

I – Prevention

A. Vulnerability

You and your child are most vulnerable to abduction when your relationship with the other parent is broken or troubled. The vulnerability is magnified if the other parent has close family in or other ties with another country.

This vulnerability may be increased in situations where permission is granted for a child to visit or travel to another country. In many cases, abduction or custody issues arise when the child is prevented from returning to Canada. These cases may not be considered as abductions under the criminal laws of others country concerned, or of Canada. Rather, they may give rise to custody or wrongful retention issues. These factors should be borne in mind when contemplating travel for either you or your children.

In some countries, children must obtain the permission of their father and women must obtain the permission of their husbands, in order to travel. If you are planning to visit another country where you are unfamiliar with the laws and customs as they relate to children and women, you should become knowledgeable before making final arrangements for the trip. You can begin by calling the Consular Operations and Emergency Services Division, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, in Ottawa, at the numbers given in Section VII. As well, if you are separated or if there is a court order with respect to custodial arrangements for your child, you should discuss your planned visit with a Canadian lawyer experienced in such matters. In some instances, it might also be necessary to discuss your situation with a lawyer in the country you will be visiting. The Consular Operations Division can provide you with a list of lawyers in foreign countries who may be able to assist.

If at any time you believe your child may be in danger of being abducted, you should discuss the matter with your local police and other organizations that may be able to provide you with assistance and advice. **Remember that it is easier to prevent an abduction than it is to recover children after an abduction has taken place.** Do not ignore your fears. Act upon them and seek assistance.

B. Precautions and Preparations

If you have any reason to believe that your child could be abducted or detained in another country against your wishes, ensure that you have detailed information about your child (including their travel documents) as well as your spouse and his/her family, friends and business associates both in Canada and in other countries. You should take colour photographs of your child every six months. A checklist for such information is given in Section VII. Further, you should teach your child to use the telephone and practise how to make long-distance collect calls. Special attention should be given to teaching a child how to make collect calls from a pay telephone.

There is often a revenge motive involved in child abductions, and the abducting parent may try to convince the children that the other parent no longer wants or loves them. Therefore, it is important for you to impress upon your children that you do indeed love them, and would in no circumstance want them to leave you.