

Understanding and effectively dealing with

Hostile-Aggressive Parenting (HAP)

Information for legal and health care professionals, judges, court workers, school officials, students, community support agencies and other professionals involved with children and families being adversely affected by high conflict separation and/or divorce.

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ABSTRACT

Hostile-Aggressive Parenting (HAP), which is a serious form of child maltreatment and abuse, is encountered in most high conflict child-custody disputes. Within the family court system today, there is very little, if any, published standard criteria or definitions relied on to determine the kind of parenting behaviours and actions would be considered as a form of abuse or maltreatment to children.

This document has been written with a purpose to bring greater clarity, awareness and understanding of **Hostile-Aggressive Parenting** and its remedies and was meant to be used as a tool by professionals and laypersons to clearly identify parents/guardians who may be suspect of being classified as HAP.

This article describes two categories of HAP, the first being mild to moderate and the second, severe. Both levels of severity of HAP require only one simple, uniform, yet effective, step by step approach to be successfully dealt with. It is hoped that this article will assist legal and health care professionals, the courts and others in the community who work to assist children and families in situations where high conflict divorce and separation is a problem.

The recommendations and procedures contained in this document can, with the meaningful support from the court, legal and health care professionals and other supportive persons in the community, effectively control and in most cases eliminate this form of child abuse as well as reduce much of the needless, most severe and protracted litigation in our family courts today, which is causing so much harm to children and families.

Public input invited

Since the first draft release of this document in 1999, many additions and improvements have been made to this document based on the comments and suggestions that have been received from readers world-wide. At the time of this printing, this document was still being circulated to members of the public as well as to recognised legal and health care professionals for their feedback and comment. All comments and suggestions received will be reviewed by the Documents Review Committee for inclusion in future releases of this document and all comments and suggestions from any source are welcomed. Should you have any questions or wish to provide comment on the contents of document then please forward your comments in writing to:

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Table of Contents

Part 1

Hostile-Aggressive Parenting (HAP) – What is it?

Part 2

The underlying causes of Hostile–Aggressive Parenting

Part 3

The outcome of Hostile-Aggressive Parenting

Part 4

Categories of Hostile-Aggressive Parenting and examples of associated behaviour

Part 5

Observable effects of Hostile-Aggressive Parenting on children

Part 6

Intervention and steps to effectively address Hostile-Aggressive Parenting

Part 7

Conclusion

Part 1

Hostile-Aggressive Parenting – What is it?

Hostile-Aggressive Parenting (HAP) is defined as: *A general pattern of behaviour, actions or decision-making of a parent or guardian that either directly or indirectly; 1) creates undue difficulties or interferences in the relationship of a child with another parent or guardian involved with the parenting and/or rearing of the child and/or, 2) promotes or maintains an unwarranted unfairness or inequality in the parenting arrangements between a child's parents and/or guardians and/or, 3) promotes ongoing and unnecessary conflict between parents and/or guardians which adversely affects the parenting, well-being and rearing of a child.*

Hostile-Aggressive Parenting is most apparent in child-custody disputes and is used most often as a tool to align the child with one of the parents during litigation over custody or control of the child. However, HAP can be present in almost any situation where two or more people involved in a child's life are at odds with each other over how a child may be raised or influenced by the parties. HAP can be present to some extent even when couples are still living together. The focus of this document is on **Hostile-Aggressive Parenting** as it applies to custody and access disputes relating to separation and/or divorce.

Hostile-Aggressive Parenting is not limited to the biological parents but also applies to any guardian - grandparents, extended family members, babysitters and to any other person who may be involved in caring and rearing of a child. In some cases, it may even involve a parent in dispute with the child's grandparents, sometimes the parent's very own parent!. Any form of interference to a normal, healthy relationship between a child and a person (most often one of the parents) caused by another person or agency having some control or influence over the child, is wrong and ultimately causes emotional and psychological harm to the child. Throughout this document the word "parent" shall be considered synonymous with "guardian".

Hostile-Aggressive Parenting is a form of abuse and maltreatment that parents and even other family members can engage in. HAP can be a factor in all types of parenting arrangements including sole maternal custody, sole paternal custody and joint custody. Interestingly, it is sole custodial parents who are most often reported to practice **Hostile-Aggressive-Parenting**, especially in its most severe form. Sole custody has been a factor identified as contributing to HAP behaviour in parents. Although the majority of complaints of Hostile-Aggressive Parenting are directed against mothers, which some say can be attributed this to the fact that approximately 85%-95% of sole custody awards are to the mothers, some professionals do support the notion that differences in the psychological makeup of the genders may be a factor with HAP. Although this article does not attempt to make the political issue of gender a major factor as it relates to HAP, a number of studies would seem to support the conclusion held by some that gender may be a factor. Those that support this view claim that there are psychological differences in the thinking patterns between men and women and that woman, in general, are more prone to HAP. In the area of gender, some research has revealed the following:

- That children who live with only their mothers are nine times more likely to have conflict with their mother than if they lived with only their father.¹
- That children were more than twice as likely to have no contact with the other parent when they lived with their mother.²
- That children living with dads felt positively about moms; children living with moms were more likely to think negatively of dads.³
- That mothers are almost five times as likely to badmouth dads as dads are moms.⁴
- That of children killed by single parents, single mothers are 24 times more likely to kill children than dads.⁵
- That in the majority of the cases of parental alienation syndrome, it is the mother who is favoured and the father denigrated.⁶
- Even when the father and mother had equal income, the children who were with their dad full-time did better than those with their moms full-time⁷
- 42% of children said their mothers tried to prevent them from seeing their fathers after divorce - 16% said their fathers tried to prevent them seeing their mothers.⁸]

Readers who may be interested in the perspective of gender as it relates to HAP should research this subject more thoroughly through other sources. HAP is clearly a form of child abuse and irregardless of the gender of the perpetrator, must be identified and effectively dealt with.

Although every family situation may be different, when situations involving **Hostile-Aggressive Parenting** are carefully looked at, one or more of the causes outlined in this document can be identified in almost every case.

In general, parents exhibiting **Hostile-Aggressive-Parenting** have not succeeded in getting on with their own life and remain, instead, controlled by their negative emotions and continue to exercise power and control over their ex-spouse's life, their ex-spouse's parenting and to a large extent, over the children of the relationship as well. HAP parents will blame everyone else except themselves. High degrees of conflict during custody settlements and litigation are almost sure signs in these affected families. Hostile-aggressive parents are unable to appreciate the needs of their child and in many cases view their child as a possession belonging to them and no other persons have any right to the child, especially not the child's other parent or other persons that the HAP parent does not like. Hostile-aggressive parents will use the child as a weapon against the other spouse and family members whenever they have the opportunity. **A parent engaged in Hostile-Aggressive Parenting will often feel encouraged to intensify their aggressive behaviour when they realize that the courts fail to exercise sanctions against them for their abusive parenting practices. He or she will also take comfort in that the community in general will choose not to get involved, probably because they don't know what to do.** This explains why hostile-aggressive behaviour is often observed in those having sole custody of their child. Angry and vindictive sole custodial parents are often able to bring a reign of terror and revenge on to a non-custodial parent and their family, their goal being to get them out of the child's life or at the very least to severely damage their child's relationship with the other parent and other parent's family.

Hostile-Aggressive Parenting is considered by many health care and legal experts as being an unhealthy, anti-social, abusive behaviour which is emotionally damaging and contrary to the best interest of a child. Simply stated, it is dysfunctional parenting, emotional child abuse and to the parent who is the target of **Hostile-Aggressive Parenting**, a form of discrimination.

Identifying Hostile-Aggressive Parenting

Although some of the underlying causes Hostile-Aggressive Parenting may be related to mental health issues, **it must be emphasized that HAP, on its own, is not considered to be a mental health condition.** HAP is simply a pattern of negative and emotionally behaviour by a parent which is damaging to children and in almost all cases is easily identified through observation of the specific actions and decisions made by a parent. A parent who engages in behaviour that is considered as HAP may not necessarily be suffering from a mental condition nor would a person diagnosed with a mental health condition necessarily exhibit HAP. Because identifying HAP is done through simple observation of the interactions of the parents with their child and with the other parent, determining the presence of HAP does not require the qualifications of a health care professional to identify. With an understanding of the information and background contained in this document, almost anyone from a child advocate to a day care worker, can competently identify HAP and know what to do to help minimize the damaging affects of HAP on children irregardless of whether the person exhibiting HAP requires some form of mental treatment or not.

Part 2

The underlying causes of Hostile–Aggressive Parenting

There are a number of reasons why parents or other family members engage in **Hostile-Aggressive Parenting** when exercising their parental/guardian authority. It is important for all persons who have to deal with persons exhibiting HAP behaviours so that they can better understand why these persons are behaving in this manner. Some of the main causes, described briefly, are:

Anger and revenge

Anger and revenge and the inability to control it, are the most common underlying causes of **Hostile-Aggressive Parenting** behaviour. Usually, when a couple separates, there is a lot of pain and hurt caused by the separation. Unfortunately, many parents are unable to deal with their hurt in a positive way and, instead, focus their emotions in a damaging way towards their former spouse and family. Their anger and need for revenge against the other parent takes control to some extent. In severe cases, these emotions can become the main motivating factors in those persons' lives. Although anger and revenge are basic human reactions, they can be kept largely under control and their adverse affects on children eliminated if the appropriate intervention strategies are employed through the court process coupled with the proper support from the community.

Jealousy and fear

In some cases, parents may fear that their own relationship with their child is not strong enough and worry that their child may develop a stronger relationship with the other parent. Some parents may fear that they may lose custody of the child to the other parent if the child's bond with the other parent becomes too strong. As a consequence, the fearful parent may resort to **Hostile-Aggressive Parenting** in the hope of strengthening their own bond with the child at the expense of the child's relationship with the other parent. Jealousy and fear are often high up on the list when a parent believes that their child may want to spend more time with the other parent, especially when custody and parenting time is yet to be determined by the court. Some parents may resort to HAP fearing that the court may reduce their involvement with the child or not grant their bid for sole custody of the child.

Power and Control

Some parents simply have a desire for power and control over the child and the child's other parent and the child literally becomes their tool to accomplish this. Often, this thirst for power and control over the other family situation can last for many years, if not a lifetime. The use of the child as a means to have power and control over the other parent is most common in situations where a child has been placed under the sole custodial power of only one parent or where one parent has a significantly greater period of time with the child. In addition to the money that will often flow to the custodial parent from the non-custodial parent, parents who have custody of children are often able to make further financial demands and accounting of their former partners, year after year. Religious conflicts between parents are also a power and control issue with parents of different religions wanting the child to follow the beliefs of his/her own religion.

Hostile-Aggressive behaviour as a court strategy

It is known in the legal community that if conflict exists in a family during separation or divorce that the courts will often apply the misguided concept of awarding sole custody to one parent in order to put the sole custodial parent “in control” over the children and, as it usually turns out, the other parent.

Many members of the public and the legal community claim that a bias in favour of mothers exists in the family courts today. Many believe that the courts will give custody of the children to the mother almost exclusively, with little regard to the father. Analysis of Canadian case law supports the claim that there is a bias based on gender in favour of mothers in the family court system.⁹

Some claim that because of the bias in the courts, some mothers who want to win sole custody in family court will deliberately create conflict prior to going into court as they believe that it is to their advantage to do so and the odds are in their favour. This may explain why many fathers experience access denial problems in the weeks and months prior to going to court.

Some parents have reported being encouraged by their solicitors to give lip service to any form of mediation, to make unfounded allegations and generally maintain a high level of conflict prior to going to court. Those in legal circles know that often the courts will grant sole custody, usually to mothers, should conflict exist prior to a court appearance. Calls to police and social services prior to court are common-place as parents attempt to disadvantage and frustrate the other parent, often forcing the other parent to call the authorities to seek help. This tactic is then used by the parent to claim conflict and to insist that the court grant sole custody to them and that any form of joint custody is unworkable. Unfortunately for the children, this strategy by the HAP parent often works, with the result that the youngest, most defenceless children are then placed into the care of a parent who exposes the children to a lifetime of hatred and revenge, a behaviour pattern which many children end up learning and many carrying these behaviour into the next generation.

Lawyers and the adversarial court process

Lawyers play a significant role in creating hostilities and encouraging a parent to engage in **Hostile-Aggressive Parenting**. Although there are many fine and outstanding family law lawyers who sincerely try their best to resolve a family’s differences, unfortunately, there are a number of lawyers who use unnecessary inflammatory, derogatory and exaggerated language in affidavits, which helps to keep emotions high and court battles going. There seems that the prevalent thinking in the court system today is to give care and control of children to only one person where conflict exists. Some of the less caring lawyers, aware that courts tend to give power and control to only one parent when conflict exists, may encourage their clients to go so far as to provoke conflict as part of an overall strategy to win in court. Some lawyers have been exposed for putting barriers to the release of information critical to a child abuse investigation, because this information would place their client in a bad light. Unfortunately, the obligation of a lawyer to work in the best interest of their client, sometimes works against the best interest of the child, which undoubtedly will cause conflict with the other parent.

Social workers, counsellors and other health care professionals

Although there are many highly qualified and caring social workers, counsellors and other health

care professionals, unfortunately, there are a number of those who are known to provide one-sided reports favourable to anyone who is willing to pay the price for their services. These unethical third parties will distort and manipulate the facts in a manner intended to conceal the behaviour of the hostile-aggressive parent while exaggerating any minor faults of the other parent. In some cases these unethical persons will submit false allegations and slander the parent they are trying to paint as a bad parent. Quite often, when children are exhibiting behaviour problems because of the actions of a custodial HAP parent, these professionals will claim that the non-custodial parent is inducing these behaviours into the children. Even though the non-custodial parent has little time to be of influence on the child, they will attempt to blame the non-custodial parent.

Hostile-aggressive parents will often take their children to these contracted professionals after coaching the children to say certain things about the other parent when they are in the presence of these hired professionals. The report done by these types of professionals is then used in court by the hostile-aggressive parent against the other parent to further harm and in some cases completely sever the relationship between the child and the other parent. Some parents have reported that some third parties demand more money to continue their work or threaten to not finish their report. Many parents who have reached the end of their financial abilities, drop out of the game, leaving the children stranded, often with the children being put in the care of the parent with resources to make it through the financial war. It has been widely reported and there is evidence to support the position that some social workers, including those working for government sanctioned agencies, have biases which result in highly inaccurate and flawed reports.

Listed below are just some of the indicators that should possibly raise concerns with third parties who work with children. The issue of unethical persons who work with children is more effectively covered in other literature. Some of these warning indicators would include:

- Will provide counselling or therapy with the child upon the consent of only one parent without giving the other parent the opportunity to be involved in the process within a reasonable period of time after first meeting the child.
- Will make damaging statements about a child's relationship with a parent based on hearsay evidence from one parent and without ever calling the other parent and providing the other parent the opportunity to meet the professionals with the child.
- Do not have an established place of business that they provide services from.
- May often ask parents to hold meetings in coffee shops or other public locations or seem hesitant about disclosing where they live or work.
- Will not disclose copies of their curriculum vitae or other evidence of their experience and past history
- Do not have published criteria, risk indicators or procedures they follow when doing work or are unwilling to provide copies of these tools for review.
- Will claim to have professional credentials but not a member of good standing with any professional body that regulates the profession locally. Some of these people have licenses granted in other countries or geographical areas which are not recognized locally but speak as if they are licensed locally. Some of these persons may refer to themselves as "therapists" which in many areas is not a regulated profession.

- Make claims and statements about children or parents in areas of expertise that they are not properly qualified or licensed to make.

Sole custody awards

In a high number of cases where **Hostile-Aggressive Parenting** has been reported, it is the parent with sole custody of the child who is identified as being the HAP parent. Sole custody awards, in fact, generally result in higher levels of conflict than with joint custody arrangements¹⁰. One reason for this is that the sole custodial parents are now in a position to exercise their revenge with impunity, confident that the non-custodial parents, in most cases, have little or no rights. The old saying “Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely” often holds true in sole custody awards. Parents with sole custody may change the school or the child’s religion without the consent or knowledge of the other parent. Custodial parents can, and often do, unilaterally change the child’s surname and give the child the surname of another person they enter into a relationship with. This can be very upsetting to the biological parent and extended family members.

Published statistics in most jurisdictions show that mothers are awarded custody of the children in the vast majority of times. The vast majority of complaints of HAP parenting are also made against mothers. Although **Hostile-Aggressive Parenting** by sole custodial fathers can also be a problem, it would appear that this scenario is much less common than with mothers. Research shows that sole custodial fathers are far more likely to include the mother in the parenting of the child than is a sole custodial mother to involve the father, which may be one significant reason for fewer complaints of **Hostile-Aggressive Parenting** by fathers.

Financial Incentives

Personal financial gain is also another strong motivator to hostile-aggressive parents. Gaining custody and control of the children involved is often desired as a way of increasing one party’s personal financial gain to the disadvantage of the other parent. **Hostile-Aggressive Parenting** can help achieve this by helping to gain custody and child support for the child. For the parent with custody of the child there are huge rewards – child support payment, income tax credits and other child tax credits. Between child support and the other tax benefits, the amount of money involved is usually amounts to thousands of dollars per year, much of it tax-free.

On the opposite side is the fear of the parent of becoming the non-custodial parent. This anticipated result encourages other parents to resort to **Hostile-Aggressive Parenting** for the same reason. The financial windfall associated with child support does little to promote cooperative parenting and ultimately increases animosity, anger, revenge, disorder and breaks down harmony. Child support laws are very punitive to the party who loses custody of the child.

Mild to severe personality/psychiatric disorders

In a very small number of cases where HAP has been identified, one or a number of personality/psychiatric disorders may be the underlying cause or partially the cause. Although most behaviours are related to the environment that persons are exposed to during their developmental years, some may be attributed to genetic disposition in which case, hostile-aggressive tendencies seem to be present in previous generations of a family tree. Those who exhibit severe hostile-

aggressive-behaviour and who seem unable to change their behaviours often suffer some form of mental or personality disorder which is affecting their ability to deal with day to day matters on a rational level. Hostile-Aggressive Parenting (HAP) can be one of the first signs of a person with a personality/psychiatric disorder.

A personality disorder is a pattern of deviant or abnormal behaviour that a person doesn't change even though it causes emotional upsets and trouble with other people at work and in personal relationships. It is not limited to episodes of mental illness, and it is not caused by drug or alcohol use, head injury, or illness. There are about a dozen different behaviour patterns classified as personality disorders by DSM-IV. All the personality disorders show up as deviations from normal in one or more of the following:

- a) cognition -- i.e., perception, thinking, and interpretation of oneself, other people, and events;
- b) affectivity -- i.e., emotional responses (range, intensity, appropriateness);
- c) interpersonal functions;
- d) impulsivity.

