DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC SECURITY

Your Partner For A Stronger Arizona

Division of Child Support Services Customer Resource Guide

Contents

Introduction to Child Support Services 1

Establishing Paternity 2

Establishing an Order 2

Opening a Child Support Case 4

Making Payments 5

Collecting Child Support 6

Intergovernmental 8

Accessing My Child Support Money 9

Modifying a Child Support Order 10

Social Security Disability Benefits 10

Settlements 11

Visitation and Parenting Time 12

Status on My Case 13

Closing My Case 14

Introduction to Child Support Services

The Arizona Division of Child Support Services (DCSS) provides services to any person who needs assistance in establishing paternity, a medical support order, or modifying or enforcing a child support order. This person may be a custodial parent, a caretaker with physical custody of a child(ren), an alleged father wanting to establish paternity, or a noncustodial parent wanting to establish, modify, or enforce a child support order. Any person receiving public assistance such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Medicaid, or federally assisted Foster Care is automatically referred to the DCSS. All other individuals must apply for services.

What does Child Support do to help me with my case?

The DCSS is a federal/state/local program that collects child support from parents who are legally obligated to pay. The DCSS has three goals:

- Ensure children are supported by their parents
- Encourage family responsibility by offering services and resources which help families become more self-reliant
- Reduce taxpayer costs

Research has shown that noncustodial parents who are financially involved in their child's life by paying child support are more likely to be involved in other aspects of their child's life, such as school and extracurricular activities. It is also true, that a parent allowed to take an active role in the child's life is more likely to pay his or her support. When a parent does not pay child support, it places their child at risk of their basic needs not being met. This may cause the primary residential parent to seek government-funded programs, such as cash assistance or nutrition assistance, to meet those needs. However, there are several reasons why a parent may have difficulty in paying child support. Perhaps they lack the skills and training to get and keep a job, or they may have issues related to mental illness or substance abuse problems.

The DCSS works with other divisions which administer programs such as cash assistance, nutrition assistance, vocational rehabilitation, jobs, and child care to ensure that both parents have the help needed to take steps toward their own well-being and self-sufficiency, as well as their families.

The DCSS is not permitted to be involved in custody or visitation issues that often accompany child support matters. Along with property settlement, these are legally separate matters, and the DCSS is unable extend services pertaining to these issues. For more information contact your County Clerk of Court. Find your County Clerk of Court https://www.azcourts.gov/AZ-Courts/AZ-Courts-Locator

Establishing Paternity

The DCSS provides services to any parent or person with a child who needs help with locating the noncustodial parent (Locate[1]) for the purpose of:

Establishing legal parentage for child(ren) (Paternity[2]) when the parents are not married. DCSS has the Hospital Paternity Program (HPP) that is a collaborative effort between DCSS and Arizona's hospitals, birthing entities and the Arizona Bureau of Vital Records to provide paternity establishment services for unmarried parents immediately following the birth of their child.

There are several ways you can establish paternity:

- At the hospital by signing a Voluntary Acknowledgment of Paternity form that is available at all hospitals and birthing centers for unwed parents to complete and sign after their child is born. After the Acknowledgment of Paternity is signed, nurses and birth recorders can help to legally establish paternity for a child.
- Both parents may come into a DCSS office to fill out and sign the Voluntary Affidavit Acknowledging Paternity form that is filed by the DCSS through the HPP to establish paternity.
- A Voluntary Acknowledgment of Paternity, signed by both parents, can also be filed with the court or an administrative agency to establish legal parentage.
- The Acknowledgment of Paternity is also available at all Vital Records offices.
- If you are unsure of paternity, genetic testing may be needed to prove the identity of the father.
- If one parent is uncooperative in establishing paternity on a case opened with DCSS, the case may be referred to the Assistant Attorney General's Office for a court hearing to establish paternity and a child support order.

Establishing an Order

How do I get a child support order?

Establishing a child support order is a legal process that results in an order that sets a monthly amount of money to be paid by the noncustodial parent for the support of the child (ren), or by both parents when a child is in foster care or in the care of a guardian or relative.

