



# AFCC eNEWS

MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER  
VOL. 5 NO. 3  
MARCH 2010

## AFCC Wins Associations Advance America Award

AFCC is one of only 13 organizations in the United States to receive an Award of Excellence in the first round of the 2010 Associations Advance America Awards program, a national competition sponsored by the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) & The Center for Association Leadership, Washington, DC. AFCC received the award for its Domestic Violence and Family Courts Project. This program is now in the running to receive a Summit Award, ASAE & The Center's top recognition for association programs, to be presented in ceremonies at ASAE's 11th Annual Summit Awards Dinner at the National Building Museum in Washington, DC, on September 29, 2010.

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## AFCC in Denver

A stellar AFCC conference, *Traversing the Trail of Alienation: Rocky Relationships, Mountains of Emotion, Mile High Conflict* is happening in Denver, June 2-5, 2010. If you have ever had to recognize, adjudicate or treat alienation in a family law case, you will want to hear about all of the latest research, practice and thinking in these areas.

[Register now...](#)

Denver is an exciting mix of vibrant urban culture and outdoor adventure. The city is home to thriving arts districts, world-class museums, a popular and renowned zoo, many exclusive chef-owned restaurants and excellent shopping, all against the stunning backdrop of the Rocky Mountains. Over the conference dates, the temperature should be moderate: lows in the 50s to highs in the 70s to low 80s. Denver boasts 300 days of sunshine a year and the downtown is very walkable. Bring your family and spend a few extra days enjoying the area!

[Things to do in Denver...](#)

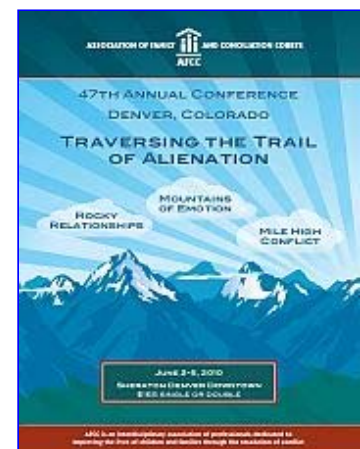
## Great Airfares to Denver

Sample round-trip airfares to Denver for the 47th Annual Conference from a leading travel website:

Atlanta (ATL) \$208  
Chicago (ORD) \$194  
Los Angeles (LAX) \$158  
Dallas/Ft. Worth (DFW) \$178  
New York (JFK) \$208

San Francisco (SFO) \$158  
Orlando (MCO) \$238  
Newark (EWR) \$218  
Detroit (DTW) \$178  
Charlotte (CLT) \$218

## UPCOMING CONFERENCES



### AFCC 47th Annual Conference

*Traversing the Trail of Alienation: Rocky Relationships, Mountains of Emotion, Mile High Conflict*  
June 2-5, 2010  
Sheraton Denver Downtown  
Denver, Colorado

### Parenting Coordination: Helping High Conflict Parents Resolve Disputes

June 14-15, 2010  
Joan B. Kelly, Ph.D.  
Loyola University Chicago  
Philip H. Corboy Law Center  
Chicago, Illinois  
[More information...](#)

### Advanced Issues in Parenting Coordination: Attachment, Personality

Las Vegas (LAS) \$148  
Houston (IAH) \$156  
Phoenix (PHX) \$118

Miami (MIA) \$208  
Minneapolis (MSP) \$178

### **Family Court Review Special Issue**

The January 2010 issue of *Family Court Review*, a special issue titled *Alienated Children in Divorce and Separation: Emerging Approaches for Families and Courts*, has been incredibly popular. AFCC members have online access to all articles and all archives back to 1963 as part of their membership, so the easiest and least expensive way to access *FCR* articles and archives is to join AFCC. [Join here...](#)

Non-members can purchase single articles directly through [Wiley InterScience](#). Simply click on the PDF of the article you would like and you will be prompted to purchase the article. [Wiley InterScience website...](#)

### **AFCC Task Force on Court-Involved Therapists Draft for Comment**

The AFCC Task Force on Court-Involved Therapists, Co-Chaired by Matthew Sullivan, Ph.D. and Hon. Linda Fidnick, was given the task of defining guidelines for the professional practice of therapists working with court-involved families. A draft document is now available for comment. [To view the draft, click here...](#)

To comment, send an email to [comments@lyngreenbergphd.com](mailto:comments@lyngreenbergphd.com) noting the specific guidelines and section you wish to comment on in the subject line. This allows the comments to be sorted electronically and applied to the correct section. Please provide suggested language for any revisions that you are requesting or recommending. Comments must be received by April 5, 2010.

