Relocation After Separation and Divorce
Annotated Bibliography
Michael Saini, PhD, MSW. RSW
October 09, 2026

Antunes, M. J. L., & Ahlin, E. M. (2025). Should I stay, or should I go now? Neighborhood, family, and youth predictors of intracity mobility. ***Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 40*****(13-14), 3182-3209. https://doi.org/10.1177/08862605241271373**

The effects of residential mobility on youth development outcomes related to violence and victimization have traditionally been understood from an outward mobility perspective. Less attention has been paid to predictors of intracity moves, a more common mobility practice. However, research should identify factors associated with intracity mobility before scholars can explore and fully understand the impacts of moving within the city on youth development outcomes such as violence and victimization, and whether these impacts are akin to those identified for moves beyond city limits. Using data from the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods, they applied a multilevel ecological framework to assess neighborhood, family, and youth factors associated with intracity mobility. They used hierarchical generalized linear modeling to examine within- and between-neighborhood models of intracity mobility among youth and their families who moved within Chicago (N = 426) and those who did not (N = 867). Their investigation highlights family dynamics, instability, and neighborhood-level aggression and violence as important factors. Findings show that parental divorce/separation, harsh disciplinary practices, negative school experiences such as racial/ethnic conflict, gangs, or heightened security measures, and exposure to violence predict intracity mobility. Critically, negative school experiences proved to be a robust determinant of moving as cross-level interactions suggest neighborhood crime significantly shapes how these experiences inform intracity mobility. This study emphasizes the importance of examining mobility beyond urban city limits, noting distinct predictors of intracity mobility across systemic levels. The findings fill a gap in their understanding of neighborhood turnover and stability, while also providing a foundation for exploring within- and between-neighborhood differences in intracity mobility.

Asher, S. J., & Bloom, B. L. (1983). Geographic mobility as a factor in adjustment to divorce. ***Journal of Divorce, 6*****(4), 69. https://doi.org/10.1300/J279v06n04_05**

Investigated geographic mobility decisions following marital disruption and examined their effects on adjustment to separation and divorce in 42 females and 41 males, aged 22–58 yrs, who were recently separated or divorced. They analysed adjustment by sex, mobility status, and their interaction. Results indicate that decisions regarding demographic mobility were consistent with life-long mobility patterns. While male and female movers did not differ in their reasons for moving, female nonmovers based their decision significantly more often than male nonmovers on the availability of social supports. The relationships between geographic mobility decisions and adjustment to separation and divorce differed substantially by sex. Among men, movers were more poorly adjusted; among women, nonmovers were more poorly adjusted. Interstate moves appeared to be particularly stressful for men. These differential findings are considered

within the framework of social support theory and social role theory and examined for their implications for community-based intervention programs.

Austin, W. G. (2000). A forensic psychology model of risk assessment for child custody relocation law. *Family & Conciliation Courts Review, 38*(2), 192. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.174-1617.2000.tb00569.x

Relocation in child custody presents a psycho-legal dilemma of trying to preserve stability in the child's residential family unit while maintaining continuity in the role of the nonresidential parent. Courts have shown a strong preference to permitting the child to move away with the residential parent unless there is a showing of potential harm to the child. The forensic violence risk assessment literature provides an analogous conceptual framework for understanding harm prediction. Instead of predicting violence, the evaluator predicts how environmental circumstances affect the child's adjustment. A forensic psychology model of risk assessment is adapted to the relocation problem. The model includes an expected base rate of short-term emotional distress due to relocation, risk and modulating factors, and how to handle the potential consequences of prediction errors. The article discusses a hierarchical predictive process, derived hypotheses, and practical considerations in relocation.

Austin, W. G. (2012). Relocation, research, and child custody disputes. In K. Kuehnle, & L. Drozd (Eds.), *Parenting plan evaluations: Applied research for the family court* (pp. 540). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/med:psych/9780199754021.003.0018

Relocation disputes are among the most complex cases family courts encounter. These cases involve one parent seeking to remove the child a substantial geographic distance from the child's and the other parent's home community, either at the time of divorce or afterward. Relocation creates both psychological and physical separation between the child and the non-moving parent. Litigation is common in relocation cases. In the 1990s, relocation by divorced or divorcing parents began to receive increased attention from state appellate courts. States began to develop and clarify relocation law through state Supreme Court case law and statutory enactments. Researchers and child custody scholars have been called upon to help courts forge law on this difficult topic by presenting amici briefs in hotly contested, high-profile relocation cases that analyzed the relocation dilemma against the background of the scientific research on children and divorce. This chapter addresses U.S. relocation law and research findings on the psychological and behavioral effects of relocation on children of divorce. Social policy issues involved in relocation disputes are discussed in light of the extensive research literature on the contribution of non-residential parents to the healthy adjustment of children of divorce and the impact of relocation on these relationships. Theory and research on parental gatekeeping are discussed as particularly important in relocation and long-distance parenting arrangements. The organizing concept of social capital explains why some children of divorce who relocate will likely fare better, while others are at risk for adjustment problems.

