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IN THIS ISSUE

- 60th Anniversary Conference Recap
- AFCC-AAML Joint Conference
- Upcoming Webinars
- 2023 Fall Virtual Conference
- Online Training Programs
- AFCC Member and Chapter News

AFCC 60th Anniversary Conference Recap

AFCC celebrated *60 Years of Asking the Difficult Questions* earlier this month at our 60th Anniversary Conference! The event was a wonderful success, bringing together more than 800 participants from 15 countries, 5 Canadian Provinces, and 40 states. We express our sincere appreciation to everyone who attended and played a vital role in making this milestone a cherished and unforgettable occasion.

Check out some of the [conference pictures!](#)

Award winners

While at the 60th Anniversary Conference we recognized a few individuals and court programs for their achievements and accomplishments. Here are the award winners:

- **John VanDuzer Distinguished Service Award:** Dianna Gould-Saltman
- **Irwin Cantor Innovative Program Award:** Lighthouse
- **Stanley Cohen Distinguished Research Award:** Connie J.A. Beck
- **Tim Salius President's Award:** Matthew J. Sullivan
- **Meyer Elkin Essay Award:** Sol Rappaport - Read the award winning [essay!](#)
- **AFCC President's Gavel Award:** Linda Fidnick
- **Special Commendation:** Family Law Division

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Tony Pelusi & Associates

Bridging Parental Conflict

Bronze Sponsors

of the Los Angeles Superior Court

- **Special Commendation:** Los Angeles Superior Court Family Court Services

[Read more](#) about the awards.

Sponsors and Exhibitors

We would also like to thank our [sponsor's and exhibitors](#) especially [OurFamilyWizard](#) and [Soberlink](#). Without our sponsors, these events would not be possible.

Additional Thank You's!

- **Collaborating Organizations:** AFCC California Chapter, American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers, American Bar Association Section of Family Law, American Bar Association Section of Dispute Resolution, International Academy of Collaborative Professionals, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges
- **Conference Volunteers:** Chioma Ajoku, Marianne Cottingham, Jacqueline Diaz, Randy Drew, Allison Librett, Lisa Low, Jessica Polin, Deborah Wellman, Kori Wetsel, Todd Wetsel, Colleen Vantol, Stacey Zimmerman, Geri-Lynn Rempel, Cindy Padgett, Talia Spear, Chris Jones, Kian Downes, and Olivia Scucci
- **Silent Auction Donors and Silent Auction Bidders**
- **Hospitality Suite Hosts:** Hon. Denise McColley, Mike McColley, and Richard Altman

Ask the Experts

Getting On With Life Post Pandemic: Being Mindful That Not Everyone Adjusts At The Same Pace

Michael Saini, PhD, MSW, RSW

The impact of COVID-19 is far reaching and remains an important consideration when working with children and families. While some families have improved their sense of cohesion and intimacy during social isolation and global lockdowns, many others experienced life disruptions, instability and the deterioration of mental health and wellbeing. Family law professionals need to be sensitive to the short and long term the impact of these changes on the lives of children and their families. We are also not immune to the pandemic-related stresses, and we need to be mindful of our own mental health and wellbeing. [Continue Reading.](#)

ADR Notable

Exhibitors

Family Court Review
California Chapter of AFCC
Overcoming Barriers Inc
Stewart Professional
Monitoring Network
Darlene Taylor
Amicable Divorce Network
Mediate.com
USDTL

Institute on Violence,
Abuse and Trauma
International Academy of
Collaborative Professionals
Supervised Visitation
Network
Active Parenting Publishers
Riverdale Mediation Ltd.
National Association
of Counsel for Children
Parent Team
New Day Divorce Center, Inc
Introspective Comprehensive
CoParenting
Pierce's Pledge
A Blank Canvas
Family Law Software
Justice Benefits, Inc.
New Beginnings
Immediation
Family Visitation Services
Association for
Conflict Resolution

AFCC-AAML Joint Conference

Washington, DC
September 28-30, 2023

AFCC Fall Virtual Conference

November 1-3 & 6-7, 2023
Virtual

AFCC Chapter Conferences

AFCC Minnesota Annual Conference

July 27, 2023
Minneapolis, MN

AFCC Florida 19th Annual Advanced Education Program

October 4-6, 2023
Orlando, FL

AFCC Illinois Annual Conference

October, 19, 2023
Chicago, IL

AFCC Colorado Fall Conference

October 20-21, 2023
Denver, CO

AFCC Arizona

AFCC-AAML Joint Conference **Advanced Issues in Child Custody**

September 28-30, 2023
Washington, DC

AFCC-AAML Joint Conference

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

Capital Hilton
Washington, DC
September 28-30, 2023

The **Association of Family and Conciliation Courts** and **American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers** are excited to be hosting their first completely in-person joint conference in four years! We have gathered several of the most renowned experts to lead a block of comprehensive institutes and a series interactive sessions that delve into the advanced issues in child custody.

