



AFCC eNEWS

MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER
VOL. 6 NO. 8
AUGUST 2011

AFCC Regional Training Conference

*Working with High Conflict Families:
A Race with No Winners*
October 27–29, 2011
Hyatt Regency Indianapolis

This fall the AFCC Regional Training Conference will be held at the Hyatt Regency Indianapolis, October 27–29. The conference offers an expanded training format, with three-hour workshops as well as five full-day pre-conference institutes from which to choose. The conference program is eligible for up to 19 hours of continuing education credit. Scholarships are available; the application deadline is fast approaching: September 6. More information is available by following the links below.

The Opening Session, *Integrating Research into Practice for Violent and High Conflict Families*, will be presented by Amy Holzworth-Munroe, Ph.D. and Amy Applegate, JD, both of Indiana University in Bloomington. This session will discuss how practitioners can incorporate the findings of social science research on high conflict families into their practices (including legal, mediation, custody evaluation, PC, and judicial decision making). The presenters, a researcher and a lawyer/mediator, have collaborated to integrate this approach in a community and will share specific examples of how research can be used to improve practice and outcomes for families.

The AFCC Regional Training Conference is an affordable conference to attend; airfares to Indianapolis from major US airports are surprisingly low, check discount travel websites for early deals. Conference attendees will receive the special room rate of just \$135/night for single or double occupancy. Rooms are subject to availability—early reservations are encouraged. The Hyatt is located in the heart of downtown, within walking distance or a short cab ride to some of Indianapolis's best restaurants, nightlife, shopping and culture. Connected to the hotel via skywalk, Circle Centre Mall offers a number of restaurant options and over 100 shops and stores.

[Online registration](#)

[Apply for a scholarship](#)

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Scholarships

[Conference Scholarships](#)

UPCOMING CONFERENCES



AFCC Regional Training Conference

Working with High Conflict and Violent Families: A Race with No Winners
October 27–29, 2011

Hyatt Regency Indianapolis
Indianapolis, Indiana

[Conference program](#)

[Online registration](#)

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The AFCC Scholarship Fund provides scholarships to professionals and students who could not otherwise afford to attend AFCC conferences, symposia and regional trainings. Thanks to the generous support of AFCC members, since 2003 the AFCC Scholarship Fund has awarded over 200 conference scholarships. From its humble beginning, awarding just one scholarship to the annual conference the first year, the scholarship fund has grown by leaps and bounds, offering 50 scholarships in one fiscal year. This year the number of \$1,000 travel stipends has been expanded to an unprecedented eleven!

The recipients of AFCC scholarships take the knowledge and practical skills they gain at AFCC events back to their practices, courts, organizations, their colleagues, and their clients. The number of professionals and clients who benefit from each conference scholarship is difficult to quantify. Hearing how pleased past recipients have been with the opportunity, reminds us not only of how important the Scholarship Fund is, but how important AFCC conferences and trainings are. Here is an example of what a past recipient said about the scholarship experience:

I brought home so much more than I went there with. You know, they say that when you have to pay for something it becomes more important to you. However, being given such a useful gift means more to me than anything. I will put my new tools to good use to enhance my services for families and be forever grateful to you and the folks who allowed me to be a part of the conference this year. –Marilyn Daniel, Tucson, Arizona

Letters requesting a donation to the Scholarship Fund are mailed in October of each year to AFCC members. The Fund is entirely sustained by AFCC members, no outside grants or corporate donors. One hundred percent of your donation goes to funding scholarships. Please consider helping to continue and expand these valuable opportunities.

[Support the AFCC Scholarship Fund—Donate online today](#)
[Apply for a scholarship to the AFCC Regional Training Conference](#)

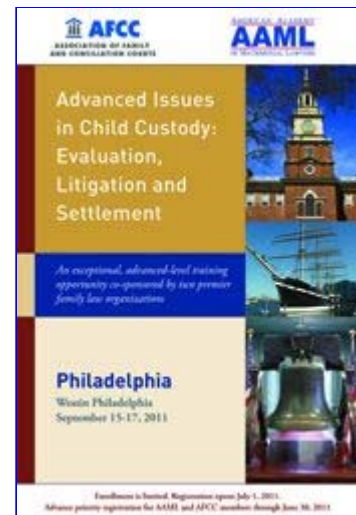
Submit a Workshop Proposal for the AFCC 49th Annual Conference

