



**Sub. H.B. 149**

125th General Assembly  
(As Reported by H. Juvenile and Family Law)

**Reps. Fessler, Seitz, Williams, Gilb, Brinkman, Perry, Reidelbach**

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**BILL SUMMARY**

- Permits a person required to pay child support (an obligor) who is called to emergency military service to request a review of the child support order for the purpose of modification of the amount of support.
- Requires that the obligor submit with the request for review a notarized letter from the obligor's commanding officer or any other appropriate documentation specifying the commencement date of the obligor's emergency military service and the monetary compensation for that service.
- Requires a child support enforcement agency (CSEA) that receives such a request to conduct an administrative review of the order.
- Permits an obligor to designate another person to act on the obligor's behalf for the purposes of participating in the administrative review and modification and requires that the CSEA or a court reviewing a modification give any notice required by law to that person.
- Provides that if a child support order is modified as a result of the review conducted under the bill, the modification relates back to the date the CSEA sent notice of a review of the order to the obligor and obligee or the first day of the month in which the obligor's emergency military service begins, whichever is later.
- Requires that a provision be included in the modified order that the modification will terminate and the prior amount of support reinstated as of the first day of the month following the date the obligor's emergency military service ends.

- Requires the obligor to notify the CSEA of the termination of the obligor's emergency military service no later than the last day of the month in which the service ends.

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## CONTENT AND OPERATION

### Background

#### Frequency of administrative review of child support orders

The Revised Code requires the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) to adopt rules establishing procedures for review of existing child support orders.<sup>1</sup> A child support enforcement agency (CSEA) is generally not required to review a support order for modification unless a review is requested by the person required to pay support (the obligor) or the person to whom the support is to be paid (the obligee) and at least three years have elapsed since the order was established or the most recent review. The CSEA must respond to a request for review of a child support order by notifying the obligor and obligee, within 15 days of receiving the request, that a review has been scheduled or that a review is not warranted and why. Circumstances that warrant review before three years have passed include the following:

- If the support order is for the minimum amount, the obligor's move from unemployment to employment or underemployment to more gainful employment;
- Either the obligor or obligee loses employment for at least six months and the unemployment is beyond that person's control and is reasonably expected to continue;
- Either the obligor or obligee becomes permanently disabled;
- Either the obligor or obligee cannot pay support for the duration of the child's minority due to institutionalization or incarceration and there are no other assets for the child's support;
- Either the obligor or obligee experiences a 30% change in gross income or income-producing assets for at least six months that is beyond the obligor or obligee's control and is reasonably expected to continue;

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<sup>1</sup> Revised Code § 3119.76.

- A child's death or emancipation;
- The availability of health insurance or improved health insurance coverage for the child;
- A change in circumstances that resulted in rebuttal of the guideline support amount in the original order.<sup>2</sup>

**Procedures before administrative review**

A CSEA that plans to review a child support order must notify the obligor and obligee that a review will be conducted and of the date and purpose of the review. The CSEA must mail the notice at least 60 days before the review begins.<sup>3</sup> In the notice the CSEA must ask the obligor and obligee to provide the CSEA, no later than the scheduled date of the review, with copies of all of the following:

- (1) Their federal income tax returns from the previous year;
- (2) A copy of all pay stubs obtained in the preceding six months or verification of pay received;
- (3) Verification of all other salaries, wages, or compensation received in the preceding six months;
- (4) A list of the group health insurance and health care policies, contracts, and plans available to them, as well as information concerning the insurance plans in which they are currently enrolled;
- (5) Any other information necessary to proper review of the child support order.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Ohio Administrative Code 5101:1-30-40.3(C)(5).*

<sup>3</sup> *If the CSEA wishes to review the order sooner than 60 days after mailing the notice and has available current information to proceed with the review, it must obtain a signed waiver agreement from the obligor and obligee allowing the review to be conducted on a date that is specified and agreed on by both the obligor and obligee. The obligor and obligee also may waive the administrative hearing and the right to a court hearing.*

<sup>4</sup> *R.C. 3119.60.*

### Administrative review

In reviewing a child support order, the CSEA must calculate a revised amount to be paid under the child support order using the Basic Child Support Schedule and the applicable worksheet set forth in the Revised Code.<sup>5</sup> It is not necessary for the obligor or obligee to be present at the review. The action taken by the CSEA as a result of the review differs depending on whether the child support order was issued by a court or the CSEA.