Read the Conference Brochure

Plan ahead by checking out the conference brochure and tailor your conference schedule to your professional interests. In the brochure you will find the conference itinerary, session descriptions, conference presenters, and CE information. [Check it out now!](#)

Pre-Conference Institutes

Looking for a more in-depth course? Check out one of our pre-conference institutes taking place the morning of September 28, 2023:

1. From Intake to Court
2. Profiles in Custody: Social Media and Family Law
3. Thinking about Stress, Trauma and Resilience in Children of Divorce: What Can You Do?
4. Advanced Ethical, Evidentiary, and Methodological Issues

Technology and Evidentiary Issues in Child Custody Cases

Family law professionals regularly confront issues regarding the validity and authenticity of information that is provided to them. But as technology continues to rapidly evolve, how can anyone be sure that the evidence provided is authentic and reliable? Join us at the plenary session as Nicholas Himonidis, Esq., Chris Mulchay, PhD, and Hon. Cheryl Joseph delve into the ever-evolving landscape of technology and its impact on evidentiary issues in child custody cases.

Reserve your room today!

The Capital Hilton is offering a reduced special rate to conference attendees of \$259 per night for single or double occupancy through the AFCC-AAML room block. Make your reservations [online](#) or call 202-393-1000 and ask for the AFCC-AAML Conference room block. Reserve your room early!

Become an Exhibitor

Sign up now to showcase your organization and connect with family law professionals! With an expected turnout of 350-400 attendees, this conference presents an excellent opportunity to promote your products and services to those who would benefit most from them. Read the [exhibitor prospectus](#) for more information and contact [Abby Reholz](#) to sign up!

[Read the Brochure](#)

Webinar Corner

The Work Before the Work

Sol Rappaport, PhD, ABPP

Thursday, June 22, 2023

1:00pm – 2:00pm Eastern Time (US/Canada)

Registration will close on June 21st, 2023 at 9:00am Eastern Time US/Canada.

Sponsored by



OurFamilyWizard®

This webinar will provide mental health professionals and attorneys with practice tips before they ever meet a client. This webinar is designed for professionals that act as mediators, parent coordinators, GAL's, court-appointed therapists, consultants, and evaluators. The purpose of this webinar is to present and discuss information and documents that should be completed prior to ever meeting a client. This includes screening forms, intake forms, statements of understanding, and assent/consent forms. A review of AFCC Guidelines and how they impact the type of forms developed will be discussed.

Sol Rappaport, PhD, ABPP, is Board Certified in Clinical Psychology and Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology. He has been appointed in over 900 custody evaluations and has testified throughout the United States. Dr. Rappaport's national practice includes consulting with attorneys for the purpose of work product review, cross-examination and expert witness testimony. Dr. Rappaport presents nationally and has published in the area of divorce, child abuse, psychological testing, gatekeeping, custody evaluations, as well as other topics.



Registration

Members: \$15

Non-Members: \$50

Certificate of Attendance

Members: \$15

Non-members: \$20

[Register Now!](#)

AFCC DE&I Series

Neurodiverse Children and Parents in Family Court Psychological and Judicial Perspectives on Avoiding Bias and Negative Presumptions

Wednesday, July 12, 2023

4:00pm-6:00pm Eastern Time (US/Canada)

Registration closes July 11, 2023 at 9:00am Eastern Time US/Canada.

As with cultural diversity and non-traditional families, neurodiversity is another social justice issue that needs to be considered in family court cases. There are unique considerations for neurodiverse children in situations of separation or divorce, who may not do as well as neurotypical children in the common “developmentally based” parenting plan arrangements often ordered by the court. Neurodiversity in parents also presents great challenges in family court, as when a parent has a neurocognitive disability or mental health conditions, there may be an automatic negative presumption that parenting capacity will be negatively impacted by this problem. This webinar will address how viewing parents and children who have been diagnosed with neurocognitive or psychiatric conditions as neurodiverse, instead of disordered or abnormal, and viewing this diversity through a strength-based lens, reduces bias in family court. This webinar will present both psychological and judicial perspectives for family court personnel to consider with neurodiverse parents and children, followed by an interactive discussion.

