

Overview

Maintenance Enforcement Program

We Can Help You

We recognize how important financial support is for families, especially to meet the needs of children. This is equally true when parents or spouses do not live in the same household.

Our purpose is to help with the payment and receipt of support (called maintenance payments) for these families. Many payors pay support willingly. Others do not. In either case, MEP is here to help. We provide service for both:

- ▶ the recipient (person who receives maintenance payments), and
- ▶ the payor (person who is required to pay maintenance payments).

We strive to have a good working relationship with all of our clients so that court orders and registered agreements for child support and spousal support (called maintenance orders) are followed.

Who We Are

The Maintenance Enforcement Program (MEP) is a program of the Nova Scotia Department of Justice. Learn more by using our website NS MEP: novascotia.ca/just/mep

We register, monitor and facilitate payments of all maintenance orders enrolled in MEP. When payments are not received, we must take every advisable measure to enforce maintenance orders according to the laws and guidelines that MEP follows.

MEP operates under the laws set out in the *Maintenance Enforcement Act* and related Regulations.

We are a separate program from the courts in Nova Scotia. For online information on family law and the court system in Nova Scotia, please visit: *Family Law Nova Scotia* and *The Courts of Nova Scotia* websites.

Why MEP Was Created

Until 1996, a recipient had to apply to the court to enforce a maintenance order and follow through with any remedy. The process could be time-consuming and expensive. The entire burden was on people who may not have had the resources or knowledge to pursue the matter on their own. The program was created to remove or minimize that burden and reduce conflict from an important, and often difficult, family matter.

NS MEP – Support for Families

Maintenance payments are debts that must be paid. They are a legal priority.

The view of the Nova Scotia Government is that families are entitled to receive their support in a timely manner.

What We Can Do For You

Having your maintenance order enrolled in MEP does not automatically mean that the payor has had a poor payment history or will have one in the future. Many people are enrolled in MEP because of the benefits that MEP can offer.

There are two main functions of MEP:

- 1. Accurate and impartial payment record**
 - ▶ We collect payments from the payor and forward them to the recipient
 - ▶ We keep accurate records of these payments without favouring either party
 - ▶ We protect each party's personal information
- 2. Enforcement if payment is not made**
 - ▶ We design the best possible enforcement strategy (see page 2) for each individual case without influence by either party
 - ▶ We provide a buffer or intermediary between the parties in enforcing the court order

Enforcement Action

Enforcement action is taken when payments are not being made. It is based on what we know or can find out about the payor's location and financial situation.

If enforcement is necessary, we will choose the actions and strategy that will have the best chance of success in each individual case.

MEP AUTHORITY

MEP has legal authority to enforce maintenance orders using many different options under federal and provincial laws. These options include the following examples of actions:

- ▶ Demand the payor's contact, financial and employment information from the payor, recipient and others
- ▶ Take money from the payor's wages, bank accounts, or other known sources of income (called garnishment)
- ▶ Request revocation of the payor's passport
- ▶ Request suspension of the payor's motor vehicle licence or hunting and fishing licence
- ▶ Work with other MEPs when one party is not living in NS

Please see *How MEP Can Enforce a Support Order* on our website for more information on MEP's enforcement options.

CHALLENGES THAT REMAIN

No maintenance enforcement program can be 100 per cent successful. Challenges that we know can be frustrating include these examples: locating an income source when a payor changes employment or locating a payor who has moved away.

We work hard to overcome these challenges in every case using the legal options that MEP has.

While MEP facilitates support payments to families and enforces maintenance orders, we cannot guarantee payment. For example: some payors may have no income or assets. We will continue to work with the parties and pursue payment of support.

NO ENROLLMENT FEE

There are no fees to be enrolled in MEP. However, specific fees are charged to the payor when MEP must take action to enforce maintenance payments.

Help Us to Help You

MEP is designed to help you with the transfer of support payments from the payor to the recipient for the benefit of the family.

Sharing Responsibility

The **payor** is the primary person responsible to ensure that support payments are made. To help you understand what that means and how the payor should work with MEP, please see the Fact Sheet on *Payor Responsibilities*.

To help you understand more about **MEP's** responsibilities to both the recipient and payor, please see the Fact Sheet on *MEP Responsibilities*.

To learn about how the **recipient** can work with MEP, please see the *Recipient Responsibilities* Fact Sheet.

Contact Us

For details on how to contact us, including office hours, mailing address, phone numbers, Infoline, MEP Online, and email, please see the *Contact Information* Fact Sheet.

