

**From:** Peggie Ward, Ph.D. <peggieward@comcast.net>  
**To:** E. Donnelly <Donnelly\_e@jud.state.ma.us>  
**Cc:** sullydoc@aol.com; Karen Henell <khenell@verizon.net>  
**Subject:** Fwd: Vancouver Conference  
**Date:** Wed, 3 Oct 2007 9:41 am

Dear Judge Donnelly - Paula Carey has suggested that you might be interested in the topic (below). Matt Sullivan and I are putting in a proposal for the Vancouver AFCC National Conference in May 2008. I didn't know if 1. You were planning on attending or 2. If you would be interested in attending and presenting on the topic below. We are in a pressured time situation, as I have just returned from Italy. If you are interested, that would be terrific. If not, I am also copying Karen Henell to see if she has any thoughts about another thoughtful and well spoken judge. Peggie Ward

**From:** Peggie Ward, Ph.D. [<mailto:peggieward@comcast.net>]  
**Sent:** Saturday, September 22, 2007 6:03 AM  
**To:** [sullydoc@aol.com](mailto:sullydoc@aol.com)  
**Cc:** Peter Salem; Paula M. Carey  
**Subject:** Vancouver Conference

Hello Matt (Paula - I am sending this to you for your thoughts as to who may be an interested and thoughtful judge) : I am emailing from a train going to Florence. Hopefully I will have internet access when I get to the hotel. Paula has written that now that she is Chief Justice for the MA Probate and Family Court - she cannot leave so soon after starting such a major position. She is interested in the topic so I copy her for possible suggestions after the outline becomes clear. Please comment and / or change what you would like).

I think we need a judge who has carefully thought out (or even two judges - MA and CA?) how the voice of the child gets presented to the Court. Obviously most (altho' some do) judges don't interview children - it is not their background and training. Beyond this we need someone who can entertain the notion that what children say may not be what they really want, what is best for them and further may not be their own thoughts (or even memories) .

As An outline- I would suggest we cover the following topics:

Do You Hear What I Hear: Complexities of Voices of Children in Separation and Divorce

- A. Current Status of 30 years of research: The Voices of Children
1. Empirical retrospective studies (Ahrons, Marquadt others)
  2. Diaries capturing the voices of children (there are at least 3 books - I have them at

home - lots of important points - I don't know (if Emery's book goes in here)

B. The Players: Who captures the voices of the children

1. Attorney for the child - what voice do they capture (i.e. spokesperson for the child)
2. GAL/ Custody Evaluation - which voice is heard here and how does a CCE weight this voice
3. Parenting Coordinator - how is the voice of the child heard - different practices
4. Therapists
  - a. family
  - b. individual - pitfalls and problems
5. The attorneys of Parents - NOT their job
6. The Court

(Examples in each arena)

C. Cacophony of Voices: What we hear and is it the same from each source?

1. If not the same - how weigh or balance
2. What are the competing standards - best for child, best interests of child, best interests of family system, best interest of parent
3. Importance of boundaries in determining when the Court is asking for the child's voice

D. The complexity of Reunification Voices

1. Whose voice is coming from child's mouth
2. What memories is this voice based on?
3. Can memory be altered?
4. If yes, under what circumstances and by whom
5. Developmental significance of the differing voices - at what age is memory most vulnerable, at what age can a child understand two viewpoints and have a "converged" voice, at what point does the child's voice (and feet) carry the day

E. Dealing with the complexities

1. As a GAL/CCE, PC, Therapist

F. The Critical Role of the Court

1. How would a judge like to receive information
2. What can/does a judge do with this information?
3. Case management for the reunification cases
  - a. Separate abuse from continuum of alienation, role reversal and poor parenting
  - b. Is a referral for skilled rapid assessment and family TX always indication?

I will try to to send this out and access the Call for Presenters as well - so I can actually fill out the proper form. I know this is a very tight schedule to get this in - particularly as I am not in the US until the 4th. I do think it is exactly the right time - as we have so many retrospectives of voices - to start this conversation. I think reunification ties the questions together - and we each have so much information in the reunification arena. Let me know if you have thoughts about judges. I am sending this to Paula Carey as well - even though I know she can't do it - she may have some other thoughts.

Peggie

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