### **ASK THE EXPERTS**

#### **Top Ten Tips for Fostering Children's Resilience after Divorce**

*By JoAnne Pedro-Carroll, Ph.D.*

How children fare during and after a divorce depends largely on how parents handle changes and create quality of life for their children over time. Many factors influence their resilience; research and clinical practice have shown these to be among the most important.

[Read more...](#)

### **New Book in Innovations Series**

AFCC is pleased to announce a new volume in the Innovations Series: *Innovations in Court Services*, edited by Cori K. Erickson, founder and CEO of the Center for Dispute Solutions, Inc., a statewide program in Wyoming dedicated to creatively assisting families in conflict. *Innovations in Court Services* looks at five programs and a new screening tool, all exciting innovative new ways to approach family conflict in the court system.

For a brief description of each program discussed in the book, as well as information on the research behind these new approaches, please read the introduction excerpted from *Innovations in Court*

### **Disorders, Alienation and Difficult Clients**

June 16-17, 2010  
Arnold Shienvold, Ph.D.  
Loyola University Chicago  
Philip H. Corboy Law Center  
Chicago, Illinois  
[More information...](#)

### **AFCC Ninth Symposium on Child Custody Evaluations**

October 28-30, 2010  
Hyatt Regency Cambridge  
Cambridge/Boston, MA

The Call for Presenters is now available for the Ninth Symposium on Child Custody Evaluations. All proposals must be submitted using the online form and are due no later than May 14, 2010.

[Call for Presenters...](#)

[Submit a workshop proposal...](#)

### **AFCC 48th Annual Conference**

June 1-4, 2011  
Hilton Orlando Bonnet  
Creek Resort  
Orlando, Florida

### **AFCC Regional Training Conference**

October 27-29, 2011  
Hyatt Regency Indianapolis  
Indianapolis, Indiana

### **AFCC 49th Annual Conference**

June 6-9, 2012  
Hyatt Regency Chicago  
Chicago, Illinois

### **AFCC 50th Annual Conference**

May 29-June 1, 2013  
J.W. Marriott Los Angeles at  
L.A. Live  
Los Angeles, California

### **Massachusetts Chapter**

Services by the book's editor, Cori K. Erickson.

[Read introduction...](#)

*Innovations in Court Services* is available for purchase now!

[Click here to order...](#)

## AFCC to Launch Mentorship Program in Denver

AFCC will launch a mentorship program for new practitioners designed to provide assistance in achieving the level of skill and professionalism critical to competent and ethical interdisciplinary practice. There will be a reception at the Annual Conference in Denver, Thursday, June 3rd, at 6:30pm that will provide an opportunity for students and new family law practitioners to meet each other and potential mentors. At 12:30pm on Friday, June 4th there will be a Mentorship Forum where mentees will hear from experienced family law professionals. AFCC members will have the opportunity to be assigned a mentor for ongoing contact throughout the year.

[Register for the AFCC Annual Conference...](#)

## Dr. Robert Emery named Associate Editor of *Family Court Review*

Robert Emery, Ph.D., has been named Associate Editor of *Family Court Review*, succeeding Dr. Janet Johnston, who is stepping down after five years of service. Dr. Emery is Professor of Psychology and Director of the Center for Children, Families, and the Law at the University of Virginia. He has served or is serving on the editorial board of eleven professional journals and is the author of over 125 scientific publications and several books. Dr. Emery is a long-time AFCC member. He has lectured extensively on his research across the United States and throughout the world. In addition to his research, teaching, and administrative responsibilities, Dr. Emery continues to engage in a limited practice as a clinical psychologist and divorce mediator. He also is the father of five children.

## Lawyer as Problem Solver Awards

The American Bar Association Section of Dispute Resolution awarded its Lawyer as Problem Solver Award for 2010 to Andrew Schepard and Mediate.com. The Award was established to recognize individuals and organizations that use their legal skills in creative, innovative and often non-traditional ways to solve problems for their clients and within their communities.

Andrew Schepard is a Professor of Law and Director of the Center for Children, Families and the Law at Hofstra University Law School and editor of AFCC's *Family Court Review*. He has consistently served as a problem solver at the highest level, identifying important challenges in our field and spearheading community and policy initiatives that impact families throughout the country. Mediate.com has been at the forefront of making the power of the internet accessible to lawyers, mediators and dispute resolution practitioners.

