



# Oregon Judicial Department

## House Bill 4121

### Child Support Referees

#### Key Points

- ✓ Allows the Presiding Judge of a judicial district to appoint child support a referee to hear child support cases.
- ✓ Enhances access to justice through expertise in a problem-solving court model that leads to positive and consistent outcomes for families.
- ✓ Takes advantage of federal Title IV-D funds.
- ✓ Builds on investments made by the Oregon Legislature in 2021 to make improvements to child support adjudication and resolution for families.
- ✓ Modeled after the successful juvenile referee program, authorized nearly 30 years ago in ORS Chapter 419A.

Questions about OJD's Child Support Referee bill? Please contact Erin M. Pettigrew, OJD, Office of Legislative Affairs:  
[Erin.M.Pettigrew@ojd.state.or.us](mailto:Erin.M.Pettigrew@ojd.state.or.us)  
971-283-1385

### Authority for Child Support Referees

HB 4121 provides express statutory authority for a skilled referee to hear and resolve qualifying child support matters. A specialized child support referee will increase efficiency and bring focus and more judicial resources in matters directly impacting families.

### Enhanced Resources to Adjudicate Cases

In 2021 the Oregon Legislature authorized a position for a centralized child support referee to hear and resolve cases eligible for services under Title IV-D of the Social Security act, together with additional investments for services to families in need of judicial intervention in child support matters. This bill expressly authorizes establishes the position and the scope of the appointed referee's role.

Child support cases can be time consuming and high stakes, particularly for families in need. For judicial districts handling all case types with few judges, the volume can be daunting. Focused specialization fosters prompt resolution and consistency in outcomes. An integrated, multi-county service will enable families to have expedited resolution with a skilled professional and with a right of *de novo* review should it be requested by the parties or ordered by a circuit court judge.

OJD believes that specialization and cross-county assignment of a referee will promote a problem-solving approach statewide to support-related contempt cases and will focus on reasons why a parent isn't paying. Referees will encourage action plans designed to help individuals self-sustain, find employment, and afford appropriate support payments.

### Leveraging Federal Funds

The federal government will reimburse 66% of the cost of such subordinate judicial officers to expedite resolution of support and parentage issues under Title IV-D of the Social Security Act.