**Review of court child support orders.** If the child support order was issued by a court and the recalculated support amount is more than 10% greater or more than 10% less than the amount of that order, the CSEA must submit the revised amount to the court for inclusion in a revised child support order. Within five days after the review date, the CSEA must incorporate its findings and conclusions into an "administrative adjustment recommendation," date the recommendation, and mail it to the obligor and obligee. The recommendation also must contain notice of each party's right to request an administrative hearing, the deadlines and procedures for requesting the hearing, and that the revised amount, if any, will be submitted to the court for inclusion in a revised child support order unless the obligor or obligee requests a hearing within 14 days after receipt of the notice.<sup>6</sup> If neither requests a hearing, the CSEA must submit the recommendation to the court for inclusion in a revised support order.

If either the obligor or obligee timely requests an administrative hearing, the CSEA must schedule the hearing for a date no later than 15 calendar days after receiving the request for an administrative hearing. No later than ten calendar days before the hearing is conducted, the CSEA must notify the obligor and obligee by mail of the date, time, place, and purpose of the hearing.

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<sup>5</sup> *The Basic Child Support Schedule is generally referred to as the "child support guidelines" and is located in section 3119.021 of the Revised Code. The Revised Code contains two worksheets--one for sole custody or shared parenting situations and one for split custody arrangements (in which each parent has custody of at least one child). R.C. 3119.022 and 3119.023.*

<sup>6</sup> *The obligor and obligee are deemed to have received notification of the administrative adjustment recommendation within three working days after the date the recommendation has been mailed. O.A.C. 5101:1-30-40.4. If the court child support order contains a deviation from the child support guidelines, or the obligor or obligee intend to request a deviation, the obligor and obligee have a right to request a court hearing on the revised amount of child support without first requesting an administrative hearing. R.C. 3119.63.*

If the obligor and obligee provided income information, the sole issue to be addressed at the hearing is whether the CSEA correctly evaluated their income information and made correct calculations based on that income information. If income information was not provided, the sole issue to be addressed at the hearing is whether the CSEA made reasonable assumptions regarding the income of the person or persons who failed to provide the income information. The CSEA must give the obligor and obligee the opportunity to present evidence and testimony, and each may bring a legal or other authorized representative to the hearing. Within ten days of the hearing, the hearing examiner must issue the administrative adjustment hearing decision and include in that decision findings of fact based on the evidence presented, relevant citations to the child support guidelines and other applicable law, a conclusion regarding the correctness of the administrative adjustment recommendation, a recommendation regarding the amount of child support to be ordered, and all exhibits. The decision must be dated and mailed to the parties within 15 days of the hearing. It must also contain a notice that the CSEA will submit any revised amount of child support to the court for inclusion in a revised child support order unless the obligor or obligee files a written request with the CSEA for a court hearing within 15 days of the issuance of the hearing decision. If neither party requests a hearing, the CSEA must submit the revised amount to the court for inclusion in a revised child support order.

If a CSEA requests that the court issue a revised child support order and neither the obligor nor the obligee has requested a court hearing on the revised child support amount, the court must issue a revised child support order requiring the obligor to pay the revised amount calculated by the CSEA.<sup>7</sup> However, on receiving a timely request for a court hearing, the CSEA, within 15 days, must submit the request and the administrative adjustment hearing decision to the court and the court must schedule and conduct a hearing to determine whether the revised amount is appropriate and whether the amount being paid under the existing order should otherwise be revised.<sup>8</sup>

The court must give the obligor, obligee, and the CSEA at least 30 days notice of the date, time, and location of the hearing and order the obligor and obligee to provide the same information they were required to provide in the administrative review process.<sup>9</sup> If the court finds that the revised child support amount calculated by the CSEA is appropriate, it must issue a revised child support order requiring the obligor to pay that amount. If the court finds that the

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<sup>7</sup> *R.C. 3119.65.*

<sup>8</sup> *R.C. 3119.66.*

<sup>9</sup> *R.C. 3119.67 and 3119.68.*

amount calculated by the CSEA is not appropriate, it must determine the appropriate amount of child support, and, if necessary, issue a revised order requiring the obligor to pay the amount of child support determined by the court.<sup>10</sup> Regardless of whether the obligor or obligee requests a court hearing, if the court modifies the child support order, the modification relates back to the first day of the month following the date on which the review began.<sup>11</sup>

**Review of administrative child support orders.** In the case of a request for modification of an administrative support order, if the CSEA determines that a modification is necessary and in the best interest of the child, it must calculate a revised amount the obligor must pay using the child support guidelines and applicable worksheet.<sup>12</sup> Within five days of the review date, the CSEA must incorporate its findings into an "administrative support order modification record" which must be dated and sent to the obligor and obligee. The CSEA must include notice of each party's right to request an administrative hearing on the revised child support amount, of the procedures and deadlines for requesting the hearing, and that the CSEA will modify the order to include the revised support amount unless the obligor or obligee requests a hearing no later than 30 days after receipt of the notice. If neither the obligor nor the obligee timely requests an administrative hearing, the CSEA is required to modify the order.

