

15.3 CHILD SUPPORT REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES (WV WORKS)

See Chapter 16 for child support requirements for Medicaid.

Federal law mandates that efforts be made to locate absent parents, establish paternity and/or obtain support for the children. The specified relative receiving WV WORKS must cooperate with child support activities and redirect to the Bureau for Child Support Enforcement (BCSE) any child support payments received.

The major responsibility for this effort rests with the BCSE through its staff of Child Support Specialists.

In addition, the Worker has the following responsibilities:

- To explain the requirements and benefits of BCSE services, including the right of the specified relative to claim good cause for refusal to cooperate
- To refer appropriate cases to the Child Support Specialist. Referral is accomplished by data system exchange or DHS-1.
- To evaluate evidence presented if the client claims good cause
- To determine if good cause for failure to cooperate with BCSE exists
- To apply the Personal Responsibility Contract (PRC) penalty for refusal without good cause to cooperate or redirect child support payments for WV WORKS
- To respond to RAPIDS alert 191. See Section 16.1, D for the required action.

The following information provides details about the responsibilities of the Worker, the Child Support Specialist, and the client in the child support process.

Specific WV WORKS Requirements

A. DFA-AP-1, ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF AUTOMATIC ASSIGNMENT OF SUPPORT RIGHTS AND OF COOPERATION REQUIREMENTS

The purpose of the DFA-AP-1 is to assure that affected clients know of the automatic assignment of support rights to the State and understand the benefits, requirements and rights associated with BCSE.

1. Who Is Required To Complete The DFA-AP-1

The DFA-AP-1 must be completed for:

NOTE: When a major parent, minor parent and the minor's child are included in the AG, the major parent is required to sign the DFA-AP-1 to assign support rights of the minor's child to the State.

a. Applicants

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The DFA-AP-1 must be completed when there is at least one child included in the AG who has an absent parent(s). This includes children who receive SSI and are included in the WV WORKS AG.

b. Recipients

The DFA-AP-1 must be completed for active cases as follows:

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- When a child is in an AG with no parent and a parent is then added, that parent must sign.
- When a child who has an absent parent, including a child who receives SSI, is added to the AG.

2. Instructions For Completion:

- Complete in triplicate.
- Enter the case name and case number in the indicated spaces on the form.

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- Enter a check mark in the block beside each paragraph number to indicate that the client understands the information.
- The specified relative must sign the form. If the parent is also in the home, he must sign the form.
- The Worker and client must sign all copies.
- Distribute copies to the client and BCSE Child Support Specialist, and file one in the case record. If no referral is made, the extra copy is filed in the case record.

3. Procedure When The Client Refuses To Sign

When the client refuses to sign the DFA-AP-1, the action taken depends upon the reason for the refusal. When the client indicates that he will not sign the DFA-AP-1 and, in doing so, indicates that he will not cooperate with BCSE, the Worker must determine if good cause exists for the refusal. If good cause does exist, no BCSE action is required or taken and no penalty is applied to the client. If good cause does not exist, the WV WORKS case is referred to BCSE and the penalty described in item H below is applied. The Worker must record in RAPIDS the circumstances involved in the determination of good cause.

When the client indicates that he will not sign the DFA-AP-1, but indicates that he will cooperate with BCSE after referral, the WV WORKS case is referred to BCSE and no penalty is applied. The Worker must record in RAPIDS that the content and purpose of the form were explained to the client, that he refused to sign, the reason given for the refusal, that the client has indicated that he will cooperate with BCSE after the referral. The Worker must provide the client with an unsigned copy of the DFA-AP-1 and this must also be recorded in RAPIDS.

NOTE: There are some circumstances under which a letter is automatically generated to the absent parent(s) from the BCSE data system (OSCAR) as soon as the case is referred through RAPIDS. Therefore, it is important that the client be given the opportunity to establish good cause for not cooperating prior to the data exchange between RAPIDS and OSCAR. If the case is approved, or benefits added to an existing case, prior to verification of the good cause claim, the claim of having good cause that is pending verification, as entered into RAPIDS, will prevent the automatic production of a notice to the absent parent by the OSCAR system.

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NOTE: For WV WORKS cases, refusal or other failure to sign the DFA-AP-1 does not constitute failure to cooperate with BCSE requirements as shown on the PRC. The above instructions are followed and no sanction is applied.

