

Child Support During COVID-19

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 LAW OFFICE OF
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The past year of living under siege from the coronavirus pandemic has brought financial hardship to millions of businesses, families, and individuals. Millions of people have lost work or benefits, and others are living with the stress and risk from uncertainty about the future of their employment. Government relief benefits have not been enough to offset income losses. Many parents are struggling with paying child support or are not receiving court-ordered support payments that they can't afford to lose. So, what can be done?

Due to the pandemic, current delays in getting resolutions through the courts can cause difficulties in obtaining urgently needed financial relief for parents. Experienced Utah child support attorneys can help parents on both sides of the financial issue brought on by COVID-19 find ways to manage the emergent circumstance that has developed. Or, they can guide you through dispute resolution alternatives, to obtain the most practical temporary child support adjustment. Below is information on how to handle your situation, whichever side of the child support transaction you are on.

What If You Can't Pay Your Child Support?

How should you handle your situation if you are responsible for paying child support and you are concerned about your ability to keep up with your scheduled payments? If you now have less income than you did when your child support order was issued by the court, or if you currently have no income, you may be unable to make your child support payments. Nevertheless, you are still legally required to make court-ordered support payments. The court will determine, based on the economic disaster conditions, if your particular case is urgent enough to advance through the system expeditiously.

While the courts are fielding emergencies during the economic crisis, most child support cases are not necessarily viewed as their first priority. You're obligated to keep current on court-ordered payments. At the same time, gather and keep all documentation of the change in your financial situation, including your job loss, or job change, and your applications for any kinds of COVID-related government relief funds. The judge will probably want to know if you have been doing all you can to try to remedy your financial situation.

What If Your Ex Is Behind On Child Support?

What should you do if you are receiving child support and are worried about your ex's difficulties in paying, at a time when you're relying on having those funds to help care for your child even more than in the past? Under restrictions due to COVID, the State of Utah, child support services, and the courts are all currently lacking the capacity to address cases except the most serious emergencies to be addressed in the judicial system.

If you are not receiving the child support payments you need for your children, be sure to keep a record of all past-due amounts, receipts, and any documentation that shows how much is due under the court's order. You will probably need that information when the court proceeds with collection enforcement actions to recover past-due support payments.

Negotiation and Alternate Dispute Resolution

Child support cases are increasingly being resolved through direct negotiation and dispute resolution alternatives like mediation and arbitration. Salt Lake City child support lawyers can help form solutions that work to meet their client's needs and address objective issues in child support cases. For example, a Utah family law attorney can help create outcomes in which the parties agree to modify arrangements during the temporary national economic emergency.

Working together with parents to examine finances can help find ways to allow temporary adjustments to child support payments. This approach helps parents reach an agreement on plans for moving forward and catching up on payments in ways that make the best sense and have the least possible adverse impact on their children.

In some cases, people can quickly succeed in negotiating to resolve temporary issues caused by the economic disaster due to the COVID crisis. In other situations, the parties are engaged in much more intense conflict. In either situation, an experienced child support attorney can provide critical guidance to help the parties obtain the necessary amount of legal facilitation to reach a sufficient outcome.

Ultimately, a mediator or an arbitrator can often help determine the most practical solution for the parties and settle issues with temporary agreements. Or, they can provide decisions that appropriately address *all* the complex technical legalities of back child support and current payments. Your Salt Lake City child support lawyer can provide the guidance you will need to obtain a temporary modification of child support payment terms in your case.

Attorney David Pedrazas, Salt Lake City, Utah

For more than 20 years, David Pedrazas, Attorney, has been helping people get the outcomes they need in difficult Utah divorces and child support cases. He works closely with each client to help them make the most fully informed decision possible for their future. David Pedrazas has been recognized as one of Salt Lake City's best divorce lawyers by the National Academy of Family Law Association, the American Academy of Trial Attorneys, and the American Institute of Family Law.

For help with problems paying or receiving full child support payments due to COVID-19, call the Law Office of David Pedrazas, PLLC, Salt Lake City, UT at (801) 263-7078, or leave us a message online for a prompt response.
