



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



May 2021  
VOL. 16 No. 5

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## The AFCC-AAML 2021 Conference, September 21-24, to Take Place Online and in Washington, DC

### 2021 Conference on Advanced Issues in Child Custody: Evaluation, Litigation, and Settlement

#### Virtual Conference

September 21-24, 2021

Live via Zoom

#### In-Person Networking and Consultation

September 23-24, 2021

Capital Hilton, Washington, DC

Members of AFCC and the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers (AAML) will meet online and in person for an advanced program featuring many of the family law community's leading experts.

Participants will learn new practice skills, explore the research, participate in consultation groups, and discuss current changes in practice.

This hybrid conference will feature the access and convenience of a virtual conference with an in-person twist to enhance the experience for those who feel comfortable traveling and gathering together.

## AFCC-AAML 2021 Conference on Advanced Issues in Child Custody

September 21-24, 2021

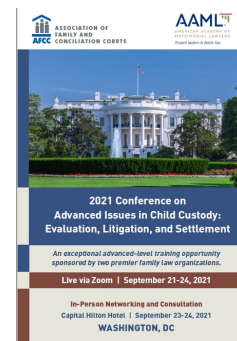
Live via Zoom

September 23-24, 2021

In-Person Networking

and Consultation

Washington, DC



Thank you to our  
annual conference  
sponsors!

### Diamond Sponsors



- All sessions will be delivered virtually.
- A break in the programming on September 23, 2021 allows time to travel to Washington, DC.
- Several in-person activities will take place at the Capital Hilton on Thursday and Friday for those who wish to experience the networking and consultation this conference has to offer.
- Dedicated meeting space at the Capital Hilton will be available on September 23-24 for those who wish to view programs together.

Registration coming soon! [Read the brochure to learn more!](#)

## The AFCC 58th Annual Conference Begins Next Week!

### When a Child Rejects a Parent: Are We Part of the Problem or the Solution?

June 1-3 and June 7-11, 2021  
Live via Zoom

### Bonus On-Demand Workshops!

**Over 20 workshops** are now available to registrants of the 58th Annual Conference! Take advantage of this treasure trove of educational content from family justice experts. Registrants can [view the workshops now](#) at no additional cost!

Enjoy these recently recorded workshops!

- **Hot Off the Press: AFCC Ontario's Parenting Plan Guide and Template** presented by Professor Nick Bala, Justice Andrea Himel, and Justice Gerri Wong
- **When a Child Says No: Working with Induced Psychological Splitting after Break-up** presented by Kelley Baker, PhD; Amy Eichler, PhD; Karen Woodall, PG.Dip; and Nick Woodall, MA
- **When a Parent Comes Out: The Role of the Attorney and Therapist in the Family Transition** presented by Jodi Argentino, JD

**Don't miss this opportunity to learn even more!** (No certificate of attendance will be issued for viewing on-demand workshops.)

### Check Out the Conference Portal

Visit the [AFCC 58th Annual Conference Online Portal](#) to view full conference information. You can:

- Visit the **Sessions tab** to view the full schedule, including workshop descriptions, date and time, presenter information, and more.
- **Download** the conference brochure.
- Check **continuing education** approvals and pending



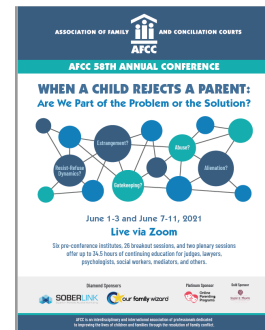
Platinum Sponsor



Online Parenting Programs

## AFCC 58th Annual Conference

June 1-3, 2021 and  
June 7-11, 2021



## AFCC Chapter Conferences & Webinar Series

### Australia Chapter Annual Conference

July 2-4, 2021  
South Brisbane, QLD

### Wisconsin Chapter Annual Conference

September 30, 2021  
Delafield, Wisconsin

### Ontario Chapter Annual Conference

October 15, 2021  
Toronto, Ontario

### Illinois Chapter Annual Conference

October 22, 2021  
Being held virtually followed by a live social gathering (COVID-19 restrictions permitting)

applications.