(1) Borderline Personality Disorder

Many of the actions of HAP parent may be identified as patterns of behaviour associated with forms of mental illness referred to as “Borderline Personality Disorder” (BPD). Although the issue of personality disorders is touched on, it is not within the scope of this document to discuss details of the issues related to mental disorders. Persons who may be dealing with HAP parents should conduct research into BPD or consult with a mental health professional to see if this mental health problem may be a factor in their case. A history of mental problems with other family members or a history of dysfunction in a person’s family may be signs of a mental condition with the person exhibiting signs of HAP.

(2) Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy (MSBP)

HAP behaviours, especially those where illness of the child is being used to interfere with a child’s relationship with another parent, may indicate a risk for a parent who suffers from a form of mental illness called Munchausen syndrome by proxy (MSBP). The term "Munchausen syndrome by proxy" (MSBP) was coined around twenty years ago, and hundreds of reports have appeared since then. In most cases, a mother either claims that her child is sick, or she goes even further to actually make the child sick. This excuse is then used to deny the other parent access to the child. The MSBP parent will say that only they can take care of the child or in many cases make the child sick so that when the child is with the other parent, the child is ill or always complaining that they don’t feel well. In very serious case where severe Parental Alienation becomes an issue, the MSBP parent may actually get the child to become a willing participant in the MSBP’s deception.

The “dutiful” MSBP parent may repeatedly take the child for medical treatment and get drugs prescribed for the child. Often they will schedule visits with the doctor for the child during times when the child is supposed to be with the other parent, all the while denying any knowledge of the origin of the problem--namely, themselves. As a result, MSBP parents may have their child undergo extraordinary numbers of lab tests, medication trials, and even surgical procedures that aren't really needed. They may repeatedly take the child to counsellors or “therapists”. ADHD is often used by HAP parents to place blame on the child for the child’s behavioural problems and detract attention

away from the HAP parent. In the vast majority of reported cases of MSBP, the perpetrator is the mother and the victim an infant or toddler. The web of deceit that a MSBP caregiver spins can be supported by medical signs and symptoms that mislead even very skilful physicians. Their acting skills of an HAP parent suffering mental problems can match those of a veteran performer. For instance, a parent suffering from MSBP might suffocate the child during the night to the point of unconsciousness, then frantically take the limp child to the hospital with tears rolling down her cheeks. The MSBY parent may secretly place a drop of blood in the child's urine specimen, then appear shocked at lab results that alarm the unsuspecting physicians and nurses. Behind closed doors, the MSBP parent may rub the child's skin with corrosive household cleaners such as oven cleaner in order to cause a baffling blistering rash that may last for months. Since it may take many years of illness for doctors finally to arrive at the truth, it should not be surprising that this form of child abuse has a significant mortality rate.

Some HAP parents may carry their hate of the other parent on for years and years, never seeming to be able to forgive or to find peace with the other parent, no matter what the other parent may try to do to attempt to improve the situation. Some of the problems that the hostile-aggressive parent may have may relate to their own childhood experience and have absolutely nothing to do with the other parent. Still other parents may have delusions about the other parent and may really believe in their own mind, certain things about the other parent. For example, they may really believe that the other parent is sexually or physically abusing the child. In most cases there may be little or no evidence to support such conclusions. Sadly, workers with child protection agencies are often misled by the hostile-aggressive parent into believing the parent's fantasy. This can and often does, results in a child being placed under even greater control of a hostile-aggressive parent.

(3) Antisocial personality disorder (APD)

Persons who appear to be acting in a hostile and aggressive manner with parenting may also suffer from what is called Antisocial personality disorder or (APD). **Antisocial personality disorder** is a personality disorder listed in the DSM-IV. It is generally considered to be the same as, or similar to, the disorder that was previously known as **psychopathic** or **sociopathic** personality disorder.¹¹

Those who have APD often act in cold and insensitive ways. At times, they can seem charming but other times they can be very cunning and insincere. Often those with APD tend to view relationships only in terms of what they can gain from them.

People with APD may think that it is acceptable to manipulate or deceive others to get what they want. As a result, persons with APD tend to have a general lack of regard for rules, laws, and customs. They assume that these rules and laws do not apply to them or always have some excuse as to why their own circumstances are an exception to the rules. This causes frequent problems at work, with family relationships and with the law.

General symptoms of APD include:

- disregard for safety and responsibility
- refusal to conform to lawful behaviours
- deceitfulness, repeated lying, or conning others for personal profit or pleasure
- impulsiveness

- irritability
- aggressiveness, and/or violent behavior
- lack of conscience or remorse for consequences of behavior
- lack of empathy
- lack of honesty

Third party reinforcement/involvement

In many cases grandparents, babysitters and former family friends may also exhibit Hostile-Aggressive Parenting at times when they have authority over a child or may encourage hostile-aggressive behaviours. For example, a daycare provider may prevent telephone communication between the child and the other parent while at their home because of instructions from the hostile-aggressive parent and without ever questioning the reasons for these instructions. Some grandparents, who provide care for the child at times, may be given similar instructions by their hostile-aggressive son/daughter. Tragically, some grandparents comply with the wishes of their hostile-aggressive son/daughter out of fear that their son/daughter will “punish” them for not following their orders. Similarly, teachers at school may help to keep a loving and caring parent away from their child based simply on the destructive wishes of a hostile-aggressive parent. Doctors and other specialists may also be deceived by the hostile-aggressive parent into taking a position which helps the hostile-aggressive parent spread their hatred of the other parent.

In such situations, these people become collaborators to the hostile-aggressive parent and end up helping the hostile-aggressive parent spread their sphere of hate and revenge. These collaborators, in fact, become unknowing contributors to abuse of the very child they mistakenly believe they are helping to protect. Any parent, especially a sole custodial parent, who instructs others to interfere with the child’s relationship with another parent should be listened to with great caution and should be asked to submit their requests in writing with third party evidence to support their claims. Such parents who also exhibit a number of the identifying behaviours or risk factors of a hostile-aggressive parent should be considered highly suspect for child abuse and their motives questioned.

In most cases, these collaborators cooperate with the hostile-aggressive parent because they lack knowledge regarding Hostile-Aggressive Parenting and have been led to believe by the hostile-aggressive parent that they are doing the right thing and helping to protect the child. These collaborators are given one-sided and misleading information about the separation and divorce by the hostile-aggressive parent, information intended to make the other parent look bad. It must be remembered that HAP parents are usually masters of deception. The collaborators have been brainwashed into thinking that the hostile-aggressive parent is the good parent and that the other parent and extended family are bad influences on the child. These collaborators usually lack the accurate and unbiased information about the family’s situation needed to make an informative and fair conclusion on their own. Hostile-Aggressive parents will go so far as to relocate their child to a new babysitter or a new school should they see that for some reason or another, that their collaborators have begun to see the truth of what the hostile-aggressive parent is really doing to their child and how wrong it is.

Part 3

The outcome of Hostile-Aggressive Parenting

Hostile-Aggressive Parenting, if left unchecked, will result in adverse, long term and often life-long physical and emotional consequences for the child, the child’s siblings (if any) and extended family members. Without effective intervention by the courts and the community, Hostile-Aggressive Parenting may cause the parents to remain embroiled in bitter conflict lasting for many years. Not only will Hostile-Aggressive Parenting affect the children and the parents but the entire community in which the family lives. In a study by Statistics Canada, hostile parenting has been identified as the most damaging form of child abuse. Children will perform poorly in school and will be lacking in the social skills needed later in life to be contributing members of society. Statistics Canada reported that children who were exposed to hostile or ineffective parenting were nine times more likely to show behavioural problems than children who were not exposed to hostile or ineffective parenting.¹²

A child who is raised in an environment where Hostile-Aggressive Parenting is practiced may eventually consider this type of behaviour to be normal and thus practice engage in this style of parenting themselves as they mature into adults and enter into their own personal relationships. Children learn to imitate the confrontational or aggressive behavioural styles that they observe in their parents¹³. A parent who engages in Hostile- Aggressive Parenting during their child’s growing years will likely cause significant harm to their own child’s psychological well-being.

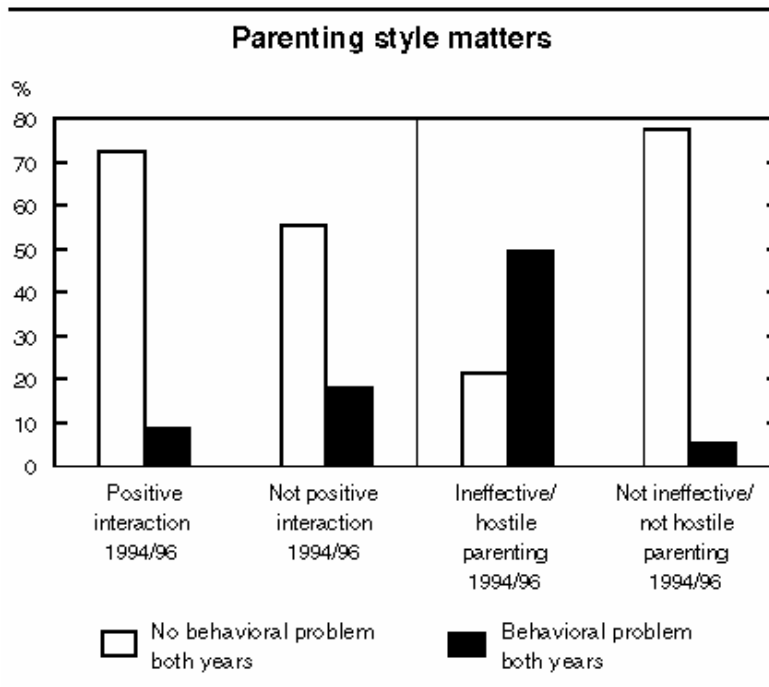


Chart from Statistics Canada National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth Cycle 2 showing that children subjected to the influences of hostile-aggressive parenting suffer behavioural problems

Propensity to violence and HAP behaviour later in life

Many of the behaviours identified as HAP can be considered as violent and abusive and can set the stage for violence and/or HAP behaviour later in the child's life. The way a parent structures the environment for their child impacts the development of the child. A review of research findings conducted by the Gulbenkian Foundation in 1995 confirms that harsh and humiliating discipline are implicated in the development of anti-social and violent behaviour' (cited in McGuire, 1997, p. 71). HAP parenting practices can hold harsh consequences for the child and may have a strong influence in shaping a child's propensity to violence later in life.

Parental alienation syndrome

One of the most serious and far reaching consequences of a child's exposure to Hostile-aggressive Parenting over a period of time is a psychological condition which the child may develop called Parental Alienation Syndrome or PAS. In many situations Hostile-Aggressive Parenting is so unrelenting and the child's awareness that the parent having control of them is so great, as to cause the child to begin to hate or fear their other parent and members of the other parent's family.

Under such conditions, a child is literally programmed by the hostile-aggressive (or alienating parent) to embark upon a campaign of denigration against the "hated" (or targeted) parent and the targeted parent's family unit. The child exhibits little if any ambivalence over their hatred, which often spreads to the extended family of the allegedly despised parent. Not only parents, but once loved grandparents and even other siblings can become the "enemy" of a child who has been brainwashed by a parent into believing that everyone who is associated with the "targeted" parent is bad and is to be avoided.

In today's political climate where mothers obtain sole custody of the children most of the time, it is, not surprisingly, that it is mothers who are reported to initiate such programming most of the time, while fathers and their extended families are the targets of such abuse. Sole custody transfers such awesome legal power on to one parent, that it is easy to understand how it can be abused, especially in the hands of someone driven by anger and vengeance against the child's other parent.

This is one of the contributing factors that explains why so many fathers and their families are missing from the lives of children today.

It must also be noted, however, that in a small percentage of cases, the father is the primary programmer and the mother comes to be viewed as the "hated" parent. Research, however, shows that fathers are far more likely to include the mother in the parenting of the child than is the mother to involve the father.

In situations where Hostile-Aggressive Parenting is severe, children themselves may also exhibit the same behaviour as the hostile-aggressive parent and actually participate in this behaviour with the hostile-aggressive parent. The children may join together with the hostile-aggressive parent in a bizarre relationship in which they all share in the denigration of the other parent.

Although the steps outlined in this article will in most cases, reverse and even eradicate Parental Alienation Syndrome if detected in its early and intermediate stages, parents and children affected by advanced Parental Alienation Syndrome where severe psychological damage has been done by the HAP parent, will likely require therapeutic and professional intervention in addition to the steps outlined in this document. In the vast majority of the times, lessening the amount of time the child is under the influence of the HAP parent is helpful at lessening the destructive influences of the HAP parent, many of which lead up to Parental Alienation Syndrome.

If the targeted parent has genuinely been abusive to the child (physically or emotionally), then the concept of PAS may not be applicable. In the vast majority of cases, Parental Alienation Syndrome is induced largely through the destructive influences of only one of the parents. Generally, children are resilient enough to withstand a fair bit of emotional or physical abuse before they reach the point of hating a parent. It is not normal or healthy for any child to hate a parent without a good, solid reason. Some children have been abused for years in intact families, yet when apprehended by child welfare authorities were found to still love their parents. A child living under the influence and control of an HAP parent can be induced to hate the other parent through subtle, yet powerful, influences of the HAP parent. It is known that, in abusive situations, children often remain loyal to the HAP parent who is abusing them and may become strongly aligned to the abusive HAP parent, sometimes to the point of being dependant on the abuse.

For further information about Parental Alienation Syndrome, readers should review materials and books by Dr. Richard A. Gardner, a clinical professor of Child Psychiatry, Columbia University, College of Physicians and Surgeons, New York City. He is considered one of the world's top authority on this subject. Other professionals as well have written books and papers about Parental Alienation.

Reverse PAS (Alienation of the child from the HAP parent)

Although there are many research documents and studies written about Parental Alienation and Parental Alienation Syndrome, which in most cases focus on the HAP parent alienating the child from what is referred to as the "target" parent, in a minor number of cases, the efforts of an HAP parent to alienate a child from the child's other parent, may actually backfire on the HAP parent, and create a situation which in simple terms could be coined "reverse PAS". In some cases, a child through their own life experiences and their exposure to HAP, learns or senses that what the HAP parent is doing is wrong and over a period of time, may begin to develop hostile feelings towards their HAP parent out of frustration of having his/her wishes and preferences suppressed and from having his/her rights and freedoms violated over an extended period of time.. Left unaddressed, the child being affected may actually begin to hate their HAP parent with a passion. In many cases, a child who has been adversely affected by HAP over a period of time, especially in its more serious forms, will react by running away from their HAP parent or exhibit severe behavioural problems while in the care of the HAP parent. This hatred of the HAP parent may last a lifetime. The only way to prevent parental alienation from the HAP parent is for the HAP parent's behaviours to be curtailed through effective intervention and counselling early enough in the child's life to repair any damage that may have been caused earlier by the HAP parenting.

Stockholm syndrome

A psychological condition similar to Dr. Richard Gardner's Parental Alienation Syndrome (PAS) which has been recognized by many health care professionals in the world is a psychological state called Stockholm Syndrome. From Wikipedia, the internet encyclopaedia, Stockholm syndrome is defined as the following:

The Stockholm syndrome is a psychological state in which the victims of a kidnapping, or persons detained against their free will - prisoners - develop a relationship with their captor(s). This solidarity can sometimes become a real complicity, with prisoners actually helping the captors to achieve their goals or to escape police.

The Stockholm Syndrome has been named this way after the famous bank robbery of *Kreditbanken* in Norrmalmstorg, Stockholm which lasted from August 23 to August 28, 1973. (See Norrmalmstorg robbery.) In this case, the victims kept on defending their captors even after their 6 days physical detention was over. They showed a reticent behaviour in the following legal procedures too.

Famous cases regarded airplane hostages and kidnapped people, such as Patricia Hearst, who after having been a hostage of a politically engaged military organisation (the Symbionese Liberation Army, or SLA), joined it several months after she was freed.

In a similar manner to victims of Stockholm Syndrome, HAP parents literally make their own child a prisoner to the HAP parent's abuse. As a victim unable to get free, the child may become aligned with his/her captors, who in the case of an HAP parent, is usually the custodial parent or persons who are most threatening and intimidating to the child.

Part 4

Categories of Hostile-Aggressive Parenting and examples of associated behaviours or indicators

Hostile-Aggressive Parenting (HAP) generally can be categorized into two levels, the first being mild to moderate (the most common) and the second being severe. Identifying the behaviours of hostile-aggressive parents is the first step to determining the category and deciding on the necessary corrective actions to be taken.

The majority of hostile-aggressive parents fall into the mild to moderate category. Parents in this category are often able to keep their abusive parenting behaviour from being noticed by others or to keep it at a level that others will likely turn a blind eye to it. In the severe category, the abusive parenting is more conspicuous, with others in the community being able to identify many of the symptoms. The harm to a child is greater than with the items considered as being mild to moderate. The campaign of a hostile-aggressive parent in the severe category may be almost continual. In the severe category there may be frequent intervention by police and other support agencies as well as open defiance to court custody and access orders. Many of these parents have become quite bold, confident as they are that the system does little to establish consequences for their actions.

There are a minority of parents, however, whose **Hostile-Aggressive Parenting** is so chronic and deep-seated that they may be considered fanatical. Often parents in this category may suffer from emotional or psychological disorders. It is in this category that the hostile-aggressive parent's behaviour towards the friendly parent and the child is likely to be alarming. The hostile parent may utilize a wide variety of hostile and aggressive tactics designed to make life difficult for the friendly parent and to disrupt their child's relationship with the friendlier parent.

In severe cases of HAP, many of the symptoms seen in the mild to moderate category are likely to be present to a significant degree as well as one or more of the symptoms identified in the severe category. The hostile-aggressive parent's level of hostility against the target parent can be very pronounced. The rationalization that the hostile-aggressive parent uses to justify their behaviour becomes more frivolous, and more absurd than in mild to moderate. The hostile-aggressive parent describes the other parent as all bad and attempts to program his or her hate of the other parent into the child in what is described by health care professionals as "Parental Alienation."

Under such extreme circumstances, sanctions may be necessary against the hostile-aggressive parent. Transfer of parenting responsibilities from the hostile-aggressive parent to the target parent may be necessary so that the target parent can provide greater care, control and protection of the child and prevent further emotional harm to the child by actions of the hostile-aggressive parent.

Examples of mild to moderate Hostile-Aggressive Parenting

In the mild to moderate category of **HAP**, most parents exhibit a number of recognizable behaviours. The extensive list below have been compiled from interviews with hundreds of parents, guardians as well as legal and health who have either experienced or witnessed **Hostile-Aggressive Parenting**. Should a parent or guardian engage in a number of the behaviours listed below, then the parent should be considered as a risk to the child's development. The list is below is not sorted in any particular order.