If either the obligor or obligee timely requests an administrative hearing, the CSEA must follow the procedures for an administrative hearing described above with regard to court child support orders, except that at the conclusion of the hearing, the CSEA is required to modify the order to include the revised amount of child support and the obligor and obligee cannot object to the conclusions of the hearing officer by requesting a court hearing. However, the obligor or obligee may object to the modified administrative support order by initiating an action in the juvenile court, and they must be notified of this right when the order is modified. Modification of an administrative support order by a CSEA relates back to the first day of the month following the date on which the review began.

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<sup>10</sup> R.C. 3119.70.

<sup>11</sup> R.C. 3119.71.

<sup>12</sup> R.C. 3119.61. *The CSEA may not deviate from the guidelines. If the agency cannot set the amount of support without deviating from the guidelines, it must bring an action in the juvenile court on behalf of the person who requested the review or, if no one requested the review, on behalf of the obligee, requesting that the court issue a support order.*

## **The bill**

### **Review on request of obligor called to emergency military service**

(R.C. 3119.77, 3119.771, and 3119.772)

The bill permits an obligor who is called to emergency military service in the uniformed services to request that the CSEA conduct an administrative review of a child support order.<sup>13</sup> An obligor who makes a request under these circumstances must indicate in the request that the reason for the modification is the obligor's emergency military service. The obligor must also provide with the request a notarized letter from the obligor's commanding officer or any other appropriate documentation specifying the commencement date of the obligor's emergency military service and the monetary compensation for that service. If a CSEA receives such a request, it is required to send notice of the review and the date it will begin not later than three business days after receipt of the obligor's request. The CSEA must conduct an administrative review and consider the obligor's call to emergency military service as a change of circumstances substantial enough to require a review of the child support amount. The bill requires that the administrative review be conducted in accordance with existing law governing the review and modification of administrative and court child support orders.

### **Effective date of modification and reinstatement of prior order**

(R.C. 3119.60, 3119.61, 3119.71, 3119.772, and 3119.773)

If a CSEA or court modifies a child support order pursuant to an administrative review conducted under the bill, the modification relates back to the date the CSEA sent notice of a review of the order to the obligor and obligee or the first day of the month in which the obligor's emergency military service begins, whichever is later. This is in contrast to current law described earlier in which the modification relates back to the first day of the month following the date the review began. The bill requires a child support order modified pursuant to it to include a provision in the modified order stating that the modification will terminate and the prior amount of support be reinstated as of the first day of the month following the date that the obligor's emergency military service ends. It

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<sup>13</sup> "Emergency military service" means the performance of active military duty by a member of the uniformed services for a period of more than 30 days in a time of war or emergency. "Uniformed services" means the Armed Forces of the United States or any reserve components of those forces, the Ohio organized militia when engaged in full-time National Guard duty, and any other category of persons designated by the President in a time of war or emergency. R.C. 3119.77(A)(1) and (2).

also requires the obligor to notify the CSEA in writing that the obligor's emergency military service has ended no later than the last day of the month in which the service ends.

**Designation of a representative to act on obligor's behalf**

(R.C. 3119.771 and 3119.772)

The bill permits the obligor to provide the CSEA with a notarized statement designating another individual to act on the obligor's behalf for the purpose of participating in the administrative review and modification. If the CSEA receives such a statement, it must permit the individual to act on the obligor's behalf during its review and provide the individual with any notices required to be given by law, including notice of the review and the date it will begin. If, with respect to the review of a court child support order, a court hearing is requested, the bill requires the court to provide the individual with any notices required to be given by law as part of the court hearing process.

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**HISTORY**

ACTION	DATE	JOURNAL ENTRY
Introduced	03-27-03	p. 304
Reported, H. Juvenile & Family Law	05-15-03	p. 485

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