

ALBERTA FAMILY MEDIATION SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Edition 11: November 2005

Special points of interest:

- We welcome your input about the newsletters and encourage you to submit articles and features

Interview with Marie Gordon

This interview with Marie Gordon was to discuss the report "Spousal Support Guidelines for Dummies" that she authored in January 2005. In discussing the title of this very interesting report, Marie made note that when it comes to spousal support, we can all be dummies with this very complex topic. In January 2005, the Spousal Support Guidelines were formally released through a process of review and consultations. Based on the feedback received through the reviews, it is likely that we can expect that there will be revisions to the document and guidelines.

Marie Gordon states that it has been an exciting endeavour to be

a part of this process and she added that in Canada we have the luxury of being able to develop spousal support guidelines that operate under the framework of the divorce law whereas in the United States the guidelines are driven by each county.

The Spousal Support Guidelines are exactly that- guidelines. They won't be mandatory or required by law and will remain guidelines or a tool to assist in the decisions of spousal support.

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Lunch and Learn Sessions

The location is always the Edmonton City Hall in the Heritage Room. Doors open at 11:30 a.m. and the presentations run from noon until 1:00 p.m. There is a question period and mixer beginning at 1:00 to 1:30. This is a great venue to learn, share information and network with colleagues (all over a lunch break).

Lunch and Learn sessions are a great way to network, learn and connect with colleagues all at once.

**Next Lunch & Learn:
December 7/05**

See Page 5 for details

There is no cost and you just need to bring your own lunch.

These sessions have been held now for several years.



Lunch and Learn

What type of calls come into the AFMS office?

Sue Bedier, AFMS Executive Assistant reports that the AFMS phone can be quite busy and that many of the calls that come into the office are actually hang ups because the information provided on the voice mail message provides callers with a great deal of information they are requesting. Many calls are specific to where to find information (e.g. website mediator listing) and the majority of calls are from mediators/potential mediators inquiring about membership, opportunities in the field, where to purchase insurance, what to charge for services, training needed and how to get started in the profession. Watch for more information about AFMS in the next newsletter. Thank you Sue for the support you provide to the organization and callers.

**AFMS Spring
Conference: April
20 and 21/06 at the
Chateau Louis
Hotel– Edmonton,
AB**

**Presenters:
Gerald Monk and
John Winslade**

***We look forward to
seeing you there.***

From the newsletter Editor– Charmaine Hammond

As fall sets in, we begin our planning for the 2006 AFMS Newsletters. Over the past few months, we have had enough news, information, book reviews and events to provide you with a monthly newsletter. It is our hope to continue

the newsletters monthly as a way of staying connected. Please feel free to let me know topics of interest, upcoming events, your favorite links and resources, and any book reviews you would like to share with your colleagues. I also invite you to be interviewed to share what is hap-

pening in your community and area of practice. I can be reached at 780-464-3828 (phone) or email: hammond@hammondgroup.biz



Different Perspectives on Helping Families Through Festive Seasons

In an article by Ann Byle regarding Jen Abbas book "Generation EX: adult children of divorce and the healing our pain", we learn that we often think that the holiday season is difficult for young children of divorce however, Abbas indicates that the holiday season can also be very difficult for adult children of divorce. Some of the strategies she recommends include:

- Keep your expectations realistic and reasonable.
- Accept there will likely be tension and it may be difficult for you to schedule time with both parents (e.g. due to geography).
- Build a support system
- Manage the triggers- songs, traditions, etc. can bring you

back to your past, being aware of the triggers (that produce fond and unhappy memories) will help with coping .

The Better Health Channel (www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au) suggests that while the holiday season is a time of joy and festivities for many people, the spirit can be undermined by: financial pressures, isolation, family tensions, managing family change and loss and other challenges. Some of the tips they have to help families cope with the holidays include:

- Shop and plan for Christmas over a longer period of time so that it is not compressed into a short time that can often feel overwhelming.

- Maintain realistic expectations (don't set yourself up for disappointment).
- Plan activities for the family to have more time for constructive activities and less time for stress and tension build ups.
- Include children in the planning of activities
- Avoid trying to recreate special occasions and holidays of the past, instead, create new traditions and experiences.
- Reach out a helping hand to others during the holiday season, provide opportunities for your family to volunteer or help a charity in some way.

Elder Mediation

In an article by Patricia Ruffin and Patricia Bertschier (2004), they advise that Elder Mediation (EM) is growing in its popularity and use, especially in the health care systems. Elder Mediation involves family members and the involved professionals meeting with a mediator to discuss differences on issues to do with estates, end of life decisions, care giver schedules, to name a few issues. The aging parent is involved in the discussion and resolutions. Elder mediation is also helpful in situations where the adult children are becoming burned out by long standing health or emotional issues of the parent. John Dugan and Arline Kardasis (2004) state that the three major life changes that are most frequently discussed in mediation are housing changes, loss of financial control and family finances. Sometimes elder mediation is more about providing a safe and respectful environment for a family in crisis to have constructive discussions. In other situations it involves a team of professionals and the family to discuss the best options for an ill or aging parent.

