

NW FAMILY TIES



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Make Plans Now for the 7th Annual WA-AFCC Conference

Saturday

September 22, 2018



**Two Outstanding Morning
Plenary Sessions followed
by Two Choices among Six
Afternoon Breakout
Sessions**

Morning Sessions include
Judicial Officer Roundtable
and Presentation by Dr. Robert
Simon



Full Program TBA

www.wa-afcc.net

FROM SHARED PARENTING SCHEDULES TO CHILDREN WHO RESIST CONTACT WITH A PARENT: CONSIDERATIONS FOR RESIDENTIAL SCHEDULES AND INTERVENTIONS



Six hour CLE and CE Training Event

Saturday, February 3, 2018

9:00 to 5:00

University of Washington — Seattle

Registration information at www.wa-afcc.net

The Washington Chapter of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts will hold a one day CLE training event this Spring. Registration is now open, but space is limited. The training session has been approved by the WSBA for 6.0 hours of CLE (activity 1049943) and there are approved credits for mental health and psychologists for CE units.

The presenters are two of our esteemed board members, Dr. Lynn Fainsilber-Katz and Dr. Jennifer Wheeler. The presentations are intended for judicial officers, family law attorneys, mediators, Guardian ad Litem, and parenting evaluators. The registration rates have been significantly reduced to encourage attendance. Non-member regular registration is \$75 and member regular registration is \$60. Additional savings for Early Bird Registration. Here is a more detailed description of the program content.

Separating parents present with a wide range of strengths and deficits, which may vary tremendously depending on their level of conflict, personalities, and other factors. At one end of the continuum are parents who are able to effectively co-parent post-separation under a "shared parenting" schedule. At the other end of the continuum are families in which a child is resisting contact with one parent (often referred to as "alienation" cases). In Part 1 of this training, we will provide an overview of the relevant scientific literature about "shared parenting" schedules, as well as practical considerations for designing schedules based on a family's individual needs. In Part 2 of this training, we will review the history of "alienation" as a framework for describing parent-child contact problems, and current approaches to describing and responding to these complex family dynamics. We will provide information about interventions for responding to these dynamics from the point of the referral and following the entry of the Parenting Plan.





Jennifer Wheeler, Ph.D.
President, WA AFCC

"It has been such an honor to serve as the WA-AFCC Chapter President...Currently our Chapter is considered by AFCC to be among the most well-established state Chapters — with tremendous thanks to our past and current Board, and of course to you, our members."

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It has been such an honor to serve as the Washington AFCC Chapter President for the 2017-2018 term. The Presidents who came before me worked tirelessly to create this organization from the ground up, and did a remarkable job at this. Currently, our Chapter is considered by AFCC to be among the most well-established state Chapters - with tremendous thanks to our past and current Board, and of course to you, our members.

Specifically, I offer a warm welcome to all of our **new** Chapter members!! Our membership continues to grow, year after year. This year, AFCC national introduced a "Chapter Challenge," awarding \$5000.00 to the state chapter that increases its membership by the greatest percent. I am proud to announce that so far, the Washington State Chapter has increased its membership by over 20% this year - which puts us in the **lead** for the Chapter Challenge!

This Chapter Challenge was announced at the 2017 AFCC conference, held this May in Boston, MA. As always, this conference brought together family law professionals, and provided us with cutting edge information about the latest research, treatment, and policy related to family law. I am looking forward to next year's conference in Washington DC!

Immediately following the AFCC conference in Boston, was the World Congress of Family Law and Children's Rights. This Congress is held once every four years, and covers a wide range of topics, from custody disputes to child-trafficking. I was proud to represent Washington State at this year's World Congress, in Dublin, Ireland. It was fascinating to learn about how other countries are seeking to address the ever-changing needs of children and families, to meet family law delegates from across the world.

