

AN ACT

*Codification
District of
Columbia
Code
2002 Supp.*

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

To amend Title 16 of the District of Columbia Code to enact the Uniform Child-Custody Jurisdiction and Enforcement Act in the District of Columbia.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this act may be cited as the "Uniform Child-Custody Jurisdiction and Enforcement Act of 2000".

Sec. 2. Title 16 of the District of Columbia Code is amended as follows:

(a) The table of contents for the title is amended as follows:

(1) Strike the phrase "45. Uniform Child Custody Proceedings . . . §§ 16-4501 to 16-4524." and insert the phrase "45. Uniform Child Custody Proceedings [Repealed] . . . §§ 16-4501 to 16-4524." in its place.

(2) Add the phrase "46. Uniform Child-Custody Jurisdiction and Enforcement . . . §§ 16-4601.1 to 16-4604.2." after the phrase "45. Uniform Child Custody Proceedings [Repealed] . . . §§ 16-4501 to 16-4524."

(b) The table of contents for Chapter 45 is amended to read as follows:

"Chapter 45. Uniform Child Custody Proceedings.

"Sec.	Sec.
"16-4501. [Repealed].	16-4513. [Repealed].
"16-4502. [Repealed].	16-4514. [Repealed].
"16-4503. [Repealed].	16-4515. [Repealed].
"16-4504. [Repealed].	16-4516. [Repealed].
"16-4505. [Repealed].	16-4517. [Repealed].
"16-4506. [Repealed].	16-4518. [Repealed].
"16-4507. [Repealed].	16-4519. [Repealed].
"16-4508. [Repealed].	16-4520. [Repealed].
"16-4509. [Repealed].	16-4521. [Repealed].
"16-4510. [Repealed].	16-4522. [Repealed].
"16-4511. [Repealed].	16-4523. [Repealed].
"16-4512. [Repealed].	16-4524. [Repealed]."

(c) Chapter 45 is repealed.

(d) A new Chapter 46 is added to read as follows:

"Chapter 46. Uniform Child-Custody Jurisdiction and Enforcement.

"Subchapter I. General Provisions.

"Sec.

"§ 16-4601.1. Definitions.

"§ 16-4601.2. Proceedings governed by other law.

"§ 16-4601.3. Application to Indian tribes.

"§ 16-4601.4. International application of chapter.

"§ 16-4601.5. Effect of child-custody determination.

"§ 16-4601.6. Priority.

"§ 16-4601.7. Notice to persons outside the District.

"§ 16-4601.8. Appearance and limited immunity.

"§ 16-4601.9. Communication between courts.

"§ 16-4601.10. Taking testimony in another state.

"§ 16-4601.11. Cooperation between courts; preservation of records.

"Subchapter II. Jurisdiction.

"§ 16-4602.1. Initial child-custody jurisdiction.

"§ 16-4602.2. Exclusive, continuing jurisdiction.

"§ 16-4602.3. Jurisdiction to modify determination.

"§ 16-4602.4. Temporary emergency jurisdiction.

"§ 16-4602.5. Notice; opportunity to be heard; joinder.

"§ 16-4602.6. Simultaneous proceedings.

"§ 16-4602.7. Inconvenient forum.

"§ 16-4602.8. Jurisdiction declined by reason of conduct.

"§ 16-4602.9. Information to be submitted to court.

"§ 16-4602.10. Appearance of parties and child.

"Subchapter III. Enforcement.

"§ 16-4603.1. Definitions.

"§ 16-4603.2. Enforcement under Hague Convention.

"§ 16-4603.3. Duty to enforce.

"§ 16-4603.4. Temporary visitation.

"§ 16-4603.5. Registration of child-custody determination.

"§ 16-4603.6. Enforcement of registered determination.

"§ 16-4603.7. Simultaneous proceedings.

"§ 16-4603.8. Expedited enforcement of child-custody determination.

"§ 16-4603.9. Service of petition and order.

"§ 16-4603.10. Hearing and order.

"§ 16-4603.11. Warrant to take physical custody of child.

- "§ 16-4603.12. Costs, fees, and expenses.
- "§ 16-4603.13. Recognition and enforcement.
- "§ 16-4603.14. Appeals.
- "§ 16-4603.15. Role of Corporation Counsel.
- "§ 16-4603.16. Role of law enforcement.
- "§ 16-4603.17. Costs and expenses.

"Subchapter IV. Miscellaneous Provisions.

- "§ 16-4604.1. Application and construction.
- "§ 16-4604.2. Transitional provision.

"Subchapter I. General Provisions.

- "§ 16-4601.1. Definitions.

"For the purposes of this chapter, the term:

"(1) "Abandoned" means left without provision for reasonable and necessary care or supervision.

"(2) "Child" means an individual who has not attained 18 years of age.

"(3) "Child-custody determination" means a judgment, decree, or other order of a court providing for the legal custody, physical custody, or visitation with respect to a child. The term includes a permanent, temporary, initial, and modification order. The term does not include an order relating to child support or other monetary obligation of an individual.

