



OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL REACHES OUT TO MILITARY FAMILIES

by Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott

THE OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (OAG) would like to thank service members and their families for the sacrifices they make each day to serve and protect our nation. The OAG recognizes that complications resulting from military responsibilities can impede parents' ability to provide the emotional and financial support their children need and deserve. The OAG's Child Support Division helps families establish, modify and enforce financial and medical support for children.

Many military families move frequently because of multiple permanent changes in station (PCS); they experience parent-child separations during year-long and multiple deployment cycles; and experience mental and physical health issues resulting from combat. These and other factors can take a heavy toll on veteran and military family life and compound child support or parenting time (access/visitation) issues. In response, the OAG provides specialized child support assistance and enhanced services through a project called Help Estab-

lishing Responsive Orders and Ensuring Support (HEROES) for Children in Military Families.

The HEROES project provides family-centered child support services to families of service members and veterans when they encounter difficulties in resolving paternity, child support and parenting time issues, or when they need expedited or individualized help. In addition, HEROES project staff and attorneys, in close cooperation with Judge Advocate General offices in San Antonio, Killeen, and El Paso, offer free legal information sessions to parents who need help understanding paternity, child support or parenting time legal matters. These sessions, called Parenting Order Legal Clinics (POLCs), are held at Fort Bliss (El Paso), Fort Hood (Killeen) and Joint Base San Antonio. The two-hour clinics are co-led by military legal assistance attorneys and OAG assistant attorneys general who provide general paternity and child support information and can offer one-on-one briefings and case reviews.

The HEROES project also aims to promote positive co-parenting. It is important to children's well-being that both parents stay involved with their children. HEROES project staff connect parents to local organizations that provide access and visitation services, including co-parenting education, alternative dispute resolution, development of parenting plans, supervised visitation and visitation enforcement.

The Access and Visitation Hotline is one resource available to parents from anywhere in Texas. Hotline attorneys do not represent parents; rather, they provide tools and guidance, and answer parents' questions related to child custody and visitation issues, as well as paternity and child support. The statewide toll-free number, (866) 292-4636, is answered in English and Spanish, Monday – Friday from 1 to 7 p.m. The hotline has a corresponding website www.txaccess.org where parents can download sample materials and tools for assistance with child support issues.

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POINTS TO REMEMBER



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Apply for child support services by visiting Child Support Interactive on the main Attorney General website at www.texasattorneygeneral.gov or by calling the 24-hour voice response system at (800) 252-8014.

Parents who believe their circumstances may qualify them for a child support order modification can download a Review and Adjustment form online or request that one be sent to them by calling (800) 252-8014.

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 on-site military Parenting Order Legal Clinics to help parents understand paternity, child support and parenting time (access/visitation) legal matters. The HEROES project provides enhanced child support services responsive to veteran/military families' needs. To make appointments, obtain a legal clinic schedule or ask general questions, call (512) 460-6400 or email heroes@texasattorneygeneral.gov.



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
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