



PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENT

The Advocacy Institute Is Pleased to Present

Money Trail: LOBA/IV E Funding and DCP Policy Regarding Social Security and Child Support

**November 20, 2023
9:10 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.**

WEBINAR

Program Summary

This program will provide an overview of the Department of Children and Families' funding streams, including LOBA, FLEX and IV-E Funds, Social Security benefits and child support, and the impact of these funds on DCF litigation. Presenters from DCF will define each funding source and explain their purpose, permissible uses, and distribution. Deputy Attorneys General from the DCF practice group will discuss the Law Guardian's increased motion practice challenging DCF's service as the representative payee for foster children receiving Social Security benefits. They will also provide an overview of the jurisdictional, federal, state and policy authority supporting DCF's practice and offer practical guidance and practice tips for opposing such motions.

Eligibility

This program is only open to Deputy and Assistant Attorneys General in the DCF practice group and DCF agency attorneys invited to attend.

Faculty

DAG Jennifer A. Lochel is the Section Chief for DCF-South in the Division of Law. She was previously a DCF assistant section chief, lead deputy and line deputy. DAG Lochel has successfully represented the Division in multiple appellate arguments, including DCP&P v. J.B., 459 N.J. Super. 442 (2019) and DCP&P v. R.L.M., 236 N.J. 123 (2018) before the Supreme Court. She has also taught classes on trial skills and child welfare legal practice. Prior to joining DOL, DAG Lochel clerked for the Honorable Diane B. Cohen, P.J.F.P., Vicinage 15. She holds an undergraduate degree from the University of Delaware and a J.D. from Widener University School of Law.

DAG Leah A. Schmidt is a member of the Department of Children and Families (DCF) – Central Section in the Division of Law. She handles administrative appeals filed through the Office of Administrative Law (OAL), overflow guardianship cases in Mercer County, and researches and briefs matters concerning DCF’s receipt and use of federal Social Security benefits. She also represents the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCPP) in FN, FG and FC cases in multiple counties and provides training to local DCPP offices. DAG Schmidt has tried hundreds of child protection cases. She was previously a member of the DCF Appeals Section, where she reviewed appeals, drafted briefs and engaged in appellate oral advocacy in child abuse and neglect matters and termination of parental rights cases. Prior to joining State service, DAG Schmidt was an associate at The Law Office of Thaniel J. Beinert & Associates in Brooklyn, NY. Before that, she volunteered with Americorps NCCC, completing service projects designed to strengthen local communities. DAG Schmidt holds a J.D. from New York Law School.

Ayesha Patrick is a Program Support specialist in the Department of Children and Families, where she is a supervisor in the Title IV-E Unit, Northern Region, covering Hudson and Essex Counties. She was previously a reviewer in the unit, covering Morris, Sussex, Middlesex, Union and Hudson Counties. Prior to that, she served as a Family Service Specialist 1 in Hunterdon, working in the intake and permanency units and as an adoption specialist. She has also worked as a Screener at the New Jersey Child Abuse Hotline and as an Adoption Case Worker in the Metropolitan Adoption Resource Center in Edison, NJ. Before that, she served as a contracted Title IV-E Reviewer for NJ with MAXIMUS. Ms. Patrick earned a B.A. in Psychology from Fairleigh Dickinson University and a Master of Arts in Management - Public Service Administration and Leadership from Thomas Edison State University.

Zairy Ramos is a fiscal management administrative analyst in the Department of Children and Families, where she oversees the submission and preparation of federal fiscal grant reporting in addition to Title IV-E federal funding stream claims on behalf of DCF. She holds a master’s degree in Business Administration from Montclair State University.

Dominic Siracusa is a Budget Analyst 1 in the Department of Children and Families, where he supervises the LOBA Unit. He started his career at DCF in the Contract Unit. Mr. Siracusa holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from Rider University.

CLE Credit

NJ CLE Credit: This program has been approved by the Board on Continuing Legal Education of the Supreme Court of New Jersey for 2.0 hours of Alternative Verifiable Learning Format (AVF) total CLE credit. Of these, 0.0 qualify as hours of credit for ethics/professionalism.

Registration

Those who are eligible to apply should use the Zoom Webinar registration link in the Program Announcement email. Students who are registered will receive a confirmation email with a link to access the program.

Students must download Zoom before the webinar in order for the AGAI to record polling responses that are required for attendance verification and CLE credit.

The AGAI will be unable to verify attendance or grant CLE credit to students who have not downloaded Zoom before the webinar.