

Support Variations During COVID-19 – New Ways to Help

I am a payor with very reduced income because of COVID-19. What can I do?

COVID-19 is impacting the daily lives of families across Nova Scotia. In some cases, people paying support may be laid off, not permitted to work, working reduced hours, receiving the Canada Emergency Response Benefit or Employment Insurance or may have no income.

What are the new steps to get help?

The first two Steps apply to everyone, whether you have a lawyer or not. Steps 3-5 apply only to parties who do not have lawyers.

Step One:

- If you are the payor, gather all financial information you have that confirms your income, for example:
 - Record of Employment
 - Letter from employer confirming lay-off or change in employment
 - Confirmation of receipt of the CERB or EI
 - Confirmation of your 2019 income (T-information slips, Income Tax Return, Notice of Assessment)

Step Two:

- Contact the Maintenance Enforcement Program (MEP) to update them on your employment situation and provide them with the financial information you have gathered.
- MEP cannot vary your payment amount and will work with you during this process to determine what enforcement measures are reasonable over the short term, in light of your new circumstances.
- You may reach MEP through the Online Account here: <https://mep.novascotia.ca/en/my-account>. If you are not registered with MEP Online, call their Client Service Line at 1-855-322-0934.

For parties who have a lawyer: Steps 3-5 do not apply to you. Contact your lawyer for help. Your lawyer may be able to negotiate a new payment arrangement with the other party and prepare a new court order. If that is not possible, your lawyer may be able to start an application for a special court process.

For parties who do not have a lawyer: Steps 3-5 apply only to you

Step Three:

- MEP will make a referral, with your consent, to Nova Scotia Legal Aid (NSLA) on your behalf to start the process.
- MEP will provide you with information on how to make an application to NSLA.

Step Four:

- Make your application to NSLA immediately after being referred. The application is available on the NSLA website: <https://www.nslegalaid.ca/> .

Step Five:

- NSLA will contact you to discuss your situation. Provide NSLA with your financial information (see Step 1). In most cases, NSLA will be able to help by contacting the other party to see if a new agreement can be reached or by making a special kind of court application that will become available soon.

I am a recipient of support. How will this referral process affect me?

Recipients of support may be referred to this new referral process too. Talk to your MEP case worker about it.

- You may reach MEP through the Online Account here: <https://mep.novascotia.ca/en/my-account>. If you are not registered with MEP, call their Client Service Line at 1-855-322-0934.

What other things can I do as a recipient?

COVID-19 is impacting the daily lives of families across Nova Scotia. As a recipient, you may be facing similar challenges in providing for your family, especially if you have lost your job and/or support is not paid or is reduced.

If you are a recipient in this situation, here are some things that you can consider:

- Find out more about provincial or federal programs (Canadian Emergency Response Benefit or Employment Insurance) that may be available for you to help to replace income or assist with the payment of bills. For example, see: <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/economic-response-plan.html>
- Contact the Maintenance Enforcement Program to update them on your situation. You may reach MEP through the Online Account here: <https://mep.novascotia.ca/en/my-account> or through the Client Service Line at 1-855-322-0934.
- Consider getting legal advice. See below for more information.

How can I get legal advice during COVID-19?

- If you do not have a lawyer, Nova Scotia Legal Aid may be able to help. Legal Aid offers **free** online chats on family law issues every Tuesday and Thursday from 3-5 p.m. Go to www.nslegalaid.ca and click the chat button to speak with a lawyer.
- Legal Aid also provides family summary advice services (Summary Advice Counsel) at all courthouses through scheduled telephone appointments for Nova Scotians who do not qualify financially for Legal Aid. Information about how to reach the courthouse in your area is available Information [here](#). NSLA has expanded their telephone family summary advice service, which is available at all Legal Aid offices that provide family law services. Legal Aid also provides full-service representation to qualified applicants. Go to www.nslegalaid.ca for more information.
- The Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia is also providing free telephone, email and live chat services. Please see this link for more information: https://www.legalinfo.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=29&Itemid=46 .
- Here are some other ways to obtain legal advice, for no or low fees: <https://www.nsfamilylaw.ca/services/getting-legal-advice-finding-lawyer>