



Handouts for Barbara Fidler session – 9:00-10:30 a.m.

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Factors Contributing to and Sustaining PCCPs (Kelly & Johnston, 2021, adapted)	2
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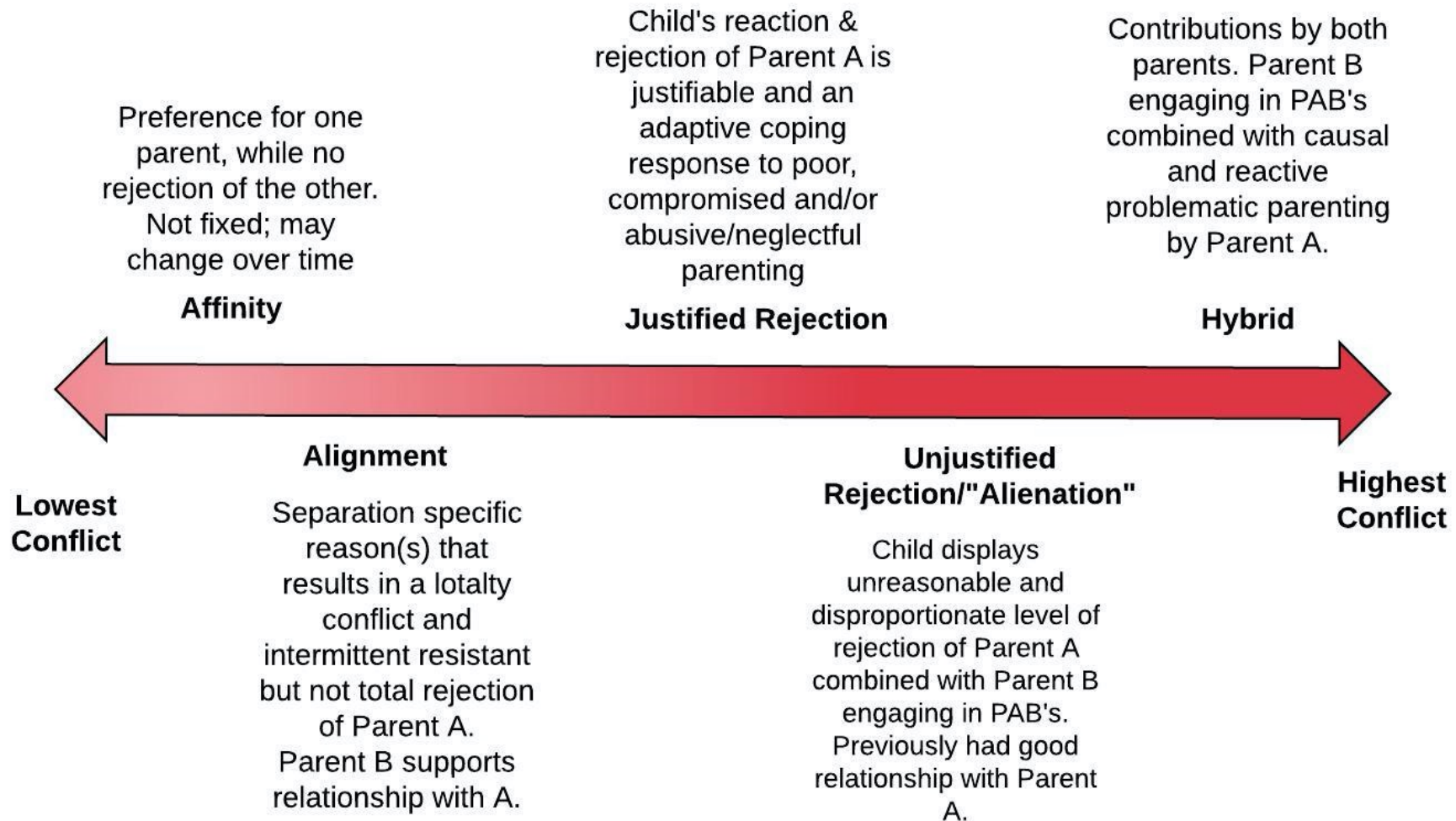


