

Family Law Resources

By Laura Mancini

Family law cases now represent an estimated 70 percent of all new circuit court filings in Michigan. Given this high number, many Michigan attorneys are bound to take on a family law case at some point in their careers. Fortunately, numerous resources are available to assist attorneys practicing in family law. In addition to the standard practice guides and treatises on divorce and child custody, new titles are being published on emerging areas of family law such as unmarried parents, grandparents, and lesbian and gay couples. Likewise, new formats such as blogs are rapidly becoming resources attorneys can consult to learn about and discuss the latest issues and developments in family law. This column will examine many of the resources available to the family law attorney.

Electronic Resources

The Updates in Michigan Family Law blog¹ is published by Traverse City family law attorney Jeanne M. Hannah and has been ranked by Attorney.org as one of the top 100 family law blogs. In her blog, Hannah discusses various family law trends and cases. BNA's Family Law Reporter² is an electronic product containing caselaw, statutes, and legislation for all 50 states and the federal government.

Emerging and Specialized Research Areas

*Domestic Violence: A Guide to Civil & Criminal Proceedings*³ is published by the Michigan Judicial Institute and is available in print and online. This guide discusses domestic violence as it pertains to personal protection, criminal, divorce, and custody proceedings. It analyzes Michigan law in each of these contexts and provides best

practices for handling these issues in court. The Michigan Judicial Institute also publishes the *Adoption Proceedings Benchbook*,⁴ available in print and online. Details of various court proceedings in adoption are detailed here along with an analysis of the adoption code.

*Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Family Law*⁵ is a new title published by West. It covers family law as it applies to this population and includes an analysis of current statutes and caselaw.

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*Grandparents' Rights*⁶ by Traci Truly discusses visitation and custody issues for grandparents. Although the main audience for this book is the layperson, Truly's sample legal forms would be useful to any attorney representing a grandparent.

*Unmarried Parents' Rights (and Responsibilities)*⁷ by Jacqueline Stanley covers paternity, custody, visitation, support, and the termination of parental rights. The sample forms provided in this volume generally are not found in most family law treatises and formbooks and are very useful to any attorney representing unmarried parents.

The Military Divorce Handbook: A Practical Guide to Representing Military Personnel and Their Families,⁸ published by

the American Bar Association, advises attorneys how to represent and handle divorce cases for members of the armed forces. Special attention is given to laws pertaining to those in the service and their impact on a divorce case.

ICLE Guides

The Institute of Continuing Legal Education publishes four family law practice guides: *Divorce Cases in Michigan: A Systems Approach*,⁹ *Michigan Family Law Benchbook*,¹⁰ *Michigan Family Law*,¹¹ and *QDROs, EDROs & Division of Employee Benefits on Divorce*.¹² *Divorce Cases* provides lawyers with advice and instructions for representing a divorce client. The *Benchbook* details court proceedings in family law. *Michigan Family Law* is arguably the single best publication on family law in Michigan and provides detailed analysis on virtually every facet imaginable. Lastly, *QDROs* covers the division of employee and retirement benefits in a divorce case. All four of the ICLE titles are essential purchases for a family law attorney.

Journals

The *Michigan Family Law Journal*¹³ is published by the State Bar of Michigan Family Law Section. In addition to discussing section news, the journal contains listings of recent important family law decisions in Michigan.

*Family Law Quarterly*¹⁴ is published by the American Bar Association Section on Family Law. It is a scholarly publication containing articles, book reviews, and in-depth analysis on family law issues. The ABA Family Law Section also produces *Family Advocate*,¹⁵ which is geared toward the family law practitioner. Each issue provides a topical treatment related to family law and includes tips and best practices.

Other Michigan Materials

*Complex Issues in Divorce for the Michigan Practitioner*¹⁶ examines the economic and child custody issues involved in divorce cases. *Family Law Litigation in Michigan*¹⁷ discusses the client interview process and gives attorneys advice for preparing and litigating a family law case in court. *Child Custody and Shared Parenting in Michigan*¹⁸ provides an analysis of federal and international law as it pertains to custody issues. It also focuses on the psychological impact of divorce on children and how such factors play a role in the custody process. These titles are all available from the National Business Institute.

West publishes two core titles in Michigan family law. *The Michigan Child Support Formula Manual*¹⁹ details how child support is calculated in Michigan and includes formula schedules and the statutes and court rules pertaining to child support. This book belongs in the collection of every attorney practicing family law. Another valuable reference publication is *Michigan Family Law and Rules*.²⁰ This compact, one-volume book contains all family law statutes and relevant court rules and is updated on an annual basis.

The sources discussed in this article represent a sampling of family law materials available to attorneys. Whether you are a seasoned family law attorney or taking your first family law case, there are plenty of resources to assist you in your research. For more information on current materials or new titles covering changes in the law, please be sure to consult a law librarian. ■

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FOOTNOTES

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