DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC SECURITY

Your Partner For A Stronger Arizona

Child Support & Unemployment

Questions & Answers

Q: What authority does the Arizona Department of Economic Security, Division of Child Support Services (DCSS) have to take my Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefit?

A. For parents involved in child support through the State's IV-D program, DES is required by statute to deduct their child support obligation from UI benefit payments: A.R.S. § 23-789. DES Child Support receives an electronic notification when the parent owing child support applies for UI. DES will enforce an obligation by deducting child support from unemployment compensation up to 50 percent of the total UI benefit amount.

Q: What if I lose/lost my job?

A: Child support is designed to help parents fulfill their responsibility for their child's well-being and help to ensure the child's needs are met. The parent who is court-ordered to pay child support (aka paying parent or obligor) is still obligated to pay child support when unemployed. If the paying parent were to skip payments, or be unable to pay, he/she will accrue arrears and interest. We encourage both paying parents and parents receiving child support to visit www.azui.com to apply for unemployment insurance benefits as soon as possible after losing employment. Parents should also contact DCSS by visiting our website https://des.az.gov/dcss when there are any changes that may impact their child support case(s).

Q: How much child support will be deducted from my unemployment insurance payment?

A: The DCSS will deduct up to 50% of the unemployment insurance benefit to apply towards any child support obligation owed. This amount includes the additional $600 emergency unemployment insurance benefit that a claimant may receive as a result of COVID-19.

Q: Now that I lost my job, what about health insurance?

A: The child support order specifies who is responsible for providing health insurance coverage. If there has been a significant change in circumstances, either party may contact DCSS for additional information, including a request for modification of the child support order. For additional questions related to your child support case, please contact DCSS Customer Service at 1-800-882-4151, Monday through Friday from 7:00am-5:30pm. DES is committed to providing assistance to DES communities during the COVID-19 outbreak to meet their basic needs. For additional information related to medical assistance, visit https://www.healthearizonaplus.gov/ or call (855) 432-7587.

Q: Will my unemployment benefit amount be increased if I owe child support?

A: The State of Arizona calculates your unemployment insurance benefit based on your previous income and not based on your monthly expenses. Since child support payments are expenses, your child support obligations will not increase your unemployment insurance benefit amount. Child support will be deducted from your unemployment insurance benefits up to 50% as child support payments are necessary to help ensure that the child's needs are met.

Q: If I am not meeting my child support obligation, am unable to pay, do not qualify for unemployment insurance benefits or am not able to find employment as a result of COVID-19, what actions will the DCSS take?

A: The paying parent or obligor should continue to work with the child support program, family court and the child's other parent during their unemployment. The unemployed parent should document his or her ongoing job search in addition to any other relief or programs that are assisting with the impacts of COVID-19. Every effort should be made to stay compliant with the child support order. Visit the DCSS child support website for payment options and frequently asked questions regarding modifications. Additional resources on assistance and programs available in Arizona can be found at the Arizona Together website.

Q: Now that I am not earning the same income and my employer is no longer garnishing my wages, can I change my current child support order?

A: A child support order will only be altered if a parent seeks modification. If you are unemployed, receive a reduced salary, or have some other involuntary loss of income, the best course of action is to contact DCSS and request a modification. Since child support obligations are established by court order, requests for a modification of the amount must be filed with the courts. A temporary order may be granted by the courts due to COVID-19 related unemployment. Until the court modifies the child support order, the parent is responsible for continuing to pay the currently ordered amount. Before seeking to modify your child support order, you should obtain information on what unemployment insurance benefits will be available to you. Unemployment insurance benefits are considered income for the purposes of child support. Arizona's Child Support Guidelines require the inclusion of unemployment benefits received. The court will need this information to determine if a modification is warranted. Additional information on child care expenses and medical insurance expenses can also affect the child support obligation and may affect the outcome of a modification request.

Q: Does the state pay child support if the paying parent does not pay as a result of a lost job?

A: No, child support is paid by the paying parent and not the state. Additional resources on assistance and programs available in Arizona can be found at the Arizona Together website.

Q: If I already receive child support payments by electronic pay card (EPC), how will I receive my unemployment insurance benefit payment?

A: Your unemployment insurance benefits and child support payments are deposited into the same debit card. If a debit card is already active for child support payments, a second debit card will not be issued.