



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



September 2021
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The AFCC Fall Conference Comes to Cincinnati, Ohio!

AFCC Fall Conference

Unmuting the Voices of Children and Families: Can You Hear Me Now?

In collaboration with the Ohio Association of Domestic Relations Judges and the Ohio Association of Magistrates

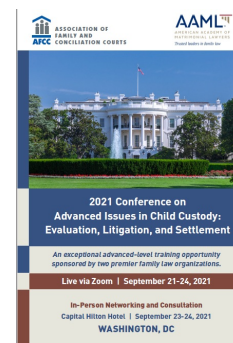
November 11-13, 2021
Cincinnati Netherland Plaza
Cincinnati, OH

Visit the Conference Portal

The conference portal is now live! This is your home for information about the AFCC Fall Conference.

- Read about all **conference sessions**: pre-conference institutes, workshops, and plenary sessions!
- Learn about **continuing education** credit applications in progress and how to obtain a certificate.
- Check **conference information** for hotel information, dine arounds, parking, the latest information on safety protocols, and more.
- Peruse the **conference brochure** for additional information.
- View **conference sponsors and exhibitors** or sign up to promote your business.

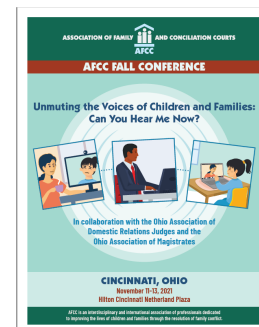
AFCC-AAML 2021 Conference on Advanced Issues in Child Custody



September 21-24, 2021
Live via Zoom

AFCC Fall Conference

November 11-13, 2021
Cincinnati, Ohio



AFCC 59th Annual Conference
May 11-14, 2022

- [Register](#) for the conference!

Hotel Reservations

A special rate of \$147/night for single or double occupancy is available exclusively to AFCC attendees. [Make your reservation online](#) or call 1-800-HILTONS (800-445-8667), ask for Hilton Cincinnati Netherland Plaza, and request the group code **AFCC**.

Exhibitors Welcome!

We anticipate the Fall Conference will be delivered in person, giving exhibitors the first opportunity to interact with AFCC attendees face-to-face in two years! [Read the prospectus](#) and contact Gina Wentling at gwentling@afccnet.org or 608-664-3750 for more information. Space is limited. Sign up now!

Safety Protocols and Health Considerations

- AFCC will require **proof of vaccination or a negative COVID test within 72 hours** of the event in order to participate in the conference.
- At present, we anticipate requiring all participants to wear a mask, and will monitor CDC guidance as we approach the conference dates. Please rest assured that we will continue to follow the CDC guidance, as we have since the beginning of the pandemic, and that we will also be guided by all state and local regulations.
- Specific health and safety protocols for the conference will be reevaluated closer to the actual date when we have the most up-to-date public health information.

[Register now!](#)

Ask the Experts

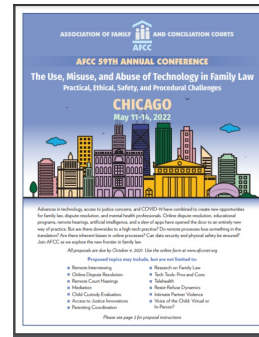
Ten Tips for Family Court Professionals Working with Families of Transgender/Gender-Expansive Children Engaged in Custody Disputes

Camellia M. Bellis, MEd and Katherine A. Kovalanka, PhD

Custody cases involving transgender and gender-expansive (TGE) children have garnered **media attention** in recent years. How do family court professionals (FCPs) work with TGE children and families when one parent affirms a child's gender identity/expression and another is unsupportive? Recent research has examined the complex challenges experienced by affirming parents and their TGE children involved in custody disputes. Due to lack of familiarity within family courts regarding TGE children, misinformation and bias have resulted in affirming parents losing physical custody and/or legal decision-making authority of their TGE children often with detrimental impacts on the children ([Kovalanka et al.](#), 2019). The following are ten tips for FCPs learning about how to advocate for this vulnerable population. [Read more.](#)

Register Now for AFCC's DE&I Next Webinar!

