



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



July 2019
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President's Message

Matthew Sullivan, PhD

It's been just over a month since I returned from an amazing AFCC Annual Conference in Toronto. Coincidentally, the conference took place just a couple blocks away from the first truly international NBA finals basketball game. Hailing from the Golden State (California), like our previous AFCC

President Dianna Gould-Saltman (well done, DGS!), I never would have thought that the NBA finals would go global, much less down the street from the AFCC conference. And while I proudly sported my team colors, I was disappointed that the Toronto Raptors beat my Golden State Warriors. It was a great series, and although it was a bitter pill, I offer heartfelt congratulations to all of our Ontario and Canadian friends.



[Read More](#)

AFCC-AAML 2019 Conference



2019 Conference on
**Advanced Issues in Child Custody:
Evaluation, Litigation, and Settlement**

*An exceptional advanced-level training opportunity
sponsored by two premier family law organizations*

September 19-21, 2019
The Westin San Diego, San
Diego, CA

AFCC Chapter Conferences

Australia Chapter Annual Conference

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

President's Profile

Matthew Sullivan, PhD

Matt Sullivan became AFCC President July 1, 2019, a full quarter-century after presenting at his first conference on Maui, Hawaii, in 1994. Over the last 25 years, Matt has helped AFCC develop programs and processes that address some of the most intractable issues in our field, all while becoming an AFCC leader.

A native Californian, Matt earned his bachelor's degree in Neurobiology from Stanford and his PhD in Clinical/Community Psychology from University of Maryland. He was originally pre-med at Stanford University, but his social life and intercollegiate swimming at Stanford took a toll on his grades. After college, he worked for two years as a nursing assistant on the "flight deck" of an acute psychiatric ward at the Palo Alto VA Hospital, where his interest in psychology developed. Matt notes that it was the same unit and same position that Ken Kesey held two decades earlier, which served as the basis for *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.

[Read More](#)

College Park Marriot
Conference Center
Hyattsville, Maryland

Indiana Chapter Annual Conference

October 4, 2019
Indiana War Memorial
Shoup Hall
Indianapolis, Indiana

Wisconsin 2019 Annual Conference

October 4, 2019
Ingleside Hotel
Pewaukee, Wisconsin

Ontario Chapter Annual Conference

October 17, 2019
Sheraton Hotel
Hamilton, ON Canada

Registration is open for the AFCC Fall Conference! Integrating Research into Practice Policy

October 31-November 2, 2019
Omni William Penn Hotel, Pittsburgh, PA



ASOCIATION OF
FAMILY AND
CONCILIATION COURTS

AFCC
FALL CONFERENCE

**Integrating Research into
Practice and Policy:**
The Impact on Families and Children



October 31–November 2, 2019
Omni William Penn Hotel
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

AFCC is an interdisciplinary and international association of professionals
dedicated to improving the lives of children and families through the resolution of family conflict.

[View the brochure](#)

Apply for a Scholarship

Thanks to generous donations from AFCC members, AFCC is able to provide a limited number of scholarship. Scholarships include registration for a pre-conference institute,

the conference, and a certificate of attendance. The application deadline is September 5, 2019. [Apply online.](#)

Make your hotel reservation today!

The Omni William Penn is offering AFCC attendees a special rate of \$155 per night single/double. ***Rooms frequently sell out before the room block is released. We encourage you to make your reservation early!*** Make your reservation by calling 800-843-6664 and requesting the AFCC special rate or [reserve online.](#)

Exhibit and Advertise at the Conference

Exhibiting with AFCC is a great way to share your products and services with an interdisciplinary community of dedicated family law professionals. Exhibit space is limited and beginning to fill up. Reserve your space today or get more information by [clicking here](#) or contacting [Gina Wentling](#) by email or at 608-664-3750.

Interesting Things to Do in Pittsburgh

There are many distinct and interesting places to visit and things to do in Pittsburgh including an old church converted to a brewery; many museums of robots, steampunk sculptures and oddities, musical instruments, and others; the steepest street in the US; a giant ball made out of a jeep; and so much more. You might want to bring your family! [Read more.](#)

[Register Today!](#)

Ask the Experts

Top 10 Tips for Using Visual Communication in Family Mediation

Lisa Arora

Visualizing information during mediation with your parties is a powerful collaboration tool—a cultural technique that changes the way people think, learn, and work together to resolve disagreements.