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## FEATURED ARTICLE

### Parenting Plans for Special Needs Children

## Annual Conference

April 30, 2010

*The Compromised Parent:  
When Good Enough Isn't*

Regis College

Weston, Massachusetts

[More information...](#)

## Minnesota Chapter Annual Conference

April 30, 2010

*High Conflict Divorce*

Continuing Education &

Conference Center

St. Paul, Minnesota

[More information...](#)

## Ontario Chapter Annual Conference

October 14-15, 2010

*The Future of Family Law*

University of Toronto

Residences

Toronto, Canada

[More information...](#)

## EARN AFCC DOLLARS

Each time a colleague joins AFCC as a first-time member and names you as the referral source on the membership application, you earn ten AFCC dollars to spend on conference registrations, membership renewals and publications. For more information, please contact AFCC at [afcc@afccnet.org](mailto:afcc@afccnet.org) or (608) 664-3750.

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## ABOUT AFCC eNEWS

*By Lynne Halem, courtesy of Mediate.com*

Increasingly, probate courts are paying particular attention to parenting plans. Judges, as all professionals involved with divorcing couples, recognize the difficulties of co-parenting after divorce. The objective underlying the mandatory Parent Education Program is for parents to understand the effects of divorce on children. Five hours of session time is devoted to educating divorcing parents on how to parent more effectively after divorce. Hopefully these sessions help parents to understand that they need to be forward thinking, to provide good parenting before problems arise, and to develop skills that help them to work cooperatively in the best interests of their children. Yet all parenting situations are not the same. In particular, in families of children with special needs, the parenting plan needs to be crafted with great care.

[Read more...](#)

## **Family Law in the News**

### **Judge Seeks Revamp of Family Law**

*By Carol Nader, courtesy of theage.com.au*

The Chief Justice of the (Australian) Family Court has called for a radical change to the law to provide more protection to family members at risk of violence. In what could be a contentious proposal, Chief Justice Diana Bryant wants information from confidential mediation sessions between separating couples to be given to family law courts if there is believed to be a risk to a child or a parent's safety.

[Read more...](#)

### **Whose God Wins? For Divorcing Parents, It's Not Clear**

*By Dahlia Lithwick, courtesy of Newsweek.com*

Joseph Reyes, an Afghanistan veteran and law student, converted to Judaism when he married Rebecca Shapiro in 2004. When they split up in 2008, Rebecca won primary custody of their daughter and Joseph got regular visitation. The Reyeses had allegedly agreed to raise their child Jewish, but Joseph, seeking to expose his 3-year-old to his Catholic faith, had her baptized last November. When Rebecca found out, she obtained a temporary restraining order prohibiting Joseph from "exposing Ela Reyes to any other religion other than the Jewish religion during his visitation." But Joseph then took his daughter to Catholic mass on Jan. 17, with a local TV news crew in tow, prompting his ex-wife's lawyers to demand he be held in criminal contempt—with a maximum punishment of six months in prison. Can a court decide what religion your child will be?

[Read more...](#)

AFCC eNEWS is a 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 practice tips, research innovations and international news. Readers are welcome to forward this e-newsletter to interested colleagues.

[AFCC eNEWS archive...](#)

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#### **Editor:**

Leslye Hunter  
[editor@afccnet.org](mailto:editor@afccnet.org)

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6525 Grand Teton Plaza  
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### **Introduction to *Innovations in Court Services*, edited by Cori K. Erickson**

It is a reality of our times that many families will restructure as parents separate or divorce. This can be a difficult time for everyone involved, but the new family structure that emerges can successfully rear strong and resilient children when the judicial system responds to the complex nature of family relationships.

A child's adjustment and development depends on their parents' behavior and level of conflict before and after a separation or divorce. Emery (1994) stated that when children are exposed to higher levels of parental conflict, the effects of family dissolution are much more negative. Traditional approaches with families in transition often exacerbate problems and increase the conflict. The challenge to the judicial system becomes one of providing quality services without escalating the conflict to a vituperative, intransigent level. Every family has its own unique set of characteristics that should be assessed independently of any other families in the system. Fundamental concerns for these families are the safety and well-being of all its members.

