

AFCC eNEWS

AFCC ASSOCIATION OF FAMILY AND CONCILIATION COURTS



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AFCC and NCJFCJ Approve Statement on Parent-Child Contact Problems

The Boards of Directors of both the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges have approved a Joint Statement on Parent-Child Contact Problems. The statement accomplishes several objectives. It acknowledges risk to children of polarized perspectives and emphasizes the importance of effectively addressing parent-child contact problems by adopting a child-centered approach. In order to reach these objectives, the statement calls for increased professional competence, screening for safety, conflict, and parent-child contact problems, the full consideration of all factors that may contribute to parent-child contact problems while conducting individual case analyses and referring to appropriate and proportional services and interventions when necessary. [Read the entire statement.](#)

15th Symposium on Child Custody Las Vegas, Nevada November 10-12, 2022



Presenting Sponsor



SOBERLINK

AFCC Chapter Conferences

AFCC Indiana Annual Conference
September 16, 2022

15th Symposium on Child Custody



From a Full House to Parenting Apart

November 10-12, 2022

Planet Hollywood Resort and Casino

Las Vegas, Nevada

Registration now open!

The full [conference program brochure](#) is now available for the 15th Symposium on Child Custody. Join AFCC as we venture to Las Vegas for the first time in decades.

Earn up to 18.5 hours of continuing education credits by attending the entire symposium, which features four pre-symposium institutes, two general sessions, and 36 outstanding workshops.

Symposium topics include:

- AFCC *Guidelines for Parenting Plan Evaluations*
- The Dangers of Concept Creep in Family Law
- Psychological Testing
- Sorting Trauma from Stress in Family Court
- When Your Child Doesn't Want to Go
- Ethics of ODR
- Child Mental Health
- Mediation for Unrepresented Parents
- Research on Parent-Child Estrangement
- Factitious Disorder Imposed on Another
- Children with Special Needs and Resist-Refuse
- Unsticking the Stuck Client

Book Your Hotel Room

Reserve your room now for our conference rate of \$179/night (including the \$30 resort fee) for single/double occupancy. Our room block is almost sold out so [make your reservation soon!](#)

A limited number of scholarships are available to attend the AFCC 15th Symposium on Child Custody.

Check your eligibility and [apply today!](#) The application deadline is **September 16, 2022.**

Exhibitor Prospectus

Exhibitors at AFCC conferences enjoy the opportunity to reach hundreds of professionals dedicated to the

Indianapolis, IN

AFCC Florida Annual Conference

September 21-23, 2022

Orlando, FL

AFCC Illinois Annual Conference

October 20, 2022

Chicago, IL

AFCC Ontario Annual Conference

October 13-14, 2022

Toronto, ON, Canada

AFCC Texas Annual Conference

December 8-9, 2022

Austin, TX

AFCC Arizona Annual Conference

January 20-22, 2023

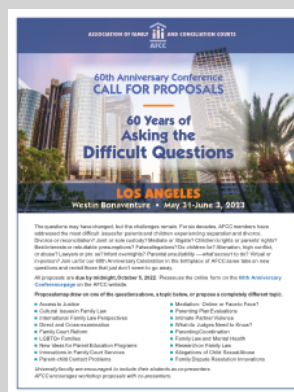
Sedona, AZ

AFCC California Annual Conference

February 10-12, 2023

60th Anniversary Conference

Call for Proposals



AFCC Virtual Training Programs

The Fundamentals of Parenting Coordination
December 5-8, 2022

resolution of family conflict. Your business could hit the jackpot, too! [Read the prospectus](#) and contact [Patrick Sommer](#) to sign up now.

[Register Now](#)

**Advanced Issues in
Child Custody**
January 17-19, 2023

**The Fundamentals of
Conducting Parenting
Plan Evaluations**
March 13-16, and
March 20-22, 2023

Ask the Experts: Ten Tips for Working with Vaccine-Hesitant Parents

Kate Allan, PhD, MSW

The COVID-19 pandemic has placed the issue of vaccine hesitancy front and center in multiple sectors, including family law. Decisions about vaccination for children have become a contentious issue within many families, in some cases requiring the family court system to settle a dispute about child vaccination when parents cannot agree.

Whether working with families involved in high-conflict custody cases, or other family law matters, there is a need to understand parental vaccine hesitancy and the best strategies for addressing it in practice. These ten tips provide an overview of best practices with respect to understanding and responding to parental vaccine hesitancy.

[Continue Reading...](#)



Webinar Corner

The Power of Values in Family Law Disputes

Bernie Mayer, PhD and April Harris-Britt, PhD

Wednesday, September 14, 2022

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

Registration will close on September 13, 2022 at 9:00am Eastern Time US/Canada.

