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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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HOUSE BILL  
No. 98

Session of  
1985

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JOSEPHS AND PRESSMANN, JANUARY 23, 1985

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AS AMENDED ON SECOND CONSIDERATION, IN SENATE, OCTOBER 8, 1985

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AN ACT

1 Amending Title 23 (Domestic Relations) of the Pennsylvania  
2 Consolidated Statutes, adding provisions relating to support,  
3 custody, visitation, property and contracts; and making  
4 repeals.

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8 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
9 hereby enacts as follows:

10 Section 1. Title 23 of the Pennsylvania Consolidated  
11 Statutes is amended by adding parts to read:

12 PART V

13 SUPPORT, PROPERTY AND CONTRACTS

14 Chapter

15 ~~41. General Provisions~~ <—

16 43. Support Matters Generally

17 45. Reciprocal Enforcement of Support Orders

18 ~~CHAPTER 41~~ <—

19 ~~GENERAL PROVISIONS~~

20 ~~Sec.~~

21 ~~4101. Liability for debts contracted before marriage.~~

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25 ~~4105. Loans between married persons.~~

26 ~~4106. Construction of chapter.~~

27 ~~§ 4101. Liability for debts contracted before marriage.~~

28 ~~(a) General rule. A spouse is not liable for the debts of~~  
29 ~~the other spouse contracted before marriage, unless voluntarily~~  
30 ~~assumed in writing.~~

~~(b) Liability of property unaffected. This chapter does not protect the property of a married person from liability for debts contracted by or in the name of the married person by any person authorized to so contract.~~

~~§ 4102. Liability for purchases by married person.~~

~~(a) General rule. Except as provided in subsection (b), married persons are not liable jointly for purchases by one of them unless they voluntarily assume joint debts.~~

~~(b) Necessaries. Married persons are jointly and severally liable for debts contracted by one of them for necessities for themselves or their children, except in cases where a child or spousal support order has been entered or a written agreement has been executed.~~

~~§ 4103. Liability on judgment against married person.~~

~~A judgment against a married person individually before or during marriage does not bind or constitute a lien upon the real property of the other spouse.~~

~~§ 4104. Right of married person to separate earnings.~~

~~A married person has the right to the separate benefit and use of the separate earnings of that person except with respect to legal support obligations due to other persons.~~

~~§ 4105. Loans between married persons.~~

~~A married person may loan the other spouse money from the separate estate of the married person and take in security therefor a judgment or mortgage against the property of the other spouse which shall be valid as otherwise provided by law.~~

~~§ 4106. Construction of chapter.~~

~~This chapter shall not be construed to affect the act of April 2, 1980 (P.L.63, No.26), known as the Divorce Code.~~

SUPPORT MATTERS GENERALLY

Subchapter

A. General Provisions

B. Support

C. Proceedings Generally

D. Proceedings Against Entireties Property

SUBCHAPTER A

GENERAL PROVISIONS

Sec.

4301. Scope of chapter.

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4304. Cooperation of Commonwealth agencies.

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4306. DUTIES OF DISTRICT ATTORNEY.

4307. STATE INCOME TAX INTERCEPT.

§ 4301. Scope of chapter.

(a) General rule.--Actions or proceedings provided by this chapter are in addition to and not in substitution of actions or proceedings provided by unsuspended statutes where there is desertion or a failure to perform a duty to support.

(b) Persons in institutions and foster homes.--Matters relating to the support of persons living in public or private institutions or receiving foster home care and who are otherwise entitled to support under this chapter shall be determined by the court under the statutes pertaining to those institutions or foster homes.

§ 4302. Definitions.

The following words and phrases when used in this chapter shall have the meanings given to them in this section unless the

1 context clearly indicates otherwise:

2 "Employer." Includes an individual, partnership,  
3 association, corporation, trust, Federal agency, Commonwealth  
4 agency or political subdivision paying or obligated to pay  
5 income.

6 "Income." Includes compensation for services, including, but  
7 not limited to, wages, salaries, fees, compensation in kind,  
8 commissions and similar items; income derived from business;  
9 gains derived from dealings in property; interest; rents;  
10 royalties; dividends; annuities; income from life insurance and  
11 endowment contracts; all forms of retirement; pensions; income  
12 from discharge of indebtedness; distributive share of  
13 partnership gross income; income in respect of a decedent;  
14 income from an interest in an estate or trust; military  
15 retirement benefits; railroad employment retirement benefits;  
16 social security benefits; temporary and permanent disability  
17 benefits; workmen's compensation and unemployment compensation.

18 "Net income." Gross income minus taxes and any other  
19 deductions mandated by the employer as a condition of  
20 employment.

21 "Order of support." Includes assistance imposed or imposable  
22 by law or by any court order, whether interlocutory or final,  
23 whether incidental to a proceeding for divorce, separate  
24 maintenance, action for failure to support a child born out of  
25 wedlock or otherwise.

26 "Support." Care, maintenance and financial assistance.  
27 § 4303. Information to consumer credit bureau.

28 (a) General rule.--Information regarding the amount of  
29 arrearages owed by an obligor shall be made available to any  
30 consumer credit bureau organization upon the request of the



1 organization, subject to the following:

2 (1) Where the amount of arrearages is less than \$1,000,  
3 information regarding the amount shall be made available at  
4 the option of the domestic relations ~~office~~ SECTION of the <—  
5 county in which the order of support was entered.

6 (2) The information shall be available only after the  
7 obligor owing the arrearages has been notified of the  
8 proposed action and given a period not to exceed 20 days to  
9 contest the accuracy of the information. The notice shall be  
10 as provided by local rule of the court of common pleas.

11 (b) Fee.--A fee for furnishing the information in an amount  
12 not exceeding the actual cost thereof may be imposed on the  
13 requesting organization by the domestic relations office.

14 § 4304. Cooperation of Commonwealth agencies.

15 Upon request of THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE ON BEHALF OF <—  
16 a domestic relations ~~office~~ SECTION, Commonwealth agencies shall <—  
17 provide information regarding wages, employer and address  
18 information for the purposes of carrying out this chapter, <—  
19 UNLESS SUCH INFORMATION MUST REMAIN CONFIDENTIAL PURSUANT TO  
20 OTHER PROVISIONS OF LAW.

21 § 4305. General administration of support matters.

22 Subject to any inconsistent general rules and to the  
23 supervision and direction of the court, the domestic relations  
24 section shall have the power and duty to:

25 (1) Process all complaints received under Chapter 45  
26 (relating to reciprocal enforcement of support orders).

27 (2) Make such investigation as may be necessary.

28 (3) Take charge of any obligor before or after hearing,  
29 as may be directed by the court.

30 (4) Collect and pay over to the persons entitled thereto

1 moneys received pursuant to support proceedings.

2 (5) Keep a full and complete record of all support  
3 proceedings, including orders of the court.

4 (6) Keep account of all payments made under order of  
5 court and promptly bring to the attention of the court and  
6 the district attorney any default in compliance with any  
7 order of court.

8 (7) Make effective the orders of support entered.

9 (8) Furnish the court with such information and  
10 assistance as it may require and generally perform such  
11 services as it may direct relating to support proceedings.

12 (9) INFORM BOTH PARTIES TO A SUPPORT ACTION THAT <—  
13 GUIDELINES AS SPECIFIED IN SECTION 4322 (RELATING TO SUPPORT  
14 GUIDELINES) ARE AVAILABLE IN THE DOMESTIC RELATIONS SECTION.

15 § 4306. DUTIES OF DISTRICT ATTORNEY.

16 (A) GENERAL RULE.--THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY SHALL AT ALL TIMES  
17 AID IN THE ENFORCEMENT OF THE DUTY OF SUPPORT AND SHALL  
18 COOPERATE WITH THE DOMESTIC RELATIONS SECTION IN THE  
19 PRESENTATION OF COMPLAINTS OR IN ANY PROCEEDING DESIGNED TO  
20 OBTAIN COMPLIANCE WITH ANY ORDER OF THE COURT.

21 (B) REPRESENTATION OF COMPLAINANT.--THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY,  
22 UPON THE REQUEST OF THE COURT OR A COMMONWEALTH OR LOCAL PUBLIC  
23 WELFARE OFFICIAL, SHALL REPRESENT ANY COMPLAINANT IN ANY  
24 PROCEEDING UNDER THIS SUBCHAPTER.

25 § 4307. STATE INCOME TAX INTERCEPT.

26 THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE SHALL HAVE THE AUTHORITY TO  
27 IMPLEMENT A STATE INCOME TAX REFUND INTERCEPT PROGRAM PURSUANT <—  
28 TO SECTION 466(A)(3) OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT (PUBLIC LAW 74-  
29 271, 42 U.S.C. § 666(A)(3)) WHEN, IN THE JUDGMENT OF THE  
30 DEPARTMENT, IT IS COST EFFECTIVE TO DO SO.

