

California Child Support Services

Military Families and Veterans Affairs

www.childsupport.ca.gov

Child support for military families

As a servicemember, spouse, or former spouse of one, you have unique child support needs. All branches of the armed forces offer parenting programs and resources to strengthen military families.

Servicemembers Civil Relief Act

If you are a parent or caretaker and you are called to active duty in the United States' military, you are protected under the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA). The purpose of the SCRA is to allow United States military personnel to devote full attention to the defense of the nation by temporarily suspending judicial and administrative civil proceedings that may impact your rights.

This means you may be able to place court proceedings on hold for a certain period of time. This is called a "stay" of proceedings. You must show that you cannot attend the proceeding due to military service.

Similarly, you as a service member can request that the court stop the execution of a judgment, attachment, or garnishment order. You must show the court that your military service prevented you from complying with the judgment and that the support case began prior to, during, or within 90 days after your military service.

Depending on the circumstances of when you are called to active duty, you may be entitled to a lower interest rate of 6%, instead of 10%, on your child support arrears.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

How is my child support order amount calculated?

Child support is calculated under California state guidelines based on your resources. This includes, but is not limited to, all employment related income, retirement benefits, and unemployment benefits.

How do I pay my child support?

Child support is withheld from your employer, the Defense Finance and Accounting Service, for servicemembers. You can also pay by credit card, cash, check, or money order. To find out more about payment options visit www.childsupport.ca.gov.

Can I pay my child support directly from my Veterans Affairs (VA) disability benefits?

You can voluntarily garnish your VA benefits regardless of the type of compensation you receive by filing forms with the VA. This is known as “apportionment”. Some child support agencies may be able to provide assistance with completing the forms to allow funds to be directed to the parent receiving support.

Can I just send money to the person receiving the support?

No. Federal and state law requires support payments go through the State Disbursement Unit (SDU) to be credited against what you owe before being sent on to the parent receiving support. If your payment isn’t sent through the SDU it could be considered a gift and not officially applied to the child support owed.

Can my child support order change if I get deployed?

If you have a child support obligation or are receiving child support payments for a child in your custody, and you are being deployed out-of-state, you have an opportunity to request a review and possible adjustment (modification) of the child support order before you deploy. See below for how.

How do I request a review of my child support order and/or an interest rate reduction prior to my deployment?

You may request a review and possible modification of the child support order before you deploy by talking to your caseworker or Judge Advocate General’s Corps Legal Assistance Officer to determine what steps you need to take.

You may also request that the interest rate being charged on past due child support that accrued prior to your deployment be reduced to 6% for the duration of your deployment. To be eligible for a reduction, you must prove that your activation to military service has a “material effect” on your ability to pay the usual, state-mandated interest rate of 10%. To request a reduction, please submit a Notice of Deployment - Request for Review of Child Support Order form to your caseworker. For more information and the form, visit www.childsupport.ca.gov and go to the “Services We Offer” tab, and then select “Military Services.”

What does “parentage establishment” mean?

Parentage is the establishment of a legal relationship between a parent and their child or children. This can be helpful to ensure your child has access to military benefits and health care. If you are not married to your child’s other parent, assistance is available to help you establish parentage for your child or children. For additional information, search for “Parentage Opportunity Program” on our website at www.childsupport.ca.gov.

Separating or making a permanent change of station?

When you separate from active duty or change permanent duty stations, your change in circumstances may warrant a child support order modification. For example, moving to another state may result in a significant difference in pay when your basic allowance for housing changes. Contact your caseworker to determine actions that are appropriate for your situation and make sure the information on your case is accurate. Be sure to stay in touch with your child support agency during your transition to ensure your child is appropriately supported by an accurate child support order and that no additional enforcement actions are taken against you.

Need additional assistance?

For legal assistance

For assistance or to find out more about your rights, you may contact the Judge Advocate General's Corps Legal Assistance Officer or the Family Law Facilitator in the county where you are stationed or living.

For child support case assistance

Depending on your location, services tailored to active duty personnel may vary. If you need help, contact the office handling your case for assistance. They may be able to direct you to other resources for additional help.

Military Qualified Debt Reduction Program

The Military Compromise of Arrears Program allows for qualifying debt owed to the government to be reduced in certain cases. Eligibility is limited to a Reservist or a member of the National Guard whose income decreased due to activation to military service. Ask your caseworker for more information and an application.

For more information on child support visit: www.childsupport.ca.gov

Contact California Child Support Services

866.901.3212 – Toll-free (within the U.S.)

TTY – 866.399.4096

Customer Connect

See your case information 24/7!

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