

NUMBER

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DATE

July 9, 2025

OF INTEREST TO

County Directors

Tribal Chairpersons and Tribal
Directors

Financial Assistance Supervisors
and Staff

County Child Support
Supervisors and Staff

Navigators, In-person assisters,
and Certified Application
Counselors

Community Partner Agencies
and Advocates

Alternative Care Case Managers
and Assessors

Child Care Assistance Program
Administrative and Client
Access Contacts

ACTION/DUE DATE

These clarifications are
effective immediately. Please
read information and assess
your agency's policies for
alignment

EXPIRATION DATE

July 9, 2027

Good Cause Exemption for Child Support Cooperation Processes, Procedures and Best Practices for Public Assistance Programs

TOPIC

This is a joint bulletin between the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), Diversionary Work Program (DWP), Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), Medical Assistance (MA), and Child Support Division on the good cause exemption for child support cooperation processes, procedures and best practices for cooperating with child support requirements.

PURPOSE

This bulletin clarifies the good cause exemption from cooperation with child support policy and disseminates best practices to create consistent procedures to ensure the safety of all parties.

CONTACT

County and Tribal Nations should submit:

- Cash and child care questions to Policy Quest
- Health care eligibility policy questions to Health Quest
- Child support policy questions to the Child Support Division Help Desk
- MAXIS related questions to the TSS Help Desk
- METS related questions to Health Care Eligibility System Support
- PRISM related questions to the Child Support Division Help Desk

SIGNED



Dr. Shaneen Moore, Assistant Commissioner Family Well-being

TERMINOLOGY NOTICE

The terminology used to describe people we serve has changed over time. The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) and Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) support the use of "People First" language.

I. Introduction

Minnesota statutes require people applying for Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), Diversionary Work Program (DWP), Medical Assistance (MA), and the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) to cooperate with the child support program. Each program has different requirements and takes different actions based on the circumstances of applicants and their family. Cooperation includes actions such as establishing paternity, establishing or modifying existing child support orders, medical support only orders, and enforcing orders. Caregivers who fear emotional or physical harm may come to them or their children if they cooperate with the child support program can request a good cause exemption to not cooperate with child support requirements. ([Minn. Stat. § 518A.81, subd. 5](#))

County and Tribal Nation public assistance and child support agencies must inform applicants and custodial parents about their right to request a good cause exemption from cooperating with child support. Good cause exemptions may be an important part of a caregiver's safety plan. County and Tribal agencies may grant exemptions for caregivers with safety concerns, including situations where cooperation with child support poses a fear or risk of physical or emotional harm to the parent, caregiver or child.

A 2014 research study shows approximately 40% of custodial parents with cases nationally in the child support program experienced domestic violence with the other party on their case¹. Because of this prevalence, child support and public assistance programs must improve how they handle safety concerns and provide safety measures, including the good cause exemption processes.

MFIP, DWP, MA and CCAP play a crucial role in providing economic support, with vital impact for families experiencing domestic abuse. These programs help survivors afford necessities, such as food, housing, and healthcare, and are essential in providing a bridge to safety and stability as survivors work to heal from violence. A survey report titled *We Would Have Had to Stay: Survivors' Economic Security and Access to Public Benefits Programs*² found "the vast majority (90%) of survivors surveyed said that public benefits are "very much" (78%) or "somewhat" (13%) important for being able to provide basic necessities."

Safe access to public programs is vital. The good cause exemption from cooperation helps ensure individuals and families are not put at risk due to their participation in public programs and child support cooperation requirements. The complexity of our programs, including relevant statutes, policies, and training provided on good cause exemptions, family violence waivers, and safety measures can lead to inconsistencies and a need for clarity.

This bulletin clarifies the good cause exemption from cooperation with child support policy and disseminates best practices to create consistent procedures to ensure the safety of all parties.

¹ [Safe Access to Child Support Services: Scope of the Issue | The Administration for Children and Families](#)

² [NRCDV_PublicBenefits-WeWouldHaveHadToStay-Nov2018.pdf](#)

II. Good Cause Exemption Request Questions and Answers

1. How do caregivers receive information on the good cause exemption to cooperate with child support or medical support?

Each public assistance program requiring caregivers with children to cooperate with child or medical support must give caregivers the following forms:

- Understanding Child Support, a Handbook for Parents ([DHS-3393](#)) (PDF)
- Referral to Support and Collections ([DHS-3163B](#)) (PDF)
- Cooperation with Child Support ([DHS-2338](#)) (PDF)
- MA Only: MHCP Medical Support Referral ([DHS-4621](#)) (PDF)

Agency staff can give these forms to caregivers at different times based on each public assistance program. For example:

- MA staff give these forms to caretakers after MA eligibility is determined. Not everyone who applies for, and receives Minnesota Health Care Programs (MHCP), is required to cooperate with the child support program.
- CCAP staff send the child support forms when there is not an open child support case for children with non-custodial parents indicating the caregiver is already cooperating with child support. Child support cooperation is confirmed at application, when the three-month eligibility period for families experiencing homelessness ends, and at redetermination of child care benefits.
- MFIP and DWP staff send the child support forms with every application for assistance, and when a household adds a child with a non-custodial parent to the household.

2. How do child support and public assistance workers maintain confidentiality and protection within their case management systems for good cause and safety concern verification, sharing, and documenting?

Policy requires County agencies, Tribal Nations, and Employment service providers to follow data privacy procedures. Ensuring confidentiality for program participants with safety concerns is vital, especially when a participant may be living with a person causing harm.

- All workers should consult with each participant to determine their preferred methods of contact including mailing address, phone number, and e-mail or other electronic communications. If phone contact is a preferred method, discuss if it is safe to leave voicemails.
- Eligibility workers should collaborate with child support and employment services when processing good cause requests to share information about the request. If a request contains Protected Health Information, all workers must comply with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Minimum Necessary Rule which requires that workers share only the specific information needed to accomplish their task. All workers must follow their agency's or Tribal Nation's

procedures for sharing known information between workers and programs. Consult with your county attorney or Tribal Nation legal counsel if you are uncertain about how to apply your policy.

