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President's Message



This is my final AFCC President's Message before I turn the gavel over to my wonderful and capable successor, Professor Stacey Platt. I want to thank all AFCC members for your support and encouragement over the past year as we slowly move from the days filled with COVID

apprehension toward what I hope will ultimately be a long period of health and prosperity for all. [Continue Reading.](#)

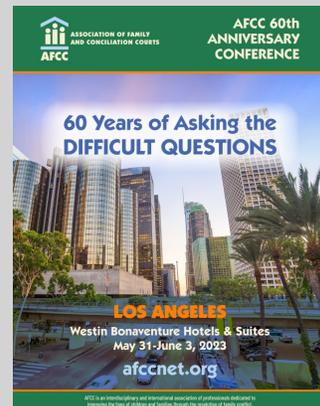
AFCC 60th Anniversary Conference

60 Years of Asking the Difficult Questions

May 31-June 3, 2023
Westin Bonaventure
Los Angeles, California

Join us as we celebrate 60 years of AFCC in the birthplace of AFCC. [Register now!](#)

60th Anniversary Conference
May 31-June 3, 2023
Los Angeles, California



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Read the Conference Brochure!

See what we have in store for this conference! The conference [brochure](#) provides a complete breakdown including pre-conference institutes, workshops, presenters, schedule, CE information, and registration information. Peruse the [schedule](#) and [register](#) soon.

Pre-Conference Institutes

Interested in a more in-depth learning experience? Sign up for one of six pre-conference institutes. These full day sessions take place May 31, 2023 and provide a more comprehensive learning experience. [Learn more.](#)

Plenary Session

Resolving parenting time disputes has evolved over the last 60 years into a complex process that requires professionals to possess a nuanced understanding of many facets. This plenary session will feature an expert panel moderated by Robert Emery, PhD. Panelists will engage in lively conversation to examine the many difficult questions that have emerged over six decades of family law. [Panel Information.](#)

Exhibit, Sponsor, and Advertise

If your business caters to the needs of family law professionals, please consider exhibiting with us in Los Angeles! Confirming early lets you take advantage of lower prices, secure a better table location, and more. Read the [exhibitor prospectus](#) for more details and contact [Abby Rebholz](#) to sign up. There are only a few exhibitor slots remaining so do not delay!

Reserve Your Room Today!

Book your room early at the Westin Bonaventure Los Angeles today. You can make your reservations [online](#) or over the phone by calling 800-937-8461 or 888-627-8520. Do not delay as AFCC room blocks frequently sell out.

Silent Auction

After a three-year hiatus, the AFCC silent auction returns to the 60th Anniversary Conference. The auction will take place on Friday night of the conference. The proceeds raised from the auction help fund essential AFCC projects and initiatives. Donations are appreciated! To donate an item to the Silent Auction, please contact Abby Rebholz at 608-664-3750 or arebholz@afccnet.org or complete the [online form](#).

[Register Now!](#)



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AFCC-AAML Joint Conference
Washington, DC
September 28-30, 2023

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

AFCC Chapter Conferences

AFCC Colorado Spring Conference
April 28 & 29, 2023
Denver, CO

AFCC Utah 2nd Southern Utah Symposium
April 28, 2023
Washington, UT

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

Ask The Experts: Ten Tips for Honoring Pronouns and Identity

Rebecca M. Stahl, JD, LLM

Cisgender heteronormative structures have permeated family law. However, as these norms shift, it is critical for professionals to become familiar with the current and more expansive language used to describe transgender and nonbinary people. Pronouns, traditionally aligned with binary categories of gender, have also become more expansive, inclusive, and a very personal aspect of identity. As we strive to be more trauma-responsive professionals, it is important to be open to learning language and its meaning to create and maintain more welcoming environments for the families we serve. [Continue Reading.](#)

AFCC Fall 2023 Virtual Conference

November 1-3 and 6-7, 2023

AFCC Fall 2023 Virtual Conference Call for Proposals

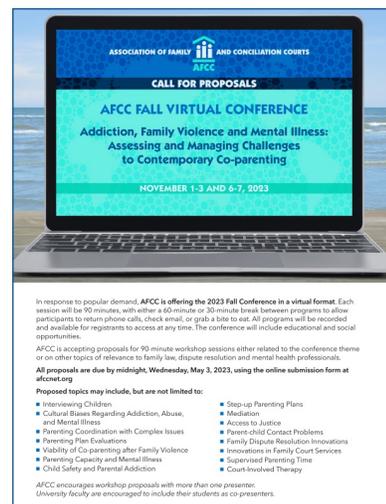
Addiction, Family Violence, and Mental Illness: Assessing and Managing Challenges to Contemporary Co-parenting

