



Texas Association of  
Domestic Relations Offices

# Newsletter

Volume 1, Issue 2

Fall 2008

## TADRO 2008 Conference October 20<sup>th</sup> thru October 22<sup>nd</sup> Abilene, TX



Visit [www.tadro.org](http://www.tadro.org) for details

**Saddle up, strap on your spurs, and hold on tight because TADRO 2008 Conference is just around the corner in the “Texas Frontier” town of Abilene!**



## THINGS TO DO IN ABILENE!

**By Shanna Smith**  
**Heritage Tourism and Special Projects Coordinator**  
**Abilene Convention and Visitors Bureau**

Perhaps Texas Highways describes Abilene's true character; "Fort Worth may be where the west begins, but Abilene is where it's in full gallop. Spend a few days in Texas' other "Cowtown," and it'll sink in that this is one of the last places where True West flavor truly resides."

Abilene's civic progressiveness has given it a number of cultural and entertainment attractions in excess of what would be expected for a city of 120,000. Three private universities call it home, as does Dyess Air Force Base. The downtown area is undergoing a renaissance with the steady growth of shopping, dining and attractions. But Abilene hasn't lost its frontier soul. Thanks to modern technology, it's possible to relive those early days.

**Frontier Texas!** allows visitors to meet – at least figuratively – some of the real people who lived and died on the Texas frontier between 1780 and 1880. Using first person narratives, the Welcome Theater gives you a holographic introduction to "Spirit Guides" historical figures – Native Americans, buffalo hunters, soldiers and settlers. A full-surround visual thrill ride will enable you to feel first-hand the terror of a prairie wolf attack, the chaos of a buffalo stampede and the magic of fireflies flitting around your head.

The **Paramount Theatre** is a fully restored art deco movie theatre featuring a ceiling with slow drifting clouds and twinkling stars. The theatre shows classic films on weekends and hosts art films, plays, and concerts throughout the year.

**The Grace Museum**, a beautifully restored 1909 hotel, houses three museums. The Historical Museum displays the history of the founding of Abilene; the interactive Children's Museum is great for children of all ages and the Art Museum proudly rotates world class exhibits. *Grace Notes*, an interactive sculpture created by artist and musician Edward Weiss, is a life-size artwork of colors, shapes and sounds designed for noise, fun and plenty of hands-on play. The *Mallouf Boot Shop* is a permanent exhibit that highlights the unique craft of custom cowboy boots. This shop features original equipment, handmade tools, many types of leather, the shop's original cash register, and *Mallouf* boots.

**The National Center for Children's Illustrated Literature** is the only one of its kind in the nation. The NCCIL designs educational programming that relates to illustrations in children's literature in order to stimulate creativity, promote literacy and to increase appreciation for art.

**Buffalo Gap Historic Village** preserves the heritage of the Texas Frontier by telling the story of the last 50 years of frontier life. It also contains the bookstore for the Texas State House Press. The Village is a collection of 21 refurbished vintage buildings from the area and structures contain premier collections of artifacts, weapons and historic maps.

The military influence began with **Fort Phantom Hill**, an 1851 Army post and continues today with **Dyess Air Force Base**. Dyess houses an Air Combat Command wing with three B-1 Bomber and two C-130 Squadrons. **12<sup>th</sup> Armored Division Memorial Museum** houses the Division's historical collection and serves as a teaching museum. The **Atlas Missile Base** offers a unique look at the 60's military movement.

**Abilene Zoo and Discovery Center:** The entire family will enjoy this award winning zoo. The 13-acre complex compares habitats of the American Southwest with similar regions of Africa. The complex is filled with 202 species of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates. The Zoo features a wetlands boardwalk, black rhinos, and the Creepy Crawler Center.

**The World Largest Wind Ranch** is located in the Abilene area. Texas is the No. 1 wind producer in the US and generates enough to power more than 600,000 average-sized homes per year. Being free and thus unaffected by market prices, wind power is the fastest growing source of electricity in the world. And unlike other alternative energy sources, it's clean, renewable and without waste.

**Western Artisans:** Leather artisan, **Art Reed** has been making custom saddles, chaps, and belts for 44 years and is happy to visit with groups about his trade. Local boot makers include **James Leddy Boots and Bell Custom Made Boots**. The shops are in clear view and the family always is hospitably willing to take guests around to see the whole boot-making process. **5-D Custom Hats and Leather** welcome guests to view the art of hat making.

**Texas Size Events:** Only in Abilene will you find the premier Ranch Rodeo. Real cowboys doing what every day cowboys do can be experienced the 2<sup>nd</sup> weekend in May at the **Western Heritage Classic**.

Abilene Convention and Visitors Bureau  
1101 N. 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Abilene, TX 79601  
800.727.7704  
[www.abilenevisitors.com](http://www.abilenevisitors.com)  
email: visitors@abilene.com

#### President's Message

Cecelia Burke

Director, Travis County Domestic Relations Office

Welcome to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Texas Association of Domestic Relations Office (TADRO) Newsletter. The focus of this issue is Family Court Services. While all of our work is critical for children and families, nothing touches families so deeply as the work of Family Court Services. Custody evaluations and adoption social studies are the most difficult work we do and has the potential for long term change in parenting behaviors. Therefore, we honor in this issue all of the DRO folks that do this work and thank them for their passion, competency and professionalism. Special thanks to Trevor Townes, Jeremy Pedigo and Judy Branham for their work on this newsletter.

The 2008 TADRO Conference, October 20<sup>th</sup> through the 22<sup>nd</sup>, is in Abilene, Texas – The Friendly Frontier. It is shaping up to be a both an informative and worthwhile conference but a really fun one also. Pat Stafford, Director of the Taylor County Domestic Relations Office, her staff and it seems just about everyone in Taylor County, is working hard to make sure this is the one of the best ever. We have an excellent conference committee and they deserve our thanks: **Pat Stafford, Cecelia Burke, Rita Ruelas, Mark Ashworth, Trevor Townes, Tony Neugebauer, Etta Warman, Flor Galvan, Gwen Green, Gene Valentini, Ouisa Davis, Patricia Sessom, Ginnie Kirkland, Donna Larson and Laura Ramos**. When you see them at the conference please thank them for their hard work.

Work is in progress to prepare for the upcoming legislative session. TADRO has a small but significant potential agenda for 2009. Some of the issues that will be considered include: deny name change until child support verified; eliminate child affidavit of choice; make it mandatory that a capias be issued for failure to appear; have social study evaluators included in the 107.009 "Immunity" provision and address the difficulty in obtaining local police department records in custody evaluations. The Legislative Committee and the Board of Directors will be working with these recommendations this summer to fine tune our potential legislative program. At the conference in Abilene, we will hear from the Family Bar Foundation and the Texas Attorney General, Child Support Division about their legislative programs. It is always interesting.

