

“UU” UCAPA: Understanding and Using UCAPA to Prevent Child Abduction

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The National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws (NCCUSL) has been engaged in crafting uniform law to deter child abduction for nearly forty years, beginning in 1968 with the Uniform Child Custody Jurisdiction Act (UCCJA), continuing in 1997 with the Uniform Child Custody Jurisdiction and Enforcement Act (UCCJEA), and culminating most recently with the Uniform Child Abduction Prevention Act (UCAPA or Act),¹ which NCCUSL approved and recommended for enactment at its annual conference in July 2006. The response to UCAPA has been swift and favorable, as evidenced by its enactment in six states and introduction in five other legislatures.² The American Bar Association House of Delegates endorsed the Act in February 2007.

* © 2007 Patricia M. Hoff. All rights reserved. The author, a legal consultant and authority on interstate and international parental kidnapping law, participated in the UCAPA drafting process as an observer and consultant on behalf of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention of the U.S. Department of Justice and Fox Valley Technical College. The views she expressed were her own and did not necessarily represent the official position of either entity. Ms. Hoff's involvement began with the submission of extensive comments and recommendations on the January 10, 2006 Master Draft, and continued through final approval of the Act.

1. UCAPA can be found online at NCCUSL's Web site. Visit www.nccusl.org. From the homepage, click the "Final Acts & Legislation" link. In the "Select an Act Title" box, choose "Child Abduction Prevention." On the next page, click "Final Act." UCAPA is also available directly at http://www.law.upenn.edu/bll/ulc/ucapa/2006_finalact.htm.

2. Enacted in Colorado (COLO. REV. STAT. § 14-13.5-101 et seq.); Kansas (not yet codified nor section assigned); Nebraska (NEB. REV. STAT. § 43-1230 et seq.); Nevada (will be Chapter 11 but not yet assigned a section); South Dakota (not yet codified nor section assigned); and Utah (UTAH CODE ANN. § 78-62-101 et seq.). Introduced in legislative sessions in Connecticut, Louisiana, South Carolina, Texas and U.S. Virgin Islands. "Bill tracing" is *available at* NCCUSL's Web site at <http://www.nccusl.org/Update/Act SearchResults.aspx>

The Act takes a new approach to preventing child abduction. Whereas the jurisdictional criteria of the UCCJA and UCCJEA, and the UCCJEA's expedited enforcement mechanisms, remove legal incentives parents once had to kidnap their children, UCAPA helps judges identify children at risk of abduction, and provides a cascade of alternative prevention measures from which to fashion an appropriate prevention order. Novelty aside, the Act piggybacks on numerous of its predecessors' provisions.³ Most notably, proceedings under UCAPA must be brought in courts having child custody jurisdiction with respect to the at-risk child.

This article begins with a brief description of how this uniform law was developed (Constructing UCAPA), and continues with a user-friendly analysis of the Act (Deconstructing UCAPA). The article complements the Prefatory Notes and the Comments to the Act, both of which are recommended reading for UCAPA users.⁴

I. Constructing UCAPA

Concerned about the high incidence of family abductions as reported in national incidence surveys⁵ and the harmful effects suffered by children,⁶ influenced by studies of abduction risk factors and prevention interven-

3. See UCAPA § 3 (Cooperation and Communication Among Courts), § 5 (Jurisdiction), § 6(6) (Contents of Petition, and § 10(4) (Duration of Abduction Prevention Order). See also UCAPA § 2 (Definitions) and accompanying comment ("To the extent possible, the definitions track the Uniform Child Custody Jurisdiction and Enforcement Act.").

4. The Prefatory Note and Comments are in the "Final Act," which is available online. See *supra* note 1.

5. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention commissioned two incidence studies, referred to as "NISMART-1" (D. Finkelhor, G. Hotaling, and A. Sedlak, *Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway Children in America. First Report: Numbers and Characteristics National Incidence Studies*, 1990, and "NISMART-2" (Heather Hammer, David Finkelhor, and Andrea Sedlak, *Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway Children in America, October 2002, Children Abducted by Family Members: National Estimates and Characteristics*. NISMART-2 estimated that 203,900 children were victims of a family abduction in 1999. Among these, 117,200 were missing from their caretakers, and, of these, an estimated 56,500 were reported to authorities for assistance in locating the children. The study recommended focusing prevention efforts on younger children who are at greater risk of family abduction, especially those who do not live with both biological parents. NISMART-2 is available at <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/196466.pdf>.

6. See generally Prefatory Note, n.2, *supra* note 4; PATRICIA M. HOFF, FAMILY ABDUCTION: PREVENTION AND RESPONSE (National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 5th ed. 2002), [hereinafter cited as FAMILY ABDUCTION]. In FAMILY ABDUCTION, see chapters titled *Psychological Issues in Recovery and Family Reunification* (JoAnn Behrman-Lippert & Christ Hatcher) and *The Impact of Abduction on Children* (Geoffrey L. Greif & Rebecca L. Hegar). FAMILY ABDUCTION is available at http://www.ncmec.org/en_US/publications/NC75.pdf. See also R. Hegar & G. Grief, *Impact on Children of Abduction by a Parent: A Review of the Literature*, 62(4) AM. J. ORTHOPSYCHIATRY 599 (1992).

tions,⁷ and inspired by nascent state abduction prevention legislation,⁸ NCCUSL appointed a drafting committee to write a model or uniform law to prevent international child abduction. The legislation's scope was promptly expanded to include domestic abductions,⁹ a change supported by research¹⁰ and reflected in the broader title of the final version of the Act. A detailed narrative about the committee's origins and undertakings is found in the Prefatory Note to the August 24, 2004 draft¹¹ of the then-titled "Standards for the Protection of Children From International Abduction Act."

Without a drafting committee and reporter, nothing would come of good ideas.¹² In this case, NCCUSL selected Lyle W. Hillyard (Utah) as

7. Janet R. Johnston & Linda K. Girdner, *Family Abductors: Descriptive Profiles and Preventive Interventions* (JUV. JUST. BULL.) (OJJDP Jan. 2001), available at <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/182788.pdf>; J. Johnston, Inger Sagatun-Edwards, Martha-Elin Blomquist, and L. Girdner, *Early Identification of Risk Factors for Parental Abduction* (JUV. JUST. BULL.) (OJJDP Mar. 2001), available at <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/185026.pdf>.

8. In June 2003, Texas enacted a child abduction prevention law, TEX. FAM. CODE §§ 153.501–153.503. Two months later, in August 2003, NCCUSL took the first step toward drafting similar law. See *infra* note 11. Before UCAPA was completed, four other states had enacted abduction prevention laws: California (CAL. FAM. CODE § 3408 (2004)), Arkansas (ARK. CODE ANN. §§ 9-13-401 to -407 (2005)), Florida (FLA. STAT. § 61.45 (2005)), and Oregon (OR. REV. STAT. § 109.035) (2005).

