

State of Connecticut, Child Support Guidelines Commission

Minutes for the 2/2/2023 meeting, *via Microsoft Teams Meeting*

5:07 pm – Roll call by Chair, Chief Family Support Michael Ferguson

Present: Chair Chief Family Support Magistrate, Michael Ferguson, Graham Shaffer, Sean Kehoe, Campbell Barrett, Craig Fishbein, Virginia Brown, Amy Calvo McNamara, Lucy Potter – Vice Chair, Darren Pruslow, Steven Hernandez, Zoe Stout being replaced by Michael Williams - DCF Deputy Commissioner

Not present: Gary Winfield, Scott Storms

Quorum obtained.

Chair entertains motion to adopt the minutes for 12/1/22. So moved by G. Shaffer. G. Fishbein abstains. D. Pruslow seconds the motion. Voted and approved by all. Motion carries.

5:10 pm. – Announcement concerning public participation in Commission meetings and the guidelines-revision process.

Chair states that he understands there is great public interest in these meetings. There will be ample time in the future for the public to participate in our process. The monthly meetings are intended only for the participation by the commission members. Therefore, we would not entertain any comments or questions from the public at this time. Ask everyone but commission members to turn off their camera and mute themselves. Thank you.

5:11 pm – Chair asks Michael Williams the DCF Deputy Commissioner of Operations to introduce himself. He does so.

5:12 pm – Introduction of Dr. Jane Venohr of the Center for Policy Research. G. Shaffer introduces Dr Jane Venohr and economist and research associate with the Center for Policy Research in Colorado. It is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing research and evaluation services to government agencies on the issues affecting children and families. Since joining CPR in 2007, Doctor Venohr has directed child support guidelines, review, and technical assistance projects for over 30 states, including Connecticut in the past. This includes the development and updating of child support schedules, adjustments for special factors such as low income and time-sharing situations, fulfilling federal requirements to analyze case data and other systems. Doctor Venohr has also conducted research on medical child support, pass through and disregard, childcare assistance, employment programs, Medicaid, and other topics. Doctor Venohr holds a PhD in economics from the University of Colorado, Boulder. She has published in Family Law Quarterly, the Journal of American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers and other journals. Prior to the pandemic, Dr. Venohr also taught economics and business statistics for Colorado Mountain College, including classes at a medium security prison for its small business certificate program. Dr. Venohr most recently co-authored an article published in Family Law Quarterly addressing how states have dealt with time sharing in their guidelines with issues concerning time sharing. I think Lucy Potter previously shared that article with the committee membership, titled ‘The Relationship Between Child Support and Parenting Time’. I am dropping a link in the chat today. G. Shaffer says that he found it helpful to understand some issues with time sharing and how other states have dealt with that. And I know that is an issue the membership of the commission has expressed an interest in. She has guided past commissions and her knowledge has been invaluable.

5:15 pm. Presentation by Dr. Venohr

Thank you to Chair M. Ferguson and the whole commission. G. Shaffer shared the Power Point of the presentation so J. Venohr can monitor the chat for questions.

Power Point entitled: Review of the Connecticut Child Support Guidelines, Presentation to the Commission for Child Support Guidelines, February 2, 2023. Jane Venohr, Ph.D. Economist/Research Associate.

Dr. Venohr described the history of federal involvement in the creation of state child support guidelines and the current federal requirements for states updating those rules. Dr. Venohr gave an overview of the economic methodology used to establish and update state child support guidelines. Dr. Venohr gave an initial overview of how Connecticut's child support guidelines might change based on updated economic data.

(Reviewing slides)

Questions from members on presentation as it is ongoing:

Slide 17. Downward modification of child support orders for a parent incarcerated for more than 180 days is a federal requirement presently. OCSE sent a letter to Mississippi that their exceptions for crimes against the family do not meet the incarcerated parent's ability to pay. Therefore, Mississippi should eliminate that exception. G. Shaffer to Dr. Venohr: Do you have any insight why the proposed rulemaking adopting an exception for downward modification for a parent who was incarcerated for a crime against the family was rescinded? Dr. Venohr stated that she thought it was due to a change in national administration. Stating that she believes from reading the controlling statute that there may be some state discretion on this rule, but she is not a lawyer. Dr. Venohr will try to get the OCSE letter that was sent to Mississippi.

Question: If the broad statutory exception is prohibited, are states using a more general deviation on a case-by-case basis? Dr. Venohr stated that she thought not. Judicial Division's Support Enforcement Services director, Paul Bourdoulous stated that CT does have experience with the CT exception and there are good and bad aspects. For instance, compounded crime, violations of probations for prior convictions as well as injury to a minor make something like crime against the family a subjective matter but there are also black and white incidents like a mother murdered or very strong, clear domestic violence. He thinks these should be handled on a case-by-case basis. Dr. Venohr states she thinks OCSE is still reviewing others states with exceptions.

(Reviewing slides, #24 may be most important slide per Dr. Venohr)

Slide 35. G. Shaffer posed the question, how reliable are these child rearing methodologies in the case of more than two parents? Dr. Venohr backed up to explain that there have been studies which included same sex married couples, families with another adult or an adult child in the family and the amount they spent on the child was not statistically different. Additionally, single parent families spent the same at low incomes as two parent families. While there is increasing data on more modern families, there is not data on families with more than two parents. California has had more than two parents addressed in their guidelines as a deviation factor. It seems to work as a proration by the number of parents but becomes more difficult when there is a time-sharing adjustment. Will be addressing this for Vermont soon. CT is one of 9 states without any time-sharing adjustment at present. CA recently decided against a study to address multiple parents and time-sharing adjustments as they did not have the volume of need.

6:54 pm – Questions & Answers Dr. Venohr concludes presentation. Chair, CFSM M. Ferguson, asks for questions from commission. Decide that all questions to Dr. Venohr will be directed through Graham Shaffer.

6:56 pm – Adjournment. Chair – next meeting will be March 2, 2023, at 5:00 pm. Previously discussed having that meeting remote. No concerns from members about that. Meeting adjourned.



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