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Message from the AFCC Executive Director

Peter Salem, MA



AFCC Celebrates 60 Years: Everything Old is New Again

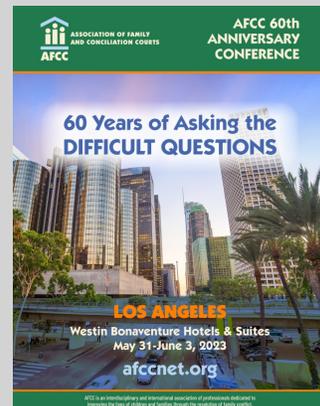
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Conciliation Courts Quarterly.

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



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by court personnel. Green reported “the group discussion elicited both agreement and disagreement among members and visitors.” Judge Pfaff suggested the preparation of a Conciliation Court Manual to help guide practice. [Continue Reading](#).

AFCC 60th Anniversary Conference

60 Years of Asking the Difficult Questions

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

The AFCC 60th Anniversary Conference is just two weeks away. Join us as we celebrate 60 years of AFCC in the birthplace of AFCC. [Register now!](#)

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](#).

Opening Session

Polarization is invading every aspect of life, including marriage and co-parenting after divorce. Join us for a keynote by William J. Doherty, PhD, who will share depolarization strategies for managing political and ideological differences in our personal, professional, and civic lives.

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](#).

Reserve Your Room Today!

The hotel block has sold out, but AFCC has arranged for more rooms to be added. You can make your reservations [online](#) or over the phone by calling 800-937-8461 or 888-627-8520. Do not delay as the AFCC room block may sell out again.

[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 Minnesota
Annual Conference](#)
July 27, 2023
Minneapolis, MN

[AFCC Florida
19th Annual Advanced
Education Program](#)
October 4-6, 2023
Orlando, FL

[AFCC Illinois
Annual Conference](#)
October, 19, 2023
Chicago, IL

[AFCC Arizona
41st Annual Conference](#)
January 19 - 21, 2024
Sedona, AZ

Webinar Corner

The Work Before the Work

Sol Rappaport, PhD, ABPP

Thursday, June 22, 2023

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

Registration will close on June 21st, 2023 at 9:00am Eastern Time US/Canada.

This webinar will provide mental health professionals and attorneys with practice tips before they ever meet a client. This webinar is designed for professionals that act as mediators, parent coordinators, GAL's, court-appointed therapists, consultants, and evaluators. The purpose of this webinar is to present and discuss information and documents that should be completed prior to ever meeting a client. This includes screening forms, intake forms, statements of understanding, and assent/consent forms. A review of AFCC Guidelines and how they impact the type of forms developed will be discussed.



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Sol Rappaport, PhD, ABPP, is Board Certified in Clinical Psychology and Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology. He has been appointed in over 900 custody evaluations and has testified throughout the United States. Dr. Rappaport's national practice includes consulting with attorneys for the purpose of work product review, cross-examination and expert witness testimony. Dr. Rappaport presents nationally and has published in the area of divorce, child abuse, psychological testing, gatekeeping, custody evaluations, as well as other topics.



Registration

Members: \$15

Non-Members: \$50

Certificate of Attendance

Members: \$15

Non-members: \$20

[Register Now!](#)

AFCC DE&I Series

Neurodiverse Children and Parents in Family Court Psychological and Judicial Perspectives on Avoiding Bias and Negative Presumptions

Daniel B. Pickar, PhD, ABPP, Hon. Michelle Short

Wednesday, July 12, 2023

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

Registration closes July 11, 2023 at 9:00am Eastern Time US/Canada.

As with cultural diversity and non-traditional families, neurodiversity is another social justice issue that needs to be considered in family court cases. There are unique considerations for neurodiverse children in situations of separation or divorce, who may

not do as well as neurotypical children in the common “developmentally based” parenting plan arrangements often ordered by the court. Neurodiversity in parents also presents great challenges in family court, as when a parent has a neurocognitive disability or mental health conditions, there may be an automatic negative presumption that parenting capacity will be negatively impacted by this problem. This webinar will address how viewing parents and children who have been diagnosed with neurocognitive or psychiatric conditions as neurodiverse, instead of disordered or abnormal, and viewing this diversity through a strength-based lens, reduces bias in family court. This webinar will present both psychological and judicial perspectives for family court personnel to consider with neurodiverse parents and children, followed by an interactive discussion.

This webinar is free to attend, but you must register in advance to receive the webinar link.

