

598.21C Modification of child, spousal, or medical support orders.

1. *Criteria for modification.* Subject to 28 U.S.C. §1738B, the court may subsequently modify child, spousal, or medical support orders 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 or permanency 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. Any filing fees or court costs for a modification filed or ordered pursuant to this paragraph are waived.
- l. Other factors the court determines to be relevant in an individual case.

2. *Additional criteria for modification of child support orders.*

a. Subject to 28 U.S.C. §1738B, but notwithstanding [subsection 1](#), 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 [section 598.21B](#) or a parent has a health benefit plan available as provided in [section 252E.1A](#) and the current order for support does not contain provisions for medical support.

b. This basis for modification is applicable to petitions filed on or after July 1, 1992, notwithstanding whether the guidelines prescribed by [section 598.21B](#) 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 [section 598.21B](#), including provisions for medical support pursuant to [chapter 252E](#). Child support services 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.

3. *Applicable law.* 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 health and 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](#).

4. *Temporary modification of child support orders.* While an application for modification of a child support or child custody order is pending, the court may, on its own motion or upon application by either party, enter a temporary order modifying an order of child support. The court may enter such temporary order only after service of the original notice, and an order shall not be entered until at least five days' notice of hearing and opportunity to be heard, is provided to all parties. In entering temporary orders under [this subsection](#), the court shall consider all pertinent matters, which may be demonstrated by affidavits, as the court may

direct. The hearing on application shall be limited to matters set forth in the application, the affidavits of the parties, and any required statements of income. The court shall not hear any other matter relating to the application for modification, respondent's answer, or any pleadings connected with the application for modification or the answer. [This subsection](#) shall also apply to an order, decree, or judgment entered or pending on or before July 1, 2007, and shall apply to an order entered under [this chapter](#), [chapter 252A](#), [252C](#), [252F](#), [252H](#), [252K](#), or [600B](#), or any other applicable chapter of the Code.

5. *Retroactivity of modification.* 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 child support services 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 subsection](#) 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.

6. *Modification of periodic due date.* 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.

7. *Modification by child support services.* Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, when an application for modification or adjustment of support is submitted by child support services, 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 [section 598.21B](#), and provision for medical support under [chapter 252E](#). When an application for a cost-of-living alteration of support is submitted by child support services 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.

8. *Necessary content of order.* 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.

9. *Duty of clerk of court.* 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.

[2005 Acts, ch 69, §41](#); [2006 Acts, ch 1030, §71](#); [2006 Acts, ch 1119, §7, 10](#); [2007 Acts, ch 106, §1](#); [2007 Acts, ch 218, §185, 187](#); [2008 Acts, ch 1019, §18, 20](#); [2023 Acts, ch 19, §1235, 1236](#)

Referred to in [§234.39](#), [252B.5](#), [252H.10](#), [252H.18A](#), [598.20](#), [598.22](#), [598.22C](#)

Subsection 2, paragraph b amended

Subsections 3, 5, and 7 amended