The ABA YLD Family Law Committee Newsletter is currently accepting submissions from authors interested in publication.

Five Traits of a Successful Family Law Attorney
By Umberto Davi & Marie Sarantakis

Family law practitioners and bar association leaders Umberto Davi and Marie Sarantakis discuss the characteristics requisite for attorneys working with families in distress.

Will a Change in Terminology Produce a Change in Tension in Child Custody Cases?
By Madeline Wines

Dissolution laws in the State of Illinois are evolving and common terms such as “custody” and “visitation” are being eliminated in order to reduce acrimony between spouses.

2017 Annual ABA Young Lawyers Division Spring Meeting in Montreal
By Marie Sarantakis

Members of the Young Lawyers Division are encouraged to visit Canada for the upcoming Division Spring meeting.

2017 Annual ABA Meeting in New York City
By Marie Sarantakis

Join fellow ABA members from across the nation for the Annual Meeting this August in New York City.

ARTICLES >>

Letter from the Editor
By Marie Sarantakis

As lawyers, our most tapped resource is our time. We are pulled in multiple directions simultaneously and our daily calendars are inundated with appointments, deadlines, and social
commitments. We struggle to do it all and to do it well. There is an immense amount of pressure to accomplish more and more in less amount of time.

We need to focus our efforts on our clients but we also need to spend some time improving ourselves professionally. This means always learning and even teaching. We must keep abreast of updates in the law and teach our clients and colleagues. Teaching makes us better students. When we share what we know, we deepen our comprehension all while helping fuel another’s knowledge.

One of the most time efficient ways to teach is to write newsletter articles. I encourage you to write a short piece on a topic that interests you regarding a recent development in family law. We are currently accepting short articles for the summer edition of the American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division Family Law Committee newsletter. Contributions should be no longer than approximately 200 words.

We are also accepting longer Practice Series articles, approximately 600 words that would serve as a resource for new lawyers. Practice series articles should discuss a substantive and/or procedural aspect of family law. These articles will be featured on our Committee’s webpage.

To submit your work, include your article in Word format, a three-line biography, and written permission to republish (if applicable). Please e-mail your submission to marie@davilegal.com for consideration.

**Five Traits of a Successful Family Law Attorney**

By Umberto Davi & Marie Sarantakis

Family lawyers are used to wearing many hats. They serve as counselors, therapists, advocates, confidants, and advisors. They need to be well versed in various practice areas such as estate planning, criminal law, and business matters, just to name a few. More importantly they need to possess certain characteristics. The following traits have been found to be especially helpful to attorneys who deal with sensitive and emotionally-laden matters such as divorce and child custody:

(1) **Patience.** As lawyers, we often have an impulse to advocate for our clients. We want to articulate our positions and convince the audience. However, an effective family lawyer needs to have patience and be able to listen. He or she needs to let clients vent and to let opposing counsel tell the other side of the story. What many family law clients suffer from the most is a feeling of betrayal and abandonment. A listening ear goes a long way toward establishing trust and ultimately ensuring that you are fully understanding of your client’s feelings, needs, and the outcome they desire.

(2) **Compassion.** Effective lawyers know to not let emotions intervene in their advocacy. However, they don’t necessarily need to be cold and uncaring. You need to be able to sympathize with your clients’ needs while at the same time apply the law to the particular facts of their case. Clients want to know that the outcome of their case matters to you and that you understand their position.

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(3) **Neutrality.** While you need to be a zealous advocate for your client’s position, you need to also be able to recognize and consider that usually there are two sides to every story. That doesn’t mean that your client’s reasons or goals are any less valid. However, you need to be prepared that at any moment opposing counsel may spring a fact or two on you that can be a game changer.

(4) **Openness.** In family law, you will hear about a lot of betrayal and bad behavior. You will become accustomed to mudslinging and dirty deeds. Your job is not to judge or add any fuel to burning fires, but rather to analyze the existing situation with an open mind, while at the same time being aware of how the law may or may not be applicable, given the facts that apply.

(5) **Creativity.** Family lawyers are always dealing with a unique set of problems coupled with the strong emotional expectations of their clients when it comes to an outcome. A good lawyer will be able to craft a solution that is outside of the box and facilitate unconventional but mutually beneficial negotiation options.

**Umberto Davi and Marie Sarantakis** practice family law in Western Springs, Illinois. Mr. Davi is the Immediate Past President of the Illinois State Bar Association and Ms. Sarantakis is currently Vice Chair of the American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division Family Law Committee.

**Will a Change in Terminology Produce a Change in Tension in Child Custody Cases?**

By Madeline Wines, *J.D. Candidate*

Illinois is stepping away from the terms “parental decision making powers,” “custody,” and “visitation” in the family law realm and replacing them with less adversarial terms such as “parental responsibilities” and “parenting time.”

These replacements are intended to create fewer hostilities between parents in the midst of child custody and divorce matters. It seems that encouraging the use of less adversarial terms encourages an atmosphere where parties are less hostile towards one another and less paralyzed by a sense of loss. By creating a less hostile atmosphere around the child custody disputes that arise in divorce proceedings, courts may be able to smoothen the proceedings.

However, by changing the terms and the duties those terms describe, parents going through this process may still feel slated by the Court system. The idea of losing time with a child will always be daunting to parents who are going through a divorce. While stepping away from adversarial terms to attempt to decrease hostilities between parents battling for custody is a laudable goal that may have the potential to help make the divorce process smoother, this may not be the case as parents may still walk away feeling confused and defeated.

**Madeline Wines** is a first year law student at The John Marshall Law School. Madeline has an interest in practicing family law and conducting mediations upon the completion of her studies.

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NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

2017 Annual ABA Young Lawyers Division Spring Meeting in Montreal

Young lawyers from throughout the United States will gather in Montreal Quebec, Canada May 4th through May 6th. A wide range of programming is sure to appeal to attorneys specializing in a multitude of practice areas. Our Committee is co-sponsoring a program with the YLD Children and the Law Committee entitled So You Wanna Adopt: The Need, The Process, and the Benefits, which will be featured at the Spring Conference on Friday, May 5, 2017 from 9:30 am - 10:30 am as a CLE Program.

2017 Annual ABA Meeting in New York City

Registration is now open for the 2017 Annual ABA Meeting, which will take place in New York City. The meeting will run from August 10th until August 15th. Attendees will have the opportunity to attend a wide variety of social events and CLE sessions.