In addition to national and international conferences in family law, it is also important to attend training that takes place at state and local levels. One of the most important functions of our WA-AFCC Chapter is to host an annual conference. This conference brings together lawyers, judges, and mental health professionals, for a day of networking, and to learn more about the important topics we face in the complex field of family law. Our annual conferences include keynote speakers, who are typically prominent figures in the field of family law - and this year's conference was no exception! Our 2017 keynote speakers were Marsha Klein Pruitt, Ph.D. and Bill Eddy, JD, MSW, who provided conference attendees with current information about child development, and managing high conflict cases.

Since our chapter's inception, the annual conference has been chaired and organized by Dan Rybicki, Psy.D. (who was also our first chapter president). Dan has done an amazing job making the WA-AFCC conferences the successes that they have consistently been, year after year. The organization owes him a huge debt of gratitude and tremendous thanks for his labors in this regard (among many others!) As much as we would love to have Dan organize the chapter conferences forever, we also recognize the importance of training a new conference chair, so that Dan can finally "pass the baton" after all of these years.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE CONTINUED

I am pleased to announce that Dana Dean-Doering, ARNP, has volunteered to take over as WA-AFCC conference chair, beginning with next year's conference in 2018. This means that 2018 will represent a year of transition, as Dan and Dana work together to organize the 2018 conference. Among the changes you can anticipate is a change in the conference date: We will be hosting next year's conference in the Fall 2018 (it as previously been held in the Spring). We will also be adding an additional day-long training in February 2018 - meaning that we will be hosting **two** day-long training opportunities in 2018! I would also like to take a moment to recognize our tireless, hard-working WA-AFCC Board members. Our Board members are intelligent, professional, creative, and a lot of fun to be with! The value of the relationships I have developed during my time on the Board is immeasurable.

Finally, I would like to encourage all of our members participate in one of WA-AFCC's committees - we are actively seeking members on most committees. Please feel free to contact me, or any other Board member, to learn more about our committees.

Thank you for the honor of serving as your President during the 2017-2018 term. If you have any questions about membership or the organization, please do not hesitate to contact me.

FISHY BUSINESS AT WA-AFCC BY DAVID HODGES, M.A.

There are various potential benefits that come from membership in the Washington Chapter of AFCC. At our chapter conferences we generally have an end of the day get together that includes the opportunity to meet and talk with the day's keynote speakers. Also featured is a silent auction of various donated objects including works of art, handmade jewelry, other special items, as well as events tickets and time share opportunities on which to bid. This year Todd DeVallance, managing attorney with the Tsai Law Company, donated a fishing trip on a boat out of Westport. It could be said that Todd has fishy connections with the owner/operator. This year, two chapter board members, Michelle Unsworth and Dave Hodges, colluded to bid on the two "tickets" to go out on the charter boat. They won.

The trip turned out to be special in a number of ways. First, the salmon weren't biting. So, instead, the captain suggested we go farther out to sea to fish for albacore tuna. We got lucky and the four of us caught seventeen albacore. Second, as planned, Michele's husband, James

Unsworth was part of the group and it turned out that it was his birthday. He caught the first tuna and I think maybe the most. Third, I paid for an additional spot and took my son, Bryan. We got to stand shoulder to shoulder on a couple of occasions doing the "albacore dance." That is when the albacore are going crazy on both lines and you are having to unweave the lines by moving the fishing rods under and over one another while staying on your feet and not going overboard. Personally, that trip had special moments for me with my adult son.



Ask the Experts: Ten Tips for Parenting Coordinators Toward Targeting and Strengthening Coparenting and Benefiting Children

by Debra K. Carter and James P. McHale

Understandably, mitigating hostile conflict and reducing acrimonious engagement between parents takes precedent in all parenting coordination efforts. But even with conflict reduced many parents say, in retrospect, that they had expected and would have appreciated (but didn't feel they received) help improving their coparenting. Remaining mindful about what parents expect from the process increases the likelihood we will provide the support they seek. In our research and clinical efforts, we have culled from principles of Focused Coparenting Consultation (McHale & Irace, 2010; McHale & Carter, 2012) to identify several principles that, when used in mindful and deliberate fashion, can strengthen PC work, improve parents' intention to coparent collaboratively, and improve circumstances for children.

