



AFCC eNEWS

MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER
VOL. 6 NO. 2
FEBRUARY 2011

AFCC 48th Annual Conference

*Research, Policy and Practice in Family Courts:
What's Gender Got to do with it?*

June 1–4, 2011

Hilton Orlando Bonnet Creek Resort
Orlando, Florida

Win a Conference Registration

Register early to enjoy the reduced early bird registration fee and for a chance to win a conference registration! The names of registrants whose registration and payment are received or postmarked by Friday, February 18, 2011, will be entered in a drawing for a complimentary Orlando conference registration!

[Conference program](#)

[Online conference registration](#)

Scholarship Application Deadline: March 1

The scholarship application deadline for the AFCC 48th Annual Conference in Orlando is approaching fast! Applications must be submitted on or before Tuesday, March 1, 2011, to be considered.

[Apply for a scholarship](#)

Early Bird Registration Deadline: March 11

To take advantage of the reduced early bird registration rate, register by Friday, March 11, 2011.

[Conference program](#)

[Online conference registration](#)

ASK THE EXPERTS

Top Ten Things Family Law Professionals Should Know about Child Development

By David Finn, Psy.D., Rolling Meadows, Illinois

Dr. Finn will present a workshop titled *What Lawyers and Custody Evaluators Need to Know about Child Development* at AFCC's 48th Annual Conference in Orlando, Florida, on June 4, 2011. Here, he briefly lists the top ten things family law professionals should know about child development.

[Read more](#)

AzAFCC 2011 Summit Project

UPCOMING CONFERENCES



AFCC 48th Annual Conference

Research, Policy and Practice in Family Courts: What's Gender Got to do with it?

June 1–4, 2011

Hilton Orlando Bonnet Creek Resort
Orlando, Florida

[Conference program](#)

[Register](#)

[Apply for a scholarship](#)

[Book a hotel room](#)

Platinum Sponsor:



AFCC Regional Training Conference

October 27–29, 2011

Parenting Communication Resources in High-Conflict Cases

The Arizona Chapter of AFCC has written a ready-to-use guide for professionals who work with high conflict cases, suggesting methods of communication between parents. This is their first annual Summit Project, designed to address a core issue that arises in the family law arena.

[Read the guide](#)

Call for Presenters AFCC Regional Training Conference

*Working with High Conflict and Violent Families:
A Race with No Winners*

The Call for Presenters is available for the AFCC Regional Training Conference, October 27–29, 2011, at the Hyatt Regency Indianapolis, in Indianapolis, Indiana. All proposals must be submitted using the online form and are due May 16, 2011.

[Call for Presenters](#)

[Submit a proposal](#)

FEATURED PROGRAM

Next Step

An innovative program in Florida for teens aging out of the foster care system

Magistrate Susan Maulucci, Family Division Magistrate in Florida's 12th Judicial Circuit, developed a mentoring program for teens aging out of the foster care system in Manatee, Sarasota and DeSoto counties. The program, named *Next Step*, includes a mentoring program, a tutoring program, and serves as a network for teens to obtain a variety of resources.

[Read more](#)

Magistrate Maulucci, with Christopher Cain Blackwell, will present a workshop titled Connecting Youth Aging Out of Foster Care to the Community: Turning an Idea into Social Action, at AFCC's 48th Annual Conference in Orlando, Florida, on June 4, 2011.

FEATURED BLOGS

Rebecca Stahl, a lawyer and certified yoga instructor from Queen Creek, Arizona, currently a Fulbright Fellow in New Zealand, maintains a blog called [Is Yoga Legal?](#)

Richard Warshak, a psychologist and author from Dallas, Texas, writes a blog called [Plutoverse](#).

If you are an AFCC member who blogs, please send a link to Leslye Hunter at lhunter@afccnet.org for possible future inclusion. All opinions in these blogs are those of the blogger. The views and opinions expressed in featured blogs do not necessarily represent those of AFCC.