SUBCHAPTER B

SUPPORT

Sec.

4321. Liability for support.

4322. Support guidelines.

4323. Support of emancipated child.

4324. Inclusion of medical support.

4325. Payment of order of support.

§ 4321. Liability for support.

Subject to the provisions of this chapter:

(1) Married persons are liable for the support of each other according to their respective abilities to provide support as provided by law.

(2) Parents are liable for the support of their children who are unemancipated and 18 years of age or younger.

(3) Parents may be liable for the support of their children who are 18 years of age or older.

§ 4322. Support guidelines.

The courts of common pleas shall develop guidelines for child and spousal support so that persons similarly situated shall be treated similarly. The guidelines shall be based upon the reasonable needs of the child or spouse seeking support and the ability of the obligor to provide support. In determining the reasonable needs of the child or spouse seeking support and the ability of the obligor to provide support, the guidelines shall place primary emphasis on the net incomes and earning capacities of the parties, with allowable deviations for unusual needs, extraordinary expenses and other factors, such as the parties' assets, as warrant special attention.

§ 4323. Support of emancipated child.

1 (a) Emancipated child.--A court shall not order either or  
2 both parents to pay for the support of a child if the child is  
3 emancipated.

4 (b) Marital status of parents immaterial.--In making an  
5 order for the support of a child, no distinction shall be made  
6 because of the marital status of the parents.

7 § 4324. Inclusion of medical support.

8 In addition to periodic support payments, the court may  
9 require that an obligor pay a designated percentage of a child's  
10 or spouse's reasonable and necessary health care expenses. If  
11 health care coverage is available through an obligor OR OBLIGEE <—  
12 at no cost as a benefit of employment or at a reasonable cost,  
13 the court ~~may~~ SHALL order an obligor OR OBLIGEE to provide or <—  
14 extend health care coverage to a child or spouse. Upon failure  
15 of the obligor to make this payment or reimburse the custodial  
16 parent or spouse and after compliance with procedural due  
17 process requirement, the court shall treat the amount as  
18 arrearages.

19 § 4325. Payment of order of support.

20 An order of support shall direct payment to be made payable  
21 to or payment to be made to the domestic relations office for  
22 transmission to the obligee or for transmission directly to a  
23 public body or public or private agency whenever the care,  
24 maintenance and assistance of the obligee is provided for by the  
25 public body or public or private agency.

26 SUBCHAPTER C

27 PROCEEDINGS GENERALLY

28 Sec.

29 4341. Commencement of support actions or proceedings.

30 4342. Expedited procedure.

1 4343. Paternity.  
2 4344. Contempt for failure of obligor to appear.  
3 4345. Contempt for noncompliance with support order.  
4 4346. Contempt for noncompliance with visitation  
5 or partial custody order.  
6 4347. Security for attendance or performance.  
7 4348. Attachment of income.  
8 4349. Consolidation of proceedings.  
9 4350. Effect of appeal.  
10 4351. Costs and fees.  
11 4352. Continuing jurisdiction over support orders.  
12 4353. Duty to report.

13 § 4341. Commencement of support actions or proceedings.

14 A support action or proceeding under this chapter shall be  
15 commenced in the manner prescribed by the Rules of Civil  
16 Procedure governing actions of support.

17 § 4342. Expedited procedure.

18 (a) General rule.--The Supreme Court shall by general rule  
19 provide for expedited procedures for the determination of  
20 support. The procedures shall include an office conference; a  
21 conference summary to the court by the hearing officer; an  
22 opportunity for the court to enter an order without hearing the  
23 parties; and an opportunity for the parties to demand a full  
24 hearing by the court.

25 (b) Alternate procedure.--The Supreme Court shall also  
26 provide an alternate expedited procedure which may be adopted by  
27 local rule of the courts of common pleas. The procedure shall  
28 include an office conference; an evidentiary hearing before a  
29 hearing officer who shall be an attorney; a transcript of the  
30 testimony; a report and recommendation to the court by the

1 hearing officer; and an opportunity for the filing of exceptions  
2 with and argument before the court.

3 § 4343. Paternity.

4 (a) Determination.--Where the paternity of a child born out  
5 of wedlock is disputed, the determination of paternity shall be  
6 made by the court in a civil action without a jury unless either  
7 party demands trial by jury. The burden of proof shall be by a  
8 preponderance of the evidence.

9 (b) Limitation of actions.--An action or proceeding under  
10 this chapter to establish the paternity of a child born out of  
11 wedlock must be commenced within 18 years of the date of birth  
12 of the child.

13 § 4344. Contempt for failure of obligor to appear.

14 A person who willfully fails or refuses to appear in response  
15 to a duly served order or other process under this chapter may,  
16 as prescribed by general rule, be adjudged in contempt. Contempt  
17 shall be punishable by any one or more of the following:

18 (1) Imprisonment for a period not to exceed six months.

19 (2) A fine not to exceed \$500.

20 (3) Probation for a period not to exceed six months.

21 § 4345. Contempt for noncompliance with support order.

22 (a) General rule.--A person who willfully fails to comply  
23 with any order under this chapter, except an order subject to  
24 section 4344 (relating to contempt for failure of obligor to  
25 appear), may, as prescribed by general rule, be adjudged in  
26 contempt. Contempt shall be punishable by any one or more of the  
27 following:

28 (1) Imprisonment for a period not to exceed six months.

29 (2) A fine not to exceed \$500.

30 (3) Probation for a period not to exceed six months.

1 (b) Condition for release.--An order committing a defendant  
2 to jail under this section shall specify the condition the  
3 fulfillment of which will result in the release of the obligor.  
4 § 4346. Contempt for noncompliance with visitation or partial  
5 custody order.

6 (a) General rule.--A party who willfully fails to comply  
7 with any visitation or partial custody order may, as proscribed  
8 by general rule, be adjudged in contempt. Contempt shall be  
9 punishable by any one or more of the following:

10 (1) Imprisonment for a period not to exceed six months.

11 (2) A fine not to exceed \$500.

12 (3) Probation for a period not to exceed six months.

13 (b) Condition for release.--An order committing a person to  
14 jail under this section shall specify the condition which, when  
15 fulfilled, will result in the release of the obligor.

16 § 4347. Security for attendance or performance.

17 At any stage of the proceedings under this chapter, upon  
18 affidavit filed that the obligor is about to leave this  
19 Commonwealth or the judicial district or, where in the judgment  
20 of the court, the obligor has habitually failed to comply with  
21 court orders under this chapter, the court may, as prescribed by  
22 general rule, issue appropriate process directing that the  
23 obligor be brought before the court and may direct that the  
24 obligor give security to appear when directed by the court or to  
25 comply with any order of the court.

26 § 4348. Attachment of income.

27 (a) Existing orders.--As to orders of support entered prior  
28 to the effective date of this part, the obligor's income shall  
29 be attached PURSUANT TO THIS SECTION where the obligor is in  
30 arrears in an amount equal to or greater than one month's

<—

1 support obligation or at such earlier date as the court may  
2 designate. ~~This attachment shall be consistent with~~ <—  
3 ~~constitutional due process requirements.~~ THE DOMESTIC RELATIONS <—  
4 SECTIONS SHALL MAIL NOTICE TO OBLIGORS OF EXISTING ORDERS  
5 INFORMING THEM OF THE PASSAGE OF THIS PART AND THE ATTACHMENT  
6 PROCEDURE WHICH SHALL BE APPLIED IF THE OBLIGOR FALLS INTO  
7 ARREARS AS SPECIFIED BY THIS SECTION. THIS NOTICE REQUIREMENT  
8 SHALL NOT APPLY TO OBLIGORS WHOSE EXISTING ORDERS OF SUPPORT  
9 CONTAIN MANDATORY ATTACHMENT PROVISIONS.

10 (b) Future orders.--As of ~~October 1, 1985~~ THE EFFECTIVE DATE <—  
11 OF THIS PART, all orders of support entered or modified by  
12 courts of this Commonwealth shall provide for the mandatory  
13 attachment of the obligor's income where the obligor is in  
14 arrears in an amount equal to or greater than one month's  
15 support obligation or at such earlier date as the court may  
16 designate. The court may, on its own motion, order the  
17 attachment of the obligor's income where the court has a  
18 reasonable basis to believe the obligor will not comply with the  
19 order of support. In making this determination, the court may  
20 consider evidence of the person's previous violations of orders  
21 entered ~~pursuant to this chapter~~ IN ANY JURISDICTION OR EVIDENCE <—  
22 THAT THE OBLIGOR HAS ATTEMPTED TO CONCEAL INCOME OR TO TRANSFER,  
23 CONVEY OR ENCUMBER PROPERTY IN ORDER TO REDUCE THE OBLIGOR'S  
24 SUPPORT OBLIGATION. Attachment shall occur without amendment to  
25 the order of support.

