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President's Message

Larry Fong, PhD

The AFCC Presidency has always been a fairly predictable endeavor. It begins on the first day of July and concludes the final day of the following June. Incoming presidents are well prepared, having served on the Board of Directors and AFCC Executive Committee for several years.

We attend annual leadership transition meetings during which we craft strategy, develop programs, and plan for the year ahead. We have a travel routine and attend many conferences and meetings that are planned well in advance. Of course, there are always a few bumps in the road, and AFCC Presidents typically have their own personal and professional responsibilities, so most find it to be an extremely busy year. [Read More.](#)

Start Learning from the AFCC 58th Annual Conference Today!

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

AFCC 58th Annual Conference

June 1-3, 2021 and
June 7-11, 2021



Thank you to our annual conference sponsors!

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Bonus On-Demand Workshops!

Numerous workshops will be recorded and made available to registrants of the 58th Annual Conference! Nine recordings are ready to [view now](#); more will be added in the coming weeks.

- **EMDR with Children Who Resist Contact with a Parent** presented by *Stacey White Kinney, MS*
- **Family Law Attorneys and Parenting Evaluators: Improving Professional Collaboration** presented by *Stacy Heard, JD and Jennifer Wheeler, PhD*
- **The Future of Family Justice Reform** presented by *Alicia Davis, JD and Michael Houlberg*
- **Gathering, Interpreting, and Archiving Email, Text, Social Media, and Internet Data in a Forensically Defensible Manner** presented by *Sean Knuth, PhD and Chris Mulcahy, PhD*
- **Making Psychological Testing Data in Custody Cases Relevant and Useful for the Non-Psychologist** presented by *Jessica P. Greenwald O'Brien, PhD; Lauren E. Persing, PsyD, JD; and Jennifer Sevigney Durand, JD*
- **Religious and Cultural Considerations in Divorce and Custody Disputes** presented by *Jacqueline Harounian, JD*
- **Reunification from the Inside Out** presented by *John-Paul E Boyd, QC, MA, LLB; Jorge Gonzalez MA, RCC; Alyson G. Jones, MA, RCC; Salley-Ann Ross MA, RCC; and Heather Lake*
- **See Evil, Hear Evil, Speak Evil: What Goes Around Comes Around** presented by *Sue Bronson, MSW, LCSW and Linda Fieldstone, MEd*
- **So, You Thought Your Divorce Would End the Conflict? A Different Approach to Parenting Coordination** presented by *Hanita Dagan, MA and Dr. Terry Singh, PhD*
- **The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse: Tips for Professionals in Rural and Urban Areas** presented by *Tammi L. Axelson, MSW; Christy Bradshaw Schmidt, MA; and Jim Mueller, JD*
- **The Trials & Tribulations of Instituting the New AFCC PC Guidelines in a State without a Statute** presented by *Marc A. Caplan, PhD; Lori Comallie-Caplan, MS; and Jill Johnson Virgil, JD*
- **Voices or Ghosts? The Place of Children in Parenting Coordination** presented by *Linda Fieldstone, MEd; Jonathan M. Graham, LLB; and Dr. Lorri A. Yasenik, PhD, RSW*

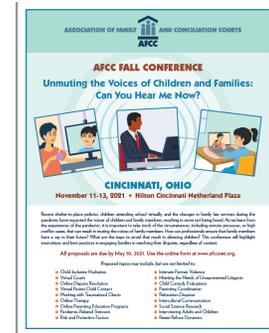
Don't miss this opportunity to learn even more, courtesy of the AFCC 58th Annual Conference. Watch these outstanding workshops now to whet your appetite for all the informative presentations to come! Remember, **registrants can view**



AFCC Fall Conference

November 11-13, 2021
Cincinnati, Ohio

Submit your proposal
by May 10, 2021.



