



Case Closure

Overview

The [Flexibility, Efficiency, and Modernization in Child Support Enforcement Programs Final Rule](#) makes a number of changes to federal case closure criteria, codified at 45 CFR 303.11. These changes provide greater state flexibility while protecting families by recognizing more circumstances in which a state is permitted to close a case. These changes help states direct resources for cases where collections are possible and carry out good customer service and management practices. They reflect advances in technology and recommendations by states for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the child support program. Additionally, the rule strengthens notice provisions to ensure that safeguards are in place to keep recipients informed about case closure actions. Cases may not be closed without considering new information provided by the parties to the case.

What is new

New criteria permit case closure for certain situations, such as:

- when there is no current support order and all arrearages are owed to the state;
- there is an intact two-parent household;
- limited services have been provided; or
- there is an inappropriate referral.

The final rule also revises the locate criteria for closing cases and adds a provision for closing and transferring cases to a tribal child support program. Please see the regulations at § 303.11 for all of the case closure criteria.

How this affects states

States have the discretion to adopt any of the case closure criteria under § 303.11(b). The rule makes it clear that, generally, case closure is not required. Case closure regulations are designed to give a state the option to close cases, if certain conditions are met, and flexibility to manage its caseload. These additional criteria provide states with greater flexibility to better manage limited program resources and provide good customer service.

How this affects families

Many factors affect whether a state closes a case or adopts any of the optional case closure criteria. The rule supports continued enforcement of cases with collection potential. The final rule emphasizes the requirement that states provide the recipient of services:

- notice of the intent to close the case; and
- an opportunity to respond with information and request that the case be kept open or, reopen the case, after the case is closed.

Closing a case does not affect the legality of the underlying order. The child support order, including any payment or installment of support such as arrearages due under the order, remains in effect and legally binding.