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AFCC eNEWS

MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER
VOL. 4 NO. 12
DECEMBER 2009

Season's Greetings from AFCC

by Peter Salem, AFCC Executive Director

The year 2009 has been a difficult one for many, and especially for our friends and colleagues in public sector positions who have experienced funding cuts and furloughs and are now being asked to perform already difficult jobs in even less time with even fewer resources. And even in such dire circumstances, AFCC members are so dedicated to excellence in their work that they use personal funds for memberships and conferences that were formerly covered by employers. This commitment to AFCC, to professional excellence and, most importantly, to the children and families who are served by our members, is the greatest holiday gift we could hope for. Our gifts to AFCC members include continuing our member price freeze, increasing the number of conference scholarships (this year we are offering 50!) and providing you with extraordinary programs, information, ideas and service in support of your work.

Wishing you a happy, healthy and peaceful 2010.

RESEARCH UPDATE

Abuse Continues After Divorce

By La Monica Everett-Haynes, courtesy of UANews.org

A great deal of research indicates that mediation is helpful for divorcing couples, but a project underway at the University of Arizona indicates that for certain couples, more supervision is necessary after the mediation process has ended.

[Read more...](#)

Child Abuse Affects Adolescents' Health

Courtesy of J.M. Craig Press, Inc.

Research has demonstrated that children need attentive and nurturing parents in order to thrive. Early childhood stress is known to cause psychological problems for children both at the time and later in life. This article goes further by addressing the links between childhood stress and later physical illness.

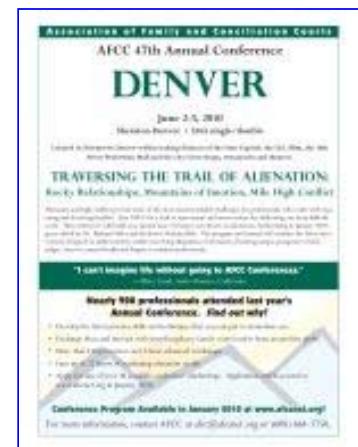
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TREASURES ON THE AFCC WEBSITE

AFCC Guidelines for Brief Focused Assessment

The AFCC Board of Directors approved the AFCC Guidelines for Brief Focused Assessment at its meeting in Reno on November 5,

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

Coming Soon! The Denver conference brochure and online registration will be posted shortly. Watch for it!

AFCC Ninth Symposium on Child Custody Evaluations

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

AFCC 48th Annual Conference

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

2009. The Task Force on Brief Focused Assessment was appointed in 2007 by then AFCC President Bill Fee to study the issues of "limited assessment" models used in family courts. In August 2007, the task force conducted a survey of family court practitioners that revealed that these assessments are increasingly practiced in a multitude of family court settings, but with little clear definition or standardization of methodology and practice.

In early 2009, a draft of the Guidelines on Brief Focused Assessment was made available for comment on the AFCC website, and the task force held an open forum at the AFCC Annual Conference in New Orleans. The task force received many thoughtful and articulate comments that were carefully considered in the final editing process.

[Read the Guidelines here ...](#)

Shared Parenting

Courtesy of Life Matters - ABC National Radio

Three years ago, family law moved away from custody and access to the concept of shared parenting. It was designed to allow separated fathers to spend more time with their children. Supporters say this is in the best interests of the child, but now the idea is being tested. Clinical psychologist Dr. Jennifer McIntosh previews her research findings on the impact of shared care ahead of a family conference in Sydney.

[Hear the interview...](#)

February AFCC Training Programs in Houston

Parenting Coordination: Working with High Conflict Families, presented by Christine Coates, M.Ed., J.D., February 22-23, 2010.

Attachment, Alienation and Difficult Clients, presented by Arnold T. Shienvold, Ph.D., February 24-25, 2010.

[More information...](#)

ASK THE EXPERTS

Ten Tips for Separated and Divorced Families for the Holidays

By Peg Libby, Executive Director of Kids First Center

Holidays and special occasions create special challenges for separating and divorcing families. Last year, Peg Libby gave suggestions to make it easier for all involved. Here they are, back by popular demand.

[Read more...](#)

FEATURED ARTICLE

Turning Parents Into People

by Michael Jacobs, Courtesy of Mediate.com

In the world of family mediation, the "best interests of the children" often take central stage. There is much to argue for in this position. While not ignoring the voice of the child, we may also need to spend time reflecting on what it might mean to also work in the "best interests of adults."

[Read more...](#)

AFCC 49th Annual Conference

June 6-9, 2012
Hyatt Regency
Chicago, Illinois

Arizona Chapter Annual Conference

February 5-7, 2010
Hilton Sedona Resort and Spa

Sedona, Arizona

[More information...](#)

California Chapter Annual Conference

February 12-14, 2010
The Crisis of Under-Funding Family Court Resources: A Clear and Present Danger to Our Children
Sheraton Delfina Hotel
Santa Monica, California

[More information...](#)

Missouri Chapter Annual Conference

March 11-12, 2010
Mediating High Conflict Cases
Featuring Larry Fong, Ph.D.
Sheraton City Center
St. Louis, Missouri

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ASK THE EXPERTS

Do you have a question that you would like answered by an AFCC expert? Let us know and your question could be answered in the next *AFCC eNEWS*.

