



A GUIDE FOR NORTH CAROLINA PARENTS

The NC School-Year Child Expense Tracker

*Every category, a reimbursement log, and a running balance sheet
you can hand your attorney.*

This guide is informational and does not create an attorney–client relationship. Wilmington · Durham · Jacksonville, NC

Nobody Loses a Reimbursement Fight Because They Were Wrong

They lose it because eleven months later they cannot prove it.

The receipt is in a purse that got cleaned out in October. The agreement was a text message on a phone that has since been replaced. The number in your head is four hundred dollars off and you cannot remember which way. Meanwhile the other parent has an answer for everything, and the judge has forty-five minutes.

This is not a budgeting tool. It is an evidence-building tool. Use it for one school year and you will be able to hand your attorney a single page with a single number on it that you can actually defend.

What This Tracker Does and Does Not Do

This tracker records what you spent. It does not decide what you are owed.

In North Carolina, a great many ordinary school costs are treated as already covered by the basic child support obligation. That surprises people, and it is the single most common source of the "he won't pay half the school pictures" fight. Which of your expenses are actually shareable depends on your order, your circumstances, and the law — not on how much the expense hurt to pay.

So track everything. Then let your attorney tell you which categories are recoverable, which are not, and what your next order should have said in the first place. Read more at [who pays for school sports, photos, field trips, and fees in North Carolina](#).

The Seven Rules

- ☐ Log the expense the day it happens. Not Sunday night, not at the end of the month. The day.
- ☐ Photograph the receipt immediately and name the file by date and category. A photo of a receipt is a receipt. A memory of a receipt is not.
- ☐ Record whether the expense was agreed in advance, and where that agreement lives — text, email, co-parenting app, or a provision in the order.
- ☐ Read your order before you spend. If it sets a dollar threshold for pre-approval, get approval in writing above it. Every time, even when you are certain they will say yes.
- ☐ Submit reimbursement requests on whatever schedule your order requires, and keep proof that you submitted them.

- ☐ Never withhold your child, withhold information, or stop paying something else because a reimbursement is outstanding. It will cost you far more than the money.
- ☐ Keep going even when they stop responding. A clean twelve-month record with no responses in it is a powerful document.

THE SYSTEM

How the Log Works

Every expense gets one line. The columns exist because each one answers a question that will be asked of you later.

COLUMN	WHY IT IS THERE
Date	Fixes the expense in time and lets you match it to a school calendar, a season, or a custodial period.
Child	Multi-child households need per-child totals. Orders sometimes treat children differently, and a child who ages out changes the math.
Category	Lets your attorney sort recoverable from non-recoverable in one pass instead of reading two hundred lines.
Description / vendor	"Sports — \$340" is not evidence. "Fall travel soccer registration, Coastal FC, \$340" is.
Amount	The actual amount paid, not the invoiced amount and not the amount before a discount.
Paid by	Both parents' spending goes in the same log. A tracker that only records your side is an advocacy document. One that records both is a record — and it is far more persuasive.
Pre-agreed?	The single most decisive field in the entire document. Yes, no, or not required — and if yes, note where the agreement lives.
Receipt?	Yes or no. Be honest with yourself in this column. A no here today is a hole in your case in March.

A Filled-In Example

DATE	CHILD	CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION / VENDOR	AMOUNT	PAID BY	PRE-AGREED?	RECEIPT?
8/14	Ava	Sports	Fall travel soccer reg — Coastal FC	\$340	Me	Yes — text 8/2	Yes
8/19	Ava	Clothing	Cleats + shin guards	\$96	Me	No	Yes
8/22	Both	School fees	Registration + tech fee, both kids	\$210	Other	N/A	No

A Note on the Guidelines Worksheets

North Carolina uses Worksheets A, B, and C, and which one applies to your case depends on the custodial arrangement. There is no Worksheet B1 — if you have seen that somewhere, it is wrong.

This tracker does not change which worksheet applies to you and it does not calculate support. Ask your attorney which worksheet your case runs on and what, if anything, gets added to it.

REFERENCE

The Category Master List

Eighteen categories. Work through them once at the start of the year and check off the ones that apply to your family — it takes ten minutes and it is the difference between remembering to log something and remembering it existed.

Most parents get to the bottom of this list and realize they have been quietly absorbing more than they thought.