Family courts around the world are recognizing the need to shift the way families in transition experience their court process, rejecting the traditional model where family conflicts are settled in a courtroom under the rule of law. Experts and research point to the need for innovative, collaborative, holistic and interdisciplinary processes to resolve family disputes. Courts are increasingly aware that family discord and conflict primarily stem from social and emotional processes, rather than a legal event (Schepard & Bozzomo, 2003).

These same courts find themselves looking to provide therapeutic jurisprudence to address the families' underlying emotional needs and dysfunction. Therapeutic jurisprudence (Winick & Wexler, 2003) enriches the practice of law through the integration of interdisciplinary, non-adversarial, non-traditional, creative, collaborative, and psychologically beneficial legal experiences. The shift in this paradigm takes responsibility for these families' problems from the judicial system alone and places it on the shoulders of society. In this place, a multitude of interdisciplinary professionals can come together to solve these problems and address the families' needs.

In a time when budgets are being slashed, more help is required for families in conflict. Many courts and communities are finding ways to meet their needs. Creativity, collaboration and innovation are keys to the success of any endeavor that will provide effective and efficient services within constraints of a tight budget. The collaborative efforts described within this book address unique approaches to program creation and acquisition of non-traditional funding for the courts, with an extremely low overall cost-to-benefit ratio of service administration. The programs' primary goals are personal interaction; appropriate, in-depth problem identification and screening; collaboration; treatment and/or services; and prevention. The outcomes are systemic and have a positive impact across generations.

This volume in the AFCC Innovations Series is launched by Steve Baron, Sandra Clark and Lilly Grenz with a program that has successfully created an infrastructure that effectively provides multiple services for families in crisis. A cornerstone of the FIRST 5 Santa Clara County Family Court Initiative is to have personal interaction with potential litigants and collaboration with other public and private entities to provide the necessary services. This large, multifaceted program is specifically designed to help families with children age five and under. By identifying the needs of families early in the process, the program provides services that are tailored to meet that specific family's problems. The services and interventions fall into two broad categories: 1) helping parents resolve disputes in a manner that preserves the child's best interest and the safety of family members, and 2) providing services for self-represented clients that effectively help them navigate the system. The authors discuss the process for setting the stage for collaborative efforts they find crucial to success. Funding for this program multiplied exponentially as a result of vigorous collaboration with non-profit community-based agencies and large public systems.

In the second chapter, David Royko, Sharon Zingery, and Corinne Levitz discuss a program where mediation can be pursued appropriately even when there is a history of family violence. The Marriage and Family Counseling Service through the Circuit Court of Cook County developed a comprehensive protocol for effectively and ethically conducting mediation when there is a history of family violence. Development of the protocol and screening criteria occurred in collaboration with local domestic violence advocacy groups. When screening uncovers safety issues, a determination will be made for an appropriate course of service. Assessing the capacity and competence of parents to mediate is critical for the success of mediation and the well-being of the participants. The chapter describes the process by which screening is administered and subsequent services are provided. Screening protocol and other forms created by the program have been added as appendices.

In chapter three, collaboration is again a crucial element in the equation for success. The Family Assessment and Intervention Resources Program (F.A.I.R. Program) is a cutting edge collaboration between the Second Judicial Court in Albuquerque, New Mexico and the University of New Mexico Clinical Psychology Program. Melissa Gerstle, Alisha Wray, Kathryn Wiggins, Peggy Maclean, Kathleen Clapp and Timothy Reed describe this program that teaches skills to help parents reduce their destructive interpersonal behavior and create healthier parenting environments. The F.A.I.R. Program is built on a theoretical framework of research on domestic violence and abuse and identifies which type of service would be most beneficial to the client through an intensive idiographic approach. Utilizing a framework for typology of domestic violence provides the program with information to identify which type of services would be most beneficial to the clients. Treatment components were created to meet the specific identified needs. The authors underscore the importance of comprehensive assessments in domestic violence cases. A thorough assessment, by highly trained clinicians, is paramount in evaluation for potential risk of danger to clients. The chapter and appendices provide exceptional information to replicate the infrastructure of the program.

Chapter four describes an approach that evolved in response to requests from family court judges for assistance with specific family problems. Linda Cavallero describes a brief, focused assessment model, which responds to a circumscribed legal question that needs immediate judicial action. The brief, focused assessment can be completed in a limited time frame and enables judges to make informed temporary orders. The written report is an important component of this model. The assessment provides current information on the family, which can be important for future legal proceedings. When the courts are informed in a timely manner, judicial decision-making can promote a reduction in conflict between the parents and provide for the well-being of children. The author includes a fictitious assessment in the appendices.

