Federal Parent Locator Service

Debt Inquiry Service

System Interface Specifications

Version 2.0

May 2014

Administration for Children and Families
Office of Child Support Enforcement
370 L'Enfant Promenade, SW
Washington, DC 20447

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Debt Inquiry Service is an application on the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement's (OCSE) portal that provides a centralized process for employers and insurers to report employees/beneficiaries who are eligible to receive upcoming lump sum payouts such as bonuses, severance, vacation payouts, and life insurance proceeds. All information must be submitted at least five (5) days prior to the payout date. This five-day window allows state agencies time to process matches they receive.

After the employer or insurer provides the payout information, the system checks each individual submitted to determine if the individual owes child support. When there is a match, state agencies receive an e-mail notification that payout information is available on the Debt Inquiry Service web application on the State Services Portal. State agencies contact the employers or insurers prior to the payout date to let them know how much money to withhold from the lump sum payment.

> Note: If the information submitted by the employer or insurer does not result in a match, OCSE does not provide data to the state child support agencies.

The employer or insurer may release the payment to their employees/beneficiaries after the payout date they provided using the Debt Inquiry Service application on the Child Support Services Portal (CSSP). However, if the employer or insurer is enforcing a child support order and the state mandated hold period for lump sum payouts is beyond the payout date, they must hold the payment according to state law.

This document provides information to assist employers and insurers in implementing and using the Debt Inquiry Service.

1.1 Benefits

The electronic submission and transmission of lump sum payout data has many benefits including:

- States receive notification about upcoming lump sum payouts more quickly
- Employers and insurers have reduced administrative expenditures (postage, paper, handling)
- Employers/insurers and state agencies experience improved communication

Using the Debt Inquiry Service web application to exchange data ensures:

- Transfer over a secure network
- Transfer of validated data
- Transfer according to a predefined and standard file layout
- Automatic matching, sorting, and reporting of lump sum payouts

1.2 Getting Started

Debt Inquiry Service application users must complete a profile form, and (if applicable) a Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN) spreadsheet. The profile form requires users to select one of the following methods for submitting files:

- Debt Inquiry Service web application
- Secure File Transmission Protocol (SFTP)

Section 2, "Profile Form," and Section 3, "FEIN Spreadsheet," contain additional information regarding profile forms and FEIN spreadsheets respectively. After completing the profile form and (if applicable) the FEIN spreadsheet, send them to the appropriate Debt Inquiry Service contact identified in Chart A-1, "Contact Information." OCSE will create an organization profile based on the information you provided.

Debt Inquiry Service web application users must complete the standard portal registration process by creating a unique user ID and password. Each unique user must complete the registration process—sharing accounts is not permitted. Once registered, users will receive a link to the web application. The application will recognize the user based on the public Internet Protocol (IP) address provided on the profile form. Only authorized users will be able to link to the Debt Inquiry Service web application.

Users submitting files via SFTP are not required to register to receive a user ID and password.

1.3 Work Flow

Registered Debt Inquiry Service users will have access to the web application. They can submit payout information online or via a file upload.

Payout information submitted online is processed immediately while uploaded files are processed within an hour of upload. The system will generate an e-mail to the user indicating whether the file processed successfully or not.

If the file failed, an error log is available on the File Errors page. The error log will indicate which fields contained errors so users can make necessary corrections and resubmit the file. Please see Chart B-1, "Debt Inquiry Service Input Record Layout," for all input field requirements.

Debt Inquiry Service users that choose the SFTP method will place their files in the directory designated on the profile form. File pick up occurs once a day, before 12:00 pm ET.

States receive notification about the matches that are available on the State Services Portal at approximately 6:00 pm ET that day.

Note: If there are no matches during processing, then there is nothing to report to state agencies.

Note: If states do not contact employers by the payout date, then barring some exceptions depending on state law, employers can release payouts. Check the state lump sum reporting requirements at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/css/resource/state-lump-sum-contacts-and-program-information.