Multi-Factor Considerations for PCCP

Safety Issues	Unresolved Traumas	Unresolved Conflicts	Child Relates Factors	Parenting Problems	Parental Alienating Behaviors
Family Violence	Phobias	Sibling Conflicts	Ages, Stages and Temperament	Rigidity in Parenting	Badmouthing the Other Parent
Child Abuse and Neglect	Panic Reactions	Blended Family Conflicts	Mental Health Issues	Parenting Competency Deficits	Limiting or Interfering with Contact
Substance Misuse	Psychosomatic Complaints	Coparenting Conflicts	Special Needs	Parent Attunement Problems	Forcing the Child to Choose
Pet Abuse	Memory Fog	Ongoing Parent-Child Conflicts	Independence of Child's Voice	Mental Health Problems	Cultivating Dependency

Drozd, L., Saini, M., Deutsch, R. (2018). Assessment and Intervention in Resist/Refuse Cases: A Trauma-Informed Approach. AFCC 55th Annual Conference, Compassionate Family Court Systems: The Role of Trauma-Informed Jurisprudence. Washington Hilton, Washington, DC (June 6-9, 2018)

Spectrum of PCCP's and RRD



Appendix A from: Fidler, B. & Bala, N. (2020). *Concepts, Controversies & Conundrums of “Alienation”*: *Lessons Learned in a Decade and Reflections on Challenges Ahead*. *Family Court Review*, 58(2), 576-603.

Typical Behaviors, Perceptions and Beliefs of Children & Parents in Alienation Cases^{1 2}

Child
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inconsistent behavior, including degrees of resistance, in the presence of the favored parent as opposed to when that parent is absent; • Inconsistency between what is <i>stated or alleged</i> about rejected parent and how child <i>behaves</i> with rejected parent; • Inconsistent behavior with the rejected parent (e.g. defiant, hostile) while may behave well with other adults; • Opinion of each parent is rigid, one-sided, all good or all bad; idealizes one parent and devalues the other; refusal or reticence to consider alternate views, explanations; • Weak, trivial, frivolous, unelaborated, false and irrational reasons to justify dislike, hatred, resistance or rejection of one parent; • Revision of history to eliminate or diminish any positive memories of experiences with rejected parent; may report negative events with the rejected parent that could not possibly be remembered (before child is 3 or 4 yrs); • Stories are repetitive and lacking in detail and depth; • Use of “borrowed scenarios” – descriptions adopted from the favored parent or aligned family members; • Report mimics that of siblings rather than own actual experience; • Reactions and perceptions unjustified or disproportionate to rejected parent’s behaviors; • Talks openly and without prompting about rejected parent’s perceived shortcomings; • Claim they are fearful, but are aggressive, confrontational, even belligerent; • Calls rejected parent by their first name; • Badmouths or extends hatred to rejected parent’s extended family or even pets of rejected parent (hatred by association); may extend to vilification of rejected parent; unrelenting campaign of denigration, hatred; • Lack of guilt or ambivalence regarding cruelty or unkind behavior towards rejected parent; • Anger at rejected parent for perceived abandonment, even though rejected parent seeks relationship; • Speech about rejected parent is brittle, a litany; obsessed; has an artificial quality; affect does not match words; no conviction; uses adult language; has a rehearsed quality; • Denial of hope for reconciliation; no acknowledgement of desire for reconciliation • Reflexive support of favored parent in the parental conflict

¹ This Table relies on previous reviews of the literature (e.g., Baker, 2005; Baker & Darnall, 2006; Cartwright, 2006; Garber, 2007, 2011; Johnston, Walters & Olesen, 2005; Kelly & Johnston, 2001). This Table has been adapted from earlier versions, including in Fidler, Bala, Birnbaum & Kavassalis, 2008; Fidler, Bala, & Saini, 2013, and Fidler & Ward, 2017).

² Behaviors listed in this table are not differentiated by level or severity. While these are typical behaviors, all of them will not be present in every case.

