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President's Message

Michael A. Saini, PhD, MSW, RSW



I've just returned from an exhilarating trip hiking the Adirondacks peaks (USA), where I had the joy of standing on top of mountains with breathtaking 360-degree views. Watching the sunrise from those heights, with the soft glow of dawn, filled me with a sense of rejuvenation and the

promise of new beginnings. As I step into the role of president of AFCC, I feel the same outlook of revitalization, positive energy, and optimism about the organization's future path.

As we embrace this new path in our journey, I want to take a moment to reflect on the incredible year we have had under the outstanding leadership of our immediate past president, Stacey Platt. Stacey's presidency was marked by unwavering dedication to the organization, visionary guidance, and a deep commitment to our mission. Her exceptional ability to navigate transitions, negotiate challenges, and foster meaningful connections within our organization has set a high standard. Stacey, your tireless efforts and inspiring leadership have made a lasting impact, and we are deeply grateful for your service. [Continue Reading](#).

AFCC Online Training

AFCC Conferences

AFCC 16th Symposium on Child Custody

November 14-16, 2024
Columbus, OH

AFCC 62nd Annual Conference

May 28-31, 2025
New Orleans, LA

AFCC Online Training Programs

The Fundamentals of Parenting Coordination

December 2-5, 2024

AFCC Chapter Conferences

AFCC Minnesota Annual Conference

July 25, 2024
Minneapolis, MN

AFCC Florida Annual Conference

September 11-13, 2024
Save the Date

AFCC Wisconsin Fall Educational Event

September 19, 2024
Delafield, WI

AFCC Texas Annual Conference

September 20, 2024
Austin, TX

AFCC Utah Fall Conference

October 10, 2024
Salt Lake City, UT

Programs

The Fundamentals of Parenting Coordination

December 2-5, 2024

Interested in parenting coordination? Join AFCC in December for a program that will provide a comprehensive overview of the parenting coordination process, including definition of the role, responsibilities, and function of the parenting coordinator; an overview of family dynamics; specific PC strategies, techniques, and interventions; implications of intimate partner violence; cultural considerations; ethical issues; and use of technology.



Participants will learn about the parenting coordinator's scope of authority, strategies to help parents improve cooperation and communication, how to help clients utilize the process, and how to effectively write recommendations or decisions.

Training Team:

- Debra K. Carter, PhD
- Robin M. Deutsch, PhD, ABPP
- Shely Polak, PhD, AccFM
- Matthew J. Sullivan, PhD

[Register Now!](#)

AFCC Colorado Chapter Fall Conference

October 18-20, 2024
Breckenridge, CO

AFCC Maryland Annual Conference

October 23, 2024
Save the date

AFCC Indiana Annual Conference

October 25, 2024
Save the date

AFCC Ontario Annual Conference

October 25, 2024
Toronto, ON

AFCC Arizona Annual Conference

January 24-26, 2025
Sedona, AZ

AFCC California Annual Conference

February 7-9, 2025
Costa Mesa, CA

10 Tips to Address Family Disputes

Kelly Browe Olson, JD, LLM



These tips are designed to help professionals and parents effectively navigate and resolve custody disputes, ensuring that the child's best interests are prioritized while promoting cooperative and sustainable co-parenting arrangements.

1. Practice Reflective Listening

Implement reflective listening techniques to ensure all parties, including children, feel their perspectives are acknowledged. Confirm understanding by paraphrasing and summarizing key points.

2. Encourage Child-Centered and Future Focused Decision-Making

Emphasize that the child's best interests should be the primary consideration in all custody-related discussions and decisions. Guide discussions towards prospective solutions that prioritize the future well-being of the child. Encourage planning and cooperative co-parenting strategies.

[Continue Reading.](#)

Webinar Corner

Economic Wellbeing of Mothers in Shared Placement: A Cross-National Perspective

Mari Haapanen & Trisha Chanda, PhD

August 14, 2024

1:00pm – 2:00pm Eastern Time (US/Canada)

Registration will close on August 13, 2024, at 9:00am Eastern Time US/Canada.

