



August 2023
VOL. 18 No.8

IN THIS ISSUE

- AFCC-AAML Joint Conference
- Upcoming Webinars
- 2023 Fall Virtual Conference
- Online Training Programs
- FCR Going Digital
- AFCC 61st Annual Conference - CFP

AFCC-AAML Joint Conference

Advanced Issues in Child Custody: Evaluation, Litigation, and Settlement

Capital Hilton
Washington, DC
September 28-30, 2023

The **Association of Family and Conciliation Courts** and **American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers** have gathered several of the most renowned experts to lead a block of comprehensive institutes and a series of interactive sessions that delve into the advanced issues in child custody at our 2023 joint conference. **Register by August 31st for the best rates!**

Read the Conference Brochure

Plan ahead by checking out the conference brochure and tailor your conference schedule to your professional interests. In the brochure you will find the conference itinerary, session descriptions, conference presenters, and CE information. **Check it out now!**

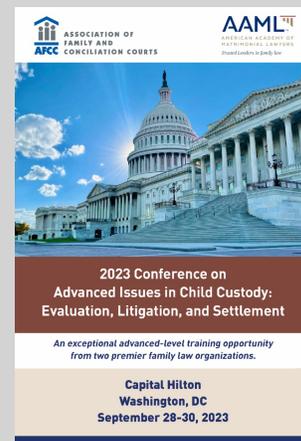
Pre-Conference Institutes

Looking for a more in-depth course? Check out one of our pre-conference institutes taking place the morning of September 28, 2023:

1. From Intake to Court
2. Profiles in Custody: Social Media and Family Law
3. Thinking about Stress, Trauma and Resilience in Children of Divorce: What Can You Do?
4. Advanced Ethical, Evidentiary, and

AFCC-AAML Joint Conference

Washington, DC
September 28-30, 2023



Diamond Sponsors



OurFamilyWizard



SOBERLINK

AFCC-AAML Exhibitors

Online Parenting Programs
USDTL
DivorcePlus
A Blank Canvas

Keynote Address: Understanding Adults Who Sexually Abuse Children

What makes adults who sexually abuse children think and act the way they do? For many, the answers to these questions are unimaginable but for judges, attorneys, and mental health professionals those answers are critical to the correct assessment of risk and defensible decision making. This presentation aims to dispel some of the common myths that surround the behavior of adult perpetrators and how predators become and remain predators.

This keynote address will be presented by Graham Hill, PhD who is an internationally recognized British Criminologist and subject matter expert in relation to the behavior of adults who sexually abuse children and men who abduct and murder children. Dr. Hill has given numerous presentations on this topic including an AFCC webinar from November 2022. View the recording of this webinar [here](#) in the AFCC webinar archives.

Reserve your room today!

The room block at the Capital Hilton is close to capacity, and sold out on Wednesday, September 28. AFCC has also secured an overflow block at the nearby Hilton Garden Inn Washington DC Downtown. [Reserve a room online.](#)

Become an Exhibitor

Sign up now to showcase your organization and connect with family law professionals! With an expected turnout of 350-400 attendees, this conference presents an excellent opportunity to promote your products and services to those who would benefit most from them. Read the [exhibitor prospectus](#) for more information and contact [Abby Rebholz](#) to sign up! There are only a couple of spots left so do not delay!

Early Bird Rates Ending Soon

The early bird rate for this conference ends on **August 31st, 2023**. Register on or before this take date to advantage of the best registration rates.

[Register Now!](#)

Post-Pandemic PPEs: Remote Evaluations and Returning to Normal

Kenneth B. Perlmutter, PhD

The world of parenting plan evaluations drastically pivoted in response to COVID-19 and vast systemic closures beginning in March of 2020. During this time, we discovered the viability of conducting parenting plan evaluations (PPEs) safely and reliably using videoconferencing (VC) and other remote technology. Milfred D. Dale and Dawn Smith addressed the use of new technologies in their article, "Making the

AFCC Fall Virtual Conference
November 1-3 & 6-7, 2023
Virtual

AFCC 61st Annual Conference
Call for Proposals



AFCC Chapter Conferences

AFCC Florida 19th Annual Advanced Education Program
October 4-6, 2023
Orlando, FL

