



ASSOCIATION OF
FAMILY AND
CONCILIATION COURTS



eNEWS

AFCC 51st Annual Conference
Navigating the Waters of Shared Parenting:
Guidance from the Harbour
May 28-31, 2014, at the Westin Harbour Castle Toronto

Justice Cromwell to Speak at Luncheon

The Honourable Mr. Justice Thomas Albert Cromwell of the Supreme Court of Canada, will speak at the AFCC Luncheon, Thursday, May 29, 2014. Justice Cromwell served as Chair of Canada's National Action Committee on Access to Justice in Civil and Family Matters, which produced the report, [*Meaningful Change for Family Justice: Beyond Wise Words*](#). The report will be discussed in a workshop Friday afternoon, *Closing the Family Justice Access Gap*, with presenters Hon. George Czutrin, Senior Family Court Judge of the Family Court, Toronto, Ontario; Hon. Barry Tobin, Windsor, Ontario; and M. Jerry McHale, QC, University of Victoria, Lam Chair in Law and Public Policy, Victoria, British Columbia. A luncheon ticket is included with conference registration; additional tickets are available for purchase prior to the conference.

[Register today](#)

Continuing Education

MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER
VOL. 9 NO. 3
MARCH 2014

Upcoming AFCC Conferences



AFCC 51st Annual Conference
May 28-31, 2014
The Westin Harbour Castle
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Earn up to 20.75 hours of continuing education for psychologists, lawyers, counselors, social workers, mediators, custody evaluators and mental health professionals. AFCC will apply for specific approvals for Canadian practitioners.

[More information](#)

Donate to the Silent Auction—Small Items Make a Big Difference!

The AFCC Silent Auction is held each year as part of the annual conference and is a fun opportunity to support the organization's special projects and initiatives like the Shared Parenting Think Tank and the Domestic Violence in Child Custody Evaluations Task Force. You can help support these efforts by donating an item or attending the auction and bidding on items. Please consider donating small, easy-to-pack items or gift cards, many attendees are traveling by air. Enjoy the chance to relax and socialize before the annual banquet.

[Donation form](#)

Exhibit Space and Advertising Opportunities Available

Exhibiting and advertising at the AFCC annual conference are excellent ways to share your products and services with an interdisciplinary community of family law professionals. A limited number of exhibit spaces remain. If you cannot attend in person, registration packet inserts ensure your marketing piece reaches each attendee. Sponsorship opportunities are also available.

[More information](#)

Reserve Hotel Rooms Today

The Westin Harbour Castle offers views of Lake Ontario and Toronto's spectacular city skyline. It features a fitness center, indoor pool and roof-top tennis courts. The hotel is within a seven-minute walk from the Harbourfront Centre and Air Canada Centre; the bustling Toronto Eaton Centre, filled with shops, is less than one mile from the property. The AFCC room block is 88% sold—make your reservations today!

[Online reservations](#)

Help More Professionals Attend AFCC Conferences

Our Annual Appeal to AFCC members to support the scholarship program is progressing, but we have not yet met our goal! We thank the members who have already donated for their generosity and urge those of you who have not yet contributed to do so today. Every gift puts us closer to the goal and allows the Resource Development Committee to award more scholarships to AFCC conferences.

[More information](#)

Conference Diamond Sponsor



Conference Platinum Sponsor



AFCC 11th Symposium on Child Custody Evaluations

November 6-8, 2014

La Cantera Hill Country Resort
San Antonio, Texas

[Call for proposals](#)

AFCC 52nd Annual Conference

May 27-30, 2015

Hilton New Orleans Riverside
New Orleans, Louisiana

AFCC Regional Training Conference

November 5-7, 2015

Hyatt Regency Columbus
Columbus, Ohio

AFCC 53rd Annual Conference

June 1-4, 2016

Sheraton Seattle Hotel
Seattle, Washington

AFCC 54th Annual Conference

May 31-June 3, 2017

Sheraton Boston Hotel
Boston, Massachusetts

AFCC Chapter Annual Conferences

[Donate today](#)

[Thank you to 2013-2014 contributors](#)

Ask the Experts

Top Ten Tips When a Child is Resisting or Rejecting Contact with a Parent

By Robin Deutsch, PhD, Boston, Massachusetts, and Matthew Sullivan, PhD, Palo Alto, California

There are many factors to consider when a child resists or rejects contact with a parent. Here are some important expert tips to keep in mind when working families in this challenging situation.