See y'all in Abilene!!!!



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# FEATURE ARTICLE

## **“An Experimental Program for Family Court Services that Works”**

**By Mark Ashworth, LCSW, LMFT;  
Family Court Services Manager, Travis County DRO**

As you are probably aware by now, we do things a bit differently at Family Court Services in Travis County, similar to our sister DRO in El Paso and in sharp contrast to the majority of our counterparts statewide.

To begin with, our staff members are appointed to represent children in suits affecting the parent child relationship as Guardians Ad Litem rather than as an investigator or caseworker, which is the case in most other jurisdictions that have similar programs. The role of GAL which emerged in Texas in the early 1970's became a fixture in the first rendition of the Texas Family Code. This role just seemed to be a good fit from the beginning in the family law community in Austin. Judges and attorneys were drawn to the idea of a trained child advocate being involved at a nuts and bolts level in the resolution of family law matters.

Our Guardians do all the typical activities to investigate these types of lawsuits such as home visits, interviews of all relevant individuals, professional referrals, review of documents, report writing etc. In addition to these activities we have the ability and the duty to attend each court hearing and give our testimony so the court is provided a child advocacy prospective. We can also set hearings on our own motion when we become aware that important information needs to be given to the court, which in many cases seems to help move a moribund case along.

In the year 2000, Sue Sheppard, a particularly forward looking associate judge collaborated with our office to devise a plan that would expedite cases that were appearing on the “Protective Order Docket”. Her vision was to secure funding that would allow us to hire a Guardian Ad Litem that would be utilized exclusively by the judge in charge of the civil protective orders.

Family Court Services successfully received grant funding through CAPCOG that enabled us to hire a new staff member that would be totally dedicated to serving this discrete population of clients.

We felt that it would be beneficial for all concerned to have one GAL that would specialize in dealing with the complexities faced by families who were experiencing domestic violence issues. The judge carefully selects cases that will be assigned to the protective order Guardian Ad Litem, especially looking out for cases in which a child may need some period of supervised contact with an alleged perpetrator. This GAL carefully monitors the child's progress in counseling if that is necessary, as well as how the child is responding to contact with this parent. The intent is to facilitate and strengthen this relationship and to ensure that children and parents do not languish in unnecessarily restrictive circumstances.

Intermittently during the six years this program has been in existence, the protective order GAL has been involved in studying rates of depression, suicidal ideation, drug abuse and poor school performance among children exposed to family violence. During one period of time our program helped supply crucial data to Dr. George Holden of the University of Texas who was conducting research concerning family violence.

The protective order GAL has also been at the forefront of engaging in dialogue with the family violence community regarding the wishes of families who have experienced family violence and in some cases are strongly desirous of maintaining their family unity rather than dissolution. This long ignored attitude amongst these families in some cases has been in diametric opposition to the prevailing concepts of family violence. It has been refreshing and intellectually stimulating to be a part of this shift in consciousness where children's needs are a priority and alternative interventions are available to families on a case by case basis.

We believe that our experimental program has become a resounding success. Last year the program went from relying at least on partial grant funding to receiving 100% of it's subsidy from Travis County. The program has been successful for several reasons. The judge involved is open to direct communication between herself the GAL and the FCS Manager to make policy modifications when necessary. A good working relationship tends to emerge when the judge and the GAL work together on a daily basis and therefore become accustomed to one another's modus operandi.

Of course the main reason for the success that we have experienced is the unwavering fortitude, creativity and intellectual curiosity exhibited by Ms. Sandra Aguilar who currently serves as our protective order Guardian Ad Litem.

## **ACCESS FACILITATION: TARRANT COUNTY'S VERSION OF THE PARENTING COORDINATOR**

**By Rocky Deutscher**  
**Access Facilitator, Tarrant County DRO**

In November, 2000, almost five years before Texas' Parenting Coordinator statute (153.601 – 611 of the Family Code) became effective, Judge Debra Lehrmann introduced Access Facilitation in the 360<sup>th</sup> Family District Court of Tarrant County by assigning a Family Court Services caseworker as the access facilitator to meet with litigants prior to the first hearing in any case involving conservatorship, possession, or access of children. Within a year Access Facilitation was introduced into the other five Tarrant County Family District Courts.

Currently, there are three Family Court Services caseworkers who work full-time as access facilitators assigned to the six Family District Courts and each of their six Associate District Courts. The access facilitators are all licensed social workers, trained family mediators and have the additional required training required by the Parenting Coordinator statute.

Referrals are by court order usually from the Associate Judge at the time of the initial hearing and prior to any testimony. Access Facilitation is part of the pre-trial conference in some courts, and attorneys often enter agreed orders for Access Facilitation at the time of filing. The same confidentiality standards as mediation and the same protections against testifying as is provided by the Parenting Coordinator statute apply to access facilitators.

Much of the success of the program is the educational component that is required of everyone utilizing Access Facilitation. Each Wednesday morning a two-hour presentation is made by Family Court Services caseworkers that includes information about grief, childhood development, and options available to litigants to settle disputes. Also included is a video in which judges, attorneys and mental health professionals inform participants of every part of the legal process and the resources available to help them settle their differences outside the courtroom.

Through Access Facilitation, parents are able to meet in a non-adversarial setting in which, with the assistance of a facilitator, they can begin to plan and establish guidelines for themselves and their child. They are able without the restrictions of a court order to implement an access plan that they can test out for a period of time. It allows them flexibility to see how their particular arrangement will work for themselves and the children.

Families have different needs and schedules, and by utilizing the access facilitation process they are able to develop a plan particular to their special circumstances. The process takes place over time, allowing families to try out different custody arrangements and possession schedules. At times other family members, such as step parents and grandparents, are included in the process. Although it is not encouraged, children—especially teenagers—are sometimes included.

When children are involved—primarily where a child has entered an affidavit of preference—they meet with the facilitator individually. This not only allows the facilitator to assess the developmental and maturity level of the child, but it gives the older teen a feeling of being heard.

Among the other benefits of Access Facilitation is the development of better communication skills between the parents. They learn new ways of sharing information and discussing the ongoing needs of their children. They are able to focus on their child rather than on the litigation process. It allows parents the ability to plan future educational, medical, and social needs for their children; and it helps parents to keep similar schedules and disciplines in both homes with the result that all family members benefit from the process.