- At the request of a caregiver, obtain a release of information prior to discussing any safety or domestic violence related circumstances with an advocate or domestic violence agency that are relevant to program needs.
- Participants may have the option to request their case be privileged to limit who may view their case information in the system. For instructions on protecting and privileging cases, all workers can refer to their program manuals.
 - In all programs, Safe at Home (SAH) participant cases must be protected as privileged data, without a participant request. SAH participants may not receive notices timely due to the SAH mail forwarding process. This may impact their capacity to reply promptly; all workers should allow caregivers additional time to respond if needed.
- Child support workers should reference the Safety Concerns topic in the Child Support Manual when documenting safety concerns and managing cases appropriately.
- For two-parent public assistance households, workers should provide minimum necessary case information to both participants and refrain from sharing non-case specific information or discussing other conversations they may have had with the other participant on the case.

Finally, it is best practice for all agencies to develop specific policies, procedures, and practices to protect safety information and maintain confidentiality, with additional considerations if both parents may be in the home. Consult with your county attorney or Tribal Nation legal counsel if you have questions about data privacy.

3. What child support program services are required as part of cooperation for MA enrollees?

MA enrollees must cooperate with medical support services as a condition of MA eligibility, but they may still choose to voluntarily request additional child support services.

Medical support only services include establishing paternity and establishing and enforcing medical support orders only. Additional child support services include establishing and enforcing child support, spousal maintenance, and child care orders when applicable.

To opt out of full child support services and only participate in the required medical support services, MA enrollees can check the following box on page one of the Referral to Support and Collections ([DHS-3163B](#)) (PDF): Check this box if you are applying only for Medical Assistance (MA) and want only medical support services.

4. How can someone request a good cause exemption?

Recipients of public assistance can claim good cause at any time during receipt of assistance. A caregiver may request a good cause exemption by filing the Cooperation with Child Support ([DHS-2338](#)) (PDF) with the public assistance or child support agency. The public assistance agency must process the

request and forward a copy of the Cooperation with Child Support ([DHS-2338](#)) (PDF) to the child support agency. Public assistance and child support agencies must work together to ensure they submit all documentation to their Good Cause Committee following internal agency procedures.

5. Is the Cooperation with Child Support form ([DHS-2338](#)) (PDF) required for requesting a good cause exemption?

Yes. The form is complete when caregivers submit it with their signature and indicate on the checkbox if they are requesting a good cause exemption or not. Caregivers can verbally attest to other information on the form.

If there are multiple noncustodial parents, caregivers must complete the form for each noncustodial parent for which they want to request good cause. Requesting a good cause exemption is child support case specific and caregivers are not required to claim good cause for all cases with noncustodial parents. Caregivers who claim a good cause exemption on one case may wish to receive child support services on another case.

If caregivers return the form with their signature but without indicating their request for good cause, contact the caregiver to verify the intention to request a good cause exemption. If caregivers want to request a good cause exemption, the caregiver must resubmit the form indicating the request by checking the good cause exemption box.

If caregivers request a good cause exemption verbally or submit the form without their signature, workers must send or return the form to the caregiver for them to complete. Public assistance workers should inform child support workers about the caregiver's request for a good cause exemption so any safety concerns are addressed while waiting for the Cooperation with Child Support form ([DHS-2338](#)) (PDF) with the caregiver's signature.

6. What is the process once a caregiver submits the Cooperation with Child Support form ([DHS-2338](#)) (PDF) and requests a good cause exemption?

Upon receipt of the Cooperation with Child Support form ([DHS-2338](#)) (PDF), public assistance eligibility workers must update the system with the good cause request status as pending and enter the claim date, reason for the claim if they know it, and notify the Good Cause Committee of the request. If the reason for the claim is missing, but the form is otherwise complete, workers must still update the system with the good cause claim status as pending.

Within five business days of the Good Cause Committee's receipt of the claim, the agency must send the caregiver the Important Information about Your Request for a Child Support Good Cause Exemption form ([DHS-3627](#)) (PDF) and the Notice of Privacy Practices ([DHS-3979](#)) (PDF). Agencies must give caregivers 20 days to provide evidence for their claim after sending the forms.

Verification for the good cause claim is due within 20 days of the Important Information about Your Request for a Child Support Good Cause Exemption ([DHS-3627](#)) (PDF) mailing date. If more evidence is needed to make a decision, send the caregiver a Request for Additional Information To Provide Your Child Support Good Cause Exemption ([DHS-3632](#)) (PDF) and Notice of Privacy Practices ([DHS-3979](#)) (PDF).

or ([DHS-3627](#)) (PDF) allowing 20 more days for them to provide evidence. The Good Cause Committee may grant extra time if it appears the caregiver is cooperating and trying to obtain the information.

The Good Cause Committee will review any supporting evidence provided and approve or deny the claim. Upon the caregiver's request, agencies must assist the caregiver in gathering the evidence. If the good cause request is approved, send the Notice of Child Support Good Cause Approval ([DHS-3629](#)) (PDF) to the caregiver. If the good cause request is denied, send the Notice of Denial of Child Support Good Cause Exemption ([DHS-3628](#)) (PDF) and the Appeal to State Agency ([DHS-0033](#)) (PDF) to the caregiver. The Good Cause Committee will share result of the claim with all programs the caregiver applied for that require cooperation with child support.

The public assistance eligibility workers of the program will then enter the result of the good cause claim into their corresponding system (MA in MAXIS and METS, MFIP and DWP in MAXIS, and CCAP in MEC²).

7. What do child support workers do if they receive good cause exemption requests for open child support cases with enforcement remedies in place?

