

ENROLLED HOUSE
BILL NO. 2598

By: Wright of the House

and

Laughlin and Cain of the
Senate

An Act relating to marriage and family; amending 43 O.S. 2001, Sections 112, as last amended by Section 22, Chapter 3, O.S.L. 2003, 118, as last amended by Section 3, Chapter 393, O.S.L. 2004, 118.1 and 120, as amended by Section 4, Chapter 314, O.S.L. 2002 (43 O.S. Supp. 2005, Sections 112, 118 and 120), which relate to divorce and alimony; modifying certain information requested by a court; requiring a petitioner to give notice to the Department of Human Services when certain action is filed; clarifying standing for the Department of Human Services; requiring approval of certain orders by the Department of Human Services; specifying criteria for a material change in circumstances; modifying the use of certain forms for a modified child support order; providing method of review for use of certain modification forms; requiring filing; providing method of child support modification upon refusal to consider by court; modifying review procedures for certain child support cases; providing for the use of standard forms for certain motions and orders; and providing an effective date.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

SECTION 1. AMENDATORY 43 O.S. 2001, Section 112, as last amended by Section 22, Chapter 3, O.S.L. 2003 (43 O.S. Supp. 2005, Section 112), is amended to read as follows:

Section 112. A. A petition or cross-petition for a divorce, legal separation, or annulment must state whether or not the parties have minor children of the marriage. If there are minor children of the marriage, the court:

1. Shall make provision for guardianship, custody, medical care, support and education of the children;

2. Unless not in the best interests of the children, may provide for the visitation of the noncustodial parent with any of the children of the noncustodial parent; and

3. May modify or change any order whenever circumstances render the change proper either before or after final judgment in the action; provided, that the amount of the periodic child support

payment shall not be modified retroactively or payment of all or a portion of the past due amount waived, except by mutual agreement of the obligor and obligee, or if the obligee has assigned child support rights to the Department of Human Services or other entity, by agreement of the Department or other entity. Unless the parties agree to the contrary, a completed child support computation form provided for in Section 120 of this title shall be required to be filed with the child support order.

The social security numbers of both parents and the child shall be included on the child support order summary form provided for in Section 120 of this title, which shall be submitted to the Central Case Registry as provided for in Section 112A of this title with all child support or paternity orders.

B. In any action in which there are minor unmarried children in awarding or modifying the custody of the child or in appointing a general guardian for the child, the court shall be guided by the provisions of Section 21.1 of Title 10 of the Oklahoma Statutes and shall consider what appears to be in the best interests of the child.

C. 1. When it is in the best interests of a minor unmarried child, the court shall:

- a. assure children of frequent and continuing contact with both parents after the parents have separated or dissolved their marriage, and
- b. encourage parents to share the rights and responsibilities of child rearing in order to effect this policy.

2. There shall be neither a legal preference nor a presumption for or against joint legal custody, joint physical custody, or sole custody.

3. When in the best interests of the child, custody shall be awarded in a way which assures the frequent and continuing contact of the child with both parents. When awarding custody to either parent, the court:

- a. shall consider, among other facts, which parent is more likely to allow the child or children frequent and continuing contact with the noncustodial parent, and
- b. shall not prefer a parent as a custodian of the child because of the gender of that parent.

4. In any action, there shall be neither a legal preference or a presumption for or against private or public school or home-schooling in awarding the custody of a child, or in appointing a general guardian for the child.

5. In making an order for custody, the court shall require compliance with Section 8 of this act.

D. 1. Except for good cause shown, a pattern of failure to allow court-ordered visitation may be determined to be contrary to

the best interests of the child and as such may be grounds for modification of the child custody order.

2. For any action brought pursuant to the provisions of this section which the court determines to be contrary to the best interests of the child, the prevailing party shall be entitled to recover court costs, attorney fees and any other reasonable costs and expenses incurred with the action.

E. Except as otherwise provided by Section 112.1A of this title, any child shall be entitled to support by the parents until the child reaches eighteen (18) years of age. If a dependent child is regularly and continuously attending high school, said child shall be entitled to support by the parents through the age of eighteen (18) years. No hearing shall be required to extend such support through the age of eighteen (18) if the child is regularly and continuously attending high school.