In the almost eight years that Access Facilitation has been a part of Family Court Services and the Tarrant County family law system, hundreds of families have benefited. Our statistics show that cases referred to Access Facilitation settle sooner than those not referred and that fewer families return to court to modify orders after participating in the program. The most encouraging and satisfying part of the process for the access facilitators is that, years after a final order has been entered, families contact the facilitator to request additional meetings to help them through a new situation with their children.

# **BORDER CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH COLLABORATIVE AND THE EL PASO COUNTY DRO**

**By Terry G. Pasqualone**  
**Executive Director, El Paso County DRO**

The Border Children's Mental Health Collaborative (BCMHC) is a single integrated system to provide comprehensive community based mental health services and support to all El Paso youth with severe emotional disturbance. The El Paso DRO has become a significant participant because:

- a. 100% of the child population we serve is in an unhealthy, potentially unhealthy or dysfunctional family environment sharply increasing the risk of severe emotional disturbance in these children;
- b. the DRO is much more tightly connected to the entire network of child-serving agencies and resources in El Paso County; and,
- c. the DRO is better able to deliver direct services through formal and informal ADR, education, counseling and enforcement as adequate support, healthcare and access to parents is an important mental health support component.

As the natural tendency of DRO's, including El Paso, seems to be to increase the enforcement services we provide, in El Paso we are determined to maintain a balance of services. Our role with BCMHC allows us to become much stronger on the social worker/mental health aspect of DRO services as well as applying our enforcement functions in this specialized environment.

Originally, BCMHC was based on a six year Federal Grant and the program is now entering Year 6. Grant funding will run until September 2009 at which time the county will take over based upon sustainability plans currently being developed. Terry Pasqualone has been appointed to chair a group to evaluate and make recommendations regarding the permanent governance structure of BCMHC.

The El Paso DRO role has grown slowly in BCMHC. At the outset, Rita Ruelas monitored and served as an informal advisor in light of her extensive knowledge and contacts in the mental health community, including serving as a member of the county Welfare Board and MHMR Board. Now the DRO Director serves as a permanent member of the governing board and Rita and Terry are both active participants in the planning and development of BCMHC.

As part of the network of services, we are better able to refer children for support services and to receive referrals. The DRO is developing new programs in support of BCMHC, e.g., expansion of the cooperative parenting groups, modified, as appropriate, for this parent population.

As a product of BCMHC, El Paso County has allocated funding for the construction of the El Paso Youth Services Center and ground breaking is expected in December 2008 with completion within 12 months. The El Paso DRO will have a satellite office in this facility. The facility will also house the BCMHC and the main or satellite offices of collaborative agencies, such as, MHMR, Juvenile Probation, Welfare Board, CPS, Ysleta del Sur Pueblo, and education offices among other related services. Although the main offices of the DRO will remain in the courthouse, we expect the satellite office to be permanently staffed with a social worker, probation officer and clerical support with additional space for regularly assigned and rotating other services including an attorney, paralegal, mediation and additional social worker or probation staff. The DRO space in the facility will include "playrooms" and conference area for monitored exchange and visitation services which are currently contracted.

Participation in the Youth Services Facility not only provides the DRO proximity for referrals from and to our services but also will provide the first step toward making the DRO more accessible to the community. Longer range planning includes maintenance of the primary office in the courthouse and other branch offices throughout the county.

To be sure, the BCMHC is very important to the El Paso DRO not only in terms of current program but also long term planning.

## **FAMILY COURT SERVICES OF TARRANT COUNTY IMPLEMENTS NEW SLIDING SCALE FEE**

**By Christina S. Glenn**  
**Director, Tarrant County DRO, Family Court Services**

Historically, Family Court Services of Tarrant County charged a flat fee for social studies. In the 80's, the fees were set at \$100 per party. The fees were raised to \$200 per party in 2000 and remained at that rate until December 2007, when we adopted a new sliding scale fee.

Several factors lead to this decision last year. One was that we were experiencing a continuing rise in divorce and modification filings, with a corresponding rise in requests for social studies. We had no increase in staff and our most recent budget request for a new caseworker position had been denied.

We were averaging 6.5 new cases per month per caseworker. Taking all of their other duties into consideration, as well as their existing caseloads, our caseworkers can reasonably manage four new cases per month. Receiving six or more new cases in a month was not only unmanageable, it was causing a great deal of anxiety. At the same time, one of our caseworkers went on extended medical leave without a return date and all of her cases had to be reassigned to the other caseworkers. Something had to give.

We first tried a waiting list, which worked, in that we were able to keep our caseloads down to a manageable number, but it was not a solution that was best for the families because it placed them in limbo for longer than would normally be necessary in a custody investigation. There had to be another answer, something that would reduce the number of cases coming in.

Would it be possible, I wondered, to increase our fees to an amount that was not cost prohibitive, but would be enough to cause the attorneys to think more carefully about the need for a social study, the clients to question the necessity of a social study and, possibly, for higher income clients to opt for a private social study?

I inquired of our sister organizations and found that Travis and Harris counties had both successfully used sliding scale fees for many years. I approached our judges about the possibility of implementing a similar system here and they agreed we should try it. So, beginning December 1, 2007, we adopted the following sliding fee scale, based on gross income (defined as the individual's adjusted gross income as reflected on his or her most recent federal income tax return or recent pay-stub indicating gross earnings): \$20,000 or less, \$100; \$20,001 to \$35,000, \$200; \$35,001 to \$50,000, \$300; \$50,001 to \$75,000, \$400; \$75,001 to \$100,000, \$500; \$100,001 to \$125,000, \$600; \$125,001 or more, \$700. The fee is per party and the judges have the discretion to lower the fee order if they feel it's necessary:

To date, I am happy to report that we have seen a decrease in the number of social study requests. In January through May of 2007, we received 204 new social study cases, while in January through May of this year, we received 145 and have all but eliminated the use of a waiting list. And we achieved all of this with almost no grumbling from the attorneys over the change. So far, it's been a very good year.

## **THE ETHICS OF SELF-CARE**

**By Linda Curcio, LCSW, LMFT**  
**Guardian Ad Litem, Travis County DRO, Family Court Services**

I have been a Guardian ad Litem for the Travis County Domestic Relations Office for eight years. All of my colleagues deal with cases where one or both of the parties are diagnosed with a personality disorder. I greatly appreciate the research and articles written to raise the awareness of this phenomenon and how these personality disorders are played out in court custody disputes. What I want to focus on is how we can begin a discussion on what we and our organizations can do to educate ourselves on how these cases affect Guardians ad Litem and others directly involved with these cases.