Some of these examples are:

- 1) **Will badmouth the other parent in front of the children.** *Hostile-Aggressive Parents will often say bad things about the other parent and constantly try to put a negative perspective on many of the things that the other parent does, even when the other parent is being reasonable and fair. HAP parents will not justify why they are saying to the child but just say bad things about the other parent.*
- 2) **Not willing to participate in any reasonable form of written communication.** *Some Hostile-Aggressive Parents may try to avoid written communication such as letters, e-mails or faxes as these documents generally provide evidence to reveal their abusive and uncooperative behaviour. Some HAP parents may send typewritten notes on occasion but often will not put their signature on their notes.*
- 3) **Will tell the other parent and other third parties to deal only with their lawyer at times of minor conflict.** *The HAP parent wishes to frustrate the other parent and believes that their lawyer will help them makes things more difficult and further frustrate the other party's efforts to communicate.*
- 4) **Will frustrate normal and healthy telephone communication**

Frustrating telephone communications is one of the most common behaviours that HAP parents demonstrate. The HAP parent will often attempt to frustrate phone communication in the following ways:

- *When the phone rings, they will pick up the phone but then immediately hang up the phone on the calling party.*
- *Will not answer the phone when the other parent calls. Often the child may witness their parent let the phone ring & ring numerous time without picking it up.*
- *Turn off their answering machine when they see that it is the other parent who is calling which makes it difficult for the other parent to leave messages.*
- *Use the call block feature on the phone so that the other party cannot ring through to their number even though the other parent's actions would not warrant the blocking of calls.*
- *Will hang up the phone immediately at the end of a conversation without giving the other parent a chance to respond.*

- *Not return phone messages left by the other parent even when left on an answering machine*
- *Force the child to speak to the other parent or family members on speakerphone or listen in on the children's private conversations. Some HAP parents will force the child to converse with the other parent over a speakerphone or will listen in on the child conversation's so that they can hear their child's live telephone conversations with the other parent. HAP parents are literally paranoid about anything that their child may say to the other parent or about what the other parent may say to the child.*
- *Will order their child not to answer the phone when it rings, thereby limiting the child's telephone contacts with the other parent. Many children in this situation are aware that their other parent is trying to call but are often too fearful of the HAP parent to pick up the phone even though they would like to.*
- *Will grab and take away the phone from the child in the middle of a conversation with the other parent.*
- *Remove phones after use and lock them away in a closet or room so that the child has no access to a phone or install phones high up on a wall, out of the reach for smaller children to be able to answer.*
- *Will not let the child use a cell phone that the other parent may have provided to the child in an attempt to help overcome some of the telephone communication difficulties. Sometimes the HAP parent will take the cell phone that was given for the child's use and use it for their personal use and run up a bill which must be paid by the other parent..*

Often the child will observe the telephone manners of HAP parent which sets a bad role model for the child. The Hostile-Aggressive Parent wishes to limit the child's contact with the other parent and frustrate the other parent. In some cases, HAP parents are trying to get the other parent to do something that they can use as an excuse to call police.

- 5) **Will say that the child does not want to speak to the other parent.** *HAP parents will not have the child call the other parent at prescribed times, even court ordered, and then say that the child did not want to speak to the other parent. Very often these children are afraid to even ask as they know the HAP parent will not be happy and may punish them in some ways.*
- 6) **Will not let older children speak for themselves.** *HAP parents will generally call on behalf of the child even when the child is old or mature enough to relay the information to the other parent. For example, the HAP parent may call and tell the other parent that the child wants to come to their home for lunch. Rather than allowing the child to call himself/herself, the HAP parent will call to give the message.*
- 7) **Will undermine the other parent by encouraging the child to defy the other parent's authority and even grant the child the freedom to do things which the other parent has deemed to be inappropriate.** *This could range from allowing a young child to stay up far too late at night or allowing the child not to do his/her homework. This is especially harmful with a teenage child as it encourages the child to manipulate one parent against the other to avoid discipline and consequences. Hostile-aggressive parents will allow the child to make*

decisions which clearly the child should not be making just for the purpose of getting the child to side with the HAP parent.

- 8) **Will tell the child that they cannot alter the parenting times outlined on the court Order because the court does not allow this.** *HAP parents try to deceive children by telling them that they cannot spend more time with the other parent because the court Order prohibits it. Although the HAP parent knows otherwise, the HAP parent wants the child to think that it is the court's fault so that they can deflect blame away from themselves.*
- 9) **Will play on the children's feeling of guilt and sympathy.** *Some examples may include telling the child that they will be lonely or not loved if the child leaves to go with the other parent or telling the child that they were really looking forward to the child spending time with them for a specific event or function, even though it was the other parent's parenting time. Children find it very difficult to express their wishes when put under pressure by the parent they are with at the time or against the wishes of the parent that they perceive to have the most power and control over them.*
- 10) **Will be uncooperative when it comes to working out summer and holiday schedules for children.** *The hostile-aggressive parent will make all kinds of excuses and employ all sorts of tactics to impede negotiations between the other parent for summer holidays and other holidays throughout the year. The hostile-aggressive parent's intention is to create uncertainty with the other parent, to create difficulties with the other parent's schedule and to hopefully through the delay, to minimize the amount of time that the child will have to spend with the other parent. Quite often, an HAP parent will delay matters and then say that they already have things planned with the child, which of course, interferes with the non-custodial parent's ability to schedule time with the child. The HAP parent is always looking for ways to make sure that the child's time is scheduled around the HAP parent's priorities and not around the child's wishes or the priorities of the other parent.*
- 11) **Fail to involve the other parent in the choice of daycare providers.** *Quite often the hostile-aggressive parent will chose friends or people they know who will accept their side of the story without questioning them. They will search out to find day care providers who will side with them or bend the truth in their favour to help them make things difficult for the other parent. The daycare workers these parents choose often are ones who they know will not get "involved" to help resolve problems or will keep silent about reporting irregularities involving the children. Such daycare providers become, in effect, collaborative supporters to child abuse.*
- 12) **Choose third parties over the other parent to care for the child when he/she is ill and not in school, regardless of the other parent's availability and willingness to care for the child.** *The hostile-aggressive parent will use every opportunity to keep the other parent from having the chance to parent the child regardless of the wishes of the child or other parent so at times such as when the child is ill, the HAP will hire a babysitter in preference to allowing the other parent to care for the child.*
- 13) **Deny access to the children by pretending that they are too sick or they have too much homework, or delay their availability.** *The hostile-aggressive parent will use every*

opportunity to keep the other parent from having the chance to parent the child regardless of the wishes of the child or other parent.

- 14) Create difficulties for the children to see the other parent on special occasions.** *HAP parents will attempt to prevent the child from being with the other parent on special occasions such as birthdays, Father's or Mother's day, special family gatherings, etc. HAP parents can be very innovative in inventing excuses to keep children from seeing the other parent.*
- 15) Attempt to force themselves upon the other family at functions.** *Hostile-Aggressive parents may show up unannounced at special events such as the funeral of a member of their ex-partner's family when they know that they are not invited or welcomed. This is often done to disrupt the peacefulness of other family's function.*
- 16) Insist that the non-custodial parent return the children precisely on time while not respecting these same rules themselves.** *HAP parents may make a big issue about when the children are dropped off or picked up. Usually it is the sole custodial parent who is able to make the biggest fuss about this as the non-custodial parent has little ability to raise an objection.*
- 17) Unwilling to make arrangements with the other parent when situations arise which reasonably warrant some flexibility.** *For instance, a hostile parent may refuse to vary parenting time to allow a child to attend events such as dance rehearsal, birthday parties and other events because they are desired by other parent.*
- 18) Unwilling to have a third party act as a mediator, coordinator, or have any other professional involved in helping the parents co-parent the children effectively.** *Generally, the HAP parent does not want any other third parties involved who may bear witness to their Hostile-Aggressive Parenting. Quite often, the Hostile-aggressive parent will claim that third parties are biased or unprofessional as a way to justify not wanting to have them involved. HAP parents may initially support the involvement of third parties but then reject involvement of these people once they see that the third parties will not support their HAP behaviours.*
- 19) Make claims of bias against any party involved with helping the family who does not support the HAP parent's interests.** *Generally, the HAP parent will try to make allegations of bias or non-professionalism against anyone who may become involved with helping the family. This may include assessors, social workers, access supervisors, child advocates, etc. HAP mothers will often allege that these people are members or supporters of "radical father's rights" organizations in an attempt to discredit them before the court. Conversely, an HAP father may allege that the people are radical feminists or closely associated with women's abuse shelters.*
- 20) Take the children to their "own" counsellors, doctors or other professionals without the knowledge or permission of the other parent.** *The hostile-aggressive parent will often take his/her child to a professional such as counsellor or family doctor to obtain documentation such as letters of support or opinions which may help them win to disrupt the child's relationship with the other parent. The HAP parent will not want the professionals to obtain any input from the other parent as they do not want the professional to be influenced by*

information from the friendly parent, which often is only the truth. Professionals who provide support to HAP parents under such circumstances are referred to in the industry as “hired guns”. Sometimes these professionals are approached by the lawyer of the HAP parent and often convinced to provide information to support the one side.

- 21) Unwilling to participate in mediation or any kind of parenting program, which involves the participation of all the members of the family.** *Hostile-Aggressive parents are usually afraid of their abusive parenting being exposed at such meetings. They often do not want other members of their family, often the children, to be revealing family secrets to outside third parties.*
- 22) Unwilling to consider any kind of fair and equal parenting arrangement for the child when such an arrangement is desired by the other parent and/or the child.** *Most Hostile-Aggressive parents cannot bear the thought of the other parent getting the same rights as they do with the children. Although most children can adapt quite well to a variety of parenting arrangements, HAP parents will insist that for reasons of consistency and predictability, the child must be with them for a greater amount of time than with the other parent. The HAP parent will use the “home base” for the child argument.*
- 23) Unilaterally make plans for the child on the other parent’s access time.** *HAP parents will sometimes plan activities for the child during the child’s scheduled time to be with the other parent. For instance, a custodial parent may sign the child up for a sports activity which may involve the child’s participation on days that the child will be with the other parent. Although having both parents show cooperation to support a common interest of the child is good, unilaterally planning the child’s time with the other parent this may be considered controlling and abusive when the other parent has less than 50% time share with the child, which is usually the case with most non-custodial parents.*
- 24) Get the child to place blame and guilt on the other parent.** *When an HAP parent attempts to make plans for the child and finds that the other parent is not able to accommodate such plans, then the HAP parent will lay blame on the parent and tell the child they can’t go to the event because of the other parent. The HAP parent will say things to the child to make it look like it was the other parent’s fault such as, “you won’t be able to go now because your other parent does not really want you to go there”. The HAP parent will then tell friends and neighbours that the other parent did not want to do something good for the child.*
- 25) Entice or bribe the child to not want to go with the other parent.** *Very similar to making plans for the child on the other parent’s time, HAP parents will sometimes entice the child to not want to go with the other parent. For instance, a custodial parent may offer such things as: to take the child to an outing at a cottage, to go boating, on a trip, get a new pet such as a dog or cat, etc. Most of the things that the parent offers are things that they know the child would really like to do or to have. By doing this, the parent instils in the child that materialistic things are more important than the child’s relationship with both of his/her parents.*
- 26) Not inform the other parent of upcoming school activities, events, or holidays when the child’s regular schedule at school may not be applicable.** *Very similar to making plans for the child on the other parent’s time, HAP parents will often not pass on notices from school in relation to children’s homework or school trips. HAP parents often want to keep this*

information from the other parent to show that they have control over the flow of information from the child's school. Often HAP parents will tell the school that the other parent is not allowed to obtain information from the school without their consent.

- 27) **Not inform the other parent in a timely manner when the child has been injured.** *HAP parents will often not inform the other parent if the child has injured themselves, even if the injuries are serious enough that the child had to be taken to the doctor's office or hospital. The HAP parent will tell the other parent days later and sometimes not until the other parent's regular parenting time. Sometimes the HAP parent may use the situation to tell the child that the other parent could not be bothered to see them when they were injured.*
- 28) **Not allow the child to have any pictures or memorabilia involving the other parent in the home, including the child's own room.**
- 29) **Throw out or destroy pictures of the other parent and remove pictures of the other parent from all photo albums. This often will include pictures that their own child may have.** *The HAP parent has very little, if any, respect for the past, even if there were some good experiences to remember. Their anger is so intense that even the picture of their former spouse in their home will negatively affect them.*
- 30) **Discard or sell gifts given by the other parent while they were together** *The hostile-aggressive parent will "clear house" by throwing out wedding gifts, wedding gowns and rings and other memorabilia relating to the couple's past relationship. Items which could be of immense value to a child in later years are discarded with little consideration.*
- 31) **Contact their child's school or daycare and attempt to discredit the other parent and to unfairly prevent the other parent's involvement with their child's activities at the child's school or daycare.** *When they contact the school or daycare, HAP parents will use the same tricks that they used in court - they will often make unsubstantiated claims and exaggerations against the other parent to cause maximum harm to the other parent's credibility in an attempt to minimize the other parent's involvement with the school or daycare.*
- 32) **Supply the school with false or misleading contact information about the other parent and family designed to make it difficult for the school to contact the non-custodial parent in the event of an emergency.** *The hostile-aggressive parent wants school officials to only recognize themselves as the parent and not the other parent and extended family.*
- 33) **Will refuse to participate in activities at the child's school when the other parent is present.** *In some cases the other parent may be doing another totally separate activity in the school but the hostile-aggressive parent will not want to even be at the school, knowing the other parent is in the same building.*
- 34) **Will object to the other parent (usually the non custodial parent) taking the child to any kind of counselling or other third party professional.** *The HAP parent is often fearful of the child disclosing information to outside third parties without their knowledge which may affect their situation with the court. HAP parents are often fearful of third parties asking the child about his/her wishes and preferences. Many HAP parents will use their sole custodial status to prevent anyone professional from speaking to the child so that the child is kept silent.*
- 35) **Refuse to disclose important and relevant contact information to the non-custodial parent.** *The HAP parent may refuse to disclose such information as place of employment,*

phone numbers, contact numbers, health card information, etc., when there is no valid reason to keep this information secret. Many times, this information can be important to the other parent in the case of an emergency.

- 36) Attempt to spread their hate and animosity to the friends and/or extended family of the targeted parent.** *The HAP parent needs to be seen as the better parent and to achieve this goal will resort to many tactics to undermine the credibility and reputation of the other parent. The HAP parent will often speak unfavourably about the other parent to everyone they know.*
- 37) Feed misinformation to professionals in order to obtain letters supporting their side** *Hostile-aggressive parents will often present themselves quite well to professionals such as doctors, nurses, police officers, etc. They are often masters of deception and will often feed these professionals with one-sided information in order to mislead professionals so that they can extract opinion or recommendation letters from these professionals which can favour the HAP parent. Often the HAP parent will use these letters to block the other parent's access time with the child or use the letters in court against the other parent.*
- 38) Claim that there is a potential for conflict with their former spouse to thwart open discussion of the issues.** *Many HAP parents have difficulty defending their allegations when the other parent is present to defend themselves. To avoid embarrassment and being faced with often is the truth, HAP parents will tend to try to avoid open dialogue or family group conferences which tend to expose the lies of HAP parents. To thwart attendance at such meetings and conferences, HAP parents will often say that they are fearful for their safety to attend such a meeting and that being in the same room with their former spouse could pose a danger to them. Even when security measures are suggested, HAP parents will come up with some other excuse in an attempt to thwart any process which promotes openness and accountability.*
- 39) Proclaim to have been awarded custody of the children by the court because the court deemed them to be the better parent and the other parent to be a lesser of a parent.** *HAP parents will use a court decision, even if flawed and unjust, as a tool in their war against the other parent.*
- 40) Will threaten the child with loss of their love should the child ever want to live with the other parent or should the child show affection towards the other parent or other parent's extended family.** *Many HAP parents play on their children's guilt and tell their child is that they will never be welcomed back in the home again if they ever go to live with the other parent or show greater affection for the other parent.*
- 41) Will coach the child to "spy" on the other parent or pump the child for information.** *Many HAP parents will ask the child to report back to them about activities in the other parent's home and will tell the child to keep their "spying" activities a secret from the other parent. Often HAP parents will interrogate the child for information after each child's visit with the other parent.*
- 42) Will make of false claims of parental conflict, while doing nothing to reduce such conflict.** *In many cases, the HAP parent actually creates the conflict before going to court as a strategy to win custody in court and then blame the other side for the conflict. A dead give-*

away to HAP parents that attempt to use this strategy to their advantage is that they cannot show any real reasonable attempt to have tried to resolve the problem with outside third parties.

- 43) **Will create conflict with their just after visits with the other parent and then blame the other parent for being the cause of the conflict with the child.** *In many cases, the HAP parent will creates conflict with their child many times when the child returns from visits with the other parent. The parent may interrogate the child about the visit, or may say bad things about the other parent to get the child upset. When the child does get upset out of frustration, the HAP parent will report the child's behaviour to child welfare protection agency or to the child's doctor, and report that this problem seems caused by the visits with the other parent. In most cases, the HAP parent is trying to have the child's access to the other parent reduced by placing blame on the other parent.*
- 44) **Will send the child to the other parent's home in old and undesirable clothes and keep any newer clothes that the other parent may have sent the child in when the child came to their home.** *By these actions, the HAP parent will indirectly benefit by forcing the other parent to purchase more than their fair share of clothes for the child.*
- 45) **Will take the child out of the country on extended trips or holidays without leaving the other parent any details or contact information.** *HAP parents want to show the other parent that they have full control over the child and taking the child away from the other parent for extended periods of time are one way in which HAP parents can demonstrate their power and control. Normally, only sole custodial HAP parents are able to do this.*
- 46) **Will extort favours or materialistic things from the other parent.** *HAP parents will demand that the other parent purchase clothes and toys for the child or make concessions to transportation even though they are receiving money for child support. If these demands are not met, the HAP parent will punish the other parent by tightening control over the child and in most cases cutting back access to the child.*
- 47) **Will ask the Court to issue a restraining order against the other party when there really is no need.** *HAP parents often want a restraining order to help make the other party look bad in court and also to set up the other parent for stalking or harassment charges later on. Once the restraining order is placed it becomes very easy in the future for the HAP parent to turn any little argument into grounds for the police to intervene and to arrest the other party. Often when police see that a restraining order is already in effect, it is assumed that the person is a troublemaker and harsh steps will be taken against the person who has the restraining order on file against them.*
- 48) **Try to get the other parent in trouble with various other government agencies.** *Some HAP parents will attempt to make trouble for the other parent by reporting them to various government bodies, often anonymously. One of the common tricks that HAP parents do is to make an anonymous call to tax collection agents giving false and misleading information about the other parent, in hopes of spawning an investigation against their former partner. Other tricks include calling municipal bylaw officials in relation to any minor bylaw infractions around the home (such as the lawn, garbage and pets) or calling police in regards*

to minor motor vehicle infractions (such as outdated insurance, emissions, seatbelt violations etc.).

