

BELIZE:

FAMILIES AND CHILDREN (AMENDMENT) ACT, 2024

ARRANGEMENT OF SECTIONS

1. Short title.
2. Amendment of section 2.
3. Amendment of section 5.
4. Amendment of section 48.
5. Insertion of new section 49A.
6. Substitution of term.



No. 6 of 2024

I assent,

(H.E. DAME FROYLA TZALAM)
Governor-General

21st February, 2024.

AN ACT to amend the Families and Children Act, Chapter 173 of the Substantive Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2020; to clarify the obligation of a spouse to maintain a non-biological child of a marriage; to change the name of the Committee from the “National Committee for Families and Children” to the “National Commission for Families and Children”; and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

(Gazetted 24th February, 2024)

BE IT ENACTED, by and with the advice and consent of the House of Representatives and Senate of Belize and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1. This Act may be cited as the

Short title.

FAMILIES AND CHILDREN (AMENDMENT)
ACT, 2024,

CAP. 173.
52 of 2021.

and shall be read and construed as one with the Families and Children Act, which, as amended, is hereinafter referred to as the principal Act.

Amendment of
section 2.

2. The principal Act is amended in section 2 by inserting the following terms and their definitions in their proper alphabetical sequence–

““spouse”, in relation to any person, means the husband or wife of the person;

“common law union” means the relationship that is established when a man and woman who are not legally married to each other, or to any other person, cohabit together continuously as husband and wife for a period of at least five years.”

Amendment of
section 5.

3. The principal Act is amended in section 5 by inserting, after the term “parent,”, the term “spouse,”.

Amendment of
section 48.

4. The principal Act is amended by repealing section 48 and replacing it with the following–

“Duty of man
to maintain
children.

48.–(1) Every man is hereby required to maintain his own children and the children of any child of his where such children, respectively, are unable to maintain themselves.

(2) An obligation of a man to maintain the children of any child of his under sub-section (1) shall only arise where the father or mother of the child–

(a) is ill;

(b) cannot be located; or

(c) are unable to maintain themselves.”.

Insertion of new section 49A.

5. The principal Act is amended by inserting after section 49, the following new section—

“Duty of spouse to maintain each other’s child.

49A.—(1) Every spouse is hereby required to maintain, in addition to the children of that spouse, every child living with either spouse at the time of the marriage.

(2) For the purposes of this section, “spouse” includes a party to a common law union.

(3) The obligation of a spouse under sub-section (1) shall cease—

(a) in the case of a marriage, upon judicial separation or divorce; or

(b) in the case of a common law union, upon the termination of cohabitation as wife and husband between the parties to the common law union.”.

Substitution of term.

6. The principal Act is amended by deleting the word “Committee” wherever it occurs and substituting it with the word “Commission”.