

Minutes

Child Support Schedule Workgroup Public Forum

July 26, 2023 | 12:00pm

Washington State University, Everett

915 N. Broadway

Everett, WA 98201

Room 101

Meeting also available on Teams Webinar

Attendance

Members appearing on Teams	Kaha Arte, Tami Chavez, Amy Roark, Gaston Shelton, Carol Ann Slater
Members appearing in person	Raymond Allen, Jim Clark, Joy Moore, Sharon Redmond, Anneliese Vance-Sherman, Janelle Wilson
Members not appearing	
Division of Child Support Staff	Lucas Camacho, Bryndis Danke, Jana Ekstrom, Josselyn Green, Ian Hall, Brady Horenstein, Jake Hughes, Rachelle Jennings, Chereen Kwon, Rachel Tumbleson
Public Attendees (In Person)	Gordon Bock, Jim Chambers
Public Attendees (Virtual)	Lila Bliss, Christy Carpenter, Jay Evans, Diana Guernsey, Nikole Lawless, Kaycee Looney, David Mace, Teresa Mathisen, Erica Munguia, Kimberly Ortloff, Amy Powers, Kristina Ralls, Candy Sanders, Michele Thrush, Martinez Veaney, Jen Watson

Agenda Details

1. Welcome and Introductions

- a. Overview of public forum – reviewing recommendations made by the 2023 Washington State Child Support Schedule (WSCSS) Workgroup
- b. Introduction of Workgroup Members and Subcommittees
 - i. Sharon Redmond (DCS Director) – economic table
 - ii. Jim Clark (Noncustodial Parent) – economic table and residential credit
 - iii. Anneliese Vance-Sherman (Economist) - economic table
 - iv. Janelle Wilson (Deputy Prosecuting Attorney) – economic table
 - v. Joy Moore (Representing the Administrative Office of the Courts) – Self-Support Reserve
 - vi. Raymond Allen (Noncustodial Parent) – Self-Support Reserve
 - vii. Tui Shelton (Noncustodial Parent) – Residential Credit and Economic Table

2. Proposed Recommendations

- a. [Available on the Child Support Schedule Workgroup Materials Page](#)

3. Public Comment

- a. Gordon Bock – Mr. Bock attributes the rise in crime in certain areas to an epidemic of fatherlessness. In his research, he’s found that the potential for financial reward is a driver of increasing divorce rates. He states that for parties whose income exceeds \$100,000 per year, a NCP will pay 40% more in

Washington than they would in Oregon, a phenomenon for which he has found no satisfactory explanation. He's attended several of this workgroup's meetings to try and understand the drivers of Washington's economic table but has found no answers.

- b. Lila Bliss – Ms. Bliss agrees that the existing 125% threshold for the Self-Support Reserve is not high enough and believes that parents who receive state assistance should get some sort of deviation to their child support. She takes issue with the way in which DCS often uses historical quarterly income data to calculate a party's income rather than obtaining their pay stubs. She asserts that this methodology causes DCS to inflate their calculations and, as a result, charge excessive support in many cases. Washington law ([WAC 388-14A-3205\(1\)](#)) states that DCS should use the best available information to calculate parties' income, and DCS's existing standards seem to fall short of that. Regarding the appeal process for modifications and her own experience, she's found that there is too little time from the order's issuance to appeal and believes that the appeal period should be made longer. Lastly, she's curious about how these recommendations will affect current cases if they are voted through. Would parents need to file for modifications? If so, what about those parents who aren't eligible for a modification yet?
- c. Nikole Lawless – Ms. Lawless brought up the USDA's periodic reports on households' expenditures. She's found that the figures in Washington's economic table are far apart from the USDA's. Per the last USDA report issued in 2015, a family of 4 with a median income of \$83,000 per year would need to spend approximately \$13,290 per year per child (\$1,107.50 per month) to support them. Per Washington's economic table, the same family with the same income would spend \$864 per month per child. Accounting for inflation, the difference only grows more severe. The USDA report goes on to say that the US child rearing expenses are second highest in the West. Regarding the workgroup's residential schedule credit proposals, she believes that the proposed threshold of 20% seems appropriate. To her understanding, the existing economic table seems to already have some sort of assumed residential time built into it, so the calculations would need to be adjusted. For example, if a NCP has 33% residential time with the children, you'd need to subtract the 20% that's already been accounted for, which would result in a 13% credit. Conversely, if a NCP has 0% residential time due to domestic violence concerns or other restrictions, the CP should be able to request an upward deviation for the additional expenses of having 100% custody. She asks the workgroup to consider the legal battles that the residential schedule recommendations would create. The burden on the court system would increase dramatically if every overnight has a financial ramification. To help alleviate this, she thinks that the minimum threshold to seek such a credit should be 35% residential time.
- d. David Mace – Mr. Mace is an attorney with 15 years of experience representing predominantly homeless clients. Given his experience, he likes the abatement for treatment idea. Having dealt with many individuals with temporary disabilities, he notes that the modification process often takes longer than the incapacitation itself. This abatement concept could be helpful for those going through shorter-term crises. He has concerns over the group's chosen definition of residential time, specifically with them using overnights as the unit of measurement. This potentially excludes parents who work nights and whose children stay with other parent during their shifts. To address this, he encourages the definition to allow for discretion in the court and administrative processes in such scenarios.
- e. Christy Carpenter – Ms. Carpenter is a legal technician who assists unrepresented clients. She supports all of the proposed recommendations except for the residential credit. The proposed threshold of 20%

of overnights will be problematic for self-represented parties who are burdened with having to prove that a downward deviation will result in inadequate funds in their household to support the children. In child support cases, the NCP is often the higher wage earner and, as such, can afford to be represented by an attorney. Self-represented clients are less savvy and don't have such resources. Furthermore, the recommendations put a lot of pressure on the bench. Judges and court commissioners would need to commit significant time to pre-hearing study sessions to scrutinize the parties' information for the hearing. That said, she does fundamentally believe there should be some sort of relief for NCPs who spend significant time with their children. She agrees with Ms. Lawless that the 20% threshold should be made higher.

- f. Jim Chambers – Mr. Chambers works with fathers who are re-entering society from incarceration. He deals with a lot of men who have child support issues. Mr. Chambers had questions for the workgroup regarding current incarceration abatement policy.

Meeting adjourned at 1:00pm