How to File a Petition for Contempt

Warning:

These instructions will tell you how to file your own Petition for Contempt for Failure to Pay Support. This can be a confusing and complicated process. If you have questions about the instructions or any of the forms, you should talk to a lawyer. This packet does not deal with every contempt situation and can not take the place of a lawyer. If you use these forms and don't talk to a lawyer, you may lose important rights.

You can not use this packet if it has been *more than three years* since the other party failed to pay or underpaid support.

You can not use this packet if you are asking for interest on any support past due. If you would like to ask for interest on support past due, you should talk to a lawyer.

The steps for filing for contempt may be slightly different in your judicial district. Always check with the Clerk of District Court in your district to make sure that you are following the right procedures.

Who Should Use this Packet?

You should use this packet of forms if you want to ask a Court to find another party in contempt for failing to pay support as previously ordered by a Court or administrative agency, like the Montana Child Support Enforcement Division (CSED). Support includes child support, medical support, spousal support (also called maintenance), or any other support ordered by a Court or administrative agency.

What Forms Will I Need?

You will need the following forms in order to ask the Court to find the other party in contempt:

- Petition for Contempt for Failure to Pay Support
- Order to Show Cause
- Praecipe
- Contempt Citation

What Do These Words Means?

Below are some common legal words you may see during this process.

Contempt- Contempt is a finding by a court that someone has violated a previous order by a court or administrative agency. In your case, you are asking that someone be found in contempt for not paying support as previously ordered by a court or administrative agency.

Petitioner- The Petitioner is the person who first asks the court for something by filing a Petition. If you are using this packet of forms, you are the Petitioner. You are asking the court that someone else be found in contempt for not paying support.

Respondent- The Respondent is the person who must respond to a court case by filing a Response. The Respondent in your case is the person you are asking the court to find in contempt.

Where Can I Get More Information?

The Montana Code Annotated (M.C.A) contains the law on contempt actions for failure to pay support. The law can be found in Title 40, Chapter 5, Section 601 of the Montana Code Annotated. This is sometimes written as M.C.A. § 40-5-601. The Montana Code Annotated. can be found in your local library or on the Montana State Law Library website at www.lawlibrary.mt.gov. At the top of the page you will see a button that says, "State Laws." Point your mouse on this button and then choose "MCA" from the list. Reading the actual law may be helpful to you.

Where Can I Get Legal Help?

If you need help, the following resources may be able to help you:

- 1. The State Bar Lawyer Referral and Information Service (LRIS) refers people to Montana lawyers who agree to charge a reasonable fee for the first visit. The referral is free. Call the LRIS at 1-406-449-6577.
- 2. Montana Legal Services Association (MLSA) provides free legal help to low-income persons. If you are eligible, MLSA may be able to give you advice on filling out and filing your Petition for Contempt. To find out if you qualify for MLSA services, call the MLSA HelpLine at 1-800-666-6899.
- 3. The State Law Library can help you to find and use legal resources, such as books, forms, and Web sites, to learn the answers to your legal research questions. You can visit the law library on the Web at www.lawlibrary.mt.gov. To talk to the Reference Librarian, call 1-406-444-3636 or send an e-mail to mtlawlibrary@mt.gov.

What Do I Do With These Forms?

You should complete the following steps in order to ask the Court to find the other person in contempt.

Step One: Fill in the Forms

Petition for Contempt-

[] Fill in the Petition for Contempt completely. Be sure to attach a copy of the support order that the other party is violating. You can get a copy of the order from the Court or administrative agency who issued it. For Number 6 in the Petition, give detailed information about how the other party has violated the support order. For instance, if the other party has failed to pay child support eight different times, list the date of each violation and how much s/he owes you for each violation. If CSED has been collecting the support, they should have a document showing how much the other party has paid each month. Call CSED and ask

