

**Georgia Commission on Child Support
Low Income Deviation Work Group
Tuesday, August 10, 2021**

Meeting Summary

The Low-Income Deviation Work Group (“Work Group”) of the Georgia Commission on Child Support (“Commission”) held this—it’s first meeting—via videoconferencing using Zoom. Elaine Johnson, Executive Program Manager for the Commission, called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and welcomed the eight Work Group members as well as two guests who attended this open meeting. Staff Attorney, Noelle Lagueux-Alvarez, and Program Coordinator, Latoinna Lawrence, also served as staff for the meeting.

Elaine Johnson reviewed the purpose of this Work Group, which was formed as the result of a suggestion by the Low-Income Deviation Study Committee based on feedback from judges, lawyers, and the public, citing that the way the low-income deviation functions in the child support calculator is too complicated and often leads child support calculator users to use the nonspecific deviation in lieu of the low-income deviation. Noelle Lagueux-Alvarez noted that using the nonspecific deviation in lieu of the low-income deviation, in a single case may not seem significant, but when aggregating all cases in which that is done it sets off a false alarm that the BCSO table may be inappropriate. Accordingly, how the low-income deviation functions in the child support calculator must be user-friendly so that it is used as needed in appropriate cases. Thus, the objective of this Work Group is to review how the low-income deviation currently functions in the child support calculator and to suggest to the Commission, if possible, ways to simplify the functionality and instructions for the low-income deviation in the child support calculator.

So that all Work Group members may start off on the same page, Noelle Lagueux-Alvarez, recapped the provisions of the low-income deviation as found in O.C.G.A. § 19-6-15(i)(2)(b), but explained to all that we are not discussing proposed changes to the statute, rather how best to execute the requirements of the statute in the calculator. Staff noted that during the next Work Group meeting they would provide a demonstration of the low-income deviation from the live calculator.

Staff asked Work Group members for their general thoughts and comments on how the low-income deviation could work better in the calculator. Deborah Johnson commented that she thinks the low-income deviation is especially hard for self-represented litigants to navigate and suggested adopting a step-by-step functionality similar to how the self-employment income calculator works. Audrey Bergeson suggested adding a pop-up box to the nonspecific deviation saying something like, “Are you using this in lieu of the low-income deviation?” to prompt people to use the correct deviation. Deborah Johnson added that she doesn’t believe the calculator should auto fill the deviation amount to automatically adjust to the maximum possible deviation so that the child support obligation drops to the low-income deviation’s statutory minimum of \$100, and Ryan Bradley voiced that he agreed. Ryan Bradley also agreed that courts are often using the nonspecific deviation in lieu of the low-income deviation. Liz Schriber shared some initial thoughts that will be reviewed further at the next Work Group meeting scheduled for Friday, August 27, 2021.

The Work Group discussed the best date/time to set a meeting in September which was determined to be Tuesday, September 21, 2021, at 10a.m. The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 a.m.