



Media Advisory:

Contact:

Camille Hayes, Public Affairs Specialist, camille@cpedv.org

California Partnership to End Domestic Violence

Phone: 916-444-7163

Fax: 916-444-7165

www.cpedv.org

Domestic Violence Advocates Sign on to Amicus Brief Questioning Validity of “Parental Alienation” Defense

Sacramento, November 30, 2011—The California Partnership to End Domestic Violence (the Partnership), the statewide domestic violence coalition, has signed on to an amicus brief filed last week concerning the case *McRoberts v. Superior Court of Los Angeles County*. The brief concerns a case in which custody of three children was transferred from their mother, Segalit McRoberts, to their father, despite evidence of his sexual abuse of two of the children.

During the thirty days in which Mr. McRoberts had sole custody, the children were not allowed to see their mother. The children were turned over to their father based on a defense of “Parental Alienation Syndrome” (PAS). PAS is a widely discredited phenomenon commonly invoked in family court proceedings, in which a parent who has been accused of abusing either the children or their spouse, claims that the abuse victim is intentionally “alienating” the children from him or her. The American Psychological Association does not include PAS in its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, because there is no scientific evidence of its existence.

PAS is often used by abuse perpetrators in court as a way of exerting control over their victims, and manipulating divorce and custody proceedings. The Partnership’s Executive Director Tara Shabazz said that her organization joined the amicus brief because of the history of bogus PAS defenses being used to undermine domestic violence victims in court.

“Parental Alienation Syndrome does not exist,” she said. “It’s a travesty to see children taken from their mother and turned over to an abusive parent, as

happened in the McRoberts case. It's time for the family court system to recognize that PAS testimony can't withstand scientific or legal scrutiny."

About the Partnership

The California Partnership to End Domestic Violence is California's statewide domestic violence coalition, with organizational and individual members across California. Working at the local, state and national levels for nearly 30 years, the Partnership has a long track record of successfully passing over 100 pieces of legislation on behalf of domestic violence victims and their children. As the unified voice for California's domestic violence agencies, the Partnership provides statewide leadership on public policy issues, offers professional training and services to domestic violence service providers and promotes public awareness through community outreach efforts. With offices in Sacramento, the Partnership's member programs span the entire state.

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