[Read more](#)

Member Profile

Maria Cognetti, President, American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers

Maria Cognetti is an AFCC member and current President of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers. She is the owner of Cognetti and Associates, a law firm practicing family law exclusively, and specializing in complex cases.

[Read more](#)

Submit a Proposal to Present a Workshop in San Antonio

AFCC is accepting proposals for 90 minute workshop sessions to be presented at the 11th Symposium on Child Custody Evaluations, *Examining Unintended Consequences*, November 6-8, 2014, at the La Cantera Hill Country Resort in San Antonio, Texas. The Symposium is designed for custody evaluators, judges, lawyers, mediators and any professional who works with separating and divorcing families. The deadline to submit a proposal is May 12, 2014.

[More information](#)

Family Court Review in Anywhere Article Format

Wiley, publisher of *Family Court Review*, has created a new format for viewing digital journal articles. Give it a try by clicking "Enhanced Article (HTML)." Anywhere Article was created to give readers a more productive reading experience. The unnecessary clutter present in traditional HTML view is gone, the layout and sidebar allow the reader easily to look at references without losing their place on the page, and figures can be viewed in context. Perhaps best of all, Anywhere Article allows articles to easily be read on any device. The responsive HTML adapts to display appropriately on your desktop, laptop, tablet, or smartphone.

New Jersey Chapter Annual Meeting

Dueling Experts in Custody Litigation

March 19, 2014, 6:00–9:00 pm
Maggiano's Restaurant
Bridgewater, New Jersey

[More information](#)

Louisiana Chapter Annual Conference

Restructuring the Family: Incorporating Different Needs and Perspectives into Your Practice

March 27-28, 2014
Hampton Inn & Suites
New Orleans, Louisiana

[More information](#)

Massachusetts Chapter Annual Conference

March 28, 2014
Regis College
Weston, Massachusetts

[More information](#)

Missouri Chapter Annual Conference

with M.A.R.C.H. Mediation
Differentiating Intimate Partner Violence

April 3-4, 2014
Sheraton St. Louis City Center
Hotel
St. Louis, Missouri

[More information](#)

Australia Chapter Annual Conference

Children as a Starting Point: Assessing Families for Family Law Disputes

August 15, 2014
Grand Hyatt
Melbourne, Australia

[More information](#)

Join AFCC

Are you a member?

[Join](#) or [Renew](#)

[Members, log in to try it](#)
[Learn more](#)

Member News

[Parenting Coordination: A Practical Guide for Family Law Professionals](#), by **Debra K. Carter**, Bradenton, Florida, will be translated to Italian by publisher [Franco Angeli](#).

Bruce P. Matez, Cherry Hill, New Jersey, was recently interviewed about mediation and divorce as alternatives to divorce litigation on the program Mind, Body, Spirit, which airs on Talk Exchange Radio (WTER), a business internet radio show broadcasting from South Jersey.

Article of Interest

How Anti-Poverty Programs Marginalize Fathers

By Elizabeth Stuart, The Atlantic

Based on decades-old stereotypes that unmarried dads are “deadbeats,” the majority of welfare programs almost exclusively serve women and children.

[Read more](#)

Family Law in the News

San Diego Superior Court to Offer ‘One Day Divorce’ Option

By Monica Garske, courtesy of NBC 7 San Diego

Filing for divorce can be a lengthy process, but a new program set to begin Saturday at the San Diego Superior Court is promising to help eligible ex-couples complete a simple divorce in only one day. The “One Day Divorce” pilot program officially goes live Mar. 1 at San Diego’s Downtown Family Court.

[Read more](#)

‘Urgent Crisis’ Facing BC Family Law Services

By Kim Pemberton, courtesy of the Vancouver Sun

A women’s advocacy group is proposing two pilot projects to address an ‘urgent crisis’ in family law services caused by cuts to legal aid over the past decade.

[Read more](#)

AFCC offers member benefits that promote excellence in practice.

[View member benefits](#)

AFCC Chapters

Network and share your interdisciplinary view of family court matters on a local level. There are currently chapters in the following states and provinces:

Australia
Alberta
Arizona
California
Colorado
Connecticut
Florida
Illinois
Indiana
Louisiana
Massachusetts
Minnesota
Missouri
New Jersey
New York
Ontario
Oregon
Texas
Washington
Wisconsin
[Add an AFCC Chapter to your membership](#)

AFCC Networks

New Zealand

Ask the Experts

Is there a topic you would like to see covered by an AFCC Ask the Experts piece?

[Email your suggestion](#)

About AFCC eNEWS

Readers are welcomed and encouraged to forward this e-newsletter to interested colleagues.

