

CHILD WELFARE AND FAMILY SERVICES IN VIRGINIA

Law 335-001 Tuesdays 8:10-10:10

Fall 2023

Professor May Shallal

Course Description:

This course will provide an in depth examination of the child welfare system in Virginia. The focus will be on the legal frameworks and contemporary issues in child welfare. Students will gain practical skills in working with child welfare agencies, children and families in need. We will explore the juvenile justice system in Virginia and its impact on child welfare. We will also have guest speakers from the child welfare/juvenile justice system who will present real world perspectives on the issues unique to children and family services in Virginia.

Required Text

The course text will be “Child Welfare and Family Services: Policies and Practice” by Susan Whitelaw Downs, (ISBN-13: 978-0-205-57190-1) and there will be supplemental readings and case studies specific to Virginia Law which will be provided.

Objectives

By the end of this course students should be able to:

1. Analyze and interpret key statutes and regulations related to child welfare;
2. Identify the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in the child welfare system;
3. Examine the legal processes involved in child abuse and neglect cases;
4. Assess the impact of cultural, social and economic factors on child welfare cases;
5. Understand the basics of juvenile justice and the laws affecting children and families and examine the intersection of child welfare with other areas of the law;
6. Analyze recent developments and emerging trends in Virginia child welfare law;

Grading:

This class will be interactive. Class participation is welcomed and expected. Attendance is mandatory and will be checked at each class. It is the University’s policy that if a student is absent for any reason for more than 20% of a course, the student will not be eligible for credit. But not to worry! We will hopefully have robust and lively discussions about what the best interests of the child(ren) are and how the law can best serve those interests. We will discuss case scenarios and court proceedings. Many of the cases presented will be based upon real life situations. We will have guest speakers to give some insights into child welfare law and practice and the juvenile courts in general.

Grades will be awarded as follows:

Attendance and participation	20%
Final Exam	80%

The final exam is December 6 and will be multiple choice with 1 case scenario for you to analyze would determine best interest of the child.

Office Hours:

If there are any questions or issues, you may reach me via email anytime. If there is an urgent need or question, I can be available by appointment for a virtual meeting.

Week 1-2:

- Overview of child welfare
- Key policies and legislation

Reading: Chapter 1 – Child Welfare and Family Services: an overview

Week 3-4:

- Examination of child abuse and neglect definitions and investigations
- Legal and ethical considerations in child welfare practice

Reading: Chapter 2 Child Abuse and Neglect: Legal Definitions and Reporting

Week 5-6:

- Foster Care and Adoption
- Permanency planning and adoption challenges

Reading: Chapter 4 Foster Care and Adoption: Placement and Permanency Planning

Week 7-8

- Juvenile Justice in Virginia and its impact on Child Welfare

Guest Speaker(s)

Reading: Selected Statutes Virginia Code 16.1 (juvenile court) and 18.2 (criminal code)

Week 9-10

Transitioning Out of “The System”

- Services available to children aging out of the child welfare system
- Educational, vocational and independent living support and alternatives

Reading: Chapter 6: Youth in Transition: Independent living and other services

Week 11-12

- Special Populations in Child Welfare
- Children with disabilities, LGBTQ+, cultural considerations

Reading: Chapter 7: Special Populations in Child Welfare

Week 13

-Emerging Trends in Child Welfare

-Policy and Advocacy

Reading Chapter 8: Future Directions in Child Welfare

Please note: This syllabus is a guide and may be subject to change, if needed.