While the good cause exemption request is pending, child support workers must stop all enforcement remedies and terminate active income withholding. Workers should not send any notices to the noncustodial parent. It is best practice to contact caregivers to inform them of the good cause exemption process and how it impacts the child support case. Caregivers should be informed of all the enforcement activities that will stop while the good cause request is pending, ensuring they understand no child support will be collected or distributed to them through income withholding.

8. How can caregivers end their good cause exemption?

Caregivers can request an end to the exemption at any time by completing the Request to End Child Support Good Cause Exemption form ([DHS-3631](#)) (PDF) and returning it to either the public assistance agency or the child support agency. The agency receiving the request must share it with the other programs using all available systems. If a request to end the good cause exemption is made verbally, workers must send the form to the caregiver for completion and case note any conversations with the caregiver.

9. Does a caregiver's request for a good cause exemption extend to all public assistance programs requiring child support cooperation?

Yes. A good cause exemption applies to all programs connected to the caregiver's exemption request for that noncustodial parent. Caregivers do not need to request a good cause exemption for each program, even if they apply for a new program requiring child support cooperation. The caregiver's good cause exemption for that noncustodial parent still applies for their child support case. The caregiver does not need to reapply for the good cause exemption or complete and return the referral to support and

collections forms unless the exemption has ended. Agencies must search all available systems to verify if a good cause exemption is active before taking action.

10. Are good cause exemptions still in place if caregivers close their public assistance case and reapply later?

Approvals for good cause exemptions are in place for one year ([Minn. Stat. § 518A.81, subd. 13](#)). Good cause exemptions are still in effect for caregivers who reapply for a public assistance program before their exemption redetermination date. They do not need to submit a new request and public assistance workers should review the caregiver's exemption at the yearly redetermination.

For example: A caregiver applies for cash assistance in January and the Good Cause Committee approves the good cause exemption in February. The case closes in April and the caregiver reapplies for cash assistance in July. Since the good cause exemption redetermination would be in February, one year from the committee's decision, the caregiver does not need to request another good cause exemption. The Good Cause Committee should review the caregiver's good cause exemption at the February redetermination.

There is only one redetermination date based on committee's decision of good cause approval. Yearly redeterminations are based on the decision date and documented by the Good Cause Committee.

11. When a decision about the request for good cause exemption is pending, is the caregiver considered in cooperation with child support?

Yes. When a caregiver requests a good cause exemption by submitting the Cooperation with Child Support form ([DHS-2338](#)) (PDF) and the decision is pending, the caregiver is in cooperation with child support program requirements. If the caregiver requests a good cause exemption after a sanction notice, the child support worker must update the case to show the caregiver is cooperating.

12. When a caregiver is appealing a good cause exemption decision, can a child support sanction be applied?

No. While good cause exemption decisions are being appealed, workers must consider the caregiver in cooperation with child support program requirements and child support non-cooperation sanctions cannot be applied while the appeal is pending. Public assistance workers can still apply sanctions for other non-cooperation reasons. Only child support sanctions cannot be applied.

13. Are new child support forms needed at CCAP application and redetermination if a caregiver has a closed child support case?

If the caregiver's child support case is closed for good cause or other reasons and the caregiver is indicated as in cooperation, the caregiver does not need to submit new child support forms. If more information is needed, CCAP eligibility workers should contact the child support agency to determine if new forms are required. If the child support agency indicates new forms are not needed, the eligibility worker should process the CCAP application without requiring child support forms from the caregiver.

CCAP is the only program that verifies cooperation at application and redetermination as an eligibility factor and may require new child support forms.

14. When a good cause exemption expires, what actions should a Child Care Assistance Program worker (CCAP) take for redetermination?

If the caregiver is in the 12-month eligibility period, the family's CCAP remains open. The CCAP worker will get an alert to send the Notice of Child Support Good Cause Redetermination ([DHS-3630](#)) (PDF) to the caregiver. If the Good Cause Committee reapproves the good cause exemption request, the CCAP worker should send the Notice of Approval of Redetermination of Your Child Support Good Cause Exemption ([DHS-3633](#)) (PDF) to the caregiver.

Forty-five days before the CCAP redetermination due date, the CCAP worker will receive an alert that the agency notified the caregiver about its redetermination. If the caregiver is not in cooperation with child support, workers should send the following documents:

- Understanding Child Support, a Handbook for Parents ([DHS-3393](#)) (PDF)
- Cooperation with Child Support Enforcement ([DHS-2338](#)) (PDF)
- Referral to Support and Collections ([DHS-3163B](#)) (PDF)

The caregiver only needs to complete and return the Referral to Support and Collections ([DHS-3163B](#)) (PDF) form by the redetermination due date. CCAP does not require the Cooperation with Child Support Enforcement ([DHS-2338](#)) (PDF) unless the family or caregiver is making a good cause exemption request. See CCAP Policy Manual 4.9.12 ([Child Support Cooperations at Redetermination](#)).

III. Good Cause Exemption Verifications

A. Good cause exemptions can be requested for the following reasons:

- Risk of:
 - Physical or emotional harm to children
 - Physical harm to the caregiver

- Emotional harm to the caregiver that reduces ability to adequately care for the children
- Good cause exemptions can also be requested in the following situations:
 - Child was conceived as a result of rape or incest
 - Court action is going on to adopt the children or the caregiver is working with an agency that is helping decide whether children should be placed for adoption

