

Section of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

Slovak Psychiatric Association

Declaration of the Section of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry of Slovak Psychiatric Association on the issue of so-called "Parental alienation syndrome"

So called "Parental alienation syndrome" (PAS), is currently not an official psychopathological syndrome and it does not occur in the medical - psychiatric syndromology. It is neither a disease entity nor a diagnosis in the official international classification system. In the Slovak Republic is binding ICD 10 diseases classification system and in this classification, mentioned PAS syndrome is not listed and therefore can be officially established neither as a diagnosis, nor described as a syndrome. "Parental alienation syndrome" is neither present as a diagnostic unit in the classification system used in America DSM 5. Currently "Parental Alienation Syndrome" is described in the narrower sense as the induction of a child by one parent against the other parent in a situation of a family crisis (family breakdown) while a child is identifying herself/himself with the inducer and she/he uncritically believes that parent and consequently she/he has a negative attitude toward the other parent. Refusing a parent (whether it is the mother or father) may have a real cause, and may not be a real induction of a potentially more functional child's parent. Rejected, respectively alienated parent is not only a "victim". Currently there are no relevant studies and conclusions, which mean there is not enough evidence to clearly define and describe the aforementioned PAS. In the ICD 10 distress of a child which is caused by conflict situations with the threat of the collapse of a family, respectively parental divorce can be coded by chapter Factors influencing health status and contact with health insurance companies (Z00 - Z99), namely: Problems related to negative experiences in childhood, Problems related to the education of the child and Other problems with primary support group, including family circumstances. In the DSM 5 classification is used a code within the term: Child Affected by Parental Relationship Distress (children affected by the distress of parent). This condition can be encoded in the case of the determination of primary psychiatric diagnosis, for example anxiety disorder, adjustment disorders, in both the ICD 10 and DSM 5 classification.

In the complicated and emotionally tense situation in life, such as divorce or disintegration of the family, the child often becomes a means of dealing with the subjective experience of injustice and wronged between two divergent and quarrelling parents. The child is in this situation easily exploitable by both parties warring for the child.

In principle, the issue of custody of children is primarily in the competence of the judiciary and socially-legal sphere. Medical care occurs when a child is showing psychopathological symptoms. Then it is necessary to examine the child by experts, namely: child psychiatrist and clinical psychologist. If it is proven as a medical problem, in some cases, hospitalization of a child is necessary.

So called PAS is currently not possible to diagnose, and therefore it is not possible to use this term in the judicial practice, even as a basis of the decision on granting custody of a child to one parent. Every case of child custody to one parent must be considered very sensitively and purely individually with unique due regard to the interests of the child.

Committee of the Section for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

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