



THE CHILD'S RIGHT TO LOVE

This booklet is for people who
want to know more about:

- Understanding laws that apply to children and families
- Family Law in B.C.
- Parental Alienation
- Where to get help

Published by the
Canadian Grandparents
Rights Association

Founded in 1986 in Canada to help the children feel part of the family.

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This handbook explains the law in general and is not intended to provide you with legal advice regarding your particular legal issue. If you have a particular legal problem, you may need to consult with a lawyer.

Resources for legal advice are found at the back of this book.

This handbook is a partnership publication of the Canadian Grandparents Rights Association (CGRA), The People's Law School, and Pro Bono B.C.

Copies of this handbook are available from the Canadian Grandparents Rights Association, B.C. Branch: www.CanadianGrandparentsRightsAssociation.com

To view, download, or order this handbook, contact The People's Law School: 604.331.5400 or visit: www.publiclegaled.bc.ca.

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INTRODUCTION

WHO ARE WE?

This publication is produced for the Canadian Grandparents Rights Association to help families in distress. The Canadian Grandparents Rights Association (CGRA) was established in 1986 and incorporated as a B.C. Society and a Canada Corporation in 1992.

OUR PURPOSE

The purpose of the association is to promote, support and assist grandparents and their families in maintaining or re-establishing family ties and family stability, where the family has been disrupted, especially those ties between grandchildren and grandparents.

This publication, *The Child's Right to Love*, describes what the law says about the child's right to maintain a relationship with you. Your relationship does not end because the child's parents separate or divorce. In many cases, your relationship with the child will continue as before. This handbook describes how you can make legal arrangements to ensure that these rights are protected.

The divorce rate in Canada is high. Most couples sensibly sit down and make good arrangements for their children's futures. These children are able to maintain a close relationship with both parents.

However, because of divorce, separation, or a death in the family, many of our children and our elders are being denied the right to visit or have access. Where children are concerned, we must be ever vigilant. To sever a family connection, especially a warm loving one between grandchild and grandparent, is viewed by many as a form of child and elder abuse.

Since the 1980's we have read articles from professional psychiatrists and psychologists about parental alienation. This behaviour often occurs after a divorce in which the court gives custody to one parent. Often the non-custodial parent and that side of the family is denied access and their rights to maintain contact with the child are abused. The deliberate attempt by the custodial parent to alienate the child from the other parent is known as Parental Alienation. (See Chap. 3 Parental Alienation)

Where it is in the child's best interests, it is important for children to maintain their connections with grandparents, relatives, and others with whom they have a close relationship. Maintaining or re-establishing your relationship can be vital to the children's social, emotional, and intellectual development. Children need all the love and support they can get to grow up with a sense of their own worth.

This publication is a partnership publication of The People's Law School and the Canadian Grandparents Rights Association. We thank Pro Bono BC for checking the document for legal integrity.

CHAPTER 1 - HISTORY OF THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD

Former Minister of Justice Mark MacGuigan

When former Minister of Justice Mark MacGuigan introduced the words “best interests of the child” into the Divorce Act, and later, in the 1984 position document, *Divorce Law in Canada; Proposals for Change*, he stated: *“A child should have maximum access to both parents. Whatever the parent’s reasons for divorce, the child has an interest in maintaining a normal relationship with each parent... any animosity the parents may feel for each other should not be allowed to interfere with this interest... the court should consider the best interests of the child, particularly the child’s interest in having maximum access to both parents.”*

It is most unfortunate that successive Ministers of Justice ignored his words and that this failure has contributed to situations of future child abuse after divorce.

Special Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons

The Special Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons was appointed to examine and analyze issues relating to custody and access arrangements after separation and divorce. In particular, its role was to assess the need for a more child-centered approach to family law policies and practices that would emphasize joint parental responsibilities and child-focused parenting arrangements, based on children’s needs and best interests.

