

# Child Abuse and Neglect Cases: A Comprehensive Guide to Understanding the System

By Travis Cushman  
American Bar Association, 2016

Reviewed by ANIETIE AKPAN

Society has created many boundaries that separate us as people, such as religion, political beliefs, and social ideologies. However, there is one universal belief that binds us all at the very core of our being – the inherent need to protect our children.

Shielding children from harm is an inherent duty that exists in all of us; human nature dictates that we must protect those who do not have the ability to protect themselves.

As I look back on my first year as a family law associate, I realize in retrospect that my understanding of family law was quite narrow. The bread-and-butter of most family law firms is divorces, child support, and child custody cases; I went through this past year believing that those would be the majority of cases I would be working on. When my firm received its first adoption case based on a

CPS investigation however, I knew it was time for me to get properly acquainted with child protective laws and how those intersect with the practice of family law.

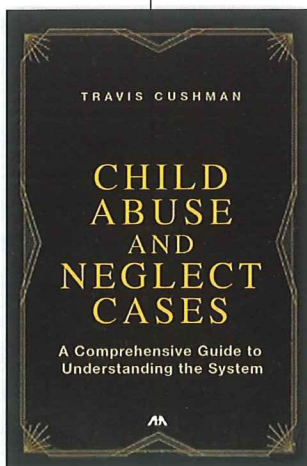
*Child Abuse and Neglect Cases* was written by Travis Cushman, an attorney who has represented over 200 abused and neglected children in Montana courts. Cushman has also served as a Special Prosecutor against accused parents, and has also served in Federal District Court as attorney ad litem representing child victim witnesses.

*Child Abuse and Neglect Cases*, in short, is a comprehensive guide for anyone – law practitioners or laymen – who is interested in learning how the child protection system works. It is divided into 19 (!) brief, distinct sections including but not limited to: “Danger Assessment – To Remove or Not to Remove,” “Show Cause


Hearing,” “Guardianship Hearing,” and “Termination of Parental Rights.” The sections narrate how a child protective case is litigated – beginning from when an initial CPS report is made, and ending with a discussion as to how to appeal a CPS court’s final judgment.

One of the great parts about this book is that it is

truly a comprehensive read. Each section is broken down to smaller segments, in which the author encapsulates each section’s issue (e.g., *Is this a vulnerable child and can the child’s parent’s or caregivers function with the minimum ability required to safely raise the child?*), the parties and duties involved with the particular issue, as well as a list of help aids and additional readings regarding the same. Moreover, each section ends with a list of *Questions to Answer* that engages the reader to practically apply the law to a series of hypothetical anecdotes presented by the author.



One caveat however, is that the author is an attorney who practices almost exclusively in Montana. Although there are several cites to federal law in this book, there are as many references to Montana law as well. This of course does not take away from the book’s invaluable guidance on understanding the child protective system. Rather, it is a gentle warning that one should supplement their study of this book with Texas case and statutory law, the proposed and adopted rules of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, as well as literature from CPS agencies (such as Texas CASA) for a holistic overview of practicing CPS law specifically in the State of Texas.

This was an easy read and an incredible educational tool for someone like me who is new to CPS and family law, but would also be a valuable resource for longer-practicing attorneys who may need a refresher in this area. 

*Anietie Akpan is a first-year associate at Sinoski & Associates, PLLC, a family law firm with offices in Spring, Texas and the Galleria.*

# When Big Law Goes Wrong

By Ron Liebman  
Blue Reader Press, an imprint of Penguin Random House LLC

Reviewed by KIMBERLY A. CHOJNACKI

Ron Liebman’s *Big Law* is the (hopefully) tall tale of a newly minted Big Law partner who gets caught up in a web of fraud, blackmail, and competing egos. The novel’s protagonist, Carney

**inside...**

Reading, Writing and the Rule of Law

A Second Chance: HBA, UH Law Center  
Team Up to Seal Juvenile Records

What Do DREAMers Dream Of?

Problems and Legal Protections for  
Homeless Youth

Do's and Don'ts of the Guardian Ad Litem  
in Civil Courts

Houston Bar Foundation Celebrates  
35 Years of Service

THE HOUSTON

# lawyer

Volume 54 - Number 5

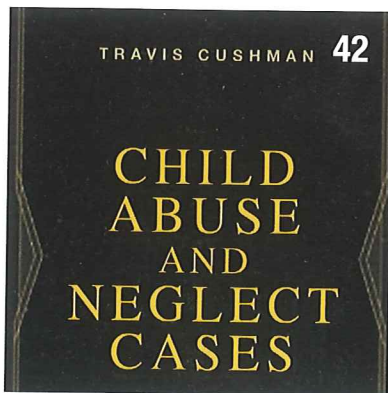
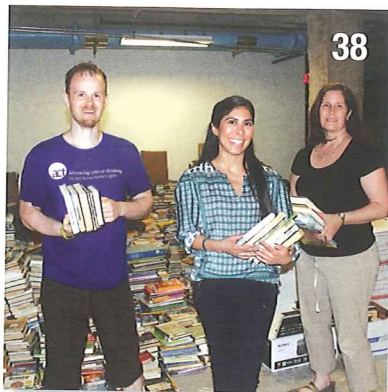
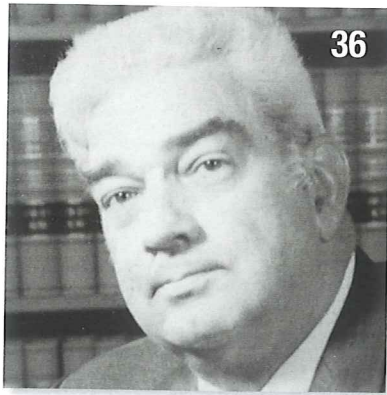
March/April 2017

## Juvenile Law



MR. AL HARRISON  
 HARRISON LAW OFFICE, P.C.  
 411 FANNIN ST STE 350  
 HOUSTON TX 77002-2056





DEPARTMENTS

- 6 **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**  
Community Groups Work Together to Benefit Juveniles  
By NEIL D. KELLY
- 8 **FROM THE EDITOR**  
Crime, Judgement, and Juvenile Justice  
By JILL YAZIJI
- 36 **HOUSTON LAWYERS WHO MADE A DIFFERENCE**  
Hon. Thomas J. Stovall, Jr.  
By The HON. MARK DAVIDSON
- 37 **OFF THE RECORD**  
Brian Fischer: Woodworker Extraordinaire  
By ERMA BONADERO
- 38 **COMMITTEE SPOTLIGHT**  
Committee Promotes Literacy & Reading Initiatives  
By LARA PRICE
- 39 **A PROFILE IN PROFESSIONALISM**  
The Hon. Ravi K. Sandill  
Judge, 127th District Court
- 40 **LEGAL TRENDS**  
SCOTX Finds no Governmental Immunity where Government Received a Benefit  
By RAYMOND L. PANNETON  
  
SpongeBob's "Krusty Krab" Restaurant Worthy of Trademark Protection  
By CRAIG STONE and MARYANN ZAKI  
  
Ethical Obligations Extend to "Hidden" Data  
By CASSIE MCGARVEY
- 42 **MEDIA REVIEWS**  
*Child Abuse and Neglect Cases: A Comprehensive Guide to Understanding the System*  
Reviewed by ANIETIE AKPAN  
  
When *Big Law* Goes Wrong  
Reviewed by KIMBERLY A. CHOJNACKI
- 44 **LITIGATION MARKETPLACE**