



# AFCC eNEWS

MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER  
VOL. 5 NO. 1  
JANUARY 2010

## TRAVERSING THE TRAIL OF ALIENATION: Rocky Relationships, Mountains of Emotion, Mile High Conflict

### AFCC 47th Annual Conference in Denver

Alienation is a controversial and emotionally charged word. How is it defined, recognized or diagnosed? How is it treated? How is it addressed in family court decisions? These are some of the challenging questions that family court professionals grapple with on a daily basis. These are the very questions that four cutting edge plenary sessions at AFCC's 47th Annual Conference will address.

[Click here to see the entire conference brochure...](#)

[Click here to register...](#)

### Special FCR Issue

The conference program builds on the January issue of *Family Court Review*, a special issue on alienation titled *Alienated Children in Divorce and Separation: Emerging Approaches for Families and Courts*. AFCC members can log in to the member center and read the entire journal.

[Click here to read the table of contents...](#)

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### Alienation and the DSM-V

The current widespread debate as to whether alienation should be a diagnosis included in the DSM-V has gone beyond the professional community. This is discussed in a *U.S. News and World Report* article by Lindsay Lyon, titled "Parental Alienation: A Mental Diagnosis?"

[Click here to read the article...](#)

### AFCC Scholarship Applications Now Online

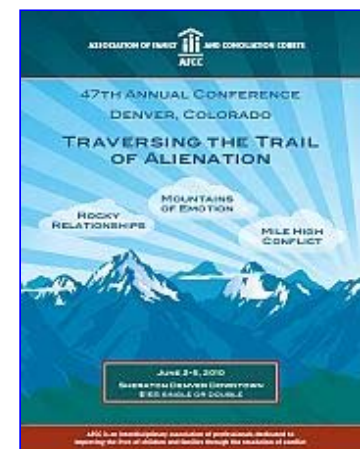
AFCC is accepting scholarship applications for the 47th Annual Conference in Denver, Colorado, June 2-5, 2010. The scholarship application is available on the AFCC website. Applications must be submitted by March 1, 2010. Recipients will be notified by mid-March 2010.

[Click here for more information...](#)

## ASK THE EXPERTS

Ten Practice Tips for Court-Involved Therapists

## UPCOMING CONFERENCES



### AFCC 47th Annual Conference

*Traversing the Trail of  
Alienation: Rocky  
Relationships, Mountains of  
Emotion, Mile High Conflict*  
June 2-5, 2010  
Sheraton Denver Downtown  
Denver, Colorado

### AFCC Ninth Symposium on Child Custody Evaluations

October 28-30, 2010  
Hyatt Regency Cambridge  
Cambridge/Boston, MA

### AFCC 48th Annual Conference

June 1-4, 2011  
Hilton Orlando Bonnet  
Creek Resort  
Orlando, Florida

### AFCC 49th Annual Conference

By Lyn R. Greenberg, Reporter, AFCC Task Force on Court-Involved Therapists

The AFCC Task Force on Court-Involved Therapists is hard at work developing guidelines for therapists working with court-involved families. A full draft will be available for your review soon. In the meantime, we offer these practice tips for court-involved therapists.

[Read more...](#)

## February AFCC Training Programs in Houston

There is still time to register to attend these two excellent training programs:

*Parenting Coordination: Working with High Conflict Families*, presented by Christine Coates, M.Ed., J.D., February 22-23, 2010.

*Attachment, Alienation and Difficult Clients*, presented by Arnold T. Shienvold, Ph.D., February 24-25, 2010.

[More information...](#)

## FEATURED ARTICLES

### What the Divorce Revolution Has Meant for Kids

By Sasha Aslanian, Courtesy of National Public Radio

The 1970s saw changes great and small in American society. But what did the 1970s divorce boom mean for the kids? Producer Sasha Aslanian spent five years working on a documentary about the children of divorce. Here's some of what she found.

[Click here to read more and listen to the NPR broadcast...](#)

### Mediation: Staying Culturally Relevant In A Multicultural World

By Nina Meierding, Courtesy of Mediate.com

Many mediators have been trained solely in a Western-style model of mediation with Western-style tools in their "toolboxes." Even the theoretical constructs of ADR often reflect a Western model that is not always respectful of culturally diverse concepts. While using Western techniques does not inherently mean that the interventions will not be successful, it does mean that they are less culturally sensitive. Internationally, it may also be seen as the United States bringing its process to another country that already has had its own conflict resolution processes in place for generations.

[Read more...](#)

## AFCC Ninth Symposium on Child Custody Evaluations

The Call for Presenters is now available for the Ninth Symposium on Child Custody Evaluations, which will be held October 28-30, 2010, at the Hyatt Regency Cambridge, Cambridge/Boston, Massachusetts. All proposals must be submitted using the online form and are due no later than May 14, 2010.

[Click here for the Call for Presenters...](#)

[Click here to submit a proposal...](#)

June 6-9, 2012  
Hyatt Regency  
Chicago, Illinois

### AFCC 50th Annual Conference

May 29-June 1, 2013  
J.W. Marriott Los Angeles at  
L.A. Live  
Los Angeles, California

### Arizona Chapter Annual Conference

February 5-7, 2010  
Hilton Sedona Resort and Spa

Sedona, Arizona

[More information...](#)

### California Chapter Annual Conference

February 12-14, 2010  
*The Crisis of Under-Funding  
Family Court Resources:  
A Clear and Present  
Danger to Our Children*  
Sheraton Delfina Hotel  
Santa Monica, California

[More information...](#)

### Missouri Chapter Annual Conference

March 11-12, 2010  
*Mediating High Conflict Cases*  
Featuring Larry Fong, Ph.D.  
Sheraton City Center  
St. Louis, Missouri

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### Florida Chapter Annual Conference

March 12-13, 2010  
*Riding the Wave to a Better  
Future: Moving Toward  
Success in Family Law*  
Renaissance Tampa Hotel  
Tampa, Florida

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## INTERNET ISSUES IN FAMILY LAW

### Irreconcilable Wall Posts? Nearly 1 in 5 Divorce Cases Cite Facebook, Lawyers Say

*By Gina Salamone, Courtesy of Daily News*

Facebook is supposed to bring people together – but it may be tearing some apart. Divorce lawyers say the social networking site is tempting users to cheat on their spouses, reports the UK's Telegraph, and flirty messages and wall posts are increasingly being cited as evidence of extramarital activity.

