

AFAC Legal Resources Writers Guidelines

AFAC Legal Resources is an independent, consumer-oriented, e-publication directed toward attorneys who represent parents and children in child welfare investigations and dependency cases nationwide, and to the judges who hear these cases.

We seek material that offers our readers new and creative insights into the esoteric issues surrounding child welfare law with an emphasis on providing practical information in an easy-to-read, engaging, narrative format. All articles should be geared to lawyers and judges who practice in this area of law. Features range in size between approximately 1,500 and 3,000 words, including sidebars. We do not cover issues involving domestic relations/custody law.

The submissions should be geared to improving the practice of these legal professionals in their representation of their clients and the administration of these cases from the perspective of protecting the fundamental human right to family association of all family members. In many instances, the attorneys representing parents and children are court-appointed and woefully underpaid, lacking the resources to mount an effective defense against the deep pockets of the state agency who is administering the child welfare case. They often carry a heavy case load and do not have much time to conduct research or improve their practice. This publication is intended to provide cost-effective, comprehensive, viable tools to the child welfare legal practitioner (respondent parent attorney and Guardian ad litem) which would enhance their representation of their clients in these extremely treacherous cases affordably. It is also intended to broaden the perspectives of all legal professionals who administer these cases.

We provide information on legal and business issues to help lawyers better manage their child welfare practice and improve the outcomes for the children who come under the jurisdiction of the court. We address changes and trends in child welfare law, the unique litigation issues presented in these cases, the use of appropriate community resources, case management, agency management, dealing with caseworkers, agency counsel and judges, dealing with the political aspects of these cases, addressing media issues, addressing intrusions by outsiders who are trying to help the family, discussing issues related to concurrent dependency and criminal child abuse cases against a parent, discussing cost management and increasing profitability, and making the most of limited resources.

All articles should be geared toward the perspective of speedy reunification and protecting the parent and child client's rights not only in their current case, but also considering the future ramifications of the decisions and outcomes from this case on the clients for the rest of their lives. To that end, articles must take a long-term view of the advice and strategies offered or employed in any child welfare case. The advice offered must be creative and effective. This must all be accomplished squarely within the context of acting in the best interests of the child and insuring the safety of the child.

Byline given. Pays on publication. No kill fee. We buy all rights. We accept queries by e-mail only. Sample article for \$5.00 via email request.

Entries must be 1,500 to 3,000 words in length.

All material must be original, and offered to *AFAC Legal Resources* for all rights, Web and electronic rights, marketing purposes and reprint permissions. Submitted material cannot have been previously published.

Sample ideas: Case analysis, what went wrong in an actual case and how to prevent or correct it; Practitioner's Perspective on Practices employed during the administration of these cases; Point Counterpoint on key issues; It's way out there, but it worked; Managing the difficult client/judge/attorney; Stories on lawyers involved with high-profile or difficult cases showing "what's involved, how's-it-done" angle and commenting on the effects of the practitioner's diligence on his practice; How to overcome [this obstacle] caused by [client/agency/court] without comprising the client's case.

Formatting:

- Footnotes may be used.
- Tables/charts need to be produced in table form.
- Writers must obtain written (via fax, mail or e-mail) permission for use of copyrighted material (*i.e.*, charts from surveys, etc.) and include that proof with their article.
- Graphics are always desirable, and in some cases necessary (*i.e.*, representations of forms, photographs of interview subjects, etc.). We accept video clips, artwork and audio files to enhance the article. We will also accept well-executed cartoons that make a relevant point contained within the article or to stand alone.
- Writers should also remember to adhere to the policy of Fair Use when quoting from published materials. But it our policy that it is safer to obtain permission first.
- Writers should confirm all facts in stories prior to submission. Verify questionable quotes, names, facts and figures.
- Third parties who are not a part of the freelance agreement should not be provided with copies of the stories under assignment. Providing copies of unpublished articles is a violation of *AFACLR* editorial and freelance policies and significantly complicates the publishing process.
- **A list of cited sources (including source name, title and phone number) is required.**
- You may be requested to provide supporting documentation (transcripts, recordings, pleadings, etc.) where there is potential for civil liability. This is strictly for our files, to support the accuracy of the statements being forwarded.
- Keep sentences brief and to the point.
- Use the active voice in all articles.
- Please do not use double spaces between sentences.
- Text should be broken up with subheads as needed. Writers are encouraged to supply sample headlines.
- Be sure to place your bylines on each article entered. Authors may specify a pen name if they wish to not be identified, but be sure to specify that you want to use the pen name. We understand the risks of exposing certain conduct and will protect the author upon request.
- Since these cases involve confidential issues pertaining to parties, you must obtain releases of information from the parties if you use real names. Do not violate the

confidentiality of any person, but remember, confidentiality attaches to the person who is a party to the case, and can be waived by that person, regardless of the wishes of the state agency or the court. However, any state actors have no expectation of privacy related to the performance of their official duties, and we prefer names be named where appropriate.

- All submitted materials are subject to editing. Due to time and space considerations, along with editorial discretion, *AFAC Legal Resources* reserves the right to determine whether and when submitted material is published.
- Materials should be sent via email in Open Office¹ (.odt) or text (.rtf or .txt) format.
- Names, telephone numbers, physical addresses and e-mail addresses of all sources quoted in articles must be provided for editorial fact-checking purposes. If information is obtained from written material or Web sites, please include a copy (or e-mail attachment/link) of the material or Web address for proofreading purposes. While the writer may want to protect the source, you must identify the source to us. Our staff have been protecting sources since 1996 and have never disclosed a source, even in the face of retaliation and threats of jail.
- Submit a brief biographical sketch (50 words maximum) with your manuscript. Include your current position (attorney, service provider, judge, freelance writer), company or other professional organization (if any), field of expertise, etc. (No hobbies, family members, etc., unless they pertain to your subject or your expertise.) We do not accept submissions from untrained, uncertified family advocates, family rights or parents rights organizations or parents with horror stories. We do accept well-documented articles about conditions for children in foster homes, group homes and state institutions, when in the context of providing solutions or seeking remedies.
- Payment is made to the writer via Paypal only at the email address you specify.

¹ This is a free word processor for PC and Mac available from openoffice.org