



ASSOCIATION OF
FAMILY AND
CONCILIATION COURTS



eNEWS

Register today —Rates Increase October 10
11th Symposium on Child Custody Evaluations
Examining Unintended Consequences
November 6-8, 2014, San Antonio, Texas

Just over two weeks remain to take advantage of early registration savings for the AFCC 11th Symposium on Child Custody Evaluations, *Examining Unintended Consequences*, November 6-8, 2014, at the Hyatt Regency Hill Country Resort and Spa, San Antonio, Texas. Take advantage of the lowest registration rates when your registration and payment are received or postmarked on or before Friday, October 10, 2014.

[Register now](#)

Session Highlights Include:

- The Relocation Case in Court
- Parenting Plans for Infants and Young Children
- The Forensic Substance Use Disorder Evaluation
- When the Evaluator Can't Recommend Either Parent
- Standardized Assessment of Children and Adolescents
- Effective Use of Research in Parenting Evaluations
- Collaborative Work Product Reviews: A Concept in Search of a Method

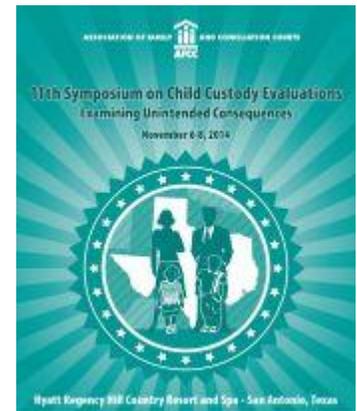
With many more sessions to choose from—see the [conference program brochure](#) for full session descriptions and presenter listings.

AFCC Room Block at the Hyatt Regency

The hotel room block is filling up fast—book your room today! There is limited availability over the symposium dates and the AFCC rate may no longer be available for all nights. Make your reservations [online](#) or call 888-421-1442. If you have questions or difficulty getting the room nights you need, please contact AFCC Meeting Manager, Nicole Ellickson at 608-664-3750 or nellickson@afccnet.org.

MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER
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AFCC Conferences



AFCC 11th Symposium on Child Custody Evaluations
Examining Unintended Consequences

November 6–8, 2014
Hyatt Regency Hill Country Resort and Spa
San Antonio, Texas
[Register today](#)

AFCC 52nd Annual Conference

May 27–30, 2015
Children in the Court System: Different Doors, Different Responses, Different Outcomes
Hilton New Orleans Riverside
New Orleans, Louisiana

Exhibit and Advertise at the Symposium

Introduce your organization, products and services to the interdisciplinary professionals who attend AFCC conferences with an onsite exhibit or put your marketing piece in the hands of each attendee with a registration packet insert. [More information](#)

Ask the Experts

Ten Considerations for Using Gatekeeping to Assess and Describe Family Dynamics

Leslie Drozd, PhD, Newport Beach, California; Nancy Olesen, PhD, San Rafael, California; and Michael Saini, PhD, Toronto, Ontario

The authors will present a full-day, pre-symposium institute at the AFCC 11th Symposium on Child Custody Evaluations in San Antonio, November 6, 2014, entitled *Using Gatekeeping as a Framework to Assess and Describe Family Dynamics within the Context of Parenting Plan Contexts*. The following are considerations for using gatekeeping to assess and describe family dynamics.

[Read more](#)

Member Profile

Aaron Robb, PhD, Frisco, Texas

Aaron Robb, PhD, is the program director at Forensic Counseling Services in Frisco, Texas. His primary focus is on intervention and assessment services for higher conflict litigation cases, particularly parenting coordination type services and child custody evaluations. In addition to his personal practice, he oversees a staff of professionals providing supervised visitation services and conducting child custody evaluations.

[Read more](#)

Deadline to Submit a Proposal for New Orleans—October 1



Submit a proposal to present a workshop at the AFCC 52nd Annual Conference, *Children in the Court System: Different Doors, Different Responses, Different Outcomes*, May 27-30, 2015, at the Hilton New Orleans Riverside. See the call for proposals for a list of topic suggestions or submit a proposal on a topic related to the conference theme. The deadline to submit a proposal is October 1 and all

[Call for proposals](#)

