



What is CSA doing to collect overdue child support?

The Child Support Agency (CSA) wants to help parents do the right thing. To ensure children get the appropriate financial support that they deserve we provide a balance of customer service, education and advice. However, parents who continue to avoid making payments will face a comprehensive range of detection and enforcement actions.

Below is our approach to working with parents when they miss child support payments:

What we do	How we do it
1. Telephone parent to discuss outstanding payments.	When speaking with the parents, we verify the amount owing and give them an opportunity to pay outstanding amounts voluntarily.
2. Assess parent's ability to pay and attitude towards clearing outstanding payments.	We listen to the parent's reasons for non-payment and consider their ability to pay. We work to resolve issues that are getting in the way of making regular payments.
3. Seek parent's commitment and confirm arrangements to clear outstanding payments.	We confirm how the outstanding payments will be met, either with a lump sum payment or an initial lump sum with further amounts based on the parent's capacity to pay.
4. Seek parent's commitment to ongoing payments and confirm arrangements.	We make our expectations clear to achieve effective and sustainable outcomes. We work with the parents to resolve issues and identify options to help them meet their responsibilities.
5. Where a parent refuses to pay, enforce payment using a method appropriate for the parent's situation.	When it is clear the parent will not pay their outstanding child support, we explain that we will now seek to enforce payment. We determine the best enforcement option for each case, based on previous behaviour, risk and our intelligence data.

Compliance strategy

For more information about CSA's compliance strategy - *CSA: Supporting parents to meet their child support responsibilities 2008-2010* or for more fact sheets on this subject visit www.csa.gov.au



Compliance activities

- **Employer withholding of arrears (EWA)** – is where employers are legally required to collect outstanding amounts of child support from employees' wages or salaries. This amount may vary each pay depending on the amount owed. EWA is an administrative cost to business.

The easy way to pay

Joe was finding it difficult to remember to pay his child support every month. He was still dealing with the emotional aspects of his separation as well as moving house and trying to settle in to his new life.

When he realised he had missed a payment, he rang CSA to discuss his options. The customer service officer worked with him to establish his current situation and explained a number of options. He chose to have his overdue payments and ongoing child support deducted straight from his salary by his employer.

While he was at first hesitant because he didn't want his employer to know about his situation, the customer service officer explained that they would handle the situation discreetly.

So now, Joe is pleased his children are taken care of, and he can focus on getting settled in his new life and maintaining contact with his kids.

- **Lodgement enforcement** – the CSA works with the Australian Taxation Office to encourage child support customers to lodge their tax returns in a timely way so that child support assessments are accurate.
- **Tax return intercept** – where tax has been overpaid, the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) is obliged to refund the excess. The ATO will inform the CSA when a refund is available to a parent with outstanding child support. The CSA may take that amount from the refund.
- **Optical surveillance** – in our more serious cases we may also use optical surveillance to assist us in investigating complex avoidance and minimisation arrangements.
- **Customer tracing** – the CSA uses a range of information from the ATO, Centrelink and other government agencies to find customers and ensure that they have paid the correct amount.
- **Departure Prohibition Orders (DPOs)** – are used to stop parents with large amounts of outstanding child support from leaving Australia until adequate payment arrangements are made. DPOs are a last resort and only issued after in-depth consideration of all relevant information about a person's situation are taken into account.



- **Income minimisers** – this project involves increasing the number of assessments on cases where there is evidence the taxable income of either or both parents may not accurately reflect their income, property and/or financial resources.

Minimising income to pay less child support

A dad's taxable income dropped by about \$65,000 after he entered a business partnership with a family member. As a result of evidence provided, the CSA investigated both parents' financial situation and found that the dad's financial arrangements suggested he was minimising his income so he could pay less child support. The dad, who owned property in New South Wales and Queensland, was paying about \$8,000 a year (or \$154 a week) in child support for his children. A review of the case resulted in his income for child support purposes increasing to more than \$100,000. As a result, his new child support payments were increased to more than \$16,000 a year, or about \$300 a week.

- **Prosecution** – this step is available to us for the most serious actions or omissions involving criminal behaviour by customers or employers.

- **Litigation** – targets parents who continue to avoid child support payments. This option is used only after CSA has made significant attempts to use other enforcement options. Where an asset or income stream is identified as belonging to the parent, CSA will take parents to court to obtain outstanding child support payments.

A serious step achieves a good result

A mum who consistently failed to meet her child support obligations had overdue child support payments of \$28,933. The mum failed to agree to any arrangement to clear the arrears and had only ever made one voluntary payment of \$2,713. After investigating a number of other avenues the case was referred to the CSA's litigation team. The team investigated the parent's income and assets and a subsequent Letter of Demand was issued. Prior to the Federal Magistrates Court drawing up any orders, the mum agreed to make a lump sum payment and an amount of \$29,000 was received. The amount cleared all outstanding child support and costs incurred. The dad was extremely happy with the result, which benefits their children.



For further information and help

Call CSA on **131 272**[†]

Call the Telephone Interpreting Service on **131 450**

Visit the CSA website **www.csa.gov.au**

Ask your representative to assist.