Microaggressions are subtle verbal,



Submit a proposal to present! The call for proposals is open until October 4, 2021.

AFCC Online Training Programs



The Fundamentals of Parenting Coordination
Nov. 29 - Dec. 2

Advanced Issues for Family Law and Dispute Resolutions Professionals
Dec. 6-7, 2021

AFCC Chapter Conferences & Webinar Series

Wisconsin Chapter Annual Conference
September 30, 2021
Now being held virtually

Maryland Chapter Annual Conference
October 7, 2021
Being held virtually

Colorado Chapter Annual Conference
October 8-9, 2021

behavioral, and environmental expressions that serve to derogate or exclude individuals based on their marginalized identities. This webinar will introduce audience members to the concept of microaggressions; the research on racial, ethnic, gender, and sexual orientation microaggressions and their detrimental impact on mental and physical health; and ways to intervene effectively when a microaggression is recognized.



Being held virtually

**Ontario Chapter
Annual Conference**
October 15, 2021
Now being held
virtually

**Illinois Chapter
Annual Conference**
October 22, 2021
Being held virtually

**Arizona Chapter
Annual Conference**
January 21-23, 2022
Sedona, Arizona

**California Chapter
Annual Conference**
February 4-6, 2022
San Francisco,
California

Free registration includes a certificate of attendance. You *must* register to attend.

[Register now!](#)

Last Chance! Register to Attend the AFCC-AAML 2021 Conference Online

2021 Conference on Advanced Issues in Child Custody: Evaluation, Litigation, and Settlement

Virtual Conference

September 21-24, 2021

Live via Zoom

All sessions will be delivered online. Registrants will have access to recordings for a full year afterwards!

Even if you can't make the in-person networking events in Washington, DC, you can attend virtually! Visit the [Conference Portal](#) for more information and [register today!](#)

Resource of the Month

Pamphlets for Parents

Located on the [Resources for Families](#) page of the AFCC website, *Pamphlets for Parents* includes *A Guide for Joint Custody and Shared Parenting* and many others.

Submit a Proposal for the AFCC 59th Annual Conference by October 4th

The Use, Misuse, and Abuse of Technology in Family Law: Practical, Ethical, Safety, and Procedural Challenges

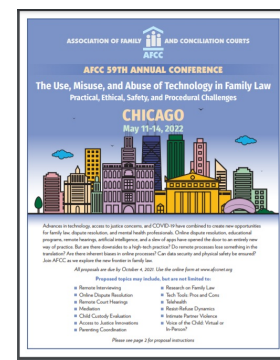
Chicago, Illinois

May 11-14, 2022

AFCC is accepting proposals for 90-minute workshop sessions for the 59th Annual Conference.

Share your expertise with AFCC members and other attendees! Build your career, expand your presentation skill set, and challenge yourself to explore your thoughts on family law and technology.

AFCC is committed to understanding the different views, needs, and wants of its membership and establishing a diverse



professional community. If your proposals would fall into this category, we would love to hear from you.

All proposals are due October 4, 2021. [Read the complete instructions](#) and use the [online form](#) to submit your proposal.

AFCC Virtual Training Programs Are Back November 29th!

Back by popular demand! Last year AFCC launched online parenting coordination training programs. Attendees appreciated the flexibility virtual training allowed, so we are offering another pair of training programs this year.

Make plans to join us for two comprehensive training programs later this year!

The Fundamentals of Parenting Coordination

November 29, 2021 - December 2, 2021

[Register now!](#)

Advanced Issues for Family Law and Dispute Resolution Professionals

December 6-7, 2021

[Register now!](#)

The training team includes:

- Debra K. Carter, PhD
- Robin M. Deutsch, PhD, ABPP
- Mindy F. Mitnick, EdM, MA
- Shely Polak, PhD
- Matthew J. Sullivan, PhD

[Read the brochure](#) for more information.

