



Family Law Through the Developmental Lens: Assessing and Including the Voice of the Ever-Maturing Child

APRIL 26, 2019

**University of Denver
CRAIG HALL**

This one-day conference will focus on the question of what is emotional maturity and how can it be assessed? Practical examples of lifespan development and emotional maturity will be presented as they pertain to family law decision making and a child's capacity for "reasoned and independent" preferences. The conference will also focus on how professionals might best elicit the child's voice in family law matters. Professionals will be informed about dynamics that can confound or corrupt a child's voice including systemic/family pressures. Family law professionals will gain skills to assess and address when and how these pressures bear on each individual child's presentation. Practical tools for assessing maturity and eliciting the child's voice in the midst of high conflict family dynamics will also be offered including, the "Process Oriented Observational Protocol" and the "Query Grid" as aids to interviewing children and observing parent-child interactions.

COAFCC 2019 Spring Conference & Annual Members Meeting

**Keynote speaker:
Benjamin Garber, Ph.D.**

**Also featuring:
A multi-disciplinary
panel including
judicial officers**

**6 CE Contact Hours,
7 General Credit CLEs,
APA accreditation pending**

**Register at
www.coafcc.org**



ABOUT THE KEYNOTE SPEAKER:



Dr. Ben Garber is a New Hampshire licensed psychologist, parenting coordinator, expert consultant to family law matters across North America, speaker and author. Dr. Garber is a former Guardian ad litem. Dr. Garber has advanced degrees in psycholinguistics, developmental and clinical child psychology from the University of Michigan and The Pennsylvania State University. He completed an internship in clinical child and family psychology at the Institute of Living in Hartford, Connecticut. He is co-founder of the Parenting Coordination Association of New Hampshire, winner of the March of Dimes "Distinction in Media Excellence" award, and an acclaimed educator and author in numerous areas of child and family development and family law. Above all else, across roles and titles and jurisdictions, Dr. Garber is an unwavering advocate for children. Participants are encouraged to learn more about the conference in advance at www.FamilyLawConsulting.org (click on "Colorado AFCC 2019")

Colorado Chapter of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts is a non-profit organization with members that include attorneys, mental health professionals, mediators, judges, magistrates and other professional service organizations. COAFCC offers several conferences each year. AFCC is an interdisciplinary, international association of professionals dedicated to improving the lives of children and families through the resolution of family conflict. AFCC promotes a collaborative approach to serving the needs of children among those who work in and with family law systems, encouraging education, research and innovation, and identifying best practices.

Program Schedule:

7:30 – 8:15 Registration and Continental Breakfast

8:15 – 8:30 Welcome and Introductions

8:30 -10:00 **Part I: Developmental Psychology Meets Family Law**
Benjamin Garber, Ph.D.

The child's need to feel psychologically held can fail when parents conflict, separate and divorce, impacting security and maturation. What is maturity? Is there such a thing as a "mature minor?"

A brief overview of the concept of maturity, differentiating distinct and inter-related types of maturation (e.g., physical, social, emotional, moral). Contemporary media clips are used to illustrate these distinct areas of development. Family law professionals are cautioned time and again not to be misled by superficial and irrelevant areas of maturity. The bottom line emphasis is on assessing emotional maturity as the development most relevant to family law decision making. The idea of regression under stress is introduced as it bears on the constant dilemma of understanding whether the children that we assess are functioning at their mature best.

10:00 – 10:15 Morning Break

Program Schedule (cont.):

10:15 – 11:45

Part II: Systemic Confounds and the Voice of the Child

Benjamin Garber, Ph.D.

Relationship pressures can corrupt the child's presentation, leaving evaluators, GALs and the courts uncertain what the child wants and needs. What are adultification, parentification and infantilization? What is the chameleon child?

The intense systemic pressures inherent in high conflict divorce can undermine or corrupt the child's voice. Family law professionals must be prepared to assess and address when and how these pressures bear on each individual child's presentation. This includes understanding the chameleon child, the three common forms of enmeshment (adultification, parentification and infantilization), alienation and estrangement. These various confounds are discussed in the context of emotional maturity and its mitigating effects.

11:45-12:15

Break

12:15-1:15

Working Lunch (provided) -- **COAFCC Annual Members' Meeting & Elections**

****Lunch sponsored by Our Family Wizard****

1:15-2:45

Part III: Practical Tools to Better Elicit the Child's Genuine Voice

Benjamin Garber, Ph.D.

Enough abstract theory...what's a conscientious family law professional to do? This session offers practical tools for assessing maturity and eliciting the child's voice in the midst of high conflict family dynamics. The two earlier discussions are integrated in this very practical approach to child custody evaluation focused on interviewing children and observing parent-child interactions. Video clips are used to illustrate many of the concepts. The Process Oriented Observational Protocol (POOP) and the Query Grid (QG) are introduced, and self-care is discussed.

2:45-3:05

Break

3:05-4:35

Multi-Disciplinary Panel

A panel of experts representing attorneys, mental health, and the bench will discuss practical aspects of including the child's voice in family law such as relevant law in Colorado to help define "reasoned and independent" wishes of the child; potential differences between mental health and legal perspectives on voice of the child; how judges and attorneys can include the voice of the child in cases where there is no CFI/PRE; and how can the voice of the child be included in mediation.

4:35-4:45

Thank-you, closing announcements, evaluations

*COAFCC will provide a certificate of attendance for **6 hours of educational contact**. Mental health professionals will need to verify approval with their licensing or credentialing boards to meet any continuing education requirements.*

***7 General Credits Continuing Legal Education Credits (CLEs) for Colorado Attorneys** have been approved.*

***APA accreditation for psychologists pending.** The Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC) parent organization is approved by the American Psychological Association (APA) to sponsor continuing education for psychologists. AFCC maintains responsibility for the program and its content.*

Registration Form

Register and pay online at www.coafcc.org or mail registration form and check to April Freier at 4307 W 6th Street, Greeley, CO 80634. Checks should be made payable to **COAFCC**.

Conference fees include presentation, continental breakfast and lunch, and parking permit.

****As a reminder, the Annual Member's Meeting and Elections will be held over the lunch hour.**

Registration Fees (postmarked or online) on or before April 8, 2019:

- _____ \$150 for COAFCC members
- _____ \$170 for Non-members
- _____ \$112.50 for COAFCC members discounted rate**
- _____ \$127.50 for Non-members discounted rate**

Registration Fees after April 8, 2019:

- _____ \$165 for COAFCC members
- _____ \$185 for Non-members
- _____ \$123.75 for COAFCC members discounted rate**
- _____ \$138.75 for Non-members discounted rate**

A special thank you to our sponsor!



****Registration Fees discounted (as of date registered) 25% for graduate or law students, CASA volunteers, Court employees and legal or mental health professionals in practice three years or less**

COAFCC is "going green!"

Handouts for this program will be delivered to you electronically a few days before the event *at no charge*.
If you wish to have a hard copy of the power point handouts in front of you during the program, please print them before you come!

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email (print clearly) _____

Enter Total Amount Paid: \$ _____

Please indicate if you require a vegetarian (), vegan (), or a gluten free () lunch request.

Cancellation Policy: Transfer of registration or substitutions to another person may be done at any time without a fee. All requests for refunds must be made in writing or by email notification; notice of cancellation received by email or postmarked by April 15, 2019, will be issued a full refund minus a \$25 administrative fee. No refunds will be issued for cancellations received after April 15, 2019. COAFCC reserves the right to cancel any training or substitute any presenter should circumstances arise beyond our control.

Please contact April Freier at aprilfreier@hotmail.com with any questions.