



The Connecticut Council
for Non-Adversarial Divorce

CCND CONNECTION

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Jennifer Luise Champagne, MA, LPC

Happy Spring to all of our CCND members! As the weather begins to improve and we are able to get out and about more and more, I hope it brings renewed energy and enthusiasm to all of you!

We have been very busy here at CCND since our last newsletter. Our mediation and collaborative trainings have continued to be well-attended and positively received by all of those individuals furthering their knowledge of these non-adversarial approaches. We have continued to offer interesting lunch and learn presentations on a regular basis and are grateful for these workshops on various topics that are timely and relevant to our work. Most recently we have heard about children with special needs, and information on Jennifer's Law. Please watch your email and look at the listing of professional development events so that you don't miss any of these workshops for our members.

Connections among our membership is critically important, and please remember we have a variety of opportunities for everyone. Mediator Meetups and Collaborate & Connect are all ways for you to exchange ideas and discuss topics with your colleagues. If you are looking for something informal, Thankful Thursday continues the first Thursday of every month. The Collaborative Network has brought together representatives from each of the practice groups throughout the state. Whether it is discussing how we can engage and support newly trained members, or discussing the similarities and differences between the groups, these conversations will continue several times throughout the year. The goal is to ensure that ambassadors of each practice group help to bridge the gap between CCND and the practice groups. At our most recent meeting, one of the suggestions was to encourage a "meetup" of two practice groups. Now that we have all been working via zoom, it broadens the opportunities for us to work together without worrying about geography! If you are a member of a practice group, think about scheduling a meet up with another group from among the state!

Our public education committee has been meeting and beginning to plan a large public outreach in the spring and fall. The spring event will coincide with the Innovation initiative of IACP. The second event, scheduled for the fall, will be a series of presentations to educate the public about mediation and collaborative divorce options. Please watch your email for specifics as the details unfold.

Our website was in need of a major overhaul and had been experiencing major difficulties over the last several months. It has undergone construction, and just recently launched again. We expect a few more hiccups and each member will be asked to log into their profile to ensure it is accurate.

Jill Bicks and her committee were very busy initiating the process of having the legislature adopt the Uniform Collaborative Law Act. Thank you to those who sent their emails to the representatives in support of the initiative! Check out the article in this newsletter for more details.

The growth and development of CCND is the result of a hardworking Board and many committees made up of CCND members. As we continue to grow mediation and collaborative practice through the state, we need all of you to be stewards of this organization and of the practice of non-adversarial divorce. Please reach out and get involved, we would love to have your ideas and energy! We have many committees to assist with the various needs of the organization, and we welcome your participation! Please contact me if you can help!

I hope to continue to see you in the zoom rooms and hopefully in person soon!

NOTES FROM THE BOARD

Abby Cole, PhD.

15 years ago, I emerged from the confidential bubble of psychotherapy, and retrained as a collaborative professional and divorce mediator. To me the great joy of my new work was connecting with colleagues, working as a team member and expanding my professional network from the realm of mental health to attorneys and financial professionals. My engagement in CCND has been critical in connecting me with so many cherished colleagues, and my years on the board have deepened so many of these bonds.

Living the COVID lifestyle the last two years, far too many professionals have become isolated socially and have lost interest in their work. CCND has provided an essential antidote to the loneliness of working from home, by offering a plethora of opportunities to network, learn and connect via zoom. The paralysis in our courts presented a perfect moment for families to turn to non-adversarial approaches to divorce, and CCND was perfectly positioned to support the professional community as we grew.

Suddenly collaborations were taking place between colleagues who worked hours apart from each other, as travel time ceased to be a barrier for teams. And clients were able to choose the divorce professionals they wanted to work with, instead of those who practiced nearby, extending the reach of non-adversarial professionals to every town in Connecticut.

Certainly, I miss the energy of being together at seminars and dinner meetings with all of you, although no one misses the agony of sitting in traffic en route to those meetings. What impresses me most is that through this tough time CCND has continued to grow. We have trained many more mediators and collaborative professionals, increased our membership size, grown our impact on the judiciary, and expanded our online promotion of Nonadversarial approaches to the general public. We continue to welcome new members onto our committees and our board, and are thrilled by the energy and ideas they have injected into CCND. Divorce is changing substantially in Connecticut, and I'm so proud of everyone who has joined together to create this seismic shift.



