

Judicial Council of California . Administrative Office of the Courts

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REPORT TO THE JUDICIAL COUNCIL

For business meeting on April 29, 2011

Title

Child Support: Form Revisions to Implement Changes to the Family Code and Improve Administration of Title IV-D Cases

Rules, Forms, Standards, or Statutes Affected

Revise forms FL-530, FL-615, FL-625, FL-630, FL-665, FL-676, FL-687, and FL-692; approve form FL-676-INFO

Recommended by

Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee

Hon. Kimberly J. Nystrom-Geist, Cochair

Hon. Dean Stout, Cochair

Agenda Item Type

Action Required

Effective Date

July 1, 2011

Date of Report

April 4, 2011

Contact

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Executive Summary

The Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee recommends that the Judicial Council revise its governmental child support forms involving child support orders that are enforced by the local child support agencies to implement changes to the California Family Code made by Senate Bill 1355 (Wright; Stats. 2010, ch. 495). These statutory changes require (1) that every child support order and agreement made on or after July 1, 2011, that is enforced by a local child support agency include a provision regarding the effect of incarceration or involuntary institutionalization on child support orders and (2) that a means be provided to allow an obligor to petition the court for an adjustment of arrears after release from incarceration or involuntary institutionalization. The recommended revisions would also implement changes to 45 Code of Federal Regulations section 303.31¹ that require every child support order in the title IV-D

¹ The change to the Code of Federal Regulations have been incorporated into state law by Senate Bill 580 (Wright; Stats. 2010, ch. 103).

program to provide for medical support, including the definition of the reasonable cost for medical insurance and an option for cash medical costs not covered by health insurance and for situations in which health insurance is unavailable. The proposed form changes would also increase cost efficiencies, increase uniformity between governmental child support forms, remove unnecessary provisions and better administer the title IV-D child support program.

Recommendation

The Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee recommends that the Judicial Council, effective July 1, 2011, take the following actions to ensure compliance with the requirements of Senate Bill 1355 (Wright; Stats. 2010, ch. 495), 45 Code of Federal Regulations section 303.31, and Senate Bill 580 as well as to increase cost efficiencies and better administer the title IV-D child support program:

- 1. Revise Form FL-530, Judgment Regarding Parental Obligations (UIFSA);
- 2. Revise Form FL-615, Stipulation for Judgment or Supplemental Judgment Regarding Parental Obligations and Judgment (Governmental);
- 3. Revise Form FL-625, Stipulation and Order (Governmental);
- 4. Revise Form FL-630, Judgment Regarding Parental Obligations (Governmental);
- 5. Revise Form FL-665, Findings and Recommendation of Commissioner (Governmental);
- 6. Revise Form FL-676, Request for Judicial Determination of Support Arrearages (Governmental);
- 7. Approve Form FL-676-INFO, Information Sheet for Request for Judicial Determination of Support Arrearages or Adjustment of Arrearages Due to Incarceration or Involuntary Institutionalization:
- 8. Revise Form FL-687, Order After Hearing (Governmental); and
- 9. Revise Form FL-692, Minutes and Order or Judgment (Governmental).

The proposed forms are attached at pages 10–37.

Previous Council Action

Effective January 1, 2010, the Judicial Council revised seven of the forms in this report (everything except FL-676 and FL-676-INFO) to implement changes to the Family Code made by Assembly Bill 2781 (Leno; Stats. 2006, ch. 797) that require every child support order to include (1) a separate money judgment against a child support obligor for the fee of a private child support collector and (2) a provision for continued health insurance coverage for disabled adult children.

Effective July 1, 1997, the Judicial Council adopted FL-676, *Request for Judicial Determination of Support Arrearages*, to implement legislation that created California's current Child Support Commissioner and Family Law Facilitator Program.

Rationale for Recommendation

This report recommends changes to forms to implement the mandates of Senate Bill 1355 (Wright; Stats. 2010, ch. 495), 45 Code of Federal Regulations 303.31(b), and Senate Bill 580 (Wright; Stats. 2010, ch.103). The Senate bills and the federal regulation affect all governmental cases where child support orders are issued. Based on legislative and regulatory mandates to increase uniformity and improve administration of title IV-D child support cases, this report's recommendations would make additional changes to eight of the forms proposed for revision.