AFCC Chapter Conferences & Webinar Series

Colorado Chapter Spring Conference

April 23, 2021
Being held virtually

Massachusetts Chapter Annual Conference

April 30, 2021
Being held virtually

Australia Chapter Annual Conference

July 2-4, 2021
South Brisbane, QLD

Wisconsin Chapter Annual Conference

September 30, 2021
Delafield, Wisconsin

Ontario Chapter Annual Conference

October 15, 2021
Toronto, Ontario

Illinois Chapter Annual Conference

October 22, 2021
Being held virtually

these recordings for no additional charge! (No certificate of attendance will be issued for viewing on-demand workshops.)

followed by a live social gathering (COVID-19 restrictions permitting)

Visit the [AFCC 58th Annual Conference Online Portal](#) to view full conference information. You can:

- Visit the [Sessions tab](#) to view the full schedule, including workshop descriptions, date and time, presenter information, and more.
- [Download](#) the conference brochure.
- Check [continuing education](#) approvals and pending applications.
- Learn about [conference sponsors and exhibitors](#).
- Read other [conference information](#), including equipment requirements, social activities, and how to make the most of your conference experience.
- [Register](#) for the conference and pre-conference institutes!

[Register now!](#)

Exhibitor and Sponsorship Opportunities Available!

AFCC offers organizations the opportunity to reach attendees of the 58th Annual Conference. Sign up now to exhibit or sponsor the conference to promote your products and service! [Learn more](#) and contact AFCC Communications Coordinator [Gina Wentling](#) with any questions.

Arizona Chapter Annual Conference
January 28-30, 2022
Sedona, Arizona

Resource of the Month

Discussion Group
May 19, 2021
4:00pm-5:00pm Eastern Time US/Canada
Registration is required.
[Register now!](#)

Members of the AFCC DE&I Task Force will lead a discussion about issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion in family law. Join us!



A Movement Not a Moment: Recapping the Current DE&I Initiatives

Chioma Ajoku, JD, PhD, ABPP

Diversity is relevant to the work engaged in by AFCC membership. For example, many countries, including the United States, are home to myriad subcultures. Some of these subcultures are the result of geography: settlement patterns and regional differences in weather and landscape. Differences are often based on region and, in general, individuals from different areas of a country may have appreciable differences in lifestyles, cultural values, business practices, and dialects. [Read more.](#)

The AFCC DE&I Webinar Series and Discussion Groups Continues May 5th

The AFCC DE&I Task Force, which will become a standing AFCC committee, began its series of webinars and discussion groups in March with the webinar *Does Diversity Matter in Family Law?* [View it here](#) (AFCC member login required). Over 200 people attended!

A discussion forum, in which small breakout rooms were used to discuss the issues raised in the webinar, followed two weeks later. The conversations were lively and informative.

The series continues in May with a webinar and discussion group to tackle issues important to the family justice system.

Risk Management and Culture: Why You Really Should Care about DE&I

April Harris-Britt, PhD and Nolanda Kirby, MS
Wednesday, May 5, 2021

4:00pm-5:00pm Eastern Time US/Canada
Registration closes on May 4, 2021 at 9:00am Eastern Time US/Canada

Free registration includes a certificate of attendance. You *must* register to attend.

Register now!



Cultural competence is not just a good idea, it is necessary for effective and ethical practice. This webinar will emphasize the importance of recognizing culture and diversity in family law cases from a risk management perspective. Presenters will discuss cases in which issues of diversity have resulted in Board complaints and grievances and will examine the importance of microaggressions, and the risk of an individual's cultural identification. A case analysis will provide opportunities for further discussion and conceptualization.

April Harris-Britt, PhD (above left), is a licensed psychologist and parent coordinator who conducts child and adult psychological evaluations, child custody evaluations, civil guardian ad litem evaluations, and parental competency evaluations. She is currently a member of the Board for the Center for Cooperative Parenting, APA Advocacy Coordinating Committee, APA Working Group to Review Scientific Literature for High Conflict Family Relationships, AFCC Task Force on Model Standards of Practice for Child Custody Evaluations, and AFCC Task Force on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

Nolanda Kirby, MS, CCFC (above right), is the Family Support Services Coordinator at the Cecil County Circuit Court and has served in this position since 2005. She provides services to families who are currently separating or divorcing and/or having child custody and visitation disputes. She also works with families who are dealing with domestic violence, and child protection services matters. Nolanda's organizational memberships include AFCC, the National Association of Forensic Counselors, the Maryland Chapter of the AFCC (President), and the AFCC Task Force for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

Discussion Group

Wednesday, May 19, 2021

4:00pm-5:00pm Eastern Time US/Canada

Registration is required.

