



Child Support Frequently Asked Questions

1. How is child support calculated?
2. When does court-ordered child support end?
3. Can I get child support for the time before the court has ordered it?
4. When can I change child support?

1. How is child support calculated?

California has a statewide uniform guideline formula for figuring out how much child support should be paid. If parents cannot agree on child support, the judge must decide the child support amount based on the guideline calculation. The guideline amount is presumed to be correct. In very limited circumstances, the judge can order something other than the guideline amount.

The guideline calculation depends on:

- How much money the parents earn or can earn,
- How much other income each parent receives,
- How many children these parents have together,
- How much time each parent spends with their children,
- The actual tax filing status of each parent,
- Support of children from other relationships,
- Health insurance expenses,
- Mandatory union dues,
- Mandatory retirement contributions,
- Certain "itemized deductions," and
- Other factors.

Child support might also include the cost of special needs, such as:

- Traveling for visitation from one parent to another,
- Educational expenses, and
- Other special needs.

2. When does court-ordered child support end?

Court-ordered child support usually ends when:

- the child turns 18 years of age and is not a full-time high school student or;
- the child turns 19 years of age (child support ends at 19 or high school graduation);
- the child gets married or joins the military; or
- the child dies before the age of 18;
- whichever occurs first.

Parents may agree to support a child longer than the minimum time required. The court may also order that both parents continue to support a disabled adult child if that child cannot support him or herself.

3. Can I get child support for the time before the court has ordered it?

If you do not get public assistance, you may get child support from the day that you filed your case asking for child support. To get support from this date, you must serve the other parent within 3 months after you file your case.

The judge may also award child support starting from the date of the hearing, the date the motion for the hearing was filed, or another date depending on the facts in the case.

4. When can I change child support?

You can ask for a change in your child support amount when there is a change in circumstances. For example, if you change the amount of time you spend with your child, you ask for a change in your child support.

Before you decide to ask for a change in child support, it is a good idea to re-calculate the amount of child support in your case to make sure it is worth it for you to go back to court. To estimate how much child support the judge may order in your case, click here [California Guideline Child Support Calculator](#).¹ To understand how to fill in the information, it is important to download the User Guide. Remember, this calculator only gives you an estimate. The amount the judge orders you to pay may be different based on information from the other parent or other factors that affect child support.

If you want to change your order, talk to the [Family Law Facilitator](#)

¹ <http://www.childsup.ca.gov/resources/calculatchildsupport/tabid/114/default.aspx>