AFCC New Jersey Coercive Control
October 10, 2023
Lincroft, NJ

AFCC Illinois Annual Conference
October, 19, 2023
Chicago, IL

AFCC Ontario Annual Conference
October 19-20, 2023
Toronto, ON

AFCC Colorado Fall Conference
October 20-21, 2023
Denver, CO

AFCC Indiana Annual Conference
October 27, 2023
McCordsville, IN

AFCC Arizona 41st Annual Conference
January 19 - 21, 2024
Sedona, AZ

AFCC California Annual Conference
February 2-4, 2024
San Francisco, CA

Case for Videoconferencing and Remote Child Custody Evaluations (RCCES): The Empirical, Ethical, and Evidentiary Arguments for Accepting New Technology,” (published in *Psychology, Public Policy and Law* in 2021) and evaluators adapted to find ways to provide necessary services during challenging times. [Continue reading.](#)

AFCC Washington
Spring Conference
April 19, 2024
Seattle, WA

Family Court Review Going Digital in 2024

AFCC’s quarterly journal, *Family Court Review*, will be disseminated exclusively in digital format beginning in January 2024. According to AFCC President Stacey Platt, “This reflects the AFCC Board’s desire to support efficient, effective, and environmentally friendly dissemination of FCR, enabling publication of a greater number of high quality articles on an ongoing basis. Articles will be posted for Early View as soon as they are ready rather than waiting for print production.”

The journal debuted in 1963 as a 10-page publication designed for judges and counselors in California’s Conciliation Courts. It evolved to a self-published publication comprised of reports from AFCC conference presentations, edited by Meyer Elkin, one of AFCC’s founders. In 1991, Sage Publications assumed responsibility for publication, bringing a truly professional production and dissemination to FCR. Co-editors Hugh McIsaac and Stanley Cohen shepherded FCR into this new era. In 1998, FCR editorial offices moved from McIsaac’s home office to Hofstra Law School, as Andrew Schepard became FCR editor-in-chief, bringing with him a law student editorial staff to edit and manage the journal. In 2005, AFCC moved FCR from Sage to Blackwell Publishing, which subsequently merged with Wiley, in a strategic effort to expand readership. As part of the agreement, FCR was posted online dating back to its very first volume. At the same time, a new position of social science editor was created and filled by Janet Johnston, lending interdisciplinary leadership to the journal. She was followed by Robert Emery, who was instrumental in the transition to a new editor-in-chief, Barbara Babb, in 2017. Marsha Kline Pruett followed Emery as social science editor in 2019.

Today, *Family Court Review* is the world’s #1 ranked family and juvenile law journal, according to the Washington & Less Law Journal Rankings. Since 2005, AFCC readership has expanded beyond AFCC membership from fewer than 150 print subscriptions to access by nearly 6,500 institutions worldwide, with more than 160,000 online article views annually.

Access the FCR Online!

Starting January 2024, AFCC members will be notified when new volumes are released. All FCR articles will be posted to the FCR archives which can be accessed via the member center on the AFCC [website](#). There you can read any new articles or previous articles you may have missed.



Make sure to [sign up for alerts](#) for when a new article is published in FCR which will allow you to stay up to date on the latest research.

Webinar Corner

Culture and Bias in the Child Welfare System

Kelly Browe Olson, JD, LLM & Nolanda Robert MS, CCFC

Thursday, September 14, 2023

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

Registration will close on September 13th, 2023 at 9:00am Eastern Time US/Canada.

Families in the child welfare system tend to struggle with addiction and poverty and are thrown into further crisis, instead of being helped by a system that is meant to decrease crises. Are there best practices for dealing with cultural biases in child welfare? What are the main problems that staff and families face systemically? Are there biases that families and professionals face in the child welfare system, and are there additional barriers that families of color deal with when trying to navigate the system? Finally, how can we help families and professionals decrease cultural biases while improving system inequities.



Kelly Browe Olson, JD, LLM is an Associate Professor and Mediation Clinic Director at the UA Little Rock Bowen School of Law. She teaches Mediation, Negotiation and Family Law courses. She oversees a state-wide Special Education mediation project. She serves on the Arkansas Parent Counsel and Access to Justice Commissions. She is a frequent national speaker, training judges, lawyers, mediators and other professionals about conflict resolution, communication, and family related legal issues. She has degrees from Marquette University, the University of Michigan Law School and Loyola University Chicago, School of Law.



Nolanda Robert, MS, CCFC is the Family Support Services Coordinator at the Cecil County Circuit Court in Maryland and has served in this position since 2005. In her position as Coordinator, she provides services to court-involved families, including those having parenting plan disputes, with domestic violence dynamics, and involved in child protection services matters. She is a mediator, parent coordinator, and a clinically certified forensic counselor. Nolanda is the President of the Maryland Chapter of the AFCC, and the co-chair of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity Committee.



