



Child Welfare Law Specialist Application Preview

FOR REFERENCE ONLY

This is not an application form.

Applications must be submitted online using NACC's certification platform, Certemy. This document allows you to preview the application contents before setting up an online application account in Certemy.

This document is applicable to the General Application, the California-Specific Application, and the South Carolina-Specific Application. Recent revisions implemented in these applications are still pending approval in Indiana. [Click here](#) for the current Indiana-Specific Application Preview.

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CWLS Application Contents

For reference only. This is not an application form. Applications must be submitted online.

Most of the CWLS application is the same for all states. The applications for CA and SC vary slightly in certain sections. Those state-specific sections can be found at the end of this document. TX applicants must be certified by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization before CWLS certification can be granted.

Introduction

Thank you for your interest in becoming certified by the National Association of Counsel for Children (NACC) as a Child Welfare Law Specialist (CWLS). Applicants seeking CWLS certification must meet and continue to satisfy the requirements documented in the **Standards for CWLS Certification** located on NACC's [Applicant Resources webpage](#). It is your responsibility to complete this application clearly and in its entirety, comply with all of its instructions, and provide all supporting documents. The application fee is non-refundable.

The application consists of two phases: Initial Application and CWLS Exam. The CWLS Certification Committee must review and approve your completed Initial Application before you can move on to the CWLS Exam phase. You now have 3 years to complete both phases. You must complete the Initial Application phase within the first 365 days. You will have 3 opportunities to take the exam - once in the same calendar year your application was committee-approved (even if it is approved in December, for example, that year counts as your first opportunity), and once in each of the two subsequent calendar years. Exam specifications and FAQs can be found under Additional Resources on NACC's [Applicant Resources](#) page.

The application fee includes a copy of *Child Welfare Law and Practice* (the Red Book) – NACC's legal treatise on which the CWLS exam is based. The first step in the Initial Application phase includes instructions for how to obtain your complimentary copy.

You may complete the Initial Application steps in any order apart from the General Information step and the Application Fee step – NACC will not review any other part of your application until those two steps are complete. You may work on your application over time and save your progress along the way. Please note that some individual steps within the phase will not allow you to save your progress - these will be flagged for you.

Now, let's get started!

Initial Application Phase

You have 365 days to complete all steps of the Initial Application phase; however, the first two steps (General Information and Fee) must be completed within the first month. Other than those two, the steps may be completed in any order. Once all steps in the Initial Application phase are successfully completed, your application information will be de-identified and sent to the CWLS Certification Committee for review. If your application is approved, you will then be eligible to sit for the CWLS exam.

General Information

This step asks you to provide general information about yourself including demographics, contact information, current employment, state(s) and date(s) of licensure, bar number(s), and license status. This step must be completed before any other steps will be reviewed by NACC. **Click COMPLETE NOW to get started.**

Please note, you will not be able to save your progress in the middle of this step. You will need to start this step from the beginning if you don't complete it all.

Once you complete this step and pay the application fee (next step), follow these instructions to obtain your complimentary copy of *Child Welfare Law and Practice* (the Red Book) (included in the application fee):

1. Go to the [Red Book product page](#) on NACC's website and click "Add to Cart."
2. Type ********* in the coupon code field, then "Apply Coupon," then "Update Cart." The cost of the book will be zeroed out - you will still need to pay for the shipping.

General Information

- Name
- Advanced Degree(s)
- Professional Title
- Office/Org/Agency/Practice Name (or Attorney at Law)
- Office Address and Phone
- Cell Phone
- Primary Email
- Secondary Email
- Secondary Address
- Date of Birth

What is your primary role in the child welfare law field? You may select multiple options. You MUST select at least one.

- a. Agency/CPS representation
- b. Child/youth/NMD representation
- c. Parent representation
- d. Judge or magistrate hearing child welfare law cases
- e. Child welfare law and policy advocate including a judicial, staff, or resource/research attorney, consultant, or technical assistance provider
- f. Child welfare law professor, faculty member, or trainer
- g. Supervisor, director, or other non-case-carrying manager of a child welfare law firm, unit, or organization
- h. Attorney in an intersecting field (see Standard 3.1.2)

You must select at least one of the roles above, but if you serve an additional role in the field not described, you may add it here:

Have you ever applied for NACC CWLS certification before?

