

The Rachel Foundation Inc.

Your Children Will Return...

Jeremiah 31:17

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

What is the Rachel Foundation?

The Rachel Foundation (RF) is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization that rebuilds parent-child bonds. It provides educational reintegration programs and supportive housing for parents and children whose familial bonds have been damaged or broken. Causes include international and domestic parental abduction, stranger abduction, alienation, estrangement, long-term separation, high-conflict divorce, and parent-child separations resulting from other causes.

Who started the Rachel Foundation (RF)?

Bob and Pamela Hoch founded RF in Maryland in 2000, with funding from the U.S. Department of Justice, Missing and Exploited Children's Division, and with the support of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC.).

What does the Rachel Foundation do?

The Rachel Foundation rebuilds parent-child bonds, one family at a time. Using a multidisciplinary team of contracted professionals, RF programs address the social, physical, educational and cultural needs of child and parent, usually in the supportive home environment at **Rachel House**, in the Texas Hill Country north of San Antonio.

What is the Rachel Foundation's primary goal?

RF's primary goal is to give children the opportunity to develop, rebuild and maintain healthy, loving relationships with both parents when possible.

What is Rachel House?

Rachel House is a home where parents and children rebuild relationships, one family at a time. Rachel House provides a warm, child-centered, safe environment with 24-hour facilitation with contracted licensed professionals and trained volunteers experienced in family reintegration. Children are encouraged to feel comfortable and safe. Parents are supported with guidance and coaching as they rebuild their relationships with their children in a structured, five-step program.

Who uses the Rachel Foundation's programs?

Custodial parents with returning abducted children and families and/or parents with alienated or estranged children.

- **Programs for returning abducted children.** The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), the U.S. State Department and other organizations such as members of AMECO (Association of Missing and Exploited Children's Organizations) find abducted children and bring them home. They recover some 94% of these children. This success, however, engenders the need for specialized expertise – family reunification and reintegration after recovery. This need was addressed by the Hochs when they founded the Rachel Foundation in 2000.

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The Rachel Foundation...rebuilding families one at a time.

- **When an abducted child is found**, the child and parent may come to Rachel House for reunification and/or reintegration. If the child is a foreign national, a parent may work with RF facilitators during the reunification, and may go through an RF program prior to returning home.
- **Programs for alienated and/or estranged parents and children.** Family courts are often at a loss in high conflict divorce cases where children adamantly refuse a relationship with one parent. RF provides Courts with a way to provide a child with the opportunity to develop a relationship with a formerly rejected parent while providing a safe environment for both parent and child.
- **Bridges Program™** – Residential reintegration based on an intensive, flexible educational and milieu-based model. Often court ordered.
- **Footsteps Program™**– Short-term residential access program based on the same model as Bridges for prevention or for less severe situations. Provides supportive, structured residential facilitation for parent and child exercising access and visitation, often court ordered.

How long are programs?

Program length cannot be predicted. Participation varies from a few days in “Footsteps” up to a month or more in “Bridges.” Offsite support may continue for a year or more depending on the strength of the new family paradigm and how strongly the new family paradigm is supported in the home jurisdiction.

What qualifications are involved?

Family Reintegration is a separate, unique and emerging field of specialized expertise that draws on skills from many disciplines. Consulting clinicians are experienced in the unique field of family reintegration. RF also benefits from the wisdom of a Scientific and Professional Advisory Panel composed of specialists in child abduction and alienation issues.

Does RF make diagnoses and provide clinical care?

No. The Rachel Foundation’s mandate is to provide a safe haven and to observe, facilitate, document and report. As stated in the Admission Protocols, RF does not provide evaluations, clinical diagnoses or assessments. Nor does it provide recommendations. Its detailed daily observations provide a rich source of empirical information to assist the Court and its designated experts to form opinions and to issue their own evaluations and recommendations. Typically, in a high-conflict, domestic alienation case, court-ordered evaluations have been completed before arrival. The Court orders a parent and child into the RF program or the custodial parent admits the family unit, the whole in collaboration with a supervising professional in the home jurisdiction.

Must the Foundation be Court appointed?

In many cases, yes. The Rachel Foundation has been court appointed in state and federal courts in the United States and in other countries. Just five days after incorporation, RF was appointed by Maryland Federal District Court to facilitate the return of an abducted child under the “Hague Convention.” **The basic requirement is that the child must be accompanied by a custodial parent as RF does not act *in loco parentis*.** See Admission Protocols for details.

What oversight does RF provide to the Court?

When court-ordered, RF’s programs are often carried out in close collaboration with a court-designated professional in the Court’s home jurisdiction. RF reports to this person.

Where are RF programs available?

Most families come to Rachel House in Texas. In rare cases, programs may be implemented elsewhere.

Is RF a religious organization?

No. People glancing at the RF web site sometimes assume this. Check “Why Rachel?” at the RF website at www.rachelfoundation.org for the story behind the name. RF welcomes families of diverse religions and cultural backgrounds. The programs have no religious component, unless requested by participants. The foundation receives financial support, prayer support and volunteer help from churches and individuals of different faiths, for which the Foundation is grateful.

Is there a waiting list for Rachel programs?

Sometimes yes. Priority is given to recovered abducted children. Second priority is given to domestic cases with a court order for a Rachel program. RF has never had to turn away a family in need of assistance.

What do RF programs cost?

Refer to the Foundation’s **Fee Schedule**. Factors include length of time in the program, how long a parent and child were separated, how severely a child has been alienated or estranged, how many children there are and, last but not least, the Court Order in place to ensure an uninterrupted reintegration process. This is a key component of success.

