

**Bridging Perspectives:  
Pioneering Solutions in Family Law**

**New Orleans**  
Louisiana

**New Orleans Marriott**  
**May 28-31, 2025**  
**[afccnet.org](http://afccnet.org)**

# **AFCC 62nd Annual Conference**

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### **ABOUT THE CONFERENCE**

AFCC strives to offer a wide range of conference sessions highlighting different research, advocacy positions, policies, practices, programs, and ideas. Some programs may be evidence-based, while others may report on works in progress, emerging practices, or policy initiatives. The goal of the conference is to enhance learning while encouraging respectful inquiry, discussion, and debate consistent with AFCC organizational values. AFCC does not necessarily endorse or support the opinions of conference presenters. The AFCC Exhibit Forum includes a variety of vendors promoting services and products. AFCC does not necessarily endorse or warrant vendors' products, services, or views.



## Bridging Perspectives: Pioneering Solutions in Family Law

New Orleans, Louisiana | New Orleans Marriott  
May 28-31, 2025

Our work as family law professionals involves collaboration and differing perspectives across practices, sometimes harmoniously and other times with tension. AFCC stands at the forefront of innovative solutions to complex family issues. Join us in New Orleans as we convene the world’s leading experts to build bridges that span the gaps between professional approaches and priorities. Participate in the pursuit of enduring solutions that address both age-old and emerging dilemmas in family law.

### Conference Topics Include

- Parenting Coordination
- Parenting Plan Evaluations
- Direct and Cross-Examination
- Cultural Considerations Including LGBTQ+ Families
- New Ideas for Parent Education Programs
- Innovations in Family Court Services
- New Strategies for Parent-Child Contact Problems
- Mentorship for New Professionals
- Substance and Process Abuse or Addiction
- Intimate Partner Violence & Coercive Control
- International Family Law Perspectives and Approaches
- Allegations of Child Sexual Abuse
- Family Dispute Resolution Innovations
- Digital Family Law / Artificial Intelligence

### Amazing Networking Opportunities!

Whether this is your first or 21st AFCC conference, this will be an extraordinary networking opportunity. Connect with colleagues at the Welcome Reception; New Member, Developing Professionals, and First Time Attendee Orientation; International Reception; Thursday night’s Taste of New Orleans; and of course, the famous AFCC Hospitality Suite. Yoga and meditation are also offered. See page 19 for more details on these events.

### DE&I Open Forum and Dine-Around

AFCC’s DE&I Committee will sponsor an open forum for informal discussion for individuals who identify as members of underrepresented communities on Thursday at 5:00PM. This will be followed by the DE&I Committee dine-around opportunity. These activities provide a safe space to share experiences, provide support, and offer solutions.

### An International Faculty

This year, conference presenters will be coming from Australia, Canada, Italy, New Zealand, and the United States to offer perspectives on our work from around the world.

### Judicial Officers

Special programming for judicial officers includes the Pre-Conference Institute examining strategies for IPV and PCCP allegations. Several conference sessions will feature topics and emerging research directly relevant to judicial decision-making in family law cases.

### Continuing Education Credits

Earn up to 20.5 hours of continuing education for psychologists, lawyers, mental health professionals, social workers, mediators, and others. Certificates of Attendance are included in the conference registration fee! See continuing education details on page 18.

### Conference Scholarships Available

There are a limited number of conference scholarships available! Scholarships cover the cost of registration for one pre-conference institute and the full conference. Some scholarship recipients will receive travel stipends based on need and their cost of attendance. The scholarship application can be found [here](#) or at [afccnet.org](http://afccnet.org).

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## Invitation from the President

Dear Family Law Colleagues,

I am thrilled to invite you to the AFCC 62nd Annual Conference, which will take place May 28-31, 2025, at the New Orleans Marriott in the vibrant and historic city of New Orleans. This year's theme, Bridging Perspectives: Pioneering Solutions in Family Law, reflects our shared commitment to advancing innovative, solution-focused strategies to address the complex challenges families and professionals face today.



This conference emphasizes the importance of focusing on desired outcomes rather than dwelling on problems. With nearly 90 presentations, including pre-conference institutes, workshops, the keynote, and plenary, you'll gain practical tools and strategies to help families craft constructive and forward-thinking solutions. I'm reminded of an insightful analogy from Fredrike Bannink, author of *1001 Solution-Focused Questions*, who reminds us that we don't go to a grocery store with a list of items we don't want. Similarly, in family law, we must help families focus on their desired outcomes—the positive changes they wish to achieve—to guide them toward solutions that work for the families and children involved.

We are honored to welcome Hamse Warfa as our keynote speaker. Mr. Warfa's remarkable journey from Somali refugee to esteemed U.S. presidential appointee exemplifies resilience, innovation, and transformation—qualities we all strive to embody in our work. With over 25 years of experience spanning federal and state government, philanthropy, nonprofits, and tech entrepreneurship, Mr. Warfa has dedicated his career to tackling complex challenges and translating them into tangible solutions. His perspective aligns seamlessly with our conference's objectives. Learn more about Mr. Warfa at [hamsewarfa.com](http://hamsewarfa.com).

Our program features an array of diverse topics, including a plenary session on Psychedelics and Family Court with Dr. Stephanie Tabashneck and Lawrence Jay Braunstein, which explores emerging research and its implications for legal and mental health professionals. Other sessions will cover advanced parenting coordination strategies, address parent-child contact problems, and integrate frameworks to screen and manage intimate partner violence. These sessions are designed to equip you with actionable tools to tackle some of the most pressing and complex issues in family law while always focusing on pioneering solutions.

Beyond the enriching educational content, the setting of New Orleans offers a unique opportunity to learn and connect. Known for its vibrant culture, music, and culinary delights, the city provides an inspiring backdrop for professional growth and collaboration.

Whether you are a seasoned professional or new to AFCC, this conference promises a unique opportunity to learn, collaborate, and grow. Together, we can explore innovative solutions and build a brighter future for the families we serve.

I look forward to welcoming you to New Orleans this May!

Warm regards,

Michael A. Saini, PhD, MSW, RSW  
President, AFCC

# AFCC 62nd Annual Conference



## Tuesday, May 27, 2025

6:00PM-8:00PM Registration

## Wednesday, May 28, 2025

7:30AM-6:00PM Registration

8:00AM-9:00AM Coffee and Rolls for Institute Registrants

8:00AM-5:00PM Exhibit Forum

9:00AM-5:00PM Pre-Conference Institutes

10:30AM-10:45AM Break

12:00PM-1:30PM Lunch (On Your Own)

12:00PM-5:00PM AFCC Board of Directors Meeting

2:45PM-3:00PM Break

5:00PM-6:00PM New Member, First-Time Attendee, and Professional Development Orientation

6:00PM-7:00PM Welcome Reception

9:00PM-12:00AM AFCC Hospitality Suite

## Thursday, May 29, 2025

6:15AM-7:15AM Meditation & Yoga

7:30AM-8:30AM Chapter Council Meeting

7:30AM-5:00PM Registration

7:30AM-5:00PM Exhibit Forum

7:45AM-8:45AM Coffee and Rolls

8:45AM-10:00AM Opening Keynote

10:00AM-10:30AM Break

10:30AM-12:00PM Workshops 1-10

12:00PM-1:30PM AFCC Luncheon & Awards Ceremony

1:45PM-3:15PM Workshops 11-20

3:15PM-3:30PM Break

3:30PM-5:00PM Workshops 21-30

5:00PM-6:00PM International Attendee Reception

5:00PM-6:30PM DE&I Open Forum

Evening Taste of New Orleans

9:00PM-12:00AM AFCC Hospitality Suite

## Friday, May 30, 2025

6:15AM-7:15AM Meditation & Yoga

7:15AM-8:15AM AFCC Committee Meetings

7:30AM-5:00PM Registration

7:30AM-5:00PM Exhibit Forum

7:30AM-8:30AM Coffee and Rolls

8:30AM-10:00AM Workshops 31-40

10:00AM-10:30AM Break

10:30AM-12:00PM Plenary Session

12:00PM-1:30PM Lunch (On Your Own)

12:00PM-1:30PM FCR Editorial Board Meeting

12:00PM-1:30PM Chapter Presidents' Lunch

1:45PM-3:15PM Workshops 41-50

3:15PM-3:30PM Break

3:30PM-5:00PM Workshops 51-60

6:30PM AFCC Evening Celebration

## Saturday, May 31, 2025

7:30AM-12:30PM Conference Registration

7:30AM-12:30PM Exhibit Forum

8:00AM-9:00AM Coffee and Rolls

8:00AM-9:00AM AFCC Membership Meeting

9:15AM-10:45AM Workshops 61-70

10:45AM-11:00AM Break

11:00AM-12:30PM Workshops 71-80

*"Attending the conferences invigorates and energizes me in such a way that I can return home to my work with a renewed sense of hope, a fresh look, and concrete ways to improve my work. Every year that I attend my relationship and connections with other attendees deepen."*

# AFCC 62nd Annual Conference



**Wednesday, May 28, 2025**

**9:00AM-5:00PM**

**Pre-Conference Institutes\***

## 1. Judicial Officers Institute: Strategies for Domestic Violence and PCCP Allegations in Parenting Disputes (*Judicial officers only*).

Family court judicial officers are challenged daily in dealing with allegations of domestic violence and alienation. Often, there is limited evidence presented to the court at the outset of legal proceedings. The challenges are accentuated when one or both parents represent themselves, a common situation in many family law cases. This institute will provide a review of current research, emerging assessment, and intervention strategies. Part 1 will focus on critical questions and potential evidence for the court to consider when exploring multiple hypotheses about the dynamic to address what happened and the impact it is having. Part 2 will examine the appellate process, the potential basis for appeal, and the importance of establishing a clear and reliable record below.

*Peter Jaffe, PhD, Western Univ., London, ON, Canada*

*Matthew J. Sullivan, PhD, Santa Cruz, CA*

*Katreena Scott, PhD, Western Univ., London, ON, Canada*

*Hon. Bernadette D'Souza, Orleans Civil District Court - Domestic Section, New Orleans, LA*

*Hon. Rosemary Collins (Ret.), Rockford, IL*

## 2. Guiding Families Through the Storm: The Shepherd's Role in Parenting Coordination

From the time a couple decides to separate and divorce, stress, doubt, and fear intensify as the impending storm of family litigation looms. Some families start with a collaborative or cooperative approach, while others face turbulent and devastating consequences for themselves and their children. Early intervention from family law professionals to assess immediate, short-term, and long-term needs, along with identification of available and suitable resources, can help stabilize the physical and psychological environment temporarily, potentially minimizing long-term damage. This institute will explore the benefits and challenges of using parenting coordination before, during, and after litigation involving child custody evaluations and other family law interventions (e.g., reunification therapy, interventions for IPV, coparenting counseling). This model builds on the concepts of an ecosystemic model of parenting coordination, considering the arc of adjustment that accompanies a stressed environmental trajectory and the multi-layered, multi-disciplinary services often needed by families in crisis. Wisely guiding the family and intervention team throughout the journey can maximize intervention efficiency, ensure adequate supplies, and support systems are available, and reduce the demand on judicial and community resources.

