



ELEVATE YOUR PRACTICE

BEST PRACTICES IN CASES INVOLVING PARENT-CHILD CONTACT PROBLEMS AND INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE/CHILD ABUSE

APRIL 25, 2025

**Sheraton Denver West
360 Union Blvd | Lakewood**

If you are an attorney or mental health professional involved in family law cases, you certainly face those challenging and multi-faceted situations where a child is resisting or refusing contact with a parent. Those same cases often involve allegations of intimate partner violence and/or child abuse. You are faced with navigating a maze of information and complicated family dynamics.

Please join us in learning about and reviewing the best practices to help you through these difficult cases, including relevant standards and guidelines for both legal and mental health professionals in the areas of Parent Child Contact Problems (PCCP) and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)/child abuse.

We have gathered dynamic presenters to share their robust expertise in addressing PCCP, IPV, and child abuse. Our faculty will help you elevate your practice by presenting best practices for court-involved mental health professionals, legal professionals, and judicial officers. You will learn about proper screenings/assessments, ethical and legal frameworks, and how to apply the best practices to your cases.

Join us to elevate your practice and interact with other professionals who are committed to helping Colorado families through some of the most difficult times in their lives.



The 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.

COAFCC 2025 Spring Conference & Annual Members' Meeting

Featuring:

Kathleen McNamara, PhD
Susannah Smith, PhD
Krista Nash, JD
Judge Kelley Southerland
Magistrate Cara Sweet

7.0 GENERAL CLE CREDITS
&
1.5 ETHICS CLE CREDITS
HAVE BEEN APPROVED

Register at

www.COAFCC.org

ABOUT THE PRESENTERS:



Kate McNamara is a licensed psychologist in private practice in Fort Collins, Colorado, specializing in counseling and forensic psychological services for court-involved families. She received her master's degree from Ohio State University and doctoral degree in Counseling Psychology from Penn State University. She has worked with high conflict families, including cases in which children who resist or refuse contact with a parent, for over 35 years. She has conducted hundreds of parenting evaluations, consults with attorneys and mental health professionals about complex issues in family law cases, and is a parenting coordinator, decision-maker, and family therapist. She was the reporter for the 2022 AFCC Guidelines for Parenting Plan Evaluations in Family Law Cases. Before devoting herself to full-time practice, she was a tenured Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology at Colorado

State University, where she was a teacher, researcher, and clinical supervisor for fourteen years. She is a past president of the Colorado Chapter of AFCC and currently serves as executive officer on the Board of Directors for AFCC. She is a past chair and former member of the Colorado Psychological Association Ethics Committee and serves on the Colorado Supreme Court Standing Committee on Family Issues. Dr. McNamara has authored numerous articles and book chapters and has presented on a variety of topics related to family psychology and family law.



Susannah Smith is a clinical and forensic psychologist, in full-time clinical practice for over 45 years. She is certified by the National Register of Healthcare Psychologists, with active licenses in Colorado and 5 other states. As a clinician, Susannah has extensive study in trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder; intimate partner violence; child physical and sexual abuse; forensic child interviewing; cognitive development; resist-refuse dynamics; attachment and bonding; parenting plans and overnights; relocation issues; gatekeeping; and family systems. She has conducted workshops on forensic evaluation best practices for child abuse and sexual abuse allegations, and spearheaded collaboration on these issues with local law enforcement, attorneys, Mental Health Clinics, and private practice mental health practitioners. Susannah has conducted Parenting

Responsibility Evaluations and Child and Family Investigations. She has conducted workshops on Domestic Violence and forensic evaluation of children. She cofounded Gulf Coast domestic violence shelter, and cofounded San Miguel Resource Center for victims of family violence. Susannah is a Board member of the Colorado Chapter of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts. She recently joined the Ouray County Sexual Abuse Response Team.



Krista Nash formed her own practice, Children First Family Law, after years of experience working in court settings and for a boutique matrimonial law firm, Krista Nash. As a key part of her practice, Krista advocates in the interests of children as a child's legal representative. She also has extensive experience in other child-centric roles, including having for years served as a child and family investigator (CFI), guardian *ad litem* (GAL), and Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteer. Krista represents spouses divorcing at all stages of life and serves in neutral roles as mediator, arbitrator, and parenting coordinator/decision maker in a wide array of family situations. Before focusing her career on legal advocacy, Krista was a Pulitzer-nominated journalist, and had a successful career in marketing and public relations. She received her BA from Northwestern University Medill

School of Journalism and her JD from the University of Denver Sturm College of Law.

