



Canadian law requires that both parents contribute financially to their children's support when parents separate. This usually means the parent who spends less time with a child pays child support to the parent who spends more time with the child.

## Who pays

Both birth parents and adoptive parents are required to pay child support. In some circumstances, a step-parent may be required to pay. A person who is a guardian of the child under the *Family Law Act* can also be required to pay child support.

- A recipient is a person receiving child support
- A payor is a person paying child support

[Legal definition of parent and guardian \(Family Law Act\)](#)

## How long

In BC, parents and guardians must support a child until the child turns 19, and sometimes after that if the child is still dependent on their parents. This can include where the child is unable to care for themselves due to an illness, disability or for other reasons.

## How much

Federal Child Support Guidelines provide tables that set out the basic amount of support a parent or guardian should pay in each province and territory in Canada. The amount is based on that person's income and the number of children to be supported. You use the table for the province where the person paying support (the payor) lives.

Child support is based on the payor's income so it is important to have accurate and complete information about that parent's income. That is why the law requires the person paying support to complete a Financial Statement using Form 4 and provide income tax returns, pay stubs and other documents before a judge makes a child support order.

[Form 4](#)

[Guide to filling out Form 4 \(Legal Aid BC\)](#)

## Simplified child support tables

Use the link below to see a simplified copy of the child support tables. Under the heading for the province where the person who will pay support lives, click the number of children that person is required to support (one to four children or five or more children). That will take you to a specific Child Support Guidelines Table.

Look for the support payor's income on the left of a row and the number of children at the top of a column. The column and row will intersect at a number, and that's the monthly amount of basic child support. It's sometimes called "the table amount". For example, the table amount for 2 children when the payor's income is \$23,00 is \$362 in July 2024.

Income Revenue (\$)	Monthly Award Paielement mensuel (\$)			
	No. of Children Nbre d'enfants			
	1	2	3	4
23000	193	362	496	532

[Simplified child support table \(Justice Canada\)](#)

If the children live with each parent at least 40% of the time, you use the table in a different way. The parent with the higher support amount will pay some support to the parent with the lower support amount.

[Section 9 of the Federal Child Support Guidelines: calculating child support when parenting time is shared](#)

## Child support calculator

You may find it easier to use the Child Support Calculator. If you fill in the payor's income, the number of children and province of residence, the calculator shows the basic amount of child support to be paid.

[British Columbia Child Support Calculator](#)

## Paying higher amounts

In addition to this basic amount, a payor may be required to pay more to contribute to special or extraordinary expenses. You may hear it called section 7 expenses, referring to section 7 of the *Federal Child Support Guidelines* where the law about these expenses is set out.

These types of expenses can include things like childcare, post-secondary schooling and medical expenses. Calculating the contribution to special expenses can be complicated. If there are special expenses in your case it is a good idea to talk to a lawyer to learn about the law.

A judge may also order a parent or guardian to pay more than the basic table amount for their reported income if there is evidence that the payor is intentionally unemployed or under-employed. In that case the judge can base child support payments on a higher income than the payer earns. This is called "imputing income".

[Section 7 of the Federal Child Support Guidelines: special or extraordinary expenses](#)

[Imputing income Federal Child Support Guidelines](#)

## Paying lower amounts

If the payor has a lower household standard of living than the parent receiving child support and paying the basic table amount of child support would cause them undue hardship, a judge may be able to lower the amount. However, "undue" means "exceptional, excessive or disproportionate" hardship. Problems like having a lower standard of living or having to support a new family are not enough to justify paying a lower amount of child support.

[Section 10 of the Federal Child Support Guidelines](#)

## Getting help

Calculating the income of the person paying support, the amount of support that should be paid and whether any exceptions can apply can be complicated. It is important to speak to a lawyer or a family justice counsellor to get more information.

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