

Obtaining Child Support For Your Children

OBJECTIVES:

1. Examine the importance of paying child support regularly.
2. Make a commitment to one's child to sustain regular payment of child support.

HANDOUTS:

1. *Weighing the Pros and Cons of Paying Child Support*
2. *Weighing the Pros and Cons of Receiving Child Support*
3. *A Letter of Commitment to my Children*
4. *Take Home Message for This Session*

ITEMS NEEDED FOR THIS EDUCATIONAL SESSION:

- Handout materials for participant workbooks
- Handout materials: *Weighing the Pros and Cons of Paying Child Support*, *Weighing the Pros and Cons of Receiving Child Support*, *A Letter of Commitment to my Children* and *Take-Home Message for this Session*
- Scrapbooking materials
- Pencils and pens
- Flipcharts and markers

GETTING STARTED

Review what was discussed in the last session on the costs of raising a child to adulthood. Ask participants to review what they wrote down in their notebooks and to identify what they learned from keeping track.

Today we are going to focus on an important topic for all of us—child support. You may be paying child support or you may receive child support from your child’s other parent. Either way child support is an important resource for raising your children to adulthood.

ACTIVITY: Mini-Lecture on the Importance of Child Support

Prepare flipcharts or a PowerPoint presentation with this information.

The child support that your child receives is an important resource in making sure he or she has the monetary resources for what is needed to grow into a healthy adult. Paying child support benefits children in other ways as well. Children who get regular child support:

- Do better at learning, especially when they are young.
- Can overcome the bad effects of separation and divorce on school performance, especially for young girls.
- Obtain more schooling, are more likely to finish high school, and are more likely to attend college.
- Have fathers/mothers who are more involved with them. These fathers/mothers who pay child support give their children both emotional and financial support.

Think back to your hopes and dreams for your child or children that we discussed previously. Did you hope that your children would do well in school or go to college? Child support can help you realize that dream. And it is not just paying child support that is important. By paying child support, the parent is more likely to have regular visits with his or her child and provide other kinds of support.

Child support also helps add to the families’ resources:

- Child support makes up 16 percent of family incomes for households that receive it. Families receive an average of \$4,300.
- For families who are low-income and receive child support, the money is an important source of financial support. They received an average of \$3,000 each year in child support.
- Each year, child support lifts about 500,000 children out of poverty.
- 75 percent of women who use to receive public assistance report that child support payments make a big difference in their family finances.
- Child support is an important resource for preventing a family from going on public assistance.

One last fact to consider: paying child support creates a healthier home for your child or children. When child support is regularly paid, the children’s parents are more likely to get along. That means they are able to agree on what is best for their child and to better work together to raise their child. A parenting plan as well as a visitation schedule is easier to negotiate. The child does not feel abandoned by the other parent, and feels wanted when child support is paid.

ACTIVITY: **Pros and Cons of Child Support**

This activity is for parents who have been ordered to pay child support. Most likely it will be the children's fathers but not in all cases. Some participants might have difficulties receiving child support. The handout, **Weighing the Pros and Cons of Child Support** can be used to talk to their children's other parents. The activity can also be adapted for the custodial parent who might be resisting the idea of seeking child support from the other parent. A handout is included for each group.

Paying child support is a big commitment for a parent. It is also one that you want to stay committed to. One way to strengthen your commitment is to consider the reasons for and against paying child support.

*In groups of two and three people, discuss and complete the handout **Weighing the Pros and Cons of Child Support**. You might find it difficult to complete the handout, but it is important for you to be honest about the reasons for and against paying child support.*

When the groups have finished their discussions, ask them to share their thoughts and write them on a flipchart that uses the same categories as the handout.

Now, in your same small group, think about the reasons for and against receiving child support for a child's custodial parent. If you receive child support, how would you respond? If you are the non-custodial parent that is paying support, what do you think about the custodial parents' views?

When the groups have finished their discussions, ask them to share their thoughts and write them on a flipchart that uses the same categories as the handout.

Now let's compare the pros and cons of the two groups—the custodial and non-custodial parents.

- How are the lists similar?
- How are the lists different?
- What did you learn from reviewing these lists?

ACTIVITY: **A Letter of Commitment to Child**

We've learned that child support is an important resource to raise a child to healthy adulthood. Paying or receiving it is an important responsibility for a child's parents. Our next activity is to write a letter to your child or children about the importance of child support for their well-being.

When participants finish their letter, have them prepare a scrapbook page that depicts their commitment to child support for their children.

HOMEWORK:

Give each participant the take-home message for this session and have them write down their action steps on the take-home message. Remind them to place the take-home message in the magnetic frame.

CLOSING:

*Child support becomes a very important resource in helping your child grow to be a healthy adult and realize your hopes and dreams for them. Sometimes child support might become an argument between you and your children's other parent. You can use the handout, **Weighing the Pros and Cons of Child Support** and the communication skills that you have learned to discuss this issue. Sometimes paying child support is a problem for you. Or you may feel that you don't want the child support. However, today we discussed why it is important to have child support. Hopefully, you are leaving this session willing to take care of this important responsibility.*



Weighing the Pros and Cons of Paying Child Support

	If I Pay Child Support	If I DON'T Pay Child Support
What it means for me		
What it means for my child or children		
What it means for my baby's other parent		
How I will feel about myself		
How others will react to me		

Weighing the Pros and Cons of Receiving Child Support

	If I Receive Child Support	If I DON'T Receive Child Support
What it means for me		
What it means for my child or children		
What it means for my baby's other parent		
How I will feel about myself		
How others will react to me		

A Letter of Commitment To My Children

Write a letter to your children about your commitment to make sure that they have regular financial support. If you are paying child support, tell your child your desire to pay child support and the reasons why. If you are receiving child support, tell your child or children how important this financial support is and your commitment to maintain it.

Dear (child or children's names),

Sincerely,

Take Home Message for This Session

Directions: Think of one step you will take before the next session and write it down in the space provided. In addition, write down the time, date, and location of the next session.

**Child support
is good
for my child.**

My Action Steps:

.....
.....

The Next Session:

.....
DATE

.....
TIME

.....
LOCATION