After 12 months of open meetings across Canada, the Joint Committee in 1998 presented the report, *For the Sake of the Children*, which included 48 recommendations to amend the Divorce Act. The Preamble recognized the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Joint Committee recognized that parent’s relationships with their children do not end upon separation or divorce. New legislation would contain the principle that divorced parents and their children are entitled to a close and continuous relationship with one another.

Other recommendations included:

- “shared parenting” was to be the cornerstone of the new Divorce Act
- children and parents are entitled to a close and continuous relationship
- grandparents and extended family members must be included
- Mediation rather than the courts is recommended

The terms custody and access would no longer be used in the Divorce Act. Canadians are still waiting for these amendments in a new Divorce Act.

The Divorce Act:

Section 16(8) of the present Divorce Act says that, in making any order about custody and access, the court shall consider only the best interests of the child. However, over the years, what has happened in practice has been in “the best interests of the custodial parent.”

CHAPTER 2 - UNDERSTANDING LAWS THAT APPLY TO CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Family Law in British Columbia

If a child's parents are separating or getting a divorce and need to resolve issues about the care of their children, then the federal Divorce Act and/or the provincial Family Relations Act are the laws that currently apply in British Columbia. (Please note that the Family Relations Act will soon be replaced by the Family Law Act).

If a non-parent, such as a relative of the child, wishes to make an application for custody, guardianship, and access, and the parents have not started proceedings under the Divorce Act or the Family Relations Act, then the Family Relations Act will apply.

Below we provide some information about each Act and what they say about custody, guardianship, and access. We then discuss different ways a non-parent might be able to obtain custody, guardianship, or access to a child.

The Divorce Act

If married parents are seeking a divorce and need to resolve custody of and access to their children, then the Divorce Act will generally apply and the parents will go to Supreme Court.

However, the married parents may choose to make an application under the Family Relations Act in the following situations:

- they do not wish to obtain an order for divorce;
- they have not been married or lived in British Columbia for at least one year; or
- they would rather go to Provincial Court instead of Supreme Court.



The parents can ask the court to decide the custody and access arrangements for the child or children of the marriage. Custody refers to who is responsible for the day-to-day care and upbringing of the child, and with whom the child lives. The court may order sole custody, joint custody, split custody, and shared custody. Access refers to the time that each parent has with the child, but is often used to describe the time between the child and the parent with whom the child does not primarily live. If the parents have started proceedings under the Divorce Act, a non-parent can apply to the Supreme Court for custody of the child or for access to the child. They will need to ask the court permission to join to the parents' proceedings.

If the parents have not started proceedings under the Divorce Act, the non-parent will need to make their application for custody, guardianship or access under the Family Relations Act. This application can be made in Provincial Court or Supreme Court.

The Family Relations Act

If a child's parents are unmarried, or have lived as a common law couple, then only the Family Relations Act (FRA) applies and they will need to make their application in Provincial Court. The parents can apply to the court for custody, guardianship and access and other orders relating to the child.

The FRA refers to being the guardian of the child's estate and being the guardian of the child's person. A guardian of the child's estate deals with the child's property for the child's benefit. The guardian of child's person cares for the child, and has the right to make decisions about the child's medical care, religious upbringing, and education. They also have the right to receive information about the child from doctors, teachers, and others.

A parent with sole guardianship of a child means that they are the only ones who have the authority to make the important decisions about the child's health, education, and care. A parent who is the sole guardian of the child also has sole custody of the child. Joint guardianship means that both parents have the right to be involved in making decisions about education, medical treatment, and religious instruction, etc.

Under the FRA, the court will generally make an order for custody, whether it is sole custody, joint custody, shared custody, or split custody, along with an order for guardianship and access.

A non-parent can also make an application under the FRA for custody, guardianship, and access to a child. If the parents have already started proceedings under the FRA, the non-parent will ask to be interveners in the parents' proceedings.

