

Introduction to the Manual

I am excited to provide you with this 2023 edition of *Abuse, Neglect, Dependency, and Termination of Parental Rights Proceedings in North Carolina*. This new edition updates the six previous editions of this Manual and since the last edition incorporates legislative changes, over 100 new appellate opinions, and additional resources available as of December 31, 2023.

This Manual is written for legal professionals involved in abuse, neglect, dependency and termination of parental rights proceedings. Thank you for the work that you do.

The primary purpose of the Manual is to provide easily accessible information about the law, procedures, and concepts that apply to these 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. 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 "NCDHHS 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 (NCDHHS DSS). 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 and 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.

Sara DePasquale