



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



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## Executive Director's Message

### Silver Linings from 2020

*Peter Salem*

All I can say is, 2020. And you know exactly what I mean. I've been writing these messages for nearly two decades. But in all that time, not once have I been able to express the essence of a twelve-month period by simply typing the year. I never responded to a negative event with "That's so 2005!" (Katrina) or "2008, what did you expect?" (Great Recession). But lately, whether it's record-high COVID-19 numbers, racial injustice (again) rearing its ugly head, or political norms or the rule of law being trampled upon, I simply sigh, shake my head, and utter, with no small amount of contempt: "2020." [Read More.](#)



## AFCC 58th Annual Conference

June 1-3, 2021

June 7-11, 2021



Thank you to our annual conference sponsors!

## Diamond Sponsors



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## AFCC 58th Annual Conference News

### When a Child Rejects a Parent: Are We Part of the Problem or the Solution?

June 1-3 and June 7-11, 2021

Live via Zoom

Let's give this another try! AFCC still wants to share the important program which was planned for May 2020 in New Orleans, so this conference will keep the theme but present the conference in a safe online format in June 2021. The conference features 6 pre-conference institutes, 26 breakout sessions, and two plenary sessions for up to 34.5 hours of continuing education credit. Join us!



**The conference program brochure is now available!** Check out the sessions in store for you, including several on-demand programs, and get excited! Online registration will open in early January.

[View the brochure](#)

### Scholarships Are Available!

Thanks to the generosity of donors to the AFCC Scholarship Fund, AFCC will offer dozens of scholarships for the conference. Each scholarship includes conference registration, pre-conference institutes, a certificate of attendance, and more! [Apply now!](#)

### Ask the Experts

#### 10 Tips for Navigating Family Law Cases with Substance Misuse

*Stephanie Tabashneck, PsyD, JD*

When allegations of substance misuse are made in family court cases, legal practitioners and the courts are often at a loss as to how to proceed. Common questions that arise include:

- Is the parent using substances and to what extent?
- When did the parent last use the substance?
- Is the parent receiving and engaged in appropriate treatment?
- How does the parent's use impact their ability to care for the child?
- Is the child safe in the parent's care and under what conditions? [Read More.](#)

### Online Training Program on Child Custody Evaluations Scheduled for March 2021

#### The Fundamentals of Conducting Child Custody Evaluations

*March 16-18 and March 22-24, 2021*

This 24-hour online training program for professionals interested in child custody evaluations offers participants the opportunity to develop their skills with experienced trainers. The program will take place in two segments per day, two hours each, with an hour-long break between segments.

**The training team includes:**

Robin Deutsch, PhD, ABPP

### AFCC Chapter Conferences

#### New York Chapter Annual Conference

January 22, 2021  
Being held virtually

#### California Chapter Annual Conference

February 1-28, 2021  
Being held virtually

#### Alberta Chapter Annual Conference

March 19, 2021  
Being held virtually

#### Ohio Chapter Annual Conference

April 7, 2021  
Being held virtually

#### Australia Chapter Annual Conference

July 2-4, 2021  
South Brisbane, QLD

### Resource of the Month

#### COVID-19 in Australia: Impacts on Separated Families, Family Law Professionals, and Family Courts

Bruce M. Smyth, et al. contributed this insightful article to the *Family Court Review*.

April Harris-Britt, PhD  
Sol Rappaport, PhD, ABPP  
Arnold Shienvold, PhD

**Additional information coming soon!** Watch your inbox, the AFCC website, and AFCC social media platforms for details.

## Recognizing Greatness: Nominate a Colleague for an AFCC Award

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

Nominations for the following awards, to be presented at the AFCC 58th Annual Conference, will be accepted online through **March 26, 2021**.

- **John E. VanDuzer Distinguished Service Award** recognizes outstanding contributions and/or achievements by AFCC members.
- **Stanley Cohen Distinguished Research Award**, sponsored by the Oregon Family Institute, recognizes outstanding research and/or research achievements in the field of family and divorce.
- **Irwin Cantor Innovative Program Award** recognizes innovation in court-connected or court-related programs created by AFCC members.

