

*This opinion is nonprecedential except as provided by  
Minn. R. Civ. App. P. 136.01, subd. 1(c).*

**STATE OF MINNESOTA  
IN COURT OF APPEALS  
A26-0321**

County of Hennepin,  
Respondent,

vs.

Jill Kline Rochford,  
Appellant,

Ross Edgar Trooien,  
Respondent.

**Filed September 28, 2026  
Affirmed  
Ede, Judge**

Hennepin County District Court  
File No. 27-PA-FA-21-727

Mary F. Moriarty, Hennepin County Attorney, Charles S. Weber, Assistant County Attorney, Minneapolis, Minnesota (for respondent county)

Jill Kline Rochford, Hopkins, Minnesota (self-represented appellant)

Ross Edgar Trooien, Grand Rapids, Minnesota (self-represented respondent)

Considered and decided by Reyes, Presiding Judge; Ede, Judge; and Rasmusson, Judge.

**NONPRECEDENTIAL OPINION**

**EDE, Judge**

This is an appeal from a child-support magistrate's order granting in part and denying in part appellant-mother's motions for review and to correct alleged clerical

mistakes in an earlier order by the magistrate. Mother argues that the magistrate: (1) abused her discretion in declining to modify child support retroactively to account for a lump-sum disability payment that respondent-father received; (2) erred by relying on “unverified” record evidence and by inadequately considering the relevant statutory factors in determining that father’s income had substantially changed; (3) abused her discretion in adopting an arrears determination based on inconsistent and incomplete financial information; and (4) erred by precluding mother from submitting new information. We affirm.

## **FACTS**

Appellant Jill Kline Rochford (mother) and respondent Ross Edgar Trooien (father) share one minor child. In September 2022, the district court ordered that father pay temporary child support. The district court modified this obligation in November 2024 (the November 2024 order).

In May 2025, the district court awarded mother sole physical custody of the child, granted parenting time to father, and ordered father to pay child support. At the time, father was unemployed but had a potential gross-monthly income of \$10,500 based on his prior employment. In June, father filed a notice of motion and motion to modify child support, seeking to lower his obligation. Mother filed a responsive motion three days before a hearing on father’s modification motion, which was scheduled before a child-support magistrate in early September. The magistrate determined that mother’s responsive motion was not timely under Minnesota General Rule of Practice 372.04, subdivision 2, because mother did not file it at least seven days before the September hearing.

At the September hearing, the child-support magistrate heard testimony from father and mother. Father testified about a change to his employment and salary. He explained that he had transitioned from a full-time salaried position that he had held for six months to contracting with counties, from which he received a flat fee of \$4,500 per contract as income for his work. Father also reported that he had received a \$37,000 lump-sum disability payment in May 2025, which related to lost wages he had incurred in 2024. Without objection from the parties, the magistrate questioned the child-support specialist—who was not under oath—about the arrears father owed. The child-support specialist responded that father owed arrears to mother of \$6,804.01.

The magistrate extended the close of the record until September 12 so that the parties could provide verification of their incomes since June. Father timely filed several documents, including items showing that he performed contract work for a flat fee of \$4,500 per contract and that he had entered into three such contracts since the end of May. In mid-September, the child-support magistrate filed an order modifying father's child-support obligation (the September 2025 order). The September 2025 order reflects the amounts that the child-support specialist provided the magistrate about the arrears father owed to mother. Mother later filed motions for review and to correct alleged clerical mistakes in the September 2025 order. In December, the magistrate filed an order granting mother's request to amend two paragraphs and denying mother's remaining requests, including her request that she be allowed to submit new information or be granted an additional hearing.

Mother appeals.

## DECISION

In challenging the child-support magistrate's decision to deny her motions for review and to correct alleged clerical mistakes in the September 2025 order, mother contends that the magistrate: (1) abused her discretion in declining to modify child support retroactively to account for the lump-sum disability payment that father received; (2) erred by relying on "unverified" record evidence and by inadequately considering the relevant statutory factors in determining that father's income had substantially changed; (3) abused her discretion in adopting an arrears determination based on inconsistent and incomplete financial information; and (4) erred by precluding mother from submitting new information. As explained below, we conclude that mother's contentions do not present a basis for reversal.<sup>1</sup>

"Appellate courts review a district court's child-support-modification decision for [an] abuse of discretion." *Grogg v. Rech*, 968 N.W.2d 45, 53 (Minn. App. 2021) (citing *Haefele v. Haefele*, 837 N.W.2d 703, 708 (Minn. 2013)). And we review determinations of past child support for an abuse of discretion. *LaChapelle v. Mitten*, 607 N.W.2d 151, 166 (Minn. App. 2000), *rev. denied* (Minn. May 16, 2000). On appeal from a child-support magistrate's order that has not been reviewed by a district court, appellate courts use the same abuse-of-discretion standard to review issues as they apply when such an order is issued by the district court. *Putz v. Putz*, 645 N.W.2d 343, 348 (Minn. 2002) (stating that the supreme court had "never addressed" the question of the appropriate standard of review

