

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

**Tuesday, March 22, 2022
10:00 a.m.**

Meeting Minutes

The Parenting Time Deviation Study Committee (“Study Committee”) of the Georgia Commission on Child Support (“Commission”) held this hybrid meeting in person at the State Bar building in Atlanta and via videoconferencing using Zoom webinar. Executive Program Manager, Elaine Johnson, Staff Attorney, Noelle Lagueux-Alvarez, and Program Coordinator, Latoinna Lawrence, served as staff for the meeting. Staff Attorney, Noelle Lagueux-Alvarez, displayed documents during the meeting for in-person and virtual attendees alike to view as the Study Committee conducted its work.

Seven (7) guests attended this open meeting via Zoom. Seven (7) Study Committee members attended in total, five via Zoom and two in person. Study Committee members in attendance were:

Pat Buonodono	Byron Cuthbert	Johanna Kiehl	Jill Massey
Sarah Mauldin	Charles Spinardi	Carol Walker	

Chair Katie Connell joined via Zoom at the start of the meeting, called the meeting to order, but within just a few minutes, had to excuse herself due to an ill child. A quorum of Study Committee members was never achieved and toward the end of the meeting, Study Committee member Carol Walker moved to hold an e-vote on the approval of minutes from the Study Committee’s meeting on March 10, 2022, which was seconded by Study Committee member Johanna Kiehl. Staff will handle conducting the e-vote.

In working toward a final report to provide to the Commission no later than this Study Committee’s end date of April 30, 2022, the Study Committee members continued to discuss their recommendations for how Georgia should handle parenting time in the calculation of child support. Specifically, the Study Committee talked through a draft report to the Commission, which the primary drafter, Study Committee member Carol Walker, referred to as the “summary” document. Carol Walker explained that she incorporated the consensus document discussed at length during the March 10th meeting of the Study Committee, into the draft report. She had also emailed a soft copy of the summary document to the Study Committee members on Friday, March 18th, for their review and use during this meeting. Ms. Walker gave an overview of that document, and the Study Committee started off discussing the “non-consensus” section at length and continued through to the end of the document. Study Committee member Carol Walker reminded the members that during the March 10th meeting the members were asked to submit their written ideas on issues of non-consensus for incorporation into the draft report. She reported having received comments from Study Committee member Pat Buonodono and Johanna Kiehl, and that

both of their comments had already been incorporated in the draft report being reviewed today. The Study Committee also discussed the composition of the report, including but not limited to, the introduction, background work, membership, and the extensions granted by the Commission for the work of this Study Committee. Commission staff will consult with Chair Katie Connell on how she wants to identify the members of the Study Committee in the report.

Study Committee member Johanna Kiehl presented on her ideas and recommendations. One of Ms. Kiehl's recommendations focuses on how to calculate the amount of parenting time in a case using two possible solutions, one being a definition of "overnight," and the other being a method addressing parents who work job shifts without necessarily overnight hours. A good bit of discussion focused on that topic with Study Committee member Pat Buonodono raising concern over possible confusion caused by Johanna's use of the word "holiday" in that recommendation.

Study Committee member Carol Walker asked whether meeting minutes from all Study Committee meetings should be included as an appendix to the Study Committee's final report. Staff attorney Noelle Lagueux-Alvarez's response was that providing all meeting minutes in an appendix was not likely needed for several reasons: (1) all Study Committee meeting minutes are available permanently on the Commission's website, (2) such an appendix would be quite voluminous given the approximately 20 meetings held by this Study Committee, and (3) the minutes are organized by date—not subject matter—so that providing all minutes on a chronological basis would not necessarily be helpful to the readers of the report. Study Committee member Pat Buonodono offered a great middle-ground solution, noting that the report could include the URL link to the meeting minutes to assist those who wish to review meeting minutes.

Next, the Study Committee discussed whether there should be a threshold amount of parenting time before a parenting time adjustment is applied. After that, they discussed the idea of having a "box to check" within the child support calculator for judges to use if parenting time has been ordered, but the judge does not think that parenting time will be exercised. There was also discussion on public policy requiring parenting time to be established by court order so there is judicial oversight to the benefit of parents, and to avoid issues involving legitimation, that Study Committee member Pat Buonodono brought up. Following those discussions, Study Committee member Carol Walker asked if there were any thoughts on the section of the draft report that addresses court-ordered parenting time. None were offered.

Next, the Study Committee discussed the four recommendations that are important, but that are "outside the scope" of this Study Committee. Study Committee member Sarah Mauldin suggested adding the idea of adopting new terminology in Georgia's child support guideline statute in lieu of "custodial parent" and "noncustodial parent" (which many members of the public find offensive). With that new suggestion, the list of "outside the scope" recommendations stands at five. The Study Committee discussed alternative terms such as "lesser time parent" and "greater time parent." Study Committee member Sarah Mauldin agreed to conduct additional research for parental terms that could be further considered by the committee.

Then, the Study Committee took up the topic of how much to include in the “process” section of the final report. There was discussion on ensuring that the most current or final version of any report or resource be included as appendices to the report to help illustrate the extent of work conducted by the Study Committee as a whole. Study Committee member Sarah Mauldin agreed to work on the task and Commission staff agreed to assist. The Study Committee plans to work collaboratively over the next few weeks to come up with a final draft of the report. Study Committee member Carol Walker is charged with keeping the working draft of the report. The Study Committee members agreed that the final draft of the report must be completed and provided to all Study Committee members no later than March 18, 2022, for their final review prior to their next meeting. It was suggested that the final report be voted on by e-vote prior to that next meeting in case there is a lack of quorum at the April 25th meeting.

The next—and what is anticipated to be the last—Study Committee meeting will be a hybrid meeting held in person at the State Bar Building in Atlanta and virtually via Zoom on Monday April 25, 2022, at 10:00 a.m.

The meeting adjourned at 11:41 a.m.