- 49) Will make a mountain out of a mole hill.** *HAP parents will often exaggerate small things in an attempt to make the other parent look bad, especially during court proceedings. HAP parents will make major problems over such things as children seating in a car with air bags, children travelling in a car that does not meet vehicle emissions testing, allowing children to play on the sidewalk on the street alone, etc. An HAP parent will try to make the other parent look bad no matter how trivial the item may be.*

Examples of severe Hostile-Aggressive Parenting

Parents and/or guardians who practice severe **Hostile-Aggressive Parenting** will usually be highly noticeable by a number of people and their behaviour will in most cases be considered objectionable by most other reasonable people in the community. Most parents in this category have engaged in a high number of the examples in the mild to moderate category in addition to some or several of the examples of the severe category. Children under the care and control of any parent who exhibits the behaviours below should be considered at high risk of psychological harm. While there are exceptions to every rule, the following can be useful as a guideline to some of the identifying behaviours exhibited by parents in the severe category:

- 1) Use excessive physical discipline their children.** *A significant number of HAP parents will use excessive physical discipline bordering assault when disciplining their children. Some children have reported being slapped, pushed around and roughly handled.*
- 2) Openly violate court orders and agreements, especially in relation to parenting time.** *HAP parents will ignore or challenge the authority of almost any court when it comes to parenting time – if they believe that they can get away with it. Hostile-Aggressive parents will constantly look at ways in which to deprive the other parent/guardian of time with the children and will challenge the resolve of the court to correct it. This is most commonly referred to as “access denial.”*
- 3) Tell the child that the other parent is not their biological parent.** *An HAP parent will sometimes resort to telling a child that the other parent is not their biological parent. Sometimes this may even be true. However, the HAP parent will cause further emotional abuse to the child by disclosing this to the child at the time of separation in order to make the child believe that they really do not belong to the other parent and that the other parent cannot love them as much because the other parent is not a real parent. Often this strategy is used by a parent when they are trying to invoke parental alienation into the child.*
- 4) Continue to exhibit anger towards the other parent, months or even years after the original separation of the couple.** *Hostile-aggressive parents in the “severe” category may literally exhibit their hate and anger towards the other parent for the rest of their life. Seldom can they ever think or talk about their former partners without evoking negative emotions. They will create communication difficulties for years.*
- 5) Force their children to use prescription drugs.** *Many HAP parents will take their children to doctors and have drugs such as Ritalin prescribed for their child in order to subdue the will of the child. HAP parents will not disclose their abuse of the child to the doctor but make the doctor believe that the child has ADHD. Many HAP parents will ignore the severe and*

dangerous long term side effects of drugs such as Ritalin just so that they can have control over the child and mask the child's behaviour problems which are often caused by the HAP parent.

- 6) **Forge court documents.** *Some HAP parents have been known to have their lawyers or other parties tamper with court documents and in some cases even forge a judge's signature to fabricate a false court Order.*
- 7) **Fabricate false sexual or physical abuse allegations against the other parent involving the children.** *HAP parents in the severe category will often go so far as to make false sexual or physical abuse allegations which can devastate the other parent. Often HAP parents will claim that the child is "afraid" of the other parent. HAP parents will call police and child welfare protection officials with their fabricated stories, knowing that an investigation often will result in the other parent losing contact with the child for extended periods of time until an investigation is complete.*
- 8) **Arrange to have anonymous allegations of abuse made to police and child welfare protection agencies.** *Sometimes Hostile-Aggressive Parents will make anonymous phone complaints to agencies in an effort to get the agencies to begin an investigation involving the child and the other parent. The HAP parent wants to create as many problems to the other parent or family as possible.*
- 9) **Force their child to see the other parent under supervised access when there really is no need for supervision.** *Some HAP parents will use every dirty trick in the book, especially false allegations to force their child to have to visit with the other parent in a very restricted supervised setting. Some HAP parents will even try to force children over the age of eight to visit with their other parent in a supervised facility. The HAP parent uses the supervised access as a form of punishment to the other parent and also as a way to get the child to not want to go to the supervised access center as most of the supervised facilities are very boring for children above the age of eight.*
- 10) **Expose their child to sexual activities with a new boyfriend or girlfriend or engage in promiscuous activities in the presence of the child.** *Some HAP parents may be so careless in their sexual activities with new partners that the child may see them with their partners in bed or hear them engage in sexual activities where the child is aware of what is going on.*
- 11) **Attempt to have biased relatives appointed for supervised access visits.** *Some HAP parents will attempt to get one parent into supervised access but with the condition that access to the child be at the home or in the presence of one of their own close family relatives. While this may sound reasonable to have a family member supervise the child, in reality what the HAP parent often plans to do is to get the relatives to support the HAP parent's allegations that the child does not want to see the other child. HAP parents should never have the authority to appoint or screen persons who fill the role of a supervisor.*
- 12) **Create interference at the other parent's place of employment or volunteer position in the community.** *To satisfy their need of revenge and thirst of power and control over the other parent, the HAP parent will employ a number of tactics to adversely affect the other parent in his/her. This may include such things as trying to get the other parent kicked out of volunteering at their children's school or at other functions in the community.*

- 13) **Not allow the child to be with or to communicate with the other parent on Father's Day, Mother's Day, birthdays and other special occasions.** *The HAP parent will ignore special days and discourage the child from showing respect for the other parent. Some children may actually wish to communicate with their other parent but are afraid to mention this to their HAP parent who most likely is the custodial parent.*
- 14) **Impose on the other parent's access time with the children.** *The HAP parent will sometime show up at activities where the non-custodial parent may have taken the child during their time with the child. The HAP parent and then come over and speak to the child while they are supposed to be spending time with the other parent. Some HAP parents may be so overbearing and controlling as to impose on the other parent's time with the child, even when the other parent may be subjected to supervised access with the child. Although there may be times, such as school concerts, when contact between parents may be unavoidable, HAP parents usually go out of their way to have contact with the child, not the other parent.*
- 15) **Threaten or intimidate third parties who try to assist the family or who may have witnessed the parent's Hostile-Aggressive Parenting.** *The HAP parent will use intimidation tactics and veiled threats to ward off the involvement of outside third parties who may wish to offer help to the child. In some cases HAP parents may even threaten third parties with legal action or police action should they get involved in the family's matters. HAP parents want to get rid of any party who may be trying to advocate for the children by bringing valuable information regarding abuse of the children by the HAP parent out into the open.*
- 16) **Allege that the non-custodial parent is responsible for the children's behaviour and emotional problems when the children are with the custodial parent.** *Often children under the control of a custodial HAP parent will exhibit serious behaviour problems. They may fight with the HAP parent continuously. The HAP parent will then allege that these behaviours are as a result of the non-custodial parent's actions and allege that the non-custodial parent is brainwashing the children. HAP parents will attempt to defect any blame on to others in order to hide their HAP behaviours.*
- 17) **Relocate the child's place of residency further away from the other parent, family and friends for the purpose of tightening control on the child and eliminating the other parent from regular involvement.** *In some cases, HAP parents will move away to another community using excuses such as work reasons or wanting to be with family to justify their move. However, in many cases, the main purpose of the move was to make it more difficult on the other parent to see the child.*
- 18) **Instruct the child's school not to provide information or report cards to the other parent and/or attempt to keep the other parent from attending school activities or events.** *Although major research studies have shown that involvement of parents at the child's school, especially non custodial parents, can be beneficial to the child's performance at school, HAP parents will use every trick they can to keep the other parent out of their child's school life.*
- 19) **Change their child's surname.** *Changing a child's surname is something done almost exclusively by mothers. HAP parents will sometimes change their child's name purposely to insult to the other parent or as a show their power over the other parent. HAP parents may change names on school records and other documents, often without following proper legal change of name procedures. Maiden names are often used and in some cases mothers will*

even change the last name of their child to be the same as their most recent common law spouse. Surnames become a flavour of the day with HAP parents and change as often as they change partners.

- 20) Get the child to call the other parent by their first name** *In many cases, HAP parents want to humiliate their former spouse and will pressure their child to call the other parent by his/her first name. Quite often while the HAP parent pressures the child to call the other parent by his/her first name, the HAP parent will insist that the child refer to their new partner as “mommy” or “daddy.”*
- 21) Reject registered mail to them from the other parent.** *Although most hostile-aggressive parents will try not to leave evidence of their behaviour, some in the serious category will even refuse to accept registered mail that may be sent to them regarding their separation, divorce or parenting arrangements.*
- 22) Provide the school with false or misleading information about the other parent to keep the other parent and family uninvolved.** *For example, a hostile aggressive parent may provide the names and phone numbers of people to call should their be an emergency at school yet avoid mentioning the other parent or family members, even though they may be more able to provide assistance in the event of an emergency at school or daycare.*
- 23) Commit acts of vandalism or carelessness against the property of other family members.** *Such acts could include damaging the other parent’s car or home. During cohabitation, this may include the scenario where the HAP parent throws the other parent’s personal possessions and clothes out on the front lawn or driveway, etc..*
- 24) Have fits of intense anger/verbal abuse against the other parent in front of the child and/or other third parties.** *These outbursts by the HAP parent often cause fear and anxiety in the child. These types of outbreaks are an indicator of emotional instability.*
- 25) Threaten the other parent with physically hurting the child if the other parent does not give in to their demands.** *Some HAP parents have been known to threaten physical harm and even death of the child as a means of getting the other parent to do what they want. Sadly, some children end up being murdered by HAP parents as a final act of revenge.*
- 26) May attempt to extort money for additional time with the child.** *Some HAP parents will tell the other parent they can see the child but only if they pay them more money for the privilege. Sometimes the HAP parent can be more subtle by telling the other parent to buy clothes or to pay for other expenses, even when the parent may already be paying child support for the child.*
- 27) Continue to physically or emotionally abuse their child even after the abuse has been brought to their attention by third party professionals.** *HAP parents in the severe category will often outright refuse to follow the recommendations and advice of mediators, doctors and outside third party professionals even after hostile parenting behaviours have been brought to the attention of the HAP parent. HAP parents will continue their campaign of terror no matter what others have to say to them. Often, HAP parents will not even listen to the advise of their own lawyer regarding the parenting of the child.*

- 28) **Offer money or bribes to outside third parties to bear false witness or to assist in making false allegations of child abuse against the other parent.** *Some HAP parents may be so bold as to involve others in the malicious use of false allegations against another parent.*
- 29) **Make false allegations of harassment or stalking against third parties who are trying to help the family.** *HAP parents will often allege that the other parent is harassing them by having third parties call them in an attempt to assist the family resolve its problems. The HAP parent will attempt to put these third parties in an unfavourable light with the court in an attempt to convince the court to discourage input from these outside third parties who are trying to help. The HAP parent will do almost anything to get rid of any third party who is trying to assist the family.*
- 30) **Will seek out lawyers in their community with a known reputation of not caring about children or families.** *HAP parents may fire and hire several lawyers as they attempt to find the most unscrupulous lawyer they can find.*
- 31) **Have their lawyer attempt to intimidate staff at the child's school.** *Unethical lawyers working for HAP parents may attempt to intimidate third parties at the school by telephoning them or writing to them in an attempt to intimidate them. Lawyers have been known to call school officials in an attempt to solicit information favourable to their client which is often done in a manner to distort the truth. Some lawyers will lead school officials to believe that they must restrict access to one parent and that the school must do as the HAP parent tells them to.*
- 32) **Avoid acknowledging their own child should the HAP parent accidentally meet the child and the other parent together in public.** *HAP parents will often turn and walk away in another direction in a store or shopping mall should they accidentally meet their child with the other parent. The HAP parent's anger is so strong that it blocks their ability to even act civilly in public.*
- 33) **Will refuse the opportunity of parenting time with their child.** *Some HAP parents will often turn away the opportunity to be with their child for their own self gratifying reasons. Sometimes the HAP parent will turn their own child's request to spend time with time as a form of punishment or rejection as a result of the child wishing to maintain a relationship with the other parent. Often, a child who has gone to live with his/her other, lesser or non hostile parent out of choice is rejected by his/her HAP parent and given various excuses why the child cannot spend time with the HAP parent during a particular parenting period.*
- 34) **Refuse to speak to other children of the relationship who has not sided with them.** *HAP parents will often divide siblings by turning away from any of their own children who do not side with them in their campaign of aggression against the other parent. For example, the HAP parent may not return phone calls from other children in the family or refuse to invite the other children to attend activities or events that they have invited the other "favoured" children to attend.*
- 35) **Self-inflict physical injuries.** *Some HAP parents may inflict injuries upon themselves, usually bruises and scratches, and then report this to doctors and police in an attempt to falsely accuse the other parent. Usually there are no witnesses to the incident when the physical*

injury was claimed to have occurred although the HAP parent will claim that this harm occurred during some time when a minor conflict, possibly verbal, occurred.

- 36) Totally severe any relationship between the child and other step parents and extended step parent family.** *HAP parents in the severe category generally desire to destroy any positive relationship that their own child may have developed with step parents or step siblings. The HAP parent takes the position that once the relationship is over between the parents, then the relationship that any child may have with the other parent or family is also ended.*
- 37) Obsessively restrict the child's access to a telephone.** *Some HAP parents may restrict all access to a phone in their home by their child in order to prevent the child from communicating with the other parent. Some HAP parents may change their phone service to a cellular service which they keep with them at all times. Some children are not even allowed to know their phone numbers at home, thus preventing phone contact by the child's friends.*
- 38) May coach their children from previous relationships to bad mouth their most recent partner and involve the children in their hate campaign of the target parent.** *This is very damaging to the child, as the child is being taught to hate another person for no reason whatsoever.*
- 39) Exercise total control over children's access to phone with use of cellular phone.** *Some HAP parents may totally control the use of the phone lines with children but using a cellular based phone line and not having any home based phone line. In this way, the HAP parent can have total control over the phone. A child in this environment has no way of using the phone in the home without the HAP parent knowing when they use the phone. A cellular based phone gives the HAP parent total control over incoming and outgoing calls to the child.*
- 40) Engage in tape recording of the child's telephone calls and involve others in this sometimes illegal and harmful practice.** *Some HAP parents will tape all their children's telephone calls between the other parent. Although this may be warranted out of fear of inappropriate dialogue for limited amounts of time, generally HAP parents will tape record conversations over many months and even years. HAP parents will also get other family members, such as grandparents, involved in illegally tape recording conversations between the child and parent. Under more appropriate conditions, a parent with a concern about inappropriate conversations should deal with the problem in an open manner with the other parent and child, but not continue to covertly record conversations over an extended period of time.*
- 41) May threaten and/or intimidate their child.** *The HAP parent may threaten or intimidate a child by telling them things to make them scared or sad such as destroying a pet or refusing to give the child something that the parent had previously promised to give to the child.*
- 42) Use underhanded tactics to force the child to recant previous statements.** *Some HAP parents may intimidate or threaten the child and force them to go back on previous statements that they may have made to social workers or police. Forcing children to lie can result in tremendous emotional harm..*
- 43) Interrogate their child after a visit with the other parent.** *Some HAP parents will literally interrogate their child immediately or shortly after the visit with the other parent, sometimes to*

the point of making their child cry into depression. Some HAP parents are literally obsessed with knowing about everything that goes on and what is said with the intent of finding something that they can use against the other parent. Some HAP parents are fearful of what the child may be saying to the other parent.

- 44) Make the child write a mean spirited letter to the other parent intended to hurt the other parent or to extort something from them.** Such letters may include the child telling his/her non-custodial parent that he/she does not want to see them or that they want more money from the non-custodial parent. Some HAP parents will go so far as to get their children to write hurtful letters to the other parent. Often these HAP parents will dictate to the child what they want the child to write in their letters. Some parents are so disturbed in their parenting as to write the letter and to forge the child's signature on the letter. Quite often, it is the language that gives away the HAP parents as the words used in such letters are often years ahead of the child's vocabulary for his/her age and maturity.
- 45) Tell the child to remain silent about incidences where the child has been abused or where the child has witnessed abuse in the home.** Often HAP parents will threaten or intimidate their child to lie and remain silent about things that may cast the HAP parent into a negative light and get the child to be part of the HAP parent's pattern of lies and deceptions. This is emotionally harmful for the child and sets a very bad role model for the child in that it teaches children that it is normal and OK to lie and to hide the truth.
- 46) Allow their own child to be exposed to highly negative influences.** Some HAP parents will allow their child to be exposed to negative influences such as drug and alcohol abuse, smoking, sex, pornography or weapons while the child is under their care and control. The HAP parent will exercise minimal supervision over the child and in many cases let their teenage child do whatever they want. It has been reported that some HAP parents have permitted their teenage children to keep hand guns in the home just because the children wanted them. This is often used to help invoke parental alienation in teenage children. The HAP parent will often go so far as to destroy the future of their own child, just for the sake of turning the child against the other parent. Unfortunately, because of the freedom granted to them by their HAP parents, many of these children end up making the wrong choices in life and ultimately find themselves in trouble with the law
- 47) Will disrupt their child's relationship with other children associated with the other parent.** Some HAP parents will interfere and try to break off their child's contact with other children who may be associated with the other parent. The HAP parent wants to cut the child off with having anything to do with the other parent's home, including having friendships when with the other parent. To erode the child's relationships with other children, the HAP parent, will refuse to take calls from the other children or tell other children when they call that the child is not available. Over a period of time the other children, just stop calling.
- 48) Encourage their child to participate in criminal activities.** Some HAP parents have been known to involve their child criminal activities such as shoplifting or stealing. A HAP parent will turn a blind eye should they see things brought back to the house that were likely obtained by illegal methods. Often the HAP parent is afraid to say anything as they know that the only thing that keeps the child loyal to them is the fact that the child has total freedom while at the home of the HAP parent.

- 49) **Intercept mail intended for the child.** *Some HAP parents will break the law and intercept letters for the child or letters that the child may be sending out. HAP parents will sometimes open and read letters that have arrived for the child and sometimes destroy letters from the other parent.*
- 50) **Intercept or destroy E mail messages intended for the child.** *Some HAP parents will find out their child's password for their e mail account and intercept the child's messages from the other parent or from other family members. Often the child will not even be aware that mail from other parties is not being received as the HAP parent may erase the messages that they do not want the child to see.*
- 51) **Unilaterally withdraw money and close down bank accounts which were intended for the child.** *Some HAP parents will withdraw money that was in a joint bank account intended for the child. They do this in order to take control of the money and to exercise their control over the other parent. Although in some cases these parents may actually take the money and redeposit the money into another account for the child, the actions of the HAP parent is often intended to anger the other parent and to show the other parent that the HAP parent has more influence over the child's life than the other parent.*
- 52) **Will attempt to cast the other parent in a bad light to the court by reporting in court documents the other parent's lawful activities to protest the court system.** *Some HAP parents will include material about the other parent's activities involving protest with any group or organization which is involved in peaceful changes to the court system. Pictures of the other parent at a peaceful rally or slogans used on signs may be used in the court documents. Peaceful protest is the right of people, yet the HAP parent will try to use a person's right to peaceful protest against them and often with the purpose to interfere with the parent's relationship with the child.*

In the majority of cases, it is the sole custodial parent who generally exhibits the behaviours listed under severe **Hostile-Aggressive Parenting**. This is because the custodial parent has greater legal control over the child and knows that the other parent has little, if any, legal authority to challenge them and is therefore powerless to prevent such behaviour. Often, with HAP parents there may be also a number of additional risk assessment indicators present which may provide further evidence that the hostile-aggressive parent's problems are deep rooted. When behaviours in the severe HAP category are observed it is also advisable to review these additional risk assessment indicators.

