



17th March, 2020

Dear Joint Select Committee AFLS,

Thank you for inviting us to appear before the Joint Select Committee on Thursday 12th March, 2020.
Further to our attendance, please see below the additional information requested by the committee:

References missing on page 3 of our original submission (updated on submission)

Templer, K., Matthewson, M., Haines, J., & Cox, G. (2016). Recommendations for best practice in response to parental alienation: findings from a systematic review. *Journal of Family Therapy*, 39, 103-122.
doi:10.1111/1467-6427.12137

Baker, A.J.L., & Verrocchio, M.C. (2013). Italian college student-reported childhood exposure to parental alienation: Correlates with well-being. *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage*, 54, 609.
doi:10.1080/10502556.2013.837714

Baker, A.J.L., & Ben Ami, N. (2011). Adult recall of childhood psychological maltreatment in adult children of divorce: Prevalence and associations with outcomes. *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage*, 52, 203-219.
doi:10.1080/10502556.2011.556973

Baker, A. J. L., & Chambers, J. (2011). Adult recall of childhood exposure to parental conflict: Unpacking the black box of parental alienation. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, 52, 55–76.
doi:10.1080/10502556.2011.534396

Clawar, S.S., & Rivlin, B. (2013). *Children held hostage: Identifying brainwashed children, presenting a case, and crafting solutions*. (2nd edn.). Chicago, IL: American Bar Association.

Richard Gardner's 8 indicators of Parental Alienation Syndrome (PAS)

Dr Richard Gardner proposed that parental alienation could be identified by the presence of 8 indicators seen in alienated children. These indicators are:

Indicator 1: Campaign of Denigration

Indicator 2: Weak or Frivolous Rationalizations for the Deprecation

Indicator 3: Lack of Ambivalence

Indicator 4: Independent Thinker Phenomenon

Indicator 5: The Reflexive Support of the Alienating Parent in the Parental Conflict

Indicator 6: Absence of Guilt over Cruelty to and/or Exploitation of the Alienated Parent

Indicator 7: The Presence of Borrowed Scenarios

Indicator 8: The Spread of the Animosity to the Friends and/or Extended Family of the Alienated Parent

Reference: Gardner, R.A. (1992). *The parental alienation syndrome. A guide for mental health and legal professionals*. Cresskill, NJ: Creative Therapeutics.



The difference between Parental Alienation (PA) and Parental Alienation Syndrome (PAS)

Research into what we now call 'parental alienation' dates back to the 1970s when it was described as 'pathological alignment.' What we now call parental alienation has been called many other names before this time and since. These names include child affected by parental relationship stress, loyalty conflict, triangulation, splitting, perverse triangle, threatened parent syndrome, narcissistic injury, brainwashing, malicious parent syndrome and indeed parental alienation syndrome.

The earliest reported case of parental alienation dates back to 1804 when Leonard Thomas De Manneville took his baby daughter and refused to return her to her mother, Margaret Crompton. De Manneville used the legal system that was available to him at the time to successfully alienate their daughter from the mother.¹

During the 1980s and 1990s Richards Gardner proposed and described Parental Alienation Syndrome (PAS).² The push for the phenomenon now called parental alienation to be viewed as a syndrome was rejected by some who considered that there were insufficient grounds for making such a claim. The result of the debate around parental alienation being considered a syndrome diagnosed in the child was not clarification of the existence of parental alienation.

More recent research considered parental alienation a form of family violence and child abuse perpetrated by the alienating parent. A review of this view can be seen in the following references:

Haines, J., Matthewson, M., & Turnbull, M. (2020). *Understanding and Managing Parental Alienation: A Guide to Assessment and Intervention*. Routledge.

Harman, J. J., Kruk, E., & Hines, D. A. (2018). Parental alienating behaviors: An unacknowledged form of family violence. *Psychological bulletin*, 144(12), 1275. doi: 10.1037%2Fbul0000175

Some tactics used by alienating parents

These tactics are quoted directly from Haines, Matthewson and Turnbull (2020) pp. 335-339. Full reference is listed above.

Denigration associated with the targeted parent

- This parent makes denigrating comments about the other parent.
- This person is grudging in their acceptance of positive statements made by others about the other parent.
- This parent refuses to use the name of the other parent.
- This parent refers to the other parent using an unflattering name (e.g., Idiot).