These cases require a disproportionate amount of time and energy due to the complexities they encompass. Specifically, as a Guardian ad Litem on one of these cases, the dynamics we deal with include: ongoing crises, complaints to supervisor, splitting of professionals involved, frequent contested court hearings, significant levels of anger and more often than not, the Guardian ad Litem on the case becomes the target of parents' hostility (and sometimes the target of the attorneys).

Our major concern is our client, the children, who are either living with or visiting this parent. These children are experiencing confusing, manipulative, conflicting and often, explosive behaviors. This creates an environment filled with fear, anxiety, apprehension and a sense of hopelessness.

How then do we strengthen our ability to manage the incredible level of stress these situations bring to our caseload? In this article, I seek to provide some suggestions based on my personal experiences with self-care to prevent burnout and what organizations can do to support those of us facing these toxic situations. I also will list some references that address these issues further.

I am fortunate to work with colleagues who are always finding their own unique ways of taking care of themselves and supporting one another. Additionally, my supervisors support our efforts to stay healthy.

## **THE SELF-CARE TOOL KIT**

### **Tips for Organizational Care of Employees**

- Give employees opportunities to take care of themselves
- Frequent case reviews/staffing
- Remember that in order to serve the best interest of children, employees need consistent support in their efforts to care for themselves.
- Provide a nurturing environment by building a sense of community/family within the organization (regular team building, outings away from the office, including: retreats, movies, acknowledging birthdays with a group lunch, lightening the load for a colleague dealing with a spike in stress at work and/or personally; checking in regularly to get a pulse on how things are going)
- Understand secondary trauma and what you can do to negate the toxicity (educate yourselves on ways to prevent and deal with employee symptoms by assessing cases prior to assigning these out. By checking in with everyone regularly you can have a better sense of what is going on with each employee as far as case intensity levels at certain times.)
- Be able to laugh at yourself and find ways to lighten things up.

### **Tips for Self-Care at Work**

- Leave your office for at least 10-15 minutes for a walk (a change of scenery)
- BREATHE- throughout your day take 10-16 deep breathing breaths (belly breaths from your diaphragm). I find three at one sitting ideal, anymore may make you feel lightheaded if you are not accustomed to this. Belly breaths bring oxygen to and massage your internal organs and release toxins as well. On an emotional level when we breathe, our load feels lighter, we can think more clearly and we feel a sense of calm. I often breathe before I go on the witness stand.
- If you can't leave right away – take a virtual/visual break - in your mind you can take a nature hike, go to your favorite place (mountains, the beach, Barton Springs, etc.). Also if you are in a stressful situation either at court or mediation, you can visualize for even 30 seconds about something pleasant. For example, at the Central Texas African American Family Support Conference in 2006, I attended a breakout session, “Creating your Personalized Mini-Relaxation Response as a Counter-balance to Stress,” by psychologists, John G. Rubel and Edna Brinkley. They let us experience the physiological effects of both stressful and relaxing visualizations. With the unpleasant visualization, the group shared physical sensations, including: sweaty palms, tightness in the chest or neck, shallow breathing, rapid breathing, stomachache. With the pleasant visualization, (I visualized my dog, Bear and wanted to laugh), we shared sensations including: an overall feeling of relaxation and peace, slowed breathing, smiling and an urge to laugh. The psychologists noted that when we laugh our body releases chemicals that prevent a stress reaction. I know we can't laugh in court but it's nice to have pleasant thoughts to relax us in a pinch.
- I carry a picture of my dogs in my date book at all times to relax me.
- Staff that case with your boss or a colleague.
- Put on your favorite relaxing music or movement music if you feel like bopping. This is a great time to file or clean off your desk (I-Pod or low volume).
- Set clear boundaries-for example, no work phone calls if you are not working
- Get and stay organized – having everything in your file by the end of each day (this helps put closure on my day plus it assures me that no documentation will get lost and will be easily accessed to review before trial). I learned this from my amazingly organized colleagues and am grateful I finally got it.

- Go out to lunch or get out of the office for a walk. Think of this as having a similar effect as going on a trip out of town. Changing your surroundings can have a very positive effect on your state of mind.
- At the end of the day focus on what you accomplished not what you didn't.
- I use our dictation service to call in my "To Do" List for the next day so I don't forget and then it is waiting for me in my email the next morning.

### **Tips for Self-Care Outside of Work**

- Keep a daily gratitude journal - end your day by focusing on acknowledging yourself and what you did to nurture yourself. Best to make a list of three or more items at the end of the night. This provides closure and helps you sleep better.
- Go to a natural setting, walk in the woods with your dogs or with a friend
- Go to the gym, any kind of physical activity is key to stress reduction
- Spend extra time with your kids, playing or making a meal together or activity they like (coloring, finger painting, clay)
- Spend time with your family and friends
- Meditate, yoga or any regular kind of moving meditation (Tai Chi for example)
- Take short day trips, even in your own city for a change of scene
- Go on a play date – favorite book store, movie, buy a coloring book and crayons
- Work in the garden (this is actively nurturing yourself and your plants)
- Nurture your creative spirit – sing a song! Write a poem! Paint a picture!
- Laugh a lot! (Remember laughter involves breathing and prevents stress)
- Let go, let go, let go (accompanied by 3 deep breaths after a difficult phone call or court hearing or other stressful situations)

These releases, quiet moments, special nurturing times, personal acknowledgement at the end of the day, enable us to put things to rest and sleep more peacefully. It's these simple things that nurture and re-energize each of us. In this way, we can be open to create new solutions and coping strategies in serving the best interest of the children.

Finally, I want to point out that organizations can start by making one adjustment and go from there. Family Court Services' departments are aware of the difficulties these cases present, however, there is still a lot of work to be done in identifying ways to address self-care in the workplace as an organization's ethical responsibility. Once we openly discuss self-care and realize its direct correlation to serving the best interest of children, we will have an even more effective, creative and healthier employees and organization.