**"There is a better way to
handle your divorce
in the state of Connecticut."**



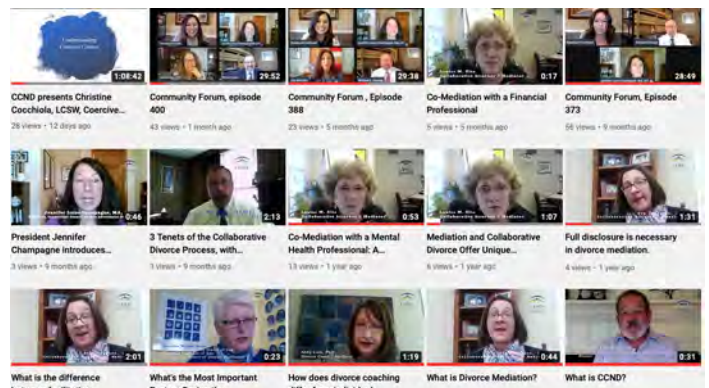
HOW TO CONNECT

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Have you seen our collection of videos on YouTube?

CCND President, Jennifer Luise Champagne, Vice President Michael Conway, and Board Member Rosemarie Ferrante have been busy raising public awareness about non-adversarial divorce options by appearing on Comcast Channel 23 show Community Forum. Have a show idea? Email Rosemarie!



UNMUTE YOURSELF

Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of CCND. CCND Connection's Editorial Team are accepting Letters to the Editor and/or Opinion articles which members would like to submit for consideration of publication. Please send all such submissions to Eva DeFranco.

Every Family Lawyer's Duty to Inform Clients and Prospective Clients about Family Dispute Resolution Alternatives

Carolyn Wikes Kaas

It is an ongoing discussion in most jurisdictions how best to educate divorcing and separating parties about the availability of the family dispute resolution [FDR] alternatives to litigation. Surely the court system has both an incentive and a responsibility to provide the parties with information on the array of options, especially for those high numbers of people who arrive at the courthouse door without the benefit of legal counsel. But the legal professional can and must do more as well.

I believe it is the ethical responsibility of every family lawyer to be fully informed about the family dispute resolution alternatives – whether or not they offer those services themselves—and to counsel every prospective client about the pros and cons of those approaches for that person. Clients are entitled to make their decisions about which process to pursue with a robust level of informed consent.

Although there has been some discussion that clearer ethical rules should be passed to make even more clear that lawyers have this duty to advise, in fact the duty already exists. A close reading of the existing model Rules of Professional Conduct, coupled with the sophisticated state of the practice of both mediation and collaborative practice, means that a family lawyer who fails to counsel about FDR options is not living up to the spirit or letter of the existing rules.

Under Rule 1.1: Competence, all lawyers have a duty to be competent, which includes keeping current with all emerging approaches. As the commentary to the rule makes clear, maintaining competence is an ongoing duty. “To maintain the requisite knowledge and skill, a lawyer should keep abreast of changes in the law and its practice, including the benefits and risks associated with relevant technology, engage in continuing study and education and comply with all continuing legal education requirements to which the lawyer is subject.” (Emphasis added.)

Further, Rules 1.2: Scope of Representation and 1.4: Communications, require conversation between clients (and prospective clients) about the goals of representation and the means for accomplishing those goals. Rule 2.1: Advisor further permits lawyers to advise clients on matters not solely legal, including “other considerations such as moral, economic, social and political factors, that may be relevant to the client’s situation.” The commentary to Rule 2.1 expressly mentions the need for informing the client about alternatives to litigation. “Similarly, when a matter is likely to involve litigation, it may be necessary under Rule 1.4 to inform the client of forms of dispute resolution that might constitute reasonable alternatives to litigation.” (Emphasis added.) The Rule is permissive, in that it says “may,” but it is precisely the existing state of the practice of non-adversarial alternatives that makes such advice an imperative under the current circumstances.