Austin, W. G. (2008). Relocation, research, and forensic evaluation, part I: Effects of residential mobility on children of divorce. ***Family Court Review, 46*****(1), 137-150. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-1617.2007.00188.x**

Relocation presents courts and child custody evaluators with dilemmas about whether to allow a child to move with a parent to a new community and how to craft long-distance parenting plans if relocation is allowed. The issue of the potential effects of residential moves on children of divorce has focused on the importance of the child-nonresidential parent relationship. The research literature on the effects of residential moves, or relocation, on children of divorce has not been fully integrated into the examination of this issue and its relevance for the child custody evaluation. The literature shows that residential mobility is a general risk factor for children of divorce, and this is a starting point for the custody evaluation, but it is not a basis for bias or a presumption against relocation. Predicting a child's adjustment to relocating or not relocating requires a careful, contextual investigation of the child and family circumstances. The research literature is a helpful frame of reference.

Austin, W. G. (2000). Risk reduction interventions in the child custody relocation case. ***Journal of Divorce & Remarriage, 33*****(1-2), 65. https://doi.org/10.1300/J087v33n01_04**

When a custodial parent relocates to a new community, the child of divorce faces a life transition that can be even more traumatic than the parental breakup. Recent developments in Relocation Law have led courts to generally allow the custodial parent to move with the child. Research on divorce effects and a recent risk-assessment model for relocation identify factors that predict potential harm or protection for the child. Family mediators and psychotherapists play important roles in reducing risk. The authors describe these tasks and suggest 6 aspirational principles for reducing relocation risk.

Austin, W. G., Pruett, M. K., Kirkpatrick, H. D., Flens, J. R., & Gould, J. W. (2013). Parental gatekeeping and child custody/child access evaluation: Part I: Conceptual framework, research, and application. ***Family Court Review, 51*****(3), 485. https://doi.org/10.1111/fcre.12045**

Parental gatekeeping refers to parents' attitudes and actions that affect the quality of the other parent's relationship with and involvement in the child's life. It captures a common statutory best-interest factor that often becomes the center of child custody disputes, especially in relocation cases. This review examines gatekeeping research for its relevance to family court and child custody evaluation. Divorce conflict and litigation are expected to be associated with negative, restrictive gatekeeping. This paper presents a conceptual framework for gatekeeping in child custody evaluation. Scholars have proposed a gatekeeping continuum in coparenting attitudes and actions, ranging from very restrictive to very facilitative. Research supports a general prediction of potential harm to the child when there is substantial restrictive gatekeeping. The concept of social capital is proposed as an efficient explanation of the "gatekeeping effect" on children of divorce. Evaluators are cautioned not to confuse restrictive gatekeeping attitudes and behaviors. Restrictive/negative attitudes are normative among custody litigants. Children's adjustment will be affected more by the level and quality of parental involvement than by parental gatekeeping attitudes. Evaluators are encouraged to identify specific gate-closing and

gate-opening behaviors in a gatekeeping assessment. Implications for crafting parenting plans are discussed.

Austin, W. G., & Rappaport, S. (2018). Parental gatekeeping forensic model and child custody evaluation: Social capital and application to relocation disputes. ***Journal of Child Custody: Research, Issues, and Practices, 15*****(1), 55. https://doi.org/10.1080/15379418.2018.1431827**

This article presents the parental gatekeeping forensic evaluation model for child custody evaluators and other family court practitioners. Gatekeeping refers to each parent's ability to support the other parent–child relationship. The gatekeeping concept reflects a common best-interest statutory factor. Gatekeeping patterns or subtypes are defined as facilitative, restrictive, and protective. A justification analysis is required when a parent is not supportive and/or restrictive regarding the other parent's access to the child. The restrictive parent needs to identify the reasons for being restrictive or protective and demonstrate the nature of the harm. Relevant research on joint parental involvement and gatekeeping is reviewed. The gatekeeping model is applied to the context of relocation disputes. Relocation is framed as restrictive gatekeeping, and the child custody relocation analysis is presented as a justification analysis that considers the facts, context, reasons for moving, advantages and disadvantages, and legal factors that need to be assessed and considered.

Booth, A., & Amato, P. (1992). Divorce, residential change, and stress. ***Journal of Divorce & Remarriage, 18*****(1-2), 205. https://doi.org/10.1300/J087v18n01_10**

Assessed the impact of divorce on residential change using a national sample of 155 divorced persons (under age 55) interviewed in 1980, 1983, and 1988. Divorce affects the probability of moving, the number of moves, dwelling type (including the likelihood of shifts in owner status), and housing quality. However, these factors do not substantially contribute to the stress symptoms that accompany divorce, except possibly moving to lower-quality housing and shifting from single-family to multi-unit dwellings.