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1 https://des.az.gov/services/child-and-family/child-support/apply-for-child-support

2 https://des.az.gov/services/child-and-family/child-support/apply-for-child-support/establish-paternity

A child support order can be established when:

- The child or children on the case are under the age of 18.
- Paternity is established.
- The parents are separated or divorced and have not established a child support order.
- The parents were never married.
- A caretaker, agency, or other party has custody of the child(ren).
- Both parents are given proper legal notice that child support will be established and the non-custodial parent does not respond within the required time period, an order for support may be entered. This is called a “default order.” It is legally valid and enforceable.

What about medical for my children?

The Arizona courts and the DCSS require that health insurance coverage and/or cash medical support be provided for children when establishing the child support order.

The DCSS will list either the mother or the father in the support order as the person who must provide health coverage, or responsibility can be assigned to both. Only the paying parent can be ordered to pay cash medical support. Medicaid (AHCCCS) coverage may be provided to meet this requirement.

How much will I have to pay?

The Arizona Child Support Guidelines ensure that a fair share of each parent’s income and resources are provided for the child(ren).

- A basic support obligation is determined using the monthly gross incomes of both parents and information about what intact families spend on their children.
- The amount of child support a parent pays can be affected by the amount of parenting time (visitation) with the child(ren).
- The parents also share the costs for child care, medical support and uninsured medical expenses.
- The paying parent’s share of the obligation establishes the amount of the child support order.
- The child support amount calculated using the guidelines is accepted as appropriate unless either parent shows a reason for a deviation.

Instructions and guideline worksheets for calculating the amount of child support owed are available by mail or from the Arizona Supreme Court Web site at: https://www.azcourts.gov/familylaw/2018-Child-Support-Calculator

- The Arizona Supreme Court’s guidelines are available here: https://superiorcourt.maricopa.gov/llrc/fc_drs1/

Opening a Child Support Case

How do I open a case with DCSS?

There are several ways to obtain an application:

- Download the "Request for Title IV-D Child Support Services" and mail it to
  P.O. BOX 40458
  Phoenix, Arizona 85067
- Call our customer service at 602-252-4045 (Maricopa County) or toll free at 800-882-4151 to request an application be sent to you by mail
- Walk into the nearest DCSS office to pick up an application

Applicants should provide as much information and as many documents as they can about the other parent(s). If there are any court orders, a divorce decree, marriage license, or other legal documents, they should be provided with the application, if possible. For a list of helpful documents, see the "Applying for Child Support Services" page.

How long does it take for my case to be opened?

A case must be opened within 20 calendar days of receipt of a completed application or referral.

Do I have to pay for services in order to open a case with Child Support?

There is no fee to apply for child support services. Once your case is opened, some nominal fees may apply.

Fee Type	Fee Amount	Responsible Party
Annual Collections Fee	$35/Year	Person receiving child support who has never received cash assistance and/or medical assistance – retained from support payment(s) only after $550 has been collected each federal fiscal year
Monthly Handling Fee	$8/Month	Person paying child support – cases with Arizona support order
Genetic Testing Fee	$31.75/ Person Tested	Father – if paternity established by genetic testing. DCSS – if genetic testing determines party is not father

Making Payments

Where do I send payments?

Fulfilling your child support order is critical to the success of your child(ren). DCSS is here to help you every step of the way. For your convenience, there are a variety of ways to make a child support payment. If you are unable to meet your obligation, DCSS can help you get back on track.

Paying parents can make a payment by visiting the State of Arizona Department of Economic Security Online Bill Payment website https://www.billerpayments.com/app/cust/login.do?bsn=descsg.

Pay at a Local Retailer

Retail Pay is a cash only option for paying child support. To make a walk-in retail payment at CVS, Family Dollar or 7-Eleven.

Go to PayInCashNow.com (link is external) to get your DCSS PaySlip with your personal barcode.

- Present the barcode – either on a smart phone or on a printed PaySlip – to any cashier to be scanned at the counter.
- Reuse the barcode for future payments or get a new one, as needed.
- Your receipt will show the amount applied to child support, plus a $2.49 transaction fee, and the total amount paid.