"(4) "Child-custody proceeding" means a proceeding in which legal custody, physical custody, or visitation with respect to a child is an issue. The term includes a proceeding for divorce, separation, neglect, abuse, dependency, guardianship, adoption, paternity, termination of parental rights, and protection from domestic violence, in which the issue may appear. The term does not include a proceeding involving juvenile delinquency, contractual emancipation, or enforcement under subchapter III of this chapter.

"(5) "Commencement" means the filing of the first pleading in a proceeding.

"(6) "Court" means an entity authorized under the law of a state to establish, enforce, or modify a child-custody determination.

"(7) "District" means the District of Columbia.

"(8) "Home state" means the state in which a child lived with a parent or a person acting as a parent for at least 6 consecutive months immediately before the commencement of a child-custody proceeding. In the case of a child less than 6 months of age, the term means the state in which the child lived from birth with any of the persons mentioned. A period of temporary absence of any of the mentioned persons is part of the period.

"(9) "Initial determination" means the first child-custody determination concerning a particular child.

"(10) "Issuing court" means the court that makes a child-custody determination for which enforcement is sought under this chapter.

"(11) "Issuing state" means the state in which a child-custody determination is

made.

"(12) "Modification" means a child-custody determination that changes, replaces, supersedes, or is otherwise made after a previous determination concerning the same child, whether or not it is made by the court that made the previous determination.

"(13) "Person" means an individual, corporation, business trust, estate, trust, partnership, limited liability company, association, joint venture, government, governmental subdivision, agency, or instrumentality, public corporation, or any other legal or commercial entity.

"(14) "Person acting as a parent" means a person, other than a parent, who:

"(A) Has physical custody of the child or has had physical custody for a period of 6 consecutive months, including any temporary absence, within one year immediately before the commencement of a child-custody proceeding; and

"(B) Has been awarded legal custody by a court or claims a right to legal custody under the law of the District.

"(15) "Physical custody" means the physical care and supervision of a child.

"(16) "State" means a state of the United States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the United States Virgin Islands, or any territory or insular possession subject to the jurisdiction of the United States.

"(17) "Warrant" means an order issued by a court authorizing law enforcement officers to take physical custody of a child.

"§ 16-4601.2. Proceedings governed by other law.

"This chapter does not govern a proceeding pertaining to the authorization of emergency medical care for a child.

"§ 16-4601.3. Application to Indian tribes.

"A child-custody proceeding that pertains to an Indian child as defined in the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, approved November 8, 1978 (92 Stat. 3069; 25 U.S.C. § 1901 *et seq.*), is not subject to this chapter to the extent that it is governed by the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978.

"§ 16-4601.4. International application of chapter.

"(a) A court of the District shall treat a foreign country as if it were a state of the United States for the purpose of applying subchapters I and II of this chapter.

"(b) Except as otherwise provided in subsection (c) of this section, a child-custody determination made in a foreign country under factual circumstances in substantial conformity with the jurisdictional standards of this chapter must be recognized and enforced under subchapter III of this chapter.

"(c) A court of the District need not apply this chapter if the child custody law of a foreign country violates fundamental principles of human rights.

"§ 16-4601.5. Effect of child-custody determination.

"A child-custody determination made by a court of the District that had jurisdiction under

this chapter binds all persons who have been served in accordance with the laws of the District or notified in accordance with section 16-4601.7 or who have submitted to the jurisdiction of the court, and who have been given an opportunity to be heard. As to those persons, the determination is conclusive as to all decided issues of law and fact except to the extent the determination is modified.

"§ 16-4601.6. Priority.

"If a question of existence or exercise of jurisdiction under this chapter is raised in a child-custody proceeding, the question, upon request of a party, must be given priority on the calendar and handled expeditiously.

"§ 16-4601.7. Notice to persons outside the District.

"(a) Notice required for the exercise of jurisdiction when a person is outside the District may be given in a manner prescribed by the law of the District for service of process or by the law of the state in which the service is made. Notice must be given in a manner reasonably calculated to give actual notice, but may be by publication if other means are not effective.

"(b) Proof of service may be made in the manner prescribed by the law of the District or by the law of the state in which the service is made.

"(c) Notice is not required for the exercise of jurisdiction with respect to a person who submits to the jurisdiction of the court.

"§ 16-4601.8. Appearance and limited immunity.

"(a) A party to a child-custody proceeding, including a modification proceeding, or a petitioner or respondent in a proceeding to enforce or register a child-custody determination, is not subject to personal jurisdiction in the District for another proceeding or purpose solely by reason of having participated, or of having been physically present for the purpose of participating, in the proceeding.

"(b) A person who is subject to personal jurisdiction in the District on a basis other than physical presence is not immune from service of process in the District. A party present in the District who is subject to the jurisdiction of another state is not immune from service of process allowable under the laws of that state.

"(c) The immunity granted by subsection (a) of this section does not extend to civil litigation based on acts unrelated to the participation in a proceeding under this chapter committed by an individual while present in the District.