*Debra K. Carter, PhD, The National Cooperative Parenting Center, Bradenton, FL*

*Annette T. Burns, JD, Phoenix, AZ*

*Shely Polak, PhD, AccFM, Mackenzie Clinic, Concord, ON, Canada*

*Silvia Mazzoni, PhD, Sapienza Università di Roma, Rome, Italy*

## 3. Mediating with IPV Concerns: Legal, Ethical, and Intersectional Considerations

The question of whether, when, and how cases involving intimate partner violence (IPV) should be mediated has been a subject of debate for decades. This debate centers on balancing the benefits of mediation—such as autonomy, efficiency, and access to justice—with the complex dynamics of IPV, where power imbalances, safety concerns, and the risk of re-traumatization can complicate the process. This pre-conference institute will provide a deep dive into the legal, ethical, and practical challenges of mediating IPV cases, with particular emphasis on intersectionality. We will explore how factors such as race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and immigration status intersect with IPV experiences and influence access to justice. Bias will also be a central theme, as it affects how mediators, legal practitioners, and survivors engage with the process.

*Tracy Shoberg, JD, Battered Women's Justice Project, Saint Paul, MN*

*Anabelle M. Martinez-Mullen, JD, Battered Women's Justice Project, Saint Paul, MN*

*Kelly Browe Olson, JD, LLM, Univ. of Arkansas-Little Rock Bowen School of Law, Little Rock, AR*

*Sujata Warriar, PhD, Battered Women's Justice Project, Saint Paul, MN*

## 4. Resolving Parent-Child Contact Problems: An Integrative Single-Therapist Framework

This institute will guide participants through the entire process of reunification therapy interventions making use of the integrative, single-therapist framework (Singh and Mader, 2025). Topics will include the theoretical and empirical context of parent-child contact problems; best practices with respect to file set-up and family violence screening; common presentations of each family member and how to respond to challenging presentations successfully; a model for providing reunification therapy with clearly defined goals and objectives at each stage, and a discussion of the different forms successful treatment can take. Participant interaction will be encouraged.

*Terry Singh, PhD, ABPP, Alberta Forensic Psychology, Calgary, AB, Canada*

*Joel Mader, MEd, Alberta Forensic Psychology, Calgary, AB, Canada*

*Janine Copeland, MEd, Alberta Forensic Psychology, Calgary, AB, Canada*

*Rachel Jose, MA, Alberta Forensic Psychology, Calgary, AB, Canada*

*Tanya Hutchinson, MSc, Alberta Forensic Psychology, Calgary, AB, Canada*

## 5. Advanced Topics and Innovative Ideas in Child Custody Assessment

This institute will build upon introductory concepts in child custody assessment to address advanced ideas about data gathering, data analysis, and opinion formation. Ideas drawn from forensic mental health areas typically outside of the custody literature will be presented, innovations in psychological assessment, and effective direct and cross examination will be covered. Discussion will include the multi-level relationship between law and social science, the role of bias in all aspects of forensic psychological activities, socio-cultural factors and systemic inequities, common errors in child custody evaluations, forensic methods and procedures, theory of science and dimensional analyses applied throughout the evaluation process, HITOP, and Alternative Models of Personality and Psychopathology, and future of custody evaluations.

*Jonathan Gould, PhD, ABPP, Charlotte, NC*

*Chris Mulchay, PhD, ABPP, Asheville Testing, Asheville, NC*

*Daphny Ainslie, MEd, PsyD, Ainslie Consulting, PLLC, Austin, TX*

## 6. Mock Trial: Testimony and Examination Issues with Mental Health Professionals

Watch actual trial lawyers and mental health professionals, go at it with real-life case issues! Explore the differences in therapeutic and forensic roles, and how those differences play out in trial settings, while learning tips and tricks regarding testimony of therapists and other mental health professionals. Participants will see how to demonstrate if a mental health professional has or has not adhered to requirements in statutes, licensing rules, and professionally accepted best practices. Increase your skills for interacting during direct and cross examination, whether an attorney, evaluator, expert witness, therapist, or other mental health professional.

*Christy Bradshaw Schmidt, MA, LPC, Coppell, TX*

*Aaron Robb, PhD, LPC-S, Forensic Counseling Services, Frisco, TX*

*Victoria Harvey, PhD, Frisco, TX*

*Susan Fletcher, PhD, Fletcher & Assoc. Psychological Services, Frisco, TX*

*And a Cast of Characters*

**5:00PM-6:00PM**

**New Member, First-Time Attendee,  
and Professional Development**

**6:00PM-7:00PM**

**Welcome Reception**

**9:00PM-12:00AM**

**AFCC Hospitality Suite**

# AFCC 62nd Annual Conference

**Thursday, May 29, 2025**

<b>6:15AM-7:15AM</b>	<b>Meditation &amp; Yoga</b>
<b>7:30AM-5:00PM</b>	<b>Registration</b>
<b>7:30AM-5:00PM</b>	<b>Exhibit Forum</b>
<b>7:45AM-8:45AM</b>	<b>Coffee and Rolls</b>
<b>8:45AM-10:00AM</b>	<b>Opening Keynote</b>

## Opening Keynote

**Welcome: Michael A. Saini, PhD, MSW, RSW, AFCC President**

### From Refugee to Diplomat: Pioneering Solutions Through Transformative Leadership



In the spirit of this year's conference theme, *Bridging Perspectives: Pioneering Solutions*, participants are invited into the inspiring journey of a Somali refugee and his groundbreaking equity-driven contributions at the highest levels of government and organizational leadership. This distinguished author, public servant, and advocate for social equity, will illuminate how resilience and inclusivity

can be harnessed to craft innovative solutions to complex problems in the face of adversity. This session promises to be a beacon of hope and practical insights for all seeking to advance the field through transformative leadership and empathy.

**Hamse Warfa, Minneapolis, MN**  
**CEO World Savvy**

<b>10:00AM-10:30AM</b>	<b>Break</b>
<b>10:30AM-12:00PM</b>	<b>Workshops 1-10</b>

## 1. Truth and Consequence—Assessing Truth, Credibility and Reliability in Family Law

This workshop examines the principles and methods utilized by courts and mental health professionals in assessing the reliability, credibility and "truthfulness" of information presented in court proceedings and while conducting child custody evaluations, parenting plan assessments, focused interviews, and similar procedures. The fundamental question of how can courts and mental health professionals rely on the truth and accuracy of information received and then subsequently presented in court is critical to decision-making in custody, IPV, and related proceedings. What is the "truth," does it matter and why?

**Hon. Mark Juhas, Superior Court of California, Los Angeles, CA**  
**Jessica P. Greenwald O'Brien, PhD, Natick, MA**  
**Michael J. Kretzmer, JD, CFLS, El Segundo, CA**

## 2. The Intersection of Emerging Technologies and Coercive Family Violence

Emerging technologies like AI can amplify coercive family violence through a variety of insidious tactics. However, AI can also help identify and document abusive behavior. This workshop explores the evolution of technology-assisted family violence, assesses if current family law definitions are adequate, and discusses policy responses and training for victims and professionals. A live AI demonstration will show how AI might proactively identify coercive control patterns. A panel of experts; a family violence response expert, family lawyer/technologist, and family law judge, will provide their unique insights.

**Hon. Tom Altobelli, Sydney, NSW, Australia**  
**Fiona Kirkman, LL.M., CORTO, Sydney, NSW, Australia**  
**David Mandel, MA, LPC, Safe & Together Institute, Canton, CT**

## 3. Pancakes from a Mix: The Voice of the Child in Resist-Refuse Dynamics

In the challenge to understand why a child resists or refuses contact with a parent, the voice of the child often opens an important window as to which factors should be given more weight. This session will consider the types of communications and observations of children that are made available during a custody evaluation and family therapy sessions that suggest an unhealthy estrangement has taken place as opposed to those that indicate real parenting deficits, and the associated therapeutic implications.

**Mira Levitt, PhD, Needham, MA**  
**Claudette Pierre, PhD, Brookline, MA**

## 4. No—Managing Youth's Consent to Therapy in Parent-Child Contact Problem Cases

Therapeutic interventions that have the goals of developing or re-establishing healthier parenting skills, coparenting functioning and a better relationship between a child and their rejected parent have come under intense scrutiny. In some states, laws have been introduced and, in some cases, passed to restrict or outlaw such interventions. One rationale for the opposition is that requiring a resistant child's participation violates their rights. This workshop will explore the unique legal, clinical, and ethical challenges associated with managing the youth's consent to participate and delineate protocols and specific interventions that can be used in the referral, intake, and therapy processes.

**Matthew J. Sullivan, PhD, Santa Cruz, CA**  
**Barbara Jo Fidler, PhD, Toronto, ON, Canada**

*"AFCC has the best conferences regardless of in person or online. The presenters are always professional, and experts trained and highly experienced in the field. I promise you everyone who attends AFCC conferences will always come back again and again. Every presentation is a good one and I always have a hard time deciding which one to attend."*

# AFCC 62nd Annual Conference



## 5. A Lawyer, a Therapist, and a Judge: Solving Complex Cases Involving Adolescents

In this session, a child's legal representative (CLR), family therapist, and judicial officer will address challenges in high-conflict adolescent cases. They'll share creative strategies for litigious families, focusing on adolescent development, the importance of teens having agency in decisions, and the dynamics of parental disputes in court. This session emphasizes the CLR's role in collaboration with therapists, parents, and the court. Strategies from other states and international approaches will be discussed, highlighting the need for balancing adolescents' voices with their best interests amid complexities like domestic violence and child abuse.

**Krista Nash, JD**, Children First Family Law, PC, Arvada, CO

**Kathleen McNamara, PhD**, Fort Collins, CO

**Hon. Kelley Southerland**, Adams County District Court, Brighton, CO

## 6. Let the Questions Define the Scope: Assisting Courts to Ask Meaningful Questions

While evaluations of an entire family system can help a court make decisions for the best interest of minor children, they are expensive and time-consuming. Evaluations of lesser scopes, including those that do not evaluate the minor children, can still provide courts with reliable opinions that may be helpful, so long as the limitations in evaluations of such scopes are acknowledged. This workshop explores those limitations and opinions.

**Sean B. Knuth, PhD**, Charlotte, NC

**Chris Mulchay, PhD, ABPP**, Asheville Testing, Asheville, NC

## 7. When the Battle Hits Home: Coping with the Emotional Toll of Custody Cases

High-conflict families in transition present countless challenges to attorneys, mental health providers, mediators, and the court. Chief amongst them is the enormous toll it can take on them personally. The level of stress, compassion fatigue, vicarious traumatization, and burnout experienced by professionals is significant and cannot be ignored. This workshop will focus on the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration and strategies for self-care to ensure the best and brightest are able to continue their work with high-conflict families, and that young professionals are encouraged to work with this population.

**Dawn Smith, JD**, Evolve Family Law, Atlanta, GA

**Daniel Bloom, JD**, Bloom Lines Alexander, Atlanta, GA

**Kristin Carothers, PhD**, Peachtree Integrated Psychology, Atlanta, GA

## 8. The Need to Empower Early Career Professionals to Join Forensic Family Law

Join us for a transformative workshop on modernizing forensic mental health training to attract young professionals to the field of family law. Discover innovative business approaches to address the aging workforce and engage the next generation of professionals. Explore practical solutions for improving competency for early career professionals by examining established models, like the medical residency model, law firm model, and state-employed court clinician model.

**Premela Deck, JD, PhD**, SD Family Services, Inc., Canton, MA

**Jeff Stein, PhD**, Psychological Consulting Services, LLC, Salem, MA

**Jennifer Sevigney Durand, JD**, Durand Family Law, LLC, Canton, MA

## 9. Words to Conquer Conflict: A Coach's Playbook

"Your voice matters—express it in a way that resonates with others." In this presentation, we will explore the dynamic relationship between thoughts, verbal expression, speech, and representation. Participants will learn how to refine their approach to language, enabling them to effectively navigate and transform conflicts. The presenters will provide a practical "how-to" guide for guiding clients' emotions and enhancing interpersonal dialogue, fostering both empowerment and mutual resolution. This session offers a fresh perspective on using language as a tool for constructive conflict engagement rather than avoidance. Join this session to discover strategies that can lead to more meaningful interactions and successful outcomes.