AFCC Awards

## Give to the AFCC Scholarship Fund

The coronavirus pandemic has led to financial hardship for many. AFCC members are no exception, and this means that many can no longer afford to attend AFCC conferences.

We understand that it may not be possible for many of you to contribute to the AFCC Scholarship Fund this year. If you can donate, in any amount, we applaud your generosity and we appreciate your contribution. It means a lot to the professionals who could not attend AFCC conferences without your help. Thank you for your consideration.

Donate now!

## Child Protection Mediation Special Topic

Resolution Systems Institute (RSI) has introduced a new Special Topic to its collection of resources that delve into different areas of court ADR. **The Child Protection Mediation Special Topic** was written by Director of Research Jennifer Shack, Associate Director Eric Slepak-Cherney, and Program Manager Kevin Malone. The 16-page resource explains the context within which mediation operates, provides evidence-based guidance on program design and implementation, and summarizes the research on the effectiveness of child protection mediation. It is available [here](#).

## AFCC Webinar Corner

### Apologies in Difficult Family Situations

Robin Deutsch, PhD, ABPP

January 19, 2021 | 1:00-2:00pm Eastern Time US/Canada  
Registration closes on January 18, 2021 at 9:00am Eastern Time US/Canada.

A sincere and timely apology can be a powerful tool to resolve conflict and pave the way for positive communication, though apologies do not always result in forgiveness. Based on a review of empirical evidence, approaches for integrating apologies in difficult family situations will be discussed and practical strategies to help families deliver meaningful apologies to help repair relationships will be provided.

**Robin Deutsch, PhD, ABPP**, is a child and family forensic psychologist, mediator, parenting coordinator, and is board certified in couple and family psychology. She is the former Director of the Center of Excellence for Children, Families and the Law at the **William James College**. Dr. Deutsch is the past president of the Massachusetts chapter of AFCC, past president of AFCC, and former Chair of the APA Ethics Committee.



#### **Registration**

Members: \$15

Non-Members: \$50

#### **Certificate of Attendance**

Members: \$15

Non-Members: \$20

Continuing education credit may be available for lawyers, judges, psychologists, social workers, counselors, and other professionals. [Learn more](#).

[Register today!](#)

### **Stay tuned for February's webinar**

#### **Children Killed in the Context of Domestic Violence: Lessons Learned from Tragedies**

Dr. Peter Jaffe

February 12, 2021 | 1:00-2:00pm Eastern Time US/Canada

[Register now!](#)

### **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, 2021**, in order to be considered by the committee prior to the election at the AFCC 58th Annual Conference. The term is three years, beginning July 1, 2021, and concluding June 30, 2024.

If you or a member you know is interested, please send the first and last name, contact information, resume, and a letter of interest to the AFCC Nominating Committee via email to [afcc@afccnet.org](mailto:afcc@afccnet.org).

### **Chapter News**

**Kevin Byrd**, AFCC member from Carmel, Indiana, is the new president of the Indiana Chapter of AFCC. He earned his PhD at the California School of Professional Psychology - Fresno and has been a practicing clinical psychologist for about 30 years. Kevin's practice is devoted to custody/parenting time for

the courts in Hamilton County, Marion County, and surrounding jurisdictions. He presents on a variety of issues, including interviewing children, co-parent coaching, and using custody/parenting time evaluations in mediation. Kevin is happily partnered with a retired IU professor who has brought two delightful grandchildren into his life. In his leisure time, he enjoys composing and recording music, traveling, and working on a non-fiction book. Congratulations, Kevin!