9. See *infra* note 11.

10. See FINAL REPORT: OBSTACLES TO THE RECOVERY AND RETURN OF PARENTALLY ABDUCTED CHILDREN (Linda Girdner & Patricia Hoff eds., 1993), [hereinafter cited as OBSTACLES REPORT] (recommending that state legislatures should pass statutes to prevent parental abductions and to require flagging of school and birth records, Research Summary at 13). The OBSTACLES REPORT (NCJ-188063), including its Appendices (NCJ-188062) and Research Summary (NCJ-143458), may be ordered from the Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse at 1-800-638-8736 or online at www.ncjrs.gov. See also GUIDE TO GOOD PRACTICE UNDER THE HAGUE CONVENTION OF 25 OCTOBER, 1980 ON THE CIVIL ASPECTS OF INTERNATIONAL CHILD ADDUCTION, PART III: PREVENTIVE MEASURES, HAGUE CONFERENCE ON PRIVATE INTERNATIONAL LAW (2005) [hereinafter cited as GUIDE TO GOOD PRACTICE] (suggesting the types of preventive measures that States might consider adopting in order to reduce the incidence of child abduction), available at http://www.hcch.net/upload/abdguideiii_e.pdf.

11. The August 24, 2004 draft is available from NCCUSL's Web site. Go to <http://www.nccusl.org/Update/CommitteeSearchResults.aspx?committee=236>. Click the link for "September 2004 Meeting Draft." It is also accessible directly at <http://www.law.upenn.edu/bl/ulc/spciaa/Sept2004MtgDraft.htm>. The Prefatory Note explains:

In August 2003, the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws appointed a study committee to explore the feasibility of a uniform law to prevent international child abduction. The possible scope of the project was discussed at a meeting of the Joint Editorial Board for Uniform Family Law Acts on October 18, 2003. The Joint Editorial Board urged the NCCUSL Committee on Scope and Program to recommend the rapid creation of a drafting committee in this area. . . . The initial mandate to the committee was: *Resolved*, that a drafting committee on the Prevention of Child Abduction in International Custody Disputes be approved by the Committee on Scope and Program to draft model or uniform legislation in this area, with an initial scope as suggested in this report. . . . NCCUSL expanded the drafting committee's scope to prevent domestic as well as international abductions in August 2004.

12. For a brief description of the composition of NCCUSL drafting committees and their meetings, visit <http://www.nccusl.org/Update/DesktopDefault.aspx?tabindex=0&tabid=59>.

Chair, and Professor Linda Elrod as Reporter. The Reporter's service to the committee under difficult circumstances was truly remarkable.¹³ In addition to the commissioners appointed to the committee,¹⁴ an official advisor¹⁵ and numerous observers¹⁶ participated in the drafting process. In all, there were six drafting committee meetings plus two readings of the legislation.¹⁷ Successive drafts of the legislation considered at these meetings are available at NCCUSL's Web site.¹⁸

II. Deconstructing UCAPA

To facilitate understanding and use of the Act, the questions listed below are addressed in this section under corresponding headings:

- What is the purpose of the Act?
- Which children are protected by the Act?
- Who may seek relief under UCAPA?
- When and where may relief be sought?
- What are the pleading and notice requirements?
- What are risk factors for abduction?
- What is the required showing for issuance of an abduction prevention order?
- What must every abduction prevention order include?
- What other prevention provisions may be included in the order?
- What relief is available when abduction is imminent or in progress?
- What is the duration of an abduction prevention order?
- What safeguards protect against misuse of the Act?

13. Prof. Elrod's unwavering dedication to the project, even as she underwent unexpected surgery and post-operative treatment, raised the bar on professionalism. Her resilience and good humor awed and amazed this observer.

14. Cynthia Bosco (California), Vincent C. Deliberato, Jr. (Pennsylvania), W. Michael Dunn (New Hampshire), Gorman Houston, Jr. (Enactment Plan Coordinator; Alabama), Peter K. Munson (Texas), Marian Opala (Oklahoma), Cam Ward (Alabama), Howard Swibel (*Ex officio*, NCCUSL President; Illinois), Tom Bolt (*Ex officio*, Division Chair member; Virgin Islands).

15. Bruce A. Boyer (Illinois), American Bar Association Advisor.

16. Jeff Atkinson, American Bar Association Section of Family Law; Richard Barry, American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers; Patricia M. Hoff, legal consultant; Teresa Lauderdale, parent; Prof. Robert Spector, University of Oklahoma Law Center; Jenni Thompson, consultant, formerly with the Polly Klaas Foundation; Prof. Merle Weiner, University of Oregon School of Law; Lawrence R. Whyte, parent.

17. Drafting committee meetings occurred on April 9–11, 2004, September 10–12, 2004, April 8–10, 2005, November 11–12, 2005, March 17–19, 2006, and April 28–29, 2006. In addition, the drafting committee convened for the Act's first reading at NCCUSL's annual conference on July 26–27, 2005, and on July 10–13, 2006, for second reading, at which time UCAPA was approved and recommended for enactment.

18. <http://www.nccusl.org/Update/CommitteeSearchResults.aspx?committee=236>.

A. Purpose

The Act's purpose is to prevent child abduction. As explained in the Prefatory Note, UCAPA is "premised on the general principle that preventing abduction is in a child's best interests."¹⁹

B. Children Protected by the Act

The Act seeks to protect unemancipated children under age 18²⁰ from abduction, which is defined to mean "wrongful removal" or "wrongful retention."²¹ Wrongful removals and retentions together include the taking, keeping, or concealing of a child in violation of custody or visitation rights "given or recognized under the law of this state."²²

The definition is intentionally broad²³ to protect children from the risk of being wrongfully removed or retained at any time—whether before a child custody determination or in violation of an existing child custody determination. The Act is responsive to the reality that many children are wrongfully removed or retained pre-decree by one parent in violation of the other parent's equal rights.

C. Petitioners Under the Act

UCAPA sections 4(b) and 4(c) provide that prevention measures may be sought by:

- a party to a child custody determination;²⁴
- another individual or entity having a right under state law to seek a child custody determination for the child; and

19. See *supra* note 4.

20. UCAPA § 2(2) (definition of "child"). See also UCAPA § 10(2) ("An abduction prevention order remains in effect until the earliest of . . . the emancipation of the child....").

21. UCAPA § 2(1) ("Abduction"); UCAPA § 2(10) ("'Wrongful removal' means the taking of a child that breaches rights of custody or visitation given or recognized under the law of this state."); UCAPA § 2(11) ("'Wrongful retention' means the keeping or concealing of a child that breaches rights of custody or visitation given or recognized under the law of this state.").

22. *Id.*

23. UCAPA's broad scope finds precedent in the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (Convention), and the International Child Abduction Remedies Act (ICARA), 42 U.S.C. §§ 11601 et seq., the federal law implementing the Convention in the U.S. The Convention's prompt return remedy applies when children are wrongfully removed or retained pre- and post-decree. ICARA defines the Convention terms "wrongful removal or retention" and "wrongfully removed or retained" to include "a removal or retention of a child before the entry of a custody order regarding that child." 42 U.S.C. § 11603(f)(2).

24. As defined in UCAPA § 2(3), "child custody determination" includes "a judgment, decree, or other court order . . . providing for visitation with respect to a child."

