

**Georgia Commission on Child Support  
Low-Income Deviation Work Group**

**Tuesday, October 19, 2021  
10:00 to 11:00 a.m.**

**Meeting Minutes**

The Low-Income Deviation Work Group (“Work Group”) of the Georgia Commission on Child Support (“Commission”) held this meeting via videoconferencing using Zoom. Elaine Johnson, Executive Program Manager for the Commission, called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. Seven Work Group members and three guests attended this open meeting. Staff Attorney, Noelle Lagueux-Alvarez, and Program Coordinator, Latoinna Lawrence, also served as staff for the meeting. Work Group members in attendance were:

Audrey Bergeson	Jamie Rush
Ryan Bradley	Liz Schriber
Deborah Johnson	Erica Thornton
Sabrina Rivers	Charles Spinardi

Elaine Johnson announced that due to retirement, one Work Group member, Shirley Champa, asked to be removed from the Work Group bringing the number of members to eleven.

At the beginning of the meeting, Staff Attorney, Noelle Lagueux-Alvarez, confirmed that a quorum of 6 of the 11 Work Group members was present. Elaine Johnson raised the issue of approving the minutes from the last Work Group Meeting which was held on September 21, 2021. She commented that the minutes were shared with member Elizabeth “Liz” Schriber for her review prior to today for the purpose of ensuring the notes correctly summarized the content of her presentation made during the September 21 meeting. Ms. Schriber approved the summary of her presentation. Elaine Johnson asked Ms. Lagueux-Alvarez to conduct a voice vote to approve the minutes. Ms. Lagueux-Alvarez stated that the minutes had been previously circulated with the members. The members of the Work Group unanimously voted to approve those minutes with no abstentions or corrections needed. Erica Thornton joined the call after the vote on the approval of the minutes was held.

Elaine Johnson asked Deborah Johnson to make her presentation on her idea to improve our current low-income deviation calculation on Schedule E and pointed out that Deborah Johnson had shared a document with the members by email that they should refer to during the presentation. Ms. Deborah Johnson explained that she is an attorney for the Legal Aid Society and that she represents both low-income custodial parents and non-custodial parents. Ms. Deborah Johnson noted that she thinks it is good that Georgia requires judges to consider the effect that granting a low-income deviation would have on both the custodial and noncustodial households. She explained that her research has shown that other states don’t always do this. She gave a presentation on her suggestion to add a feature to Georgia’s child support calculator, like the self-employment calculator that is embedded within the larger child support calculator, that would elicit information from someone requesting a low-income deviation. She has included questions to help draw out information from the parents that the court will need to consider. The information is organized in columns for each parent and for the judge. This would allow the requester to consider all factors required in the statute, lay out their case, and the court could see a summary of all factors presented when determining whether to apply the low-income deviation. This tool would become part of the calculator in Schedule E. She pointed out that some of the categories of income that she included are straight from the statute and others are included for consideration. The crux of Ms. Deborah Johnson’s suggestion is to embed prompts in the calculator motivating the requester to explain why the low-income deviation is being requested.

Elaine Johnson commented that Ms. Deborah Johnson's idea goes directly to the heart of determining if a noncustodial parent meets the extreme economic hardship, when considering a request for a low-income deviation. Ms. Lagueux-Alvarez commented that she believes Ms. Deborah Johnson's consideration of other sources of income is appropriate. The statute does say that the court shall weigh all sources of attributable and excluded sources of income. Deborah Johnson invited the members to contact her directly should they have questions and want to discuss her idea further.

Elaine Johnson and Noelle Lagueux-Alvarez thanked Deborah Johnson for her presentation. Elaine Johnson commented that the presentation by Deborah Johnson was the only scheduled presentation on the agenda but asked if there were any other comments. Member Audrey Bergeson noted that she liked what Deborah Johnson suggested especially as it would help self-represented litigants better explain why they think the low-income deviation is appropriate for their case. She stated she has seen situations in court where parents were unable to make their case to the court, but that Ms. Deborah Johnson's idea serves as a framework for this process. Elaine Johnson reminded the members that the requirements to determine an extreme economic hardship are found in the statute at OCGA 19-6-15(i)(2)(b)(iv)(v).

Elaine Johnson informed the members that she and Ms. Lagueux-Alvarez are developing an idea for improving the functionality of the current low-income deviation process and will share that idea at the next scheduled meeting.

Elaine Johnson shared that she and Ms. Lagueux-Alvarez have also discussed next steps for this Work Group. She stated how the ideas shared by the Work Group members complement each other and may prove to work best when paired together. She explained that the Work Group needs to reach a point where we're finished with our work. She anticipates one more Work Group meeting is needed to compile ideas before raising all ideas to the Commission's Technology and Calculator Subcommittee. She requested that members who presented ideas send staff written documentation for use in presentations to the Commission's Technology and Calculator Subcommittee unless they have already done so.

Elaine Johnson said staff will work with the chair of the Technology and Calculator Subcommittee, Regina Quick, Commission member, to set a first meeting. She also stated that the members of this Work Group will be invited to attend meetings held by that subcommittee.

The next Work Group meeting will be on Tuesday, November 9, 2021, at 9:30 a.m. This meeting was adjourned at 10:45 a.m.