



MAKE SURE YOUR CHILDREN KNOW YOU CARE THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

by Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott

CHRISTMAS IS A TIME of giving, sharing and making memories, but it can also put a financial strain on parents as they purchase gifts or host families for a holiday meal. One way to make sure the holidays are a memorable time of year for your children is to pay your child support.

Child support enables parents to put a roof over their children's heads, clothes on their backs, and food on the table. During the holidays, these challenges are compounded as parents also try to put gifts under the tree or gas in their car for a long trip to grandma's house. That is why I am giving parents this special reminder to pay their child support.

To those parents who regularly pay their child support in full and on time, I extend my heartfelt thanks. Your faithfulness will reap great rewards as you help your children remember the holidays as a time of provision rather than hardship.

Sometimes circumstances arise, such as losing a job, that make it difficult to meet one's child support

obligation. For parents who are in a situation like this, I encourage you to contact my office so we can work together to determine a course of action. As an additional service, my office partners with the Texas Workforce Commission and workforce development boards across the state to help low-income parents find good-paying jobs so they can meet their child support obligations.

Ultimately, what children need most is to know their parents care about them. For unmarried parents, this begins with establishing paternity. When paternity is established, a child has a legal connection to his or her father that protects the child's access to a whole range of benefits fathers can provide, starting with having dad's name on the birth certificate. Through the Paternity Opportunity Program, my office trains and certifies employees of hospitals and birthing centers to assist parents with the process of acknowledging paternity just after their child's birth. We can also facilitate DNA tests to scientifically and legally

establish fatherhood. As children grow up, my office encourages parents to stay involved in their lives beyond paying child support.

We also help parents who are having trouble getting access to their children. This year, my office administered more than \$500,000 in federal grants to 11 organizations across Texas that facilitate parents' access to and visitation with their children. One organization, Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas, operates my office's statewide Access and Visitation Hotline. The hotline is staffed by attorneys who provide legal information and assistance with child custody and visitation matters. Parents can call the hotline's toll-free number, 1-866-292-4636, Monday through Friday from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Kids will remember forever what happens during this holiday season. Please, help make those memories good ones by being there for them and paying your child support.

POINTS TO REMEMBER



PARENTS SHOULD MAKE A SPECIAL EFFORT TO PAY THEIR CHILD SUPPORT DURING THE HOLIDAYS

- Because family expenses usually increase during the holidays;
- To show their children they are loved; and
- Because it is their legal duty to do so.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL:

- Helps establish a child's paternity;
- Establishes and enforces child support orders;
- Reviews and adjusts child support payments;
- Collects and distributes child support payments;
- Partners with other agencies to help parents find jobs to meet their child support obligations;
- Works with groups that facilitate parental access and visitation; and
- Encourages parental involvement in their children's lives.

APPLY FOR CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES BY:

- Visiting Child Support Interactive on the main Attorney General website: www.oag.state.tx.us
- Calling the 24-hour voice response system at (800) 252-8014

Information on this and other topics is available on the Attorney General's website at www.oag.state.tx.us.



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