

If you do not have a custody order, consult with your lawyer on the need for one. In cases where the Hague Convention applies, a custody order "after the fact" may not be necessary. However, for abductions to countries not party to the Hague Convention, a Canadian custody order is important.

One of the most important things you can do in the early stages of an international child abduction is to establish friendly contact with the relatives and friends of the other parent, both in Canada and abroad. The fastest and most effective way to resolve international child abductions is for the abducting parent to return the child to Canada voluntarily. While there may be good reasons for you to believe that this approach won't work, *it is important that the effort be made*. Section IV contains more information on this.

You may want to contact a local or national non-governmental organization that provides advice and assistance to parents whose children have been abducted. Such organizations can be of considerable help to you and can put you in touch with other parents who have gone or are going through the same turmoil. A list of some of these organizations is given in Section VI.

However, the first and most important element is to determine exactly where your child is. Recovery actions cannot be taken until your child's location is known. The following agencies can assist you in finding and recovering your child.

### *The Local Police*

As soon as you suspect that your child has been abducted, contact your local police department immediately. The sooner the police network can begin to search and investigate, the better.

When you contact the local police, give them a copy of any custody order as well as photographs and descriptions of your child and the abducting parent. You should also provide any other information that may lead to the quick discovery of the location of your child. A checklist of such information is provided in Section VII.

Ask the local police to enter the information in the Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC) computer system, so that all police forces in Canada will have access to it. Also request that the information be entered in the United States National Crime Information Center (NCIC) computer system.

If you believe that your child has been or may be taken out of the country, request that the local police immediately contact the Missing Children's