Value conflicts are often viewed as the hardest to resolve, and we are often cautioned to keep our personal values under wraps in our professional lives. But our values and our clients' values inevitably inform our practice and their needs. Rather than avoid addressing value differences, perhaps we need to encourage our clients to embrace them, and we perhaps should not shy away from doing the same. In this webinar we will discuss the role of values in family conflict. We will discuss how personal and cultural values affect family conflict, how we can help parents recognize and navigate their value differences, how values can help us bring our most authentic selves to the table in constructive and powerful ways, and how we can find value congruence amid seemingly highly polarized differences. We will also explore value hierarchies in family conflicts and illustrate the challenge and potential of working with value differences.

Bernie Mayer, PhD has provided conflict intervention services for families, schools, public interest groups,



communities, NGO's, unions, corporations, and governmental and agencies throughout North America and internationally for over 40 years. He is Professor Emeritus of Conflict Studies, Creighton University, and a founding partner of CDR Associates, a conflict intervention firm headquartered in Boulder, Colorado.

April Harris-Britt, PhD, is a licensed psychologist and parent coordinator. She provides training to mental health professionals, attorneys, and judges and has presented at numerous conferences regarding services for families engaged in high-conflict custody disputes. Dr. Harris-Britt is currently a member of the AFCC Task Force on Model Standards of Practice for Child Custody Evaluations, and AFCC Task Force on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.



Registration

Members: \$15

Non-Members: \$50

Certificate of Attendance

Members: \$15

Non-members: \$20

[Register Now!](#)

More Upcoming Webinars!

Representing Children in International Cases

Melissa Kucinski, JD, James Netto

October 18, 2022

Understanding Adults who Sexually Abuse Children

Dr. Graham Hill

November 16, 2022

Family Dispute Resolution Research

Marsha Kline Pruett, PhD, ABPP

December 13, 2022

Access to Justice/Family Dispute Resolution Services

Jeannie Sato, JD, Loren P. Hildebrandt, JD

January 11, 2023

AFCC 60th Anniversary Conference

Call for Proposals

60 Years of Asking the Difficult Questions

May 31-June 3, 2023

Westin Bonaventure

Los Angeles, California

AFCC is accepting proposals for 90-minute workshop sessions. Read the [Call for Proposals](#) thoroughly for complete instructions. Proposals must be submitted using the [online form](#) by the deadline on **October 5, 2022**.

Proposed topics may include but are not limited to:

- Access to Justice
- Cultural Issues in Family Law
- International Family Law Perspectives
- Direct and Cross-examination
- Family Court Reform
- LGBTQ+ Families
- New Ideas for Parent Education Programs
- Innovations in Family Court Services
- Parent-child Contact Problems
- Parenting Plan Evaluations
- Intimate Partner Violence
- What do Judges Need to Know?
- Parenting Coordination
- Family Law and Mental Health
- Research on Family Law
- Allegations of Child Sexual Abuse
- Family Dispute Resolution Innovations



Submit Your Proposal

Save the Dates!

AFCC Virtual Training Programs

Save the date for upcoming AFCC Training Programs:
The Fundamentals of Parenting Coordination
 December 5-8, 2022

Advanced Issues in Child Custody
 January 17-19, 2023

The Fundamentals of Conducting Parenting Plan Evaluations
 March 13-16, and March 20-22, 2023

Chapter News

AFCC California 2023 Annual Conference - Call for Proposals

Runnin' On Empty: What Do You Do When You Haven't Got a Clue
 February 10-12, 2023
 Westin South Coast Plaza
 Costa Mesa, California

AFCC-CA is requesting proposals for 4-hour Institutes, 90-minute workshops, and 120-minute Workshops.

The conference aims to:

1. Provide cutting edge and creative solutions to the increasingly difficult times in which we practice.

2. Promote opportunities for engagement and partnerships with other professionals (e.g., police, physicians, clergy) who are the first to be involved with domestic abuse, a deteriorating adult relationship, or inappropriate parental practices.
3. Examine alternative interventions and therapies for issues ranging from resist-refusal issues to mental health issues to unique and challenging treatment of alcohol, drug and other addictions to dealing with the epidemic of domestic violence and other conditions which impact the ability to parent children.
4. Engage conference participants in the exchange of ideas and practices.
5. Develop practices to protect professionals from burnout.

The submission deadline is **September 9, 2022**. [See complete instructions](#).

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](#).