1. *Recognize Your Parties' Need for Visual Information*

People in disputes are under stress, which from a neuroscience view means they can't hear, process, or store new information the way they usually can. When you write down key information, your parties can see as it's being discussed, this second channel of communication restores the ability to hear, think, and remember as people are making life-changing decisions.

[Read More](#)

Register today for the AFCC-AAML Conference

Advanced Issues in Child Custody: Evaluation, Litigation, and Settlement

September 19-21, 2019

The Westin San Diego, San Diego, CA



**2019 Conference on
Advanced Issues in Child Custody:
Evaluation, Litigation, and Settlement**

*An exceptional advanced-level training opportunity
sponsored by two premier family law organizations*

Join AFCC and the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers (AAML) for the fifth biennial Conference on Advanced Issues in Child Custody: Evaluation, Litigation, Settlement. The opening plenary session will address the pros and cons of psychological testing, and the second day plenary will focus on the role of the mental health consultant in family law. Peruse the [program](#) or [register](#) today! The early bird registration rate ends August 19th!

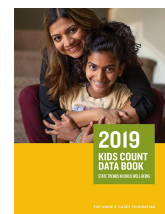
Register Now!

KIDS COUNT Data Book

2019 State Trends in Child Well-Being

By the Annie E. Casey Foundation

In the 30th edition of the most comprehensive annual report on child well-being in the United States, the Annie E. Casey Foundation shows that while there has been progress in helping children thrive since the first Data Book was published in 1990, serious inequities in child outcomes persist. Key findings include:



- The U.S. child population increased from 64.2 million to 73.7 million between 1990 and 2017. Texas (2.5 million), Florida (1.2 million), and California (1.1 million) accounted for half of the nation's total growth.
- All 15 of the states where growth in the child population outpaced the national average since 1990 are in the South or West. The states that saw declines in the child population are in the Northeast and Midwest.
- From 1990 to 2017, 38 states and the District of Columbia saw the percentage of children from immigrant families double; 12 have seen those percentages quadruple.
- Eighteen percent of American kids grow up in poverty, presenting tremendous risks to child well-being. Despite economic growth and reduced unemployment, there's been virtually no progress on child poverty since the publication of the first Data Book in 1990. [Read the report.](#)

Submit a Proposal to Present at the AFCC 57th Annual Conference in New Orleans, Louisiana

When a Child Rejects a Parent: Are We Part of the Problem or the Solution?
May 27-30, 2020

AFCC is accepting proposals for 90-minute workshop sessions. Proposals must be submitted using the online form. Go to afccnet.org and click on the AFCC 57th Annual Conference box from the home page. **Proposals are due no later than Wednesday, October 2, 2019.**

All proposals must describe any limitations of the proposed content, present contradictory evidence, and discuss both sides of controversial topics. AFCC strongly encourages including presenters representing diverse perspectives.

[Click Here for More Information!](#)

AFCC Webinar Corner

Registration is now open for the August webinar with Barbara Jo Fidler, PhD.

“I Don’t Want to Go!” What’s a Parenting Coordinator To Do?

Barbara Jo Fidler, PhD

August 21, 2019

1:00-2:00pm Eastern Time US

Registration closes Tuesday, August 20, 2019 at 9:00am Eastern Time.

Though outcomes hopefully include change, the parenting coordinator (PC) is not a therapist. Working with high conflict co-parenting situations involving resist-refuse dynamics poses additional complexity, practice challenges, and ethical conundrums for the PC. This webinar identifies specific issues a PC faces when a child is resisting parent contact and discusses possible solutions and best practices.



Barbara Fidler, PhD, is a clinical developmental psychologist. She is co-author of four books: two on child custody assessments and two on parent-child contact problems. She has authored journal articles and book chapters, including three chapters in the recently published *Overcoming Parent-Child Contact Problems: Family-Based Interventions for Resistance, Rejection, and Alienation* (2017) and is co-editor of *Evidence-Informed Interventions for Court-Involved Families* (in press).

Registration

Members: \$15

Non-Members: \$50

Certificate of Attendance

Members: \$15

Non-Members: \$20

Attendees may purchase a certificate of attendance along with their registration. No refunds or credits will be issued for webinar cancellations.