B. Supporting evidence for good cause exemption requests may include but is not limited to:

- Safe at Home address or identification card.
- Medical or law enforcement records showing the child was conceived as the result of rape or incest. If these records are not available, the agency must consider the caregiver's own statement about the circumstances that led to the child being conceived.
- Court documents or other records showing legal proceedings for adoption are pending. Tribal court records can be accessed by contacting Tribal court directly.
- A written statement from a public or licensed private social service agency confirming the caregiver is deciding whether to keep the child or to place the child for adoption. The caregiver's right to request a good cause exemption based only on this claim expires if the adoption decision process lasts more than 90 days.
- Court, medical, criminal, child protective services, social services, domestic violence advocate services, psychological, or law enforcement records that show the alleged or absent parent might cause physical or emotional harm on child, parent, or caregiver.
- Medical records or written statements from a licensed medical professional indicating the emotional health history or status of the caregiver, child or caretaker or indicating a diagnosis or prognosis concerning the emotional health may be damaged if the caregiver cooperates to establish paternity or to obtain child support.
- Examples of records available may include:
 - Police reports
 - Orders for Protection
 - Medical records
 - Newspaper or other media accounts of prior harm
- Sworn statements from other people who might provide information supporting the caregiver's good cause request. Friends, neighbors, clergy, social workers, counselors, doctors, psychologists, school personnel, and others can write the statements. To meet sworn statement criteria, the statement must do one of the following:
 - Include: "I declare under penalty of perjury that everything I have stated in this document is true and correct" and then their signature, or, be notarized.

- The Good Cause Committee may also receive statements that are not considered sworn statements. Because state statute does not limit the evidence the committee can consider, it should use its discretion in reviewing the statements in combination with any other evidence.
- Other types of documentation may be accepted such as:
 - Text messages
 - Emails
 - Photographs
 - Videos
 - Social media messages
 - Written statement from the caregiver explaining why they are making a good cause exemption request.

C. Important things for workers to remember with all good cause exemption requests and verifications:

- Avoid over verifying information the agency already knows. Review the case file at each initial request and redetermination to check what verification is already on file. This could include collaboration with employment services, public assistance, and child support staff if case files are not shared across systems. Workers should only send out a request for more information if they need it.
- Review evidence with the family's safety as the highest priority. In discretionary review, err on the side of safety when determining a request.
- Do not assume expired documentation means there is no fear or risk of harm as it may never truly go away.
- Refrain from denying a good cause exemption at redetermination just because there has not been a new incident of harm. Consider no new incidents of harm or new evidence available at redeterminations an indication that good cause may be working as intended to improve the participant's safety.
- Remember it is not necessary that harm has occurred or is presently occurring to approve a good cause request. The standard under MN statute is whether the pursuit of child support services could reasonably result in physical or emotional harm, not whether applicants for public benefits or their children have already suffered physical or emotional harm.
- Count Safe at Home address or identification cards as evidence for any reason listed on a good cause exemption request.
- Avoid viewing the examples of evidence listed in statute as a hierarchy and remember the Good Cause Committee may consider other evidence when it determines good cause exemptions.
- Keep in mind there will not always be external documentation or professional evidence to support a good cause request. The lack of this type of evidence should not be a reason for the Good Cause Committee to deny a request.
- Assist individuals in obtaining evidence upon request. It is best practice to inform caregivers of the type of support workers can provide in obtaining evidence. Reach out to see what type of assistance may be needed.

- Do not assume a caregiver does not have safety concerns or does not want good cause if the request form is not returned, or not clearly indicated. Contacting the caregiver in these situations is best practice to avoid any risk that may happen from an incomplete request.
- Most importantly, consider the best interests of the child in all good cause exemption determinations.

IV. Good Cause Exemption Request for Safe at Home (SAH) Participants

SAH participants are not required to claim a good cause exemption. However, if they do, the Good Cause Committee must automatically grant the request upon completion of the Cooperation with Child Support ([DHS-2338](#)) (PDF) requesting a good cause exemption. This also applies if there are multiple non-custodial parents. If a caregiver is in the SAH program and requests a good cause exemption for one or all non-custodial parents, the good cause exemption is automatically approved. Child support workers must protect the SAH participant's address on the child support case following address protection processes even if participants do not request a good cause exemption.

The Good Cause Committee must grant the exemption at the redetermination for good cause if the caregiver is still in the SAH program. If program enrollment is unclear, workers can contact SAH with the lot number to confirm it is still active, and child support workers should do so before removing any SAH addresses or denying an exemption for this reason. Workers should not send the Notice of Child Support Good Cause Redetermination ([DHS-3630](#)) (PDF) for automatic approvals. The committee must still send the Notice of Approval of Redetermination of your Child Support Exemption ([DHS-3633](#)) (PDF) with the Request to End Child Support Good Cause Exemption ([DHS-3631](#)) (PDF) in case the caregiver wants to end the exemption and pursue child support services.

To find out more about the Safe at Home Program, visit:

- Website: <https://www.sos.mn.gov/safe-at-home/about-safe-at-home/>
- Metro Area Phone: 651-201-1399
- Greater MN Phone: 866-723-3035
- TTY 800-627-3529 or 711

V. Differences between the Family Violence Waiver (FVW) and the Good Cause Exemption

A. Family Violence Waiver

The Family Violence Waiver (FVW) is for caregivers who receive MFIP or DWP and the waiver affects only their MFIP or DWP case. The waiver exempts caregivers from the 60-month lifetime limit of MFIP benefits when they develop and comply with an employment plan focused on addressing safety issues.

Caregivers can request a FVW with their employment service provider. Together with their employment counselor and a family violence specialist they will develop an appropriate employment plan focused on safety. Caregivers are required to provide documentation, and the waiver is approved when all parties sign the plan. In this process of developing the FVW plan, the caregiver should be informed of the good cause exemption option to not cooperate with child support requirements.

B. Good Cause Exemption

The good cause exemption affects all programs that require caregivers to cooperate with the child support program as a condition of eligibility. This includes MFIP, DWP, CCAP and MA. MA enrollees are referred and required to cooperate if they meet certain criteria. MA referral and cooperation criteria can be found in the Minnesota Health Care Programs Eligibility Policy Manual in section [2.1.1.2.1.3.2 Medical Support](#). Caregivers with children must help pursue basic child support, medical support, and childcare support unless they have a good cause exemption for not cooperating, depending on the type of public assistance they receive. If caregivers request a good cause exemption, workers need to make sure they know about the Family Violence Waiver (FVW) option as well if they are receiving MFIP or DWP.

