



Improving the lives of children and families  
through the resolution of family conflict



MARCH 2019  
VOL. 14 NO. 3

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May 29-June 1, 2019  
Westin Harbour Castle Hotel

## AFCC 56th Annual Conference

*The Future of Family  
Justice: International  
Innovations*

## AFCC 56th Annual Conference



*The Future of Family Justice:  
International Innovations*  
May 29-June 1, 2019  
Westin Harbour Castle Hotel  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Interested in a quick summary of the program? See the word cloud above! Don't miss out on attending AFCC's hallmark event! [Click here](#) to register now. Looking for things to do in Toronto? [Click here!](#)

### Hotel Reservations

Make your reservations today, as the discounted room block is already over 75% full! The Westin Harbour Castle Hotel is offering a special rate to AFCC attendees of \$239/\$259 CAD single/double (approximately \$179/194 USD). *Rooms frequently sell out before the room block is released so we encourage you to make your reservation early!* [Reserve online.](#)

### Exhibit and Advertising Opportunities Available

Exhibiting and advertising at the Annual Conference are great ways to share your products and services with an interdisciplinary community of dedicated family law professionals. Only a few exhibit spots remain! For more information, [click here](#) or contact [Corinne Bennett](#).

### Donate to the Silent Auction

The annual AFCC Silent Auction is a longstanding AFCC tradition. All proceeds support AFCC special projects and initiatives. Donate an item and then attend the auction to bid! You do not need to attend the conference to donate. Past auction items include tropical getaways, one-of-a-kind jewelry, sports memorabilia, the latest gadgets and electronics, books, and more. [Donate an item.](#)

### Continuing Education Credits

The program is eligible for up to 20.5 hours of continuing education for psychologists, lawyers, mediators, custody evaluators, social workers, counselors, and parenting coordinators. Most sessions are eligible. [Click here for the list](#) of eligible sessions.

## Ask the Experts

### Ten Tips for De-escalating Conflict in Parent-Child Contact Problems

*John A. Moran, PhD and Shawn McCall, PsyD, JD*

Conflict in parent-child problems can escalate quickly and needs to be de-escalated as rapidly and as early in the process as possible. Here are ten tips for de-escalating that conflict.

[Read More](#)

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### Save the Date AFCC-AAML Conference

September 19-21, 2019  
San Diego, California

### AFCC Chapter Conferences

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Washington Chapter Annual  
Conference

March 23, 2019  
Washington Athletic Club  
Seattle, Washington

Missouri Chapter Annual  
Conference

March 28-29, 2019  
St. Louis Zoo  
St. Louis, Missouri

Massachusetts Chapter  
Annual Conference

March 29, 2019

## Call for Comments - Guidelines for Parenting Coordination

The AFCC Parenting Coordination Guidelines Revision Task Force has been working for nearly two years to gather information from jurisdictions across the globe about the practice of parenting coordination and to incorporate data from the parenting science and legal literature to update the original AFCC PC Guidelines (2005). To access the Draft Guidelines, [click here](#). Once you have reviewed the proposed guidelines, proceed through the survey and make your comments on the sections you wish to address.

[Submit Comments Here](#)

## Parental Alienation: The Impact on Children and the Parents Left Behind

"Divorce is hard enough on a child, but what if one parent tries to damage a child's relationship with the other parent by saying untrue things, and in severe cases, brainwashing the child. Find out why the court system is moving away from using the term (parental alienation), what can be done to rebuild a relationship with an alienated child, and why it's considered a family dynamic problem and not a syndrome." ABC27 - Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Arnold Shienvold, PhD, former AFCC President, discusses parental alienation and related behaviors, including estrangement, abuse, and refuse/resist behaviors in this illuminating 30-minute podcast.

