

Your Support Matters

Sacramento County Department of Child Support Services is here to help!



As a local child support agency, we offer services and resources for parents who need help navigating the child support system.

Partnering With Families

At Sacramento County Department of Child Support Services, our mission is to enhance the lives of families. We do this by helping parents stay involved in the support and well-being of their children. Studies show that having each parent involved in a child's life improves overall well-being—they are likely to do better in school, have lower dropout and incarceration rates, go on to college, and lead happier and healthier adult lives.

Each family is unique and we tailor our assistance to your specific circumstances and needs. For example, you might need help with genetic testing, establishing court orders, modifying child support amounts or facilitating the collection of payments. We can also help if you've lost your job, your driver's license or passport has been suspended or you owe back support payments. **Our services are free and we are here to help.**

We understand that worrying about your children, your relationships and money are major life stressors and navigating the complex legal system can be very challenging. But you don't have to do it alone. Let us be your partner—and your bridge to a world of possibilities.

*Terrie Hardy-Porter, Director
Sacramento County Department
of Child Support Services*



Did You Know...?

10 important facts about child support

BY THEA MARIE ROOD

1

The Sacramento County Department of Child Support Services is a neutral third party and does not represent the child, parents or guardians. Either parent can open a child support case by contacting SCDCCS.

2

A legal parent does not have to be a biological parent. Legal parentage is determined by marriage, voluntary declaration of parentage, or court order.

3

Ignoring a child support action does not make it go away. If you do nothing, the court will assume you agree with what was requested.

4

Two important parts of determining how much child support is due are the income of each parent and the actual time the child spends with each parent. Parents may go to the California Guideline calculator to get an idea of how much child support may be due.

➔ See childsupport.ca.gov/guideline-calculator

5

If a parent has no income, the court can consider earning capacity in deciding how much a parent should be ordered to pay. Earning capacity is the ability and opportunity to earn income.



If your circumstances change—losing a job, getting a raise, going to jail—it is important that you contact a child support office or the courts to address your new situation.

6

Child support must be paid directly to the person determined to receive support within the court order unless your case is open with a child support office. If your case is opened with a child support office, payments must be made directly to the State of California Disbursement Unit, which will send your payment to the correct party.

7

Child support must be paid, even if the other parent is not allowing the parent paying support to see the child and even if you have a change in circumstances. If your circumstances change—losing a job, getting a raise, going to jail—it is important that you contact a child support office or the courts to address your new situation.

8

Child support is due and payable until the balance is paid in full. When you do not pay child support as ordered by the court, the unpaid amount becomes past due and accrues interest.

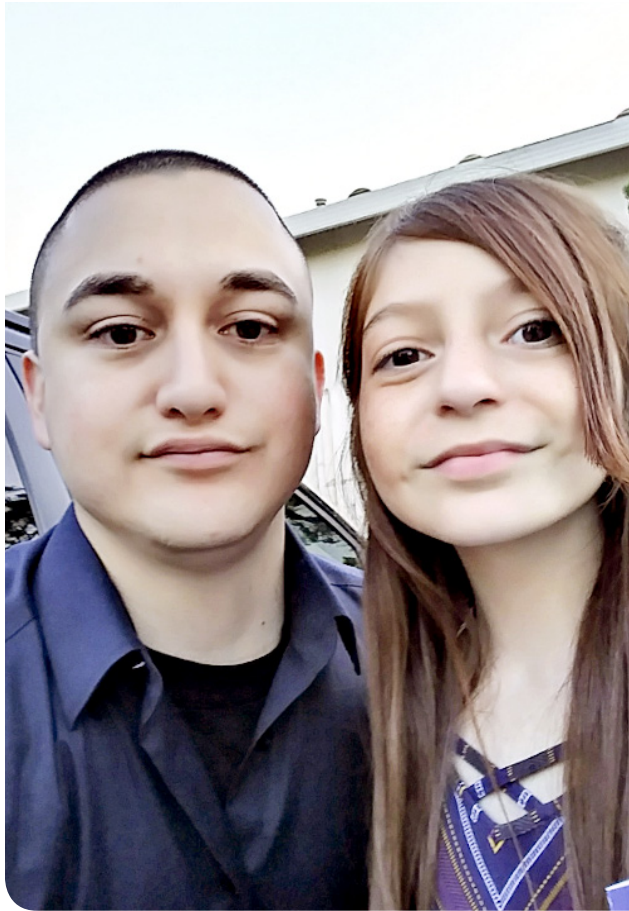
9

Your driver's license might be suspended for nonpayment of child support. If your driver's license is suspended, you may negotiate a release with a child support caseworker.

