



AFCC eNEWS

MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER
VOL. 6 NO. 10
OCTOBER 2011

AFCC Regional Training Conference

*Working with High Conflict Families:
A Race with No Winners*
October 27–29, 2011
Hyatt Regency Indianapolis

There is still time to register! It's not too late to plan a trip to the AFCC conference in Indianapolis. Registration costs for this regional training conference are very affordable. Walk in registrations are welcome, but you can save a few minutes by completing the form online before you arrive. The room block at the Hyatt Regency has been released, but there are still rooms available at reasonable rates.

[Online registration](#)

[View the conference brochure](#)

Turn your conference attendance into a mini-vacation! Add a day onto your stay or enjoy Indianapolis in the evenings. We have put together a list of things to do and the hotel is conveniently located in downtown Indianapolis, near restaurants, shopping and entertainment.

[Plan your trip: Things to do in Indianapolis](#)

The [Indianapolis Repertory Theatre](#), located less than one block from the hotel, will hold performances of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* Friday and Saturday evenings at 7pm.

President's Message

Linda Fieldstone, MEd, Miami, Florida

In these days of doing more with less we find ourselves in need of help more often. We can no longer rely on our own self-sufficiency to provide the best for the families we see; we need to work together. In his essay, *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*, Robert Fulghum refers to what it takes to play well in the sandbox, to work together to enrich our resources, rather than deplete them. Simple ideals like sharing, respecting and collaborating. It seems that AFCC members have learned those lessons well, whether in kindergarten or since, as I have seen through our exemplary work with each other—in chapters, task forces and committees. We work well with others too.

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Member Profile

UPCOMING CONFERENCES



AFCC Regional Training Conference

Working with High Conflict and Violent Families: A Race with No Winners
October 27–29, 2011

Hyatt Regency Indianapolis
Indianapolis, Indiana

[Conference program](#)

[Online registration](#)

[Things to do in Indianapolis](#)

AFCC 49th Annual Conference

June 6–9, 2012
Hyatt Regency Chicago
Chicago, Illinois

[More information](#)

AFCC 10th Symposium on Child Custody Evaluations

November 1–3, 2012

Kenneth P. Altshuler, Esq., Portland, Maine

Anyone who knows Ken knows him as a happily married, successful family law attorney and incoming President of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers. What they may not know is that he is also a Renaissance man who credits that trait to his ADHD! By the age of 30, Ken had been a successful tournament bridge player, book store owner and accountant, an avid golfer and law school graduate. He is now also a popular radio call-in talk show host and a published author of a book about golf.

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Ask the Experts

Top 10 Questions to Ask when Selecting a Supervised Visitation Provider

By Joseph J. Nullet, Jacksonville, Florida and Judy Newman, Ontario, Canada

It is important that a supervised visitation provider has training, experience and written guidelines among other attributes. Here Joe Nullet, Executive Director of Supervised Visitation Network and Judy Newman, MSW, RSW, Manager of the Supervised Access Program, Ministry of the Attorney General, Ontario tell you what questions you should ask of any provider.

[Read more](#)

See Joseph J. Nullet, along with Lee David, Executive Director of Community Anti-Violence Alliance, present The Benefits of a Supervised Visitation/Safe Exchange Center while Working with High Conflict and Violent Families on October 28, 2011, at the AFCC Regional Training Conference in Indianapolis.

Practice Dilemmas

Child Custody Evaluator

Proposed by Mindy Mitnick, EdM, MA, Edina, Minnesota

A common practice dilemma arises when a child custody evaluator receives pertinent information just after the report is completed.

[Read more](#)

This new column invites readers to pose practice dilemmas that professionals in the various disciplines represented in AFCC may face and to comment and suggest possible solutions to dilemmas posed by other readers. Please send dilemmas, comments and solutions for possible inclusion in upcoming issues of the AFCC eNEWS to Leslye Hunter at lhunter@afccnet.org.