1 Enrollment, Registration & School Fees

Registration and enrollment fees · annual activity fee · technology or device fee · device insurance or damage waiver · locker fee · lab fees for science, art, ceramics, culinary · PE uniform · agenda or planner fee · classroom supply fee · parking permit · student ID and replacement ID · late fees

2 Academic & Testing Costs

AP and IB exam fees · PSAT, SAT, ACT registration and late fees · score reports · test prep courses and materials · dual enrollment tuition and fees · summer school · credit recovery · weekly tutoring · exam-period tutoring · learning app and platform subscriptions · driver's education · college application fees · transcript fees · campus visit travel

3 School Supplies & Equipment

Annual supply list · backpack · lunchbox and thermos · water bottle · graphing or scientific calculator · headphones or earbuds for testing · laptop, Chromebook, or tablet · protective case · printer, ink, and paper · flash drive · art supplies · musical instrument accessories · classroom wish-list donations · replacement of lost or damaged school property

4 Clothing & Shoes

School uniforms and replacements · spirit wear · everyday school-year clothing · mid-year growth-spurt replacements · everyday shoes · PE shoes · cleats and sport-specific footwear · coats, rain gear, and boots · socks and undergarments · dress clothes for concerts, awards, and picture day · dance and recital costumes · costume alterations · team spirit packs

5 Food & School Meals

School lunch account deposits · breakfast program · à la carte and snack purchases · packed-lunch groceries · field trip sack lunches · class party food contributions · classroom birthday treats · teacher appreciation contributions · vending and coffee money for older students · concession stand money on game days

6 Transportation

Bus fee where charged · fuel and mileage for school runs and custody exchanges · carpool contributions · rideshare for missed buses · teen driver insurance increase · parking pass · vehicle maintenance attributable to the school run · travel to away games and competitions · airfare, hotel, and meals for out-of-area events

7 Sports & Athletics

League and school registration · club and travel team dues · tryout fees · uniforms and practice gear · protective equipment and pads · mouthguards · helmets · bats, sticks, gloves, rackets, balls · equipment bags · sports physicals · league insurance · tournament entry fees · travel and lodging for tournaments · team meals · gym or facility fees · private coaching and skills clinics · off-season training and conditioning · team photos · banquet tickets · senior night · coach and team gifts · fundraising buy-outs

8 Arts, Music & Performance

Instrument purchase or rental · instrument insurance · reeds, strings, valve oil, and consumables · instrument repair · private lessons · marching band fees and band camp · color guard equipment · choir robes and attire · theater production fees · dance studio tuition · competition and festival entry fees · recital costumes and shoes · sheet music and books · audition fees · performance tickets for family

9 Clubs & Enrichment

Robotics, STEM, and engineering club fees and kits · chess, debate, and academic team fees · yearbook and newspaper staff dues · student government dues · honor society induction and dues · scouts and 4-H dues, uniforms, and campouts · martial arts tuition, belt testing, and gear · gymnastics and swim team · summer camps and specialty camps · museum, zoo, and science center memberships · language and coding programs

10 Special Education, Therapy & Health

Independent educational evaluations · private psychological, speech, OT, and PT evaluations · therapy sessions and copays · behavioral services · assistive technology and devices · specialized tutoring and remediation · educational advocate or consultant fees · travel to appointments · annual physicals · immunizations · dental cleanings and treatment · orthodontia and retainers · vision exams, glasses, contacts, and replacements · prescription medication and copays · supplies sent to the school clinic such as an inhaler, EpiPen, or glucose supplies · mental health counseling · deductibles and out-of-pocket maximums

REFERENCE, CONTINUED

The Category Master List



11 Photos, Keepsakes & Milestones

Fall and spring picture packages · retakes · class composite · sports and activity photos · yearbook purchase · yearbook personalization and ads · senior portraits · cap and gown · graduation announcements and postage · class ring · senior dues · letterman jacket and patches · awards night attire · milestone gifts

12 School Events & Fundraising

Field trip fees · overnight and multi-day trips · class trip payment plans · book fair · book drives and reading program purchases · fundraiser participation including wrapping paper, cookie dough, candy, popcorn, and discount cards · fun run and read-a-thon pledges · PTA or PTO dues · spirit night purchases · silent auction and raffle · school carnival · teacher gifts at holidays, end of year, and appreciation week · classroom party contributions · dance tickets for homecoming, winter formal, and prom · prom attire, alterations, shoes, hair, nails, flowers, photos, transportation, and pre-party contributions

13 Social & Birthdays

Classmate birthday gifts · birthday party hosting including venue, food, cake, decorations, and favors · sleepover and group outing costs · Valentine's cards and treats · holiday gift exchanges · end-of-season teammate gifts · movie and mall outings · phone-based social spending

