



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



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VOL. 17 No. 1

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### President's Message

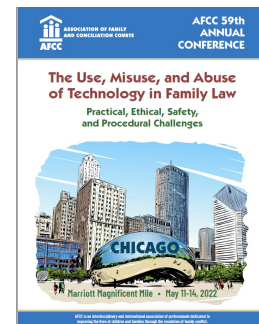
*Mindy Mitnick, AFCC President*

The words to the old Coca Cola jingle came to me the other day unbidden: "I'd like to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony. I'd like to build the world a home and furnish it with love."

And then I realized how long it had been since I had thought about "perfect harmony." The last two years I have found to be incredibly challenging – not because of the pandemic – but because the issues of tolerance and intolerance have moved to the front of my consciousness. I live in Minnesota where George Floyd was murdered and where there has been a long, deep history of racism and antisemitism. [Read more.](#)



**AFCC 59th Annual Conference**  
*Chicago, Illinois*  
*May 11-14, 2022*



Thank you to our  
annual conference  
sponsors!

**Diamond Sponsors**



## Registration is Open for the AFCC 59th Annual Conference in Chicago!

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

*May 11-14, 2022*

*Chicago Marriott Downtown Magnificent Mile*



Register Now!

## Plan to Attend the Opening Session and Plenary Session!

These can't-miss sessions promise to be highlights of the AFCC 59th Annual Conference. Make sure you are there to catch them!

### OPENING SESSION: **Data Analytics and Artificial Intelligence: Promise and Pitfalls in Family Courts**

*Keynote Speaker:* Amy J. Schmitz, JD

*Discussants:* Hon. Kevin Duffan & Kathleen McNamara, PhD

Family law professionals have been thrust into innumerable forms of technology, which has both improved practice and created new challenges. Presenters in this session will examine the future that doubtless lies ahead.

### PLENARY SESSION: **Mind the Gap: Technology, Access, Connection, Equity, and Justice**

*Presenters:* Chioma Ajoku, JD, PhD, ABPP; Hon. William S. Boyd; Stacey E. Platt, JD; and Susan M. Yates

*Moderator:* Colin Rule, MPP

Since the explosion of online mediation, remote hearings, evaluations, and telehealth, due to Covid-19 risk, questions about the impact of technology on the family justice system are on the rise. This panel will discuss how technology impacts users and practitioners as we strive to evolve toward a more accessible, effective, and humane family justice system.

[Read the full conference program brochure](#) for full descriptions of the Opening Session and the Plenary Session, plus the pre-conference institutes and the workshops.

### Scholarships Are Available!

Thanks to the generosity of donors to the AFCC Scholarship Fund, AFCC will offer several scholarships for the conference. Each scholarship includes conference registration, one pre-conference institute, a certificate of attendance, and meal functions, including the Welcome Reception, Luncheon, and Annual Banquet. A limited number of scholarships will include travel stipends. **The application deadline is February 22, 2022. Apply now!**

### Place Your Hotel Reservation Today!

Reserve your hotel room now. The Marriott Chicago Downtown Magnificent Mile is offering a special rate to AFCC attendees of \$229 per night for single/double occupancy. **We encourage you to make your reservation early because rooms frequently sell out before the room block is release.** To make your reservation today, call 1-877-303-0104 and request the AFCC special rate, or [reserve online](#).

### Donate to the Silent Auction

The annual AFCC Silent Auction is a longstanding AFCC tradition that we hope to resurrect in 2022. All proceeds support AFCC special projects and initiatives. Donate an item and attend the auction to bid! The auction is scheduled for Friday, May 13, 2022, 5:30pm-7:00pm. *You do not need to*



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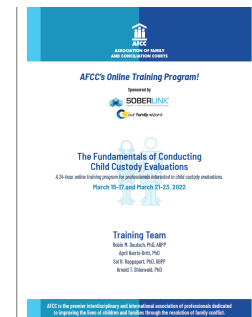
ADR Notable

Mediation Management Made Easy.