26 (c) Assessment of penalty.--~~Where an obligor is subject to~~ <—  
27 ~~attachment under this section, the court may impose a penalty of~~  
28 ~~up to 10% to be added to the amount which is 30 days or more in~~  
29 ~~arrears. Any such penalty shall be imposed on the amount in~~  
30 ~~arrears at the time of the attachment.~~ THE COURT MAY IMPOSE A <—



1 PENALTY OF NOT MORE THAN 10% ON ANY AMOUNT IN ARREARS FOR 30  
2 DAYS OR MORE IF THE COURT DETERMINES THAT THE ARREARAGE WAS  
3 WILLFUL.

4 (d) Arrearages.--If support arrearages exist at the time of  
5 the entry of the order, the order shall specify all of the  
6 following:

7 (1) To whom an arrearage is owed and the amount of the  
8 arrearage.

9 (2) The period of time for which the arrearage is  
10 calculated.

11 (3) The amount of periodic support to be applied to  
12 current support and the amount to be applied to arrearages.

13 (4) If support arrearages are owed to more than one  
14 obligee, how payments are to be divided and in which  
15 priority.

16 (5) A direction that all payments are to be credited to  
17 current support obligations first, with any payment in excess  
18 to be applied to arrearages.

19 (e) Attachment process.--

20 (1) The obligor shall be given advance notice prior to  
21 the attachment of his income. Such notice shall specify all  
22 of the following:

23 (i) The amount to be withheld.

24 (ii) That the order of attachment shall apply to  
25 current and future employers.

26 (iii) That the grounds for contesting the order of  
27 attachment shall be limited to mistakes of fact. Mistakes  
28 of fact shall be limited to errors in the amount of  
29 current support owed, errors in the amount of arrearage,  
30 an attachment in excess of the maximum amount set forth

1 in subsection (g) or mistaken identity of the obligor.

2 (iv) That attachment shall occur in all cases within  
3 ten days of the issuance of the advance notice.

4 (v) A notice of how and when the order may be  
5 contested.

6 (2) To contest the order, the obligor must appear before  
7 the domestic relations section no later than ten days after  
8 issuance of the initial notice at which time it will be  
9 determined if a mistake of fact has occurred. If so, the  
10 order shall be modified accordingly.

11 (f) Request of obligor.--The court shall also order the  
12 attachment of income where the obligor so requests.

13 ~~(g) Maximum amount.~~

<—

14 ~~(1) The maximum part of the aggregate disposable~~  
15 ~~earnings of an individual for any workweek which is subject~~  
16 ~~to attachment to enforce any order for the support of any~~  
17 ~~person shall not exceed:~~

18 ~~(i) Where such individual is supporting his spouse~~  
19 ~~or dependent child, other than a spouse or child with~~  
20 ~~respect to whose support such order is used, 50% of such~~  
21 ~~individual's disposable earnings for that week.~~

22 ~~(ii) Where such individual is not supporting such a~~  
23 ~~spouse or dependent child described in subparagraph (i),~~  
24 ~~60% of such individual's disposable earnings for that~~  
25 ~~week.~~

26 ~~(2) With respect to the disposable earnings of any~~  
27 ~~individual for any workweek, the 50% specified in paragraph~~  
28 ~~(1)(i) shall be deemed to be 55% and the 60% specified in~~  
29 ~~paragraph (1)(ii) shall be deemed to be 65%, if and to the~~  
30 ~~extent that such earnings are subject to attachment to~~

~~enforce a support order with respect to a period which is  
prior to the 12 week period which ends with the beginning of  
such workweek.~~

(G) MAXIMUM AMOUNT.--THE MAXIMUM AMOUNT OF ANY ATTACHMENT  
UNDER THIS SECTION SHALL NOT EXCEED THE LIMITS SET FORTH IN THE  
CONSUMER CREDIT PROTECTION ACT (PUBLIC LAW 90-321, 15 U.S.C. §  
1601 ET SEQ.).

(h) Termination.--The court may order the termination of an  
order of attachment in any of the following instances:

(1) The support obligation has terminated and the total  
arrearages are paid.

(2) Where the payee cannot be located and it becomes  
impossible to forward payments.

(3) The result would be unconscionable.

(i) Notice to employer.--The employer of an obligor shall be  
given notice of the attachment as provided by the Rules of Civil  
Procedure governing support. This notice shall include reference  
to subsections (g), (k), (l) ~~and~~, (n) AND (O) and all of the  
following:

(1) The amount to be attached.

(2) That the attachment shall be implemented as soon as  
possible and no later than 14 days from the issuance of the  
notice to the employer.

(3) THAT THE ATTACHMENT PAYMENT MUST BE SENT TO THE  
DOMESTIC RELATIONS SECTION WITHIN TEN DAYS OF THE DATE THE  
OBLIGOR IS PAID.

~~(3)~~ (4) That the attachment order is binding upon the  
employer until further notice.

~~(4)~~ (5) That the employer may combine attachment  
payments into a single payment to the domestic relations

1 section and separately identify the portions attributable to  
2 each obligor.

3 (6) THAT THE EMPLOYER MUST NOTIFY THE DOMESTIC RELATIONS <—  
4 SECTION WHEN THE OBLIGOR TERMINATES EMPLOYMENT AND PROVIDE  
5 HIS LAST KNOWN ADDRESS AND THE NEW EMPLOYER'S NAME AND  
6 ADDRESS, IF KNOWN.

7 (j) Effect of compliance by employer.--Compliance by an  
8 employer with an order of attachment of income operates as a  
9 discharge of the liability of the employer to the obligor as to  
10 that portion of the employment income of the obligor affected.

11 The employer may deduct from the income of the obligor ~~3%~~ 2% of <—  
12 the amount paid under the order for reimbursement of the expense  
13 in complying with the order. In no case shall the money be  
14 deducted from the amount of the support order.

15 (k) Effect of noncompliance by employer.--

16 (1) An employer or officer or employee thereof who  
17 willfully fails to comply with an order of attachment under  
18 this chapter may, as prescribed by general rule, be adjudged  
19 in contempt and committed to jail or fined by the court.

20 (2) The employer shall be liable for any amount the  
21 employer willfully fails to withhold from income due an  
22 employee under an order of attachment of income and any  
23 amount which is withheld from such income but not forwarded  
24 to the domestic relations office.

25 (3) The court may, pursuant to general rule, attach  
26 funds or property of an employer.

27 (l) Disciplinary action by employer prohibited.--

28 (1) When an order of attachment on income is about to be  
29 or has been entered, an employer or officer or employee  
30 thereof shall not use the attachment or possibility thereof

1 as a basis, in whole or in part, for the discharge of an  
2 employee or for any disciplinary action against or demotion  
3 of, an employee. In case of a violation of this subsection,  
4 the employer or officer or employee thereof may be adjudged  
5 in contempt and committed to jail or fined by the court.

6 (2) Any employee aggrieved by a violation of this  
7 subsection shall have the substantive right to bring an  
8 action for damages by reason of such violation in a court of  
9 competent jurisdiction.

10 (m) Certify income.--Upon request of the domestic relations  
11 section, the employer shall report and certify the income of an  
12 employee.

13 (n) Bonding.--The court may attach forms of income other  
14 than wages, assets including spendthrift trusts, and private, <—  
15 PUBLIC, STATE, COUNTY and municipal pensions, and include <—  
16 bonding or other requirements in cases involving obligors whose  
17 income is from sources other than wages, in order to assure that  
18 support owed by obligors in this Commonwealth will be collected  
19 without regard to the types of these obligors' income or the  
20 nature of their income-producing activities.

21 (o) Priority of attachment.--An order of attachment ~~under~~ <—  
22 ~~this chapter~~ FOR SUPPORT shall have priority over any <—  
23 attachment, execution, garnishment or wage assignment.

24 (p) Nonresidents.--Income attachment shall be available to  
25 obligees residing outside this Commonwealth where the income of  
26 the obligor is derived in this Commonwealth.

27 § 4349. Consolidation of proceedings.

28 In order to facilitate frequent and unimpeded contact between  
29 children and parents, a judge may consolidate with a support  
30 action or proceeding any proceeding commenced for visitation

1 rights, sole or shared custody, temporary or permanent custody  
2 or any other matters pertaining to support authorized by law  
3 which fairly and expeditiously may be determined and disposed of  
4 in the support action or proceeding.

5 § 4350. Effect of appeal.

6 An appeal from an order of support entered pursuant to this  
7 chapter shall not operate as a supersedeas unless so ordered by  
8 the court.

9 § 4351. Costs and fees.

10 (a) General rule.--When it appears to the court that either  
11 party or both parties are financially able to pay costs and  
12 fees, the court may impose the costs and fees on either party or  
13 both parties.