- No / Yes

Please list all states of licensure starting with your primary state of practice. If more than three, ensure they are listed on your resume/CV (upload required in a later step).

- State #1 – Bar Number – Date of Licensure – Status (active/inactive)
- State #2 (if applicable) – Bar Number – Date of Licensure – Status (active/inactive)
- State #3 (if applicable) – Bar Number – Date of Licensure – Status (active/inactive)

NACC is committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion in our programs, the CWLS community, and the child welfare field. Answering below helps us evaluate our progress toward this goal. Your response or nonresponse in no way impacts your CWLS application.

What is your race and/or ethnicity? Select all that apply.

- a. American Indian, Indigenous, or Alaska Native
- b. Asian
- c. Black or African American

- d. Latina/o/x or Hispanic
- e. Middle Eastern or North African
- f. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- g. White
- h. Prefer not to answer
- i. Prefer to self-describe - see below

If you would like to self-describe or further specify racial, ethnic, or cultural identities, please do so:

Which of the following terms best describes how you think about your sexual orientation?

- a. Lesbian or gay
- b. Straight or heterosexual
- c. Bisexual
- d. Queer
- e. Pansexual
- f. Prefer not to answer
- g. Prefer to self-describe – see below

If you prefer to self-describe your sexual orientation, please do so here:

Which of the following terms best describes how you think about your gender?

- a. Woman/female
- b. Man/male
- c. Non-binary, gender queer, gender fluid, or not exclusively male or female
- d. Prefer not to answer
- e. Prefer to use another term – see below

If you prefer another gender term, please add it here:

Do you consider yourself to be transgender, non-binary, or another gender than assigned at birth?

- a. No, I am not transgender
- b. Yes, I am a transgender woman (assigned male at birth and identify myself as a woman)
- c. Yes, I am a transgender man (assigned female at birth and identify myself as a man)
- d. Yes, I identify as non-binary, gender queer, gender fluid, or not exclusively male or female
- e. Prefer not to answer
- f. Prefer to self-describe – see below

If you prefer to self-describe, please do so here:

Do you have a mental or physical condition, impairment, or disability that affects daily activities or requires the use of equipment or technology?

- a. No
- b. Yes
- c. Prefer not to answer

How to Get Your Red Book

A copy of the Red Book is included with the application. To obtain your copy, you must fill out the Red Book order form on NACC's website and enter promo code ***** to zero out the cost. Allow two weeks for delivery (longer if shipping to AK or HI). Please check the box to confirm you understand how to obtain your copy of the Red Book.

Application Fee

This step must be completed before any other steps will be reviewed by NACC. The non-refundable application fee is \$400 for NACC members and \$525 for non-members. The fee includes the exam as well as a copy of *Child Welfare Law and Practice* (the Red Book). Follow the instructions in General Information to obtain your copy.

If your office or other third party is covering the application fee, or if you prefer to pay by check, please indicate that by using the options below and adding relevant information.

If you are an applicant from DE, GA, ID, IN, LA, MO, OH, NC, ND, UT, or WY, please email Certification@NACCchildlaw.org before completing this step – we may have scholarship slots available.

Complete online credit card payment *OR* Add notes about third party payment *OR* Upload evidence of offline/check payment

Substantial Involvement and Period of Practice (see below for SC variant)

This step asks about your involvement in the field. To be certified as a CWLS, you must either meet certain Substantial Involvement requirements (regarding period of practice and percentage of time spent on child welfare matters) or be eligible for the Substantial Involvement waiver. The waiver is for attorneys who are involved in the child welfare law field in an alternative capacity, rather than party representation. Please read the Substantial Involvement questions carefully. You should be able to answer “yes” to one of them. Then answer “N/A” to the others.

Please note, you will not be able to save your progress in the middle of this step. You will need to start this step from the beginning if you don't complete it all.

Definition of Child Welfare Law

For purposes of CWLS certification, this is the definition of Child Welfare Law (Standard 1.2): The practice of law representing any party or case participant in all child protection proceedings including but not limited to the representation of children, parents, government agencies, tribes, foster/resource parents, non-offending parents, guardians, adopters, kin, and other intervenors; such proceedings to include but not be limited to emergency, temporary custody, adjudication, disposition, foster care placement, permanency planning, termination, guardianship, and adoption proceedings. Child welfare law does not include representation in private custody and adoption matters where there has been no finding of dependency and the government is not a party.