AFCC Webinar Corner

Parent Education for Divorcing and Separating Families: Are We Accomplishing Our Goals?

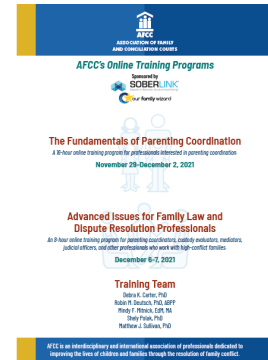
Irwin Sandler, PhD and Karey O'Hara

October 12, 2021 | 1:00-2:00pm Eastern Time US/Canada

Registration closes on October 11, 2021 at 9:00am Eastern Time US/Canada.

Family courts around the world encourage -- and many require -- separating and divorcing parents to attend educational programs to improve children's post-separation experience. But some question whether children truly benefit. This webinar will provide an overview of program goals and examine existing literature that describes the programs that are being implemented in the courts. The review will focus on what evaluations have shown about the state of the evidence of parent education programs in the courts and whether they are accomplishing the goals that have been set. Future directions for court use of parent education programs will be discussed.

Irwin Sandler, PhD has published major reviews of the literature on parent education programs in the family courts and in other settings. He has been a member of the working group of the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine that produced a landmark review of preventive interventions for children and adolescents and has been a co-author on a paper describing standards of evidence for preventive interventions. He is the co-developer and evaluator of the New Beginnings Program



that has published multiple studies demonstrating long-term benefits for children following divorce.

Karey O'Hara, PhD, is an Assistant Research Professor of Psychology at Arizona State University. She earned her PhD in clinical psychology from the University of Arizona in 2017. She completed a clinical internship at SUNY Upstate Medical University and an NIH-funded T32 postdoctoral fellowship at Arizona State University's REACH Institute. She conducts research on the ways that children and parents adjust after stressful events in the family, such as parental divorce, bereavement, and incarceration. Her work is currently funded by a career development award from the National Institute of Mental Health (K01MH120321).



Registration

Members: \$15

Non-Members: \$50

Certificate of Attendance

Members: \$15

Non-Members: \$20

Continuing education credit may be available for lawyers, judges, psychologists, social workers, counselors, and other professionals. [Learn more.](#)

[Register today!](#)

Register Now for AFCC's November webinar!

Parent-Child Contact Problems: NCJFCJ and AFCC Working Toward Common Ground

Hon. Ramona Gonzalez and Matthew Sullivan, PhD

November 17, 2021 | 1:00-2:00pm Eastern Time US/Canada

[Register now!](#)

In Memoriam: Darryl Bauchert

Darryl Bauchert, AFCC member from Fort Myers, Florida, passed away in August. Darryl was an active member of the AFCC-Florida chapter and formerly acted as its treasurer. A former United States Marine who earned an MBA, worked as a financial planner, and played trumpet in the Ohio State University Marching Band, Darryl later worked in family mediation. He "became a fervent advocate for peaceful and fair resolutions to family law cases." Members of the Florida chapter of AFCC remember Darryl as a "wonderful man who contributed greatly to the chapter."



Member News

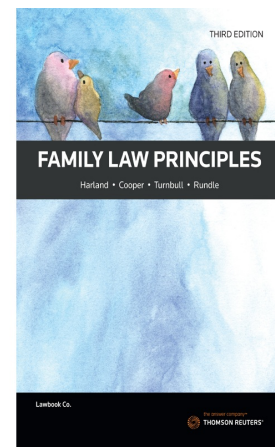
Barbara Babb, MS, JD, AFCC member in Baltimore, Maryland and Editor-in-Chief of *Family Court Review*, retired from the University of Baltimore in August and is now the Associate Professor of Law Emerita, and Founder and Founding Director of the University of Baltimore School of Law Sayra and Neil Meyerhoff Center for Families, Children and the Courts (CFCC). Barbara will remain editor of *Family Court Review*. During her 32-year career at the law school, Barbara has received the University System of Maryland Regents' Award for Outstanding Public Service, the first Benjamin L. Cardin Distinguished Service Award, and the Stanley Cohen Distinguished Research Award from the AFCC, among other honors. Congratulations, Barbara!