Webinars will be archived as a member benefit, for personal use only. These can be found in the Member Center on our website. If you are not currently a member, join when you register to get \$10 off your annual membership as well as webinar registration at the member price.

Read more about continuing education credit for lawyers, judges, social workers,

counselors, and other professionals [here](#).

[Register now!](#)

Member News

Debra Forman, AFCC member from New Jersey, is the winner of the overall survey random drawing for free conference registration. By completing the conference evaluation survey of the AFCC 56th Annual Conference in Toronto, she was entered into the raffle to win free registration for the AFC 57th Annual Conference in New Orleans, May 27 - 30, 2020. Congratulations, Debra!

Chapter News

Meet Sara Rich, Oregon Chapter President

Sara Rich, LCSW is a family therapist in private practice. Sara received her BA from the University of Oregon in Theater Arts and her Masters of Social Work from Portland State University. She provides Expert Consultation in Lane County for Parent/Child Interaction, Co-Parent Coaching, Parent Coordination, Reintegration Support, and Supervised Parenting Time. [Read more](#).



Meet Leslie Todd, Louisiana Chapter President

Leslie Todd, LCSW, ACSW, has been in private practice since 1990. She been a child custody evaluator for 20 years and has served several times on the Louisiana State Board of Social Work Examiners' Custody Evaluations Task Force. In 2007, she rallied Baton Rouge professionals to start an AFCC Chapter and served on the Louisiana State Law Institute's Parenting Coordination Committee to enact the law, making Louisiana the 13th state to have PCs. [Read more](#).



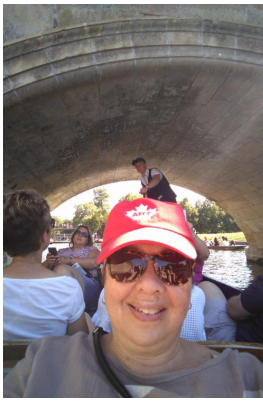
Where in the World is AFCC?

AFCC's hats are finding their way across Europe. Are you traveling this summer? Post your picture in an AFCC hat (any version is fine) in in the coming year. Please post your photo on social media using [#AFCCChats](#) [#whereintheworldisAFCC](#).

Also, if you email your photo to AFCC you will be entered into next year's contest and we will add the photo to AFCC social media posts and our Facebook album. Just email your photo to afcc@afccnet.org with a subject line "AFCC hats."

Qualifying photos must include at least one AFCC member along with a visible AFCC hat. The contest winner will be chosen at AFCC's next annual conference in New Orleans, LA which will take place May 27-30, 2020. We hope to see you there!

See examples from AFCC members below!



Justice Gerri Wong in
Cambridge, England



Larry Fong in Davos,
Switzerland



Mindy Mitnick in Amsterdam,
Netherlands

AFCC Staff News

Gina Wentling, BM, BME Communications Coordinator

Gina joined the AFCC team in July 2019 as Communications Coordinator. She writes content for the website, social media platforms, emails, and printed pieces. Gina also develops and implements AFCC's communication strategy. Her previous experience includes marketing and communications positions in the health care, biotechnology, and real estate industries. Early in her career, Gina taught middle school band after earning degrees in music education and music performance at the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point.



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:
[Patrick Sommer](#)





ASSOCIATION OF
FAMILY AND
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eNEWS

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AFCC: An Organization Without Borders

Matthew Sullivan, PhD, AFCC President, Palo Alto, CA

It's been just over a month since I returned from an amazing AFCC Annual Conference in Toronto. Coincidentally, the conference took place just a couple blocks away from the first truly international NBA finals basketball game. Hailing from the Golden State (California), like our previous AFCC President Dianna Gould-Saltman (well done, DGS!), I never would have thought that the NBA finals would go global, much less down the street from the AFCC conference. And while I proudly sported my team colors, I was disappointed that the Toronto Raptors beat my Golden State Warriors. It was a great series, and although it was a bitter pill, I offer heartfelt congratulations to all of our Ontario and Canadian friends.



