



## Family Law Section News

### APRIL 30, 2018

#### **FAMILY LAW SECTION PUBLISHES NEW 'BOUNDS OF ADVOCACY' PROFESSIONAL AND ETHICAL PRACTICE GUIDELINES**

**Tallahassee, April 30** – If you practice family law or handle any family law issues, the Family Law Section's newly revised and released "Bounds of Advocacy," which outlines goals for family lawyers in Florida, is a must-have publication for you. The guide leads Florida lawyers through the quagmire of professional and ethical dilemmas that are unique to the practice of family law. The "Bounds of Advocacy" offers goals for professional cooperation, competence and advice, conflict of interest, fees and children. It suggests a higher level of practice than the minimum baseline of conduct required by The Florida Bar rules—and spells out guidelines for situations that often arise in family law where the rules don't provide sufficient guidance.

This "Bounds of Advocacy" version is an update from the original 2004 Florida publication. The Family Law Section Ad Hoc Bounds of Advocacy Committee—active and retired members of the judiciary and some of Florida's most experienced family lawyers and professionals—revised the guide to capture not only changes in marital and family law, but in ethics, professionalism, social media and technology. The revamped 52-page reference book soon will be available on the Family Law Section website ([FamilyLawFla.org](http://FamilyLawFla.org)) at no charge.

Family Law Section Chair Nicole L. Goetz appointed Richard West and Melinda Gamot to co-chair the ad hoc Bounds of Advocacy Committee. West and Gamot are Florida Bar board certified in marital and family law and are fellows of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers and the International Academy of Family Lawyers.

#### **Family Law Section Ad Hoc Bounds of Advocacy Committee**

Richard West, co-chair, Orlando  
Melinda Gamot, co-chair, Palm  
Beach Gardens  
Hon. Scott Bernstein, Miami  
Dr. Deborah Day, Winter Park  
Maria C. Gonzalez, Ft. Lauderdale  
Ky Koch, Clearwater  
David Manz, Marathon  
Hon. Ray McNeal, Ocala  
Ashley Myers, Jacksonville

"We hope family lawyers will use the Bounds to better serve our clients, our system of justice, and our individual practices by reducing the emotional and financial costs of family law conflicts," said West. "Adopting the spirit of the Bounds will lead to increased cooperation while eliminating many of the negative aspects of restructuring a family. The committee is proud to present our vision to the family law bar."

"The Bounds is a tool for the family lawyer to increase the level of professionalism and civility in an area of law fraught with human emotions," said Gamot. "We strive to raise the level of positive behaviors for the lawyers and their clients."

Rebecca Bandy, Director of The Florida Bar Henry Latimer Center for Professionalism, said the publication is a significant contribution to legal professionalism.

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“Our Supreme Court has made it abundantly clear that professionalism is no longer aspirational; it is an expectation in Florida,” said Bandy. “Family law is a very emotional and stressful area of practice. With the pressures of social media, client expectations, and the combative nature of these cases, it is important to have a resource guide such as the ‘Bounds of Advocacy.’ The Center applauds the Family Law Section in its efforts to elevate the level of professionalism and civility among its members and also those members of The Florida Bar who do not routinely practice in this area.”

Goetz said the “Bounds of Advocacy” has been an invaluable part of her family law practice.

“I remember receiving a copy of the original publication when I first started into private practice. It was such an incredible resource to me that I knew that I wanted to ensure that a revision of the publication was a primary goal of the section this year,” said Goetz. “With the vast changes in technology, ethics and the law since its original publication, revisions were necessary to once again make the publication a key document for family law practitioners or any attorney that is addressing a family law issue.”

**Background.** The American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers published the original “Bounds of Advocacy” in 1991 and revised it in 2002. The Florida Bar Family Law Section the same year formed a committee to adapt the guide to Florida law and practice. The section published the original “Bounds of Advocacy” goals for family lawyers in Florida in 2004. Family Law Section Chair Nicole Goetz created the ad hoc Bounds of Advocacy Committee and appointed members from throughout Florida to update the practice guide to reflect recent and significant changes that impact the practice of Florida family law.

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