

How to Adjust Your Child Support Agreement

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When child support agreements are created, they reflect the parents' financial circumstances at that moment, and it's very common for these conditions to change with time. Many different situations can prompt an adjustment to a child support arrangement, *including injuries, changes in employment, or even changes in the economy such as inflation.* ***Modifying child support can be either temporary or permanent, and requested by either the payer or the recipient.***

Informal Agreements

While it's uncommon, some couples can informally agree to the terms of an adjustment without any legal documentation. This is only viable for those with very healthy relationships, because there is no legal basis to enforce the agreement in the event that either participant violates its terms. ***An informal agreement can become legally binding only if it is prepared in writing, signed by both participants, and approved by a judge.*** There are a few instances in which adjustments can be triggered automatically, without any court involvement, such as if the original court order includes provisions about changing the payments based on the Consumer Price Index.

Mediation and Arbitration

Mediation and arbitration are two of the most popular ways to handle modifying child support, because they can create legally binding arrangements without the hassle of taking the case to court. In mediation, the two participants have the last word on the terms, and a lawyer will help by writing it in formal legal language and possibly suggesting edits. ***In an arbitration, the lawyer is more actively involved and will have the final say about the***

terms; this is often used to settle more contentious cases. With both mediation and arbitration, the proposal will typically need to be signed by a judge to become legally enforceable.

Directly Petitioning the Court

In cases where mediation or arbitration aren't appropriate, participants will need to present their case to a judge. **First, they must request a hearing, and clearly indicate in their proposal that there has been a “substantial change in circumstances”** that necessitates a temporary or permanent change in the agreement's terms. Each state defines “substantial changes” differently, but most will recognize situations like **medical emergencies and changes in employment**. If the proposal is accepted and a hearing is granted, the judge will verify the applicant's claims and determine the proper updates to the agreement.

How Can a Lawyer Help?

Every state's family and child support laws are different, and it can be difficult to navigate these laws on your own. Whether you're seeking a mediation, arbitration, or preparing for court, a lawyer can help you protect yourself and your children with a legally binding agreement that works for all parties involved.

Why Choose Salt Lake City, Utah Child Support Modification Lawyer at Wall & Wall Attorneys at Law?

Wall & Wall Attorneys at Law have been serving Salt Lake City since 1973, and we're one of Utah's most **experienced family law** practices. We offer services in both English and Spanish, and can even provide translators for other languages with advanced notice. Contact us today to learn more about child support adjustments or our services, and to schedule a **free 30-minute consultation**.