**Maria C. Gonzalez**, AFCC member from Miramar, Florida, is the new president of the Florida Chapter of AFCC. She is the managing partner of Maria C. Gonzalez, P.A. in South Florida and has practiced exclusively in marital and family law for over 30 years. She is the past-Chair of The Family Law Section of the Florida Bar and The Florida Bar Marital and Family Law Certification Committee. Ms. Gonzalez co-authored the electronic communication statute, Section 61.13003, Florida Statutes. She is also past-President of the First Family Law American Inn of Court. In 2016, Maria was the recipient of The Honorable Raymond T. McNeal Professionalism Award and of The Honorable Hugh Stearns Community Service Award. She has an “AV” rating by Martindale-Hubbell and is listed in the Bar Register of Preeminent Lawyers. Congratulations, Maria!



## Member News

**Larry Braunstein**, member of the AFCC Board of Directors from White Plains, New York and a partner in the law firm of Braunstein & Zuckerman, Esqs., has been appointed to serve as counsel to aid committee members in their review of the events that led to an eight-year-old’s hypothermia death earlier this year. Larry, who has expertise in child custody litigation and litigation involving allegations of child sexual and physical abuse, is grateful for the opportunity to seek justice on the boy’s behalf. Read more about the case [here](#).



**Hilary Linton**, AFCC member from Toronto, Ontario, is the recipient of the 2020 Crowe Soberman Award of Excellence in Family Dispute Resolution. A long-time AFCC member, Hilary finds AFCC an endless source of new information and professional contacts. She is a founder of the Family Dispute Resolution Institute of Ontario (FDRI), which provides networking and universal standards for diverse FDR professionals. Hilary’s firm, mediate393 inc., provides family information and mediation services. Hilary develops and delivers online training for new mediators, arbitrators, and parenting coordinators. Congratulations, Hilary!

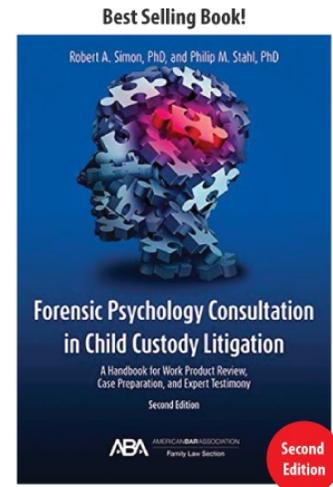


**Erin Pash**, AFCC member from Saint Paul, Minnesota, was honored as a 2020 Women in Business Award winner by the *Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal*. She is recognized by the Minnesota and American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy as a clinical supervisor and clinical fellow. Over the last 15 years, Erin’s work experience in local government and non-profits led her to cofound Ellie Family Services. In the last 5 years, Ellie Family Services has grown

to 10 locations throughout Minnesota and has provided services for more than 15,000 families. Erin is an author, professional speaker, and legislative chair for the Minnesota Association of Marriage and Family Therapy, as well as a mom to three boys. Congratulations, Erin!



**Robert A. Simon**, AFCC member from San Diego, California, is proud to announce the publication of the 2nd edition of his book, co-written with **Philip M. Stahl**, PhD (AFCC member from San Diego, California), entitled *Forensic Psychology Consulting in Child Custody Litigation*. The book, published by the Section of Family Law of the American Bar Association, contains significant additions and revisions to the best-selling and widely respected first edition, especially regarding lessons learned by the authors based on their many years as leading forensic psychology consultants. It is available through the [ABA webstore](#) and will also be available on Amazon very soon. Readers can expect an honest, candid, and straightforward reflection on the work of consultants and a discussion of the pluses and minuses of the work of reviewers and consultants. Congratulations, Robert and Phil!



**Thomas Wolfrum**, AFCC member from Walnut Creek, California, is the recipient the National Academy's Public Service Award from the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers (AAML). He has practiced law in the San Francisco Bay Area for 48 years. Tom represents a wide range of clients, with an increasing focus on mediation. He is a Fellow of the AAML and the International Academy of Family Lawyers. Tom was Editor-in-Chief of the AAML Law Journal 2010-2012 and 2017-2020. He is an active fundraiser for the AAML Foundation also serves the Foundation as its counsel. One of Tom's joys is practicing family law with his daughter, Shannon Wolfrum. Congratulations, Tom!



