

## **598.21 Orders for disposition and support.**

1. Upon every judgment of annulment, dissolution, or separate maintenance the court shall divide the property of the parties and transfer the title of the property accordingly, including ordering the parties to execute a quitclaim deed or ordering a change of title for tax purposes and delivery of the deed or change of title to the county recorder of the county in which each parcel of real estate is located. The county recorder shall record each quitclaim deed or change of title and shall collect the fee specified in section 331.507, subsection 2, paragraph "a", and the fee specified in section 331.604, subsection 1. The court may protect and promote the best interests of children of the parties by setting aside a portion of the property of the parties in a separate fund or conservatorship for the support, maintenance, education and general welfare of the minor children. The court shall divide all property, except inherited property or gifts received by one party, equitably between the parties after considering all of the following:

*a.* The length of the marriage.

*b.* The property brought to the marriage by each party.

*c.* The contribution of each party to the marriage, giving appropriate economic value to each party's contribution in homemaking and child care services.

*d.* The age and physical and emotional health of the parties.

*e.* The contribution by one party to the education, training or increased earning power of the other.

*f.* The earning capacity of each party, including educational background, training, employment skills, work experience, length of absence from the job market, custodial responsibilities for children and the time and expense necessary to acquire sufficient education or training to enable the party to become self-supporting at a standard of living reasonably comparable to that enjoyed during the marriage.

*g.* The desirability of awarding the family home or the right to live in the family home for a reasonable period to the party having custody of the children, or if the parties have joint legal custody, to the party having physical care of the children.

*h.* The amount and duration of an order granting support payments to either party pursuant to subsection 3 and whether the property division should be in lieu of such payments.

*i.* Other economic circumstances of each party, including pension benefits, vested or unvested, and future interests.

*j.* The tax consequences to each party.

*k.* Any written agreement made by the parties concerning property distribution.

*l.* The provisions of an antenuptial agreement.

*m.* Other factors the court may determine to be relevant in an individual case.

2. Property inherited by either party or gifts received by either party prior to or during the course of the marriage is the property of that party and is not subject to a property division under this section except upon a finding that refusal to divide the property is inequitable to the other party or to the children of the marriage.

3. Upon every judgment of annulment, dissolution or separate maintenance, the court may grant an order requiring support payments to either party for a limited or indefinite length of time after considering all of the

following:

- a.* The length of the marriage.
- b.* The age and physical and emotional health of the parties.
- c.* The distribution of property made pursuant to subsection 1.
- d.* The educational level of each party at the time of marriage and at the time the action is commenced.
- e.* The earning capacity of the party seeking maintenance, including educational background, training, employment skills, work experience, length of absence from the job market, responsibilities for children under either an award of custody or physical care, and the time and expense necessary to acquire sufficient education or training to enable the party to find appropriate employment.
- f.* The feasibility of the party seeking maintenance becoming self-supporting at a standard of living reasonably comparable to that enjoyed during the marriage, and the length of time necessary to achieve this goal.
- g.* The tax consequences to each party.
- h.* Any mutual agreement made by the parties concerning financial or service contributions by one party with the expectation of future reciprocation or compensation by the other party.
- i.* The provisions of an antenuptial agreement.
- j.* Other factors the court may determine to be relevant in an individual case.

4. The supreme court shall maintain uniform child support guidelines and criteria and review the guidelines and criteria at least once every four years, pursuant to the federal Family Support Act of 1988, Pub. L. No. 100-485. The initial review shall be performed within four years of October 12, 1989, and subsequently within the four-year period of the most recent review. It is the intent of the general assembly that, to the extent possible within the requirements of federal law, the court and the child support recovery unit consider the individual facts of each judgment or case in the application of the guidelines and determine the support obligation, accordingly. It is also the intent of the general assembly that in the supreme court's review of the guidelines, the supreme court shall do both of the following: emphasize the ability of a court to apply the guidelines in a just and appropriate manner based upon the individual facts of a judgment or case; and in determining monthly child support payments, consider other children for whom either parent is legally responsible for support and other child support obligations actually paid by either party pursuant to a court or administrative order.

*a.* Unless prohibited pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1738B, upon every judgment of annulment, dissolution, or separate maintenance, the court may order either parent or both parents to pay an amount reasonable and necessary for supporting a child. In establishing the amount of support, consideration shall be given to the responsibility of both parents to support and provide for the welfare of the minor child and of a child's need, whenever practicable, for a close relationship with both parents. There shall be a rebuttable presumption that the amount of child support which would result from the application of the guidelines prescribed by the supreme court is the correct amount of child support to be awarded. A variation from the guidelines shall not be considered by a court without a record or written finding, based on stated reasons, that the guidelines would be unjust or inappropriate as determined under the criteria prescribed by the supreme court.