This webinar is free to attend, but you must register in advance to receive the webinar link.

Daniel B. Pickar, PhD, ABPP is board-certified child psychologist who conducts child custody evaluations, consultation to family law attorneys, and psycho-educational evaluations of children. He received his undergraduate education at Brown University and completed his Ph.D. in clinical psychology at the California School of Professional Psychology at Berkeley. For 12 years, he served as the Chief of Child and Family Psychiatry at Kaiser Permanente Medical Center in Santa Rosa, California. He has published numerous journal articles and book chapters in the areas of child custody evaluation, mediation, and children with special needs in family court. He served on the editorial board of the *Journal of Child Custody* for 6 years and currently serves on the editorial board of the *Family Court Review*. He regularly presents workshops at state and national AFCC and AAML conferences and serves on the Board of Directors of AFCC. In 2019, Dr. Pickar was awarded the Judge Rex Sater Award for “Excellence in Family Law” by the Sonoma County Bar Association.



Hon. Michelle Short was appointed to the Los Angeles Superior Court as Judge in 2018. Prior to appointment, she was elected Superior Court Commissioner in 2015. From 2015 to 2021, Judge Short heard family law matters. Prior to taking the bench, her practice was exclusively Family Law. She was regularly appointed as minor’s counsel for both neurotypical and neurodiverse families. She also worked with parties in complicated and highly contested custody and visitation issues, as well as litigated the issues of property, child support and spousal support. Throughout her tenure as a judge and commissioner, Judge Short has presented at conferences and served the Judicial Council on the Family Law Curriculum Committee, providing judicial education on the issues of Taking Testimony from Children, Minor’s Counsel, Special Needs Children, and Special Education.



More Upcoming Webinars!

Parent Child Contact Problems: Family Violence and Parental Alienation – Either/or, Neither/nor, Both/and, One in the Same?

Matthew Sullivan, PhD
July 25, 2023

Coercive Control: Understanding the Impact on Survivors as Parents and their Children

Peter Jaffe, PhD
August 9, 2023

Culture and Bias in the Child Welfare System

Kelly Browe Olson, JD, LLM; Nolanda Y. Robert, MS, CFCC
September 14, 2023

What Works (and What Doesn't) for Kids and Adults in "Blended Families"

Patricia Papernow, EdD
October 18, 2023

See All Upcoming Webinars!

AFCC Fall 2023 Virtual Conference

November 1-3 and 6-7, 2023

Addiction, Family Violence, and Mental Illness
Assessing and Managing Challenges to Contemporary Coparenting

AFCC Fall 2023 Virtual Conference

Planning for the AFCC Fall 2023 Virtual Conference is underway! We are currently in the process of finalizing the presenters and workshops for this conference and will have a finalized brochure and itinerary by the end of July. So, stay tuned for more information!

Addiction, Family Violence and Mental Illness: Assessing and Managing Challenges to Contemporary Co-parenting

November 1-3 and 6-7, 2023

Online Training Programs

In addition to the Fall conference being online, our online training programs will also be returning this winter. This training lineup will feature a new two-part program on court involved therapy presented by Matthew Sullivan, PhD and Lyn Greenberg, PhD. Stay tuned for more information.

The Fundamentals of Parenting Coordination

December 4-7, 2023

Registration opens in August!

Advanced Issues for Family Law and Dispute Resolution Professionals

January 16-18, 2024

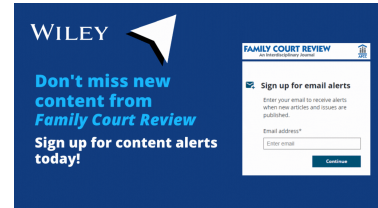
The Fundamentals of Conducting Parenting Plan Evaluations

March 11-14, 2024 and March 18-20, 2024

Online Access to the Family Court Review

Did you know as an AFCC member, you have access to the Family Court Review online archives? Visit the member center of our [website](#) to read any volumes you may have missed. These archives date all the way back to the inaugural issue in 1963.

