



How much child support will I pay?

The court uses guidelines from the state to figure out how much child support you will pay.

First, the court looks at the total amount both parents take home in their pay each week. This is called the parents' **combined net weekly income**. For example, if each parent takes home \$500 per week, then their *combined net weekly income* is \$1,000.

Then the court uses the state guidelines to figure out the percentage of the parents' total income that should be used to support the children. This is called the **basic child support obligation**.

According to the guidelines, the *basic child support obligation* for parents earning a total of \$1,000 per week is:

- \$229 (or about 23%) of the combined net weekly income for 1 child
- \$322 (or about 32%) for 2 children
- \$385 (or about 39%) for 3 children

The percentages used in this example are for parents earning \$1,000 per week. The percentages will be different for parents who earn more or less than \$1,000. The Connecticut guidelines are online at www.jud.ct.gov/Publications/ChildSupport/CSguidelines.pdf.

Next, the court looks at how much each parent contributes to the combined net weekly income.

Since the parents in this example take home the same amount of money each week, they each contribute 50% of the *combined net weekly income*. In this example, each parent would be responsible for 50% of the costs to raise the children. So the parent who has to pay child support would pay 50% of the *basic child support obligation*, or **half of**:

- \$229 for 1 child
- \$322 for 2 children
- \$385 for 3 children

► **Note:** The court may order more support for health expenses or child care.

Remember: This is just an example. The cost of child support will depend on each parent's income and situation.

How long will I pay child support?

Child support is usually paid until the child graduates from high school or turns 19, whichever happens first. You will probably continue paying even if

- the child's other parent gets married or lives with someone else,
- you don't see the child, or
- you are in prison or unemployed. (Call 1-800-228-KIDS to ask for your support amount to be lowered.)

Can I visit or get custody of my child if I don't pay?

Yes. Even if there are problems collecting support, both parents have the right to ask for visitation and custody.

*The court can **increase** or **decrease** the support amount, so you should talk with a lawyer first. Call the Children's Law Line at 1-888-529-3667 for more information.*

Can the child support amount be changed?

You can ask to have your payment lowered. Your payment might go down if there was a big change to your income, to the other parent's income, or to other circumstances involving the child (for example, the child no longer lives with the other parent). Here is how to ask for a change in the amount:

- ▶ **Get free help from Support Enforcement Services (SES).** Ask SES to look at your support order. You can get a form online at www.jud.ct.gov/childsupport or by calling the Child Support Hotline at 1-800-228-KIDS. If SES finds the court order is too low or high, they will ask the court to change the order.
- ▶ **Do it yourself.** You will have to file papers in court asking for a *Modification*. You can get help at a Court Service Center, located in most courthouses. You can get a copy of the pamphlet, *How to Change Your Child Support Order*, at your local Court Service Center or online at www.ctlawhelp.org.
Note: You may get a court date faster if you file the paperwork on your own, but you may want to call SES to find out.

What happens if I'm behind on my payments?

Pay as much as you can and try to make up the support payments you missed. Keep making payments, even if you can't pay the full amount.

Call 1-888-233-7223 to get information about your payments. Call 1-800-228-KIDS to ask for the amount to be lowered.

If you are behind on making payments, Support Enforcement Services can collect back child support in different ways, including by taking money from your paycheck, tax refund, and/or bank account. It can also

- put a lien on your property,
- report you to credit bureaus, and
- stop you from getting a passport.

If you disobeyed a court order that you knew about and were able to pay, the court could find you in contempt and order you to

- make lump sum payments,
- search for work, or
- come back to court.

If you don't do what the court orders, you could lose your driver's license or be sent to jail.

Note: The judge will appoint a lawyer for you if your income is very low and you face jail time.

Call 1-800-228-KIDS to have your support amount reviewed.

A collection agency keeps contacting me. What should I do?

You can send the collection agency a letter asking them not to contact you anymore. Make sure you keep a copy for your records. If they have threatened you, call the Department of Consumer Protection at 1-800-842-2649 or ask a lawyer for help.

This flyer was produced by Connecticut Legal Services, Greater Hartford Legal Aid, New Haven Legal Assistance Association, and Statewide Legal Services of Connecticut. The information in this booklet is based on laws in Connecticut as of May 2022. For advice on your situation, call Statewide Legal Services or contact a lawyer.

NEED HELP?

Call us for help.



Statewide Legal Services

1-800-453-3320

860-344-0380

Search our website for help.



www.ctlawhelp.org