The Family Law Act

The new Family Law Act (FLA) will replace the Family Relations Act (FRA) in British Columbia. The FLA passed third reading and royal assent in November 2011 but will not be fully in force until late 2012 or early 2013. The FLA is very different from the FRA and there have been major changes to the laws relating to the care of children. Some of the changes include:

- The best interest of the child will now be the only consideration that will be taken into account when making decisions about children. There is a new list of factors that will be taken into account in determining what is in the best interests of a child.
 - When family violence is a factor, courts must apply a prescribed test to decide the impact of violence on the child and on the violent party's capacity to care for the child.
 - GUARDIANSHIP is used instead of custody. Parents may lose the status of being a GUARDIAN by agreement or by a court order. GUARDIANS have parental responsibilities and these may be allocated or shared by each GUARDIAN. The time that each GUARDIAN spends with a child is PARENTING TIME.
 - People who are not guardians have CONTACT with a child. CONTACT may be the result of a court order or agreement among child's guardians. CONTACT may be on terms and conditions, including supervision.
-

- A non-parent may only be appointed a GUARDIAN by court order.
- GUARDIANS wishing to relocate with a child must give 60 days' notice to GUARDIANS and persons with CONTACT, but only another GUARDIAN may object to a move.
- Unreasonable withholding of PARENTING TIME or CONTACT may result in an order for makeup time, counselling, or the payment of expenses.
- The FLA also focuses on dispute resolution processes other than the courts including the use of family justice counsellors, parenting coordinators, mediation, and collaborative law.

Please note: This booklet will be updated when the new Family Law Act comes into full force in late 2012 or early 2013.

PROCESSES FOR OBTAINING CUSTODY, GUARDIANSHIP OR ACCESS TO A CHILD

Agreements

If you and the child's parents can talk openly and agree about plans for the child, and there are no safety issues involved, you can develop a plan for custody, guardianship, and access.

It is best if the plan is written down as an agreement in case there are problems later. Before you sign the written agreement, it is a good idea to see a lawyer to ensure your rights are protected.

If you need help to reach an agreement about custody, guardianship, or access, you can see a Family Justice Counsellor. Family Justice Counsellors are trained to deal with family problems. A Family Justice Counsellor can do the following:

- help you understand the process of making an agreement
- provide mediation services
- help you and the other parties prepare a written agreement
- give you information and refer you to other services that may help

It is also a good idea to file the agreement with the court, because if there are problems later, you can show the agreement to the Judge and it may help the Judge make a decision about how any issues should be resolved.

Mediation

You may also be able to reach an agreement with the parent(s) of a child and other family members using a family mediator. A mediator sits down with you, the child's parent(s), and in some cases the child, to help you discuss all the issues. Usually everyone is in the same room at the mediation but, sometimes, everyone will be in separate rooms and the mediator will go between the parties. This is referred to as conciliation.

Mediators can offer the following assistance:

- they can help you communicate with the parent(s)
 - they can help you solve the problem rather than having a judge impose a decision in court
-

- they may help you reach a decision more quickly, which is much less costly
- they can help you ensure your voice, the voices of the parents and the voice of the child is heard.

Making an Application to the Court

Before making your application, you should talk to a lawyer who specializes in family law.

They can provide the following services:

- give you legal advice about all the issues
- provide or recommend mediation services
- attend mediation sessions with you
- help negotiate and draft a written agreement or consent order
- represent you in court



When one or both parents are still parenting the child, it may be very challenging for a non-parent to get an order from the court for custody or guardianship of the child unless the parent(s) have harmed the child.

There are some things you can do to help prepare for your application, including keeping a written record of the following:

- dates when you see the child;
- whether the child has told you about any issues at home;
- any incidents or issues you see that may not be in the child's best interests;
- any calls you make the Ministry of Child and Family Development; and
- any telephone calls from the child and from the parent or parents, including dates of the calls.

You should also assess whether you are able to care for the child and have a plan for how you are going to care for the child, which you can describe to the court.

If you are applying for access, you will have to show the judge that the child's access with you is in the child's best interests, that it will not place the child in a conflict between you and their parent(s) and that the time spent will be beneficial to the child.