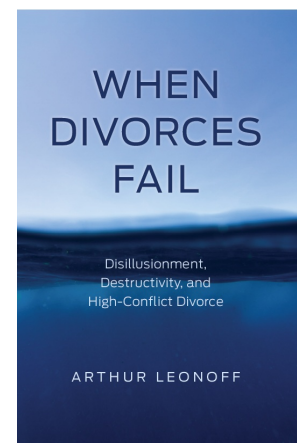
Lawrence Jay Braunstein, JD, AFCC member from White Plains, New York and a member of the AFCC Board of Directors, was named Lawyer of the Year by *Best Lawyers* for Family Law, White Plains (2022). He is a partner in the law firm of Braunstein & Zuckerman, Esqs, where he practices in the areas of Matrimonial, Family and Collaborative Law and related civil and criminal litigation, with an expertise in child custody litigation. He is an Adjunct Professor of Law at Hofstra University School of Law, Hempstead, New York where he teaches Child Abuse and Neglect, Collaborative Family Law and Modern Divorce Advocacy. Congratulations, Larry!



Judge Alexandra Harland, AFCC member from Melbourne, Australia, is one of the authors of *Family Law Principles*, published by Thomson Reuters. The book covers areas that are important in practice, such as family law reports, how courts consider social science research, and emerging areas in family law. It also takes a practical approach to practice and procedure, systematically dealing with the types of applications before courts, providing analytical guidelines, checklists, and summaries of key components. This third edition brings a thorough examination of recent developments in the law, including examining the court's approach to COVID-19 issues in the context of the unacceptable risk test, and provides a unique framework to assist practitioners in resolving ethical dilemmas. [Learn more](#). Congratulations, Alexandra!



Arthur Leonoff, PhD, AFCC member from Perth, Ontario, has published a new book, *When Divorces Fail: Disillusionment, Destructivity, and High-Conflict Divorce*, in which he combines psychoanalytic knowledge with a wealth of clinical experience to explore the root causes of major high conflict. [Learn more](#). Arthur is a psychologist and psychoanalyst practicing in Ottawa. He is a supervising & training analyst with the Canadian Psychoanalytic Society and an honorary member of the American Psychoanalytic Society. Arthur has worked and written extensively in the divorce field. He is also the author of *The Ethical Divorce* (Karnac, 2015; Friesen, 2021). Congratulations, Arthur!



Do you have a notable achievement to share? Email [Gina Wentling](#) with your story

and a professional head shot or book image (PNG preferred), if you have one, to be featured in next month's Member News!

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, international news, and the latest initiatives in family law and conflict resolution. The *AFCC eNEWS* is provided at no charge to you; anyone can subscribe.

[Subscribe here](#).

AFCC members are free to share eNEWS content.

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ASSOCIATION OF
FAMILY AND
CONCILIATION COURTS



eNEWS

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Ten Tips for Family Court Professionals Working with Families of Transgender/Gender-Expansive Children Engaged in Custody Disputes

Camellia M. Bellis, M.Ed., and Katherine A. Kuvalanka, Ph.D.

Custody cases involving transgender and gender-expansive (TGE) children have garnered media [attention](#) in recent years. How do family court professionals (FCPs) work with TGE children and families when one parent affirms a child's gender identity/expression and another is unsupportive? Recent research has examined the complex challenges experienced by affirming parents and their TGE children involved in custody disputes. Due to lack of familiarity within family courts regarding TGE children, misinformation and bias have resulted in affirming parents losing physical custody and/or legal decision-making authority of their TGE children often with detrimental impacts on the children ([Kuvalanka et al., 2019](#)). (For relevant law review articles, see: [Margolis, 2016](#); [Perkiss, 2014](#); [Skougard, 2011](#)). The following are ten tips for FCPs learning about how to advocate for this vulnerable population.