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<sup>1</sup> Father and the county did not file appellate briefs. Consistent with Minnesota Rule of Civil Appellate Procedure 142.03, we determine this case on the merits.

for a magistrate’s decision that had not been reviewed by a district court but nonetheless applying the abuse-of-discretion standard and observing that “the court of appeals [had] applied the abuse of discretion standard and [that] the parties [had] agree[d] that it [was] the appropriate standard of review”). A magistrate “abuses [their] discretion by making findings of fact that are unsupported by the evidence, misapplying the law, or delivering a decision that is against logic and the facts on record.” *Woolsey v. Woolsey*, 975 N.W.2d 502, 506 (Minn. 2022); *accord Grogg*, 968 N.W.2d at 53.

“Statutory construction is a matter of law, which this court reviews de novo.” *Branch v. Branch*, 632 N.W.2d 261, 263 (Minn. App. 2001) (citing *Brookfield Trade Ctr., Inc. v. County of Ramsey*, 584 N.W.2d 390, 393 (Minn. 1998)). “A court’s determination of income must be based in fact and will stand unless clearly erroneous.” *Newstrand v. Arend*, 869 N.W.2d 681, 685 (Minn. App. 2015) (quotations omitted), *rev. denied* (Minn. Dec. 15, 2015). And similar decisions, such as “whether a parent is voluntarily unemployed[,] . . . [are likewise] finding[s] of fact, which appellate courts review for clear error.” *Id.* (quotation omitted).

A child-support magistrate’s factual “findings are clearly erroneous when they are manifestly contrary to the weight of the evidence or not reasonably supported by the evidence as a whole.” *In re Commitment of Kenney*, 963 N.W.2d 214, 221 (Minn. 2021) (quotation omitted). “In applying the clear-error standard, [appellate courts] view the evidence in a light favorable to the findings.” *Id.* Appellate courts “will not conclude that a factfinder clearly erred unless, on the entire evidence, [they] are left with a definite and firm conviction that a mistake has been committed.” *Id.* (quotations omitted); *accord*

*Newstrand*, 869 N.W.2d at 685. “In sum, the role of an appellate court is not to weigh, reweigh, or inherently reweigh the evidence when applying a clear-error review; that task is best suited to, and therefore is reserved for, the factfinder.” *Kenney*, 963 N.W.2d at 223 (citing *In re Civ. Commitment of Ince*, 847 N.W.2d 13, 24 (Minn. 2014) (stating that a factfinder is in the best position to “weigh the evidence and assess credibility”); *In re Knops*, 536 N.W.2d 616, 620 (Minn. 1995) (affording “due regard” to the factfinder’s opportunity to “judge the credibility of the witnesses”)).

With these legal standards in mind, we address each of mother’s arguments below.

**I. The child-support magistrate acted within her discretion in declining to modify child support retroactively to account for the lump-sum disability payment that father received.**

Mother asserts that the child-support magistrate misapplied *Lenz v. Wergin*, 408 N.W.2d 873 (Minn. App. 1987), and that the magistrate “erred by excluding \$37,000 of father’s income from child-support calculations.” Put differently, she maintains that the magistrate “created an irreconcilable inconsistency by attributing father’s \$37,000 in income to 2024 while the November . . . 2024 order determined father had \$0 income for that same period based on the representation that he was unpaid.”

Under Minnesota law, “[a] modification of support . . . *may* be made retroactive.” Minn. Stat. § 518A.39, subd. 2(f) (2024) (emphasis added); *see also* Minn. Stat. § 645.44, subd. 15 (2024) (stating that “[m]ay” is permissive). “A modification of support is generally retroactive to the date the moving party served notice of the motion on the responding party.” *Bormann v. Bormann*, 644 N.W.2d 478, 482 (Minn. App. 2002) (citing

Minn. Stat. § 518.64, subd. 2(d) (Supp. 2001)).<sup>2</sup> When no exceptions to that general rule apply, and when nothing suggests that a child-support magistrate has exercised their discretion to make a modification effective on another date, any modification to the child-support award is retroactive to the notice-of-motion-service date. *See id.* at 482–83.

