

“Essentials of Representing Parents in Dependency Cases”

Parent Attorneys Fall Seminar

PARENT ATTORNEY ADVOCACY COMMITTEE

September 11, 2015



8:30 to 9:00 a.m.	Registration and Welcome
9:00 to 9:30 a.m.	Meat and Potatoes: “Timelines in Dependency Cases” <i>Handout/Discussion</i>
9:30 to 10:30 a.m.	Name of the Game: “What to Argue at Every Review Hearing” <i>Deidre Kirkland Merriman & Emma Brown-Bernstein</i>
10:30 to 10:45 a.m.	Break
10:45 to 11:45 a.m.	“Nuts and Bolts of Representing Parents with Disabilities” <i>Nicole Woolfork Hull, Michelle LeGault & Barbara Geter</i>
11:45 a.m. – Noon	Break and Pick up Box Lunch
Noon to 1:00 p.m.	Heart of the Matter: “Ethics of Representing Parents” <i>Ari Mathe and the Hon. Robert Waller, Gwinnett County</i>
1:00 to 2:00 p.m.	“The Nitty Gritty of Representing Fathers in Dependency Cases” <i>Kamau Hull and Nazish Ahmed</i>
2:00 p.m.	Adjourn

This Seminar is presented by the Parent Attorney Advocacy Committee with sponsorship by the Administrative Office of the Courts and support from the Georgia Public Defender Council. Thanks to the following Faculty who have given generously of their time and talents.

Faculty Biographies

Nazish A. Ahmed is a native of Fort Lauderdale, Florida and attended the University of Florida where she received her Bachelor of Arts in Political Science, with a concentration in International Studies. She earned her law degree from St. Thomas University School of Law in Miami. After law school, Nazish moved to Georgia with her husband, where she established her practice in 2013. One of her first cases was appealing the Termination of Parental Rights of a father in 2013, which was overturned in *In re: C.K.S* (2014). Nazish practices primarily in the areas of dependency, family law and bankruptcy in South Atlanta.

Emma Brown-Bernstein was born in New York City. She enrolled at Emory University School of Law after completing Bates College in Maine. During her first summer after law school she interned at the Bronx Defenders in the Family Defense Division. She interned the following year at both the Southern Center for Human Rights and Appellate Advocates in New York City. She spent the final year of law school in the Barton Juvenile Defense Clinic working under Randee Waldman. She was hired by the Fulton County Public Defender in the Parent Attorney division in the spring of 2013 after participating in an internship at the Fulton County Public Defender through the Emory Fellowship Program.

Barbara Geter, Ph.D, DDP, J.D. came to Advantage as its director of DD services in June 2010 after many years in the educational arena, where she served as social worker, psycho-educational therapist, as well as special and regular education teacher and administrator. A native Athenian, Barbara holds a Bachelor's degree in Sociology from Shaw University in Raleigh, NC; and a Masters in Social Work, Specialist in Special Education, Ph.D. in Educational Leadership, and a J.D. in Law from UGA. Barbara was employed for 24 years for the special school now known as Rutland Academy, where she wore a variety of hats, including infant assessor/evaluator, outpost coordinator, county consultant, social worker, and adolescent therapist. Since 1995, Barbara has served as an attorney in private practice, an assistant principal (Fowler Drive-Athens), and a principal and director of transition services at the Georgia Academy for the Blind in Macon, GA.

A. Kamau Hull graduated from Virginia Military Institute with a degree in Mechanical Engineering and minors in Mathematics and English and also Atlanta's John Marshall School of Law. During law school, Kamau became a published member of the Law Journal, and served as a Student Ambassador, Peer Mentor, and Vice President of the Sports & Entertainment Law Society. Before going into private practice, Kamau's professional experience included working as a Mechanical Engineer with the Virginia Military Institute; and internship with the Forsyth County Solicitor's Office; an internship with the University of Georgia Fanning Institute; working with the Pro Bono Outreach and Externship Office at the John Marshall School of law, and working as an associate for Kenneth Dious & Associates. Additionally, Kamau serves on the Executive Board for the Parent Attorney Advocacy Committee,

annually serves as a mediation judge for the Brenau University Mock Mediation Tournament, serves on the Whit Davis Elementary School Council, and is a Board member of the Chess & Community Conference.