Publication of New Innovations Book

Innovations for Self-Represented Litigants

AFCC is happy to announce the newest addition to the *Innovations* series, *Innovations for Self-Represented Litigants*, edited by Bonnie Rose Hough and Pamela Cardullo Ortiz. This book presents a variety of creative and effective approaches to serving self-represented litigants. Chapters cover topics like innovative methods for providing self-help services in large rural and urban communities, judicial education, case management, technology projects that prepare pleadings and other court documents and a creative mediation program operated with pro

Arizona Grand Resort
Phoenix, Arizona

AFCC 50th Annual Conference

May 29–June 1, 2013
J.W. Marriott Los Angeles at
L.A. Live
Los Angeles, California

AFCC 51st Annual Conference

May 28–31, 2014
The Westin Harbour Castle
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

AFCC TRAININGS

Managing Personality-Disordered Parents

William A. Eddy, MSA, JD
December 5-6, 2011
Baltimore, Maryland

[More information](#)

Children and Divorce: The Voice of the Child and Interventions When Children Resist Parental Contact

Barbara Jo Fidler, PhD, AccFM

December 7-8, 2011
Baltimore, Maryland

[More information](#)

AFCC CHAPTER CONFERENCES

Colorado Chapter Conference

Applications of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) in Family Cases

October 21, 2011
Holiday Inn Express
Montrose, Colorado

[More information](#)

Washington Chapter Conference

bono attorneys and law students. Contributing authors include: Stacey Marz, Kathleen Dixon and Margaret Little, Robert Rubinson, Hon. Fern A. Fisher and Mr. Justice Harvey Brownstone.

[The table of contents and supplied appendices are online; learn more before you buy!](#)

[Order form](#)

Report on the AFCC–Marquette–RSI Conference and Webcast

The Future of Court ADR

Dispute resolution practitioners, scholars and administrators from throughout the U.S. and Canada convened in late September at Marquette University Law School in Milwaukee, Wisconsin for a two-day symposium, *The Future Court ADR: Mediation and Beyond*. The Symposium was sponsored by AFCC, Marquette University Law School's Dispute Resolution Program and Resolution Systems Institute. Day one of the symposium featured presentations and discussions that explored core values of ADR, stakeholder needs and recent innovations in practice. The second day allowed participants to work in small groups to begin framing and discussing the challenges court ADR programs presently face. The symposium was unique in that it brought together representatives from family, civil (non-family) and those from Wisconsin area programs. The program was supported, in part, by a grant from the JAMS Foundation. You can learn more about the symposium and view the recording of the webcast by visiting law.marquette.edu/courtadr.

NEW AFCC Training Programs

Managing Personality-Disordered Parents

William A. Eddy, MSA, JD

December 5-6, 2011, Baltimore, Maryland

Children and Divorce: The Voice of the Child and Interventions When Children Resist Parental Contact

Barbara Jo Fidler, PhD, AccFM

December 7-8, 2011, Baltimore, Maryland

AFCC, in collaboration with the University of Baltimore School of Law's Center for Families, Children and the Courts, is thrilled to announce two new two-day training programs this December in Baltimore. Bill Eddy will present on managing personality-disordered parents, including education on personality disorders and ways to reduce the negative impact parents' disorders have on their children. Barbara Fidler will present on obtaining and incorporating the voice of the child in our work with families. Her program will differentiate the types and levels of parent-child contact problems and discuss the short and long term consequences of alienation.

To register, please fill out the registration form included in the brochure and fax or mail it to the AFCC office. You may also register by calling the AFCC office directly (608) 664-3750. Our apologies; there is no online registration available for these programs.

