



**ASSOCIATION OF FAMILY  
AND CONCILIATION COURTS**

Improving the lives of children and families  
through the resolution of family conflict



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## President's Message

*Hon. Dianna Gould-Saltman*



## AFCC 56th Annual Conference



AFCC 56th ANNUAL CONFERENCE



*The Future of Family Justice:  
International Innovations*  
May 29-June 1, 2019  
Westin Harbour Castle Hotel  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

We are certainly living in interesting times. Since my last President's Message, in January, we've heard (some of) the Congressional testimony of the President's former lawyer, Michael Cohen, the Brexit deadline has come and gone (and been extended), the Mueller Report has been summarized (but not yet released as of this writing), and families continue to form and change as AFCC moves forward. It was a busy three months for yours truly on the AFCC front.

[Read More](#)



## AFCC 56th Annual Conference

*The Future of Family Justice: International Innovations*

May 29-June 1, 2019  
Westin Harbour Castle Hotel

AFCC 56th Annual Conference will have workshops on alienation and reunification, abuse, using the child's voice to settle disputes, domestic violence, and high conflict cases, as well as a plethora of international topics and more. [Click here](#) to register now.

### Hotel Reservations

Make your reservations today, as the discounted room block is nearly 90% full! The Westin Harbour Castle Hotel is offering a special rate to AFCC attendees of \$239/\$259 CAD single/double (approximately \$179/194 USD).

***Rooms frequently sell out before the room block is released so we encourage you to make your reservation early! [Reserve online.](#)***

### Continuing Education Credits

Application has been submitted to the Ontario Law Society for equality, diversity and inclusion, as well as professionalism hours. The program is eligible for up to 20.5 hours of continuing education for psychologists, lawyers, mediators, custody evaluators, social workers, counselors, and parenting coordinators. Most sessions are eligible. [Click here for the list](#) of eligible sessions.

## Ask the Experts

Thank you to our **Diamond and Platinum Sponsors.** To see a complete list of sponsors, [click here.](#)



**Save the Date**  
**AFCC-AAML Conference**  
September 19-21, 2019  
San Diego, California

### AFCC Chapter Conferences

Colorado Chapter Annual Conference  
April 26, 2019  
Craig Hall, University of Denver  
Denver, Colorado

Oregon Chapter Annual Conference  
April 29, 2019  
McMenamins Kennedy School  
Portland, Oregon

Australia Chapter Annual Conference

## Ten Tips on Questions that Allow a Child's Voice to Be Heard and Can Help to Settle Custody Disputes

Nolanda Kirby, MS, CCFC

"I'm tired of being stuck in the middle!" "Please make this stop!" Parents entrenched in custody litigation are so busy fighting each other that they do not realize that they are putting their children in the middle of their dispute. They do not hear their children's voices. When children are asked the right questions, while their parents are listening, it opens the eyes of the parents to what their dispute has done to their children; hence leading to settlement.

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## AFCC European Members Host Conferences

AFCC European members hosted two sold out conferences in March, bringing together family law professionals from England, Scotland, Germany, and Sweden to address critical issues in family law.

[Read More](#)



*Integrating Research into Practice and Policy: The Impact on Families and Children*  
October 31-November 2, 2019  
Omni William Penn Hotel  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

The AFCC Conference Committee is seeking proposals for 90-minute workshop sessions. Proposals must be submitted using the online form by May 13, 2019. The

August 15-17, 2019  
International Convention  
Centre ICC Sydney  
Sydney, Australia

[Florida Chapter Annual Conference](#)  
September 26-27, 2019  
The Florida Hotel &  
Conference Center at the  
Florida Mall  
Orlando, Florida

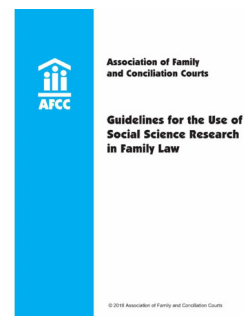
[Maryland Chapter Annual Conference](#)  
September 27, 2019

[Indiana Chapter Annual Conference](#)  
October 4, 2019  
Indiana War Memorial Shoup  
Hall  
Indianapolis, Indiana

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### AFCC Resource of the Month

Guidelines for the Use of  
Social Science Research  
in Family Law



See more AFCC resources on the [Resources page](#) of the AFCC website

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program brochure and online registration will be available August 2019.