Examples of Critical Risk Behaviours/Indicators

The term "Critical Risk Behaviour/Indicator" refers to any behaviour or action of a parent or guardian which would be considered as so potentially damaging or neglectful to a child's physical or emotional well-being as to warrant immediate intervention and removal of the child from the care of the parent at the very least on an interim basis. Under many child welfare protection laws, most of these behaviours would be considered as meeting the threshold for child abuse, neglect or maltreatment.

In most cases, the presence of any Critical Risk Indicators listed here will warrant immediate intervention and removal of the parent's custody rights and comprehensive review of the child's time with the HAP parent.

- 1) **Plan to abduct or abduct the children and go into hiding.** *In some rare situations, HAP parents may make plans and then flee with the child without any warning and take the child to another state, province and in some cases another country, leaving no trace of where they were taking the child. In some situations, parents have been successful in hiding the children for years.*
- 2) **Rejected all efforts to correct HAP behaviours.** *Some HAP parents exhibit a gross unwillingness or inability to reduce the child's exposure to HAP influences by literally refusing to follow any recommendations intended to reduce HAP influences after being formally cautioned about the harm that these behaviours could cause the child and the consequences of their actions.*
- 3) **Threats to kill or harm child.** *Some HAP parents will threaten to kill, to seriously harm, sexually or physically assault or to use a weapon against a child. Some children have reported being thrown against walls, hit with objects and forcefully wrestled and held down on the floor for just doing simple things such as trying to use the phone to speak to their non-custodial parent.*
- 4) **May attempt suicide while caring for the child.** *Some HAP parents have attempted suicide, threatened suicide or have overdosed on drugs as part of a suicide attempt while they have been caring for a child. Some children have witnessed their parents attempt to take their lives.*
- 5) **Attempted to extort or to blackmail another parent.** *Some HAP parents will attempt to extort a signature on court documents from the other parent in matters relating to any issue. Often these HAP parents will use denial of access to children as their key weapon to extort or blackmail the other parent.*
- 6) **Attempt murder or physical injury.** *Some HAP parents may plan and attempt to carry out the act of murdering or maiming the other parent either themselves or through a third party "hit" person.*
- 7) **Child is physically or sexually assaulted by a parent's partner.** *In some cases, children will report being physically or sexually assaulted by the parent's current boyfriend, girlfriend or spouse. Sometimes the parent will help to conceal the abuse from authorities and in some cases become a collaborator to the crime.*
- 8) **Expose the child to excesses of alcohol and drugs.** *Some HAP parents will have wild parties where there is excessive use of drugs and alcohol, fighting, etc. while the child is staying in the home. Often the child sees these activities and is often feels uncomfortable or afraid of the situation.*
- 9) **Expose child to smoke when child has a medical condition.** *Some HAP parents are unwilling to control their cigarette habit even for the sake of their children's health. Some HAP parents will continue to smoke and expose their child to smoke even when their child has been diagnosed with a respiratory illness such as asthma.*
- 10) **Long term medical illness.** *Some HAP parents are diagnosed as suffering from some form of long term mental illness which can be directly linked to the parent's HAP behaviour.*

- 11) Promote drug abuse by the child.** *In some rare situations, HAP parents may share drugs or alcohol with their underage child.*

Additional Risk Assessment Indicators

In most instances where signs of **Hostile-Aggressive Parenting** are present, some of the following additional risk factors may also be noted. When these additional risk assessment indicators are known to exist with any person exhibiting the specific HAP behaviours listed, would further reinforce a conclusion of Hostile-Aggressive behaviour. Should any of these risk assessment indicators listed below be detected with parents who are also exhibiting a number of the behaviours/actions listed in the severe category, then it is very likely that the hostile-aggressive parent may have some deep seated psychological problem which will adversely affect their ability to act in the best interest of the child. This will usually require professional treatment. The following additional risk assessment indicators are often associated with HAP parents and they should also be referred to whenever HAP is suspected.

Additional risk assessment indicators are:

- 1) Past history of denial of children's access to a parent from one or more previous relationships. HAP parents with children from previous relationships often have children who do not have regular contact with their other biological parent and extended family. A high risk indicator would be if the HAP parent has another child who has been totally alienated from a parent and extended family from a previous relationship.
- 2) Past history of the HAP parent of being raised as a child in a home where Hostile-Aggressive Parenting was practiced by parents or guardians in that home. Quite often, parents and guardians suffering from HAP were raised by a parent who acted in a hostile manner against another parent. HAP behaviours can be passed down from one generation to the next.
- 3) The HAP parent has older or younger siblings in his/her own family who have been alienated from a parent or other family members.
- 4) Collection of child support from multiple parents for the same children. HAP parents will often use their children as profit centers and go after as many former partners for child support for the same children in a practice called double-dipping. In countries such as Canada, a custodial parent can collect child support from an unlimited number of parents who the HAP parent may have had a short relationship with.
- 5) History of physical or emotional abuse of a partner's children from previous relationship during the time that hostile-aggressive parent was cohabitating with their partner.
- 6) History of obtaining one or more ex-parte court Orders against a current or former spouse which were used to gain an advantage in a family court matter.
- 7) Past history as a victim of sexual, physical abuse or neglect as a child or young adult.
- 8) Previous attempts at suicide or threats of suicide.
- 9) History of mental illness or suicide within the HAP parent's own family.
- 10) Currently under medication for depression or mental illness or past history of mental illness or depression requiring treatment or medication.
- 11) Current or a past history of drug or alcohol abuse.

- 12) History of bad relations with third parties such as neighbours, landlords, babysitters, in-laws or past friends. HAP parents will often distance or cut off their relationship with most relatives on the other side of the child's family.
- 13) Past history of being a "bully" in school.
- 14) The child's school has felt it necessary to contact child protection agencies regarding the child's physical or emotional well-being.
- 15) Parent has a documented history as a perpetrator of physical or emotional child abuse or neglect which has required involvement of a child protection agency
- 16) Past history as a foster child or child receiving temporary care or assistance of local child protection agencies.
- 17) History of neglect of children such as leaving children alone in the home when the children were too young to be left alone.
- 18) History as a perpetrator and/or as a victim of physical or emotional abuse against/from their partner during cohabitation.
- 19) Few or no long term friendships. *Hostile-aggressive parents tend to constantly move on to finding new friends and associates as people become aware of the hostile-aggressive parent's behaviour and distance themselves from the HAP person.*
- 20) History of protracted family or civil court litigation with one or more previous partners.
- 21) History of poor relationship with own parents or other members of immediate family.
- 22) Past history of conflict with in-laws and former in-laws from previous relationships.
- 23) History of having former partner(s) charged criminally for sexual or physical abuse. *(Often hostile-aggressive parents use false allegations against the other parent to get revenge)*
- 24) Neighbours and friends of the family also express concern about the behaviour and motivation of the hostile-aggressive parent.
- 25) Anger management problem such as history of yelling at children, spouse and others.
- 26) A pattern of multiple, short term sexual relationships or promiscuous lifestyle.
- 27) Past history of deceptive practices such as shoplifting, fraud, use of false or misleading information relating to abuse of welfare or immigration laws. *In many cases, HAP parents are good liars and masters of deception.*
- 28) Currently involved in an intimate or live-in relationship with a new partner. *HAP parents may become more determined to alienate children from a previous relationship in an attempt to make the children more attached to a new partner.*
- 29) Currently involved in an intimate or live-in relationship with a new partner who has a history of violence, drug or alcohol abuse, or who has a history of himself or herself of engaging in HAP behaviours. *HAP parents often get strong support and encouragement from partners who themselves have a history of HAP behaviours. Quite often these new partners, view*

themselves as a saviour and will help their partner to get rid of their former partners and help to encourage conflict.

- 30) *Past history of naming children from a relationship with the mother's maiden name. HAP parents (mothers) will insist at the birth of their child that they want the child to carry their own last name rather than the name of the father which is considered normal for most North American tradition and culture. Many HAP parents quite often have already made plans to leave their current partners at a future convenient time, and even pregnancy may be part of their plan of deception. HAP parents generally want to get things in place that will give them full control when they do make the move to separate from their partners.*
- 31) *Past history of using a different surname to a partner they may have been married to as a form of disrespect to their current partner at the time. Some HAP mothers have been known to resort back to their maiden name and sometimes use the last name of former husbands even while married and living with new husband. This does not include those professional people such as doctors who are happily married but who keep their original surnames for professional reasons.*
- 32) *Past history of engaging in paternity fraud (usually mothers). Some HAP mothers have named a particular man into a relationship, claiming he was the father of their child, when in fact, he is not. Often this deception is done for purposes of collecting child support from the unwary man.*
- 33) *Escalating involvement in a religious organization or cult. Some HAP parents may increase their involvement in a religious group or cult. Often HAP parents find sympathetic supporters in such activities and are often able to get the others in the religious group to support their HAP behaviour. Many times the HAP parent will also get their child tied up with activities with the group and will use this as an excuse to deprive the other parent of access at times.*
- 34) *Currently collecting welfare or social assistance or has a history of collecting welfare or social assistance at various times over a number of years. Studies document that there is a direct link between poverty and problems within families. The risk of HAP behaviours are increased when parents are on social assistance, likely due to the added pressures caused by financial hardship.*
- 35) *Past history of HAP behaviour in previous relationships. Many HAP often end up becoming involved in multiple unsuccessful marriages or relationships during their lifetime. Upon investigation, many of their previous relationships involve HAP behaviours as well.*

Dysfunctional family relationships as a risk indicator

It is a foundation and a principle of psychology that people learn their foundational relating patterns and skills in their first relationships, ie parents, siblings, extended family and then friends. It's a simple rule that is valid in the vast majority of situations. Many people will agree that people are a product of the social environment they were raised in.

People with strong wills and self discipline can change the surface level of their relating patterns but seldom can they change the underlying emotional patterns that have been learned during their developmental years as a child and young adult. The current behaviour of an HAP parent can be

highly influenced by the kind of relationship that the HAP parent had with his/her parents, siblings and extended family members during the years since childhood. Also influential can be the relationships that the HAP parent has observed amongst the other members of his/her family and circle of friends.

The bottom line is that if the HAP parent comes from a family where there would appear to be a lot of conflict within the family unit and those associated with the family unit, then there is a significant risk that the HAP parent may carry these sorts of relationship problems into new relationships they develop themselves during their lifetime, such as with a new spouse. This is what many would refer to as being part of the “baggage” when entering a new relationship.

PART 5

Observable effects on children resulting from exposure to Hostile-Aggressive Parenting

Raising a child in a hostile-aggressive parenting environment is, without a doubt, one of the most serious forms of child abuse imaginable. The behaviours of HAP parents can seriously affect their children's emotional, social, and intellectual development in many ways. To those with the knowledge to identify HAP, most children living under the influence of an HAP parent will exhibit some signs of being adversely affected. It must be emphasized that no specific behaviour problem observed in a child can be assumed to indicate that the child has been abused in any particular manner or even abused at all. Some of the signs observed in children can be misleading to those without knowledge and experience in HAP to the point where outside third parties, even professionals who are unfamiliar with HAP, may be totally misled initially and in some cases misdiagnose the behaviours. In one case a child may be reacting in one way, yet another child will react in a totally opposite way.

Although HAP is a behaviour is often looked as an issue affecting only the parents, by its very nature, HAP is a form of child abuse and neglect. Neurodevelopmental research (Glaser, 2000; Schwarz and Perry, 1994) suggests that child abuse and neglect can affect brain development at critical and sensitive periods. Abuse and maltreatment of children through HAP behaviours can have lasting effects on a child's cognitive, emotional, behavioural, and interpersonal functioning (Glaser, 2000). HAP must be taken very seriously for it can significantly affect the child for his/her lifetime.

In many cases, it is not unusual for a child to exhibit signs of affection and love towards a HAP parent at some times which can be very confusing to the occasional or untrained observer who may see the child showing affection to the HAP parent at some particular time. Psychologists have recognized for years that even children living under the care of abusive caregivers, often will have deep seated loyalties to those who may be physically and emotionally abusing them. Most children often long for the love and approval from their caregivers so it is not uncommon for a child who is being abused by an HAP parent to be seen showing affection at some times to their HAP parents. Where an HAP parent has been successful in alienating the child from another parent, the child may have the HAP parent as the only source of what the child perceives as love and affection. In reality, the behaviours of many HAP parents cause the child to develop an emotional dependency on the HAP parent, which in itself is not healthy for the child. The presence of HAP is more precisely determined by analysis of the child's overall behaviour patterns and the overall parenting patterns of the HAP parent over a period of time and also reviewing the associated risk indicators.

Evaluating HAP can be very deceiving to unsuspecting observers, especially when children have been coached or have been made to have fears of their hostile-aggressive parent or guardian. Therefore, in order to provide greater accuracy in determining the presence of HAP and identifying who the perpetrator of the abuse is, it is important that conclusions be based on known behaviour

patterns of the child and parents/guardians over a period of time so that the behaviour patterns of the HAP parent can be identified.

Note: Because the behaviours of children can be misleading if looked at in isolation, it is important that the observable effects on children as listed in this section be cross referenced with the known behaviour patterns of the parents. For example, an HAP parent may complain about a child who is misbehaving and creating problems every time the child returns from the non-custodial parent's home. The HAP parent will then claim that the child's behaviour is because of the influence of the non-custodial parent and then using this reasoning, may attempt to further restrict the child's access to the non-custodial parent. Often, many professionals agree with this position without looking at the behaviours of the parent who is complaining and as a result great harm is done to the child. However, if the situation is carefully analyzed by looking at the behaviours of the parents and involved extended family members, it may be found that the HAP parent and his/her family has an extensive history of interference with the child's relationship with the non-custodial parent.

These observable signs are affected by the age of the child and the intensity of the hostile-aggressive parent's campaign. Sole custody and control of a child can be a significant barrier to the evaluation of HAP. A child is at greatest risk when sole custody of the child is in the hands of a parent who is hostile and aggressive to the other parent. Sole custody in the hands of such a person, when there would appear to be another caring parent available, is often nothing more than a license to emotionally abuse the child. A non-custodial parent, even if they may have tendencies towards HAP, are not in an position to influence a child to any great extent as the custodial parent can easily take steps to reinforce their control over the child and diminish the non-custodial parents influence over the child.

Below are some examples of the widely-varied indicators that may be observed in a child who is being adversely affected by Hostile-Aggressive Parenting:

High levels of conflict and behavioural between the child and the custodial HAP parent

High levels of conflict between a child and the custodial parent, especially about parenting time and/or communication with the non-custodial parent, are almost always a sure sign that the custodial parent is an HAP parent. A determined child will often rebel against their custodial parent and create all kinds of problems when they feel that their natural wishes and desires to see or to communicate with their other parent are being interfered with by the HAP parent. This is a natural reaction which is often a result of the child's frustration and a desire to have their wishes and preferences respected.

Children, especially children above the age of 7 to 8 may begin to show anger directed at their custodial HAP parent. Children at this age begin to come out of their shell and begin to develop a greater ability to reason and to differentiate right from wrong. Children who are being adversely affected by a custodial parent's Hostile-Aggressive Parenting, may at this age begin to start speaking of what it is that is bothering them and start challenging the authority of the HAP behaviours of their parents. They may become defiant and aggressive with the custodial parent,

especially after they first go back to the custodial parent's home after a visit with the non-custodial parent.

Children at this age often begin to see that what their custodial parent has led them to believe about their non-custodial parent is simply not true. They may become angry for being lied to by the HAP parent. Children when questioned, if they have not developed a fear or an emotional dependency of their custodial parent, will be able to speak out and clearly say what it is that is bothering them. They may begin to speak about some of the things that the custodial parent may be doing that are listed in this document as being HAP behaviours. In some situations, children may even start to create incidents in an attempt to have their custodial parent get in trouble with authorities. Left unresolved, often these conflicts will turn to physical altercations between the child and the custodial parent and/or other family members who support the custodial parent. Boyfriends and girlfriends of HAP parents sometimes get involved and assist the HAP parent to discipline the child without fully understanding the previous history.

Unfortunately, most HAP parents, of course, will claim that the conflict between themselves and the child is caused by the non-custodial parent and will not admit that it is their own HAP behaviour that is causing their child to behave in this manner.

Child runs away from the home of the custodial HAP parent or may refuse to return to the home of the HAP parent

Another sure sign that a child is being exposed to the influences of an HAP parent is when the child runs away from the custodial parent's home and goes to the non-custodial parent's home. A child who is having their physical and emotional needs by a custodial parent seldom has no need to run away as the custodial parent has all the power and control to protect them. Sometimes the child may refuse to return and do such things as refuse to get out of the car when dropped back at the home of the custodial parent. Running away from an HAP parent's home is one of the symptoms of reverse parental alienation where the child begins to develop a distain or even hatred of the HAP parent.

Child may exhibit behavioural problems

Children exposed to Hostile-Aggressive Parenting likely will demonstrate a number of behavioural problems as a result of their exposure to HAP ranging from minor to serious. These problems may be observable at school, in the home and in the community. Some studies have shown that as much as 85% of children with behavioural problems come from single parent (usually fatherless) homes. Behaviour problems associated with children of separation and divorce generally are the result of two contributing factors, both of which are closely connected to HAP parenting.

(1) Behaviour problems learnt from child's exposure to HAP environment

When children observe their HAP parent acting in an anti-social and aggressive manner over an extended period of time they often pick up on a number of these behaviours and over time, consider them to be socially acceptable. Children are a product of their environment and do learn what they live. Children living under the influence of a hostile-aggressive parent may become themselves, selfish, self centred and have growing anger management difficulties as years pass on. Children who are being physically abused or yelled at constantly by a HAP parent will begin to deal with their own problems in the same manner, often hitting out at siblings or schoolmates. Many of these

negative behaviours are often observable at the child's school. HAP behaviours picked up by a child from the HAP parent will, in many cases, seriously affect a child's development and interfere with their ability to lead a normal and balanced life. Some professionals may misdiagnose the child as having a conduct disorder and prescribe medication but, in reality, these professionals fail to realize that the child's own parent is instilling these types of negative and anti-social behaviours into the child.

Some young children who exhibit behavioural problems as a result of exposure to HAP parents do improve over the years. However, at least half or more get worse. Older children often develop a hostile, aggressive attitude as well as being disobedient and defiant to parents and authorities. Often these children get involved in more violent physical fights and may start to use weapons. They may steal or lie, without any sign of remorse or guilt when they are found out. They refuse to follow rules and may start to break the law. Teenagers exposed to the influences of an HAP parent start to manipulate the parents so that they can get anything they want. Remember, when children witness their HAP parent lie and deceive people and get away with it, then the child may develop the same attitude that if their parent can get away with it, then they can too.