In chapter five, Paul Murphy and Lisbeth Pike take the reader to Australia and share an innovative approach to managing negotiations between separating parents in cases that involve children. Family law in Australia is undergoing its most radical change since the introduction of 'no fault' divorce in 1975, and the Family Court of Western Australia has piloted numerous projects over the years. The focus for this chapter is the Child-Related Proceedings Model, which manages all cases involving children. In complex matters the case can be directly referred to a judge and then that judge and the Family Consultant jointly manage the case to its conclusion.

Court etiquette has been adapted to encourage direct participation with the presiding judicial officer and Family Consultant. The program required intensive interdisciplinary cross training that led to an understanding: there is a "better way." The authors describe the catalyst for the new services, the value of collaboration, an interdisciplinary approach to decrease client alienation from the courts, benefits to both clients and the courts and positive outcomes.

The final chapter in this publication provides a detailed description of an early screening system developed by the Connecticut Judicial Branch—Court Support Services Division, Family Services Unit (Salem, Kulak & Deutsch, 2007). Peter Salem, Debra Kulak and Robin M. Deutsch describe the ground-breaking approach developed and implemented by the consultants from the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts in partnership with the Connecticut Family Services Unit to screen family disputes and match individual cases with the most appropriate court services. This program has been evaluated by Marsha Kline Pruett, Ph.D., who recently completed an in-depth analysis of the triage screening tool and new services developed in the wake of the screening tool's implementation. The research looks at how well the screening tool works, how new services may have improved the court process for families and what can be learned from the intake screening about vulnerable populations. Publication of the research is forthcoming and an initial peek at the results provides support for an extremely positive impact on the services provided by Connecticut's judicial system.

Today, more than any other point in history, we have a chance to provide the support for the emerging pluralistic family system—a family system that is not better or worse, merely different. The authors of these six chapters and their colleagues invariably recognize the necessity for the paradigm shift. They are tirelessly passionate about creating a better world for families and children who face the challenges of the ever changing family structure. A round of applause and gratitude goes out to these authors for dedicating the time necessary to share these innovative programs.

Cori K. Erickson

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- Salem, P., Kulak, D. and Deutsch, R. (2007). Triage family court services: The Connecticut Judicial Branch's family civil intake screen. *Pace Law Review*, 27, 741- 783.
- Shepard, A., and Bozzomo, J. W. (2003). Efficiency, therapeutic justice, mediation and evaluation: reflections on a survey of unified family courts. *Family Law Quarterly*, 37, 333-340.
- Winick, B.J., and Wexler, D.B. (2003). *Judging in a therapeutic key: Therapeutic jurisprudence and the courts*. North Carolina: Carolina Academic Press.

6525 Grand Teton Plaza, Madison, WI 53719  
Phone 608.664.3750 Fax 608.664.3751 [afcc@afccnet.org](mailto:afcc@afccnet.org) [www.afccnet.org](http://www.afccnet.org)

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#### **Top Ten Tips for Fostering Children’s Resilience after Divorce**

*by JoAnne Pedro-Carroll, Ph.D.*

How children fare during and after a divorce depends largely on how parents handle changes and create quality of life for their children over time. Many factors influence their resilience; research and clinical practice have shown these to be among the most important.