- a prosecutor or other public authority designated under section 315 of the UCCJEA.²⁵

The Act also grants courts authority to order prevention measures *sua sponte*. Section 4(a) provides that “A court on its own motion may order abduction prevention measures in a child-custody proceeding if the court finds that the evidence establishes a credible risk of abduction of the child.”²⁶ The import is that courts can issue abduction prevention orders in the context of child custody proceedings even if a UCAPA petition has not been filed by a person or entity noted above. The only limitation on issuing relief *sua sponte* is under Section 9 of UCAPA, discussed *infra*.

25. Arizona (ARIZ. REV. STAT. ANN. § 25-1065, prosecutor); Arkansas (ARK. CODE ANN. § 9-19-315, prosecutor or public official); California (CAL. FAM. CODE § 3455 (West 2006), district attorney); District of Columbia (D.C. CODE § 16-460315 (2001), attorney general); Florida (FLA. STAT. § 61.538, state attorney); Georgia (GEORGIA CODE ANN. § 19-9-95, district attorney); Hawaii (HAW. REV. STAT. § 583A-315, attorney general and prosecuting attorneys); Idaho (IDAHO CODE ANN. § 32-11-315, county prosecuting attorney); Illinois (ILL. COMP. STAT. 750 ILCS 36/315, state’s attorney or other appropriate public); Indiana (IND. CODE § 31-21-18(a), prosecuting attorney or other appropriate public official); Kansas (KAN. STAT. ANN. § 38-1372, prosecutor); Kentucky (KY. REV. STAT. § 403.870, county attorney or other appropriate public official); KY. REV. STAT. § 403.872, peace officer); Louisiana (LA. REV. STAT. ANN. 13:1837 (2007), prosecutor or other appropriate public official, effective 8/15/2007); Maine (ME. REV. STAT. ANN. tit. 19, § 1775, prosecutor); Maryland (MD. CODE ANN., FAM. LAW § 9.5-315, attorney general); Michigan (MICH. COMP. LAWS. § 722.1314, prosecutor or attorney general); Minnesota (MINN. STAT. § 518D.315, prosecutor or other appropriate public official); Mississippi (MISS. CODE ANN. 1972, § 93-27-315, prosecutor or other appropriate public official); Montana (MONT. CODE ANN. § 40-7-315, prosecutor); Nebraska (NEB. REV. STAT. § 43-1262 (1943), county attorney or the attorney general); Nevada (NEV. REV. STAT. § 125A.565, district attorney or the attorney general); New Jersey (N.J. STAT. ANN. § 2A:34-89, prosecutor or other appropriate official); New Mexico (N.M. STAT. § 40-10A-315 (1978), prosecutor or other appropriate public official); New York (N.Y. DOM. REL. LAW § 77-n (McKinney 1978), prosecutor or other appropriate public official); North Carolina (N.C. GEN. STAT. § 50A-315, prosecutor or other appropriate public official); North Dakota (N.D. CENT. CODE § 14-14.1-35, State’s Attorney); Ohio (OHIO REV. CODE ANN. § 3127.45, prosecutors); Oklahoma (OKLA. STAT. tit. 43, § 551-315, district attorney); Oregon (OR. REV. STAT. § 109.821, district attorney); Pennsylvania (PA. CONS. STAT. ANN. § 5455, prosecutor or other appropriate public official); Rhode Island (R.I. GEN. LAWS § 15-14.1-37 (1956), prosecutor or other public official); South Carolina (S.C. CODE ANN. § 20-7-6078, prosecutor); South Dakota (S.D. Codified Laws § 26-5B-315, prosecutor or other appropriate public official); Tennessee (TENN. CODE ANN. § 36-6-239, prosecutor or other appropriate public official); Texas (TEX. FAM. CODE ANN. § 152.315, prosecutor or other appropriate public official); U.S. Virgin Islands (V.I. CODE ANN. tit. 16, § 140k, prosecutor); Utah (UTAH CODE ANN. § 78-45c-315 (1953), prosecutor or attorney general); Washington (WASH. REV. CODE § 26.27.541, prosecutor or attorney general); West Virginia (W. VA. CODE § 48-20-315, prosecutor or other appropriate public official); Wisconsin (WIS. STAT. §§ 822.45, prosecutor); Wyoming (WYO. STAT. ANN. §§ 20-5-415, prosecutor or other appropriate public official).

26. Note that the California and Texas prevention statutes also provide for courts to act on their own motion in prevention cases, though these statutes are distinguishable from UCAPA. See *infra* note 54 for the text of the California and Texas statutes, as well as an analysis of the relationship between UCAPA §§ 4(a) and 8(b).

1. PARENTS

The typical petitioner will be a parent who is apprehensive that the other parent plans to “wrongfully remove” or “wrongfully retain” the child, as these terms are defined in UCAPA sections 2(10) and 2(11).²⁷ Custodial and noncustodial parents, even in the absence of a custody determination, may petition for prevention measures pursuant to UCAPA in most circumstances.²⁸

In pre-decree situations, both parents have joint custody rights by operation of law. This Act seeks to reduce the risk that one parent will unilaterally and without consent interfere with the other’s custody rights by removing or retaining the child, and allows a petitioner to seek an abduction prevention order under the Act to deter such conduct. Accordingly, either parent may seek prevention measures before custody has been adjudicated when there is a credible risk of abduction.

When there is a child custody/visitation determination in place, the petitioner would seek measures and conditions to prevent the respondent from violating the order or, put another way, to compel respondent’s compliance with the order. For instance, the custodial parent may seek prevention measures when there is a credible risk that the noncustodial parent will take the child out of the country in violation of the order, just as the noncustodial parent may seek prevention measures when there is a credible risk that the custodial parent will refuse to send the child for the summer visit prescribed in the order. When, as in the latter example, the perceived risk pertains to a wrongful retention, a court may order suitable relief, with the exception of a warrant under Section 9 of UCAPA.²⁹

2. PROSECUTORS

Albeit less typical, a prosecutor or other public official authorized by the UCCJEA³⁰ to locate a child, obtain the return of a child, or enforce a child custody determination may also petition under UCAPA for prevention measures, including, but not limited to, a warrant to take physical custody of a child in exigent circumstances addressed in Section 9 of UCAPA.

27. See *supra* note 21.

28. A “warrant to take physical custody of child” authorized by UCAPA § 9 is only available in imminent wrongful removal cases (*i.e.*, to prevent the imminent taking of a child). It may not be issued in imminent wrongful retention of a child (*i.e.*, to prevent the keeping or concealing of a child).

29. See *infra* note 73 and accompanying text.

30. For a description of the prosecutor’s role under the UCCJEA, including a profile of California prosecutors’ long-standing experience under the statutory prototype for UCCJEA §§ 315–317, see P. Hoff, *The Uniform Child Custody Jurisdiction and Enforcement Act* (JUV. JUST. BULL.) (OJJDP Dec. 2001), available at <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/189181.pdf>.