The opinions expressed in articles published or linked to in

the *AFCC eNEWS* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the positions of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts.

Editor:

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AFCC
6525 Grand Teton Plaza
Madison, WI 53719
Phone: 608-664-3750
Fax: 608-664-3751
afcc@afccnet.org



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Continuing Education Credits

AFCC 51st Annual Conference

Navigating the Waters of Shared Parenting: Guidance from the Harbour

May 28–31, 2014, Westin Harbour Castle

Earn up to 20.75 hours of continuing education for psychologists, lawyers, counselors, social workers, mediators, custody evaluators and mental health professionals.

AFCC will provide a certificate of conference attendance for a processing fee of \$15 for members and \$20 for non-members. The certificate will verify attendance at conference sessions and may be used to apply for continuing education credits with the registrant's accrediting institution. A complete list of conference sessions eligible for continuing education credits will be available at the AFCC registration desk.

Psychologists: AFCC is approved by the American Psychological Association to sponsor continuing education for psychologists. AFCC maintains responsibility for the program and its content. The program is eligible for up to 20.75 hours of continuing education for psychologists.

Mental Health Professionals:

Continuing education approval from the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) for up to 20.75 CE credits will be applied for; however, individuals will need to verify approval with their credentialing or licensing boards.

AFCC is approved by the California Board of Behavioral Sciences to offer continuing education for MFT and LCSW professionals in California, PCE #4630. The pre-conference institutes provide 6 hours and the conference program provides up to 14.75 hours toward continuing education required by BBS.

AFCC is an NBCC-Approved Continuing Education Provider (ACEP™) and may offer NBCC-approved clock hours for events that meet the National Board of Certified Counselor requirements. The ACEP is solely responsible for all aspects of the program. Up to 20.75 hours may be earned.

Mediators: All conference sessions are eligible for continuing education units through the Association for Conflict Resolution.

California Custody Evaluators and Mediators: Applications will be submitted to the Judicial Council of California, Administrative Office of the Courts.

Ontario Lawyers: An application will be submitted to the Law Society of Upper Canada to accredit the educational program content for professionalism hours (Continuing Professional Development, or CPD) for lawyers.

US Lawyers: An application for accreditation of continuing legal education activity will be submitted to Vermont. US Lawyers may use the certificate of attendance to apply to their individual state for credit.



Ask the Experts

Top Ten Tips When a Child is Resisting or Rejecting Contact with a Parent

By Robin Deutsch, PhD, Boston, Massachusetts, and Matthew Sullivan, PhD, Palo Alto, California

1. It is uncommon that a case presented as “alienation” or “parental alienation syndrome” involves just one dynamic that contributes to the child’s response to the targeted parent. A dichotomous conceptualization that characterizes the situation as either alienation or estrangement is rarely accurate or helpful to develop effective interventions. The most common case might be called a “hybrid case” and must be understood from a family system’s perspective.

2. Always evaluate systemically. Consider child development, history of the parent-child relationships, parental abuse, parenting problems, the effects of highly conflictual co-parenting, and other contextual factors (ongoing litigation, financial issues, the impact of extended family, etc.).

2a. Reunification with the non-custodial parent is not the primary goal of intervention, but a by-product of individual and relationship work with family members.

3. Clear and specific court orders for parental access and intervention are necessary but not sufficient for effective intervention.

3a. Mandate information exchanges and joint decision-making between parents who share legal custody, regardless of the physical custody timeshare (even if no contact is occurring with a rejected parent).

4. Professionals involved cannot mirror the conflicted process of the family system: the likelihood that intervening professionals will become aligned in the polarized dynamics of the family system can only be avoided by collaborative professional work supported by structures that allow information sharing and the coordination of the team’s treatment. Ongoing adversarial legal processes tend to be detrimental to successful outcomes.

5. Any mental health professional in the community won't do. Professionals who work in these cases need to have specialized experience and skill. See the [AFCC Guidelines for Court Involved Therapy](#)¹, professional practice guidelines for mental health professionals working with these cases.

¹ The Guidelines for Court-Involved Therapy are the product of the Court-Involved Therapist Task Force, appointed in 2009, by then AFCC President Robin Deutsch. Matthew Sullivan and Hon. Linda S. Fidnick served as the co-chairs of the task force.

