

WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

WSBA SECTION ANNUAL REPORT

FY 2024: October 1, 2023 – September 30, 2024

The mission of the Washington State Bar Association is to serve the public and the members of the Bar, to ensure integrity of the legal profession, and to champion justice.

Instructions: In accordance with the WSBA Bylaws, Committees, Other Bar Entities (excluding Regulatory Boards^j), Councils, and Sections must submit an annual report to the Executive Director. The information below should reflect the activities and outcomes from the fiscal year October 1, 2023 – September 30, 2024. Information in the annual report will be provided to the Executive Director and Board of Governors, and may be published for other purposes, such as *Bar News*, volunteer recruitment messaging, and other WSBA activity-based reporting.

It is recommended that completion of the annual report be a collaborative effort with members of your entity, the BOG liaison, and staff liaison.

Submission Deadline is Friday, October 11: please submit by emailing to Carolyn MacGregor (carolynm@wsba.org).

Name of Section:	WSBA Family Law Section
Chair or Co-Chairs:	Dawn Sydney
Staff Liaison: (include name, job title, and department if known)	Carolyn MacGregor, Sections Program Specialist, Advancement Department
Board of Governors Liaison:	Kari Petrasek and Kristina Larry
Purpose: <i>May be stated in Bylaws, Charter, Court Rule, etc.</i>	
<p>The purpose of the Family Law Section is to involve all interested members of the WSBA in order to benefit its members, their clients, and the general public by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing the opportunity and forum for the interchange of ideas in all areas of law affecting families; • Initiating and implementing common projects, including but not limited to an annual meeting; • Reviewing pending legislation and court rules, providing input and timely responses to pending and proposed legislation and court rules and development of proposed statutory enactments to improve and to facilitate the administration of justice within the Section's area of interest and expertise; and • Educate the staff and BOG on issues of concern arising from WSBA issues and projects; and 	

- Host CLE's to improve the quality of family law practice; and undertaking such other service and participation of our members as may be of benefit to the members, the legal profession, and the public.

Strategy to Fulfill Purpose:

Legislative Efforts: FLEC works with BOG staff and the legislative review process to promote and enhance our ability to perform the section's legislative duties. Of particular importance is to identify potential unintended consequences of draft legislation. FLEC's BOG liaison reports at least monthly to our committee members and this contributes, we believe, to ongoing communication with current BOG members and keep our membership informed. FLEC's strategy is to work collaboratively with a variety of legislative, judicial, other sections and bar association or community groups on a variety of legislative and educational issues of interest to our membership.

Education Programming and CLEs: We provided in-person CLEs, including the [Basic Skills Seminar](#), April 21-22, 2023 in Longview, WA., the [WSBA Family Law Section Annual Fall Seminar: The New Uniform Family Law Arbitration Act](#), October 27, 2023, in Seattle, WA. , and the [2024 Family Law Midyear Meeting and Conference-Keeping Your Passion for the Practice of Law](#), July 19-21, 2024 in Vancouver, WA. We used a hybrid format that allowed for the option of remote or in-person attendance, which increased participation for those unable to attend in-person. We continue to weight the pros and cons of offering hybrid programming in the future.

Workgroups and Collaboration: Our members continue to be involved in important and impactful collaborations. (e.g.,. Superior Court Judges Association (SCJA), WSBA Small Town and Rural Practice Committee (STAR), WSBA Practice of Law Board Committee (POLB).

Member Engagement: We continue to evaluate and seek input from our membership and other members of the legal community to better serve our communities. We host a list serve for our members which offers an important forum for sharing information and expertise. We are improving our presence on the WSBA Family Law Section website. We have created and continually freshen a separate Family Law Section website (www.wafls.org) that provides information for our members and the general public. Through our New Lawyer Liaison to FLEC, we continue to broaden the scope of our membership. As we transitioned to a hybrid format for the Basic Skills and Mid-Year Seminar, we provided numerous opportunities for in-person networking and social interactions with a reception and a fundraising event. We offered scholarships for Basic Skills training, approved a \$5,000 grant for the 2025 S.T.A.R. Committee, and provided a reduced tuition for new lawyers attending our Mid-Year conference.

How does the section's purpose help further the mission of the WSBA "to serve the public and the members of the Bar, to ensure integrity of the legal profession, and to champion justice"?

We seek to recruit new members to the executive committee to emphasize diversity, including age and length of time in practice, geographic representation and encourage legal professionals of diverse backgrounds to participate, to assure that in our service, we incorporate and honor diverse perspectives in our work.

We have focused on Legal Deserts and participated in work groups, such as S.T.A.R. and focus on steps that our section can take to bridge the gap to access to legal aid in rural areas.

We intend to make even more headway to advance the WSBA's REJI goals and to challenge structural inequities. We maintain a list serve for section members to discuss legal issues and to build community and developed a website with extensive, continually updated content and resources for our members. This gives practitioners access to a diverse and experienced pool of professions for advice and information.

