



# COVID-19 and Child Support in Washington State

*This is a new and rapidly changing landscape. Emergency court procedures are changing often and vary by county. Check with your local court for the latest information. We will try to keep this updated as things change.*

## **I or the other parent lost their job because of COVID-19. Does child support change?**

Not automatically.

There are two types of child support orders:

- 1.** orders set by the court
- 2.** administrative orders set by the Division of Child Support (DCS) (common if you get or have gotten public benefits for your children)

**Court-ordered child support** can only be changed by the court. It will not change until someone files a motion with the court.

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❖ Courts will probably not consider child support an emergency issue during this time.

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Child support cannot change retroactively. This means that once you can go to court, you cannot ask that child support go down dating back to March 1.

**If DCS set your order**, they might be able to modify (change) it. There have their own rules about how often they review a support order and how much income must have changed. Right now, DCS would probably not modify an order because we do not know how long COVID-19 will affect employment.

At this time, all DCS offices are assisting by phone only. If you have questions about an administrative child support order, call 1-800-442-KIDS (5437). Have a copy of your order or the case number ready when you call.

## **What happens if I cannot pay my child support?**

If you cannot pay your full support, you should do everything you can to make some payment towards supporting your children financially. Any amount you do not pay will become a support debt owing to the parent who you pay support. That debt can be collected for at least 10 years past the child's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Once you are working again, you can voluntarily contribute to the past due amount. If DCS collects child support, they will work with your employer to increase the amount to cover back support obligations.

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