Incarcerated or involuntarily institutionalized obligors

Senate Bill 1355, which added Family Code section 4007.5, provides that the obligation of a person ordered to pay child support pursuant to an order that is being enforced by a local child support agency under title IV-D of the Social Security Act is suspended for any period exceeding 90 days in which the obligor is incarcerated or involuntarily institutionalized. New Family Code section 4007.5 also provides that the child support order will immediately resume upon the obligor's release from confinement. Once released, the obligor may petition the court for an adjustment of arrears and must provide proof of the dates of incarceration or involuntary institutionalization, as well as proof that he or she had insufficient means to pay the support during that period. Finally Section 4007.5(h) requires that the Judicial Council develop forms necessary for the implementation of this new Family Code section no later than July 1, 2011, including a form to allow an obligor to petition to adjust arrears.

In order to implement the mandates of SB 1355, the following language would be added to Forms FL-530 (item 6b(6)), FL-615 (item 3e(6)), FL-625 (item 3d(6)), FL-630 (item 6b(6)), FL-665 (item 5c(6)), FL-687 (item 4b(6)), and FL-692 (item 14i):

As provided in Family Code section 4007.5, the obligation of the person ordered to pay support must be suspended for any period exceeding 90 consecutive days in which the person ordered to pay support is incarcerated or involuntarily institutionalized, unless that person has the ability to pay support while incarcerated or involuntarily institutionalized. Immediately upon the release from incarceration or involuntary institutionalization of the person ordered to pay support, the support order will start in the amount of the last child support order.

In addition to adding the language to the above referenced forms, new Family Code section 4007.5 requires the Judicial Council to develop forms necessary to allow a child support obligor to petition the court for an adjustment of arrears upon release from incarceration or involuntary institutionalization. To that end, the current FL-676, *Request for Judicial Determination of Support Arrearages* would be revised and renamed as *Request for Judicial Determination of Support Arrearages or Adjustment of Arrearages Due to Incarceration or Involuntary Institutionalization*.

Form FL-676 currently allows child support obligors to petition the court in governmental child support cases to request a judicial determination of child support arrears when the obligor

disagrees with the local child support agency's calculation of arrears. This form would be revised to also allow an obligor to request that the court adjust his or her child support arrears upon release from incarceration/institutionalization. The title of the form would be revised to make it clear to the user that the form can be used for either a determination of arrearages or an adjustment of arrears pursuant to the specific circumstances stated in new Family Code section 4007.5(d). Check boxes would be added to the form's caption and headings would be added to some form items to allow the users to identify the relief the user is requesting. Because each of the requests has its own specific statutory requirements, this revised form will provide better notice to the court and the parties regarding the nature of the request and the elements specific thereto. Additional items would be added to the form under the heading "Adjustment of Arrearages Due to Incarceration or Involuntary Institutionalization" to incorporate the requirements of SB 1355 to allow an obligor to make the request for an adjustment of the arrearages.

This revision would also include specific references to the statutory authority in the Family Code for making this request. There are very limited statutorily authorized circumstances under which an adjustment to arrearages can be made without resulting in an impermissible retroactive modification of the child support order. The revised title of the form clarifies that the adjustment of arrearages would only be made as a result of incarceration or involuntary institutionalization and would not mislead users into believing the court has the authority to retroactively adjust child support arrears in other circumstances. Also, SB 1355 provides that the court may deny the obligor's petition for an adjustment of arrears for the period of time that the obligor was incarcerated if the incarceration was due to any offense constituting domestic violence against the support obligee or supported child as defined by Family Code section 6211 or for any offense that could be enjoined by a protective order under Family Code section 6320. Because SB 1355 specifically cites these Family Code sections, those cited sections have been included on the form.

