

Georgia Child Support Guidelines Commission Meeting

SUMMARY OF MEETING MINUTES

September 9, 2005

Chairman, Representative Earl Ehrhart

I. Welcome and Introductions

Representative Earl Ehrhart, Chairman of the Commission, called the Commission Meeting to order at 10:30 am. Commission Members reintroduced themselves, and members in attendance were as follows: Representative Earl Ehrhart; Judge Louisa Abbot; Judge Thomas Campbell; Judge Debra Bernes; Senator Seth Harp; Judge R. Michael Key; Dr. Roger Tutterow; Chuck Clay; Dr. John Clayton Thomas; Annetta Panatera and Senator Joseph Carter. Representative Ehrhart [hereinafter "Chairman Ehrhart"] introduced the Commission staff and Sandra Keating, who will be starting with the Office of Child Support Enforcement shortly as a legislative liaison. This meeting was open to the public.

After the Commission Members had the opportunity to review the August 12, 2005 Commission Meeting minutes, a motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes. The minutes were approved without objection.

II. Obligation Tables: Presentation by Policy Studies, Inc.

Chairman Ehrhart introduced Dr. Jane Venohr, an economist who has been with Policy Studies, Inc. for more than fifteen years. Policy Studies, Inc. ("PSI"), a company operating out of Colorado, has been developing child support guidelines for over twenty years. At this point, the company has been working with more than forty states, with Tennessee being the most recent, to assist them with their guidelines. Dr. Venohr's interactive presentation featured the steps which must be considered for Georgia when building a child support obligation table, which is a component of Income Shares and contemplated by HB 221. She went through nine steps, which are: (1) Select economic basis (estimate of child-rearing expenditures); (2) adjust for current price levels; (3) realign estimates based on national data if state's income differs from national average; (4) subtract child care expenses, such as health insurance premium and extraordinary and uninsured health care expenses; (5) extend to four plus children; (6) extrapolate to higher incomes if necessary; (7) adjust for non-current consumption (optional step); (8) apply tax assumptions; and (9) incorporate self support reserve into table (optional). She also discussed the alternatives involved in some of these steps, such as various estimates as to child rearing costs. The underlying assumption with Income Shares is that the child is entitled to the same amount of expenditures if the parents were still together in an intact family. Thus, the first step in developing an obligation table or schedule is start with the child rearing expenditures from an intact family. However, there are various estimators and Dr. Venohr discussed the various opinions and evaluations of these estimators. Following her presentation, Dr. Tutterow and the economists of the Economic Consortium, who were recommended and volunteered by the Georgia University System, will analyze the information Dr. Venohr presented and what makes sense for Georgia. This Economic Consortium will make their

recommendations to the Child Support Commission's Economic Study and Obligation Table Subcommittee, who in turn will make a recommendation to the full Commission for their approval. Upon the Commission's recommendation, the Administrative Office of the Courts will finalize its contract with PSI to begin developing, assisting and creating the obligation table for Georgia.

(PSI's Power Point is attached)

Representative Ehrhart had to leave for a legislative meeting and turned the chair over to Senator Seth Harp who heard subcommittee reports from the various subcommittee chairs.

III. Statute Review Subcommittee Report

Judge Abbot summarized the activities of the Statute Review Subcommittee, including the statutory revision recommendations which the Subcommittee adopted and agreed to recommend to the full Commission. In addition, the Office of Legislative Counsel has agreed to become involved. Jill Travis, from that Office, has already put these suggested changes into a proposed legislation format. Once the Full Commission approves or makes final revisions, a final draft of the legislative proposal can be created. At that point, the goal is to present the recommendations to the public for their input and submit the proposal to the House and Senate Judiciary Committees so they can begin to review. After this meeting, the Statute Review Subcommittee will convene again and proceed to go through the definition section and review for suggested revisions.

IV. Forms Subcommittee Report

Senator Harp gave a report of the Forms Subcommittee, which he chairs. The Subcommittee has had one meeting in which the Office of Child Support Enforcement presented a proposed electronic calculator. Senator Harp tasked the Office of Child Support Enforcement to assemble a taskforce to review and assist in the creation of worksheets which will drive the development of the calculator. This process is now ongoing.

V. Case Sampling Subcommittee Report

Judge Bernes, chair of this Subcommittee, reported that the case data gathering has begun this month by requiring that twelve pre-selected counties submit all final child support orders for the month of September to the Commission. Approximately three counties have indicated some difficulty in complying. Judge Bernes was hopeful that these issues can be worked out shortly. In addition, Judge Bernes anticipated that a subcommittee meeting could be convened soon to analyze the data as it arrives from the Superior Clerks.

VI. Training Subcommittee Status

Judge Key thanked Judge Abbot for chairing the Training Subcommittee at the last meeting on August 25, 2005. He indicated that he had recently spoken at a state Juvenile Court Guardian ad Litem training, and realized that this is another audience which will require training. He stated there is some support to create an implementation guide for HB 221. He suggested that since there is common membership of both the Statute Review and Training Subcommittees that their meetings can be combined. In terms of the implementation guide, the Subcommittee

Members of both Subcommittees can build the table of contents as the Statute Review Subcommittee reviews the various components of the statute.

VII. New Business or Comments from Commission Members/Public

Joy Hawkins announced that at the conclusion of this meeting, there will be a short meeting to discuss the interplay between temporary protective orders and child support issues. This meeting will serve as a division of the Statute Review Subcommittee. Judge Abbot added that this issue had been brought forward by a number of individuals regarding the emergency nature of temporary protective orders and often the summary fashion of these hearings. Due to the needed quick turn around, both parties often fail to provide any documenting evidence as to income. Thus, issues arise as to training and how does the court calculate child support in that type of setting.

No other new business issues were raised. In addition, there were neither comments from the Commission Members nor the Public.

VIII. Future Meeting Dates

The next meeting will likely be held in three weeks. Staff will circulate several dates and survey Commission members to obtain a consensus of the most convenient date.

With no further business, the Commission Meeting was adjourned.