The AFCC Toronto conference also transcended the borders of family law, with participants and programs demonstrating the global family that AFCC has become. The conference was inspirational in providing a collaborative forum to share different approaches to universal problems such as access to justice, family violence, and parent-child contact problems, to name a few. Equally important, the social venues at the conference (and internet platforms) provided opportunities for our diverse global community in attendance (nearly 1,000 from 28 countries) to build personal relationships. Former AFCC president Emile Kruzick's intimate conversation with retired Canadian Supreme Court Justice Claire L'Heureux-Dube highlighted the similarities in how an extraordinary Justice has advanced equality for all members of our global society. Some of our US colleagues called her Canada's RBG, but it just might be that Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg is the United States' Justice Claire L'Heureux-Dube!

The AFCC Board of Directors approved the new, revised AFCC Guidelines for Parenting Coordination. The updates reflected the expansion of the parenting coordinator's role to several countries in Europe, Australia, and Asia is another example of AFCC's global leadership in family law. You can view the new Guidelines on the

AFCC website. They will be followed next year by a special issue of the *Family Court Review* highlighting the PC Task Force's work on the revision and additional research projects. Special thanks to the Task Force for their outstanding efforts. Members include: Debra K. Carter, PhD, Chair; Ann M. Ordway, J.D., PhD and Linda Fieldstone, MEd, Reporters; Hon. Dolores Bomrad, J.D.; Dominic D'Abate, PhD; Barbara Fidler, PhD; Alexander Jones, JD, MSW; Mindy Mitnick, EdM, MA; John A. Moran, PhD; Daniel T. Nau, JD; Matthew Sullivan, PhD; Robin Belcher-Timme, PsyD, ABPP; and Leslye Hunter, MA, AFCC Associate Director.

The Toronto conference and the work of the Parenting Coordination Task Force demonstrated that borders are no longer an obstacle to building AFCC's global family. Our international mission is something AFCC members should be proud of and I look forward to the honor of promoting our global presence in my upcoming year as AFCC President.



ASSOCIATION OF
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Profile of a President

Matthew Sullivan, PhD

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Matt has practiced forensic family psychology for most of career and has become a leading name in the areas of parenting coordination and resist/refuse dynamics in high-conflict families. At his first AFCC conference on Maui, he presented on what was then a new role called the "special master" to all of six people in the audience, and the rest, as Matt says, is history! He credits his mentors Joan Kelly and Janet Johnston for their support of his professional development.

Today, Matt practices parenting coordination and mediation, as well as consulting and training. He has written one book, six book chapters, and 20 articles in professional journals. He has served on all three of the AFCC Parenting Coordination Task Forces; chaired the AFCC Court-Involved Therapy Guidelines Task Force; was a member of the

APA Ethics Committee; co-founded Overcoming Barriers, Inc.; and, has served on the Board of Directors for both the AFCC California Chapter and the international AFCC.

Matt clearly loves what he does, but also recognizes the inherent risks. “In highly litigated child custody cases, if litigants don’t like the message, they try to kill the messenger,” he said. His work and dedication have been honored many times with awards and certificates, but the most gratifying to him was being awarded in 2012 the CA-AFCC’s Joseph Drown Award for outstanding services to children and families.

Matt met his wife, Sherry Cassedy, when she hired him (against the advice of others) to join her as a teaching assistant in a health policy course when they were Stanford undergraduates. Sherry went on to study at Georgetown Law School, work on Capitol Hill, and pursue a career in family law. Matt followed her to Washington D.C. for graduate school and they later returned to California together. Matt and Sherry have three children (Tyler, Cassedy, and Timmy, who died in 2010) and two grandsons. They are expecting a granddaughter very soon.

Matt loves warm, coastal life and spends time in two homes in Santa Cruz, California, and Kauai, Hawaii, each within walking distance of a world-class surf break. Matt took up surfing later in life, but he takes it seriously and relishes his early mornings on the ocean. He practices yoga daily (you can join Matt and Sherry, the instructor, for early morning yoga at AFCC conferences). Matt and Sherry took a year-long sabbatical mid-career for a complete reset. He practiced yoga, surfed with the “Dawn Patrol,” and played golf every day. Matt loves to cook and has always done all the cooking for his family. When he turned 50, he swam a four-man relay from the island of Lanai to Maui (12 miles) in open ocean with six-foot swells. He has had an annual reunion for more than 25 years of Stanford swimmers and their families where they dive for and feast on abalone.