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UNMUTE YOURSELF

Every Family Lawyer's Duty to Inform Clients and Prospective Clients about Family Dispute Resolution Alternatives (continued)

Lawyers who offer services that include alternatives to litigation, such as mediation and/or Collaborative Law are quite adept at talking with prospective clients to help them choose the approach that is most appropriate for their family. Even if a client starts down the litigation road, the lawyers who themselves offer mediation and collaborative options usually watch for opportunities to switch gears -- to resolve the case early and more amicably, whether through mediation or perhaps arbitration. These lawyers willingly and expertly fulfill their duty to inform clients of their range of options.

Those lawyers who only offer litigation services are not exempt from this obligation. They must accept that they also have the duty to know about, and counsel about, the dispute resolution alternatives. It is unconscionable to withhold important information from the prospective client to push them into litigation blindly. Even if the lawyer is "merely" uninformed, and not staying silent for the purpose of making it more likely that the client will retain them, it is still a violation of the duty to inform. Given the state of the development of the non-adversarial alternatives in family law, and the beneficial impact of those approaches for parties and their children, there is no credible question that it is "necessary under Rule 1.4 to inform the client" of all these non-adversarial alternatives. Just as a lawyer cannot willingly ignore new legal precedents, they cannot pretend new practice modalities are not tried and true options for parties. Moreover, if the client wants to mediate or pursue collaborative law, the litigator must refer them out.

Some lawyers who offer mediation and collaborative options shudder at the thought of how a family litigator who does not practice these approaches would describe them, and perhaps advise clients against them. They worry about holding those attorneys to this duty; perhaps it is better not to point it out to them. And yet, it is already too late to hide it -- the duty already exists. We cannot and should not hold back from expecting all family lawyers to get with the program of making sure all parties understand they have choices. It is a truism that the more FDR lawyers offer those options, and the more successful they are in helping clients separate in a non-adversarial manner, the stronger the duty becomes for all lawyers to educate themselves about the alternatives and who would benefit from them.

We have to assume the good faith of our litigation colleagues. And then, we have to help educate them, and even prepare documents for them to offer the prospective clients—in our words, not theirs. But even if the "worst" happens, and a litigation lawyer describes the FDR options poorly to a prospective client, is that really worse than that same lawyer remaining completely silent? Perhaps that client goes home and googles the term "Collaborative law" because they heard it for the first time – and uncovers the wealth of good information out there.

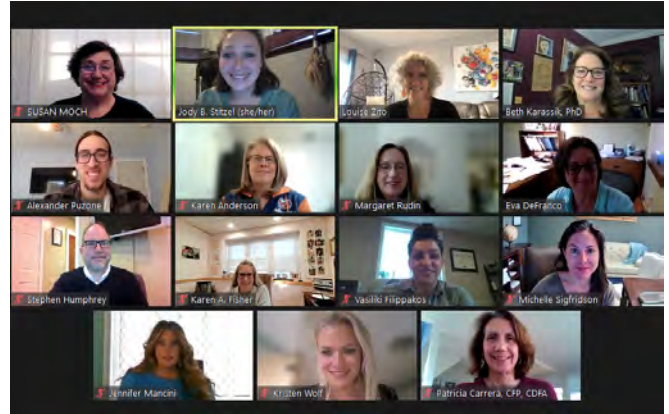
We were the future. Now we are the present. That evolution creates a duty that all lawyers see the new reality clearly, and then to make sure the clients see it, too.

Congratulations New Members!

CCND congratulates the following recent graduates of the Basic 40 hour Divorce Mediation Training and the Basic Interdisciplinary Collaborative Divorce Training. We extend a warm welcome to our newest members!