**Jamie Niesen, MA, MS**, Niesen Resolution Services, Worthington, OH

**Jennifer Szeghi, MA**, Successful Parenting, LLC, Cincinnati, OH

## 10. From Conflict to Connection: Transforming Parenting Coordination Through the Use of AI

Participants will examine how digital tools and platforms can help overcome traditional barriers to accessing parenting coordination services, particularly for underserved communities. The session will cover practical strategies for implementing tech-based solutions, while addressing important considerations around digital equity, privacy, and user experience.

**Debra K. Carter, PhD**, The National Cooperative Parenting Center, Bradenton, FL

**Christine Profito, PhD**, The National Cooperative Parenting Center, Bradenton, FL

**12:00PM–1:30PM**

**AFCC Luncheon & Awards Ceremony**

**Presiding: Michael A. Saini, PhD, MSW, RSW, AFCC President**

**1:45PM–3:15PM**

**Workshops 11-20**

## 11. Optimizing Online Family Mediation: Balancing Automation and the Human Touch

After 30 years of incremental development, more mediation has moved "online." This was initially necessitated by the pandemic, yet somewhat surprisingly, approximately 85% of all mediations continue to take place online (without physical meetings)! Both professionals and participants now generally prefer resolving their family situations online. Even when people physically meet, they still greatly benefit from also having a most capable, secure, and supportive online mediation environment. This workshop will seek to identify the most valuable components of an optimized online family mediation platform.

**Jim Melamed, JD**, Mediate.com, Eugene, OR

**Clare Fowler, MS**, Mediate.com, Veneta, OR

**Colin Rule**, Mediate.com/ODR.com, San Jose, CA

*"The interdisciplinary nature of an AFCC conference makes it a unique experience. AFCC has provided me with great opportunities to learn from leading international practitioners and scholars, as well as to meet and engage with professionals in my own community and region."*



# AFCC 62nd Annual Conference



## 12. Child Custody Disputes in the Movies: From *Kramer vs. Kramer* to *Marriage Story*

In the 1970s, the movie *Kramer vs. Kramer* dramatized the destructiveness of child custody disputes. It helped inspire family law reform and careers. The central problem identified was an adversarial system and hostile litigation. Today's parents are under greater legal and social pressure to resolve disputes without resorting to court. This can be welcomed and resisted by parents. This workshop focuses on parental resistance to non-adversarial dispute resolution over litigation through a return to Hollywood. The movie *Marriage Story* is used to show how parents might feel alienated rather than relieved by the opportunity to cooperatively problem-solve differences. The panelists will discuss what has endured and changed in parent use of courts, and when court-based decisions prove more efficient and effective than first requiring effort to mediate.

**Chioma Ajoku, JD, PhD, ABPP**, Forensic Psych Solutions, Brooklyn, NY  
**Hon. Dolores Bomrad (Ret.)**, Family Matters Resolution Services, Hubertus, WI  
**Lilly Munro, MSW, CADC**, Family Court Services, Chicago, IL  
**Carlton D. Stansbury, JD**, Burbach & Stansbury, Milwaukee, WI  
**Moderator: Alexandra Crampton, MSW, PhD**, Marquette Univ., Milwaukee, WI

## 13. Who Do You Think You Are? Avoiding "Role Creep" in Family Law Matters

Court-involved mental health professionals (CIMHPs) function in an environment with inherent ethical challenges and risks. It is not possible to avoid completely the pressure exerted by various parties for us to engage in several roles simultaneously (e.g., evaluator/helper; trial consultant/testifying expert). Sometimes we engage in overreaching on our own initiative, attempting to help as many persons as possible. This workshop explores real-life examples of this phenomenon and seeks to provide participants with a practical, evidence-based approach to navigating the pressures and temptations of "role creep" in the family court system.

**Jeffrey P. Wittmann, PhD**, Albany, NY  
**Eric Y. Drogan, JD, PhD**, Harvard Medical School, Hingham, MA

## 14. Co-Parent Coaching: A First Look at Standards

Co-Parent Coaching is a recognized program in Delaware County, Ohio, and is offered privately worldwide. Coaches use their experience and training to creatively help parents through co-parenting conflicts. This workshop, led by multidisciplinary professionals, will explore ethical and training standards, their implementation, and the benefits of setting clear guidelines. Participants will also discuss key differences between co-parent coaching and other dispute resolution methods, and examine challenges in applying standards, deepening their understanding of this growing field.

**Hon. Randall Fuller**, Delaware County Domestic Relations Court, Delaware, OH  
**Marya Cody Kolman, JD**, Supreme Court of Ohio, Columbus, OH  
**Jennifer Wheeler, PhD**, Seattle, WA  
**Amy Armstrong, MSW**, Delaware County Domestic Relations Court, Delaware, OH

## 15. Safeguarding Childhoods: Co-Parenting with BeH2O's Transformative Framework

This workshop introduces professionals to the BeH2O 16-week Child-Focused Joint Parenting Approach, a program designed to help high-conflict co-parents shift mindsets and foster collaboration. Participants will gain insights into the program's foundation in neuroplasticity and conflict resolution, while learning how to become certified BeH2O coaches or refer clients to this transformative approach. BeH2O provides tools for professionals to support families in creating healthier co-parenting dynamics, ultimately safeguarding childhoods and promoting stability.

**Trina Nudson, JD, LBSW**, The Layne Project, Inc., Olathe, KS

## 16. Missing Pieces: Different Angles and Approaches in Reunification Cases

Reunification therapy often focuses exclusively or mostly on working with the rejected parent and the child. Stepping back and considering the family system as a whole suggests that it is vital to pay attention to other pieces of the puzzle, specifically the favored parent, the co-parenting relationship, and the sibling relationships. This session will examine some of the important therapeutic tasks and various evidence-informed techniques for other parts of the family system, without solely focusing on the rejected parent.

**April Harris-Britt, PhD**, AHB Forensic and Consulting Services, Durham, NC  
**Cynthia M. Sortisio, PhD**, Counseling Services, Inc., Durham, NC

## 17. A Sneak Peek into a Family Systems Intensive Intervention

This workshop will explore the current theoretical and political divide regarding the understanding of parent child contact problems, differentiating between a single factor theory as opposed to a multi-factorial, family systems approach. Key components of a family systems intervention will be noted, and attendees will be able to have a 'sneak peek' at how one of these components is conducted.

**Marcy Pasternak, PhD**, Watchung, NJ  
**Sharon Montgomery, PsyD**, Morristown, NJ

## 18. Reframing the Paradigm: Parenting Plans in the Context of Domestic Violence

This session will focus on safe and appropriate parenting plans when domestic violence is present in either a parenting case and/or protection order. Presenters will discuss Ohio's model as it answers the following questions: How do the dangerousness/lethality factors intersect with the best interest factors? How does the presence of domestic violence and the use of coercively controlling behavior detrimentally impact the meaningful allocation of parental rights and responsibilities and the enforcement of parenting time arrangements?

**Alexandria M. Ruden, JD**, The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland, Cleveland, OH  
**Hon. Diane M. Palos**, Cuyahoga County Domestic Relations Court, Cleveland, OH

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## 19. Bringing the Voice of the Child into Court Proceedings

In a busy motion calendar or trial department, how does a judicial officer hear the voice of the child? This workshop will explore practical ways to sharpen our ability as judicial officers to know what children want from their parents, to conduct proceedings that focus the parents' attention on the needs of their children, ask when and if it may be helpful for a judge to interview a child, and how to make orders that encourage peaceful cooperation.

**Hon. Sharon L. Kalemkiarian**, San Diego Superior Court, San Diego, CA  
**Cindy Grossman, LCSW**, Kids' Turn San Diego, San Diego, CA

## 20. User-Engaged Research to Develop Effective Psychosocial Family Law Programs

This workshop will explore how interdisciplinary research, with separated families, can be used to develop family law and psychosocial programs that are evidence-based, contextually relevant and impactful. It will bring together international research to examine the complexities of post-separation parenting disputes involving high conflict and family violence. Through insights from Australia, Canada, the US, and Switzerland, the workshop will explore children's participation in family court processes, methodological and ethical challenges in psycho-judicial services, trauma-informed perspectives on parental experiences, and development of evidence-based interventions that balance rigorous research with real-world constraints.

**Georgina Dimopoulos, PhD, LLB**, Southern Cross Univ., Bilinga, QLD, Australia  
**Karey L. O'Hara, PhD**, Arizona State Univ., Phoenix, AZ  
**Amylie Paquin-Boudreau, PhD**, Univ. of Québec, Montréal, QC, Canada  
**Karine Poitras, PhD**, Univ. of Québec, Trois-Rivières, QC, Canada

<b>3:15PM-3:30PM</b>	<b>Break</b>
<b>3:30PM-5:00PM</b>	<b>Workshops 21-30</b>

## 21. The Dangerous Paradox

In family law custody cases, the constitutional and due process rights belong to the parents, and yet, the law is in the best interest of the children. This strange dichotomy of interests has created a paradigm where family law professionals have normalized parent focused custodial orders despite the orders being contrary to the best interests of the children. This session will include examples from a judicial and clinical perspective of cases where the child's best interests were lost and look at the research on factors that predict good outcomes for children.

**Hon. Harvey Silberman (Ret)**, Signature Resolution, Los Angeles, CA  
**Robin M. Deutsch, PhD, ABPP**, Newton Centre, MA  
**Leslie M. Drozd, PhD**, Seattle, WA  
**Marsha Kline Pruett, PhD, ABPP**, Smith College, Northampton, MA

## 22. Point C and Bridging Perspectives on the Child's "Best Interests"

"Point C" was released to the public as a free educational resource. Since its release, Point C has been supported by multiple organizations such as AFCC, APFM and OurFamilyWizard. This panel discusses the potential use of Point C in helping resolve parenting issues and focuses on constructive ways professionals can not only hear but listen to the voice of the child coping with parental dysfunction. The panel also discusses challenges when the child has significant emotional vulnerabilities and/or developmental disabilities.

**Mark Singer, EdD**, Livingston, NJ  
**Hon. Lawrence Jones (Ret.)**, Lawrence R. Jones NM, LLC, Bernalillo, NM  
**Joni Jones, RN**, Lawrence R. Jones NM, LLC, Bernalillo, NM  
**Holly M. Friedland, JD**, Jacobs Berger, LLC, Morristown, NJ

## 23. Improving Parent-Child Relationships with Parent-Child Interaction Therapy

Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) is an effective treatment for improving parent-child relationships, parenting skills, and child behavior. It works by first improving the parent-child attachment relationship, and then teaching parents effective discipline skills. This workshop will describe the research support for this modality of treatment, specifically within child-welfare involved families. We will also give an overview of PCIT, explain how it is different from other therapies, and describe how our research intends to improve it further.

**Amy Mikolajewski, PhD**, Louisiana State Univ., Baton Rouge, LA  
**Taylor Vautrot, BS**, Louisiana State Univ., Baton Rouge, LA  
**Kenadi Washington, BS**, Louisiana State Univ., Baton Rouge, LA  
**Alayah Mingo, BS**, Louisiana State Univ., Baton Rouge, LA

## 24. Conflict, Communication, Courtesy, and Culture: Establishing Fluency

There are many layers of differences and biases to navigate while working with a multicultural population and many ways communication within families and between professionals can go off track. This interactive presentation will provide practical tools to help engage in constructive and sensitive conversations. Professionals will participate in break-out groups, focused on skill building through role plays of difficult discussions/conversations related to cultural, professional, and intergenerational differences. In a supportive environment, the focus will be on increasing emotional and cognitive empathy and on addressing differences with compassion and courtesy.