Braver, S. L., Ellman, I. M., & Fabricius, W. V. (2003). Relocation of children after divorce and children's best interests: New evidence and legal considerations.***Journal of Family Psychology, 17*****(2), 206-219. https://doi.org/10.1037/0893-3200.17.2.206**

Relocation cases, in which a divorced parent seeks to move away with the child, are among the knottiest problems facing family courts. The recent trend is to permit such moves, largely because of Wallerstein's (1995) controversial amicus curiae brief, which a recent court (Baures v. Lewis, 2001) interpreted as supporting the conclusion that "in general, what is good for the custodial parent is good for the child" (p. 222). The current study provides the first direct evidence on relocation by dividing college students into groups based on their divorced parents' move-away status. For most child outcomes, children whose parents moved are significantly disadvantaged. This suggests that courts should give greater weight to the child's separate interests when deciding such cases.

Cadiou, M. (2021). « Suis-moi, je te fuis » : l'éloignement géographique d'un parent et ses conséquences sur la résidence de l'enfant. ["Stay by me, I'm leaving"—Child custody when one of the parents leaves the country of residence] ***Dialogue: Recherches Sur Le Couple Et La Famille, 233*****, 17. https://doi.org/10.3917/dia.233.0017**

Deciding not only to separate but also to move abroad risks having the child's residence assigned to the other parent's home in the event of separation. The following analysis of French custody case law illustrates the underlying theme of sanctioning the parent who removes the child from their living environment and disregards the other parent's rights. A parent who moves away, thereby obstructing the continuation of alternating custody or the other parent's right to visitation and accommodation, risks losing the benefits of the rights conferred on them regarding the child's place of residence. By comparing rulings on the matter, the author, a lawyer specializing in family and property law, proposes a matrix for reflection to help divorced or separated parents anticipate the issues inherent in a proposed move and identify the steps to retain their child's place of residence.

Cohen, P., Johnson, J., Struening, E. L., & Brook, J. S. (1989). Family mobility as a risk for childhood psychopathology. In B. Cooper, & T. Helgason (Eds.), ***Epidemiology and the prevention of mental disorders*** **(pp. 145-156, 367 Pages). Taylor & Frances/Routledge.**

Examine the effects of residential relocation on the frequency of psychopathology first in early and middle childhood, and then, using a longitudinal design, during late childhood and adolescence. The emphasis will be on the latter period, when it is easier to control for children's preceding problems: conduct disorder / age / sex / socioeconomic status / divorce / remarriage / poor school achievement / maternal symptoms / social isolation

Elrod, L. D. (2006). A move in the right direction? Best interests of the child emerging as the standard for relocation cases. ***Journal of Child Custody: Research, Issues, and Practices, 3*****(3-4), 29. https://doi.org/10.1300/J190v03n03_03**

Relocation cases have become more common in an increasingly mobile society. After a divorce, the parent with primary residential custody of a minor child may seek to move for a new partner, spouse, job, or family. The nonmoving parent objects, and courts must decide whether to allow the child to relocate. This article explores the legal approaches American courts use to resolve these difficult custody cases. Some courts presume that moving is not in a child's best interests, while others presume that it is. The majority trend, however, appears to favor a best-interests-of-the-child standard with no presumptions.

Fabregas, M., Arch, M., García-Arch, J., Segura, J., & Pereda, N. (2020). Assessment criteria in relocation cases: An exploratory study of Spanish family court judges. ***Journal of Family Trauma, Child Custody & Child Development, 17*****(1), 76. https://doi.org/10.1080/15379418.2019.1699487**

This descriptive study examined whether Spanish family law judges (N = 30) use the criteria proposed in the scientific literature and jurisprudence to assess cases involving the relocation of minors after the breakdown of their parents' relationship. The results showed that judges

consider these criteria relevant in guiding their decision-making, with psychological factors most valued (parents' psychological adjustment; the relationship between the minor and each parent; the child's right to maintain personal relationships with both parents). However, the study observed trends in judicial resolutions: a third of judges tended to authorize relocation requests, and another third tended to deny them, suggesting bias or presumptions.

Fabricius, W. V., & Braver, S. L. (2006). Relocation, parent conflict, and domestic violence: Independent risk factors for children of divorce. ***Journal of Child Custody: Research, Issues, and Practices, 3*****(3-4), 7. https://doi.org/10.1300/J190v03n03_02**

They conducted several re-analyses of data from Braver, Ellman, and Fabricius (2003) to test whether the reported association between parental relocation after divorce and negative long-term outcomes in grown children could be explained by pre-existing levels of parental conflict and domestic violence. Conflict and violence might have prompted relocation and also produced the negative outcomes. Analyses of covariance, controlling for conflict and violence (as reported by the grown children), confirmed that relocation was associated with negative outcomes, even after accounting for the effects of conflict and violence. These findings support Braver et al.'s original recommendation that "courts should give greater weight to the child's separate interests in deciding such relocation cases" (p. 206). Additionally, there was little indication that moves reduced levels of conflict, though that finding is tentative.