C. Is there a relationship between the FVW and good cause exemptions?

There is no relationship between the FVW and the good cause exemption to cooperate with child support. Caregivers always have the choice whether to ask for the FVW, good cause exemption, or both. Certain types of documentation or evidence may meet the requirements for the FVW and good cause exemption.

VI. Good Cause Exemption Redetermination Questions and Answers

A. Good Cause Exemption Redeterminations

In accordance with Minnesota law [Minn. Stat. 518A.81 Subd.13](#), a good cause exemption may not continue for more than one year without redetermination. Good Cause committees must review the good cause exemption to determine whether the reasons for originally granting the good cause exemption still exists. The Good Cause Committee or public assistance worker will send the caregiver the Notice of Child Support Good Cause Redetermination ([DHS-3630](#)) (PDF), the Notice of Privacy Practices ([DHS-3979](#)) (PDF), and Request to End Child Support Good Cause Exemptions ([DHS-3631](#)) (PDF) at least 30 days before the annual good cause exemption expires.

When the factors that led to the original exemption continue to exist, the good cause committee must allow the exemption to continue without additional evidence. If the good cause committee does not

require further verification at the good cause exemption redetermination, including for cases they have permanently approved, the committee does not need to mail the Notice of Child Support Good Cause Redetermination ([DHS-3630](#)) (PDF). The Good Cause Committee must send the caregiver the Notice of Approval of Redetermination of Your Child Support Good Cause Exemption ([DHS-3633](#)) (PDF) and the Request to End Child Support Good Cause Exemption ([DHS-3631](#)) (PDF). These documents inform the caregiver of the committee's decision to approve the good cause exemption for another year and give information on how to end the good cause exemption if the caregiver would like to receive child support services.

B. Permanent Good Cause Exemption Redeterminations

State statutes require good cause committees to review all good cause exemptions they have approved on an annual basis. Some situations are designated as "permanent" good cause exemptions when the safety reasons usually will not change, such as if the child was conceived as a result of rape or incest. When the Good Cause Committee grants a permanent good cause exemption, they do not send the Notice of Child Support Good Cause Redetermination ([DHS-3630](#)) (PDF) but should send the Notice of Approval of Redetermination of Your Child Support Good Cause Exemption ([DHS-3633](#)) (PDF) and the Request to End Child Support Good Cause Exemption ([DHS-3631](#)) (PDF) to the caregiver at review. These documents inform caregivers their good cause exemption is approved for another year and give them information on how to end the exemption if they want child support services.

There is no indicator in any program systems that show if the good cause granted is permanent or not. Workers should review case notes and contact the Good Cause Committee to confirm if anything is needed for the good cause redetermination.

C. Questions and answers about good cause redeterminations

1. Do caregivers need to return the Notice of Redetermination form to continue their good cause exemption?

No. The Notice of Redetermination form is only a notice informing the caregiver that new evidence may be needed, what qualifies as evidence, how to end the good cause exemption, and who to contact if they have questions. Caregivers do not need to return the form as part of the good cause exemption redetermination.

2. Do caregivers need to provide new evidence to continue their good cause exemption?

The factors for each request determine the type of evidence the good cause committee may need to continue the caregiver's good cause exemption. When the factors that led to the original exemption continue to exist, the committee must allow the good cause exemption to continue without requiring additional evidence. If the committee needs additional information or verifications to make a determination, the committee will send the Request for Additional Information to Prove Your Child Support Good Cause Exemption ([DHS-3632](#)) (PDF). If additional information is needed to make a redetermination, contact caregivers to let them know what is needed using their preferred method of communication. If this information is not returned, the child support worker must document the attempts to contact the caregiver before ending the exemption or denying the request.

For example: A 50-year Order For Protection is on file for verification of the initial good cause exemption request. As the order still stands, the factors that led to the original request continue to exist. No further verification is needed. The committee should send the caregiver the Notice of Approval of Redetermination of Your Child Support Good Cause Exemption ([DHS-3633](#)) (PDF) and the Request to End Child Support Good Cause Exemption ([DHS-3631](#)) (PDF).

3. What is best practice when a redetermination is due, and the caregiver is receiving assistance from another county?

The county or Tribal Nation where the public assistance case is open must redetermine the good cause exemption no later than one year from the date of the most recent approval. A county or Tribal Nation's Good Cause Committee may share its findings with another county or Tribal Nation's Good Cause Committee to assist in the redetermination process, making coordination between committees essential.

If a person claiming good cause is also a recipient of Tribal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (Tribal TANF), the county's good cause committee and the Tribal TANF Agency make a joint decision regarding good cause claims, and the Tribal TANF agency's decision must prevail.

VII. Worker Roles

A. Good Cause Committee Role

Minnesota law requires agencies to form a Good Cause Committee with at least one representative from the child support agency. Tribal agencies may have a different structure for their Good Cause Committees. The state also encourages county agencies to add representatives from the Child Care Assistance Program and Minnesota Health Care Programs to ensure representation from each area.

Committees help caregivers get verifications needed, explain the process in greater detail as questions arise, and make the final approval or denial decision. The committee will send out notices for approvals, denials, and handle redeterminations of good cause. If a caregiver requests a conference within 30 days of denial, the committee will schedule and hold this conference in person or by phone.

B. Good Cause Committee Decision Meetings

Policy does not require Good Cause Committees to have a decision meeting. Good cause committees can make decisions in whatever manner they find works best to provide timely responses to the caregiver. This can occur with an in-person meeting, teleconference meeting, or by email. Once the committee makes a decision, public assistance workers must enter the result of the good cause claim into their corresponding system. Public assistance and child support workers must clearly document the Good Cause Committee decision, reason for request, and any type of supporting evidence received in case notes within PRISM, MAXIS, MEC², MMIS, and METS as appropriate. All workers need to check cases to be sure they have documented the most up-to-date information. Child support workers should ensure all information related to the good cause request is captured in appropriate safety panels in PRISM, including all information that will need to be reviewed at a redetermination if approved.