Living arrangements where children's time is shared more equally between separating parents are becoming increasingly common in the US and several developed countries in the world. Post-separation time-share arrangements determine the way child support is distributed as well as how child-related expenses are shared between parents. Moreover, these living arrangements can govern the amount of time available to parents to spend on activities outside of the household. As such, placement arrangements can have important implications for the economic wellbeing of separated families - particularly mothers, who are known to suffer worse economic outcomes after family dissolutions as compared to fathers. In this webinar, we will share research on economic outcomes of shared placement on mothers and the pathways through which these outcomes manifest, such as child support and cost-sharing, using a cross-national perspective. We will consider how different public policy frameworks interact with shared placement arrangements and mothers' ability to provide for themselves and their children. We will discuss the policy implications of the findings from this research and directions for future research.



Mari Haapanen is a doctoral student and a researcher at the INVEST Research Flagship Centre, University of Turku, Finland. MA. Haapanen conducts cross-national research on family and child support policy with a focus on separated families and their economic well-being. Her current work is investigating the relationship between economic resources of separated families and children's post-separation living arrangements across European countries.



Trisha Chanda, PhD is a post-doctoral researcher at the Institute for Research on Poverty at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She completed her PhD in Human Ecology from UW Madison's Department of Consumer Science in May 2023. Dr. Chanda's doctoral thesis investigates the relationship between mothers' economic wellbeing, labor force participation, and union dissolutions with a special focus on post-separation living arrangements, in Wisconsin and the United States. Her current work is investigating the incidence of low-income debt in the US and its interaction with public policy.



Registration

Members: \$15

Non-Members: \$50

Certificate of Attendance

Members: \$15

Non-members: \$20

[Register Now!](#)

More Upcoming Webinars!

The entire webinar schedule for the rest of 2024 has been released! See below for a comprehensive list of upcoming webinars:

[Co-Parent Coaching: Inspiring Transformation for Families](#)

Amy Armstrong, MSW
September 11, 2024

Understanding Conflicted Family Systems through a Developmental Lens: How Do I Refuel?

Benjamin Garber, PhD
October 9, 2024

Affirming & Supporting LGBTQIA+ Youth & Families: From the Basics to Advanced Family Court Concerns, Part II

Lindsey Sank Davis, PhD, McKenzie Sheridan, MA, Jesse Frieder, MEd
October 23, 2024

Ethical Decision-making in the Face of Competing Guidelines

Arnold Shienvold, PhD
November 20, 2024

Cutting to the Chase Competently: Brief Focused Custody Assessment

Ken Perlmutter, PhD & Christy Bradshaw Schmidt, MA, LPC
December 12, 2024

AFCC 16th Symposium on Child Custody

Shaping the Future: Screening and Assessing for Safety and Wellbeing of Parent-Child Relationships

November 14-16, 2024

Columbus, Ohio

Hilton Columbus Downtown

Save the Date!

Save the date for AFCC's 16th Symposium on Child Custody in Columbus, Ohio this fall. The brochure and workshop details will be published around mid-to-late-summer so stay tuned.

Sign Up to Exhibit at this Conference

The AFCC 16th Symposium is an excellent opportunity to introduce your products and services to the interdisciplinary community of professionals that attends AFCC conferences. Approximately 350-450 judges, custody evaluators, mediators, lawyers, and other family court professionals are expected to attend. See the [exhibitor prospectus](#) for more details and contact AFCC's **Abby Rebholz** at arebholz@afccnet.org or at 608-664-3750 to sign up or if you have any questions.

Family Court Review

The Journal of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts

Volume 62 Number 3

July 2024

Leading dialogue in family court research, policy, and practice for more than half a century.

The July issue of AFCC's academic journal, *Family Court Review* (FCR), will be fully released soon. A few articles have already been published, and AFCC members can view them in the [FCR archives](#).

If you want to be notified whenever a new FCR article is released, sign up for FCR Alerts! [Navigate to the FCR archives](#) and enter your email in the "Sign up for email alerts" form on the right.

AFCC Member News

Susan Yates, AFCC member from Illinois and founding Executive Director of Resolution Systems Institute (RSI), is stepping down from RSI to explore new opportunities in alternative dispute resolution and non-profit work. Her work at RSI particularly focused on the needs of unrepresented individuals and those affected by intimate partner violence making her well suited for this transition.



