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FOREWORD

In 1975, Title IV-D of the Social Security Act authorized the creation of a Federal/State Child Support Enforcement Program. Since its inception, there have been many changes to meet the needs of the populations it serves. In its early years, the Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) provided direction, assistance, and tools to States, with a focus on the collection of child support and the recovery of funds expended for public assistance. 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 their Child Support Enforcement (CSE) attorneys. Increasing focus is placed on providing for the health and well-being of children, in addition to financial support, encouraging families to work together to provide for the physical and emotional needs of their children. Child Support Enforcement agencies today deal with issues ranging from domestic violence to access and visitation to fatherhood initiatives. With the changing role of the Child Support Enforcement program in promoting the well being of families, the role of the IV-D attorney is changing as well.

Essentials for Attorneys, 3rd edition is written as a guide for the CSE agency (IV-D) attorney. Initial chapters provide an overview of the roles and relationships of the Federal OCSE, its regional counterparts, and the State Child Support Enforcement programs. These chapters will be of special interest to the attorney new to the IV-D program. The remainder of the book is organized around topics that are related to case preparation. The information is geared toward the IV-D attorney, regardless of whether the attorney practices in a judicial or administrative environment.

In addition to substantive law, the book contains “best practice” tips gleaned from experienced CSE attorneys. Some chapters contain exhibits and flowcharts. Where appropriate, chapters reference Federal forms and resources. The book also cites relevant State case law and includes references to state-specific provisions. Although the Essentials, 3rd Edition attempts to be as comprehensive as possible, given available resources, it is not exhaustive. Attorneys are encouraged to access the OCSE website (<http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cse/>) and the National Electronic Resource Child Support Resource System (NECSRS) (<http://ocse.acf.dhhs.gov/necsrspub/>) for Federal policy documents that can provide additional assistance in particular topic areas. For state-specific information, consult the Online Interstate Roster and Referral Guide (IRG) at <http://ocse3.acf.dhhs.gov/ext/irg/sps/selectastate.cfm>, as well as your State and local statutes and rules.

We hope this handbook will enable IV-D attorneys to enhance their performance both in adversarial proceedings and the day-to-day operation of the Child Support Enforcement program.

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