November 1-3 and 6-7, 2023

In response to popular demand, AFCC is offering the 2023 Fall Conference in a virtual format. If you'd like to present at an AFCC conference from the comfort of your home or office, **we are accepting proposals for 90-minute workshop sessions.** See the [Call for Proposals](#) for complete instructions. Proposals must be submitted using the [online form](#) by the deadline on **Wednesday, May 3, 2023 by midnight (Pacific).**

Proposed topics may include but are not limited to:

- Interviewing Children
- Cultural Biases Regarding Addiction, Abuse, and Mental Illness
- Parenting Coordination with Complex Issues
- Parenting Plan Evaluations
- Viability of Co-parenting after Family Violence
- Parenting Capacity and Mental Illness
- Child Safety and Parental Addiction
- Step-up Parenting Plans
- Mediation
- Access to Justice
- Parent-child Contact Problems
- Family Dispute Resolution Innovations
- Innovations in Family Court Services
- Supervised Parenting Time
- Court-Involved Therapy



AFCC strongly encourages workshop proposals with more than one presenter and including presenters representing diverse perspectives. University faculty members are encouraged to involve students as co-presenters.

The deadline to submit your proposal is Wednesday, May 3, 2023 by midnight (Pacific).

You will be notified of the status of your proposal by mid-June 2023.

[Submit Your Proposal](#)

Webinar Corner

The Impact of Intimate Partner Violence on Young Children

Kate Wurmfeld, JD, Kiran Malpe, LCSW, BS

Wednesday, May 10th, 2023

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

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



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Infants and toddlers are disproportionately represented in the child welfare system, and many face serious adversities during their formative years, including having witnessed or being at risk for witnessing intimate partner violence (IPV). In a system with little knowledge of infant and early childhood mental health, and even less on the impact of IPV on very young children, the Strong Starts Court Initiative (Strong Starts) employs a specialized, Family Court-based approach to address these risks and meet the needs of very young children (0-3) and their families. Strong Starts focuses on the infant's need for protection and secure attachment and considers all child welfare practices through the lens of infant mental health and strengthening parent-child relationships. Strong Starts' intergenerational approach and focus on secure attachment relationships works to mitigate the effects of IPV on very young children. In this workshop, participants will learn the ways in which very young children experience IPV; the risks and impact of IPV on the caregiver-child relationship; and how Strong Starts' approach promotes best practices around the intersection of IPV and very young children across systems.

Kate Wurmfeld, Esq. is the Director of Family Court Programs at the Center for Court Innovation. In this role, Kate oversees the Center's Family Court operating projects and provides national technical assistance and strategic planning advice to courts wishing to improve their response to domestic violence. Kate has extensive experience providing direct legal services on cases involving domestic violence, most recently as a supervising attorney for Matrimonial and Family Law at New York Legal Assistance Group, where she handled divorce, custody, orders of protection and support matters in Supreme and Family Court throughout New York City. In addition to providing direct legal services, Kate also provided supervision to staff attorneys, law students and volunteers, taught clinical seminars and provided training for outside organizations, community groups and law firms. Kate graduated from Seton Hall Law School and Oberlin College.



Kiran Malpe, LCSW, BS is a licensed clinical social worker who has been practicing since 2003. She is a graduate of Columbia University School of Social Work and holds a Bachelor's in Psychology from New York University. Ms. Kiran has a passion for Child Welfare Reform, and prevention of maltreatment of children. She has worked in various social work fields, including Foster Care, Child Protection, and Preventive Services. Kiran is currently the Clinical Director of the Strong Starts Court Initiative (SSCI), a specialized Family Court approach developed to meet the needs of very young children during the foundational stage of development.



Registration

Members: \$15

Non-Members: \$50

Certificate of Attendance

Members: \$15

Non-members: \$20

[Register Now!](#)

More Upcoming Webinars!

