

Press release:

Parental Alienation is now recognised by the ICD - 11

Parental Alienation is officially recognised as a mental disorder.

The World Health Organisation has included “Parental Alienation” in its new International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) which was released on June 18, 2018.

The index entry of parental alienation and estrangement means that the ICD-11 recognises the reality of Parental Alienation for Irish children and families.

Parental Alienation is characterised as occurring “when a child/ren allies himself or herself strongly with the care giver (the alienating or aligned party) and rejects the relationship with the other parent or parents (the targeted or alienated parent or parents) without legitimate justification despite a previous warm and loving relationship. The primary behavioural symptom is the child’s refusal to have contact with the targeted parent or parents”

Parental alienation and estrangement is described as substantial and sustained dissatisfaction within a caregiver-child relationship associated with significant disturbance in functioning.

The literature suggests that parental alienation disproportionately affects young people whose parents are experiencing high conflict relationship breakdowns and predominantly children in state care or adoption. The effects and outcomes usually have a life long negative effect on the child. This is manifested in psychological and physical co-morbidities, including, but not limited to, addiction, crimes and suicide.

Neuroplasticity in children can occur with ongoing negative aspects when the child is taught to adopt a dichotomous (black and white thinking) thought process of one parent good one parent bad programming. The neurological effects can have consequences including psychological and cognitive deficits.

Systemic Family Psychotherapist, Brian O Sullivan agrees that Parental Alienation has been a significant psychological and emotional challenge for young people in Ireland affecting them across their life span and on into their families of creation in future generations for some time now, the inclusion of parental alienation in the ICD - 11 is the next appropriate step.

Parental Alienation Support Worker, Andries van Tonder of APS has said that he welcomed the inclusion in the DSM 5 under different terminology, but is now rejoicing in the knowledge that parental alienation has been officially included in the ICD -11 under the code QE52.

There are thousands of Irish families experiencing parental alienation and asking for help. Formal recognition of parental alienation by the ICD - 11 will encourage further research and resources being committed to combating the problem.

Several other conditions that can be associated with parental alienation are listed in ICD-11. Hereunder are some other applicable codes:

QD5Y Other specified problems associated with finances. (Situation caused by exorbitant legal, court reports and therapeutic fees the parent have to pay)

QD71 Problems associated with housing. (Situation after separation or otherwise caused)

QD82 Problem associated with threat of job loss. (Court attendances, stress related illnesses)

QE03 Social exclusion or rejection. (by community or family)

QE60 Absence of family member. (child or parent)

QE61 Disappearance or death of family member (child or parent)

QE62 Uncomplicated bereavement (due to loss of child or parent)

About ICD

The International Classification of Diseases (ICD) is the international "standard diagnostic tool for epidemiology, health management and clinical purposes." Its full official name is International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems.

The ICD is maintained by the World Health Organization (WHO), the directing and coordinating authority for health within the United Nations System.

Education Needed:

Regarding offences

Recognising parental alienation as a "Health Problem" justifies attempts by authorities to address the causes.

In most cases, the alienation is connected to a criminal action by the alienating party. Some of the offences committed are perjury, procuring perjury, reckless endangerment of the child, cruelty to children, reckless endangerment (non fatal offences), causing serious harm, coercion, offences under the Child Care Act, false reporting of child abuse, coercive control, inhumane and degrading treatment (common law), contempt of the court and more.

We took notice that An Garda Síochána is apparently rolling out specific training modules on how to approach investigating the offences in terms of family law.

In Closing

We have gotten confirmation that the Child and Family Agency (TUSLA) and the HSE (CAMHS) took notice of this ICD development.

The Law Society and the Law Library indicated that this matter will be looked at in the near future.

The education and / or screening of court report writers also need serious attention. We believe that only certified Parental Alienation Professionals should be used in this specialised area. (PAAA, EAPAP or other recognised membership). The President of the Circuit Court also indicated that the Judiciary will take notice of this suggestion.

Serious education is needed on all levels and is to be implemented as soon as possible.

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Note to editors:

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