



# Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance

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## Informational Letter

### Section 1

<b>Transmittal:</b>	22-INF-09
<b>To:</b>	Social Services District Commissioners
<b>Issuing Division/Office:</b>	Child Support Services
<b>Date:</b>	November 16, 2022
<b>Subject:</b>	Domestic Violence and the Child Support Program: <i>Get Child Support Safely</i>
<b>Suggested Distribution:</b>	Child Support Program Coordinators Support Collection Unit Supervisors Staff Development Coordinators
<b>Contact Person(s):</b>	Child Support Services – County Representative: <a href="mailto:otda.sm.dcse.bpo@otda.ny.gov">otda.sm.dcse.bpo@otda.ny.gov</a>
<b>Attachments:</b>	<a href="#">Attachment 1 – Pub-5194, <i>Get Child Support Safely</i> brochure</a> <a href="#">Attachment 2 – Pub-5194A, <i>Get Child Support Safely</i> poster</a> <a href="#">Attachment 3 – <i>Get Child Support Safely</i> Model Screening Questions and Practices</a> <a href="#">Attachment 4 – <i>Domestic Violence Resource Guide</i></a>

### Filing References

Previous ADMs/INFs	Releases Cancelled	Dept. Regs.	Soc. Serv. Law & Other Legal Ref.	Manual Ref.	Misc. Ref.
03 ADM 5		18 NYCRR § 347.5			

### Section 2

#### I. Purpose

The purpose of this Information Letter (INF) is to introduce social services district (district) child support enforcement units and support collection units (collectively CSEUs) to the new *Get Child Support Safely* publications and resources designed by the Division of Child Support Services (DCSS) and the New York State Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence (OPDV). These materials provide domestic violence (DV) assessment and resource information for anyone considering or receiving child support services.

In particular, the *Get Child Support Safely* materials describe how individuals may access child support services more safely and provide guidance to local districts on how to proactively assess for, and respond to, the presence of a safety concern. These communications and resources include:

- Pub-5194, *Get Child Support Safely* brochure (**Attachment 1**);
- Pub-5194A, *Get Child Support Safely* poster (**Attachment 2**);
- *Get Child Support Safely* messaging on the New York State Child Support website, [childsupport.ny.gov](http://childsupport.ny.gov);
- *Get Child Support Safely Model Screening Questions and Practices* (**Attachment 3**); and
- *Domestic Violence Resource Guide* (**Attachment 4**).

## II. Background

At the core of the Child Support Program is the recognition that every child has the right to consistent financial support from both parents. Lack of economic security can be a significant obstacle for DV survivors, and child support can be a crucial resource in fostering independence from an abusive partner. Therefore, the safety of families applying for or receiving child support services is critically important.

For this reason, DCSS has partnered with OPDV since November 2020 to examine how the Child Support Program interacts with survivors of DV and ensures survivors can safely access our services. The new DV materials seek to encourage survivors to apply for child support services by informing all parents of the steps our program can take to help make the child support process safer.

## III. Program Implications

The *Get Child Support Safely* print and online communications inform survivors about the child support process. In addition, the newly available *Get Child Support Safely* resources provide child support professionals with information about how to recognize, and carefully handle, the DV concerns of applicants and recipients of child support services. The print communications may be viewed online at the [LDSS E-Forms](#) page.

### A. Overview of DV Publications

#### 1. Pub-5194, *Get Child Support Safely* brochure

Pub-5194 presents examples of feelings and behaviors to help an applicant assess whether their safety or the safety of their child will be at risk due to seeking child support services. The brochure messaging encourages applicants to talk privately with a child support worker about any safety concerns. Pub-5194 includes contact information to reach OPDV's highly trained advocates for anyone seeking to talk immediately about safety.

#### 2. Pub-5194A, *Get Child Support Safely* poster

This poster is a companion to the *Get Child Support Safely* brochure and provides information about the protections, (i.e., scheduling laboratory appointments for genetic testing to establish parentage separately from the other parent, requesting telephone or video testimony instead of an in-person appearance in court), that are available to survivors while receiving child support services. The Pub-5194A poster also includes contact information for advocates at OPDV.

