

A photograph of a man in a white t-shirt lifting a young boy into the air. The boy is wearing a blue t-shirt, blue jeans, and red sneakers, and is smiling with his arms outstretched. The background is a blurred green landscape with trees. The text 'Help Your Child GO PLACES' is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Help Your Child GO PLACES

LOS ANGELES COUNTY
CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES
works with both parents to
give their child the best
possible start in life.



LOS ANGELES COUNTY
**CHILD SUPPORT
SERVICES**



In the Best Interest OF THE CHILD

Los Angeles County Child Support Services Department helps families help themselves



**ONE
FAMILY
AT A TIME**

Ceylonya Ewell understands why people can be a little apprehensive when child support services comes calling: “We’re dealing with people’s most precious assets — their kids and their money.”

As a Head Child Support Officer for the Los Angeles County Child Support Services Department (CSSD), she wants people to know that the department’s purpose is looking after the best interest of children.

“We are here to enrich our community and provide services in a professional manner,” she said. “We’re here to help — one family at a time.”

What is child support?

The purpose of child support is to ensure a child’s well-being. Court-ordered judgments provide for basic living expenses, such as food, clothing, shelter, health care and education. Monthly payments are determined by each parent’s earnings and income, as well as the amount of time each parent cares for the child. In calculating or adjusting support amounts, consideration is also given to a parent’s medical expenses, how many other children they are legally obligated to support, and certain other expenses.

Child support eligibility

Parents, legal guardians, or any party receiving public assistance for a child may apply for child support.

Parents don’t have to have been married

Parents can apply for support even if the other parent has regular visitation.

Support can be granted even if a parent is not listed on a child’s birth certificate.

What does CSSD do?

The Los Angeles County Child Support Services Department can help people seeking support — as well as people paying support — navigate the complicated legal system. Their free services include:

- Locating a parent and their assets
- Determining parentage
- Filing for an order of support or enforcing an existing order of support
- Enforcing and collecting support payments

In a child’s best interest

Because support enforcement methods for nonpayment can be severe — driver’s license suspension, passport suspension or revocation, interception of tax refunds and bank account levies — Ewell explains that it’s important for parents to cooperate with child support efforts.

“There may be a set of circumstances that aren’t as black and white as they are on paper, and you may want to provide that information to the court,” she said. “But if you’re not there, if you ignore it, then we use the information we have available.”

Keep reading this publication for stories

of parents and children who have been assisted by the Los Angeles County Child Support Services Department.

**“We’re here to help
— one family at a
time.”**

CEYLONYA EWELL
Head Child Support Officer,
Los Angeles County Child Support
Services Department

Children are the Los Angeles County Child Support Services Department’s first priority. Studies show that having both parents involved in a child’s life greatly improves their well-being: Children whose parents are involved in their lives do better in school and have lower high school dropout and incarceration rates.

We believe that by facilitating child support payments in Los Angeles County, we are helping more children stay on track for success. While enforcing court orders for child support is our responsibility, arresting parents is not part of our job. Regardless of your circumstances, immigration status or income, we’re here to help.

We understand this may be a difficult time for your family. When you come to our offices or reach out to our call center, our child support professionals are here to help you navigate the complex legal system with dignity and respect. Our mission is to enrich our community by providing child support services in an efficient, effective and professional manner, one family at a time.

*Dr. Steven J. Golightly,
Director of the
Los Angeles County Child
Support Services Department*

Child Support Can CHANGE A LIFE

Woman gets help determining parentage and seeking child support payments

BY EDGAR SANCHEZ

Petunia* and her 16-year-old daughter, Angela*, have a loving bond and enjoy a simple life in Los Angeles.

But for most of Angela's life, her father Rueben* has claimed that he wasn't her father.

That dispute ended recently with help from the Los Angeles County Child Support Services Department (CSSD), which obtained court-ordered DNA testing that found a 99.99999999 percent probability that Rueben was indeed the girl's father.