In addition to the archives, you can also [sign up for alerts](#) for when a new article is published in the FCR which will allow you to stay up to date and get the scoop much sooner than the in-print edition.



AFCC Member News

Hon. Justice Tom Altobelli, AFCC member from Australia, was recently recognized in the King's Birthday Honours List for his remarkable contributions to the field of law and legal education. The King's Birthday Honours List serves as a platform for Australians to honor the unsung heroes like Tom who tirelessly dedicate themselves to improving the legal system. Congratulations, Tom!



Maggie Trahan Simar, Family Court Hearing Officer for the 16th Judicial District and the President of the Louisiana Chapter was recently awarded the Friend of Pro Bono Award by the Louisiana State Bar Association at the Louisiana Supreme Court. Simar's award was based on a nominee that has made a major contribution to the enhancement and promotion of pro bono legal services to the poor within the past year but that does not involve direct provision of legal services. Congratulations, Maggie!



Lawrence R. Jones, retired New Jersey Superior Court Judge and AFCC member, has created **Point C** as a personal endeavor to assist and provide guidance to parents facing challenges during the divorce process. Point C's mission strongly aligns with AFCC's objective of minimizing the adverse effects on children involved in the divorce process. One of the innovative approaches utilized by Point C is the creation of [this catchy video](#), designed to encourage parents to introspectively reflect on their choices and the potential impact on their

children. Thank you for your dedication, Lawrence!



Nancy Chausow Shafer, AFCC member from Illinois led a section council in conjunction with Hon. Grace G. Dickler (Ret.) in an effort for the Illinois Supreme Court to adopt Rule 909 which officially codifies rules for parenting coordinators in Illinois. Effective May 24, 2023, this rule was successfully adopted. Great work, Nancy!



AFCC Chapter News

AFCC Ohio

Safeguarding Guardians ad Litem and Court Appointed Special Advocates

Ohio is fortunate to have experienced professionals who help identify the best interests of children when families are involved in court. In family law cases, a Guardian ad Litem (GAL) and a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) serve a very important and difficult role. At times, however, their work with families makes them vulnerable to becoming a victim of abuse by someone involved in the case.

Judge Randy Fuller, former president of the Ohio Chapter of AFCC and the Chapter Liaison to the Board, provided proponent testimony on behalf of the Ohio Judicial Conference, before the Ohio House of Representatives, Criminal Justice Committee, in support of Ohio House Bill 122 (HB 122). If passed, HB 122 will provide legal protection for a GAL and a CASA volunteer involved in a family law case. [Read more.](#)

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:

[Ann Ordway, JD, PhD](#)

ASSOCIATE EDITOR:

[Patrick Sommer](#)

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

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AFCC 2023 Award Winners

AFCC awards acknowledge the many important contributions made by individuals and organizations to enhance the lives of children and families involved in family courts.

The following awards were presented at the AFCC 60th Anniversary Conference in Los Angeles on June 1st, 2023:



John E. VanDuzer Distinguished Service Award, which recognizes outstanding contributions and/or achievements by AFCC members, was presented to Dianna Gould-Saltman.

Irwin Cantor Innovative Program Award recognizes innovation in court-connected or court-related programs created by AFCC members. This year, the award was presented to Lighthouse, an **Australian court program**.

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. The 2023 recipient of the award is Connie J.A. Beck.



Tim Salius President's Award is presented annually to an AFCC member who has provided exemplary service to the association, as chosen by the AFCC president (currently, Hon. Linda Fidnick). The 2023 recipient is Matthew J. Sullivan.

The Meyer Elkin Essay Award is presented to the authors of the article judged as the best of those published in "Family Court Review" for each volume, as selected by the journal's editorial staff. The 2023 recipient is Sol Rappaport (not present at the conference). Read Sol's **award winner article** in the Family Court Review.



There were two special commendations presented at the 2023 AFCC award ceremony. AFCC recognized the following divisions of the Los Angeles Superior court for their instrumental role in the founding our organization:

- Family Law Division of the Los Angeles Superior Court
- Los Angeles Superior Court Family Court Services

See previous winners of all AFCC **awards** here!



June 2023
Vol. 18 No. 6

Getting on with Life Post Pandemic: Being Mindful that Not Everyone Adjusts at the Same Pace¹

Michael Saini, PhD, MSW, RSW

The impact of COVID-19 is far reaching and remains an important consideration when working with children and families. While some families have improved their sense of cohesion and intimacy during social isolation and global lockdowns, many others experienced life disruptions, instability and the deterioration of mental health and wellbeing. Family law professionals need to be sensitive to the short and long term the impact of these changes on the lives of children and their families. We are also not immune to the pandemic-related stresses, and we need to be mindful of our own mental health and wellbeing.