MARCH 2021 COLLABORATIVE TRAINING GRADS

Kathy Boufford
Soumya Evans
Jennifer Mancini
Michelle Sigfridson
Robin Abramowitz
Susanne Snearly
Maria Hampton
Randolph "Rick" Richardson
Traci Provost
Natalie Robbins
Tamara Conway
Susan Marks
Josh Kershenbaum
Angela Laidlaw
Kristina Darwood
Michelle Cortez-Harkins
Susan Moch
Megan Filipi

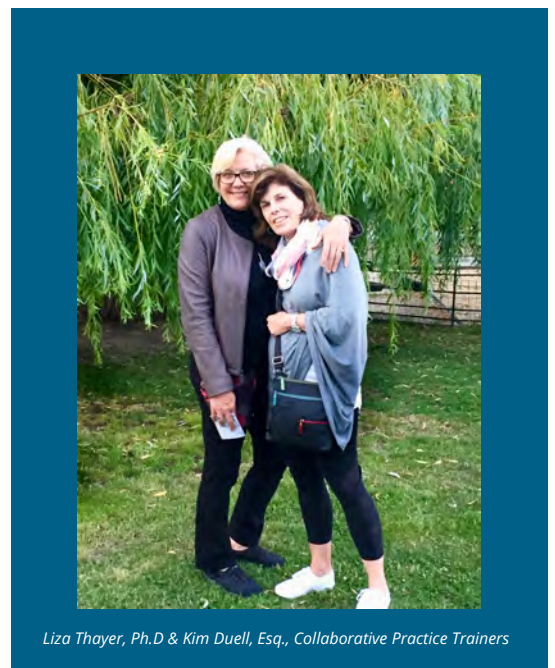


FEBRUARY 2022 MEDIATION TRAINING GRADS

Jennifer Mancini
Kristen Wolf
Patricia Carrera
Stephen Humphrey
Karen Anderson
Michelle Sigfridson
Karen Fisher
Margaret Rudin
Vasiliki Filippakos
Susan Moch
Alexander Puzone

SEPTEMBER 2021 COLLABORATIVE TRAINING GRADS

Richard Rochlin
Linda Bertollette
Krystal Ramos
Stephanie Norton
Mondana Nikouri
Kristen Wolf
Charlotte Ejderberg
Patricia Carrera
Sheryl Shaugnessey
Stephen Humphrey
Carolyn Conlon
Scott Birrell
Rebecca Kinsel
James Wing
Olivia Summerhill
Ashley Taylor
Joshua Feldman
Thomas Esposito
Stacie Provencher
Jake Pezzullo
Jenna Hyler



Liza Thayer, Ph.D & Kim Duell, Esq., Collaborative Practice Trainers

Update On The Uniform Mediation Act In Connecticut

Mark Soboslai

The ADR Section of the Connecticut Bar Association has been working diligently to have the Uniform Mediation Act (UMA) established as law in the State of Connecticut. As professionals involved in mediation of divorce and family matters, we might think that the process of getting a uniform mediation law passed would be rather uncomplicated and straightforward. Yet, for a number of reasons, the process is not as simple as one might assume.

Over the years, mediation has become an increasingly popular choice for parties involved in virtually any type of legal dispute seeking an out-of-court resolution. Mediation is used in multiple types of civil cases including, for example: various torts and personal injury claims; all varieties of employment disputes; complex, multi-party construction cases; probate matters which also may involve multiple parties; and, of course, divorce and family matters. This list is by no means complete but it illustrates how widely pervasive mediation has become as a dispute resolution process option. Accordingly, the task of obtaining legislative approval of the Uniform Mediation Act has first required significant attention to existing state laws and procedural rules which already include provisions governing various aspects of mediation in the State of Connecticut.

Among other things, the Act provides a privilege that assures confidentiality for the participants. Protecting mediation confidentiality enhances the effective use of mediation and builds public confidence that the mediator will not take sides or disclose the statements of the participants in the process in the context of other investigations or judicial processes. The Act promotes integrity of the mediation process by requiring mediators to disclose conflicts of interest. Further, because mediations sometimes involve participants in different states with potentially differing laws, establishing uniformity enhances public confidence and party self-determination. Nevertheless, as the Preamble indicates: “the Drafters operated with respect for local customs and practices by using the Act to establish a floor rather than a ceiling for some protections. It is not the intent of the Act to preempt state or local rules that are consistent with the Act....”