***Attachment, Brain Science, Children of Divorce:
 The ABCD's of Child Development for Family Law***
 June 6–9, 2012
 Hyatt Regency Chicago

Call for Proposals

The June 2012 annual conference will take an in-depth look at attachment and neuroscience perspectives in child development as they relate to family law. Several sessions at this conference will continue the discussions begun in the July 2011 *Family Court Review*, guest edited by Dr. Jennifer McIntosh. Other relevant topics for professionals working with children and families will be discussed as well.

Take advantage of a wonderful opportunity to present your work to the interdisciplinary AFCC community; submit a proposal for a 90-minute workshop session. Proposals must be received via the online form by Wednesday, October 5, 2011, in order to be considered. The conference program brochure will be available



AFCC/AAML Conference

Advanced Issues in Child Custody: Evaluation, Litigation and Settlement
 September 15–17, 2011
 Westin Philadelphia
 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
[Conference program](#)
[Online registration](#)
[Exhibit opportunities](#)

AFCC 49th Annual Conference

June 6–9, 2012
 Hyatt Regency Chicago
 Chicago, Illinois
[View the Call for Proposals](#)
[Submit a proposal online](#)

AFCC 10th Symposium on Child Custody Evaluations

November 1–3, 2012
 Arizona Grand Resort
 Phoenix, Arizona

AFCC 50th Annual Conference

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

AFCC 51st Annual Conference

May 28–31, 2014
 The Westin Harbour Castle
 Toronto, Ontario, Canada

AFCC CHAPTER CONFERENCES

online in late December 2011 and print copies will be mailed in January 2012.

[View the Call for Proposals](#)

[Submit a proposal online](#)

Chicago Conference Scholarships

Chicago conference scholarships include registration to the annual conference, one full-day pre-conference institute, a certificate of attendance and admittance to all conference food, beverage and networking functions. This year, in response to concerns regarding travel and hotel expenses, a record eleven scholarships will include a travel stipend. The online scholarship application will be available in January 2012.

[Guidelines and criteria](#)

FAMILY COURT REVIEW

JULY 2011 SPECIAL ISSUE: *Attachment Theory, Separation and Divorce: Forging Coherent Understandings for Family Law*

Jennifer E. McIntosh, as guest editor of the *FCR* special issue on attachment writes:

A mounting body of research from developmental psychology and neuroscience confirms attachment relationships to be a central axis of the child's developmental pathway, in every family, in every culture throughout the world. The health of a child's attachments can influence multiple and far reaching outcomes. As such, attachment theory and knowledge deserve a place in the family court's deliberations and planning for children, but to date, that place remains ill defined. Inconsistencies and misunderstandings, conundrums and complexities of applying attachment knowledge to divorce and separation matters are evident throughout the field. This Special Issue went in search of a shared praxis of meaning about attachment.

[Read the FCR July Issue Table of Contents](#)

AFCC members: [read this issue of FCR](#)

ASK THE EXPERTS

Top Ten Tips for Judicial Interviews of Children

By Hon. Denise McColley, Napoleon, Ohio

In most jurisdictions, judicial officers are allowed to interview or speak with children in the process of their parents' divorce or custody litigation. Ohio is somewhat unusual in that judicial officers are generally required to interview children upon the request of either party or at the court's discretion.

[Read more](#)

Conference of Interest

Supervised Visitation Network

Working with High Conflict and Violent Families, Implications for Supervised Visitation

October 26, 2011

Hyatt Regency Indianapolis

This one day institute will focus on the issues presented in

Texas Chapter Conference

Maximizing Our Resources for Texas Families

October 12–14, 2011

In collaboration with Texas Association of Domestic Relations Offices
Fort Worth, Texas

Washington Chapter Conference

Divorce Minefields and Milestones: Interdisciplinary Resources and Roads to Resolution

October 21, 2011

Holiday Inn, SeaTac International Airport
Seattle, Washington

[More information](#)

Ontario Chapter Conference

Experience and Brain Development: How Childhood Events Shape the Children and Families We Serve

