



IN THIS ISSUE

- [AFCC Online Training Programs](#)
- [Parent Child Contact Problems: Tangled Webs and Complex Resolutions - Article](#)
- [Upcoming Webinars](#)
- [16th Symposium on Child Custody - Recap](#)
- [Donate to the AFCC Scholarship Fund](#)
- [AFCC Member News](#)
- [AFCC Chapter News](#)

The Fundamentals of Parenting Coordination

Coming up soon!

December 2-5, 2024

Online / Virtual



Join AFCC for our most anticipated online training program this year!

Designed specifically for family law professionals interested in Parenting Coordination, this online program 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!](#)

November 2024
Vol 19 No. 11

[AFCC Online Training Programs](#)

[The Fundamentals of Parenting Coordination](#)
December 2-5, 2024

[New! Advanced Issues in Family Law: Parent-Child Contact Problems](#)
January 13-16, 2025

[Fundamentals of Conducting Parenting Plan Evaluations](#)
March 10-13 and
March 17-19, 2025

[AFCC 62nd Annual Conference](#)
May 28-31, 2025
New Orleans, LA

[AFCC Chapter Conferences](#)

[AFCC New York Annual Conference](#)
December 13, 2024
New York, NY

[AFCC Arizona Annual Conference](#)
January 24-26, 2025
Sedona, AZ

[AFCC California Annual Conference](#)
February 7-9, 2025
Costa Mesa, CA

[AFCC Alberta Annual Conference](#)
March 13-14, 2025
Edmonton, AB

[AFCC North Carolina Annual Conference](#)
March 21, 2025
Chapel Hill, NC

Problems

January 13-16, 2025

Online / Virtual

This innovative, 16-hour course examines best practice pathways and pitfalls when assessing and intervening in families with parent child contact problems. The course is organized around a hypothetical case study of a family, with multiple video clips per module designed to enhance concepts and encourage thinking. Audience participation is encouraged. The course will take place in two segments per day, two hours each, over the course of 4 days. Recordings of all sessions will be available for registrants.



The experienced faculty will use a multi-media approach to introduce a fictional family with many aspects of what attendees might encounter when working with actual parent-child contact problems in the field. Participants will learn more about assessing parent-child contact problems, including allegations and cross-allegations, to more effectively get to the underlying roots of the presenting problem, and to develop nuanced approaches to resolving some of these extremely difficult dilemmas. Attendees will learn more about how to develop and test multiple hypotheses, and how to craft recommendations that maximize successful outcomes and minimize risks for families. Through the use of video clips, teaching concepts, and group discussion, those attending this program will engage in a detailed examination of parent-child contact problems and the issues and challenges that frequently arise.

Training Team:

- Robin M. Deutsch, PhD, ABPP
- Leslie M. Drozd, PhD
- John A. "Jack" Moran, PhD
- Marsha Kline Pruett, PhD, ABPP
- Matthew Sullivan, PhD
- Peggie Ward, PhD

Check out the article below from some of this training's presenters!

[Register Now!](#)

Parent Child Contact Problems: Tangled Webs and Complex Resolutions

Robin Deutsch, PhD, ABPP, Leslie Drozd, PhD, Peggie Ward, PhD

Cases with Parent-child contact problems (PCCPs) are among the most challenging we face as professionals. PCCPs are some of the most complex and difficult issues for family law professionals. They involve a web of emotional, psychological, and relational factors including high interparental conflict, the child's vulnerabilities, potential influence by one parent, and the need to balance the child's best interests with safety concerns. Navigating these dynamics requires careful assessment, multi-disciplinary collaboration, and tailored interventions to address both the family's unique challenges and the long-term impact on the child.

These complexities can be described as pieces of challenging puzzles. Here are ten pieces of one such puzzle.

[Continue Reading](#)

Fundamentals of Conducting Parenting Plan Evaluations

March 10-13 and March 17-19, 2025

Online / Virtual

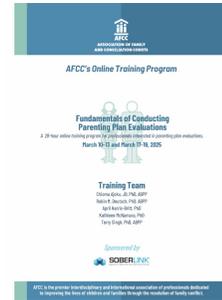
Join AFCC in March for a 28-hour online training program for professionals interested in parenting plan evaluations.

Participants will learn the difference between a forensic role and a clinical role, how to review court orders and determine what information should be obtained, strategies for interviewing adults and children, how to assess coparenting issues, how to develop and test multiple hypotheses, and how to craft recommendations.

