

CHILD SUPPORT OBLIGATIONS & MODIFICATIONS

★ Impact

- Child support obligations have been identified as a major factor of housing insecurity for veterans.
- Child support obligations are a high-priority debt. There are serious consequences for not paying child support. In addition to penalties and interest accruing each month (when arrears are \$500.00 or more), the Department of Revenue (“DOR”) can:
 - suspend a driver’s and business/professional license;
 - place a levy on a bank account;
 - intercept state and federal tax refunds, insurance claims, workers’ comp and unemployment insurance;
 - deny passport renewal;
 - file a contempt action, which can result in jail time.

★ Modifications

A child support modification **may** be possible if

- there is a change in income since the date of the last child support order
- there is a change in custody and/or parenting time
- the veteran starts receiving SSDI and the child may be eligible for the dependent benefit

This information is provided to you by Veterans Legal Services, thanks to the generous support of **Operation Money Wise**, an education initiative through the Massachusetts Office of the Treasurer and the Office of Economic Empowerment.

★ Considerations

- If the child support is lowered, it is only **retroactive to the date that the complaint for modification is served**, so it is important to file ASAP if there is a job loss or income change.
- Not all child support orders can be modified, but one may seek a hardship adjustment which alerts DOR that the amount being taken is not leaving the veteran with enough income to self-support.
- There are legal remedies available to help adjust support when there has been a change in income but it is important to **act fast**.

Veterans Legal Services helps Massachusetts veterans overcome adversity by providing free civil legal aid that honors their service, promotes well-being, and responds to their distinctive needs.