14 (b) Lack of good cause for failure to pay on time.--If the  
15 court determines that the person subject to a child support  
16 order did not have good cause for failing to make child support  
17 payments on time, it may further assess costs and reasonable  
18 attorney fees incurred by the party seeking to enforce the  
19 order.

20 § 4352. Continuing jurisdiction over support orders.

21 (a) General rule.--The court making an order of support  
22 shall at all times maintain jurisdiction of the matter for the  
23 purpose of enforcement of the order and for the purpose of  
24 increasing, decreasing, modifying or rescinding the order  
25 without limiting the right of the obligee to institute  
26 additional proceedings for support in any county in which the  
27 obligor resides or in which property of the obligor is situated.

28 (b) Transfer of action.--Where neither party to the action  
29 resides or is employed in the county wherein the support action  
30 was filed, the court may transfer the matter to ~~either of the~~

<—

1 ~~two counties wherein the parties reside or are~~ ANY COUNTY  
2 WHEREIN EITHER PARTY RESIDES OR WHERE THE DEFENDANT IS REGULARLY  
3 employed. If one of the parties resides outside of this  
4 Commonwealth, the action may be transferred to the county of  
5 residence or employment of the other party.

6 (c) Foreign support orders.--The court may modify registered  
7 foreign support orders when the foreign court declines,  
8 surrenders or determines that it is an inappropriate forum to  
9 modify the decree. The court may at any time remit, correct or  
10 reduce the amount of arrearages.

11 (d) Applicability.--This section applies to all support  
12 orders whether entered under this chapter or any other statute.  
13 § 4353. Duty to report.

14 A party to a support proceeding shall notify the domestic  
15 relations section in writing or by personal appearance within  
16 seven days of any change of employment, change of personal  
17 address or change of address of any child receiving support.  
18 Willful failure to comply with this section may be adjudged in  
19 contempt of court pursuant to section 4345 (relating to contempt  
20 for noncompliance with support order).

21 CHAPTER 45

22 RECIPROCAL ENFORCEMENT OF

23 SUPPORT ORDERS

24 Sec.

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5 4538. Official to represent obligee.  
6 4539. Registration procedure.  
7 4540. Effect and enforcement of registered order.

8 § 4501. Short title and purposes of chapter.

9 (a) Short title.--This chapter shall be known and may be  
10 cited as the Revised Uniform Reciprocal Enforcement of Support  
11 Act (1968).

12 (b) Purposes.--The purposes of this chapter are to improve  
13 and extend by reciprocal legislation the enforcement of duties  
14 of support.

15 § 4502. Definitions.

16 The following words and phrases when used in this chapter  
17 shall have the meanings given to them in this section unless the  
18 context clearly indicates otherwise:

19 "Court." The courts of common pleas of this Commonwealth and  
20 when the context requires, the court of any other state as  
21 defined in a substantially similar reciprocal law.

22 "Duty of support." A duty of support whether imposed or  
23 imposable by law or by order, decree, or judgment of any court,  
24 whether interlocutory or final or whether incidental to an  
25 action for divorce, separation, separate maintenance, or  
26 otherwise and includes the duty to pay arrearages of support  
27 past due and unpaid.

28 "Governor." Includes any person performing the functions of  
29 Governor or the executive authority of any state covered by this  
30 chapter.

1 "Initiating court." The court in which a proceeding is  
2 commenced.

3 "Initiating state." A state in which a proceeding pursuant  
4 to this or a substantially similar reciprocal law is commenced.

5 "Law." Includes both common and statutory law.

6 "Obligee." A person to whom a duty of support is owed or a  
7 person including a state or political subdivision that has  
8 commenced a proceeding for enforcement of an alleged duty of  
9 support or for registration of a support order. It is immaterial  
10 if the person to whom a duty of support is owed is a recipient  
11 of public assistance.

12 "Obligor." Any person owing a duty of support or against  
13 whom a proceeding for the enforcement of a duty of support or  
14 registration of a support order is commenced.

15 "Prosecuting attorney." The public official in the  
16 appropriate place who has the duty to enforce laws relating to  
17 the failure to provide for the support of any person.

18 "Register." To record in the Registry of Foreign Support  
19 Orders.

20 "Registering court." Any court of this Commonwealth in which  
21 a support order of a rendering state is registered.

22 "Rendering state." A state in which the court has issued a  
23 support order for which registration is sought or granted in the  
24 court of another state.

25 "Responding court." The court in which a responsive  
26 proceeding is commenced.

27 "Responding state." A state in which any responsive  
28 proceeding pursuant to the proceeding in the initiating state is  
29 commenced.

30 "State." Includes a state, territory, or possession of the

1 United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of  
2 Puerto Rico, and any foreign jurisdiction in which this or a  
3 substantially similar reciprocal law is in effect.

4 "Support order." Any judgment, decree, or order of support  
5 in favor of an obligee whether temporary or final, or subject to  
6 modification, revocation, or remission, regardless of the kind  
7 of action or proceeding in which it is entered.

8 § 4503. Remedies additional to those now existing.

9 The remedies provided in this chapter are in addition to and  
10 not in substitution for any other remedies.

11 § 4504. Extent of duties of support.

12 Duties of support arising under the law of this Commonwealth,  
13 when applicable under section 4507 (relating to choice of law),  
14 bind the obligor present in this Commonwealth regardless of the  
15 presence or residence of the obligee.

16 § 4505. Interstate rendition.

17 The Governor of this Commonwealth may:

18 (1) demand of the Governor of another state the  
19 surrender of a person found in that state who is charged  
20 criminally in this Commonwealth with failing to provide for  
21 the support of any person; or

22 (2) surrender on demand by the Governor of another state  
23 a person found in this Commonwealth who is charged criminally  
24 in that state with failing to provide for the support of any  
25 person.

26 Provisions for extradition of criminals not inconsistent with  
27 this chapter apply to the demand even if the person whose  
28 surrender is demanded was not in the demanding state at the time  
29 of the commission of the crime and has not fled therefrom. The  
30 demand, the oath, and any proceedings for extradition pursuant

1 to this section need not state or show that the person whose  
2 surrender is demanded has fled from justice or at the time of  
3 the commission of the crime was in the demanding state.

4 § 4506. Conditions of interstate rendition.

5 (a) Obligor in another state.--Before making the demand upon  
6 the Governor of another state for the surrender of a person  
7 charged criminally in this Commonwealth with failing to provide  
8 for the support of a person, the Governor of this Commonwealth  
9 may require any prosecuting attorney of this Commonwealth to  
10 satisfy him that at least 60 days prior thereto the obligee  
11 initiated proceedings for support under this chapter or that the  
12 initiation of any proceeding would be of no avail.

13 (b) Obligor in this Commonwealth.--If, under a substantially  
14 similar law, the Governor of another state makes a demand upon  
15 the Governor of this Commonwealth for the surrender of a person  
16 charged criminally in that state with failure to provide for the  
17 support of a person, the Governor may require any prosecuting  
18 attorney to investigate the demand and to report to him whether  
19 proceedings for support have been initiated or would be  
20 effective. If it appears to the Governor that a proceeding would  
21 be effective but has not been initiated he may delay honoring  
22 the demand for a reasonable time to permit the initiation of a  
23 proceeding.

24 (c) Effect of support proceedings.--If proceedings have been  
25 initiated and the person demanded has prevailed therein the  
26 Governor may decline to honor the demand. If the obligee  
27 prevailed and the person demanded is subject to a support order,  
28 the Governor may decline to honor the demand if the person  
29 demanded is complying with the support order.

30 § 4507. Choice of law.

1 Duties of support applicable under this chapter are those  
2 imposed under the laws of any state where the obligor was  
3 present for the period during which support is sought. The  
4 obligor is presumed to have been present in the responding state  
5 during the period for which support is sought until otherwise  
6 shown.

7 § 4508. Remedies of state or political subdivision furnishing  
8 support.

9 If a state or a political subdivision furnishes support to an  
10 individual obligee it has the same right to initiate a  
11 proceeding under this chapter as the individual obligee for the  
12 purpose of securing reimbursement for support furnished and of  
13 obtaining continuing support.

14 § 4509. How duties of support are enforced.

15 All duties of support, including the duty to pay arrearages,  
16 are enforceable by a proceeding under this chapter including a  
17 proceeding for civil contempt. The defense that the parties are  
18 immune to suit because of their relationship as husband and wife  
19 or parent and child is not available to the obligor.

20 § 4510. Jurisdiction.

21 Jurisdiction of any proceeding under this chapter is vested  
22 in the courts of common pleas.

23 § 4511. Petition for support.