Proposed new form FL-676-INFO, *Information Sheet for Request for Judicial Determination of Support Arrearages or Adjustment of Arrearages Due to Incarceration or Involuntary Institutionalization* would be approved as a separate form rather than as part of *Request for Judicial Determination of Support Arrearages (Governmental)* (form FL-676). This separation is part of the ongoing effort of the Judicial Council to make information sheets readily available to the public and eliminate excess and unnecessary paper from being filed with the court.

Uninsured health-care costs

In July 2008 the federal regulations were modified, changing the requirements for establishing and enforcing medical support obligations in child support cases receiving services under title IV-D of the Social Security Act. Federal laws require that child support guidelines consider whether the cost to add a child to the health insurance is reasonable and whether the medical services available through the health insurance are accessible for the child. The guidelines must not only consider the health insurance that may be available to either or both parents, but also how the parents will meet the child's health-care needs when no insurance is available, or when

the cost of insurance is beyond the reasonable means of the parents. Specifically, 45 Code of Federal Regulations § 303.31 requires that each state have a method for obtaining "cash medical support," which is either an amount ordered to be paid toward the cost of health insurance or for other medical costs not covered by insurance.

The Department of Child Support Services requested clarification from the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) regarding whether, based on existing state law, California was already in compliance with this federal regulation. OCSE advised that the existing definition of "reasonable cost" as insurance available through employment was not consistent with the definition in the federal regulation that defined "reasonable cost" as not exceeding 5 percent of the parent's gross income to add the child. Family Code section 3751 was amended by SB 580 to make the definition of "reasonable cost" consistent with the federal regulation. With regard to cash medical support, Family Code section 4062 provides that the court shall order as additional child support the splitting of uninsured health-care costs, and Family Code section 4063 provides instructions to the parties on how to implement the order. OCSE found that these Family Code provisions were sufficient to meet the requirements of the federal regulation if an order for the sharing of uninsured health-care costs was actually made in all child support cases. There was a concern, however, that a phrase in Family Code section 4061 seemed to suggest that the court had discretion in making this order. In response, Senate Bill 580 (Wright; Stats. 2010, ch. 103) revised several Family Code sections to implement the requirements of federal law. Family Code section 3751(a)(2) was amended to require that health insurance be provided by either or both parents, if that insurance is available at no cost or reasonable cost. Health insurance coverage is rebuttably presumed to be reasonable if the cost does not exceed 5 percent of the gross income to add the child to the health insurance plan. Family Code section 4061 was modified by SB 580 to remove language that created ambiguity about whether or not an order for uninsured health-care costs is mandatory.

Forms FL-530 (item 6b(1)), FL-615 (item 3e(1)), FL-625 (item 3d(1)), FL-630 (item 6b(1)), FL-665 (item 5c(1)), and FL-687 (item 4b(1)) would be revised to add a provision for the sharing of uninsured health-care costs. This provision would allow the court the flexibility to make an order splitting the uninsured health-care cost evenly, based on a proportionate share, or for a sum certain as allowed by California law. It also would allow courts the flexibility to make an order for the payment to be made directly to the other parent, the health-care provider, or the State Disbursement Unit.

Child-care costs

In addition to the added provision for the splitting of uninsured health care costs, these same forms (and same items) would be revised to add a provision for parents to split childcare costs. Adding this provision to the forms would allow courts to make mandatory orders that comply with the requirements of Family Code sections 4061 and 4062 regarding childcare costs. Similar language is already provided for in other Judicial Council forms. The absence of this language causes local child support agencies to regularly add this order for childcare costs manually to the forms outside of the statewide automated Child Support Enforcement System. Such manual

work-arounds are resource intensive and cause inconsistency of practice among the local child support agencies. In order to increase uniformity throughout the state and reduce costs for the local child support agencies, the above referenced forms would be revised to add an order for the splitting of childcare expenses. Again, the item would allow the court to use its discretion to make an order splitting the cost evenly, based on a proportionate share, or for a sum certain as allowed by California law. The item would also allow the court the flexibility to make an order for the payment to be made directly to the other parent, the childcare provider, or the State Disbursement Unit.

