

TALK ABOUT CHILD SUPPORT

Children are expensive. When you are involved in the creation of a child, or adopt a child, you accept responsibility for the expenses of meeting your child's needs. In reality, when parents buy prenatal vitamins, they are paying to support that unborn child.

After a separation, both parents will pay some form of child support regardless of whether or not money changes hands between them. Each parent will be responsible for expenses during their time with their child. Each home will be responsible for their own expenses regarding basic care items for the child such as food, clothing, hygiene products, and over the counter medications. There are many reasons why one parent actually pays child support to the other. Those decisions are made with legal representation and documented in court orders.

However, some orders for support come with contradictions. There are a lot of rules surrounding child support that are imposed by the courts in reference to who pays and how much, but relatively little when it comes to how it is to be spent. This lack of regulation can be both good and bad. On a positive note, the parent that receives child support has the flexibility to decide how it could be best spent. On the down side, unspoken assumptions about how it is used can lead to confusion between parents and cause harm to children. Discussion on what each parent thinks an order for child support should cover is important.

- What happens if one parent signs their child up for soccer thinking both parents will help pay for the costs and the other parent assumes that the fees should be covered by child support?
- Does child support cover all clothing costs?
- Does child support cover tutors?
- What about birthday parties?
- What about a college fund, does that come out of child support?

Without discussion, parents can become frustrated and resentful and children can miss out on opportunities and are often caught in the middle of their parent's decisions as to who pays what. Are you in agreement with your child's other parent? If not, spend some time addressing those items you don't agree on. Remember, it is better to know upfront what you both think even if you don't agree. Your goal is work together for the benefit of your children. If you have difficulty discussing these issues, seek the help of a trained professional.