

To PA Subcommittee on Judiciary Family Law:

I support PA Bill HB 1397 for 50/50 Co-Parenting where there are **two fit** parents involved who cooperate for the best interest of the child. However, when one parent's sole purpose is to destroy the child's relationship with the healthy/loving parent, as an extension of domestic violence, by using the child/children as a weapon to destroy the other parent, the alienating/abusive parent should receive **at best** limited supervised visits.

Alienation is extremely destructive and is causing severe lifelong emotional and psychological harm to children, which also negatively affects the children's physical health for a lifetime.

In many cases, alienated child/children block all forms of communication with the healthy/loving parent and may never see the healthy/loving parent again despite an award of 50/50 custody. The child is taught to refuse contact with the healthy/loving parent while the alienator denies any responsibility for the child's behavior. Alienating parents do not act in the best-interest of the child.

A parent who uses alienation as an extension of domestic violence possesses obvious traits of a severely personality disordered person (Usually Cluster B Personality – diagnosed or undiagnosed). Children do not just discard a loving parent and the entire side of the loving/healthy parent's family unless they have been forced into a loyalty conflict by the alienating parent. The alienating parent uses **cult-like programming techniques** which include manipulation through fear and intimidation, badmouthing the other parent, denigrating, demeaning, and devaluing the other parent, instilling fear and hate for the other parent without justification, undermining authority of other parent, smearing the other parent, and telling outright pathological lies about the other parent including false allegations and false narratives. This in effect brainwashes the child against a healthy/loving parent and causes that child to ultimately reject the fit parent in favor of the unfit alienating parent. The child is made to feel shame, guilt, and that he/she is a disappointment to the alienating parent when he/she does not comply with the alienator's demands until the child can no longer resist or bear the abuse and is forced into submission.

In a situation with an obsessed alienator, the child eventually loses the sense of self and reality and becomes an extension of the alienator. The targeted parent has been so debased, demeaned, and devalued by the negative programming from the alienating parent that the child eventually becomes very hostile and abusive toward the healthy/loving parent and refuses to spend time with that loving parent. It is extremely damaging to a child to lose his/her healthy/loving parent as well as the entire side of the extended family of the healthy/loving parent including aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, etc. (ref. Adverse Childhood Experiences/ACE Study).

In order to protect the child/children from this psychological manipulation and abuse, limited supervised contact or no contact at all with the alienating parent and alienated siblings (who are an extension of the alienating parent) would be in the best interest of the child.

In addition, where there is obvious alienation by a parent, the child's testimony (which is given under duress, coercion, undue influence, intimidation, and false beliefs) **must be deemed invalid** as should the child's stated desire to be in the alienator's custody.

Alienating behavior **should not and must not continue to be rewarded**. This type of behavior, which causes a child/children to reject their healthy parent, must be recognized for what it is – **SEVERE EMOTIONAL and PSYCHOLOGICAL CHILD ABUSE** and **ongoing domestic violence** for which there must consequences.

It is a fact that there are cases where children are placed in the custody of the alienator/abuser where the alienator/abuser goes so far as to kill the child and himself/herself to punish the other parent and make them suffer. We must protect the children and the healthy/loving parent from these horrific outcomes. For the reasons specified above, the alienator/abuser should not be given any custody and should be allowed only limited supervised visitation at best. This is the only way to stop further alienation and help the child to heal from the damage that was already done and to stop any further damage to the child.

It is time for the courts, the mental health community, Child Protective Services, and law enforcement to be **trained to recognize** this type of child abuse so that it can be detected and punished for what it – severe emotional and psychological abuse, which has been shown to be every bit as harmful as sexual and physical abuse by the ACE Study. In fact, schools should also receive training in parental alienation.

Parental alienation is a family crisis issue of epidemic proportions that cannot be corrected until it is recognized and understood for what it is. **Parental alienation is a human rights issue, a child protective issue, and domestic violence issue**, and it is happening in epidemic proportions throughout the United States and worldwide.

It is time for the State of Harrisburg to mandate the Court, legal personnel, the Mental Health Community, Child Protective Services, everyone involved in making these critical custody decisions, as well as law enforcement personnel, and school counselors to receive mandatory continuing education on this type of child abuse and domestic violence where the child/children are used as pawns and weapons in a war against the healthy/loving parent who is terrorized because he/she cannot rescue the child/children from the damage being done to them. In fact, I recommend that the topic of Parental Alienation be taught in schools and colleges.

This must stop now. The lives of children and the targeted healthy/loving parents (and their extended family members; e.g., grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and siblings) are being destroyed. Target parents as well as alienated children have committed suicide because of the damage that this form of abuse causes. **Research shows (ACE study) that adults who were alienated as children suffer from alcoholism, drug addiction, depression, anxiety, sleep disorders, health problems, relationship problems, and even suicide.**

It is time to do what is truly in the best interest of the child/children. The time is **NOW** for the legislature, the Courts, legal staff, the mental health community, Child Protection Services, everyone involved in making decisions in these high-conflict divorce custody cases, etc. to **understand and to recognize the emotional and psychological child abuse** being inflicted on the child/children and the target parent that **has been for way too long wrongly packaged as being "in the best interest of the child,** when it is in **no way "in the best interest of the child."**

This horrific issue of alienation of a child from a loving parent and family by an alienating parent is a national and international family crisis emergency that cannot wait.

The time is NOW to do what is really in the best interest of the child/children. Where alienation is obvious, the courts must recognize alienation, and it must be punished. The time is **NOW to stop this abuse** of the child/children and the loving parent and the extended family.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this matter.

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