Regulatory Analysis

Notice of Intended Action to be published: 441—Chapter 99
"Child Support Guidelines"

Iowa Code section(s) or chapter(s) authorizing rulemaking: 252B
State or federal law(s) implemented by the rulemaking: Iowa Code chapter 252B

Public Hearing

A public hearing at which persons may present their views orally or in writing will be held as follows:

November 19, 2024 2 to 3 p.m.	Microsoft Teams Meeting ID: 222 143 545 89 Passcode: Ythqof

Public Comment

Any interested person may submit written or oral comments concerning this Regulatory Analysis, which must be received by the Department of Health and Human Services no later than 4:30 p.m. on the date of the public hearing. Comments should be directed to:

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Purpose and Summary

This proposed chapter sets process standards and guidelines for determining parent income. This chapter was previously Division 1 of 441—Chapter 99 (additional Divisions, beyond Division 1, have been restructured and repromulgated into 441—Chapters 100, 101, and 102).

Analysis of Impact

1. **Persons affected by the proposed rulemaking:**

- **Classes of persons that will bear the costs of the proposed rulemaking:**

Those undergoing an income determination from child support services will bear the costs.

- **Classes of persons that will benefit from the proposed rulemaking:**

People receiving child support services will benefit.

2. **Impact of the proposed rulemaking, economic or otherwise, including the nature and amount of all the different kinds of costs that would be incurred:**

- **Quantitative description of impact:**

Child Support Services used the Guidelines to calculate 6,094 obligation amounts in SFY 24, which may not include all uses of the Guidelines for all processes during SFY 24.

- **Qualitative description of impact:**

These rules play an important role in providing standards, clarity and consistency for determining parent income.

3. **Costs to the State:**

- **Implementation and enforcement costs borne by the agency or any other agency:**

The Department incurs personnel costs for team members to implement the program.

- **Anticipated effect on state revenues:**

None were identified.

4. **Comparison of the costs and benefits of the proposed rulemaking to the costs and benefits of inaction:**

Child Support Services would be unable to perform its essential functions and ensure families are supported.

5. **Determination whether less costly methods or less intrusive methods exist for achieving the purpose of the proposed rulemaking:**

None were identified.

6. **Alternative methods considered by the agency:**

- **Description of any alternative methods that were seriously considered by the agency:**

This chapter clarifies specific procedures and policies as required by the Iowa Code and in accordance with Iowa Supreme Court guidelines.

- **Reasons why alternative methods were rejected in favor of the proposed rulemaking:**

The rules in this chapter are mandated by the Iowa Code or are necessary to provide additional detail.

Small Business Impact

If the rulemaking will have a substantial impact on small business, include a discussion of whether it would be feasible and practicable to do any of the following to reduce the impact of the rulemaking on small business:

- Establish less stringent compliance or reporting requirements in the rulemaking for small business.
- Establish less stringent schedules or deadlines in the rulemaking for compliance or reporting requirements for small business.
- Consolidate or simplify the rulemaking's compliance or reporting requirements for small business.
- Establish performance standards to replace design or operational standards in the rulemaking for small business.
- Exempt small business from any or all requirements of the rulemaking.

If legal and feasible, how does the rulemaking use a method discussed above to reduce the substantial impact on small business?

There is no impact on small business.

Text of Proposed Rulemaking

ITEM 1. Rescind 441—Chapter 99 and adopt the following **new** chapter in lieu thereof:

CHAPTER 99
CHILD SUPPORT GUIDELINES

441—99.1(234,252B,252H) Income considered. Child support services will consider all regularly recurring income of both legal parents to determine the amount of the support award in accordance with the child support guidelines prescribed by the Iowa Supreme Court. Spousal support will be considered as specified in the Iowa Supreme Court guidelines, and prior obligation spousal support actually paid or received will be calculated in the same manner as the deductions for support in subrule 99.2(1). These rules on child support guidelines will not apply if child support services is determining the support amount by a cost-of-living alteration as provided in Iowa Code chapter 252H, subchapter IV.

