



Florida Child Support Info Pack

*Understand the system. Protect your rights.
Put your child first.*



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INTRODUCTION

Navigating child support and custody matters in Florida can feel overwhelming—especially when you're trying to protect your child's best interests while managing stress, uncertainty, or conflict. Whether you're just starting the legal process, seeking to modify an existing order, or trying to understand your rights and obligations as a parent, this guide is designed to give you clear, straightforward answers.

When Legal Help Is Essential

Family law issues are rarely one-size-fits-all. You may benefit from legal support if:

- You're unsure how much child support you should receive or pay
- The other parent is refusing to cooperate or communicate
- You need to modify an existing child support or custody order
- There's been a change in income, job status, or time-sharing
- You're worried your child's best interests aren't being prioritized
- You've been served court papers or need to respond to a filing

The sooner you understand your legal options, the better equipped you'll be to resolve disputes and protect your family's stability.

About The DeVries Law Firm

At The DeVries Law Firm, P.A., we serve families across Florida with thoughtful, compassionate legal guidance. We know how deeply personal these matters are, and we approach every case with the care it deserves.

Our family law team works closely with clients at every stage—from initial consultation and intake, through filing, mediation, and trial if needed. Whether you're pursuing support, negotiating a parenting plan, or resolving post-judgment issues, we're here to help.

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OVERVIEW OF FLORIDA CHILD SUPPORT & CUSTODY LAW

Florida's child support and custody laws are centered on one key principle: the best interests of the child. Whether you are receiving or paying support, understanding the legal framework behind these decisions helps you advocate for fairness, stability, and protection for your child. While every family situation is unique, Florida follows clear guidelines to ensure that both parents contribute to their child's well-being.

Child support and custody decisions are handled in family court and can be part of a divorce case, a paternity case, or a stand-alone support petition. The law assumes that children benefit from having ongoing contact with both parents, and courts typically prefer shared parental responsibility unless there is a reason not to. That said, equal time-sharing does not automatically eliminate child support obligations—support is based on a combination of time-sharing and income.



Custody in Florida is legally referred to as “time-sharing” and “parental responsibility.” Time-sharing refers to the physical time each parent spends with the child, while parental responsibility refers to decision-making authority for matters like education, health care, and religion. A court-approved Parenting Plan is required in every case involving minor children and outlines how both of these will be handled.

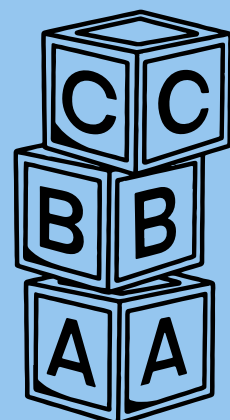
The law also provides a structured formula for calculating child support, which considers both parents' incomes, number of children, time-sharing percentages, and specific expenses like child care and health insurance. However, judges may deviate from the formula if circumstances call for it—especially in cases involving special needs, extraordinary expenses, or financial hardship.

If you're facing a child support or custody dispute, legal guidance can help you understand your rights, avoid costly mistakes, and ensure your child's needs remain front and center.

What Impacts Child Support in Florida? Income, Custody, and Legal Modifications

Explore how income, time-sharing, and court-approved changes affect child support in Florida—and when legal help makes the difference.

[Read here](#)



HOW CHILD SUPPORT IS CALCULATED IN FLORIDA

Understanding how child support is calculated can help you prepare for what to expect—whether you're requesting support or responding to a claim. Florida follows a statutory formula known as the Income Shares Model, which aims to ensure both parents contribute fairly to their child's financial needs based on their combined income and time-sharing arrangement.

The calculation begins by adding together the gross monthly income of both parents. This includes wages, bonuses, self-employment income, rental income, and more. Each parent's percentage of the total income is then used to determine their share of financial responsibility. From there, the court considers the number of children, the amount of overnights each parent has, and costs like child care and health insurance.



For example, if one parent earns 70% of the combined income, they are generally expected to contribute 70% of the total child support obligation. However, if that parent also has a significant number of overnights with the child, their direct care may offset some of what they would pay in support. In contrast, if one parent has little to no parenting time, they may be responsible for a larger payment.

