

Beware, Holiday Break Sees Higher Rates of Parental Child Abductions

Victims of this type of family abduction are usually under the age of 6 and the parents are often in a custody dispute.

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-- December 20, 17 - For some, the holidays are a warm and happy time where families get together to share the season. The much-anticipated winter break provides kids get a breather from school, allowing them to relax and enjoy some well-deserved freedom and fun. Yet parents need to be aware that these times of year are also when kids are the most at risk of parental abduction.



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*Executive Director - IPAA
Dawn Willson*

Dawn Willson, the Founder and Director of the [International Parental Abduction Association \(IPAA\)](#), says, “Parental abductions could be four times higher than authorities admit”. Willson goes on to say, “I expect to be flooded with calls in January when many parents realize their kids are not returning at all,” unfortunately she says they call her when it’s too late.

“Usually, I get the cases when the parents have suffered various dead ends, have spent thousands of dollars on attorneys, and the empty promises of mercenaries convincing parents they can “re-abduct” the child from a foreign country, only to find out it was “too difficult” and the money is gone. “They all want the, “Not Without My Daughter” scenario, but are often let down.”

Seasonal holidays such as winter break have consistently shown an [increase in child abduction rates](#). School calendar holidays are often a time when non-custodial parents have increased access to their children. Out of revenge, resentment or simply because they feel they are above the law, the child is not returned.

Although parents cite it as one of their biggest fears, evidence shows that stranger abductions are extremely rare. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) 2016 report on missing children found that of the 20,500 children reported missing that year, only 1% of cases involved non-family abductions. “And those are just the ones that are reported missing,” says Willson, “There is a deep dark ugly secret of how an entire dysfunctional system has been the fist in the abuse of many children. The police turn parents away consistently when they want to report the abduction of their child, especially when they find out the kidnapper was a parent. That, in itself, is a crime,” says Willson.

She goes on to say, “Parents who are going through a breakup or custody battle should be aware of the increased risks, particularly if their (former) partner has ties to another country. Think carefully before allowing your children to travel abroad and be vigilant of any suspicious behavior. Get your

paperwork in place for proper enforcement.”

Victims of this type of family abduction are usually under the age of 6 and the parents are often in a custody dispute over the child. This crime affects over 203,000 children every year in the U.S., according to NCMEC, but Ms. Willson insists the data is dirty and the numbers are much higher.

The International Parental Abduction Association (IPAA) is the leading organization and authority, in the U.S., on international parental child abduction. IPAA is based in the U.S. and aids parents, both American and foreign through the legal and governmental maze of getting an abducted child returned. IPAA provides consultation, expertise, testimony, research and advocacy, in the form of practical, impartial advice, and information to support parents, family members, and guardians who have had their child abducted. Dawn Willson, [a former victim of parental abduction](#), is an expert and Director of IPAA <http://www.internationalparentalabduction.org> and has been returning children to parents since 2008. See: <https://www.facebook.com/internationalparentalabduction/>

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