We have surveyed our membership to gather a wide range of viewpoints and to help guide the section's future activity.

We work to provide education and scholarship to new members or those who are disadvantaged in our community so that our work can be broad-based.

We provided our annual Basic Skills Seminar in a hybrid format to assist new legal professionals or those new to family law with the intent to accomplish training for both virtual practice/in-person practice and around equity concerns.

We provided scholarship grants for this seminar as well as our annual Midyear. Reduced tuition was also available for the Midyear for new attorneys.

We had a very active year working with the legislature on multiple issues that impact family law.

We collaborated with the WSBA STAR Committee (and provided a \$5,000 grant), and provided input to the POLB Committee regarding its Data-Driven Legal Regulatory Reform proposal.

As a committee, we have studied and continue to study POLB initiatives by researching both the systemic implications and outcomes in other states, fostering a broad discussion at the Committee level. We have invited guest lecturers to deepen our knowledge as we work to gain a deeper understanding before we take a long-term position on this change in technology and business impact to our legal community.

We continue to advocate for WSBA policies, which recognize the sections' expertise especially the need for timely comment on pending legislation to avoid unintended negative consequences. Our BOG Liaison, Nancy Hawkins, is a clear voice for the interests of FLEC and the section as a whole and her dedication and experience is of great value to FLEC. These collaborative activities demonstrate FLEC's efforts to foster professionalism and collegiality.

Our committee members also actively participate and respond on the Section list serve and at the Section Leaders monthly meetings. This approach keeps membership educated, engaged in legal discussions in civil forums, up-to-date and interacting with our legislators and trial courts and is an integral part of contributing to justice.

Top 2023 -2024 Section Accomplishments:

We maintained our commitment to increasing member engagement and providing meaningful resources, including the web presence on both the WSBA website and the separate Family Law Section website: www.wafls.org.

FLEC held regular, lengthy, meetings and several special meetings to address pending legislation and other urgent policy matters.

FLEC strengthened their involvement with WSBA staff and communicated more directly our needs to better provide services to our section, such as timelier notification and advertisement of upcoming CLEs.

We continued to meet the needs of our members as it relates to changing legislation.

FLEC meetings are conducted with respect for all members' input, and it is clear in our discussions that all voices are heard and contribute to the ultimate actions taken by FLEC.

We continue to build and maintain relationships with other sections.

We continue to have membership interest in serving on FLEC, and had more nominees run for this year's election than there were spaces available.

Our finances are maintained in a thoughtful manner with budget considerations discussed by the entire FLEC. Budget adjustments were made this year to include more resources for outreach, communication, and scholarships for our community and section members. We are holding a FLEC retreat in May 2025 for more in depth discussions among FLEC members.

Our increased focus at Basic Skills and the Midyear on practical topics, such as motion practice, discovery, appeals, financial issues in family law, tribal courts, and domestic violence including as it relates to parenting plans.

Justice Montoya-Lewis provided a keynote address at the Midyear conference which we plan to provide a link to our membership on the website to disseminate this important education and to combine with a podcast invitation.

Next Fiscal Year: 2024-2025 Top SMART Goals & Priorities:

Tip: SMART Goals are: Specific Measurable, Relevant and Time-Bound

[Use this worksheet](#) (under 'Leadership') to develop your SMART goals and then summarize below in 1-2 sentences.

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| 1 | We anticipate an active 2024-2025, beginning with the presentation of a WSBA CLE on November 15, 2024 on the newly enacted UFLAA that will provide practitioners with the necessary credits to meet the education requirement in the Act. |
| 2 | We are planning a FLEC retreat for May 2025 at which we can spend additional time and energy on issues we are not able to address in our regular monthly meetings. While the planning is still underway for the retreat, the agenda includes an in depth review for possible revisions of the FLEC bylaws, reviewing the structure of FLEC to determine if/how additional member engagement benefits FLEC and the section, and a section on interpreting the budget as the FLCE members need to fully understand and actively participate in budget discussions of the section. |
| 3 | Additional CLEs planned for this fiscal year include our Annual Midyear conference will in Spokane from July 18-20, 2025 and Basic Skills in Spring 2025. |

Looking Ahead: *Please share any long-term goals and/or priorities that your entity aims to address.*

