



Improving the lives of children and families
through the resolution of family conflict



September 2020
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Register now for the 14th Symposium on Child Custody

The Future of Child Custody: Stacking the Deck in Favor of Children

November 9-13, 2020

(or November 10-14, depending on your time zone)

The 14th Symposium on Child Custody will take place virtually to prioritize the safety of its attendees and presenters while still offering opportunities for educational enrichment and continuing education credit.

Register now! Early bird rates will end in October.

Program Highlights

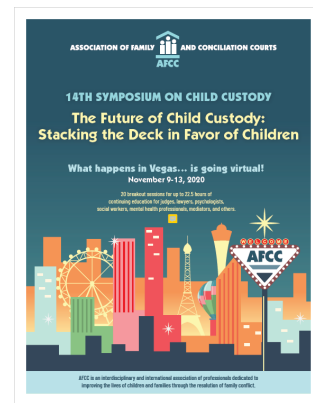
The opening session, ***Stacking the Deck in Favor of Children: What to Do When the World Goes Haywire***, will examine the trials and tribulations of providing effective services to families in conflict even when the world is in crisis. Panelists include:

- Gabrielle Davis, JD
- Susan Myres, JD
- Hon. Marge Slabach (Ret.)
- Matthew Sullivan, PhD

The panel for the plenary session, ***Betting on the Voice of the Child in Parenting Disputes***, will examine how to keep children's voices front and center, regardless of the

14th Symposium on Child Custody

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(or November 10-14, depending on your time zone)

Thank you to our symposium sponsor, Soberlink!



Thank you to our annual conference sponsors!

Diamond Sponsors

challenges faced by professionals. Panelists include:

- Mindy Mitnick, EdM, MA
- Stacey Platt, JD
- Hon. Herman Walker, Jr.
- Marsha Kline Pruett, PhD, ABPP

[Read the conference program](#) brochure for complete details! We look forward to seeing you.

Apply for a scholarship

Thanks to generous donations from AFCC members, AFCC is able to provide a limited number of scholarships to the virtual symposium. Scholarships include registration for one pre-symposium institute and the symposium, plus a certificate of attendance. The application deadline is Tuesday, September 29, 2020, so don't wait! [Apply online](#) today.

Sponsor the Symposium

Many thanks to our symposium sponsor, [Soberlink](#)! Join Soberlink and sponsor [OurFamilyWizard.com](#)—promote your business on the event sponsor page. Contact [Gina Wentling](#) for details and affordable pricing.

[Register now!](#)

Ask the Experts: Ten Tips for Mental Health Professionals Who Work with Families Struggling with Parent-Child Contact Problems

John A. Moran, PhD; Shawn McCall, PsyD, Esq.; and Matthew Sullivan, PhD

Treatment of families in which a child resists or refuses contact with a parent can be difficult for even the most seasoned professional. Amplified by litigation, the built-in emotional intensity of this problem leads family members to fully deploy their defenses and to be battle-ready.

Therapy minefields are everywhere. These ten tips highlight helpful precautions and strategies.

1. Be mindful of the number of these cases you accept at any given time. [Read more.](#)

Family Law Writing Competition

Attention students: Hofstra Law and AFCC are sponsoring the twelfth annual Family Law Writing Competition. The competition is run in cooperation with the editorial staff of the *Family Court Review*, the academic and research journal of AFCC.

First prize includes a \$500 cash prize courtesy of the Center for Children, Families and the Law at Hofstra Law; consideration for publication of the article in the *Family Court Review*; a one-year complimentary AFCC student

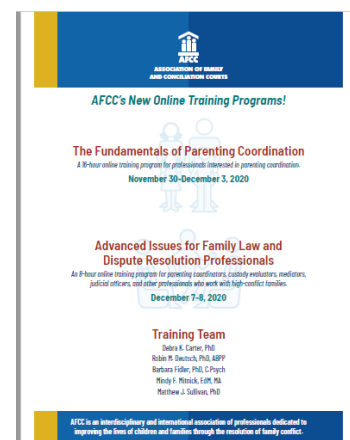


Platinum Sponsors



AFCC's New Online Training Programs!

Nov. 30 - Dec. 3, 2020
Dec. 7 - 8, 2020



AFCC Chapter Conferences

Florida Chapter Annual Conference

Begins October 1, 2020
Being held virtually

membership, including a one-year subscription to the *Family Court Review*, or complimentary conference registration to the AFCC 58th Annual Conference, June 2-5, 2021!

