

NW FAMILY TIES



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Make Plans for Second Annual WA AFCC Conference

Saturday April 14, 2012

Systemic Solutions for Families In Crisis

Nuts and Bolts of Being A Parenting Coordinator presented by Dr. Matthew Sullivan

Pre-Conference Training Institute Friday April 13



FIRST ANNUAL CONFERENCE SET FOR SUCCESS

The tables are set and the PowerPoint slides are ready to go!! **Registration is still open**, but the early bird registration just closed for the First Annual Conference for our WA AFCC Chapter. The early bird registration has already led to having scores of professionals signed up to attend. Attorneys, GAL's, mental health professionals and others have been making their plans to be at the SeaTac Holiday Inn on Friday October 21, 2011 for what will be an outstanding day of presentations, discussions, networking and sharing of information. There is **still space still available** for you to register, so **Sign Up Now**.

In addition to the lunchtime meeting for the local WA Chapter, Dr. Hedrick will be presenting on Gatekeeping and Alienation issues, Dr. Rybicki will present on Thorny Issues in Custody Cases, and Dr. Benjamin will discuss Preventing Ethical Complaints. A roundtable with several Judicial Officers will



present "A View from the Bench" and there will be a panel of professionals from several counties discussing their efforts to develop Case Manager, Special Master, or Parenting Coordinator tools for serving high conflict cases.

Conference proceedings will be available on DVD/CD after the meeting. This is a great chance to meet with your colleagues, make new contacts, and earn valuable Continuing Education (CLE and CE) credits. Come on out for this historic First Annual

Conference and have a great day with other Family Law Professionals.



SPACE STILL AVAILABLE

Friday October 21, 2011
SeaTac Holiday Inn



SECOND ANNUAL CONFERENCE SYSTEMIC SOLUTIONS FOR FAMILIES IN CRISIS

In order to get on track for holding annual conferences each Spring, we are calling for Presenters to provide their proposals for seminars and panel discussions for the 2nd Annual WA AFCC Conference which will be held Saturday, April 14, 2012 at the lovely

Washington Athletic Center downtown. There will be a morning of plenary sessions and plans for two tracks of afternoon presentations aimed at meeting the needs of attorneys and mental health professionals. This might be your time to share

your latest exciting ideas with your peers. Proposal guideline is available on the website. Plan also to attend the day-long Pre-Conference Institute on Friday April 13 which provides training on the Nuts and Bolts of Providing Parenting Coordination Services.



"It's exciting to see this invaluable resource become available here in Washington. Come join in at the October Conference and begin a new "chapter" for us all."

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE DANIEL RYBICKI, PSY.D.

This has been a busy and exciting time for organizing our new Washington Chapter of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts. From the initial kick-off event last year until now, there has been growing interest, enthusiasm and involvement of attorneys, judges, GAL's, and mental health professionals in our local Chapter. It is apparent that there is clearly a strong desire to learn from one another and advance the quality of service we provide to children and parents in family law cases.

Through the hard work of the steering committee and the current Officers and Board of Directors, we have developed the infrastructure necessary for a vibrant and useful professional network. Our membership rolls have expanded and we have set up a website and email contact system for keeping our WA community of professionals informed about training events and other news. We are organized as a non-profit educational group which will

provide training opportunities and a forum for discussion to bring cutting edge methods to our community where we can tailor-make programs that meet our local needs. I am very honored and pleased to serve as the founding president in this start-up phase and look forward to tackling the tasks that lie ahead.

With graduate training that dates back to 1980 at the University of Illinois, I bring a broad array of clinical training and exposure to methods of assessment and treatment. My work in the child custody field became more focused in 1987 when I trained with a practice group in Illinois that was actively involved with AFCC. This group was very dedicated to offering solution-focused, family systems-oriented custody evaluations. I had the benefit of lessons from the early research and conceptual models found in the Family Court Review journal offered by AFCC. For myself, joining the national group and the local state

chapter in California brought me into direct contact with the top researchers and practitioners in the field. I was happy to discover that my AFCC membership gave me online access to over 35 years of valuable research material and the means of learning from the foremost experts in the international field of family law specialists.

It is most exciting to see this invaluable resource become available here in Washington. Our new WA Chapter has the opportunity to stimulate dialogue and develop novel methods for better serving the needs of local families in times of crisis.

I sincerely hope that others will take this opportunity to share their insight, skills and professional experience as we grow our WA AFCC chapter.

Come join in at the October Conference and begin a new "chapter" for us all.