F. In any case in which provision is made for the custody or support of a minor child or enforcement of such order and before hearing the matter or signing any orders, the court shall inquire whether public assistance money or medical support has been provided by the Department of Human Services, hereafter referred to as the Department, for the benefit of each child. If public assistance money ~~or~~, medical support ~~has~~, or child support services under the state child support plan as provided in Section 237 of Title 56 of the Oklahoma Statutes have been provided for the benefit of the child, the Department of Human Services shall be a necessary party for the just adjudication and establishment of the debt due and owing to the State of Oklahoma, as defined in Section 238 of Title 56 of the Oklahoma Statutes, and for the just adjudication and establishment of paternity, current child support, and medical insurance coverage for the minor children in accordance with federal regulations. When an action is filed, the petitioner shall give the Department notice of the action according to Section 2004 of Title 12 of the Oklahoma Statutes. The Department shall not be required to intervene in the action to have standing to appear and participate in the action. When the Department is a necessary party to the action, any orders concerning paternity, child support, medical support, or the debt due to the State of Oklahoma shall be approved and signed by the Department.

G. In any case in which a child support order or custody order or both is entered, enforced or modified, the court may make a determination of the arrearages of child support.

SECTION 2. AMENDATORY 43 O.S. 2001, Section 118, as last amended by Section 3, Chapter 393, O.S.L. 2004 (43 O.S. Supp. 2005, Section 118), is amended to read as follows:

Section 118. A. Except in those cases where parties represented by counsel have agreed to a different disposition, there shall be a rebuttable presumption in any judicial or administrative proceeding for the award of child support, that the amount of the award which would result from the application of the following guidelines is the correct amount of child support to be awarded.

B. The district or administrative court may deviate from the amount of child support indicated by the child support guidelines if the amount of support so indicated is unjust, inequitable,

unreasonable, or inappropriate under the circumstances, or not in the best interests of the child. If the district or administrative court deviates from the amount of child support indicated by the child support guidelines, the court shall make specific findings of fact supporting such action.

C. The court shall not take into account any stepchildren of such parent in making the determination, but in making such determination, the court may take into account the reasonable support obligations of either parent as to only natural, legal, or legally adopted minor children in the custody of the parent.

D. For purposes of this section and in determining child support, the noncustodial parent shall be designated the obligor and the custodial parent shall be designated the obligee.

E. The child support guidelines are as follows:

1. All child support shall be computed as a percentage of the combined gross income of both parents. The Child Support Guideline Schedule as provided in Section 119 of this title shall be used for such computation. The child support obligations of each parent shall be computed. The obligor's share shall be paid monthly to the obligee and shall be due on a specific date;

2. a. (1) "Gross income", subject to paragraph 3 of this subsection, includes earned and passive income from any source, except as excluded in this section.
- (2) "Earned income" is defined as income received from labor, or the sale of goods or services and includes, but is not limited to, income from:
 - (a) salaries,
 - (b) wages,
 - (c) commissions,
 - (d) bonuses, and
 - (e) severance pay.
- (3) "Passive income" is defined as all other income and includes, but is not limited to, income from:
 - (a) dividends,
 - (b) pensions,
 - (c) rent,
 - (d) interest income,
 - (e) trust income,
 - (f) annuities,
 - (g) social security benefits,

- (h) workers' compensation benefits,
- (i) unemployment insurance benefits,
- (j) disability insurance benefits,
- (k) gifts,
- (l) prizes, and
- (m) royalties.

b. Specifically excluded from gross income are:

- (1) actual child support received for children not before the court, and
- (2) benefits received from means-tested public assistance programs including, but not limited to:
 - (a) Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF),
 - (b) Supplemental Security Income (SSI),
 - (c) Food Stamps, and
 - (d) General Assistance and State Supplemental Payments for Aged, Blind and the Disabled;

3. a. For income from self-employment, rent, royalties, proprietorship of a business, or joint ownership of a partnership or closely held corporation, "gross income" is defined as gross receipts minus ordinary and necessary expenses required for self-employment or business operations.

b. Specifically excluded from ordinary and necessary expenses for purposes of this paragraph are amounts determined by the district or administrative court to be inappropriate for determining gross income for purposes of calculating child support.

c. The district or administrative court shall carefully review income and expenses from self-employment or operation of a business to determine an appropriate level of gross income available to the parent to satisfy a child support obligation.

d. The district or administrative court shall deduct from self-employment gross income an amount equal to the employer contribution for F.I.C.A. tax which an employer would withhold from an employee's earnings on an equivalent gross income amount. A determination of business income for tax purposes shall not control for purposes of determining a child support obligation.

e. Expense reimbursements or in-kind payments received by a parent in the course of employment, self-employment, or operation of a business shall be counted as income if they are significant and reduce personal living expenses. Such payments may include but are not limited to a company car, free housing, or reimbursed meals;

4. a. For purposes of computing gross income of the parents, the district or administrative court shall include for each parent, whichever is most equitable, either:

(1) all earned and passive monthly income,

(2) all passive income, and earned income equivalent to a forty-hour work week plus such overtime and supplemental income as the court deems equitable,

(3) the average of the gross monthly income for the time actually employed during the previous three (3) years, or

(4) the minimum wage paid for a forty-hour work week.

b. If equitable, the district or administrative court may instead impute as gross monthly income for either parent the amount a person with comparable education, training and experience could reasonably expect to earn.

c. If a parent is permanently physically or mentally incapacitated, the child support obligation shall be computed on the basis of actual monthly gross income;

5. The amount of any preexisting district or administrative court order for current child support for children not before the court or for support alimony arising in a prior case shall be deducted from gross income to the extent payment is actually made under the order;

6. The amount of reasonable expenses of the parties attributable to debt service for preexisting, jointly acquired debt of the parents may be deducted from gross income to the extent payment of the debt is actually made. In any case where deduction for debt service is made, the district or administrative court may provide for prospective upward adjustments of support made possible by the reasonably anticipated reduction or elimination of any debt service;

7. The results of paragraphs 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 of this subsection shall be denominated "adjusted gross income";

8. In cases in which one parent has sole custody, the adjusted monthly gross income of both parents shall be added together and the Child Support Guideline Schedule consulted for the total combined base monthly obligation for child support;

9. After the total combined child support is determined, the percentage share of each parent shall be allocated by computing the percentage contribution of each parent to the combined adjusted

gross income and allocating that same percentage to the child support obligation to determine the base child support obligation of each parent;

10. a. In cases where shared parenting time has been ordered by a district court or agreed to by the parents, the base monthly obligation shall be adjusted. "Shared parenting time" means that each parent has physical custody of the child or children overnight for more than one hundred twenty (120) nights each year.
- b. An adjustment for shared parenting time shall be made to the base monthly child support obligation by the following formula: The total combined base monthly child support obligation shall be multiplied by one and one-half (1 1/2). The result shall be designated the adjusted combined child support obligation.
- c. To determine each parent's adjusted child support obligation, the adjusted combined child support obligation shall be divided between the parents in proportion to their respective adjusted gross incomes.
- d. (1) The percentage of time a child spends with each parent shall be calculated by determining the number of nights the child is in the physical custody of each parent and dividing that number by three hundred sixty-five (365).
- (2) Each parent's share of the adjusted combined child support obligation shall then be multiplied by the percentage of time the child spends with the other parent to determine the base child support obligation owed to the other parent.
- (3) The respective adjusted base child support obligations for each parent are then offset, with the parent owing more base child support paying the difference between the two amounts to the other parent. The base child support obligation of the parent owing the lesser amount is then set at zero dollars.
- e. The parent owing the greater amount of base child support shall pay the difference between the two amounts as a child support order. In no case shall the amount of child support ordered to be paid exceed the amount of child support which would otherwise be ordered to be paid if the parents did not participate in shared parenting time.
- f. In no event shall the provisions of this paragraph be construed to authorize or allow the payment of child support by the custodial parent to the noncustodial parent;
11. a. The actual medical and dental insurance premium for the child shall be allocated between the parents in the same proportion as their adjusted gross income and shall be added to the base child support obligation.

If the insurance policy covers a person other than the child before the court, only that portion of the premium attributed to the child before the court shall be allocated and added to the base child support obligation.

- b. If the obligor pays the medical insurance premium, the obligor shall receive credit against the base child support obligation for the obligee's allocated share of the medical insurance premium.
- c. If the obligee pays the medical insurance premium, the obligor shall pay the obligor's allocated share of the medical insurance premium to the obligee as part of the base child support obligation;

12. In cases of split custody, where each parent is awarded custody of at least one of their natural or legally adopted children, the child support obligation for each parent shall be calculated by application of the child support guidelines for each custodial arrangement. The parent with the larger child support obligation shall pay the difference between the two amounts to the parent with the smaller child support obligation;

- 13. a. The district or administrative court shall determine the "actual" child care expenses reasonably necessary to enable either or both parents to:

- (1) be employed,
- (2) seek employment, or
- (3) attend school or training to enhance employment income.