them to send a list of the missed payments by the other party. Attach this document to your Petition. When you are done filling out the form, sign it in front of a Notary Public. Order to Show Cause-[] Fill in the top left box on the first page. The Court will fill out the rest of this form. *Praecipe*- This form asks the Sheriff to serve your court papers on the other party. [] Fill out the first and second page of this form. Date and sign the bottom of the second page. The Sheriff will fill out the third page. **Step Two: Make Copies** Make the following number of copies of the forms you have filled out: • Petition for Contempt- 2 copies (plus the original) • Order to Show Cause- 1 copy (plus the original) • Praecipe- 1 copy (plus the original) **Step Three: File Your Papers with the Court** Go to the Clerk of District Court in the County Courthouse where you are filing. You will have to pay a filing fee in order to file your papers with the Court. If you cannot afford to pay the filing fee, you may be eligible to have prepayment of the fee waived. [] If you can not afford the filing fee, ask the Clerk of District Court for an "Affidavit of Inability to Pay Filing Fees." Fill the form out and file it with the Clerk of District Court. If the Clerk does not have the form, you can find a sample Affidavit of Inability to Pay Filing Fees on the State Law Library's website, www.lawlibrary.mt.gov. Click on the link to "Find a Law by Topic" and then choose "District Court." The Affidavit of Inability to Pay Filing Fees will be listed there. After you have paid the filing fee (or the Judge has decided to waive the filing fee), file the following original documents with the Clerk of District Court: • Petition for Contempt for Failure to Pay Support • Order to Show Cause Always keep one copy of everything that you file with the Clerk of District Court or serve on your spouse. The original documents get filed with the Clerk. Every time you file a document with the Clerk, bring a copy of the document with you and ask the Clerk to stamp it, showing that the document has been filed. Keep an organized file of all your court papers and letters concerning your case.

to Show Cause.

Make two copies of the Order to Show Cause

If the Judge schedules a hearing, the Clerk of Court will call you or send you a copy of the Order

The Clerk will put a cause number on all of the documents you filed. This cause number is how the court will identify your case. Put this cause number on all of your forms from now on.

Step Four: Notify Your Spouse

After you file all of your papers and the Clerk of District Court gives you your Order to Show Cause, you must serve the other party. Sheriffs in Montana will serve the papers for free if you have an Order of Inability to Pay from the Judge. Otherwise, you will need to pay the sheriff for this service.

[] Either mail or personally deliver the following documents to the sheriff in the county where the other party lives:

- Praecipe (original)
- Petition for Contempt for Failure to Pay Support (copy)
- Order to Show Cause (original and one copy)

Also give the sheriff a self-addressed stamped return envelope. When the sheriff has served the documents, s/he will send you a Record of Service and the original Order to Show Cause. The Record of Service is your proof that the documents were served.

Step Five: File the Original Order to Show Cause and Record of Service

[] After you receive proof that your spouse was served by the Sheriff, make one copy of the Record of Service. File the original Record of Service with the Clerk of District Court. At the same time, file the original Order to Show Cause.

Step Six: Complete and Make Copies of the Contempt Citation

- [] Fill in everything on page one of the Contempt Citation. Also fill out all of the information under the "Findings of Fact" section. The Judge will fill out the rest of the Contempt Citation if he decides to find the other party in contempt after the hearing.
- [] Make two copies of the Contempt Citation.

Step Seven: Prepare for Your Hearing

You will need to collect the evidence to support your case for your hearing.

- [] Try to get something that shows the other person knew about the previous order. You can do this in one or more of the following ways:
 - If CSED or another administrative agency issued the support order, call the agency and ask them to send proof that the other person was sent a copy of the order.
 - If a Court issued the order, call the Clerk of the District Court that issued the order and ask if there is something in the file showing that the other party was given or mailed a copy of the order. Ask them to send you a certified copy of the proof.
 - If the other party has paid the support sometimes, bring proof that s/he has paid. This will show that the other party knew s/he was supposed to pay. You can show this by getting a copy of a previously deposited check. If CSED has been collecting the support, they

should have a document showing how much the other party has paid each month. If you haven't already, call CSED and ask them to send a list of the payment history by the other party. If you don't have any other proof that the other party has paid in the past, try to write down the dates that the other party has paid support.

- [] Try to get something that shows that other person has not paid the support that s/he was ordered to. Examples of proof that the other person has not paid include:
 - If CSED has been collecting the support, they should have a document showing how much the other party has paid each month. Call CSED and ask them to send a list of the missed payments or underpayments by the other party.
 - Write down a list of every support payment missed or underpaid by the other party. This
 should be the same information you put in you Petition for Contempt for Failure to Pay
 Support.
 - If you have bills that you have paid that the other party was ordered to pay, bring copies of those bills and proof of payment.
- [] You should also write down and practice the questions that you want to ask the other party at the hearing. You may want to include questions about:
 - Whether s/he knew about the support order
 - Whether it's true that s/he hasn't paid the support as ordered
 - Whether s/he is employed and, if so, where and how much s/he makes
 - Whether s/he has property s/he could sell to pay the child support, for example, cars (including year, make, and model), recreational vehicles, trailers, ATVs, motorcycles, boats, campers, and/or firearms
 - Whether s/he has any friends or relatives that s/he could borrow the money from to pay the back child support
 - Whether s/he has asked a bank for a loan to pay the back child support

Important: Only ask questions that you think will help your case. For example, if you know the other party doesn't have a job and can't get a job, do not ask whether s/he has a job.