Read the announcement for complete details and submit your article by February 15, 2021.

Register Now: AFCC Parenting Coordination Training Programs

AFCC is pleased to introduce a new, comprehensive parenting coordination training, conducted online by a team of leading international practitioners and trainers. Participants can earn up to 24 hours continuing education credit!

Registrants can choose to attend either training program or both:

The Fundamentals of Parenting Coordination
November 30 - December 3, 2020 (16 CE hours)

Advanced Issues for Family Law and Dispute Resolution Professionals
December 7-8, 2020 (8 CE hours)

View the brochure for more details and **register online**.

Indiana Chapter Annual Conference
October 2, 2020
Being held virtually

Illinois Chapter Annual Conference
October 2, 2020
Being held virtually

Maryland Chapter Annual Conference
October 8, 2020
Being held virtually

Ontario Chapter Annual Conference
October 16, 2020
Being held virtually

Texas Chapter Annual Conference
November 5-6, 2020
Being held virtually

Resource of the Month

AFCC members can access all recordings from the **Special Webinar Series on Parent-Child Contact Problems!** This member benefit includes over 24 hours of valuable content.

Update on AFCC Annual Conference

The AFCC 58th Annual Conference is scheduled for June 2-5, 2021, in Boston, MA. At the present time, AFCC is planning for a face-to-face conference featuring the program originally planned for the 57th Annual Conference, *When a Child Rejects a Parent: Are We Part of the Problem or the Solution?*

AFCC continues to carefully monitor health and safety issues related to the pandemic and is in close contact with the Sheraton Boston Hotel. We will continue to place a priority on the health and safety of AFCC members and conference attendees. If you have questions, please contact AFCC at afcc@afccnet.org.

AFCC Joins the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Collaborative to Encourage Census Participation

AFCC, as member of the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Collaborative, has joined with other organizations that represent judges and practitioners in the family justice system in encouraging people to participate in the 2020 Census. Organizations include:

- The American Bar Association
- The Association of Family and Conciliation Courts
- The Hispanic National Bar
- The International Association of LGBTQ+ Judges

- The National American Indian Court Judges Association
- The National Asian Pacific American Bar Association
- The National Association for Court Management
- The National Association of Women Judges
- The National Bar Association
- The National Center for State Courts
- The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges
- The National Judicial College
- The National LGBT Bar Association

[View the video](#) and [complete the census online](#), if you haven't already been counted.

Reminder: Complete the Child Custody Evaluation Survey

As a family law professional, you are invited to complete this online survey to assist the AFCC Task Force in revising the AFCC *Model Standards of Practice for Child Custody Evaluation*. We would greatly appreciate your participation.

If you have not yet completed the survey, we ask that you please consider doing so now. The survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. There are no right or wrong answers. We do not intend for you to look up answers, but instead we are asking for your general impressions and opinions.

Don't wait to respond—the survey closes on Friday, September 18, 2020.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Kate McNamara at kathleenmcnamaraphd@gmail.com.

For more information, including disclosures and survey structure, [click here](#).

AFCC Webinar Corner

Voice of the Child: An International Perspective

Rachel Birnbaum, PhD, RSW, LLM

October 13, 2020 | 1:00-2:00pm Eastern Time US

Registration closes on October 12, 2020 at 9:00am Eastern Time US.

There is growing recognition internationally that there is an important role for children in post-separation decision-making; though there is continuing controversy about how, when, and even whether this should be done. While there are legitimate concerns about children being “caught in the crossfire” of their parents’ conflicts, the reality is that if parents are unable to reach an agreement on parenting arrangements post separation, their children are inevitably involved. If parents are proceeding through the family justice system, there are a number of ways for children to have their “voices heard,” including having a mental health professional prepare a report about the results of interviews with the child, child legal representation, a parenting assessment, a letter or other communication from the child, and a judicial meeting with the child. Dr. Birnbaum will highlight the different ways children are being heard as well as the risks and benefits in promoting children’s participation in family decision-making across the globe.



Registration

Members: \$15

Non-Members: \$50

Certificate of Attendance

Members: \$15

Non-Members: \$20

Continuing education credit may be available for lawyers, judges, psychologists, social workers, counselors, and other professionals. [Learn more](#).

Register today!

