

## Corporate Counsel Organization Highlights

### Letter From The President Of The New York County Lawyers' Association



To The Readers Of The Metropolitan Corporate Counsel:

#### The Family Court Needs Help.

The Family Court, which deals with matters affecting children and families, needs help. The number of abuse and neglect filings by the Administration for Children's Services more than doubled between 2005 and 2006 alone. The Permanency Law of 2005 mandated permanency hearings with respect to children in foster care twice a year instead of once a year and, for the first time, required such hearings for children between the ages of 18 and 21. The Legislature recently passed a bill expanding the jurisdiction of the Family Court in domestic violence cases – a laudable and widely supported measure – but did not provide any additional resources to handle the predictable increased workload.

The Family Court is widely described as being overwhelmed by its mounting caseload. In January 2008, the New School's Center for New York City Affairs and the Center for an Urban Future issued "Against the Clock: The Struggle to Move Kids Into Permanent Homes." The summary stated, "New York City's Family Court is in crisis, with case backlogs growing and judges unable to hold many routine hearings in a timely manner...."

The number of judges permanently assigned to the Family Court has been frozen at 47 since 1991. This year, Chief Judge Judith S. Kaye asked the Legislature to create 39 new Family Court judgeships, but the bill died.

The status of the Family Court has been a matter of concern for some time. In 2004, the Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care recommended sweeping changes in family courts nationwide. The NYCLA Justice Center convened two conferences on the Family Court, which considered the full range of the New York Family Court's jurisdiction, and not just foster care and permanency proceedings. The report of the first conference was published in the *Columbia Journal of Law and Social Problems*, Vol. 40, No. 4, Summer 2007.

Conference participants noted that although we speak of "Family Court," in practice we mean the Family Court along with the plethora of agencies whose work is closely linked with Family Court cases, such as the Administration for Children's Services and The Legal Aid Society. Because the Family Court is embedded in such a complex matrix of governmental and quasi-governmental agencies, as well as the community itself, reform becomes a very difficult proposition.

The conference participants identified a broad range of issues, including:

- the need for accountability of the Family Court, including comprehensive data collection and analysis and better information systems to facilitate administration and disposition of cases;
- the need to divert cases that do not really need court involvement to appropriate treatment or service providers;
- the need for better coordination among the various stakeholders in Family Court proceedings;
- the need to give Family Court judges broader powers;
- the need to improve relations between the court and the community, and the court and its litigants; and
- the need for additional resources in the court itself and in the related agencies.

Last month, NYCLA established a Task Force on the Family Court, co-chaired by Hon. Howard Miller, Appellate Division, Second Department, and Professor Jane M. Spinak, Columbia Law School, to follow up on these conferences. The members of the Task Force include judges, parent advocates, government officials, court personnel, legal service providers, academics and concerned citizens.

NYCLA hopes that its Task Force will produce concrete proposals for improvements that can be implemented in the near future, at least as pilot projects. Although Family Court resources are scarce, the Task Force will strive to identify reforms that will increase productivity – either by increasing efficiency or by decreasing caseload by diverting matters that are not really appropriate Family Court cases.

Sincerely,  
Ann B. Lesk

### Video Replay: Drafting And Negotiating Licenses

This program titled Licensing Beyond the Basics will address some of the more complex issues that arise in drafting and negotiating trademark, copyright and technology licenses. A panel of experts, chaired by Amada Samuel, Colgate-Palmolive Company, will offer practical advice on how to negotiate contested issues related to fashion, sports, consumer brands and a host of other areas.

The video will be replayed on Wednesday, August 20 from 9 a.m. to noon at the Association of the Bar at 42 West 44th Street, New York City.

For information on registration fees and available CLE credits, see the Bulletin Board on *The Metropolitan Corporate Counsel* website at [www.metrocorp-counsel.com](http://www.metrocorp-counsel.com).

To register for the program, call (212) 382-6663 or visit [www.nycbar.org](http://www.nycbar.org).

### Maine State Bar Schedules Video: Communicating Across The Gender Gap

The video titled Communication Across the Gender Gap – What Lawyers Need to Know! can be viewed on Friday, August 22 from 8:15 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the Black Bear Inn and Conference Center, 4 Godfrey Drive, Orono, Maine. The program is sponsored by the Maine State Bar Association.

Communication always goes two ways. What we say may not always be what someone else hears and how well we communicate is deeply affected by gender.

This video will teach participants: how to use one's natural style to one's advantage; how the nature of the legal profession exaggerates gender differences; how the rules of a meeting affect who talks and how the seating arrange-

ment at a table makes a difference in who participates; how age influences gender considerations; how gender affects interactions in the courtroom; how to defuse gender conflicts in the office, and why many lawyers turn off potential clients of the opposite sex.

The presenters are Steven Stark, former commentator, CNN, NPR and VOA, and Sarah Wald, former assistant provost, Harvard University and assistant dean, University of North Carolina School of Law.

For more details and information about available CLE credits, please visit *The Metropolitan Corporate Counsel* at [www.metrocorp-counsel.com](http://www.metrocorp-counsel.com).

To register call (877) 622-7554 or visit [www.mainebar.org](http://www.mainebar.org).

### NYC Bar Seminar To Focus On Employment Law Claims

The New York City Bar Association will sponsor a seminar titled Investigating Liability & Assessing Damages in Employment Law Claims: Identifying Methods That Have Proven Successful in Negotiating Such Claims. It is scheduled for Tuesday, August 12 from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the House of the Association, 42 West 44th Street, New York City.

Program instructors Murray Schwartz and Brian Heller of Schwartz & Perry LLP will cover the background of the laws addressing employment discrimination, the local civil rights restoration

act of 2005 and commonly raised issues regarding liability in an employment law claim and how they can best be resolved. The final presentation will cover how to evaluate an employment law claim and proven procedures to achieve a settlement whether during negotiations or after litigation is instituted. The program will conclude with a question and answer session.

For details about fees and CLE credits, visit *The Metropolitan Corporate Counsel* at [www.metrocorp-counsel.com](http://www.metrocorp-counsel.com).

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### Hear What's New In Copyright Law (Video Replay)

Titled Current Developments in Copyright Law 2007, this program, sponsored by the New York City Bar Association, is intended for practitioners who have a working knowledge of the copyright law. It will focus on a cross-section of recent developments. A panel of experts, chaired by expert Jessica R. Friedman of Scarola Ellis, LLP will discuss copyrightability, fair use, equitable defenses to infringement, and the implications of new technology on the display right. The program will provide a case law update on the covered topics as

well as information that transactional and in-house attorneys can use in their day-to-day advisory roles.

The program is scheduled for Friday, August 1 from 9 a.m. to noon at the Association of the Bar at 42 West 44th Street, New York City.

For information on registration fees and available CLE credits, see the Bulletin Board on *The Metropolitan Corporate Counsel* website at [www.metrocorp-counsel.com](http://www.metrocorp-counsel.com).

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### Learn To Read Financial Statements (Video Replay)

No matter what an attorney's area of practice, the ability to read and understand basic financial information adds value to delivering high-quality services to one's clients. Yet, accounting information and documents often seems like another language. In a video replay titled ABCs of Financial Statements, Program Chair Shari Helaine Lichtman, professional educational consultant, will offer this course to all lawyers who need and want to gain a clearer understanding of accounting and financial statements. The course offers clear, simple and comprehensible vocabulary, giving the prac-

ticing lawyer the skills to read and interpret accounting and financial statements as it may apply to diverse professional matters.

The video will be replayed on Thursday, August 7 from 6 to 9 p.m. at the Association of the Bar at 42 West 44th Street, New York City.

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