"§ 16-4601.9. Communication between courts.

"(a) A court of the District may communicate with a court in another state concerning a proceeding arising under this chapter.

"(b) The court may allow the parties to participate in the communication. If the parties are not able to participate in the communication, they must be given the opportunity to present facts and legal arguments before a decision on jurisdiction is made.

"(c) Communication between courts on schedules, calendars, court records, and similar matters may occur without informing the parties. A record need not be made of the

communication.

"(d) Except as otherwise provided in subsection (c) of this section, a record must be made of a communication under this section. The parties must be informed promptly of the communication and granted access to the record.

"(e) For the purposes of this section, the term "record" means information that is inscribed on a tangible medium or that is stored in an electronic or other medium and is retrievable in perceivable form.

"§ 16-4601.10. Taking testimony in another state.

"(a) In addition to other procedures available to a party, a party to a child-custody proceeding may offer testimony of witnesses who are located in another state, including testimony of the parties and the child, by deposition or other means allowable in the District for testimony taken in another state. The court on its own motion may order that the testimony of a person be taken in another state and may prescribe the manner in which and the terms upon which the testimony is taken.

"(b) A court of the District may permit an individual residing in another state to be deposed or to testify by telephone, audiovisual means, or other electronic means before a designated court or at another location in that state. A court of the District shall cooperate with courts of other states in designating an appropriate location for the deposition or testimony.

"(c) Documentary evidence transmitted from another state to a court of the District by technological means that do not produce an original writing may not be excluded from evidence on an objection based on the means of transmission.

"§ 16-4601.11. Cooperation between courts; preservation of records.

"(a) A court of the District may request the appropriate court of another state to:

"(1) Hold an evidentiary hearing;

"(2) Order a person to produce or give evidence pursuant to procedures of that state;

"(3) Order that an evaluation be made with respect to the custody of a child involved in a pending proceeding;

"(4) Forward to the court of the District a certified copy of the transcript of the record of the hearing, the evidence otherwise presented, and any evaluation prepared in compliance with the request; and

"(5) Order a party to a child-custody proceeding or any person having physical custody of the child to appear in the proceeding, with or without the child.

"(b) Upon request of a court of another state, a court of the District may hold a hearing or enter an order described in subsection (a) of this section.

"(c) Travel and other necessary and reasonable expenses incurred under subsections (a) and (b) of this section may be assessed against the parties according to the law of the District.

"(d) A court of the District shall preserve the pleadings, orders, decrees, records of hearings, evaluations, and other pertinent records with respect to a child-custody proceeding

until the child attains 18 years of age. Upon appropriate request by a court or law enforcement official of another state, the court shall forward a certified copy of those records.

"Subchapter II. Jurisdiction.

"§ 16-4602.1. Initial child-custody jurisdiction.

"(a) Except as otherwise provided in section 16-4502.4, a court of the District has jurisdiction to make an initial child-custody determination only if:

"(1) The District is the home state of the child on the date of the commencement of the proceeding, or was the home state of the child within 6 months before the commencement of the proceeding and the child is absent from the District, but a parent or person acting as a parent continues to live in the District;

"(2) A court of another state does not have jurisdiction under paragraph (1) of this subsection, or a court of the home state of the child has declined to exercise jurisdiction on the ground that the District is the more appropriate forum under sections 16-4502.7 or 16-4502.8, and:

"(A) The child and the child's parents, or the child and at least one parent or a person acting as a parent, have a significant connection with the District other than mere physical presence; and

"(B) Substantial evidence is available in the District concerning the child's care, protection, training, and personal relationships;

"(3) All courts having jurisdiction under paragraph (1) or (2) of this subsection have declined to exercise jurisdiction on the ground that a court of the District is the more appropriate forum to determine the custody of the child under sections 16-4502.7 or 16-4502.8; or

"(4) No court of any other state would have jurisdiction under the criteria specified in paragraph (1), (2), or (3) of this subsection.

"(b) Subsection (a) of this section is the exclusive jurisdictional basis for making a child-custody determination by a court of the District.

"(c) Physical presence of, or personal jurisdiction over, a party or a child is not necessary or sufficient to make a child-custody determination.

"§ 16-4602.2. Exclusive, continuing jurisdiction.

"(a) Except as otherwise provided in section 16-4502.4, a court of the District which has made a child-custody determination consistent with sections 16-4502.1 or 16-4502.3 has exclusive, continuing jurisdiction over the determination until:

"(1) A court of the District determines that neither the child, nor the child and one parent, nor the child and any person acting as a parent have a significant connection with the District and that substantial evidence is no longer available in the District concerning the child's care, protection, training, and personal relationships; or

"(2) A court of the District or a court of another state determines that the child, the child's parents, and any person acting as a parent do not presently reside in the District.

"(b) A court of the District which has made a child-custody determination and does not have exclusive, continuing jurisdiction under this section may modify that determination only if it has jurisdiction to make an initial determination under section 16-4502.1.