Mail Payment

Clearinghouse
PO Box 52107
Phoenix, AZ 85072

Overnight Express Payments can be sent to:

Arizona Department of Economic Security
DCSS - SDU S/C 019A - Mail Drop 7214
1789 West Jefferson, 3rd Floor SW
Phoenix, AZ 85007

Note: Correspondence should not be submitted with a check.

Pay at a Kiosk

TouchPay kiosks accept cash, credit/debit cards (American Express, Discover, MasterCard, and Visa) and personal checks. You can pay using the TouchPay kiosks at several local offices. See office locations for participating DCSS offices https://des.az.gov/find-your-local-office.

Collecting Child Support

How does DCSS help me receive money for my children?

The DCSS has legal authority to take enforcement actions when the paying parent is not making payments for (time)/$$ (threshold) and has been notified. However, the DCSS is required to provide notice to parents when taking enforcement actions. These notices include instructions on how to request an Administrative Review to dispute enforcement actions being taken. Possible enforcement actions include:

Administrative Income Withholding Order

The DCSS is required to issue an Income Withholding Order (IWO) to collect support from a parent's earnings. The DCSS will send an IWO to an employer to withhold the monthly amount for current support. The order may include an additional amount for any unpaid support that is owed. *A.R.S. §25-505.01*

Arizona Department of Revenue (DOR) State Income Tax Refund Offset

The DCSS is authorized to offset State Income Tax Refunds when a past-due child support balance of at least $50 exists, even if current child support payments are being made. The DCSS may offset the income tax refund up to the total amount of past-due support owed. *45 C.F.R. §303.102*

Asset Seizure

The DCSS may seize accounts with financial institutions or other property to collect child support arrears when twelve months or more in unpaid support is owed or when there is a court ordered judgment. Financial institutions may include banks, credit unions, federal and state savings and loan associations, trust companies, mutual funds, and other similar institutions. *A.R.S. §25-521*

Credit Bureau Reporting

The DCSS is required by federal law and state statute to report all support cases to consumer reporting agencies on a monthly basis. The credit report account shows the monthly payment amount that is due, the payment amount received, and any past-due amounts. Arrears balances of six months or more of unpaid support appear on credit reports as collection accounts. Credit reporting continues as long as payments are due on an open child support case. *A.R.S. §25-512*

Passport Denial

The DCSS may report any unpaid support that is equal to or greater than $2,500 to the U.S. Secretary of State who may refuse to issue a passport or may revoke a current passport until the unpaid child support is paid. Arizona will not release a hold on a passport until the arrears are paid in full except in cases of substantial hardship. *Pub L. 104 - 193 PRWORA – Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996*

Property Lien

The DCSS may place a lien for unpaid child support on many types of property. If the property is sold or refinanced, the lien may be paid from the proceeds. The lien applies to property that is owned at the time the lien is recorded and to all property that may be acquired at a later time. *A.R.S. §25-516*

Lottery Winnings

The DCSS intercepts cash prizes in excess of $600.00 from a paying parent who owes past-due child support of $100 or more. *A.R.S. §5-573*

License Suspension or Revocation

The DCSS may review a case for license suspension when six months or more of child support is owed. State statute allows the DCSS to suspend a professional or occupational license without going to court. In addition, the DCSS may request the court to suspend or restrict a Driver License. The DCSS may ask the court to deny or revoke a recreational license (such as a hunting license and/or fishing license). *42 U.S.C. 666(a) (16); A.R.S. §§ 25-517and 25-518*

New Hire Reporting Access

Federal and State laws require all employers to report new hires to the State Directory of New Hires. This information is shared between states in a National New Hire Directory. DCSS can use this new hire information for income withholding and to locate parents who have a child support obligation. *45 C.F.R. 303.100; A.R.S. §23-722.01, A.R.S. §25-505, A.R.S. §25-505.01, and A.R.S. §25-513*

Unemployment Insurance Benefits (UIB)

Arizona statute allows for the withholding of child support payments from UIB. Parties who owe child support may have payments deducted from weekly UIB amounts. *A.R.S. §23-779 and A.R.S. §23-789*

Workers Compensation Benefits

The DCSS has the authority to attach Workers' Compensation benefits from parties who owe child support. Weekly benefits or lump sum payouts may be taken to pay child support. *A.R.S. §23-1068, A.R.S. §25-500, and A.R.S. §25-510*

Federal Income Tax Refund Offset

Federal law authorizes the DCSS to ask the U.S. Department of the Treasury to offset an income tax refund owed to the paying parent. This offset may occur if the receiving parent is receiving public assistance (TANF) and at least $150 of unpaid support is owed, or if the receiving parent is not receiving public assistance and at least $500 of unpaid support is owed. The DCSS may offset the IRS refund up to the amount of unpaid support owed. Your spouse is entitled to obtain the portion of the refund that belongs to him or her. The injured spouse must file an Injured Spouse Claim to Tax Intercept with the IRS. Contact the IRS or tax preparer to obtain the proper forms. *Sec. 452(k) [42 U.S.C. 652(k)] of the Act, Sec. 464 [42 U.S.C. 664] of the Act, 31 CFR §285.3, 45 C.F.R. §303.72, OCSE AT-16-03, OCSE AT-98-17, OCSE AT-09-01, OCSE AT-10-04, OCSE DCL-00-79, OCSE DCL-15-11, OCSE DCL-15-21, OCSE PIQ-01-06 and OCSE PIQ-11-01*

Federal Administrative Offset (FAO)

The DCSS may request the federal government withhold and send payments owed to a paying parent if at least $150 (TANF cases) or $500 (non-TANF cases) in past-due support is owed. Some benefits such as social security payments, Railroad Retirement payments and Veteran's Affairs benefits are excluded from FAO. *Arizona Administrative Code Title 6 R6-7-603, 31 CFR §285.1, 45 C.F.R. §303.72 and A.A.R. 5201*

Intergovernmental

The other parent lives outside of Arizona, can DCSS help?

The Uniform Interstate Family Support Act (UIFSA), provides rules for the jurisdiction and modification of child support orders when the parents live in different states. DCSS must rely on the other jurisdiction's laws, regulations, procedures and personnel to take action on the case.

In some cases, the law allows Arizona to act as though both parents live in-state. In other most cases, the DCSS must request help from other jurisdictions to establish paternity and/or support or to enforce a child support order. The case is assigned as an "intergovernmental" case. When parents live in two different jurisdictions, timeframes associated with case processing are often longer.

By federal law, DCSS is responsible for communicating with both the other state and the party parent who requested our services. Contact your Arizona case manager for case status information instead of contacting the other state.

Enforcement and Registration of Other States' Orders

According to the UIFSA, the DCSS must enforce other states' support orders and income withholding orders in the same manner as Arizona orders. The DCSS may also register other states' orders with the Arizona Court and request that the Court enforce other states' orders. *45 C.F.R. 303.7, A.R.S. § 25-9*

Intergovernmental Income Withholding

UIFSA also permits any person to send another state's income withholding order to the employer of a person who owes support even if that employer is in another state. *A.R.S. §25-503 and A.R.S. §25-505.01*

Income Withholding Order (IWO)

The DCSS has the authority to issue an IWO for current and past-due support. An IWO is issued to the employer to deduct the required amount from the payor's wages or other income. The DCSS has numerous tools to identify employers including Department of Labor wage data and "New-Hire Reports" that employers are required to submit to all states. *45 C.F.R. 303.100; A.R.S. § 23-722.01 and A.R.S. §25-513*

Accessing My Child Support Money

How do I access my child support money?

You will need to choose one of two methods to receive your child support payments:

Electronic Payment Card

The Arizona Electronic Payment Card (EPC) is a debit card in which Child support payments are transferred electronically and allows you to access your money at any Automated Teller Machine (ATM), worldwide. The discreet VISA® card is accepted anywhere debit cards are accepted. You will be using your own money from child support payments which have been deposited on your behalf.

After we receive your Electronic Payment Authorization form, it will take up to two weeks to receive your electronic payment card. You must activate the card in order to begin using it. Until you receive your card, you will continue to receive your child support payments by check.

You must sign up to use your Electronic Payment, you must call 1-855-847-2030 to activate your card by selecting an access code and a Personal Identification Number (PIN).