The Work Before the Work*Sol Rappaport, PhD, ABPP*

June 22, 2023

Neurodiverse Children and Parents in Family Court Psychological and Judicial Perspectives on Avoiding Bias and Negative Presumptions (DE&I Series)*Daniel B. Pickar, PhD, ABPP, Hon. Michelle Short*

July 12, 2023

Parent Child Contact Problems: Family Violence and Parental Alienation – Either/or, Neither/nor, Both/and, One in the Same?*Matthew Sullivan, PhD*

July 25, 2023

Coercive Control: Understanding the Impact on Survivors as Parents and their Children*Peter Jaffe, PhD*

August 9, 2023

Culture and Bias in the Child Welfare System*Kelly Browe Olson, JD, LLM; Nolanda Y. Robert, MS, CFCC*

September 14, 2023

What Works (and What Doesn't) for Kids and Adults in Blended Families*Patricia Papernow, EdD*

October 18, 2023

[See All Upcoming Webinars!](#)

AFCC-AAML Joint Conference Advanced Issues in Child Custody

**September 28-30, 2023
Washington, DC**

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** are excited to be hosting their first completely in-person joint conference in four years! Leading family law experts will offer extended institutes and breakout sessions that address the most challenging issues faced by lawyers, judges, psychologists, custody evaluators, parenting coordinators, mediators, therapists, arbitrators, educators, and others.

[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 Methodological Issues

[Technology and Evidentiary Issues in Child Custody Cases](#)

Family law professionals regularly confront issues regarding the validity and authenticity of information that is provided to them. But as technology continues to rapidly evolve, how can anyone be sure that the evidence provided is authentic and reliable?

Plenary Session Presenters:

Nicholas Himonidis, Esq.

Chris Mulchay, PhD

Hon. Cheryl Joseph

Moderator: Lawrence Jay Braunstein, Esq.

[Reserve your room today!](#)

The Capital Hilton is offering a reduced special rate to conference attendees of \$259 per night for single or double occupancy through the AFCC-AAML room block. Make your reservations [online](#) or call 202-393-1000 and ask for the AFCC-AAML Conference room block. Reserve your room early!

[Read the Brochure](#)

[New FCR Student Editorial Staff](#)

AFCC is excited to welcome **Emily Fontanetta** as the FCR's new managing editor and to introduce the new student editorial staff of the Family Court Review! We are thrilled to have such a talented and committed group of students on board. AFCC would also like to extend a special appreciation to the previous student editorial staff including **Nicole Case**, the previous Managing Editor. [See the 2023-2024 student editorial staff!](#)

[Technology in Dispute Resolution Survey](#)

The impact of new technology is being felt in every profession. To consider the future of technology in dispute resolution, the ABA Dispute Resolution Technology Committee Fellows would like to start with a snapshot of how practitioners currently use technology and their attitudes about its future application to the profession. Please help by completing this anonymous survey.

AFCC Member News

Ramona Gonzalez, AFCC member from Wisconsin and Judge of La Crosse County Circuit Court, is the 2023 recipient of the Bench and Bar Committee's Lifetime Jurist Award. This award recognizes jurists who, during their tenure on the bench, were fair and impartial, demonstrated high ideals and personal character along with outstanding, long-term judicial service. Congratulations, Ramona!



Colin Rule, AFCC member from California and CEO of Mediate.com and ODR.com has been announced as the 2023 recipient of the D'Alemberte/Raven Award from the American Bar Association Dispute Resolution Section. Colin will be recognized at the May 11th Award Ceremony at the 25th annual ABA DR Spring Conference in Las Vegas. Congratulations, Colin!



AFCC Chapter News

Congratulations to the Ontario chapter of AFCC for another successful Walsh Family Law Moot Competition and a special congratulations to all the students who participated.

The Walsh Family Law Moot competition brings together law students from across Canada to compete in a simulated family law case, providing them with a unique opportunity to hone their advocacy skills and gain valuable experience in the field of family law. [Read more.](#)

Membership Notice of AFCC Board Nominations

At the AFCC membership meeting on Saturday, June 3, 2023, the following individuals will be nominated to serve on the AFCC Board of Directors for a three-year term beginning July 1, 2023 and concluding June 30, 2026: **Chioma Ajoku**, **Lawrence Jay Braunstein**, **Linda Fidnick**, **Joi Hollis**, **Beth McCormack**, and **Stacey Platt**.

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: **Michael Saini**;
- Vice President: **Dolores Bomrad**;
- Secretary: **Tom Altobelli**;
- Treasurer: **Kathleen McNamara**

Stacey Platt and **Linda Fidnick** 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:

[Ann Ordway, JD, PhD](#)

ASSOCIATE EDITOR:

[Patrick Sommer](#)

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

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President's Message

Hon. Linda Fidnick



This is my final AFCC President's Message before I turn the gavel over to my wonderful and capable successor, Professor Stacey Platt. I want to thank all AFCC members for your support and encouragement over the past year as we slowly move from the days filled with COVID apprehension toward what I hope will ultimately be a long period of health and prosperity for all.