¹Lorandos, D., & Bone, J.M. (2016). Child custody evaluations: In cases where parental alienation is alleged. In M.L. Goldstein (Ed.). *Handbook of child custody* (pp. 179-232). Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.

² Gardner, R.A. (1992). *The parental alienation syndrome. A guide for mental health and legal professionals*. Cresskill, NJ: Creative Therapeutics.



- This parent struggles to admit that the other parent is capable of caring for the child(ren).
- The denigration of the targeted parent is implied rather than stated (e.g., "I suppose he does the best he can given his background").

Vilification of the targeted parent

- This parent makes allegations about the dangerousness of the other parent without adequate supporting evidence.
- This parent makes claims about the abuse of the child by the other parent without substantiation.
- This parent makes reference to the possibility of abuse of the child by the targeted parent without actually making the allegation.
- The timing of any claim of abuse of the child by the targeted parent is linked to legal events or parenting changes (e.g., upcoming court appearance, progression of more time for the targeted parent with the child).
- This parent makes sinister interpretations of normal events (e.g., the child sitting on the father's lap, the child getting into bed with the father in the morning).
- The child's reluctance to see the targeted parent is used as 'evidence' of wrongdoing by the other parent.

Interference with time spent with the targeted parent

- This parent puts obstacles in the way of the child spending time with the other parent.
- This parent offers the child alternative, favoured activities that compete with time they are supposed to spend with the other parent.
- This parent insists on repeatedly contacting the child while the child is with the other parent.
- This parent fails to produce the child so the child can spend time with the other parent.
- This parent keeps the child out of school or collects them early from school so that the other parent cannot collect the child to spend time with them (if the other parent is to collect the child from school).
- This parent schedules medical, dental, counsellor or other appointments for the child during time they are scheduled to spend with the other parent.

Eradication of the targeted parent from the child's life

- This parent fails to pass on gifts, cards or letters to the child from the other parent.
- This parent makes it difficult or impossible for the other parent to maintain contact with the child by telephone or other electronic means.
- This parent refuses to mention the other parent when talking with the child or around the child.



- This parent insists that the child call his or her new partner 'Dad' or 'Mum' even when the relationship is very new.
- This parent encourages the child to call the other parent by their given name rather than 'Dad' or 'Mum' (or some other title, such as Papa, that indicates the parent's role in the child's life).
- This parent acts to prevent the child from spending time with the extended family of the other parent.

Information gatekeeping

- This parent fails to inform the other parent about important events for the child that the other parent could attend (e.g., school plays, sports carnivals).
- This parent fails to inform the other parent about the child's medical appointments or about matters relating to the child's health.
- This parent fails to inform the other parent about the child's counsellor or psychologist appointments.
- This parent limits the information that is provided to professionals working with the child (e.g., counsellors, psychologists).
- This parent fails to provide the other parents with information about the child's school performance.
- This parent withholds information from the other parent about the child reaching developmental milestones.

Interrogation of the alienated child

- When the child returns from spending time with the other parent, this parent wants to know what occurred in detail from the child.
- This parent questions the child about the other parent's potential wrongdoing after the child spends time with the targeted parent.
- This parent questions the child about the time they spend with the other parent despite being told not to do this.
- It is your view that the child is feeling pressured to provide information to the questioning parent.
- The child tends to change their story about their other parent to a more negative one if this parent questions them enough about the targeted parent.
- This child avoids or would avoid spending time with the targeted parents to avoid having to be questioned by this parent.

Damage to the loving connection with the targeted parent

- This parent tells the child negative things about the other parent.
- This parent tells the child the other parent has a new family and does not want the child.



- This parent tells the child the other parent never wanted them.
- This parent tells the child the other parent is too busy for them.
- This parent tells the child the other parent does not care about them because they have not paid child support.
- This parent tells the child the other parent was unhappy about the pregnancy/wanted to terminate the pregnancy/was unsupportive during the pregnancy.

Inappropriate disclosure about the targeted parent

- This parent informs the child about negative events that occurred in the relationship that had nothing to do with the child or occurred before the child was born.
- This parent shows the child court documents or tells them about the content of court documents to reinforce the negative view being expressed about the other parent.
- This parent does not balance up negative comments about the targeted parent with positive comments.
- This parent does not filter what they say about the targeted parent when they are around the child.
- This parent discloses information about the targeted parent to the child as a means of strengthening the alliance between this parent and the child.

