



The Connecticut Council
for Non-Adversarial Divorce

CCND CONNECTIONS ~ Spring/Summer 2025

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Rosemarie Ferrante, JD



Dear CCND Members,

This is an exciting time for divorce mediation and collaborative divorce in Connecticut. The anticipated enactment of the Uniform Mediation Act (UMA) and the Uniform Collaborative Law Act (UCLA) this October marks a powerful affirmation of the principles CCND has championed for years. This moment marks more than just legislative success; it is a cultural shift. With the UMA and UCLA soon to be a part of Connecticut's legal framework, our state is sending a clear message: families deserve access to private, structured, child-centered alternatives to litigation. These new laws reinforce our mission to offer dignified, respectful, and non-adversarial processes for families.

At our recent Board retreat, we reflected on this progress and charted next steps. We are developing additional public-facing tools, videos, digital materials, and website updates, to help families understand the value of working with CCND members. We're also reviewing our outreach content to better highlight mediation and collaborative professionals and improve public visibility.

Looking ahead, we will host discussions on how the UCLA and UMA will impact our practices; please don't miss them. We're also continuing to highlight the fact that CCND members are trained, vetted, and committed to excellence. This year, we updated our Best Practices for Review and Drafting Counsel, providing clear guidance on supporting respectful agreement review in mediation and collaborative contexts. These standards, along with our ongoing advanced trainings and monthly discussions, reflect our dedication to maintaining the highest levels of competence in our field.

Please share our upcoming Introductory Interdisciplinary Collaborative Training and 40-Hour Divorce Mediation Training with your networks. These are excellent opportunities to grow our community and expand our collective impact.

We hope to see you at our Annual Meeting on September 11, 2025, where we'll honor Sid Horowitz for his tremendous legacy. We're also pleased to welcome members of the Connecticut judiciary, who will speak to the growing collaboration between our professional community and the court system. This is a powerful moment for our field. Whether you're newly trained or a seasoned practitioner, we invite you to get involved. Join a committee, attend an event and help shape what's next.

Together, we are changing the way families experience divorce and leading with compassion, professionalism, and integrity.

Rosemarie Ferrante
President, CCND

2025 Annual Conference

A Powerful Day of Learning, Reflection, and Action

On May 16, 2025, the Connecticut Council for Non-Adversarial Divorce (CCND), in partnership with Quinnipiac University School of Law's Center on Dispute Resolution, hosted our Annual Conference: From Awareness to Action: Understanding, Assessing, and Planning for Power Imbalances, Coercive Control, and Abusive Behaviors in Divorce. The day brought together a wide range of professionals, mediators, attorneys, mental health and financial specialists united in their commitment to improving outcomes for families navigating divorce in the presence of power imbalances, coercive control and abusive behaviors.

Dr. Christine Cocchiola opened the conference with a compelling, evidence-based session on coercive control, the often unseen but defining dynamic of domestic abuse. She urged professionals to move beyond the misleading label of "high conflict" and recognize the patterned, controlling behavior that often persists post-separation.

David Mandel, founder of the Safe & Together™ Institute, followed with a call to reframe our systemic responses. Drawing from his book *Stop Blaming Mothers and Ignoring Fathers*, he challenged professionals to hold perpetrators accountable, partner more effectively with survivors, and adopt child-centered practices.

The final session, led by Kayte Cwikla-Masas and Laura Silva of The Center for Family Justice, bridged theory and practice. Their presentation provided a clear blueprint for collaboration between family law professionals and domestic violence agencies.

A clear takeaway from the day was this: awareness is not enough. As professionals committed to non-adversarial divorce, we must embed trauma-informed, abuse-aware practices into every facet of our work and build systems that don't just recognize coercive control and other abusive behaviors, but also actively protect families from their harm.



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CCND Board of Directors Retreat Focuses on Strategic Goals



In 2013 and 2014, CCND (now CCND) undertook a lengthy process to identify long term strategic goals for the organization and created an Operating Plan. CCND's Board of Directors has, in large part, been guided by this Plan in its efforts to achieve our mission which is worth restating here:

There have been tremendous strides over the last 10 plus years within our organization and in the fields of divorce mediation and collaborative divorce in general. CCND has evolved from a kitchen table board of like-minded professionals dedicated to promoting divorce mediation to the well-structured, and nationally respected professional organization for mediation and collaborative divorce professionals in Ct. The non-adversarial divorce profession itself has experienced a cultural shift: from widely misunderstood and criticized models of divorce to well-understood, legitimate alternatives to litigation models. That trend continues as the word about the potential benefits of divorce mediation and collaborative divorce continues to spread.