Since last July, I have had many exceptional opportunities to represent AFCC. I participated in the AFCC Symposium on Child Custody in Las Vegas (record setting attendance!). I was honored to present a session at the annual conference of our "sister" organization, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFJC), and to attend the annual Forum of the International Academy of Collaborative Professionals. In addition, I have been extensively involved in planning the AFCC-NCJFJC International Symposium on Family Court Reform, with judges from all over the world.

This is what I learned: AFCC is universally considered a preeminent leader in the world of family law. AFCC members are professionals who are engaged, thoughtful, energetic, and willing to work hard to assist the families that they see. Even when members of other organizations in the field aren't also AFCC members (and many are!) They are aware of what we do and consider us to be credible, yet visionary, willing to wade into controversial territory while preserving civil discourse, and ultimately the "go-to" resource.

In addition to learning more about how AFCC is perceived externally, I also learned much more about the inner workings of the association. In the last 12 months, AFCC sponsored two major conferences, twelve webinars, four additional DE&I webinars, three online training programs, published four issues of Family Court Review and twelve

issues of the AFCC eNEWS, approved the Guidelines for Parenting Plan Evaluations in Family Law Cases and the AFCC-NCJFCJ Statement on Parent-Child Contact Problems, appointed a task force to revise the Model Standards on Family and Divorce Mediation, upgraded the website, hired two new staff members, and answered hundreds of member inquires, and that is just the tip of the iceberg.

None of this just happens. It is the result of AFCC volunteer leadership and members and the AFCC staff. I want to state, unequivocally, that there are none better. Our members provide countless hours volunteering their time and expertise so that all AFCC members and family court professionals have the tools available to provide services of the highest possible caliber. They are engaged, supportive, and an amazing resource for all of us. The editors of FCR, Barbara Babb, Marsha Kline Pruett, and Rob Cannon, not only turn out an amazing journal, but lead a group of dedicated second- and third-year law students in producing it on a quarterly basis.

Last, but by no means least, the AFCC staff makes the trains run on time for nearly 6,000 members. Did you get CEs for your last conference? Thank Ann Ordway, AFCC Program Director for leading the AFCC efforts for continuing education for lawyers, psychologists, PCs, social workers, and others. Did that last online training program or webinar run smoothly? Kelly Bienfang, Operations Administrator, and Patrick Sommer, Communications Coordinator, made those happen. Is the office responsive to your requests? That's probably our top-notch administrators, Abby Rebholz and Tanya Froh. That's not all they do of course, there is much, much, more. Dawn Holmes, Director of Operations, oversees this seamless operation and according to Executive Director Peter Salem, his job is to stay out of their way.

It takes decades to build this kind of reputation. Each one of you is to be credited for your role in it, whether you are a lawyer, clinician, researcher, mediator, court professional or judge. All of you working together – which is of course the hallmark of what AFCC does best – have created an organization of which you should be very proud.

Please come to Los Angeles in May for our 60th anniversary conference to celebrate and enjoy the fruits of those decades of AFCC's commitment to families and find your role in continuing this legacy.



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Ask The Experts: Ten Tips for Honoring Pronouns and Identity

Rebecca M. Stahl, JD, LLM

Cisgender heteronormative structures have permeated family law. However, as these norms shift, it is critical for professionals to become familiar with the current and more expansive language used to describe transgender and nonbinary people. Pronouns, traditionally aligned with binary categories of gender, have also become more expansive, inclusive, and a very personal aspect of identity. As we strive to be more trauma-responsive professionals, it is important to be open to learning language and its meaning to create and maintain more welcoming environments for the families we serve.

This article, inspired by the webinar, *Gender and Sex in Family Law: How to Work with a Gender Diverse Population* (sponsored by the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee in April 2023 and available through the [AFCC Webinar Archives](#)), includes some tips for honoring personal pronouns and respecting identity of those we encounter to be more trauma-responsive in family court.

1. **Make no assumptions.** Take a moment right now to think about the first thing you think about someone when you see them. Is it your assumption about their gender? This need to know someone's gender is a deeply held bias in our society and within our own systems. The first question often asked of a pregnant person is "what are you having?" That question assumes gender and sex even though that is not even the question being asked. Thus, unraveling the need to assume gender upon first meeting someone takes time, and it is the most important way to honor pronouns and identity. Working to unravel our immediate assumptions is key to the rest of these tips, and it is often the most difficult.
2. **Learn the truth about gender identity.** Many of us have been raised to believe very specific ways of seeing gender as binary and as determined by birth. Despite rhetoric, the idea of gender identity as a spectrum has been around as long as people have existed. Many cultures, including likely your own culture if

you go back far enough, have had space for multiple gender identities. It is important to let go of the notion that thinking outside the gender binary is new and recognize these are identities that have always existed, and they are finally finding language in today's society.

