WELCOME & OPENING REMARKS
WILLIAM MOORE & TESSA RICHTER

INTRODUCTION OF PANELISTS
MODERATOR: TESSA RICHTER

LIVE CONVERSATION
SUBMIT YOUR QUESTIONS VIA CHAT BOX

Q&A AND DISCUSSION

NEXT STEPS & RESOURCES
TESSA RICHTER & WILLIAM MOORE

Why Quality Legal Representation Matters for Families Affected by Substance Use Disorders

May 19, 2020 | 11 am - 12:30 pm (PT) | 2 pm - 3:30 pm (ET)

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Meet Our Panelists

Mimi Laver
Director, Legal Representation
American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law
Mimi.Laver@americanbar.org

Mimi Laver is the Director of Legal Representation at the American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law. In this position, she directs the National Alliance for Parent Representation and co-directs the Family Justice Initiative. Mimi’s publications include Opening Doors for LGBTQ Youth in Foster Care: A Guide for Lawyers and Judge, It’s My Life, Foundations for Success: Strengthening Your Agency Attorney Office and edited Representing Parents in Child Welfare Cases: A Basic Introduction for Attorneys. In collaboration with expert work groups, Mimi drafted Standards of Representation for Child Welfare Agency Attorneys and Standards of Practice for Attorneys Representing Parents in Abuse and Neglect Cases. She also drafted the Indicators of Success for Parents Representation which is a guide for courts and states with both qualitative and quantitative tools to measure progress.

Prior to joining the ABA, Mimi was a Deputy City Solicitor in the Health and Human Services Unit of the Philadelphia Law Department. Mimi earned her JD from Temple University School of Law and her BA from Vassar College.

Melissa Michaelis Thompson
Executive Director
Office of Respondent Parents' Counsel
Denver, Colorado
mthompson@coloradoorpc.org

Melissa Michaelis Thompson is the Executive Director of the Office of Respondent Parents’ Counsel, an independent judicial agency tasked with providing lawyers to indigent parents in child welfare proceedings in Colorado. Prior to the ORPC, Melissa last served as a Lead Attorney at the Colorado State Public Defender’s Pueblo Regional Office. In 2013, she was honored by the Pueblo County Bar Association with the Outstanding Young Lawyer of the Year award for Professional, Civic, and Charitable Participation and Contributions to the Community of Pueblo for her work litigating the unshackling of children in juvenile court. She serves on the National Steering Committee for the American Bar Association’s Alliance for Parent Representation. She is a graduate of the Family Defense Leadership Workshop at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Michigan and the Trial Practice Institute at the National Criminal Defense College in Macon, Georgia. Melissa received her J.D. from Wayne State University Law School, where she was an assistant editor of the Wayne Law Review, and her Bachelor of Arts from the University of Michigan with Distinction.

Graham Peper
Attorney
Jefferson County, Colorado
graham@peperlawoffice.com

Graham Peper is an attorney that has been in private practice for over 23 years. He focuses his practice on representing indigent clients as a respondent parent counsel, criminal defense attorney, and represents children’s best interest as a Guardian ad Litem. He was part of a committee that started the Family Integrated Treatment Court (FIT Court) in Jefferson County, Colorado, and has been practicing as a respondent parent counsel, or Guardian ad Litem in that court for over 10 years. Mr. Peper is currently President of Court Support Jefferson County, CO, a non-profit, that raises money for small incentives, bus passes, and pro-social activities for Jefferson County’s seven problem solving Courts. He serves on FIT Court’s Continuous Quality Improvement Committee and in FIT Court’s Steering Committee.
Tessa Richter currently serves as a Program Associate for the National Family Drug Court Training and Technical Assistance Program at the Center for Children and Family Futures (CCFF). In this role, she provides technical assistance and support for several substance abuse and child welfare-related projects. Additionally, Ms. Richter serves as the Program Manager for the Statewide System Improvement Program (SSIP), where she supports and oversees efforts to improve outcomes for families impacted by substance use disorders within the child welfare system through the institutionalization of effective family drug court practices into larger statewide systems. Prior to her position with CCFF, Ms. Richter was the Problem Solving Court Coordinator and Juvenile Programs Coordinator for the 1st Judicial District in Colorado, where she coordinated the family drug court program in Jefferson County. She also has experience as a child welfare caseworker. She completed the Women’s Addiction Services Leadership Institute (WASLI) through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) in 2015. Ms. Richter received her MSW from the University of Denver with an emphasis in Child Welfare and holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Human Development and Family Studies from the University of Missouri. She is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker.