STATE OF CONNECTICUT, CHILD SUPPORT GUIDELINES COMMISSION MEETING

Minutes for the February 6, 2025, meeting held via Microsoft Meetings. Agenda items are bolded.
Scribe: Gregory Bennett, DSS/OCSS

5:05pm – Call to order, provision for meeting minutes.
Roll Call
Present: CFSM Michael Ferguson, Chair, Graham Shaffer, Carolyn Signorelli, Virginia Brown, Darren Pruslow, Michael Werner, Cara Pavalock D'Amato, Rose Colon, and Susan Hamilton.

Not present: Scott Storms, Gary Winfield, Campbell Barret, and Amy Calvo MacNamara

Minutes from December meeting moved to adopt by Graham Shaffer and seconded by Susan Hamilton. Motion carried unanimously.

Present in the meeting who are not on the commission and signed into the chat include; Maria Lopez, Lynn Reeves, Edgar Young, Colleen Michelson, Andrew Celinski, and Gregory Bennett.

5:06 pm – Update on information from Dr. Vanore with Compliance with Federal Guidelines
Graham Shaffer provided an update from communication with Dr. Venohr. Mr. Shaffer reported that Dr. Venohr is putting together a final report for CT to be able to comply with the Federal requirements which should be ready sometime next week. He reported that it will be sent out to the full commission as soon as it is available, and the findings will be discussed during the March meeting.

5:08 pm – Update on the process for amending the Guidelines

Graham Shaffer reported that the commission is largely ready to move forward with the public and the full proposed regulation will be ready for the full Commission meeting in March. The proposed regulation sponsored by the Commission will be open for a 30-day public comment period. It will consist of a formal public hearing so that members of the public can appear and give oral comments. Graham suggested a Microsoft Teams public hearing. Graham explained that there will be a need for public comments to be received, reviewed, and responded to and it will be decided if changes will be made to the proposed regulations based on the comments. Graham further explained that once that is complete, the regulations must be reviewed by the attorney General's office for legal sufficiency, and then finally submitted to the Regulation Review Committee at the General Assembly for a hearing.

Darren Pruslow suggested doing a hybrid public hearing which would offer both in-person and virtual options for the public to attend. Cara Pavalock offered the idea of holding the public hearing at the Capital because of the hybrid capabilities already in place

Michael Furgeson requested Graham Shaffer send proposed next steps on the topics just discussed for the Commission to outline a time frame moving forward.

5:12 pm – Update on options for how to handle situations involving more than two parents

Darren Pruslow reported a meeting took place to discuss the California plan and the consensus is that there is more of a comfort level with the California plan. The group expressed a comfort level by doing an extra layer of forms and using the same forms. Due to the time, expense and technical capabilities it does not appear there is a return on investment at this point in time. Graham Shaffer further reported that the California plan is preferrable because it is the only model that has been adopted anywhere so far so there is precedent to it. The model that Darren Pruslow thought up would duplicate the income of the custodial parent and could not be rationalized. Graham Shaffer explained that the California model is effectively just a proration of the total support based on all income of each party. The recommendation regarding the forms were discussed. The existing form found out last session was made by a private attorney essentially on their own and with extensive changes and formatting proved to be an issue. It would also be preferrable to use the existing forms because of some of the software applications the private bar uses. The plan would be to continue to use the existing form with instructions and guidelines about how to complete it multiple times effectively and the reconcile everything on one third form to demonstrate to the court how the calculations were reached.

Darren Pruslow explained that no matter what method that is going to be utilized it was going to be a presumptive order because we do not have the financial data to fully back up any of these proposals. We don't have the data on multi parent families, so it is going to be a deviation. It is a suggestion that gives evidence and support of the data we have which is then up to the judgment of the parties and the court when putting the order into effect to take in all the other various factors involved.

Graham Staffer stated that there is not a need to vote on adopting the California model today and the language is not prepared yet. He will prepare the draft language for the next meeting to vote on it then. Michael Ferguson stated that we are all in agreement to have the language to be able to vote and thanked Michael Werner and Cara Pavalock for volunteering to assist in arranging for the public hearing to take place at the Capitol.

Darren Pruslow requested the committee clarify if all are generally in favor prior to Graham moving forward with bringing the work to implementing and putting the language together for the California model. Cara Pavalock asked if this is for multiple parents and what is the percentage of cases that this involves. Graham Shaffer explained since it was enacted several years prior he is unaware of any cases working their way up through the court system. It is exceedingly rare, but the Parentage Act did direct the commission to come up with a methodology for dealing with the circumstances of more than two parents and there is a provision that directs the Commission at the next meeting to resolve the issue. Michael Furgeson clarified that there is one case out of New Britian that is now in the Supreme Court.

Cara Pavalock questioned if there will be a new form and Graham Shaffer reported that he doesn't think there is a need for a new form. He explained that you can put the custodial parent on one sheet with one of the non-custodial parents. Then do a separate sheet with the custodial parent again with the non-custodial parent and combine everything on another sheet and prorate according to each parents' respective incomes after deductions. As long as we have a way to clearly explain in the guidelines. If during the drafting of the language it appears that there is no way members of the public will be able to understand then it will be discussed at the next meeting.

Susan Hamilton asked if the California model would still allow for low-income obligors the benefit or adjustments. Graham Shaffer clarified that yes, you would have a low-income obligor calculate like you would for that individual obligor if there were only two parents.

6:11 pm – Adjournment

Chair Michael Ferguson stated the next meeting is March 6, 2025.

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