### B. Overview of Online DV Information, *Get Child Support Safely* Web Messaging

The New York State Child Support website, [childsupport.ny.gov](http://childsupport.ny.gov), has been updated to include new *Get Child Support Safely* messaging that prioritizes the safety of families. The messaging and information added include:

- Examples of feelings and behaviors an applicant may identify with that suggest a potential for safety concerns;

- A list of the protections available to survivors to help make the child support process safer;
- Important phone numbers, web addresses and links to family/DV resources; and
- Important information regarding the intersection of DV, public benefits, and child support.

A link to the revised safety messaging is located on the home page in the [Family Violence](#) section and on the [How to Apply for Child Support](#) page.

### C. Overview of DV Resources

The following new DV resources are available on the [Domestic Violence](#) page of the Electronic Resource System (ERS):

#### 1. *Get Child Support Safely Model Screening Questions and Practices*

The new *Get Child Support Safely Model Screening Questions and Practices* document provides sample questions and scripts that workers may use to screen for safety concerns and provide information about the protections available within the child support process and DV resources.

#### 2. *Domestic Violence Resource Guide*

The new *Domestic Violence Resource Guide* supports the work of OPDV and DCSS to move towards a Statewide service delivery model that is survivor centered. The guide includes contact information for DV, sexual assault, and crime victims service providers and advocates, and agencies that provide families with the following types of assistance: legal services, housing, health, basic needs (food, transportation), childcare, financial management, and child welfare. Note: The current list, by county, of [Approved Domestic Violence Service Providers](#) is also available on ERS.

### D. Use of the Publications and Resources

Districts can determine how to best use the *Get Child Support Safely* publications and resources to encourage survivors to apply for child support services and promote safe access to those services.

DCSS recommends the use of the publications in the following points of contact with customers of the Child Support Program:

- Reception areas;
- Intake and interview for program applicants; and
- Case management or follow-up meetings.

In addition, districts can share the brochure and poster across program lines (i.e., Temporary Assistance [TA] Units, Medicaid, and Foster Care) and with local courts, law enforcement agencies, and community stakeholders such as the YWCA and legal aid agencies.

At all stages of the application process and throughout the life of the case, child support professionals within the local districts should advise customers of the importance of keeping their child support records up to date (e.g., change in address, household composition, or income; presence of family violence) and seek to encourage conversations/exchanges that foster the sharing of such information. Confidentiality and the customer's right to privacy are of critical importance, especially when interacting with DV survivors. It is important for the worker to maintain confidentiality while seeking to encourage disclosure or foster the sharing of information. The screening question and script examples included in the *Get Child Support*

*Safely Model Screening Questions and Practices* document promote opportunities for a survivor to disclose a safety concern. The model screening questions are recommended for use with both custodial parents and noncustodial parents, as the responses provided by the customer can assist in determining how the child support process can be made safer for the survivor and children. **Note:** All applicants and recipients (A/R) of TA subject to TA program requirements are screened for DV using the LDSS-4583, *Domestic Violence Screening Form*, prior to being referred to the Child Support Program. When a TA A/R indicates the presence of DV to the child support professional, that worker must refer the individual to the district's Domestic Violence Liaison (DVL) for screening and assessment using locally developed procedures.

Child support professionals are encouraged to provide parents with information from the *Domestic Violence Resource Guide* as appropriate to their situation. Importantly, child support professionals can gain insight on survivors' needs and priorities through conversations at various points of contact with customers. This interactive process presents an opportunity to provide parents with helpful information that can assist families with housing, transportation, employment, and other supports.

#### **IV. Publication Ordering**

The brochure and poster are available in English and Spanish. Districts may use either the [OTDA-876 form](#) or the [Electronic Forms and Publications Online System](#) to order stock.

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#### **Issued By:**

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**Title:** Deputy Commissioner

**Division/Office:** Child Support Services