

NEWS RELEASE

SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA

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RELEASE DATE: November 14, 2022

SAN FRANCISCO SUPERIOR COURT ANNOUNCES NEW PROGRAM FOR NON-CASH ALTERNATIVES IN CHILD SUPPORT CASES

SAN FRANCISCO - The San Francisco Superior Court today announced a new pilot project establishing an In-Kind Child Support calendar – a non-cash payment alternative to traditional monetary child support orders. The new program, designed in collaboration with the Director of the San Francisco Department of Child Support Services, is the first of its kind in California, and if successful, could be expanded throughout the state and the nation.

The pilot program will provide families the flexibility to determine how best to address the needs of their children. With the help of professional mediators, families will be able to reach agreement which will then become child support orders designed to meet the unique needs of each family and their children through “in-kind” support in lieu of monetary support. Examples of “in-kind” support can be purchasing food, clothing, providing childcare services, paying household bills, or anything that the court can assign a clear value to as agreed upon by the parents.

“I cannot tell you how many times in the course of my career I have heard the words ‘but I take care of my child and buy diapers, clothing, food and anything else needed,’” said Rebecca Wightman, the court’s Title IV-D Child Support Commissioner. “And I have had to explain to the litigant that such actions do not count. Under this program, now they can.”

MORE

SFSC/NEW CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES PROGRAM
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Over the past 18 months, Commissioner Wightman, Director Karen Roye and her team from the San Francisco Department of Child Support Services, formed a small collaborative group with representatives from the Office of the Family Law Facilitator and the Unified Family Court's Family Court Services, studying, planning, and developing the pilot program. The federal government has already authorized alternative support arrangements in tribal child support courts and the San Francisco Superior Court pilot was modeled after the principles underlying the benefits of such arrangements.

Allowing for non-cash payment alternatives, or "in-kind" support, empowers families to address the needs of their children in a way that best suits that individual family and respects the cultural values among families. The program is rooted in the basic principle that parents should take responsibility for caring for and supporting their children.

Participation in the project is voluntary and if a parent meets eligibility requirements they can be considered for enrollment in the program. The pilot is scheduled to begin this month.

If you would like to receive more information about the pilot program, please contact the San Francisco Department of Child Support Services at 415-356-2901.

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