So, as promised, here is a summation of my conversation with a “do-gooder, child-rescuing” child protective caseworker who inadvertently harms children as a result of inexperience, lack of education in child development, absolutely no understanding of family dynamics, complete ignorance about the PAS, and probably subjective reaction to his own imperfect childhood. And yet, he would probably be incredulous and take umbrage by my description of him as someone who harms children.

This summary is virtually identical to events that occur in every alienation that I have encountered since 1994, when I went into private practice as a Family Therapist. So I would not be surprised if a member of any PAS family is able to perceive herself/himself in the following case description.

The family consists of three teenagers, one girl and two boys. Several months ago they were transferred to the permanent custody of their alienated parent after a very knowledgeable and competent forensic evaluator (of which we have far too few) had testified as to the alienation in the case and that it is a form of child abuse. All contact by the alienating parent with the children was denied----not even phone calls or supervised visits. (Which I have found to be a necessary condition in order to facilitate the transfer of custody.) The children quickly adjusted to and responded positively to their loving, formally alienated parent. And all their very serious emotional and behavioral symptoms that they had exhibited while in the care of their alienating parent completely disappeared! (So much for biochemical causes of mental disorders.) The transition and adjustment went so smoothly that no professional services were required. (Please take note all custody judges. This ease of the change in custody is the norm and not the exception. Because the expressed enmity for and rejection of the targeted/alienated parent is spurious, the PAS child’s feelings flip like a light switch when the alienating parent is disempowered by the loss of custody and denial of contact which is used to brainwash the child against the alienated parent.)

But of course the obsessed alienating parent refused to accept the loss of custody and subsequently appealed the court ruling and requested the return of the children. The Appellate Court did not reverse custody but implausibly granted the alienating parent unsupervised visitation with the children. After every visit, the children returned to the home of the once again alienated parent and became aggressive, hostile, disrespectful, and defiant. The ease of transition was undone after just one visit with the alienating parent. The alienated parent filed a counter motion to terminate contact between the children and the alienating parent, documenting the children's misbehavior and return of symptoms after each visit with the alienating parent. The court’s remedy was to deny the alienated parent's request and instead required therapy. I was designated as the family therapist.

Guess what the alienating parent did next to sabotage the transfer of custody? A completely frivolous report was filed with child protective services against the alienated parent, and I received a call from the CPS caseworker, who questioned the therapy I was providing to the family. Hmm, someone with a bachelor's degree in who knows what was questioning a therapist who has a Masters degree specializing in family therapy; has 18 doctoral credits in family therapy; had 1,000 hours of training in family therapy at the Institute of child psychiatrist, Salvador Minuchin, the most respected, world-renowned child psychiatrist, and whose 100 of those 1000 hours of supervision was provided by Salvador Minuchin himself; and who has a family therapy practice spanning 18 years! Who did this caseworker think he was? He really believed he had the credentials to question 1) my videotaping of the sessions over the children’s objections (something that every therapist who treats the PAS family must do to protect against false allegations of what occurs in the therapy); 2) my refusal to provide individual therapy for the brainwashed children so as to take into consideration their judgments of their parents; 3) my refusal to give credence to the children’s feelings of negativity towards their alienated parent and desires to return to their alienating parent.

Give me a break! Imagine this: the CASEWORKER challenged me with the following comment, “Well shouldn't the children’s feelings be recognized and considered?” To which I responded, “So what would CPS do if a child expressed the desire and intention not to attend school, and the parent gratified that wish? What would CPS do if a child’s wish was to reject medical care, and the parent complied? Do we not consider the relationship with a parent equally necessary to a child as are education and medical care? Do we really believe that the immaturity of a child’s cognitive and emotional development should permit anointing them with veto power over such a significant decision as custody? And finally, how do you distinguish the true feelings of brainwashed children from those of their alienating parent?” The CPS caseworker even had the hubris to suggest to the alienated parent to obtain the services of a therapist who would provide individual therapy to the children. Well, CPS caseworker, you better attempt have the judge rescind the court order assigning me as the family therapist.

Okay, I recognize freely that I sound a bit pedantic in enumerating my credentials. But I really do wish to make a point here: one of the major points of my book is that all treatment modalities not created equal, and caseworkers are not professionals nor have been trained to do the job to which they are assigned. I have therefore argued in my book that only someone who is adequately trained in family dynamics is able to recognize alienation and should be anointed with the power to treat families of high conflict divorce and/or make recommendations to the court regarding custody. I am willing to bet my license that the destructive recommendations made by therapists are not typically made by licensed marriage and family therapists or mental health professionals who have had intense training in dysfunctional family dynamics. (Of course, there will always be some exceptions.)

I certainly understand the anger of those who have suffered the pain of alienation, having been a child victim of the PAS and as a targeted professional. And I acknowledge that there are far too many professionals in the mental health, child protective, law enforcement, and matrimonial and judicial systems who encourage an adversarial approach to child custody and who unjustifiably demean, denounce and support the eradication of the targeted parent for the child's life. But it would be a mistake to ascribe culpability to these professions as a whole. Doing so only discourages and disheartens those professionals who are genuinely endeavoring to eradicate the PAS.