How is Child Support Calculated in Massachusetts?

Services

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By Thomas J. Cleary on February 25, 2026

It can seem like the method of calculating child support is arbitrary. However, the Massachusetts child support lawyers with Cohen Cleary, P.C. have years of experience in helping clients calculate a child support agreement that ensures the child receives the financial support they are due while also protecting your finances.

To truly understand the process, we must look at some key components of the calculation.

Understanding Child Support in Massachusetts

Massachusetts child support orders are meant to ensure that the child still benefits from the financial status of both parents, even when they do not live together. According to the Massachusetts Department of Child Support Services, the minimum child support order is typically around $12–$15 per week. However, it will increase from there based on several key factors.

Key Factors Considered in Massachusetts Child Support Calculations

Child support starts with a base amount, and the courts adjust it based on several criteria. Though it may seem like an arbitrary process, it is often comprehensive, aiming to consider all relevant factors.

Income of Both Parents

The first consideration for child support is based on the income of both parents. While the noncustodial parent, or parent with less parenting time, is likely to owe child support regardless, the amount is heavily impacted by both income levels. A child is entitled to benefit financially from both parents, but the courts will consider both the recipient's needs and the payor's ability to pay.

For example, a noncustodial parent making $60k a year is likely to pay less child support to a custodial parent making $100k a year than to a noncustodial parent making $55k a year.

Number of Children Being Supported

Next, the courts will consider any other support orders in place, as well as the number of children you are required to support in the current order. The parties will typically determine a weekly or monthly rate per child, and multiply per child up to 5.

Parenting Time & Custody Arrangement

We understand that having physical custody of your child comes with costs, such as meals, gas money for transportation to and from places, and necessities like water for laundry and bathing. Therefore, your child support order is often affected by the parenting time you have.

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In many cases, if you have relatively even physical custody, child support will reflect a lower rate than if you only had custody of your child every other weekend.

Health Insurance and Medical Expenses

It is common for child support orders to require one parent to maintain health insurance for their child. In many cases, this premium is credited toward the amount of support ordered. Additionally, a stipulation of the ordered amount is that each parent pays for half of the child's medical expenses, such as copays, medication costs, or any health-related expenses.

Childcare, Educational, and Extracurricular Expenses

Anyone utilizing childcare knows that the cost is high, and it is not reasonable for one parent to shoulder all of the burden without that expense being factored into support owed. In some cases, the noncustodial parent may have a reduced payment with the understanding that they pay a portion of childcare costs, or the payment may increase to compensate the other parent for a portion of those costs.

Similarly, paying tuition for a private school, tutoring needs, or contributing to extracurricular expenses may be considered when determining the final order.

Other Considerations

Other relevant factors may include the costs of any additional needs the child may have, or even travel costs to get to and from visitation. For example, a noncustodial parent may see a small decrease in what they owe if they take on the responsibility for transportation to and from parenting time.

The Massachusetts Child Support Guidelines

The state of Massachusetts provides set guidelines to assist the courts in determining the support amount. This framework is regularly reviewed and adjusted as necessary. Our team stays on top of these new child support guidelines to ensure we fight for a fair and reasonable amount according to the most current standards.

Using the Massachusetts Online Child Support Calculator

In simple cases, you may be able to use the online child support calculator to gain a general idea of what your child support order should be. However, working with an attorney can help you ensure that all relevant factors are considered and you have a fair value based on your unique situation and needs.

How Child Support Orders Are Enforced in Massachusetts

The Massachusetts Department of Revenue is responsible for child support enforcement. The action they take is dependent on the severity of the situation, including how much back support is owed, and how long the party has failed to make payments. The consequences can range from fines to license suspension, wage garnishment, and even imprisonment.

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Modifying Child Support in Massachusetts

The child support order you receive is based on your current situation and your child's needs. If you have a significant change in circumstances, you may be eligible to obtain a modification of support. Some of the circumstances that may qualify include:

- You lost or gained a job
- One parent moved further away
- The child no longer needs childcare
- The child develops significant medical needs, or old ones resolve

You must provide evidence that the reason for a modification is valid and that the proposed adjustment is in the child's best interest.

Common Misconceptions About Child Support

A large portion of the conflict around child support is often due to misconceptions. Many parents want to see exactly where their money goes, but child support is meant to support the child's overall quality of life. This means that money can go to part of the rent or mortgage, the grocery bill, or a portion of utilities.

Similarly, many assume that child support ends when the child turns 18, and while that is not uncommon, it may continue past 18 if the child is still in school or has a significant disability that makes them dependent on care.

Speak With an Experienced Child Support Lawyer at Cohen Cleary

Dealing with child support is all but guaranteed when you separate from your child's other parent. Working with an experienced child support lawyer from Cohen Cleary, P.C. can provide you with much-needed support and clarity to make sure your child's needs are met and help you maintain financial stability in this new stage of life. Call us today to schedule a case consultation and discuss your situation.

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