

SECTION SPOTLIGHT

The Wild West of Family Law

BY LAUREN BERKICH, ESQ. AND MEGAN LUCEY, ESQ.

The Family Law Section of the State Bar of Nevada is an incredibly unique and dynamic section in the fact that while the laws very rarely change, our cases and practitioners are ever-evolving due to constant changes to historical family make-up, as well as society in general. From transgendered parents and children, to decisions regarding medical marijuana use in the family unit, to navigating the balance of technology and social media, our courts and section members are consistently confronted with matters of first impression that they must navigate through, with few guide posts along the way.

With our growing state, family courts in both the north and the south have expanded their benches this year and, thereby, expanded access to the courts so that families in our communities can navigate their ongoing needs. The Legislature recently voted and approved to add six new judicial seats to the Eighth Judicial District Court, Family Division, and one new seat to the Second Judicial District, Family Division. These additional seats will allow for cases to be processed faster, which helps the community at large. The newly created seats will also relieve some of the stress of our current judicial officers with overflowing caseloads.

A newly implemented pilot program was successful in southern Nevada. Sitting judicial officers will take cases from other departments and lead settlement conferences. Many attorneys had great success settling cases with this new program, and the parties have had the benefit of a shortened litigation timeline in the process.



Lauren Berkich (left) and Megan Lucey are both members of the State Bar of Nevada's Family Law Section's executive committee. The Family Law Section is preparing for its annual Family Law Conference March 11-13 in Bishop, California.

For more information on the section or the annual conference, please visit www.nvbar.org > Member Services > State Bar Sections > Family Law Section > Family Law Conference: Learn more & sign up.

The north is continuing to evolve its preliminary hearing docket to fast-track the urgent needs of families in the community. This process allows families to get into court faster than ever before, even if just for a few minutes, to receive guidance from the court that they often desperately need, but that they have historically waited months to receive.

In addition, the north will be adding another alternative dispute resolution program to their offerings beginning in 2020, in which parties may use the assistance of online technology to negotiate areas of dispute in hopes of avoiding the need to litigate each and every issue through the court. The bench

in the north will be monitoring this program and will provide feedback to the state bench as it is received.

As always, the Family Law Section hosts an annual family law conference each February/March to discuss the basics of family law and the ongoing challenges faced by the bench, and to share experiences about the new landscape of issues we are now facing. This year the conference will be held March 11-13, 2020, in Bishop, California, and we welcome all who wish to attend.

For more information, please visit the Family Law Section page of the State Bar of Nevada's website at: www.nvbar.org > Member Services > State Bar Sections > Family Law Section > Family Law Conference: Learn more and sign up.

LAUREN BERKICH and **MEGAN LUCEY** are the shareholders of Berkich Lucey Law in Reno. Berkich Lucey Law provides compassionate and professional legal representation in all family matters. Berkich and Lucey are also both executive council members of the Family Law Section of the State Bar of Nevada.

