



# Child Support Conference Boards



*Washington State*  
Department of Social  
& Health Services

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**DCS** Division of Child Support



## **What is a Conference Board?**

A Conference Board is a way to resolve disputes about how the Division of Child Support (DCS) works your case.

A Conference Board Chair is the DCS attorney who makes the decisions.

What kinds of relief does the Conference Board have authority to grant?

Conference Boards may:

- Release liens filed by DCS.
- Release money DCS gets from IRS tax refunds or bank accounts.
- Reduce the withholding from your pay.
- Decide that DCS will not report a child support debt to a credit bureau.
- Decide if DCS will enforce an order or collect a debt
- Reduce back support owed to the State of Washington.
- Review and correct other action taken by DCS.

Conference Boards can ONLY forgive debts owed to Washington State, based on:

- Hardship to the paying parent or that parent's household.
- Settlement by partial payment.
- Future cost of collections.
- An error or legal issue that reduces the possibility of collection

## **Are there problems the Conference Board cannot resolve?**

Yes. A Conference Board cannot:

- Change the amount of child support ordered in an administrative or court order.
- Reduce debts owed to an individual, another state, or another agency.
- Decide visitation or custody issues.

## **Do I need an attorney?**

You may represent yourself or have an attorney, friend, relative, or other person represent you. Most people represent themselves. DCS cannot provide free legal help.

***You must try to settle your case with the Field Office first.***

## **Can I settle my case without a Conference Board?**

Yes, DCS field office staff may make many of the same decisions Conference Boards make. Contact the Support Enforcement Officer (SEO) assigned to your case to try to reach an agreement before the Conference Board. You may also talk to a lead worker or supervisor. If you cannot reach an agreement, you can still have a Conference Board.

## **How do I ask for a Conference Board?**

- Contact the DCS field office by phone, mail or in person.
- Explain what you disagree with and why.
- Provide information to back up your claim.

## **How will the Conference Board Chair decide?**

Chairs base their decisions on:

- DCS records, rules and laws, and
- Information you provide.

## **How do I know the Decision?**

The Chair mails a written decision to you. Be sure that DCS has your current address.

## **Is there a Meeting?**

Often the Conference Board Chair makes the decision without meeting with you. They may ask for more information by letter or by phone. Either way, you will get a written decision.

We do not hold Conference Board Meetings when:

- You provide the information needed to resolve the issues, or
- The Conference Board cannot legally give the relief you are asking for.

## **What happens at a Conference Board Meeting?**

A DCS staff attorney and one or more DCS staff take part in an informal Meeting. You may take part in the Meeting in person or by phone.

The Board members listens and asks questions while you tell your view of the dispute. Other parties also share their views, in some cases.

Meetings usually last less than an hour.

## **How will I find out when my Meeting is set?**

DCS mails you a Notice with the date and time of the Meeting. Make sure DCS knows your current mailing address and phone number.

## **Will I attend the Conference Board in person or by phone?**

The Conference Board Notice tells you where to go for the Meeting. You may need to go to the DCS office. You do not have to come to the Meeting in person if you fear the other party. Call the number on the Notice to make other arrangements.

You, the Chair, DCS staff, or other people involved in the Meeting may take part by phone. The Notice tells you if you must take part by phone.

If you take part by phone, you must:

- Call DCS at the number printed in the notice to make sure DCS has your correct phone number, and
- Be at that phone number on the date and time of the Meeting.

If there is no phone you can use, contact us as soon as possible and make other arrangements.

## **How can I ask for a different date or time for my Conference Board?**

If you cannot make it to your scheduled Meeting call and ask for a delay. Call DCS at least one week before the Meeting day. The Conference Board Notice gives you the phone number to call.

## **Do I need to send anything to the Conference Board?**

If you have papers you want the Chair to review, send them to DCS before your Meeting, if possible. All other parties may see your proof, so you may want to delete personal information.

