

Curriculum and Faculty for IAFL Institute

The International Academy of Family Lawyers has established an IAFL Institute of Further Learning for lawyers who have practiced for approximately 6-7 years and want to elevate their knowledge and expand the reach of their practices. The curriculum includes topics universally related to the practice of family law and topics intended to enable the practitioner to identify issues involving cross-border legal questions and/or applicable international Conventions.

The purpose of the Institute is to mentor, educate, and introduce attorneys to issues of international practice while providing a network of similarly situated and interested peers from different jurisdictions and cultures. The discussions in each session will invite participating lawyers to contribute questions and perspectives from their different legal and cultural environments. Participants will be encouraged to speak freely within an environment of mutually agreed privacy.

The Institute will have ten 2-hour virtual sessions from September through June from 2:00-4:00 GMT. The class will be limited to ten attorneys to enable a dialogue and conversation between the attendees and the presenters. The graduating class will receive a certificate acknowledging completion of the one-year course and will be invited to attend a general meeting of the IAFL. At that meeting, they will be recognized for their accomplishment and encouraged to meet and mingle with Fellows of the Academy.

The IAFL's goal is to facilitate and deliver our mission, "to improve the practice of law and the administration of justice in the area of divorce and family law throughout the world" by enabling growth as attorneys and facilitate continuing peer relationships, consultation, and mentoring beyond completion of the program. The IAFL also hopes to enhance interest in cross-border practices and interest in the IAFL.

The curriculum will be as follows:

1. September, 2025: The Intersection of Family Law and Psychology

In this session we will explore and explain the psychological relationship of the lawyer to her/his self, the lawyer's relationship to the client, the client's relationship to the lawyer, and the psychological needs of the client. This will include the concepts of boundaries, transference, counter-transference and how to support the client in getting appropriate support from outside professionals. We also will explore the developmental stages of children and concepts of attachment important to understanding the context for co-parenting decisions.

Presenters: Jill Hersh (CA, USA) and Rebecca Robbins, Ph.D. (MA, USA)

2. October, 2025: Domestic Violence and Safety

In this session we will explore different forms of domestic violence, notions of safety for victims, (including men who are physically abused by their female partners), how to assess domestic violence, and how to interview victims. Attention will be paid to our role in guiding our victim/client without re-enacting their experience of control or coercion. We also will address circumstances in which our client is unable to receive help from us due to the extent of psychological distress, trauma, or injuries. The session will include the use of assistance from criminal defense lawyers if restraining orders are needed or wrongfully sought through false allegations, and to pursue with the prosecutor's office the likelihood or status of any criminal investigation or charges.

Presenters: [Gretchen Rubel](#) (CA, USA) and [Adele O'Grady KC](#) (Northern Ireland)

3. November, 2025: Addiction and Impulse Control

In this session, we will explore how to assess or identify substance abuse and impulsive behavior. Some of this may crossover with the module on domestic violence and certainly will have implications for custody work. We will discuss our ethical duty as it relates to representation of an addict and the particular problems posed by a potential client who is in denial and who is not in a recovery program. You will receive guidance on recovery programs, drug testing protocols, and how to retain an alliance with an addicted client while simultaneously declining to participate in the client's denial or continued failure to seek treatment.

Presenters: [Gretchen Rubel](#) (CA, USA) and TBC (Medic or Psychologist)

4. December, 2025: Modern Families and Assisted Reproduction

In this session, we will explore the evolution of our notions of family and the evolving environment surrounding conception, rights related to frozen embryos, surrogacy, and gender fluidity. Who is a parent? may be a relevant question in some jurisdictions. We will provide resources regarding body autonomy in various jurisdictions and a longitudinal study of the relative well-being of children raised in modern families as opposed to the "traditional" unitary family headed by a heterosexual couple.