- b. When the obligee is participating in the Department of Human Services child care subsidy program as provided under Section 230.50 of Title 56 of the Oklahoma Statutes, the Child Care Eligibility/Rates Schedule established by the Department shall be used to determine the amount to be treated as actual child care costs incurred. When applying the schedule to determine the family share copayment amount, the obligor's share of the base monthly obligation for child support and the obligee's gross income shall be considered as the obligee's monthly income. The actual child care costs incurred shall be the family share copayment amount indicated on the schedule which shall be allocated and paid monthly in the same proportion as base child support. The Department of Human Services shall promulgate rules, as necessary, to implement the provisions of this subparagraph.
- c. The actual child care costs incurred for the purposes authorized by this paragraph shall be allocated and paid monthly in the same proportion as base child support.
- d. The district or administrative court shall require the obligee to provide the obligor with timely

documentation of any change in the amount of the child care costs. Upon request by the obligor, whose requests shall not exceed one each month, or upon order of the court, the obligee shall provide the documentation of the amount of incurred child care costs which are related to employment, employment search or education or training as authorized by this paragraph.

- e. If the court determines that it will not cause detriment to the child or will not cause undue hardship to either parent, in lieu of payment of child care expenses incurred during employment, employment search, or while the obligee is attending school or training, the obligor may provide care for the child during that time;

14. Reasonable and necessary medical, dental, orthodontic, optometric, psychological, or any other physical or mental health expenses of the child incurred by either parent and not reimbursed by insurance may be allocated in the same proportion as the parents' adjusted gross income as separate items that are not added to the base child support obligation. If reimbursement is required, the parent who incurs the expense shall be reimbursed by the other parent within thirty (30) days of receipt of documentation of the expense;

15. Transportation expenses of a child between the homes of the parents may be divided between the parents in proportion to their adjusted gross income;

- 16. a. (1) Child support orders may be modified upon a material change in circumstances which includes, but is not limited to, an increase or decrease in income, changes in actual child care expenses, changes in medical or dental insurance, or when one of the children in the child support order reaches the age of majority or otherwise ceases to be entitled to support pursuant to the support order.
- (2) Modification of the Child Support Guideline Schedule shall not alone be a material change in circumstances for child support orders in existence on November 1, 1999.
- (3) Providing support for children born to or adopted by either parent after the entry of a child support order shall not alone be considered a material change in circumstances.
- (4) An order of modification shall be effective upon the date the motion to modify was filed, unless the parties agree to the contrary or the court makes a specific finding of fact that the material change of circumstance did not occur until a later date.
- b. (1) A child support order shall not be modified retroactively regardless of whether support was

ordered in a temporary order, a decree of divorce, an order establishing paternity, modification of an order of support, or other action to establish or to enforce support.

- (2) All final orders shall state whether past due support and interest has accrued pursuant to any temporary order and the amount due, if any; however, failure to state a past due amount shall not bar collection of that amount after entry of the final support order.
 - c. The amount of a child support order shall not be construed to be an amount per child unless specified by the district or administrative court in the order. A child reaching the age of majority or otherwise ceasing to be entitled to support pursuant to the support order shall constitute a material change in circumstances, but shall not automatically serve to modify the order;
17. a. When a child support order is entered or modified, the parents may agree or the district or administrative court may require a periodic exchange of information for an informal review and adjustment process.
- b. When an existing child support order does not contain a provision which requires an informal review and adjustment process, either parent may request the other parent to provide the information necessary for the informal review and adjustment process. Information shall be provided to the requesting parent within forty-five (45) days of the request.
 - c. Requested information may include verification of income, proof and cost of children's medical insurance, and current and projected child care costs. If shared parenting time has been awarded by the court, documentation of past and prospective overnight visits shall be exchanged.
 - d. Exchange of requested information may occur once a year or less often, by regular mail.
 - e. (1) If the parents agree to a modification of a child support order, their agreement shall be in writing ~~on a~~ using standard agreed order form modification forms and the child support computation form provided for in Section 120 of this title ~~and shall comply with the child support guidelines.~~
 - (2) The standard ~~agreed order form modification forms,~~ and the standard child support guideline calculation computation form, ~~and the standard financial affidavit form~~ shall be submitted to the district or administrative court. The court shall review the modification forms to confirm that the child support obligation complies with the child support guidelines and that all

necessary parties pursuant to Section 112 of this title have been notified. If the court approves the modification forms, they shall be filed with the court.

