

I work for a large government social service agency. I am a social worker. I work with children's mental health cases. This means that as a case manager I help parents access services in the area to help their children get a good education and counseling. Many of the families that I work with are intact middle class families. I do have a few families on my case load where the people are divorced. This means for some of the divorced families I work with the parents separately to insure that the child has consistency in both settings they stay in.

For some of the divorced families paying child care maintenance becomes an issue. My employer is also a child support agency. The child support officers meet with the custodial parents if they are having a difficult time collecting the support that was court ordered to be paid as part of a disilluisionment hearing. One of the stipulations of working with our child support agency is that the support that is being sought has been ordered through a court hearing. The child support officers are not able to enforce payments that are agreements between two parties that have not been supported and ordered through a court.

The first goal when being involved with a child support agency is to determine paternity. Once this has been established the child support officer will contact the non-custodial parent and remind them of the amount of child support that is due. If the parent does not pay the officer can bring the matter into court. Most child support hearings are held before a magistrate. They have the same power as a judge in making and enforcing judgments, but their only duty is to hear child support cases. This helps them be experts in child support laws, and also frees the time for the district judges to hear other matters. Through the court order the non-custodial parent can have their wages garnished so that the child support payment is automatically paid. In cases where the person will not follow the court orders and make payments the child support agency will make the payment to the mother to insure that the children are cared for, and will then collect from the father. They can take tax returns, place individuals in jail and pull driver licenses in an effort to get the payments. To me it is said that such extreme measures need to be used to get a parent to be responsible for looking after the well being of their child. The support payments are not punishment, they are contributing to the care and needs of a child that the person is responsible for.