WA AFCC INCEPTION TO PROVISIONAL STATUS

In June 2010, Washington State joined the ranks of several other states and provinces having local AFCC chapters. This task was accomplished through the hard work of the original steering committee which was comprised of Hon. Comm. Les Ponomarchuk, Hon. Comm. Stephen Gaddis (Ret.), Debora Bianco, Camille Schaefer, Dr. Daniel Rybicki, Dr. Ellie Sternquist, Kathleen Kennelly and Carol Bailey. Even before this step, there was a growing number of local professionals across the state whom had already

attended AFCC conferences and expressed their hopes to one day establish a local chapter. Enthusiasm for the project was further enhanced when AFCC held their 42nd Annual Conference in Seattle in May, 2005. Three years later, there was the 45th Annual AFCC Conference held in Vancouver, BC. This event prompted an interdisciplinary group to pull together to form a steering committee to get the process started for attaining provisional status. With the kind assistance of the Collaborative Professionals of Washington and some

donations of funds from the office of Felicia Malsby, the office Carol Bailey and Associates, and from Dr. Rybicki, the fledgling WA AFCC chapter held an initial "kick-off" event in Gig Harbor in November 2010. Elections were held for officers and directors while work began on establishing the WA AFCC Chapter as a Not-For-Profit organization with a 501 3c Charitable status.

The Washington Chapter is one of thirteen other chapters that include Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Louisiana,

WA AFCC INCEPTION (CONTINUED FROM P.2)

Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Texas, and Ontario.

In the past several months, the membership rolls of WA AFCC have grown as word has spread about the training and resource materials available through the organization. With the leadership of the officers (Dr. Daniel Rybicki, President; Ms. Margo Waldroup, VP/Treasurer; Dr. Ellie Sternquist, Secretary) and Board Members (Camille Schaefer, Dr. Jennifer Wheeler, Dana Dean Doering, and Dr. Natalie Novick Brown), the chapter has established their website (www.wa-afcc.net) and made arrangements for their First Annual WA AFCC Conference. This event will provide 5.75 hours of CLE credit and up to 6.5 hours of continuing education credit for mental health professionals and

psychologists. The Conference will be held at the SeaTac Holiday Inn on Friday, November 21st from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and include presentations by notable professionals such as Dr. Marsha Hedrick, Dr. Andy Benjamin, Dr. Daniel Rybicki, Dr. Landon Poppleton, Ms. Frances Kevetter, Ms. Karin Ballantyne, Judge Paula Casey, Judge James Orlando, Judge Patricia Clark and Hon. Comm. Les Ponomarchuk among others. CD's and DVD's of the presentations will be available. Find more details about the conference on the WA AFCC website.

The Chapter will hold their Second Annual Conference on Saturday, April 14, 2012 at the WA Athletic Center, with a pre-Conference Institute on Parenting Coordinator training presented by Dr. Matthew Sullivan on Friday, April 13.

The WA AFCC is also joining with other groups in WSBA and elsewhere to develop task force study groups addressing such special innovative programs such as Family Law Special Master and Parenting Coordinator training and professional standards. The WA AFCC is dedicated to developing outstanding training programs and opportunities for other devoted professionals throughout the state to join together to improve the quality of care, assessment, and guidance that is available to our court system and for families in crisis. As the WA AFCC membership expands, local regional groups will be developed in other parts of the state. We welcome your questions and encourage you to please consider joining this group to help chart the course for the future.



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CALL FOR PRESENTERS SYSTEMIC SOLUTIONS FOR FAMILIES IN CRISIS

WA AFCC is accepting proposals for 90-minute workshop presentations on topics such as listed below or on an idea related to the conference theme.

- Judicial Skills & Interventions
- Legal Practice
- Domestic Violence
- Mediation
- Parenting Coordination
- Collaborative Practice
- Case Management
- Family Court Service Innovations
- Ethics
- Avoiding Bias
- Interviewing Children
- Conducting Brief Assessments
- High Conflict Families
- Financial Issues
- Third Party Custody
- Never Married Parents
- Self-Represented Litigants
- Voice of the Child in Family Law
- Child Custody Evaluation

- Voice of the Child in Family Law
- Child Custody Evaluation
- GAL Services & Training
- Court Ordered Therapy
- Finding Community Resources
- Special Needs Children

If you are interested in presenting a workshop, please send the following information: (1) an abstract of 200 words or less describing your proposed workshop; (2) a one-page outline of your proposed workshop; (3) three learning objectives that will be addressed by your workshop; (4) resumes and complete contact information for all proposed presenters (limit 4 per workshop); (5) the name of the person who will be coordinating your workshop; (6) contact information for two professional references; and (7) a one-page bio of each presenter.



