



ASSOCIATION OF
FAMILY AND
CONCILIATION COURTS



eNEWS

December 2017

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Executive Director's Message

It's that time of year again, and many people are taking some time for self-reflection. Have I been naughty or nice? Will I make any New Year's resolutions? Should I renew my gym membership because this year I am committed to go *at least* three times a week?

Here at AFCC, we like to reflect as well (sometimes we call it strategic planning), and as usual, I have been thinking a lot about AFCC: who we are, what we do, and the reasons family law professionals become a part of AFCC. Lately, I

MONTHLY
E-NEWSLETTER

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Save the Date
[AFCC Annual
Conference](#)

Compassionate Family
Court Systems: The Role
of Trauma-Informed
Jurisprudence

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Ask the Experts: Considerations in Family Law Matters when a Family has a Child with Special Needs

Sol R. Rappaport, PhD, ABPP

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[Read more](#)

AFCC 55th Annual Conference

Compassionate Family Court Systems: The Role of Trauma-Informed Jurisprudence

June 6-9, 2018, Washington Hilton Hotel

The AFCC 55th Annual Conference [program brochure](#) is now available online! Start making your plans to attend. **Registration will open January 3, 2018.** Printed copies of the brochure will be mailed to AFCC members and colleagues. The scholarship application is available and can be found on the AFCC website. Thank you to our Diamond and Platinum Sponsors. To see a complete list of sponsors, [click here](#).

June 6-9, 2018
Washington Hilton
Washington, DC

AFCC Chapter Conferences

Arizona Chapter Annual Conference

January 26-28, 2018
Hilton Sedona Resort
Sedona, Arizona

Louisiana Chapter Annual Conference

January 26-27, 2018
Paul Hebert Law Center
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

California Chapter Annual Conference

February 2-4, 2018
Park Central Hotel
San Francisco, California

Missouri Chapter Annual Conference

March 15-16, 2018
Marriott St. Louis West
St. Louis, Missouri

Oregon Chapter Annual Conference

April 13, 2018
River's Edge Hotel
Portland, Oregon

Wisconsin Chapter Annual Conference

September 28, 2018

AFCC March Training Programs

Building a Successful
Unbundled Family Law
Practice

March 5-6, 2018
Loyola University Chicago
Philip H. Corboy Law



Online Parenting Programs



delaney mckinney LLP
For your Family. For your Future.

Bob Woodward and Kyle Pruett to Present Luncheon Address

AFCC is pleased to announce that Washington Post associate editor Bob Woodward will join Yale child psychiatrist Dr. Kyle Pruett for a discussion on the loss of civility in our institutions. Mr. Woodward is best known for leading a Pulitzer Prize winning team of reporters in exposing the Watergate scandal in the 1970s.

[Watch Bob Woodward's TED Talk on Watergate](#)

AFCC Scholarship Fund

Help your colleagues attend AFCC conferences by giving to the AFCC Scholarship Fund. AFCC scholarship recipients increase our diversity by bringing professionals from different backgrounds, representing the many disciplines we represent as an organization. The annual appeal letter was recently mailed to all AFCC members. Please consider making a gift today. Receiving your gift by the end of 2017 helps us plan for next year, and will provide US taxpayers with a deduction for the 2017 tax year. Will you contribute to allow a hard-working professional like yourself attend an AFCC conference?

[Donate Today](#)

AFCC Webinar Corner

Center
Chicago, Illinois

Parenting Coordination:
Work in the Trenches with
High Conflict Co-parents
March 7-8, 2018
Loyola University Chicago
Philip H. Corboy Law
Center
Chicago, Illinois

EDITOR:
[Leslye Hunter](#)

ASSOCIATE EDITOR:
[Corinne Bennett](#)



afccnet.org



Register now for next month's webinar:
Potential Impact of Implicit and Cognitive Bias
Philip Stahl, PhD, ABPP
January 23, 2018 1:00pm Eastern

[Register now](#)

If you missed this month's webinar, Eldercaring Coordination, members may access the recording for free through the [Member Center](#) of the AFCC website.

Introducing AFCC E2M Webinar Series!
Join AFCC E2M (early-to-mid career professionals) webinar:

Work/Life Balance

Annette T. Burns, JD
March 7, 2018 1:00-2:00pm Eastern Time
Registration opens January 3, 2018.

This webinar is geared towards the E2M crowd and is free to AFCC members. Please register to participate!