- [] You should also practice what you want to say to the judge. Practice with a friend until you feel comfortable with everything that you want to say. You should plan on telling the Judge:
 - That a previous child support order was issued, who issued it, and what it ordered the other party to pay
 - That the other party knew about the previous order. Give the Judge any proof you collected in Step Six which shows that the other party knew
 - That the other party has not paid the support as ordered. Give the Judge any proof you collected in Step Six which shows that the other party has not paid. List all of the dates that the other party has not paid when s/he should have
 - That the other party has money or property s/he could use to pay the back child support

Ste	ep Eight: Go to Court for Your Hearing
[]	The time and date of your hearing should have been filled in by the Judge on your Order to
	Show Cause form. You must attend that hearing. Be at the courthouse at least 15 minutes
	before your scheduled hearing time. Dress as you would for an important meeting or job
	interview. Ask the Clerk of District Court which courtroom your Judge is in. Go to the
	appropriate courtroom and wait for the Judge to call your name and cause number. Be calm
	and polite and address the Judge as AYour Honor.@
[]	Bring your original and two copies of the Contempt Citation.
[]	Bring copies of all of the evidence you gathered in Step Six above.
If t	he other party is at the hearing, the Judge will ask him/her to be sworn in and to take the

The Judge will then ask you to take the stand. You should bring your evidence with you. You will be allowed to tell your side of the story.

allowed to ask the other party any questions you have.

witness stand. The other party will be allowed to tell his/her side of the story. You will then be

After the hearing the Judge will decide whether to find the other party in contempt. You may be given a copy of the order right then, or you may be mailed a copy of the order later. If the Judge schedules another hearing to determine if the other party has complied with the order, you should plan on going to that hearing and telling the Judge what, if anything, the other party has done since the order was signed.

Your Name			
Your Address			
Your City	State	Zip Code	
Your Phone Numbe			
	MONTA	NA	JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT COUNTY
Your name	Petitioner,	,	Cause No.: Petition for Contempt for Failure to Pay Support and Supporting Legal Brief
The other party's	name Responder	nt.	
I respect	-		spondent in contempt for failure to pay support.
		Sta	atement of Facts
•	me:		Birth:
c. My Ad	dress:		State:

2.	Information about the Other Par	rty (Respondent)			
	a. Name:				
	b. Age: Date of	Birth:			
	c. Address:				
	d. City:C	ounty:	State:		
3.	Information about the Children				
	The parties have (number:)	child(ren). List your ci	hildren here:		
	Name of Child	Child's Birth	Who the Child Lives		
		Date	With		
	Attach additional sheet.	s if necessary.			
4		. 37. 1 4 1			
4.	Information about the Order Be				
	The Respondent has not paid so	upport as ordered in:			
гэ	Choose One:				
[]	A Court order or decree. The order was signed on (date:)				
гэ	A copy of this order is attached to this Petition. An order from the Montana Child Support Enforcement Division or an administrative				
[]					
	agency in another state. The or A copy of this order is attached				
гэ	•		(data)		
[]	An order from and Indian tribe	C	(uuie.)		
12.	A copy of this order is attached				
Att	ach a copy of the order to this Petit	iori.			

5. Respondent's Knowledge of Order Respondent knows about the Order. Choose all that apply: The Respondent was in Court when the Order was made The Respondent was given a copy of the Order. [] The Respondent has followed the Order on occasion in the past, showing that s/he knew about the Order. Respondent knew about the Order because: []6. Information About Violation(s) of Order a. The Respondent has not obeyed the previous order. The Respondent has not (Choose all *that apply:*) Paid child support as ordered Followed the medical support order Paid spousal support as ordered [] Other: b. Give more detailed information about how the Respondent has violated the previous order, including the dates of any violations and amount owed for each violation:

	c.	Check i	if applicable:					
		[]	I have attached a payment history from Montana Child Support Enforcement					
			Division or another administrative agency to this Petition.					
7.	Ar	nount O	wed					
		The Re	spondent owes me a total of (amount): \$ in back support.					
8.	Re	esponder	nt Can Afford to Pay					
		The Re	spondent can afford to pay what s/he owes.					
		Choose	all that apply:					
[]		S/he ha	s enough income. S/he makes \$ per month. His/her occupation					
		is	, and s/he is employed by					
[]		S/he ha	s the following personal or real property that could be sold, mortgaged, or pledged					
		to raise the money:						
		-						
[]		S/he co	uld borrow the money from a bank.					
[]		S/he co	uld borrow the money from a relative or another source.					
[]		Other:						
0	Eil	ling Info	ormation					
).	1,11	_						
		I am filing this Petition in this Court because:						
		Choose one:						
			This Court issued the original support order.					
		[]	I live or work or have an office in this judicial district.					
		[]	The Respondent lives in this judicial district.					