Registration

Members: \$15

Non-Members: \$50

Certificate of Attendance

Members: \$15

Non-members: \$20

[Register Now!](#)

AFCC DE&I Webinar Series

The Intersection of Family Court, Religion, and Tradition

Leah R. Younger, PsyD & Darrin W. Gerson, PsyD

Wednesday, October 11, 2023

4:00pm-6:00pm Eastern Time (US & Canada)

Registration closes October 10, 2023, at 9am Eastern Time US

Registration is free, but you must register in order to receive the link to join the webinar.

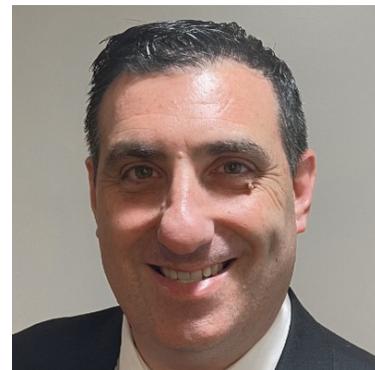
Family law professionals bring a unique set of biases and opinions to their work. Personal

backgrounds and experiences inform how clients, their families, and their traditions are viewed - as well with the actual work professionals provide. In this webinar, the presenters will discuss the various religious and cultural issues that often present for family law professionals. They will also share the numerous experiences they have had when working with clients of various religious backgrounds, and with the intersection of religion and cultural traditions. Attendees will have the opportunity to increase their awareness of variations and nuances that have implications for parenting plans, agreements between parents, and court orders. The presenters will review how their interventions have been informed to meet the needs of their clients.

Leah R. Younger, PsyD, is a licensed psychologist in New York State. After working in elementary schools and child inpatient settings, Dr. Younger obtained postdoctoral training and has been practicing in the fields of child and forensic psychology since. In her current role as Clinical Director of Younger Psychology, Dr. Younger provides a wide range of child and divorce-related services. These include performing assessments and therapeutic interventions with diverse populations of children, adults, and families. Dr. Younger also provides trial consultation services, including testifying as an expert witness and conducting peer review. Dr. Younger performs these functions for families involved in Family and Supreme Courts of Nassau County, Richmond County, Kings County, Queens County, and New York County.



Darrin W. Gerson, PsyD, a clinician at Younger Psychology, Dr. Gerson is a New York State licensed psychologist with extensive experience working with children, adolescents, and adults in a host of settings including inpatient, residential, and outpatient facilities. He is currently the Chief of Service at Creedmoor Psychiatric Center. Dr. Gerson conducts psychological evaluations across Long Island and New York City for parties including DSS/ACS, OCFS, Family Court and Supreme Court, and has provided a range of other assessments, including focused diagnostic evaluations and in-depth evaluations of competency and risk assessment.



[Register Now!](#)

More Upcoming Webinars!

What Works (and What Doesn't) for Kids and Adults in "Blended Families"

Patricia Papernow, EdD

October 18, 2023

Affirmative Practice with LGBTQ+ Clients and Family Members

Allan Barsky, MSW, JD, PhD

December 11, 2023

[See All Upcoming Webinars!](#)



AFCC Fall 2023 Virtual Conference

**Addiction, Family Violence and Mental Illness:
Assessing and Managing Challenges to Contemporary Co-parenting**
November 1-3 and 6-7, 2023

In response to popular demand, AFCC is presenting the Fall 2023 Conference virtually! This conference features two pre-conference institutes, 20 workshops, an opening session, and a plenary session. All workshops and general sessions will be recorded and made available to all registrants live and following the conference! This means that if you are unable to attend a workshop due to a scheduling conflict, you can watch it later to benefit from the sessions you missed.

The complete conference [brochure](#) is now available. Check out everything we have in store for you including workshop information, presenters, times/agenda, and CE information.

Members Outside of North America Register for Free!

In recognition of time zone limitations, all AFCC members who reside outside of North America may register for the conference at no charge and may attend the live sessions and also have access all conference recordings. Use the [online form](#) to register.

Apply for a Scholarship

There will be a few scholarships available for this conference. AFCC encourages students and newer professionals to apply to attend this conference for free. [Apply online](#) - the application deadline is September 19, 2023.

Online Training Programs

AFCC online training programs will be returning this winter with three excellent courses.

The Fundamentals of Parenting Coordination

December 4-7, 2023

This comprehensive parenting coordination (PC) training is based on the 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.