If the court process has started, you can still reach agreement with the parent(s). Agreement may be achieved through mediation or attendance at a Family Case Conference in provincial court or a Judicial Case Conference if you are in Supreme Court. Agreements at this stage are through a consent order, which is negotiated by the parties or their lawyers and then sent to the judge to sign. You should speak with a lawyer before agreeing to a consent order to ensure your rights are protected.

You may be able to get a lawyer whose services are paid by legal aid. You may also be able to get a duty counsel lawyer to provide you with some advice about your legal options or to help you with certain tasks. Information about legal aid, family duty counsel and other resources are found in Chapter Four.

Returning to court if there is a change in circumstances or to enforce an order or agreement

If you have an agreement, you and the child's parent(s) can agree to alter it if circumstances change. You can file your new agreement with the court. If the parent(s) refuse to change the agreement, you will have to go to court.

If you need to change a consent order or a court order you will have to return to court and show the judge that there has been a change in circumstances. The judge will then decide whether that is the case and if a new order needs to be made.

If you obtained the original order for custody, guardianship, or access in provincial court, you will have to return to that court. If the order was obtained in Supreme Court, you will have to return to Supreme Court.

If the parent(s) are not following a court order, you will have to return to the court to try and enforce it.

IF A CHILD IS IN NEED OF PROTECTION

The Child, Family and Community Service Act

The Child, Family and Community Service Act (CFCSA) is the law in British Columbia that deals with the safety and well-being of children. The CFCSA says that the number one priority is the safety and well-being of a child.

The CFCSA sets out the principles and process the Ministry for Children and Family Development (often called "MCFD" or the "Ministry") and the courts must follow when the Ministry conducts an investigation into the care of a child.

The need to report if you think a child is being abused, neglected, or harmed

If you think the child (or any child) is being abused or neglected, you have a legal duty to tell the Ministry for Children and Family Development.

Once a report is made, a social worker will conduct an initial assessment to determine whether there is a protection concern and whether the Ministry needs to conduct a further investigation. Sometimes after an assessment, the social worker will decide that nothing further needs to be done.

To report the abuse, harm, or neglect of a child in British Columbia

From Monday to Friday, 4:30 p.m. to 8:30 a.m. and all day Saturday, Sunday and on statutory holidays, call the Helpline for Children at 310-1234 without the area code.

For after hours emergencies, call:

604.660.4927 (Vancouver, North Shore, Richmond)

604.660.8180 (Lower Mainland, Burnaby, Delta, Maple Ridge, Langley)

1.800.663.9122 (Other parts of the province)

If the Ministry of Child and Family Development starts an investigation

However, if there is a protection concern, the social worker will conduct an investigation. After an investigation, the social worker may decide that it is safe for the child to stay with the parent(s) but refer them to some services.

The social worker might also decide that the child needs protection, but work with the family to develop a plan of care so that the child can stay at home. The plan of care describes what is going to happen to protect and support the child.

Sometimes the Ministry will ask a court to order that the parent(s)' care of the child be supervised for a period of time.

Although the MCFD has no obligation to contact relatives such as grandparents once they start a child protection investigation, they often do contact relatives because they can learn more about the child, their history and their well-being.

It is important to make sure the social worker knows you wish to be part of developing the plan of care and ensuring the child's safety and well-being. You can also call your local Ministry office if you want to talk with the child's social worker and express your wish to help.

If the child is taken into care

If the social worker believes the child is in immediate danger and there is no other way to keep the child safe, the Ministry may remove the child from the home (also called "taken into care").

The Ministry says that when they remove a child from the home, their first choice is to place the child with a member of the immediate family, such as the other parent, if it is safe to do so. Their second choice is to place the child with a member of the child's extended family, such as grandparents, aunts, or uncles.

The CFCSA also recognizes that an aboriginal child's cultural identity is very important. The Ministry's preference for an aboriginal child in care is to keep the child within the aboriginal community.

When a child is taken into care, contact the Ministry and make sure they know about your relationship with the child. You may want to tell them that you want the child to live with you.

