



Quarterly eNewsletter

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Get to Know the Commission: Divida Gude

In this edition of the eNewsletter, we introduce you to Judge Divida Gude, who has been a member of the Commission on Domestic Violence for three years. Divida lives and practices in Atlanta, Georgia. Her experience as both a practitioner and a judge is invaluable to the Commission on Domestic Violence.

One of Divida's contributions to the Commission is to share her own experiences as an attorney and as a Family Court judge presiding over domestic violence hearings, working with attorneys, judges, and advocates in other states and jurisdictions to find new ways of addressing and managing domestic violence issues, problems, and solutions that are shared by all who work in domestic violence.

Divida's interest in the Commission was spurred because the mission of the Commission appealed to her and the opportunity to work with a diverse group of others in the field was also appealing to her.

Divida believes that the main challenge in our work to end domestic violence is always access to legal services and education about the legal rights of victims of domestic violence. Education plays such an important role for domestic violence survivors. Divida articulates that domestic violence victim advocates are essential partners with attorneys in this work because as much as the laws against domestic violence have progressed, there are still many pitfalls for unrepresented clients and lawyers. Education, as Divida sees it, is not limited to informing survivors of options and processes, it includes educating lawyers, judges, law enforcement and others of the importance of their roles in the safety of survivors and their children. Many survivors of

domestic violence are isolated from family and friends and the information that one assumes is common knowledge about support services and laws available may be unknown to survivors. Finally, Divida points out that some victims are convinced by batterers that the legal system will fail them if they come forward; that they will not be believed, will not be safe and will not be heard or understood. Education is essential to overcome these barriers.

Divida is proud that the Commission is a resource for attorneys representing victims of domestic violence and is at the forefront of addressing many issues relating to domestic violence. She also believes that the Commission does an excellent job of relaying information on the legal response to domestic violence on a national level, including training and other means of support and communication to advocates, lawyers, and judges. She now thinks of the Commission as an essential resource in her work and passes information on about the Commission and its work to her colleagues. Finally, Divida wants readers to know that the Commission is an invaluable resource for publications, information, trainings and programs in the area of DV.

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