The process of obtaining legislative approval of the UMA has occupied the time and attention of a many dedicated individuals working “behind the scenes” toward the goal of eventually presenting a bill to the Connecticut legislature for review and approval. One of the first steps in the process involves retaining attorneys to draft the law taking into account any exceptions or special provisions as necessary to allow the uniform law to fit within the Connecticut legislative landscape. Once that drafting process is complete, another important step is to offer opportunities for interested stakeholders such as CCND, the Connecticut Bar Association, and others interested in mediation in Connecticut to review that draft legislation. The bill will eventually be submitted to the Connecticut Legislative Commissioner’s Office (LCO) for further review and editing. The LCO is staffed with skilled professionals who review virtually every piece of legislation that is ultimately presented to the legislature via the appropriate legislative committee for a vote. Typically, a new law is also accompanied by an Executive Summary which either the drafting attorneys or the LCO will prepare.

As of the present time, it is expected that the bill will be ready for review sometime this summer. If all goes as planned, it is hoped that the Act will be ready for a vote in the 2023 legislative session. As with any law, there are usually some purely “political” questions to be addressed. This involves determining any opposition to the legislation; the specific basis for such opposition; and, accommodating to the extent possible any such opposition with additional amendments or edits to the proposed bill.

To read the Act as drafted by the commission, go to: www.uniformlaws.org and select the “Final Act Documents” tab.



J.D. FORM 278: Please File It!

In November of 2019, at the request of CCND board members, Judge Albis created J.D. Form 278: Notice of Collaborative Divorce/Mediation. The notice is designed to inform the Court that a divorce matter is being mediated or resolved through a collaborative divorce process. Since its creation, judges have used the form to help manage cases. The form has also been helpful in avoiding family relations review of separation agreements before agreements can be sent to a Judge for approval; as is the case with other self-represented agreements. CCND has been asking the judicial branch to track mediation and collaborative divorce cases for years. Form 278 would allow the judicial branch to track. The judicial branch has informed us that the forms filed in 2020 and 2021 are extremely low: less than 200 for each year. Anecdotally, we know that there are far more divorce cases that are resolved through mediation and collaborative processes than what is being reported. CCND and the Task Force on Reimagining Divorce in Ct. are digging deeper into these numbers. However, it is critically important that all attorneys who resolve cases through mediation or collaborative divorce file the form with the uncontested documents. If we do not file Form 278 in our mediated and collaborative cases, the judicial branch cannot count the cases in their tracking. In general, our collective voice for non-adversarial divorce may well have limited impact with the branch if the number of verified cases are negligible as the current numbers suggest. Please file the form in every applicable case.



A Word From CCND's Professional Development Committee

MEMBERS: MICHELLE ADELMAN, ED BRYAN, SUSAN BUSBY, SOPHIE HELENEK, BOB HORWITZ, BETH KARASSIK, RICK RICHARDSON, SUSANNE SNEARLY, AND LOUISE ZITO

2022 began with a Lunch & Learn by our own James Russell on the Child Tax Credit in Mediation and Divorce. This was followed soon after by a Panel discussion organized by CCND Board Member and Treasurer Sophie Helenek and Attorney Ed Bryan on How to Approach Divorce in Families with Special Needs Children. Attorney Brendan Holt then hosted January's Mediator Meetup.

February began with the 40-Hour Mediation Training led by Attorneys Eva DeFranco and Louise Zito, along with guest presenters Sidney Horowitz; Ph.D., Elizabeth Thayer, PhD; Lisa Gresham, CDFA; and Beth Karassik, Ph.D.

CCND President Jennifer Champagne continued monthly Thankful Thursday Happy Hours on the first Thursdays of the month.

Our newly designed and upgraded website will easily handle your registrations for our upcoming events. Keep your eyes open for the email announcements.

BOOK REVIEW

Traci Provost, CDFA

Divorce & Separation – A Practical Guide to Making Smart Decisions. by Rosemarie Ferrante (CCND Board Member) & Lili Vasileff (CCND Member), is part of a series spearheaded by Michael Lang, a prominent leader in the field of conflict resolution with more than 40 years' experience in the areas of family, workplace, organizational, congregational and public policy disputes, and the 2020 recipient of the APFM's (Academy of Professional Family Mediator) prestigious Outstanding Professional Mediator Award. The book is currently available with published versions for Connecticut, Florida, Vermont, Oregon, California, Arizona, Massachusetts, Illinois, Colorado, Pennsylvania and New Jersey. CCND members Lili Vasileff and Rosemarie Ferrante contributed the Connecticut state specific content, and it is filled with tons of helpful resources.