2. PROFILE FORM

Debt Inquiry Service application users must provide the information requested on the Debt Inquiry Service Profile form. This information is used to identify users and their preferences. All required fields are marked with a red asterisk (*). OCSE receives frequent questions about the following sections:

1. **Organization Type** – Select one of four options as outlined in Chart 2-1, "Debt Inquiry Organizations."
2. **Contact Information** – Provide business and technical contact information. Please note:
   - At least one contact needs to receive e-mail notifications
   - If more than three (3) people in an organization should receive e-mail notifications, include their contact information in an e-mail when submitting the completed profile form
3. **Transmission Method** – Options to provide payout information:
   - Submit payout information through the Debt Inquiry Service web application using either of the following methods:
     - File Upload (submit information about payouts to many employees/beneficiaries at once)
     - Online (one payout at a time)
   - Connect to OCSE's SFTP server to drop off a file
   - Place a file on an SFTP server on your network for OCSE to pick up
4. **Server Information** – IP Address – Must be the public IP address of the computer used to access the web application. Additionally, the organization associated with the IP address must be the user's organization.

> Note: If the web application page does not display, this usually means that the IP address from the profile form is incorrect. If this is the case, follow up with the organization's IT staff or department for the correct public IP address. In some cases, visiting www.whatismyip.com provides the correct public IP address.

After completing the profile form, you must send it to the appropriate Debt Inquiry Service contact before initiating any data exchange or using the Debt Inquiry Service web application. See Appendix A, "Service Contact Information," for more information.

Chart 2-1 lists the types of Debt Inquiry organizations.

CHART 2-1: DEBT INQUIRY ORGANIZATIONS

Organization	Description
Debt Inquiry Employer	Have only one FEIN. Employers submit payout information regarding their employees.
Debt Inquiry Third Party Employer	Have one main FEIN and multiple subsidiary/child FEINs or may be a processor submitting information on behalf of their employer clients. Third party employers submit payout information regarding their own employees and employees on behalf of subsidiary FEINs. They also submit payout information on behalf of their employer clients.
Debt Inquiry Insurer	Have only one FEIN. Insurers submit payout information regarding insurance payouts.
Debt Inquiry Third Party Insurer	Have one main FEIN and multiple subsidiary/child FEINs. Third party insurers submit insurance payout information on behalf of their subsidiary FEINs.

3. FEIN SPREADSHEET

Third party organizations with multiple FEINs or submitting on behalf of another organization or subsidiaries need to complete the FEIN Spreadsheet. This spreadsheet contains many of the same fields as the profile form.

To obtain an FEIN spreadsheet or additional information, refer to the contacts listed in Appendix A, "Service Contact Information."

4. REGISTRATION

Each employer, third-party administrator, or insurer must complete one profile form. After receiving a completed profile form and (if applicable) FEIN Spreadsheet, OCSE sets up an organization profile, and adds the IP address contained in the profile form to the web application's firewall.

In order to use the Debt Inquiry Service web application, each individual user must register and create an account. OCSE will send registration information to each Debt Inquiry Service user, including a link to the application. Each user must provide their Social Security number and the name of the organization submitting payout information. OCSE uses this information to verify the user's identity and confirm employment by the organization submitting the payout information. This supports the requirement that each individual user must create a user ID.

After receiving the registration e-mail:

1. Click on the link provided (https://fpls.acf.hhs.gov/fsf/welcome.html) to access the Debt Inquiry Service application
2. Click **Register** (under the New User section)
3. Follow the on-screen directions and complete the required fields

After completing this process, the system will verify the user account. This may take up to two days. Once the system has verified the user account, it will generate an e-mail containing an activation code. Use this code to activate a user account on the web application.

5. FILE UPLOAD

The file upload option is best suited for submitting payout information about multiple employees/beneficiaries at one time. The Debt Inquiry Service validates all files submitted.