The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges Releases Indian Child Welfare Act Judicial Benchbook

The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) has announced the release of the [Indian Child Welfare Act Judicial Benchbook](#) to improve court practice for judges in handling Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) cases.

AFCC Award Nominations

AFCC awards acknowledge many important contributions made by individuals and organizations to enhance the lives of children and families involved in family courts. Your nominations help recognize and bring attention to these accomplishments.

Nominations for the following awards, to be presented at the AFCC Annual Conference in Washington, D.C., will be accepted online through March 15, 2018:

John E. VanDuzer Distinguished Service Award recognizes outstanding contributions and/or achievements by AFCC members;

Stanley Cohen Research Award, sponsored by the Oregon Family Institute, recognizes outstanding research and/or achievements in the field of family and divorce; and

Irwin Cantor Innovative Program Award recognizes innovation in court-connected or court-related programs created by AFCC members.

[Submit a nomination online, see past recipients, learn more about the awards and criteria.](#)

AFCC Chapter News

AFCC **Alberta Chapter** has begun to run “Supper Clubs” once per month in Edmonton and Calgary. A member of the Board takes the responsibility to find a restaurant location and a local speaker to attend the supper meeting. The location and topic is advertised to all of the AFCC Alberta members and people can email their intent to attend. Topics are all related to families and family law and are varied. For instance, updates on Practice Note Guidelines, summaries of recent research conducted, children’s issues, child development, property issues, special techniques when meeting with high conflict families, complaints made by litigious clients to name a few: PC’s, mediators, lawyers and assessors are to name a few. The list is endless. It is a great way to meet with colleagues, have dinner, and collaborate. The evening usually begins around 6:30 and the talk portion is approximately one hour and the event usually ends about 9-9:30pm.

AFCC Member News



AFCC member and past AFCC Fellow, **Liana Shelby** gave birth to her son, Grayson, on December 10, 2017. Congratulations, Liana!

Staff News

Chris Shanahan, AFCC Business and Administrative Director, has accepted a position and will be leaving AFCC at the end of December 2017. Chris has worked with AFCC for 22 years and we are sad to see her go, but are thrilled for her and new opportunities. The AFCC family wishes Chris well in her future endeavors.

Family Court Review Submissions

Effective December 15, 2017, *Family Court Review (FCR)* will accept submissions only through our ScholarOne Manuscripts portal. This secure online peer-review management system facilitates real-time communication and access to manuscripts for editors, reviewers, and other editorial team members. The system will help to ensure a speedy and efficient peer review, which will remain as careful and rigorous as before. The new system will allow us to automate routine administrative aspects of peer review.

To access ScholarOne, [click here](#). First-time users need to create an account. By default, your username is your e-mail address. If you have more than one account or need assistance editing your account, please e-mail [FCR](#).

To submit a manuscript, click on "Author," then click on "Start a New Submission," and follow the prompts and instructions on each of the steps of the submission form. You then will receive a manuscript number and an e-mail verifying receipt of your manuscript. Keep track of the status of your manuscript by logging onto [ScholarOne Manuscripts](#).

If you have submitted a manuscript prior to December 15, 2017, you do not have to resubmit your manuscript to ScholarOne. If you have questions regarding a manuscript submitted prior to December 15, 2017, please contact the [Articles Editor](#) or [Matthew Kiernan](#), FCR Faculty Administrative Editor.

Board of Directors Nominations

The AFCC Nominating Committee is seeking nominations for individuals to serve on the AFCC Board of Directors. Recommended individuals must be AFCC members and have an interest in and knowledge of AFCC and its work. Nominations must be received by January 31, 2018, in order to be considered by the committee prior to the election at the AFCC 55th Annual Conference, June 6-9, 2018, in Washington, D.C. The term is three years, beginning July 1, 2018, and concluding June 30, 2021. If you or a member you know is interested, please send the first and last name, contact information, resume, and a letter of intent to the AFCC Nominating Committee, c/o AFCC, 6525 Grand Teton Plaza, Madison, WI, 53719, or via email to afcc@afccnet.org.

Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC)

6525 Grand Teton Plaza, Madison, WI 53719

(608) 664-3750

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Message from the Executive Director

A Promise for 2018

It's that time of year again, and many people are taking some time for self-reflection. Have I been naughty or nice? Will I make any New Year's resolutions? Should I renew my gym membership because this year I am committed to go *at least* three times a week?

Here at AFCC, we like to reflect as well (sometimes we call it strategic planning), and as usual, I have been thinking a lot about AFCC: who we are, what we do, and the reasons family law professionals become a part of AFCC. Lately, I have been thinking about it in terms of what an AFCC membership promises to you.

