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Fathers' rights must be protected

This is in response to the story headlined "Psychobabble or a legitimate, legal basis of child custody" (Nov. 14). As someone who has spent more than 20 years as a domestic relations attorney representing fathers in custody cases, I can say that parental alienation is hardly "psychobabble" but is a very real phenomenon that destroys many positive parent-child relationships.

Unfortunately, more often than not, it is the father who is left out in the cold. However, the ultimate victims in parental alienation are the children. The fact is that that father involvement is essential to the healthy development of a child.

But too many family law courts view fathers as biological necessities but social accidents. Fathers already face an "anti-dad" bias in custody cases because of the prevailing old wives' tale that mothers are innately superior parents. But numerous studies of single-parent households have reached the conclusion that there is no correlation between gender and child-rearing competence.

Family law courts in Illinois and across the country need to protect fathers and children against this bias and the very real and destructive pattern of parental alienation.

Fathers also need to take action to protect their relationships with their children.

Free resources, such as the Fatherhood Educational Institute (www.fatherhood-edu.org), can help fathers learn about their rights.

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Opinion