"§ 16-4602.3. Jurisdiction to modify determination.

"Except as otherwise provided in section 16-4502.4, a court of the District may not modify a child-custody determination made by a court of another state unless a court of the District has jurisdiction to make an initial determination under section 16-4502.1(a)(1) or (2) and:

"(1) The court of the other state determines it no longer has exclusive, continuing jurisdiction under section 16-4502.2 or that a court of the District would be a more convenient forum under section 16-4502.7; or

"(2) A court of the District or a court of the other state determines that the child, the child's parents, and any person acting as a parent do not presently reside in the other state.

"§ 16-4602.4. Temporary emergency jurisdiction.

"(a) A court of the District has temporary emergency jurisdiction if the child is present in the District and the child has been abandoned or it is necessary in an emergency to protect the child because the child, or a sibling or parent of the child, is subjected to or threatened with mistreatment or abuse.

"(b) If there is no previous child-custody determination that is entitled to be enforced under this chapter and a child-custody proceeding has not been commenced in a court of a state having jurisdiction under sections 16-4502.1 through 16-4502.3, a child-custody determination made under this section remains in effect until an order is obtained from a court of a state having jurisdiction under sections 16-4502.1 through 16-4502.3. If a child-custody proceeding has not been or is not commenced in a court of a state having jurisdiction under sections 16-4502.1 through 16-4502.3, a child-custody determination made under this section becomes a final determination, if it so provides, and the District becomes the home state of the child.

"(c) If there is a previous child-custody determination that is entitled to be enforced under this chapter, or a child-custody proceeding has been commenced in a court of a state having jurisdiction under sections 16-4502.1 through 16-4502.3, any order issued by a court of the District under this section must specify in the order a period that the court considers adequate to allow the person seeking an order to obtain an order from the state having jurisdiction under sections 16-4502.1 through 16-4502.3. The order issued in the District remains in effect until an order is obtained from the other state within the period specified or the period expires.

"(d) A court of the District which has been asked to make a child-custody determination under this section, upon being informed that a child-custody proceeding has been commenced in, or a child-custody determination has been made by, a court of a state having jurisdiction under sections 16-4502.1 through 16-4502.3, shall immediately communicate with the other court. A court of the District which is exercising jurisdiction pursuant to sections 16-4502.1 through 16-

4502.3, upon being informed that a child-custody proceeding has been commenced in, or a child-custody determination has been made by, a court of another state under a statute similar to this section shall immediately communicate with the court of that state to resolve the emergency, protect the safety of the parties and the child, and determine a period for the duration of the temporary order.

"§ 16-4602.5. Notice; opportunity to be heard; joinder.

"(a) Before a child-custody determination is made under this chapter, notice and an opportunity to be heard in accordance with the standards of section 16-4501.7 must be given to all persons entitled to notice under the law of the District as in child-custody proceedings between residents of the District, any parent whose parental rights have not been previously terminated, and any person having physical custody of the child.

"(b) This chapter does not govern the enforceability of a child-custody determination made without notice or an opportunity to be heard.

"(c) The obligation to join a party and the right to intervene as a party in a child-custody proceeding under this chapter are governed by the law of the District as in child-custody proceedings between residents of the District.

"§ 16-4602.6. Simultaneous proceedings.

"(a) Except as otherwise provided in section 16-4502.4, a court of the District may not exercise its jurisdiction under this subchapter if, at the time of the commencement of the proceeding, a proceeding concerning the custody of the child has been commenced in a court of another state having jurisdiction substantially in conformity with this chapter, unless the proceeding has been terminated or is stayed by the court of the other state because a court of the District is a more convenient forum under section 16-4502.7.

"(b) Except as otherwise provided in section 16-4502.4, a court of the District, before hearing a child-custody proceeding, shall examine the court documents and other information supplied by the parties pursuant to section 16-4502.9. If the court determines that a child-custody proceeding has been commenced in a court in another state having jurisdiction substantially in accordance with this chapter, the court of the District shall stay its proceeding and communicate with the court of the other state. If the court of the state having jurisdiction substantially in accordance with this chapter does not determine that the court of the District is a more appropriate forum, the court of the District shall dismiss the proceeding.

"(c) In a proceeding to modify a child-custody determination, a court of the District shall determine whether a proceeding to enforce the determination has been commenced in another state. If a proceeding to enforce a child-custody determination has been commenced in another state, the court may:

"(1) Stay the proceeding for modification pending the entry of an order of a court of the other state enforcing, staying, denying, or dismissing the proceeding for enforcement;

"(2) Enjoin the parties from continuing with the proceeding for enforcement; or

"(3) Proceed with the modification under conditions it considers appropriate.

"§ 16-4602.7. Inconvenient forum.

"(a) A court of the District which has jurisdiction under this chapter to make a child-custody determination may decline to exercise its jurisdiction at any time if it determines that it is an inconvenient forum under the circumstances and that a court of another state is a more appropriate forum. The issue of inconvenient forum may be raised upon motion of a party, the court's own motion, or request of another court.