If you want the child to live with you, the Ministry will consider various factors such as:

- Your ability to care for the child and ensure his or her safety and well being
 - Whether you can take the child right away and look after him or her for the required length of time
 - If you have had any involvement with the Ministry in the past
 - The age and needs of the child, and how the child feels about living with you
 - How the parents feel about you caring for the child
 - Whether there are others who are interested in caring for the child
 - The plan of care for the child
-

The Ministry may agree that the child should live with you and make an agreement with you without going to court. There are different types of agreements that can be made including Kith and Kin Agreements, Voluntary Care Agreements with the Parents, and Family Home Care Agreements. These agreements can be with or without the parental support. It is best to talk to a lawyer about the different types of agreements before entering into an agreement.

If the child cannot be placed with you, then they will be placed with a foster parent. If the child is living with a foster parent, talk to the social worker about visiting with the child.

Going to court when the child has been taken into care

If a child is taken into care and the Ministry goes to court, you may be eligible for a legal aid lawyer. See Chapter Four for information about how to apply.

If the Ministry goes to court about the child, the first hearing will be a presentation hearing. At this hearing, the court may order that the child be placed into your custody under the supervision of the Ministry until the next court date (this is referred to as a supervised interim order).

At the next hearing, called a protection hearing, the court may place the child in your custody under a temporary custody order. You will be given notice of a protection hearing if you have interim custody of the child after the presentation hearing.

If you were not part of the presentation hearing or were not given interim custody of the child at that hearing, you can also file an application for custody and access under the FRA.

You can ask the judge to be made a party to the CFCSA proceedings or that your FRA application be heard alongside the CFCSA proceedings.

At the protection hearing the court may order:

- that you be given temporary custody of the child;
- that a Family Case Conference take place to try to reach agreement about the custody, access, and care of the child; or
- that the child be placed in the custody of the director, which is called a Continuing Custody Order.

If the court does not make a Continuing Custody Order at the protection hearing and no agreement about custody is reached at a Family Case Conference, then there will have to be a trial. Before the trial, the parties can also try mediation to reach agreement about custody, access and other issues relating to the child's care.

At the trial, the court will determine whether you should be granted custody of the child under the FRA. If you are granted custody, then you will have legal guardianship and custody of the child. If the court makes a Continuing Custody Order in the favour of the Ministry, then the Ministry can still transfer custody to you if you consent to the transfer and it is in the child's best interests. If a Continuing Custody Order is made, you can also apply to have access to the child.

CHAPTER 3 - PARENTAL ALIENATION AND CHILD/ELDER ABUSE



This chapter is dedicated to all the victims of child abuse and elder abuse caused by an alienating parent. This often results on the death or divorce of a married (or partnered) parent of the child. You may be a victim of parental, grandparent, or family alienation.

What is Parental Alienation?

Parental Alienation, as first defined by Dr. Richard Gardner, 1985, “results from the attempt by one parent after divorce or separation (usually the custodial parent) to behave in such a way as to alienate the child or children from the other parent.”

Alienation does not occur overnight. It is a gradual and consistent process that is directly related to the time spent in the alienation process. The longer the child spends with the ‘alienator,’ the more severe will be their alienation. Their supposed dislike of the lost parent does not lesson with time away from that parent. It grows stronger, precisely because this attitude is continuously encouraged by the alienator, who has unlimited opportunity to sustain the child’s negative feelings. The child has little time to learn an alternative response.

During the October 1997 Senate debates on custody and access, Senators spoke of parental alienation by the custodial parent as a means used to eliminate access to the children of divorce by the non-custodial parent. The end result, down the road, is often that this elimination of access of the non-custodial parent becomes permanent. As Britain’s Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg determined: “It is vital to change the law in the face of heartbreaking evidence that huge numbers of children, after separation, lose contact with one parent forever.” Canadian non-custodial parents often suffer the same fate.

Who are the victims of Parental Alienation?