Grundy, E. (1985). Divorce, widowhood, remarriage and geographic mobility among women. ***Journal of Biosocial Science, 17*****(4), 415-435. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021932000015935**

Examined data from the 1971 census records for England and Wales to study the relationship between geographic mobility and marriage termination and remarriage among women. Results indicate that remarried Ss had high rates of mobility, with a clear excess of moves around the time of remarriage, shortly after the end of the 1st marriage. There was a suggestion of a peak in movements following widowhood, but no indication of excess movement at the time of de jure divorce. Additional data from linked 1971–1981 census information showed that changes in marital status were strongly associated with changes in tenure, particularly for divorcees. A quarter of the Ss aged 20–29 yrs who were divorced between 1971 and 1981 and had been owner-occupiers were in the local authority sector by 1981, compared with only 3% of comparable continuously married women. Such movement from owner-occupancy to the council sector was also apparent for widows, while remarriage was associated with an increased probability of moving from a council tenancy to owner-occupation. Council tenancy also seemed to affect the probability of divorce or remarriage.

Haberman, P. S. (2005). Before Death, They Must Part: Relocation and Protection for Domestic Violence Victims in Volatile Divorce and Custody Situations. ***Family Court Review, 43*****(1), 149. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-1617.2005.00014.x**

Domestic violence trends and case law reporters across the country suggest the time is right for a new alternative to help provide refuge for victims of domestic violence. As the American justice system stands right now, there is no significant mechanism in the United States with the

financial, legislative, and legal backing to help victims of domestic violence escape. A model for relocation based on the Federal Witness Protection Program can provide such a mechanism. The first part of this note presents a New Jersey case in which a divorce proceeding resulted in the relocation and change of identity of a battered woman and her children, and suggests this remedy as a model for an interstate or federal relocation program for domestic violence victims. The next part discusses the merits and rationale for such a program. The third part discusses the types of batterers this program would seem to protect against, a legal standard to ascertain eligibility, and certain logistical issues of a theoretical program. The next two parts discuss items troublesome to the implementation of both state and federal programs. The sixth part discusses potential issues such programs might face once implemented on both levels. Finally, the last part provides an overall assessment of the feasibility of such programs, followed by the conclusion. While the costs that would be incurred by such a program on the interstate or federal level may be quite high, it is quite clear that relocation and protection could save countless lives each year and provide a new beginning for the innocent victims who toil in a world of domestic violence.

Hill, N. R., Deschamps, H. S., & Portman, T. A. A. (2007). "Outside the castle": Divorce and relocation. In S. M. (. Dugger, & L. Carlson (Eds.), ***Critical incidents in counseling children*** **(pp. 205-212, 410 Pages). American Counseling Association.**

This incident addresses the losses inherent in a divorce, especially when it necessitates a move to a new home. The authors consider the impact of divorce from both a grief-and-loss and a cultural perspective. "Ahmed Akhtar," a 4-year-old Pakistani American boy, was brought in for counseling at their mental health agency after his parents divorced. His mother, Mrs. Akhtar, explained that Ahmed had become "more and more needy, demanding, and dishonest" since the divorce and that complaints from his day care facility prompted her to seek counseling for him. Although the family had recently moved out of the house where they had lived for the past 4 years, Ahmed was still attending the same day care he began last fall. His mother expressed confidence in the day care workers' perception that he needed additional assistance to adjust to the divorce.

Himel, A., Paulseth, H. D., & Cohen, J. (2016). 1-800-Skype-me. ***Family Court Review, 54*****(3), 457. https://doi.org/10.1111/fcre.12231**

It is increasingly common for children of divorced parents to be geographically separated from one of their parents. This article examines the challenges that arise from that reality by exploring the issue from multiple perspectives and offering practical tips to minimize the impact of the distance. A review of Ontario case law and the Arizona Guidelines reveals that several factors matter in resolving these disputes, including the child's age, mode of transportation between homes, distance, prior contact, and the feasibility of virtual access. Court-ordered access may include remedies that, absent the distance issue, may be considered extreme, including moving to overnight or extended access periods for young children, permitting children to travel unaccompanied, favoring the nonresident parent for holidays and vacation time, allowing children to decrease contact with the nonresident parent, and decreasing or terminating child support. When distance dictates in-person and virtual access schedules, creative solutions are critical to successfully resolving these cases. Forward-thinking family law professionals can meaningfully help parents achieve better outcomes for children. Key points for the Family Court

Community: They review the factors considered and the access ordered by Ontario courts; they explore options for in-person and virtual access with respect to frequency, duration, and location; they describe steps to strengthen the relationship between the nonresident parent and the child, and they consider equitable sharing of access costs and the impact on child support.