Legal Brief

MCA § 40-5-601 (2) says that if a person who is ordered to pay support fails to pay that support, the payee (the person the support is owed to) may petition a district court to find the obligated party in contempt. "Support" as defined at MCA § 40-5-601(1), includes "child

support, spousal support, health insurance, medical, dental, and optical payments; day care expenses; and any other payments due as support under a court or administrative order."

MCA § 40-5-601(5) provides that an obligated person is presumed to be in contempt upon a showing that a court order was issued, the obligated person had actual or constructive knowledge of the order, and the obligated person failed to pay. The Petitioner has met the requirements for a showing of contempt under MCA § 40-5-601.

MCA § 40-5-601(3) provides that the petition for contempt for failure to pay support may be filed in the district court "(a) that issued the support; (b) of the judicial district in which the obligated person resides; or (c) of the judicial district in which the payee or assignee of the payee resides or has an office."

Request for Relief

The Petitioner respectfully asks this Court to:

- 1. Order the Respondent to appear before this Court and show cause, if any exists, why a finding of contempt should not be entered against the Respondent;
- 2. Find the Respondent in contempt and order appropriate punishment, including incarceration, community service, and/or payment of a fine;
- 3. Order the Respondent to pay the support owed by any reasonable means including, but not limited to, garnishment of Respondent's wages or attachment of Respondent's real or personal property; and
- 4. Any other just and equitable relief.

DATE:		
	Petitioner Pro Se	
	Print Name	

STATE OF MONTANA)
COUNTY OF) ss.)
	, being first duly sworn on oath, says that he/she is
the Petitioner in the above-entitl	ed proceeding; that he/she has read the foregoing Petition and
knows the contents thereof; and	that the matter, facts and things stated therein are true to the best
of his/her knowledge and belief.	
	Petitioner Pro Se
SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN t	to before me on this date:
	Name (printed):
(SEAL)	Notary Public for the State of Montana.
	Residing at My Commission Expires
	111 Commission Expires

MONTANA	JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT COUNTY	
Your name ,	Cause No.:	
Petitioner,	Order to Show Cause	
The other party's name Respondent.		
This Court has reviewed the Petition for ConHEREBY ORDERED:	ntempt filed by the Petitioner. Finding good cause IT IS	
1. That (Name of Respondent:)	appear in person before this Court at	
the time and place below to give reason, if a	any exists, why s/he should not be found in contempt of court	
for failing to pay support as ordered.		
Date:Place: (County name:)Address of Courthouse:	Time: County Courthouse	
 That a copy of the Petition filed in this action and a copy of this Order be served upon the Respo at least five (5) days before the date set for hearing in this Order. DATE:		
	DISTRICT COURT JUDGE	

Your Name			
Your Address			
Your City	State	Zip Code	
Your Phone Number PETITIONER F	PRO SE		
	MONTA		JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURTCOUNTY
Your name	Petitioner,		, Cause No.: Praecipe
The other party's no	ame Responder	nt.	
To the S	heriff of (na	me of cou	anty where the Respondent lives:)
County:			
Please se	erve upon th	e Respond	dent the following documents:
			npt for Failure to Pay Support use (original and one copy)
Also enc	closed is:		
[-		s Affidavit and Order of Inability to Pay Filing Fees which for service in this matter; OR
[] \$		_ to cover the fee for service in this matter.

