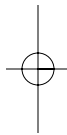
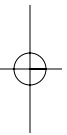


# **Legal Research in North Carolina**



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**Miriam J. Baer**

Edited by  
**James C. Ray**

CAROLINA ACADEMIC PRESS  
Durham, North Carolina

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**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Baer, Miriam.  
A guide to legal research in North Carolina / by Miriam Baer.  
p. cm.  
Includes bibliographical references and index.  
ISBN 1-59460-008-2 (alk. paper)  
1. Legal research--North Carolina. I. Title.

KFN7475.B34 2005  
340'.072'0756--dc22

2005015359

CAROLINA ACADEMIC PRESS  
700 Kent Street  
Durham, North Carolina 27701  
Telephone (919) 489-7486  
Fax (919) 493-5668  
www.cap-press.com

Printed in the United States of America

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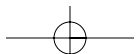
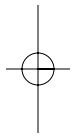
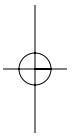
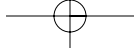
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# Introduction

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Who is in charge if the President and Vice President of the United States are killed in a terrorist attack? Does North Carolina recognize gay marriage? Is it a crime to write a bad check? You may not know the answers to all of these questions, but you can find them if you know how to do legal research.

Whether you prefer turning a page or typing on a keyboard, there is a host of information available to you about the law, once you learn the skills to find it. This book will give you the basics. Read it, and you will be able to find your way around a law library with confidence. You will know how to distinguish between the resources that contain the law itself (**primary authority**), those that summarize, analyze and describe it (**secondary authority**), and those that help you find the resources you need (**finding tools**). And, you will be able to assess how authoritative each resource is: is it something a court might rely on in deciding a case, or merely helpful to you in learning and understanding the area of law you are researching?

Of course, not every legal question has a definitive answer. For example, if you are asked whether it is legal to terminate an employee based upon his or her age, you will find that it depends upon the circumstances, including the age of the employee and requirements of the job. In fact, the short answer to many legal questions is, “it depends.” But, if you know how to find and analyze the available resources, you will be able to describe the factors that determine the answer, and to make arguments both for and against a particular position.

Once you have found the resources that address your legal question, you must be able to cite them correctly for others. This book will tell you how to accurately cite the resources typically used in North Carolina, according to *The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation* (Columbia Law Review Ass’n et al. eds., 18th ed. 2005). Although in practice you may often shortcut the rules set out in *The Bluebook*, it is extremely helpful to know them. Maybe you will be lucky enough to work on a brief going to the Supreme Court, or perhaps you will need to figure out how to cite an obscure reference. If you know how to use *The Bluebook*, you can accurately cite virtually all legal resources, and make sense of any citations you encounter.

Research and citation may seem challenging at first. But, as with most skills, the more you practice, the better you will become.

