

Introduction to the Manual

I am excited to provide you with the February 2022 edition of *Abuse, Neglect, Dependency, and Termination of Parental Rights Proceedings in North Carolina*. This new edition updates the five previous editions of this Manual.

This Manual is written for legal professionals involved in these proceedings. The primary purpose of the Manual is to provide easily accessible information about the law, procedures, and concepts that apply to abuse, neglect, dependency, and related termination of parental rights proceedings in North Carolina. This Manual serves the additional goal of making the information uniformly available to a variety of professionals. It is meant to be a useful and reliable reference manual and training tool for judges, social services attorneys, parents' attorneys, guardian ad litem attorney advocates, and others involved in this important and challenging work.

The text of the chapters combines applicable statutes, relevant case citations, additional resources, and practical explanations for particular topics. This February 2022 edition includes opinions published by the North Carolina appellate courts through February 15, 2022, and legislative changes made up to that date.

Throughout the chapters, "Practice Notes" are set apart to offer insight into practical aspects of a given topic; "Resources" are set apart to alert the reader to resources and tools beyond the Manual; and "AOC Forms" and "NC DHHS DSS Forms" are set apart to notify the reader of applicable forms that are created and updated by the North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) and the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Division of Social Services (NC DHHS DSS). Web links are present throughout the Manual, typically embedded as a hyperlink in the relevant text. If a link does not work, the reader usually can find the resource by conducting an internet search using the title of the resource. The Manual uses cross-references liberally to alert the reader to other parts of the Manual that are relevant to a particular topic.

Checklists are also provided. The Checklists are meant to be used as a tool to help a judge or an attorney identify required findings of fact or jurisdictional issues that should be addressed in the various court orders that apply to these proceedings.

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I hope you find this Manual useful in your work. I welcome any corrections, suggestions, or comments. You can email me at sara@sog.unc.edu or call (919) 966-4289.

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