

CHILD SUPPORT IN BC: INFORMATION FOR PARENTS



You should not rely on this booklet for legal advice. It provides general information only.

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What is this booklet about?

This booklet contains basic information about child support in British Columbia. It explains:

- your duty as a parent to support your child or children, whether you live together or not;
- what child support is and who has to pay it;
- who makes decisions about child support, and how they decide;
- how the amount of child support is determined;
- how child support payments affect your income tax;
- what you can do to help make sure child support is paid; and
- where you can get more help.

This booklet contains many important legal terms and phrases that you will need to know in order to understand the booklet. The first time we use one of these terms and phrases, we have put it in **bold letters**. If you need to learn what a term or phrase in bold letters means, please see the definitions under “Important words and phrases,” beginning on page 10.

Who is this booklet for?

This booklet is for **parents** who have **child support** decisions to make, whether:

- you had a relationship with one another, either married or living together, and are not together anymore; or
- you had a child or children together and do not have an ongoing relationship.

This booklet might also apply to you if you have been a “step-parent” or have contributed to the support of a child for at least one year and stood in the place of a parent to that child.

What does the law say about the responsibility of parents to support their children?

As a parent, you have a legal responsibility to support your children financially. Even if you have never lived with your child or with your child’s other parent, you have this duty. A court can force you to support your child or children if the other parent applies for child support.

If you have been ordered by a court to pay child support, and you do not do so, there may be serious legal consequences for you; for more information, see “What can happen if I don’t pay child support?” on page 9.

What does the law say about support of children when parents separate?

When you separate from the other parent, your child has a legal right to receive financial support from each of you until your child turns 19 years old. If your child is still dependent at age 19 or older – for example, because the child is ill, disabled, or still in school – your child still has the right to financial support for as long as he or she is dependent.

What is child support? Who has to pay it?

Child support is a financial contribution to the costs of raising a child, made by one parent to the other parent, with whom the child generally lives (the **primary resident parent**). Sometimes the primary resident parent has joint **custody** with the other parent, and sometimes sole custody. In most cases, if the child lives with one parent for 60% or more of the time, that parent is entitled to receive child support.

The primary resident parent also contributes financial support – but, in most cases, that parent’s contribution is combined with other household expenses, so that it is not possible to identify a specific amount. In contrast, a **non-primary resident parent** usually pays a specific amount on a regular basis (in most cases, once a month) to the primary resident parent.

A “step-parent” may also be liable to pay child support. This includes anyone who has contributed to the support of the child

for at least one year and stood in the place of a parent to that child. A step-parent, or someone in a common-law relationship with a parent, might not be obligated to pay if the primary resident parent doesn't make an application to court within a certain period of time. Even if a step-parent or parent can't afford to pay much right now, it's important for the primary resident parent to get an **order** as soon as possible, and then apply to vary the order if a payor's financial situation improves.

Who decides on child support, and how?

What is a child support agreement?

Many parents who separate are able to agree on a fair amount of child support, and put the **agreement** in writing. This **child support agreement** may be part of an overall **separation agreement**, which shows what they agreed to about this issue, and all the other issues that arose when they separated – such as child **custody** and how they will divide their property.

Parents who want to work out a child support agreement can use the **Child Support Guidelines** (see page 5 for a description of the Child Support Guidelines) as a model of what is fair, according to law. It is sometimes a good idea for each parent to get separate legal advice before they commit themselves to an amount, so that they can feel confident that the amount they agree to is fair. For information about how you can obtain the Child Support Guidelines, please see page 6.

What is a child support order?