10

Custody and visitation will be considered in determining your child support. If you are seeking custody and visitation information you must contact either the Sacramento Family Law Facilitator or the courts.

Alec Poe and his daughter Angelina
PHOTO COURTESY OF ALEC POE



Support for Dads

There is financial—and emotional—support for custodial fathers

BY COREY RODDA

Fathers with full custody or partial custody can receive child support, but many men do not see child support as a resource that they are eligible for.

Alec Poe was 18 years old when he became the full-time caregiver of his daughter, Angelina. He applied for child support, but because Angelina's mother was not working, he did not receive it. It took him three-and-a-half years after relocating to Sacramento to apply for child support again.

The biggest obstacle in his path was the sense of shame he felt about pursuing a child support order.

"For men, there is a stigma that we shouldn't take money from the mother," Poe explains. "Pride is an issue and there is a stigma for men receiving child support from the mother. We have these assumptions that we won't get anything. I never went and pursued it because I didn't think that I would get anything."

Poe was introduced to Daddy's Here, a support group for single fathers, by his social worker at the Sacramento County Department of Human Assistance.

A representative from Sacramento County Department of Child Support Services would speak at Daddy's Here

"To have child support means that I don't have to be so strict with the money. I have a little more flexibility to buy my daughter a burger from In-N-Out if that is what she wants or to buy her clothes."

Alec Poe
Custodial father receiving support

every other month to educate the group about the child support process. Eventually, she convinced Poe to pursue a child support order. Angelina's mother was unemployed

at the time, but the representative said that it was important to establish the order so that when she started working, Poe would receive support.

Since then, Angelina's mother found a job and Poe has started receiving child support. The money pays for clothing, makeup and necessities for Angelina.

"It is a buffer for me because being a single parent is tough," Poe says. "Cost of living keeps going up, rent keeps going up. To have child support means that I don't have to be so strict with the money. I have a little more flexibility to buy my daughter a burger from In-N-Out if that is what she wants or to buy her clothes."

Another lifeline for Poe has been the support that he's received from other single fathers who attend Daddy's Here.

"Just to be able to know that there are other single dads raising their kids on their own—not co-parenting," Poe said. "I was a little boy and a teenage boy. I don't know what it's like to be a little girl or a teenage girl. Being with other dads raising young women, they taught me how to make a ponytail. These guys took me under their wing and provided me mentorship."

Having a Father in the Life of a Child Matters!

When children have involved parents, research shows:

- ✓ they perform better in school, get better grades, are thought more highly of by teachers
- ✓ school attendance improves, as does their attitude toward school
- ✓ they have lower rates of substance use and delinquent acts
- ✓ social functioning improves
- ✓ they have enhanced skills for regulating emotions and feel negative emotions less often

Children who grow up with a present, engaged dad are:

- ✓ more likely to have higher IQ test scores by the age of 3 (paternal involvement boosts infants' neurodevelopment)
- ✓ less likely to have sex at a young age and tend to avoid other high-risk behaviors
- ✓ less likely to drop out of school or wind up in jail
- ✓ more likely to have high-paying jobs and healthy, stable relationships when they grow up and endure fewer psychological problems throughout their lives

For more information:

- 🔗 [verywellfamily.com/how-parent-involvement-benefits-kids-3288064](https://www.verywellfamily.com/how-parent-involvement-benefits-kids-3288064)
- 🔗 [contemporarypediatrics.com/pediatrics/paternal-involvement-boosts-infants-neurodevelopment](https://www.contemporarypediatrics.com/pediatrics/paternal-involvement-boosts-infants-neurodevelopment)
- 🔗 [fatherly.com/health-science/science-benefits-of-fatherhood-dads-father-effect/c](https://www.fatherly.com/health-science/science-benefits-of-fatherhood-dads-father-effect/c)

Never Ignore a Summons

A child support case begins with the filing and service of a Summons and Complaint (S&C) with the courts. When served a S&C, **it means you are being sued and have 30 days from the date of service to file an Answer with the courts.** This allows you to be heard before the courts. If you provide an Answer (within the 30 days) to SCDCCS, SCDCCS will file it with the courts for you.