1	Improve member engagement and communication with specific emphasis on advancing diversity, equity and inclusion to achieve the organizational goals as set forth in the WSBA Diversity Council's recommendations and the REJI commitments that the WSBA has endorsed. Access to Justice remains a central goal of the work we do on FLEC and within our section to advance our service to the public.
2	The FLEC legislative liaison, Patrick Rawnsley, who has served for nearly 10 years, will lead FLEC's work to continue to build on the respected reputation of FLEC and remain a strong voice in the legislative and rule process. Continue to review, comment and testify regarding family-law related legislation. Continue to review and comment regarding proposed court rules
3	Collaborative Participation with Judicial and Legislative Workgroups. Work to strengthen FLECs involvement with BOG such as participation on S.T.A.R. and expressing a candid, yet constructive voice to family-law related issues. FLEC's liaison to BOG has worked hard to improve the existing relationship and those efforts will continue.
Please describe how this entity is addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion: <i>How have you elicited input from a variety of perspectives in decision-making? What have you done to promote a culture of inclusion within the board or committee? What has your committee/board done to promote equitable conditions for members from historically underrepresented backgrounds to enter, stay, thrive and eventually lead in the profession? Other?</i>	
<p>We have prioritized access to our CLEs by offering hybrid platforms to eliminate travel costs for those unable to travel due to economic or other barriers. We have also committed financially to contributing to scholarships and fundraisers for legal aid organizations located in rural and/or small towns. We offered topics to educate our members on family law topics centric to diversity and inclusion, such as gender diverse youth, issues regarding Native Peoples and ICWA, to name a few. We have participated in S.T.A.R. and focused on the challenges of legal deserts in WA. We engage with the Superior Court Judge's Association annually and work collaboratively with them on issues of mutual concern. We have engaged in a concerted effort to recruit committee members of diverse background to our committee and help us to hear a wider range of viewpoints. We continue to evaluate our practices and our recruiting methods to better engage with underrepresented communities and to ensure that we are connecting with and responding to the needs of all family law attorneys in Washington State.</p>	
Please share feedback regarding the support and engagement provided by WSBA. <i>For example:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Quality of WSBA staff support/services, including technology solutions</i> • <i>Involvement with Board of Governors, including assigned BOG liaison</i> • <i>Ideas you have on ways WSBA can continue to strengthen/support your entity.</i> 	
<p>For the most part since the inception of the Family Law Section, FLEC has maintained a regular presence at the Board of Governors meetings. Our current Liaison – Nancy Hawkins – has continued a strong Family Law Section presence at the meetings. We are pleased with the improvements we have seen in our relationship with the BOG; we are dedicated to moving in a positive direction. FLEC works well with WSBA staff and makes payments to WSBA to cover the cost of any staff support we receive. Staff are routinely helpful in identifying CLE locations, obtaining budget and contract information, and handling</p>	

<p>administrative issues we otherwise would struggle to navigate. WSBA staff played a critical role in the success of the Basic Skills and Midyear CLE which were managed in a hybrid format. They have also been responsive to feedback from our Section regarding WSBA policies and how they impact the Section, membership recruitment and participation. We value our collaboration with the WSBA to improve the process for earlier notice and marketing of upcoming CLEs and to more effectively coordinate with BOG to serve our membership.</p>		
<p>Please quantify your section's 2023-2024 member benefits:</p> <p><i>For example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$3000 Scholarships, donations, grants awarded; • 4 mini-CLEs produced 		
Our multi-day, in-person Midyear CLE (also available online) in July 2024 in Vancouver, WA. An all-day, in person CLE on the UFFLA in October 2023	Co-sponsored half-day, full-day and/or multi-day CLE seminars with WSBA	
	Co-sponsored half-day, full-day and/or multi-day CLE seminars with <i>non</i> -WSBA entity.	
Hosted a reception where Justice Montoya-Lewis spoke.	Receptions/forums hosted or co-hosted	
\$5,000 donation to WSBA 2025 S.T.A.R. Committee	Amount given through donations/scholarships/grants.	
Developed a separate Family Law Section website: www.wafls.org for which member engagement increases each month.	Newsletters/publications produced	
	Mini-CLEs produced	
	New Lawyer Outreach events/benefits	
2024 Attorneys of the Year to Kids in Need of Defense and Washington State Taks Force on Unaccompanied Children and the 2024 Professional of the Year to Quinn Dalan at Volunteer Attorney Services in Yakima.	Recognitions/Awards given	
	Other (please describe):	
<p align="center">SECTION DATA <i>To Be Completed by WSBA Sections Team</i></p>		
Section Membership Information:	1021	Membership Size: (As of September 30, 2024)

Sections

	\$84,132		FY24 Revenue (\$): For Sections Only: <i>As of September 30, 2024</i>
	\$55,050	\$19,239	Budgeted and Direct Expenses: <i>Does not include the Per-Member-Charge. For Direct Expenses, draft estimate as of December 3, 2024.</i>
Section Executive Committee Information:	15 voting + 3 nonvoting members		Size of Executive Committee: <i>(include and specify voting and non-voting positions)</i>
	6		Number of Vacancies for FY25: <i>The number of positions with terms beginning October 1, 2024 (FY25).</i>
	8		Number of Applicants for FY25: <i>Applications submitted in the Spring-Summer of 2024 for terms beginning October 1, 2024 (FY25)</i>

ⁱ Supreme Court Boards (Access to Justice Board, Disciplinary Board, LLLT Board, Limited Practice Board, MCLE Board and Practice of Law Board) provide annual reports to WSBA to support its responsibility under [GR 12.3](#), to provide oversight and monitor compliance with applicable rules and orders. Boards have the option to use the WSBA template or to share their annual reports to the Washington Supreme Court.