



# Child Welfare Law Attorney Specialty Certification

## Program Summary

Child Welfare Attorney Specialization is a program of the National Association of Counsel for Children (NACC) whereby the NACC certifies qualified attorneys as Child Welfare Law Specialists (CWLS). Attorneys receive the CWLS credential from the NACC by showing their proficiency in child welfare law through a comprehensive child welfare law competency process.



## Board Specialty Certification



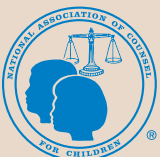
Board specialty certification is a process whereby professionals in areas such as medicine and law are designated specialists in a particular practice area. Modeled after Medical Board Certification, Attorney Certification brands attorneys as specialists, thereby identifying them to clients, peers, and court systems as proficient practitioners. Board Certification elevates the quality of the practice of law by encouraging attorneys to be among the best in their communities. Attorneys have been board certified for years in areas such as real estate, bankruptcy, criminal law, and estate planning. There are approximately 25,000 Board Certified attorneys in the U.S. The NACC certified the first Child Welfare Law Specialists in the United States in 2006.

## NACC

### The National Association of Counsel for Children

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Denver, Colorado 80218

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Fax 303-864-5351  
Toll-Free 1-888-828-NACC  
Email [advocate@NACCchildlaw.org](mailto:advocate@NACCchildlaw.org)  
Website [www.NACCchildlaw.org](http://www.NACCchildlaw.org)



The NACC is a national non-profit child advocacy and membership organization of juvenile law attorneys. Founded in 1977, our mission is to improve the delivery of legal services to children, families, and agencies, and develop the practice of law for children and families as a sophisticated legal specialty. The NACC is headquartered at the Kempe Children's Center at The Children's Hospital in Denver, Colorado. The NACC has approximately 2400 members representing all 50 states, DC, and several foreign countries. The NACC is a recipient of the *Meritorious Service to the Children of America Award* given by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. The NACC is accredited by the American Bar Association to award specialty certification credentials in Child Welfare Law (Abuse, Neglect, and Dependency cases). The program is supported by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Children's Bureau.

## Certification Authority

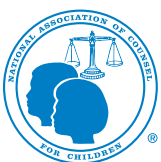
Attorney Specialty Certification is awarded by authorized state and national organizations. Attorneys certified as specialists may so designate (hold themselves out as specialists in advertising or letterhead, for example) as provided by states' versions of ABA Model Rule of Professional Conduct 7.4. Under Model Rule 7.4, attorneys may designate themselves as board certified specialists once certified by the state certification regulatory authority or an authorized national certification program. The NACC certification program was created and sponsored by a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Children's Bureau and is accredited by the American Bar Association. The NACC also obtains the necessary authorization from the state regulatory authorities such as the court, state bar association, or committee on legal specialization so that individuals may use their credential. Attorneys must comply with their state certification rules.

## Child Welfare Law Certification Practice Areas

NACC Child Welfare Law Certification is available to attorneys who serve in the role of Child's Attorney (including Guardian ad Litem, Law Guardian, Attorney ad Litem), Parent's Attorney, and Agency / Department / Government Attorney. The specialization area as approved by the ABA is defined as "the practice of law representing children, parents or the government in all child protection proceedings including emergency, temporary custody, adjudication, disposition, foster care, permanency planning, termination, guardianship, and adoption. Child Welfare Law does not include representation in private child custody and adoption disputes where the state is not a party." If you represent children, parents, the state child welfare agency, or the state in abuse, neglect, and dependency cases, you may be eligible to become certified in child welfare law.

## Why Become Certified

Board Certification is a testament to your proficiency. Certification brands attorneys as specialists in their field. Child Welfare Law is an increasingly complex and sophisticated field requiring special training and expertise. Whether you have already reached this level or plan to by preparing for NACC certification, you will be able to identify yourself to the court, clients, and your community as a Board Certified Child Welfare Law Specialist, having met the standards set by the U.S. Supreme Court, the American Bar Association, the National Association of Counsel for Children, and your state. Specialty certification is a highly recognized, prestigious credential.



## The Certification Process

The process begins by contacting the NACC and inquiring into the status of certification in your state. Once the NACC is authorized to proceed in a state, you will be provided with the NACC Certification Standards and Application. Following receipt of the Application and applicable fees, the NACC will review and rule on the sufficiency of the application (whether you have satisfied the Standards requirements including good standing, substantial involvement, peer review, and writing). If you satisfy the requirements, you will be notified of your opportunity to sit for the certification exam. Upon passage of the exam, you will be certified as a child welfare law specialist. Certification is valid for five (5) years and recertification is granted upon recertification application which does not require additional examination or writing sample.