Hymowitz, P. (2005). Relocation: Parents' needs, children's interests. In L. Gunsberg, & P. Hymowitz (Eds.), ***A handbook of divorce and custody: Forensic, developmental, and clinical perspectives*** **(pp. 301-314, 409 Pages). The Analytic Press/Taylor & Francis Group.**

Relocation cases, which concern a divorced parent's right to move with the children, highlight many of the more vexing child custody issues the courts face. In these cases, courts must weigh a custodial parent's right to pursue personal goals, a noncustodial parent's wish to remain actively involved in the children's everyday life, and the children's best interests. Because relocation often entails a more permanent, one-sided resolution of the family dispute than a standard custody case, it can be a far more bitterly fought battle. Further complicating the resolution of custody disputes is the fact that society is increasingly mobile, and divorced parents are, understandably, even more likely to move than married ones. This chapter explores how the courts have traditionally handled relocation disputes in New York and California. It addresses limitations in many of the current relocation statutes and argues for recognizing each family's unique dynamics.

Jeynes, W. H. (1999). The role of family residential mobility in explaining the lower academic achievement of high school children from reconstituted families.***Journal of Divorce & Remarriage, 32*****(1-2), 123. https://doi.org/10.1300/J087v32n01_08**

This study tests S. McLanahan and G. Sandefur's (1994) hypothesis that children from reconstituted families score lower in academic achievement because their custodial families are more likely to move than those of children from intact families. If this hypothesis is correct, one would expect that children from reconstituted families whose parents moved over a substantial period would perform more poorly academically than their counterparts whose families did not move during the same period. Using the NELS 1988–1992 data set, the academic achievement of children whose parents remained remarried throughout the 1988–1992 period was examined. The academic achievement of children from these households whose custodial parent moved during the 1988–1992 period was compared to that of their counterparts whose custodial parent did not move during the same period. The analyses were performed for children from both divorced and widowed reconstituted families, as well as for those from only divorced reconstituted families. The results showed no statistically significant differences between the 2 groups, but directional differences consistently emerged. Both the merits and possible problems with McLanahan and Sandefur's hypothesis are discussed.

Kostense, L. (2024). The consequences of divorce-related relocation: A scoping review on the (lack of) knowledge of the topic. ***Marriage & Family Review, 60*****(4), 210. https://doi.org/10.1080/01494929.2024.2328245**

This scoping review provides a systematic overview of the empirical literature on the consequences of divorce-related relocation for children. Literature in English and Dutch on

divorce-related relocation within countries was screened. They coded and analyzed 17 empirical studies, based on 10 independent samples, that addressed the consequences of divorce-related relocation. The results of the included studies, with due caution given the studies' quality and data variation, suggest that divorce-related relocation may have a short-term negative impact on psychological, relational, and behavioral outcomes. The few observations on financial, physical health, and educational consequences made it difficult to draw conclusions. Extensive empirical research on this topic should be conducted, preferably longitudinal and including a comparison group. This could provide further insight into the short- and long-term consequences of divorce-related relocation for children and the possible interconnectedness of these consequences.

Kostense, L. (2026). The impact of divorce-related relocation for Dutch children: An empirical-legal survey study. *Family Court Review, 64*(2), 410-426. https://doi.org/10.1111/fcre.70067

Parental divorce has been linked to adverse child outcomes, potentially worsened by additional disruptions such as relocation. Yet empirical research remains limited, particularly in the Netherlands, where no data currently inform judicial decision-making. This study addresses this gap by surveying 418 Dutch participants (ages 16–35) and comparing three groups with different childhood experiences, including divorce-related relocation. Psychological, behavioral, and relational outcomes were assessed, controlling for parental conflict intensity, domestic violence, elapsed time, and other life stressors. Because the sample includes few recent divorce cases, the findings primarily reflect long-term effects, which may explain the absence of certain associations and suggest a “fading” effect over time. Contrary to prior research, psychological and behavioral outcomes are linked not to divorce and relocation, but to parental conflict and stressful life events. Father–child relationship quality correlates negatively with both divorce and relocation, though relocation does not exacerbate this effect. In contrast, mother–child relationship quality appears negatively associated with relocation, influenced by parental conflict and life stressors. Participants experiencing relocation report the highest levels of parental conflict intensity and domestic violence, suggesting heightened exposure to conflict. Professionals handling relocation cases should consider broader family dynamics. However, because the results reflect averages, they may not apply to every case.

Lazarova, M., McNulty, Y., & Semeniuk, M. (2015). Expatriate family narratives on international mobility: Key characteristics of the successful moveable family. In L. Mäkelä, & V. Suutari (Eds.), *Work and family interface in the international career context* (pp. 29). Springer International Publishing/Springer Nature. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-17647-5_3

While research confirming the importance of family in expatriate success is growing steadily, organizations with expatriate employees have not made much use of the knowledge researchers have generated. Expatriates still face just as many, if not more, family-related challenges as they did several decades ago. According to industry reports, organizations provide a wide variety of support services to address and hopefully ease many expatriation challenges. However, it remains unclear whether data from human resource (HR) managers and global mobility divisions truly reflect the experiences of expatriate families or whether the support offered is actually helpful. Further, despite increased attention to expatriate support issues, one thing has not

changed: organizations and families generally underestimate, by a wide margin, the challenges of international assignments. Based on qualitative data from a sample of 656 respondents (primarily trailing spouses), this chapter explores family narratives on international mobility. It unpacks issues such as key challenges and opportunities presented by international mobility as a family, the organizational support families receive—and the support they wish they could receive—during international relocations, the key characteristics of the successful "moveable family", and the importance of family dynamics to successful assignments. It concludes by discussing emerging themes and ideas for future research on international mobility.

