Conference Highlights

Workshops and Presentations

Changes and Revisions to Standard 5.20: A short update will be provided to participants regarding changes and revisions to Standard 5.20 (Uniform Standards of Practice for Providers of Supervised Visitation), as well as upcoming additional field of practice issues. Presenter: Shelly La Botte J.D. California’s Access to Visitation Grant Program Manage, Center for Families, Children & the Courts/ Operations & Programs Division Judicial Council of California.

Prevention and Response to Child Abduction: The Role of the Visitation Monitor: This session will cover the safety concerns and measures that should be taken in a case of parent/family child abduction. The presenter will discuss prevalence of child abduction and risk factors including steps Visitation Monitors should take to prevent abduction and how to be prepared to work with Law Enforcement, Social Service Agencies and District Attorney’s Offices if abduction occurs. Presenter: Erin Runnion is the Founder and Director of The Joyful Child Foundation

Basics of Family and Juvenile Law: Court referrals for supervised visitation services may be ordered in family court resulting from custody and visitation issues and/or juvenile court resulting from allegations or findings of child abuse and neglect. This session on Basics of Family and Juvenile Law will provide participants with a general overview of family and juvenile law systems. The session will highlight the distinction between family and juvenile court, the various court processes, and the variant goals of safety in supervised visitation. This session will meet requirements under Family Code section 3200.5(d)(1)(K). Presenter: Melyssa MacQuarrie, Psy.D., Supervising Court Mediator, Family Court Services, Superior Court of Orange County.

Safety Issues Considerations in Domestic Violence Cases: This session will address issues observed in supervised visitation cases in which domestic violence has occurred and may or may not be the primary reason for the referral. The professional provider’s duties and obligations in domestic violence cases and its relationship to Standard 5.20 and Family Code 3200.5 will be reviewed. This session will meet requirements under Family Code section 3200.5(d)(1)(j). Continued annual training in matters related to domestic violence is recommended for all professional providers and participants will receive best practice guidance for local resource connections in their respective communities. Presenters: Debbie Comstock, M.A., CSW and Bobbi Richards M.A...
Understanding and Making the Connection between the Developmental Stages of Children & the Supervised Visit: The objective of this workshop will be to provide a general overview on the usefulness of child development in supervised visits. Understanding the importance of child development is key for monitoring parent-child interactions, ensuring reasonable safety in the visit, and the best interest of the child. The knowledge of child development ages and stages, developmental needs of children, and mastery of developmental task can equip the professional supervised visitation practitioner towards quality service delivery in the visitation process. 

Presenter: Georgia A. Thompson, M.A., MBA, IMFT

The Challenging Role of the Professional Provider (Panel Discussion with Supervised Visitation Experts): This panel discussion and dialogue will probe how we can better serve the needs of children and families court-ordered to supervised visitation and exchange services. The panel will consist of statewide supervised visitation experts working in supervised visitation centers and independent providers working in the public. Participants will have an opportunity to discuss their challenging role, concerns, or issues as a professional provider of supervised visitation and panelists will provide strategies and approaches for field of practice consideration towards ensuring high-quality service delivery.

Moderator: Shelly La Botte J.D. California’s Access to Visitation Grant Program Manage, Center for Families, Children & the Courts/ Operations & Programs Division Judicial Council of California

Panel Experts: David Duffey, Program Manager, Rally Family Visitation Services – San Francisco; Denise Riley, A+ Visitation and Family Services-Ventura County; Bobbi Richards, M.A. – Supervised Visitation & Exchange Best Practices Consultant for California Providers. Other panelists to be announced.
About the Presenters

Debbie Comstock MSW, CSW has served on the Board of the California Association of Supervised Visitation Providers (CASVSP) since 2011. In this role she has assisted in Standard 5.20/Family Code 3200.5 training development specific to visitation cases that involve domestic violence. She is a recognized expert Domestic Violence and has been a member of the San Diego Domestic Violence and East County San Diego Domestic Violence Councils since 1998. Debbie has also participated in the fatality review team for the County of San Diego. She provides consultation in child welfare cases and is an advocate for effective assessment of domestic violence victims and their children. Debbie travels as a trainer on understanding trauma and developing trauma-informed services and organizations. She provides services to the State of Utah to expand the discussion of domestic violence as it relates to supervised visitation and promote prevention of domestic violence in the community.

David Duffey-Leon has worked in the field of Supervised Visitation since 2000 as the Program Manager of Rally Family Visitation Services in San Francisco. As Program Manager of a visitation and exchange center for almost 15 year, Mr. Duffey-Leon has provided direct client services including the supervision of regular and monitored exchanges, parent intake and child orientations. He has compiled and approved case reports for court hearings, provided program operations oversight in three Bay Area counties served by Rally, trained and supervised staff, volunteer and student interns and acted as program liaison between Rally and the courts. Over the past 30 years, he has also had experience working in community mental health centers, psychiatric hospitalization and foster care and adoption services. He earned the following degrees: B.A. in Psychology from Austin College, M.A. in Professional Counseling from the University of Texas A & M.Div. from the Episcopal Seminary in Berkeley.