This brief note considers the impact of COVID-19 on children and families and the family law professionals who serve them, introduces the new concept of 'return anxiety' as we all struggle to make decisions about in-person and virtual connections, and emphasizes the importance of education about the impacts of COVID-19 when helping to make decisions about parenting plans.

Awareness of the impact on COVID-19 and ongoing stressors

The COVID-19 global pandemic dramatically altered our way of relating with others. The movement towards social distancing, self-isolating, and minimizing in person meetings to curb the spread of the virus dramatically shifted services to children and parents involved in family law disputes.

Efforts to protect against the spread of the virus required families to adjust to new social distancing measures, but these had their associated costs. Physical distancing measures contributed to increased feelings of isolation, stress, and anxiety, mood disorders, sleep issues, PTSD, and emotional burnout. Although the research about the impact of COVID-

¹ This is a brief version of an article published in the International Academy of Family Lawyers European Newsletter in Autumn 2022 see <https://www.iafl.com/media/7659/iafl-european-chapter-newsletter-2nd-edition.pdf>

19 remains in the early stages, the preliminary findings are consistent with the impact of various types of disasters that have occurred around the world.

The impact has been particularly difficult for children due to moving to online learning, school closures, a stoppage of recreational activities and social events, thus transforming them into less active children. Most children's eating and sleeping habits were changed, as well as the time spent on electronic devices. The lack of extracurricular activities and outdoor activities away from the family has contributed to higher rates of anger and aggression, the occurrence of sibling rivalry and increased violent outbursts.

The impact of COVID-19 on family law professionals

Preliminary research also documents the increased stress and anxiety of family law professionals due to the ongoing personal and professional adjustments in these uncertain times. Not all family law professionals will experience the long COVID-19 psychological impacts that have been documented in the literature but those who do, they may experience mental health problems including anxiety, depression, higher levels of PTSD, poor job satisfaction, and overall psychological problems. Left unaddressed, these psychological challenges can impact the work with children and families and can impact overall job satisfaction.

Awareness of return anxiety

As the COVID-19 curve flattened and jurisdictions have re-opened in-person services, family courts are slowly returning to a 'new normal'. Most family law professionals have now left their home offices to return in-person activities. While returning to in-person services is a welcome return for some, many have experienced some level of 'return anxiety'. This new concept stresses the importance of acknowledging the fears and worries about the heightened risk of infection, new social expectations, and the adjustment of routines to new work realities.

Returning to the workplace may impact people differently. For some people, the return to routines and seeing colleagues can be very healing. For others, returning to social situations can both be exhausting and concerning due to the ongoing concerns around infection. It is important to allow space for people to have mixed and complex feelings about returning to social situations, including the clients, and colleagues. It is expected that the awkward greeting dance (e.g., should I elbow bump, shake hands, hug, bow, smile, etc.) will continue for the foreseeable future and will be influenced by both the cultural and geographical context.

In-person or virtual meetings

Online communication technology has grown exponentially during the pandemic. Remote methods to connect with clients has become a vital method for improving access to justice for children and families involved in family courts. Family law professionals now have new virtual tools in their toolbox for engaging with clients. This increased access to virtual

methods of communicating also requires decisions to be made about the optimal use of virtual technologies versus when it would be best to meet in-person (or even to just use the old fashion telephone call!) Decisions should be based on considerations of accessibility, convenience, and the best interest of the clients and should be on a case-by-case basis.

Importance of educating clients

The speed of changes during this global pandemic has created an essential role for family law professionals to articulate the needs of families and to educate about the challenges of developing and adjusting parenting plans in the post pandemic era. Family law professionals need to educate their clients about the legal context of the pandemic, including the expectations of the courts, the types of issues being considered by the court in relation to the pandemic, and how the courts are generally deciding similar decisions in the context of COVID-19 so their clients are better able to make decisions that are in the best interest of their children.

Family law professionals also need to be aware of the literature on the impact of COVID-19 so they are better able to educate parents about the stressors and consequences related to the pandemic and how best to mitigate the negative feelings and emotions. Parents may be unaware, uninformed, or misinformed about the impact of COVID-19 on their own mental health and the overall wellbeing of their children and how these concerns may be impacting their legal matters.