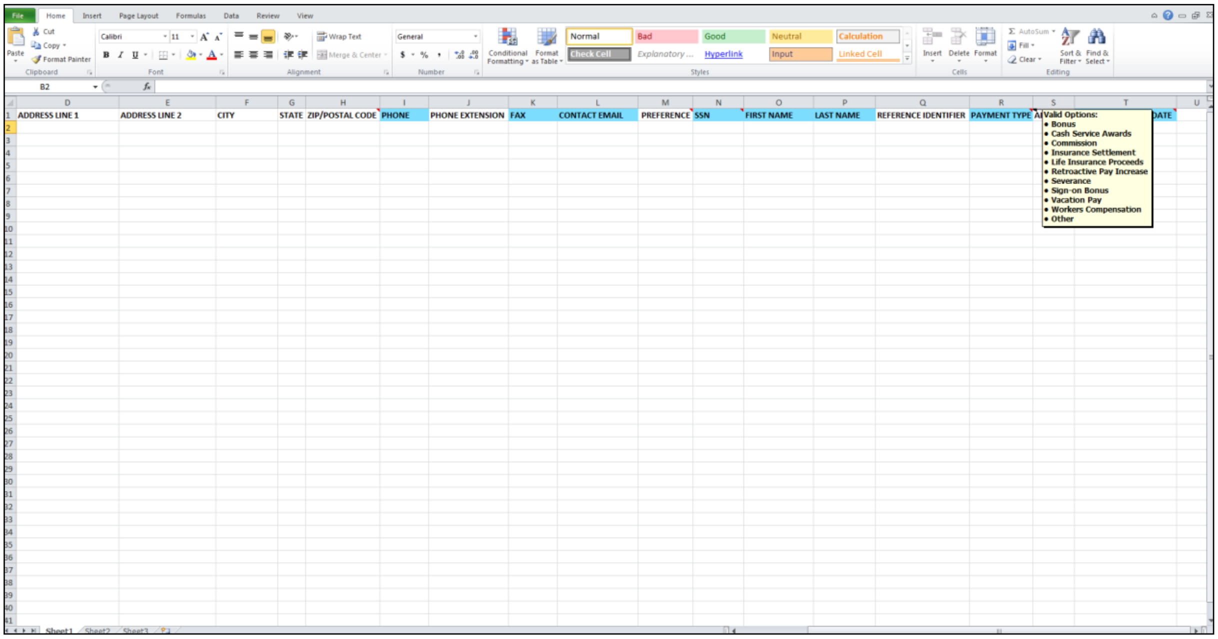
On the File Upload page, click **Sample .XLS** to download the sample template spreadsheet. This formatted template is ready for input data. All required columns have blue headers. Additionally, many headers contain tool tips that indicate valid inputs, common errors, and other helpful tips.

To upload the completed spreadsheet, click **Browse…** and select the appropriate file. Click **Open** and then click **Upload**.

Figure 5-1 shows the File Upload page. Figure 5-2 shows the sample template. See Chart B-1, "Debt Inquiry Service Input Record Layout," for field requirements.

Figure 5-1: File Upload Page

Figure 5-2: Sample Template



Files typically process within an hour of upload. E-mail notification indicates whether the file was successfully processed.

If the file fails, check the error log on the File Errors page of the web application. The error log will indicate the fields that contain errors. After correcting the fields, resubmit the file. See Chart B-1, “Debt Inquiry Service Input Record Layout” for field requirements. For further information, contact the appropriate person from Appendix A, “Service Contact Information.”

The following list addresses many of the most common questions/issues with the File Upload option:

1. Use the template available for Debt Inquiry file upload, located on the File Upload page. The formatted template columns ensure successful file processing. Required columns are highlighted blue. The Reference Identifier column is highlighted orange because it is required for Insurers and Third Party Insurers.
2. Avoid copying and pasting information into the spreadsheet. This may cause column format modifications that could cause data validation problems. If it is not possible to avoid copying/pasting data, ensure that the cell formats are set to ‘Text’ and there was no data modification after pasting the data. To set the cell format to ‘Text’, right click on the cell, select **Format Cells…**, select **Text** and click **OK**.
3. The only acceptable file extensions are:
   a. txt
   b. xls or xlsx
   c. csv
4. Please ensure the following:

   a. No hyphens in the FEIN or phone number fields
   b. Date of payout must be in MM/DD/YYYY format
   c. Date of payout must be at least five days after submitting the file. Check state lump sum reporting requirements at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/css/resource/state-lump-sum-contacts-and-program-information.
   d. Payment Type must be one of the following:
      - Bonus
      - Cash Service Awards
      - Commission
      - Insurance Settlement
      - Life Insurance Proceeds
      - Retroactive Pay Increase
      - Severance
      - Sign-on Bonus
      - Vacation Pay
      - Workers Compensation
      - Other
5. When resubmitting a file, the name must be different from the previously submitted file. Adding a sequence number is an easy way to make the resubmitted file's name different from the previous file name sent.