October 21, 2011

Sala Caboto at Villa Colombo
Toronto, Ontario

[More information](#)

California Chapter Conference

The New Frontier: Exploring the Challenges and Possibilities of the Changed Landscape for Children and the Courts

February 10–12, 2012

Sheraton Delfina Hotel
Santa Monica, CA

[More information](#)

Florida Chapter Conference

Spirit of Cooperation

March 30–31, 2012

Renaissance Tampa International Plaza
Tampa, Florida

[More information](#)

supervised visitation when domestic violence is present. This institute will provide information to help professionals who work with SV providers and those who provide direct services, to understand how domestic violence may require changes to their services in response to the complex dynamic created. More info is available at SVNIndy.info.

AFCC CHAPTER NEWS

AFCC currently has 13 Chapters across the U.S. and in Canada, each promoting the AFCC mission at the local level.

The **Washington Chapter** has issued a [Call for Proposals](#) for its Second Annual Conference, *Systemic Solutions for Families in Crisis*, April 14, 2012, in Seattle. The proposal submission deadline is October 15, 2011.

[Read more about your local chapter](#)

FAMILY LAW IN THE NEWS

Alimony Reform Advances in Massachusetts

By Paul Tuthill, courtesy of publicbroadcasting.net/WAMC

As New York State marks a major change in matrimonial law, Massachusetts is poised to make major changes in family law. A bill to reform the state's alimony system is heading toward passage in the state legislature.

[Listen](#)

Polygamist, Under Scrutiny in Utah, Plans Suit to Challenge Law

By John Schwartz, Courtesy of the New York Times

Kody Brown is a proud polygamist, and a relatively famous one. Now Mr. Brown, his four wives and 16 children and stepchildren are going to court to keep from being punished for it.

[Read more](#)

50/50 Parenting

Courtesy of Background Briefing, mpegmedia.abc.au

Legislation before the Australian Senate now may take some of the heat out of tragic confusion over shared, or "equal time parenting," and the role of violence in Family Law decision making. Research shows children of high conflict families, forced into equal time, are suffering. Reporter Brendan King has more in this audio interview.

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ABOUT AFCC eNEWS

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.

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Professionals dedicated to improving the lives of children and families through the resolution of family conflict



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ASK THE EXPERTS

Top Ten Tips for Judicial Interviews of Children

Hon. Denise McColley, Napoleon, Ohio

In most jurisdictions, judicial officers are allowed to interview or speak with children in the process of their parents' divorce or custody litigation. Ohio is somewhat unusual in that judicial officers are generally required to interview children upon the request of either party or at the court's discretion. As one might imagine, this law results in judicial officers interviewing children of all ages. Positive aspects of interviewing children include allowing the judicial officer to actually meet and learn first-hand about a child for whom he or she is about to make life-changing decisions; permitting the child to meet the judicial officer; and allowing the child to feel he/she has been part of the process of determining his/her future.

Although certainly not exhaustive, here are a few pointers that may be helpful to a judicial interviewer:

1. No matter what the law is regarding interviewing children in a particular jurisdiction, it is important to focus on the purpose of the interview. In general, an interview is not to determine what the child states that he or she *wants*, but rather to determine his/her *wishes and concerns*.

2. Consider developing a "script" of topics that you will use for interviews. It is helpful to ask similar questions of each child. Once you have developed the questions you wish to ask, it becomes easier to follow the script. In doing so, you insure that you do not miss something that is important to discuss with the child.

3. Remember the age and the cognitive abilities of the child. Even though you will want to follow a script of some sort, the interview may be very different for each child, depending upon his/her age, cognitive abilities, and maturity. For instance, a very young child might be asked to draw a picture of and tell the interviewer the names of everyone who lives in daddy's house and everyone who lives in mommy's house. An older child may just be asked that question.

4. Some issues you may want to consider with a child are as follows:

- Who does the child identify as being in his/her family?
- Where does he/she go to school? Is he/she involved in other activities? What does he/she enjoy or dislike about school, extracurricular activities or church? Are there activities in which he/she wants to be involved in the future?
- Who participates with him/her in various activities or who takes him/her to appointments to school, or to church?
- What are the child's goals and who is best able to assist the child in obtaining those goals?
- What sort of rules does each parent have?
- Do the child's parents communicate with one another?
- Is it important to a child that his/her siblings have the same parenting arrangements? How would he/she feel if the arrangements were different?
- Besides the parent, who else lives in each household?