AFCC Regional Training Conference

November 5–7, 2015
Hyatt Regency Columbus
Columbus, Ohio

AFCC 53rd Annual Conference

June 1–4, 2016
Sheraton Seattle Hotel
Seattle, Washington

AFCC 54th Annual Conference

May 31–June 3, 2017
Sheraton Boston Hotel
Boston, Massachusetts

AFCC Training Programs

The Model Standards and Beyond: Custody Evaluations and Risk Management

David Martindale, PhD
December 8-9, 2014
University of Baltimore School of Law
Student Center
Baltimore, Maryland
[More information](#)

Parenting Coordination: Strategies for Helping Parents Improve Communication and Reduce Conflict

Mindy Mitnick, EdM
December 10-11, 2014
University of Baltimore School of Law
Student Center
Baltimore, Maryland
[More information](#)

AFCC Chapter Annual Conferences

Wisconsin Chapter Annual Conference
Understanding and Managing

proposals must be submitted using the [online form](#).

Custody Evaluation and PC Trainings in December

AFCC and the University of Baltimore School of Law's Center for Families, Children and the Law will hold two training programs, at the University of Baltimore School of Law, Student Center in Baltimore, Maryland. David Martindale, PhD, will present *The Model Standards and Beyond: Custody Evaluations and Risk Management*, December 8-9, 2014. Mindy Mitnick, EdM, will present *Parenting Coordination: Strategies for Helping Parents Improve Communication and Reduce Conflict*, December 10-11, 2014. Online registration and the complete training brochure are [now available](#). AFCC members receive a discounted registration rate. Save even more when you attend both trainings.

Meet the Newest Board Members

AFCC welcomed three new board members July 1. You can learn more about all members of the AFCC Board on the [AFCC website](#).

Milfred “Bud” Dale, PhD, JD, is an attorney and psychologist in independent practice in Topeka, Kansas. His practice focuses on helping families in conflict. Dr. Dale presents on topics including attachment and parenting plans, attorney-expert relationships, constitutional issues in child protection cases, and paradigm shifts in child custody policy. He is a reviewing editor of *Family Law Quarterly* and on the editorial board of the *Journal of Child Custody*. Dr. Dale was a participant in the AFCC Shared Parenting Think Tank.

Hon. Dianna Gould-Saltman is a judge of the Los Angeles County Superior Court. She was previously a partner with Gould-Saltman Law Offices, LLP in Los Angeles, which handles family law cases exclusively. While a practitioner, she was a California Certified Family Law Specialist and Fellow of the American and International Academies of Matrimonial Lawyers. She served on the Leadership Council of the American Bar Association Family Law Section and chaired the section's Ethics Committee; she also served on the editorial boards of the ABA/FLS *Family Advocate* and the *Journal of Child Custody*.

Stacey Platt, JD, is a clinical professor of law and associate director of the ChildLaw Clinic at Loyola University Chicago School of Law. She and her clinic students represent children in legal proceedings, focusing on private custody disputes. Ms. Platt regularly teaches lawyers representing domestic violence survivors and children for the

the Challenges of Relocation: A Factor Based Approach
September 26, 2014
Country Springs Hotel and
Conference Center
Pewaukee, Wisconsin
[More information](#)

Florida Chapter Annual Conference

October 16–18, 2014
The Wyndham Tampa
Westshore
Tampa, Florida
[More information](#)

Ontario Chapter Annual Conference

*Exploring Relevant Issues
Facing Our Family Courts*
October 16–17, 2014
Marconi Club
London, Ontario
[More information](#)

Arizona Chapter Annual Conference

*Tomorrow is Here: Examining
the Challenges of the Modern
Family*
February 6–8, 2015
Sedona, Arizona
[More information](#)

California Chapter Annual Conference

*Inventing the Future: Getting
Ahead of the Curve for
California's Families*
February 6–8, 2015
Westin South Coast Plaza
Hotel
Costa Mesa, California
[More information](#)

Oregon Chapter Annual Conference

Shared Parenting
April 10, 2015
The Grotto Conference Center
Portland, Oregon
[More information](#)

Join AFCC

American Bar Association (ABA) Commission on Domestic and Sexual Violence and the National Institute for Trial Advocacy. She is on the editorial board of *Family Court Review*.

Chapter News

Chief Justice Diana Bryant was elected the first president of the **Australia Chapter**. She also is a member of the AFCC Board of Directors. Chief Justice Bryant was appointed as Chief Justice of the Family Court of Australia in 2004. The Australia Chapter held its launch at the Sixth World Congress on Family Law and Children's Rights in 2013, and its inaugural conference last month.