Online Parenting Programs

### AFCC Online Training Programs



*The Fundamentals of Conducting Child Custody Evaluations*  
Mar. 15-17, 2022, and  
Mar. 21-23, 2022

### AFCC Chapter Conferences

Massachusetts Chapter Webinar Series

*attend the conference to donate.*

Past auction items include tropical getaways, one-of-a-kind jewelry, sports memorabilia, gadgets, electronics, and books. The best options are small, portable items that are easy for the donor to bring to the conference and easy for the recipient to take home. [Donate an item.](#)

### **Exhibit with AFCC!**

AFCC has several sponsors and exhibitors lined up for the conference already, but we'd love to welcome more! [Read the prospectus](#) and contact [Gina Wentling](#) to sign up.

Confirming early allows you take advantage of lower prices, better table location, and more! Don't miss out on your chance to promote your business to AFCC conference attendees. Sign up now -- space is filling up quickly!

February 8, 2022, and  
March 8, 2022

### **Colorado Chapter Annual Conference**

February 4-5, 2022  
Being held virtually

### **Alberta Chapter Annual Conference**

March 4, 2022  
Calgary, Alberta and  
online

### **Louisiana Chapter Annual Conference**

March 18, 2022  
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

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## **Conversation Corner: Tami Moscoe**

### **A Column Throwback to the AFCC Newsletter of the 90's**

**Tami Moscoe, LLB**, provides advice to the Chief Justice and Senior Family Justice of the Ontario Superior Court on all issues relating to family law, family court processes, and the Unified Family Court. This includes developing internal and external resources for the Superior Court of Justice, which handles 50,000 cases annually. Tami is also an Accredited Family Mediator (Ontario Association for Family Mediation). Tami recently helped to develop Ontario's Family Law Limited Scope Services Program, the Superior Court's new Binding Judicial Dispute Resolution pilot and Ontario's upcoming pilot for articling students to assist with family cases. [Read more.](#)



## **Register Now for AFCC's Online Training Program on Child Custody Evaluations**

### **The Fundamentals of Conducting Child Custody Evaluations**

*March 15-17, 2022, and March 21-23, 2022*

This comprehensive child custody evaluation (CCE) training program will be conducted online by a team of leading practitioners and trainers. The training takes place in two segments per day, two hours each.

**Join us and earn up to 24 hours of continuing education training!** Recordings of all sessions and all handouts will be available to registrants.

The training team includes Robin M. Deutsch, PhD, ABPP; April Harris-Britt, PhD; Sol R. Rappaport, PhD, ABPP; and Arnold T. Shienvold, PhD. [Read more](#) about the team.

[Visit the training portal](#) for more information!

### **Ready to Learn Even More About Child Custody Evaluations?**

An in-person, interactive program will be offered as a supplement as a pre-conference institute at the 59th Annual Conference in Chicago.

Look for *Advanced Training in Child Custody Evaluation* on page 4 of the [conference](#)

[program brochure](#). This institute is designed for those who have attended the child custody evaluation online training program or similar training.

## Nominate a Valued Colleague for an AFCC Award!

AFCC is honored to recognize the accomplishments of leaders in family law by presenting awards at the AFCC Annual Conference. We encourage you to nominate a colleague who has made an important contribution to the field.

Nominations for the following awards, which will be presented at the AFCC 59th Annual Conference, will be accepted online through **March 21, 2022**. Learn more about each award and view past recipients by click on each award below.

**John E. VanDuzer Distinguished Service Award** recognizes outstanding contributions and/or achievements by AFCC members. [Submit a nomination!](#)

**Stanley Cohen Distinguished Research Award**, sponsored by the Oregon Family Institute, recognizes outstanding research and/or research achievements in the field of family and divorce. [Submit a nomination!](#)

**Irwin Cantor Innovative Program Award** recognizes innovation in court-connected or court-related programs created by AFCC members. [Submit a nomination!](#)

## Every Donation to the AFCC Scholarship Fund Helps a Colleague in Need!

The AFCC Scholarship Funds provides funding to support attendance at AFCC conferences. If you are able to donate in any amount, as [these individuals](#) have, we truly appreciate your contribution. It means a lot to the professionals who could not attend AFCC conferences without your help. Thank you for your consideration.