Call for Proposals

## Donate to the AFCC Scholarship Fund

Would you consider helping your colleagues attend AFCC conferences by making a donation to the AFCC Scholarship Fund? AFCC scholarship recipients increase our diversity by bringing professionals from different backgrounds, representing the many disciplines encompassed by who we are as an organization. **Will you contribute to allow a hard-working professional attend an AFCC conference? Thank you to those who have already donated!**

Donate Today

## Top Downloaded *Family Court Review* Article



The top downloaded paper in 2018 was written by last year's managing editor, Lisa Fenech, "Creating the Perfect Human Race: How Far Will We Go for Designer Families?" [Click here](#) to read the article! You can find the entire *Family Court Review* archives [available here](#), including the [top 5 opened articles for 2018](#). Not an AFCC member? [Click here](#) to view the benefits of an AFCC membership, including full access to the *Family Court Review*!

## Where in the World is AFCC?



*Archana Medhekar in New York at the United Nations Headquarters during the Commission for Status of Women*

#AFCCHats are everywhere! Thanks to everyone for submitting photos of yourselves wearing AFCC hats from around the world this year! The best picture will be honored at the 56th Annual Conference in Toronto. Check out all the pictures on the [AFCC Facebook page](#).

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## AFCC Webinar Corner

Registration is now open for two AFCC webinars:

### **Not Just Alienation: Resistance, Rejection, Reintegration, and Realities of Troubled Parent-Child Relationships**

Marsha Kline Pruett, PhD, ABPP & Leslie Drozd, PhD

May 7, 2019

[Register Here!](#)

### **Set Another Place at the Grown-Ups' Table: Child Participation in Family Disputes Resolution**

Stacey Platt, JD

April 25, 2019

[Register here!](#)

Registration closes April 23, 11:59pm Eastern time USA

Both webinars will take place from 1:00-2:00pm Eastern time (USA).

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## Award Winners



AFCC was awarded the John W. Cooley Lawyer as Problem Solver Award by the American Bar Association Section of Dispute Resolution at its awards ceremony in Minneapolis, MN, on April 11, 2019. The award recognizes an institution or individual who has exhibited extraordinary skill in either promoting the concept of the lawyer as problem-solver or resolving individual, institutional, community, state, national, or international problems. Award recipients are acknowledged for their use or

promotion of collaboration, negotiation, mediation, counseling, decision-making, and problem-solving skills to help parties resolve a problem in a creative and novel way. Congratulations to all AFCC members, as this award truly represents the collective talent and spirit of all 5,300 members of the association. [Click here](#) to read more about the award and past award winners (including several AFCC members and partner organizations).

**Judge Michael Dwyer**, AFCC member from Milwaukee, WI, received the Judge of the Year Award from the Wisconsin State Bar's Bench and Bar Committee. The Judge of the Year Award recognizes an outstanding circuit court trial judge who is an example of a fair and impartial jurist. Judge Dwyer was recognized as a leader in advancing the quality of justice, judicial education, or innovative programs. He has demonstrated the ability to effectively handle complex or unusual trials. High ideals, personal character, and community involvement that enhance the judicial system are hallmarks of the Judge of the Year Award recipient. This award was given in recognition of Judge Dwyer's service as a circuit court judge, for an example of a fair and impartial jurist.