Often, the parent who may have practiced HAP parenting when the child was younger, now find themselves held hostage to a child terrorist. HAP parents, fearful that the child may leave them and go to the other parent if they don't get their way, often fall prey by letting the child set their own limits. The fear of losing child support payment, alone, is enough to make a parent ignore good parenting just to maintain their legal control over the child. Many of these affected children get involved in criminal activities with their friends. They may steal cars, break into houses or shoplift. They may take risks with their health and safety by taking illegal drugs or having unprotected sexual intercourse.

Children are less likely to act out aggressively when their parents use more effective parenting techniques than those who rely on hostile-aggressive techniques such as reacting to their child's wishes to have a reasonable relationship with their other parent with anger, and using negative rather than positive reinforcement to the child's relationship with the other parent.

Professor Jamie McHale of Clark University headed a team of undergraduate and graduate students in the research project he called Families Through Time. The project examined coparenting relationships and how they can affect and predict the behaviour of children from birth to preschool age. The Families Through Time project extends prior research McHale did with Jeffrey Rasmussen from Purdue University. Here are the conclusions of this study which are available from the Clark University Website:

- **an understanding of what happens in the triadic relationship between mother, father and child during the child's infancy helps us to predict the child's patterns of coping with distress during the preschool years.**
- **the preschool children rated high by their teachers on a scale of hostile/aggressive behaviour were more likely in infancy to have witnessed low levels of family harmony and a hostile-competitive coparenting environment.**
- **the preschool children rated high by their teachers on a scale of anxious-fearful behaviour were more likely to have had in infancy a parent who was significantly under-involved.**

- **husbands from families that worked hard at promoting family harmony during the child's infancy were more likely to indicate approval of their wives when talking with the preschool child outside the mother's presence.**
- **wives from families that demonstrated a hostile-competitive family dynamic during the child's infancy were more likely to indicate disapproval of their husbands when talking with the preschool child outside the father's presence.**
- **preschool children relatively free of behaviour problems were more likely to have fathers who strove to promote a strong sense of family and mothers who spoke positively to the child about the father even when he was not around.**

(2) Behavioural problems caused by child's unresolved anger and frustration from living under the control of an HAP parent

Some children develop behaviour problems as a result of unresolved anger and frustration because of being forced to live under the control of a hostile and controlling parent. Too often, family courts place custody of the child in the hands of the wrong parent who is often the HAP parent. Too often, the non-custodial parent is rendered helpless to assist the children and placed fully under the control of the custodial HAP parent. Children become angry and frustrated by the efforts of the HAP parent to further interfere with their relationship with the non-custodial parent. This anger and frustration develops into severe behaviour problems which affect them at school and at home. Behavioural problems caused by frustration and anger can only be effectively addressed when the children's wishes and preferences are considered and the children provided the opportunity to have a meaningful relationship with their non-custodial parent.

Anxiety

From an early age, children need security and safety. A young child who does not feel safe and is exposed to the behaviours of a hostile-aggressive parent may have significantly elevated levels of anxiety. This might show up in simple nervous behaviours (habits such as twirling hair or biting nails) or actually be seen in the development of phobias, panic disorders, and obsessive/compulsive disorders. The anxiety that the child exhibits may be associated with a particular person or environment, or it may be more generalized with the child constantly feeling on edge or irritable. Children may be afraid to talk about summer holidays or about future parenting periods for fear of saying something that may offend the custodial HAP parent. Young children often use avoidance to cope with this kind of anxiety or develop other symptoms such as nightmares, bed wetting, or physiological symptoms such as headaches or stomach distress.

May be overly quiet and reserved

A child who is living under the primary control of a hostile-aggressive parent is often threatened with punishment if they say something about the parent's Hostile-Aggressive Parenting. To protect themselves from retribution by the HAP parent, children may become quiet, reserved and afraid to speak out about the HAP parent. The child will find that by saying nothing, even if it means hiding abuse against them, keeps them out of further trouble with their hostile-aggressive parent. This type of behaviour is not uncommon with children under 12 years of age. Children raised in this kind of environment often grow up lacking in self esteem and confidence and unable to compete in the working world.

Conflict with the HAP parent's new partner

Children living under the influence of an HAP parent may often experience difficulty with the HAP parent's new partner. Sometimes this may be due to a personality conflict, but in many cases the HAP parent's new partner will often support the HAP parent's alienating behaviour quite often as a result of the HAP parent having convinced his/her new partner that the other parent is the problem. It must be remembered that HAP parents are masters of deception and one of the first things they do is to convince all the persons they associate with that they are the "good" parent and the other parent the "bad" parent. New partners, acting only on information given to them by the HAP parent, often in good faith, try to assist the HAP parent by trying to assume the role of parent, rather than step-parent. The child knows the truth but only sees the new partner taking sides with the HAP parent which causes the child to be angry and defiant with the new partner as well. Often, conflict between an HAP parent's new partner can have devastating effects of the dynamics within the family, sometimes totally destroying the family unit. In many cases, children report being physically and emotionally abused by the HAP parent's new partner.

Bed wetting and sleep disorders

Some children adversely affected by HAP parents may suffer from enuresis (bed wetting) with some affected children known to have wet their beds well beyond the time when most children are toilet trained. Some children abused by HAP parents have reported to have been still wetting their bed even as old as eight or nine years of age.

May become defensive or fearful when questioned about the hostile-aggressive parent's behaviour

Sometimes their body language will give these kids away. When questioned during an interview about the HAP parent, they may squirm, become easily distracted or use phrases such as "I don't know" or "I want to go now" or "I don't remember" or "I don't want to talk about it". Some children may forget things that the HAP parent has done that other children or witnesses can clearly recall. Children under the primary care and control of a hostile-aggressive parent will often learn to say what the hostile-aggressive parent wishes them to say while they hide the truth as well as their real feelings. These children know that their HAP parent is trying to hide the truth and that the child may be punished for telling the truth to others. Sometimes it is only the body language of these children that will give them away during an interview.

May express to their teacher, a desire to share their school related work with their non-custodial parent or to ask for help contact the other parent.

Teachers at school, especially elementary school, may be faced with situations that they find strange when dealing with children being affected by a Hostile-Aggressive Parent. Some of these situations may include:

- The child may tell the teacher that they would like to take their work from school to their non-custodial parent. The child may even ask to keep the work at school in order to get it directly to the non-custodial parent. They may not want their custodial parent to know about this. Children in this situation are wanting to share their accomplishments at school with

their non-custodial parent. Hostile-aggressive parents often will not share a child's work with the other parent and quite often will destroy it out of spite.

- The child may tell the teacher that they don't want a particular parent to be at the school.
- The child may ask school staff for help to use the phone to call their non-custodial parent.
- Drawings or notes may reveal the child's hidden feelings such as unhappiness, anger at one or both parents, wishes to live with one parent, etc.

The child may disclose information to third parties about the behaviours of the HAP parent

A child may reveal to third parties such as teachers and other family members, specific details of some Hostile-Aggressive Parenting behaviours they have been exposed to. Children will usually have the courage to speak up between the ages of 7 to 14 years of age with a number of factors influencing when a particular child may begin to speak up. Some of the most common things that children may speak out about may include such things as one parent saying bad things about the other parent or not being able to call the other parent on the phone. The child may even tell third parties that they want to live with their other parent, rather than the one they live with now. This is a sign that the child is reaching out for help from others and has not developed a total fear of the hostile-aggressive parent as of yet. This situation must be handled delicately so as not to place the child at greater risk of abuse at the hand of the hostile-aggressive parent. In most cases, the hostile-aggressive parent may punish the child for exposing things that the hostile-aggressive parent was trying to keep a secret. Third parties must demonstrate that the child can trust them by not turning them back into the clutches of the HAP parent.

The child may show greater affection to a parent/guardian contrary to the claims of the hostile-aggressive parent.

Hostile-aggressive parents will often attempt to paint a bad picture of the other parent/guardian to everyone they know so that they can turn others against that other person, often as part of a strategy to isolate that person from others in the community and to solicit the support of others to help isolate the child from the other parent. This strategy is most often used by custodial parents to turn school officials and babysitters against the non-custodial parent. Hostile-aggressive parents will often say that the child's relationship with the other parent is not good and that the child does better when he/she does not have contact with the other parent. This strategy is usually used when children are younger as it becomes more difficult for the HAP to continue these lies as the child becomes more aware which is usually above the age of 7 years of age. However, when given the opportunity to see the child and the other parent together, many in the community find that the child and the other parent enjoy a loving relationship together, contrary to what they were told by the HAP parent.

The child may indicate fear of reprisal of a parent for disclosing information

A child who lives in a safe and secure environment, should never have a fear of telling the truth to anyone about his/her living and or parenting environment. Should a child express a fear for their physical or emotional safety and indicate that they are fearful of one parent knowing about them

disclosing information, then this is another supporting sign that the parent who the child is afraid of is an HAP parent.

The child may show excessive animosity/fear/hate towards the non-custodial parent

In some severe cases of Hostile-Aggressive Parenting, the hostile-aggressive parent may have been successful in implanting Parental Alienation in the child **to the point where the child may express severe animosity, fear or even hate towards the non-custodial parent**. In some cases, children will literally run away or hide should they accidentally meet the alienated parent in public such as on a street or in a store.

This reaction in children can be very misleading to those without knowledge of parental alienation and the brainwashing of children by hostile-aggressive parents. To those without knowledge, it could lead them to believe that the non-custodial parent is actually a bad parent or has abused the child.

Persons who witness a child, especially a young child speak very badly of another parent should consider the possibility that the child may be the victim of brainwashing. It is not normal for ANY child to express strong animosity toward a parent without very clear and understandable reasons. Should the child's animosity be directed towards a non-custodial parent, then this is usually further evidence that the custodial parent may be responsible for the child's hate of the other parent. When children are carefully questioned however for details of why they hate their parent so much, that is when the truth usually starts to become apparent. Seldom can children provide specifics to why they feel the way they do and only given general statements such as "he/she used to hit me" or "he/she was mean to me" Parental alienation can be suspected when interviewers start to ask for specifics and the child's recollection is vague or inconsistent. The pattern of the parent's behaviours may also help one to determine if the child's reaction is justified or if this behaviour has been implanted in the child by the custodial parent.

The child's personality may change when the hostile-aggressive parent is present

A change in the child's personality toward one parent may be noticed when the child is in the presence of both parents. Such a situation may occur at a school function where both parents attend. Persons may notice that the child is very affectionate with one parent such as holding hands and appearing excited and happy. As soon as the hostile-aggressive parent comes on the scene, the child will suddenly stop showing their affection to the other parent. The child recognizes the power that the custodial parent wields over them and in order to protect themselves, the child will hide the affection they would normally give to the non-custodial parent because they know the custodial parent will disapprove of this and may become angry.

May self inflict injuries or exhibit suicidal tendencies

It has been reported that children have committed suicide while living under the influence of an HAP parent. A small number of children become so depressed and distraught about not being able to have a meaningful relationship with their other parent that they end up taking their own lives. Some children may cause physical injury to themselves such as cutting or burning themselves. The presence of HAP parenting in any household affected by divorce and/or separation must be carefully looked at whenever children show symptoms of hurting themselves or have thoughts of doing so. Often these children are diagnosed by professionals as being suicidal, yet in many cases

professionals are unable to relate the child's suicidal thoughts to the behaviours of the HAP parent because in many cases the HAP parent is able to appear to the professional as being a wonderful and caring parent.

The child may produce notes and drawings indicating sadness living with the HAP parent or indicating a desire to live with the non-custodial parent.

Children adversely affected by an HAP parent may sometimes make drawings or write notes where they express their sadness about the way they are being treated by an HAP parent. Sometimes they will write that they wished they were living with their other parent.

May show aggression towards the custodial parent especially at times just after returning back from parenting time with the non-custodial parent.

A common reaction seen in children living in the care of a HAP custodial parent is that the child may exhibit anger and hostility towards the custodial parent when they return from the non-custodial parent's home. This, in a sense, is one of the symptoms of reverse parental alienation where the child begins to develop a distain or even a hatred of the HAP parent. Some children may fight, kick, spit and break things upon their return and generally be uncooperative with the custodial parent. These children become angry because of being forced back into the care of a parent who they know is not as nice as the other parent. Often this reaction is caused because the child does not get to spend enough time with the non-custodial parent as the custodial parent will often do everything they can to keep time with the non-custodial parent to a bare minimum.

What is important to note is that in many cases, the HAP parent will claim that the aggression by the child is caused by the non-custodial parent. The HAP parent will often report that this aggressive behaviour is happening when the child returns or during the days following the child's return from the other parent's home. The HAP parent, knowing that it is difficult to hide the children's behavioural problems blame the cause on the other parent in an attempt to hide their own abuse of the child. Often blaming the other parent is part of a well thought out strategy to get the court to further restrict the child's time with the non-custodial parent and to further. Ultimately, this only makes the child even angrier at the custodial parent.

May show signs of physical abuse

In addition to the personality related observations, children who may be physically abused by an HAP parent may exhibit a number of physical injuries such as:

- a) Bruises or welts on their body or face (One should be especially concerned when bruises or welts would appear in various states of healing, in unusual patterns or clusters which would reflect the instrument or in multiple areas of the body);
- b) Burns (cigar or cigarette burns, glove or sock-like burns on extremities, doughnut-shaped burns on buttocks, or any burn that shows the shape of the item used, such as an iron);
- c) Bone fractures (spiral fractures of long bones without a history of twisting force as the cause, multiple fractures in various stages of healing, any fracture in a child under the age of two);
- d) Internal injuries;

- e) Lacerations and abrasions (especially around the mouth, lip, eye, or external genitalia);
- f) Teeth marks from biting.

May lack self esteem and confidence

A child's sense of self can be negatively impacted when living under the control of an HAP parent. Levels of self-esteem (a child's positive view of him or herself) and appropriate self-confidence (a child's realistic view of their capabilities) are crucial to the ongoing psychological development and well-being of a child. When a parent or guardian assaults the child's self-esteem using hostile-aggressive behaviours, often this will negatively impact the child's developmental progress. When a child has an impaired sense of self or a reduced sense of self-esteem, they are often unable to cope with situations in which there is increased stress. Exposure to HAP during developmental years can also have an impact when children need to separate or become independent from others in later years. The child may be subject to separation anxiety disorder at a later time in life. Later in the child's development the child may have difficulty in defining his/her own boundaries or appreciating the needs and desires of others in their environment. In addition, children raised in an environment where he/she is being exposed to hostile-aggressive parenting may lack adequate self-protectiveness and may be at greater risk of being victimized or exploited by others.

HAP parenting and its relationship to ADHD in children

Children being abused by an HAP parent often end up being wrongly diagnosed as having ADHD (**Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder**). Often, because of the emotional abuse that HAP parents inflict upon their children and the resulting behaviour problems that result, many HAP parents take their children to doctors and get prescription drugs such as Ritalin prescribed to modify their child's behaviour, especially those children who begin to rebel against the HAP parent's constant emotional and sometimes physical abuse. Children under drugs such as Ritalin are often turned into walking zombies and become much more submissive to their HAP parent and easier to control by the HAP parent. A significant number of children end up being misdiagnosed with ADHD because the HAP parent does not disclose to the physician the true situation at home. In most cases because the HAP parent is the custodial parent, the doctor is prevented from speaking to the child's other parent, who in many cases could alert the doctor of the emotional abuse in the HAP parent's home. Most HAP parents who have their children prescribed drugs such as Ritalin, place blame on the other parent or other factors, but never look at what their own HAP parenting is doing to their child.

HAP parents will ignore the long term health risks to the child because to them, only their interests are what is important, not the long term health of even their own child. For another caring parent to be able to remedy the misdiagnosis it is important the doctor be made aware of the HAP behaviours that the child is being subjected to in the home of the HAP parent. Once the child's doctor is made aware of the abuse that the child is being subjected to, the doctor should ensure that no further medication be prescribed to the child until such time as he/she is certain that the abusive behaviours that the child may be subjected to by the HAP parent have ended.

SEVERE CASES OF HOSTILE-AGGRESSIVE PARENTING (HAP)

Legal Approaches

In the vast majority of cases, effective legal approaches will eliminate or at the very least, effectively control emotional and physical harm to children caused by **Hostile-Aggressive Parenting**. It must be noted that in the vast majority of cases, the behaviour of HAP parents will correct their behaviour quickly once the watchful eye of the court or other specialists from the community who have knowledge of HAP have been brought into the case.

One of the main problems is that in recent years the courts have become too lenient when dealing with hostile-aggressive behaviours with parents. The courts failure to sanction those parents who are abusive to their children through HAP has actually resulted in a greater incidence of abuse against children caused by HAP. **To effectively deal with Hostile-Aggressive Parenting, the courts must apply positive motivators to reward parents for good parenting behaviour as well as effective penalties to discourage Hostile-Aggressive Parenting.** Re-establishing a power balance between the HAP parent and the other parent is one of first, most crucial steps in stopping HAP behaviours as this allows the child to see that the HAP parent is no longer able to prevent the child from seeking meaningful help through the other parent (usually the non-custodial parent).

Parents who continue to expose their children to **Hostile-Aggressive Parenting** need to be warned by the court that if they do not end their hostile parenting patterns, court sanctions will be imposed upon them, including reversal of primary care or even custody of the child. Court sanctions not only serve to "remind" the hostile parent to cooperate and to behave in a civil manner, but are very useful for the children as well. Effective sanctions set an example to the children and all family members that **Hostile-Aggressive Parenting** is not acceptable behaviour to our society and that the courts will not tolerate it. When a child feels reassured that the system will protect him/her from their hostile-aggressive parent it will give the child the courage to express their love to the more reasonable parent and will ease the fear they might otherwise feel if they were to admit to the HAP parent that they themselves really want to see the other parent. In such situations, the child can say what they know they must to satisfy the hostile parent's need to feel that the children love them more than the other parent but knowing at the same time that the hostile parent must take them to see the other parent and that what they say to the hostile-aggressive parent will not be somehow used against the friendly parent. Many times HAP parents will pressure the child to say that they don't want to see the other parent. This of course is used as part of the strategy to justify what the child should not be seeing the other parent. Unfortunately, in most communities there are a number of biased social workers and counsellors who have no knowledge of HAP who will support the hostile-aggressive parent's campaign to alienate the child from the other parent. Some of these workers have a personal background which has caused them to become biased.

It cannot be emphasized strongly enough that one of most powerful incentives to get the hostile-aggressive parent to act in the best interest of their child is through a collaborative approach from family, the community and the courts. This is a very important factor in providing the children of separation and divorce with the support mechanism, outside of their parents, they so desperately need. Children are often afraid to express their wishes and preferences out of their fear of a

custodial HAP parent. Generally, children want a relationship with both parents and need the help of the courts and the community to ensure this without the children themselves, having to say it.