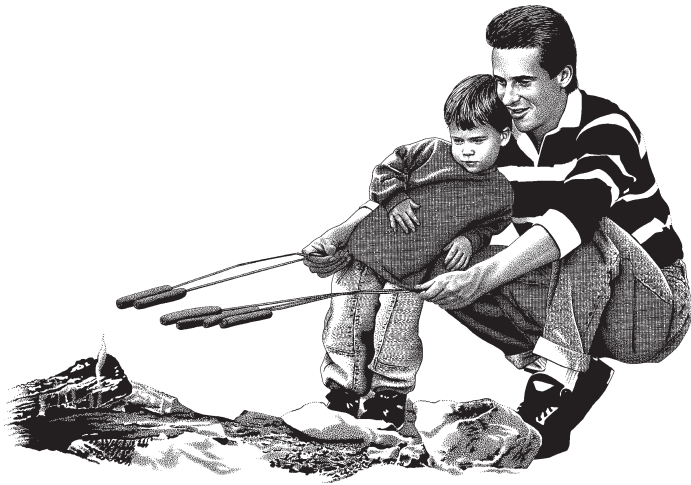
If you cannot decide on a fair amount of child support, you can go to court and ask a judge to decide. The judge will make a **child support order** – in other words, the judge will give directions about how much child support must be paid, and by whom, and how often. You must obey this **court order**.

In seeking a child support order, you can go to either the **Provincial Court** of British Columbia or the **Supreme Court** of British Columbia. The Supreme Court is the only court that may grant a **divorce**, so divorcing parents will likely seek a child support order there. You may also ask the court to settle other issues, such as child custody, child access, and division of property. If you are married, you will not be granted a divorce unless a judge has determined that your child support order or agreement is fair and in accordance with the Child Support Guidelines.

If a child support order or agreement is filed with a court, either you or the other parent can register it with the Family Maintenance Enforcement Program (FMEP), a service of the BC government. Once the order is registered (enrolled) with the FMEP, staff there can monitor the order and **enforce** it, if child support payments are late or unpaid. For more information on the FMEP, see page 9.

Which is better – a child support agreement or order?

If you and the other parent know in advance what a judge is likely to order for child support, it may be possible for you to



agree without going to court. This will save you time (resulting in less stress) and money (by your not having to pay court filing and legal fees). Also, if you come to your own agreement, you will likely find it easier to abide by its terms. And you are free to agree on an amount of child support that is different from the amount in the Child Support Guidelines (for guidance, see “Making a child support agreement on your own” on this page). However, if a dispute arises and you go to court, the judge is required to order the amount in the Child Support Guidelines.

If you fear for your own safety or the safety of your child when dealing with the other parent, then seeking an agreement may not be wise or even possible.

What happens if we don't have a written child support agreement or order?

If you don't have your agreement or order in writing, and the paying parent fails to pay as agreed to or ordered, it will be hard for you to enforce the agreement.

(If you have gone to court and the judge made an order, and you don't have the

order in writing, ask the **registry** staff to help you.)

If you are married, you will not be granted a divorce unless a judge has determined that your child support order or agreement is fair and in accordance with the Child Support Guidelines.

How can we get a child support agreement or order?

Making a child support agreement on your own

If you and the other parent (or guardian) decide to work out a child support agreement without going to court, it is a good idea to write down what you have agreed to and take it to the court to be recorded at the registry. This is called “filing” the agreement. This way, if the parent who is required to pay child support fails to pay, the other can get legal help to enforce the agreement.

If you and your spouse are seeking a divorce, a judge must review your agreement to find out if it meets the Child Support Guidelines. If it does not, then the judge may not grant your divorce.

Before agreeing on any amount of support, make sure you consider all of the additional costs your child incurs on a regular basis, such as medical and dental costs, prescriptions, glasses, the cost of children's extracurricular activities, school fees, and childcare costs. These should also be included in your child support agreement, and these costs should be shared proportionate to each parent's income.

What are the Child Support Guidelines?

What the guidelines are

The Child Support Guidelines are rules passed by Parliament and the BC legislature about how to calculate the amount of child support that one parent must pay to the other.

To whom the guidelines apply

The guidelines apply to all separated parents (or guardians) of children, whether or not they had an ongoing opposite-sex or same-sex relationship or marriage.

When the guidelines became law

For child support orders made under the federal *Divorce Act* (in other words, made as part of a divorce), the Child Support Guidelines became law on May 1, 1997. For child support orders made under the provincial *Family Relations Act* (in other words, not made as part of a divorce), the Child Support Guidelines became law on April 14, 1998.

How do the guidelines work?

The guidelines include tables that set out monthly support amounts, depending on two main factors:

- the income of the parent paying support; and
- the number of children to be supported.

The child support amounts found in the tables are based on what an average parent at each level of income would usually spend on their child, if the parents had continued to live together.

