

**Louisiana State Bar Association's  
Children's Law Committee  
Meeting Time:** August 21, 2024, 12:00 PM

**Attendees**

***Kellie Johnson, Co-Chair***

Lauren Anderson, Attorney (Shreveport)  
Emily Aucoin, Loyola University New Orleans College of Law  
Pamela Crawford, Mental Health Advocacy Service  
Judge Ernestine Gray, Orleans Juvenile Court  
Jack Harrison, Juvenile Defense Clinic LSU  
Rebecca May-Ricks, Mental Health Advocacy Service  
Amber LaBorde, Neblett, Beard & Arsenault  
Guy Lain, Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services  
Rachel Nastasi, Acadiana Legal Service Corporation  
Richard Pittman, Louisiana Public Defender Board  
Sara Stone, The Pro Bono Project  
Mary Ann McGrath Swaim, Southeast Louisiana Legal Services  
Cherrilynne Thomas, LA Dept of Children and Family Services

**LSBA Staff**

Monte Mollere  
Rebecca Collins

**MEETING MINUTES**

**1) Welcome & Introductions**

Kellie Johnson welcomed the committee for the new bar year, and everyone introduced themselves.

**2) Approval of Meeting Minutes from March 20, 2024.**

Guy Lain moved to approve the March meeting minutes. Jack Harrison seconded. The minutes were approved without opposition.

**3) Review of Workgroup Initiatives from 2023-24 Committee**

Kellie led a discussion of the work groups' purposes and initiatives from the last year. The conversation served both to inform new members of past work that had been done as well as to discuss potential topics of interest for the upcoming year.

**a) Trauma Informed Care**

This working group focuses on assessing the T-I resources within the state and supports the education of the judiciary and practitioners on this issue. Kellie and Rebecca Collins briefly discussed the survey results distributed last year to discern which courts in the state were utilizing trauma-informed practices. After the meeting, more detailed information regarding the survey results will be provided to committee members. Judge Ernestine Gray said that this workgroup should still be

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included in the committee's work moving forward because there is still a need to focus on making peoples' practices trauma-informed. Lauren Anderson mentioned that the group should work on getting judges trained on trauma-informed courtroom practices, particularly because litigation itself can be traumatizing.

**b) Crossover Youth**

This workgroup identifies issues faced in representing children and how they impact the various representatives' ability to better advocate for the child. Emily Aucoin and Jack Harrison recently gave a presentation about children in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems at LSU, which went well. Emily said that the Youth Justice Clinic at Loyola would also be willing to coordinate efforts with this workgroup. It was also agreed that this group would research other states to determine whether there are any models for a centralized database for all children in state custody. Guy reminded the group that a potential project previously discussed was creating cheat sheets to help communication between the court systems through cheat sheets. Monte said that the next step in this project was to meet with Professors Pittman and Harrison.

**c) Diversity**

This workgroup examines the impact that diversity, equality, and inclusion have on the fair representation of children. Judge Gray said that there is disproportion everywhere within the children's law field and that this workgroup is very important. Jack Harrison agreed. There was a brief discussion of possibly dissolving this workgroup and incorporating its charge into the others, but this was decided against. The diversity workgroup will remain for the upcoming bar year because people need to understand the historical impacts of the work. Patsy Wilkerson has previously done training on this topic, which the group may be interested in.

**4) Consideration of Other Initiatives**

This committee formed an Education Workgroup for the upcoming bar year. This came from discussions about the other workgroups and what would be most helpful for the committee moving forward. Emily Aucoin suggested that the committee tackle education as a priority topic. Judge Ernestine Gray agreed that education is such an important issue for children in both the child welfare and delinquency systems that it might warrant a dedicated workgroup rather than just being integrated into the other groups. This workgroup was created to ensure educational rights for children in foster care and DCFS custody and to address challenges between school districts and parents' educational rights. Kellie Johnson and Monte Mollere said they would work on setting up this workgroup moving forward.

**5) Children's Law Legal Updates**

Lauren brought up the case [United States of America v. Zackey Rahimi](#), which concerns protective orders and guns in the 5<sup>th</sup> Circuit.

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**6) Training and Education**

- a) The **CIP Cafes** hosted by [Team Dynamics](#)
  - These happen monthly and provide 1 hour of CLE credit. The next one is on [September 19<sup>th</sup> at noon](#)
- b) [Louisiana Children's Trust Fund Caucuses](#): Several caucuses are happening across the state
- c) [47th National Child Welfare Law Conference](#) – September 11<sup>th</sup> -13<sup>th</sup>
  - This event is virtual, Hosted by the National Association of Counsel for Children
- d) **Child's Law Conference**, Sept 6, 2024
  - Loyola and the Pro Bono Project are organizing a Child's Law conference, which will hopefully become an annual event. It is meant to provide opportunities for child attorneys to get their qualification hours for the Supreme Court.
  - Register here: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/child-law-conference-tickets-1002497255277>

**7) Future Meetings**

- November 20, 2024
- February 19, 2025
- May 21, 2025

- 8) Adjournment** – Kellie moved to adjourn the meeting and Monte seconded. The next committee meeting is on Wednesday, November 20<sup>th</sup> at 12pm.