The S&C alleges that you are the parent of each child named in the lawsuit and are required to provide child support and medical support. **If you fail to file an Answer, the information in the S&C becomes a final judgment against you.**

Even if you do not believe you are the father of the child, you should file an Answer. Once your Answer is filed, the court will set a date for you to be heard. If the court orders genetic testing, it will be completed by SCDCCS at no charge to you. **If you fail to file an Answer, the court will find that you are the father without testing.**



Sometimes You Need a Referee

How child support can heal relationships
and reestablish trust

BY RAUL CLEMENT

Separation or divorce can be difficult, especially when a child is involved. When a partnership ends with hostility or estrangement, it's important to have a mediator to make sure children get the support they need. This is where the Sacramento County Department of Child Support Services comes in.

Vinny Valenzuela is someone who benefited from such mediation. His path is an unusual one. He describes himself as “state-raised,” having spent his formative years in California Youth Authority and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR). After being paroled, he entered into a relationship and fathered a daughter. Unfortunately, this “toxic and combative” partnership did not last.

“My lifestyle didn’t lead to a healthy relationship with the mother of my daughter,” Valenzuela says.

Valenzuela was able to turn his life around, doing outreach with Narcotics Anonymous and later with CDCR, where he speaks to other parolees about his transition into society. One important step was establishing trust with the mother of his child. To do this, they needed a “financial referee.” Further complicating matters, the mother of Valenzuela’s child

had moved to Texas with their daughter. But through the Department of Child Support Services, they were able to establish fair payments based on the minimum wage in Texas.

“It gave me clear boundaries and responsibilities,” Valenzuela says. “At the time I didn’t have any boundaries.”

**“...you’ve got a chance
of making your kid see
that both parents can
work together. And
that’s everything.”**

Vinny Valenzuela
Father paying support

Now, Valenzuela and his former partner have a healthy relationship. They are able to have dinner together with their daughter and Valenzuela’s current wife—no arguments or resentment. And Valenzuela’s outreach has extended to the same Department of Child



Vinny Valenzuela admits he was not initially a “star client,” but Sacramento County DCSS helped him transform from a reluctant payer into a child support advocate.

PHOTO COURTESY OF VINNY VALENZUELA

Support Services that made this reconciliation possible. Through DCSS, he has spoken at Policy Symposiums and Whole House Meetings.

At these events, Valenzuela is open about his past and his initial resentment of the child support process. At first, he found the steps toward a child support arrangement—automated messaging systems, arranging a caseworker, setting up payments, looking for work—intimidating.

“I was not what you’d call a star client,” he says.

However, his caseworker provided reassurance, directed him to outside resources, and explained the rationale behind every step. He has been transformed from a reluctant participant to an advocate.

When asked what he would tell parents about to undergo this process, Valenzuela’s message is simple.

“Try to be patient,” he says. “If you can do that, you’ve got a chance of making your kid see that both parents can work together. And that’s everything.”

Stepping Up

A father experiences the satisfaction of providing his son with a stable life

BY COREY RODDA

David Svanda never anticipated that at 48 years old he would be caring for a 4-year-old. But a child was something he'd never had and always wanted.

"It was one of those things that nobody plans for, so I accepted full responsibility," Svanda says.

When his son Dave was born, Svanda had to go through the child support process to ensure that Dave had full medical coverage. At the time, Svanda worked for a small dental lab that did not offer an employee health insurance plan and Dave's mother was on Social Security.

"I went to court and told the judge that this was my kid and I am proud of that and I will do whatever I need to be responsible, and he said that he was so glad to hear that," Svanda recalls.

Svanda has shared custody and cherishes the stability that his child support payments provide for his family.

"I appreciate that my kid is covered with my financial aid and that I don't have any kinds of worries about his health, and know that he can go to a hospital and have his bills covered," he says.

For Svanda, working with Sacramento County Department of Child Support Services has been easy.

"I am still very old school—I don't do a lot of computer stuff and they were able to work with me on the monthly payment over the phone because they understand that not a lot of

people are computer savvy," he says. "So that really helped me out in that situation."

Svanda advises others in his shoes to stay involved in their children's lives and also to not miss any payments, which can result in arrears, driver's license suspensions and liens.

"Just roll with the punches," he says. "It is not something that anyone wants to sign up for, but I am just grateful that I get along with Dave's mother and that we have a beautiful kid. We didn't have to hire any lawyers or fight. It's been a beautiful experience and I am staying involved and spending as much of my time raising him as possible, and we are doing good as far as that goes."

"I went to court and told the judge that this was my kid and I am proud of that and I will do whatever I need to be responsible."

David Svanda
Father



Cost of Raising Children in California

According to the California Budget & Policy Center, in Sacramento County a single-parent family with one preschool-aged child and one school-aged child would need **\$56,624** in annual income—or about **\$4,700/month**—to cover basic expenses, without publicly funded benefits or supports.

