

How Do I Calculate Financial Support?

Illinois law requires that specific formulas be used to calculate financial support. The formula to calculate **maintenance**, or the money paid from one spouse to another when the couple separates or gets a divorce, can be found at 750 ILCS 5/504 (“section 504”). The formula to calculate **child support**, or money paid from one legal parent to another legal parent on behalf of a child,¹ can be found at 750 ILCS 5/505 (“section 505”).

Both formulas require calculation of each party’s income. Section 504 and Section 505 specify what counts as “income” and what can be excluded from a party’s income for either calculation.

Helpful Evidence to Gather

- Each party’s pay stubs (three most recent are recommended).
- Each party’s tax returns (three most recent are recommended).
- Documentation of child(ren)’s expenses, if applicable (i.e. health insurance premium attributable to the child, child care expenses, etc.).
- Proof of any and all money received by either party defined as “income” outlined in either section 504 or section 505, depending on which type of support you are calculating.

Helpful Resources

There are resources available online to help you walk through these formulas and calculate the amount of financial support that should be paid, such as www.illinoislegalaid.org or tinyurl.com/HFSchildsupport. If you and the other party are having trouble figuring it out on your own, ask the judge for a referral to a hearing officer to help you calculate financial support.

We encourage you to speak to an attorney. If you are having trouble finding an attorney:

- All litigants can call CARPLS, available at (312) 738-9200, to be referred to a free or reduced-cost attorney if you qualify for their services.
- Veterans, active military personnel, their spouses, and their qualified dependents can receive legal advice from attorneys via the Illinois Armed Forces Legal Aid Network at (855) 452-3526.
- All litigants can contact the Chicago Bar Association at (312) 554-2055 for a referral to a private attorney.

If you wish to change court-ordered financial support, please see 750 ILCS 5/510 and our accompanying “How Do I Change an Order?” handout for more information.

¹ Please note that, in addition to a basic child support obligation, the judge may order reimbursement for child care expenses, health insurance premiums, extraordinary medical expenses, and education and extracurricular activities.

DISCLAIMER: This guide serves as a court-process navigation tool. It does not contain legal advice. Litigants are encouraged to consult an attorney if possible and the Illinois Marriage and Dissolution of Marriage Act (IMDMA) at 750 ILCS 5/ et seq. for more information. Note that the IMDMA and all accompanying statutes have been interpreted and explained by the Illinois Appellate Court and the Supreme Court of Illinois; and their decisions are equally as binding on the trial court as the statute itself. To research and review those cases via a legal research database commonly used by judges and attorneys, please visit any of the Circuit Court of Cook County’s Law Libraries (e.g. 29th floor of the Daley Center).