## Staff News

**Corinne Bennett**, AFCC Program Coordinator, is leaving AFCC to attend graduate school at John Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, D.C. She will study International Relations and International Economics. Corinne has been with AFCC since 2015, and has enhanced the association's digital communications program, served as associate editor of the *AFCC eNEWS*, and provided invaluable support to the scholarship program and silent auction, among her many duties. AFCC wishes Corinne continued success in her new career path!

**Kai Brito** has joined the AFCC staff as AFCC Communications Coordinator. Kai comes to AFCC with a background in public and community radio production, and as a Communications Specialist with the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Welcome Kai!

## Chapter News



**Meet Elise Buie**, President of the Washington Chapter



**Meet Lorri Yasenik**, President of the Alberta Chapter

## Membership Notice of AFCC Board Nominations

At the AFCC membership meeting, Saturday, June 1, 2019, the following individuals will be nominated to serve on the AFCC Board of Directors for a three-year term beginning July 1, 2019 and concluding June 30, 2022: Kathleen McNamara, PhD; Mindy Mitnick, EdM, MA; Carlton Stansbury, JD; Teresa Williams, MS; Hon. Herman Walker; Hon. Gerri Wong.

The AFCC Executive Committee is elected by the board of directors. For informational purposes, the following individuals have been nominated for positions on the executive committee: President Elect: Larry S. Fong, PhD; Vice President: Mindy Mitnick, EdM, MA; Secretary: Hon. Linda Fidnick; Treasurer: Stacey Platt, JD; Matthew Sullivan, PhD, and Hon. Dianna Gould-Saltman automatically become President and Past-President, respectively, per AFCC bylaws.

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### AFCC eNEWS

The AFCC eNEWS is the monthly e-newsletter of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts. The eNEWS provides up-to-date information for professionals including practice tips, case law and research updates, international news and the latest initiatives in family law and conflict resolution. The AFCC eNEWS is free and you do not need to be a member of AFCC to subscribe. [Subscribe here](#). AFCC members are free to share eNEWS content.

#### EDITOR:

[Leslye Hunter](#)

#### ASSOCIATE EDITOR:

[Corinne Bennett](#)



Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC) | 6525 Grand Teton Plaza, Madison, WI 53719

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eNEWS

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**President's Message**  
*Hon. Dianna Gould-Saltman*  
*Los Angeles, California*

We are certainly living in interesting times. Since my last President's Message, in January, we've heard (some of) the Congressional testimony of the President's former lawyer, Michael Cohen, the Brexit deadline has come and gone (and been extended), the Mueller Report has been summarized (but not yet released as of this writing), and families continue to form and change as AFCC moves forward. It was a busy three months for yours truly on the AFCC front. Here are a few of my travels:

#### AFCC-Arizona Chapter, Sedona, AZ

AFCC-AZ held its annual conference in Sedona, AZ. The conference was full, and the venue, as usual, was beautiful. The weather was crisp, and the camaraderie was warm. As is often the case with chapter annual conferences, in addition to the great education opportunities, the conference served as a place for people to connect with friends from around the state whom they don't see nearly enough. Former AFCC President, Annette Trainor Burns got to play along with a running gag during the opening plenary that served to set a fun tone for the whole weekend.

#### AFCC-California Chapter, Costa Mesa, CA

AFCC-CA had its annual conference at the Westin South Coast Plaza in Costa Mesa, CA (they alternate between Northern and Southern California annually). The day the conference started it actually snowed in the city of Los Angeles 30 miles away! There were many great presentations. The most memorable for me was the plenary about the impact and process of a genuine apologies presented by Drs. Michael Saini, Robin Deutsch and Leslie Drozd. Also, during the conference, we held the AFCC Leadership Transition Meeting, to help prepare incoming AFCC President Matt Sullivan for his year at the helm.