[Listen Now](#)



*Integrating Research into Practice and Policy: The Impact on Families and Children*

## AFCC Fall Conference Call for Proposals

Regis College  
Weston, Massachusetts

[Texas Chapter Annual Conference](#)  
March 29-30, 2019  
Hyatt Place  
The Woodlands, Texas

[Ohio Chapter Annual Conference](#)  
April 3, 2019  
Quest Conference Center  
Columbus, Ohio

[Colorado Chapter Annual Conference](#)  
April 26, 2019  
Craig Hall, University of Denver  
Denver, Colorado

[Oregon Chapter Annual Conference](#)  
April 29, 2019  
McMenamins Kennedy School  
Portland, Oregon

[Australia Chapter Annual Conference](#)  
August 15-17, 2019  
International Convention Centre ICC Sydney  
Sydney, Australia

[Florida Chapter Annual Conference](#)  
September 26-27, 2019  
The Florida Hotel & Conference Center at the Florida Mall  
Orlando, Florida

[Maryland Chapter Annual Conference](#)  
September 27, 2019

[Indiana Chapter Annual Conference](#)  
October 4, 2019  
Indiana War Memorial Shoup Hall  
Indianapolis, Indiana

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October 31-November 2, 2019  
Omni William Penn Hotel  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

The AFCC Conference Committee is seeking proposals for 90-minute workshop sessions. Proposals must be submitted using the online form by May 13, 2019. The program brochure and online registration will be available August 2019.

Call for Proposals

## Donate to the AFCC Scholarship Fund

Would you consider helping your colleagues attend AFCC conferences by making a donation to the AFCC Scholarship Fund? AFCC scholarship recipients increase our diversity by bringing professionals from different backgrounds, representing the many disciplines encompassed by who we are as an organization. **Will you contribute to allow a hard-working professional attend an AFCC conference? Thank you to those who have already donated!**

Donate Today

## Where in the World is AFCC?



*Family Court Review editorial team at Hofstra University, Hempstead, NY*

#AFCCHats are everywhere! We need you to submit your photos of AFCC hats! Email the photo with the location to [Corinne Bennett](#) and we will feature it on the [AFCC Facebook](#)

## AFCC Resource of the Month

Guidelines for Examining Intimate Partner Violence



See more AFCC resources on the [Resources page](#) of the AFCC website

page. To sweeten the deal, an award for the best picture will be presented at the annual conference in Toronto!

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## AFCC Webinar Corner

Did you miss Michael Saini's webinar, *Evidence-Informed Approach to Alienation*? Did you know AFCC members can access this webinar and previous webinars for free? Visit the [Member Center of the AFCC website](#) to start watching. Not a member? [Click here](#) to join today!

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## In Memorium

Judge Lawrence W. Kaplan  
Aug. 21, 1928 -- Feb. 18, 2019

Former AFCC President Judge Lawrence Kaplan pioneered mediation in Allegheny County (Pittsburgh, PA) family court, always preferring mediation over litigation. He was known as the father of mediation in Allegheny County and it is due to him that family mediation is required in most of Pennsylvania. Judge Kaplan served as a case editor of the law review at the University of Pittsburgh School of Law, graduating in 1953. He later joined the private law practice of Kaufman & Harris, where he was a partner for 22 years. In 1978, Judge Kaplan was appointed to the county Common Pleas Court. He was elected to a full, 10-year term in 1979 and served on the bench until 2008, when he reached the mandatory retirement age of 80. Judge Kaplan served as the President of AFCC in 1988-1989. He was recognized with numerous awards and was also honored by the Allegheny County Bar Association in 2004 with the establishment of the annual Lawrence W. Kaplan Lecture in Conflict Resolution. After retirement, Judge Kaplan accepted a position specializing in dispute resolution with the firm of Rothman Gordon. Judge Kaplan, 90, died at his Oakland home Monday from complications of melanoma.

## Member News

**AFCC and Alberta Chapter Board member Gay Benns, LLB** was called to the bench and was appointed to the Family and Youth Division of the Provincial Court of Alberta. Gay was a partner at Moe Hannah, LLP and volunteered for many years with Calgary Legal Guidance. Gay worked with CLERC (Children's Legal Education and Resource Centre) and with the Dispute Resolution Program in the Alberta Courts.

**AFCC member Leslie Drozd, PhD**, Newport Beach, CA, was appointed as an associate member to the American Psychological Ethics Committee. Leslie was the founding editor of the Journal of Child Custody, is on the editorial board for Family Court Review, the AFCC Board of Directors, and served on the Task Forces that created The Model Standards of Practice for conducting child custody evaluations and evaluations with intimate partner violence. She is an editor of *Parenting Plan and Child Custody Evaluations: Applied Research for Family Court* and is a recipient of AFCC's John E. Van Duzer Distinguished Service Award for her outstanding contributions and achievements.