Removal of request to recover costs

The Code of Federal Regulations, 45 C.F.R. §302.33(d), provides that states may elect to recover administrative costs under the state IV-D plan. California has elected to not recover such costs, and therefore, the item on the governmental child support forms that provides for recovery of the cost is unnecessary. Eliminating this item will make additional space available to be used as additional text for other orders and recommendations. The cost recovery provision would be removed from the Forms FL-530 (item 6*l*), FL-615 (item 3p), FL-630 (item 6o), and FL-665 (item 5o).

Other revisions to improve the administration of IV-D cases

FL-615, Stipulation for Judgment or Supplemental Judgment Regarding Parental Obligations and Judgment (Governmental) would be revised at item 3p to add a check box in front of the item and revise the language to make it uniform with other governmental child support judgment, stipulation, and order forms.

Form FL-630, *Judgment Regarding Parental Obligations* (*Governmental*) would be revised at item 1a to add language to specify when the proposed judgment has been amended. Revising this form to include check boxes to distinguish between an initial and an amended proposed judgment would eliminate confusion and create more clarity for the court and the parties.

During a prior forms cycle, the space available to enter a monthly payment amount for the repayment of child support arrears was inadvertently removed from three forms making that item ineffectual for its intended use. Forms FL-630, item 6d(2), FL-665 item 5e(2) and FL-692 item 18b would be revised to correct the prior change.

Form FL-687 item 4d and Form FL-692 item 19 would be revised to clarify that the order of the court is for support arrears.

Comments, Alternatives Considered, and Policy Implications

Comments

The invitation to comment on the proposal was circulated for public comment from December 13, 2010, through January 24, 2011, and also was sent to the standard mailing list for family and juvenile law proposals, as well as to the regular rules and forms mailing list. These distribution lists include judges, court administrators, attorneys, social workers, probation officers, mediators,

and other family and juvenile law professionals. In addition, the proposal was sent to child support commissioners, family law facilitators, court clerks, the California Department of Child Support Services (DCSS), Child Support Directors Association (CSDA) forms committee, and title IV-D program directors.

During the formal comment period the committee received 15 written comments. Of these, 4 commentators agreed with the proposed revisions, 6 agreed if suggested modifications were made; 3 did not indicate a position; and 2 disagreed with the proposed revisions in its entirety. The committee reviewed and analyzed the comments and, in response to many of them, made some revisions to the proposed form. A chart summarizing the comments received and the committee's responses is attached at pages 38–67.

Several commentators requested that the period of incarceration or involuntary institutionalization that triggers the relief from the ongoing child support order be changed to a shorter period of time. Commentators also requested that the child support order resume at a later date once the obligor is released from confinement. SB 1355 provides that the suspension of the child support order due to incarceration or involuntary institutionalization is available for any period exceeding 90 consecutive days. This legislation also provides that the suspension of the child support obligation only applies to periods of incarceration or involuntary institutionalization and that after that period, the obligation shall immediately resume. The proposed language in each of the forms complies with this legislation and cannot be changed to some other period of time.

Some commentators suggested that in addition to the governmental child support forms, the family law forms be revised to include the language provided in SB 1355 regarding the suspension of the child support order due to incarceration or involuntary institutionalization. They suggest that this is appropriate because the local child support agency may later intervene or register a family law order at some point in the future. The legislation authorizing the suspension of the child support order specifically provides that the suspension is only applicable to cases where the local child support agency is already providing services. The legislation requires that the relevant provisions regarding incarceration and involuntary institutionalization be included in all child support orders and judgments where the local child support agency is providing services. This provision does not operate retroactively nor as a matter of law upon the agency intervening in a previously nongovernmental child support case. It would be contrary to law to add language concerning suspension of the child support in these circumstances to family law forms where this relief is not available.