It is best practice that if a caregiver appeals the Good Cause Committee decision, a committee member will create the appeal packet and represent the agency at the appeal hearing.

C. Public Assistance (MA, CCAP, MFIP, DWP) Eligibility Worker Role

Public assistance workers must provide the Cooperation With Child Support ([DHS-2338](#)) (PDF) to inform caregivers of their right to request a good cause exemption and how good cause committees make decisions on good cause exemptions.

This is required for MFIP, DWP and CCAP at the time of application and any time caregivers add children when one or both parents of the child do not reside in the same household.

This is required for MA after eligibility is determined because not everyone who applies for and receives Minnesota Health Care Programs (MHCP) is required to cooperate with child support. See [MHCP EPM 2.1.1.2.1.3.2 MA Medical Support](#) under “When Medical Support Referrals are Made,” for more information.

Workers should put a copy of the Cooperation With Child Support ([DHS-2338](#)) (PDF) signed by the caregiver in the case file and inform the Good Cause Committee if the caregiver is requesting a good cause exemption. While agencies each have their own Good Cause Committee, every worker who works with programs that require cooperation with child support should be able to explain the good cause exemption allowing caregivers to not cooperate with child support.

It is best practice that if a caregiver requests a good cause exemption using the Cooperation With Child Support ([DHS-2338](#)) (PDF) at any point during the life of the case, workers should mail out the initial request paperwork to start the request. This includes Important Information about Your Request for a Child Support Good Cause Exemption ([DHS-3627](#)) (PDF) and the Notice of Privacy Practices ([DHS-3979](#)) (PDF).

D. Child Support Worker Role

While each county and Tribal Nation Good Cause Committee is made up differently, a child support worker must be part of these committees. Child support workers help committees make good cause exemption determinations by reviewing evidence and resources from court records and other evidence available to them. Child support workers should contact the parent requesting a good cause exemption to explain child support services including the process for establishing child support court orders and paternity. Child support workers can also outline safety measures available to receive support safely and answer any questions so the caregiver can determine the best choice for the situation. If the Good Cause Committee needs additional documentation or verifications, child support workers must help collect that information. Child support workers must send the Cooperation with Child Support ([DHS-2338](#)) (PDF) if caregivers request it. Child support workers should make a note, properly code the case for safety in PRISM, and forward the form to the appropriate public assistance agencies to process if the caregiver returns the form to the child support agency.

VIII. Available Domestic Violence Training for Workers

It is best practice for all workers to have regular training on domestic violence. All Good Cause Committee members should aim to have additional training to the extent possible; state statute requires child support program committee members to have domestic violence training.

The state has training accessible to all workers on TrainLink. Some programs may have required trainings for staff. Agencies are also encouraged to seek local training for their staff. All workers with TrainLink access, regardless of program area, can take the state training modules in the following categories:

- Economic Assistance and Employment Supports:
 - Understanding Domestic Abuse, Sexual Assault, Stalking, and Sexual Harassment (TES200)
- Child Support Enforcement:
 - Domestic Violence (DV) for Child Support (CSE72837)
 - SAVES Legal Advocate Training (CSE728-02)
 - CSD Safety Concerns: Overview of Family Violence and Safety Concerns in CS (CSE041)

IX. Safety Concerns

Public assistance and child support workers must document safety concerns raised by caregivers. Workers should provide information on any safety measures available in their program, offer community resources, and clearly document conversations. To ensure family safety, all workers should provide relevant safety information to other programs. Caregivers may inform public assistance and child support workers they have safety concerns but do not wish to pursue a good cause exemption or the FVW. Previous research found 90% of domestic violence victims would pursue child support if they could do so safely.³

- Child support workers are responsible for informing caregivers about the safety measures available through child support services and ensuring these safety concerns are properly documented. Child support policies outline the procedures to document safety concerns, and resources such as the Safety Options Job aid and Safety and Coding PRISM Job aid, are available to assist child support workers. All child support workers should refer to the Safety Concerns topic in the Child Support Manual for further guidance and access to these resources. Child support workers should give caregivers information about community resources that provide domestic violence and advocacy services.
- MFIP/DWP eligibility workers are responsible for giving participants the Family Violence Referral ([DHS-3323](#)) (PDF) and the Domestic Violence Information ([DHS-3477](#)) (PDF). When someone reveals that they or a household member has been or is a victim of family violence, the worker must explain how requesting the Family Violence Waiver may impact their situation and explain the documentation required as part of the approval process. The worker must give caregivers information about community resources that provide services to victims of family violence. It is best practice to advise them of the good cause exemption to cooperate with child support.

³Safe Access to Child Support Services: Scope of the Issue | The Administration for Children and Families

X. Best Practices and Requirements for Child Support Workers When a Child Support Case is Closed for Safety

- If the child support case was closed for safety reasons, including good cause, and a child support application is received from a non-custodial parent (NCP) or alleged father (ALF), review all available safety information for both parents. Attempts must be made to contact the custodial parent (CP), and all conversations documented before following any applicable child support policy for safety and case closure.
- If the case was closed for good cause and public assistance is still open, a Good Cause Committee must review annually to determine whether the reasons for originally granting good cause exemptions still exist. When the factors that led to the original exemption continue to exist, a good cause exemption must be allowed without requiring additional evidence in future applications and redeterminations. Follow the child support good cause policy and keep closed.

