

The Connecticut General Assembly

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

Co-Chairs:

Sue Cousineau, Esq.

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c/o Judiciary Committee, Room 2500
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DRAFT **Amended #2** Minutes

Tuesday, December 10, 2013
Room 2B

Attendance: Chairperson Sue Cousineau, Esq., Chairperson Sharon Wicks Dornfeld, Esq., Joseph J. DiTunno, Representative Edward Vargas, Jennifer Verraneault, Thomas Weissmuller, Esq., Linda Allard, Esq., Elizabeth Thayer, PhD., Robert Horwitz, PhD.

Protocol: The meeting was called to order at 10:11am. Chairperson Cousineau advised those in attendance of the emergency evacuation procedures for hearing room 2B, and that the event will be televised.

Introduction: For the benefit of the members who could not attend the last meeting and the public, each member was introduced and explained his/her background. Chairperson Dornfeld made known the dates and room assignments for future meetings and the proper email address for testimony submissions.

Minutes of December 10, 2013 Meeting:

- A motion was made to accept the minutes from the last (November 26, 2013) meeting.
- Some members of the task force suggested revisions to the minutes; the minutes were tabled.
- The chair indicated that a team of law students were nearing completion of their research project on laws in all 50 states.
- Certain Members indicated the vital importance of cost analysis for evaluation and care; one member recommended a survey of the costs of 20% of cases and evaluations to present an adequate sample for examination.
- The discussion was focused on the topic of timely compliance with court orders to prevent parental alienation.
- Some members voiced the opinion that cost of litigation and care can complicate matters of access and lead to further conflict; it was their opinion that the issue of cost should be revisited.
- Discussion followed regarding lack of appropriate resources, and an experimental early intervention program being run in Hartford.
- The concept of "Special Masters," volunteer lawyers and mental health professionals, who attempt to resolve disputes outside of the official judicial process, was mentioned.

- Several members highlighted the many complications inherent in parental access cases, including the difficulty of all parties performing adequate cost-benefit analyses.
- Attorney Weissmuller provided significant information on the statutory and procedural processes in Washington State and Alaska.
- Constructive discussion ensued regarding the differences between other states' and Connecticut's statutes and procedures for ensuring adequate parental access while respecting the complexities of each individual case and legitimate causes for concern.
- The discussion concluded with specific emphasis being placed on different ideas for recommendations to change Connecticut's statutes and procedures in regards to strictly enforcing compliance with laws and orders designed to increase parental access.
- The lack of financial and other resources to effectively implement programs was mentioned.

Timeline & Scheduling:

- The next meeting of the task force is scheduled to be held on December 12, 2013, in room 2B.
- A motion was made to adjourn the meeting by Chairperson Dornfeld. Meeting adjourned at 12:00pm