[Access trainings brochure](#)

AFCC 49th Annual Conference

Divorce Minefields and Milestones: Interdisciplinary Resources and Roads to Resolution

October 21, 2011

Holiday Inn, SeaTac International Airport
Seattle, Washington

[More information](#)

Ontario Chapter Conference

Experience and Brain Development: How Childhood Events Shape the Children and Families We Serve

October 21, 2011

Sala Caboto at Villa Colombo
Toronto, Ontario

[More information](#)

Louisiana Chapter Conference

January 27, 2012

LSU Law Center
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

[More information](#)

Arizona Chapter Conference

February 3–5, 2012

Hilton Sedona Resort and Spa
Sedona, AZ

[More information](#)

California Chapter Conference

The New Frontier: Exploring the Challenges and Possibilities of the Changed Landscape for Children and the Courts

February 10–12, 2012

Sheraton Delfina Hotel
Santa Monica, CA

[More information](#)

Florida Chapter Conference

Spirit of Cooperation

March 30–31, 2012

Renaissance Tampa International Plaza
Tampa, Florida

[More information](#)

**The ABCD's of Child Development for Family Law
June 6–9, 2012
Hyatt Regency Chicago**

Make your plans now to attend the June 2012 annual conference—you will not want to miss it! Several sessions will provide an in-depth look at attachment and neuroscience perspectives in child development as they relate to family law, continuing the discussions begun in the July 2011 issue of *Family Court Review*, guest edited by Dr. Jennifer McIntosh. Other sessions will include additional relevant subjects for professionals working with children and families. Look for the digital version of the program in late December!

[Until then enjoy online access to the July 2011 FCR!](#)

Chicago Conference Scholarships

Chicago conference scholarships include registration to the annual conference, one full-day pre-conference institute, a certificate of attendance and admittance to all conference food, beverage and networking functions. This year, in response to concerns regarding the cost of travel and lodging, a record eleven scholarships will include a travel stipend. The online scholarship application will be available in January 2012.

[Guidelines and criteria](#)

[Donate to the AFCC Scholarship Fund](#)

AFCC Member News

Stephen Carter, PhD, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, has released a new book *Family Restructuring Therapy: Interventions with High Conflict Separations and Divorces*. Dr. Carter, Bonnie F. Haave, PhD, James P. Bateman, MA and Shirley Vandersteen, PhD will present a full-day pre-conference institute titled, *Family Restructuring Therapy: Working with High Conflict Parents and Angry Children* at the AFCC Regional Training Conference in Indianapolis on October 27, 2011.

Honorable Mark A. Juhas, Los Angeles, California, was honored as the Judicial Officer of the Year by the State Bar of California, Family Law Section. Judge Juhas currently sits in a family law assignment of the Los Angeles County Superior Court in downtown Los Angeles. He chairs the Access and Fairness Committee and is a member of the Elkins Family Law Implementation Task Force after serving on the Elkins Family Law Task Force for the Judicial Council from 2008 to 2010. He is also on the Task Force on Self Represented Litigants to the Judicial Council and participates regularly in continuing education programs with the family law bar.

Lynette Berg Robe, CFLS, Studio City, California, was presented the Zephyr Ramsey Award by the Harriet Buhai Center for Family Law. This award recognizes Lynette for championing pro bono work throughout her professional life. Her trademark patience, integrity and intelligence make her an effective role model, mentor and leader. Believing families are the foundation of her community, Lynette has devoted her efforts to helping low-income parents and children at the center for over two decades.

Family Court Review Special Issue: FLER II

Professor Barbara Glesner Fines is the guest editor for the

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ABOUT AFCC eNEWS

AFCC eNEWS is a monthly e-newsletter published by the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC). *AFCC eNEWS* provides professionals with time sensitive and up-to-date topics including practice tips, research innovations and international news. Readers are welcome to forward this e-newsletter to interested colleagues.

[AFCC eNEWS archive](#)

Website Version:

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Editor:

Leslye Hunter

editor@afccnet.org

October 2011 special issue of *Family Court Review: FLER II*. Professor Glesner Fines brings authors from various legal teaching backgrounds together to highlight the need for family law education reform and to engage faculty in bettering the learning environment for students. The special issue demonstrates some of the significant progress that has been made since the inception of the Family Law Education Reform (FLER) project over five years ago. The issue is drawn from *The Future of Family Law Education Conference* sponsored by the Midwest Family Law Consortium and held at William Mitchell College of Law.

