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Executive Director's Message

Peter Salem

Every five years the AFCC Board of Directors and staff takes a step back to reflect on our work, determine if we are going in the right direction, and adjust our course for the future. It can be challenging, as our collective plates

AFCC 56th Annual Conference

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

AFCC Chapter Conferences

New York Chapter Annual Conference

December 14, 2018
New York, New York

Arizona Chapter Annual Conference

January 25-27, 2019
Sedona, Arizona

are quite full of daily tasks, but it is an exercise that invariably proves well worth the effort.

[Read More](#)

Ask the Experts **Ten Tips for the Holidays**

Robin M Deutsch, PhD, ABPP

Every year, many families are forced to address parenting time conflicts around the holidays. The AFCC eNEWS is pleased to share this updated classic Ask the Experts column on Ten Tips for the Holidays.

[Read More](#)

AFCC Annual Appeal and Scholarship Fund

All AFCC members should have received a letter for this year's Annual Appeal asking for your support for the AFCC Scholarship Fund. Please consider helping your colleagues attend AFCC conferences by making a generous donation. AFCC is offering 40 scholarships for the 56th Annual Conference, May 29-June 1, 2019, in Toronto. 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?**

[Donate Today](#)

AFCC 56th Annual Conference Sponsorship, Advertising, and Exhibits

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

Program Sneak Peak

[California Chapter Annual Conference](#)

February 22-24, 2019
Westin South Coast Plaza
Costa Mesa, California

[Alberta Chapter Annual Conference](#)

March 14, 2019
Hilton Garden Inn - Calgary
Downtown
Calgary, Alberta, Canada

[Texas Chapter Annual Conference](#)

March 29-30, 2019
Hyatt Place
The Woodlands, Texas

[Australia Chapter Annual Conference](#)

August 15-17, 2019
International Convention
Centre ICC Sydney
Sydney, Australia

With over 20 hours of continuing education, and more than 100 conference sessions, this conference is a can't miss event. Featured speakers will include: Supreme Court of Canada Justice Claire L'Heureux-Dubé (Ret.), former Chief Justice of the Family Court of Australia Diana Bryant, The Right Honourable Sir Ernest Ryder, Senior President of Tribunals, Lord Justice of Appeal, England and Wales, and Justice George Czutrin, Senior Family Judge of Ontario. You do not want to miss this remarkable event!

Sponsorship, Advertising, and Exhibit Deadline

Whether your marketing budget is \$500 or \$25,000, there is a sponsorship level for you! **More than 1,100 participants are expected to attend.** Conference presenters include leaders in the field, authors, and researchers who conduct landmark studies, leading policymakers, trainers, and program directors, who are responsible for selecting programs and products for agencies, firms, and courts.

Sponsorships of \$1,500 and up include at least one conference registration! The \$2,500 Gold Sponsorship includes a conference registration AND exhibit table to share your products and services with attendees. Don't delay! **The sponsorship and advertising deadline is December 3, 2018.** For more information, please contact AFCC Program Coordinator, [Corinne Bennett](#). For information on conference sponsorships, exhibit space, or advertising, [click here](#).



AFCC Webinar Corner

The New Hague Treaty on Child Support Enforcement
Anne Miller and Robert Keith
December 6, 2018, 1:00-2:00pm Eastern time USA

[Registration is now open](#)

AFCC members may access the recording for free, along with all other previous webinars through the [Member Center](#) of the AFCC website. Not a member? Click here to [join today!](#)

Where in the World is AFCC?

[#AFCCHats](#) [#whereintheworldisAFCC?](#)



Andrea Himel and daughter
Lauren Adelson in Stone
Mountain, Atlanta



Linda Feldman, at Franz
Josef glacier, New Zealand.



Kathleen McNamara and
Rebecca Stahl in
Breckenridge, Colorado

#AFCCHats are everywhere! Follow along on [Facebook](#) to see the submissions. Want to join in? Show your AFCC pride by taking a picture with your AFCC hat in your hometown, while your out on vacation, or at work. Email the photo with the location to [Corinne Bennett](#) and we will feature it on the [AFCC Facebook page](#). To sweeten the deal, an award for the best picture will be presented at the annual conference in Toronto!

