



ASSOCIATION OF FAMILY AND CONCILIATION COURTS

Improving the lives of children and families through the resolution of family conflict



AUGUST 2018
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Where in the World is AFCC?

#AFCCHats
#whereintheworldisAFCC?

Peter Salem, AFCC Executive Director

AFCC is everywhere! Many members post photos on social media sporting their AFCC hat, including me, here in St. Croix. Upon receipt of a recent photo of member **Rebecca Stahl at Disneyland**, we decided to encourage

ASSOCIATION OF FAMILY AND CONCILIATION COURTS
AFCC

13th Symposium on Child Custody



Denver, Colorado
Embassy Suites By Hilton
November 8-10, 2018

AFCC 13th Symposium on Child Custody

Guidelines and Standards and Rules, Oh My!
November 8-10, 2018

members to share their adventures. So, if you are out and about (vacation, court, wherever) with an AFCC hat, please email a photo and location to [Corinne Bennett](#) and we'll feature it on the [AFCC Facebook page](#) and social media. ***An award for the best picture will be presented at the annual conference in Toronto!*** Shameless efforts to sway the judges with photos of cute children or pets are encouraged. When posting on social media, please tag #AFCCHats and #whereintheworldisAFCC?

Ask the Experts

Top Ten Tips for Courts to Better Serve Self-Represented Litigants in Domestic Violence Cases

Kate Wurmfeld, Esq.

The Center for Court Innovation convened a group of national leaders in developing and implementing programs designed to assist self-represented litigants. We asked them to identify underlying core values or fundamental principles, as well as critical strategies that are particularly useful in responding to domestic violence cases. We also collected examples from courts around the country that are working hard to improve access to justice for self-represented litigants in domestic violence cases. Here are ten tips and the full guide that resulted from this gathering.

[Read more](#)

13th Symposium on Child Custody

Guidelines and Standards and Rules, Oh My!
November 8-10, 2018
Embassy Suites by Hilton Denver Downtown Hotel
Denver, Colorado

Registration Now Open

The symposium [program brochure is available online](#) and registration is open. There are over 40 sessions, featuring an exciting array of topics for psychologists, mental health professionals, lawyers, mediators, counselors, social workers, and others who work with separating and divorcing families. Topics include parent-child contact problems, restorative justice, model standards of practice, and more!

Embassy Suites by Hilton
Denver Downtown Hotel
Denver, Colorado

AFCC Chapter Conferences

[Washington Chapter Annual Conference](#)
September 22, 2018
Washington Athletic Club
Seattle, Washington

[Florida Chapter Annual Conference](#)
September 26-28, 2018
The Florida Hotel and Conference Center
Orlando, Florida

[Wisconsin Chapter Annual Conference](#)
September 28, 2018
Crowne Plaza
Madison, Wisconsin

[Indiana Chapter Annual Conference](#)
September 28, 2018
The IndyBar Venue
Indianapolis, Indiana

[Illinois Chapter Annual Conference](#)
October 19, 2018
Chicago, Illinois

[Ontario Chapter Annual Conference](#)
October 19, 2018
The Toronto Reference Library
toronto, Ontario

[New York Chapter Annual Conference](#)
November 18, 2018
University at Buffalo School of Law
Buffalo, New York

Register today!

Book Your Hotel Room

The Embassy Suites by Hilton Denver Downtown Hotel is offering a special rate to AFCC attendees of \$179/night for single or double occupancy. Rooms are selling very quickly so reserve your room today! On October 17, 2018, any unreserved rooms in the AFCC block will be released and the special rate will no longer be guaranteed. Make your reservation by calling 1-800-445-8667 and request the AFCC special rate or [reserve online](#).

Apply for a Symposium Scholarship by September 7

Scholarships assist recipients with the cost of symposium attendance. Scholarships include pre-symposium institute registration, symposium registration, welcome reception, Friday's luncheon, access to the hospitality suite, and a certificate of attendance. The deadline to apply is **September 7, 2018**. A limited number of scholarships are available. If you have any questions, please contact [Corinne Bennett](#).

Apply today!

New Family Court Review App



With the new FCR app, you can download and save articles to your mobile device and receive alerts when new issues are available.

To access the app, [click here](#) for instructions.

As always, you can access the *Family Court Review* online through the AFCC website by [clicking here](#).

A Call for Comments on the Model Standards on Child Custody Evaluation

AFCC is conducting a review of its **2006 Model Standards of Practice for Child Custody Evaluation** and is inviting comments from all AFCC members. If you would like to contribute, please complete this [online survey](#) and submit all comments by **September 15, 2018**. Thank you for your assistance.



