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AFCC eNEWS

BI-MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER
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Sneak Preview: Report on Wingspread Conference on Domestic Violence and Family Courts

The Report from the Wingspread Conference on Domestic Violence and Family Courts is now available on the AFCC Web site. Written by Conference Reporters, Professors Nancy Ver Steegh and Clare Dalton, the Report will be the centerpiece of a special issue of *Family Court Review* in July 2008. The conference was cosponsored by AFCC and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges and work developed by conference participants will be featured at the AFCC 45th Annual Conference in Vancouver, BC.

[Read report \(PDF\)...](#)

AFCC 45th Annual Conference - Register Today!

Register today for AFCC's 45th Annual Conference, May 28-31, 2008 in Vancouver, BC. Early bird registration expires March 7. Last year's conference sold out, so reserve your space now. You can register online at www.afccnet.org or complete and return the registration form in the conference brochure. The conference hotel, the Westin Bayshore, is sold out during the conference. If you wish to stay at the Westin we encourage you to contact the hotel directly at (604) 682-3377 and put your name on the waitlist. AFCC has secured a limited number of additional hotel rooms. For more information on lodging options in Vancouver please click the link below.

[Alternate lodging options...](#)

Apply for a Conference Scholarship

AFCC is offering twenty-five conference scholarships to its 45th Annual Conference in Vancouver, BC. The application deadline is February 29, 2008. A limited number of scholarships will be designated to Court Services professionals, graduate students and professionals in the Greater Vancouver area. International scholarships with travel stipends will also be offered. The scholarship application can be accessed by clicking the link below.

[Online scholarship application...](#)

Call for Presenters

Eighth International Symposium on Child Custody Evaluations



45th Annual Conference

Fitting the Forum to the Family: Emerging Challenges for Family Courts

May 28-31, 2008

Westin Bayshore Resort
Vancouver, BC, Canada

[Register now...](#)

DID YOU KNOW?

If you're considering attending **AFCC's 45th Annual Conference**, participants outside Canada may save up to 40% flying to Seattle and taking a car, bus, train or ferry to Vancouver. Click the link below for alternative travel options to Vancouver.

[More information...](#)

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

AFCC Eighth International Symposium on Child Custody Evaluations

Albuquerque, New Mexico

The Call for Presenters for the Eighth International Symposium on Child Custody Evaluations, September 25-27, 2008 in Albuquerque, New Mexico is available online. If you are interested in participating as a presenter, please submit a proposal before May 1, 2008.

[Call for Presenters \(PDF\)...](#)

AFCC Five-Year Report Available Online

Since 1963, AFCC has grown from a small group of volunteers to a robust professional association. In 2001, AFCC implemented sweeping changes to its governance structure; in 2002 the association restructured the administration; and in 2003-2004 AFCC developed and implemented an ambitious five-year strategic plan. The results of these efforts are contained in the AFCC Five-Year Report, which chronicles the development of AFCC from fiscal years 2002-03 through 2006-07.

[Read report \(PDF\)...](#)

NEW ASK THE EXPERTS

Top Ten Tips for New Parenting Coordinators

What is the best advice veteran parenting coordinators have for those who are new to this emerging field of practice? *AFCC eNEWS* asked experienced parenting coordinators Christie Coates, Robin Deutsch, Barbara Jo Fidler, Joan B. Kelly, Arnie Shienvold and Matt Sullivan.

[Read their Top Ten Tips for New Parenting Coordinators...](#)

Do you have a question that you would like answered by an AFCC expert? Let us know and your question could be answered in the next *AFCC eNEWS*.

[Click here to email us your question!](#)

FEATURED VIDEO INTERVIEW

Mediate.com Featured Video with Jay Folberg

courtesy of Mediate.com

Mediate.com and the *AFCC eNEWS* are pleased to present *Views from the Eye of the Storm*, interviews with leading experts in family mediation. This month we are featuring Jay Folberg, Professor Emeritus at University of San Francisco School of Law and former AFCC President and Executive Director. To view the interview, click the link below.

[Watch now...](#)

AFCC Member Survey Coming Soon

Watch your email inbox for a chance to respond to the survey and provide your feedback to the organization.

[Not a member? Join today...](#)

AFCC Award Nominations

AFCC is seeking nominees for the following awards to be

September 25-27, 2008
Albuquerque Marriott
Albuquerque, New Mexico
[Call for Presenters \(PDF\)](#)

AFCC Eighth International Congress on Parent Education and Access Programs

September 26-27, 2008
Albuquerque Marriott
Albuquerque, New Mexico

AFCC Trainings

Advanced Issues in Child Custody: Abuse, Alienation and Other Challenges

Robin Deutsch, Ph.D.