- “Independent thinker phenomena” – child claims these negative views about the rejected parent are their own, and not the favored parent’s beliefs;
- Distorted perceptions and beliefs go unchallenged by favored parent;
- Expresses worry for preferred parent, desire to care for that parent; or, defensive denial child is indeed worried about parent;
- Acts to appease, or avoid rejection or withdrawal of attention by or love from favored parent;
- Role corruption or reversal with favored parent, child triangulated (e.g. parentification, adultification, infantilization);
- Internalizing (eg., anxiety, phobic reactions, depression, low self esteem behavior problems);
- Externalizing (aggressive to people or objects, or other acting out bullying, oppositional behavioral problems);
- May appear to function adequately in other environments than with rejected parent (eg., school, social), but tends to have difficulty interpersonally).

Favored Parent (and possibly Alienating Parent)

- Makes statements or demonstrates behavior indicating separation is experienced as humiliating;
- Badmouthing, denigrating of other parent’s qualities, parenting, involvement with child;
- Believes or portrays other parent as dangerous (harmful, angry, mean) or sick; convinced of harm or abuse by other parent, despite absence of evidence; especially concerning if there are repeated unfounded allegations of sexual, physical and/or emotional abuse despite independent investigations do not support;
- Believes or implies other parent never really loved or wanted the child;
- Portrays self as parent who was the only “real” or involved parent;
- Believes other parent is not “worthy” of relationship with the child or has abandoned child;
- Acts fearful and/or suspicious of other parent in front of child; instills fear and rejection of other parent;
- Fosters dependency on and need for protector of child in favored parent;
- Withdrawal of love and approval; love of favored parent is conditional on the child not showing love or positive feelings for other parent;
- Minimizing actual and symbolic contact with other parent (eg., no or removal of photos or other reminders of other parent in the home);
- Insists that the child has the right to make decisions about contact; tells the child: “It’s up to you.”
- Refuses to talk directly to parent; refuses to be in same room or close proximity; does not let rejected parent come to door to pick up child;
- Rarely talks about the other parent to the child; uninterested in child’s time with other parent after contact; gives a cold shoulder, silent treatment, or is moody after child’s returns unless child expresses dissatisfaction about the contact;
- Refusal to hear positive comments about rejected parent; quick to discount child’s good times as trivial and unimportant;
- Intercepts calls and messages from rejected parent;

- No encouragement of calls by child to other parent between contacts; rationalizes that child does not ask;
- Tells child fun things that were missed during the child's time with other parent;
- Arranges conflicting activities; talks about missed activities;
- Indulges child with material possessions and privileges;
- Sets few limits or is rigid about routines, rules and expectations;
- No concern for missed time with other parent;
- Makes statements and then denies what was said;
- Body language and nonverbal communication reveals lack of interest, disdain and disapproval;
- Engages in inquisition of child after time spent with the other parent;
- Rejected parent is discouraged or refused permission to attend school events and activities;
- Telephone messages, gifts and mail from other parent to child are destroyed, ignored or passed on to the child with disdain;
- Restricts or withholds other parent's access to child related information (about school, activities, health);
- Distorts any comments of child that might justify the accusations about abusive parenting or negative behavior;
- Doesn't believe child has any need for relationship with other parent;
- When child calls during contact with other parent and is quiet or non-communicative, parent wrongly assumes child has been pressured by rejected parent, or concludes child is uncomfortable with rejected parent, thereby confirming evidence of bad parenting, with no appreciation that child is in loyalty conflict or uncomfortable sharing positive experiences with the favored parent;
- Repeats negatives and embellishes or exaggerate negative attributes of other parent;
- Neglects or avoids talking positively about the other parent or child's time with other parent;
- Psychopathology, mental illness, personality disorder or characteristics, substance/alcohol abuse manifest in unfounded allegations of abuse and/or intimate partner violence and/or; abusive/neglectful parenting;
- Delusional false statements repeated to child; distorts history and other parent's participation in the child's life; claims other parent has totally changed since separation;
- Projection of own thoughts, feelings and behaviors onto the other parent;
- Does not correct child's rude, defiant and/or omnipotent behavior directed towards the other parent (or extended family), but would never permit child to do this with others;
- Says other parent left "us," divorced "us" and doesn't love "us;"
- Over-involves or confides in child about the marriage, adult matters and litigation;
- Child required to keep secrets and spy or report back on other parent;
- Overt and covert threats to withdraw love and affection from child unless other parent is rejected;
- Lack of courtesy to rejected parent, manifest directly or indirectly to varying degrees;
- Not permit child to take (or return with) certain clothing, cellphones, toys, etc.;
- "Therapist shopping" for child;
- Relocation for minor reasons and with little concern for effects on child