AFCC's Online Training Program
 Sponsored by **SOBERLINK**

The Fundamentals of Parenting Coordination
 A 8-hour online training program for professionals interested in parenting coordination.
December 4 - December 7, 2023

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

AFCC is an interdisciplinary and cross-sectional association of professionals dedicated to improving families of children and families through the resolution of family conflict.

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.

Presenters:

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

The [program brochure](#) is now available and registration will open soon!

Advanced Issues for Family Law and Dispute Resolution Professionals

January 16-18, 2024

This year's advanced issues training will feature several new topics, including a new two-part program on court involved therapy presented by Matthew Sullivan, PhD and Lyn Greenberg, PhD, ABPP. Stay tuned for more information.

The Fundamentals of Conducting Parenting Plan Evaluations

March 11-14, 2024 and March 18-20, 2024

AFCC 61st Annual Conference - Call for Proposals

AFCC is now accepting 90-minute workshop proposals for our upcoming 61st Annual Conference in Boston.

AFCC 61st Annual Conference

June 5-8, 2024

Boston, Massachusetts

Proposals may draw on one of the topics below or introduce a completely different topic.

Conference topics may include:

- Trans Youth in Separating Families
- Individualized Parenting Plans for Multiple Siblings
- Transgender Parenthood
- Transnational Families
- Assisted Reproduction Technologies
- LGBTQ+ Families
- New Ideas for Parent Education Programs
- Innovations in Family Court Services
- Parent-child Contact Problems
- Digital Family Law
- Relocation
- Intimate Partner Violence
- International Family Law
- Stepfamily Transitions

ASSOCIATION OF FAMILY AND CONCILIATION COURTS
AFCC

AFCC 61st Annual Conference
Coping with Transition: Individual, Family, and Beyond

BOSTON
 Massachusetts
 Sheraton Boston Hotel • JUNE 5-8, 2024

The work of family law, mental health, and dispute resolution professionals is endlessly impacted by transition on an individual, family, and community level. These include the transition from an intact family to one that lives in two homes, children's transition between developmental stages, transitioning gender, transitioning to new roles, processes and professional roles, transitioning in or out of a career, moving, which requires a transition between communication and parenting time plans, and transitioning to new relationships, marriages, and new family forms. Join AFCC to explore the wide of transition in and out of our work.

All proposals are due by **11:00pm Eastern Daylight Time (EDT), October 2, 2023**. Please use the online form on the 61st Annual Conference page on the AFCC website.

Proposals may draw on one of the themes above, a topic below, or propose a completely different topic. Topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Trans Youth in Separating Families
- Individualized Parenting Plans for Multiple Siblings
- Transgender Parenthood
- Transnational Families
- Assisted Reproduction Technologies
- LGBTQ+ Families
- New Ideas for Parent Education Programs
- Innovations in Family Court Services
- Parent-child Contact Problems
- Digital Family Law
- Relocation
- Intimate Partner Violence
- International Family Law
- Stepfamily Transitions
- Digital Family Law
- Relocation
- Intimate Partner Violence
- International Family Law
- Stepfamily Transitions
- Parenting Coordination
- Family Law and Mental Health
- Empirical Methods in Family Law Research
- Allegations of Child Sexual Abuse
- Family Dispute Resolution Techniques

AFCC is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization. All proposals are subject to review and approval by the AFCC. AFCC reserves the right to accept or reject any proposal at its discretion. AFCC reserves the right to accept or reject any proposal at its discretion.

- Parenting Coordination
- Family Law and Mental Health
- Empirical Methods in Family Law Research
- Allegations of Child Sexual Abuse
- Family Dispute Resolution Innovations

All proposals are due by 11:00pm Eastern Daylight Time (USA), October 2, 2023. Please see the [Call for Proposals](#) for more information and use the [online form](#) to submit your application.

AFCC Member News

Dianna Gould-Saltman, AFCC member from California was awarded the 2023 Spencer Brandeis Award. This Award is presented to individuals who have had an extraordinary impact upon the advancement of family law by way of creative legal advocacy and commitment to the service of the family law community. It is the highest honor bestowed by the Los Angeles County Bar Association Family Law Section. Congratulations, Dianna.



Susan Guthrie, AFCC member from Illinois, was recently elected as Chair Elect of the ABA Section of Dispute Resolution. Susan's position will help to bolster the leadership of this section of the ABA which seeks to provide accessible, relevant and cutting-edge information, practice tips, and skill-building opportunities to ABA members. Congratulations, Susan.



