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[Home](#) » [Criminal Division](#) » [About The Criminal Division](#) » [Sections/Offices](#) » [Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section \(CEOS\)](#) » [Citizen's Guide To U.S. Federal Child Exploitation And Obscenity Laws](#)

[CEOS Home](#)

[CEOS Mission](#)

▶ [Subject Areas](#)

[Press Releases](#)

[Congressional Testimony](#)

▼ [Citizen's Guide to U.S. Federal Child Exploitation Laws](#)

[Child Pornography](#)

[Child Sexual Abuse](#)

[Child Support Enforcement](#)

[Extraterritorial Sexual Exploitation of Children](#)

[International Parental Kidnapping](#)

[Obscenity](#)

[Prostitution of Children](#)

[Sex Offender Registration](#)

▶ [Additional Resources](#)

▶ [Employment and Internship Opportunities](#)

[FAQs](#)

[Report Violations](#)

CITIZEN'S GUIDE TO U.S. FEDERAL LAW ON CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT

18 U.S.C. § 228- Failure to pay legal child support obligations

Section 228 of Title 18, United States Code, makes it illegal for an individual to willfully fail to pay child support in certain circumstances.

For one, an individual is subject to federal prosecution if he or she willfully fails to pay child support that has been ordered by a court for a child who lives in another state, or if the payment is past due for longer than 1 year or exceeds the amount of \$5,000. A violation of this law is a criminal misdemeanor, and convicted offender face fines and up to 6 months in prison (See 18 U.S.C. § 228(a)(1)).

If, under the same circumstances, the child support payment is overdue for longer than 2 years, or the amount exceeds \$10,000, the violation is a criminal felony, and convicted offenders face fines and up to 2 years in prison (See 18 U.S.C. § 228(a)(3)).

Lastly, this statute prohibits individuals obligated to pay child support from crossing state lines or fleeing the country with the intent to avoid paying child support that has either been past due for more than 1 year or exceeds \$5,000. (See 18 U.S.C. § 228(a)(2)). Any individual convicted of this crime may face up to 2 years in prison.

Notably, other than in the specific circumstances aforementioned, child support enforcement issues are handled by state and local authorities, and not by the federal government. Furthermore, all child support enforcement matters must be addressed at the local or state level before concerns can be raised at the federal level.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- [Federal Offenses Related to Child Support Enforcement, Child Sexual Abuse, and Child Custody Matters](#)
- [Report Violations](#)

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