**Do you have a notable achievement to share?** Email [Gina Wentling](#) with your story and a professional head shot (JPEG or PNG preferred), if you have one, to be featured in next month's Member News!

## AFCC eNEWS

The *AFCC eNEWS* is the monthly e-newsletter of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts. The *eNEWS* provides up-to-date information for professionals including practice tips, international news, and the latest initiatives in family law and conflict resolution. The *AFCC eNEWS* is provided at no charge to you; anyone can subscribe. [Subscribe here.](#)

*AFCC members are free to share eNEWS content.*

### EDITOR:

[Katie Porter, MSW, JD](#)

### ASSOCIATE EDITOR:





## **Silver Linings from 2020**

*Peter Salem*

All I can say is, 2020. And you know exactly what I mean. I've been writing these messages for nearly two decades. But in all that time, not once have I been able to express the essence of a twelve-month period by simply typing the year. I never responded to a negative event with "That's so 2005!" (Katrina) or "2008, what did you expect?" (Great Recession). But lately, whether it's record-high COVID-19 numbers, racial injustice (again) rearing its ugly head, or political norms or the rule of law being trampled upon, I simply sigh, shake my head, and utter, with no small amount of contempt: "2020."

I am a bit concerned that we expect 2021 to somehow magically usher in nothing but good things and that some people may forget the challenges ahead. But there does seem to be a light at the end of the tunnel. Many people, including AFCC members, have struggled mightily this year. Others have continued to work, remained healthy, and some have even thrived. So in the spirit of the good kind of positivity (not a test result), and ever hopeful for the future, here is my own top ten list of silver linings from 2020.

### **Ten Silver Linings from 2020:**

**1. AFCC STAFF:** I am always grateful for the excellent work of the AFCC staff, but this year was special. Even with 50% staff turnover (a singular occurrence), we shifted to a remote workplace, added several new programs, adapted all programs, staff meetings, and procedures to online, expanded member outreach and communication, revised most internal protocols, and were still able to celebrate with a virtual staff summer outing. Dawn Holmes, AFCC Director of Operations, anchored the effort and all staff members have worked extended hours to deliver services as seamlessly as possible throughout 2020. Many thanks to Dawn and the rest of the team: Katie Porter, Program Director; Kelly Bienfang, Operations Administrator; Gina Wentling, Communications Coordinator; and Patrick Sommer, Program Assistant.

**2. AFCC LEADERSHIP:** 2020 was an all-hands-on-deck effort like no other, and the collaboration with 2020 Presidents Matt Sullivan and Larry Fong, the AFCC Executive Committee, Board, Chapter leaders, former Executive and Board members, Committee and Task Force members, and others was extraordinary. We needed a lot of extra help to lead online discussion groups, offer extra webinars, develop online training programs, and moderate

conference sessions, all while our leaders were addressing challenges and crises in their own workplaces and personal lives. While I can't say that we didn't skip a beat, we came pretty darn close. Simply put, everyone stepped up and delivered. It demonstrates exceptional commitment, and speaks to the strength of the association.

**3. AFCC CHAPTERS:** There is nothing harder than keeping volunteer-run organizations moving forward when the world is in flux, but on the whole, AFCC Chapters thrived. Louisiana, after losing out on hosting the New Orleans Annual Conference, had the highest percentage growth of any AFCC Chapter, with Minnesota gaining the most members. The majority of AFCC Chapters were able to pivot, move to webinars, and continue to thrive during 2020.

**4. AFCC SPONSORS:** The support of sponsors in 2020 was incredible. I contacted them immediately when the New Orleans conference was cancelled, brainstorming ways to provide them exposure and hoping to work out some sort of a deal as we were looking at massive revenue losses. The response, almost without fail, was, "Keep the money, we'll figure something out." So deep and heartfelt gratitude goes out to OurFamilyWizard.com (Bryan, Jai, Katrina, Matt, Racheal, and Steven); Soberlink (Mike, Chris, and Thy-Ann); Online Parenting Programs (Michelle); High Conflict Institute (Bill and Megan); and the Suzie S. Thorn Family Foundation (Suzie, Joe, and Claire). For those not aware, they are more than vendors and business relationships; they are true professionals, great contributors, and important members of the AFCC family.