ABOUT THE PRESENTERS:



Honorable Kelley R. Southerland serves as a district court judge in the 17th Judicial District. Judge Southerland was appointed in 2023. Prior to her appointment to district court, Judge Southerland served as juvenile and domestic relations magistrate in the 17th Judicial District. Judge Southerland has spent her legal career serving children and families as a GAL, CFI, CLR, mediator, PC/DM, and litigator. Judge Southerland is passionate about improving access to justice for self-represented litigants, peace for children in conflicted co-parenting dynamics, and improving wellness both in the courts and community.



Magistrate Cara Sweet was appointed as a District Court Magistrate in Jefferson County in March 2024 and currently handles a diversified docket including domestic relations, temporary and permanent civil protection orders, child support enforcement, paternity, truancy, juvenile delinquency/ detentions, and Prior to taking the bench, Magistrate Sweet served as an Assistant County Attorney in Jefferson County handling primarily Dependency and Neglect cases, as an attorney with the Attorney General's Office focusing on trial work in all aspects of civil law, and in the Arapahoe County District Attorney's office as a Senior Deputy District Attorney in the Special Victim's Unit. Magistrate Sweet has spent almost 15 years working directly with families in crisis. Over her career she has earned many awards for her commitment to working with victims of interfamilial violence and sexual violence, and her litigation skills. Magistrate Sweet has trained around the state and country on trial skills and issues affecting families in crisis, including most recently at the Family Law Institute 2024 conference on the topic of Cross Examination Skills.

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CONFERENCE INFORMATION

COAFCC Members save \$50.00 on conference registration rates!

This rate is only available to COAFCC members (To all others: Join AFCC and COAFCC today and get the same low rate!!) See registration details. Register online at www.coafcc.org or use the mail-in form.

Hotel Accommodations

The conference will be held at the newly renovated Sheraton Denver West, located at 360 Union Boulevard, Lakewood, CO. Please use the online reservation link below. Conference registrants can enjoy a special rate of \$119.00 per night. The last day to book at this rate is April 11, 2025. [Book your group rate for COAFCC Spring Conference](#)

Conference Materials

Materials for this conference will be delivered to you electronically a few days before the event at no additional charge. If you wish a hard copy in front of you during the program, please print them before you come.

Continuing Education Credits

COAFCC will provide a certificate of attendance, including **5.75 hours of educational contact**, at no charge. Mental health professionals will need to verify approval with their licensing or credentialing boards to meet any continuing education requirements. **7.0 General and 1.50 Ethics Continuing Legal Education Credits (CLJEs)** for Colorado attorneys have been approved.

Cancellation Policy

Transfer of registration 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 4, 2025** will be issued a full refund minus a \$35 administrative fee. No refunds will be issued for cancellations received after **April 4, 2025**. COAFCC reserves the right to cancel any training or substitute any presenter should circumstances arise that are beyond our control.

ELEVATE YOUR PRACTICE

Friday – April 25, 2025 | Morning Sessions

8:00-8:30 **Registration | Light Continental Breakfast**

8:30–8:45 **Welcome & Overview**

8:45-10:00 **Best Practices in Parent-Child Contact Problems | Part 1**

Kathleen McNamara, PhD

In this session, parent-child contact problems (PCCP) will be defined, and the numerous factors that influence parent-child dynamics will be presented. Best practices for accurately assessing allegations, and strategies for effective early management of PCCP cases by therapists, lawyers, and the court, will be outlined.

10:00-10:30 **A word from our sponsor | Soberlink
Break**

10:30–11:30 **Best Practices in Parent-Child Contact Problems | Part 2**

Kathleen McNamara, PhD

In this session, we will explore potential interventions for parent-child contact problems and examine the critical roles played by lawyers, including Child Legal Representatives (CLRs), Parenting Coordinators/Decision-Makers, and the Court in supporting effective therapeutic interventions. We will highlight best practices for court-involved therapy, including strategies for structuring interventions to maximize success, the importance of setting clear goals, and ways to secure family members' engagement. Additionally, we will discuss the numerous challenges that may arise and how to navigate them effectively.