Presenters: [Jemma Dally](#) (England and Wales) and [Gary Debele](#) (MN, USA)

5. January, 2026: Jurisdiction and Enforcement in Divorce and Financial Provision

In this session, we will explore cross-border questions related to judicial jurisdiction and oversight of a pending dissolution of marriage and in relation to children. It will include identifying issues related to enforcement of court orders in a foreign jurisdiction. The discussion will include examples from different jurisdictions of how a court determines that it has or does not have jurisdiction over both the parties and their assets and when a court may take jurisdiction over marital status without taking jurisdiction over the division of assets or other financial issues. This session will explore the differing ideas of residence(y), domicile, and habitual residence as it applies to jurisdiction over a party's marriage. This session will include an exploration of how to register and enforce a judgment from a foreign jurisdiction.

Presenters: [Sandra Verburgt](#) (Netherlands) and [Eleri Jones](#) (England and Wales)

6. February, 2026: International Conventions and Jurisdiction in Child Law Matters

In this session, we will identify and explain various international Conventions that regulate or define procedural and jurisdictional issues in cross-border cases. This session also will address which Conventions are most commonly implicated in family law and the countries that are not signatories or aligned with particular Conventions and how that circumstance is addressed. This session also will explore jurisdiction in relation to children more generally.

Presenters: [Ian Kennedy AM](#) (Australia) and [Melissa Kucinski](#) (DC, USA)

7. March, 2026: Premarital Agreements

In this session, we will address the efficacy of premarital agreements in various jurisdictions and the need for attorneys to determine if premarital agreements are recognized in a country in which one or both parties may eventually reside. Will a foreign jurisdiction apply a premarital agreement drafted in California? Will a country with a civil law regime recognize or enforce a premarital agreement drafted and to be interpreted under a common law regime? Will a foreign jurisdiction apply a choice of law provision in a premarital agreement? What are the various bases for declining to enforce a premarital agreement from a foreign jurisdiction?

Presenters: [Jill Hersh](#) (CA, USA) and [Charlotte Butruille-Cardew](#) (France)

8. April, 2026: Property Valuation, Taxes, Pensions and Inter-Disciplinary Work with Other Professionals

In this session we will help lawyers to spot issues related to assets in the marital estate subject to valuation and/or division that may be complex to understand. We will explore the use of professionals from other disciplines, such as business lawyers, business valuers, appraisers, or accountants. We also will be encouraging lawyers to spot, explore, and understand the tax implications of dividing assets located in a foreign jurisdiction, taxes related to the transfer of property incident to the divorce, tax exposure if one of the parties is a foreign national, and potential other taxes.

Presenters: [Sarah Hoskinson](#) (England and Wales) and [Jacky Campbell](#) (Australia)

9. May, 2026: Dispute Resolution

In this session, we will explore various modalities of dispute resolution ranging from mediation without counsel, mediation with counsel, private adjudication, and arbitration. We will explore the concept of dispute resolution from the traditions of indigenous peoples through the perspective of a Tribal Judge from a Native American tribe in California. We will invite from the attending lawyers their perspectives on dispute resolution from their cultural frames of reference.

Presenters: [Jill Hersh](#) (CA, USA) and [Judge Abby Abinanti](#) (CA, USA)

10. June, 2026 Self-Care as Family Law Practitioners

In this session, we will explore how to create healthy work boundaries which enable us to achieve a balanced work/life equilibrium. This session will address how to promote and market our practices and ourselves. Our goal is to support the idea that family law attorneys need not exhaust themselves by either over-working or internalizing their clients' distress and anxieties. We want to encourage lawyers to diffuse the stress of working in a profession that is both a service and helping profession by pursuing other interests and experiences that enhance their peace of mind and reduce the risk of "burn out". This session will include the idea of having a mental health consultant with whom the lawyer may discuss client management and how to draw a boundary between their clients' experiences and the life experiences the lawyer brings to the attorney/client relationship.

Presenters: [Adelaide Benneh Prempeh](#) (Ghana) and [Sarah Hoskinson](#) (England and Wales)

Closing: If you are interested in attending, we invite you to complete an application which will give us some autobiographical information about who you are, why you are



interested, how you may contribute to the program, and how the program may enhance your practice.