June 23-24, 2008
Loyola Law Center
Chicago, Illinois

Parenting Coordination: Helping High Conflict Parents Resolve Disputes

Joan B. Kelly, Ph.D.

June 25-26, 2008
Loyola Law Center
Chicago, Illinois

AFCC Chapters

Missouri Chapter Annual Conference

March 6-7, 2008
Crowne Plaza St. Louis Airport

Bridgeton, Missouri
www.afccnet.org

Massachusetts Chapter Annual Conference

April 11, 2008
Regis College
Weston, Massachusetts
www.afccnet.org

Texas Chapter Annual Conference

October 3-4, 2008
South Texas College of Law
Houston, Texas
www.texasafcc.org

presented at AFCC's 45th Annual Conference in Vancouver, BC. **John E. VanDuzer Distinguished Service Award:** Recognizes outstanding contributions and/or achievements by members of AFCC; **Stanley Cohen Research Award:** Recognizes outstanding research and/or research achievements in the field of family and divorce; and **Irwin Cantor Innovative Program Award:** Recognizes innovation in court-connected or court-related programs. The nomination deadline is March 15, 2008. [More information...](#)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

News from Across the Pond

by Karen Mackay, Chief Executive, Resolution, Kent, England

Post holiday season, there has been the usual media flurry of stories about January being the worst month for divorce. Resolution, the main association for family solicitors in England and Wales, used the opportunity to present positive messages about better ways of managing the whole separation process, such as using collaborative practitioners and how to talk to the children.

[Read more...](#)

RESEARCH UPDATE

Good Co-Parents Feel Better About Themselves

Courtesy of J.M. Craig Press, Inc.

We have reviewed a number of studies that emphasize the importance for children of good post divorce co-parenting. This is the first study we have seen that looks at the effects of good co-parenting on the self-concept of mothers.

[Read more...](#)

CASE LAW UPDATE

Termination of Parental Rights Does not End Child Support Obligation

by Barbara Glesner Fines, Ruby M. Hulen Professor of Law, University of Missouri-Kansas City

In an unpublished opinion, the Illinois Supreme Court has held that the termination of parental rights does not extinguish a child support obligation unless the child is being adopted. Thus, a father whose parental rights are terminated must continue to pay support for a child in foster care. Relying on statutory language that refers to "a child sought to be adopted" the court held that merely being available for adoption is not sufficient to sever the responsibilities to the child. Three judges dissented. Illinois DHFS v. Warner, III., Illinois Supreme Court, January 25, 2008. To view the opinion and for more information, please view the Family Law Prof Blog by clicking the link below.

[More information...](#)

ACR Call for Article Proposals

The Association for Conflict Resolution (ACR) is currently accepting article proposals for the summer issue of its quarterly magazine, *ACResolution*. The issue will focus on the topic of

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ABOUT AFCC eNEWS

AFCC eNEWS is a bi-monthly e-newsletter published by the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC). *AFCC eNEWS* provides professionals with time sensitive and up-to-date topics including case law updates, research innovations and international news.
[AFCC eNEWS archive...](#)

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If you are having trouble viewing this email correctly, please view the Web site version by [clicking here](#).

Editor:

David Vigliotta

AFCC welcomes your comments, questions or feedback. Please email the editor by [clicking here](#).

Social Justice. The proposal deadline is March 25, 2008.
[Call for Articles \(PDF\)...](#)



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[Professionals dedicated to improving the lives of children and families through the resolution of family conflict](#)



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Task Forces and Initiatives

Brief Focused Assessment Task Force

Phil Bushard, D.P.A. Co-Chair
Phil Bushard

Linda Cavallero, Ph.D., Co-Chair
Linda Cavallero

Project Information

AFCC appointed the Task Force on Brief Focused Assessment with the task of defining a model of "focused" or "brief" evaluation and to write suggested guidelines for such work. An important component of the work of the task force is to gather information about similarities and differences in practices using "brief" or "focused" evaluation models in different locales and settings.

The Task Force conducted a survey that was made available to the public to help guide their initiatives and develop Guidelines for Focused Assessment. Nearly 300 AFCC members and non-member responded. You may click the link below to view the results of the survey.

[Guidelines for Brief Focused Assessment \(PDF\)](#)

[Brief Focused Assessment Task Force Survey Results \(PDF\)](#)



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Good Co-Parents Feel Better About Themselves

Courtesy of J.M. Craig Press, Inc.