Suggested Readings and Resources:

[The Palette of Breath, Facts About Breathing](#), Lauren Robins, 2003 by Body Sense Press, ISBN: 0-9742498-9-0

[Proceedings of the 6<sup>th</sup> Central Texas African American Family Support Conference](#), "Celebrating Healthy Families: Mind, Body & Soul,"(2006) "Creating Your Personalized Mini Relaxation Response as a Counter-balance to Stress," John G. Rubel, Psy.D., and Edna Brinkley, Ph.D., p15

[The 5 Minute Healer, Self-Healing Techniques for Busy People](#), Mary Capone & Janet Rupp, 2002

[The Power of Now, A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment](#), Eckhart Tolle, 1999

[A New Earth, Awakening to Your Life's Purpose](#), Eckhart Tolle, 2005

[Creative Visualization](#), Shakti Gawain, 2002

## CHILD CUSTODY COACHES, CONSULTANTS AND ADVISORS IN CONTESTED CASES- HIDDEN RESOURCES OR LURKING MENACES?

By Aaron Robb, M.Ed., NCC, LPC-S  
Forensic Counseling Services

Coaching in the divorce and child custody field is nothing new; collaborative lawyers have been using “divorce coaches” and “communication consultants” to help conflicted parents resolve their disputes and learn to co-parent their children. This idea has had growing purchase in the world of contested custody litigation as well.<sup>1</sup> However unlike in collaborative cases, where transparency is valued, a mental health professional (MHP) retained as a consultant may be an undisclosed factor on a litigation team.<sup>2</sup> While we certainly expect attorneys to prepare their clients for what to expect in the litigation process (everything from how to dress and behave in court to rehearsing so clients do not ramble during testimony) an undisclosed MHP involved in a case may present unique challenges.

There are clear advantages for parents in being well-prepared as they head in to the emotionally charged process of custody litigation: a good overview of the process helps them stay organized, reasonable expectations help them frame requests, and ultimately parents understanding the harm of protracted conflict may lead to better outcomes for the children involved. Examples of poorly prepared litigants and the extra difficulties they face abound. It seems hard to have worked in the family court arena for any length of time and not encountered a parent with expectations more influenced by Judge Judy than any reasonable idea of modern jurisprudence. Certainly many of our lives would be easier if more of our clients had quality professional help in their lives.

Example: One colleague who works extensively with parenting coordination cases noted that he uses essentially the same techniques and curriculum when retained by an attorney to help out a struggling parent as he does when working a court ordered case with the entire family. He reports seeing positive results in one sided work as these parents, who might otherwise be resistant to outside input, know they are receiving unvarnished advice on how to parent better (which my colleague considers the basis of what it really takes to ethically improve one's position in court, and the attorneys referring to him agree).

But while educating clients about the family court process, helping them develop reasonable expectations, and assisting in improving co-parenting relationships are laudable goals for MHPs working with families in litigation, there exists a darker side to this role when MHPs begin to focus on helping clients present themselves in a positive manner while maintaining their maladaptive behaviors. These kinds of services can range from preparing parents for psychological tests by walking them through the questions before hand (invalidating whatever information the tests might have provided), to actually serving as a “ghostwriter” for communication allegedly from the parent.

*Example: A colleague received a request by an attorney to assist a client in “translating their thoughts” in a more productive fashion so they would do better in an evaluation. The attorney was clear that the parent did not want to work on changing their behavior<sup>3</sup> – it was essentially a request to help the parent hide their deficiencies more effectively than they had done in the past. Needless to say my colleague declined to “help” in that case.*

*Example: A misdirected e-mail arrived showing the responses the coach wrote based on the parent's suggestions. Rather than teaching the parent how to improve their communications skills the e-mail revealed the coach was essentially representing themselves as the parent.*

Although it seems that few ethical MHPs would intentionally allow themselves to become used to perpetrate a deception upon the court<sup>4</sup> there are those MHPs who may be talked into questionable services by attorneys willing to push boundaries. Worse are those providers that purport to be “professionals” but who subscribe to no professional code of ethics and essentially do whatever they can get paid for. Multiple web sites exist offering various advice on how to “win” custody litigation that refer to these type of

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<sup>1</sup> See for instance Family Mediation News, Spring 2006, published by the Association for Conflict Resolution

<sup>2</sup> The attorney work product privilege may attach in many cases, much like communications with paralegals and other professionals working for the attorney may be covered.

<sup>3</sup> Indeed, it was in part the parent's instance that they did not need to change their own inappropriate behavior that they needed help “translating.”

<sup>4</sup> Psychologists, for instance, are enjoined from permitting misuse of their services by others (TAC 465.14).

“professionals” and the services they sell.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately if this author’s anecdotal experience holds true we are seeing an increase in the use of these services and the confounding problems they bring to making assessments and recommendations that are truly reflective of what is in the best interest of the children involved.

What we as professionals can do:

- The front line in combating unethical coaches appears to be in raising this issue with local bar associations. While attorneys will always retain experts to assist their clients, by educating on the differences between professionals who actually help parents change and those who are essentially suborning perjury attorneys will be better able to select ethical providers.
- Coupled with this is raising the issue of ethical boundaries with professionals who provide consultation services to attorneys. When professionals are aware of gray areas they can then better identify when they are risking crossing the line into them.
- Those who conduct evaluations for the courts need to be asking parents what resources they have availed themselves of – books, web pages, professional consultations, etc. Failing to ask leaves a gap in data gathering and may actually be a disservice to both parents and children involved.

Example: One parent I worked with received extremely bad advice on how to approach a situation from a web page. They essentially copied and pasted sample letters that, from my perspective, seemed only designed to further inflame the conflict rather than resolve it. This was certainly not the parent’s intent, they just lacked appropriate resources.

As roles for MHPs in the legal system continue to evolve there are sure to be new challenges. By advocating for high levels of ethical practice we can continue to help families in conflict receive the best services possible.

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<sup>5</sup> While there have always been books on such subjects the individualized nature of personal coaching, combined with the new networking opportunities presented by the world wide web seem to represent a fundamental shift in how such flawed advice is being dispensed.

## **Harris County Family Court Services and Baylor College of Medicine Continue Collaboration**

**By: Trevor Townes, Director, Harris County DRO, Family Court Services Division**

Harris County Family Court Services and Baylor College of Medicine, Menninger Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences entered their fourth year of affiliation this July. The relationship began with preliminary meetings in August 2002, and by June 2004, a resident training agreement was executed, allowing for a forensic rotation of post-doctoral child and adolescent psychiatry fellows through Family Court Services.

During each rotation, residents become familiar with the role of the family courts, the array of professionals contributing to the workings of the family courts and the preparation and use of social studies in contested child custody/access and adoption matters. As part of their clinical instruction, residents collaborate with FCS investigators during the preparation of social studies and observe family mediation, parent conferences and courtroom testimony of expert witnesses. Additionally, residents are required to make educational presentations to FCS investigators on various topics within their specialty.

Initially, one resident at a time was assigned to each rotation, which lasted three months and included two days per week of instruction. The first resident was assigned in July 2004. Two years later, rotations were modified to allow for two residents at a time, for a period of six months, with one day per week of instruction. The latter arrangement has proven most beneficial, allowing residents to consult with investigators on a multitude of cases, exposing them to a wide variety of family circumstances.