XI. Helpful Tips and Resources

- All workers should consult with the caregiver to determine what address agencies should use to send mail and what phone number to use for phone calls made since some communication methods may not be safe for caregivers to use. Program notices may introduce or enhance risk to a caregiver, even if the notice is not related to safety.
- Referrals to domestic violence programs are critically important for all workers to provide. Referring to your local agency or state wide resources should be provided whenever possible.
 - In Minnesota, the Day One call for safety is available across the state [1.866.223.1111](tel:18662231111).
- Remember, good cause exemptions may be an appropriate safety measure at any time throughout the life of the case (not just at the time of application) when the caregiver is receiving a form of public assistance requiring cooperation. If the caregiver isn't receiving public assistance from a program requiring cooperation, the caregiver can ask the child support agency to close their child support case.
- Communication between public assistance programs and child support is key to ensure that workers update their cases timely to not jeopardize the safety of caregivers and their children. Proper documentation on safety matters should be done to the extent possible, including relevant information without providing specific details. Steps should be taken to protect safety information, especially in systems accessed by multiple people.
- Remember safety concerns may exist between program participants or caregivers who reside in the same home, or who workers have reason to believe reside in the same home. If workers are unsure who lives in the household, it is best practice to attempt contacting the caregiver using their preferred methods of communication to discuss. The information available that led to the reason to believe they may be in the same home may be due to safety reasons.

- For example: A caregiver requests good cause. Child support sends notices to the noncustodial parent (NCP) who has the same address as custodial parent. The postal service does not return the mail, and the worker believes the NCP is in the home. Before denying a good cause request, it is best practice to contact the caregiver to discuss why the NCP is receiving mail at the home.
- When communicating with both program participants, only share relevant case or program information. Participants or caregivers who are on the same public assistance case may contact their workers to share or request information related to safety or make decisions on their case.
 - For example: An MFIP participant is thinking of leaving the home and has spoken with their worker about a potential change in the household. Workers should not share that information with the other parent, even if the participant has not expressed a safety concern.
- Employment service providers and eligibility workers who process MFIP, DWP, and CCAP should inform two-parent public assistance households of the child support cooperation requirements, including good cause information, should their household composition change in the future.
- Participants or caregivers may need information on potential scenarios related to their case to make decisions about their safety. Participants may ask “what if” questions about changes to case information not already known to the agency or reported by the participant.
- Caregivers requesting a good cause exemption may not have records or external documentation to support their claim or may need help getting these documents. Over 50% of survivors report they do not have any “proof” of what they are experiencing.⁴
- Child support obligations included in a prior court order are still in effect if good cause is requested and approved. Requesting good cause does not mean there are no longer child support obligations. To end a person’s child support obligations, a court action would need to be taken. A good cause approval only stops child support agency involvement and enforcement of the order.
- Child support income must be used when determining eligibility for programs that require child support income reporting. Good cause exemptions do not impact the requirement for the caregiver to report any child support income received directly.
- The federal Office of Family Assistance (OFA) and federal Office of Child Support Services (OCSS) recently issued joint guidance regarding TANF and child support:
 - o [OFA – OCSS Joint Letter on Child Support Cooperation Requirements | The Administration for Children and Families](#)
 - o [OFA – OCSS Joint Letter on Tribal Child Support Cooperation Requirements | The Administration for Children and Families](#)
- In addition, OCSS released [PIQ-25-01](#) titled Policies to promote Safety and Economic Stability for Survivors of Domestic Violence in the Child Support Program.

⁴ <https://www.freefrom.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/TrustSurvivorsReport.pdf>

For child support workers

- The good cause exemption process should always be followed first when public assistance is open. However, if the good cause exemption process will further jeopardize the child or the caregiver's safety or enhance safety risks, child support workers must then determine if the case meets other case closure policy criteria found in the Case Closure topic in the Minnesota Child Support Manual.
- If a caregiver is in child support sanction for non-cooperation and contacts a child support worker to discuss safety measures in the program and any concerns, the worker can consider the caregiver in cooperation and cure any child support sanctions for that time period.

XI. Legal Authority

Code of Federal Regulations, title 42, section 435.610

Code of Federal Regulations, title 42, section 433.145

Minnesota Statutes, section 518A.81

Minnesota Statutes, section 256B.056, subdivisions 6 and 8

Minnesota Statutes, section 142G.70

Minnesota Statutes, section 142G.53

Minnesota Statutes, section 142E.10, subdivision 1(c)

Minnesota Rules 3400.0040, subpart 5a

Minnesota Rules 3400.0180, subpart 3

Minnesota Rules, 3400.0183, subpart 2(C)

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Advisory

This information is available in accessible formats for people with disabilities by calling (651) 431-4049 (voice) or toll free at (800) 657-3739, or by using your preferred relay service. For other information on disability rights and protections, contact the agency's ADA coordinator.



Parenting Decisions Affidavit



Why We Are Sending You This Affidavit

Before setting a child support amount, the court may need to decide who the legal father of your child is. We call this process “establishing paternity.” Genetic testing is often part of how the court establishes paternity.

The court also decides on **three other issues** as part of this process of establishing paternity:

- **Parenting time**
- **Custody**
- **The child’s legal name**

The information on this affidavit tells the court how you want it to decide on those three issues.



What We Are Asking You to Do

Please complete and sign the Parenting Decisions Affidavit. Then return it to our office. Be sure to keep a copy for your records.



What to Do If You Do Not Feel Safe During This Process

We take the safety of parents, children, and guardians seriously. We encourage you to ask your child support worker questions about the process and to raise any concerns you have with any part of it.

We can put safety measures in place for your case. You can always update your safety concerns in the future.



What We May Do with the Affidavit

If your child support case goes to court, we will file this document with the court and give a copy to the other parent. The other parent may also file this same type of affidavit with their requests. If they do and if the case goes to court, you will receive a copy of their affidavit.

As with other court documents, people not related to your case might be able to request access to this document.