Proposals may be submitted in MSWord, PDF, or WordPerfect format no later than **October 15, 2011**. WA AFCC is unable to guarantee consideration of incomplete proposals or those submitted after the deadline. WA AFCC offers a reduced registration fee for conference presenters but is unable to reimburse travel and related expenses. **Electronic submissions via email are preferred** and may be sent to info@wa-afcc.net. You may also send your proposal to WA AFCC c/o Dr. Rybicki at 5114 Pt. Fosdick Dr. NW #E, PMB#287, Gig Harbor, WA 98335

Special Thanks to Sponsors for Conference 2011
Supporting (\$250 or more)
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Dr. Bruce Harshman

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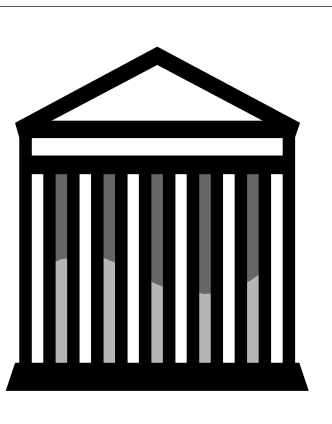
**WA Chapter
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Helping Families in Times of Crisis



Considering Coparenting or Parallel Parenting — Clarification of Terms

PARALLEL PARENTING FOR HIGH CONFLICT FAMILIES

The operating principles in RCW 26.09.187 call for establishing permanent parenting plans based on several criteria, including “whether the parents have a demonstrated ability and desire to cooperate with one another in decision making....” This concept appears to drive many evaluators and GAL’s to recommend primary custody based on their assessment of which parent seems to be more agreeable or reasonable in terms of co-parenting capacity. This may be a misleading endeavor when we consider the fact that one fifth of divorcing families may be unsuitable for cooperative co-parenting since they are characterized as “high conflict” (Johnston, 1994; Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992). Attempting collaborative coparenting may be doomed from the start. The alternative form of parenting plan seeks to develop clear boundaries and to decrease opportunities for conflict by using court orders to establish parallel domains for the parents. This plan is known as Parallel Parenting and has been recommended by many noted authorities (e.g., Matthew Sullivan, Janet Johnston) as a system which affords the children with predictability and stability and reduces exposure to conflict by limiting the amount of contact that the parents have with one another.

While **coparenting** refers to an arrangement in which parents cooperate closely in all aspects of raising their children in post-separation decisions, **parallel parenting** structures the lives of children along two separate paths. Cooperative coparenting approximates the pre-separation ideal for children where both parents are actively involved in solving the normal challenges of parenting as they arise. Coparenting of this sort requires two parents who are able to maintain a civil and child-focused relationship and have mutual trust and respect which would promote good communication between the parents. Co-parenting is contra-indicated by high conflict and/or incidents of violence before, during or after the separation, or by lack of suitable relationship between the parents. A history of poor communication, coercive interactions, inability to problem-solve, and a lack of a child-centered focus by one or both parents are among the reasons to select parallel parenting plans over cooperative coparenting plans. A serious mental health problem or substance abuse concern may also lead one to favor parallel parenting plans.

In a parallel parenting plan there is limited flexibility and the parties generally are to adhere to a very structured and detailed schedule. Natural transitions are used to limit parental contact and reduce risks for conflict to erupt between the parents. Holiday plans, attendance at events and means of communication must be very carefully laid out in the parenting plan. The goal of a parallel parenting plan is disengagement between the parents. In some instances, a parenting coordinator or special master may work with such parents to facilitate transition to coparenting, or to at least resolve key decisions without the necessity of returning to litigation for many of the day to day decisions for the family.

Parallel parenting assumes that each parent has a valuable contribution to make to the children, but any direct parent-to-parent contact may be harmful to the children due to ongoing acrimony. This acrimony may be based on mutual mistrust, personality conflict, or inability of one or both parents to move past the separation and focus on the future. Any clinical or legal finding that one parent poses a physical, sexual or emotional threat to the children, or that there are concerns of violence towards the other parent would likely contra-indicate a parallel parenting plan. Careful assessment of such risk is required in developing such parallel parenting plans.

Ten Tips for Successful Parallel Parenting

1. Maintain an attitude for non-interference with your child’s other parent. Neither parent has influence or say over the actions of the other parent.
2. Carry on a business-like attitude; use common courtesies.
3. Do not plan activities for the children during the other parent’s time. It may be better for child to miss an event than to witness conflict.
4. Stay focused on the present.
5. Stay oriented to the task at hand.
6. Keep your children’s best interests in mind.
7. Remember the goal is to keep conflict to a minimum.
8. Follow up in writing all agreements and discussions regarding the children.
9. When communication and/or negotiation is necessary, use a neutral third party to assist you.
10. Keep an open mind.