Membership Categories with AFMS

Registered Family Mediator (RFM) specializing in separation/divorce mediation.

Registered Family Mediator (RFM) specializing in General Family Mediation.

Registered Family Mediator (RFM) specializing in Family Business Mediation.

Practicing Mediator (designation for those who are continuing to gain mediation experience or for whom mediation is a small part of their practice.

General Member
Student Member

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Alberta *family* Mediation Society

*Advancing the practice of
family mediation.*

*We're on the web—
look us up!*

About AFMS

Established in 1984,
the non-profit
society provides
services to family
mediators.

The organization has a
part time administrative
assistant and is managed
by a volunteer board of
directors, with
representatives across the
province.

The society is dedicated to
both professional and public
education regarding family
mediation.

“You can complain because
roses have thorns, or you can
rejoice because thorns have
roses.”
By Ziggy

“Once we realize that im-
perfect understanding is
the human condition, there
is no shame in being
wrong, only in failing to
correct our mistakes.”
By George Soros

“Effective communication
between parties is all but
impossible if each plays to
the gallery”

Roger Fisher and William
Ury

ONCE AGAIN, MARK YOUR CALENDARS
ALBERTA FAMILY MEDIATION SOCIETY
PRESENTS
A NEW SERIES OF
LUNCH AND LEARN SESSIONS
In Co-operation with
Mediation and Restorative Justice Centre
(NO COST / BRING YOUR LUNCH)

PLACE:
TIME:

EDMONTON CITY HALL, HERITAGE ROOM
11:30 AM (doors open) to 1:30 PM
(Presentation begins at noon to 1:00 PM.)

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 7

Leo Campos A. and Luis R. Garay
of The Community Network
Immigrant Men Advocacy Network
Phase two: "Health and Wellness for Immigrant Men"

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 11

Rob Papin and Derrick Powder
Showing of film "Gang Aftermath"
(ex-gang members open to any questions and/or information about their program)

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 12

Brad Kring (Legal Counsel and Senior Program Coordinator of the Family Law Information Centre)
An overview of the New Family Law Act

WEDNESDAY, MAY 10

Dianne Dalley (Project Coordinator with MRJC)
An Overview of Research Project: Assessing Domestic Violence and the Dynamics of Restorative Justice Mediation

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 7

Gordon Andreiuk (Lawyer with Laurier Law Office)
Summary, insights, funny stories of
"Changes in Retroactive Child Support"

Contact: Barbara Bishop at Barbara.Bishop@gov.ab.ca or Sue Bedier at info@afms.ca
Visit our website: www.afms.ca

News, Upcoming Events and Other Information

- **Family Justice Services and Family Law Act brochures** are now available on the AFMS Website

Diverse Voices is presenting a conference on December 4, 5, and 6, 2005 (in Edmonton) that considers the impact of Family Violence across generations, from various multicultural perspectives as well as in the workplace and the health care systems. There are several keynote speakers that will discuss:

- the impacts of family violence on children
- working with abusers
- impact of family violence on the workplace
- and much more

Registrations can be found at www.diverse-voices.com

AFMS Annual Conference– April 20 & 21, 2006 (Chateau Louis Hotel, Edmonton)
Watch upcoming newsletters for details. The conference is a collaborative effort of AFMS and the Collaborative Law Lawyers Association. The featured speakers are Gerald Monk and John Winslade.

Continued: Interview with Marie Gordon

Many mediators report that there are challenges with mediating cases that involve spousal support. Many find that spousal support is often the last discussion item but it can be the most decisive and flammable issue. Often the parents feel like a tremendous amount of progress and collaboration was reached on the parenting plan and future parenting issues and the discussions of spousal support often create a barrier in the collaboration. Often the discussions seem to put the parties back into adversarial roles whereby there are notions of blame, fault, and they question each other's efforts and contributions in the marriage as they attempt to come up with a fair amount.

Marie Gordon referred to the writings of Mr. Craig Martin who stated that without guides, reference points and starting points, there is a higher chance of pitting the risk adverse and risk friendly people apart. The decisions on spousal support are often looked at in this way by the parties: if he gives more for spousal support it is a loss for him and a bonus for her.

Spousal support is often easier to deal with in higher income cases and lower income cases (where possible support is often not determined), however it is the middle income range that is a challenge. The guidelines will serve as providing a range for parents to start their discussions.

NOTE: If you would like to access the January 2005 document titled:
Spousal Support Advisory Guidelines: A Draft Proposal,
it can be accessed at:

<http://www.justice.gc.ca/en/dept/pub/spousal/project/index.html>