**5. AFCC PROGRAM PRESENTERS:** There are far too many to name, but we would not have survived 2020 without them. AFCC introduced four online COVID-related discussion groups, 16 *Family Court Review* webinars (in lieu of the Annual Conference), a Flash Webinar Series on Parenting Coordination, and two online training programs, not to mention the usual fall conference and webinars. We asked literally dozens of people, we asked a lot from them and we asked it frequently, often at the last minute. For all of those requests, only one person said no. One. What an incredible gift.

**6. RYAN:** Ryan is the web developer/software engineer who created and manages the AFCC website. Ryan typically makes a few updates, does a bit of coding, and makes sure AFCC has a secure and functional website. In 2020, he created portals for online conferences and training programs, developed a management system for the extensive collection of downloaded program videos, came to the rescue when we were hacked (fixed and secured it within an hour!), and provided critical insight as AFCC became increasingly reliant on an online presence. Ryan and Dawn were joined at the hip (virtually, of course) much of the year. Ryan was available, cheerful, skilled, and thoughtful in his approach. The year would have never been successful without him.

**7. THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF MATRIMONIAL LAWYERS (AAML):** A tip of the hat to Susan Myres, AAML Immediate Past-President, who reached out last spring to suggest that AFCC partner with AAML to develop *Seven Guidelines for Parents Who Are Divorced/Separated and Sharing Custody of Children During the Covid-19 Pandemic*. This happened in March, when most of us were just trying to survive. Susan and AAML helped us realize an important purpose. The *Guidelines* went viral and were cited by courts, bar

associations, chief judges, and others in helping families to navigate a new and frightening situation.

**8. AFCC PARTNERS:** Throughout 2020, AFCC stayed connected with our colleagues at the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ), Battered Women's Justice Project (BWJP), International Association of Collaborative Professionals (IACP), Mediate.com, Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System (IAALS), ABA Section on Dispute Resolution (ABA-SDR), and AAML. A true silver lining is those executive directors and CEOs with whom I consulted extensively this year on how to manage an organization during a global pandemic. It turns out that none of us had a playbook and I learned so much from them. Thank you: Joey Orduna-Hastings, NCJFCJ; Anne Tamar-Mattis, IACP; Colin Rule, Mediate.com; Jill Pena, AAML; and Linda Warren Seely and Gina Brown, ABA-SDR.

**9. AFCC DIVERSITY EQUITY AND INCLUSION TASK FORCE:** In nearly 30 years with AFCC, I have experienced numerous efforts to create a more diverse and inclusive organization. To be honest, it has been an uphill climb. The George Floyd killing and all that it sparked seem to have created a moral imperative within AFCC. Significant challenges remain, but the time seems right. The Task Force is comprised of several exceptional and thoughtful AFCC members: Hon. Herman Walker, Chair; Hon. Gerri Wong, Reporter; Chioma Ajoku, JD, PhD; Gitu Bhatia, PsyD; Frank Davis, PhD; Hon. Kevin Duffan; April Harris-Britt, PhD; Nolanda Kirby, MS; Kelly Browe Olson, JD, LLM; Ernie Sanchez, MSW; and Carlton Stansbury, JD.

**10. AFCC MEMBERS:** AFCC members are the heart and soul of the association, and we were deeply concerned that financial circumstances would result in some having no choice but to allow their membership to lapse. We were also concerned that few people would attend online programs. So I am incredibly grateful that membership actually grew by 10%, and that our programs were remarkably well attended. Members did not complain about the extra emails—in fact, many appreciate the information. And we received strong support, and many wonderful emails, in response to the statement on George Floyd and racial injustice. We still receive (and take seriously) plenty of constructive criticism from AFCC members and invite you to continue to share. It is how we learn and improve. But in 2020, the patience and support demonstrated by AFCC members to staff, leadership, one another, and doubtless to our respective communities, is a silver lining to celebrate.