**Gitu Bhatia, PsyD**, Los Angeles, CA  
**Linda Bortell, PsyD**, Bortell Psychological Inc., South Pasadena, CA  
**Mesha Ellis, PhD**, Ellis Evaluation & Consulting Services, Torrance, CA

## Sign Up for the Taste of New Orleans!

Don't miss out on an exclusive opportunity to connect, network, and savor the vibrant culture of New Orleans!

On Thursday evening, join AFCC's *Taste of New Orleans*, a unique social outing where you'll join a small group of 8-10 fellow conference attendees for dinner at one of New Orleans' best restaurants!

*Participants are responsible for food, beverage, and transportation costs.*

# AFCC 62nd Annual Conference



## 25. IPV Common Factors: Legislative and Empirical Considerations

Courts and mental health professionals continue to pay greater attention to the presence of intimate partner violence (IPV), domestic, and family violence within relationships. However, differences have arisen across jurisdictions, including differing term definitions, conceptualizations, and understanding. Using a blended approach, this presentation provides a focus on legislative considerations as outlined by a retired judge, and scientific considerations by a scientist-practitioner psychologist. The purpose is to promote a greater understanding and application of the “common factors” underlying these important concepts to family matters with direct application to on-going work.

**Terry Singh, PhD, ABPP**, Alberta Forensic Psychology, Calgary, AB, Canada  
**Hon. Nancy Flatters (Ret.)**, Alberta Justice, Calgary, AB, Canada

## 26. Trauma Informed ADR Practices that Address Diverse Backgrounds and Identities

In today's complex world ADR practitioners require conflict management skills that are both trauma-informed and responsive to the unique needs of individuals with diverse backgrounds and identities. Participants will learn core principles of trauma-informed practice; discuss diversity and identity competencies and receive a brief overview of trauma and brain science. Trauma triggers will be explained, along with techniques to calm those triggers and re-engage the thinking part of the brain. Attendees will leave better prepared to create a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment where clients feel heard, and respected.

**Sharon Crooks, KC, LLM**, Trauma Informed Conflict Solutions, Inc., Red Deer County, AB, Canada

## 27. Don't Burn Your Bridges: Skill Building to Reduce Multigenerational Conflict

Families don't age out of conflict—the next generation is watching and assuming those behaviors. In this interactive, practical workshop, we will present professional interventions to bridge the divide and calm the waters toward engagement, focused communication, and multigenerational benefits. Using scenarios and your oceans of experience, together we will develop a list of top 10 responses and skills to bridge the gaps we confront when working with families of all ages in conflict.

**Linda B. Fieldstone, MEd**, Elder Justice Initiative on Eldercaring Coordination, Miami, FL  
**Sue Bronson, MSW**, Elder Justice Initiative on Eldercaring Coordination, Milwaukee, WI

## 28. A Review of Private Arbitration Panels Handling Custody Matters

This program will review and analyze the concept of private arbitration panels to handle custody matters. The workshop will review cases that exist in jurisdictions that permit arbitration as well as a review of cases in which custody has been arbitrated that are limited in their extent to mediation. The presentation will focus on proposed models of conduct for them, the requirements of forensic evaluations, and the members of the arbitration panel requiring them to be a mental health professional or legal expert. The workshop will review this as an option to the extreme backlogs that exist in custody matters and the fact that arbitration panels, based on the consent of both parties, can effectuate a result in a more timely fashion.

**Martin E. Friedlander, JD**, Yashar Coalition, Brooklyn, NY  
**Hon. Jane Pearl (Ret.)**, New York, NY

## 29. We Hear You: Balancing Research with the Real World in Family Law Interventions

This workshop explores collaborative approaches to developing and implementing family law interventions. The panelists will discuss how human-centered design and community-engaged research can be integrated into family court interventions to improve outcomes. The featured studies highlight the development of child and parent high-conflict divorce programs, as well as randomized trials conducted in real-world settings. Emphasizing interdisciplinary collaboration, the workshop addresses the challenges of maintaining rigorous research in complex environments. It offers practical insights for scholars, practitioners, and policymakers committed to advancing psychology and law through innovative strategies and empirical findings.

**Sydney M. Parker**, Arizona State Univ., Phoenix, AZ  
**Gabriela A. Lay**, Arizona State Univ., Phoenix, AZ  
**Michelle Y. Yang, MS**, Arizona State Univ., Phoenix, AZ  
**Trevor Morris**, Arizona State Univ., Phoenix, AZ

## 30. The AFCC Parent Education Task Force: Open Forum

This workshop will introduce the work of the AFCC Task Force on Parent Education. The Task Force is currently in phase one of their work, which includes development of a comprehensive report that deals with issues around common language, contextual factors that should be considered in program design and mandates, and review of statutes and case law surrounding parent education. The long-term goal of the Task Force is to establish guidelines for gathering and communicating evidence and will provide tools to aid developers and consumers of parent education programs to better evaluate the quality and relevance of the evidence supporting various programs. Participants will learn about this work in progress and have the opportunity to provide feedback and ask questions to inform the on-going work of the Task Force group.

**Anthony J. Ferraro, PhD**, Kansas State Univ., Manhattan, KS  
**Jonathon J. Beckmeyer, PhD**, Illinois State University, Normal, IL  
**Annette T. Burns, JD**, Phoenix, AZ  
**Sheila M. Sproule, JD**, New York Unified Court System, New York, NY

<b>5:00PM-6:00PM</b>	<b>International Attendee Reception</b>
<b>5:00PM-6:30PM</b>	<b>DE&amp;I Open Forum</b>
<b>Evening</b>	<b>Taste of New Orleans</b>
<b>9:00PM-12:00AM</b>	<b>AFCC Hospitality Suite</b>

*“AFCC conferences are essential to maintaining a high-level set of tools relevant to my practice. The topics are current, the materials are always excellent and savable, and the presenters are the top in our interrelated professions.”*

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## Friday, May 30, 2025

<b>6:15AM-7:15AM</b>	<b>Meditation &amp; Yoga</b>
<b>7:15AM-8:15AM</b>	<b>AFCC Committee Meetings</b>
<b>7:30AM-5:00PM</b>	<b>Registration</b>
<b>7:30AM-5:00PM</b>	<b>Exhibit Forum</b>
<b>7:30AM-8:30AM</b>	<b>Coffee and Rolls</b>
<b>8:30AM-10:00AM</b>	<b>Workshops 31-40</b>

### 31. Domestic Violence and the Grave Risk of Harm under the Hague Convention

The Hague Convention of 25 October 1980, on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction seeks to protect children from the harmful effects of abduction and retention across international boundaries. One of the defenses to a return under the Hague Convention is the grave risk of harm to the child. Historically, this defense has been narrowly construed. However, research regarding the impact of domestic violence on children has expanded significantly. This workshop, presented by three extremely experienced lawyers who specialize in representing parties in children abduction proceedings, will look at practices in their respective countries and the impact domestic violence is having upon the case law in this area of international family law.

**Max Blitt, KC, LLB, Spier Harben, Calgary, AB, Canada**

**Jeremy Morley, JD, New York, NY**

**Michael Stangarone, LLB, MacDonald & Partners, LLP, Toronto, ON, Canada**

**Tiffany Guo, JD, MacDonald & Partners, LLP, Toronto, ON, Canada**

### 32. Neuroaffirming Perspectives from a Judge, Lawyer, and Psychologist

With the increase in diagnoses of neurodevelopmental conditions, particularly autism and ADHD, it is important that judges, lawyers, psychologists, and other family law professionals are affirming in their approach to working with neurodivergent children and families. This workshop will explore the complexities of neurodivergence in the courtroom, family law processes, in a psychological and assessment setting, and in day-to-day practice.

**Stephanie Lau, MS, Vincent Papaleo and Associates, Melbourne, VIC, Australia**

**Hon. Megan Christopher, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Boston, MA**

**Coralee Ellum, MS, Ellum Family Law, Melbourne, VIC, Australia**

### 33. Working Together: Interdisciplinarity in Action

Interdisciplinarity is considered the gold standard in family law practice—different professions working together to better serve families in need through respectful, non-hierarchical partnering and consultation. But in reality, interdisciplinarity is hard work. In this workshop, guiding participants through a case consultation, the following questions will be addressed: How do we work together productively when we speak different languages and see family problems through different lenses? How do we challenge one another without creating rifts? What are the benefits of an interdisciplinary rolodex? Is it worth the work? How can interdisciplinary practice improve our professional practices? How does one build an interdisciplinary practice?

**Stacey E. Platt, JD, Loyola Univ. Chicago School of Law, Chicago, IL**

**Marsha Kline Pruett, PhD, ABPP, Smith College, Northampton, MA**

### 34. Triage Tool Usability and Usefulness: Right Services, Right Families, Right Time

The Pathways Project aims to improve court efficiency and child well-being through early case management, particularly for cases involving high conflict, domestic violence, trauma, or substance misuse. Usability testing through CU Law's Access to Justice Innovation Lab identified areas for improvement, while ASU's Youth and Family in Court Systems (YFaCS) Lab assessed the tool's effectiveness using validated risk measures. Results showed strong associations between risk scores and high-risk case pathways, demonstrating the tool's potential to prioritize resources for families most in need.

**Karey L. O'Hara, PhD, Arizona State Univ., Tempe, AZ**

**Hon. Keven O'Grady, Kansas 10th Judicial District, Olathe, KS**

**Amy G. Applegate, JD, Indiana Univ. Maurer School of Law, Bloomington, IN**

**Staci Pratt, JD, LL.M., Univ. of Colorado Law School, Boulder, CO**

**Alicia Davis, JD, National Center for State Courts, Chicago, IL**

### 35. Parenting Is a Job — Post-Separation Parenting Is a Job Share

Parenting is a job and post-separation parenting, or shared parenting, is a job share. Shared parenting requires communication, decision making, problem-solving, and conflict resolution in four areas of interest: education; health, wellness, and safety; optional enrichment activities; and family. Through the consideration of a clearly laid out parenting job description and standards to evaluate the parents, this workshop connects the dots between parents' behaviors and the best interests of the children with the principles of job-sharing.

**Allen L. Levy, MS, Generations Family Consulting, LLC, Anchorage, AK**

### 36. Beyond the Mighty CCE: Preserving the Benefits While Mitigating the Challenges

Child custody evaluations (CCE) can be a valuable tool to the court and to families embroiled in high-conflict custody matters. CCEs also can augment costs, incur delays, increase conflict and stress, promulgate bias, and misrepresent the social science literature. In this interactive workshop, the Massachusetts AFCC working group will share how they are exploring alternatives to the mighty CCE and its progress on identifying new "products" and "services," ranging from new reports to interventions that circumvent reports, to entirely different legal processes and court structures. The panelists will invite audience comments on these alternatives and best practices and challenges to engaging families.

**Jessica P. Greenwald O'Brien, PhD, Natick, MA**

**Hon. Diana S. Velez Harris, Hampshire Probate and Family Court, Northampton, MA**

**Ellen Waldorf, JD, eWaldorf Mediation, Newton Upper Falls, MA**

*"AFCC conferences are the premier education and networking events that allow me to succeed in my career. I appreciate how knowledgeable the presenters are and how gracious they are in sharing their research, experience, and insights. AFCC is the go-to source for me to serve court-involved families."*

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## 37. Applying Family Systems in Conflicted Families

What do professionals mean when they describe a family in terms of “Family Systems” and how do we consider this concept when working with families? This presentation will provide some tools for use in working with conflicted families and support a paradigm shift enabling professionals to move from just talking about family systems to applying the Family Systems Theory in their work both in and outside the courthouse.