The court shall order as child medical support a health benefit plan as defined in chapter 252E if available to either parent at a reasonable cost. A health benefit plan is considered reasonable in cost if it is

employment-related or other group health insurance, regardless of the service delivery mechanism. The premium cost of the health benefit plan may be considered by the court as a reason for varying from the child support guidelines. If a health benefit plan is not available at a reasonable cost, the court may order any other provisions for medical support as defined in chapter 252E.

*b.* The guidelines prescribed by the supreme court shall be used by the department of human services in determining child support payments under sections 252C.2 and 252C.4. A variation from the guidelines shall not be considered by the department without a record or written finding, based on stated reasons, that the guidelines would be unjust or inappropriate as determined under criteria prescribed by the supreme court.

*c.* The guidelines prescribed by the supreme court shall incorporate provisions for medical support as defined in chapter 252E to be effective on or before January 1, 1991.

*d.* For purposes of calculating a support obligation under this section, the income of the parent from whom support is sought shall be used as the noncustodial parent income for purposes of application of the guidelines, regardless of the legal custody of the child.

*e.* Unless the special circumstances of the case justify a deviation, the court or the child support recovery unit shall establish a monthly child support payment of twenty-five dollars for a parent who is nineteen years of age or younger, who has not received a high school or high school equivalency diploma, and to whom each of the following apply:

(1) The parent is attending a school or program described as follows or has been identified as one of the following:

(a) The parent is in full-time attendance at an accredited school and is pursuing a course of study leading to a high school diploma.

(b) The parent is attending an instructional program leading to a high school equivalency diploma.

(c) The parent is attending a vocational education program approved pursuant to chapter 258.

(d) The parent has been identified by the director of special education of the area education agency as a child requiring special education as defined in section 256B.2.

(2) The parent provides proof of compliance with the requirements of subparagraph (1) to the child support recovery unit, if the unit is providing services under chapter 252B, or if the unit is not providing services pursuant to chapter 252B, to the court as the court may direct.

Failure to provide proof of compliance under this subparagraph or proof of compliance under section 598.21A is grounds for modification of the support order using the uniform child support guidelines and imputing an income to the parent equal to a forty-hour work week at the state minimum wage, unless the parent's education, experience, or actual earnings justify a higher income.

*f.* For the purposes of including a child's dependent benefit in calculating a support obligation under this section for a child whose parent has been awarded disability benefits under the federal Social Security Act, the provisions of section 598.22C shall apply.

4A. If, during an action initiated under this chapter or any other chapter in which a child or medical support obligation may be established based upon a prior determination of paternity, a party wishes to contest the paternity of the child or children involved, all of the following apply:

*a.* (1) If the prior determination of paternity is based on an affidavit of paternity filed pursuant to section

252A.3A, or a court or administrative order entered in this state, or by operation of law when the mother and established father are or were married to each other, the provisions of section 600B.41A apply.

(2) If following the proceedings under section 600B.41A the court determines that the prior determination of paternity should not be overcome, and that the established father has a duty to provide support, the court shall enter an order establishing the monthly child support payment and the amount of the support debt accrued and accruing pursuant to subsection 4, or the medical support obligation pursuant to chapter 252E, or both.

*b.* If a determination of paternity is based on an administrative or court order or other means pursuant to the laws of a foreign jurisdiction, any action to overcome the prior determination of paternity shall be filed in that jurisdiction. Unless a stay of the action initiated in this state to establish child or medical support is requested and granted by the court, pending a resolution of the contested paternity issue by the foreign jurisdiction, the action shall proceed.

*c.* Notwithstanding paragraph "*a*", in a pending dissolution action under this chapter, a prior determination of paternity by operation of law through the marriage of the established father and mother of the child may be overcome under this chapter if the established father and mother of the child file a written statement with the court that both parties agree that the established father is not the biological father of the child.

If the court overcomes a prior determination of paternity, the previously established father shall be relieved of support obligations as specified in section 600B.41A, subsection 4. In any action to overcome paternity other than through a pending dissolution action, the provisions of section 600B.41A apply. Overcoming paternity under this paragraph does not bar subsequent actions to establish paternity. A subsequent action to establish paternity against the previously established father is not barred if it is subsequently determined that the written statement attesting that the established father is not the biological father of the child may have been submitted erroneously, and that the person previously determined not to be the child's father during the dissolution action may actually be the child's biological father.

4B. If an action to overcome paternity is brought pursuant to subsection 4A, paragraph "*c*", the court shall appoint a guardian ad litem for the child for the pendency of the proceedings.

5. The court may protect and promote the best interests of a minor child by setting aside a portion of the child support which either party is ordered to pay in a separate fund or conservatorship for the support, education and welfare of the child.

5A. The court may order a postsecondary education subsidy if good cause is shown.

