

Responsibilities of the Payor

The Maintenance Enforcement Program (MEP) uses the term payor (debtor) for those individuals who are required to pay maintenance awarded in a court order or agreement.

Payor Registration

Payors who wish to register with the MEP must complete a *Registration Package* and *Authorized Bank Withdrawal* form. To inform the MEP of maintenance amounts owed from the past (arrear), an *Affidavit of Arrears* and *Calculation of Arrears Worksheet* must be completed. These forms can be found on the MEP's website.

If a party wishes to re-open a previously registered MEP file, a \$205.00 re-registration fee may apply. For more information, refer to the MEP's information sheet *Service Fees*, available on the MEP's website.

Recipient Registration

When a recipient registers, the MEP notifies the payor by mail about their MEP file registration. Registration allows the MEP to act as a financial intermediary between payors and recipients and ensures that all maintenance payments are properly recorded and credited.

Payments Made Directly to Recipients

Once a file is registered with the MEP, the payor must make all maintenance payments through the MEP, as required by section 7 of the *Maintenance Enforcement Act*. Payors must not pay the recipient directly. When payments are made directly between the payor and the recipient, the MEP's financial records are not accurate, which may result in late payment penalties, interest charges and unnecessary collection actions.

If a payor has made payments directly to a recipient after registration, they should advise the MEP immediately and provide proof (e.g. canceled cheque or receipt signed by the recipient). The MEP will credit a file for direct payments only when the MEP receives proof of payment which confirms the recipient accepted the payment as maintenance, and not for some other purpose.

Making Payments to the MEP

Payors living in Canada may make payments to the MEP in any of the following ways:

- **Authorized bank withdrawal** (by completing an *Authorized Bank Withdrawal* form available on the MEP's website).
- **Voluntary pay deduction** (by completing a *Payor (Debtor) Voluntary Pay Deduction* form available on the MEP's website).
- **Internet or telephone banking** (through a bank or financial institution).
- **Cheque or money order** (by mailing cheques or post-dated cheques to the MEP office).

For more information on making payments to the MEP, refer to the MEP's information sheet *Making Payments*, available on the MEP's website.

Difficulties with Paying Maintenance

Payors are responsible for making payments according to the terms of their court orders or agreements. It is not possible for the MEP to change the amount a payor is required to pay, although the MEP may make administrative decisions to temporarily collect an amount less than the required amount in certain situations.

To avoid collection actions, penalty and interest charges, maintenance payments should be paid in full by the due date set out in the court order or agreement. If this is not possible (e.g. due to job loss, illness, or new family responsibilities), payors are encouraged to contact the MEP to make payment arrangements by completing a [Statement of Finances](#). Payors may also wish to return to court to have their court orders or agreements changed.

For more information, refer to the following information sheets available on the MEP's website:

- *Payment Arrangements*
- *What to do if you Cannot Make Your Support Payments*
- *Stay of Enforcement*
- *Varying or Changing Your Court Order*

Non-sufficient funds

When paying by cheque or authorized bank withdrawal, it is a payor's responsibility to ensure they have sufficient funds in their bank to cover the payment. When a payment is returned to the MEP due to non-sufficient funds (NSF), the MEP charges a \$51.50 fee to the payor's file. This fee partially covers the MEP's costs when a NSF payment occurs. In cases when the payment was advanced to the recipient, and the payor's payment is then returned as NSF, the MEP must recover the payment from the payor at the first

possible opportunity. Maintenance payments to the recipient will be delayed until the full payment is recovered. For this reason, the payor should make every effort to make up the missed payment as soon as possible.

Personal Information

Payors are legally required to keep their contact, banking, and employment information up to date with the MEP. Newly registered payors are also encouraged to contact the MEP promptly to ensure they are aware of their file status.

Child Status Reports

Payors should notify the MEP immediately of any changes in child status that may affect eligibility for maintenance. If the MEP is notified that there are changes to a child's circumstances that may impact payment of child support, the MEP conducts a child status review by requesting the recipient to complete a Child Status Report. The MEP also automatically conducts a child status review for a child who is about to reach their age of majority (in Alberta, the age of majority is 18). These reviews help the MEP to make administrative decisions on the collection of maintenance. For more information, refer to the information sheets *Child Status Reviews* and *Maintenance for Adult Children*, available on the MEP's website.

Income Support

When recipients receive income support from the government (often known as welfare or social assistance), the government has the right to their maintenance payments when the government is fully supporting recipients and their families. In such cases, payors continue to make maintenance payments to the MEP, and the MEP forwards these payments to the provincial government to offset the income support being provided. For more information, refer to the MEP's information sheet *Income Support and the Government's Right to Receive Maintenance Payments*, available on the MEP's website.

Withdrawal from the MEP

To close a file with the MEP, the registering party must provide a written notice to the MEP requesting file closure, or complete the *Withdrawal from the Maintenance Enforcement Program* form, available on the MEP's website. The file closure will be processed once any amounts owed to the government are paid in full and if the recipient is not receiving income support from the government.

- The MEP has other Information Sheets, on a variety of helpful topics. To see them, visit the MEP's website at alberta.ca/mep
- To contact the MEP, phone 780-422-5555 or toll-free in Alberta at 310-0000.
- To view information about your MEP file, go to the MEP's website at alberta.ca/mep and select "MEP Accounts Online".