## United Kingdom

March brought me to the United Kingdom, along with AFCC Executive Director, Peter Salem and Board Member, Michael Saini. We flew into London and then on to Edinburgh, Scotland. We had the opportunity of speaking in Edinburgh at a gathering of Relationships Scotland, an organization with goals and values very much aligned with AFCC. I developed a slight accent before we left and, in grand AFCC tradition, we all had a “wee dram.” Okay, more than one, and a bit more than “wee.” Back in London we participated in a round table discussion with a number of representatives of child-focused organizations and judges hosted by the Nuffield Foundation, including Sir Andrew McFarlane, President of the Family Division of England and Wales. AFCC then co-sponsored a full-day program on Coparenting with CAF/CASS (Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service). Both in Edinburgh and London we met wonderful people and shared thoughts about innovations and politics (and how Brexit could affect families globally).

## AFCC-Missouri Chapter – St. Louis, MO

Back in the States I spent two days at work then it was off to Missouri for the AFCC-MO chapter annual conference. The featured speaker was former AFCC Board Member Phil Stahl and the theme of the conference was decision-making. I had the good fortune to participate on a really innovative panel moderated by AFCC-MO President Simone Haberstock using sound clips of parents discussing how they made decisions, and their levels of satisfaction with various dispute resolution practices. The next day I participated on a judge’s panel with three very bright (and very funny) family court bench officers about judicial decision-making. Former AFCC Board Member (and current AFCC-MO Board Member), Larry Swall moderated. The conference was held in an amazing conference center inside the St. Louis Zoo.

## AFCC-Ohio Chapter – Columbus , OH

The following week it was off to Columbus, OH for the AFCC-OH annual conference. The Ohio Chapter has had some crazy shake-ups of their Board but the valiant and committed members have rallied the troops to keep the chapter thriving. Amy Armstrong served as my local guide and hostess. Magistrate Rosaline Flores has stepped in as President and served as the day’s emcee. I had the opportunity to present my thoughts on what makes a good, a bad, and a great child custody evaluation/investigation while other presenters discussed related issues including the development of child custody evaluation guidelines for the state. The multi-disciplinary audience was interactive, and discussion was lively.

After nearly a year on the job, I can say with great confidence that the best part of being AFCC President is having an opportunity to meet members around the world. We practice in different disciplines and in different jurisdictions, but we all hold true to the fundamental goal of making family transitions better for children and families. In addition to being smart (as my mother has noted more than once), AFCC members tend to be genuinely kind. In an era of political turmoil, which permeates even the work we do with families, it is comforting for me to know we share such enduring values as kindness.



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## Ten Tips on Questions that Allow a Child's Voice to Be Heard and Can Help to Settle Custody Disputes

*Nolanda Kirby, MS, CCFC*

"I'm tired of being stuck in the middle!" "Please make this stop!" Parents entrenched in custody litigation are so busy fighting each other that they do not realize that they are putting their children in the middle of their dispute. They do not hear their children's voices. When children are asked the right questions, while their parents are listening, it opens the eyes of the parents to what their dispute has done to their children; hence leading to settlement. Here are ten questions to consider asking children, and the rationale behind them.

### **1. How do you feel about your parents' divorce/separation?**

This question is one that gives the parents the answers that they never knew existed, especially in high conflict families. Parents tend to play tug-of-war with their children and never consider the children's feelings. Parents are either wrapped up in the drama surrounding their divorce or are so entrenched in their own feelings regarding the separation, that they do not acknowledge their children's feelings. The children's response tends to make the parents more aware of how their children are being affected.

### **2. Do you feel that you can speak to either parent about your feelings on the divorce/separation?**

Older children in most cases state they can talk to their parents, but that their parents aren't acknowledging their feelings. In some cases, one parent acknowledges the children's feelings, and the other parent is too angry at the other parent to acknowledge them. In some cases, parents are realizing during the interview that their children are stuck in the grieving process of the parents' divorce.

### **3. How do your parents feel about each other? How do they treat each other?**

Parents tend to think they are hiding their emotions or feelings about the other parent from their children. Children overhear the third-party conversation a parent may have with a relative or friend. Children reveal that parents are so entrenched in the fight they are constantly angry with the other parent and say things in front of the children, as well as act aggressively or rude during the exchanges of the children. Parents sometimes hear for the first time how this behavior effects their child.