- ~~(3) The standard agreed order form and supporting documents submitted shall be reviewed by the district or administrative court for approval to confirm that the standard agreed order form and documents comply with the child support guidelines and that all necessary parties have been notified. The approved standard agreed order form shall be filed with the court.~~
- ~~(4) If the standard agreed order form does not comply with the child support guidelines, or all necessary parties have not been notified, the matter shall be set for hearing.~~
- f. ~~(1) If the parents fail to cooperate in the exchange of information, either parent may move for a modification hearing or for mediation. The district or administrative court on its own motion may refer the parents to a mediator.~~
- ~~(2) If referred to mediation, and modification is subsequently found to be appropriate, the modification shall be effective on the date the motion was filed.~~
- ~~(3) Costs for mediation, if any, shall be paid by the parent who failed to cooperate in the exchange of information. Otherwise, the court may assess costs equally between the parents, or as determined by the court. If the district court refuses to consider the parents' agreed modification order or the parents do not agree to a modification of the child support order, a parent may request a modification through the Department of Human Services Child Support Enforcement Division, hereinafter referred to as the "Department", when the child support services are being provided under the state child support plan as provided in Section 237 of Title 56 of the Oklahoma Statutes. If the parent does not have an open case with the Department, the parent shall make application for services and complete a request for review;~~

18. Child support orders may include such provisions as the district or administrative court deems appropriate to assure that the child support payments to the custodial parent are used for the support of the child;

19. The district or administrative court shall require and enforce a complete disclosure of assets by both parents on a financial affidavit form prescribed by the Administrative Office of the Courts;

20. Child support orders issued for prior-born children of the payor may not be modified for the purpose of providing support for later-born children;

21. The court, to the extent reasonably possible, shall make provision in an order for prospective adjustment of support to address any foreseen changes including, but not limited to, changes in medical insurance, child care expenses, medical expenses, and extraordinary costs;

22. The social security numbers of both parents and the children who are the subject of a paternity or child support order shall be included in the support order summary form provided for in Section 120 of this title; and

23. A completed support order summary form shall be presented to the judge with all paternity and child support orders, and no such order shall be signed by the judge without presentation of the form.

SECTION 3. AMENDATORY 43 O.S. 2001, Section 118.1, is amended to read as follows:

Section 118.1 A. In all cases in which child support services are being provided under the state child support plan as provided in Section 237 of Title 56 of the Oklahoma Statutes, the Department shall ~~conduct a review upon the request of any party or upon its own decision. All procedures for reviews will be conducted~~ reviews of child support orders pursuant to rules promulgated by the Department. Prior to such review, all parties shall receive notice of the review as provided by law. If the Department conducts a review and determines that individual awards are the child support obligation is not in accordance with such child support guidelines, the case Department shall file a notice of review and intent to modify the child support order, and it shall be served upon the parties in accordance with law. The notice shall be presented to the set for hearing before a district or administrative court for action. The district or administrative court shall review the award child support obligation to determine its compliance with the child support guidelines and order modification if appropriate. An order of modification shall be effective upon the date the notice of review and intent to modify the child support order was filed.

B. In any proceeding to establish or modify a support order, each party shall completely disclose his or her financial status.

SECTION 4. AMENDATORY 43 O.S. 2001, Section 120, as amended by Section 4, Chapter 314, O.S.L. 2002 (43 O.S. Supp. 2005, Section 120), is amended to read as follows:

Section 120. A. A child support computation form shall be signed by the judge and incorporated as a part of all orders which establish or modify a child support obligation.

B. 1. When services are not being provided under the Department of Human Services State IV-D plan pursuant to Section 237 of Title 56 of the Oklahoma Statutes, a support order summary form shall be prepared by the attorney of record or the pro se litigant and presented to the judge with all orders which establish paternity or establish, modify or enforce a child support obligation. No

paternity or child support order shall be signed by the judge without presentation of the support order summary form. After the order is signed by the judge, the summary of support order form shall be submitted to the Central Case Registry provided for in Section 112A of this title.

2. ~~A standard agreed order form~~ Standard forms for motions to modify child support and orders modifying child support shall be used by all parents for any agreements submitted to the court for approval as a part of the informal review and adjustment process provided in Section 118 of this title.

3. The forms specified by this subsection shall be prepared by the Department of Human Services and shall be published by the Administrative Office of the Courts.

SECTION 5. This act shall become effective November 1, 2006.

Passed the House of Representatives the 2nd day of May, 2006.

Presiding Officer of the House of
Representatives

Passed the Senate the 19th day of April, 2006.

Presiding Officer of the Senate