Archana Medhekar, AFCC member from Ontario was awarded the Top 25 Canadian Immigrant Award. This award highlights inspiring stories of immigrants in Canada. Read her inspiring story [here](#). Congratulations, Archana!



In other member news, AFCC members from around the world came together to form an international research project on interventions in co-parenting crisis titled "New Orientations in Justice for Families of the 21st Century Families."

The theme of this project, "New orientations in justice for families of the 21st century", responds to the need to identify new solutions to the challenges presented by families and the protection of the rights of children and adolescents in situations of high conflict, after a couple breakup. The negative impact of children's exposure to interparental conflict is well established and jurisdictions seek tools to protect these children and adolescents. In addition, there are more and more international contentious cases in which the parents reside in different countries and require special attention.

AFCC members involved in this project included:

- **Debra Carter, PhD**, Florida
- **Michael Saini, PhD**, Ontario
- **Dominic D'Abate, PhD**, Montreal
- **Shely Polak, PhD**, Ontario
- **Connie Capdevila Brophy**, Spain

Click [here](#) to read the conclusions of this project.

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](#)

[Problems viewing this email? View in your browser.](#)



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

[Unsubscribe psalem@afccnet.org](mailto:unsubscribe_psalem@afccnet.org)

[Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)

Sent by afcc@afccnet.org powered by



Try email marketing for free today!



August 2023
Vol. 18 No. 8

Post-Pandemic PPEs: Remote Evaluations and Returning to Normal

Kenneth B. Perlmutter, PhD

The world of parenting plan evaluations drastically pivoted in response to COVID-19 and vast systemic closures beginning in March of 2020. During this time, we discovered the viability of conducting parenting plan evaluations (PPEs) safely and reliably using videoconferencing (VC) and other remote technology. Milfred D. Dale and Dawn Smith addressed the use of new technologies in their article, “Making the Case for Videoconferencing and Remote Child Custody Evaluations (RCCES): The Empirical, Ethical, and Evidentiary Arguments for Accepting New Technology,” (published in *Psychology, Public Policy and Law* in 2021) and evaluators adapted to find ways to provide necessary services during challenging times.

A Series of Surveys

Through a series of surveys posed to California mental health professionals conducting PPEs, the author collected informal feedback about their implementation of technology and new methods into their processes. Through an initial survey, PPEs were asked how they were incorporating technology in response to the pandemic, and what they were learning as a result. About a year later, in 2021, a second survey collected thoughts about the effectiveness, and possible limitations, of the VC PPE methods and outcomes, and to obtain more information about how results were received and implemented by decision-makers in the court systems. Finally, in 2022, a third survey sought to understand current work methods utilized by PPEs, comparing the work process pre-pandemic with early post-pandemic approaches. While the information collected is anecdotal in nature, it lends insight into the role of technology for practice during the pandemic and how that impact has lingered and evolved.

First Survey

The initial survey asked relatively simple questions regarding the number of PPEs conducted in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic, compared to immediately preceding, and plans for returning to the office setting.

There were four key themes:

- 1) The overall number of PPE was substantially lower than during a similar time period pre-COVID.
- 2) Evaluators wholeheartedly embraced the remote videoconferencing techniques.
- 3) Evaluators planned to continue to use the remote techniques.
- 4) Approximately one-fifth of the evaluators had returned to the office using in-person meetings, just over half were using a hybrid approach using in person meetings together with remote techniques, and one-quarter had not returned to in-person work, and planned to use only VC methods until there was a vaccine and clear path to safety.

Overall, forensic practitioners who participated responded that they used the crisis as an opportunity for significant and positive change as to how we do our work and how we can best assist the populations we serve.

Second Survey

The goal of the second survey was to learn more about the perceived effectiveness, and possible limitations, of the VC CCE methods and outcomes, and to gain insight as to how those outcomes were being received and utilized within the courts. The second survey sought information about the number of remote PPEs started and completed from about March 2020 through summer of 2021. Eight California Bay Area practitioners who completed the survey agreed to be interviewed telephonically to answer follow-up questions.

