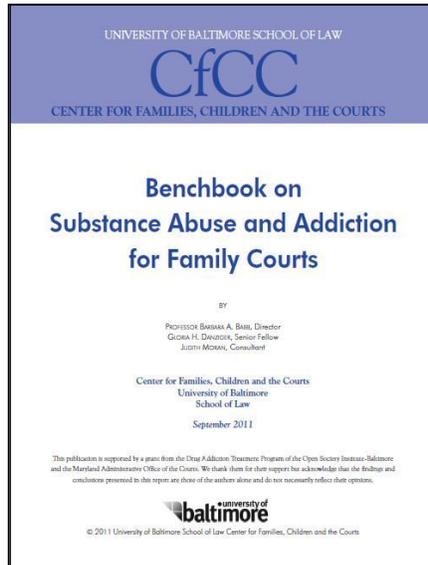


## Benchbook on Substance Abuse and Addiction Provides Critical Information for Family Courts



The University of Baltimore School of Law Center for Families, Children and the Courts (CFCC) has published this month a much-needed addition to the resources available to family court judges: the *Benchbook on Substance Abuse and Addiction for Family Courts*. One would be hard-pressed to find a family court judge who does not face on a daily basis families and children struggling with this chronic and terrible disease. The Benchbook delivers science-based information and guidance to assist the judiciary, court personnel, and attorneys in the management of family law cases involving an addicted family member.

Addiction and substance abuse affect families and children with the same destructive and debilitating consequences as they do those trapped in the criminal justice system. Family court judges and staff routinely deal with children beginning to experiment with

alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs for the first time; with teenage addicts trapped in an environment that seems to offer no escape from addiction; and with adults struggling with family crises that are made many times worse by addiction. Moreover, family cases are complex, nearly always involving myriad “issues” in addition to chemical dependency, such as family violence, child abuse and neglect, delinquency, mental health, and truancy.

In a survey of Maryland Circuit and District Court judges and masters conducted by CFCC several years ago, nearly all of the respondents (87 percent) indicated that the abuse of alcohol and other drugs is a major problem in their jurisdictions. A clear majority believed that, if an individual suffering from addiction appears before a family court judge, it is the court’s responsibility to refer him/her for treatment. Despite the fact that substance abuse and addiction were perceived by the judges as pervasive throughout the Maryland family court system, however, the judges believed there were very few resources available for members of the judiciary who wanted information specifically geared to parents and children in the family court system. In fact, 70 percent of the judges responding to CFCC’s survey felt that a benchbook on addiction and substance abuse would be useful in their courtrooms.

In order to meet this need, CFCC’s *Benchbook on Substance Abuse and Addiction for Family Courts* provides clear and concise information about the range of substance abuse and addiction issues affecting families and children in family courts. Chapters include timely information and research on the following areas:

- The science of addiction: explains how and why addiction is a complex and life-long disease, which requires a sustained commitment to recovery.

- **Addiction treatment:** describes the criteria that determine treatment effectiveness, various treatment settings, and treatment programs for special populations, including women, adolescents, and addicts who suffer from mental illness.
- **Families and addiction:** examines the physical, psychological, social and economic consequences of addiction for a family and explains how, in light of the fact that all family members are affected by alcoholism and drug dependence, the entire family needs treatment.
- **Adolescent addiction and substance abuse:** explains how and why alcohol and drug abuse among adolescents is characterized by unique issues that place youth at greater risk for long-lasting physical, social, and psychological problems and describes the key components of effective treatment for adolescents.
- **Effective approaches for family courts to address substance abuse and addiction:** addresses underlying issues that plague many families involved with the family court system, looks at the types of cases where substance abuse and/or addiction are an issue, and makes recommendations to develop and implement a holistic approach to substance abuse and addiction.

In addition, the benchbook provides a list of resources available to assist families in recovery.

CFCC hopes that this benchbook will be an important tool to guide judges and court staff as they grapple with the broad range of substance abuse and addiction issues that affect families and children in court. For ordering information, please email CFCC at [cfcc@ubalt.edu](mailto:cfcc@ubalt.edu).