"(b) Before determining whether it is an inconvenient forum, a court of the District shall consider whether it is appropriate for a court of another state to exercise jurisdiction. For this purpose, the court shall allow the parties to submit information and shall consider all relevant factors, including:

"(1) Whether domestic violence has occurred and is likely to continue in the future and which state could best protect the parties and the child;

"(2) The length of time the child has resided outside the District;

"(3) The distance between the court in the District and the court in the state that would assume jurisdiction;

"(4) The relative financial circumstances of the parties;

"(5) Any agreement of the parties as to which state should assume jurisdiction;

"(6) The nature and location of the evidence required to resolve the pending litigation, including testimony of the child;

"(7) The ability of the court of each state to decide the issue expeditiously and the procedures necessary to present the evidence; and

"(8) The familiarity of the court of each state with the facts and issues in the pending litigation.

"(c) If a court of the District determines that it is an inconvenient forum and that a court of another state is a more appropriate forum, it shall stay the proceedings upon condition that a child-custody proceeding be promptly commenced in another designated state and may impose any other condition the court considers just and proper.

"(d) A court of the District may decline to exercise its jurisdiction under this chapter if a child-custody determination is incidental to an action for divorce or another proceeding while still retaining jurisdiction over the divorce or other proceeding.

"§ 16-4602.8. Jurisdiction declined by reason of conduct.

"(a) Except as otherwise provided in section 16-4502.4, if a court of the District has jurisdiction under this chapter because a person seeking to invoke its jurisdiction has engaged in unjustifiable conduct, the court shall decline to exercise its jurisdiction unless:

"(1) The parents and all persons acting as parents have acquiesced in the exercise of jurisdiction;

"(2) A court of the state otherwise having jurisdiction under sections 16-4502.1

through 16-4502.3 determines that the District is a more appropriate forum under section 16-4502.7; or

"(3) No court of any other state would have jurisdiction under the criteria specified in sections 16-4502.1 through 16-4502.3.

"(b) If a court of the District declines to exercise its jurisdiction pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, it may fashion an appropriate remedy to ensure the safety of the child and prevent a repetition of the unjustifiable conduct, including staying the proceeding until a child-custody proceeding is commenced in a court having jurisdiction under sections 16-4502.1 through 16-4502.3.

"(c) If a court dismisses a petition or stays a proceeding because it declines to exercise its jurisdiction pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, it shall assess against the party seeking to invoke its jurisdiction necessary and reasonable expenses, including costs, communication expenses, attorney's fees, investigative fees, expenses for witnesses, travel expenses, and child care during the course of the proceedings, unless the party from whom fees are sought establishes that the assessment would be clearly inappropriate. The court may not assess fees, costs, or expenses against the District unless authorized by law other than this chapter.

"§ 16-4602.9. Information to be submitted to court.

"(a) In a child-custody proceeding, each party, in its first pleading or in an attached affidavit, shall give information, if reasonably ascertainable, under oath as to the child's present address or whereabouts, the places where the child has lived during the last 5 years, and the names and present addresses of the persons with whom the child has lived during that period. The pleading or affidavit must state whether the party:

"(1) Has participated, as a party or witness or in any other capacity, in any other proceeding concerning the custody of or visitation with the child and, if so, identify the court, the case number, and the date of the child-custody determination, if any;

"(2) Knows of any proceeding that could affect the current proceeding, including proceedings for enforcement and proceedings relating to domestic violence, protective orders, termination of parental rights, and adoptions and, if so, identify the court, the case number, and the nature of the proceeding; and

"(3) Knows the names and addresses of any person not a party to the proceeding who has physical custody of the child or claims rights of legal custody or physical custody of, or visitation with, the child and, if so, the names and addresses of those persons.

"(b) If the information required by subsection (a) of this section is not furnished, the court, upon motion of a party or its own motion, may stay the proceeding until the information is furnished.

"(c) If the declaration as to any of the items described in subsection (a)(1) through (3) of this section is in the affirmative, the declarant shall give additional information under oath as required by the court. The court may examine the parties under oath as to details of the information furnished and other matters pertinent to the court's jurisdiction and the disposition of

the case.

"(d) Each party has a continuing duty to inform the court of any proceeding in this or any other state that could affect the current proceeding.

"(e) If a party alleges in an affidavit or a pleading under oath that the health, safety, or liberty of a party or child would be jeopardized by disclosure of identifying information, the information must be sealed and may not be disclosed to the other party or the public unless the court orders the disclosure to be made after a hearing in which the court takes into consideration the health, safety, or liberty of the party or child and determines that the disclosure is in the interest of justice.

"§ 16-4602.10. Appearance of parties and child.

"(a) In a child-custody proceeding in the District, the court may order a party to the proceeding who is in the District to appear before the court in person, with or without the child. The court may order any person who is in the District and who has physical custody or control of the child to appear in person with the child.