There is help available for parents who are having trouble agreeing on a fair amount of child support – including private **mediators** and **Family Justice Counsellors**. For more information, see pages 13 and 15.

Going to court for a child support order

If you and the other parent cannot work out a child support agreement, you can go to court and apply for an order. The deciding judge will ask each of you for your side of the case.

Supreme Court or Provincial Court?

You can go to Provincial Court (Family Court) or Supreme Court. If the child support application is part of a divorce action, then the choice must be Supreme Court.

Both Provincial Court and Supreme Court are required to use the Child Support Guidelines to set the appropriate amount of child support.

What is the amount of child support based on?

If you and the other parent (or guardian) agree on child support without going to court, then the amount of child support is based on what you agreed to. If a judge makes a child support order, then the amount of child support is based on the Child Support Guidelines. Many parents (or guardians) agree to an amount that is based on the guidelines, without going to court.

Where can we find the Child Support Guidelines for BC?

The Child Support Guidelines differ from one province or territory to another because the cost of living differs from one province or territory to another. To locate the Child Support Guidelines for BC, you can do one of the following:

- Get a print copy from your local courthouse library. Telephone: 604-660-2841 or 1-800-665-2570 (toll-free).
- Email: bccls@bccls.bc.ca.
- Try your local public library.
- Telephone the BC Family Justice Services Information Line (see page 13) and ask for a copy.
- go to the Internet. Both Canada's Department of Justice and BC's Ministry of Attorney General have made the Child Support Guidelines available on numerous websites, including the following:
 - Justice Canada has created a helpful web page called "Eight steps to calculating child support," which you may find in Portable Document Format (PDF) at <http://canada.justice.gc.ca/en/ps/sup/steps/int8stps.html>. Step Six shows you the actual guideline tables for all of the provinces and territories.
 - You can find the tables in Microsoft Word format at <http://canada.justice.gc.ca/en/ps/sup/grl/glpta.html>.
 - You can find the guidelines in Hypertext Markup Language (HTML)

Extraordinary expenses

The amount listed in the tables may be only a starting point. Parents, or else a court, may decide that certain special expenses (such as child care) are or are not reasonable and necessary for the child, and decide whether or not to add to the basic table amount.

Shared custody

Shared custody exists in cases where the children live at least 40 per cent of the time with each of their parents over the course of a year. If the children are in the care of the paying parent at least 40 per cent of the time, an amount different from the amount in the Child Support Guidelines may be ordered or agreed to.

If you asked a court to decide, the judge would look at the guideline amount for each parent, the increased costs of shared custody, and the financial circumstances and needs of the child and each parent.

Split custody

If each parent has custody of one or more children, they are said to have **split custody**. In this case, each must use the Child Support Guidelines to determine what they would owe the other parent based on their own income level. The parent who would owe more to the other must pay the difference between the two amounts.

or Microsoft Word format at <http://canada.justice.gc.ca/en/ps/sup/grl/guide.doc>.

- You can also find the tables in HTML at <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/D-3.4/SOR-97-175/index.html>.
- BC's Ministry of Attorney General has made several helpful publications, including the Child Support Guidelines, available at <http://www.ag.gov.bc.ca/family-justice/resources/publications/index.htm>.

What if we have a child support agreement or order made before the guidelines became law?

If you and the other parent had a child support order or agreement made before the Child Support Guidelines became law, you may choose to let it stay the way it is, or you or the other parent may want to change it. There are significant income tax consequences if you change an agreement or order that pre-dates the guidelines. Before the guidelines were passed, the paying parent could deduct child support from their income on their income tax return, and the receiving parent had to declare it as income. If the order or agreement is changed, the paying parent will no longer be able to deduct the amount of child support they pay.

How can we change our child support agreement or order?

If you agree

You and the other parent can agree to change your child support order or agreement to the amount set out in the Child Support Guidelines.

- If you and the other parent have a written child support agreement, you will need to make changes to it in writing, or write a new agreement. It is a good idea to file the revised agreement at a court registry – the same registry where the original one was filed, if it was filed.
- If you and the other parent have a child support order, you will need to apply to the court that made the original order for a variation.