Markham, M. S., Ganong, L. H., and Coleman, M. [2007].
Coparental Identity and Mothers' Cooperation in Coparental Relationships. *Family Relations*, 56, 369-377.

We have reviewed a number of studies that emphasize the importance for children of good post divorce co-parenting. [See Digests: 3, 2; 4, 4; 5, 1; 6, 2; and 7, 2, 5 & 8.] This is the first study we have seen that looks at the effects of good co-parenting on the self-concept of mothers.

The authors begin by stating that "Divorcing mothers may have a difficult time identifying themselves as co-parents because their preference is to have sole custody. Because their preference is to be their child's primary parent, mothers may be less willing to engage in co-parental behaviors, and may be more likely to restrict their former partners' involvement in the child(ren's) lives [p. 370]." From this, the authors hypothesized that stronger co-parenting expectations (e.g., "I think I should be a good co-parent."), a commitment to co-parenting (e.g., "I plan to continue to be a good co-parent."), and a desire to fulfill the expectations of others (e.g., "Others expect me to be a good co-parent."), will lead more cooperative co-parenting.

The authors surveyed 196 mothers who had previously taken a post-divorce co-parenting class. Many participants had some college, and the overwhelming number of them were Caucasian. Seventy-one percent had shared legal custody, and 29% were sole legal custodians. Thirty-seven percent were living with or married to a new partner.

The authors found that:

- When mothers had high expectations for themselves, as well as feeling those expectations from others, they reported greater co-parenting cooperation.
- If mothers felt committed to co-parenting, they felt they were more cooperative.
- "Mothers are not motivated to co-parent cooperatively because of social pressure and the influence of those not directly affected. Instead, mothers are cooperating with their former husbands in child rearing because they think it is the right thing to do, and they believe that to be a good mother, they should be co-parenting [p. 375]."

Critical Analysis

A major strength of this study is that it gives us some insight into the reason why mothers may be good co-parents. This was a survey of mothers only; no fathers were included. Therefore, as the authors noted, there was no way to verify the accuracy of the mothers' reports. If mothers remembered that they "should" co-parent cooperatively, they "may have over-reported the level of cooperation in which they engaged because of social desirability [p. 375]."

Recommendations

These findings are especially relevant for a variety of different groups: parenting coordinators; mediators; teachers of co-parenting classes; post-divorce therapists; and those involved in collaborative law because "co-parenting cooperatively with their children's fathers can be beneficial to themselves (i.e., mothers) and their children and will not interfere with their identity as a good mother [p. 376]." Therefore, cooperative co-parenting relies less upon the specificity of court orders and more upon mothers believing that it is important for their children that they do the right thing. Furthermore, when they do, they feel better about themselves.

The authors begin with a rather provocative quotation. Since the vast majority of custody issues are settled by agreement, we are not sure that all mothers necessarily want sole conservatorship or that they feel as strongly as described. While co-parenting classes may be beneficial in many ways, the reader should not necessarily assume that such steps are necessary in all divorces.

For this as well as other valuable research visit J.M. Craig Press online at www.jmcraig.com or call (877) 960-1474. AFCC members receive a 25% discount on all J.M. Craig Products.

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News from Across the Pond

by Karen Mackay, Chief Executive, Resolution, Kent, England

Post holiday season, there has been the usual media flurry of stories about January being the worst month for divorce. Resolution, the main association for family solicitors in England and Wales, used the opportunity to present positive messages about better ways of managing the whole separation process, such as using collaborative practitioners and how to talk to the children.

Help for separating parents

Helping separating couples to part as peaceably as possible was Resolution's founding mission 25 years ago. Our Jubilee year is 2008, and we are using that occasion to promote ways of putting the interests of children foremost in the divorce process. In the UK, parenting support for separating parents is at best an embryonic service. Unlike some North American jurisdictions, parenting classes are not readily available to separating parents and what parenting support there is has tended to focus on dealing with children with anti-social behavior patterns.

Resolution has been working with Christina McGhee, well known divorce coach and parent educator, to develop resources for our members to give to their clients to help them help their children through the separation process. In the UK, family lawyers are a major gateway to other services for separating parents, but all too often they have little or no idea of what is available to their clients. One member says she refers her clients to their medical practitioner as they are more likely to know what services are available than she does.

Resolution wants to develop central resources for our members to support their clients—be that books and DVDs for parents and their children, knowledge of services and some guidance about what to expect from service providers. Ultimately we would like to develop more services for separating parents and to make access to parenting support the norm for separating couples in England and Wales as it is in other jurisdictions. And we hope to learn from practitioners where parenting support is generally available and where it is the norm. I'm looking forward to AFCC's 45th Annual Conference in Vancouver as an opportunity to make some of those connections—so if you are attending and have experience, knowledge, and/or ideas of how parenting support best works, please look out for me!