Check the [Chapter Events page](#) for upcoming chapter annual conferences offering opportunities for AFCC-style education, networking and learning near you. Chapters with conferences scheduled include: Wisconsin, Florida, Ontario, Arizona, California, and Oregon. Visit individual chapter websites for more local and regional events.

Staff Changes at AFCC

Elliot Bartz began working for AFCC earlier this month as the new program assistant. He received his undergraduate degree in Russian Language and Civilization, and Political Science, from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Elliot speaks Polish and Russian fluently.

Carly Kreger has been promoted to a new position, communications coordinator. She began working for AFCC in August 2013 as program assistant. Carly is completing her MA in Library and Information Studies at the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

Center for Excellence in Family Court Practice

Shared Parenting Think Tank

The Shared Parenting Think Tank brought together legal scholars, practitioners and policymakers with disparate viewpoints about parenting time and decision making after separation and divorce. Participants discussed the impediments to the integration of emerging research with this challenging area of practice. The results were published in the April 2014 special issue of *Family Court Review*, which included the Report, commentaries and articles. Several think tank participants presented on the topic at the 51st Annual Conference earlier this year in Toronto.

[More information, conference audio, Think Tank Report and FCR articles](#)

Are you a member?

[Join](#) or [Renew](#)

AFCC offers member benefits that promote excellence in the field of family law and in your practice.

[View member benefits](#)

Ask the Experts

Is there a topic you would like to see covered by an AFCC Ask the Experts piece?

[Email your suggestion](#)

AFCC Chapters

Network and share your interdisciplinary view of family court matters on a local level. There are currently chapters in the following states and provinces:

Australia
Alberta
Arizona
California
Colorado
Connecticut
Florida
Illinois
Indiana
Louisiana
Maryland
Massachusetts
Minnesota
Missouri
New Jersey
New York
Ohio
Ontario
Oregon
Texas
Washington
Wisconsin

[Add an AFCC Chapter to your membership](#)

Call for Nominations—AFCC Awards

Nominate a colleague or a program for one of the following AFCC awards by March 15, 2015. Awards will be presented at the AFCC 52nd Annual Conference. The John E. VanDuzer Distinguished Service Award recognizes outstanding contributions and/or achievements by AFCC members; the Stanley Cohen Research Award, sponsored by the Oregon Family Institute, recognizes outstanding research and/or achievements in the field of family and divorce; and the Irwin Cantor Innovative Program Award recognizes innovation in court-connected or court-related programs created by AFCC members.

[More information](#)

Family Law in the News

Divorce Hotel: Check In Married, Check Out Single

Genevieve Shaw Brown, courtesy of Good Morning America

A New York hotel promises lovely weekends away this fall, complete with quickie divorce packages for those looking for a life change along with the seasonal one. The Gideon Putnam Resort in Saratoga Springs will, in conjunction with a Netherlands-based company, debut as a “Divorce Hotel” this month.

[Read more](#)

'Blended' Families are Focus of Honey Maid Ad

Bruce Horovitz, courtesy of USA Today

Madison Avenue may be making divorce its newest form of diversity. Take a look at Honey Maid's new YouTube commercial that breaks on Monday, and its vision of the new American family is simple: blended. The ad—which also has a 30-second version that will debut on broadcast TV on Monday—features a boy (not an actor) who says that his family is “hard to explain,” then goes on to say, “I have two moms and I've got two dads.”

[Read more](#)

AFCC Networks

New Zealand

The opinions expressed in articles published or linked to in the *AFCC eNEWS* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the positions of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts.

Readers are welcomed and encouraged to forward this e-newsletter to interested colleagues.

[About the AFCC eNEWS](#)

Editor:

Erin Sommerfeld
editor@afccnet.org



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AFCC

6525 Grand Teton Plaza

Madison, WI 53719

Phone: 608-664-3750

Fax: 608-664-3751

afcc@afccnet.org



Member Profile

Aaron Robb, PhD, Frisco, Texas



What does your current work entail?

As program director at Forensic Counseling Services, my primary focus is on intervention and assessment services for higher conflict litigation cases, particularly parenting coordination type services and child custody evaluations. In addition to my own personal practice, I oversee a staff of professionals providing supervised visitation services and conducting child custody evaluations.

How did you become interested in the field of separation and divorce?

