

SECTION V GLOSSARY OF TERMS FOR THE NON-LAWYER

Alimony *pendente lite* (“APL”) – Latin for payments made to the spouse with less money and/or fewer assets by the spouse with more money and/or more assets from the time a divorce is filed until the entry of the divorce decree.

Arrears, arrearages – unpaid support or alimony *pendente lite*, for past payment periods owed by a person who is obligated to pay.

Child Support – money a parent pays to help provide food, clothing and other necessities/items for a child. Child support can include health insurance and payments for medical bills not covered by health insurance, as well as child care and other expenses for the child.

Contempt of Court – not doing what the court ordered you to do when you have the ability to do it.

Continuance – cancellation and re-scheduling of a conference, hearing, conciliation or trial.

Custodial Parent – the parent with whom the child lives the majority of the time; this is the parent who usually receives child support.

Custody – Legal decision by a court which establishes with whom the child or children will live; an allocation of parental rights and responsibilities; the decision is in writing in a court order.

Delinquent Support – unpaid support or alimony *pendente lite*, for past payment periods owed by a person who is obligated to pay.

Divorce Decree – Court order which holds that a formerly married couple are no longer married.

Domestic Relations Officer (“DRO”) – the person who conducts a support or custody conference.

Emancipation – independent status granted a child under the age of 18 who is married or has otherwise been determined to be independent of his or her parents.

Genetic Testing – tests used to determine whether or not a particular man is the father of a particular child.

Hearing Officer – An attorney who sits as a trier of fact in support and custody matters, conducts hearings that are recorded, then makes recommendations to the Court, which become orders if not appealed by the filing of exceptions.

Income or Wage Attachment – a court order directing an employer, or other person or entity from whom a defendant in a support action receives income, to automatically deduct the periodic support amount from the defendant's income, which is then sent to State Collection and Disbursement Unit ("SCDU") to pay the support obligation.

Intrastate Family Support Act ("IFSA") – a law that provides a mechanism for establishing, enforcing and modifying support orders, in addition to establishing paternity, when parents live in different counties.

Jurisdiction – Legal authority a court has over particular persons or certain types of cases in a defined geographical area and/or subject matter.

Lien – a legal claim against property owned by a person who owes overdue support, or by a person to whom that property is transferred.

Medical Support – Money paid in accordance with a court order to provide medical insurance for a spouse or child or as payment toward unreimbursed medical expenses.

Modification – change to an order of court; court orders may be changed after a hearing or by agreement of the parties, but **MUST** always have a judge's signature.

Movant – person presenting a motion in motions court.

Non-custodial Parent – parent who does not have primary custody of a child, but who is responsible for a share of the child's financial support.

Obligee – person receiving support payments.

Obligor – person obligated to pay support.

Overdue Support - unpaid support or alimony *pendente lite*, which becomes due after entry or modification of an order.

PACSES (PA Child Support Enforcement System) – the statewide computer system used to process and keep track of all support cases in Pennsylvania.

Parent Locator Service – computer interface that uses federal, state and county sources to find a home address or new employer information for non-custodial parents.

Past Due Support (retroactive support) – the amount of unpaid support which is owed for the time between the filing of the support complaint and the entry of the support order, or the filing of the modification petition and the entry of the modified order.

Paternity Establishment – creating a legal relationship between a child and the child’s father where the child’s parents are not married.

Paternity Testing – genetic testing; tests used to determine whether or not a particular man is the father of a particular child.

Payee – person to whom support is paid.

Payor – person who pays support.

Petition – a written request presented to the Court in the proper form and manner, asking the Court to do some specific action on a case.

Petitioner – the person who files a petition or written request with the Court.

Pro Se - An action by a party on his or her own behalf, without the assistance of a licensed attorney; it may involve filing papers with the Court, or appearing at a conference or hearing.

Protection from Abuse (“PFA”) – the name of the statute, as well as the unit in Family Division, which assists victims of domestic violence in obtaining a protective order.

Respondent – the person who responds to a petition filed against him/her.

SCDU – Statewide Collection and Disbursement Unit, where support payments are collected and distributed. SCDU is located in the Harrisburg area, and is operated by contract with the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services.

Support – includes child support, spousal support and APL; all are calculated in accordance with the support guidelines.

Support Guidelines – The support guidelines are issued by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court and set forth the calculation by which the amount of support payments are determined. The calculation takes into consideration the net income of both parents. The support guidelines are found in the Pennsylvania Rules of Civil Procedure 1910.16-1 through 1910.16-7.

Support Order – A court order that states the amount of the support payments, how often the payments are to be made, other expenses that must be paid (such as health insurance and child care expenses), who is to pay, and how the payments are to be made.

Suspend (a court order) – to eliminate the effect of an order for a period of time.

TANF – Temporary Assistance for Needy Families; public assistance payments for children deprived of the financial support of one or both parents due to death, disability or continued absence from the home.

Terminate (a court order) – to end the order and the underlying obligation.

Trier of Fact – a judge or hearing officer who decides the facts of a case after listening to evidence.

Uniform Interstate Family Support Act (“UIFSA”) – a law that provides a mechanism for establishing, enforcing and modifying support orders, in addition to establishing paternity, when parents live in different states.

Vacate (a court order) – to declare a particular court order null and void, as if it were never entered.