[AFCC members: read online](#)

Family Court Review Call for Papers Special Issue: Immigration and the Family Court

The editors of *Family Court Review* seek submissions for an upcoming special symposium issue dedicated to the complex interplay between immigration issues and the family court's obligations to serve families and children. The deadline to submit a paper is June 1, 2012.

[Read more](#)

Mediation Week, October 16 -22, 2011

Courtesy of the American Bar Association, americanbar.org

Over the last few decades the field of alternative dispute resolution has grown tremendously. The recognition that not all cases are well suited for the adversarial process and that there are multiple paths to justice is increasingly shared by attorneys, judges, and the public. The ABA Mediation Week initiative is a celebration of the strides we have made in institutionalizing mediation as one of several appropriate dispute resolution processes.

[Read more](#)

Family Law in the News

US Supreme Court Decides No Right to a Lawyer when Faced with Jail Over Non-Payment of Child Support

Courtesy of NJ Family Law Blog

Family Law decisions from the United States Supreme Court are always worth commenting on firstly because they are not frequent and secondly because they usually relate to a policy issue of national importance.

[Read more](#)

Increasing Numbers of Single Fathers Gaining Child Custody

Courtesy of U.S. Politics Today

Data from the 2010 Census show a significant increase in the number of families led by single dads, reflecting a shift toward greater gender equality in child custody decisions.

[Read more](#)

AFCC welcomes your comments, questions or feedback. Please email the editor by [clicking here](#).

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Professionals dedicated to improving the lives of children and families through the resolution of family conflict



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President's Message

by Linda Fieldstone, MEd, Miami, Florida



In these days of doing more with less we find ourselves in need of help more often. We can no longer rely on our own self-sufficiency to provide the best for the families we see; we need to work together. In his essay, *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*, Robert Fulghum refers to what it takes to play well in the sandbox, to work together to enrich our resources, rather than deplete them. Simple ideals like sharing, respecting and collaborating. It seems that AFCC members have learned those lessons well, whether in kindergarten or since, as I have seen through our exemplary work with each other—in chapters, task forces and committees. We work well with others too.



The essay's first line is "Share everything..." AFCC held its first joint conference with the American Association of Matrimonial Lawyers (AAML), *Advanced Issues in Child Custody: Evaluation, Litigation and Settlement*, September 16–17. The initial response to the conference was overwhelming and the program was sold out by mid-August. Evaluations revealed enthusiastic responses from participants, who appreciated the opportunity for lively dialogue between the experienced, highly skilled attorneys of AAML and the leading mental health and family law professionals of AFCC. Those from AAML were able to experience the benefits of our interdisciplinary approach to conferences, as they moved through workshops with presenters from both organizations on the panel. Always striving to do even better, we left energized and ready to focus on the next joint organizational training venture.

"And then remember the Dick-and-Jane books and the first word you learned—the biggest word of all—LOOK..." On September 23 and 24, AFCC collaborated with Marquette University and Resolution Systems Institute for a symposium titled, *The Future of Court ADR: Mediation and Beyond*. A group of practitioners, policy makers and academics from the U.S. and Canada gathered to explore procedures, programs and processes of the past and present ideas to improve our approach to conflict resolution in the years ahead. Exchanges were encouraged between those in the civil and family sectors of ADR for the mutual benefit of our collective experiences. Contemporary practices were highlighted, such as triage, focused evaluations and parenting coordination; processes that have been guided by the work of AFCC. Discussions took place regarding obstacles and challenges faced by overburdened courts with fewer resources and the increasing numbers of self-represented litigants. What makes it possible for some courts and communities to initiate innovations during times of economic distress, while in other courts programs are terminated or diminished? Continued dialogue will take place as we grapple with questions to steer us toward solutions and options that address the specific needs of families rather than one size fits all interventions.

