



## NEWSLETTER

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### MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The New Jersey chapter of AFCC is proud to present our first newsletter. For those of you who are not familiar with AFCC, we are an international organization focused upon the mission of helping children and families. The majority of our members are mental health and legal professionals who share a common commitment to education, innovation and collaboration to promote the best possible outcomes for children and families in conflict.

Membership in the international organization includes a subscription to the Family Court Review (quarterly publication), and reduced registration rates for AFCC conferences and programs. The international AFCC website ([afccnet.org](http://afccnet.org)) contains a wealth of information, including conferences, training announcements, and extensive resources for professionals. This year's annual conference, which focuses on 'When a Child Rejects a Parent', will take place in New Orleans from May 27<sup>th</sup> to May 30<sup>th</sup>.

We invite you to include the New Jersey Chapter in your international membership. Our New Jersey chapter is a very active one. Our board of directors meets approximately once a month, and we have both a Fall and Spring presentation, the latter dovetailing with our annual meeting. In 2019, our Fall conference was on supervised parenting time, and our Spring presentation will be focused upon refuse/resist dynamics (parent/child contact problems) and treatment.

We are also pleased to announce our re-vamped website, which can be accessed at [afcc-nj.org](http://afcc-nj.org). The website provides an on-line membership resource directory which was created as a New Jersey Chapter member benefit to provide a useful listing of its current membership and the services the member provides. (If you are a member and are not already listed, contact Denise Wennogle at ([denise@wennoglelaw.com](mailto:denise@wennoglelaw.com))). As a NJ-AFCC member, you will also receive discounts on chapter programs, receive notification of events, and have opportunities to participate on committees and initiatives.

If you haven't already joined our chapter, we hope you will do so!

*Marcy A. Pasternak, Ph.D.*  
*President*

*Dr. Pasternak is a clinical and forensic psychologist in Watchung, NJ. She has served on the Board of NJ-AFCC since 1999.*



# RECENT EVENTS

## OCTOBER

### **NJ Chapter's Open Board Meeting Combines Sunday Morning Brunch with Business and Pleasure**

The Board of Directors of the NJ Chapter of the AFCC held an open board meeting on October 20, 2019 at the home of Dr. Cynthia Lischick in Clarksburg, NJ. The site was selected both because of Dr. Lischick's generosity in hosting, but also, because it is conveniently located in the middle of the state, making it more accessible to professionals living in both the northern and southern regions of New Jersey. The event provided an opportunity for interested guests to meet the board members and other active members of the chapter, as well as to get an update on chapter activities. Everyone who attended enjoyed a relaxed opportunity to network with existing members and guests while enjoying brunch. No one left the meeting hungry or without having met someone new. The Board would like to thank Dr. Lischick for hosting the event.



Marcy Pasternak, Tam Abitante, Denise Wennogle, David Salvaggio & Sharon Ryan Montgomery



Attorney Daniel Hoberman and Dr. Eileen Kohutis



Janet Berson, Lidia Abrams, Joseph Racite and Jason Hunt

# The Benefits of Membership in the New Jersey Chapter of the AFCC to Young Lawyers

*By Thomas DeCataldo, Esq.*

Practicing family law in New Jersey as a young attorney is a challenging process. On top of busy workloads, newly minted attorneys are learning to adapt to firm life, while honing skills such as billing, client management, and networking. Unlike other areas of the law, family law practitioners regularly find themselves in direct contact with clients at an early stage of their career – sometimes even directly responsible for the management of a matrimonial case. This occurs regularly via direct contact with clients via phone, email or in-person meetings. Young lawyers also routinely draft certifications in support of motions, or script testimony for depositions and trial, or attend mediation with clients.

To compound the stress of having client contact early on in a legal career, matrimonial litigants in particular are among the most vulnerable, emotional, and scared clients an attorney can represent. Although any matrimonial case has the potential to involve tension and emotion, there is perhaps no area more prone to such dynamics than disputes pertaining to custody and parenting time. In the eyes of a client, the stakes could not be higher in these disputes.

For young attorneys with little to no experience representing clients, these situations present significant challenges. If an attorney lacks knowledge in the subject area or can't provide a client with a clear plan to accomplish the client's goals, clients quickly lose confidence and trust in their attorney. This unfortunate occurrence is usually irreparable and, in a field as demanding as family law, losing the confidence of clients is not a recipe for long-term success.

For young attorneys hoping to avoid such setbacks, AFCC provides a comfortable and low-pressure arena for attorneys to rapidly improve his or her knowledge of custody and parenting time issues. AFCC is an international, interdisciplinary organization devoted to the resolution of family conflict. It is comprised of mental health experts, attorneys, mediators, and judges from around the world.