Matt Sullivan is serious, quiet, and thoughtful when seen at AFCC. He doesn’t talk a lot in meetings and task forces, but when he does, it is something worth listening to. He has a calming, spiritual presence and is a fantastic role model and leader. He works hard and plays hard and is a force to be reckoned with. His goals for his presidential year include supporting collaborative and collegial work in our field in a variety of AFCC forums: conferences, *Family Court Review*, and trainings on the controversial and polarized issue of children’s resistance and refusal to have contact with a parent. Matt firmly believes that AFCC members must model collaboration with those who have different views and perspectives if we expect to help families address these highly-destructive and adversarial issues.



Top 10 Tips for Using Visual Communication in Family Mediation

Lisa Arora

Visualizing information during mediation with your parties is a powerful collaboration tool—a cultural technique that changes the way people think, learn, and work together to resolve disagreements.

1. **Recognize Your Parties' Need for Visual Information**

People in disputes are under stress, which from a neuroscience view means they can't hear, process, or store new information the way they usually can. When you write down key information, your parties can see as it's being discussed, this second channel of communication restores the ability to hear, think, and remember as people are making life-changing decisions.

2. **Set the Space to Work Visually**

Ensure that wherever your mediation takes place, you have a working surface (a whiteboard, a wall where you can hang large sheets of paper, or, at minimum, a flip chart) and markers. If you have these ready, you're more likely to seize those moments where visualizing something could help.

3. **Be Selective and Know Why You Are Writing Something Down**

You don't need to capture the entire conversation. In fact, you want to be selective about what you do put on the page because what you write down creates focus. At each stage of mediation, ask yourself, what information, if parties could see it, would help move the process forward by creating understanding? Generating agreement? Supporting the mediation goals?

4. **Wherever Possible, Synthesize the Parties' Exact Words**

Where parties' words are not inflammatory, preserve their words, but synthesize it down to the "nugget" in a few words. When people see their actual words, they develop a sense of ownership over the information and agreements on the map. Other times, you may intervene to help formulate the communication (reframe, neutralize, develop an idea) before it's committed to the page. In those instances, for the purpose of supporting a shift, what goes on the page may wind up in the mediator's phraseology.

5. **Build Your Visual Vocabulary Over Time**

If you believe you can't draw, don't worry about imagery. Stick to text and focus on how you organize information on the page. Over time, learn the meaning of various line types, shapes, and color and use that "vocabulary" to help show how pieces of information on the page do or do not relate.

6. ***Beyond Legibility, Don't Worry About How It Looks***

Rest assured that what you are doing is not art. It is communication. It has nothing to do with your performance or the aesthetic appeal of what you put on the page (it's not about you). It's about providing a process that supports parties to develop shared understanding and actively work with their information while finding solutions.

7. ***Welcome Mistakes/Revisions As Opportunities for Clarification***

Normalize making changes to the visual at the start of the mediation. Put the onus on the parties to make sure what's captured matches their perception/meaning. If a party objects to what is on the visual, probe to find out what they'd rather see and why. On paper, if you make a mistake, simply cross it out, or cover it up with a white mailing label and revise.

8. ***Use Sticky Notes to Move Information While Problem Solving***

When it comes to negotiating finances and schedules, putting information on sticky notes is helpful because it can be color coded, sorted, arranged, added to, or removed during discussions.

9. ***Be Vigilant About Protecting Confidentiality***

Be clear at the start of mediation how confidentiality applies to the visuals you will create together. Be prepared to handle situations when parties whip out their phones to photograph the visuals. After the mediation, dispose of or store the images according to the confidentiality agreement.

10. **Remember... You Already Have the Skills to Do This!!!**

Chances are you already take notes in mediation. It's just that when they're on your notepad, parties don't benefit from seeing what you find important. Transfer your notes to the wall and your now "public" version will increase transparency and trust because parties can see that they've been heard, they can see what the mediator has understood, and they can confirm whether the words on the page match their perceptions. Try it and take your cues about what's helpful from your parties.



An expert visual facilitator and pioneer of visual mediation methods, Lisa works with teams and families leveraging the power of visual communication to resolve disputes easier and faster. Lisa is the creator of the world's only online program that teaches dispute resolution professionals how to amplify the effect of their interventions with visuals.

www.bigbeginningsinvisualmediation.com