To date, 16 residents have completed the rotation and overall, the affiliation has been a success. Residents have found the rotations to be of significant value to their education and unique among their professional experiences. FCS investigators have benefited from the regular association and collaboration with child and adolescent psychiatrists and from resident lectures. Most importantly, families and children of divorce will benefit from a treating psychiatrist with forensic knowledge and experience in the area of family law.

*Trevor was recently presented with the 2007 Outstanding Faculty Award by the Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Graduating Fellows.*

### **Events**

**TADRO 2009 Board of Directors Bi-annual Meeting**  
Date and location to be determined

**TADRO 2009 Annual Training Conference**  
Houston, TX  
October 19-21, 2009

Check for more details on [www.tadro.org](http://www.tadro.org)

## TADRO 2008



## TEXAS ASSOCIATION OF DOMESTIC RELATIONS OFFICES 24<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL TRAINING CONFERENCE

**HOST:** Taylor County Domestic Relations Office

**WHEN:** October 20-22, 2008

**WHERE:** MCM ELEGANTE SUITES HOTEL, 4520 Ridgemont Drive, Abilene, Texas 79606

**HOTEL:** MCM ELEGANTE SUITES HOTEL, 4520 Ridgemont Drive, Abilene, Texas 79606; 325-698-1234; [www.mcmelegantesuites.com](http://www.mcmelegantesuites.com). The MCM is offering conference attendees a special rate of \$99.00 (plus tax) for a single room, and \$109.00 (plus tax) for a double room per night with advance reservations. **Parking is free.** Reservations may be made by calling toll free 1-888-897-9644 and asking for the Texas Association of Domestic Relations Office (TADRO) room block. **THE HOTEL CUT OFF DATE FOR THE SPECIAL TADRO ROOM RATE IS SEPTEMBER 22, 2008.**

**COST:** **Full Conference** (Monday noon through Wednesday noon):

Registration fee is \$100.00 per person and includes annual TADRO membership dues, breaks, social and dinner at Frontier Texas on Monday, October 20<sup>th</sup>, and the awards luncheon on Tuesday, October 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Partial Conference** (Tuesday **only**):

Registration fee is \$75.00 and includes annual TADRO membership dues, breaks, and the luncheon on Tuesday, October 21<sup>st</sup>. The social and dinner at Frontier Texas is **not** included in the registration fee but attendees can participate at a cost of \$25.00 per person.

**CANCELLATIONS:** TADRO **does not** accept telephone cancellations. Written notice of cancellation must be e-mailed to TADRO at [patricia.sessom@co.travis.tx.us](mailto:patricia.sessom@co.travis.tx.us) on or by **October 8, 2008** to receive a full refund. Cancellations made **after October 8, 2008** will only be eligible for a 50% refund.

**HOW:** To reserve your place at the conference, please complete and mail the attached form, and enclose a check made **payable to TADRO** by the registration deadline of **OCTOBER 3, 2008** to:

TEXAS ASSOCIATION OF DOMESTIC RELATIONS OFFICES  
PO Box 5063  
Austin, Texas 78763-5063

**OTHER:** Continuing Legal Education Hours have been applied for with the State Bar of Texas. Continuing Education Units are available for Social Workers. Continuing education hours for District and County Clerks are available.

**CONTACT:** If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Patricia Sessom at:

512-854-9686 or e-mail: [patricia.sessom@co.travis.tx.us](mailto:patricia.sessom@co.travis.tx.us)

**REGISTRATION DEADLINE IS OCTOBER 3, 2008**

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# THE TEXAS ASSOCIATION OF DOMESTIC RELATIONS OFFICES WOULD LIKE TO THANK OUR SPONSORS!

Abilene Christian University

Abilene Convention and Visitors Bureau

Abilene Public Radio 89.7 KACU

ACS, State & Local Solutions

Alex Camacho, TX SDU Project Director-Sponsor of Business Meeting/Awards Luncheon

Anonymous Donor-Transportation for Frontier Texas

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MCM Data Service, Inc.

National Curriculum & Training Institute, Inc. (NCTI)

Alan Werner, Vice President of Sales & Marketing

Scotia Consulting; Mr. & Mrs. Tom Hendry

## **TADRO 2008 Annual Conference Registration Form**

Please complete this form **IN FULL**, regardless of your level of participation. This will ensure that we have a conference packet, and other essential information prepared in advance for you.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Agency/Court/Company: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Office Telephone#:: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax #: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**CIRCLE** WHICH TRACK DURING THE **TUESDAY OCTOBER 21<sup>ST</sup>** SESSIONS YOU WILL BE ATTENDING:

### **MORNING SESSION**

TRACK I - Family Court Services

TRACK II - Child Support Enforcement/Community Supervision

TRACK III - Enforcing Parenting Time Orders

### **AFTERNOON SESSION**

TRACK I - Family Court Services

TRACK II - Child Support Enforcement/Community Supervision (**“Real Colors” presentation; to ensure adequate materials for everyone you MUST circle this track in order to attend!**)

TRACK III - Enforcing Parenting Time Orders

### **OPTIONAL FREE EVENT – FOR FULL CONFERENCE ATTENDEES**

**Monday, October 20<sup>th</sup> - TADRO Social and Dinner at Frontier Texas. The cost is included in the full conference registration fee. Transportation will be provided free of charge to all attendees.**

\_\_\_\_\_ **YES, I will attend the Social and Dinner (full conference attendee)**

\_\_\_\_\_ **NO, I will not attend the Social and Dinner (full conference attendee)**

\_\_\_\_\_ **YES, my spouse will attend the Social and Dinner and I have enclosed an additional \$25.00 for this event**

\_\_\_\_\_ **YES, I will attend the Social and Dinner. I am a partial conference attendee so I have enclosed an additional \$25.00 for this event**



## Texas Association of Domestic Relations Offices

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July 28, 2008

Dear County Director/Administrator:

On behalf of the Texas Association of Domestic Relations Offices (TADRO) Board of Directors, we cordially invite you and your staff to attend this year's annual conference to be held in Abilene, Texas on October 20th-22nd, 2008.

We know that many government entities are cutting back on travel expense as the cost of doing business continues to escalate. However, the opportunities available through our conferences to network with your peers, form relationships, and to obtain quality employee training will add value to your organization as you have the opportunity to widen your vision for your family courts and services.

In order to help defray the costs of attending this year's conference, the TADRO Board is offering five scholarships of \$350.00 each. Each county will be eligible to receive no more than two (2) scholarships, and the winning counties' Director/Administrator will decide which of their staff will be able to attend the conference on the scholarship/s awarded.

