

2026 Family Law Midyear Conference

ORIGINAL PROGRAM DATE
July 17–19, 2026

Presented in partnership with the WSBA Family Law Section

REPORTING YOUR CREDIT

This on-demand program was a live seminar presented on July 17–19, 2026. If you attended or viewed the original presentation, please note that WSBA members may not claim credit for the same CLE sessions if repeated within their three-year reporting period.

DESCRIPTION

Join us on-demand for the 2026 Family Law Midyear. Expanding your expertise through dynamic, informative sessions full of timely updates, helpful insights, and strategies to support and strengthen your family law practice.

AGENDA

1 The Ethics of Withdrawing and Terminating Representation Under RPC 1.16
Many lawyers struggle with saying "no" or "goodbye" to a client. Improper termination can lead to ethical grievances, malpractice claims, and lost fees. In analyzing the ethical mechanics of stepping away and RPC 1.16 the rule allows for permissive exits, accounts for tribunal permission, requires protection of client confidentiality and emphasizes mitigating harm. This presentation will give lawyers clarity and confidence so they can make ethical decisions that protect both the client and their own well-being.
Jeanne Marie Clavere – Washington State Bar Association, Seattle, WA

2 Guardianship Updates
Hear updates on guardianships that could affect your clients and your practice.
Todd Yelish – Yelish, Barker & Cunningham, Port Orchard, WA

3 Loan Assumptions in Divorce: What Every Family Law Attorney Needs to Know
A practical guide to understanding loan assumptions as a settlement strategy — covering the two types of assumptions, how to structure buyouts, support income implications, real-world examples, and the settlement language needed to protect both spouses.
Mihaella Bayla – True Lending LLC, Edmonds, WA

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4 The Dog in the Room: Courthouse Facility Dogs in Family Law

Family law proceedings carry an emotional weight that rivals anything in the criminal system, and yet facility dogs are rarely part of that picture. From dependency hearings and family treatment courts to mediation, guardian ad litem interviews, and domestic violence witness preparation, attorneys consistently report the same thing: when the dog comes in, the temperature in the room goes down. Reshape how you think about client participation, courtroom climate, and the untapped potential of facility dogs in family law settings. Understand the science of why facility dogs work, and the best practice framework practitioners need before pursuing a program in their jurisdiction, and offer a practical path forward — regardless of the size of your courthouse or community.

Felicia Ako – Courthouse Dogs Foundation, Bellevue, WA
Kim Carroll – Thurston County Prosecuting Attorney's Office, Olympia, WA
Celeste Walsen, DVM – Courthouse Dogs Foundation, Bellevue, WA
Megan Winder – Pierce County Prosecuting Attorney's Office, Tacoma, WA

5 When Immigration Law Meets Family Law

This panel discussion reviews immigration categories which involve family law and common immigration issues that arise with family law cases.

Janet Gwilym – International Rescue Committee, SeaTac, WA
Katrina Zafiro – ZafiroLaw, Seattle, WA

6 From Impasse to Agreement: Mediation Issues and Pitfalls

A presentation and open conversation on mediation issues with family law mediators Jacqueline Jeske and James Shipman. Take this opportunity to explore questions that have come up in your practice on a variety of mediation topics in this open forum. Jacqueline and James will address some common issues they see, and then open things up for a lengthy and hopefully educational discussion on issues all of us face in family law mediation today. By the end of this presentation, you will develop a problem-solving knowledge base, learn that the right way is the way that works for each client and meet participants where they're at so you can identify acceptable settlements. Mediators can assist attorneys in managing client emotions, setting expectations and how to defuse intense conflicts to break through impasse barriers in settlement negotiations.

Commissioner Jacqueline Jeske (Ret.) – Jeske Dispute Resolution LLC, Woodinville, WA
James Shipman – Port Gardner Law Group, Inc. P.S., Everett, WA

7 Vicarious Trauma in Family Law: Hazards and Help

This presentation examines the disproportionate vicarious trauma faced by family law practitioners and judges caused by repeated exposure to traumatic experiences of clients, parties and witnesses. And it explores what to do about it. The American Psychiatric Association recognizes this as a form of PTSD. In this presentation you will learn about the signs, symptoms and triggers of the hazard, and healthy ways to address it.

Leslie J. Hagin – Washington Lawyers Assisting Lawyers, Seattle, WA

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8 The LGBTQIA+ Litigant and the Court

In December of 2012, Washington State granted recognition of same sex marriages. This was followed in 2015 by the US Supreme Court decision in Obergefell v. Hodges. Since these events, members of the LGBTQIA+ community have been increasingly noted in various court proceedings. Regardless of your personal stance regarding LGBTQIA+ rights, the ability to properly address members of that community in court and to handle sensitive issues is not only encouraged but expected by the Bar and by the courts. This course is intended to explore those issues and give some insight into how you may be able to properly navigate these areas when dealing with parties, counsel, witnesses, and judicial officers.

Judge Jeffrey P. Bassett – Kitsap County Superior Court, Port Orchard, WA

9 Intimate Partner Violence in Family Law Cases: From Screening to Litigation

This presentation will briefly trace the social and legal history of domestic violence, define what is encompassed under the term "domestic violence", provide information on various communication methods and instruction to screen for domestic violence, and train participants how to develop litigation strategies for those impacted by domestic violence in divorce and following divorce.

Diane F. Russell – The Law Office of Diane F. Russell PS, Silverdale, WA

10 There's No Place Like Home: Understanding Harms of Removal and Family Separation

In 2023, Washington became one of the first states to require dependency courts to weigh the potential harm of removal alongside the risk of a child remaining in the home. This session introduces the concept of the "harm of removal," explains its foundational research, and provides tools that attorneys can use to identify and mitigate the impacts of family separation.

Jacob D'Annunzio – Washington State Office of Public Defense, Olympia, WA
Ambrosia Eberhardt – Akin, Spokane, WA
Laura Vogel – Washington State Administrative Office of the Court, Olympia, WA

11 Legislative Update

What happened in the Washington State Legislature in 2026? There were numerous bills affecting Family Law practitioners. What passed? What didn't?

Commissioner Jacqueline Jeske (Ret.) – Jeske Dispute Resolution LLC, Woodinville, WA
Christopher Fox – Family Law Attorney, Kirkland, WA

12 Case Law Update

The always-popular case law update is presented by Chris Meserve and Chuck Szurszewski. They will discuss cases affecting family law that were decided this year by the appellate courts.

Christina Meserve – Connolly Tacon & Meserve, Olympia, WA
Charles Szurszewski – Connolly Tacon & Meserve, Olympia, WA