- What is each parent's home like? Is it a house, apartment, mobile home? Is it in town or in the country? How many bedrooms? Who stays in each bedroom? Where does the child study, play, eat, etc.? Does the child have friends in the neighborhood? Does the child have pets?
- How does the child get along with the individuals in each household?
- What work/school schedules does each individual in the household have?
- Who takes care of the child when the parent or other adults in the household are gone?
- What things does the child enjoy doing with each parent, with the other individuals in each parent's household, or by him/herself when he/she is in a parent's household?
- What things would the child change in each household if he/she were able?
- Does the child have relatives or friends he/she visits or with whom he/she has an ongoing relationship? What do they do together?
- If the child were able to make three wishes (to his/her fairy godmother/father or a genie) for his/her family, what wishes would the child make?
- If the child were able to live anywhere in the world, where would it be? Who would live with him/her? Ask the child to draw a picture of the house/castle/home in which he/she would live and everyone who would live in the house with him/her.
- If the child were scared, had a nightmare or needed advice, to whom would he/she turn or who would he/she prefer be there to help?
- Who obtains or helps the child obtain or purchase clothing or personal items?
- Who obtains or helps the child obtain or purchase school supplies?
- Who attends school activities, parent-teacher meetings, etc.?
- Is there anything the child is afraid of? Is there anything that makes the child angry?
- Who is most likely to help the child with his/her homework or school projects?
- Is the child able to identify his/her present schedule for spending time with each parent?
- If he/she were able to make his own parenting plan, what would it look like? Has he/she discussed this with his/her parents?
- What sort of punishment does each parent or other adult in the home(s) use if a child misbehaves?
- What questions does the child have about the process or what is happening?
- Is there anything the child would like the judicial officer to tell his/her parents?
- Is there anything a parent or another adult reminded the child to tell the judicial officer?
- How does the child get to and from school when he/she is at each parent's house?

5. Allow enough time to conduct the interview of a child. Depending on his or her age or maturity, the interview could be as short as 20 minutes or as long as 1-1/2 hours. Allowing one hour for each interview would be a good rule of thumb. If there are several children, each should be interviewed alone. If there is more than one child, less time might be set for the individual interviews as basic information can generally be verified with the second or third child interviewed—e.g., "Your sister told me that you live in a house with three bedrooms and that you share a room—is that right?"

6. If there is a guardian *ad litem* and/or child's attorney, he or she should always be present for the interview. If the child has a therapist or if there is a court counselor on staff, you may consider involving that individual as well.

7. Even though it may be permissible for parents' attorneys or even parents to attend the interview, consider excluding them. The presence of so many adults, especially unknown individuals, is very intimidating to a child. If requested, allow attorneys for the parties to submit questions they would like to have answered or concerns they would like to have addressed during the interview. Of course, whether you ask those questions or address those concerns or the manner in which you do so is entirely up to you.

8. Refuse to interview a child the day of the hearing, even though an attorney or party may request it. Set the interview several days before the

hearing. If the child is school-aged, make every effort to schedule the interview after school or during a school holiday. The last thing you want is to have a child sitting in the hall waiting to speak to the judicial officer while his parents and any witnesses called for the hearing are also gathered at the court.

9. Do whatever you can to make a child comfortable. Make sure you explain the reason for the interview and your role in the court process. Indicate how the interview will be used and when and under what circumstances his/her parents may learn of what has been discussed. In making arrangements for the interview, be cognizant of the child's age and maturity. Consider making special arrangements for younger children, who are generally not able to sit in a judge's office and answer one question after another. Decide if it is appropriate for you to wear a robe for the interview or if that will make the child more uncomfortable. Older children may be interviewed in the judicial officer's office while it may be best to interview younger children in a specially-prepared playroom. During interviews with younger children, reading books about parental separation, playing games, coloring, drawing pictures and other activities are more likely to promote conversation about the child's family.

10. Record the interview so you are prepared in the event there is an appeal.

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