



Paying support

Maintenance Enforcement Program (MEP)

Ensuring that child/spousal support obligations are paid.


Begin a better **ending**



Commonly Used Terms

- Creditor** The person who is to **receive** maintenance/support.
- Debtor** The person who is to **pay** maintenance/support.
- Support Order** A court order or written agreement that requires a Debtor to pay a specific amount of money on specific dates to a Creditor for child and/or spousal support.
- Arrears** Money that should have been paid under the terms of the support order or agreement but has not been paid.
- Enforcement** Forcing a Debtor to pay money owing to a Creditor under the terms of a support order or agreement.

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What is the Maintenance Enforcement Program?

The Maintenance Enforcement Program (MEP) provides enforcement services to help ensure that child(ren) and spousal support obligations are paid.

Paying support.

When do I have to pay support, and how much do I have to pay?

If you have entered into an agreement to pay support, or been ordered to pay support by a court of law, you are legally responsible for paying the amount ordered or agreed-upon, at the times specified.

What happens once my support order has been registered with the Maintenance Enforcement Program?

Once a support order has been registered with the MEP, as a debtor, you will be notified that you are now to make all support payments to that office. Enforcement will begin immediately if you are behind in your payments, unless you contact the MEP office to make other arrangements for payment.

How long do I have to pay child support?

Depending on the circumstances, child support payments may stop when the child reaches the age of majority, which is 19 in the NWT. They may continue even longer if the child is still dependent or attending school. You should refer to your support order and seek legal advice if it is unclear whether payments are to continue.



What about gifts?

Are gifts considered child support?

NO. Gifts are gifts. Money paid directly to the child(ren) is also considered a gift.

Do I still have to pay if the creditor won't let me see the child/children?

YES. If the creditor won't let you see the children, you should contact your lawyer.

Where should I send my support payments?

If the creditor has registered with MEP, **all of your support payments must be made directly to the MEP office.** We will then forward them on to the creditor.

Sending your payments to the MEP office helps keep track of your payments. If you don't, the MEP office may be attempting to collect the wrong amount. This may mean financial difficulties for you! MEP only enforces the amount shown on its records.

Take Responsibility!

What happens if I don't make a support payment?

If you do not make a support payment or if you only pay part of a payment, the MEP will take immediate action to enforce the outstanding amount.

The MEP can do any of the following things:

Does the MEP arrange Access or Visitation to Children?

In the NWT, access and maintenance are treated as separate matters. MEP has no authority to deal with custody and access issues.

Can MEP provide me with legal advice regarding my court order?

MEP cannot give legal advice or represent you in any legal matter. You should seek legal advice through contacting a lawyer, the Legal Aid Office or the NWT Law Line.

Can MEP change (vary) a court order?

NO. MEP cannot change the terms of any court order or reduce/increase either the ongoing support or amount of arrears owed. Only the courts can change an order. We suggest you seek legal advice or other assistance for this matter.

Will the information provided to MEP be kept confidential?

With two exceptions, all information provided to MEP will be kept confidential. MEP can give out information about you to another Maintenance

- have money taken from your wages or other income;
- garnish federal money (eg. EI, Income Tax);
- require you to file a financial statement with the court;
- bring you to court to explain why you are not paying; or
- request to the court that you serve a jail term.

Enforcement Program. MEP also discloses information regarding receipt of maintenance payments to the Department of Education, Culture and Employment's Income Support program upon request under Section 48(d) of the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

What happens to my MEP case if I move to another province, territory or country?

All of the provinces and territories of Canada, all US states and many other countries will enforce the support order and forward the payments to the MEP office. If debtors leave without providing a forwarding address and stop making payments, the MEP will take action to find them.

If you move back to the NWT, please let us know.

What if I change jobs?

Call or write the MEP office as soon as possible. It's important to notify them of your new job to ensure that your payments continue and are not delayed.

How can I contact the MEP?

- 1** You can make an appointment to visit the Maintenance Enforcement office from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.
- 2** You can mail them a letter at:
Maintenance Enforcement Program
P.O. Box 1770
Yellowknife, NT X1A 2P3
- 3** You can fax them at: (867) 873-0106
- 4** You can telephone them at: (867) 920-3378 or 1-800-661-0798 (within the NWT)
- 5** Or visit the website at www.justice.gov.nt.ca

ALWAYS REFER TO YOUR CASE NUMBER WHEN CONTACTING THE OFFICE.

Other Important Contact Information

Legal Services Board

(Legal Aid)867-873-7450

Collect calls are accepted from outside of Yellowknife

Legal Service Board

Court Workers867-873-7450

Child Support Guidelines

(Federal Justice)1-888-373-2222

<http://canada.justice.gc.ca/en/ps/sup/index.html>

Law Line867-920-3160

Toll Free1-888-920-3160