Do you have any news you'd like to share? Contact AFCC's Communication Coordinator, [Patrick Sommer](#).

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](#).

AFCC members are free to share eNEWS content.

EDITOR:

[Ann Ordway, JD, PhD](#)

ASSOCIATE EDITOR:

[Patrick Sommer, BS](#)

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Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC) | 6525 Grand Teton Plaza | Madison, WI
53719 US

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President's Message

Michael A. Saini, PhD, MSW, RSW

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Dear AFCC Community,

I've just returned from an exhilarating trip hiking the Adirondacks peaks (USA), where I had the joy of standing on top of mountains with breathtaking 360-degree views. Watching the sunrise from those heights, with the soft glow of dawn, filled me with a sense of rejuvenation and the promise of new beginnings. As I step into the role of president of AFCC, I feel the same outlook of revitalization, positive energy, and optimism about the organization's future path.

As we embrace this new path in our journey, I want to take a moment to reflect on the incredible year we have had under the outstanding leadership of our immediate past president, Stacey Platt. Stacey's presidency was marked by unwavering dedication to the organization, visionary guidance, and a deep commitment to our mission. Her exceptional ability to navigate transitions, negotiate challenges, and foster meaningful connections within our organization has set a high standard. Stacey, your tireless efforts and inspiring leadership have made a lasting impact, and we are deeply grateful for your service.

Stacey demonstrated remarkable resilience and adaptability throughout the past year, guiding us through significant change and uncertainty. Her ability to remain calm under pressure and her unwavering commitment to our mission have been inspiring. Stacey's leadership has strengthened our organization and set a path for us to follow in the years to come.

I also want to extend my heartfelt thanks to our responsive and dedicated Board of Directors. Your commitment to excellence, collaborative spirit, and innovative thinking have been instrumental in steering AFCC through a year of unprecedented change and growth. Each of you has played a crucial role in our successes, and your support and commitment to AFCC have been a cornerstone of our achievements. Working alongside such a talented and dedicated group of individuals is a privilege. Please take a moment to learn about the stellar bios of our outstanding [Board of Directors](#).

Reflecting on our recent events, it is remarkable that the attendance at the annual conference in Boston reached pre-COVID numbers, with approximately a thousand registered. The energy and enthusiasm were unmistakable, and it was a testament to the strength and resilience of our community. Those in attendance were treated to an impressive array of excellent speakers who inspired and challenged us with their insights and expertise. The connections made, and the knowledge shared at this conference will undoubtedly have a lasting impact on our work and our community.

As we progress, I am thrilled to welcome Bryan Altman as our new AFCC Executive Director. Bryan brings a wealth of experience, a fresh perspective, and a dynamic approach to leadership. I am excited about Bryan's positive energy, forward-thinking vision for AFCC, and ability to listen and learn from those who have helped to shape our organization over the past several decades. Bryan, I look forward to working with you and supporting your vision for AFCC's future. Your passion and your innovative ideas for the future, while engaging those who have helped shape AFCC, will no doubt propel us to new heights.

At the same time, I extend my deepest gratitude to our recently retired Executive Director, Peter Salem. Peter's years of dedication, passion, and steadfast leadership have left an indelible mark on AFCC. His commitment to the organization, its members, and its mission has been instrumental in shaping AFCC as we know it today. Your dedication and tireless efforts have laid a strong foundation for our future success. Peter, your legacy will continue to inspire us as we move forward.

Looking ahead, I eagerly anticipate connecting with many of you at our upcoming AFCC 16th Symposium on Child Custody in Columbus, Ohio, from November 14 to 16, 2024. And then save the date for the AFCC 62nd Annual Conference from May 28 to 31, 2025, in New Orleans! These gatherings are more than just events; they are opportunities to learn, grow, and strengthen the bonds within our community. AFCC also offers several training and educational opportunities throughout the year, including monthly webinars and professional training topics. Most of these are archived on the AFCC website and available for members. Also, don't forget about the many AFCC chapter events that occur throughout the year, as these are also excellent ways to engage with others and strengthen your connections to AFCC.

