

Resolution

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arbitration, early neutral evaluation and directive mediation.

As well as offering training and accreditation in new and related ways of helping clients going through family breakdown, Resolution has devoted resources to developing training for family lawyers to encourage family solicitors to develop other skills they need to assist their clients. Listening skills, understanding child development, learning about addictive behavior, negotiation skills and understanding the impact of family breakdown on children are only a few of the courses recently offered.

Family law is increasingly an interdisciplinary field of practice, relying on, not just law skills, but also counseling, financial expertise, child psychology, the dynamics of human relationships, recognizing and dealing with domestic abuse and, in some fields of family law, medical expertise. Increasingly, solicitors are working with other disciplines to mitigate the effects of family breakdown and need to understand the role that other disciplines can offer and when to involve them. Lawyers themselves also need to widen their skill range to be able to offer a more rounded, human and holistic approach to their clients. Resolution aims to arm lawyers with those skills and to work with other family justice professionals to promote interdisciplinary working and learning.

Another important arm of Resolution's work is to lobby for the reform of family law. Resolution has been campaigning for no fault divorce for over ten years and promoted the use of pre-marital agreements (not currently enforceable in the U.K.). Policies have been developed for the better resolution of parenting time disputes and Resolution is actively engaged in discussions with the Government about promoting early interventions to resolve disputes before they become entrenched.

Resolution renamed itself in 2005 because the name Solicitors Family Law Association had the ring of a trade union or trade association and did not reflect the commitment of the Association to a better way of resolving family disputes. The name Resolution seemed to sum up our members' values.

Resolution continues to spread the message of a constructive approach to family disputes and has witnessed the effect of that message on the way in which family cases are conducted in England and Wales. However, the association is convinced it can still improve – on the skills and understanding of family lawyers, on the operation of the courts, in developing a range of alternative ways of solving family disputes and in promoting a message that a constructive approach to family breakdown is better in the long run for everyone involved. Increasingly, the goal is to work with colleagues in other jurisdictions to promote and develop that message worldwide.

For further information, contact Resolution Chief Executive Karen Mackay, at karen.mackay@resolution.org.uk or view www.resolution.org.uk.

Virtual Visitation Update


New technology is becoming a legal option for divorced parents to stay in contact with their children in custody cases. Virtual visitation is the use of electronic communication such as email, instant messaging and web conferencing, which in some states can be used as an alternative visitation option.

In 2006, Wisconsin became the second state after Utah to pass virtual visitation laws. Under the laws, judges evaluate whether the communication is in the child's best interest and whether the necessary equipment is available. As of February 2007, there are seven states considering similar legislation, which include Illinois, Ohio, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey, South Carolina and Texas.

Virtual visitation can be used for local or long distance situations. Some fear that virtual visitation could actually reduce the amount of face-to-face time those parents spend with their kids. However, proponents argue that the laws require that such communications be used to supplement, not replace, regular in-person visits.


A PDF of the Utah legislation can be accessed at www.le.state.ut.us/~2004/bills/hbillenr/hb0082.pdf and the Wisconsin legislation at www.legis.state.wi.us/2005/-data/acts/ and by clicking "WisAct 174." More information on virtual visitation, including the latest states that are considering virtual visitation laws can be found at www.internetvisitation.org.

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