

Drown Award Recipient: Leslie Ellen Shear

Leslie Ellen Shear has practiced family law in California since 1976. She limits her family court practice to representation and consultation in complex child custody, complex parentage and assisted reproduction, interstate and international jurisdiction (including Hague Abduction Convention and UCCJEA) cases, and court-appointed representation of children in family court.

Leslie joined AFCC in 1981 and gave her first presentation at a national AFCC conference in 1983 -- the topic was the role of the attorney in child custody mediation-- and has presented at many AFCC state and international conferences over the past 30 years. She was awarded an Association of Family and Conciliation Courts Ambassador medal at the 2013 annual international conferences. She credits AFCC with transforming her career trajectory and the quality of her work.

Leslie's appellate practice includes consultation with trial counsel in preparation for possible appellate review, and representation of adults and children in appeals, writs, and amicus curiae briefs in family law cases (including 18 published appellate opinions in the U.S. Supreme Court, California Supreme Court, and other appellate courts). In her appellate practice Leslie has made significant contributions to the development of California law on relocation, biological and non-biological parentage, and international custody jurisdiction.

Leslie drafted the bill that became California's first statutory definition of joint legal custody. She was a member of the faculty of the 1981 Vallambrosa Retreat: Mediation of Child Custody and Visitation Disputes training California's first statewide class of Family Court Services mediators after the adoption of mandatory mediation legislation. Leslie is the author of Chapter 4: "Parenting Plans" in CEB, California Child Custody Litigation and Practice (2006-2014). She has presented full day institutes on parenting plans at AFCC state and national conferences.

Leslie is a past president and long-term board member of the Association of Certified Family Law Specialists, served as a commissioner for the State Bar of California Board of Legal Specialization Family Law Advisory Commission, has played leadership roles in various other family law organizations over 37 years of family law practice, and regularly gives talks to local, state, national and international professional organizations. 