The children of divorce and broken partnerships, the non-custodial parent, and the parents of the non-custodial parent (the children’s grandparents), plus extended family are all victims.

Dr. Glenn Cartwright, psychology professor at McGill University, studied the matter and noted, “an alienating parent requires time to enlist the child’s compliance without interference.” In a 1993 paper he said, “the manipulation of time becomes the main weapon in the hands of the alienator,” as long as the custodial parent can keep the non-custodial parent and the grandparents from access to the children.

When a family member is unwell, we try to help. No custodial parent who loves his/her child should teach them to dislike or ignore another human being, let alone a parent. Nor should a parent who loves this child tell lies about the non-custodial parent, or try to erase that child’s happy memories of the non-custodial parent or other family members. When this does occur within our families,

we must remember these custodial parents are the mothers and fathers of our grandchildren and continue to care about them. They may be unaware that this kind of destructive behaviour can be abusive to children and create lifelong issues. Handbooks like this one help provide guidance—for the sake of the children.

To heal the relationship, the child requires quality time with the lost parent to continue and repair the meaningful association that may have existed since birth. This continued communication also serves as a reality check for the child to counter the ongoing alienation at home. Unfortunately, the child doesn't usually get the quality time to heal the lost relationship with the lost parent and grandparent. Consequently: "The non-custodial parent experiences the anguish of the loss of a child or children. Grandparents, relatives, and friends are similarly affected and summarily dismissed. Far more serious is the effect on the child, who experiences a great loss, the magnitude of which is akin to the death of a parent, two grandparents, and all the lost parent's relatives and friends, all at once."

What is the cause of Parental Alienation after divorce or separation?

If the court judge does not recognize the importance of "a child having maximum access to both parents, and maintaining a normal relationship with both parents," and instead grants sole custody to one, the climate is set for parental alienation. Since PA behaviour is of a serious nature, "it seems reasonable to suppose that it would be provoked only by an equally serious emotional dispute, as the question of custody is for most parents. ... and disagreement over custody remains implicated as the chief cause of PA behaviour. (Gardner 1992)

Alienation of a parent from a child is child abuse. In thousands of homes across Canada, when the custodial parent is determined to end any association with the ex and with their family, and initiates action within the custodial parent's home to alienate the child from the non-custodial parent, this is often the start of a long struggle. The non-custodial parent faces one setback after another trying to see his or her child and one set of grandparents loses access to their grandchild, and often never sees that child again. That is grandparent (elder) abuse.

What happens to these children when they grow up?

Many say time heals all wounds; such is not the case with Parental Alienation. Perhaps, years later, the child begins to comprehend what has happened. The realization they believed the alienator and wrongly rejected the lost parent and (worse) were a pliable accomplice and willing contributor can produce powerful feelings of guilt. (Goldwater, 1991)

Serious emotional problems may ensue. The reestablishment with the lost parent is a huge task, naturally. When the child becomes an adult and realizes that he/she has not only lost a parent, but also grandparents and that side of the extended family, they are in shock. It is too late for the justice system to apologize or change what happened.

The Parental Alienation Awareness Organization is the creation of young victims of parental alienation growing up and facing what happened to them and trying to understand how they could have lost a parent and grandparents. By meeting with others who were also victims, they offer support for

the pain they experienced and the unexplained loss of family. Recovering from the effects of the custodial parent's actions is a long and painful process.

How can we stop Parental Alienation?

Our judges and decision-makers must recognize the rights of the child to his or her family, and the rights of the parents and grandparents to their children and grandchildren.

The U.K.'s Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg and Work and Pensions Secretary Iain Duncan Smith both realized, in February 2012, that it was necessary to make changes. "Courts will have to ensure that children have an equal right to a proper relationship with both parents, and there will be no inbuilt bias towards father and mother—this principle will become law."

Canada can do no less. Our justice system has been paying lip service to 'the best interests of the child.' Now, we must achieve this reality.