## **How can I prepare for the Conference Board?**

- Make notes and bring them to organize what you want to say.
- Discuss your case with the Chair before the day of the Meeting to make sure the issues are clear.
- Provide any papers that help the Chair understand and resolve the dispute.

## **During a Conference Board Meeting, you may:**

- Be represented by anyone, such as an attorney, friend or relative. However, you do not have a right to free legal help from DCS.
- Tell your view of the case.
- Present proof; such as cancelled checks, school records, witness statements or other papers.

- Ask to send in more proof after the Meeting.
- Bring witnesses.

Board members may question you and your witnesses.

Please show respect for the others present.

## **What happens if I do not show up for the Meeting?**

If you do not show up for the Meeting, the Chair may:

- Dismiss your request.
- Go ahead with the Meeting without you, or
- Reschedule the Meeting for another time.

## **What if I don't like the Conference Board decision?**

Ask for an informal review by writing to the Conference Board Manager at:

PO Box 9162, Olympia, WA 98507.

## **What if I do not speak English well or have special needs?**

Call 360-664-5326 or 800-457-6202 if you or a witness need:

- A language translator or interpreter. A friend or relative may not be your interpreter unless approved in advance.
- Other special assistance such as a sign language interpreter or alternate format materials because of a disability.

## **Ask for these free services at least a week before a Meeting.**

Call 360-664-5011 if you need DCS Deaf and Hard of Hearing (TDD) help.

All DCS offices are wheelchair accessible.

## **If you have other questions about Conference Boards, you may**

- Call the DCS Field office or the Conference Board Unit at the numbers in the back of this brochure.
- Contact an attorney

# *Request for Conference Board*

To request a Conference Board, complete this form and return it to the Division of Child Support (DCS) at the address listed below. Except for your signature, print or type all responses. Attach additional pages if needed.

I tried to settle my dispute with DCS staff. I request a Conference Board because:

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I understand that:

1. A Conference Board tries to settle complaints informally. A Board cannot modify a court order. A court does not review a Board's rulings.
2. This is not a request for an adjudicative proceeding (hearing). A Conference Board does not take the place of any other right I have to a hearing. This request will not stop DCS from taking collection actions.
3. I may represent myself or have someone else represent me. DCS will not pay my costs.
4. DCS may send a copy of this request to the other party to my child support case. DCS will remove my address from the copy sent to the other party.

No person, because of race, color, national origin, creed, religion, sex, age, or disability, shall be discriminated against in employment, services, or any aspect of the program's activities. This form is available in alternative formats upon request.

Print Name

PO Box or Street Address

City

State

Zip

Date

Home Phone

Work Phone

Signature

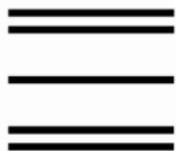
In reply, refer to Case No.:

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**DIVISION OF CHILD SUPPORT**  
**PO Box 11520**  
**Tacoma, WA 98411-5520**

**Call the DCS office nearest you or call 800-442-KIDS (5437) to find the office handling your case.**

## **DCS Offices**

**Everett**                    **800-729-7580**  
**425-438-4800**

**Fife**                        **866-243-4449**  
**253-922-0454**

**Kennewick**                **800-345-9981**  
**509-374-2000**

**Olympia**                  **800-345-9964**  
**360-664-6900**

**Seattle**                    **800-526-8658**  
**206-341-7000**

**Spokane**                  **800-345-9982**  
**509-363-5000**

**Tacoma**                    **800-345-9976**  
**253-597-3700**

**Vancouver**                **800-345-9984**  
**360-696-6100**

**Wenatchee**                **800-535-1113**  
**509-886-6800**

**Yakima**                    **800-441-0859**  
**509-249-6000**

**Headquarters**            **800-457-6202**  
**360-664-5000**

### ***Conference Board Unit***

***800-457-6202***

***360-664-5326***

***Fax 360-664-5340***

Rules governing Conference Boards are in the Washington Administrative Code: WAC 388-14A-6400 through 6415