

RE: HB0285 2023 Session Family Law-Custody Evaluations-Qualifications and Training

Favorable with Amendments

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The intent of HB0285 is good and has many desperately needed trainings for evaluators. However, the following sections are of concern:

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Line 10

The immediate and long-term impacts of parent separation on a child. ***This separation MUST also be understood from the aspect of a child being turned against, manipulated, and psychologically, emotionally, and physically coerced to reject a parent AND the symptoms associated with such separation, the covert way this manipulation is achieved, and the SEVERE PSYCHOLOGICAL and PHYSICAL impacts to the child. This is SEVERELY DEVEASTATING TO A CHILD both short and long term in the absence of founded abuse.***

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Line 33

Part XI Background and current research informed literature regarding parental alienation, ~~its invalidity as a syndrome, and the inappropriateness of its use in child custody disputes.~~

- **Parental alienation a very real and very devastating form of child psychological and emotional abuse *and* intimate partner violence ¹. It is no longer recognized as a syndrome.**
- **Victims (both parent and child) need protection from alienating behaviors.**
- **Parental Alienation is considered scientifically valid².**
- **Parental alienation is in the DSM (V995.51 and V61.29)^{3,4}**
- **Children who are alienated often display a lack of ambivalence: all black, all white thinking⁵**
- **Parental alienation includes the coercive control⁶, manipulation, psychological, physical, and emotional control of the child**
- **Perhaps the term has been misused and abused in the past, but that does not mean that alienation doesn't happen; it means that the term has been misused and abuse.**
- **Children who have been alienated are at SEVERE risk for short- and long-term physical, psychological, and emotional disturbances including, but not limited, to⁷:**

- Depression and anxiety
- Eating disorders/body image issues
- Personality Difficulties
- PTSD
- Chronic medical conditions
- ADHD
- Self Harm
- Suicidal Ideations
- Substance Abuse
- Shame and guilt
- Poor self esteem
- Loneliness and isolation
- Helplessness
- Grief and los
- Anger
- Trust issue
- Maladaptive coping mechanisms

Dismissing the validity of parental alienation and not training evaluators is a disservice not only to the child and affected parent, but also to the evaluator who is then ill equipped to do their job effectively.

Not training evaluators is to abandon children and parents in a horrific cycle of abuse.

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2. Harman, J. J., Warshak, R. A., Lorandos, D., & Florian, M. J. (2022, June 2). Developmental Psychology and the Scientific Status of Parental Alienation. *Developmental Psychology*. Advance online publication. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/dev0001404>
3. von Boch-Galhau W. Parental Alienation (Syndrome) – Eine ernst zu nehmende Form von psychischer Kindesmisshandlung [Parental Alienation (Syndrome) - A serious form of child psychological abuse]. *Neuropsychiatr.* 2018 Sep;32(3):133-148. German. doi: 10.1007/s40211-018-0267-0. Epub 2018 Apr 13. PMID: 29654470.
4. William Bernet, Marianne Z. Wamboldt, William E. Narrow, Child Affected by Parental Relationship Distress, *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, Volume 55, Issue 7, 2016, Pages 571-579
5. Bernet, William & Gregory, Nilgun & Reay, Kathleen & Rohner, Ronald. (2017). An Objective Measure of Splitting in Parental Alienation: The Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire. *Journal of Forensic Sciences*. 63. 10.1111/1556-4029.13625.
6. Dijkstra, S. (2022). 'I see a wall... then I cannot reach my son.' Coercive control tactics by one parent alienate the child from the other, *Journal of Gender-Based Violence* (published online ahead of print 2022). Retrieved Feb 7, 2023
7. Verhaar S, Matthewson ML, Bentley C. The Impact of Parental Alienating Behaviours on the Mental Health of Adults Alienated in Childhood. *Children (Basel)*. 2022 Mar 30;9(4):475. doi: 10.3390/children9040475. PMID: 35455519; PMCID: PMC9026878.