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Children's Law Advocates Hold Statewide Training/Networking Conference

Louisiana children's law advocates met in Lafayette in November 2010 to participate in a training/networking conference hosted by the Louisiana State Bar Association's (LSBA) Access to Justice Program. Representatives from the Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) joined advocates from the state's four legal service corporations, the Louisiana Supreme Court's Division of Family and Children, pro bono volunteer attorneys and members of the private bar for the day-long conference.

The purpose of the conference was to create a forum for children's law advocates to network and learn more about their counterparts at other organizations that handle critical legal issues for children.

Sandra A. Broussard, the Lafayette Region-Area Director for DCFS, helped to organize the conference and conveyed that "attorneys from across the Department of Children and Family Services, throughout the state, mentioned how collaboration with the Legal Service Corporations and CINC attorneys is important to the work that we do to help Louisiana families who are in dire need of our services."

The networking and training event was moderated by Gale J. Luquette, a family law hearing officer for the 15th Judicial District's Acadia and Vermilion parishes. During each of the sessions, participants engaged in roundtable discussions with

their counterparts at other organizations, giving them the unique opportunity to pose questions and speak frankly about their shared practice issues and the legal needs of Louisiana's most vulnerable children.

The first session was led by DCFS attorney Candice M. LeBlanc and focused on the work of the DCFS Child Welfare Division. During the second session, Broussard led a discussion about the Division of Child Support Enforcement. For the final session, Sachida R. Raman, senior attorney in Acadiana Legal Service's Family Law Unit, provided an overview of Louisiana's legal service corporations and their representation of indigent children and families.

Following the conference, participants had positive evaluations of the event and its impact on the justice community. "During these economically hard times," Broussard said, "we need to work together to provide the best services that we can provide and to assist one another whenever there is an opportunity to do so."

The Access to Justice Program is planning another children's law training and networking conference in 2012. For more information or to get involved, contact LSBA's Access to Justice Training Coordinator Jonathan M. Rhodes, e-mail jonathan.rhodes@lsba.org.

CAC, LCLCE Partnering in "Computers for Education" Initiative

The Louisiana State Bar Association/Louisiana Bar Foundation's Community Action Committee (CAC) is partnering with the Louisiana Center for Law and Civic Education (LCLCE) in a new initiative, "Computers for Education," to facilitate the donation of used computers to students in need.

This year's beneficiaries will be students from families adversely affected by the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill, particularly in the parishes of Jefferson, St. Bernard and Plaquemines, including the towns of Grand Isle, Lafitte and Port Sulphur.

The initiative organizers are asking lawyers and law firms to donate used computers and computer equipment. Organizers ask that all personal and corporate data be removed from the computer equipment before donation. Also, equipment should be no more than three years old.

This computer equipment, the initiative organizers said, will allow students to participate in distance learning classes from home to complete courses that may no longer be offered because of low classroom numbers.

The initiative organizers are working with school boards, principals and superintendents to generate the list of eligible families and students. Corporate sponsors also are being sought to provide free Internet services and software to the students' families.

If you or your firm has equipment you would like to donate, contact Louisiana State Bar Association Communications Assistant Krystal L. Bellanger for more information; call (504)619-0131 or e-mail kbellanger@lsba.org.