FEATURED ARTICLE

Acting Out: What Mediators Can Do To Help Parties Stop Reliving The Past And Start Working Together

By Miriam L. Zimmerman, courtesy of Mediate.com

Hyatt Regency Indianapolis
Indianapolis, Indiana

[Call for Presenters](#)

[Submit a proposal](#)

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

Missouri Chapter Annual Conference

*Working with High Conflict
Parents: Approaches for
Clients Even a Mother Can't
Love*

March 3–4, 2011

Sheraton St. Louis City Center
St. Louis, Missouri

[More Information](#)

Florida Chapter Regional Training Conference

*From Our Diversity We are
Strengthened*

March 4, 2011

The Children's Board of
Hillsborough County
Tampa, Florida

[More Information](#)

Keeping Parenting Coordinating Cases on Track: Advanced Concepts and Case Management Strategies

Matthew J. Sullivan, Ph.D.

June 20–21, 2011

Chicago, Illinois

Children and Divorce: The Voice of the Child and Interventions When Children Resist Parental Contact

*Barbara Jo Fidler, Ph.D.,
AccFM*

June 22–23, 2011

Chicago, Illinois

This article will help mediators preempt client acting-out behavior by systematic strategies employing business methods and communication techniques to help clients begin creating a better future instead of invoking a dysfunctional past.

[Read more](#)

FEATURED RESEARCH

Court-Connected Settlement Procedures: Mediation and Judicial Settlement Conferences

Courtesy of Court ADR Connection

Lawyers surveyed in Ohio demonstrated a preference for mediation conducted by staff mediators over judicial settlement conferences and mediation conducted by volunteer mediators.

[Read more](#)

AFCC Award nominations

Nominations must be received or postmarked on or before Tuesday, **March 15, 2011**, for three awards to be presented at the Awards Luncheon as part of the AFCC 48th Annual Conference in Orlando. Please review the award criteria and take a moment to consider whether a friend, colleague, or program deserves extra recognition this year! At this time, the AFCC Awards Committee is accepting nominations for the following awards:

[Read about the awards here](#)

Conference of Interest

ABA Section of Dispute Resolution

13th Annual Spring Conference

April 13–16, 2011

Sheraton Denver Downtown

Denver, Colorado

[Conference brochure](#)

FAMILY LAW IN THE NEWS

For Some Couples, Economic Indicators Say Split

By Jennifer Ludden, courtesy of Morning Edition, NPR.org

The United States divorce rate, which dipped during the recession, appears to be on the rebound. Divorce is expensive—and it's hard to split assets when you can't sell a home. But now, divorce lawyers say that's changing.

[Read more](#)

Child Custody Law in Pennsylvania New this Month

By Amaris Elliot-Engel, The Legal Intelligencer, courtesy of Post-Gazette.com

Pennsylvania's child custody law is changing this month, bringing the state statute "into the 21st century" after a decade-long reform process. As many family lawyers are celebrating the codification of custody law, there are also concerns that some parts of the new framework could result in unfunded state mandates.

[Read more](#)

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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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Surrogacy Law: Connecticut Gives Non-Genetic Parents Legal Rights

By Susan Donaldson James, courtesy of Courtesy of ABC NEWS/Health

During a two year legal battle, Anthony and Shawn Raftopol, Americans who live in Holland, worried that only one of the men was the legal parent of their young twin boys. But the Connecticut Supreme Court ruled this week that Shawn Raftopol, 40, has parenting rights, even though he is not the biological father, because the couple had a valid surrogacy agreement.

[Read more](#)



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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 Things Family Law Professionals Should Know about Child Development

By David Finn, Psy.D., Rolling Meadows, Illinois

1. Children are hearty

Ok, admittedly not a scientific lead off, but one that addresses something most of us forget in child custody cases—common sense! Most children are handed from one relative to the next shortly after birth and after a short maternity leave, most are bundled up for daycare within weeks of returning home. The idea that we must build cocoons around very young children of divorcing parents and restrict their contact to one primary caregiver is inconsistent with the experiences of most children.

