



Judge Brandy Hallford,  
Williamson County Court at Law One

## Legal Essentials and Beyond for Representing Parents and Children in Child Welfare Cases

### SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Friday, January 12, 2024  
8:30 a.m. - 3:45 p.m.

Williamson County Justice Center  
405 Martin Luther King  
Georgetown, Texas 78626

#### **Judge Brandy Hallford**

Judge Brandy Hallford was elected to be the presiding Judge of Williamson County Court-at-Law No. One in 2018. During her tenure, she has presided over criminal, protective orders, family, civil and Child Protective Services cases. Judge Hallford has been licensed to practice law since 1996. She has a Bachelor of Liberal Arts degree from the University of Texas at Austin, and a Juris Doctor degree from St. Mary's School of Law. The first half of Judge Hallford's legal career was dedicated to serving as a prosecutor for Williamson County, Dallas County, and the First Open Government Prosecutor for former Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott. During those years, she was the voice for victims and gained extensive jury trial experience prosecuting crime. She was promoted to Criminal Division Chief at the Williamson County Attorney's Office where she worked closely with law enforcement and supervised the attorneys and staff. The second half of her career was in private law practice where she focused on representing children in child protective services cases, parents in child protective services cases, adults in criminal matters, juveniles and Veterans. She also practiced law in the areas of family, probate, and civil litigation. During her legal career, Judge Hallford has also trained attorneys, law enforcement, and community groups in various legal areas. Judge Hallford received the 2019 Excellence in Civil Law from the Williamson County Bar's Women Lawyers Section. She is a Fellow of the Texas Bar Foundation, and a member of the Williamson County Bar Association. Judge Hallford has served her community as a member of the Wilco Blue Star Mothers, Kiwanis Club, a former board member for Drive a Senior, and former board member for the Williamson County Children's Advocacy Center.

#### **Brenda Kinsler**

Brenda L. Kinsler is employed by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services as the Managing Attorney for Regions 4, 5, and 7. Prior to her position as the managing attorney, Brenda was an appellate attorney for the Department. Prior to the position of appellate attorney, Brenda was employed as a regional attorney for the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services, where she represented the Cabinet in all CPS-related matters. Before moving to

Kentucky, Brenda was employed as the CPS prosecutor in Ellis County, Waxahachie, Texas and before that in Henderson County, Texas. Brenda is a graduate of South Texas College of Law in Houston, Texas. Brenda is a member of the inaugural class of attorneys to receive their Board Certification in Child Welfare Law. She is a member of the Texas Children's Commission Legal Practice and Process Committee, is currently serving as co-chair of the Texas Children's Commission DFPS Representation Sub-Committee, is a member of the Children's Commission Standards of Representation Committee, and has been appointed to the Child Welfare Law Exam Commission. Brenda is a frequent speaker on various issues related to child welfare law.

### **Ryan Palmquist**

Ryan Palmquist is a partner at Fifield, Brown and Palmquist, LLC in Cedar Park, Texas. With over 13 years of experience, Mr. Palmquist is a dedicated child welfare advocate with a proven track record in championing the rights and well-being of vulnerable children. His career has been marked by a commitment to making a positive impact in the lives of children and families. Mr. Palmquist's journey into child welfare advocacy began during his time as a Williamson County Assistant County Attorney with the Family Justice Department. In this role, he served as an attorney representing Texas DFPS, where he played a pivotal role in protecting the interests of children facing challenging circumstances. In his private practice with Fifield, Brown & Palmquist, LLC, Mr. Palmquist has continued his dedication to representing children and families in a variety of child welfare matters, with a particular focus on child abuse and neglect. He brings his legal expertise, compassion, and unwavering commitment to ensuring that children and families receive the care and support they deserve. Mr. Palmquist graduated from The University of Texas at Tyler with a BBA in December, 2005 and from South Texas College of Law in May, 2010. Outside of his legal career, he enjoys a fulfilling family life with his brilliant wife Laura, whom he met during their time in law school. Together, they have two young children and Mr. Palmquist cherishes the time he spends with his family. Beyond his professional and family commitments, Mr. Palmquist is a passionate sports enthusiast, particularly the Texas Rangers and the Dallas Mavericks.

### **Mark Zuniga**

Mark is currently a staff attorney for the Texas Justice Court Training Center. He is board certified in child welfare law by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization. Previously, he was with the Travis County Office of Parental Representation. Before that, he was an appellate attorney for the Department of Family and Protective Services, during which time he was assigned occasional trial work throughout the state. He was the Senior Attorney before that with the Hays County Criminal District Attorney's Office. He has been in private practice. Mark graduated from the University of Texas School of Law in 1999.

### **Leigh de la Reza**

Leigh de la Reza is Board Certified in Family Law by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization and a partner at Noelke, Maples, St. Leger Bryant LLP. She is a member of the Texas Academy of Family Law Specialists and a Fellow of the prestigious American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers. She is a member of the Family Law Council of the State Bar of Texas, a member of the Family Law Section of the State Bar of Texas, as well as the Past-President of the Austin Bar Association Family Law Section. Leigh is a frequent speaker at family law courses and seminars, and the author of numerous family law articles and publications. Ms. De La Reza received her JD from St. Mary's University School of Law and her BA from the University of Texas at San Antonio.

### **Kellie Price**

Kellie Price is the Special Projects Attorney for the Department of Family and Protective Services. She began practicing child protection law in 2013 as an Assistant County Attorney in El Paso. She joined DFPS in 2016 as a Regional Attorney and moved to the Appellate Unit in 2020. She is part of the inaugural class of attorneys to become Board Certified in Child Welfare Law by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization in 2018. Kellie serves on the CLE and membership committees for the Child Protection Law Section and the Texas Children's Commission's Training Committee. Kellie graduated from the University of Texas School of Law in 2007 and became licensed that same year.

### **Rebecca Safavi**

Rebecca L. Safavi is employed by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services as an appellate attorney. Prior to the position of appellate attorney, Rebecca was engaged in private practice in Tennessee. Rebecca's practice emphasized family law, with a particular focus on juvenile custody. As an appellate attorney, Rebecca serves as an advisor and reference resource to regional attorneys, district attorneys, and county attorneys on a wide range of trial and appellate issues. She represents the Department in appellate proceedings before the Texas Supreme Court and all fourteen courts of appeals. Rebecca is a graduate of Saint Louis University School of Law, where she was a recipient of a full-tuition merit scholarship. Rebecca is board certified in child welfare law by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization.