

FAMILY LAW SECTION OF THE STATE BAR OF GEORGIA

VOLUNTEER INFORMATIONAL LETTER

Dear Volunteer Lawyer –

Thank you for your donating your time and your legal expertise to the Child Support Helpline project (the “Helpline”). As you are likely aware, the purpose of the Helpline is to provide a system for volunteer lawyers to assist income eligible, *pro se* Georgians with the completion and filing of child support worksheets in pending legal matters.

1. Your Role as a Volunteer

Essentially your role as a volunteer will be to receive information from an eligible, *pro se* litigant, and create a child support worksheet for the *pro se* litigant applying O.C.G.A. §19-6-15 and using the form provided at <http://www.georgiacourts.org/csc/>. The child support worksheet will be as accurate as the information the *pro se* litigant provides. Each caller will be directed to go to the Family Law Section webpage at www.gabar.org/committeesprogramssections/sections/familylaw/index.cfm, or the Georgia Legal Services webpage at www.GLSP.org to obtain a copy of the “CHILD SUPPORT WORKSHEET HELP LINE PREPARATION LIST” for the Helpline. If they do not have access to the internet, they will be directed to leave a message on the Helpline voicemail regarding same, along with their name and address, so one can be mailed to the caller. Please go to the section website to review the Questionnaire prior to making your first call. As you can see on the Questionnaire, the *pro se* litigant is required to obtain all the relevant information that a Child Support Worksheet requires before you can assist him/her through the Helpline; however, you, as the volunteer attorney, can determine through your expertise the complexity of the case and determine if the caller’s failure to complete the Questionnaire prohibits you from effectively assisting the caller. If it does not, you can proceed with the call and assist the caller. If it does prohibit you, you should direct the caller to seek out the information on the Questionnaire and call the Helpline back when he/she has obtained same.

2. The Basics of the Child Support Worksheet Helpline

Every year, someone on the Family Law Section Executive Committee will chair this project and will designate someone a coordinator to check the Helpline voicemail and distribute calls to volunteers. When you sign up with the program as a volunteer, you committed to a certain number of callers to help per month. The coordinator will distribute callers to you accordingly. As a volunteer, you will receive an email from the coordinator at cswgahelp@gmail.com with the name and contact information for your Helpline caller(s). Once you receive your caller(s), please try to call him or her within 48 hours and also endeavor to continue to reach out to them over a 5

business day period. If your caller is unavailable for the 5 business days, please email the Coordinator for further direction.

Before you begin the call, you will be required to ask eligibility questions to determine if the caller qualifies for the service. This is also a statistics form that will need to be returned to the helpline. The Eligibility/Statistic form is attached and on the website www.gls.org.

Once you have completed the Child Support Worksheet, which should be complete at the end of your call, please convert it to a .pdf document titled, "Name of caller-CSW-date," e.g. Johndoe-CSW-2-5-15.pdf. Then, please email same to the coordinator, with the name and email address of the Caller or name and mailing address of the Caller, stating how your caller expected to receive the worksheet, e.g. "John Doe would like to receive his CSW via email at johndoe@yahoo.com."

3. Liability concerns addressed for all volunteers

Your participation in this project does not create an attorney-client relationship between you and the pro se litigant, as you are providing one-time legal assistance. You do not need to investigate if there is a legal conflict; however, if you know by the facts shared by the pro se litigant that a conflict is present, then you may not continue with the call. If a conflict is present, then email the coordinator so another volunteer can be assigned to the caller.

This project is co-sponsored by Georgia Legal Services. Accordingly, their professional liability insurance would apply in the event of any professional malpractice claims.

4. Instruction on making the call as a volunteer

As a volunteer, you are expected to be knowledgeable about Child Support Worksheets and how to properly complete them. (If you do not have this experience, please do not volunteer for this program.) When volunteering, you will be returning the call of a *pro se* litigant and assisting him or her in completing a Child Support Worksheet. You **MUST** block your phone number from appearing by dialing *67 and then the number immediately thereafter. You should never provide your contact number. The program is set up to protect you from return calls, if you use "*67". Also, as a volunteer, you will be an anonymous caller; you should not provide your name.

When calling, please use the following introduction so it is consistent with all other volunteers:

"Hello, I am an attorney volunteer with the Georgia Child Support Helpline. I am calling to complete your child support worksheet. This process can take up to 30 minutes. Please have all of this time available during this call. If you have to

end the call, you may have to start the process over by calling the Helpline again and waiting for another call. So, if you cannot talk now for the full 30 minutes, let's set a day and time in the next few days for me to call you back.

Before we begin, I must confirm that you are not currently represented in the matter that requires a Child Support Worksheet. (If they are represented, you must politely end the call because we cannot do the worksheet for represented callers.) I also want to remind you that I am not your attorney and cannot give you legal advice about any matters. I can only ask for information as it relates to the Child Support Worksheet, and I will place that information in the correct categories on the Child Support Worksheet as provided by law. If you need legal advice, you will need to find an attorney to answer those questions after this call. It would not be appropriate for me to refer you to an attorney, so I would ask around your community for a referral, or the State Bar website at www.gabar.org has recommendations on how to find an attorney. Okay, let's begin."

Also, at the conclusion of the call, please use the following language so it is consistent with all other volunteers.

"I have completed the Child Support Worksheet to the best of my ability with the information you have provided to me. Can I get an email address from you so the Helpline can email it to you? You should print this Child Support Worksheet that is emailed to you and follow the instructions on the bottom of the Questionnaire on how to properly serve and file the document. On behalf of the Child Support Helpline, it was a pleasure talking to you and assisting you. Good bye."

If they do not have email or printing capabilities you can add the following:

"If you cannot receive email or print the Child Support Worksheet, the Helpline would be happy to mail it to you. To what name and address should we mail it? When you receive the Child Support Worksheet that is mailed to you, follow the instructions on the bottom of the Questionnaire on how to properly serve and file the document. On behalf of the Child Support Helpline, it was a pleasure talking to you and assisting you. Good bye."

Since you are an attorney volunteer, we will not dictate to you in what order to fill out the Child Support Worksheet as everyone has his/her own style. Just be sure all information is

included in the worksheet, including the full style of the case. Also, please ensure all schedules are included, as applicable, when emailing same to the coordinator.

5. Costs to the volunteer

As a volunteer, the only cost to you personally may be a long distance telephone call, so you are encouraged to use your cell phone to avoid the fees because we do not have funds for reimbursement. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause you.

6. Thank you for your legal service to the Georgia community!

Thank you again for your service and time. If you have any questions or concerns, please email the Coordinator. We sincerely appreciate it.

Best regards,

The Child Support Project Subcommittee of the
Family Law Section of the State Bar of Georgia