B. BCSE REFERRALS

Referrals to the Bureau for Child Support Enforcement (BCSE) are automated in RAPIDS. Clients who claim good cause are not required to cooperate with BCSE, but a referral is made. Refer to the RAPIDS User Guide.

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All WV WORKS AG's which include a child under age 19 with at least one absent parent must be referred to BCSE. In addition, a currently unmarried minor parent who is unable to live with a parent(s) must be referred. See Section 9.21.

C. GOOD CAUSE

The client is required to cooperate unless good cause is established.

If the client who refuses to cooperate asserts that one or more of the factors listed below is the reason for non-cooperation, a good cause claim has been made. A client who refuses to cooperate and who gives as the reason some factor other than one of those listed below is considered to have refused to cooperate without claiming good cause.

1. Definition Of Good Cause

The client has good cause for refusal to cooperate with BCSE if one of the following conditions exists:

- The child was conceived as the result of incest or forcible rape.
- Legal proceedings for the adoption of the child are pending.
- The client is currently being assisted by the Department or by a licensed private social agency to resolve the issue of whether to keep the child or to relinquish him for adoption and the discussions have not gone on for more than three months.

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- The client's cooperation in establishing paternity or securing support is reasonably anticipated to result in:
 - Physical or emotional harm to the child for whom support is being sought; or
 - Physical or emotional harm to the parent or other specified relative with whom the child lives, which would reduce such person's capacity to care for the child adequately. A finding of good cause for emotional harm may only be based upon evidence of an emotional impairment that substantially affects the parent or other relative's functioning.

In determining good cause based in whole or in part upon the anticipation of emotional harm to the child, the parent or the other specified relative, the Worker must consider the following:

- The present emotional state of the individual;
- The emotional health history of the individual;
- The intensity and probable duration of the emotional impairment; and
- The extent of involvement of the child in the paternity establishment of support enforcement activity to be undertaken.

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2. When The Client Refuses To Cooperate Prior To BCSE Referral

If the client indicates to the Worker, prior to BCSE referral, that he does not intend to cooperate in BCSE activities, the Worker must determine if good cause exists for the refusal.

If good cause does exist, no BCSE action is required or taken and no penalty is applied to the client. If good cause does not exist, the WV WORKS case is referred to BCSE and the penalty described in Item H below is applied. The Worker must record in RAPIDS the circumstances involved in the determination of good cause.

NOTE: There are some circumstances under which a letter is automatically generated to the absent parent(s) from the BCSE data system (OSCAR) as soon as the case is referred through RAPIDS. Therefore, it is important that the client be given the opportunity to establish good cause for not cooperating prior to the data exchange between RAPIDS and OSCAR. If the case is approved, or benefits added to an existing case, prior to verification of the good cause claim, the claim of having good cause that is pending verification, as entered into RAPIDS, will prevent the automatic production of a notice to the absent parent by the OSCAR system.

For WV WORKS cases, a PRC sanction is applied when the client fails to comply with the child support requirements of the PRC.

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3. When The Client Claims Good Cause For Refusal To Cooperate Prior To BCSE Referral

When a client claims good cause prior to referral, the Worker makes a determination according to the procedure in item 4 below.

If there is evidence to immediately establish good cause, the Worker notifies BCSE at the time of referral that good cause has been established.

NOTE: There are some circumstances under which a letter is automatically generated to the absent parent(s) from the BCSE data system (OSCAR) as soon as the case is referred through RAPIDS. Therefore, it is important that the client be given the opportunity to establish good cause for not cooperating prior to the data exchange between RAPIDS and OSCAR. If the case is approved, or benefits added to an existing case, prior to verification of the good cause claim, the claim of having good cause that is pending verification, as entered into RAPIDS, will prevent the automatic production of a notice to the absent parent by the OSCAR system.

If good cause is not established, the Worker notifies BCSE at the time of referral that good cause was claimed but not established. If BCSE then notifies the Worker that the client has failed to cooperate, the Worker sends the notification of sanction.