Encouraging child defiance

- This parent tells the child they do not have to obey the other parent.
- This parent tells the child they do not have to obey the other parent's new partner.
- The child is compliant with other people but not the targeted parent.
- There are complaints that the child has to comply with the parental demands of the targeted parent despite these demands being normal enough requests a parent makes of a child (e.g., doing homework, picking up their clothes, tidying the kitchen, not snacking before dinner).
- This parent makes the targeted parent's rules for the child seem unreasonable to the child.
- This parent rewards the child for noncompliance with the targeted parent's rules (e.g., letting the child know they are pleased, affection in the form of hugs, reinforcement of the alliance between this parent and the child).

Forcing loyalty to the alienating parent

- This parent pressures the child to take their side in the conflict between the parents.
- This parent insists the child tell others that they support this parent.
- This parent makes it clear to the child that positive feelings about both parents will not be tolerated.



- This parent makes it clear there will be negative consequences for failing to be loyal to the alienating parent (e.g., 'You can go and live with your father').
- This parent creates opportunities for the child to express their loyalty towards this parent.
- This parent has an expectation that the child will be loyal to them.

Encouraging an unhealthy alliance

- This parent talks about the child as if they are friends rather than having a parent-child relationship.
- This parent actively encourages the child to be dependent on them.
- This parent encourages the child to believe they cannot function without them.
- This parent plots with the child against the other parent.
- This parent encourages the child to lie to support their point of view.
- This parent talks about only needing the child to make them happy.

Emotional manipulation

- This parent withdraws or threatens to withdraw love and affection if the child disagrees with their view about the other parent.
- This parent withdraws or threatens to withdraw love and affection if the child acts in a way they consider to be disloyal.
- This parent withdraws or threatens to withdraw love and affection if the child asks to see the other parent.
- This parent sulks if the child talks about the other parent.
- This parent expresses displeasure or becomes angry if the child mentions the other parent.
- This parent threatens abandonment if the child expresses a wish to see the other parent.

Utilising outside forces

- This parent makes notifications to child protective services about the other parent.
- This parent seeks restraining orders or family violence orders claiming the other parent represents a significant threat despite no evidence to support this threat existing.
- This parent uses the legal system to punish the other parent.
- This parent seeks out counselling for the child to support their view that the child should not spend time with the other parent.
- This parent informs the child's school of the threat the other parent represents to the child despite no evidence to support this threat existing.



- This parent seeks out sexual assault support or family violence support for the child despite no evidence that the other parent sexually abused the child or perpetrated family violence.

Interventions for parental alienation

Haines, Matthewson and Turnbull (2020) and Templer, Matthewson, Haines and Cox (2017)³ provide a thorough overview of the interventions that currently exist internationally for parental alienation. Additionally, EMMM is of the view that when parents present for Family Dispute Resolution in relation to custody matters, their children should attend a workshop facilitated by appropriately trained and qualified practitioners. The aim of the workshop would be to teach children skills that will help them to cope better with and adjust to family separation. We propose the workshop be based on Dr Amy Baker's program *I Don't Want to Choose: How Middle School Children Can Avoid Choosing One Parent Over Another*. EMMM has access to this program.

It is essential that such a workshop we propose be facilitated by practitioners who have current knowledge of parental alienation. Because of our collaboration with the University of Tasmania, links with international researchers and practitioners, and our access to Dr Baker's program, EMMM is best placed to train practitioners and work with the relevant service providers to develop the workshop we propose.

We would also like to bring to the attention of the Committee that EMMM next year will be hosting the Parental Alienation Study Group International conference on **11th to 13th August 2021** on the Gold Coast. This conference will bring world renowned experts on parental alienation to Australia. Details will be coming soon on our website www.emmm.org.au.

If you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Kind regards

Ms Amanda Sillars	and	Dr. Mandy Matthewson
CEO & Director		Director

³ Templer, K., Matthewson, M., Haines, J., & Cox, G. (2017). Recommendations for best practice in response to parental alienation: Findings from a systematic review. *Journal of Family Therapy*, 39(1), 103-122. doi: 10.1111/1467-6427.12137