My initial clinical training occurred in a children's advocacy center and from there, I spent several years working with severely abused and neglected children. Unfortunately, there is often an overlap between the cases seen in dependency courts and family courts, as well as in the skill sets needed to work with these families. My first experience with this overlap occurred when I was hired in to the Family Court Services Office for Dallas County where we provided evaluations and mediation services. This is also where I was introduced to AFCC and became involved on a state and local level with ongoing work to improve the services available for these families. I find it tragic how many children have to struggle because of their parents' inability to deal in a healthy way with the choices they have made, but I also find hope in how many parents can focus on prioritizing their children's needs even during difficult family transitions.

What advice would you give to someone new to the field?

The number of fields one has to be able to draw from to function at a competent level with court-connected cases is broad. Good initial clinical experience serves as a solid foundation, but you have to build a scope and depth of knowledge that may seem daunting at first. Form good working relationships with your colleagues, and reach out often to challenge what you know and how you think about the cases you work with.

What are the greatest challenges you see in the field?

For the practitioner in the field, keeping up with the growing body of diverse knowledge needed to provide services, especially with the growing prevalence of expert reviewers and consultants working with attorneys, will continue to be a major hurdle. Additionally, the amount of acrimony directed towards court-connected professionals seems to be a related issue. If the expectation is perfection, we will all fail. We must find ways to continue to bring the best social science research to the family courts without further polarizing already contentious litigation.

What would you like to see happen in the field in the next ten years?

Building on the growing points of consensus that are beginning to emerge, while continuing to innovate in service delivery to meet the ever-changing needs of the families we serve. Efforts such as the [Wingspread Report on Domestic Violence and Family Courts](#) and the [AFCC Think Tank on Shared Parenting](#) give us a glimpse of a future where professionals model working together to resolve differences the same way we ask our healthy families to do so.

What aspect of your work do you enjoy the most?

This work is certainly never boring! The professional challenges in working with court-connected cases, especially when the ultimate outcomes of services may not be seen until years down the road, have to be their own reward much of the time.

How did you first learn about AFCC? When was that?

Pat Ross, the now-retired long-time manager of Dallas Family Court Services, enlisted me to help plan the state conference in 2001. I got to meet leaders from around the state, including a Texas Chapter President who is now a State Supreme Court Justice, and was inspired by the caring and commitment they brought to this work.

What do you like most about AFCC?

Nowhere else do I encounter such interdisciplinary support and sharing of knowledge, whether that be at regional and international training, through *Family Court Review* or, I think most importantly, through the close professional relationships I have developed with others in the field.

What is your proudest personal achievement?

I returned to school to complete a PhD later in life, while at the same time starting a family. Having done both at the same time was a challenge to be sure, but my children are now in school while I am out (finally)!

What do you enjoy doing in your free time?

I enjoy traveling, especially into remote areas where there is no internet or cell phone access so I can truly escape the office! I am also an avid foodie, which combines well with a love of travel. As a kid my parents took me and my brother on the Appalachian Trail and camping throughout the country. I particularly like hiking and diving around the many national parks and reserves around Texas, and I've travelled all over the US. For a change of pace this year, after the AFCC Symposium in San Antonio, I am taking off for New Zealand where I'll be doing some diving around various shipwrecks, spending time in a shark cage, and climbing the glacial formations, among other things.

Tell us something about yourself that your AFCC colleagues don't know.

I believe strongly in giving back through volunteering and, as part of that, I've recently returned to serving as a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) with children in the foster care system. It certainly helps keep my "day job" in perspective.



Ask the Experts

Ten Considerations for Using Gatekeeping to Assess and Describe Family Dynamics

Leslie Drozd, PhD, Newport Beach, California; Nancy Olesen, PhD, San Rafael, California; and Michael Saini, PhD, Toronto, Ontario

