



# CAREER DEVELOPMENT OFFICE JOB GUIDE

## FAMILY LAW

### Description

Family law attorneys handle a variety of matters relating to domestic and family relations. These matters often include adoptions; paternity and custody disputes; domestic, spousal and child abuse charges; marriage annulments; prenuptial agreements; divorces; juvenile justice issues; and rights of children, parents, women and the elderly.

Family law sometimes also includes estate planning for individuals. Some family law attorneys who handle domestic relations matters will also provide estate planning services, but often the estate planning work is performed by attorneys who have a strong background in tax law. Consequently, we have developed a separate Jobs Guide for estate planning and tax.

### Qualifications

The work in a family law practice can require a wide range of legal skills. Family law practitioners provide advice to their clients on legal rights and obligations, draft and negotiate settlement and other types of agreements, litigate contested matters, and represent criminal defendants. In addition to having the knowledge and experience to perform these functions, family lawyers need to be creative in suggesting resolutions to complex interpersonal issues, and be adept in handling emotionally volatile situations. A background in social work, psychology, counseling or other similar areas can be helpful.

### Types of Employers

#### **Law Firms:**

Many small and mid-sized general practice firms have family law practices. There are also a number of small

boutique firms that specialize only in family law matters. Large national law firms rarely handle domestic relations matters, and then usually only in a special situation for an otherwise important client.

#### **Nonprofits:**

There are a large number of nonprofit legal services organizations that represent low income clients in various family matters. They typically focus on one area of this field, such as domestic violence, rights of children, or elder care services. See below for a sample list of nonprofits, some of which may be targets of opportunity for summer internships, academic year externships, or post-graduate employment.

#### **Government Agencies:**

Federal, state and local government agencies are also good employers for practicing family law. Agencies like departments of family and children services, and departments of health and human services, have staff attorneys who handle difficult and complex issues. Federal agencies tend to hire from the top ranks of the class, while state and local agencies are usually more concerned with experience and commitment to the practice.

### Job Search Strategy

You will probably find it easier to obtain a post-graduate job in this field if, while you are in law school, you establish a commitment to working with family and related law matters and gain some experience in the field. As you plan your path to a family law career, consider the following advice:

- You will need to decide whether you want to pursue this field by going into private practice or by working in a public interest or government position. You may want to apply widely and leave your options open.

- For your 1L summer, do your best to secure a position for at least part of the summer that will give you relevant experience. It can be difficult to find 1L summer jobs at law firms, so look for options like juvenile justice courts, superior courts that handle domestic and juvenile cases, government agencies like the Georgia Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS), and civil legal services organizations like Atlanta Legal Aid and Georgia Legal Services.
- Similarly, in your 2L summer try to find a relevant summer position. Law firms tend to hire more 2Ls than 1Ls. However, many of the smaller firms do not have the resources to recruit on-campus, so you may need to make more outreach to the firms through unsolicited letters and networking. Agencies, courts and nonprofits are good options for this summer as well. Your CDO Counselor can help you search for good targets of opportunity and draft appropriate cover letters.
- Look for summer internship positions in Symplicity or at external job posting sites listed below. You should also talk with 2Ls and 3Ls who had such internships in the past. You can get lists of summer positions held by our students during the most recent summer from your CDO Counselor.
- Many public interest and government summer jobs do not pay. You may be able to get course credit, however. Check with [Professor Alex Scherr](#), but do so as soon as possible and definitely before you start the job.
- For your 2L and/or 3L academic year, consider enrolling in the [Family Violence Clinic](#) or the [Community Health Law Partnership Clinic](#). These clinics will give you the opportunity for hands-on experience, and they help build your resume.
- You might also consider enrolling in the [Civil Externship Program](#). There are often a number of placements available that relate to family law, such as DFCS, Dekalb Child Advocates, Clarke County Juvenile Court, Clarke County Probate Court (guardianships), Atlanta Legal Aid, Georgia Legal Services and the Elder Law Assistance Project.
- Participate in extracurricular activities and professional organizations. You can network with helpful people at meetings, and it helps to have these affiliations on your resume.

## Experiential Learning Opportunities

Georgia Law offers several experiential learning opportunities that will help you prepare for a family law career:

- Family Violence Clinic
- Community Health Law Partnership
- Mediation Practicum
- Public Interest Practicum
- Civil Externship Program

The Law School's [website](#) has more information about these programs.