4. When The Client Claims Good Cause For Refusal To Cooperate After BCSE Referral

When the client claims good cause after the referral, the Child Support Specialist refers the case back to the Worker for a determination of good cause. The Worker enforces the cooperation requirement; however, the Legal Assistant must participate in the good cause determination in an advisory capacity. The Worker must give the Child Support Specialist an opportunity to review and comment on the good cause investigation and the decision. The Worker must consider the recommendation of the Child Support Specialist in making the final decision.

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The procedure to determine good cause is as follows:

- Form DFA-AP-1A, Notice to Individual Who Has Claimed Good Cause for Refusal to Cooperate in Child Support Activities, must be completed by the Worker during a face-to-face contact with the client who signed or was interviewed about the DFA-AP-1A.

The Worker must be sure the client understands the information on Form DFA-AP-1A. Two original forms must be completed and signed by the Worker and the client. One original is given to the client and the other filed in the case record.

- The client has the primary responsibility for obtaining the verification needed to establish good cause. Refer to Chapter 4. The client must provide the verifications within 20 days of the date good cause is claimed.

In certain situations, it is acceptable to make a determination of good cause without verification. These situations are:

- The claim of good cause is based on the anticipation that cooperation will result in physical harm to the specified relative or the child; and
- The Worker believes, from the information provided by the client, that:
 - The claim is credible without corroborative evidence; or
 - Corroborative evidence is not available; and
 - The Worker and Supervisor agree that good cause exists.
- The Worker must determine if good cause exists within 45 days of the date good cause is claimed.

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- If good cause is established, the Worker must refer the case to the Child Support Specialist in writing (DHS-1) and indicate the basis for good cause. The case is not acted on by BCSE. At each redetermination of eligibility, the Worker determines if good cause still exists. If good cause no longer exists the Worker must notify the client and take appropriate action.
- If good cause is not established, the Worker initiates the PRC penalty by sending the client an DFA-NL-C. The Worker notifies the Child Support Specialist that good cause was claimed, but not established, and that the penalty or sanction for refusal to cooperate has been applied.

5. BCSE Case Closure of WV WORKS Cases

BCSE closes a case after referral for reasons such as, but not limited to, the following:

- The non-custodial parental rights and responsibilities are terminated and no arrears are owed
- The non-custodial parent or alleged father is deceased and no further action, including a levy against the estate, can be taken.
- Paternity cannot be established because the alleged father's identity is unknown
- The non-custodial parent's location is unknown and BCSE has been unsuccessful in locating the person after exhausting all efforts.
- The non-custodial parent is a citizen of, and lives in, a foreign country, does not work for the federal government or a company with headquarters or offices in the United States, and has no reachable domestic income or assets; and there is no reciprocity with the other country.
- The non-custodial parent cannot pay support for the duration of the child's minority and the person has no income or assets which can be levied or attached for support for one of the following reasons:
 - The non-custodial parent is incarcerated and there is no chance for parole for the duration of the child's minority; or

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- The non-custodial parent is receiving SSI and there is no income or assets to pay support and a doctor's statement or statement from SSA is provided to state that the non-custodial parent is permanently and totally disabled; or
- The non-custodial parent has a medically verified permanent and total disability with no evidence of support potential.

When BCSE closes a case for one of the above stated reasons, the BCSE Child Support Specialist enters the absence code PX. When this code is entered, information about the absent parent is no longer exchanged with OSCAR. The code cannot be changed by the Worker. The code is retained in RAPIDS and no entry is required at redetermination. If the Worker receives information about the absent parent which he believes is pertinent and which may require action by BCSE, he sends a DHS-1 to the Child Support Specialist.

D. REDIRECTION OF CHILD SUPPORT PAYMENTS (WV WORKS)

All child support payments made on behalf of children who are recipients of WV WORKS must be redirected to BCSE. The first \$100 in child support collected for families with 1 child and \$200 for families with more than 1 child eligible for TANF will pass through to families and will not count against WV WORKS, WV WORKS solely state funded programs, DCA, and EAP.

Exceptions are as follows:

- The case is exempt from referral to the Child Support Specialist due to good cause
- The specified relative refused to cooperate with child support activities after referral to BCSE and good cause was established.
- If paternity has not been established, but the putative father voluntarily makes child support payments, such payments are not required to be redirected.

