

**Georgia Commission on Child Support
Parenting Time Deviation Study Committee
Kathleen Connell, Esq., Chair**

Thursday, July 22, 2021

Meeting Minutes

Welcome, Introductions, and Roll Call:

The Parenting Time Deviation Study Committee (“Study Committee”) of the Georgia Commission on Child Support (“Commission”) held this meeting via videoconferencing using Zoom. Kathleen (“Katie”) Connell, Chair of the Committee, called the meeting to order and welcomed the 11 Committee members, including herself, who attended as well as the nine guests who attended this open meeting. Executive Program Manager, Elaine Johnson, and, Staff Attorney, Noelle Lagueux-Alvarez, served as staff for the meeting.

Meeting Minutes from May 20, 2021:

Noelle Lagueux-Alvarez acknowledged that no quorum existed. There are 27 members of this Study Committee and only 11 were present. To establish a quorum, 14 members are required. Katie Connell suggested that a vote on meeting minutes from the May 2021 Study Committee Meeting be conducted via email. Staff confirmed that they would do so in compliance with the Commission’s Bylaws.

Charge and Objectives of Committee:

Chair Connell asked staff to report on status of the Charge and Objectives document for the Committee. Elaine Johnson reviewed section A of the document, reviewing the three bullets, and reminded members that Carol Walker and Johanna Kiehl compiled the content of section B. Johanna Kiehl suggested the language in section A, the second bullet should be reviewed further. The Committee members focused their discussion accordingly and discussed certain words in the text, specifically, mandatory and presumptive, and how they should be used in the text. Carol Walker reminded the Committee that the task is to make recommendations to the Commission, and they make the decisions on the language used, and that including the two terms allows that opportunity. Chair Connell commented on the use of the word’s adjustment and deviation, as being two different things, but we should include both words for the Commission to consider. Carol Walker summarized the discussion stating there could be two separate components, one could be, “should include that there be a mandatory or presumptive adjustment,” a secondly, “should there be a mandatory or presumptive deviation,” which breaks the terms into the two categories that are statutorily defined. Chair Connell said she would take on the task of editing the second bullet, possibly breaking it into two bullets, and raise it for further discussion at the next meeting.

Old Business

A) Review Questions for Expert Practitioners

Chair Connell asked staff to report on the list of questions the Committee may consider when interviewing practitioners from other states. Elaine Johnson reported that two documents were prepared and included as handouts for the meeting. She explained that staff prepared a list of questions compiled from the initial 50-state survey, from the public and judicial surveys, questions previously compiled by Carol Walker, Johanna Kiehl, and Adam Gleklen, and suggestions from member Pat Buonodono. Elaine explained that the second document prepared by Johanna Kiehl removed duplicate questions to synthesize the two documents.

Chair Connell stated she would like to see us finalize the questions in one document and the members agreed. She led the Committee in a discussion of ideas on the process of communicating with other states' practitioners and generally the approach the Committee should take when making those contacts. Chair Connell pointed out we should initially speak by telephone with practitioners, and then follow-up with a written email contact. She identified that we would need to draft email content, which should include an introduction and bullets to organize the questions, but not written as a questionnaire. Further, that we should fill-in obvious answers to questions based on what we already know, so as not to over burden anyone. The content should also state our understanding of their state's parenting time process and ask them to confirm that our understanding is correct.

Our goals will be to gather information on what is important, hone in and find out why other states established their parenting time as they did and find out their thoughts behind their choices and decisions so we may secure informative responses and substantive recommendations. Chair Connell asked if there were members who would volunteer to synthesize the questions and member Sarah Mauldin agreed to take on this task, with Carol Walker assisting.

B) Identify Expert Practitioners

Chair Connell shared with the Committee that Carol Walker reached out to Elizabeth Lindsey, a Georgia Family lawyer and current Chair of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers, for assistance in identifying practitioners in the states the Committee wants to contact. Mrs. Connell thanked Carol for taking on this task. The members were provided a handout with the names and contact information for those practitioners. The Chair also thanked Adam Gleklen who identified an individual practitioner in Florida, who formerly practiced family law in Georgia. Chair Connell asked for volunteers willing to contact the practitioners. Carol Walker volunteered for Tennessee; Chair Connell volunteered for Minnesota and Nevada; Johanna Kiehl volunteered for New Jersey; Adam Gleklen volunteered for Florida; and Pat Buonodono volunteered for Virginia. Discussions on the email content and interview of practitioners will be reviewed further during the next meeting.

New Business

Discussion on Committee Membership

Elaine Johnson spoke on the issue of member absences. Currently, the Committee consists of 27 members, but it has been routine for half of the members to attend, and for today's meeting, the membership has not reached quorum- of at least 14 members present. Chair Connell acknowledged that the chronic absences of several members of the Committee are impacting the work of the Committee by denying the Committee their contributions and perspectives, and by thwarting the ability to reach quorum. Committee members discussed a few ideas on how to resolve the lack of attendance and to address the approval of minutes, including an e-vote. Chair Connell asked Noelle Lagueux-Alvarez to draft a letter on Commission letterhead for the Chair to sign and that will be mailed to those members who have been chronically absent as a solution for addressing this issue. Ms. Connell's office will handle a hard copy and electronic mailing of that letter.

Schedule Next Meeting and Adjourn:

To ensure compliance with the Open Meetings Act, staff suggested discussing and setting the dates for the next several meetings. It was decided to set meetings on Wednesday, August 25, 2021, Wednesday, September 15, 2021, and Wednesday, October 6, 2021, from 1:30-3:00 p.m., on each of those days.