Bank of America is the banking service vendor for DCSS. For any Electronic Payment Card (EPC) service issues (such as ordering a replacement card or finding the nearest ATM), please contact:

Bank of America Customer Service:
1-855-847-2030
TTY: 1-866-656-5913
AZ DES Electronic Payment Card
https://prepaid.bankofamerica.com/azdesepc

Direct Deposit

Have your child support payments automatically deposited in your personal checking or savings account. Use the Electronic Payment Authorization Form to sign up, stop, or change your direct deposit.

Return the signed form to:

Arizona State Disbursement Unit
Electronic Payment Authorization Unit
P.O. Box 36626
Phoenix, AZ 85067-6626

Modifying a Child Support Order

I already have a Child Support Order, but I want to change it, how do I do that?

Both paying and receiving parents can request a modification of their existing child support order when there has been a significant and continuing change within the household, such as adding or changing health insurance, a loss of a job, disability, or an increase or decrease in income for either parent.

To print and complete the ***Request for Modification Review of Child Support***, follow this link: https://des.az.gov/sites/default/files/legacy/dl/CSE-1178A.pdf

Once you have completed the documents, you may drop it off at your local office or mail your packet to:

Modification Packet
Division of Child Support Services
PO Box 40458
Phoenix, AZ 85067

Note: Include your return address on the envelope to help ensure the timely processing of your request.

Enter your zip code to find the address of the office closest to you.
https://des.az.gov/find-your-local-office

If you have questions or need assistance, you may contact the DCSS Customer Service at 800-882-4151, 602-252-4045, or you can visit your local office.

Social Security Disability Benefits

I'm receiving Social Security Disability Benefits. Can my child support order be modified?

Social Security pays disability benefits under two programs:

Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) pays benefits to you and certain members of your family if you are disabled and have sufficient work history and paid Social Security taxes. When you qualify for Social Security benefits under this program, your children may also qualify to receive benefits while they are minors. The Social Security Administration (SSA) may also withhold a portion of your retroactive disability lump-sum to pay your child support arrears balance.

If your child(ren) receives dependent benefits, your monthly support obligation may be satisfied by those benefits. Contact the DCSS as soon as possible if your children will be receiving these benefits. The DCSS may refer your case to the court for modification if the children will be receiving benefits directly from the SSA.

The SSA may also issue a lump-sum payment to the receiving parent. If you become aware of such a payment as the paying or receiving parent, it is important to notify the DCSS right away to ensure proper credit towards the arrears balance.

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is for people with little or no income and resources, as well as people 65 and older who meet the financial limits.

If you receive SSI, the DCSS will review your case for closure. When appropriate, the DCSS may refer your case to the court for a modification, due to an inability to pay.

Settlements

What is a Settlement of Arrears?

If you currently owe past-due child support, you may be eligible to participate in the Settlement Program. If you are interested in discussing a settlement offer, please contact a DCSS representative by:

Stopping into a local office or calling our Customer Service Center at 602-252-4045, or toll-free at 800-882-4151.

Past-due support may include amounts owed to the receiving parent, the State of Arizona, or both. The Settlement Program may provide the paying parent with an opportunity to pay off past-due child support. Additionally, a settlement may provide the receiving parent with a lump-sum amount for the arrears owed on the case.

Some of the advantages to settling an outstanding arrears balance may include:

- Paying parent may become current on the monthly child support obligation
- Receiving parent and children are assisted by receiving a lump-sum for the arrears balance
- Interest accrual, credit bureau reporting, and/or income tax offsets may be stopped
  - Opportunity for case closure
  - Adjustment of income withholding amount

My wages are being withheld; will a settlement offer stop the withholding?

The income withholding may be stopped if only arrears are owed and there is no current support obligation accruing. The income withholding may be adjusted to current support only if the monthly child support obligation remains owed.

What happens with credit reporting when my settlement offer is completed?

If there is still an active Arizona child support order, the case will continue to be reported to the credit reporting agencies, and the balance will be adjusted. If a case is closed due to a settlement payment, the case will be reported as closed.

Visitation and Parenting Time

Does Child Support help with Custody/Visitation/Parenting Time?