If you do not agree

If you want to vary, or change, an existing child support order or agreement, but the other parent opposes a change, you can get help from a private mediator or Family Justice Counsellor – see pages 13 and 15.

Otherwise, one or both of you may choose to apply to the court that made the original order, and ask the court to vary the order. Judges are required to use the Child Support Guidelines to determine the new amount. Depending on the evidence – including, most importantly, the income of the paying parent – the level of support could change in either direction.

What if a child support recipient is receiving income assistance?

In order to be eligible for income, disability, or hardship assistance (welfare) from the Ministry of Human Resources (MHR), a person who is entitled to child support (a recipient) is required to sign a form called an “Assignment of Maintenance Rights.” Signing the form gives MHR the right to try to get the other parent to pay child support. This is called “assigning” the right to child support. The person who assigns their right to child support to MHR may be allowed to keep some of the child support money that MHR collects from the other parent. You can find out more from your caseworker.

Once the right to child support is assigned, MHR, instead of the parent, has the right:

- to go to court to ask for a child support order;
- to go to court to seek to change a child support order (for example, so that it meets the Child Support Guidelines); and
- to decide how to enforce the order, if necessary.

How do child support payments affect income tax?

In 1997, the federal government changed the income tax rules about child support payments. If a child support order or agreement was made on or after May 1, 1997, then the new income tax rules apply. Under the new rules:

- parents paying child support cannot deduct child support from their income; and
- parents receiving child support do not have to report it as income.

Two parents can agree to let the current income tax rules apply to their existing order, without changing the order. To do so, they must sign a Canada Customs Agency (CRA) form called an “Election for Child Support Payments” and submit it to CRA. This form is available at a CRA office, or can be printed out from CRA’s website at <http://www.ccra-adrc.gc.ca/E/pbg/tf/t1157/README.html>.

A parent who goes to court and asks a judge to let the current income tax rules apply may be taking a risk, because judges are bound to apply the Child Support Guidelines to any new order. They could end up paying more, or receiving less, than with the order or agreement they have now.

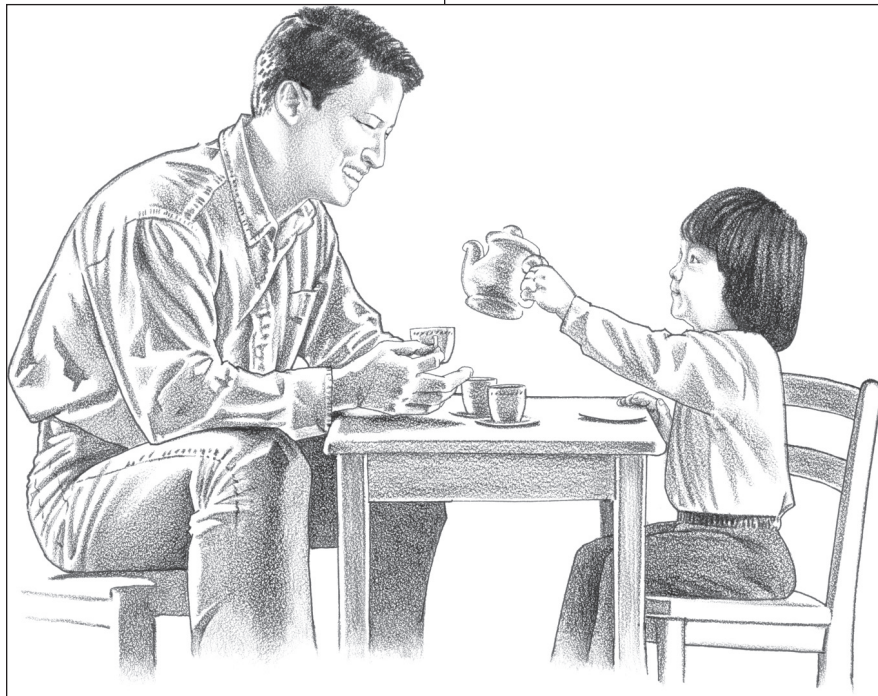
What can happen if I don't pay child support?

If the other parent registers their order with the Family Maintenance Enforcement Program (FMEP), you will be required to send your payment to FMEP, who will then forward it on to the other parent. You are called the payor, and the other parent is called the recipient.