- Inflexibility around making occasional changes to the schedule to accommodate special events or occasions (eg., weddings, funerals, special birthdays, etc.);
- Changes child's last name without permission of other parent;
- Does not put the other parent's name on school, extracurricular and health forms;
- Moves away without notice or hides child from other parent.

Rejected (Alienated) Parent (Listed behaviors do not reach the level of abuse or warrant the child's disproportionate response or contact refusal. If behaviors reach level of abuse, the correct identification of the contact problem is justified rejection)

- Lax or intermittently rigid or punitive parenting style;
- Outrage at child's challenge to his/her authority;
- Passivity or withdrawal in face of conflict;
- Feelings of helplessness in response to child's dramatically changed behavior;
- Immature, self-centered in relation to child;
- Puts own needs ahead of child;
- Loses temper, angry, demanding, intimidating character traits, but not to level of abuse;
- Counter-rejecting behavior towards child in response to child's rejection;
- Loss of hope that anything or anyone can change the child's new belief system;
- Lacks empathic connection to child;
- Critical or demanding traits, present in marriage, continue and take on new meaning;
- Inept and unempathic pursuit of child, pushes calls and letters, unannounced or embarrassing appearances at school or activities;
- Challenges child's beliefs or attitudes, and tries to convince child otherwise;
- Tells the child they are parroting other parent;
- With child, vents and/or blames other parent for brainwashing child; takes no responsibility for family circumstance;
- Dismissive of child's feelings and negative attitudes;
- Attempts to induce guilt in child;
- May use force to attempt to reassert parental position;
- Mental illness, personality disorder or characteristics but does not manifest to the point of abusive/neglectful parenting.

Appendix B

Behavioral Manifestations of Parent and Child Behaviors By Level of Severity in Alienation Cases³

Mild

- Usually, younger children, under 8 or 9 years;
- Some parental alienating behaviors (e.g., contact interference, badmouthing), but limited and not in a consistent pattern; likely unwitting and not an effort to prevent child's relationship with other parent;
- Favored parent values child's relationship with other parent, but occasional displays of misguided or justified protective behaviors
- Parents are usually able to cooperate on major and day to day child-related decisions, and parental conflict is limited and co-parenting communication is usually respectful;
- Child values relationship with both parents but displays discomfort (not extended to extended family), or may be mildly or situationally disillusioned, unhappy or angry with one parent;
- Situational and infrequent parent-child relationship strain;
- Few resisting child behaviors at transitions; once preferred parent departs, child resumes comfort level with other parent;
- Contact is occurring combined with minor interruptions of parent-child contact (e.g., late, missed visits, short-lived transition difficulties in presence of preferred parent);
- Duration of interruptions in parenting schedule that was previously agreed or ordered has been relatively brief (e.g., not more than 6 months);
- Parents and child(ren) are generally flexible, but show inflexibility at times;
- Parents are generally to separate their own needs and feelings from those of the child's
- Both parents statements and demonstrated behavior provide indications they are responsive to treatment/education to improve the parent-child relationship and their own parenting; parents can be reassured;
- Parents generally compliant with parenting plan, treatment agreement and court orders

Moderate

- Usually older children, commencing around 8 or 9 years (although in some cases children as young as 4 or 5 can show early signs of becoming alienated, which fall in Mild or Moderate category) ;
- Child may be disillusioned (unhappy about separation, new partner, angry with one parent), not "alienated"
- Difficulties with transitions with child insisting they don't want to go;
- Child takes longer to settle in after transitions than at mild level; guarded and cautious initially;
- Child 's rejection behaviors reemerge in anticipation of returning to favored parent prior to transition back.