99.1(1) *Exempt income.* The following income of the parent is exempt in the establishment or modification of support:

a. Income received by the parent under the family investment program (FIP).

b. Income or other benefits derived from public assistance programs funded by a federal, state, or local governmental agency or entity that are listed in 441—41.8(239B) as exempt from consideration in determining eligibility under FIP.

c. Income such as child support, social security dependent benefits received by a parent for a child because of the other parent's disability, and veteran's dependent benefits received by a parent on behalf of a child.

d. Stepparent's income.

e. Income of a guardian who is not the child's parent.

f. Income of the child's siblings.

g. Earned income tax credit.

99.1(2) *Determining income.* Any of the following may be used in determining a parent's income for establishing or modifying a support obligation:

a. Income reported by the parent in a financial statement.

b. Income established by any of the following:

(1) Income verified by an employer or other source of income.

(2) Income reported to the department of workforce development.

(3) For a public assistance recipient, income reported to the department of health and human services caseworker assigned to the public assistance case.

(4) Other written documentation that identifies income.

c. Income as determined through occupational wage rate information published by the Iowa workforce development department or other state or federal agencies.

d. The median income for parents on the child support services caseload, calculated annually.

e. Social security dependent benefits. Social security dependent benefits paid for a child because of a parent's disability will be included in the disabled parent's income. Social security dependent benefits paid for a parent due to the other parent's disability will be included in the receiving parent's income.

99.1(3) *Verification of income.* Verification of income and allowable deductions from each parent will be requested.

a. Verification of income may include but is not limited to the following:

(1) Federal and state income tax returns.

(2) W-2 statements.

(3) Pay stubs.

(4) Signed statements from an employer or other source of income.

(5) Self-employment bookkeeping records.

(6) Award letters confirming entitlement to benefits under a program administered by a government or private agency such as social security, veterans' or unemployment benefits, military or civil service retirement or pension plans, or workers' compensation.

b. Cases in which the information or verification provided by a parent is questionable or inconsistent with other circumstances of the case may be investigated. If the investigation does not reveal any inconsistencies, the financial statement and other documentation provided by the parent will be used to establish income.

c. If discrepancies exist in the financial statement provided by the parent and additional income information is not available, child support services may:

(1) Request a hearing before the court if attempting to establish a support order through administrative process.

(2) Conduct discovery if a parent places the matter before the court by answering a petition or requesting a hearing before the court.

(3) When attempting to establish a default order, provide the court with a copy of the parent's financial information and the reasons the information may be questionable.

d. If child support services is unable to obtain verification of a parent's income, the financial statement provided by the parent may be used to establish support.

99.1(4) *Use of occupational wage rate information or median income for parents on the child support services caseload.* Child support services will use occupational wage rate information or median income for parents on the child support services caseload to determine a parent's income when the parent has failed to return a completed financial statement when requested, and when complete and accurate income information from other readily available sources cannot be secured. If a parent's most recent residential address is in Iowa, child support services will use Iowa workforce development regional data to determine income. If a parent's most recent residential address is in another state, the District of Columbia, or Puerto Rico, child support services will use wage data from the place of the parent's most recent residence to determine income. For all other cases, child support services will use Iowa statewide occupational wage rate or median income for parents on the child support services caseload to determine income.

a. Occupation known. When child support services can reasonably ascertain the current or last-known occupation of a parent, child support services will use occupational wage rate information to determine income. Wage rate information will be converted to a monthly amount in accordance with subrule 99.3(1).

b. Occupation unknown. When child support services cannot reasonably ascertain the current or last-known occupation of a parent, child support services will determine the income of a parent using the median income amount for parents on the child support services caseload, based upon the parent's most recent residential address.