When divorce, separation, or death occurs in families, CGRA and many provinces in Canada recommends mediation rather than the courts in the custody process. Take the decisions out of the adversarial atmosphere; use discussion and compromise and involve the children.

Include Parental Alienation as a major part of Family Studies in our school curriculum. DVD's such as Parental Alienation Awareness and discussion with knowledgeable counsellors will red flag this destructive behaviour.

Pre-marriage counseling of this extremely serious issue would be advisable, in view of Canada's divorce rate.

The problem of Parental Alienation is extremely serious. We often speak of family values, but even disintegrated nuclear families have values and rights (i.e., child visitation), which must be preserved and respected to prevent further disintegration and total collapse. To do less is to sacrifice entire generations of children on the altar of alienation, condemning them to familial maladjustment and inflicting lifelong parental loss. (Dr. Gardner 1992)



CHAPTER 4 - WHERE TO GET HELP

SUPPORT

Canadian Grandparents Rights Association, B.C. Branch

It's not surprising that when we first learn that we are losing our family, we don't know where to turn for help. Fortunately, the Canadian Grandparents Rights Association was formed for just that reason. Families in distress need to talk and need help.

The Canadian Grandparents Rights Association, B.C. Branch's main function is to serve as a point of contact for people who require assistance in gaining access to grandchildren in case of family separation. However, relatives and others are also welcome. As well, the Association can refer you to other support services able to supply you with legal guidance. CGRA is a non-profit association and we are all volunteers.

Contact our B.C. Support Contacts for more information:

Armstrong	250.546.1939	Kamloops	250.554.2179
BigLake (L.)	250.243.2355	Kelowna	250.448.2390
Chilliwack	604.703.1481	Mission	604.820.0985
Clinton	250.459.7020	Prince George	250.564.5888
Qualicum Beach	250.752.0420	Savona	250.373.0081
Comox	250.890.1053	Terrace	250.635.7421
Cumberland	250.336.2128	Vernon	250.545.8572
Fort St. John	250.787.9722	Victoria	250 479 6318
Horsefly	250.620.3721	Williams Lake (L.)	250 392 3630

(L.) means Library

www.CanadianGrandparentsRightsAssociation.com

Ministry of the Attorney General Family Justice Centres

Family Justice Centres operate across B.C. to provide services to British Columbians going through separation or divorce. Each centre is staffed by Family Justice Counsellors (FJs). FJs are specially trained to help families with child custody, access, guardianship, and support issues. They can help parties resolve their disagreements without going to court. They provide short-term counseling, emergency and community referrals and other services. There is no fee for this service.

To find a Family Justice Centre in your community, contact Enquiry B.C. between 7:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday to Friday. Ask the operator to transfer you to the Family Justice Centre.

Greater Victoria: 250.387.6121 | Metro Vancouver: 604.660.2421.

Elsewhere in B.C.: call toll-free 1.800.663.7867

www.clicklaw.bc.ca/helpmap/service/1019

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Support Line

The Parent Support Services Society has been funded by MCFD to operate a province-wide support line for grandparents and other relatives who are raising children full-time in their homes in B.C. The GRG line will be job-shared by two (part-time) social workers with experience in advocacy, family law, and government services related to kinship care-giving.

Lower Mainland: 604.558.4740

Elsewhere in B.C.: 1.855.474.9777 (toll free from anywhere in B.C.)

Email: GRGline@parentsupportBC.ca

The new help line will operate province-wide Monday-Friday. However, at the start the hours will be Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

FOR LEGAL INFORMATION

People's Law School

The People's Law School is a non-profit society that provides free and impartial legal information to British Columbians.

Phone: 604.331.5400

Website: www.publiclegaled.bc.ca

Email: info@publiclegaled.bc.ca

The B.C. Courthouse Library Society

This non-profit organization provides access to legal information, resources, and services.