Stay tuned for November's webinar:

[Providing Effective Testimony for Mental Health Professionals](#)

Mike Kretzmer, JD, CFLS, AAML

November 19, 2020 | 1:00-2:00pm Eastern Time US

[Register now!](#)

AFCC Flash Webinar Series Concludes

AFCC's Flash Webinar Series featured authors from the July 2020 Special Issue of *Family Court Review* on Parenting Coordination, co-edited by Debra K. Carter, PhD, and Linda Fieldstone, MEd. The flash series ended September 3, 2020.

Flash Webinar Series by the numbers

- 4 webinars
- 10 presenters from 3 countries
- 390 series registrants
- 360+ minutes of webinar content delivered and recorded

Many thanks

AFCC thanks all presenters (listed below) for sharing their time and knowledge. Behind the scenes, AFCC staff members Kelly Bienfang, Patrick Sommer, and Gina Wentling helped the series run smoothly.

Annette Burns, JD
Debra K. Carter, PhD
Robin M. Deutsch, PhD, ABPP
David A. Donner, JD
Leslie M. Drozd, PhD

Linda Fieldstone, MEd
Jonathan Graham, LLB
James McHale, PhD
Matthew J. Sullivan, PhD
Lorri Yasenik, PhD

Did you miss it? [Purchase the recorded webinar series](#) for just \$30 for AFCC members or \$80 for non-members.

If you previously registered for this webinar series, [visit the flash webinar page](#), click on the program you wish to view, and login using your AFCC email address and password.

Mediation 20/20: Navigating Mediation's Best Future

Mediate.com, led by AFCC member Colin Rule, will celebrate its 25th Anniversary with an online conference later this month. The Mediation 20/20 Conference, a focused think-tank conference dedicated to defining best courses for mediation's continued growth over the next decade, runs online September 30 - October 2, 2020. [Learn more here.](#)

Chapter News

Hon. Randall Fuller, AFCC member in Delaware, Ohio, is the new President of AFCC's Ohio Chapter. He currently serves as the Domestic Relations Judge in Delaware County. Judge Fuller was elected in 2016 to be the first judge of Delaware County's newly unified Domestic Relations Division. In 2017 he was elected to the Board of Directors of the Ohio Association of Domestic Relations Judges and currently serves as Vice President. Judge Fuller has created a mediation program, Settlement Week, and Neutral Evaluation program in his first

three and a half years as judge. Before taking the bench, he was an attorney in private practice for 22 years. Fuller is a graduate of The Ohio State University and the University of Toledo College of Law. Congratulations, Judge Fuller!



Member News

Ann Ordway, AFCC member in Gilbert, Arizona who has been a member of the AFCC Board of Directors since 2015, has been promoted to College Academic Director of Counseling Programs for the University of Phoenix. She was also named a faculty of the year at the University of Phoenix, from over 1,300 nominations and a faculty pool totaling over 5,000. Ann teaches graduate-level students in the counseling department. She has been a family law attorney for more than 25 years (now retired from private practice) and is a nationally certified counselor (NCC), continuing to work in the fields of parenting coordination and child advocacy. Her doctoral dissertation on the experiences of parenting coordinators working with high conflict couples engaged in intimate partner violence dynamics is the foundation of her current research. Congratulations, Ann!



Patrice Oppenheim, AFCC member in Louisiana, has been elected without opposition and will become one of the Family Court Judges in the 22nd Judicial District Court which serves St. Tammany and Washington Parishes, Louisiana beginning in January 2021. She has practiced law for 29 years with over 15 years exclusively in family law. Judge-Elect Oppenheim is Board Certified as a Family Law Specialist by the Louisiana Board of Specialization, on the Board of Directors of the Louisiana Chapter of AFCC, active in the state's Family Law Section of the Bar Association, the local Inns of Court, and a past-president of her local bar association. Congratulations, Judge-Elect Oppenheim!



Do you have a notable achievement to share? Email [Gina Wentling](#) with your story and a professional head shot (JPEG or PNG preferred), if you have one, to be featured in next month's Member News!

Staff News

Every August, the AFCC staff takes half a day away from the office to do something fun together. Past activities include mini-golf, kayaking, and touring a local mustard museum.

This year is different, of course, but in an attempt to cling to some semblance of normal life, the AFCC Staff Outing lives on. In 2020, each staff member embarked on a separate adventure. The next day, the staff met over Zoom (see screen shot below) to share tales

and pictures of their activities.