99.1(5) *Self-employment income.* A self-employed parent's adjusted gross income, rather than the net taxable income, will be used in determining net income. The adjusted gross income will be computed by deducting business expenses involving actual cash expenditures that affect the actual dollar income of the parent.

a. A person is self-employed when the person:

(1) Is not required to report to the office regularly except for specific purposes such as sales training meetings, administrative meetings, or evaluation sessions.

(2) Establishes the person's own working hours, territory, and methods of work.

(3) Files quarterly reports of earnings, withholding payments, and FICA payments to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

b. In calculating net income from self-employment, child support services will deduct only those items allowed by the child support guidelines. Amounts from a prior period claimed as net losses will not be allowed as deductions.

c. Net profits from self-employment may be determined through a review of self-employment bookkeeping records, sales and expenditure records, quarterly reports filed with the IRS, previous year's federal or state income tax returns, or other documentation. The parent must provide records of bookkeeping, sales, and expenditures for the most recent 12-month period or, if the self-employment is less than 12 months old, for the period since the self-employment began.

99.1(6) *Fluctuating income.* A person has a fluctuating income when the calculated gross income or the adjusted gross income, as defined in subrule 99.1(5), for the current year varies from the gross or adjusted gross income of the previous year by more than 20 percent.

a. If requested, child support services will average the income of a person whose income fluctuated because the nature of the person's occupation is of a type that normally experiences fluctuations in income.

b. In determining a person's average income, the following procedures will be used:

(1) For non-self-employed persons, child support services will estimate the gross income for the current year and add the amount to the gross income from relevant years that would accurately depict fluctuations in the person's income. Child support services will divide this sum by the number of years

added, prior and current, to arrive at an average gross annual income. Child support services will divide the average gross annual income by 12 to arrive at the person's average gross monthly income.

(2) For income from self-employment, child support services will compute the adjusted gross annual income as defined in subrule 99.1(5) for the relevant years that would accurately depict fluctuations in the person's income. Child support services will use the adjusted gross annual income to compute the average adjusted gross monthly income in the same manner as the computation of average gross monthly income for a non-self-employed person.

441—99.2(234,252B) Allowable deductions. The deductions specified in the Iowa Supreme Court child support guidelines will be allowed when determining the amount of income subject to application of the guidelines. The parent claiming the deduction must provide the documentation necessary for computing allowable deductions. When applying the deductions specified in the Iowa Supreme Court guidelines, the following will also apply:

99.2(1) In determining the amount of child support actually paid pursuant to a prior court or administrative order, the date of the original court or administrative order, rather than the date of any modifications, will determine whether it is a prior order. Support paid under an order established subsequent to the order being modified will not be deducted. All support payments will be verified before being allowed as a deduction. Child support services will calculate deductions for support as follows:

a. If the obligation is one year old or older, child support services will add together all verified amounts paid during the past 12 months preceding the current month up to the total of the current support obligation that accrued during this 12-month period, and divide by 12. All amounts collected will be included, regardless of the source.

b. If the support obligation is less than one year old, child support services will add together the verified amounts paid since the obligation began up to the total of the current support obligation that accrued during this period, and divide by the number of months that the obligation has existed.

c. When a parent has more than one prior support order, child support services will calculate the allowable deduction for each obligation separately, and then add the amounts together to determine the parent's total allowable deduction.

99.2(2) Health insurance premium costs will be verified before being allowed as a deduction.

99.2(3) Child support services will determine the amount of the deduction for actual child care expenses as follows:

a. Actual child care expenses will be verified by a copy of the custodial parent's federal or state income tax return or by a signed statement from the person or agency providing the child care.

b. Only the amount of reported child care expenses in excess of the amount allowed as "credit for child and dependent care expenses" for federal income tax purposes will be allowed as a deduction in determining the custodial parent's net income.

c. In determining the deduction allowed to the custodial parent for child care expenses, the following procedures will be used:

(1) If the custodial parent provides a copy of a federal income tax return for the current tax processing year and the amount is consistent with the current financial circumstances of the parent, child support services will use the amount reported as "credit for child and dependent care expenses."