"(b) If a party to a child-custody proceeding whose presence is desired by the court is outside the District, the court may order that a notice given pursuant to section 16-4501.7 include a statement directing the party to appear in person, with or without the child, and informing the party that failure to appear may result in a decision adverse to the party.

"(c) The court may enter any orders necessary to ensure the safety of the child and of any person ordered to appear under this section.

"(d) If a party to a child-custody proceeding who is outside the District is directed to appear under subsection (b) of this section or desires to appear personally before the court, with or without the child, the court may require another party to pay reasonable and necessary travel and other expenses of the party so appearing and of the child.

Subchapter III. Enforcement.

"§ 16-4603.1. Definitions.

"For the purposes of this subchapter, the term:

"(1) "Petitioner" means a person who seeks enforcement of an order for return of a child under the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction or enforcement of a child-custody determination.

"(2) "Respondent" means a person against whom a proceeding has been commenced for enforcement of an order for return of a child under the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction or enforcement of a child-custody determination.

"§ 16-4603.2. Enforcement under Hague Convention.

"Under this subchapter, a court of the District may enforce an order for the return of the child made under the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction as if it were a child-custody determination.

"§ 16-4603.3. Duty to enforce.

"(a) A court of the District shall recognize and enforce a child-custody determination of

a court of another state if the latter court exercised jurisdiction in substantial conformity with this chapter or the determination was made under factual circumstances meeting the jurisdictional standards of this chapter and the determination has not been modified in accordance with this chapter.

"(b) A court of the District may utilize any remedy available under other law of the District to enforce a child-custody determination made by a court of another state. The remedies provided in this subchapter are cumulative and do not affect the availability of other remedies to enforce a child-custody determination.

"§ 16-4603.4. Temporary visitation.

"(a) A court of the District which does not have jurisdiction to modify a child-custody determination may issue a temporary order enforcing:

"(1) A visitation schedule made by a court of another state; or

"(2) The visitation provisions of a child-custody determination of another state that does not provide for a specific visitation schedule.

"(b) If a court of the District makes an order under subsection (a)(2) of this section, it shall specify in the order a period that it considers adequate to allow the petitioner to obtain an order from a court having jurisdiction under the criteria specified in subchapter II of this chapter. The order remains in effect until an order is obtained from the other court or the period expires.

"§ 16-4603.5. Registration of child-custody determination.

"(a) A child-custody determination issued by a court of another state may be registered in the District, with or without a simultaneous request for enforcement, by sending to the Superior Court of the District of Columbia:

"(1) A letter or other document requesting registration;

"(2) Two copies, including one certified copy, of the determination sought to be registered, and a statement under penalty of perjury that to the best of the knowledge and belief of the person seeking registration the order has not been modified; and

"(3) Except as otherwise provided in section 16-4502.9, the name and address of the person seeking registration and of any parent or person acting as a parent who has been awarded custody or visitation in the child-custody determination sought to be registered.

"(b) On receipt of the documents required by subsection (a) of this section, the registering court shall:

"(1) Cause the determination to be filed as a foreign judgment, together with one copy of any accompanying documents and information, regardless of their form; and

"(2) Serve notice upon the persons named pursuant to subsection (a)(3) of this section and provide them with an opportunity to contest the registration in accordance with this section.

"(c) The notice required by subsection (b)(2) of this section must state that:

"(1) A registered determination is enforceable as of the date of the registration in the same manner as a determination issued by a court of the District;

"(2) A hearing to contest the validity of the registered determination must be requested within 20 days after service of the notice; and

"(3) Failure to contest the registration will result in confirmation of the child-custody determination and preclude further contest of that determination with respect to any matter that could have been asserted.

"(d) A person seeking to contest the validity of a registered order must request a hearing within 20 days after service of the notice. At that hearing, the court shall confirm the registered order unless the person contesting registration establishes that:

"(1) The issuing court did not have jurisdiction under subchapter II of this chapter;

"(2) The child-custody determination sought to be registered has been vacated, stayed, or modified by a court having jurisdiction to do so under subchapter II of this chapter; or

"(3) The person contesting registration was entitled to notice, but notice was not given in accordance with the standards of section 16-4501.7, in the proceedings before the court that issued the order for which registration is sought.

"(e) If a timely request for a hearing to contest the validity of the registration is not made, the registration is confirmed as a matter of law and the person requesting registration and all persons served must be notified of the confirmation.

"(f) Confirmation of a registered order, whether by operation of law or after notice and hearing, precludes further contest of the order with respect to any matter that could have been asserted at the time of registration.

"§ 16-4603.6. Enforcement of registered determination.

"(a) A court of the District may grant any relief normally available under the law of the District to enforce a registered child-custody determination made by a court of another state.

"(b) A court of the District shall recognize and enforce, but may not modify, except in accordance with subchapter II of this chapter, a registered child-custody determination of a court of another state.

"§ 16-4603.7. Simultaneous proceedings.