- 3. Take time to learn why pronouns matter.** Pronouns are the way we recognize and honor a person's gender identity. For people who do not fit within the proscribed gender binary, having their pronouns respected is a way to say, "I respect who you are, and you are safe with me." Mental health issues increase in people whose pronouns are not respected, and we know that when people feel seen, heard, and understood, their mental health issues decrease. The easiest way to show someone they are seen, heard, and understood is to use their correct pronouns. (While we are here, the term is "correct pronouns," not "preferred pronouns," because pronouns are not a preference; they are key to identity.)
- 4. Normalize asking about pronouns.** Remember tip number one to make no assumptions? The act of asking about pronouns always ensures that no one feels called out when we ask. If we ask all the time and not only when we cannot make an easy assumption about someone's pronouns, then no one feels like they do not belong. As such, it is sometimes even more important to ask in spaces where no one is nonbinary or transgender. Normalization makes it safer for everyone.
- 5. Ask questions and learn important language around gender.** It is easy to feel like there are new words and ideas all the time, but remember, gender diversity is not new. Learning terminology is simpler than you might think, and it goes a long way to helping people feel seen, heard, and understood. Using that terminology also helps. For example, learning that cisgender means "identifying with the gender you were assigned at birth" and using it as a common term reduces the stigma associated with being transgender, or "identifying with a gender different from the one you were assigned at birth." When we use all the terminology, there is no assumption that one is normal, and another is different. All identities are on a spectrum of experiences that we all share. Asking questions when you do not understand a term, and then learning more about it, are simple ways to help everyone feel safer in your presence.
- 6. Practice using pronouns for people in your life.** Brains work from patterns, so learning to use new pronouns for someone in your life, or beginning to use "they" as a gender neutral, singular, and specific pronoun can take time. We have always used "they" as a singular, non-specific pronoun, so our brains can learn this specific use as well. We know that, with practice, anything is possible. Thus, practice, practice, and practice some more. Practice when the person for whom you are learning a new pronoun is not in your presence so if you make a mistake, you do not unintentionally cause them harm. Then keep practicing. Ask

people to correct you when you practice with them. And then keep practicing some more. Over time, this becomes simpler, easy, and eventually automatic.

7. **Apologize.** We all make mistakes. When you make a mistake about someone's gender, a simple apology is all that is needed. And the intent to do better the next time. It is important to acknowledge the mistake, fix it, and continue practicing.
8. **Practice using non-gendered greetings.** Common greetings in large spaces include words like "ladies and gentlemen" or "brothers and sisters." Can you think of ways to speak about groups of people without gendered words at all? How about saying "Welcome, everyone" ? A simple change in our language ensures that everyone feels included. Many of our honorifics are also gendered, such as Mr. and Ms. The gender-neutral honorific is Mx. Or think about ways to address people that are still respectful without an honorific to ensure you are following tip number 1 and making no assumptions.
9. **Correct others.** If you notice someone misgender someone else, politely correct them. There does not need to be shaming, but it helps a gender diverse person feel safer when someone else notices a misgendering and corrects the mistake. The goal of all of this is for people to feel seen, heard, and understood. What better way to help someone feel seen and understood than when someone else supports their identity publicly?
10. **Curiosity and compassion are key.** You may not fully understand someone's gender identity, but can you begin from a place that says, "I want this person to feel safe, seen, and understood?" As family law practitioners our jobs include being curious about people's lived experiences. Gender identity is not anything that needs to change that. Beginning with curiosity and compassion make all the other tips possible. Just remember that we are all human, we all have unique experiences, and we all benefit when we hold each other in a space of respect and willingness to learn more about each other and how to address each other in ways that help us all feel safer, seen, and understood.



Rebecca M. Stahl, JD, LLM is the Interim Executive Director of Somatic Experiencing International, an international trauma-healing organization. She was previously the Staff Director of the Sayra and Neil Meyerhoff Center for Families, Children and the Courts at the University of Baltimore School of Law. Rebecca represented children in child welfare cases in Los Angeles County and Tucson, Arizona. She was a Fulbright Scholar in New Zealand and earned a Master of Law degree from the University of Otago in Dunedin, New Zealand and studied the role of lawyers for children in family court cases. Rebecca has presented at a variety of international

conferences focused on children's rights and family law on topics ranging from the role of lawyers for children to trauma. Rebecca coauthored, *Representing Children in Dependency and Family Law: Beyond the Law*, a book regarding the psychological issues lawyers for children need to understand to better represent their child clients and has published articles on the role of children's representation, including a recent one on trauma, published in October 2020 in *Family Court Review*.