### **4. Does either parent talk badly about the other parent in front of you? How do you feel when that happens?**

Like question three, this question has children revealing statements and behaviors that their parents either knowingly or unknowingly commit and their children experience. Parents hear their children stating how sad and sometimes angry this makes them feel. Usually children state "I wish they would just stop". Parents tend to forget that children can love both parents.

**5. Do you ever feel caught in the middle between mom and dad?**

This question is rather poignant. The majority of children have stated that they feel stuck between their parents. Parents don't realize that the tug-of-war game they play puts their children in situations that make them feel as if they must side with each parent when they are in that particular parent's home. Also, parents use children as messengers. Older children in these interviews tend to ask parents to talk to each other and leave them out of it.

**6. How do you feel when mom and dad do not get along with each other?**

Most children explain that they are sad that their parents don't get along. Many remember them not getting along when they lived together. The children explain how sad they were then. Children have expectations that things will get better upon separation.

**7. What would you like to see change with your parents?**

A majority of children want to see their parents get along and be cordial. Children are caught in the parents' drama at exchanges and events. Parents hear for the first time that their children notice their behaviors toward the other parent. Hearing that their children notice assists with settlement negotiations.

**8. How do you feel about the current custodial schedule and what would you like to see as the custodial schedule?**

This question is the one that helps parents understand their children may or may not like the schedule. Parents tend to want a schedule that may or may not work for the children. Some children feel as if a certain schedule is too back and forth, and therefore will state they still want equal time with both parents, but would rather the length of time be longer with each parent. In some cases, children have revealed that they are content, even though a parent continues to file numerous petitions stating that the child is uncomfortable with the schedule. Parents hearing their children's voice stating their wants and needs assists parents to settle their dispute.

**9. Parents allowed to ask their concerning questions.**

As part of the process, parents are allowed to ask their children questions, if they are deemed appropriate. Usually this is when questions that are related to concerns that one parent may have about the other, such as substance abuse, corporal punishment to the child, domestic violence, coaching, and many other types of issues as it relates to their case, arise.

**10. If I were a genie and can grant you three wishes, what would your wishes be?**

Children correlate this question with the current dispute, and the answers they provide are anywhere from "I want my parents to just get along," "I want them to keep me out of it," or "I wish that we could all just be happy," to stating they want to see one parent more than what is currently happening. The emotions that usually come with their answers tends to lead to settlement.

*Nolanda Kirby is the Family Support Services Coordinator at the Cecil County Circuit Court, and has served in this position since 2005, providing services to families who are currently separating or divorcing and/or having child custody and visitation disputes and overseeing the administrative and case management services. She is a mediator and parent coordinator, as well as a Clinically Certified Forensic Counselor. Nolanda has been a member of Association of Family and Conciliation Court since 2006, the National Association of Forensic Counselors since 2012, and is the current President Elect of the Maryland Chapter of the AFCC.*



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## AFCC European Members Host Conferences

AFCC European members hosted two sold out conferences in March, bringing together family law professionals from England, Scotland, Germany, and Sweden to address critical issues in family law.

The first program, *Family Justice and Dispute Resolution: Insights from North America*, was co-sponsored by Relationships Scotland and AFCC and took place in Edinburgh. It featured AFCC President, Dianna Gould-Saltman, Board member Michael Saini, Executive Director, Peter Salem, and AFCC member Rosanne Cubitt of Relationships Scotland. Discussions centered on family dispute resolution processes, high conflict families, educational programs for separated and divorcing families, and the voice of the child.

The second program, co-sponsored by AFCC and Cafcass (Court and Family Court Advisory and Support Service), was held in London, and the theme was *Co-parenting for Children*. Along with the above mentioned AFCC speakers, the program featured AFCC members Sir Andrew McFarlane, President of the Family Division; Janet Walker; Anthony Douglas, Cafcass CEO; Liz Trinder, Exeter University; Teresa Williams and Sarah Parsons, Cafcass; and Rob Street, Nuffield Foundation.