11:30–12:30 **Best Practices in IPV/Child Abuse Screenings and Assessments (Virtual Presentation)**

Susannah Smith, PhD

Current and disturbing research reveals that a statistically significant number of vulnerable children are not being protected by the family law system, and are in fact being sent back into abusive and dangerous family environments. A very important part of the system is the child custody evaluator. In Colorado, that would be the Parenting Responsibility Evaluator (PRE) and the Child Family Investigator (CFI). It is our responsibility to understand essential aspects of evaluations to ensure that our work follows best practices models as opposed to going by one's "clinical impression" or "gut instinct." Specifically, the area of intimate partner violence that proves the most dangerous for children and the most difficult to evaluate successfully is one that involves coercive control. Research indicates that evaluators, along with other professionals throughout the system of family law and child protection (DHS, caseworkers, therapists, CLR's, GAL's, judges) are part of the problem in many cases. This training focuses on how the child custody evaluator can be part of the solution rather than part of the systemic problem. Best practices models are based on reliable and valid social science research, and are our guides in order to avoid falling into biases and misinformation pitfalls, and will be presented.

ELEVATE YOUR PRACTICE

Friday – April 25, 2025 | Afternoon Sessions

12:30–1:30 **Lunch | Provided**

1:30–2:00 **COAFCC Annual Members' Meeting & Elections**

2:00–3:15 **Best Practices in Court Cases Involving IPV, Child Abuse, and PCCP**

Hon. Kelley R. Southerland | 17th Judicial District

Magistrate Cara Sweet | 1st Judicial District

Judge Kelley Southerland and Magistrate Cara Sweet will discuss practices to implement the new Colorado statutory structures in cases involving domestic violence. The challenges of cases involving PCCP will be analyzed. Presenters will look to dialogue with practitioners about ways these issues can be addressed within the structure of the court system. Helpful professional approaches to support children and families through court-involved challenges will be presented, including ways to make the court a helpful part of the process without adding conflict.

3:15–3:45 **A word from our sponsor | Our Family Wizard
Break**

3:45–5:00 **Panel Presentation | Best Practices for Child Legal Representatives and Attorneys in Cases Involving IPV, Child Abuse, and PCCP**

Krista Nash, JD

Hon. Kelley Southerland

Magistrate Cara Sweet

Kathleen McNamara, PhD

This dynamic and multi-disciplinary panel will present best practices for court proceedings involving families who are affected by Intimate Partner Violence, Child Abuse, and Parent-Child Contact Problems by focusing on the legal and ethical best practices for Child Legal Representatives, attorneys representing parents, judicial officers, and others. The session will cover selected Colorado Rules of Professional Conduct, and the Colorado Code of Judicial Conduct, and other guidelines related to these issues. The session will also cover confidentiality, privilege, and professionalism as it relates to the role of the Child Legal Representative, attorneys, and judicial officers involved in these proceedings.

Ethics credits pending.

5:15 **Evaluations and Adjourn**

COAFCC Spring Conference 2025 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**.

****As a reminder, the Annual Member's Meeting and Elections will be held on Friday, April 25th from 1:30-2:00.**

Registration Fees:

COAFCC Member \$225

Nonmember \$275

Student \$50
(must use student email)

Colorado Judicial Officers
and Court Staff \$95
(must use judicial email)

Registration will remain open until April 18, 2025.

Name _____

Pronouns he/him she/her they/them prefer not to say

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Email (print clearly) _____

I require a CLE Affidavit: _____

I require a Certificate of Attendance: _____

Please check no more than two boxes that best describe you:

- Judicial Officer
- Lawyer
- Court Personnel
- Mediator
- CFI/PRE
- Mental Health Professional
- Student
- Therapist
- Parent Educator

Conference Scholarships A limited number of scholarships are available. The scholarship application can be found on the COAFCC website (www.COAFCC.org). Application deadline is **March 28, 2025**. Recipients will be notified in early April. If you have any questions, please contact the COAFCC Administrative Assistant, April Freier, at aprilfreier@hotmail.com

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