Gatekeeping, Alignment and Alienation: Different but Connected

In 1976, Joan Kelly and Judith Wallerstein talked about how children of different ages responded to "Tugs and pulls for loyalty" that often ended in a child being 'aligned' with one parent. In 1985, Richard Gardner coined the phrase 'parental alienation' asserting it was a 'syndrome' where one parent actively engaged in behavior designed to 'alienate' the child from the other parent often employing allegations of abuse. In 2001, Joan Kelly and Janet Johnston reformulated PAS by rejuvenating the concept of 'alignment' asserting children can become distanced from one parent not only because of parental behavior, but because of developmental and other factors. Most recently, William Austin and others have talked about the role 'parental gatekeeping' plays in a child's adjustment post-divorce and how it can contribute to 'alignment' and 'alienation.' Distinguishing between and among these concepts in 'real life' is difficult and can be problematic for attorneys and the court. This presentation will explore how these concepts are different but connected.

Matthew Davies, Ph.D. Bio

Matthew Davies, Ph.D., is a licensed psychologist who has been working with children, adolescents and families for over 30 years. He attended the University of Utah and trained primarily at The Children's Center in Salt Lake City where he worked with emotionally and behaviorally challenged preschool and latency age children and their families for nearly 12 years. He entered private practice in 1986 and has been working exclusively with children, adolescents and their families since. In addition to working therapeutically with children, adolescents and families, he has, since 1987, conducted custody and time sharing evaluations as well as other types of forensic evaluations for the Juvenile and District courts. He has presented locally and nationally on issues related to custody and parent time and has been actively involved in promoting children's rights.