In *Lenz*, the child-support obligor received a lump-sum worker’s-compensation-permanent-disability settlement, and the district court applied that settlement to the year the obligor received it for purposes of determining income. 408 N.W.2d at 877. We concluded that the district court “erred in determining . . . [the obligor’s] income” because, when the court “allocated the entire settlement to the year of receipt, . . . [it gave] a false impression of [the obligor’s] income [for that year].” *Id.* On remand, we instructed the district court to apply the obligor’s “lump-sum payment made to her for diminution of her earning capacity . . . over the years from the date of injury (1981) until her obligation to support the child ceases on his eighteenth birthday (1994), a 13–year period.” *Id.*

Here, father testified that he had received the \$37,000 lump-sum disability payment in May 2025, which related to lost wages he had incurred in 2024. The child-support magistrate determined that this payment “was not relevant to determining the father’s current income as it was received before June 2025, the date of service of father’s motion, and was not a recurring current income source for the father.” The magistrate further reasoned that the lump-sum payment “was to reimburse the father for his past wage loss in

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<sup>2</sup> The substance of what was Minnesota Statutes section 518.64 (Supp. 2001) has since been moved to section 518A.39 (2024). *See generally Leifur v. Leifur*, 820 N.W.2d 40, 42 n.2 (Minn. App. 2012) (observing that the child-support statutes were “renumbered” in 2005).

2024” and, relying on *Lenz*, found that the payment relates only to father’s 2024 income. *See id.*

The undisputed facts before us are unlike *Lenz*, insofar as the lump-sum disability payment father received is not a worker’s-compensation-permanent-disability settlement that relates to diminution in earning capacity that would apply through the child’s age of majority. *See id.* But like *Lenz*, it would have been error for the child-support magistrate to have allocated the entire lump-sum disability payment to 2025—the year father received it—because that would have given a false impression of father’s 2025 income when the amount related only to lost wages that he had incurred in 2024. *See id.* We therefore discern no abuse of discretion in the magistrate’s application of *Lenz* in determining that father’s lump-sum disability payment is properly allocated to his 2024 income.

Moreover, we conclude that the child-support magistrate acted within her discretion in declining to make the modification retroactive. *See* Minn. Stat. § 518A.39, subd. 2(f). We are not persuaded by mother’s argument that the magistrate abused her discretion by allocating the lump-sum disability payment to 2024, even though the district court had already determined in the November 2024 order that father had no income during that period. Father filed his notice of motion and motion to modify child support in June 2025. The applicable statute affords the magistrate the discretion to make a retroactive modification. And the general rule—which applies under these circumstances—is that such retroactivity would only run to the June 2025 notice-of-motion-service date of father’s motion. *See* Minn. Stat. §§ 518A.39, subd. 2(f), 645.44, subd. 15; *see also Bormann*, 644 N.W.2d at 482–83.

In short, the child-support magistrate did not make findings of fact that are unsupported by the evidence, did not misapply the law, and did not deliver a decision that is against logic and the facts on record. Accordingly, we conclude that the magistrate acted within her discretion in declining to modify child support retroactively to account for the lump-sum disability payment that father received. *See Woolsey*, 975 N.W.2d at 506; *see also Grogg*, 968 N.W.2d at 53.

**II. The child-support magistrate properly determined that father’s income had substantially changed based on sufficient record evidence and appropriate consideration of the relevant statutory factors.**

In challenging the child-support magistrate’s determination that father’s income had substantially changed, mother raises two main arguments.

First, mother contends that the child-support magistrate “erred by relying on insufficient and unverified evidence in determining father’s income and child support obligation.” Citing Minnesota Statutes section 518A.28 (2024), mother maintains that the magistrate could not make that determination without tax returns and wage-replacement documentation.

The child-support magistrate relied upon testimony and documentary evidence to determine father’s income. Father testified that he had transitioned from a full-time salaried position that he had held for six months to contracting with counties, from which he received a flat fee of \$4,500 per contract as income for his work. And he filed several documents, including material showing that he performed contract work for a flat fee of \$4,500 per contract and that he had entered into three such contracts since the end of May 2025.

The child-support magistrate reasoned that the documents father filed have probative value upon which she could reasonably rely, as provided in Minnesota Rule of General Practice 364.10, subdivision 1. We discern no error in this reasoning. By contrast, mother's reliance on Minnesota Statutes section 518A.28, which provides that income verification may come in the form of "all other documents evidencing earnings or income as received that provide verification for the financial affidavit," is unavailing. This is because the documents father filed adequately reflect his earnings and income for purposes of verifying the financial affidavit he submitted with his modification motion. Viewing the record in the light most favorable to the magistrate's findings without reweighing the evidence, we conclude that the findings are not clearly erroneous because they are based in fact, are not manifestly contrary to the weight of the evidence, and are reasonably supported by the record as a whole. *See Kenney*, 963 N.W.2d at 221; *Newstrand*, 869 N.W.2d at 685. In other words, we are not "left with a definite and firm conviction that a mistake has been committed." *Kenney*, 963 N.W.2d at 221 (quotation omitted).

