

Children & Family Law Center

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN NEED OF ASSISTANCE

Children and their families face numerous complex challenges. Each year, a significant number of children are involved in administrative hearings and court proceedings in which vital, often irreversible, decisions are made concerning their future well-being. Many children, as well as parents, lack competent, consistent representation because lawyers traditionally have not been trained to screen for domestic violence, to understand family systems, or to know the different kinds of advocacy needed to represent a child, rather than an adult, client.

THE CENTER

The Children and Family Law Center aims to respond to the legal needs of children and their families. Its mission is to provide education, research, advocacy and training focused on children and families involved in the legal system. The new Center will be directed by Professor Linda Elrod, past chair of the both the ABA and KBA Family Law Sections. Professors Nancy Maxwell, Lynette Petty and Sheila Reynolds will also be furthering the mission of the center. In addition, professors in the schools of social work and psychology will add an interdisciplinary perspective in some courses.

The Center's first task has been enhancing the curriculum and educational offerings. In addition to the basic family law course, a family law seminar, a seminar in divorce and negotiation and pleading, domestic violence, and child advocacy courses have been added. The Center will be expanding the clinical opportunities for students and increase internship and externship possibilities so that students can work with practicing professionals in public legal clinics, Kansas Legal Services and public prosecutor's offices. Alternative dispute resolution training gives students additional tools to help families. In addition, students have the opportunity to work on the Family Law Quarterly, the scholarly publication of the American Bar Association which is edited at Washburn Law.

ROLE FOR ALUMNI

Washburn's alumni have been invaluable in Washburn's mission since the beginning.

The Children and Family Law Center will continue the tradition

of using our talented alumni to direct, focus and support the work of the Center. By May 2003, the Center hopes to have an Advisory Council set up composed of alumni and others interested in children and family law issues. The Council will be a resource to the school, offering direction and assistance.

Alumni have always helped with teaching specialty courses or with continuing education programs. The Center will seek to capitalize on the expertise of alumni in particular family law areas. The Center will seek alumni support in participating in programs, mentoring students, talking to students and faculty, and providing ideas. Collaboration with alumni will enable the Center to respond to the needs of the legal community and the judicial system as the Center trains advocates to work within both.

FAMILY LAW STUDENT SOCIETY

The Center will sponsor a student society to provide additional input and student support for activities related to children and families. The Family Law Student Society will help sponsor a speaker's series on family law issues and work with other groups, such as CASA and the National Association of Council for Children.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

The Children and Family Law Center will continue the Family Law Institute, now in its 17th year, focusing on children and family issues. In addition, the Center will soon start a monthly CLE lunch series on specialized topics for lawyers and students alike.

The Center will train child advocates as well as family lawyers who are not only competent practitioners but also are creative and innovative lawyers who can help families find optimal resolutions to their legal problems.



Professor Linda Elrod



If you wish to learn more about the Center, or if you would like to volunteer to mentor students with a focus on the Family Law area of practice, please contact, Professor Linda Elrod, at linda.elrod@washburn.edu.