"If a proceeding for enforcement under this subchapter is commenced in a court of the District and the court determines that a proceeding to modify the determination is pending in a court of another state having jurisdiction to modify the determination under subchapter II of this chapter, the enforcing court shall immediately communicate with the modifying court. The proceeding for enforcement continues unless the enforcing court, after consultation with the modifying court, stays or dismisses the proceeding.

"§ 16-4603.8. Expedited enforcement of child-custody determination.

"(a) A petition under this subchapter must be verified. Certified copies of all orders sought to be enforced and of any order confirming registration must be attached to the petition. A copy of a certified copy of an order may be attached instead of the original.

"(b) A petition for enforcement of a child-custody determination must state:

"(1) Whether the court that issued the determination identified the jurisdictional basis it relied upon in exercising jurisdiction and, if so, what the basis was;

"(2) Whether the determination for which enforcement is sought has been vacated, stayed, or modified by a court whose decision must be enforced under this chapter and, if so, identify the court, the case number, and the nature of the proceeding;

"(3) Whether any proceeding has been commenced that could affect the current proceeding, including proceedings relating to domestic violence, protective orders, termination of parental rights, and adoptions and, if so, identify the court, the case number, and the nature of the proceeding;

"(4) The present physical address of the child and the respondent, if known;

"(5) Whether relief in addition to the immediate physical custody of the child and attorney's fees is sought, including a request for assistance from the Metropolitan Police Department or other law enforcement officials and, if so, the relief sought; and

"(6) If the child-custody determination has been registered and confirmed under section 16-4503.5, the date and place of registration.

"(c) Upon the filing of a petition, the court shall issue an order directing the respondent to appear in person, with or without the child, at a hearing and may enter any order necessary to ensure the safety of the parties and the child. The hearing must be held on the next judicial day after service of the order unless that date is impossible. In that event, the court shall hold the hearing on the first judicial day possible. The court may extend the date of hearing at the request of the petitioner.

"(d) An order issued under subsection (c) of this section must state the time and place of the hearing and advise the respondent that at the hearing the court will order that the petitioner may take immediate physical custody of the child and the payment of fees, costs, and expenses under section 16-4503.12, and may schedule a hearing to determine whether further relief is appropriate, unless the respondent appears and establishes that:

"(1) The child-custody determination has not been registered and confirmed under section 16-4503.5 and that:

"(A) The issuing court did not have jurisdiction under subchapter II of this chapter;

"(B) The child-custody determination for which enforcement is sought has been vacated, stayed, or modified by a court having jurisdiction to do so under subchapter II of this chapter;

"(C) The respondent was entitled to notice, but notice was not given in accordance with the standards of section 16-4501.7, in the proceedings before the court that issued the order for which enforcement is sought; or

"(2) The child-custody determination for which enforcement is sought was registered and confirmed under section 16-4503.4, but has been vacated, stayed, or modified by a court of a state having jurisdiction to do so under subchapter II of this chapter.

"§ 16-4603.9. Service of petition and order.

"Except as otherwise provided in sections 16-306 (adoptions), 16-2306 (neglect proceedings), 16-2357 (termination of parental rights), and 16-4503.11 (custody under emergency circumstances), the petition and order must be served upon respondent and any person who has physical custody of the child by any method authorized for the service of complaints under the rules for domestic relations proceedings adopted by the Board of Judges of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia.

"§ 16-4603.10. Hearing and order.

"(a) Unless the court issues a temporary emergency order pursuant to section 16-4502.4, upon a finding that a petitioner is entitled to immediate physical custody of the child, the court shall order that the petitioner may take immediate physical custody of the child unless the respondent establishes that:

"(1) The child-custody determination has not been registered and confirmed under section 16-4503.5 and that:

"(A) The issuing court did not have jurisdiction under subchapter II of this chapter;

"(B) The child-custody determination for which enforcement is sought has been vacated, stayed, or modified by a court of a state having jurisdiction to do so under subchapter II of this chapter; or

"(C) The respondent was entitled to notice, but notice was not given in accordance with the standards of section 16-4501.7, in the proceedings before the court that issued the order for which enforcement is sought; or

"(2) The child-custody determination for which enforcement is sought was registered and confirmed under section 16-4503.5 but has been vacated, stayed, or modified by a court of a state having jurisdiction to do so under subchapter II of this chapter.

"(b) The court shall award the fees, costs, and expenses authorized under section 16-4503.12 and may grant additional relief, including a request for the assistance of the Metropolitan Police Department or other law enforcement officials, and set a further hearing to determine whether additional relief is appropriate.

"(c) If a party called to testify refuses to answer on the ground that the testimony may be self-incriminating, the court may draw an adverse inference from the refusal.

"(d) A privilege against disclosure of communications between spouses and a defense of immunity based on the relationship of husband and wife or parent and child may not be invoked in a proceeding under this subchapter.

"§ 16-4603.11. Warrant to take physical custody of child.

"(a) Upon the filing of a petition seeking enforcement of a child-custody determination, the petitioner may file a verified application for the issuance of a warrant to take physical custody of the child if the child is imminently likely to suffer serious physical harm or be removed from the District.