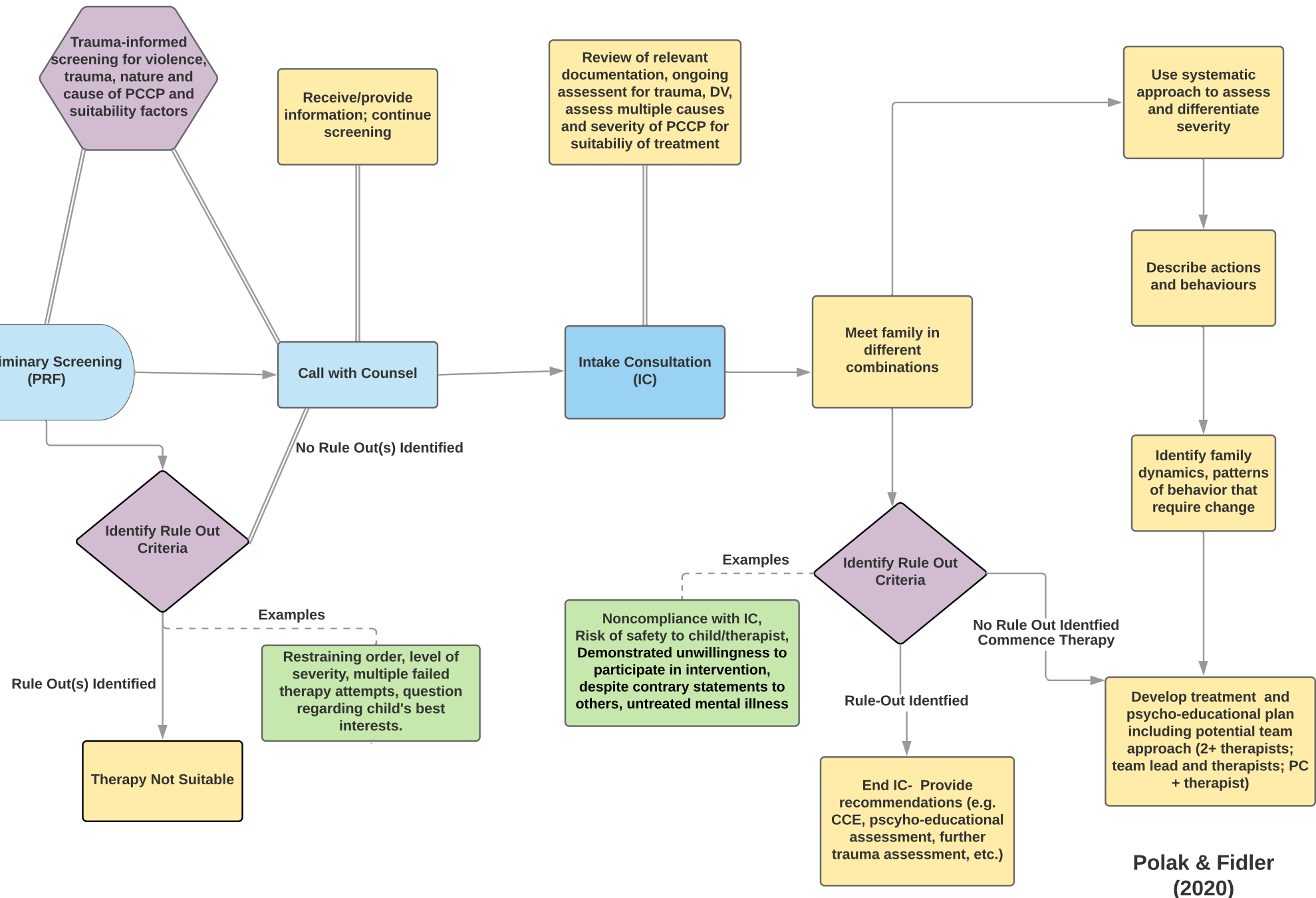
³ Adapted from Fidler & Ward (2017).