24 (a) Contents.--The petition shall be verified and shall  
25 state the name and, so far as known to the obligee, the address  
26 and circumstances of the obligor, the persons for whom support  
27 is sought, and all other pertinent information. The obligee may  
28 include in or attach to the petition any information which may  
29 help in locating or identifying the obligor including a  
30 photograph of the obligor, a description of any distinguishing

1 marks on his person, other names and aliases by which he has  
2 been or is known, the name of his employer, his fingerprints,  
3 and his social security number.

4 (b) Filing.--The petition may be filed in the appropriate  
5 court of any state in which the obligee resides. The court may  
6 decline or refuse to accept and forward the petition on the  
7 ground that it should be filed with some other court of this or  
8 any other state where there is pending another action for  
9 divorce, separation, annulment, dissolution, habeas corpus,  
10 adoption, or custody between the same parties or where another  
11 court has already issued a support order in some other  
12 proceeding and has retained jurisdiction for its enforcement.  
13 § 4512. Officials to represent obligee.

14 If this Commonwealth is acting as an initiating state the  
15 prosecuting attorney upon the request of the court, or a  
16 Commonwealth or local welfare official shall represent the  
17 obligee in any proceeding under this chapter. If the prosecuting  
18 attorney neglects or refuses to represent the obligee, the  
19 Department of Public Welfare may undertake the representation.  
20 § 4513. Petition for a minor.

21 A petition on behalf of a minor obligee may be executed and  
22 filed by a person having legal custody of the minor without  
23 appointment as guardian ad litem.

24 § 4514. Duty of initiating court.

25 If the initiating court finds that the petition sets forth  
26 facts from which it may be determined that the obligor owes a  
27 duty of support and that a court of the responding state may  
28 obtain jurisdiction of the obligor or his property it shall so  
29 certify and cause three copies of the petition and its  
30 certificate and one copy of this chapter to be sent to the

1 responding court. Certification shall be in accordance with the  
2 requirements of the initiating state. If the name and address of  
3 the responding court is unknown and the responding state has an  
4 information agency comparable to that established in the  
5 initiating state it shall cause the copies to be sent to the  
6 state information agency or other proper official of the  
7 responding state, with a request that the agency or official  
8 forward them to the proper court and that the court of the  
9 responding state acknowledge their receipt to the initiating  
10 court.

11 § 4515. Costs and fees.

12 An initiating court shall not require payment of either a  
13 filing fee or other costs from the obligee but may request the  
14 responding court to collect fees and costs from the obligor. A  
15 responding court shall not require payment of a filing fee or  
16 other costs from the obligee but it may direct that all fees and  
17 costs requested by the initiating court and all fees and costs  
18 incurred in this Commonwealth when acting as a responding state,  
19 including fees for filing of pleadings, service of process,  
20 seizure of property, stenographic or duplication service, or  
21 other service supplied to the obligor, be paid in whole or in  
22 part by the obligor or by the state or political subdivision  
23 thereof. These costs or fees do not have priority over amounts  
24 due to the obligee.

25 § 4516. Jurisdiction by arrest.

26 (a) General rule.--If the court of this Commonwealth  
27 believes that the obligor may flee it may:

28 (1) as an initiating court, request in its certificate  
29 that the responding court obtain the body of the obligor by  
30 appropriate process; or

1           (2) as a responding court, obtain the body of the  
2 obligor by appropriate process. Thereupon it may release him  
3 upon his own recognizance or upon his giving a bond in an  
4 amount set by the court to assure his appearance at the  
5 hearing. When the obligor is detained for the hearing, the  
6 hearing shall be held within 15 days from the date of arrest.  
7 The court may compel the attendance at a hearing by  
8 attachment process directed to the sheriff or other proper  
9 officer of the county directing and commanding that the  
10 obligor be brought before the court at such time as the court  
11 may direct. If the court, whenever an attachment is issued in  
12 any county as provided in this paragraph, shall find after  
13 hearing that the obligor has willfully neglected or refused  
14 to comply with any order of the court, the court may adjudge  
15 such person in contempt of court and, in its discretion, may  
16 commit such person to the county jail or house of correction  
17 until compliance with such order, but in no case for a period  
18 exceeding six months. The court in its order shall state the  
19 condition upon which fulfillment will result in the release  
20 of the obligor.

21       (b) Philadelphia cases.--In the first judicial district the  
22 obligor shall be brought before the court forthwith, but in any  
23 event within 48 hours or two court working days, whichever is  
24 the longer from the time the obligor is taken in custody  
25 pursuant to the attachment; at which time, if the court shall  
26 find, after hearing, that the obligor is about to leave the  
27 jurisdiction, the court may direct that he give security, by one  
28 or more sureties, to appear when directed by the court, or to  
29 comply with any order of court.

30 § 4517. State information agency.



1 (a) General rule.--The Department of Public Welfare is  
2 designated as the state information agency under this chapter.  
3 It shall:

4 (1) Compile a list of the courts and their addresses in  
5 this Commonwealth having jurisdiction under this chapter and  
6 transmit it to the state information agency of every other  
7 state which has adopted this or a substantially similar law.  
8 Upon the adjournment of each session of the General Assembly  
9 the agency shall distribute copies of any amendments to this  
10 chapter and a statement of their effective date to all other  
11 state information agencies.

12 (2) Maintain a register of lists of courts received from  
13 other states and transmit copies thereof promptly to every  
14 court in this Commonwealth having jurisdiction under this  
15 chapter.

16 (3) Forward to the court in this Commonwealth which has  
17 jurisdiction over the obligor or his property petitions,  
18 certificates and copies of the laws it receives from courts  
19 or information agencies of other states.

20 (b) Inquiry for obligor.--If the state information agency  
21 does not know the location of the obligor or his property in the  
22 state and no state location service is available it shall use  
23 all means at its disposal to obtain this information, including  
24 the examination of official records in the state and other  
25 sources such as telephone directories, real property records,  
26 vital statistics records, police records, requests for the name  
27 and address from employers who are able or willing to cooperate,  
28 records of motor vehicle license offices, requests made to the  
29 tax offices, both State and Federal, where such offices are able  
30 to cooperate, and requests made to the Social Security

1 Administration as permitted by the Social Security Act as  
2 amended.

3 (c) Department of Public Welfare prosecution.--After the  
4 deposit of three copies of the petition and certificate and one  
5 copy of the law of the initiating state with the clerk of the  
6 appropriate court, if the state information agency knows or  
7 believes that the prosecuting attorney is not prosecuting the  
8 case diligently it shall inform the Department of Public  
9 Welfare, who may undertake the representation.

10 § 4518. Duty of the court and officials of this Commonwealth as  
11 responding state.

12 (a) Docketing and notice.--After the responding court  
13 receives copies of the petition, certificate and law from the  
14 initiating court the clerk of the court shall docket the case  
15 and notify the prosecuting attorney of his action.

16 (b) District attorney prosecution.--The prosecuting attorney  
17 shall prosecute the case diligently. He shall take all action  
18 necessary in accordance with the laws of this Commonwealth to  
19 enable the court to obtain jurisdiction over the obligor or his  
20 property and shall request the clerk of the court to set a time  
21 and place for a hearing and give notice thereof to the obligor  
22 in accordance with law.

23 (c) Department of Public Welfare prosecution.--If the  
24 prosecuting attorney neglects or refuses to represent the  
25 obligee, the Department of Public Welfare may undertake the  
26 representation.

27 § 4519. Further duties of court and officials of responding  
28 state.

29 (a) General rule.--The prosecuting attorney on his own  
30 initiative shall use all means at his disposal to locate the

1 obligor or his property, and if because of inaccuracies in the  
2 petition or otherwise the court cannot obtain jurisdiction the  
3 prosecuting attorney shall inform the court of what he has done  
4 and request the court to continue the case pending receipt of  
5 more accurate information or an amended petition from the  
6 initiating court.

7 (b) Forwarding of documents.--If the obligor or his property  
8 is not found in the county, and the prosecuting attorney  
9 discovers that the obligor or his property may be found in  
10 another county of this Commonwealth or in another state he shall  
11 so inform the court. Thereupon the clerk of the court shall  
12 forward the documents received from the court in the initiating  
13 state to a court in the other county or to a court in the other  
14 state or to the information agency or other proper official of  
15 the other state with a request that the documents be forwarded  
16 to the proper court. All powers and duties provided by this  
17 chapter apply to the recipient of the documents so forwarded. If  
18 the clerk of a court of this Commonwealth forwards documents to  
19 another court he shall forthwith notify the initiating court.

20 (c) Notice of no information.--If the prosecuting attorney  
21 has no information as to the location of the obligor or his  
22 property he shall so inform the initiating court.

23 § 4520. Hearing and continuance.

24 If the obligee is not present at the hearing and the obligor  
25 denies owing the duty of support alleged in the petition or  
26 offers evidence constituting a defense the court, upon request  
27 of either party, shall continue the hearing to permit evidence  
28 relative to the duty to be adduced by either party by deposition  
29 or by appearing in person before the court. The court may  
30 designate the judge of the initiating court as a person before

1 whom a deposition may be taken.