14 Childcare & Coverage

Before-school care · after-school care · YMCA and community programs · teacher workday camps · early release day coverage · tracked-out coverage on year-round calendars · summer care · school break and holiday camps · snow day and unscheduled closure coverage · sick day coverage · babysitting for evening events · late pickup fees · registration and deposit fees to hold a spot

15 Technology & Connectivity

Phone and line cost · phone case and screen protector · screen and device repair · smartwatch or tracker and its subscription · headphones · home internet attributable to schoolwork · printer supplies · app and subscription charges · cloud storage · replacement chargers and cables · parental control software

16 Faith & Community Programs

Youth group dues · mission and service trips · church, temple, or mosque camps · sacrament or milestone ceremony costs and attire · community service program fees · volunteer program supplies

17 Fines, Losses & Replacements

Lost or damaged textbook charges · lost or damaged device charges · library fines · lost lunchbox, water bottle, and jacket replacements · lost uniform pieces · lost instrument accessories · replacement student ID · lost retainer, which on its own justifies keeping this tracker · damaged school property

18 Other

Anything not listed above, with a description. Review this category with your attorney first — the catch-all is where the disputed items usually live.

The Categories People Forget Until It Is Too Late

Childcare on teacher workdays and early release days. Tournament lodging. Instrument repair. Sports physicals. The second pair of cleats in March. Prom, which is not one expense but eleven. Anything that had to be replaced because it was lost at the other parent's house — log it, describe it neutrally, and let someone else decide what it means.

Expense Log

[illegible]

YOUR WORKING COPY, CONTINUED

Expense Log (Continued)

[illegible]

The Reimbursement Ledger

The log records what was spent. This page records what was asked for and what was actually paid. It is the page your attorney will care about most, because it is the page that produces a single defensible number.

The sharing percentage under my order

Submission deadline required by my order

Reimbursement deadline required by my order

Pre-approval threshold in my order, if any

If you do not know the answers to those four questions, that is the first thing to ask your attorney — and if your order does not answer them, that is the second.

DATE SUBMITTED	ITEMS / PERIOD COVERED	AMOUNT REQUESTED	THEIR SHARE	DATE PAID	BALANCE

Log the Silence Too

When a request goes unanswered, write "no response" in the paid column and keep going. Ten submissions with ten non-responses is a pattern, and a pattern is something a court can act on. A parent who stopped submitting after the third one has nothing to show but frustration.

ONCE A YEAR

The Annual Review

Do this once, in June. It takes twenty minutes and it is the page that changes your next order.

Where the Money Went

CATEGORY	TOTAL SPENT	REQUESTED	RECEIVED	OUTSTANDING

What to Do With What You Just Learned

Categories that generated repeated disputes this year

Expenses that recur every year and should be pre-agreed by category and dollar amount before next August

What I absorbed silently that I should not absorb again

Total outstanding at year end

This Page Is a Drafting List

Every line above is a provision your next order should contain. A support or custody order that names the categories, sets a pre-approval threshold, fixes a percentage split, and puts deadlines on submission and reimbursement is an order that stops generating fights. Most orders do not do any of that, which is exactly why most people end up keeping a tracker in the first place.

Related: if the school year is also generating fights about who the school calls and who can pick your child up, download our [School Year Emergency Contact & Authorization Agreement Worksheet](#).

A Word About Money and Control

If you or your child are in immediate danger, call 911.

National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233, available 24 hours a day.

Financial control does not always end at separation. If you are being kept from information, made to account for every dollar, or threatened over money in a way that frightens you, that is worth telling your attorney about — plainly, and early. Tracking expenses is useful. It is not a substitute for safety, and it is not something to keep doing quietly while a situation gets worse.

One Last Thing

Keeping this tracker will not feel good. It is one more piece of administrative work in a year that already has too many, and every entry is a small reminder of a situation you did not choose.

Do it anyway. Twelve months from now you will either have a document or you will have an argument, and only one of those is worth anything.

How Cape Fear Family Law Can Help

Bring this tracker to your consultation. We will tell you what is recoverable, what is not, and what your order should have said in the first place.

[Schedule a Confidential Consultation →](#)

Read more: [Who pays for school sports, photos, field trips, and fees in North Carolina?](#)

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Information, Not Advice. This tracker is provided for general informational purposes only and is not legal, tax, or financial advice. Recording an expense in this document does not mean the expense is recoverable, shareable, or owed by anyone. Whether any particular cost may be recovered depends on your court order, your circumstances, and North Carolina law.

Not a Support Calculation. This tracker does not calculate child support and does not determine what any party owes.

No Guarantee of Results. Past results do not guarantee future outcomes.

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