- Child's displays more resistance than at mild level, although reactions are mixed, confused or inconsistent (e.g. before or during transitions, while with rejected parent);
- Some contact is occurring; may be sporadic, infrequent or delayed; pattern of missed opportunities for parent-child contact evident;
- Parents or child generally more rigid but some instances of flexibility;
- Some remnants/indications of warm/loving relationship with rejected parent;
- Parent's overprotection undermines (unwittingly or intentionally) the child's relationship with other parent;
- More frequent episodic (than in mild cases) parental alienating behaviors (contact interference, badmouthing, undermining, exaggeration, distortion); may be intentional to alienate or may be unintentional (protective);
- Parents able, to some extent, to separate own needs/views from those of the child;
- Favored parent can be reassured at times and to some extent;
- Favored parent may be willing to meet with other parent;
- Favored parent willing to attend (or is attending) treatment, but sporadic and/or with minimal success;
- Co-parenting communication may exist for specific informational transactions but is strained or non-existent for major child-related decisions; parent communication is terse and less civil;
- Parent(s) demonstrate periodic lapses but generally compliant with parenting plan, treatment agreements and/or court orders;
- Parent(s) inconsistently responsive to education and direction.

Severe

- Intrusive and psychologically controlling parenting by favored parent (see Barber, 2002);
- Favored parent may have severe personality disorders or characteristics may be (e.g., paranoid, antisocial, borderline, narcissistic); or even mental illness (psychotic or quasi psychotic thinking, profound emotional dysregulation, extreme or bizarre behavior);
- Favored parent identifies actions as protecting (rights of) child, despite repeated investigations or evidence demonstrating the risk of future harm is improbable;
- Favored parent advances allegations of abuse (emotional, physical or sexual) against the other parent, despite independent investigation (child protection, police or medical) finding no support;
- Eight "alienated child behaviors" present and stronger than in mild or moderate cases
 - Repeated denigration of one parent
 - Lack of ambivalence
 - Child claims to be "independent thinker" but clearly influenced by favored parent
 - Reflexive support for favored parent
 - Absence of guilt about bad feelings of rejected parent
 - Descriptions of poor conduct of rejected parent based on favored parent claims
 - Animosity towards relatives of rejected parent;
- Child threatens to run away or harm self, rejected parent or others;
- Child runs away or exhibits self harm;
- Child acts out or behaves aggressively (towards rejected parent or others, destruction of property);
- Child guarded and hyper-vigilant to perceived threat of rejected parent, despite absence confirmed history of abuse;

- No or very infrequent contact between child and rejected parent for significant length of time (e.g 12-24 months or more); contact problem chronic; if there is contact, child's resistance does not subside during time with rejected parent;
- Inflexible position taken by child and favored parent; cannot be reassured, no ability to suspend belief to even consider the possibility of another perspective;
- Favored parent or child refusing therapy; not willing participants;
- Previous unsuccessful attempt(s) at therapy for family members;
- Chronic non-compliance with parenting plan, treatment agreement, and/or court orders.