2 § 4521. Immunity from criminal prosecution.

3 If at the hearing the obligor is called for examination as an  
4 adverse party and he declines to answer upon the ground that his  
5 testimony may tend to incriminate him, the court may require him  
6 to answer, in which event he is immune from criminal prosecution  
7 with respect to matters revealed by his testimony, except for  
8 perjury committed in this testimony.

9 § 4522. Evidence of husband and wife.

10 Laws attaching a privilege against the disclosure of  
11 communications between husband and wife are inapplicable to  
12 proceedings under this chapter. Husband and wife are competent  
13 witnesses and may be compelled to testify to any relevant  
14 matter, including marriage and parentage.

15 § 4523. Rules of evidence.

16 In any hearing for the civil enforcement of this chapter the  
17 court is governed by the rules of evidence applicable in a civil  
18 matter in the court of common pleas. If the action is based on a  
19 support order issued by another court a certified copy of the  
20 order shall be received as evidence of the duty of support,  
21 subject only to any defenses available to an obligor under  
22 section 4527 (relating to paternity) or to a defendant in an  
23 action or a proceeding to enforce a foreign money judgment. The  
24 determination or enforcement of a duty of support owed to one  
25 obligee is unaffected by any interference by another obligee  
26 with rights of custody or visitation granted by a court.

27 § 4524. Order of support.

28 If the responding court finds a duty of support it may order  
29 the obligor to furnish support or reimbursement therefor and  
30 subject the property of the obligor to the order. Support orders

1 made pursuant to this chapter shall require that payments be  
2 made to the clerk of the court of the responding state, or to  
3 other officer designated by the court. The court and prosecuting  
4 attorney of any county in which the obligor is present or has  
5 property have the same powers and duties to enforce the order as  
6 have those of the county in which it was first issued. If  
7 enforcement is impossible or cannot be completed in the county  
8 in which the order was issued, the prosecuting attorney shall  
9 send a certified copy of the order to the prosecuting attorney  
10 of any county in which it appears that proceedings to enforce  
11 the order would be effective. The prosecuting attorney to whom  
12 the certified copy of the order is forwarded shall proceed with  
13 enforcement and report the results of the proceedings to the  
14 court first issuing the order.

15 § 4525. Responding court to transmit copies to initiating  
16 court.

17 The responding court shall cause a copy of all support orders  
18 to be sent to the initiating court.

19 § 4526. Additional powers of responding court.

20 In addition to the foregoing powers set forth in this chapter  
21 a responding court may subject the obligor to any terms and  
22 conditions proper to assure compliance with its orders and in  
23 particular to:

24 (1) Require the obligor to furnish a cash deposit or a  
25 bond of a character and amount to assure payment of any  
26 amount due.

27 (2) Require the obligor to report personally and to make  
28 payments at specific intervals to the clerk of the court, or  
29 to other officer designated by the court.

30 (3) Punish under the power of contempt the obligor who

violates any order of the court. No such punishment shall be administered until the court shall find, after hearing, that the violation was willful.

§ 4527. Paternity.

If the obligor asserts as a defense that he is not the father of the child for whom support is sought and it appears to the court that the defense is not frivolous, and if both of the parties are present at the hearing or the proof required in the case indicates that the presence of either or both of the parties is not necessary, the court may adjudicate the paternity issue. Otherwise the court may adjourn the hearing until the paternity issue has been adjudicated.

§ 4528. Additional duties of responding court.

A responding court has the following duties which may be carried out through the clerk of the court, or other officer designated by the court:

(1) To transmit to the initiating court any payment made by the obligor pursuant to any order of the court or otherwise.

(2) To furnish to the initiating court upon request a certified statement of all payments made by the obligor.

§ 4529. Additional duty of initiating court.

An initiating court shall receive and disburse forthwith all payments made by the obligor or sent by the responding court. This duty may be carried out through the clerk of the court, or other officer designated by the court.

§ 4530. Proceedings not to be stayed.

A responding court shall not stay the proceeding or refuse a hearing under this chapter because of any pending or prior action or proceeding for divorce, separation, annulment,

1 dissolution, habeas corpus, adoption, or custody in this  
2 Commonwealth or any other state. The court shall hold a hearing  
3 and may issue a support order pendente lite. In aid thereof it  
4 may require the obligor to give a bond for the prompt  
5 prosecution of the pending proceeding. If the other action or  
6 proceeding is concluded before the hearing in the instant  
7 proceeding and the judgment therein provides for the support  
8 demanded in the petition being heard the court must take into  
9 account in placing its support order the amount allowed in the  
10 other action or proceeding. Thereafter the court shall not stay  
11 enforcement of its support order because of the retention of  
12 jurisdiction for enforcement purposes by the court in the other  
13 action or proceeding.

14 § 4531. Application of payments.

15 A support order made by a court of this Commonwealth pursuant  
16 to this chapter does not nullify and is not nullified by a  
17 support order made by a court of this Commonwealth pursuant to  
18 any other law or by a support order made by a court of any other  
19 state pursuant to a substantially similar law or any other law,  
20 regardless of priority of issuance, unless otherwise  
21 specifically provided by the court. Amounts paid for a  
22 particular period pursuant to any support order made by the  
23 court of another state shall be credited against the amounts  
24 accruing or accrued for the same period under any support order  
25 made by the court of this Commonwealth.

26 § 4532. Effect of participation in proceeding.

27 Participation in any proceeding under this chapter does not  
28 confer jurisdiction upon any court over any of the parties  
29 thereto in any other proceeding.

30 § 4533. Intrastate application.

1        This chapter applies if both the obligee and the obligor are  
2    in this Commonwealth but in different counties. If the court of  
3    the county in which the petition is filed finds that the  
4    petition sets forth facts from which it may be determined that  
5    the obligor owes a duty of support and finds that a court of  
6    another county in this Commonwealth may obtain jurisdiction over  
7    the obligor or his property, the clerk of the court shall send  
8    the petition and a certification of the findings to the court of  
9    the county in which the obligor or his property is found. The  
10   clerk of the court of the county receiving these documents shall  
11   notify the prosecuting attorney of their receipt. The  
12   prosecuting attorney and the court in the county to which the  
13   copies are forwarded then shall have duties corresponding to  
14   those imposed upon them when acting for this Commonwealth as a  
15   responding state.

16   § 4534. Appeals.

17        (a) By Department of Public Welfare.--If the Department of  
18   Public Welfare is of the opinion that a support order is  
19   erroneous, or inadequate, or presents a question of law  
20   warranting an appeal in the public interest, it may:

21            (1) perfect an appeal to the proper appellate court if  
22        the support order was issued by a court of this Commonwealth;  
23        or

24            (2) if the support order was issued in another state,  
25        cause the appeal to be taken in the other state.

26   In either case expenses of appeal taken by such department may  
27   be paid from funds appropriated to the Department of Public  
28   Welfare.

29        (b) By obligee.--In the event the Department of Public  
30   Welfare fails or refuses to file an appeal on behalf of the



1 obligee, such obligee may file such appeal as provided in  
2 subsection (a).

3 (c) By obligor.--The obligor shall have the right to file an  
4 appeal to the proper appellate court if the support order was  
5 issued by a court of this Commonwealth, or may cause the appeal  
6 to be taken in the other state, if the support order was issued  
7 in another state.

8 § 4535. Additional remedies.

9 If the duty of support is based on a foreign support order,  
10 the obligee has the additional remedies provided in the  
11 following sections of this chapter.

12 § 4536. Registration.

13 The obligee may register the foreign support order in a court  
14 of this Commonwealth in the manner, with the effect, and for the  
15 purposes provided in this chapter.

16 § 4537. Registry of foreign support orders.

17 The clerk of the court shall maintain a registry of foreign  
18 support orders in which he shall file foreign support orders.

19 § 4538. Official to represent obligee.

20 (a) General rule.--If this Commonwealth is acting either as  
21 a rendering or a registering state the prosecuting attorney upon  
22 the request of the court, or a Commonwealth or other local  
23 welfare official, shall represent the obligee in proceedings  
24 under this chapter.

25 (b) Department of Public Welfare prosecution.--If the  
26 prosecuting attorney neglects or refuses to represent the  
27 obligee, the Department of Public Welfare may undertake the  
28 representation.

29 § 4539. Registration procedure.

30 (a) General rule.--An obligee seeking to register a foreign

1 support order in a court of this Commonwealth shall transmit to  
2 the clerk of the court:

3 (1) One certified copy of the order with all  
4 modifications thereof.

5 (2) One copy of the reciprocal enforcement of support  
6 law of the state in which the order was made.