Want to see the staff outing pictures for yourself? [View the Facebook album](#) for a glimpse of the AFCC staffers enjoying some fun time out of the office. It just might inspire you to take the afternoon off!

AFCC Staff (clockwise from upper left):

Peter Salem, Executive Director

Gina Wentling, Communications Coordinator

Patrick Sommer, Program Assistant

Dawn Holmes, Director of Operations

Katie Porter, Program Director

Kelly Bienfang, Operations Administrator



AFCC eNEWS

The *AFCC eNEWS* is the monthly e-newsletter of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts. The *eNEWS* provides up-to-date information for professionals including practice tips, international news, and the latest initiatives in family law and conflict resolution. The *AFCC eNEWS* is provided at no charge to you; anyone can subscribe.

[Subscribe here.](#)

AFCC members are free to share eNEWS content.

EDITOR:

[Katie Porter, MSW, JD](#)

ASSOCIATE EDITOR:

[Gina Wentling](#)





ASSOCIATION OF
FAMILY AND
CONCILIATION COURTS



eNEWS

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Ten Tips for Mental Health Professionals Who Work with Families Struggling with Parent-Child Contact Problems

John A. Moran, PhD; Shawn McCall, PsyD Esq.; and Matthew Sullivan, PhD

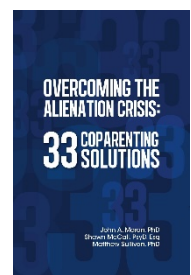
Treatment of families in which a child resists or refuses contact with a parent can be difficult for even the most seasoned professional. Amplified by litigation, the built-in emotional intensity of this problem leads family members to fully deploy their defenses and to be battle-ready.

Therapy minefields are everywhere. These ten tips highlight helpful precautions and strategies.

1. **Be mindful of the number of these cases you accept at any given time.** Cases with parent-child contact problems can emotionally tax even the most seasoned mental health professionals. When the conflict escalates, these cases may require many hours and several points of contact weekly. More than three or four of these cases in a professional's caseload may easily overwhelm a practice and lead to burnout.
2. **Remember to focus on enjoyable activities.** Families typically tend to focus on historical and current problems between the child and rejected parent. In order to improve relationships, the focus needs to balance work on these problems with work creating positive expectations and experiences built into the relationship through enjoyable activities both in and out of the therapist's office.
3. **Implement a communication intervention for the coparents.** A frequently needed intervention for high-conflict coparents is to structure communication so that emails are filtered to a particular folder or through an app such as OurFamilyWizard.com or Talking Parents. This allows a parent to avoid the anxiety and fear of what the coparent has to say as every electronic *ding!* announces a new email. Rather, a parent can choose a convenient time to engage in the business of coparenting.
4. **Establish a communication intervention between the professional and clients.** Both professionals and clients will benefit when the professional creates a boundary around the time that he or she is able to engage with the families. Such a boundary will free the professional from feeling as though he or she is obligated to respond to clients the moment a message comes in.

5. **Set realistic expectations for the coparents about the reconnection process.** A rejected parent may expect that a good reconnection therapist will be able to rapidly return things to “normal.” Everyone in the family needs to understand that this is generally a slow, lengthy process of building trust between the rejected parent and the child. Small but meaningful steps in parent-child reconnection are a more sustainable intervention goal.
6. **Help the child to develop realistic expectations about interactions with the rejected parent.** Usually children are anxious about renewing their relationship with the resisted parent. Sometimes they are oppositional to substantial increases in time. There is a higher likelihood of success when parent-child time progresses as planned by the treatment team. Trust is gradually re-established as consistent and positive experiences occur between the child and rejected parent.
7. **Remain flexible and open as your work with the family evolves.** A central premise of Family Systems Theory is that movement by one family member creates changes in the other members. Reconnection therapy invariably requires that the interventionist be flexible and open to the ways these unique individuals and families may behave, grow, and change in response to treatment.
8. **Keep focused on your responsibilities as a reconnection therapist.** Reconnection therapists are not in a position to render opinions on psycho-legal questions, including but not limited to: if a parent is competent, if abuse has occurred, or if alienation has occurred. Reconnection therapists may have information that evaluators or judges may find useful, but the reconnection therapist’s job is not to make a legal determination or to provide formal recommendations about parenting time disputes.
9. **Avoid making recommendations outside the treatment plan.** Reconnection therapists must be very vigilant to prevent any of their recommendations from being viewed or characterized as custody or parenting time recommendations. Rather, any recommendations about the rejected parent spending time with the child should be clearly communicated as limited in scope and time as well as in the service of achieving treatment goals rather than the court-ordered nature of a custody schedule.
10. **Seek support and peer assistance to avoid burnout.** Families experiencing parent-child contact problems are among the most complex and dynamic of clinical challenges, and significant polarized advocacy positions in the field make this work even more difficult and risky. Thus, reconnection therapists should be involved in a peer consultation and case discussion group. Ongoing professional education, consultation, and support are essential to do effective clinical work with this population.