- Learn about [conference sponsors and exhibitors](#).
- Read other [conference information](#), including equipment requirements, social activities, and how to make the most of your conference experience.
- [Register](#) for the conference and pre-conference institutes!

[Register now!](#)

## Attend the Next Presentation in the AFCC DE&I Webinar Series on July 7th!

### Culture Specific Family Conflict: Case Applications

*Gitu Bhatia, PsyD; Linda Bortell, PsyD; and Frank Davis, PhD*

Wednesday, July 7, 2021

4:00pm-5:00pm Eastern Time US/Canada

Registration closes on July 6, 2021 at 9:00am Eastern Time US/Canada

**Free registration includes a certificate of attendance.** You *must* register to attend.

[Register now!](#)

**Arizona Chapter  
Annual Conference**  
January 21-23, 2022  
Sedona, Arizona

## Resource of the Month

### Recommended Webinar

*Claims and Counterclaims in Parental Alienation Research: What's a Family Court Professional to Do?*

Presented by Robin Deutsch, PhD, ABPP; Peter Jaffe, PhD; and Michael Saini, PhD

### Watch now!

*(AFCC member login required.)*

This webinar will provide ways of understanding and addressing issues of race, ethnicity, and culture through a discussion between mental health professionals in forensic and clinical roles. The presenters will discuss the challenges faced by mental health professionals in application of psychological terms when working with diverse populations and the paradigm shift from cultural competence to cultural humility.

### Discussion Group

**Wednesday, July 21, 2021**

4:00pm-5:00pm Eastern Time US/Canada

*Registration is required.*

[Register now!](#)

## Conversation Corner: Irwin Sandler, PhD

*A column throwback to the eNEWS of the 90's*

**AFCC:** You've been studying the effectiveness of prevention programs for children and families for over a forty-year period. What keeps you going?

**Irwin Sandler:** I've always been interested in the topic of resilience and curious why some children adapt well to a major disruption like divorce while other children are devastated. So beyond finding out why that is, which is sort of an intellectual issue, I've wanted to figure out how we can make a difference. [Read more.](#)



## The AFCC Fall Conference Comes to Cincinnati, Ohio!

Save the date for the [AFCC Fall Conference](#)! More information coming soon!

## AFCC Fall Conference

### *Unmuting the Voices of Children and Families: Can You Hear Me Now?*

November 11-13, 2021

Cincinnati Netherland Plaza

Cincinnati, OH

## AFCC Webinar Corner

### **The Role of Family Law Professionals in Preventing Gun Violence**

Judge Mark A. Juhas and Julia Weber, JD, MSW

June 22, 2021 | 1:00-2:00pm Eastern Time US/Canada

Registration closes on June 21, 2021 at 9:00am Eastern Time US/Canada.

The prevalence of firearms in our communities and the role they play in mass casualties, suicide, and domestic violence has become tragically familiar. There are opportunities for prevention in the family court and with family justice professionals. The presenters will provide information on “red flag” laws, the legal and social reality of domestic violence and suicide, and the role family law professionals can play in preventing gun violence.



**Judge Mark A. Juhas** (above left) sits in a general family law assignment on the Los Angeles Superior Court. He is the current Chair of the California Commission on Access to Justice and he recently received a lifetime achievement award from the Family Law Section of the State Bar and a Distinguished Service Award from the Judicial Council.

**Julia Weber, JD, MSW** (above right) serves as Giffords Law Center’s implementation director, implementing gun safety laws with a focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion. She is a trained mediator, member of the California bar, serves as an expert witness, and is an adjunct professor at Golden Gate University School of Law.