**Lori Thibodeau, MA, LMFT**, *The Bridging Center, Bloomington, MN*

**Kevin J. Chafin, MA, LPC**, *Kansas City, MO*

**Simone A. Haberstock, JD, LLM**, *St. Louis, MO*

## 38. Unmasking Identity Bias: Stereotyping, Discrimination, and Family Law Outcomes

This workshop explores the psychological mechanisms of prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination, focusing on how biases (e.g., racial, gender, socioeconomic, cultural) manifest in family law, particularly in parental access cases. Participants will learn how implicit and explicit biases can impact legal processes and outcomes, gaining strategies to identify and minimize their influence in family law work. Case studies will highlight how prejudice and stereotyping can affect parenting plan decisions and disadvantage marginalized individuals.

**Chioma Ajoku, JD, PhD, ABPP**, *Forensic Psych Solutions, Brooklyn, NY*

## 39. Understanding Child Sexual Abuse Forensic Interviews and Evaluations

Allegations of child sexual abuse can arise within the context of a child custody evaluation. When that occurs the child custody evaluation is placed on hold, Child Protective Services undertakes an investigation, and the child is interviewed at a child advocacy center (CAC) by a trained child forensic interviewer. This presentation will explore the various protocols utilized to conduct a child forensic interview, explain the process, and compare and contrast to a child sexual abuse forensic evaluation.

**Lawrence Jay Braunstein, JD**, *Braunstein & Zuckerman, Esqs., White Plains, NY*

**Julie Kenniston, MSW, LISW**, *National Criminal Justice Training Center, Mason, OH*

## 40. Updating the Model Standards for Divorce and Family Mediators for the 21st Century

An AFCC/ABA Family Law Section Interdisciplinary Task Force was appointed in 2022 to revise the 2001 Model Standards of Practice for Divorce and Family Mediators. Since 2001, many changes have occurred in the field of family mediation. The task force divided up into subcommittees and met as a large group to examine the individual standards, overarching themes, and specific language. Major and minor changes have been considered. Important topics have included prioritizing self-determination and informed decision-making, the need to address the widespread use of technology in mediation, advances in best practices dealing with domestic abuse, child abuse and neglect, updated protocols about capacity and how to include the voice of children. The task force reporter and members will present updates and review the current status of the revised standards.

**Kelly Browe Olson, JD, LLM**, *Univ. of Arkansas-Little Rock Bowen School of Law, Little Rock, AR*

**Donna Erez-Navot, JD**, *Institute for Dispute Resolution, Univ. of Florida Levin College of Law, Gainesville, FL*

10:00AM-10:30AM

Break

10:30AM-12:00PM

Plenary Session

## Plenary Session

Welcome: **Hon. Dolores Bomrad (Ret.)**, *AFCC President Elect*

## Shrooms, Science, and Custody Battles: Psychedelics in the Family Court Spotlight

As psychedelics become increasingly recognized in medical and therapeutic settings, their implications for family court are emerging in fascinating and complex ways. This plenary delves into the latest in psychedelic research and examines how these substances are influencing custody disputes and other family law issues. Join a forensic psychologist with specialized expertise in neuroscience and substance use alongside a nationally recognized family law litigator with deep experience in complex custody cases and forensic testimony. Together, they will guide participants through key considerations for legal and mental health professionals, including the scientific evidence for psychedelic therapies, ethical challenges, and practical strategies for addressing psychedelic-related cases in court. Prepare for a thought-provoking journey into an evolving legal frontier.

**Stephanie Tabashneck, JD, PhD**, *Center for Law, Brain & Behavior, Boston, MA*

**Lawrence Jay Braunstein, JD**, *Braunstein & Zuckerman, Esqs., White Plains, NY*

12:00PM-1:30PM

Lunch (On Your Own)

12:00PM-1:30PM

FCR Editorial Board Meeting

12:00PM-1:30PM

Chapter President's Lunch

1:45PM-3:15PM

Workshops 41-50

## 41. Domestic Violence in Louisiana: A View from the Bench

Have you ever wondered how the judiciary views domestic violence, stalking and sexual assault cases? Have you ever pondered the facts and laws that a judge, commissioner, or hearing officer considers in deciding these cases? This session seeks to highlight a judicial perspective in decision making on these important cases in a true/false, interactive session and gives participants an inside look at how and why decisions are made.

**Hon. Maggie Simar**, *16th Judicial District Court, St. Martinville, LA*

**Hon. John Guidry**, *Chief Judge, First Circuit Court of Appeal, Baton Rouge, LA*

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## 42. Draining the Swamp—Preventing and Responding to “Stuck” Child Custody Cases

High conflict child custody matters can pose extraordinary challenges when pro se representation can delay or derail proceedings, attorney zealous advocacy devolves into emotionally fraught litigation trench warfare, judicial prudence gives into stagnating indecisiveness, parenting plan evaluator guidance becomes thinly veiled partisanship or departs from reliable behavioral science, and/or expert testimony serves to complicate rather than resolve issues. Cases can take months to years to resolve. This workshop identifies common factors contributing to the derailing of cases and describes strategies for preventing or addressing derailed cases for judges, attorneys, evaluators, court staff, parties, and others.

**Robin M. Deutsch, PhD, ABPP**, Newton Centre, MA

**Robert T. Kinscherff, PhD, JD**, Center for Law, Brain & Behavior, Cambridge, MA

**Hon. Christina Harms (Ret.)**, William James College, Newton, MA

## 43. When to Lawyer Up: Effective Use of the Legal Team in Resist-Refuse Cases

Families experiencing separation or divorce face a host of legal, emotional, and relational challenges. When parent-child contact problems (PCCP) arise, the intersection of mental health treatment and legal intervention becomes critical. A team-based approach, integrating legal and mental health professionals, can provide a customized strategy for addressing resist-refuse dynamics (RRD) and facilitating positive family outcomes. This collaboration helps ensure that the legal process supports—rather than complicates—therapeutic goals. However, there are times when involving the legal team may be counterproductive, disrupting treatment progress and family healing. This workshop will explore the strategic use of legal professionals in RRD cases, helping participants navigate when and how to align legal actions with therapeutic goals. Attendees will leave with practical tools for fostering more effective collaboration between legal and mental health professionals, enhancing outcomes in these complex cases.

**Premela Deck, JD, PhD**, SD Family Services, Inc., Canton, MA

**Jacqueline Cafaro, MSW**, SD Family Services, Inc., Canton, MA

**Hon. Randy Kaplan (Ret.)**, Ligris + Associates, Boston, MA

**Evey Diaz, JD**, Casner & Edwards, LLP, Boston, MA

## 44. Teens, Tech, and AI—What you Need to Know

Today's youth use technology for nearly all interactions: communication, education, and entertainment. As family law professionals working with families in conflict, you have a responsibility to understand how technology is being used in these cases, especially involving children. In this interactive workshop, the panelists will discuss and demonstrate technologies that are being used by our youth to cause harm, harass, and threaten others. They will explore artificial intelligence (AI), smartphone technology, location applications, and commonly and uncommonly used social networking sites.

**Steven Bradley, MBA**, OurFamilyWizard, Pottsboro, TX

**Mindy F. Mitnick, EdM, MA**, Minneapolis, MN

## 45. Preflight Checklist: Positioning Parties to Succeed After Our Involvement is Done

Following plane malfunctions in the 1930s, the military began using a preflight checklist, to establish standardized procedures and verify that critical steps were followed for a successful flight. Our clients work with us to solve a problem, but the end of the case for practitioners is the point of takeoff for clients. In this session presenters will use a lot of flight metaphors (and sound effects?) to offer a standard practice to implement as our cases end. Participants will receive practical advice and a checklist template to begin using.

**Christopher Vatsaas, JD**, Tuft, Lach, Jerabek & O'Connell, PLLC, Maplewood, MN

**Victoria A. Elsmore, JD**, Ramsey County Judicial Branch, Saint Paul, MN

**Lori Thibodeau, MA**, The Bridging Center, Edina, MN

**Melanie I. Nelson, JD**, Tuft, Lach, Jerabek, & O'Connell, PLLC, Maplewood, MN

## 46. Children and Parents Comment on Transitions: Objects, Locations, and Routines

Most children whose parents/caregivers separate or live separately move between households and often locations. How children, young people and parents view transitions is poorly understood. Many use various forms of digital technologies to support connection. In some cases, those remain the primary form of engagement, but little is known how children and young people view this. This presentation aims to provide some ideas about the voices of those most impacted by the transition process.

**Sarah Calvert, PhD**, Auckland, New Zealand

## 47. Gender-Affirming Care 101

This workshop introduces family court professionals to the basics of gender-affirming care, covering key terminology related to gender identity and expression. Participants will learn about social and medical aspects of affirming care, including social transitions, hormone therapy, and surgeries. The session will also address the barriers transgender and gender non-conforming individuals face in accessing care, equipping attendees with tools to create supportive and affirming environments in their professional roles.

**Lindsey Sank Davis, PhD**, William James College, Brookline, MA

**Gavin Meade, MA**, William James College, Newton, MA

**Jack Burke, MA**, William James College, Newton, MA

## 48. Family Dispute Resolution: Process and Practice

This workshop will discuss and synthesize *Family Dispute Resolution: Process and Practice*, a recent Oxford University Press book. The 29 chapters cover a variety of topics including Family Specialty Courts, IPV, LGBTQIA+, family arbitration, working with children with special needs and what's next for family dispute resolution processes. The workshop will present options for using the book in training and graduate classes as well as for a reference for program personnel.

**Kelly Browe Olson, JD, LLM**, Univ. of Arkansas-Little Rock Bowen School of Law, Little Rock, AR

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## 49. Disruptive Innovation in Family Law: Is a Netflix/Airbnb Approach Possible?

This workshop addresses the ongoing challenges in family court, particularly in high-conflict cases that involve multiple professionals and significant resources. Traditional approaches often fall short, raising critical questions about effectiveness and child welfare. The panelists will explore transformative strategies inspired by disruptive models like Netflix and Airbnb. Participants will learn to implement early interventions, tailor solutions, and reduce conflict outside the legal framework, with the ultimate goal of equipping professionals with tools to minimize toxic stress and foster healthier family dynamics.

**Hon. Bruce Cohen (Ret.)**, High Conflict Institute, San Diego, CA  
**Megan Hunter**, MBA, High Conflict Institute, San Diego, CA

## 50. Language Matters—How the Words We Use Impact Possibilities for Families

Language is critical to how we define problems and the causes and solutions we consider. Disputes about professional language may detract from the focus on children's needs, increase polarization and increase obstacles to problem solving. These issues can arise in a variety of cases, ranging from parent-child contact problems, to disputes about children's medical, mental health or educational needs, to use or misuse of diagnostic terms. The presenter will address these impacts and propose practices to identify accurate information, improve discourse, and promote healthy solutions for families.

**Lyn R. Greenberg**, PhD, ABPP, Los Angeles, CA

3:15PM-3:30PM

Break

3:30PM-5:00PM

Workshops 51-60

## 51. Mediating High-Conflict Cases: 10 Paradigm Shifts

This session will address 10 key paradigm shifts for mediators, including three traditional approaches to avoid: trying for insight, trying to resolve the past, and addressing emotions. The focus shifts to teaching and guiding clients to use four simple problem-solving skills during the mediation process. The structure and tasks of this approach, called *New Ways for Mediation*, are based on the presenter's book *Mediating High Conflict Disputes (2021)*, which draws on his forty years' experience in divorce and custody mediation. The program will include video clips and case examples.

