



September 2022
VOL. 17 No.9

IN THIS ISSUE

- AFCC 15th Symposium on Child Custody
- Conversation Corner
- AFCC Training Programs
- Webinar Corner
- 60th Anniversary Conference - Call for Proposals
- Member News

15th Symposium on Child Custody

Association of Family and Conciliation Courts

15th Symposium on Child Custody

From a Full House to Parenting Apart
November 10-12, 2022



15th Symposium on Child Custody

Las Vegas, Nevada
November 10-12, 2022



Presenting Sponsor



From a Full House to Parenting Apart

November 10-12, 2022

Planet Hollywood Resort and Casino
Las Vegas, Nevada

Roll the dice with AFCC as we venture to Las Vegas for the 15th Symposium on Child Custody! The full [conference program brochure](#) is available.

Take advantage of intensive learning with an AFCC Pre-Symposium Institute

Choose from one of four full-day institutes:

1. When the Deck is Stacked: Sorting Stress from Trauma in Family Court
2. Playing Your Cards Right: Meaningful Integration of Test Data into a Parenting Plan Evaluation
3. Co-parent Coaching as Dispute Resolution
4. The ABC's and 123's of a Child Custody

AFCC Chapter Conferences

AFCC Florida Annual Conference
September 21-23, 2022
Orlando, FL

AFCC Utah Annual Conference

Reserve Your Hotel Room Today

The AFCC room block is sold out on Friday and Saturday, November 11-12, but you can still make a reservation at Planet Hollywood at the group rate Wednesday and Thursday and at prevailing rates thereafter. Rates can change at any time, so [make your reservation today](#).

Exhibitor Prospectus

Exhibitors at AFCC conferences enjoy the opportunity to reach hundreds of professionals dedicated to the resolution of family conflict. Your business could hit the jackpot, too! Exhibitor spots are given on a first-come-first-serve basis and there are only a couple of slots remaining. Sign up soon to reserve your spot! [Read the prospectus](#) and contact [Patrick Sommer](#) to sign up now.

[Register Now](#)

Conversation Corner

Justin and Alexis Black

Justin and Alexis Black are the cofounders of Redefining Normal, and co-authors of a book by the same title. Having grown up in the foster care system, Justin and Alexis have devoted their careers to supporting youth in foster care in a variety of ways, ranging from fundraising for access to education, building a sense of community, increasing awareness, and encouraging others to offer opportunities for youth in foster care to redefine normal and create positive outcomes. Justin holds a BA in Public Relations and African Studies. Alexis has a dual BBA in Entrepreneurial Studies and International Studies, a Certificate in Nonprofit Leadership, and a minor in Political Science Both are graduates of Western Michigan University.

AFCC: How did the two of you meet and start working together?

AB: We met in 2016, while we were both part of the Seita Scholar Program for foster youth in higher education. We met on Justin's first day in the program, during his freshman year. I was a junior. It was amazing how we connected and discovered quickly how well we work together. During our time in college, we traveled for study abroad 13 times (combined) and co-developed two programs. We got married in 2020, during the pandemic, and we had our first child recently, Maeva Rose Black.

AFCC: Your book includes many references to your personal journey through the foster care system. Why did you decide to share your own story?

AB: Our stories, and the way we have come together to

October 6-7, 2022
Salt Lake City, UT

**AFCC Ontario
Annual Conference**
October 13-14, 2022
Toronto, ON, Canada

**AFCC Illinois
Annual Conference**
October 20, 2022
Chicago, IL

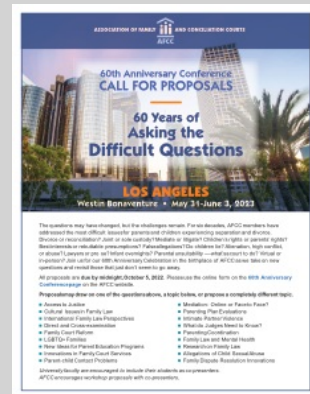
AFCC Colorado
October 28-29, 2022
Denver, CO / Virtual

