2025 Conference Speaker Bios

Elsa Ronningstam, Ph.D.

Dr. Ronningstam is a clinical psychologist in the Borderline Personality Disorder Outpatient Program and the Adult Outpatient Services at McLean Hospital, and an associate professor of psychology in the Department of Psychiatry (part-time) at Harvard Medical School. She is also a psychoanalyst, a member of the American Psychoanalytic Association, and a faculty of the Boston Psychoanalytic Society and Institute. As a longstanding member of the Boston Suicide Study Group. Over the past 30 years, she has authored over 100 publications and given over 150 presentations, lectures, and courses, both nationally and internationally. She was the recipient of a 2014 prize for outstanding service in McLean's borderline personality disorder programs.

Magistrate Elizabeth Case, Circuit Court for Howard County

Magistrate Elizabeth Case graduated with honors from the University of Maryland Francis Carey School of Law in 1986. After graduating from law school, she served as a law clerk for the Honorable Marshall A. Levin at the Circuit Court for Baltimore City. For most of her career, she was a family law practitioner. She became a Magistrate for the Circuit Court for Howard County in 2015. Magistrate Case was trained as a mediator in 1997 and had an active family law mediation practice. She was also involved in the practice of collaborative law, holding offices with the Howard County Collaborative Law Group.

Magistrate Case has been a trainer for multiple seminars on collaborative law, mediation, parenting plans, and best practices for best interest attorneys for children. For many years, Magistrate Case participated in the National Family Resiliency Center parenting seminars addressing the topic of why a parent should mediate and not litigate his or her family law matter. Currently, she is a Magistrate primarily hearing family law cases. She also conducts settlement conferences for family law cases. Magistrate Case is a former member of the Maryland Judiciary ADR Committee and the ADR Research and Grants Subcommittee. She is a member of the Howard County Bar Association and the Women's Bar Association as well as AFCC.

Risa Garon, LCSW-C, BCD, CFLE

Risa Garon_is the Executive Director and co-founder of the National Family Resiliency Center, Inc. (NFRC) in Maryland, a private, non-profit mental health center serving children and families who are experiencing major family transitions. NFRC has received national

awards from the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges and the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts for its innovative work with children and families.

Ms. Garon is a licensed clinical social worker, board certified diplomate and certified family life educator. As a psychotherapist, Ms. Garon specializes in working with adolescents, adults and couples and serves as a divorce coach and child specialist in collaborative divorce. Ms. Garon and NFRC staff have trained judges, attorneys, mediators, pediatricians, nurse practitioners, faith community leaders and other mental health professionals locally and across the country in NFRC's C*hild and Family Focused Decision Making Model©,* a nationally recognized model that helps both parents and professionals better address the needs of children and which helps parents remain decision makers about their children.

Ms. Garon has written numerous articles in professional journals and co-authored eight books for children, parents, and professionals.

Katherine Killeen, Ph.D.

Katherine W. Killeen, Ph.D. is a licensed psychologist in private practice in Towson, Maryland. Her practice focuses primarily on family law and civil law matters including custody evaluations, fitness to parent evaluations, child sexual abuse evaluations and trauma. She has also served as a consultant to a number of agencies is the greater Baltimore area including: The House of Ruth; Baltimore City Child Protective Services; Baltimore Child Abuse Center; Harford County Child Advocacy Centre and The Children's Guild.

In addition to her private practice, Dr. Killeen has been actively involved with legal, ethical and legislative issues related to the practice of psychology. She has held a number of elective and appointed positions with the Maryland Psychological Association including President, Chair of Legislative Issues, Chair of Financial Affairs, and Member-At-Large and is currently on APA's Council of Representatives.

John Lefkowits, ABPP, Ph. D

Dr. Lefkowits is Board certified clinical psychologist in practice for thirty years. Dr. Lefkowits has appeared as an expert in most jurisdictions in Maryland, DC Superior Court and US Federal Court and has been qualified over 100 times. He conducts custody evaluations, forensic psychological evaluations, and expert testimony as well as parenting coaching. He is a member of Maryland Psychological Association Ethics Committee for 3 years and has consulted with Board of Board of Examiners of Psychologists.
He is a Provider of Executive Optimization, leadership development to Deloitte and a Member of "Psypact" allowing Dr. Lefkowits to offer services in 45 States.

Tracey Perrick, Esq.

