

**ARJA Rule 32**  
**Rule 32. Child support guidelines.**  
**2009 Comment for Schedule of Basic Child Support Obligations**

The original schedule of basic child-support obligations was developed through research sponsored by the National Center for State Courts. The revised schedule of basic child-support obligations was updated and is based on the latest extensive economic research on the cost of supporting children at various income levels. Specifically, the revised schedule of basic child-support obligations is based on estimates of child-rearing expenditures that were developed applying the Rothbarth methodology to 1998-2004 expenditures data and updated to 2007 price levels. The revised schedule of basic child-support obligations is also based on gross income and has been adjusted for Alabama's income distribution relative to the income distribution for the United States. It also incorporates the 2007 federal and State of Alabama personal income-tax withholding formulas.

Other assumptions incorporated in the revised schedule of basic child-support obligations include:

(1) **TAX EXEMPTIONS.** The schedule of basic child-support obligations assumes that the custodial parent will take the federal and state income-tax exemptions for the children in his or her custody;

(2) **HEALTH-CARE COSTS.** In respect to health-care costs, the schedule of basic child-support obligations assumes unreimbursed medical costs of \$250 per child per year. These assumed costs include medical expenses not covered or reimbursed by health insurance, Medicaid, or All Kids, or insurance from another public entity up to \$250 per child per year;

(3) **VISITATION.** The schedule of basic child-support obligations is premised on the assumption that the noncustodial parent will exercise customary visitation rights, including summer visitation. Any abatement of child support because of extraordinary visitation should be based on visitation in excess of customary visitation; and

(4) **SELF-SUPPORT RESERVE.** The schedule of basic child-support obligations incorporates a self support reserve of \$851 per month. It is based on the 2007 federal poverty guidelines for one person but is also realigned to consider Alabama incomes in the same manner as the revised schedule. The adjustment is incorporated into the schedule for combined gross incomes below: \$1,100 for one child; \$1,350 for two children; \$1,550 for three children; \$1,700 for four children; \$1,900 for five children; and \$2,100 for six children. The evidence on child-rearing expenditures indicates a higher amount is expended on children below these income levels than what is shown in the schedule of basic child-support obligations.

The entire revised schedule of basic child-support obligations includes combined gross incomes ranging from \$0 to \$20,000 a month. Rule 32(C)(1) provides that the court may use its discretion in determining child support when the combined adjusted gross income is below the lowermost levels or above the uppermost levels of the schedule. To further the consistency of awards, a court may wish to issue an order establishing minimum child support obligations for

combined adjusted gross incomes of less than \$800. When the combined adjusted gross income exceeds the uppermost limit of the schedule, the amount of child support should not be extrapolated from the figures given in the schedule, but should be left to the discretion of the court.

The revised schedule of basic child-support obligations assumes that each child will have \$250 in unreimbursed medical expenses each year up to \$750 for three children per year and \$75 per each additional child thereafter. This includes ordinary medical expenditures such as over-the-counter medicines, Band-Aids, and co-pays for well visits. In providing for the payment of deductibles and/or other noncovered medical expenses by the parties, it should be assumed that those expenses are in excess of this amount.



## Official USDA Food Plans: Cost of Food at Home at Four Levels, U.S. Average, July 2014<sup>1</sup>

Age-gender groups	Weekly cost <sup>2</sup>				Monthly cost <sup>2</sup>			
	Thrifty plan	Low-cost plan	Moderate-cost plan	Liberal plan	Thrifty plan	Low-cost plan	Moderate-cost plan	Liberal plan
<b>Individuals<sup>3</sup></b>								
<b>Child:</b>								
1 year	22.00	29.30	33.20	40.60	95.30	127.00	143.80	176.10
2-3 years	24.00	30.80	37.00	45.10	103.90	133.30	160.40	195.30
4-5 years	25.30	31.70	39.30	48.00	109.60	137.60	170.40	208.00
6-8 years	32.10	44.70	53.70	63.60	139.00	193.60	232.80	275.50
9-11 years	36.20	48.30	62.20	72.40	157.00	209.30	269.40	313.80
<b>Male (M):</b>								
12-13 years	39.00	55.20	69.20	81.10	169.10	239.00	299.70	351.50
14-18 years	40.20	56.00	71.40	82.00	174.30	242.70	309.40	355.30
19-50 years	43.30	55.80	70.00	86.00	187.60	241.80	303.30	372.80
51-70 years	39.50	52.70	65.70	79.00	171.30	228.40	284.50	342.40
71+ years	39.80	52.30	64.60	79.80	172.50	226.80	279.70	345.80
<b>Female (F):</b>								
12-13 years	39.10	47.70	57.30	70.40	169.50	206.70	248.20	304.90
14-18 years	38.40	47.60	57.80	71.10	166.50	206.40	250.30	307.90
19-50 years	38.50	48.40	59.80	76.40	166.90	209.90	259.10	331.00
51-70 years	38.10	47.30	58.90	71.00	164.90	204.80	255.20	307.80
71+ years	36.90	46.90	58.10	70.00	159.90	203.10	251.80	303.50
<b>Families</b>								
<b>Family (M&amp;F) of 2:<sup>4</sup></b>								
19-50 years	90.00	114.70	142.80	178.70	389.90	496.90	618.60	774.20
51-70 years	85.30	110.00	137.00	165.10	369.80	476.50	593.70	715.30
<b>Family of 4:</b>								
Couple (M&F), 19-50 years and children—								
2-3 and 4-5 years	131.10	166.80	206.10	255.50	568.00	722.60	893.10	1107.10
6-8 and 9-11 years	150.10	197.20	245.70	298.50	650.50	854.60	1064.60	1293.20

<sup>1</sup>The Food Plans represent a nutritious diet at four different cost levels. The nutritional bases of the Food Plans are the 1997-2005 Dietary Reference Intakes, 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, and 2005 MyPyramid food intake recommendations. In addition to cost, differences among plans are in specific foods and quantities of foods. Another basis of the Food Plans is that all meals and snacks are prepared at home. For specific foods and quantities of foods in the Food Plans, see *Thrifty Food Plan, 2006* (2007) and *The Low-Cost, Moderate-Cost, and Liberal Food Plans, 2007* (2007). All four Food Plans are based on 2001-02 data and updated to current dollars by using the Consumer Price Index for specific food items.

<sup>2</sup>All costs are rounded to nearest 10 cents.

<sup>3</sup>The costs given are for individuals in 4-person families. For individuals in other size families, the following adjustments are suggested: 1-person—add 20 percent; 2-person—add 10 percent; 3-person—add 5 percent; 4-person—no adjustment; 5- or 6-person—subtract 5 percent; 7- (or more) person—subtract 10 percent. To calculate overall household food costs, (1) adjust food costs for each person in household and then (2) sum these adjusted food costs.

<sup>4</sup>Ten percent added for family size adjustment.