

## **Episode Title: Understanding Child Support Calculation in California**

### **What formula does California use to calculate child support and what are its main components?**

California uses a software called X spouse to calculate child support, which functions similarly to an Excel spreadsheet. While there are several, the main components include the number of children, the gross income of both parents from all sources, and the percentage of visitation for the non-custodial parent. Other factors such as mandatory retirement contributions, voluntary retirement contributions, and deductions like interest and taxes on the house are also considered. The software generates a guideline support amount, but complexities arise when there are issues like unreported income or disputes over visitation percentages.

### **What challenges arise with unreported income in child support cases?**

Unreported income is a significant issue, especially when one parent is self-employed or works in cash-based jobs. This complicates the calculation process, often requiring extensive investigations into bank records, credit card statements, and online payment platforms like CashApp, Zelle, Venmo or PayPal. The process, which should ideally be straightforward, can become protracted due to these discrepancies.

### **How do changes in income or employment affect child support payments?**

Child support orders are not permanent and can be modified based on changes in circumstances, such as a significant change in income or employment. Even a small increase in income can warrant a review of the support order. However, these adjustments are not automatic and require a legal process to update the existing orders.

### **How are expenses like private school tuition and extracurricular activities handled in child support?**

Child support is structured in tiers: guideline support, mandatory add-ons, and discretionary expenses. Guideline support covers basic needs, while mandatory add-ons include essential childcare expenses like daycare for employment purposes or necessary tutoring. Discretionary expenses, such as private school tuition or extracurricular activities, are typically not mandated by the court unless both parents agree to include them in their support agreement.

### **What happens when parents disagree on child-related expenses?**

If parents cannot agree on expenses like private school tuition or extracurricular activities, one parent may need to seek a court order to modify the support agreement. The court will then evaluate the situation based on the best interests of the child and the financial circumstances of both parents.

### **How do courts view child support orders in terms of permanency?**

Child support orders are considered final but not permanent. They are subject to change as circumstances evolve, such as changes in parental income or living situations. The orders remain in effect until the child turns 18 and graduates high school, after which parental obligations typically end unless otherwise agreed upon for discretionary support.

**What advice is given regarding resolving disputes over child support and custody?**

The primary advice is to reach an agreement between the parties whenever possible, as this is often more favorable than court-imposed decisions. If an agreement cannot be reached, the court will decide based on the law and the presented evidence. It's crucial to understand that the dynamics of family law are fluid, continually adjusting to the changing needs and circumstances of the child and parents.