(2) If income tax information is not available, or if the parent indicates or there is reason to believe that the amount stated in the return is no longer representative of the parent's financial conditions or child care expenses, child support services will determine the allowable deduction for child care expenses for federal income tax purposes using the custodial parent's income only.

d. Child support services will compute the child care deduction as follows:

(1) Divide the amount of child care expense the parent may claim as a deduction for federal income tax purposes by 12 to arrive at a monthly amount.

(2) If the child care expense reported on the financial statement is not a monthly amount, convert the reported amount to an equivalent monthly figure and round the figure to two decimal places.

(3) Subtract the amount the parent may claim as "credit for child and dependent care expenses" for federal income tax from the amount of child care expenses reported on the financial statement. The difference is the amount allowed for a deduction in determining income for child support.

99.2(4) A qualified additional dependent deduction will be allowed for dependents of the custodial or noncustodial father or mother, whether in or out of the parent's home. The father may establish the deduction by providing written verification of a legal obligation to the child through one of the actions enumerated in the guidelines. The mother may establish the deduction by providing written verification of a legal obligation to the child, including a written statement by the mother or a birth certificate.

99.2(5) All cash medical support payments for other children, not in the pending matter, will be verified before being allowed as a deduction and will be calculated in the same manner as the deductions for support in subrule 99.2(1).

441—99.3(234,252B) Determining net income. Unless otherwise specified in these rules, child support services will determine net income as prescribed by the Iowa Supreme Court guidelines.

99.3(1) *Calculating net income.* All allowable income and allowable deductions will be expressed in monthly amounts. Income and corresponding deductions received at a frequency other than monthly will be converted to equivalent monthly amounts by multiplying the income and corresponding deductions received on a weekly basis by 4.33, on a biweekly basis by 2.17, and on a semimonthly basis by 2.

99.3(2) *Estimating net income.*

a. The estimated net income of a parent will be 80 percent of the reported income or the estimated income as determined from occupational wage rate information or derived from the median income of parents on the child support services caseload, as appropriate, to account for an estimate of the Iowa Supreme Court guidelines deductions for federal and state taxes and Social Security and Medicare taxes. The parent will also be entitled to additional deductions allowed by the guidelines when the information to calculate these deductions is readily available through automated or other sources.

b. The net income of a parent will be estimated under the following conditions:

(1) Gross earned income information was obtained from a source that did not provide itemized deductions allowed by the mandatory support guidelines.

(2) Occupational wage rate information or median income of parents on the child support services caseload was used to determine a parent's income.

441—99.4(234,252B) Applying the guidelines.

99.4(1) *Applying the guidelines.* Child support services will use the child support guidelines schedule as prescribed by the Iowa Supreme Court only for the number of children for whom support is being sought sharing the same two legal parents.

Exception: For foster care recovery cases, the guidelines schedule will be used as set forth in subrule 99.5(4).

99.4(2) *Establishing current support.*

a. Calculation. Child support services will calculate the amount of support as prescribed by the Iowa Supreme Court guidelines. Round amount of support to the nearest whole dollar.

b. Additional factors.

(1) In all cases other than foster care, child support services will establish current support payable in monthly frequencies.

(2) In foster care cases, child support services may establish current support payable in monthly or weekly frequencies. To establish a weekly amount, child support services will divide the figure in paragraph 99.4(2)*"a"* by 4.33 and round to the nearest whole dollar.

(3) If the court orders joint (equally shared) physical care of a child or split or divided physical care of multiple children, child support services will calculate current support according to the Iowa

Supreme Court guidelines for each parent assuming the other is the custodial parent. If a child begins receiving family investment program (FIP) benefits or if foster care funds are expended, an offset of the two amounts as a method of payment will be disallowed.

