

WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

WSBA Family Law Section

WSBA ENTITY ANNUAL REPORT FORM

FY 2023: October 1, 2022 – September 30, 2023

The mission of the Washington State Bar Association is to serve the public and the members of the Bar, to ensure integrity of the legal profession, and to champion justice.

Instructions: In accordance with the WSBA Bylaws, Committees, Other Bar Entities (excluding Regulatory Boards¹), Councils, and Sections must submit an annual report to the Executive Director. The information below should reflect the activities and outcomes from the fiscal year FY2023 (October 1, 2022 – September 30, 2023). Information in the annual report will be provided to the Executive Director and Board of Governors, and may be published for other purposes, such as *Bar News*, volunteer recruitment messaging, and other WSBA activity-based reporting.

It is recommended that completion of the annual report be a collaborative effort with members of your entity, the BOG liaison, and the staff liaison.

Submission Deadline is Friday, October 13: please submit by emailing barleaders@wsba.org or requesting that your staff liaison submit the report internally.

Name of Entity:	WSBA Family Law Section
Entity Size: <i>Total Number of Entity/Section Executive Committee Positions</i>	989 Section Members/16 FLEC Positions
Chair or Co-Chairs:	Tamara Garrison
Staff Liaison: <i>Include name, job title, and department if known</i>	Carolyn MacGregor
Board of Governors Liaison(s):	Sunitha Anjilvel and Kari Petrasek
Purpose of Entity: <i>May be stated in Bylaws, Charter, Court Rule, etc.</i>	
The purpose of the Family Law Section is to involve all interested members of the WSBA in order to benefit its members, their clients, and the general public by: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Providing the opportunity and forum for the interchange of ideas in all areas of law affecting families and juveniles;• Initiating and implementing common projects, including but not limited to an annual meeting;• Reviewing pending legislation and court rules, providing input and timely responses to pending and proposed legislation and court rules and development of proposed statutory enactments to	

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improve and to facilitate the administration of justice within the Section’s area of interest and expertise.

- Host CLE’s to improve the quality of family law practice; and undertaking such other service and participation of our members as may be of benefit to the members, the legal profession, and the public.

Strategy to Fulfill Purpose:

Legislative Efforts: FLEC works with BOG staff and the legislative review process to promote and enhance our ability to perform the section’s legislative duties. Of particular importance is to identify potential unintended consequences of draft legislation. FLEC’s BOG liaison reports monthly to our committee members and this contributes, we believe, to ongoing communication with current BOG members and keeping our membership informed. FLEC strategy is to work collaboratively with a variety of legislative, judicial, other section and bar association or community groups on a variety of legislative and educational issues of interest to our membership.

Education Programming and CLEs: We returned to in-person CLEs, first with the Basic Skills CLE in April 2023 in Kelso, WA and then the annual Family Law Midyear program in July 2023 in Wenatchee. We used a hybrid format that allowed for the option of remote or in-person attendance, which increased participation for those unable to attend in-person. The Basic Skills CLE, in partnership with Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Legal Aid, focused on a variety of practical topics including preparing declarations, presenting for settlement conferences; preparing to present motions and prepare for trial; and preparing the client to self-represent. The second day of the seminar allowed each participant, including those appearing remotely, to argue a motion in front of a judge or commissioner. The Annual Mid-Year included topics ranging from: abusive use of litigation; the impact of AI on the judicial process: trial skills such as objections, presentation of evidence, and pre-trial prep; gender diverse youth in family law cases; advice from the bench, ICWA, and the legislative and case law updates to name a few.

Workgroups and Collaboration: Our members continue to be involved in important and impactful collaborations. (i.e. FLEC partnered with Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Legal Aid for the Basic Skills CLE, a member was appointed to and participated on the Washington State Child Support Workgroup, an invitation was extended to FLEC and accepted to attend the SCJA FJLC meeting.)

Member Engagement: We continue to evaluate and seek input from our membership and other members of the legal community to better serve our communities. We host a list serve for our members which offers an important forum for sharing information and expertise. We are improving our presence on the WSBA Family Law Section website. We began development of a separate Family Law Section website to provide more content for our members and it will probably launch in Fall 2023. We have added a New Lawyer Liaison to FLEC as we continue to broaden the scope of our membership. As we transitioned to a Hybrid format for the Basic Skills and Mid-Year Seminar, we provided numerous opportunities for in-person networking and social interactions with a reception and a fundraising event. We offered scholarships for Basic Skills training and the Mid-Year to improve access and provided reduced tuition for new lawyers. We also have discussed having a law student representative on FLEC.

How does the entity’s purpose help further the mission of the WSBA “to serve the public and the members of the Bar, to ensure integrity of the legal profession, and to champion justice”?