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AFCC Thanks Our Scholarship Fund Contributors

Each year AFCC has increased the number of scholarships awarded to our conferences. This year, additional travel stipends have been created as well. If you would like to be part of the generous group of contributors who help make these scholarships possible by making a tax deductible contribution to the AFCC Scholarship Fund, [please click here](#).

[List of Contributors...](#)

Hofstra Family Law Writing Competition

Hofstra Law School and AFCC are sponsoring the annual Family Law Writing Competition to celebrate the establishment of Hofstra's LL.M. program in Family Law. The competition is run in cooperation with the editorial staff of *Family Court Review*, the academic and research journal of AFCC. *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 School. *Family Court Review* contributes to and facilitates discourse among the judicial, legal, mediation, mental health and social services communities.

[For more information...](#)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Internet Makes Divorce Process Easier for Family Court

By Dot Whittington, Courtesy CourierMail.com.au

More than 400 Australian couples have applied for divorce with the click of a mouse since e-divorce was introduced two months ago.

[Read more...](#)

Judge Links Suicides to Family Break-ups

By Simon Collins, Courtesy of NZHerald.co.nz

A top judge has called for more mental health support for people involved in Family Court cases after finding 18 suspected suicides by people involved in the court [from May 2008 to June 2009]. Principal Family Court Judge Peter Boshier, in a speech delivered in Blenheim [on November 19, 2009], also proposes a new specialist agency to refer victims and offenders in domestic violence cases to counselling and to chase up offenders who drop out of programmes.

[Read more...](#)

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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Childhood Abuse Affects Adolescents' Health

Courtesy of J.M. Craig Press, Inc.

Shirtcliff, E. A., Coe, C. L. and Pollack, S. D. [2009]. Early Childhood Stress Is Associated With Elevated Antibody Levels to Herpes Simplex Virus Type 1. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, doi-10.1073/pnas.0806660106.

Research has demonstrated that children need attentive and nurturing parents in order to thrive. Early childhood stress is known to cause psychological problems for children both at the time and later in life [See Digests: 6, 6; 8, 8, & 10; and 9, 2, & 3.] This article goes further by addressing the links between childhood stress and later physical illness..

The authors collected samples of saliva from 155 adolescents to measure their level of antibodies to Herpes 1 as a physical measure of their stress levels. Twenty-six percent of the participants had lived in orphanages for some portion of their lives, 21% had been victims of physical abuse but continued to live with their parents, and 53% served as controls.

The authors found that deprivation and/or physical abuse led to higher levels of antibodies for Herpes 1. Those from the orphanages had higher levels than those who had been mistreated by their parents, but both groups' levels were higher than the controls'.

When those who had lived in orphanages left the institution, their blood levels went down, but only to the level of the teens who were living in abusive environments. That is, they did not return to normal levels. These differences continued even when a large number of other factors were considered such as race, socio-economic status, and chronic medical conditions.

The authors concluded that childhood stress affects long-term functioning of the immune system. Much research tells us that there are emotional consequences and cognitive deficits associated with mistreatment; this study demonstrates that there is also a direct impact on physical health as well.

Critical Analysis

We need to consider these findings with some caution since the teens were tested only during a brief period of time. Furthermore, since we do not know how long the teens lived in these adverse circumstances, we cannot know the extent to which they may have been exposed to a more germ-laden environment than the children who were living at home with their parents. Therefore, while it is tempting to conclude that the resulting elevated antibody levels were all stress related, the authors did not control for this factor. We can only assume that the longer they lived in adversity, the greater their vulnerability to illness would be, but the authors do not tell us this, and we cannot know.

Recommendations

It is generally considered standard practice for CCEs to request medical records from both parents' and children's physicians. In many cases, such

information is not helpful as all those involved are generally healthy. As a result, some may conclude that requesting such records entails an unnecessary expense. This article should caution all those involved in family law that both physical and psychological maltreatment can have emotional and physical causes. Therefore, medical information should be pursued as a routine matter. Similarly, it is important to obtain school records because children may be sent to school even if they are not feeling well, and the school records might reflect this.

We should emphasize that this study only measured antibodies to the Herpes 1 virus. It does not mean that children had the illness or were even sick. Rather, the data tell us that these children had compromised immune systems and were more susceptible to Herpes and other illnesses than the children who were not mistreated.

For this as well as other valuable research visit J.M. Craig Press online at www.jmcraig.com or call (877) 960-1474. AFCC members receive a 25% discount on all J.M. Craig Products.

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