*a.* In determining whether good cause exists for ordering a postsecondary education subsidy, the court shall consider the age of the child, the ability of the child relative to postsecondary education, the child's financial resources, whether the child is self-sustaining, and the financial condition of each parent. If the court determines that good cause is shown for ordering a postsecondary education subsidy, the court shall determine the amount of subsidy as follows:

(1) The court shall determine the cost of postsecondary education based upon the cost of attending an in-state public institution for a course of instruction leading to an undergraduate degree and shall include the reasonable costs for only necessary postsecondary education expenses.

(2) The court shall then determine the amount, if any, which the child may reasonably be expected to contribute, considering the child's financial resources, including but not limited to the availability of financial aid whether in the form of scholarships, grants, or student loans, and the ability of the child to earn income while attending school.

(3) The child's expected contribution shall be deducted from the cost of postsecondary education and the

court shall apportion responsibility for the remaining cost of postsecondary education to each parent. The amount paid by each parent shall not exceed thirty-three and one-third percent of the total cost of postsecondary education.

*b.* A postsecondary education subsidy shall be payable to the child, to the educational institution, or to both, but shall not be payable to the custodial parent.

*c.* A postsecondary education subsidy shall not be awarded if the child has repudiated the parent by publicly disowning the parent, refusing to acknowledge the parent, or by acting in a similar manner.

*d.* The child shall forward, to each parent, reports of grades awarded at the completion of each academic session, within ten days of receipt of the reports. Unless otherwise specified by the parties, a postsecondary education subsidy awarded by the court shall be terminated upon the child's completion of the first calendar year of course instruction if the child fails to maintain a cumulative grade point average in the median range or above during that first calendar year.

*e.* A support order, decree, or judgment entered or pending before July 1, 1997, that provides for support of a child for college, university, or community college expenses may be modified in accordance with this subsection.

6. The court may provide for joint custody of the children by the parties pursuant to section 598.41. All orders relating to custody of a child are subject to chapter 598B.

7. Orders made pursuant to this section need mention only those factors relevant to the particular case for which the orders are made but shall contain the names, birth dates, addresses, and counties of residence of the petitioner and respondent.

8. Subject to 28 U.S.C. § 1738B, the court may subsequently modify orders made under this section when there is a substantial change in circumstances. In determining whether there is a substantial change in circumstances, the court shall consider the following:

*a.* Changes in the employment, earning capacity, income or resources of a party.

*b.* Receipt by a party of an inheritance, pension or other gift.

*c.* Changes in the medical expenses of a party.

*d.* Changes in the number or needs of dependents of a party.

*e.* Changes in the physical, mental, or emotional health of a party.

*f.* Changes in the residence of a party.

*g.* Remarriage of a party.

*h.* Possible support of a party by another person.

*i.* Changes in the physical, emotional or educational needs of a child whose support is governed by the order.

*j.* Contempt by a party of existing orders of court.

*k.* Entry of a dispositional order in juvenile court pursuant to chapter 232 placing custody or physical care of a child with a party who is obligated to pay support for a child.

l. Other factors the court determines to be relevant in an individual case.

Unless otherwise provided pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1738B, a modification of a support order entered under chapter 234, 252A, 252C, 600B, this chapter, or any other support chapter or proceeding between parties to the order is void unless the modification is approved by the court, after proper notice and opportunity to be heard is given to all parties to the order, and entered as an order of the court. If support payments have been assigned to the department of human services pursuant to section 234.39, 239B.6, or 252E.11, or if services are being provided pursuant to chapter 252B, the department is a party to the support order. Modifications of orders pertaining to child custody shall be made pursuant to chapter 598B. If the petition for a modification of an order pertaining to child custody asks either for joint custody or that joint custody be modified to an award of sole custody, the modification, if any, shall be made pursuant to section 598.41.

Judgments for child support or child support awards entered pursuant to this chapter, chapter 234, 252A, 252C, 252F, 600B, or any other chapter of the Code which are subject to a modification proceeding may be retroactively modified only from three months after the date the notice of the pending petition for modification is served on the opposing party. The three-month limitation applies to a modification action pending on or after July 1, 1997. The prohibition of retroactive modification does not bar the child support recovery unit from obtaining orders for accrued support for previous time periods. Any retroactive modification which increases the amount of child support or any order for accrued support under this paragraph shall include a periodic payment plan. A retroactive modification shall not be regarded as a delinquency unless there are subsequent failures to make payments in accordance with the periodic payment plan.

The periodic due date established under a prior order for payment of child support shall not be changed in any modified order under this section, unless the court determines that good cause exists to change the periodic due date. If the court determines that good cause exists, the court shall include the rationale for the change in the modified order and shall address the issue of reconciliation of any payments due or made under a prior order which would result in payment of the child support obligation under both the prior and the modified orders.