AFCC hosts several conferences per year on issues pertinent to custody and parenting time disputes. These conferences consist of seminars on an endless array of topics, including issues pertaining to domestic violence, substance abuse, relocation, parental alienation, and many other topics impacting the best interests of children. AFCC offers seminars on trial practice, collaborative divorce, mediation, and on the mechanics of drafting custody and parenting time reports. The seminars are regularly conducted by nationally prominent professionals, including renowned experts, accomplished attorneys, and judges from jurisdictions all over the world. There are also many opportunities to network with talented and knowledgeable professionals from all over the country, and to purchase literature helpful in handling custody matters. Over the course of 2-3 days, a young attorney can greatly expand his or her knowledge of family conflict and custody issues.

The New Jersey chapter of this organization embodies the same goals and is comprised of a more localized membership. Many members of the New Jersey chapter regularly act as expert witnesses in custody disputes or are experienced attorneys adept at handling custody disputes. The chapter generally coordinates an annual dinner meeting in the Spring with educational programming, and a Fall CLE program, typically staffed with experienced attorneys, family part judges, and mental health experts with decades of experience in handling custody issues. Attendees have the opportunity to network with leading practitioners from throughout New Jersey.

In sum, for attorneys seeking to gain confidence and relevant knowledge in handling custody issues, there is no better place to network and learn than through AFCC and membership in the New Jersey Chapter.

*Thomas DeCataldo, Esq. is a partner at Skoloff & Wolfe in Livingston, NJ. He has served on the Board of NJ-AFCC since 2017.*

# RECENT EVENTS

## NOVEMBER

### Supervised Parenting Time Workshop

*By Amy Wechsler, Esq.*

On November 13, 2019, over 50 mental health and legal professionals attended a NJ-AFCC workshop about Supervised Parenting Time. We were delighted to have a panel comprised of The Honorable Daniel D'Alessandro (ret), Mathias Hagovsky, Ph.D., Ann Ordway, Esq., Linda Schofel, Esq., and Carol Dvoor, who runs a busy and successful supervised parenting program at Safe Harbor Child Access Center. The panel presentation, moderated by Amy Wechsler, Esq., examined supervised parenting from a judicial perspective, an advocacy perspective, a psychological perspective and the experience of professionals who serve as supervisors.

Ms. Schofel pointed out that, in assessing the need for supervised parenting it is critical to differentiate unsupported accusations or criticisms by one parent about the other from actual concerns about both emotional and physical safety. When considering supervised visitation as an option, Dr. Hagovsky noted the importance of assessing the psychological impact on the child and parents.

Once the need is established, the focus is choosing the appropriate model and identifying the supervisor. Dr. Ordway and Ms. Dvoor provided inspiring examples of supervised processes ranging from office visits, to in-home visits with a family member, to structured participation in more normalized settings (i.e., shopping, going to restaurants, seeing a movie) in order to rebuild and strengthen the parent-child relationship.

If the proposed supervisor is a family member, Judge D'Alessandro stressed the importance of making sure supervisors understand and agree to what is expected of them, and he noted the value of questioning the supervisor under oath to confirm this. Court orders requiring supervised parenting time should include clear guidelines defining the process to be followed, identifying the supervisor (and whether training should be required for that person), establishing record-keeping and reporting processes, and setting forth the circumstances under which the supervision requirement can be lifted.

*Amy Wechsler, Esq., is a partner at Shimalla, Wechsler, Lepp & D'Onofrio, LLP in Warren, NJ. She has served on the Board of NJ-AFCC since 2003 and is the Immediate Past President.*

*A special thanks to the law firm of Wilentz, Goldman & Spitzer for allowing us to use their offices for the program!*



Amy Wechsler, Esq.



Mathias  
Hagovsky, Ph.D.



Ann Ordway,  
J.D., Ph.D.,  
NCC



Hon. Daniel D'Alessandro, J.S.C.

# Guidelines for Parenting Coordination Issued by AFCC

*By Lynn B. Norcia, Esq.*

The AFCC is the premier interdisciplinary and international association of professionals dedicated to the resolution of family conflict. It promotes a collaborative approach to serving the needs of children among those who work in and with family law systems, and it encourages education, research and innovation and identifying best practices. As part of its continuing mission to identify best practices, the AFCC recently published recommended "Guidelines for Parenting Coordination." ("Guidelines" [www.afccnet.org/Resource-Center/Practice-Guidelines-and-Standards](http://www.afccnet.org/Resource-Center/Practice-Guidelines-and-Standards) ).