The co-parenting program also featured compelling presentations by two young people, members of the Family Justice Young People's Board, who shared their personal observations and experience about separation and divorce.

AFCC thanks everyone at Cafcass for their support, especially Carole Goodman and Holly Dare, as well as Rosanne Cubitt and Stuart Valentine of Relationships Scotland, for their partnership.



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### **Top Five Downloaded Family Court Review Articles for 2018**

1. [Creating the Perfect Human Race: How Far Will We Go for Designer Families?](#)  
Lisa Fenech (2018) | *Vol. 56, Issue 1*
2. [Differentiation among types of intimate partner violence: Research update and implications for interventions](#)  
Joan B. Kelly & Michael P. Johnson (2008) | *Vol. 46, Issue 3*
3. [Effects of father and mother parenting on children's mental health in high- and low-conflict divorces](#)  
Irwin Sandler, Jonathan Miles, Jeffrey Cookston, and Sanford Braver (2008) | *Vol. 46, Issue 2*
4. [Our Baby, Her Choices: The Need for Enforcement of Gestational Surrogate Contracts](#) Samantha Lollo (2018) | *Vol. 56, Issue 1*
5. [Child-focused and child-inclusive divorce mediation: Comparative outcomes from a prospective study of postseparation adjustment](#)  
Jennifer E. McIntosh, Yvonne D. Wells, Bruce M. Smyth, and Caroline M. Long (2007) | *Vol. 46, Issue 1*



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### Meet Elise Buie, President of the Washington Chapter

**Elise Buie** is an active member of the Washington Bar (voluntarily inactive member of both the Minnesota and the Louisiana Bars). She is a member of the King County Bar Association (Family Law Section, Collaborative Law Section), the Snohomish County Bar Association, the Washington State Bar Association, (Family Law Section, CLE Committee), and the American Bar Association (Family Law Section and GP Solo Division). The bulk of her day to day work is as a Guardian ad Litem in Seattle.

Elise received her Juris Doctorate from Loyola School of Law in 1994. While in law school, she served on the Loyola Law Review and the National Moot Court Team earning the Top Orator Award. She also served as an appellate law clerk to Judge Ward at the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans. She began her legal career as a Federal Judicial Law Clerk to the Honorable Stanwood R. Duval, Jr. of the Eastern District of Louisiana. She then went on to join a litigation practice at Blue Williams in New Orleans. Elise "retired" from the law for several years while she raised (and home-schooled) four young children before Hurricane Katrina slammed into South Louisiana. Several relocations later, she ended up in the Pacific Northwest.





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### Meet Lorri Yasenik, President of the Alberta Chapter

**Lorri A. Yasenik, PhD, RSW, RPT-S, CPT-S** is specialized in working with children and families in the areas of treatment of trauma, high conflict separation and divorce and child development in Calgary, AB, Canada. In addition to being a certified supervisor of child psychotherapy and play therapy, Lorri is a Registered Family Mediator and a Registered Parenting Coordinator-Arbitrator. Lorri has a keen interest in legal issues that affect children's lives and has completed research in the area of "Including the Voices of Children in the Legal System" and is currently the key researcher in an international post-doctorate research project on a method of child inclusive practice "*Meeting with Children*" for Mediators and other ADR practitioners.

Lorri is a long-standing member and supporter of AFCC and is an original board member of AFCC Alberta Chapter. She held the positions of Program Chair and Vice President. She is the co-founder and co-director of the International Centre for Children and Family Law (Sydney Australia /Calgary Canada) and the Co-director/owner of Rocky Mountain Play Therapy Institute in Calgary, AB, Canada. Lorri provides training related to child inclusive practice in family law and child psychotherapy and play therapy nationally and internationally.