PHILADELPHIA BAR ASSOCIATION
FAMILY LAW SECTION MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 4, 2016
Chair Dina Ronsayro, Esquire, presided.

I. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION: Dina called the meeting to order at 12:10 p.m., welcomed everyone, and acknowledged Judge Doris Pechkurow was in attendance.

II. CORRECTIONS OR ADDITIONS TO MINUTES: The December and January minutes will be reviewed for approval at next month’s meeting (February 1st).

III. TREASURER’S REPORT: The financial information is not available as of the time of this report.

IV. ANNOUNCEMENTS:

A. Dina recognized Lee Schwartz, Esquire, for his great work as the immediate past Chair. In addition, Dina advised the Section that Lee is now handling the sign-ups for the Help Center in the Philadelphia Family Court building. Please contact Lee to schedule a time to help (lee@schwartzjordan.com).

B. Susan Pearlstein, Esquire, thanked all who have been helping thus far with the Help Center but noted the ongoing need for more volunteers. Court policy currently requires at least one attorney be present to supervise in order to open the Center. Susan appealed to Section members to each volunteer at least once (with the time slot being from 12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.).

V. PROGRAM: “Special Immigrant Juvenile Status: Representing Children”

A. Sarah Katz, Esquire, introduced the following speakers:

1. Elizabeth Yaeger, Esquire – Immigrant Youth Advocacy Project Supervising Attorney of HIAS Pennsylvania (2100 Arch Street, Philadelphia; 215-832-0900; eyaeger@hiaspa.org)

2. Catherine Feeley, Esquire – Staff Attorney/Stoneleigh Emerging Leader Fellow of HIAS Pennsylvania (cfeeley@hiaspa.org)

3. Stephanie Gonzalez Ferrandez, Esquire – Owner of Gonzalez Ferrandez Law Firm (GFamilyLaw@aol.com)

B. Notable Points/Tips – See also attached materials for detailed information.
1. There is no requirement for the involvement of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) or any active removal proceedings for HIAS to become involved with a juvenile who is seeking Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS).

2. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) issued a report entitled “Children on the Run” in April 2015 – In this report, there were interviews with hundreds of children who were fleeing their home countries, and among other findings, common reasons to flee included: missing their family who were in the US, being abused or mistreated in home country, receiving death threats from gangs, and being subjected to other dangerous conditions (see PowerPoint Slide 8).

3. Child must fit eligibility requirements under INA §101(a)(27)(J) in order to pursue SIJ status (see Slide 17).

4. If the child is eligible for SIJS, there is a two-step process:
   a) Obtain an SIJS predicate order (see Slide 23) in a dependency or custody matter; and then
   b) Seek SIJS through U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

5. Tips
   a. When seeking to obtain an SIJS predicate order, make sure you file in the proper jurisdiction and have proper service (common issues that can cause problems in these cases).
   b. In Philadelphia County, you may write a letter to Judge Margaret Murphy to request your case skip the support master level due to your client seeking SIJS. Her Honor will likely grant your request and have the case listed in front of a judge.
   c. In Bucks County, there is no skipping, as these cases must go through the custody masters. Also, a guardian ad litem is appointed for the child(ren) in the case.
   d. In Montgomery County, these cases are typically heard by Judge Kelly Wall.
VI. **COMMITTEE REPORTS:** Committee meeting times/dates and announcements are disseminated over the Family Law Section’s listserv.

VII. **GOOD & WELFARE:** None.

**NEXT SECTION MEETING:** Monday, February 1, 2016, at 12:00 p.m. on the 15th Floor of the Philadelphia Family Court building at 1501 Arch Street

**NEXT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING:** Thursday, January 21, 2016, at 12:00 p.m. on the 11th Floor of the Philadelphia Bar Association at 1101 Market Street

Respectfully submitted,

[Signature]

Kristine L. Calalang, Esquire
Secretary

**ATTACHMENTS(3):**

- January 2016 PA Appellate Court Family Law Slip Opinions – Courtesy of Sara Slocum, Esquire, of Astor Weiss Kaplan & Mandel, LLP
- HiAS – Two attachments: 1) PowerPoint presentation, forms, and additional information and 2) Appendix