Part 6

Steps to intervene and effectively address Hostile-Aggressive Parenting

In all cases, identifying an HAP parent is not meant to vilify any parent in the process, nor should a person who has been identified as HAP be automatically deemed incapable of being a good parent. Identification of HAP is part of the process to clearly identify what a parent is doing wrong and to clearly show what kind of behaviours the parent is engaging in that is wrong. When it comes to HAP, it is not the past history of HAP that is the most important, but the ability and willingness of the person(s) involved to correct their undesirable and harmful HAP behaviour and to work towards a more productive relationship with their child and with other members of the child's family.

In all cases, one of the main purposes of the intervention process is to give all parties (usually both parents) the fair and equal opportunity to correct their behaviour during a process of education, while at the same time provide relief to any children who may be adversely affected by HAP. One main objective of the courts and those in the community when helping families of separation and divorce should be to help make all parents in the community the best parents possible, not to just vilify those identified as problem parents based solely on their past history. Unfortunately, the current court process is far too focused on laying blame on one parent and then to make decisions which punish one parent by making one parent less of a parent than the other, often relegating that parent to the role of being an "every other weekend" non-custodial parent.

During the intervention process any parent/party identified as HAP should feel reassured that their right to have a meaningful lifetime relationship with their child will be assured should they demonstrate their willingness and ability to act in the best interest of their child by correcting their HAP behaviour. Fairness and equal opportunity must be ensured to parents during every step of the intervention process as unfairness is one of the primary causes of conflict which in turn helps to fuel HAP behaviour in the first place.

STEP ONE

Voluntary mediation, arbitration or family group conferencing (Most Ideal situation if successful)

Before the courts intervene in the parent's dispute, at least one of the parents should be able to show the court that a reasonable attempt to resolve ongoing problems through some form of meditative or family group conferencing approach was made prior to asking the court to intervene. The courts should always be the option of last resort in settling disputes. To minimize the potential for conflict or false allegations during mediation or arbitration, communication should be done with the assistance of at least one trained, neutral third party. Any attempts to enter into an out-of-court process prior to a dispute being taken to court should be monitored and documented by the third parties who are familiar with the process and trained to facilitate communication between the parents. If mediation is used as one of the processes, ideally "open" mediation is preferable as the

mediator will be allowed to submit a report that may be helpful to the court in determining the willingness of each parent to negotiate in good faith.

In most cases, this first step is initiated by the friendly and cooperative party as they are the party who is adversely affected the most and the parent who most desires a solution to the Hostile-Aggressive Parenting to be found. The friendly parent, with the assistance of a third party, should make a documented proposal to the other side which they feel will address the difficulties being created as a result of Hostile-Aggressive Parenting. Generally, a parent who initiates the mediation process, especially one who is willing to involve themselves in an “open” mediation or conflict resolution process, likely is the parent with the least to hide and the most willing to work in the best interest of the child. At this time, those involved with mediation or arbitration should explain to both parents, the process of resolving the problems through the court process should a voluntary agreement not be successful.

In many cases, except in some severe cases, once a hostile-aggressive parent sees that a fair a comprehensive review of matters will be undertaken by the court and that this is going to create nothing but expense and inconvenience to them, they may at this point elect to become a willing participant to a process that will avoid court. For those remaining parents who are unable to reach a reasonable agreement because of the resistance of a hostile-aggressive parent, then the process of dealing with the situation should move on to step two. It is important, however, that the parents, especially the hostile-aggressive parent, know that the Court will not be tolerant of Hostile-Aggressive Parenting behaviour and that it will take the effective steps as outlined below to deal with it. The purpose is to motivate parents to settle matters fairly between themselves without intervention of the court.

Family group conferencing approach to resolve HAP

Early in the process during or after mediation has been attempted, as many of the family members and friends of the family should be contacted and asked to participate in a family group conference (FGC). Family group conferencing can be very effective because in the vast majority of cases, parents using hostile-aggressive techniques do not want others in the community, especially their family and friends to see what they are doing or for others to see the true facts. In most cases, HAP parents will modify or improve their parenting if they feel that there is a chance that others will see the truth. As a result of fear of the truth being exposed, these parents will modify their behaviour if they feel that others in the community, especially family members, take a direct interest in their family matter. The modification of the parenting style by an otherwise abusive parent through community and family involvement uses the age old concept of “it takes a village to raise a child”. This approach to resolving family relationship problems can be a powerful influence on parents and extended family members.

Family group conferencing (FGC) is a participatory approach to case planning that was originally developed by the Maori people of New Zealand, in response to concerns that the child welfare system was removing Maori children from their homes and cultural ties at a disproportional rate. Based upon the success of this approach in New Zealand, FGC has been utilized as a case planning approach in many other countries and is spreading to many countries and jurisdictions. An underlying philosophy of the FGC model is that extended families have the commitment, resources

and capacity to create safe and caring plans for children within their family unit. Family group conferencing can be extremely effective in dealing with Hostile-Aggressive Parenting.

Studies show that FGCs engage more family members than other case-planning methods, result in high degrees of family and professional satisfaction, and expand the quality of support available to families who have participated (for a review, see Lupton, 1999). Findings from child welfare studies where there was *not* a FGC provide support for the importance of active family involvement. Gleeson et al (1997), for example, found that an absence of active family involvement in case planning and decision-making can create a barrier to achieving permanence.

It has been found that FGCs did a better job than regular case planning approaches in promoting family unity, increasing safety for all family members, and reducing reports of child maltreatment and domestic violence. The study found that overall levels of abuse & violence had decreased significantly for the families using FGC approach.

Although the actual process of facilitating a family group conferencing process is not described in this document, using the process of family group conferencing as a first step in resolving issues relating to Hostile-Aggressive Parenting can have significant impact in the elimination of child abuse and maltreatment by HAP parents. Another tool that can be helpful is the appointment of a parent mentor. A parent mentor is another parent in the community who has a successful track record of raising children and who volunteers his/her time to help other parents in parenting their children.

STEP TWO

Implement first stage of intervention plan for family

Quite often the HAP parent will refuse to participate in mediation or any other process intended to resolve conflict. They know that by entering any kind of process that involves others in the process, that their hostile-aggressive behaviour may be exposed and that this will likely disadvantage them in the court. Hostile-aggressive parents will sometimes give lip service in an attempt to sway those involved to their line of thinking, but they are seldom successful providing those involved are properly trained. In some cases, lawyers representing hostile-aggressive parents may advise their clients not to participate in mediation or family group conferencing, or if anything, to pay lip service to alternate processes so that their client does not look uncooperative to the court. A lawyer representing an HAP parent may argue that he/she has a legal obligation to help protect the hostile-aggressive parent by helping to hide the Hostile-Aggressive Parenting from the court or from any outside parties which places them in a conflict with the best interest of the child.

If the more friendly parent has demonstrated that they have attempted to resolve issues through a reasonable process but that because of the response of the hostile-aggressive parent this has failed, then the court at this time must provide whatever support it can to help the parent most willing to participate in a process intended to reduce conflict. This would be accomplished by ordering both parents into a program or process specifically designed to end or effectively control the Hostile-Aggressive Parenting. It is important that both parties be ordered to participate in any program or process so as not label one parent as all “bad” and the other parent as all “good.” The process of dealing with Hostile-Aggressive Parenting should equally involve BOTH parents as it is a matter of education which ultimately will benefit both parties and any child of the relationship.

Ordering the non-cooperative parent or HAP parent to attend a family group conferencing session and providing the authority for the family group to provide recommendations to the court can be very effective and powerful tool to eliminate litigation.

First stage interim court Order to implement provisions below (if required)

The court should provide a court order ordering the following to be implemented and completed within 90-120 days.

a) Have the family support group meet and submit recommendations (optional)

To provide valuable input from the family, a family group conference should be organized with the family providing its recommendations to the court to resolve the conflict. The concept of family group conferencing is somewhat new and its use will depend on the availability of trained facilitators in the area and the ability of the parents to gather a group of family members and willing supporters. Input regarding the child's wishes and preferences should be provided by the child to the family group at the conference.

b) Immediate adjustment of parenting schedules to minimize damage to child caused by Hostile-Aggressive Parenting

To prevent any further chance of the child being emotionally damaged by the hostile-aggressive parent, the parenting schedules should be modified to promote greater influence of involvement of the non hostile-aggressive parent in the child's life and lesser influence of the HAP parent. If one of the parents can put forth reasonable arguments to show that this adjustment of the parenting times may be of benefit to the child, then the court should approve such a schedule as an interim measure.

c) Review of parenting history and parenting capabilities

Before the court gets involved in making any decisions relating to the most effective steps to eliminate problems between parents caused by Hostile-Aggressive Parenting behaviour, it is important that a thorough review of the parent's parenting patterns as part of a formal family evaluation process be undertaken. This evaluation process should include an analysis of the parent's past behaviour as it relates to the best interest of children and the rights of children in order to determine the suitability and capability of both parents to parent their own child.

d) Submission of parenting plans by parents

During the time that a formal assessment is being undertaken, both parents should prepare a comprehensive parenting plan which they feel is most suitable for the child. Each parent's parenting plan will be reviewed as part of the assessment process for the purpose of determining which parenting plan is best for the child. Parents should be encouraged to obtain help from competent third parties to complete their parenting plans. Some of this help could come from attending parenting education courses.

e) Appointment of a neutral third party to assist the family and monitor their ongoing progress and report to the court.

The court should order the involvement of third parties (family coordinator, parent referee, etc.) to be part of a two person monitoring team. It will be the job of this team to help deal with any problems and to provide solutions to the parents to resolve any problems encountered. It will also be the responsibility of this family support team to report to the court any behaviour considered relevant to the best interest of the child. Persons on this team can also be given the responsibility of reviewing the past history of the parents as outlined in (b) as well as all mitigating factors relating to children.

At least one person of the monitoring team should be knowledgeable about the identifying signs of Hostile-Aggressive Parenting behaviour as well as Parental Alienation and Parental Alienation Syndrome.

f) Parent education

Any parent who has engaged in Hostile-Aggressive Parenting behaviour should be ordered by the court to attend at least one course specifically about teaching parents how to parent cooperatively and how to best understand what is in the best interest of their children. It is recommended that both parents attend such education so that even the parent who may not be considered as HAP, will be familiar with all aspects of good parenting. Having both parents attend also removes the stigma of one parent being considered the “bad” parent.

g) Professional Counselling or anger management counselling(* Optional)

Parents should be ordered to obtain professional help to deal with their behaviour problem when reasonable evidence would suggest that a parent may be exhibiting behaviour patterns that would be considered in the “severe” category of Hostile Aggressive Parenting.

In the event that one or both parents behaviour involved intense anger, violence or unacceptable levels of abuse, then the parents responsible for this more serious form of abuse should be required to attend and complete anger management courses.

h) Evaluation of parenting plans

The parenting plans submitted by the parents should be reviewed by independent third party persons or agencies, having the specific training to properly review and evaluate such documents. Based on a review of all the factors relating to the best interest of the child this evaluation should clearly state which of the two parenting plans best meets the best interest of the child. Reasons for determination must also be clearly provided for the court and the parties to review. The purpose is to ensure that where more than one parenting plan has been made available, that only the one that best satisfies the criteria considered relevant to the best interest of the child be used.

Once the court has ordered the above components, in the vast majority of cases, the hostile-aggressive parent will modify their parenting behaviour in a positive direction. Early and effective intervention by the court could eliminate further emotional damage to the child and motivate the hostile aggressive parent to focus on positive parenting skills.

STEP THREE

Implement second stage interim court order (90-120 days)

When the components (a) to (g) of Step Two have been completed, the next step will be to have the parties come back to court to update the court on all of the requirements that were set down in step one. The court will now have reasonable evidence before it so that a realistic and effective court Order can be crafted. There is a good possibility by this time that the Hostile-Aggressive Parent has curtailed much of their destructive behaviour as they now are conscience of the fact that a continuation of their Hostile-Aggressive Parenting behaviour will likely result in sanctions against them by the court. Again, many of the hostile parents will be willing to settle at this point with only the very extreme and most contested cases left unresolved.

At this time, should a voluntary consent agreement be reached between the parties, then the Court should order that the one parenting plan which has was previously identified as being most child focussed become the current parenting arrangement ordered by the court. Ideally, the most suitable parenting plan should include an interim joint custody arrangement and meet all of the minimum criteria for the best interest of the child.

STEP FOUR

Third stage final court order

After the interim period has expired as stated in the court Order from step three, the matter will be brought back to court for a final determination of parenting arrangements. A second review of the family's compliance to the previous court Order will be made by the third party team and a final report with recommendations will be submitted to the court. This may also include a revised parenting plan which may address any others issues not previously identified at Step Two of the process.

In most cases, the final court order will be just a formality with the court being asked to endorse a final consent order based on the most current recommendations of the family's monitoring team. Quite often this can be dealt with by the parent's solicitors or agents without the parents even having to attend court in person. In only a few rare situations will the court be required to significantly change any of the provisions of the previous court order and this will be in cases where the hostile-aggressive parent continues to disobey the court and to continue with their pattern of abuse. Those parents who demonstrate this level of defiance most likely have deep-seated emotional or mental problems which may make them unsuitable as primary caregiver to the child. At this point it may be necessary for the court to impose sanctions on the hostile-aggressive parent which may even include awarding sole custody to the friendly parent or giving the friendly parent enough control over the child's environment so as to lesson the impact of the hostile-aggressive parent's behaviours on the child. Should matters reach this stage, however, the court will have very reliable evidence before it, including recommendations which will make the court's final order a rather simple matter.

Collaborative Community-Based Support Strategies

Hostile-aggressive parents generally try to keep their pattern of behaviour from being noticed by friends and others in the community. Most of the time they know that what they are doing to their children is wrong and do not want to be embarrassed for what they know most people in the

community would consider to be bad behaviour. These HAP parents continuously hide the truth behind a wall of deception and over a period of time become quite skilled at deceiving others. Often HAP parents may threaten and intimidate children to remain silent about abuse, causing children to be terrified of saying anything about their abusive parent's behaviour.

Members of the community can play a vital role in eliminating the harm done by hostile-aggressive parents. By learning to identify the presence of HAP and refusing to participate in a hostile-aggressive parent's campaign of abuse against a child, they are helping to protect that child and helping to make the community a better place for all to live.

Schools, child care agencies and their workers

Schools and child care agencies are in the front line when it comes to dealing with the problems associated with families in conflict as a result of separation and divorce. Many teachers and school officials will undoubtedly have to deal with children from broken homes where parental conflict is high. Through their extensive day-to-day involvement with children, teachers and early childhood educators may often be in a position where they are exposed to the behaviour of hostile-aggressive parents or may observe the effects of HAP with children they teach or care for.

Quite often, HAP parents will attempt to drag the school into the conflict and will try to get the school to take sides against the wishes and preferences of the child. At any time, should a parent request school officials to take an action that would appear to contradict a child's reasonable wishes and preferences, the school should become highly suspicious of this request. Children affected by HAP should perceive the school as a safe haven for them where they are free from parents harassing or intimidating them while on school property. If a child indicates that they do not feel comfortable with a particular parent coming to the school and there would appear to be reasonable reason for this, then school officials should respect the child's wishes by keeping that parent from coming on school property.

Schools and day care facilities need to have appropriate policies regarding children who are being exposed to abuse by a HAP parent. Schools should also develop protocols when abuse by an HAP parent is suspected.

Some of the things that schools and child care agencies and their workers can do to help protect children are as follows:

- a. Ensure that all workers working with children are educated about Hostile-Aggressive parenting and its solutions as part of their training.
- b. Before accepting children into a child daycare facility, providers should ideally meet both parents before agreeing to provide day care services or at the very least provide both parents the equal opportunity to meet with providers. Make parents aware right up front that there will be no discrimination against either parent.
- c. At all times, schools and day care facilities should provide both parents with the same level of service, courtesy and access to information unless a clear court Order indicates otherwise. Schools especially, should be wary of discriminating against parents as this may violate constitutional laws and result in an expensive and messy lawsuit. Schools and daycare

facilities must send a clear message to those children affected by separation and divorce that schools and daycare facilities are a safe place for children and that Hostile-Aggressive Parenting behaviour will not be tolerated.

- d. School officials should be willing to speak to the child and to be aware of the child's wishes and preferences if requested to do so. Quite often, children will report abuse to teachers they trust before they will report it to strangers such as child welfare protection workers. Again, school officials must consider the possibility of parental coaching of young children and interview children outside the presence of either of the parents. Children who have not been coached should be able to clearly articulate their wishes and preferences and provide clear reasons to support their wishes.
- e. Never interfere with one parent's access to services based on the word of only one parent. Should one parent try to interfere with the child's relationship with another parent or with one parent's relationship with the school or day care facility or any worker, then insist that the parent present a court order requires the school or day care facility to comply with these demands or at the very least, provide reasonable third party information, in writing, to support the parent's claims. Claims by HAP parents often begin to fall apart when they are asked for credible evidence to support their claims.
- f. In all cases where parents are requesting school officials to take some form of action which they claim is to protect the child, then some sort of evidence, in writing, should be provided to school officials to support a parent's requests. If a parent's complaints appear to be valid, then that parent should have no problem in obtaining a court Order in a reasonable period of time. Refuse to become a collaborator to child abuse by not being a part of a parent's campaign to abuse the child and/or the other parent unless the parent can provide you with evidence, in writing, to support their allegations.
- g. Studies show that the involvement of non-custodial parents in their child's education can have a positive impact on the child's learning experience at the school so parental involvement at school should be encouraged whenever possible. The best interest of the child must take president over the wishes of a hostile-aggressive parent who in most cases want to keep the other parent from involving themselves with the child's school.
- h. At the first sign of conflict between parents, insist that the parties use a neutral third party for communication. Insist that parents not involve teachers or daycare providers in their personal issues and instead have parents use a neutral third party appointed to deal with issues between parents. The third party can then communicate with school or daycare facility regarding any issues which may affect workers with these agencies. Should a parent not be willing to have a third party get involved then suspect that parent's motives. HAP parents generally want to have full control of the situation and generally do not want neutral third parties helping in the conflict.
- i. Have those working with the children maintain proper records and logs whenever hostile-aggressive parenting is observed or if the child exhibits signs that could indicate abuse. Such signs may be the child's sadness about not seeing one parent or about reporting abuse

by a hostile parent. Remember, Hostile-Aggressive Parenting is child abuse and will likely affect the child in some manner at school.

- j. Be ready and willing to report Hostile-Aggressive Parenting and to provide reliable testimony to the court if be requested by the parents. Exposing HAP parents and supporting children who are victims of the actions of HAP parents is one of the best ways to control and eliminate this serious form of child abuse.

Extended family, friends & community

Unfortunately, too often, friends and family tend to support those who are part of their family or group of friends without questioning how their support for the parent they know may be affecting the child. This approach can often be wrong and have devastating negative effect on a child. Many times, family members end up supporting the HAP parent without knowing it.

