

# The Connecticut General Assembly

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

Co-Chairs:

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c/o Judiciary Committee, Room 2500  
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### DRAFT

Minutes

Thursday, December 12, 2013

Room 2B

**Attendance:** Chairperson Sue Cousineau, Esq., Chairperson Sharon Wicks Dornfeld, Esq., Joseph J. DiTunno, Representative Minnie Gonzalez, Jennifer Verraneault, Thomas Weissmuller, Esq., Linda Allard, Esq., Elizabeth Thayer, PhD., Robert Horwitz, PhD., Stephen M. Humphrey, 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.

**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.

### Minutes of December 12, 2013 Meeting:

- A motion was made to accept the minutes from the December 10<sup>th</sup> meeting, several objections were heard, and the minutes were tabled.
- Dr. Stephen Humphrey was introduced and gave his expert testimony regarding the subject of child welfare based on research and personal experience.
- Dr. Humphrey's testimony included, but was not limited to, references regarding:
  1. The fact that single parents can do a very good job raising children.
  2. "Authoritative Parenting," that is disciplined and nurturing care for children
  3. Minimizing conflict
  4. That a very small percent (1.5%) of child-custody matters are "high conflict;" i.e., drawn into lengthy court cases.
  5. The research that supports the importance of a father's involvement in parenting vis-à-vis the established practice of awarding majority custody to the mother.
  6. His nuanced understanding of gatekeeping as something that can be done well to the benefit of the child.
  7. The fact that in his practice, he has only had three (3) incidents where highly restrictive gatekeeping resulted in the need for "radical responses"
- Questions were asked regarding the evidence for the low percentage number of "high conflict" custody disputes, and how the 1.5% number may be misleading.

- There was discussion regarding the studies that Dr. Humphrey referenced, as well as other relevant studies.
- Defining the terms, “shared-parenting,” and, “shared-custody,” was discussed at length.
- Certain members brought attention to the need to carefully craft court orders to reduce conflict and streamline procedure.
- The topic of parallel parenting was discussed.
- Certain members brought up the fact that psychological records can only be sealed with difficulty.

**Timeline & Scheduling:**

- The motion to adjourn was made at 12:07 pm.
- The next meeting will be held at 10:00 am on Thursday December 19, 2013.