

II – If Your Child Has Been Abducted

If your child has been abducted to a country that is a party to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, please refer to Section III.

Search and Recovery

1. General Advice

The search for and recovery of missing children is an extremely complex process in the face of a determined abducting parent. It is very difficult, even when the abductor remains in Canada. When the abductor leaves Canada, it is a far more complex process, and the search and recovery efforts can be prolonged and often unsuccessful. Therefore, you should not expect unrealistic results, or results in a matter of days or – in some instances – months. You should be well organized in this process, establishing reasonable goals and expectations for yourself, which may include:

- ❖ obtaining early confirmation of where your child is located;
- ❖ obtaining early confirmation of the well-being of your child;
- ❖ arranging a meeting, as soon as possible, between your child and a Canadian official;
- ❖ becoming knowledgeable about your legal situation both in Canada and in the country where your child is located;
- ❖ 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 most important that there is someone at your home at all times in order to answer the telephone in the event 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 involving 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.