There were five key themes from the second stage of this project:

- 1) The number of evaluations had increased substantially.
- 2) All evaluators believed that the remote CCE process worked well for the families, and decreased parents' anxiety about their interviews.
- 3) The final reports and findings were well received by attorneys, and PPEs believed that the attorneys were less likely to challenge the findings and more likely to resolve their matters.
- 4) The evaluators participated in fewer trials than they had pre-pandemic, and those trials were conducted by video conference, with no personal appearances. Evaluators who participated in video conference trials (and depositions) found those experiences positive and to some extent easier than when done in person.
- 5) The hybrid model was used by all evaluators. The most common process was to complete individual interviews with videoconference methods (on a secure platform) and to conduct parent-child interviews and observations in person. These in person methods occurred at parks near parents' homes, in their backyards, and some inside the homes. The hybrid model was uniformly embraced by evaluators not only as the preferred modality (as compared to conducting in office, but masked, interviews) but the one they believed allowed them to have most confidence in their work. All evaluators used a variety of

COVID-19 protocols in all settings. These included having parents complete Covid Health Questionnaires (similar to those one would complete at a physician's office) in advance of in-person interviews and home visits; using social distancing and masks; increased screening for vaccination status (including disclosing their own); and conducting in-person interviews only with adults who had been vaccinated.

Those who participated in the survey did not reveal a clear or uniform plan for evaluators to return to their offices. The evaluators' comments suggested a great deal of trepidation, likely due to the fact that during the period when they replied, the pandemic went from easing (May of 2021) to worsening (July of 2021) due to the then-new Beta variant. By the end of the summer, three of the evaluators stated they had stopped taking new cases, and two of whom said they would cease doing evaluations completely. However, a majority of evaluators indicated that the pandemic did not dissuade them from continuing their work. They were committed to continuing the hybrid model and figuring out how to do their work in a safe and sure manner that would yield accurate, valid, and reliable data. While a few evaluators had suspended their work, the majority chose a middle ground and continued to complete evaluations or begin new ones using a variety of methods.

It was clear that this was not work for the faint of heart and required great attention to detail, rigorous application of consistent methodologies, and a willingness to examine all that one does in order to be assured of the reliability and validity of the final work product. Further, at that time there were no best practices guidelines to apply to the use of these new methods. This concern has been corrected with AFCC's new *Guidelines for Parenting Plan Evaluations in Family Law Cases*, which includes a section on virtual evaluations.

Third Survey

The final survey was disseminated in Fall of 2021 and was designed to take a look at more current practices. Interestingly, most responding practitioners indicated that with the incorporation of hybrid methods for conducting evaluations, the amount of time it took to conduct the evaluations increased, or was about the same as before the pandemic protocols were implemented. The survey also asked about methods used to protect against the transmission of COVID-19, including the use of health and vaccine questionnaires, and the requirement for masking. Respondents were also asked about their methodology for interviewing, including variations for seeing children and meeting with parents together or separately.

Evaluators who returned to in-office practice reported being vigilant in protecting against COVID-19 transmission. Few reported requiring their clients to be immunized before allowing in-office meetings. The majority of respondents reported continued use of remote technology for conducting interviews. Those who used a hybrid model largely reported continued use of technology for remote interviews.

Several thoughts came from this final, modest survey.

- 1) This highly experienced group of evaluators were making full use of the virtual/remote CCE methods that they had never used before the pandemic.
- 2) There were definite signs that the majority were making a return to the office using the hybrid approach.
- 3) After what seemed to be a drastic decline in the number of evaluations conducted in 2020, the number of evaluations starting in 2021 seemed to be more comparable to the numbers reported in 2017-2019 - and those PPEs were being completed in less or the same amount of time compared to 2017-2019.

Finally, the feedback clearly indicates that the respondents using these virtual methods found them to be useful methods for use to conduct PPEs. Thus, not only have they embraced the new technology, they found that evaluations so conducted could be of service to the families they evaluated.

Conclusion:

In 2023 both the informal, collected feedback and anecdotal evidence suggest that many evaluators have returned to the office and that the majority of them plan to augment or have augmented their practices with these new videoconference methods. Clearly this is a remarkable change and development none could have seen in 2019. Dr. Dale and Ms. Smith appear to have been on point when they optimistically looked at MHPs embracing the R-CCE methods and indicated the pandemic has “temporarily and permanently changed the landscape of mental health service delivery, including the conduct of child custody evaluations.” They showed great insight when they suggested that “the child custody community-for example, courts, attorneys, evaluators, and families-should accept RCCEs as a valid alternative that, when properly done, can help resolve custody disputes.” There is no doubt our field has been positively and irrevocably changed.