Some commentators also suggested adding language to each of the forms to clarify that the obligor must petition the court for an adjustment of his or her child support arrearages after the obligor is released from incarceration or involuntary institutionalization. The plain language of Family Code section 4007.5(a) requires that every child support order being enforced by the local child support agency include an order that suspends the child support obligation by operation of law if an obligor is incarcerated or involuntarily institutionalized for more than 90

days and has no means to pay support while confined. This would therefore allow a local child support agency to administratively adjust its accounting for any period qualifying under the legislation. However, Family Code section 4007.5(c) also allows the obligor to petition to the court for an adjustment of arrears and allows the local child support agency and obligee an opportunity to object to the petition. This section requires the court to approve the petition before the arrears are adjusted. Because the legislative intent is unclear as to whether a support order can administratively be suspended by the local child support agency enforcing the support order or whether an obligor must petition the court for relief before the child support order can be adjusted for the qualifying period, the committee does not recommend adding language to the forms stating that the obligor must petition the court for an adjustment of his or her child support arrearages. The legislative intent must be resolved by legislative amendment or interpretation by the appellate court. The proposed language of the form does not exclude either interpretation of the statute. Instead, the required language has been added to each of the forms with a reference to the applicable statute.

The Child Support Directors Association (CSDA) requested that an item be moved and several items be renumbered on current FL-676, *Request for Judicial Determination of Support Arrearages* that would be revised and renamed as *Request for Judicial Determination of Support Arrearages or Adjustment of Arrearages Due to Incarceration or Involuntary Institutionalization*. CSDA requests that item 2, which declares that the local child support agency is providing enforcement services in the case, be moved above the first heading. In order to request that the court either make an arrears determination or adjust arrears due to incarceration or involuntary institutionalization using this form, the local child support agency must be providing services. Because this requirement applies to both types of the relief available to be requested, it is appropriate to move the item.

CSDA also suggested that the heading "Determination of Support Arrearages" and the heading "Adjustment of Arrearages Due to Incarceration or Involuntary Institutionalization" be numbered and that the items under the heading be renumbered as subparts of the item number of the corresponding heading. Numbering the heading would clarify that this form can be used (1) to either seek a determination of arrearages or to request an adjustment of arrearage or (2) to make both requests. Numbering the items as subparts under the heading would clarify which information the petitioner must provide when making the particular request. Also, a check box would be added at item 4b. SB 1355 gives the court the discretion to deny the petition if it finds that the obligor was incarcerated or involuntarily institutionalized for any offense constituting domestic violence as defined by specific sections of the Family Code. Because an obligor can still petition the court for relief if the confinement was a result of a domestic violence offense, it is appropriate to add a check box.

One commentator suggested revising FL-676 to clarify that an obligor may petition the court for an adjustment to the arrearages for multiple periods of incarceration or involuntary institutionalization. In order to clarify that an obligor may petition the court for relief for multiple periods of confinement in one motion, "date" at item 4a and b would be revised to "date(s)."

One commentator pointed out that a parent ordered to provide health insurance coverage may find a better and less expensive health care plan than offered through employment and should have the option of using that plan. SB 580 provides that the court must order one or both parents to provide health insurance coverage for the supported child if it is available at no or reasonable cost. Health insurance coverage is rebuttably presumed to be reasonable if the cost to provide insurance for the child does not exceed 5 percent of the parent's gross income In response to this comment, the health insurance provision on the governmental judgment, stipulation, and order forms would be revised to remove the reference that the parents obtain health insurance for the child if it is available through employment. The removal of this language will clarify for the parties that health insurance must be provided for the child if it can be obtained at no or reasonable cost, no matter the source, consistent with the requirement of SB 580. Additional language would also be added to each of the health insurance provisions on the forms to include the statutory definition of reasonable costs.

Alternatives considered

Because legislation requires that every child support order and agreement that is being enforced by a local child support agency include a provision suspending the child support obligation for any time exceeding 90 days that an obligor is incarcerated or involuntary institutionalized effective July 1, 2011, the Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee rejected the option of taking no action. (Fam. Code, § 4007.5(2)(h).)

Implementation Requirements, Costs, and Operational Impacts

The committee is not aware of any implementation requirements, increased costs, or operational impacts on the local courts arising out of the revision of the forms.

