**Child Support with Separate Mothers**

If you are currently in the process of seeking a divorce, you may know that Illinois law recently changed when it comes to [child support](https://www.familylawadvocate.com/divorce/child-support/) calculations. Under Illinois law ([750 ILCS 5/505](http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/documents/075000050K505.htm)), child support is now calculated based on an “income shares” model. In the income shares model, the court determines what the parents’ combined net income is, and then it determines what portion of that net income should go toward the child support obligation. The court still uses guidelines to determine the child support obligation, but it takes other factors into account in determining what portion of each parent’s income should go toward that support obligation. The goal is to determine how much of the parents’ combined net income would go toward supporting the child if they were living together in an intact household.

This calculation might seem complicated, and it becomes even more complex when there is a need for what the law calls a “multi-family adjustment.” In other words, how does child support get calculated under the new model when one father has multiple children with different mothers? How is the support obligation calculated for each of the children?

**Understanding the Multi-Family Adjustment in Illinois**

How does the law define a “multi-family adjustment” for child support purposes? According to the statute, in most situations where “a parent is also legally responsible for support of a child not shared with the other parent,” then the court shall adjust that parent’s net income. The statute specifies that this “multi-family adjustment,” as it calls it, will happen in one of the following ways:

* Court order: the court will deduct the amount of the child support that the parent is actually paying for the other child (with a different mother) from the parent’s net income for purposes of calculating child support.
* Without court order: the parent who pays child support for another child can request that his or her net income be reduced because of a prior child support payment. The statute clarifies that “the court shall deduct from the parent’s net income the amount of financial support actually paid by the parent for the child or 75 percent of the support the parent should pay under the child support guidelines (before the adjustment), whichever is less.”

In either scenario, if the court determines that such a reduction in the parent’s net income “would cause economic hardship to the child,” then it does not have to reduce the parent’s net income by the amount of child support that parent already pays.

**The Multi-Family Adjustment in Practice**

How does the multi-family adjustment work in practice? Imagine we have Parent #1 and Parent #2, who have one child (Child B) and are in the process of getting divorced. Parent #1 already has a child from a previous marriage (Child A) for whom he pays a child support obligation of 20 percent of his net income. His monthly net income in total—prior to any reductions—is $4,000. For a number of years, Parent #1 has been paying $800 per month (or, 20 percent of his net income) for Child A.

When the court goes to determine the child support obligation for Child B, it will “adjust” Parent #1’s monthly net income by $800—the amount he pays for child support of Child A. As such, the court will say that, for the purposes of calculating child support for Child B, Parent #1’s net monthly income is $3,200. The court will then do the remaining calculations, adding that amount to Parent #2’s income and determining a child support obligation.

**Contact a Chicago Child Support Attorney**

If you have questions or concerns, a Chicago child support attorney can assist with your case. [Contact M. Scott Gordon & Associates](https://www.familylawadvocate.com/contact-us/) today to learn more about the services we provide to clients in Chicagoland.