We seek to recruit new members to the executive committee to emphasize diversity, including age and length of time in practice, geographic representation and encourage legal professionals of all of diverse backgrounds to participate, to assure that in our service, we incorporate and honor diverse perspectives in our work. We have focused on Legal Deserts and participated in work groups and focus on steps that our section can take to bridge the gap to access to legal aid in rural areas. We intend to make even more headway to advance the WSBA's REJI goals and to challenge structural inequities. We maintain a list serve for section members to discuss legal issues and to build community and are developing a website with extensive content and resources for our members. This gives practitioners access to a diverse and experienced pool of professions for advice and information. We have surveyed our membership to gather a wide range of viewpoints and to help guide the section's future activity. We work to provide education and scholarship to new members or those who are disadvantaged in our community so that attendance can be broad-based. We provided our Basic Skills Seminar in a Hybrid format to assist new legal professionals or those new to family law with the intent to be more comprehensive providing training for both virtual practice/in-person practice and around equity concerns. We offered the opportunity for attendees to pledge pro bono hours in exchange for free tuition, which resulted in 99 volunteer hours (~\$24,750 equivalent in fees) dedicated to communities across the state. We provide scholarship grants for this seminar as well as our annual mid-year. A reduced tuition was also available for the midyear for new attorneys. At the midyear, we sponsored a fundraiser in partnership with Chelan-Douglas Volunteer Attorney Services to raise money for the local legal aid clinic. We provide a means of membership engagement at seminars; list serves and at informal settings. We believe these efforts contribute to professionalism and collegiality. We have circulated a survey regarding GR 40 – Informal Family Law Trials to engage with our membership and represent their views to stakeholders. We had a very active year working with the legislature on HB 1121 (UCAPA); HB 1165; SSB 5920 (amending RCW 26.09.260); SSB 5205 (amending RCW 26.09.191); and HB 1088 (UFLAA). In addition, we reviewed and commented on GR 12 and GR 40, the TAXICAB Policy, and supported the proposed modified comments to RPC 1.2 & 8.4 to include language regarding giving advice regarding reproductive healthcare. We continue to advocate for WSBA policies which recognize the sections expertise and the need for timely comment on pending legislation to avoid unintended negative consequences. Our BOG Liaison, Nancy Hawkins, is a clear voice for the interests of FLEC and the section as a whole and her dedication and shared experience is of great value to FLEC. These collaborative activities demonstrate FLEC's efforts to foster professionalism and collegiality. Our committee members also actively participate and respond on the Section list serves and at the Section Leaders monthly meetings and this approach keeps membership educated, engaged in legal discussions in civil forums, up-to-date and interacting with our legislators and trial courts and is an integral part of contributing to justice.

2022-2023 Entity Accomplishments:

We reasserted our commitment to increasing member engagement and providing meaningful resources with progress towards implementation of website, which should launch this year. FLEC held regular, lengthy, meetings and several special meetings to address pending legislation and other urgent policy matters. FLEC strengthened their involvement with WSBA staff and communicated more directly our needs to better provide services to our section, such as more timely notification of upcoming CLEs. We continued to meet the needs of our members as it relates to changing legislation by providing necessary CLE credits to meet arbitration requirements – beginning with the Midyear. FLEC meetings are conducted with respect for all members' input and it is clear in our discussions that all voices are heard and contribute to the ultimate actions taken by FLEC. We continue to build and maintain relationships with other sections. We continue to have membership interest in serving on FLEC, and had more nominees run for this year's election than there were spaces available. Our finances are maintained in a thoughtful manner with budget considerations discussed by the entire

FLEC. Budget adjustments were made this year to include more resources for outreach, communication, and scholarships for our community and section members. Our increased focus at Basic Skills and the Midyear on practical topics, such as the relatively new abusive use of litigation motion, administrative hearings, trial skills, and responding to diverse clients, have been met with positive feedback from section membership. We anticipate an active 2023, beginning with the presentation of a CLE on the UFLAA that will provide practitioners with the necessary credits to meet the education requirement in the Act.

Looking Ahead: 2023-2024 Top Goals & Priorities:

1	Improve member engagement and communication with specific emphasis on advancing diversity, equity and inclusion to achieve the organizational goals as set forth in the WSBA Diversity Council’s recommendations and the REJI commitments that the WSBA has endorsed. Access to Justice remains a central goal of the work we do on FLEC and within our section to advance our service to the public.
2	Continue to build on the respected reputation of FLEC and remain a strong voice in the legislative and rule process. Continue to review, comment and testify regarding family-law related legislation. Continue to review and comment regarding proposed court rules.
3	Collaborative Participation with Judicial and Legislative Workgroups. Work to strengthen FLECs involvement with BOG such as participation on S.T.A.R. and expressing a candid, yet proactive voice to family-law related issues. FLEC’s liaison to BOG has worked hard to improve the existing relationship and those efforts will continue.
4	Partnership with organizations (internal and external) to Improve practice opportunities and public service in legal deserts and marginalized communities. Reach out to broader demographics and newer practitioners, and provide content that is relevant to a more diverse community of legal professionals.
5	Continue to implement creative opportunities for volunteerism and participation such as additional scholarship opportunities and free tuition/pro bono exchange to enhance more diverse and broad-based attendance. Continue to provide hybrid participation to address the needs and preferences of our membership. Continue to present high quality education and seminars to our membership and the legal community. Continue to emphasize equity, diversity and inclusion and the need to address structural inequities not only as to FLEC itself but also with respect to all FLEC activities.
5	Encourage more member participation and facilitate more transparency by improving communication with section members about FLEC and our ongoing work. Provide opportunities and a forum for membership to share their ideas and comments regarding family law section related topics.

