

**PARENTAL ALIENATION IS CHILD
PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE.
HOW TO PREVENT IT.
HOW SHOULD COURTS DEAL WITH IT.**

WEBINAR FOR UKRAINE

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WHAT IS PARENTAL ALIENATION?

- **Action by one parent which causes the child, without justification, to reject contact with the other parent who was previously loved**
- **May be deliberate, arising from personality disorder and/or mental illness and/or extreme reaction to parental separation**
- **May be failure to set boundaries to child's reaction to parental separation**
- **Distinguish from justified rejection by the child, arising from extreme abuse, or neglect of the child by the rejected parent**

Child psychological abuse

Parental alienation is a form of psychological abuse

- False allegations that the child was abused in infancy by the other parent**
- False allegations of violent or abusive behaviour towards the parent**
- Inducing guilt, as if contact with the parent makes the other parent sad**
- Inducing the feeling that the child is in danger when visiting**
- Exposing the child to information about litigation**
- False allegations about grandparents and the extended family**
- Relocation without consultation**

What are the results?

Alienated children may exhibit:

Lack of identity, developmental and psychological deficits

- **poor reality testing;**
- **illogical cognitive operations;**
- **simplistic and rigid information processing;**
- **inaccurate or distorted interpersonal perceptions;**
- **disturbed and compromised interpersonal functioning;**
- **self-hatred;**
- **low self esteem or inflated self-esteem or omnipotence;**

What are the results? continued

- **pseudo-maturity;**
- **gender-identity problems;**
- **poor differentiation of self (enmeshment, parentification);**
- **aggression and conduct disorders;**
- **disregard for social norms and authority;**
- **poor impulse control;**
- **emotional constriction, passivity, or dependency; and**
- **lack of remorse or guilt.**

The damage lasts into adulthood

The alienated child has not experienced normative couple relationships, or normative child-parent relationships:

- low self-esteem, having internalized the negative characterization by the alienating parent of their rejected parent.**
- self-hatred, self-blame and guilt for abandoning younger siblings.**
- significant episodes of depression**
- Indiscriminate sexual behaviour, use of drugs or alcohol during adolescence, to cope with painful feelings arising from loss and parental conflict.**
- self-doubt about their own perceptions and feelings about themselves and others**

The damage lasts into adulthood continued

- **two-thirds had been divorced once and one quarter more than once.**
- **anger and resentment about being emotionally manipulated and controlled**
- **negative effect on their relationship with the alienating parent.**
- **alienated from their own children.**

How to prevent it?

- **Primary prevention:**
- **Focusing on the entire population who may be at risk of parent-child contact problems after separation**
- **The public need to be made aware of the problem, well before they enter into relationships or at least at the outset of their parenting.**
- **The press; TV; social media**
- **High Schools**
- **Youth movements**
- **Premarital training**

How to prevent it? continued

Secondary Prevention:

Early Identification of:

- At risk populations
- Problematic parental behaviour
- The child's reaction to parental strife

so as to enable referral to support services before contact problems develop into complete cutting off of contact

Who can identify it?

Professionals Working with Children:

- **Teachers, school counsellors**
- **Medical doctors, pediatricians**
- **Social workers**
- **Psychologists**
- **Therapists**
- **Lawyers**
- **Relatives**

What should professionals do

- Identify children at risk**
 - Identify parents at risk**
 - Identify parental behaviours that indicate strife**
 - Identify children's reactions to parental strife**
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- Refer to advice and professional interventions**

What is the role of the Courts?

Where abuse is alleged, of any kind, the application must be prioritized, by:

- Setting a preliminary hearing immediately after the date fixed for the response – not more than 14 days after the application is filed**
- Requiring a response within a few days**
- Requiring the parties, and not only their lawyers, to attend all hearings**

Judicial Case Management: Preliminary Hearing

The preliminary hearing requires

- Assessment of danger to the child**
- Appropriateness of conflict resolution, referral to social worker**
- Appointment of lawyer or guardian ad litem for the child**
- Requiring the parents to cooperate with conflict resolution and child's lawyer/GAL , with sanctions for non-compliance**
- Fixing another hearing within 10 days for receiving reports from child's lawyer/GAL and about conflict resolution efforts**

Judicial Case Management: The Second Hearing

Unless the safety of the child prohibits any kind of contact with one of the parents

- Orders for contact, including supervision or remote contact if necessary, to start immediately**
- Orders for the child to start assessment by expert in child maltreatment and PA**
- Consider if and how the child should communicate with the court**
- Orders for the parents to start assessment of parenting and co-parenting**
- Orders for the parents, GAL and assessors to report within short time; assessors to propose treatment schedules.**

Judicial Case Management: Orders

Orders of the court must

- Be clear**
- Be detailed**
- Include time limits for performance**
- Require clear parameters, goals and timelines for assessment and intervention**
- Require interim reports**
- Include warning of sanctions for non-compliance**

Judicial Case Management: Sanctions

Non-compliance with court orders must not be tolerated

- **Gives impression that the court is powerless, thereby reducing standing of the judicial system as a whole**
- **Gives a bad example to the child.**

Sanctions may be:

- **Financial (fines, pay legal fees, pay costs to court treasury, change in child support)**
- **Custodial (imprisonment for contempt of court**
- **Changes in residence and contact arrangements**
- **Referral to child protection authorities and or police**
- **etc**

Courses and consultations

Courses for Students: law, education, medicine, social work, psychology, etc.

Courses for professionals: judges, lawyers, teachers, doctors, psychologists, social workers, etc

Consultation on Family Law – proposing amendments relating to parental responsibilities and ensuring contact

Consultation on Family Court reform, including:

- **Specialist judges**
- **Social services support in the court**
- **Swift procedures**
- **Hearing the voice of the child**

Thank you!

To Semen Gen

To the interpreter

To you, for attending and listening.

**For more information about courses and consultations,
please contact me:**

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