## Certification Costs

The cost of certification is typically \$600 (\$300 application fee and \$300 exam fee) plus annual dues of \$100. The fee includes your copy of the NACC treatise *Child Welfare Law and Practice: Representing Children, Parents, and Agencies in Abuse, Neglect, and Dependency Cases* (also known as The Red Book). Agencies such as the Departments of Children's Services and staff offices may arrange for certification as a group at reduced rates. Groups may be eligible to access office, state, and federal funds including court improvement funds to pay for or subsidize certification fees. The NACC also offers Attorney Certification and Training (ACT) packages which include on-site certification orientation, training, materials, and exam preparation.

## Exam Preparation and Training

Your legal education, practice experience, and continuing legal education in child welfare, delinquency, family law, and related areas all help prepare you for the certification exam. In addition, applicants should have a command of the 4 basic child welfare competencies: 1. The Context of Child Welfare Law; 2. The Legal Framework of Child Welfare Law; 3. The Child Welfare Legal Process; and 4. The Role and Duties of Legal Counsel. Applicants should review The Red Book together with the Exam Matrix (indicating relative percentages of areas covered on the test). Additionally, the NACC typically conducts its 1-day Child Welfare Law Survey Course and Exam Preparation (The Red Book Training) at our national conference each year designed to teach the certification competencies. The course may be available as part of group certification packages as well.



# The Standards for Child Welfare Law Certification\*

Lawyers certified in child welfare law must be knowledgeable in the state and federal laws applicable to child protection and foster care. A specialist must understand relevant principles from child development and psychology regarding individual and family dynamics and appropriate treatment modalities for child abuse and neglect. Specialists must be capable of recognizing the professional responsibility and ethical issues that arise out of the children's status. Lawyers certified as specialists in child welfare law should be proficient in the skills of interviewing and counseling child clients.

In order to be certified, attorneys must meet the following standards:

**Good Standing.** The applicant shall furnish evidence of good standing in the state of admission, or if admitted in more than one state, in the state of principal practice.

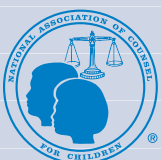
**Substantial Involvement.** The applicant must make a satisfactory showing of substantial involvement relevant to child welfare law with at least thirty (30) percent of his or her time involved in child welfare law during the three (3) years preceding the filing of the application.

**Educational Experience.** The applicant must demonstrate substantial participation in continuing legal education relevant to child welfare law (36 hours) in the three-year period immediately preceding application. Topics deemed relevant to child welfare law include, but are not limited to, substantive and procedural law, trial practice, alternative dispute resolution, child abuse and neglect, child development, and family dynamics and relationships.

**Peer Review.** The applicant shall submit with the application the names of no less than five (5) references. These references shall be substantially involved in juvenile law (child welfare), and familiar with the applicant's work. References satisfactory to the NACC must be received from at least one judge who can attest to the applicant's competence in child welfare law. A reference from an individual who has served as opposing counsel is encouraged.

**Writing Sample.** The applicant shall submit a copy of a trial court memorandum, appellate brief, article, or a writing sample demonstrating legal analysis in the field of child welfare law. This should be a substantial writing sample, stating facts and arguing law, submitted or drafted no more than three years before the date of application.

**Examination.** The applicant must pass the NACC Child Welfare Law written competency examination. The examination may be taken only after the applicant has satisfied all other certification standards.



\*The foregoing standards are applicable in the majority of jurisdictions. Some jurisdictions, such as California, may impose further requirements such as additional CLE or a state-specific exam.

# Getting Started

For more information on Child Welfare Law Attorney Specialty Certification, contact the NACC.

Call toll-free **1-888-828-NACC**  
Visit the NACC website **[www.NACCchildlaw.org](http://www.NACCchildlaw.org)**  
Send an email to **[advocate@NACCchildlaw.org](mailto:advocate@NACCchildlaw.org)**

To receive an application for certification, complete and return this form via fax or mail.

Fax **303-864-5351**  
Mail **National Association  
of Counsel for Children**  
1825 Marion Street, Suite 242  
Denver, CO 80218

NAME  MR.  MS. LAST FIRST MIDDLE

PRINCIPAL STATE OF PRACTICE

LAW DEGREE AND DATE OF LAW DEGREE

DATE ADMITTED TO PRINCIPAL STATE OF PRACTICE

TITLE / POSITION

FIRM / AGENCY NAME

TYPE OF PRACTICE

BUSINESS ADDRESS

CITY STATE ZIP

PHONE FAX

EMAIL ADDRESS

WEBSITE

