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## **New Mexico Child Support Cases Reach Record Numbers Due to Economy**

According to a recent article in the Albuquerque Journal, the number of child support enforcement cases pending in New Mexico has reached a record high. The Child Support Enforcement Division, called CSED for short, is a part of the New Mexico Human Services Department and is responsible for enforcing parents' child support obligations. CSED officials believe that the increase in cases is due to the bad economy, which means that the enforcement cases have increased but that actual collections of unpaid back child support are down.

CSED can get involved in a divorce or paternity case in multiple ways. The most common situation is when the custodial parent gets any kind of financial assistance from the State or Federal government to assist them in raising their child. In these cases CSED automatically sets up a case and will begin trying to establish and collect support from the non-custodial parent. Where applicable, part of the money collected from the non-custodial parent will go to repaying the State for the assistance it has paid to the custodial parent. A CSED case may also be automatically opened when the custodial parent applies for Medicaid coverage for a child. And, finally, a parent who is not receiving public assistance or Medicaid, but who has a child support order that is not being followed can go to CSED and ask that a case be opened up on their behalf.

Once an enforcement case is opened, CSED has extensive power to force non-custodial parents to pay support, including the garnishment of wages, the seizure of bank accounts and the suspension of driver's licenses. Thus, if you are a parent who gotten behind on support for whatever reason, it is important that you seek the advice of an attorney experienced in child support matters immediately before CSED begins to take enforcement and collection action against you. In turn, if you are a parent who is entitled to support but is not receiving it, speaking with an attorney can show you the various options available to begin encouraging your child's parent to pay support.

CSED is generally very helpful and cooperative so long as you address the situation. This means that you immediately contact them to address a problem as it arises. Often times, there are solutions that both parties and CSED can live with. Due to their vast experience in child support matters, CSED attorneys will know every available alternative short of financial ruin for either party. That is the good news. The bad news is that CSED is overwhelmed with cases so it may be difficult to make contact with someone with decision-making authority. This alone will typically indicate and justify hiring your own attorney.

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