The American Bar Association and the University of Houston Law Center are proud to be part of a collaboration that focuses our collective efforts on a problem that has been all but overlooked in the aftermath of the hurricanes of 2005— the effect of disasters on children. We are proud to have been the co-sponsors of the symposium that inspired this book. We are pleased not only with the collaboration between the ABA and the University of Houston Law Center, but also with the interdisciplinary cooperation among the contributors who have brought their special knowledge to the table in explaining how children were affected by the disasters of 2005 and what we could do better.

This book reflects on all three stages of public policy that affect children as a result of disasters like the hurricanes. It looks at the experiences of children during the disaster and the first response to the events in order to demonstrate how we could do a better job for children. It acknowledges that systems such as juvenile justice, foster care, and education were already under considerable stress in the areas affected by the hurricanes. The additional stress placed on systems in distress in a sense provided an opportunity to go back to the drawing board and redraft the policies that affect children in these all important systems. Finally, the book takes a longer view about the implications of an agenda focused on children’s needs for public policy in general.

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