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Shining Hope

The "Shining Hope" newsletter offers valuable resources and support to families facing child abduction and parental alienation. Our publication provides uplifting and informative messages to parents dealing with the abduction of their children, fostering a strong and supportive community throughout their difficult journey. Stay informed and up-to-date with the latest news, events, and pressing issues through our comprehensive and timely newsletter.



Gift with Impact! Our [new STL mug](#) helps support our mission to bring kids home!

Bi-Weekly Parent Support Zoom Call: Email contactshinethelight@gmail.com for dates and the link to join.

Celebrate the power of love! Share a special note to your child for the upcoming Valentine's Day feature by submitting to the editor by February 9.

“

There is no friendship, no love, like that of the parent for the child.

Henry Ward Beecher

”

Nurturing Compassion Without Burning Out

In the face of global crises and pressing challenges here in the United States, feelings of frustration and despair are not uncommon. A new year often brings renewed challenges, yet it's important to stay open-hearted and supportive of the community's needs.

At STL, donors have consistently demonstrated remarkable generosity, answering the call to help families dealing with the destructive effects of parental child abduction. Their contributions have not only enabled critical services but have also delivered an unwavering message of hope to families affected by this pervasive issue.

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While donor support remains essential to sustaining STL's initiatives, team members face their own unique challenges. Consistent exposure to families' traumatic stories can lead to [compassion fatigue](#), an emotional strain that ultimately reduces the capacity to provide empathetic care. This type of burnout happens when empathy becomes so deeply invested that personal well-being is compromised.

Dr. [Charles R. Figley](#), the world-renowned traumatologist, has described compassion fatigue as "the cost of caring" and has defined it as "the deep physical, emotional, and spiritual exhaustion that can result from working day to day in an intense caregiving environment."

STL addresses this challenge by offering wellness resources to staff and volunteers, promoting open dialogue and empathetic leadership. Reliability and dependability are reflected in all aspects of the organization's culture and the way it operates. These measures help safeguard mental health and sustain long-term engagement. Additional information on recognizing and managing compassion fatigue is available through The American Institute of Stress.

Remaining mindful that empathy and self-care work best side by side helps providers maintain their strength and effectiveness. When the well-being of advocates is considered and the generosity of donors remains steadfast, the capacity to provide support endures. Through resilience and continued donor support, STL's resolve to stand by all those who rely on its services remains strong.

Support STL Parents!

Through giving, compassion closes the gap between despair and hope, offering crucial support to those who need it most.

Highlighted below are links to GoFundMe campaigns created by left-behind parents in the STL community. Any form of support—such as resources, services, or encouragement can make a difference in their journey toward reunification.

Please take a moment to explore their stories by clicking on the links and consider how you might help.

[Terrance Wright](#)

[Paul Sneed](#)

[Taylor Prince](#)

[Mandy Kelly](#)

Thank you!



Breaking the Myths

Parental child abduction and alienation remain deeply complex issues, often clouded by half-truths and misguided assumptions. Inaccurate beliefs undermine understanding, reinforce stigma, and reduce effective support for left-behind families.

The following realities shed light on some widespread myths:

Myth: *“Only non-custodial parents abduct children.”*

Reality: Any parent—custodial or otherwise—can engage in abduction. In some cases, extended relatives or other individuals in the child’s life may also take part in the act. Certain situations arise from a perceived need to “protect” the child from harm, while others stem from a desire to gain leverage in a custody dispute.

Myth: *“If a child is with a parent, it’s not real abduction.”*

Reality: Simply being a parent does not grant the right to ignore legal custody arrangements or remove the child from the other parent without consent. Parental abduction often causes severe emotional harm to the child and the left-behind parent.

Myth: *“Parental abduction is less harmful than stranger abduction.”*

Reality: Abduction by a parent can be uniquely damaging—children may struggle with trust issues, loyalty conflicts, and long-term psychological trauma.

Myth: *“Parental alienation isn’t real—kids just prefer one parent.”*

Reality: While children naturally gravitate toward certain personality types, alienation involves a deliberate campaign to undermine the child’s relationship with the other parent. This is a serious form of emotional manipulation.

