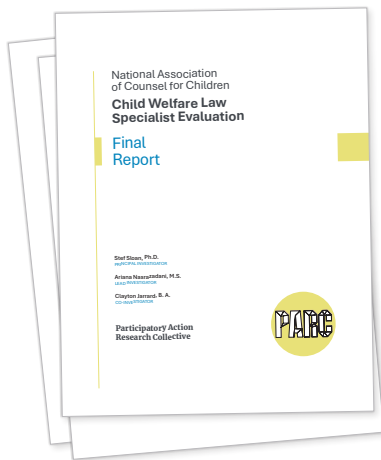
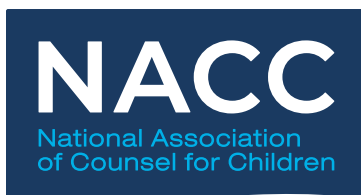


NACC Child Welfare Law Specialist Certification

NOW IS THE TIME TO RAISE OFFICE STANDARDS OF PRACTICE



Take a deeper dive into the [CWLS evaluation reports](#) ▶



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NEWLY RELEASED INDEPENDENT EVALUATION SHOWS IMPACT OF CWLS CERTIFICATION

As the Child Welfare Law Specialist (CWLS) certification program approached its 20-year anniversary, NACC sought out an independent evaluation to examine the program's efficacy. Led by the Participatory Action Research Collective, and co-designed by lived experience experts, the survey study found that:

- ✓ **CWLS attorneys scored higher on four of five key categories of high-quality child welfare legal representation:**
 - Advocacy and Procedural Competence
 - Legal Knowledge and Statutory Expertise
 - Individualized Case Planning
 - Holistic Approaches
- ✓ **CWLS attorneys consistently outperformed non-certified attorneys in procedural and statutory aspects of the study**, showing that the program can be a worthwhile return on investment by fostering these critical competencies that promote effective and efficient advocacy.
- ✓ **CWLS attorneys reported more frequently advocating for client-specific supports and accommodations than non-certified attorneys**, helping clients access basic needs and promoting protective factors that can prevent future systems involvement and decrease systemic burden on the child welfare court system.
- ✓ **CWLS attorneys reported receiving training and continuing legal education from a wider variety of sources than non-certified attorneys**, exposing practitioners to a broader array of ideas, novel legal strategies, and networking opportunities.
- ✓ **CWLS preparation can directly impact legal practice and increase confidence.** CWLS reported that preparing for the CWLS exam improved the quality of their practice and boosted their self-confidence.
- ✓ **The CWLS credential may promote retention and tenure** in the field based on preliminary evidence. →

NOW IS THE TIME TO RAISE OFFICE STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

What do CWLS attorneys say about certification?

"I learned more things about child welfare law by studying to get the CWLS than I did from my practice in the area!"

"The stakes are too high to leave the quality of representation to chance."

"It has helped my organization in terms of prestige, credibility and funding..."

"I feel more 'polished', more professional. I feel like I am on top of cutting-edge issues."

"Preparing for the exam was a thorough education on the history and current status of child welfare law. [U]nderstanding the laws/policies that were enacted and the justification for those laws in the historic context gave me a much better appreciation of the current state of child welfare law."

Email

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to get your office involved or set up invoicing for CWLS fees.

WHAT DO CHILD WELFARE LAW OFFICES SAY ABOUT CERTIFICATION?

"We have found that the CWLS attorneys have **more success** in finding otherwise untapped resources and ideas to help the children and families we serve. They are able to be **creative with problem-solving**, which is valuable to the clients."

"Our attorneys are in court and in the field practicing child welfare law every day; **their practice is elevated** when they are exposed to and develop expertise in child welfare law, policy and regulations in addition to that which they typically see in their busy practice. The certification serves as a way to earn distinction and **recognize achievement**."

HOW CAN YOUR OFFICE SUPPORT CWLS CERTIFICATION?

- Invest in CWLS certification for your staff by:
 - Covering the CWLS application fee upfront or reimbursing attorneys upon their successful certification
 - Enrolling your staff in NACC's foundational prep course
 - Offering flex time or dedicated non-court days to study for and take the CWLS exam
 - Paying the annual fees and five-year recertification fees on behalf of CWLS attorneys upfront or through reimbursement
 - Publicly acknowledging their achievement and dedication
- Integrate CWLS into your hiring and retention strategy by:
 - Providing a bonus at initial certification and every five years at recertification
 - Offering a salary enhancement to attorneys with the CWLS credential
 - Building CWLS-preferred or CWLS-required status into hiring and promotion decisions
 - For court-appointment or panel-based models, offering a higher hourly or per-case pay differential to CWLS attorneys
 - Making CWLS certification a priority investment of Title IV-E legal representation funds

WHAT DO CWLS ATTORNEYS IN YOUR OFFICE RECEIVE?

- A copy of *Child Welfare Law and Practice* (the Red Book) at initial application and every five years at recertification
- Ongoing NACC membership while in good standing as a CWLS
- Discounts on NACC conferences and training registration as well as free access to NACC's monthly member webinars and member listserv