Please describe how this entity is addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion:

How have you elicited input from a variety of perspectives in your decision-making? What have you done to promote a culture of inclusion within the board or committee? What has your committee/board done to promote equitable conditions for members from historically underrepresented backgrounds to enter, stay, thrive, and eventually lead the profession? Other?

We have prioritized access to our CLEs by offering hybrid platforms to eliminate travel costs for those unable to travel due to economic or other barriers. We have also committed financially to contributing to scholarships and fundraisers for legal aid organizations located in rural and/or small towns. We offered topics to educate our members on family law topics centric to diversity and inclusion, such as gender diverse youth, issues regarding Native Peoples and ICWA, to name a few. We have participated in S.T.A.R. and focused on the challenges of legal deserts in WA. We have engaged in a concerted effort to engage and recruit committee members of diverse background to our committee and help us to hear a wider range of viewpoints. We continue to evaluate our practices and our recruiting methods to better engage with underrepresented communities and to ensure that we are connecting with and responding to the needs of all family law attorneys in Washington State.

Please share feedback regarding the support and engagement provided by WSBA.

For example:

- *Quality of WSBA staff support/services, including technology solutions*
- *Involvement with Board of Governors, including assigned BOG liaison(s)*
- *Ideas you have for ways WSBA can continue to strengthen/support your entity.*

For the most part since the inception of the Family Law Section, FLEC has maintained a regular presence at the Board of Governors meetings. Our current Liaison – Nancy Hawkins – has continued a strong Family Law Section presence at the meetings. We are pleased with the improvements we have seen in our relationship with the BOG; we are dedicated to moving in a positive direction. FLEC works well with WSBA staff and makes payments to WSBA to cover the cost of any staff support we receive. They are routinely helpful in identifying CLE locations, obtaining budget and contract information, and handling administrative issues we otherwise would struggle to navigate. Our staff liaison has been professional, knowledgeable and provided consistent and courteous assistance. They are timely in responding to any questions we ask and also help us to understand WSBA policy and navigate our obligations. WSBA staff played a critical role in the success of the Basic Skills and Midyear CLE which were managed in a hybrid format. They have also been responsive to feedback from our Section regarding WSBA policies and how they impact the Section, membership recruitment and participation. We have struggled to improve the process for earlier notice and marketing of upcoming CLEs, which creates a struggle for membership to plan in advance for significant time commitments and travel, such as the Midyear. We continue to hold the same concerns regarding BOG support of our Section and how BOG implemented policy may negatively impact our ability to serve our membership.

SECTIONS ONLY: Please quantify your section's 2022-2023 member benefits:

0	Newsletters/publications produced
0	Mini-CLEs produced

<p><i>For example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$3000 Scholarships, donations, grants awarded; • 4 mini-CLEs produced 	1	Co-sponsored half-day, full-day and/or multi-day CLE seminars with WSBA
	1	Co-sponsored half-day, full-day and/or multi-day CLE seminars with <i>non</i> -WSBA entity
	3	Receptions/forums hosted or co-hosted
	\$1967	Scholarships, Donations, & Grants
	0	New Lawyer Outreach events/benefits
	0	Other (please describe): Click or tap here to enter text.
<p>SECTIONS ONLY: Please quantify your section's 2022-2023 legislative activity.</p>	5	Bills Reviewed
	5	Bills tracked
	5	Comments proposed
	0	Bills proposed/drafted
<p>Entity Detail Report: <i>To Be Completed by WSBA Staff</i></p>		
<p>Number of Entity Members/Section Executive Committee Members:</p>	18	
<p>Number of Section Members: <i>As of September 1, 2023. Note: The Section Membership year runs on the calendar year.</i></p>	1,001	
<p>Number of Applicants for FY24 Positions: <i>October 1, 2023 – September 30, 2024</i></p>	7	
<p>Do you have vacant positions for the coming year, FY24?</p>	Yes - 1	
<p>FY23 Budgeted Direct Expenses: <i>As of September 30, 2023. For Sections, this does not include the Per-Member-Charge.</i></p>	\$67,281	
<p>FY23 Total Direct Expenses: <i>Draft estimate as of Dec. 1, 2023 For Sections, this does not include the Per-Member-Charge.</i></p>	\$37,136	

ⁱ Supreme Court Boards (Access to Justice Board, Disciplinary Board, LLLT Board, Limited Practice Board, MCLE Board and Practice of Law Board) provide annual reports to WSBA to support its responsibility under [GR 12.3](#), to provide oversight and monitor compliance with applicable rules and orders. Boards have the option to use the WSBA template or to share their annual reports to the Washington Supreme Court.