Currently, prosecutors (or other designated officials) in forty-one jurisdictions³¹ have been authorized by the UCCJEA to resolve child abduction cases using civil means. Prosecutors inclined to exercise their discretionary UCCJEA authority³² may find it cost effective to seek civil remedies under UCAPA (in particular, a warrant under Section 9 of UCAPA) to prevent abductions, thereby avoiding the substantially higher costs of prosecuting abductors.

3. "ANOTHER INDIVIDUAL OR ENTITY"

The language in Section 4(b) of UCAPA enables parents, others individuals (*e.g.*, grandparents), and entities (*e.g.*, child welfare agencies) with standing to seek a child custody determination to petition for abduction prevention measures. The right to seek relief is based on the right under state law to seek a child custody determination (which by definition includes a visitation determination³³).

D. Timing

The Act makes it possible to petition for prevention measures at any time there is a credible risk of abduction with respect to a child protected by the Act. Jurisdictional requirements limit where relief may be sought.

E. Jurisdiction

A UCAPA petition may only be filed in a state court having jurisdiction to make a child custody determination respecting the child at risk of abduction, whether by initial order, modification order, or temporary emergency order.³⁴ In all but the five jurisdictions that still follow the UCCJA,³⁵ the UCCJEA governs jurisdiction over UCAPA actions. The Parental Kidnapping Prevention Act must also be considered.³⁶

31. See *supra* note 25.

32. Through a U.S. Department of Justice initiative, training is available to prosecutors interested in learning more about their civil authority under the UCCJEA in child abduction cases. For information about the *Prosecutors' Strategies in Child Abduction Cases* course, visit <http://www.amber-net.org>. Click on "Prosecutors."

33. See *supra* note 24.

34. UCAPA § 5. In a departure from earlier drafts, the March 6, 2006 draft eliminated personal jurisdiction as a basis for exercising jurisdiction over a UCAPA petition. The change was made to ensure consistency with the UCCJEA.

35. Massachusetts, Missouri, New Hampshire, Vermont, Puerto Rico.

36. States exercising child custody jurisdiction must do so consistently with the Parental Kidnapping Prevention Act (PKPA), 28 U.S.C. § 1738A, in order for their custody determinations to be entitled as a matter of federal law to nationwide enforcement. States exercising jurisdiction pursuant to the UCCJA may run afoul of the PKPA's home state preference and

1. INITIAL JURISDICTION

The petitioner need not have a child custody determination to seek prevention measures under UCAPA. In pre-decree cases where there is no custody determination (because custody has never been litigated or an initial child custody proceeding is pending), the petitioner may seek a custody order with appropriate prevention provisions from a court with jurisdiction to make a child custody determination. Petitions for initial custody determinations, including petitions for prevention measures, normally would be filed in the child's "home state."

Ideally, prevention concerns will be anticipated and addressed in the initial custody determination, with the goal of deterring future violations (*i.e.*, the taking, retention, or concealment of the child in violation of custody and visitation rights specified in the order).

2. MODIFICATION JURISDICTION

When the need for prevention measures did not exist or was not anticipated at the time of the initial custody determination, a petitioner could seek to have the existing order modified to incorporate prevention measures to reduce the risk of future (or repeat) abductions. The UCAPA petition would be filed in a court having modification jurisdiction. Look first to the decree court to determine if it has, and will exercise, exclusive continuing jurisdiction. If so, the UCAPA petition should be filed there.

3. TEMPORARY EMERGENCY JURISDICTION

A petitioner may seek relief under UCAPA on emergency grounds. Under Section 5(b) of UCAPA, "a court of this state has temporary emergency jurisdiction under [the UCCJEA³⁷ or UCCJA] if the court finds a credible risk of abduction." The comment to Section 5 of UCAPA explains that the Act "equates a credible risk of abduction with threatened mistreatment or abuse for emergency jurisdiction purposes." The intent is to allow a court to exercise emergency jurisdiction to enter a temporary abduction prevention order if the child is present in the state and it is necessary in an emergency to protect the child because of a credible risk of abduction.

continuing jurisdiction provisions, with the resulting effect that sister states may not enforce their custody determinations. Courts exercising jurisdiction pursuant to the UCCJEA, which was purposely modeled on the PKPA, can expect a sister state's court to enforce and not modify their orders.

37. UCCJEA § 204(a) provides: "A court of this State has temporary emergency jurisdiction if the child is present in this State and the child has been abandoned or it is necessary in an emergency to protect the child because the child, or a sibling or parent of the child, is subjected to or threatened with mistreatment or abuse."

When UCCJEA emergency jurisdiction is invoked, all of the restrictions and requirements of Section 204 of the UCCJEA are incorporated by reference. Thus, a prevention order entered on the basis of emergency jurisdiction will be a temporary order. It may be necessary (depending upon whether the emergency order ripens into a final determination or the court with jurisdiction defers to the emergency court following judicial communication) for petitioners to file for prevention measures in the court having jurisdiction under sections 201–203 of the UCCJEA.³⁸

Note that not all prevention orders are emergency orders and that courts need not exercise emergency jurisdiction to issue abduction prevention orders when there is another basis for doing so (*i.e.*, initial, exclusive continuing, or modification jurisdiction).

F. Pleading Requirements

A petition for relief under UCAPA must be verified and provide the information specified in Section 6 of UCAPA, which incorporates by reference UCCJEA pleading requirements and confidentiality protections.³⁹ The petition must allege risk factors for abduction, including but not limited to those listed in Section 7 of UCAPA (discussed *infra*).

Required information about the parties' relevant legal histories (*i.e.*, existing custody determinations; previous prevention or domestic violence proceedings; criminal arrests for domestic violence, stalking or child abuse or neglect)⁴⁰ could affect a court's determination of, and response to, abduction risk. A child custody determination would inform the court of the parties' respective rights, from which the court might surmise a parent's right to relocate with the child. Evidence of previous abductions and/or past violence may reveal to the court when a petitioner is using the Act as a weapon against the other parent instead of as a shield to protect a child from abduction.

Beyond the required information, the petition should provide detailed supporting evidence, and the prayer for relief should request specific pre-

38. UCCJEA § 201 (Initial jurisdiction), § 202 (Exclusive, continuing jurisdiction), § 203 (Jurisdiction to modify determination).

39. See UCCJEA § 209 (or the comparable section of state law) for applicable pleading requirements. UCCJEA § 209 or state domestic violence law may also protect certain information (such as past and present addresses of the child and respondent) from disclosure.

40. See comment to UCAPA § 6: "The requirement for information on domestic violence or child abuse is to alert the court to the possibility that a batterer or abuser is attempting to use the Act. Domestic violence underlies large numbers of parental kidnapping. . . . The court should not allow a batterer to use this Act to gain temporary custody or additional visitation in an uncontested hearing. A person who committed domestic violence or child abuse poses a risk of harm to the child. Such a person, however, may still seek relief in a contested hearing where the issues can be fully examined by the court. . . ."

vention measures including, but not limited to, select options set forth in sections 8 and 9 of UCAPA.

