



# For today's families, new systems and services

One of the biggest challenges that dispute resolution practitioners and family attorneys face is helping families as they move through life's transitions, including separation, divorce, and child custody. The array of family dispute resolution options has expanded well beyond the original court-connected family mediation programs that started more than 40 years ago, and we think this is a good time to take stock of some of the new systems and services that are emerging to address the needs of today's families, which are as wonderfully varied as the people who create them.

The systems featured in this issue highlight the importance of taking a multidisciplinary and multifaceted approach to families in conflict. Richard Altman, a magistrate and past president of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts, and Jacqueline C. Hagerott, a former manager of the dispute resolution section of the Supreme Court of Ohio, look at an Ohio family court triage system that helps parties develop a healthy ongoing relationship and minimize the need for further court processes. Marty Swaden, an attorney, mediator, and parenting consultant, talks with Kelly Browe Olson, one of the editors of this issue, about how Minnesota has used financial and social early neutral evaluations in family cases with considerable success. District of Columbia court administrators and domestic violence researchers describe their own expanded programs, which aim to help families with a history of intimate partner abuse whose cases had previously been returned to court.

Gabrielle Davis, Loretta Frederick, and Nancy Ver Steegh, who work for and with a national resource center called the Battered Women's Justice Project, challenge traditional thinking about how and when mediation should be used in cases involving intimate partner violence. Their SAFeR model encourages

family-law court personnel, attorneys, and dispute resolution practitioners to approach the use of mediation and any other dispute resolution process with careful attention to exactly what's best for each family.

In a thorough and insightful book review, Maria Federica Moscati, a lecturer in family law at the University of Sussex, examines a collection of essays titled *LGBTQ Divorce and Relationship Dissolution: Psychological and Legal Perspectives and Implications for Practice*, which looks at LGBTQ unions and divorces from many viewpoints, including the clients'. The review discusses the distinctive, sometimes extra-legal characteristics of these relationships, again reminding us of the importance of tailoring approaches to every family's specific conflicts and transitions.

Meeting our own members' needs sometimes means reassessing a big decision. Last fall, aiming to reduce the significant costs of printing and recognizing that technology provides many ways to access material, we announced that *Dispute Resolution Magazine* was switching to a mostly-digital format. In recent months, however, we've learned that for various reasons many of our members have not been able to use the digital format as we expected, and so after considerable discussion, the Section's Council has decided to return to mostly-print form. Beginning with this issue, the magazine will be published primarily in paper format (although our overseas subscribers will continue to receive their copies in digital form, with the option of requesting a print issue) three times a year. However you receive it — on paper, on your tablet, phone, or computer — we hope you continue to read and enjoy *Dispute Resolution Magazine*. ■

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