Daniel B. Pickar, PhD, ABPP is board-certified child psychologist who conducts child custody evaluations, consultation to family law attorneys, and psycho-educational evaluations of children. He received his undergraduate education at Brown University and completed his Ph.D. in clinical psychology at the California School of Professional Psychology at Berkeley. For 12 years, he served as the Chief of Child and Family Psychiatry at Kaiser Permanente Medical Center in Santa Rosa, California. He has published numerous journal articles and book chapters in the areas of child custody evaluation, mediation, and children with special needs in family court. He served on the editorial board of the *Journal of Child Custody* for 6 years and currently serves on the editorial board of the *Family Court Review*. He regularly presents workshops at state and national AFCC and AAML conferences and serves on the Board of Directors of AFCC. In 2019, Dr. Pickar was awarded the Judge Rex Sater Award for “Excellence in Family Law” by the Sonoma County Bar Association.



Hon. Michelle Short was appointed to the Los Angeles Superior Court as Judge in 2018. Prior to appointment, she was elected Superior Court Commissioner in 2015. From 2015 to 2021, Judge Short heard family law matters. Prior to taking the bench, her practice was exclusively Family Law. She was regularly appointed as minor’s counsel for both neurotypical and neurodiverse families. She also worked with parties in complicated and highly contested custody and visitation issues, as well as litigated the issues of property, child support and spousal support. Throughout her tenure as a judge and commissioner, Judge Short has presented at conferences and served the Judicial Council on the Family Law Curriculum Committee, providing judicial education on the issues of Taking Testimony from Children, Minor’s Counsel, Special Needs Children, and Special Education.



[Register Now!](#)

More Upcoming Webinars!

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 Member News

Dr. Rachel Birnbaum, AFCC member from Ontario, has been honored as Distinguished University Professor, a distinction reserved for faculty members who have garnered global recognition for their extraordinary contributions to their academic fields. This designation represents the highest research-related honor bestowed by King's University College, acknowledging her exceptional impact and accomplishments. Congratulations, Rachel!



Dr. April Harris-Britt, AFCC member from North Carolina, has been **recognized by Fielding Graduate University** for her exceptional achievements and contributions to her community as a mentor and role model. April has become a beacon of empowerment for women and African American students through her exceptional work with the American Psychological Association and her esteemed reputation as a clinician and researcher. Beyond her mentorship, her vibrant private practice has touched the lives of many underserved families, providing invaluable assessment and psychotherapy support. Congratulations, April!



Archana Medhekar, LLB, LLM, AFCC member from Ontario, co-led a NGO delegation for the sixty-seventh session of the **Commission on the Status of Women (CSW67)** held at the United Nation's Headquarters in New York in March 2023. It is the world's main policy-making body dedicated exclusively to gender equality and the advancement of women. Congratulations, Archana!



Lynn Norcia, JD, AFCC Member and New Jersey Chapter board member, was presented with the Phillip N. Sobel award at the New Jersey Chapter Annual Spring

Program. Lynn's approach to her cases embodied the spirit of Phil Sobel's belief by solving the problems of the entire family rather than advocating for only one side. Congratulations, Lynn!



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! We have gathered several of the most renowned experts to lead a block of comprehensive institutes and a series interactive sessions that delve into the advanced issues in child custody.

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? Join us at the plenary session as Nicholas Himonidis, Esq., Chris Mulchay, PhD, and Hon. Cheryl Joseph delve into the ever-evolving landscape of technology and its impact on evidentiary issues in child custody cases.

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!

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!

[Read the Brochure](#)

AFCC Chapter News

AFCC Utah

Congratulations to the Utah chapter for winning this year's chapter challenge! The chapter challenge is a competition between all AFCC chapters to see who can gain the most new members. The Utah chapter has gained the most members by total number and by percentage increased. They increased their membership by 69 members which represents a 38% total increase in membership since the start of this competition last July! As a result of their outstanding achievement, the Utah chapter will be awarded a well-deserved cash prize for their victory. Congratulations!

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.

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AFCC Celebrates 60 Years: Everything Old is New Again

Message from the AFCC Executive Director



Peter Salem
AFCC Executive Director

Kenneth A. Green, Conciliation Counselor from Los Angeles County reported on the first AFCC conference in Volume 1, Issue 3 of *California Conciliation Courts Quarterly*.

