



# OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL REACHES OUT TO MILITARY FAMILIES

by Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott

THE OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (OAG) appreciates the sacrifices that military families make in service to our country. We want to do our part by making sure parents in the military know the OAG's Child Support Division (CSD) can help them obtain financial and medical support for their children. Services include: locating absent parents; establishing paternity; establishing, enforcing and modifying child and medical support orders; and collecting and distributing child support payments.

Applications for child support services can be obtained by visiting Child Support Interactive on the main Attorney General website at [www.texasattorneygeneral.gov](http://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov) or by calling our 24-hour voice response system at (800) 252-8014.

The OAG recognizes that military personnel may require specialized child support services. In response to this need, the CSD recently started HEROES: Help Establishing Responsive Orders and Ensuring Support for Children in Military Families. The HEROES project provides military families with expedited and enhanced, family-centered paternity and child support services that are responsive to the special needs of military families, as well as promotes early compliance with child support obligations. HEROES currently operates at Fort Hood and San Antonio-area bases, with plans to expand.

Under certain circumstances, the Child Support Division helps parents modify

their child support order. Parents entering or leaving military service may experience a change in income. For military parents, either an increase or a decrease in pay is considered a material and substantial change that may warrant a modification to the order. Visit the child support section of the Attorney General's website to learn more. Parents who feel their circumstances may qualify for a modification can download a form requesting that the child support office review their case.

Children need more than child and medical support from the parent without custody. It is important to children's well-being that both parents stay involved in their lives. Our office helps parents who are engaged in custody or visitation disputes by partnering with local organizations to provide access and visitation services, including co-parenting education, alternative dispute resolution, development of parenting plans, supervised visitation and visitation enforcement. For more information about access and visitation programs throughout Texas, visit the child support section of the Attorney General's website and select Access and Visitation Help.

The Access and Visitation Hotline is one resource available to parents from anywhere in Texas. The hotline is the only one of its kind in the nation that provides parents with free phone access to attorneys, who offer legal information and assistance related to child custody and visitation issues, as well

as paternity and child support information. Hotline attorneys do not represent parents; rather, they provide tools and guidance, and answer parents' questions. The statewide toll-free number is answered in English and Spanish, Monday – Friday from 1 to 7 p.m. The hotline has a corresponding website [www.txaccess.org](http://www.txaccess.org) where parents can download sample materials and tools for assistance with child support issues.

In addition, the OAG offers free legal clinics to military parents who need help understanding their visitation orders. The desire to increase positive, safe, shared parenting led the OAG to work with the Texas Access to Justice Foundation (TAJF) to develop a statewide project to help parents with visitation questions. The military Parenting Order Legal Clinics, also known as POLC, are currently held at Forts Bliss and Hood, with plans to expand. The two-hour clinics are led by experienced attorneys who are trained to address parents' access and visitation concerns.

The Office of the Attorney General would like to thank service members and their families for the sacrifices they make each day to serve and protect our nation.

– November 2010

## POINTS TO REMEMBER



### REACHING OUT TO MILITARY FAMILIES

- Apply for child support services by visiting Child Support Interactive on the main Attorney General website at [www.texasattorneygeneral.gov](http://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov) or by calling the 24-hour voice response system at (800) 252-8014.
- Contact your local child support office to request a review and adjustment of your child support order, if you are a noncustodial parent who experiences a change in income due to your military activation.
- The Access and Visitation Hotline's toll-free number, (866) 292-4636, is answered in English and Spanish, Monday – Friday from 1 to 7 p.m.
- The OAG offers free military Parenting Order Legal Clinics to help parents understand visitation orders.
- The HEROES project provides expedited and enhanced child support services responsive to service members' needs.



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