

LEGAL SERVICES

There is a variety of ways you can find legal resources in your community:

- Ask a family member, friend, or co-worker for a referral to an attorney.
- Consult the Washington State Bar Association's Web site at www.wsba.org under Resources for the Public.
- A list of legal service providers for those with low income who live *within King County* can be found online at www.nwjustice.org or by calling **211**. The local number is 206-461-3200. The toll-free number is 800-621-4636, from King County only.
- Northwest Justice Project's legal education, referral, and advice service is called CLEAR and is available toll-free for those with low income who live *outside King County* at **888-201-1014**.
- Legal help on a variety of topics, including family law, may be found at www.washingtonlawhelp.org.
- Court forms and instructions can be downloaded at www.courts.wa.gov/forms/.
- Courthouse facilitator programs are listed on the Court Directory page of the Washington Courts Web site at www.courts.wa.gov.
- Guardian ad litem information is included on the "Boards, Commissions, Programs & Orgs" page of the Washington Courts Web site at www.courts.wa.gov.
- Domestic violence advocacy groups can help with protection orders and other related matters. For a directory of resources near you, call the Domestic Violence Hotline at **800-562-6025** or check the Web site for the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence at www.wscadv.org. Forms and instructions for domestic violence protection orders can be found on the Washington Courts Web site at www.courts.wa.gov/forms/, and your County Clerk's office has a domestic violence clerk who can help you apply for a protection order.

HARMFUL EFFECTS OF PARENTAL ABDUCTION IN CHILD CUSTODY CASES

This important information is for parents involved in a divorce, separation, or parenting plan action and is provided by your Superior Court.



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HARMFUL EFFECTS OF PARENTAL ABDUCTION IN CHILD CUSTODY CASES

Child custody disputes can sometimes lead one parent or the other to abduct one or more of their children. Each year approximately two hundred fifty thousand children in the United States are abducted by a noncustodial or custodial parent in violation of the law.

Child abduction, including abduction by a parent, commonly leads to growing fear, confusion, and general mistrust on the part of the child. Parental abduction means a loss of the parent left behind, extended family, friends, pets, community, and familiar surroundings that provide children with a sense of security and well-being. Such losses may be very traumatic for a child leading to long-term, adverse effects as the child grows.



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Given the need to maintain secrecy by the abducting parent, children who are parentally abducted often:

- (1) Fail to receive an adequate education;
- (2) Fail to receive adequate medical care;
- (3) Live in substandard housing;
- (4) Are told the parent left behind is a bad person, does not want the child, or is deceased;
- (5) Are instructed to lie to remain anonymous and hidden;
- (6) Are fearful of leaving their residence;
- (7) Are fearful of encountering law enforcement and other security personnel.

If and when returned, abducted children often live in apprehension of being abducted again. Just as abused children may identify with and seek the approval of their abuser, abducted children may do the same with their abductor. Once returned, the child may feel anger and resentment at the parent who was left behind because the child now does not have visitation or communication with the abducting parent.



The returned child may suffer loyalty conflicts, emotional detachment, and feelings of betrayal by providing information about the abducting parent who broke the law. An inability to trust adults in general can hinder the child's ability to form lasting relationships even long into adulthood.

If the child is very young when abducted and is returned as an older child, the child may suffer serious negative emotional effects because the child feels as if he or she is returned to a stranger, and therefore the return to the parent who was originally left behind seems like an abduction itself.

Parents need to understand that, even though their relationship with each other may be strained or even toxic, their children often have a strong, loving, trusting relationship with both parents.

A parent who is considering abducting his or her child should know and understand the potential short-term and long-term traumatic impacts that parental abduction has on a child and consider only those actions that will be lawful and will contribute to the child's best interests.