[Read more...](#)

### For Judges on Facebook, Friendship Has Limits

*By John Schwartz, Courtesy of NYTimes.com*

Judges and lawyers in Florida can no longer be Facebook friends. In a recent opinion, the state's Judicial Ethics Advisory Committee decided it was time to set limits on judicial behavior online. When judges "friend" lawyers who may appear before them, the committee said, it creates the appearance of a conflict of interest, since it "reasonably conveys to others the impression that these lawyer 'friends' are in a special position to influence the judge."

[Read more...](#)

## TREASURES ON THE AFCC WEBSITE

### Professional Practice Standards and Guidelines

Check out the AFCC Resource Center for standards and guidelines for many areas of practice. The following are all in one place, easy to access and reference: Guidelines for Brief, Focused Assessment (AFCC, 2009), Model Standards of Practice for Child Custody Evaluation (AFCC, 2006), Guidelines for Parenting Coordination (AFCC, 2005), Model Standards of Practice for Family and Divorce Mediation (Symposium on Standards of Practice convened by AFCC, 2000), Standards of Practice for Lawyers Representing Children in Custody Cases (ABA-FLS, 2003), Standards of Practice for Lawyers who Represent Children in Abuse and Neglect Cases (ABA, 1996) and Standards and Guidelines for Supervised Visitation Practice (Supervised Visitation Network, 2006).

[Click here to read standards and guidelines...](#)

## ABOUT AFCC eNEWS

AFCC eNEWS is a monthly e-newsletter published by the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC). AFCC eNEWS provides professionals with time sensitive and up-to-date topics including practice tips, research innovations and international news. Readers are welcome to forward this e-newsletter to interested colleagues.

[AFCC eNEWS archive...](#)

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### ASK THE EXPERTS

#### Ten Practice Tips from the AFCC Task Force on Court-Involved Therapists

by Lyn R. Greenberg, Ph.D., Task Force Reporter

**1. Develop and maintain expertise.** Acquire and maintain current knowledge of research on divorcing/separating families and their children, as well as issues such as child abuse, domestic violence, alienation and high conflict dynamics, children's suggestibility and interviewing, and child development. Such knowledge is essential to court-involved therapeutic roles, and is just as important for court-involved therapists as for other experts. Even therapists who work only with adults should develop and maintain sufficient knowledge of child-related research to address parenting issues.

**2. Informed consent.** Detailed informed consent is more important when the client or family is involved in a legal process. Provide detailed informed consent documents; make every effort to ensure that your clients, or the parents of a potential child client, understand the nature of the services to which they are consenting, any limits on confidentiality, and the clients' or parents' responsibilities toward the process (including financial arrangements).

**3. When treating children, know the legal custody situation.** A parent with apparent authority to consent to treatment may not have actual authority, or may be required by court order to consult with the other parent about treatment decisions. Request a copy of any custody order establishing and clarifying parents' rights to involve their children in mental health treatment, and any decision-making processes that the parents are to follow. If no such order exists, assume the parents have joint legal authority. While it may be legal for one parent to consent to treatment without consulting the other parent, treatment effectiveness may be sabotaged if one parent is excluded.

**4. Maintain professional objectivity and multiple working hypotheses about case dynamics and treatment needs.** Remember that the information you are getting may be one-sided or incomplete. Use caution in forming or communicating therapeutic opinion based on one-sided information.

**5. Know the limits of your role and work within them.** Provide clinical feedback as appropriate to treatment and clinical opinions when properly requested. Support your client's therapeutic progress, but avoid becoming engaged as a legal advocate or expert.

**6. Use methods supported by available research.** Avoid methods, or interpretations of therapeutic information, that would not be consistent with research on issues such as child interviewing, child development, parental conflict, or the use/misuse of play or other behaviors as diagnostic indicators.

**7. Release treatment information only with appropriate authorization.** If you are working with a parent, be sure that the parent has authorized release of treatment information and has been informed of the potential consequences of such disclosure. If working with a child,

clarify the expectations regarding confidentiality, and who has authority to waive or assert the child's privilege.

**8. When a child is involved in treatment, maintain balanced procedures.** Attempt to obtain information from both parents and to engage both in treatment if possible and appropriate. Avoid unilateral communications with either parent's counsel. Remember that a biased approach to treatment may also be perceived by the child.

**9. Convey opinions and information responsibly.** Be cognizant of the potential power and misuse of therapist information and opinions. Limit any opinions expressed to those that can be clearly supported by treatment data and are within the scope of the therapist's role. Avoid expressing opinions on psycho-legal issues, even if asked. Avoid psychological jargon; convey information/opinions in language that can be clearly understood by non-mental-health-professionals.

**10. Respect the legal system and your role within it; expect accountability.** Be respectful of the rights of the parties. Expect a higher level of accountability; maintain records and procedures that will allow you to support your actions. Respect the roles of other professionals, some of whom may be asked to review or assess the progress or effectiveness of therapy.

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