

Future child support cases to use widely accepted 'Income Shares'

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SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services announced today that the most widely used method nationwide to calculate child support will begin to be applied to new cases in Illinois starting July 1, following a bipartisan law signed by Governor Bruce Rauner last year. Child support orders established before July 1, 2017 will not change.

Under the "income shares" model, child support will be calculated primarily by looking at typical costs for families in similar circumstances. The income of both parents will also be factored in.

"With Illinois becoming the 40th state to adopt the income shares model, we will be using an approach that has become increasingly endorsed by experts and advocates in the field," said Felicia Norwood, Director of the Department of Healthcare and Family Services.

Currently, child support in Illinois is calculated primarily based on the income of the obligor – the parent who owes payments – and the number of children.

The income shares model considers the typical costs to raise a child for a family at a similar income level as the parents in a case. If there are two incomes, both are added together to arrive at the amount needed to raise the child. Each parent's contribution is then calculated by applying the methods laid out by the model. The portion owed by the parent who the child lives with is assumed to be paid because they reside together.

The General Assembly passed the income shares law in 2016, with overwhelming bipartisan approval and the governor's signature. Many other states began shifting to income shares 10 years ago. The model was developed under the Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement.

Among the costs of raising a child that are taken into account are housing, clothes, food, transportation, ordinary uncovered medical expenses, ordinary extracurricular activities, entertainment and education. Judges may also consider extraordinary circumstances in setting support.

INCOME SHARES/ Ad 1

"Illinois now joins 39 other states and the District of Columbia in adopting the income shares model for calculating child support," said Margaret Bennett, a DuPage attorney and chair of the Illinois Child Support Advisory Committee. "It is both equitable and accurate thus reducing conflict among divorced or never-married parents. Both parents and practitioners will find the new child support process to be transparent, fair and equitable thus making it more likely that parents will interact in a way that serves the best interests of their children."

The new guidelines will apply to all child support cases set beginning July 1, 2017, however, the change itself does not entitle a parent to a modification of any current order of support.

HFS oversees the child support collection process statewide, regularly managing around 500,000 cases annually. Child support services are free and anyone may apply. Applications for service can be found at www.illinois.gov/hfs

More information on income shares, including FAQs and a calculator to help individuals understand the impact of the change, can be found at www.illinois.gov/hfs