This article is adapted with permission from an article by the author for the Newsletter published by the California Chapter of AFCC

Ken Perlmutter, PhD has worked as a licensed psychologist practicing clinical and forensic psychology in Palo Alto for forty years. He serves children, parents and the courts conducting comprehensive Child Custody Evaluations (CCE) and Brief Focused Assessments (BFA). He has extensive experience serving as Parenting Coordinator, Custody Mediator (both confidential and recommending), and Co-Parent Counselor. A significant part of his current practice involves consulting with attorneys both as a confidential consultant and as a disclosed work product reviewer providing expert testimony. He has written articles, presented at workshops and taught professionals (mental health, attorneys, judges) for many years. Since 2010, he has promulgated the practice of BFAs. Since 2020, he has written and presented on the practice of Remote-Child Custody Evaluations.



Conclusions of the International Research Project on interventions in coparenting crisis. "New orientations in justice for families of the 21st century families" (June 2022-June 2023).

Please note this document was translated from its native language so the summary below may differ from the author's original thoughts and conclusions. Please see the [original document](#) for a more accurate summary.

1) **Understanding Complex Family Dynamics**

Divorce and separation are considered the most stressful life events after the death of a loved one. The judicialization of these conflicts tends to have an emotional impact on all family members, especially minors in adversarial processes. Statistics show that in 10-15% of couple breakups the parents continue to be involved in conflictive co-parenting beyond the first two years. In this context, it is common for children to get involved in this confrontation, which generates behavioral problems, not only in the short term, but also throughout their lives. Sequels have been detected both in physical and emotional health, in the sphere of their academic performance, in their social relationships and in their system of ethical values. When these conflicts occur between parents who live in distant towns or in different countries, the risk of losing intrafamily contact is much greater. Understanding these problems and family dynamics that produce them requires a systemic vision of the family from the psychological and educational point of view. The jurisdictional simplification that tends to the dichotomy of guilt and innocence is notoriously wrong and inappropriate. The warmongering position that is sometimes adopted by the professionals who advise the parties in these processes contributes to aggravating the problem.

2) **Public Policies to Promote Co-Parental Responsibility**

Society has become aware in recent years of the benefits of co-parenting, but its exercise is not easy to perform; The problems generally arise from the confrontational dynamics between the parents that are common after breakups. For this reason, it is essential to implement public prevention policies in different cultural environments. The promotion of mutual respect, the implementation of equality between men and women, equal participation in the tasks of caring for sons and daughters, the interdiction of violence and the promotion of family mediation in the initial phase of breakups. The culture of consensus regarding shared parental responsibility, in the face of the tendency to confrontation to obtain custody, guarantees that children and adolescents do not suffer a negative and pernicious impact in the separation and divorce processes.

3) **Need for Professional Specialization in Family Conflicts and to Generalize the Use of Multidisciplinary Work**

In order for all countries to offer efficient and effective family justice, protecting the best interests of the people who are directly or indirectly involved in the high level of conflict, two essential conditions are required: that the competent courts have an adequate structure, that is, that the judges who preside over them have the technical support of a multidisciplinary team and that both legal operators and professionals in psychology, social work, education or pediatrics who provide technical assistance to the courts have received specialized theoretical training in the matters that are typical of this type of conflict and a proven experience in working with families, minors or people who suffer from some type of disability.

4) **Adaptation of Procedural Mechanisms for the Effectiveness of Judicial Intervention in Cases of High Conflict**

The legal institutions of family and personal law typical of the Anglo-Saxon system pay special attention to the psychosocial and care dimensions of marital breakdowns. Court procedures are more flexible and traditionally include interventions such as mediation, until recently alien to our culture. Probably the reason is due to the scarce divorce tradition in most of the countries of the Ibero-American area. With the insertion of divorce, procedural institutions more typical of economic and patrimonial law, and even criminal law (in cases of violence or abuse) were chosen. These cases, especially when the legal mandate to ensure the best interest of the minor must be fulfilled, require unique principles typical of the family specialty. The specialized doctrine highlights four key ideas: (a) instrumentality, taking into account fundamentally that the purpose of the prosecution is peculiar since there are no winners or losers in the process, but that the jurisdictional activity is aimed at establishing standards of conduct and rules towards the future; (b) contextualization, that is, the principle of *res judicata* or the estoppel of procedural phases does not govern and, on the contrary, it must be formally adaptable to the circumstances. The psycho-emotional evolution of children and adolescents means that, when the judicial decision is pronounced, on many occasions their problems have worsened compared to the initial moment of the process (the "*edictio actionis*") and their needs may have changed; and (c) speed and promptness in judicial intervention are essential to prevent the escalation of the conflict, and that the true causes of non-compliance be investigated; (d) when there are indications of relevant problems, the appropriate support measures must be established for the correct execution of judicial resolutions with instruments as valuable as parenting coordination to prevent future escalations of conflicts.

