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## **Parental Alienation: A Serious and Growing Problem in Family Law Cases**

Some of the issues facing parents involved in a divorce or paternity action involving child custody are not specific to New Mexico, but occur all over the United States. One such issue, which has become increasingly recognized by family law courts during the last 20 years, is the concept of parental alienation.

Parental alienation is generally discussed in the context of a contested custody dispute, although elements of parental alienation can certainly be found in intact families. When the research about parental alienation first began being published, it focused on situations in which one parent sought to alienate the child from the other parent by doing things like preventing visitation between the child and the other parent and bad-mouthing the other parent to the child. Frequently, one parent would go so far as making false allegations in court to prevent the other parent from seeing the child.

The current research has revised the concept of parental alienation to extend beyond just one parent and to examine how the actions of both parents, and sometimes extended family, can work to alienate a child from a parent. Whatever the cause, parental alienation is a serious situation and if it goes on long enough, it can result in a parent-child relationship that is irretrievably broken.

Psychological therapy or counseling is often recommended for all of the parties involved in a parental alienation situation. If a party to custody action believes that alienation is an issue, they will need to bring that to the court's attention as soon as possible so that the court can order the necessary therapy and start putting in other safeguards to stop the breakdown of the parent-child relationship.

Parental alienation is taken very seriously by the New Mexico courts. The court above all is charged with promoting the **best interests of the child**. Anything that interferes with this goal which includes interference with the parent-child relationship is dealt with very seriously. An experienced **divorce and family law attorney** is essential to getting these issues heard and addressed by the court before it is too late save the parent child relationship.

Main Office:  
400 Gold Ave. SW  
Suite 500  
Albuquerque, NM 87102  
(505) 242-5958

<http://www.albuquerquedivorcelawyerblog.com/>