By any standards, the First Annual Conference of the California Conciliation Courts was an outstanding success. From the time the meeting was opened by Judge Roger Alton Pfaff on Saturday morning, September 7, 1963, until its adjournment that same evening, each participant had an opportunity to make some contributions from personal experience and to obtain first-hand impressions and observations from other counselors in the six California counties.

Green went on to name all 23 conference participants, mostly counselors, a few judges, and some invited guests. The program focused on special problems related to the establishment of conciliation courts and the character and extent of counseling services provided by court personnel. Green reported “the group discussion elicited both agreement and disagreement among members and visitors.” Judge Pfaff suggested the preparation of a Conciliation Court Manual to help guide practice.

Finally, and for our purposes perhaps most important, “... a major result of this first conference was the heartfelt need on the part of all participants to have further conferences at regular intervals. Those conferences would include all conciliation courts... as well as invited visitors and other professional people who could contribute different points of view and information to the group.”

Sixty years (and who knows how many conferences) later, AFCC has changed dramatically. The association has expanded from exclusively court personnel to more than a dozen disciplines in the public, private, and non-profit sectors. Beyond what was once a handful of California Conciliation Courts, there are nearly 6,000 members in 35 countries worldwide. Conference attendance, routinely over 1,000 before the pandemic, appears (fingers crossed) to be heading back in that direction. Over the decades, AFCC has spearheaded dozens of projects and publications that provide guidance to mediators, custody evaluators, parenting coordinators, and professionals, provided training and education through face-to-face programs, webinars, and online training programs that have been downloaded by tens of thousands of practitioners. *California Conciliation Courts Quarterly* began as a 10-page mimeographed newsletter designed to connect family court service agencies. It was ultimately replaced by two publications, AFCC's newsletter (now the [AFCC eNEWS](#)) with more than 17,000 subscribers, and [Family Court Review](#), which is published quarterly by Wiley, and is the number one ranked family law journal, with nearly 200,000 article downloads annually.

Many things have changed, as our organization has grown from being called the Conference of California Conciliation Courts, to the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC), with a few names in between. The name itself has been a source of discussion and continues to confound some. But as one of many participants over the years in various attempts to arrive at a new moniker, I can attest that it is much like Winston Churchill's description of democracy – “the worst form of government, except all of the others that have been tried.”

AFCC has clearly transformed in many ways over 60 years, but what might be most impressive is what has *not* changed. Because the vision of the founding members—Meyer Elkin, Stanley Cohen, Roger Alton Pfaff and others—laid the groundwork for extraordinary growth over six decades. And the hallmarks of AFCC remain the same:

- Publications that allow members to develop and share new and innovative ideas with one another. Today, they can be found in [FCR](#), the [AFCC eNEWS](#), and in the [Resource Center](#) and the [Center for Excellence in Family Court Practice](#) on the [AFCC website](#).
- Guidance for AFCC members and other professionals, beginning with Judge Pfaff's suggestion of a Conciliation Court Manual, and evolving to a series of [practice guidelines and model standards](#), and online [archived webinars](#) and [training programs](#) that inform the work of family law professionals worldwide.
- AFCC conferences continue to create a space for learning, connection, and community, serving as a catalyst for the development of new program ideas, professional relationships, and even some lifelong personal friendships.

Sixty years later, publications, practice and policy guidance, and conferences remain three articulated AFCC areas of focus. What was not necessarily identified as an early goal (but was mentioned in the first report) is the role of disagreement in AFCC. I have written before about the important **role of disagreement in AFCC**, whether it is related to intimate partner violence, shared parenting, resist-refuse dynamics, or something as mundane as why we don't serve cookies during conference breaks (spoiler alert: it keeps conference registration fees low).

An interdisciplinary community is inherently accompanied by multiple perspectives, whether derived from profession, academic background, nationality or geographic region, race, culture, socioeconomic status, or institutional affiliation. It is the discussions informed by these differences—whether between a mediator and a litigator, or a younger or more “seasoned” professional—that are the true strength of AFCC. In more than 30 years with AFCC, I have witnessed, participated in, and intentionally created many of these conversations, sometimes to my (and AFCC's) detriment, but more often to the benefit of those involved and others.

I hope that as many of the seasoned members of AFCC move on, that when the 70th or 75th anniversary is celebrated, our successors will have continued the legacy of an outstanding journal, practice guidance for professionals and programs, and amazing conferences that continue to engage and energize AFCC members. But most of all, I hope for continued, respectful, and fervent disagreement.

Looking forward to celebrating with you in Los Angeles.