1. Although originally focused on maternal behaviors that either facilitate or restrict the involvement of fathers with the children, recent attention has shifted the theory of gatekeeping to be more gender neutral as a framework for assessing how parents' (both mothers and fathers) attitudes and actions affect the involvement and quality of the relationship between the other parent and child.
2. Gatekeeping should be assessed on a continuum that varies in degrees from facilitative to restrictive on the issue of supporting the other parent-child relationship (Austin, 2011; Austin, 2005a, 2005b; Pruett, Arthur, & Ebling, 2007).
3. Parental gatekeeping can be positive or negative. "Facilitative gatekeepers" actively work to support and enrich the child's relationship with the other parent. "Protective gatekeepers" restrict or manage the child's contact with the other parent in order to protect the child from known risks of harm by the restricted parent. In contrast, "restrictive gatekeepers" use a set of behaviors that results in their child resisting or refusing time with the other parent without realistic reasons (Saini, Johnston, Fidler, & Bala, 2012).
4. Gatekeeping is not synonymous with alienation. Only unjustified restrictive gatekeeping behavior is similar to alienating behavior. Gatekeeping does not look at whether the child is resisting or refusing contact with the "out" parent, but only at the parental behavior.
5. Gatekeeping is important but not the only factor to consider. Other considerations may include parental attunement, parent competency, parent-child attachment, parent-child conflict, and age and development of the child, to name a few.
6. The analysis of gatekeeping should focus on the impact of gatekeeping behaviors and attitudes on child's outcomes, including the child's overall safety and wellbeing and the quality of the child's relationships with both parents.
7. Adaptive gatekeeping behaviors include responses to the co-parenting that lead to positive outcomes of safety and wellbeing for the child. Adaptive gatekeeping serves the purpose of doing what is best for the child by either promoting the child's relationship with the other parent in safe situations or protecting the child if she or he needs to be protected because of risk of harm by the other parent.

8. Maladaptive gatekeeping behaviors include responses to the co-parenting that lead to poor outcomes for the child. Maladaptive gatekeeping occurs when a parent, out of his or her own needs—for example, to get revenge on the other parent, or to maintain an enmeshed relationship—restricts a child's relationship with the other parent and in so doing, harms the child's relationship with that parent and ultimately harms the child.
9. A parent's gatekeeping can also be maladaptive if the parent is non-protective, disengaged, or too lax, failing to protect the child from harm.
10. Rather than a set of hardline rules that govern behaviors, gatekeeping analysis requires working hypotheses to consider the various factors that may contribute to both adaptive and maladaptive gatekeeping responses.

The authors will present a full-day, pre-symposium institute at the AFCC 11th Symposium on Child Custody Evaluations in San Antonio, November 6, 2014, entitled, Using Gatekeeping as a Framework to Assess and Describe Family Dynamics within the Context of Parenting Plan Contexts.

Leslie Drozd, PhD, is an editor (with Kathryn Kuehnle, PhD) of Parenting Plan Evaluations: Applied Research for Family Court (2012) and a forthcoming update of the research (with Michael Saini, PhD). She was the founding editor of the international Journal of Child Custody: Research, Issues, and Practice (2004-2013). She been a child custody evaluator for over 25 years, teaches professionals how to do custody evaluations, reviews other experts work, and serves as a consultant to attorneys. Her specific areas of expertise include intimate partner violence, alienation, gatekeeping, and substance abuse. She works clinically with families in the various stages of divorce including co-parenting therapy, reunification therapy, and parent coordination. She is a co-author (with Drs. Olesen and Saini) of a 2013 book, Parenting Plan and Child Custody Evaluations: Using Decision Trees to Increase Evaluator Competence and Avoid Preventable Errors.

Nancy W. Olesen, PhD, graduated in psychology from the University of Wisconsin, Madison and earned a PhD in clinical psychology from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. She has conducted over 150 child custody and dependency evaluations for the courts in California and has provided expert testimony in child custody cases throughout California and other states in the US. Dr. Olesen has taught many courses in best practices in child custody evaluation for professionals in California, including the mandatory training required for court appointed evaluators. She is a co-author (with Drs. Drozd and Saini) of a 2013 book, Parenting Plan and Child Custody Evaluations: Using Decision Trees to Increase Evaluator Competence and Avoid Preventable Errors.

Michael Saini, PhD, is an associate professor and holds the Endowed Chair of Law and Social Work at the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto. He is the co-director of the combined JD and MSW program with the Faculty of Law at the University of Toronto and the course director of the 40-hour Foundations to Custody Evaluations with the faculty's Continuing Education Program. For the past 15 years, he has been conducting custody evaluations and assisting children's counsel for the Office of the Children's Lawyer, Ministry of the Attorney General in Ontario. He is a co-author (with Drs. Drozd and Olesen) of a 2013 book, Parenting Plan and Child Custody Evaluations: Using Decision Trees to Increase Evaluator Competence and Avoid Preventable Errors.