

# NACC CHILD WELFARE LAW SPECIALIST CERTIFICATION

## THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNSEL FOR CHILDREN:



### #PromotesExcellence

by providing programs and resources that improve the quality of legal representation for children, parents and agencies.



### #BuildsCommunity

by supporting a national community of hard-working and dedicated child welfare professionals, and by helping attract and retain diverse talent in the children's legal advocacy profession.



### #AdvancesJustice

by advocating for policies that advance children's rights, opportunities, and well-being, including the right to counsel.

# NACC

National Association  
of Counsel for Children

[NACCchildlaw.org](http://NACCchildlaw.org)

[Certification@  
NACCchildlaw.org](mailto:Certification@NACCchildlaw.org)

**Child Welfare Law Specialist (CWLS) certification is a professional achievement that signifies an attorney's specialized knowledge, skill, and verified expertise in the field of child welfare law. In the same way that a physician can be certified as a specialist in pediatrics, an attorney can be certified as a CWLS. The CWLS credential is granted only to those attorneys who successfully complete a rigorous application and examination process — it is the highest testament to an attorney's dedication and demonstrated excellence in this discipline.**

NACC is the only national organization accredited by the American Bar Association to certify attorneys in this practice area. Over 1,000 CWLS have been certified since the program began in 2006, collectively helping to raise the standards of practice for all those working in the field of child abuse and neglect law and all those affected by it.

## THE BENEFITS OF CWLS CERTIFICATION

Child welfare law is an increasingly complex and sophisticated practice area. Achieving the CWLS credential makes an attorney identifiable to the court, clients, colleagues, and the community as a supremely qualified practitioner and leader in the field, committed to upholding the highest of standards. In addition to this recognition, a CWLS receives:

- Complimentary, voluntary NACC membership
- Access to NACC's monthly members-only webinars (presented live, recordings on-demand)
- Discounts on NACC conference registration
- Complimentary copy of the Red Book at 5-year recertification
- Discounts on additional copies and new editions of the Red Book
- A subscription to *The Guardian* and *The Advocate*
- A one-year gift membership to NACC for a colleague or friend
- Access to the NACC listserv →



## PLAY A PART IN PROMOTING JUSTICE

“The Children's Bureau strongly encourages all attorneys and judges practicing child welfare law to obtain CWLS certification... Providing high-quality legal representation to all parties at all stages of dependency proceedings is crucial to realizing [the] basic tenets of fairness and due process under the law.”

— U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families IM-17-02

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## VISIT [NACCCHILD.LAW.ORG](https://naccchildlaw.org) FOR DETAILED INFORMATION INCLUDING:

- ✓ Online application and other applicant resources
- ✓ Standards and definitions
- ✓ State-specific requirements
- ✓ Exam details and tools

## CWLS EXAM PREP COURSE

NACC has developed the Red Book Training Course to help applicants prepare for the exam. This training is consistently praised for its comprehensive approach and exceptional delivery. For more information, contact [Training@NACCchildlaw.org](mailto:Training@NACCchildlaw.org).

## 4TH EDITION RED BOOK

A complimentary copy of the Red Book is included with the initial application and every 5 years at recertification. The 4th Edition Red Book includes fresh content, a revised book structure, new chapters on LGBTQ+ youth, racial justice, representing parents and children with disabilities, multidisciplinary advocacy, preventive legal representation, crossover youth, child trafficking, and more!



## CWLS ELIGIBILITY

CWLS certification is available to attorneys in good standing who have spent the three years immediately preceding application involved in the practice of child welfare law (see specific requirements below). This traditionally includes attorneys providing direct representation to children, parents, or governmental agencies in child abuse and neglect cases. However, in many states NACC may also certify attorneys who have chosen instead to work in this field as judicial officers, law faculty, law firm directors/executives, or policy advocates.

## CERTIFICATION STANDARDS AND REQUIREMENTS

To be certified as a CWLS, an attorney must meet certain certification standards evidenced through submission of a multi-component application. The application must be approved by NACC's Certification Committee and the applicant must pass NACC's child welfare law exam before certification is granted. The following is a general overview of the application requirements:\*

**The Application:** Standards and required components of the application include:

- Evidence of substantial involvement in child welfare law (time equivalent to at least 30% of a full-time position during the three years preceding application)
- Continuing legal education hours in child welfare law and related topics
- Good standing and disciplinary history
- A writing sample demonstrating legal analysis in the field of child welfare law
- Peer review by a minimum of four attorneys and one judicial officer

**The Exam:** NACC's national child welfare law proficiency exam is:

- 60 multiple choice questions, 2 essay questions, 3 hours and 55 minutes long
- Available to committee-approved applicants at a time and place of their choosing on any date during exam season (March-December)
- Administered remotely using secure testing and monitoring technology
- Open-notes, but use of the Red Book in all formats is prohibited

**The Fee:** The CWLS application fee is \$400 for NACC members and \$525 for nonmembers. NACC membership also includes discounts on the exam prep course and other benefits. The CWLS application fee includes:

- A copy of *Child Welfare Law and Practice* (the Red Book), the legal treatise on which the exam is based
- Taking the exam

**Ongoing CWLS Requirements:** To remain in good standing, a CWLS must:

- Submit an annual \$120 fee and "Disclosure of Conduct" report to NACC
- Recertify every five years (similar to original process minus the exam and writing sample)

\* The listed requirements are applicable in most jurisdictions. Some states may impose further requirements such as an additional state-specific exam or additional CLE hours. For details, visit [NACCchildlaw.org/cwls-certification/](https://naccchildlaw.org/cwls-certification/).