

HB 1579 -- Child Support

Sponsor: Holand

This bill adds the requirement that the court determine that a party obligated to pay child support is current on all support payments before the court grants a dissolution of marriage. The obligee may waive the obligor's duty to be current on all payments, but the waiver does not relieve the obligor of any child support arrearage.

The bill also requires that the parties to a petition for dissolution or legal separation file income and expense statements and a preliminary Form 14 except those cases in which the Attorney General is a party. In cases where child support is established or modified, except those in which the Attorney General is involved, the parties must submit income and expense statements along with the Form 14 documents. The court can issue a temporary order of child support; and when the temporary order is issued, the parties must verify their current addresses, telephone numbers, and employment information. The court is also required to hold an initial case management conference on the first available date 60 days after the date of service in the case. Subsequent case management conferences may also be held. At the case management conference, the court may order parties to participate in mediation or may require attendance at court-approved educational sessions.

Current law allows courts to require parties to a dissolution or legal separation involving child custody or visitation issues to take part in an alternative dispute resolution program. The bill requires the court to order parties to participate in the program unless there is good cause to not require participation. The parties must participate in at least two hours of mediation, and either party may terminate the mediation after two hours. Any agreement reached during the mediation must be in writing and submitted to the parties. The agreement may not be binding until the parties and their attorneys have signed the agreement and the court has approved it. The bill also requires the Missouri Supreme Court to have a rule in effect within 120 days of the effective date of the bill requiring each judicial circuit to establish an alternative dispute resolution program for proceedings involving dissolution of marriage. Current law requires the Supreme Court to have a rule in effect that allows but does not mandate alternative dispute resolution in proceedings involving issues of child custody.