John A. Moran, PhD, Shawn McCall, PsyD Esq, and Matthew Sullivan, PhD have many decades of experience working with high-conflict families where a child is resisting or rejecting contact with a parent. They are the authors of the recently published Amazon #1 Best Seller *Overcoming the Alienation Crisis: 33 Coparenting Solutions*.



The Maurice A. Deane School of Law at Hofstra University and the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts present the twelfth annual Family Law Writing Competition



Hofstra Law and the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC) are sponsoring the twelfth annual Family Law Writing Competition. The competition is run in cooperation with the editorial staff of the *Family Court Review*, which is the academic and research journal of AFCC. The *Family Court Review* is an interdisciplinary and international journal published quarterly by Wiley and in cooperation with the Center for Children, Families, and the Law at Hofstra Law. The *Family Court Review* contributes to and facilitates discourse among the judicial, legal, mediation, mental health and social services communities.

Topics for Submission

The subject of entries may be within any area of family law, although topics that focus on international or interdisciplinary subjects of family law are especially encouraged. Articles should concentrate on a current legal issue and must have a strong foundation in legal research. Use of interdisciplinary sources may also be appropriate for many topics.

Entries will be judged on the quality of legal analysis, originality, depth of research, timeliness, creativity and format. The *Family Court Review's* editors and a subcommittee of editorial board members will evaluate all articles.

Authorship

Submissions must be the work of one person. No joint authorships will be accepted, except articles written jointly by a law student and mental health, social science, or other relevant graduate student. Submissions must be originally argued and researched legal papers. Hofstra Law students are ineligible to participate. Law students can be from any country. Advice and input from professors, judges, and professionals in the field is allowed, but the author must research and write the entire article. Entries cannot be more than 25 double-spaced pages in length, including footnotes. Articles must be in Times New Roman, 12-point font, with 1-inch margins. Authors from the United States must comply with *The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation, 20th Edition*. Authors from outside the United States must conform to the relevant legal citation format commonly used in that country and must indicate the citation format used. The submitted article cannot be published or submitted for publication elsewhere.

AWARDS

First Prize

- \$500 cash prize courtesy of the Center for Children, Families and the Law at Hofstra Law
- Certificate of recognition as first-place winner.
- Consideration for publication of the article in the *Family Court Review*
- Letter to the dean of the student's law school
- One-year complimentary AFCC student membership, including a one-year subscription to the *Family Court Review*

OR

- Complimentary conference registration to AFCC's 58th Annual Conference, held June 2-5, 2021, in Boston, Massachusetts (Does not include hotel, transportation and food)

Honorable Mention (Up to two)

- \$250 cash prize courtesy of the Center for Children, Families and the Law at Hofstra Law
- Certificate of recognition as the honorable-mention winner
- Consideration for publication of the article in the *Family Court Review*
- Letter to the dean of the student's law school

SUBMISSION PROCESS

Applicants must download the Entry Form from law.hofstra.edu/FCR and e-mail the completed form to fcr@hofstra.edu for an anonymous entry

number by February 1, 2021. Applicants who do not submit an Entry Form by February 1, 2021 are ineligible. All submissions must be emailed as a Microsoft Word or PDF document to the *Family Court Review* at fcr@hofstra.edu. Hard copies are not permissible.

DUE DATE

Entry forms must be received by February 1, 2021. Article submissions must be received by February 15, 2021. The winner will be notified no later than March 15, 2021.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions, please contact the Managing Editor of the *Family Court Review* at fcr@hofstra.edu.

RELEVANT LINKS

Association of Family and Conciliation Court (AFCC): <http://www.afccnet.org/>

Hofstra Law's Center for Children, Families and the Law:
law.hofstra.edu/CenterForChildren

Hofstra Law's L.L.M. Program in Family Law:
law.hofstra.edu/LLMFamilyLaw

Family Court Review:
law.hofstra.edu/FCR

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