



CHILD SUPPORT FOR PARENTS WITH CHILDREN IN PLACEMENT IN BERKS COUNTY

**Berks County Domestic
Relations Office
Berks County Services Center
633 Court St,
6th floor
Reading PA 19601
610-478-2900**

www.drs.berks.pa.us

Each time a child enters foster care or alternative placement, whether voluntarily or by court order, the agency is required to file a complaint for support through the Domestic Relations Office. Once the complaint is filed, notices are sent to the parents, ordering each of them to appear for a support conference.

Examples of foster care/alternative placement:

- *Berks County Children & Youth Services
- *Berks County Juvenile Probation
- *Licensed foster care homes
- *Relatives/Caretakers

Who has to pay child support?

Mothers
Fathers
Adoptive parents

When will the conference be scheduled?

Agency conferences are held in the Domestic Relations Office one day per month, in a round-robin format. Approximately 75 cases are scheduled for each agency day. Parties will be seen on a first come, first serve basis therefore there may be a wait to be seen.

How is the child support determined?

Federal law requires each state to adopt Child Support Guidelines. Under the Pennsylvania guidelines, both parents are responsible for the costs of raising their child(ren). The amount that each parent must contribute is calculated based on each parent's income. The guidelines take into account the costs of raising a child and other support obligations.

What if I disagree with the amount I am required to pay?

If an agreement is not reached at the conference, a hearing will be scheduled. The officer may enter a temporary Order called an Interim Order, so support begins being paid until the case is resolved. The case is then scheduled to be heard by a Support Master.

What if I fail to appear for the conference?

Failure to appear as directed by the court is a serious matter which could result in a paternity finding and a support order being entered in your absence.

I am required to meet certain conditions before my child can return home. I cannot afford these extra expenses and child support.

What can I do?

At the support conference, bring proof of the expenses related to family reconciliation and/or your agency plan. The officer may consider these expenses in establishing the support amount.

What if my circumstances have changed since the child support order was entered?

Whenever there is a change in circumstance after the order is entered, a Petition to Modify can be filed to have the order reviewed. This paperwork is available in our Docketing Division or on our web site.

How long do I have to pay support to the agency?

Child support does not automatically stop. In Pennsylvania, support stops when a child is emancipated (self supporting), which is usually when the child reaches the age of 18, or

graduates high school, whichever occurs last. However, when a child is in the physical care of an agency, the agency can collect support from both parents until the child reaches the age of 21 if the child remains in care.

Once the child is released from the agency, a termination order is prepared to terminate the case. If you owe any arrears at that time, an arrears payment will be established. You will receive a copy of this order in the mail.

What if I am already paying support for this child?

If you are a plaintiff receiving support for the child in care, contact our office to remove the child from your support order. If you are a defendant paying support, you will need to file a petition to modify to have the order modified or terminated.

***YOUR CURRENT ORDER WILL NOT BE AUTOMATICALLY TERMINATED.**

If your child goes into agency care and you have any additional questions about your child support obligation, please contact our office.

What do I need to bring with me to the conference?

--Copy of identification (driver's license, photo id, etc.)

--Social Security card

--Birth Certificates for all children

--Medial insurance cards

--Completed Income & Expense sheet provided to you with your order to appear for the conference

--Copies of your last 6 months pay stubs and last tax return

--Verification of any other source of income, including welfare benefits, SSI, SSD, unemployment benefits, and workman's compensation

--Medical documentation, if unable to work due to a medical condition

-- Paperwork from the agency regarding family reconciliation conditions