

Minnesota Association of
Custody Resolution Specialists
PO Box 127
Chanhassen, MN 55317-0127

MACRS FALL TRAINING – OCTOBER 27th 2006

MACRS is pleased to present the tenth annual Advanced Topics in Dispute Resolution training on Friday, October 27th at the Continuing Education and Conference Center in St. Paul. This program is designed specifically to meet the criteria for the six (6) hours of advanced skills training required by ADR – Rule 114. We are also applying for CLEs and CEUs.

This year's training includes a three hour presentation by Sandra K. Hewitt, PhD, L.P., clinician and author of the book, Assessing Allegations of Sexual Abuse in Preschool Children: Understanding Small Voices. Dr. Hewitt will be focusing on multiple child sexual abuse allegations. A one hour panel discussion on the application of multiple allegations to Family Court cases will follow. The panel of experts will include the Honorable Theresa R. Warner, District Court Judge in Ramsey County, Second Judicial District; Lisa Hill, Attorney with Southern MN Regional Legal Services; Kay Kraus, Attorney, former Guardian *ad Litem* supervisor in Hennepin County and current Parenting Consultant, and Custody Evaluator; and Eric Thompson, Guardian *ad Litem*, Custody Evaluator and Parenting Time Expeditor.

The final two hours will be devoted to sorting out the confusion associated with the new law (MN Statute, section 257.55) regarding parental relocation that went into effect on August 1, 2006 and changes in child support rules that will be effective January 1, 2007. Lisa Hill and Dana Mitchell, Ramsey County Assistant Attorney in the Child Support Enforcement Division, will discuss how the change of standard for move aways and the new child support rules may impact physical custody decisions.

If you have questions regarding registrations, contact Carol Breimhorst at 507-332-5972; cbreimhorst@co.rice.mn.us or on our MACRS web site at www.macronline.org where you can download the brochure.



MACRS BULLETION BOARD

A Minnesota network for training and information exchange in child custody resolution. On the Internet at www.macronline.org.



The Bulletin Board is published quarterly for member and friends of MACRS. Requests for information about MACRS, membership dues and other business items, etc. should be sent to: MACRS, PO Box 127, Chanhassen, MN 55317-0127 or may be emailed to : braddawson@co.todd.mn.us.

The MACRS Board for 2006 is as follows and reflects some changes from past years. The following is a list of current members along with a little information about the new members. Please feel free to contact any member with questions or ideas regarding MACRS. We also invite you to submit articles for the newsletter by calling or emailing us. We appreciate any and all ideas and contributions for the newsletter.

MACRS 2006 Board Members:

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|-------------------------------------|--------------|--|
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*Meet the New Board Members:

Judy Carr

Judy Carr works as a Guardian ad Litem for the 7th Judicial District. Judy also works as an Independent Custody Evaluator in Todd & Wadena County, conducting child custody and parenting time evaluations.

Judy earned her Bachelor of Science Degree in Social Work from Bemidji State University, in Bemidji, MN. Judy facilitated the 1st and 2nd Annual Child Abuse Prevention Awareness Conference -

held in Wadena, MN. Judy currently serves on the Wadena County Child Abuse Prevention Council, Children's Justice Initiative Committee, Methamphetamine Task Force, Wadena County Crisis and Referral Program Board of Directors, Verndale PEP Club Parent Advisory Committee and is a member of the Wadena County Mounted Sheriff's Posse.

Judy resides in Verndale, MN with her husband Mike and three daughters, Jennifer (13), Jacqueline (11), and Jordan (7).

Kay Kraus

Kay currently works at Child Centered Custody and Parenting time with Jean Peterson, working with parents, conducting mediations, evaluations and consulting in the Family Court arena. Their office is located in Edina, MN.

Kay was a psychiatric nurse, working with children, adolescents and their parents, focusing on mental health and chemical dependency issues for several years prior to attending Wm Mitchell College of Law. She then practiced law primarily in Family Court for several years. She was then coordinator for the Hennepin County Family Court program until November, 2005. The program grew considerably (from 4 Guardians ad Litem to over 16) while she was coordinator. She continues to focus her time on child centered pursuits. Kay lives in Brooklyn Park, with her husband of many, many years and has three wonderful grown sons she is very proud of: Nick, Tom and Tim.