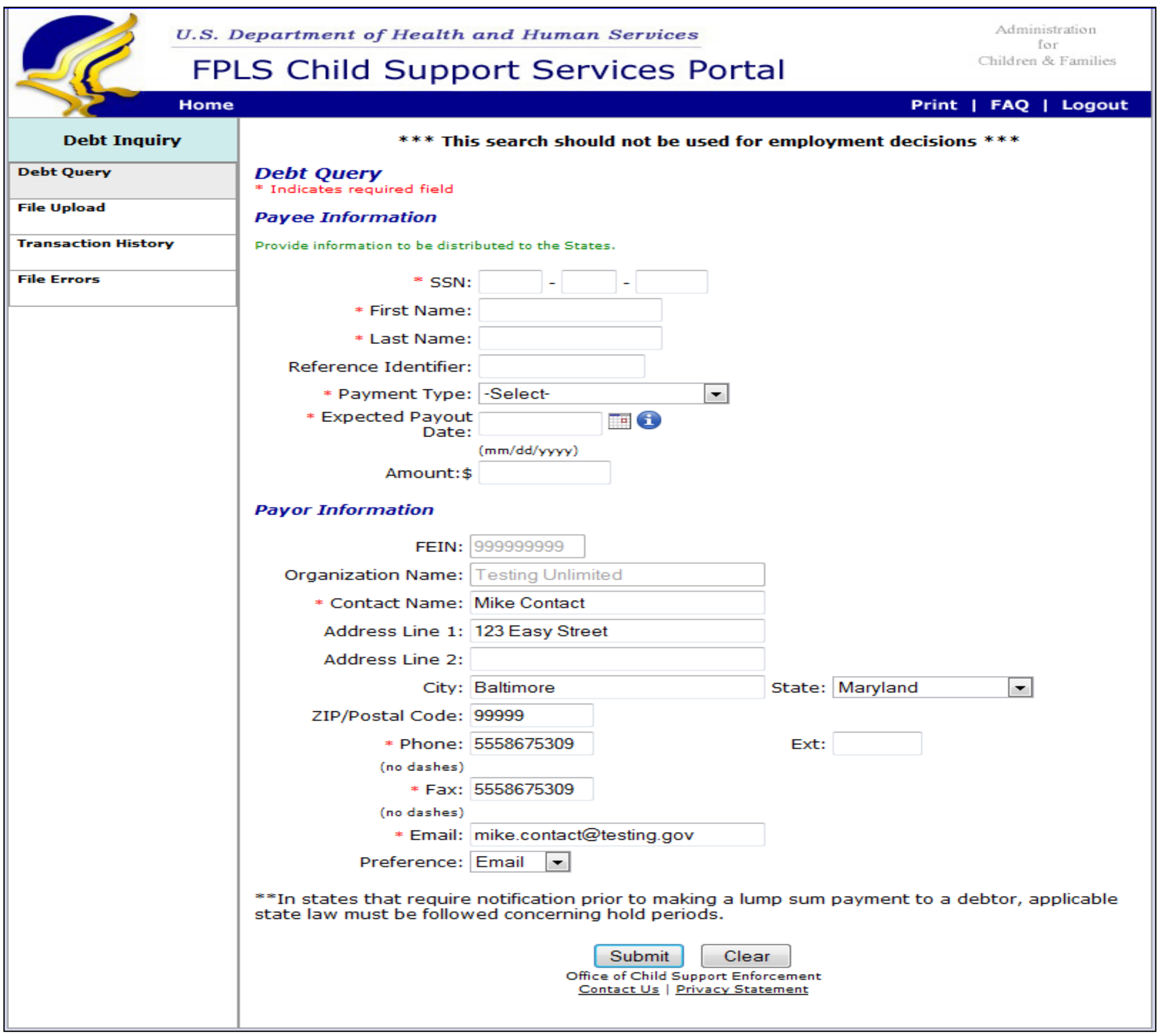
6. ONLINE (ONE-BY-ONE)

The online option is best suited for single or a small number of payout submissions.

Once logged into the Debt Inquiry Service web application, click the Debt Query link. The Debt Query page contains fields for payout information. Required fields are marked with a red asterisk (*). Enter the appropriate information and click **Submit**. Figure 6-1 shows an example of an in-progress debt query submission.

Note: Payor Information is pre-populated information from the profile form. The user cannot update the FEIN and Organization Name fields when submitting a debt query, but the user may update the contact information.

Figure 6-1: Debt Query Online Page



7. SFTP SERVER DROP-OFF/PICK-UP

In addition to using the Debt Inquiry Service web application, there are two other options for submitting files.

1. OCSE connects to an SFTP server on your network to pick up a file
2. You connect to OCSE's SFTP server to drop off a file

These options follow all of the same steps as the File Upload option except instead of submitting a file for upload through the web application you place the file in the designated directory for pickup. All Debt Inquiry Service SFTP files are picked up once daily before 12:00 pm ET. Files submitted using these methods must use the same sample template as the File Upload option.