Assessment: Level of Severity	Mild	Moderate	Severe
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parental conduct 2. Protection vs the probability of harm 3. Rigidity of child's perceptions/behavior towards their parents 4. Frequency of parent-child contact 5. Duration of strained relationships 6. History of parents' rigidity 7. Responsiveness to education/treatment as suggested 8. Compliance with court, orders, parenting plans, and treatment agreements 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Minimal interference/ badmouthing 2. Parent values child's relationship with other parent but occasionally displays misguided protective behavior 3. Child values relationship with both parents, but displays discomfort (not extended to extended family) 4. Minor interruptions of parent-child contact (eg. late, missed visits, short-lived transition difficulties in presence of preferred parent) 5. Situational and infrequent relationship strain (eg. due to affinity, alignment, expected and time-limited upset over parents' separation) 6. Generally flexible but can be rigid 7. Responsive to treatment/education to improve parent-child relationships 8. Compliant with parenting plan, 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Episodic interference / badmouthing 2. Parent's overprotection (unwittingly or intentionally) undermines child's relationship with the other parent 3. Child displays more resistance than at mild level, although reactions are mixed, confused, or inconsistent (eg. before or during transitions, while with resisted parent) 4. Contact is sporadic, infrequent, or delayed 5. Pattern of missed opportunities for parent-child contact; child takes longer to settle in after transitions than at mild level, and may become unsettled closer to return time to other parent 6. Generally rigid but some instances of flexibility 7. Attends therapy but sporadic and/or with minimal success 8. Inconsistent compliance with parenting plan, treatment agreement and court orders 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Psychologically abusive behaviors related to mental health issues (eg. CCV, paranoia, encapsulated delusions) 2. Identifies actions as protecting (rights of) child, despite repeated investigations or evidence that demonstrates risk of future harm is improbable, or make malicious allegations knowing they are unfounded 3. Rigid / extreme child reaction to rejected parent (eg., threats to run away, of harm to self or others, acting out, aggressive behavior, refusal to eat) 4. No or very infrequent contact between child and RP 5. Chronic parent-child disruptions 6. Inflexible position taking 7. Refusal of treatment / Previous attempts for treatment unsuccessful 8. Noncompliance with parenting plan, treatment agreement or court orders
Legal Interventions: From court support, monitoring to intervening	<p>Detailed parenting plan, including specified parenting time with resisted parent, and primary residence care with preferred parent</p> <p>Early case conference</p> <p>Court management and monitoring</p> <p>Referral to parenting education or counselling with experienced and adequately trained therapist</p> <p>Warning of sanctions for noncompliance of parenting plan and orders</p>	<p>Highly detailed and unambiguous parenting plan (specified court ordered parenting time for child with resisted parent)</p> <p>Court monitoring</p> <p>Continuity of court appearances - one judge</p> <p>Warning of sanctions or residential care reversal</p> <p>Sanctions for noncompliance (contempt of court, opportunity to purge contempt)</p> <p>Consideration for shared parenting responsibility to ensure involvement of rejected parent in child-related decision making</p> <p>Consideration for extended periods of contact over holidays with rejected parent (eg, summer school break)</p>	<p>Strong sanctions for noncompliance implemented</p> <p>Possibility of transfer of residential care and decision making to rejected parent with one of more of the following monitored by court:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * interim period of restorative contact with rejected parent/interruption of contact with favored parent (30-90 days), or indefinitely until behavior change demonstrated * monitored or supervised contact with favored parent * use of transitional site to prepare for transfer of residence to rejected parent (eg. relative, foster care) * eventual return to favored parent if there is an absence of emotionally abusive parental alienating behaviors
Psychoeducational & Clinical Interventions: Map interventions to client needs	<p>Preventative parent education</p> <p>Psychoeducational groups for children</p> <p>Family therapy (all members seen in various combinations)</p> <p>Therapist reporting to court when there is noncompliance with parenting plan, orders or therapy agreement</p>	<p>Court ordered family therapy (all members seen in various combinations) to restore functional parenting, & coparenting; repair relationships & implement court ordered parenting time with rejected parent</p> <p>Additional individual therapy for child, rejected or favored parent</p> <p>Multi-day family intervention with both parents and children, combining therapy and psychoeducation</p> <p>Therapist reporting to court for noncompliance with parenting plan, orders or therapy agreement</p> <p>Parenting Coordinator (case manager / monitor interventions)</p>	<p>Parental decision-making responsibility and residence change to resisted parent (as above) accompanied by intervention with child and rejected parent, followed by</p> <p>Parent education and individual therapy for favored parent with a view to their reunification with child</p> <p>Therapist reporting to court when there is noncompliance with parenting plan, orders or treatment agreement</p> <p>Parenting Coordinator (case manager / monitor of interventions)</p>

Continuum of Interventions (Fidler & Polak)