The underlying premise of this book is that, with basic information, helpful questions and a guide to cooperative decision making, divorcing couples can think for themselves and make effective decisions. Their approach mirrors the foundational principle of self-determination. This is NOT a DIY divorce book but rather an educational tool for couples to educate themselves while working with their professional advisors and advocates.

What I liked most about this book is that it is truly written for a layperson who is facing divorce. This book is an easy to read, easy to understand guide, that provides basic information from the onset of deciding to untie the knot, to the final agreement mechanics. It is neither an instruction manual or a list of pre-packaged options, but, instead it educates the reader about the options for obtaining a divorce, and provides accurate details about the two main components of divorce: the children, and finances. The other aspect that is addressed throughout the book are the emotions that arise during the different stages of the process.

This book helps the reader learn the questions to ask while always coming back to this one critical component: no one knows what is best for the family, except the family itself. It reads a bit like a "divorce support group" which I find to be extremely helpful as it can save the reader time and money by using this book to learn more about the process and what to really expect verses listening to friends, surfing the internet, or using expensive professionals to educate them.

One of the best parts of this book is the 20-page resource toolbox. Lili and Rosemarie did an exhaustive job to include every resource you can think of, including websites, support groups, books, court resources, even Collaborative Divorce Practice Group links. This valuable toolbox is reason enough to have an ample supply of this book in your office.

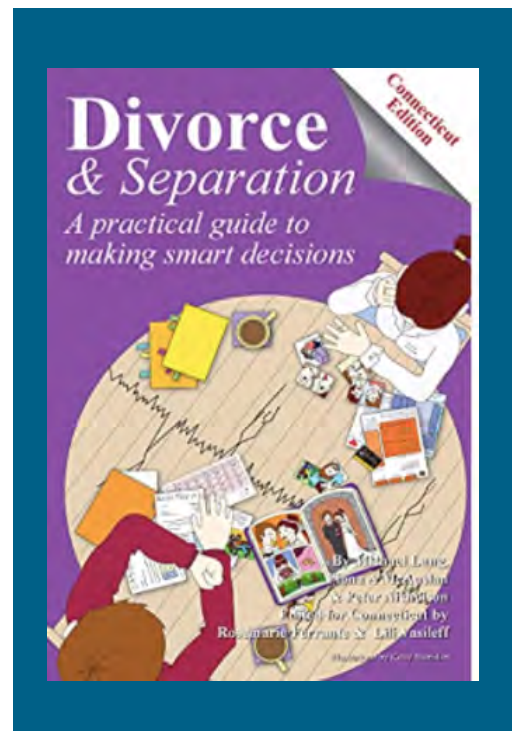
As professionals, we are all busy and sometimes forget that our clients have not been through this process before. This book is a welcome companion to the professional resources we provide. Your clients will thank you for introducing them to this well written, well-organized, thorough resources, during one of the most difficult times in their lives.

IACP Update

The 23rd annual IACP Networking and Educational Forum will be at the Gaylord Palms Resort and Convention Center in Orlando, Florida from October 27 through 30. The theme is "Share the Collaborative Magic!" Registration will open mid-2022.

IACP's website www.collaborativepractice.com is a very useful resource that provides a wealth of information Anyone can access information about collaborative practice and upcoming events like the Forum simply by clicking on one of three tabs at the top of the page. All IACP members have access to that information and much more which is available under the "Resources" tab.

Check it out!





COMPETENCY BASED CREDENTIALING FOR MEDIATORS

Eva DeFranco

Other than the regulations that exist in our own professions, mediation is not a regulated profession in CT and most other states. Generally, there are no licensure or certification requirements as a prerequisite to practicing mediation. Individuals can and do “practice” mediation without adequate training and competency. There exists a plethora of “advanced certifications” that a practitioner can essentially purchase – usually for a fee and an unvetted application of experience—from various associations; but, these are largely meaningless except perhaps to the unsuspecting and often misled public.

