SOFTWARE & TECH

State Of Colorado Child Support Worksheet

PUBLISHED
November 25, 2026

REFERENCE
#1795583386531417

Understanding the State of Colorado Child Support Worksheet

Navigating child support can feel overwhelming, especially when you are faced with legal forms and financial calculations for the first time. For parents in Colorado, one of the most critical documents in this process is the **State of Colorado Child Support Worksheet**. This form is not just a piece of paperwork; it is the foundation used by courts to determine fair and consistent financial support for children. Whether you are filing for divorce, establishing paternity, or modifying an existing order, understanding this worksheet is essential for protecting your rights and ensuring the best outcome for your child.

Colorado law requires that child support be calculated using a standardized formula based on the income of both parents. The worksheet serves as the official tool to perform this calculation. It ensures transparency, consistency, and fairness by accounting for each parent's financial resources, the number of children involved, and specific expenses such as healthcare and childcare. This article will walk you through everything you need to know about the Colorado Child Support Worksheet, from its purpose and key components to common pitfalls and where to find help.

What Is the Colorado Child Support Worksheet?

The **State of Colorado Child Support Worksheet** is a legal form used by the courts, the Colorado Child Support Services program, and family law attorneys to calculate the amount of child support one parent must pay to the other. It is based on the Income Shares Model, which assumes that children should receive the same proportion of parental income they would have received if the parents lived together. This model is used in many states across the U.S. and is designed to prioritize the financial well-being of the child.

The worksheet captures detailed financial information from both parents, including gross monthly income, allowable deductions, and parenting time percentages. Once completed, it produces a presumptive child support amount. This amount is presumed to be correct by the court unless a parent can demonstrate that applying the guideline would be unjust or inappropriate in their specific circumstances.

Who Needs to Use the Colorado Child Support Worksheet?

Several situations require the use of a Colorado Child Support Worksheet:

- Parents who are divorcing and have minor children together
- Parents who were never married but need to establish paternity and a support order
- Parents seeking to modify an existing child support order due to a significant change in circumstances
- Parents involved in a case with the Colorado Child Support Services program

- Parents who are filing for legal separation or allocation of parental responsibilities

In each of these scenarios, the court will require a completed worksheet as part of the initial filings or as supporting documentation during a hearing. Even if both parents agree on a support amount, the court typically reviews the worksheet to ensure the agreed amount is consistent with state guidelines.

Understanding the Legal Framework Behind the Worksheet

Before diving into the specifics of filling out the worksheet, it helps to understand the legal rules that govern it. The Colorado Child Support Guidelines are found in **Colorado Revised Statutes § 14-10-115**. This statute provides the legal authority for the worksheet and outlines how income is defined, what deductions are allowed, and how parenting time affects the final calculation.

The guidelines are designed to achieve several key goals:

1. To ensure child support orders are adequate to meet the child's basic needs
2. To make the process predictable and consistent across similar cases
3. To encourage both parents to share in the financial responsibility for their children
4. To minimize conflict by providing a clear, objective calculation method

Knowing that the worksheet is rooted in state law gives parents confidence that the process is fair and standardized. However, the law also allows for flexibility when special circumstances arise, such as high combined incomes, extraordinary medical expenses, or a parent's voluntary unemployment.

Key Components of the Colorado Child Support Worksheet

The worksheet is divided into several sections, each designed to capture specific financial data. Understanding each section is the first step to completing the form accurately.

Parental Income Information

This is the most critical section of the worksheet. Both parents must report their **gross monthly income** from all sources. This includes wages, salaries, bonuses, commissions, self-employment income, rental income, investment income, and even certain benefits like unemployment compensation or Social Security. The court looks at actual income, not just earning potential, but a parent who is voluntarily unemployed or underemployed may have income imputed to them based on their earning capacity.

Adjustments to Income

Once gross income is entered, the worksheet allows for certain adjustments. These include:

- Spousal maintenance (alimony) paid or received
- Child support paid for other children
- Self-employment taxes and mandatory retirement contributions
- Health insurance premiums paid for the child

These adjustments help arrive at each parent's **adjusted gross income**, which is the figure used in the final calculation.

Number of Children and Combined Income

The worksheet considers the total number of children covered by the support order. Parents must also list other children they are legally obligated to support, as this affects the calculation. The combined adjusted gross income of both parents is then used to find the **basic child support obligation** from a schedule included in the statute.

Extraordinary Expenses

Beyond basic support, the worksheet accounts for additional costs that are essential for the child's well-being. These include:

- Childcare expenses necessary for work or education
- Health insurance premiums for the child
- Uninsured medical, dental, and vision expenses
- Educational expenses, such as private school tuition in some cases

These costs are typically added to the basic obligation and shared between parents in proportion to their incomes.