G. Notice

According to the last paragraph of the comment to Section 6 of UCAPA, “notice and opportunity to be heard should be given according to state law, and may be by publication if other means are ineffective.” Perhaps the reason this important point is made in a comment rather than statutory text is that the entire Act is premised on relief being sought in courts validly exercising child custody jurisdiction. To do so requires due process notice to affected parties. The requirements are set forth in the UCCJEA (or UCCJA) and the PKPA.

Section 9 of UCAPA allows for a court to issue an *ex parte* pick-up order to prevent a child’s imminent wrongful removal. The respondent must be served virtually simultaneously with the execution of the warrant and is entitled to be heard promptly thereafter.⁴¹

H. Abduction Risk Factors

A key element of this Act is the list of risk factors set forth in Section 7, which will help parents frame their prevention requests and courts identify children at risk of abduction. Section 7 of UCAPA, along with the Section 8 list of abduction prevention provisions, are the crux of the Act. Both sections are essential reading for anyone involved in an abduction prevention case.

The listed risk factors address potential intrastate, interstate and international abductions. A history of abduction, attempted abductions, and threats to abduct top the list,⁴² followed by abduction planning activities⁴³ and intrafamily violence and conduct violative of an order.⁴⁴ The number and strength of the respondent’s ties to the state and country, and other states or countries, are among the listed factors.⁴⁵ When a risk of international abduction is specifically alleged, evidence may be presented regarding potential legal and practical obstacles to securing the child’s return from the destination country,⁴⁶ and the potential in that country for harm

41. See text under the heading “§ 9 Warrant to Take Physical Custody of Child.”

42. UCAPA at § 7(a)(1)–(2).

43. *Id.* at § 7(a)(3)(A)–(F).

44. *Id.* at § 7(a)(4)–(5).

45. *Id.* at § 7(a)(6)–(7).

46. When the alleged abduction risk involves a potential wrongful removal to, or retention in, a country party to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, UCAPA recognizes that Hague countries may be noncompliant with the Convention

to the child.⁴⁷ Other factors focus on citizenship and immigration status that could affect a party's opportunity for contact with the child, and certain fraudulent or criminal behavior.⁴⁸ The list of risk factors, though lengthy, is not exhaustive.⁴⁹ Petitioners may offer evidence of conduct not expressly mentioned in the Act.⁵⁰

A prevention case is not meant to be one-sided. Courts are required to consider evidence regarding both parties.⁵¹ The Act is silent about the weight the evidence is to be given. A petitioner will allege risk factors, including any from the list set forth in Section 7 of UCAPA, with supporting evidence concerning the respondent's conduct (and likely destination country, when the alleged risk is an international abduction). The respondent may counter with allegations about the petitioner in its responsive pleading. Additionally, Section 7(b) of UCAPA requires a court hearing a UCAPA petition to "consider any evidence that the respondent believed in good faith that the respondent's alleged conduct was necessary to avoid imminent harm to the child or respondent and any other evidence that may be relevant to whether the respondent may be permitted to remove or retain the child."⁵²

I. Abduction Prevention Order Required Upon Finding Credible Risk of Abduction

Courts are required to issue abduction prevention orders upon finding a credible risk of abduction⁵³ (*i.e.*, wrongful removal or retention) based on

and/or lack procedures for enforcing return orders under the Convention, or may not be U.S. treaty partners. These are listed risk factors; *see* UCAPA § 8(B)(i) – (iii). Country compliance reports are available on the State Department Web site. *See infra* note 87.

47. UCAPA § 7(a)(8)(A)–(G).

48. UCAPA § 7(a)(9)–(12).

49. For instance, social scientists have identified six personality profiles that may be helpful in predicting which parents may pose a risk of abduction. They are reported in *Family Abductors: Descriptive Profiles and Preventive Interventions*, *supra* note 7, and summarized in *Family Abduction*, *supra* note 6.

50. UCAPA § 7(a)(13) provides that the court shall consider any evidence that the petitioner or respondent "has engaged in any other conduct the court considers relevant to the risk of abduction."

51. UCAPA § 7(a) ("In determining whether there is a credible risk of abduction of a child, the court shall consider any evidence that the petitioner or respondent . . .") Even in UCAPA § 9 *ex parte* warrant cases, the respondent is entitled to a hearing promptly after the warrant is executed.

52. See the concluding two paragraphs of the UCAPA § 7 comment for an explanation of how this section might come into play when the respondent is legitimately seeking to relocate or escape domestic violence.

53. Early drafts of the Act required a petitioner to establish a *substantial risk* of abduction in order to trigger issuance of an abduction prevention order. The March 6, 2006 draft adopted the *credible risk* standard found in the final Act. "Credible risk" represents a middle ground

evidence presented at a hearing under the Act. Courts can also issue prevention orders on their own motion⁵⁴ in other child custody proceedings when the evidence establishes a credible risk of abduction.

J. Contents of an Abduction Prevention Order

Every abduction prevention order must include certain mandatory provisions; the remainder of the order is at the court's discretion.

I. MANDATORY PROVISIONS

At a minimum, UCAPA Section 8(b) requires every abduction prevention order to include the five provisions set forth in sections 8(a)(1)–(5):

- (1) the basis for the court's exercise of jurisdiction;
- (2) the manner in which notice and opportunity be heard were given to the persons entitled to notice of the proceedings;
- (3) a detailed description of each party's custody and visitation rights and residential arrangements for the child;
- (4) a provision stating that a violation of the order may subject the party in violation to civil and criminal penalties; and
- (5) identification of the child's country of habitual residence at the time of the issuance of the order.

between the earlier drafts and the California statute, which simply requires *a risk* of abduction. It finds support in the Hague Conference on Private International Law's *Guide to Good Practice* (*supra* note 10), which recommends that domestic legal provisions should enable State authorities to respond rapidly and effectively where there is a *credible risk* of abduction.

54. UCAPA § 8(b) provides: "If, at a hearing on a petition under this [act] or on the court's own motion, the court after reviewing the evidence finds a credible risk of abduction of the child, the court shall enter an abduction prevention order." When UCAPA § 8(b) is read in conjunction with UCAPA § 4(a) (*see* text accompanying note 26), there is some ambiguity as to whether it is mandatory or discretionary for a court to issue a prevention order on its own motion if the evidence establishes a credible risk of abduction. To reconcile the seeming incongruity, it is useful to compare the purposes of the two sections. UCAPA § 4 establishes standing to use UCAPA. It does not, however, require its use. Individuals and entities have the right under UCAPA §§ 4(b) and 4(c)—but not the obligation—to seek relief pursuant to the Act. By analogy, UCAPA § 4(a) confers on courts the authority, but not the duty, to act *sua sponte*. UCAPA § 8(b) describes the relief that must be ordered when a court, acting on its own motion pursuant to the authority granted by UCAPA § 4(a), finds a credible risk of abduction. In essence, when a court acts *sua sponte* and finds a credible risk of abduction, it must issue relief in accordance with UCAPA § 8(b).