Improving family law

Law reform is also high on our agenda for this anniversary year. The substantive law on divorce has not changed for over thirty years. Our laws no longer reflect the needs of our society—nor, ironically, do they reflect government policy, which is to reduce acrimony between separating couples and to keep people out of the courts. The current fault based divorce process encourages couples to sling accusations at each other, increasing bitterness and encouraging a backward look rather than looking to the future. The lack of certainty as to the financial settlement the courts are likely to award encourages litigation and the non-enforceability of pre-marital agreements means couples cannot create certainty for themselves. Cohabitants live in a legal no-mans land—often with disastrous consequences and expensive, uncertain litigation when live together couples split.

Our country's piecemeal and slapdash approach to family reform helps no one. Currently the government is overhauling the law as it relates to child support, but is not looking at how that impacts on other parts of the family justice system, for example, the government has been obdurate in keeping any child support work away from the courts, even when they are considering all other aspects of the family's finances.

The whole of family law needs a major overhaul if we are to achieve our aims of a respectful divorce process that allows couples to arrange their affairs with dignity and which reduces acrimony and promotes positive resolution of family disputes. Resolution will be promoting a law reform agenda that promotes no fault divorce, makes pre-marital agreements enforceable, reforms the law as it relates to cohabitants and calls for a complete overhaul to the law as it relates to financial settlements.

Although both these initiatives are being launched in our 25th anniversary year, they are not flash in the pan projects—we are in it for the long haul. Family law reform is notoriously difficult to get on the government's agenda, fearing as they do the accusation that by reforming family law, they undermine the institution of marriage. Resolution believes that our proposals for reforming family law and the services to separating parents will help couples and their children deal with the fallout of divorce and separation in a more constructive way when separation is a sad but inevitable fact.

If you would like further information on these topics or other issues in England and Wales, please contact Resolution Chief Executive Karen Mackay at Karen.mackay@resolution.org.uk or visit www.resolution.org.uk.

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ASK THE EXPERTS

Christine A. Coates, M.Ed., J.D., Boulder, Colorado
Robin Duetsch, Ph.D., Boston, Massachusetts
Barbara Jo Fidler, Ph.D., Toronto, Ontario
Joan B. Kelly, Ph.D., Corte Madera, California
Arnie Shienvold, Ph.D., Harrisburg, Pennsylvania
Matthew J. Sullivan, Ph.D., Palo Alto, California

Top Ten Tips for New Parenting Coordinators

1. Avoid Burnout

Don't let your caseload of parenting coordination (PC) cases exceed half of your overall caseload. Take regular vacations making sure that you are not available during those periods.

2. Never Accept a PC Case without a Court Order or Consent Agreement

Always try to have input into the contents of the Stipulation and/or Order before issuance or signing.

3. Payment

Get as much of a retainer as the parties can pay up front and bill against it for your work. The beginning of a case is very time intensive. Keep a client "trust account" to hold unused retainer moneys, so that you don't get caught taking a loan to reimburse clients.

4. Boundaries, Boundaries, Boundaries

Set up the communication structure immediately. Set time limits on your sessions and stick to them. Remind yourself that the clients own the problems.

5. Document, Document, Document

Document all of your work carefully and completely.

6. Screening

Screen for domestic violence (intimate partner violence) and power imbalances.

7. Calendar

Have the parents transpose the words of the parenting plan/order for parenting time (usual and holiday) into calendar form for at least 6 months, preferably for one year, in the early stage of the work and quickly address any scheduling conflicts, ambiguities, loop holes at the outset to preempt nth hour conflicts, "crises."

8. Conference Call Service

Get a reliable, affordable conference call service to facilitate conference calls in your work.

9. Hybrid ADR Process (remember, it's efficient!)

Parenting coordination is a hybrid ADR process, not therapy, advocacy or evaluation. Take advantage of all the functions as appropriate: assessment, education, coordination, conflict management, mediation, arbitration. Also, make a clear distinction for the clients when you begin to arbitrate a conflict and are making a decision.

10. Networking

Have a mentor or at least a few other professionals to consult with about parenting coordination cases. It will save your sanity. Join the [AFCC Parenting Coordination Network](#) (group email networking list for AFCC members to connect with each other, ask questions and share techniques) for stimulating discussions.

Do you have a question that you would like answered by an AFCC expert? Let us know and your question could be answered in the next *AFCC eNEWS*.

[Click here to send your question!](#)

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