The department helps parents establish parentage for child support orders, even if the parties were never married.

In Petunia's case, getting child support was a long ordeal. Rueben persistently denied he was the father, claiming to be a victim of mistaken identity.

After a friend told her about child support services, Petunia first contacted the department in 2003, the year Rueben married another woman, with whom he has two daughters.

Summoned to court later that year, Rueben failed to appear and a judge ordered that he pay \$247 in monthly child support.

He did not pay until 2017, after CSSD obtained his driver's license number, Social Security number and the name of his employer, who deducted child support from Rueben's salary, despite his protests.

In August 2018, after being presented with the DNA test, a Los Angeles County Superior Court commissioner immediately denied Rueben's motion to be deemed a misidentified father. The commissioner then ordered that \$247 a month continue to be garnished from Rueben's wages.

The monthly payments have been life-changing for Petunia, 42, who works in a seniors' rehabilitation center as a nurses' aide and a dietary specialist/dishwasher. She is



Petunia* and her 16-year-old daughter, who have requested to remain anonymous, have been able to receive \$247 a month in child support payments thanks to the Los Angeles County Child Support Services Department.

PHOTO BY NEDA BRIDGEMAN

grateful to Los Angeles County Child Support Services Department.

"It's a good organization that helps you find the fathers of your children," she said.

The commissioner in the case also declared that Rueben owes a staggering \$63,836.92 in retroactive child support, including 10 percent interest. The back payment may be settled in an upcoming court hearing.

If granted, Petunia said she would use part of the funds for her daughter's college education and perhaps some for a down payment on a house — apartment living is difficult, she said.

"This money would be like a gift from God, because only He knows the sacrifices I have gone through," she said.

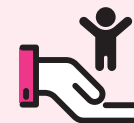
Her daughter has also been traumatized by the experience, at times tearfully expressing a yearning to meet her dad and her half-sisters. But this past summer, Rueben has twice taken all three of his daughters — including the teen — out together as a family.

**Names have been changed to protect privacy*

HOW TO ESTABLISH CHILD SUPPORT

A private attorney is not needed to open a child support case. The Los Angeles County Child Support Services Department (CSSD) offers FREE and low cost help to anyone. Here's how the process works:

- 1 Open a case.**
Custodial parents or legal guardians submit a request to open a case by filling out an application. Parents receiving CalWORKs are automatically referred for case opening and DO NOT need to fill out an application.
- 2 Locate the parent.**
CSSD collects information to determine where the person paying support lives and works. The department can assist, even if one of the parties is out of state or, many times, out of the country.
- 3 Establish parentage.**
Depending on if the parents were married, CSSD will use birth records or genetic testing to establish a legal relationship to the person paying support.
- 4 Establish a court order.**
CSSD files a case with the court and will then serve the person paying support with a summons and complaint.



Already have a child support order?

Those with current child support orders should provide copies of all judgments and orders and a completed Declaration of Support Payment History along with records of payments made/missed.

The Los Angeles County Child Support Services Department successfully helped Erin Flemming and her son, Landon, enforce their family's court-ordered child support.
PHOTO BY NEDA BRIDGEMAN



In Your CORNER

Los Angeles County Child Support Services Department helps level the legal playing field

BY ANNE STOKES

Divorce is never a pleasant experience, but for Erin Flemming, it was a nightmare. Thanks to the Los Angeles County Child Support Services Department (CSSD), however, she successfully fought for — and won — the child support she needed to raise her son.

When she filed for divorce in 2009, she never imagined that it would take nearly a decade to collect child support and that it would come close to ruining her financially. She and her son went from living in a three-story Hollywood Hills home to a 600-square-foot apartment in South Pasadena.