"Say you're sorry when you hurt people..." The AFCC Regional Training Conference, *Working with High Conflict and Violent Families: A Race with No Winners*, will take place October 27–29, in Indianapolis, Indiana. We all know the toll on children is extreme when parents are not able to share, perceive their children's needs apart from their own or take responsibility for their parenting behavior. Together we will have the chance to inform our practices through research and enhance our work with more effective strategies and processes.

"...and it is still true, no matter how old you are—when you go out into the world, it is best to hold hands and stick together." With the help of AFCC, we will grow professionally as we continue to share information through training opportunities, respecting the views we bring from our interdisciplinary backgrounds and benefiting from the diverse questions we ask through our collaborations. Hopefully, through our sharing, respecting and collaborating, children will have the support of both parents and a better opportunity to learn the right lessons in their own sandboxes.

– Linda Fieldstone
AFCC President

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PRACTICE DILEMMAS

Custody Evaluator Dilemma

Proposed by Mindy Mitnick, EdM, MA, Edina, Minnesota

You have completed a custody evaluation with two children ages 14 and 11. The following issues were prominent in the evaluation:

- Mother is volatile and has had numerous blow-ups with the 14-year-old daughter.
- The daughter went to live with her father during the evaluation and refused to see her mother for a period of time. The mother agreed to attend therapy with her daughter.
- The son has been asking for more time with his father and this appears to be based on his own wish and not due to pressure from his father.
- Dad has a past DWI but was not reported to be abusing alcohol when a chemical use assessment was completed.
- The parents have needed a parenting coordinator to assist with schedule and activity disputes.

Based on the information gathered, you were prepared to recommend a shared parenting arrangement with alternating weeks. The day before you were going to issue your report, you learned that father received another DWI during the evaluation, which he did not disclose.

What do you do now?

Please send thoughts and proposed solutions to Leslye Hunter at lhunter@afccnet.org for possible publication of your comments.

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AFCC Member Profile

Kenneth P. Altshuler, Esq., Portland, Maine



Anyone who knows Ken knows him as a happily married, successful family law attorney and incoming President of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers. What they may not know is that he is also a Renaissance man who credits that trait to his ADHD! By the age of 30, Ken had been a successful tournament bridge player, book store owner and accountant, an avid golfer and law school graduate. He is now also a popular radio call-in talk show host and a published author of a book about golf.

Ken was born in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma where he lived until the age of 18 when he left to attend college in Ann Arbor, Michigan. After earning a Bachelor of Science in Conservation, he moved to Amherst, Massachusetts, pursuing a Masters in Sociology at the University of Massachusetts.

When he was 23 years old, Ken bought a bookstore in Keene, New Hampshire with \$5,000 he had saved from his earnings as a professional tournament bridge player. At 25 he was an accountant. He met Lynda Doyle, fell in love with her and her daughter from a previous marriage. Ken realized that the bookstore and accounting could not support a family the way he wanted to, so he went to law school at the University of Maine. He married Lynda (a marriage counselor, GAL and AFCC member) on New Year's Eve, 1983, and adopted her daughter. When he graduated law school at age 30, Ken hung out his shingle and has been practicing family law ever since. Lynda and Ken's children are also very accomplished: their older daughter, Amy, is a senior editorial producer at CNN and was recently married. Their younger daughter, Chelsea, is a technology writer for the Portland Press Herald.

