

Maintenance Enforcement Program

Variable Support Orders

What is a variable support order?

Variable support orders allow for changes in the payment of maintenance if circumstances change. These orders specify which particular situations change the amount of maintenance payable, or the way maintenance is payable.

What circumstances cause a change in maintenance payable?

Circumstances that can change the amount of maintenance payable depending on the specific provisions of court orders and most commonly refer to changes such as:

- a reduction in debtor income below a specific amount
- debtors being laid off or becoming unemployed
- shared custody arrangements that result in debtors exchanging roles with custodial parents
- debtors assuming responsibility for section 7 expenses to be offset by a reduction in the amount of ongoing support payable

Whose responsibility is it to notify the Maintenance Enforcement Program (MEP) of changes in circumstances?

MEP enforces the terms of court orders according to the circumstances that applied at the time the file was registered with MEP, **unless notified otherwise**. The parties involved are responsible for notifying MEP of any changes in circumstances that affect the enforcement of court orders. MEP requires supporting documentation to confirm any changes in income or employment status. Changes in maintenance obligations related to custody arrangements must be confirmed by both parents.

How does MEP ensure appropriate adjustments are made to files?

Once MEP receives confirmation that circumstances have changed affecting maintenance payments, MEP updates the file accordingly. In most cases, when debtor circumstances change, the amount of maintenance being collected and paid to creditors also changes.

How can clients find out if their files have been adjusted?

Clients can find out why support payments have changed by referring to their variable court orders. Clients can get updates on adjustments made to their file by viewing the details on *MEP Accounts Online* (see below).

This document is part of a series of MEP information sheets that can be obtained in the following ways:

- MEP's website at www.albertamep.gov.ab.ca
- MEP's fax-on-demand service on the *MEP Info Line* by calling 780-422-5555 and using the catalogue number of the information sheet you wish to request

* **Toll-free** service to all Government of Alberta phone numbers is available from anywhere in Alberta by calling 310-0000 and following the voice prompts