1.	De	scribe what the Respondent looks like:		
		-		
2.	The	e Respondent (choose one:) [] does not/[] do	es carry a weapon.	
3.	At	present, the Respondent can be found:		
	[]			
		Times normally available at this address:		
	[]	At his or her work (address):		
		Times normally available at this address:		
	[]	Other (address):		
		Times normally available at this address:		
Ple	ase	serve the papers on the Respondent as soon a	s possible. Please return the original	inal Order to
		Cause to me at the address above, along with		
		to locate the Respondent.	·	3
		F		
		DATE:		
		DATE:	•	
				Petitio
			ner Pro Se	
				D ' 4
			Name	Print

Below for Sheriffs' office use only

	Record of Service			
	I hereby certify that (Choose One):			
[]	I personally served the Petition for Contempt for Failure to Pay Support and Or	der to		
	Show Cause on the Respondent by delivering a copy of said documents to him/	her		
	personally on (date:), in the County of			
	, State of			
[]	After due effort, I was unable to locate or serve the Respondent in the County of	f		
	, State of			
	Sheriff			
	By:			
	Deputy Sheriff			

		JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURTCOUNTY
	,	Cause No.:
Y	our name Petitioner,	
aı	nd	Contempt Citation
T	he other party's name Respondent.	
	•	ay Support was filed with this Court on (date:)
		earing was held on (date:) ear. After considering all evidence and pleadings,
	Court finds:	ar. After considering an evidence and picadings,
	STATEMEN	T OF FACTS
4.	The Respondent was properly served with a (date:)	Petition and Order to Show Cause in this case on
5.	The Respondent has violated a previous Ord	er to pay support issued by:
	Choose one:	
	[] this Court	
	[] another Court (name of Court):	
	[] Montana Child Support Enforcement Div	vision
	[] An administrative agency of another stat	e (name of agency):

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	[] An In	dian tribe (name and location of tribe):	
6.	The previ	ous order was issued on (date:)	
7.		ondent knew about the previous order.	
8.	The Resp	ondent has violated the previous order by failing to	
	Choos	se all that apply:	
	[]	Pay child support as ordered	
	[]	Follow the medical support order	
	[]	Pay spousal support as ordered	
	[]	Other:	
9.		ondent has violated the previous order on (number:) separate occasions,	
	from (beg	ginning date:) to (ending date:)	
10	. The last v	violation occurred within 3 years of this proceeding.	
11.	. The Resp	ondent owes the Petitioner a total of (amount:) \$ in unpaid support.	
12.	. The Resp	ondent has or can secure the money to pay the unpaid support.	
13.	. This Cou	rt (choose all that apply:)	
		Court that issued the support order.	
	[] is in tl	he judicial district where the Petitioner lives or works or has an office.	
	[] is in the	he judicial district where the Respondent lives.	
	Based	l on the Findings of Fact, the Court makes the following:	
		CONCLUSIONS OF LAW	
14	. This Cou	rt has jurisdiction over this case.	
15	. The Resp	ondent is in contempt for (number:) separate violations of a previous suppo	rt
	order.		
16	. The Resp	ondent's violations are punishable under MCA § 40-5-601.	
	Based	l on the Conclusions of Law, the Court enters the following:	

CONTEMPT CITATION

The Court hereby orders (*choose all that apply*): [] That the Petitioner shall have a judgment against the Respondent in the amount of \$_____ for unpaid support. Respondent's income is subject to immediate income withholding under MCA § 40-5-303. The Respondent to serve days in the county jail to begin on (date:) and end on (date:) _____ The Respondent must report to (specify place:) _____ by (time:) _____ on (date:) _____ The Respondent to perform _____ hours of community service to begin on (date:) ___ [] and end on (date:) _____ The Respondent must report to (specify place:) _____ by (time:) _____ on (date:) _____ The Respondent must pay a fine in the amount of \$______, by (date:) ______ []_____, made payable to _____ CONDITIONS FOR PURGING THE CONTEMPT The Respondent may purge this Contempt, suspending the above punishment, by (choose all that apply): []Complying with the current support order. Paying the total unpaid support, in the amount of \$_____, made payable to [] (name:)______ by (date:) ______

Payment shall be delivered by ______ Seeking employment and filing a written report with the district court on all efforts to find employment by (*date*:) ______. Paying at least (amount:) \$______ per month for unpaid support in addition to any current monthly child support owed. Payments should begin on (date:)

	and be made payable to
-	and be made payable to Respondent's income is subject to immediate income withholding under MCA § 40-5-303.
	immediate income withholding under MCA § 40-5-303.
	Selling or transferring the following real or personal property and paying the proceeds to the Petitioner:
	Transferring the following real or personal property to the Petitioner:
	Transferring the following real of personal property to the retainner.
	Borrowing the total amount owed in unpaid support in the amount of \$ and filing a written report to this Court on all efforts to borrow the amount by (date:)
	Other:
	Respondent shall appear before this Court on (date:) at (time:) for a hearing to determine whether Respondent has complied with the terms and conditions for the purging of this Contempt Citation.
	DATE:
	DISTRICT COURT JUDGE