At the time, Flemming was working as a freelance marketing consultant, while her ex-husband continued to live in, and pay for, the mortgage on their house. She said he told her he was struggling to keep current on the house payments. Worried they might lose

their biggest asset, she didn't press for child support payments until 2012. It was then that she discovered her ex-husband, an attorney, was earning a six-figure income. In 2014, a judge awarded her \$18,500 in back child support payments, also known as arrearages, as part of their divorce judgment. Flemming's ex-husband contested the order.

Over the next several years, he buried her in paperwork, motions and appeals. The legal fees made fighting back nearly impossible for her. After an appellate court upheld the arrearages in 2017, Flemming's ex-husband contested it again.

"I'm not a lawyer. I was really outgunned. ... All I could do was go up there with common sense," she said. "I went through \$14,000 in legal costs in four or five months. At that point, it was near more than I was taking home just from working, let alone

"I'm so thankful. They get everything done in the best interest of the child."

ERIN FLEMMING
Parent and Child Support Services Department customer

having to eat and pay rent. I couldn't afford it."

In January 2018, she contacted CSSD for help with enforcing the court-ordered judgments. The department issued a bank levy to obtain the child support and interest on arrears. Again, he contested it, filing a 40-page

brief that put the matter on hold. This time, however, Flemming had CSSD's expertise and muscle in her corner.

"As a result of [CSSD's enforcement], the system started to process him as somebody with support arrearages — his passport was on hold, his driver's license was on hold and his law license was on hold," she said. "That really got his attention."

When Flemming and her ex-husband finally settled his child support arrearages, she was awarded \$26,000 in back payments and interest. She says the help she received from CSSD was a lifesaver.

"Child Support Services got something done ... in less than six months, whereas ... every other aspect of [our divorce] has droned on for years. I'm so thankful," she says. "They get everything done in the best interest of the child. It's fantastic."

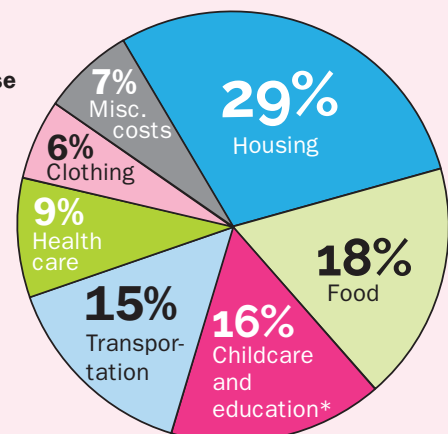
THE HIGH COST OF PARENTHOOD

Raising children is expensive, even for two-parent households. For a single parent, reliable child support payments can help with the high cost of raising a child in Los Angeles County, where the cost of living can be **27% higher** than other areas of California.



\$13,900/year
Cost of raising a child¹

Broken down, those expenses include:



* Does not include college

Sources: 1) U.S. Department of Agriculture, highest estimated cost for a middle-income, two-parent American family

EMPLOYERS Play an Important Role

County offers help implementing payroll deductions

BY ANNE STOKES

Fred Damavandi knows just how important getting a child support check on time can be for a family.

“I was part of the system,” said Damavandi, whose mother relied on child support. “I understand how difficult it is sometimes for families — we’re not just talking about money they need to pay the bills, but to survive.”

Today, as a human resources professional, Damavandi is in a position to help employees meet their obligation to pay child support in full and on time.

The Los Angeles County Child Support Services Department (CSSD) can help with wage garnishment. It is a convenient and effective way to ensure those payments get to the families that need them. Employers play a critical role in that process as well.

“The most important thing to know is that if you have any questions, we are here for you. This is a ‘help me help you’ deal,” said Chaino Seaborne, Child Support Officer III with the Los Angeles County Child Support Services Department. “The ultimate goal in having this monthly obligation done through the employer is to benefit the child, which is why the child support order was established in the first place.”