The FMEP keeps track of what the recipient is owed by the payor based on the court order. If the payor does not pay as required by the court order, the FMEP has authority to do certain things to recover that money. The FMEP may “attach” the payor’s income (such as wages, pensions, income tax refunds, GST credits, workers’ compensation benefits, or rental income) or the payor’s bank accounts. This means the FMEP may require anyone who owes the payor money (such as an employer) to pay it directly to the FMEP. The FMEP

may register a lien against a payor’s land or personal property or obtain a court order to seize and sell the payor’s personal property. If the payor owes more than \$2,000, the FMEP may report them to a credit bureau, making it harder for the payor to get a credit card or a loan.

If the payor owes more than \$3,000, the FMEP may instruct ICBC to refuse to issue or renew the payor’s driver’s licence, and ask the federal government to suspend or refuse to issue or renew the payor’s passport or aviation or marine licence. If the payor owns a corporation, or a major part of one, the FMEP may make the corporation responsible for the child support payments. The FMEP will also charge a payor a default fee if they miss or are late on two payments within the same calendar year. This money goes to the FMEP to help the government cover the costs of running the FMEP program.



Important words and phrases

Agreement: An understanding between two people that binds them legally about a particular issue, such as how much one parent will pay to the other for child support. The agreement is stronger if they put it in writing so that there is written proof of what they agreed to, in the event of a dispute.

Arrears: Child support that is owing and overdue.

Child support: The amount of money one parent must pay to the other under the terms of an order or agreement to help support their child after **separation** or divorce. This is also sometimes called **maintenance** or child maintenance.

Child support agreement: An agreement that says how much one or both parents will each pay to the other for child support. It may be part of an agreement that deals with other issues, as well – such as a **divorce order** or separation agreement.

Child Support Guidelines: These are the rules for calculating the amount of child support one parent must pay to the other to help support their child. The Child Support Guidelines were passed into law by Parliament on May 1, 1997. The guidelines apply to all couples who have had a child together and who are no longer together – whether they were married or in an opposite- or same-sex common-law relationship. The Child Support Guidelines also apply to people who had no lasting relationship at all but one just long enough to produce a child.

Child support order: An order that says how much one or both parents will each pay to the other for child support. It may be part of an order that deals with other issues, as well, such as a divorce order.

Collaborative law: A process for making decisions in which both of the parents and their lawyers make a formal commitment to resolve disagreements without going to court.

Consent order: A court order made by a judge, usually without a court hearing, upon learning that both parents agree to certain terms.

Court order: Sometimes called simply an “order.” Directions given by a judge in court. Usually refers to the document that records the judge’s directions and is signed by the judge. The order tells the people named in it what they must do about issues such as custody, access, and child support. People named in a court order are bound to obey it, and will face legal consequences if they fail to do so.

Custodial parent: A parent who has custody of a child.

Custody: This refers to a situation when the child is in the custody or care of an adult. An adult with custody is responsible for the care of the child or children on a daily basis. Also:

Sole custody: Custody when the child or children live with only one parent.

Joint or shared custody: Custody when the child or children live part of the time with each parent and decisions about the child or children are made jointly. Joint

custody does not always mean that a child lives an equal amount of time with each parent.

Split custody: This refers to a situation where there are two or more children. Custody of the children is “split” when one or more children go with one parent and the other child or children go with the other parent.

Defendant: In Supreme Court, the person who must respond to a legal **proceeding** (such as a divorce) begun by another person (the **plaintiff**). In Provincial Court, the defendant is called the “respondent” and the plaintiff is called the “applicant.”

Divorce: The legal end of a marriage. A divorce can only be granted by a Supreme Court. Also, the legal proceeding in which one or both parties seek a divorce.

Divorce Act: The federal statute that sets out law about divorce and related issues such as child and spousal support, child custody, child access, and division of property, and authorizes the Supreme Court to grant divorces and make decisions about these issues as terms of the divorce.

Divorce order: An order of the Supreme Court granting a divorce.

Enforce: To compel someone to obey an agreement or order. For example, if a child support agreement or order is filed with a court, either parent can register it with the Family Maintenance Enforcement Program (FMEP). Once the agreement is registered, FMEP staff can monitor the agreement and enforce it (compel payment), if necessary.