The Texas and California prevention statutes also authorize courts to act on their own motion in prevention cases, but the statutes are worded and operate differently. CAL. FAM. CODE § 3048(b)(1) provides: "In cases in which the court becomes aware of facts which may indicate that there is a risk of abduction of a child, the court shall, either on its own motion or at the request of a party, determine whether measures are needed to prevent the abduction of the child by one parent. To make that determination, the court shall consider the risk of abduction of the child, obstacles to location, recovery and return if the child is abducted, and potential harm to the child if he or she is abducted." TEX. FAM. CODE § 153.501 provides: "In a suit, if credible evidence is presented to the court indicating a potential risk of the international abduction of a child by a parent of the child, the court, on its own motion or at the request of a party to the suit, shall determine . . . whether it is necessary for the court to take one or more of the measures described by Section . . . to protect the child from the risk of abduction by the parent."

Because these provisions are a matter of good drafting that help not only to prevent abductions but also to facilitate enforcement of custody determinations, the Act expressly provides that courts may include these provisions in their orders even when abduction prevention provisions are not ordered.⁵⁵ In practice, they should be included in every child custody determination.

Add to the above list of mandatory provisions other “measures and conditions, including those in subsections (c), (d), and (e), that are reasonably calculated to prevent abduction of the child, giving due consideration to the custody and visitation rights of the parties.”⁵⁶ The court may choose which measures and conditions to include from the statutory list or otherwise;⁵⁷ there is no fixed formula.⁵⁸ Optimally, courts will issue abduction prevention orders capable of achieving their objective without unduly burdening parental rights, recognizing, however, that restrictive measures are warranted under certain circumstances.⁵⁹

To determine what is reasonably calculated to prevent abduction, the court is required to consider “the age of the child, the potential harm to the child from an abduction,⁶⁰ the legal and practical difficulties of returning the child to the jurisdiction if abducted,⁶¹ and the reasons for the potential abduction, including evidence of domestic violence, stalking, or child abuse or neglect.”⁶² (Footnotes added). From a practical standpoint, this

55. UCAPA § 8(a). *See also* UCAPA § 8 cmt., paras. 2–5.

56. UCAPA § 8(b).

57. UCAPA § 8(c)–8(e).

58. The studies cited in note 7, *supra*, offer useful guidance in fashioning prevention orders because they correlate specific risk factors with suggested interventions.

59. In *Family Abductors: Descriptive Profiles and Preventive Interventions*, *supra* note 7, at 7, social scientists Johnston and Girdner:

propose that the more restrictive measures suggested in this Bulletin are warranted under three conditions: (1) When the risks for abduction are particularly high, as indicated by prior custody violations, clear evidence of plans to abduct, and overt threats to take the child; (2) When obstacles to locating and recovering an abducted child would be particularly great, as they would be in uncooperative jurisdictions in some States and abroad—especially in countries not party to the Hague Convention; and (3) When the child faces substantial potential harm from an abducting parent, such as a parent who has a serious mental or personality disorder, a history of abuse or violence, or little or no prior relationship with the child.

60. *See supra* note 6. For insights into the child’s perspective on being abducted, visit the Web site of Take Root (www.takeroot.org), a nonprofit organization of adults who were abducted as children by a parent or family member. Also visit the Polly Klaas Foundation’s parental kidnapping Web site at <http://www.stopfamilyabductionsnow.org>. Click the link for “Families and Their Stories.”

61. *See* OBSTACLES REPORT, *supra* note 10; FAMILY ABDUCTION, *supra* note 6; A FAMILY RESOURCE GUIDE ON INTERNATIONAL PARENTAL KIDNAPPING (OJJDP Jan. 2007), *available at* <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/215476.pdf>; Patricia Hoff, Parental Kidnapping: Prevention and Remedies (ABA Center on Children and the Law, rev. 2000) [hereinafter cited as Prevention and Remedies], *available at* <http://www.abanet.org/ftp/pub/child/pkprevrem.doc>.

62. UCAPA § 8(b).

means that the court must consider petitioner's evidence as to the potential harm to the child and obstacles to securing the child's return if an abduction were to occur,⁶³ as well as respondent's evidence in explanation and/or justification for the alleged potential conduct.

2. OTHER PREVENTION PROVISIONS

The prevention provisions, measures, and conditions set forth in Section 8 of UCAPA are neither exhaustive nor exclusive.⁶⁴ A petitioner may request, and a court may order, preventive measures not included in the Act. The organization of the prevention measures in the Act may suggest others. Specifically, sections 8(c), 8(d), and 8(e) of UCAPA, respectively, list: (i) prerequisites to, and restrictions on, travel with the child; (ii) prerequisites to exercising custody or visitation; and (iii) urgent measures to prevent imminent abductions.

By way of example only—and not as a substitute for reading Section 8 of UCAPA—the court may order the party traveling with the child to provide the other party with a travel itinerary, contact information for the child while away, and copies of travel documents⁶⁵ (such as airline tickets). The respondent may be prohibited from removing the child from the country (and other specified locations) without prior consent or applying for new or replacement passports or visas for the child, or may be required to surrender U.S. and foreign passports for the child. The court may order supervised visitation or require the respondent to post a bond or other security.⁶⁶ Imminent and in-progress abductions may necessitate special court orders (discussed, *infra*).

Parents concerned about domestic abductions are advised also to consider measures aimed principally at international abductions, because the relative ease of travel often leaves that door open. It is far better to prevent an international abduction than it is to navigate the complexities of securing a child's return from abroad—a result that is never guaranteed. Certain precautions are worth considering in every case, such as requesting entry of the child's name into the child's passport issuance alert pro-

63. See FAMILY ABDUCTION, *supra* note 6, chapters titled *Preventing Abduction and Preventing International Abduction*.

64. See UCAPA § 8(f) (“The remedies provided in this [act] are cumulative and do not affect the availability of other remedies to prevent abduction.”), and UCAPA § 8(e)(3) (To prevent imminent abduction of a child, a court may “grant any other relief allowed under the law of this state other than this [act].”).

65. “Travel document” is a defined term. See UCAPA § 2(9).

66. Of the reported prevention cases, many involve bonds, supervised visitation and passport controls. Case law summaries and citations are available, respectively, in *Prevention and Remedies*, *supra* note 61, and *FAMILY ABDUCTION*, *supra* note 6 (in the Appendix titled *Directory of Family Abduction Laws and Resources*).

gram.⁶⁷ Yet beware that this is an imperfect solution in cases involving dual national children, because foreign governments may freely issue travel documents to their citizens without regard to U.S. court orders; other preventive measures may also be beneficial (*e.g.*, supervised visitation, bonds, mirror orders).

Recall that custodial and noncustodial parents (and certain others) may seek prevention orders under UCAPA. Thus, the petitioner may be a custodial parent and the respondent a noncustodial parent, or vice versa. Prevention orders may bind one or both parties: most apply exclusively to the respondent, one applies only to the petitioner,⁶⁸ and several apply to either or both.⁶⁹ One provision directed at a respondent may only be ordered upon petitioner's request.⁷⁰

Judges writing orders pursuant to UCAPA may find it helpful to review, and possibly adapt, the form California judges use when issuing prevention orders (see page 54). At a minimum, language satisfying the mandatory requirements of UCAPA sections 8(a)(1)-(5) would have to be added. The form is available online at <http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/forms/documents/fl341b.pdf>.

