

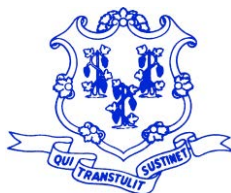
# The Connecticut General Assembly

## Task Force To Study Legal Disputes Involving the Care and Custody of Minor Children

Co-Chairs:

Sue Cousineau, Esq.

Sharon Wicks Dornfeld, Esq.



c/o Judiciary Committee, Room 2500  
Legislative Office Building  
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### **DRAFT** **Minutes**

Thursday, October 31, 2013  
Room 2B

**Attendance:** Chairperson Sue Cousineau, Esq., Chairperson Sharon Wicks Dornfeld, Esq., Joseph J. DiTunno, Rep. Minnie Gonzalez, Rep. Ed Vargas, Jennifer Verraneault, Thomas Weissmuller, Esq., Linda Allard, Esq.  
**Absent:** Elizabeth Thayer, PhD

**Protocol:** Meeting was called to order at 10:05am. Chairperson Cousineau advised of the emergency evacuation procedures for hearing room 2B.

**Introduction:** For the benefit of the members who could not attend the last meeting and the public, each member introduced themselves and explained their background.

#### **Minutes of the Oct. 24, 2013 meeting:**

- A motion to accept the minutes was made by Attorney Dornfeld and seconded by Attorney Allard.

#### **Discussion:**

- Attorney Dornfeld explained that copies of relevant cases regarding the duties of attorneys for minor children and guardians ad litem have been distributed to members of the task force, and are on the Task Force website.
- Other documents distributed to the Task Force included the appointment of Guardian Ad Litem form from the Judicial District of Waterbury, and a state-wide Guardian Ad Litem form from Washington.
- Mr. DiTunno provided information regarding the type of family civil court services provided by the Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division.
- Attorney Dornfeld asked the Judicial Branch to compile and sort data based on members' requests from the last meeting.
- Attorney Dornfeld reported that there are some students from the Quinnipiac University School of Law who would be willing to help the Task Force conduct legal research of best practices in other states.

#### **Attorney Sarah Stark Oldham, president of the Connecticut Chapter of American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers.**

Following up on Rep. Vargas' suggestion from the first meeting, the Task Force invited Attorney Oldham to provide an overview of procedure and basic law of custody cases. Attorney Oldham's presentation and discussion with the task force members included examination of

- The ways that guard ad litem (GAL) can get appointed

- The duties of GAL's and AMC's
- Courts' goals during custody proceedings
- The "best interest of the child" standard
- The sixteen factors that courts must consider under Connecticut statutes during custody disputes.
- The qualification and training of matrimonial lawyers, GAL's and AMC's
- The benefits of GAL representation during custody proceedings
- Concerns of potential abuse of GAL's submitting bills for work that has not been done.
- The issue of parents being able to choose GAL's to represent their child
- The need for GAL's to obtain experience and have continuing education

**Timeline & Scheduling:**

- The next meeting of the task force is scheduled to be held on November 7, 2013, at 10:00am.

Motion was made to adjourn the meeting by Chairperson Cousineau and seconded by Chairperson Dornfeld.  
Meeting adjourned at 12:15pm.