Second, mother argues that the child-support magistrate failed to consider the factors under Minnesota Statutes section 518A.32 (2024), which she asserts "require[] consideration of employment history, education, job skills, and job availability." In particular, mother points to two facts in claiming the magistrate erred: (1) that father has three houses; and (2) that "a simple search . . . shows over 6 different family law attorney jobs." In mother's view, the child-support magistrate erred in modifying father's obligation based on the determination that his gross-monthly income was reduced, which mother asserts "resulted from father's own choices."

“If a parent is voluntarily . . . underemployed, . . . child support must be calculated based on a determination of potential income.” Minn. Stat. § 518A.32, subd. 1. “For purposes of this determination, it is rebuttably presumed that a parent can be gainfully employed on a full-time basis.” *Id.* The statute specifies three methods to determine potential income. *Id.*, subd. 2. One method is based on “the parent’s probable earnings level based on employment potential, recent work history, and occupational qualifications in light of prevailing job opportunities and earnings levels in the community.” *Id.*

In the September 2025 order, the child-support magistrate explained her determination that “father is not voluntarily underemployed,” reasoning that he had “earned a gross-monthly income of \$4,500 recently,” which was “consistent with his employment history, education, job skills, and availability of jobs within the community for an individual with . . . father’s qualifications.” In denying mother’s motions for review and to correct alleged clerical mistakes in the September 2025 order, the magistrate ruled that she had “properly analyzed . . . father’s income per Minn. Stat. § 518A.32.” More specifically, the magistrate found that father “was not voluntarily underemployed” because his “prior income from his 6-month employment . . . [in a full-time salaried position] was not representative of his past or current income” and because the magistrate “calculated his income based on his current actual income.”

Our careful review of the record reveals no error in the child-support magistrate’s analysis. Although mother urges us to consider evidence that could support a different finding, it is not our role “to weigh, reweigh, or inherently reweigh the evidence.” *Kenney*, 963 N.W.2d at 223. Consequently, we conclude that the child-support magistrate properly

determined that father’s income had substantially changed based on sufficient record evidence and appropriate consideration of the relevant statutory factors.

**III. The child-support magistrate acted within her discretion in determining the amount of arrears father owed to mother.**

Mother suggests that the child-support magistrate “erred by adopting an arrears determination that is based on inconsistent and incomplete financial information.”

Relying on the child-support specialist’s unobjected-to statements at the September 2025 hearing,<sup>3</sup> the child-support magistrate found in the September 2025 order that father owed arrears to mother in the amount of \$6,804.01. Viewed in the light most favorable to the child-support magistrate’s findings without reweighing the evidence—as mother asks us to do—the record establishes that the magistrate’s arrears finding is reasonably supported and therefore not clearly erroneous. *See Kenney*, 963 N.W.2d at 221; *Newstrand*, 869 N.W.2d at 685.

We thus conclude that the child-support magistrate acted within her discretion in determining the amount of arrears father owed to mother.

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<sup>3</sup> Mother did not object to the magistrate’s consideration of the child-support specialist’s unsworn statements about childcare costs at the September 2025 hearing, and she does not challenge the magistrate’s reliance on those statements on that ground in this appeal. “[A]ppellate courts generally address only issues presented to and decided by the district court.” *Davis v. Davis*, 631 N.W.2d 822, 828 n.2 (Minn. App. 2001) (citing *Thiele v. Stich*, 425 N.W.2d 580, 582 (Minn. 1988)). Moreover, “[a] party’s failure to brief and argue an issue on appeal results in forfeiture of that issue.” *Jundt v. Jundt*, 12 N.W.3d 201, 204 (Minn. App. 2024) (citing *In re Welfare of M.D.O.*, 462 N.W.2d 370, 379 (Minn. 1990)) (other citation omitted), *rev. denied* (Minn. Dec. 31, 2024).

**IV. Mother has forfeited her argument that the magistrate erred in declining to allow her to submit new information or to have an additional hearing.**

Mother contends that, by declining to allow her to submit new information or to have an additional hearing, the magistrate “created a twisting of procedural rules”: Minnesota General Rule of Practice “354.14” and Minnesota General Rule of Practice 377.09.

Minnesota General Rule of Practice 354.14 does not exist. “Although some accommodations may be made for [self-represented] litigants, this court has repeatedly emphasized that [self-represented] litigants are generally held to the same standards as attorneys and must comply with court rules.” *Beardsley v. Garcia*, 731 N.W.2d 843, 850 (Minn. App. 2007) (quoting *Fitzgerald v. Fitzgerald*, 629 N.W.2d 115, 119 (Minn. App. 2001)), *aff’d*, 753 N.W.2d 735 (Minn. 2008). Appellate courts “will not consider [self-represented] claims on appeal that are unsupported by either arguments or citations to legal authority.” *State v. Reek*, 942 N.W.2d 148, 165 (Minn. 2020) (quotation omitted).

Because mother’s argument that the magistrate erred in declining to allow her to submit new information or to have an additional hearing is inadequately supported by legal authority, it is forfeited.

**Affirmed.**