

2011 Child Support Workgroup
Economic Table Subcommittee
Conference Call Notes
August 4, 2011

On the Call: Members Kathleen Schmidt (Chair for Jim Cox), Kathy Lynn, Tim Eastman, and Janet Skreen; Nancy Koptur, DCS; and Greg Howe, member of the public

Janet agreed to give the report to the Workgroup at its next meeting August 12, 2011. Neither Jim Cox nor Kathleen Schmidt will be able to attend.

Issues discussed:

1. End point for the economic table

The majority on the call reached consensus that the table should extend to \$20,000 combined monthly net income. The minority position is that the table should not extend beyond \$15,000 and preferably should end at \$12,000. All agreed that the legislature should reconfigure the table at the high end and not extrapolate out the way that was done when the table was increased to \$12,000.

Concerns were that without the table being configured to the higher ends, there won't be consistency. Concern was also voiced that there is not sufficient data to extend the table to \$20,000.

2. Creation of a table

Consensus was reached that the legislature should not be left to its own devices to create a table, nor should the workgroup be tasked with creating a table. Consensus was reached that the Betson/Rothbarth should be used, with the USDA data used to validate and confirm that method. Kathleen can, on behalf of the WSBA, approach Dr. Betson and ask him to create a table. There may be sufficient funds within DCS to have Dr. Betson create a table. There was consensus that a hybrid approach (somehow averaging the Betson/Rothbarth and USDA) should not be adopted.

Greg Howe cautioned against using the Betson/Rothbarth table, as significant flaws in it were pointed out by David Spring. Greg supports using McCaleb or Krabel.

3. Collapse of the age brackets

Consensus was reconfirmed that the age brackets in the table should be collapsed.

4. Residential time credit

Consensus was reached that this subcommittee is not making a recommendation as to whether the table should have any residential time built in, as this issue is being reached by the Residential Time Credit Subcommittee.

5. What is covered by child support

One viewpoint is that statute should include an explanation of what was used to determine the table, and what expenses are to be covered by child support.

Concern was voiced that if too much detail is included, it will serve as a basis to invite argument and no consensus will be able to be reached to pass on to the legislature. Consensus was reached that for the report out to the workgroup, it will be noted that the subcommittee continues to work on this issue, and that the hope is that the recommended language will do more good than harm.

Greg Howe noted that this is the big question: where does child support go, whom does it benefit, and what does it cover. Courts are very reluctant to order accountings for how child support is spent, even with existing law permitting it.

6. Additional meetings

Consensus was reached that at least one more subcommittee meeting, by email if necessary, would be helpful in formulating our recommendations for the workgroup and drafting of the workgroup report.