Family Justice Counsellors: Government employees who work at Family Justice Centres in British Columbia. They are trained and certified as family mediators. They help people resolve disputes over custody, **guardianship**, access, and child support issues.

Family Maintenance Enforcement Act: A British Columbia statute that sets out:

- procedures for enforcing child and spousal support orders and agreements filed with a court registry; and
- the powers and responsibilities of the Family Maintenance Enforcement Program to monitor, collect, and enforce child and spousal support payments.

Family Relations Act: A British Columbia statute that sets out law about issues such as child and spousal support, child custody, and child access, and authorizes a court to make decisions about these issues.

Guardianship: The responsibility for making major decisions about the care of a child or children, including issues such as education, health care, religious upbringing, and money or property belonging to the child. Guardianship may be sole or joint.

Maintenance: Financial support for a child or children and/or a former **spouse** that must be paid under the terms of an order or agreement.

Mediation: The process of attempting to resolve a dispute with the help of a mediator.

Mediator: A person who is trained to act as a neutral third party to help people resolve a dispute and come to a mutually acceptable agreement without going to court.



Non-custodial parent: The parent who does not have custody of a child or children.

Non-primary resident parent: The parent with whom the child generally does not live.

Order: See court order.

Parent: You can be:

- a biological parent;
- an adoptive parent;
- a same- or opposite-sex step-parent who has lived with, or been married to, a parent and provided support for the child or children for at least one year; or
- a legal guardian (someone who has been granted guardianship by a court).

Payor: The parent or spouse paying child support or spousal support.

Plaintiff: In Supreme Court, the person who begins a legal proceeding (such as a divorce) to which another person (the **defendant**) must respond. In Provincial Court, the plaintiff is called the “applicant” and the defendant is called the “respondent.”

Primary resident parent: The parent with whom the child generally lives.

Proceeding: A legal action begun in court to settle issues in dispute between two or more parties. Sometimes called a “lawsuit.”

Provincial Court: A court that contains several divisions, each dealing with a different area of law – such as small claims or traffic. The family division of the Provincial Court (often called Family Court) routinely makes orders for child custody, guardianship, child access, child support, and spousal support.

Recipient: A parent or spouse receiving child support or spousal support.

Registry: At a courthouse, the counter/office that is open to the general public, where documents are filed.

Separation: When two spouses are no longer living together. There is no such thing as a “legal” separation; two spouses living apart are separated. But there is a “separation agreement,” which we explain below.

Separation agreement: This is a comprehensive, written agreement between two former spouses, which sets out what they have agreed to regarding issues such as child support, spousal support, child

custody, guardianship, child access, and how the two parties will divide property.

Spousal support: The amount of money one ex-spouse must pay to the other under the terms of an order or agreement to help support that person, after separation or divorce. Also called maintenance or spousal maintenance. In the U.S., this is sometimes called “alimony.” In BC, we use the terms “support” or “maintenance.”

Spouse: One of the partners in a marriage or a marriage-like, common-law relationship – in other words, a wife, a husband, or an opposite- or same-sex partner.

Statute: A written set of laws on a specific topic, created by a legislature or Parliament. Also known as an “act.”

Supreme Court: The name that is often used to refer to the Supreme Court of British Columbia. The only court that is authorized to grant divorces. The Supreme Court routinely makes orders for child custody, guardianship, child access, child support, spousal support, and the division of property, usually as terms of a divorce.

Variation: A change in an existing order.

Where can I get more information or help?

BC Family Justice Services Information Line

- In the Lower Mainland, call 604-660-2192.
- Outside the Lower Mainland, call 1-888-216-2211 (toll-free).

When you call, you can ask for free copies of the publication *Federal Child Support Guidelines: A guide to the new approach*. It includes the Child Support Guidelines and the tables.