No, the DCSS is unable to represent either party in establishing and/or modifying Parenting Time (visitation) or Legal Decision-Making (custody) rights. If either parent wishes to modify or enforce Parenting Time and/or Legal Decision-Making, they must file their own action or seek legal counsel.

What is a Parenting Time Plan?

A Parenting Time Plan is a schedule that tells each parent when they will have their child with them for parenting time. There are all kinds of parenting plans, and yours can be customized for your own unique situation.

What about Legal Decision-Making?

Legal decision-making, which used to be called legal custody, is the right to make significant non-emergency decisions for the child, including decisions about education, health care, religious training and personal care decisions. It does not include the routine decisions you will need to make while the child is with you, such as what the child will eat for dinner, which bedtime story to read, which movie or television show the child will watch, or what the child will wear to school. In Arizona, parents can have sole or joint legal decision-making authority.

Joint legal decision-making means that both parents work together to make major decisions for their child. Sole legal decision-making authority means that one parent makes the major decisions for the child. Legal decision-making is addressed at the same time as a parenting time plan is put in place.

Do I need a Parenting Time Plan and, if so, where can I get one?

Having a parenting time plan allows both parents and children to know when they will be spending time together as a family. You can plan your schedule knowing what days and times you will have your child with you. Children also benefit from knowing when they get to spend time with each parent.

Forms are available online or by visiting the Arizona Supreme Court at https://www.azcourts.gov/selfservicecenter/Forms

Status on My Case

I already have an open case; how can I check on it and the status online?

The AZ Child Support Services Portal is available for custodial parents and caretakers to:

- View a history of child support payments
- Correspond with case workers
- Review case status
- Provide updates to your contact information

To Login you must already have an open case with the Arizona Division of Child Support Services (DCSS). You can login at the AZ Child Support Portal: https://dcssprod.azdes.gov/dcss/edcss/index.jsf

If you have not have an open case or completed an application with the DCSS, you will **NOT** have access to use this portal. Your case is being serviced by an Arizona Clerk of Court or an out-of-state child support entity, please contact them directly for information. To find your County Clerk of Court, visit https://www.azcourts.gov/AZ-Courts/AZ-Courts-Locator

How can I contact a child support representative about my questions?

The primary contact for your own child support case is your local DCSS Office. If you do not have that information, please contact Customer Service or use the office locator:

DCSS Customer Service:
Metro Phoenix/Maricopa County: 602-252-4045
Toll-Free: 1-800-882-4151
Hours: 7:00 a.m. -5:30 p.m., Mountain Time

Contact us through Email

To access the Division of Child Support Services (DCSS) Contact Us Mail Server, please log in. If you have not registered on the DCSS Web site, you must first register here https://dcssprod.azdes.gov/dcss/edcss/index.jsf, then when registration is complete you may log in and click the “Contact Us” menu item to contact DCSS using secure Web Mail.

Who can use the Child Support Services Secure Contact Us process?

Anyone who receives child support services from the Division of Child Support Services is eligible to use the secure “Contact Us” page on our web site if they have established a Personal Identification Number (PIN). This includes both parents who receive support and pay support.

Child Support case workers from other states that have a child support case with DCSS may register or login to use the Contact Us process too.

You may also send correspondence to DCSS

Correspondence Unit
PO Box 40458
Phoenix, AZ 85067

Closing My Case

How can I close my case with DCSS?

Only the applicant for services may request to close a case. If you are the receiving parent and not currently receiving cash assistance (TANF) or Medicaid (AHCCCS), and wish to discontinue child support services, you may request to close your case in writing, providing there are no assigned arrears owed to the state.

If you are currently receiving TANF and/or AHCCCS, you cannot close your case. Any arrears that accumulate while you are receiving TANF or AHCCCS are considered assigned arrears. Assigned arrears are used to pay back the state for the amount of TANF that has been given to you. Once the assigned arrears are paid, and you are no longer receiving TANF or AHCCCS, you may request to close your case.

