



# *1. Introduction*

## **Purpose**

This handbook provides useful information about common Family Law issues. If you need Family Law help, this handbook has good suggestions about some of the most common areas of Family Law. If you are already involved in a Family Law court case, this handbook discusses common procedures in your county. This handbook also gives answers to commonly asked questions.

## **Disclaimer (a legal caution)**

This handbook is a guide. It does not give legal advice. It is a general statement of the law. It should be used **ONLY** as a guide. It should not be considered legal advice because everyone's case is different and family law cases may be different from one county to the next. Also, family laws change over time. This handbook may not be reprinted every time family laws change. If you have a specific concern or legal problem, do not rely on this handbook. Be sure to seek the advice of an attorney about the facts of your case.

## Need Legal Help?

A lawyer can help you understand the laws that may apply to your situation. If you are low-income, you may qualify for free legal help. If you reside in Northeastern or North Central Pennsylvania, please call North Penn Legal Services at 1-877-953-4250 to see what services may be available in your county.

## Usage

For convenience and clarity, the handbook refers to “child” although your case may involve more than one child. It may also refer to a hearing officer or other trier-of-fact, though your county may only utilize judges.

## On-line forms and resources

Child Custody forms are available at [www.PALawHELP.org](http://www.PALawHELP.org). Select the “Children & Families” section, and choose “Child Custody and Guardianship.”

## Acknowledgements

1. Definitions within the “Child Custody” section reprinted with permission from the Pike County Court of Common Pleas, August 2010.
2. Segments of the “Adoption,” “Marriage” and “Grandparent’s Rights” sections reprinted with permission from the Erie Bar Association, May 2010.
3. Segments of the “Custody Myths and Facts” and “Emancipation of Minors” sections reprinted with permission from MidPenn Legal Services, May 2010.
4. Segments of “The ‘Legal’ Baby’s Daddy: What Men Need to Know” section reprinted with permission from Philadelphia Legal Assistance, May 2010.
5. “Emancipation-General Information” section reprinted with permission from the Juvenile Law Center, June 2010.