Program costs run from \$1,000 to \$10,000 or more. RF strives to keep fees low with the assistance of private donations to help defray overhead. The program is typically cost effective in terms of length and success rates. The family may save fees for protracted litigation and therapy.

Who pays for services?

The participating parent is fully responsible for payment regardless of any disposition the Court may make in this regard. Program fees must be paid in advance and credit status maintained in order to be admitted and to remain in the program. Please refer to the Foundation’s Admission Protocols and Fee Schedule. **The Rachel Foundation strives never to refuse treatment to any family based on an inability to pay.**

What other services does Rachel Foundation offer?

- Collaborative coaching for parents, professionals and law enforcement personnel involved in the recovery of a missing child or in the transfer of an estranged or alienated child to a searching or rejected parent.
- Specialized assistance to Central Authorities in cases involving the “Hague Convention”, especially where clauses 13 (b) and 21 are invoked as a reason not to return a child home. RF provides safe haven for child and parent to transition safely, including experienced escorts.
- “PAS Parents.” This e-mail support group started in early 2001 and now has over 400 participants from many states and countries. Volunteer moderators (the “**Mod Squad**”) donate their time and skills, 24/7 365 days/yr to help and comfort parents separated from their children through abduction or alienation. This is one of RF’s most successful volunteer programs with a worldwide reach.

How is the Foundation funded?

RF received start-up funding from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) As a member of **The Association for Missing and Exploited Children’s Organizations, (AMECO)** RF receives training and other support from the U.S. Department of Justice.

Donations:

Foundation programs are funded by donations and program fees. Some professional services are donated or reduced in cost. The Executive Director and Program Director are unpaid volunteers. All donations go directly towards providing programs and services. Donations are tax deductible to the extent permitted by law as RF is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Who refers families to the Rachel Foundation?

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, Central Authorities under the “Hague Convention,” child-find agencies, members of AMECO, the U.S. State Department, law enforcement agencies, courts, professionals, DFS agencies and individual families all refer cases to RF. About a sixth of referrals are via RF’s web site (www.rachelfoundation.org).

Can RF provide references?

RF will provide references upon request. Judicial references are confidential and will be provided directly to and only to the Court.

Is the Rachel Foundation licensed?

State licenses are accorded to individuals, not to corporations. The Rachel Foundation is listed with the Texas Secretary of State as a not-for-profit organization operating in good standing in the State of Texas. The Rachel Foundation requires the presence of a legally-designated custodial parent and does not act *in loco parentis*. It is not a foster home or a group home and its services fall outside the context of the Texas Administrative Code or the Texas Occupations Code.

The specialized activity known as family reunification and/or family reintegration is not licensed or certified in any state at this time. It is a separate and distinct field of emerging professional expertise utilizing skills drawn from diverse areas of expertise as well as collaboration with law enforcement and federal and state agencies such as the FBI, the U.S. State Department, Federal and state courts, special or private investigators, security providers, and a wide range of other professionals.

When mental health services are required, these are referred to licensed professionals.

To what professional organization does Rachel Foundation belong?

The Rachel Foundation’s “umbrella” professional organization is the Association of Missing and Exploited Children’s Organizations, (AMECO) of which the Rachel Foundation is a member in good standing. AMECO is funded by the United States Department of Justice., Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. AMECO works to ensure uniform high levels of professional standards and members must adhere to its Code of Ethics. The Rachel Foundation’s Executive Director, Robert (Bob) Hoch, was recently elected Vice-President of the Board of Directors and is Chair of the Training Committee.

Has the Foundation ever been sued?

In every family that comes to Rachel House, one parent does everything possible to ensure admission. The other parent typically tries to prevent this from happening. The Foundation’s work is valued on the one hand and vilified on the other. Therefore, RF is sometimes the object of legal action by disgruntled parents who are unhappy with a court’s custody decisions. Despite several attempts, there has never been a finding against RF in any court of law.

One attempt was made to sue RF in 2005. The case was dismissed summarily in RF home jurisdiction of Gillespie County, TX. The petitioners thereupon re-filed in another jurisdiction, Bexar County (90 miles removed) and that is ongoing.

What is your success rate?

When a parent and child complete the program without interruption, when the parent is competent and healthy, and when the Court is able to put in place the legal protections needed to ensure ongoing stability for the new family structure, RF success rate is more than 90%. Even in cases where the Court has limited success in protecting the family structure, the RF program has brought about lasting improvements in parent-child relationships.

Can you help facilitate my child's return under the "Hague" Convention?

Signatory countries of the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of Child Abduction ("The Hague Convention), working through their Central Authorities, use RF to facilitate the reunification of children and parents. In the U.S., these functions are carried out by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and the U.S. State Department, both of whom refer cases to RF. For instance:

- RF facilitated the return of a child to the U.S. from Belgium, at the request of the Belgian Central Authority.
- Sweden's Central Authority used RF services in the return of two children to that country.
- The Foundation provided safe haven to a mother from Scotland reunited with her teenage sons, whom she had not seen for three years, prior to their return to that country.
- The Foundation has provided training to professionals and facilitated the reunification of children involving more than 25 foreign countries.

What is RF's program methodology?

RF's family reintegration programs, while unique and distinct, draw from skills in law enforcement, education, social psychology, parenting skills education and family life education. Programs are structured and goal-oriented and tailored to the specific needs of each unique family.

Can you help me find my missing child?

No. RF is not a child-find organization. RF's job begins when a child is found. If you expect your child may soon be found, contact RF so that you can prepare for the reunification and reintegration process.

For further information, contact the Rachel Foundation at:

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