



# NEWSLETTER

## Association of Family and Conciliation Courts

An international association of judges, counselors, mediators, and lawyers.

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Editor, Laurance M. Hyde, Jr.

### OUR FIRST!

This first Newsletter, in what is planned to be a regular series, intends to create an information exchange. These are fast moving times in the family conciliation field and our membership is in the forefront of the movement. We need to keep in touch with what is going on in our field. A fine exchange of information and ideas takes place at the Annual and Winter Conferences and the "Conciliation Courts Review" is our medium for the dissemination of ideas.

If you will let us have information about what's going on in family counseling, mediation and in conciliation Courts in your bailiwick, we will use the Newsletter to spread the word.

### CALIFORNIA

It all began here and the news is just as exciting now as it was back then. California has formed the first Chapter of AFCC, which is sponsoring a series of Institutes, supported by two grants to AFCC from the Drown Foundation totalling \$20,000, obtained by AFCC Board Member Jeanne Ames. The Institutes are designed to provide training to assist in the implementation of California's new mandatory mediation statute.

The Chapter's officers are:

- President.....Judge Don King,  
San Francisco
- President-Elect.....Murray Bloom,  
San Diego
- First Vice-President..Judge Billy Mills  
Los Angeles
- Second Vice-President.Diana Richmond,  
San Francisco

Under the editorship of Chapter President-Elect Murray Bloom and Judith Buifaloe, the California Chapter is publishing its own Newsletter. The California Chapter Newsletter, as well as the National Newsletter, will welcome your contributions of news from other places. The address is Suite 1301, 110 West C Street, San Diego, California 92101.

The chapter concept and its excellent beginning may be the look of the future for AFCC.

In Alameda County (Oakland) AFCC Board Member Elizabeth O'Neill reports that an important step has been taken towards the establishment of the Family Court. Two judges have accepted a two-year assignment to hear all family law cases and each to keep all cases assigned from start to finish, including modifications. They are also considering the establishment of full time positions that can be split into half or quarter time assignments. This will enable the court to maintain the existing program with a variety of people with various skills and specialties at a lower fiscal cost. All personnel in these assignments will meet and exceed the minimum qualifications set forth in mediation legislation.

### GUIDE

The National Alliance for Optional Parenthood, 2010 Massachusetts Avenue, Northwest, Washington, D.C. 20036 has just published a resource for teachers, counselors, and youth leaders entitled Exploring the Parenthood Choice; An Activities Guide for Educators. It offers valuable ideas for people working to prevent problems associated with unwanted pregnancies and "parenthood by chance." Copies can be ordered from N.A.O.P. for \$5.25 each.

#### WASHINGTON

King County (Seattle) has established a four judge Family Law Department to streamline the handling of domestic relations matters, which comprise 41% of all noncriminal cases filed annually. All family law cases are subject to mandatory settlement conferences. The program became effective September 15, 1980 and a fifth judge was added on January 1, 1981. The Superior Court Administrator reports that the time period from filing to dissolution has been reduced since the formation of the Department from 20 months to 4 months.

Of special assistance in establishing this new department was AFCC Board Member Judge Irwin Cantor of Phoenix, Arizona. AFCC Board Member Judge Nancy Ann Holman, one of the judges involved in the project, reports that the Department has assisted in reducing the backlog for all trials in King County since family cases comprise such a large portion of the civil calendar.

After an unsuccessful attempt to develop legislation acceptable to various groups in the recent legislative session, University of Puget Sound Family Law Professor Andrew M. Walkover convened a working group of all known to be active in such legislation to re-draft for the upcoming session. In addition to AFCC members Judge Nancy Ann Holman of Seattle and Judge Carol Fuller of Olympia, State Representative Art Wang of Tacoma and numerous other professionals in the family law field are represented. Professor Walkover and Rep. Wang welcome and urge us to provide them with all legislation and comments on the experience with joint custody in other states. Send to Professor Walkover at the University of Puget Sound Law School, 950 Broadway Plaza, Tacoma, Wa 94802.

#### NEW JERSEY

In consultation with AFCC Board Members Tim Salius and Hugh McIsaac, New Jersey is launching a conciliation courts program.

#### ARIZONA

AFCC Board Member Judge Irwin Cantor, presiding judge of the Maricopa County (Phoenix) Conciliation Court reports new approaches in Custody and Visitation Counseling including screening conferences to assess whether or not a full custody study is warranted; a telephone referral program permitting an emergency handling of a visitation or custody problem to avoid a buildup of hostility and a shared custody program which encourages parents who are interested in an alternative to sole custody to make the fact known to their lawyers and to the Court so that all possibilities can be explored.

AFCC Board Member Judge Norman Fenton, reports the establishment in Pima County (Tucson) of a domestic relations division to expedite cases, provide greater consistency and a more sympathetic approach to people suffering the trauma of divorce. Judge Fenton is the presiding judge of this specialty Court which became effective June 1, 1981 and has created new rules, guidelines and forms for the Court.

Pima County's Conciliation Court is directed by AFCC Board Member Craig Everett. The Court uses a modified mediation approach which, through its Child Advocates office may make custody and visitation recommendations to the Court if the parents cannot agree.