2. Children can sleep at Dad's house

Assuming that both parents have been involved (versus paternity actions where one parent is a stranger to the child), sleeping at the non-residential parent's house (usually dad's) is fine. An important developmental task for very young children is to build trust, and having the experience of being rocked/soothed/cared for by both parents helps them to accomplish this task.

3. Children can sleep at Dad's house (part 2)

Back to common sense—children around the world are put down for naptime (and comforted when they awake) by their daycare providers. Children, from a young age, are shipped off to grandma's house when mom and dad want to get some sleep. The idea that young children of divorce will be traumatized by a night at dad's house, again, is inconsistent with the experience of most children.

4. Children are traumatized by traumatic events

Seeing both parents is not traumatic. Being abused is traumatic. Being withheld from a parent due to false accusations of abuse is also traumatic. If a child is being traumatized, the court should act immediately to provide that child safety and protection. If not, the child deserves to have quality time with both parents.

5. Children need predictability

Young children (under 12 years old) are concrete thinkers. This is why they don't understand conceptual ideas such as "being good" or "clean your room." Very young children (under age 7) likewise don't understand "typical" parenting time allocations (once or twice weekly and every other weekend). These children benefit from parenting time plans that are regular and routine. Give them a calendar or chart in clear view with different colors for "days with mom" and "days with dad" to help them understand.

6. Stress hurts children

Children are neurologically and developmentally impacted by stress and tension from a very early (pre-verbal) age and possibly in-utero, as well. The court process accommodates the needs and rights of the parents to a greater degree than it does for children who are distressed and need help NOW. Work with your family court system to implement interventions for distressed children and parents while litigation is ongoing to facilitate

stress relief and reduction. Be aware of your local resources, such as Rainbows, that work with children who have experienced divorce.

7. Separation anxiety is normal

As very young children (12 to 18 months) gain an understanding that people and objects exist even when they're not present (this is when you can't merely hide the keys or cell phone anymore!) they become anxious at separations. THIS DOES NOT (necessarily) REFLECT ON THE PERSON THEY ARE BEING TRANSITIONED TO. Daycare staff and kindergarten teachers see this on a daily basis. The better a parent handles the transition, the better the child will handle the transition.

8. Parenting plans need some flexibility and creativity

We all know that a 6 month old has different needs than a 6 year old or a 16 year old, but we are stuck within a system that requires a parenting plan be identified for RIGHT NOW. These plans are important, but we should build in some provisions (parenting coordinator, parenting therapist) for revisiting the plan at specified intervals (yearly) to make minor (not sweeping) adjustments. While it should be clear that this revisiting is not for the purpose of modifying custody, an extra night with mom or dad for an adolescent child is something that may be worthwhile to consider accommodating.

9. Parenting plans need some flexibility and creativity (part 2)

Be willing to think "outside the box" for your parenting plans. Some of these non-standard arrangements may include isolating overnights (i.e. 6pm until 9am) for very young children or allowing each child in a 2+ child family to have separate "alone" time with each parent during the week/month.

10. Violence damages a child's development

Violence, either observed or experienced, has profound effects on a child's emotional and psychological development. If there are allegations of violence, these should be assessed by a professional trained in domestic violence immediately and offending parents should be required to enter appropriate treatment. The children should also receive counseling if indicated. Educated and caring professionals routinely misunderstand domestic violence. Rely on your local experts with specialty training in this area to make assessments and recommendations.

Dr. David Finn, a licensed clinical psychologist, is the owner and director of the Associates in Human Development Counseling in Rolling Meadows, Illinois. He specializes in working with high conflict families and is regularly appointed by local courts to conduct custody evaluations or facilitate therapeutic intervention. Dr. Finn has expertise in assessing claims of alienation, domestic violence, and other forms of abuse. He has been privileged to have served as a guest speaker on these and other related topics including child development and working with high conflict never married litigants to various local and national groups. When not working, Dr. Finn enjoys spending time with his spouse and young children in their Chicago-area home.

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