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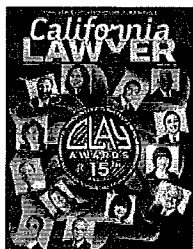
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ESQ. CALCULATING CHILD SUPPORT

March 2011

What's the connection between family law and the U.S. Department of Agriculture? For Los Angeles sole practitioner Mark B. Baer, the agency's annual Expenditures on Children by Families has become a tool for quelling discord in the oft-contentious process of calculating child support payments.

Based on more than 15,000 responses to the annual Consumer Expenditure Survey, the USDA report details how much it costs to raise a child over the course of the next 17 years. Baer says the numbers come in handy as a neutral starting point for negotiating child support because "whoever is receiving it is never satisfied that they're getting enough, and whoever is paying feels like they're paying too much."

According to the USDA, the total cost of raising a child born in 2009 to age 17 is between \$205,960 and \$475,680, adjusted for inflation. The 2010 figures will be released as early as next month.

The agency's interactive Cost of Raising a Child Calculator also allows users to go online to tailor a yearly estimate according to geography and other key factors, such as income level.

The USDA numbers prompt battling parents to keep things in perspective, Baer says: "People seem more than willing to spend sums of money they can't afford litigating their divorce over three or four years--as much as they could have spent on raising their child from birth to age 17."

THE COST OF KIDS PER YEAR

Health Care	\$925
Clothing	\$988
Other	\$1,250
Food	\$1,725
Transportation	\$1,925
Child Care/Education	\$3,163
Housing	\$5,838
TOTAL	\$15,814

Note: Estimates are based on a two-parent family living in a California city or suburb, with one child and an income between \$56,000 and \$98,000 per year.

Source: 2009 Expenditures on Children by Families, U.S. Department of Agriculture; and Cost of Raising a Child Calculator, USDA Cost of Raising a Child Calculator



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