



# Child Support in Massachusetts – When Does It End?

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Child support in Massachusetts is covered in [Chapter 208, Section 28 of the Massachusetts General Laws](#). Child support is an important part of any divorce when there are minor children, so parents should have at least a basic understanding of child support. Make sure your divorce attorney or divorce mediator explains child support to you if you are or may be paying or receiving child support.

**One of the most frequent questions asked about child support is “how long does child support last?”**

Child support normally lasts until a child is 18, although it may continue until age 23 if the child is principally dependent on the receiving parent and enrolled in an education program (up to an undergraduate degree). If a child has yet to graduate high school, but still in high school and dependent, child support would continue.

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The specific events that can trigger an end to child support eligibility should be specifically addressed in a Separation (Divorce) Agreement. Here is some typical language one might see in a Massachusetts divorce or separation agreement regarding the termination of child support:

(a) the child attaining the age of eighteen (18) or graduating from high school (whichever last occurs), except that if the child commences a formal full-time undergraduate education in a two or four year college or university, or any reasonably equivalent accredited course of study, and is matriculating successfully, the child shall not be deemed to be emancipated until the child graduates from or completes said college, university or course of study, or reaches the age of twenty-three (23), whichever first occurs; or

(b) the child's marriage;

(c) death of the child;

(d) the child's engagement in full-time employment, except that full-time employment during secondary or post-secondary graduate school vacations periods shall not be deemed emancipation; or

(e) the child's establishment of a residence not with the (primary custodial parent), except that the child's alternate living arrangements during post-secondary education (other than with the parent paying child support) shall not be deemed emancipation.

(f) entry into the military service of the United States (provided that emancipation shall be deemed to terminate upon discharge from such service; thereafter, emancipation shall be determined in accordance with other applicable provisions of this section);

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(g) in the event a child is emancipated by not being enrolled in a full-time course of college education, and subsequently returns to a full-time course of college education and has not yet attained age 23, he shall resume his unemancipated status until the first to occur of one of the events above.

(h) the child's receipt of governmental benefits intended to provide support for the said child (e.g. receipt of AFDC or SSDI payments).

Like in most areas of the law, things are not always as cut and dry as we might like. Situations can vary, so your circumstances may be different and this information is not intended as a substitute for legal advice that is specific to your actual situation!

For more information on the MA Child Support Guidelines and enforcement, [click here](#). If you have other questions regarding child support or custody, please call to arrange a meeting at either our Bedford, MA or Franklin, MA office.

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