

**Eighth Judicial Circuit Family Law Advisory Group (FLAG)
Minutes of February 23, 2009**

The FLAG met at the Alachua County Family and Civil Justice Center. Present were: Margaret Anderson, Ruth Angaran, Nancy Baldwin, Harvey Baxter, Bill Farley, Rebecca Feldman, Beverly Graper, Helen Gyllstrom, Nancy Huggard, Arlene Huszar, Mark Juzwiak, Sheree Lancaster, Kit McDonald, Molly McGowan, Myrna Neims, Jack Nettles, Camila Pachon, Lili Palacio, Bob Perchalski, Olga Shraybman, and Jean Westin.

Old Business

A group of members including Bill Farley, Myrna Neims, Ruth Angaran, and Arlene Huszar met with Judge Moseley, Administrative Judge of the Family Division, on February 2, 2009 to talk about plans for the FLAG. One of the topics that were discussed was the enforcement of the restrictions in our circuit's administrative order regarding online parenting classes. Our circuit requires that the classes be taken in person unless the party lives in a county that does not have a parenting class provider, the party is out of state, or on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the judge.

The group also discussed parenting plans. There is a need for three types of plans: a regular plan that most people would use; a plan for high conflict couples, and a safety plan for use when domestic violence is involved. There is currently no form approved by the Florida Supreme Court and various versions of plans have been developed. The FLAG created one and our ADR department has one they are using. We would like to compare the two and come up with one form for the circuit.

Judge Moseley raised several issues that he would like to see addressed including children's input in family cases. What kinds of questions should they be asked? At what ages is involvement in the court process appropriate? The judge suggested that we have a panel discussion about this. He would also like a program about social investigations (custody evaluations) including the cost and timeliness. We may also want a presentation about parental alienation because there is some conflict about that theory. We want the FLAG to continue to be a place for open discussions among judges, attorneys, and mental health professionals.

Program

Ruth Angaran gave a presentation about her class for high conflict couples called "New Beginnings: Shielding the Child from Conflict." The curriculum was developed in Atlanta and Ruth has been teaching it in Gainesville for about a year. She and several attorneys recounted some success stories of participants in the class. Each couple has a different issue that is a main source of conflict. In one case, it was the husband's controlling mother; in another it was the husband's new girlfriend.

The charge for the class is on a sliding scale starting with a minimum of \$50 per person and going up to \$150 per person. FLAG members encouraged Ruth to raise the fees so that people who can afford it would pay the true cost of the class. There are 8 weekly sessions. The classes are conducted on two different nights during the week so the parties do not attend together until the last night when they get together to work out a previously unresolved problem. There is a limit of 12 people in a group.

Ruth gave a PowerPoint presentation discussing each of the sessions. The presentation is attached to these minutes.

Our March 23 meeting will be the Domestic Violence training presented by retired Judge Ray McNeal. We are applying for credits for Continuing Legal Education, Continuing Judicial Education, and Continuing Education Units from the Florida Psychological Association. The meeting will start at 3:00 PM and will be in Courtroom 4A of the Family and Civil Justice Center.

Submitted by Arlene C. Huszar, Family Court Manager.