Tracey Levin Perrick, Esq. is a Partner at Amos Perrick Law, located in Columbia, Maryland. Tracey has been a family law attorney and litigator in Howard County, Maryland, and the surrounding area since 2008. Tracey is the Co-Chair of the Howard County Bar Association Family Law Section and is a volunteer for the Howard County Circuit Court Family Law Assistance Program. Tracey is a trained and experienced Best Interest/Privilege Attorney and has been appointed many times by the Court to serve in this role. She is also a trained Collaborative Divorce attorney. She is a member of the Maryland State, Howard County Bar, and Carroll County Bar Associations. Tracey was the recipient of the Howard County Bar Association Service Award in 2016 and 2019. Tracey was selected as a Super Lawyers® Rising Star in 2012 and 2013, and as a Top Lawyer in Family Law by Super Lawyers® in from 2014 – 2025 including being selected as one of the Top 50 Women Attorneys in Maryland in 2015 and 2018, and one of the Top 100 Lawyers in Maryland in 2018. Tracey graduated Magna Cum Laude from the University of Baltimore School of Law in 2006 and after graduation served as one of two law clerks to the Honorable Patrick L. Woodward, on the Appellate Court of Maryland.

Keith Schiszik, Esq.

Keith has been practicing family law for more than 40 years, with the past 22 years dedicated to serving clients in Frederick County. A Certified Mediator since 1995, he has also long served as a Best Interest Attorney and trainer. His leadership within the legal community includes serving as Chair of the Maryland State Bar Family Law Section, Chair of the Prince George's County Family Law Committee, and Chair of the Frederick County Family Law Committee. Throughout his career, Keith has been recognized for his service and expertise. He was appointed Commissioner on the Maryland Legislative Commission on Child Custody Decision-Making from 2012 to 2014, where he chaired the Subcommittee on Legislative Changes. He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers, one of only 32 fellows in Maryland, and has been named a "Super Lawyer" every year since 2004. His additional honors include serving as a board member of the Maryland Chapter of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (2017–2024), being named a Life Fellow of the Maryland Bar Foundation, and receiving the prestigious Beverly Groner Award from the MSBA, which recognizes outstanding professionalism and career distinction.

In addition to his legal practice, Keith is deeply committed to education and mentorship. He is a frequent presenter and teacher at the Maryland Judicial College on family law matters and has helped design and teach curriculum for Best Interest Attorney certification courses. He has taught continuing education classes for family lawyers statewide through MICPEL, Section Council, county bar associations, and the Maryland State Bar Annual Meeting. Beyond Maryland, Keith has presented at national and international Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC) conferences, as well as at the Maryland Chapter's annual event. His expertise has also been sought by the

Maryland legislature, where he has testified on a range of family law initiatives. Throughout his distinguished career, Keith has combined practice, teaching, leadership, and advocacy to leave a lasting impact on family law in Maryland and beyond.

Judge Cathy Hollenberg Serrette
Senior Judge, Circuit Court for Prince George's County, Maryland

Judge Cathy Hollenberg Serrette has dedicated her career to advancing justice, equity, and opportunity for all. With over two decades of service on the Circuit Court for Prince George's County, including eight years as Family Division Coordinating Judge, she has led transformative initiatives that continue to shape Maryland's judicial landscape.

Judge Serrette initiated and chaired the Task Force to Establish the Prince George's County Family Justice Center and launched the Crossover Youth Practice Model to better support vulnerable youth. She co-chairs the Bridge from Y.E.S. Committee, which created the YES Center—a wraparound service center for young adults aging out of foster care—and led the Model Court initiative to improve outcomes for abused and neglected children. She chairs the Maryland Judicial Council's Domestic Law Committee, guiding policy and legislation on family law and domestic violence, and serves on the Supreme Court's Standing Committee on Pro Bono Legal Services, Maryland's Access to Justice Commission, and the Judicial Council's Equal Justice Committee. Judge Serrette is a co-founder and steering committee member of the of the annual MCIW Re-entry Conference and a former District Director and Maryland Chapter President of the National Association of Women Judges. She served as board president of Prince George's County's Community Legal Services and the Pro Bono Resource Center of Maryland, and as president of the Prince George's County chapter of the Maryland Women's Bar Association, she initiated the WBA's annual programming at Maryland's Waxter Juvenile Facility. Judge Serrette frequently serves as faculty for the Maryland Judicial College and sits on the editorial board of the Association of Family and Conciliatory Courts' *Family Court Review*.

Judge Serrette earned her Bachelor of Science degree, Phi Beta Kappa, *summa cum laude*, from the University of Pittsburgh, her Juris Doctor degree from George Washington University's National Law Center, and a Master's degree in International Legal Studies from American University's Washington College of Law. She is also an alumna of the Advanced Science & Technology Adjudication Resource fellowship. She draws deep inspiration from her children, grandchildren, family, and friends—and from the enduring memory of her beloved husband and parents.

Judge Ronald A Silkworth

Judge Silkworth was born in Baltimore, Maryland, August 27, 1949, has been a member of the Circuit Court bench since July, 1996, in Senior Status since 2019. He graduated from Brooklyn Park Senior High School in 1967 and attended the University of Maryland Baltimore County, (B.A., American Studies, 1972). Judge Silkworth served in the U.S. Army Reserves from 1967-73. He graduated from the University of Baltimore School of Law, J.D. in 1975. He is an *ASTAR Fellow*, (Advanced Science and Technology Adjudication Resource Judge) one of the first 58 judges in Maryland and approximately 450 nationwide trained extensively in science over seven years.