**AFCC Texas
Annual Conference**
December 8-9, 2022
Austin, TX

**AFCC Arizona
Annual Conference**
January 20-22, 2023
Sedona, AZ

**AFCC California
Annual Conference**
February 10-12, 2023
Costa Mesa, CA

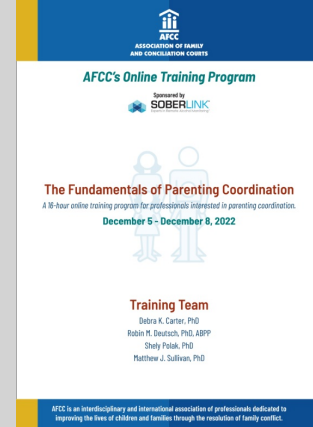
**60th Anniversary
Conference**
Call for Proposals



**AFCC Virtual Training
Programs**

redefine the path of our journey, are worth telling. We both grew up in the foster care system, largely because of unresolved family issues with mental illness and substance abuse. I was actually adopted when I was 26 years-old by the family I met when I was 17. They changed my views about marriage, love, and my whole identity. Justin and I wanted to share some of the lessons we have learned. The most important lesson is that you cannot do it alone. Some of our outcomes have been about being fortunate to find the support we have received; and some of it has been the willingness to accept the support; to embrace it.

[Continue Reading](#)



The Fundamentals of Parenting Coordination
December 5-8, 2022

Advanced Issues in Child Custody
January 17-19, 2023

The Fundamentals of Conducting Parenting Plan Evaluations
March 13-16, and
March 20-22, 2023

AFCC Training Programs

AFCC's Fundamentals of Parenting Coordination returns in December! Join AFCC for a 16-hour online training program for professionals interested in parenting coordination!

The Fundamentals of Parenting Coordination December 5-8, 2022

This comprehensive parenting coordination (PC) training is based on the 2019 AFCC Guidelines for Parenting Coordination and the Recommendations for Comprehensive Training of Parenting Coordinators. This program will include a comprehensive overview of the parenting coordination process, including definition of the role, responsibilities, and function of the parenting coordinator; an overview of family dynamics; specific PC strategies, techniques, and interventions; implications of intimate partner violence; cultural considerations; ethical issues; and use of technology.

Participants will learn about the parenting coordinator's scope of authority, strategies to help parents improve cooperation and communication, how to help clients utilize the process, and how to effectively write recommendations or decisions.

The **training team** includes:

- Debra K. Carter, PhD
- Robin M. Deutsch, PhD, ABPP
- Shely Polak, PhD
- Matthew J. Sullivan, PhD

[View the program brochure!](#)

[Register Now!](#)

More AFCC Training Programs Coming in 2023!

Advanced Issues in Child Custody

January 17-19, 2023

The Fundamentals of Conducting Parenting Plan Evaluations

March 13-16, and
March 20-22, 2023

Webinar Corner

DE&I Webinars

AFCC's DE&I series returns in October with another free webinar!

Engaging Cultural Differences and Communities in IPV Cases

Sujata Warriar, PhD

Tuesday, October 11, 2022

4:00pm-6:00pm Eastern Time US/Canada

This webinar will explore opportunities, challenges, and strategies for engaging cultural issues to create more culturally affirming spaces in IPV cases. The first part will provide a critical redefinition of the term using more current knowledge and debates. The second half will focus on skills necessary to engage survivors, children, families, and communities to change cultural norms around IPV.

Although this webinar is free to attend, you must register in advance to attend.

Registration closes October 10, 2022, at 9am Eastern Time US.

Sujata Warriar, PhD, is the Chief Strategy Officer for the Battered Women's Justice Project. She trains and provides technical assistance to professionals in various criminal justice systems. She has also trained extensively at the local, state, national and international levels on the issue of cultural competency for various professionals and has delivered numerous keynotes on the issue of culture, competency, relativism, and violence against women.