Please check the box to acknowledge that you have read this definition.

Regular Substantial Involvement Requirement – Period of Practice and Percentage of Time on Child Welfare Matters (Standard 3.1)

Standard 3.1 says the applicant must have spent each of the 3 years immediately preceding application substantially involved in the practice of child welfare law [as defined above]. The applicant must make a satisfactory showing of substantial involvement in child welfare law, with the time spent practicing child welfare law being equivalent to at least 25% of a full-time practice, in each of the 3 years immediately preceding application.

Do you meet the requirement of Standard 3.1?

- n/a – I am applying under the Substantial Involvement waiver
- No
- Yes

If you answered "No" above, and also do not meet waiver criteria, you may not be eligible for CWLS certification. Please provide further explanation.

If you answered "Yes" above, Standard 3.1.1 says that evidence of substantial involvement may be shown by the following activity over the 3 years preceding application. (The following are sample criteria for substantial involvement. Although applicants meeting each of these criteria would clearly satisfy this requirement, applicants are not required to meet all these criteria).

Check all that apply (or n/a if you are applying under the waiver).

- n/a – I am applying under the Substantial Involvement waiver
- a. Participation in 45 child welfare matters
- b. Direct or cross examination of 25 lay witnesses
- c. Direct or cross examination of 10 expert witnesses
- d. Referral of 25 child welfare matters to collateral systems, such as the education system, mental health system, criminal, immigration, or other system, which demonstrates applicant's knowledge of and appreciation for representing the whole client
- e. Making 25 visits to the community, such as a home visit to a client, foster parent, family resource, the case address, field office, or scene of the crime
- f. Consultation with a non-legal expert on some aspect of child welfare, child development, or medical or related issues in 10 cases
- g. Consultation with a non-legal professional on some aspect related to the representation of the client's interests in 20 cases
- h. Collection of relevant information from outside sources in 45 cases
- i. Participation in 10 negotiated settlements
- j. Participation in 5 appellate or writ matters
- k. Authorship of multiple trial-level pleadings

Substantial Involvement Waiver for Attorneys Involved in the Child Welfare Law Field in an Alternative Capacity (Standard 3.1.2)

Standard 3.1.2 says that the regular Substantial Involvement requirements may be waived for any applicant who has spent time equivalent to at least 25% of a full-time practice in each of the 3 years immediately preceding application involved in the child welfare law field in an alternative capacity in one or more of the roles below.

If you are applying under the waiver, please indicate the role(s) you serve (otherwise, select n/a):

- n/a – I am NOT applying under the waiver
- a. Judge or magistrate hearing child welfare law cases
- b. Child welfare law and policy advocate including a judicial, staff, or resource/research attorney, consultant, or technical assistance provider
- c. Child welfare law professor, faculty member, or trainer
- d. Supervisor, director, or other non-case-carrying manager of a child welfare law firm, unit, or organization
- e. Attorney involved in an intersecting field such as juvenile defense, custody/family law, education, public benefits, child support, immigration, housing, health care, mental health/substance use, or disability law. Attorneys in intersecting fields must have previously met the requirements of Sections 3.1 and 3.1.1 during their career, must demonstrate an ongoing dedication to child welfare law, and must provide a separate detailed explanation of how their current work intersects with, supports, and addresses the complexities of child welfare law. Attorneys applying in this capacity whose practice does not substantially intersect with child welfare law and who have not previously met the requirements of Sections 3.1 and 3.1.1 during their career shall not be eligible for CWLS certification.

Verification of Substantial Involvement

Standard 3.1.3 says a detailed resume/CV must be provided at the time of initial application and recertification evidencing substantial involvement in the field of child welfare law directly or in an alternative capacity including places of employment, dates of employment, titles held, duties and responsibilities, and states and dates of licensure. All applicants are required to swear or affirm that the evidence of substantial involvement in child welfare law directly or in an alternative capacity is true and accurate. NACC will need to be able to conclude from this document that your level of involvement in the field justifies certification as a CWLS. Especially if you are applying for certification under the Substantial Involvement waiver, please ensure that the information provided is detailed enough that such a conclusion can be readily drawn. To upload, click the blue "entries" link below. (You may upload multiple documents and/or additional explanation if needed.)