8A. If a parent awarded joint legal custody and physical care or sole legal custody is relocating the residence of the minor child to a location which is one hundred fifty miles or more from the residence of the minor child at the time that custody was awarded, the court may consider the relocation a substantial change in circumstances. If the court determines that the relocation is a substantial change in circumstances, the court shall modify the custody order to, at a minimum, preserve, as nearly as possible, the existing relationship between the minor child and the nonrelocating parent. If modified, the order may include a provision for extended visitation during summer vacations and school breaks and scheduled telephone contact between the nonrelocating parent and the minor child. The modification may include a provision assigning the responsibility for transportation of the minor child for visitation purposes to either or both parents. If the court makes a finding of past interference by the parent awarded joint legal custody and physical care or sole legal custody with the minor child's access to the other parent, the court may order the posting of a cash bond to assure future compliance with the visitation provisions of the decree. The supreme court shall prescribe guidelines for the forfeiting of the bond and restoration of the bond following forfeiting of the bond.

9. Subject to 28 U.S.C. § 1738B, but notwithstanding subsection 8, a substantial change of circumstances exists when the court order for child support varies by ten percent or more from the amount which would be due pursuant to the most current child support guidelines established pursuant to subsection 4 or the obligor has access to a health benefit plan, the current order for support does not contain provisions for medical support, and the dependents are not covered by a health benefit plan provided by the obligee, excluding coverage pursuant to chapter 249A or a comparable statute of a foreign jurisdiction.

This basis for modification is applicable to petitions filed on or after July 1, 1992, notwithstanding whether the guidelines prescribed by subsection 4 were used in establishing the current amount of support. Upon

application for a modification of an order for child support for which services are being received pursuant to chapter 252B, the court shall set the amount of child support based upon the most current child support guidelines established pursuant to subsection 4, including provisions for medical support pursuant to chapter 252E. The child support recovery unit shall, in submitting an application for modification, adjustment, or alteration of an order for support, employ additional criteria and procedures as provided in chapter 252H and as established by rule.

10. Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, when an application for modification or adjustment of support is submitted by the child support recovery unit, the sole issues which may be considered by the court in that action are the application of the guidelines in establishing the amount of support pursuant to subsection 4, and provision for medical support under chapter 252E. When an application for a cost-of-living alteration of support is submitted by the child support recovery unit pursuant to section 252H.24, the sole issue which may be considered by the court in the action is the application of the cost-of-living alteration in establishing the amount of child support. Issues related to custody, visitation, or other provisions unrelated to support shall be considered only under a separate application for modification.

10A. If the court modifies an order, and the original decree was entered in another county in Iowa, the clerk of court shall send a copy of the modification by regular mail, electronic transmission, or facsimile to the clerk of court for the county where the original decree was entered.

11. If the court orders a transfer of title to real property, the clerk of court shall issue a certificate under chapter 558 relative to each parcel of real estate affected by the order and immediately deliver the certificate for recording to the county recorder of the county in which the real estate is located. Any fees assessed shall be included as part of the court costs. The county recorder shall deliver the certificates to the county auditor as provided in section 558.58, subsection 1.

Property divisions made under this chapter are not subject to modification.

[C51, § 1485; R60, § 2537; C73, § 2229; C97, § 3180; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, § **10481**; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, § 598.14; C71, 73, 75, 77, 79, § 598.17, § 598.21; C81, § 598.21; 82 Acts, ch 1054, § 1, ch 1250, § 49]

83 Acts, ch 101, § 118; 85 Acts, ch 159, § 10; 85 Acts, ch 178, § 6, 7; 86 Acts, ch 1079, § 5; 88 Acts, ch 1141, §2; 89 Acts, ch 102, §6; 89 Acts, ch 166, §6; 90 Acts, ch 1224, § 4245; 92 Acts, ch 1195, § 405, 406, 508, 509; 93 Acts, ch 78, §4446; 93 Acts, ch 79, §48, 49; 94 Acts, ch 1171, §4042; 95 Acts, ch 52, § 8; 95 Acts, ch 115, § 11, 12; 96 Acts, ch 1106, § 17; 96 Acts, ch 1141, § 7, 28, 29; 97 Acts, ch 41, §32; 97 Acts, ch 175, §188193, 200; 99 Acts, ch 103, §44, 45; 2001 Acts, ch 143, §8; 2002 Acts, ch 1018, § 16, 17, 21; 2003 Acts, ch 151, §28; 2004 Acts, ch 1157, §1

## Footnotes

Child support recovery unit, initiation of proceedings to modify child support award; § 252B.5(7)

Subsection 5A, paragraph e, takes effect March 15, 2002, and applies retroactively to support orders, decrees, or judgments entered or pending before July 1, 1997; 2002 Acts, ch 1018, §21