COURTS ARE SKEPTICAL of accusations of paternal abuse; this disbelief increases when alienation is cross-claimed

- In simple abuse cases mothers reporting abusive fathers are believed less than half the time on average (41%) — and even less when alleging child abuse (CPA 29%; CSA 15%)

- When fathers respond to abuse claims with an alienation cross-claim, only 23% of mothers are believed (DV 57%; CPA 18%; CSA 2%); courts almost never believe child sexual abuse claims (1/51)

- Independent research has found that 50-75% of child sexual abuse allegations in the custody context are believed to be likely valid, and less than 14% are considered intentionally false

Alienation defenses are associated with GENDER BIAS

- When fathers cross-claim alienation, courts are four-times more likely to disbelieve mothers’ allegations of child abuse

- Mothers accused of alienation have twice the odds of losing custody compared to fathers accused of alienation

- In cases where one parent accused the other of abuse and the other cross-claimed alienation, mothers alleging abuse lost custody 50% (81/163) of the time; only 29% (5/17) of fathers in the same position lost custody (this difference is not statistically significant)

Mothers alleging abuse experience a LOSS OF CUSTODY

- In simple abuse cases, 25% of mothers who allege fathers’ abuse lose custody — when fathers cross-claim alienation this increases to close to 50%

- 75% of mothers lose custody when the courts believe the mother is an alienator — sometimes even when courts acknowledge the father has abused the mother or children

Court-appointed experts EXACERBATE GENDER BIAS

- Court-appointed experts — such as a custody evaluator or Guardian ad Litem (GAL) — are associated with even greater gender bias in outcomes

MAJOR OUTCOMES

- Overall, courts only believe mothers’ abuse claims 39% of the time

- Courts reject mothers’ abuse claims far more often when alienation is cross-claimed

- When facing accusations of alienation, mothers’ custody losses are nearly twice as likely

- Credited alienation trumps credited abuse 43% of the time

READ THE STUDY bit.ly/ChildCustodyOutcomes