(4) The amount of support will be zero if the noncustodial parent's only income is Supplemental Security Income paid pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 1381a (as amended to August 1, 2024).

99.4(3) *Establishing accrued support debt amount.*

a. Support debt created. The payment of public assistance to or for the benefit of a dependent child or a dependent child's caretaker creates an accrued support debt due and owing by the child's parent to the department. The amount of the accrued support debt is based on the period of time public assistance payment or foster care funds were expended, but is not created for the period of receipt of public assistance on the parent's own behalf for the benefit of the dependent child or the child's caretaker.

b. Calculating accrued support debt. Child support services will calculate the accrued support debt as follows:

(1) For FIP benefits, child support services will use the period for which FIP was paid during the 36 months preceding the date the notice of support debt is prepared or the date the petition is filed. For foster care assistance, child support services will use the three-month period for which foster care assistance was paid prior to the date the initial notice to the noncustodial parent of the amount of support obligation is prepared, or the date a written request for a court hearing is received, whichever is earlier.

(2) Child support services will exclude periods the noncustodial parent received public assistance as a part of this eligible group.

(3) Child support services may extend the period to include any additional periods public assistance is expended prior to the entry of the order.

(4) Child support services will calculate the amount of the obligation by using the current net income of both parents, the guidelines in effect at the time the order is entered, and the number of children of the noncustodial parent who were receiving public assistance for each month for which accrued support is sought.

(5) Child support services will calculate the total amount of the FIP support debt by multiplying the number of months for which assistance was paid times the determined guidelines amount.

(6) Child support services may calculate the total amount of the foster care support debt by multiplying the number of months for which assistance was paid times the determined guidelines amount and will adjust this amount for weeks in which no foster care benefits were paid.

c. Establishing the accrued support repayment amount.

(1) In cases other than foster care, child support services will establish the repayment amount as follows:

1. When there is an ongoing obligation, the monthly repayment amount will be 10 percent of the ongoing amount unless the noncustodial parent agrees to a higher amount.

2. When the order does not include ongoing support, the monthly repayment amount will be the same as the amount for ongoing support that would have been due if such an obligation had been established. However, when all of the children for whom accrued support debt is sought are residing with the noncustodial parent, the monthly repayment amount will be set at 10 percent of this amount.

(2) In foster care cases, child support services will establish the repayment amount in the same manner as subparagraph 99.4(3)*"c"*(1), but may establish weekly amounts and if the order does not include ongoing support, the repayment amount will be set at 10 percent of the amount for ongoing support that would have been due if such an obligation had been established.

99.4(4) *Children in nonparental homes or foster care.* The parents of a child in a nonparental home or in foster care are severally liable for the support of the child. A support obligation will be established separately for each parent.

a. Parents' location known. When the location is known for both parents having a legal obligation to provide support for their children, the income of both parents will be used to determine the amount of ongoing support in accordance with the child support guidelines.

(1) Calculating support amount. There will be a separate calculation of each parent's child support amount, regardless of whether the parents are married and living together, or living separately. Each calculation will assume that the parent for whom support is being calculated is the noncustodial parent and the other parent is the custodial parent.

(2) Prior orders. If only one parent is paying support under a prior order for the children for whom support is being calculated, the amount of support paid will not be deducted from that parent's net monthly income in computing the support amount for the other parent.

b. One parent's location unknown. When the location of one parent is not known, procedures will be initiated to establish a support order against the parent whose location is known in accordance with the mandatory support guidelines as follows:

(1) The parent whose location is known will be considered the noncustodial parent and that parent's income will be used to calculate child support.

(2) The income of the parent whose location is unknown will be determined by using the estimated median income for parents on the child support services caseload and that parent will be considered the custodial parent in calculating child support.

c. When one parent is deceased or has had parental rights terminated, the method used to calculate support when one parent's location is not known will be used. The parent who is deceased or has had parental rights terminated will be considered the custodial parent with zero income.

