



Quarterly E-Newsletter

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Chair's Column



Margaret Drew, Esq.

Dear Colleagues:

It is my pleasure to bring you this valuable edition of the American Bar Association's Commission on Domestic Violence E-newsletter. This quarterly edition addresses myths surrounding domestic violence, particularly those that arise in custody cases, including those involving allegations of child abuse.

We are honored to have three notable contributing authors. Joan Zorza has been a lawyer and advocate for battered women for most of her adult career. She has written numerous articles on domestic violence and is the current editor of *Sexual Assault Report* and *Domestic Violence Report*. Joan's article addresses incest allegations in the context of domestic violence cases. Anyone who has addressed incest issues while representing a survivor knows how explosive the topic can be. Child abuse allegations in general, and sexual abuse allegations specifically, invariably result in attacks on the reporter's credibility. More often than not, the reporter is the mother. Allegations of mental illness, fabrication and "alienation" are not unusual. Joan provides us with information that will enlighten us as to the reality of this particularly destructive form of violence.

A related and equally compelling issue faced by attorneys representing victims of domestic violence in custody cases is the batterer as parent. Reprinted with permission in this edition is an article by Lundy Bancroft and Jay Silverman entitled “Assessing Risk to Children from Batterers” which first appeared on the Communities Against Violence Network website. [<http://www.cavnet2.org/> (Document ID: 3085)(May 3, 2003)] Lundy is a noted speaker and author on batterer behavior, and Jay teaches and researches at Harvard’s Department of Society, Human Development, and Health is Director of Violence Prevention Programs, Division of Public Health Practice. We are honored to have Jay as a member of the Commission.

This column is my final one as Chair of the Commission on Domestic Violence. It has been my honor to serve as in that capacity during the past two years. It has been an extraordinary experience. I wish Hon. Pamela Brown all the best as she succeeds me as chair.

My particular thanks go to the remarkable Commission staff. For any of you who have had the privilege of meeting Robin Runge, our director, you are aware of the depth of her knowledge of domestic violence as well as her attentiveness to the needs of lawyers and advocates working in the field. It is a tribute to Robin’s talent that she has assembled an amazing staff. Thus my gratitude to Ellie, Cindy, Rebecca and Tiffany, as well.

Blessings to all of you who work so hard to enhance survivor safety.

The ABA Commission on Domestic Violence publishes its *Quarterly e-Newsletter* four times a year in electronic format. Subscriptions are free to all interested parties, and are distributed via e-mail and by download from the Commission website. Large-print editions are available upon request. *Quarterly e-Newsletter* includes substantive articles by experts in the field, resources and tools for representing survivors of domestic violence, and caselaw updates and trends.

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