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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.



Visit our [website](#) for programs, resources, and support!

Sunday night Zoom call for parents: email contact@stlforabductedchildren.org for more information. JOIN..... for yourself and your children!

Introducing the STL Zazzle store! Shop with purpose [HERE!](#)

“Strength grows in the moments when you think you can’t go on but you keep going anyway.”

Why Are Left-Behind Parents Left Out? The Overlooked Crisis of Parental Child Kidnapping in Child Welfare Policy

Parental child kidnapping (PCA) is a serious issue impacting thousands of children and families nationwide every year. When one parent takes a child without the other’s consent, the child’s safety, emotional well-being, and development are put at significant risk. These are exactly the areas child welfare systems are meant to protect. However, the latest [Child Welfare Policy Manual \(CWPM\)](#), issued by the Children’s Bureau under the Administration for Children & Families (ACF), contains a glaring omission: it makes no mention of parental child kidnapping.

(Continued on page 2)



How the U.S. handles family abduction cases
Page 3



15 Nations, zero Accountability
Page 4

Why Are Left-Behind Parents Left Out?

Continued from page 1

The [CWPM](#) provides comprehensive guidance for child welfare programs across the United States, addressing major safety concerns such as abuse, neglect, foster care, adoption, and notably, sex trafficking. Its emphasis on trafficking stems from recent federal legislation requiring child welfare agencies to identify and respond to trafficking risks. Yet, despite being an undeniable form of child endangerment, parental child kidnapping is not mentioned anywhere in the Child Welfare Policy Manual.

This lack of recognition is especially troubling given the clear threat parental child kidnapping poses to a child's safety and emotional stability. Federal laws such as the [International Parental Kidnapping Crime Act \(IPKCA\)](#) and the [Parental Kidnapping Prevention Act \(PKPA\)](#) acknowledge the seriousness of these cases within the criminal and family court systems. Still, because child welfare agencies operate outside these legal frameworks, they receive no specific guidance and bear no obligation to intervene. As a result, families are left in limbo, and many children fall through the cracks without the protections they urgently need.

The separation between systems, combined with the absence of PCA in child welfare policy, creates lasting consequences. Left-behind parents face overwhelming legal battles with little or no access

to the coordinated social services, trauma-informed care, or reunification support that agencies typically provide. There is no designated liaison, no established protocol, and no central agency tasked with guiding these families through recovery.

Meanwhile, the children, many of whom endure prolonged periods of instability, fear, and psychological stress, are left without the safety net or continuity of care that would otherwise be standard in cases of child endangerment. This lack of collaboration and accountability across systems leaves critical gaps in prevention, response, and aftercare for left-behind parents and their children. Without formal recognition or integration into existing systems, these families remain unprotected, unsupported, and unseen.

While some leaders have recognized the urgent need to bridge the gaps in addressing parental child kidnapping, many continue to overlook this critical issue—despite it affecting thousands of American families and even more worldwide. [Secretary of State Marco Rubio](#), addressed this directly in his recent statement in the [Annual Report on International Child Abduction 2025](#). He affirmed a commitment “to encouraging these countries to take more effective measures to resolve cases of international parental child abduction, to restore the strength and safety of children and parents harmed by international parental child abduction, so that they may thrive.” This message is both welcome and necessary. (Continued on page 3)

Addressing the gap requires focused action like:

- *Incorporating parental child kidnapping explicitly within child welfare policies and programs*
- *Appointing designated liaisons to assist families navigating reunification and recovery*
- *Allocating increased funding for trauma-informed care and long-term support services*
- *Establishing collaborative frameworks that connect legal, social service, and law enforcement responses*
- *Promoting community awareness campaigns to reduce stigma and empower families to seek help*

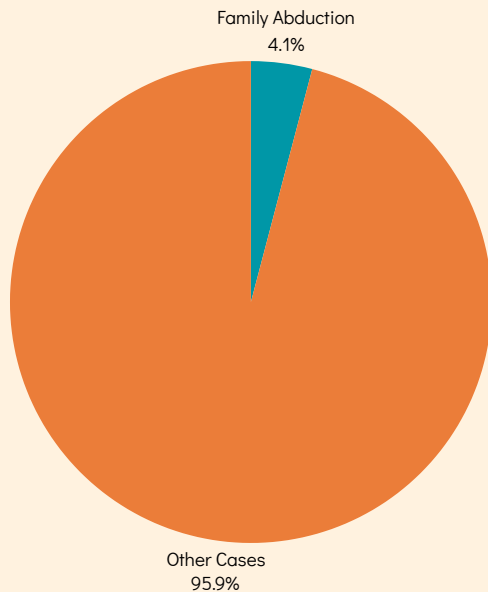
The graphs below reveal a striking contradiction in how the U.S. handles family abduction cases.