According to Damavandi, the county’s current system is more efficient now than when his family relied on child support. Payments are easier to automate and track, which benefits everyone involved: People paying support don’t risk enforcement measures, people receiving support don’t go without much-needed financial support, and businesses can be assured their employees are taking care of their responsibilities and not risking the loss of their driver’s or professional licenses due

to missed payments. To help businesses, the county also provides free training, something Damavandi said not many companies or government agencies offer human resource departments.

“It’s not something that you’re trained on or learn when you enter the profession, you pick it up here and there. So the training that they offer is so appreciated,” he said. “I’ve had nothing but positive experiences. It’s easy to get somebody on the phone and talk to them,

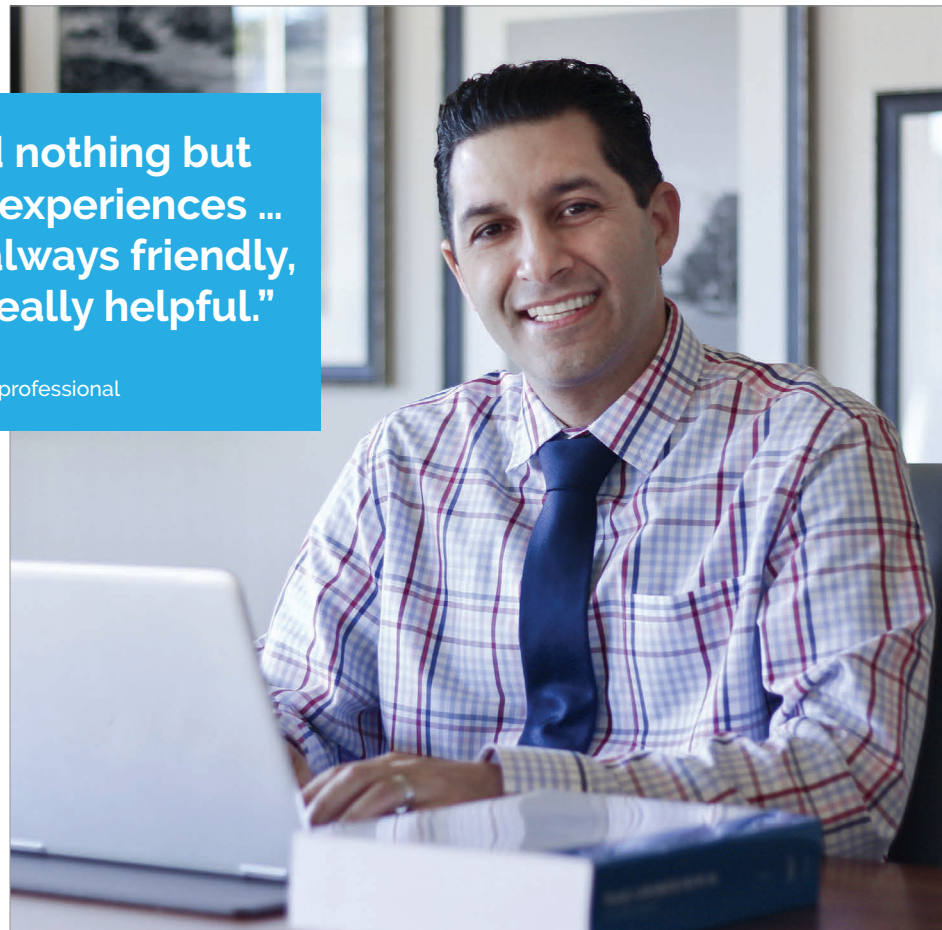
they’re always friendly, they’re really helpful.”

Damavandi said one of the things he learned through the county’s training workshops is not to make judgments about any situation that may have led to an employee’s wages being garnished.

“It doesn’t have to be somebody who’s refusing to pay, the system is almost mandatory to go through,” he said. “It’s easier and it’s sometimes the preferred — or only — method that’s accepted by the courts.”

“I’ve had nothing but positive experiences ... they’re always friendly, they’re really helpful.”