One day, when I have a bit more perspective, I will look back at what an amazing year 2020 has been. For now, I simply thank you from the bottom of my heart for all you do for AFCC, and I wish for you a healthy, happy, and sane 2021, with lots of indoor dining, large gatherings with family and friends, and cheering for your favorite team in a sold-out stadium—but only *after* we are all vaccinated.



ASSOCIATION OF  
FAMILY AND  
CONCILIATION COURTS



eNEWS

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## 10 Tips for Navigating Family Law Cases with Substance Misuse

*Stephanie Tabashneck, PsyD, JD*

When allegations of substance misuse are made in family court cases, legal practitioners and the courts are often at a loss as to how to proceed. Common questions that arise include:

- Is the parent using substances and to what extent?
- When did the parent last use the substance?
- Is the parent receiving and engaged in appropriate treatment?
- How does the parent's use impact their ability to care for the child?
- Is the child safe in the parent's care and under what conditions?

This article includes ten tips for approaching cases with substance misuse dynamics.

### 1. Recognize that addiction is a chronic disease

Substance Use Disorder (SUD) is a chronic condition. Recurrences (relapses) are to be expected and like other chronic conditions, including heart disease and asthma, there are often a series of relapses followed by remission. Even with tremendous effort, intervention, and support, it can take many years for an individual to enter into sustained remission. Prior to sustained remission, the severity of the individual's substance use is likely to wax and wane. However, over time, most individuals are able to achieve long-term recovery.

### 2. Approach each case with awareness that every person and family is unique

Every case involving substance misuse is different and there is no one-size-fits-all model for approaching these complicated cases. Some parents have milder substance misuse issues that are unlikely to significantly impact the child (e.g., excessively drinking a few times a year at social functions where the child is not present). Other parents fall into a gray area where concerns exist but it is unclear the extent to which the use impacts the child (e.g., a single-incident DUI without the child in the car). Other cases have a pattern of use that is concerning and clearly impacts caregiving (e.g., heroin dependence and use when the child is in the home). However, even within these categories, there is gradation. For example, using in front of a child is different from not using in front of the child. A heroin-addicted mother may use when the child is with family and an alcohol misusing parent may limit their binge drinking to when the child is not in their care. These nuances matter and are relevant when determining parent-child contact.

3. Clarify the nature of the parent's substance use and the nexus between the parent's use and the impact on the child

A central question to ask when approaching a case with allegations of substance use is how that particular parent's substance misuse impact the child given the child's age, needs, supports, and available buffers. The legal practitioner should clearly identify the nexus between the parent's impairment and caregiving deficits to tailor a reasonable course of action. The child's age is an important consideration. Some parents with milder substance misuse issues may be able to provide sufficient care for older children but not younger children who are home full-time. In cases where monitoring may be necessary due to the dynamics of the case, supervision may be critical for younger children but not for older children who may be more readily able to advocate for themselves and communicate about a parent's impairment.

4. Maintain reasonable expectations

Given the nature of Substance Use Disorders, it is unreasonable to expect that a person with a history of severe addiction will not have a recurrence. It is also unreasonable to expect that a parent with a severe addiction will immediately and permanently stop using a substance because of court-related consequences, treatment, or legal issues. While the parent's decisions and behavior may appear puzzling to an outside observer, due to the neurobiological and behavioral consequences of addiction, the parent with addiction – even when putting forth their best effort – is likely to have challenges maintaining sobriety as well as with planning, following through with commitments, and providing sufficient caregiving. It is important to note that compromised parenting may also occur as a result of other chronic illnesses (e.g., heart conditions, diabetes) but stigma and misperceptions can cause stakeholders to view SUD differently.

5. Encourage open communication

Fostering an environment of open communication is imperative. Parents should not be subjected to unnecessary shame and embarrassment in the event of a recurrence. Rather, parents should be praised for disclosing a relapse and offered additional support. Step-ups in monitoring and intervention should be viewed through the lens of problem-solving, the paradigm of recovery, and as a way to help the individual to get their needs met so that they can effectively parent their children.