**Bill Eddy**, MSW, JD, High Conflict Institute, Scottsdale, AZ

## 52. Dibling-Dumpling Donuts: Mind Your Language When Talking about Donor Conception

Using correct terminology to clarify roles, relationships, and genetic connections in parenting matters involving donated gametes or embryos is essential to avoid causing confusion or offense and encourages a child centric approach. The presenters will take a deep dive into the murky waters of the fertility industry to explain why words matter and why it is so important to mind your language when talking about donor conception.

**Fiona Darroch**, MPsych, The Relationshipspace, Sydney, NSW, Australia  
**Wendy Kramer**, The Donor Sibling Registry, Nederland, CO

## 53. Personality Trait Research, Parenting, & CCEs: The Science We Have Been Ignoring

This workshop will cover the utility of the Five Factor Model (FFM) of personality for child custody evaluations (CCEs). Using the FFM in evaluating parents in CCEs offers reliable data based on a voluminous research foundation on normal personality functioning and various forms of psychopathology and use of research relating these issues to hypotheses about parenting. Research data on use of the NEO-PI-3 in CCEs, including new validity scale data, will be presented.

**Milfred "Bud" Dale**, PhD, JD, Topeka, KS

## 54. The CARE Program: Background, Innovation, & Efficacy Relative to Duration & Dose

This workshop will provide background on the Co-Parenting After Romance Ends (CARE) online, asynchronous program and innovation in its design. This program features tailored content, specific to four distinctive family forms and circumstances, as well as five dosages. This workshop will present findings from an external evaluation to determine change in indicators consistent with goals of the program to reduce conflict, increase collaborative co-parenting, and reduce re-litigation. Effects are also explored relative to program dosage (2-12 hours) and duration (time participants engaged with the materials).

**Nolanda Robert**, MS, CCFC, OnlineParentingPrograms.com, Bel Air, MD

**Anthony J. Ferrara**, PhD, Kansas State Univ., Manhattan, KS

**Melinda Stafford Markham**, PhD, Kansas State Univ., Manhattan, KS

## 55. Ontario's Novel (and Easily Exportable!) Family Court Processes

When family law proceedings are commenced, an aggressive litigation culture often tends to prevail, to the detriment of the parties and their children. The problem with that aggressive litigation culture was diagnosed in Ontario some time ago. Its court system has adopted various processes to remedy the worst aspects of that culture. Utilizing the Ontario experience, this workshop will present some of the ways that a family court culture can be transformed from one typified by aggressive litigation to one that is more trauma-informed, dignified, and settlement-focused.

**Justice Kendra Coats**, Ontario Superior Court of Justice, Milton, ON, Canada

**Justice Marvin Kurz**, Ontario Superior Court of Justice, Milton, ON, Canada

**Brian Burke**, LLB, Burke and Co. Family Law Litigation and Advocacy Group, Toronto, ON, Canada

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**New Membership Special**  
**Save up to \$200 when you join AFCC**  
**and register at the early bird rate**

**See page 20 for details**

# AFCC 62nd Annual Conference



## 56. Addressing the Shortage of Qualified Supervised Visitation Providers

Join this engaging workshop on the Supervised Visitation Network (SVN) Business Accelerator Initiative, a transformative program aimed at fostering community support for the development and collaboration with supervised visitation providers. This session will delve into various strategies communities can implement to enhance the capacity of these providers, ensuring they receive the necessary training, mentorship, and resources. Participants will explore how the SVN Business Accelerator Initiative can serve as a vital component in this collaborative effort, promoting advocacy, diversity, and inclusion. Participants will learn how to create a robust network that empowers families to access safe and effective visitation experiences.

**Joe Nullet, BA**, Supervised Visitation Network, Jacksonville, FL

## 57. Uncharted Waters: Research Findings of Therapists in High-Conflict Divorces

Therapists who are unprepared to work with high-conflict families often show reluctance or withdraw from engaging with the families and other involved professionals. Despite the increasing need for their support, there is limited research on therapists' experiences and effective practices in this area. This workshop will explore findings from a dissertation study analyzing therapists' beliefs, attitudes, and approaches through phenomenological data analysis. The presenters will discuss these findings and their implications for improving therapy practices with such families, specifically surrounding what legal professionals can do to engage with mental health professionals.

**Erin Guyette, PhD, LMFT**, Guyette Family Guidance, Maple Grove, MN

**Megan Oudekerk, PsyD, LMFT**, Cedar Valley Therapy, Eagan, MN

## 58. Coparent Training for Front-Line Personnel in Child- and Family-Serving Agencies

This workshop presents a novel training and consultation program that communities can use to upskill conflict resolution competencies of diverse front-line providers across child- and family-serving agencies. "Connected Coparenting" was designed by national coparenting experts, agency organizational leaders, and community members attuned to sensibilities of diverse families. The curriculum, customized training, and consultation model—currently supporting over 50 health and human services, substance abuse, child welfare, and kinship care providers serving pregnant and parenting families—challenges in organizational uptake and implementation, and evaluation of child and family impact will be addressed.

**James McHale, PhD**, Univ. of South Florida, St. Petersburg, FL

**April Harris-Britt, PhD**, AHB Forensic and Consulting Services, Durham, NC

**Carla Stover, PhD**, Yale Univ. Child Study Center, New Haven, CT

**Kacey Jenkins, PhD**, Univ. of South Florida, St. Petersburg, FL

## 59. How Conflict Can Keep Us Together: The "Normal Chaos" of Child Custody Cases

Ideally, child custody cases resolve through mediation. This workshop addresses those that do not. The focus is on "normal chaos," which means conflict that can derail resolution without the severity of high-conflict problems. The panelists will present a framework to identify underlying needs and parent conflict dynamics that are likely to require more than one or two mediation sessions. Participants learn how case triage can include assessment of conflict dynamics driven by non-mutual separation, persisting negative co-parenting dynamics, and other conflict interaction that does not meet a "high-conflict" threshold.

**Don Saposnek, PhD**, Family Mediation Service, Aptos, CA

**Alexandra Crampton, MSW, PhD**, Marquette Univ., Milwaukee, WI

## 60. Military as a Minority: Veterans and the Family Court System

Veterans and service members (SMs) must contend with unique barriers that place them at a disadvantage from the outset of a custody matter when seeking what they deem is an equitable child custody or visitation arrangement. The presenters offer recommendations to reduce the barriers veterans and SMs must contend with based on success states have had with specialty courts as well as recent legislation passed in California. State and federal agencies must collect and analyze data to understand veterans and SMs perceptions and the specific manner their status impacted or is impacting their child custody.

**Erhan Bedestani, JD, MS**, Warrior Family Advocacy, Arlington, VA

**Roger Hill, MBA**, Warrior Family Advocacy, Arlington, VA

6:30PM

AFCC Evening Celebration

## Celebrate, Connect, and Unwind!

Join us at the AFCC Evening Celebration!

Enjoy a memorable evening of delicious food, great company, and live entertainment in a relaxed welcoming atmosphere!

Sign up for an additional ticket and bring a guest!



# AFCC 62nd Annual Conference



## Saturday, May 31, 2025

<b>7:30AM-12:30PM</b>	<b>Conference Registration</b>
<b>7:30AM-12:30PM</b>	<b>Exhibit Forum</b>
<b>8:00AM-9:00AM</b>	<b>Coffee and Rolls</b>
<b>8:00AM-9:00AM</b>	<b>AFCC Membership Meeting</b>
<b>9:15AM-10:45AM</b>	<b>Workshops 61-70</b>

### 61. It's a New Ball Game Out There! The Impact of Misinformation and How to Respond

Misinformation and misperceptions fuel polarization in our field. It opens the door for professionals to replicate the intractable conflict in the families we serve, particularly around controversial topics like overnights and young children, resist-refuse dynamics, and IPV. Recognizing how misinformation is used allows us to extract ourselves and the families we work with from locked positions to one that encourages dialogue, critical thinking, and multiple perspectives. This workshop will provide practitioners with essential skills to recognize and combat the perils of misinformation as it applies to issues in family law.

*Regina Marshall, PhD, Reno, NV*

*Shawn McCall, PsyD, JD, San Francisco, CA*

*Shely Polak, PhD, AccFM, Mackenzie Clinic, Concord, ON, Canada*

### 62. The Adoption and Safe Families Act: Historical Insights and Modern Implications

This program provides an in-depth examination of forensic mental health assessments in child protection cases, focusing on current controversies within Child Protective Services (CPS) and child maltreatment policies. Key topics include the termination of parental rights (TPR), historical context of the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA), and the experiences of children affected by TPR, particularly among marginalized demographic groups. The discussion will address the evolving perception of child welfare as a "family policing system" and explore state authority over parental rights, alongside proposed legislative reforms aimed at improving the child welfare system.

*Jemour A. Maddux, PsyD, ABPP, William Paterson Univ. of New Jersey, Wayne, NJ*

*Dominique Harris, MA, William Paterson Univ. of New Jersey, Wayne, NJ*

*Sara Rupertus, MA, William Paterson Univ. of New Jersey, Wayne, NJ*

*Audrey Sickel, MA, William Paterson Univ. of New Jersey, Wayne, NJ*

### 63. Clinical and Evidential Perspectives on Unacceptable Risk to Children

This workshop will explore mental health and legal perspective on psychological safety and risk in the context of separated families, and the manner in which the Australian Court is presently responding to unacceptable risk to children. Panelists will include a discussion of the implications of psychological risk and its manifestations, particularly that which emerges from parental conflict and litigation. The presenters will explore the utility of scaffolding the psychological safety of children through court order, including a review of parental education and therapeutic intervention in the context of prioritizing a child's psychological safety.

*Sarah Angel, MClInPsych, DClinPsych, Psych Support, Brisbane, QLD, Australia*

*Kara Best, LLB, Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia, Brisbane, QLD, Australia*

### 64. The Eye of the Storm: Uncovering Domestic Violence in American Homes

When addressing domestic violence, we often focus on the aftermath, seeing only the victim and punishing the perpetrator based on the last confrontation. While a purely punitive response may mitigate the immediate threat, it fails to address the root causes of interpersonal violence, limiting long-term solutions. However, deeper dynamics are often at play, including family history, cultural expectations, and financial stress, all of which contribute to interpersonal violence. The presenter will explore these interconnected factors and how they affect mental health and relationships.

*Victor Martinez Reyes, PhD, 10th Judicial Circuit, Bartow, FL*

### 65. Navigating Cross-Border Family Disputes: Family Mediation Perspectives

This presentation explores mediation strategies in cross-border family disputes, focusing on marriage, divorce, parenting conflicts, and relocation with children. Emphasizing the emotional and psychological impacts on parents and children, it highlights the mediator's role in addressing cultural transitions, based on Canadian cross-border case experiences. Attendees will gain practical insights into managing these complex cases within national and international legal frameworks, using empathy-driven dialogue to support child-centric decisions. This session will equip family justice professionals and mediators with tools to reduce conflict and promote family well-being in an increasingly globalized world.

*Archana Medhekar, LLB, LLM, Ontario Association for Family Mediation, Toronto, ON, Canada*

*Mary-Anne Popescu, Ontario Association for Family Mediation, Toronto, ON, Canada*

### 66. Trauma-Informed Family Therapy Planning

Family court professionals are called to determine how to order relevant mental health services to address the needs of families in conflict. While relationship building between children and their parents is important, there are situations where this can actually be detrimental to the child. Treatment planning when there has been a history of maltreatment is a complicated matter. Through a case example, an overview of the concerns to be considered, evidence-based practices, and how to know if a mental health professional is equipped to make these decisions will be discussed.