7 (3) A statement verified and signed by the obligee,  
8 showing the post office address of the obligee, the last  
9 known place of residence and post office address of the  
10 obligor, the amount of support remaining unpaid, a  
11 description and the location of any property of the obligor  
12 available upon execution, and a list of the states in which  
13 the order is registered.

14 Upon receipt of these documents the clerk of the court, without  
15 payment of a recording fee or other cost to the obligee, shall  
16 record them in the registry of foreign support orders. The  
17 recording constitutes registration under this chapter.

18 (b) Notice.--Within ten days after the registration the  
19 clerk of the court shall send by certified or registered mail to  
20 the obligor at the address given a notice of the registration  
21 with a copy of the registered support order and the post office  
22 address of the obligee. He shall also docket the case and notify  
23 the prosecuting attorney of his action. The prosecuting attorney  
24 shall proceed diligently to enforce the order.

25 § 4540. Effect and enforcement of registered order.

26 (a) Effect.--Upon registration the registered foreign  
27 support order shall be treated in the same manner as a support  
28 order issued by a court of this Commonwealth. It has the same  
29 effect and is subject to the same procedures, defenses, and  
30 proceedings for reopening, vacating, or staying as a support

1 order of this Commonwealth and may be enforced and satisfied in  
2 like manner.

3 (b) Challenge to order.--The obligor has 20 days after the  
4 mailing of notice of the registration in which to petition the  
5 court to vacate the registration or for other relief. If he does  
6 not so petition the registered support order is confirmed.

7 (c) Procedure.--At the hearing to enforce the registered  
8 support order the obligor may present only matters that would be  
9 available to him as defenses in an action to enforce a foreign  
10 money judgment. If he shows to the court that an appeal from the  
11 order is pending or will be taken or that a stay of execution  
12 has been granted the court shall stay enforcement of the order  
13 until the appeal is concluded, the time for appeal has expired,  
14 or the order is vacated, upon satisfactory proof that the  
15 obligor has furnished security for payment of the support  
16 ordered as required by the rendering state. If he shows to the  
17 court any ground upon which enforcement of a support order of  
18 this Commonwealth may be stayed the court shall stay enforcement  
19 of the order for an appropriate period if the obligor furnishes  
20 the same security for payment of the support ordered that is  
21 required for a support order of this Commonwealth.

22 PART VI

23 CHILDREN AND MINORS

24 Chapter

25 53. Custody

26 CHAPTER 53

27 CUSTODY

28 Subchapter

29 A. General Provisions

30 B. (Reserved)

1 SUBCHAPTER A

2 GENERAL PROVISIONS

3 Sec.

4 5301. Declaration of policy.

5 5302. Definitions.

6 5303. Award of sole custody.

7 5304. Award of shared custody.

8 5305. Counseling.

9 5306. Plan for implementation of custody order.

10 5307. Denial of custody under agreement or plan.

11 5308. Removal of party or child from jurisdiction.

12 5309. Access to records and information.

13 5310. Modification of existing custody orders.

14 5311. When parent deceased.

15 5312. When parents' marriage is dissolved or parents  
16 are separated.

17 5313. When child has resided with grandparents.

18 5314. Exception for adopted children.

19 § 5301. Declaration of policy.

20 The General Assembly declares that it is the public policy of  
21 this Commonwealth, when in the best interest of the child, to  
22 assure a reasonable and continuing contact of the child with  
23 both parents after a separation or dissolution of the marriage  
24 and the sharing of the rights and responsibilities of child  
25 rearing by both parents and continuing contact of the child or  
26 children with grandparents when a parent is deceased, divorced  
27 or separated.

28 § 5302. Definitions.

29 The following words and phrases when used in this subchapter  
30 shall have the meanings given to them in this section unless the

1 context clearly indicates otherwise:

2 "Child." Any unemancipated person under 18 years of age.

3 "Legal custody." The legal right to make major decisions  
4 affecting the best interest of a minor child, including, but not  
5 limited to, medical, religious and educational decisions.

6 "Partial custody." The right to take possession of a child  
7 away from the custodial parent for a certain period of time.

8 "Physical custody." The actual physical possession and  
9 control of a child.

10 "Shared custody." An order awarding shared legal or shared  
11 physical custody, or both, of a child in such a way as to assure  
12 the child of frequent and continuing contact with and physical  
13 access to both parents.

14 "Visitation." The right to visit a child. The term does not  
15 include the right to remove a child from the custodial parent's  
16 control.

17 § 5303. Award of sole custody.

18 In making an order for custody to either parent individually,  
19 the court shall consider, among other factors, which parent is  
20 more likely to encourage, permit and allow frequent and  
21 continuing contact and physical access between the noncustodial  
22 parent and the child. The court shall award sole custody when it  
23 is in the best interest of the child.

24 § 5304. Award of shared custody.

25 An order for shared custody may be awarded by the court when  
26 it is in the best interest of the child:

27 (1) upon application of one or both parents;

28 (2) when the parties have agreed to an award of shared  
29 custody; or

30 (3) in the discretion of the court.

1 § 5305. Counseling.

2 (a) General rule.--The court may require the parents to  
3 attend counseling sessions and may consider the recommendations  
4 of the counselors prior to awarding sole or shared custody.  
5 These counseling sessions may include, but shall not be limited  
6 to, discussions of the responsibilities and decisionmaking  
7 arrangements involved in both sole and shared custody and the  
8 suitability of each arrangement to the capabilities of each  
9 parent or both parents.

10 (b) Temporary custody.--The court may temporarily award  
11 custody to either parent or both parents pending resolution of  
12 any counseling.

13 (c) Report.--The court may require the counselor to submit a  
14 report if the court desires and within such reasonable time as  
15 the court determines.

16 § 5306. Plan for implementation of custody order.

17 The court, in its discretion, may require the parents to  
18 submit to the court a plan for the implementation of any custody  
19 order made under this subchapter. Upon the request of either  
20 parent or the court, the domestic relations section of the court  
21 or other party or agency approved by the court shall assist in  
22 the formulation and implementation of the plan.

23 § 5307. Denial of custody under agreement or plan.

24 When the court declines to enter an order awarding custody  
25 either as agreed to by the parents or under the plan developed  
26 by the parents, the court shall state its reasons for denial on  
27 the record.

28 § 5308. Removal of party or child from jurisdiction.

29 If either party intends to or does remove himself or the  
30 child from this Commonwealth after a custody order has been

1 made, the court, on its own motion or upon motion of either  
2 party, may review the existing custody order.

3 § 5309. Access to records and information.

4 (a) General rule.--Except as provided in subsections (b) and  
5 (c), each parent shall be provided access to all the medical,  
6 dental, religious or school records of the child, the residence  
7 address of the child and of the other parent and any other  
8 information that the court deems necessary.

9 (b) Court determination not to release information.--The  
10 court, in its discretion, may determine not to release any part  
11 or parts of the information in this section but in doing so must  
12 state its reason for denial on the record.

13 (c) Nondisclosure of confidential information.--The court  
14 shall not order that the address of a shelter for battered  
15 spouses and their dependent children or otherwise confidential  
16 information of a domestic violence counselor be disclosed to the  
17 defendant or his counsel or any party to the proceedings.

18 § 5310. Modification of existing custody orders.

19 Any order for the custody of the child of a marriage entered  
20 by a court in this Commonwealth or any state may, subject to the  
21 jurisdictional requirements set forth in 42 Pa.C.S. §§ 5342  
22 (relating to purposes and construction of subchapter) and 5344  
23 (relating to jurisdiction), be modified at any time to an order  
24 of shared custody in accordance with this subchapter.

25 § 5311. When parent deceased.

26 If a parent of an unmarried child is deceased, the parents or  
27 grandparents of the deceased parent may be granted reasonable  
28 partial custody or visitation rights, or both, to the unmarried  
29 child by the court upon a finding that partial custody or  
30 visitation rights, or both, would be in the best interest of the

1 child and would not interfere with the parent-child  
2 relationship. The court shall consider the amount of personal  
3 contact between the parents or grandparents of the deceased  
4 parent and the child prior to the application.

5 § 5312. When parents' marriage is dissolved or parents are  
6 separated.

7 In all proceedings for dissolution, subsequent to the  
8 commencement of the proceeding and continuing thereafter or when  
9 parents have been separated for six months or more, the court  
10 may, upon application of the parent or grandparent of a party,  
11 grant reasonable partial custody or visitation rights, or both,  
12 to the unmarried child if it finds that visitation rights or  
13 partial custody, or both, would be in the best interest of the  
14 child and would not interfere with the parent-child  
15 relationship. The court shall consider the amount of personal  
16 contact between the parents or grandparents of the party and the  
17 child prior to the application.

18 § 5313. When child has resided with grandparents.