AFCC Webinar Corner

Online Dispute Resolution

Colin Rule, MPP

September 12, 2018, 1:00-2:00pm Eastern time USA

[Registration](#) is now open!

If you missed this month's webinar, International Child Abduction Mediation, **AFCC members may access the recording for free, along with all other previous webinars** through the [Member Center](#) of the AFCC website. Not a member? Click here to [join today!](#)

December Trainings

Registration is now open for the December trainings, sponsored by AFCC and the University of Baltimore School of Law.

Parenting Coordination: Essential Tools for Conflict Resolution

Mindy F. Mitnick, EdM, MA

December 3-4, 2018

Advanced Issues in High Conflict Child Custody Cases

Robin M. Deutsch, PhD, ABPP

December 5-6, 2018

[View the brochure](#)

[Register today](#)

Member News

Melissa A. Kucinski, JD, MA, an attorney and mediator in Washington, D.C. and Maryland just published *[A Practical Handbook for the Child's Attorney: Effectively Representing Children in Custody Cases](#)*. Melissa shares information, advice, and war stories on topics ranging from standards, model acts, and ethics to practical issues such

as information gathering, negotiation, settlement, and litigation. Her book helps the family lawyer effectively problem-solve when representing the child in a custody case, and gives insight on how to work with child's counsel when your case involves one.

Norma C. Izzo, JD was recognized as a most influential woman in Arizona business. As chair of Jennings Strouss' family law and domestic relations practice, Norma focuses her practice on pre-marital planning, complex divorce litigation and asset division, child custody, parenting time, child support, and spousal maintenance. To read more about Norma, [click here](#). Congratulations, Norma!

Lauren Behrman, PhD and **Jeff Zimmerman, PhD** have recently published a book for high conflict parents with tools and strategies for recovery during and after divorce. The book, entitled *Loving Your Children More than You Hate Each Other*, is available on Amazon and through the publisher, New Harbinger publications.

Former AFCC President **Linda Fieldstone, MEd**, received the Sharon Press Award awarded by the Florida Dispute Resolution Center in Orlando. She was honored for her vision, integrity and devotion, to conflict resolution. Congratulations, Linda!

Beth F. McCormack, JD, AFCC Illinois Chapter President, was recently honored as one of 2019 BEST LAWYERS. Recognition by Best Lawyers is based entirely on peer review. Congratulations, Beth!

Submit a Proposal to Present at the AFCC 56th Annual Conference in Toronto, Canada

The Future of Family Justice: International Innovations
May 29-June 1, 2019
Westin Harbour Castle
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

AFCC is accepting proposals for 90-minute workshops through October 4, 2018. Numerous innovative processes have emerged to meet the needs of rapidly changing families and the family justice system. This conference will convene the best of our global partners to share pioneering efforts taking place world-wide. To view the call for proposals, [click here](#).

Conference sponsorships are available. Whether your marketing budget is \$500 or \$25,000, there is a sponsorship level for you! More than 1,100 participants are expected to attend. Conference presenters include leaders in the field, authors, and researchers who conduct landmark studies, leading policymakers, trainers, and program directors, are responsible for selecting programs and products for agencies, firms, and courts. For more information, please contact AFCC Program Coordinator, **Corinne Bennett**.

[Submit a proposal](#)

AFCC – Maryland Chapter: Ambassador Program

To truly meet the needs of family law professionals and families of separation and divorce across the state, the Maryland Chapter of AFCC created the Ambassador Program. The Ambassador Program is a mechanism by which AFCC will provide concrete and realistic opportunities for statewide participation in continuing education and program involvement.

[Read more](#)

Chapter News



Meet **Simone Haberstock**, President of the **Missouri Chapter**

[Read more](#)



Meet **Jack DeWalt**, President of the **Minnesota Chapter**

[Read more](#)

AFCC eNEWS

The AFCC eNEWS is the monthly e-newsletter of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts. The eNEWS provides up-to-date information for professionals including practice tips, case law and research updates, international news and the latest initiatives in family law and conflict resolution. The AFCC eNEWS is free and you do not need to be a member of AFCC to subscribe. [Subscribe here](#). AFCC members are free to share eNEWS content.

EDITOR:
[Leslye Hunter](#)

ASSOCIATE EDITOR:
[Corinne Bennett](#)



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

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Ask the Experts

Top Ten Tips for Courts to Better Serve Self-Represented Litigants in Domestic Violence Cases

Kate Wurmfeld, Esq.