Member News

Connie Beck, AFCC member from Tucson, Arizona, has recently co-authored a new book with G. Andrew H. Benjamin, Morgan Shaw, and Robert A. Geffner. The book is entitled *Family Evaluation in Custody Litigation, Second Edition: Promoting Optimal Outcomes and Reducing Ethical Risks*, and it is published by the American Psychological Association. If you are interested in learning more about the book, please [click here](#).

The Missouri Bar Association has named St. Louis County Presiding **Judge Douglas R. Beach**, AFCC member from Saint Louis, Missouri, as the winner of the Roger P. Krumm Family Law Award. The award is dedicated to family-law attorneys who have demonstrated an exceptional degree of competence, skill, integrity, commitment and dedication toward the improvement and advancement of the practice of family law, and to the children and families involved in family law matters. Congratulations, Douglas!

Melissa A. Kucinski, AFCC member from Washington, DC, has written a new book titled *A Practical Handbook for the Child's Attorney: Effectively Representing Children in Custody Cases*, published by the American Bar Association. More information about the book is available [here](#).

AFCC member **Peter Walzer**, from Woodland Hills, California, has been named President of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers. Peter is the founding partner of the law firm Walzer Melcher LLP, a practice focused exclusively on family law with offices in Woodland Hills, CA. He is the past chair of the Los Angeles County Bar Association's Family Law Section, a past president of the Southern California Chapter of AAML and former chair of the executive committee of the State Bar Family Law Section. He has been a practicing attorney for 36 years.

Chapter News



The AFCC Alberta Chapter Supper Club, at a recent meeting in Edmonton, Canada.

The AFCC Ontario Chapter, in celebration of their 10th anniversary awarded ten outstanding family justice professionals with the Award of Excellence in Family Justice. Join us in congratulating the following:

Dr. Rachel Birnbaum
patti cross
Justice George Czutrin and Justice Emile Kruzick
DivorceMate Software Inc.
Mr. Philip Epstein
Dr. Barbara Fidler
Dr. Peter Jaffe
Mr. Alfred Mamo
Justice Joyce Pelletier
Professor Carol Rogerson and Professor Rollie Thompson

Meet Brian J. Burke, President of the Ontario Chapter



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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Message from the Executive Director

Peter Salem

Every five years the AFCC Board of Directors and staff takes a step back to reflect on our work, determine if we are going in the right direction, and adjust our course for the future. It can be challenging, as our collective plates are quite full of daily tasks, but it is an exercise that invariably proves well worth the effort.

The process includes gathering outside perspectives. We convene a charrette, which is a facilitated meeting of 8-10 colleagues who are somewhat peripheral to, but familiar enough with, AFCC to give us honest and straightforward feedback about what we do, how we are perceived by others, what opportunities we are leaving on the table, and if we are drifting off course.

We then launch a strategic planning process with all of the familiar trappings: SWOT analyses, reviews of mission, vision and values, and the development of goals, objectives, strategies, and tactics. The result is a road map that guides our daily work. It is simple, but invaluable.

Our first step, however, is to hear from AFCC members. And we did just that in September when we sent our membership survey (and a couple of reminders) to you. Fewer than 400 members responded, which, candidly, was a disappointment. Respondents appear to have been those who are more engaged in AFCC, as nearly 80% had attended an annual conference in the last five years. On the bright side, that might suggest that those who responded know AFCC well and are in a better position to evaluate the association than those who don't participate. In fact, the results of this survey were remarkably consistent with previous surveys conducted in 2013 and 2008. Nonetheless, we certainly would like to hear from everyone.

So, what did we learn from those who shared their views? Well, AFCC remains very much a "word of mouth" organization, with 64% of respondents reporting that they learned about AFCC through a friend or colleague. The next highest category was

“other” (9%) followed by conferences (7%) with social media trailing the pack at well under 1%.

Why do members join and renew with AFCC? First and foremost, to keep abreast of issues in the field (4.62 on a 5-point scale), followed by attending AFCC conferences, trainings, and webinars (4.42), then the *Family Court Review* (3.94). This suggests that among the many benefits of AFCC membership, the focus is on learning and improving as a professional. Furthermore, respondents identified our most important attributes as (1) addressing challenging issues in the field (4.67); (2) multi-disciplinary perspective (4.52); (3) practice standards and guidelines (4.41); and, (4) research (4.29). This information is enormously helpful to the Board of Directors as we make plans for the future.

