

CHANGES TO THE MAINTENANCE ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM

Changes to The Family Maintenance Act came into effect in July 2019 and significantly expanded the administrative authority of the Maintenance Enforcement Program (MEP). Some of the changes include:

- parties are permitted to enter into an agreement to change the amount of court-ordered support that the MEP will enforce,
- the MEP may undertake reviews to determine the status of adult children and cease enforcement of child support for them in appropriate circumstances,
- the MEP may enforce a reduced amount of child support in an order if certain criteria are met, such as when an adult child is no longer dependent but support continues for other dependent siblings,
- the MEP may suspend enforcement of support in appropriate circumstances, and
- a recipient of support can decide whether penalties are assessed on arrears and a recipient of support can waive or cancel penalties payable to them.

By allowing the MEP to make administrative decisions in appropriate circumstances and to gather information more effectively, families will not need to make as many court applications to vary existing orders or adjust the amount of support being enforced. Matters that would have previously required a court filing, will now be able to be addressed outside of court.

The MEP administers child, spousal and common-law support set out under court orders, agreements or family arbitration awards, acting as an intermediary between those who pay and receive support. They currently manage about 12,600 files.