

Essentials for Attorneys in Child Support Enforcement

4th Edition – 2021



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES
Office of Child Support Enforcement

FOREWORD

In 1975, Title IV-D of the Social Security Act authorized a federal-state child support enforcement program. Since then, there have been many changes in the program designed to meet the evolving needs of the populations it serves. In the early years, the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) provided direction, assistance, and tools to states with a focus on collecting child support and recovering public assistance funds.

In 1996, Congress passed welfare reform legislation promoting self-sufficiency and personal responsibility. The legislation created new tools and new challenges for IV-D agencies and the attorneys that represent them. In the current child support program, the focus is on providing for the health and well-being of children. Along with providing financial support, families are encouraged to work together to provide for their children's physical and emotional needs. Child support enforcement agencies today deal with an array of issues, ranging from domestic violence to access and visitation to responsible fatherhood. Since the role of the child support program is changing, the role of the attorney representing the program—the IV-D attorney—is also changing.

OCSE first published the *Essentials for Attorneys* in the 1990s. Like the first manual, this fourth edition is a practical guide for the IV-D attorney. Initial chapters summarize the roles and relationships of OCSE, its regional counterparts, and the state child support programs. These chapters will especially interest the attorney new to the program. Other chapters relate to case preparation and special initiatives, including domestic violence and access and visitation. The information is geared toward the IV-D attorney, regardless of whether the attorney practices in a judicial or administrative environment.

Besides substantive law, the book contains “best practice” tips gleaned from experienced attorneys. Some chapters contain exhibits and flowcharts. Where appropriate, chapters reference federal forms and resources. The book also cites state case law and includes references to state-specific provisions.

During the writing of this fourth edition, there have been even more changes in the child support program. Some are legal. Some are technological. And some reflect the impact of social media. Through it all, the role of the IV-D attorney continues to be an important one. Hopefully, the guide reflects a good balance between the history of the program and the ever-evolving legal arena in which the IV-D attorney works.

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