DIRECT PAYMENT FACT SHEET

Family Maintenance Enforcement Program

Do all payments have to be sent to the FMEP?

As soon as a maintenance order or agreement is filed with the Family Maintenance Enforcement Program (FMEP), we are responsible under the *Family Maintenance Enforcement Act* for monitoring and enforcing that order.

We are also responsible for collecting and tracking maintenance payments, and for keeping accurate, up-to-date and reliable payment records.

To ensure our records stay accurate, we require all payors to send their payments to us, rather than to the recipient. That way we can record each payment directly into our system as soon as it arrives, and then send it back out to the recipient, usually the same day.

Definition:

A direct payment is a payment made directly by the payor (the person paying maintenance) to the recipient (the person receiving maintenance), instead of through the FMEP.

What should I do if I receive a payment directly from the payor?

We know that sometimes payors just simply hand over money to recipients directly. We do not expect you to refuse that money, but you do need to report it to us.

The best way to report a direct payment is through InfoLine, our automated telephone system or through the FMEP website.

You may also report direct payments by calling us or sending us a letter by mail or fax.

Income assistance clients: You must report all direct payments both to us and to your family maintenance worker.]

What happens if I forget to report a direct payment?

If a payor sends a payment directly to you, and you forget or neglect to tell us about it right away, we will have no record of the payment. That means we will consider the payor to be in "default" (to have fallen behind in payments), and may begin enforcement action even though the payor has made the payment.

This is not only unfair to the payor, it can also waste a great deal of our time and effort, and it may mean that we will be unable to act on your behalf in the future.

Our basic rule is this: if you accept two direct payments without reporting them to us, we will make your case "inactive." That means we will keep a record of all payments owing to you, but will not take any enforcement action on your behalf.

If you are on income assistance, not reporting payments could also affect your future income assistance payments.

What if I do not want to accept direct payments?

You do not have to accept direct payments if you don't want to.

Tell us you do not want direct payments and we will remind the payor to send all payments to us.

We will also warn the payor that, if the payor continues to send payments directly to you, we may decide not to record them as maintenance payments, which could lead to us taking enforcement action.

For more information:

For pre-recorded, general information about how to report direct payments and a variety of other subjects, please call the FMEP InfoLine:

Greater Vancouver: 604-775-0796

Greater Victoria: 250-356-5995

Elsewhere in BC: 1-800-668-3637

For more specific information about your case, please call an Enquiry Representative at one of our FMEP Regional Offices:

Greater Vancouver: 604-678-5670 or toll-free 1-800-663-9666

Greater Victoria: 250-220-4040 or toll-free 1-800-663-3455

Northern and Interior BC: 250-434-6020 or toll-free 1-800-663-3933

For information about your case, visit our website, www.fmep.gov.bc.ca

For information about family justice issues and services, visit www.ag.gov.bc.ca/family-justice