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AFCC AND NCJFCJ JOINT STATEMENT ON PARENT-CHILD CONTACT PROBLEMS

Problem Statement:

The vast majority of separating and divorcing parents maintain safe, healthy, and positive relationships with their children; however, a small percentage of parent-child relationships remain strained and/or problematic. Children are at greater risk when parent-child contact problems are not effectively addressed and when family law professionals and others echo and intensify the polarization within the family. This problem may be exacerbated by (1) gendered and politicized assumptions that either parental alienation or intimate partner violence is the determinative issue; (2) contradictory rhetoric about the application of research findings and the efficacy of interventions; (3) indiscriminate use of services; and (4) a lack of understanding of different perspectives, education among family law practitioners, and resources.

AFCC and NCJFCJ support transparent, informed, and deliberate dialogue and response to parent-child contact problems following separation and divorce, or when the parents have never resided together, by adhering to the following considerations:

1. Adopt a child-centered approach

Children's behavior should be considered in the context of what is normal for a child's age, developmental stage, and the family socio-cultural-religious norms. This behavior may also be an expectable, adaptive reaction to stress, change, or an adverse childhood experience. The paramount focus of practitioners working with parent-child contact problems should be to promote the safety, interests, rights, and wellbeing of children and their parents/caregivers at all socioeconomic levels. Children should have the opportunity to express their views in family justice matters that concern them. The stated views of children are not necessarily determinative of their best interests. There are multiple factors that may contribute to children expressing views that do not reflect their best interests. Family justice practitioners should understand the basis for the child's expressed wishes and acknowledge their rights.

2. Increase competence in working with parent-child-contact problems

Specialized knowledge and skill are necessary to work effectively with families with parent-child contact problems. Family law practitioners should receive regular and ongoing training on the various factors related to parent-child contact problems including, but not limited to intimate partner violence, substance misuse, high conflict, denigration, parental alienating behaviors, and healthy parenting.

3. Screen for safety, conflict, and parent-child contact problems

In addition to initial and ongoing screening for safety, intimate partner violence and power-imbalances within families in all family law cases, parent-child contact issues, once identified, should be uniquely screened for safety and family risk factors, including the severity, frequency, and impact. Practitioners should, in all cases, employ a structured and evidence-informed screening for family risk factors.

**AFCC AND NCJFCJ
JOINT STATEMENT ON PARENT-CHILD CONTACT PROBLEMS**

4. Fully consider all factors that may contribute to parent-child contact problems

There should be no immediate label used for parent-child contact problems as there are multiple factors and dynamics that may account for these issues. These include interparental conflict before and after the separation, sibling relationships, the adversarial process/litigation, third parties such as aligned professionals and extended family, a lack of functional co-parenting, poor or conflictual parental communication, child maltreatment, a response to a parent's abusive behaviors, the direct or indirect exposure to intimate partner violence, parental alienating behaviors, an alignment with a parent in response to high conflict coparenting, or a combination of these factors. Therefore, practitioners should maintain a broad lens and sufficiently consider the relative contribution of each potential factor before conclusions are made about cause.

5. Conduct individual case analysis

Social science research findings can provide the field with valuable information about the group studied but cannot be used to determine the characteristics or experiences of individual parties or children; therefore, each family/case/situation must be specifically examined and informed by the best available evidence. Each case must be examined uniquely to understand the etiology and current dynamics of the problem for the family justice system to intervene in an effective child-focused manner.

6. Refer to appropriate and proportional services and interventions

Practitioners should exercise care in recommending, referring, or ordering family members to services and interventions. These services and interventions should be accessible, accountable, proportional to the nature and severity of factor(s) contributing to the parent-child contact problem(s), particularly when there is a court order requiring such services and interventions. Such services and interventions should be informed by a child-centered approach.



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Ask the Experts: Ten Tips for Working with Vaccine-Hesitant Parents

Kate Allan, PhD, MSW

The COVID-19 pandemic has placed the issue of vaccine hesitancy front and center in multiple sectors, including family law. Decisions about vaccination for children have become a contentious issue within many families, in some cases requiring the family court system to settle a dispute about child vaccination when parents cannot agree. Whether working with families involved in high-conflict custody cases, or other family law matters, there is a need to understand parental vaccine hesitancy and the best strategies for addressing it in practice. These ten tips provide an overview of best practices with respect to understanding and responding to parental vaccine hesitancy.