FRED DAMAVANDI
Human resources professional



Human resources professional Fred Damavandi has a decade of experience working for large and small companies. He says the Los Angeles County Child Support Services Department is very easy to work with and provides ample support for businesses navigating the wage garnishment system.

PHOTO BY NEDA BRIDGEMAN

WORKING WITH CSSD? IT'S EASY!

For employers, helping ensure child support payments are made on time is as simple as any other payroll deduction. Complying with the Los Angeles County Child Support Services Department (CSSD) is a convenient and effective way to prevent employees from incurring penalties — like losing their driver’s license.

“We’re here and we have the answers, both for employers and participants,” said Chaino Seaborne, CSSD Child Support Officer III. “An employer can say, ‘I have a good employee who’s taking care of their responsibility’ and the person receiving support is guaranteed that payment.”

- If an employee has a court-ordered obligation for child support, an employer will receive an **Income Withholding Order (IWO)**, which will include step-by-step instructions on how to implement appropriate withholdings.
- After receiving an IWO, employers have **10 business days** to comply.
- Monthly payments **must be sent** to the California State Disbursement Unit, P.O. Box 989067, West Sacramento, CA, 95798-9067.
- **Free educational employer workshops** are available through CSSD!

For more information, visit cssd.lacounty.gov or call 866-901-3212. Employers can enroll in a free workshop by calling 323-680-1810.

I RECEIVED A SUMMONS. NOW WHAT?

If you've been served with a summons and complaint, the following steps help to ensure that your child support order takes your information into consideration:

1 File the answer.

This paperwork is included with the summons and should be filed with the court or by contacting the Los Angeles County Child Support Services Department (CSSD) within 30 days if you were personally served, or 40 days if the summons was delivered to someone older than 18 who resides in your residence.

2 Contact child support services.

Call the Customer Contact Center at 866-901-3212 to better understand the process and the options available. Resources are available through the life of the case.

3 Go to court.

If both parties do not agree with the order, it moves forward to the court. A hearing will be scheduled and you should be prepared to present evidence to either contest parentage or your inability to pay the proposed amount.

If you do not file an answer or contact CSSD, a court order will be entered against you without your input.



It's About THE KIDS

Father is on his way to settling child support back payments and getting full custody of his daughters

BY ELISSA EINHORN

"Do you need help?" These four simple words changed Tyrone Dubose's life.

The divorced father of three daughters heard those words from Tina Robinson, the Community Engagement Coordinator with the Los Angeles County Child Support Services Department.

The pair met at an outreach event that provides community resources and services, including health care, education, employment and child support.

"I cannot thank Ms. Robinson enough. I told her I wasn't earning much," Dubose said as he recalled their August 2018 interaction. Robinson provided him with a Compromise of Arrears Program (COAP) packet, requesting that all or part of his government-owed arrears be forgiven.

Robinson's team is responsible for going out into the community to help parents with child support questions and to explain the services her department provides.

"We try to explain the process," she said, adding, "I stay neutral. I don't represent the mother or the father. I represent the best interest of the child."

Dubose is awaiting a decision about a forgiveness settlement that may reduce his debt to \$300. Dubose claims that he had been steadily paying support directly to his ex-wife since their divorce, however, she never signed the necessary documents to let the court know he was abiding by the order.



Tyrone Dubose received help from Los Angeles County Child Support Services Department to pay child support that he owed. Dubose, center, is currently seeking full custody of his daughters, ages 9, 7 and 6, seen here with son Jalon, 16.

PHOTO BY NEDA BRIDGEMAN

"I'm taking everything one step at a time, and doing what's in the best interest of my daughters."