Continuing Legal Education (see below for CA & SC variants)

In this step, you must demonstrate participation in continuing legal education relevant to child welfare law in the 3-year period immediately preceding application by:

1. Attendance at **no fewer than 36 hours** of continuing legal education programs, including in-house staff trainings, acceptable to the CWLS Certification Committee (preapproval is not required); and/or
2. Equivalent participation through, but not limited to, the following means acceptable to the CWLS Certification Committee (preapproval not required):
 1. Teaching courses or seminars in child welfare law;
 2. Participation as panelist, speaker, or workshop leader at educational or professional conferences in child welfare law;
 3. Authorship of books or of articles published in professional journals in child welfare law.

Topics deemed relevant to child welfare law include but are not limited to substantive and procedural law, trial practice, alternative dispute resolution, child abuse and neglect, child development, family dynamics, trauma-informed lawyering, ethics, recognition and elimination of bias, and selfcare.

You may upload a printout of your official CLE transcript or you may download this [CLE Record Template](#) or use any similar tracking spreadsheet or other list/document as long as the course titles are detailed enough to be determined relevant, and the sponsors, dates, number and type of hours, and type of participation are included. For purposes of CWLS certification, you may include hours that do not appear on an official transcript or may not have been CLE-accredited in your jurisdiction. You may also include hours obtained after you officially started your application process. You **do not** need to upload individual certificates of attendance.

Click the blue "entries" link below to upload your CLE document(s) demonstrating participation in at least 36 hours of CLE relevant to child welfare law. (You may upload multiple documents.)

Peer Review (see below for sample questionnaire)

Instructions for Applicants:

For the Peer Review steps (Standard 3.3), you must submit the names of no fewer than 5 attorneys and/or judges who are knowledgeable regarding child welfare law, who are familiar with your competence, and who are not related to you or in private, for-profit legal practice with you, to serve as peer reviewers. A review from an individual who has served as opposing counsel is encouraged as is a review from a judicial officer before whom the applicant has appeared in child welfare proceedings. (In some cases, we may request that you provide additional names.) These peer

reviewers will be asked to respond to a questionnaire (non-fillable example shown). You will be able to see whether a reviewer has accepted, rejected, and/or submitted the form, but you will not be able to see the contents of any submissions. Applicants waive any right to review confidential questionnaire responses or other evaluations and references made to NACC. All questionnaires received will be reviewed by the CWLS Certification Committee to assess whether you have demonstrated an appropriate level of child welfare law skill, expertise, integrity, and dedication. A minimum of 5 peer reviews satisfactory to the CWLS Certification Committee must be submitted before an application will be approved.

1. Enter reviewer's email and first and last name once those fields appear.
2. To avoid the peer review request email being mistaken as junk mail, we recommend you notify your reviewers that they will be receiving an email invitation from NACC/Certemy [noreply@certemy.com] with the subject "Your Review Requested". You may also enter a message and/or peer reviewer instructions in the invitation text field.
3. Type "1" in number of entries assigned and click "Submit." The system will automatically send the request to the reviewer.

Instructions for Peer Reviewers:

You have been identified as a peer reviewer by an applicant for NACC's Child Welfare Law Specialist certification. We request that you complete your registration as a peer reviewer in our online system and fill out a brief, confidential questionnaire regarding this applicant. Please be as frank and objective as possible. The applicant will not be able to see any responses you provide. They will only be able to see whether you accepted, rejected, and/or submitted the form, not its contents. (The system may refer to you as a "supervisor" - please ignore this language.)

1. *Once you are logged in, you will see the applicant's name on the left side (as well as others if you serve as a reviewer for multiple applicants). Click "Accept" on the righthand side and then click the **blue date/time link**.*
2. *Fill out the questionnaire and click "Submit." **Important:** There will be two popup windows that ask you to confirm submission after you click "Submit" - you must confirm submission in order for NACC to see your responses.*
3. *If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Certification@NACCchildlaw.org.*

Good Standing, Disciplinary History, & Disclosure of Conduct

This step asks about your standing in the state(s) where you are licensed, your disciplinary history, and disclosure of any specified conduct (Standards 3.4 and 3.5).

Please note, you will not be able to save your progress in the middle of this step. You will need to start this step from the beginning if you don't complete it all.

