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FACT SHEET

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California Dependency Online Guide

[<http://www.courts.ca.gov/dependencyonlineguide/>]

The California Dependency Online Guide is a resource website that provides high quality, juvenile dependency–related legal and nonlegal information to California attorneys, judicial officers, social workers, tribal representatives, CASAs, and other child welfare professionals. The website is managed by staff at the AOC’s Center for Families, Children & the Courts. Subscriptions to the site are free.

Purpose

The purpose of the California Dependency Online Guide is to provide relevant, up-to-date information for judicial officers, attorneys, and all other professionals working in California’s child welfare system, regardless of the size of their county, who they work for, or the availability of legal and other resources in their local area. It also serves to ensure that attorneys practicing anywhere in the state are able to complete the statutorily mandated training that is required before accepting an appointment as counsel for a parent or a child.

Website Content

Over 5,000 individual entries are on the website, as of October 2013, including:

- 1065 case summaries, on a comprehensive case law page that includes summaries and case text for California dependency and related state and federal cases;
- Links to legal resources, including California Rules of Court, Judicial Council forms, California statutes, and state and federal regulations;
- 82 sample briefs, motions, and writs;
- Approximately 75 upcoming conferences and trainings, on a training calendar;
- 13 distance-learning courses, including for-credit online courses that meet the eight-hour training requirement for new dependency attorneys;
- 109 “other” training materials, such as handouts from the annual Beyond the Bench conference and many other conferences and trainings;

- Over 200 expert witness listings, including links to other databases of experts;
- Information about 2,413 county-specific reunification and family maintenance service providers, in areas such as substance abuse treatment and therapy and domestic violence counseling, including links to county or regional databases of service providers serving most California counties;
- 531 articles, brochures, videos, reference charts, benchguides, and other child welfare-related publications;
- 425 juvenile court-related links to resource libraries, directories, service and training organizations, advocacy groups, courts, and government agencies; and
- A “What’s New” box on the home page with child welfare news, including timely updates about new and pending statutes, cases, California Rules of Court, and Judicial Council forms.

New content is added to the website every week.

Website Indexing and Searching

All content on the California Dependency Online Guide website is indexed using a specially created, child welfare-specific topical coding system, accessed through the “Browse Topics” button. This allows users to search for relevant information across the website by accessing a keyword or code section in the index. The system currently contains 563 topics and subtopics.

The website is also searchable using a more traditional search function. In addition, some sections of the site are searchable in additional ways, including the cases section, which is searchable by case citation, and the publications, links, and motions pages, which can be searched by type.

History and Funding

The California Dependency Online Guide website was created with grant funding from the California Office of Emergency Services, the federal Court Improvement Program, and the Stuart Foundation. The website went “live” in December 2008. Currently, funding for ongoing website operations comes from the State Trial Court Improvement and Modernization fund and the federal Juvenile Court Improvement Grant.

There is no cost to subscribe to the website. Subscribers must be California child welfare professionals. As of October 2013, the website had 3,644 individual subscribers, including 251 judicial officers, 1,977 attorneys, 627 county child welfare

social workers and managers, and 775 “other child welfare professionals,” including court staff, tribal representatives, probation officers, CASA volunteers, law students, substance abuse and mental health professionals, and others.

Website Usage

Averages for the most recent six-month time period for which data is available (January 2013 through June 2013):

- Page hits: 66,237 hits per month
- Distinct pages viewed: 25,322 pages per month/840 per day
- Distinct visitors per month: 2,069

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Additional resources:

Center for Families, Children & the Courts,

<http://www.courts.ca.gov/programs-cfcc.htm>