

NACC Child Welfare Law Specialist Certification

Founded in Colorado in 1977, the **National Association of Counsel for Children (NACC)** is a nonprofit, multidisciplinary membership and advocacy organization dedicated to advancing the cause of justice for children, youth, and families involved in child abuse and neglect cases and the juvenile justice system. NACC has worked for over forty years to strengthen the delivery and quality of legal services for children, youth, and families and to promote continuous systemic improvement to achieve the best possible outcomes.

National Association of Counsel for Children

Kim Dvorchak, JD,
Executive Director

Kim.Dvorchak@
NACCchildlaw.org

1-888-828-NACC

www.NACCchildlaw.org



Child Welfare Law Specialist (CWLS) certification is a professional achievement that signifies an attorney's specialized knowledge, skill, and verified expertise in the field of child welfare law. In the same way that a physician can be certified as a specialist in pediatrics, an attorney can be certified as a CWLS. The CWLS credential is granted only to those attorneys who successfully complete a rigorous application and examination process — it is the highest testament to an attorney's dedication and demonstrated excellence in this discipline.

NACC is the only national organization accredited by the American Bar Association to certify attorneys in this practice area. Over 800 CWLS have been certified since the program began in 2006, collectively helping to raise the standards of practice for all those working in the field of child abuse and neglect law and all those affected by it.

The Benefits of CWLS Certification

Child welfare law is an increasingly complex and sophisticated practice area. Achieving the CWLS credential makes an attorney identifiable to the court, clients, colleagues, and the community as a supremely qualified practitioner and leader in the field, committed to upholding the highest of standards. In addition to this recognition, a CWLS receives:

- Complementary, voluntary NACC membership
- 20% discount on NACC conference registration
- Access to the online version of the Red Book
- 20% discount on additional copies and new editions of the Red Book
- A six-month gift membership to NACC for a colleague or friend
- Subscription to *The Guardian*
- Subscription to *The Advocate*
- Access to the NACC listserv
- Access to the Member Rewards program →



Play a Part in Promoting Justice

“The Children's Bureau strongly encourages all attorneys and judges practicing child welfare law to obtain CWLS certification... Providing high-quality legal representation to all parties at all stages of dependency proceedings is crucial to realizing [the] basic tenets of fairness and due process under the law.”

— U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families IM-17-02

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Visit NACCchildlaw.org/Certification for detailed information including:

- ✓ Application forms and other applicant resources
- ✓ Standards and definitions
- ✓ State-specific requirements
- ✓ Exam details and tools

CWLS Exam Prep Training

NACC has developed the Red Book Training to help applicants prepare for the exam. This training is consistently praised for its comprehensive approach and exceptional delivery. For more information, contact Training@NACCchildlaw.org.

Red Book Included!

66 Top specialists in our field of child welfare have, in one volume, produced an exhaustive compendium of information to help achieve not merely competence, but exemplary practice skills. Because of the rapid changes in and increasing complexity of dependency cases, this book should find its way onto every child welfare lawyer's bookshelf. 99

— Howard Davidson,
Former Director,
ABA Center on
Children and
the Law



CWLS Eligibility

CWLS certification is available to attorneys in good standing who have spent the three years immediately preceding application involved in the practice of child welfare law (see specific requirements below). This traditionally includes attorneys providing direct representation to children, parents, or governmental agencies in child abuse and neglect cases. However, NACC may also certify attorneys who have chosen instead to work in this field as judicial officers, law faculty, law firm directors/executives, or policy advocates.

Certification Standards and Requirements

To be certified as a CWLS, an attorney must meet certain certification standards evidenced through submission of a multi-component application. The application must be approved by NACC's Certification Committee and the applicant must pass NACC's child welfare law exam before certification is granted. The following is a general overview of the application requirements.*

The Application: Standards and required components of the application include:

- Evidence of substantial involvement in child welfare law (time equivalent to at least 30% of a full-time position during the three years preceding application)
- Continuing legal education hours in child welfare law and related topics
- Good standing and disciplinary history
- A writing sample demonstrating legal analysis in the field of child welfare law
- Peer review by a minimum of four attorneys and one judicial officer

The Exam: NACC's national child welfare law proficiency exam is:

- 60 multiple choice questions, 2 essay questions, and 3 hours and 55 minutes long
- Taken at a time and place of the applicant's choosing (March through mid-December) and proctored remotely via webcam
- Open-notes, but use of the Red Book in all formats is prohibited

The Fee: The 2018 CWLS certification application fee has been reduced to \$350 (from \$650) due to program restructuring and in honor of NACC's 40th anniversary.

The application fee includes:

- A softcover copy of *Child Welfare Law and Practice, 3rd Edition* (the Red Book), the legal treatise on which the exam is based
- Taking the exam once (an exam retake fee applies)

Ongoing CWLS Requirements: To remain in good standing, a CWLS must:

- Submit an annual \$120 fee and "Disclosure of Conduct" report to NACC
- Recertify every five years (similar to original process minus the exam and writing sample)

*The listed requirements are applicable in most jurisdictions. Some states may impose further requirements such as an additional state-specific exam or additional CLE hours. For details, visit NACCchildlaw.org/Certification.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

visit www.NACCchildlaw.org/Certification or email Certification@NACCchildlaw.org