

Step by Step Process of Calculating Child Support* (Self-Represented Litigant)

1. Determine the gross monthly income of both the mother and father. Gross income shall be calculated on a monthly basis and each parent enters the amount on Schedule A.

2. The gross income of either parent may be adjusted if one or more of the following situations apply, as calculated on Schedule B:

Is either parent self-employed?

- If so, each parent's monthly gross income can be reduced by 6.2% of FICA (up to the annual maximum amount allowed), and 1.45% for Medicare.

Has either parent been paying preexisting child support orders?

- If so, the parent's monthly gross income may be reduced by the amount of monthly current support the parent has been paying consistently for a specific period (12 months if order has been in effect for at least one year). If less than full payments have been made, or the order has been in existence for less than 12 months, use the average of the amount of current support actually paid over the last 12 months. Do not include arrears (back child support owed).

Is either parent supporting other children in their home?

- If so, the court may allow a reduction of that parent's monthly gross income if: (a) the failure to consider the parent's other child in the home would cause a substantial hardship to the parent, and (b) such adjustment is in the best interest of the child or children for whom support is being calculated in the current case. In order to qualify for this adjustment, the five requirements listed in the child support calculator must be met: 1) the parent is legally responsible for the qualified child (stepchildren do not qualify); 2) the qualified child lives in the parent's home; 3) the parent is actually supporting the qualified child; 4) the qualified child is not subject to a preexisting child support order; and 5) the qualified child is not currently before the court to set, modify or enforce child support. If the child qualifies the parent for this reduction of gross income, a "Theoretical Support Order" is calculated on Schedule B.

3. The calculator will total the parents' adjusted income to arrive at the combined adjusted income amount.

4. The calculator will populate the worksheet with the dollar figure that corresponds with the combined adjusted income amount and the number of children for whom support is being requested from the Basic Child Support Obligation Table.

5. The calculator will divide the combined adjusted income into each parent's adjusted gross income to arrive at a number which is referred to as each parent's pro rata share of the child support. The pro rata share is expressed as a percentage. The calculator will multiply the Basic Child Support obligation by each parent's pro rata percentage to determine each parent's child support responsibility.

6. If there are health insurance premiums for the children and/or work related child care costs, insert these costs on Schedule D. These costs are added together and divided between the parents, based on the same pro rata percentage as determined in #5 above. Please note that if either parent is already paying these costs, the parent who is paying or will pay the expense will receive credit for the expense. After the calculator makes adjustments to the Basic Child Support Obligation for health insurance and work related child care costs, the resulting amount is considered the "Presumptive Amount of Child Support."

7. If there are no deviations granted by the court or jury, the noncustodial parent owes the custodial parent the Presumptive Amount of Child Support. The Presumptive Amount of Child Support is the total of his or her pro rata share of the Basic Child Support Obligation and the additional expenses of health insurance and work related child care costs. This amount may be viewed on the Child Support Worksheet.

8. If the court or jury finds there are special circumstances, the Presumptive Amount of Child Support may be deviated upward or downward, if applicable, and the calculations are entered on Schedule E. The court or jury will need to make written findings as to why the Presumptive Amount of Child Support is to be deviated from. Schedule E contains three boxes, labeled B, C and D, which must be completed fully and factually to support the findings of fact required by law for each deviation.

Specific Deviations: The court or jury may deviate from the Presumptive Amount of Child Support by applying specific deviations as set forth in the Guidelines.

- On a case by case basis, if the parties prove extraordinary educational expenses, extraordinary medical expenses and/or special expenses incurred for child rearing, these expenses are to be pro rated between the parties. Where special expenses exist, the amount of special expenses must exceed 7% of the Basic Child Support Obligation threshold, which the calculator will determine. Additional special expenses over the threshold may be considered, if appropriate.
- If a noncustodial parent's gross income is such that it would create "extreme financial hardship," the court or jury may consider whether a low income deviation would be appropriate. The low income deviation may take the child support award to the minimum amount of \$100 for the first child and \$50 for each subsequent child. The court or jury must also consider the financial impact that a reduction in the amount of child support paid to the custodial parent would have on the custodial parent's household. No award shall impair the ability of the custodial parent to maintain minimally adequate housing, food, clothing and other basic necessities for the child.
- Other specific deviations, found and calculated on Schedule E, include upward deviations for high income, and deviations for parenting time, travel expenses for visitation, dental, vision or life insurance, child and dependent tax care credit, permanency foster care plan, payment of alimony or a mortgage or shelter provided to custodial parent in which the child resides.

Nonspecific Deviations: The court may also deviate for any other reason when appropriate, if in the best interest of the child.

9. After adjusting the Presumptive Amount of Child Support for any potential deviations, the calculator will show the Final Child Support Order amount.

10. At the bottom of the Worksheet, the court will allocate the uninsured health care expenses between the parents. These expenses are not a part of the support awarded or part of the calculation.

*Please note that the basic steps listed above are only just that, the basic steps. For more thorough details regarding the provisions found within the child support guidelines, please see O.C.G.A. §19-6-15.

To access the Georgia Child Support Calculators, visit our web site at www.csc.georgiacourts.gov.

To aid in calculating your child support easily, it is highly recommended that you have the appropriate documentation in hand. Examples include: documentation relating to income, preexisting child support orders, health insurance and work related child care expenses, and/or the child's extraordinary or special expenses.