It's important to note that courts can deviate from the standard formula in certain situations. These might include a child's special medical needs, a parent's disability, or a significant discrepancy in parenting responsibilities or financial stability. Additionally, the court may adjust the amount if applying the standard guidelines would be unfair or inappropriate.

A completed Child Support Guidelines Worksheet must be submitted in every case, and the numbers can be complex. That's why many parents choose to work with a family law attorney to ensure the figures are accurate—and their rights are fully represented.

Whether you're filing for the first time, modifying an existing order, or dealing with a dispute, knowing how the numbers work is a critical first step.

How to Establish Child Support

Establishing child support in Florida typically begins with filing a petition through the family court or the Department of Revenue (DOR), depending on the case. If paternity hasn't been legally established, that must happen first. Once the petition is filed, the other parent is served, and both parties exchange financial information. The court will then calculate support using the Florida guidelines, taking into account income, expenses, and the parenting schedule. If parents can't agree on terms, a hearing may be scheduled. Legal representation can help ensure your documentation is accurate, deadlines are met, and your child's financial needs are properly addressed.

CHILD CUSTODY & TIME-SHARING EXPLAINED

In Florida, what many refer to as “custody” is legally divided into parental responsibility and time-sharing. Parental responsibility involves decision-making for the child’s health, education, and welfare, while time-sharing refers to the actual schedule of when the child spends time with each parent. Florida law favors shared parental responsibility unless there’s evidence it would harm the child. A detailed Parenting Plan must be filed in every case, outlining the time-sharing schedule, communication rules, and logistics. While 50/50 time-sharing is common, it doesn’t automatically eliminate child support—financial support is still based on income and specific expenses tied to the child’s care.



MODIFYING OR ENFORCING CHILD SUPPORT ORDERS

Florida law allows child support orders to be modified or enforced when circumstances change or obligations aren’t met. A modification may be requested if there’s a substantial, permanent, and involuntary change—such as job loss, a significant income shift, or a new time-sharing arrangement. To enforce an existing order, legal tools include income withholding, license suspension, property liens, and even contempt of court. The Department of Revenue can assist with enforcement, but working with a family law attorney ensures faster, more direct action, especially in complex or disputed cases. Keeping court orders up to date protects both your financial rights and your child’s well-being.

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FAQS

1. How is child support calculated in Florida?

It's based on both parents' gross income, number of overnights with the child, child care costs, health insurance, and other relevant expenses.

2. Do I still pay child support if we share custody 50/50?

Possibly. If one parent earns significantly more, they may still owe support even with equal time-sharing.

3. Can I get child support without going to court?

Yes. You can apply through the Florida Department of Revenue (DOR), but a court order is ultimately required to enforce payments.

4. Is paternity required for child support?

Yes. If the parents weren't married at the child's birth, paternity must be legally established before child support can be ordered.

5. What if the other parent won't pay child support?

You can request enforcement through the court or DOR. Tools include wage garnishment, license suspension, and contempt actions.

6. Can child support be changed later?

Yes. You can request a modification if there's a significant, permanent, and involuntary change in circumstances, like a job loss or new custody arrangement.

7. Is retroactive child support allowed in Florida?

Yes. Florida courts can order up to 24 months of retroactive child support from the date the parents separated or the petition was filed.

8. What if the paying parent is self-employed?

Their income is still factored in, and courts may investigate business records to determine true earnings.

9. Can we agree on a different amount than what the court calculates?

Yes, but the court must approve the agreement and ensure it meets the child's best interests and guideline thresholds.

10. What if my child turns 18?

Support usually ends at 18, but may continue through graduation if the child is still in high school full time and not yet 19.



WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU CONTACT OUR FIRM

When you reach out to The DeVries Law Firm, our team will guide you through a focused, confidential consultation to understand your child support or custody concerns. We'll explain the intake process, review key documents, and outline your legal options clearly—whether you're seeking to establish, modify, or enforce a court order.

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