What *is* the promise of an AFCC membership? I suspect it is different for each member. We start with the tangibles: *Family Court Review*, the *AFCC eNEWS*, discounts on conferences, webinars, training programs, AFCC chapters, and access to the member section of the website. These are invaluable sources of information and ideas, and appear to be sufficient to satisfy many of our 5,000+ members.

Beyond the products and services, AFCC's interdisciplinary and international network is appealing to many members. AFCC offers the opportunity for us all to get out of our own backyard and engage with like-minded (or different-minded) individuals who are grappling with similar challenges but from a different professional or cultural perspective. This often stems from common experiences shared at conferences, through chapters, and more recently online through listservs and webinars. Of course, we cannot guarantee these relationships the same way we can promise a monthly e-newsletter, but opportunities abound and many AFCC members have found a way to extend their network across the globe.

Another promise of AFCC membership is the service initiatives that we hope benefit not only our members but the entire field. This includes think tanks on intimate partner violence, shared parenting and family law education; practice guidelines or model standards for custody evaluators, parenting coordinators and mediators; and the development of professional resources, such as our new guides for self-presented litigants and professionals who work with them. These projects are supported largely by membership dues and volunteer time of our members. In some instances, we push the

envelope with new or different thinking. We do not always find unanimity and at times spark a bit of controversy. We believe this to be an invaluable function of the association.

Finally, an unarticulated promise of AFCC membership is that we support one another. This happens in many ways, including informal consultation, referrals and networking; contributions to the AFCC Scholarship Fund and Silent Auction; or the simple act of paying dues, because the more members we have, the easier it is for us to keep dues low. We have raised dues only once in the last fifteen years. This means that AFCC members are supporting one another by making membership widely accessible.

There are some things AFCC membership does not promise, one of which is that AFCC will not make mistakes. But we will always do our best, and decisions from leadership will be thoughtful and considered. And we will always focus on our mission: *Improving the lives of children and families through the resolution of family conflict*. On that, I believe we have a consensus.

Wishing happy holidays and a peaceful 2018 to all.

Peter Salem
AFCC Executive Director



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Ask the Experts: Considerations in Family Law Matters when a Family has a Child with Special Needs

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Families who have children with special needs have unique features, which must be taken into consideration when developing parenting plans. The term special needs children include a wide range of challenges, including Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Learning Disabilities, Depression, Anxiety, and other mental health and physical challenges. Therefore, special needs children and their families should not be treated the same. Just as one parenting plan does not work with all families without a special needs child, families with a special needs child also cannot be placed into one parenting plan. The development of parenting plans for families with a special needs child require professionals to consider several issues which typically do not arise in other families, or not to the same degree. The following tips and guidelines should be considered when working with families with a special needs child:

1. Raising a child with special needs is stressful and challenging. Parents have to mourn the loss of their ideal child, and must learn to adapt their expectations. Due to the stress and challenges of raising a child with a disability, it is important to make sure parents have breaks. In some situations, having both parents significantly involved (50/50, 60/40) can be beneficial in that it gives each parent a significant amount of time away from the child to rejuvenate themselves so that they can be a more effective parent when they are with their child. Thus, just because a child has special needs, does not mean that they have to live primarily with one parent with significantly less time with the other. At the same time, some children with disabilities (such as Down Syndrome or severe cognitive impairments) may need consistency of residential placement which may limit one parent's involvement more than might otherwise be the case.
2. Tailor plans to fit the child. Aside from considering the needs of the parents, it is imperative to consider the needs of the child. Some children with special needs handle transitions well, and can go back and forth between homes without significant difficulty. Other children need a great deal of consistency of routine and environment, such as

those with Autism or ADHD. It can be helpful to work with parents to make sure that they have similar routines at both houses, such as similar morning and bedtime rituals.

3. Think outside of the box. While this statement applies to all families, it is especially true for families with a special needs child. For example, a child who has anxiety or difficulty remembering whose home they are going to on a given day, does not preclude the child from having midweek overnights with a parent. For example, parents can agree on picking up from one bus stop so a child has the consistency of only having one bus stop and one bus to go to/from school.

4. Interventions and services. One important predictor of a child's success when there is a disability is how early and intense the interventions and services the student receives. Thus, when working with families with a child with special needs, it is important to assess which parent is more supportive of ensuring the child is provided with a variety of services. It is also important to assess how to get the child to all of their appointments. In these families, it is often important to be flexible so that even when the child is with one parent, the other parent may need to help provide transportation to/from appointments, especially if there are other children in the family. Thus, it is vital not to get locked in the view that when it is one parent's parenting time, he is solely responsible for getting children to appointments/activities.