Attachments

- 1. Forms FL-530, FL-615, FL-625, FL-630, FL-665, FL-676, FL-676-INFO, FL-687, and FL-692, at pages 10–37
- 2. Chart of comments, at pages 38–67
- 3. Attachment A: SB 580, at pages 68–73
- 4. Attachment B: SB 1355, at pages 74–75

GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY (Under Family Code, §§ 17400,17406):	FOR COURT USE ONLY
TELEPHONE NO.: FAX NO.:	
E-MAIL ADDRESS (Optional):	5 6 6 6 6 6 6 7 7 7 7
ATTORNEY FOR (Name):	Draft 6 - 021611icb
SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA, COUNTY OF	Not Approved by the Judicial Council
STREET ADDRESS:	Judiciai Couricii
MAILING ADDRESS:	
CITY AND ZIP CODE:	
BRANCH NAME:	
PETITIONER:	
DECDONDENT.	
RESPONDENT:	
OTHER:	
	CASE NI IMPED.
JUDGMENT REGARDING PARENTAL OBLIGATIONS (UIFSA)	CASE NUMBER:
AMENDED SUPPLEMENTAL	
entered by the court and will become legally binding unless you fill out and file the Response to Uniform Support Petition (UIFSA) (form FL-520) with the court clerk within 30 days of the date you were served with the Summons (UIFSA) (form FL-510) and Uniform Support Petition (form OMB 0970-0085). If you need a Response form, you may get one from the local child support agency, the court clerk, or the family law facilitator. The family law facilitator will help you fill out the forms. To file the Response, follow the procedures listed in the information sheet attached to that form. b. NOTICE: THIS IS A JUDGMENT. It is now legally binding. THIS MATTER PROCEEDED AS FOLLOWS: a. Judgment entered under Family Code section 5002. b. By court hearing, appearances as follows: (1) Date: Dept.: Judicial officer: (2) Petitioner present Attorney present (name): (3) Respondent present Attorney present (name): (4) Child support agency (Family Code, §§ 17400, 17406) by (name): (5) Other (specify):	
 c. The parent ordered to pay support is the petitioner respondent other (specify): 3. This order is based on presumed income for the parent ordered to pay support under Family Code section 5002. 4. Attached is a computer printout showing the parents' income and percentage of time each parent spends with the children. The printout, which shows the calculation of child support payable, will become the court's findings. 5. This order is based on the attached documents (specify): 6. THE COURT ORDERS: a. The parent ordered to pay support is the parent of the children named in item 6b. 	
has previously been determined to be the pb. The parent ordered to pay support must pay current child support as follows:	
Name of child Date of birth	Monthly support amount
NOTICE: Any party required to pay child support must pay interest on overdue amounts at the legal rate, which is currently 10 percent per year.	

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FL-530 [Rev. July 1, 2011]

FL-530 PETITIONER: CASE NUMBER: RESPONDENT: OTHER: e. No provision of this judgment operates to limit any right to collect the principal (total amount of unpaid support) or to charge and collect interest and penalties as allowed by law. All payments ordered are subject to modification. f. All payments, unless specified in item 6b(1) above, must be made to the State Disbursement Unit at the address listed below (specify address): An earnings assignment order is issued. In the event that there is a contract between a party receiving support and a private child support collector, the party ordered to pay support must pay the fee charged by the private child support collector. This fee must not exceed 33 1/3 percent of the total amount of past due support nor may it exceed 50 percent of any fee charged by the private child support collector. The money judgment created by this provision is in favor of the private child support collector and the party receiving support, jointly. If "The parent ordered to pay support" box is checked in item 6c, a health insurance coverage assignment must issue. The parents must notify the local child support agency in writing within 10 days of any change in residence or employment. The Notice of Rights and Responsibilities and Information Sheet on Changing a Child Support Order (form FL-192) is attached. The court further orders (specify): Date: JUDICIAL OFFICER SIGNATURE FOLLOWS LAST ATTACHMENT Number of pages attached: Approved as conforming to court order. Date:

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(SIGNATURE OF ATTORNEY FOR THE PARENT ORDERED TO PAY SUPPORT)