Register now!

Save the date! More information to come -- stay tuned!

Proposals for the AFCC Fall Conference due May 10th!

The AFCC Fall Conference will highlight innovations and best practices in engaging families and resolving their disputes. Many aspects of family law that were taken for granted, like in-person hearings and home visits, have been unavailable to families and professionals due to the global pandemic. This conference will explore what these practices will look like in a post-COVID world and how we can ensure children's voices are not lost in the shuffle.

Submit your proposal for a 90-minute workshops to contribute to the conversation. Please read the **Call for Proposals** thoroughly and complete your submission using the **online form**. The deadline to submit is **May 10, 2021**.

Presenting or not, please plan to attend! Mark your calendars and stay tuned for more information, coming soon!

AFCC Fall Conference

Unmuting the Voices of Children and Families: Can You Hear Me Now?

November 11-13, 2021

Cincinnati Netherland Plaza

Cincinnati, OH

The AFCC-AAML Conference Is Set for September!

AFCC leadership and their colleagues at the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers (AAML) are working together to bring you an exceptional, advanced-level training opportunity, coming this fall. This year's program features a Trial Track and Parenting Coordination Track.

Leaders of AFCC and AAML are watching the evolving coronavirus situation closely and considering its implications for in-person events. We expect to make a final decision soon regarding whether the format will be virtual, in-person, or a hybrid model.

Save the date and keep an eye on your inbox for updates!

September 23-25, 2021

Capital Hilton

Washington, DC

AFCC is Hiring!

AFCC is hiring a program director to work either remotely or in the AFCC offices in Madison, WI. The successful candidate will develop AFCC educational programs, work closely with AFCC Chapters, oversee continuing education, communications, staff special projects and committees, and serve as a resource to 6,000 amazing AFCC members!

[Read the job description and application information for details.](#)

Mediate.com Announces Online Mediation Training Forums

Mediate.com, an organization dedicated to everything mediation led by AFCC member Colin Rule (and sponsor of the virtual hospitality suites at the upcoming AFCC 58th Annual Conference), has launched an Online Mediation Training Task Force, chaired by AFCC member Forrest "Woody" Mosten. AFCC Executive Director Peter Salem is a member of the Online Mediation Training Advisory Board.

The Task Force will hold five Open Forums to share its work in different focus areas, including community mediation, diversity and inclusion, workplace mediation, and more. The Open Forum that is most applicable to the Family & Elder Mediation Committee may be of interest to AFCC members. Mark your calendars and join the discussion!

What Online Mediation Training Is Needed and Effective?

Mediate.com Open Forum

April 30, 2021 12:00pm - 2:00pm Eastern Time US/Canada

Hosts: Susan Guthrie, Donna Silverberg, and Jim Melamed

[Learn More](#)

AFCC Webinar Corner

Deconstructing a Child Custody Evaluation in Court

Lawrence Jay Braunstein, JD

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

Registration closes on May 11, 2021 at 9:00am Eastern Time US/Canada.

The parties have requested, or the Court has ordered *sui sponte*, a child custody evaluation. Once it is received and reviewed by the parties, and possibly by the Court, decisions need to be made. Do the parties settle, or do they proceed to trial? This webinar will explore how to read and evaluate a child custody evaluation and how best to present its strengths or weaknesses to the Court.

Lawrence Jay Braunstein, JD is a partner in the law firm of Braunstein & Zuckerman, Esqs, located in White Plains, New York, where he practices in the areas of Matrimonial, Family and Collaborative Law and related civil and criminal litigation, with an expertise in child custody litigation. He is a member of the Board of Directors of AFCC and an Adjunct Professor of Law at Hofstra University School of Law, Hempstead, New York where he teaches Child Abuse and Neglect, Collaborative Family Law and Modern Divorce Advocacy.