The monthly breakdown is as follows:

Expenses	\$ of Monthly Income	% of Monthly Income
Housing and Utilities	\$1,036	22.0%
Food	\$577	12.2%
Child Care	\$1,219	25.8%
Health Care (employer-based)	\$564	12.0%
Transportation	\$393	8.3%
Miscellaneous	\$463	9.8%
Taxes	\$466	9.9%
Monthly Total	\$4,719	100%

📍 For more information on budgeting, see:

Making Ends Meet:

calbudgetcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/Making-Ends-Meet-12072017.pdf

Monthly budgeting for a family in Sacramento County:

calbudgetcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/Fact-Sheet_Making-Ends-Meet-2017_SacramentoCty.pdf

Monthly budgeting for a family in California:

calbudgetcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/Fact-Sheet_Making-Ends-Meet-2017_California-State-Avg.pdf

Employers Help the Process

Wage attachment through a parent's payroll can actually make things easier

BY COREY RODDA

Child support payments ensure that children have access to health insurance, shelter, food and clothing. And businesses large and small play a role in delivering these vital payments through wage attachment.

Danielle Wolselben has set up wage attachment services for hundreds of employees during the 22 years that Econo Lube N' Tune has been changing brakes and oil. Now with a shop on Fulton Avenue in Sacramento, at one point she and her husband, Jeff Wolselben, operated five different locations.

"It is a benefit to the person on the other end," Danielle Wolselben says. "Typically in our situation it is the father who is responsible for paying child support for their children. So I think that it is a benefit for their child to get the payment that has been established by the court system."

A wage attachment automatically deducts child support from a child support payer's paycheck and sends it directly to the California State Disbursement Unit, which distributes it to the appropriate party. The automated process frees the child support payer from having to submit an electronic or check payment on a monthly basis and ensures that the payment is timely and consistent. It also avoids penalties: When a payer misses a child support payment, he or she is required to pay interest on the missed payments. This interest can add up quickly and be crippling.

Wolselben says the process to set up wage attachment is easy and takes her less than five minutes. She fills out a form documenting her employee's pay rate, structure and the amount of back pay they owe. Then she mails this paperwork to Sacramento County DCSS. After the form is processed, her employee's wage



attachments are sent directly through Econo Lube N' Tune's payroll system.

"I don't touch it again unless there is a change in the employee status," Wolselben says.

"I think that it is a benefit for their child to get the payment that has been established by the court system."

Danielle Wolselben
Co-owner of Econo Lube N' Tune

If this happens, Wolselben simply fills out another form notifying SCDCCS that the person is no longer employed at Econo Lube N' Tune to cease the wage attachment order.

Since Econo Lube N' Tune opened its doors in 1998, Wolselben has witnessed the process become more streamlined as confusing technicalities have been ironed out and more counties have adopted standard wage attachments forms. At one point, she would have to send out wage attachment checks on behalf of the county. Thankfully, that paper trail is a thing of the past.

Other Ways to Pay

SCDCSS offers its clients several different ways to pay child support.

✔ **ExpertPay:** Pay child support directly through your bank account each month through ExpertPay. It can take up to 10 days for payments to be transferred after an account is initially registered on ExpertPay, so it is important to set this up as soon as possible. www.expertpay.com/obligorapp/#/login

✔ **Checking Account:** Make one-time payments using your checking account or debit card. Payments will be transferred on the same day or two days later, depending on the

time of day when the payment is made. childsupport.ca.gov/state-disbursement-unit/

✔ **Paypal:** Pay child support through PayPal. There is a 2.49% processing fee and a three-four day processing period. www.childsupportbillpay.com/Payment/SelectEntity/793

✔ **MoneyGram:** Pay online through MoneyGram or by visiting a MoneyGram location at CVS, Raley's/Bel Air, Walmart and Advance America (Receiver Code 14630). It typically takes one day for these payments to process and there is a convenience fee. www.moneygram.com/mgo/us/en/m/child-support-payments

✔ **PayNearMe:** Get a personal barcode from <https://www.paynearme.com/s/8873/b/WC6j0Q/edit> or by contacting SCDCCS. Then present this barcode, which is reusable, at 7-Eleven, Family Dollar, Casey's General Store, CVS and ACE Cash Express stores to make your child support payment. There is a \$1.99 fee to use PayNearMe, which can take up to four days to be posted to the child support account.

✔ **Phone:** Pay by phone by calling the California State Disbursement Unit (SDU) at 1-866-901-3212.

