

tance and advice. Remember that it is easier to prevent an abduction than it is to recover a child after an abduction has taken place. Do not ignore your fears. Act upon them and seek assistance.

Precautions and Preparations

If you have any reason to believe that your child could be abducted to or retained in another country against your wishes, you should ensure that you have detailed information about your child (including travel documents), as well as about the other parent and his or 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 of such information is given in Section VII. Further, you should teach your child how 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 phone.

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

Custody

The laws of Canadian provinces and territories generally provide for both parents to have equal legal custody of a child, as long as there is no custody order and the child is living with them. This is the law in many other countries as well. If you are considering separation or divorce, if you are already separated or divorced, or if you were never legally married to the other parent, you should discuss custodial arrangements with your lawyer. Only your lawyer can provide you with advice appropriate to your specific circumstances.

A well-written custody order is important when dealing with parental child abductions, especially if the other parent is a landed immigrant or a Canadian citizen with ties to, or citizenship of, another country. Even if your Canadian custody order would not be officially recognized in the country to which your child could be abducted, it will serve as a formal statement of your custodial rights in subsequent discussions and proceedings. Your lawyer can advise you on what is appropriate for your situation. The custody order might include some or all of the following:

- sole or joint custody;
- access rights;