1. Remember these fundamental principles

Ensure that policies and practices for serving self-represented litigants, particularly victims of domestic violence, promote principles of procedural justice (voice, respect, understanding, neutrality and helpfulness), aim to eliminate bias, provide culturally responsive services and are trauma informed.

2. Design strategies for remote information gathering

Litigants often look for resources before starting a case—and this can be a critical time for victims of domestic violence—so courts should consider strategies to assist at this stage of the process, including providing web-based and telephone services, utilizing law help and establishing remote locations staffed by advocates where victims can be supported and connected to services.

3. Make sure your court house is welcoming

What happens when litigants walk through the court house doors—the greeting and assistance they receive, their ability to read any signage, and other aspects of the experience—is critical to how accessible the court process will be and whether victims in particular will view the court as a useful resource. Courts should consider creating a welcome center or help desk, design clear signage and welcoming waiting areas, provide space for community providers and establish a child care center.

4. Establish a self-help center

Self-help centers are offices located in the court that serve as a central place for providing information and assistance to domestic violence victims. They should be easy to locate, fully integrated into courthouse operations, and supervised by attorneys so that any dissemination of legal advice is properly provided. Self-help centers can provide a variety of services, including assistance drafting petitions, staff to explain forms and procedures, written materials on how cases are processed, information to

assist self-represented litigants throughout the litigation, and referrals to civil legal and other community services.

5. Provide remote/electronic filing and participation in hearings

Electronic filing of pleadings has been implemented by a growing number of courts across the country and can save time and resources, enhance access to court documents, and minimize lost and misfiled documents, among others. But special considerations apply in the context of domestic violence cases, especially when one or both of the parties are self-represented. To ensure that an e-filing system promotes and does not undermine the fundamental principles described above, courts should make sure that the use of technology does not replace human contact and that victims still have an opportunity to connect with an advocate at all stages of the process.

6. Streamline court processes and forms

Streamlining court processes, as well as the forms and other documents that people must file with the court, can dramatically improve access to justice for litigants in domestic violence proceedings. Courts should engage in a careful examination of their procedures, including how hearings are scheduled, to determine whether changes could be made to reduce the number of hearings or to eliminate litigants' need to spend hours at the courthouse to participate in hearings (or to make return trips as a result of adjournments or for other reasons). There should also be a clear process for notifying the court if unable to appear or to request a continuance.

7. Find ways to maximize legal services

Since 3 out of 5 litigants in civil cases nationally are self-represented, communities are finding creative ways to provide legal assistance short of full representation and have come up with many ideas to fill the gaps left by a lack of access to lawyers. While full legal representation for all litigants who desire a lawyer is optimal, less comprehensive but more readily available forms of legal assistance may make a real difference for victims.

8. Ensure the court room is a safe and accessible space

Judges and court staff can take a number of steps to ensure that self-represented litigants in domestic violence cases experience the courtroom as a safe environment that adheres to all of the tenets of procedural justice (voice, respect, understanding, and neutrality), and that is culturally responsive, linguistically accessible, and trauma-informed in its actions.

9. Provide assistance in enforcement and modification matters

The decision to enforce, modify, or withdraw a protection order is complicated even with access to legal counsel. Therefore, courts should examine their processes for providing assistance to self-represented litigants post disposition and ensure that they maximize informed decision-making, safety and autonomy for victims, as well as clarity for the other side regarding his or her responsibilities and options for modification.

10. Engage in a planning process

Planning for how to improve services and experiences for self-represented litigants in domestic violence cases should involve an assessment of what the needs and gaps are for those accessing your system. Consider conducting a system-wide needs assessment of your jurisdiction's response to self-represented litigants. There may be opportunities to modify or enhance existing policies and practices, as well as to develop new programs to better respond to the unique needs of litigants in domestic violence cases. You can find the full guide, *Assisting Self-Represented Litigants in Domestic Violence Cases*, at <https://www.courtinnovation.org/publications/assisting-srl-dv-cases-recommended-strategies>. For training and technical assistance, contact the Center for Court Innovation at dvinfo@cci.org.