After the file pick up, all processing, generating e-mails, matching, and reporting matches to state agencies follow the same schedule/process as the File Upload option.

8. PROCESSING STATUS NOTIFICATION E-MAIL

When using the File Upload option, an e-mail notification will automatically generate the file processing status (typically within an hour of uploading the file). This automated e-mail will indicate whether the file processed successfully.

In the event that the file does not process successfully, the notification will indicate that there is a file error log available on the web application. This file error log will indicate which rows and fields contain invalid values so users can make the necessary corrections and resubmit the file.

If a user uploads a file and does not receive an e-mail regarding the processing status within two hours of file submission, the user should contact a Debt Inquiry Service Administrator for assistance.

When using the SFTP method for submitting files, automated processing status e-mails will generate shortly after the file pick-up and processing. Without access to the web application, users will not be able to view file error logs if a file fails validation. In the event of a file failure, contact the appropriate person from Appendix A, "Service Contact Information."

A. SERVICE CONTACT INFORMATION

Chart A-1 contains OCSE contact information for assistance with the Debt Inquiry Service.

CHART A-1: CONTACT INFORMATION			
Questions Related To	Contact	Telephone	E-mail
User Account, Log in	Portal Help Desk	800-258-2736	ocse.gr-portal@lmco.com
Employers, Third Party Employers, Profile Forms	Cindy Holdren	240-676-2808	cynthia.holdren@acf.hhs.gov
Insurers, Third Party Insurers, Profile Forms	Beatrice Locks	202-260-5606	beatrice.locks@acf.hhs.gov
File Uploads, File Processing, Access	Michael Liebert	443-436-6466	michael.liebert@ssa.gov

B. DEBT INQUIRY SERVICE FILES

This appendix describes the files submitted to Debt Inquiry Service.

B.1 Input Records

This appendix includes the layouts for the records accepted by the Debt Inquiry Service. Each record layout includes:

1. Field names
2. Field locations (for fixed length (.txt) files)
3. Field lengths (for fixed length (.txt) files)
4. Field types (alphabetic, numeric, or alphanumeric)
5. Field comments

The Comments section of the record layouts indicates when the field is required for the transaction. Fields defined as “Conditionally Required” must be present on the input record based on the conditions described in the Comments field. Comments also provide an explanation of the field and its relationship to other fields or records.

B.2 Formatting Requirements

If using the File Upload option, please use the template available on the File Upload page. When submitting an .xls or .xlsx file, the first row must be the Header row. The Header must contain the names of the fields in the layout in the exact order they appear in Chart B-1. Even if data is optional, all column headers must be present in the file in the order specified below.

Additionally, do not modify the header from the sample template.

Only data populated on the first worksheet of an .xls or .xlsx file is processed and read. Data on subsequent sheets is not processed.

B.3 File Information

When submitting multiple files on the same day, each file name must be unique. We suggest appending a date and sequence number to the file name as an easy approach.

When submitting a .csv, .xls, .xlsx, or .txt file, the first row must contain the names of the fields in the exact order they appear (row number 1). Even if data is optional in the field, all column headers in row number 1 must be included for the file to process successfully.

Note: On .xls and .xlsx files, the system processes the data populated on the first worksheet only. No further processing on subsequent sheets will occur.

The location and length values in this chart only apply to fixed length text (.txt) files.

Chart B-1: Debt Inquiry Service Input Record Layout

Column Number	Field/Header Name	Location	Length	A/N	Required/ Optional/ Conditionally Required	Comments
1	FEIN	1-9	9	N	R	This field contains the federal employer identification number (FEIN) of the organization offering the payout. This field will not contain dashes. Must be numeric; no special characters are allowed.
2	Organization Name	10-109	100	A/N	R	This field contains the name of the organization offering the payout.
3	Contact Name	110-159	50	A	R	This field contains the name of the person to contact at the organization offering the payout. Must be alphabetic, and only periods, apostrophes and hyphens are allowed.