Screening and promoting safety

Given the known increase in intimate partner violence, family conflict and psychological harm within families during COVID-19, it is more important than ever before to identify emotionally-charged parents and to help them navigate this stressful time in their lives.

Promoting children's voices

COVID-19 emergency measures, leading to the closure of schools, recreation centres, and organized activities resulted in widespread disruption to all aspects of the lives and routines of children, including: families home together for long periods of time, without access to the usual external resources; parents and children using more screen time; economic uncertainties putting extra strain on families; and family conflicts due to different expectations. For many children in isolation from others, their voices were silenced during the pandemic. Children, more than ever, need to be heard and their views considered in decisions that impact them. Family law professionals should take steps to ensure that children's views and perspectives are ascertained in a sensitive fashion, and that these are shared in a matter that promotes the children's best interests.

Seeking mental health assistance for clients

Family law professionals should speak to parents about how they are coping with the COVID-19 and refer them to mental health services as needed. Connecting with local mental health agencies and service providers can provide direct lines for emotional support to clients when mental health issues are identified. In some cases, it may be helpful for parents to receive guidance by mental health professional to address parenting plans disputes that have arisen due to the pandemic (e.g., disputes about vaccination, issues, dealing with the increased stress of their children due to the pandemic, mental health issues impacting parenting).

Conclusion

Family law professionals play a critical role in the lives of their clients, and they have a significant impact on the outcome of the family disputes. In these ongoing uncertain times, we need to be aware of the impacts of the pandemic as we provide a critical role in providing information and education about the role and impact of the pandemic on family disputes.

While we may just wish to forget all about the pandemic and move on.... we should be mindful of the experiences of the pandemic that remain with us and that continue to impact the work we do with families.

Michael Saini, PhD, MSW, RSW holds the endowed Factor-Inwentash Chair in Law and Social Work, and he is the Co-Director of the combined J.D. / M.S.W. program at the University of Toronto. He has over 200 publications, addressing children and families' wellbeing in systems governed by law. He is a Board Member of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC) and current president elect, Access for Parents and Children of Ontario (APCO), Family Mediation Canada (FMC), the Canadian Coalition of the Rights of the Child (CCRC) and he is also an Associate Fellow of the International Academy of Family Lawyers.





**June 2023
Vol. 18 No. 6**

Safeguarding Guardians ad Litem and Court Appointed Special Advocates

Ohio is fortunate to have experienced professionals who help identify the best interests of children when families are involved in court. In family law cases, a Guardian ad Litem (GAL) and a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) serve a very important and difficult role. At times, however, their work with families makes them vulnerable to becoming a victim of abuse by someone involved in the case.

Judge Randy Fuller, former president of the Ohio Chapter of AFCC and the Chapter Liaison to the Board, provided proponent testimony on behalf of the Ohio Judicial Conference, before the Ohio House of Representatives, Criminal Justice Committee, in support of Ohio House Bill 122 (HB 122). If passed, HB 122 will provide legal protection for a GAL and a CASA volunteer involved in a family law case.

Often, a GAL's or CASA's position is upsetting to one or both parents, or custodians. Unfortunately, in some cases, GALs and CASAs are subject to threats, harassment, intimidation, stalking, attempts to ruin their reputation with the public, or verbal abuse from people involved in the case that disagree with their recommendation or efforts to help the family.

In Ohio, one GAL talked to a State Representative about this concerning issue and the ordeal she had been through in a family law case. This conversation led to the introduction of HB 122.

If passed, HB 122 will make it a criminal offense in the State of Ohio to intimidate, threaten or abuse a GAL or CASA. This legislation is needed to protect GALs and CASAs while they perform their court appointed work.

Before testifying on behalf of the Ohio Judicial Conference, general feedback was solicited from some GALs to determine their thoughts on HB 122. A concerning number of people serving as a GAL had experienced threats, intimidation, or abuse in their role for the Court.

Each GAL shared their own experience of mistreatment by a person involved with the case. These experiences included threats of violence to the GAL and their family members, brandishing a weapon, trespass, and stalking.

Testimony on behalf of the Ohio Judicial Conference supporting HB 122 will hopefully contribute to this by-partisan legislation becoming law. It is important that GALs and CASAs are protected so they can continue to protect children in family law cases.