



Introduction

Child abductions are difficult and complex when they occur within Canada. When they involve other countries, they are even more so. Provincial/territorial and federal governments co-operate closely in assisting parents affected by such abductions. These cases involve Canadian children who have been illegally removed from Canada, or who have been prevented from returning home by one of their parents. There are hundreds of active cases.

Each international child abduction is unique. It is important, therefore, that you, the affected parent, work closely with officials to improve the chances that you can be reunited with your child. You must be directly involved in the search and the anticipated return. This is a bewildering and often prolonged experience. The objective of this manual, therefore, is to help you understand the process and to direct you to appropriate sources of help.

The *Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction* – known as the Hague Convention – is the main international treaty that can assist parents whose children have been abducted to another country. To date, 53 countries have adopted the Convention, including Canada. It offers considerable assistance in the case of children abducted to signatory countries, and over 300 Canadian children have

been returned under its arrangements. Canadian cases involving countries that are parties to the Hague Convention are managed through special offices in each of the provincial and territorial Attorney General or Justice departments. These offices are called “central authorities.” Details on the use of the Convention, as well as a list of participating countries, are contained in Section III. Addresses for the Canadian central authorities are given in Section VI.

If you have any questions, please contact the Consular Affairs Bureau of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 125 Sussex Drive, Ottawa, ON K1A 0G2; tel.: **1-800-267-6788** (in Canada) or **(613) 996-8885**; fax: **(613) 995-9221** or **(613) 996-5358**. This manual, as well as other useful information, can also be found in the Travel section of the Department’s Web site (<http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca>).

Every effort has been made to provide you with accurate and current information in this manual. However, the manual should be used only as a general guide. Individuals facing a potential or actual abduction situation should seek advice and guidance from the appropriate authorities. Nothing in this manual should be construed as legal advice, nor is it intended to replace the advice of your lawyer or other authorities.

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 other countries concerned or of Canada. Rather, they may give rise to custody or wrongful retention issues. You should bear these factors in mind when you

are contemplating travel for either yourself or your child.

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 acquire a thorough knowledge of them before making final arrangements for the trip. You can begin by calling the Consular Affairs Bureau in Ottawa. As well, if you are separated or divorced, 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