Kate Wurmfeld, Esq. is the Associate Director of Family Court Programs at the Center for Court Innovation (CCI). In this role, Kate oversees CCI's Family Court operating projects and provides national technical assistance and strategic planning advice to courts wishing to improve their response to domestic violence. Kate has extensive experience providing direct legal services on cases involving domestic violence, most recently as a supervising attorney for Matrimonial and Family Law at New York Legal Assistance Group, where she handled divorce, custody, orders of protection and support matters in Supreme and Family Court throughout NYC. In addition to providing direct legal services, Kate also provided supervision to staff attorneys, law students and volunteers, taught clinical seminars and provided training for outside organizations, community groups and law firms. Kate has also served as Co-chair for the Lawyers Committee Against Domestic Violence, where she was active in planning the annual Fordham Forum on Domestic Violence, as well as other professional trainings, and promoting legislative and policy initiatives impacting survivors of domestic violence. Kate graduated from Seton Hall Law School and Oberlin College.



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Meet Jack DeWalt, President of the Minnesota Chapter

Jack has been practicing law for 16 years, and during that time he has successfully represented hundreds of clients in all forms of litigation and settlement negotiations at both the district court and appellate levels. His varied background has allowed him the opportunity to litigate cases throughout both metropolitan and greater Minnesota, as well as Wisconsin and in numerous tribal courts. He began his legal career with Legal Aid before transitioning to private practice where he is now in business with his two partners and friends. Jack is a frequent speaker and presenter on various legal topics, has received professional recognition for his work including being selected for inclusion in the Top 100 Minnesota Super Lawyers list in 2018, and currently helps teach family law as an adjunct professor with Mitchell Hamline School of Law



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Meet Simone Haberstock, President of the Missouri Chapter

Simone Haberstock graduated from Saint Louis University School of Law in 1991 and completed her Masters of Law in Dispute Resolution at University of Missouri-Columbia School of Law in 2013. She is a mediator, attorney and parenting coordinator in St. Louis, Missouri and has worked in public interest law, private practice, and taught as an adjunct professor. She completed Missouri's first academically approved research on the state's model for parenting coordination in 2013 while completing her masters work and currently serves on St. Louis County Circuit Court's Parenting Coordination and Mediation Oversight Committee. She also provides civil and family mediation training for law school students and professionals and has contributed to the development and design of court-connected mediation for indigent litigants. She authored the original "Retirement Benefits" Chapter for the Missouri Bar Elder Law Attorney's Desk book and has served for many years on the Missouri Bar's Family Law Conference Planning Committee.



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AFCC – Maryland Chapter: Ambassador Program

To truly meet the needs of family law professionals and families of separation and divorce across the state, the Maryland Chapter of AFCC created the Ambassador Program. The Ambassador Program is a mechanism by which AFCC will provide concrete and realistic opportunities for statewide participation in continuing education and program involvement. Each judicial circuit in Maryland has an assigned ambassador who regularly meets with other judicial circuit ambassadors that make up the Ambassador Board. Each Ambassador has been tasked with forming a circuit committee consisting of AFCC members within the same circuit and ideally each committee will include at least one member from each county or region of that circuit and include members from multiple disciplines. Ambassadors will conduct circuit-wide educational events and host discussions that will not only promote collaboration, education and innovation all over the state, but will give those who attend these events an individual and collective voice on the same subjects. This feedback and data will be synthesized and submitted by the Ambassador Board to the Maryland Chapter Board of Directors for consideration when setting goals and priorities for the Chapter.

This year we have already begun identifying issues relevant to the various circuits by mirroring the theme from the AFCC 55th Annual Conference that was held in Washington, DC in June 2018. The Maryland Chapter narrowed down the topic and subject matter of the annual conference theme, Compassionate Family Court Systems-The Role of Trauma-Informed Jurisprudence and came up with the topic for the Chapter's state-wide annual event. This year our topic is Coercive Control: A

Multidisciplinary Skills-Based Training for Judges, Family Court Administrators, Lawyers and Mental Health Professionals. Our annual event is being held on September 21, 2018 and beginning in November 2018, we are taking “the show on the road”. Lin Delaney, President of the Maryland Chapter, along with a rotation of dedicated mental health professionals, will be traveling to each of the eight judicial circuits to present a mini-conference on the same topic but they will tailor the presentation and any skills-based training to the needs of that particular circuit (the needs to be assessed by the Ambassador and circuit committee of each circuit in advance of the mini-conference) The Ambassador Program is just one of many steps we are taking to build an organization with a grass roots infrastructure that ensures that we hear from and address the needs of all Maryland practitioners and the populations they serve across the socio-economic spectrum.

For more information, contact [Jerin Horton](#) and [Linda Delaney](#)