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!](#)

Register Now for AFCC's June webinar!

The Role of Family Law Professionals in Preventing Gun Violence

Judge Mark A. Juhas and Julia Weber, JD, MSW

June 22, 2021 | 1:00-2:00pm Eastern Time US/Canada

[Register now!](#)

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

Chapter News

Chapter Challenge Winners

Congratulations are in order! **The California and Indiana chapters have secured the top spots in this round of the Chapter Challenge!** California welcomed 53 new members since last summer and Indiana increased their membership roster by over 23%!

The Texas, Washington, Illinois, and Utah chapters also made strong showings, each with an increase of more than 10%. That is a remarkable achievement! Congratulations to the California and Indiana chapters, and to all AFCC chapters for a terrific race!

In Memoriam: Phil Epstein

AFCC is saddened by the passing of noted Canadian family law attorney, mediator, and educator Phil Epstein.

Epstein, a longtime AFCC member who retired from law practice last summer with a career full of awards – including the Order of Canada in February – and was widely perceived as a trailblazer in Canadian family law, died at home in Toronto on April 4, of acute myeloid fibromyalgia; he was 78 years old.

“Mr. Epstein’s impact on the legal community, his leadership in Canadian family law and his contributions to access to justice over the course of his career were significant,” Teresa Donnelly, treasurer of the Law Society of Ontario said in an email to Canadian Lawyer. “His work improved the lives of many.”



“He has made such a significant impact on three generations of family law lawyers,” says Carole Curtis, a judge in the Ontario Court of Justice. “It’s not possible to overstate his contribution; one of a kind doesn’t even cover it.”

Epstein also lectured in family law at the University of Toronto Law School, Osgoode Hall Law School and the University of Sydney.

Phil Epstein is survived by his wife, the former Joyce Rapp, whom he met while both were students at the University of Toronto’s University College, and by their son, David, daughters Deborah and Sara, and eight grandchildren. [Read more.](#)

Member News

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!

Membership Notice of AFCC Board Nominations

At the AFCC virtual membership meeting, Friday, June 4, 2021 at 5:00pm ET, the following individuals will be nominated to serve on the [AFCC Board of Directors](#) for a three-year term beginning July 1, 2021 and concluding June 30, 2024: Tom Altobelli, Dolores Bomrad, Larry Fong, Alex Jones, Daniel Pickar, and Michael Saini.

The AFCC Executive Committee is elected by the board of directors. For informational purposes, the following individuals have been nominated for positions on the executive committee: President Elect: Linda Fidnick; Vice President: Stacey Platt; Secretary: Michael Saini; Treasurer: Dolores Bomrad. Mindy Mitnick and Larry Fong automatically become President and Past-President, respectively, per AFCC bylaws.

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:
Gina Wentling





ASSOCIATION OF
FAMILY AND
CONCILIATION COURTS



eNEWS

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President's Message

Larry Fong, PhD

The AFCC Presidency has always been a fairly predictable endeavor. It begins on the first day of July and concludes the final day of the following June. Incoming presidents are well prepared, having served on the Board of Directors and AFCC Executive Committee for several years. We attend annual leadership transition meetings during which we craft strategy, develop programs, and plan for the year ahead. We have a travel routine and attend many conferences and meetings that are planned well in advance. Of course, there are always a few bumps in the road, and AFCC Presidents typically have their own personal and professional responsibilities, so most find it to be an extremely busy year.



It is hard work, make no mistake, but there are a few perks. The transition meeting is held in Sedona, Arizona. AFCC Presidents are also invited to an awards dinner at the US Supreme Court. In recent years, my colleagues have had opportunities to participate in programs with our European colleagues in Ireland, Spain, Malta, and the United Kingdom (including a stay on the grounds of Windsor Castle). These are working trips, but the locations make them a bit more fun and interesting.

Then came 2020. The annual transition meeting took place in late January, and by mid-March the carefully laid plans were out the window. As Matt Sullivan's presidency wound down, we were making decisions one day at a time, then weekly, monthly, and now we are looking 2-3 months ahead. We are planning and hoping for in-person conferences in September and November, but we have learned from experience that we must be nimble.

