

# A Record \$1.8 Billion in Support Collected for Texas Children



I am very pleased to announce my office collected a record \$1.86 billion in child support in the last fiscal year. The \$1.864 billion collected during the year that ended August 31 surpassed the previous year's total by \$186 million. More than \$4.6 billion has been collected for the children of Texas since I became attorney general.

One of the most important jobs my office performs is making sure Texas children get the support they need and deserve. For many Texas children, child support means the difference between food on the table or going to bed hungry.

A court order is required to make a parent legally responsible to pay child support. Last year the Child Support Division obtained court orders obligating 56,000 parents to pay child support.

My office uses every available tool to enforce a parent's legal obligation to pay child support. More than 70 percent of the \$1.864 billion collected in 2005 was made possible by withholding income from a parent's paycheck. Other enforcement measures include interception of federal income tax refunds; suspension of drivers, professional and recreational licenses; and seizure of assets held in financial institutions.

When all else fails, my office seeks

jail time for parents who continue to ignore a court's order to pay child support. In the last fiscal year, more than 3,500 parents were incarcerated for failing to pay child support.

Aggressive enforcement resulted in \$54,000 in past due child support for a Fort Bend County mother and her two sons. For many years, the mother made sacrifices and went without so her children could have the things they needed. Last year, the Child Support Division seized \$4,000 from the delinquent father's out-of-state bank account. In March, a child support officer negotiated a \$50,000 payment after learning the boys' father would receive a substantial settlement in a lawsuit against an employer. The money has helped the mother pay bills and send her sons to college.

That is just one of the examples where I am privileged to touch the lives of so many boys and girls who rely on child support to give them a fair start in life.

My office also helps parents establish legal fatherhood for children born to unmarried parents. Under Texas law, a child born to a man and woman who are not married has no legal father. More than half of the 1.1 million children served by the Child Support Division were born to unmarried parents. My office works with hospitals to help unmarried mothers and fathers voluntarily acknowledge paternity, so the father's name can appear on the birth certificate and the children can be eligible for child support, Social

Security, veteran's survivor benefits, and health insurance. Last year, more than 100,000 couples voluntarily acknowledged paternity at the hospital when their children were born.

Of course many parents who want to pay child support face obstacles to finding and keeping steady employment. Over the past 10 years, child support employees have referred thousands of needy parents to local workforce development boards for employment services. Last year, my office began a partnership with the Texas Workforce Commission and local workforce development boards to provide intensive job training to unemployed parents from El Paso, Hidalgo, Brazoria, Galveston, Tarrant and Bexar counties who are in contempt of court for disobeying orders requiring the payment of child support.

My office strives to be accessible to all of our customers, who often need up-to-date information about their child support case. The Child Support Division provides 24-hour access to parents who are seeking information about their child support case, both by telephone and Internet. The agency's toll-free automated voice response system (800-252-8014) handled more than 24 million calls during the last fiscal year. With one phone call, parents who pay child support or parents who receive child support can obtain a record of recent child support payments; dates and locations of pending court hearings; dates of service on current legal actions; availability of

genetic test results; and amounts due for current and past-due support.

Child Support Interactive, accessed from the main Attorney General website at [www.oag.state.tx.us](http://www.oag.state.tx.us), gives visitors another avenue for obtaining general information about the child support program and applying for services. Those with child support cases can obtain specific case information from a secure section of the site. Child Support Interactive received more than 13.7 million visits in the last fiscal year, an increase of 1.2 million over the previous year's visits.

If you need help collecting child support, my office accepts applications from mothers, fathers and other individuals who are caring for a child. To request an application for services, call our toll-free telephone number at (800) 252-8014 or visit the website [www.oag.state.tx.us](http://www.oag.state.tx.us).

I appreciate the hard work of the child support employees that made our record-breaking year possible. However, there are still many children going without a parent's financial support. I want the people of Texas to know that my office will not be satisfied until all children receive the support they are due.

## POINTS TO REMEMBER

You may obtain an application for child support services by:

Visiting Child Support Interactive, located on the main Attorney General website at [www.oag.state.tx.us](http://www.oag.state.tx.us)

Calling the 24-hour voice response system at (800) 252-8014

Provide the following information about the other parent with your application:

- Current address;
- Current (or last known) employer's name and address;
- Social Security number and date of birth;
- Names and addresses of relatives and friends;
- Names of banks or creditors such as utility companies;
- Names of organizations, unions or clubs to which the other parent belongs; and
- Places where the other parent spends free time.

If possible, also be prepared to submit copies of official documents like your:

- divorce decree,
- children's birth certificates, and
- signed acknowledgment of paternity.

[www.oag.state.tx.us](http://www.oag.state.tx.us)



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Information on this and other topics is available on the Attorney General's website at [www.oag.state.tx.us](http://www.oag.state.tx.us).