Good Standing

- Are you a member in good standing of the state bar of all states in which you are licensed to practice, or were in good standing at the time any license may have been voluntarily surrendered or made inactive?
 - o No
 - o YesIf you answered "no," please explain.
- You must provide evidence of current admission to practice in one or more states or territories of the United States or District of Columbia as well as evidence of good standing and any public disciplinary history in all states or territories where you are actively licensed. (Private discipline is discussed further in the disclosure questions below.)

This evidence may be in the form of a screenshot or printout from the state bar/attorney regulatory authority's website but needs to show both your active/good standing status and

whether any public discipline has ever been imposed. If that information is not available online, you will need to request formal documents showing both status and public disciplinary history from all states where you are actively licensed.

Please upload all documents here. Do not mail anything to NACC. To upload, click the blue "entries" link below. (You may upload multiple attachments and/or additional explanation if needed.)

- Have you been suspended, revoked, or denied certification by any other legal specialty certifying entity?
 - No
 - Yes
 - If yes, please attach additional documentation listing the certifying entity, type of certification, dates, and reasons given.

Disclosure of Conduct - Note: During the application process and once you are certified, you must disclose any matters discussed below as soon as they occur as well as on an annual basis. Failure to disclose is considered a material misrepresentation.

- Have you been disbarred, suspended, publicly or privately reprimanded, placed on diversion or probation, or otherwise disciplined by the state bar of any state, by a state or federal court, or by any other entity which has authority over attorney discipline? If yes, give full details below and attach evidence of disposition.
 - No
 - Yes
- Are you aware of having been the subject of a disciplinary lawsuit or action or a complaint or inquiry with a grievance committee of any bar association or with the designated disciplinary entity of any state? If you answer "Yes – and it is pending", you don't need to provide additional information now but you are required to notify NACC and provide details if the final result in anything other than dismissal/finding in your favor.
 - No
 - Yes – and it is pending (notify NACC if result is anything other than dismissal)
 - Yes – and it was dismissed or found in my favor
 - Yes – and I was disciplined (see first question)
- Have you been indicted, convicted, given probation, or fined for a felony crime or for legal malpractice? If applicable, please answer "yes" regardless of (1) whether the conviction resulted from a plea of guilty or nolo contendere; (2) whether the conviction resulted from a verdict after trial or otherwise; or (3) whether the indictment or an appeal is currently pending. If yes, give full details below and attach evidence of disposition.
 - No
 - Yes

If you answered "yes" to the first or last conduct question above, please provide a summary here and then upload details and relevant documentation below.

Writing Sample

You must submit a writing sample written by you within the 3 years preceding (or during) application submission demonstrating legal analysis in the field of child welfare law (Standard 3.6). The sample at a minimum must meet 4 criteria. It must:

1. Be related to a child welfare case or child welfare law, policy, or practice;
2. Contain at least one citation of child welfare case law, statute, regulation, or code;
3. Include your name as the author; and
4. Include the date the writing sample was written or filed.

Examples of acceptable types of writing samples include memos, briefs, policy/position papers, articles, proposed orders, motions, or any other legal pleading that satisfies the criteria above. The sample does not need to have been officially filed in court and may be written specifically for the purpose of fulfilling this application requirement. **If the sample is from a real case, you must redact or replace client names. Samples containing unredacted names will be deleted from your application file and the step will be rejected as incomplete until a redacted sample is uploaded.**

Exam Acknowledgement and Accommodations

Once your application is complete, it will be de-identified and included in the next monthly batch for review by the CWLS Certification Committee. If approved by the Committee, you will then be eligible to sit for the CWLS exam. Much more information can be found in the Exam FAQs and Specifications under Additional Resources on NACC's [Applicant Resources webpage](#).

Please read the exam acknowledgment and answer the question regarding exam accommodations on the following page.

Exam Acknowledgement

Once your application is Committee-approved, you will have 3 opportunities to pass the CWLS exam – once in the same calendar year as Committee approval and once in each of the 2 subsequent calendar years. If you do not sit for the exam or do not pass the exam during that period, your application will expire, and certification will not be granted. This is not considered an application denial, rather an expiration. This does not prevent you from reapplying in the future. Use of the Red Book (Child Welfare Law and Practice: Representing Children, Parents, and Agencies in Neglect, Abuse, and Dependency Cases) during the CWLS exam is strictly prohibited including any edition of the hardcopy book, the electronic version, or photocopies.