*Heather Risk, PsyD, Heather Risk, PsyD & Associates, PLLC, Lexington, KY*

*Aimee Mau, MSW, Heather Risk, PsyD & Associates, PLLC, Lexington, KY*

*Caity Merritt, MA, Heather Risk, PsyD & Associates, PLLC, Lexington, KY*

### 67. Navigating Child Custody in the Context of Gender Diversity

Attendees will explore how gender diversity impacts custody cases involving transgender parents or children. The presenter will discuss key topics, including gender dysphoria and gender-affirming care, while examining legal cases from across the country. Participants will gain practical knowledge and insights into how courts have addressed disputes in these contexts, helping them better navigate these complex and evolving custody cases.

*Alana Chazan, JD, MA, All Family Legal, PC, Glendale, CA*

# AFCC 62nd Annual Conference



## 68. “Urgent Care” for RRD Cases: Attorneys as First Responders to Families in Crisis

Resist-Refuse Dynamics (RRD) cases represent a crisis to which we must urgently adapt. This panel will propose an “urgent care” model for RRD cases, in which family law attorneys are the “first responders” who must be equipped with tools to appropriately “triage” RRD cases. Presenters will describe limitations of parenting evaluations as a “first response,” and interventions to implement prior to a parenting evaluation, including “urgent care consultants,” brief-focused assessments, therapy, and co-parent coaching. Ideally, this “urgent care” model will result in fewer cases referred for parenting evaluations, and better outcomes for children.

**Jennifer Wheeler, PhD**, Seattle, WA

**Jennifer Keilin, MSW**, Issaquah, WA

**Amy Armstrong, MSW**, Delaware County Domestic Relations Court, Delaware, OH

## 69. Does One Size Fit All? Individualized Plans for Multiple Siblings

Developing a singular parenting schedule that meets the needs of all children in a family can be a daunting task. This workshop explores the reasons that different parenting schedules for siblings might be in the best interest of the children and better support families. Successful and pragmatic parenting plans must consider the best interests of each child in the family as well as various parental and familial factors. Participants will explore factors to consider when deciding to use individualized plans and have the opportunity to share and reflect using some examples of plans the presenters have used in the past.

**Deborah Bell, PhD, MSc**, Sand Story Psychology Services, Vancouver, BC, Canada

**Jennifer Malcolm, PhD, MSc**, JM Psychology, Calgary, AB, Canada

## 70. Speech is Free, But Words Have a Cost: Communicating in Family Conflicts

This workshop will explore the critical role of language during divorce and its profound effects on children and families. Participants will learn how specific words can either alleviate or intensify emotional turmoil. The presenters will analyze communication styles, engage in practical exercises, and share how language can shape perception and environments. By the end of the session, attendees will have practical strategies to enhance communication and understand their role in fostering solutions. Empower yourself to choose words that promote resilience and emotional health for yourself and the families with whom you work.

**Maureen Goldblatt, MS**, LifeStance Health, Milwaukee, WI

**Paul Stenzel, JD**, Hansen & Hildebrand, SC, Milwaukee, WI

<b>10:45AM-11:00AM</b>	<b>Break</b>
<b>11:00AM-12:30PM</b>	<b>Workshops 71-80</b>

## 71. High-Conflict Parents in Custody Assessments: The Role of Educational Programs

Participants will explore how educational programs enhance parents’ conflict resolution skills, emotional regulation, and communication, leading to better co-parenting relationships. Attendees will learn best practices for incorporating these programs into evaluations to ensure a comprehensive understanding of family dynamics. Designed for family law professionals and evaluators, this workshop offers strategies to improve outcomes in custody disputes, prioritizing the child’s well-being and long-term stability.

**Nolanda Robert, MS, CCFC**, Able2Adjust, Bel Air, MD

**Gina Santoro, PhD**, Santoro Psychological Services, Ellicott City, MD

## 72. A Comprehensive Psychoeducational Intervention for High-Conflict Coparents

Parents engaged in high conflict often present with a confusing mix of volatility and vulnerability, leaving mental health and legal professionals at a loss as to how to assist them and their children. Sometimes these parents have received multiple interventions by legal and mental health professionals, as well as the court, with little discernible effect. This session will provide a model for a psychoeducational class – whether in a live or online format – that can be an effective intervention for co-parents who have not been successful in resolving their conflict.

**Natalie Malovich, PhD**, Aspen Mediation, Draper, UT

**Cathe Madison, MSW**, Sunrise Counseling and Consulting Services, Sandy, UT

## 73. The Blessing/Curse of Writing Reports: How to Effectively Overcome the Obstacles

Do you dread writing reports as a parenting plan evaluator? Are you looking for more efficient ways to write reports so you can avoid having to write on weekends and during your time off? This workshop will provide practical, efficient strategies for writing and assembling reports that are transparent and useful while also helping you clarify and support your opinions using procedures that reduce bias. Two experienced psychologists will provide templates and strategies for dropping the dread in report writing so you can produce reports that are useful and informative.

**Susan Fletcher, PhD**, Fletcher & Assoc. Psychological Services, Frisco, TX

**Benjamin J. Albritton, PsyD, ABPP**, Southwest Clinical and Forensics, Dallas, TX

## 74. Hearing Adolescent Voices in Custody Arrangement Decisions

This workshop will provide information on the involvement of adolescents in the custody arrangement decision. The concerns shared by both parents and adolescents will be discussed. The appropriate age for adolescent involvement, and how to determine when an adolescent is ready to be involved in the custody arrangement decisions will be shared. Recommendations will be shared on how to determine when it is appropriate to include an adolescent in the custody arrangement decision.

**Jaimee Hartenstein, PhD**, Univ. of Central Missouri, Warrensburg, MO

## 75. Making the Case for Client-Directed Child Representation in Family Court

The client-directed model ensures that children’s expressed wishes are represented in custody proceedings through developmentally appropriate engagement. This session will inform family court professionals including attorneys, judges, and mental health practitioners how the client-directed model works. It will address common misconceptions about the approach and highlight research in social science and child development that supports client-directed representation. By focusing on this model, professionals can help promote positive youth development and build protective factors for children involved in family court.

**Stef Sloan, PhD**, Child’s Voice Project, New York, NY

**Hon. Liberty Aldrich (Ret.)**, The Children’s Law Center, Brooklyn, NY

**Suzanne Chester JD, PhD**, Child’s Voice Project, New York, NY

# AFCC 62nd Annual Conference



## 76. Seven Strategies When Meeting Children for Child Lawyers and Advocates

This workshop invites children's lawyers and advocates to add to their expertise, apply the Meeting with Children Principles, and discuss seven strategies for meaningful engagement. Strategies include: 1) setting the stage, 2) child assent process, 3) use of protocols, 4) following the child's lead, 5) organizing child input, 6) circling back to the child, and 7) sharing in court.

**Lorri A. Yassenik, PhD**, International Centre for Children and Family Law, Calgary, AB, Canada

**Jonathan M. Graham, LLB**, International Centre for Children and Family Law, Summer Hill, NSW, Australia

## 77. Parental Relationships and Children's Coping Behaviors

This session will focus on safe and appropriate parenting plans when domestic violence is present in either a parenting case and/or protection order. Presenters will discuss Ohio's model as it answers the following questions: How do the dangerousness/lethality factors intersect with the best interest factors? How does the presence of domestic violence and the use of coercively controlling behavior detrimentally impact the meaningful allocation of parental rights and responsibilities and the enforcement of parenting time arrangements?

**Mercedes E. Ebanks, PhD**, Howard Univ., Washington, DC

**Mharisi Bonner, MA**, Howard Univ., Washington, DC

## 78. Neurodevelopmental Conditions and Family Law Considerations

The increasing prevalence of neurodevelopmental conditions, such as autism, attention, language and cognitive differences, present a challenge to all family law professionals. It is critical when working in this complex field, to possess an appropriate understanding of how to appropriately work with individuals across the developmental lifespan where someone may present with neurodivergent needs. A neuroaffirming approach will be discussed, with reference to practical strategies to support children, adults, and families.

**Stephanie Lau, MS**, Vincent Papaleo and Associates, Melbourne, VIC, Australia

*"I was struck by the sense of community that I felt at this conference, despite its large size. Everyone I met was approachable, friendly, and open to sharing their experiences in the field. I actually left this conference saddened that I would have to wait some time to see everyone again.*

*This is an incredible community of people."*

## 79. Tough Choices: A Systemic Response to DV and Its Pervasive Impact on Families

The experience of domestic abuse is nuanced and complex across family systems, and many professionals find it difficult to identify, and then challenging to manage. Because the impact of abuse (and sometimes the abuse itself) does not abate post separation, the professionals working with these families will benefit from a thorough understanding of the pervasive impact abuse has on both the individuals in the family and the family system's overall functioning. This session features an experiential component to bring the complexity to the forefront.

**Carrie Crockford, MA, LMFT**, Paradigm Counseling, Big Lake, MN

**Alexandra Michelson, JD**, Tuft, Lach, Jerabek & O'Connell, PLLC, Maplewood, MN

**Jennifer E. Joseph, JD**, Saint Paul, MN

## 80. Neuroregulatory Perspective on Family Reunification Therapy

This presentation will review the neuroregulatory model and applications for conceptualizing and working with trauma and the increasing resist-refuse dynamics in contested child custody cases that pose challenges within family reunification therapy. Integration of the neuroregulatory model in family reunification work can inform implementation of attuned interventions and skills to teach parents and children that reduces the risk for traumatization (or re-traumatization), and better yet, offers real-time trauma healing opportunities, resulting in improvements in parent-child dynamics. Relevant case examples will be discussed.

**Reina Remigio, PhD**, Sage Family Reunification, Pleasanton, CA

**Steven Peterson, LCSW**, Sage Family Reunification, Pleasanton, CA

**Christopher Cook, JD, LCSW**, Sage Family Reunification, Pleasanton, CA

## Future AFCC Conferences!

**AFCC-AAML Joint Conference**  
**Advanced Issues in Child Custody**  
**September 18-20, 2025**  
**San Francisco, CA**

**AFCC Fall Virtual Conference**  
**November 12-14 and 17-18, 2025**  
**Online**

**AFCC 63rd Annual Conference**  
**May 27-30, 2026**  
**Seattle, Washington**

# AFCC 62nd Annual Conference



## Continuing Education Credits

A certificate of attendance is included with the conference registration. Attendees will receive their certificate by June 30th, 2025, via email. The certificate will verify attendance at conference sessions and may be used to apply for continuing education credits. It is the responsibility of the attendee to sign-in/out of each session attended. The certificate will reflect only those sessions properly signed into and out of. A list of conference sessions eligible for continuing education credits can be found on the conference portal and will be updated regularly.

### Psychologists

AFCC is approved by the American Psychological Association to sponsor continuing education for psychologists. AFCC maintains responsibility for this program and its content. The program is eligible for up to 20.5 hours of continuing education for psychologists. AFCC is also approved to sponsor continuing education for psychologists licensed to practice in the state of New York.

### Mental Health Professionals

An application for continuing education approval from the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) will be submitted for up to 20.5 CE credits; however, individuals will need to verify approval with their credentialing or licensing boards. If you are an LMFT, LPC, or other mental health professional, you may use the AFCC certificate of attendance to verify attendance at conference sessions and apply for continuing education credits with your accrediting institution.

### Massachusetts Parenting Coordinators

An application for continuing education approval for Parenting Coordinators in Massachusetts will be submitted.

### California Custody Evaluators and Mediators

Applications will be submitted to the Judicial Council of California, Administrative Office of the Courts. The views expressed in the program are those of the faculty and do not necessarily represent the official positions or policies of the Judicial Council of California or the Administrative Office of the Courts.

