

Introduction to the Maintenance Enforcement Program

The Maintenance Enforcement Program's (MEP) mission is to help families achieve compliance with court orders and agreements for maintenance. Parties wishing to have their file enforced by the MEP must complete a registration package. Either party may register with the MEP and once a file is opened, both parties are automatically enrolled in the Program.

The MEP's Responsibilities

The MEP enforces maintenance obligations awarded in court orders and certain agreements by collecting payments from payors (those who are required to pay maintenance) and forwarding them to recipients (those who are awarded maintenance payments). The MEP does not obtain court orders for clients and cannot change the amount of maintenance ordered by a court. The MEP also does not provide legal representation or advice to clients.

The MEP:

- keeps clients' personal information confidential
- collects payments from payors and forwards them to recipients
- enforces on the file as needed

The MEP cannot guarantee the collection of funds on all MEP files. The MEP achieves the best collection results when we work in partnership with our clients. As the MEP operates through a trust account, payments must clear the bank before the MEP can deposit them directly into recipient bank accounts. Depending on the source of the payment and the method of payment, it may take up to 10 days for a payment to clear and be released to the recipient. Although there is generally no cost to clients for the MEP's enforcement services, service fees and penalties may apply in some cases.

For more information about the MEP's responsibilities, refer to the information sheet *Responsibilities of the Maintenance Enforcement Program*, available on the MEP's website.

Recipient Responsibilities

Recipients are legally required to keep their contact and banking information up to date with the MEP. Recipients should also notify the MEP immediately of any changes in child status that may affect eligibility for maintenance.

Once a file is registered with the MEP, recipients must not accept payments directly from payors. If a recipient accepts a direct payment, the payment must be reported to *MEP Accounts Online* or the *MEP Info Line* within seven days of receiving it, or a \$51.50 penalty will be charged. Continued acceptance of direct payments by a recipient, even if it is reported to the MEP, will result in file closure.

For more information about recipient responsibilities, refer to the information sheet *Responsibilities of the Recipient*, available on the MEP's website.

Payor Responsibilities

Payors are legally required to keep their contact, banking, and employment information up to date with the MEP. Newly registered payors are encouraged to contact the MEP promptly to ensure they are aware of their file status. Payors should also notify the MEP immediately of any changes in child status that may affect eligibility for maintenance.

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.

To avoid penalties, interest charges and collection actions, payors should make all maintenance payments to the MEP on or before the court ordered due date. The best way to make payments to the MEP is by Authorized Bank Withdrawal, deductions from the payor's paycheque, or by telephone or Internet banking. If a payor is unable to make all maintenance payments to the MEP on or before the court ordered due date, the payor should contact the MEP immediately to discuss making a payment arrangement with the Program.

For more information about payor responsibilities, refer to the information sheet *Responsibilities of the Payor*, available on the MEP's website.

Communicating with the MEP

The *MEP Info Line* and *MEP Accounts Online* provide general information about the MEP and provide clients with automated information about their file 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Clients can call the *MEP Info Line* at 780-422-5555 in Edmonton and area or toll free in Alberta at 310-0000 to speak with a staff person. To access *MEP Accounts Online*, clients visit the MEP's website at alberta.ca/mep and click on "MEP Accounts Online".

For more information about communicating with the MEP, refer to the information sheet *MEP Accounts Online* and *MEP Info Line* available on the MEP's website.

Information Sheets

The MEP has many information sheets to help answer your questions and provide more detailed information about the Program. Clients can read these information sheets online at the MEP website.

MEP forms are also available through the website. Some of the commonly used forms available are:

- Registration Package
- Child Status Report
- Section 7 Expenses Information and Report
- Authorized Bank Withdrawal
- Statement Of Finances

- 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"