

Preface

I have had the pleasure of teaching paralegal classes for more than a decade. Like many instructors who begin teaching with no formal education on how to teach, I taught the law the way I was taught the law. The results were disastrous! I quickly realized that the way the law is taught in law school is ill suited for the paralegal classroom. I started over, writing new lectures and developing new lesson plans. The objective was to present the material in a way that would be accessible to the paralegal student.

One major roadblock to reaching my objective was the textbooks themselves. They seemed to be written by lawyers for law students. They did not communicate the information in a way that was readily accessible by most paralegal students.

This textbook is a new approach to a textbook on family law. It is based on the lectures and learning tools that I developed over the years to help my students. I had two main goals for this textbook.

First, it must present the information in a way that is readily accessible to the paralegal student. To achieve this goal, I've presented the material in a manner that the student can easily digest, while also understanding its importance to his or her future career. It is written in a way that first shows the students why the subject is important and then introduces them to the skill sets they will need when they get into the field.

Second, the text must provide real-life practice for the students. To achieve this goal, students are presented with hands-on assignments throughout the textbook. The students are consistently asked to demonstrate their knowledge of the material covered in a chapter by completing tasks associated with that material.

ORGANIZATION OF TEXT

The text contains 14 chapters that are divided into two parts. It starts with a nonconventional introductory chapter. Like most textbooks, Chapter 1 provides the student with an introduction to some of the key concepts and terms that will be covered throughout the remaining chapters. Unlike most textbooks on the subject, it also gives paralegals an introduction to what their duties would be in a family law firm and a warning of the possible ethical issues they may face.

The textbook is designed to take students through the steps needed to develop the required skills, without overwhelming them during the process. Part One of the textbook introduces students to the legal concepts associated with family law. It does so by using real-world examples and direct, clear language. Part Two provides students with the skills needed to do some common tasks that they will be asked to perform—including the drafting of key documents associated with divorce, dissolution of marriage, and adoption—as well as introduces students to the various legal proceedings associated with those matters.

TEXT DESIGN

Chapters are laid out in a manner that ensures that students will have the opportunity to learn the appropriate legal concepts and the necessary vocabulary, to develop their legal reasoning skills, and to demonstrate their knowledge of the material. Each chapter contains the following:

- *Client Interview*. Students are given a simple fact pattern that will be referred to within the chapter.
- *Case in Point*. Students are provided with at least one full-length case opinion that they are asked to brief.
- *Research This*. Students are given an assignment designed to help develop their research and writing skills.
- *Ethics Alert*. Students are presented with ethics issues related to the topic covered by the chapter.
- *Cyber Trip*. Students are given the opportunity to take at least one Cyber Trip that allows them to explore the Web to learn more about the law relating to the chapter's topics.
- *Real World Discussion Topics*. Students are presented with a fact pattern taken from an actual court case to help them develop their analytical skills.
- *Portfolio Assignment*. Students are given assignments that require them to analyze a fact pattern and draft documents associated with material covered in the chapter.

This textbook provides students the opportunity to learn about family law and develop the skill sets they will need to succeed in the legal field. I hope they will agree that the goals of the book have been met.

OTHER LEARNING AND TEACHING RESOURCES

Online Learning Center, www.mhhe.com/kent09

The **Online Learning Center (OLC)** is a Web site that follows the text chapter-by-chapter. OLC content is ancillary and supplementary germane to the textbook—as students read the book, they can go online to review material or link to relevant Web sites. Students and instructors can access the Web sites for each of the McGraw-Hill paralegal texts from the main page of the Paralegal Super Site. Each OLC has a similar organization. An Information Center features an overview of the text, background on the author, and the preface and table of contents from the book. Instructors can access the instructor's manual and PowerPoint presentations from the IRCD. Students see the Key Terms list from the text as flashcards, as well as additional quizzes and exercises.