TYRONE DUBOSE
Father of four

"I had been trying to prove to them that I had been making payments for six years," Dubose, a

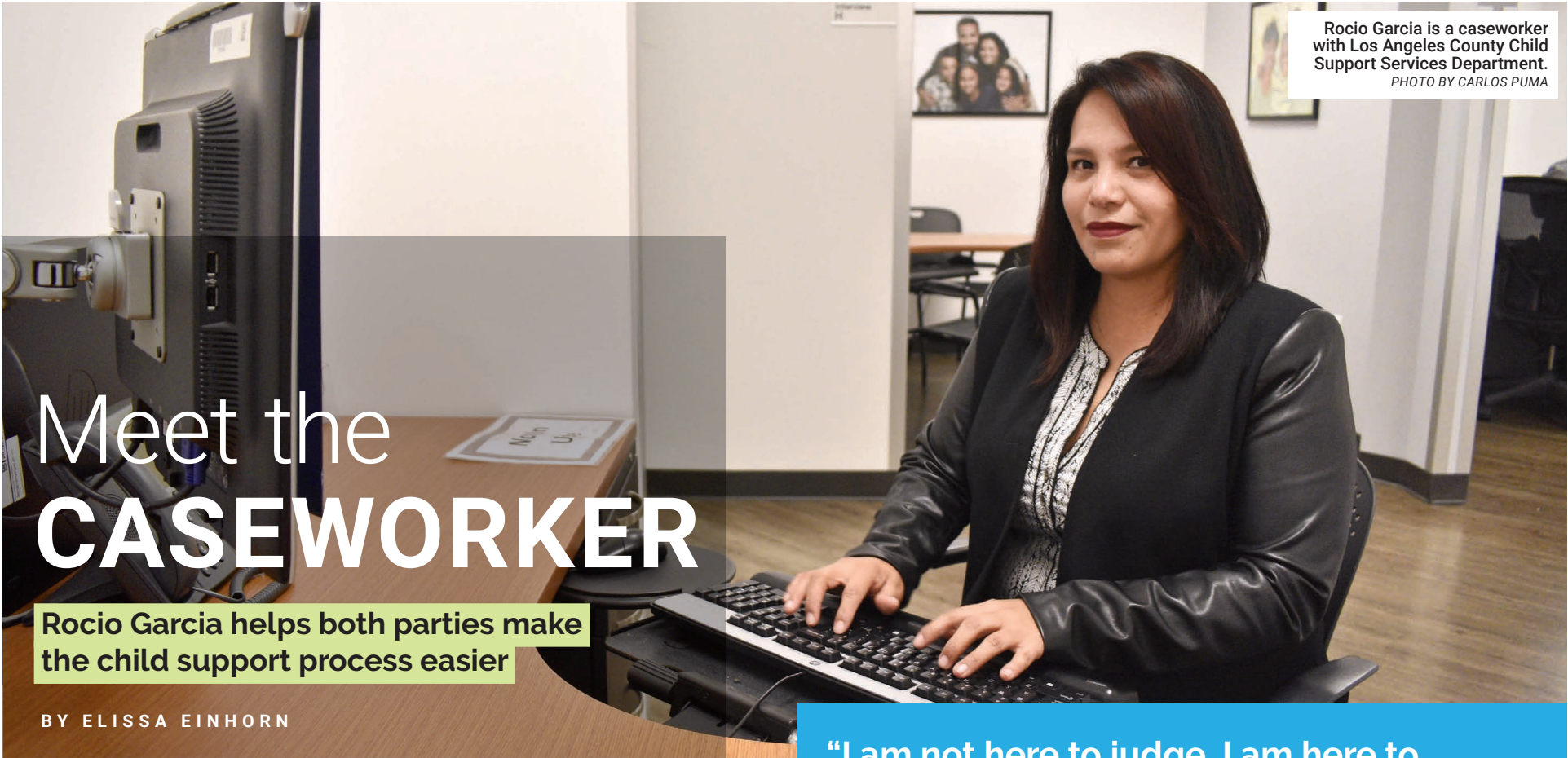
freelance IT consultant, explained.

"Tina also gave me the tools to go to the courthouse to see if the visitation order was valid and if I could go back to seeing my kids 50-50 time," Dubose said. "I also filed for a

modification of the order because when it was made, my kids were babies. Now they are 9, 7 and 6. She has been there with every question about paperwork."