- 1. Listen to and center the child's experience:** Transgender identities and diverse gender expressions are normal aspects of human diversity—and TGE children, like their cisgender peers, have an understanding of their gender from a young age ([American Academy of Pediatrics, 2018](#)). They benefit from being listened to and believed when sharing their identity with family members, providers, and court professionals. Giving a child room to explore their gender identity in a safe, nonthreatening environment is the goal of the [gender-affirmative care model](#). As an FCP, you could be in a critically important and unique position to advocate for a TGE child.
- 2. Familiarize yourself with the literature on family acceptance:** TGE youth who lack supportive families are far more likely to experience depressive symptoms and suicidal ideation (Aitken et al., 2016; Perez-Brumer et al., 2017). The [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) summarizes the existing body of research, which clearly indicates that TGE children not supported in their identities face an increased likelihood of experiencing

adverse social, emotional, and physical health outcomes. Family acceptance is a critical factor when it comes to the health and well-being of TGE children.

- 3. Educate yourself on the structures that impact TGE children and their families:** The issues and challenges that TGE children and their families face are complex and multifaceted. Systemic bias and transphobia in [societal institutions](#), such as schools, laws, and health care, can contribute to physical and mental health disparities for TGE youth. TGE children may also face additional risk factors, such as adverse childhood experiences, resulting from family rejection and/or racism. FCPs, who lack training around gender diversity and the best interests of TGE children, may unintentionally exacerbate negative outcomes for TGE children.
- 4. Interrupt and challenge interpersonal and institutional transphobia in family court:** Transphobia can take on many forms in family court. The most common in these cases is when an affirming parent is “[blamed](#)” for causing the child to be TGE. Parental acceptance does not determine or change a child’s gender identity, but it can “[profoundly affect young people’s ability to openly discuss or disclose concerns about their identity.](#)” Transphobia in family court can also lead to: a) assertions that affirming gender experts are “biased,” b) statements that a child is too young to know their gender, and c) use of Child Protective Services to falsely allege that an affirming parent’s affirmation or validation of their child’s gender is akin to child abuse. FCPs can pay attention to ways in which transphobia manifests in family court and can actively challenge any claims that affirmation and support of a TGE child’s gender identity are detrimental.
- 5. Recognize coercive tactics sometimes utilized by non-affirming parents:** Coercive and controlling tactics on behalf of a non-affirming parent toward an affirming parent (as well as toward the child) can occur in these [cases](#). Psychological and emotional abuse, which may have been evident prior to relationship dissolution, can continue post-dissolution through the courts. In these situations, family court has been used by non-affirming parents as a vehicle to further control and punish the affirming parent, such as through relentless threat of (or actual) court filings, which can intimidate and financially devastate, and using court orders to block affirmation of the child’s gender.
- 6. Oppose harmful court orders that seek to restrict a child’s gender expression:** Firmly oppose any recommendations that seek to limit a child's gender exploration or identity development. Court orders that take away toys, clothes, or a child's favorite items deemed "not in accordance with the child's sex assigned at birth" are uninformed, arbitrary, harmful, and are not in line with a [gender affirmative model](#).

