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EMORY'S BARTON CLINIC RELEASES FOSTER CARE REFERENCE MANUAL

Emory University's Barton Child Law and Policy Clinic has compiled and is distributing this week a new reference manual on Georgia's responsibilities toward children in foster care that is the first unified source of information for everyone who makes decisions about children in the state's foster care system.

"We created the manual because people working with the child welfare system reported great difficulty in finding accurate answers to their questions about law and policy," says Karen Worthington, director of the Barton Clinic. Previously, "no single resource in Georgia clearly explained the state's legal responsibilities toward children in foster care."

Titled "Georgia's Responsibilities Toward Children in Foster Care: A Reference Manual," the publication integrates federal and state statutes, court decisions, state regulations, agency policies and local practice in a single reference document. The Barton Clinic is distributing copies to all Georgia state legislators, juvenile court judges, the Division of Family and Children Services, and child advocates throughout Georgia.

"I'm proud that the Barton Child Law and Policy Clinic is taking the lead to improve the treatment of the 14,000 child victims of abuse and neglect who are in the care of the state of Georgia," says state Sen. David Adelman, whose district includes Emory.

State Rep. Mary Margaret Oliver called the manual "a long-overdue resource for legislators responsible for understanding the complex relationship of state and federal child welfare laws and the mechanics of protecting children." Oliver, whose district includes Emory, also serves as a visiting professor at the Barton Clinic.

"This document should be required reading for anyone working for the benefit of children in need," says Trenny Stovall, director of the DeKalb County Child Advocacy Center. "Any person involved in Georgia's child welfare system will find useful information and an invaluable roadmap to what can be a complex and sometimes convoluted process."

Manual author Danette Joslyn-Gaul, an Atlanta attorney with the firm Wimberly & Lawson, says the audience for the manual is broad, from elected officials determining funding to foster parents establishing bedtimes. The publication also provides "an opportunity for practitioners, advocates, lawyers, judges and other interested parties to determine where there are gaps between the law and practice in the field." For members of the Georgia General Assembly, the publication provides a central source of information to help inform funding and legislative decisions, says Worthington.

The manual is supported with funding from Emory University School of Law, Public Interest Breakthroughs, The Freddie Mac Foundation, Emory's Center for the Interdisciplinary Study of Religion, the Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation and Georgia Power.

Founded in 2000, the Barton Child Law and Policy Clinic helps Georgia serve neglected and abused children by providing multi-disciplinary, child-focused research, training and support for practitioners and policymakers charged with protecting Georgia's children.

For more information about "Georgia's Responsibilities Toward Children in Foster Care: A Reference Manual," contact the Barton Child Law and Policy Clinic at 404-727-6664 or childlaw@law.emory.edu. The manual is available online in PDF format at the clinic's Web site: <http://www.childwelfare.net>.

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