K. Relief When Abduction Is Imminent

Section 8(e) of UCAPA lists remedies available to prevent imminent abductions.⁷¹ With the exception of the section 9 warrant incorporated by

67. UCAPA § 8(4)(a). A request form for entering a child's name into the passport issuance alert program is available on the State Department's Web site at http://www.travel.state.gov/pdf/entrychild_issuance.pdf. Other international abduction prevention information is available on the State Department Web site. See *infra* note 87.

68. UCAPA § 8(c)(4)(A) (directs the petitioner to place the child's name in the passport name-check system).

69. UCAPA § 8(c)(1) (applies to "a party traveling with the child"); § 8(c)(3) (requires a party to register the order in another state).

70. UCAPA § 8(6) ("upon the petitioner's request, a requirement that the respondent obtain an order from the relevant foreign country containing terms identical to the child-custody determination issued in the United States."). Requiring respondent to obtain a so-called "mirror order" can backfire if the foreign court addresses custody on the merits. Thus, the burden is placed on the petitioner to request this measure specifically, presumably after assessing the risks (which may be particularly challenging for pro se petitioners). Information about foreign law may be available from the State Department Office of Children's Issues and from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, International Division. Contact information is provided in note 87, *infra*.

71. UCAPA § 8(e) provides: "To prevent imminent abduction of a child, a court may: (1) issue a warrant to take physical custody of the child under Section 9 or the law of this state other than this [act]; (2) direct the use of law enforcement to take any action reasonably necessary to locate the child, obtain return of the child, or enforce a custody determination under this [act] or the law of this state other than this [act]; or (3) grant any other relief allowed under the law of this state other than this [act]."

reference in Section 8(e)(1), the remedies apply to both wrongful removals and retentions. Each subparagraph makes clear that the court may also issue relief under other state law.⁷² This is an important reminder to consider all available remedies, not only those found in UCAPA.

In fact, there are circumstances when effective relief may *only* be available under state law other than the UCAPA. Imminent wrongful retention cases that cannot be remedied under Section 9 of UCAPA (which is limited to imminent wrongful removals), or other sections of the Act, are an example. It might be possible to obtain injunctive or other relief to prevent an imminent wrongful retention that could not be redressed under section 9.⁷³

1. SECTION 9 WARRANT TO TAKE PHYSICAL CUSTODY OF CHILD

Extraordinary relief in the form of a warrant to take physical custody of child (“warrant,” “§ 9 warrant,” “pick up order”), issued *ex parte*, is available under Section 9(a) if a petition filed under UCAPA alleges and “the court finds that there is a credible risk that the child is imminently likely to be wrongfully removed.” This relief is neither required nor automatic, but it is an effective intervention that courts can use to prevent an imminent wrongful removal.

A Section 9 warrant is reserved for urgent situations and only when certain conditions are met. As noted above, a warrant is only available to prevent the imminent wrongful removal of a child. A court may not issue a Section 9 warrant unless a UCAPA petition has been filed.⁷⁴ This contrasts with all other prevention measures in the Act, which may be ordered by a court *sua sponte* in *any* child custody proceeding.⁷⁵ However, the absence of a specific prayer for relief in a UCAPA petition does not constrain a court from issuing a warrant under Section 9.

72. *Id.* See also UCAPA §§ 8(f) and 9(h).

73. Wrongful retentions not remediable with a UCAPA § 9 warrant might include, for example, the anticipated refusal by a noncustodial parent to return a child after a lawful visit, or by a custodial parent to allow the child to visit as prescribed by the custody order. State law other than UCAPA may allow for issuance of an injunction to compel compliance with the order. Alternatively, enforcing an existing custody/visitation determination would be a viable remedy if the anticipated wrongful retention were to occur. Expedited enforcement procedures, most with “next day” hearings, are available in most states under the UCCJEA. Prevention measures could be sought under this Act in the appropriate court to deter future compliance problems. In a pre-decree wrongful retention scenario, a party could seek prevention measures (other than a § 9 warrant) under UCAPA in the context of a proceeding for an initial custody determination or temporary emergency order.

74. UCAPA § 9(a).

75. *Id.* at § 4(a).

L. Relevant Evidence: Petition and Database Searches

The court may issue a Section 9 warrant based on allegations in the UCAPA petition.⁷⁶ In addition, Section 9(d) authorizes courts to order a search of computerized federal and state databases⁷⁷ for information about the parties' histories with respect to domestic violence, stalking, or child abuse or neglect. Courts may have second thoughts about issuing *ex parte* relief to petitioners with abusive backgrounds. If the court determines to issue the warrant, this information may be useful in choosing an appropriate interim placement for the child pending the hearing.

These discretionary database searches may be ordered "if feasible."⁷⁸ The court should weigh the information that may be gleaned from database searches with the time it takes to run them, as time is of the essence in imminent removal cases. If information can be obtained without delay—and in many cases it can—then searches are worth conducting. Judges unfamiliar with conducting database searches will find the comment to this section particularly instructive.

The Act itself does not require a hearing.⁷⁹ Thus, under Section 9(a) the court may issue the warrant on the basis of the allegations in the petition if it finds "that there is a credible risk that the child is imminently likely to be wrongfully removed."

M. Contents of the Warrant

The warrant must include the four provisions set forth in Section 9(c) of UCAPA. The most important from the petitioner's standpoint is the directive to law enforcement to pick up the child. The respondent, on the other hand, will appreciate Section 9(b), which says that the warrant must set a hearing date "at the earliest possible time after the *ex parte* warrant is executed, but not later than the next judicial day unless a hearing on that

76. A petition for a § 9 warrant is a UCAPA petition and as such must satisfy the UCAPA § 6 pleading requirements.

77. The UCAPA § 9 comment identifies numerous databases that may have relevant information, and explains how these databases may be checked. Federal databases include National Crime Information Center (NCIC) files (e.g., protection order files; warrant files) and the national sex offender registry. States may have comparable databases and also may maintain registries of persons convicted of child abuse and neglect.

78. UCAPA § 9(d).

79. UCAPA § 9(a) differs from its prototype, UCCJEA § 311(b), which requires a court to hear the testimony of the petitioner or another witness prior to issuing a pick-up order for a child. The second paragraph of the UCAPA § 9 comment would import that requirement: "The court should hear the testimony of the petitioner or another witness before issuing the warrant. The testimony may be heard in person, by telephone, or by any other means acceptable under local law, which may include video conferencing or use of other technology."

date is impossible.” Thus, it is conceivable that the hearing could be held on the same day the warrant is executed.

The warrant is enforceable intrastate and interstate. Section 9(f) of UCAPA expressly provides that “a warrant to take physical custody of a child, issued by this state or another state, is enforceable throughout this state.”⁸⁰ This enables law enforcement in State A to enlist the help of law enforcement in State B to execute State A’s pick-up order if/when the abductor and child are located in State B. This is an especially important tool to stop an abductor who is in flight with the child and may be traveling interstate.