## Relevant Courses

The Law School's webpage provides a current list of [courses recommended](#) for a family law practice. In addition, it would be beneficial to have litigation courses (like evidence, etc.), transactional courses (like contract drafting), and tax courses, depending on the particular area of family law you wish to pursue.

## Relevant Law School Activities

[Family Law Society](#)

[Street Law](#)

[Equal Justice Foundation](#)

[Working in the Public Interest](#)

[Public Interest Law Council](#)

## Bar and Professional Organizations

[Georgia Bar Association, Family Law Section](#)

[Georgia Bar Association, Section on Child Protection & Advocacy](#)

[Georgia Bar Association, Elder Law Section](#)

[Atlanta Bar Association, Family Law Section](#)

[American Bar Association, Section of Family Law](#)

[American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers](#)

[Association of Certified Family Law Specialists](#)

[National Academy of Family Law Attorneys](#)

[International Society of Family Law](#)

[National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys](#)

## Job Fairs

Georgia Public Sector Career Fair (Spring)

- Takes place in Atlanta
- Last year, it included over 75 employers from the Southeast
- Registration period is in mid-January, and the job fair is typically during the third week of February
- No website; see a CDO Counselor for more information

Equal Justice Works (Fall)

- Takes place in Washington, D.C.
- Last year, it included over 140 employers from across the country
- Registration period is August 11–September 14, 2015, and the job fair is October 23–24, 2015

## External Job Posting Sites

Public Sector Jobs Directory. This site posts all types of public interest jobs from across the country.

Idealist

Indeed.com

State Bar of Georgia

Georgia Office of the Child Advocate

See also the list of nonprofit organizations below. Many of them post jobs on their websites.

## Fellowships and Funding

Annie E. Casey Foundation Grants

Holland & Knight's Chesterfield Smith Community Service Fellowship

K&L Gates Public Interest Fellowship

Skadden Foundation Fellowship Program

Sol and Helen Zubrow Fellowship in Children's Law

## Nonprofit Organizations

Georgia Bar Directory of Child Protection and Advocacy Organizations

ABA Directory of Children's Law Programs (catalog of organizations by state)

Georgia Law Center for the Homeless

GeorgiaLegalAid.org

Georgia Legal Services Program

Georgia Department of Human Services

U.S. DHHS Administration for Children & Families

Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice

National Women's Law Center

WomensLaw.org

Catholic Charities

The Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation

National Elder Law Foundation

National Center on Elder Abuse

Court Appointed Special Advocates

Children's Defense Fund

Child Care Law Center

Juvenile Law Center

Families USA

Kellogg Foundation

Global Justice Center

## Recent Jobs

The table below lists some of the employers who have hired UGA Law students in the family law practice area, recognizing it is sometimes difficult for CDO to track our students and graduates who are engaged in family law within general practice firms.

For confidentiality reasons, we do not publish the names of specific students; however, CDO may have contacts at these employers who can help you.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Type of Job</b>
American Association of Retired Persons	Washington, DC	Summer
Atlanta Legal Aid	Atlanta, GA	Summer, Externship
Catholic Charities	Atlanta, GA	Summer
Children's Law Center	Los Angeles, CA	Summer
Children's Legal Services	Greenville, SC	Post-Grad
Coleman, Chambers, Rogers & Williams, LLP	Gainesville, GA	Summer
Council for Children's Rights	Charlotte, NC	Post-Grad
Georgia Department of Community Health	Atlanta, GA	Summer
Georgia Law Center for the Homeless	Atlanta, GA	Summer, Post-Grad Fellowship
Georgia Legal Services	Atlanta, GA	Summer, Post-Grad
Holland Roddenberry LLC	Atlanta, GA	Summer
Kessler & Solomiany LLC	Atlanta, GA	Summer
National Women's Law Center	Washington, DC	Semester in D.C.
Smith, Gilliam, Williams & Miles, P.A.	Gainesville, GA	Summer, Post-Grad
Smith, Treadaway & Joffe LLP	Rome, GA	Summer
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services	Atlanta, GA	Summer, Externship, Post-Grad
Voices for Georgia's Children	Atlanta, GA	Summer
Warner, Bates, McGough, McGinnis & Portnoy	Atlanta, GA	Summer, Post-Grad

## Other Resources

- [\*Children's Rights Law\*](#), Harvard Law School
- [\*Women's Rights Guide\*](#), Harvard Law School
- [\*Elder Law Lib Guide\*](#), UGA King Library