Please check the box to confirm you understand this exam guidance.

Exam Accommodations

NACC is committed to providing an inclusive and accessible application and exam process. Reasonable exam accommodations can be requested by applicants who demonstrate a documented need. Requests will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. The request process includes submission of a form and supporting documentation typically from a health care provider and/or institute of higher education or attorney admissions board by whom previous exam accommodations have been granted. If you intend to request exam accommodations, NACC will follow up with additional instructions on submitting your request once your application is approved by the CWLS Certification Committee and you are eligible to sit for the exam.

Do you intend to request exam accommodations if your application is approved?

- No, I don't intend to request exam accommodations.
- Yes, I do intend to request exam accommodations.

Application Agreement and Signature

The application agreement contains a series of statements you must review and acknowledge. Please read the statements carefully, acknowledge that you have read them and agree to be bound by their terms, and then officially sign your application.

- I understand that use of the Red Book (Child Welfare Law and Practice: Representing Children, Parents, and Agencies in Neglect, Abuse, and Dependency Cases) during the CWLS exam is strictly prohibited including the hardcopy book, the electronic version, or photocopies.

- I agree to abide and be bound by all certification rules, regulations, and policies promulgated NACC as amended from time to time and to pay all fees required by NACC as due. I have read NACC’s Standards for CWLS Certification (Standards) and affirm that I meet all eligibility criteria listed.
- I certify that all statements, claims, and representations I have made in this application and its attachments are true and complete. I specifically certify that all claims I have made regarding my experience and involvement in the field of child welfare law and participation in continuing legal education activities are true and complete. I agree to supply all relevant documents, records, or other information that may be requested from me to substantiate these claims or otherwise aid in the investigation of my application.
- In making and filing this application, I authorize all persons, firms, officers, corporations, associations, organizations, state or federal agencies, and institutions to furnish to NACC all relevant documents, records, or other information that may be requested in the investigation of this application or in any investigation of my continuing satisfaction of the Standards.
- I agree that all information received by NACC may be treated confidentially by NACC. I specifically waive any right to review any confidential peer reviews or other evaluations and references made to NACC, whether solicited by me or by NACC. In addition, I agree not to seek discovery of such references and evaluations, formally or informally, in any legal proceeding or otherwise.
- I waive my right of confidentiality with regard to any agency (whether state, national, or other, including the American Bar Association) with jurisdiction over legal licensure, disciplinary proceedings, or specialization, and also with regard to any organization or entity approved by the state to certify legal specialists to which I have applied or by which I am certified.
- I release, discharge, and exonerate NACC, its officers, directors, staff, agents, employees, volunteers, and representatives, and any person furnishing information or evaluations to NACC, from any and all liability of every nature and kind arising from the investigation and evaluation of my application or my continuing satisfaction of the Standards.
- I agree that the law and courts of the State of Colorado shall govern and have jurisdiction over any controversy, claim, dispute, or legal action arising from my application, my certification by NACC, or any actions that may be taken by NACC, its officers, directors, employees, or volunteers. I agree to defend or pay the costs of defense, at the discretion of NACC, for any suit or claim initiated concerning my application, my certification, or revocation of my certification by NACC, and to indemnify NACC for any judgment or settlement ordered or paid as a result of any legal action arising therefrom.
- I understand that, if certified, it is my responsibility to be aware of and in compliance with the Rules of Professional Conduct (or equivalent regulations) in all jurisdictions where I am licensed, and specifically in compliance with those rules and requirements governing how my specialist certification may be communicated or advertised to the public in those jurisdictions.
- I agree that in the event my certification is surrendered, denied, revoked, or I am not recertified, I shall cease to hold myself out in any way as certified by NACC, and will remove my certificate from public display.

Signature

- By typing my full name here (equivalent to a signature), I hereby certify that I have carefully reviewed this Disclosure of Conduct report and answered each question fully, frankly, and without concealment or reservation. Such answers are, to my personal knowledge, true and complete.

Committee Review

This is an internal NACC step. No action is needed from you. If your application is approved, you will be eligible to sit for the CWLS exam.

