

# GEORGIA CHILD SUPPORT GUIDELINES COMMISSION

## Summary of Meeting Minutes

August 12, 2005

Representative Earl Ehrhart, Chairman of the Commission, called the Commission Meeting to order at 10:00 am. Commission Members reintroduced themselves, and members in attendance were as follows: Representative Earl Ehrhart; Judge A. Quillian Baldwin, Jr; Judge Louisa Abbot; Judge Thomas Campbell; Judge Debra Bernes; Senator Seth Harp; Judge R. Michael Key; Dr. Roger Tutterow; Chuck Clay and Senator Joseph Carter. Representative Ehrhart [hereinafter "Chairman Ehrhart"] introduced the Commission staff. Robert Swain introduced the DHR staff present, and Jill Radwin introduced some new staff members. This meeting was open to the public.

Following introductions, Commission Members had the opportunity to review the July 8, 2005 Commission Meeting Minutes. A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes. Commission Members unanimously approved the meeting minutes.

The following reports were presented regarding the activity of the various Commission Subcommittees:

### **I. Economic Study and Obligation Tables Subcommittee Report**

Dr. Roger Tutterow, Chair of this Subcommittee, reported that the members of the Economic Study Group have been identified and each has been sent information regarding other states' guidelines and economic studies. Shortly, there will be a face to face meeting of this group in which they will discuss methodologies of capturing child rearing costs and the feasibility of a Georgia-specific study. Dr. Tutterow said there is thought about hiring national experts familiar with the issue of tracking and capturing child rearing expenditures to assist this study group with their recommendations. Commission Member, Chuck Clay, recommended that an objective expert in this area would be helpful to meet with the Commission or this study group. Senator Harp reminded the Commission that this study group, consisting of state college economists, needs to provide recommendations by September 15, 2005.

Chairman Ehrhart said the Commission also needs to ensure that obligation table(s) will be ready pursuant to the already discussed late fall time lines. He asked staff attorney, Jill Radwin, what findings have been made as to who can produce the obligation table(s). Jill Radwin said that Robert Riddle, Georgia's Title IV-D Director made a nationwide inquiry of other Title IV-D Directors as to who or what companies can produce obligation tables in a timely, professional and competent manner. The result was that PSI was only the private entity, with some states commissioning their own state colleges to review or produce obligation tables. Ms. Radwin, an employee with the Administrative Office of the Courts, said that her agency can

contract directly with PSI and operate through her budget to have the obligation table(s) produced.

Judge Abbot recommended that since the statute does not necessarily spell out all factors which need to be included within the obligation tables, a representative from PSI should make a presentation on this matter to the next full Commission. Further, Judge Abbot suggested that PSI should meet with the newly formed Economic Study Group to see what data can be shared and what recommendations of Georgia specific data needs to be incorporated into the obligation table(s).

Senator Harp moved that the Administrative Office of the Courts begins negotiating with PSI to create the obligation table(s) and that a PSI representative testifies about the table(s) and PSI's capabilities at the next full Commission meeting. No objections were heard. Thus, with no objections, the motion passed.

### **III. Statute Review Subcommittee Report**

Judge Abbot, the Chair of the Statute Review Subcommittee, reported on the July 13, 2005 Statute Review Subcommittee Meeting. She mentioned that at that meeting two Child Support Enforcement Attorneys presented concerns unique to Child Support Enforcement. In addition, Child Support Enforcement has established a work group, as has the Family Law Section of the Georgia State Bar, to review the statute and make recommendations to this Subcommittee which would help clarify and assist in the ease of use of the statute.

Judge Abbot announced that the next Statute Review Subcommittee will be held on August 25, 2005. Prior to that meeting, members will be sent out suggested revisions to the statute to facilitate the work conducted at the actual subcommittee meeting. Chairman Ehrhart asked that the Subcommittee's approved recommendations be posted on the listserv to share with other Commission Members and the public.

Chairman Ehrhart complimented Judge Abbot on her presentation to the Council of Superior Court Judges last month. Judge Campbell, who attended Judge Abbot's presentation, said that the presentation was very helpful, as it dispelled some misleading illusions. Yet, what everyone needs to be reminded is that this is still a work in progress.

Judge Abbot just returned from the National Child Support Enforcement Association Training Seminar in Cincinnati where she moderated a panel on Child Support Guidelines. She commented that this was a learning experience and somewhat relieved to find that the other states are facing issues similar to Georgia. She learned these issues are not unique to Georgia and that each of the states can learn from each other.

### **IV. Forms Subcommittee Report**

Senator Seth Harp, who will chair the Forms Subcommittee, invited all Commission Members to stay upon adjournment for the organizational meeting of the Forms Subcommittee. The agenda will deal with the development of the electronic calculator, worksheets and other associated forms.

## **V. Case Sampling Subcommittee Report**

Judge Debra Bernes reported on the status of the Case Sampling project. A few days before, a letter signed by both Judge Bernes and Chairman Ehrhart, was sent to Superior Court Clerks in twelve counties seeking all final child support orders during the month of September. A follow up letter was also sent the Chief Judge in these judicial circuits, and Judge Bernes also hopes to make a personal phone call to each of these clerks. These orders will be sent to the Guidelines staff for processing and extrapolating data pursuant to the federal mandate of analyzing case data, gathered through sampling or other methods on the application of and deviations from the guidelines. Judge Bernes thanked Dr. Tutterow for identifying the twelve counties which will be used in this sampling.

## **VI. Training Subcommittee Status**

Judge Michael Key reported on the initiation of the Training Subcommittee. An e-mail was distributed to the Members and placed on the listserv which set out some initial thoughts on the directions this Subcommittee may take. Judge Key invited Commission Members to participate. He also announced that while some of the preliminary work of this Subcommittee will be conducted via e-mail, with all e-mails and responses posted on the listserv, the first actual meeting will convene on August 25, 2005.

As to the next full Commission meeting, Chairman Ehrhart said that staff will send out several suggested dates for the next meeting. He asked Commission Members to respond as to which date fits best with each one's schedule. The next Commission Meeting will likely be held in three weeks, and a representative from PSI will be invited to testify at that time.

With no further business to be conducted, the meeting was adjourned.