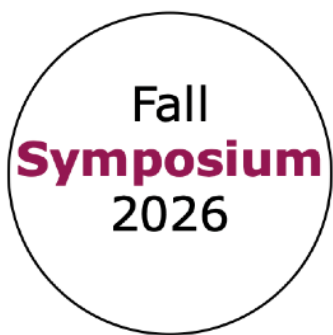




CALGARY  
October 16, 2026



**"Excelling as a Family Court Witness:  
Process, Practice and Avoiding Common  
Pitfalls"**

*with*

**The Honourable Justice M.J. Shafte**

*and*

Dr. Jeff Chang Ph.D, R.Psych  
Sonja Lusignan K.C., B.Ed., J.D.  
Jane Gillespie MSW, RCSW

Join us in-person or  
online and learn with  
colleagues from an  
expert panel.

**University of Calgary  
Downtown Campus  
906 8 Ave SW**

Lunch included for in-  
person attendees.

Includes Certificate of  
Attendance.



An  
Investment  
in  
Professional  
Excellence



**In this full-day training, four experienced individuals representing social work,  
psychology, law, and the judiciary, will provide an overview of:**

- Family court procedures and practices, including levels of court and jurisdiction
- Distinctions between factual and expert evidence
- Preparing to attend court, including:
  - Preparing your file
- Preparing your CV
- Dressing for success
- Keeping calm, cool, and collected
- Insights from a family court justice about what the bench finds helpful

**REGISTER**

<https://www.afccalberta.org/event-details/fall-symposium-2026-26-10-16>

# **The Mental Health Professional Witness in Family Court and in Arbitration Hearings: A Practical Guide for Family Lawyers and Mental Health Professionals**

This interactive session will highlight practical strategies for examining and challenging expert opinions, with insights for lawyers, judges, mediators, arbitrators, and mental health professionals.

In this full-day training, four experienced professionals representing social work, psychology, law, and the judiciary will provide family lawyers with practical insights into working effectively with mental health professionals and expert evidence in family court and arbitration proceedings.

## **Handouts will include:**

- Checklists for lawyers and for witnesses
- Current PN7 and PN8 template orders, and practice notes
- Current guidelines from the AFCC, and from the CAP regarding these assessments
- Template letters to provide to potential witnesses
- And much more...

## **Topics in the morning include:**

- Deciding whether to call the mental health professional as a witness
- Distinguishing between factual (lay) and expert evidence and the implications for litigation
- Preparing mental health professionals for court / arbitration hearing attendance, including:
  - Reviewing qualifications, experience, and curriculum vitae
  - Ensuring they understand the expectations of expert witnesses in court
  - Supporting effective communication under cross-examination
  - Best practices for lawyers for examining and cross-examining mental health professionals

Common pitfalls when introducing expert evidence and how to avoid them  
Insights from a family court justice on what the court finds most helpful from both counsel and mental health professionals; and are differences if the process is arbitration

## **The afternoon is devoted to a mock trial**

*Watch and learn the following:*

- Qualification of an expert witness
- Direct examination of an expert witness
- Cross-examination of an expert witness
- Redirect of an expert witness
- Objections
- Tendering documents as exhibits

This program offers a unique opportunity to hear directly from professionals across disciplines and gain practical tools to improve the presentation and use of mental health evidence in family law cases.

**Expert evidence under pressure. Real-world advocacy. Practical takeaways.**