The Guidelines are the result of the AFCC's two-year Task force on Parenting Coordination. The Task Force included mental health and legal professionals and it looked at practices in jurisdictions with and without formal laws pertaining to parenting coordination. The Task Force also identified resources that have served to inform and document the practice of parenting coordination over the last approximately 12 years. Parenting coordination is described in the guidelines as: "a hybrid legal-mental health role that combines assessment, education, case management, conflict management, dispute resolution, and, at times, decision-making functions. The parenting coordinator (PC) assists co-parents engaged in high conflict co-parenting to implement their parenting plan by: (1) facilitating the resolution of the co-parents' disputes in a timely manner; (2) educating co-parents about their children's needs; and, (3) with prior approval of co-parents or the court, making decisions within the scope of the court order or appointment contract." (Guidelines, at p. 2).

The AFCC Guidelines lend guidance to practitioners where there is a lack of definition and uniformity for Parenting Coordination, as is the case in New Jersey since termination by the Administrative Office of the Courts ("AOC") of a 5-year Parenting Coordinator Pilot Program in 2012 (<https://njcourts.gov/notices/2007/n070403a.pdf>). On termination of the pilot program, the AOC published a Notice to the Bar, advising that Family Court Judges may continue to appoint PCs in cases without domestic violence restraining orders. The only directions or protocols the AOC provided were publication of two model court orders, "for guidance," when making such appointments, (one for appointment by consent and one for appointment upon motion of a party or by the court), and a statement that anyone appointed to serve as a PC should "be qualified to serve either by consent of the parties or by the court in the same manner as other experts." Thus, there is currently no existing protocol, court rule, AOC directive or statute in New Jersey that provides direction or standards for the appointment, qualifications, training or best practices of PCs.

Now, with the publication of the AFCC's Guidelines for Parent Coordination in 2019, there is an informed, comprehensive source of information and guidance for courts and practitioners to consider when a PC is appointed. The Task Force's work produced an 18 page document which sets out 14 Guidelines that address such issues as: recommended qualifications and training of PCs, the unacceptability of a PC serving in multiple concurrent or sequential roles in the same case, limitations on confidentiality, and the scope of authority of a PC, among other suggested standards. The Guidelines make clear that they are meant to be "aspirational and offer guidance in best practices, qualifications, training and ethical obligations for PCs" and are not meant to define mandatory practice. (Guidelines, at p. 3). Yet they provide comprehensive, intelligent, guidance to judges, practitioners and litigants in New Jersey in the absence of any formal guidelines or standards.

*Lynn B. Norcia, Esq. is Of Counsel at Starr, Gern, Davison & Rubin in Roseland, NJ.  
She currently serves on the Board of NJ- AFCC as Secretary.*

**Association of Family and Conciliation Courts  
New Jersey Chapter**

**Officers**

- Marcy A. Pasternak, Ph.D., President
- Denise A. Wennogle, Esq., President Elect
- Amy Wechsler, Esq., MSW, APM, Immediate Past President
- Linda A. Schofel, Esq., LCSW, Vice President
- Lynn B. Norcia, Esq., Secretary
- Tam M. Abitante, Esq., CDFA, Treasurer

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- Janet S. Berson, Ph.D.
- Thomas J. DeCataldo, Esq.
- Holly M. Friedland, Esq.
- Cynthia M. Lischick, Ph.D.
- Joseph Racite, Ph.D.
- David F. Salvaggio, Esq.

**Past Presidents**

- Ron G. Silikovitz, Ph.D. (1999 – 2002)  
*Co-founder of Chapter*
- Philip N. Sobel, Esq. (2002 – 2007)  
*Co-founder of Chapter*
- Sharon Ryan Montgomery, Psy. D. (2007 – 2009)
- Frank Weiss, Ph.D. (2009 – 2010)
- Barbara Worth, Esq., Ph.D. (2010 – 2013)
- Ann Scucci Ordway, Esq., Ph.D. (2013 – 2015)
- Gregg Benson, MA, LCADC (2015 – 2017)
- Amy Wechsler, Esq., MSW, APM (2017 – 2019)

**Upcoming Event**

**SAVE THE DATE**

**Annual Dinner, Elections and Program**

**April 23, 2020**

**Maggiano's, 900 Commons Way,  
Bridgewater, NJ**

Full Program to be announced shortly

For more information about the  
New Jersey Chapter of AFCC go to:

[afcc-nj.org](http://afcc-nj.org)

Or send us an email!

[afccnewjersey@gmail.com](mailto:afccnewjersey@gmail.com)

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