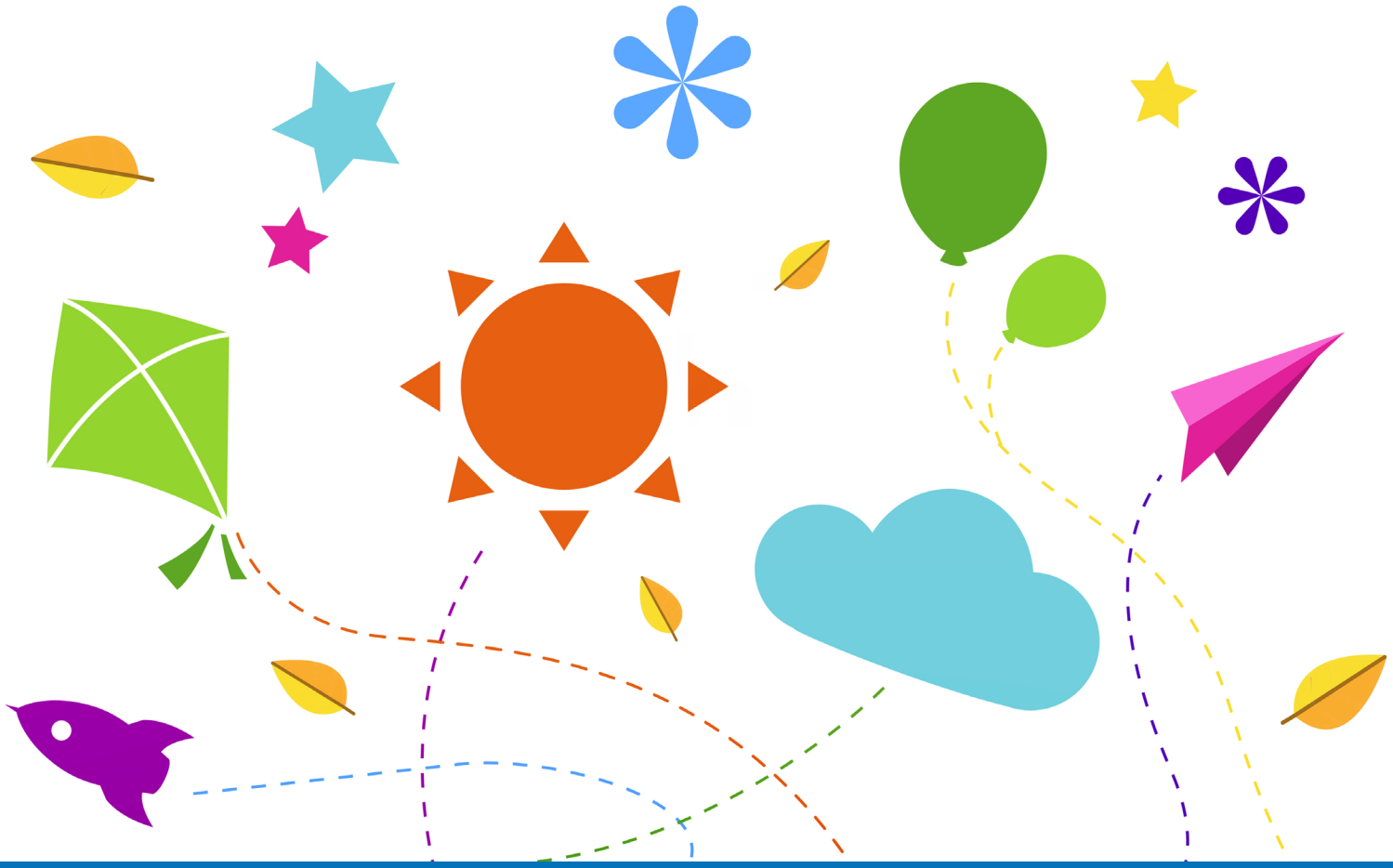
Will I be able to reopen my case?

You may reopen your case with the DCSS by completing a new application for services.

DCSS may close your case

Your case may be closed for other reasons as well, even without a request. To learn more about the closure reasons, you can contact your local office representative.

The DCSS will also close your case once the child(dren) has emancipated and all arrears have been paid in full.



Equal Opportunity Employer / Program • Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities • To request this document in alternative format or for further information about this policy, contact the Division of Child Support Services at 602-252-4045; TTY/TDD Services: 7-1-1

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