- 1. Understand that vaccine hesitancy exists on a spectrum.** Attitudes towards vaccination vary from those who have the most accepting views towards vaccination, to those who are most resistant to vaccination; however, the vast majority of parents fall somewhere in the middle. Some parents consent to some vaccines for their children but not others, but few parents refuse all vaccines. It is important to understand that parental attitudes are complex and ever-changing, so there are countless opportunities to have impactful discussions about vaccinations with parents.
- 2. Recognize that parents may feel hesitant for a variety of different reasons.** Vaccine hesitancy may be driven by different things for different parents. Some parents are fearful of newer vaccines, some parents are concerned about needle pain, while other parents wish for their child to acquire natural immunity and some parents do not see vaccine-preventable diseases as a significant threat to their child's life. Understanding the concerns that are driving vaccine hesitancy is a necessary step in being able to thoughtfully engage with vaccine-hesitant parents.
- 3. Respect that vaccine attitudes like many other health attitudes, are often shaped by many factors.** Often vaccine hesitancy is influenced by factors at a variety of levels from the immediate family system all the way up to government policy. Social forces play an

especially important role in vaccine decision-making and parents tend to be impacted by perceived social norms related to vaccination in both real life and virtual communities.

- 4. Notice how previous healthcare experiences may impact vaccine hesitancy.** In some cases, past negative experiences with the healthcare system can impact parents' attitudes towards vaccination. For instance, if parents felt that in the past their child's vaccination pain was not properly managed or if they did not feel heard in a clinical interaction, they may be more apprehensive to attend further vaccination appointments.
- 5. Appreciate the historical roots of medical mistrust among minority populations.** For some communities, for instance the African American community, a history of mistreatment by the healthcare system has created community-wide feelings of medical mistrust. Often these deeply rooted feelings are challenging to address and can only be solved with the slow rebuilding of trusting relationships between the healthcare system and marginalized communities.
- 6. Use open-ended questions to try to uncover parents' concerns about vaccination.** One of the best ways to understand parents' concerns about vaccination is to use open-ended questions. Generally, parents want to be heard and understood. Open-ended questions, for instance, "Could you take me through how you are feeling about vaccination right now?" give parents the chance to share their perspectives.
- 7. Remember that parents have their children's best interests in mind.** Vaccination has become a hugely contentious topic and it is easy to forget that parents' attitudes are often coming from a place of concern for their children's well-being. Over the course of vaccination discussions, it can be helpful to remind parents that you recognize this. Using phrases to affirm parents which could include, "I can tell you really care about your children's health," can often go a long way towards building engagement with parents.
- 8. Utilize reflective listening to help parents explain their perspectives.** In many cases the best way to engage parents in a discussion about vaccination where you can provide evidence-based information is to first listen to their concerns and rationale. Reflective listening (e.g., "You're worried about the side effects your children could experience as a result of the vaccine") is a helpful way to build engagement and to clarify the specific concerns parents have.
- 9. Consider the 'ruler method' a useful tool for talking about vaccine attitudes.** The 'ruler method' is a helpful tool for discussing vaccination with parents. You can use this method to help parents to see their existing confidence with vaccination and opportunities to build on it (e.g., On a scale from 1 to 10 how confident do you feel about vaccination for your child? [If they answer 4] Why did you say a 4 and not a 2?). You can also use the ruler method to understand the most important factors holding

parents back from consenting to vaccination (e.g., On a scale from 1 to 10 how likely is it that you will have your child vaccinated this year? [If they answer 4] What do you think it will take to get you from a 4 to a 6?)

10. Be aware of how access barriers may impact vaccine hesitancy. Access barriers (cost, transportation, work hours, childcare etc.) are often overlooked as factors that may impact vaccine hesitancy but for many families, logistic concerns related to attending vaccination appointment can be a leading or contributing factor preventing children from receiving some or all vaccines in a series. Connecting parents with appropriate community supports which can ameliorate these logistical concerns is an effective means of enhancing vaccine uptake.



Kate Allan, PhD, is a SSHRC-funded postdoctoral fellow. She is currently completing her second postdoctoral fellowship at the Centre for Vaccine-Preventable Diseases at the University of Toronto. During her doctoral studies, she was Manager of the Vaccine Hesitancy Study at the Fraser Mustard Institute for Human Development. Prior to beginning the PhD program, she was a Site Researcher for the Ontario Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect 2013 (OIS-2013), a Research Assistant for the Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect 2008 (CIS-2008), and a Graduate Research Assistant at the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies

(OACAS). Dr. Allan served on the Provincial Council for Maternal and Child Health, Discharge Planning (Transition to Adult Healthcare Services) Working Group and on the Good 2 Go Transition Program Advisory Committee at The Hospital for Sick Children. Kate has a keen interest in the interplay between psychosocial factors and physical health, and her primary research interests focus on the decision-making process of parents regarding routine childhood immunization and COVID-19 vaccination.