1. Stay abreast of the literature on parenting coordination effectiveness. The field is still young, and we are still learning what works and what doesn't. While empirical research on PC effectiveness is still sparse, and it does appear that parenting coordination can help reduce hostile conflict, the jury is not yet in on whether or not PC also helps to improve coparenting and child adjustment. Knowledge is power – PCs should keep up on the latest news regarding what we are learning – especially from the perspective of parents.
2. Reflect on whether parenting coordination is the right tool for the job. An ADR Triage Model can be used to help PCs determine: Who is likely to benefit, what can be expected from the process, when PC should be ordered, why to consider PC versus other ADR processes, and how the Order of Referral can best be used. Like other powerful tools, PC can be very effective when used properly, but in untrained hands or when applied to the wrong job, the results can be ineffective or harmful.
3. Approach the PC work understanding and holding firm to a Triangular Coparenting Model (McHale & Phares, 2015). Children will eternally experience themselves as part of a mother-father-child triangle. Their embeddedness in this triangle remains throughout their lives, sometimes consciously, other times not. The reality of this triangle exists whether parents and PCs concede so or not. Because children are emotionally connected to both parents, disparagement by one parent of the other ultimately creates damage to the child's sense of self. But parents can also work collaboratively to build a strong bridge between their two homes so the child does not perennially feel she is treading on shaky ground. Helping parents understand triangles and the ongoing importance of supportive coparenting for children's emotional health is a crucial component of all PC work.
4. Be ready to test the waters and assess the potential for building an effective coparenting alliance. Though most can, certainly not everyone can get there. The Parenting Coordinator must be open to evaluating inter-parental conflict. The PC must also know how best to intervene with resistance in order to help parents move beyond acrimony -- if they are to focus, instead, on the

care and well-being of their children. This requires going beyond conclusions or opinions about how the other is right or wrong; transformative encounters can be engineered to assess and confront judgment and resistance to change, as a means of increasing potential for development of a coparenting alliance.

5. Talk with parents about the legacy of divorce. Experiencing divorce or separation and living in a single-parent family can have negative consequences for both children and parents, and the legacy of divorce can be powerful and lifelong. For the first time in history, parents who were themselves children of divorce are now raising their own children. Such parents typically do not enter their own parenthood with a model of family commitment or of successful resolution of family conflict. Tactful introduction of childhood memories about parenting and coparenting can help parents heighten empathy to their own children's needs.

6. Be prepared and quick to short-circuit conflict thoughts, behaviors, and emotions, if the goal is to get to the far side of acrimony. Describe and offer a safe haven in which parents can take small steps to build cohesion, trust, and safety, thereby creating a strong container in which the process of conflict resolution and heightened awareness can unfold. This requires truth-telling or being honest about one's internal experience, particularly about the impact of the conflict on each parent's life and that of their children.

7. "Surprise the unconscious." Parents have aired their grievances and told their stories numerous times and their thought processes are often almost automatic. In seeking to heighten parents' awareness of what lies beneath, and hence sustains inter-parental conflict, it can be helpful to ask questions that prompt them to think about the family and their core family dynamics in different ways. With new "content" about their unconscious biases (e.g., my child's other parent does nothing right as a parent) on the table, it becomes possible to examine those biases and help parents understand their resistance to change. Frank conversations with increased insight can increase the potential for parental teaming in development of a coparenting alliance that prioritizes the care and well-being of their children.

8. Use transformative encounters as intervention techniques. Transformative encounters introduce the skill of mindsight and offer practices for selfregulation. Two main modalities for this are the establishment of guidelines and making explicit collective intention. The timing of when in the work these encounters are introduced does matter, and they are best implemented once a beginning agreement to work in the child's best interest has been achieved.