Ken credits his ADHD for his unquenchable thirst to be active and keep busy. In addition to his law practice, chairing local Bar committees and his decade of serving on the AAML Board of Directors and Executive Committee, he has found time to co-host the number one radio call-in talk show in Portland, Maine for the past eight years. He is the "quiche-eating, intellectual liberal" counterpart to his "conservative Neanderthal" partner on the *WGAN Morning News with Ken and Mike*. The show airs five mornings a week and Ken is at the studio from 4:30am until about 9:30am (when he goes to his law office until 6:30pm). People call in to discuss local and national political and current events. Some of Ken's most ardent fans are judges who hear his cases; the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court has made it clear that Ken does not need to be in court until 10am, and has said it is of benefit to the legal profession to show that a lawyer is human.

If you are a golfer, you might want to pick up Ken's book *Golf Foreplay: Everything You Need to Know About the Game—Before You Try to Hit the Sweet Spot*. It has received excellent reviews and is written with Ken's irreverent view of the world and amusing take on the game of golf. You might wonder when he had time to write a book. Ken will tell you that he has ten minute breaks during his call-in radio show, so he put those breaks to good use.

He has been a Fellow of the AAML since 1991, editor of the newsletter since 2000, served on the executive committee for some time and will become AAML President on November 4, 2011. Even with all these accomplishments, Ken will tell you that his favorite ribbon on his conference name badge is AAML Golf Tournament Director.

Ken was instrumental on the program committee that planned the AFCC-AAML joint conference last month and wants to continue in that role far into the future. "This is the best collaboration between lawyers and mental health professionals that I have ever seen. We've taken the spirit and intent of AFCC and expanded it to include the AAML." He expects his year as president to be a full time job, traveling and speaking. We can't wait to see what his next project will be. Ken says that he will never retire, and we believe him!

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***Family Court Review* Call for Papers**

Special Issue: Immigration and the Family Court

The editors of *Family Court Review* seek submissions for an upcoming special symposium issue dedicated to the complex interplay between immigration issues and the family court's obligation to serve families and children. Family courts throughout the United States have explicit statutory duties to aid families in crisis, to maintain families when appropriate, to protect children and safeguard their well-being, and to provide children with permanency in their lives. These are not narrow obligations, and the judges, practitioners and agencies involved in family courts must constantly adapt to serve the individual needs of the families that come before them. The purpose of this special issue is to examine the unique challenges presented when working with families and children who are immigrants—both documented and undocumented—and the complex interplay between immigration issues and the family court's obligation to serve the families and children.

Contributions can be from scholars, practitioners, judges, public policy makers, and experts in all professional disciplines who work with children and families who are immigrants. We expect to publish on a broad range of topics, including: whether immigration status should be a factor in basic family court legal standards; what responsibility family courts and related agencies have to tailor services for families with immigration-related issues; the duty of judges and attorneys to advise parties of the immigration consequences of family court decisions; parental rights of detained non-citizen parents; the effect of undocumented immigration status on children's mental health and overall well-being; and educating family court judges, attorneys and administrative personnel on relevant immigration issues. A symposium highlighting these topics will follow in November 2012.

To be eligible for publication, papers must be submitted by June 1, 2012. Submitted articles should be 15–20 double-spaced pages, including citations, notes, references, tables, and figures. Authors are requested to follow the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th edition) or the *Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation* (19th Ed.). Publication decisions will be made shortly following the submission date and the publication of this special issue is expected to be completed in October 2012.

The *Family Court Review* is the quarterly research and academic journal of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC), edited at Hofstra University School of Law and published by Wiley Publishing. AFCC is an interdisciplinary association of approximately four thousand judges, academics, researchers, counselors, evaluators, mediators, attorneys and others concerned with the constructive resolution of family conflict.

Please direct all inquiries to Professors Theo Liebmann and Lauris Wren, Special Issue Editors, by email at lawtstl@hofstra.edu and lawlpw@hofstra.edu.

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ASK THE EXPERTS

Top 10 Questions to Ask when Selecting a Supervised Visitation Provider

Prepared by Joe Nullet, Executive Director of Supervised Visitation Network (SVN) and Judy Newman MSW, RSW, SVN Board Member and Manager of the Supervised Access Program, Ministry of the Attorney General, Ontario.