After receiving a referral, the Child Support Specialist arranges for support payments to be sent directly to BCSE rather than the specified relative. If direct payments to BCSE cannot be arranged, the client must forward the payment to BCSE. Failure to do so will result in application of a sanction for WV WORKS for failure to cooperate with child support activities.

NOTE: While there is no penalty for Medicaid recipients who refuse to redirect support payments, they must be instructed that being referred to BCSE automatically triggers income withholding, whenever there is an existing court order for support and an identifiable source of income.

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E. REDIRECTION OF SPOUSAL SUPPORT (WV WORKS)

Spousal support must be redirected when:

- The spousal support (alimony or separate maintenance) is court-ordered; and
- It is paid by the absent parent to the parent who is the caretaker relative.

All policies and procedures applicable to child support which must be redirected also apply to spousal support which must be redirected to BCSE.

See Chapter 10 for counting redirected support.

Spousal support is not redirected when any of the following conditions exist:

- The parent is not included in the payment; or
- The caretaker relative receiving the spousal support is not the parent of the children receiving WV WORKS; or
- The parent who is the caretaker relative is receiving spousal support from a spouse who is not the parent of the children receiving cash assistance; or
- The spousal support is not court-ordered.

Spousal support which is not required to be redirected is considered unearned income and is counted as income. The \$50 Child Support Disregard is not an allowable deduction from spousal support.

F. REDIRECTION OF CHILD/SPOUSAL SUPPORT IN SPECIAL SITUATIONS

If the absent parent is ordered by the court to make child support payments in the form of in-kind payments (provision of food, clothing, etc.) or third-party payments (direct payment of the rent or mortgage, etc.), the payment cannot be redirected.

If the court order specifies that part of the child support obligations is to be paid in cash and part by third-party or in-kind method, the portion paid in cash must be redirected.

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A child may receive statutory benefits (RSDI, VA benefits, etc.) on the basis of his own entitlement, as a dependent of the absent parent who is the primary beneficiary. This benefit amount is not considered child support and is not redirected even though the court order may refer to such income as a source of support to the child, or even as child support.

G. PENALTIES FOR FAILURE TO COOPERATE (WV WORKS,)

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The decision about the application of a sanction is made by the Worker. The case is sanctioned for failure to cooperate with BCSE requirements based on the PRC. See Chapter 13 for the WV WORKS sanction.

An mp, who is included in the payment, must always cooperate for the mp's included child(ren) or a sanction is imposed, unless good cause exists. An included MP, or other caretaker, must cooperate for the mp and the mp's siblings, if any, or a sanction is imposed, unless good cause exists. In addition, an included MP must cooperate for the mp's included child(ren), as required by BCSE. Failure to comply, without good cause, results in application of a sanction.

Failure, without good cause, of either the mp or the MP to meet the cooperation requirements results in one sanction. Failure, without good cause, of both to cooperate may result in 2 sanctions. However, if there is more than one absent parent for either the mp or the MP, or both, failure, without good cause, results in one sanction for the case.

NOTE: The WV WORKS benefit is sanctioned on the Personal Responsibility Contract sanction request screen in eRAPIDS. An additional sanction on the Medicaid benefit is not applicable.

H. COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE WORKER AND THE CHILD SUPPORT SPECIALIST

Communication between the Worker and the Child Support Specialist continues until the case is closed or the child whose parent(s) is absent is removed from the AG,.

The Worker must notify the Child Support Specialist, in writing, of the following:

- A good cause determination is being made and the Child Support Specialist comments and recommendations are being requested prior to a final decision.
- The client has requested a Fair Hearing as the result of the Department's finding that good cause for non-cooperation is not established.
- Should the Worker become aware of information which could help the Child Support Specialist in obtaining support, this information must be shared.

The Child Support Specialist must notify the Worker, in writing, of the following:

- The client refuses to cooperate in child support activities and the reason for the refusal.
- Information which affects eligibility or the amount of the payment.
- Change of address.
- Paternity is established.
- Information regarding a change in the deprivation factor or cause of absence is secured.
- The client refuses to redirect child support payments and/or refuses to repay child support payments which were not redirected.

Changes in case circumstances are automatically referred to BCSE through the data systems. When health insurance information is entered by BCSE, RAPIDS alert 191 is sent to the Worker. See Section 16.1.

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