AFCC plans to return to in-person events at the 59th Annual Conference, set for May 11-14, 2022, in Chicago, Illinois. With your help, the Scholarship Committee can send more worthy professionals to the conference and offer travel stipends to some, which helps make attendance more feasible for many people in need. [Learn more](#) or [donate now!](#)

## AFCC Webinar Corner

### Focused or Cost-Effective Evaluations

Leslie Todd, LCSW, ACSW

February 8, 2022 | 1:00-2:00pm Eastern Time US/Canada

Registration closes on February 7, 2022 at 9:00am Eastern Time US/Canada.

Many families cannot afford the “Cadillac” of child custody evaluations. Leslie provides a hybrid Honda model: sturdy, sensible and efficient, which has won many Louisiana attorneys over to AFCC. Leslie creates dual-household genograms in sessions, educating families while gathering data. This Honda provides an excellent psychosocial history and collateral data with attention to parenting competencies and relational attributes rather than relying on psychological testing and its inflammatory potential.

**Leslie Todd, LCSW, ACSW** has been a psychotherapist for thirty years. For twenty years, she has been a custody evaluator and pioneered parenting coordination in Louisiana. Leslie has served on the AFCC-LA board since its inception and twice as Chapter President.



## 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!](#)

## Moving Family Disputes Online

Bernie Mayer, PhD and Colin Rule

March 10, 2022 | 1:00-2:00pm Eastern Time US/Canada

Registration closes on March 9, 2022, at 9:00am Eastern Time US/Canada.

[Register now!](#)

## Chapter News

The **Massachusetts chapter of AFCC** recently launched a webinar series. Though the first webinar has already taken place, anyone who is interested can join the series now to view the other two.

### DRUG AND ALCOHOL TESTING THREE-PART WEBINAR SERIES

Presenters: Steven Paymer, MSW & Stephanie Tabashneck, PsyD, JD

#### Upcoming webinars:

February 8, 2022 | 1:00pm-2:00 pm Eastern time US/Canada

*Drug testing and family court*

March 8, 2022 | 1:00pm-2:00 pm Eastern time US/Canada

*Parenting plans and family court*

[Register now!](#) The cost to participate is \$15 per webinar.

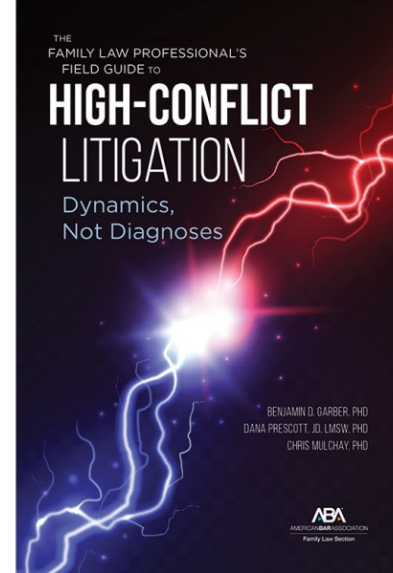
## Member News

**Stephanie Tabashneck, PsyD, JD**, AFCC member from Waltham, Massachusetts, is celebrating two recent professional achievements. She was announced as the Senior Fellow in Law and Applied Neuroscience for 2022-2023 at the Center for Law, Brain & Behavior and the Petrie-Flom Center at Harvard Law School. The Project on Law and Applied Neuroscience is a collaboration between the Massachusetts General Hospital Center for Law, Brain & Behavior (CLBB) and the Petrie-Flom Center. Stephanie was also recently appointed to the American Psychological Association Ethics Committee. She is a forensic psychologist and attorney in Boston. Her practice areas include substance use disorders, forensic psychological assessment, child custody, and criminal forensic evaluations. Congratulations, Stephanie!