1. Why is supervised visitation needed?

Courts will sometimes order that a child only have contact with a parent when a neutral third person is present during the visitation. Before considering a provider, it is important to have a complete understanding of why supervised visits may be necessary. Some of the reasons may include helping to reintroduce a parent after a long absence, allegations or a history of child abuse and/or neglect, substance abuse, or domestic violence, concerns about the mental fitness of one parent, or threats of abduction.

2. Why not use a friend or relative rather than a professional service, particularly when there is a fee involved?

While there may be circumstances when friends or family can serve as "supervisors," the high level of conflict in most cases requiring supervised visitation will make it difficult for friends and relatives to refrain from taking sides. Once neutrality is lost, then the credibility of the "supervisor" will come into question and much of the feeling of security and safety will be gone. It is also unlikely that family members will have sufficient training in the areas of domestic violence, conflict resolution, child abuse, and substance abuse to provide a safe, secure environment.

3. Does the provider have the training and experience to handle the specific issues of the family needing supervised visitation?

The qualifications, training and experience of the provider are important in determining if they can safely provide service to the family. For example, if there have been issues of domestic violence or child abuse, the service provider should be trained to be aware of and sensitive to domestic violence and child abuse in the context of supervised visitation. The provider should have security measures in place to keep children and parents safe. This can include staggered arrival and departure times to prevent parents from having contact with each other, checking bags and parcels, security cameras, separate entrances and parking lots, written emergency procedures, and security personnel.

4. Does the provider conduct an intake interview during which parents have an opportunity to express their concerns and the policies and procedures are clearly explained?

An intake interview is the basis of service excellence and safety. The intake interview sets the tone for all future interaction. It is an opportunity to give and receive information about the family and the circumstances leading to supervised visitation. It is also a time to learn about the service provider such as their policies and procedures, their experience and qualifications for meeting the needs of your particular case.

5. Does the provider have a clear set of written guidelines?

Providers should have written guidelines for service. They should have a service agreement for each parent/guardian to sign that sets out what is

expected of the parents and what the parents can expect from the provider. There should be a form for each adult party to sign authorizing release of information and to whom the information is to be released. Policies should include clear notice of fees for service and reports; a policy to keep personal identity information (e.g. addresses and telephone numbers) confidential; the limits of confidentiality; and consequences of not following policies and procedures.

6. What are the provider's policies on documentation?

A provider should have written policies and procedures regarding writing and submitting reports to the court or referring source or other entity. And if the provider submits reports to the court, they should ensure all reports are limited to facts, observations, and direct statements made by the parents and not personal conclusions, suggestions, or opinions of the provider.

7. Where will visits take place?

The provider should have a secure location where visits are conducted that is designed to protect the safety and security of participants. If the visits are to be conducted off site in a community setting, the provider must have detailed procedures in place to insure safety of all participants, and also be prepared to decline the case if an offsite location is not suitable for the risks presented.

8. Does the provider have a clearly defined grievance procedure?

Visitation providers like any other service should be accountable for their services. They should have a way for you to express your concerns about the service you are receiving. The procedure should be in writing. If you are not satisfied with the response you receive, you should contact your local court or whoever referred you for supervised visitation. Some local areas and states may have governing bodies that regulate or oversee supervised visitation.

9. How much will services cost?

All providers should have established written policies and procedures regarding fees for service, including the amount and collection of fees and consequences for failure to pay. The provider's policies regarding all fees must be discussed with each parent prior to the beginning of service. Providers may also have a sliding scale structure available for parents with financial hardships.

10. Is the provider prepared to handle an emergency situation?

While it is impossible to prepare for every possible situation, a provider should have an active collaboration with local law enforcement to facilitate a rapid response; they should review security measures on a regular basis and have established written protocols for emergency situations.

For more information and tips about supervised visitation please visit the Supervised Visitation Network website: www.svnetwork.net.