Over the last 10 years, the Board has strategically focused on three main goals for our members: providing quality education, training and networking opportunities to our members so that our members can offer excellent and ethical services to the consuming public; promoting real awareness of non-adversarial divorce options to the public by providing truthful information and a directory of trained professionals that are well equipped to perform these services; and, continuing to help elevate and legitimize the professional practice of non-adversarial models of divorce both within our state and nationally.

On June 6, 2025, your Board of Directors met to discuss strategic next steps to further our mission. We discussed strategies to increase our board capacity, increase member involvement in committees and leadership pathways for the CCND Board of Directors. We recommitted to raising awareness of non-adversarial divorce AND our members to the public by unifying and refining our public message, building strategic partnerships across Ct and the tri-state area and enhancing our public facing tools. We also brainstormed ideas to continue our commitment to create opportunities for high quality trainings and educational opportunities for our members.

We have come a long way; we have a long way to go. Remember, mediation and collaborative divorce are infants compared to litigation, and, as such, the field continues to grow and evolve—for the better. CCND is defined by all of us—our valued members. By the same token, we can go only so far as the collective energy of those who get involved.



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Notes From The Board



D. Susanne Snearly, J.D.

Greetings!

When I was asked to write this piece, it came at a truly profound moment in CCND history as well as the fact that my term on the Board is coming to its conclusion. So, I entered this assignment with a lot of memories at the fore on how we got here.

A little background: For me, my true initiation into the mediation world was as an attorney representing the interests of the Connecticut Bar Association, Family Law Section (CBA/FLS). As a result of requests from the Judicial Branch and a spate of claims made against non-attorney mediators alleging the unauthorized practice of law (UPL) back in 1999, the Connecticut Council of Divorce Mediators (CCDM as we were known then) created the Standards of Practice Committee. I was asked to participate. Comprised of attorneys and brilliant representatives of UConn law school and the mental health profession, 11 in total, we met monthly in New Haven for approximately 18 months. Debates and discussions were intense and scholarly and even decades later; I reflect on what an amazing opportunity I was granted to have the benefit of the professional scholarship and commitment of those gifted individuals. The CBA/FLS membership was sharply divided on the issue of mediation at that time with those clearly believing it was UPL and should require licensing and those who embraced the concept we have come to represent. Whatever the outcome of the Standards Committee, I would be tasked to report back to the CBA/FLS and would certainly make some faction unhappy.

At the conclusion of the work, “Best Practices” evolved. They were formally adopted in April 2001 by CCDM and have served our organization well as a bedrock of ethical practice. I am still struck by this excerpt: CC[DM] believes that unauthorized practice of law rules serve[s] important consumer interests by protecting consumers from incompetent and unethical practices. By the same token, CC[DM] notes (in common with most academic commentators) that overly broad enforcement of UPL laws is not in the public interest if it serves mainly to protect lawyers from unwanted competition. CC[DM] believes that mediation's strength lies in its flexibility; that mediators from differing professional disciplines and backgrounds can provide clients highly competent service; and that standards in this area can be interpreted in a balanced manner that both protects the public and ensures consumer access to a broad variety of divorce resolution processes.

That was, indeed, the message delivered to the Judiciary and to the CBA/FLS – and to the public. It continues to be amplified with the work of our membership.

Fast Forward: This week, yes, THIS WEEK, our state legislature enacted the Uniform Mediation Act (UMA) AND the Uniform Collaborative Law Act (UCLA)! I cannot express the actual joy this has brought to me. This could not have happened without the ongoing, years long, dedication of Jill Bicks and Deborah Noonan, as well as many others both within and without CCND. A sweet full circle moment for me came insofar that I was tasked to address the CBA/FLS this past year with a request it vote to endorse the UCLA enactment. Unlike the presentation I was tasked with in 2000 concerning the work of the Standards of Practice Committee to an intensely divided group, the CBA/FLA voted unanimously to endorse its adoption in Connecticut. Nothing speaks higher, in my opinion, of our membership than that unanimous vote and the subsequent enactment by our legislature. For over 30 years this group has embraced multi-discipline alternative dispute resolution with intelligence, compassion, and exceptional professionalism that now represents the gold standard in our state. For me to witness and to participate in this history has been gratifying and awe-inspiring. And yet more good news: we also learned this week that our Internal Revenue Code 506(c)(6) status has been approved with the new name The CCND, Inc.