19 If an unmarried child has resided with his grandparents or  
20 great-grandparents for a period of 12 months or more, and is  
21 subsequently removed from the home by his parents, the  
22 grandparents or great-grandparents may petition the court for an  
23 order granting them reasonable partial custody or visitation  
24 rights, or both, to the child. The court shall grant the  
25 petition if it finds that visitation rights would be in the best  
26 interest of the child and would not interfere with the parent-  
27 child relationship.

28 § 5314. Exception for adopted children.

29 Sections 5311 (relating to when parent deceased), 5312  
30 (relating to when parents' marriage is dissolved or parents are



1 separated) and 5313 (relating to when child has resided with  
2 grandparents) shall not apply if the child has been adopted by a  
3 person other than a stepparent or grandparent. Any visitation  
4 rights granted pursuant to this section prior to the adoption of  
5 the child shall be automatically terminated upon such adoption.

6 Section 2. Savings provision.--(a) This act does not affect  
7 the ability to enforce any right to penalty or punish any  
8 offense under the authority of statutes repealed by this act.

9 (b) This act does not repeal or modify sections 1, 2, 3, 4,  
10 5 and 6 of the act of June 24, 1937 (P.L.2045, No.397), known as  
11 The Support Law.

12 Section 3. Repeals.--(a) The following acts or parts of  
13 acts are repealed:

14 Act of February 22, 1718 (1 Sm.L. 99, Ch. 226), entitled "An  
15 act concerning feme-sole traders."

16 ~~Act of April 11, 1848 (P.L.536, No.372), entitled "A~~ <—  
17 ~~supplement to an act, entitled 'An Act relative to the Le~~  
18 ~~Raysville Phalanx,' passed March, Anno Domini one thousand eight~~  
19 ~~hundred and forty seven, and relative to obligors and obligees,~~  
20 ~~to secure the right of married women, in relation to~~  
21 ~~defalcation, and to extend the boundaries of the borough of~~  
22 ~~Ligonier."~~

23 ~~Act~~ SECTION 20 OF THE ACT of April 22, 1850 (P.L.549, <—  
24 No.342), entitled "A supplement to an act, entitled 'An Act to  
25 prevent waste in certain cases within this commonwealth,' passed  
26 the twenty-ninth day of March, one thousand eight hundred and  
27 twenty-two; to land and building associations; giving the court  
28 of Susquehanna county jurisdiction in a certain case; relative  
29 to the service of process in certain cases; to party walls in  
30 West Philadelphia; to the proof of a certain will; to the sale

1 and purchase of certain burial grounds in Philadelphia; to the  
2 laying of gas pipes in the district of Moyamensing; to the  
3 release of certain sureties in Erie county; to the State Lunatic  
4 hospital; relative to the service of process against sheriffs;  
5 to the rights of married women; to ground rents; and relating to  
6 foreign insurance companies."

7 ~~Act of April 15, 1851 (P.L.669, No.358), entitled "An act to~~ <—  
8 ~~incorporate a company to erect a bridge over the river~~  
9 ~~Schuylkill at Spring Mill, in Montgomery county, relative to the~~  
10 ~~nineteenth section of 'An act regulating certain election~~  
11 ~~districts, &c,' approved March twenty ninth, eighteen hundred~~  
12 ~~and fifty one, to school directors in Philadelphia county, to~~  
13 ~~actions for damages sustained by injuries done to the person by~~  
14 ~~negligence or default, relative to the accounts of John Humes,~~  
15 ~~deceased, to authorize the trustees of the Seventh Presbyterian~~  
16 ~~church of Philadelphia to convey certain real estate, to~~  
17 ~~security for moneys loaned by wives to husbands, to unpaid~~  
18 ~~school taxes in Bradford county, and relative to service of~~  
19 ~~process on agents of joint stock companies."~~

20 Act of May 4, 1855 (P.L.430, No.456), entitled "An act  
21 relating to certain duties and rights of Husband and Wife, and  
22 Parents and Children."

23 Act of April 11, 1856 (P.L.315, No.334), entitled "An act  
24 relating to the rights of property of Husband and Wife."

25 Act of April 1, 1863 (P.L.212, No.225), entitled "A  
26 supplement to the act to secure the rights of married women,  
27 passed the eleventh day of April, Anno Domini one thousand eight  
28 hundred and forty-eight."

29 ~~Act of April 3, 1872 (P.L.35, No.24), entitled "An act~~ <—  
30 ~~securing to married women their separate earnings."~~

1 Act of June 11, 1879 (P.L.126, No.129), entitled "An act  
2 relative to actions brought by husband and wife, or by the wife  
3 alone, for her separate property, in cases of desertion."

4 Act of June 8, 1893 (P.L.344, No.284), entitled "An act  
5 relating to husband and wife, enlarging her capacity to acquire  
6 and dispose of property, to sue and be sued, and to make a last  
7 will, and enabling them to sue and to testify against each other  
8 in certain cases."

9 Act of July 9, 1897 (P.L.212, No.171), entitled "An act  
10 authorizing married women, living separate and apart from their  
11 husbands under separation agreements, to convey and encumber  
12 their real estate without the joinder of their husbands."

13 ~~Act~~ SECTION 2 OF THE ACT of June 4, 1901 (P.L.425, No.233), <—  
14 entitled "An act regulating trusts arising from the payment of  
15 the purchase money of land by one person, and the taking of the  
16 legal title in the name of another."

17 Act of May 23, 1907 (P.L.227, No.176), entitled "An act  
18 relating to husband and wife, and to enlarge the rights and  
19 remedies of married women in case of desertion or non-support by  
20 husband."

21 Act of June 3, 1911 (P.L.631, No.241), entitled "An act  
22 authorizing a married woman to make conveyances of real estate  
23 to her husband, and validating all such conveyances heretofore  
24 made."

25 Act of May 1, 1913 (P.L.146, No.97), entitled "An act  
26 enabling a married woman, who has been deserted, abandoned, or  
27 driven from her home by her husband, to sue her husband, upon  
28 any cause of action whatsoever; and making such wife a competent  
29 witness against the husband in such case."

30 Act of June 12, 1913 (P.L.502, No.330), entitled "An act to

1 increase the powers of courts in summary proceedings for  
2 desertion or non-support of wives, children, or aged parents, by  
3 directing that imprisonment in such cases be at hard labor in  
4 such institution as the court shall name, with the wages payable  
5 to the wives, children, or parents; providing for the  
6 disbursement of moneys collected on forfeitures of bonds, bail-  
7 bonds, or recognizances; and by empowering such courts to  
8 appoint desertion probation officers for the performance of such  
9 duties as the court shall direct; and providing for the payment  
10 of the expenses incident to the carrying out of this act."

11 Act of May 28, 1915 (P.L.639, No.279), entitled "An act to  
12 permit a married woman whose husband has lived separate and  
13 apart from her for one year or more, and who during that time  
14 has not been supported by her husband, to become a feme sole  
15 trader."

16 Act of June 2, 1919 (P.L.363, No.177), entitled "An act to  
17 quiet the title of real estate by providing that the sale of  
18 real estate of any bankrupt or insolvent debtor shall pass the  
19 title of such real estate freed from any claims for, or rights  
20 to, any statutory interest inchoate of the spouse of the  
21 bankrupt or insolvent debtor."

22 Act of May 10, 1921 (P.L.434, No.210), entitled "An act to  
23 empower courts of competent jurisdiction to issue writs of  
24 execution against property of defendant, and attachment  
25 execution or in the nature of attachment execution against  
26 trusts, including those commonly known as spendthrift trusts, no  
27 matter when such trusts were created, in cases where an order,  
28 award, or decree has been made against a husband for the support  
29 of his wife or children or both; making such attachment  
30 execution against trusts a continuing lien and levy for fifty

1 per centum of such money or property until the order, judgment,  
2 or decree is paid in full with costs; and abolishing the benefit  
3 of the exemption law in such cases."

4 Section 7 of the act of June 24, 1937 (P.L.2045, No.397),  
5 known as The Support Law.

6 Act of July 17, 1957 (P.L.969, No.417), entitled "An act  
7 enlarging the rights and powers of married women as to property  
8 and contracts and repealing certain provisions."

9 ~~Act of August 7, 1961 (P.L.961, No.426), entitled "An act~~ <—  
10 ~~authorizing minor spouses to join their adult spouse in the~~  
11 ~~conveyance or mortgaging of their real estate and to execute~~  
12 ~~bonds or other obligations in connection therewith and~~  
13 ~~validating such action taken."~~

14 Act of November 5, 1981 (P.L.322, No.115), known as the  
15 Custody and Grandparents Visitation Act.

16 18 Pa.C.S. Ch. 43 Subch. B (relating to nonsupport).

17 42 Pa.C.S. Ch. 67 (relating to support proceedings).

18 (b) All other acts and parts of acts are repealed insofar as  
19 they are inconsistent with this act.

20 Section 4. Effective date.--This act shall take effect in 90  
21 days.