✔ **Paying Cash:** Pay with cash onsite through a kiosk. Location: SCDCCS, 3701 Power Inn Road, Sacramento, CA 95826.

✔ **Check:** Bear in mind that paying by check is the slowest and most insecure payment method. If your child support case is not managed by a public agency, call 1-866-901-3212 for pay-by-mail help. If your case is managed by Child Support Services, mail a check payable to CA SDU, and mail it to CA SDU, PO Box 989067, West Sacramento, CA 95798-9067.



For more information, visit the payment options website at California SDU: <https://childsupport.ca.gov/payment-options/>

Dismantling Stereotypes

The goals of a child support services caseworker

BY RAUL CLEMENT

“We’re here for the kids,” says Roy Casillas, a child support supervisor for Sacramento County Department of Child Support Services. “We’re not here for one side or the other, as far as the parents go. We’re here to help the child.”

This is just one of many misconceptions Roy Casillas wants to clear up. People think of Child Support Services the way they think of many government entities, as a faceless bureaucracy out to take their money.

Many cases are settled in court during divorce or separation proceedings, without involving SCDSCSS. Casillas’ office only steps in if requested by a parent or if the parent with custody is receiving welfare benefits. As such, they could be considered a facilitator as much as an enforcer. And even when SCDSCSS does become involved, the process isn’t necessarily scary or punitive. Often, the parents are able to reach an agreement, called a stipulation, without ever going to court. The amount of the payment is determined based on income and custody arrangement. It is never the goal to bankrupt either party.

Casillas shared many of these common misconceptions before joining SCDSCSS. He had some experience with child support himself, being a parent who had to make payments after his own divorce. However, because his child support order was established outside of DCSS, he didn’t have anyone to guide him through the process. Now, hoping to demystify child support for others, he openly shares his past.

“I always tell people my background,” Casillas says. “I was in law enforcement for 11 years and in the military for another nine. Child support can pertain to anyone and is nothing to be ashamed of.”

To that end, Casillas meets with parents as early in the process as possible and is as transparent as possible. He walks them through each step using what he describes as “layman’s terms,” avoiding the legalese that can make court orders intimidating. He tells both parents about what they can expect to happen and what they need to do to get through the transition as “smoothly as possible.”

“We’re here to help,” he stresses again and again.

This might be his unofficial motto, but it also happens to be the truth.

“Child support can pertain to anyone and is nothing to be ashamed of.”

Roy Casillas
Child support supervisor for SCDSCSS



Additional Resources for Divorced or Separated Parents

While Sacramento County Department of Child Support Services offers many resources to parents trying to negotiate child support payments, the department also has a network of invaluable partner organizations.

For parents with custody or limited income, the Department of Human Assistance can be an important resource. This department covers everything from CalFresh, which assists low-income families with buying food, to Medi-Cal, which

provides low-cost or no-cost health insurance to qualified applicants.

For non-custodial parents, there are organizations to help them find jobs or get job training. One such organization is the Sacramento Employment and Training Agency (SETA), which helps the unemployed or underemployed find work. SETA is also home to Head Start, which provides preschool education for children from low-income households.

🔗 These are just a few examples of the resources a SCDSCSS caseworker can provide to parents in times of need. For more information, please visit: <https://childsupportservices.sacounty.net/Pages/ResourcesandLinks.aspx>

Sacramento County Department of Child Support Services



Always Here to Help

Reach out now—let SCDCCS make navigating the child support system easy



**Sacramento County
Department of Child Support
Services**

**3701 Power Inn Road,
Sacramento, CA 95826**

(866) 901-3212

childsupportservices.saccounty.net

Sacramento County Department of Child Support Services:

Works with parents and legally-acknowledged guardians to ensure children and families receive court-ordered financial and medical support. Child support services are available to the general public through a network of 49 county and regional child support agencies.

Services offered by the Child Support Program:

- ✓ Opening a Case
- ✓ Locating Absent Parents
- ✓ Establishing Parentage
- ✓ Genetic Testing
- ✓ Obtaining a Court Order
- ✓ Enforcing Support Orders
- ✓ Enforcing Medical Support
- ✓ Modifying Child Support Orders

SCDCSS Partners:

- 🔗 **Family Law Facilitator**
www.saccourt.ca.gov/family/self-help-center.aspx
- 🔗 **Center for Fathers and Families**
cffi.sacramento.org/cms/?page_id=6420
- 🔗 **Sacramento Employment and Training Agency (SETA)**
www.seta.net
- 🔗 **211 Sacramento**
www.211sacramento.org/211
- 🔗 **Family Justice Center**
www.hopethriveshere.org