Parenting Time Adjustment

Colorado law allows for a parenting time adjustment when the non-custodial parent exercises at least 93 overnights per year (roughly 25% of the time). The worksheet calculates a credit for the expenses the non-custodial parent incurs directly during parenting time, such as food, housing, and activities. This adjustment can significantly reduce the final support amount but is not automatic for very low parenting time schedules.

How to Fill Out the Colorado Child Support Worksheet Step by Step

Filling out the form correctly is essential to avoid delays or inaccurate orders. Here is a practical step-by-step guide.

Step 1: Gather Financial Documents. Collect recent pay stubs, tax returns, bank statements, and proof of any other income. Also gather records of health insurance premiums, childcare costs, and any other child-related expenses.

Step 2: Complete the Parent Information Section. Enter your full name, the other parent's name, and the names and birthdates of the children involved in the case.

Step 3: Report Gross Monthly Income. For wage earners, use the gross amount before any deductions such as taxes or retirement contributions. For self-employed parents, use net income before taxes minus reasonable business expenses. Be honest and thorough, as the court may request verification.

Step 4: Apply Allowed Deductions. Subtract any allowable items such as spousal maintenance paid or health insurance premiums already being paid for the child. These deductions reduce your adjusted income and can lower your obligation.

Step 5: Determine the Basic Child Support Obligation. Using the combined adjusted income and the number of children, find the corresponding amount in the child support schedule. This schedule is included in the guidelines and is updated periodically.

Step 6: Add Extraordinary Expenses. Include childcare, health insurance, and uninsured medical costs. The total is added to the basic obligation.

Step 7: Calculate Each Parent's Share. Each parent's proportional share of income determines their portion of the total obligation. For example, if Parent A earns 60% of the combined income, they are responsible for 60% of the total support.

Step 8: Apply the Parenting Time Adjustment (if applicable). If the non-custodial parent has 93 or more overnights per year, calculate the credit using the worksheet's formula. This reduces the amount owed to account for direct expenses.

Step 9: Determine the Final Support Amount. The result is the presumptive monthly child support order. This is the amount one parent pays to the other unless the court approves a deviation.

Adjustments and Deviations from the Worksheet Amount

While the worksheet provides a presumptive amount, Colorado law recognizes that no formula can account for every family's unique situation. A court may deviate from the worksheet amount if applying it would be **unjust or inappropriate**. Grounds for deviation include:

- Extraordinary medical expenses not covered by insurance
- Special educational needs or disabilities
- Significant disparity in the parents' incomes
- Voluntary unemployment or underemployment intended to avoid support
- Agreement between both parents (if the court approves)

If you believe a deviation is necessary, you must present evidence and explain why the standard calculation is unfair. The court will consider the child's best interests above all else.

Common Mistakes When Completing the Worksheet

Avoiding errors can save time, money, and stress. Here are the most common mistakes parents make when filling out the **State of Colorado Child Support Worksheet**:

- Misreporting income: Forgetting to include bonuses, overtime, or self-employment income can lead to an inaccurate order.
- Failing to document deductions: Not providing receipts or proof of health insurance premiums or childcare costs can result in those items being excluded.
- Wrong parenting time calculation: Miscalculating overnights or not understanding the threshold of 93 overnights can change the final amount significantly.
- Ignoring other children: Parents who have other children they support must disclose that, as it affects the obligation.
- Not updating the worksheet for modifications: Life changes such as job loss, promotion, or a change in parenting time require a new worksheet to modify the order.

Working with an attorney or a child support professional can help you avoid these pitfalls and ensure the worksheet is completed accurately.

Resources and Assistance for Colorado Parents

You do not have to navigate this process alone. Several resources are available to help parents understand and complete the Colorado Child Support Worksheet.

- Colorado Child Support Services (CSS): This state agency provides free services to parents, including help establishing paternity, locating parents, and calculating support. They can also assist with modifying orders.
- Self-Help Centers: Many Colorado district courts have self-help centers where you can get guidance on completing forms, including the worksheet.
- Family Law Attorneys: For complex cases or if you anticipate a dispute, hiring an attorney experienced in Colorado family law is strongly recommended.
- Online Calculators: While the official worksheet is required for court filings, several reputable online calculators can give you an estimate. Use these only for planning, not as a substitute for the official form.
- Colorado Judicial Branch Website: The court system's official website provides downloadable versions of the worksheet and instructions.

Conclusion

The **State of Colorado Child Support Worksheet** is a powerful tool designed to ensure that children receive the financial support they need from both parents. While the form may seem intimidating at first glance,

understanding its purpose, components, and step-by-step process can demystify the entire experience. Whether you are establishing a new order or modifying an existing one, accuracy and honesty are paramount. By gathering the right documents, following the guidelines closely, and seeking help when needed, you can navigate

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