

PREFACE

Family law combines the old and the new, engrossing us in the past and catapulting us into a future we never imagined. The study of family law can consequently be experienced as an exercise in time travel. As the legal system scrambles to keep up with rapid social change, today's family law students must be equipped to practice on the cutting edge. Because the past shapes the future, these materials are rich in historical and cultural context, and students will find themselves immersed in the major family law revolutions of our era. What happens when family structure changes more quickly than the law? What if the legislature and the courts cannot agree on public policy issues? How are such policy questions viewed through the lens of different cultures? These are just a few of the absorbing questions presented.

The expert, empathetic, and creative practice of family law is of enormous importance to families of all types. Because nearly 50 percent of marriages end in divorce, many people first encounter an attorney and the legal system through a family law action. Sadly, a high percentage of attorney disciplinary complaints are lodged against attorneys handling family matters, and some attorneys view the practice with disdain. Quite to the contrary, as these materials illustrate, the practice of family law can be a personally fulfilling and intellectually stimulating one. Furthermore, as more procedural options become available to clients, especially in the area of alternative dispute resolution, additional career paths become available for lawyers and those in related professions. These materials encourage students to contemplate their own personal style and develop a personal philosophy for practice.

The casebook is organized in a simple and straightforward manner so as to be as "student friendly" as possible. Each chapter begins with a brief introductory overview of the topic presented. Cases are introduced through an "issues and cases" section, which places each case in a larger historical or societal context. The cases are logically and sequentially ordered and have been heavily edited so that the reader can focus on the legal principles and judicial reasoning most essential to understanding the issue presented. Each case is followed by a set of discussion questions designed to reinforce student understanding. A special "context and principles" section, included near the end of each chapter, contains related material including relevant social science research. Finally, discussion questions appear at the end of the chapters so that students can practice applying the concepts learned. As a whole, this casebook provides an integrated perspective on the theory and practice of family law.

Because of the sharp focus and clear organization, the book can be easily and effectively used in the traditional law school classroom setting, a law clinic, or a family law skills course.

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