Without the wholesale implementation of competency- based credentialing, the mediation profession as a whole continues to suffer. Lack of training leads to reduced competency which leads to an erosion of the public’s confidence in mediation in general. Lack of uniformity in the practice of mediation leads to confusion within and without the profession and often the distortion of mediation itself in practice.

Model standards have been enacted by state and national mediation professional organizations such as the Academy of Professional Family Mediators. These particular standards have been in widespread use for almost a decade and form the backbone of accepted best practices for divorce mediation practitioners. They also provide the platform for national competency.

In 2014, the Professional Mediation Board of Standards (PMBS) was formed to develop competency-based credentialing efforts for mediators. Credentialing will help define the field, provide the public with a clear idea of services they are buying, will allow for the establishment of ethics complaints and review like other professions and will generally help maintain integrity of the mediation profession. The Professional Mediation Board of Standards has made significant progress in the development of competency- based credentialing. Credentialing will include minimum education and training requirements, mentoring and sponsorship, knowledge assessment, review of skills, completed cases and client feedback. The assessment process is currently being tested by PMBS. The hope is that the assessment process will be available for widespread use within the next few years. Mediation is a viable, increasingly popular process for divorcing spouses. The widespread legitimacy of mediation professionals will be elevated by competency- based credentialing to ensure that mediation is practiced only by trained, skilled and competent practitioners.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Calendar:

April 26 at 12 pm: Collaborate & Connect hosted by Attorney Jill Bicks "Discussing the Collaborative Process with Clients During an Initial Consultation"

May 19 at 1:00pm: Mediator Meetup hosted by Attorney Kathryn Bissonette

Also in May: Lunch & Learn hosted by Attorneys Deborah Noonan and Brendan Holt

June 14 at 12 pm: Collaborate & Connect hosted by Beth Karassik, PhD

July 13 at 1:00pm: Mediator Meetup hosted by Attorneys Nicole Bikakis and Louise Zito

Also in July: Lunch & Learn hosted by Attorney Wendy Price on Pre-Nups

Did you forget?

When the website is finished, you can renew online. For now, please download a hard copy and mail with your payment. Renew today!!

Benefits: online profile, workshops, events, monthly get-togethers, networking, newsletter & more.



Upcoming Collaborative Training

May 4, 5, 6, and 9:
Basic Interdisciplinary Collaborative Training presented by Elizabeth Thayer, Ph.D.; Attorney Kim Duell; and Lisa Gresham, CDFA

Other Trainings:

June 29 at 9am-12pm:
"This is the Brain on Divorce"
A half-day training presented by Beth Karassik, PhD



CCND
The Connecticut Council for
Non-Adversarial Divorce

Status of Efforts to Pass the Uniform Collaborative Law Act in Connecticut

Mark Soboslai

By now, every CCND member is undoubtedly aware that significant efforts are underway to have the Uniform Collaborative Law Act (UCLA) passed as the law of this State. Formal efforts began with a letter from Senator Will Haskell to the leaders of the Judiciary Committee in February of 2022. Although twenty-three states have passed the UCLA since it was first promulgated by the National Conference of Commissioners of Uniform State Laws in 2009 and amended in 2010, this was the first time in our State's history that the Judiciary Committee was asked to raise a bill to adopt the UCLA in this State.

It is a credit to the members of CCND that so many members have reached out to your representatives in the legislature as part of our organization's efforts to get the UCLA passed in Connecticut. While those efforts have been extremely helpful, the latest word is that it will not be on the legislative agenda during this current (short) legislative session. Nevertheless, preparations are underway for this to become an item for the legislature to consider in the next legislative session.

As part of those preparations, an important next step is to secure the endorsement of the Connecticut Bar Association. For that purpose, efforts are underway to meet with and educate members of the relevant sections and committees of the CBA. Members of CCND will be meeting with members of the CBA Family Law Section and Alternative Dispute Resolution Section. Significant momentum in favor of the law has already been developing as indicated by the recent editorial of the Editorial Board of the Connecticut Law Tribune urging the Judiciary Committee to embrace Collaborative Law.