Family Justice Counsellors

Family Justice Counsellors are accredited family mediators who work at Family Justice Centres around BC. Family Justice Counsellors help parents and spouses resolve disputes, without charging a fee, and are trained to spot safety issues. They offer the following services:

- emotional support and short-term counselling;
- mediation;
- referrals to services that can help you and your family adjust to separation and divorce;
- referrals to emergency and community services if violence has occurred;
- information about the Child Support Guidelines and the court process;
- assistance in going to Provincial Court to get or vary a child support order or agreement, if you don't have a lawyer;

- information about enforcement through the Family Maintenance Enforcement Program (FMEP);
- information about Parenting After Separation Programs (see “Parenting After Separation” on this page); and
- custody and access assessments, when judges ask for these.

Family Justice Counsellors don’t provide legal advice. They will refer you to legal services if you need them. Family Justice Counsellors can also make referrals to other sources of help.

To contact a Family Justice Counsellor, call a Family Justice Centre near you. To find the nearest Family Justice Centre, you can either:

- call Enquiry BC between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday to Friday, and ask the operator to transfer you. Here are the telephone numbers for Enquiry BC:
 - In Greater Vancouver, call 604-660-2421.
 - In Greater Victoria, call 250-387-6121.
 - Elsewhere in BC, call 1-800-663-7867 (toll-free)
- or
- Look in the BC government listings (the blue pages) of your telephone book under “Attorney General, Ministry of – Justice Centres.”

Parenting After Separation

Parenting After Separation is a free, three-hour information session that parents (and other family members, such as grandparents) may attend in person. In some communities¹, most parents are required to attend Parenting After Separation before they can go to Provincial Court to obtain or change a court order concerning child support or other issues. You do not have to attend the same Parenting After Separation session as your former spouse.

Parenting After Separation is designed to help you and your family adjust to separation or divorce. It may help you to:

- make careful and informed decisions about separation, and make them in the best interests of your children;
- know more about the impact of separation on children;
- keep your children out of the middle of disputes;
- communicate with your former spouse more effectively;
- know more about mediation, counselling, the court process, and the Child Support Guidelines.

To find out more about Parenting After Separation, talk to a Family Justice Counsellor (see “Family Justice Counsellors” on page 13).

Parenting After Separation has a home-study package that you may be able to get from your local library. Call or visit your library and ask the librarian to check under “Parenting After Separation.”

¹ Burnaby, New Westminster, Surrey, Vancouver, Kelowna, Prince George, Abbotsford, Victoria, Kamloops, and Nanaimo.

Family Maintenance Enforcement Program (FMEP)

FMEP is a BC government service. For every child (and spousal) support order or agreement filed with the FMEP, staff will calculate, receive, record, and forward child (and spousal) support payments to the recipient. If necessary, staff will take action to try to ensure that the payor makes the required payments.

To register (enroll) with the FMEP, you need a Filing Kit.

- You can get a Filing Kit at any Provincial Courthouse, government agent's office, or Ministry of Human Resources Family Maintenance Program office; or
- You can call or write the FMEP at the central Enrollment Office between 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m., Monday to Friday:
Enrollment Office
Box 5789
Victoria, BC V8R 6S8
Telephone: (250) 220-4040
Toll-free: 1-800-663-3455

Comprehensive Child Support Service (for Kelowna residents)

- In Kelowna, call (250) 712-3636.
- Outside Kelowna, call 1-888-227-7734 (toll-free).

Getting Legal Advice

Lawyer Referral Service

The Lawyer Referral Service can give you the name of a family lawyer near you who will give you a 30-minute consultation for \$25. You can then hire that lawyer, if you wish. To contact the Lawyer Referral Service:

- In Greater Vancouver, call 604-687-3221.
- Elsewhere in BC, call 1-800-663-1919 (toll-free).

Legal Services Society of BC

If your legal problem is covered under the legal aid rules and you are financially eligible, the Legal Services Society of BC will appoint a lawyer for you if you apply. For more information, contact your local Legal Services Society office, or phone the Legal Services Society's provincial call centre from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, and 9:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. on Wednesday:

- In the Lower Mainland, call (604) 408-2172.
- Outside the Lower Mainland, call 1-866-577-2525 (toll-free).

Mediators

Mediators are trained to help people resolve their disputes and reach an agreement while remaining neutral. They provide a neutral space for you to meet, help you identify the issues you need to resolve, help you stay on track in your discussions, and help you maintain a working relationship with your former spouse.

