

Appalling Violation of the Rights of the Alienated Parent

Our irrational, unjust, and harmful policy that fails to protect the child's right to a meaningful relationship with the non-residential parent.

Parents whose children have been removed from their homes due to abuse and/or neglect have their parental rights scrupulously protected by Federal and State mandates, which require that immediate interventions be taken to provide the services which will facilitate the child's return to parental care as soon as possible. (At least that is the law; I can't vouch for whether this occurs in all cases and in all states.) These mandates are in place because it has been determined that it is in the child's best interest to continue to have an ongoing and meaningful as possible relationship with the biological parents---with the goal of reunification. To that end, a regular weekly visitation schedule is mandated between the child and parent(s), even if the situation requires that the visit be supervised. The placement agency is required to plan with the parent(s) in all areas, including but not limited to, educational, medical, religious, social, and extracurricular activities. Before an agency official can authorize or provide consent for anything that is normally required to be obtained from the parent of the minor child, the agency must make diligent efforts to first obtain the authorization or consent from the parent(s.) This requirement for is for anything as simple as authorizing a school trip or the taking of school pictures! (The 32 targeted/alienated parents whom I wrote about in my book did not even receive one school picture, yet they had paid for the pictures as required by their support order.) In essence, the placement agency is prohibited from making any decisions about or plans for the child in its custody without first attempting to gain the collaboration and approval of the biological parent(s)----both parents if both are accessible.

There are thousands of alienated/targeted parents out there, and yet I will wager that not one of you has been involved in the planning for your child's life as I just described as pertaining to the parental rights of parents of children who are placed in foster care.

Child welfare policy, therefore, is mandated to scrupulously protect and encourage all the parental rights of parents who had been adjudicated to be neglectful and/or abusive. (And I fully agree with this policy as it is in the child's best interests to do so: these children crave and need to have a relationship with their parents. And not one foster child in all the thousands whom I worked with ever expressed a refusal to visit with their parents or a hatred for them. And, upon "graduation" from foster care, the overwhelming majority, sought out their biological parents, had their parents not been in their lives during the placement.) But, incredulously, we do not even have laws on the books that even minimally safeguard and encourage the rights of the non-residential parent in situations where the parents are not together. (We merely have vague concepts stating that the residential parent is required to encourage the child's relationship with the other parent, and even this is rarely enforced over the defiance of the residential parent.) This appalling approach to child custody and visitation makes absolutely no sense to this therapist---nor would it to any rational parent who promotes the best interests of her/his child.

Too many professionals in the mental health, child protection, and judicial systems----the systems whose mission is to promote the best interests of the child----are too cavalier regarding the parental rights of the non-residential parent. Out of ignorance about the PAS, indifference, and sometimes to protect their bottom line, they readily trample upon the parental rights of the targeted/alienated----parents who are loving, nurturing, supportive (both financially and emotionally) and in no way have committed abuse or neglect.

In the end, the children suffer the most. It is time to correct this travesty of justice, which emotionally harms children.