

# 1. The Use of Social Science Research on Attachment, Overnights and Shared Parenting

Presented by Tiffany Mitchell, Ph.D., The Hon. Don Lee & Carlos Ramos, Esq.

**2. Abstract.** A consensus is emerging from the research and literature on divorce and separation about attachment, the issue of overnights and shared parenting. But how can this information be brought into court hearings or settlement processes? This workshop will explore how and when the research is useful to judges, lawyers, mediators and evaluators, in helping to focus debate on the relevant issues, to ask pertinent questions of witnesses, and to inform clients about realistic alternatives for parenting plans. (77 words)

**3. Outline.** Our workshop is focused on the practicalities of using the social science research that is, and is not, available and relevant to our work. Clearly, every family is different and the best interests standard makes clear that decisions should be customized to the particular children at issue. So, how can research that is about groups of data be useful? When is it relevant and when not?

The presentation will start with brief overviews of relevant theory and research. We will give overviews of theories and/or research on implicit and explicit bias, the modern family, same-sex parents, protection from conflict, good parenting, father involvement and shared parenting, and attachment and overnights.

Then, we will move to consider how this research (or lack thereof) is relevant:

**For judges:** As background, to understand the issues and ask pertinent questions; when and how research can be introduced as evidence.

**For lawyers:** Understanding the key issues helps lawyers organize presentations of pertinent issues, and ask witnesses relevant questions.

**For mediators:** Research can be used to teach clients and give them alternatives that they may not have thought of, and to reassure them about trying new plans.

**For evaluators:** Reports that focus on relevant issues instead of irrelevant mud-slinging will be more useful to the court; consider how a particular family fits and does not fit with research data; how to present relevant research to the court.

The workshop will be interactive and engaging. There will be a mix of didactic and experiential learning as follows:

- A. Presentations – 40 minutes
- B. Small group discussions of a case – 20 minutes
- C. Feedback – 15 minutes
- D. Concluding remarks – 15 minutes

**4. Three learning objectives.** This Workshop is designed to help participants:

- a. Testify in court and/or write expert opinion about findings and limitations of research and theory relevant to divorce and separation and development of young children.
- b. Develop parenting plans for individual families with babies and young children based on social science research and the individual family's needs.
- c. Design parent education programs and materials for parents in mediation parenting using findings and concepts from social science research.

**5. Contact information for presenters:**

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**6. One paragraph bio of each:**

**Dr. Tiffany Mitchell** is a clinical and forensic psychologist. She is known for her work in high-conflict family disputes. She has worked with hundreds of families facing the challenge of divorce or separation, as a mediator, custody evaluator, parenting plan coordinator (PPC), and family therapist. She is also an Assistant Clinical Professor of Psychology at University of California, Merced, where she teaches social psychology.

**Judge Lee** is a graduate of NYU. He received his law degree from Southwestern Law School in Southern California. Judge Lee spent five years in private family law practice. He taught family law at UCLA Law School for four years. He took the bench in 2008, first as a Commissioner and in 2012 as a Judge. He has been actively involved in legal education and sits on the bench in Contra Costa County.

**Carlos Ramos, Esq.** is a Certified Specialist in Family Law since 1999 and a former board member of the AFCC-California Chapter. Mr. Ramos is a graduate of San Diego State and UCLA Law School and has been practicing primarily in the areas of child custody and high conflict family law for most of his career. Mr. Ramos has presented workshops and participated in plenary sessions on behalf of AFCC at numerous California, Regional and National Conferences in the past.

**7. Coordinator: Tiffany Mitchell**

**8. Length of program.** 90-minute program.

Note: Full resumes are attached.