**AFCC member Rebecca Stahl, JD** will assume the position on April 1 of Deputy Director of the Sayra and Neil Meyerhoff Center for Families, Children, and the Courts (CFCC) at the University of Baltimore School of Law. CFCC, founded and directed by AFCC member and FCR editor-in-chief Barbara Babb, is a national leader in promoting unified family courts. Rebecca will work with Barbara to implement CFCC's projects, including family court reform, strategic planning, and reports and publications on family justice issues. She will oversee the operation of CFCC's Truancy Court Program, an interdisciplinary program working within Baltimore public schools to identify and address the root causes of truancy to help students stay in school.

**Daniel Pickar, PhD, AFCC member from Santa Rosa, CA**, received the 2019 Judge Rex Sater Award from the Sonoma County Bar Association in California. The award is given for excellence in family law to an individual or group who has contributed to improving the practice of family law in Sonoma County. Dan is the first psychologist to receive the award in its 20-year history. Dan is a long time AFCC member who serves on both the Conference and Continuing Education Committees of AFCC.

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## 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, case law and research updates, international news and the latest initiatives in family law and conflict resolution. The AFCC eNEWS is free and you do not need to be a member of AFCC to subscribe. [Subscribe here](#). AFCC members are free to share eNEWS content.

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ASSOCIATION OF  
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CONCILIATION COURTS



eNEWS

VOL. 14 NO. 3  
March 2019

## **Ask the Experts:**

### **Ten Tips for De-escalating Conflict in Parent-Child Contact Problems**

*John A. Moran, PhD and Shawn McCall, PsyD, JD*

Conflict in parent-child problems can escalate quickly and needs to be de-escalated as rapidly and as early in the process as possible. Here are ten tips for de-escalating that conflict.

#### **1. Use a Family Systems Approach**

The interaction of individual, family, and systemic factors leads to parent-child resist/refuse dynamics. Treatment interventions need to include goals for all family members.

#### **2. Use a Team Approach**

A court-appointed Interventionist<sup>1</sup> coordinates the work of each of the behavioral health professionals involved with the family and establishes a collaborative working relationship with the attorneys representing the parents.

#### **3. Emphasize Pre-treatment Assessment**

Family members need to feel confident that their concerns are understood, appreciated, and really listened to. The Interventionist should review relevant documents, consult with current and previous behavioral health providers, and provide a treatment plan that identifies the type and severity of the parent-child contact problem as well as intervention goals for each family member.

#### **4. Avoid Making Parenting Time Recommendations**

The Court or the attorneys may ask the Interventionist to recommend a schedule of contact between the child and the resisted parent. When an Interventionist is tasked with making recommendations during the intervention, family members will lobby for their parenting time wishes and feel betrayed if their wishes are not honored. The general

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<sup>1</sup> Courts use various designations for behavioral health professionals appointed to reunify a parent-child relationship. We use the term "Interventionist" as equivalent to court-appointed therapist, family therapist, counselor, or special master.



formula for resolution of parent-child contact problems consists of compliance with a well-crafted court-ordered parenting plan implemented through parallel coparenting with the support of an intervention.

## **5. Conflict Escalation is the Problem, Not Conflict**

All family relationships experience conflict. In families with parent-child contact problems, parents find themselves in a maelstrom of negativity—a powerful emotional whirlpool in which avoiding conflict becomes increasingly difficult. Conflict escalation becomes a tormenting force in the family and is more difficult to organize and manage than any maladaptive personality trait the parents may have. General treatment goals for the family are to reduce family conflict and improve family members' skills for addressing conflict when it arises.

## **6. Negotiate Coparenting Nuts and Bolts**

Since a family with intractable parent-child contact problems is trapped in a web of defensive and hostile orientations, coparenting communication needs to start with negotiating coparenting “nuts and bolts,” that is, small matters such as how the coparents will communicate, how they will manage parenting time exchanges, etc. After successfully problem-solving a series of nuts and bolts problems, coparents begin to feel a glimmer of hope that coparenting communication can work and that they can trust one another in small cooperative efforts, at least when they have the assistance of a skilled third party. Small successes open the door for addressing more difficult issues such as how to support the child in their relationship with the rejected parent.