Lower Mainland: 604-660-2841

Elsewhere in B.C.: 1-800-665-2570 (toll-free)

Website: www.courthouselibrary.ca

Email: librarian@courthouselibrary.ca

B.C. Supreme Court Self-Help Information Centre

Located at: 274-800 Hornby Street, Vancouver, BC

Hours: 9:00 am - 12:00 noon, 1:30 pm - 4:00 pm Monday- Friday

This is a drop-in information centre only. They do not take written, telephone, or e-mail enquiries.

JP Boyd's B.C. Family Law Resource

This website is maintained by a family law lawyer in B.C. The site has a lot of free legal information on various areas of family law.

Website: www.bcfamilylawresource.com

Dial-A-Law

The Canadian Bar Association provides a library of audio scripts prepared by lawyers. These scripts give general legal information including family law in British Columbia. The scripts are available by phone 24 hours a day, 7 days a week or on their website.

Lower Mainland: 604-687-4680

Elsewhere in B.C.: 1-800-565-5297 (toll-free)

Website: www.dialalaw.org

Justice Education Society

This not-for-profit provides information, programs, and resources on many legal topics in British Columbia.

Head Office: 260-800 Hornby St., Vancouver, B.C. Phone: 604-660-9870

Email: info@justiceeducation.ca

For information about family law, go to:

www.justiceeducation.ca/family-law

Legal Aid

Legal Aid is provided by the Legal Services Society of B.C. (LSS). LSS provides free legal information in the form of booklets, fact sheets, and guides. To download this information, go to: www.lss.bc.ca.

For information about family law go to: www.familylaw.lss.bc.ca

LSS also provides free duty counsel for criminal, youth, and family matters at provincial court in British Columbia. Duty counsel lawyers provide you with brief legal advice about legal rights and options, as well as information about court procedures. They may also speak to the court on your behalf in some instances. LSS may also provide you with a lawyer if you meet their eligibility requirements.

Contact your local legal aid office to apply for legal aid. The locations of legal aid offices or local agents are in the telephone book or on the LSS website at www.lss.bc.ca

To apply for legal aid by telephone, call:

Lower Mainland: 604.408.2172

Elsewhere in B.C.: 1.866.577.2525 (toll-free)

FREE LEGAL ADVICE

Access Pro Bono

Access Pro Bono has a free legal advice program, including a family roster program and a variety of free legal clinics. Access Pro Bono is located at:

Access Pro Bono Society of British Columbia: 106 - 873 Beatty Street

Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6B 2M6

Client Telephone Line: 604.878.7400 or 1.877.762.6664 (toll-free)

E-mail: help@accessprobono.ca

UBC First Nations Legal Clinic

This program provides free legal advice to First Nations in British Columbia. They are located at:
UB.C. First Nations Legal Clinic, Suite 101-148 Alexander Street
Vancouver, B.C. V6Z 1B5
Phone: (604) 684-7334
Toll Free: 1-888-684-7874

MEDIATION

B.C. Mediator Roster Society

This society provides a directory of trained mediators. They also have a Mediator Consultation Program, which can put you in touch with family mediators who will give you a half hour consultation for a fee of \$10.

Greater Victoria: 250-356-8147

Elsewhere in B.C.: 1-888-713-0433 (toll-free)

Website: www.mediator-roster.bc.ca

Email: mediators@mediator-roster.bc.ca

Go Between Consulting

Go Between Consulting services offers Mediation, Supervised Visitation, and Conflict Management consultation. We have offered support to grandparents in the form of information sessions on Grandparents Rights, Parental Alienation Awareness and Individual Consultations and Mediation. Contact Carmen @ 250-714-8754

Website: www.gobetweenconsulting.com

Email: gobetweenconsulting@gmail.com



CGRA

Canadian Grandparents Rights Association

People Helping People to Maintain the Integrity of Family Relationships through Love, Encouragement, Caring and Patience.

www.CanadianGrandparentsRightsAssociation.com
grandchildrenrights@gmail.com



To view, download, or order a copy of this handbook, visit:

The People's Law School
www.publiclegaled.bc.ca
604.331.5400

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CGRA

Canadian Grandparents Rights Association

Established in 1986

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