Lott, M. A. (2006). Relocation cases: Analyzing relevant evidence. *Journal of Child Custody: Research, Issues, and Practices, 3*(3-4), 125. https://doi.org/10.1300/J190v03n03_06

This article offers a framework for analyzing evidence in relocation cases where both parents are fit for primary custody of the child. The suggested analysis of evidence in family relocation cases after dissolution of marriage results in a positive and workable resolution of the issues presented to the court. The endpoint is a workable plan for parenting in the best interest of the child. The format balances the interests of both parents and the child in compliance with state, federal, and international law.

Masilla, A. G., & Jacquin, K. M. (2016). Relocation evaluations in child custody disputes. In M. L. Goldstein (Ed.), *Handbook of child custody* (pp. 233). Springer International Publishing/Springer Nature. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-13942-5_17

When parents are proceeding through divorce and/or separation hearings, it is hoped that both can amicably work out the situational elements pertaining to their children (e.g., location, schools, residence, or visitation). However, disagreements over such matters often prompt a forensic psychologist to conduct evaluations to aid the decision-making process. Although each child custody case has various elements embedded within it that are largely dependent on the particular family under evaluation, relocation evaluations are specific components that must not be overlooked. For a variety of reasons (e.g., job or family), a large number of postdivorce custodial parents will move within a few years of their divorce settlement and custody determination. Usually, the justification provided for relocation is based on parental wants and needs and is likely not primarily framed in a way that constitutes the best interest of the child. More often than not, the parents leave the child's wishes out of the equation while they seek a solution to a disagreement or to improve a situation (for one or both parties). Therefore, it is up to the forensic psychologist to ensure that all information relevant to the child is presented to the court to inform comprehensive decision-making and to provide safeguards so the best interests of the child are met.

Mazeh, Y. (2021). Factors that affect judicial decisions in relocation cases: Bridging the gap between the empirical evidence and socio-legal practice. In J. M. de Torres Perea, E. Kruk & M. Ortiz-Tallo (Eds.), *The Routledge international handbook of shared parenting and best interest of the child* (pp. 183). Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003140566-17

One of the most difficult situations in post-separation litigation arises when a parent seeks to

relocate with the children to a distant location. Allowing relocation would separate the child from the parent staying behind; disallowing it would either separate the child from the relocating parent or prevent the parent from choosing the desired place to live. In this chapter, I consider the factors that affect judicial decisions in relocation cases. I focus on Israeli case law, but the findings may reflect phenomena present in other jurisdictions as well. Relocation problems are usually severe because relocation rules out ordinary parenting, in which the children spend time with both parents on a weekly basis. Studies have repeatedly found that it is important for children to be raised by both parents and to have a full and meaningful relationship with each. A full and meaningful relationship means that the children spend a significant part of their time with each parent on a regular basis, including overnight. Experts have concluded that, in divorce and separation cases, the goal should be an arrangement in which the children spend a considerable part of their time with each parent, preferably in a shared parenting scheme.

Mulder, C. H., & Wagner, M. (2010). Union dissolution and mobility: Who moves from the family home after separation? ***Journal of Marriage and Family, 72*****(5), 1263-1273. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2010.00763.x**

They investigate which partner in a 2-gender couple moves out after separation. They test hypotheses about how differences between partners in moving costs and resources affect the likelihood of moving out, using data from the Divorce in the Netherlands survey (N = 1,537 ex-couples who separated between 1972 and 1998). Ex-partners who initiated the separation were more likely to leave, as were those for whom a new partnership was the reason for separation. An ex-partner with custody of children was less likely to leave, as were those with more resources. A woman was less likely to leave when the joint children no longer lived at home or when the partnership had been longer-lasting.

Norford, B. C., & Medway, F. J. (2002). Adolescents' mobility histories and present social adjustment. ***Psychology in the Schools, 39*****(1), 51. https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.10005**

This study compared three groups of high school students: frequent movers (6 to 13 relocations), moderate movers (3 to 5 relocations), and nonmovers, on depression, appraised social support, and participation in extracurricular activities. The sample was further examined by the primary reason for relocations, timing (before or after the seventh grade), and whether student shyness, SES, and family cohesion influenced any potential effects. All students completed a battery of tests, and the mothers of movers completed a telephone survey. Despite methodological improvements over past research, including excluding students who recently moved or reported other current stressors, the study found few significant effects. Findings showed that students whose families relocated because of divorce and those who experienced early-life relocations had lower participation in extracurricular activities. Students reported fewer negative effects of relocation than their mothers. Further, mothers' negative attitudes toward relocation were significantly correlated with student depression. The authors conclude that little current or prior research evidence links high rates of social mobility to long-term social adjustment problems for adolescents.

