

Georgia Department of Human Resources

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR CHILD SUPPORT EMPLOYERS

The Family Support Registry (FSR) in Georgia has centralized the collection and processing of child support payments made by payroll deductions. In the past, employers withheld wages from noncustodial parents and sent them to each custodial parent individually. The process, required by federal law, began July 1, 1999. Employers send all court-ordered child support payments to the Registry, which will in turn distribute payments to custodial parents. All child support income deduction orders handled by the Georgia Department of Human Resources' Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) go through the Registry, as well as any non-OCSE payments from income deduction orders dated January 1, 1994 or later.

OCSE has talked with employers across the state about the Registry. Below is a list of the most frequently asked questions employers have about the new payment system.

1. When should employers begin sending payroll deductions to the Family Support Registry?

If the deduction is an income deduction order through Child Support, then the payments should already be coming to the Registry. OCSE has sent notices to employers directing them to send OCSE income deduction payments to the Registry. All new OCSE orders are now being directed to the Registry. If the deduction is from a divorce ordered Income Deduction Order, employees may remit deductions to the FSR by fax at 770-473-2655, within three days of sending a copy of the order to the Financial Customer Service Unit.

2. Employers send out child support payments on different schedules—weekly, biweekly or monthly. Can an employer send income deductions to the Registry every month instead of what is mandated in the court order?

Employers must send payments according to the time frame stated in the child support order. To do otherwise would violate the court order.

3. How long does an employer have to pay a child support income deduction?

According to the law, the deducted child support payment must be sent within two days of the payment date. Because late payments hurt families who rely on child support, they need to be submitted promptly. For flagrant and continuing violations, contempt proceedings are possible and could result in fines or imprisonment.

4. What should employers do with court-ordered support payments for parents in other states? Can these payments be sent to the Registry, or should they continue to send them to the other states?

Employers responding to orders from other states should continue to send payments to the place designated by the orders.

5. Many payroll-processing programs require a tax identification number. What is the state's number?

The Georgia tax identification number is 581130678. The number is on the notices sent to each employer redirecting payments to the Family Support Registry.

6. How will noncustodial parents and recipients be notified of the change?

When OCSE receives information from employers and registers a case, a notice will be sent to both parties. Receivers' offices and clerks of Court that process child support payments separate from OCSE will notify noncustodial parents and recipients who have income deduction orders in effect after January 1, 1994.

7. Some noncustodial parents may have more than one child support order against them. Should employers continue to separate each payment by case number?

Yes, employers should include all case numbers as well as the noncustodial parent's social security number and the names of the custodial and noncustodial parents associated with a noncustodial parent's payment. This will ensure that each parent filing for child support will get their fair share of the income deduction.

8. Is there a fee to use the Family Support Registry?

There is currently no fee for using the Registry. However, the law does allow for a fee to be imposed. If the state does impose a fee for the Registry, both parents and the employers will be notified.

9. Will all divorce orders involving child support now direct employers to process income deductions through the Registry?

Employer deductions make up about 70 percent of all payments collected by OCSE. Courts must consider and, if possible, include income deduction orders as part of any divorce decree involving child support. If income deductions are ordered, they will be paid through the Registry.

10. If a company has two sites in Georgia and payrolls are distributed from one location, can all payments be sent to the Registry at once?

Yes, payroll deductions may be sent by one check with a list of all noncustodial parents, their social security numbers, the custodial parents' names and social security numbers and case numbers. All of the required identifying information must be included. Also, companies may transmit the funds and identifying information electronically through Electronic Fund Transfer/Electronic Data Interface (EFT/EDI).

11. Some income deductions include a fee charged by Receiver's offices for processing the payment. How can an employer determine the order amount without the fee amount?

The Child Support Receiver's Office should be able to provide the needed information.

12. What happens if an employer sends a non-OCSE payment to the Registry before an account is set up? How long will it take for the family to get its money?

If a payment is sent before an account is established, someone from the Registry's

Employer Relations Unit or the State Financial Customer Services Unit will call the employer to find out why these funds were sent. If the employer can supply enough information to help OCSE set up an account, a check will be sent to the family within 48 hours.

As a last resort, the unidentified funds will be sent back to the employer. OCSE will do all that is within its power to identify and distribute money sent by an employer to the Registry.

13. Some payroll systems can take as long as a week to distribute payments. Are they in violation of the two-day check issuance requirement?

Some companies may pay child support the same way they pay other vendors. As long as the child support payment is paid in accordance with the company's operational procedures, there should not be a compliance problem. However, these delays can create a hardship on families. OCSE is urging employers to consider sending benefits electronically to the FSR to simplify and speed up this process.

14. Some employees do not make enough to pay their full support obligations, and the Federal Consumer Protection Act limits the percentage of income that can be deducted. Who is responsible for the unpaid support?

The difference between what is paid and owed is the responsibility of the noncustodial parent. The employer bears no legal liability for the amount unpaid.