

**Georgia Commission on Child Support
Low-Income Deviation Work Group
Tuesday, September 21, 2021**

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. The first order of business was to review for the members the purpose of the Work Group. She explained that the Work Group is to consider ideas that could simplify and make the use of the Low-Income Deviation on Schedule E of the Child Support Calculator more user-friendly, while remaining compliant with the guidelines statute at O.C.G.A. § 19-6-15(i)(2)(B).

Eight Work Group members as well as six 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	Erica Thornton
Byron Cuthbert	Sabrina Rivers
Deborah Johnson	Jamie Rush
Kenneth Sleets	Elizabeth “Liz” Schriber

Staff attorney, Noelle Lagueux-Alvarez, confirmed that a quorum of seven of the 12 Work Group members was present. Work Group member, Jamie Rush, moved to approve the minutes of the Work Group meetings held on August 10, 2021, and August 27, 2021. Work Group member, Sabrina Rivers, seconded that motion. A voice vote was held, and that motion passed unanimously with no abstentions. Deborah Johnson joined the call after the vote on the motion to approve minutes was held.

Work Group member, Liz Schriber, shared her screen and made a presentation explaining her idea that a tool should be added to the calculator to allow people to go step by step to determine whether they should request a low-income deviation. She explained that she created an Excel spreadsheet and envisions the calculator automatically inserting information from the schedules into this additional spreadsheet, so amounts do not have to be entered twice. She began her demonstration showing where the attributable income from Schedule A is inserted. Next, are the exclusions from gross income that we cannot consider on Schedule B, but that including these expenses helps give a better idea of the household income for the parents. Next, she looks at the reasonable household expenses for both parents to get a picture of what the separate household incomes look like. At the bottom of the spreadsheet, the low-income deviation amount for the number of children is included, as set in the statute. The spreadsheet then recaps the income and expenses and brings over the presumptive amount of child support from line 9 of the child support worksheet. Depending on the amount we would enter for the low-income deviation, the adjusted child support amount would subtract from the noncustodial parent’s total income, and then add to the custodial parent’s income that amount of child support. Ms. Lagueux-Alvarez stated that it seems that Ms. Schriber’s recommendation to add this tool is given because people are having

trouble using the low-income deviation because of a barrier in knowing if they can even request the deviation. Ms. Schriber agreed that this tool would be used to help them determine if they should even request the low-income deviation.

Work Group member, Ryan Bradley, was slated to make a presentation, but due to circumstances beyond his control was unavailable to participate in the meeting. Ms. Johnson read the handout Mr. Bradley had furnished and asked if there was any discussion. Member Deborah Johnson commented that her concern was that the process described would treat the low-income deviation similarly to that of the non-specific deviation. She explained that she is concerned that the requirements in the statute would not be met.

Elaine Johnson asked whether anyone had any ideas to improve the instructions about the low-income deviation in the calculator. No other ideas were offered. She asked if anyone had the idea of updating the current instructions and continue to use the current low-income deviation process currently used in the calculator. No one indicated they had considered this type of update.

Elaine Johnson called upon Deborah Johnson asking if she has an idea to recommend. Deborah Johnson suggested enhancing the child support calculator with something like the self-employment calculator that elicits information that the law requires and could then be considered by the court when determining whether to apply the low-income deviation. Deborah Johnson further stated that litigants know they are struggling financially, but do not know what to do about it. She agreed to make a presentation about her idea at the next meeting, including a written handout of the idea.

Elaine Johnson remarked to the members that any written ideas from this Work Group will be used when these ideas are presented to the Technology and Calculator Subcommittee for their consideration.

Audrey Bergeson suggested adding a pop-up box at the non-specific deviation asking the party whether the deviation was being requested for low-income reasons, used in lieu of the low-income deviation.

Elaine Johnson noted that Ryan Bradley and Deborah Johnson would present their ideas at the next Work Group meeting which will be on October 19, 2021. Deborah Johnson recommended we schedule a following meeting. The members agreed for the following meeting to be held on November 9, 2021.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 a.m.