CWLS Exam Phase

You will take the exam on a separate platform. NACC will process this step once you pass.

State-Specific Variants

California Variants

[CA] Continuing Legal Education

[The general application and California-specific application differ only in the number of hours required – as noted in red italics below. California requires that the applicant demonstrate at least 45 hours of child welfare-related CLEs as opposed to the 36 hours required on the general application.]

In this step, you must demonstrate participation in continuing legal education relevant to child welfare law in the 3-year period immediately preceding application by:

1. Attendance at **no fewer than 45 hours** of continuing legal education programs, including in-house staff trainings, acceptable to the CWLS Certification Committee (preapproval is not required); and/or
2. Equivalent participation through, but not limited to, the following means acceptable to the CWLS Certification Committee (preapproval not required):
 1. Teaching courses or seminars in child welfare law;
 2. Participation as panelist, speaker, or workshop leader at educational or professional conferences in child welfare law;
 3. Authorship of books or of articles published in professional journals in child welfare law.

Topics deemed relevant to child welfare law include but are not limited to substantive and procedural law, trial practice, alternative dispute resolution, child abuse and neglect, child development, family dynamics, trauma-informed lawyering, ethics, recognition and elimination of bias, and selfcare.

You may upload a printout of your official CLE transcript or you may download this [CLE Record Template](#) or use any similar tracking spreadsheet or other list/document as long as the course titles are detailed enough to be determined relevant, and the sponsors, dates, number and type of hours, and type of participation are included. For purposes of CWLS certification, you may include hours that do not appear on an official transcript or may not have been CLE-accredited in your jurisdiction. You may also include hours obtained after you officially started your application process. You **do not** need to upload individual certificates of attendance.

Click the blue “entries” link below to upload your CLE document(s) demonstrating participation in at least **45 hours** of CLE relevant to child welfare law. (You may upload multiple documents.)

South Carolina Variants

[SC] Substantial Involvement and Period of Practice

[The general application and South Carolina-specific application differ only in the “period of practice” requirement – as noted in red italics below. South Carolina requires that the applicant have been practicing law for at least five years prior to application. The general application has no such requirement.]

Regular Substantial Involvement Requirement – Period of Practice and Percentage of Time on Child Welfare Matters (Standard 3.1)

Standard 3.1 says the applicant must *have been engaged in the practice of law for at least 5 years and* have spent each of the 3 years immediately preceding application substantially involved in the practice of child welfare law [as defined above]. The applicant must make a satisfactory showing of substantial involvement in child welfare law, with the time spent practicing child welfare law being equivalent to at least 25% of a full-time practice, in each of the 3 years immediately preceding application.

[SC] Continuing Legal Education

[The general application and South Carolina-specific application differ in that the child welfare-related CLEs must appear on the applicant’s official South Carolina CLE transcript – as noted in red italics below. Therefore, the applicant is required to upload a copy of their official South Carolina CLE transcript rather than using the spreadsheet template or other format of CLE list described in the general application above.]

In this step, you must demonstrate participation in continuing legal education relevant to child welfare law in the 3-year period immediately preceding application by:

1. Attendance at **no fewer than 36 hours** of continuing legal education programs, including in-house staff trainings, *accredited by the South Carolina Commission on CLE and Specialization (the SC Commission)* and acceptable to the CWLS Certification Committee (NACC preapproval is not required); and/or
2. Equivalent participation through, but not limited to, the following means *if approved for credit by the SC Commission and* acceptable to the CWLS Certification Committee (NACC preapproval is not required):
 1. Teaching courses or seminars in child welfare law;
 2. Participation as panelist, speaker, or workshop leader at educational or professional conferences in child welfare law;
 3. Authorship of books or of articles published in professional journals in child welfare law.

Topics deemed relevant to child welfare law include but are not limited to substantive and procedural law, trial practice, alternative dispute resolution, child abuse and neglect, child development, family dynamics, trauma-informed lawyering, ethics, recognition and elimination of bias, and selfcare.

To show that your hours have been approved by the SC Commission on CLE and Specialization for credit, please upload your SC CLE transcript(s) detailing at least 36 hours of relevant CLEs. You may also include hours obtained after you officially started your application process. You **do not** need to upload individual certificates of attendance.