5. Educating professionals. Professionals involved with parents of a special needs child need to understand that parents can come across as obsessive and vigilant. For many of these parents, it may not be that they were always this way, but rather have developed this coping strategy in response to having difficulty getting their child's needs met. While pushy parents may not always be likeable, these parents are often the ones who get their children's needs met.

6. Cooperation and flexibility of parents. Cooperation and flexibility of parents should always be a part of the assessment when developing parenting plans. The need for cooperation takes on additional meaning in families where a child has special needs. For example, assess whether the parents allow children to take objects that give them comfort between households. If in-home services are necessary, is a parent willing to take their child to the other parent's home during their parenting time for the in-home service, if the in-home service will not go to both homes? Parents of a child with special needs should also understand that while consistency and routine may be important for their child, it does not mean that one can't be flexible and adjust to any given situation. Parents may need to be flexible with drop-off/pick-up times. While it is helpful to have set times to avoid parental conflict, if a child has autism or severe anxiety, transitions may cause dysregulation or anxiety attacks. When this occurs, a parent may be late dropping off a child. It is important for the other parent to be flexible in understanding that it may not be that the parent with the child was trying to keep the child longer to return the child later, but rather that she did the best under the circumstances. Related to this, some children do better when a parent drops them off at the other parent's home while others do better by being picked up by a parent.

7. Consider the needs of siblings. If there is more than one child in the family, consider making sure each parent has time alone with both the special needs child, and the other children. There are two main reasons for this. First, it allows the children who do not have a disability to spend time with each parent without their sibling there. This may allow these children to be able to participate in activities and do things with a parent they may not otherwise be able to do. Second, it allows each parent to also have one on one time with the child with a disability, which may help foster the parent-child relationship and give that child attention he might not otherwise receive. It also allows a parent to participate in activities with that child without the challenge of having to manage other children at the same time.

8. Developmental considerations. When considering various parenting plans, pay closer attention to the child's psychological/developmental level than their chronological age. Some older children need parenting plans that may be more similar to what is typically done with much younger children. A 14-year old child with high functioning autism may have average or above average intelligence, but emotionally be more similar to a much younger child. Focus on the child's level of emotional and social development rather than age. At the same time, just because a child has a disability, does not mean that their emotional or social maturity is low. A child with a learning disability, while needing much educational assistance, may function fine in other domains.

9. Investigate available services. For many children, the difference between going to school through their mother's and father's home may not be significant. However, when there is a child with a Learning Disability, Autism, or other disability which requires special education services, it is important for parents and professionals to fully investigate the types of services available from the school. This includes not only the quality of services, but also what services the school can provide at the home school. Otherwise, a school may place a student outside of their regular building in order to meet the needs of the child. Some schools may provide after school care, which may be needed for some students with special needs. In evaluating services, it is recommended that parents and professionals speak with the principal and the director of special education. For children with significant medical problems, consulting with their treating physicians may be helpful in the development of parenting plans. For children with serious mental health concerns, talking to the child's psychiatrist/prescribing physician and therapists can also provide vital information that can be used in the development of an individualized parenting plan.

10. Encourage support systems. Often when working with families, there is a focus on each parent's ability to meet their children's needs. When a child has a disability, parents often rely on other family members or friends for both emotional and physical support. They may also benefit from support groups for parents of children with disabilities similar to their child's disability.

11. Pay attention to finances. It can be extremely costly to raise a child with a disability. For example, it has been estimated that it costs at least \$17,000 more per year to raise a child with autism as compared to a child without a disability.

12. Individualized plans. Finally, remember that just as no two children are identical (even identical twins have different needs), no two children with the same disability are identical either. Therefore, while rules of thumb are helpful, they should never replace an individualized assessment of what is best for a child. There is no “one size fits all.”

Sol R. Rappaport, PhD, ABPP, is a forensic psychologist specializing in family law matters. Dr. Rappaport conducts child custody evaluations and psychological evaluations on children and adults. He also provides consultation to attorneys on all aspects of litigation, including work product review and expert testimony. Dr. Rappaport also co-owns 5 therapeutic day schools for children with various disabilities including significant emotional and behavioral problems, as well as for students with high functioning Autism. Dr. Rappaport is the President of the Illinois Chapter of AFCC.