Training Team:

- Chioma Ajoku, JD, PhD, ABPP
- Robin M. Deutsch, PhD, ABPP
- April Harris-Britt, PhD
- Kathleen McNamara, PhD
- Terry Singh, PhD, ABPP

[Register Now!](#)



Webinar Corner

Cutting to the Chase Competently: Brief Focused Custody Assessment

Ken Perlmutter, PhD & Christy Bradshaw Schmidt, MA, LPC

December 12, 2024

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

Registration will close on December 11, 2024, at 9:00am Eastern Time US/Canada .

A recent article published in Family Court Review revealed that judges view Parenting Plan Evaluations as too costly, time-consuming, and lengthy. These results indicated that a new approach is needed to provide the courts with the data they require to make appropriate decisions in the children's best interest. Brief Focused Assessments appear to provide a solution. This webinar will explore the history of BFAs, the professional's qualifications to conduct BFAs, the proper protocols to use, and how we can all work to help this needed concept have a robust future in our field.

Ken Perlmutter, PhD has worked as a licensed psychologist practicing clinical and forensic psychology in Palo Alto, CA for forty years. He serves children, parents and the courts conducting comprehensive Child Custody Evaluations (CCE) and Brief Focused Assessments (BFA). He has extensive experience serving as Parenting Coordinator, Custody Mediator (both confidential and recommending), and Co-Parent Counselor. A significant part of his current practice involves consulting with attorneys both as a confidential consultant and as a disclosed work product reviewer providing expert testimony. He has written articles, presented at workshops and taught professionals (mental health, attorneys, judges) for many years. Since 2010, he has promulgated the practice of BFAs.



Christy Bradshaw Schmidt, MA, LPC is a Licensed Professional Counselor from Texas who works as a child custody evaluator. She also serves as an expert witness, and conducts work product reviews related to the work of other child custody evaluators and mental health professionals.

Christy is also available to provide strategic legal support to attorneys and their clients in a consulting role.



Registration

Members: \$15

Non-Members: \$50

Certificate of Attendance

Members: \$15

Non-members: \$20



[Register Now!](#)

More Upcoming Webinars!

See below for a comprehensive list of upcoming webinars:

AFCC's monthly webinars are eligible for one-hour of continuing education credits for qualifying professionals.



The Truth and Consequences of Kayden's Law: Emerging Trends

Lawrence Jay Braunstein, JD; Robin M. Deutsch, PhD, ABPP; & Shely Polak, PhD, AccFM

January 8, 2025



Impact of Disabilities on Family Dynamics (DE&I Series)

Alison Freeman, PhD & Moderator: Gitu Bhatia, PsyD

January 21, 2025



Better or for Worse? Arguments for and Against Codifying Coercive Control in the Family Law Context

Tracy Shoberg, JD & Anadelle M. Martinez-Mullen, JD

February 12, 2025



Effective Collaboration Between Attorneys and Parenting Coordinators in Custody Cases

Bettina Thomsen, LCSW & Jenifer J. Foley, JD

March 4, 2025



Every Person Has a Story: The Importance of Narrative in Native American Culture (DE&I Series)

Hon. Abby Abinanti

April 10, 2025



Authenticity and Weight when Including Children's Voices in Court Processes

Lorri Yassenik, PhD & Jon Graham, LLB, BA

April 16, 2025

AFCC 16th Symposium on Child Custody

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

AFCC's 16th Symposium on Child Custody was an incredible success, bringing together the brightest minds and most passionate professionals in family law, mental health, and dispute resolution. With thought-provoking sessions, expert panels, and interactive workshops, attendees left energized, equipped with practical tools, and brimming with new ideas to support children and families navigating custody disputes.



The networking opportunities were just as impactful—whether it was connecting over coffee, diving into case discussions, or sharing insights during evening receptions, participants forged invaluable professional relationships.

Want to relive the moments? Check out the highlights and photos on our [social media page here](#). You'll see why this was a can't-miss event!

Thank you to all who attended and thank you to our [exhibitors and sponsors](#) for allowing us to keep our conferences as affordable as possible!

AFCC 62nd Annual Conference

Bridging Perspectives: Pioneering Solutions in Family Law
May 28-31, 2025 | New Orleans, Louisiana

If you missed the symposium, don't worry—the best is yet to come! Join us for the AFCC 62nd Annual Conference in New Orleans, Louisiana, May 28-31, 2025. Mark your calendar now for another extraordinary opportunity to learn, connect, and grow. Laissez les bons temps rouler (Let the good times roll)!