So, while my predecessors traversed the globe promoting AFCC and engaging with members, I have remained in Calgary. As a health care provider, I have been working from my office, but much of my work has been through videoconference, even though in-person appointments are permissible. On the AFCC front, all meetings have been exclusively online. Long held ceremonial traditions, such as the physical passing of the gavel from one president to the next and the presentation of awards, have been modified. Our annual banquets, luncheons, and other in-person events are on hold until our next face-to-face opportunity.

While certainly disappointing, this past year has also been enlightening, as I have been privileged to experience the resilience and the excellence of AFCC and its members and our partners in response to the challenges we faced.

- By mid-March 2020, we partnered with the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers on “Seven Guidelines for Parents Who Are Divorced/Separated and Sharing Custody of Children During the COVID-19 Pandemic,” which went viral worldwide.
- By April we had convened four discussion groups for professionals to help them address the unknown challenges of the pandemic, with support from our partners at OurFamilyWizard.com and Soberlink.
- Since March 2020, AFCC members, leadership and staff pooled efforts to present more than 130 online programs, attracting nearly 18,000 registrants.
- New online training programs were developed on parenting coordination and child custody evaluation.
- Numerous AFCC Chapters delivered online conferences. (Special thanks to OurFamilyWizard.com for supporting so many of the chapter programs.)
- AFCC Task Forces on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and on Child Custody Evaluation Model Standards moved forward with their important work.
- *Family Court Review* continued to meet publication deadlines, including important special issues on parenting coordination and parent-child contact problems.
- Many AFCC operations were conducted remotely, typically with one or two people in the office.

These are just a few examples. I am sure I have missed others. It would be impossible to name all of the people involved, so suffice it to say that, as usual, AFCC as a whole stepped up. With decades of accumulated wisdom and experience, we were ready, willing, and able to make the necessary changes to continue business (not quite) as usual even in the most challenging of times.

As a result, some lines have been blurred as is our future, to some extent. When will we go back to fully in-person events? How will AFCC continue to meet the needs of members who have benefited from our online programming, but could not access the face-to-face programs? Does AFCC need a physical office space? And what about the hospitality suite?

These and other questions will be examined in the coming year, as strategic planning is another event that the pandemic forced us to postpone. As we navigate the future, we know that AFCC is not alone in revisiting how we do our work. We will continue to plan ahead, to navigate the uncertainty and to anticipate the needs of members as they evolve.

It has been an honour and privilege serving as AFCC President, even if not as originally planned.



A Movement Not a Moment: Recapping the Current DE&I Initiatives

Chioma Ajoku, JD, PhD, ABPP

What is the DE&I Task Force and what is its purpose?

AFCC created the Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DE&I) Task Force in 2020 to examine how AFCC responds to matters related to DE&I, how such matters affect AFCC, and to recommend steps going forward.

Specifically, the charge of the Task Force is to:

1. Consider and propose educational opportunities to make available to all AFCC members and others in the family law field,
2. Consider and propose the design of a mentorship or similar program that will better enable engagement in AFCC by a more diverse body of professionals,
3. Consider and propose ideas to make AFCC better known to a diverse community of family law professionals, and
4. Consider and propose additional steps to improve AFCC efforts toward diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The Task Force has three subcommittees: education, mentorship, and outreach.

What do we mean when we talk about “diversity, equity, and inclusion?”

Understanding the meaning of the term “diversity, equity, and inclusion” is critical to understanding the work of the Task Force. Below you will find brief definitions. I encourage readers to research the history of the term further.

Diversity refers to creating a community comprised of individuals with varied backgrounds and beliefs. These myriad backgrounds can include differences related to race, ethnicity, gender, ability, sexual orientation, age, and religion, among other identity markers. Diversity also considers intersectional diversity, which is when an individual’s identity includes more than one underrepresented group.

