

## How does the DRS enforce court orders?

In 1988 the Pennsylvania legislature enacted a law that says that past due child support is considered to be a judgment by operation of law. This means that as soon as a support obligation is past due, the Court may take steps to enforce it's support order and try to collect the money that is owed. Steps that may be taken include: scheduling appointments with enforcement specialists, scheduling contempt conferences, collection through the federal and state income tax refund offset program, suspension of driving privileges, reporting to the credit bureau of outstanding arrears, suspending someone's hunting, fishing, or driver's license and seizing certain financial assets. For details about the Lawrence County DRS approach to enforcing court orders, see the "Enforcement Remedies" brochure which is available at the receptionist's desk.

## What is the Federal Tax Refund Offset Program?

In 1988 the federal legislature passed a law that permits the DRS to try and collect unpaid support balances by intercepting a defendant's income tax refund. There are many special rules associated with this program which are outlined in the separate "Enforcement Remedies" pamphlet. This pamphlet may be picked up at the DRS receptionist's desk.

## Where is the Domestic Relations Section?

The DRS is conveniently located in the Government/Judicial Center directly across the street from the Courthouse. The office is located on top level of the building. Because this is a court complex, offensive weapons of any kind are prohibited in the building. The Lawrence County Sheriff screener conducts security screenings of all individuals who enter the building. Be sure to plan on the possibility of spending a few extra minutes at the front door as a result of this screening.

Lawrence County  
Lawrence County  
Domestic Relations

[LawrenceCountyPA.gov/drs](http://LawrenceCountyPA.gov/drs)

# Client Services



## Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990

The Lawrence County DRS has adequate facilities to accommodate individuals with disabilities. Please make your needs known several days prior to your scheduled hearing.



Lawrence County  
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430 Court Street  
New Castle, PA 16101

Phone: 724-656-2179  
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## What is the Domestic Relations Section?

The Domestic Relations Section is the branch of the Court designated to handle the establishment and enforcement of Court Orders relating to child and spousal support. These services are controlled by state and federal rules & regulations which are strictly applied to all cases.

### WHAT SERVICES ARE PROVIDED?

The DRS will accept your initial complaint, conduct support conferences and enforce final support orders. Trained case managers are available to receive case related phone inquiries on a daily basis from 8:00—12:00 pm and from 1:00—4:00 pm. All support cases are managed through a computer system known as the Pennsylvania Child Support Enforcement System (ePACSES). All support payments are mailed to and distributed from a centralized facility in Harrisburg, PA known as the Statewide Collections and Disbursement Unit (SCDU). Current payment histories may be obtained by calling 1-877-727-7238, by visiting the child support website at [www.childsupport.state.pa.us](http://www.childsupport.state.pa.us), or by picking up a printed copy at the DRS receptionist's desk. **All questions about a specific support case are handled by the local DRS.** Strict attention is paid to maintaining the confidentiality of personal information. DRS personnel can only speak about a specific case

the parties involved.

### Your rights and responsibilities as a support client:

1. You must be able to provide either your social security number or your PACSES case ID when you call the DRS for assistance.
2. Clients who are in receipt of public assistance are required by the state to cooperate with the DRS in establishing a support order. This includes providing information and attending hearings. These clients must continue to work with the DRS as long as they receive public assistance or as long as money is owed to DHS.
3. Plaintiffs who do not receive public assistance may voluntarily end their relationship with the DRS at any time.
4. Prompt filing of initial petitions and petitions to modify a case is a must. Conference officers may only "go back" to the date that the petition is filed.
5. All parties in a support case must, within seven days, report any change of address, employment or name to the DRS and to the other party.
6. When circumstances change substantially, either party to a support action may file a petition to modify their support order. These petitions may be obtained at the DRS by writing, calling or stopping by. Petitions may be returned to the DRS by mail or in person. Proof of the change of circumstances MUST be presented at the time of your hearing. An order of support can be based only upon the facts presented to the Conference Officer. When filing a petition for modification the support amount may be increased or decreased based on current financial information.
7. DRS staff persons are not permitted to offer legal advice. While you may choose to proceed without an attorney, legal advice can only be offered to you by the attorney you choose to represent you.
8. The DRS will gladly provide you with a summary of the payment history in your case. You may obtain this report by requesting it in writing, calling the DRS or stopping by.

**Remember, the DRS is closed daily from noon until 1:00 pm.**

9. There are some fees that are required to be paid in order to receive some services at the DRS. A copy of the fee schedule is available at the DRS receptionist's desk.
10. The custodial parent pays a yearly annual fee of \$35.00 if at least \$2,000.00 of child support is collected in a year. As required by federal law, the custodial parent must pay once a year.

### SUPPORT DISTRIBUTION POLICIES:

All support payments received by SCDU are distributed to custodial parents following a set of rules that have been established by the federal government. Normally, all current support is paid before any arrears are paid. Sometimes defendants have more than one case at the DRS. When this occurs, all payments received are distributed on a pro-rata basis so that all families receive a portion of the payment. The DRS cannot override these distribution rules.

### SUPPORT PAYMENT POLICIES:

The Domestic Relations Section cannot receive any support payments at the DRS office. All payments must be mailed to PASCDU, PO Box 69110, Harrisburg, PA, 17106-9110. Employers receive a different address to send money from wage withholdings. You may also contact the DRS for other payment options.

### HOW TO CHANGE A HEARING DATE:

Once a date has been scheduled for a hearing, either party may file a motion, in proper form, with the Court and ask for the date to be changed. For details on how to file a motion, visit our webpage at [www.lawrencecountypa.gov/drs](http://www.lawrencecountypa.gov/drs) and select Conference Continuance. Also one may request a phone conference if Judge approves. The Instructions are also included in the link.

### Who does Domestic Relations Represent?

The DRS is an administrative office of the Court and therefore, represents neither party to a support action. The DRS simply applies the "Rules of Court" and Pennsylvania law to the support cases it supervises.