

DRUGS, PREGNANCY AND PARENTING:  
WHAT THE EXPERTS IN MEDICINE, SOCIAL WORK AND THE LAW HAVE TO SAY

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

**On-Site Registration, Breakfast**

8:00-9:00 a.m.

**Welcome and Overview**

9:00-9:15 a.m.

**Eileen Wolkstein, M.A., Ph.D.**, Director, Division of Lifelong Learning and Professional Development; Adjunct Assistant Professor, New York University Silver School of Social Work

**Martin F. Guggenheim, J.D.**, Boxer Family Professor of Clinical Law at New York University School of Law

**Lynn M. Paltrow, J.D.**, Founder and Executive Director, National Advocates for Pregnant Women

**I. Prenatal Drug Exposure: What Does the Science Tell Us?**

9:15-11:00 a.m.

*Popular media accounts of addiction, drug use, and infants with intrauterine exposure to psychoactive substances often differ from actual research findings. Even among research studies, levels of accuracy and reliability of methods range from effective use of the scientific method to junk science. Leading physicians and researchers will address ways to distinguish reliable, evidence-based science from misinformation, what a positive drug test can and cannot tell us, discuss what we can learn from the scientific research on effects of prenatal exposure to cocaine, methamphetamine and marijuana, and address the role of evidence-based research on these drugs in efforts to protect children and preserve families.*

**Moderator:**

**Maria Arias**, Clinical Professor in the Battered Women's Right's Clinic at CUNY Law School

**Panelists:**

**Deborah Frank, M.D.**, Founder and Director of the Grow Clinic at Boston Medical Center

**Barry M. Lester, Ph.D.**, Founder and Director of the Brown University Center for the Study of Children at Risk at Women & Infants Hospital and Brown University Medical School

**Peter Fried, Ph.D.**, Professor Emeritus, Distinguished Research Professor of Psychology at Carleton University, Former Professor of Obstetrics & Gynecology, at University of Ottawa.

**Break**

11:00-11:15 a.m.

**II. Drug Use and Parenting: How Do We Know if Children Are Safe?**

11:15 a.m.-12:45 p.m.

*Presenters will discuss what the evidence-based research tells us about the relationship between drug use and parenting ability and how that information may be used to improve the health and well-being of children and families. How does current social science research about drug use, relapse and recovery compare to popular understanding and practices? What is the difference between drug use and drug abuse? How do responses to addiction compare to responses to other chronic relapsing diseases including diabetes and hypertension and to mental health problems including anxiety and depression? Does drug use predict future neglect or abuse of children? Panelists will address safety plans, service delivery and effective child welfare responses to parental drug use.*

**Moderator:**

**Allison Guttu, J.D.**, Equal Justice Works Fellow, National Advocates for Pregnant Women

**Panelists:**

**Alan Abramowitz, J.D., M.P.A.**, Florida State Director of the Office of Family Safety for the Department of Children and Families

**Brenda D. Smith, Ph.D.**, Associate Professor at the School of Social Work, University of Alabama

**Tracey Carter**, Parent Advocate, Child Welfare Organizing Project, Highbridge Community Life Center

**Lunch**

12:45- 1:30 p.m.

**III. Determining the Need for Treatment and Defining What Success is in the Context of Drug Treatment and Service Plans**

1:30- 2:45 p.m.

*Parents are often required to obtain drug treatment to keep or win back custody of their children or in order to fulfill other kinds of court mandates. We know that with many health problems, some treatments work better than others. What happens when people are required to obtain treatment that is not likely to work for them? What evidence-based research do lawyers, agencies and judges rely on in deciding what treatment is appropriate and how success will be measured, including issues of abstinence and relapse? If treatment is successful, what does that predict about parenting, risk and safety? Presenters will discuss what the evidence tells us about these subjects, how to measure success and how to determine if it is safe to keep children with parents or to reunite children and parents.*

**Moderator:**

**Tiloma Jayasinghe, J.D.**, Baron Edmond de Rothschild Staff Attorney Fellow, National Advocates for Pregnant Women

**Panelists:**

**Andrew Tatarsky, Ph.D.**, Psychologist, specialist in substance use treatment and Past-President, Division on Addictions, New York State Psychological Association

**Barbara Rittner, Ph.D., L.C.S.W.**, Associate Professor, School of Social Work, State University of New York at Buffalo

**Robin Wiley**, Parent Advocate, Child Welfare Organizing Project

**Meaghan Thumath, R.N., B.S.N., M.P.H.**, Impart Fellow in Gender and Addictions, Canadian Institute for Health Research, and Former Community Health Nurse at Sheway Maternity Clinic

#### **IV. Barriers to Treatment and Interventions That Work**

3:00 - 4:30 p.m.

*Popular media accounts of programs that address addiction treatment seem to be presented in extremes – from suggesting that they will work for anyone committed enough to recovery to stories that suggest that some highly successful treatments are dangerous or counterproductive. Cultural context, barriers to treatment, and the opinions of the people who may need and want treatment are often ignored in these accounts. Panelists will address what to look for when considering research and reports on the subject, provide examples of approaches that work, discuss barriers to those approaches as well as the kind of expertise required to make determinations about recovery and treatment.*

**Moderator:**

**Benita Miller, J.D.**, Founder and Executive Director of the Brooklyn Young Mothers' Collective

**Panelists:**

**Alma Carten, D.S.W., A.C.S.W., L.M.S.W.**, Associate Professor of Social Work, New York University Silver School of Social Work

**Sarah Roberts, M.P.H.**, Doctor of Public Health (Dr.P.H.) Candidate, University of California, Berkeley, Pre-doctoral fellow at the Alcohol Research Group and Project Coordinator at Contra Costa Health Services.

**Robert G. Newman, M.D., M.P.H.**, Director of The Baron Edmond de Rothschild Chemical Dependency Institute of Beth Israel Medical Center, and Professor of Epidemiology, Population Health, Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine

**Harolyn Belcher, M.D., M.H.S.**, Neurodevelopmental Pediatrician, Associate Professor at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, Director of Research at the Kennedy Krieger Institute Family Center

#### **V. Closing: How Can I Best Advocate for My Client When Drug Use is an Issue?**

4:45-6:00pm

*Issues of race and class as well as widespread misinformation about drug use, addiction and treatment, affect the care, advocacy and representation that clients in child welfare and other kinds of cases receive. This panel will address the use of science, research, and expert testimony in child welfare and other cases, address the requirements for expert testimony, what judges and advocates should look for with regard to the admission of and conclusions from scientific evidence such as urine drug screens, and the extent to which advocacy and standards may vary depending on the race, class, and/or gender of the clients involved.*

**Moderator and Panelist:**

**Deborah Peterson Small, J.D.**, Executive Director and founder of Break the Chains

**Panelists:**

**Lynn M. Paltrow, J.D.**, Founder and Chief Executive Officer (Executive Director) of National Advocates for Pregnant Women

**Martin F. Guggenheim, J.D.**, Boxer Family Professor of Clinical Law at New York University School of Law