We also learned that even as technology advances rapidly, as a group AFCC members are taking their own sweet time getting there. The print edition of *Family Court Review* is considered more valuable than the online version, although the gap has closed slightly since our 2013 survey. Just as in 2013, members found the functional online resources (event registration, membership application, membership directory) more valuable than our email communication, and far more valuable than social media.

A few respondents commented that they found AFCC dues and conferences to be too expensive; at the same time, overall, members responded that the annual dues and conference registration fees are a good value compared with other national and international associations (both about 4.2/5). (As an aside, we closely monitor the fees charged by many of our peers and AFCC consistently charges the least, or close, for membership and conferences.)

There were a few comments that suggests there are areas for improvement. One person had concerns about lawyer-bashing (I would hope that we can stop that!); another mentioned the lack of programs for financial professionals; and it was suggested that we stop using the same presenters all the time. One person suggested a reduced rate for retired members, and I am delighted to report that we implemented that last year! While these do not represent the majority or a significant minority view, we take them very seriously.

Perhaps the best news is that respondents report being satisfied with AFCC. More than 90% were very satisfied (71%) or somewhat satisfied (21%) with AFCC membership, which is consistent with both our 2008 and 2013 surveys. Only 1% were not very satisfied, and there was one person who reported being not at all satisfied. We appreciate hearing all of your views.

In addition to appreciating AFCC membership, respondents gave the AFCC staff high ratings for accessibility (4.49), problem solving ability, (4.5), competence (4.67), courtesy and professionalism (4.72), and prompt response to requests (4.54). These ratings are consistent with 2008 and 2013 surveys, and as you can imagine, I am very proud of the work of our staff. Full disclosure, there were a couple of comments from

people who felt they were not served well. I am sorry to hear that it happened. Please know that we try very hard to treat every member with courtesy, respect, and as a priority. Every so often, something falls through the cracks. I do believe that the overall scores are indicative of these efforts. Credit goes to Associate Director Leslye Hunter, Director of Operations Dawn Holmes, Meeting Manager Nicole Ellickson, Program Coordinator Corinne Bennett and Program Assistant Patrick Sommer who make up the rest of an outstanding team and speaking on behalf of the staff, we are grateful for your support.

Who are AFCC members? Like most international and national membership associations, we are trending older, with 10% ages 36-45; 23% between 45-55; nearly 40% are 56-65 and 26% over 65 years old. Interestingly, 15% of new members are over 65. While we have long known that few under 35 are active in AFCC (or in many other professional associations), these numbers suggest we are aging a bit more than previous surveys. This is supported by anecdotal reports that younger professionals are not engaging in family law organizations. AFCC's Early-to-Mid-Career (E2M) initiative is working toward finding ways to involve younger professionals, so if you are new to the field, or to AFCC, please reach out to our E2M Committee Chairs [Rebecca Stahl](#) and [Liana Shelby](#).

The majority of survey respondents have more than 20 years of professional experience (61%) with another 23% practicing between 11-20 years. When asked to identify their primary area of practice, 23% respondents reported their primary practice was as a lawyer and another 23% responded mental health professional. This was followed by custody evaluator (17%), mediator (13%), judicial officer (6%), parenting coordinator (4%), and academic and researchers (2% each). Respondents reported that their secondary areas of practice included mediator (20%), custody evaluator (13%), and mental health professional and lawyer (both 5%).

Nearly 44% of respondents reported that they are solo practitioners, with another 23% working for a private (for profit) firm or agency, 14% for the courts, 7% non-profit and 3% educational institutions and non-court government agencies. This represents a significant departure from the early years of AFCC when it was almost entirely court personnel.

AFCC members continue to come primarily from the United States (77%) with Canada representing 13% of members, another 4.4% from Australia and 2% from New Zealand. In recent years we have dedicated significant resources to outreach in Europe and are hopeful that will pay dividends. AFCC is also overwhelmingly (90%) Caucasian, a struggle that continues within our organization and the family law community generally.

Finally, it is noteworthy, that a full two-thirds of respondents indicated that they pay for their AFCC membership with personal funds. Courts and other public agencies—once the foundation of AFCC—paid for fewer than 5% of respondents. It is concerning that fewer and fewer public agencies are supporting continuing education. The silver lining is that an enormous segment of our membership apparently believes enough in AFCC

that they will dig into their own pocket and pay the dues. It is for that reason that AFCC has been committed to its longstanding philosophy of limiting dues increases (there has been only one since 2002) and making AFCC as accessible as possible for all.



