



Family Law & Mediation

As a step-parent, do I have any child support obligations on separation or divorce?

In a nutshell... maybe.

The **1st question** is: do you "stand in the place of a parent" to your step-kids? The court will look at the parental relationship while you were a family unit, not after the separation. Factors to be considered are: do you discipline them? Do you show others that you are responsible for them? What is your relationship with them compared with that of the absent biological parent?

The **2nd question** is: are there other persons who are/should be paying support for your step-kids? The courts have ruled in so many different ways on this one that it's tough to give a straight answer. Some courts have placed the greatest support burden on the birth parents, while other courts have placed more importance on the step-parent who has the most involvement with the child.

The **3rd and final question** is: if the step-parent must pay child support, what proportion should they take on as compared with the absent birth parent? Again, no easy answer, but some courts

may order that the step-parent is only required to pay a certain % of the total support obligation, forcing pursuit of the absent parent to contribute the remainder.

So, in short, a step-parent may have to pay support for a soon-to-be-ex-step-child, but the final determination depends on your circumstances and your relationship with your step-kids.

Feel free to contact Stephanie to answer your questions or to set up a consultation.



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STEPHANIE DOBSON
Lawyer & Mediator

Kd

kindrachukdobson
LAWYERS & MEDIATORS

2nd Floor, 5014 - 48th St, Lloydminster
(780) 875-6600

email: stephanie@kindrachukdobson.com
www.kindrachukdobson.com