Parkinson, P., & Cashmore, J. (2018). Relocation and the indissolubility of parenthood. ***Journal of Child Custody: Research, Issues, and Practices, 15*****(1), 76. https://doi.org/10.1080/15379418.2017.1411858**

This article draws on findings from a five-year prospective longitudinal study of relocation disputes in Australia, involving interviews with 80 parents and 33 children across 70 families. Over the five years following the relocation dispute, much changed for some of these families. A few mothers left without their children; several mothers returned to the original location; some fathers followed. Some custody arrangements also changed. The mothers who moved were, not surprisingly, satisfied with the outcome; however, even mothers who were not allowed to move showed greater improvements in stress levels and mental health than fathers over the five-year period, even when fathers successfully opposed the move. Several mothers adapted to staying if they could see the benefit to their children. All children who moved adapted to the new location and made new friends; however, those with close relationships with their father found it very hard to be long-distance from him. Drawing on these interviews, the article argues that decision-making in relocation cases must be resolutely child-centered. It cannot be based on adults' rights. Children usually benefit from a continuing relationship with a nonresident parent who wants to be involved in their lives. When adjudicating relocation disputes, courts must carefully consider how close and developmentally important the child's relationship is with their nonresident parent. Courts must also consider whether the nonresident parent can move to the primary caregiver's preferred location.

Parkinson, P., Taylor, N., Cashmore, J., & Austin, W. G. (2016). Relocation, research, and child custody disputes. In L. Drozd, M. Saini & N. Olesen (Eds.), ***Parenting plan evaluations: Applied research for the family court (2nd ed.)*** **(2nd ed. ed., pp. 431). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/med:psych/9780199396580.003.0014**

This new version of the chapter has two main goals. First, the relocation analysis and discussion, framed as a legal and psychological problem, are placed in an expanded international context, with particular reference to Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. Second, the new qualitative research studies on families from a range of cultural backgrounds who have been involved in relocation disputes in these countries are described in some detail. These studies complement the other relevant research literature and shed new, idiographic light on the psychological realities for separated and divorced families who have had to grapple with the psycholegal dilemmas involved in child custody issues and relocation. While other large-scale quantitative studies on residential mobility have reported aggregated between-group average differences on a variety of outcome measures, more recent studies rely on relatively small samples (though they included a substantial percentage of the total population of families involved in relocation disputes at the time of recruitment). They use qualitative, in-depth interviews to provide insight into families' experiences of dealing with the relocation dispute and its aftermath. Some families were coping with the realities of a long-distance parenting plan after relocation was allowed, while others continued with a local parenting plan after the relocation request was denied. One of the studies has been prospective and longitudinal in nature, with the parents and children interviewed at different points in time following the resolution of the relocation dispute.

Present Koller, J. (2017). *Effects of post-divorce relocation on adult children from divorced families* (Order No. AAI10152770). Available from APA PsycInfo®. (1904811787; 2016-58401-035). https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/effects-post-divorce-relocation-on-adult-children/docview/1904811787/se-2

This cross-sectional study evaluated the potential psychological and health-related outcomes associated with relocation among adult children from divorced families. It sought to expand the limited empirical literature in the social sciences on the long-term effects of post-divorce relocation and to inform challenging legal decision-making in relocation cases. The study collected data from 701 participants in the United States aged 18 years and older. The primary objectives were: (1) to examine whether post-divorce relocation with a custodial parent away from a noncustodial parent was associated with long-term negative psychological and health-related outcomes compared to adult children of divorce who never relocated; and (2) to examine whether post-divorce relocation with a custodial parent away from a noncustodial parent was associated with greater long-term negative psychological and health-related outcomes compared to adult children from intact families who experienced a relocation during childhood. Participants who relocated within the context of divorce had significantly worse behavioral health outcomes than those who did not relocate within the context of divorce and than those who relocated within the context of an intact family. These results were robust, even after controlling for gender, age, and multiple adverse childhood life events.

Rose, B., & Bradshaw, C. P. (2013). The link between student mobility and academics. In J. Hattie, & E. M. Anderman (Eds.), *International guide to student achievement* (pp. 155-157, 504 Pages). Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.

The term student mobility refers to the transfer of students between schools. Although some school moves are expected or scheduled (i.e., normative), such as promotion from elementary school to middle school, mobility typically refers to nonpromotional transfers, such as moving between schools at normally unscheduled times (i.e., nonnomiative). The focus of the current paper is on moves because these are the types of transitions that research has generally linked with reduced academic performance. One of the most common reasons for school mobility is a change in family residence, which itself can be due to a variety of factors, such as family instability, as in the case of divorce or marriage, loss of employment, unstable housing, residential moves, migration, and employment-related transfers. Other reasons for school mobility include school closures or merges, redistricting, and family choice. Much of the research on student mobility has focused on urban and low-income families because urban schools tend to be disproportionately affected by student mobility. However, other studies examine the impact of strategic moves, which can be beneficial. Such "upward mobility" can result in improved living conditions and, thus, school environments.

