



# Parental Abduction: Reducing the Risk

*MOST ABDUCTED CHILDREN ARE TAKEN BY SOMEONE THEY KNOW, LOVE & TRUST - THEIR PARENTS, WHO ARE USUALLY INVOLVED IN ADVERSARIAL DIVORCES, VISITATION/CUSTODY BATTLES & CHILD SUPPORT DISPUTES.*

- COURT ORDERS:** Having court orders that are detailed and clear on custody and visitation (parenting time) substantially reduces the risk that there will be violations due to misunderstandings. In addition, if a party is in contempt of the parenting time order, law enforcement has the ability to intervene.
- MEDIATION:** Where the parties share a balance of power in the relationship (e.g. neither experiences intimidation at the hands of the other) and both have the capacity to make sound judgments (e.g. free from drug-abuse or mental health issues), mediated agreements can be drafted. These documents can then be incorporated into court orders and tend to see a stronger commitment by the parties who have agreed on the stipulations.
- WRITTEN CONSENT:** Court orders can require written consent by parents allowing a child to be taken from the county, state, or country.
- CERTIFIED COPIES:** Have a certified copy of the court order on hand.
- PASSPORTS:** Passports can be ordered held by an agreed-upon third party or by the court.
- BONDS:** The traveling parent can be required to post a substantial bond prior to leaving the country.
- PASSPORT ALERT PROGRAM:** The Department of State can issue an alert prior to the issuance of a passport (CPIAP).
- SCHOOLS / DAYCARE PROVIDERS:** A copy of the court order can be given to schools and child care facilities for clarification, along with names and photos of the parties who do not have permission to pick up your child.
- SUPERVISED VISITATION:** Supervised or suspended visitation can be ordered when there is a clear threat of abduction.
- ENGAGING THERAPEUTIC PROFESSIONALS:** Mental health and social welfare professionals can be used to assess a child's anxiety regarding a parent and may lead to disclosure of abuse.
- SHARING CONCERNS:** It's important to tell those who will have the child in their care (sitters, camp counselors) that there is concern about a parental abduction and to give instructions regarding how to reach you.
- RECIPROCAL ORDERS:** Parents can obtain reciprocal (mirror) court orders in the foreign country where the other parent has citizenship or a right of residence, clarifying which party has residential custody.
- PREPARE YOUR CHILD:** Children should learn their full addresses (with zip codes) and phone numbers (with area codes). They should be taught how to make a collect call and how to dial when out of the area and country on different types of phones (flip phones, cell phones, rotary phones, public phones). Discuss calmly what a child might be told by the other parent, and that your child must contact you - no matter what is said - if taken from your care.
- KEEP A LOG:** Document abduction threats with names of those who can provide witness statements.
- EMERGENCY ORDERS:** Courts can grant emergency-based orders giving you full custody if there's reason to believe abduction is imminent. Courts can grant orders that a child is to be picked-up with the assistance of law enforcement. You can ask that the court specify that law enforcement has the right to enter a premises to do so.



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