Friends, family and neighbours should be cautious in believing negative comments from one parent about the other, even if it is their own family member who is giving them information. People in the community whose support is being sought by a parent should take the time to make themselves of the issues before providing their blind support. They should be especially cautious when it would appear that their support is sought to support what are considered as Hostile-Aggressive Parenting behaviours by one of the parents such as trying to restrict the child's access to the other parent. If it would appear that any parent is exhibiting any of the HAP behaviours listed in this document, then extreme caution must be exercised in supporting this parent. People in the community must do what is right for the child and to be careful not to cause further harm to the child by providing support to the HAP parent.

When extended family members and other people in a community refuse to support parents who abuse their children through HAP behaviours, then those parents harming their child by HAP will more than likely change the way they parent their children. The concept that, "it takes a village to raise a child" is still a concept that has worked for many generations in the past and still works today. A community that stands united against Hostile-Aggressive Parenting, will help to send a strong message to parents who may be harming their children that this is not acceptable behaviour. Only when the community stands up can we hope to eliminate this most serious form of child abuse.

Health care professionals

Health care professionals in the community such as doctors and nurses should be very careful that they do get themselves involved in the hostilities in a manner that hurts the child. Hostile-aggressive parents will often present themselves quite well to professionals such as doctors, nurses, police officers, etc. and are often masters of deception. HAP parents will often feed misleading and one-sided information to health care professionals for the purpose of extracting opinion or recommendation letters from these professionals which favour the HAP parent's position in court. Often the HAP parent will use these letters to block the other parent's access time with the child or use the letters in court against the other parent at some time in the future. In most cases, however, when professionals do look into matters more closely and seek information from the other side

before writing such letters, they find that they have been duped by the HAP parent. Under such circumstances, many professionals can find themselves the subject of a disciplinary hearing or civil lawsuit. Any professional who is requested by a parent to support any action which would appear to be a hostile-aggressive action or a violation of the child's rights, should carefully and fully review the circumstances before taking action for one parent. Taking the time to speak to the other parent is usually one of the best things to do to protect both the professional and the child who may be under the control of a HAP parent.

Police and child welfare protection workers

Law enforcement and child welfare protection agencies in the community must also be very careful that they do not involve themselves in a manner that ends up hurting the child and benefiting the HAP parent. Failure to identify and effectively deal with an HAP parent can have a devastating effect on the child.

HAP parents will often attempt to use the police or child welfare protection agencies as a tool in their campaign to destroy their child's relationship with the other parent. The most common thing that an HAP parent will do to involve the police or child welfare protection agencies will be to allege that the other parent has assaulted, stalked or threatened them or has physically or sexually assaulted the child. The HAP parent tries to get police to lay charges as once charges are laid, then the court or child welfare protection workers will likely prevent the other parent from having contact with the child. Even if the parent is found innocent, the effect that the HAP parent wanted would have been achieved. HAP parents are masterminds of deception and can often spin a good story when it comes to making false allegations against their former partner. The problem is that with the Zero Tolerance policies in many areas, the false allegations often achieve the desired result of interfering with the child's relationship with the other parent for a long period of time.

Police and child welfare protection agencies must be very diligent in investigating such allegations and to see if the behaviours of the accuser categorize them as an HAP parent, then police should be very careful to get involved unless there is clear and convincing evidence that would show that the allegations are legitimate. Police and child welfare protection agencies should carefully interview all collateral witnesses and should never lay charges or take a child away from one of the parents based on just the allegations of the accuser. Allegations must be supported by reasonable collateral evidence.

Failure by authorities to properly investigate allegations made by HAP parents will ultimately result in the loss of respect of the authorities by people in the community. Children who have had their relationship damaged by the HAP parent with the help of local authorities will likely grow up with a strong dislike of local authorities. This is not good for these agencies which rely on support from the community. Agencies should encourage the involvement of other family members using "Family Group Conferencing" strategies before using the criminal justice system to intervene in these types of family matters when the risk to a child may be small, however, where serious risk to a child may be a potential possibility, or where a child is expressing fear and anxiety of the HAP parent, authorities must move quickly to remove the child for an interim period of time from the care and control of the HAP parent.

Sanctions for Hostile-Aggressive Parenting

Generally, it is recommended that the first level of such sanctions be an adjustment of the child's parenting time to lessen the amount of time the child is being exposed to the behaviour of the parent who has been identified as being hostile-aggressive. Being exposed to the influence of a hostile-aggressive parent is not healthy for the child and so the child's exposure to this negative influence must be lessened whenever circumstances permit. Lessening the amount of time that the child spends with the hostile-aggressive parent will also provide relief to the child and reassurance that the hostile-aggressive parent's behaviour is wrong and will not be tolerated by others, especially the authorities.

Seldom will any parent want to have their parenting time significantly reduced, especially if it is to be less than the other parent's time. Often, when faced with the choice of either improving their parenting behaviours or losing time, even the most hostile of parents will modify their behaviour rather than risk losing some of their parenting time with the child. Adjusting parenting time is a powerful motivator to better parenting and must be used liberally where the other parent is capable of caring for the child a greater period of the time.

Where parents live close enough to each other to accommodate the child at the same school, parenting time should be moved to a 50% equal time share providing the HAP parent is not exhibiting too many of the behaviours considered in the "severe" category in which case, the HAP parent's time may have to be reduced to less than 50%. Equal parenting time maintains equality and fairness between parents and for the child which will help to reduce conflict and also give the child a more time away from the HAP parent.

If simply reducing time with the hostile-aggressive parent does not serve to improve the situation then the hostile parent should be ordered to undergo psychological testing, cooperative parenting courses and if anger is a problem, anger management courses. Ordering the parent to provide community work or to make a financial contribution to a worthy cause in the community can also serve as an effective sanction as well as a positive motivator to change their behaviour.

If the simple sanctions listed above do not serve to bring about more reasonable parenting attitude/behaviours, then mental health problems should be suspected and the hostile-aggressive parent's time with the child further reduced as part of a strategy to protect the child from further emotional harm. An analysis of the HAP behaviours listed in this document as well as the additional risk indicators should give some guidance as to parenting abilities of the parents. Parents who exhibit behaviours that fall into the category of "severe" may have mental health problems and should be diagnosed by a competent mental health professional.

Circumstances which warrant removal of the custodial rights (sole or joint custody) and responsibilities of the primary guardianship of a Hostile-Aggressive Parent.

The rights of the child to have the equal protection and enjoyment of both parents must be regarded as one of the fundamental rights of the child. Parental rights and responsibilities automatically flow when the child's rights are protected by the parents. Treating a child's care and protection by both of his/her parents as a fundamental right requires the presumption of joint legal custody by both parents in reasonable situations. The right of a child to be raised and protected by two parents is fundamental and falls within the security interest of the child and under the equal protection of the law as defined under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

However, parental rights are neither absolute nor are they unlimited. Parental rights are not absolute in a sense in that they may be overridden by other considerations such as the presence of HAP behaviours shown to be harmful to the child. In a sense, parental rights are fiduciary rights in that the parent must exercise their parental rights and responsibilities in the best interest of the child. Case Law from the Supreme Court of Canada reinforces the most basic concept that parents must act in a manner consistent with their child's best interest and rights or potentially lose their custodial and parenting rights once they have passed over the threshold of what would separate a "fit" parent from an "unfit" parent.

In some cases, the parental rights and responsibilities of an HAP parent may have to be taken away completely and given conditionally on an interim or permanent basis to the parent who is identified as being the friendly or non HAP parent. The rights and responsibilities of the HAP parent must be taken away in situations where clear and convincing evidence exists to suggest that continued sole or joint legal custody of the child by the HAP parent may be harmful to the child or where the HAP parent is not fulfilling their fiduciary responsibility to parent the child in a manner that is consistent to the child's best interest. In situations where HAP is a serious problem between parents, it is important that the child be placed in an environment where the child is as free from the influence of HAP parenting as much as possible. Under such circumstances, the HAP parent would be considered as being an unfit parent and unable to carry out his/her fiduciary responsibilities to the child. In some cases where both parents may be considered as being unfit, custody of the child may have to be taken from both parents and given to other family members or to a child protection agency should extended family members not be able to provide interim care for the child.

The sole custodial rights and responsibilities of a parent or the primary guardianship of a parent should be removed on a conditional and limited basis when reasonable and probable evidence would suggest any of the following:

- **The HAP parent has coached, attempted to coach or has used threats, intimidation or terror to make the child to provide false or misleading information to authorities.**
- **The HAP parent has physically harmed the child or has failed to take adequate steps to protect the child from being physically abused by others while under his/her care.**
- **The HAP parent has brazenly denied the other parent's access to the child in violation to a valid court Order or signed agreement.**
- **The HAP parent has threatened the child with the use of physical force beyond that considered reasonable as parental discipline.**

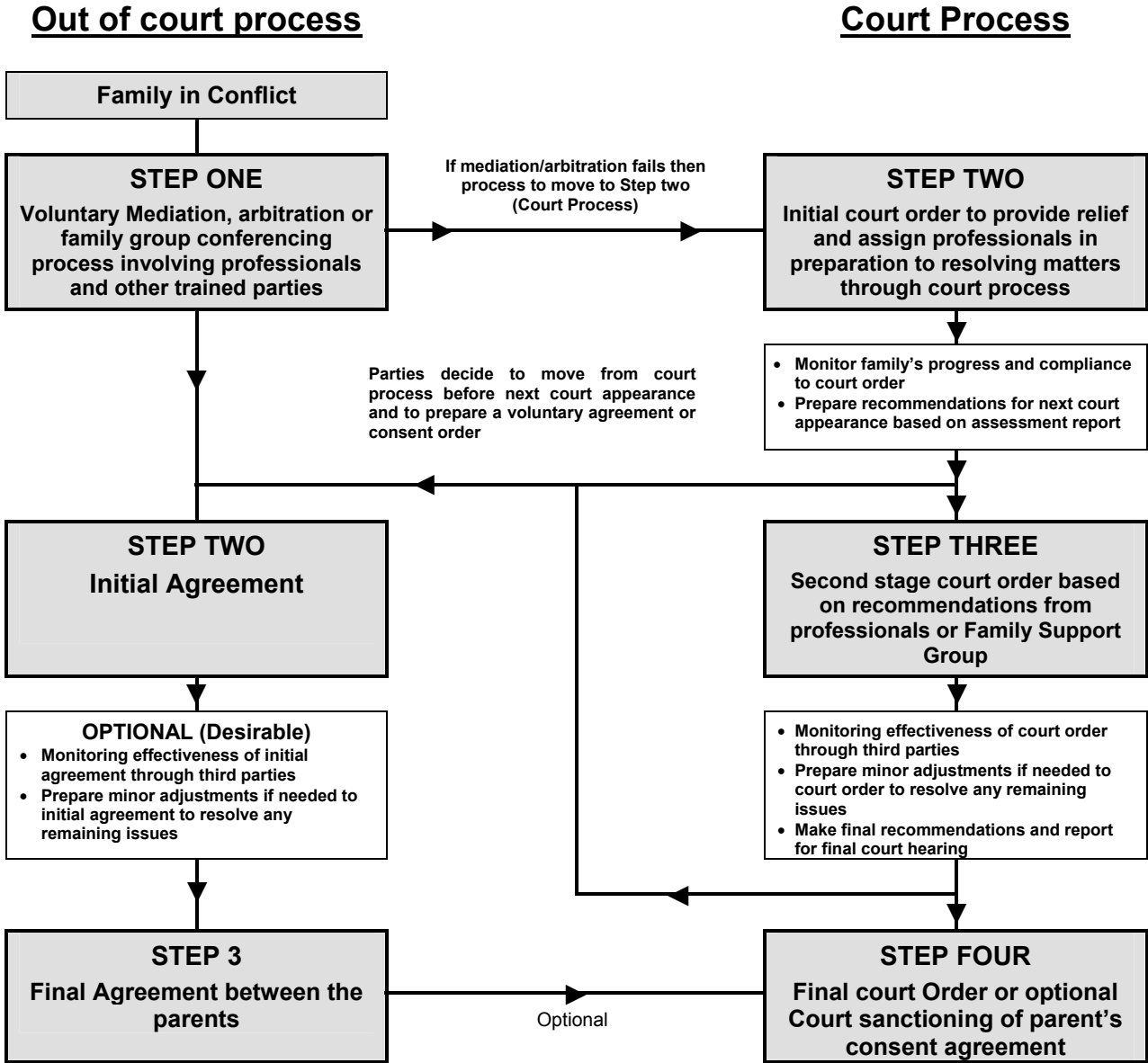
- **The HAP parent has threatened or is planning to kidnap or to take the child out of the country, province or state against the reasonable wishes of the other parent or against the reasonable wishes of the child.**
- **Reasonable evidence would indicate that the HAP parent may be preparing to relocate the child without the consent of the other parent and without evaluating all of the factors that would be considered in the best interest of the child under any of the following situations:**
 - a) **Relocation of the child would require the parents to move legal matters to a new court jurisdiction.**
 - b) **Relocation of the child would required that the child attend school in another school district.**
 - c) **Relocation of the child would require that the parents drive more than an additional 30 minutes combined by automobile in order to physically exchange the child between one residence and the other.**
- **The child is showing the early signs of parental alienation syndrome.**
- **The child has inflicting injuries upon himself/herself or has attempted injury to himself/herself and the influence of the HAP parents is suspected to be the cause of the child's self destructive behaviour.**
- **The child is expressing a fear for his/her physical or emotional safety while in the care of the HAP parent.**
- **The HAP parent has exposed the child to dangerous or highly undesirable environment such as drugs, alcohol, criminal activity or domestic violence in the home and the potential exists for this environment to continue.**
- **The child is expressing a strong desire to not live under the primary control of a parent and where reasonable evidence would suggest that the parent who the child does not want to live under the control of is engaging in HAP behaviours and/or other poor parenting practices and other forms of child maltreatment.**
- **The child is expressing a strong desire to live with the parent considered to be the non HAP parent and current reasonable evidence would support this to be in the child's best interest.**

The friendlier and more reasonable parent, of course, would be expected to adequately provide for all of the child's emotional and physical needs while in his/her care. Placing a child in the care of the friendlier parent gives the child a needed break from the emotional abuse of the HAP parent and helps to build the child's confidence in the justice system by allowing the child to see that the system will help him/her and that the justice system will do what is truly in the best interest of the child and not the HAP parent.

In all cases, however, sanctions against the HAP parent, based on past behaviour, should be removed once the HAP parent has been able to successfully demonstrate his/her willingness and ability to parent the child in a normal, healthy and positive manner. Joint legal custody should be

restored as soon as possible after the HAP parent is no longer considered a source of harm to the child through HAP behaviour.

Process of effectively dealing with family conflict where Hostile-Aggressive Parenting is a factor



Note:
The process outlined here allows the parties in conflict to leave the court process at any time and enter into a voluntary consent agreement. Often, when disputing parties know that the outcome of the court process is very predictable and absolutely fair in every case, parties will move towards a voluntary process sooner, rather than spend more money and time through the adversarial court process.

PART 7

CONCLUSION

The simple and effective approach to correct Hostile-Aggressive Parenting can be highly effective in the vast majority of cases. The advantages of the approach outlined in this article can be summarized as follows:

- The approach is simple and the steps to implement the process are consistent in every case.
- The results are highly predictable.
- Overall results provide maximum recognition and support to the criteria considered relevant to the best interest of children.
- Cost effective – minimal use of courts, legal and health care systems. Much of the implementation and monitoring of the system can be done by lower paid trained specialists from the community, rather than highly paid professionals.
- Fairness and equality is ensured at all steps of the process.
- Maximum balance and consideration to parental rights, children’s rights and all elements of law and the principles of fundamental justice.
- Sound and time tested principles of the use of “consequences” for unacceptable behaviour are applied. Parties who behave in a hostile manner will be penalized and those who foster cooperative behaviour, rewarded. Maximum use of positive motivators is promoted throughout the process to foster cooperative parenting.
- The community can contribute in a very meaningful way and provide an effective support mechanism to help protect a child from Hostile-Aggressive Parenting.

The importance of early intervention in dealing with Hostile-Aggressive Parenting cannot be emphasized enough. Not to do so is likely to result in a worsening of the conditions that will predictably cause significant long term psychiatric disturbances in the child affected, with the possibility that parental alienation will take hold of the child.

In most cases it is recommended that both parents have the opportunity of sharing in the parenting of their children on an equal and consistent basis with an outside, neutral party monitoring the parents during an adjustment period. It is only when one parent cannot, or will not, inhibit his/her Hostile-Aggressive Parenting that custodial transfer to the more friendly parent should be implemented. Early intervention coupled with the support of the community can be instrumental in preventing progressively more pathological levels of HAP and even greater levels of emotional and behavioural problems in the children. Only in the most severe of cases should sole custody ever have to be awarded to one parent.

The presence and severity of Hostile-Aggressive Parenting (HAP) is only one of the factors in determining what is in the best interest of the child, but it must be noted that it is one of more significant factors to be taken into consideration. While other factors must also be considered, effectively dealing with Hostile-Aggressive Parenting is crucial if one is to make proper

recommendations concerning the parenting arrangements in families where this very serious form of child abuse and maltreatment is a factor.

Notes

- ¹ Christofferson, An Investigation of fathers with 3- 5- Year old children, Chart 4, "Psychosomatic Symptoms and Select Background Situations of the Parents."
- ² Christofferson, op. cit
- ³ Clarke-Stewart, op. cit
- ⁴ Glynnis Walker, *Solomon's Children* (N.Y: Arbor House, 1986), pp. 27, 84-85
- ⁵ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, Third National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect: Final Report Appendices (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Center of Child Abuse and Neglect, 1997), pp. A-63--A-64. Table A-11B, "Parent Structure by Categories of Maltreatment and Severity for Children Countable Under the Harm Standard." The estimated total for Mother Only Household is 264.1 children killed. For Fathers Only Household the estimated total is 10.8.
- ⁶ Gardner, Richard A., (1986), *Child Custody Litigation: A Guide for Parents and Mental Health Professionals*. Cresskill, New Jersey: Creative Therapeutics
- ⁷ K. Alison Clark-Stewart and Craig Hayward, "Advantages of Father Custody and contact for the Psychological Well-Being of School-Age Children," *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, Vol. 17, No. 2, April-June 1996, pp 239-270
- ⁸ [Glynnis Walker: *Solomon's Children - Exploding the Myths of Divorce*, New York: Arbor House, 1986.
- ⁹ Gene Colman B.A., L.L.B., Gender Bias: Where do we stand?
- ¹⁰ Albiston, C.R., Maccoby, E. E., & Mnookin, R.R. (1990). Does joint custody matter?
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- ¹¹ Wikipedia Internet Encyclopedia
- ¹² Statistics Canada - National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth – Cycle 2
- ¹³ Fauber et al., 1990