

RCW 26.09.315 Child custody issues—Abduction by parent—

Information. In any proceeding under this chapter where the custody or care of a minor child is at issue or in dispute, information on the harmful effects of parental abduction shall be included in any packet of information or materials provided to the parties, or in any parenting class or seminar that is offered to or required of the parties. The information shall include the following:

PAMPHLET REGARDING THE 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.

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. [2013 c 91 s 1.]