6. Develop a relapse plan

When a recurrence of SUD occurs, there is often considerable confusion and chaos. This dynamic is harmful to children. It is imperative that a relapse plan be developed prior to a recurrence so that everyone is on the same page with next steps. This plan should include who the parent should disclose the recurrence to, the timeframe for the disclosure, who will make the determination as to whether a step-up in treatment is necessary, a list of potential treatment providers or facilities in each category of treatment (e.g., inpatient treatment, structured outpatient addiction program, etc.), and plans for communicating the relapse to the children.

7. Recognize that there is no one path to recovery

There is not one path to achieving sustained remission from a Substance Use Disorder. Many people require several iterations of treatment to reach sustained remission. Some individuals benefit from Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous while others do not and are better served by SMART Recovery, mindfulness-based recovery, faith-based recovery, or other peer-

support groups. Addicted individuals also generally require mental health treatment with a provider with expertise in addiction, including group therapy and/or one-on-one counseling. Most individuals will try several different methods to manage their addiction with multiple recurrences before they identify the structure of supports and intervention that best meets their needs. This pathway is likely to evolve and change over time as the individual progresses in their recovery.

#### 8. Acknowledge small wins

Many parents become discouraged over time in the face of repeated “failure.” While abstinence from a substance is often ideal, it is helpful for the court to recognize progress in smaller forms, including decrease in the frequency of use, the amount used, the potency of the drug used, safe use, open communication and acknowledgement of use, and taking responsibility for one’s actions. Parents with addiction are often trying exceptionally hard to function and to get better and acknowledging effort and incremental progress can be helpful for discouraged parents.

#### 9. Look for ways for children to maintain a connection to the addicted parent

Most children can continue to have a relationship and in-person parenting time with a parent with a SUD. If it is deemed definitively unsafe for the parent to have unsupervised contact with the child, some form of supervised visitation or avenue for continued connection should be immediately implemented. If in-person visitation is not feasible due to, for example, the parent frequently no-showing visits or repeatedly arriving to the visit under the influence, intermediate measures should be considered, such as writing letters, sending videos that are taken when a parent is not visibly under the influence, phone calls, videoconferencing, FaceTime, and so forth. It is important to note that younger children often struggle with phone and videoconferencing and that expected behaviors may include inattention, resistance, and distress. This is generally best navigated by the custodial caregiver actively facilitating the interaction with planning, preparation, and encouragement. Notably, due to the nature of progress and setbacks often inherent when Substance Use Disorder is present, supervision and parenting time should be revisited and reassessed every 30 days so as 1) not to prolong unnecessary supervision and decreases in parenting time and 2) to maintain safety as consistent with the best interest of the children. Regular drug testing is often useful to promote accountability and reassure stakeholders that the addicted parent can safely care for the child. However, a positive drug screen, in isolation, should not be used as grounds to sever contact between the child and parent.

#### 10. Have compassion

Substance Use Disorders are exceptionally difficult and often come with considerable pain for individuals and their families. The larger culture holds many stigmatizing thoughts and beliefs about SUD and these oftentimes erroneous preconceptions have significant effects on parents in recovery. While the addicted parent may appear as if they are not trying, they are often experiencing crippling shame, embarrassment, a lack of control, and fear. These individuals should be treated with empathy, respect, and care as they work toward recovery.

**Stephanie Tabashneck, PsyD, JD** is a forensic psychologist and attorney in Boston. Her practice areas include substance use issues, child custody, criminal forensic evaluations, and expert testimony. Dr. Tabashneck presents regionally and nationally on psychology and law topics, including at events organized by the Federal Judicial Center, the American Bar Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts, and the Massachusetts Trial Courts. Dr. Tabashneck is a board member of the Massachusetts chapter of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts. Recent publications include an article on family drug courts in *Family Law Quarterly* (Spring 2019) and a chapter in the American Bar Association book, *Representing People with Mental Disabilities: A Practical Guide for Criminal Defense Lawyers* (2019).