#### **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!](#)

## Register Now for AFCC's July webinar!

### **Interviewing Children About Sexual Abuse: What They Know and How They Tell Us**

Mindy Mitnick, EdM, MA

July 14, 2021 | 1:00-2:00pm Eastern Time US/Canada

[Register now!](#)

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

## Chapter News

**Judith Lake**, AFCC member from Edmonton, Alberta, is the new president of the Alberta

chapter of AFCC. Judith is a nationally chartered mediator and trainer with over 20 years of experience in the areas of workplace, separation and divorce, civil claims, and restorative justice. She is an ADR coach and lecturer with the University of Alberta's Faculty of Business. Judith co-authored and instructs ADRIA's Separation & Divorce Mediation program. She was a family mediator with Alberta Justice Resolution Services for nine years and now mediates for their Family Mediation and Civil Claims programs. She also worked with the Mediation and Restorative Justice Centre, starting as a volunteer mediator with the Victim/Offender Mediation Program before becoming a Co-chair and then Executive Director of the Centre. Congratulations, Judith!

**Denise Wennogle**, AFCC member from Morristown, New Jersey, is the new president of the New Jersey chapter of AFCC. After completing a judicial clerkship with The Honorable William J. McGovern, III in the Superior Court, Family Part, Sussex County, New Jersey, Denise joined the firm of Scott & Daly, LLC as an Associate. She then opened the firm of Wennogle Law, LLC, which is solely dedicated to family law. Denise is a Board Member and Past President of the New Jersey Collaborative Law Group and is a member of the New Jersey Association of Professional Mediators. Denise is a former Barrister of the Barry I. Croland Family Law Inn of Court and the Worrall F. Mountain Inn of Court, and currently a board member of the Justice Marie L. Garibaldi Alternative Dispute Resolution Inn of Court. Denise volunteers for the Jersey Battered Women's Services and the Women's Center at the County College of Morris. Congratulations, Denise!



**The New Jersey Chapter's Phil Sobel Award** was presented to Dr. Frank Weiss at the chapter's annual meeting in late April. Attorney Philip N. (Phil) Sobel was one of the founding members of the New Jersey chapter in the late 1990s. Phil's dream was to reform the court system to help families collaborate in resolving conflict without having to go to court. After Phil's untimely death in 2012, the New Jersey chapter created the annual Phil Sobel Award to honor his vision. This year's recipient, Frank, holds a PhD in psychology and has been in private practice for almost 30 years. He is a charter member of the chapter and served as president from 2009-2010. He joins other distinguished recipients, including current Past President Marcy Pasternak and President Denise Wennogle.

## Member News

**Jessica Pearson**, AFCC member from Denver, Colorado, is proud to announce the publication of a new book, co-edited with Jay Fagan, entitled *New Research on Parenting Programs for Low-Income Fathers*. Jessica and Jay are co-directors of the national Fatherhood Research & Practice Network (FRPN). The book, published by Routledge Press, features 13 studies funded and guided by FRPN. It covers key topics, such as increasing paternal engagement and improving parenting skills, engaging mothers to support father-child contact, building systems-level inclusion for fathers, staff training and effective resources for fatherhood practitioners. The book concludes with a summary of key learnings and suggestions for future research. Learn more and purchase the book [here](#). Congratulations, Jessica!



## AFCC Membership Meeting

AFCC's annual Membership Meeting and Awards Ceremony will take place as an online Zoom meeting. Mark your calendars for **Friday, June 4, 2021 at 5:00 pm Eastern Time US/Canada**. Highlights include the election of new board members, committee reports, and the passing of the gavel to the new AFCC president.

AFCC will also acknowledge the achievements of AFCC members to the field by

presenting the following awards: the Meyer Elkin Essay Award, the Irwin Cantor Innovative Program Award, the Stanley Cohen Distinguished Research Award, the Tim Salius President's Award, and the John E. VanDuzer Distinguished Service Award. Please join us in celebrating the contributions of this year's award winners and leadership. You must register to participate in the meeting. [Register now!](#)