Shelly La Botte, J.D., is the Access to Visitation Grant Coordinator for the State of California. She is responsible for managing the state (federal funding) grant program, which supports funding to the superior courts (approximately 30 of the 58 counties) to facilitate and increase noncustodial parents’ access to and visitation with their children through the grant-related activities of supervised visitation and exchange services, parent education, and group counseling services for parents and children going through separation and divorce in family court. Ms. La Botte has made numerous presentations on the topics of grant management, supervised visitation and safe exchange services, and domestic violence. She also works on various public policy initiatives and assists with the development of statewide standards of practice for court-based best practices and Rules of Court related to supervised visitation services. Ms. La Botte holds a Juris Doctorate degree with more than eighteen years of experience in the California court system with an expertise in public policy development, project administration and management, and grant supervision.

Mellissa MacQuarrie, PsyD is a native of California who received her PsyD from Pepperdine University in 1994. She has worked as a shelter therapist and coordinator, and completed a dissertation addressing conflict tactics used by couples with a history of domestic violence. Dr. MacQuarrie has been employed by Orange County Superior Court since 1999; first as a mediator and investigator, and as a Supervising Court Mediator for the past ten years. She has testified over 200 times as an expert regarding risk factors to children of separation and divorce.
**Bobbi Richards, M.A.**, served as the founding director at Families Network of San Diego, a supervised visitation and exchange center. A founding member of the California Association of Supervised Visitation Professionals (CASVSP, she has also served as an invited expert for the Access to Visitation Grant Program Consultant Group. Ms. Richards has served as Editor of the Supervised Visitation Network (SVN) publication, “Sitting In,” the Chapter Secretary for the Southern California Chapter of SVN and has developed a training curriculum for San Diego-based visitation professionals and community members focusing on the application of Standard 5.20 for both dependency and family law cases. She currently provides professional development and best practice recommendations for supervised visitation professionals.

**Denise Riley** is the founder of *A+ Visitation & Family Services*, serving Ventura, Santa Barbara and Los Angeles counties. She also has been certified through Breakthrough Parenting to instruct Parenting Classes. Ms. Riley is an invited expert for the Access to Visitation Grant Program Consultant Group and is a current Board member with California Association of Supervised Visitation Professionals (CASVSP).

**Erin Runnion** is the Founder and Director of The Joyful Child Foundation as well as The Surviving Parents Coalition, and a member of the Board of Directors for the National Association to PROTECT Children, Erin has become a highly respected spokesperson, spreading her message in frequent media appearances, keynote addresses, and presentations for both government and private organizations. As a consultant to the Orange County Department of Education for abduction prevention education, Erin delivers child safety empowerment programs to children, parents, law enforcement, and teaching staff. Her goal is to enable communities to bring personal safety education to every. The Joyful Child Foundation was founded in Memory of Samantha Runnion, (TJCF) a nonprofit organization dedicated to preventing child sexual abuse and abduction. Samantha was kidnapped and murdered in 2002. Erin is dedicated to ensuring Samantha’s tragic death continues to be a catalyst to engage adults in our collective responsibility in protecting our nation’s children.

**Georgia A. Thompson, M.A., MBA, IMFT**, is the Program Director of Community Services and part of the leadership team for over thirteen years for Bienvenidos Children’s Center. She is responsible for the development, management, and leadership of five community based programs. The programs include Family Preservation, Cal WORKs-Domestic Violence, and Partnerships for Families- 0-5 child abuse prevention. Within the scope of services for the various programs understanding and applying the knowledge of child development is a keep component in working with families to facilitate change in their family dynamics. Ms. Thompson has facilitated a host of training topics for over 18 years, including how to Apply Supervised Visitation Standards of Practice to the visitation process, Child Development, Mandated Child Abuse Reporting, Case Management, Who’s Listening Any Way, Anger Management, Domestic Violence, Safety and Security, and more. Previously, she was the Program Director of Los Angeles Wings of Faith, Inc. agency for 20 years. The agency provides community-based services including on-site supervised visitation services, mental health assessments, teaching and demonstration homemaking services, and low-cost mental health counseling. Wings of Faith, Inc. is a past ACCESS grant recipient under the Superior Courts of Los Angeles County. Ms. Thompson is a community advocate for the safety and well-being of children and has served on coalition committees, neighborhood watch, and has served on boards of directors that focus on the well-being of children and families. Ms. Thompson is presently, pursuing her doctoral degree at the University of Phoenix, Arizona in Organizational Management and Leadership. Her dissertation topic is Leadership Behaviors of Supervised Visitation Providers: A Qualitative Exploration.

**Other Presenters TBD**