Because the UCLA has been drafted in a form that states like Connecticut may adopt without much, if any, editorial changes or drafting revisions, the process of presenting that law for review and approval by legislators and relevant stakeholders is rather straightforward. This also helps keep the momentum moving forward.

We will continue our efforts to get the UCLA passed in Connecticut. To the extent any members of CCND are involved with or in touch with members of the CBA members or any legislators, everyone is encouraged to help with this process.

A copy of the UCLA and the Rules is available on the IACP website www.collaborativepractice.com under the Resources tab/Member Resources page.



AN INTERVIEW WITH SUSAN MOCH, ESQ.

Why, after almost 40 years of litigating divorces, did you decide to obtain training for collaborative divorce and mediation?

When I first began to practice family law, collaborative did not exist, and mediation was a foreign idea. Mediated agreements were very often full of holes and led to difficulties post dissolution. In the past 10 years or so, as collaborative gained traction and mediators had more extensive training, I became aware that more people were able to solve issues without litigation. The final nudge towards taking training was actually COVID. I had just been involved in a terrible custody litigation (that actually was finished in a remote 4 day hearing). The first months of COVID, without court and litigation, were the first time in 40 years I was not fighting all the time. I realized that while I am still a great litigator, I was becoming reluctant to rejoin the battle. Mediation and collaborative divorces started to make a lot of sense.

What were some of the aha moments for you in these trainings?

The first 'aha' moment came in the collaborative training, when I finally understood the idea of a 'paradigm shift' and was able to understand how in litigation we put the fight ahead of our clients. It was also an 'aha' moment when I understood that mediation and collaborative divorces are not limited to those couples who are agreed on virtually all issues. It is the reaction to those surprises and how the parties are guided to work out their issues that is really different.

How has your training affected how you practice?

I have noticed that rather than stressing how we can fight if pinned to the wall, I discuss how we can agree and reach out to understand the other side. I do, of course, advise clients that if we are attacked unjustly we will fight back, but it is no longer the sole emphasis.

What do you do for fun in your spare time?

Spare time???? Actually, since COVID started I have had a lot of spare time. I do a lot more reading for fun, mostly science fiction and biographies, and I started baking a lot of bread for friends and neighbors, and unfortunately, for us. We also expanded our garden and have been preserving veggies. There is a real kick from eating food grown at home.

What advice do you have for young divorce lawyers?

Divorce is not a field to pick lightly. It takes an enormous emotional toll. Young attorneys who want to practice in this field should take all the training available to them.

What are you most proud of in your career?

I am proud of all the public service I have done for my community and the Bar. I am very proud of some of the cases that I tried or worked on the appeal that have changed Connecticut divorce law in positive ways for litigants.

What gives you joy?

Nature gives me joy. I love watching sunrise and sunset over the water, sitting outside and reading, etc. And I love my family.



The Connecticut Council for
Non-Adversarial Divorce



Susan Moch was admitted to the Ct Bar in 1977. She began her career with the State's Attorneys Office and in 1986 began her impressive career as a family litigator. She has served the CBA Family Law Section in many capacities over the years and is currently a member of its Executive Committee. She is a Town Moderator for Weston, a Justice of the Peace, was an elected police commissioner for many years and is currently a Small Claims Magistrate. Susan recently completed the Collaborative Divorce Training and the 40 Hour Divorce Mediation Training. CCND welcomes Susan to our team of distinguished professionals.



Thank you Cortress!

Cortress Jones has been our administrator for the past five years, and has decided not to renew her contract with us. She has other employment and is beginning school, feeling as though it is time to focus her energies in other areas.

She has helped the organization in many ways over these years and we wish her well in her next endeavors. We thank her for all that she has done for our membership and the board!

NOTE: We are in the process of advertising and searching for Cortress' replacement. In the meantime, continue to use the email address for our organization for any issues and concerns, as we have someone temporarily assisting during this transition. Any questions, please reach out to Jen Champagne.

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