

Child Support Information for Parents with Children in Placement

Each time a child enters placement, whether voluntarily or by Court order, the agency is required to file a complaint for support through the Domestic Relations Office. Once the complaint is filed, notices are sent to the parents, ordering each of them to appear for a support conference.

Examples of placing agencies/foster care placements:

- Lehigh County Juvenile Probation
- Lehigh County Children and Youth Services
- Licensed foster care homes
- Relatives/caretakers

Who has to pay child support?

- Mothers
- Fathers
- Adoptive parents

When will the conference be scheduled?

Agency conferences are held in the Domestic Relations Office on a daily basis except Wednesdays. The conference will be scheduled out a least 20 days.

How is the child support determined?

Federal law requires each state to adopt Child Support guidelines. Under the Pennsylvania guidelines, both parents are responsible for the costs of raising their child(ren). The amount that each parent must contribute is calculated based on the parent's income. The guidelines take into account the costs of raising a child and other support obligations.

What if I disagree with the amount I am required to pay?

If an agreement is not reached at the conference, a hearing will be scheduled. The officer may enter a temporary Order called an Interim Order, so support is paid until the case is resolved. The case is then scheduled to be heard by a Support Hearing Officer.

What if I fail to appear for the conference?

Failure to appear as directed by the court is a serious matter which could result in a legal father being named and a support being entered in your absence.

What if my circumstances have changed since the child support order was entered?

Whenever there is a change in circumstance after the order is entered, a Petition to Modify can be filed to have the Order reviewed.

How long do I have to pay support to the agency?

Child support does not automatically stop. In Pennsylvania, support usually stops when a child reaches 18 or graduates high school, whichever occurs last. However, when a child is in the physical care of an agency, the agency can collect support from the parents until the child reaches the age of 21 if the child remains in care.

Once our office receives notification from the agency that the child has left their care, a court order will be reentered to terminate the support order. If back support is owed, that will need to be paid in full for the case will be closed.

What do I need to bring with me to the conference?

- Copy of identification (driver's license, photo id, etc.)
- Social Security Card
- Birth Certificates for all children
- Medical Insurance Cards
- Completed Income & Expense sheet provided to you with your Order to appear for the conference
- Copies of your last 6 months pay stubs and last tax return
- Verification of any other source of income, including welfare benefits, SSI, SSD, unemployment benefits, and workman's compensation
- Medical documentation, if unable to work due to a medical condition
- Paperwork from the agency regarding family reconciliation conditions

Domestic Relations Office Contact Information:

Lehigh County Domestic Relations Office
455 W Hamilton Street Room 320
Allentown PA 18101
610-782-3185