**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!

### **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](#)





## Conversation Corner: Irwin Sandler, PhD

*A column throwback to the eNEWS of the 90's*

Irwin Sandler, PhD, is a pre-eminent researcher in the field of prevention programs for children and families. For over thirty years, he has conducted efficacy research of established programs and used developmental theory and models of resilience to design interventions for families experiencing major life stressors, primarily in the areas of parental divorce and bereavement from the death of a parent. He has conducted research on stress, social support and coping in children and adolescents in these high stress situations to better understand factors that lead children to adjust well and avoid long-term problem outcomes. Dr. Sandler has published major reviews of the literature on parent education programs in the family courts and in other settings. He has been a member of the working group of the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine that produced a landmark review of preventive interventions for children and adolescents and has been a co-author on a paper describing standards of evidence for preventive interventions. He is the co-developer and evaluator with Sharlene Wolchik of the [New Beginnings Program](#). Findings about this program have been published in multiple studies that demonstrate long-term benefits for children following divorce. Dr. Sandler received a BA from Brooklyn College in 1966 and a PhD in Clinical Psychology from the University of Rochester in 1971. Subsequently, Dr. Sandler moved to Arizona, where he has been affiliated with Arizona State University (ASU) in Tempe ever since. Dr. Sandler is currently a Regents' Professor Emeritus and Research Professor with the REACH (Research and Education Advancing Children's Health) Institute and the Department of Psychology. Dr. Sandler has been an AFCC member since 1990 and is scheduled to present the AFCC webinar "Parent Education for Divorcing and Separating Families: Are We Accomplishing Our Goals?" in October of this year.



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**AFCC:** You've been studying the effectiveness of prevention programs for children and families for over a forty-year period. What keeps you going?

**Irwin Sandler:** I've always been interested in the topic of resilience and curious why some children adapt well to a major disruption like divorce while other children are devastated. So beyond finding out why that is, which is sort of an intellectual issue, I've wanted to figure out how we can make a difference. We focus on parenting because our research and a lot of other research shows that the quality of parenting after divorce is one of the strongest predictors of how children will do. We have a number of studies about parenting by fathers and mothers showing both are important and both have an effect, but even more importantly, we have research showing that whoever is providing high quality parenting can make a difference, even if the other parent is completely screwing up. This is a strong message to get to share with

parents. You can tell a parent that he/she can make a difference. You can say, “I know you are concerned that the other parent may not be disciplining or feeding your children the way you wish and you cannot do a lot about that, but you can control what you do and you can really make a difference.” We have the data to show that! I think that is an empowering message. I’m still doing this because in the grand scheme of things, our work as researchers is not going to mean anything if we don’t get out there and let people know what we are learning and providing programs that can make a difference.

**AFCC:** We hear a lot about the importance of using evidence-based programs, but what does that really mean in the family law arena? How can true research principles be applied? Is it correct in thinking it’s hard to get a completely randomized study?

**IS:** It’s a myth! I know courts often think it’s hard to do but it’s not really that hard. It can be done and it has been done. I’ve completed five randomized trials involving children’s adjustment to divorce and several of them were administered with the court. A randomized trial is the gold standard of research. There are other acceptable designs but a randomized trial, if properly done, provides the highest level of confidence about program effectiveness. It’s what they are doing with the COVID-19 vaccines. It means that with proper analysis a consumer can be confident that the program is effective. I feel strongly that the trial must be randomized to be considered evidence-based but that’s not necessarily what is happening in the real world. I have seen some weaker designs and even some ridiculous ones from a scientist’s point of view. There is research showing that some parenting after divorce programs have not been beneficial (some even harmful) and we don’t want that for families, so it’s really important to get this right. A randomized design can, for example, involve providing the new program for some participants and a program that the court is already using for other participants. If the court does not know if their existing program works, then they are simply providing another plausible alternative. Other design options include using a control group of other online programs, or a wait list control group, which means all participants receive the program (and the proposed benefit) but some participants will get it now and other participants will get it in a few months. Court professionals need to know that randomized trials aren’t simple, but they are doable. Frankly, not all parent education works, BUT we can find out which ones do and which ones don’t. We can get answers to what court professionals want to know so why wouldn’t we do it?