[Register now!](#)

Representing Children in International Cases

Melissa Kucinski, JD; James Netto

Tuesday, October 18, 2022

1:00pm – 2:00pm Eastern Time (US/Canada)

Registration will close on October 17, 2022 at 9:00am Eastern Time US/Canada.



This session will feature lawyers from the US and UK discussing how children are heard in international parental child abduction cases, the emerging issues of children having independent counsel in Hague Abduction cases, and policy considerations and best practices for working with children in these complex matters.

Melissa Kucinski, JD, works with lawyers across the globe handling the international aspects of family law cases. In addition to her law degree, Melissa obtained a Master's Degree from the American University School of International Service, focusing her studies on high conflict cross-cultural mediation and crisis negotiation. She consulted for the Hague Conference on Private International Law on a range of issues related to the Hague Child Abduction and Child Protection Conventions.



James Netto, is a Partner at The International Family Law Group LLP, London, United Kingdom. He specializes in all areas of children law, with expertise in international children matters. James is highly experienced in cases concerning the international movement of children and is regularly instructed by parents and children within the UK and abroad. He is the Chair of the UK's Child Abduction Lawyers Association, which recently provided an amicus brief to the US Supreme Court in the matter of *Golan v Saada*.



Registration

Members: \$15

Non-Members: \$50

Certificate of Attendance

Members: \$15

Non-members: \$20

[Register Now!](#)

More Upcoming Webinars!

Understanding Adults who Sexually Abuse Children

Dr. Graham Hill

November 16, 2022

Family Dispute Resolution Research

Marsha Kline Pruett, PhD, ABPP

December 13, 2022

Access to Justice/Family Dispute Resolution Services

Jeannie Sato, JD, Loren P. Hildebrandt, JD

January 11, 2023

Screening for Intimate Partner Violence

Beth McCormack, JD

February 8, 2023

Coping Abilities Children Need (And How to Ensure They Get Them)

Lyn Greenberg, PhD, ABPP

March 7, 2023

AFCC 60th Anniversary Conference

Call for Proposals

60 Years of Asking the Difficult Questions

May 31-June 3, 2023

Westin Bonaventure

Los Angeles, California

AFCC is accepting proposals for 90-minute workshop sessions. Read the [Call for Proposals](#) thoroughly for complete instructions. Proposals must be submitted using the [online form](#) by the deadline on **October 5, 2022**.

Proposed topics may include but are not limited to:

- Access to Justice
- Cultural Issues in Family Law
- International Family Law Perspectives
- Direct and Cross-examination
- Family Court Reform
- LGBTQ+ Families
- New Ideas for Parent Education Programs
- Innovations in Family Court Services
- Parent-child Contact Problems
- Parenting Plan Evaluations
- Intimate Partner Violence
- What do Judges Need to Know?
- Parenting Coordination
- Family Law and Mental Health
- Research on Family Law
- Allegations of Child Sexual Abuse
- Family Dispute Resolution Innovations



Submit Your Proposal

AFCC Member News

Rachel Birnbaum and Nicholas Bala, AFCC members from Ontario have recently published their research titled *Experience with Ontario's Parenting Plan Guide and Template*. This research project involved surveys and interviews with a total of 103 participants (lawyers, judges, mediators, mental health professionals, and parents) about their experiences with parenting plans and the AFCC-O materials. They found professionals and parents appreciate having access to the type of jurisdictionally specific resource materials prepared by multidisciplinary groups, and judges have made significant use of these materials.

Darren Mort, AFCC Member from Australia has been named Barrister of the Year at the 2022 Australian Law Awards while living a double life as an actor. Outside of his legal career, Darren has done a wide range of work in featured films, stage productions, musical theatre, television and training videos as an actor, producer, writer and director.