Myth: *“Technology makes it easier to find abducted children.”*

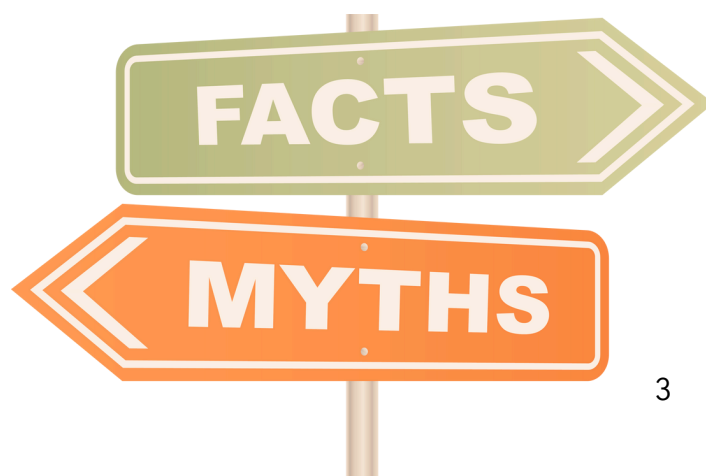
Reality: Digital footprints can sometimes help locate missing children, but tech-savvy abductors can also use encrypted apps and false identities online, making recovery efforts more complicated.

Myth: *“Children who have been abducted always want to stay with the abducting parent.”*

Reality: In truth, children in abduction cases can experience fear, confusion, or loyalty conflicts. Some may remain silent due to manipulation or emotional pressure, rather than genuine preference.

Myth: *“Legal intervention guarantees a quick return of the child.”*

Reality: While legal action is vital, cases can become drawn out and complicated by jurisdictional issues, parental non-compliance, or limited enforcement mechanisms. Courts, law enforcement, and advocacy groups often work in tandem, but the process can still take considerable time.



The Blurred Lines Between Parental Child Abduction and Familial Trafficking: Why Distinctions Matter

In recent years, child protection discussions have started to blur the lines between parental child abduction (PCA) and familial trafficking. While both are serious forms of child abuse, this overlap can create challenges for families affected by PCA, particularly when it comes to ensuring the unique needs of these cases are met.

Thankfully, strong federal support exists for addressing human trafficking through comprehensive laws like the [Trafficking Victims Protection Act \(TVPA\) of 2000](#) and its updates, as well as the [Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2015](#). These laws provide frameworks for prevention, protection, and prosecution. Similarly, the PROTECT Act of 2003 has enhanced law enforcement's ability to combat crimes against children.

[Parental child abduction](#) cases, however, lack the same level of resources, despite affecting thousands of children in the U.S. each year. The [International Parental Kidnapping Crime Act \(IPKCA\)](#) criminalizes parental abduction, but enforcement—especially in international cases—can be difficult. The Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction offers tools to help recover abducted children, but these processes are complex and require expertise.

What are the key differences between these issues? While familial trafficking falls under the umbrella of human trafficking, the distinguishing factor is the perpetrator.



In familial trafficking, exploitation comes from within the family unit, whereas human trafficking more broadly involves exploitation by strangers, acquaintances, or criminal networks. In contrast, parental child abduction (PCA) is a legal matter distinct from trafficking. It involves the wrongful removal or retention of a child by a parent or relative, often in the context of custody disputes.

Organizations like STL address the unique challenges of PCA, offering legal guidance, emotional support, and tailored advocacy to ensure families navigating the complexities of parental abduction receive the support they need.

Treating PCA and trafficking as the same issue risks weakening the specialized responses that each uniquely requires. Both are grave violations of children's rights, but they demand different expertise and solutions.

Strengthening resources for both independently is the best way to ensure every child and family receives the help they deserve.

Human Trafficking and Parental Child Abduction Laws

Human Trafficking Laws:

- - Trafficking Victims Protection Act (2000) and Reauthorizations
- - William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (2008)
- - Abolish Human Trafficking Act (2017)
- - Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act (2015)
- - Victims of Child Abuse Act (1990)

Parental Child Abduction Laws:

- - International Parental Kidnapping Crime Act (1993)
- - Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (1980)
- - Uniform Child Custody Jurisdiction and Enforcement Act (UCCJEA)
- - The David Goldman Act (2014)

Related Legislation

- Violence Against Women Act of 1994, Pub. L. No. 103-322, 108 Stat. 1796, 1902 (September 13, 1994)
- Violence Against Women Act 2005, Pub. L. No. 109-162 (Jan. 5, 2006)
- Technical Corrections to Violence Against Women Act 2005, Pub. L. No. 109-271 (Aug. 12, 2006)
- Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2015, Pub. L. No. 114-22 (May 29, 2015)
- Violence Against Women Act Reauthorization Act of 2022, Div. W. of Pub. L. No. 117-103 (Mar. 15, 2022)

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Share your stories, ideas, or feedback with our Editor at info@tiffanyfontana.com. We value your input and look forward to hearing from you!