**AFCC:** If some parenting after divorce programs are helpful while others may not be, how does a family law professional, court, or parent know whether the one they are taking or providing is effective?

**IS:** Firstly, I think the goal of parent education is right on the mark. Providing this information to parents, strengthening their parenting skills post-divorce, and thereby promoting the wellbeing of children is from my perspective a wonderful thing and I’m glad courts are taking on this responsibility. We just need to make sure that what we are doing, to the extent that we can discern, is effective. There are registries of effective programs in multiple fields including one sponsored by the National Institute of Justice. Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development based in Colorado is one good example. They lay out their criteria for why they are saying whether something is evidence-based and give a level of evidence, such as “model program”, “promising program”, etc. The public would really benefit if all providers said, “I can do better than that and I’ll show you. This is an even better outcome and even better evidence than yours.” Unfortunately, that is not what we do as a field right now because there is a myth that you cannot evaluate these programs, which is just not true. These are outcomes that really matter in people’s lives and we should treat them the way we treat diabetes, COVID-19 or any other physical health outcome.

**AFCC:** What have you been researching recently? Is there anything that has you particularly excited?

**IS:** Yes! Back in late January, we received the results on a program I developed with Dr. Sharlene Wolchik, my long-time colleague and a fellow ASU researcher and professor, and they are the best results I’ve seen in 30 years for an online program. We modified our ten week in-person parenting-after-divorce program called the New Beginnings Program to fit an interactive, online platform. While the in-person program has remarkable long-term benefits for children, it’s costly to deliver and was not reaching as many parents as we’d hoped. The online format which we call eNBP, allows for broader access and affordability, plus it’s



shorter (about 5 hours) and puts less burden on parents. It's still a skills-based program. Every session teaches a skill or tool that parents are then expected to practice at home. Research supports the importance of home practice and strengthening skills through practicing them. The parents report back on how the skills practice went and, if they had trouble, we give feedback and problem solve with them so they can figure out how to make it work for their family. We did a randomized trial with 131 families using a wait list control group and I'm really excited about the results. We've always gotten great effects on strengthening parenting and reducing child behavior problems for the in-person program but we had spotty effects on reducing interparental conflict. Not with this new online program! According to both parents and children, the program significantly strengthened positive parenting and reduced interparental conflict. It also significantly reduced child behavior problems! In adapting the program to a web-based format, we completely redesigned the interparental conflict activities and it worked! Dr. Sanford Braver, another ASU researcher, colleague and professor, had found impressive effects in conflict reduction in his program for divorced fathers so we incorporated elements from that program along with the approaches we had developed in the New Beginnings Program. The exciting finding for us is that parents reported a reduction in interparental conflict AND so did their children! The children weren't even part of the program so they were independent reporters. Wow! My dream has always been that our research make a meaningful difference in children's lives so this just put us over the moon. I hope this information reaches every divorced family. I would like professionals and families to know that parent education works. It can make a difference in the lives of children.

**AFCC:** You've been an AFCC member since 1990! Would you tell us a bit about how AFCC factored into the work you've done over your career?

**IS:** That's easy. AFCC has had a major influence on my work over the years in many different ways. First, just attending conferences and learning about the multi-disciplinary collaborations that embody AFCC has been refreshing. Multidisciplinary work is not easy because of the professional silos we all live in, but AFCC is a model of problem-focused collaborative exchange of ideas in search of better solutions to problems faced by families. It is also a model of how diverse stakeholders engage issues on which they differ and do the difficult work on coming to agreements on a better way forward that honors the concerns of all. In addition, the friendships and collegiality I've been privileged to enjoy have helped guide our work in a direction that, hopefully, will make it more useful to addressing the problems we all care about. It has also given me an opportunity to weigh in on issues of the day, and co-author papers with colleagues at AFCC about issues such as parent education. It's helpful to be aware that the work we all do is more a product of a community rather than of individuals. AFCC has been a primary community for the work that I've been lucky enough to engage in over the years.