

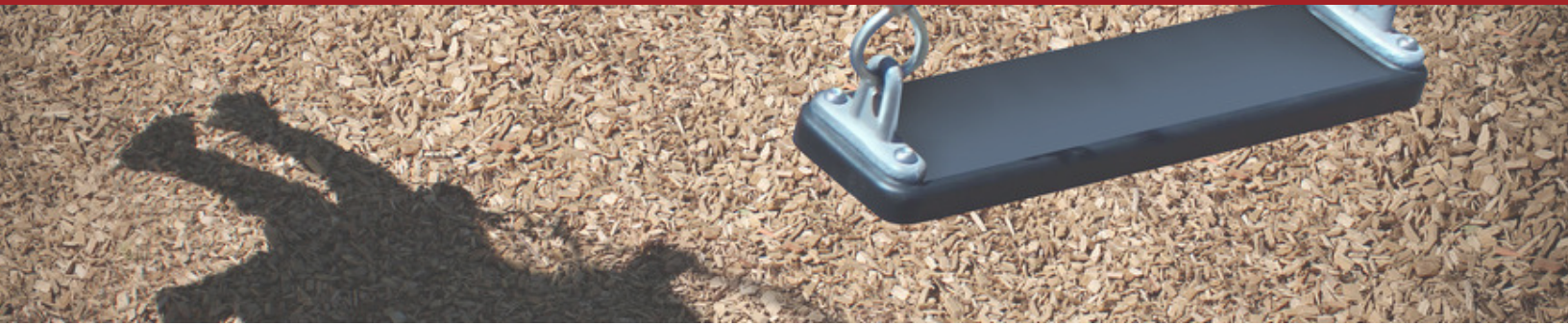


CHILD ABDUCTION T.I.P.S. NEWSLETTER

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Maintaining Multidisciplinary and International Outreach in the Virtual World

by Bridget Billetter

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International parental child abduction cases can be the most diplomatically and legally complicated cases to handle. The Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction is an international treaty between the United States and over 80 other countries, designed to ensure the prompt return of parentally abducted children to their home country. California is unique in that prosecutorial agencies are tasked with implementing the Hague Convention in our state.

An important component of this international work has always been multidisciplinary outreach with our counterparts in other countries and Washington D.C. Throughout the years, the U.S. State Department's International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) has coordinated meetings between local agency representatives and foreign professionals to discuss California's implementation of the Hague treaty. Similarly, the Attorney General's office has hosted meetings between local District Attorney's offices and representatives from the State Department's Office of Children's Issues. These meetings provide invaluable networking opportunities for everyone involved. Unfortunately, the worldwide pandemic limited the ability for in-person travel and planned IVLP and State Department visits were cancelled. However, as with many of our activities in the "new normal," these opportunities eventually resumes in a virtual format.

In August, an IVLP delegation from Brazil participated in three virtual meetings with California representatives. The Brazilian delegation included five judges, one deputy attorney general, a minister of the superior court, and a case officer from the Brazilian Central Authority—all of whom had experience with and interest in international abduction cases. Over the course of three meetings, they met with representatives from the Attorney General's Child Abduction Unit, the Attorney General's Missing and Unidentified Person unit, the Sacramento, San Francisco, and San Diego District Attorney's offices, the Governor's Office of Emergency Services, and the Center for Innovation and Resources. These meetings provided an opportunity to highlight California's unique system for handling international parental abduction cases, as well as discuss the mutual issues and challenges experienced in both countries.

In November, the Attorney General's office hosted a virtual meeting between representatives of the State Department's Office of Children's Issues and southern California District Attorney Child Abduction Units. The discussion focused primarily on the new pandemic-related logistics in handling international cases, but also allowed significant time for open-ended questions and answers about case-specific or general concerns.

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Despite the drawbacks of the virtual format, the hope is that these important meetings can continue, at least until everyone is able to travel and meet in-person again. Handling international abduction cases requires cooperation and collaboration. This type of networking whether virtually or in-person, is a huge benefit for all those involved.

If You Are a Deputy District Attorney, DA Criminal Investigator, or Peace Officer This Article is For You

By Heidi Brennan

Deputy District Attorney, Sacramento Co. District Attorney's Office

The best things in life are free...This is true for law enforcement officers and Deputy District Attorneys working in the child abduction unit if they have the 2019 Attorney General Child Abduction Reference Manual. The manual is full of helpful information, quick start guides, sample pleadings, motions, orders, checklists and more.

I have worked in the Sacramento DA Child Abduction Unit (CAU) since 2016 and have many binders from many trainings, but nothing compares to the AG manual. The online version has a quick click table of contents on the left upper corner to expedite finding your topic section. Additionally, you can hit the Ctrl and F buttons simultaneously and then type in any word(s) to quickly find what you are researching. The guide covers in-state, out-of-state, and international child abductions and discusses DA responsibilities as well as investigative techniques for parental abduction cases. It has sections on specific issues related to abduction cases like confidential records, missing persons reports, and claim reimbursements.

The best part about the online manual is that if you open the document with Adobe Acrobat Reader you can click on a paperclip on the left of the screen then you will see a list of attachments. The attachments are referenced in the various subjects throughout the manual. For instance when discussing what is required to file a Hague petition the manual says, "see Attachments 5-4.a, 5-4.b, and 5-4.c for samples." This means you do not have to reinvent the wheel and can find all kinds of sample legal and non-legal documents to use as templates in your cases.

The manual is designed to assist in investigating and handling child abduction cases involving locating, serving, and recovering children. It also discusses the prosecution of criminal charges (e.g., Penal Code 278.5). The AG manual is only for law enforcement and can be obtained from the CDAA website by the DA Child Abduction Unit in your county.

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