### US Lawyers

AFCC intends to submit an application for accreditation of continuing legal education activity and CLE in the following states: Minnesota, Vermont, Illinois, Ohio, Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas, and Mississippi. Attorneys from other states may use the AFCC certificate of attendance to verify attendance and apply for credit in their state.

### California Attorneys

California attorneys may apply for CLE in California based upon approval by a state listed as one of California's approved states for reciprocity since this conference is not being held in California. Several of the states to which application will be made are on California's list of approved states.

### Ontario Lawyers

An application will be submitted to the Law Society of Ontario to accredit the educational program content for Continuing Professional Development, or CPD, for lawyers.

## Important Conference Information

### Conference Scholarships

AFCC will offer scholarships for the conference. Scholarships include pre-conference institute registration, conference registration, meal functions (luncheon and the Friday evening celebration), and access to the AFCC hospitality suite. Some scholarships may include stipends to help with travel and accommodations, prioritizing applicants with high travel costs, international status, and financial need. The scholarship application is available [here](#) or on the AFCC website, [afccnet.org](http://afccnet.org). The scholarship application deadline is March 3rd, 2025. Recipients will be notified in late March.

### Exhibit Forum

The Exhibit Forum will be open during conference hours and provide an opportunity to meet face-to-face with representatives to discuss your needs and the products and services they offer. If you are interested in an exhibit table or other advertising opportunities, please contact AFCC Program Associate, Abby Rebholz at [arebholz@afccnet.org](mailto:arebholz@afccnet.org) or 608-664-3750.

### AFCC Hospitality Suite

Join AFCC conference attendees for informal networking and refreshments Wednesday and Thursday from 9:00PM-12:00AM and on Friday after the evening celebration until midnight. Please wear your name badge. The hospitality suite location will be included in attendee emails and on the conference portal. AFCC will send out more details closer to the date of the conference.

### Taste of New Orleans

AFCC will make reservations at several local restaurants so that you can join colleagues on Thursday evening for a no-host dinner. Sign up before 1:30PM on Thursday to join a group of 8-10 for dinner—space is limited! Restaurant menus and sign-up sheets will be available onsite Thursday morning. Participants are responsible for food, beverage, and transportation costs.

### Meditation and Yoga

Start your day in the right frame of mind for concentration and learning! Join AFCC colleagues for morning meditation and yoga. Meditation is from 6:15AM-6:30AM followed by yoga from 6:30AM-7:15AM, Thursday and Friday mornings. Please bring a yoga mat if you have one.

# AFCC 62nd Annual Conference



## Registration Information

Please read before completing your registration.

### AFCC Members Save up to \$200 on Registration Rates

Register and pay by March 18th, to receive the lowest rates for the conference! Not a member, yet? Join AFCC by taking advantage of the New Membership Special then register for the conference at the AFCC member rate.

### New Membership Special

Join AFCC when you register for the conference and receive a twelve-month membership for \$150—a \$10 discount—and save up to \$200 by registering at the AFCC member rate! It pays for itself! To join AFCC, simply select the new membership special on the registration form. The new membership special rate is only available to first-time AFCC members.

### Pre-Conference Institute Registration

Includes attendance at one pre-conference institute, refreshment breaks, and printed institute materials. Institute registration is a separate fee from registration for the full conference.

### Conference Registration

Includes all conference sessions, electronic access to conference materials, certificate of attendance, refreshment breaks, opening reception, luncheon, evening celebration, entertainment, and access to the AFCC hospitality suite. *\*Pre-conference institutes require a separate registration fee.*

### Spouse/Guest Registration

Available only to a spouse or significant other accompanying a full-conference registrant, not a business associate or staff colleague. Includes plenary sessions, opening reception, luncheon, evening celebration, entertainment, and access to the AFCC hospitality suite.

### Conference Presenter Registration

Available only to conference presenters. Includes all conference sessions, electronic access to conference materials, refreshment breaks, opening reception, luncheon, evening celebration, entertainment, and access to the AFCC hospitality suite. *\*A separate registration fee is required for presenters who wish to attend a pre-conference institute.*

### Full-Time Student Registration

Includes all conference sessions, electronic access to conference materials, and access to the hospitality suite. *Meal functions are not included; however, meal tickets may be purchased separately. Registration must include proof of full-time student status. \*A separate registration fee is required for pre-conference institutes.*

### Additional Tickets

The luncheon and evening celebration are included in the conference registration fee. Additional tickets are available: for the luncheon are \$85 and \$125 for the evening celebration. Ticket prices reflect the cost to AFCC.

## Certificate of Attendance

AFCC will provide a certificate of attendance for all conference attendees. Certificates will only reflect sessions where the attendee signed in *and* out.

## Session or Presenter Changes

AFCC reserves the right to make changes to the conference program, including (but not limited to) changes to the content and speakers in the published event schedule, or canceling sessions, should unforeseen circumstances arise.

## Audio/Video Recording

No personal audio or video recording or photographing of sessions is permitted. This is a live in-person event and will not be available virtually.

## Photo and Video Policy

AFCC reserves the right to take photographs during the conference and conference events. Your registration, attendance, or participation constitutes your consent for AFCC to use such photos and videos for promotional and archival purposes.

## Travel and Lodging Information

### New Orleans Marriott

555 Canal Street, New Orleans, LA 70130  
504-581-1000 • Book [online!](#)

Experience the charm of downtown New Orleans at the New Orleans Marriott, just steps from the French Quarter, Jackson Square, Café du Monde, and more. Enjoy the vibrant culture, from Bourbon Street's energy to art-filled Rue Royale. New Orleans is a cultural mecca, sure to offer something for everyone!

**Reserve your stay today** by calling 504-581-1000 and requesting the AFCC special rate, or book [online!](#) AFCC attendees can enjoy a special rate of \$215 per night (single/double occupancy). The room block and special rate are only guaranteed until May 4th, 2025—rooms often sell out early, so book soon! **Attendees are responsible for their own hotel arrangements.**

To ensure that all rooms booked at the conference hotel by attendees are recognized as part of the event, AFCC will provide the hotel with a list of registrants. By registering, you acknowledge this information will be shared with the hotel for this purpose only.

### Ground Transportation

A taxi from New Orleans Airport to the New Orleans Marriott costs approximately \$50 one-way and takes about 25 minutes, depending on traffic. Uber and Lyft are also available, along with hotel shuttles serving some downtown hotels.

### Parking

Valet parking rates at New Orleans Marriott Hotel on Canal Street are \$52 plus tax per day. *Prices may be subject to change.*

### Ambient Temperature

Meeting rooms and hotel facilities may be chilly, so bring a light jacket or sweater for indoors.

# CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FORM

AFCC 62nd Annual Conference • May 28-31, 2025 • New Orleans, Louisiana  
Register online at [afccnet.org](http://afccnet.org)

Please type or print clearly. This form may be duplicated.

First Name (Dr./Mr./Ms./Judge) \_\_\_\_\_ M.I. \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name \_\_\_\_\_ Degree \_\_\_\_\_

First Name or Nickname (as you would like it to appear on your name badge) \_\_\_\_\_

Title/Profession \_\_\_\_\_ Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State/Province \_\_\_\_\_ Country \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have dietary restrictions or other special needs? Meals Access Other Please provide details: \_\_\_\_\_

Registration Rates	Paid by March 18	Paid by May 5	Paid after May 5
Please check the appropriate amount(s) when making your selections and enter your total at the bottom			
<b>AFCC Membership Special</b>			
Join AFCC for 12 months at a reduced rate and register at the AFCC member rates!	__\$150	__\$150	__\$150
<b>Pre-Conference Institute Registration Rates</b>			
Full Day Institute Registration – AFCC Member	__\$170	__\$190	__\$200
Full Day Institute Registration – Non-member	__\$255	__\$275	__\$295
<b>Conference Registration Rates</b>			
Conference Registration – AFCC Member	__\$555	__\$580	__\$595
Conference Registration – Non-member	__\$670	__\$695	__\$725
Conference Presenter Rate – AFCC Member	__\$350	__\$375	__\$400
Conference Presenter Rate – Non-member	__\$420	__\$450	__\$490
Full-time Student Rate – AFCC Member <i>(ID required. No meals included.)</i>	__\$185	__\$235	__\$260
Full-time Student Rate – Non-member Includes a one-year AFCC student membership! <i>(ID required. No meals included.)</i>	__\$235	__\$260	__\$285
<b>Other Registration Rates</b>			
Additional Luncheon Ticket	__\$85	__\$85	__\$85
Additional Evening Celebration Ticket	__\$125	__\$125	__\$125
Spouse/Guest Registration Rate <i>(Meals and plenary sessions only.)</i>	__\$280	__\$280	__\$295
Scholarship Fund Donation	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ _____</b>	<b>\$ _____</b>	<b>\$ _____</b>

### Method of Payment

Registration must be paid in full prior to attendance.

\_\_\_\_\_ Payment of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed (US currency only please.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Please charge \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to my:  Visa  MasterCard  
 Discover  American Express

Card Number \_\_\_\_\_

Exp. Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ Security Code \_\_\_\_\_ Billing ZIP/postal code \_\_\_\_\_

Name on Credit Card \_\_\_\_\_

You may register online at [afccnet.org](http://afccnet.org) or return the completed form and payment to:  
AFCC • 6525 Grand Teton Plaza, Madison, WI 53719  
Phone: 608-664-3750 • Fax: 608-664-3751  
[afcc@afccnet.org](mailto:afcc@afccnet.org)

**Cancellation Policy:** Transfer of registration to another person may be done once, at any time without a fee. All requests for refunds must be made in writing. Written notice of cancellation if sent and confirmed by email or postmarked by April 28th, 2025, will be issued a full refund minus a \$75 USD service fee. Written notice received after April 28th, 2025, will have the \$75 USD service fee deducted and the balance issued as a credit for future AFCC conferences, webinars, trainings, or membership dues. No refunds or credits will be issued for cancellations received after May 8th, 2025. Payment method may include banking or credit card service charges beyond AFCC service fee.

### Institute Selections - Wednesday, May 28, 2025

If you have registered for an institute, please check only one of the following boxes:

#### Pre-Conference Institutes 9:00am–5:00pm

- 1. Judicial Officers Institute: Strategies for Domestic Violence and PCCP Allegations in Parenting Disputes
- 2. Guiding Families Through the Storm: The Shepherd's Role in Parenting Coordination
- 3. Mediating with IPV Concerns: Legal, Ethical, and Intersectional Considerations
- 4. Resolving Parent-Child Contact Problems: An Integrative Single-Therapist Framework
- 5. Advanced Topics and Innovative Ideas in Child Custody Assessment
- 6. Mock Trial: Testimony and Examination Issues with Mental Health Professionals

### Conference Workshop Selections

Seating is not guaranteed and will be first-come, first-served. Your selections will ensure that sessions with more attendees are scheduled in larger meeting rooms.

*(Please write in one workshop number per time slot)*

Thursday, May 29	8:45am–10:00am	Opening	__Yes __No
Thursday, May 29	10:30am–12:00pm	1–10	_____
Thursday, May 29	1:45pm–3:15pm	11–20	_____
Thursday, May 29	3:30pm–5:00pm	21–30	_____
Friday, May 30	8:30am–10:00am	31–40	_____
Friday, May 30	10:30am–12:00pm	Plenary	__Yes __No
Friday, May 30	1:45pm–3:15pm	41–50	_____
Friday, May 30	3:30pm–5:00pm	51–60	_____
Saturday, May 31	9:15am–10:45am	61–70	_____
Saturday, May 31	11:00am–12:30pm	71–80	_____