9. Remember that change is not linear. Setbacks can be frustrating, especially once a glimmer of breakthrough had been felt. The general arc of change in human behavior is typically cyclical in nature – with parents dipping into the truth of their experience, pulling back, and then dipping a little deeper. The depth of transformation will be dependent on the depth of truth telling, which is dependent on the skillfulness of facilitators, the maturity of parents, and the amount of time and energy invested.

(continued on p. 6)

10. Keep your eyes on parental sensitivity to children's sensibilities, and reinforce parental attunement and high solidarity behaviors. Facilitators may help parents develop a specific and doable action plan consisting of high-solidarity behaviors such as the offering of a gift (extra time), the exchange of an apology and forgiveness, or a mutually created and signed agreement. Be especially validating of new high solidarity behaviors parents make visible to the children. Validation helps to affirm the coparents' new way of being and relating.

McHale, J. P. & Carter, D. K. (2012) Applications of Focused Coparenting Consultation with Unmarried and Divorced Families, *Independent Practitioner*, Vol. 32(3), 106-110.

McHale, J. P. & Irace, (2010) Focused Coparenting Consultation: Helping parents coordinate to support children. *Independent Practitioner*, Vol. 30, 164-170.

McHale & Phares, (2015) From dyads to family systems: A bold new direction for infant mental health practice. *Zero to Three*, 35(5), 2-10.

Debra K. Carter, PhD is a clinical and forensic psychologist, a Certified Family Mediator, and a Qualified Parenting Coordinator. She is Co-Founder of the National Cooperative Parenting Center (NCPC) which offers services and training to the Mental Health and Legal Communities in North America and around the globe. Dr. Carter is also the author of *Parenting Coordination: A Practical Guide for Family Law Professionals* and *CoParenting After Divorce: A GPS for Healthy Kids* in addition to numerous chapters and journal articles.

Dr. McHale is Executive Director of the USF St. Petersburg Infant-Family Mental Health Center at Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital, directs the USFSP Family Study Center, and is a Professor of Psychology at USF St. Petersburg. He is among the nation's leading experts on coparenting in diverse family systems, having authored more than 200 conference research reports and published over 70 articles, books, and other manuscripts on the topic of coparenting. Drs. Carter and McHale presented a pre-conference institute in Milwaukee on November 2, 2017 titled *The Far Side of Acrimony: Using Transformative Encounters in Parenting*

Ask the Experts: Ten Tips for Interviewing Collateral Sources

by Kathleen McNamara, Ph.D., and Beth Lieberman, LCSW

Gathering collateral data is a critically important component of child custody evaluations. Here are ten tips for conducting interviews with collateral sources.

1. Begin with the end in mind

Collaterals assist in corroborating or refuting the parties' claims, provide information about family members' functioning, and shed light on available sources of support for the children. Collaterals who have direct knowledge of the family provide the most useful information. Consider a wide range of sources.

2. Talk to multiple and balanced sources of information

Multiple sources are necessary to fully explore alternative hypotheses. Invalid conclusions are more likely when too few sources are relied upon. Balanced input is also important. For example, if you interview extended family members on one side, it is usually wise to interview extended family members on the other side.

3. Consider the advantages and disadvantages of using questionnaires Questionnaires are efficient. Answers to the same questions from multiple sources can be directly compared. Respondents can thoughtfully prepare their answers. Additionally, a permanent record of the collateral's statement is created. On the other hand, boilerplate questions may not tap the most important information, and unknown others may "assist" in writing answers. Spontaneity and discussion are absent. Consider conducting brief follow-up interviews, either in person or by telephone, with collaterals who respond to questionnaires.

4. Consider the advantages and disadvantages of conducting interviews Interviews provide the opportunity to establish rapport with respondents, which may lead to more robust information. Closed, open, and probing questions may be asked and discussion can occur. On the downside, collaterals may not give well thought out answers to unexpected questions or questions requiring detailed recall. Additionally, unless the interview is recorded, there is no documentation of the collateral's input, aside from the interviewer's notes, which may be disputed later. Summarize the collaterals' answers to ensure you have accurately heard their input, and consider recording interviews to mitigate the risk of recanted statements later.

