

Minutes of Meeting
Georgia Commission on Child Support
Calculator/Technology Committee
May 2, 2014

The meeting was brought to order at 12:08 p.m.

Present:

Wendy Williamson, Co-chair (via teleconference)

Philip Ladin, Co-chair

Deborah Johnson, Atlanta Legal Aid, Dekalb County

Ryan Bradley, Policy Unit at DCSS (via teleconference)

Judge Brenda Weaver, Appalachian circuit (via teleconference)

Laurie Dyke (via teleconference)

Patricia Buonodono, staff attorney

Elaine Johnson, staff

Bruce Shaw, staff

I. Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was called to order and all present in the meeting were introduced.

II. Review/Approval of Minutes of Last Meeting

Deborah Johnson revised a statement she made in the minutes correcting the identification of her colleague Megan Miller's office to the Fulton county office of Atlanta Legal Aid. Wendy Williamson moved to approve the minutes as revised. Deborah Johnson seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

III. Old Business

a. Global Solution for service in Georgia from Microsoft or another company?

Philip Ladin was tasked at the last Georgia Commission on Child Support meeting to explore the possibility of a site license. Many inquiries were made into this but Microsoft has not issued a site license to an entire state and it appears to be cost prohibitive.

b. Using Microsoft Household Use Program

Elaine Johnson reported her research on the Microsoft Home Use Program as it relates to cost effectiveness for users. While it only costs \$9.99 for an employee to essentially rent Microsoft

Office products, it is contingent upon their remaining employed and the employer remaining in a licensing agreement with Microsoft Software Assurance. The cost of this licensing agreement can over time exceed the cost of simply buying an Office suite thereby nullifying any potential benefit of this program as a cost effective means for the state government and the general public to access Excel for the use of calculating child support.

c. Requirements document for new calculator

A requirements document created by Patricia Buonodono was reviewed by the Committee. This document serves as a starting point for what will be a final requirements document. The following are the line items in the requirements document as presented with revisions from the committee added.

Accessibility

1. The calculator must be accessible through the Internet to everyone without cost to the user. It must also be a product that can run using any secure internet web browser and operating system, and be accessible using a URL, icon, or app.

Philip Ladin pointed out that the state is developing security standards that will require the use of specified secure browsers and that this line will have to be amended in the future with language ensuring it complies with those standards. During the conversation of this topic, HIPAA compliance was discussed but Deborah Johnson encouraged the committee to use the term “HIPAA like compliance” because in no way does HIPAA affect the information provided in child support cases.

2. The calculator must be user-friendly, intuitive, and easy for judges, attorneys, and self-represented litigants to understand and use.
3. The calculator must be available for use on Windows, Android, Apple and other similar platforms; on computers, laptops, tablets and smart phones. ~~The application should also run as an “App” on a smart phone without the need for printing forms.~~ The application should look similar and function the same way regardless of what type of device is being used to access it.
4. ~~The program should eliminate the need for Microsoft, Excel or any other product that is not fully compatible with all available devices and platforms.~~
5. The individual worksheets must be accessible and easily modified by the judge and preparing party in the courtroom during trials and hearings whether or not the judge or preparing party has internet access. ~~[This was done very unsuccessfully in the past. Must be EASY for the judges to access.]~~

Appearance and Content

6. The screen should look simple and uncluttered. Screen colors used should take into consideration people with red or green color-blindness and the worksheets should be easy to read when printed without color.
7. (*Tabled*) Wherever possible, drop down menus should be used, using the simplest possible language (i.e., “mother” and “father” rather than “custodial parent” or “noncustodial parent.”) Text Boxes should be available only where explanations or findings of fact are required by law.

Number 7 was tabled due to work on the language on several issues. Deborah Johnson stated there is a need for text boxes that are for such things as explanations and not findings of fact. Laurie Dyke also explained that there might not be a way to get away from using terms like “noncustodial parent” due to the multitude of custodial situations that arise in child support cases; she also noted the common use of the current footnote boxes for explanations and how useful it is to the current users.

8. (*Tabled*) The paper end product must be acceptable for filing in any Superior Court and have the style of the case, page numbers, civil action and other types of case numbers, and submitting party’s name on each page.

Discussion was held regarding the appearance of the printed form. Deborah Johnson cautioned that this committee should not revise the way the printed form appears but rather a different group with the specific purpose to develop a revised printed form and have the Child Support Commission approve it. There is some question as to whether this committee has the purview to make such changes for which the previous minutes were examined after the meeting. The previous minutes lacked specificity in this matter so it’s likely that the Committee will need to confer with the Commission to determine in what manner to proceed. In 2005 the Commission created the Forms Subcommittee for this purpose, but this was to develop a yet unseen form from the statutes whereas this committee seeks to revise the appearance of the current form when printed to save space and paper and keep all similarities that are within reason. This number was tabled for revision.

Laurie Dyke proposed that in schedule E, lines 2b through 10, if users are only allowed to enter deviations into the noncustodial parent’s column, most of the mistakes made on that schedule would be eliminated.

Functionality

9. The calculator must produce a child support worksheet that may be printed out or stored digitally, in addition to providing accounts that people may sign into ~~and out of~~ that will securely store their information when they sign out.
10. The calculator must produce a document for filing with the clerk of court that consumes the least amount of paper (~~preferably not more than 2-3 pages~~) necessary to reflect all relevant information entered by the parties in calculating the proposed or final child support amount. Printed forms must ~~use no less than a 12 point font and~~ maintain at least ~~one inch~~ half-inch margins.

Wendy Williamson stated that the current printed worksheet displays all of the instructions that are on the digital form and that eliminating any unnecessary instructions from the printed form would greatly reduce the paper space needed.

11. The parties should be able to enter their pay however it is received (weekly, monthly, semimonthly, biweekly) and the calculator should convert it to a monthly income amount.
12. ~~One click of the print button should print~~ The program should provide the option to print one schedule or all relevant (used) portions of the worksheet. There should be no blank forms, and different parts of the document should not have to be printed individually, except as an option.
13. The calculator must be capable of producing a “FINAL” online version of the worksheet that is controlled by the Judge, which then becomes “read only” so that no one else can modify it.

Privacy/Security

14. Privacy is essential so that financial information of the parties cannot be accessed by anyone else and the parties to one case cannot access one another’s financial information.

The language to number 14 was deemed too vague by the Committee. Philip Ladin will try to rework this requirement to make it more specific.

15. The program must include version controls, and the calculator and printed forms must display the current version.

Maintenance

16. The program must be inexpensive to update and modify. It should not be susceptible to modifications to versions of an underlying commercial product.

Lines 16 and 17 both need to be refined. Negotiating costs inside the requirements document is probably not appropriate but defining features in such a way that they would be easier to maintain and therefore cheaper is appropriate. Allowing administrative maintenance to be done in house and more technical program maintenance to be done on a contract basis would help to keep costs down. Philip Ladin will work on the language on both lines 16 and 17.

17. The program must provide administrative access to any tables created, final worksheets, judicial controls, and collect data on the number of calculator downloads and their origination points.

IV. New Business

Patricia Buonodono stated she would like push for a deadline for this project to be July 1, 2015.

Wendy Williamson moved to set a target date for launch of the new calculator for July 1, 2015. Debra Johnson seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Wendy Williamson inquired on how we are to proceed with developing a more in depth requirements document to which Philip Ladin suggested collaborating through email. The intent of the committee is to have the requirements document in its final form in front of the Commission by the next meeting to have it approved.

V. Close of meeting and scheduling of next meeting

The next committee meeting will be scheduled after the next Full Commission meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 1:32 pm.