



NEW JERSEY STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

NORBERTO A. GARCIA, PRESIDENT, NEW JERSEY STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

Partner, Blume Forte
26 Journal Square, Suite 603
Jersey City, NJ 07306
201-963-4711
FAX: 201-963-4706
EMAIL: ngarcia@njatty.com

June 29, 2026

Hon. Michael J. Blee, J.A.D.
Administrative Director of the Courts
Hughes Justice Complex
P.O. Box 037
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0037

Re: Evaluation of Impact of New Custody Statute

Dear Judge Blee:

Members of the New Jersey State Bar Association (NJSBA) who practice in the family courts have been adjusting to the recent statutory amendments to the procedures utilized by judges in making custody and therapy determinations in contested child custody matters contained in P.L. 2025, c.316. As the professionals charged with helping litigants navigate compliance with the new amendments, the NJSBA requests that its members be included in the evaluation of the new law's effectiveness.

As background, the amendments require a judge to consider the express preferences of a child in making custody determinations and include heightened standards that must be met before therapy can be ordered. These changes represent a significant departure from how these cases were handled previously. The NJSBA voiced concerns about the changes, but has now turned its attention to educating its members about how to best incorporate them into their everyday practice.

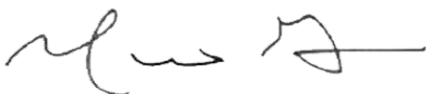
One important part of the new law calls for the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) to work with the Institute for Families at the Rutgers School of Social Work to prepare a report to be submitted to the Legislature within three years concerning the impact of the statutory amendments. The report is expected to include “all necessary and appropriate information that would assist the Legislature in evaluating” the new law.

The NJSBA is asking that its members be included in the AOC’s work with the Institute for Families at the Rutgers School of Social Work. A critical component of the evaluation will be the perspective of the attorneys who are regularly advising clients and navigating through the new statutory requirements. Our members can offer a unique perspective because they engage in child custody matters on a daily basis and have already experienced, and will continue to see, the impact of the amendments firsthand. They also possess substantial institutional knowledge about the legislative history, policy consideration and practical concerns associated with the changes. Drawing on that experience and background, our members will be able to provide meaningful contributions about the statute’s implementation and impact on litigants, practitioners and the courts.

For these reasons, the NJSBA requests that its members be included in the evaluation process being conducted by the AOC in conjunction with the Institute for Families at the Rutgers School of Social Work, and they be permitted to assist in the preparation of the report to be submitted to the Legislature of the new law’s effectiveness.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,



Norberto A. Garcia, Esq.
President

cc: G. Glennon Troublefield, Esq., NJSBA President-Elect
Angela C. Scheck, NJSBA Executive Director