

# Guidelines Review and Oversight Committee (GROC)

## 2024 Aug 22, 10:00a–12:00n – Meeting Minutes

(Discussions are organized by topic, not necessarily by actual sequence.)

### \* I Opening business and participants list

At 10:03 a.m. Kim opened the Teams meeting. Patrick was with us only briefly due to hearings. Below is a list of all GROC participants (x = those present today)...

	Community reps	Title, plus county(ies) covered	Location
--	Hoge, Jess	COC Petroleum	Winnett
x	Thiel, Cindy	Atty (ret.) Missoula	Missoula
--	Timmer, Colleen	Master Mineral, Missoula	Missoula
	State workers	Division & role and/or title	Location
x	Christensen, Kelsey	CSSD Investigator	Butte
x	Delaney, Barb	CSSD Bureau chief, SPOT	Helena
x	Ensey, Miranda	CSSD Investigator	Great Falls
x	Hochhalter, Priscilla	CSSD Recorder / Training specialist	Helena
x	Leach, Kial	CSSD Compliance manager	Helena
x	Martin, Chad	CSSD Investigator	Helena
x	Pappe, Kate	CSSD Investigator Supervisor	Missoula
x	Quinn, Patrick	OLA Staff attorney	Missoula
x	Twardoski, Christie	CSSD Administrator	Helena
x	Watne, Kim	CSSD Chair / Guidelines project manager	Helena

### II Mission; purpose; requirements; process; Quadrennial Report (QR)

GROC is an advisory body with expertise in MT child support guidelines (GLs). It is authorized to do research, develop recommendations, suggest proposed rule changes and, every four years, file a federally-required quadrennial review and report (QR) in the MT State Plan.

**Mission and purpose.** From [45 CFR 302.56\(e\)](#) – GROC’s mission is: “The State must review, and revise, if appropriate, the child support guidelines...at least once every four years to ensure that their application results in the determination of appropriate child support order amounts.”

**Requirements.** From [45 CFR 302.56\(h\)\(1–3\)](#) – We are required to: consider economic data; analyze case data; and allow for meaningful public input, especially regarding low-income families. (Such input often comes from GROC’s community representatives and their case experiences.)

**Process.** From [MCA 40-5-209](#) – any proposed GLs changes are submitted for consideration for administrative rule changes, or as proposed legislation to MT’s legislature.

**Quadrennial Review / Report (QR).** To fulfill the above, typically the QR covers at least tax data, economic data, and case data (methodology, findings, variances, payment histories by case traits, etc.). For the 2024 QR, key resources – retained here for reference – include...

- US Department of Agriculture (USDA) 2015 figures on cost of raising a child (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cnpp/2015-expenditures-children-families>).
- MT Department of Labor & Industry (DLI) 2023 Labor Day report on MT’s economy (<https://lmi.mt.gov/docs/Publications/LMI-Pubs/Labor-Market-Publications/LDR20221.pdf>).

### \* III 2024 QR: Due date, Dec. 31; possible GLs updates

The 2024 QR is due Dec. 31. Any proposed GLs changes are meant to keep GLs ‘in line’ with MT’s current economy and demographics, and to make GLs as standardized and easy to use as possible, while still achieving support obligations similar to those achieved by current GLs. Current GLs are very complex / opaque; the goal is to make them more user-friendly and transparent.

\* Today, asterisk-marked sections were discussed / updated; other (non-marked) sections – often retained for reference only – were not.

Thus – for this current 2024 QR (due Dec. 31) – possible proposals being considered include:

1. Remove tax factors; doing so would simplify the calculation for everyone, and eliminate the need to make updates (including software reprogramming) every time tax laws change.
2. Update PIG percentages for each parent's personal allowance (self-support reserve).
3. Update SOLA percentages.
4. Update primary support allowance percentage for child(ren) of the case.
5. Use ranges of days (instead of counting each individual day) for parenting days.
6. Remove credit for other child(ren), not of the calculation, in parents' homes..
7. Simplify, and make more transparent, calculation of minimum support obligation.

If implemented, these proposed changes would require updates – both to our current GLs worksheet (GLW) and to certain ARMs. Kim and Kial are looking at both.

## \* IV 2024 QR: GLs worksheet (GLW) – existing vs proposed

### A General input

The proposed new GLW (in Excel) is generally well received and considered easy to use by GROC members. Kim and Kial have incorporated last month's input – e.g., changing colors, and reducing multiple pay schedules (monthly, weekly, etc.) to just one (annualized). Adding a line or two of user instructions (e.g., how to enter data so Excel can read it properly) was suggested.

### B Specific input

More specific input also arose, which Kim and Kial agreed to explore. E.g.:

- Some would like more discussion on giving credit for other child(ren) in parents' homes.
- Some asked about giving credit not only for mandatory retirement contributions (usually in government jobs) but also for voluntary ones, maybe up to a given percentage. Kial said ARM specifies mandatory ones – but if we propose changing other rules, we could propose changing this one too. Patrick said this verbiage is from decades ago when most retirement was employer-funded; now it's often self-funded, so a review may be in order. Kim noted some parties put their entire paychecks into retirement and live on their spouses' income. Miranda noted that Delaware, our model for Melson without taxes, uses 5% of gross.
- It was asked if there are current minimum-order exceptions for very low minimum wage (in some states, \$7.25/hr). Kim said no; if minimum order exceeds self-support, it defaults to minimum order. Discussion and comparative testing continues on this point as well.

Please keep sending input and testing (with existing vs proposed GLW).

### C Testing

Again this time, no changes were made to previously-shared 2024 QR test-case data. Kim and Kial continue to ask GROC members to, as soon as possible, test existing vs proposed GLW – and then submit side-by-side test-case comparisons, using calculations run with each; examples may be used in QR. Low-income cases are important, but please test other income ranges too.

### D Oct. 11 deadline for input and testing

To finish QR by Dec 31, it was determined that Oct. 11 should be the deadline for all input so that final decisions can be made and proposals prepared. Thus, before that date, please finish – and submit to Kim and Kial – final input and side-by-side testing of existing vs proposed GLWs. Kim wants everyone to do enough testing to be comfortable with the proposals we'll make in QR. Also, remember that after this QR deadline is met, we can consider changes for the next QR.

## \* V Closing business / adjournment

The goal is for all of the proposed changes to be built into the (eventual) new system; but for now we have only the proposed Excel GLW, which should be standardized and easy to use for all. We adjourned a bit early, at 11:33 a.m. Next meeting is set for Sep. 19, 10:00a–12:00n.