Chart B-1: Debt Inquiry Service Input Record Layout						
Column Number	Field/Header Name	Location	Length	A/N	Required/ Optional/ Conditionally Required	Comments
4	Address Line 1	160-259	100	A/N	O	This field contains address line 1 of the organization offering the payout. Ampersands and percentages are not allowed.
5	Address Line 2	260-359	100	A/N	O	This field contains address line 2 of the organization offering the payout. Ampersands and percentages are not allowed.
6	City	360-389	30	A	O	This field contains the name of the city of the organization offering the payout. Must be alphabetic; ampersands and percentages are not allowed.
7	State	390-391	2	A	O	This field contains the two-character state abbreviation code for the organization offering the payout.
8	ZIP/Postal Code	392-400	9	N	O	This field contains the ZIP Code of the organization offering the payout. The ZIP Code contains two parts. The first five positions contain the high-level postal ZIP Code. The last four positions further define the postal location. This field cannot contain dashes. Must be numeric; no special characters are allowed.

Chart B-1: Debt Inquiry Service Input Record Layout						
Column Number	Field/Header Name	Location	Length	A/N	Required/ Optional/ Conditionally Required	Comments
9	Phone Number	401-410	10	N	R	This field contains the phone number states should use to contact the organization offering the payout. This field cannot contain dashes. Must be numeric; no special characters are allowed.
10	Phone Extension	411-416	6	N	O	This field contains the extension associated with the phone number of the organization offering the payout. Must be numeric; no special characters are allowed.
11	Fax Number	417-426	10	N	R	This field contains the fax number states should use to contact the organization offering the payout. This field cannot contain dashes. Must be numeric; no special characters are allowed.
12	Contact Email Address	427-491	65	A/N	R	This field contains the e-mail address of the contact at the organization offering the payout. Format must adhere to *name@company.xxx*. For example .xxx may be .com, .net, etc. Must contain an ampersand (@) and can contain multiple nodes.

Chart B-1: Debt Inquiry Service Input Record Layout						
Column Number	Field/Header Name	Location	Length	A/N	Required/ Optional/ Conditionally Required	Comments
13	Preference	492-496	5	A/N	O	This field describes the preferred method identified by the organization offering the payout for states to communicate with them. If populated, this field must contain one of the following values: Phone Fax E-mail
14	SSN	497-505	9	N	R	This field contains the Social Security number of the employee, claimant, or beneficiary eligible to receive the payout. For .txt and .csv files, only whole numbers are allowed; no special characters. For .xls and .xlsx files, whole numbers or whole numbers with hyphens are allowed; no other special characters.
15	First Name	506-555	50	A	R	This field contains the first name of the employee, claimant, or beneficiary eligible to receive the payout. Must be alphabetic and only periods, apostrophes, and hyphens are allowed.

Chart B-1: Debt Inquiry Service Input Record Layout						
Column Number	Field/Header Name	Location	Length	A/N	Required/ Optional/ Conditionally Required	Comments
16	Last Name	556-605	50	A	R	This field contains the last name of the employee, claimant, or beneficiary eligible to receive the payout. Must be alphabetic and only periods, apostrophes, and hyphens are allowed.
17	Reference Identifier	606-630	25	A/N	C	This field contains the organization issuing the payout's identifier that assists them link an action issued by a state child support agency with the employee, claimant, or beneficiary eligible to receive the payout. This field is required when the user is assigned the role of Insurer or a TPA for an Insurer. No special characters allowed except hyphens.

Chart B-1: Debt Inquiry Service Input Record Layout						
Column Number	Field/Header Name	Location	Length	A/N	Required/ Optional/ Conditionally Required	Comments
18	Payment Type	631-670	40	A/N	R	This field contains the type of payout offered to the employee, claimant, or beneficiary. This field must contain one of the following values: • Bonus • Cash Service Awards • Commission • Insurance Settlement • Life Insurance Proceeds • Retroactive Pay Increase • Severance • Sign-on Bonus • Vacation Pay • Workers Compensation • Other
19	Amount	671-681	11	N	O	This field contains the dollar amount that the employee, claimant, or beneficiary is eligible to receive. Amount can contain a maximum of eight numbers and must have two decimal places, for example xxxxxxxx.xx. Must be numeric and the only special character allowed is a period.

Chart B-1: Debt Inquiry Service Input Record Layout						
Column Number	Field/Header Name	Location	Length	A/N	Required/ Optional/ Conditionally Required	Comments
20	Expected Payout Date	682-691	10	A/N	R	This field contains the date by which the company offering the payout must receive notification from the state child support agency to withhold all or a portion of the payout. Date format must be mm/dd/yyyy and must be at least five days later than the day of submission.