Saini, M., Allan-Ebron, D., & Barnes, J. (2015). A critical review of relocation research specific to separation and divorce. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage, 56*(5), 388. https://doi.org/10.1080/10502556.2015.1046797

Relocation, as an issue in the context of family law, typically involves the proposed move of a separated or divorced parent with a child to a new residence a substantial distance away from the

non-moving parent. Based on a comprehensive review of the empirical evidence, 11 studies that focused on relocation within the context of separation and divorce were identified, retrieved, and appraised using a common standard for assessing the methodological quality of the studies. The critical appraisal found that most social science studies on relocation are of poor quality. Overall, the project's findings show the need to move away from oversimplified considerations of relocation and to embrace a more comprehensive approach that captures the various factors relevant to its strengths and limitations.

South, S. J., Crowder, K. D., & Trent, K. (1998). Children's residential mobility and neighborhood environment following parental divorce and remarriage. ***Social Forces, 77*****(2), 667-693. https://doi.org/10.2307/3005543**

Longitudinal data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics show that parental divorce sharply increases the annual probability that children will move out of their neighborhoods. Conditional on moving, children of divorced parents move to significantly poorer neighborhoods than children in stable, two-parent families, a difference attributable to the negative impact of parental divorce on children's family income. The impact of divorce on these mobility outcomes is especially pronounced for African American children and for children whose parents owned their homes before divorcing. Parental remarriage is associated with higher mobility rates, but this difference reflects preexisting differences between parents who remarry and those who do not. Mobile children whose parents remarry move to slightly wealthier neighborhoods than mobile children whose parents remain unmarried. These issues matter because residential mobility shapes children's social development and well-being, and because living in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods negatively affects children's social and demographic behavior.

Stein, S. J., & Oler, C. S. (2010). Emotional and legal considerations in divorce and relocation: A call for alternative dispute resolution. ***The Journal of Individual Psychology, 66*****(3), 290. https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/emotional-legal-considerations-divorce-relocation/docview/854375751/se-2**

The authors address the emotional and legal considerations surrounding the relocation of children after their parents' divorce. They advocate alternative dispute resolution over traditional litigation. In doing so, they illustrate the kinship between alternative dispute resolution and individual psychology.

Stevenson, M. M., Fabricius, W. V., Braver, S. L., & Cookston, J. T. (2018). Associations between parental relocation following separation in childhood and maladjustment in adolescence and young adulthood. ***Psychology, Public Policy, and Law, 24*****(3), 365-378. https://doi.org/10.1037/law0000172**

This study examines the impact of custodial parents' petitions to relocate children away from noncustodial parents, a process that poses complex decisions for family courts. The sample consisted of 81 children, randomly recruited through their schools based on criteria including being 12 years old at the time, residing primarily with their mothers, and having a mother who had been living with a male partner in a paternal role for at least one year. Thirty-eight of these children experienced separation by over an hour's drive from their biological fathers due to

relocations by either parent. Data collection involved two reporters, children and mothers, at five intervals corresponding to child ages 12.5, 14, 15.5, 19.5, and 22, conducted by trained interviewers using standardized, reliable, and valid measures. Findings indicate that long-distance separation from biological fathers before age 12 is associated in adolescence and young adulthood with significant behavioral issues, anxiety and depression symptoms, and strained relationships with biological fathers, mothers, and stepfathers. These associations persisted after controlling for variables such as family conflict, domestic violence, family income, and relationship quality between mothers and biological fathers. The longitudinal results corroborate previous cross-sectional studies by Braver, Ellman, and Fabricius (2003) and Fabricius and Braver (2006). The study concludes with policy implications regarding parental long-distance relocations following separation.

Strous, M. (2007). Post-divorce relocation: In the best interests of the child? *South African Journal of Psychology, 37*(2), 223. https://doi.org/10.1177/008124630703700202

This article analyzes the factors influencing whether post-divorce relocation affects children's psychological well-being. It reviews psychological literature and legal cases rather than presenting original empirical research. The main points include: (a) a shared parental responsibility model can be an alternative to the traditional primary caregiver approach; (b) minimizing a child's emotional bond with a non-relocating parent risks emotional harm; (c) denying children access to a non-custodial parent to whom they are attached may infringe on their rights; and (d) the 'best interests of the child' standard offers advantages in decision-making. The article discusses the implications of these points and proposes a framework for assessing relocation cases. While respecting parents' mobility rights, the 'best interests of the child' remains the guiding principle. Finally, it emphasizes that individualized assessments considering multiple factors are essential in determining what truly benefits the child.

Weissman, H. N. (1994). Psychotherapeutic and psycholegal considerations: When a custodial parent seeks to move away. *American Journal of Family Therapy, 22*(2), 176-181. https://doi.org/10.1080/01926189408251311

This article discusses the issue of relocation during or after divorce and its impact on children. It examines the psychological stresses, legal considerations, and potential impairments associated with a parent's desire to relocate. The concluding section explores how relocation might influence ongoing psychotherapy.