In closing, I am pleased to have my Board seat filled by the dynamic and immensely talented Nicole Bikakis, J.D., who brings energy, innovation, and creativity to our Board and I am certain she will be a part of the amazing history in the making. And I leave your Board with my sincerest gratitude for the years of wonderful professional connections and friendships that have been forged because of this organization. The future has arrived, and I encourage you all to be a part of it!



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Meet Isabel Barney, our new Executive Director!

What drew you to CCND and this role?

I was looking for an additional opportunity and nothing seemed to be the right fit. I was drawn to the similarity of my role at the Westchester County Bar Association and felt there were a lot of positive opportunities to working with CCND as well.



What experiences in your career have prepared you most for this position?

I have an undergrad degree in film & tv production because I thought I wanted to be a film director

when I was a teenager. I realized that I was a better organizer, fundraiser and coordinator than I was a filmmaker fairly early on. I like to think that I fall back on my long-term experience trying to bring people together to have an event or achieve a goal is built of that foundation of producing student films.

What book, podcast, or speaker has influenced your leadership style most?

I am not sure if it is one specifically. I like to learn and apply different elements from various books and speakers. I enjoy some of the elements of "Extreme Ownership" by Jocko Willinik and I also like Mel Robbins and her recent book "The Let Them Theory."

What's a passion or hobby of yours outside of work?

I have three boys ages 14, 10 and 10 so right now their hobbies are my hobbies. Outside of spending time as chauffeur, sideline cheering and scouting the next theater production, I am an avid reader. I tend to have 3-4 books going at once between electronic books, audio books and paper books. My topics vary widely from work-related to family to fiction. I also like to do counted cross-stitch but tend to snarky sayings rather than old-fashioned designs and I sew when I can.

• If you weren't in this field, what would you be doing? *I think it would be amazing to combine my love of travel with something creative like photography. My kids are great roadtrip buddies but they get tired of watching me take pictures of fallen trees and rock formations on your trips.*

Isabel can be reached at info@gooddivorcect.com



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CCND- Divorce With Respect Billboard

CCND has launched a billboard campaign this year that ran in May and will run again in September, at the interchange of RTE8 and 95 in Bridgeport. Our goal is to move our message around the state, in conjunction with the other efforts of our public education committee. We are excited about this initiative and thanks to Jennifer Champagne for coordinating!



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Professional Development Update



We're halfway through 2025, and it's already been an exciting and productive year for CCND! Our flagship 40-Hour Family Mediation Training was successfully completed, and our Annual Conference—"From Awareness to Action: Understanding, Assessing, and Planning for Power Imbalances, Coercive Control, and Abusive Behaviors in Divorce"—was both well-attended and financially successful. Our monthly member benefit events have continued, offering rotating opportunities for connection through Mediator Meetups, Collaborate & Connect, and CDFA Meetups. In response to member feedback from our recent survey on event preferences—and given lower attendance at past dinner events—we've decided to step away from our traditional spring and fall in-person dinner meetings. Instead, we're focusing our energy on ensuring strong participation at our two major in-person gatherings: the Annual Conference and Annual Meeting. We're also exploring engaging remote programming. If you have an idea for a virtual training or meetup, please reach out - we'd love to hear from you! A special thanks to Jill Bicks and the entire UCLA Committee for their tremendous work advocating for the recent passage of both the Uniform Collaborative Law Act (UCLA) and the Uniform Mediation Act (UMA). These landmark developments will significantly shape our field, and we look forward to offering educational workshops to help our members prepare for and navigate these changes in practice.

Mark Your Calendars - Upcoming Events:

- CCND Annual Meeting - September 11, 2025 | 5:30–8:00 p.m. Elm City Club, New Haven
- Introductory Interdisciplinary Collaborative Training - October 23, 24, 27 & 28, 8:30 a.m.–1:00 p.m.
- Monthly Meetups will continue—and we encourage you to consider hosting one! Reach out to @gooddivorcect.com to discuss further!

As always, we welcome your suggestions for future training topics, meetup themes, and program ideas. Thank you for being an engaged and valued member of the CCND community!

Your Professional Development Committee,

Edward Bryan,
Susan Busbsy,
Sophie Helenek,
Robert Horowitz,
Beth Karassik,
Megan McGrath,
Susanne Snearly,
Brendan Holt, co-chair, and
Nicole Bikakis, co-chair.



The Connecticut Council
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Legislative Update: BIG NEWS!!!!



