

234.39 Responsibility for cost of services.

1. It is the intent of [this chapter](#) that an individual receiving foster care services and the individual's parents or guardians shall have primary responsibility for paying the cost of the care and services. The support obligation established and adopted under [this section](#) shall be consistent with the limitations on legal liability established under [sections 222.78](#) and [230.15](#), and by any other statute limiting legal responsibility for support which may be imposed on a person for the cost of care and services provided by the department. The department shall notify an individual's parents or guardians, at the time of the placement of an individual in foster care, of the responsibility for paying the cost of care and services. Support obligations shall be established as follows:

a. For an individual to whom [section 234.35, subsection 1](#), is applicable, a dispositional order of the juvenile court requiring the provision of foster care, or an administrative order entered pursuant to [chapter 252C](#), or any order establishing paternity and support for a child in foster care, shall establish, after notice and a reasonable opportunity to be heard is provided to a parent or guardian, the amount of the parent's or guardian's support obligation for the cost of foster care provided by the department. The amount of the parent's or guardian's support obligation and the amount of support debt accrued and accruing shall be established in accordance with the child support guidelines prescribed under [section 598.21B](#). However, the court, or the department in establishing support by administrative order, may deviate from the prescribed obligation after considering a recommendation by the department for expenses related to goals and objectives of a case permanency plan as defined under [section 237.15](#), and upon written findings of fact which specify the reason for deviation and the prescribed guidelines amount. Any order for support shall direct the payment of the support obligation to the collection services center for the use of the department's foster care services. The order shall be filed with the clerk of the district court in which the responsible parent or guardian resides and has the same force and effect as a judgment when entered in the judgment docket and lien index. The collection services center shall disburse the payments pursuant to the order and record the disbursements. If payments are not made as ordered, child support services may certify a default to the court and the court may, on its own motion, proceed under [section 598.22](#) or [598.23](#) or child support services may enforce the judgment as allowed by law. An order entered under this paragraph may be modified only in accordance with the guidelines prescribed under [section 598.21C](#), or under [chapter 252H](#).

b. For an individual who is served by the department under [section 234.35](#), and is not subject to a dispositional order of the juvenile court requiring the provision of foster care, the department shall determine the obligation of the individual's parent or guardian pursuant to [chapter 252C](#) and in accordance with the child support guidelines prescribed under [section 598.21B](#). However, the department may adjust the prescribed obligation for expenses related to goals and objectives of a case permanency plan as defined under [section 237.15](#). An obligation determined under this paragraph may be modified only in accordance with conditions under [section 598.21C](#), or under [chapter 252H](#).

2. a. A person entitled to periodic support payments pursuant to an order or judgment entered in any action for support, who also is or has a child receiving foster care services, is deemed to have assigned to the department current and accruing support payments attributable to the child effective as of the date the child enters foster care placement, to the extent of expenditure of foster care funds. The department shall notify the clerk of the district court when a child entitled to support payments is receiving foster care services pursuant to [chapter 234](#). Upon notification by the department that a child entitled to periodic support payments is receiving foster care services, the clerk of the district court shall make a notation of the automatic assignment in the judgment docket and lien index. The notation constitutes constructive notice of assignment. The clerk of court shall furnish the department with copies of all orders and decrees awarding support when the child is receiving foster care services. At the time the child ceases to receive foster care services, the assignment of support shall be automatically terminated. Unpaid support accrued under the assignment of support rights during the time that the child was in foster care remains due to the department up to the amount of unreimbursed foster care funds expended. The

department shall notify the clerk of court of the automatic termination of the assignment. Unless otherwise specified in the support order, an equal and proportionate share of any child support awarded shall be presumed to be payable on behalf of each child subject to the order or judgment for purposes of an assignment under [this section](#).

b. An assignment of support under paragraph “a” shall not apply when a child is placed with a relative or fictive kin as those terms are defined in [section 232.2](#), unless the relative or fictive kin is an individual licensee or an approved kinship caregiver under [chapter 237](#).

3. The support debt for the costs of services, for which a support obligation is established pursuant to [this section](#), which accrues prior to the establishment of the support debt, shall be collected, at a maximum, in the amount which is the amount of accrued support debt for the three months preceding the earlier of the following:

a. The provision by child support services of the initial notice to the parent or guardian of the amount of the support obligation.

b. The date that the written request for a court hearing is received by child support services as provided in [section 252C.3](#) or [252F.3](#).

4. If the department makes a subsidized guardianship payment for a child, the payment shall be considered a foster care payment for purposes of child support services. All provisions of this and other sections, and of rules and orders adopted or entered pursuant to those sections, including for the establishment of a paternity or support order, for the amount of a support obligation, for the modification or adjustment of a support obligation, for the assignment of support, and for enforcement shall apply as if the child were receiving foster care services, or were in foster care placement, or as if foster care funds were being expended for the child. [This subsection](#) shall apply regardless of the date of placement in foster care or subsidized guardianship or the date of entry of an order, and foster care and subsidized guardianship shall be considered the same for purposes of child support services.

[C75, 77, 79, 81, §234.39]

[83 Acts, ch 96, §160; 83 Acts, ch 153, §3; 89 Acts, ch 166, §1; 90 Acts, ch 1270, §45; 92 Acts, ch 1195, §303, 304; 92 Acts, ch 1229, §27; 94 Acts, ch 1171, §8; 95 Acts, ch 52, §1; 96 Acts, ch 1213, §36, 37; 97 Acts, ch 175, §227; 99 Acts, ch 127, §1; 2005 Acts, ch 69, §1; 2016 Acts, ch 1011, §40; 2023 Acts, ch 19, §684; 2024 Acts, ch 1157, §62; 2025 Acts, ch 135, §10](#)

Referred to in §232.4, 232.78, 234.8, 252A.13, 598.21C, 598.34, 600B.38

Subsection 2, paragraph b amended