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:

[Ann Ordway, JD, PhD](#)

ASSOCIATE EDITOR:

[Patrick Sommer](#)



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

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Conversation Corner: Justin and Alexis Black

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JB: I also experienced seasons of homelessness. It made a big difference to be a part of a community of people who looked like me, and to have mentors, who offered support, and examples of what life could be. We wanted to let others who started out like us to know there is hope, and that they have more control over their own destiny than they might think. Being a part of a supportive community makes a

tremendous difference. We wanted to provide a roadmap of sorts for overcoming adversity and creating a new life – and sharing our stories is a big part of that.

AFCC: Once you made the decision to write about your experiences, what was the process like for you?

JB: We were inspired to write the book by our pastor and mentor. The title is based on regular conversation that happens when parents come together to create a family. Parents usually set the norm and then *normalize* things that are traumatic. The parents create what becomes the culture in the family, and they define what is *normal*.

We have made a conscious choice to learn from our journeys, but to not allow them to define us. We have decided to rewrite cultural values and to redefine *normal* in our lives. Through our belief in and support of each other, we have created a new path. Everyone has the power to do that – to set their own path.

The skills we have now are learned. We wanted to share the lessons we have learned with others who have had rough starts in life. The healing journey involves a relentless and intentional path. It is a choice to create a different life, to embrace support and community; and to not allow past wounds to bleed over into other areas of life- which it will if we don't address them.

AB: My adoptive parents allowed us to live with them so we could spend all day, every day, writing. We wrote the book and published it in 2020. After the book was finished, we decided to buy our first home. The loan officer we were introduced to happened to have read our book. Although we were denied from other institutions, our loan was approved the same day and we were able to move into a place of our very own two days before Christmas. That was one of the best things to come from *Redefining Normal*. The most important thing, however, has been the opportunity to make a difference.

AFCC: What are some of your other projects?

AB: There are a few examples of the work we have been doing. As of right now, we have a faith-based workbook and a youth-focused workbook. Each individual is invited to examine who they are foundationally, no matter race, sexual orientation, or other cultural identity. We all have to evaluate the messages that inform our actions and behaviors. Are the messages upon which we build our lives foundationally healthy or unhealthy? What do those messages mean and where do they come from? The workbook is a great opportunity for an individual to examine their journey and to self-reflect.

JB: Another example is ROSE Empowerment Group, which stands for *Rising Over Societal Expectations*. We do podcasts, which include conversations about themes with special guests. The name is based upon a poem – roses don't usually come from concrete – so it is about overcoming barriers and expectations. We break them down. We offer tools to develop a roadmap to approach adversity in a variety of different areas such as mental health, relationships, business, and more.

AFCC: What do you see as the most important takeaway for readers?

JB and AB: The most important takeaways will vary depending upon the reader. There are points to reflect on for those coming from the foster care system, and for those who might be in a position to offer support. Here are a few:

- Hyper-individualism is a sign of trauma. It comes from a lack of trust in others. The notion of “I will do it myself” is the quickest way to be unsuccessful and it is important to unlearn that way of thinking. To be successful, a person must be willing and vulnerable. We are meant to be in community to be healthy and happy. To redefine normal, a person must be willing to listen.

- It is important to establish boundaries with the ones who hurt us and to forgive them. Letting go of negative experiences and not allowing them to weigh us down, allows us to forge a new path and create a new normal.
- Encouragement for youth and for their parents does make a difference. Everyone can be a conduit of information; can create opportunities; and can help turn ideas into reality. Service to those around us can be our legacy. It makes us a part of a greater community, and draws in those who have never before known what community is.
- Everybody has a role in supporting kids coming up in the foster system. We can tutor, mentor, foster, or adopt. We can offer driving lessons, share meals, teach skills, and so much more. Ask: what we can offer? what is my role toward supporting these kids? Even a little bit can make a difference!
- We see the daunting statistics. So many kids who are in the foster care system experience homelessness, prison, sex trafficking, and significant challenges throughout their lifetime. If every person thinks about how they can contribute to changing a child's vision of self, those statistics might change. When someone's path is changed for the better because we took the time to see something in them; when we take the time to advise and guide, the vision can become a reality.