"(b) If the court, upon the testimony of the petitioner or other witness, finds that the child is imminently likely to suffer serious physical harm or be removed from the District, it may issue a warrant to take physical custody of the child. The petition must be heard on the next judicial day after the warrant is executed unless that date is impossible. In that event, the court shall hold the hearing on the first judicial day possible. The application for the warrant must include the statements required by section 16-4503.08(b).

"(c) A warrant to take physical custody of a child must:

"(1) Recite the facts upon which a conclusion of imminent serious physical harm or removal from the jurisdiction is based;

"(2) Direct law enforcement officers to take physical custody of the child immediately; and

"(3) Provide for the placement of the child pending final relief.

"(d) The respondent must be served with the petition, warrant, and order immediately after the child is taken into physical custody.

"(e) A warrant to take physical custody of a child is enforceable throughout the District. If the court finds on the basis of the testimony of the petitioner or other witness that a less intrusive remedy is not effective, it may authorize law enforcement officers to enter private property to take physical custody of the child. If required by exigent circumstances of the case, the court may authorize law enforcement officers to make a forcible entry at any hour.

"(f) The court may impose conditions upon placement of a child to ensure the appearance of the child and the child's custodian.

"§ 16-4603.12. Costs, fees, and expenses.

"(a) The court shall award the prevailing party, including a state, necessary and reasonable expenses incurred by or on behalf of the party, including costs, communication expenses, attorney's fees, investigative fees, expenses for witnesses, travel expenses, and child care during the course of the proceedings, unless the party from whom fees or expenses are sought establishes that the award would be clearly inappropriate.

"(b) The court may not assess fees, costs, or expenses against a state unless authorized by law other than this chapter.

"§ 16-4603.13. Recognition and enforcement.

"A court of the District shall accord full faith and credit to an order issued by a court of another state and consistent with this chapter which enforces a child-custody determination by a court of another state unless the order has been vacated, stayed, or modified by a court having jurisdiction to do so under subchapter II of this chapter.

"§ 16-4603.14. Appeals.

"An appeal may be taken from a final order in a proceeding under this subchapter. The appeal shall be considered on an expedited basis. Unless the court enters a temporary emergency order under section 16-4502.4, the enforcing court may not stay an order enforcing a child-custody determination pending appeal.

"§ 16-4603.15. Role of Corporation Counsel.

"(a) In a case arising under this chapter or involving the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, the Corporation Counsel of the District of Columbia may take any lawful action, including resort to a proceeding under this subchapter or any other available civil proceeding, to locate a child, obtain the return of a child, or enforce a child-custody determination if there is:

"(1) An existing child-custody determination;

"(2) A request to do so from a court in a pending child-custody proceeding;

"(3) A reasonable belief that a criminal statute has been violated; or

"(4) A reasonable belief that the child has been wrongfully removed or retained in violation of the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction.

"(b) A member of the Office of the Corporation Counsel acting under this section acts on behalf of the court and may not represent any party.

"§ 16-4603.16. Role of law enforcement.

"At the request of a member of the Office of the Corporation Counsel acting under section 16-4503.15, a member of the Metropolitan Police Department or other law enforcement officer may take any lawful action reasonably necessary to locate a child or a party and assist the Office of the Corporation Counsel with responsibilities under section 16-4503.15.

"§ 16-4603.17. Costs and expenses.

"If the respondent is not the prevailing party, the court may assess against the respondent all direct expenses and costs incurred by the Office of the Corporation Counsel and Metropolitan Police Department or other law enforcement officers under section 16-4503.15 or section 16-4503.16.

"Subchapter IV. Miscellaneous Provisions.

"§ 16-4604.1. Uniformity of application and construction.

"In applying and construing this uniform act, consideration must be given to the need to promote uniformity of the law with respect to its subject matter among the states that enact it.

"§ 16-4604.2. Transitional provision.

"A motion or other request for relief made in a child-custody proceeding or to enforce a child-custody determination which was commenced before the effective date of this chapter is governed by the law in effect at the time the motion or other request was made."

Sec. 3. Fiscal impact statement.

The Council adopts the fiscal impact statement in the committee report as the fiscal impact statement required by section 602(c)(3) of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act, approved December 24, 1973 (87 Stat. 813; D.C. Code § 1-233(c)(3)).

ENROLLED ORIGINAL

Sec. 4. Effective date.

This act shall take effect following approval by the Mayor (or in the event of veto by the Mayor, action by the Council to override the veto), approval by the Financial Responsibility and Management Assistance Authority as provided in section 203(a) of the District of Columbia Financial Responsibility and Management Assistance Act of 1995, approved April 17, 1995 (109 Stat. 116; D.C. Code § 47-392.3(a)), a 30-day period of Congressional review as provided in section 602(c)(1) of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act, approved December 24, 1973 (87 Stat. 813; D.C. Code § 1-233(c)(1)), and publication in the District of Columbia Register.

Chairman
Council of the District of Columbia

Mayor
District of Columbia