Click the blue “entries” link below to upload your CLE document(s) demonstrating participation in at least 36 hours of CLE relevant to child welfare law. (You may upload multiple documents.)

Peer Review Questionnaire Example

For reference only. This is not a fillable questionnaire.

Peer reviews must be submitted online using NACC's certification platform, Certemy.

Peer Reviewer Form

General Information

Reviewer Name

Reviewer Title

Firm/Org/Office Name or Self

City, State

In terms of your interaction and familiarity with the applicant, please select all that apply:

- I am an attorney in the same geographical area.
- I am an attorney who has had child welfare cases with the applicant (aligned, opposed, or other).
- I am a judge/judicial figure before whom this applicant has appeared in child welfare matters.
- I am an attorney or judge/judicial figure who is familiar with this applicant's child welfare work in another capacity specified below.

If other, please describe:

Are you a certified CWLS?

- No / Yes / I am a current CWLS applicant

If you are a CWLS or current applicant, was this applicant listed as a reference on your application?

- No / Yes / N/A or don't recall

Your Experience

In what month, year, and state were you first licensed to practice law?

What is your primary field of practice/expertise. If you are a judge/judicial role, what is your primary docket and how long have you been on the bench?

Do you have experience representing parties in child welfare matters?

- No / Yes

Do you have experience trying a child welfare case in court?

- No / Yes

Please provide a brief summary of your experience in child welfare law and/or related fields.

Your Knowledge of the Applicant

Are you a relative of the applicant either by blood or marriage?

- No / Yes

In what capacity do you know the applicant? Check all that apply.

- a. In their role as an attorney providing representation in child welfare matters.
- b. In their role as an attorney who has appeared before you (if you are a judge).
- c. In their role serving as a judge/magistrate/commissioner/referee.
- d. In their role as a director/manager/supervisor of a firm/organization/unit.

- e. In their role as a law professor/faculty/trainer.
- f. In their role as a policy advocate, consultant, research attorney/TA provider.
- g. In some other capacity.

If you selected "In some other capacity," please describe:

How well do you know the applicant? How many years? Describe the opportunity you have had to form an opinion of the applicant as a practitioner (or in another capacity) in the child welfare field.

Are there any incidents in the applicant's history, known to you either directly or indirectly, that reflect a lack of proficiency in child welfare practice, or a lack of integrity or dedication to the interests of clients, or performance of their role?

- No / Yes

If yes, please describe the incident(s).

To your direct or indirect knowledge, has the applicant ever been convicted of a felony, or of a lesser offense involving moral turpitude or misconduct, or are charges of any such serious crime presently pending against the applicant in court?

- No / Yes

If yes, please describe.

Your Opinion of the Applicant's Knowledge and Skills

Please rate the applicant as to each of the criteria listed below in comparison to all other child welfare law professionals with whose work you are familiar.

	Outstanding	Above Average	Average	Below Average	Unknown
Knowledge of Substantive Law					
Ability to Advance a Position (verbally or in writing)					
Resourcefulness					
Knowledge of Procedure					
Trial Skills & Courtroom Effectiveness					
Out-of-Court Representation Skills					
Client Interest Consideration					
Preparation					
Reputation in the Field of Child Welfare Law					

Do you believe the applicant has the ability to fully represent a party in a child welfare proceeding?

- No / Yes / Unknown

Comments on representation skills?

Whether or not you have witnessed such, do you believe the applicant has the ability to try a serious, complex child welfare case?

- No / Yes / Unknown

Comments on trial skills?

If you answered 'Unknown' to several of the items above, please describe the applicant's child welfare knowledge and skills in your own words so the Committee might incorporate your opinions in lieu of ratings.

Overall Assessment

Overall, how would you rate the applicant as a child welfare law professional?

- Outstanding
- Above Average
- Average
- Below Average
- Unknown

Do you believe the applicant possesses a specialized level of skill, knowledge, integrity, and dedication in the field of child welfare law and can appropriately be known as a Child Welfare Law Specialist?

- No / Yes

Comments on skill, knowledge, integrity, dedication?

Please summarize your overall opinion of the applicant in 1-3 sentences.

If there is any other information you feel the CWLS Certification Committee should consider in making its decision, please add it here.

By typing my full name here, I certify that the information given herein is, to the best of my knowledge, true and correct, and that I have personally made these statements freely, frankly, and without reservation.