Dubose hopes to even receive full custody of his children soon.

"I'm taking everything one step at a time," he said, "and doing what's in the best interest of my daughters."



Rocio Garcia is a caseworker with Los Angeles County Child Support Services Department.
PHOTO BY CARLOS PUMA

Meet the CASEWORKER

Rocio Garcia helps both parties make the child support process easier

BY ELISSA EINHORN

Q What do you do as a caseworker?

I conduct interviews, including bilingual interviews, to make sure my customers understand the process — why they are here, to verify information, and to find out what they need or what they think they need.

Q What is the process after a case is opened?

After the parties are notified that a case is open, the system searches for income and parentage information. Once income is found, we calculate child support guideline amounts. We then file a summons and complaint to obtain parentage and support. We notify the court of the proposed support amount. Then we serve the paying parent, who has 30 days to respond.

Q What are some of the most common reasons people contact you?

The majority of questions deal with payments or missing payments. Customers also ask about license suspension, how to complete paperwork or other forms, and custody, which is an issue our office doesn't address.

Q Are some people nervous when contacting your department?

There is sometimes apprehension from the community. Customers assume we are there to enforce, rather than help. We engage with people to make sure they are informed. We try to make them comfortable and educate them so they can make informed decisions. If they are comfortable, they will get the help they need because they understand the process.

"I am not here to judge, I am here to help customers understand why they are here and to provide as much information as I can."

ROCIO GARCIA
Los Angeles County Child Support Services Department caseworker

Q How do you remain neutral and not side with one party or another?

My job is to understand and reason with a customer about what they can do about their situation. I am not here to judge, I am here to help customers understand why they are here and to provide as much information as I can. If they don't want help, there is nothing we can do, but in the long run, they find out what the right choice is.

Q Do you have a success story you can share?

I had a case in which the father couldn't see the child, so he wasn't paying support. He had a high balance. He said that he wanted to pay, but wasn't able to talk to the other party. I brought them both in. When he made a payment, she saw that he was willing to pay, and the agreement was made into a court order. He paid off \$20,000 and the case was closed. He mailed me a thank you note and told me the children's mother allowed him to see his kids. It was a success for him, the other parent, and his kids. It was a win-win-win.



Contact us,
**WE'RE
HERE
TO HELP!**

Los Angeles County Child Support Services Department is responsible for establishing and enforcing support orders when a child receives public assistance or when a parent or legal caretaker requests our services. We act in the “public interest” and do not represent any individual.

Child support issues can often be resolved without you having to go to court. This is one reason it is important that you stay in contact with our office once a case has been opened.

Our mission is to enrich our community by providing child support services in an efficient, effective and professional manner, one family at a time.

Want to open a case?

- Apply online or download an application at cssd.lacounty.gov/open-a-case
- Call 866-901-3212 to request an application by mail
- Request an application by email at cservice@cssd.lacounty.gov
- Apply in person at any CSSD office location

Receiving CalWORKs?

You do **not** need to apply. We will automatically receive a referral to open a case.

Already have a child support order?

Contact the department for help with enforcing your order.

Is one party out of state?

Contact us, we can still help with your case!

LOS ANGELES COUNTY CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES DEPARTMENT (CSSD)

CUSTOMER CONTACT CENTER
(866) 901-3212 • cssd.lacounty.gov

Van Nuys Division
7555 Van Nuys Blvd.
Van Nuys, CA 91405

Pomona Division
3179 Temple Ave.
Pomona, CA 91768

Torrance Division
20221 S. Hamilton Ave.
Torrance, CA 90502

Commerce Division
5500 S. Eastern Ave.
Commerce, CA 90040

**South Los Angeles
Division**
8300 S. Vermont Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90044

Antelope Valley Division
42281 10th Street W.
Lancaster, CA 93534