While only 4.1% of missing children cases reported to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) in 2023 involved family abductions (as shown in the pie chart), these very cases made up a staggering 59% of all AMBER Alerts issued (bar chart).

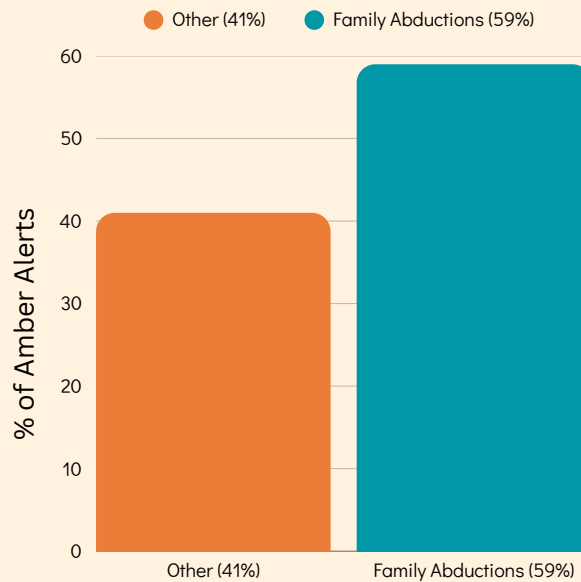
What This Means:

When a child is taken by a parent or family member, it's clearly serious enough to trigger our nation's highest-level child recovery alert. Yet, paradoxically, U.S. government agencies often dismiss these incidents as mere "custody disputes," not urgent crises—especially when they involve international borders. This discrepancy underscores the need for policy change and stronger government intervention in all forms of child abduction.

Missing Children Cases



Amber Alerts by Type (NCMEC 2023)



Source: National Center for Missing & Exploited Children

However, given the severity and widespread impact of parental child abduction, STL respectfully urges Secretary Rubio to prioritize the formal inclusion of PCA within child welfare policies. Protecting children from all forms of harm must be a bipartisan priority—one that addresses PCA with the same urgency and resources as trafficking or abuse.

Family abduction is not merely a private matter—it's a pressing public policy issue and a growing crisis that affects the lives and futures of children across the globe.

In 2023 alone, 59% of all AMBER Alerts were issued for family abduction cases, highlighting both the scale and urgency of this issue. Despite these alarming figures, parental child abduction remains underrepresented in case management and policy frameworks.

Shine the Light for Abducted Children stands ready to partner with federal agencies, policymakers, and community organizations to help close these gaps—ensuring left-behind families are no longer excluded from the systems meant to protect and reunite them.



Working to connect systems, close policy gaps, and restore hope for families affected by parental child abduction



Each year, the [U.S. State Department](#) publishes an [Annual Report on International Parental Child Abduction](#). This report tracks international parental child abduction cases—specifically focusing on how foreign governments respond when an American child is wrongfully taken or retained abroad by one parent. In the most recent report, fifteen countries were identified as having a “*pattern of noncompliance*.”

This designation isn’t made lightly; it means these nations have repeatedly failed to uphold their legal obligations under the [Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction](#). Even in the face of court orders and diplomatic pressure, many of the nations cited have refused to return abducted American children. Unfortunately, this suggests that parents may have little to no recourse if their child is taken to one of these places—and the U.S. government is publicly acknowledging the breakdown in cooperation.

Countries identified as noncompliant in the 2025 U.S. State Department Report:

Argentina, The Bahamas, Belize, Brazil, Bulgaria, Ecuador, Egypt, Honduras, India, Jordan, Peru, Poland, the Republic of Korea, Romania, and the United Arab Emirates.

Additional Resource Links

[From Broken Steps: A Guide to Healing After Parental Abduction](#)

[Department of Justice](#)

[FBI](#)

[Interpol](#)

[NCMEC](#)

[DAVIA: Domestic Abuse and Violence International Alliance](#)



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