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# LEGAL INFORMATION PAMPHLET

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A Preventive Law Service from the Tobyhanna Army Depot Legal Office

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## A GUIDE TO CHILD SUPPORT IN PENNSYLVANIA

### WHO OWES CHILD SUPPORT?

Both parents must contribute to the financial support of minor children. Child support continues until the children graduate from high school or reach age 18, whichever happens last. The court usually directs that the parent with primary physical custody of the child receive the child support payments.

### HOW DO I OBTAIN SUPPORT FOR MY CHILD?

Parents (or other persons with whom the children are living) who want child support may contact the domestic relations office in their county for help. Follow this link for contact information <http://www.pacounties.org/counties.html>.

### HOW MUCH SUPPORT WILL I RECEIVE OR WILL I HAVE TO PAY?

In most cases, the amount of support is determined by the Pennsylvania Support Guidelines. To apply the guidelines, the court officials will calculate the gross and net income of each parent. Some of the types of income are all wages, overtime pay, bonuses, rental income, retirement income, Social Security, workers compensation and unemployment compensation, and other sources of income may be included as well. To find net income, the court officials will subtract from gross income: federal, state and local income taxes, Social Security and Medicare payments, mandatory retirement contributions and union dues. If a person does not have any income but is capable of

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working, the court will estimate the amount of income the person could earn and apply the guidelines as if the person did have income.

In addition to the base support, the court may order parties to make other payments to assist with specific expenses such as daycare costs, health insurance premiums, private school tuition and mortgages.

#### **CAN A SUPPORT ORDER BE CHANGED?**

Yes. If there has been a significant change in the income of either party or in the circumstances of the case, then the court may modify the amount of support. To request a change, a petition to modify should be filed. Contact the domestic relations office for help with the petition.

#### **WHAT HAPPENS IF THE SUPPORT ORDER IS NOT PAID?**

If the support cannot be collected by wage attachment, then other enforcement alternatives may be used. Some of these are: being sent to jail or fined at the conclusion of a contempt of court hearing, suspension of state-issued licenses to drive, hunt, fish or engage in other activities, reports to credit bureaus, liens on real estate and interception of federal income tax refunds.

#### **WHAT IF THE PARENT WHO OWES SUPPORT LIVES IN ANOTHER STATE?**

There are systems in place to help people find parents and to obtain, modify and enforce support orders when the two parents live in different counties or in different states. Contact your local domestic relations office for information and help.

**The Legal Information Pamphlet** is distributed by the Legal Office, Tobyhanna Army Depot, PA located in Building 11A Hap Arnold Blvd.. Our office hours are: 0730 – 1600 hrs. You may call us for an appointment at (570)895-7210. Check out our web site at \_\_\_\_\_ for other helpful information on similar personal legal affairs topics.

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