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Ask the Experts: Ten Tips for the Holidays

Robin M. Deutsch, PhD, ABPP, Wellesley, Massachusetts

1. Have a very specific plan for the holidays so there is no opportunity for confusion or conflict. Parents may alternate or split holidays, but when there is disagreement about this plan, consider the longer view of alternating holidays by even and odd years. Holidays are often a time of heightened emotions, and the reality of the loss associated with separation or divorce is no more apparent than when parents must spend a holiday without their children or without old traditions.
2. Try to continue traditions of the past for the children. If they are accustomed to spending Christmas Eve with one extended family, try to continue that tradition, if not every year then in alternate years. Parents should consider maintaining some of the family traditions the first year after the separation, and alternating beginning the following year.
3. If you can continue some traditions together, make them clear, attending to details of who, what, where, when, and how. Some families are able to be together without conflict arising, but parents often have different expectations about the experience itself, as well as the amount of time they will be together. The most important thing for the children is that they do not experience conflict between their parents.
4. Create new traditions that feel special to the children and family. This is an opportunity for the new family configuration to establish new traditions for the holidays including creation of a special holiday celebration or experience on a day other than the actual holiday. It is also an opportunity for the adult who does not have the children, to establish new practices such as time with friends, volunteering, movie days, and travel.
5. Think long-term—what do you want your children to remember about holidays when they have their own children? For children, holidays are magical. It is often the little rituals and practices that are most memorable, such as baking a pie, playing a game or lighting the fire.
6. Remember, children's memories include all senses—what they saw, heard, smelled, tasted and touched. To the extent possible, create a memory that involves each of these senses and describe it, e.g. we always listen to this music, eat cranberry sauce,

watch this movie, read this book, take this walk, and cut these branches. Do not allow conflict to enter into these memories.

7. Self-care is very important. Life for the adults has significantly changed. Find new ways to care for yourself, e.g. exercise, friends, books, movies, clubs, martial arts, dance, classes, activities that bring new energy and attention. You want to rejuvenate yourself and refocus on something to help you reconstitute yourself in your new life.

8. Keep your expectations small and be flexible. Focus on one thing that matters most to you during the holidays, e.g. some sense of connection to your family, having some time with extended family or close friends, creating a new tradition, continuing a tradition. Your holiday time will not be the same, but you can decide that you will have one small goal that you will work toward creating or preserving. Holidays may be accompanied by unmet needs and dashed hopes. By thinking small you can manage disappointment and decrease stress.

9. Though you, the parent, may feel disoriented and lost in the changed family, keep your focus on the children and the new family constellations. Make the holidays about your children, which means helping them to feel good about spending holiday time with the other parent.

10. In ten years or twenty years, what do you want to see when you look back on these years of change? From that long view you can highlight the tone and experience of these transformed holidays. Remember, children who find holidays stressful because of the conflict between their parents, have terrible memories as adults of holidays and of special family moments. It is in your hands to create fond, pleasant memories for your children. They can be traditional or not, but the message is that you and our family are important and we find ways to celebrate and enjoy holidays.

Dr. Robin Deutsch provides consultation, mediation, parenting coordination and expert witness services in Wellesley, MA. She developed and was the director of the Center of Excellence for Children, Families and the Law at the William James College. Previously she was an Associate Clinical Professor of Psychology at Harvard Medical School. Dr. Deutsch was the co-chair of the AFCC Child Consultant Task Force. She served on both the AFCC and APA task forces that developed Guidelines for Parenting Coordination, the AFCC task force for Guidelines for Examining Intimate Partner Violence and the AFCC task force for Court-Involved Therapists. She is the past president of the Massachusetts chapter of AFCC, past president of the AFCC, and former Chair of the APA Ethics Committee.



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Meet Brian J. Burke, President of the Ontario Chapter

Brian is a partner at the family law firm Epstein Cole LLP in Toronto. He attended Trinity College at the University of Toronto for undergraduate studies and then Osgoode Hall Law School.

Brian started his career by summering, articling, and then briefly practising corporate and commercial law at the firm Torys in Toronto. After that he practised tax law for several years at the firm Thorsteinssons in Toronto. Brian then decided, over a decade ago, to pursue a career in family law. He has been with Epstein Cole LLP since 2004.

In addition to his extensive involvement in AFCC matters Brian is also involved in various other family law justice initiatives, committees, and educational programming.