

## About FloridaLawHelp.org

FloridaLawHelp.org is administered by Florida Legal Services, Inc. and is produced in cooperation with Pro Bono Net and the legal services organizations and government agencies throughout Florida and the United States.

### CAN I STOP THEIR VISITATION UNTIL THEY PAY?

No. Although parents often agree on child support amounts and visitation schedules at the same time, they are two separate issues. If you keep your children from their other parent without a court order, you could get in trouble for violating the terms of that agreement.

### IF MY CHILD IS OVER 18, IS IT TOO LATE TO GET CHILD SUPPORT?

No, there is no statute of limitations in Florida for collecting child support. Once an amount of child support is set, the parent who hasn't been paying will have to make payments until the debt is met, even if the children are now adults.

The Florida Bar Foundation, with Interest on Trust Accounts program funding, provides support for this service.



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To locate your local legal aid or legal services office, please visit us on the web at

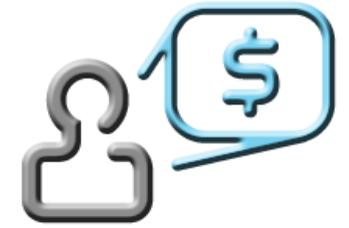
[www.floridalawhelp.org](http://www.floridalawhelp.org)

Your local legal aid or legal services office can be located through either the "Find Local Help" or "Directory" links at the top of the page.

If you don't have access to the internet, consult your local Directory Assistance for the number of the legal aid or legal services office nearest to you

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# Child Support

## How to get and collect child support payments

## DO YOU HAVE A CHILD SUPPORT ORDER?

This is a legal document signed by a judge that outlines how much money a parent will give to the person housing, feeding and providing most of the child's care. It often also requires parents to share medical costs like prescription drugs.



## HOW DO I GET ONE IF I DON'T HAVE ONE YET?

The Florida Department of Revenue coordinates and enforces child-support orders at no charge. Many parents, however, hire attorneys to help them navigate the time consuming and complex legal process. Some file the documents on their own.

## WHICH WAY IS BEST FOR ME?

It depends on your situation. If you need to verify income for an ex-spouse who may be hiding money to avoid paying more child support, having an attorney's help may be a better choice.

## CAN I DO IT MYSELF?

Parents who want to do it themselves must file their own requests with the court which means paying filing fees and costs. You may have to do your own research and leg work.

## HOW MUCH CHILD SUPPORT WILL I GET?

This amount is based largely on how many children you have, your income, the other parent's income and what you pay for things such as daycare, insurance, education, etc. You can get an estimate by using the child support calculator on the state's web site, [www.alllaw.com/calculators/childsupport/florida/](http://www.alllaw.com/calculators/childsupport/florida/)



## IS THIS HOW MUCH I WILL ALWAYS RECEIVE?

Probably not. Child support can be recalculated every few years or when one parent experiences a significant change that impacts their income such as losing a job. The other parent cannot stop paying child support because they have been laid off, injured or had their

hours cut at work. The amount that is legally required is stated in the support order. It is the paying parent's responsibility to have that amount changed by going to court.

## I HAVE A SUPPORT ORDER. WHAT'S NEXT?

If you can't get the other parent to pay, you can go back to the state, by yourself or with an attorney, for help. You can file papers with the court on your own asking the judge to make the other parent pay. Another option is to hire a private collection agency which will typically charge a fee based on the amount of support to be collected.

## HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE TO GET PAYMENTS?

It depends. It may only take a few days if the other parent complies with the child support order. But if they do not, it could be months or even years before you get all of the money due. Collecting current and late payments can be a complicated process if the other parent switches jobs a lot or moves around often.

## WILL I GET A LUMP SUM FOR ALL THE LATE SUPPORT?

Probably not. Often, parents are allowed to pay a portion of what they owe each month on top of their

regular monthly child support payments so that, over time, they get caught up.

## CAN YOU JAIL MY CHILDREN'S OTHER PARENT TO MAKE THEM PAY?

That's usually an option the state and the courts pursue only in extreme circumstances. That's because a jailed parent can't work to make money to pay child support. Even when they are jailed, they often only have to pay a portion of what they owe to get out of jail.



## HOW ELSE CAN THEY BE MADE TO PAY?

The state can suspend the non paying parent's drivers license, take lottery winnings and seize money from their bank accounts. It can also intercept federal tax refunds and report past due child support to credit agencies. A judge can force parents to sell assets such as a car or real estate to cover child support debt.