

- ❖ understanding the limitations and constraints that may affect the return of your child to Canada;
- ❖ learning about the legal process;
- ❖ understanding the potential financial implications for you and other members of your family in the search and recovery process.

The discovery that your child is missing will be a very traumatic experience. It is important that you stay calm and seek assistance from family, friends and appropriate professionals. It is crucial that there is someone at your home at all times to answer the telephone in the event that there are calls relating to your child. 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 would be useful. **First, report your child's disappearance to the police; then consult with your lawyer.**

You may want to contact a local or national non-governmental organization that provides advice and assistance to parents whose child has 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.

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 might not work, **it is important that the effort be made.** Section IV contains more information on this.

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.

## 2. The Local Police

As soon as you suspect that your child has been abducted, do the following:

- ❖ Immediately contact your local police department. The sooner the police network can begin to search and investigate, the better.
- ❖ When you contact the local police, provide a copy of any custody order and 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 listing 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 Centre (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 Registry of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). Also contact the Consular Affairs Bureau and/or your provincial/territorial Hague Convention central authority.

Your local police may initiate some of the following, or seek your assistance in doing so:

- ❖ review with you and other authorities whether criminal charges should be laid against the abducting parent;
- ❖ notify your child's school authorities of the abduction, and request that they advise you or your lawyer in the event that there is a request for school records; you may need to provide the school authorities with a certified copy of your custody order;
- ❖ review credit cards that the abducting parent may have and request records of purchases;