



## Fair child support can be more accessible to those who need it most.

Child support provides a pathway to economic stability for thousands of single parent households, the majority of which are headed by single mothers. In fact, child support can represent **over half** of a custodial parent's income. **Yet, in New York State, getting a fair child support order is far from accessible, typically involving a lengthy and complex pursuit through Family Court.**

At Her Justice, we believe the civil justice system should work for everyone. That's why we're committed to ensuring that the systems through which parents obtain child support produce the most favorable outcomes, and that the process is as equitable, empowering, and as efficient as possible.

To achieve this goal, we've proposed legislation that would enable parents to agree on child support through an expedited settlement conference process. Ultimately, we seek to create a **straightforward** process for **undisputed** cases. Learn more below.



**"I wish it would not take so much time. There is so much time wasted in court."**

— Victoria, Her Justice client.

## The Need for Reform

### Why go through lengthy litigation when there is a more efficient alternative?

In New York, child support is determined with a **one-size-fits-all approach** with both complicated and straightforward cases litigated in court. Some cases are best served through litigation because parents may not agree on how much income is available to support their children, and judges are needed to review evidence. In other cases, however, parents already agree on available income, making lengthy litigation in court unnecessary.

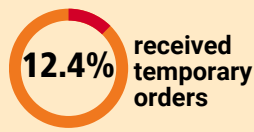
Despite this difference, **200,000** requests for child support pass through the same courthouse doors **each year** in New York. This causes serious delays and inefficiencies that many parents cannot afford, as they often must miss work and pay for childcare to appear in court for a succession of brief hearings that can drag on for **months** before finally reaching resolution.

**Parents in New York deserve a greater menu of options including a single court-based settlement conference as an alternative to lengthy litigation for those who can agree on child support, which will make the system more efficient for all.**

## The data shows an inefficient system.

Most child support hearings in Family Court are adjourned or dismissed without orders, causing parents to wait even longer for fair support.

In 2017, the Her Justice Policy team led a research project where nearly **800** child support case appearances were observed over 2 years. Of those observed:



and appearances lasted, on average, just slightly more than **11 minutes.**

# The pandemic further exposed systemic flaws.

Court closures during the pandemic brought the system to a standstill. In 2020, there were **45% fewer** filings in Family Court compared to pre-COVID levels and this trend continued in 2021 and 2022.

Considering that child support represents **one-third of cases** heard in New York Family Courts, it's clear that closures barred a significant portion of vulnerable families from obtaining critical income at a time when they needed it most.

**With the courts now open and faced with a massive backlog of cases, it's time to reassess how our system can swiftly and efficiently get families the support they need for their children, when they need it.**



**"The pandemic arrived when I was supposed to have my court hearing in March of 2020 to set the official order for child support, but everything stopped... I could not get a new court date until August of 2021."**

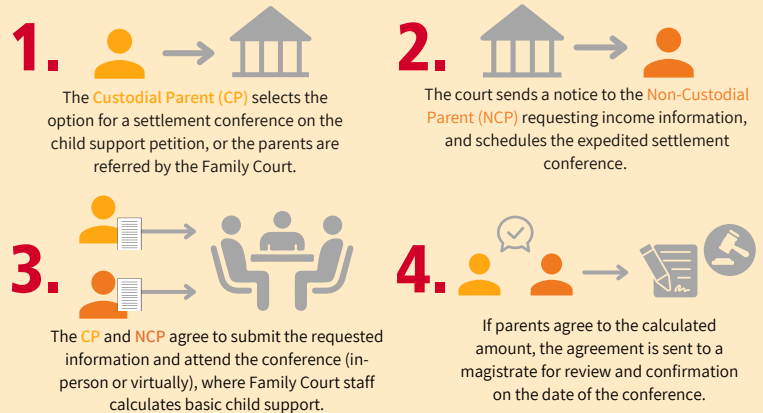
*– Mary, Her Justice Client*

## Court resources should be devoted to more complicated cases.

*Creating an expedited path for parents with simpler child support cases would:*

- **Free up** the courts' limited and valuable resources to better serve those that require judicial intervention in litigation.
- Address the **backlogs** worsened by the pandemic and help parents achieve a fair support order much faster than if they were to wait for their turn to be heard in court before a magistrate.
- Provide an opportunity to reach an agreement in **one sitting**, rather than having to appear for multiple hearings due to inefficiencies in the court system.

### What does an Expedited Settlement Conference look like?



## You can help us advance a fairer justice system for child support.

Contact Her Justice to learn more about this important legislation and ways to support this important policy reform:

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