



# UNDERSTANDING SPOUSAL SUPPORT

When a marriage ends, one spouse may be required to make monthly payments to the other spouse to help them cover their living expenses. In California, this is called spousal support (also known as alimony).



## TYPES OF SPOUSAL SUPPORT

- **Temporary Spousal Support**
  - Court-ordered monthly payments from one spouse to another while the divorce is ongoing.
  - A judicial officer can order support in any amount the spouses agree on, but if they cannot agree then the judicial officer will decide the amount based on need and ability to pay.
- **Long-Term (“Permanent”) Spousal Support**
  - Court-ordered monthly payments from one spouse to another once the divorce is finalized.



## PURPOSE OF SPOUSAL SUPPORT

- The goal of spousal support is to help the lower-earning spouse maintain a similar standard of living to the one they had during the marriage.
- Spousal support is also meant to help the supported spouse become self-sufficient.
- Spouses can agree on support terms outside of court. If they cannot agree, then a judicial officer will decide for them.
- It is not automatic or guaranteed. A judicial officer will determine if support is appropriate, the amount required, and length of time using a set of factors.



## PROMINENT FACTORS CONSIDERED BY THE COURT

- **Length of Support:** For longer marriages, the court will have discretion regarding how long support will last.
- **Standard of Living During Marriage:** The supported spouse’s accustomed lifestyle can be a key factor in determining the amount of support.
- **Financial Needs:** The expenses of each spouse.
- **Ability to Provide Support:** Each spouse’s income, earning capacity, and assets.
- **Age and Health:** If either spouse is not capable of supporting themselves.