Support Services

Family Relationship Advice Line

Phone: **1800 050 321**

www.familyrelationships.gov.au

8am–8pm weekdays, 10am–4pm Sat. (public holidays excluded)

Assists people from families affected by relationship or separation issues.

Other CSA resources:

Getting Started—information about child support for separated parents.

Me and My series of self-help booklets (available in a range of languages and as audio downloads).

Dealing with Separation interactive CD Rom.

Family Separation: a guide for teens—helping young people cope with family separation and change.

CSAonline—this is a secure online service where you can view and update your child support information when it suits you. Go to **www.csa.gov.au** to enrol.

To order any free CSA publication or more fact sheets visit **www.csa.gov.au** or freecall **1800 040 972** (charges apply to mobile and public phones).

Your privacy

CSA collects information about you and your family for child support purposes. We understand that some information is sensitive, and we place great importance on protecting your privacy. For more information see the *Privacy* fact sheet.

The Australian Government Services Fraud tip-off line

The Australian Government Services Fraud tip-off line provides people with a place to report suspected fraud against Centrelink, Medicare, the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme or the Child Support Agency. If you have information about someone who is mis-using government services, call **131 524**.

*Call charges may apply to the telephone numbers listed.

[†]Please note: your call may be recorded.

Do you need interpreting help?

If you don't speak English and need help from CSA, ring the Telephone Interpreting Service on **131 450**.

ARABIC إذا كنت لا تتحدث اللغة الإنكليزية والحجت إلى مساعدة من Child Support Agency اتصل بخدمة الترجمة الخطية والشفوية (TIS) على الرقم 13 14 50.

CHINESE 如果您不說英語，但需要Child Support Agency的協助，請致電翻譯及傳譯服務處(TIS)，電話13 14 50。

CROATIAN Ako ne govorite engleski i trebate pomoć Child Support Agency, nazovite Službu prevoditelja i tumača (TIS) na 13 14 50.

FARSI اگر انگلیسی نمی‌دانید و به کمک Child Support Agency نیاز دارید به سرویس ترجمه کتبی و شفاهی (TIS)، شماره 13 14 50 تلفن کنید.

GREEK Αν δεν μιλάτε Αγγλικά και χρειάζεστε βοήθεια από το Child Support Agency, τηλεφωνήστε στη Μεταφραστική και Τηλεφωνική Υπηρεσία (TIS) στο 13 14 50.

INDONESIAN Jika Anda tidak berbahasa Inggris dan memerlukan bantuan dari Child Support Agency, silakan menelepon Jasa Penerjemahan dan Juru Bahasa (TIS) pada nomor 13 14 50.

ITALIAN Se non parli inglese e ti serve assistenza da parte della Child Support Agency, chiama il Servizio traduzioni e interpreti (TIS) al 13 14 50.

KHMER បើលោកអ្នកមិននិយាយអង់គ្លេសទេ បើលោកអ្នកត្រូវការជំនួយពី Child Support Agency សូមទូរស័ព្ទទៅអ្នកប្រកាសសេវាស្រុកស្រាវជ្រាវ (TIS) តាមលេខ 13 14 50 ។

KOREAN 당신이 영어를 못하고 Child Support Agency의 도움이 필요하시면 전화통역 서비스(TIS) 13 14 50 으로 전화하십시오.

MACEDONIAN Ако не зборувате англиски јазик и ви треба помош од Child Support Agency, телефонирајте во Службата за преведување и толкување (TIS) на 13 14 50.

MALTESE Jekk inti ma titkellimx bi-Ingliż, u trid għajnjuna miċ-Child Support Agency, cempel lis-Servizz ta' Interpreti bit-Telefon (TIS) fuq 13 14 50.

POLISH Jeśli nie mówisz po angielsku a potrzebujesz pomocy Child Support Agency, zadzwoń do Biura Tłumaczy (TIS) pod numer 13 14 50.

PORTUGUESE Se não fala inglês e precisa da ajuda da Child Support Agency, ligue para o Serviço de Tradutores e Intérpretes (TIS) no 13 14 50.

RUSSIAN Если вы не говорите по-английски и нуждаетесь в помощи Child Support Agency, звоните в Службу устного и письменного перевода (TIS) по телефону 13 14 50.

SERBIAN Ако не говорите енглески и треба вам помоћ од Child Support Agency назовите Службу преводилаца и тумача (TIS) на 13 14 50.

SPANISH Si no habla inglés y desea ayuda de Child Support Agency, llame al Servicio de Traducción e Interpretación (TIS) al 13 14 50.

TURKISH Eğer Child Support Agency'den yardım istiyorsanız ve İngilizce konuşamıyorsanız 13 14 50'den Yazılı ve Sözlü Tercümanlık Servisi'ni (TIS) arayınız.

VIETNAMESE Nếu không nói được tiếng Anh, mà cần Child Support Agency giúp, xin gọi điện thoại cho Dịch Vụ Thông Phiên Dịch (TIS), số 13 14 50.