Three AFCC members worked together to write a new book, *The Family Law Professional's Guide to High-Conflict Litigation: Dynamics, Not Diagnoses* -- **Benjamin Garber, PhD** (Nashua, New Hampshire), **Dana Prescott, LMSW, PhD** (Saco, Maine), and **Chris Mulchay, PhD**

(Asheville, North Carolina). The guide, "the first book to capture the full spectrum of our contemporary understanding of high-conflict family dynamics," is designed to help family law professionals better understand and communicate the dynamics of the conflicted family system. It has been chosen by the ABA Family Law Section as its January book of the month. Book chapters include "Healthy child and family development," "The motives that yield destructive family dynamics," and "The Chameleon child." Learn more [here](#). Congratulations, Ben, Dana, and Chris!



**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.*

**EDITOR:**

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[Gina Wentling](#)





ASSOCIATION OF  
FAMILY AND  
CONCILIATION COURTS



eNEWS

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## President's Message

*Mindy Mitnick, AFCC President*

The words to the old Coca Cola jingle came to me the other day unbidden: "I'd like to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony. I'd like to build the world a home and furnish it with love."

And then I realized how long it had been since I had thought about "perfect harmony." The last two years I have found to be incredibly challenging – not because of the pandemic – but because the issues of tolerance and intolerance have moved to the front of my consciousness. I live in Minnesota where George Floyd was murdered and where there has been a long, deep history of racism and antisemitism.

I wanted to write about tolerance and efforts not to look away from the hard things all around me, like the outing of a transgender child to keep her mother from winning the local school board election in the suburbs of the Twin Cities. I looked for inspiration in poetry and found this:

For is not all, of nature in this life?  
The good, the bad, together, love, and strife  
As nature, this is how such things will be  
So it is not how loud we shout, but what we see  
And seeing do, to help, to liberate  
To free with tolerance, not shut the gate  
That is  
How it should be

~ from *Tolerance* by Egal Bohem

Stretching our tolerance and our comfort zones, can we see, hear, and do differently in our personal lives and in our work worlds? Can we ask ourselves not to create "other" when we disagree, no matter how strongly felt, and expand debate to dialogue?

And then, as I sought other inspiration for this message, I found this perspective:

When you tolerate  
You hold yourself in high esteem  
Above Not beside  
You grace me with your temporary favor  
You disguise me with your perceptions  
You make me a little less distasteful  
For a moment  
Perhaps a day  
You feel proud for not looking away

~ from *Tolerance* by Richard Lamoureux

This hard message lent itself to feeling the need to choose between increasing tolerance or diminishing intolerance, whether expressed in words or actions. I reminded myself of my E2M colleague who thinks in terms of dialectics and holding two truths at the same time.

For AFCC, as our Executive Director wrote last month, “It has been AFCC’s (and my personal) mission to facilitate productive, collaborative conversations about the many difficult issues we face, whether through conferences, task forces, collaborative projects, or AFCC committees.”

One of our challenges is to come together across our differences and model what we seek for the families we work with: cooperation, positive communication, and working towards a shared goal, the reduction of conflict – not just within the family, but within and between our professions. I believe that a peaceable approach will have a ripple effect into our wider communities where we cannot look away from what we need to see, not tune out what we need to hear, and hold meaningful discussions about what is difficult to say.

My gentle challenges to family law professionals: Take an extra moment to examine what you have written – to colleagues and about their clients – and perhaps change an adjective or two; read something you would not ordinarily read to expand your knowledge base about those from backgrounds different from your own, listen to something you would not ordinarily listen to, such as a different genre of music, and watch something in media you ordinarily would scroll past or change the channel to avoid. Could you say something to someone who, intentionally or not, has used words that diminish, isolate, or stigmatize another?

Can we avoid doing only the familiar and comfortable and expand our tolerance? Can we actively work to eradicate intolerance in whatever form it shows up to us?