5) **Parenting Coordination: A Complex Tool, Proven Effective in Common Law**

The right of all people to know their origins and to maintain healthy relationships with their parents, especially in childhood and adolescence, is of a natural nature

and for this reason it is included in all international texts. It is not a legal principle, but also belongs to the field of the right to health, to physical and mental integrity and to develop one's own personality freely and without suffering psychological traumas that prevent a peaceful existence free of conflicts. The increase in high levels of conflict in maternal and paternal-filial relationships that frequently occurs before the courts is the consequence of ruptures and divorces that were poorly managed in their origin, or in their subsequent development.

For these reasons, a specific method of judicial intervention is needed whose objectives are to reduce the level of conflict and to work on the causes with the entire family group in order to establish a co-parenting plan adapted to each case. For this purpose, judges need to have specialists in this problem.

6) Insufficiency of Coercive Sanctions, Mediation, and Supervised Exchange Locations

The appearance of these problems is due to a multitude of factors, which is why they are useless. generic recipes or rigid intervention models. Each minor is a world and each case is different. The legal provisions inspired by the traditional mechanisms of the execution of the obligations to do, are inoperative: coercive fines aggravate the problems⁴ and warnings of proceeding with the change of custodial parent as advocated by those who appeal to SAP⁵ are extremely detrimental to the stability of the minors. It is essential to listen to the reasons given by these people, even when they are under twelve years of age, in order to understand the underlying problems. To prevent this problem, there are already in many countries with mediation services, or with specialized centers that favor contacts peaceful, such as family meeting points or parenting offices in Brazil. But mediation, voluntary and confidential, is located before or at the beginning of the process judicial; and the meeting points have another role of supervision and control does not contemplate more complex psychosocial interventions.

7) Distinction of Parenting Coordination from Other Methods of Intervention

To the extent that progress is being made in a more humanist practice of law, initiatives have been emerging that represent great advances in the role of justice in society. One of them is the so-called "therapeutic justice" that arose in the US under the influence of behavioral psychology in the field of courts that judge crimes related to addictions to alcohol, drugs and other narcotics. Its function is to connect the punitive measures of the courts with the curative treatments, in such a way that both act as positive reinforcements. These experiences have been used in family conflicts for the prevention and management of intrafamily violence, especially in adolescents and adults. Also, "restorative justice" is

sometimes aimed at family conflicts when the intervention focuses on the perspective and needs of the victim.

8) **Characteristics of Parenting Coordination and the Need to Guarantee the Judicial Oversight of the Parenting Coordination Process to Establish Clear Standards of Practice to Monitor Quality Control of the Process and Adherence to Applicable Laws and Rules**

Among the main characteristics of parenting coordination, the following should be highlighted: (a) That these are cases that have already been prosecuted in which a resolution has been issued, or an agreed agreement is in force to regulate the parental and maternal child relations of the breakups or divorces. (b) That judicial resolutions have been repeatedly breached. (c) That other measures have been tried that have not given positive results or have been insufficient. (d) That the intervention has been decided by a court at the request of one or both parties, by the ombudsman for minors, the technical teams or the prosecutor's office. (e) Due to the status of "assistant of the judge" of the person who performs the intervention, the designation must fall on suitable professionals. His appointment compromises the prestige of the justice administration itself. Whatever the form of selection⁶, it is essential and necessary for there to be a public "observatory", linked to the judicial sector to guarantee the excellence of the professionals, the adequate provision of the service, and the prevention of malpractice in these interventions. Unfortunately, we have experience in the implementation of family mediation which, in some countries, has been promoted with great impetus with mandatory pre-trial systems and has become just another bureaucratic process, with little efficiency with respect to reaching agreements.

9) **Appeal to International Organizations and States for the Implementation of Parenting Coordination**

The reception of this new psychosocial resource, which is operating in the area of "common-law" for years successfully, presents in traditional countries "code-civil", mainly in continental Europe and Latin America, the absence of a legal-procedural regulation. The protocols articulated with the collaboration of the judiciary, the legal profession and the competent professional sectors has its advantages in regarding the adaptability to each place, but also its drawbacks, due to the gaps regulatory. Consequently, it is necessary that, from international organizations that have among their objectives the protection of children and the family, guidelines are issued that provide legal certainty to these interventions. Similarly, it is necessary that these conclusions be raised to the highest judicial magistracies of the countries of the Ibero-American Area, to the Judicial Schools and Academies and to the ministries of Justice and the family so that the pertinent legislative measures are adopted.