5. Obtain authorization from the parties to contact collateral sources

Unless you have explicit authority to obtain collateral input per your order of appointment or by statute, obtain written authorization from the parties to contact collateral sources.

6. Inform collaterals of how their input may be used and that it will not be kept confidential

It is wise to provide this information in writing and obtain the collateral's signature to document their informed consent before they provide input.

7. Be prepared

Prior to conducting interviews, read relevant records and documents, know the issues, and prepare your questions. Schedule interviews in advance so you and the collateral can be prepared and situated in an appropriate location for the interview.

8. When weighing collateral input, consider the neutrality of the source

Those closest to the family are generally viewed as less credible due to alignments with one side or the other. On the other hand, those closest to the family are often privy to day-to-day interactions and may have the most salient and critical information. Collaterals who are more distant, including professionals, are generally viewed as more objective and credible, but their direct knowledge of the family may be more limited.

9. When weighing input, consider the possibility of "neutralized" input

Be mindful that some collaterals who possess critical knowledge may be reluctant to provide it and may "neutralize" it. Reasons might include fears that their input may damage relationships with family members, fears of retaliation, discomfort with court involvement, unpleasant memories from their own divorce, or concerns that their input will be misquoted or misused.

10. Pursue further information until sufficient information has been gathered

It is incumbent upon the evaluator to determine whether sufficient information has been obtained.

Kathleen McNamara is a licensed psychologist in private practice in Fort Collins, Colorado. She works extensively with court-involved families as a custody evaluator, parenting coordinator, and therapist for high conflict families. Beth Lieberman is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker practicing in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Her practice focuses on working with parents and children in high-conflict divorce situations, including performing parental responsibilities evaluations, individual and family therapy, and parent coordination. She is the current president of the Colorado Chapter of AFCC.

Thanks to Debra Carter, James McHale, Kathleen McNamara, and Beth Lieberman for sharing these two informative articles. They were also previously distributed by the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts as part of their e-newsletter. Keep informed of training events and the latest in professional practice with AFCC and the Family Court Review.

More information about AFCC is available at their website including professional practice guidelines, research papers, and other useful material.

www.afccnet.org



INTERESTED IN GETTING INVOLVED AND LENDING A HELPING HAND?

Your state chapter is a vibrant organization which relies on the guidance and input of an active Board of Directors and various committees. As a precursor to serving on the Board, members are expected to have been involved with WA AFCC for at least two years and preference is given for persons who have served on committees. In order to get involved in moving this organization to greater heights, you are encouraged to consider volunteering to work on one of the committees. In order to be considered for involvement in a committee, you should email the respective chairperson and share your interest and contact information. They will be happy to answer questions and see where you might be able to participate. The current committee structure and email contacts for chairpersons is listed below.



Education Committee (includes Conference, Speakers Bureau) — Dr. Jennifer Wheeler (dr.wheeler@yahoo.com) and Hon. Tony Wartnik (theadjudicator@comcast.net) co-chairs

Professional Roles and Practice Standards (includes Quality Assurance, Ethics, Professional Outreach) — Melanie English, Ph.D., MSW (menglish@drmenglish.com) and Michele Unsworth, M.Ed. (mischa915@gmail.com) as co-chairs

Membership and Outreach (includes Public Relations, Social, Professional Partners) — John Kydd, J.D. (john@kyddlwa.com)

Technology and Media Task Force (website design, mgt.) — Bruce Pruett-Hamm, J.D. (bpruitthamm@gmail.com)

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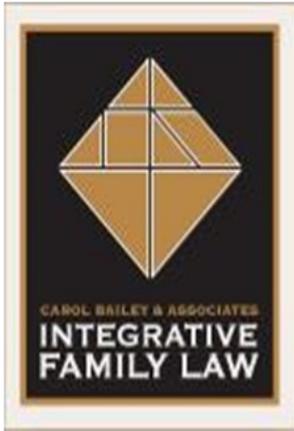
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