The respondent must be served virtually simultaneously with the child’s pick-up.⁸¹ At the hearing, the respondent can contest the underlying allegations, and may also present evidence that the petitioner sought the warrant in bad faith or to harass. If persuaded by such evidence, the court may award the respondent reasonable attorney’s fees, costs and expenses.⁸²

Section 9 of UCAPA is modeled on Section 311 of the UCCJEA.⁸³ A critical distinction is that a UCAPA Section 9 warrant may be obtained pre- and post-decree; a custody determination need not be in effect. In contrast, a UCCJEA Section 311 warrant is only available post-decree. It must be requested in conjunction with an action to enforce an existing custody determination. To illustrate the difference, a parent may petition for a warrant under UCAPA, even though there is no custody order concerning the child, upon discovering that the other parent has secretly obtained a passport for the child and has purchased airline tickets for the two of them on a flight the same day. The parent could not seek a warrant under UCCJEA because there is no custody determination to enforce. If there is a custody order, the parent could elect to seek a warrant under UCAPA or UCCJEA.

80. The language resembles Section 4 (“Nonjudicial Enforcement of Order”) of the Uniform Interstate Enforcement of Domestic Violence Protection Orders Act (*available at* <http://www.law.upenn.edu/bll/ulc/uiedvoa/2002final.htm>), to the effect that law enforcement officers shall enforce a valid foreign order as if it were a local order.

81. UCAPA § 9(e).

82. *Id.* at § 9(g).

83. UCCJEA § 311 authorizes and provides procedures for an enforcing court to issue a “warrant to take physical custody of child” when a child is imminently likely to be removed from the state. Issuance of a warrant under UCCJEA § 311 is tied to an enforcement action (*i.e.*, a warrant may only be issued in conjunction with proceedings to enforce an existing custody/visitation order). The UCCJEA provides no comparable relief to prevent pre-decree imminent abductions. UCAPA § 9 fills this void. It also charts new territory. Courts are authorized to assess attorney’s fees against petitioners seeking UCAPA § 9 warrants in bad faith or to harass, and to search state and federal databases for parties’ relevant histories to safeguard against issuance of ex parte orders that might endanger the child.

*N. Duration of Abduction Prevention Orders*⁸⁴

The court may expressly provide an expiration date in the abduction prevention order. The provisions may be set to expire at different times. Absent an expiration date(s), the order remains in effect until the child turns 18 or is emancipated, or the order is modified, revoked, vacated, or superceded by a court with child custody jurisdiction.

O. Safeguards Against Misuse of the Act

UCAPA seeks to deter wrongful removal and retention of children. The operative word is “wrongful.” Courts will judge from the pleadings and evidence whether the conduct sought to be prevented is wrongful and, if so, will issue suitable prevention measures. The Prefatory Note is unequivocal: “The Act is not meant to prevent a legitimate relocation action filed in accordance with the law of the state having jurisdiction to make a child custody determination nor to prevent a victim of domestic violence from escaping abuse.” Numerous comments sound the same theme, shedding light on what is *not* intended as wrongful.⁸⁵ Provisions of the Act dealing with pleading requirements, evidence, and database searches seek to alert courts when the Act is being used by abductors or abusers, or for unintended purposes, and the fee-shifting provision in Section 9 enables courts to impose attorney’s fees, costs, and expenses on petitioners seeking warrants in bad faith or to harass.

III. Conclusion

Anyone who has been involved in any aspect of a domestic or international child abduction case understands the truth to the adage: *Prevention is worth a pound of cure*. The Uniform Child Abduction Prevention Act is worth a pound of cure. However, it is not a panacea. The Act does not and cannot eliminate all risk of abduction, but that does not detract from its value.

Parents who have tried unsuccessfully to persuade courts to take pre-emptive action to prevent abductions, only to have their children abducted after being denied relief,⁸⁶ can appreciate the significance of a law that

84. UCAPA § 10.

85. See comments accompanying UCAPA § 5 (last paragraph), § 6 (penultimate paragraph) (quoted in note 40, *supra*), § 7 (first, fourth and fifth paragraphs), § 9 (third, fourth, and fifth paragraphs).

86. See, e.g., *Mubarak v. Mubarak*, 420 S.E.2d 225 (Va. Ct. App. 1992). (In an earlier phase of the reported case, the mother sought to have the father’s visitation supervised following his threats to kidnap the couple’s three children and remove them from the United States. The court denied supervised visitation. Subsequently, the father disappeared with the three children, then

codifies risk factors for abduction. So, too, should judges appreciate the guidance this law provides. Finally there is a statutory rubric for considering parents' pleas for prevention orders and responding constructively. Judges do not need UCAPA to issue orders protecting children at risk of abduction. However, the Act transforms an *ad hoc* process into a more methodical analysis of risk factors and available interventions.

Significantly, UCAPA by its own terms does not preempt the prevention field. Neither its risk factors nor its remedies are exclusive or exhaustive. UCAPA users should consider it a starting point but not necessarily an endpoint in making abduction prevention cases and orders. Much useful prevention information and guidance is available from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, the Department of State Office of Children's Issues, and the Hague Conference on Private International Law.⁸⁷

If its brief legislative history⁸⁸ is any indication, UCAPA should receive favorable consideration in legislatures across the country, especially in states that have already enacted the UCCJEA. (Indeed, by all rights, UCAPA could have been Article 4 of the UCCJEA.⁸⁹) Importantly, UCAPA's utility is not limited to enacting states. Even before its enactment, UCAPA can serve as a valuable resource for lawyers framing prevention petitions and judges issuing abduction prevention orders. The key lies in understanding and using the Act.

ages 4, 3, and 1. The children were located in Jordan several months later, and the mother regained physical custody through the intervention of the Jordanian government and army.)

87. The U.S. Department of State, Office of Children's Issues (OCI), handles hundreds of international child abduction cases annually, as does the International Division of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC), which also has a domestic abduction caseload.

Contact OCI at 202-736-7000, or visit the Web site, www.travel.state.gov, for a wealth of material. From the top of the homepage, click the "Children and Family" link, then click the "International Child Abduction" link and follow all prompts beginning with "Prevention Tools."

Contact NCMEC's International Division toll free at 1-888-246-2632. Ask about NCMEC's prevention package. Take advantage of the materials available on the Web site at www.missingkids.com. From the homepage, click on "Resources for Attorneys." Then click the "International Abductions" link, followed by the "Preventing Child Abduction" link. The next page is a virtual gateway to many relevant studies, publications, and other resources, many of which are cited elsewhere in this article.

If there is a concern about a possible abduction to a country that is a U.S. treaty partner under the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, visit the Web site of the Hague Conference on Private International Law at www.hcch.net. Follow the prompts for the Child Abduction Section to find an array of resources about the Convention. The GUIDE TO GOOD PRACTICE, *supra* note 10, is recommended reading when the risk of international abduction is of primary concern.

88. *See supra* note 2.

89. The five jurisdictions (listed in note 35, *supra*) that have not yet enacted the UCCJEA should consider enacting it simultaneously with UCAPA. Legislative counsel responsible for codifying law should ensure UCAPA's proximity in the code to the UCCJEA.