Stay tuned - the brochure and registration information for this conference will be available in December!

Sponsor or Exhibit at this Conference

With an expected attendance of around 1,000 family law professionals including lawyers, judges, psychologist, social workers, and more, this is the perfect opportunity to showcase your product or service to those who could benefit most from them! Sign up before January 31st for the best rates!

Sponsor packages include listings in the conference program brochure, conference website, exhibit tables, conference registrations, acknowledgements, and link to your website in the AFCC eNEWS, and more!

See the [exhibitor prospectus](#) complete details and contact [Abby Rebholz](#) to sign up!

Donate to the AFCC Scholarship Fund

Supporting the AFCC scholarship fund is an impactful way to help professionals dedicated to improving family court practices and outcomes for children and families. By donating, you provide financial assistance to those who might otherwise be unable to access AFCC's conferences which, as you probably know, are crucial for advancing the knowledge and skills of judges, attorneys, mediators, mental health professionals, and others who work to resolve family conflicts in a fair and child-focused manner. If you have the means to do so, please consider donating to the [AFCC scholarship fund](#)!

[Donate Today!](#)

AFCC Member News



Denise McColley (Ret.), AFCC member from Ohio, has been honored with the Croucher Family Award for Outstanding Leadership by the Ohio Domestic Violence Network. This prestigious award recognizes individuals who have shown extraordinary dedication to addressing and preventing domestic violence. Denise, a former domestic relations judge in Henry County and magistrate in Henry and Fulton counties, has devoted much of her career to enhancing Family Court systems to better support survivors of domestic violence. Congratulations, Denise.

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

AFCC Chapter News

We're thrilled to celebrate the recent success of the [Illinois](#) and [Texas](#) AFCC chapters, each hosting impactful and well-attended conferences! These events brought together professionals dedicated to family law and dispute resolution—bravo on a job well done!

Catch a glimpse of these conferences via the highlights on social media for [Texas Chapter Conference](#) and the [Illinois Chapter Conference](#).

Calling All Chapters!

We know it's a busy time for chapter events and we'd love to feature your chapter's activities in our next eNews. [Send us](#) your news, photos, and highlights, and let's showcase the amazing work happening across AFCC!

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.

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Parent Child Contact Problems: Tangled Webs and Complex Resolutions

November 2024

Vol 19 No. 11

Robin Deutsch, PhD, ABPP, Leslie Drozd, PhD, Peggie Ward, PhD

Cases with Parent-child contact problems (PCCPs) are among the most challenging we face as professionals. PCCPs are some of the most complex and difficult issues for family law professionals. They involve a web of emotional, psychological, and relational factors including high interparental conflict, the child's vulnerabilities, potential influence by one parent, and the need to balance the child's best interests with safety concerns. Navigating these dynamics requires careful assessment, multi-disciplinary collaboration, and tailored interventions to address both the family's unique challenges and the long-term impact on the child.

These complexities can be described as pieces of challenging puzzles. Here are ten pieces of one such puzzle.

1. **Know what's in the name.** Parent-child contact problems are an umbrella term that refers to family dynamics that result in a child resisting or refusing access to a parent. Issues may include a child exposed to intimate partner violence, child maltreatment or neglect, harsh or compromised parenting, untreated mental illness, substance abuse, threats of harm or abduction, and/or parent alienating behaviors.
2. **PCCP cases have multiple causes and multiple solutions.** Each case is unique and requires holding multiple perspectives with early assessment and interventions designed to address specific problems. An ecological model is a useful way to look at the family, considering the individuals, relationships, and external influences. We consider the ontogenetic factors, such as the child's temperament or parents' mental health; the microsystem: relationships such as coparenting dynamics, interparental conflict, parent-child relationships, friends, neighbors, extended family; the mesosystem: interactions between school and family, professionals and family members; extended family and immediate family members; the exosystem: available mental health and legal resources, access to resources, social media; and the macrosystem: cultural and societal values and beliefs, the courts and laws, and other institutions and policies that affect the family.
3. **Don't go it alone.** These cases usually involve a team of professionals working together. The family therapist and a liaison to the court (e.g., parent coordinator, minor's counsel, GAL) are the minimum team. The team may also include as needed parent coaches, child therapists, trauma therapists.