Just as I stood on those peaks in the Adirondacks, marveling at the vast horizon and the beauty of a new day, I feel similar anticipation and excitement about the journey ahead with all of you. With our committed Board, our new Executive Director, and the unwavering support of our members, we are poised for a future filled with promise and innovation. Thank you all for your continued dedication and enthusiasm. Your hard work and commitment are the driving force behind our success, and I am confident that together, we will continue to positively impact the lives of the families and children we serve.

If you are as optimistic as I am about AFCC's future, refer a colleague and tell them to like and subscribe!

Michael A. Saini, PhD, MSW, RSW



10 Tips to Address Family Disputes

Kelly Browe Olson, JD, LLM

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These tips are designed to help professionals and parents effectively navigate and resolve custody disputes, ensuring that the child's best interests are prioritized while promoting cooperative and sustainable co-parenting arrangements.

1. Practice Reflective Listening

Model and implement reflective listening techniques to ensure all parties, including children, feel their perspectives are acknowledged. Confirm understanding by paraphrasing and summarizing key points of all participants.

2. Encourage Child-Centered and Future Focused Decision-Making

Emphasize that the child's best interests should be the primary consideration in all custody-related discussions and decisions. Encourage planning and cooperative co-parenting strategies. Guide discussions towards prospective solutions that prioritize the future well-being of the child.

3. Teach Problem-Solving to Facilitate and Promote Effective Co-Parenting Communication

Employ and teach advanced problem-solving methodologies such as interest-based negotiation, option generation, and consensus-building techniques to promote the development of effective co-parenting communication strategies. Encourage parents to use respectful and constructive communication to discuss child-related issues.

4. Use Conflict Resolution Processes

Use conflict resolution processes such as mediation, collaborative law, and arbitration to help parents reach mutually acceptable agreements. Be aware that Intimate Partner Violence, ongoing substance use, and other competency issues might make certain dispute resolution options unworkable or require special techniques.

5. Implement Comprehensive Yet Flexible Parenting Plans

Advocate for detailed and flexible parenting plans that outline custody arrangements, visitation schedules and accommodate the changing needs of the child and parents over time. Encourage mechanisms for resolving future disputes and regular reviews of the parenting plan to ensure it remains effective and relevant for the parents and children.

6. Provide Emotional Support and Counseling and Address Emotional Dynamics

Offer access to counseling and emotional support for both parents and children to help them recognize and navigate the emotional dynamics of custody arrangements. Utilize psychological insights to help parties process emotions and maintain focus on the child's welfare.

7. Address and Mitigate Power Imbalance

Ensure that any power imbalances between parents are identified and mitigated. Depending on your role, you may need to provide additional support to the less empowered party to ensure fair participation in decision-making.

8. Educate on Legal and Psychological Aspects

Provide education on the legal and psychological aspects of custody disputes. Ensure parents understand the legal framework and the impact of custody arrangements on children's well-being. Help them think about managing disputes, not just resolving them. Develop strategies for ongoing conflict management to maintain a stable co-parenting relationship.

9. Promote Positive Parenting Practices

Encourage positive parenting practices that foster a healthy and supportive environment for the children. Provide resources and training to help parents develop effective parenting skills.

10. Evaluate Long-Term Impact and Real vs. Fake Disputes

Think about whether the dispute will matter in 5 days, 5 months, or 5 years. Prioritize issues that have a significant long-term impact on the child's well-being. Assess whether a dispute is genuine or contrived. If it's a fake dispute, consider if it needs to be resolved. Focus on resolving meaningful conflicts.



Kelly Browe Olson is an Associate Professor and the Mediation Clinic Director at UA Little Rock Bowen School of Law. She is a frequent national speaker, educating lawyers and other professionals about family dispute resolution, domestic violence, emotional intelligence, and legal issues impacting families and children. She teaches Family Law, Domestic Violence, Mediation and Family

Mediation Seminars. She oversees a state-wide Special Education mediation project and mediates family cases. She is the author of *Intimate Partner Violence and Family Dispute Resolution: Coercion, Capacity and Control*, a chapter in **Family Dispute Resolution: Process and Practice** recently published by Oxford University Press.