It takes agreement by both people for mediation to work. Mediation is not a good option if there is a history of violence, threats, intimidation, or abuse.

To find a mediator:

- Look in the Yellow Pages of your telephone book under “Mediators.”
- Ask a Family Justice Counsellor if they can mediate (see “Family Justice Counsellors,” above).
- Some family lawyers are also mediators. Ask a family lawyer for a referral.
- Contact the BC Mediation Roster Society:

By mail:

BC Mediation Roster Society
P.O. Box 9222 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9J1

By telephone:

(250) 356-8147
Toll-free: 1-888-713-0433
Victoria, BC V8W 9J1

Website:

www.mediator-roster.bc.ca

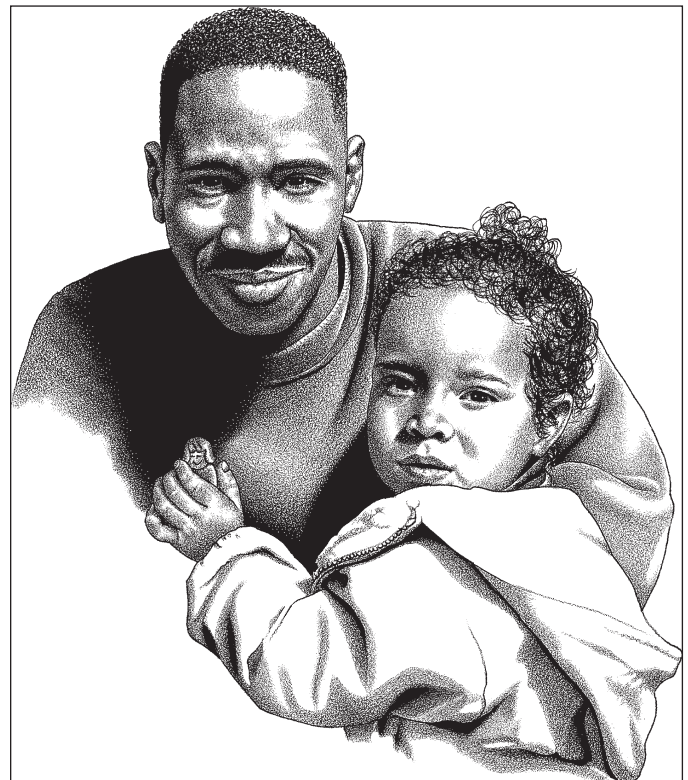
Collaborative Law

Collaborative law is a process for making decisions in which both of the parents and their lawyers make a formal commitment to resolve disagreements without going to court. For more information:

- Call Collaborative Divorce at (604) 878-1498 or email them at info@collaborativedivorcebc.org; or
- Go to the Collaborative Family Law Group website at <http://www.nocourt.net/>.

Other Information on the Internet

- Legal Services Society of BC
Legal Services Society of BC (LSS) has helpful booklets, a video, and an online self-help kit for people who are facing legal issues from separation or divorce, including child support. LSS may have additional services available; contact them directly to find out.
<http://www.familylaw.lss.bc.ca/default.asp>
- Family Maintenance Enforcement Program (FMEP)
FMEP website:
<http://www.fmep.gov.bc.ca/>
- JP Boyd’s BC Family Law Resource
<http://www.bcfamilylawresource.com/index.html>



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Acknowledgements

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(Ratcliff & Company)

Other Reviewers: Lois Shelton, Legal Services Society, Gordon Hardy & Bernice DeWitt, People's Law School

Field-testers: Lisa Galland, Leslie West, Donna Klym, Arlena de Bruin

You should not rely on this booklet for legal advice. It provides general information only.

The People's Law School

The People's Law School is a non-profit Society whose purpose is to provide British Columbians with reliable information about their rights and responsibilities under the law.



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Thanks to our funders....

The People's Law School is generously supported by the:

- Law Foundation of BC
- Notary Foundation of BC
- Department of Justice Canada
- Province of British Columbia
- Ministry of Attorney General of BC
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police
- City of Vancouver
- Canadian Heritage
- National Crime Prevention Centre



This booklet was adapted from an earlier booklet on the same topic jointly published by the Ministry of Attorney General of BC, the Law Courts Education Society and the People's Law School.