

Nevada Family Law Practice Manual **2013 Edition**



This recently revised manual provides up-to-date information on timely, modern day family law issues such as:

MILITARY DIVORCES

including how military divorces differ from non-military divorces and what extra steps need to be made

ARTIFICIAL REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGY

including definitions of terms used in discussing Artificial Reproductive Technology

DOMESTIC PARTNERSHIPS

including how partnerships are recognized in other jurisdictions

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15% discount.**

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for more information!**

"It sits on the corner of my desk and I refer to it daily. It is the definitive reference guide for family law in Nevada."

— John F. Keuscher, Anderson Keuscher, PLLC

PRO

HONOR ROLL

The State Bar of Nevada Board of Governors and the Access to Justice Commission extend a special thanks to the following attorneys who generously accepted cases in December 2014, through the Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada, Washoe Legal Services, Nevada Legal Services, Volunteer Attorneys for Rural Nevadans and Southern Nevada Senior Law Program.

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Attorneys who participated in clinics, Ask-A-Lawyer, or Lawyer in the Library programs:

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Travis Barrick
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◀ **BOLD honors multiple cases accepted and/or sessions conducted within the month.** ▶

BONO

ONE FOCUS



BY SHAWANNA L. JOHNSON, ESQ.

Throughout my legal career, I have had a passion for pro bono work, particularly for family court and civil matters. As an associate at Arent Fox LLP in New York, I was my firm's organizer and participated in the New York Family Court Volunteer Attorney Program from 2008 – 2012. In addition, I worked on several other family court, employment and civil pro bono litigation matters, for which I received the 2011 Albert E. Arent Pro Bono Award for Outstanding Contributions to the Public Interest.

When I returned to Las Vegas in 2012, I continued my pro bono work on family court and civil cases. A case that particularly stands out in my mind is one I received through a referral from Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada; it involved a client who had been taken advantage of by a used car dealership. The client was a low-income individual, dealing with physical and mental health challenges. She had scraped together just enough cash to purchase a used vehicle. She put \$1,500 down towards the purchase of an older model vehicle, and agreed to make four monthly payments of \$500 a month until the vehicle was fully paid for. This represented a significant amount of money for the client. The dealership sold her a vehicle that did not function properly and, despite having knowledge of her mental challenges, sold it to her at a time when she did not have a representative present to assist her with the purchase. When she complained to the dealership about the dysfunctional car, the dealership half-heartedly attempted to have its mechanic fix the vehicle. However, the mechanic did nothing to make the car work properly. The client subsequently took the car back to the dealership and left it for the dealer to repair.

Over the next several weeks, and upon further complaints by the client, the dealership claimed that she had never legally purchased the car, that it had no written record of the purchase and that it would not refund her money. The client became extremely frustrated, upset and emotional over the loss of \$1,500: a significant amount of money to her. She was confused and felt helpless due to the dealership's refusal to bargain with her fairly. Her mental challenges made the situation even more frustrating, as the dealership showed little interest or patience in communicating with her, or in refunding her money.

I accepted the case and immediately interviewed the client, spoke with other witnesses, analyzed her paperwork, and contacted the dealership by phone and letter. Within 48 hours of accepting the case and being officially retained, I was able to negotiate with the dealership and persuade them to return the client's entire \$1,500 deposit, take back the vehicle and apologize to the client. The client was exceptionally relieved by and grateful for the outcome.

This case stayed with me due to the challenges presented by communicating with the client, who was emotional, upset, and had some mental challenges that made it difficult to determine the facts of the case and to develop an approach leading to a suitable legal resolution. However, I knew the client was legitimately harmed and that she needed me to fight for her rights against the dealership's unscrupulous business practices. She needed me to listen and help her and I felt honored that she placed that trust in me. The client thanked me and sent me a card to show her appreciation after she received her full refund from the dealership.

I would advise any attorney interested in taking a pro bono case (please do!) to be aware of all the facts of the case, along with any special circumstances presented by it, prior to taking it on. Then plan out the proposed time and resources you will need to devote to the case. I was able to offer the patience and time needed to deal with the challenges of this case; it was certainly well worth it to have assisted this client in a difficult situation.

My other piece of advice: Take a pro bono case! So many individuals are in need of assistance with very meritorious claims. Pro bono work is perhaps the most fulfilling work an attorney can do as a way of giving back to those in need. It certainly has been fulfilling for me. **NL**

SHAWANNA L. JOHNSON is a native of Las Vegas, and graduated from Cheyenne High School. She did her undergraduate work at Harvard University (B.A. Economics, Cum Laude), and received her Juris Doctor from Boston University School of Law. She was a litigation associate at Arent Fox LLP in New York City for nearly four years before returning to Las Vegas in 2012. Johnson was a litigation associate at Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck LLP and Duane Morris LLP from 2012 - 2014. She is currently attorney for the Office of Risk Management in the Department of Finance for Clark County.