6. Custody change requires risk analysis and should not be a punitive measure or based only on the evidence of a parent engaging in alienation.
7. An ounce of early intervention when there is evidence of a child resisting visitation (or even before the child begins resisting) is worth a pound of legal and mental health intervention when these problems become entrenched.
8. Parenting coordination is almost always a necessary role for case management in these cases, unless the judicial officer is willing and able to intensively manage the case.
9. Some coercive court authority is often needed to support compliance with treatment and access orders. The favored parent and child are rarely motivated to comply with orders that support reunification, and a coercive component to interventions (i.e., the risk of court sanctions) is often necessary for progress to occur in these cases.
10. In the most entrenched cases, after reunification interventions have failed, sometimes the least detrimental alternative is a well-prepared intervention that provides the rejected parent an opportunity to give the child a “parting message.” This message explains that the parent will let go of continued efforts to reconnect for the moment, but allows them the opportunity to express their love and commitment to the child with an open door in the future.



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MARCH 2014

Member Profile

*Maria Cognetti, President, American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania*



Maria Cognetti is an AFCC member and current President of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers. She is the owner of Cognetti and Associates, a law firm practicing family law exclusively, and specializing in complex cases.

What does your current work entail?

As President of AAML, I am in charge of the daily goings-on of all the committees, planning three executive committee meetings, planning two annual meetings (one of which was earlier this month in Cancun), overseeing the important work of the treasurer, being available for the executive director and staff, being the point person for all media requests for interviews and appearances, and generally putting out fires.

As owner of Cognetti and Associates, I oversee a staff of two other attorneys, one or two paralegals, two secretaries, an office manager and two part timers. I am the person primarily responsible for bringing new clients in the door, and overseeing the work of the attorneys and paralegals. Oh, and I practice law while doing the above two jobs!

How did you become interested family law?

To be honest, I started out wanting to be a tax attorney. I never had a thought of spending most of my time in a courtroom. As fate would have it, the first two firms I worked at were solos and they had no desire to do family law work. Having a degree in psychology and wanting to be more involved with numbers, the move to family law seemed like a reasonable compromise. It only took about six months to determine that I had found my niche.

What advice would you give to someone new to family law?

Since I do not believe that everyone is cut out for family law I suggest that, whenever possible, find a way to do a clerkship with a family law firm before deciding on it as a career. When you look at areas such as custody, being a full-time family law attorney can clearly have its gut wrenching moments.

What are the greatest challenges you see in family law now?

Each area of family law is changing on a monthly, if not weekly, basis. Each time a new higher court case ruling comes down, the practitioner must know and absorb how the opinion in that case affects any similar case on that attorney's desk.

What would you like to see happen in family law in the next ten years?

Ahhh—many things...first and foremost, and likely the most pie in the sky, I would like to see more respect for this area of law from the bench. Cases should be heard by judges and given the proper amount of time needed on a case-by-case basis. Most importantly, we need to find a better way to resolve custody cases to leave fewer scars on the children of divorce.

What aspect of your work do you enjoy the most?

The best and the worst are my custody cases. There is nothing better than knowing your client is a good parent; and achieving the client's goal in their child's best interest. These are the most rewarding cases.

How did you first learn about AFCC?

I learned about the AFCC through Dr. Arnie Shienvold, past president of AFCC. Since then, I have found that many of my cohorts are also members.

What do you like most about AFCC?

Wow, this is a long list:

- A membership list filled with the best and the brightest.
- An amazing executive director.
- AFCC puts on the best programs around.
- Consistently having great speakers at said programs.
- Whether on the website or personally, I can always find important data or research through my membership.
- Likewise, AFCC members are always ready, willing and able to help out, whether it is an answer to a question, to speak on a program, or just general information.

What is your proudest personal achievement?

Being a good daughter and knowing that my folks were proud of me. Professionally, it would have to be this year and being the President of the AAML.

What do you enjoy doing in your free time?

When I have free time, I like to go to big league baseball games, play golf and go to the beach (the Jersey Shore). Of course, I like to do all of these with my family!

Tell us something about yourself that your AFCC colleagues don't know.

This one is tough. Probably the craziest thing about me is my love for not only the game of baseball, but also playing baseball. Two years ago, I started attending New York Yankees Women's Fantasy Camp. As a veteran player, this past January we played seven seven-inning games over about a four day period. I generally play the infield and this year I played almost every inning. To get in shape for my first camp two years ago, I started training two years before camp started. I still train all year. In fact, after I got home from camp in January, I went to my regular Sunday afternoon 90 minute skills session where I am crazy enough to play with teenage boys. The short story is that having survived real camp only two weeks earlier, I took a throw right to my face (never even got my glove up) and loosened three teeth. I got stitches inside and out, a double emergency root canal and can't go back until I get a well-fitted mouth guard. But, I will be back there within the next few weeks!