In AFCC, we have many voices that should be heard – with respect and ... without denigration. We can and must accommodate differences with dignity, welcoming those with different educational, work history, and personal backgrounds. I look forward to continuing this conversation with you.

We seek to connect  
Accepting those we know and  
don't. We all matter.

~ A haiku by Mindy Mitnick



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*A Column Throwback to the eNEWS of the 90's*

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**AFCC:** Access to family law services has been a big challenge for those who cannot afford a lawyer. Tell us about the Family Law Limited Scope Services Project in Ontario.

**TM:** We launched this project in 2017 with support from the family bar, the courts, and the broader family justice community. The project has a number of different features, including a 200 plus roster of family lawyers who provide limited scope services, training opportunities, best practices, and resources. It takes a huge step forward in increasing the availability of these services and making it easier for separating families to find them. When our project funding came to an end, we had to find a permanent home and are delighted that Osgoode Hall Law School's Mediation Clinic and Winkler Institute have agreed to take this on. This move will lend itself to stability for the program, increased visibility and access, and more opportunity to reach the people in need of services.

**AFCC:** Can you tell us a little more about Osgoode and why they were chosen to take on the project?

**TM:** Osgoode is a natural fit. We needed an organization with an access to justice focus, and also credibility with the family bar. Osgoode has both, as well as academics who can continue the important research that was started by Dr. Rachel Birnbaum and Professor Nick Bala (two members of the initial Steering Committee). Also, they have the benefit of law students who can help take the project to the next level (whatever that may be).

**AFCC:** What are some of the benefits law students and newer professionals will bring to the project?

**TM:** Law students and newer lawyers seem more open to the unbundled model of practice because they aren't as committed to traditional ways of practicing. It is a real opportunity to move family law away from a traditional retainer model of practice. There is also an openness to trying new approaches there that we don't always see with more experienced lawyers. And there are specific kinds of unbundled practice that I think are ripe for the younger lawyers to run with like, legal coaching, for example. I am excited to see what they do with it.

**AFCC:** This seems like a win-win arrangement. How will the project contribute to the growth of the new professionals who will be providing services through the law school?

**TM:** That is very true and there are quite a few benefits. The Family Law Limited Scope Services Project is an excellent opportunity for law students at Osgoode to support this important access to justice initiative. For example, they can apply out-of-the-box thinking about the affordability of legal services and how lawyers can address that need. They can also help develop more resources to support the lawyers and even articling students (a Canadian experiential requirement for law school graduates before they can be called to the bar) who want to incorporate limited scope services into their practices. I also love that this project will give more law students exposure to family law, to spark interest, and hopefully, cultivate a new generation of lawyers who are committed to this work and access to justice for families.

**AFCC:** Now that your direct involvement in the project is coming to an end, what are some of the lessons you learned that you can share with others who may be interested in developing a similar project in their jurisdiction?

**TM:** Here are my thoughts and suggestions, in no particular order:

1. Find funding, even if it needs to be time-limited. Especially with everything else we had going on, the Steering Committee needed funding to help with the research, which was critical to us and also provide some administrative support.

2. The support of the bar was critical. We brought the family lawyer associations in from the start and obtained their input as important decisions were made, such as experience and training requirements. The result was a project that many were happy to sign on for.
3. The support of the judiciary is also really important. For litigation files, lawyers are justifiably concerned about having the boundaries of the lawyer-client relationship respected. We worked with the courts to share information about the benefits of these types of services including how they can assist the court in operating more effectively.
4. The program can't rely on lawyers volunteering their time. This was important for us in Ontario where the family bar already does a ton of volunteer, pro bono and reduced fee work. We need to think more broadly about how unbundled services could be part of a viable family law practice.
5. Finally, get help to publicize your program. This is an area that we struggled with, which we believe impacted uptake. And it isn't just about publicizing the particular project, but also about changing the larger dialogue about how a family lawyer can help in more affordable ways. In other words, the availability of a la carte or bespoke legal services, where the client retains control over how much help they get and the resulting expense.