Nicole Hull graduated cum laude from Mercer University with a dual degree in Sociology and Criminal Justice and also the Walter F. George School of Law. During law school, Nicole served as the Regional Director of Community Service for the Black Law Students Association and the local Community Service Director for the Walter F. George School of Law. Before going into private practice, her professional experience included two judicial externships with Judge John Beam, Jr. (Chatham County) and Judge Robin Shearer (Athens-Clarke County); clerking for the Carl Vinson Institute of Government; working with the Emory University School of Law Summer Child Advocacy Program; working for the Ninth Judicial Administrative District Office of Dispute Resolution as the Director of Operations; and working as an associate at Kenneth Dious & Associates. Additionally, Nicole has served as the Vice President for the Board of Directors for the Georgia Conflict Center, currently serves on the Juvenile Mediation Sub Committee for the Georgia Office of Dispute Resolution, and is as an Adjunct Professor for Brenau University's Conflict Resolution & Legal Studies Program.

Michelle LeGault has been licensed as an attorney in GA since 1999 and has litigated disputes in magistrate, superior, state and federal district courts throughout Georgia. She has been approved to accept parent representation, client-directed and dual-role child representation and guardian ad litem appointments in dependency, delinquency and private custody disputes in DeKalb County Juvenile Court since 2012 and has been on the conflict attorney list (dependency, guardianship, delinquency) in Fulton County Juvenile Court since January 2014. She takes approximately 40-50+ hours per year in CLEs and other trainings in the areas of child welfare, child abuse, intellectual disabilities and the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC). Michelle is currently a Co-Chair of the Training Committee, Parent Attorney Advocacy Committee (2014-15) and serves as a Service Board Committee Member of the Atlanta Legal Aid Society (Fall 2014 to present). She previously served as a Member at Large of the Lawyer Referral & Information Service (LRIS) Board of the Atlanta Bar Association (June 2011 to 2015). Her recent speaking engagements include “Five Skills for the Stress of Parent Representation”, (PAAC Advanced Training, November 2014) (moderator), “Case Plans & Reviews: A Beginning Attorney’s Perspective” (PAAC, May 2013) (co-presenter) and “Managing Your Law Practice and Your Life: Work/Life Balance and the Value of Engaging in Bar, Pro Bono and Community Activities” (Atlanta Bar Association, March 2013) (webinar panelist).

LeGault Legal, LLC, Decatur, GA; michelle@legault-legal.com

Ari Mathe’ is a certified Child Welfare Law Specialist who has practiced primarily juvenile law for over a decade. Mathe’ served as an Assistant Public Defender in the Northeastern Judicial Circuit for six years,

representing indigent juveniles and adults involved with the criminal justice system, during which time she also served as the chairman of the Juvenile Law Committee of the State Bar Young Lawyers Division. Mathe' now represents children, parents and custodians in juvenile court dependency and delinquency matters and serves as a contract appellate attorney for the Georgia Public Defender Council. Mathe' has trained attorneys both nationally and locally for the American Bar Association, the Georgia Association of Counsel for Children, the Georgia Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, and the Georgia Public Defender Council.

Deidre Merriman is the owner and founding attorney of The Criminal & Family Law Group, D Merriman, LLC. Her current practice is all about the defense of individual rights in a variety of legal areas, primarily focusing on criminal defense and family law. With extensive knowledge of both deprivation and delinquency laws, Deidré handles juvenile law cases ranging from allegations of physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, severe developmental delay of the child, mental impairment of parent or guardian, and misdemeanor or felony criminal charges of minors.

The Honorable Judge Robert Waller was born in Albany, Georgia. He graduated from Albany High School and attended Albany Junior College. He is a graduate of the University of Georgia and Atlanta Law School. Prior to becoming an attorney, he was a history teacher at Morrow High School in Clayton County, Georgia for four years, and worked for the Georgia Department of Human Resources in the divisions of Youth Services and Mental Health/Mental Retardation Substance Abuse for 6 years. He served as the Solicitor for the Juvenile Court of Gwinnett County from 1986 to 1988, and the Associate Judge of that Juvenile Court from 1988 to 1991. He was a practicing attorney and part-time Magistrate from 1991 until 2009 when he was sworn in as Juvenile Court Judge. Judge Waller is married to Cindy Wright and has two children, Keegan, and McKenzie. He is a former youth basketball coach and has coached the Mock Trial teams at the Wesleyan school since 2003.