

Parental Alienation and Misinformation Proliferation

Correction(s) for this article

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Abstract

Since parental alienation syndrome (PAS) was identified in the 1980's, there has been a remarkable amount of misinformation regarding both PAS and parental alienation (PA). These falsehoods were published in professional journals, presented at conferences, and distributed through internet websites and blogs. This article summarizes five examples of published misinformation regarding PAS/PA. Each case study includes: the false statements that were published in the medical, psychological, or legal professional literature; the names of the individuals who made the false statements; and the steps taken to refute the falsehoods and correct the record. The writers of the misinformation were from Sweden, Tunisia, Spain, and the United States, which illustrates the international scope of PAS/PA. In one example, the misinformation reached the U.S. House of Representatives and was almost included in a formal resolution adopted by that body. The article discusses various underlying causes of the high level of polarization in PAS/PA scholarship. The article also proposes steps that both mental health and legal writers can adopt to reduce the destructive polarization that has occurred. In general, however, clinicians, forensic practitioners, and legal professionals should remain vigilant when they read articles or listen to presentations about topics that might be considered controversial.