99.4(5) *Adjustment for extraordinary visitation or parenting time.* Child support services will calculate an extraordinary visitation or parenting time credit as specified in the Iowa Supreme Court guidelines. The credit will not reduce the child support below the amount required by the Iowa Supreme Court guidelines.

The extraordinary visitation adjustment or parenting time credit will be given if all of the following apply:

a. There is an existing order for the noncustodial parent that meets the criteria for extraordinary visitation or parenting time in excess of 127 overnights per year on an annual basis for the child for whom support is sought. The order granting visitation or parenting time can be a different order than the child support order. If a controlling order is determined pursuant to Iowa Code chapter 252K and that controlling support order does not meet the criteria for extraordinary visitation or parenting time, there is another order that meets the criteria.

b. The noncustodial parent has provided child support services with a file-stamped or certified copy of the order.

c. The court has not ordered equally shared physical care.

99.4(6) *Establishing medical support.* Child support services will calculate medical support as required by Iowa Code chapter 252E and the Iowa Supreme Court guidelines. The cost of the health insurance premium for the child is added to the basic support obligation and prorated between the parents as provided in the Iowa Supreme Court guidelines, and the parent ordered to provide health insurance must provide verification of this expense or anticipated expense.

441—99.5(234,252B) Deviation from guidelines.

99.5(1) *Criteria for deviation.* The court will not vary from the amount of child support that would result from application of the guidelines without a written finding as required by the Iowa Supreme Court guidelines.

99.5(2) *Supporting financial and legal documentation.*

a. The party requesting a deviation from the guidelines must provide supporting documentation. The supporting documentation must include an itemized list identifying the amount and nature of each adjustment requested. Failure to provide supporting documentation for a request for deviation will result in a denial of the request.

b. Legal documents prepared for the court's approval, such as stipulations and orders for support, will include language to identify the following:

(1) The amount of support calculated under the guidelines without allowance for deviations.

(2) The reasons for deviating from the guidelines.

(3) The amount of support calculated after allowing for the deviation.

99.5(3) *Depreciation.* A parent may request a deduction for depreciation of machinery, equipment, or other property used to earn income. Straight-line depreciation will be the only type of depreciation that will be allowed as a deduction. Child support services will allow the straight-line depreciation amount as a deduction if the parent provides documentation from a tax preparer verifying the amount of straight-line depreciation being claimed. Straight-line depreciation is computed by deducting the property's estimated salvage value from the cost of the property, and deducting that figure in equal yearly amounts over the period of the property's remaining estimated useful life.

99.5(4) *Foster care case.* In a foster care case, child support services may deviate from the guidelines by applying a 30 percent flat rate deduction for parents who provide financial documentation. The flat rate deduction represents expenses under the case permanency plan and financial hardship allowances or other circumstances contemplated in Iowa Code section 234.39.

Child support services will calculate the support obligation of the parents of children in foster care when the parents have a legal obligation for additional dependents in the home, as follows: The support obligation of each parent will be calculated by allowing all deductions the parent is eligible for under the child support guidelines as provided in rule 441—99.2(234,252B) and by using the guidelines schedule corresponding to the sum of the children in the home for whom the parent has a legal obligation and the children in foster care. The calculated support amount will be divided by the total number of children in foster care and in the home to compute the support obligation of the parent for each child in foster care.

99.5(5) *Negotiation of accrued support debt.* Child Support Services may negotiate with a parent to establish the amount of accrued support debt owed to the department. In negotiating accrued support, the state does not represent the custodial parent. The custodial parent may intervene at any time prior to the filing of the order to contest the amount of the debt or request the entry of a judgment in the parent's behalf that may otherwise be relinquished through negotiation or entry of a judgment.

441—99.6(17A) Right of appeal. Department actions under this chapter are not subject to administrative appeal under 441—Chapter 7.

These rules are intended to implement Iowa Code sections 234.39, 252B.3, 252B.5, 252B.7A, and 598.21(4).