

FAMILY LAW SECTION CHILDREN'S ISSUES COMMITTEE

SUBMITTED BY: Dawn K. Gull

Re: 2007-2008 Family Law Section Children's Issues Committee

Dear Mr. Blaner:

This letter is in response to your recent correspondence seeking a written report on the Children's Issues Committee's activities and achievements for the year referenced above, as well as plans for the future (now current) year. I apologize that it has taken me this long to respond to your request.

The Children's Issues Committee is a sub-committee of the Family Law Section. Meetings are held monthly, September through June, on the third Tuesday of the month at 8 a.m. in the Academy Room, 9th Floor, City-County Building. Our meetings are held in a round table format, and focus on children in the court system, from psychological, judicial and practitioners' perspectives. Our group generally consists of adult and juvenile family law practitioners, adult and juvenile family law judges, psychologists (both private and court-appointed) and various court personnel from the Generations program, as well as juvenile court. Our goal is to identify issues and discuss issues regarding children in the court system, sometimes to find solutions to problems, but more often than not simply to educate our members as to what the issues are and different ways of dealing with them. Often there are no hard and fast solutions to the issues we discuss, and merely identifying and making all aware of the issues/problems leads to the finding of solutions for children on a case by case basis.

I have enclosed for your review our September 2007, January 2008 and September 2008 program notices, which contain all program topics and presenters for the 2007-2008 year, as well as the Fall of 2008. We are in the process of putting together the programs for the Spring of 2009.

Finally, please be advised that Kate Norton, Esquire now co-chairs the Pro Bono Committee, and my new co-chair on the Children's Issues Committee is Elisabeth Molnar, Esquire, with Raphael Ramsden and Behers.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. If I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Very truly yours,
Dawn K. Gull

ACBA Family Law Section
CHILDREN'S ISSUES SUB-COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: **TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2007**
Meeting Time: **8:00 a.m.**
Meeting Location: **Academy Room,
ACBA Conference Center,
9th Floor City County Building**
Co-Chairs: Katherine L.W. Norton & Dawn K. Gull

AGENDA: **Treating Children Trumatized by Domestic Violence.** - by Judy Cohen, M.D., Medical Director, Center for Traumatic Stress in Children & Adolescents, Allegheny General Hospital

Fall's Programs:

October 16, 2007 - *Guardian ad Litem Primer*: When, where, how and what. Discussion led by David J. Slesnick, Esquire

November 20, 2007 - *Police Department Perspective on Custody Orders*. An exploration of how to get them enforced and other issues. Discussion led by C. Kurt Mulzet, Esquire

December 18, 2007 - *The Contact Question* - Is more contact the the previously uninvolved or absent parent always better? A discussion of the factors to be considered by therapists, counsel and the Court. Discussion led by Dr. Robert M. Wilson.

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ACBA Family Law Section
CHILDREN'S ISSUES SUB-COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: **TUESDAY January 15, 2008**
Meeting Time: **8:00 a.m.**
Meeting Location: **Academy Room,
ACBA Conference Center,
9th Floor City County Building**
Co-Chairs: Katherine L. W. Norton & Dawn K. Gull

AGENDA: **You Call it Madness (But I Call it Love)** - The use and/or overuse of psychological evaluations in custody litigation. Discussion into how it impacts the child and the process, the possible alternatives, and what the judges do and don't like about having the reports. Discussion led by Dawn K. Gull, Esquire, with Judge Alan Hertzberg and Dr. Eric Bernstein.
Spring's Programs:

February 19, 2008 - Sleeping Single in a Double Bed. Custody relief when the parties live under the same roof. Is it possible, what is possible, and what remedies are available. Discussion led by Kristin Humphrey, Esquire with Judge Kim D. Eaton.

March 18, 2008 - Very Special Love. A discussion of the unique challenges of special needs children. Featuring Lilian Aiken, Esquire, counsel for CYF and Judge Kathleen Mulligan. Discussion led by Clare Homer, Esquire.

April 15, 2008 - Love is a Battlefield. Preparing the Evaluator for Trial. All evaluators and psychologists are encouraged to attend and participate in this session. Discussion led by Kate Norton, Esquire.

May 20, 2008 - It's My Party and I'll Cry if I Want To - Custody litigation with the older teen. When, if ever, is involvement in the process advisable; the teen who aligns with one parent; the teen who refuses to participate in court-ordered custody; and other sticky topics. Discussion with a judge's perspective and Dr. Bruce Chambers.

June 17, 2008 - Brainstorming Breakfast Party! Our fifth annual - bring your ideas and your appetite!

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ACBA Family Law Section
CHILDREN'S ISSUES SUB-COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: **TUESDAY September 16, 2008**
Meeting Time: **8:00 a.m.**
Meeting Location: **Academy Room,
ACBA Conference Center,
9th Floor City County Building**
Co-Chairs: Elisabeth Molnar & Dawn K. Gull

AGENDA: **Anatomy of an Evaluation.** Independent mental health professionals' perspectives on critiquing custody evaluations and reports performed by court-appointed evaluators.. Discussion led by Mary Sue Ramsden, Esq. and Dr. Stephen P. Schachner, Ph.D.

Fall's Programs:

October 21: The Usual Suspects. A discussion of the litigant who uses the custody litigation system to abuse the other parent, how policies and procedures can be used to deter such behavior and what policies might still be needed. Discussion with Amy Ross and Judge Beth Lazarra.

November 18: The Tale of Two Divisions. Questions and answers by Judges, administration and practitioners regarding the intersection between the Juvenile and Adult Family Divisions in Allegheny County. Discussion led by Judge Alan Hertzberg, Judge Dwayne Woodruff, Mark Greenblatt, Esq. and Elisabeth Molnar, Esq. (moderator).

December 16: Legal Custody Nightmares. A discussion of legal custody issues with a seriously or terminally ill child when the parties cannot agree how or whether to treat. Who makes treatment decisions - parents, parties having custody, CYF? Discussion led by Kathy Miehl, Esq. with Judge Kim Clark, and Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh's General Counsel.

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