If you are interested in applying for a scholarship please complete the attached "Scholarship Application Form" and return the completed application to me either by e-mail, [jbuchert@tarrantcounty.com](mailto:jbuchert@tarrantcounty.com), or by regular mail:

Jessica Buchert  
Tarrant County Child Support  
200 E. Weatherford 2<sup>nd</sup> floor  
Fort Worth, TX 71696

Please note that the **DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION IS WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2008.**

If upon receipt of this letter you have any questions or need additional information please do not hesitate to call me at (817) 212-7418. We look forward to seeing everyone in Abilene in October!

Sincerely,

Jessica Buchert, Director  
Tarrant County Child Support  
TADRO Scholarship Sub-Committee Chair

**TEXAS ASSOCIATION OF DOMESTIC RELATIONS OFFICES**  
**2008 ANNUAL CONFERENCE SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION**

Member County: \_\_\_\_\_

Executive Director/Administrator: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you a TADRO Member? (circle one)      **Yes**                      **No**

Number of Scholarships Applying for (circle or highlight):                      1                      2

Please attach a brief essay stating why your county should be awarded a conference scholarship(s). Include information evidencing your county's financial needs (e.g. budget cuts, staff layoffs, etc.), travel restrictions, or other reasons. If applying for more than 1 scholarship, include justification for why your county should be awarded 2 scholarships.

Submit your application in writing by mailing to:

Jessica Buchert  
Child Support Director  
200 E. Weatherford 2<sup>nd</sup> floor  
Fort Worth, TX 76196

Or, complete and submit by e-mail to: [jbuchert@tarrantcounty.com](mailto:jbuchert@tarrantcounty.com)

***DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION IS SEPTEMBER 8, 2008!***

**Winners will be notified by e-mail no later than September 12, 2008.**

**2008 Texas Association of Domestic Relations Offices Conference**  
**Abilene, Texas**  
**October 20th - 22nd, 2008**

**Monday October 20th, 2008**

**12:00 pm to 4:30 pm    Registration**

**1:00 pm to 1:30 pm    Welcome To Abilene**

**Ms. Pat Stafford, Director, Taylor County Domestic Relations Office  
& TADRO Host  
The Honorable George A. Newman, County Judge, Taylor County  
The Honorable Aleta Hacker, Judge 326th District Court  
Thank You - Abilene Convention & Visitors Bureau Staff & Volunteers**

**Announcements**

**1:30 pm - 2:00 pm    The Women There Don't Treat You Mean: Abilene In Song  
Mr. Joe Specht, Collection Manager of the Grady McWhiney Research  
Foundation  
Former Director, Jay-Rollins Library, McMurry University; Author; Journalist**

**2:00 pm - 3:00 pm    The Challenge of Multi Cultural Issues in Marriage, Divorce and Child Rearing  
Speaker: Dr. Joann Roberts  
Abilene, Texas**

**3:00 pm - 3:15 pm    Break  
Sponsored by: MCM Data Service, Inc. & Baldwin Consulting, LLC**

**3:15 pm - 4:00 pm    State of the Domestic Relations Offices  
Bexar County, Mr. Tony Neugabauer  
Dallas County, Ms. Angela Igrisan  
El Paso County, Mr. Terry Pasqualone  
Harris County, Mr. David Simpson  
Lubbock County, Mr. Gene Valentini  
Tarrant County, Mr. Norris Branham  
Taylor County, Ms. Pat Stafford  
Travis County, Ms. Cecelia Burke**

**4:00 pm - 4:45 pm    State Disbursement Unit Update  
Speaker: Mr. Alex Camacho, Texas State Disbursement Unit  
Project Director; ACS, State & Local Solutions**

**5:00 pm - 6:00 pm    Board Meeting - Hotel Board Room**

**6:30 PM    Load Buses in Front of Hotel for Frontier Texas & Barbeque  
Dinner  
Sponsored by: Anonymous**

**Tuesday October 21st, 2008**

**8:00 to 12:00 pm**

**Registration**

**TRACK 1 - FAMILY COURT  
SERVICES**

**MODERATOR FOR TRACK 1: Mr. Tony Neugebauer, Director, Bexar County Domestic Relations Offices**

**9:00 am - 10:00 am**

**So What Exactly Does "Best Interest of the Child" Mean Anyway?**

**Speaker: Mr. Aaron Robb, M.Ed., NCC, LPC-S  
Forensic Counseling Services  
Keller, Texas**

**10:00 am - 11:15 am**

**Family Violence: It's Impact on Children & the Non-Offending Parent**

**Speaker: Mr. J.J. Lara, Jr., MA, Director of Advocacy & Training  
Texas Advocacy Project**

**11:15 am - 12:30 pm**

**TADRO Luncheon**

**General Business Meeting**

**Awards Ceremony**

**Sponsored By: ACS State & Local Solutions**

**12:45 pm - 2:45 pm**

**Controversial Issues In Family Court: Opinion, Theory and Research**

**Speaker: Mr. Aaron Robb, M.Ed., NCC, LPC-S  
Forensic Counseling Services  
Keller, Texas**

**2:45 pm - 3:00 pm**

**Break**

**3:00 pm - 4:00 pm**

**Controversial Issues In Family Court: Opinion, Theory and Research  
Continued**

**Speaker: Mr. Aaron Robb, M.Ed., NCC, LPC-S  
Forensic Counseling Services  
Keller, Texas**

**4:00 pm - 4:15 pm**

**Informal Break - Refreshments Not Available**

**4:15 pm - 5:00 pm**

**Open Discussion - Topics From the Audience**

**Moderator: Mr. Tony Neugebauer, Director, Bexar County DRO**

**6:00 PM**

**Walk to Casa Herrera - Private Room & Separate Checks for  
TADRO - Outstanding Mexican Food**

**Tuesday October 21st, 2008**

**8:00 to 12:00 pm**

**Registration**

**TRACK 2 - CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT/COMMUNITY SUPERVISION**

**MODERATOR FOR TRACK 2:**

**Ms. Donna Larson, Manager, Child Community Supervision,  
Tarrant County DRO**

**8:15 am - 9:15 am**

**Military Enforcement: Garnishment, Locate, Service of Process,  
Capias, Federal Service Members Act  
Speaker: To Be Announced**

**9:15 am - 10:15 am**

**NCP Incarceration: Jail Hearings, Capias, Commitment Orders,  
Jail Release Payments, Failure to Report to Jail Capias,  
Violation of Inmate Civil Rights, Out of County Arrests  
Speakers: Mr. Scot Doyal, Managing Attorney, Travis  
County DRO  
Ms. Patricia Sessom, Paralegal, Travis County  
DRO**

