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**Child Support: 5 Key Things Every Parent Should Know**

**By Detra D. Davis**

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There is no magic solution to getting issues surrounding child support resolved. Most parents know that when dealing with the bureaucracy tied to the child support system persistence, persistence, persistence is the key that opens the door. In fact, it is the only thing that will open any door when it comes to getting a resolution to a problem. You cannot count on pencil pushers, or all too patient white collar "Friend of the Court" workers to help. They are overworked, underpaid, wrapped in a sea of paperwork, antiquated computer programs, and red tape that barely allows them to move from point "A" to point "B". So what's a parent to do?

1. If your relationship even remotely appears to be on the rocks and children are involved start collecting information on your partner. This is advice for both men and women. Don't fool yourself gentlemen; you too can become a custodial parent seeking child support from your partner. It may not be the norm, but it is a reality. Don't sneak around, and don't feel as though you are going behind someone's back. You have to do what is in the best interest of your children and yourself. Begin collecting bank account numbers, list of licenses, locations of stock/bond papers, money markets and past work/address history. Gather as much as you can.
2. Keep impeccable records. Write the names, addresses, phone and fax numbers to everyone you talk to concerning your child support case. You must hold people accountable and this is one way to do it. Don't ever be afraid to ask a judge or referee, attorney or the child support worker of your case who they report to at the end of the day. This will send a clear message that they will be held accountable for every word that comes out of their mouth so it better be in your best interest.
3. Parents who were married at the time of conception may not have an issue filing for a child support order and often times your divorce attorney will cover this matter in your initial interview. However if the parents are not married, establishing paternity is essential if you expect to receive child support. Paternity means fatherhood. Establishing paternity provides the child/children with a legal father.

4. Child support equals survival. Break-ups are never easy for the parents or the children. It often means that the emotional and financial standard of living for all parties will suffer. Parents must understand that child support is paid for the well being of the child and the parent caring for that child. Money is a powerful tool in this society and can be used as a weapon when it comes to child support. The duty to pay child support and the right to visit are two different issues. They are not connected in the law. In the eyes of the court the child is entitled to contact with both parents. If non-support is an issue, begin documenting the visitation and during your next visit with the judge or referee assigned to your case mention the fact that support has stopped. If you don't have an upcoming court visit, write the judge or referee assigned to your case. You can also inform your child support worker if you have one assigned, but write the judge and request a hearing to address the matter immediately.

5. There is power in the pen, or in the keyboard, depending on how you choose to communicate with the people associated with your child support case. Always, always leave a paper trail. If you send a letter, ask the postal worker to give you a confirmation, it will at least let you know when the letter has

arrived. Calling child support workers or trying to get in touch with "Friend of the Court" staff is as impossible as winning the "mega millions lottery." Parent must continue to write or, drop off letters to their workers/judges, and get the name of the person you leave the letter with, along with a phone number, This is great advice for any situation, if you think someone is giving you a bogus phone number, use your cell phone or a pay phone and call the number before you leave the location. If the number is not valid go back, ask to speak to a supervisor and let them know; and take the information to court with you so it can become part of the court record. If you truly have a problem getting child support issues addressed, write your legislators and your governor, weekly if needed. The squeaky wheel get the oil, and nothing ventured, nothing gained.

Detra D. Davis is a Consultant, and technical writer with over 20 years of experience. She writes technical and operational manuals, and works as Parent Educator teaching workshops on the importance of establishing paternity and paying child support. Detra may be reached at 313-446-0896, at

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### **3 Key Ways to Keep Child Support Funds Flowing**

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#### **3 Key Ways to Keep Child Support Funds Flowing by Detra D. Davis**

If you are one of the millions of parents who receive sporadic child support payments, here are three strategies you can use to improve the untimely receipt of child support payments.

Caution: These strategies will not work for everyone, but remember nothing from nothing leaves

nothing.

1. If you are to receive child support payments, insist the paying parent buy a life insurance policy covering the term of the payments, naming you as the owner and beneficiary. Your "ex" will be unable to change the beneficiary without your agreement. Try to have this court ordered at the time the child support order is established.

2. Take action if delinquent parents are consistently late or refuse to pay child support altogether. You may need an attorney or intervention from your local child support enforcement agency.

A measure you may want to take before seeking legal assistance is offering to renegotiate the amount of the child support order. This may sound unfair, even unheard of, but understand that if the amount set by the court does not realistically allow the paying parent to maintain a decent standard of living, the parent is more apt to stop working or leave the state. The question you must ask: Is it better to receive a slightly less amount consistently or a larger amount inconsistently or not at all. You and the paying parent are the only ones who will know if this option would work.

3. Allow the paying parent to use a variety of methods to pay child support. Child support for some parents is more than money. It may be food, clothing, recreational activities, daycare. If the paying parent is willing to provide pre-paid credit cards, gift cards from movie theaters, clothing stores, grocery stores, gas stations etc. all of these items provided, in addition to the court-ordered child support may assist in reducing arrears or assisting when the child support payments have been reduced.

Both parents should understand that together it is their responsibility to care for the well-being of their child, and both are responsible for keeping a record of all contributions made above and beyond the court-ordered child support payments. Court ordered child support payments are only necessary when one or both parents refuse to take responsibility for the financial welfare of their child. So...do the right thing.

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