**HARD
WORK**
pays off



Legislature Passes Two New Uniform Laws Favoring Non-Adversarial Conflict Resolution

After many years and much hard work by several members of CCND, the Connecticut legislature has now passed the Uniform Mediation Act (UMA) and the Uniform Collaborative Law Act (UCLA). The UMA had been pending before the legislature for much longer than the UCLA and it was the first of these two important laws to be passed.

On May 29, 2025, when news of the passage of the UMA was announced, it was a time to celebrate for many Connecticut lawyers and legal professionals, particularly the members of the Connecticut Bar Association's ADR committee. That committee worked tirelessly on this important uniform law for many years.

Although the UCLA was on the same legislative agenda, that agenda was very lengthy and the UCLA was far down that long list. After nearly a week of suspense, there was a collective sigh of relief among CCND members when the legislature finally passed the UCLA on June 4, 2025. With its focus upon collaborative divorce, the passage of the Uniform Collaborative Law Act is a cause for all CCND members to celebrate! Both laws take effect on October 1, 2025.



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Upcoming Events & Happenings



☀️ **Join Us for a Night to Remember!** ☀️
CCND's Annual Meeting is happening Thursday, September 11, 2025, from 5:30-8:00 PM at the Elm City Club in New Haven. You won't want to miss it!

We are honored to present the Howard Krieger Beacon Lifetime Achievement Award to the incomparable Sidney S. Horowitz, PhD a trailblazer in non-adversarial divorce and tireless advocate for children and families. With over four decades of service, Sid's impact spans clinical practice, mediation, teaching, and judicial training. His legacy is one of compassion, progress, and unwavering dedication.

To make the night even more powerful, Sid will moderate a special Q&A panel with esteemed judges: Hon. Barry Armata, Hon. Barbara Aaron. Hon. Steven Dembo. Hon. Leo Diana.

This is a rare chance to hear directly from the bench on the challenges we all face – and to ask the questions that matter most.

Come celebrate, connect, and be inspired. Let's honor those who paved the way and continue building a better future for the families we serve.

July 8 @ 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm CDFA Meet Up Zoom

Certified Divorce Financial Analysts assist in both mediation and collaborative divorce processes. Join other CDFAs for our quarterly virtual CDFA meet ups to discuss our processes, our challenges and our success stories! Announcements and links are provided to active members through email. We encourage all our colleagues to join us.

Mark your calendar!!

10/1 - Noon -Jill Bicks will lead discussion on the UCLA

10/8 - Noon - Brendan Holt will lead a discussion on the UMA



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'24/25 CCND Training Graduates

CCND extends a warm welcome to our newly trained divorce professionals!

We are confident that you will make a significant contribution to our organization and look forward to working with you to help create positive outcomes for our clients. Once again, welcome to the team!

2024 Interdisciplinary Introductory Collaborative Practice:

Brina Aia
Brendan Azoff
Andrea Berkowitz
Elise Cousineau
Heidi DeLaRosa
Vasiliki Filippakos
Alana Farnsworth
Rebecca Goodrich
Amanda Kreinbrink
Melissa Marcello
Jodie Rinde
Juliet Schnur

2025 40 Hour Divorce & Family Mediation Training:

Brina Aia
MaryAnne Bowman
Kevin Daken
Alana Farnsworth
Howard Graber
David Heuvelman
Shannon Jakubowski
Lauren Kalb
Judith Keogh
Melissa Marcello
David McGrath
Kathleen Scelfo
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Divorce with Respect Week 2022: Recorded Events



Kick off Divorce with Respect week began with CCND President Jennifer Luse Champagne and CCND Board Member Deborah Noonan join Susan Guthrie, former CT attorney and host of the well known Divorce and Beyond podcast to discuss what it means to divorce respectfully, how CCND and its members are committed to non-adversarial divorce and an overview of the week's event.



During this information session, participants will have had the opportunity to hear about the collaborative process and ask questions of the professionals. Presenters: Yvonne Shoff, Katie Bissonnette, Traci Cipriano, Elaine Ducharme, and Brenda Larkin.



This discussion focuses on college education and how it can be best addressed within the collaborative process. Presenters: Bob Opatzner, Sophie Koven, Vicki Volper, and Patricia Carrera.

We've updated our website! See our collection of videos- use them to educate your clients about non-adversarial divorce options!



HAVE NEWS?

Hosting an event? Writing an article?
Please share your news, so we can highlight you!



The Connecticut Council
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join us



Are You Interested in Joining a Committee? We need YOU!

We have lots of opportunities to get involved with CCND.
Reach out to a Board Member today!

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