**10:00 am - 10:15 am**

**Break**

**10:15 am - 11:15 am**

**ICSS Collection Techniques: Best Practices from the Office  
of the Attorney General. Strategies to increase collections and  
use of federal collection tools.  
Speaker: Ms. Dalia Perez Perez'  
Assistant Deputy Director for Field Services  
Child Support Enforcement, OAG**

**11:15 am - 12:30 pm**

**TADRO Luncheon  
General Business Meeting  
Awards Ceremony**

**12:45 pm - 2:30 pm**

**Real Colors: Motivating Probationers. Understanding human  
behaviors, uncovering motivators specific to temperament and  
improving communications.  
Speaker: Ms. Debbie Buck, Training Officer  
Tarrant County CSCD**

**2:30 pm - 2:45 pm**

**Break**

**2:45 pm - 5:00 pm**

**Real Colors Continues**

**6:00 PM**

**Walk to Casa Herrera - Private Room & Separate Checks for  
TADRO - Outstanding Mexican Food**

**Tuesday October 21st, 2008**

**8:00 to 12:00 pm**

**Registration**

**TRACK 3 - ENFORCING PARENTING TIME ORDERS**

**MODERATOR FOR TRACK 3:**

**Ouisa Davis, Division Chief, Friend of the Court/  
Family Law Information Center, El Paso DRO**

**9:00 am to 10:30 am**

**A Sampling Of Texas' Innovative Access & Visitation Projects**

**Speaker: Ms. Anita Stuckey  
Shared Parenting Projects Coordinator  
Office of the Attorney General  
Child Support Enforcement Division**

**10:30 am to 10:45 am**

**Break**

**10:45 am to 11:15 am**

**Mediation of Access & Possession Issues**

**Speaker: Mr. Gene Valentini  
Director, Lubbock County DRO**

**11:15 am to 12:30 pm**

**TADRO Luncheon  
General Business Meeting  
Awards Ceremony**

**12:45 pm to 2:45 pm**

**Texas Enforces Possession Orders  
Overview and Roundtable**

**Moderator: Ms. Ouisa Davis  
Division Chief  
Friend of the Court/Family Law  
Information Center  
El Paso County Domestic Relations Office**

**Speakers: El Paso County DRO - Ms. Ouisa Davis  
Tarrant County DRO - To Be Announced  
Travis County DRO - Ms. Erin Hittman  
Bexar County DRO - To Be Announced  
Harris County DRO - To Be Announced**

**2:45 pm to 3:00 pm**

**Break**

**3:00 pm to 4:00 pm**

**Transition into Standard Possession Schedules  
Interim Parenting Plans**

**Speaker: Ms. Rita Ruelas, Manager, Family Court Services  
El Paso County Domestic Relations Office**

**4:00 pm to 5:00 pm**

**Merging of Access & Possession Projects Into An Enforcement Program**

**Speakers: Mr. Steve Musil, Senior Attorney  
Legal Enforcement Division, Travis County DRO  
Ms. Erin Hittman, Casework Manager,  
Legal Enforcement Division, Travis County DRO**

6:00 PM

Walk to Casa Herrera - Private Room & Separate Checks for  
TADRO - Outstanding Mexican Food

Wednesday October 22nd, 2008

9:00 am - 10:30 pm

Legislative Update & Strategies for the 2009 81st Legislature

Moderator: Ms. Cindy Allen, Attorney at Law  
Abilene, Texas

Speakers: Mr. Steve Bresnan  
Family Law Foundation  
Ms. Cecelia Burke, Director  
Travis County Domestic Relations Office  
Ms. Alicia Key, IV-D Director,  
Office of the Attorney General

10:30 am - 10:45 am

Break

Sponsored by: MCM Data Service, Inc. & Baldwin Consulting LLC

10:45 am – Noon

Legislative Update & Strategies for the 2009 81st Legislature  
Continued

Noon -

Adjourn

## JOIN TADRO TODAY!

### Membership Form

County \_\_\_\_\_

Office \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_ Job Title \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

What services does your office provide?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### Mail form with \$25 check to:

Steve Musil, c/o Travis County Domestic Relations Office, TADRO  
Treasurer, PO Box 1495, Austin, Texas 78767. For additional information  
you may e-mail Steve at [steve.musil@co.travis.tx.us](mailto:steve.musil@co.travis.tx.us) or call Steve at  
512-854-9685.

### Benefits

- \* Exchange of information about new and innovative programs, current programs and particular County practices.
- \* Members actively monitor legislative activities in regards to Family Law issues.
- \* Professional associations for peer assistance, advice, support and encouragement.
- \* Support of the cause and mission of Domestic Relations Offices (DRO) so that every child has what is necessary to not only survive, but to thrive.

### Cost of Membership

- \* \$25 per year per individual.
- \* Individuals that register for the annual conference automatically become members.

# 2008 Board of Directors



## Officers

**President** Cecelia Burke, Director  
Travis County Domestic Relations Office

**President-Elect** David Simpson, Executive Director  
Harris County Domestic Relations Office

**Vice President** Judy Branham, Child Support Manager  
Dallas County Domestic Relations Office

**Treasurer** Stephen Musil, Senior Attorney  
Travis County Domestic Relations Office

**Secretary** Patricia Sessom, Board Certified Paralegal  
Travis County Domestic Relations Office

## **Board Members**

Trevor Townes, Director  
Family Court Services & Alternative Dispute Resolution  
Harris County Domestic Relations Office

Erin Hittman, Manager  
Child Support and Visitation Enforcement  
Travis County Domestic Relations Office

Jessica Buchert, Child Support Director  
Tarrant County Domestic Relations Office

Kristina Voorhies-Legan, Chief of Enforcement  
El Paso County Domestic Relations Office

Norris Branham, Executive Director  
Tarrant County Domestic Relations Office

Jeremy Pedigo, Senior Community Supervision Officer  
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Michael Kopatz, Supervisor  
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Child Support Probation Unit

Anthony Neugebauer, Director  
Bexar County Domestic Relations Office

Terry Pasqualone, Executive Director  
El Paso County Domestic Relations Office

Pat Stafford, Executive Director  
Taylor County Domestic Relations Office

Crystal Stone, Assistant Director  
Lubbock County Domestic Relations Office

Angela Igrisan, Director  
Dallas County Domestic Relations Office

## **Committee Chairs**

Government Affairs & Contracts David Simpson

Legislation Co-chairs Cecelia Burke  
David Simpson

Membership Judy Branham

Budget & Finance Stephen Musil

Nominating David Simpson

Scholarship Jessica Buchert

Conference Co-chairs Pat Stafford  
Cecelia Burke

Executive Cecelia Burke

Web Site Jeremy Pedigo

Join us in 2009 as  
TADRO convenes in  
Houston!