4. **Maintain boundaries and objectivity.** There are polarized dynamics in the families and sometimes among the professionals. Beware you, as a professional, don't get pulled into one point of view. It is very easy to be influenced by an attorney, align with one parent's therapist, or to reject anything a biased therapist has to say. Ongoing communication amongst and between team members is essential to maintain balanced perspectives (and sanity).
5. **Unholy alliances can exacerbate these cases.** Those alliances tend to be from influences external to the family (extended family, litigation, polarized professionals, social media). These cases involve a balance between safety and connection. As a lawyer, judge or mental health professional, it is paramount that there's an ongoing assessment of risk and maintenance of safety while protecting from an undermining of the family system.
6. **Whereas it is the child's best interest to have a voice, many factors need to be considered to determine the weight to be given to the child having a choice.** Children's' desire to have a voice and children's desire to make a choice need to be carefully assessed and addressed in terms of level of maturity, risk factors and external influences. The calculus always focuses on a child's best interests.
7. **Successful outcomes have many pieces.** Successful resolution of PCCPs begins with the parents' ability to put themselves in the child's shoes. Successful outcomes vary from reintegration of family members, ongoing sustained parent-child contact, healthy coparent communication and boundaries, acceptance of limited parent-child and/or parent-parent relationships, forgiveness, and/or a ritualized goodbye. Also to be considered are the weight to be given to short, intermediate, and long-term outcomes. The ongoing management of each family member's expectations is also critical.
8. **It's critical to know what we know and what we don't know.** There is insufficient empirically validated evidence about definitions and treatment. We have all seen child abuse, child neglect, intimate partner violence, and alienating behaviors even if definitions may vary. However, there are well researched and evidence informed treatments that can be applied to treatment of the specific issues present in a case.
9. **Treatment interventions.** Appropriate intervention is a combination of assessment and screening, identifying the multiple factors at play, getting buy-in from all family members, and proceeding in a stepwise manner. Understanding the context of concerns and level of severity of behaviors is essential. Acceptance of responsibility and accountability for one's behavior, facilitation of apologies, anxiety desensitization, cognitive behavioral interventions, all within a family systems approach are components of successful interventions.

10. The court stays involved. Legal interventions include monitoring and providing accountability measures. The courts keep the focus on the best interests of the child while enforcing orders. The court provides a formalized process within which interventions for parent child contact problems can be resolved. However, the court has a relatively narrow toolbox for addressing these complex family issues. Appropriate, informed intervention by knowledgeable professionals can often resolve these cases by reducing conflict between parents, increasing overall well-being of children, and forming lasting agreements to provide stability and predictability for families.

Want to know more? Sign up for the [Advanced Issues in Family Law: Parent-Child Contact Problems](#) online training program taking place January 13-16, 2024!



Robin M. Deutsch, PhD, ABPP is a Board-certified psychologist in Couple and Family Psychology (ABCFP) and a Fellow of the American Psychological Association (APA). She developed and was the director of the Center of Excellence for Children, Families and the Law at William James College where she was a Professor of Clinical Psychology. Previously she was an Associate Clinical Professor of Psychology at Harvard Medical School and Director of Training in the Children and the Law Program, Department of Psychology at Massachusetts General Hospital. She has published extensively on issues related to attachment, alienation, co-parenting after divorce, high conflict divorce, parent-child contact problems, parenting plans, and parenting coordination. Dr. Deutsch has served on numerous AFCC and APA task forces. She is also a former president of AFCC.



Leslie M. Drozd, PhD is a psychologist with 36 years of practice in forensic and clinical psychology in California, Washington, and Hawaii. She has conducted parenting plan evaluations in addition to serving as a forensic consultant and as a testifying and didactic expert. Leslie has co-authored professional guidelines for conducting evaluations and co-edited books, chapters, and articles on conducting evaluations, domestic violence, substance misuse, trauma, alienation, gatekeeping, step-up parenting plans, relocation, psychological testing, child sexual abuse, parenting coordination, and family therapy with families with parent-child contact problems. She served on the American Psychological Association's Ethics Committee and on numerous boards of directors including AFCC's.



Peggie Ward, PhD is a clinical-forensic psychologist who has specialized in the areas of child abuse, alcohol abuse, and parent child contact problems for 35 years. Her independent practice focuses on complex parent child and family interactions where family conflict is a dominant factor. Dr. Ward has held appointments at Tufts Medical School and Harvard Medical School. She has served on the AFCC MA Board of Directors and FLAFCC Board of Directors where she is currently Vice President. She has published articles on parental alienation. She contributed several chapters to the edited book, *Overcoming Parent Child Contact Problems: Family-based Interventions for Resistance, Rejection, and Alienation* (2015). Dr. Ward has created courses for William James College on Interventions for Parent Child Contact Problems.