

BOOK REVIEW

Protection of Abused Victims: State Laws and Decisions, Vol. 1,
IRVING J. SLOAN, Oceana, Dobbs Ferry, New York, 1982.

The publication of a looseleaf service on an area of law is an indication that the topic covered has come of age. Such looseleaf services provide two primary functions: (1) making available to the practitioner a comprehensive survey of the case and statutory law on a particular topic in a single source volume and (2) providing a continuous updating of that area of law. Two types of legal subjects lend themselves to such treatment. These are areas such as taxation, where the simple bulk of materials requires that it be dealt with in a highly organized and indexed form, and areas such as workers' compensation where there are common features among the laws of the several states which encourage practitioners in one state to cite decisions construing similar statutory provisions in other jurisdictions.

The law relating to the protection of abused victims is appropriate for a looseleaf service. All states now have statutes concerning child abuse and neglect and most states have begun to offer statutory protection to battered spouses and the abused elderly. There is a great deal of state and federal case law interpreting the child abuse statutes and more is appearing daily in the other areas. In addition, there is substantial similarity among the state child abuse statutes as many of them were modeled on one of the three or four major model acts which have been published by various advocacy groups and individual advocates in recent years.

Despite the potential usefulness of offering such a service, the real need for the service provided by Irving J. Sloan in this Oceana publication must be called into question. The first volume of this service deals with the subject of child abuse, an area on which there is very substantial coverage in other media. Not only does the *Family Law Reporter*, published by the Bureau of National Affairs, provide weekly coverage of decisions in this area but several journals also regularly publish materials about this topic. These include dedicated journals such as *Child Abuse and Neglect*, the *Journal of Family Law* and the *Family Law Quarterly*. In addition, newsletters from several national and state organizations provide extensive coverage of changes in the statutory law as well as coverage of important judicial decisions in the area.

In light of this extensive existing coverage, for a looseleaf service to be of value it would have to be of extraordinary quality and, regrettably, this cannot be said of the one provided by Oceana. The

service does not provide the complete statutes of any state in the area of child abuse, but rather provides selected language from the statutes of all states on such questions as the definition of abuse and neglect, age limits, immunities and the like. The language quoted from these statutes is taken out of context so that it is often difficult to interpret and does not provide a real comparative base for evaluation of the various state laws. An example of this problem is the provision of the definitions of abuse and neglect provided in the criminal, reporting, court code and welfare code laws of all the states. The definitions of abuse and neglect are reported separately, which has the effect of dividing out terms which are often defined together. The usefulness of such a compilation of definitions is probably limited to those few persons who are engaged in drafting statutes covering these areas.

The reporting of state court decisions also poses certain problems. Those cases which are dealt with are reported in full, but this first publication provides coverage of only eight cases. There is a very large number of cases dealing with these subjects reported in the United States on an annual basis, and if all these opinions are to be reprinted in full the volume of the service will rapidly become unmanageable. In addition, the usefulness of providing full reporting in this kind of a service is questionable. If the details of a decision are needed the reader could refer to the regular case reports. Furthermore, the decisions are indexed only by name so that a person interested in a particular topic would have to examine all the reported decisions to see if any of them were applicable.

Probably the most useful aspect of the service is the set of tables provided in the third booklet. These provide a rapid basis for the comparison of different state laws on a number of topics and could serve as a useful ready reference for the reader who is seeking common features of various state statutes. This is, however, a very limited portion of the work.

Finally, the introductory text of the work provides a nine chapter survey of various aspects of child abuse and neglect. Such surveys are always useful, but there is little or no original analysis in this section and much of the subject matter has been better covered in volumes such as the Practising Law Institute's *The Abused and Neglected Child: Multi-Disciplinary Court Practice*.

As to the format of the service, the binder provided is an attractive and suitable one. The packaging of the contents into individual booklets is, however, a problem. Experience with other similarly packaged Oceana looseleaves indicates that this practice is convenient only for the publisher who can, thereby, justify the replacement of material which is still current by adding a limited number of pages of

new material to each booklet. The preferred format of printing individual pages allows for the retention of material that has not been superseded and reduces substantially the cost of the updating materials for the service.

In summary, while the author and publisher have made considerable efforts in the development of this set, it seems unlikely to be sufficiently useful to recommend purchase at this time. It is possible that as the set develops further many of these flaws may be corrected and the work will then be of substantial value.

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