#### HAWAII

AFCC board member Judge Betty Vitousek has promulgated an order requiring all visitation disputes between parents in Honolulu to be referred to mediation. The Court will order a social study only if mediation fails.

Judge Vitousek's court also has in progress a mini-study project in which one-third of the cases involving contested custody will be referred for mediation, one-third will undergo the traditional social study, and litigants in the other third of disputed custody cases will have a choice between mediation and social study.

MICHIGAN

The Wayne County (Detroit) circuit bench has named AFCC member Gerhard (Hardy) Ritsema as the new Circuit Court, Friend of the Court.

AFCC Board Member Ed Staniec has been appointed Director of Client Services for the Friend of the Court. The Family Counseling Service which Ed previously directed has been merged into the Counseling Service Section of the Friend of the Court. Ed was also appointed by the Governor to the Marriage Counselor's License Board for the State of Michigan.

AFCC Board Member Carl Gunderson is the new Deputy Director of Family Counseling and Mediation Services.

Michigan's new law increases the marriage license fee from \$5.00 to \$20.00 and earmarks the \$15.00 increase exclusively for marital and family counseling functions.

FLORIDA

AFCC Board Member Judge Dominic Salfi reports that in Seminole County (Stanford) each division of the Court has a coordinator who is, in essence, a judicial administrator. This permits the division hearing family cases to develop a specialized staff, an advisory committee composed of lawyers who regularly practice family law, a forum for education and communication among the bench, the bar, court function areas, the sheriffs department etc. The advisory committee is in the process of sponsoring a series of family law seminars for which attending lawyers may receive continuing legal education credit under Florida's specialty designation system. The division also maintains an updated library specializing in divorce, custody, step-parenting, teenagers and the like. The books may be checked out by lawyers for their clients. They also have a community family resource guide and an information and referral service available to the public.

WISCONSIN

Dane County (Madison) has amended its rules of court to approve a form of mediation contract, to provide for voluntary mediation, to provide for confidentiality, and immunity from testimony or deposition as to the mediation process. AFCC Board Member Kathleen M. Jeffords, Director of the Family Court Counseling Service, 311A City County Building, 210 Monona Avenue, Madison, Wisconsin 53709 would like to hear from other court counseling services using a similar approach and is willing to provide copies of the mediation agreement and the amended rules of court to other AFCC members.

ONTARIO, CANADA

Board Member Gerry Gaughan, Principal Program Officer, Divorce Counseling and Family Affairs, Department of National Health and Welfare, reports that an extensive series of workshops has been held over the past several years throughout Canada, with attendance ranging from 30 to 325 persons per workshop, to encourage collaboration among lawyers, judges, social workers, and persons from other helping professions as to topics including the whole range of family counseling and conciliation issues. AFCC Board Members have been well represented on the faculty of these workshops, including Judge Victor Baum, Meyer Elkin, Edward Staniec, James MacDonald, Gerald Lecovin, Judge Betty Barteau, Judge John Van Duzer and Ann Milne.

MISSOURI

AFCC Board member Roberta Harris, Chief of Domestic Relations Circuit Court St. Louis, Missouri, has undertaken an Annual Post-Divorce Workshop to provide a forum for parents to discuss their concerns about the after divorce adjustment, to help them to become more knowledgeable about community resources and to assist them toward facilitating family restructure.

AFCC GRANTS

FILM GRANT

AFCC's film "A Family Affair" was produced under an LEAA Grant primarily for use in judicial training programs. It will be of value to others concerned with the issues of spousal and child abuse. It deals with the impact of violence upon one family and the responses, some helpful and some not, of the legal system.

It is available from Visucom Productions, Inc., 1047 Whipple Avenue, Redwood City, California, 94063, purchase price is \$475, rental price for three days is \$60. It will also be available through the lending library facilities which NIMH is in the process of developing. We hope to have details soon on how to receive the film (or videotape) through NIMH. In the meantime, it can be borrowed from the Learning Technology Center, Nova University, 3301 College Ave., Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33314; (305) 475-7677.

MEDIATION STUDY GRANT

AFCC's mediation study, under a three year grant from The Children's Bureau of HHS and directed by Jessica Pearson of Denver, is developing a

divorce mediation resource directory, a collection of papers on divorce mediation theory and practice as well as the results of research comparing cost effectiveness and quality of court connected mediation services in Los Angeles, Minneapolis and Connecticut with the traditional adversary process in Denver.

It appeared in mid-September that the grant might be terminated after considerable time, effort and federal money had been spent in gearing up for the undertaking. We are now told that funding will be continued and the project will be permitted to continue its important task. All of us owe thanks to those who rallied to the support of this project by letters and phone calls. It is a project which should result in solid information for legislators, county commissioners, judges and others to use in deciding policy and fiscal issues as to alternative dispute settlement mechanisms.

FORT LAUDERDALE WINTER MEETING  
DECEMBER 3-5, 1981

The theme is "Divorce Mediation-Theory and Practice." If you haven't made reservations and sent for the complete program, now is the time.

Post meeting trips include a weekend in Key West, a diver's or beachcomber's trip to the Bahamas and a Caribbean cruise.

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