Verification Form to be completed by a physician.

If a defendant fails to pay the full amount of the support order, the following enforcement actions may be taken:

- Contempt action, which could lead to incarceration.
- Suspension of your PA Driver's License and other professional or recreational licenses.
- Submission to the IRS and the PA Department of Revenue for interception of Federal and State Income Tax Refunds.
- Seizure of assets in a financial institution.
- Submission of name and amount of arrears to the major credit bureaus.
- Interception of state lottery winnings.
- Denial of obtaining a new passport.
- Lien against real estate; delinquent support automatically becomes a lien

In addition to child support, a provision for payment of health insurance and/or payment of uncovered medical expenses will be included in support orders. The Domestic Relations Section can assist in enforcement of such orders. Not all medical expenses are reimbursable. Please refer to your support order and the medical policy for further details. Failure to provide payment to the other party for uncovered medical expenses may result in contempt action.

Upon written request from an employer or insurer, social security numbers may be released if they are needed to provide court ordered medical coverage.

A custodial parent has no legal right to withhold visitation because support payments are not current. A non-custodial parent has no legal right to withhold support payments because visitation is denied.

## **LEGAL COUNSEL**

Plaintiffs and defendants may hire legal counsel to appear with them at hearings or conferences in the Domestic Relations Section. All legal counsel is required to file an entry of appearance.

Indigent defendants may apply for free representation when scheduled for a contempt hearing before a Judge or when parentage is at issue. Assignment of counsel will be based upon financial eligibility.

Unless the plaintiff is represented by private counsel, the plaintiff in any support action may have their case presented by the staff attorney for support hearings.

## **DISABILITIES**

The Court of Common Pleas of Lebanon County is required by law to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. All Domestic Relations meetings, hearings and conferences are held in the Lebanon County Municipal Building, which is handicapped accessible. For information about accessible facilities and reasonable accommodations available to disabled individuals having business before the court, please contact our office at (717) 228-4480. All arrangements must be made at least 72 hours prior to any hearings or business before the court.

**Please feel free to contact the Lebanon County Domestic Relations section by phone at (717) 228-4480 or by email at [cs-Lebanon@PACSES.com](mailto:cs-Lebanon@PACSES.com) with any questions or concerns about your support matters.**