## **7. Avoid Negativity Traps**

The toxic stress of parent-child contact problems is so strong that it results in striking similarities across different types of families with alienation-type problems including:

- Inability to address truth and blame,
- Polarized thinking characterized by negative stereotypes, open-and-shut conclusions, and negative confirmation bias,
- Deep resentment.

Family dialogue about the problem becomes polarized (lacking cooperation), stereotyped (lacking individuality), and open-and-shut (lacking flexibility). Negative confirmation bias by the child restricts the impact of positive experiences with the resisted parent. At the emotional level, the family is coping with deeply felt resentments and grudges that must be addressed.

## **8. Stop Runaway Conflict Escalation**

A lot of information is available online and in self-help books about how to defuse arguments. But coparents with parent-child contact problems are not trying to defuse an argument. Their conflict is much more severe. They are trying to end a holy war waged to defend the children against what they view as mortal (and moral) threats to the children's best interest. Rather than defusing, the first step needs to be a cease-fire. This cease-fire

can be created either by one parent acting alone, or both parents mutually disengaging without counter-punching. Early in the conflict de-escalation process, it is necessary to have a third party involved as a “conversational manager” who insures that the conversation is emotionally safe and productive.

### **9. Shift from Problems to Proposals**

Bill Eddy, LCSW, Esq. pointed out that when people focus on proposals rather than problems, the conversation shifts from the past and placing blame for problems, to the future—taking responsibility and contributing to finding solutions to problems.<sup>2</sup> We could not agree more. When family members focus on what they can do differently going forward, a major shift toward de-escalation occurs. The problem is that it is hard to keep the conversation focused on solutions and proposals.

### **10. Shift from Resentment to Respect**

A parent can reduce the child’s resentment by skillfully inquiring what the child’s hurt has been like, and by communicating appreciation for the suffering the child has endured. Parents focusing on their own self-responsibility can reduce the child’s resentment. The well-known advice of using “I” statements can help a parent make this shift.

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<sup>2</sup> Bill Eddy, LCSW, Esq. (2014). *So What’s Your Proposal? Shifting High-Conflict People from Blaming to Problem-Solving in 30 Seconds!* Unhooked Books, LLC. Scottsdale, AZ.

*These Ten Tips are excerpted from a forthcoming Overcoming Barriers, Inc. book publication: Overcoming Malignant Family Conflict: Coparenting Nuts and Bolts. Drs. Moran and McCall will be presenting a workshop, Overcoming Malignant Parent-Child Resist/Refuse Dynamics, at the AFCC 56<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in Toronto May 29-June 1, 2019.*

*After earning his PhD in clinical psychology from the University of Maryland, John A. (Jack) Moran, PhD, relocated to Phoenix, Arizona, to become the Associate Director of the Milton H. Erickson Foundation. In his independent practice in Phoenix, he provides evaluation, intervention and consultation services for individuals and families involved in family court. He leads the Family Turning Point team which provides multi-day interventions for family with disrupted parent-child relationships. He is on the Board of Directors of Overcoming Barriers, Inc. and has served as the clinical director of three OCB family camps. He coauthored the Overcoming Barriers publication: Overcoming the Coparenting Trap: Essential Skills When a Child Resists a Parent. He has contributed chapters to texts including Overcoming Parent-Child Contact Problems: Family Based Interventions for Resistance, Rejection and Alienation, A.M Judge and R.M Deutsch (Eds.); Parenting Plan Evaluations: Applied research for the Family Court, K. Kuehnle & L. Drozd (Eds.) and its second edition, L. Drozd, M Saini, & N. Olesen (Eds.) He provides training to behavioral health professionals, attorneys and judges at local, regional, and national conferences. He is a former president of the Arizona Chapter of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts.*

*Shawn McCall, PsyD, JD is a psychologist who is currently practicing in California, and he has a broad array of professional experiences that inform his work with children, parents, families, courts, and schools. Dr. McCall has been active in the professional community, including being a former president and chairperson of the Ethics committee of the San Francisco Psychological Association and a former treasurer of the Santa Clara County Psychological Association. Dr. McCall presents across the nation on clinical, forensic, and ethical topics and considerations in practice. Dr. McCall has provided expert services to criminal, family, civil, and dependency courts.*



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