- 7. Understand that a “gender neutral” approach can cause harm:** Some affirming parents have been ordered to refrain from speaking to their TGE children about gender or to stop using the name or pronouns that a child has requested. These orders assume that a “gender-neutral” approach is benign and that, rather than affirming a TGE child’s asserted gender, a more prudent approach is to wait and see if a child is “really transgender.” The [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) asserts that “watchful waiting” is “an outdated approach” that “does not serve the child because critical support is withheld,” and goes on to say that “current research suggests that, rather than focusing on who a child will become, valuing them for who they are, even at a young age, fosters secure attachment and resilience, not only for the child but also for the whole family.”
- 8. Seek out experts in the field and follow current standards of care:** FCPs are increasingly turning toward medical and mental health professionals with gender-related expertise for guidance and recommendations when parents disagree about a child’s gender identity or expression. FCPs can also educate themselves by referring to current best practices and standards of care from the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#), the [American Psychological Association](#), and the [World Professional Association for Transgender Health Standards of Care](#). Court delays, due to lack of awareness, implicit bias, and transphobia, that restrict access to affirming health care can have dire consequences for TGE youth. Please visit our [provider toolkit](#) for additional information.
- 9. Recognize that affirming parents may need legal and/or financial assistance:** In high-conflict [cases](#), affirming parents can experience significant financial strain due to ongoing litigation stemming from a non-affirming parent’s attempts to stop affirmation of a TGE child’s gender. This happens especially where courts are uninformed about TGE identities in childhood and, therefore, sympathetic to a non-affirming parent’s claims. Some affirming parents who are sued for custody end up out-resourced by the other parent and find it challenging or impossible to afford initial or ongoing legal counsel. In instances where the child’s gender is the central issue, consider connecting the affirming parent to discounted or pro bono legal services, or, when possible, direct gender-related filings to less expensive options, such as guardians ad litem, parenting coordinators, therapeutic interventionists, or community advocates educated about TGE children.
- 10. Engage in continuing legal education related to TGE children in family court:** There is a need for well-informed, unbiased FCPs assigned to these [cases](#). Affirming parents and their children would benefit from encountering FCPs who have sound knowledge of TGE identities and gender nonconformity in childhood, including health and mental health disparities of those not supported in their identity. We encourage self-reflection and critique of the legal system (both historically and present-day) and the harm done to

sexual and gender-diverse youth and adults. Legal education on implicit and explicit bias is strongly recommended as a core component of any legal training.

The authors will present a pre-conference institute, *Affirming or Corrupting the Child's Truth: Family Dynamics, Gender Identity, Domestic Violence, and Special Needs*, along with co-presenters Benjamin Garber, Jessica Greenwald O'Brien, and Sol Rappaport, at the AFCC Fall Conference, set for November 11-13, 2021, in Cincinnati, Ohio. [Register now](#) to attend this important, thought-provoking presentation!

Camellia Bellis is the Co-Director of the Health Equity Longitudinal Curricular Theme, and Education and Training Specialist in the Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at the University of Arizona College of Medicine Phoenix. In her role, she develops and delivers trainings to faculty, staff, students, residents, fellows and community affiliates on topics related to diversity and inclusion and assists faculty in implementing current research and best practices related to cultural humility, health equity, implicit bias, social and structural determinants of health and health disparities. She has developed trainings on LGBTQ+ inclusion in health care for faculty, students, residents, and community partners and presented to a variety of audiences about transgender youth and adults. She is the lead author of a toolkit for medical and mental health providers on navigating care for transgender/gender-expansive youth in family court cases and examining the social determinants of health/mental health for this vulnerable group. Cammy is also the founder of Mothers/Parents in Transition, a national organization dedicated to supporting parents of transgender/gender-expansive children in custody disputes with unsupportive ex-partners through collaborative research, education, and advocacy. She is the 2020 recipient of the Building the Next Generation of Academic Physicians (BNGAP) LGBT Health Professional Leadership Award.



Katherine (Kate) A. Kovalanka (she/her) earned her PhD in family studies from the University of Maryland, College Park, and is currently a professor and Interim Chair in the Department of Family Science and Social Work at Miami University in Ohio. Her research has focused on sexuality and gender socialization more broadly, and more specifically on families with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) family members. She is interested in how factors in various contexts (e.g., family, school, legal climate) pose challenges to, and foster resilience among, families with LGBTQ members. She teaches various courses, including “Family Policy and Law” and “Diverse Family Systems across the Life Cycle.” She has received funding from the Williams Institute at the University of California Los



Angeles School of Law, the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, the National Council on Family Relations, and the American Psychological Foundation. She is on the editorial board of the *Journal of GLBT Family Studies* and the *Journal of Youth & Adolescence* and is the principal investigator of the Trans*Kids Project (<http://transkids.info/>), a longitudinal study of 50 families with transgender and gender-diverse children, which began more than a decade ago.