He was admitted to Maryland Bar, 1976; U. S. District Court, 1976. Judge Silkworth was a Member, American Bar Association, 1976-85; Maryland State Bar Association, 1976-96; Baltimore City Bar Association, 1976-84 (public relations committee, young lawyers' section); Anne Arundel County Bar Association, 1984- present (chair, legislative committee, 1990-94). He was a member of the Maryland Trial Lawyers Association, 1977-96 (Board of Governors, 1984-92)

Judge Silkworth has served on numerous committees and workgroups during his years as a circuit court judge and now senior judge, including but not limited to the Civil Law and Procedure Committee, the Committee on Mental Health and Addiction, Maryland Judicial Conference, Family Law Committee, Subcommittee on Sentencing, the Education Subcommittee and others. He was a member of the workgroup that planned and helped implement the Business and Technology Case-Management Program, himself becoming a Business Technology judge. He received the Maryland Leadership in Law Award, Daily Record, 2012. Judge Silkworth helped create the Civil and Family DCM Policy for the Circuit Court for Anne Arundel County, serving two terms as the family DCM Judge. He has served on numerous judiciary committees, has been a faculty member and a course coordinator for multiple programs through the Judicial Institute of Maryland, including ACES Too High, Crisis Response-An Innovative Approach, HG 8-507, Take One and Two, and others.

Michelle D. Smith, Esquire

Michelle D. Smith is a partner at Trainor, Billman, Bennett, Milko & Smith, LLP, in Annapolis, concentrating her practice in the areas of family law and domestic violence throughout Maryland for the past ten years. She has been consistently rated as a Maryland Super Lawyer and has been honored by two Maryland Governors with Citations for her work in the area of domestic violence. Ms. Smith is a long-standing member of the Board of Directors of the Anne Arundel County Bar Association and a
member of the MSBA Family Law Section Council. As the Chair of the Legislative Committee of the Family Law Section Council, Ms. Smith regularly testifies before the members of the House and Senate of the Maryland General Assembly on family law related bills. She was honored to be an integral part of the legislative effort in support of the Divorce reform legislation in 2024 which removed the fault grounds for divorce and the

Child Custody Determination legislation in 2025 which finally codified the factors Judges consider when rendering decisions in child custody cases.

Hope Stafford, Esq.

Hope Stafford is a co-founder of Delaney Stafford, bringing more than 17 years of experience in family law practice alongside her longtime colleague, Lin Delaney. Before earning her law degree, she graduated magna cum laude with a B.S. in engineering from the University of Virginia and worked as a portfolio analyst in New York City, skills she now applies to complex family law matters. A graduate of Georgetown University Law Center (J.D., cum laude, 2006), Hope is admitted to practice in the District of Columbia and Maryland.

Her strong background in math and finance makes her particularly skilled in handling cases involving alimony, property division, child support, and prenuptial agreements. She also has extensive experience in high-conflict custody cases involving substance use disorders, domestic violence, coercive control, gatekeeping behaviors, and visitation resistance or refusal. In addition, she is a seasoned appellate advocate, having argued appeals in both D.C. and Maryland.

Hope's career reflects her commitment to children and families: she has served as a guardian ad litem, clerked for the Honorable John M. Campbell of the D.C. Superior Court's Family Court, and volunteered at the D.C. Family Court Self-Help Center. Dedicated to service, she has also devoted significant time to pro bono family law activities in the D.C. area.

Judge Julie B. Weatherly
Senior Judge, Circuit Court for Prince George's County, Maryland

The Honorable Julia B. Weatherly is a senior judge of the Circuit Court for Prince George's County, Maryland, where she served as an Associate Judge from 2000 to 2015 and as a Family Division Magistrate from 1985 to 2000. She is admitted to practice law in both Maryland and the District of Columbia. Judge Weatherly earned her Juris Doctor from George Washington University Law School and her B.G.S. from the University of Michigan.

Throughout her distinguished career, she has been recognized with numerous honors, including the Beverly Groner Family Law Award from the Maryland State Bar Association and the Award for Professional Legal Excellence in the Advancement of Professional Competence from the Maryland Bar Foundation. She is an active member of the American Bar Association, the Conference of State Trial Judges, and the National Association of Women Judges, where she served as Director for District 4. She has also been active with the Maryland State Bar Association, contributing to the Family Law Section Council, the Professionalism Committee, and serving as Chair of the Judicial Administration Council. Before her judicial service, Judge Weatherly practiced law privately, building the

foundation for a career dedicated to excellence, professionalism, and the advancement of family law in Maryland.