Equity is the act of ensuring that everyone has access to the same opportunities and the acknowledgment that advantages and barriers to access to opportunities exist. “Equity” and “equality” are not the same. Equality is the act of giving everyone the same resources or opportunities, regardless of context. Equity

recognizes that each person has different circumstances or advantages and barriers and provides the resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome. In other words, equity is a *means* of achieving true equality. To give a few tangible examples related to “advantages and barriers,” a 2004 study by Bertrand and Mullainathan found that job candidates with “White-sounding” names were 50 percent more likely to receive callbacks for interviews than candidates with “Black-sounding” names. A 2012 study by Moss-Racusin, et al., found that female job candidates with resumes and experiences identical to male candidates were considered less skilled, less deserving of being hired, offered less career mentoring, and offered lower initial salaries. Finally, a 2014 study by Reeves found that when law firm partners believed the author of a legal brief was Black, the partners consistently rated identical briefs as lower in quality and identified more spelling, grammar, factual, or analytical errors.

Inclusion is the act of creating environments where members of the community feel welcomed, respected, supported, and feel that their participation and contributions are valued. Such an environment sees, respects, and even celebrates differences. Inclusion moves beyond simply having diversity in the community to focusing on retaining that diversity. To use the analogy of inclusion strategist Vernā Myers, “Diversity is being invited to the party; inclusion is being asked to dance.”

Why is it important to talk about diversity in the family law field?

Diversity is relevant to the work engaged in by AFCC membership. For example, many countries, including the United States, are home to myriad subcultures. Some of these subcultures are the result of geography: settlement patterns and regional differences in weather and landscape. Differences are often based on region and, in general, individuals from different areas of a country may have appreciable differences in lifestyles, cultural values, business practices, and dialects. Just as we may have differences based on geography, we may have differences based on our lived experiences as persons from a particular race, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, religion, gender, sexual orientation, ability, age, and other identity markers.

Additionally, data shows that many countries are becoming more diverse and quickly so in some regions. So, how do we as professionals address the needs of families whose cultures and subcultures may be unfamiliar to us? How do we even know if their culture is unfamiliar to us? In essence, how do we know what we do *not* know?

As the landscape of many countries continues to shift, it becomes increasingly important to understand the influence of cultures and subcultures in family law related work. Understanding the influence of culture on the work conducted by mental health, legal, and dispute resolution professionals is critical because culture can influence a parent’s parenting style or philosophy, discipline practices, or co-parenting approach. In fact, there is literature that explores differences in childrearing practices and discipline across different racial and ethnic groups. Furthermore, how a parent conceptualizes “family,” everyone’s role within the family, and what family is “supposed” to look like before, during, and after significant change to the family structure (e.g., a breakup, separation, or divorce) is arguably culture-bound whether that is culture as influenced by race, religion, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, gender, geography, or some other identity marker.

Whether it is from a dominant or non-dominant culture, each family has a culture that dictates daily practices, beliefs, values, and strengths and weaknesses possessed by the family collectively and individually. In addition to how culture affects a person’s views on parenting, the co-parenting relationship, and the parent-child relationship, it is important for practitioners to examine how their own cultural identity and sensitivity influences the ways in which they, as professionals, approach family law related work and the lens through which they see the families and filter the information and data they collect (Gould & Martindale, 2004).

Thus, being a culturally sensitive practitioner means appreciating and exploring differences and similarities between cultures. It also means attempting to understand the degree to which a family is acculturated (the extent to which an individual or group has adopted another group's values and practices, usually the dominant group in a society). It is also important to note that the road to “cultural sensitivity” or “cultural competence” has no final destination. It is a continual journey toward increasing one’s intercultural and intracultural knowledge in order to improve our capacity to work with persons from different cultures.

A difficulty, of course, is figuring out how to consider the role of culture while also being knowledgeable regarding the parenting and childrearing norms of the jurisdictions within which we work, the relevant social science literature, and what culturally sensitive approaches, methods, and procedures to use when working with families from non-dominant groups (Gould & Martindale, 2004).

What initiatives are the Task Force currently undertaking and why?

To promote diversity, equity, and inclusion, the DE&I Task Force developed a webinar series devoted to addressing issues of diversity relevant to family law work. Thus far, the Task Force has planned three free webinars, each of which includes a certificate of attendance. Each webinar is followed weeks later by small discussion groups facilitated by members of the DE&I Task Force.

The first webinar took place on March 11, 2021 and was entitled *Does Diversity Matter in Family Law?* During this webinar, which had 277 registrants, the panel discussed the challenges and nuances associated with cultural diversity in the family law arena.

During the hour-long webinar, the panel addressed the following four questions:

- What do we mean by cultural diversity?
- What are the advantages of a diverse professional community for those we serve?
- Are we responsible for looking beyond our interpersonal interactions and the walls of our agencies and institution to promote greater diversity, equity, and inclusion?
- And if so, how can this be accomplished?

Following the webinar on March 11, 2021, the DE&I Task Force hosted discussion groups on March 31, 2021 so that individuals could further discuss the above questions in small groups. AFCC members can access a recording of the first webinar [here](#). (All past webinars can be found on the [Webinar Archives page](#) of the Member Center tab on the AFCC website.)

Contents of the small group discussions

Several topics were discussed in the small discussion groups. Firstly, all discussion groups were free to discuss the four questions addressed by the panel on March 11, 2021. In addition to those questions, other areas relevant to diversity, equity, and inclusion were broached.

For example, discussants talked about the role of consultation when assigned cases involving families from cultures unfamiliar to the family law professional. Attendees also discussed the importance of approaching family law work with the understanding that families may be operating under cultural norms unfamiliar to the practitioner. Thus, to understand the family dynamics and communicate that to the court and better help the family feel understood, obtaining a professional consultation can be helpful.

Discussants also talked about diversity in the research literature and whether the literature reflects the diversity of families that may come in contact with the family law system.

Other topics of discussion included how to increase diversity within the family law field and possible reasons for the lack of diversity in the family law profession. Several possible explanations were discussed, such as the lack of promotion, in law schools, of careers in family law relative to other areas of the law. Regarding mental health professionals, discussants talked about the possibility that graduate students are not typically introduced to family law related work in graduate school. Thus, participants discussed the possibility of performing outreach efforts geared towards younger populations (e.g., graduate school students and possibly at earlier levels). Other topics of discussion included the possibility of creating a survey, etc., to assess a family's cultural identity before the start of an evaluation.

The DE&I Task Force hopes to continue the conversation with future programming that will be taking place. Currently, our future programming includes a webinar entitled *Risk Management and Culture - Why You Really Should Care about DE&I* which will take place on May 5, 2021. A discussion group based on the webinar will occur on May 19, 2021. Then, the DE&I Task Force will host a webinar entitled *Culture Specific Family Conflict: Case Applications* on July 7, 2021 with the discussion group to take place on July 21, 2021.

The Task Force hopes that this programming will encourage AFCC members to begin thinking about the role of diversity in the work that we do as mental health, legal, and dispute resolution professionals. The Task Force is committed to bringing our membership more programming and creating initiatives that bring lasting change and continued conversation to AFCC. Please be on the lookout for our future efforts!

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Chioma Ajoku, JD, PhD, ABPP, is a private practitioner in New York State and the owner of Forensic Psych Solutions. The focus of her practice is forensic evaluations and child/adolescent therapy. Dr. Ajoku graduated cum laude from Dartmouth College with a B.A. in Psychological and Brain Sciences. She then obtained a dual degree, M.A./J.D. (psychology/law), from Duke University and Duke University School of Law, and was admitted to the NYS Bar. She subsequently obtained her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from the CUNY Graduate Center via the John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Additionally, Dr. Ajoku completed her clinical internship year at Rutgers University in Piscataway as the Adolescent Forensic Track intern. Afterward, she completed a Child and Family Forensic Postdoctoral Fellowship at William James College. Dr. Ajoku is licensed to practice psychology in New York State. Currently, she serves on the Mental Health Professionals Certification Committee for the First and Second Judicial Departments of New York. She also serves on the AFCC Continuing Education Committee and is a member of the AFCC Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force.