Eric Thompson

Eric Thompson works at Conflict Management & Resolution in Rochester, MN. Eric provides parenting time expeditor and consultant services; additionally, Eric performs child custody and parenting time evaluations.

Eric earned his Bachelor of Arts (History/Philosophy) and Juris Doctorate degrees from Hamline University in St. Paul, MN. In addition to his work at Conflict Management & Resolution, Eric works full-time for the Dodge County Family Services Collaborative and part-time as a Guardian ad Litem in the Third Judicial District.

Eric resides on a farm in the Rochester area with his wife Shannan and daughter Saige. Most of Eric's services are provided at an hourly rate of \$150.00, although some services require a flat fee. Please contact our office for more information or to schedule an appointment.

Solomon's Surrogates Training Held

Solomon's Surrogates, a 4 day training in the basics of how to complete child custody evaluations, was held in the Radisson Inn, St. Cloud, MN from May 1st through May 4th.

The 21 people who attended Solomon's came from a variety of backgrounds so everyone was rewarded with stimulating discussion and shared worthwhile ideas. The evening spent in case consulting gave everybody time to get to know each better. We are looking forward to working together in the future.

A new date for the next Solomon's Surrogates has not yet been determined.

Survey Results In

The MACRS board recently surveyed training participants for their opinions on completing child custody evaluations. The most common response to the question, "What is the hardest part of doing a custody evaluation?", was finding what is in the best interests of the children. Responses also included "finding out the truth" and "struggling with the he said, she said scenario." A question brought forth was, "What if both parents seemed to be good parents and there is no determining factor for which parent the child should be with"? The reverse question was also asked, "What if neither parent seemed to be a fit parent, should one choose the lesser of the two bad parents"? Many important issues were raised and it was clear that performing custody evaluations can take quite a toll on the evaluators. On the other side, some felt the most difficult part of the evaluation was the paper work and deciding what factors should be written about in depth versus which factors should be less relevant.

In response to the question, "What are your biases?" many respondents indicated that their biases are looking into the best interests of children. One respondent indicated that 'women thinking that men are clueless about raising infant' was a bias for them. Another indicated that 'sole custody of an infant to a dad' was their bias. Another participant answered this question with, "On what day?" This answer is amusing but also brings home the point that depending on the parents that we are evaluating, our biases change or reflect differently. While clearly it is important to remain neutral when we begin a custody evaluation, it is natural to have a clear opinion or bias by the time we have completed our evaluation.

In asking about how culture has affected their custody evaluation, many respondents indicated that they had only dealt with families that had cultures similar to their own; not completely surprising for those of us in central and northern Minnesota. Other respondents felt that lower income clients and some people of color have cultures that conflict with their own. One respondent had a Vietnamese parent who slept with the younger children and had all of the children in this same bedroom. This family had lived in the midst of war and the custom was for everyone to sleep together for safety and protection, for a quick escape in the middle of the night, if necessary. Wow! Being culturally aware and noticing the importance of keeping one's cultural traits was recognized as an important issue by many participants.

The question, "What is the strangest thing you've been accused of by a client?" brought forth several interesting responses. Here are some of them:

- "Taking his side because he looks cute in a suit and tie" (This was prior to making their recommendation)
- "Being prejudice of a black person who initially denied being black"
- "Having a tape recorder attached to the underside of my desk to record our conversations"
- "Sexual abuse"
- "Not listening to the dad's plan and giving him too much parenting time"

The most popular accusation was that of being biased. One participant indicated that their superior received two complaints about her within 24 hours. One complainant indicating that she was biased against mothers and the other complainant indicating that she was biased against fathers. Clearly, she must have been doing something right!

Conducting child custody evaluations is a difficult but extremely important job. The MACRS Board would like to thank all of you for your courage and compassion in this very important work!

Special thanks go out to all of you who participated in this survey!

The June 2006 MACRS' sponsored 40-hour training yielded almost universal high marks for quality. We hope to present mediation training again, perhaps in the fall of 2007, so watch the MACRS website for information.