



MAKE SURE YOUR CHILDREN HAVE JOYFUL MEMORIES THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

by Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott

THE HOLIDAY SEASON IS A TIME when many families gather to honor traditions, give thanks and make memories. Unfortunately, it can also put a financial strain on parents as they purchase gifts or host families for a holiday meal. Make sure the holidays are a memorable and joyful time of year for your children by paying your child support.

Child support enables parents to put a roof over their children's heads, clothes on their backs, and food on the table. During the holidays, these challenges are compounded as parents also try to put gifts under the tree or gas in their car for a long trip to grandma's house. That is why we are giving parents this special reminder to pay their child support.

Thank you to those parents who regularly pay their child support in full and on time. Your faithfulness will reap great rewards as you help your children remember the holidays as a time of provision rather than hardship.

Sometimes circumstances arise, such as losing a job, that make it difficult to meet one's child support obligation.

For parents who are in a situation like this, contact the Attorney General's Child Support Division so we can work together to determine a course of action. As an additional service, the Attorney General's Office partners with the Texas Workforce Commission and workforce development boards across the state to help low-income parents find good-paying jobs so they can meet their child support obligations.

Ultimately, what children need most is to know their parents care about them. For unmarried parents, this begins with establishing paternity. When paternity is established, a child has a legal connection to his or her father that protects the child's access to a range of benefits fathers can provide, starting with having dad's name on the birth certificate. Through the Paternity Opportunity Program, the Attorney General's Office trains and certifies employees of hospitals and birthing centers to assist parents with the process of acknowledging paternity just after their child's birth. We can also facilitate DNA tests to scientifically and

legally establish fatherhood. As children grow up, our office encourages parents to stay involved in their lives beyond paying child support.

We also help parents who are having trouble getting access to their children. This year, the Attorney General's Office administered more than \$500,000 in federal grants to 12 organizations across Texas that facilitate parents' access to and visitation with their children. One organization, Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas, operates a statewide Access and Visitation Hotline. The hotline is staffed by attorneys who provide legal information and assistance with child custody and visitation matters. Parents can call the hotline's toll-free number, 1-866-292-4636, Monday through Friday from 1 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Kids will forever remember what happens during this holiday season. Please, help make those memories good ones by being there for them and paying your child support. The Office of the Attorney General wishes you and your family a happy holiday season!

POINTS TO REMEMBER



CHILD SUPPORT AND THE HOLIDAYS

PARENTS SHOULD MAKE A SPECIAL EFFORT TO PAY THEIR CHILD SUPPORT DURING THE HOLIDAYS

- Because family expenses usually increase during the holidays;
- To show their children they are loved; and
- Because it is their legal duty to do so.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL:

- Helps establish a child's paternity;
- Establishes and enforces child support orders;
- Reviews and adjusts child support payments;
- Collects and distributes payments;
- Partners with other agencies to help parents find jobs to meet their child support obligations;
- Works with groups that facilitate parental access and visitation; and
- Encourages parental involvement in their children's lives.

APPLY FOR CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES BY:

- Visiting Child Support Interactive on the main Attorney General Web site at www.oag.state.tx.us.
- Calling the 24-hour voice response system at **(800) 252-8014**

More information is available on the Attorney General's Web site at www.oag.state.tx.us.



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