- 1. Tell and show them you love them. Repeat very often.** Reassure children that the love you have for them will never end—and then back it up with your behavior. Children crave parents’ physical expressions of affection along with words of love, encouragement and reassurance.
- 2. Prepare children for changes.** Begin by telling them about what *will* and *will not* change for them as a result of the divorce. “Telling” is not a one-time event. Continue the conversation over time, as family changes continue to occur. An open line of communication is a life line for children, especially during turbulent times.
- 3. Strengthen your relationship with your children.** Do not allow your divorce from your former partner to become a divorce from your children or your role as their parent. Create frequent, regular, one-on-one time with each child. Use play and other enjoyable activities to build closer emotional bonds and express your love and reassurance. Noticing and expressing appreciation for your children’s positive behaviors and acts of kindness creates good will that fuels hope, optimism, and loving relationships.
- 4. Help your children identify their emotions, and respond with empathy.** Children often hide their real feelings about a divorce, but by listening carefully, you can help them to explore, understand, and label their emotions. Neuroscience research has shown that labeling emotions has powerful therapeutic effects in the brain. Your empathy for what they are experiencing also helps children cope with powerful feelings.
- 5. Contain conflict.** On-going conflict is poisonous for children, emotionally, socially and physically, and it erodes positive parenting. Never let your children witness violent or hostile behavior or hear you denigrate your former partner. Avoid putting your children in the middle of your problems or creating situations where they feel they must choose between their parents.
- 6. Share parenting, if it is safe to do so.** Your children benefit from two responsible parents. Reframe your relationship with your former spouse as a “business” partnership whose sole focus is your children’s well-being. Use legal options and experienced therapists to help you and your former partner keep your children’s needs a top priority and create effective parenting plans.
- 7. Support and encourage your child’s safe and healthy relationship with both parents.** Nurture your children’s healthy relationship with their other parent. When problems arise between them, help your children discuss it respectfully and help them find ways to ease their distress and learn to problem-solve. Do not burden children with adult problems that



contribute to loyalty conflicts and alliances with one parent at the expense of a healthy relationship the other.

**8. Focus on what is in your control and strive for consistent, quality parenting.** Research shows that warmth, nurturing and empathy along with effective and consistent discipline, rules and limits is related to better adjustment for children and teens. Children need and want consistent limits in both of their homes. Knowing how they are expected to behave gives children a sense of control over their own behavior and their lives. They feel a basic sense of trust and security, even as they learn new skills within a loving structure.

**9. Teach and model resilience skills.** The skills that influence resilience are well defined. Explain and practice: age appropriate understanding and acceptance of family changes, problem solving, coping skills, understanding and managing emotions, differentiating between what can and cannot be controlled, expressing empathy, and fostering hope, competence and confidence. A supportive relationship with caring adults is an essential contributor to resilience. Reach out for support and get help when needed. Resilient children are connected through faith, friends, family, nurturing communities and supportive resources. Support your child's healthy relationships with other caring adults and mentors.

**10. Provide household structure, routine and traditions that children enjoy—including family time together.** Reducing the number of major changes in a child's life and having consistent structure at home helps children to feel safer and more secure when their lives have changed dramatically. Regular bedtimes, meals together, limits on "screen time," and plenty of quality time as a family are all factors that have proven to positively influence better social and emotional adjustment.

*JoAnne Pedro-Carroll, Ph.D., is a clinical psychologist and child specialist based in Rochester, New York. She is the author of Putting Children First: Proven Parenting Strategies for Helping Children Thrive after Divorce. Avery/Penguin, 2010.*

6525 Grand Teton Plaza, Madison, WI 53719  
Phone 608.664.3750 Fax 608.664.3751 [afcc@afccnet.org](mailto:afcc@afccnet.org) [www.afccnet.org](http://www.afccnet.org)

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AFCC received the award for its Domestic Violence and Family Courts Project. This program is now in the running to receive a Summit Award, ASAE & The Center's top recognition for association programs, to be presented in ceremonies at ASAE's 11th Annual Summit Awards Dinner at the National Building Museum in Washington, DC, on September 29, 2010.

The Domestic Violence and Family Courts Project was a collaborative effort of AFCC and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ). It began with a small think tank of experts at the Wingspread Conference Center to explore issues related to differentiating domestic violence, an issue on which there has been significant disagreement. Project participants with differing perspectives and professional backgrounds subsequently wrote journal articles, presented at conferences together and collaborated on projects, integrating a broader perspective of family court and domestic violence professionals in a variety of contexts. The project is considered a major breakthrough by many in the family law and domestic violence fields.

Now in its 20th year, the prestigious Associations Advance America Awards program recognizes associations that propel America forward—with innovative projects in education, skills, training, standards setting, business and social innovation, knowledge creation, citizenship, and community service. Although association activities have a powerful impact on everyday life, they often go unnoticed by the general public.

"AFCC's program truly embodies the spirit of the Associations Advance America campaign. It is an honor and an inspiration to showcase this activity as an example of the many contributions associations are making to advance American society," remarked 2009-2010 Associations Advance America (AAA) Committee Chair Ping Wei, director of educational opportunities for the American Society of Civil Engineers.

More information on the award: [Click here.](#)

More on the Domestic Violence and Family Courts Project: [Click here.](#)

Read the report from the Wingspread Conference on Domestic Violence and Family Courts: [Click here.](#)