What Parenting Time Is and How It Works

Also called visitation, parenting time is the amount of time that children normally spend with each parent. Parenting time can affect the amount of child support. Parenting time is different from custody.

If parents do not agree about the amount of time that the child will spend with each parent, the court will set a parenting time schedule, which says when the child is with each parent. Each schedule is unique.

How the Court Decides on Parenting Time

The court normally calculates parenting time by counting the number of overnight stays that a parent has with a child. But the court may also consider other ways that a parent spends long periods of time with the child.



In Person: Downtown: 121 7th Place E, Suite 2500, St. Paul, MN 55101
Maplewood Mall: 3001 White Bear Ave N, Suite 1022A
Maplewood, MN 55109



Mail: 360 Wabasha St N, Suite 300, St. Paul, MN 55102



Phone: 651-266-3344
Fax: 651-266-3300



Email: ChildSupport@RamseyCounty.us

Generally, the court starts from the position that the child should spend a minimum of 25% of the parenting time with each parent. Why? Because the law assumes that this 25% minimum will be in the best interests of many children. The law also lets the court make a different decision about parenting time if it finds that the 25% minimum is not in the best interests of the child.

What Kinds of Parenting Time Decisions the Court Might Make

For safety reasons or for the best interests of the child, the court may add conditions to parenting time, such as:

- Not allowing overnight visits
- Requiring that the visits happen under supervision
- Requiring that a parent be sober for a period of time before, during, or after parenting time
- Limiting electronic communication with the child
- Limiting access to information about a child (such as medical information or schooling)

The court could also order that a parent should not have any parenting time.



What Custody Is and How It Works

Because custody is a legal term, it has technical meanings that may be different from what people expect.

The law divides custody into two types:

- **Physical custody** is about which parent or parents the child will normally live with and who will make day-to-day decisions for the child
- **Legal custody** is about making major decisions for the child, such as where the child goes to school, their religion, and major health care decisions

Physical custody and legal custody are then divided in two other ways:

- **Joint custody** means sharing that type of custody with the other parent
- **Sole custody** means only one parent will have that type of custody

Minnesota law expresses a preference for parents to share joint legal custody. But the court can make a different decision based on the best interests of the child, including in situations of domestic abuse.



What the Court Decides about the Child's Legal Name

You can keep the name that is on the child's existing birth certificate or ask the court to change the child's name. The court only makes a decision about changing it when a parent or legal guardian requests it.



How the Court Holds Hearings and Why You Need to Participate in Them

If your case goes to court, the court will send a notice with the date and time of your hearing. The first hearing will be held online, using Zoom.

For the court to consider your requests, you must show up and participate in the hearing. Once the court sets custody for the first time, it becomes much harder to change it.

If you have safety concerns about participating in the hearing, talk to your child support worker. They can provide you with safety measures.

Ramsey County and

PARENTING DECISIONS AFFIDAVIT

First and Last Name

Petitioners,

and

Court File: Court File Number

Case: 0000000000-00

County Attorney File:

First and Last Name

Respondent(s).

My name is _____. I am the mother or alleged father of the following child or children:

_____. The other parent I refer to here is named: _____.

I understand that, as part of the county's paternity action for this case, the court will decide on custody, parenting time, and the child's legal name. My specific requests are listed below.

1. The following two-week parenting schedule arrangement describes the order I want the court to make about **parenting time**. I have made a checkmark where a parent should have the child overnight and the time of day the child should go to the other parent.

	Which Parent Will Have the Child Overnight on This Day						
	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Week 1	☐ Mom or ☐ Dad	☐ Mom or ☐ Dad	☐ Mom or ☐ Dad	☐ Mom or ☐ Dad	☐ Mom or ☐ Dad	☐ Mom or ☐ Dad	☐ Mom or ☐ Dad
The time of day that you will exchange the child							
Week 2	☐ Mom or ☐ Dad	☐ Mom or ☐ Dad	☐ Mom or ☐ Dad	☐ Mom or ☐ Dad	☐ Mom or ☐ Dad	☐ Mom or ☐ Dad	☐ Mom or ☐ Dad
The time of day that you will exchange the child							

2. I am asking the court to make special parenting time arrangements in the best interest of the child. These arrangements may improve the child's safety and well-being or mine. They might include a request that the other parent not be allowed parenting time or that the court not decide about parenting time now. Specifically, I am asking for the following decisions on parenting time:

3. I want the court to grant **legal custody** of the child or children:
- ☐ Jointly to both parents
 - ☐ Solely to me
 - ☐ Solely to other parent
4. I want the court to grant **physical custody** of the child or children:
- ☐ Jointly to both parents
 - ☐ Solely to me
 - ☐ Solely to other parent
5. I want the child or children's **legal name** to:
- ☐ Stay the same as it is on the child's birth certificate. *Skip to the Declaration and Signature.*
 - ☐ Change to: _____

Issues the Court Considers When Changing a Child's Name

(Only complete this section if you want to change the name of your child or children.)

5a. Does the other parent agree with how you want to change the name?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I don't know

5b. Do you know what the child or children would like their name to be?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not old enough to say

5c. Do you think changing the name will affect their relationship with the other parent?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I don't know

5d. Does the current name lead to any difficulty, harassment, or embarrassment for your child in your family or the community?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I don't know

5e. Do you think the new name could lead to any difficulty, harassment, or embarrassment for your child in your family or the community?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I don't know

5f. Why do you think the name should change? _____

Declaration and Signature

By signing this form, you agree with these statements:

- The information I have provided may be filed with the court and shared with others, including the other parent.
- Completing this Affidavit does not guarantee that the Court will issue an order with my requests.
- For the Court to consider my requests, I must appear at all court hearings on this paternity case.
- I may have to serve and file a formal response, and pay the Court's filing fee.
- I declare under penalty of perjury that everything I have stated in this document is true and correct.

_____	_____	_____ (County), _____ (State)
Signature	Date	County and State Where You Signed This Form